

~ Warrior Mine ~

by Cas

Standard Disclaimer - These characters belong to me; though they might resemble our dearest heroines in a TV show now since defunct, they are mine and only mine. This is written for personal enjoyment, and no copyright infringement was intended to any character similar in appearance.

Specific Story Disclaimers:

Violence - Yes, there is light violence in this story, so be forewarned.

Acknowledgements - Thanks to Kris my beta reader for pointing in the right direction.

Emotional distress - This might cause some distress to readers who don't like violence of any sort; to which I suggest you stop and read something else. But there is nothing harsh in this story so you shouldn't worry too much.

Subtext - This is based on the premise of two people who are very much in love with each other. They happen to both be women. There will be graphic depiction of this, yay! But be patient to get to it. If the thought of this gives you a problem, STOP now. As I no longer have my cat to assist you for a therapy session and his analysis of your problem.

Dedication - To my loving wife, partner, confidant and friend. Thank you for putting up with my late nights with writing and typing this. For your suggestions and ideas and your frustrated urging to get to it and finish it this millennium.

So you have been warned, scared, chastised, beaten with a wet noodle and covered inoops ...wrong story.

And as always, any and all comments are always welcome. You can email them to:

Xena.Uber@gmail.com or check out my show at: www.xena-ubers.blogspot.com

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[She knew that when she woke up things would be different; she could not tell what it would be; only that it would...somehow.](#)

[The dance club was definitely filling up with the long weekend crowd who were out to let their hair down and pick their feet up for some fun.](#)

The lights were set to barely illuminate the dance floor and even less of the patrons on the outside edge of it.

It was nearly the midnight hour and the place was packed with all varieties of women.

You had your short, medium and tall. There was the athletic and couch jockeys, even more subdivided into lipstick, femmes, tomboys, soft butch and butch.

Any flavour you could want to choose from.

But Xenifra was a classification all to herself.

You could even say she was unclassifiable.

Tall beyond the average woman, she stood at an even six foot. She had long black hair with unique streaks of gray at the sides of each temple.

These seemed to highlight her magnificent grey blue eyes which scanned the club in an otherworldly fashion.

Her broad shoulders and tapered figure accentuated her chiselled features as she strode to the side of the room and stood in observation of those around her, her long black coat giving her the illusion of her gliding across the room as all eyes turned, transfixed to her exquisite exotic beauty.

After standing there a few moments, most of the crowd returned to their own conversations or picked up new ones.

"Wow, wouldja look at her..." an average femme by the name of Tabitha said in a loud murmur to her friend, "...give my right nipple to be with her tonight!"

Her quiet friend rolled her eyes and looked in the direction everyone else was staring to and quickly lowered her eyes as Tabitha took another shot and chased it with a beer.

The club was getting more crowded if at all possible.

Xenifra stood by a column that was near the dance area and in-between a small table and the edge of the bar.

From here she could observe the humanity of the time and drink her Glenfiddich Scotch.

The music thrummed throughout the venue with a pulsating beat that synchronized with those bodies swaying and grinding on the dance floor.

Tabitha leaned over to her friend again, "Come on, loosen up. You'll never get laid being a stiff stuck up and not on the dance floor" she told her while grabbing her by the hand and pulling her to the dance floor.

Tabitha began dancing with her and anyone else who came into her sight.

The few too many drinks she had imbibed loosening her already wanton morals and expressing her lack of inhibitions suggestively.

Unfortunately, it also fuelled her mission to get her friend just as involved in any entertainment for the night.

Xenifra noticed, out of the corner of her eye, an individual moving about the dance floor.

She was in the company of the one who had a total disregard for personal space.

Something about this individual piqued her curiosity as well as stirring a very dormant memory.

Setting her drink down on the bar's edge, Xenifra walked over to where the two were dancing.

The wanton one was suggestively dancing with a baby butch who thought she was in heaven.

Xenifra strode to the immediate front of the young woman who had to tilt her head back to see who the wall was that walked in front of her.

When she looked into storm filled eyes, she retreated hastily off the dance floor entirely.

Tabitha could not believe her luck, here in front of her was her wish come true.

She immediately swayed her hips and body towards the object of her want, encouraging her quiet friend to encircle the woman.

She began to grind and sway to the music, giving Xenifra an almost standing lap dance while her friend merely danced behind her, never touching her.

Xenifra swayed to the music, allowing the woman to do as she pleased, casually assessing her quiet friend and her reticent actions.

The music turned more soulfully erotic with its lyrics and rhythm.

Tabitha, encouraged by the unspoken words she thought she received of this exotic woman, began caressing her thighs and hips, and she could feel the strength of hardened muscles under the clothes.

Brazenly, she slid one hand up an arm and around the back of her neck; twining her fingers with the silky tresses of the beauty before her.

Xenifra could feel the absolute lust permeating the woman's skin yet she could feel no heat coming from the woman behind her.

Closing her eyes to allow her senses access, she could faintly feel another emotion coming from her instead.

Tabitha misunderstood Xenifra's eyes closing as a sign of pleasure and tiptoed up to kiss the woman before her.

Xenifra accepted the kiss, eliciting a moan from Tabitha.

Breathlessly, Tabitha pulled back and smiled at the woman before her.

As the music turned to a new techno beat, several couples took the opportune time to retreat to their table for drinks.

Xenifra took the moment to stand to her full height, towering over both of the women, and finally spoke "Would you and your companion care for a drink?" she asked in a rich voice.

Mesmerized by the silky voice, Tabitha merely stood transfixed.

Xenifra cocked her head to one side and arched an eyebrow.

Tabitha's friend came from around the woman's back and without looking up to Xenifra, nudged her friend with her elbow to shake her out of her stupor, "Uh, why, yeah...sure" she stumbled to say.

Xenifra gave a barely noticeable nod of her head and turned to the bar, clearing a path without even trying as onlookers just moved out of her way.

"Wow, can ya believe it...she is so dam fine! Girl, play our cards right and she will be makin us scream her name tonight" Tabitha took a deeply excited breath.

"I...I don't know Tab; I mean....I don't know if I should go..."

"Oh COME ON!" Tabitha interrupted, "What better way to lose you cherry than to a woman like that? HELL, if I had mine still I'd give it to her in a heartbeat! Come on, you are definitely going to see this night out with me!"

Before she could reply, Xenifra had returned with two of the exact drinks the girls had been drinking all night.

"Ladies" Xenifra handed them the drinks.

"By the way, I'm Tabitha and this is my friend Teh" Tabitha motioned with her hand wrapping around her friend's elbow.

"A pleasure ladies" Xenifra gave a slight nod of her head.

"You sure are an excellent dancer; what is your name?"

"Thank you Tabitha, my name is Xenifra"

"Wow, cool" she replied, "I've never seen you here before, you new in town?"

"No, this is my first venture to this establishment though"

"You have a great accent, you European or something?" Tabitha shot back her drink and stood next to Xenifra while putting a hand on her long coat at her lapel.

"You could say something other than European" Xenifra looked at Tabitha then to Teh, "Are you ladies a couple?"

"What? Us? Oh no....we're best friends looking for a fun night out, that's all" Tabitha immediately clarified.

"Would you ladies care for a nightcap at my home?" Xenifra asked.

"We'd thought you'd never ask!" Tabitha sprouted, grabbing her friend by the arm and following the tall woman out.

Xenifra walked to the curb as a limousine pulled up and the sharply dressed livery quickly opened the door.

Xenifra motioned for Tabitha and Teh to enter first and then followed them in.

Tabitha sat next to Xenifra and curled into her, placing kisses to her neck and jaw line.

Teh sat at an angle to them.

"Care for a drink?" Xenifra asked as she pressed a button and a fully stocked bar emerged at the front of the seats.

"A shot of whiskey for me, thanks" Tabitha quickly stated.

Teh just nodded her head no and quickly lowered her head again.

"As you wish" Xenifra replied pouring a shot of whiskey for Tabitha and retaking her seat.

Tabitha slammed the shot back and proceeded to retake her place where she left off in kissing this woman who exuded seductive power.

The trip was made in silence as Tabitha made it known to Xenifra what she wanted without words by the actions of her hands and deeper kisses.

Teh never looked in their direction.

When they arrived, the livery immediately opened the door to a massive black marble building on the other side of town.

The doorman quietly and efficiently held open the door with a bowed head as Xenifra entered the building.

A second set of doors past the lobby entrance was slid open as she approached and inside was another guarded lobby albeit smaller; off to the right of the expensively looking lobby was an elevator which gave the aura of exclusivity.

All three passengers were transported quietly and efficiently up the ten floors to the penthouse.

The doors opened to a beautifully carpeted foyer of a sunken living room. There were three sets of sofas in a crème suede that sat in the center leaving the forth side open towards the floor to ceiling windows.

In the center of them was a black granite coffee table with a black crescent moon made of Onyx on a white triangular plate of marble.

On either side of the foyer, was a wide corridor of black marble which lead to other parts of the penthouse.

"Ladies, would you care for a refreshment?" a small man in his 50's dressed in a black coat with a white shirt, black pants and thin black tie said with a heavy French accent.

Both women snapped their heads in the direction of the voice in startlement of hearing another.

"Yeah...sure...how bout a whiskey with a chaser?" Tab replied casually.

"As you wish madam and you miss?" he turned slightly to look at Teh.

"Um, just water please?"

"Very well mademoiselle" he gave a curt bow and turned, leaving the three in the room.

"Very impressive Xenifra; what are you? A millionaire's daughter or something?" Tabitha asked as she walked up to the woman.

Xenifra had taken off her coat and handed it to a woman of the same age as the man; she wore a black skirt, white blouse with a frilly apron.

The woman curtsied and left the room with out a word.

"You could once again say 'or something' but not a millionaire's daughter" Xenifra replied.

The drinks were handed most efficiently and again they were left alone.

Xenifra stood at one of the windows, looking out over the city.

Tabitha drained her drink and began to wrap herself around Xenifra.

Xenifra accepted the woman's attention and when she felt they were proceeding in the direction her body wanted, she stopped "Would you care to freshen up?"

Tabitha was suddenly confused by the abrupt stop and by the question "Uh...oookay...I guess."

"Veronique will show you each to a guest room where everything is available for you. If you require anything, all you need do is ask"

When Tabitha looked in the direction Xenifra had motioned towards with a nod of her head, the lady who had attended to Xenifra when they first entered was standing quietly waiting.

"I am sure you would like to remove the stale smoke smell that clings to you from the venue plus freshen up a bit?" Xenifra asked more as an encouragement of unspoken request to Tabitha's questioning look.

"Oh um...yeah, sure" she hemmed as she grabbed Teh's arm and they left to follow the apparent maid with questioning brows furrowed together.

When they returned a short while later, Xenifra was no where to be seen.

Tabitha turned completely around in a circle looking for her throughout the living room foyer, "Great! We do as she wants, cause apparently she has a hang-up about washing before you eat and she disappears!"

"Tabitha! You go too far! That was just crude!" Teh said to her.

Tabitha huffed off in the direction where the maid had gone "Hey V...know where Xen has gone?" Teh could hear her friend say as she disappeared down the hall.

Teh walked over to where Xenifra had stood earlier and looked out the floor to ceiling windows into the night city skyline, unconsciously wrapping her arms around herself.

Xenifra leaned down and into Teh's hair by her left side, inhaling deeply her scent. Suddenly her brows furrowed deeply and a look of confusion and fear crossed her features.

Teh could feel someone at her back, at her shoulder, smelling her hair and breathing almost into her ear and she spun to see who or what it was; only to find herself alone and no one there.

"You have the scent of innocence" said a disembodied voice.

Teh looked into the direction of where the voice came from to suddenly see Xenifra emerge from the shadows.

"I...um..." Teh stuttered.

"You are not of the same mind as your companion" Xenifra seemed to glide across the floor but kept to the opposite side of the room.

She was freshly showered and dressed in a long silk black robe with matching silk pants.

"Um...no...I'm not" Teh answered almost embarrassingly.

"It is nothing to be ashamed of. Innocence is something to be proud of in this day and age. And it is a gift only to be shared with your Anamchara; your soul mate" Xenifra said in a wistful tone that Teh barely noticed.

"I...I should go...you and Tab will have a great time without me around" Teh moved as to return to gather her belongings.

"It is late, would you not say, to be going out?" Xenifra stood so still Teh did not think she'd even spoken, "As for your companion, I would not be a civilized host in having a dalliance with her whilst you remained here unattended to. Not to mention that she has imbibed in a small amount of spirits to dampen any ardor or thought of my wanting to pursue that venue."

"Oh, hey! There ya are..." Tabitha had just come back into the room "Ya maid said ya'd be out here, guess my eyes aren't used to this dark lighting" her words starting to slur a touch.

"Would you desire anything to drink?" the butler asked again.

"Yeah Peeves, how bout another shot?"

"Very well madam; anything for you mademoiselle?"

Before Teh could answer, Xenifra strode across the room and had looked at Philippe.

He merely nodded, bowed and left the room.

"Xen, this place is awesome! How does your bedroom look?" Tabitha suggestively asked as she walked, in what she thought was an alluring manner but was actually the sway of a drunk, up to Xenifra and began playing with her robe tie.

Philippe returned so quickly with Tabitha's drink on a silver tray that she still was waiting on Xenifra's response.

She took the offered drink, "Thanks Peeves" and slammed it back, setting it back on the tray in his hand.

"Would you accompany me?" Xenifra asked Tabitha, extending her arm in the direction of the corridor.

Tabitha looked over to Teh and smugly winked, thinking to herself 'Well, if she doesn't want to join in...more attention for me'.

They walked down the corridor leaving a stunned Teh standing in the room.

Philippe returned a moment later with a silver tray laden with a tea pot, some biscuits and two tea cups. He set the tray on the small table, gave a small bow to Teh and left her alone again.

Teh just looked at him then to the serving, wondering what that was all about when she heard that silky rich voice again, "Would you like milk and sugar in your tea?"

She looked up and blinked.

There was Xenifra again, except she was now dressed in a more conservative robe and moving towards the serving tray.

"Um...n.no...plain will be fine. Thank you"

Xenifra nodded once and poured the tea, handing one over to Teh and then moving to the opposite side of the room. "Would you care to sit?" Xenifra said as she extended her hand in the direction of one of the sofas.

"Thank you"

"You are most welcome"

"I'm sorry to ruin your evening. I'm sure you'd be enjoying yourself...er....um" Teh didn't finish as a blush crept up her cheeks; "...um...where's Tab?"

"Your companion is resting. Apparently the spirits she imbibed have finally taken a toll on her. Do not apologize nor presume. As my first impression to you is of someone who has brought two unknown women home for entertainment services for the evening. Would you not say that speaks ill of the caliber of my ethics?"

"You were just looking out for a night of fun. No one can fault you for that."

"But you have not nor would ever, so would you say we are of the same morals?"

"No but...hey wait, why do you think I've never?" Teh asked with a small hint of indignation.

Xenifra sat watching the play of emotions on Teh's face and studying the woman. Here in the soft light, she could truly appreciate the young woman's beauty.

But with it also brought a feeling of angst, almost Déjà vu; the pull she had towards this young woman was disconcerting.

She had long blond red hair with highlights that Xenifra could tell where natural. Her hair had a soft natural wave to it as it cascaded down her shoulders and back to above mid-waist and was parted to the left side lightly.

She was an athlete of some sort to have the body she possessed, she thought.

She was well fit; her arms were very well toned. Almost showing muscle definition and she walked with a confidence in her stride that was gained by those who worked to achieve it.

Her back was straight as she sat and her ankles crossed and tucked slightly in up to the sofa, denoting one who knew the proper way for a lady to sit in company.

She had innocent surrounded light green eyes that swirled to different ends of the color spectrum with each different emotion and had soft yet high cheek bones. Her lips were full and sensually sculpted yet seemed delicate and fragile.

When she spoke, she revealed impeccably perfect and white teeth all set surrounded by a blemish free goddess like face.

"Because, you blush at the mere mention or idea of intimacy. Because you carry yourself with respect of your body and because you have the air of innocence in you."

"Well...I...could have...you know" she replied like a child trying to fit in.

At this, Xenifra merely raised one eyebrow and remained silent.

"Well, if I kept drinking like Tab, I probably would have and regretted it tomorrow morning."

"Not by my doing I assure you; as I can not do anything to sully an innocent's virtue."

Teh regarded the woman seated across from her for a few moments, and then spoke softly "I believe you" with an almost genuine conviction and awe.

Teh just kept looking at Xenifra, wondering how it was that this handsome woman was seated across from her drinking and talking but seemed almost as if a statue. Disconcerted by it she shook her head of the thoughts and stifled a yawn.

"Late is the hour my lady..." Xenifra stood and placed her tea cup on the tray, "Please, make yourself comfortable in my home. Veronique will show you to your room. If you require anything at all, ask either Veronique or Philippe and they will endeavor to fulfill your requirement."

"Thank you Xenifra, I appreciate your taking this all in stride" Teh put her cup down and walked towards Veronique.

"Goodnight my lady, pleasant dreams."

Teh turned to reply but Xenifra was gone.

"Does she always do that?" she asked Veronique.

"This way Miss" Veronique replied and led her to the room.

"Good night Miss."

"Thank you, Good night" Teh crawled into the massive king bed that was in the room she had used earlier to shower as the maid closed the double doors behind her.

She lay looking around the room lit by the small lamp at the bed side.

"What a weird night" she commented to herself and slowly drifted off to sleep.

When they both eventually got up, Philippe had a full breakfast for them and led them into the breakfast table which was down a ways in the corridor from the bedrooms.

The table could easily accommodate eight but was, to their surprise, only arranged for two.

"Is Xenifra not having breakfast with us?" Teh asked disappointedly as Tabitha was feeling a bit sluggish in waking up still.

"Mistress has left instructions that you are both welcome to stay as long as you wish"

"Oh, Okay...thank you" Teh picked up some orange juice and sipped while Tabitha was working on her second coffee cup.

Philippe gave a small bow and stepped away.

After eating, well mostly Teh ate; Tabitha just drank coffee and was surly. Teh spoke to Philippe, "Can you please give this message to Xenifra?"

"Yes Miss" Philippe took the message as he led them to the door, "There is transportation downstairs waiting to take you where you wish."

"Thank you Philippe" Teh answered as she led a half sick, half grumpy Tabitha into the elevator.

After dropping Tabitha off at her apartment with a slight verbal dressing down for her actions and a note that she would be calling her later to see if she survived, Teh asked the driver to drop her at her home.

As the driver drove off, Teh looked sadly to the vehicles receding outline, 'I wonder if I'll ever see her again?' she said to herself. With a heavy sigh, she walked up the steps to her house and entered.

It had been a long week; meeting upon meeting, conference after conference and yet still another function remained to attend this evening.

"It amazes me Philippe, that after all these years, people seem more concerned with the approval of their actions from their peers than actually accomplishing a task" Xenifra said to her manservant as she sat looking out over the city while sipping a cognac.

"Mistress?" he replied in question to her line of reasoning.

"If someone comes up with an idea, which in and of itself is remarkable considering some of these employees' intellect, they must call a meeting to discuss this idea, the pros and cons of the idea, the possible scenarios arising from proceeding with said idea only to ultimately dispose of the original idea if not seen favorable in advancing their status."

"Progression in reverse" he replied.

"Precisely! They accomplish less with more rhetoric of how they are so progressive."

"Shall I ring for the car Mistress?"

"Ah yes..." she sighed "...time to attend yet another boring social function where the entire pompous, self absorbed elitists jockey for my favor and possible support."

"Yes Mistress"

"Have it brought around; I must pick up my companion for the evening's event..."

He bowed and walked away to do his task.

"...maybe I will be able to find more than just companionship" she said to herself.

The antiquities gallery was hosting this evening's event in hopes of raising funds for refurbishment of a hall that held attractions of lesser renown. Its care had been neglected and as the gallery had expanded, this one section became more of a '*boring section of relics*' as compared to the others which held items such as the swords of Romans, armor of the

Mesopotamians and gold of the Greeks. It was being thought of more as a semi-storage area than hall.

"This one is supposedly a script of a mother-to-be requesting the favor of a Goddess named Hequit to oversee her childbirth favorably" a well fit woman was regaling a young man who seemed bored with the lesson and was seeking a way to leave.

"But most of the populace is not aware of the little known fact that Hequit was actually the Goddess Hecate. The Goddess of Magic, the moon, judgments and many other duties." Xenifra's silky voice caused Teh to spin around yet again to find her standing a small distance away.

"Yes, that....that is true. How did you become learned in that fact?" Teh asked in surprise at Xenifra's appearance there.

"A hobby, if you will, of reading ancient lore" Xenifra gave a small bow and turn of her head showing no emotion at the surprise it was that it was Teh she was speaking to.

"Ah, there you are..." a man's voice broke the moment of each of the women looking at one another.

"Oh, Miss General...lovely to see you again" the distinguished looking older man addressed Xenifra and extended a hand in greeting.

"Good evening to you Mr. D'Olympia" she replied accepting his hand.

"So I see you've met my daughter Khateh" he turned and placed he arm around Teh's shoulder, Xenifra stiffened at the words.

"Yes Daddy, we..."

"Were just discussing the Goddess Hecate" Xenifra cut Teh off and looked from Teh to her father with no facial expression belying her shock.

"Ah, well you've stepped into a hornet's nest then I'm afraid" he chuckled.

Xenifra cocked her head in question and Teh rolled her eyes.

"It's the reason for her name and knowledge of all there is about the Goddess. You see her mother loved that the Goddess was about change and when she found out she was pregnant with this one here, she named her after her but with a little twist for modern society; hence Khateh"

Teh took a deep breath, closed her eyes and shook her head as if the story had been told just a few times too many for her liking.

Xenifra was taken off guard at this revelation but put on a polite smile, "A unique name for a unique individual, I am sure. Now if you will excuse me, I am sure there are corporate executives

who have yet to try and acquire my investment support. Good evening to you both" with a slight bow she was gone, mingling with others.

"A very lovely, driven and talented lady, that Miss General" her father remarked.

"Interesting to say the least" Teh murmured.

"What was that honey?"

"Oh nothing Daddy, so what's next to see?" the young man had vanished the minute he could and Teh looked around and shrugged when she could not spot him, slipping her arm into her father's and he led her down the hall.

As the evening wore on, Teh caught glimpses of Xenifra.

One moment listening to some man's excited speech as he waved his arms about dramatically, the other looking up to a piece of antiquity while one of the curators explained some facet or another of the item.

Several times, she noted a woman hanging on her arm. A very beautiful woman; with long red hair who was dressed in a shimmering black evening dress that had a split up the left leg to mid thigh and an open back revealing a very sensual curve.

This woman complimented Xenifra in height and attire as Xenifra was graceful in her tailored grey suit.

'A very gorgeous couple' thought Teh as she watched Xenifra say something to the woman on her arm and cause her to laugh.

The woman then leaned into Xenifra, placing a delicate hand to her chest; she whispered something back which caused Xenifra to laugh in return.

"Ready honey?"

"Wha...oh sure Daddy..." Teh replied her father.

"You were out of it there for a moment dear, are you okay?" he asked concerned.

"Yeah Daddy; I was just wondering where do you know Miss...what was her last name again?"

"Miss General?"

"Yes, her"

"Business dealings only; Miss General is the CEO and Owner of Amoeba Inc."

"Thee Amoeba Inc?"

"Yes, why?"

"Wow, she's....wow. They were listed on the Forbes 100 Top Companies. Actually it was listed number one for the last three years."

"And you know this how?"

"Well, when I sit waiting for you outside your office, the only magazines available are Forbes or Wall Street. I chose the lesser of the two evils and the article explained what it took to make it to the list."

"You mean my daughter actually read something modern? About today's living society?" her father asked incredulously but with a teasing voice, "Stop the presses! I've got to have this put in print!" he joked.

"Oh hardy har har."

"Just joking sweet pea. So yes, that's where I know of Miss General, but I know her from having had my advisors speak to her consultants and she met with us two times this past month."

"Why Daddy? Is something wrong?" Teh asked concerned as she slowed down in her walk causing her father to almost stop as she had her arm hooked in his.

"No darling, just making sure we do the right thing so that nothing does go wrong. She is a very knowledgeable woman who has an understanding I've not ever seen in one so young."

"Oh"

"Well come on pumpkin, this old man of yours is starving. These little pigs in a blanket leave so much to be desired."

"Daddy! How many of those did you eat?" Teh stopped this time and placed both her fists on her hips, staring at him and speaking in an admonishing tone.

"Uh, only a couple..." he hemmed.

"You know the doctor said none of that stuff!"

"I know....but I was hungry and this dinner thing is still another fifteen minutes away" he whined like a child instead of the parent.

Shaking her head, she smiled at him and laughed "What am I going to do with you?"

"Feed me?"

"Come on then, before you eat a rare priceless artifact"

"Or become one if I don't eat" he joked back and they headed towards their table.

Dinner was a typical event which was catered with a variety of specialty foods unlike the common fare while speeches were presented by guest speakers from the National Archives and Historical Society.

Afterwards, each guest was informed by the curator to reach under their chairs and pull out an envelope taped there.

As the guests did so the curator went on to explain that in each envelope there was a number. Guests had to find their matching numbered guest; one of them would have another sealed envelope.

They were to open the envelope and then follow the clues to an artifact. At each artifact there would be another clue to lead them on to decipher a riddle or clue. Whoever could solve the problem correctly and return would win a generous prize donated by Eloquence Marketing.

The sounds of tearing envelopes and then chairs being moved was immediately heard as guests began looking for their match.

"Oh Xenifra, can we just leave now? I'd rather we pursued other forms of entertainment this evening" the redhead implored with a very enticing voice while running her fingers provocatively up Xenifra's forearm.

"As much as I am drawn to that idea, I have to decline for the moment. There are two individuals who we must assist in this endeavor. Once that task is accomplished, I will auspiciously oblige your every request" Xenifra handed the redhead her envelope from under her seat and proceeded to open her own.

"Oh..." the redhead pouted as she looked from her number to Xenifra's "...you've got 17, I've got 3."

"Well then, the sooner this is complete..." Xenifra let the words hang as she rose and assisted her companion up. Turning she held up her number as she walked about with the other guests doing the same.

"What number do you have Daddy?"

"I've got 34, how about you pumpkin?"

"Oh, 17. Wish we could have done this together" Teh said sadly.

"Well how about I go find 17 and ask them to trade?"

"No, its okay. You go mingle with other suits. I'll find my unfortunate victim and attempt to bore them to tears in a new all time record" she joked self-deprecatingly.

"That's my girl, spread the misery" he joked back as he rose up and went in search of his matching number.

'Oh well, number 17 isn't going to come to me sitting h...'

"Excuse me, Miss D'Olympia?"

Again the voice.

Teh turned to her left where she swore she heard her name only to see no one there; 'I bet she's behind me' she thought.

Turning around she found Xenifra standing almost a table away "Did you call me?" she asked.

"Yes, it seems we have a number match" Xenifra held up her number.

"How do you know what number I have?" Teh asked with brows furrowed.

"It is on the table in front of you. My apologies if I have made an error"

Teh turned around in her seat and looked at her number then to Xenifra, "You can see that from there?" she pointed to where Xenifra stood.

"Yes. You seem reluctant to participate. If you so desire, we both can decline and continue on with our evening's plans?"

"No!...um, no that's okay. Sorry, I was just....never mind."

Xenifra stood silently waiting, as if frozen in time.

Teh found it amazing she could do that and just stared at the living statue of beauty before her.

It wasn't until someone walked in front of her that she realized what she was doing. She lowered her head embarrassed, "Sorry for staring."

"Shall we commence then?" Xenifra replied.

"Yes, sure. Um, here's the envelope" Teh handed it out to Xenifra as she approached.

Xenifra opened the envelope and began "Your clues, should you choose to accept, are as follow:

1. Of this parchment was a request

2. Of this immortal, no one claimed possession

3. Of the lesser of two was their species

"Wow, give us a clue why don't you" Teh shook her head.

"It is best if we start one at a time, do you not agree?"

"Yes, of course."

"Of this parchment was a request" the silky voice repeated.

"Parchment...that would mean something written, something on paper...a written request" Teh said to herself then looked up to Xenifra.

"Yes, very good deduction Miss. D'Olympia."

"Please, I think we are past the Miss stage don't you think?"

"I was merely according you some respect."

"Speaking of which, why did you not let me finish telling my father we knew each other?"

"Because in truth Miss D'Olympia, we do not. It behooved me to save explaining to your father that his daughter went to an unknown woman's home under the pretense of granting sexual favors or that I seduced his daughter into such a predicament."

Teh blinked her eyes as her mouth hung open then closed and opened again.

"Would you prefer that I had not intervened?"

"Uh...no...that's okay, it's over. Uh, now we've been formally introduced so ...um ...yeah."

"Shall we continue then?"

"Yeah, that's a good idea...so...um...paper...yeah a written paper request" Teh nervously stammered trying to get her bearing around this woman who made her emotions go in every direction except under her control.

"I am unfamiliar with this gallery, are there many documents or parchments of requests?"

Teh's brows furrowed in thought and she unconsciously bit her bottom lip in thought, "Well there's the parchment of Helios, the writ of Aristotle, the scroll of some Mesopotamian King and that script for Hequit" she counted off on her fingers.

"Well, shall we go and locate each one of these in hope that our next clue will be there and yield us a possible answer?" Xenifra motioned her arm out towards the halls.

"Only one way to find out..." Teh replied as she rose from her seat and headed towards the first set of documents.

"Okay, the second clue you read, can you re-read it?" Teh asked as she leaned down to read a description plate.

"Of this immortal, no one claimed possession."

Teh shivered as Xenifra's voice seemed to be right at her ear but looking down and behind her, she could not see her on either side.

"Of this immortal...what do you think that means?" Teh asked.

"God or Goddess is what lore defined as the immortals."

"Okay, so this God or Goddess...no one claimed possession...claimed possession, hmmm. Possession as in owned you think?"

"No, I do not think they meant as in owned. Claimed possession, as one could not own a God but could call a God their own; such as the Greeks calling Zeus or Hera or any other deity their God."

"That's true and it fits, so this God or Goddess did not belong to a particular culture. Well Helios belonged to the Greeks so he's out and Aristotle was a Greek philosopher so he's out."

"He also was not a God"

"That's right, so he's definitely out" Teh agreed, "So it can't be the Mesopotamian King because he wasn't a God either so it only leaves the Script of Hequit."

"Shall we revisit that location again then?"

As they walked towards the script, Teh felt she needed to ask Xenifra a question that was in the back of her mind "Why did you pick us up?"

"Basic need of human nature and curiosity" Xenifra said succinctly.

"Curiosity? Of what?"

"Not of what Miss D'Olympia but of whom?"

"Tabitha? But you said she turned you off with her drinking?!"

"Yes indeed Miss D'Olympia, she did."

As Xenifra did not expand on this reply, it confused Teh to the point of furrowing her brow and once again biting the outside corner of her lower lip, as she had not answered her question.

They walked in disconcerting silence though the other quests were all talking in seeking an answer to their clues.

"Here we are; the script" Xenifra stated, "and the third clue states 'Of the lesser of the two was their species'"

"Species...well we are talking about humans, immortal ones but human nonetheless. So lesser species in humans ...of the two...male and female...it's often said woman is the less of the two, so I guess we were right in it being Hequit's parchment and here's the cipher."

What they both saw taped on the glass display was a sheet of paper with large font letters "PHWDQRLD."

"Oh" Teh looked at the paper and the sound escaped her from having no idea what to do.

"For every cipher there is a key, we need only find the key to crack the code" Xenifra stated.

"Look, there's small print on the paper..." Teh pointed and stepped closer "The original cipher code was invented by this salad." Teh shook her head, "A curator's bad sense of humor."

"Or another clue to the answer we seek; a salad can not invent things correct?"

"Of course not!"

"But what if a salad was named after someone who invented it?"

"What?" Teh looked at her like she'd just lost her mind.

"Example, Cobb salad, Chef's salad..."

"Oooh, I get it now. But there are so many."

"Let us list only famous or important salads of renown"

"Okay, Cobb, Chef, Chicken..."

"Pardon me Miss D'Olympia, but should we not concentrate on those with names versus type?"

"Okay, well then there's Waldorf, Olivier, Nicoise, Pazanella, Louise, Cobb, and Caesar."

Xenifra looked at Teh and cocked her head just a bit that it gave Teh pause and a sudden embarrassed flush, "I, um...I like to eat healthy so I know about salads...Okay, Waldorf is a building and it was created by a chef so that never created a cipher, Olivier by a Russian chef and Nicoise named after the city in France Nice also did not invent any cipher that I am aware of, Louise well, he was the self absorbed King or the chef in Washington , Cobb by Bob Cobb at the Brown Derby and Caes..."

"Caesar" Xenifra interrupted Teh.

"Yeah but not by Julius Caes..."

"Caesar's substitution cipher, it has been in use since Ancient Rome. Julius Caesar invented a very simple yet efficient cipher that served him well" Xenifra took a pen from within her coat pocket and began writing on the paper, "Caesar's cipher was three places removed down the alphabet in position, thus A would become D, B would become E."

