

~ Perspective ~

by Red Hope

Disclaimers: Violence ~ Might be a smidge violent but nothing intense.

Subtext ~ Up close and personal subtext which is really love and well there's some sexual ruckus going on. But nothing quite like my other story. ;-)

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Section 1

~*Part 1*~

She shot up in her bedroll, beads of sweat rolling down her face and covering her body in the fur. Gabrielle threw off her blanket and pulled up her legs, close to her body. She hugged herself as tightly as she could so that she may escape everything. It's been two days since it all happened and if she were feeling like this now she'd hate to see herself in a week. But then again, she did have an excuse... right?

Even I would think so.

The bard's thoughts were fast as her breathing. Her head buried between her legs, trying to block the nightmare. The nightmare has been coming to her since the first day it happened. The day her and Perdicus came out of their house together and Callisto found a form of revenge. Well not really, Callisto was now a prisoner in a cell. Not the end Gabrielle wanted but knew was right. Right compared to killing the murderer.

Gabrielle almost became a murderer herself.

The young woman held herself and lifted her red eyes to stare across the camp. She took a shaky breath that was loud for it awoke the large form across the fire.

"Gabrielle?" It was Xena's deep voice. She rose up from her own bedroll and came across the camp. "What happened?"

The bard shook her head and dropped her eyes.

With a sigh the warrior squatted in front of her best friend. Her right hand came up to her small friend's flush cheeks. "Dream?" Her eyes stayed pinned on Gabrielle.

"Yeah." Sad green eyes lifted. "They won't leave Xena." She shook her head. "They're more alive than I am."

Xena lost her eye contact, not sure what to say. She took a deep breath and locked eyes with her partner again. "Feel alone?"

"No." Gabrielle quickly shook her head, she was ready to lie to that anytime.

The Warrior Princess's eyes searched Gabrielle's in the darkness. Her hands came up to grasp the small knees. "Tell me the truth." A small squeeze to the bard's knees and Xena asked, "Do you feel alone... inside?"

The young woman shut her eyes and turned her head away. "Alone... hollow. Same difference." Her shaky right hand went through her bands. "Sometimes you have to fight alone... don't you Xena?"

"Yes, sometimes." Xena's right hand came up under her best friend's chin, turning her head back to her. "But you won't be."

Gabrielle studied the warrior's eyes to find some of distrust in that but there was none to be found. Oh no, she didn't blame Xena for Perdicus's death nor for sparing Callisto. She actually admired Xena for sparing Callisto because she didn't want too. Taking a deep breath Gabrielle let a small smile take her lips. "Thanks."

"I'm here for you Gabrielle." The Warrior Princess gave a loving smile despite the fact she shouldn't. And despite the fact of her worries, she followed through with her next actions. "Come on." She stood up and took Gabrielle's hands.

The small female stood up with the warrior. Her hands locked with Xena's, they were so warm and protective.

Releasing one hand, Xena strolled across the camp with her partner. Her hand still holding Gabrielle's was on fire. She knew better than to be doing this however she wanted to do this for Gabrielle. To let Gabrielle know she was not alone. Hence, the bard would hopefully heal in Xena's line of thinking.

Slowly the warrior, in only her leathers, laid down on her bedroll and brought Gabrielle down with her.

The bard smiled at this and pressed her back into the warm body. Now she only knew safety from her emotions, dreams, and the world.

To add on, the warrior wrapped her arms around the other female and tightly.

Closing her eyes, Gabrielle reached up to pull the fur over them both. "Thanks Xena."

The older woman shut her eyes. "Mmm, go to sleep now."

A faint chuckle escaped the bard but none the less she shifted into her dreams, not

nightmares.

The warrior wasn't too far behind, her own nightmares never attacking her on this night.

~*Part 2*~

That's where we left the two women, incased by the surrounding night. Gabrielle slept in the warrior's embrace and Xena's body pressed tightly against the bard's. Now this is where we may question. Question Gabrielle, her best friend, and their relationship.

However, I myself am questioning Gabrielle's newfound darkness. Darkness or is it pain? Well, won't you find out with me?

For by that morning rose the sun, as did the warrior. Xena went about readying a small breakfast for both she and Gabrielle. Small only because she hardly ate and these days the bard hardly ate.

The Warrior Princess sighed as to why Gabrielle hardly ate.

The young woman could care less about herself now. She'd seen her husband slain by a mad warrior... or insane demon of Hades. Gabrielle had yet to decide which when it came to Callisto. But what she did know was she greatly hated Callisto for killing Perdicus. Not because Perdicus was exactly her husband but because he was a good man. A person does not deserving of such an early death. Such things brought about such hatred for Gabrielle. Is hatred not pain, is not darkness? Or is maybe hatred is rage that is darkness that will bring pain? Are they all the same in the end, linked?

With an unhappy sigh, Xena came up to her partner's side and bent down. "Gabrielle?" No response so she tried shaking the bard gently. "Gabrielle?"

Slowly blurred green eyes opened. "Hey." It was low.

"How'd you sleep?" Xena's hand remained her friend's shoulder.

"Better, thanks." The bard lifted herself up.

"Good." The warrior stood up and strolled over to the breakfast, she lifted the plates and walked back to Gabrielle. She neatly handed one to the small woman.

A sigh left the bard and she took the plate of food, semi-eating. "Xena?"

"Yeah?" The older woman was sitting cross-legged near the other woman. She had no quick answer so she looked up. "Gabrielle?"

Hollow green eyes shifted to her tall friend. "Can I ask a favor?"

Xena nodded while listening.

Taking a deep breath, Gabrielle quietly asked, "Can I sleep with you for now on?"

The warrior studied Gabrielle, trying to figure it all. "Yeah, if it helps."

"It does." The Amazon Princess lowered her eyes to her plate. She didn't like the food, well maybe the food didn't like her.

The Warrior Princess went back to eating and considering things. She needed to get Gabrielle away from this area. In her mind, Xena figured if she could comfort her friend but keep a certain distance then the bard would heal. The last thing Gabrielle would want is another person close to her.

Yet, Gabrielle didn't quite see it that way. She felt the anger inside of her still. She'd released most of it over the week but yet it still hid in her, caressing her soul. It yearned to take her from inside out and over again. And what the bard wanted more than ever was to have Xena save her from inside out.

Inside and out, inside and out, inside and out. There was only one other label for such a thing between these women. It was a label they would neither ever dare breath to the other let alone take on as their own and place in their relationship.

"Ready to travel today?"

Gabrielle nodded. "Yeah." She stood up and stretched her legs.

The warrior stood as well with the plates. "Get yourself ready and I'll take care of the plates."

"Alright." The young woman went milling about in the camp.

Xena though went to the local lake to clean the plates.

Within a half of a candlemark the pair were getting ready to move on.

Xena mounted her mare and leaned to her left towards Gabrielle on the ground. "High or low?" She gave small grin.

Slowly ivy eyes lifted to the warrior. Gabrielle took a second to figure that out but it made her smile when she realized. "Low."

"You sure?" Xena held the saddle horn. "I wouldn't mind you riding with me."

"I'll make you deal then."

"Oh gods, bartering. What's the deal bard?" Xena arched an eyebrow high with an amused look.

"I'll ride if you let me ride in the front."

The tall woman held her hand out. "Deal."

