

~ Switched Up ~

by Red Hope

Disclaimers:

Violence: Yes, there definitely will be some violent scenes.

Subtext: Oh, always a yes!

Copyright: We know that Universal owns Xena, Gabrielle, Janice, Melinda, and Argo. However, I own Schiller (or better known as Shit-ller) along with the story line.

Time Frame: Sixth season Xena and Gabrielle. Can you tell I'm hooked to this season?

Note: Yup, yup I am back at it again. I've begun yet another crossover. Oh the places my imagination will go huh? Please let me know if you enjoy this new crossover.

Dedication: This story is dedicated to the most divine of women, Mom Bard. She absolutely loves Janice and Melinda so she couldn't stop begging for this story.

Mom, I hope you immensely enjoy this story. Its all for you, hun. Thank you for becoming my mother. I love you dearly!

Feedback can be sent to me at... redhope@redhope.net

Started: December 8th 2000, Friday

"Sleep well," whispered the warrior.

Gabrielle held back her yawn. She glanced at the low fire in the middle of the camp. She was exhausted from traveling all day. But it made her smile and she lifted her head. Leaning in, she kissed her soulmate gently on the lips. "Night Xen."

The Warrior Princess smiled warmly at the end of the kiss. She peered over Gabrielle to see her sais near the bed. *Smart warrior*, mused the Xena. She closed her eyes and pulled Gabrielle in close.

The warrior-bard soon faded into her dreamscape. The dream was wild and something Gabrielle thought only her imagination could have created. It was about herself being some kind of person that researched history. Xena was even in it and she could translate Greek. Even weirder, Xena in the dream had a funny accent and didn't quite act like... well Xena.

Part One- Waking Up Anew

Gabrielle shifted out of her dream. She kept her eyes closed and sighed deeply. She felt her lover beside her; it left her smiling.

Her eyebrows furrowed together at realizing something. She wasn't wearing her velvet, red warrior attire. Instead she was wearing pants or something that covered her entire body. Slowly, she opened her eyes and stared up.

Her heart stopped and she studied her new surroundings, she wasn't outdoors anymore. It was a tent: a very large brown tent. "Oh god... where am I?" Turning her head to the left, she found Xena beside her. She sighed in relief at seeing her lover.

The Amazon Queen shifted and leaned down, she gently kissed her soulmate on the lips.

Xena awoke but didn't respond to the kiss, she actually tried to refuse it. Yet, she gave in and returned the kiss with a little fear.

Gabrielle ended the kiss, worried about how Xena responded. She lifted her head with a confused, worried expression. "Xena, are you alright?"

The dark haired woman furrowed her eyebrows. "Janice?" Her face was turning red, probably from the kiss.

The warrior-bard just became more confused. "Janice?" she whispered. That was the name from her dream. Her long strawberry blond hair fell forward more. Gabrielle brushed it back and her eyes widened at realizing she had long hair. "By the gods!" She leaped out of the bed and lifted a bit of her long hair. Her breathing was becoming labored. "What... what's going on?"

The tall woman sat up in the bed. "Are you okay, Janice?"

Gabrielle took a step back. "Xena, why are you calling me Janice?" She held up her hands. After shaking her head, she looked at her body and noticed she had on pants and a button up shirt. Button, what's a button? Gabrielle was thinking.

"Janice, its okay." The older woman got out of the bed. "Remember me? You're partner? Melinda Pappas?"

The Amazon Queen shook her head. "This is a dream," she whispered.

"My lord, naw it ain't, Janice." Melinda grasped the smaller woman's shoulders. "Ya jus' had uh weird dream. You'll be fine once we start digging again."

Gabrielle said nothing then whispered, "Mmmmel, this is hard to explain but... I'm not Janice." She paused. "My name is Gabrielle."

The southerner pressed the palm of her right hand against the smaller woman's forehead. "You feel fine."

The small warrior pulled the large hand away from her forehead. "I'm serious," she growled.

Melinda blinked and stared into green eyes. She noticed that Janice wasn't quite... Janice. The brassy, rough, and tough archeologist she'd come to love. "You ain't Janice," she whispered in fear. She stepped back, closer to the bed.

"That's what I was saying." Gabrielle sighed and ran her fingers through her long hair. That was an odd feeling, to have her hair long again. "Look... Mel, I don't know how I got here... wherever here is but I'm not Janice."

"Okay." The southerner breathed calmly and asked, "You're saying you're Gabrielle..."

the bard from Potidaea?"

The Amazon Queen nodded. "Yes, I travel with this warrior named-

"Xena," finished the belle. "Oh my..." Melinda half sat, half fell onto the bed. She put her right hand over her chest and repeated, "Oh my." She was stunned so she considered on being a proper bell and fainting. But she didn't let herself faint because this was too interesting. "How... how..." She stumbled with her words.

Gabrielle shook her head. "I don't know." She crossed her arms against her chest. "I just know I was dreaming about myself being some woman that dug up my own scrolls and I found Ares... you were in it."

It dawned on Melinda. "That happened jus' yesterday... Gabrielle." She tilted her head. "You're Janice's ancestor."

The pieces were coming together for Gabrielle. Somehow, somehow space and time mixed up Janice and Gabrielle. That meant Janice had to be in Gabrielle's body. Now the only question left was, how is Janice doing with Xena?

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Xena glanced over at her partner sleeping in the furs still. She creased her lips with a grin. "Somethings never change over five years," she whispered to her new mare. "You ready, girl?"

The mare whined and nodded.

"Me too." The warrior turned to Gabrielle and strolled over to her. She knelt down beside the smaller warrior. Reaching forward, she combed her hand gently through short blond hair. "Time to wake up." Xena caressed her lover's cheek.

"Not yet," stated Gabrielle.

The Warrior Princess grinned and leaned down. Her lips captured Gabrielle's in a warm, delicate kiss. At first, she found her partner refusing the kiss but gave in and returned with passion. She grinned when the kiss was over.

Gabrielle opened her eyes, they were harder than normal. They also were very confused. "What the Hell was that, Mel?"

Xena did a double-take. "Gggabrielle?" Her eyes narrowed with suspicion. Anything was possible that was one thing she learned in these five years.

The warrior-bard shook her head. "Mel, why the Hell are you calling me Gabrielle and kissing me?" She sat up before her expression suddenly dropped once she saw what Xena was wearing. "Jesus Christ, wh-wh..." She leaped out of the bedroll and stumbled back with her hands up. "Who the Hell are you?"

The warrior stood up slowly and she shifted herself into a stoic attitude. "The name is Xena." She corked an eyebrow. "And you are?"

"Janice... Janice Covington." The younger woman tilted her head. "You're... Xena, the Warrior Princess?"

The Warrior Princess folded her arms. "The same." She took a step closer. "So, why are you in my partner's body?"

Janice shook her head. She lifted her arms and saw the silver bracelets. She gazed down. She was wearing a red, velvet skirt and small top. Her horror filled eyes rose back up to Xena. "You thought I was... Gabrielle the Bard of Potidaea?"

"Yesss," answered the warrior.

"Holy shit," muttered Janice. "I'm in my ancestor's body."

"Who are you?" growled Xena.

Janice looked up and smiled. "Like I said, I'm Janice Covington and I'm... I'm from the future."

Xena stared at her, she didn't know how to respond to this. "And you're Gabrielle's descendent?"

"Yes," answered Janice. "I'm friends with your descendent too. Her name is-"

"Mel," Xena cut in.

Janice nodded. "Yes, and we had just finished salvaging some of Gabrielle's lost scrolls and stopped Ares."

"Ares?" whispered the older woman. She made a mental note of that for future reference. "Then Gabrielle must be in your body in your time."

Janice nodded in agreement. "Look about earlier, sorry." She grinned. "Was a little freaky."

The warrior carked an eyebrow but turned and went towards Argo. "Get the bedroll, we're leaving."

The archeologist stared at Xena. "You're serious?"

"Yes," called the dark woman. "We'll figure this out later."

"Great," mumbled the small woman. "I'm stuck in this stupid bard's body and I'm getting a 'please wait' sign." She rolled her eyes and knelt down to get the bedroll. Beside the bedroll, she noticed a pair of sais. She concluded they were Gabrielle's and took them. For a moment, she tried figuring out where they belonged.

"On the sides of your boots," helped the warrior. She smirked.

Janice peered up with a semi-glare. She inserted them onto the sides of her boots and stood up. "You're a real smartass, aren't you?"

Xena took the bedrolls. "Just like you," she retorted and put the bedroll away in the saddlebags. "Let's travel. Oh, your horse is over there, tacked up." She mounted her mare. "Take care of him."

The archeologist came around the mare and spotted the smaller bay. "Wonderful," she muttered. She walked over, took the reins, and led the horse. Janice just followed

Xena. What other choices did she have right now? But one thing she did wonder, was how Melinda was doing with Gabrielle?

Part Two- Acting 101

Gabrielle sat down in the chair and crossed one ankle over the other. "Explain to me again what happened?" Her attention focused on the southerner, who sat on the bed.

Melinda sighed and folded her hands in her lap while keeping her back straight. "Janice and I were in the tomb. A couple of men tried to stop us while we were searching for Gab... your scrolls."