Teh watched as Xenifra wrote the Alphabet in very elegant precise script then under it, the same three placed moved.

"So, taking the clue PHWDQRLD, we transpose the letter to those of the cipher and it becomes METANOIA" Xenifra froze.

"Metanoia? I've never heard of that word" Teh looked up from the writing to Xenifra's profile.

Xenifra was stark still and not breathing.

"Ms. General? Ms General, are you alright?" Teh placed a hand on Xenifra's forearm bringing her around to the moment.

"Yes, thank you. It is Greek for change of heart."

"Oh, you...you know Greek?"

"Yes."

"Well, we've solved this cipher. Let's head back and see if we've at least managed not to come in last" Teh joked.

Xenifra turned and motioned for Teh to precede her, then took once last glance at Hequit's script *'What is it you seek of me now Hecate?'* she said in an inaudible whisper.

"Ladies and Gentlemen, may I ask you please make your way back to your tables?" the curator requested over the announcement system.

After all the guests were seated he began, "Thank you Ladies and Gentlemen for this evening. As this event was to raise donations for renovations on the hall of lesser renown, I'd like to thank

each of you for your kind donations in purchasing tickets for this charity. It is with great pleasure that I announce tickets for this evening's event raised Ninety Thousand dollars." The guests applauded.

"And donations by several generous companies have raised that total to One Hundred Fifty Thousand!"

Another round of applause was given.

"That will truly help cover the costs of renovating the hall and maybe a little on the side for future works. Now I'd like to turn this over to the director of Eloquence Marketing, Mrs. Brigle, to announce the winners. Mrs. Brigle has kindly donated two all expense paid voucher for two to the exclusive Intuition Resort."

The curator stepped away from the podium and applauded with the other guests as a middle aged lady dressed conservatively approached.

"Thank you Curator D'Everoux and thank you guest; I know it is late so I'll only take a moment of your time. Eloquence Marketing is its name sake, we market everything with Eloquence and we look forward to working with all companies, big or small, with the same drive and desire to achieve that you require of an outcome. So thank you for this opportunity to address you this evening. The concept for this evening's entertainment was created by one of our team members, Mr. David Mex. Thank you David for a job well done."

She and the guests applauded a young man standing by a column as he gave a slight wave and stepped back.

"And now, the winners in tonight's hunt; having worked out all the clues and ciphers correctly; the set of number 17, Ms. D'Olympia and Ms. General"

"Way to go pumpkin!" Teh's father said proudly as Teh rose and walked towards the podium for her voucher.

"Ms. General has kindly donated her prize to be given to a randomly selected couple out of the community and has offered airfare for the couple as well."

The audience applauded as Teh did a double take at hearing of Xenifra's decision as well as looking around for her. Xenifra's table looked about for her as well, but both seats were empty as she had already gone for the evening.

Teh received her voucher and made her way back to her table, "Thank you" Mrs. Brigle announced and allowed the curator to return to the podium.

"Well Ladies and Gentlemen that concludes this evening. I hope you all had a pleasant evening and thank you once again for your kind donations. Good evening to you all" the curator stepped

back from the podium and applauded the audience as they did in return and everyone began rising to leave.

"Way to go honey, so you and Ms. General figured it out huh? I got stuck with Miller Tovington, man couldn't find a clue if I bought it for him!"

Teh laughed, "Sorry Daddy. Yeah, she's a very intelligent woman. Just very quiet, not one for much talking and it was weird; she just took off like that."

"Well, she could probably buy Eloquence Marketing ten times over honey and she can go wherever she pleases. I wouldn't expect anything less of her really."

"Oh well, I guess you're right."

"So who are you going to take with you? Your friend Tabitha?"

"Oh no, no way! She has got to learn some things about me and proper etiquette before I take her anywhere."

"Oh? Something wrong?"

"No, just morals...nothing you have to worry about Daddy." She reassuringly said while patting his arm.

"Alright honey. Come on, let's go home. This old man of yours is tired and I've got tee off at 6 a.m. with the boys."

Xenifra's body was flushed warm having been thoroughly sated; she un-wrapped the arms of her companion from around her waist as she rolled up and out of the bed. Taking one last glance at the mark on her bed mate's shoulder, she slipped her black silk robe over her vigorous body and exited the room. Walking to one of the windows overlooking the city lights below; she stood in her living room.

"Mistress?" Philippe questioned.

"Tea please Philippe, I would very much enjoy a cup of tea."

"Yes Mistress" he bowed and immediately set upon making one for her.

He returned, placing the tea set on the table as he knew she would take it when she wanted. He had grown concerned that his mistress would seem so melancholy when she would have company.

"Thank you Philippe, rest now."

"Yes Mistress, Good night."

Xenifra stood with her hands crossed behind her back casually but with no movement whatsoever.

Finally, she spoke in a whisper "Millennia have passed, but words have not lost their sting my Goddess."

"Will you not have metanoia?"

"No little one, you are who I want my little serf"

"But I am nothing my Kurios (lord/master); I am your slave."

"You are everything, to me. I will not have metanoia; I seek Pharaoh's permission at Apollo's Chariot's rise. No one will touch you as you are mine and I will not take what we will freely give each other once we wed."

"But Archelaos (master of the people), you can have anyone you wish or desire. Anyone of great standing, you are the Pharaoh's Chosen."

"And I have the right to choose who I wish, that is you Rielle" the warrior replied.

The little serf had started serving as a child while they grew together, one in the father's shadow as he served as Centurion for the Pharaoh, the other indentured.

The soldier had earned the position not by name but strength of blade, by fortitude and tenacity. Having had followed on the heels of the father as he ordered his group about, wearing a small wooden sword and mimicking the sword swings of the others. When older, being allowed to train with the soldiers.

As the child's mother had died in childbirth, the father had kept them with him when he traveled. One listening and learning battle strategies, practicing and becoming proficient in most weaponry. The other keeping watch over their household as expected.

The men, who at first smiled at the child, were later very impressed with the skill and knowledge displayed by the youth. It was during a fierce battle, when the Centurion was injured, that the youth became the leader by holding the group together and urging them into battle until reinforcements could arrive.

News spread quickly of the 'little general'; a moniker the men had called the child turned leader that stuck in the field.

The legion commander heard of the little general and began watching, observing the leadership and qualities shown while in charge of the centurion's group while he recovered.

Being very impressed, he offered the title of Tribunus to the young soldier.

At such a young age of only 20 summers, many were hesitant to serve for such a young Tribunus whilst others ridiculed those who did for following.

But seasons of battle changed their opinions when the young leader's group would emerge victorious and with the least amount of casualties battle after battle.

By the 25th summer, the young leader was made Praefectus Castorum, a position which made many enemies.

Xenifra closed her eyes and sighed sadly.

The next day Teh wanted nothing more than to relax and unwind without any drama arising in her day, but it was not to happen.

"No Tab, I am not interested in going out with you to a meat market to lose what you call 'my cherry'" Teh said irritatedly into the phone.

"Because one, that is not the way I choose to bestow upon someone the one thing I can only give once. Two, I don't want a repeat of you getting totally smashed and acting like some street walker and three, I don't feel like having to be paraded like some prized heifer to the highest bidder! So if you want that, you go right ahead" she ran a hand through her hair frustratingly.

"I am not stuck up! And I am not a nerd who lives inside a fantasy world of the ancients! I just don't want to sleep around with drunks who can't remember by name!" she sighed exasperatedly.
"Fine Tab, you do that. Go enjoy yourself. Good bye."

Teh hung up the phone and dropped herself into the lounge chair in her living room looking up towards the ceiling.

Though she lived with her father she had her own private section of the house. It had its own entry, kitchen, living room and two bedrooms with bath.

"Ugh, she just has no concept of self respect" she said out loud.

A knock on her door brought her out of her reflective mood, "Coming" she hollered as she got up.

"Hey pumpkin" her father gave her a kiss on the cheek as he entered.

"Hi Daddy, what are you up to?" she closed the door behind him.

"Well, I came to grovel a bit" turning he faced her.

"Uh oh, what have you done Daddy?"

"Weeeellll...."

Putting her fist on her hips, "Daddy!" she dragged the word out as one eyebrow rose up.

"Can we sit for a min?" he motioned towards the lounge seat.

"Oh no, this is going to be bad, isn't it?"

"No, well...not bad..."

"Oh boy"

"Well, I kinda sorta set you up on a date"

"YOU WHAT?!" Teh jumped up from the seat.

"I did say kinda sorta..."

"Daddy!"

"Well, it was an accident. See, I've been talking with this attorney lady who happens to be very attractive..."

"Yeah" Teh drawled out.

"Well, we've been talking about issues with regards to new laws on restructuring of intellectual boundaries for a few months and she has this fascinating view on interpreting..."

"Daddy, stay on point here"

"Oh yeah, um well we were talking, it was about a month ago, just after the charity event and she mentioned a new restaurant. Well, I kinda asked her for lunch one day and she said no to that..."

"Sorry to hear that Daddy but..."

"No, it was not a brush off but because she was overloaded with work, so instead she asked me out for dinner. I said yes, but she called to apologize as her daughter is in town and asked if I would mind a tag along. I joked about her having a chaperone and asked if that was the case could I bring one too. I told her about you..." he hemmed nervously.

"Uh huh, I'm listening"

"Well that, you know, you being a lesbian and all and if it would be okay, so as not to offend anyone. She laughed because her daughter is a lesbian also who is single."

"Oh Daddy, NO!"

"What?"

"You set me up on a blind date!"

"N...no....um....yeah?"

"Oh Daddy, how could you?!"

"Well, I didn't intentionally, it was because she was bringing her daughter and it would've made me feel like a third wheel or being chaperoned like I was a kid. And why can't I have my beautiful, intelligent daughter there too?"

"Suck up!"

"Yes, but I thought I did that smoothly?"

Teh sighed and rubbed her forehead, "When?"

"Tomorrow night, 7 p.m. You don't have any plans, do you?"

"No, it just so happens I don't"

"Would you mind....puhhlleassee?" he asked while clasping his hands in prayer.

"Fine, fine. Just don't do that puppy dog look thing, its dirty playing."

"Great," he gave her a quick hug and kiss on the cheek "I'll swing by and pick you up"

"Yeah, yeah, get out of here. Now I have to figure out what to wear on this chaperoned blind date. Is it formal?"

"It's just under formal, so I guess jacket for me and dress like for you" he said impishly.

"OUT!" she growled jokingly to his scurrying but laughing retreat.

~***~

"Well this is definitely a very ornate restaurant" an elegantly dressed lady of middle age stated.

"Yes it is. I wonder who the owners are. This is new and has been on a few of the associates lips as a fabulous place" Mr. D'Olympia replied.

"Thank you for joining us on such a short notice Ms. D'Olympia" the lady said to Teh.

"Oh no bother at all Mrs. Tresledge, and please, it's Teh"

"Thank you Teh, and it's Vicky," she smiled "I wonder where that day late daughter of mine is, always this way I tell you" she looked at her watch again, "she said she'd be here right on time."

"I'm sure she'll be here soon, shall we order some drinks?" Frank asked.

"Yes Daddy, can you order a Zinfandel for me please?"

He nodded and addressed the waiter with their drinks order.

"So, we recently attended that charity event at the museum..." Frank began.

"Oh, I heard about that, how did it go?" Vicky questioned.

"Excellent, they raised over One Hundred Fifty Thousand and Teh here won the prize of the night"

"Prize?" Vicky asked.

"Yes, the entertainment for the evening was a game of deciphering clues after we were matched up with an unknown guest by a number randomly selected and assigned. You were to figure out these clues which led you to an artifact or relic. There you deciphered a code and if you were the first ones back with the correct answer, you won" Teh explained.

"What sort of clues?" Vicky asked as the drinks were brought to their table.

"It was mostly about ancient history, Gods and artifacts"

"Sounds like a history mind bender, of which I have no knowledge" Vicky said after taking a sip of her wine, "What was your prize?"

"An all expense paid voucher for two to the Intuition Resort."

"Oh that is marvelous; that is so exclusive and fabulous I've heard" Vicky replied enthusiastically, "have you decided who you are going to take with you?"

"No, I'm not in a rush to use it just yet."

"She figured out a couple of the clues" Frank said proudly.

"So who was your partner? Or did you do most of the work?" Vicky looked at her watch again.

"No, I was very lucky as my partner actually knew a great deal more of the history of the ancients than I did; which says a lot as I majored in it" Teh sipped her wine, "It was a learning experience to say the least."

"Ah, as a matter of fact, it looks like your partner just happens to be walking this way" Frank said to his daughter.

Teh turned around to see Xenifra walking around, stopping and speaking with people as she did.

Vicky looked up to see a strikingly tall and beautiful woman converse with guests of the restaurant as she strode around; eventually making her way to their table.

"Mr. and Ms D'Olympia, pleasure to see you again" Xenifra stated as she shook a now standing Frank's hand and then gently took Teh's in both of hers in an unconscious gesture.

"Ms. General, what a pleasure to see you again. May I introduce Mrs. Tresledge, my other date for this evening?" Frank motioned towards Vicky.

"A pleasure to make your acquaintance Mrs. Tresledge" Xenifra took her dainty hand and released it.

"Likewise Ms. General, we were just discussing your partnership with Teh."

Xenifra turned towards Teh and inclined her head slightly.

"Um, she is speaking of the Charity event last month, for the museum" Teh said shyly.

"Yes, I was fortunate enough to have the talents of this young lady in solving riddles and clues. It is not often that I come across someone with knowledge and interests in Ancient mythology and lore that equal my own."

"Do you have interest in that field Ms. General?" Vicky asked.

"Yes, a hobby, a collector of antiquities myself, I often immerse myself in history and lore."

"Do you collect Ms. General?" this time Teh asked, surprised at this revelation.

"Yes, I have my own private collection. If you would care to peruse it one day, I would be honored to show you."

"Oh yes! Thank you" Teh said eagerly.

Just then Xenifra stood up tensely, her senses alerting her of an unknown's presence...a danger of sorts.

"So, are you here dining also Ms. General?" Frank asked unaware of Xenifra's actions.

Not seeing anything in the immediate area, Xenifra replied "No, it so happens this is another of my ventures" she motioned around the restaurant whilst keeping an alert eye.

"The Pantheon is *YOUR* restaurant?" he asked.

Xenifra's hackles rose, she could sense an intruder. She extended her sense and determined it was not highly warranted but subtle so she relaxed, somewhat.

It had been decades since her senses alerted her as there had not been any intruders or danger to warrant her concern. But still, she remained alert. An intruder was nevertheless an intruder.

"My apologies, Mr. D'Olympia I did not mean to disregard you."

"No, no. That's quite alright. It's a new restaurant and I'm sure you are busy with ensuring everything runs smoothly."

Just then, a woman entered and made the stride toward their table.

She was young, of Teh's approximate age and she stood almost the same height as Teh but had dark onyx eyes and dark brown black hair cropped short and spiked with gel tonight. She wore dress slacks with closed heeled shoes, a blood red silk blouse with a white scarf draped over the shoulder.

She was average looking but had a noticeable flush to her skin and carried herself with a slight swagger, almost an air of cockiness.

Xenifra concluded this woman was the reason that caused her alarm and her nostrils flared unnoticeably.

"Ah here she is finally" Vicky stated looking up at the young woman approaching.

Frank turned as the woman approached the table.

"Mother" the woman bent and gave her a kiss on the cheek.

"Late as usual Madeline" Vicky said with a bit of reproach.

"Sorry Mother, I was...held up" she said while casually using her right index finger to wipe at the left corner of her mouth in a gesture she thought would make her look more nervous of being late than of hiding the truth in plain sight.

For in truth, Madeline had indeed been held up. She had walked to the restaurant from her hotel and had taken a shortcut through the park where her assailant now sat propped up against a tree, dead.

"Frank, Teh and Ms. General, this is my late daughter Madeline; and your blind date Teh"

Xenifra stiffened.

Madeline laughed at the choice of words her mother had used to introduce her for reasons very differently than what everyone else thought.

"My apologies for the late arrival, it is nice to meet you" Madeline looked to them, unbeknownst of who in the group was looking back.

Frank motioned to the empty chair for Madeline to sit. Madeline took no time in assessing that there were only four chairs but five people.

"I shall leave you to enjoy your evening" Xenifra said not displaying her displeasure of the announcement regarding Teh's blind date.

"Pleasure to meet you Ms. General" Vicky said.

"Nice seeing you again" Frank replied.

"Thank you again for the invitation, Ms. General. I'll take you up on that offer soon" Teh said looking up from her seat.

"I look forward to it, Good night" Xenifra gave Teh a genuine smile and then one last look towards Madeline that caused Madeline to blink twice in consternation. But before Madeline could blink a third time, Xenifra was gone.

"Did I interrupt anything?" Madeline asked as she placed her drink order and placed her napkin across her lap.

"No, we were just discussing this restaurant that we only just found out Ms. General owns" Frank answered taking a drink of his wine.

"Oh, is that right? Seems like a nice place" she said looking about.

"Yes, it's all the latest anyone talks about Maddy," Vicky said to her daughter "So how was your trip?"

She shrugged, "Airlines, luggage, hotels...what more can one say?"

"So how long will you be in town this time?" Vicky continued.

"Oh depends..." she looked at Teh, eyeing her up and down.

"So you don't have to rush off?" Vicky said totally unaware of the way her daughter was looking at Teh.

"No" Madeline turned back towards her mother once Teh had blushed a bit.

"So, what is it you do for a living?" Frank asked.

Madeline smiled a somewhat predatorily evil smile, laughing inside at the word usage going on this evening. "I am a consultant for a marketing firm. I go where they send me and give them insight and ideas on how to get clients that they can then market for."

"So you market for the marketing firms?" Teh asked.

"Yes, in a way. How very astute" Madeline smiled.

They talked over various topics throughout their meal.

"That was delicious" Vicky commented.

"Yes, it was" Teh agreed.

"Would there be anything else this evening?" the waiter inquired.

"No, we are done here. Thank you" Frank spoke for the group.

A moment later the Maître'D came to their table; "Your bill has been taken care of."

"By who?" Frank asked as he was reaching inside his jacket pocket for his wallet.

"Ms. General wished to thank you for coming to the restaurant" he replied.

"Will you tell her thank you?" Teh looked about the restaurant trying to find the elusive woman but could not see her anywhere.

"I shall pass it along Miss" he gave a curt nod and went back to his station.

"Well, that was very...magnanimous...wouldn't you say?" Madeline said with an air of snobbishness of one used to those sorts of things done for them all the time.

Teh looked at her sharply.

"I think it was a kind gesture. She often does things like that for others" Frank said having not picked up on Madeline's tone.

"Well Frank, how about you and I go for a walk and coffee. I'm sure these two young children of ours can find some way to entertain themselves" Vicky asked as she rose from her seat getting Frank to scramble to help pull her chair out.

"Yes definitely" he gave Teh a pleading look.

Teh smiled warmly at him, "You two have fun Daddy."

He gave her a kiss on the cheek and whispered, "Thanks pumpkin, you're the best," before standing "you two behave."

They watched as their parents left them, in silence.

"Well, that was one way of dumping us. Very subtle, my mother is" Madeline commented.

"You don't need to feel obligated to extend me an invitation for coffee" Teh said politely.

"No, no. Actually, I would greatly enjoy talking with you over a coffee...that is if you would agree?"

"Well, coffee it is then" Teh rose and was surprised when Madeline helped pull her chair out.

They made their way to a little café and sat outside watching the rest of the evening revelers go by.

"Do you enjoy your line of work?" Teh asked breaking the silence as she stirred her coffee.

"It is a means to an end."

"You sound as if you don't enjoy it"

"I enjoy aspects of it. I travel, see different parts of the world, meet interesting and beautiful women" she eyed Teh again.

"But the job itself?" Teh ignored the look, attempting to hide the blush and be sociable.

"It has its moments."

"Don't you find it dangerous traveling alone to different and foreign places?" Teh asked while sipping her coffee.

"Oh, I have no fear of that. I can take care of myself," she said with a predatory smile, "in fact, my bite is worse than my bark" she licked her lips and gave a small chuckle.

Teh turned her eyes towards the street, looking at the people going by.

"I was wondering if you would care to join me to possibly see one of the museums we spoke of this evening and an early meal tomorrow?" Madeline asked Teh, catching her off guard from the change in subject.

"O..okay" Teh said, she could never really turn down an opportunity to see a museum and talk a willing person's ear off.

"Great, how about I pick you up, say...around 1pm? We can go to the museum first and then have dinner."

"Alright, that sounds fine" Teh said, rising from her seat after giving her address and phone number to Madeline.

"Do you need a lift home?" Madeline asked as she got up also.

"No, that's okay. I'm just going to hail one of those taxis."

"Well, let me" Madeline walked to the curb and held out her arm, summoning a cab to a halt.

"Thank you for the coffee" Teh said as Madeline opened the door for her.

"The pleasure was all mine Teh" she took hold of the hand Teh held out to her, and staring deeply into Teh's eyes for a few moments she leaned in and at the last second changed direction, kissing a momentarily stunned Teh's hand; inhaling her scent as she did "Until tomorrow" she said, her voice pulling Teh out of her trance.

Teh shook her head, "Um, yeah um...Good night"

Madeline watched the taxi drive off, unaware of the eyes that watched her.

The next morning; "Hey there pumpkin, how'd ya fare up?"

"Okay Daddy, we had coffee and sat, talked a bit. How about you?"

"Great, we walked along the lake, sat and had coffee, then walked some more"

"Uh huh...that's all?"

"She let me hold her hand...I was perfect gentleman."

"So when are you seeing her again?"

"Tuesday, she's prepping for a big case tonight for Monday morning. How about you?"

"Well, she asked me to dinner after we take in a museum" she said blandly.

"Hey, that's great sweetie"

"Eh, I guess"

"What?" he asked with a bit of concern, "You alright? Do you not want that?"

"She just...I don't know," Teh said with an edge of confusion "she just doesn't make me feel...comfortable. Almost a weird feeling around her"

"Well baby, if you don't feel comfortable, don't go. I'll not have you feeling obligated to keep her company cause you think it will make things easier for her mom and me."

"No Daddy, its okay. Maybe it's cause I don't know her; that's all. I'll be fine"

"Only if you're sure honey"

"Yeah Daddy, I'll be fine. Well I'm going to run a few errands and be back later. She'll be stopping by to pick me up for the museum around 1 p.m. See ya later Daddy" Teh kissed her father's head and left.

Teh was just putting on her jacket when she heard a car pull up along the circular driveway.

Stepping out of the house, she locked the door behind her as Madeline opened her car door and stood, leaning an arm on the roof of the car "Hey there, you ready to go?"

"Yep, let's go" Teh said as she got in the car, buckling herself in she noticed a sticker on the dashboard of the sleek BMW convertible that it was a rental.

"You look nice" Madeline complimented while she drove into the city.

"Thank you"

"So, any preference to which museum?"

"Well, do you have a particular genre you'd like to see? There's the Arts Museum, then my favorite the Antiquities Museum and then..."

"Well, let's do your favorite; at least one of us will know what the things are then, eh?"

"Okay, let's"

The short drive was done in sporadic silence as Teh really couldn't find a subject she wanted to discuss.

"So this statute here is depicting Zeus defeating Chronos in the Titanomachy" Teh spoke with a passion of the arts as they walked amongst them in the museum.

"Do you think any of this is true? That any of these *GODS* existed and wasn't some escape of reality some poor peasant made up to blame his life's misery upon?" Madeline asked skeptically.

"No, I believe they existed and they guided the people in the manner befitting their time"

"Hmm, interesting" Madeline commented as she walked along some relics.

"Do you not believe they existed?" Teh asked from where she still stood in front of the statue.

"Yes and no," Madeline turned to answer looking about the hall, "I believe a few were real enough, possibly, but that some were out of someone's creative imagination."

"How can you only believe in a few being real?"

"Just my hard fast belief that one or two could have been vs. the rest. Say, it's close to closing time, how about that dinner?" Madeline staved off any remark Teh could have replied with.

"Yeah, sure"

"Great, there's a little bistro that used to be about ten minutes from here when I last visited, sound okay to you?"

Teh nodded.

Madeline led them back to the car and they drove in silence yet again.

"So, thanks for joining me today. It's nice to have the company of a beautiful intelligent woman for a change" Madeline complimented as they looked over the menu.

"Um, you're welcome" a mildly embarrassed Teh replied.

"It's true, you are very attractive Teh and very knowledgeable. I was very pleased that you accepted my invitation."

"Well, I must be honest; I take any opportunity offered to go to the museum."

"And here I thought some part of the acceptance was to be in my company" Madeline said as she feigned a hurt expression.

"Oh no, I didn't mean it like that" Teh put a hand up in halting supplication.

Madeline laughed, "Only kidding Teh, I understand what you meant"

A slightly embarrassed Teh gave a small self deprecating smile and chuckle, "So, do you not meet attractive intelligent women in your travels?"

"Yes and no; attractive but airheads or average and Einstein, the ones with both are for the most part married or straight. Those that I've met that aren't, usually aren't around for a second date..."

"...due to your travels" Teh finished for her unaware that it was not the reason but Madeline did not correct her.

They placed their orders and talked a bit more of the museum and other things.

"Do you get to see your mother often?"

"When my travels bring me close to home and I have time in between, how about you? Your father seems nice; your mom must be upset that he's seeing my mother."

"Um, no. She's dead."

"Oh Teh, I'm sorry, I didn't ..."

"Know; its okay. She died when I was a baby so it's history" Teh finished for her.

"Your father never remarried?"

"No, business and taking care of me was enough. He's got a lot more time now though."

"Lucky for me, otherwise I'd never be with you tonight."

'Whoa, what did she just say?!' Teh thought to herself.

Their food was finished in light conversation that Teh actually enjoyed.

"Care for a walk?" Madeline asked.

"I..."

"Just a small stroll, not long I promise" Madeline insisted seeing Teh's hesitancy.

"Okay, small stroll, then back as I have to prep for work tomorrow."

"Promise" Madeline said while mimicking an X mark over her heart for sincerity.

They walked along the boutique shops and cafés, stopping once or twice to admire an item in a store front display.

At one stop, Madeline stood to Teh's side, "You have a lovely scent about you, what perfume do you wear?"

Teh nearly jumped out of her skin and blinked at the closeness, "Uh...I ...sorry um, I'm not wearing any" she said as she moved a few step away.

"Hmm, perhaps your shampoo or clothes" Madeline said turning away, "Well, lets get you back eh?"

Teh nodded and they headed back.

Driving up Teh's circular driveway Madeline parked and exited the car escorting her up to the door, "Thank you once again for today. Maybe we could do another lunch or dinner?"

"Sure"

"Great," Madeline stepped closer taking Teh's hand, "It has been a great evening Teh," she looked deeply into Teh's eyes with her onyx ones, sending Teh into another slight trance.

Leaning into Teh, Madeline inhaled deeply "...you smell sweetly divine Teh, something I mean to sample..."

The rustling of a bush caused Madeline to stop her lean in and to look over her shoulder; turning back to Teh she placed a kiss to Teh's cheek instead.

Madeline spoke again while still holding onto Teh's hand and then took a step back, "Well, thank you for the evening's company" releasing her hand, Teh's trance was broken.

"Um, yeah...sorry...phased out there for a second, must be tired. I'll um, catch you later. Good night" Teh said entering into her home and closing the door behind her.

Madeline turned and walked to her car and stopped. She looked out into the night and lifted her head a bit to sniff the air for a moment, and then shrugging her shoulder as if dismissing the thought she got into her car and then drove away.

As the car turned out into the street, a shadowed figure stepped out from behind the bush, looked from the retreating car to the house and then, faster than human eyes could track, took off in a blur into the city.

~***~

A few days later.

"Ms. General?"

"Yes Barbara" Xenifra answered the voice on the intercom in her office.

"There is a Ms. D'Olympia on line two. Do you wish me to take a message?"

"No Barbara, put her through please."

"Yes Ms. General" she replied.

"Hello Ms. D'Olympia, to what do I owe this pleasure?"

"Hello Ms. General and please, can we move past the Ms. D'Olympia? Could you call me Teh?"

"Shall we come to a compromise Ms. D'Olympia? Allow me to call you Khateh and only if you would call me Xenifra."

"Okay, deal."

"Well then Khateh, how can I be of assistance?"

Teh shivered at Xenifra's use of her name.

"Well, I've called to accept your invitation. Do you remember?"

"Of course, how could I forget?"

"Great, when would be a good day and time for you?"

"Whenever you desire, I can clear my schedule if the need arises."

"Would today be too presumptuous?"

"No, not at all, in fact, would you consider favoring me with some of your time for dinner afterwards?"

"Are you sure? I don't want to be an inconvenience."

"Never Khateh, it would be an honor."

"Why is it this woman causes me to shiver just by her saying my name?" Teh thought, "Then I would be delighted ...what time would you prefer me to come over?"

Xenifra didn't hesitate, "Are you occupied with the rest of your day?"

"Um no, I just finished. Why?"

"I will have my driver pick you up then, would that be suitable to you?"

"Yes, that would be great."

"Excellent, I shall see you soon."

"Okay, see you then, bye."

Xenifra hung up the phone; "Barbara, I am taking leave for the rest of the day" she spoke into the intercom.

"Yes Ms. General. I'll see to everything. Good Day."

"Thank you Barbara, Good Day."

Teh was waiting at the driveway of her home as the limousine pulled up. She got in after the driver opened the door for her and settled back for the ride; unaware of the BMW that began following them.

When the limo dropped her off at the marbled building, the BMW parked further up the road and the driver sat, waiting in the darkness.

"Good evening Miss."

"Hello again Philippe...it is Philippe isn't it?" Teh asked as she was greeted at the foyer again by the elder gentleman.

"Yes Miss. The Mistress will be with you momentarily. Would you care for anything?"

"A very large glass of water would be great Philippe, if you wouldn't mind?"

"At once Miss" he bowed and exited the room.

Teh walked over to the windows and looked out into the dusk skyline, "Stunning" she whispered to herself.

"Yes indeed" she felt whispered into her ear which sent shivers up and down her spine but she knew Xenifra would not be standing there.

Slowly she turned to see Xenifra closer than before yet still a few paces away, wondering yet again to what Xenifra alluded to.

"Good evening Khateh" Xenifra gave a slight nod, her long coat swinging with her movement.

Teh shivered as Xenifra's voice caressed her, "Hello Xenifra, thank you once again for this. I really appreciate you allowing me to see your collection."

"The pleasure is mine. It is very rare that I am afforded the opportunity to share history with one who seems so...passionate for it."

Teh realized Philippe had placed her water on a tray on the table by the steps down to the sunken seating area. Taking several long drinks before speaking again Teh felt it easier to speak, "I guess my mother's infatuation was transferred to me."

"A fabulous trait to inherit" Xenifra replied, "would you care to see them now?" she motioned with a sweep of her arm toward the opposite corridor from the bedrooms.

"Lead on" Teh said excitedly.

Xenifra led her down the corridor and turned at the end to a short hallway, there she opened a set of wooden double doors that led into a massive study.

The fire place was ablaze and replete with mantelpiece and a neat stocked pile of cords of wood.

Above the mantelpiece was a painting of a hieroglyph, a unique design that caused Teh to wonder at its origin and meaning.

Off to one side was a floor to ceiling showcase, displaying books and small artifacts that Teh knew from a momentary glance contained items of immeasurable value.

In the center of the room, facing the fireplace were two high wingback chairs with a small table between them and a beautiful rug just in front.

Teh took this all in, completely in awe of the simplicity yet thought out usefulness of everything in the room.

"Oh Xenifra, I could practically live in this room!" Teh said as she brushed her hands over the spines of some of the volumes of books in awe and looked back at the showcase; torn between deciding which one to go to first.

"If you so wished it."

Teh turned in amazement at the elusive woman's reply; surprised that she would so easily open up her home to Teh.

"This showcase holds a few of the items I have the pleasure of being caretaker for. The rarer items, except for a few, are on loan at a few museums."

"These seem to range over several cultures and times" Teh noticed.

"Yes, there are various antiquities."

"Would you mind telling me of a few of them? I don't want to monopolize your time but I am not familiar with them."

"It would be my pleasure Khateh, and you may ask anything you wish for."

Teh wondered at the pleasurable shiver she felt every time Xenifra's voice almost purred her name and the mental images the offer conjured.

Stepping further into the study and over to the showcase Xenifra began at one end, "Here is the Sword of Damocles."

Teh looked at the sword then to Xenifra then to the sword and back again to Xenifra with utter disbelief, "Oh funny, almost had me there on that one" she chuckled thinking it a joke.

Xenifra's face remained one of absolute seriousness.

"You're not joking, are you?" Teh asked with her brows furrowed.

"No Khateh, I do not jest about artifacts of history."

"I'm sorry, I didn't mean ..."

"It is a shock, I am sure, to actually see items that have always been thought of as myth, would you not say?" Xenifra asked, interrupting Teh's apology but not condemning her for the misunderstanding, merely helping her in an excuse for it.

"Yes, yes it is..." Teh agreed, acknowledging Xenifra's understanding way, "Thank you."