"Sweet." The bard went serious as she took her partner's hand and was hauled up into the saddle.

"Here." Xena took the staff and turned in the saddle to attach it to the saddlebags. Turning back around she wrapped one arm around the bard's waist. Her other hand grasped the reins. "Relax."

Gabrielle moved her head in understanding and let her body go loose into the warrior's body.

Xena did a click and kicked Argo lightly.

The war-horse whined and turned to walk briskly down the road. Down the road that leads to an end.

~*Part 3*~

Late afternoon, that's when our heroes pulled Argo to slow pace, very slow and very relaxing.

Argo was rather thankful with her huff and slow walk.

Gabrielle gradually shut her eyes and continued to relax into Xena.

"Don't fall asleep on me."

The bard chuckled at the deep octave voice. "Mmm, if you weren't so comfortable, then maybe I wouldn't."

Xena raised an eyebrow. "I still have yet to decide if that's a compliment or a insult."

The small woman patted her partner's thigh. "Take it as a compliment. Means your soft."

"I still not sure if that's good."

"Hard on the inside."

The tall woman chuckled and smiled as she went ahead. "Good come back."

"Yeah." Gabrielle sighed and kept her eyes shut. Soon her thoughts came flooding in. She had no control over her thoughts.

You need to mourn, those were Xena's past words that smacked Gabrielle over and over. Mourn. That was something the bard had yet to do for Perdicus. She'd alone expressed anger for Perdicus... for Callisto.

Her eyes became tight as she can still remember pressing that sword against the insane warrior's neck. She was dying inside to give in and give a hard thrust to pierce Callisto's throat and kill her instantly.

Gabrielle could still remember the moment, it thrilled part of her. That part of her that still held the anger. She shivered in complete remembrance to the feel.

Xena lowered her eyes to her friend. "You okay?"

"Yes, sorry." Gabrielle opened her eyes. "Xena?" Her voice was low, almost inaudible.

"Yeah?"

"What would have happened to me if... if I'd killed Callisto?"

The warrior shut her eyes knowing what would have happened because it happened to her. "I'd lost you." Her eyes opened again.

The small woman turned in the saddle and looked up into sad blue eyes. "What you

mean?"

Xena sighed and began to explain simply. "You would have disappeared into the darkness and anger."

Gabrielle turned face forward in the saddle. The realization took her and she knew then that was what had taken Xena so long ago. She had to wonder what Xena was like before Cortese, always tried to imagine. Yet most of her never want to really know. She liked Xena like this, a powerful, strong, and protective warrior. It normally kept her safe, normally. But there were always those small kinks in the system where she'd get hurt because of who the warrior was. Well not who but more who she knew and knew the warrior.

Yet at this current time, neither of them had to worry about anything in the middle of no where. In the middle of no where or are they in the middle of everything?

Xena pulled Argo off the road into the surrounding woods. "Getting late huh?"

"Yeah." Gabrielle took a deep breath. "Where we headed to anyway?"

The warrior shrugged. "I figured you might want to hit a town tomorrow. We'd make it there by tomorrow mid afternoon."

"Sounds good." Gabrielle noticed Argo came to a stop and she saw Xena hop off first.

The warrior turned to her friend with a smile. "Come on." She held out her arms.

The bard nodded and hopped off the horse into her friend's arms. Instead of backing off she only leaned into the warrior.

Xena sighed and pulled Gabrielle in tightly. This was a bad idea in her mind.

The bard, well she thought this was a wondrous idea. Yeah well maybe part of her was a bit stressed by the closeness but right now she needed it more then ever.

"Come on, let's get camp setup."

"Yeah." Gabrielle backed away and seemed to relocate herself.

The stoic warrior shifted back into place and began to unpack Argo.

Soon the women had the camp made up and a fire going. It was pleasant enough and always had been.

It was still late afternoon too early to start dinner. Gabrielle was sitting down just resting for a moment after doing her tasks.

Xena came over and squatted in front of her. "How you feel?"

Dark green eyes lifted to the warrior. "Alright."

The older woman placed her warm hands over the smaller pair. "Feel like... talking?"

"No." Gabrielle shook her head and looked away. "Over and done with."

The tall woman sighed and stood up, she left Gabrielle be.

The bard decided to go for a short walk and picked up her staff. Without a word she disappeared into the forest.

Blue eyes watched her go with worries.

Gabrielle strolled through the forest and her emotions erupt inside. Inside and they began to come out with a rage. It brought about a tidal wave of anger to the bard.

She stopped walking and gritted her teeth, lifted her staff, and suddenly turned to a tree. She soon found her staff whacking hard against the large tree.

The rage fueled her body to an endless extent. The air around filled with the loud whacks and hits. Gabrielle pressed all her strength and anger into the attack on the tree. She could only think of what Callisto did, think of Perdicus's needless death.

What sent her over the edge was her last single thought. Her and Xena. She yelled and attacked the tree hard with such aggression and rage.

Her and Xena. Yes only her and Xena. She'd married Perdicus in vein. She married Perdicus to get at Xena. To stuck in her pride and fear to tell the warrior how she felt for her. And so that lead her to marry Perdicus in hopes to see what Xena's reaction was. There was no reaction from Xena or least none she knew of.

A hard whack crashed through the air.

Gabrielle stopped and breathed. "I used Perdicus to get to Xena and only got him killed." Her green eyes went to an olive shade and she attacked the tree again. Angry at herself now. Gabrielle now became lost into the angry forgetting about the world around.

The young woman saw out of the corner of her eye somebody coming towards her. Without thinking, she attacked them with a hard swing coming at their head.

Xena narrowed her eyes as she held the staff's head in her right hand. Her hand stung deeply from the blow she caught.

Gabrielle stared up with furious eyes.

The warrior only held the staff's tip hard, her knuckles white. She saw the fury in her friend's eyes and knew what had happened. It only angered her to see this.

The bard quickly realized things and felt the anger drain from her. She noticed her friend's heavy breathing, which worried her. Taking a deep breath she lowered her staff.

Xena let go but kept her eyes locked with Gabrielle's.

"Xena?"

"How's the tree? Still alive?" Xena crossed her arms over her chest. That killing desire to pull Gabrielle into her body took the warrior.

Gabrielle sheepishly smiled. "I think so." Her head hung low. "Sorry... it's just... I was angry and didn't care."

"I know." Xena took a deep breath feeling her own anger begin to disappear for a time. "How you feel now?"

The small woman's head moved up a down a little. "Better... I think."

"Good." The warrior uncrossed her arms. "Ready for dinner?"

"No." Piercing emerald eyes lifted up. "I don't care."

The older woman's hand quickly shot out to Gabrielle's arm. "Well I do." She leaned forward, close to her friend. "Don't tamper with your life Gabrielle."

Gabrielle turned her head in a bit of confusion but narrowed her eyes. "It is *my* life Xena."

Xena closed her eyes and released her friend. "Then in the future don't ask me to be careful with my life."

"Xena don't-"

"Stop there." The warrior took a deep breath to calm. "I am asking you to care for yourself like you would of me."

Gabrielle nodded and looked away. "Hard to do when I feel disgusted with myself."

"I know." The Warrior Princess took a long breath. "But don't give up on yourself so quickly."

"Why?" Gabrielle had a lost look.

"Because..." The warrior stopped herself before it was too late. "Because you're too precious of a person in this world."

