

~ Truth in Light ~

by D.S. Bauden

Disclaimers: Xena, Gabrielle, Solari, Ephiny, and Epinon are owned by MCA Universal. This is a story of a mature relationship between two consenting women. If this bothers you in anyway go back to South Park cartoons until you have grown up. If you aren't old enough to read this type of material, please save this for another day. If you happen to live in a place where this is illegal, burn the trail as you leave that horrid place. If you are an obsessed fanfiction lover I urge you to sit down with your favorite snack and read this now.....

Sex: Yes there is, and it is graphic as well, so those with the weakness in their knees, please read on. For those who have a weakness in the belly for lovemaking between two women...please go to jail, go directly to jail, do not pass GO do not collect \$200.

Violence: There is a little bit of a scene, not too much though.

Love: Oodles of it :-)

The message was very clear to Gabrielle as Xena left her once again to save a village under the attack of a nasty warlord. 'I can't worry about you and fight effectively at the same time.' Gabrielle remembered her saying. 'Since when?' She thought to herself. 'Isn't that what we always do? Whatever Xena, you still think of me as a child, we'll see about that.'

Gabrielle didn't mind being left behind this time, because they were in a village that was very festive. There was shopping to do!! The Inn that they were staying in was a pleasant one with nice rooms, comfy bed, warm baths, and delicious food. She didn't mind at all. The village was filled with merchants of every kind. There were food booths, shops with knick knacks, tapestries, candles, weaponry's, you name it is was there. She figured she could get in a good days shopping until Xena returned in the evening.

She started off when the smells of cooked chicken and rabbit came to her nostrils. 'Mmm, that smells wonderful! I am starving.' Smelling deeply.

"What would you like little lady?"

"I don't know it all smells so good."

"It's all good today, all for you my dear." He winked.

"I think I'll have some of that chicken it smells wonderful."

"Coming right up, that'll be three dinars."

"Three? C'Mon now."

"Oh OK for you, two dinars."

"Deal. Thank you." The merchant just nodded at the ravenous young woman leaving his booth.

"Mmm this is delicious, oh yeah I'm liking this." She said a few other words but not comprehensible with a full mouth. A small belch escaped her lips and she put her hand over her mouth in embarrassment looking around to see if anyone had noticed. 'Whew! That was a close one, I need something to wash this down.'

She found a small stand with juices and graciously gave her dinar for a glass of juice to swallow the rest of lunch with. 'Ah, much better. Now I can breathe again.' She thought to herself as she continued her shopping journey.

The town was filled with people. Hagglers of all kinds were shouting at her, from every direction. She looked around and loved the surroundings, she loved being in the center of all of this. She spotted a small woman with a huge hoop earring selling exquisite candles with incredible aromas. 'Maybe she is an Alchemist.' She thought as she found herself being pulled to the shop, and with a short look around found a beautiful indigo candle. The design on it had her mesmerized. The bottom of it had little swirls of lines that twirled towards the top as she spun it in her hands. 'By the gods, this is beautiful. I wonder if it smells as good as it looks' She pondered while gazing at this new object.

"It is very special." The shopkeeper said to her, almost startling her.

"I can see that. How is it special?"

"It is the light of truth, with it loves eyes can be seen."

"Loves eyes? What do you mean?"

"When loves eyes look from the light, the truth will be seen."

"Hmm. Interesting."

"You must have this."

"Oh I don't know, how much for it?"

"Let me help you, only one dinar."

"Oh, I don't need..."

"Let me help you." was all she said as she took the dinar Gabrielle's hand willed to this woman, and went towards the back of her shop.

'Let me help you? What...does she know? Can she read my mind?' Gabrielle's thoughts were spinning her head. As she turned to leave, she glanced back at the shopkeeper who was staring at her. She gave Gabrielle a nod and a wink of understanding and turned her head away leaving Gabrielle with a shudder as she left the shop.

She held the candle in her hands and spun the item with a strange familiarity. 'Where have I seen this before? I know I have seen this design somewhere, but I just can't put my finger on it.' She looked at the sun and realized that Xena would be back soon so she decided to finish her day at the market and make her way back to the Inn.

"I'll pick up some of that chicken for Xena, I know she'll be hungry. Maybe some bath soaps too, I know she'll need a bath too if I know her well enough! Gods I wish I could know more of her. I know she thinks of me as a child, but I have grown such a love and desire for her I can't take the silence of it any longer. Who am I kidding I'll never be able to tell her that. She'd laugh at my childish nature and brush it off as a crush. Well let me tell you that I have learned a few things over these last years, and it's no crush!!! I am an Amazon Queen for Zeus' sake! Grrrr, I am such a baby, maybe she's right.' She picked up her pace with her newly acquired anger and started the last of her shopping.

Xena was on her way back from the battle with this week's hellions. It seemed lately it was always something. Someone or something needed her assistance with one thing or another. She didn't mind helping out, in fact it was a much better way of expressing herself than her past ways. She would rather put out those fires than be the one that started them. So many nights she would have nightmares about her past as a warlord. A very different person existed then, and she was glad that those days were over. Xena also realized that she was missing Gabrielle terribly. Even though she had only been gone a day, she still missed that little bard of hers.

'I can't wait to see those eyes when I return! The sight of them after a day of battle makes my heart ache. I do love her with everything that I am, but how could one as young and vivacious as her, feel anything but friendship towards me. I know she trusts me as she has no other, but trust won't make her love me. Nothing can make me warm the way she does on those nights of bitter cold. The way she'll let me sleep wrapped around her, and on those nights where it isn't even that cold, she still humors me and lets me hold her anyway. Maybe she does know how I feel and just won't allow that scenario to play out. Gods, what if the idea of two women in love makes her uneasy? No, there's no way she feels like that, not after what she has seen with the Amazons. I would have seen that right away. I don't know, maybe she sees me as a maternal figure, I mean we were introduced when she was younger. I don't even want to go there, I couldn't handle that. I just hope that I can control myself, maybe channel my desire for her through some other means. Like what?? I can only practice with my sword for so long. My arms will fall off first. I can't do that to her, our friendship means too much to both of us, that would be wrong and selfish. Ugghhh!!'

