

~ Attraction ~

by Red Hope

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Copyright: Lets see, Universal and MCA own Xena, Gabrielle, and the rest but I created the plot.

Violence: No violence.

Subtext: That's the only thing I know how to write, hehe.

Summary: After the battle against the Horde, Xena shuts Gabrielle out. The bard isn't too keen on the idea of being shut out by her friend so she decides to head to the Amazons for a break. Yet a fight starts between Xena and Gabrielle.

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Section 1

~*Part 1*~

Gabrielle lifted her hands over her head as the warrior followed the same example. The pair had heard a bird call high in the trees and knew what it meant so they'd had stopped walking and did a peace signal.

Quickly three Amazons came out of the trees and landed on the ground. One of them stepped forward as they pushed their mask back; the other two doing the same.

Gabrielle grinned. "Ep."

The weapons master smiled at the bard. "It's good to see you, my queen." Immediately the Amazon was pulled into a hug by the small woman, and she chuckled. "How are you, Gabrielle?"

The bard pulled back. "I'm doing well." She then turned her head back to the warrior with serious eyes.

Xena nodded grudgingly and took a step up beside her partner. Argo was in tow. "How are you, Eponin?"

The weapons master turned her attention to the warrior. "I'm good. Yourself?"

Xena dipped her head and replied, "Not too bad."

Eponin nodded with a smile. "Good to hear." She turned back to Gabrielle. "So what brings you both here?"

"We were just passing through the area so we thought we'd come in for a visit."

The weapons master brightly smiled, which was rare for her. "Glad you decided to grace your nation with your presence."

The bard chuckled. "Anytime."

"Well, would you like an escort into the village?" The weapons master waited a beat then muttered, "My guess is no."

Gabrielle rolled her eyes then confirmed it. "No thank you, Ep."

"As you wish." The Amazon took a step back. "Then I believe we'll head back on patrol. I'll see you in the village later, Gabrielle."

"See you then, Ep." Gabrielle then watched her Amazon friend leap into the trees followed by the other two Amazons. She sighed and leaned against her staff for a moment.

Xena looked to her friend. "You okay?"

The bard nodded. "Yup, let's go." She then began to walk with her staff and rather quickly.

The warrior watched her go for a moment then she followed with Argo in tow.

~*Part 2*~

Gabrielle flopped down in the wood chair and raised her head to look to her friend.

"Things aren't going well huh?"

The bard shook her head at her regent's question. "They aren't, Eph." She sighed and leaned back in the chair.

Slowly the regent walked over to her desk and sat down in a chair to face her friend. "What's been happening?"

The bard took a long breath then replied, "Well we just had a fight before coming here."

Ephiny furrowed her eyebrows. "Over what?"

"Xena didn't want to come here but I kept insisting."

"So how'd you win her out?"

Gabrielle's face was slightly sour looking. "I just told her I'd be angry for a real long time otherwise." She crossed her legs at the ankle. "I don't know why she didn't want to come here."

The regent leaned back in her seat. "Well we both know she's never really liked the Amazons."

"Ephiny, she doesn't at least mind them... I really don't think it's that." She turned her eyes to the door then back to her friend. "Besides she told me we could come here for a visit anytime." Gabrielle paused and gathered her thoughts. "Xena just has a sword stuck up her ass." Her last words showered her irritation, and she knew she was wrong in her assessment.

Ephiny though, she'd heard it and chuckled then went serious. "Well did you two go through a rough spot?"

Gabrielle's gaze went to the floor as she reflected, then she looked back up. "She must still be upset about the fight with the Horde."

The regent furrowed her eyebrows. "The Horde? You two fought the Horde?"

"Well sort of." The small bard exhaled loudly and shifted in the seat. "You see, we ran into the Athenian Army and they asked for Xena's help. So she... well she really got dark."

"You mean into her warlord set of mind?"

Gabrielle nodded. "Yes, it was something else. After the battle with the Horde she's hardly been talking to me."

The regent crossed her arms against her chest. "Did you ask her why?"

The Queen arched an eyebrow. "Are you crazy? This is the same Xena we're talking about right?"

Ephiny grinned. "True." Then she sobered again. "Maybe you should try to talk to her?"

Gabrielle shook her head. "No." She grumbled then mumbled, "She'll come around on her own. I just hope it doesn't take long." *Because I can't take much more of the silence and fighting.*

The regent nodded. "Well, stay here for awhile and relax. Maybe Xena will get out of her funk."

"Or get worse."

The Amazon shrugged her shoulders. "Hopefully she won't." She then stood up. "Glad you came though. It's real good to see you."

Gabrielle now stood up. "Thanks, Eph. I've missed talking to you." She smiled warmly.

The regent returned the smile and took a step forward; she hugged her friendly tightly. "She'll talk to you."

Slowly the queen pulled back with a sad smile. "I know. It's just a question of how long?"

"Well your Amazons will keep you busy 'til then." Ephiny still had her hands on the other woman's shoulders.

Gabrielle chuckled. "Good. Party tonight?" She grinned.

"Definitely... our queen is back."

Gabrielle rolled her eyes then thoroughly teased, "Any excuse, I swear."

The regent laughed. "Sshhh, don't give away our secret." She then leaned in to place a kiss to Gabrielle's cheek. "I'll see you later." Ephiny relinquished her hold on the bard.

"Bye, Eph and thanks." She shifted to the door of the hut.

"See you, Gabrielle."

Gabrielle opened the door to the hut and stepped out, closing the door behind. After she closed the door, she brought her right hand up to her cheek where Ephiny had kissed her. The bard could still feel her cheek flushing in reaction. She grinned. "Hmmm." After a shake of her head, Gabrielle walked off to find her best friend.

~*Part 3*~

The small bard walked into the dinning hut then she gazed around for either Xena or Ephiny. As she looked to her right, she saw Ephiny waving to her. Gabrielle grinned and walked over to her friend. She sat down beside her. "What's up?"

Ephiny leaned to her left closer to Gabrielle. "Right after dinner starts the party." She settled back into her original spot.

"Oh gods, this will be bad." Gabrielle wickedly grinned and then went stern. "Have you seen Xena?"

The regent nodded. "I did, she was talking to Solari earlier." She lifted her mug of ale to get a drink.

"Where?"

Ephiny lowered her mug after a quick sip. "Over on the other side of the hut. She might still be there."

Gabrielle's eyes showed her appreciation. "Thanks, I think I'll see if I can find her and get something to eat." She turned her sights back to her Amazon friend. "Need anything while I'm up?"

