

~ Bacchae Truth ~

by Red Hope

Disclaimers: Violence ~ Violence is low in this one amazingly.

Subtext ~ Oh course there's subtext, maintext or whatever you fancy to call it.

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Started: April 29th 2000 on Saturday

Finished: April 30th 2000 on Sunday

Series: **Putting the Puzzle Together** Story: **Four**

If anybody has comments about my story please let me know at:

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~*Part 1*~

Gabrielle lifted her head from staring down at the forest floor, she gazed up to her partner. "Remember the last time we were here?"

The taller woman grinned down to Gabrielle. "How couldn't I?"

The bard chuckled as she continued to trek through the woods with her friend. "That was...interesting."

"To say the least Gabrielle."

"Come on Xena, you can't say you didn't feel a bit of thrill when you were a bacchae."

The warrior chuckled as she turned her sights back ahead. "It was... different."

"Uh huh." Gabrielle still had her grin as she looked forward again. "It was invigorating in a way as I remember."

"Gabrielle, you make is sound like you wouldn't mind being a bacchae again." Xena then arched an eyebrow at her friend.

"I'm not saying that Xena." The bard shrugged her shoulders. "Was just saying it was... different too. Makes you see things that you normally don't."

"Oh yeah my diet cutting down to just blood sucking. I wanna do that for the rest of my immortal life."

The younger woman started to laugh then calmed back down. "Yeah I have to admit I didn't like that part much."

"What about the part of being controlled by Bacchus?" Xena grinned down to her friend for an instant then looked up again.

"Yeah that too." Gabrielle sighed. "You know I never took the opportunity to turn into a wolf when I was a bacchae."

The warrior let a smirk take over. "Yes as I recall you were too busy trying to suck my blood."

The bard chuckled. "Funny Xena." She then grinned back devilishly. "And as I recall I did get the chance too."

Xena chuckled and shook her head. "Yeah well that was the first and last time."

"Gods I hope so." Gabrielle then noticed the sun sinking low into the western sky ahead. "Are we going to make camp?"

"Yes." The warrior gazed down at her friend. "You don't mind sleeping in the Bacchae Forest tonight?"

The bard raised an eyebrow at the other woman. "Should I be?"

Xena smiled warmly. "No." She lifted her left hand to Gabrielle's back. "Come on."

~*~*~*~

By the evening the pair had camped in a small clearing in the Bacchae Woods. The night was warm faintly sticky creating an eerie feeling in the night air. As of now Xena and Gabrielle were relaxing having just finished dinner that the warrior had haunted down.

The bard walked over to the other side of the camp to Xena with her staff. The warrior as normal was working on sharpening her sword. Sometimes Gabrielle had to wonder exactly how sharp that sword was. Sharp enough to split a hair?

With a sigh the bard was about to sit down near the warrior but then had second thoughts. She moved to sit down in front of the warrior's legs so that she leaned back into her friend's legs. Gabrielle smiled to herself as she laid her staff to her right.

The warrior stopped her sharpening and gazed down at her friend. "Comfortable?"

The young woman chuckled, she turned her head to glance up at Xena. "Yeah, thanks." She grinned.

Xena grinned back and saw her friend turn her head back to relax and close her eyes. Her grin formed more into a smile and she reached down to push back some of Gabrielle's hair. She then lifted her hand up to go back to sharpening her sword.

Gabrielle opened her eyes for a moment then closed them again with a smile.

The two women stayed like that for about half of a candlemark, each in their own world yet together. Them both liking the positioning of their bodies against each other.

The warrior had finished sharpening and sheathed her sword only to drop her whetstone to the ground. She then reached forward with both hands to Gabrielle's shoulders beginning to massage them.

The bard opened her eyes and dropped her head back against the other females' legs to

peer up at her friend. "That feels really good."

Xena grinned. "I figured." She continued to work the small woman's shoulder muscles. "How you feeling?"

"Pretty good now." The small woman grinned up at her friend.

The warrior grinned back. "I would be to if I were getting a massage"

The Amazon Queen started to laugh, her eyes closing. "Xena, gods." Her eyes opened again and she grinned up. "Who wouldn't?."

"True." Xena gave a few more massage rolls to her friend's shoulders then released her shoulders. She brought her hands to her lap. "Better?"

"Yeah." Gabrielle shrugged her shoulders not feeling them tight as they were. "Thanks." She sighed with a sad smile now. "You know I'll be glad to get out of this forest though."

"Same here."

The bard arched an eyebrow. "Really?"

"Yesss. Becoming a blood sucker isn't on my list Gabrielle."

The young woman chuckled. "Not on my list either." She was about to say something else but something stopped her. And that something was a howl, a wolf howl to be specific. That led to Gabrielle lifting her head off the warrior's leg to stare into the black forest. Then there were was a set of howls to follow the first single one. In reaction the bard shivered where she sat. "Xena?"