The warrior nodded. "What about Ares?"

"He was there too." The southerner shrugged. "He just wanted tuh get out of the tomb."

"How'd you stop him?" Gabrielle felt like she was in an interrogation.

"That's the interesting part." Melinda paused and sighed. "It's hard to explain, but Xena's soul or essence... she took my body over."

The warrior was silent and tried to think. "There has to be some kind of connection with that."

"Or Ares has uh hand in this," suggested the belle.

Gabrielle huffed. "That wouldn't surprise me either." She sighed and considered her options, there were few.

"You're stuck here," stated Melinda.

The small woman peered up at the belle. "Never say never." She grinned.

The aristocrat chuckled and smiled but lost it. "I reckon you're gonna have tuh play Janice for awhile, Gabrielle."

"Oh no," grumbled the warrior. "You're right."

"It ain't that hard."

Gabrielle raised an eyebrow. "This going to be bad, I can tell already."

Melinda laughed quietly. "Well all ya gotta do is be in a bad mood all the time."

The warrior's face dropped. "You're telling me my descendent is a grouch?"

"I wouldn't say uh grouch but she's not nice." The southerner grinned faintly. "She's just tough."

"Alright, brief me on how she acts." The warrior smirked to herself. "Probably the same way she did in my dream," she mumbled under her breath.

"Well first, let's get ya dressed right." The belle stood up and strolled over to a broken, beaten trunk. On top rested a leather jacket, whip, gun, and half-smoked cigar. Melinda crinkled her nose when she saw the cigar, she just tossed it aside. Taking the

other items, she came over to the short strawberry-blond. "Stand up."

Gabrielle rose up and waited.

"First this." The belle handed the jacket.

The warrior-bard slipped into it and adjusted the jacket. She quickly picked up on a funny scent with the jacket. "What is that?"

"Cigar smoke." Melinda held out the gun. "Get use to that, she fancies them quite a bit."

The small woman took the revolver and turned it up and down. "What is this?"

"Uh gun... weapon." Pappas tucked the whip under her arm and snatched the gun. "Here's how ya use it." She pulled back the hammer and held it up. "Then you jus' pull this little thing."

"That?" Gabrielle pointed at the tiny trigger.

"Yes." Melinda demonstrated and pulled the trigger.

Suddenly there was boom, and the smoke lingered up from the barrel.

The warrior-bard cringed. She looked across the tent and saw a tiny hole. "That's all it does?"

"Yes, well actually." Melinda quickly handed the gun back with a shaky hand. "Its rather dangerous," she said hastily. "I shouldn't had done that," she mumbled.

Gabrielle turned the gun every which way again. She lifted it up, cocked the hammer, and pulled the trigger. She jumped when the bullet went reeling from the barrel. "For Eli's sakes," she whispered.

"Holy shit!" yelled a high-pitched man's voice. "Dog gone, who's shooting around here?"

Melinda's eyes widened.

The warrior peered up at her friend. "Whoops." She laughed.

"Put it away," whispered the southerner when the man came rushing in.

"What you two janes tryen to do, blow me away?"

Gabrielle and Melinda turned to the man in the tent flap.

The aristocrat quickly responded, "Sorry Jack... Janice didn't know." She smiled shyly. "Why are ya back here?"

The warrior-bard tried to not let her expression go into shock at seeing this guy that looked exactly like Joxer. *This is getting ridicules*, thought Gabrielle with amusement.

"Well, sweetheart... I figured out I took the wrong pack last night from you dames." Jack came over with his pack on his back. He swung it off, trying to be cool, but failed and almost stumbled.

Gabrielle sprung forward and helped him.

"Thanks, Janice."

"You're welcome."

Jack did a double-take at the politeness that came from the gruff archeologist.

The small woman saw the confusion so she switched her attitude in seconds. "Why don't you be more careful, next time?" she growled. She sighed in annoyance and stepped back next to Melinda.

"Well you know, I didn't have to come back." Jack straightened up with pride.

"Can we just have the damn bag back?" snarled Gabrielle.

Jack sighed and dropped his shoulders. "As long as you still have my pack," he accused.

Melinda cut in quickly, "We still have it, Jack. Wait here and I'll go get it." She handed Gabrielle the whip, left the tent and went to the truck.

"So..." Jack pressed his lips together, thinking. "Planning any good digs, Janice?"

Gabrielle rolled her eyes. "Not yet," she stated. She looked at her side and figured out how to attach the whip. She tied it on. "Why?" She peered back up. "Planning to come bust into the middle of my damn dig again, Jox... Jack?"

"No," said the man proudly. "I have better plans."

Gabrielle rolled her eyes. She pulled out the revolver and she tried to recall from her dream how to open the barrel. She figured it out and opened the barrel chamber.

Jack took a step back. "Well, I think I'll be heading back to New York, myself."

"That's nice," said Gabrielle nonchalantly. She noticed there were only two round things left inside. She thought and reached inside of the leather pocket. She extracted a few more round things and slipped them into the empty sockets. "Just don't show up on my digs again," she warned while slamming the barrel closed. "Without an invite." Gabrielle spun the barrel and heard it click. *Oh, this could be fun.*

Jack nodded briskly.

The small warrior lifted the gun and pointed it at Joxer's descendent. "Is that clear?"

Jack held up his hands. "I swear, Jan... I won't touch your blinken digs." He smiled fakely.

Gabrielle smiled evilly. "Wonderful." She lowered the gun and slipped it roughly into the holster on her side. She glanced to the tent when Melinda came in. "Find it, sweetheart?"

Melinda almost stumbled at how much Gabrielle sounded like Janice. "Uh... yes." She was starting to think that it was Janice by the way Gabrielle was carrying herself. With a smile, she faced Jack. "Here's your pack, Mr. Kleinman."

"Thanks." The man took his pack and handed over the other one. "Well, I have to rush off, ya dig?"

The southerner sighed. "Oh, I dig." She stepped aside.

"So soon?" asked Gabrielle with a smirk. "Don't wanna hang around, Jack?"

"No, can't miss the flight back to the big apple." The man left the tent quickly.

The warrior-bard chuckled to herself and smiled.

"You did something," accused the belle.

Gabrielle grinned. "Nah." She rubbed the back of her neck while watching Melinda go to that trunk again. "So, what now?"

"You become Janice," declared the aristocrat as she turned around holding a brown hat.

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"What the Hell? I am not acting like Gabrielle," growled Janice.

The Warrior Princess stepped closer to the small woman. "Yes you are," stated the warrior. She narrowed her eyes. "You are in her body, people will think and say you are Gabrielle." She paused and let her voice go deeper. "I can't have my seeming partner going around acting like a drunken sailor."

"Oh that's real rich," jabbed the archeologist. She was walking down the road, beside Xena with Gabrielle's horse trailing behind.

Xena breathed deeply and attempted relaxing. Her grip on her horse's reins was strong. She tried another approach. "Have you ever tried acting?"

Janice glared. "That's the dumbest thing-"

The Warrior Princess instantly covered the woman's mouth. "Sssh." She stopped walking and felt her body tense up.

"Bhat?" mumbled the small woman through the hand.

Xena removed her hand and pointed ahead to the forest. "Over there."

Janice looked that way and spotted three men coming through the forest. "So?"

"We're about to have trouble." The warrior laughed deeply and placed her mare's reins on the saddle. "Get ready."

"Get ready? What the Hell am I suppose to do?"

"Fight," stated Xena. She stepped ahead while unsheathing her sword. "Morning boys." She propped the sword against her shoulder.

Janice couldn't believe this but she placed the reins of the horse on the saddle. She joined Xena and folded her arms.

The boys came out of the woods with sly grins. They unsheathed their swords or pulled out their maces.

"Can we help you?" taunted the warrior.

The male warriors laughed and didn't say anything, they did by their actions. They all raced forward and took on Xena and Janice.

"Holy shit," yelled Janice. She jumped right as a mace swiped past her stomach. "Come on, you stupid asshole." She held up her hands, grinned, and bent her knees. "You couldn't hit the broad side of a barn, you dumbass."

The warrior growled and attacked Janice.

The archeologist laughed then leaped up. She performed a roundhouse kick in midair.

The enemy went flying onto his back and coughing.

"Ha." Janice grinned and held up her hands. *How'd I do that? The fighting must be natural to Gabrielle's body.* Once she realized that, her grin only broadened and her eyes sparkled. With that knowledge, she bent down and extracted the sais. "This going to be fun." Her opponent was getting on his feet so she attacked.

Xena punched one of her opponents hard and knocked him out. She parried her other enemy's sword blow. She easily fought him.

The archeologist, however, was having more fun with her opponent. As she was fighting him, she was laughing. Eventually, she knocked him out cold. Janice lifted her hands up with the sais and stared at them. "Not bad for a bard," she mumbled under her breath.

Xena cut her last enemy down and turned to Janice. She cocked an eyebrow. "Nice to see you still alive."

"You knew," stated Janice. "You knew I could use Gabrielle's body to fight."

The Warrior Princess grinned and whistled.

Argo trotted over to her mistresses.

"I'd just like to know how." The small woman grinned and bent down, sheathing the sais.

"Its happen to me before," told Xena.