The regent shook her head. "No I ate, thanks though."

The queen stood up then padded over to the other side of the huge hut. She quickly spotted Xena, who stood out against the rest of the Amazons. Gabrielle made a beeline to the warrior then stood near the warrior's side. "Hey."

The Warrior Princess looked up; her face expressionless. "Hey. How are you?"

"Good. What you up to?"

Xena had a nonchalant attitude and coolly remarked, "Just hanging around. I assume there's going to be a party."

"Oh yeah, you know Ephiny." Gabrielle grinned but didn't get one back from Xena. "Um, anyway, just came over to say hi."

"Thanks." Xena nodded slightly.

Gabrielle slightly smiled, yet it wasn't true. "Well, I'll catch you later in the hut." She then walked off heading to the table with the food.

The warrior watched her friend walk to the food table then she turned her attention back to the Amazons at her table.

The bard though didn't walk over to the food table, more like stomped. She'd never been so brushed off by her best friend than she has these past couple of days. Each time only raised Gabrielle's temper and frustrations. But right now she wanted to enjoy herself since she's here with friends and planned to take advantage of it.

So that led her back to the table with her regent; she sat beside Ephiny. Gabrielle quickly ate and drank a few mugs of wine, which seemed to relax her. Every now and again she would look across the hut to Xena. She could tell Xena was trying to ignore her but could feel the warrior's piercing blue eyes on her. Then again, it really didn't matter to Gabrielle because she was angry with her best friend.

After most of the Amazons in the dinning hut ate, they went outside where the party began. A large fire had been made, and the Amazons were playing music as they danced. Others sat around and told jokes and funny stories as they drank wine or ale.

After awhile the queen lost track of Xena or rather gave up on keeping track. She was too busy enjoying herself and her regent.

Gabrielle broke out laughing as she heard a story from Solari. She leaned forward and her stomach ached from the laughter. Beside her sat Ephiny, who was also laughing hard along with all the other Amazons in the group.

The bard took a deep breath and looked to her left at Ephiny. "I can't believe that happened."

The regent grinned. "Oh trust me it did, I was there." She turned her head and gazed across at Eponin, who was blushing deeply. The weapons master had been just made the butt end of an embarrassing story.

Eponin took a deep breath to stop the blushing. "I'll admit it happened." She then turned her head to the second in command. "I'll get you for that, Solari."

Solari flashed quite the smirk. "Right, Ep. We'll see about that."

Gabrielle quietly laughed at the pair, and she felt relaxed. Her smile was warm and bright from her enjoyment.

Ephiny glimpsed at Gabrielle and observed how Gabrielle was truly in rare form, and it made Ephiny smile. "Relaxed much?"

The bard revealed a lopsided smile. "Oh yeah."

The regent winked and playfully teased, "Good." She then brought her right arm back around the queen's shoulders.

Gabrielle's smile only got warmer, and she shifted closer to her friend and dropped her head against Ephiny's shoulder. Her left arm then came around Ephiny's mid back.

All the Amazons in the group just grinned at this as they traded glances.

The regent looked away from Gabrielle to Solari. "Any other stories you have about Eponin?"

The second in command turned her head to the weapons master with a grin.

Eponin narrowed her eyes. "Don't even, Solari."

Solari chuckled and averted her attention back to Ephiny. "Oh yeah. Where would you like to begin?"

There was a roar of laughter from the group of Amazons, and Solari received a slew of demands for a story.

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Most of the night had passed on, and the party never seemed to end. Xena was around, however she never was too far from her best friend but yet out of sight. She'd seen the way Gabrielle wrapped her arm around Ephiny's back and leaning against her. That only made the warrior's eyes narrow and her upper lip twitched. She'd sighed then looked away back to the fire with the dancing Amazons. What could she do or say anyway? *Not your place, Xena.* Xena actually became irritated when she realized that aspect.

Ephiny looked to her right at Gabrielle. "Hey, you wanna dance?"

Gabrielle arched an eyebrow. "You're kidding right? After the last time I danced here?"

The regent chuckled. "I remember that quite well."

"Oh gods." The bard groaned and closed her eyes.

The Amazon flashed an assuring smile then urged, "Don't worry, I won't let it happen to you again."

The smaller woman opened her eyes and peered up into gleaming amber eyes. "Really?"

Ephiny's smile suddenly grew bright. "Promise." She released the other woman and stood up facing her and holding her hands out to her. "Come on."

The queen grinned and took the regent's hands then was pulled up to her feet. She felt her head spin for a moment from the wine, but it calmed back down.

The regent's smile hadn't slipped as she turned around to face the fire with the dancing Amazons. She continued to hold Gabrielle's hands behind her back. She carefully guided the other woman through all the Amazons to edge of the area made for the dancing. Ephiny then faced her friend. "Ready?"

Gabrielle took in a steady breath then replied, "I think so. You lead." She took a step closer to the regent but only held one of the Amazon's hands.

"Here we go." Ephiny winked and the two women walked into the space for dancing.

They quickly mixed in with the other Amazons and danced side by side. It was a fast beat so they moved quickly with it. The entire time Ephiny was smiling warmly and Gabrielle mirrored it. Here and there the queen would laugh at herself and kept dancing. After a quarter of a candlemark the beat slowed to a very fine rhythm.

Gabrielle had raised an eyebrow. "I don't remember this the last time."

The regent shrugged casually then explained, "No we don't do this 'til midway through the party." She then smiled. "So wanna keep dancing?"

The smaller woman scanned the other Amazons dancing and noticed they were in pairs and holding each other. They then moved slowly to the beat. Gabrielle turned back to Ephiny. She then figured why not? "I would love to."

"Great. Come closer to me." Ephiny stepped up to her friend.

Gabrielle placed her right hand on her friend's hip and her left hand on Ephiny's upper side. Ephiny though, she placed an arm around Gabrielle's upper back and the other around the bard's lower back. They then gracefully glided along with the other dancers.

The bard was excited as her smile showed it. "This isn't too bad."

Ephiny released a soft laugh. "You seem to be enjoying yourself."

"Definitely." Gabrielle sighed very contently. "Thanks, Eph."

"You're welcome, my queen." The regent then brought her right hand up and brushed back some of the bard's hair behind her ear. She then wrapped her arm back around the queen's back.

Gabrielle closed her eyes then opened them again. "You're bad."