The warrior's eyes narrowed after hearing the howls. Her back was stiff while her instincts seemed to pick up. "Yeah?"

"Please tell me that wasn't what I thought."

"It wasn't." Xena gazed down at her friend then back up to the shadow laid forest. "Just regular wolves."

Gabrielle still studied the forest, she was breathing a little heavy. "I hope you're right. I think sleeping tonight was just scratched off my list."

Xena didn't respond, her skin was crawling right now. She felt like somebody was coming towards them and she was pin pointing their direction. Then there was another howl but it was closer then the last ones. There was a snap of a twig in the forest directly across the camp. Then everything fell silent for a few heartbeats. Slowly a cold breeze picked up ruffling the summer leaves in the dark forest.

The bard stared off in the direction she'd heard the branch snap and she began to tense up, her heart pounded. She knew something was out there. Then her green eyes become locked with a set of low amber eyes that seemed to almost float in the dark forest. They bored into Gabrielle's eyes with a rage sensation. "Xena?" The bard's voice was filled with horror.

Xena quickly sprung up with her sword coming unsheathed pointed in that direction.

Gabrielle had stood up and grasped her staff beside her right hand. She brought it up in defense as she saw the low yellow eyes bob up and down and come into the firelight. It was a wolf with its teeth showing and ears back. Behind that wolf three other yellow eyes formed and moved forward into the light to show wolves as well. They all growled low and in unison with their black coats reflecting the firelight off.

The warrior stepped in front of her best friend. "Stay back and behind me." Xena then quickly moved forward to grasp a branch in the fire that's ended had been sticking out. The other end of course was burning and the warrior grinned down at the wolves. "A little wolf barbecue."

The four wolves all stepped menacingly towards Xena with their heads low but the fangs only showing more. One moved towards the Warrior Princess but Xena only repealed the wolf back with the burning branch. That one wolf kept her busy while the other three slowly circled the warrior.

Gabrielle stood back and watched, noticing the wolves circling her best friend. "Xena they're trapping you."

"I want them to." Xena grinned as she watched out of the corner of her eyes, seeing the wolves surround her.

The Amazon Queen was nearing to shift forward deciding Xena would need her help. But she was stopped as a woman fell out of the trees in front of her and hissed. "Xena!" Her mouth was cover by another woman who came behind her and also placed an arm around her stomach.

Xena turned around to see her friend being held by two bacchae. Xena was about to jump forward but the wolf that was at her feet all of sudden morphed into a bacchae and reached forward with her right hand to slash Xena's right cheek.

The warrior jumped back and quickly found the other three wolves as bacchae now all surrounding her. They all went about trying to attack her but Xena was just able to hold them back. She ditched the fire branch and began to fight with her sword.

Gabrielle for her part felt the bacchae behind her low its head to her neck. She felt two fangs brush against her neck and the bard closed her eyes. She knew what was about to happen and she knew she couldn't fight it. Then a piercing sharp pain shot through the bard's neck and her head fell back as her eyes rolled up and close. Her body now went cold all over.

"No!" Xena saw what happened to her partner. She slashed at the bacchae in front of her knocking her down. The warrior then was about to leap across the fire to her friend but she was stopped. The bacchae she'd been fighting all grasped her from behind and pushed her to the ground. Then Xena felt a fist connect with her face and she blacked out with a moan.

~*Part 2*~

The woman moaned and she rolled to her right and her blue eyes opened. On the ground in front of her lay her sword. Xena reached forward to grasp the hilt, she then shifted to lean down on one knee. She gazed around in the camp to find the fire dead and her friend gone. The warrior reached up with her right hand to her forehead, she

felt a bump and her jaw clenched. "Oh they'll pay for that too." Lowering her hand she stood up sheathing her sword.

Xena gazed around in the camp and tried to get her bearing. It was still fairly dark but there was sunlight creeping into the woods. It was the beginning of dawn. The warrior walked over to where she last saw Gabrielle. She found her partner's staff on the ground. She sighed and leaned down to pick it up.

The Warrior Princess had gathered her friend's staff quickly and began to trek through the woods. She felt a huge déjà-vu again. She knew where she needed to go and that was directly to the graveyard for dryad bones. Definitely a huge déjà-vu for the warrior. Xena figured it would take her till tomorrow to reach the graveyard, which was practically on the other side of the forest.

By midday was when the warrior got her visit by three drop in guests. Xena tensed up as she saw two bacchae come forward from the trees. The warrior raised her best friend's staff in front of her body and narrowed her eyes. "So you've decided to wiggle out of the shadows for me."

The bacchae grinned and one responded. "*We* didn't come for you." The bacchae turned back to the forest. "*She* did."