Xena continued to ponder her thoughts as she nudged Argo to a full gallop, and her destination was getting nearer in her sights.

Gabrielle had managed to bring her goodies to their room and waited for Xena to arrive. 'I hope she likes dinner. This chicken was delicious, and this tapestry to go on the table is just beautiful. Where shall I put the candle? Oh, I'll put it next to the bed, that will make for nice soft lighting when the night's sky returns.' She smiled as she put the candle next to the bed, 'I will spoil her tonight and try to make her feel every bit of what she does to me every single day. Hopefully she won't see right through me, but she'll probably just chalk it up to me being my kind self. That's a good thing too though.' She smiled and finished her preparations just as the warrior walked into their room.

"Hey there." Xena said waving her hand to Gabrielle.

"Xena!! You are back!!" Said the bard as she knocked Xena practically into the wall with her embrace.

"What, did you miss me or something?"

"Mmm, maybe a little." She smirked as she nonchalantly kissed Xena's cheek. After realizing she was coming on a bit strong, she blushed and turned away from Xena's grin.

"What do we have here?"

"Dinner fit for a warrior!" The bard exclaimed.

"Wow it looks wonderful. Do you think I could get a bath first, I don't really smell like an eating companion at the moment." Sniffing herself she winced in agreement with Gabrielle.

"I planned on that too Xena so I bought some new bath soaps for you!"
Xena's expression was a classic "wow thanks" look.

"Gabrielle, you shouldn't have, but thank you. I'll be just a minute." She winked at her friend and began to take off her armor. "Um, Gabrielle, could you give me a hand with these?"

Jumping to the call, "Of course Xena, I'd be surprised if you got them undone by yourself."

"You know, I did do this before I met you." She announced creating a frown on Gabrielle's face. Realizing what she had said, she retorted, "but it was a real pain, it took me forever by myself, thanks for all you help." She smiled her most seductive smile bringing Gabrielle's heart to her stomach.

"You're welcome Xena, you know its no biggie, I don't mind at all." She said trying to calm the nerves and fire burning through her body. Her fingers fumbled with the leathers until they finally managed to free Xena's body of them.

With a quick look at Xena's naked body, a small sigh escaped Gabrielle's lips before she could stop it. Xena's head turned to her with a questioning stare.

"What's wrong?"

"Oh, uh, nothing you just got really dirty that's all."

'Dumb, dumb, stupid answer.' She beat herself up with that.

"Yeah, it was quite a mud splash."

'Why the sigh? She's seen me dirty plenty of times. Is it because I am naked? Nah, she's seen me naked a thousand times.' She thought trying to figure out her friend's unusual noise.

"The water is hot, just like you like it Xena."

She smiled at her as she slowly sunk herself into the scalding water. 'Ahh, that feels godly.' She sighed from the bath room.

Gabrielle could barely see her but her sounds were making her quiver with desire.

"How do you like the soaps Xena?"

"Hmm? Oh they smell great, thanks again."

"Sure no problem! Do you want me to wash your back?"

"Sure, I can't reach it by myself, thanks." Xena couldn't resist having Gabrielle wash her back. It was a ritual that she would never even consider breaking, she loved it way too much. Her touch was so soft and caring. 'She'll make someone a great wife someday.' She painfully admitted to herself as Gabrielle walked into the room.

"How's the water? Is it hot enough?"

"If it were any hotter I would be melting!! Ha! No, its perfect I love it this way."

"Good. I don't think I could handle it that hot."

"Sure you could, you would just have to get used to it."

"No really, I don't have the skin for it, I would burn."

"Oh Gabrielle, don't be such a baby, you should try things first before you dismiss them."

"Baby? I am NOT a baby!" Looking Xena square in the eyes.

"Geez Gabrielle, I was only kidding. Take it easy!!!"

"I'm sorry, I just don't like the fact that you think of me as infantile."

"I honestly don't Gabrielle," Raising from the tub to reach for her. " You have grown up into a fine young woman. You are gonna make some man very happy some day."

Only then, was Gabrielle broken from the spell of Xena's naked soapy body.

"I'm gonna make a 'man' happy one day?"

"Oh sure, you are the best. Any man will be overwhelmed to have you. Really I mean it."

"Hang on, I left something in the other room."

Gabrielle left the room and slowly put her head in her hands and began to weep softly.

Sitting in the tub Xena wondered if it was something she said to make the bard really leave.

"Gabrielle? Are you coming back? Or should I wash my back myself?"

Sniffing, "I'll be right there Xena." She quickly looked around the room to find something she may have left to make her leave. 'I know!' She thought as she walked over to the table next to the bed and picked up the candle. 'I'll burn this in there to make the fragrance enhance her bath. Now calm yourself, she was just speaking earnestly.'

"Coming Xena, I just wanted to burn this to give you a little better light in there, its kind of getting dark." With that she lit the candle and walked into the room.

"That's beautiful Gabrielle, where did you get it?"

"I got it at the market today, oh there were so many shops it was such fun."

She looked up at Xena and saw her eyes were glowing with the fiercest of blue she had ever seen. It made her gasp aloud.

"Gabrielle? Are you okay? You look kind of different. Have you been crying?"

'Can she tell that from here?' Shaking her head, "No Xena I am fine. You look a little different tonight as well. I don't think I have ever seen your eyes so blue."