Ephiny smirked then leaned closer and murmured, "I have no idea what you're talking about."

The bard laughed then shook her head once. "Uh huh."

The regent shifted past two pairs of Amazons, and she returned her attention to her friend. "Well... I'm surprised Xena hasn't done anything."

"Hades, Xena probably isn't even here."

Ephiny chuckled and shook her head as she kept dancing. "That's not what I meant."

The bard's right eyebrow curved up. "Then what do you mean?"

The regent looked away then back to Gabrielle. "I'm saying I can't believe Xena hasn't made a move on you."

Gabrielle's eyes widened for a moment. "You mean...?"

Ephiny nodded with a grin. "Yes, that's what I mean."

The bard's sudden laugh held a note of surprise. "No... she wouldn't." Then her earlier happiness drained at her thoughts of Xena.

That's when the regent quickly figured out Gabrielle had deeper emotions for the warrior than she cared to admit. Ephiny decided Xena knew, didn't know, or just didn't care to confront it at all. If that was the case, it didn't make Ephiny happy that somebody could just sidestep her amazing friend.

"Well Gabrielle, I don't know how she could pass you up."

The Queen smiled as she felt a bit of a blush take over. "Thanks, Eph."

Ephiny lowered her head closer as a grin shaped her lips. "You're welcome." She then lifted her right hand up to the back of Gabrielle's head and pushed the bard's head against her shoulder.

Gabrielle went with it and rested her head on the Amazon's shoulder then closed her

eyes. She sensed Ephiny's arm going to her back again. The bard just let her friend guide her in the dance.

Xena narrowed her eyes at the scene of her best friend with the regent. She took a deep breath and tried to relax but couldn't. After a shake of her head, the warrior uncrossed her arms from her chest then stood up. She walked off into the shadows, heading to her hut she shared with Gabrielle. As she walked to the hut, she wondered if she'd see Gabrielle tonight in the hut later. Or would the bard spend the night in Ephiny's hut? Xena couldn't help but wonder despite it made her stomach pitch.

The warrior went inside of the hut and closed the door quietly. She then removed her weapons and began to take her armor and boots off. After she was finished, Xena took her whetstone out and sat on the end of the bed. Her thoughts filled her head about her recent events while she sharpened her blade.

The stone stopped in the middle of the blade, the warrior lifted her head to stare at the door for a moment. Her expression was blank then it filled with pain, and Xena closed her eyes. She took a deep breath, lowered her head, opened her eyes as she continued sharpening her sword.

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Solari stood up from her seat with a smile. "Well I'm going to bed everybody."

Gabrielle glimpsed up at the Amazon. "Goodnight, Solari."

"Good night, Gabrielle." The second in command then turned to the regent. "Night, Eph." She grinned more to Ephiny.

The regent mirrored Solari's expression back. "See you tomorrow, Solari. Sleep well."

"I will. Bye." Solari then strolled off in the direction of her hut.

Ephiny watched her go then turned to the bard. "Sleepy?" She noted it was mainly she and Gabrielle left while most of the Amazons had left for the night.

Gabrielle considered it then moved her head in agreement. "Yeah, I just hope I can make it to the hut after all the wine I drank."

The Amazon chuckled then squeezed her right hand that held Gabrielle's. "I'll escort you, my queen."

The queen was pleased and mentioned, "I couldn't make it otherwise." Carefully, she stood up with Ephiny. She felt her head swim, and she closed her eyes.

The regent quickly grasped the other woman's shoulder with her free left hand. "Wooo a little tipsy there."

The queen opened her eyes slowly. "Oooh yeah." She laughed at her situation.

Ephiny gently ordered, "Come on." She started walking with Gabrielle.

Along the walk they were both quiet but still held hands. Neither really saying anything about that because it'd just sort of happened. They didn't seem to mind and didn't mention it. They came up to the queen's hut and stopped near the hut.

The bard faced the Amazon with appreciative features. "Thank you for tonight, Eph."

"I wish I had a dinar for each time you've thanked me."

Gabrielle rolled her eyes before she teased, "Okay, I won't thank you anymore."

The regent snickered and taunted, "There you go." She then leaned in to place a gentle kiss on Gabrielle's right cheek. "Get some sleep, you'll have a nice headache tomorrow."

"So will you." The queen's expression was quite playful. "Have any remedies?"

"Oh yeah, come by my hut and I'll help you out."

Gabrielle sighed in relief, and she commanded, "Be prepared three candlemarks after sunrise for me to come by whining."

Ephiny bit back her laughter but promised, "You're on."

The bard squeezed the other female's hand then released her hold. "See you then." She shifted to the door and opened it quietly.

"Goodnight, Gabrielle."

"Night, Eph. Sleep well." Gabrielle then quietly slipped into her hut and closed the door after seeing Ephiny walk off. The bard then turned around in the fairly dark hut to see her best friend sleeping on the bed on the left side. She sighed, shifted the table, and took her boots off. Then she quietly and carefully slipped into the bed beside Xena and let the night's entertainment take its toll.

~*Part 4*~

The sun shined right on the bard's face, she groaned and rolled to her left to the edge of the bed. She slowly opened her eyes and quickly regretted it. Her eyes rammed shut, and she could feel her head pounding. Oh yeah, Ephiny was right. She chuckled at that thought. Carefully, she opened her eyes again and gazed out the window that was filled by the dawn sun. She'd said she would go to Ephiny's hut. Why not?

Gingerly, Gabrielle got out of the bed and went over to her boots, she slipped into them but didn't tie them. She noticed that Xena seemed to still be asleep. So she turned to the door and went outside in the brisk morning. The queen made her way to the regent's hut, didn't knock, and just went in.

"Ephiny?"

The Amazon sat up in her bed and looked to her door to see Gabrielle standing in front of it, which made her smirk. "I thought you would come."

"So where's this remedy of yours?"

Ephiny softly laughed and carefully rolled out of bed. "I got it prepared last night, well part of it." She walked over to her desk and as she walked she could feel herself swaying. Her head was pounding as well. "Come here."

Gabrielle walked over to the Amazon's side next to the desk. There on the desk were two mugs filled with something sort of dark and brownish liquid. "Ephiny?"

"Drink one." The regent lifted them both and handed one to her friend.

The bard picked it up and stared at the contents. "This is safe?"

"Yes." Ephiny exhaled dramatically. "Okay, on the count of three we'll drink it at the same time."

Gabrielle eyed her friend but gave into the idea. "Alright."