Xena looked to her right to see her best friend appear from the shadows of the trees. She quickly noticed Gabrielle was dressed in the same bacchae clothes she was in the last time this happened. The warrior locked eyes with Gabrielle seeing how hollow the bard's eyes were now not to mention an evil yellow.

Gabrielle grinned and slowly walked up to the warrior. "Thanksss for saving me Xena."

"Gabrielle?" Xena took a step back as the bacchae came closer to her.

"Yesss?" Gabrielle narrowed her cold eyes as she continued to slowly close in on the warrior.

The Warrior Princess raised her staff again. "Don't Gabrielle."

The bacchae laughed at the warrior. "Really Xena? Are you going to fight your own best friend?"

Xena closed her eyes for an instant then opened them again. "No." She lowered the staff.

For a second Gabrielle didn't move as if hesitation. But then she grinned and brushed past the taller woman to stand behind. She brought her right hand to go across the warrior's stomach while her body pressed against Xena's back. Her left hand came up to brush back the woman's dark hair.

Xena closed her eyes as her hands began to lose their grip on the staff. But then she tightened her hands on the staff more as she opened her eyes again. "Gabrielle." It came out low in a plea.

The bacchae closed her eyes then opened them again she lowered her lips down to Xena's neck. Her lips slowly parted and her teeth brushed against the warrior's smooth

neck.

The older woman closed her eyes. "Please don't Gabrielle." It was a whisper.

Gabrielle closed her eyes, she felt a deep warmth slightly take her.

The two on looking bacchae's eyes widen. "Take her Gabrielle. Take her. She's yours, just take her."

Slowly Gabrielle's eyes opened again and she lifted her head so that her lips were close to the warrior's ear. "I'll find you." It came out in whisper for only Xena to hear. She then released the woman's stomach and sauntered over to the other two bacchae. Gabrielle grinned at them. "She's not ready... yet." Her head turned back to the warrior and she laughed then disappeared into the woods.

The two bacchae turned their heads to Xena. "Enjoy your final hours of life." Then they both disappeared as well into the forest.

After that Xena sighed in relief and lowered the staff back to her side. Licking her lips the warrior then started to walk quickly onwards through the forest. She needed to get to the graveyard and fast before they stopped her. She knew that was her only freebee to get by the bacchae, the next time will only mean a fight.

The rest of the day was quiet and long for the warrior. All she could think about was her best friend and what was going on. Xena had no clue as to how Bacchus could have came back. He should be dead, right? But by nightfall Xena found herself making camp. This time she kept a few branches close to the fire so she could light them. Her instincts were in high gear and she could hardly eat.

She tried to relax herself some by the night with sharpening her sword. She lifted her eyes after feeling her body tense up. Directly across from the fire in the dark woods was a set of amber eyes staring at her. The eyes weren't deathly but weren't warm either. Xena stopped running her whetstone down her sword's blade and blinked for a moment. As her eyes opened again and she found the yellow eyes now floating higher up.

That's when Gabrielle stepped out of the dark forest into the small firelight clearing.

Xena stiffened up, she slowly lifted her sword from her lap and sheathed it. She then stood up, she had no idea what to say. So she started with a greeting. "Hi."

The bacchae took another step into the camp with her eyes still pinned on the warrior. "Nice walk today?" It came out cold.

"A lonely one." Xena's eyes averted to the fire then quickly back to Gabrielle.

Gabrielle narrowed her eyes. "Don't even."

The warrior nodded. "I won't. I promise." She then slowly crossed her arms against her chest. "Why are you here?"

The bacchae grinned. "I told you I'd find you."

"And why?"

Gabrielle still had her grin and took a step closer to the warrior. "Because I want you."

"So here I am. Make me a bacchae Gabrielle. What's stopping you?"

Gabrielle's grin fell and she narrowed her eyes. "You are." She then took a step to her left closer to the woods.

"Wait Gabrielle."

The bacchae's head quickly whipped around. "Why?"

Slowly Xena took steps closer to her friend. "I want to talk."

Gabrielle's eyes narrowed again. "Don't." As the warrior neared her she felt the warmth from earlier today begin to fill her again.

"Please Gabrielle." The warrior took another step and stopped knowing she was closer than she should be.

The bacchae lifted up her head to lock eyes with the other woman.

Xena quickly saw a hidden warmth in those yellow eyes. That only made her smile faintly. Maybe, just maybe she could reach Gabrielle. "Gabrielle I know you're really in control and not Bacchus."

Gabrielle closed her eyes and looked away, turning her head. "Xena." She opened her eyes to the warrior again. "Don't leave me like this." It was ushered in a whisper.

The older woman smiled warmly. "I won't. Promise." She paused. "I need your help Gabrielle. You have to tell me where Bacchus's lair is."