A nod and a small smile was her only reply.

"How are you assured these items are what you claim they are? I mean, I hope you weren't misled into purchasing an old roman's sword or such" Teh asked sincerely.

"Have you ever heard of the cloth of Christ?" Xenifra asked.

At the question, Teh's brows burrowed in confusion.

"The Shroud of Turin?" Xenifra continued.

"Yes, it was thought to be the burial shroud of Jesus Christ, but was debunked."

"Correct; scientists used Carbon 14 testing though some skeptics still say it is not accurate. These have been tested and certified by location, age and then there are the markings and writings on them as well as those that have been transcribed."

"Very efficient and thorough but still, it is hard to fathom that this is thee sword" Teh said pointing at the item behind the glass display.

"Undoubtedly true; this is why some of the collection is here instead of on display. For the very same notion your reaction would be that of the general public."

"That is businesslike to keep the ones not to be believed in safe keeping."

"Just assuring items are placed where more readily accepted."

"So what other amazing items are there?" Teh looked over to the right of the sword and pointed, "What's the story of those links of chains?"

"Prometheus."

"Thee chains that bound Prometheus to the mountain in the Caucasus?" Teh asked incredulously.

"Some of the links, the entire chain is lost now to thieves and vandals who sold off links and some to be smelted into use as armor or weaponry during the wars as they knew Hephaestus made it."

"Shame."

Xenifra walked quietly to the last section of the showcase and slid back a cover where there sat a keypad. Entering a series of codes, a panel slid back to the side on the showcase and a glass encased drawer rose up from the bottom.

Teh saw Xenifra from the corner of her eyes and quietly watched; when the enclosed case came to a stop she walked over.

"This is my most guarded entrustment. This leather bound journal with raised impressed relief is about your namesake Khateh and lore has it, belonged to her."

Teh blinked slowly, taking in what Xenifra had said and looking from the journal to Xenifra.

"How much do you know of the Goddess?" Xenifra asked looking from the journal to Teh's face.

"Anything and everything I could get my hands on, I read" Teh answered.

"So, you know of her temple and sanctuary in Lagina?"

Teh nodded.

"She was not the three faced Goddess depicted by many. She was singularly beautiful and many warriors pledged themselves to her over Ares simply for her natural beauty. She chose her champion to be of an unknown warrior..." Xenifra looked up and over into the fireplace, as if recalling a memory.

"Ah, my precious warrior princess, you have a spirit in you unseen throughout the ages"

"Goddess, I am your humble servant. I ask you to be my Patron..." laying a sword at the Goddess's feet, "I swear fealty to you Hecate, great Goddess, I am yours to do as you please"

"For one so young you have impressed many; but also made enemies of others. I shall not pass judgment on your request yet young warrior princess..." as the Goddess began to de-materialize, "...but I shall be watching."

"She eventually accepted her champion after a series of tests. The warrior protected her temples, fought battles in her name and professed her strength as a deity."

"How do you know this?" Teh asked still looking at the journal.

"Entries made in here" Xenifra tapped the glass case where the journal was stored, "That have been translated by several leading linguists and historians, tested for dating and consistency against documents of that time."

"But isn't there the possibility that these could have been written by someone other than the Goddess?" Teh posed the question.

"Yes, there is that remote possibility, but based on incidents recorded in other antiquities around the world that only the Goddess could have known and due to travel constraints of the time, I am sure of its authenticity."

"To come across such an item is extremely rare if at all possible" Teh said in admiration, still in awe over the passion in which Xenifra talked of the subject.

"Would you care to see it?" Xenifra asked.

Teh looked up in shock; here was an opportunity of a lifetime "I would...are you sure?"

Xenifra did not reply, instead she walked over to the desk and opened the drawer, she retrieved a few things and then returned, handing Teh one.

Teh looked down and in her hands were a set of cotton gloves.

Xenifra entered another code in the keypad and then held her hand over a scanner causing the lid to the journal to slide back.

Xenifra motioned for Teh to sit down at the desk as she picked up the journal and placed it upon the desk that she had covered with a cloth.

During the whole time, Teh just sat and watched.

Hesitantly Teh touched the cover, feeling the carved relief, and then gently opened the cover.

Xenifra stepped away from the desk to give Teh the opportunity to review the journal unencumbered.

A light knock on the study door and Xenifra walked over, opening it quietly.

She spoke with Philippe then closed it.

"Khateh," she whispered in a low mellow voice.

A shiver ran up Teh's spine causing the hair on the nape of her neck to stand, slowly she looked up and was struck by the beauty of Xenifra standing across the room, hair down about her shoulders, wine colored silk blouse, black linen pants and black jacket with a set of low heeled boots.

She was casually leaning against the bookcase with her arms crossed over her chest.

"Mesmerizing" Teh said in a whisper as she could only describe the vision.

"Khateh?" Xenifra said softly again.

Her name being called was like a lover's soft caress. Blinking out her staring, Teh finally responded "Um, sorry, did you call me?"

"Yes, would you care to have dinner with me?"

"Oh yes" she said nodding her head.

"It is ready when you are, care to wash up?"

"Wow, I've been sitting here for three hours. I'm sorry for...um...ignoring you. I get lost when I find a new item on Hecate" Teh said bashfully, "may I use the rest room?"

"But of course, understandable" Xenifra opened the door, "Philippe will direct you."

Standing, Teh stretched and cracked her neck realizing how long she'd not moved.

When she returned, to her dismay, the journal was no longer on the desk and its case was concealed again. She couldn't hide the disappointment from her face.

"Do not look so discontented; whenever you wish you may read it" Xenifra's voice whispered almost caressingly from the showcase to which Teh turned to.

Walking effortlessly toward Teh, Xenifra opened the door and awaited Teh to pass through, closing it behind her.

"All you need do is ask and the journal will be made available to you" Xenifra offered.

"Xenifra, thank you so much. You really are something else to be so generous."

"You have a true interest in a topic I greatly enjoy and am extremely zealous about."

"Is there a particular reason?"

"There should always be truth about history, not misinterpretation or to suit a particular faction or person's needs" Xenifra lead her to a circular winding staircase and opened the door to a glass enclosed private rooftop dining room.

The dinner setting was for two at a sizeable table that could easily accommodate six. In the background Teh could hear some violin music playing and the candelabras at the four corners gave a soft light to the room with the moon illuminating the outside, which could be accessed by a sliding glass door on one of the four sides.

Xenifra pulled out a chair for Teh to sit and then seated herself.

Immediately Philippe was pouring Teh a glass of white wine.

"Are you allergic to any particular food?"

"No, not that I am aware of."

"Good, Philippe you can begin then."

Philippe nodded and left them.

"This is a beautiful view, almost as if you're on top of the world here. Do you entertain often?"

"Thank you and no; I have rarely, if ever, used this."

"That's a shame, on nights like this you can see all the stars" Teh looked out taking a sip of her wine, "Ooh, this is lovely...what is it?"

"1978 Montrachet Domain e de la Romanée Conti"

"Hmm, never heard of it...but then again a 1978 bottle would be something I've never had before anyways."

As they ate their meals, they talked of museums, antiquities and books. Teh was amazed at the vast knowledge that Xenifra had of different subjects while Xenifra was enchanted at having such a beautiful companion who she could discuss such topics so effortlessly.

"Khateh..." Xenifra asked as their table was cleared and Philippe brought in tea, "would you indulge me in a request?"

Another shiver, "Sure" Teh replied without hesitation.

Xenifra stood, walked to an electronic panel on the wall and entered some numbers then walked over to Teh and extended her left hand with a slight bow.

Teh didn't understand but stood and walked with Xenifra, turning and facing her at one side of the room.

Teh could hear the music cue up slowly and then hear lyrics as Xenifra raised their joined hands up to shoulder height and placed her other hand gently on Teh's waist, leading her across the room in an old world waltz to the strains of 'The Prayer by the Ten Sopranos'.

Teh was held with such reverence yet strength as she was lead around the room and she could only look up and smile contentedly into Xenifra's eyes, where she was captivated by their warmth and depth.

Teh sensed agelessness to those eyes but could not reconcile those thoughts as Xenifra could not be older than her by only a few years.

Xenifra was lost to the forest of Teh's green eyes, wondering how gold could have been so sprinkled in them as to cause their twinkling up to her; her heart constricted at a memory.

"The Pharaoh has granted me my petition Rielle! When I return, we are to wed!" The warrior had lifted up the little serf and future mate and spun her around.

"Oh my Kurios (lord/master), no. You should marry one of standing"

"No my little serf, I shall only marry the one who holds my heart" setting her down, the larger hand of the warrior gently lifted her chin up and they kissed chastely, "I am also asking Goddess Hecate to bless us by allowing our ceremony to be held in her temple upon my return"

"When then my warrior, when shall you return to me?"

"We leave on the high tide, two days from the morrow. Our campaign will be to secure the border port and return. We expect to return to shore here in fewer than four moons, just in time for solstice, which is a blessing for joinings as you know."

"Then I pray Goddess Hecate grants our wish."

"Does that mean you'll finally accept me?"

"Yes my Kurios, I will."

"HA!" the warrior shouted and picked her up, spinning her around again "oh Rielle, you've made me so happy!"

"Nay my warrior, it is me you have made happy!"

The music ended and Xenifra stood with her eyes now closed holding Teh and yet not.

"Xenifra?"

"Thank you Khateh for indulging me this whim" Xenifra opened her eyes and the look of absolute sadness fled across them for a moment which caused Teh to furrow her brow in concern.

"It is late; would it meet your agreement if I escorted you home to your door?"

"Yes, thank you for a wondrous evening, really..." looking at her watch, "Oh my, it's midnight. I didn't realize."

Xenifra smiled a truly heartfelt smile, "You have given me a charming evening full of delightful debate and conversation, not to mention a pleasurable evening meal with a beautiful woman. The thank you is mine."

Xenifra escorted her down to the waiting limo and then to her doorstep when they arrived at Teh's home; "Thank you once again Khateh. Should you feel inclined..." Xenifra handed her a card, "these are my private numbers, no secretaries or servants. Do not hesitate to call me for coffee and conversation" Xenifra picked up Teh's hand and kissed the top of it chivalrously and stepped back and down a step, "Good night Khateh."

Teh blushed at the act, "Good night Xenifra" she turned, opened her house door and with one last glance and smile to Xenifra, who stood at the base of the steps, she went in and locked the door behind her.

Xenifra turned and walked to her limo, and looking out into the night she spotted a figure seated in a car out on the street, "You'll not harm her" she growled under her breath and slowly entered the limo with a sense of foreboding.

~***~

Teh decided to catch up with her dad and called his office sometime later that week.

"Hey pumpkin, how's it going?"

"Hiya Daddy, how was your date last week?"

"Great, we've gone out again since that one I told ya about and had lunch, of course while working you know"

"Yeah, sure Daddy, sure"

"How about you sweetie. Go out with Vicky's daughter again?"

"As a matter of fact, she called last week, wanted to go out for dinner but I was not feeling up for it, bad week. So I told her I'd go out this Thursday with her. I'd figure another museum or gallery to see if she's okay."

"Ah the ole test by museum ploy eh?"

"Daddy!" Teh tried to sound indignant but the giggles have her away, "okay...busted."

"Yeah well, if she puts up with it and survives she's gone further than most you've dated."

"Well" Teh drawled.

"Okay, fess up daughter of mine!" he joked.

"I had the most fabulous evening last week."

"With Madeline?"

"No, no with Xenifra."

"Who?"

"Ms. General."

"What? Really?" he asked shocked.

"Yeah, I called her about the offer to see her collection and we wound up having dinner and a great time."

"Really? Was she nice? Is it a nice collection?"

"Yes Daddy, it was amazing...her collection is phenomenal and she was the perfect gentlewoman. So much so I called and asked her for coffee."

"Honey, you called her office to ask the CEO and owner out for coffee?"

"No Daddy..."

"Whew."

"I called her private cell phone number she gave me and we had coffee Tuesday afternoon."

"Wow"

"Yeah, she is so intelligent Daddy, she loves history especially ancient mythology and is such a great conversationalist not to mention dancer and..."

"Whoa, dancer?!"

"Oh yeah, we danced that night after dinner. She is ..." a sigh escaped her, "intriguing and amazing."

"Uh oh"

"What?"

"Sounds like you've got a crush."

"I do NOT!" Teh became defensive.

"Okay, okay. Just a small teasing observation. Listen honey, I'm being given a dirty look by my pit-bull secretary. I've gotta go to this meeting. And you know, whoever you choose to spend your time with will be lucky regardless."

"Thanks Daddy. Tell Sarah I said to keep up the good work keeping you in line. Love you."

"Love you too pumpkin, catch ya later."

Thursday afternoon Teh came home and was just kicking off her shoes when the doorbell rang. 'Sheesh, not even a two minute break' she thought walking to the door, "Yes?"

"Ms. D'Olympia?"

"Yes, that's me."

"I have a delivery for you ma'am, if you'd sign here" a young delivery man held a clipboard for her, "Thank you ma'am, I'll be right back with your parcel" he trotted off to the back of his van and returned holding a long rectangular box with a tiny wooden cross bow under a large red bow.

"Here you are ma'am," he handed it to her, "gotta say this one is different from what most guys send" he turned and jumped into his van and drove out of the circular driveway.

Bewildered by the parcel herself, Teh did not see the person slink back into the side street towards a car, an evil sneer to their face.

"Okay, this is different" Teh said to herself while walking towards her kitchen and putting the box on the counter and taking the card out from under the bow.

'It is Hecate's day of celebration, according to her journal, for those who worshipped in her temples celebrated this day as a day for hunt and good fellowship. I am unfortunately attending to a crisis out of town, but upon my return, would you grant me another evening of your intellect? Signed H.W.' the card read.

"H.W.; who is H.W.?"

On the very bottom of the card was a small set of letters, printed in fine script - KHFDWHV ZDUULRU

Smiling with the thought of who it could be, Teh pulled out a piece of paper and wrote Caesar's cipher, figuring the signature to say Hecate's Warrior.

A huge smile graced her face as she looked at the box and then back to the card.

Excitedly, she pulled open the box and sat the little cross bow down to the side with a curious look; opening the box she was overwhelmed with the fragrance of beautiful multicolored long stem roses.

She brought them to her nose and inhaled deeply then admired their unique colors.

Setting them down she looked about for something to put them in, "Dam" she said in frustration, "ah, I know!" she picked up her phone, "Mim, do you have a vase to put long stem roses in? Yes, I just received some. You do!? Can you help me out? Great, thanks Mim" she hung up with her father's housekeeper who also happened to be hers and the person, who raised her as a child.

While she waited for Mim to come over for the other side of the estate house, she took the time to inspect the little cross bow.

She smiled at such a unique little gift and unknowingly pressed the trigger mechanism only to be startled when it fired a small arrow that imbedded itself near Mim's head as she opened the door, causing Mim to screech in fear.

"Oh sorry Mim, sorry. I didn't know it was loaded, honest!" Teh rushed to her side and put a comforting hand on her arm, then reached up and grabbed hold of the arrow which was three to four inches long and now stuck in the wall.

"Child! Ya right scared me into dropping this thing" Mim admonished.

Impishly Teh gave her an apologetic but cheeky grin.

"So who's courting ya child?"

"Oh no, it's just an invitation for dinner by Xenifra when she gets back."

"Uh huh, if ya says so" Mim gave her a look that said she thought otherwise.

She arranged the flowers in a long glass vase and set them in the living room for Teh as she left to get changed.

When her doorbell rang, Teh was just admiring them.

Looking at her watch she saw it was thirty minutes before Madeline was due to arrive. It came as a shock to see her date at the door when she opened it, "Oh, um hi."

"Hello Teh, I was in the neighborhood and thought I'd just save myself a trip and swing in. Mind if I come in?"

Something in Teh's mind screamed out "NO! DANGER! DON'T DO IT!"

"Um, well...actually, let me just grab my bag and we can go get some coffee first, how's that sound? You stay right there and I'll be back in a tic" Teh nervously turned and closed the door, running to grab her bag, leaving Madeline without a chance to reply.

"There, all set. Let's go, eh?" she locked her door and threw her keys into her bag.

Madeline kept a neutral look on her face and walked back to her car, opened the door for Teh and leaned on the door frame waiting for her.

Teh took a deep breath and got in the car, forcing a smile to her face as Madeline closed the door and got in on her side.

"So, how are you feeling?"

"Huh?"

"Feeling? You were not feeling too well when I called you last week."

"Oh better, thanks."

Madeline took in a very deep breath, breathing in the air to her lungs, then nodded to herself as she acknowledged the reason Teh was 'not feeling too well' was due to that time of the month.

"So which is it tonight? Gallery, museum or library?"

"Library?!" Teh looked over to her in outraged shock.

Madeline laughed, "Just thought I'd throw that in for fun; so how about the Gallery tonight?"

"Okay, which one?"

"Well there's a new exhibit at the Richert's. We'll go there; I've taken the liberty to book us over at the new restaurant that we met at."

"The Pantheon?"

"Yes, the one your *friend* owns" Madeline said with a bit of disdain on the word friend.

"She is a very intelligent woman with an eye for business" Teh said not catching the tone.

"So the Gallery has marketed this exhibit with a very unique idea. It gives out very tiny miniature canvases of some of the lesser works on display, with hopes of intriguing people's curiosity enough to attend. They select several major financial businesses and owners to invite."

"How do we get in then?"

"The advantages of working for a marketing firm...certain perks of the trade" Madeline smirked and winked at Teh, giving her a quick once over.

They entered the gallery just as it was starting to get crowded.

"Very nice, very nice indeed" Madeline said as she eyed some of the paintings and a few of the women in attendance as well.

"Yes, some of these paintings are very compelling" Teh replied.

"Would you care for a drink? There's someone walking around with a tray of sorts" Madeline asked more for a reason to peruse the eye candy than for courtesy.

"Only if they have water, thanks"

"I'll be right back" Madeline walked off leaving Teh to her own device.

"It is a lovely piece, is it not?" A young man asked Teh as he looked at the same one she was analyzing.

Teh looked over at him, "Yes, it is. The artist took great lengths to capture the essence of the subject."

"You know much of artistry?" he asked as he leaned into the painting to look at the detail.

"No, only the appreciation of it" Teh shrugged nonchalantly.

"Ah, understood" he continued to look at the detail not paying any attention to his surrounding.

"Here you go Teh" Madeline returned, handing her a glass of water.

"Thank you"

Madeline glared at the young man who happened to look up, making him very uncomfortable and causing him to move on to another piece, "Who was he?"

"I don't know, someone admiring the paintings like everyone else I guess."

"You should be careful, you never know" Madeline said.

Teh gave her a confused look and looked around the gallery now full of people as Madeline kept glaring at the man who now stood at another painting.

"Hey, look at this one over here" said Madeline startling Teh completely, taking her by the hand to another section of the gallery.

Once they were there, she didn't let go of Teh's hand.

"Um, okay, this...this is nice" Teh stammered and tried to extract her hand only to have Madeline pull her toward another painting, "Oh look at this one."

"Um, yeah, listen...I'm going to go to the ladies room. I'll be back in a few" Teh said finally getting her hand free.

"Oh, good idea; I'll go with you" Madeline replied getting a roll of Teh's eyes once she had her back turned.

Once out of the bathroom, Madeline took her hand again, "Hey, I'm getting hungry and its only about 10 minutes to the restaurant, how about I get the car and we head over?"

"Okay, guess so" Teh replied as she was led to the gallery doors.

"I'll be right back" Madeline released her hand after giving it a small squeeze and went around the back to the parking lot.

While waiting, Teh took a brochure on the gallery exhibit display stand in hopes of returning one day to enjoy the exhibit.

After a few minutes, Teh looked at her watch and began to wonder what was taking Madeline so long to get the car. As she looked up, Madeline pulled up in her rental.

Getting in, Teh noticed Madeline was flushed and a bit disheveled, "Are you alright?"

"Yeah, why?"

"You look a-bit flustered, that's all."

"Nah, just had to sort something before I got to the car" she replied with lack of detail that the thing she sorted was the young man of the gallery who she encountered earlier. He was now stuffed inside a huge garbage bin in the back of a restaurant down a few doors from the gallery, having been stripped of his wallet, id, watch and half of his blood "What do you think of the exhibit?"

"They had some really interesting pieces. Some of the artists seem very talented and promising"
Teh said as she looked out the window watching the other cars go by.

"Yes, you can see their souls in some of the strokes on the canvas."

"Some of those paintings should fetch a very nice price at auction sale."

"Yeah, I think I'd like one. Which do you think?"

"You're asking me? I mean...I might have a different taste than you."

"Oh, of that I have no doubt...no doubt at all" Madeline looked at her provocatively causing Teh to flush in embarrassment.

"Um, uh...I...uh...don't know" she stammered.

"Okay, how about you tell me about a few and we'll see if we agree?"

The conversation continued as they entered the restaurant, where Madeline guided Teh to their table with a hand on the small of Teh's back, disconcerting Teh as Madeline seemed to want to either hold her hand or touch her in some manner.

"There was the one with contrasting light of a pier point. That one really captivated me."

"Yes, the one done in varying shades of gray, black and white."

"Yes, that's the one."

"That really had something to it, didn't it?" Madeline sipped her wine, a visible flush to her skin and an almost animated evil spark in her eyes.

Teh excused herself for the ladies room and Madeline watched her with intent eyes, "Tonight I am sated but I cannot resist your cleansed scent Teh, maybe a small sample of you will suffice and tide me over, hmm?" Madeline whispered to herself.

"How about a nightcap Teh? My treat...um, my hotel bar maybe?" Madeline asked as she had taken care of the bill and they were leaving the restaurant.

"Uh...um, if it's okay with you; I think I'll pass tonight. It's getting late and I'm a bit tired and still have to work tomorrow."

"Sure, understandable. Perhaps another time then?"

Teh shrugged in non-committal.

The ride home was made in silence as Teh was wondering how to get out of not seeing Madeline anymore.

Madeline pulled the car up in the circular driveway as close to the door as possible as a light rain had begun to come down.

She turned to face Teh in the car, reached over and took one of Teh's hands, "Teh, thank you again for another...fulfilling evening."

"Um, no problem; thanks for the invitation."

"I really do enjoy your company Teh; you are one of those rarities I've not come across in a long, long time; a beautiful woman with intelligence and single."

"T...thanks."

"I would like to ..." Madeline looked up from their joined hands and fixed a direct look at Teh causing her to look deep into her eyes and transfixing herself in the process, "...spend more time..." Madeline leaned over, whispering the words as she looked unblinking at Teh.

She leaned in further and with only an inch between their lips, she finished, "...discovering and tasting your secrets" and kissed her.

The kiss was not assaulting or enticing but curious in its exploration, "Mmmmm" Madeline moaned at Teh's taste and texture; she reached up with her other hand and placed it on the back of Teh's neck, drawing her closer.

Madeline broke the kiss and moved to kiss Teh's jaw line and neck. She had just parted her mouth open and touched her lips to Teh's neck when they were interrupted.

"RING RING"

A tiny jolted start from Teh at the sound from her cell phone.

"RING RING"

A growled grumbled sigh was exhaled from Madeline as she could feel Teh's consciousness regain its foothold so she pulled away from Teh and unclasped their hands.

"RING RING"

"Wha...uh...oh...excuse me" an utterly confused Teh blinked and scrambled to dig out her phone from her purse, "Hello? Tabitha? What? ...slow down, where are you? Where? Okay, yes...alright! I'll be there as soon as I can" Teh disconnected the call and held the phone on her lap, "Sorry, um, what were you saying before?"

"That I would greatly enjoy getting to know you more if you would allow me?"

"Madeline, um...I..."

"No need to make a decision now, you obviously must attend to something. Do you need any assistance?"

"My friend Tab, she's been thrown in jail and asked me if I would bail her out."

"I could drive you if you want."

"No, I couldn't..."

"You won't, I'm offering. Besides, it'll give me some more time with you"

"Well..."

"I can help with drunk friends, overbearing police and if need be, I carry an excellent line of credit for the bailman."

"Okay, okay...you are persuasive to a degree. Thank you."

"Not a problem."

They drove to the jail house where they found out that Tabitha had only had a few drinks but was picked up for solicitation of an undercover female officer.

Madeline didn't need to assist with bail as Teh had an extensive line of credit judging by the look on the bailsmen face when he pulled up her name, but Madeline did have to step between the two friends when Tabitha made a comment about Teh never having to ever be charged for solicitation as she'd only be charged for celibacy and Teh verbally lashed back.

"How about I drop you off Teh, then drop off your friend here and call it a night eh?"

"No, you don't have to"

"It's okay. Besides, I'd like a word with your friend regarding her comment after you bailed her out."

Teh sighed heavily and shrugged, "Okay, I guess" having walked away from Tabitha once they exited the jail.

Madeline escorted Teh to her house door, "Good night Teh, give what I asked you earlier some thought for me okay?" and before Teh could reply, Madeline had turned and gotten into her car and drove off.

"So gorgeous, where'd did Ms. Goody find you?" Tabitha purred as she draped an arm across the drivers' seat.

"Question is; where did she find you?" Madeline countered with a bit of sarcasm in her tone.

"Oh, we've been friends since kindergarten" Tabitha missed the sarcasm from Madeline's question.

"Well you would think you'd treat her with some gratitude for what she did for you this evening."

"Nah, Teh's just frigid" she waved her hand in a dismissive manner, "she needs to loosen up a bit, get into the new century and stop living in old values" Tabitha ran a finger down Madeline's shoulder.

"So, you are not so frigid I take it?"

"No way, I am all loose and uninhibited."

"Care to discuss that?"

"Sure thing honey, turn on 8th and King Street."

Madeline stopped at the front of the building, "I'm just going to go to the store, and I'll be right back"

"Okay sugar, I'll be ready and waiting for ya" Tabitha purred excitedly as she started up the stairs to her apartment.

Approximately 15minutes later Tabitha answered the door in a sheer robe and Madeline walked in. "So, you say you are loose and uninhibited?" Madeline asked as Tabitha pulled her in the apartment, sat her down on the sofa and straddled her.

"Care to find out?" Tabitha drawled.

Madeline did not reply with words, she pulled Tabitha forcefully to her and plundered her mouth, tearing the sheer robe from her body at the same time and began rubbing her hands roughly across her backside.

Tabitha was turned on by this aggressive woman under her, "Oh yeah" she moaned as Madeline kneaded her hips and buttocks, bending her head to take in a nipple swaying freely in front of her face.

Sucking wantonly, Madeline reclaimed her lips while putting a hand to the back of Tabitha's neck to pull her down to her.

Pulling away slightly, she turned pure onyx eyes to her, "Let's see how loose" and plunged two fingers deep inside her spread open legs with no preamble.

"Aaaaahhh" Tabitha moaned harshly at the suddenly painful yet pleasant invasion.

Entangling her left hand in Tabitha's hair, Madeline held her with her eyes and grip while pumping her fingers inside her.

She could feel Tabitha's walls begin to quiver and clench in small spasms signaling an impending orgasm.

"Oh damn, yes...oh yeah" Tabitha groaned, "you are so fuc.....uuuuhhh"

Madeline said nothing.

"Teh doesn't know what she is missing! Uuuuunnnnnhh" Tabitha ground her hips down, meeting each thrust, "oh, oh, yes, yes"

"Shame you'll never live to tell her" Madeline's ice cold voice replied.

Then it happened all at once.

Tabitha's overwhelming orgasm crashed down on her as her mind fought for clarity over her body's sensory overload, trying to decipher what Madeline meant as her legs clamped shut on the stroking fingers and her hips impaled her on them.

Madeline's eyes gleamed black as she tilted Tabitha's head to one side with her hand and exposed her jugular to her awaiting mouth and pierced her neck with one swift movement.

Tabitha's body shuddered and convulsed a few times then slumped listless to the side as Madeline moved her off from on top of her and licked the blood off her lips.

She rose off the sofa and walked into the bathroom, washed her hands and wiped down the faucet handles with a handkerchief, which she then put in her pocket.

Coming back into the living room, she pulled out a serrated knife that she had picked up in the kitchen.

Walking over to Tabitha's body, she plunged the knife into the mark that was now on her neck.

She wiped the handle down, turned off the light and wiped down the door handle after closing the door behind her, leaving no evidence she was even there.

~***~

"RING RING"

"Yeah, yeah, hold on...I'm coming"

"RING RING"

"Hello?"

"Good day Khateh."

A delicious feeling caressed her at hearing her name uttered by Xenifra, "Xenifra, hello; thank you for the flowers and gift..." she lowered her voice shyly, "...and another invitation."

"You are most welcome, the pleasure was all mine."

"Did your business trip go okay?"

"Yes, thank you. One of the smaller companies had some crisis with management."

"I hope it was all sorted."

"Yes, I would discuss this with you more, but have only a moment before I must attend a meeting. My reason for this call is to ask if you were available this evening to have dinner with me?"

"Oh yes, definitely."

"Excellent, I shall have you picked up then if it pleases you."

"Yes, thank you. When should I be ready?"

"Shall we say two hours?"

"Great, see you then."

"Until then Khateh."

Teh sighed happily after hanging up, the lingering feeling of her name being uttered with such allure and unspoken passion causing butterflies in her stomach.

"Hello Philippe" Teh greeted the butler upon entering the foyer of Xenifra's home.

"Good evening Miss, care for a glass of water Miss?"

"Yes, thank you Philippe."

"Good evening Khateh."

"Dam, I love that" Teh thought to herself after her body's reaction to Xenifra's voice.

Xenifra walked toward Teh, all grace and fluid motion, she reached for her hand and gave the top of it a chaste kiss, causing Teh a small pang of guilt for having had gone out with Madeline two nights before.

"Care to sit for a moment?"

"Yes, thank you" she sat facing Xenifra on one of the three sofas in the foyer, "Was it another company or one of yours that needed help?"

"Yes, to both. It was another company, which I own as well. It so happens that the independent auditors found some anomalies in the book keeping. When confronted, it seemed that the senior executives had decided to make company profits as their private expense account"

"They embezzled?"

"Yes, to the sum of 1.3 million"

"Oh my Go..." Teh was stunned speechless.

"I became suspicious and questioned the figures in a report, hence the audit and the unraveling. They have since been arrested and new vetted managers from my company here, put in place."

"I'm sorry to hear that Xenifra; any way to recoup any of the loss?"

"Yes, my attorneys are working with prosecutors to have their assets seized and an order of recompense stipulated at trial."

"You won't get it all back though, will you?"

"No, but several good things have come from this; tighter security, independent book keeping and a board of trustees to sign off expenses. Plus, fresh management perspective just to name a few."

"Positive outlook to what could have been looked at as a major setback. That is refreshing to hear and actually see" Teh said complimentarily.

Xenifra acknowledged the compliment with a small nod of her head, "Are you interested in reading some more of the journal this evening?" she enquired.

"Actually, I was hoping you could tell me about it as we sit in your study."

Xenifra tilted her head slightly with a curious expression to her face at the request.

"Being as versed in the journal's contents as you are I'm sure, will give me an insight to your knowledge on not only the journal but other ancient subjects as well."

"Very well, shall we?" Xenifra stood and extended her hand to assist Teh in standing.

Teh took the proffered hand, feeling its cool smoothness yet subtle strength.

They sat in the study in front of the now blazing fireplace.

"So when did you begin collecting artifacts" Teh asked as she settled into the wingback and crossed a leg over the other casually.

"Ever since I can remember" Xenifra stated.

"It is a very impressive collection from my glimpse of it when I was last here."

"There are several pieces stored in museums because they have proper facilities to care for their delicate nature."

"Why the special attention to the journal, if I may ask?"

"It is beyond measurable value. The journal proves beyond doubt that at least one of the known mythological Gods existed."

"That is true, that alone would make its worth inconceivable."

"There are those factions that would be extremely displeased if that knowledge became public, to the extent of destroying it."

This made Teh's eyes widen in alarm, "What do you mean?"

"Consider, if you may, the Christian World's viewpoint. It would cause chaos and uncertainty in their belief"

"Are you saying the Vatican would go to the extreme of eradicating history to maintain their view of religious superiority?"

"It is a possibility that I am not willing to gamble on."

"Wow," Teh shook her head, "That concept is so unbelievable but to a certain degree understandable."

"Have you studied other subjects besides the Goddess?"

"Yes, some on the rituals, pharaohs and geography of different classes."

"Quite extensive variety."

"Yes, I believe that to understand the particular God or Goddess, one has to be learned in all facets of the people in that time and their beliefs and lifestyle."

"True, to gain a full appreciation of the time, all of the aspects of all of the people have to be learned as they were correlated."

"Is that how you learned?"

"I appreciated everything."

"I shall miss you my Kurios" the little serf said with her head bowed, her forehead resting on her master's chest.

"And I you Rielle, but when I look upon you again, it will be on a special moment in our lives. I cherish you and appreciate who you are in my life little one."

"Please, take care my Sartorian (warrior)."

"I will always be yours Rielle..." the warrior leaned down and placed a gentle loving but chaste kiss on her lips.