Janice got Gabrielle's horse and joined the other woman. "Care to share the tale?"

"I had an enemy several years ago named, Callisto."

"Wait." The archeologist held up her hand. "Blond, annoying screechy voice, and really skinny? She lived in..."

"Cirra," finished the warrior.

"Right, what happened?" asked Janice. She was becoming intrigued by the warrior's

life.

The older woman chuckled and began the brief tale.

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"Sounds about right." Gabrielle adjusted the hat on her head. "Janice acted the same way in my dream." She grinned and faced Melinda. "I am a bard... I'll just become my character."

The southerner smiled and reached up, readjusting the hat. "I reckon you'll do fine with it, honey." She lowered her hands to her side. Melinda still wore her outfit from yesterday, she hadn't expected to stay in Greece this long. "I jus' wish I knew how to send ya home."

Gabrielle shrugged. "There's a reason for everything." She paused while considering. "I'm here to do something, gods only know what." She glanced around in the tent. "What were you and Janice planning to do next?"

"Translate the scrolls to figure out where Amphipolis and Potidaea are."

The warrior-bard chuckled deeply. "You won't find them in my scrolls, I never placed directions in my scrolls." She grinned evilly. "Since most people in my time knew where the towns were located." She walked over to the bed and opened the pack. She reached in and slipped out one of her scrolls. Her heart skipped a beat at seeing them after so long.

Melinda bit her lower lip. "Well then." She came up beside the smaller woman. "Then ya wouldn't mind... showing me where the towns are?"

Gabrielle unrolled the old scroll and recognized her handwriting. *Oh gods, this is The Quest.* She closed her eyes at the memory when her and Xena first came together. "Why?" she whispered. Her piercing green eyes opened again and locked on Melinda. "So they can be dug up for research?"

The southerner's eyes dropped. "Yes... and no." She grasped Gabrielle's arm. "Please Gabrielle, ya don't understand how much it would mean tuh Janice." She shook her head. "Her daddy did this all his life and now she is. She's lost so much just so she can find the Xena Scrolls." She paused and tried to come up with another reason. "Please... she needs to find her ancestry."

The warrior-bard stared down at her scroll. Melinda's words hit home for her and brought more turmoil inside. "But from what I recall from the dream, Mel..." She looked up with pain in her eyes. "Janice hates being my descendent." She paused. "Why would I bother to help her when she doesn't accept her own blood?"

The aristocrat smiled warmly and squeezed the small arm. She whispered, "'Cause ya are Gabrielle."

Gabrielle nodded and rolled up the scroll, she placed it back into the bag. "Alright." She heard Melinda sigh. "I'll take you to Amphipolis first."

Without warning, there was a loud explosion.

"What was that?" asked Gabrielle. She raced to the tent flap.

Pappas followed behind and looked out. "Oh my... the Nazes." She put her right hand against her chest and in hopes to calm down.

"The Nazes?" Gabrielle peered up then it came to her. "The Nazis, oh gods." She pushed Melinda back into the tent. "We gotta get out of here and now." She raced over to the leather pack and closed it up frantically.

Melinda stood in the middle of the tent in fear. "Janice," she whispered fleetingly as her eyes rolled up into her head.

Gabrielle spun around with the bag on her back. She heard how the southerner said Janice in complete fear. Her eyes widened at seeing Melinda getting ready to faint. "Oh no." She raced over and caught the larger woman while she was falling. "Mel?" she yelled. "Oh great, just what I need."

The tent flap flew open and a bunch of Nazi soldiers stormed in with large tomahawk guns.

The small warrior looked up while holding the aristocrat in her arms. "Even better," she grumbled.

Simultaneously, there was a round of gun's clicking from the soldiers and they aimed at the two women on the ground.

Another larger man in an officer's suit came in with a proud stance. He stood tall and peered down at the women. "Doctor Covington, how wonderful it is to finally meet you." The man clicked his boot heels and bowed his head. Looking back up with cold eyes, he said, "I am Friedrich von Schiller." His face was bland, German accent noticeable, and his eyes emotionless like any other stereotype Nazi. "I do believe you met my second hand man, a Mr. John Smythe."

"Ah yes." Gabrielle settled Melinda carefully on the ground. She rose up with cold eyes and took on her character. "I did meet... Smit."

"Smythe," corrected the German officer.

"Whatever," retorted Gabrielle. She crossed her arms. "So, how can I help you... Mr. Shit-ller?" She smirked.

Friedrich von Schiller narrowed his eyes. "Its Schiller."

"Schiller... Shit-ller... whatever." The warrior-bard reached into her pocket.

The men with the tomahawks all flinched and prepared to shoot.

Gabrielle pulled her hand back out and held up the cigar. "Don't mind if I smoke?" She corked an eyebrow.

"Go ahead." The German officer waved a hand.

The warrior-bard slipped the cigar between her mouth. "So, what can I help you with?" she repeated through the small stogie. She reached into her jacket and extracted pack of matches. She struck a light and bent forward. Soon, she was taking a

long drag on the cigar.

"We would like to collect the scrolls that Mr. Smythe was after."

Gabrielle nodded and pulled the cigar away. She let the smoke rise from her lips, she still nodded. "No," stated coldly. "I've claimed rights to them." She grinned. "If you don't like it then you can kiss my ass, Mr. Shit-ller."

Friedrich von Schiller snapped his fingers.

The men with the guns raised them at Gabrielle.

"Let me put it another way, Doctor Covington." He smiled mockingly. "Either hand over the scrolls... or die." He paused with a grin. "It's a simple choice."

"Hmmm." Gabrielle removed the cigar and studied it. "You know this is a damn good cigar." She was stalling for time, hoping Melinda would revive any moment. "But you know, Mr. Shit-ller, the best kind of cigar you can get is a Cuban." She grinned. "Have you ever had one, Mr. Shit-ller?" She slipped the stogie back into her mouth and took a puff of it.

"Afraid not, Doctor Covington," growled the German officer. His patients were running short.

The warrior nodded and shifted her weight to her right foot. "Well, if the stupid Nazis ever take over Cuba maybe you'll be in luck." She laughed and grinned. "But then again, Cuba is a little to close to the States."

"And what are you insinuating, Doctor Covington?"

Gabrielle shot a smug look. "That America will kick your Nazis's stupid asses back to Hell where you came from." Her left hand slipped into her jacket pocket and felt something metallic.

Friedrich von Schiller snapped his fingers again. "Take her now."

The small woman laughed and reached back. She swung the pack around and held it up with her right hand. "Tsk tsk, I wouldn't if I were you." Her left hand came out of her pocket. She flipped the top of the lighter, flicked it, and the flame came to life. "Come any closer and these scrolls will go up in smoke," growled the small woman.

The German officer shook his head with a smirk. "You wouldn't, Doctor Covington. After you spent all your life on them."

If only he knew how true that statement was. "It's either me or the scrolls." Gabrielle grinned. "I'd pick the scrolls."

"Well, since we are at a stand still, what do you suggest, Doctor Covington?"

"I suggest nothing." The warrior let the flame die out. "I will demand." Her eyes lowered to Melinda. "Mel, get up, sweetheart."

The aristocrat moaned softly.

"Come on, Mel." Gabrielle glimpsed up, making sure nobody was closing in on her.

Melinda opened her eyes and recalled what was going on. She slowly stood up beside the smaller woman. "Oh my." She gasped at seeing the men with guns. "What's going on, Gab-Janice?" she corrected quickly.

"We're getting out of here, sweetheart." The small warrior lowered her arms with the lighter and bag. "Right Mr. Shit-ller?" She still talked through her cigar.

Friedrich von Schiller teeth were grinding over each other. "Yes, Doctor Covington," he said hotly.

Gabrielle chuckled. "Let's go, Mel." She stepped forward.

The men with guns stepped forward.

"No," ordered the officer. "We will let them go. Step aside." Friedrich von Schiller held his hand to the tent flap and stood aside. "Doctor Covington and Miss Pappas."

The two women walked past with tension shooting through their bodies. Gabrielle had slung the scroll bag over her shoulder.

Gabrielle turned around and walked backwards out of the tent. She spotted a lit lamp on a small table near the bed. She whipped out her gun, aimed, and shot. She completely missed. "Oh Hades." She shot again and hit the lamp.

The lamp was pinged on the side and fell onto the bed with a crash. The bed exploded in flames.

Gabrielle threw the cigar into the tent. "Run!" she yelled. She shoved Melinda.

The southerner could barely run in her heels, more like waddled.

The men in the tent were screaming and hollering from the tent catching on fire.

"Come on, Mel." The warrior grabbed her friend's hand and dragged her. "Ditch the shoes."

Melinda kicked them off and began sprinting. "Ya know, I am a proper bell... we ain't made for running."

"Run or die," stated Gabrielle. "Where are there horses or some kind of mode of transportation?"

"This way." The aristocrat now led the small woman to the western side of camp.

The Nazis all came rushing out the burning tent.

Friedrich von Schiller searched the camp with his eyes. "Find them!" he ordered. "Bring me those scrolls intact and that tall woman."

The German soldiers coughed and broke off running in search of the women.

Gabrielle and the southerner arrived by a beat up old truck.