The young woman nodded faintly. "I will." The bacchae then took a step closer to the warrior so that she was almost pressing her body against the other woman's. "Xena don't take long please. I can't hold out much longer against his pull."

"I know." Xena saw how her friend's amber eyes went into deep warmth. She smiled at that.

Gabrielle smiled back and then she noticed the slash marks on the older woman's right cheek. She lifted her left hand to lightly graze across the scratches as her eyes narrowed. "Does it hurt?"

Xena shook her head. "It's fine." The warrior sensed the bacchae's hand lowering from her cheek. Xena then raised her right hand to Gabrielle's cheek. She studied her friend's eyes seeing how much love they held in them making the yellow shade of her eyes not as bad.

"Xena." Gabrielle's voice held a need.

The warrior smiled and slowly leaned down and closed her eyes after seeing the bacchae's eyes close. Their lips locked together and Xena felt how cold her friend's lips were. But as they kept kissing Gabrielle's lips seemed to warm. The warrior let her tongue slip into the bacchae's mouth and she felt the tips of the fangs graze over

her tongue.

Xena let her hands grasp Gabrielle's sides carefully and she sensed the other woman's small arms go behind her head and around her waist. Slowly the warrior pulled back from the kiss and what she found was surprising.

Gabrielle opened her eyes again and they were a sparkling sea green. She felt perfectly filled with a special warmth in her body. "Xena?" Her voice came out sounding normal and in confusion.

"Hey yeah it's me." The Warrior Princess held the other woman tightly.

The bacchae closed her eyes as a pained expression took over. She pulled away, lowered her head, and took a step away from Xena. Her eyes opened again to gaze at Xena, they were a hollow yellow once more.

The warrior furrowed her eyebrows in confusion. "Gabrielle?" Xena took a step forward.

"Don't Xena." The bacchae narrowed her eyes and clenched her teeth. "Stay back."

"Gabrielle wait a-" The warrior began to move forward.

But Gabrielle quickly turned around and disappeared into the black woods without a trace.

Xena stood on the edge of the fire lit clearing and stared into the woods. She sighed and closed her eyes.

~*~*~*~

"Where you've been?"

Gabrielle stopped dead in her tracks and stared up the cavern wall to where a large red horned creature sat in a throne. "I was out in the forest Bacchus." She then noticed five other bacchae began to circle around her with narrow eyes.

Slowly Bacchus glided from the ledge on the cavern wall to come down on the ground. He then slowly walked over to Gabrielle with a grin. "Find anything interesting out there?"

Gabrielle narrowed her eyes. "No, just trees."

Bacchus then suddenly laughed as he came up to Gabrielle. He gazed down with gleaming yellow eyes. "How was your visit with Xena? Is it what you wanted?" He only laughed again and then suddenly stopped and looked to his other bacchae. "Take her."

Without any other warning the five bacchae all lunged forward to grab Gabrielle and held her. Bacchus grinned at Gabrielle then whirled around to walk over to an altar where there was a silver bowl and cup. He stepped up to the altar and turned to Gabrielle. "I believe you have a little too much freedom." Bacchus reached down to a small dagger on the altar and lifted it to cut the inside of his right hand.

Quickly the blood flowed out and he placed his bleeding hand over the bowl. The silver bowl easily filled up and when it was Bacchus lifted his cut hand to his mouth

the lick away the remaining blood in his palm. Slowly the dagger was placed back on the altar and Bacchus lifted the silver cup to plunge it in the bowl with the deep crimson blood. He filled it then turned back to Gabrielle and slowly walked towards her.

Gabrielle knew what was about to happen and she struggled against the bacchae that held her. Then one bacchae grasped her head and jerked her head back with one hand. The bacchae's other hand opened Gabrielle's mouth.

Bacchus laughed and came up to Gabrielle, he slowly lowered the cup to Gabrielle's lips and let the blood seep into her mouth.

Gabrielle felt the thick ice cold liquid creep down her throat in into her stomach, it seemed to lace her insides. And as it did coat her inside she felt her body's warmth disappear and a strong ice chill shift through her body. Her eyes burned and she closed them to deal with the pain.

Bacchus raised the empty cup from Gabrielle's lips and took a step back with a satisfying grin.

Gabrielle felt the other bacchae release her and she opened her eyes again. Slowly she lowered her head again and stared at Bacchus with gleaming bright yellow eyes that were circled with a red tint.

"How do you feel?" Bacchus crossed his arms over his chest after he asked.

"Better." Gabrielle narrowed her eyes and sighed in satisfaction.

Bacchus began to laugh with his head falling back. His laugh echoed through and through.

~*Part 3*~

Early morning came and Xena was gone from the camp. She didn't sleep that night only staying up for protection and in hopes Gabrielle would show again. Yet she knew her friend wouldn't. As soon as Xena went to leave the camp in the early dawn she heard a deep almost bellowing laugh whisk through the Bacchae Forest.