"As I will always belong to you, mo chroi (my heart)" the little serf said to her beloved warrior, who turned away and walked towards the ship bound for duty.

"Xenifra?"

"My apologies" Xenifra said as she remained motionless except for her eyes, that tracked back from the faraway depths of the fireplace to Teh's concerned face.

"You seem to have a depth of kinship to this journal."

Xenifra did not reply to this statement.

"Does your collection and hobby interfere at all with your work?"

"No, not at all; though having my own business yields opportunity for me to acquire items that are secreted away."

A knock on the door, "Yes Philippe?"

"Mistress, would you dine in the formal room or in the sky room this evening?"

"Khateh will decide" Xenifra motioned towards Teh and yielded the decision to her.

"Oh, um...the sky room...is that where we ate the other night?"

"Yes" Xenifra replied.

"Can we have it there again?" Teh looked from Xenifra to Philippe.

Xenifra nodded once and Philippe exited the room.

"Do you travel often to find or collect artifacts or relics?" Teh continued.

"No, it is rare now to discover or have discovered items that are of true interest."

"Yes, I can imagine a lot has been unearthed and what was not was due to destruction, not for lack of trying."

"Correct"

"Shame really; as it would be fascinating to discover something from Hecate's time now. Something that no one has set eyes upon or touched."

"Yes, indeed" the grandfather clock chimed seven times, "shall we?" Xenifra stood and extended her hand again, which Teh took immediately and before releasing it, gave a small squeeze which brought a tiny quirk to Xenifra's lips.

Dinner was filled with discussion on artifacts and the discovery of them, some thoughts on what they meant and the reason the finders went in search of them.

"So you don't think that the person who found the journal was searching for it per say but just for a treasure of sorts."

"The journal was not of the same process, I believe most relics and artifacts were discovered by chance. Not for some altruistic regard."

"That seems a bit harsh don't you think?" Teh stated as she sat back from the table.

"Care to indulge me once more?" Xenifra asked as she stood from the table.

"Sure" Teh said as Xenifra took her hand, but this time led her out the sliding door onto the penthouse walkway that ran parallel to the edge of the roof.

Feeling a bit brazen, Teh held Xenifra's hand and didn't let go, feeling secure and at ease with her.

Xenifra, being courteous, placed Teh's hand onto the crook of her arm and covered it with her other as she escorted her on a slow leisure walk.

"It is not harsh that I speak truth. Ninety percent of discoveries were made by treasure seekers; those seeking to have their names immortalized by their significant finds. Wadi el-Muluk, King Tut etc were discovered by archeologists seeking treasure of world renown. The dead sea scrolls were found by an unknown who just happened upon them."

"Does that make the actual find any less significant?"

"No, but it lends credibility to its contents."

"True, that it does" Teh agreed shivering a bit at the cold night air.

"You are cold. Forgive me my inconsiderateness, as I do not feel the temperature as most" Xenifra stopped, immediately taking off her jacket and placing it about Teh's shoulders with a delicate hand.

Teh was immediately engulfed in a cocoon of warmth and oddly, a sense of security.

"Oh your jacket is so warm" she snuggled it about her, appreciating the crisp fresh scent. A scent, she realized, that was of Xenifra.

"We can return..."

"Oh no, please" Teh cut her off and placed a hand on her arm, "I really am enjoying you...I mean this walk" Teh blushed.

"As you wish" Xenifra extended her arm again and Teh gladly wrapped her hands around it and they continued on their walk.

"It has been many years since I've debated and discussed so freely with another Khateh, for that I thank you."

"You make is sound like its coming to an end" Teh said jokingly.

"On the contrary, it is something I look increasingly forward to."

That earned her a huge smile from Teh, "I do too" she agreed.

"Would you be inclined to a trip?" Xenifra inquired hesitantly.

"Trip?"

"I am scheduled for a board meeting in New York in a fortnight; it is only for two hours. If it suited you, we could see the museums there for the weekend. All expenses paid and your own private suite as I would not wish you to think ill of me."

"Xenifra that is too generous of you. I can..."

Xenifra held up a hand to stop Teh, "I am flying up in my own plane; so it would not be of any inconvenience and your suite, if you desire, can be paid by yourself. I meant no offense."

Taking Xenifra's hand down and turning it over in her own while looking at it, Teh began, "No, it wasn't an offense. I just didn't want you to think I couldn't pay my own way or that you needed to" she shrugged.

"Khateh..."

A warmth surrounded Teh's heart.

Xenifra turned her hand over and using it, tucked two fingers under Teh's chin and lifted her head up to meet her eyes, "I know you would be more than capable and I would greatly be honored if you would allow me this..." a deep sigh.

Teh looked into her warm blue eyes, answering "Thank you."

They looked into each other's eyes, searching their depths when a cool breeze tussled Teh's hair about and Xenifra spoke, "It is late and very cold for you, may I escort you home again?"

"Yes please" Teh took her arm again and they turned back to the sky room.

~***~

The next day saw Xenifra rise with a determination she had not had in many seasons.

"Mr. D'Olympia?"

"Yes Sarah."

"I have a Ms. General to see you."

"What?! Here? Now?"

"Yes sir."

"See her in, see her in" Frank D'Olympia said into the intercom, standing and buttoning his jacket as he walked from behind his desk and the door opened with the secretary holding it open for Xenifra to walk in.

"Mr. D'Olympia, thank you for receiving me on such short notice."

"Please, come in and have a seat, would you like something to drink?" He motioned toward the chairs and table.

"Tea, if you would?"

"Certainly, Sarah?"

"At once sir" Sarah replied and went to the kitchenette counter.

"Thank you."

Sarah made up a tea and coffee, served them and closed the door behind her.

"So Ms. General, what can I do for you?" Frank unbuttoned his jacket and sat down.

"Please, call me Xenifra" she sat down and crossed a long leg over her knee.

"Xenifra it is, and it's Frank."

"Thank you Frank. My reason for seeing you today is twofold. Firstly, I wish to discuss a personal matter with you."

Frank's eyes widened and his eyebrows shot up.

"No need for alarm, I assure you."

At this he relaxed a bit.

"I do not know if you are aware, but I recently had dinner with your daughter Khateh."

"Yes, she mentioned it. Had a very lovely time she said."

Xenifra gave a small smile and incline of her head in acknowledgment, "That is an excellent segue way to discuss this with you then. I find Khateh a charming, beautiful young lady who is intelligent and full of life. You have done a fantastic job raising her into the woman she has become."

"Thank you Xenifra, though I can't take all the credit. After her mother's death, I didn't know what I would do, how to raise her. But one look from her baby green eyes and I knew I'd do anything and everything to bring her up right and protected, it helped that she assisted me along the way too" he proudly stated, "but we worked together on it."

"Well, you both did an exemplary job. I come to speak with you to ask a somewhat unorthodox request of this day and age."

"Please Xenifra, ask."

"Thank you sir, I come to ask you for your permission to court your daughter."

Frank was stunned and the only movement was his eyes that blinked twice.

Xenifra remained silent, allowing him the opportunity to absorb her request.

"P...pardon?"

"Mr. D'Olympia, I am requesting your permission to court your daughter. As you know, she and I are of the same lifestyle. But, before I pursue her any further, I wish your consent. Rest assured my intentions are honorable and I will abide by her decision of this request as well."

Another set of blinking eyes, "Uh, um...you've caught me completely unprepared and off guard for this Xenifra."

"I understand Mr. D'Olympia and if it something you wish to consider or not consent to, I will respect that."

"No, no by no means" he waved his hand at her, "you just shocked me, that's all. It's a rare, if ever done thing nowadays, to have someone ask for permission to see their daughter."

"Yes, it is a bygone tradition. As women prefer not to be considered property of their fathers; I do not ask you in that capacity for that would be an affront to Khateh, something I would never do. I ask in regards to your agreement as my being a potential and worthwhile suitor."

"Oh, of that I have no qualms Xenifra. You are a very intelligent, honorable and beautiful woman in your own right. You have a business sense about you that speaks of a vast and extensive experience but it really amazes me that you are so young to have it. That aside, what father wouldn't want those attributes for his daughter's partner? So, in answer to your request, I whole heartedly agree and consent, not that Teh would let it be any other way once she has her mind set" he chuckled at that.

"Thank you Mr. D'Olympia."

"Frank, please"

"Frank, thank you. I will ask Khateh for her permission of course and please rest assured she will not come to harm nor ever have her virtues sullied by my hand."

"I know, you are a rarity in your own right Xenifra."

A slight nod in acknowledgment of the compliment was his reply.

"Then there is the other reason for my visit..." she set her teacup down, "I have become aware of a company you might possibly be considering doing business with, a company called Empusae?"

"Yes, they were recommended by Vicky's daughter Madeline for marketing. Why? Is there a problem?"

"No, not at all; but I wanted to ensure you were fully aware of the company and its reputation before you associate your company to them."

"Oh, it is something I need to worry about?"

"Just something you need to be certain will not tarnish the reputation you have built by association."

"Tell me then."

"You say Mrs. Tresledge's daughter recommended them to you?"

"Yes"

"Empusae is a subsidiary to Toro Corporation based in China; it was created as a tax shelter for several executives who were under investigation from the SEC for insider trading. Some of the executives were found out to be using family members for names on deeds so that the investigations could not pinpoint to them. The company used a marketing front to supply services without an actual product."

"Are you accusing Vicky of this?" Frank became a bit unsettled.

"No, my investigations clear her of any involvement, but her daughter is on the board and my sources at the commission have let me know that a federal inquiry into their international business practices is coming very, very soon."

"What about those companies legitimately doing business with them?"

"They will have nothing to worry about but the cost of both legal representation and loss of reputation by association will put the smaller companies out of business."

"What about Vicky's daughter?"

"She will have to defend herself in court as part of the board but with a good attorney, such as her mother, and if she is not guilty in any part, I am sure she will come away unscathed."

He remained silent, thinking about what she had just said. Finally he said, "Hmm, might I ask you a question Xenifra?"

"By all means."

"Any reason why you told me after asking about Teh?"

"Yes, I did not want you influenced in your decision based on the information I have provided you."

"Would you have told me if I had said no?"

Xenifra did not reply, but her gaze remained fixed to his.

"I apologize" he stated truly ashamed as he lowered his head, "I am sure you would have. I didn't mean to question your integrity."

A nod in acceptance of the apology was returned.

"Thank you for the heads up about this company. I think it best we pass on going with them. As we can ill afford some controversy right now; we have a few contracts pending with the federal agencies and I don't want to be embroiled in some scam."

Xenifra rose, "The choice remains yours sir, it is just practical and good business to make sure you are fully aware of the implications associating with them can cause."

Frank rose also, noting the demeanor of his associate meant their meeting had come to its conclusion. Extending his hand to her again, "Well thank you Xenifra, I owe you a debt of gratitude" as he walked her to the door.

"None needed" she accepted his hand.

"At least let me wish you luck with my daughter. She's the one who you'll need all the inside information on" he joked.

"I look forward to every moment then" she smiled one of her rare sincere smiles and left his office.

'Ah Teh, if you don't keep this one, I'll marry her myself!' he said admirably.

~***~

"RING RING"

"Hello?"

"Hi Teh, Madeline here; was wondering if you'd like to do coffee tomorrow morning?"

"Uh hi Madeline, sorry I'll have to pass on that."

"Oh, okay. Got something going on?" Madeline asked.

"Excuse me Madeline, but I'm just walking out the door and a bit pressed for time."

Madeline bristled at the non response and being dismissed but kept her tone even, "Sure, some other time then maybe, bye."

"Good bye" Teh replied and disconnected the call, rushing out the door and into her car.

After Teh had been hard at work for over two hours straight, Tina a co-worker of hers, called out to her from the office door, "Teh?"

"Yes, just finishing up a report; what's up?" Teh replied not looking up from her computer.

"There are three different people here to see you."

"Three different? What do you mean?" as she looked up confused and curious.

"Well, a really gorgeous woman came in asking to speak with you and not a moment later, two rough looking suits came in asking to see you too."

"Who is the woman?" Teh eagerly asked.

"A Ms. General, she says you know her?" Tina looked at her with a little tilt of her head in question.

"Yes, I do! Who were the suits?"

"They said Detectives Robinson and Harmon"

"Detectives? Wonder why and what for."

Shrugging her shoulders Tina said, "They didn't say."

"Okay, um can you bring Ms. General over and sit the detectives in a meeting room, tell them I'll be with them in a few minutes" Teh asked while rising from her chair and unconsciously straitening out her clothes.

"Sure thing" Tina replied chuckling at Teh's reaction and headed back towards the entry foyer.

"She's in here" Tina motioned into Teh's office and closed it after Xenifra entered.

"Hello Xenifra, what a surprise, how are you?"

"Well thank you. I stopped by in hopes of asking you out for a coffee, but it seems you have business to attend to that has just asked for you as well."

"Oh," Teh said disappointedly, "Yes, I don't know what they would want of me though."

"I shall not take up any of your time so that you may find out" Xenifra turned as if to leave.

"Would you mind if I asked you to stay? I know that it's an imposition but that way once I'm done with them, you and I can go get that coffee?" Teh asked as she did not want to miss an opportunity with Xenifra.

"If you so wish, then I shall stay and wait for you"

"Thank you! I'll be back as soon as possible, um, did you want to sit here or on the sofa outside the meeting room which is more comfortable than these office torture devices they call chairs."

"The sofa will do nicely, thank you" Xenifra turned and followed Teh out towards the meeting room.

"Okay, I'll be out in a tic" Teh said while Xenifra nodded as she sat down and picked up a magazine.

Teh entered the meeting room to find two women standing, waiting somewhat impatiently for her.

"Hello, I'm Khateh D'Olympia. How can I help you?"

"Hello Ms. D'Olympia, I'm Detective Robinson and this is my partner Det. Harmon."

Teh nodded at the other woman.

"Ms. D'Olympia, do you know a Ms. Tabitha Moore?"

"Yes, she's my friend, why?"

"When was the last time you saw Ms. Moore?"

"Um, Thursday night, she called me because she had gotten arrested and asked me to bail her out."

"Did you?" Detective Harmon asked.

"Yes, she's my best friend since grade school. I always help her out."

"Did you drive her home that night?" Detective Robinson asked.

"Yes...no. I was on a date that night. My date offered to go with me and bail her out. We did and Tabitha and I got into a tiny verbal tiff."

"Oh?" Detective Harmon queried.

"Yeah, she is always making remarks about my...um, me being...um."

"Yes?" Detective Harmon pressed.

"Well, she made a remark about me never being possibly arrested for something like solicitation like she did and I snapped and made some remarks back. My date intervened."

"Did your date have a name?"

"Yes, her name is Madeline Tresledge."

Both detectives arched one eyebrow and looked at each other but said nothing.

"So you both drove her home?" Detective Robinson continued.

"No, Madeline offered as we had just finished our date when Tabitha called so she said she'd drop her off and call it a night."

"Did this Madeline seem mad or upset about ending the night?"

"No, she said something else to me that we had talked about earlier that evening and then something about talking with Tabitha over the comment she made after I bailed her out."

"Have you spoken with Tabitha since that night?" Detective Harmon asked while still writing in her note pad.

"No, she talks to me when she wants. I'm waiting for her to apologize for what she said, she usually does after about a week or so" Teh looked between the two detectives, "What is this all about anyways? Why are you asking so much about Tabitha?"

"Well Ms. D'Olympia, I'd give up any notion of getting that apology. You see, Ms. Moore is dead" Detective Robinson stated as she walked over to Teh, seeing her blanch at the words.

"No, no, NOOOO!" Teh's voice rose quivering before breaking down into sobs.

The door to the meeting room suddenly flung open with Xenifra storming in going to Teh. Teh immediately ran into Xenifra's arms, sobbing uncontrollably.

"Who are you?"

"What has happened?"

Both the Detectives and Xenifra asked at the same time.

"Are you Madeline Tresledge?"

"Is Khateh's family alright?"

Again, they spoke at the same time.

Xenifra stiffened at hearing Madeline's name, "No, I am not her. I am Xenifra General, a...a friend of Khateh's" Xenifra replied while lending comfort and soothing Teh.

"Ms. D'Olympia's family is fine. We are investigating a Ms. Moore's murder."

"Murder?!" Teh croaked out, "You never said she was murdered, dear God!" Teh muttered before fainting in Xenifra's arms.

When she came to, Teh found herself lying on the meeting room sofa, a cold wash cloth to her forehead. Blinking blearily, she tried to focus and the first thing she saw was that of a furrowed brow on Xenifra's concerned face above her. "Uhh, why do I feel like a freight train hit my head?" she grumbled while putting a hand to her forehead.

"Khateh, how are you feeling?" Xenifra's soothing voice asked as she placed a gently hand to Teh's face as she sat on the edge of the sofa.

"A little knocked about, but, asides from that okay, I guess"

"Care to try and sit up?"

A small nod.

Xenifra rose and assisted Teh into a sitting position.

Tina had brought over some bottles of cold water and handed one to her.

"Thanks" Teh said after taking a few sips.

"Ms. D'Olympia, we are sorry for your loss" Detective Harmon stated, "Do you have any idea who could have done this?"

"No, not that I can think of right now."

"Have you spoken with Ms. Tresledge since that night?" Detective Harmon continued to ask.

"Um, yes and no; she actually called this morning, asked to meet her for coffee..." Teh looked down to her hands, feeling somewhat ashamed, then back to Xenifra and back down again, "I told her I wanted to pass and I was running late so I told her I had to go and we hung up."

"Is there any way of contacting her?"

"Yes, I've got her number in my phone."

"We'll need that."

"Yes, of course. Now, tell me what happened to Tab?"

The detectives looked to one another.

"Look, I have a right to know after you two dropped me like that! She's my..." a deep breath, "she was my best friend. I can take it and I promise, no more passing out."

Detective Robinson nodded to the other detective, "Well, Ms. Moore was found yesterday in her apartment. Apparently the next door neighbor, a Mrs. Grathers, knocked and called as Ms. Moore had not picked her up to take her to do her shopping on Sunday. There was not answer so she tried later that night and when standing at the door, something smelled off to her. She called the building landlord who called maintenance. When they opened the door, they found Ms. Moore. Preliminary investigation point to Ms. Moore having been sexually assaulted and then stabbed, no other signs of struggle or burglary"

"Oh dear God Tab!" Teh gasped, putting her face in her hands.

Xenifra sat down and put an arm around Teh, who put her head on Xenifra's strong shoulder.

"Did she have a possible date that night?" the detective asked while writing some notes down in note pad.

"No, not that I know of as she didn't mention anything about scoring with someone. And Madeline drove her home so I don't know what they talked about."

"Okay Ms. D'Olympia. Could we bother you for that number now? We're finished for now but need to get your whereabouts for that night. We'll be in touch" Detective Robinson concluded.

"Sure, um, it's in my bag."

"Are you alright to stand up?" Xenifra asked.

"Yeah, I want to get out of here anyways. Tina, I..."

"Go home Teh, I'll take care of everything" Tina cut her off.

"Thanks T."

Xenifra rose and extended a hand to help Teh up, keeping an eye on her as she walked to her office, gave the detectives the information and gathered her things.

"Khateh, I do not think it is a wise idea to drive home in your state of mind. Allow me to take you home please."

"Actually, would you mind if we just walked to the park up the road a bit? I could use the fresh air and walk."

"Certainly."

Somberly, they exited the building and walked to the park a few blocks away.

As Xenifra had noticed Teh bundle up she motioned them over to a coffee stand and bought two hot chocolates, "Here, seems as if you could use a little comforting warmth."

"Thank you Xenifra, for everything. I don't mean to burden you with..."

"Khateh," Xenifra interrupted her gently, "you are no burden to me in any regard. I am only glad to be able to be here for you in any way you see fit."

"Oh Xenifra!" Teh broke down crying.

Xenifra walked over to a park bench, guiding Teh to sit down, allowing her to use her shoulder to cry on.

"She's gone Xenifra, she's gone!" she sobbed.

"Yes Khateh, I am sorry for your loss, truly."

"Who could have done this to her? Why?" She continued crying.

"Allow the detectives to do their work and in time they will provide all the answers."

"She didn't deserve this Xenifra, she didn't deserve this."

Xenifra said no more but held Teh with one arm wrapped securely about her as Teh let go of her anguish in tears.

After a while of crying, Teh finally began to compose herself. "Oh look at what I have done to your coat" she said wiping her nose with a handkerchief Xenifra had provided her with, "it's soaked."

"It has not been put to better use than to accept and take away the tears of hurt and grief from your loss" she replied.

"RING RING"

Teh jumped, startled at her phone ringing all of a sudden.

"RING RING"

She opened her bag and answered her phone, "Hello? Daddy! Yes, I'm okay, Tina told you? Yes, they said they found her murdered... Thanks Daddy ... What? No, I'm sitting with Xenifra. She's

been my rock today Daddy...No, I'll be okay, I'll talk with you later Daddy. Yes, I love you too Daddy, bye."

Xenifra had stood and walked a few paces away to give Teh some privacy but had heard the entire conversation and was shocked but gladdened when she heard Teh tell her father she was her rock.

"That was my dad; news travels fast...bad news even faster."

"Let me escort you home."

"No, I mean...if it's okay with you, I'd rather not go home...just yet. Um, that is if you don't mind, I...I feel safe around you."

"Let it always be so Khateh," Xenifra replied, "Do you wish to accompany me to my home at least? I would rather get you out of this weather and somewhere warm and if you desire you can either peruse the library or rest there, take your mind off the current situation."

"Are you sure?"

Xenifra extended her hand as a reply and they walked back to Teh's building where Xenifra's limo sat waiting for her return.

"Philippe" Xenifra called out as she entered her home.

"Mistress, Miss D'Olympia" he bowed slightly to both.

"Philippe, please arrange a warm meal for Khateh, draw a warm bath for her in one of the guests rooms and have Veronique assist her with her clothes."

"Yes Mistress, at once" he gave a nod and went about his duties.

On the ride over, Xenifra has suggested Teh be her guest while the detectives sorted out the details and emotions ran high for Teh.

She did not allude to the fact that she felt protective over her and that it brought peace of mind to have her safe here in her home.

Teh had tried to protest, albeit not willingly as she really did want to stay, but every excuse was rebutted with a justified counter reason to stay. The final nudge had been when Xenifra had called Frank and offered her suggestions and he'd wholeheartedly agreed.

Xenifra had excused herself to make a few phone calls when she walked in to find Teh was curled up on the wingback chair in front of the fireplace in the library, with a book splayed on her lap, asleep.

Setting the book aside, Xenifira knelt down and brushed Teh's hair from her face, quietly admiring her beauty. With a smile to her face, Xenifira whispered "Oh Khateh," then she scooped her up easily into her arms, rising in one graceful movement and carried her into the guest room.

She felt her heart skip when Teh unconsciously snuggled into her and let out a small sigh of contentment. Gently laying her down onto the bed, Xenifira pulled the blankets up and around Teh and brushed the hair from off her face again. Teh reflexively pulled her hand into hers, put it to her heart and rolled onto her side, essentially trapping Xenifira in her grasp.

Being one used to long periods of stillness, Xenifira waited until Teh was in a very deep sleep before extracting her hand with a wistful thought.

"Rielle, come sit with me"

"But there is so much to prepare for my Kurios" the little serf replied.

"The only thing I shall need is you, there with me. Besides, what shall you do whilst I am away? Grow bored if you do it all tonight!"

"True my warrior, true" she stopped folding and walked over to where the warrior was sitting and sat down, taking the warrior's much larger hand into her smaller one, "I shall miss you" she whispered.

"And I you little one."

They looked into each other's eyes, wanting so much to express their bodies, heart and soul's desire to be with one another, but knowing it was forbidden to consummate such an act without the blessing of the Goddess and ritual as they were now betroth.

A snap of the log fire broke their trance and they both smiled shyly, entwining their hands.

That is how the warrior awoke to find them in the morning, arms wrapped around each other with hands clasped.

Not wanting to disturb Rielle's dreaming, the warrior slowly separated their hands, placing a gentle kiss to the crown of her head then turned and with one final glance back to her sleeping visage exited the room to make final arrangements for the day's journey out.

Teh stretched luxuriously and then opened her eyes, confusion furrowing her brow; this was not her room, her bed.

Then it came crashing down upon her, her best friend was gone; murdered, "Oh Tab, what happened to you?" she whispered.

Grabbing a robe that was laid out on the edge of the bed, she padded out of the room after washing up and headed in the direction of the breakfast table like last time, 'huh, like last time'

Teh thought to herself, 'Tab wanted to sleep with her so badly...' she shook her head to rid herself of the thought.

"Good Morning Miss" Veronique said softly.

"Oh, Good Morning Veronique"

"Would you care for coffee or tea Miss?"

"Um, coffee would be great, thank you. Is Xenifra here this morning?" Teh asked as she sat down and watched Veronique gather a coffee for her.

"Good Morning Khateh" a silky rich voice burred causing Teh to close her eyes and her body to shiver, 'Oh Gods I love that!' she thought.

"I hope you slept well" Xenifra inquired as she strode in casually dressed and seated herself, Philippe immediately placing a steaming cup of tea before her.

"Good Morning Xenifra, yes thank you....for everything" she sipped her coffee "uuuummm" she murmured in appreciation.

"It is my pleasure Khateh, I only wish I could do more", not telling Teh that she'd gone out last night and found Tabitha's apartment and done some investigating on her own. She had looked about and with her heightened senses seen things others could not; giving her insight to who it could possibly be.

"So, you'll be going to work soon?" Teh asked.

"No, I have taken the rest of the week off. I..."

"Not because of me, please?!" Teh interrupted, looking up quickly.

"I would like to help you, if you would allow me, in supporting you through this."

"Xenifra, you've done so much already" Teh said but quietly rejoiced in the fact because she had secretly wanted Xenifra to stay with her today.

"If you do not wish for me..."

"No! No, sorry I, its just..." a sigh, "Thank you, yes please" Teh then amended her reply, "but on one condition..."

Xenifra cocked her head and raised one eyebrow slightly at the sudden changed in Teh's response, "As you wish."

"...that you tell me a bit about yourself."

Xenifra's eyes widened then blinked at having been caught off guard at this request.

"You said as I wish" a mischievous tiny grin to Teh's face let Xenifra know she was caught.

"Yes, I did."

"And not the business side of you either" Teh put the coffee cup down that she held cupped with both hands.

Xenifra's response was a nod in agreement.

They ate breakfast in friendly conversation.

"I need to go home; get changed and then call those detectives to find out where to go from here" Teh said rising from her seat at the table.

"Do you wish to be alone?" Xenifra asked.

"No, not really; will you....?" Teh stopped.

"I would and shall" Xenifra smiled back.

Teh changed back into her clothes from the previous evening and they headed over.

At the entry to Teh's home, Xenifra hemmed "I shall go to see....I will go over to..."

"You can come in Xenifra, I don't mind; that is if you don't mind waiting a little while I freshen up and change clothes."

Xenifra sighed heavily, "Are you certain?" Xenifra asked as Teh did not know of the significance of granting permission to enter allowed.

"I trust you Xenifra. Don't ask me why, I only know that I do and I feel you will do me no harm."

"You have my sworn oath to that Khateh."

"Then come on, I'm sure Daddy will be over in a minute anyways, to be the overprotective father" she opened her front door and held it open; waiting for Xenifra to enter.

Xenifra took a deep breath, and then slowly walked through the open doorway.

True to Teh's words, her father knocked and entered through the connecting door of the house, "Teh, you okay?" he immediately embraced her into a hug.

"Yes Daddy, I'm okay. I think I cried most of it out of my system yesterday."

"Ms. General... Xenifra; thank you for being there for Teh" he said as he greeted her.

"You are welcome sir, but it is not necessary - it was an honor to help."

"Daddy, will you please keep Xenifra company while I go and freshen up?"

"Sure pumpkin" he kissed the crown of his daughter's head, "you go do that...I can smell you from here" he joked.

"Daddy!" she lightly backhanded him in the gut with a touch of blush coloring her cheeks in mild embarrassment.

"Ugh! Abuse, you saw that Xenifra, abuse!" he joked while grabbing his stomach in mock hurt.

Xenifra covered her smile by turning away, looking towards the ceiling while putting her hands in her pockets and whistling an off handed tune causing Teh to laugh, "Ha! Team Teh scores" while doing a little happy dance as she walked down the hallway to her room.

"Oh, I see how it is" he laughed.

Once Teh was showering, he looked over to Xenifra with a serious face on, "So how is she, really?"

"She is coping remarkably well, she did indeed have a good cry over it to the point of exhaustion actually causing her to fall asleep reading one of the historical journals

I possess."

"For her to fall asleep reading one of those things is true exhaustion. She used to pace and read so she would not miss something while in college" he remarked back while turning to look towards her bedroom.

"I am making inquiries into this situation, as I know it must concern Khateh of her friend's tragic demise but yours and mine as well. As well as our mutual assurance that this is not in any way targeted to Khateh."

"Thank you, I am..."

Xenifra raised a hand in a stopping motion, "It is the least I could do."

He nodded; "So what happens now?"

"Khateh mentioned contacting the authorities to answer that very question. Did Tabitha have any family?"

"No, her parents died a few years ago and she was an only child. Never spoke of cousins or anyone else."

"I will have my attorney find out if she had a will or died intestate, also if there were any arrangements for her last wishes."

The bedroom door opened and Teh emerged, hair still damp and dressed in jeans and University sweatshirt.

Seeing her, Xenifra was captivated by the simplistic beauty and Frank could see it in her eyes.

"Daddy?"

"Yes pumpkin?"

"I want to handle Tab's arrangements" Teh said determinedly.

"Okay hun, I'll get you the numbers."

"Thanks Daddy" she sat next to the phone and rummaged through her purse getting the detective's phone number and dialing.

After speaking with the detectives Teh looked to her dad and Xenifra, "Well, the coroner will release her to the funeral home when he's done and once I am cleared I can go and fill out all the paperwork; regarding her apartment though, the forensics hasn't been completed but they'll let me know so that I can make arrangements as well. They still have to verify all my information and it will take a few days."

"Well pumpkin, I'm sure that will happen soon enough. In the meanwhile, I'll get you those numbers and I assume you will stay with Xenifra? I'd feel at ease knowing you would be safe and in good company."

"Okay Daddy. I'll just go get a few things Xenifra" she told them both.

"Take as long as you wish Khateh" she replied.

"Well, I'll leave you girls be" Frank gave Teh a kiss again on the head, "you be good" and then went to shake Xenifra's hand but instead suddenly pulled her into an impromptu hug whispering "Thank you" to a startled Xenifra. He then turned and left the two women alone thinking *'Dam she's a stocky strong one!'*

Teh just shrugged and went back to her bedroom leaving Xenifra standing puzzled in the living room.

When Teh returned, she found Xenifra playing with the cross bow, "You know, I almost took someone's head off with that thing. I didn't know it was loaded" Teh said pointing to the cross bow in Xenifra's hands.

"I apologize for that, it is habit" Xenifra replied unconsciously while removing the arrow and placing it down next to the cross bow, "All set then?"

"Yes, thanks again..."

"Khateh..."

"Yes?"

"There is no need for your constant expression of appreciation. I am only too happy to help in any manner possible."

"Okay, sorry."

"Nor apologies, for you have done no wrong."

"Sheesh, are you always this way?" Teh smiled to show her she was not serious.

Xenifra cocked her head with a quizzical expression to her face.

"So amiable and forgiving and...and..."

"Does this bother you?"

"No, I'm just not used to meeting anyone quite like you."

"Is that a bad thing?"

"No, very refreshing actually."

"Good" Xenifra replied picking up the bag Teh had placed on the floor and heading out the front door.

After a brief stop to Xenifra's office and then over to the funeral home to set an appointment time, Xenifra asked "Would you care to dine out or have a meal in my home?"

"Oh I don't want to inconven..."

"Khateh..." a rich and softly velvet voice burred.

"Let me guess, if you ask then it's not an inconvenience, right?" Teh enjoyed Xenifra's voice saying her name.

"Correct."

"Okay, have you ever had Bubbalou's Bodacious BBQ?"

"Pardon?"

"I'll take that as a no, okay...Thomas?" Teh called up to the driver, "Can you take us to 17-92 and Lee Road please? Thank you" Teh sat back enjoying the tiny look of confusion on Xenifra's face.

They pulled along the side of the road and exited, "Come on, my treat" Teh said grabbing Xenifra's hand and pulling her into the little restaurant, "Tab and I would come here every so often. So, this is kinda my way of keeping a good memory of her, and besides, you haven't lived til you had this food."

Teh was ordering for both of them and motioned for Xenifra to precede her and sit down at one of the inside bench tables. Returning from the ordering counter Teh handed Xenifra a glass of iced tea, "Though it's cold outside, you really can't eat this without some homemade ice tea" as sat opposite her.

"This is a unique establishment" Xenifra admired the ambiance.

"This is the best place in the world for ribs and fixins"

"Fixins?" Xenifra asked with a small smile at Teh's happier mood.

"The accompaniments to your meal....southern talk."

"Oh"

When their number was called, Teh jumped up, "I'll get it!"

She placed a tray laden with food down on the table and returned to the counter for a second which was just as full.

