

~ Coming Together ~

by Red Hope

Disclaimers: Violence ~ Lacking the violence.

Sex/Subtext ~ Two women in-love. There is subtext sex though.

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Time Frame ~ In the fifth season after episode "Motherhood."

Section Note: ~ I hope everybody likes this section. Hope is developing along and so are her relationships with everybody. Now, I've set Hope and Eve up. So everybody can debate whether these two would make a good couple. Sisters or lovers? And no, it's not incest. Hope and Eve are opposite ends of the scale on being related. ;-) But everybody decide and vote on it on the series page or email me about it. This may decide on whether this mini series becomes a regular series. So the next section and series' fate is up to everybody!

Started: September 6th 2000 on Wednesday

Mini Series One: **Thick as Blood** Story: **Three**

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

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Section 1

~*Part 1*~

"Hold on... wait." Xena sighed and strolled over to the two women. "Just stop."

The two younger women chuckled together and dropped their fighting stances.

"Something wrong Xen?" The small warrior peered up to her partner.

"You know there is." The warrior narrowed her eyes at her lover then slowly grinned.

"That's not how you want to do it and you know it."

Gabrielle bit her tongue however smirked. "Oh?"

The older woman corked an eyebrow. "Would you like me to teach your daughter?"

"Oh no." The small woman poked her soulmate's stomach with the hilt of her sai. "I teach her and you teach me."

The Warrior Princess laughed. "Fine." She shrugged and strolled out of the clearing.

"Don't come to me when Hope gets knocked on her ass."

"She won't!" The young warrior called back.

"Mother like daughter!" Answered the warrior.

Gabrielle grumbled and looked back to Hope. "Anyway." She grinned. "Xena is right." She sighed. "Don't pull that move until you understand how to use your staff better. Got me?"

Slowly the younger woman nodded. "Alright." She dropped her head against the staff. "How long did it take you to learn the staff?"

The warrior-bard's eyes went unfocused. "Learned it in... a few months." Her eyes focused again as a small grin tweaked her lips. "Mastered it in a year or so."

Hope's eyebrows shot up. "It takes that long?"

Gabrielle quietly laughed. "For a fast learner, yes." She twirled her sais to bring the blades out. "Feel like one more round?"

The daughter sighed dramatically. "I think I can do it."

"Getting too old for your mother?" The small warrior stepped back and bent her knees.

Hope quietly laughed and raised her staff. "Come on old lady."

Gabrielle laughed and lunged forward to fight her daughter.

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The warrior peered up to see her soulmate and Hope come into the camp. She smiled to her partner. "Was wondering when you would come back."

"Miss me?" Gabrielle grinned and strolled up to her lover. She leaned down and kissed her soundly.

Hope leaned against her staff with a sad smile watching the pair. She could see the strong love between them.

The young warrior straightened up with a smile.

"So what we doing for dinner?" Hope placed her free hand on her hip.

The soulmates chuckled together and glanced over to the young woman.

Gabrielle shook her head. "How about you catch it."

Hope's eyes widen.

A small grin creased the warrior's lips. She stood up. "Rabbit?" She gazed down at Gabrielle.

"Yeah." The Amazon Queen shrugged. "Sounds good to me."

"Same here." Gabrielle's daughter nodded.

"Alright." Xena faced her lover. "The fire is almost ready." She gazed over to the western sky to see the sun about to touch the horizon. "Be back."

"Thanks Xen."

The warrior flashed a smile and walked into the woods.

Gabrielle walked over to her horse and pulled off the saddlebag. She came back to the fire to settle it there. She sat down with crossed legs.

Hope quietly came up beside her and sat down. "Is it always like this?" She turned her head to her mother. "Xena catches and you cook?"

"Yup." The mother grinned. "Since day one." She turned to the saddlebags and started to pull out her cooking supplies. "Works well."

"Must if it's been for five years." Hope glanced to the fire that was building up. "So explain to me why you're not growing gray hairs and wrinkling?"

"A mother doesn't give away all her secrets." The small warrior gave a grin but lost it. "It's a long story." She sighed. "But in a nutshell, Xena and I were frozen in ice tombs by Ares." She shrugged. "We finally broke through twenty-five years later... about a month ago." Her voice faded out but she quietly asked, "How were you reborn?"

Hope fiddled with her staff in a little bit of nervousness. "My remains were committed to Dahak's flames." She stared at her small fingers playing with the smooth wood on the staff. "Dahak's followers found my remains and took them to his old temple." She shrugged.

Gabrielle reached over and grasped the small hand. "Dahak?" She'd noticed how her daughter was referring to him.

The young woman huffed and lifted her eyes to Gabrielle. "I have to choose. You or Dahak." She smiled warmly. "I'm liking it with you better." She lowered her eyes. "No, he's not my father."

The small warrior squeezed her daughter's hand tightly. "And I will be counting my blessings for eternity that I have you." A few tears rolled down her cheeks.

Hope studied her mother for a moment as a smile crept along her lips. "Me too." She was holding Gabrielle's hand just as tightly. With her free hand she wiped away Gabrielle's tears.

The mother smiled confidently then released the small hand. She leaned a little to her left to retrieve a long stick. She poked at the fire.

"What happened at my birth?" Hope's voice barely heard.

The Amazon Queen continued to poke the fire with her stick. She didn't respond right away. "Too many things." She poked some more. "Even today it still makes my head spin." She sighed. "I had you in Britannia in about a weeks span." She pulled the stick out.

Hope slowly nodded. "How long does a baby normally take?"

"Nine months."

The young woman dropped her head while staring at her staff. "That long?"

"Yes." Gabrielle lifted her eyes towards her daughter. "But the fact you came sooner

made me believe you were even more special." She smiled sadly. "And I was right."

Hope's right hand went through her hair. "I wouldn't say that," she mumbled under her breath.

"I would." The small warrior sighed. "Let me explain something to you Hope." She took a deep breath. "You have two sides."

"I know." Hope faintly nodded. "My Dahak side and my Gabrielle side." She turned her head to Gabrielle. "Right?"

"Sort of." The Amazon Queen looked to Hope. "You have a dark side and a light side." She glanced to the spot where Xena had entered into the woods. "Xena has the something." Her eyes focused on Hope again. "When I met Xena she'd just began to take control of her darkness. Today she has a powerful control over her darkness but now and again it will come back." She paused. "She controls it a little better each day."

Gabrielle's daughter moved her head in understanding. "So you think this is the same with me?"

"Yes." The young warrior's expression held a warm smile. "Give yourself time and you'll learn to control it too. You've already taken the largest step. Just keep that in mind."

Hope slowly nodded. "I'll remember." She raised an eyebrow at her mother. "If... I have problems I can... talk to you?"

"Definitely." A smile that held love formed on Gabrielle's mouth. "I'm always here if you need me."

"Good." The young woman nodded briskly. "You're the only one I trust right now."

"I know... give it time." The mother breathed deeply. "But as I said, I thought you were special during your birth." She smiled to her daughter. "In the local port Xena and I went to there were villagers. They knew I was pregnant."

"And they knew with what huh?"

Gabrielle faintly nodded. "Fear set in and the villagers came after us. So Xena and I escaped to a castle in a woods. Within the next day I had you." She lowered her eyes with her mind focussing on the past. "The next day or so you grew rapidly to about a year old. Walking and starting to talk. The knights of this castle knew who you were too. They and Xena tried to kill you but I took you."

Hope began to play with the staff again.

"I ran from Xena with you." Gabrielle lifted the stick and began to poke again. "Finally I put you into a small basket and placed you into a stream. I could only hope you'd survive." She removed the stick from the fire. "Xena caught up to me not long after near a gorge." She lowered her head. "I lied to Xena telling her I threw you over."

"Xena believed you?"

Gabrielle slowly nodded. "She did." She peered over to her daughter. "She trusted me dearly then."

The daughter raised an eyebrow. "Of course she trusts you now?"

"Yes." The older woman smiled warmly. "We trust each other with our soul."

The young woman stared into the fire considering her mother's words. "I wonder if I'll have that."

The small warrior quietly laughed. "One thing at time." She turned her head to Hope. "You have a lot of other things to worry about."

A dramatic sigh came from Hope. "Don't remind me." She grinned. "Like social skills."

"That and other things." Gabrielle grinned for a second as her right hand rested on her daughter's knee. "You need to be carefully with your telekinesis." She paused while coming up with the right words. "People will fear it." Her eyes locked with Hope's. "They will fear it and desire it. Only show it to people you trust."

"I figured." Hope turned her head away. "So, what of the Amazons?"

Gabrielle lifted her eyes to see her soulmate come back in with a skinned rabbit. "We're headed there." She stood up with a pan. "Probably make it there tomorrow afternoon."

The daughter slowly nodded and watched her mother take the rabbit and begin to cook it. The darkness of the night, she noticed, began to set in.

"You'll love the Amazons." Xena evilly grinned to Hope then walked over to her mare.

"What's that supposed to mean?" Hope cocked an eyebrow. She glanced between Xena and her mother.

"Xena just doesn't like the Amazons." Gabrielle placed the pan over the fire to cook. "Just ignore her."

The warrior whirled around with her saddlebags. "You know I love the Amazons, Queen Gabrielle."

The small warrior rolled her eyes. "You love the Amazons like you love bows in your hair."

"They are bows in my hair," mumbled the warrior. She settled the saddlebag down by Gabrielle's. She sat down beside Hope and leaned towards her. "Watch out, your mother will con you into making you an Amazon," she whispered.

The Amazon Queen mocked glare at her partner. "I heard that."

"You're an Amazon?"

Xena shook her head at Hope. "Nope."

"One day," teased the Queen.

The Warrior Princess corked an eyebrow.

Gabrielle silently laughed and walked over to the other women. She sat down next to her soulmate. "Do we know how long we're staying with the Amazons?"

The older woman shrugged. "Doesn't matter."

The young warrior raised an eyebrow slowly. "Right," she said in sarcasm.

The tall warrior chuckled. "Well maybe a little."

"Uh huh."

"Amazons are that bad?" Hope asked.

"Depends." The mother glanced over. "Some people like leathers and feathers... and some..." Her eyes focused on her lover. "Don't."

"I never said I didn't like them."

"I didn't say that either." The warrior-bard smirked then gazed at the pan. "The Amazons are a blast."

Xena moaned deeply.

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Gabrielle glanced away from her soulmate to her daughter. "You'll be fine, promise."

Hope sighed dramatically while glancing to the fire. "Hopefully it won't take to long."

"Nah." The small warrior grinned. "You'll pick up things quickly."

It was evening about quarter of a candlemark after dinner. Xena was sitting on a log sharpening her sword while Gabrielle and Hope were talking closer to the fire.

Hope chuckled a little. "I'm about as old as you."

The Amazon Queen slowly nodded. "Physically." She shrugged. "Mentally is different."

"Ssso, you're saying I have a lot to learn?" The daughter grinned a little.

"Uh huh." Gabrielle stretched her legs out before propping them up. She dropped her head down on her knees with her face towards Hope. "What you think of this side of life?"

"It's... greener." The small woman grinned while stretching her own legs out with her hands behind her back. "I just don't know what I'm going to do."

The small warrior shrugged. "You'll figure it out."

"Mmm." Hope nodded and looked away. She breathed deeply and said, "I think I'm going to go to sleep."

"Yeah." Gabrielle reached over to pat her daughter's thigh. "Tomorrow will be busy."

"Why?" The young woman had a worried look.

The short warrior quietly laughed. "You'll see."

"Oh great." Hope slowly stood up. "I can wait." She grinned.

Gabrielle had an amused look. "Goodnight Hope." Her loving smile took shape.

"Sleep well mother." The daughter smiled back with depth as she squeezed Gabrielle's shoulder. Afterwards she walked over to her bedroll in curled up to sleep hard.

Gabrielle on the other hand trailed her eyes over to her lover.

Xena's eyes focused on Gabrielle.

The small warrior's lips creased into a smile.

The warrior grinned a little, sheathed her sword, and stood up. She went to put her whetstone away.

The Amazon Queen lifted her head as Xena came over to her.

The Warrior Princess knelt down at her lover's side. "How you doing?"

"Well." The small woman leaned over to kiss her partner tenderly. She slowly pulled back with a smile. "You?"

"Still a little... edgy." Her blue eyes flickered over to Hope then back to Gabrielle.

"I know." The warrior-bard caressed Xena's cheek. "She's doing well."

"Yeah," whispered the older woman. "She's completely different."

Gabrielle moved her head in agreement. "She is."

Xena wrapped her arms around Gabrielle and began to sit down taking her partner with her.

The young warrior snuggled into Xena's body and tangled her legs with the longer ones. "Mmm, it's been a while."

"Uh huh." The older woman leaned her head forward. "For a couple of things."

The short woman evilly grinned while whispering, "The hut."

"If I can wait that long."

Gabrielle patted her lover's knee. "You can because you're going to be too busy restraining me."

The older woman quietly laughed. "Who said anything about restraining?"

The small warrior grinned but slowly lost it. She sighed a little sadly. "How you handling it?" quietly asked she.

"Hope?"

Gabrielle nodded while grasping her friend's hands.

Xena sighed then lowered her chin onto her soulmate's shoulder. She didn't move or say anything while thinking. After several moments she lifted her head. "It's hard at certain points."

The warrior-bard nodded a little while squeezing her lover's hands. "Thank you for giving her a second chance." She felt a tight squeeze around her body.

"She deserves it and so does your relationship with her."

A sad smile creased the short warrior's lips. "Yeah." She dropped her head back into her lover's shoulder.

Xena's eyes drifted over to Hope. She stared at the young face with the innocent look. It undoubtable reminded she of her soulmate almost three years ago. "She sleeps like you," whispered the warrior.

Hope's mother turned her head to the left to stare at the sleeping form of Hope. She saw the soft expression and innocence written in. She noticed how Hope tucked her hands under her head with her body curled up close for warmth. The lips slightly parted as her face twitched here and there from dreams. It caused a powerful smile to take control of Gabrielle. A few tears rolled down her cheeks. "She's another person."

The warrior smiled sadly as she realized that herself. She leaned forward to kiss her lover's cheek. "Give me time." Her eyes went to Hope again. "Maybe it won't hurt quite as much later."

Gabrielle smiled and tilted her head back. "Thank you Xena," she whispered. She pulled down her soulmate's head and kissed her with love.

~*Part 2*~

Gabrielle dropped the reins to her horse. She raised her hands over her head.

Xena did the same.

Hope had a confused expression but did it none the less. She heard nothing and saw nothing but then three women reappeared from the trees. She noticed them to wear leathers, have masks on, and feathers. She now grinned at knowing they were Amazons.

The three women dropped their arms together.

One Amazon stepped forward to push her mask back. "Welcome Queen Gabrielle." Her hair was black and gray that reached below her shoulders.

The warrior-bard turned her head in question. "Eponin?"

The weapons master grinned slowly. "Still at your services my Queen." She bowed her head.

Gabrielle smiled warmly and took a step forward to hug her friend tightly. "It's so

good to see you."

Eponin hugged back just as strongly. "Glad you could make it back my Queen."

The Queen laughed and took a step back.

Eponin smiled but then glanced over to Hope noticing her. Her eyes widen.

The small warrior held her hand out to Hope. "This is Hope."