"Really, you think? Thanks, I guess. Maybe its the candlelight, because yours are a very deep green right now too."

Gabrielle's heart raced as her mind lead her back to the shop of the Alchemist and what she had told her about the candle's powers. 'Does this thing really work? Could it mean that Xena loves me as well? Or am I just being a little too eager to read into that? Oh I don't know.'

"Gabrielle? Are you with me? What happened to you? You look like you have seen a ghost?"

"No, I am fine Xena, really. Lets wash your back before you look like a raisin."

The aroma of the candle filled the room while Gabrielle washed Xena's back with long, soft, easy strokes of the sponge.

"Mmm, Gabrielle, that candle smells wonderful, almost as good as you. My back feels great, thanks for washing it for me."

"I smell good? Is that what you said?"

Unknowing that she said that aloud she replied, "Yyes... you do, you always smell so clean and your skin has a unique fragrance to it, its...nice."

Blushing, "Thanks, I didn't know you noticed those kinds of things, but I'm glad you like it. I love the way your leather makes you smell actually its very...sexy."

"Sexy?"

Biting her lip, "Yeah...I like it."

The wind from the window blew out the candle and the two of them looked at each other like they had just told the biggest of secrets of their lives.

"How about some food?" Gabrielle chimed in.

"Sounds great to me." The glow in her eyes was gone as was Gabrielle's. Xena dried off and put on a night shift and walked over to the table and sat down.

"Mmm, this looks delicious Gabrielle!"

"Thanks, I wish I could take the credit for this but I bought it at the market. You are going to love this chicken it is delectable. Dig in!"

"Don't mind if I do!"

Gabrielle noticed the color of Xena's eyes were back to normal, she wondered if it was just the lighting, but why did she tell Xena she thought her smell was sexy? 'Gods, what was I thinking? I didn't think I would ever say something like that out loud.'

Xena ate her meal as she watched Gabrielle wondering what in Tarturus she was thinking to tell Gabrielle she liked the way her skin smelled. 'I must be going insane in my old age. Nothing like

trying to scare the girl. Calm down!!

Gabrielle started to eat as well and the silence was deafening. The two of them just sat there eating their dinner sometimes looking up to gently smile at the other.

"Are you tired from your trip Xena?"

"Yeah kind of, I might even sleep tonight." She said with a smile.

"You sleep? Impossible for you."

"You'd be surprised what I can do."

"Oh, I'm sure of that."

Thinking of what she just said, Gabrielle hid her blushing face and started to get ready for bed. She slipped off her boots, then her skirt, and then her top. Looking through her bag, she found a clean shift to wear to bed. Xena was staring at the naked bard while her back was turned away. 'Gods she is beautiful.'

"Did you say something?" Gabrielle turned around as she slipped the shift over her head showing her body only momentarily to Xena, that was enough to make the warrior blush though.

"Uh, no Gabrielle I did not." She replied 'Great now she is reading my thoughts. I'm in trouble if that is the case.'

"Oh I thought I heard you say something, guess it came from outside."

"Gabrielle!!! Xena!! Are you guys here?"

They both looked at each other in confusion. A knock came to the door. Xena walked over to the door and slowly opened it, with her sword in her other hand.

"You are here!!" Said the young woman holding onto Xena.

Xena pulled away and saw that it was Solari from the Amazon Nation and a sister Amazon.

"Solari!!!" Gabrielle jumped from the bed and hugged her tightly. "What are you doing here?"

"We heard you were around here. We came to bring you this." Handing a piece of parchment to Xena.

"What's this?"

"Read it." Xena read the note and turned towards Gabrielle.

"The Amazons request that their queen be present to commence the Annual Summer Festival. It seems that it starts in a few days. Your Regent Ephiny has requested your presence."

"Oh how exciting! Xena can we go? Pleeease? I can't deny the nation of their queen on an occasion like this can I?"

Solari and Jenna looked at Xena with a strong sincere glance and pleading.
"Who am I that I should stop the festival? We'll leave in the morning."

Squeaking, "Oh Xena thank you! You can tell Regent Ephiny that your queen will be joining her in a day or so, with her warrior escort." Winking at Xena.

"Xena that brings us to the other reason that we are here."

"OK what's up?"

"Ephiny needs your help with this as well."

"What can I do?"

"We need your help with stopping an attack on the Amazon Nation. A warlord by the name of Kennis is threatening our land and his attack would start the day of the festival."

"What's the nation to him?"

"Just another greedy bastard that wants the land that we have built up so beautifully so he can destroy it for himself. Ephiny doesn't think it'll be a big deal, but since you are coming that way anyway.."

"She doesn't want any unnecessary trouble."

"Exactly. Will you help us?"

"Of course, anything for Regent Ephiny. Is she at the camp?"

"No she will stay with the nation to prepare for the festival. I will travel with you and meet up with the rest of the war party led by Epinon. Jenna will take our queen back to the nation." Turning to Gabrielle. "If that's okay with you. She's very trustworthy and fights well if necessary."

Looking towards Gabrielle's approving nodding, Xena accepted the Amazons' request for assistance.

"Shall we leave now or is the morning still fine?" Xena asked Solari.

"Tomorrow will be too late I fear. Kennis' army will be on their way and I don't want it to get any closer to the day of the festival."

"OK let me get dressed and we'll be on our way. Well, no rest for the weary tonight. Thanks for dinner though Gabrielle, it was great." Winking at Gabrielle the two Amazons looked at each other, then at Gabrielle and smiled.

"What?" Xena asked.

"Oh nothing. I'm just excited I guess.

"Uh huh."

"Jenna do we have to leave tonight as well?"

"No my queen, we can leave tomorrow, if you would rather. It won't take too long to get home from here."

"OK good, one more night in a bed. Yes!"

"Lucky you." Xena scowled knowing she wouldn't know the next time sleep would be an option.