"You got to be kidding me?" asked Gabrielle, "Not this thing?"

The belle nodded. "It's the only way, Gabrielle."

"Not good."

There was a gunshot.

The warrior ducked and gazed in the direction from the gunshot. She saw five soldiers coming. "Oh wonderful." She took the pack off and pushed it into Melinda's arms. "Get in the car, and get ready to drive."

"I can't drive," whispered the aristocrat. "I'm a bad driver."

Gabrielle looked up with surprise. "Could this get any worse?" she growled. "Just get in the damn truck and start it. Can you do that?"

"Yes." Melinda cringed from another gunshot.

"Go!" yelled the warrior.

The southerner scrambled to the truck, opened the door, and hopped in.

The warrior-bard whipped out her gun and cocked the hammer. "Alright let's see what this can do." She aimed at one of the coming soldiers. She pulled the trigger.

The soldier screamed in pain and crashed to the ground holding his leg.

"Ha, not bad." Gabrielle grinned. "Better than Xena's chakram." She laughed and aimed at another soldier while cocking the hammer. Pulling the trigger, she heard the bullet scream out.

A German soldier stopped coming and held up his tomahawk. Three other soldiers joined him and aimed at Gabrielle.

"Oh no," whispered Gabrielle. "I'm screwed."

They all fired at once.

The short warrior jumped backwards, went high into the air, did a flip in midair, and twisted her body to land in the bed of the truck. Her head spun since the body wasn't use to such physical abilities. "Janice try working out," mumbled the small woman. She glanced over at the Nazis.

They were stunned by what just happened but they quickly recovered.

Gabrielle recovered faster and shot again. She hit another Nazi in his side. "Three left."

The Nazis had begun firing again.

The warrior-bard dropped to the bed of the truck as the bullets reflected off the truck. "I wonder how long it takes for those big guns to run out of bullets?" Deciding her own gun needed reloading, she reached down and pulled out a few bullets. She opened the barrel of her gun and slipped the bullets into the empty sockets. She closed up the barrel and spun it with natural instinct. Now she heard the shooting stop and the reloading of guns. "Bingo." She grinned and jumped up with her gun pointed.

The three Nazis left, all fell in seconds from the wounds in their bodies.

Gabrielle grinned and nodded. "Definitely better than a pair of sais." She jumped out of the truck and for the first time she noticed it was running. She stopped at hearing another sound. She turned her head sidelong.

The Nazi wobbled up onto one foot and lifted his gun with a growl. "Bitch," he spat.

The warrior-bard spun around while cocking the gun.

The Nazi pulled his trigger. Gabrielle pulled her trigger.

Bullets flew towards Gabrielle while one single bullet went towards the Nazi. Simultaneously, they both screamed in pain.

Gabrielle fell against the truck and slumped. She felt the pain screaming up and down her left arm. She covered the bleeding wound with her right hand. "Oh damn that hurts."

The Nazi was lying on the ground, his eyes opened, and blood trickling out of his mouth.

The small warrior lifted herself off the truck and went to the driver's door. She slipped the gun away and opened the door with her right hand after releasing the wounded arm. Before she climbed into the truck, she moaned in agony.

"Gabrielle, are you okay?" Melinda helped the small woman in. She saw the blood trickling down on the left side of the jacket.

"Peachy keen." The warrior-bard grunted and dropped her head against the seat. "Let's get out of here, huh?"

"I would recommend the idea right now." Melinda's voice held fear.

Gabrielle glimpsed out the southerner's window.

Friedrich von Schiller coming after them with five more soldiers.

"Hell." Gabrielle straightened up then looked at the steering wheel. "Oh double-Hell."

Gunshots went off again.

"Duck!" The small woman pushed Melinda down and covered her head with her hands. She felt the glass shatter in on them. She tried to breathe but she felt trapped. Looking down, she spotted some kind of pedal. She took a lucky guess, and just twisted her body. She slammed on the right one.

The truck roared before having spun its wheels. It rolled off at a fast speed.

Gabrielle sat up and grabbed the wheel as the truck flew past the Nazis. She kept her right hand on Melinda signaling her to stay down.

The gunshots kept coming at them as they drove out of the camp.

The warrior-bard felt the driving come natural to her. She peered up in the rear-view

mirror and saw the Nazis gave up and stopped the pursuit. She sighed in relief. "It's alright, Mel."

The belle sat up and looked out the back window. She felt herself jounce from the bumpy ride. She watched Friedrich von Schiller cussing up a storm and throwing his arms up while punching some of his men. "Oh my lord." She shook her head. "He ain't happy."

"Good," stated Gabrielle. "He was jerk." She turned the wheel to the left down another road. She hissed at the pain in her left arm.

The tall woman looked at the wounded arm. "Let me look at that." She scooted closer.

"Not now, Mel." Gabrielle sighed sadly. "I need to drive." She smiled at the other woman. "You can look at it later, promise."

Pappas raised an eyebrow. "Are you sure?"

"I'll be okay." The short warrior sighed.

The southerner nodded plus scooted back to her spot from earlier. "You sure were amazing."

Gabrielle chuckled and asked, "Why do you say that?"

"Ya managed to pull off Janice perfectly." The aristocrat shrugged. "Not tuh mention, ya saved us."

"It's all in the cocky attitude, sweetheart," teased the warrior-bard in a deeper voice.

Melinda laughed quietly but sighed and rested in her seat.

The small woman sensed a hint of despair in the other woman. "What's wrong?" she whispered.

The southerner glanced at her friend then out the window. She sighed again but more sadly and whispered, "I miss Janice."

Part Three- Coming to an Understanding

Ah Christ, I can't believe this... I miss Mel. Janice shook her head. *What the Hell is my damn problem? I've only known the woman for a day and I have feelings for her? Real stupid, Covington.* She shoved the thoughts away and tried focusing on where she was now and what she was doing now. "So, what are we going to do about switching things back to normal?"

The warrior shrugged. "Don't know."

Janice stopped walking. "You're joking me?" She grabbed the Warrior Princess's arm. "I've got to get back to my time. I have things to do. I can't be screwing around in Gabrielle's body."

"Listen to me." Xena leaned towards the other woman. "You need to respect Gabrielle." She narrowed her eyes and deepened her voice. "I'm sick of hearing your crock about Gabrielle." She paused. "Try being a solution to the problem instead of

pain in the ass," she growled. She pulled her arm free and continued walking with Argo.

"This is not my fault," stated the archeologist.

The warrior stopped and turned around. "You make it hard to believe you're Gabrielle's descendent." Sighing and shaking her head, she walked on.

Janice licked her lips, and stared at the gravel. She ran a free hand through her short hair.

Gabrielle's horse came up, and nudged the small woman's back.

The archeologist glanced back at the horse. She reached up and petted the horse. "Xena is pretty tough huh?"

The horse whined.

Janice gazed down the road at the warrior. "Nor does she care for my shitty attitude." She grinned a little.

The horse whined with more laughter.

"Alright, strike one on my part." The archeologist began to walk quickly with the horse. "Xena, wait up!" she called.

Xena stopped and waited without looking back.

Janice caught up and stopped. "Look, sorry... I just have a little prejudice against Gabrielle."

"I've noticed," stated the warrior coldly. She peered down at the archeologist. "Let me guess, you preferred me in Gabrielle's scrolls?"

"Yes," answered the small woman.

Xena stood tall and stoically. "Well somebody like me shouldn't be caught dead with somebody rare and special as Gabrielle." She corked her lips with a small smile. "Trust me, Janice, you do not realize who you are related to." She grasped the shoulder of her lover's body. "I'd choose to be Gabrielle any day than myself." She squeezed the smaller shoulder before releasing it and walking onward.

"Huh." Janice glanced at Xena's back. "Even if she was throwing up if you were her?" she teased.

"Especially if she was throwing up," joked back the Warrior Princess.

"Interesting." The archeologist joined the taller woman. "Where are we headed?"

"To a town for the night." Xena grinned. "I need time to think."

Janice corked an eyebrow. "And you're telling me walking endless on this road today hasn't given you time to think?"

"Not with you rambling."

The archeologist shot a glare up at the dark woman. "I know how to shut up."

"Let's see it," taunted the older woman. "Starting now till the village."

"Fine," growled the smaller woman. She went silent.

Xena slowly formed an evil grin on her lips. "Ah, the peace and quiet." She sighed contently.

Janice bit her lower lip from saying anything.

The Warrior Princess held up her freehand. "Isn't this nice?" She leaned towards the archeologist. "The silence... of your voice?"

"Jesus Christ," roared the small woman. "I think your voice is more obnoxious than mine," she snarled. Stopping, she poked a finger at Xena's chest. "I can shut up fine but the Hell if you can." She leaned towards the warrior. "And you know why? Because your chatty bard rubbed off on you."

"Are you finished?" asked the warrior.

"No!" yelled Janice. "You think I've got the shitty attitude, it just don't compare to your damn smartass attitude." She stood on her tiptoes. "Gabrielle didn't do your damn attitude justice in her scrolls." She smirked. "I'm done now."

Xena smiled amusingly. "May we continue our journey to the village?"

"Yes, let's." The archeologist started walking. "I feel better."