"All this?" Xenifra looked at all the food then back to Teh.

"Yep, trust me on this one. I'll explain, okay, here is your slab of ribs..." she began distributing the food, "then here's your coleslaw, fried okra, baked beans and corn bread."

Xenifra's only movement were her eyes looking from the food to Teh's and back again.

"Come on, trust me...you'll eat it all and wonder how later" Teh teased with a wink as she picked up a rib and began eating.

Xenifra relaxed and sat back in her seat after finishing her meal.

"See, you ate it all" Teh said quite proud of herself.

"Yes, you were correct."

"That's it!" Teh said suddenly which caused Xenifra to involuntarily reach for something she had not carried for over a millennia.

Realizing there was no danger; Xenifra relaxed her tense body "Is everything alright?"

"I finally figured out what it is about you, well part of you that I find wholly different."

Xenifra waited in silence.

"Your speech" Teh finally said; "you speak uniquely different than those all around us. You speak proper English, not cutting off words or endings or even..." Teh sighed, "it's like, well like that...instead of it's, you say 'it is'. You speak in an old world manner of formality, you never use contractions."

"Does that bother you?" Xenifra finally asked.

"No, not at all; I find it ..." a blush rose to her cheeks, "very attractive. It gives you an air of mystery" Teh lowered her head, "Why aren't you with someone Xenifra? Why are you single?"

'Ah, so she finally asks' Xenifra thought to herself.

"Truth is Khateh, I do not know."

"Was there ever someone?" Teh looked up and saw a brief glimpse of pain cross Xenifra's face.

"Yes"

"What happened, if you don't mind me asking?"

"She was...she is dead."

"Oh Xenifra; I'm sorry. I didn't mean to bring up a sad memory."

"It was long ago" Xenifra said with a hint of sadness lingering in the conversation.

"So no one has been close to you since?"

"No"

"Um, so...where do you come from?" Teh sucked the bottom of her drink through her straw.

"I was born in Greece. My mother died at my birth and father was a commander in the military. He raised me until I was old enough to follow in his footsteps and join the military."

"Wow, did you enjoy it? The military I mean. And is your dad still around?"

"Yes and no. I did in the beginning enjoy the military, but circumstances change. And no, my father passed long ago as well."

"Sorry. Seems we have similar upbringing though, now that I think about it. My mother died when I was a baby and my dad has raised me."

"Yes, so it seems."

"Xenifra, you seem awfully young to own so many companies and have such a diverse knowledge and background experience. Do you mind me asking how old you are or how you managed this?"

"No, I did say as you wish..." Teh blushed a bit in chagrin, "I happen to have an ability to analyze business and project trends. A few wise investments in markets that had only begun to establish themselves yielded exemplary earnings which I reinvested. As to my age, how old do you consider it to be a necessary requirement to be successful in business?"

"Oh I don't mean it as an insult or to question your ability, just a compliment."

"I merely wish to know your opinion as you seem to believe I am too young to be this successful."

"I don't know."

"How old are you Khateh?"

"Twenty seven"

"I was already a commander before that age."

"Is that where you get your discipline from?"

"Yes and no, I've always been strict. Father would say I was more regimented than even he was."

A customer entered the restaurant causing a gust of wind to brush over them.

"Oh, it's getting colder" Teh shuddered from the cold and rubbed her arms.

"It is; shall we go? Unless you wish to eat more?" Xenifra said with a tiny sly grin.

"Oh, you're a cut up Xenifra. Really funny" Teh chided back, "no, but I need to pick something up" Teh held up a finger and went to the counter. A few moments later she returned carrying two big bags, "Okay, let's go."

Xenifra looked at the bags but did not ask.

~***~

As they walked to the limo, Teh waited until Thomas opened the door and then handed him a bag and whispered something which caused the driver to start. He blinked, took hold of the bag and nodded with what Xenifra saw as a blush coloring his cheeks.

When they returned to Xenifra's home, Teh handed Philippe the other bag and did the same thing.

"You have a kind, innocent heart" Xenifra said to Teh.

"Just thought they'd enjoy a treat too" she replied shyly.

"For that, I thank you."

Teh gave a half shrug, blushing "it just seemed like the thing to do. They've done so much for me."

"Would you care to sit in the study?"

"Oh yes, I'd love to talk with you in front of the fireplace about all the things you've collected and done" she replied excitedly.

"Then so it shall be" Xenifra extended her hand and Teh immediately took it, this time not letting go until they entered the study.

Xenifra waved Philippe off, "Go and enjoy your meal with Veronique that Khateh has gifted you. I can manage."

Xenifra knelt in front of the fireplace, building a fire as Teh asked "So Xenifra, can you answer a question for me?"

"If I can, yes" she replied while getting the fire just right and setting the fire screen in place.

"I originally asked you why you picked us up but you were very vague; basic need of human nature and curiosity. I understand the basic need of human nature as the physical manifestations but curiosity, you've got me on. As I thought it was Tab but you said she put you off."

"Yes" Xenifra replied, sitting in the other chair next to Teh.

"So, was it...and please don't think me egotistical in asking, but why were you curious and was it of Tab or me?"

Xenifra looked from the fire to Teh, "I do not think of you as egotistical by any means. It was not Tabitha" she turned to look off at nothing in particular.

"Oh" Teh said quietly, "Um, why?" Teh tucked one leg up under the other and sat to face Xenifra.

"You reminded me of two individuals, uniquely different yet who supremely impacted my life. At first in appearance and now in mannerism, personality and character" she looked again to Teh then back to the fireplace.

"Two people? Well, that's different. Usually it's the 'you remind me of someone' line" she posed her fingers as air brackets when she spoke the words.

"Each was markedly different in their own right."

"Well, I hope they were good impressions upon you" Teh said as she admired what she believed was a regal profile as she looked at Xenifra staring into the fire.

"Life altering" Xenifra replied barely above a whisper.

A light knock, "Mistress?"

"Yes Philippe?"

"The Mademoiselle's phone is ringing. I thought it important she not miss a call."

"Thank you Philippe" Xenifra said as Philippe handed Teh her bag and she scrambled to answer it.

"Hello? Yes, I did Madeline, Why? Because they asked and you drove her home and yes they questioned me too. She was my best friend and this has happened to her. No, I don't want to have coffee and discuss this with you. No, I don't want you to swing by to check up on me. I'm fine and being taken care of, safe and secure and I prefer it this way. No, I don't need any help. Madeline stop, look could you just STOP! I haven't felt right since our first coffee and if it's all the same to you, I don't want to have you pursue me anymore. Because you wouldn't take no when I tried to tell you, as a matter of fact it was the night Tab..." Teh got up out her seat and began pacing the room, running a hand through her hair, "Did you hurt her Madeline? Because as far as I know you were the last one to see her, that's why!" her voice rising causing Xenifra to rise and walk towards her.

"Oh, alright. I apologize. I didn't mean to accuse you; she ...was my...look; okay, yeah, you take care too, goodbye" Teh took the phone away from her ear, pressed the disconnect button and sighed exhaustedly.

Xenifra stood just in front of her and hesitantly touched her shoulder.

It was all Teh needed as she reached out for Xenifra and began sobbing. Xenifra pulled her into her arms and embraced her gently and comfortingly, "Shhhh, no more pain, no more shock" Xenifra soothed.

After a few moments, she could hear Teh's crying lighten and feel her breathing return to normal, "Come, sit and rest" as she led her back to the chair, "Care for something to drink?"

"Water, please."

"Philippe" Xenifra put her hand out and was handed a tall glass of water.

Teh drank and sat back, "I am so not wanting anymore grief!"

"If it is in my power, you shall not" Xenifra said from her knelt position just in front of Teh.

"Do you remember the woman you were introduced to the night we were at your restaurant?" Teh asked Xenifra after finishing her water.

"Yes, I recall her."

"Well, that was her, as you could no doubt hear. I apologize for raising my voice. She has just..."

"Firstly, are you alright?" Xenifra interrupted.

"Yes, thank you" Teh smiled at her concern, "She was the blind date Daddy set me up with."

This caused a small twitch to Xenifra's right eye.

"It was an unintentional thing, but I went along with it for his sake..."

Xenifra shifted her eyes to Philippe and he exited, returning soon after with a tray set for tea.

"Madeline seemed like a nice person with an interesting work field..."

"I sense hesitancy on your part" Xenifra stated.

"Yes, there's a but..." Teh smiled, "she just felt 'off' to me...here, in my gut" Teh motioned with her hand on her stomach, "I just thought it was because I wasn't giving her the benefit of the doubt and she was only just introduced to me. But the second meeting was just as weird and the third just creepy."

"Did she harm you?" Xenifra's eyes grew dark and her voice had a slight edge to it.

"No," Teh was looking to the fireplace and missed the look, "she just acted possessive and something must've happened in the parking lot because she came back almost flustered."

"What night was this?"

"The night I bailed Tab....the night..." she couldn't finish the statement.

Xenifra rubbed the hand that she still held in hers, "It is okay."

"She said she wanted me to consider her getting to know me better, I tried to say no but she said to give it time due to Tab's call."

"Do you feel she had anything to do with Tabitha's demise?"

"I really don't know. I just know she said she wanted to talk to her regarding a tiff we had at the police station. She said she had nothing to do with it as she dropped her off and went to a gas station further up and then headed back to her hotel. Last she saw of her she said was her climbing the stairs to her place."

"Well, it is for the police to find the details and sort them. You should rest now" Xenifra said as she rose from kneeling on floor still holding her hand.

"Can't we just sit and have this tea? Please...I don't want to....be alone...right now" Teh said in a small voice.

"I could never allow such a thing intentionally Khateh. We will sit as long as you wish" Xenifra let go of her hand and turned to pour her a cup of tea.

Surprising Xenifra, Teh stood up and on her tiptoes gave her a kiss on the cheek, "Thank you" she whispered.

Xenifra froze.

Teh sat and began drinking her tea, unaware of the reaction she had caused.

Shaking herself from her stupor Xenifra finally sat, staring off into the fire's flames. After a while, she turned to look at Teh, finding her asleep in the chair, "Dear Goddess, what are you doing?" Xenifra said looking at the sleeping beauty, "She is all that I could ever want and more yet, so forbidden to me."

Xenifra stood, walked over to Teh and took her cup from her hand, placing it on the table.

She bent and scooped Teh up in her arms, gently cradling her, and going to the guest room.

Gently laying her down, she removed her shoes and pulled a blanket up over her, "Sleep well little one...." Xenifra choked realizing what had just escaped her lips that had not been uttered by her in over a millennia.

She brushed Teh's hair from off her face with a gentle caress and left the room.

Xenifra wandered the city street for a while, coming back to Tab's apartment then proceeding to the gas station; mentally calculating time and specifics. A few hours later, back at her home, she made a mental conclusion that this Madeline was the cause of Tabitha's death.

By Tuesday the coroner had released Tabitha to the funeral home as directed by Teh and the funeral was scheduled for Friday morning.

The police had finished with Tabitha's apartment and Teh had decided to give most of her possessions to a charity to give to families that were either destitute or struggling with no where to go; with the stipulation they never made anyone pay for anything.

Some items Teh kept for sentimental value of the time that they had shared together.

During the time she was sorting things, Teh was unaware she was being stalked. Xenifra could sense another's presence whilst with her but could not afford to leave Teh's side to further investigate.

It was also at this time that she started to realize she truly enjoyed Teh's companionship, their talks and meals together and alarmingly, enjoying the nightly kisses to her cheek from Teh.

"RING RING"

"Miss D'Olympia?" a voice asked when Teh answered her phone.

"Yes?"

"It's Detective Harmon here."

"Oh hello detective; what can I do for you today?"

"Well, this is an informal call actually. I just wanted to talk to you about the preliminary results of the investigation and ask a few more questions. Would I be able to meet with you to discuss?"

"Um, could you hold a second?"

"Sure"

"Xenifra?"

"Yes Khateh."

A smile graced Teh's face at her name rolling off Xenifra's lips, "I've got Detective Harmon on the phone; she wants to meet regarding Tab. Can I..."

"Yes"

"But you..."

"Anything you need, wish or desire is at your beckon call Khateh."

A deep blush and an extreme shiver of her body at the thoughts her statement caused, "Thank you Xenifra; sincerely" Teh finally was able to say in a quavering voice.

Xenifra gave a small nod while lowering her eyes in acknowledgement.

"Detective, do you know the black marble building downtown? Yes, that one. I'll wait for you in the lobby" Teh hung up, "Xenifra, would you mind..."

"No, I shall do as you wish."

"You know, I really could get used to you...I mean, um..." Teh blushed again and began to stammer.

"Philippe?"

"Yes Mistress?" Philippe replied from the doorway of the study they sat in.

"Serving of tea and coffee for three in the meeting room."

"At once Mistress" he exited silently.

"Shall we?" Xenifra rose, extending her hand to Teh who took it willingly and did not let go while they rode down to the lobby.

Xenifra stood behind and to the side of Teh as they watched the detective come into the lobby, "Miss D'Olympia, Miss General."

"Please detective, it's Teh. Would you follow us; we're going to a meeting room where there is privacy."

The detective nodded and once they were seated with drinks settled in front of them she began, "Thank you for meeting with me. I wanted to give you a preliminary report of our findings so far. Since we have cleared you of any involvement as your alibi checked out; sorry but we had to be thorough and be assured everything was verified so as not to be looked upon as being neglectful in our duties of checking every detail and lead."

"Understood"

"Did you mind discussing this before her funeral?"

"Its okay, I want to know what happened to her before I say my last goodbye. Can Xenifra stay? She's my support."

"Yeah, sure, well the coroner has determined her death a homicide. Apparently aside from the stabbing and sexual assault, there were some unique markings in the wound; as if someone had covered it up with the serrated knife to hide it."

"What kind of markings?"

"Well the doc found two puncture type holes on either side of the blade. Almost like a small carving fork was used first then they used the serrated knife afterwards."

"Oh my God Tabitha" Teh put a hand to her mouth.

"Detective, did they find or recover such an item or anything similar?" Xenifra asked while she took hold of Teh's other hand.

"No, nothing at the scene; as she didn't own a vehicle we didn't have that option to search. Tabitha wasn't into any ritualistic sorta stuff was she? Or into any specific form of intimate acts?"

"No, she liked to fool around but was strictly person to person or persons. No outside influences like whips or chains or into kinky things."

"Oh okay"

"Why do you ask?"

"Well aside from the wound, the doc said that there was a big amount of blood loss but the crime scene was clean and we can't account for it."

Xenifra's jaw hardened and her eyes turned steely dark.

"Are you saying that something or someone punctured Tab's neck and drained her blood? Like some sort of Vampire or Satanic ritual?"

"We don't know yet. It's all preliminary and conjecture; that's why we're still investigating."

"What did Madeline say?" Teh asked bitterly.

"Without being specific as to her statement as it is part of the ongoing investigation, she said she spoke with her in the car as she drove to her home. Told her she was out of line in what she said to you and dropped her off. She apparently saw her climbing the stairs to her place when she drove off to the gas station up the road before heading to her hotel. The tape from the gas station

shows her purchasing some things before driving off in the opposite direction of the home, with the right approximate time."

Teh nodded almost dejectedly.

"Was there anything you can add to the investigation?" the detective asked.

"No, I'm sorry. That's everything as I only picked her up and then got dropped off. I wish I would've asked her to stay with me. Maybe she'd be alive rig..."

"Khateh, you did nothing wrong. You were not to know this would happen" Xenifra interrupted Teh.

"I know, it's just ...hard" Teh lowered her head, attempting to hold back the tears and failing as they began to streak down her face.

The detective looked from Teh to Xenifra, their hands still joined and then back up to them again, "Well, if you do recall anything at all, please call us" the detective rose, "Once again, we are sorry for your loss."

"Thank you detective, I will."

The detective nodded "I'll find my way out" rose and left them alone.

Teh sat quietly and Xenifra did not disturb her.

After a while, Teh began "I just get this feeling..."

"What is it?" Xenifra looked her in the eyes.

"That somehow Madeline's involved in this...I know she said she didn't and the police say they verified her story but ...it just feels wrong."

"If she is, she will get what is due" Xenifra replied with a cold edge to her voice.

~***~

Friday morning arrived with a light misty rain falling.

"Are you ready?" Xenifra asked from just inside the portacashier of the crematorium.

Taking a deep breath she answered "I guess as I'll ever be" and gave a slight shrug, proceeding into the building where a short ceremony would be performed for Tabitha and then she would be sent off to her final fate.

Afterwards, Xenifra had arranged for her restaurant to hold the wake and was inside with the few who had chosen to attend.

"Xenifra, thank you for all of this" Frank said as she stood with her and a few of Tabitha's co-workers.

"It is not necessary Frank, the least I could do for her memory."

"Well, I know that Teh appreciates it very much. Speaking of ...where is she?" he looked about.

"She excused herself to the rest room. She said she would return momentarily" Xenifra looked at her watch and felt an odd sense come over her.

"Oh, I just haven't seen her since we got in."

Suddenly Xenifra turned and strode quickly heading towards the rest rooms, a sense of panic overcoming her. As she headed towards the back of the restaurant she could see the cooks and wait staff looking to the back dock entrance. "What has happened?" She demanded to know.

"A woman, she went by in blur out door" one of the cooks said in broken English pointing out the door.

Xenifra went out the same door; a panic seizing her heart, as she caught the scent that she knew belonged to Khateh.

"Ugh" Teh moaned from the seat of the car she sat slumped in.

"Soon, Teh soon; you'll be fine" a voice familiar yet growing distant said to her as the motion of the car and the pain to her head caused her to pass out again.

"Mr. D'Olympia...Frank" Xenifra said with an urgency to her voice.

"Ah, Xenifra so where is..."

"Come with me" she interrupted and turned demanding with her voice to be followed.

Once inside her office she closed the door, "She has been taken."

"What? What are you talking ab..."

"Khateh"

"What?! Who? Where?" he angrily shouted as he rose and dropped his drink to the floor.

"Just now, a car was driven away and I believe Khateh was in it. She has been abducted."

"Xenifra! We have to find her. Call the police!"

"I already have, they are sending the two detectives Khateh has spoken to."

"Where the hell are they?!" he shouted.

"Frank, please...sit down. I am going to explain to the guests what has happened. The detectives will want to talk with them when they arrive. Meanwhile, I need you to be calm; I will send in a drink for you."

"Xenifra, she's all I ..."

"I know."

"Please Xenifra; I'll give you any..."

"No! Do not Frank. She will be fine; I stake my life on it. I will do what I must to help" Xenifra turned and exited her office leaving him alone for the moment.

After the detectives left, Xenifra drove Frank home, "Please stay here."

"How can I when my baby..."

"Frank! I only say it as a courtesy. But mark my words, I am telling you to stay here in no uncertain terms. Do not allow anyone in, only the detectives. Do you understand?" the cold harsh tone she spoke made him nod in submission. "NO ONE!" she turned away stroding to her car and returning to her now vacant restaurant. Inhaling the air she growled, "Not again!"

~***~

"Unh...ugh" Teh blinked groggily as she stirred in pain.

"It's okay, here, let's try to get you to sit up" said that voice again and now a blurry face.

"Ow, ow, ow...my head" Teh rubbed the back of her neck.

"Yeah, that's the after effect of the pinch. But it'll go soon."

"Who? Madeline?!" Teh said incredulously, "Why?"

"You...your scent...you drive me to do this. I don't know why, its ...I've got to have you!" she replied getting up from crouching down in front of her and began to pace, "I can't do anything without wanting you!"

"What are you talking about? Where am I?" she looked about.

"You don't have to worry about that. All that matters is that we're together. You'll see. You'll want to be with me like I do with you."

"What are you on about? I don't want to be with you!"

"Yes you do, and you'll want me to bed you and it will be sweet and innocent. Not like that streetwalker you called friend."

"You did it! You killed her!" Teh said retreating back in horror.

"She didn't appreciate you! She was a whore, if it wasn't me it would have been someone else!"

"You didn't have to kill her!" Teh yelled at her.

"Its just part of what she brought out in me."

"What are you saying?"

"Certain types bring out certain reactions; mostly bad...well actually all types are bad. But you, you make me crazy. Your scent...it drives my blood to boil in want. My skin tingles around you and my sex aches and drives me through the roof. I need you, I need to feel you, taste you, to lay with you and feed of you" Madeline ranted.

Teh's skin crawled at that notion, "NO! I WILL NOT!" she yelled.

"Yes, you will whether you want to do it willingly or by force."

"What?! You...you intend to rape me?" Teh was incredulous.

"That's harsh but if the need arises, so be it, yes" Madeline said with a non-chalant shrug.

"NO!" Teh jumped up.

Faster than Teh could blink Madeline was holding her in viselike grip, "Ah, ah princess...and don't think to scream. I know your type, so I've got us in a warehouse far away from listening ears until I can get you safely to a more, shall we say, appropriately intimate location to consummate our need of each other."

"NO!" Teh tried to struggle, angry tears escaping her eyes as the painful grip hurt her wrists.

Madeline inhaled deeply as she leaned in to smell her hair and neck, "I know what it is! Your blood...your blood is innocent. You've not lain with anyone" she said finally coming to the realization of what Tab and her argument had been over and loosening her grip a fraction.

Teh tried to move again but was still pinned by her hands.

"Oh what a pleasure it will be Teh, you'll see. I will be gentle and it will be magical."

Teh tried to scream but Madeline put a hand over her mouth, "Don't make me mad Teh," she went to remove her hand and Teh screamed anyways. Then things went black, again.

Having many skills, Xenifra was able to follow the trace scent that was uniquely Teh. She was just nearing a few warehouses when she heard voices and could smell adrenaline in the air.

"Man, ya think ya can take over our crib and just fuckin' walk out carryin' some bitch and we gonna let ya?" a young hoodlum told Madeline as approximately five of them were surrounding her as she carried Teh to her car.

"Out of my way pissant and I'll let you live" Madeline snarled.

"There's five of us and one of ya bitch, ya ain't goin no where til we've had our fun. We's got an initiation ta'nite and ya's gonna be the skill..." then motioning towards Teh's limp form, "she's gonna be the prize."

Xenifra stood in the shadows as more of the hood's companions arrived to their apparent club that Madeline had inadvertently chosen to use, "I would leave now" she said from within the shadows.

Several members turned to see who spoke.

As if out of an old classic black and white movie, Xenifra emerged from the dark. Her full length black coat open with an overly high collar accentuating her chiseled jawline, her wine colored silk blouse shimmering in the street light's illumination.

She moved as if on a casual stroll.

"They're the ones who should leave, as well as you. Teh doesn't want you, she wants and needs me!"

"Man, ya'll a bunch of lezzos. That's fine, we'll sort ya what ya needs to know" the so called leader said as hip hopped his way forward grabbing his crotch.

"STOP!" Xenifra's cold voice commanded, "Leave this place now and you will have much to appreciate later, I guarantee."

"Man, this here's our crib, ya ain't tellin us what to do" he motioned with his hands like he was showing her the words he spoke in an attempt of intimidation.

"You should leave. This doesn't concern you" Madeline said as started walking again to her car to put Teh in.

"Bitch, ya ain't goin' no where!" another hood stood in front of her path crossing his arms.

With one arm she held Teh's limp form cradled to her and with the other she flung the man out of the way, where he landed several feet away.

Xenifra walked a few feet closer, "I would suggest you place Khateh gently on the ground and walk away from her Madeline."

"Or what? You think you know me to tell me what to do? No, no one knows or owns me! And you have no idea what I am capable of" Madeline's voice rose and she became agitated.

"Bitch, ya gonna pay for that!" the leader came after her.

She picked him up by the shirt collar and flung him over her car.

"Put Khateh down!" Xenifra ordered with a voice of authority that dripped with anger.

Madeline laid Teh down gently as she had started to awaken, "Ugh."

Madeline, in a blur, was around the car and holding the leader up again, "You'll be my example to them." She said as her face contorted and she bared her elongated canines.

The man's eyes widened in horror; "AH! BITCH ...GET OFF ME!" he yelled.

"Khateh? Khateh?" Xenifra was at Khateh's side instantly, checking her neck for signs of the mark of possession.

"Ungh, wha....Xenifra?"

"Shhh, I have you, you are safe" Xenifra went to lift her.

"I wouldn't do that if I were you!" Madeline snarled while she held the now limp body of the man by the shirt with both hands and casually tossed him to the floor, licking her lips of the dripping blood but never turning her head to look.

"Do not cross me Madeline. Leave Khateh alone and go back to where your master made you. There I will leave you be" Xenifra stood slowly.

"You'll what!?" Madeline laughed the laugh of a crazed woman, "you have no idea what I am to threaten me or..."

Before even Madeline could begin to utter the next word Xenifra was right next to her, startling everyone including Madeline.

"It is you who has not concept of who *I* am" Xenifra emphasized the word 'I' as she said in an almost whisper standing mere inches from Madeline causing her to jump.

"Man, that crazy bitch's a vamp! She killed Bigs" a young hood pulled a gun and fired at both of the women.

Faster than Teh could see or even for Madeline to track, Xenifra had all the hood's guns in her hands, "Go now...you never beheld any of this...or you lives will be forfeited" she said as she dropped the guns to the pavement at her feet.

"Bitch, Get her!" the hood yelled as he lunged at her with the rest of the members attacking as well.

It was only a minute but that's all it took.

Xenifra had dispatched seven men, several of them by a stab with their own knives that they had attempted to use on her and two with broken necks using her formidable martial arts skills.

Madeline had killed four by ripping their throats open to die a horribly painful death of blood loss.

Xenifra stood in front of Khateh protectively as she still lay on the ground in shock at what was happening and what she was witnessing.

"So you think your little Kung Fu is going to stop me?" Madeline sneered while still breathing heavily from her rampage.

"It is not Kung Fu and no, that is not going to stop you" Xenifra replied while standing stock still.

"Exactly, so get out of here and leave Khateh to me where she belongs" Madeline moved forward while brushing off her arms in a cocky manner.

Xenifra's tone was ice cold and bitter "Khateh is not a possession to give over to you and she does not belong with you."

"She will be mine and you'll be dead to say otherwise!" Madeline lunged at Xenifra at a speed that cause Teh to think she had disappeared. But Xenifra was faster and sidestepped before Madeline could stop.

Teh was startled by a loud crash behind her and turned to find Madeline in a heap on the pavement, unable to have stopped her momentum forward.

"Madeline, last chance....leave!" Xenifra said solemnly.

A growl of frustration was all that was heard from Madeline as she attacked again.

Teh could only see past glimpses of images as the two of them traded blows so quickly she could not actually see them.

Xenifra out speeding and hitting Madeline in all facets, with only a lucky hit landing on her. Xenifra finally had had enough and took Madeline by the throat with one hand, lifting her completely off the ground.

"Who...wha...are you?" Madeline croaked.

"I am Xenifra, General to Pharaoh Seti I. I am Hecate's Warrior and Guardian of her word. I am your sire's sire by millennia."

Madeline was struggling like a child in Xenifra's grip, kicking and flailing about and froze at these words as her blood ran cold and looked up into Ancient steely cold blue eyes.

"You....you..."

"You are my regret on this earth Madeline, and you will be no more."

With that Xenifra's canines elongated. Holding Madeline's neck to one side, Xenifra plunged her bite into Madeline's throat, ripping it open.

Madeline's legs thrashed as she tried to escape her doom but it was to no avail. She grew weak and went limp, feeling the blood drain and escape from the wound inflicted in her neck.

She watched through a fog filled haze as Xenifra reached inside her coat, pulling out a small katana and then letting go of her body.

Madeline watched from her severed head on the ground how her body stood for only a brief moment then fell to its knees and collapsed to the side headless. Then all went black.

Xenifra stood still and then spat out the blood still on her mouth. She took a handkerchief from inside her coat and wiped the katana clean, placing it back inside her coat and then removed a vial.

Sprinkling some liquid on the two pieces of Madeline's body, she spoke some words that linguists of old languages would cry to have heard spoken so eloquently. "Legaras temidian u vampi makar; regratil meo a correma meo" (*Maker of Vampire, fear my wrath; the regret I made I correct*).

Smoke began to rise from the body and after a few moments the body burst into flames all traces - body, clothes, and blood - were gone.

Teh blinked.

One moment, Madeline was there threatening her life, the next she was a vampire and attacking men and Xenifra and then she was up in smoke.

She looked from the spot where Madeline's body was, then around to those of the dead hoodlums and finally up to Xenifra; who stood with the most forlorn hurt and look of sadness upon her face.

"I...I don't..." Teh was confused and disoriented as she tried to stand up only to have her lights go out.

~***~

"Honey, come on now. Wake up for me pumpkin, please" a strained and nervous voice begged.

Teh could hear the voice, then slowly opened her eyes and closed them again from pain when the light hit them, "Ow."

"Whew" Frank said relieved, "you're safe honey."

"What? Where am I?" Teh opened her eyes slowly, looking about as she realized she was in her own room.

"Xenifra found you and brought you home. She said there was some sort of kidnapping and hoodlum's fight."

Teh recalled images of what she had seen and tried to reconcile them with what Xenifra had done.

"I'm just glad you're safe, I owe Xenifra a debt that I could never repay. She said you'd be fine, she swore her life on it" Frank said while holding Teh's hand from the edge of the bed.

"Where is she?" she asked as she sat up.

"She had to go talk with the detectives downtown."

"Oh" Teh said sad yet a bit relieved. She didn't understand what was going on or what had happened and needed time to sort things out. "Dad, if it's okay with you, I'm going to go jump in the shower and then lay back down" she said rising up from the bed.

"Sure honey, I'll get Mim to bring you over a tray of your favorite soup and a sandwich. You just rest up and I'll let the detectives know you'll talk with them tomorrow."

"Thanks Daddy"

"Sure pumpkin" he leaned over and gave her a kiss on the head, turned and left the room.

Shaking her head Teh said to herself, 'What the hell is going on?'

~***~

"Thank you Miss D'Olympia for coming down, we hope you're feeling better?" Detective Robinson asked while sitting at the meeting table, "And you've been seen to by the doctors, we hope?"

"Yes detective I'm feeling better, thank you for asking. Just a shock I guess to it all. The doctor says I'm fine."

"Great, well we'll get right to it then" Detective Harmon stated.

"By all means"

"So, after the funeral, you were at the wake being held at the Pantheon Restaurant?"

"Yes"

"Can you tell us what you remember?"

"I was washing up at the sink after coming out of the toilet when I felt a hand at the side of my neck. It all went black then, when I woke up I was in what looked like a warehouse but it had a sofa and tables and stereo equipment."

I remember a really bad headache and pain in my neck here," she motioned with her hand to her shoulder and neck area where there was a visible bruised area, "when I looked up, Madeline was kneeling in front of me."

"Madeline? As in Ms. Tresledge?" asked Det. Robinson.

"Yes, she said something about the effects of a pinch hold or something. Then she started ranting about having to have me" Teh shuddered at the thought again.

"Have you?" Det. Harmon asked with a quizzical raised eyebrow.

"Yes, either willingly or by force if need be."

"Are we talking..." the detective tried to clarify the statement.

"She intended to rape me detective. I told her I would never be with her willingly" Teh interrupted, "I got up to leave but she held me down with an incredible amount of strength. She said it would be better than what happened to Tabitha" tears escaped her at the name of her best friend.

"She confessed to killing Ms. Moore?" Det. Robinson interjected.

"Yes, that supposedly Tab made her do it and deserved what she got. If not her, it would have been someone else."

"What happened next?" Det. Robinson asked as she rose and offered Teh coffee and water.

"I asked where I was and was going to scream when she covered my mouth, she told me we were in a warehouse until she could move us to a more intimate location to consummate her belief of us wanting to be together. When she removed her hand I screamed and then I felt a pinch to my neck again. I came to as someone put me on the ground next to a car.

I remember hearing raised voices, shouting and seeing several men surrounding the area, then I saw Xenifra standing over me, checking to make sure I was okay. I then heard shouting, a gun go off and then fighting. I could only see a bit as the car blocked my view and I was still dizzy. I saw Xenifra walk towards me as I tried to get up.

I don't remember anything after that. The next thing I know I was waking up in my bed at home yesterday. Apparently the doctor had been in, checked on me and gave me some painkillers which kept me out until I woke up late yesterday afternoon" Teh finished, taking a sip of her water.

The detectives were writing notes as the recorder still taped.

"Can you remember how many people were there?" Det. Robinson looked up from her notepad.

"I vaguely remember seeing two to the right of me and one just over the hood of the car. I know more were there from the voices coming behind the car"

"One, two or more voices?"

"Easily more than two"

"Did Ms. General do anything?"

"What do you mean?"

"Did she try to talk to anyone?"

"Yes, she said that they should leave now, it would be safer for everyone"

"What was the response to her and by who?"

"Their leader, I guess, said it was their crib and some other things that I couldn't hear as several of them were shouting things"

"Did Ms. Tresledge say anything?"

"Yes, she said the same thing to them, and to Xenifra.

"Did either one of them have a weapon?"

"There were guns that a few of the thugs had, but I didn't see anything on either Xenifra or Madeline."