Feeling guilty Gabrielle stroked Xena's arm and said, "Yeah, but you guys will have that Kennis and his army down so fast, you'll be in a soft bed in the royal hut before you know it."

"I can hardly wait." She replied in her most seductive voice sending shivers throughout Gabrielle's body.

Watching Xena leave was always the hardest part of their journeys together. Unknowing if she would come back alive or get word from some stranger that she had been killed in battle. Looking up into Xena's eyes Gabrielle leaned into Xena and gave her a large hug and kissed her on the cheek.

"Solari better take care of you, or else."

"Oh I will, I don't want to be the target of my queen."

"Very reasonable of you Solari." Xena chuckled. "Take care Gabrielle, I will be back to the nation in time for the festival, don't worry about anything." Bringing Gabrielle closer for another hug she whispered so only she could hear. "You do smell incredible."

Gabrielle blushed and squeezed Xena good-bye. "Be careful, promise me."
Xena winked and smiled her best smile, "Always."

The two of them left as Gabrielle watched them ride away until they were too small to be seen anymore. She sadly wiped her tears away and started back up into the room where Jenna was waiting anxiously for her queen to return.

"Is everything okay my queen?"

"Please Jenna, call me Gabrielle."

"OK my quee... Gabrielle."

They both smiled and yawned.

"Jenna please, if you are tired, go to sleep. I am wide awake I won't be sleeping anytime soon."

"You miss her when she's gone don't you?"

Gabrielle looked up in surprise. "What?"

"I'm sorry, it's none of my business."

"No, how did you know?"

"Are you kidding me? The way you two look at each other. It is obvious that you have feelings for each other that are more than just friendly."

"What do you mean the way we look at each other. Xena is my friend, why shouldn't I look kindly towards her."

"I'm sorry that I upset you my queen, er, Gabrielle."

"No, you didn't. Really, you didn't." Pausing for a long time, "It's just that if you see it, why doesn't Xena? I have never felt for someone the way I feel for her. She thinks I'm gonna wind up marrying some man one day! Can you believe that?"

"No ma'am! That just doesn't seem very likely. I mean you are in love with her are you not?"

"Well...I never thought I'd say this aloud and in front of someone, but yes, I am very much in love with her. She thinks of me as a child though, how do I change that."

"She doesn't Gabrielle, the looks she has for you are much more than that. Trust me."

"Well maybe. You know today I bought this candle from a merchant who said it had special powers. Well tonight as it was lit I saw the warmest, bluest eyes, coming from Xena that I have ever seen. The Alchemist said that the light would bring out the truth in loves eyes."

"Maybe she was right. If you say you saw her eyes in a way you haven't before, then maybe, she does in fact love you."

"I wonder. That would be wonderful, but I just don't know. Everytime I watch her leave me I get so sad. I mean she has never not returned, well not never, but it makes my heart yearn so badly to be with her again. I can't believe that I am saying all of this to you. I mean I just met you. I am supposed to be the Amazon Queen, I can't even control my own emotional life."

"Gabrielle, do you feel better?"

"Well, yes, as a matter of fact I do."

"Then I am glad that I could help."

"Thanks Jenna, you should sleep, we have a long journey ahead of us tomorrow."

"OK Gabrielle, good-night."

"Good-night."

Gabrielle was so alive at this moment. 'Could Xena be in love with me? Isn't that an impossibility? What a mystery to be solved. I can't wait to see Ephiny and the rest of the nation, how fun this festival will be!!'

Gabrielle grabbed her scroll and began to write vigorously. Her quill was writing almost as fast as her mind was spinning. The thoughts in her mind were as puzzled now as they ever had been. This time she felt that there was a slight hope in her future with the woman she so loved. The night went by slowly and she finally finished her scroll and fell asleep in the chair next to the window. Now her mind was able to dream all of the things that she hadn't had time to think about during the day. Never a dull moment in the mind of a bard.

Morning came and the two Amazons left for their village. Gabrielle convinced Jenna to try some of the chicken before they started their journey. She agreed with her queen and ate every last bite.

"That was delicious!"

"Told you!" She smiled at her new sister.

"So tell me about the festival. What do you do?"

"Oh its alot of fun. We have competitions, outrageous food, storytelling, poetry, music. It is a time where we can all let our hair down and just have fun with our sisters. One big happy family I guess you could say."

"Oh that sounds wonderful! How fun it'll be, I can't wait. I love to tell stories. I am a bard of course, you probably heard that though."

"Yeah, Regent Ephiny talked about some of your ramblings."

"Jenna!!!"

"Just kidding Gabrielle. The stories of your adventures with Xena are well known and strong in our hearts. We love all of them."

"Whew, I was getting a complex for a second there. I just finished one last night, maybe I will read it at the festival."

"It would be an honor to hear it my queen. I look forward to it."

"Thanks. I hope you will all like it. I kind of wrote it for Xena, so maybe I'll get it in before she returns. I think I would be too embarrassed if she were watching me read this aloud. She would probably kill me too."

"She wouldn't dare."

"Just a figure of speech, relax Jenna."

They were about a half day's walk from the Amazon Nation. Their talking was good for Gabrielle, it took the thoughts of sadness away from her for now, anyway.

Xena and Solari met up with Epinon and the rest of the war party in no time flat.

"So what's the word Epinon?"

"He hasn't done anything yet Xena. His troops appear to be waiting for a sign from him to start their attack."

"Well, let's make sure that doesn't happen. Where is Kennis now?"

"He is still at the camp in his quarters. I think he has a guest if you know what I mean."

"The poor thing, probably some slave girl that he forced himself on."

"I don't know of anyone who would go willingly to that man."

"Let's break up his little party so you can go home. If we stop this now, we may get back in time for the festival."