The weapons master's right hand instantly moved to her sword. "By the gods." She began to extract it. She could remember who Hope was from the past.

The warrior-bard stepped forward with her hands up. "It's alright Ep."

The other two Amazons glanced between their Queen and the weapons master trying to figure out what was going on.

Xena took a step forward. "Ep, Hope is with us."

The weapons master stood still with her sword half unsheathed. Slowly her hand let go and there was a scrape of the blade going into the sheath again.

"Thank you." Gabrielle smiled and lowered her hands. "Hope?" She turned towards her daughter. "This is Eponin." She held her right hand to the Amazon. "She was one of the first to teach me the staff." She grinned.

Hope quietly laughed and glanced over to Eponin. "Nice to meet you."

The weapons master faintly nodded with cold eyes. She remembered. She then glanced to her two Amazon friends. "This is Rhesus." She held her hand to the right at the Amazon. "And this is Ambrosios."

Gabrielle nodded at both the Amazons with a warm smile. "Nice to meet you both."

The two Amazons shyly smiled.

Eponin glanced over to Xena then to Gabrielle. Her eyes focused on Xena. "So, mind telling me where the fountain of youth is? I could use it myself."

The warrior slowly grinned. "We forget."

The weapons master huffed. "Right." She turned around. "Follow me my Queen."

Gabrielle sighed. "Ep," she growled.

Eponin quietly laughed. "Follow me Gabrielle."

"Thank you." The warrior-bard followed behind her friend after collecting her horse's reins.

The Amazon, Rhesus, slowed her pace to walk along side Hope. She glanced at the short long-haired blond shyly then away. "Nice to meet you Hope." Rhesus was younger than Hope.

The short woman smiled warmly at Rhesus as she walked with her staff. "Rhesus."

She bowed her head slightly. She could tell she had to start the conversation that Rhesus wanted to have. "So... how long have you been an Amazon?"

Rhesus brightened up. "All my life." She chuckled a little. She was a little taller than Hope with short brown hair. "Are you and Queen Gabrielle sisters?" she asked quietly.

Hope had an amused expression. "No, Gabrielle is my mother."

The Amazon's eyes widen. "You're kidding."

Hope shook her head while glancing ahead.

"That's amazing," ushered Rhesus.

The older woman lost her amusement as a sigh came. She turned her head to the Amazon again. "Amazons are only women?"

Rhesus quickly nodded. "Yes, have been forever."

Hope slowly nodded. "Mmm, I consider myself an independent woman." She turned her head to the Amazon with an evil grin. "But I'd ask my father first if I could become an Amazon."

The Amazon's narrowed her eyes with a raised eyebrow.

Hope started to laugh at the other woman. "It was a joke." She settled down.

"Right," Rhesus shook her head as a small smile formed.

Eponin turned her head away from Hope's direction while shaking it. "I can't believe it," she whispered.

Gabrielle narrowed her eyes a little. "Well start believing it Ep."

The weapons master sighed deeply. "I'll need some convincing." Her eyes flickered up to Xena then back down to Gabrielle. "I know what she did to you." Her eyes lifted to the warrior again. "The both of you."

"She's changed."

Eponin narrowed her eyes before whispering, "History repeats itself."

The Queen's left hand shot out to grasp Eponin's arm tightly. She leaned into the Amazon as she continued to walk. "Listen to me Eponin." Her eyes narrowed while she spoke in a whisper. "She's my daughter and she deserves a second chance." She paused. "She's not the same person."

The weapons master narrowed her eyes now. "I pray that she isn't Gabrielle for your sake." She took a shaky breath. "But until I know that for myself... I'll be on my guard." She shook her head. "I don't need losing you or Xena." She had a hurt look crossed her face. "We've lost to many good Amazons... friends. First it was Solari, then Eph, Amarice after that, and we thought we lost both of you." She pulled her arm free. "So let me decide for myself. I care about what happens to you both."

The small warrior sighed very sadly. "Alright, I see your point." She gazed ahead

through the forest.

"Thank you." The weapons master saw the village coming into view.

The group soon came into the village.

Xena began scanning around the village.

Eponin grinned and peered up the tall woman. "She's right over there." She pointed to the right then signaled to the other two Amazons to take Xena and Gabrielle's horses away.

The soulmates handed their reins over to the two Amazons.

Hope came up beside her mother and looked to the right to see what was so interesting.

Slowly a loving smile creased the warrior's lips as she recognized the one person out of the Amazons. She locked blue eyes with blue. She quickly power walked in that direction.

"Mother."

Xena met her daughter halfway and pulled her into a strong hug. She kissed the side of Eve's temple and whispered, "I missed you."

Eve quietly laughed while hugging her mother tightly. "It's good to see you mother." She pulled back from the hug with a warm smile. "I was starting to worry about you and Gabrielle."

Gabrielle brought her right hand to Hope's back. "Come on." She led her daughter up to Xena's side.

"We ran into some... trouble." The warrior folded her arms. "We would have been here sooner."

Eve nodded slowly. "That's what I figured." She glanced to her right to see... well two Gabrielles. Her jaw dropped.

"You were right," Gabrielle whispered while leaning towards her soulmate.

"Uh huh." Xena grinned. "Aren't I always?"

The young warrior chuckled and glanced back to Eve. "How are you dear?" She moved in for a strong hug.

Eve released the older woman and watched her step back to her original spot. "Nnnot bad." Xena's daughter shook her head. "Excuse me, but why are there two of you?" She chuckled at her own words.

Hope grinned while leaning against her staff. "That's the interesting part."

Eve blinked at Hope.

Gabrielle turned her head to her daughter. "This is Hope, Eve." She glanced back to

her soulmate's daughter.

Eve's expression dropped. She peered up to her mother. "The same Hope that..." She trailed off. She'd heard a few fragments of the story.

The Warrior Princess nodded a little.

"Well..." Eve faced Hope again. Slowly she raised her right arm. "People change. I should know." She smiled warmly while holding her hand out.

Hope grasped the woman's hand briskly and shook. "Thank you." She smiled warmly. "You're the first to say that."

Eve grinned a little while releasing the small warm hand. "We're in the same boat." She winked. "Let me know if you ever want to trade stories."

The soulmates glimpsed up to each other. Then they raised eyebrows at each other in wonderment.

"So..." Eve put her hands on her hips. "What's going on?" She glanced between her mother and Gabrielle.

Gabrielle shrugged.

Xena rocked on her the heels of her boots. "Don't know." She grinned. "Family get together."

Hope glanced to the lovers. "So you're saying... Eve and I are sisters?"

The small warrior grinned at her daughter. "That's up to you two." She patted Hope's arm then looked up to Xena. "Horses then hut?"

"Yup." Xena looked to Eve. "Show Hope around the town."

"Sure." Eve looked to Hope. "Want a tour?"

Gabrielle's daughter quietly laughed. "Lead the way." She walked up to Eve's side.

"See you two later." Xena grinned and strolled off with her soulmate.

Gabrielle grinned and waved. "Bye." She started to walk but called off, "Stay out of trouble too."

"I think we're mature enough for that," yelled Eve.

"That's not true." The small warrior turned around with a huge grin. "Because Xena and I do it all the time." She spun around to catch up with her lover.

Hope quietly laughed and shook her head. "Mothers," she whispered.

"Really." Eve sighed and turned her attention to the other woman. "So... what's your story?" She started to walk.

The smaller woman breathed deeply. "Only if you tell me yours."

The dark haired female mocked glare. "I hate telling stories."

Hope shrugged. "Only fair."

"Fine, you begin." Eve placed her hands behind her back.

The short woman took a deep breath while trying to figure everything right.

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Eve smiled as the door swung open. "Hi."

Gabrielle slowly raised an eyebrow as she leaned against the hut's doorway. "What's up?"

The younger woman faintly shrugged. "I showed Hope around."

"And?"

The tall woman noticed Gabrielle wore no boots, her body shining with a thin layer of sweat and her right top strap a little askew. Eve slowly began to grin. "And well... I couldn't get her out of the scroll hut."

The warrior-bard did a double take. "The scroll hut?"

"She pulled out one scroll and I lost her." Eve shrugged. "I figured you'd understand that." She evilly grinned now.

The warrior-bard laughed. "I could."

"Sounds like somebody else I know."

The Amazon Queen dropped her head back to see her lover grinning down at her. She rolled her eyes. "Yeah well, it's like taking you into a weapons shop." She lifted her head with a small smile. "I'll go get her." She smiled warmly. "Thanks Eve for showing her around."

"No problem." Eve shifted her weight to her left foot with her hands going to her hips. "Are we having a party tonight?" She cocked an eyebrow. "We are in Amazon land."

The Queen chuckle then folded her arms. "Of course."

"Mmm, no sleep tonight." Eve slowly nodded.

"I know." Gabrielle patted Eve's shoulder with a grin and turned to walk into the hut.

Xena watched her soulmate bypass her before she turned her attention to Eve again. "Feel like a walk?"

The daughter smiled warmly. "Would love one." Her hands left her hips. "Mother daughter bonding time."

"Uh huh." The warrior turned with a grin.

Eve followed in and closed the door behind.

"Eve?"

The young woman turned her head to the left to Gabrielle. "Mmm?"

Gabrielle's right foot hit the wood floor with a boom after she'd tied her boots on. "What section of the scrolls was Hope in?"

"Hmmm." Eve furrowed her eyebrows. "I don't know." She looked to the floor thinking. "She went to the... left side... third row from the top."

The Amazon Queen's eyes widen. "Oh no."

Xena glanced over to her partner while she tied her boots. "What's wrong with that section?"

The small warrior turned her head to her lover. "That's the... *special* Amazon tales," she emphasized.

"Special tales?" Eve glimpsed between her mother and the smaller woman.

"It's nothing." The Warrior Princess shook her head then straightened up. "Ready for that walk?" She raised an eyebrow at Eve.

The daughter folded her arms at the distraction. "Sure." She tapped her boot.

The warrior came up beside Eve and directed her towards the door. She turned her head back to her soulmate and mouthed, *get Hope out of there.*

Gabrielle quickly nodded. "See you soon."

Xena winked. "See you for dinner." She met Eve out of the door.

"What are the special tales?" Eve started walking along side her mother.

The Warrior Princess looked anywhere except at her daughter. "I'll tell you when you're old enough."

The warrior-bard heard it and started to chuckle as she left the hut and closed the door behind.

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Gabrielle leaned against the doorway as a tender smile eased across her lips. Her head dropped against the doorframe. Her warm eyes stayed locked on the small woman inside of the hut just disappeared into her reading. A content sighed left her.

Hope's head whipped up at hearing the sigh, which caused her heart to skip a beat. She sighed in relief.

"Sorry." The small warrior chuckled. "What you reading?"

"Just this story." The younger woman was sitting in a wood chair with the scroll in her lap. Her staff was leaning against a scroll case. "It's really interesting."

"What's it about?" The Queen lifted her head then crossed her arms against her chest.

"I think basically about the Amazons dealing with the Centaurs." She lifted her head again from the scroll. "Where's Xena?"

"She and Eve went for a walk." The mother shrugged. "So it's just you and me." A

smile formed.

Hope quietly laughed then sighed as her eyes drifted to the scroll again. "So uh..." She glanced up to her mother. "Are we having mother daughter bonding time too?"

The young warrior shrugged. "We can or we can't." She shrugged again. "Up to you."

Hope looked back to the scroll and slowly began to roll it up. "So, where to?" She stood up after finishing rolling the scroll up.

"First." Gabrielle came into the scroll hut. "Let me give you something to read." She walked past her daughter to the opposite scroll case.

The younger woman had slipped her scroll away and retrieved her staff. She strolled over to Gabrielle's side.

The warrior-bard's right hand was up scanning the scrolls. She knelt down and grinned. Reaching forward, she extracted a scroll and turned to stand. "Read that sometime." She handed it over.

Hope carefully took it. "Is it good?" She peered up from the scroll.

"That's up to you to decide." The small woman strolled out of the scroll hut.

Gabrielle's daughter smiled and walked out behind.

Silently the pair walked through the village of Amazons.

Hope continually caught odd glares in her direction, she felt uncomfortable. "They know," she whispered.

The small warrior glanced around noticing the looks as well. "Doesn't matter," she ushered back. "They knew."

The younger woman furrowed her eyebrows at her mother.

The Queen quietly laughed. "They knew... as in they think of the past you." She shrugged. "They don't know you."

Hope faintly nodded while glancing ahead once more.

"Ah, let's go in here." The small warrior strolled into the hut.

As soon as the daughter came in she was ransacked by the smell of leather. "Must be the leather hut."

Gabrielle chuckled and walked over to a table lined with pairs of leathers, one right after another. She strolled down the table with her left hand scraping over the leathers. "Want any?" She stopped for the reply.

Hope shook her head as she stood staring at the leathers. "I don't think that's my thing. I like what I have." She realized what she might be saying and quickly looked to her mother. "I mean, I could change out of these and-"

"Its okay." The warrior-bard turned around with a grin. "I have no problem with you

looking like me... or like I did." She smiled with love. "Be yourself."

"Whatever that is," mumbled Hope while walking over to a table.

Gabrielle quickly came up and grasped her daughter's arm.

Hope looked up instantly to see intense eyes freezing her into place.

"Give it time." The short warrior paused for effect. "You're basically starting a new life." She smiled with hinted sadness. "You'll figure things out, okay?"

"Yeah," whispered the younger woman. "Thank you."

"You're welcome." Gabrielle released the small arm. Without warning she found her daughter giving her a one armed hug. The small woman returned the hug. She gave a tight squeeze and released.

Hope smiled then strolled over to a chair to place the scroll down and lean the staff against the wall.

The small warrior walked to opposite side of the hut to look at more leathers. She lifted her head towards her daughter from looking at a table. "How... how long can you... are you..." She stopped because she didn't like asking this.

The younger woman looked up with curious eyes. "How long what?" Her hands rested on the leathers.

Gabrielle sighed while looking away. "How long will you live for?"

Hope lowered her eyes to the leathers on the table. "I'm not sure." She peered back up to lock eyes. "Considering how fast I grew, the gods only know." She sighed for a second. "I think from here out I age normally." She shrugged. "But I could be wrong too."

The Queen nodded in accepting that. She started to walk to the opposite side of the hut where there were a number of weapons lining the wall. She gazed up and down the swords.

Hope peered over to stare at her mother's back. She then sighed while her eyes drifted to the Amazon leathers on the table. "So, Eve is Xena's daughter."

"Yesss." Gabrielle turned around on her heels with a smile. "She's had a rough past."

"So she told me." Hope didn't look up. "We traded stories." She shrugged while glimpsing over to her mother. "Was nice to share."

The small warrior chuckled a little. "Eve is understanding... stubborn but understanding."

The younger woman snickered. "Sounds like somebody else I know," she ushered under her breath.

The warrior-bard folded her arms against her chest as she corked an eyebrow. She was giving her daughter an inquisitive look.

Hope bit back a grin as she glanced to her mother then away again. She shrugged as

she started to walk along the table of leathers. "Not that I'm calling names."

"Right." Gabrielle stance was putting her weight on her left side. "But they say birds of a feather flock together."

"Mother like daughter." Hope shot a grin and looked away as she came to the end of the table. Her eyebrows furrowed together as she lifted a few leathers. She caught sight of something interesting. "Mother, come here."