"I wouldn't be sure about that Xena. I can be rather deceiving."

"How you figure?" Xena raised an eyebrow as well.

"I just can." Gabrielle brushed pass her partner towards the camp.

The warrior turned her head to watch her go. She sighed and lifted her eyes to the rustling tree leaves in the wind.

~*Part 4*~

Xena stopped the whetstone going down the blade watching the fire light flicker down her blade, her eyes became memorized for a moment by the scene. Her own words came back to her on this early night about possibly losing Gabrielle. Lifting her concern cobalt eyes, they rested on the young bard.

Gabrielle was lying on her back, staring up to the stars.

The warrior studied her small partner there lying.

The bard was doing nothing more. No writing, no speaking, nor no dreaming. She only became lost in her haunting thoughts.

Xena could see the flickering emotions sweep across the younger woman's face. Her body tensing and un-tensing. She narrowed her blue eyes and went back to sharpening her sword.

Gabrielle brought her hands from over her stomach to under her head. With a deep sigh she continued to muse.

If she hadn't married Perdicus, he'd still be alive. If she hadn't been selfish, he'd still be alive. And if she'd been smart she'd told Xena the truth about the marriage. Yet none of this had happened. She only had her childhood sweet heart killed and left the warrior possible in pain by the marriage. Well, Gabrielle wasn't sure if Xena really was upset about the marriage. Yet I, myself, can simply see the warrior was in some fashion internally burned by the marriage but favored not to voice it. How typical.

Yet how untypical was it for Gabrielle to be selfish. Such a thing can be heart crushing for one to see. However, I must say that as of now the young bard is only being selfish once more. For she only keeps her emotions locked away not expressing them. But then I must say the same about Xena. Yes how selfish of both these women to hold such grandeur of love for each other but never express it to the other. I can only say hiding love is a selfish matter. Won't you join me in that ideal? So in that perspective we keep watching these two women in hopes of a better route they take.

Taking a deep breath Xena stood sheathing her sword. She ambled over to her friend and sat down on her own bedroll. "How you feel?"

"Fine." Wasn't said hotly just in a whisper as if Gabrielle was trying to believe it herself. With a sigh she glanced up to Xena. "How about you?"

The warrior shrugged. "S'alright." Her legs came up, her arms circled over her legs, and she lowered her chin over her arms. "Tired?"

"A little." The small woman studied the older one. She found it odd to see Xena sit like that. To Gabrielle, Xena seemed almost... well vulnerable. Even holding an air of innocence in that position. "Xena?"

"Mmm?" Blue eyes lost into the rolling campfire.

"What... what were you like before Cortese?"

Xena took a deep breath. "Almost the complete opposite Gabrielle. I still wasn't talkative." She hint of a grin played on her lips.

The bard chuckled. "I couldn't imagine you talkative."

"Never?" The warrior's eyes shifted to Gabrielle.

"No." Gabrielle pulled her hand from under her head and placed it against the warrior's thigh. "I don't think I would want to see you any other way except like this."

The Warrior Princess shut her eyes, Gabrielle's touch was ripping through her body and sense. "Why?" She opened her eyes again.

"I don't know." Gabrielle lowered her hand down on the ground between them. "I like you as a warrior."

Xena nodded at that simple explanation. She was a simple woman... at certain times. Lowering her left hand to Gabrielle's, she gently placed it over her partner's. Studying their two hands she saw how much larger hers was in comparison to the bard's.

Gabrielle peaked over to their hands and memorized how small her hand was while pressed against Xena's. "Like the largeness."

"Oh?" Amused sapphire eyes looked over to the bard. "It doesn't scare you any more how... large I am?"

The young woman chuckled and grinned faintly. "Nah, as long as I am not at the receiving end of your anger. I love it."

Now it was Xena chuckling as she shifted her eyes back their hands resting on each other. Without even considering the idea first, she laced her hands with Gabrielle's. "Still feel alone?"

The bard glanced up to Xena but didn't hold the contact. "No." Another lie whispered from her lips all over again.

Quickly with her free right hand the warrior reached over to turn Gabrielle's head to her. She searched her companion's green eyes. She saw only faint touches of love and light but that was enough to tell her Gabrielle wouldn't disappear into the darkness. "Don't lie Gabrielle, it doesn't suit you nor can you do it well."

Again the small woman turned her head away, knowing she'd been easily caught. Hades, she can't even lie right. For her that was something to be annoyed about. Or was she happy that the warrior could read her so well?

Xena turned her friend's head back to her. Now her thumb also brushed across Gabrielle's red lips while she spoke. "Don't lie to me Gabrielle. I wouldn't to you."

Emerald eyes shut as she felt her friend's warm fingertips graze across her lips. "Alright." She sensed Xena's hand run across her cheek and off. Her eyes opened again hollowed out by the leaving of the warm touch.

"Thank you." Xena smiled her rare loving smile, then turned her head away. Standing the warrior soon took her armor off along with sword and chakram. They lay resting near Xena's bedroll. As we know, only a hands flicker away to using.

Gabrielle rolled onto her right side to watch Xena.

The tall woman smiled down to her partner and she lowered herself to her bedroll again. "Come here."

The young woman shifted to curl up in the older woman's arms. There she stayed home and let her more pleasant dreams take her.

Xena tucked the bard's head under her chin, pulled the fur over them, listened to the crackling fire while closing her eyes. She didn't want to even attempt to get up tomorrow and disturb this sleeping position with Gabrielle. But... she couldn't let this go on forever.

Yet right now, they only slept. That was the only thing to do now to escape this

perfection they felt between each other. For they felt the perfectionism and believe it only was a one way street.

~*Part 5*~

The partners decided by the following morning to head to that village Xena spoke of yesterday. Gabrielle found the idea rather... refreshing. A new place to see instead of the never-ending forest. The vast amount of trees sometimes could almost overwhelm the young bard.

Currently the pair walked down the dirt road, a fine cloud of dust following behind them in the gentle breeze. For once Xena was not riding and walked beside her friend. Even though her friend was beside her, she still felt leagues away. Gabrielle was a league away.

The bard was a league away into her emotions. Lost inside of her. I have to wonder if she will make it through this. Well, I've heard that the good fight can only be won with support. As of now, she had little support. Oh she had help from the warrior but not the right help the bard needed to win this war. We can see the darkness stay in her and caress her soul. And if it is not soon stopped we'll be able to smell it.

I will though ask this one thing, what is the opposite of darkness? For that is what Gabrielle needs at this very moment and forever. And it is what the warrior needs, herself, to stop her personal darkness. Both women were bobbing up and down in the same boat. However, will they look towards each other?

The Amazon Princess's staff stamped the ground and she lifted her head. The air around filled her lungs deeply.

Xena turned her head to Gabrielle and smiled faintly.

The small woman felt the smile penetrate her walls and made her lift her head up. That smile reflected off her lips back to Xena.

The warrior's lips shifted into a grin and she wrapped her arm around her partner's back. "Thought you left me back there."

"Nah." Gabrielle lowered her head and studied her boots. "Just part of me."

"That's to much then."

Quickly the bard looked up to respond her mouth open. But she stopped because she saw the look on Xena's face.

The Warrior Princess's face was deathly, her eyes narrowed, and staring ahead down the road. She stopped walking and released her friend.