"Do you remember seeing any stray dogs or if the men had them with them?"

"No, why?"

Det. Robinson nodded to the other detective, "Several of the men had their throats ripped open."

"Oh my God" Teh covered her mouth with her hand in shock, "what happened to the others?"

"Some had their necks broken, others were stabbed with their own knives as far as we can tell, but they are all dead."

"Oh no..."

"Miss D'Olympia did you see either Ms. Tresledge or Ms. General fight with these men?"

Teh hesitated a moment in thought, "No, as I was behind the car and they were in the dark. I remember seeing feet under the car shuffling back and moving like in a fight but couldn't see what was happening or who it was."

"Do you remember how many shots were fired?"

"I..." she looked off to the side trying to remember, "I think I heard two shots when Xenifra asked them to leave again."

"After that?" Det Harmon tried to encourage her to continue.

"Just the fight, oh yeah...then I remember Madeline on the ground as Madeline flew over me."

"Pardon?!" Both detectives said at the same time incredulously.

"She tried to attack Xenifra and she sidestepped her lunge and flew over me almost hitting the warehouse door."

"So Ms. General and Ms. Tresledge fought over you?"

"Yes, they traded blows and then I remember seeing Xenifra walking towards me, that's when I tried to get up but...I passed out I guess" Teh shrugged her shoulders.

"Have you heard from either of them?"

"No, my dad said Xenifra called to check up on me after speaking with you; nothing from ...Madeline" Teh said her name with disdain and discomfort. The detectives continued to write while Teh drank the rest of her water; "What did Xenifra say happened?"

"We're sorry Ms. D'Olympia; we can not divulge that information. Is there anything else you can remember?"

"No, I tried to order my thoughts. You know, who, what, where kinda of things but I've given all I can." 'Except stuff that I can't even believe!' she thought to herself.

"It's quite an amount Miss D'Olympia, we really appreciate you coming down and helping us out a much as possible."

"Well at least I know who did that to Tab, it was that bitch Madeline!" Teh said angrily.

"We intend to find her and investigate this to the full extent of the law Miss D'Olympia. We have a bolo out on Ms. Tresledge and have asked a judge to rescind her passport and notified Interpol. If Ms. Tresledge tries to go anywhere, we'll know about it. In the meanwhile we'd like to have a security detail set to watch you."

"What?! You think she'll try again?" Teh was outraged at the suggestion. Especially since she had yet to assure herself of what had happened and that Madeline would never bother her again.

"We'd rather not take the chance Miss D'Olympia" Det. Harmon tried to explain.

"No, I don't want to live my life in a bubble nor do I want a watch dog...no offense" Teh said shaking her head.

"Please reconsider Miss D'Olympia, it would..."

"No, I mean it. I don't want anyone following me or lurking over my shoulder...it will creep me out and scare me more than thinking she could come back again" which Teh knew would never happen after seeing her body in pieces and going up in smoke.

"Okay, but if you feel different or something changes your mind, please let us know" Det. Robinson acquiesced.

"I will. Is there anything else you need from me?" Teh asked rising from her seat.

"No, not right now Miss D'Olympia. We have your statement and we'll get it typed up and if you could stop by in a day or so to review and sign it, we'd appreciate that. Otherwise, if we need you we'll be in touch" both detectives rose.

"Okay, I'll be back tomorrow then, thank you."

"Thank you Miss D'Olympia, be safe" Det. Harmon shook her hand as did Det. Robinson once they escorted her to the door where a taxi waited for her.

~***~

"Hey Daddy?" Teh called out to her father after going home.

"Yes sweetie"

"Do you have the curator's number at the Smithsonian museum?"

"Yeah, I think I do...why?"

"Just research Daddy....getting my mind off things."

"Good, glad to see you trying to get back into things. Um, pumpkin, can I ask you something?"

"Sure Daddy"

"What's happened between you and Xenifra?"

Teh's face could not hide the look of hurt, sadness and confusion, "I...I just need some time to get over everything, I'm sure she understands."

"She sounds so sad on the phone, and seemed very concerned about you honey. She's asked how you're doing and I thought she was very interested in you."

"What do you mean interested and concerned how?"

"Well, she calls me everyday at the office to get an update on your condition and she had asked me for permission to court you."

"She what?!"

"She saw me a while back, before we knew about Tabitha and asked for my permission to court you. She said not in the father's possession aspect but in the potential suitor capacity. She believes in tradition and said she was going to ask you as well. Guess she never got that chance huh?"

"No"

"Shame really, she seems like one who cares deeply only once in a lifetime"

"Yeah, she does" Teh said sadly in a bare whisper.

"What's that honey?"

"Oh nothing, um, that number Daddy?"

~***~

"Hello Professor Baxter? My name is Khateh D'Olympia, I was wondering if I could ask you a few questions. My father, Frank D'Olympia, said you'd be most agreeable to a mythology geek such as me. Yes, he's my dad. No, I didn't know you were frat brothers; I'll have to grill him on that little secret. Well, I am looking for any information you might have on the Goddess Hecate, not just your run of the mill history but very deep historical data and anything on her priestesses or warriors. Yes, I'd be willing to travel there, when would...well I could be there tomorrow morning. Thank you Professor. I'll be sure to give my dad your regards."

~***~

Teh flew up to Washington and spent the next week camping out in the archives, learning new tidbits of information she was not aware of. She then flew to New York where the curator had set aside some information as a favor to Prof. Baxter on her behalf.

Finally she returned home to pack for a flight to Wadi el-Muluk.

"Honey, where are you off to now?"

"Oh, research out at Wadi Daddy, I'm using some of my six months accrued vacation and just ...relaxing" Teh said while packing.

"Alone?" Frank asked concerned.

"Yes Daddy, I'll be fine. No sign of Madness for over three weeks now, so I'd say she's gone for good" Teh had nicknamed Madeline that as part of her dealing process, having reconciled what she had seen that night and put fact to incidences as her research began to yield her some answers.

"Yes, I know. Vicky's completely distraught over the whole incident."

"Daddy, I am sorry Vicky is hurting as she had nothing to do with this, but I don't really care to hear about it."

"Sorry pumpkin, I didn't mean to..."

"It's okay, how about you and I go have dinner out tonight? Just us two?"

"Great. Your pick."

"Ah, ribs it is."

"How did I know!?" he chuckled.

~***~

After a week in Wadi, Teh arranged a flight to a remote location near Lagina in Turkey, a temple.

There she studied the markings in the temple with some of her notes, marking references and cross matching symbols. The one that made her gasp was the marking where the altar once stood. It matched the hieroglyph in Xenifra's study. It was the mark bestowed on Hecate's chosen warrior.

There were a few priestesses in the nearby modern day temple that worshipped Hecate in this day and age as the ancient temple was an archeological landmark and not accessible to the general public.

There Teh spent a few days speaking with the head priestess, discussing her namesake which earned her great influence points on getting highly guarded information, such as reading ancient parchments that had been archived to computer and modern books and even listening to stories handed down for hundreds of years.

Each fact confirming her suspicions more and more.

On the day of her departure, Teh spoke with the head priestess and asked a question that took the Priestess by surprise; the priestess smiled slowly then gave a nod of her head.

Teh said a gracious thank you to all with a very kind donation attached to her goodbye for their hospitality.

Returning home with determination and resolution she'd never felt before.

~***~

"Hello, may I please speak with Ms. General? It's Khateh D'Olympia."

"Good Morning Ms. D'Olympia, Ms. General is not available, may I take a message?" her secretary asked.

"No, that's okay, thank you" Teh hung up and dialed Xenifra's home number, "Hi Philippe, its Khateh D'Olympia, is Xenifra home? No? Oh that's okay, thank you" she hung up again and dialed her private number which rang out and went to voice message, "Where are you?" Teh said out loud while pondering what to do next.

Xenifra sat in a tent a few miles from the remnants of one of the smaller archeological digs, but was only interested in the site known to her and a chosen few officials.

There, there was a small obelisk made of black marble that sat upon a white granite slab. On the slab was inscribed ancient Greek letters mixed with hieroglyphs. The Egyptian government having had granted a special permit for this one unique marker to Ms. General's estate in appreciation for several artifacts being returned from lands afar.

Xenifra rose from her seat and walked barefoot out into the predawn darkness.

Though the temperature was well into single digits, she wore only black silk Gi pants with a sash about her waist and a deep purple silk sleeveless tunic, her long hair braided and held back with a leather strap.

She walked to where the obelisk was and knelt down, sitting on her heels with her hands upon her thighs with her elbows slightly away from her body, her head bowed.

To her side lay a katana in an ornately decorated sheath.

As the dawn approached, Xenifra began reciting in an ancient long dead language, the greeting for another day and an oath sworn to her patron Goddess.

Once complete, Xenifra slowly stood and began a series of moves that belonged to the ancient form of Tai-Chi.

Almost an hour later, the sun had risen and began its climb to its peak.

Xenifra stopped with a bow towards the sun, then gracefully picked up the katana and while holding it across both palms of her hands, she bent towards the obelisk and said some more words but this was in utterance of a prayer.

Unsheathing the blade, she laid the carved protector down and began an intricate dance of moves capable of severing head or limb from body with fluid grace.

A small breeze caressed the cheek and shoulder of Xenifra as if by a lover's hand causing the warrior to slow and stop.

Xenifra re-sheath her blade, turned towards the obelisk and bowed deeply.

In an ancient tongue she spoke, "You grace me my Goddess."

Slowly a beautiful woman shimmered to life besides her; "My Sartorian, your heart is heavy...again" the Goddess reached over, hovering her delicate hand over Xenifra's heart, but did not touch her.

"I have many burdens" she replied.

"I have watched over you, why do you carry these burdens not of your doing?"

"Because they are" she replied sadly.

"The creature you vanquished was not of your blood Xenifra," the Goddess said causing Xenifra to look up at her confused, "that creature was wrought by the greed of man for power and immortality. It was of a sire a mere infant to your age. You have left no such mark on mankind."

Xenifra's brows burrowed in confusion, trying to reconcile what her Goddess was telling her and the realization that the guilt she carried for that facet for so many years was for naught.

"Now, of the other burden."

"That was a foolish whim and of great disrespect to the memory of my anamachra" she turned sad eyes towards the obelisk.

"Oh my sartorium, these millennia have taught me that to have found the other half of your soul, you are favored."

"Yes, I was favored Goddess, and to do what I have done is a great dishonor to that."

"But Archelaos (*master of the people*), you punish yourself for a love greatly felt but not of your soul."

Xenifra stood confused and with a bit of resentment at what she felt the Goddess was implying, "What do you speak of my Patron?"

"The love you had was your life's love, but not the love of your life."

"NO! Rielle was my all!" Xenifra's head snapped to the Goddess, and then slowly, she sank to her knees, laying both palms to the granite stone before her.

"She was for your life then my warrior, but she was not to be your anamachra."

"No...no."

"The Fates foretold that the warrior I chose to gift, would walk the earth many turns before finding one of my blood to complete their soul."

"I...what?"

"Do you recall asking what I was seeking of you at the museum?"

"Yes," Xenifra nodded not looking up.

"Do you recall saying the word Metanoia had not lost its sting?"

Again a nod.

"Of the endearment you so freely called the little serf slipping through your high held walls? After asking me what I was doing as you believe she is forbidden to you."

A heavy sigh escaped the warrior.

"She is more than what you see, sartorian. Her name is Khateh D'Olympia, my namesake from Olympus."

The warrior's eyes slowly widened at the sudden realization of her name.

"She reminds you of both Rielle and me in features, personality and character."

Xenifra looked at her Goddess then off into the distance while recalling a memory both past and present.

"She is fierce, intelligent, strong, vibrant, passionate and innocent."

"She is someone I should not touch."

"Why do you say such things? When I gifted you, my last words to you were that there would come someone, who by the Fates and my blood, would cause you to unknowingly give away your most guarded possession."

"There is nothing I possess aside from your journal that I guard."

"Oh my warrior, I disagree. She will have a choice to make that you will offer."

"What do you speak of? What is it I guard to give and what choice will she have to make?"

"The choice you will offer will come because of who you are" the Goddess began to shimmer and fade, "it is the reason for your being here, it is where your burden lies, and it is what she now holds...your heart" the Goddess placed a hand on Xenifra's chest above heart causing a shock as she disappeared.

Xenifra stood in absolute bewilderment.

Her patron had completely confused her world with only a few spoken sentences.

She was lost to the notion that she need not carry guilt for an evil she thought she sired into the world. She was confused in her feelings about her lost love and the thought that she was not her soul mate and now the confirmation of her feelings and soul match for the little blond who had managed to steal the one thing she believed was lost.

After standing there frozen for hours in thought, Xenifra shook herself from her stupor and walked back to her tent, placing her katana in its carrying chest and retrieving some clothes and a towel.

Xenifra had set up a make shift shower, on the top of the camper truck she had affixed a large industrial strength water bag that would warm with the heat of the sun and provide a refreshing cleanse.

All she had to do was pull out a curtain rod that covered two sides in a ninety degree angle with the truck's side providing a third side. She would undress and step between the truck and the curtain leaving open the one side to the desert. She would reach up and turn a nozzle that would allow water to flow through a shower head by use of gravity.

Setting a tea kettle to boil, she stepped into her shower. By the time the kettle had boiled, Xenifra was dressing in a pair of Docker shorts, button down short sleeve tan camping shirt and a pair of desert boots.

She took her tea and sat under the canopy awning of her tent that could easily accommodate six people.

She sat looking off into the distance, past the obelisk at nothing.

~***~

At the Orlando International airport, "Yes Daddy, I'm going back over to Wadi. Because there's something I need to do. I'll be back when I'm done, okay? Love you Daddy, I've got to go" Teh hung up her phone as her flight was called to board.

She had exhausted all avenues of looking for Xenifra, using some contacts that would have certainly raised her father's eyebrows had he known who they were, but try as she may she had not received a solid lead on her whereabouts.

It was a fluke chance that she came across a website that said one place not commonly checked and overlooked when tracking people's movements, were flights or if privately owned airlines, flight plans.

So she knew Xenifra had her own plane, it was a matter of finding that information with a few greased palms of a few hundred dollars.

Sitting on the flight, she planned her course of action, using clues she had deciphered out of all the scrolls and tablets she had read. A rented camper truck was waiting for her when she disembarked having arranged all the necessary details prior to leaving.

With a navigator attached to the dashboard, all supplies checked and loaded, she took off in search of an answer.

Xenifra was just finishing off her shower, after her exercise routine, when she heard a rumble off in the distance.

At first she dismissed it as another truck ferrying tourists up to the tombs of the kings, but then she looked up and could see a vehicle headed in her direction.

The vehicle, a camper truck similar to her own, emerged like out of a movie, a mirage of shimmering metal with winds of sand being blown off the back tires as it threaded through on its way towards her.

Xenifra had left no word of her whereabouts to anyone and was weary of possible grave robbers, as this was her place of refuge.

Finally, the vehicle came to a stop and neither Xenifra nor the driver moved.

Watching Xenifra and the look of annoyance on her face, Teh eased the truck door open slowly and stepped out.

To Xenifra's shock, the one person she did not expect to see here but secretly wished for looked up to her.

"We need to talk" Teh said as she slowly walked towards Xenifra.

Xenifra turned and walked towards the tent awning.

She set the tea kettle to boil again and then made them both a cup; after handing one to Teh she sat down and waited for her to begin.

Taking a few sips of her tea, Teh found it refreshing and soothing to her parched throat, even though it was a scorching hot day, "You once said you would tell me about yourself..."

"Yes"

"I think now would be the appropriate time and remember, it was not the business side of it..." a long pause in which Xenifra thought Teh had finished and had her clear her throat to begin when Teh said something more, "...Pharaoh Seti's Legatus Legionis."

Xenifra eyes snapped up to Teh's and finally taking a deep breath, she began "My name is Xenifra; I was born to Caius Panterus and Cyrene Aries in the year 1329BC. My mother died in childbirth and my father took it upon himself to make every effort to ensure my wellbeing until I could be with him.

He was a centurion in the Pharaoh's legion and moved up in station as I grew. I would follow him about, learning and training with the rest of the soldiers. One day, he was injured and I took charge of his men until the battle ended. The legion commander promoted me and Pharaoh's general did as well after a few more seasons.

By my Twenty-eight summer, I was made General and Legionis to the Pharaoh.

I had a young servant girl, Rielle, whom I loved dearly and was to be wed to on Solstice upon my return from an outpost securing in a port town. It was to be my last duty overseas and abroad for the Pharaoh had given me permission to wed upon my return.

Unbeknownst to me, there were many who did not approve of the Pharaoh's kindness towards me or of my appointment. They felt it was their position I was taking and set plans to fix that.

After a few weeks out, they made allegations against my Rielle and had her thrown into the pits..." Xenifra's eyes became steely dark and her voice cold, "there, they took turns defiling her, torturing her to confess to something she did not commit and then under these allegations, she was put to death."

Teh gasped in horror.

"Upon my return, my home was in shambles. My father had died the summer prior and I was the head of the household. When I asked for Rielle, they told me she was gone. After speaking with the Pharaoh and advising him of his outpost, I asked of Rielle and he had his vizier come forth. It was then that I found out, as did the Pharaoh, of her death.

He put forth a decree that his General's servants were to be given stay of execution until he personally was read into the allegations and then he would decide.

But that was of little comfort to me; my Rielle was gone.

I asked who had made the allegations and was told it was three Praefectus who said they witnessed her stealing from my home.

This, of course, was a lie as Rielle had complete control and autonomy over my home, she was a free woman who was known to be betroth to me.

The Pharaoh said if I so choose, I could select another mate from one of his concubines to be my servant and slave, but I wanted no other.

I left and sought out these men, finding one I ran him through, my vengeance only starting.

The others were harder to find as they hid like cowards upon knowing of my return.

Pharaoh put out a decree on their heads, to have them arrested after learning of their circumstance of lies and deceit against my betroth and that she would not steal from me as she was my childhood friend.

But I did not want Pharaoh's men to find them; I wanted their blood on my hands.

These cowards had gathered men to join their cause under pretense that once they were rid of me and made commanders or legionis, they would give them command of their own troops as well.

One night, as I lay in my home in mourning, they attacked.

Many of these men I had known in the battlefield and here they were, attacking me for their egotistical advancement.

I was not to make it so, I slaughtered some of them, but was mortally wounded in the process. As I lay there, giving into my grief, loss and ache to be with Rielle, the Goddess Hecate appeared to me.

The cowards that survived with their leader ran upon seeing the shimmering of her light. Being that I was her chosen warrior, she knew of my love lost and my anger and despair.

I did not know that the Goddess favored me highly or that she had adored me secretly until reading her journal decades later. But she did not wish me carry the suffering of loss or to wander Hades' realm so she did what she knew was forbidden, something only she could do but with heavy heart at what it meant.

The Goddess made me into Vrykolakes; vampire.

She drained my blood near death's breath and cutting over her own heart, suckled me to her bosom.

I drank.

I drank the thirst quenching essence, feeling it heal my body of its wounds, feeling it charge my body as if struck by a bolt from Zeus himself.

She put me to sleep, saying into my dream *'Sleep now my warrior, for you will rise to never need sleep again. You will feast upon those who have taken from you your heart to one day have it be held by one of my blood who will complete your soul'*.

And so I slept.

I awoke several days later; after they had found my home in ruins and the stench of death of the slaughtered men overwhelmed them to find it so.

When I did, I sought Pharaoh's permission to leave. He did not question my request and granted me complete support in understanding all my needs.

I left my home to seek those men.

It took moons, but I did. When I did, I killed them all with my bare hands and as my Goddess said, I drank of their blood.

I have corrected many wrongs done by man and exacted justice for many who could not of their own accord. I never returned to my home; instead I have wandered the earth for all this time.

This is where I come to seek refuge...as it is where I had Rielle's body interred."

Teh sat in absolute silence.

She had found clues of the possibility of the woman seated across from her being truly Pharaoh's General and Hecate's Warrior.

Her piecing of clues such as Xenifra's signing of the card Hecate's Warrior; of her hearing what she told Madeline; of seeing what she had done to her; all tying into her suspicions.

But to actually confirm them was surprisingly shocking to say the least.

"Was she your...what did you call it...anamchara?" Teh asked.

Turning slowly to look at the obelisk, Xenifra said "She was the love of that life."

"Is she one of the two that I reminded you of?"

"Yes"

"Who was the other?"

"The Goddess Hecate"

"I am neither of them"

"No, you are not"

"Yet you asked my father to court me."

"Yes"

"Why?"

"Because in you I find peace, joy and have felt more alive than in all the millennia I have walked this earth."

Teh was at a loss. How could one even respond to such a bold heartfelt truth?

"Why did you come here Khateh?"

The question threw her as she didn't expect such directness, "I..I.."

"Go home. You know enough to send you screaming into the night or to call the mental services."

"NO!"

Xenifra turned her head slowly to face Khateh.

"I came out here because I was lost without you" Teh said in anguish.

Xenifra's eyebrows shot up.

"I've known something was different about you, but I could not place it. That night you saved me...it was then that I knew something but when you would not contact me or see me so that we could talk. But then again....I was not ready to talk with you."

"Khateh, this..."

"I belong with you!"

Xenifra closed her eyes and took a deep breath; this was all out of her control and very disconcerting. "Do not say things like that!"

"Why? Because I'm saying it instead of you?" Teh began to get upset but then took a calming breath. "You never asked me."

"Asked you?"

"Asked me if I wanted you to court me; why?"

"I was not afforded the opportunity, the day I was going to ask was when the detectives and I arrived at your office."

"And now?"

Xenifra blinked, "I...I..."

"Not nice being caught off guard, is it?" Teh asked with a tiny hint of a smirk.

"No"

"So?"

"Would you even consider it even a reasonable request after all that I have just revealed to you?"

"Yes," a pause, "In fact..." Teh put her cup down and walked over to Xenifra, "I need to hear you ask me."

"Would you consider me Khateh, as a possible suitor?"

"No,"

A confused hurt face looked back at her.

"Not possible, but my only suitor"

"Even knowing what I am and from where I come?"

"Yes"

"But..."

"No buts Xenifra, now....isn't there something you're supposed to do to make that official?"

Xenifra stood up and took one of Teh's hands, bringing it to her lips, she gently kissed it.

"Can't you do better? Considering the circumstances and all?" Teh asked coyly yet brazenly.

Xenifra took another deep breath and very nervously and hesitantly leaned down and placed a gentle chaste kiss to Teh's lips.

Looking up to Xenifra, "That wasn't hard now, was it?"

Xenifra nodded no, her body doing weird things inside at the kiss and touch.

"I know there is much more we have to talk about, but can we eat first? I've been driving for two days and only eaten trail bars and nut mix."

"If you would want to freshen up, you can use the shower around the side of the truck while I make us something to eat" Xenifra said pointing to the back of the truck.

"That'll be great, thank you."

~***~

A half an hour later they sat under the awing again, eating a light meal that Xenifra had prepared.

"You take what I have told you in stride" Xenifra sat back from the table.

"There's been a lot happening in the last few months that really have caused me to expect the unexpected. As you know, I've lived my life reading; researching and studying all there is to know about the past; their rituals, people, actions, stories...all of it. To actually be in the presence of a live person of that culture...it just seems the natural progression to me since I've always been surrounded by artifacts and relics of the same."

"You are not disturbed of my history?"

"No, intrigued and saddened."

"Why?"

"I do not know, only that I feel it a need to be with you..." a blush came to Teh's face and she lowered her head, "I have been lost with out you. I feel safe, feel...at home, feel lov...anyways" a shrug.

Xenifra rose and cleared the plates, not replying as she was utterly confused as well.

"Would you show me her resting place?" Teh asked.

Xenifra turned and stood thinking, finally giving a small nod. She then led them to the obelisk.

Teh looked upon the site which was pristine in cleanliness and condition for the desert conditions they were in, "May I ask what the letters and symbols say?"

"Never forgotten or left behind. Loved throughout the sands of time."

Teh was quiet and gave respectful reverence to the site, "Thank you...for sharing this with me" she finally said.

Xenifra turned and walked back to her tent, not replying at all.

Teh watched her go, leaving her alone to have some space and peace. She turned back towards the obelisk, squatted down and gently touched the granite slab "She must have loved you dearly; I wish I would know what that's like one day. I only hope she'll let me" Teh said gently caressing the slab and looking out to the desert.

Standing, she made her way back to her truck to set up her camp for the night.

Xenifra wandered out of her tent when she heard some banging and shuffling, "Khateh, you need not do that. You can have my tent as I do not require it or have need of it."

"No, no...I'm not going to intrude on you anymore, not like that either" She shook her head, "Bad enough I've intruded on your private grounds here like this uninvited" she began to get upset with herself 'What was I thinking?! How can I compete with that?!' she thought to herself.

Before she could shake out her sleeping back, Xenifra was standing in front of Teh and holding her hands gently in her own.

"Khateh, *You* (she emphasized the word) are not intruding. If anything, I find your company ...calming and refreshing."

A ragged breath escaped Teh as she held back her tears.

"Come sit with me" Xenifra led her over to her tent, "Khateh..."

"Why did you save me?" Teh suddenly asked.

"Because, she was an abomination and you deserve a chance to be happy with whom you want to be with."

"No other reason?" Teh asked hopeful with unshed tears in her eyes.

"I...I..." a pause, "I hope the tent has what you require. I am going for a walk" Xenifra rose, exited and started walking. She walked past the small monument of her love lost and headed out towards Wadi.

Teh watched her go and her heart broke, 'What are you? A teenager with your first crush?!' she admonished herself as she threw herself onto the camping cot and curled up like a little child, crying. Letting the exhaustion of everything crash over her and drag her into restless sleep in moments, tears still spilling from her eyes.

A short while later she felt a presence, not scary or alarming, just a secure feeling as she rolled over and blinked open her eyes to see a tall, regal and beautiful woman.

She had blond red hair that hung to mid waist in waves and curls. A very aristocratic face with beautiful deep green eyes that twinkled at seeing her awaken.

"Hello Khateh" said a soft melodic voice.

Teh felt no malice coming from this woman; only a sudden, overall warmth as if being embraced in a grandmotherly affectionate hug which had been granted her.

"Uh, hello" she rolled over and sat up.

The woman admired Teh, smiling as she looked her over with pride.

Teh still squirmed at the perusal and blushed, "Um...I..."

"You are doing the correct things Khateh, she is just a little lost."

"Pardon?"

"You question your actions regarding Xenifra, but rest assured you are right. She is just afraid. Something she has never known"

"I don't understand."

"In all her life Xenifra never felt fear. She was loved dearly by her father and protected by him as much as he could. She was admired and praised by her men and honored by the Pharaoh. And, she was loved and cherished by her Rielle."

Teh was quiet; she lowered her eyes then brought them back up to look at this enigmatic woman.

"Never has she feared anyone or anything, yet with you she does."

"But..."

"Not because of something you do Khateh, it is because of who you are and what you mean to her."

"I don't ..."

The woman smiled at Teh's spirit but confused frustration, "You are the only one who has caused her to feel since Rielle has been gone from her life. You have touched her more deeply than Rielle ever did and, you hold something insurmountably precious of hers that she is afraid of it."

Teh looked confused.

"You hold her heart little one."

"But ...she wouldn't even say why she saved me! How am I to believe that?!"

"Because she is in love with you, and the last person she ever loved died. She is afraid of not being able to protect you like she did with Rielle. She is afraid of failure to protect the one thing she is weakened by, her love for you."

"But she didn't even try to explain what happened or to ask me what I thought of it all!"

The woman merely tilted her head to the side slightly and smiled knowingly; waiting.

Teh's brows furrowed once again, then as if a light had been turned on she said, "Because she's afraid of what I would say or do!" and slapped her forehead.

A small nod.

"What do I do then?"

"I think you already know that answer, don't you? According to my Priestess you already have an arrangement for what you wish."

A moment later the realization of what she meant dawned on Teh accompanied by a blush, "Um, uh....so...um, how do I accomplish that?" she stammered.

"First, you must understand the implication and conditions which come with loving Xenifra."

A nod.

"As you know, Xenifra is no mere mortal, she is Vrykolake."

Another nod.

"Do you know what that means or entails?"

A hesitant nod, "Um, she needs to...um...have...um...to feed on...blood."

"Yes, that means she needs to feed on Human blood. Not only in killing though, it is when she is excited that she needs to feed. That means either in battle...or in passion."

A moment of silence as the woman watched Teh comprehend what she had said; a look of a cross between confusion and fear appearing to Teh's features.

"She does not kill her...partners. She merely has a taste of their blood in the encounter joining. But you little one, you are Katharos; innocent. She has never had, um..." here, for the first time, the woman faltered in explaining. She took a breath, "A virgin."

Teh blinked, shocked at the bluntness and truth.

"It is something that will change her, forever, if you were to gift her your ...um ...innocence."

Teh said nothing, as embarrassment of what that action meant, and then shyly she asked, "How would it change her?"

"She would become mortal; she would no longer be Vrykolake."

"Oh, that's a good thing isn't it?"

"Yes and not, for you see....she would age quickly and then..." the woman left the words of finality unspoken.

"Quickly? How quickly?"

"Within one of your years" the solemn response came.

"NO! NO...that's not fair! There's got to be something...there's got to be a way around that!" Teh said in near tears and anger evident in her voice which brought a look of sad happiness to the woman's face.

"There is but one way....but that is a decision only you can make and ask of her."

"What is it? It has to be done" was her determined reply.

A nod, "You must drink of her blood, becoming Vrykolake yourself and then have her drink of you again. But this must all happen in the same...um...at the same...."

"Joining" Teh finished.

"Yes"

"But, it's not only my choice?"

"No, she must sacrifice her control and relinquish decision to you."

"So, how do I get her to do this?" Teh asked determinedly having already made her decision she wanted Xenifra, whatever the price.

"You must first complete your request of my Priestess, as Xenifra is nothing but honorable and would not consummate such an act unless you were of each other's bond. Then the rest will follow."

"But how do I get her over there?" Teh was starting to get a bit frustrated.

"When you wake in the morning, you will have your answer" the woman replied cryptically as she approached Teh.

"What do you mean?"

The woman approached her and cast a hand over her, causing the suddenly sleepy Teh to yawn, "Who...who are you anyways?" she blinked blearily.

"I am sire to your line, my child, for I gave birth to your ancestor" she kissed the top of Teh's head as she slowly lowered her to the bed; already fast asleep.

"You should have told her my warrior" the Goddess said as she walked up to stand at Xenifra's side.

Xenifra stood looking out over the moonlit desert, "I...I can not."

"You mean you will not let yourself!"

A deep defeated breath escaped her, "She is forbidden to me as I could not bring myself to..."

"Do you always take decisions from people?"

Xenifra snapped her head up.

"Khateh is more than capable of making her own decisions; she does not need you making them for her."

"But, what she doesn't understand is who I am..." she bared her elongated canines, "and that I will watch her grow old and feeble. Yet I will never change, that is not fair to her."

"You love her deeply" this was more of a statement than question to the warrior.

A nod and breath, "She...she makes me feel things even Rielle did not. I crave her looks upon me, I yearn to hear her voice to my heart, I ...I relish her..."

"Scent and touch?"

A tiny embarrassed nod.

"That is because of what she is to you my kurios. Her blood is an aphrodisiac due to her innocence. Her touch is a balm to your soul as it is the other half of you."

"I can not harm her."

"No my kurios, you can not. But you can share yourself with her. Let her in, let her make the choice" the woman walked to Xenifra and gently laid a hand over her heart, "you must, as she holds your very being in her hands. Relinquish your fear and finally be whole and at peace" she then placed a whisper of a kiss to the warrior's lips as she disappeared.

Xenifra took in a shuddering deep breath, turmoil resting heavily on her broad shoulders.

In the morning Teh woke surprisingly refreshed. Sitting up, she ran her hand through her disheveled hair, wondering if she dreamt the night's conversation with a woman who claimed to be her birth mother of ancient times.

Just as she convinced herself it was a dream, she shook her head and made to stand when she caught glimpse of a silk pouch resting by the pillow.

Reaching over and picking it up, she heard some jingling inside. Opening the ties that held it closed, she turned its contents out into the palm of her hand.

Two rings, fashioned in hardened gold filigree with identical clear stones set shone brilliantly up at her, and a scroll.

She sat the rings down on top of the pouch in her lap and opened the scroll.

'No, you did not dream this. You need to know the meanings inscribed in these rings that are explained with a hieroglyph in my temple, in a language only Xenifra knows...' a smile came to Teh's face, '...by reading the hieroglyph, she will complete your request of my Priestess. The rest is up to you my blood daughter of old, be well and know I will be there when you need me most'.

Teh reread the scroll, her smile becoming broader and firmly set as with her determination.

Reaching over, she picked up the rings again. They were heavy filigree with a unique set of stones, each ring identical to the other except in size, one being larger in circumference to the other.

She closed her hands over them and held them to her heart with a nod, putting them back into the pouch and tucking it into her waistband.

Xenifra was just finishing her morning workout routine when Teh came upon her, watching mesmerized by her fluid and graceful movements with the bright red orange skyline illuminating her silhouette.