"One... two... three."

Both women drank from the mugs and could feel the liquid seep down their throats and into their stomachs.

"Oh gods, Ephiny that was foul." Gabrielle coughed a few times and patted her chest. She had a very disgusted look on her face because of the taste.

"Well I never said it would be like honey." Ephiny took the mug from her friend's hands and placed both mugs on her desk again. She'd gotten rather used to the taste herself.

"You said that was part of your magical remedy?"

The regent nodded. "Yeah."

"What's the other part? I'm sort of worried though." Gabrielle rested her hands on her hips then curiously studied her friend.

Ephiny grinned playfully but simply stated, "More sleep." She glanced at her bed then back at her friend. "Come on."

The bard's lips puckered in thought but then decided, "Alright... it sounds good to me." She then walked over to the regent's bed and crawled into it.

The regent watched and was quite amused because she knew how much her friend enjoyed sleeping. She padded over to the foot of the bed then noticed a slight issue. "Forgot the boots huh?"

Gabrielle lifted her head and her sights set on her feet. "Hades." She began to shift.

"I got it." Ephiny leaned forward and pulled off the other woman's boots and dropped them to the floor. She then crawled into the bed and came up beside the queen. Then she carefully pulled Gabrielle in against her body and wrapped her arms around Gabrielle's waist. "There's the other half."

Gabrielle couldn't stop her smile, and she confessed, "I like this half better."

A chuckle escaped Ephiny, and she taunted, "That's what I figured." She then smiled. "Go back to sleep." Her eyes drifted shut slowly.

"Sounds like a plan." Gabrielle closed her eyes and snuggled her back more into the regent's body and sighed happily. It wasn't long before the pair slipped away into their quiet dreamscapes.

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The bard gradually opened her eyes, and she smiled to herself. She could still feel Ephiny's arms around her waist securely. Now they tightened and that made Gabrielle grin. She rolled over to her friend.

Ephiny cracked an eye open upon seeing the queen's movements. "Sleep well?"

"Definitely." Gabrielle then did a physical check of herself, no headache, her eyes didn't hurt, and she didn't feel nasty. "Good remedy."

The Amazon released a small laugh. "It works huh?"

"Amazingly yes."

Ephiny rolled her eyes at Gabrielle's dubious tone. "Funny."

"So what was in that mug I drank from?" Gabrielle inquisitively lifted her eyebrow.

"You don't wanna know."

The queen considered it then she laughed. "You're right, I don't." She grinned and then buried her head underneath the other woman's chin. A sigh escaped her lips.

"Feel okay?"

"Yeah this is just real comfortable."

Ephiny was quite pleased, yet she sighed and mentioned, "I do need to go see if the other Amazons are up."

Gabrielle snorted at that idea. "They're probably not."

"Maybe I'll be lucky."

The bard lifted her head up after she decided something. "I think I'm gonna go to my hut."

"How about I come by later on so we can get lunch?"

After a beat, Gabrielle replied, "Sounds good to me. I'm gonna wake up then work on my scrolls."

"Okay, I'll be over there." Ephiny then released her friend.

They rolled out of bed, and Ephiny dressed while Gabrielle slowly put her boots on.

Gabrielle shifted to the door and looked back to her friend. "I'll see you at lunchtime, Eph."

The regent hooked her sword on her back and glanced over at Gabrielle. "See you then, Gabrielle."

The queen went through the door and closed it quietly. She walked to her hut and went inside to find Xena gone which made her sigh. Gabrielle padded over to her scroll bag and pulled out her quill and new scroll. She hopped on the bed and crossed her legs and unrolled the scroll then she thought out the start of her latest story.

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Xena patted her mare on the side. "See ya, girl."

Argo nickered and dropped her head over the stall door with sad eyes.

The warrior chuckled yet walked out of the stable. She exhaled deeply but made her way through the village and towards her hut. The ride with Argo had helped her relieve some of her stress but not all of it. Xena came to the door of her hut and went inside to find Gabrielle there writing.

Gabrielle peered up with a smile. "Morning."

The warrior casually replied, "Morning."

The bard lowered her quill and scroll in her lap. "How'd you sleep?"

Xena walked over to the table and sat in one of the chairs facing her friend. "Alright. I assumed you slept well."

The younger woman considered it after a beat. "Yeah. So where'd you go?"

"I took Argo for a ride."

Gabrielle knew exactly what that meant for Xena, and it made her frown. She wondered if it'd helped the warrior, but she suspected it didn't. "Nice ride?"

"It was fine." Xena leaned back in the chair. "So are you enjoying your time here?"

"Yeah, it's relaxing."

"So I've noticed."

The bard waited a beat after she read her friend's body language and demeanor.
"Xena... if you want to leave then we can. I won't stay here if you don't want to."

The warrior instantly shook her head. "No I'm fine. Nor would I want to ruin your time here."

Gabrielle briefly turned away but studied the warrior, who was greatly frustrating her again. "What's going on with you, Xena?"

Xena's eyes somewhat slotted, and her defenses quickly engaged. "I'm fine. I just want to make sure you're enjoying it here."

"I am."

"Yes well I'd say you are with Ephiny."

The bard groaned, but she stopped herself then carefully asked, "Can't I spend time with Ephiny?"

The Warrior Princess shrugged her shoulders. "Why couldn't you?"

"That's what I want to know. You sure act like I shouldn't be."

Xena shrugged then reminded, "I didn't say that."

Gabrielle shook her head. "No you didn't but you act it."

Xena stood up from the chair. "Well I don't control which... friends you spend time with."

Gabrielle's temper finally spilled over into her tone, and she sharply snapped, "That's right you don't Xena." Gabrielle narrowed her eyes. "Nor do you control my relationships with them so just back off."

The older woman walked up to the bed, she leaned forward so that her hands touched the bed. "I definitely will." Xena stood back up, walked to the door of the hut, and opened the door. "I wouldn't want to intrude on your *friendship* with your regent." The warrior walked through the door and closed it behind roughly.

Gabrielle sighed then dropped her head forward into her hands. "Gods." She tried to calmly breathe in hopes it'd settle her emotions, which helped but she was still distraught about what was happening between she and Xena.

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Ephiny easily agreed with Solari. "Good, get a few Amazons together and start

patrol."

"Okay." The second in command then walked off.

The regent turned to her right and strolled off for Gabrielle's hut. She then saw Xena coming towards her, and she felt her back stiffened up. As she approached the warrior, she could see the warrior's eyes dark. Xena came right to Ephiny with cold features, and she wasn't sure what to do. "Hey, Xena."