The small warrior dropped her arms. "I don't need more leathers sweetie."

"Oh no." Hope lifted the leathers out of the way to stack them on others. "These ain't leathers." She reached down to lifted a red velvet top and move it out of the way to reveal the skirt.

The Queen felt the soft red velvet. "Mmm, that's odd."

"Odd but really nice." Gabrielle's daughter chuckled while lifting up the top and turned to the warrior-bard. She held the top against the Queen's chest. "Oooh, that would look real good on you."

The older woman shook her head. "I don't think so."

"Come on mother." Hope tilted her head gazing at the red velvet top against her mother's chest. "Try it on at least."

The young warrior sighed dramatically. "Alright, give me the skirt too."

The long blond haired female handed over the top then gave the skirt. She noticed the black belt with jewels on the skirt. "Oh gods, it'll look real good on you." She chuckled while her mother rolled her eyes.

"Be back." Gabrielle trundled off with the outfit to a small room around a corner in the hut.

Hope went back to scanning the leathers. "So you're the Amazon Queen right?" she called off.

The small warrior was slipping out of her top. "Yup."

The younger woman walked over to the swords to study them with little interest. "Who's in charge when you're not around?"

"A regent that I leave in charge." Gabrielle pulled on the new red velvet skirt. "Why you so interested?" A small grin creased her lips as she lifted the red velvet top.

That grin was reflected to Hope's expression. "I just don't understand how the Amazons work... that's all."

"Oh." Gabrielle walked around the wall with the new outfit on. She turned to her daughter.

Slowly Gabrielle's daughter turned while scanning up and down her mother's body. And as she did this a warm smile etched its way. Her head started bobbing. "Lookin' real good mother."

The Amazon Queen laughed and shook her head. "Red?"

"Oh yeah." Hope nodded while studying some more. "Red is the color of the year." She grinned. She took a step back. "It's also you." A smile came now. "I'm serious, you should wear those instead of the leathers."

The warrior sighed dramatically. "Maybe."

"Hold on." Hope held up a hand. "We need to change your arm bracelets." She spun around to scan the hut for an area of jewelry. She spotted one with a brightening expression. She walked over to a shelf and found numerous types of bracelets. She selected just a gold band. Coming back over she took off the arm bracelets Gabrielle had on then slipped on the golden one on her mother's right arm. She stepped back again.

"Your verdict?" The small warrior fisted her hands up at her sides with her stance holding a sway to her hips.

"Mmm, let's change your necklace too." Hope chuckled.

The warrior-bard shook her head with a grin. "What's your recommendation?"

Gabrielle's daughter looked back to the shelves that held jewelry. "I saw one over there." She scanned the shelves with her eyes and found it. Raising her right hand and the narrowing of her eyes, she lifted the necklace mentally.

The necklace floated through the air towards the women.

Hope walked over to her mother again as the necklace came near. She reached up and snatched it out of the air as she turned her head back to Gabrielle.

The Queen unwidened her eyes. "I keep forgetting your telekinesis."

"Mmm not telekinesis." Hope reached around to unhook the necklace her mother wore now. "It's called lazyness." She reached back around with the new necklace.

The short warrior laughed. "That's one way to put it."

"Uh huh." The younger woman took three steps back finished with the transition of necklaces. "I have pity for Xena already mother."

Gabrielle laughed. "That bad huh?"

"No, that sexy." Hope snickered when she shook her head. "You look perfect." She smiled warmly.

The young warrior glanced around for a mirror and found one. She walked over to it and studied herself. "So, you like these?"

"On you, yes." The daughter stood beside her mother as she stared into the mirror. "You look older too."

"Great." Gabrielle groaned. "How old?" she asked quietly.

"Mmm." Hope tilted her head in thought. "Thirty."

"Not bad." The Queen put her hands on her hips.

The younger woman nodded with a grin. "Not bad at all for fifty-three."

"Sssh." The warrior-bard grinned towards the mirror. "Nobody is suppose to know I'm that old."

"Well you are." The daughter evilly grinned. "Twenty-eight plus the twenty-five years in the ice tomb."

"Don't rub it in," growled the mother. She smiled as she went silent. Now she took in the entire image of her standing beside Hope.

Hope was silent as well. She memorized the mirroring of her and Gabrielle. She memorized how they looked exactly alike physically other then tiny differences. She also noticed the worn look on her mother's face. "Been a hard journey," she whispered so silently.

Gabrielle nodded faintly. She whispered back, "But it's been worth it." A smile relaxed onto her expression. "Been worth it," she repeated.

Hope grasped her mother's shoulders. "Was worth waiting out those twenty-five years." She squeezed and released her the woman's shoulders. She strolled over to get her staff and the scroll. "You should really wear it."

"Alright, you convinced me." The warrior spun around. "Happy?"

The daughter chuckled with a smile. "Yup." She leaned against her staff. "You?"

"Very." The Queen winked in suggestion and walked into the back room to grab her leathers. She sauntered out of the hut into the late western light. "Let's... go by my hut so I can get rid of these." She indicated her leathers. "And then walk out of the village for a few minutes."

The younger woman moved her head in agreement.

The pair made their way back to Gabrielle's hut.

Gabrielle went inside briefly then quickly came back out beside her daughter. "I almost forgot." She closed the hut door. "You're staying with Eve." She turned her head to Hope. "Is that alright?"

Hope nodded. "Sounds good." She grinned. "I think I can put up with Eve."

The older woman laughed while strolling along. "I know that. I just hope Eve can put up with you." She received a slap to her arm.

"What's that suppose to mean?" Hope mocked glared at her mother. "I'm easy to get along with."

The small warrior grinned. "I agree." She shrugged. "I was just saying it's hard to get along with Eve." Her grin went devilish. "It's in the genes."

The younger woman's eyes widened, as she understood. "Oh you're bad mom."

A snicker escaped Gabrielle. "Just don't tell Eve 'cause it'll get to Xena."

Hope laughed while nodding a little. "I'll try not too."

The two women left the village and went into the woods. Gabrielle was silent with a smile, so was Hope. But slowly the warrior-bard's smile dropped and Hope knew something serious was going to be said.

"Let's sit." Gabrielle held a hand out to a log.

The women straddled the log facing each other. Hope still held her staff and scroll in hand.

The mother looked away then back again. Her hands came to rest on the log. "I wanted to talk to you about the Destroyer."

Hope dropped her head.

"Please Hope."

"I can't do it." Hope started to stand up.

Gabrielle's hand shot out to grasp her daughter's hand. "Please Hope." She squeezed. "You need to... we need to." Her voice was low with a plea. "I want to help."

The younger woman broke the eye contact. She stared into the forest past Gabrielle. "What about it?"

"Everything," whispered the small warrior. "Hope please... please."

Hope closed her eyes and slowly sat back down.

The Amazon Queen watched her daughter lower the staff and scroll down. And this was the first time she noticed Hope still held her old necklace. It made a sad smile ease across. Bending forward she picked up her old necklace from the ground. She straightened up while facing her daughter again. "You loved him."

"I did." Hope faintly nodded while watching her mother straightened out the necklace. "But now..."

"Now?" the small warrior prompted. She peered up with question.

"I do but I also... hate him in a way." The small woman shrugged to Gabrielle. "He was my pride... my joy." She rested her hands on her legs. "But I only hate my son because... it's hard to explain."

"Try me." Gabrielle bent forward then raised the necklace.

Hope felt the warm hands go around her neck and hook the necklace on as she spoke. "Because he wasn't what I wanted completely. He was a pawn in Dahak's games and not a real child."

The warrior-bard lowered her hands to adjust the necklace's charm on her daughter's neck. "And it makes you hate Dahak more huh?"

"Yes."

"I know the feeling." The older woman peered up with a small grin as she sat back.

Gabrielle's daughter chuckled a little. "Guess you do." She shook her head. "What really angers me is if I could have a real child or not. Whether Dahak still controls that of me."

"Knew that feeling."

Hope slowly started to smile as she realized the meaning of the statement.

"And what of Xena and I?" The mother had a concerned look. "When we fought you both and-"

"I'm glad you did it." Hope cut off her mother with a serious expression. "It was the right thing." She worked a smile out. "I was Dahak's then." She lost the smile as her eyes dropped. "Look mother." Her eyes lifted to her mirror image. "If... well you said Xena will revert to her dark side." She shook her head. "If I do the something and there's no stopping me." She ran her right hand through her bangs. "Then kill me."

"Never." Gabrielle reached out to grasp her daughter's hands. "Not now or ever." She had a desperate look. "I've got you back, I'm not letting go."

"But I may return to Dahak again." Hope started to shake her head with emotions bubbling up causing small tears. "Don't risk people's lives for me."

Gabrielle locked eyes as she went into conviction. Her voice came out hard and slow. "I will risk whatever to get you back." She squeezed her daughter's hands again. "I am not losing you again."

Hope stared into her mother's eyes that held so much love and protection in them. She was holding just as tightly to Gabrielle's whitening hands. Her eyes slowly closed as tears came down.

The mother quickly scouted down the log to pull her child into a strong hug.

Hope dug her head into her mother's neck while crying harder.

Gabrielle quickly joined. She only swayed their bodies as they cried. "I'm never letting you go Hope," she whispered.

Hope's arms tightened around her mother. After several minutes she pulled back with red eyes. "Gods." She wiped away at her eyes. "I don't think I've cried this much."

The small warrior quietly laughed as her eyes slowly began to stop stinging. "It's a good thing." She sniffed a little and smiled warmly. "How you feel?"

The younger woman nodded a little. "A little better." She chuckled. "Thank you mom."

"Anything for you sweetie." Gabrielle still had her loving smile. She glanced to her left to see the sun just streaming through the trees. "We better head back."

"Eve told me we're having a party." Hope raised an eyebrow.

"Uh huh." The Queen turned her head back. "But party is a nice word for it."

Hope wrinkled her nose. "A bash?"

"Try two bashes in one." Gabrielle chuckled and stood up.

The daughter laughed while standing up herself.

"Let's go find your hut mate." The Queen moved over the log to start walking back towards the village. "And mine."

Hope quietly laughed and followed along side with her staff and scroll. She felt the new weight of the necklace around her neck.

<~*~*~*~

Eve lifted her head as she saw Gabrielle and Hope enter into the hut. "Hey," she said with a smile.

Gabrielle put her hands to her hips. "Hope can stay with you?"

Eve's eyes widen as she peered over to Hope then back to the mother. "Of course." Her smile eased back across her lips. "Would love it." Her eyes flickered over to Hope. "We can trade more stories about our mothers."

Hope snickered quietly and dropped her head against her staff. "Sounds like a plan."

The Amazon Queen grumbled. "Great." She turned to the door again. "Be at the party."

"We will." The dark tall woman grinned at Gabrielle. "Count on it."

The young warrior chuckled. "Good." She opened the door.

"Oh by the way." Eve straightened up. "Nice outfit Gabrielle."

"Thanks." Gabrielle stepped out the doorway. "I'm worried about what your mother will think."

"Oh..." Xena's daughter started to shake her head as an evil grin came across her lips. "I'd be more worried about what she'll do to you if I were you."

Hope snickered. "Agreed," she mumbled.

The older woman sighed dramatically. "Kids," she mumbled and closed the door behind.

Eve and Hope chuckled together.

"You'd think we were in our teens or something." Hope shook her head while straightening up.

Eve nodded in agreement. She walked around the bed. "Well..." She held her left hand out to the huge bed. "Don't mind sharing?" Her hand dropped.

Gabrielle's daughter studied the large bed. "Do I have a choice?" She peered up to the

darker woman.

The tall woman quietly laughed. "Nope."

"Alright then." Hope tossed her scroll and staff to the left side of the bed. "My side."

"Glad we got that settled." Eve sighed with a grin and walked over to the door.

The smaller woman came up behind with little space between bodies. "To the party?"

"To the bash." Xena's daughter chuckled as her hand curled around the handle. "Be prepared."

Hope leaned her head forward close to Eve's. "That bad?"

"Very." The tall woman's eyes drifted shut for a second as she took in a large breath. She shook her head, opened the door, and stepped out.

The short woman followed behind and closed the door.

<~*~*~*~

The bash wasn't going quite like a bash, that was noticeable to Gabrielle and Xena.

The Amazon Queen sighed and walked across the dark open ground. She came up beside her soulmate. "What is it?" She shook her head. "Why is it so dead?"

Xena peered down at her partner. "Hope." She lifted her mug to drink.

"I know," whispered the younger woman. Her eyes flickered around the village of Amazons seeming them all quiet and hardly celebrating. She hated this. She also noticed Hope was back away in a corner, sitting, and her head hung low as if she knew the lack of partying was her fault. "Damn it," mumbled the small warrior. She started to walk towards her daughter.

"Wait." The warrior grasped her lover's hand. She nodded to the right.

The warrior-bard looked in that direction to see Eve reappear out of the shadows with two mugs. She watched Eve walk right up to Hope, kneel down to hand over a mug, then sit down next to her. Gabrielle smiled warmly and dropped her head against Xena's shoulder. "Thank the gods for Eve."

"Mmm." Xena nodded in agreement. "Reminds me of..."

"What?" The Amazon Queen peered up in question. She thought about what her partner might have said. "Eve just did something you would have done for me?"

The warrior said nothing and drank her port. She still held Gabrielle's hand, which she squeezed. She lowered her mug. "Wait till she asks for a dance," she mumbled.

"Xena," warned the small warrior.

The tall woman quietly laughed and gazed down at her lover. "You told them to select their relationship."

Gabrielle leaned forward a little to study the two daughters. "Well... they look sisterly

right now."

"Oh definitely." Xena glanced over and pointed a finger towards the young women. "Sisters always sit that close to each other." Her hand lowered.

"Hey, Lila and I did alright?" The small woman grinned up.

The Warrior Princess chuckled. "Alright... alright." She turned her head to her lover with furrowed eyebrows. "Are they in the same hut?"

"Uh huh." The small warrior peeked up with a concerned look. "Bad idea?"

Xena shook her head. "Let them get to know each other." She winked and strolled off.

Gabrielle's mouth dropped. "Are you suggesting something?"

The warrior turned around while walking backwards. "Don't assume anything."

"Well I am."

The older woman chuckled while still walking backwards. "Well assuming makes an ass of you and me."

The warrior-bard's mouth dropped all over again. "That's it." She ran after Xena.

The tall woman evilly laughed and turned to run with her head buzz. She tried holding her mug up right to not spill it.

Eve shook her head while peering back to Hope. "Mothers," she mumbled.

"Uh huh." Hope chuckled and smiled to the other woman. "Thank you."

"For what?" The taller woman furrowed her brow.

"Other than the head buzz." The blond indicated the mug. "For sitting with me."

The dark woman chuckled with a smile. "No problem." She reached over to squeeze Hope's knee. She pulled her hand away to hold her mug again. "It's hard to, at first, once you've turned away from quote evil unquote."

Hope moved her head in agreement. "Definitely with people that had you on their hit list," she whispered.

Eve nodded a little. "That too." She sighed while lowering her eyes. "Just have to take one step at a time." She glanced up to Hope. "Get's a little easier each day."

The small woman nodded then chuckled a little. "Have you been hanging around my mother?"