Gabrielle followed the gaze and quickly noticed why. Her arms instantly raised up with her staff, all to natural.

There on the road stood five grimy foul warriors... well maybe to us they're more like boys. Especially to Xena, they were more like centaur shit on a stick.

Taking a deep breath, Xena found an amused look take over. She took a step closer to

the men. "Well boys, lovely morning huh?"

One of the thugs laughed and gave a grunting response. "Oh yes, a very lovely morning." He reached to his side to unsheathe his sword. "For us anyway."

The warrior now gave her own laugh with a shake of her head, her eyes coldly narrowed. "I highly doubt that boys."

That same thug went rushing forward to take on Xena and two others followed.

The remaining two warriors went after the bard.

Gabrielle quickly moved away from Xena, not wanting to get in the way. She easily took on her two opponents.

Xena wiped the road with her enemies. She used kicks to the men's arms, legs, chest, and squarely in the groin. These wonderful moves only left the three warriors groaning and holding on to themselves in hopes for future use. The Warrior Princess though was in a good mood today, so that kept the men alive. She'd enjoyed the fighting especially since she didn't use her sword. After her opponents were sound asleep on the ground she turned to her partner.

The young woman was beating her enemies, not as fast as Xena but she was doing it. Yet scenes flashed before her, scenes over the past days. Past days of Perdicus's death, Callisto, and Gabrielle's rage. That rage came fully to life in the bard now. And her fighting went insane, her staff hitting harder then needed and moving faster then needed.

Gabrielle's two enemies soon found themselves unconscious and their bodies trying to fall to the ground but couldn't. Couldn't because Gabrielle was still fury fighting them. But eventually their bodies hit the ground hard.

Gabrielle stared down at them while breathing very heavy, she still felt the anger inside. She heard boot steps coming up behind her and the anger made her whirl around with her staff. Her actions faster then her mind lead her to swing the staff hard at the coming person.

Xena moved her hand in a blur to grasp the staff's top again. She held it tightly and peered down into feral olive eyes. The warrior's back straightened up but she let her eyes fill with love. Fill with love for Gabrielle.

The bard became a lost into Xena's eye, her breathing began to calm. Slowly her eyes began to transform into a hollow warm green. Lowering her head she mumbled out, "Sorry Xena."

"It's alright." The warrior took a deep breath. "Strike two." Releasing her friend's staff she put her hands on Gabrielle's shoulders. "How you feel?"

"Like Hades." Gabrielle shrugged out of her companion's grasp and started walking ahead. "Just... let me walk alone."

The tall woman straightened up and watched the bard keep walking down the road. Whistling, she took the walking mare's reins. Xena jumped onto Argo's back and kept at a slow walk behind Gabrielle.

The young woman took a deep breath and listened to the clip clop of Argo's hooves. With a sigh, her right hand came up through her blond bangs and fell to her side again. She lifted her eyes to the leaves rustling in the trees, her eyes began to sting now. Taking a shaky breath her eyes closed in attempt to block everything. Yet everything did the opposite and fell on her with the greatest weight ever.

~*Part 6*~

Well, I am quite intrigued to see what happens to this pair. We know so many bits of information about Xena and her best friend. I personally can not wait to see the outcome of all of this. However, I am sure you maybe as well. So being the good narrator I am, I will greatly continue on with this truth of the best friends. Exposing it for what it really is and should have been sooner.

Xena sat high on Argo's back, her eyes pinned on her best friend walking ahead. With a sigh, she tried to think of a way to ease her friend. A snort escaped from her knowing there was no way to ease things for Gabrielle. There was only one way to stop the pain. It was a way that Xena looked at once and quickly turned away from.

Gabrielle kept walking at a fast pace. The clip clop of Argo's hooves reminded her of when Callisto came after Perdicus. So much so that she closed her eyes to try and fight the memory away. That's what all of this has been about, fighting and fighting. That's what her life has been like since she met Xena, fighting. Fighting, traveling, fighting, traveling. It never seemed to stop.

The warrior studied her partner's back and her thoughts starting to take her away. Now it came, the perfect thought, so perfect that Xena shook her head. She focused on Gabrielle and she could just see the anger radiating off the bard. She could feel it from here. Kicking Argo lightly she was in a trot, catching up. "Gabrielle?"

The young woman sucked in a deep breath and stopped walking, she leaned against her staff. "Yeah?"

The tall woman pulled Argo to a halt by Gabrielle. "Let's take a break."

"No, I'm alright Xena." The bard was about to walk again but stopped at the warrior's voice.

"Take a break... for me?" Warm blue eyes caught Gabrielle in place.

Looking away, the Amazon Princess nodded. "Yeah sure."

"Good." The older woman lead Argo off the road and into the surrounding woods. Once in, she hopped off the mare to the forest floor. She led them to a clearing and there she tied Argo to a tree.

Gabrielle walked into the center of the clearing and sat down with a flop. She studied the grass in front of her and plucked it in handfuls.

A sad sigh quietly came from the warrior and she ambled over to Gabrielle. Xena knelt down in front of her partner. "Let's talk."

The bard quietly laughed. "Remember I am suppose to be the one talking."

"Exactly." The tall woman's hand rested on Gabrielle's right knee. "You're not."

"Oh I am sure it doesn't damper your day Xena." Emerald eyes held a hint of anger to them.

Xena arched a dark eyebrow. "It doesn't damper my day no. It just ruins it."

The small woman huffed and turned her head away. She will remain greatly bitter till she no longer wanted to.

Reaching out, Xena turned her companion's face to her. "Listen to me, don't you dare let yourself fall into that anger."

"And you're the one to talk Xena." Gabrielle narrowed her eyes. "You're the one-"

"I know Gabrielle." Xena's face was serious. "That's why I have room to talk because I know what will happen to you." She shook her head. "Anger and darkness is not your home."

"No it's not." The bard lowered her head. "But right now it's the only place inviting me to stay." Her hollow eyes lifted again.

A sigh and Xena lowered her hand. She studied her partner's eyes, trying to read them but she couldn't these days. Her next words were in a low whisper of desperation. "Then where do you want to go?"

Gabrielle furrowed her eyebrows at the other woman. "Where Xena? Well... I can only say where I want to go is not too far but it's in another world out of my reach." She shook her head while talking with anger. "But then I had a hand in that."

The warrior suddenly stood and reached to her back, unsheathing her sword. "Stand up." She took a step back.

Gabrielle slowly stood up with her staff. She turned her head in misunderstanding about what was happening.

Xena twisted her sword in a circle and held her hand out at her partner. "Come on attack me."

"What?" The bard furrowed her eyebrows.

"I said attack me Gabrielle." The warrior held such seriousness in her eyes and voice.

"Xena, what-"

"Gabrielle... attack me now!" Xena spun her sword again. "Can't you attack me? Show me your anger. Come on, imagine I am Callisto."

The bard narrowed her eyes. "This is not funny." Her staff came up in defense.

"I know, I am not being funny. I wanna see what you have Gabrielle." Xena took a step close to Gabrielle. "I'm Callisto, attack me. I killed your husband."

Gabrielle suddenly was breathing heavy and with a growl she attacked in a fury. "You're playing with fire Xena!"

"Oh come on Gabrielle, you've gotta be kidding me. This is fire?" The Warrior Princess easily parried the blows. "Show me your anger."