When she had finished, she re-sheath her blade and walked towards her tent "Good Morning Khateh" as she wiped the sweat off her body.

Teh stepped in front of her and tiptoed up, placing a kiss to her cheek, "Morning" rendering Xenifra speechless.

Teh proceeded to get a pot of tea ready while Xenifra continued to stand there, in shock at the unexpected show of affection directed towards her. Finally, she gathered her wits and placed her katana away.

"I, um..."

"Why don't you go ahead and shower. I'll get us some breakfast ready, okay?" Teh cheerily asked.

Xenifra nodded and walked around her truck to shower.

When she returned, Teh had breakfast set at the table and sat sipping on a cup of tea.

"Thank you" Xenifra said as she sat down.

"Your welcome."

They ate in silence until Teh finally spoke up, "So, tell me about Wadi."

"It is where all the Kings and Pharaohs were buried. You know of the Hamunaptra of the movies?"

"Yes"

"This is actually it, Hamunaptra does not exist. Here is where my Pharaoh was laid to rest to enter the afterlife."

"Wow, so are there many here?"

"Yes, a few yet to be discovered as I was witness to their burial and these archeologists are no where near their location."

"That is so..."

"Weird or disconcerting for you?"

"No, fascinating; to have seen history...first hand."

Xenifra shook her head in a confused and non-understanding manner.

"What?"

"Nothing"

"No, what Xenifra?"

"You"

"Me?"

"Yes"

"What about me?"

"You are sitting with someone who is not only millennia old but is Vrykolakes and you find it, fascinating. Everyone else would either try to have me committed, analyzed or go running into the night praying to whatever God they believe in to protect them using whatever symbols they believed in."

"I'm not like anyone else and you; I would never do that to you. I find you...just..." a shrug, "I can't describe it. Only that I don't want you to ever leave me again or go away...please" she said the last word in a whisper.

This made Xenifra take a deep breath, feeling something deep inside stir without an idea what it was. "So how was it that you figured out who I am?"

"I followed the clues; I started at the museums gathering all the historical data I could. Then I came here and then I went to a...temple."

"You have invested a lot of effort in this"

"This is important to me, you are important to me. And I could not find you to ask you."

"How did you find me?"

"Oh, um, your flight plans. Then just asking the camper truck local you rent from which direction you headed in and then logical conclusion with a GPS navigator."

"Very resourceful"

"Determined" she looked down and then back up, "Do you mind me knowing?"

"No, actually, it is almost a burden of loneliness lifted. I do not feel so isolated now."

"So, was Madeline the same as you?"

"No" a cold voice replied which caused Teh to flinch, "My apologies. She was nothing like me except in being Vrykolake."

"I know that Xenifra," Teh rose and stood next to her seated companion, "She was nothing like you" and placed a hand on Xenifra's shoulder feeling the subtle shift of tense muscle under the shirt, "I meant no offense."

"No, I am sorry. I should have realized you would not assume such."

Teh, not wanting to move her hand, pulled her chair over and sat touching Xenifra's arm now which Xenifra found unusually calming, "She was made from man's greed for power and immortality, not of my blood. But, as Vrykolakes we are bound by the laws of the ancients that made us, me. Her sire, whoever they are, must be found and destroyed."

"Can they harm you?" Teh asked looking up from running her fingers along Xenifra's arm with concern filled eyes.

This once again caused something deep within Xenifra to stir, as she had never had someone concern themselves for her sake aside from her father and Rielle, "No, as I am under the protection of the Goddess and I am trained in the ancient arts of which no other has."

"Oh," Teh continued to rub her forearm absentmindedly, watching the muscles twitch to the gentle caress, "there was something I came across that I couldn't decipher and ...well, I was wondering if..."

"You need not ask; where is it?"

"Well, not here."

Xenifra cocked her head slightly in question

"Would you mind taking a little trip?"

"Yes, for you."

"Well, then when you are ready..."

"Let us pack and go then."

"But...just like that? I mean...I don't want to rush you, you might not be done here and I don't want to...."

"Yes, I am done here" Xenifra said looking from the obelisk to Teh, realizing suddenly with a sad yet relieved breath that she had indeed said her goodbye to this place for the final time, 'Granix mopar ne retra a cora'(Thank you for giving me back my heart) she whispered an ancient prayer of thanks.

After packing and driving the two days back to the airport, they boarded Xenifra's plane, "So where do I tell my pilots to set course for?"

"Turkey" Teh replied trying to keep a tight lid on the excitement she was feeling.

A small lift of her eyebrow in curiosity etched Xenifra's face, "As you wish."

~***~

The flight was comfortable in the jet and Teh immediately settled down, her head resting on Xenifra's shoulder as she had fallen asleep while they were talking, the exhaustion of the trip catching up on her.

"Khateh...Khateh, wake up, we have arrived."

Shiver, "Huh, wha...oh, that was quick" Teh stammered as she rubbed the sleep from her eyes trying to wake up.

"No, we left yesterday. You have slept the whole trip over."

"Oh" she replied sheepishly.

"I have arranged for a car to take us to a hotel. We can rest there and then head out tomorrow if you wish."

"That would be great."

They exited the plane and entered the waiting limousine which took them to the Laguna Hilton, a magnificent hotel overlooking a beautifully landscaped valley.

"Ms. General; I have reservations" Xenifra told the front desk clerk.

"Oh yes Ms. General, all is ready. Here is your key, the concierge will see to your bags" the clerk replied.

"Thank you" Xenifra took the key after signing the register and followed the young bag handler.

The concierge led the way to the elevator and pressed the penthouse floor button.

After opening the door, delivering the bags and explaining the layout of the hotel room and amenities available, the concierge left the two in the penthouse suite.

"I hope you are agreeable to sharing accommodation? The master suite is for you," Xenifra pointed, "and I will use the other suite down the hall."

"No, I don't mind. But I can use the other roo..."

"That is not necessary. I do not require the bed as ..." Xenifra interrupted Teh.

"Yes, I know" Teh interrupted her in turn saying with small hint of sadness, "But, don't you ever rest?"

"Yes, occasionally."

Teh just pressed her lips together and turned, "Well, I'll go and freshen up then. Um, do you want to grab something to eat later?"

"That would be delightful" Xenifra smiled, gave a slight bow and turned towards her own room.

'Gods, how do I get her to accept me totally tomorrow, to willingly, in front of the Priestess, read the inscriptions and hieroglyph?' Teh thought to herself as she let the hot water run down her scalp and back. A voice whispered inside her mind, 'She will willingly' calming her anxious stomach immediately.

Xenifra was enjoying the heat of the hot pulsating shower on her back as she braced both her arms on the opposite wall, letting the water soothe her tense muscles.

'Goddess, she is so...' a sigh, 'I am so lost' Xenifra sighed heavily again.

'Let her in my warrior, relinquish to her' she heard the melodic voice in her mind, the Goddess's voice, 'Say the words you know to be true' the voice faded.

Taking a deep breath she closed her eyes.

She finished showering and dressed in a pair of pressed black pants, a deep blue silk blouse and long leather coat jacket.

She stood at the window overlooking the valley and hotel grounds below while waiting for Teh.

Teh emerged from her room and quietly walked into the common living room of the suite, finding Xenifra looking out the window.

Teh gasped quietly while admiring this woman who stood bathed in the evening's sun. Her skin was flawlessly radiant in the glowing reflection of the setting sun's ray. Xenifra was an enigma to her, yet a person she felt completely lost without. All these feelings occurring to Teh in the short

span of time she had known her and it was disconcerting to be sure, but she was not afraid of it whatsoever. If anything Teh felt resolute about it more and more each minute she was with her.

Xenifra slowly turned her head to look over at Teh, having heard her enter the room, yet enjoying the feeling of her eyes upon her, "Good evening Khateh", she said in a rich deep velvety voice.

Teh could not hold back her body's shuddering at that voice and what it invoked in her, "G...good evening Xenifra...you look.....amazing. Almost surreal standing there" she said shyly as she looked down to her fidgeting hands and then back up, letting her feelings finally start to be expressed even though she was afraid of them being rejected.

When she looked up, Xenifra was standing right in front of her, and she gasped in shock at how quickly she had moved "I...I always wondered if it was my imagination that you could do that."

"Thank you for the compliment, and no, not your imagination; it is a skill I learned after I became aware of my ..."

"Being Vrykolake"

"Yes"

"I could imagine that would come in handy sometimes" Teh smiled.

Xenifra nodded, "I have taken the liberty to have reservations made at the restaurant only a few blocks from here. Would that be suitable to you?"

"Yes, thank you"

Xenifra extended her arm to escort Teh, and she happily accepted, "Shall we walk?" Xenifra motioned towards the direction of the restaurant.

"Yes, that would be very nice as I've never seen this country and it's looking to be a beautiful night. Have you come here often?"

"No, I have only been here a few times and that was many years ago"

Teh rubbed Xenifra's forearm unconsciously as they walked, causing a shiver up Xenifra's arm.

"This is beautiful Xenifra," Teh commented as they sat in the restaurant balcony overlooking at the base of the Asar Mountains.

"Yes it is, though I can honestly say I have never really appreciated the beauty of it all, until now."

"Why is that?"

"Simple, I had no one to share it with" Xenifra said looking directly into Teh's eyes, opening the door to her heart and baring a bit of her soul.

"Oh Xenifra," Teh said softly reaching across the candlelit table and gently running her fingers over the top of Xenifra's hand, "Grant me the opportunity to share these things with you."

Xenifra took in a shaky breath and looked at their hands then out to the mountains.

They ordered their meals and drank some wine, "This item that you could not decipher, it is located here?" Xenifra asked.

"Part of it, yes; there is a key located there and I am certain you will tell me what I need to know" Teh replied using very specific words.

"Part of it?"

"Yes, part"

"Where is the other part?"

"Its here....now"

Xenifra slightly cocked her head yet again in curious wonder.

Teh enjoyed the look but inside she felt at odds with herself at not having revealed all to Xenifra and it bothered her, "Xenifra, you are part of what I could not decipher."

Xenifra blinked, "I am?"

"Yes, you are the essential part of this and tomorrow; I hope you can answer the rest."

"As you wish."

"Xenifra, can I ask you something?"

"Yes, by all means"

"What about you? Your wishes?"

"I...I do not understand" Xenifra looked away and out towards the mountain, a bit lost.

"Who fulfills your wishes?" Teh reached for her hand again.

"No one...no one has ever asked...no one has ever....since Rielle."

Teh took in a sad breath, "That's along time ago Xenifra," looking from her hand which was still caressing the top of Xenifra's, "I think it's time ...for a change."

Xenifra looked into Teh's eye, seeing something that she had never seen before even with Rielle, the other half of her soul looking back.

A light clearing of a throat caused Teh to jump a bit; "Sorry for interrupting Kadinlar (*ladies*), your meals if you please" a young man dressed in waiter's attire said in heavy accented English while holding their plates.

The meals were served and were a learning experience for Teh as Xenifra explained the foods and their history.

"Wow," Teh said as the table was cleared, "that was delicious and entertaining."

"I am pleased you enjoyed it."

"Thank you for explaining all the foods to me."

"You are most welcome. I...I have never been afforded the opportunity to do that with anyone" she replied with a small smile which surprised herself more than anything, "would you care for some Kahre?"

"And the lessons continue..." Teh chuckled, "so that means coffee?"

"Yes, it is Turkish coffee."

"I'd like to try some, yes please."

After their coffee, they walked arm in arm along the many touristy shops and restaurants as Xenifra explained different items to Teh; as a feeling of completeness enveloping both of them in a cocoon of warmth that neither of them was consciously aware of.

Heading back to the hotel Teh asked, "Xenifra, what do you do whilst the rest of us sleep?"

"Well, I read journals and books, or I take long walks or work"

"Do you miss sleeping?"

"Yes and no. I occasionally rest, to stop thinking or to ease a rare tension headache. But I do not require sleep as most due to my body not tiring or need to recharge as it were."

"What about when you...um...had company?"

"I do not partake often of company, as you say. But when I have, I usually wait until they have fallen asleep before I excuse myself."

"Oh" Teh said turning her head away, her mind conjuring up images of Xenifra in another's intimate embrace, to then turn away and leave afterwards.

"Do you wish for anything else for this evening; another drink or coffee? Xenifra asked opening the door to their suite.

"How about I make you a cup of tea and you sit and relax? Just let me change out of these clothes, okay?" Teh asked her in reply.

"You need not..."

"No, but I know you are partial to them and I'd very much like to make you one," Teh looked up to her, "please?"

"As you wish, little one."

The term of endearment earned her a grin and amused twinkling eyes in return.

Teh moved to go and quickly turned back to Xenifra, grabbed her in a hug and pressed up on tiptoes giving her a quick kiss on the cheek before releasing her and quickly heading into the master suite.

Xenifra stood stunned. Teh, for all her small and innocent gestures was able to shock her, something no one had been able to achieve in over millennia to her. The feeling of Teh, holding her and showing her affection without an agenda had touched a deeply secreted part Xenifra did not even know existed.

Her touch had inflamed, aroused and soothed in one encompassing move.

Ah yes; there had been others to touch her, but none to spark any emotional connection to those touches. They were merely satisfying the basic human need.

And Xenifra herself had touched them in return, pleasuring and enticing her partners with intimate caresses or erotic strokes. But none had caused her desire to flame, her want to surface or her body to yearn; that is, none until now.

Slowly, she made her way to her room, changing her evening attire with relaxed clothing.

When she returned, Teh was already at the kitchenette making a tray ready; "Want to sit on the terrace?" she called out.

"That is a most enjoyable idea" she replied as she opened the door to the terrace and pulled out both chairs.

She walked over to the railing and resting her forearms on it, leaned down looking out over the valley and base of the mountain.

"It's a beautiful evening" Teh commented as she placed the tray down on the table.

"Yes it is, tomorrow there is to be a full moon. The mountains will be bathed in the moonlight and you will be able to see them all from here" she stated pointing to them from the railing.

"Did you know...tomorrow is Solstice?" Teh asked inquisitively as she poured the tea.

Xenifra quirked her head a tiny bit, reflecting on that statement "No, it seems to have slipped my mind some time ago," she turned to see Teh seated, her legs tucked up under her and to the side in a long University t-shirt and shorts, barefoot.

Xenifra took her all in, the athletically muscular legs, the firm toned arms, her hair pulled up in a loose ponytail, blond strands hung loosely having escaped the confines, and the green eyes twinkling up at as she watched Xenifra looking at her, 'Oh Hades!'

Xenifra had the decency to blush in embarrassment at having been caught and immediately dropped her eyes, "Mm...my apologies" she said stuttering as she had never felt what a blush or embarrassment felt like.

"Come over and sit down with me, enjoy your cup of tea" Teh said gesturing to the tea cup and graciously letting the incident go.

"Do you like what you see?" Teh asked over the rim of her cup looking out at the mountains.

"P...pardon?" Xenifra almost coughed.

"The view" Teh mischievously answered, not alluding to anything specific or the possible number of topics but secretly hoping it was about her Xenifra's reply would be about.

"I, um, yes" a pause, "Breathtaking" Xenifra finally responded having picked up on the subtle, yet nervous inquiry.

A smile formed on Teh's lips and her shoulders visibly relaxed.

They said no more that evening, enjoying the peaceful serenity and companionship.

Teh stifled a yawn, "Well, I'm going to turn in. Tomorrow's a big d...brand new day"

"Do not worry of this tray, I will take care of it" Xenifra motioned.

"Okay, well, good night then" Teh looked down at her hands and then back up.

"Good night Khateh, sleep well" Xenifra rose.

Teh rose and walked slowly, standing in front of her, looking up into the calm blue eyes she found fascinating.

Pressing up to her tiptoes, Teh moved to give Xenifra their nightly kiss on the cheek but stopped.

She lowered herself back down and reached up to cup Xenifra's face with both her hands, holding her attention as well as her cheeks.

Slowly she tiptoed back up, never breaking eye contact, and hesitantly, but determinedly, she leaned in and kissed her lips.

Closing their eyes to the sensation, they neither pushed nor pulled away, feeling the softness of each other, melding together and experiencing the moment for what it was.

Teh pulled back slightly, opening her eyes to see Xenifra flutter hers open, and seeing no rejection she leaned in again, this time they mutually opened up to each other.

Xenifra shakily placed her hands, which had been held at her sides by sheer will alone up til that point, tentatively on Teh's hips.

Teh felt Xenifra's hands reach out to her hips and she could feel the trembling in them.

Shyly Teh slid her tongue out and grazed Xenifra's bottom lip, retreating and waiting before doing it again in request for entrance.

Xenifra gasped lightly at the sensation and granted access while slowly leaning down to ease Teh to her feet.

Hesitantly, Teh slid her tongue in and touched Xenifra's causing an immediate spark to their cores. They slowly and timidly explored each other, not wishing to frighten one another off.

Knowing this could escalate to much more they both broke the kiss, each missing the other's contact immediately.

Teh searched Xenifra's eyes and saw so many emotions swirling about in their depths: confusion, fear, yearning and desire.

"Are you alright? I'm sorry if I..."

Xenifra stopped Teh by placing two fingers gently upon her lips, "No little one, you have no reason to apologize..." she softly ran her index finger over the top of her lips before pulling her hand away, "I am fine."

"You just looked so....lost."

"No reflection on you little one."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, please believe me."

"I do."

"Thank you."

Looking into each other's eyes they stood for a moment longer, "Well, Good night then...warrior" Teh grinned.

"Good night little one" a tiny smile to the edge of Xenifra's lips at this endearment as Teh turned and took two steps, still holding Xenifra's hand and giving it one last gentle squeeze. Xenifra released hers and watched her enter the master suite and close the door.

Slowly she released the breath she held.

Teh had seen the emotions she was feeling, all of them.

The confusion of having all the new emotions surface and not knowing how to deal with them, the fear of loving someone again and possibly losing them, the yearning to hold Khateh and protect her, love her and the desire to be with her, to touch her, and to consume her.

She needed to walk out her thoughts.

Changing her clothes yet again, within moments she was at the base of the mountains.

Meanwhile Teh lay in her bed, wide awake.

Her heart was pounding as were other parts of her body, achingly.

"Wow," she whispered to herself, "what a kiss" replaying in her mind the moment not minutes before.

Then suddenly her brow furrowed, sitting up she realized that once she did commit to Xenifra and drink of her, she would be...a vampire.

"Oh My GOD!" she started to panic, "I could never...I can't..." she began to work herself up into an anxious fit when a flash of light caused her to jump off the bed, "EEK!"

"Little one, I felt your distress" the woman from the day before spoke.

"Are you Goddess Hecate?" Teh asked as she held a hand to her beating chest, trying to calm herself down.

"Yes my child"

"And I am a descendant, of yours?" she pointed to her.

"Yes again"

Teh sat down on the edge of the bed, dumbstruck as she attempted to process this; "I..I.."

"You need not worry little one, you will not have to nourish yourself by harming another."

"But..."

"Your need will be fulfilled by Xenifra when you couple."

A sudden instant heat to her face let Teh know she was the deepest shade of red she could possibly imagine, "But you said that Xenifra has to feed when she is either in battle or in passion. Does that mean when she gets angry as well?"

"Yes...and no my daughter, I understand your question as to your concern of when you could possibly become angry and hurt someone. It is not the case, so rest at ease. The excitement of battle is something only a warrior would understand. You are a warrior of words, not swords, as the case of Xenifra. The only other time your desire would rise would be in life peril situations, and the mere fact that you question doing harm to another, shows a facet in you that tells of your ability to want to do that."

"But won't I drain Xenifra if I continually only...drink ...of her?"

The Goddess smiled at Teh's concern, "No my child, she will be fine. As at your joining you will feed each other. And then there is also the fact that she will still source feedings from others."

"She's going to be with others...besides me?!" Teh said in shock, hurt and dismay at that notion.

"NO! Not like that Khateh," the Goddess quickly replied, "In battles, when vanquishing evils of the earth."

Teh looked down and sheepishly said, "Oh...um, sorry."

"Are there any other questions you might have? You can have no doubt of this, understand?"

"No! I have no doubt. I just didn't...it's all new to me"

"Yes it is little one. Now don't you think you should rest? After all, tomorrow is a big day for you, your wedding day."

Teh snapped her head up at these words and blinked, "I ...I didn't even realize that ...til you just said it; will...will you be there?" she asked shyly.

"I would not miss this for any treasure in Zeus's Realm" and she disappeared.

The sun had started its ascent over the mountain range, bringing with it an array of spectacular colors as the misty fog clung to the ground with fierce determination before succumbing to the sun's heat.

Xenifra sat on the terrace, watching all the world's wonders as it began its morning rituals. She felt different today, serenely at peace. She heard Khateh's room door open and her soft barefoot padding out into the living room.

She rose and entered the room, "Good Morning little one, I hope you slept well?"

Khateh shivered at the cool morning crisp air that entered with Xenifra as well as the rich velvety voice that spoke her name of endearment.

She walked right up to Xenifra and cuddled into her, startling Xenifra who was unused to such signs of affection, "Ummm, yes, g'morning."

"Uh ...um...." Xenifra, uncertain as to what to do hesitantly put her arms around Teh and could feel her settle in against her with a contented sigh.

With Teh's head tucked up under her chin, Xenifra could not miss inhaling the clean, fresh scent of Teh's hair and bodywash as well as her own unique scent as it drifted up to her.

Inhaling deeply, she relished it with quiet abandon and unconsciously kissed her head, "I have ordered breakfast up by room service, but have some coffee ready for you."

"Oh you are a goddess amongst men!" Teh said groaning contentedly as she gave Xenifra another squeeze before releasing her and heading in to get a cup.

The sense of loss when Teh let go, hit Xenifra square in the chest, causing her to gasp and blink in shock.

"Did you go for a walk last night?" Teh called out from the kitchenette.

It took a moment for Xenifra realized Teh was speaking to her, "Wha...oh um, yes" she rubbed her chest, trying to quell the feeling.

"So, where'd you go?" Teh asked as she padded back into the living room, setting a cup of tea down for Xenifra and sitting down, which earned her a smile and a nod.

"Just along the base of the mountains," taking a sip of tea as she pointed outside.

"Oh, that must have been a bit hard to see at night."

"Actually, I have phenomenal night vision," taking another sip, "another ability I acquired."

"Are there a lot of these...skills or abilities?"

"I have many skills, some I have learned others were inherent. The abilities were gifted though as part of being Vrykolake."

"Xenifra, I...I have to be honest with you...about today..." Teh stammered suddenly.

"Khateh, whatever you wish or desire is yours."

"...you see I just feel guilty asking you without you knowing..."

"Khateh," Xenifra repeated getting Teh to stop as she had not heard her, "It is alright. I do not mind doing this."

"But it means you marr..."

A knock on the door interrupted her, "Room Service."

Xenifra rose and opened the door, allowing the cart to be brought in with the food.

"Shall we?" Xenifra motioned for Khateh to join her at the table, "So, it is at the Temple that I will decipher and answer all this for you, yes?"

"Yes, but how did you..."

"The Goddess Hecate's Temple is here, as you know I am her warrior, I would know this as being one reason."

"Oh,"

"Relax Khateh; enjoy your food...and company?" Xenifra leaned her head down to catch Teh's eyes and attention.

A smile greeted her back.

~***~

They made their way to the Temples; first to the original to pay homage and respect as Xenifra requested; then over to the newer occupied temple.

At the entrance, the head Priestess awaited. She had been told in her dreams to make ready for this day and await them at the entrance.

She greeted each and then had them escorted separately to different chambers, where they were assisted in a ritual bath and Teh was dressed in a crème silk stolas while Xenifra was dressed in a warrior's tunic of crème silk.

They were then escorted into the inner sanctum, where the temple altar was adorned with flowers and rose petals. In the center lay a scroll held open by two ancient oil lamps.

The Priestess stood at the altar and motioned them both forward to kneel at the front where several pillows lay.

She walked around the altar holding a small pot; she dipped her thumb in the pot and then withdrew it covered in lightly scented jasmine oil. Pressing her thumb to each of their shoulders and then the top of their heads, she began to chant.

As she ended her chant, she motioned for Xenifra to come forward.

Xenifra rose with fluid grace, her brows furrowed in confusion as all this ritual was new to her and had never been done in all the visits and millennia she had attended Hecate's temple.

The Priestess bowed to Xenifra and opened both palms, motioning towards the scroll.

Xenifra stepped closer to the altar and looked over the items on the top. Then she focused on the scroll and began reading some of the ancient text, "Seemera ec paratithei o vous..." Xenifra stopped, "What is this!?" she angrily demanded of the Priestess.

"It is part of the ritual" the Priestess replied softly.

"Ritual? What ritual?" she retorted.

"The ritual of bonding" the Priestess paused, "this is for you to recite."

"Bonding?!" Xenifra opened her mouth to say more but suddenly stopped and ever so slowly, she turned towards Khateh.

Just as she opened her mouth again, the Goddess appeared causing the Priestess to drop to the floor prostrate, "Xenifra, before you continue, think well" the Goddess walked away motioning for her to follow.

"Sartorian, she is doing what her heart speaks that yours has no courage to do."

"But, she led me here...without telling me...under false notion."

"No, she did not. She asked you to help her decipher and answer. She explained you are an important part of this and she tried to tell you this morning." the Goddess walked up to her, "Do you love her?"

"Yes"

"Are you in love with her?"

"Yes"

"And then what is your reason for objecting?! Do you think she does not know what you are?"

"She...I..." Xenifra ran a frustrated hand through her hair.

"Sartorian, give yourself a chance; and her. Only you can make this decision, but bear in mind that it affects BOTH of you."

And with that the Goddess disappeared.

Xenifra stood like a statue, as always when she was deep in thought. Shaking her head sadly, she turned to walk back into the inner sanctum.

Teh was standing alone, looking out the one open archway of the inner sanctum, the Priestess having walked to the back of the room waiting for Xenifra's return.

Xenifra walked to the Priestess and spoke quietly to her, and then the Priestess turned and exited the room.

Teh, having heard Xenifra return, watched the whole scene and when she saw the Priestess leave, her heart broke in half.

Xenifra walked back to the front of the altar where the pillows were strewn about the floor, "Khateh, would you come here please?" she held out her hand.

There was no shiver of pleasure this time.

Teh walked over, her first few steps faltering as her heart was breaking into pieces.

She took the hand Xenifra held out and took a deep breath, "I am sorry for not..."

"Shh," Xenifra halted Teh's words with two fingers to her lips, "If I recall, I said you need not apologize for you have done nothing wrong" a small smile softening her features.

A lone tear escaped Teh's eye.

"Why do you cry little one?" Xenifra asked while wiping away the tear.

"Because, I hurt" she replied barely above a whisper.

"What is wrong?" Xenifra asked in concern and worry.

"I was foolish to think that you would do this...after all you've been through" Teh lowered her head.

"No little one, you are far braver than I" Xenifra placed her finger tips under Teh's chin, lifting up her head to look into confused eyes.

"I don't understand."

The Priestess returned.

"Priestess," Xenifa spoke, her eyes never leaving Teh's, "would you please translate?"

"As you bid Archelaos" the Priestess bowed.

"Seemera ec paraitithei o vous..." Xenifra began.

"Today I relinquish all to you..." the Priestess echoed.

"Gia ta chronia pou ec perfatisei ti gi kai mono, tha perpatso de yperainei..."

"For the years I have walked the earth alone, I will walk no more..."

"Eiste pio tharralees apo tin kardia non oti mono esris tha diathetoan..."

"You are braver than my heart that only you possess..."

"Se latrero Khateh..."

"I adore you Khateh..."

"S'eho eroteftei Khateh..."

"I am in love with you Khateh..."

"Tha dechtheite mou os polemistis sas?"

"Will you accept me as your warrior?"

"Tha dechtheite mou os synergatis sas?"

"Will you accept me as your partner?"

"Tha dechtheite mou os gynaika sas?"

"Will you accept me as your wife?"

Xenifra went on bended knee, "Tha me pantre fteis?"

"Will you marry me?"

Teh had to blink several times to clear the tears that were streaming down from her eyes, "Oh Xenifra!"

"That is a yes, I hope?"

"Yes, oh yes!" Teh hurled herself at Xenifra who was still on bended knee.

"Kurios, you must present a symbol of your devotion" the Priestess said.

"I do not have a ring, I was unprepared..."

"Wait!" Teh exclaimed suddenly while pulling the tiny silk pouch from her waistband, "here, I forgot about these."

She opened the pouch and turned it over in her hand, from where came the two rings.

"Where did you get these from?" Xenifra asked in mild shock.

"Goddess Hecate" Teh replied, "She said you would have to decipher the inscription in them."

Xenifra picked up one of the rings, holding it up to the light to look at it, then picked up the other noting they were identical.

Turning the ring over on its side, Xenifra read out loud the inscription, "O Mo Chroi et anamchara" (*To my heart and soulmate*).

Suddenly the rings glowed brilliant, as if set to fire and then cooled, leaving them shining brilliantly bright. There was only one difference - where the stones were clear before, now on each ring there was one emerald, one sapphire and in the center a unique combination of the two.

All three stood stunned, none having seen such an event before.

Teh was the first to react by slowly reaching up and taking the larger of the two rings from Xenifra's right hand.

She took Xenifra's left hand and began placing it on her forth finger, "My warrior, my love, my wife."

Xenifra felt something on her cheek and she watched Teh reach up and caress her cheekbone, it was then she realized it was a tear.

Smiling, she took Teh's hand and placed the ring on in the same manner, "My heart, my love, my wife."

The Priestess stepped back from the two, stood at the altar, and as she raised her hands into the air, the Goddess appeared yet again.

"To my warrior and my child, I bless your bonding. May you be each other's strength and heart for all the days of your lives."

She then gave each a kiss to their foreheads and stepped back, "Seal your bond to each other."

Xenifra turned to Teh and leaned down as she tiptoed up.

With a smile to one another, they slowly came together in a soft gentle sealing of souls.

When they separated, the Goddess and Priestess were gone and looking about they realized they were alone.

"Um, where'd everyone go?" Teh asked.

"Their roles are done, it is now up to us" Xenifra replied.

"Oh," suddenly extremely shy Teh was at a loss what to say or do next so she stood fidgeting with their joined hands.

"Shall we change back into our own clothes?" Xenifra suggested.

"Ah yeah, okay" Teh turned to go but was stopped by Xenifra who still held her hand, "Thank you" she whispered.

"No, thank you for granting me this" Teh said looking back.

Simultaneously they gave each other a chaste kiss and parted.

Xenifra was waiting for Teh out at the front of the temple when the Goddess reappeared again, "Are you happy with your decision Sartorian?"

"Yes my Goddess, I feel..." Xenifra quirked her head, "complete."

A beautiful smile was her reward, "Finally" the Goddess stated as she disappeared.

In the same time Teh emerged from within the temple, "So..." she began nervously.

"It is a day of celebration, would you not say?" Xenifra smiled happily, something Teh had never seen before, causing her to smile in response, "Yes, it is."

"And so we shall!" Xenifra extended her hand to Teh and they entered the awaiting limo.

On the way back to the hotel, Xenifra asked the driver to pull over.

Xenifra exited and returned shortly with a dozen red and white roses with lilies interspersed amongst them, and handed them to Teh, "No beautiful bride should be without a bouquet" she leaned over and kissed her cheek, settling back into the seat.

"Oh Xenifra, they're beautiful, thank you" Teh said appreciatively, noticing the genuine happiness that showed on Xenifra's features.

"You, my bride, are most welcome!"

This earned her a bashful smile with a full blush accompaniment.

When they entered the hotel, Xenifra went straight to the Concierge's desk and asked to speak with the manager.

After some soft spoken words, Xenifra returned, "Shall we freshen up?"

"Oh yes, that would be great. Though the bath they gave us was different, I'd like to get all these scented oil and perfumes off me. I feel like I smell like a multi-scented skunk" Teh said chuckling.

Xenifra made a show of sniffing the air, "Hmmm, l'eau de pew!" she said with a straight face, causing Teh to burst into laughter and quickly covering her mouth as they were still in the lobby heading towards the elevators.

As Teh showered, Xenifra made another call to the manager, a few moments later a knock on the door sounded.

When Teh came out to the living room, there lay before her on one of the sofas a beautiful deep emerald dress with accompanying shoes, a rose and a note, '*A bride should also have a beautiful gown for her wedding reception, X*'.

Teh brought the rose to her nose and inhaled, smiled and hugged the note to herself. She then looked at the dress and quietly whistled, "Wow, it's beautiful" she whispered as she ran her fingertips across the top of it.

She suddenly picked it up with the shoes and excitedly ran back into her room.

Xenifra walked out to the living room having showered and dressed, noticing the dress was gone she smiled.

She wore a full length dress jacket of dark grey, under that was a deep rich wine colored silk blouse, dark charcoal grey pants with a thin black belt and black dress boots.

Noticing the sun starting to set, she stepped out onto the terrace.

She walked up to the railing and placed both hands upon it which let the setting sun catch on her ring causing it to sparkle brilliantly and catch her attention as she looked out over the mountains.