The dark haired woman laughed while raising her mug a little. "Must have been all those baby stories Gabrielle told me." She drank a little of her port.

"Must of." Hope took a sip of her wine.

"Hey you two." Gabrielle jumped up to the daughters. "You're joining the group."

Both Hope and Eve corked eyebrows in question.

The Amazon Queen sighed. "All of the Amazons are getting together to do a few games. You two are joining in."

"Trying to quit myself." Eve shook her head.

Gabrielle put her hands on her hips.

The warrior reappeared from the black of night. "If I am, then you two are," she said with seriousness.

Hope and Eve instantly stood up at the hard voice.

"So, where we doing the games?" Hope glanced between her mother and Xena.

Gabrielle quietly laughed. "Follow me." She turned with her soulmate to stroll off.

Hope and Eve placed their mugs down and followed along. They came into a large open area in the village where there were all the Amazons getting together in a huge circle.

"Over here." Eponin waved where there was a huge open space in the large ring circle.

The small warrior led the way to the open fragment in the circle of Amazons. "Okay." She turned to her family. "Stand in front of each other and face the way everybody else is."

Hope nodded and walked up to stand behind an Amazon.

Eve came up behind and stood behind Hope.

The Amazon Queen stood behind Xena's daughter.

Then the Warrior Princess stood behind her soulmate and in front of Eponin.

"Okay my Queen, this is your call." The weapons master called off.

"Right," whispered the Queen. She glanced around at the huge ring of Amazons. "Everybody, squish tight as possible."

The ring of Amazons began to shift and so that their bodies all touch front and back.

Gabrielle nodded in approval. "Alright, now then grasp the person's hips in front of you." She demonstrated as she grasped Eve's hips and she found her lover's hands on her hips tightly.

Hope smiled a little when she felt strong warm hands grasp her sides.

"Okay, now this is a good team thing Amazons." The Queen evilly grinned. "Let's see if we can do it while being tipsy."

All the Amazons laughed together but settled back down to listen.

"So, what the object is, is to sit back into the person's lap behind you." The Amazon Queen's lips creased into a grin. "The trick is, we have to do it all at the sametime or it

won't work." She took a deep breath. "Okay, so on the count of three we all sit simultaneously." She paused for a second. "One... two... three."

Everybody in the ring all begin to sit back into the person's lap behind them. When they all thought it would work one person lost their balance at the last second and went tumbling to the ground. It was a domino effect as one Amazon after another went rolling over.

"Oh no." Hope saw the ring falling apart and felt the person in front of her start to take her down. She let go of the person but still felt herself toppling down.

Eve tried to stand up as she moved her feet and held tight to Hope. She stumbled to the right out of the ring but kept herself and Hope up.

The small woman laughed and straightened up. She turned around with a smile. "Thanks Eve."

"No problem." The dark woman winked. She then glanced to her right at hearing familiar laughter. "Look at them."

Turning her head to the right, Hope chuckled at the sight of the soulmates.

Gabrielle buried her head into her lover's neck while still laughing. She lay on her side on the ground and her warrior's arms around her waist. "Oh gods," she moaned.

"Looks like your Amazons aren't quite coordinated, love."

The small warrior chuckled and lifted her head. "I think you're right." She leaned in to kiss her soulmate warmly.

Hope chuckled and shook her head. She looked away with a sigh. "We almost had that game."

The tall woman nodded in agreement. "Almost." Eve grinned and saw the warriors standing up together. "What's next on the list?"

The Amazon Queen ran her hand through her hair. "Ladders."

<~*~*~*~

Rhesus asked, "What we do again?"

Gabrielle sighed while shaking her head. She looked back to the young Amazon. "Okay listen up everybody." She looked down to her left at the end. "It starts from that direction till we get to the end." She was sitting on the ground with her legs stretched out and boots pressing into Xena's boot. Her hands were propped back behind herself. "Now see how everybody is sitting the same way?"

The Amazons nodded together. "Like a ladder," called an Amazon.

"Exactly." The young warrior nodded and gazed around at her Amazons. "Now the persons at the beginning on the go will jump up, run down the ladder made up of our legs." She grinned a little. "Now you're not suppose to trip over anybody's legs. Once those two sit down the next two go and run down the leg ladder till they get back to their spots on the ground. Then the next two go." She shrugged. "It keeps going till we

get to the last two Amazons. And whichever side gets done first wins."

Now, Xena and Gabrielle sat across from each other in competition to each other. They couldn't help but compete against each other in this. However, Hope and Eve sat beside each other deciding to be on the same team.

"Alright." The Amazon Queen took a deep breath and glimpsed down at the beginning of the ladder. "On your mark." She leaned her head back. "Get set." She grinned. "Go!"

The two Amazons at the start jumped up from the ground and went stepping through all the legs of the Amazons towards the end. The two Amazons were screaming trying not to step on anybody.

The Amazons on the each side of the ladder cheered on the Amazon for their team.

Hope watched with a huge smile.

The warrior glanced across to her soulmate. "Get ready love."

The younger narrowed her eyes at her partner. "I'll beat your butt old woman."

Xena just rolled her eyes.

Gabrielle laughed and glanced back down to see that their turn would come soon to run the ladder. She saw that the person next to her went and she cheered that Amazon on. "Wahoo!" She laughed while glancing back to Xena. "Ready partner?"

"Bring it on." The Warrior Princess laughed as she looked down to see the person on her team was making it to the end.

The Queen saw her teammate was at the end and running to the start of the ladder to make it back to her spot. "Come on Amrosios! You go girl!" She hooted. "You got it girl, you're almost here." Her eyes flickered to Xena then back to Amrbosios coming closer. Her body tensed in anticipation.

Ambrosios sat down with a huff.

Gabrielle sprung up and started running between the legs.

Xena jumped up soon as her person sat down on her side. She went racing down between the legs. "You gotta move faster then that Gabrielle!"

The small warrior screamed as she went faster. "Oh gods!" She yelled again. "Oh gods, oh gods, oh gods," she repeated frantically.

Eve laughed and peered down her side to Hope. "It's your turn next."

The small woman nodded. "I know, I'm gonna goof."

"Just focus." The weapons master grinned to Hope.

Gabrielle's daughter smiled to Eponin a little. "Focus, I'll try with this head buzz."

"We're all buzzing." The weapons master laughed as she looked down to see the

Queen coming to the end just after Xena.

Gabrielle went sprint down beside the human ladder. She came to the beginning to start doing there to make it back to her seat. "Xena slow down!"

The Warrior Princess laughed evilly as she made it to her spot. "Come on pokey!"

The small warrior growled and leaped down to the ground. "Go Hope!"

"Ah!" Hope bounced up and went running down between the legs to try and catch up to Rhesus. "Wait up Rhesus!"

Eve laughed at the small woman's words. "Go Hope! Catch her!"

"Oh Hades!" yelled Hope. She picked up her speed to stumble through the legs of Amazons. She started to catch up to Rhesus. She came to the end and ran around the ladder to race down along side. She came to the start of the ladder and went through the legs there.

"Come on Hope!" Eve cheered on with a hoot.

The small woman glanced down the ladder as she neared Eve. She locked eyes with Eve and lost focus. "Aaah!" She stumbled forward then stumbled again as she tripped. She went crashing down on the Amazons and on her mother. She left her face planted into somebody's lap as her laughter took control. Gabrielle dropped her head back laughing. "Oh gods," she whispered between her laughter. She looked to the next person to run after Hope. "Go, go."

The Amazon sprung up and went down the ladder.

Hope moaned as she laid in five Amazon's laps. "That was smart." She lifted her head.

"It was." Eve peered down into green eyes with an evil grin.

The small woman's eyes widen as she realized her head was resting in Eve's lap. "Hi." She chuckled. "I better move."

The dark woman laughed as she saw Hope got up to go and sit in her spot again. She sat down comfortable next to Eve.

The tall woman slowly turned her head to her friend. She noticed Hope was turning red. "Was it really that embarrassing?" she whispered.

Gabrielle's daughter closed her eyes for a moment. "Uh." She opened her eyes and gazed at Eve with a grin. "In a way... hard to explain."

"Oh." Eve nodded and wanted to add more but couldn't for it was her turn to run the ladder.

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Hope swayed to the right. "Wooooo, where's our hut again?"

The short warrior came up beside her daughter. "Your hut is that way." She pointed with half closed eyes.

The younger woman laughed. "That's right." She chuckled and glanced over to her

mother. "Thank you mom."

"Uh huh. Get to bed sweetie." Gabrielle leaned over to place a kiss to her child's cheek.

"If I can make it."

Eve came up behind Hope and placed her hands to the small woman's shoulders. "I'll help her." She started directing Hope towards their hut. "Night mothers."

Xena grinned with a wave. "Night dear." She came up behind her lover.

"Goodnight Xena." Hope gave a half wave.

The warrior laughed deeply. "Sleep well Hope."

"You too," called back Gabrielle's daughter before she withdrew into the shadows of the night.

The small warrior sighed deeply. "That was awesome." She spun around and almost fell over. She chuckled and grinned up to her lover. "Those... games helped huh?"

"Yup." The older woman smiled with love. "It was a good idea. The Amazons seem to loosen up."

"Uh huh." Gabrielle leaned into her partner. "Oh gods, I'm tired."

"Come on then." The warrior bent a little and reached to lift her soulmate up. "Let's get some sleep." She started walking towards their hut.

The soulmates made it the door of their hut.

Gabrielle reached down to the handle to swing the door open. She grinned and dropped her head back against her lover's shoulder.

Xena was about to move but stopped as a yell exploded in the village.

"Goodnight Amazons!" rung loudly Eve and Hope's voices through the village followed by loud giggles.

The warriors closed their eyes together just not believing it. "Kids," they both grumbled together then laughed.

The Warrior Princess carried her partner into the hut. Stepping into the dark hut she kicked back at the door while saying, "By the way, sexy outfit."

Section 2

~*Part 3*~

Eve lifted her head at hearing the knock. "Come in." She saw Gabrielle stroll in. "Morning, Gabrielle."

"Morning, Eve." Gabrielle closed the door behind and glanced around. "Where's

Hope?"

"She left."

The Amazon Queen's eyes widen. "This early?"

Eve chuckled and stood up from the bed. "Yeah, she read some scroll. She kept rambling about it and said it wasn't finished. So she headed to the scroll hut to find the rest of it."

"She won't find it," the warrior mumbled under her breath.

Eve caught what Gabrielle said. "What is that?"

The small warrior looked up quickly. "I never finished the story." She walked over to the foot of the bed and sat. "How you been?"

"Pretty good." Eve came around to sit on the foot of the bed. She faced Gabrielle. "Glad you and mother are well." She grinned in suggestion.

Gabrielle chuckled but sighed contently. "Me too." She smiled and repeated, "Me too."

Eve reached out and placed her hand on Gabrielle's thigh. "I know you both were hurting." She cocked an eyebrow. "I'm blessed I didn't lose you from what's happened."

The small warrior licked her lips and gathered Eve's hand in her own hands. "Eve, I'm sorry about what happened earlier." She shook her head. "I should have never questioned you."

Xena's daughter shook her head. "You were being controlled by the Furies." She smiled warmly. "Not to many people get to say they made it past the Furies' revenge."

The smaller woman chuckled and grinned. "Just your mom and I."

"Yup," grinned Eve.

Gabrielle squeezed Eve's hand and released. "How are you and Hope getting along?"

The tall woman stood instantly.

The short warrior knew what that meant since this was Xena's daughter. Mother like daughter. *Eve is falling for Hope.*

"We're doing... well." Eve nodded briskly and walked over to a bag. She glanced over to Gabrielle. "She talks a lot."

The Amazon Queen did a double take. "You're kidding." She gave a skeptical look. "Hope may be my daughter but she's not talkative like me."

"Oooh... I wouldn't say that," whispered Xena's daughter. She started milling around in the bag.

That's when Gabrielle concluded, *Hope has a crush on Eve.* She chuckled inwardly for two seconds then suddenly stiffen up. *Eve and Hope.... Hope and Eve.* Gabrielle

was starting to do the mathematics but it was just not adding up for her right now. *Oh Hades, where's Xena? Teenager crisis on hand... motherly stuff... oh boy... we're in for it now.*

Eve glimpsed over at Gabrielle and saw her puzzled expression. "What's that look about?"

Gabrielle snapped to and smiled at Eve. "Just thinking about something." She stood up. "I need to find your mother."

"Are you two going to be at breakfast soon?" The tall woman strolled over with her hands on her hips.

"We will... soon." The young warrior walked over to the door. "Bring Hope too."

Eve chuckled. "Not a problem. See you then, Gabrielle."

The small woman winked. "Bye, Eve." She opened the door and headed out. As soon as she closed the door she whispered, "Where are you, Xena? We've got a crisis." She power walked off after her soulmate.

~*~*~*~

"Xena?" Gabrielle slammed the door shut and leaned against the door. "We have a problem."

The warrior sat in a chair sharpening her sword, letting herself wake up. "What's going on?"

"Hope and Eve... they're in-love."

Dead silence.

Hope and Eve... Eve and Hope. Xena kept repeating the combination of the couple. Then her mind focused on another aspect. *My daughter with Dahak's child.* Her eyes shut in reaction and her right hand placed a death grip on the sharpening stone. The last thought, *The woman who killed my son with my Eve,* made Xena dropped her sword to the floor with a loud clang. "What?" She whispered in controlled anger.

The Amazon Queen stared at her soulmate's sword on the floor and realized what Xena was thinking. "Xena-"

"No." The Warrior Princess held up her free hand for silence. She was breathing heavily as her anger was raising. "I know I was kidding last night but..." she trailed off with a shake of her head. Her eyes opened and she stared at the floor. Reclining back, she lowered her head back. She tried to control her breathing.

"Xena I know what you're thinking... but Hope isn't the same," Gabrielle persisted with confidence.

Xena looked up instantly with darkness speckling in her eyes. "And that's suppose to justify the fact she killed Solan?" Her eyes narrowed and she pointed at Gabrielle. "She is not to touch Eve."

The anger flared in Gabrielle as her green eyes went dark. She stalked over to Xena with her eyes as slits. "Don't... you... dare," she growled slowly. Now she was

pointing a finger at Xena. "Don't damn Hope anymore." She shook her head. "She's paid her price and still is."

The warrior ran her tongue along her molars.

The Amazon Queen took another step to get into Xena's face. "Eve could be considered guilty as Hope. She's had a dark past herself, Xena. They both have earned a second chance and we both need to give them that second chance... starting now." She straightened up and stomped off to the opposite side of the hut. Her right hand came up to pull her bangs back. She closed her eyes to fight the tears of anger and pain.

The warrior dropped her head and stared at the stone in her hand. She leaned forward and placed the stone down. Standing up, she walked up behind her partner.

Gabrielle felt large warm hands clasp her shoulders and it made her close her eyes.

"You're right," whispered the older woman. She squeezed her lover's shoulders. "I'm still... angry."

"I know." The warrior-bard turned around and took her partner's hands. "They've both had it hard and could really use support and love... and forgiveness."

Xena nodded slowly and sighed. "I'm trying..." Her eyes lowered to the floor.

"That's what counts right now." The warrior-bard licked her lips and stared across the room, thinking. "Xena... even if we tried to stop either of them... we couldn't." She focused her eyes on her warrior.