That had made her stop moving and gaze around in the forest. Her body's reaction was a deep shiver and then her skin crawling. Xena narrowed her eyes and started on her remaining trek to the dryad graveyard. And she reached the gates to the graveyard by midday. She grasped the gates to the dryad graveyard and slowly opened them and stepped in. The warrior raised her friend's staff up defensively as she came more into the graveyard.

Unexpectedly the metal gates slammed shut behind and Xena whirled around to face the gates. She narrowed her eyes as she saw nobody and there was no wind to close them. Then rapidly the next thing to happen was she found herself face first in the ground with somebody on top of her. The weight then disappeared from her back and Xena stood up. She lowered the staff and with her right hand she fingered her chakram.

The warrior abruptly whirled around and in a fluent motion threw her chakram, which just missed a flying bacchae. The chakram hit a tree in the graveyard and bounced

back to her. Xena laughed up at the surprised bacchae as she retrieved her returning chakram. "Come and get some!" She then heard a hissing sound from behind and Xena ducked as she spun around punching her enemy from behind.

Her enemy from behind was another bacchae and Gabrielle at that. Gabrielle went reeling to her back from the punch she quickly jumped to her feet and flew into the air.

Xena took a step back and looked up to her friend in the sky and saw three other bacchae join her gliding in the air. The warrior spun the staff in her hands, waiting for their attack. But before it could happen there was a small explosion and a flying creature made of bones came from a grave. Xena quickly realized it was a dryad.

The dryad looked down at Xena as it beat its boned wings in the air then it raised its head to the four bacchae and it suddenly lunged towards the four bacchae with a scream.

The Warrior Princess's eyes widen as she completely remembered that the dryads were mortal enemies of the bacchae. "Hades." She lowered her staff and reached down to her chakram to hurl it through the air at the dryad. The chakram cut through the dryad's neck and came back to Xena.

The dryad exploded before it could even reach the bacchae and its bones all showered to the ground in a heap. But for the dryad's death three other dryads came from their graves and began to attack the bacchae. Yet a fourth dryad came from the ground afterwards to come after Xena.

Xena laughed at the flying dryad. The dryad came swooping down at Xena but the warrior leapt in the air and did a kick to the dryad repealing it back. As soon as the warrior's feet made contact with the ground she raised the staff seeing the dryad come back at her. Xena timed it and raised the butt end of the staff towards the dryad. The dryad rammed hard into the staff, the staff itself becoming mangled in the dryad's ribs. Xena easily flung the staff with the dryad to the ground and held the dryad to the ground with the staff. The warrior freed her right hand from the staff and unsheathed her sword to slash down and cut the dryad's neck. The dryad stopped moving, as its skull rolled away and then the bones all fell apart to the ground.

Xena sighed in relief and sheathed her sword to turn to where she knew the bacchae and dryads were fighting. As soon as she turned to the scene she saw a dryad and bacchae attack each other in the air. The dryad won and the bacchae exploded into bits with its body parts all showering to the ground over Gabrielle.

Gabrielle was on the ground and she took a step back. She was the last bacchae and two dryads hovered in the air in front of her. She raised her hands and narrowed her eyes prepared to fight them.

The warrior saw this and knew that no way in Tartarus that Gabrielle was going to beat the two dryads. She then saw the dryads begin to dive down at Gabrielle together. Xena dropped the staff and sprinted towards her friend. She reached down to chakram lifted it in front of her body as she ran. She threw the chakram as she leaped towards Gabrielle. The chakram went sailing through the air at the two diving dryads. Xena went soaring through the air and slammed into the bacchae and they both went to the ground.

The chakram cut through the two diving dryad's necks and in turn the dryads exploded into a flurry of sharp bones. Xena though kept her body covered over Gabrielle knowing if any of those bones pierced her friend that it would kill her.

Gabrielle for her part felt the weight of Xena over her and that same strong warmth began to glow inside of her body. It quickly grew and washed over her, the strength of it was so powerful that she felt like she couldn't breath. She closed her eyes in panic and then the glowing warmth blacked her out as she fainted.

Xena slowly raised her head as she heard the finally bone pieces fall to the ground beside her. She gazed down at the bacchae below her to see her eyes closed. The warrior reached down with her right hand to place her hand over Gabrielle's nose to feel her breath slightly come out. She sighed and moved off Gabrielle to quickly collected five dryad bones. Xena slipped one in each of her gauntlets and then a third between her breasts. The other two well, she just cared them and she raced over to grab Gabrielle's staff and her chakram from the ground. The warrior came up beside the unconscious bacchae and bent down to lift Gabrielle into her arms. Slowly she lifted Gabrielle up from the ground and cared her with the staff and dryad bones out of the graveyard. Xena kicked the gates open and stepped through only to kick the gates closed behind. She quickly walked over to a tree and lowered Gabrielle to lean against it. The staff rolled out of her right hand to the ground with the two dryad bones as she bent down to one knee.