She rubbed her thumb at the base of the ring as she looked upon it in wonder, amazement and reverence, "Huh, I am married."

"Yes, you are" the soft voice elicited a smile and closing of her eyes, she took a deep breath and turned slowly.

~***~

The vision before her, for the first time in her entire life, cause her knees to buckle, her heart to race and her mouth to dry.

Before her stood a woman of graceful beauty, unspoken strength and of determined character. Before her stood her bride.

Khateh had pinned her hair up with only a few strands gracefully hanging down on the sides giving her an aura of regal beauty.

The dress's color accentuated and highlighted her forest green emerald eyes and on her lips she wore a lighted frosted pink gloss that gave them a fullness and soft sensuality.

The dress was unique in having only one shoulder that was tailored into a cluster design so that it allowed the material to hang off the shoulder in a mid arm shawl. It was also designed to be a snug tapering fit with a split at mid thigh. The openness of the dress showed off Teh's physical fitness and feminine beauty in a sensual manner.

Xenifra stood mouth agape.

"Is...is this okay?" Teh asked feeling a bit self conscious all of a sudden under Xenifra's wandering eyes.

Shaking her head slowly side to side, "No," her eyes wide, "that is supremely understated. Khateh, you are a vision of absolute stunning beauty" she slowly approached her.

"T...thank you Xenifra, for the dress and the compliment" Teh whispered back blushing at the words as a shiver ran down her spine and back up.

"It is only but the truth" she reached for her hand and bent forward, placing a gentle kiss to the top of it, "and you are most welcome."

"You look very poised, enigmatic and ..." a slight turn of her head as she searched for a word, "I can only describe it as anciently regal."

A small laugh escaped Xenifra, "Perhaps because I am?"

Teh giggled, "Probably."

Xenifra extended her arm, "Shall we?"

Teh put her arm in hers and they made their way down, "So where are we going?"

"A surprise."

"Okay" Teh drawled out not knowing what awaited her.

Many eyes turned in the direction of the striking couple.

The quick trip was indeed quick as Teh had only settled into her seat and looked over the city lights they were flying over when they started their descent.

"Biz cekinceleri var, Ms. & Mrs. General" (*We have reservations, Ms. & Mrs. General*) Xenifra said in perfect Turkish to the Maître'D in the secluded restaurant. The place and its clients were very exclusive and secretive as it catered to business women who desired the company of other women. It belonged to a business associate of Xenifra's and whose employees were of the same persuasion and maintained the utmost discretion in a world where others did not understand nor accept that lifestyle with the vehemence that bordered on fanatical and could mean their deaths.

"Evet, evet...bu tarafa gel lütfen" (*Yes, yes, please come this way*), the middle aged man slightly bowed and motioned forward as he turned and made his way to what was clearly a specially reserved table as everyone watched them being led through.

Xenifra was behind and to the side of Teh, her hand very lightly touching the small of her back which caused shivers up and down her spine.

"Özel bir fırsat kaçırmak nedir?" (*It is a special occasion, yes?*) The asked as he watched Xenifra pull Teh's chair out for her before he was allowed to do the same for her.

"Evet, our wedding night" Xenifra said giving Teh a lovingly proud look.

Teh instantly blushed.

"Tebrikler madames!" (*Congratulations madames!*)

"En iyi şampanya Maître'D" (*Your best champagne Maitre'D*)

The gentleman bowed and immediately several wait staff were at the table giving water, placing their napkins across their laps, handing menus and bringing over the best champagne.

"I must apologize, that was rude for not translating for you."

"No, I actually enjoy listening to all the languages you speak" Teh sipped some water.

"Well, I have ordered champagne; would you do me the honor of sharing our wedding toast?"

"Yes, of course. Would you order for me this evening please?"

"It would be my pleasure."

"So what did he ask anyways?"

"He asked if it was a special occasion."

"Oh"

"I hope I did not embarrass you."

"No, no...I'm just not used to being the center of attention."

"You always will be for me Khateh."

Her body shivered all over and blushed at the words, and Xenifra smiled and lightly chuckled.

The champagne was poured and Xenifra lifted her flute glass, "In you I have given my most guarded possession, my heart. No other will ever touch what you now possess. I will endeavor to respect, trust and nurture you all the days of my life. I love you."

Small tears welled in Teh's eyes as she watched Xenifra speak and with the last words they escaped as Xenifra leaned forward and touched her flute with Teh's and they both drank.

Xenifra ordered and they sat enjoying the atmosphere and ambiance of the restaurant.

"So, how do you think your father will take the news of your marriage...to me?"

"Well, one way or the other...I am married to you" at this statement they both smiled to one another, "but I don't think it'll bother him in a bad sense, only in that he wasn't there to give me away. He likes you Xenifra, and that says a lot."

Just then a small group of musicians began playing softly and strolled over to their table.

They played a beautiful ballad that had everyone in the restaurant glued in fixated appreciation of them.

When they finished, they all bowed and one of them spoke in broken English, "Congratulations madams, best luck."

"Thank you that was beautiful" Teh spoke to them giving them each a grateful smile.

Once they left, "Did you do that?" she asked Xenifra with an arched eyebrow.

"Who? Me? No!" Xenifra shook her head, eyes wide in defense, "I guess the Maître'D from what I said."

"Okay, you're off the hook."

"Why do I get the feeling, being with you will be an adventure to keep me on my toes?"

"Because so far you have definitely been for me" Teh fired back causing Xenifra to laugh out loud.

Dinner was a lavish affair, but Teh did not eat everything in site and Xenifra noticed, "Are you okay? Is something wrong?"

"No, why?"

"You are not eating as much as you would normally"

"No, I'm just savoring everything and I don't want to over do it and regret it later."

"Understandable, did you want to skip dessert?"

"Was it going to be something huge?"

"No, but it is something I believe we must at least eat a bit of."

"Why do you say that?"

Xenifra only pointed behind Teh as an answer.

There, as she turned to look, was the Maître'D pushing a cart with a small wedding cake on top with a heart in the center as a figurine.

"Oh!" Teh exclaimed.

"Congratulations Madames" the gentleman said as he offered the cake slicer to Xenifra who shook her head and pointed to Teh.

"No Xenifra, both of us....please?" Teh asked.

"As you wish little one" Xenifra covered Teh's hand as she held the knife and they sliced through the one layer cake, everyone in the restaurant clapping in their honor.

Teh blushed and Xenifra chuckled quietly while nodding to the other restaurant patrons in acknowledgment of their kindness.

The Maître'D served them a slice and then began cutting the cake up to serve to the rest of the patrons at Teh's request.

Teh cut a small piece of the slice and looked up to Xenifra, "Well, are we traditional or non-traditional?" she asked.

"We are unique."

"I like that answer" Teh said smiling as she held out the small piece in her fingertips and looked with twinkling eyes at Xenifra, waiting for her to accept.

Xenifra's eyes turned darker blue and mesmerizing right before Teh's eyes as she leaned in and accepted the cake from her fingers, grazing them lightly with her teeth as she closed her mouth and pulled away.

Teh swallowed hard and took a deep breath; "Um..." her body shuddered at the erotically physical touch.

Xenifra took a small bit of the cake and offered it to Teh as well, "Khateh?" she called out softly.

Teh blinked out of her stupor, "Huh?"

Xenifra waved the small tidbit at her and she shyly leaned in and took the cake with her mouth, Xenifra winking at her in return.

"There is a boardwalk along the shore; would you care to take a stroll?" Xenifra asked as she wiped her mouth with her napkin and placed it on the table.

"Oh that would be fabulous" Teh followed suit, excusing herself to the restroom.

Xenifra reached inside her jacket chest pocket, pulling out a long billfold with several cards inside. She laid one on the table and a waiter promptly picked it up and returned with the bill, on which Xenifra scribbled her name and returned the card into her jacket just as Teh returned.

Xenifra rose, "Shall we take a walk then, my wife?" she whispered as she leaned into the side of Teh's head above her ear and kissed it.

This affection and title caused goose bumps to erupt all over Teh and a shy loving smile on her face, "Yes, my warrior."

Once again, Xenifra walked behind and to the side of Teh as they exited the restaurant, "Size ve çali?anlarina te?ekkür eder, mükemmel servis edilmi?tir" (*Thank you to you and your staff, it has been excellent service*), Xenifra said with a slight nod.

"Thank you Madames, Good Luck to you both" the Maître'D put a hand to his chest and bowed in reply.

Xenifra offered her arm to Teh as they walked slowly along the boardwalk in peaceful contemplation.

The moon was very bright in its fullness and set a beautiful backdrop by shining off the water along the bayside.

"This is so lovely Xenifra, the moon on the water, the light crisp air, and the sounds of the street vendors in the distance. It is really different for me." Teh squeezed her arm lightly.

"For me as well Khateh, as the last time I was here, this was not."

"So we get to experience it for the first time together, I like that." Teh said smiling up to Xenifra and then looking out over the water.

"So do I" Xenifra agreed.

They spoke to each other, often Xenifra answering Teh's inquisitive questions of the region, populace or local fauna as they casually strolled arm in arm.

Returning back to the restaurant, they entered the awaiting limousine which would take them back to the airport for the trip to their hotel.

Once again it was a very short trip as they ascended and then descended with only enough time for Teh to see a sprinkling of stars and lights over the region.

They entered arm in arm to the hotel and directly into an awaiting private elevator to take them to their penthouse suite.

"Would you care for anything to drink or eat?" Xenifra asked as she removed her jacket.

"Actually, a small plate of fresh fruit would be great to nibble on later, did you want anything?" Teh asked in return as she put her purse down.

"No, water will suffice for me. I will order it up for us."

Teh nodded and walked out onto the terrace to enjoy the moonlit view over the mountains.

Xenifra joined her, walking up next to her by the railing, "It's so beautiful and serene" Teh whispered as she put her arm through Xenifra's.

"Yes, the moon has cast its graceful magic again" Xenifra clasped her hand in hers.

Teh absentmindedly began caressing the ring on Xenifra's hand.

"They are magnificent designs, are they not?" Xenifra asked.

"Hmm? Yes"

"You seem distracted?"

"No, just still trying to understand and appreciate all of this, it seems so surreal to me; like I'll wake up from a dream any moment."

Xenifra pulled her arm away as she turned slightly and very hesitantly and nervously wrapped her arms about Teh, embracing her. "If this is but a dream, I pray tell never to wake little one, for I would not care to walk this earth without you."

She gently held Teh's chin within her index finger and thumb, leaned down and placed the softest of kisses to lips that had held her attention from the moment Teh had stepped into the living room that evening.

Teh's eyes blinked open when she felt Xenifra pull away.

Slowly, she eased her hands up Xenifra's arms to rest clasped behind her head. Pulling her back down for another kiss, Xenifra went willingly.

A light knock on the door broke the moment.

"I will get that" Xenifra said softly against Teh's lips before giving a quick peck, a wink and walking away.

Teh was still amazed at the kiss and sensuality of it.

Her heart had begun to pound and she felt if Xenifra had not held her in her arms, she would have swooned and collapsed there and then.

A beautifully melodic voice came softly lilting through the night air to Teh's ears outside.

Believing Xenifra to have turned on some music, Teh closed her eyes and wrapped her arms about her, lightly moving her hips in a very slow sway to the lyrics.

The volume seemed to increase slightly and Teh turned stopping suddenly in surprise.

There stood Xenifra, leaning slightly on the sliding door frame, serenading her.

"How do I...

Get through one night without you,

If I had to live without you,

What kind of life would that be?

Oh I need you in my arms

Need you to hold

Your my world, my heart, my soul

If you ever leave,

Baby you'd take away everything good in my Life..."

She sang in perfect pitch and tone as she slowly walked towards Teh and embraced her in her arms again, slowly swaying with her as well.

"You have accomplished what no mortal has ever been able to do Khateh" she whispered.

"What is that?" Teh asked as she leaned in, placing her cheek against Xenifra's chest.

"You have captured me and I surrender to you willingly."

Teh pulled back to look up to Xenifra and saw the sincerity in her eyes as she leaned down and kissed her again.

Each of them took the kiss slowly, softly; wanting to enjoy the moment of their acceptance of each others hearts.

Teh pulled back, her eyes drinking in Xenifra's features by the moonlight as she raised her hand and traced her fingertips gently across Xenifra's full lips before guiding her back down for another kiss.

This kiss was tentatively passionate, hesitantly inviting and innocently searing.

Xenifra could feel a sensation surge through her that was reminiscent of her excitement of her first battle, and she knew if she did not control this sensation now, it would devastate the entire evening for both of them.

Yet she was powerless against the strength of the yearning she had for this woman in her arms, her wife.

Suddenly scooping Khateh up in her arms, she headed towards the master suite.

Gently setting her down on her feet, Xenifra cupped Teh's face with both hands and stared deeply into her eyes, "I so desire to be with you Khateh, it is an ache that I have never felt and consumes my very being painfully."

"I ...I don't know what to do Xenifra" Teh replied bashfully lowering her eyes.

"I will show you little one but first, you know what I am, yes?"

Teh nodded.

"Do you know what happens, what I become when ...?"

"Aroused?" Teh finished.

"Yes"

"Yes, I do and I accept you ...all of you"

Xenifra looked deeply into those emerald eyes, searching for the sincerity and truth of those words and found them with no doubt, "I love you Khateh D'Olympia" she whispered.

"And I love you Xenifra General, warrior mine" she replied as Xenifra smiled at the endearment and leaned in for a soft and slow, sensual kiss.

Xenifra slid her hands down Teh's neck to her shoulders, feeling the soft skin quiver under her touch.

With one hand she reached up and released Teh's hair from its pin, pulling away from the kiss to watch it flow freely down her shoulders as Teh shook her head to settle it about her.

Very slowly Xenifra walked around Teh to stand behind her as she caressed the bare shoulder with her other hand. Brushing Teh's hair to one side, she leaned down and placed butterfly kisses to the bare shoulder, causing Teh to shudder in response.

She undid the clasp on the other shoulder at the gathering and slowly peeled the dress down from in front of Teh as she stood behind her, releasing it to watch it continue to fall from her body of its own accord.

Xenifra slid her hands up both of Teh's arm, across her shoulders, splaying them across the top of her upper back and slowly sliding them down, gently kneading the muscles until she reached Teh's strapless bra, where she deftly unhooked it and cast it aside.

Her hands continued further down her back to rest on her hips, where she gently pulled Teh back against her.

Teh could feel the shivers erupt on her skin as Xenifra kissed her shoulder and then the cool air hit her exposed skin as the dress was dropped.

The contrast of the cool air and Xenifra's hot hands on her skin caused her belly to clench in small spasms and her body to shiver unconsciously at what it was experiencing and enjoying immensely.

Her nipples were rock hard pebbles before her bra was even removed and when the air hit them, they ached from being taut.

She could feel Xenifra's body heat through her clothes as she was pulled back to rest against Xenifra's body.

Xenifra moved her hands around front to Teh's waist where she began exploring the skin, feeling the soft supple curves; the taut muscled stomach that planed out below shallowly expanding ribs as Teh's breathing was becoming erratic.

Moving her head to the opposite shoulder, Xenifra placed small kisses stopping to let her tongue taste her skin in an open mouthed kiss, "Ummmmm," she murmured appreciatively.

"Oh Xenifra" Teh moaned, her eyes struggling to stay open.

"Yes my sweet" Xenifra replied in a very husky voice.

Teh's hand had come up to entwine itself in Xenifra's dark tresses at the base of her neck, holding her and kneading, scratching seductively of its own accord.

Xenifra cupped Teh's breasts tenderly, feeling their weight and their softness as she caressed them while avoiding the points that so ached to be touched.

Feeling Teh arch to try and have them caressed while her body began to slightly tremble, Xenifra gave each nipple a light squeeze with her thumb and forefinger, rolling them a tiny bit before running the palms of her hands over the top of them.

Teh's body gave a start at having her nipples lightly pinched, arching unconsciously into the touch, "Oh" she moaned.

Xenifra's nostrils flared at Teh's taste and sounds. She could feel her canine teeth elongating without her control and feel a shiver down her spine as her arousal became excruciatingly heightened to a level never felt before.

Teh's hand joined over the top of one of Xenifra's as she kneaded her breast and she could feel the cool metal of Xenifra's belt buckle against the skin of her back where they touched.

Wanting to feel her skin on her own, Teh made to turn.

"No" came the strangled whisper as Xenifra held her in place.

Confused, Teh stopped "What's wrong?"

"I...I..."

"Xenifra please, let me see you...as you see me..." she pleaded, "all of you."

Taking a deep breath, Xenifra released her hold.

Teh turned slowly, somewhat expecting something out of a movie.

What she found was...her beautiful wife, still the same...albeit with quarter inch long canine teeth and deep dark blue eyes.

Knowing Xenifra was struggling to maintain her tenuous control, Teh surprised her by gently cupping her face with one hand, "Look at me my love" she whispered the softly spoken command.

Xenifra raised her head slowly, tears streaming down her cheeks.

Looking straight into Xenifra's eyes while gently stroking her cheek with her thumb, Teh said "Do not hide from me warrior mine, please." She then moved her hand to the back of Xenifra's neck and pulled her down to her waiting lips.

Xenifra hesitated, but could feel Teh was not going to relent in her pull, so slowly she gave in to their mutual desire.

Teh kissed her softly, slowly, showing her tenderness and acceptance.

Once she felt Xenifra relinquish control to her, she deepened the kiss, exploring not only her newfound and soon to be lover, but the unique sensation of kissing a vampire; with very sharp teeth!

Teh reached between them and began to slowly unbutton Xenifra's silk blouse, untucking the shirt from the still fastened pants. She undid her belt and lowered the zipper, letting the pants fall.

Teh looked into Xenifra's eyes, noticing how the dark azure eyes pierced into her very soul.

Sliding the blouse from off her shoulder, Teh could see a body belonging to that of a sculptured masterpiece.

She drank in with her eyes every inch of the warrior now standing before her, hungrily.

Xenifra's nostrils flared as she breathed in deeply from the look of want coming from Teh.

Taking a page out of Xenifra's book, Teh placed her fingertips on the small of Xenifra's throat, slowly grazing the skin as she dragged her hand along her shoulder while walking around to stand behind her.

There, she brought her other hand up to the slope of Xenifra's neck, then her shoulder, feeling the hard muscles and immense strength in them.

Following down her spine, she stopped at her bra and unhooked it as well, sliding the straps down, off and then tossing it aside.

Teh leaned in and kissed the center of Xenifra's spine, a gesture that no one had ever done.

Xenifra took in a sudden sharp, shuddering breath.

Teh edged her thumbs into the waist band of Xenifra's briefs and tugged them down, letting them pool at her feet and then taking a step back she took in the amazingly beautiful body before her.

Xenifra turned slowly, feeling Teh's eyes on her body in wanton desire.

Taking a step forward, she bent and scooped Teh up in her arms again and walked to the edge of the bed.

Surprising Teh, she sat down with her in her lap.

Looking deeply into her eyes, Xenifra leaned in and kissed Teh passionately and deeply, letting loose the last of the control she knew only Teh had of her.

Teh turned slightly and wrapped one arm around Xenifra, her hand treading into her hair as she returned the passionate kisses.

Xenifra's one hand was rubbing alongside Teh's outer thigh on the leg furthest from her as she pulled her closer; the other was rubbing up and down the soft skin of her lower back.

The kisses were a dance of learning, each giving and receiving touches not yet known to the other.

"Mmmmm," Teh hummed at the sensations she was feeling.

Xenifra's hand moved from her outer thigh to slide in and upward to Teh's stomach, over the toned muscle to cup a breast.

"Uuuuh" Teh moaned in her kiss as Xenifra grazed over a pebbled nipple to then gently pinch and knead the little stone flesh, "Oh Xenifra" she gasped, her breathing shallow and erratic.

In one graceful fluid movement, Xenifra rose, turned and laid Teh down on her back on the bed.

Hovering over her, Xenifra whispered in a deep rich husky voice, "Gods on Olympus Khateh, I want you more than I have wanted anything in this world!" her eyes gleaming with intense need, desire and passion - the likes she had never felt in her body, heart or soul before.

Seeing the yearning and desire in her wife's eyes made Teh's arousal brazenly reply, "Then take me, warrior mine" pulling her down by her hair in searing kiss.

Teh could hear the growl come from deep within Xenifra's chest as she kissed her deeply.

Xenifra held herself up with one arm while she used her other hand to smartly rip Teh's bikini briefs off her body, her nostrils flared immediately as her heightened senses smelled Teh's arousal.

Lowering herself onto Teh, their bodies came fully in contact. They both let out soft moans of pleasure at the sensation.

Xenifra moved to settle between Teh's legs and pulled one of Teh's legs up by the knee to wrap around her hip and thigh.

"Unnnnh" she moaned feeling Teh's sex against hers, Teh was lost to all the feelings her body was going through. From feeling Xenifra's body heat, the friction as their breasts began rubbing smoothly against one another with the sweat of their bodies, to the fact that her sex was drenched and mixing with that of Xenifra's above her.

Xenifra kissed Teh along her jaw line to her neck with complete abandon, want and desire.

She suckled an earlobe; "Oh my Khateh, you are such a treasure to me" she huskily said, "you are my every desire, my every want" as she moved her kisses to Teh's throat sliding down to then nuzzle between her breasts.

Teh's hands felt ever muscle twitch, every shift and move as she rubbed along Xenifra's back and shoulders, kneading and pulling into her.

As Xenifra moved down, Teh ran her hands through her hair, noting the silkiness and coolness as it flowed through her fingers.

Xenifra cupped a breast as she rubbed her palm over the other, pinching and squeezing the nipple gently. She grazed her cheek across the one breast she cupped and then took the nipple into her mouth suckling.

Teh let out a gasp in shock and pleasure, pulling Xenifra to her chest automatically, "Oh GODS yes!" she groaned.

Xenifra suckled, kissed, licked and pulled on Teh's nipple sensually before moving over to the other and paying it the same homage.

Teh tossed her head side to side in the pleasurable assault she was receiving, never believing this would ever be, "Oh Xenifra" pulling on her hair.

Xenifra placed a kiss on the breast she was feasting on then moved up to deeply kiss Teh, "You are a divinity my little one" she whispered into her ear as she moved to kiss her neck and graze her earlobe.

Teh wrapped both legs around the back of Xenifra's knees as they unconsciously began to grind against one another.

"Oh.....please" Teh pleaded in a groan as she ran her hands down Xenifra's back to lay on her firm buttocks and pulled her closer.

Feeling she was about ready to crawl out of her own skin, Xenifra ran a hand down Teh's thigh and squeezed her butt cheek on the return trip up.

"Please Xenifra, please...I ache to feel you inside" Teh gasped.

Xenifra shifted to straddle one of Teh's legs, giving her easy access to Teh's yearning.

Slowly, she slid her hand over her hip and eased it to gently rest over Teh's heated core; causing moans of pleasure and desire from escaping Teh' lips.

Xenifra kissed the moan into silence as she began gently stroking her hand up and down through the nestle of golden hair, easing a finger into the fold of wetness.

"Oh Yes!" Teh exclaimed, "You feel so good my love."

"It is you who feel so wonderful" Xenifra replied as she slid in the abundant wetness, easing another finger into the folds.

Teh's body jumped when Xenifra grazed over the hardened nub of nerves in her core, "Oh, Ungh" Teh pulled her closer.

Slowly Xenifra stroked up and down, Teh starting to match her rhythm.

Kisses were deepened between gasps for air as they began a climb of pleasure.

"Oh GODS Xenifra, yes...oh yes" Teh had one hand tangled in Xenifra's hair, the other kneading Xenifra's butt as she pulled her deeper into her core.

"Oh Khateh, you are so soft, so wet" Xenifra murmured, lost in the depth of passion this woman created in her.

"Xenifra....Xenifra" Teh's breathing had turned to gasps and her body began to buck under Xenifra.

Xenifra could feel Teh's body begin to tense and feel the walls of her sex begin to pulse, as she sensed her wife's first orgasm begin to build.

"Oh GODS Xenifra....I....I....unnnnh" Teh was holding onto Xenifra in a grip that would leave a mortal woman in pain and bruises as she felt her body surge towards something indescribable.

"I love you Khateh, with all that I am" Xenifra said as she gave her a searing kiss still stroking Teh and then moved her head over to Teh's neck.

Feeling Teh's explosion, Xenifra entered her entirely as she pierced her neck and drank of her.

"Aaahhhhhh" Teh yelled out as she gripped Xenifra in a vise grip with her legs and arms as the orgasm ripped through her.

She felt the pain of the barrier breaking, she felt the rush of her orgasm exploding from within her and she felt the sensual piercing of her skin as Xenifra bit into her neck and drank of her essence.

Xenifra stopped stroking and held still, letting Teh's body accept her inside.

Her mouth was sealed to Teh's neck as the blood rushed into her as she drank, exploding vibrantly into her system causing her to go dizzy and swoon. Pulling her mouth away, she groggily licked at the wound; her saliva causing an instant healing.

She was disoriented and woozy, this had never happened before.

As she moved to give Teh a kiss, Teh let out a small groan, "Unngh."

"Little one?"

Teh blinked open heavy lidded eyes.

"Did I hurt you?" she asked concerned.

Teh nodded her head no.

Slowly, Xenifra eased out of the clamped tight core of her lover, causing a slight hiss to escape Teh.

Xenifra could smell the blood of Teh's innocence as she moved and her desire flared to life again. Her body tingled as if having thousands of sparks exploding over her and in her.

She had never felt this and felt disoriented by all the feelings and emotions. She lifted herself off Teh and lay on her back, pulling Teh with her, both of them still breathing heavily.

"I tingle all over Xe" Teh whispered against Xenifra's chest, using a shortened version of her name in endearment.

"So do I...I...I have never felt this before" Xenifra said in awe.

Teh ran a hand up the center of Xenifra's chest watching the flesh pebble under her touch.

She could hear Xenifra's heart beating fast under her ear as she lay with her head against her chest.

"Never?"

"No little one, never."

"Good"

Xenifra chuckled, "You are a mystery to me" she said lovingly.

"Well, there is one mystery I want to solve tonight."

"And what is that my love?"

"If you moan as much as I do..." Teh said as she pinched Xenifra's nipple.

"UNGH!" Xenifra arched into the touching, closing her eyes.

"Heh...oh yeah!" Teh said in a deep voice as she leaned up to kiss Xenifra deeply. She slid down and took the nipple between her teeth and nipped lightly causing another groan to escape Xenifra.

She kneaded the other as Xenifra had done to her, fully in awe of the sensations it had caused her and wanting Xenifra to feel the same pleasure.

Xenifra pulled Teh back up to her, wanting, needing to kiss her. As she did, she slid her hand between Teh's legs again and felt the wetness wash over her hand.

Teh gasped at the touch, not expecting it.

Bringing her hand up to her mouth, Xenifra licked her fingers, the essence of Teh's innocence too strong to be denied.

Teh watched in fascination at the sensually erotic gesture, her core clenching in reflex, "Oh Xenifra" she groaned.

Wanting to know the same experience, Teh placed her hand on Xenifra's sex, immediately feeling the wetness of her desire, "Oh my love, you are so aroused and wet."

Xenifra could only moan, close her eyes and tilt her head back at the pleasure, "Unnnh."

Teh felt her way slowly, not knowing what to do but following Xenifra's lead by her moans of pleasure.

"Oh Khateh"

"Yes my love"

"I need you"

"I am here my love"

"Oh GODS!"

"Xenifra...let me be with you..."

"Yes"

"To love you..."

"Yes"

"For all eternity of our lives...."

Teh stroked Xenifra to a frenzied state and she hissed the last words, "YES!"

Plunging into her lover deeply, Teh spoke the softly pleaded command, "Let me drink of you Xenifra!"

Knowing what Teh had just asked, what she had demanded in a lover's pleading, Xenifra lifted her head and looked at Teh in the eyes with the gaze of the Ancient Vrykolake Warrior that she was.

Nodding with a close of her eyes, Xenifra lifted her left breast and leaned down to it, cutting a small gash to the top of it with her teeth.

Blood immediately welled up out of the wound.

Teh looked at the blood starting to trickle out and run down the center, looking up into Xenifra's eyes she held her gaze as she lowered her mouth to lick up the trickle to the wound and began to drink.

Xenifra dropped her head back to the bed in a thud, eyes closed tight as an immense orgasm exploded from her core and she felt something leave her body...her immortality.

Crying out, she embraced Teh to her in a crushing hold.

Teh felt something enter her with a force of a lightning bolt.

She stopped breathing or moving from the intensity.

Xenifra's cry and crushing embrace brought her out of her state.

She stopped drinking and pulled away, feeling disoriented in her own body.

Xenifra lay panting, eyes closed, feeling completely drained.

"Xe, Xenifra?" Teh whispered to her lover nervously.

Xenifra opened her eyes slowly.

Noticing the wound still bleeding, Teh looked to her, "How do we stop your bleeding?"

"Lick the wound, your saliva will heal it closed" she hoarsely replied.

Teh leaned in and gently licked the wound, watching in amazement as it began to heal closed.

Finally she looked up to see Xenifra looking at her with a hint of fear and sadness. "What worries you so my love?"

"That you are now as I..." she replied caressing her cheek with the back of her knuckles gently.

Teh eased out of Xenifra and rolled to her side, propping her head up with the palm of her hand while lightly brushing the curls of hair on Xenifra's sex, "I am in love with you, warrior mine. And I will not walk this earth without you. I do this willingly and without any doubts or reservations."

"Do you understand all there is to being?"

"All that I know, I do. The rest I will have you to guide me through my love."

Shaking her head, Xenifra could not fathom the emotion she felt for this beautiful woman who was now her wife, "And with every beat of my heart, I will do as you need my love." She cupped her face with both hands and kissed her deeply; "But for now, my need is dire."

"And of what is that my love?"

"To taste you" Xenifra said as she kissed her passionately, "to consume you" she moved to kiss her neck and throat, "to devour you." These last words she growled deeply as she kissed her way down Teh's body to nestle between her legs, sliding her arms under Teh's thighs and opening her up.

Inhaling deeply she shuddered at Teh's scent and arousal; not realizing that her teeth had returned to normal as she was no longer Vrykolake as she was so deeply and emotionally attached to making love to her bride.

Lowering her head, she slid her tongue out and up into Teh's sex.

Teh bucked and gasped, "OH!"

Slowly Xenifra began to lick every fold, every crevice of Teh's womanhood, going around and near her bundle of nerves but never touching. She delved deeply into her as Teh pulled her deeper into her by pulling her hair, "Oh GODS Xenifra!"

Teh writhed and moaned, knowing this was the feeling of pleasure and bliss that only Xenifra could ever and would ever give.

Finally, hearing the pleas of anguish from her lover, Xenifra stroked the hardened nub.

Holding her with strong arms, Xenifra began to stroke the sensitive point. Drinking the nectar that seeped out, Xenifra continued the passionate assault as she felt Teh begin to tremble signalling the impending explosion.

Xenifra tightened her hold as Teh began to buck as the orgasm ripped through her with a scream; Xenifra began drinking as if a fountain had opened. Suckling to the portal of the nectar, she did not let one drop go astray.

Teh pulled her up as the aftershocks still rippled through her body, "Come to me warrior, and drink of me" she said in a whispered voice hoarse from her scream.

She sat up and placed Xenifra's head to her shoulder where she had fed before, "Please Xenifra, don't leave me alone" she pleaded in a voice only Xenifra's sensitive hearing could pick up.

Xenifra leaned into her and since the wound was still fresh, she was able to open them up with a nip of her regular teeth.

She drank deeply as her immortality returned, flowing back into her as her need increased.

Teh shuddered at the sensuality of having her lover drink of her body in such a manner.

Pulling away, Xenifra licked the wounds shut and kissed up Teh's neck to her lips in a kiss expressing all the love she had for her bride.

Coming up for air, they pressed their foreheads together; a smile across both faces.

Xenifra leaned up and kissed Teh's forehead then laid back down, pulling Teh with her and covering them both with the bed sheet, "I..I actually feel tired" Xenifra said confused and in shock.

"Are you okay?"

"Yes, just...believe it or not...sleepy. I have not felt this in over the millennia I have walked this earth, since I became Vrykolake."

"Do you think this is because of what we've done?"

"Highly probable...but I am too tired to care" she yawned.

"Then sleep with me warrior mine" Teh said looking into the face of her beloved.

"So be it" she kissed Teh softly then they snuggled down and closed their eyes.

Just as they drifted off the Goddess appeared, "Sleep well my child and warrior. For when you arise, there will be an evil brewing that will test the strength of your immortality" the Goddess blew them a kiss of blessing and disappeared.

They drifted off to deep sleep, both hugging each other reflexively but hearing the Goddess's words deep in their minds for heeding when they awoke.

Over in another part of the world, a minion said in Romanian "Master, master...Lestat has returned."

An elegantly dressed man of mid twenties in age entered a dark chamber, bowing deeply at the waist as he waited permission to rise.

"Vorbi" (*Speak*)

The young man nodded and rose, "Master, I have found she who dared raise a hand to your authority! She lives in the Americas"

"Bine, c? este locu unde mergem!" (*Well, that is where we go*).

The END