The tall woman cocked an eyebrow. "How you figure that?"

"Love." Gabrielle smiled sadly and squeezed her lover's hands. "If... if they decide on *that* sort of relationship... we need to support it."

"It won't be easy."

"Nobody is saying it will be... at first." The small warrior had a desperate look. "But crazier things have happened." She sighed deeply. "Hope... is not the same."

The Warrior Princess nodded slowly. "No she isn't," she agreed. Her eyes locked with Gabrielle's. "I look at Hope now and see another person." She shook her head. "I hear the name and I still think of Dahak's daughter."

The small warrior nodded and lowered her eyes. "I know," she whispered.

Xena tipped her partner's head back up and she smiled warmly. "I'm trying... for you."

Gabrielle received a loving kiss from her soulmate. When Xena pulled back, she smiled. "Thank you." She nodded with emotions flickering through her bright green eyes. "That means a lot." She shook her head. "I can't lose her again, Xena."

"You won't," uttered the older woman. "You won't lose Hope and I won't lose Eve. Not now."

"Nor ever," added the Amazon Queen. She moved in to hug her soulmate.

The Warrior Princess held tightly to her lover.

~*~*~*~

"Hey."

Hope turned around from the scroll shelf. She smiled warmly. "Hey, Eve."

"Find the rest of that scroll?" Eve leaned against the doorframe of the scroll hut.

"Nnnno." Gabrielle's daughter sighed and stared at the scroll shelf. "I'd really like to read the rest of that story. It's really good and the writing was something else." She chuckled while shaking her head. "The imagery was perfect and the plot was amazing." She clenched up her right hand and she pressed her lips together. "And Hades if I can find it. Just a perfect..." She trailed off and looked up to Eve since she realized she was rambling. "Sorry," she whispered.

The tall woman corked an eyebrow and folded her arms against her chest. "I'm getting use to it."

Hope turned red on the spot. "I know... I talk to much."

"No you don't." Eve smirked. "Only around me you do."

Gabrielle's daughter looked up instantly. "Really?"

"Really," answered Xena's daughter. "Especially last night."

"I was drunk... first time." Hope laughed quietly. "What you expect?" She put her hands on her hips. "Well, I don't think I'm gonna find the rest of this scroll."

"You're probably right."

The small woman glanced over to Eve. "Thanks for the encouragement," rumbled her voice.

Eve laughed and gave a grin. "You got that scroll from your mother... why don't you try asking her for the rest of it."

"You make it sound like she wrote it," mumbled Hope. She reached to her left to pick up her staff. She strolled over to stand in front of Eve.

"Well..." Eve shot a smug look. "She was a bard." She spun around on her heels and strolled out of the hut.

Hope tilted her head in thought. "I didn't know that," she whispered to herself. "Huh." She grinned and power walked to catch up with Eve. "Where we headed too?"

The tall woman smiled at her friend beside her. "Thought we'd do breakfast."

"Mmm... good plan." Hope nodded then peered up. "With the... old folks?"

Eve snickered. "Yeah." She raised an eyebrow. "You better not say that around them."

"I'd probably get lectured," grumbled Hope.

"You're probably right." Eve laughed with her friend.

"I know though... its odd."

"What's that?" The dark woman looked down at Hope.

Gabrielle's daughter corked an eyebrow. "The fact that we're only a few years younger than our mothers."

Eve nodded to that in agreement. "Physically-

"But mentally, no," finished Hope.

"You wanna know what's odder?" whispered Eve as an evil grin spread across her lips.

The small woman peeked up at her friend. "What?"

"That Gabrielle looks like you."

Hope started to laugh extremely hard and stopped walking.

Eve stopped and faced the other woman. "Was that really funny?"

Gabrielle's daughter nodded and settled down with her laughing. "Only because that's the first time I've heard somebody say mom looks like me." She grinned. "It's always me looking like mom."

The dark woman crinkled her nose up. "I get that too with mother." She chuckled. "Thought it'd be nice the other way around."

"Definitely." Hope walked once more beside her friend.

Gabrielle gave a smirk when she saw the two younger women walking towards she.

Xena came up behind her partner. Her eyes fixed on Hope. She studied the way Hope smiled so warmly, her green eyes lit up with life, and her expression happy. Slowly, a smile eased along Xena's lips. She lifted her hands to Gabrielle's shoulders. "They'd make a cute pair."

"Cute?" whispered the small woman. "I was thinking more... dangerous." Gabrielle leaned back into her lover.

"Same difference."

The Amazon Queen laughed quietly and continued to watch the daughters stroll up together. "Xena?"

"Yeah?"

"I see the younger us," ushered the small woman.

Xena stared down at her partner with a confused look. She raised her eyes to the daughters and watched. She smiled gradually as she knew what her partner meant by

those words. "Me too."

The soulmates watched Hope grasp Eve's closes arm and laugh at something Eve said. They continued to study the way the two young women talk and glanced to each other.

Eve and Hope... Xena and Gabrielle?

Hope smiled at her mother when they came up. "Ssso, are your Amazons good at making breakfast?"

"You're about to find out for yourself." Gabrielle grinned and focused her attention on Eve. "Glad you found her."

"She was milling around in the scroll hut... again." Eve coughed when a Hope's small hand hit her stomach. "She was nicely searching through the scrolls in the hut."

Hope smirked up at Eve.

Eve smirked down at Hope.

Gabrielle's daughter sighed and rolled her eyes. "Anyway."

The tall woman chuckled and gazed at her mother. "Morning, mother."

Xena smiled and brought her right hand to Eve's back. "Sleep well?"

Hope made her way into the food hut with Gabrielle. "Fill me in about being a bard," she asked her mother.

Eve nodded to the Warrior Princess. "Yeah, once I got the chance to go to sleep," she said a little loudly before entering the food hut.

Hope glimpsed back at her friend. "Just rub it in." She brought her attention back to her mother.

The warrior chuckled and looked at Eve. "I take it she kept you up."

"She rambled," whispered Eve.

"Mmm." The mother's head bobbed up and down. "I can sympathize completely."

"...the academy..." Gabrielle stopped in the middle of her conversation with Hope and glared back to her soulmate. "I heard that."

"Just telling it how it is," retorted the warrior.

The warrior-bard rolled her eyes and focused back on her daughter. "Anyway, it's a talent." She lifted her eyes when she saw the food table ahead. "Why you ask?"

Hope grinned at her mother. "Wellll... I was wondering where the rest of that scroll you gave me might be."

"You won't find it."

"Oooh." Gabrielle's daughter stopped walking when she came to the table of food. "You never finished the story?" She corked an eyebrow in suggestion.

Gabrielle grinned at her daughter's suspicions. "No, I actually..." She fell into her tale of several years ago.

Soon the family was sitting together at a table talking about anything and everything.

~*~*~*~

Hope jumped back and parried the sai. "Not bad."

Gabrielle laughed and stepped back so she could fall into her fighting stance again. "You're getting better."

"Thinks so?" asked the younger woman with a bit of concern.

"Yes." The warrior-bard smiled warmly. "Keep at it." She went serious as she flipped the blades out. "Just concentrate more on your defense." She pointed a sai at Hope. "No defense... no life. I can guarantee it."

Hope nodded and spun her staff. "Alright... let's keep going."

The Amazon Queen smirked and disappeared in a blur of attack.

Eve folded her arms against her chest and kept watching Hope and Gabrielle spar. "She's not bad."

Xena nodded. "Gabrielle or... Hope?"

The daughter chuckled and smiled at Xena. "Both." She studied Hope again. "Mmm, she needs to watch her footing though." She tilted her head and pointed at Hope's feet. "She'll get them taken out." She folded her arm again.

The warrior nodded. "Gabrielle will show her..." She watched and grinned. "Right... about... now." She chuckled when she saw Hope go onto her back after getting her feet swiped.

Eve chuckled too and smiled with ease. "Mother... Gabrielle did follow the way of love... right?" She glanced at her mother.

"Yes." Xena nodded and watched her partner across the sparring field. "For about a year."

"Why'd she leave the way of love?"

The Warrior Princess sighed and put her weight on her left foot. "It wasn't for her." She looked at Eve. "She still believes in a number of morals from the way of love... but she's a warrior."

The younger woman nodded slowly. "That's something that bothers me. Not the fact she left the way of love but more the fact that it was Gabrielle that left the way of love."

Xena gave a confused look.

Eve sighed and began to explain. "Basically, how can I stay on the way of love if somebody such as Gabrielle couldn't." She paused. "My past is a lot darker than Gabrielle's... there's just no way."

"It wasn't Gabrielle's path."

The daughter shook her head. "I'm a fighter... not a lover." She studied Hope and Gabrielle sparring. "Nor am I preacher for God." She shook her head. "I can't preach."

"No, you're not the preacher." Xena raised an eyebrow. "Eli was... you're the messenger."

The young woman dropped her eyes. "It doesn't make sense... God's will." She thought for a moment. "I'd server better to the greater good and not the way of love."

The warrior was silent in responding at first. "Eve... you have to figure that out for yourself." She smiled sadly. "It's your fate... you choose your path." She grasped her daughter's arm. "Your message may have been to give me the power to kill the Gods." She paused. "Maybe more will come later. You don't know." She squeezed a little. "Just do what feels natural and right." She relinquished her hold.

Eve stared into her mother's eyes for a moment but looked away. "I ache sometimes to pick up a sword again." She closed her eyes. "Sometimes I can just feel the weight in my hand." Her eyes opened once more. "But I'll look to my hand and realize it is not there." She shook her head. "And I'll even ache more to have the sword in my hand... almost drives me crazy at points."

Xena could understand that simply. "And does... following the way of love feel right to you?"

"No." The young woman stared at the ground. "God's messenger yes but the way of love... no."

The Warrior Princess in a flash reached behind to unsheathe her sword. She spun her sword and held it vertical towards Eve. "Take it."

Eve swallowed as she started to reach for the sword's hilt. She wasn't prepared for this truth. Her right hand took the sword.

Xena grabbed her daughter's left hand and placed it on the hilt too. She cupped her hands around Eve's. "Does that feel... right?"

The young woman closed her eyes tightly and let the feel of the sword flow from her hands through her body. "Yesss."

The Warrior Princess watched her daughter's lips curl into a grin, which she fully recognized. *Mother like daughter*, concluded the warrior mentally. "You may have your answer."

The young woman gave back the sword. "Maybe." She turned her head away. "I think I'm going to go help with patrol duty."

The warrior reached out with her free hand and grasped her daughter's shoulder. "I know it's not easy. Do it for yourself, Eve." She smiled with sadness.

"Yeah," said Eve with a quiet voice. "Thanks, mother." She gave a reassuring smile.

Xena nodded briskly and let go.

Eve took a deep breath and walked off.

The warrior, with her eyes, followed her daughter until she was out of sight. She sighed heavily and focused back on Hope and Gabrielle.

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Hope flopped down on the bed and let her body cool off.

Gabrielle closed the door behind and walked into the washroom.

"Where'd Xena go?"

The warrior-bard came out of the bathroom after washing her face. "Probably to give Argo a ride."

The young woman nodded and crossed her legs at the ankles. "Can I ask you something?"

The Amazon Queen crossed the distance over to her daughter. "Sure sweetie." She knelt down and rested her hands on Hope's knees.

Hope ran her fingers through her damp bangs. "How'd... how'd you know you were in-love with Xena?"

"One big thing." Gabrielle grinned. "A dying need to be with her if not be her."

Gabrielle's daughter furrowed her eyebrows. "When did it happen to you?"

"When I first saw her." The small warrior went serious. "But I didn't realize it till later... I thought it was just a crush or idolization at first." She chuckled.

Hope grinned for all of two seconds then glimpsed away. "You never questioned yourself if you were just... confused?"

"I questioned myself about that." The Amazon Queen shrugged. "Thought myself crazy for having strong needs for another woman." She shook her head and smiled. "But whenever the person you're in-love touches you with even a smile and leaves you tingling... you know its right," whispered Gabrielle.

The daughter just nodded and stared at Gabrielle's hands.

The warrior studied her child's eyes. "What's... eating at you?"

Hope shook her head and combed her bangs again. "Just trying to figure out all these new emotions." She grinned a little.

Gabrielle chuckled and smiled warmly. "Give it time."

"Yeah I know," whispered the warrior's daughter. "I'm only use to anger and hatred."

"I wouldn't say that sweetie." The warrior-bard still had her smile. "I've seen you laughing and smiling so much lately."

"Yea." Hope smiled warmly and chuckled. "Feels good."

"Good." The mother sighed sadly. "I need you to listen to me for a sec huh?"

The young woman nodded and went serious.

The Amazon Queen took a deep breath before speaking. "Xena... is trying to work on her anger." She paused. "She's giving you a chance." She squeezed Hope's knees. "Just be aware of that when you're around her, okay? Its not easy for her."

"I'm even surprised she's giving me a chance... after Solan," whispered Hope.

"She is... she knows... has seen you change." She smiled. "She would give you a second chance like other people have showed her when she drop her warlord times." She corked an eyebrow. "Just give her time and be patient."

"I will." Hope nodded faintly. "Well... darkness is one thing Xena and I have in common."

"That and you both can control it." The short warrior started to stand and leaned in to kiss her daughter's forehead.

"Also we both have you," added Hope with a grin.

Gabrielle chuckled as she rose up. "And I have you both, thank god."

The younger woman stood up from the bed. "Thank you, mom."

"You're welcome, sweetie."

Hope took a step with a hint of hesitation but she pulled Gabrielle in for a strong hug.

When the warrior-bard released her daughter she was smiling with love. She stared at her younger mirror image but she didn't see herself like in a mirror. No, she just saw Hope and not her younger self... it was her daughter. There was no past, no darkness, no Dahak, and no anger. There was only her Hope and her love for Hope.

Hope broke the trance with her voice. "I think I might go find Eve."

The Amazon Queen nodded and folded her arms. "I think she went on patrol duty."

Gabrielle's daughter raised an eyebrow. "She's an Amazon?"

"Yes... she's the princess technically." Gabrielle sighed. "I gave her right to my caste when she was a baby. As soon as I die or retire, she'll become queen."

Hope nodded and grinned. "Being an Amazon sounds... interesting."

"That's one way to put it." Gabrielle grinned and walked over to the door. "I need to find Eponin."

The daughter came up behind and grabbed her staff off the wall near the door. "Catch up with you later?"

"Yeah." The Amazon Queen went outside and closed the door once Hope came out. "I'll be around."

Hope nodded and leaned against her staff. "How much longer are we staying here?"

"I don't know, yet." Gabrielle placed her hands on her hips. "I need to talk to Xena. See what she thinks." She shrugged. "You may want to stay here." She sighed. "But I think we're going to Amphipolis to see if Cyrene is still alive."

"Cyrene?"

The warrior-bard nodded. "Xena's mother."

Hope nodded and looked down at the ground briefly before giving Gabrielle a questioning look. "What about... your family?"

Your family? Gabrielle made a mental note to talk to Hope about that later. "Amphipolis is on the way to Poteidaia so we'll stop in there. Hopefully Lila will at least be alive after twenty-five years."

The young woman smirked. "Lila will be able to say she's the older sister now."

The Queen groaned and rolled her eyes. "Thanks." She turned to head off.