"Your lead Xena. We will back you."

"Let's go."

The Amazon's gave their signal to watch Xena for any attack movement to happen. They spread themselves out like a swarm of bees going in for the kill of their prey. One of the guards saw one of the Amazons and started to yell when Epinon drew her bow and silenced him instantly. The party crept closer to the camp where Kennis' army remained. Xena was the first on enemy ground and found Kennis' tent and slowly made her move inside. He was in the middle of having his way with a slave girl when Xena slammed her pinch on him, instantly tossing his naked body onto the ground.

"Who... who are you?"

"I'm Xena, I can't believe you haven't heard of me. You mustn't know what'll happen to you if you don't talk then."

"I can't feel my hands or feet anymore."

"You have thirty seconds before your body becomes lifeless."

"What do you want from me?"

"Your attack on the Amazon Nation. Call it off or else."

"Those damn women don't need that land." Choking loudly.

"Now is not the time to start bad mouthing my friends. It wouldn't be in your best interests I guarantee that." Staring at the writhing body beneath her. "You don't have much time left."

"OK, OK just take this thing off of me."

Just as she initiated the pinch, she terminated it just as quickly.

"Well.. I'm waiting. I hate waiting. You don't want me in a bad mood do you?"

He shook his head vigorously, "No...I don't."

"Then tell me what I want to hear."

"I will call off my army. We will not attack the Amazons."

"Good. You will live then. Those women would have whipped your sorry ass anyway."

"Women warriors bah!!!"

Xena raised her eyebrow to him. "What about women warriors?"

Feeling the nerve he just struck, decided to retort. "You are probably right. It would've been a good fight though."

"Why don't you claim some other land? Land that isn't occupied by someone else. I swear, that if I hear of you trying to muscle your way into someone else's homeland, I will track you down like an animal. And I guarantee, it won't be as pretty a sight as this one." She gave him a stare that he could only nod at.

"Now call off your guards so we can leave in peace. We had you surrounded anyway. Give this woman some clothes, now!" The woman took her clothes and quickly put them on. She graciously thanked Xena for her rescue.

Kennis stepped out of his tent stark naked and yelled to his troops.

"OK men! There will be no attack of the Amazon Nation!! We are heading north instead. Pack up your gear, cuz we are leaving tonight!! Anyone that tries to kill any Amazon will answer to me!! They will leave unharmed, is that understood?"

The troops looking around felt their capture and agreed to stop the attack. Knowing quite well at this point that they had no alternative anyway. The Amazons yelled in victory surrounding the camp with their war cries. Xena and the rest of the war party offered to escort the young girl back to her homeland.

She gratefully accepted the offer.

"I'll take her home Xena. You and Solari take the rest of the party back home." Epinon offered.

"Will you be alright?"

"Me? Oh yeah I'll be fine. Don't worry I'm taking a couple Amazons with me so I don't have to walk home alone."

"OK good, there is always safety in numbers."

"Bye Xena, and thanks again for your help."

"No problem."

Xena led the war party back towards their home where the festivities had almost begun.

"Ephiny this is great!!! I am so excited to see you and the rest of the nation."

"We are pleased to have you here Gabrielle. The festival wouldn't be the same without our queen."

"Aw shucks. I wouldn't miss this for anything, well almost anything." Her mind started to trail off thinking of Xena."

"Gabrielle? Is everything okay?"

"Yeah, it's just Xena."

"There's nothing wrong is there?"

"No not exactly."

"Spill it, Gab."

"OK, walk with me?"

"Sure, lets go."

The two walked down by the lake discussing Gabrielle and Xena's relationship. Ephiny laughed at Gabrielle's innocence.

"You have got to be joking! You guys still haven't gotten together? Man, do you need a staff of steel to hit you two in the heads?"

"I guess we do. I haven't seen anything from her, and she obviously hasn't seen my gestures towards her. What a mess! Ephiny what do I do? I can't take it any longer. I'll go mad first."

"Oh no you don't!! We will not have a queen ranting throughout the nation. That is unacceptable!!" Laughing at Gabrielle.

"OK then, tell me what to do."

"Oh Gabrielle, just be yourself. It is working. She loves you for who you are. If you change that, you risk losing what she saw in you I the first place."

"That does make sense."

"Of course it does! Now let's get back to work on the festival."

Smiling at each other the two regents walked back to the center of the village for the final preparations. The night was filled with exuberance. Everyone was excited for the festival to

begin. Gabrielle was in the royal hut trying to settle her thoughts. She took out the indigo candle from her pack and placed it next to the bed and lit it.

"Tell me, am I wrong to think I have a chance with her? Is this my destiny? Does she love me the same way?"

The candle flickered excitedly, its glow was a deep purple. "Maybe you do know the truth. Maybe you can see it, and I have just been too blind and naive to notice."

"Now you are talking to candles?"

"Ephiny, you scared me!!!"

"I'm sorry Gabrielle. How are you feeling? Any better?" Sitting next to the bard on her bed, she put her arm around the queen. Gabrielle felt a lump form in her throat and she turned to Ephiny for a hug. Ephiny rocked Gabrielle as she sobbed quietly missing her love.

"It'll work out Gabrielle, trust me on this one. I know what I am talking about, really I do."

"I trust you Ephiny, I think I just miss her now."

"OK you can do that. I will allow that." Grinning sarcastically at Gabrielle's soaked eyes. She gave her one final hug and told her queen that dinner would be ready for her if she wanted it. Gabrielle decided to sleep instead so she could dream of holding Xena in her arms once more.

Xena and Solari made camp with the rest of the war party and agreed it would be just short of a day until they arrived back home. They all took turns hunting their meals, but Xena did not cook. She in turn sat alone staring at the stars thinking of Gabrielle and what she may be doing right about now. She found herself drifting off into sleep dreaming of holding her bard once more. She was interrupted by Solari's voice.