"No!" The bard kept attacking Xena but wasn't breaking her defense.

What I though happened to notice odd was the fact that Xena has yet to go on attack. She simply stayed on defense. Although just this random fighting was interesting in itself let alone Xena's actions.

The warrior kept a serious expression but continued to taunt her friend. "Give it to me Gabrielle. Let yourself loose. Remember I am Callisto, I killed Perdicus and soon I'll escape the prison."

Gabrielle jumped back with gritted teeth. Her eyes were narrow with rage, it was bubbling closer and closer to the top.

The older woman saw this and pulled out her last verbal attack with a huge grin. "I am Callisto and I will escape Gabrielle." She took a step closer. "I will escape and I will find Xena and run her through before you can even breathe. I will stand there laughing at you with Xena's *warm* blood oozing over my blade and hands."

Without warning Gabrielle disappeared and her anger took control. She was in a blur of attack on Xena.

The warrior wasn't totally expecting it but quickly adjusted. And she could see the overwhelming darkness in Gabrielle taking control. She only prayed she could purge the darkness out now and have Gabrielle return. Either it would work or she would fail and lose Gabrielle forever.

The two women fought in the clearing for a quarter of a candlemark, non-stop.

The Amazon Princess soon felt her muscles weaken but she still tried to push herself. But with weakening muscles, low energy, and fading stamina only spent her. And she found herself giving one hard last thrust and it did make contact.

Xena went stumbling back coughing, as the wind was drain from her lungs. Lifting her eyes to Gabrielle she watched the angry bard take a step back.

The young woman dropped her staff and began to cry. "Oh gods, I am gonna be sick." The anger disappeared rapidly.

The tall woman rammed her sword into the ground and came towards her friend slowly. "Gabrielle?" Her voice was so gentle.

"Xena?" The bard shook her head and only cried more. "Oh gods."

The warrior caught sight of her partner's eyes, they were not quite as hollow. She took a step closer and pulled Gabrielle into her arms.

Gabrielle only felt herself become lost into the warrior. The pain rocked her body and it sent her to the ground with Xena.

The warrior buried her head into her friend's head and fell to her knees with Gabrielle. She pulled the smaller woman up into her lap. Tears were taking her now.

Gabrielle stayed hidden in her friend's embrace while letting some of the darkness escape her. Finally, finally.

~*Part 7*~

Xena opened her stinging eyes for a moment, she kissed the top of Gabrielle's head. After that her eyes shut and her head dropped against Gabrielle's.

How the tides definitely turned, from the high drowning to low and calm. The low tide brought about less stress and let Xena see more. Let her see more and let Gabrielle see more. Now this could be so exciting I say. Don't you think so? It definitely gives me the butterflies the wonderment. So I must continue with my story to you.

The warrior's mind currently was going faster then the wind. She worked through all her years till it led up to the day in the grove with Gabrielle. That was the breaking point of everything for Xena. Why? Why? She could not figure that out for the longest of times. But as the days rolled by along with her confusion. The sun glowed over her with the understanding. She was in-love with Gabrielle in every way, shape, and form. Yet there were so many reasons to ram that love away.

Shoving, pushing, hiding, running from, burning, and killing love was not a possibility. That was one thing Xena had truly learned in her years. However she always tried especially when it came to her love for Gabrielle. She never felt like she earned the right to have love for Gabrielle. Yet she couldn't escape it.

Gabrielle, well, the young woman called it a crush for herself. But a crush has an expiration date while love does not. That supposed crush never expired and actually grew in intensity.

It was a whirlwind of emotions to confront now for both women.

Here was Gabrielle fighting darkness all the while figuring her emotions for Xena and Xena's for her.

The warrior herself was continuing her endless war against her darkness. And off to the sides the warrior was contending with her love for Gabrielle.

I have to almost laugh at that but can not for it's too serious of thing. The small part I would laugh at is the part where Xena fights darkness alone just as much as Gabrielle does now. For wherever there's darkness there is light, can't have one without the other.

"Xena?"

"Yeah?" The warrior lifted her head and peered down.

Taking a deep breath Gabrielle gazed up. "Thank you... for that." A pause. "I don't know where that came from but... it... it helped me."

"I know, trust me I know." The warrior kept her arms tight around her partner. But now she sensed Gabrielle's legs shifting to wrap around her waist. She sighed inside, she thought that not a good idea on the bard's part.

But I personally think it was a brilliant idea.

The bard took a deep breath. "Why'd... why'd you cry?"

The warrior sadly smiled, she hated those sorts of questions. But it didn't mean she wouldn't answer it. "I cried with you." Leaning forward she pressed her lips against her friend's forehead. After that, she rested her forehead against Gabrielle's own.

"Xena?" The smaller woman's voice was a bit mischief.

"Yesss?"

"Did anybody ever teach you the concept of personal space?" Gabrielle opened her eyes. They sparkled for the first time in a week.

Sky whisked eyes gradually opened, a lopsided grin took the older woman's lips. "Yesss."

"Well..." Gabrielle took a shaky breath and took a step towards Xena in the fight against darkness. "You can keep invading my space."

"Good." The warrior had a grin. "Have you ever followed the concept of personal space?"

"Yes." The Amazon Princess arched an eyebrow.

"You can have mine."

Smiling, the bard nuzzled her head into her friend's neck. "We're making this sound like we're owning each other."

The warrior's breath caught quickly. What did she just do? Oh Hades above his flames in Tartarus! Why did she just say what she did early? Why... why did she just let go? Xena let go and flowed with her love for Gabrielle. And looked at the response she got something she hadn't expected.

With a deep breath, Xena lifted her head. "Let's get up."

"Yeah." The young woman slowly released her companion and stood. She was shaking for so many reasons. The main was because of Xena's words early. They brought about a great overwhelming hope in the darkness that scared her.

The Warrior Princess lifted her sword from the ground and sheathed it. Turning back around she saw her companion get her staff. "Feel like trying to make it to the village?"

"Yeah." The small woman smile faintly. "But can I ride?"

"Of course." Xena started walking now.

Gabrielle felt a guilt bubble up and she reached out to grasp Xena's arm. "Wait Xena."

Slowly the older woman turned around and took her friend's hand. "Yeah?"

The younger woman took a deep breath and lifted her eyes to her friend. "I've gotta

tell you something... it's... it's just..." Her eyes shut. "Oh gods, I hate myself for this."

"What is it?" The warrior squeezed her partner's hand.

Gabrielle opened her eyes. "I shouldn't have married Perdicus Xena." She paused organizing her thoughts but she didn't and they came rushing out. "I shouldn't have married him, I only used him. I used him to get to you because I wanted to see how you'd react to me marrying him." She shook her head. "I'm sorry Xena... I didn't mean to hurt you. I just... oh gods Perdicus, I am sorry too."

"Hey hey." Xena took a step closer, her free hand going to Gabrielle's side. "Listen, that's my fault Gabrielle. I'm... I'm not good at telling you my emotions when I should be a little more forward."

"Xena, that's not you." The Amazon Princess shook her head. "I should be more up front instead of undermining like that to get to you. Look at what it's cost?"

The warrior went very stern. "You're human Gabrielle. You made a mistake and learned from it. Yes I agree it was a price to pay." She stopped and set her next words right. "But there is no going back. You saved Perdicus from Troy, either way he was fated to die."