Hope chuckled and went the opposite direction towards the gates. She went outside the gates into the surrounding woods. Her gait was rather fast. Once in the woods pretty far she spotted Xena coming from her right. She stopped and waited.

Xena stopped walking for a second when she saw Hope. She took a deep breath and strolled over to Hope. "Where you headed too?" her deep voice rumbled.

The small woman peered up with almost scared eyes. "To find Eve."

"Me too." The Warrior Princess turned and continued on the trail Hope was following.

Hope closed her eyes so she could relax herself. She breathed heavily and power walked to catch up. She came to walk beside the warrior.

The warrior didn't glance at the other woman, she just kept walking with her stoic expression.

Gabrielle's daughter peered up at Xena and studied her profile momentarily and looked ahead. "Xena-"

The Warrior Princess held her hand up and stopped in her tracks. She half faced Hope with her steel eyes on Hope. "Do not say... *anything* right now," she whispered with a hard voice. "I'm still trying to get use to you in my personal space."

Hope nodded as she examined crystal blue eyes.

Xena lowered her hand. "Honestly, this will not be easy since the past is still knocking at my door." She sighed. "But I do see a new side to you... let me get accustomed to that."

"Thank you," whispered Gabrielle's daughter.

The tall woman nodded. "You've earned it." She continued following the trail.

The smaller woman proceeded along side.

Eve pushed back the tree's branch as she stooped in the tree and she glanced ahead. There she saw Hope and Xena coming down the trail... together. A smile eased across her lips because she knew her mother was trying to reconcile with Hope. She let go of the branch and jumped then back flipped and landed on the forest floor. "Mother."

The warrior grinned and raised an eyebrow. "Didn't know."

The daughter tilted her head. "I've picked up a few things." She chuckled and smiled to Hope.

Hope smiled back warmly.

"Sso..." Eve shifted in her stance. "What brings you both out here?"

"Visit," replied Hope.

Xena crossed her arms over her chest. "When you have a chance, we need to discuss travel plans."

The daughter raised an eyebrow. "Any thoughts?"

"Gabrielle and I would like to go to Amphipolis."

"Grandmother?" Eve grinned.

The warrior chuckled and shifted in her stance. "Yes." She went serious. "I'm hoping mother is still alive."

Eve moved her head in agreement. "Me too," she whispered. "What about Gabrielle's family?"

"Mom said she wanted to go," cut in Hope.

The Warrior Princess glimpsed at Hope then to Eve. "Poteidaia after Amphipolis." She sighed. "Of course you're both welcomed to come. That's up to you both. Think about it."

Xena's daughter nodded. "We will." She arched an eyebrow. "And thanks for thinking of us."

"Not a problem." The warrior smirked and turned to leave. "See you both for dinner."

"Bye, mother."

Xena flashed a smile back. "Bye Evie." Turning her head forward, she headed back to the village to find her soulmate.

Eve sighed when she saw her mother gone.

"We?"

The tall woman put her hands on her hips with a questioning look.

Hope strolled up with a smirk. "You said that... collectively."

Xena's daughter chuckled and dropped her arms. "Figured it'd be faster than saying Hope and I."

"Oooh... I see." Hope grinned. "So, how much longer are you on patrol duty?"

"Not much... can leave when I want." The dark woman moved then leaned against a tree. "How've you been?"

"About the same since I last saw you." Hope leaned against her staff. "You?"

"Nothing much changing here."

The small woman went serious. "Why don't I believe that?"

"I don't know."

Gabrielle's daughter narrowed her eyes with concern. "Something is bugging you."

"Nothing is." Eve shrugged and lifted herself from the tree. Her expression went stoic without warning and she walked away to stand with her back to Hope.

"Wrong button," whispered Hope. She sighed sadly and became extra worried. She came up beside Eve slowly and quietly. "I'm sorry." She peered up at her friend's profile. "If there is something wrong... I can try and help... if you want." She reached to squeeze Eve's arm for a second.

"Thank you," replied Eve sincerely. She smiled faintly at Hope. "Just a lot of... conflicting emotions."

Hope huffed. "You and I both," she uttered.

Xena's daughter grinned but went serious again.

"Truly..." The small woman sighed as she looked at her friend. "I'm worried," she whispered.

The dark woman breathed heavily and stared at the forest. "I'm having problems deciding on if this is really my way."

Hope furrowed her eyes brows. "Your way?"

"Yes." Eve glimpsed down. "The way of love." She folded her arms. "I didn't tell you... but I was cleansed by God." She looked away. "And I'm God's messenger."

"Did... you have anything to do with the death of the gods?"

The tall woman nodded gradually. "As long as I am alive then mother can kill a god."

Hope looked up instantly. "That's amazing."

Eve grinned. "That's the power of God."

The small woman chuckled however went serious. "So... you don't think the way of love is for you?"

"No." Xena's daughter shook her head. "But its God's way and I am his messenger..."

confusing."

Hope was silent in her thought. She looked up to Eve. "You know... I had that problem with Dahak." She breathed with shakiness. "I was doubting my position as his chosen." She tilted her head. "The way I finally decided I was suppose to be with Gabrielle was when I realized it didn't feel right to be with Dahak." She shrugged. "You just have to ask yourself if it feels right. Maybe you're only suppose to be his messenger and not a follower." She peeked up to Eve. "There is a difference between following the way of love and delivering the way of love."

Eve nodded as she processed her friend's idea. "That's what I'm thinking too."

"You'll know when its right." Hope smiled confidently. "I know." She leaned her head against her staff. "What... do you think is your way?"

"The warrior," whispered Eve.

"Huh... certainly runs in the family." The small woman grinned.

The dark female chuckled deeply. "Very true."

Slowly, Hope began to grin. "I have an idea... that might just help."

~*~*~*~

Eve ducked as the staff breezed over her head. "I'm still a little rusty... be careful."

Hope smirked and twirled her staff. "And you use to be a commander of an army?"

The tall woman narrowed her eyes and spun the Amazon sword. "Yesss," she hissed and attacked Hope in a blur of motion.

"Oh Hell," yelled Hope as she tried to parry a number of Eve's attacks. "I was just kidding."

Eve laughed deeply and brought the sword down over Hope.

Gabrielle's daughter raised her staff above her head to stop the strike. "I don't think I'm liking my idea anymore," she growled as she tried to keep the sword from hitting her.

Eve continued to put all her strength into pushing Hope down. "Not bad," she grinned.

Hope tried not to laugh but she felt her knees startling to buckle. "I... need to... work out." She gritted her teeth.

Xena's daughter put all her weight in strength into pressing Hope down. "You can't take much more," she teased with a deep voice.

Hope closed her eyes as her knees started to bend under the pressure. *There's gotta be another way*, she thought. She opened her eyes and looked at her friend's bare stomach, which made her grin with an idea. She sucked in a breath, gave a surge of energy, and sprung up while giving a kick to Eve's stomach.

The tall woman went stumbling back and coughing. She straightened up with a grin.

"Serves you right," joked the small woman.

Eve's grin went into a warm smile with love hidden.

Hope blinked as she felt a tingling begin in her stomach and shoot through her body. *But whenever the person you're in-love touches you with even a smile and leaves you tingling... you know its right.* Her mother's words echoed in her mind as a new emotion came clear to her.

"You know, a drawing will last longer than staring at me," remarked Eve.

Gabrielle's daughter chuckled and raised an eyebrow. "Well, I had nothing better to stare at."

"Oooh, is that the reason why?" Eve spun her sword and took a menacing step. "You better start concentrating."

"Trying taking your own advice, Eve," teased the small woman.

The dark woman laughed and attacked Hope.

Hope was losing ground as she backed up on the sparring field. "Cut me some slack, Eve."

Eve laughed deeply and continued her thrusts, stabs, and swipes. Then she remembered one thing Hope continually forgot to guard... her feet. She dropped down and did a roundhouse kick and managed to swipe Hope's feet out from under her.

Hope crashed onto her back with her staff rolling out of her hand. She ground and coughed. "Why does that..." She coughed again. "Always happen to me." She closed her eyes.

"Because you never guard your feet." Eve smirked down at her sparring partner.

The small woman opened her eyes and glared. "Now you tell me." She grinned evilly without warning. "Let's see if you do." She gave a swipe of her feet at Eve's.

"Hell!" Xena's daughter hadn't paid attention and was now falling forward. She dropped her sword in the falling process so that she could hold herself up from crashing on Hope.

Hope closed her eyes waiting for the impact of the larger body but found it never happened. She half opened her eyes to see Eve smirking at her. She sighed in relief. "I couldn't help it."

"Right," Eve responded sarcastically. She peered straight down into warm green eyes. She held herself up with both hands with her body just touching Hope's.

The pair went very silent as they stared into each other's eyes.

That was at the point Eve knew another truth as her body warmed.

"Um..." Hope desperately came up with a topic. "Ssso you think this... feels right?" she whispered but realized how she made it sound. "I mean the fighting that is," she corrected hastily.

"Yes," uttered Xena's daughter. She noticed how her friend's chest was rising and

falling quickly and not due to the recent sparring.

"Wellll... good." Hope smiled warmly and felt the franticness to want to move from this invading position.

Eve didn't respond. She just kept her eyes locked with Hope. Without thinking about it, she lowered her body a little onto Hope's. She could feel her stomach touch the other woman's smooth hot stomach, which only sent a shockwave through her body.

Hope was far past being in control for she couldn't stop the tremors of need quivering through her body. Her heart was pounding into her ears.

Eve smiled and lowered her head gradually.

The smaller woman closed her eyes and prepared for the emotions that she knew would surge through her on contact.

Eve's closed her eyes as she brought her head a little lower to leave their lips scarce inches from each other. She felt her stomach twist with anticipation and she believed she'd have a heart attack any moment. Carefully, she caressed Hope's warm lips with her own. Her left hand shifted to hold Hope's side as she tried to gain courage.

"Hope... Eve!"

"Oh no," both women said together.

In a flash, Xena's daughter was off of Hope and rolling onto her butt.

Hope turned bright red and sat up then propped her legs up. She looked across and saw her mother coming. Her expression dropped at knowing what her mother might have seen. She took deep breaths to relax herself.

Eve sat tense and tried to put on her stoic expression. *Great... I was just on top of your daughter, Gabrielle.* She groaned inwardly at the thought and felt angry with herself.

Gabrielle came up to the pair and saw them both breathing a little hard. *I just definitely interrupted a... moment. Real good timing, Gabrielle.* "Are you sparring?" Her eyes focused on Eve.

Xena's daughter nodded. "Yeah," she whispered in apology.

The Amazon Queen squatted down and smiled to Eve. "Xena told me." She reached out and patted Eve's knee. "Jus' do what's right."

Eve chuckled faintly. "So I've been told." She grinned over to Hope.

The small woman sighed. "Hey, I was just trying to help. I'll remember not to next time."

The tall woman smiled. "Alright, I won't joke about it."

"Good," replied Hope with a grin.

Gabrielle watched with amusement yet went serious. "Have either of you decided

what your plans are?" She glanced between the pair to see them shake their heads.

"When are you and Xena planning to leave, mom?"

"We're kinda waiting on you two." The warrior glimpsed to her daughter. "We'd like to leave soon."

Eve dropped her elbows onto her knees. "How about an answer tomorrow morning or so?"

The warrior-bard nodded. "That'd be perfect. We'll plan on leaving tomorrow afternoon if the weather is good... with or without you two." She grinned.

"I feel the love," teased Hope.

Gabrielle laughed quietly. She sighed and stood up. "Dinner is early this evening." She glanced over to the west and saw the sun kissing the horizon. "Just about ready to start." She peered down at the younger women. "We'll see you there."

"Alright." Eve nodded.

"See ya, mom." Hope smiled up.

Gabrielle winked and strolled off. "And make sure you return the sword, Eve."

"Yes, Queen Gabrielle."

The Queen glimpsed back and shot a grin.

Eve chuckled and turned her head to her sparring partner. "Ready for dinner?"

"Oh yeah... that sparring worked up an appetite."

The taller woman groaned and stood up. "Doesn't surprise me." She turned towards Hope and held a hand out.

Gabrielle's daughter took the offered hand and was hauled to her feet. "Thanks."

Eve nodded, moved, and got her sword.

Hope sighed inwardly at noticing her friend's emotionless attitude from earlier. Now she was officially worried. She collected her staff and turned to Eve.

The dark woman spun her sword. "Let's go."

The small woman nodded and followed along side without a word.

The pair headed first to the weapons hut. Hope waited at the door while Eve went to put the sword away.

When Eve returned, Hope went very serious. "Eve..." She stopped short when hollow blue eyes lowered to her.

The tall woman folded her arms. "There's nothing to say," she said coolly.

Hope narrowed her eyes at seeing so many walls just materialize in her friend's eyes. She had to wonder if she triggered them or if Eve, herself, triggered them.

"Alright..." Her head bobbed up and down as her voice went cold, quiet, and filled with pain. "I understand... there's nothing to say." She shrugged her shoulders and looked away. "Then I know where I stand... little importance." She turned away and walked off.

Eve closed her eyes as the anger at herself grew two more notches.

~*~*~*~

"Oooh, I definitely interrupted something, Xen."

The warrior came out of the washroom after washing her face. "Mmm." She strolled over to her partner on the bed. "You're sure?" She climbed onto the bed and peered down at her lover laying in the center of the bed.

"Oh yeah." Gabrielle opened her eyes and her expression shifted into worry. "You know, they're going to get worried about our reaction." She shook her head. "May even slow them down."

"Slow them... but won't stop them." Xena laid on her side but still peered down at her soulmate.

"I don't know, Xena." The small woman rolled onto her left side to face the warrior. "Eve... she's not going to want you to get angry. You know that."

The warrior dropped her eyes. "Yeah," she whispered.

The warrior-bard reached forward and took her lover's hand. "Xena... they are us." Blue eyes lifted to Gabrielle. "Eve is very much like you and Hope is very much like me." She rubbed her thumb over Xena's hand. "That's the best way of looking at it."

The older woman nodded slowly and took a deep breath. "Yeah." She smiled warmly. "Trying to stop them would be like trying to stop us."

"Uh huh." Gabrielle grinned. "It's all about love. We've gotta support this."

"Sssso, you're saying..." The warrior grinned. "That we should bring them together?"

The Amazon Queen chuckled and smiled. "No, they have to do that themselves. We just need to give them a good shove towards each other."

The Warrior Princess grinned evilly. "That'll be simple," she teased.

"Yeah I know." Gabrielle rolled her eyes. "They're stubborn like us."

"I think we can get around that." Xena raised an eyebrow in proposition.

The small warrior now was grinning. "Definitely." She leaned in and kissed her lover. "Thank you," she whispered.

The warrior nodded and kissed her partner's forehead. When she pulled back she smiled and said, "We both want them happy, that's a mother's job."

"Among other things." The Amazon Queen smiled. "We better go... do some match making."

Xena chuckled and rolled out of the bed.

Gabrielle followed suit and met her partner at the door.

The pair left the hut and went directly to the food hut. And there they met up with Hope and within a few moments a stoic Eve came strolling in. Xena had sighed at seeing her daughter like that, she knew this wasn't going to be simple.

~*~*~*~

Xena turned to her daughter. "Feel like a walk?"