"Xena? Are you sleeping?" Stirring Xena from her much needed rest.

"No Solari, haven't you heard? I'm not allowed to sleep. What is it?"

"I'm sorry, you were making sounds that resembled laughter, so I was just wondering if you were awake or asleep."

"Let's just say that I was asleep, okay? Damn. Now I am awake."

"I'm sorry Xena."

"You should be, now you have to stay up with me."

"I guess that is payback. What do you want to do?"

"Can I ask you something?"

"Sure, anything. What is it?"

"Do you see Gabrielle as a child or a woman?"

"Xena she is my queen. I would never consider her a child. Why do you ask?"

"She thinks that's how I see her. She couldn't be more wrong."

"I can almost guess how you really feel."

"Is it that obvious?"

"Yep, it sure is."

"Then how come she doesn't see it?"

"Maybe you just aren't looking in the right direction. A different light maybe, is all you need, a new perspective."

"A different light huh? Maybe you are right."

"You love her don't you?" Xena just nodded her head slowly over and over.

"Can I ask why you just haven't told her?"

"And risk our friendship are you nuts?"

"I don't think that it's a risk, she may surprise you. You can't tell me you haven't noticed the way she stares at you."

"No, I haven't. She's just being herself. She is a very affectionate woman. When she lets me hold her during the cold nights...."

"She's just being nice? Xena think about what you are saying. The girl is crazy over you. Think about it!!! It shouldn't take you long to see that what she feels for you is the REAL thing! Sheesh, and they say that I am dense."

"Did you just call me dense?"

Swallowing hard and realizing who she had said that to, "Er, uh, yes Xena. Even at the risk of my throat being slit, I did say that." Closing her eyes, she feared the wrath of Xena coming close to her.

"Thanks, Solari. I needed that." Xena leaned over to the terrified Amazon and hugged her, leaving her feeling relieved that her life was spared.

"Can we go to sleep now?"

"Sure, go ahead. We have to make serious tracks tomorrow, get some rest."

'While I sit here like an idiot and try to figure out when all of this happened behind my back.' She finally drifted back to sleep and stayed that way until morning.

The sun came out and it was a beautiful day in Amazon country. Gabrielle had just given the signal for the festival to commence. She wore the special royal attire for the day. The community was buzzing with excitement as the festival began. Smells of exotic foods were blowing through the air and Gabrielle was the first to detect them. Ephiny and Gabrielle walked around the festival to make sure that all arrangements had been completed. Everyone was exhausted, but thrilled just the same with the turnout. The Amazons had already begun the competition for the best fighters. The poets were reading aloud in preparation of their events later in the day. Music was beating throughout the Nation, there was a little extra bounce in everyone's walk today.

"Are you joining the festivities today Ephiny?"

"Everyone knows I'd whip them, why do I need to prove myself in public?" Gabrielle just rolled her eyes and smirked at her Regent. "Well I am going to read one of my scrolls. I think it'll be fun."

"If I fought today, who would keep you out of trouble?"

"Yeah, I guess you are right." Grabbing Ephiny's hand, the two of them strolled through the rest of the festival admiring all of the hard work put into today's fun.

"Everything looks wonderful don't you think Gabrielle? Gabrielle?"

"I hope Xena and Solari were successful in their meeting with Kennis."

"Oh, I'm sure everything went Xena's way. The guy hasn't got a prayer, quit worrying. She'll be back here before you know it, trust me she has someone very special waiting for her, and she knows it." Ephiny giving Gabrielle's hand a squeeze eased her thoughts a little bit, for now.

The day was filled with laughter and frolicking from everyone here. The sun was beginning to set and the poetry and story competition was about to begin. The audience had mellowed due to the excess of ale and wine in the systems of most woman in the nation. The first Amazon to read, told a story of a princess who was lost at sea. She was rescued by her love who had been searching for her for two summers. The love was never questioned and fire between them was never extinguished by time. The quest to find her love was all that was needed. The rest of their eternity was spent in each others arms and with the people they loved the most.

"Hold out for love, if its true it will find you, even if your thoughts mislead you. Hang on to love once it is yours, for it can change your life forever."

The Amazons hooted and howled for the young bard who told the story. Their appreciation made the girl blush with gratefulness. Next up was Gabrielle. She approached the stage with her scroll in her hands ready to read her latest endeavor of poetry. Xena's arrival was unknown to Gabrielle. Xena moved her way through the Amazons to a nice place to hide, so she could listen to her bard's writings.

"This I call Mystery.

Each time you'd ride down the path, I wasn't sure when I would see you again.

Yours was a twisted blind-sided road no matter which road you took then.

Oh you set up your place in my thoughts moved in and made my thinking crowded.

Now we're out in the woods with the howling wolves, my heart the red sun your heart the moon clouded.

I could go crazy on a night like tonight.

When summer's beginning to give up her fight.

And every thought's a possibility and voices are heard but nothing is seen.

Why do you spend this time with me?

Maybe an equal mystery.

So what is love then?

Is it dictated or chosen?

Does it sing like the hymns of a thousand years or is it just pop emotion?

And if it ever was here and it left does it mean it was never true?

And to exist it must elude is that why I think these things of you?

But I could go crazy on a night like tonight.

When summer's beginning to give up her fight.

And every thought's a possibility and voices are heard but nothing is seen.

Why do you spend this time with me?

Maybe an equal mystery.

Oh but you like the taste of danger it shines like sugar on your lips.

And you like to stand in the line of fire just to show you can shoot straight from your hip.

There must be a thousand things you would die for.

I can hardly think of two.

But not everything is better spoken aloud, not when I'm talking to you.

Oh the pirate gets the ship and the girl tonight.