"Excuse me, Ephiny." The warrior's tone was cutting, and she brushed past the regent.

Ephiny turned around and watched her friend keep walking on like she hadn't been there. The regent shook her head. "What in the gods' names?" Her expression dropped then. "Hades... Gabrielle." She turned around and broke off running to the bard's hut.

The Amazon went right inside the hut without knocking. She found her friend on the bed with her eyes closed breathing heavily. "Gabrielle?"

The queen revealed her red eyes and rasped, "Ephiny."

The regent smiled sadly. "Hey." She walked over to the bed and took the scroll, rolled it, and set it aside with the quill. "What happened?"

"She got really angry." Gabrielle ran her right hand through her bangs. "Gods Eph, I don't know what to do." Her burning tears rolled down her cheeks.

"Hey it'll be okay." The regent then pulled the smaller woman into her arms.

The bard tucked herself up into the regent's lap and buried her face into the Amazon's neck. She softly cried, but her body trembled from fear. The fear of not knowing what to do or what could happen.

"We'll figure it out, Gabrielle. Xena can't stay that angry." Ephiny dropped her head on top of the bard's head. She held her smaller friend tightly.

Gabrielle nodded her head. "I hope so, Eph." She lifted her head up and stared into bright amber eyes.

The regent smiled sadly. "She will. I promise."

The bard smiled warmly and nuzzled her cheek against the Amazon's and then lowered her head down against Ephiny's neck.

"Hey?" The regent lifted her friend's head with her right hand under Gabrielle's chin. "I'll try and help."

"I know, Ephiny."

"Good." Ephiny smiled very warmly.

Gabrielle mirrored the smile as she calmed down. Ephiny then brought her right hand

up and caressed the smaller woman's cheek. She then slowly leaned in, and her lips captured Gabrielle's in a tender kiss. The bard closed her eyes and returned the kiss just as gently, almost scared.

Gradually, the regent pulled back with a warm expression. Gabrielle shyly laughed but leaned for another kiss. Ephiny urged the kiss deeper, and the bard met the demand. Once they pulled back, Ephiny ducked her head down to place light kisses to the queen's neck. Gabrielle moaned then her eyes slowly closed, but her eyes snapped open upon her thoughts. "Ephiny, wait... please."

The Amazon placed one more kiss then stopped, leaning her head against Gabrielle's neck. "I know, Gabrielle." She frowned and berated herself for letting this happen between them. She knew better than to compete for Gabrielle's affection when she knew the bard felt so much for Xena.

The bard rested her chin on top of her friend's head. "Thank you," she sincerely whispered.

Ephiny brought head back up. "I know you're in love with her." She stopped and reminded herself that Gabrielle really needed her support. "I'm here for you though okay?"

"I know thanks." Gabrielle leaned in then quickly placed a butterfly kiss to her regent's cheek. When she pulled back, she grinned. "We have a Platonic friendship, right?"

The Amazon closed her eyes and willed herself not to laugh, but she did anyway. "That's and understatement, bard." She returned the small kiss from earlier. "Come here." Ephiny shifted so that Gabrielle could lean her back into the Amazon's body.

Gabrielle did just that and felt her regent wrap her arms around her stomach. She leaned back into her friend's body and closed her eyes. And the pair stayed like that for half a candlemark, Gabrielle thought out her dilemma with Xena while the regent kept her friend safe from the world around.

After some time passed, they decided it was time to get moving so they left the hut. Ephiny had recommended to her queen that she should do some sparring since the sparring would help rid some of the stress and frustration. Gabrielle agreed but only after Ephiny promised to spar with her.

The made it to the field and took their proper stances. The regent charged first and cleanly missed the bard. Gabrielle reacted and did a thrust with the butt end of her staff, however Ephiny parried her attack.

Ephiny jumped back and grinned. "Almost."

The queen twirled her staff. "Almost isn't good enough." She smirked and swung her staff at her friend.

The Amazon stopped the swing with her sword then did several offensive attacks with her sword but every time Gabrielle stopped her attacks.

The queen took a step back with her staff up in defense, and she narrowed her eyes at the regent.

Ephiny shot a challenging look to the bard. "Are you backing off, my queen?" She grinned devilishly.

"No, I'm just distracting you." Then Gabrielle surged forward, slammed the butt end of her staff into the ground while her hands grasped the top of the staff. Her feet came up in front of her as she jumped up and aimed at the other woman's stomach area.

The regent had been surprised, and she paid for it because she took the blow and went flying through the air. Ephiny landed hard on her back but rolled to her right side and started to cough as she stared at her sword.

The Amazon Queen smiled evilly and stood there gazing down at her friend while leaning against her staff. "Well, that was a nice practice."

Ephiny stared up with a small glare. "Right." She cleared her throat then a grin spread across her lips. She straightened her legs out and swiped them towards Gabrielle's. She hit the bard's legs and swiped Gabrielle's feet from under her.

The bard went toppling forward onto Ephiny while the staff fell to the ground and rolled away. Gabrielle stared down into the regent's gleaming amber eyes.

The Amazon snickered, but released her sword and brought both her hands onto the queen's sides. "That was my new move."

Gabrielle quietly laughed then nodded once. "That's not such a bad move." She grinned.

"I agree." Ephiny didn't think about it and leaned up to capture the other woman's lips in a gentle kiss that lasted for a number of seconds.

As they kissed a shadow fell over them and the owner of the shadow hotly spoke, "Interesting."

The bard closed her eyes at upon hearing Xena's voice.

Ephiny though had pulled back from the kiss, and she inwardly groaned at her stupid move.

Xena then walked off, and her footsteps could be heard fading into the village.

"I'm sorry, Gabrielle." Ephiny slowly opened her eyes and the regret shined in her eyes. "I really wasn't thinking."

The queen opened her eyes and mentioned, "No, it's Xena who should be apologizing." She slowly let her breath out and lowered her head onto Ephiny's right shoulder. "Hades."

The regent wrapped her arms around her friend. "You have to admit, she has

incredible timing."

Gabrielle couldn't help her laugh because she really needed it. "Tell me about it." Then she nibbled on her lower lip as she considered her next move. "Ephiny, can I stay in your hut tonight?"

"You sure that is a good idea, Gabrielle?"