"This late?" questioned the younger woman.

"Getting to old?" teased the warrior.

Eve chuckled faintly. "Let's go." She turned towards the exit of the food hut and headed that way.

The Warrior Princess followed behind.

Hope sat at one of the tables in the food hut. Her eye followed Eve out the door.

Gabrielle caught this and she lowered her eyes to the table. She could just feel the pain from here. She reached across the table, she squeezed her daughter's hand. "Hey."

Hope turned her head. "Sorry." She smiled half heartily.

The Amazon Queen removed her hand and smiled warmly. "How are you doing?"

The daughter shrugged and stared at her empty plate of food. "Alright," she whispered.

"Mmm, don't lie."

Hope peered up. She sighed and stared back at the empty plate. "Can we go somewhere... to talk?"

"Yeah." Gabrielle was more than happy for this opening. "Let's go to my hut huh?"

The younger woman nodded. "Sounds good." She stood up with her plate and grabbed her staff.

They disposed of their dishes and headed silently to the hut.

"So what's up?" asked Gabrielle after she closed the hut door.

"I'm... not sure." Hope said as she propped her staff up against a wall. "Just some really con-"

"Confusing, mother." Eve shook her head and kept walking "Nothing is ever easy huh?" She peered over at Xena.

The warrior nodded slowly. *When it involves love... never*, she thought. "So, what's confusing?"

The younger woman looked away and saw the sparring fields coming into view. "It

doesn't really matter."

Xena stopped walking and narrowed her eyes. "Don't feed that to me, Eve," she said with an almost pained voice. "Nobody comes walking up to people with a stoic attitude for shits and giggles." She folded her arms. "Don't pull that on me... I know that game." She sighed inwardly at her own harsh word but she knew tough love was a way to get Eve to talk. It was the way Gabrielle handled her at certain points.

Eve licked her lips as she stared at the sparring field. "How'd you tell Gabrielle that you were in-love with her?"

The Warrior Princess knew this was her daughter's round about way of talking about Hope. One thing she knew was she was blunt about everything except love, Eve was the same way. "Well..." She took a deep breath. "I kissed Gabrielle-

"In a dreamscape," answered Gabrielle. She sat down on the bed beside Hope. "She couldn't tell me verbally."

Hope huffed and grinned. "Doesn't surprise me."

The Amazon Queen chuckled but sighed. "It was frustrating at first."

"How was that?"

"Mmm." The warrior-bard studied the floor. "Because I was more into talking about things while Xena preferred to show things." She peered up. "We're still a little bit like that but we both try to adjust either way."

The small woman nodded slowly. "Understandable."

Gabrielle glanced up at her daughter. "Why you ask though?"

"Well..." Hope took a deep breath preparing to reveal a little something. "I think... I know-

"I'm in-love." Xena shrugged and shifted her weight to her other foot. "It's not a simple thing to realize."

Eve nodded and looked up to the stars. "Especially not with our pride," she teased.

The warrior nodded slowly but a smile eased across her lips. "I will tell you one thing, Eve." She lifted her eyes to the stars. "Being in-love is powerful and complete." Her eyes started to twinkle. "You feel perfect and your life is a dream." She flashed a smile towards Eve then studied the stars once more. "I'll come to realize that you'll never find another person like her. All you want to do is make her happy. You spend the rest of your life doing just that and the sweet rewards are her smiles, laughs, and affection to you. One morning you'll wake up and know that-

"You'll never find a person that'll love you more or accept you more." Gabrielle smiled with her eyes glossing over in thought. "You'll do anything for her and go through anything for her no matter the pain. And that's when you'll know you've found your soulmate."

Hope smiled very slowly at hearing her mother's words. "I just hope Eve will see

that."

"Trust me, she will." Gabrielle turned on the bed and faced her daughter. "Love is powerful, it'll catch her no matter what."

The young woman nodded plus turned her head to Gabrielle. "I hope so." She chuckled. "I don't know how it happened."

"And you'll never know." The warrior-bard was still smiling. "That's the magic of love." She leaned towards Hope and kissed her on the temple. "Let me tell you a little secret about handling Eve... I had to do this with Xena."

Hope grinned and became very attentive. "Okay."

"Here's what you need to do. First you-"

"Take control." Xena shrugged with a grin. "Let her take control," repeated the warrior. "Eve, I know." She faced her child. "I know," she whispered.

Eve sighed and dropped her head. "Must be tattooed on my forehead," she mumbled.

The warrior chuckled and tipped her daughter's head up with her fingertips. "No, it's easy to see when somebody is in-love." She grinned. "Everybody but Gabrielle and I knew we were in-love with each other." She chuckled deeply. "We were the last to know." She lowered her hand.

"Really?" The young woman raised an eyebrow. "That's funny."

"Hmmm, you could say that." The Warrior Princess sighed with a grin.

"Sso, are you saying Hope might be in-love with me?" She gave an inquisitive look.

The older woman shrugged. "That's for everybody else to know and for you to find out, honey."

"Gee thanks." Eve mock glared. "That was such motherly support."

"It was," teased the warrior. She leaned forward to kiss her daughter's cheek. "Just take my advice. Been there, done that, it worked." She pulled back with a smile. "You have nothing to lose... only gain."

The daughter took a deep breath and nodded. "Alright." She folded her arms. "I think I might head back to the hut."

Xena nodded. "Same here." She began walking for the main section of the village. "You'll figure out whether you're coming with Gabrielle and I tomorrow?"

"Yea." Eve nodded and gaze through the torch-lit village. "I'd really like to go... see grandmother."

"Let's hope so." Xena sighed. "I'm worried about that."

"You have that nasty feeling too?" whispered the daughter.

The warrior nodded sadly. "Yeah." She peered over at Eve. "Maybe she's fine."

"Maybe." Eve nodded in agreement.

The Warrior Princess fell silent for a second but formed a new topic. "Have you decided on your path?"

"I think so." Eve grinned evilly. "Have any advice on a good sword brand?"

Xena laughed deeply. "I think I can help you out." She winked.

"Good." The young woman reached towards her mother's chakram. As soon as her fingers touched the chakram she found a strong hand grabbing hers.

"Don't." The warrior grinned but didn't look at her daughter. "You're too young for that."

Eve removed her hand and peered down at the chakram, pretending to read something. "Oh yeah, says right there 'Made in Chin... for ages five and up.' Looks like I don't qualify."

Xena laughed loudly. "No, you're old enough... you just need to read the instructions that come with it."

"Oh right."

"And..." The warrior turned her head towards her daughter. "It wasn't made in Chin... try India."

"Let me look." Eve looked down at the chakram and pretended to squint. "Yeah, I did read it wrong, such small printing... 'Made in India' and I missed something else too... 'Part of the exclusive Warrior Princess weapons collection,'" said Eve with a tease. She grinned at her mother.

Xena chuckled deeply and winked to Eve. She saw her hut ahead and she went serious. "Let Hope talk, alright?"

"That won't be a problem." The daughter stopped walking and smiled to her mother. "Thank you."

"That's what mothers are for." Xena grinned.

"Yeah," answered the daughter because she knew that was true. She moved in to hug her mother tightly.

The warrior smiled warmly as she hugged back strongly. She was beyond happy that she could finally do this with Eve. "Get some sleep too."

"I will." Eve let go. "Make sure you do." She arched an eyebrow with a grin.

"Are you suggesting something?" Xena walked over to her hut.

Eve took a few steps towards the direction of her hut. "Nope... don't assume anything."

"I am about to." The warrior grabbed the door handle.

The daughter shrugged and smirked. "Yeah well... assuming makes an ass out of you and me." She laughed and turned to jog off.

"Kids," grumbled Xena. "Monkey see... monkey do." She chuckled. "Goodnight Eve!" she yelled.

Eve heard and grinned. "Night mother!" she called.

Xena smiled to herself and went inside of the hut.

Gabrielle saw her partner come in. She got out of the bed. "How'd it go?"

"Not bad... you?"

"The same." The warrior-bard grinned as she sauntered up to Xena. "Hopefully something will happen tonight."

"Pun intended," whispered the Warrior Princess. She remembered her words earlier from the conversation with Eve.

Gabrielle smiled warmly and encircled Xena's waist. "Yeah," she uttered. "Xen?"

The older woman lowered her head. "Yeah?" she whispered.

"I love you."

Xena smiled with love.

The smaller warrior felt the tingle begin in her stomach and erupt through her body. *Just the way I love it.* She mirrored the smile and put her hand behind Xena's head.

The warrior let her lips brush over Gabrielle's. "I love you too." She sealed their lips together.

Gabrielle moaned softly and opened her mouth then slipped her tongue out while Xena's came in. That tingling inside her became something much more needy.

~*~*~*~

Hope looked up from the scroll when she saw Eve come in. "Hey," she smiled a little.

Eve smiled back. "Hi," she whispered and closed the door.

Gabrielle's daughter felt the tiny tingle begin even with just that smile. *I'm really in trouble.*

Eve sighed inwardly at the scene of Hope sitting in the middle of the bed, glowing from the firelight of the candles, and with magnificent green eyes sparkling warmly. *I'm really in trouble,* she thought. "Another scroll?" She indicated the scroll in her friend's lap.

The small woman glanced down at it. "Yup, a finished one though this time." She lifted her eyes. "Mom said the scroll I read last night was the only one she's never finished."

Eve chuckled. "I think she's working on one now."

"Yeah, she mentioned that to me." Hope glanced back down at the scroll. "She's an amazing bard."

The tall woman made her way to a side of the bed as she spoke. "I'd bet you'd be good at it." She sat down on the bed and faced her friend.

Hope shook her head. "I doubt it. I'm not Gabrielle." She huffed. "Not that I look like her anything," she sighed sadly.

"No you don't," whispered Eve.

"Eve..." The small woman glimpsed up. "I look exactly as mom did when she was traveling with Xena in the third year." She shook her head. "Trust me, I know... I was there."

"So?" The dark woman narrowed her eyes. "It's the personalities." She tilted her head so she could study her friend more. "You're beautiful inside and out."

"Oh yeah, definitely considering my past," whispered Hope as she rolled up the scroll.

Eve narrowed her eyes. "Hey... you and me both huh?" She shook her head. "We've both had it hard."

"Yeah," whispered Hope as she leaned to her right so she could place the scroll on the nightstand. "We're both in the same boat huh?"

"Yes." Eve grinned. "Both our mothers saved our butts."

The small woman chuckled and stared at her hands in her lap. "Yup... same boat." *Now I just need to get to the bow and into your arms without tipping the boat,* mused Hope. "Can we..." She peered up. "Talk about earlier?"

Xena's daughter knew the sign and also remembered her mother's words. "Yeah." She went serious and straightened up. "Look, I'm sorry-"

Hope put her hand over her friend's mouth. "Please don't," she removed her hand and continued, "Apologize for that." She shook her head. "It wasn't wrong... don't make it sound like it was a bad thing."

Eve smiled and nodded. "Alright... thank you."

The small woman smiled back. "Um... I know talking isn't your thing."

Eve chuckled then grinned. "But I'm willing to try it out... for you."

"You just did," whispered Hope. "And I'm willing to try actions... for you." She smiled warmly.

The taller woman reflected the smile back.

It started that tingliness again in Hope. So, she couldn't hold herself back any longer. It was her turn, she was going to show action. She leaned in slowly with her eyes closing.

Eve closed her eyes and was prepared for something to just break this moment again.

It took a seeming lifetime but she felt those smooth warm lips touch hers again. And how it began the burning desire in her soul once more.

Hope raised her hand as she carefully touched Eve's cheek. She leaned in a little more as their lips touch more.

Eve moaned softly as her heart pounded. She had never felt this before. She leaned more into Hope and placed her hand on Hope's side.

Hope finally sealed their lips together. Now she was positive about this love. She let her mouth open slightly and she felt Eve's tongue come in. Opening her mouth more, she slipped her tongue out.

Their tongues passed over each other and left them moaning. The tingling went strong inside of both women.

Hope pulled away and breathing heavy. "Oh... gods," she whispered.

The dark woman opened her eyes slowly and grinned. "Too much?" She was breathing deeply herself.

Hope chuckled and opened her eyes. "Oh no." She leaned forward to give a tender kiss. "I love you, Eve," she uttered.

"I love you too," whispered Eve. She held onto both of Hope's sides and gave her a signal to move.

The small woman followed the command and pulled back from the kiss. She shifted closer and found herself in Eve's lap. She just couldn't get past kissing Eve for she started another strong kiss.

Xena's daughter chuckled and returned the strong kiss. She wrapped her arms around the other woman. When the kiss ended, she spoke quietly. "We need to be slow."

Gabrielle's daughter thought about that. "Won't be easy."

"I know... I know." Eve grinned. "Let's just be careful."

Hope nodded and lowered her head onto Eve's chest. "Yeah, you're right. After what we've both been through." She tightened her arms around the other woman's body.

"That and we still need to learn some things about each other."

The small woman chuckled deeply and added, "Don't forget the parental units." She closed her eyes. "We need to convince them."

"I don't think that'll be a problem." Eve peeked down at her partner. "I think they convinced each other."

Hope looked up and narrowed her eyes. "You're right." She grinned. "Those snitches."

"They're just being mothers." The dark woman grinned too. "Thankfully."

"Uh huh." Gabrielle's daughter stared across the room. "Huh... they set us up." She

looked back at Eve.

"Basically."

"You know Eve..." She dropped her grin. "Your mom won't..."

Eve shook her head. "If mother didn't want me with you, do you think I'd be in this hut right now?"

Hope chuckled and nodded. "True... you may have a point."

The tall woman smiled. "Don't worry." She kissed Hope's forehead. She needed to move since she knew being this close to Hope would mean being out of control soon. "Let's get ready for bed huh?"

"Yeah." The small woman let go of Eve and hopped out of the bed.

Xena's daughter shifted out of the bed. She turned to Hope and smiled. "Hope... eternity, that's how long I need you." Her expression was hidden with desperation.

"I know," whispered Hope. "I wouldn't have imagined something like this." She laughed nervously. "But gods, when I first saw you..." She shook her head. "I can't even describe it nor understand it."

Eve smiled. "Feeling is mutual."

"Good," the small woman grinned. She went serious and took a step to hug Eve tightly.

Eve didn't want to let go. She could feel everything complete as her mother described.

Nor did Hope want to let go. She was prepared to do anything to be with Eve, anything. "Eve?"

"Mmm?"

"I just realized something." Hope lifted her head. "Something mom told me."

The tall woman grinned slowly. "Are things adding up for you as well?"

"Uh huh." Hope arched an eyebrow. "Half plus half is making one."

Eve chuckled. "That's one way to say it." She lowered her head down.

"Mmm, better yet." Her lips touched Eve's. "Soulmates."

"Adds up the same for me." Eve sealed their lips together in a long loving kiss.

~*~*~*~

"You know, this is kinda odd." Hope turned her head towards Eve. Her hands were on her stomach and she was lying beside her soulmate.

"What's that?" Eve placed her hands under her head as she stared at the ceiling.

"Welllll... our mothers are together."

The dark woman turned her head to Hope. "Yeah but our fathers are on the opposite

end of the scale." She chuckled. "What am I saying, I don't have a father."

The smaller woman furrowed her eyebrows. "You've failed to tell me this." She rolled onto her side and peered down at Eve.