Breaks a bottle to christen her.

Basking in the exploits of her thief, she's a very good listener.

And maybe that's all that we need is to meet in the middle of impossibility.

Standing at opposite poles, equal partners in a mystery.

We're standing at opposite poles, equal partners in a mystery.....

The Amazons went wild!!!! They loved it wholeheartedly, clapping, whistling, shouting, but all Gabrielle could see was Xena staring at her with a smile that could silence even her. Xena walked slowly through the Amazons and approached the stage. Gabrielle made her way down the steps to greet her friend's return.

"Xena you made it back!!!" Giving her a hug that took the warrior's breath away.

"I was just on did you hear me? Did you just get here? Say something?"

"I could if you lighten your hold on me."

"Oh sorry Xena I just missed you."

"Me too. I loved your poem, it was beautiful. When did you get a chance to write that?"

"Oh a couple of nights ago, I guess it was. You really liked it?"

"Yes, I did. I really did."

"Are you hungry? There is a ton of food here, all tastes, shapes, colors, the women here went nuts!!!"

"I am kind of hungry, let's go find something/"

"OK Xena, Ephiny I'm sure is waiting to hear about your fight with Kennis and his army."

"I wouldn't call it a fight."

"No? Did you kill him?"

"No, I just reasoned with him. His final decision was a smart one, I'll say that for him."

"Oh I just bet. I don't need to hear anymore."

"All you need to know is that Amazon country is not one of the places he'll be visiting any time soon."

"Well that's a relief! Let's go get you some food and find Ephiny."

"Lets."

The two women walked arm in arm unwilling to share their new knowledge with each other. They found Ephiny talking with Solari and the rest of the war party.

"I guess you heard the good news then, yes?"

"Xena the entire nation thanks you for everything you have done for us. How can we ever thank you enough?"

"Just enjoy the day, that is thanks enough for me. Let's celebrate the rest of the festival."

"Sounds good to me!..... AMAZONS!!..... A toast ... The nation hushed at the tone of their regent. "To Xena!! Once again she has saved the Amazons and our nation. Lift your drinks to our hero and to our queen who came all this way to make sure the festival was a great success!!!"

The sounds of the clanking glasses, cups, steins, were everywhere. Whatever was in their hands, they slammed together in celebration with another Amazon's awaiting goblet. The cheering was loud and howls towards Xena were everywhere. There wasn't one woman who wouldn't give her life for her. Or giving whatever they could just to spend one night of passion with her was a consideration too. None of them had anything that she wanted except for Gabrielle. She had her heart, mind, and soul.

"Thank you, Ephiny, that was kind of you." Gabrielle squeezed her hand.

"Are you kidding? That's the least I could do for you guys. You have come through for us many times. We thank you wholeheartedly."

"The night is far from over, we have a lot of celebrating to do. First, we must get some food for our hero here. We haven't eaten in awhile." Solari interjected.

"Yes, I am hungry, lets go!"

The four of them walked through the festival talking, laughing, and eating whatever came to their mouths. The food was filling, the ale was intoxicating, and the festival was a complete success. The fires started to burn low as the night came to a close.

"What a great day! I had such fun."

"Of course you did you won the contest. Big surprise. You are the best bard to come this way in a long time."

"Thanks Solari, I appreciate it. Xena have you had enough?"

"Yes, I have had a great day as well. I am glad that it turned out as well as it did."

"Well thanks to you it did."

Smiling, she grabbed Gabrielle's arm, "Thanks, it was really nothing. Good-night you two."

"Good-night Xena, good-night Gabrielle." Ephiny said as she nudged Solari.

"Good-night." Gabrielle walked with Xena back to the royal hut with her arm still wrapped around Xena's.

"See I told you you'd be back to sleep in a bed in the royal hut."

"Thank the gods, I am tired."

They walked in the hut and the room smelled of exquisite fragrances. The indigo candle was burning on a table next to the bed with a large flame illuminating the entire hut. The bath was filled with flower petals and fresh warm water. The two women smiled and knew the Amazons had set it up just for them.

"They stop at nothing to give thanks don't they?"

"Uh huh. They are wonderful people."

Gabrielle noticed the blue fire coming from Xena's eyes once again. This had to be the real thing, the truth that she had been waiting for, had shown itself once again. This time she wasn't going to ignore it.

"Xena, can I help you with your armor?"

"Thanks Gabrielle, it'll be a nice relief to get this stuff off."

'Oh you just wait my princess' Gabrielle thought as she tugged on the leathers and buckles of Xena's armor.

"Gabrielle?"

"Yes Xena?"

"That poem you read today."

"Mmm hmm."

"Who did you write it for? There was so much depth in it, was it someone in your life you haven't mentioned to me yet?"

"Yeah, actually it was written for a person I love very much."

Xena slipped in the tub and waited to see if Gabrielle was going to offer anymore information about this person.

"Ahh, this feels great. Do you want me to have them bring more water for you?"

"No Xena, I won't need any."

Gabrielle picked up the soap and started to lather the sponge to wash Xena's back. She squeezed the excess water down Xena's shoulders making her shiver from head to toe. With long strokes Gabrielle washed every part of skin that was available to her. Her strokes were very soft and very affectionate.

"So, are you going to tell me who you wrote that for?" Xena asked in a questioning low voice hoping that she knew the answer.

"Who do you think I wrote it for?"

"I honestly don't know, Perdicus? Another boy from Potediea?"

"Xena..." She turned to face her love, "I didn't write it for some boy from my past, and no it wasn't Perdicus. I wrote it for.." lifting her hands to hold Xena's face and looking straight into those fiery eyes of blue, "You. Only you could give me such inspiration. I love you, and only you." Gabrielle lowered herself in to the bath and kissed Xena's forehead, then her cheek, and then the other cheek.