Gabrielle raised her head up to glimpse into the regent's eyes. "Yes." She stopped and her eyes darted away before returning to her friend. "I just can't sleep in that hut with Xena... not with the way we're fighting."

Ephiny took a long breath then slowly released it. "Okay." She smiled but it didn't quite reach her eyes. She brought one hand up to brush back some of her friend's hair. "But we'll be careful."

The queen bit her lip but promised, "We will be. Let's go back."

The Amazon nodded and relinquished her hold then stood up as Gabrielle stood up. They both then collected their weapons and started walking into the village.

~*Part 5*~

The rest of the day passed rather quietly, thankfully. At dinner Gabrielle sat with her regent, but Gabrielle was quiet. And Ephiny didn't like this at all.

Gabrielle stood up with her empty plate, however the food hadn't really settled well in her stomach. She slowly walked to the other side of the food hut and disposed of her dish and utensils. And as she turned around, strolling to her table, she tried to find her best friend. She couldn't and that made her sigh as her eyes settled on Ephiny.

The regent offered a smile, yet she knew it would help.

The bard tried to return the smile as she came back to seat beside her friend.

"How you doing?"

The Queen turned her head to Ephiny then after a long moment, she simply answered, "I'm okay."

Ephiny leaned closer and quietly asked, "You want to leave?"

Gabrielle's gaze fell to the wood table, and she studied the cracks in the smooth wood. "Yeah... I think so."

Ephiny nodded then announced to the other Amazons, "I think Gabrielle and I are going to head out."

Solari and Eponin nodded in answer then the second in command responded, "See

you later, Eph and Gabrielle."

The regent flashed a smile. "Night, Solari." She stood up and smirked to Eponin. "Ep, be good tonight."

The weapons master kept her stoic expression, but her eyes gleamed. "I always am."

Ephiny shifted away from the table but wait for her queen.

Gabrielle smiled lightly to both Amazons. "Goodnight, Solari and Ep."

Both Amazons responded together. "Night, Gabrielle." They chuckled with smiles.

The queen grinned for a brief moment then turned to the regent. She and Ephiny strolled out of the food hut and directly to the regent's hut. They stepped inside, and the bard sat down on the bed with a long sigh.

Ephiny walked over to her friend and peered down at her. "You're too quiet."

Gabrielle peered up with hollow, green eyes. "I'm sorry."

"There's nothing to be sorry about. It just worries me, Gabrielle." The regent brought her right hand up and lightly touched her friend's cheek. "Are you sure you'll be okay?"

The bard nodded and leaned her head into the other woman's hands. The gods only knew how much she needed some comfort despite she wished it wasn't Ephiny's hand. "Yeah, I'll be fine."

"Do you want to go to sleep now?" The regent then gradually brought her fingers to glide across the queen's lips.

Gabrielle inwardly tensed when Ephiny touched her lips. She muttered, "Yeah." She then lifted her left hand to grasp the Amazon's and pulled Ephiny's hand away from her face. She gave a smile then warmly mentioned, "Thanks for everything, Eph."

The Amazon had a lopsided smile. "Anytime." She bent down and pressed her lips against Gabrielle's forehead. "Come on. We should get some sleep."

Gabrielle released her friend's hand then brought up one foot at time to untie her boots. "Are you going to bed now?"

The regent shook her head the stepped away to move to her desk. "No, I need to do a few things. I will in half a candlemark or so."

The bard nodded as she took her boots off and crawled into the bed. "Don't stay up late, Ephiny."

"I won't," Ephiny promised then added, "Goodnight Gabrielle and sleep well." The regent walked over to the walls to blow out the candles and left the three candles to glow on her desk. She sat down at her desk and began to do some work.

After Ephiny finished her work, she took her sword off her back and any armor. She climbed into the bed but this time she didn't hold the bard because she knew it was best, especially for her. What she didn't realize was that Gabrielle was still awake and had been thinking Xena.

~*~*~*~

The morning came quickly and Gabrielle slowly rolled out of bed followed by Ephiny. The bard went about putting her boots on while her friend put her attire on.

Once Gabrielle was ready, she asked "Breakfast?"

The Amazon shook her head and the amusement showed on her face. "I was thinking the same thing."

The bard grinned for a brief moment then shifted to the door. Ephiny came up beside her and grasped the door handle then led the way to the hut and they ate. For the most part, Gabrielle kept fairly silent and that was unnerving to the concerned regent. At the end they slowly strolled out of the food hut.

Gabrielle stopped right outside and commented, "Eph, I think I'm going to go for a walk."

The Amazon curiously studied her friend. "Do you want me to come?"

"No." The queen combed her bangs back then honestly confessed, "I want to be alone, thank you though."

"You're welcome. You know I'm always here for you." She took a step to her friend and gave her a hug. "Be careful huh?"

"I will." The bard pulled back from the hug. "I'll see you later."

"Bye, Gabrielle." Ephiny smiled and started heading off towards her hut.

Gabrielle watched her go for a moment then sighed. She was about to head out of the village but then decided to go to her hut first.

The door creaked open as Gabrielle stepped in and as soon as she came in she spotted her best friend by the table. The bard's back stiffened up because she thought the warrior would have been gone. She took a deep breath to calm herself and walked into the hut.

Xena didn't say anything, and she still went about tying her boots yet studied her partner for a moment then went back to her boots.

The bard padded over to the saddlebags on the other side of the hut. She leaned down and collected her scroll satchel that rested near. She hefted it over her head then she put the strap across her chest. Gabrielle turned around and sadly studied the warrior. "How are you?"

The Warrior Princess still tied her last boot as she responded, "Fine, you?"

"Okay." Gabrielle lifted her right hand up to grasp the strap across her chest. "Um, do you want to leave here soon?"

Xena dropped her foot down to the wood floor hard, and it made a boom echo in the hut. "I was considering it."

"Well, when do you want to leave? I don't care when we leave."

The warrior stared at her partner. "I was thinking I," she emphasized, "would leave tomorrow or so."

The Amazon Queen dropped her hand from the strap. "Hold on, Xena you're not leaving without me."

The older woman crossed her arms tightly against her chest. "And why not?" Her tone wasn't cold but it was shallow as if she could care less.

"Because..." Gabrielle trailed off trying to find the right words. She looked up from the floor. "Because I'm your partner and friend." She had her eyes locked with Xena's.

Xena didn't say anything at first. She then broke her eye contact. "Well I figured you wouldn't want to travel any longer. You seem pretty... content here."