Xena carefully reached forward with her right hand to touch Gabrielle's pale cheek. She felt how cold the bacchae's cheek was but it warm as she kept her hand there. "Gabrielle come on wake up."

Gabrielle's silver earrings flashed as she turned her head left and right some. She came around and slowly opened her eyes to stare into clear blue eyes. The bacchae quickly realized who it was and her right hand shot up to grasp Xena's wrist that was touching her cheek. Gabrielle narrowed her eyes.

The warrior didn't say anything, she kept her eyes locked with Gabrielle's. She let her love and trust show through her warm eyes. Xena saw her friend's yellow eyes slowly dissipate of the coldness and they slowly warmed. She could feel Gabrielle's hand loose its grip around her wrist.

"Xena?" Gabrielle lowered her hand from the warrior's wrist.

"Yeah it's me, not much change here."

The bacchae grinned a little. "Funny." Her voice was still hard and cold.

Xena smiled. "You okay?"

Gabrielle closed her eyes and nodded. "I think so." Her eyes opened again. "What did you do to me?"

The warrior furrowed her eyebrows. "Nothing... that I know of."

The bacchae shook her head. "I can't feel Bacchus's control over me. I should since I drank his blood last night."

Xena's eyes narrowed. "You're a-

"Full fledged bacchae? Yeah." Gabrielle abruptly bent her head forward as her expression went into pain. "Xena?" Her voice came out more light and normal.

The older woman's eyes quickly widen as she grasped her friend's eyes. "Come on Gabrielle, fight it. Don't let Bacchus control you."

Gabrielle's hands came up to face as she lowered her head more. "Godssss." It came out hard and in a hiss of pain.

"Gabrielle fight his control. I need your help, I need you." Xena held tight to the bacchae's shoulders.

Gabrielle lifted her head again but had her eyes closed. Her head fell back into the tree's trunk as the pain expression still crossed her face. "I can't Xena." It was weak.

"Yes you can Gabrielle, I know you can." The warrior stared down at the ground for a moment trying to thinking of something. Then she looked back up to Gabrielle. "I need you with me Gabrielle... I love you."

The bacchae sucked in a deep breath and her eyes tightly closed. The words seem to echo through her head and then only strengthen the warmth in her. That warmth quickly flushed out the bitter coldness in her body, it stopped Bacchus's control. Her eyes slowly opened again and lowered to Xena. Her eyes were still yellow but were warm, sparkling, and seemed to flash an emerald green shade to Xena.

The warrior smiled back, she knew what happened. She leaned forward to placed a gentle kiss to the other woman's forehead. "Welcome back."

Gabrielle grinned. "Not totally." Her voice sounded normal and was warm. She then leaned towards Xena and captured her lips on a deep kiss. Once she slowly pulled back from the kiss she smiled. "I love you Xena." She paused. "And thank you."

Xena furrowed her eyebrows. "For what?"

"For saving me from those dryads." Gabrielle smiled now. "And just now."

The warrior smiled and then stood up while grasping the two dryad bones on the ground. "Come on."

Slowly the bacchae stood up and gazed up to friend. "What we going to do Xena?"

"Kill Bacchus." She took the two dryad bones slipping one down in her right boot then the other in her left boot.

"Xena you're not going to make it two steps in that liar without being attacked like that."

The warrior grinned. "I wasn't planning on going in there like this."

The bacchae arched an eyebrow. "Xena?" It came out low in warning.

Xena kept her grin as she took a step to Gabrielle and pressed her body against Gabrielle's. Her hands came to rest on her friend's waist. She lowered her head down

to Gabrielle's, her lips next to the bacchae's ear. "Make me a bacchae."

Gabrielle groaned. "Xena, he'll control you." She let her lips brush against the warrior's neck lightly. "I can't."

"You will Gabrielle." Xena let her fingers glide across her partner's bare stomach. "He won't control me because you control me. Do it Gabrielle."

The bacchae closed her eyes, she remembered the last time she heard that one. She knew the warrior was right, last time this happened they both resisted Bacchus's control together. They did control each other and now Gabrielle finally realized why. Love. That's all there is to it. So Gabrielle slowly let her mouth part and her teeth grazed up across Xena's neck and then suddenly pierced through the soft skin.

Xena closed her eyes as they rolled up back into her head. She slowly dropped her head back as she felt a coolness sweep through her body it was strong but only for a moment. For a warmth suddenly exploded inside of her and destroyed the bitter cold. She moaned in reaction.

Gabrielle slowly lifted her head and watched Xena's skin turn pale. She wrapped her arms tightly around Xena to support her. She didn't feel the warrior go cold but seem to stay warm if not warmer. She saw Xena lower head to her, the warrior's eyes opening to show a deep yellow and they were twinkling with a warm flashing blue.