"That doesn't make it any easier."

"No it won't, I agree." The older woman shook her head. "But you have no control over your destiny and another person's." Another stop but Xena persisted. "You could have never guessed Callisto would kill Perdicus. That was my fault. Don't blame yourself because I believe you would have been happy with Perdicus."

"I didn't want to be with him, that's just it."

"I know." Xena shut her eyes. "But they say let go of a person you love and if it's meant to be then the person will come back." Her eyes opened again to lock with slightly warm emerald eyes. She sadly smiled. "You know what's left Gabrielle?"

"What?"

"Cleaning up this mess that's between us in the darkness."

"Yeah." The bard sadly smiled. "Together?"

"Together."

~*Part 8*~

"How you feel back there?"

Gabrielle squeezed her arms around the warrior's waist with a hidden grin. "Not bad."

"Good." Xena kicked Argo's side lightly into a walk. She held onto the reins with both hands. Taking a deep breath she spoke. "Why don't you try to sleep?"

The bard rested her head against her partner's back. "No."

"Why not?"

"Nightmares."

The older woman's right hand came down to grasp Gabrielle's. "Go to sleep, I'll be here."

Without a word the small woman shut her eyes and let herself relax in the knowledge of Xena's presence.

The warrior could feel her friend's breathing eventually lighten along with her hold. But Xena's right hand held tightly to Gabrielle's hands.

It was mid afternoon for the women and they were headed directly to the village. There'd been too many sidetracks while trying to get to this village today. But they were all worth it.

And well this remaining distance to the village was covered with no issues. The pair coming to the edge of the village and Xena stopping Argo.

Sighing Xena had turned a little in the saddle to wake her friend. "Gabrielle."

"Hmmm." The small woman nuzzled the side of her face against Xena's back.

"Come on wake up." Her right hand fell to pat her friend's leg. "Come on."

"This is really comfortable."

The Warrior Princess chuckled with her grin. "Well, I don't plan on sleeping on Argo tonight." She got a snickered response. "Come on."

"Alright... alright." The bard lifted her head and faintly shook it to shake out the sleepiness. "That was a good dream you ruined."

"Oh?" The warrior kicked her mare lightly to head into the village. "What was it about?"

"Um." The small woman's face began to heat up with her body. "Just one of those dreams."

Xena quietly laughed. "Really? Who was it with?"

Gabrielle's eyes bugged out as she hastily came up with any person but the truthful person. "You know... I really can not recall now. You know dreams you sort of forget after a few minutes from waking up."

"Uh huh." The older woman had a huge grin on her lips. "Well if it comes to you, please tell me." She'd said that in a low voice.

Gabrielle's eyes quickly narrowed in suspicion. Is she flirting with Gabrielle? The bard balled up that idea and threw it into the trashcan. "Right."

Soon the partners were inside of the village and ambling into an inn slash tavern together. The bard carried their saddlebags in her left arm, her staff in her other hand. They came up to the bartender.

Xena took this one. "We need a room."

Warm eyes of the bartender rose up in greeting. "Two beds? It will cost extra."

Gabrielle lifted her head up to the warrior in question.

The tall woman looked down at Gabrielle. She studied her friend. Personal space? "A single bed." She lifted her eyes again.

The innkeeper nodded and turned around to a wall that held an array of keys. He reached up to one, grabbed it, but stopped. His hand moved to the right and plucked those keys from the hook. He turned to the women and held out the keys in his palm. "Seven dinars."

Xena held her right hand out to Gabrielle.

The small woman nodded, leaned her staff against the bar and reached into the saddlebags. She easily extracted a sack of dinars and tossed it up to the warrior.

The Warrior Princess snatched it out of mid-air, opened it, and handed over the dinars. She received the key and turned to the stairs.

Gabrielle followed behind after snatching her staff. Following her partner they finally came to their room after the long stretch of a hall. Inside she plopped the bag down on the bed.

Xena turned her head to the left to see an open doorway that lead outside. "Hmmm, there's a ledge."

The younger woman looked and saw the doorway. "There is." She grinned. "Awesome."

The warrior grinned and padded out onto the ledge to find two wood chairs and a table between. With a smile, she lifted her eyes over the short railing to see the sun beginning its final half of a candlemark decent. The sunset would be over the village.

"Gabrielle?"

The bard came migrating out to stand beside her partner. "Ohhh, that's going to be a nice sunset."

"Yeah." Xena shifted to the close chair and sat down. Stretching her legs out, she propped them up on the railing. Slowly she began to lean back and then remembered the sword. "Hades."

"I got it." The small woman shifted to stand behind Xena as she leaned forward. Carefully Gabrielle unclipped her companion's sword and placed it down on the table.

"Thanks."

"No problem." Gabrielle found herself in the other seat. Her eyes lowered down to the street below, it was buzzing with people. "Have you ever sat back and people watched?"

"No." Xena turned her head to Gabrielle. "Been to busy for that."

The bard chuckled and smiled over to Xena. "Well it's real interesting to people

watch." She took a deep breath. "Especially for a bard. Can get lots of ideas to create characters with."

The older woman quietly laughed. "I can see that." Her eyes turned down at the people below, watching them. "Definitely interesting."

They both fell silent while doing some people watching.

Gabrielle randomly started to giggle.

Xena glanced over to her friend in question.

The bard shook her head and sighed. "See that mother and her daughters down there?"

Blue eyes gazed at the scene. "Yesss."

"Reminds me of Lila and I."

Xena peopled watched this mother and daughters carefully. Seeing the two daughters tease each other left and right and the mother trying to keep them under control. Slowly a grin spread across her lips. "Mmm I can see it now."

Gabrielle sighed at the old memory, it made her feel good. She hadn't felt good in days, which made it extra special. "You know, sometimes it was hard being the older sister... still is."

"I'm sure." The tall woman took a deep breath. "Never had a sister."

"Be glad."

"Be glad you didn't have a brother, let alone two."

"Right." Gabrielle chuckled. "I'm glad I have an older sister."

Rapidly blue eyes turned. "Well, a younger sister is always nice."

The bard smiled warmly. "Good." However I still notice Gabrielle's eyes tinted with hollowness. "What's it like being the middle child?"

"Horrible." Xena shook her head. "Being crunched."

"Mmm." Emerald eyes turned away. "I see you as the best part." A small smile took her lips. "You know, like a cake, you're the best part, the frosting."

Slowly warm sapphires studied Gabrielle. "Thank you." Xena held her left hand out to her partner.

Gabrielle carefully took her friend's warm large hand.

Xena's held the bard's hand with her warm smile.

Their eyes were locked in depth.

The warrior squeezed and released without wanting to. Turning her head back to the sun, she saw the beginnings of the sunset. "Alone?"

The bard was now watching the sunset and thought about the question. "No." It was

truth passing her lips, no lie.

Xena smiled because she knew it was truth as well. Not just by Gabrielle's voice, her tone, or her own intuition. But knew because she no longer felt alone herself. "Good."

The younger woman sighed with a touch of happiness to it. "I feel so tired."

"I know." The warrior's head moved up and down. "Hungry too?"

A chuckle. "Yes."

"How about we eat after the sunset?"

"Sounds like a plan." Contently the bard stretched her legs out and crossed them at the ankles.