"Oh for Hades's sake, Xena." The bard walked closer to the warrior. "I think you forgot to ask me."

The tall woman uncrossed her arms, and she narrowed her eyes. "I don't have to since you make it quite apparent." She padded over to the door but glanced back at Gabrielle. "You shouldn't travel with me unless you want to. Don't humor me." She swung the door open, walked off, and left the door wide open.

Gabrielle lifted her right hand up to pull back her bangs and held them back. She watched Xena slowly recede away to nothing. Her sea green eyes then closed and she felt warm tears trail down her cheeks. Her eyes opened again. "I'm sorry, Xena," she whimpered in a defeated tone. After a deep breath, the queen marched out of the hut but made sure to close the door. She headed for the village gates and entered the vast woods to think.

~*~*~*~

Gabrielle came to the lake's edge, and she spotted a good size rock. She took a seat on it then studied the beautiful lake that actually calmed her. After a bit, she withdrew a new scroll and her quill then rested her satchel against the rock. Gabrielle scribed her recent feelings about what was going on between her and Xena but then her concentration broke.

The bard thought she'd heard something or somebody but she contributed it to her overactive imagination. For a beat, she'd hoped it was Xena, yet she knew that wasn't

the case despite she'd hoped it was her. She set her scroll aside then just stared at the quiet lake.

Gabrielle mulled over how things became this ugly for her and Xena. She knew she missed Xena since the warrior had become so distant after fighting the Horde. She understood that the fight against the Horde had been hard on them both, yet she didn't expect it to drive them so far apart.

Then there was Ephiny. Gods what was she thinking in indulging herself with Ephiny? She was glad she hadn't been any more idiotic and done something she'd regret. Ephiny was one of her closest friends, and she did love Ephiny. Although what she felt for Ephiny could not match what she felt for Xena.

The bard laughed sarcastically because it really didn't matter what she felt for Xena. She guessed the warrior most likely didn't feel the same way. She didn't have confirmation, and she'd always hoped otherwise, but she really doubted it. Still though she knew there would come a time when she'd have to settle it with the warrior. She just didn't know when that day would come for them, for her.

The bard shook her head to rid of the thoughts. She packed up her things then collected her satchel. Gabrielle took her time in strolling back to the village since she had a chance to enjoy the natural beauty of the woods around her.

~*Part 6*~

The Amazon Queen took a very long, deep breath and released it so gradually.

Ephiny had heard it, and she twisted her head around to her friend. "Good walk?" She was sitting at one of the tables in the dining hut.

Gabrielle softly smiled then replied, "It was nice and the weather was beautiful."

The regent nodded. "It was a nice day." She lifted her mug of ale and drank from it. It had been a long day for her and now dinner was relaxing for her.

"How was your day, Eph?"

The Amazon revealed her worn features finally. "It was tiring and I plan to sleep well tonight." She chuckled, which caused her friend to do the same.

Gabrielle's features went solemn again, and she patted her friend's nearest thigh. "I think I might head out of here."

"Where to?"

"The sparring field for a moment, I want to see the stars." Gabrielle began to stand up.

"I'll come with you." Ephiny climbed to her feet and after she and Gabrielle rid of their dishes, they headed out.

Once they got there, Gabrielle stared up to the night sky where the twinkling stars greeted her. She actually felt a real smile, and she turned to Ephiny. "They're great huh?"

The regent gazed upon the stars that made her amber eyes glow. "They really are." She then stepped behind the queen and massaged the tense shoulders. "Did you get a lot of thinking done?"

Gabrielle dropped her head forward and appreciated the relaxation of her tense muscles. "Yeah but the problem is far from solved." She rolled her head to the right then the left. She lifted her head and patted her friend's hand on her right shoulder to signal that she was okay now.

Ephiny squeezed the still knotted shoulders then backed away "Yeah, I do understand." Ephiny folded her arms against her chest then peered up at the stars again. "I really wish I could be of better help." She briefly closed her eyes at her last thought. "Instead of being the problem."

"Ephiny," Gabrielle argued, "You've helped and honestly I should have said something sooner." She stopped and dropped her head forward now. She kicked at the ground under her boot. "I don't know what I was thinking... I just wasn't thinking." She glanced over at the curious amber eyes that watched her now. "I'm sorry I did that to you."

Ephiny's face swept over with compassion, and she faced her friend. "Gabrielle, I knew... I've known about how you've felt for Xena." She ran her fingers through her curly locks then muttered, "I'd have a snowballs chance in Tartarus to be with you."

"Ephi-"

"No," cut off the regent, "it's okay, really. When I first met you, you were such an irritating blond." Ephiny paused when she saw Gabrielle's not so appreciative look, which made her laugh some. "You grew on me, Gabrielle and I realized how amazing of a person you are. I would love to try and be with you, but I know it wouldn't work." She tilted her head when she saw the bard's distraught features. "It's just not meant to be, and I'm okay with that because I'll find that person meant for me."

Gabrielle stepped closer and pulled Ephiny's hand into hers. "Thank you, Ephiny... I don't ever want to lose you and especially over this."

The regent squeezed her friend's hand then promised, "You couldn't."

Gabrielle's loving smile appeared, and she leaned in for a kiss to Ephiny's cheek. She murmured in Ephiny's ear, "Thank you, my friend."

Ephiny returned the earlier squeeze then released hands. "I should be getting back... I'm pretty exhausted. Are you...?"

The bard quickly understood the unfinished question, and she shook her head. "I need to stay with her tonight. Thank you though, Ephiny."

"If you feel too uncomfortable in your hut then you can stay over."

"I know and thank you but I need to be with her no matter what's between her and I." Gabrielle huffed then muttered, "That was another dumb move on my part."

"You shouldn't be so hard on yourself," Ephiny argued. "You're not perfect, my queen." She then stepped back once and said, "I'll see you tomorrow."

The bard nodded once then warmly responded, "Goodnight, Ephiny and sleep well tonight."

"You too." Ephiny gave a wave, spun on her boots, and strolled off. Her form slowly faded away in the darkness.

Gabrielle folded her arms back against her chest then tilted her head back. Her memories of the nights she'd spend with Xena and star gazing came back to her. She truly wished her best friend was here so they could share one of those nights.

Then unexpectedly the bard heard boot steps from behind. She turned around and discovered the object of her wishes before her.

Xena bowed her head, brought her arms up over her chest, and quietly took Ephiny's vacated spot.

Gabrielle closed her eyes, and she emotionally whispered, "I don't want to fight anymore with you. Please."