"I'm so happy," muttered the warrior. She signaled her mare to follow.

Janice glanced at the older woman. "How about this, you be quiet and I'll be quiet? Deal?"

"Deal," agreed the warrior. She held out an arm. "Shake on it, Janice."

The small woman grabbed the larger arm. She cringed when pain shot up her arm from the extent of Xena's grip.

The dark woman grinned evilly.

"Okay, okay." Janice jerked her arm free and shook it. "You take your iron pills," she grumbled.

"Be quiet," growled Xena.

"Did I mention too that you're really grouchy?"

The Warrior Princess narrowed her eyes.

The archeologist grinned. "Wasn't gonna lie." She shrugged and went silent. She studied the area around her, trying to keep her mind busy. But the only thing her mind went to was Melinda. She sighed because she knew she missed the tall, dark, southern bell. Which she couldn't help but consider odd due to the fact she hardly knew the woman. Yet, she felt like she'd known Melinda for ages. She laughed at that inwardly.

Xena, in quick seconds, would take a glance at Janice. She was still having a hard time getting use to this gruff person in her soulmate's body. Part of her really wanted to wake up from this like a bad dream. However, she knew that wasn't going to happen and she would have to work with Gabrielle's descendent. One thing she knew for sure, it was going to be pure torture to have her soulmate physically here but not mentally or spiritual.

Within a candlemark, the pair arrived at a small town. They went in and searched out a stable for the horses.

"Hey Xena, how you get this stuff off the horse?" Janice poked her head out of the stall.

The warrior groaned and came into Janice's stall. She took the tack off the horse. "Get the saddlebag and get mine." She grinned over at the archeologist. "If you know what a saddlebag is," she teased.

Janice glared. She took off the saddlebag from Gabrielle's horse then walked out of the stall. She grabbed Xena's as well as well as waited for the warrior.

The Warrior Princess came out and smiled. "All done, doesn't take long."

The archeologist shoved a saddlebag into the warrior. "Thanks." She walked off.

The warrior sighed before having followed the younger female. She entered the inn after Janice. "Go up to the bar," whispered Xena.

Janice nodded and neared the bar. She saw a large man reappear. "How stereotypical of a bartender," she muttered under her breath.

Xena jabbed the small woman in the side for the comment. She smiled at the innkeeper. "Can we get a room for the night?"

"Sure, six dinars."

The small archeologist furrowed her eyebrows at the money. *Dinars... huh need to remember that.* She watched Xena pay him then she asked, "Where is the room?"

The man pointed down a hall. "Seventh door on the left. And the tub is already filled."

"Thanks," said Xena then she signaled Janice to move.

Janice sighed and headed for the hallway. She counted doors and found their room. She swung open the door, she stood there peering into the room. She whistled. "Pretty classy."

Xena pushed the archeologist in the room. "Gods, you're difficult," she growled. She slammed the door shut with her boot after coming in.

Janice dropped the saddlebag on a table. She examined the room again while her head bobbed up and down. "Yup.... BC... before cleanliness." She snickered.

The Warrior Princess rolled her eyes then placed her saddlebag with Janice's. "Well, we have a little before dinner." She walked over to the bathroom, glanced in and saw

the bathtub already filled with hot water. "I'm going to take a bath."

The archeologist came over and peeked in. "Oh, does it have jet streams of water too?"

"Let's try a new rule," stated Xena. "If you don't have anything interesting to say, then don't say anything at all. Got me?"

Janice smirked. "Just depends on who's definition we're going by." She walked away. "I know I don't go by anybody's definition but my own."

"I was afraid of that," grumbled Xena. She strolled over to the table, she began taking her armor off. Slowly, she grinned evilly. "Care to join me?"

The archeologist was sitting on the bed. "At the sametime?"

"Sure, Gabrielle and I do all the time."

"Wait." Janice held up a hand. "Did you understand what you just said?" She lowered her hand. "No you did not, let me enlighten you." She took a deep breath. "You said 'Gabrielle and I' and the last time I checked... I'm not Gabrielle."

Xena knelt down and took her boots off. "Hey, never say I didn't offer you anything."

"Oh, I definitely won't deny that you never gave me an invite for bath." She snickered.

"Well." The warrior shrugged. "Your lost."

Janice narrowed her eyes. "You make it sound like I wouldn't survive the bath."

The dark woman shaped a cat grin on lips. "You wouldn't," she stated. She neared the other woman, bent forward, and pressed her large hands down on Janice's knees. "Don't want to scare you off." She rose back up to her tall height.

"You know, this is called flirting." The archeologist peered up. "My guess is, Gabrielle would get angry about it." She corked an eyebrow.

Xena crossed her arms. "Depends on whose definition we're going by." She sauntered towards the bathroom.

"How about Gabrielle's definition?"

"She would call it teasing," called the warrior. She pulled down the straps of her leathers.

Janice hopped off the bed and went to the bathroom. "Teasing, flirting... it's the same thing," she responded. She had the worst timing when she came into the doorway.

Xena stood nude and slipped into the bathtub of hot water.

The archeologist saw the incredible, perfect body and went deep red. She coughed, pounded her chest, and glanced away.

"Problem?" asked Xena.

"Yeah... hair ball." Janice cleared her throat and smiled shyly. "Think I'm going to go

relax."

The Warrior Princess nodded and watched the small woman leave. She sighed sadly and leaned against the tub. "How are you doing, love?" she whispered to thin air. She closed her eyes and tried to relax. Gradually, images of her soulmate's smile came into mind and it reflected on Xena's lips. She could just hear Gabrielle's voice now and sweet words. Her heart ached.

Janice sifted through the saddlebags. She found a scroll and she pulled it out. While unrolling it, she sat down. She could actually read the Greek clearly than she could ever. She tilted her head, noticing it was a love poem from Gabrielle to Xena. "I'll be damned." She grinned. "I knew they loved each... but this much?" She lost her grin as she kept reading. All the emotions in the poem became so real and Janice realized just how much Gabrielle needed Xena and Xena needed Gabrielle. "They're... soulmates."

Rolling the scroll up carefully, she placed it in the saddlebag she found it in. The poem was incomplete too, that was another thing she noted. "Hey Xena?" she yelled.

"Yeah?" called back the warrior.

"Does Gabrielle still write?"

The Warrior Princess opened her eyes. "Sometimes." Her eyes filled with sorrow at her own response.

Janice reappeared at the doorway. She leaned against the frame. "Why only sometimes?"

"A lot of things have happened." Xena lifted her eyes.

The archeologist dropped her head against the doorframe. "But she's good," she whispered. She stared ahead.

"Oh?" asked the warrior.

Janice's eyes flickered back to Xena. "Yes." She paused. "Even I can see that." She breathed deeply. "Doesn't she miss it?"

"I don't know, honestly." The older woman lifted her arms up onto the rim of the tub.

"Ask her," whispered Janice. She shrugged. "Maybe she stopped believing in herself as a writer."

Xena brushed back her wet bangs.

"There's more to it huh?"

The warrior faintly nodded.

Janice licked her lips and sighed. "You know... even though I don't truly know her... I think I'd risk my life for her to see her happy." She smiled at Xena.

The Warrior Princess smiled slowly at the words. She looked up. "Thank you... that's what Gabrielle would say." She sighed. "Gabrielle is a warrior, not a bard." She

dropped her eye contact.

"So?" Janice shrugged. "She can do both at once... if she wanted too." She lifted herself off the door. "Maybe if a certain somebody reminded her, she would give it a shot." She left Xena to think.

"Maybe... maybe," whispered Xena. She grabbed the soap and began cleaning her body.

Janice stood in the middle of the room. She went to the window, and glimpsed out.

The sunset was beginning and people in the village were still shuffling about while the market was closing down.

The archeologist turned away from the scene. Straight ahead of her, was a mirror. Going around the bed, she stood in front of it. She blinked and stared at Gabrielle's lean, sculpted body, which was well built compared to hers. Reaching out, she touched the mirror briefly then dropped her hand.

Xena came out in her leathers, she saw Janice staring at the reflection. She came up behind the short woman. She grasped the small shoulders. "She's beautiful, isn't she?" she whispered.

"She's incredible," uttered the archeologist. *What the Hell am I saying?* But she knew it was the truth.

"Gabrielle is an amazing woman, Janice." Xena studied the image in the mirror. "An amazing woman you should be proud of like I am."

Janice swallowed and said nothing else. Normally, she would joke something like this off with a smartass comment. But she didn't want too.

The Warrior Princess peered down at the archeologist. "Are you okay?"

"Yeah, sure." The small woman shrugged it off and stepped away.

Xena turned then watched the woman go across the room with her back to her.

Janice combed a hand through her hair. She blinked back the stinging in her eyes.

The warrior knew something was going to happen but not quite sure what.

The archeologist turned around and breathed deeply before saying, "Have I ever mentioned my father?"

Xena shook her head but waited for more.

Covington laughed cynically. "You see, my father is dead but he was known as a grave-robber." She crossed arms against her stomach. "After he died I took on his occupation, so to speak, and I even acquired the title, the grave-robber." She paused. "The name Covington is like a disease in my time. Even a joke." She locked eyes with Xena. "My father couldn't prove the existence of you, I can't, and well my father couldn't even keep his wife." She laughed lowly. "It's pretty fucking funny." She shook her head. "It's rough when you're at the bottom of everything."