Neither female said a word after that and let themselves become lost in the sunset. As the sun's rays streamed across the sky in shades of yellow, red, and orange. Purples here and there revealed without warning.

Near the end of the sunset the air crept with the scent of food cooking. Gabrielle's stomach soon smelled it, so to speak, and it voiced its opinion about the scent.

Xena laughed and smiled over to her friend. "Ready for dinner?"

The small woman grinned over. "I think my stomach is, yes."

"Let's go." The tall woman stood up and picked up her sword, clipped it on, and went inside the room.

The bard was in next and coming up behind Xena.

The warrior turned around. "How you feel?" Pure seriousness.

"Really?" Emerald eyes gazed up. "Tired." A pause. "My spirit is tired Xena." Her right hand came up to run through her bangs, her eyes closed.

"I'm sorry." The warrior's hands soon rested on Gabrielle's hips.

"It's... it's not your fault Xena."

"If you hadn't met me then it would have never happened."

"No it wouldn't have." The small woman shook her head. "No, I'd just be a slave." She lifted her eyes to lock with Xena. "I like this path a lot more... love this path."

Xena took a deep breath. "Truthfully... I'd rather have Perdicus die if it meant you weren't a slave." Her eyes averted away but came back. "I'm sorry for that truth, it's wrong."

"No, it's human." Taking a deep breath Gabrielle shut her eyes. Opening them again her arms wrapped around Xena's waist. "I also rather have had that happen Xena." She shook her head. "I wouldn't have survived if you didn't come to that grove."

"I know the feeling." The warrior sadly smiled.

A tension filled silence enclosed them.

"Personal space Xena."

Xena searched her friend's eyes after those words. Should she even dare think of leaning closer to Gabrielle let alone do it? Would Gabrielle become scared over it? Here she was concerned about whether a kiss would make or break the relationship while she was holding Gabrielle. A bit odd? There was no risk.

Slowly the warrior bent down and carefully brushed her lips against Gabrielle's. She didn't feel her friend response. Xena lifted her head up and opened her eyes to see Gabrielle open her own.

The bard stood there with wide eyes, heavy breathing, and warmth flushing over her, and racing emotions.

Xena took to notice of it all and it placed a contented look on her face.

"Xena... did you... did what happen... is my dre..." Gabrielle shook her head and laughed to get the shock out of her body. "Um... do that again."

Xena smiled lovingly and gradually lowered her head while closing her eyes.

Again the bard felt the smooth warm lips touch hers. Last time she was shocked now she was better prepared and took Xena's lips.

The warrior felt the invite and slipped her tongue into the other woman's mouth. She soon sensed a small hand behind her head pushing the kiss on. An easy compile came from Xena.

Pulling her head up a little, Xena opened her eyes and gazed into warm emeralds. She was getting Gabrielle back from the darkness.

The small woman smiled and took a shaky breath. "How about dinner?" Her voice was a quick whisper.

The older woman grinned. "Definitely."

"Great." Gabrielle quickly moved out of Xena's embrace, still collecting herself. She went to get her staff.

Xena's arms went against her chest, she was smiling with pure warmth. Her eyes stayed pinned on her friend. She felt her body shaking all over.

Taking a deep breath, the bard snatched her staff and whirled around. "Let's go."

The warrior nodded with a smile and walked over to the door, opening it.

The young woman followed, her entire body was shaking with warmth. Her chest raised up and down with depth. "Breathe... breathe." Gabrielle stepped out and closed the door behind. "I can do this...breathe."

The door silently shut.

~*Part 9*~

Now where were we? Ah yes, the two glorious women decided to dine together in the tavern. Now then, let's continue on with this little story that will be known till time's end.

The pair were down in the tavern, tense, and smiling from ear to ear. So much smiling it hurt their faces, they'd have to smack their own smiles off to rid them. But oh how that ache of the smile they enjoyed and would not rid.

"Xena?"

"Mmm?" The warrior relaxed back in her seat.

"Think we can check out the stars tonight on the ledge?"

The tall woman's head moved up and down. "Oh yeah."

"Perfect." The bard sat back into her seat, crossing her arms over her warm stomach. Warm because of the overwhelming feelings Xena awakened from her soul.

Suddenly Xena went serious and sat up. "Gabrielle..." She stopped, her eyes flickering around in the dark inn.

The small woman furrowed her eyebrows while sitting up. "Xena." She locked her eyes with the warrior's "Hey what?"

The older woman sighed and focused on her partner. "Why did you marry Perdicus?"

"I told you." Gabrielle shook her head. "Because I wanted to force you to admit any deep feelings you might have had for me... stop me from the marriage... do something. Anything."

Xena quickly reached forward to the bard's small hand on the table. "Why?" She squeezed the smaller hand. "Why would you do something like that?"

The young woman studied her friend's expression and understood what she was asking. "Because... I am in-love with you."

The warrior's head moved in understanding while a warm smile spread across her lips. "Good."

The bard chuckled and laced her fingers with Xena's. "This... this isn't going to be easy."

"I know." Xena took a long breath. "Take your time with this relationship because I'll need to."

Gabrielle chuckled. "I'll need to... mentally. Still feel like I am in the darkness"

"Hey." The older woman grinned to her partner. "See you in the light."

"Definitely."

After the long and pleasant dinner, the two returned to their room. And stood side by side out on the ledge as they peered up to the stars and arms against their chests.

Xena lowered her eyes to her friend. Her left arm came to rest on the bard's shoulder gently drawing her close. "Come here."

Gabrielle voiced nothing, she could only physically respond. So she stepped in front of her companion waiting for what would happen next. Her body flared with fire when heated arms came around her waist. She closed her eyes at the feeling, and soon found her back pressing against cool brass armor. "Oh gods," she whispered.

The warrior lowered her head. "Is this okay?"

"Oh yeah." Dazzling emeralds opened. "Too okay."

Xena chuckled and lifted her eyes to the sky. "I agree."

The bard closed her eyes and whispered, "Oh gods." Her chest now began to fall and rise with increasing speed. "I can do this."

Xena let a smirk play her lips while reminding, "Just breathe."

"Right." Gabrielle nodded quickly. "Perfect idea." She laughed trying to ease the tension then took a deep breath. "Breathe Gabrielle."

The tall woman lowered her lips close to Gabrielle's ear. "Relax... just let go."

Gabrielle filled her lungs with crisp air again, slowly releasing it, and relaxed into her friend. "I'm good." But that didn't last long as the warrior's warm lips brushed against her ear. She moaned in response when Xena lifted her head back up.

"Have you ever seen the Gemini in the sky before Gabrielle?"

"Nnno, haven't looked lately."

Xena laughed and dropped her head back. "Well, look straight up." She was glad to hear Gabrielle cracking jokes again.

The bard did the same, dropping her head back into Xena's breasts. That same warm feeling of grandeur came to life inside of her.

"See those two main stars, really big?" Xena stared up to the brightly gleaming stars straight up.

"Oh yeah, those are really big breas... stars."

Blue eyes lowered to brilliant emeralds.

The bard still had her head resting against her partner's. She no longer gazed at the stars but yet into twinkling sapphire eyes. "Hi." A sheepish grin tweaked her lips.

"Hi yourself. How's the view?" Xena's eyes still held the twinkle but with a deep mischief.