Xena grinned to show her fangs. "A blood sucker again." Her voice was low and words slurred together from the fangs.

Gabrielle chuckled at her friend. "Join the club."

"Mmm with you, yes." The warrior lowered her head down to the young woman captured her lips. They both parted their lips and their tongues grazed across each other's fangs. Xena also could taste a hint of blood to Gabrielle's lips.

Gabrielle slowly pulled back and grinned up. "So we head to Bacchus?"

"Definitely." Xena then went serious. "How'd he live Gabrielle?"

The smaller bacchae furrowed his eyebrows. "I'm not sure. All I know is when we killed him last time, we really didn't kill him." She glanced up to Xena again. "We weren't full bacchaes so we couldn't kill him only destroy him for awhile."

Xena nodded a few times. "Then that means you'll have to kill him."

Gabrielle sighed. "Guess so."

The older woman grinned. "Don't worry I'll help." She then smiled. "Let's get this done with." Xena released her partner and walked over to the staff she leaned down to pick it up as a grin took her lips. Then she spoke letting her words all came out slurred together. "Pickle Peter piper pick a pile of perfect peppers." Now she heard Gabrielle burst out laughing. She slowly stood up and turned to her friend to see her laughing hard.

Gabrielle took a deep breath and straightened up to grin at the bacchae warrior. "Gods Xena that was good." She shook her head.

"I thought sso too." Xena walked over to the other bacchae with her eyes flashing.

The younger bacchae grinned up. "Mmm I got one." She took a deep breath and let her more deep voice take control. "Sssally sssold ssseassshellsss by the sssea ssshore."

The warrior started to chuckle then grin. "Love these fangss." She then went serious. "You lead the way to the cave."

Gabrielle nodded. She started walking towards the woods with Xena right beside her. "It isn't to far." She stopped at the forest's edge and gazed up to her partner. "Leave my staff. We need to get to the lair and quickly."

Xena nodded and lowered the staff to lean against a tree and turned her head back to Gabrielle.

The small bacchae grinned. "Let's have a little fun." She closed her eyes and opened them again to find herself low to the ground.

The bacchae looked down to see Gabrielle as a wolf with a pure white coat. Xena followed Gabrielle's example and closed her eyes then opened them again to find herself low the ground with a tail. Xena looked down her length to see she had a jet-black coat. She then turned her head back to Gabrielle.

Gabrielle revealed her fangs in a seeming grin then she broke off running into the woods.

Xena let her own fangs become noticeable and she broke off running after Gabrielle. She quickly noticed how her vision moved faster then before and everything was pure yellow to her. Ahead she saw Gabrielle and she was catching up. Xena saw Gabrielle run around a pile of rocks but Xena raced ahead and ran up into the rock pile and jumped to glide through the air and land on her paws neatly beside her partner.

Gabrielle turned her head for an instant to Xena to flash her a fanged grin. She then looked ahead again and let her bacchae side lead her through the forest towards the cave. They ran together side by side through the forest and quickly made time.

Gabrielle then noticed how close they were to the cave so she slowed down to a walk.

Xena did as well and gazed at her partner.

Gabrielle glanced to Xena and nodded her head. She then walked ahead of Xena and her ears fell back because she felt somebody coming towards them. She turned her head left and right searching in the woods. Slowly she lowered her muzzle to sniff the ground picking up the sent of other bacchae. Her head came back up quickly and she stopped walking while her ears perched up again.

Xena stopped walking as she breathed heavy from running. She studied the woods as well knowing there were others near. Her head then quickly turned straight ahead as she saw three wolves come walking from behind a set of trees.

Gabrielle stepped forward and lowered her head put kept her eyes up. The three wolves stepped closer and one of them nodded at Gabrielle. Gabrielle nodded back and turned her head back to Xena and closed her eyes. Xena followed her example

and closed her eyes. The three other wolves also closed their eyes. When everybody opened their eyes they found themselves in human form again.

One bacchae from the group of three stepped up close to Gabrielle. "I see you made it back." She then gazed over at Xena. "And succeeded in your mission."

Gabrielle grinned. "I did." She glanced back at Xena then back to the bacchae.

"What happened to the others?"

"They were killed by the dryads. I was the only one left."

The bacchae nodded her head, she looked up and down the length of Xena then back to Gabrielle. "Take her to Bacchus."

Gabrielle grinned. "With pleasure." She turned her head to Xena. "Follow me."

Xena nodded with narrowed eyes and followed behind Gabrielle into the cave.

The two bacchae stepped up close to their leader bacchae with their fangs low. The leader bacchae watched Xena and Gabrielle walk to the cave's mouth, her eyes narrowed. "Follow them."