"You're jealous," stated Xena. She held no anger in her tone just pure honesty. "Jealous of Gabrielle."

"Yeah," whispered Janice. "She's amazing and I'm the screw up in her bloodline." She laughed at her own joke. "I can't stand it, how damn good her scrolls are or how amazing she is. And I can't fucken compare." She looked up. "I cannot be amazing like Gabrielle." She began crying. "I can't," she growled and pulled back her hair while closing her eyes.

Xena closed in the distance and pulled the small woman in.

Janice wanted to pull away but then she couldn't refuse protection from her past. She wrapped her arms around Xena, dropped her head against the warrior's chest, and attempted to calm down.

The warrior held onto the archeologist. She lowered her head onto Janice's. She felt how good it was to hold Gabrielle's body despite Gabrielle wasn't inside. "Janice, your self worth is only low as you make it."

Janice closed her eyes and willed the agony to leave. Eventually she gained control again. "No, you don't understand."

"Trust me, I do." Xena pulled back and knelt down. She smiled softly. "You can change your reputation as long as you want too." She coked an eyebrow. "You're looking at a perfect example, Janice."

The archeologist huffed because she knew the warrior was right. "If I could just prove your existence... then none of my work nor my father's would have been in vain."

"And you have Gabrielle's scrolls?"

Janice sighed. "That's not enough to go on... I need more hard proof." She shrugged. "As far as some historians are concerned they'll say they're some kid's fairy tales." She paused while having thought. "If I can find hard evidence and related it to the scrolls then I can prove your existence."

The Warrior Princess shrugged. "So you would need something like my chakram."

"Exactly." The archeologist laughed. "The thing is... I had your chakram but it's lost in the tomb."

Xena tilted her head. "Which chakram?"

Janice's eyes widened. "W-what you mean which chakram?"

The older woman grinned, rose up, and went over to the table. She picked up her chakram and turned around. "Was it this one you found?"

The archeologist stared then shook her head. "I've never heard about that chakram." It was the first time she noticed the chakram. She walked over and took it. She turned it every which way, examining it. "What happened to your other one?" Her green eyes lifted up. "When Mel and I found it, it was broken in half."

Xena shrugged. "Long story."

Janice huffed and handed back the weapon. "Also, if I can find evidence of your hometown and Gabrielle's that'll help prove things."

"Really?" The warrior sat down and grabbed her boots. "Let's visit Amphipolis." She grinned. "Otherwise, you'll never be able to figure out where the towns are in your time."

"Mel and I were hoping Gabrielle's scrolls would hold directions."

Xena shook her head. "No, Gabrielle never wrote directions to any places." She smirked. "Waste of ink." After putting her boots on, she stood up with her armor and slipped into it.

Janice crossed her arms and watched. "Xena, I need to return to my time... I can't go gallivanting across the country with you... no offense." She shook her head. "We have to figure out how I can get home."

"That's not my problem," stated the warrior. She grinned plus put her weapons into place. "Its yours." She faced her friend. "This is personal."

Covington was thoroughly confused. "What... are you saying?"

"That there's real no solution around here." Xena arched an eyebrow. "Its has to come from within yourself."

Janice thought over the words then related it to when Xena's spirit took Mel's body. She blinked and continued rationalizing. "I have to have an epiphany then I can switch with Gabrielle again."

"Basically." Xena strolled towards the door. "I think this is love talking to you, Janice." She opened the door and held it open.

The archeologist came over and asked, "Love?"

"Love for your family." The warrior went out of the door. She heard Janice silently pursue.

Together, they went into the tavern section and sought a table in a lone spot. Within seconds, a barmaid came up and took orders from them both.

Janice had become rather quiet

Xena sighed and pushed her seat back. She propped the back against the wall. Folding her hands in her lap, she gazed at Janice. "So, tell me about Melinda." She grinned. "Wouldn't mind knowing a little about my own descendent."

The archeologist chuckled and relaxed in her seat. "She looks exactly like you, that's it."

The warrior raised an eyebrow. "That's it as in...?"

"As in she doesn't have any other qualities like you." Covington grinned. "She's the complete opposite mentally."

"Go on," insisted Xena.

Janice sighed, acting as if she didn't want to continue the conversation about Melinda yet she went on. "She can be outgoing but shy too." Her ivy green eyes glosses over, as she became lost in this description. "Mel is very caring and proper." She shifted in her seat. "Quite rich but doesn't act like a spoiled brat. She can act a little dizzy." She stopped to chuckle. "But she's actually really bright, knows how to translate Greek damn good." She peered over at Xena. "She's southern so she has a funny accent."

"Really?" Xena had noticed how her friend was falling into this conversation of Melinda. "Demonstrate."

Janice laughed and sat up a little. "Alright, let me think of an example." Slowly, she creased her lips with a grin. "Y'all ain't gonna go up yonder there? Oh my, but it ain't safe for ya." She stopped and chuckled. "Mel has a higher pitched voice than you."

The warrior laughed quietly. "That's her accent?"

"Yup, the southern drawl." The archeologist grinned. "She's just the average southern bell."

"Average huh?"

Covington laughed. "Well, she has a few difference than most southerners."

"Oooh, I see," teased Xena with a smug look. She sat up in her seat and grinned. "Now, I reckon, honey, ya have uh few fancying emotions for this Melinda Pappas."

Janice's expression went into shock. "You... you sounded just like her."

The Warrior Princess laughed deeply and rested back in her chair.

Then the small woman realized what Xena had said. "And Jesus Christ, what did you say? I don't... fancy Mel," she growled

Xena arched an eyebrow.

"Xena, I've know her a day... a day."

"And your point is?" asked the warrior. She shrugged. "I fell in-love with Gabrielle the second my eyes rested on her." She grinned evilly. "If not before," she whispered.

"What are you saying?"

The dark woman waited for a moment before having responded, "That maybe Gabrielle and I were together in a past life."

Janice chuckled at that idea. "That doesn't make sense."

"Soulmates," whispered Xena, she didn't need to say anything else.

The archeologist huffed.

The barmaid came over and served the food. Afterwards, she strolled off.

The pair ate relatively silent and then left for the night. They went back to the room and prepared for bed.

Janice simply took her boots off then crawled into the bed. *Christ, I'm sleeping in the same bed with Xena. What the Hell is that?* She then chuckled inwardly. *I slept in the same bed with Mel. What's the difference? Yeah, one's dark and dangerous while the other is dark and sweet.* She closed her eyes and listened to Xena taking her armor off.

Xena placed her chakram on the bed stand after blowing the candles out then she got into the bed beside Janice.

The archeologist was quick about falling sleep.

The warrior, on the other hand, stared up at the ceiling, thinking. She sighed deeply as her thoughts of Gabrielle center in her mind and heart.

Janice moaned softly in her sleep. She rolled to her right and half her body came on top of Xena's. Her left arm came across the warrior's stomach while the side of her face rested on Xena's warm chest.

Xena's breathing was hesitant at first but she relaxed. "Janice?" she whispered softly.

"Mel?" mumbled the small woman.

The older woman closed her eyes briefly then opened them again. "Janice?" She didn't want to refuse her lover's body against her own but this wasn't Gabrielle inside. "Come on," she said soothingly.

The archeologist shifted out of her sleepy state and peered up. "Christ, sorry Xena." She started lifting herself up. "It was natural," she mumbled. *And damn comfortable,* she added mentally.

"Let's humor me." The Warrior Princess pressed Janice's back for her to lay back down.

Janice captured Xena's eyes. *She's missing Gabrielle pretty bad.* She sighed sadly and lowered the body she was trapped in back down on Xena. *I wonder if Mel feels like this?*

The warrior wrapped her arms around Janice and closed her eyes, feeling more content. "Thank you," she whispered.

"I won't tell anybody you're this soft... pun intended."

Xena chuckled and growled, "Go to sleep."

"But I will tell them how damn grouchy you are."

The Warrior Princess sighed but let it go.

Janice chuckled quietly at the lack of response, she soon went to sleep followed by Xena.

Part Four- **The Plans**

Gabrielle hissed as the pain shot through her arm.

"Sorry," whispered Melinda. She lowered her hand and said, "You're gonna have to take yo jacket off."

The warrior stood up and stared at the campfire while having took her jacket off.

The southerner noticed how quiet her friend had become. She was still trying to figure out the cause. "Um, Gabrielle ya might want to remove your shirt too." Her face flushed at her own words. "It'll just get in the way," she whispered.

Gabrielle sighed and began unbuttoning the shirt. "Is there a medical kit in the truck?"

"Let me go take a gander." Melinda stood up from the log and walked over to the truck on the side of the road. Nightfall had begun an hour ago and they'd stopped for the evening, not even quite sure where they were driving.

Gabrielle sat back down on the log. She took off her hat and placed it on top of the leather jacket and shirt. She only wore boots, pants, and her bra... well and her gun and whip hung off her side.

The aristocrat came back over with a small bag, she settled it on the ground, then sat down, straddling the log. "We're in luck." She opened the small pack before gazing back at the wound on the side of Gabrielle's arm.