"Awe striking." Gabrielle grinned. "How about yours?"

"Mmm very beautiful." The warrior smiled warmly. Yet even more when she saw Gabrielle's eyes finally come warm after so many days.

Everything was falling into place perfectly

The smaller woman shut her eyes when a warm hand glided up her stomach.

Xena grinned at the response she was receiving from her partner. The strong stomach under her hand was quivering from her light touch. Her hand came to rest directly under Gabrielle's green top.

"Oh gods." The bard felt as if she were starting to melt away into this and she slowly turned around to face her partner. Her left hand went around the warrior's waist, while the other found Xena's head to lower closely. "Xena?"

"Yeah?" The older woman's full lips were so close to touching Gabrielle's.

"Remember this conversation we were having earlier?"

"Yess." The warrior's lips spread with an evil grin.

"Let's finish it." Gabrielle leaned in to press her lips onto Xena's in a powerful kiss.

Well, who's left feeling as warm as this pair? Surely I must continue with such a story as this? Well... we'll see if I am that sort of a narrator.

~*Part 10*~

Gabrielle found her jaw clamped tightly and her wrists pinned to the bed above her head. Her eyes were closed firmly and now her body arched up into a warm nude body above. "Xena."

The warrior grinned and shifted her grasp on her partner's wrists. She kept her lips so closely to Gabrielle's breasts, just taunting. Her knees however were planted into the bed right between her bard's legs. Moving her legs wider she spread Gabrielle's legs open.

The bard felt her body's riptide of heat crash through and flow to her center. The breeze from the ledge doorway was not even near cooling her bare body. For now she sensed her body becoming coated with a thin layer of perspiration.

Xena shifted her head down close to her companion's ear. "Are you sure?"

"Yess." The small woman tried to shift her hands but found it useless compared to the other woman's strength. "I was sure the firsst day I met you."

The Warrior Princess grinned and took Gabrielle's lips. And as she kissed this younger woman she pulled those small arms down. After the kiss she released the small wrists and her hands embedded to the soft covers of the bed. She lowered her lips back down to take Gabrielle's.

The bard's hand instantly went to the older woman's hips. She pulled Xena's hips down against her own. Heat shots that contracted to her center. "Xena." Her eyes opened and they morphed into a deep forest green of passion.

The warrior grinned and lowered her head down close to Gabrielle's head. "Sssh, let go when I tell you." Her head lifted back up with her deep twinkles warping through

her eyes. "Because I'll take care of you."

Gabrielle's right hand rapidly came up to push Xena's lips down to her own. It was searing kiss leaving the women gasping for life.

Xena's lips then traced down to Gabrielle's right breast, her lips caressing the hard nipple there.

The bard lifted her head and dropped it back with closed eyes. Her right hand came up to run through the midnight hair. But her other hand was grasping the bed sheets for control over the killing heat.

The warrior finally stopped her tease and just took the breast while her right hand went down to caress along Gabrielle's thigh.

The Amazon Princess moaned deeply and kept running her right hand through her partner's black hair that tickled her stomach. But now she went with a natural instinct and let her hips roll up and down against Xena's hips. In response she heard her lover groan with pleasure.

And at the right moment Xena was no longer just building her partner up with the teasing and pleasing. But she was soon releasing Gabrielle into the sweet ecstasy with her fingers. The warrior disappeared into Gabrielle's own ecstasy when her name echoed through the room. For Gabrielle's voice held that power over Xena.

So that left the Warrior Princess slumped on the bed beside her partner. Her left arm draped casually over Gabrielle's breasts with her legs intertwined with Gabrielle's legs. "Gabrielle?" She lifted her head up.

The bard took a deep breath and part of her came around. "Xena..." She was caught up in her emotions and her body's feelings.

Xena's lips took on a grin, she bent down to place a gentle kiss to her bard's lips. "Relax."

"Trying." Gabrielle had a smirk but reached up to brush back Xena's wet bangs. "You went with me."

"How couldn't I?" A smile took over the tall woman's lips. "You hold a power over me."

"Same here." Gabrielle sat up a little to kiss her warrior gently. "Oh gods, I don't think I have any energy."

"No?" The older woman was nuzzling her lover's neck "We only have... nine candlemarks till dawn."

"Mmm good." The small woman's hand crept down between Xena's stomach and the bed. Her hand slipped down to warm center of Xena. "You need to join me in the world of rapture."

Xena shut her eyes instantly as a finger opened her folds. Soon she'd float away into a world of pleasure only by Gabrielle's pure demand.

~*Part 11*~

Now then, that following morning slowly woke the pair up, slowly as in late.

Gabrielle had the side of her cheek pressed against the side of her partner's face. Then ever so pleasantly her small-framed body was sprawled over the warrior's warm body.

Xena's right arm was draped over her own stomach and her hand rested on Gabrielle's side. However her other arm was directly under her bard's stomach. Her eyes were easing open to the late morning. Now this was a good way to wake up every morning. Why hadn't she done this sooner? Ah right, those fears. She should have been ramming those fears and not her love for Gabrielle. But the price was paid.

The small woman was coming out of her dreams now.

The warrior felt warm lips press against her shoulder. With a turn of her head she kissed the side of her lover's head. "Morning."

Gabrielle quietly laughed. "You mean *good* morning?"

"Mmm, to say the least." Xena sighed contently and let her fingertips brush up and down her fiend's side.

A grin masking her lips, Gabrielle lifted her head. "I love you."

"I love you too." A warm smile had drawn across the warrior's lips.

The Amazon Princess lowered her head to take Xena's lips. How the heat shots went through her body. She had to wonder if she'd ever be able to stop them. But why would she ever want to?

Xena moaned into the kiss while sliding her fingertips down to her bard's thigh.

Gabrielle grudgingly pulled back from the kiss and lowered her head against her warrior's chest. "It's late huh?"

"Yeah." Now the warrior sensed her partner's hand caressing her stomach.

The bard was fascinated with her lover's soft but muscular stomach, it highly interested her along with the rest of Xena's body. "I'm not in the mood to move."

Xena laughed with a smile. "I'll agree to that."

"You think we should leave today?"

"Nope."

The small woman lifted her head in surprise by the truthful statement. "Really?"

"Definitely." A huge grin was flowing across the warrior's lips. "Do you want to leave?"

"Not at all." Gabrielle brought up her arms to rest on Xena's chest. Her chin came down to rest on her arms. "A day off won't kill us."

"Mmm, we've definitely earn it." The older woman's light fingertips glided up to her

lover's middle back. "You have."

The bard's eyes shut while a heat rush shot through her body causing a shiver.

That same heat ripple found its way into Xena when Gabrielle's hand stopped its decent right above her center. Her chest rose high and Xena's eyes went dark.

"Xena?"

"Yeah." The Warrior Princess's voice was in a controlling whisper.

"We're going to make it out of this... the darkness."

"We will." A smile couldn't help but find its way on Xena's face. "Together."

"That's the only path I know." Gabrielle's confident smile was in place and she sealed her words with a kiss.

And when she pulled back Xena spoke her last words I leave us with. "I promise... we will, only soulmates could."

That's where I end this with to you because that's where I contently sigh. This is the point where the truth finally came to life between these soulmates. How perfectly fitting of an ending for this perspective story. I am happily satisfied. Are you left happily satisfied as I am?

The End