The warrior glanced over sadly but peered up the bright stars. "Neither do I, partner."

Gabrielle's eyes fluttered open. Her emotions surged up and stung her eyes because of Xena's last word. She hoarsely whispered, "Thank you."

The Warrior Princess didn't comment but instead enjoyed the stars like she often did with her friend. She loved those nights too, and it was often the star gazing nights that she was herself with Gabrielle.

Gabrielle let the silence linger for some time then she murmured, "Xena?"

"Yes?"

The bard swallowed then carefully asked, "What... what happened?"

Xena still had her arms against her chest and the question only caused her to tighten her arms against her chest. "I'm not sure."

"It was the Horde, wasn't it?"

The warrior was quiet for awhile, yet she finally answered, "Yes." She turned her head to the bard. "I never wanted you to see me that way, Gabrielle."

Gabrielle stepped closer to the still defensive warrior. "If you're not protecting me from the world around us then you're protecting me from you." When hazy blue eyes rested on her, she continued to talk. "I admit what I saw come out of you did scare me at first." When Xena seemed to withdraw from her because of the words, she grabbed the warrior's nearest forearm. "That doesn't mean I still am or that I don't understand it. I do and because I do understand it now then I can accept it." She moved around until she faced the warrior and held both muscular forearms. "Xena, if it wasn't for your dark side we would be dead right now and so would plenty of others." Her eyebrows almost met, and she hoarsely whispered, "Don't you see that your darkness was something good?"

"Good?" Xena snapped. "Gabrielle, good is not the slaughter-

"No it's not," Gabrielle cut off, "but it is saving people lives. It would have been a bigger slaughter otherwise and you know that... so do I." She could see the warrior was settling down so she pulled out her last trump card. "If it wasn't for your dark side you wouldn't know your light side... it's a balance. After we walked away from that city, Xena I was thankful you'd been there and that you did what you did."

Xena turned her head away, stared up at the stars, and because she didn't want her friend to see her emotions in her eyes.

"Xena, I accept your dark side... but do you?"

The warrior finally gazed upon the bard, and she whispered, "I don't know if I can because if I do I may become it again."

"I don't think you will," Gabrielle argued, "because you've changed too much, learned too much to return to that place." She then squeezed the warrior's arms. "I won't let you go back to that place."

The warrior knew it was true too because Gabrielle was very much her inspiration. Since the first day Xena saved the bard, she'd followed the imaginary hero that Gabrielle saw in her and maybe one day she would fulfill it but it wouldn't be today or tomorrow. For now though it was her guiding light.

Gabrielle rubbed Xena's arms a few times then pulled away. "It'll be okay?"

Xena swallowed down the forming lump in her throat. Her husky voice filled the air finally. "Yes." She opened her arms then accepted her friend into her arms.

The bard melted into the contact that she truly needed now. She was amazed by how much she missed being so close to Xena. She rested her head against Xena's chest. "Xena?"

The warrior lowered her head down closer in signal that she was listening.

"I'm sorry about Ephiny." Gabrielle bit her lip then sadly admitted, "It was really stupid of me. There's nothing going on between her and me."

Xena was quiet for a few beats then she whispered, "I know."

Gabrielle released a heavy sigh that showed she was relieved.

"I'm sorry that I overacted... for getting jealous." Xena then surprisingly chuckled and joked, "I acted like a teenager."

The Amazon Queen laughed too, which helped ease her tension. "It was kind of cute." She then lifted her head and gave that innocent wrinkled up nose face.

Xena rolled her eyes at her friend's words. "I don't think so." She grinned at the bard's lopsided smile, and she finally felt at ease again. She should have known to come to Gabrielle sooner to settle things and avoid the entire mess.

"Let's not do this again," Gabrielle offered as if she read Xena's thoughts.

The warrior gave a crooked smile then lowered her head closer. "My thoughts exactly."

The bard then toyed with Xena's right arm bracer in a nervous habit. She considered Xena's earlier words and even the fact that Xena was still holding her. "Why were you jealous?" She peered up into sharp blue eyes.

Xena glanced away for a beat and composed herself. She focused back on her friend then replied, "Why do most people get jealous over something like that?"

Gabrielle slightly glared at the question to her question. "Xena, come on." She then lifted her right hand off the warrior's arm and started to rant, "You can't just answer my question with..." Her words were quickly cut off by lips sealing over hers, which briefly shocked her. She instead released a moan and her eyes shut when Xena invited her into her mouth.

The warrior drew Gabrielle's body closer to hers when she sensed that the kiss was accepted by Gabrielle. She loved how the bard's tongue felt across hers, and she wondered why she'd waited for so long. At the end of the kiss, she huskily asked, "Is that answer enough?"

Gabrielle had a dreamy look on her face, but she blushed when she realized Xena was waiting on her response. "Um..." She laughed then only blushed more because of Xena's smug features. "Yes," she finally mustered. "Wow," she breathlessly added.

Xena enjoyed the effect she was having on the bard so she leaned in for another kiss.

Gabrielle didn't refuse and her hands slid up to her partner's neck. Her arms encircled the warrior's neck. After the kiss, she inhaled deeply to help her racing heart overcome her initial shock about everything. She peered up shyly and asked, "Are you sure about this?"

"Gabrielle," drew out the warrior, "it's either this or I keep watching Ephiny fall all over you. I think you can guess my choice."

The bard dropped her head forward and laughed. She lifted her head again but

displayed a smug look. "You're somethin', Xena." She lifted her right hand and caressed her partner's cheek. "Thank you."

The warrior took Gabrielle's hand into hers. "Thank you for always staying by my side... even at my darkest."

"I always will be," the bard swore. She laced their hands together.

Xena's smile broadened then she separated from the bard while saying, "Come on." She walked back with Gabrielle to the village. "You don't have plans with Ephiny tonight, do you?"

"You're just going to keep rubbing that in, aren't you?"

"For all it's worth," the warrior teased who squeezed her partner's hand.

"And no," Gabrielle replied, "I only have plans with you."

"Mmmmm." Xena revealed a very wicked grin and leaned over Gabrielle. She purred, "And I have plans for you."

Gabrielle flushed a deep red that went down to her chest. "Well... um..." She laughed at her nervousness then teased, "Promise?"

Xena stopped in front of the hut door, pushed it open, and simply stated, "I'll do better... I'll show you." She then guided the bard into their hut for a very long yet pleasing night for them.

The End