The warrior-bard peered down and studied the wound. "Looks like it didn't go through." She touched it and felt the sharp pain jolt through her arm. "Its just not happy," she grumbled.

Melinda reached into the bag and pulled out white moist clothes. "This gonna sting."

Gabrielle nodded and closed her eyes when the stinging began. She sighed in attempt to relax.

The southerner began cleaning the wound. She couldn't believe she was cleaning a wound. She should have been the ever proper southern bell, and fainted at the sign of blood. But she knew Gabrielle needed her help and wasn't going to deny that. "How do ya feel?"

"Okay," answered the small woman. "You?"

"Fine," responded Melinda. "Was a long a day."

Gabrielle simply nodded.

The aristocrat was getting worried because she knew this woman was normally talkative. She pushed her glasses back up on her nose, continued cleaning the wound, but said quietly, "You're quiet."

"Just exhausted." The warrior-bard opened her eyes once more and stared at the fire. "Tiring trying to figure out a new body."

"Is it all that different than yours?" Melinda stopped cleaning and peered up.

"Yes." Gabrielle felt the stinging begin again on her arm. "Janice's body isn't quite as muscular as mine." She rolled her head and cracked her neck. "Funny too, her body

frame seems smaller."

"Maybe that's 'cause her body isn't as well built as yours."

"Yeah." The warrior-bard sighed and noted that Melinda was beginning to wrap the wound. "Its funny how much you two look like Xena and I."

Pappas stopped bandaging the wound. "Janice and I look exactly like you both?" She went back to bandaging.

"Yes, exact mirror images."

The southerner finished bandaging the wound and put the supplies back in the bag.

Gabrielle turned her head to Melinda. She reached forward and removed the southerner's glasses. She grinned. "Exactly alike."

Melinda chuckled, took back the glasses, and stood up while putting them back on. "Should I be flattered?" She walked back to the truck.

The short warrior grinned to herself and grabbed her shirt. She put it on and buttoned it up. "Sure," she said with arrogance.

"Was that uh little pride I heard?" The belle chuckled and came back with another pack. She knelt down next to the fire and pulled out food items with a cooking pot.

"Of course." Gabrielle stood up and slipped into her leather jacket. "I am the bard of Potidaea that traveled with the legendary Xena," she teased.

"Travels," corrected the southerner. She peeked up at the small woman through her glasses. "We're gonna get ya back."

The warrior corked an eyebrow. "Whatever you say, sweetheart." She grinned before grabbing her hat.

Melinda laughed lowly and shook her head. She watched Gabrielle gradually put on the hat and almost transformed into Janice Covington. She blinked and looked back at the food.

Gabrielle saw the expression on Melinda's face. It was an expression of hidden love. She grinned. *It runs in the bloodline.* After she came over, she knelt down beside the taller woman. "So, what we have to eat?"

"I have no idea." Melinda laughed faintly. "Who knows what Janice was thinken when she packed this."

"Looks like she was thinking smart." The warrior-bard reached in a popped out a glass container of sage spice. "Good choice, Janice." She grinned. Grasping something else, she extracted something that looked like meat. "Okay." She tilted her head.

"Dried meat." Melinda took it. "How 'bout I cook dinner."

Gabrielle did a double-take. "Say that again."

"I'll cook dinner," the southerner drew out in her deep accent.

The warrior blinked. "You'll cook?" She giggled and sat on the ground.

"Is that funny?"

"I'm sorry." Gabrielle shook her head. "Xena doesn't know the first thing about cooking. She only knows how to burn food." She coked a grin. "Its just funny to hear somebody that looks like her, say they'll cook."

Melinda sighed at her friend's amusement. "Xena must be quite the warrior." She turned back to the pack and pulled out her supplies she needed.

"She really is." The small woman sighed sadly. "An amazing woman."

The southerner glanced at the other female. "May I ask ya something?"

Gabrielle nodded and waited for the question.

The belle looked away while a flush crept up her neck. "Uh... well..." She cleared her throat because memories of this morning filtered back to her of when Gabrielle kissed her. "Are you and Xena..." she trailed off.

The warrior grinned before patting the southerner's knee. "Yes, is the answer." She stood up. "For quite awhile now." She went to the fire then stoked it with wood. "Why?" She glanced over.

Melinda chuckled in hopes to calm herself. "Would place a whole new perspective on Janice's research... history even."

"Oh? How is that?" The warrior-bard brushed her hands clean of the wood and sat down on the log.

The aristocrat brought her attention to the food and filled the pot with water and other items. "Well, its assumed..." She stopped then pushed her glasses up on the bridge of her nose. She glanced at Gabrielle. "Its assumed that there were same sex relationships during yo time period."

"And?"

Melinda sighed while having gone back to her cooking, preparing the soup. "These days people don't talk about same sex relationships let alone have them." Her voice was even small in explaining this to Gabrielle. "It's actually looked down on."

Gabrielle huffed. She rested her arms on her knees. "Why?"

"Tradition," stated Melinda. "Even I have uh hard time talking 'bout it 'cause its so improper." She stopped while considering her next words. "However, I do 'cause in my line of work, its talked 'bout now and again." She then mumbled, "But only in whispers."

"What do you think of it, personally?"

The aristocrat sighed and stood up. She settled the pot over the fire, she neared Gabrielle. "Personally." She sat on the log beside the smaller woman. "Love is love." She smiled but lost it. "But its still uh hard topic."

Gabrielle slowly nodded in understanding. "Sounds like society has really set themselves up." She chuckled and shook her head. "A shame."

"I agree," stated Melinda. "That's another thing that would be important if Janice finds out in yo scrolls." She shrugged. "I don't know if that's what she's after." She grinned slightly at Gabrielle. "If it's proven that the two greatest heroes in time were lovers then that'll start uh lot of talk."

"Or it's liable to destroy Janice's research."

"How is that?"

The small woman licked her lips before she had said, "Think about it. If society doesn't accept same sex relationships then how would you expect them to accept my scrolls? To accept my scrolls means they'd have to accept the relationship between Xena and I. From the sounds of things, society wouldn't accept the truth, which means they'd have to deny my scrolls." She paused. "Deny Xena and I's existence."

Melinda's eyes lowered to the forest floor. "Then its hopeless," she whispered.

"Not... totally." Gabrielle grinned. "My first year and half worth of scrolls are based around Xena and me being friends." She shrugged. "If Janice tries focusing her research around those then she will be fine. But if she pulls out the others it could get sketchy."

Melinda made a mental note of that for later. "Are same sex relationships... common in yo time?" she asked quietly.

The warrior-bard nodded. "Just depends on where you're talking about." She grinned. "If you're talking Rome it was more-"

"Men?" asked Melinda.

Gabrielle nodded. "It was normal for two men to be together in Rome."

"There was research done saying that uh few Caesars had younger boys for lovers," stated the aristocrat.

"I've heard that too." The small woman shrugged. "Don't know first hand." She grinned. "I think it was a way for the husbands to cheat and not get caught with a pregnant woman in the end."

The southerner's eyes widened in utter surprise.

Gabrielle chuckled and patted the southerner's knee. "I was kidding, Mel." She grinned at the woman's look.

Melinda sighed in relief. "Ya had me going for uh moment."

The warrior chuckled. "We need to figure out our plans," she stated.

"We do," agreed the southerner. She stood up and walked over to the fire. "Do we know how we are gonna get ya back to yo time?"

The warrior-bard stared at the fire while having considered. "I don't know," she

whispered sadly.

The aristocrat turned after she had stirred the soup. "Ya already miss home huh?"

Gabrielle peered up and nodded. "Yeah," she whispered sadly. She took her hat off and placed it in her lap. "Well, considering the way Janice and I switched bodies, there has to be away to fix it."

"I'm sure there is," agreed the belle. "But wwwwwhat is it?"

The small warrior ran her fingers through her strawberry-blond hair. "I have no idea." She huffed. "I could be home this second or in a year."

"Naw, it won't take that long," reassured the southerner. She came over and knelt down in front of the small woman. "Gabrielle, we'll get ya back home... promise." She smiled warmly.

Gabrielle smiled back but it faltered. "Thanks, Mel." She sighed. "Let's hope it won't be that hard."

"I have uh sneaky suspicion it ain't gonna be that hard."

"Time will tell." The small woman peered up with a more stoic expression. "Do you have a map or anything?"

Melinda stood up. "It'd be in one of those packs Janice put in duh truck."

"Alright, I'll go take a look." The warrior-bard stood up and asked, "You'll be okay with the cooking?"

"I reckon so, not uh thing to worry 'bout."

Gabrielle nodded and strolled over to the truck. She went to the rear and began fishing through the packs.

The aristocrat was back at the soup, she checked on it.

The warrior huffed at not finding a map. She opened another pack and found odd items in it. She then found a folded up piece of paper. She grinned and pulled it out. She unfolded it.

It looked to be a map.

Gabrielle shrugged, folded it back up, and neared the fire. She unfolded beside the fire. She knelt down, placed the map on the ground, and studied the map.

Melinda came over and knelt down. "We're here." Her finger came to a northern part of Greece.

"Hmmm, which way did we head?" inquired the small woman. She looked up to the road. "Let's see... the sun set over there."