"Gabrielle, I..."

"Sssshhhhhh, let me finish, otherwise I won't be able to do this."

Gabrielle slowly kissed Xena's parting lips with the tenderness that only she could bestow. Xena brought her arms around the fully clothed wet bard and intensified their passionate embrace. A small moan escaped the lips of Gabrielle sending Xena's desire up to an incredible level. Xena peeled off the remainder of Gabrielle's clothes and tenderly caressed her body. The newness of their caresses enticed them both and heightened their already peaked appetites. They crawled out of the tub and quickly dried off before jumping on each other in bed.

"Xena, why did you never tell me?"

"Me? What about you? You had all of this inside of you and never offered me any insight to it."

"I was afraid that you only looked at me as a child. I never knew you could feel this way about me. I never knew until I saw your eyes the other night. The light showed your true feelings for me. At first I didn't believe, but now there is no question in my mind."

"Mine either, I love you Gabrielle. I so want to make love to you."

"Oh Xena, please, I want you so much it hurts."

"Your wish is my command."

Xena kissed Gabrielle so tenderly that Gabrielle was overwhelmed by the amount of passion growing inside of her. Their tongues met with the fiercest of hunger and desire. Moans were escaping both of their lips and their bodies were grinding into each other at a rapid pace. Xena moved her kisses towards Gabrielle's throat and around her ears. She felt the bard's body press into hers as she stroked the curves of her neck with her tongue. Slowly working her way down the bard's wanting body, she captured her nipple in her mouth and swirled her tongue over and over it, bringing loud moans from the bard. The light nibbling on her chest was creating a wave of excitement that was growing between her legs.

"Oh Xena please. Take me. I need... you. I have to feel you inside of me. Please."

"I don't want to rush this Gabrielle, I promise, it'll be worth the wait."

Gabrielle growled at her newfound lover and reveled in the sensations this woman was giving her. None that had ever struck her body the way they were right at this minute. Xena slowly started her descent of her lover's body. Kissing every spot on her body, Xena delicately stroked the bard's face and smiled at her young love. She moved down to look at her bard's wetness between her thighs, and began to inhale the sweet smell that escaped her body.

"Xena... what are you....? Oh gods!!"

Xena placed her tongue on the bundle of nerves at her center, causing Gabrielle's body to jump in every direction. Placing two fingers deep inside of her, she felt herself scream with desire. She drank all of the love that Gabrielle gave her in every stroke of her tongue. She wriggled beneath Xena like a caged animal that was in need of escape. Xena followed her every move and hung onto the back of Gabrielle's leg until she began to feel her climax start.

"Oh yes, that feels... oh my godssssss"

With that, a surge of emotion left the bard's lips as she screamed Xena's name so the entire Amazon Nation knew that Xena was hers and only hers. The jolts of shock surged through Gabrielle's body and Xena didn't let up for a second. She continued to move her tongue in a circular motion while thrusting her fingers deep inside of Gabrielle until she could feel the second wave of ecstasy burn through her body.

"By the gods Xena!!!! You are incredible." Was all that she would be allowed to say before her body shut down and absorbed all of the aftershocks of an incredible orgasm.

Xena kept her body pressed hard against Gabrielle's to feel every movement that came from her. Gabrielle moved her hips so she could wrap her legs around Xena's waist. This excited Xena so much that she began to thrust herself onto Gabrielle over and over. She was sweating harder now, her breathing became very ragged and her stomach muscles were tight, and leading her into a wave of utter ecstasy. Gabrielle could feel Xena's body begin to quake and shudder with anticipation of release. Faster and harder Xena's body thrust onto Gabrielle's.

"Oh Gabrielle you feel so good, I think I'm gonna explode right here!!"

"Don't hold back Xena, show me how you feel, tell me... tell... me." Gabrielle kissed Xena deeply and sent her completely over the edge.

"Gabrii....elllle!!!!!!" Shook the royal hut and the Amazon Nation. Many hearts were broken that night when they heard that cry. Xena's body collapsed onto Gabrielle completely exhausted from her large climax. One word, she said one word and Gabrielle knew that she had finally captured the warrior's heart.

Ephiny and Solari slapped each other hands in victory and headed off to end a perfect night with a silent toast to the happy and exhausted couple. The peacefulness of the night's breeze cascaded into the royal hut, extinguishing the candle, but not the fire within the two resting bodies beside it. Gabrielle fell fast asleep entwined in her lover's arms. The morning brought smiles and giggling around the royal hut as people passed by. The two women awoke to find that it was not a dream, but in fact it was more than a dream brought to reality, it was their destiny. Xena sat up and held the candle in her hands admiring the pattern it made as she spun it in her hands.

"Do you see that Gabrielle?" A small gasp escaped her lips when she realized that the design of the candle remarkably resembled the design on Xena's breastplate. "Where did you say you got this?"

"From a very special woman, who knew that the truth could be discovered from a new light."

"That reminds me of something that Solari said to me. She said that I couldn't see your love for me, because I needed to look at it from a new light. I guess from a new perspective you see things a little more clearly."

"I know I do. Now anyway."

"Thanks the gods you shared it with me."

"Xena I will share the rest of my life with you if you'll let me. I love you."

"I love you too Gabrielle."

"I love the way you say my name."

"Gabrielle...." Xena paused to kiss her. "Gabrielle...."

Rolling the bard over to her back, they made love again and again until they had absolutely no strength left. The two spent the rest of the day wrapped in each other's arms and smiling with the knowledge of their destiny.

The End

NOTES:

I would like to thank all of you that have read this story and hope that you fully enjoyed it. The song Mystery was written and is copyrighted by Indigo Girls and Sony Music. (thanks guys for the inspiration!!)

Let me know how you liked it!!! Feedback is the ruler of all Bards.

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