The two bacchae growled and hissed, they quickly whipped by the one bacchae to glide across the ground to the cave's mouth.

~*~*~*~

Bacchus landed to the ground with a grin. He straightened back up as ten or more of his bacchae followers surrounded Xena and Gabrielle. He walked forward to Xena and Gabrielle. "So Xena you're apart of the my bacchae again."

The warrior bacchae stepped forward and directly in front of Gabrielle. "I am."

Bacchus grinned and continued to take his small steps to Xena. "And what do you plan to do this time to stop me?"

Xena grinned, her right hand curled up to the bottom of her wrist to reach in to slowly pull out a dryad bone from her gauntlet. "I can't stop you Bacchus. That's something I've learned."

The wine god laughed hard. "I will be more convinced of this when you've drank my blood."

The warrior slipped the dryad bone out of her gauntlet and into her hand. She then lowered it towards Gabrielle. "Won't we both?"

Slowly Gabrielle reached forward to take the dryad bone and tuck it into the black wrap of her cape around her right wrist.

Bacchus narrowed his eyes, he then snapped his finger. Quickly the ten bacchae including Gabrielle all grabbed Xena and held her tight. Bacchus watched the warrior bacchae struggle for a moment then he walked over to his altar, it was half filled with the blood. He dipped the cup in to fill it with his own blood and turned to the bacchae holding Xena. "Open her mouth."

One of the bacchae quickly jerked Xena's head back and forced her mouth open.

Gabrielle shifted a little more to Xena's right side grasping the warrior's shoulder with her left hand. With her right hand she reached up to feel the tip of the dryad bone press against her finger. She let the dryad bone slip down some between her fingers. She averted her eyes towards Bacchus.

Bacchus laughed and stepped towards Xena. He grinned. "Finally I'll have the Warrior Princess." He took one final last step to come up to the warrior and he began placed the rim of the cold silver cup against Xena's lips.

"Sorry Bacchus, she's *mine*." Gabrielle suddenly lunged forward with the dryad bone in her right hand. She pushed him forward away from Xena with the dryad bone plunging into Bacchus's chest.

Bacchus stumbled back and dropped the silver cup, which crashed to the ground. He reached up with both his hands to the dryad bone in his chest. He closed his eyes and dropped his head back and yelled. It echoed through the cave and he bursted into millions of pieces.

Gabrielle took a step back as she felt a pain center in her, it grew and forced her to close her eyes. She then felt warm arms circle around her and pull her into a warm body. Slowly she opened her eyes and everything flashed before her between yellow and normal. Then finally it all stopped and her eyes saw everything for what it was, the normal colors and stable vision.

Xena slowly opened her eyes to find her sight not shaky and the yellow gone. She looked down her body to see her tan skin back. She smiled and tightened her arms around Gabrielle more.

The bard turned around in her partner's arms to smile up to Xena. "It worked."

"No more blood sucking." The warrior then grinned.

The Amazon Queen chuckled and leaned up to capture her partner's lips. This time she felt no fangs in the kiss. She didn't know if that was good or bad, the fangs had definitely made things more interesting in the kisses. Gabrielle pulled back with a smile. "Love you."

Xena smiled brightly. "I love you too Gabrielle."

The younger woman grinned then looked beyond her partner to see all the bacchae from earlier all moaning for they were in human form again. "We better help them out." She gazed up to Xena.

The warrior nodded and glanced back at the women. "Come on." She looked back down at Gabrielle with a smile.

They released each other and took care of all the women. Telling them where they were and how to get back to their village through the woods. Afterwards Xena and Gabrielle left the cave where the only thing that remained was the altar and blood stained dagger. On the floor the silver cup laid arrest with crimson blood still trickling out to mask the cave's floor. The pair though trekked to the graveyard to get the bard's staff. And well after that they were heading down the road to leave the Bacchae

Forest.

"The fangs did make it interesting. You have to admit."

The warrior started to laugh. "Don't even." She gazed over to her partner.

Gabrielle grinned. "Worried I might jinx us again."

"Yesss." Xena then reached across to hit the wood of Gabrielle's staff.

The bard glared at her best friend. "Oh you are so funny warrior."

The older woman grinned. "Not trying to be."

Gabrielle stopped walking and put her left hand on her hip. "You know if I hadn't turned into a bacchae you wouldn't have told me you're in-love with me. Or visa versa."

Xena chuckled. "Maybe." She then brought one hand behind Gabrielle's shoulder while the other was at her side. "I have a feeling something else could have happened to get me to tell you."

The bard grinned. "Or me for that matter. This was just.... The truth of it through the bacchae."

The warrior nodded. "You do see things differently as a bacchae." She slowly leaned down to soundly capture Gabrielle's lips.

That's where we leave our soulmates, at the Bacchae Truth.

The End