"Mmm, I neglected to tell you." Eve sighed. "I was made by God and placed in my mother's womb to be born." She peeked up to Hope. "Scary huh?"

"No." Hope smiled warmly. "It sounds beautiful." She grinned. "A lot better than my birth."

"And you've failed to tell me this." Xena's daughter gave a serious look.

"Mmm, I neglected to tell you." Hope smirked.

Eve laughed deeply but stopped. "So?"

The short blond sighed deeply and looked away. Her eyes glossed over in memory. "Basically... Dahak raped Gabrielle and impregnated her with me." She shrugged. "When I was born, some things happened and Gabrielle sent me down a river in a basket."

"Some things?" The dark woman furrowed her eyebrows. "I know there's more to it." She reached up to caress her soulmate's cheek. "What happened?"

Hope reached up and took the other woman's hand. "Your mother knew I was evil and knew I would bring Dahak. So after my birth she..."

"Tried to kill you," whispered Eve.

The small woman nodded. "I don't blame her." She closed her eyes as a few tears rolled down her cheeks. "I wish she had... especially after Solan," she uttered with pain.

Eve moved instantly, lifted Hope, and pulled her into her arms. "Hey... I'm glad my mother didn't," she said quietly. "I'd never find my soulmate then." She kissed Hope's forehead as she listened to her cry. She tried to think of things to say to help. "Hope... you're human. You're human and made a mistake." She rocked their bodies a little. "And you were being controlled."

Hope took a shaky breath and laid the side of her head down on her soulmate's neck. "I thought I had nothing... nothing except for Dahak. I thought he loved me when mom didn't." She closed her eyes. "I thought mom only loved Xena... that she chose Xena over me and I wanted revenge." She cried again. "If only I had known... known Gabrielle tried to save me."

Xena's daughter kept her arms tight around Hope. The woman who was said to have killed her older brother numerous years ago and that she should scorn. That wasn't even an option for Eve, she couldn't see that in Hope. "I know the past can hurt, Hope." She closed her eyes at the own pain she felt. "But we learn from the mistakes and forgive," she whispered. "I promise you, my mother is doing that." She kissed Hope's head again. "Just let go and move on, I'll be right there to help." She took a deep breath. "Don't let the past keep you, you've paid for everything."

Hope sucked in a heavy breath. She lifted her head and kissed her soulmate gently. When she pulled back she had a sad smile. "Thank you."

Eve smiled warmly. "You're welcome." She brushed back Hope's hair. "You'll be okay?"

"Right here, in your arms... yes." The small woman grinned. "You'll be okay?"

"Just as long as I have you here."

Gabrielle's daughter smiled and leaned back down for a warm kiss.

Eve smiled at her soulmate at the end of the kiss. "Let's get some sleep huh?"

"Yeah." Hope tucked her head under Eve's chin. "You don't mind if I sleep here?" She grinned.

The tall woman chuckled and responded, "Nope."

"Hey, what about the plans?" Hope closed her eyes. "Are we staying or leaving?"

"I'd like to go with them."

"Me too." The blond sighed deeply. "Then what?"

Eve breathed for a long moment and closed her eyes. "We'll worry about that later."

"True... God only knows what could happen between now and then."

"Exactly." Eve fell silent after that.

Slowly, the smaller woman grinned. "Eve?"

"Mmm?"

"I love you."

"I love you, Hope." A smile shifted onto Eve's lips as she went to sleep.

~*Part 4*~

Hope lifted both hands and opened the double wood doors of the barn. She looked inside as the thunder sounded in the late night. She walked in slowly and gazed around. She saw the grinding stone of the windmill turning and her heart skipped a beat.

There was a loud eruption of thunder and lightening flashing.

She whipped her head to the right at seeing something in the dark windmill barn. Her eyes widen as the barn lit up from a lantern.

"Mother?" whined a deep voice.

Hope's breathing went ragged as she saw the Destroyer standing to her right. She said nothing and only walked up slowly to the Destroyer. She reached up with her right hand to caress his face.

Lightening flashed.

"Mother," repeated the cold deep voice.

"How are you, dear?" Hope smiled gently but something felt out of place. She narrowed her eyes because she knew the Destroyer could not talk verbally.

"Where've you been?" asked the Destroyer as he carefully lifted his hands to Hope's shoulders.

"Away," answered Hope. She felt her body tense up.

Thunder boomed loudly and left the walls of the barn rattling.

"Why?" The Destroyer tilted his head. "I've needed you."

"Sorry, sweetie."

The Destroyer narrowed his eyes and lowered his head closer to Hope's. "You've left me... you chose Gabrielle over me."

Hope began to breathe heavily. "No I didn't... only for a while sweetie. I'll be back." She felt the strong cold hands on her shoulders squeeze hard.

"No you won't." The Destroyer opened his mouth with his fangs showing. "You've left Dahak."

"I had too." Hope closed her eyes when she felt the Destroyer's nails dig into her skin. "I had too," she repeated in a whisper.

"You left me," roared a deep menacing voice.

The thunder exploded with violence and the lightning crash to the mortal world brightly.

Hope opened her eyes to see the Destroyer gone and now stood Dahak. "Dahak." She began to panic.

"Your father," growled Dahak. "How dare you make a fool of me!"

"Me!" yelled Hope with cold eyes. "You used me!" She received a hard slap to her face. She went stumbling back with blood trickling from the corner of her mouth.

Dahak narrowed his red eyes and pointed. "Do not defy me, Hope." He grinned with evil. "I made you and I can destroy you. You are mine!"

"Never." Hope spat on the ground. "I'll never be yours again." She narrowed her eyes. "And you won't destroy me as long as you remain in the other universe. You need me... father," she said with threat and anger.

"Do not toy with me!" Dahak took a menacing step as the lightning flashed. "I will have you again and I will be reborn. Then even *you*... will know my rage."

"You'll never come to the mortal world." Hope shook her head. "You can't do it without me and I'm not yours."

Dahak bellowed with laughter. "For now, Dahak only knows what could happen between now and then." He grinned and said in quiet deep voice. "There's nobody to protect you from me, Hope. Your...mother can't and your soulmate, Eve, can not. You will be mine again." He laughed deeply when the thunder and lighting agreed with him.

"No!" screamed Hope as she fell to her knees.

"Hope!" Eve shook her soulmate. "Hope, wake up."

Hope lifted her head with wide eyes. She was breathing heavily. "No... no."

"It's alright... it was a dream." Eve was brushing back her soulmate's damp bangs. "Its okay, I'm here."

"Oh gods," whispered Hope. She closed her eyes and started to shake.

"It's okay," repeated Eve with a soothing voice. She narrowed her eyes and reached up and touched the corner of Hope's lip. "W-wh..." She looked at her fingertips to see blood.

Gabrielle's daughter touched the corner of her lip and opened her eyes to see the blood. "It wasn't a dream," she uttered.

The taller woman was breathing heavy with anger at knowing something hurt her partner. "What happened?"

Hope locked eyes with her soulmate. "Dahak is after me."

~*Part 5*~

"We shouldn't tell them... yet." Hope turned around with her staff. "They've been through a few things as it is."

"But they're use to that," Eve said as she came over to Hope. "We should tell them."

"Eve..." Gabrielle's daughter took her soulmate's hand. "They're gonna have plenty of fun trying to process the fact that we're together." She shook her head. "Maybe it was a dream." She shrugged.

"I don't think so with your lip bleeding."

Hope sighed. "I know," she said sadly. "We'll tell them later, okay?" She shook her head. "Neither of our mothers need to hear about the dream."

The tall woman sighed but went serious. "Tell me the instant that something seems wrong to you, alright? I'm not going to lose you to some one-god of evil." She narrowed her eyes. "I promise that."

"Thank you," ushered Hope. "Maybe nothing will happen." *Now I just asked for it by saying that*, thought Hope. "Let's go tell them about us."

Eve nodded but leaned down more and kissed her soulmate warmly.

The small woman smiled when her partner pulled back. "Come on." She squeezed

Eve's hand before letting go.

So soon the young soulmates found the older soulmates and they all were in the Queen's hut.

"You wanted to tell us something?" asked the warrior as she saw her partner come out of the washroom.

"Yeah." Eve nodded and lifted herself from the door. "We all better sit for this."

Gabrielle came up beside her soulmate and peered up. She grinned.

Xena winked and looked up with a stoic expression.

Hope walked over to the table and pulled out four of the five chairs. She sat down in one with a sigh. She wasn't sure she was ready for this. *Xena, I killed your son and now I'm in-love with your daughter.* She felt her stomach twist with the nervousness and in her mind, the anger towards herself flamed deeply.

Eve sat down beside her soulmate as she watched the two mothers sit down and face them. "Alright." She glanced over to Hope.

Gabrielle's daughter faintly nodded with approval to commence.

"We all know what's going on," said Eve calmly. She grinned to her mother and Gabrielle. "Since you both did a little match making."

The older soulmates chuckled together and relaxed back in their seats.

"So, lay it on us." The warrior-bard went serious. "Is it yes or no?"

Eve grinned and reached over to take her partner's hand.

"Yes," answered Hope with a smile.

Gabrielle sighed deeply and dropped her head back. "Thank Aphrodite," she mumbled.

Xena laughed deeply. "As I said... the last to know."

"You have to admit, Xen." The Amazon Queen lifted her head. "They figured it out a lot faster than us." She chuckled.

"Ssssh, don't tell them that part." The Warrior Princess grinned briefly but faced the other woman with a stoic expression. "So, what are you two planning?"

"To go with you both." Eve raised an eyebrow for an answer.

Gabrielle smiled. "We'd love it."

Xena nodded in agreement. She then focused her eyes on Hope and leaned towards her. She took a deep breath preparing to say what needed to be heard to everybody and herself. "Hope," her voice was deep and quiet, "I trust you to protect my daughter." She paused when she saw Hope nod. "I do not doubt your love for Eve and I will not point a finger at you about Solan." She had to pause so even she could soak in her own words. "And I say that because you've changed and I've hurt you as much as

you've hurt me."

Again Hope nodded because she knew what Xena meant by hurting her. They had played ping-pong on hurting each other in the past.

"Now, I will try my hardest for Gabrielle, Eve, myself... and you to forgive and forget." The warrior sighed. "However it won't be easy. As long as I'm given time and get to know you, I'll be fine." She took a deep breath. "Is this clear between us?"

Hope waited for a moment so she could understand everything said. She felt a squeeze given to her hand from Eve. "Yes." She combed her bangs back with her hand. "I know the word sorry won't fix things. I'd be cheating you." She shook her head as she thought. "I'm giving you a chance as you have to me. That means sssso much to me." She smiled warmly. "Thank you."

The warrior nodded as she saw the deep regret and sorrow in Hope's eyes. She then realized that was another step to forgiving. She sat back in her seat.

Thank you, Xen. Gods, I love you. Gabrielle took a hidden shaky breath. She glanced between the two younger women. "You both know at times it may get hard."

"We know." Hope crossed her legs at the ankles. "But we're taking this slowly and carefully."

Both the older soulmates nodded in approval.

"Good idea." Gabrielle smiled. "If either of you need to talk about something, Xena and I are here for you both."

The Warrior Princess moved her head in agreement. "We have some experience." She grinned.

Hope and Eve chuckled together. "Don't we know," they both responded together.

"Are they trying to say something?" asked the warrior-bard to her partner.

"Yeah, I think they are." Xena winked. "Is there anything else?"

Gabrielle chuckled and glanced between the daughters. "Like... are either of you mysteriously pregnant?"

"Not... yet." Eve laughed and shook her head. "I don't think I can handle that."

"Trust me, you could." The Amazon Queen grinned. A knock at the door came and she looked up. "Come in."

The door opened and Eponin stepped in. She walked over to the group after closing the door. Her eyes flickered over to see Hope and Eve's hand intertwined. She grinned inwardly as she glanced to Gabrielle. "There's a vicious rumor going around that you two are leaving?" She peered over to Xena.

The Queen responded with a chuckle. "Its true. Actually we're all leaving."

The weapons master sighed. "You know how I feel about that."

"Deal Ep." Gabrielle grinned. "We'll be back."

The old Amazon nodded with a smile. "So where is the whole family headed too?"

"Amphipolis then Potaidaia," answered the warrior.

Eponin nodded. "When?"

"Soon as we can," answered Eve.

"I think it runs in the family," mumbled the Amazon.

Gabrielle grinned. "You mean the lack of love for Amazons?"

Eponin grinned at her Queen. "You notice too?"

The warrior-bard laughed. "Uh huh."

The weapons master reached back to the door handle. "Come say goodbye before you leave."

"We will, don't worry Ep."

"I'm worried." The Amazon grinned and left.

"So..." Gabrielle glanced back to the group. "Who's up for breakfast?"

"I know I am." And to add to that, Hope squeezed her soulmate's hand before bouncing up to her feet.

The mother laughed and stood. "Let's go." She held her arm out.

Hope moved to take her mother's arm.

Eve glanced over to her mother. "Mother?"

Xena arched an eyebrow. "I think we're invited."

"If you get your butts out the seats, sure." Gabrielle opened the door and walked off with Hope. She left the door wide open.

The Warrior Princess chuckled and stood up. "No arms."

"Yeah." Eve stood up with a crinkled nose. "No affectionate stuff."

"Right," said Xena as she laughed. She brought her right arm behind her daughter's shoulders.

Eve smiled and brought her arm around her mother's shoulders. Together they walked out and Xena kicked the door closed.

~*~*~*~

"So, explain to me how you managed to sneak a horse from the Amazons?"

Eve grinned to her mother. "Ask your significant other." She shifted the reins in her hand.

Xena slowly turned her head to Gabrielle beside her. "Start explaining."

Gabrielle chuckled and shrugged. "Nothing to tell. Your daughter wanted a horse and I couldn't refuse." She chuckled. "I am the Queen."

"When do I get a horse?" asked the warrior with a grin.

"You've got a horse." The warrior-bard nodded to the second Argo.

The warrior chuckled deeply. "True."

"Besides," whispered Gabrielle. "Eve is an Amazon."

"Now the truth comes out." The Warrior Princess smirked.

The group was walking through the Amazon forest head for Amphipolis after saying goodbye to the Amazons.

"I hope we never bicker like that," whispered Eve.

Hope snickered.

"Hey, it comes with age," snapped Gabrielle. "And we're teasing... not bickering."

"Sure, mom." Hope glanced over at her mother. "You make it sound like a technique."

"No... it's a skill," retorted Xena with a grin.

The older soulmates both chuckled and said together, "We have many skills."

"This is where we leave them, Hope," joked Eve.

Hope laughed deeply. "I think you're right." And reached over and took her soulmate's hand.

"Kids," both Xena and Gabrielle said simultaneously.

"Gotta love them, Xen."

Eve and Hope glanced at the other soulmates with smirks.

Eve smiled warmly now. "We're just one big happy family." She winked down at Hope. "This love thing is contagious."

"But I won't argue with it," uttered Gabrielle's daughter.

"Neither will I." Eve leaned down and kissed her soulmate. They stopped walking so they could deepen the kiss.

Xena and Gabrielle grinned to each other and now held hands.

"Yup..." Gabrielle's head bobbed up and down as she smiled so strongly. "It's about coming together... and the love thing."

The End