"Dat's west." Melinda pointed in the opposite direction. "Dat's east."

"So, we've been traveling south... perfect." Gabrielle glanced back at the map and her eyes lowered to southwest Greece. Her express dropped. "Mel, Amphipolis is on this

map." She peered up with a corked eyebrow.

Pappas sheepishly smiled and bushed up her glasses. "Well ya see, Gabrielle, its uh modern day version of Amphipolis." She paused. "The one that Xena grew up in is gone."

"What you mean, its gone?" Gabrielle pointed on the map. "Its right here."

"Yes but ya see, where the modern one ain't where the old Amphipolis was."

The warrior glanced back down and realized Melinda was right. "Ha, I'll be damned to Hades." She grinned. She then noted that there was a modern Potidaea but just south of where her hometown would have been. "The same thing with Potidaea." She shook her head and looked up at Melinda again. "So, why hasn't Janice just going to the modern day one's and dug around the areas?"

"It ain't that simple." The aristocrat sighed. "Ya have to have permission to dig anywhere plus proof that there is uh reason to dig there."

Gabrielle considered that explanation. "So... Janice needs accurate location of where Potidaea and Amphipolis once existed?"

"Yesum." Melinda got up and check on the soup. "Once she has dat then she can dig... I reckon." She took the pot from over the fire then placed it on the ground. "Well, its what I know from my daddy... what he's taught me."

The small warrior pulled out two bowls from the food pack along with spoons. "It makes sense." She held out the bowls while Melinda had filled them. "So, I'll just show you where they are then you and Janice can dig there later." She shrugged. "It'll be simple as that." She peered up. "Right?"

The aristocrat finished pouring the soup in. She settled the pot on the ground. "I reckon so... I ain't sure how this archeology stuff works. But I reckon if Janice has the right evidence and location then she would be given permission tuh dig."

Gabrielle nodded and handed a bowl out with a spoon in it. "So, that's what we'll do." She smiled. "We travel to Amphipolis first and find her then we'll head to Potidaea and locate the old ruins." She shrugged. "Simple enough." She strolled over to the log and sat. "Sound like a plan?"

The southerner chuckled quietly and sat down beside her friend. "I reckon so... not many other options."

"They're other options... they just wouldn't make much sense." Gabrielle grinned but had begun eating.

The belle nodded in agreement and started eating.

Within half an hour the pair finished dinner. Cleaned up things then they settled down two sleeping bags near the fire.

Gabrielle placed more wood into the fire before having sat back down on the log. She slid off the log and leaned against it. She closed her eyes and took her hat off. Her mind drifted to her lover in another time.

Melinda came over, she sat down beside her small friend. "Are ya okay?" she whispered.

"Fine," whispered the warrior. "Just tired." She turned her head to her friend.

The belle smiled softly.

The smaller woman's eyes locked with serene water blue eyes.

Melinda didn't shifted and studied the rich forest green eyes flickering in the firelight.

Gabrielle reached up, cautiously, and removed the tall woman's glasses. "You look exactly like Xena," she whispered in sorrow.

The southerner's soft lips eased into a sad smile. "I'm sorry," she uttered.

The warrior-bard gently brushed her fingertips over the belle's lips.

Melinda was stiff and could not breathe from the warm fingers touching her lips. She looked at the face and saw Janice and inside the eyes she saw Gabrielle. She closed her eyes from the torment.

Gabrielle lowered her hand and leaned towards the southerner. She simply lowered her head onto Melinda's chest and closed her eyes.

The belle relaxed a little and was able to bring her arm around her friend's back. She pulled the small woman in, in hope to comfort her.

The warrior snuggled in and closed her eyes tightly, having tried to hold tears back.

The aristocrat lowered her chin onto the strawberry-blond head. *She really misses Xena.* She shut her eyes and ended her thoughts with, *And I really miss Janice.*

The pair stayed silent for an hour. They relaxed in their embrace together, both imagining the other as the person they wanted to be with. It was blissful torture.

Section Two

Part Five- Time to Travel

"Get up," ordered the warrior. She sat down in a chair and finished getting ready by having put her boots on.

Janice groaned and mumbled, "Later. That damn dig can wait."

Xena peered up and grinned to herself. "Janice Covington, you're not in Macedonia anymore."

Janice opened her eyes and blinked. "Christ." She groaned again and closed her eyes. "Thought it was a damn nightmare."

"Thanks," grumbled the Warrior Princess. She stood up then went around the bed. "Maybe you are Gabrielle's decadent... considering how much you sleep."

Janice glared up at the woman. She rolled out of bed and stretched. "Me neva." She grinned. "What about breakfast?"

The warrior sighed before having gone to the saddlebag. "A little later." She hefted the bag onto her shoulders and signaled the small woman to get the other one.

The archeologist strolled over then took the bag. "What are we doing?"

"Going to Amphipolis," stated Xena. She neared the door yet Janice didn't follow her.

"Wait," said Janice. "I am nnot traveling to Amphipolis for family visits." She narrowed her eyes. "I want to get the Hell out of here. Get back to my own goddamn time if you don't mind."

The warrior didn't turned around, she opened the door, but said, "It is your personal problem on getting home. I am helping but it's your inner problem. Figure it out," then she left with the door open.

Janice growled, however she followed behind. "Goddamn warrior," she grumbled. She headed for the stable and went in.

Soon the pair left with the horses. Their destination- Amphipolis.

Part Six- **The Long Journey**

Gabrielle jounced up and down in the truck as it rolled down the road. She took her hat off, rolled down the window, then she propped her left elbow up on the window. The breeze blew back her bangs and cooled her face.

Melinda glanced over but gazed back out the window. "This ain't that bad."

The warrior shook her head. "Nope." She peered down at the fuel gauge "Until we run out of fuel."

The translator looked. "Oh my... we are low."

Gabrielle nodded. "Uh huh." She studied the road ahead and noticed how... wooded everything was around. "Look on that map, see if we'll hit a town soon."

The belle grabbed the map out of the pack between them. She opened it then spread it out on her lap. She pushed her glasses up and studied the map.

The small woman glimpsed over then back to her driving. She thought it odd to see Melinda in different clothes now.

The aristocrat this morning had changed into khaki pants, a white top, and boots. Fortunately, they had found some clothes in a bag in the back of the truck. They fit Melinda perfectly and now it seemed to place a strong air to Melinda Pappas. Gabrielle would have almost labeled it as a warrior air but those glasses just broke it along with Melinda keeping her hair up in a bun. However, Melinda Pappas just vibrated a power that dwelled inside of herself. That was one thing Gabrielle could pick up on since this was Xena's decadent.

"There is one that ain't too far away," mentioned Melinda. "Bout fifteen miles

uhhead."

Gabrielle nodded. "Perfect." She tapped the fuel gauge. "I think we'll just make it."

"I reckon ya are right." The southerner folded the map up and put it away. "That's considering if they have uh fuel station there."

The warrior-bard glanced at the older woman. "What?" She corked an eyebrow. "Why wouldn't they?"

"Well..." Pappas grinned impishly. "There is uh war going on, Gabrielle." She looked away. "Besides dis is Greece, it ain't America."

The small woman huffed. "You have a point... I think." She chuckled. "Not that I know this time period."

"Ya know enough," stated Melinda, "if you had dat dream."

Gabrielle nodded. "Sorta'." She sighed and glanced at her friend. "So tell me more about Janice," she mentioned.

The translator chuckled and said, "Ya know her after dat dream." She relaxed back in her seat. "Ya know as much as I do, honey."

The warrior shrugged. "Well... what you think of her? I mean I am going by a dream here," she reminded.

The aristocrat shrugged this time. "She's... interesting." Her voice was quiet.

Gabrielle grinned but hid it quickly. "Interesting... sort of like attractive?"

"Oh my, no I reckon not," hastily answered the southerner in her deep drawl.

"Oh... okay." The short warrior nodded. "Well then... she's fascinating to you?"

"I reckon so," answered the belle.

"Why is that?" inquired Gabrielle with a serious tone.

Melinda considered with no quick answer. "I reckon its her attitude... jus' who she is."

That's how it happen to me too, Mel. The warrior refrained from having said anything straightforward... yet. "I'll agree... she's unusual."

"Its ain't jus' that," stated Melinda. "There are few women in dis time that are quite like Janice, I reckon." She paused. "With such uh independent mind and so determined. She ain't gonna let anything stop her."

Gabrielle nodded. "Very true." She paused and flashed a grin at her friend. "I wonder if she can be sweet."

The translator laughed quietly and said, "I'd reckon so... she probably reckons it'd hurt her to be nice."

The small woman snickered quietly. "You're probably right." She sighed. "Or she just doesn't want to show that about herself."

"Considering her past, I can see why."

The warrior shrugged. "I don't know, you have to learn to be soft as much as tough." She paused as she thought of the perfect example- her soulmate. "A person needs a balance."

Melinda nodded in agreement slowly. "I reckon ya are right." She grinned. "But I reckon somebody forgot tuh tell Janice."

Gabrielle laughed and shook her head. "When she gets back, I recommend you mention the idea to her, Mel."

"I don't reckon so," stated Melinda. "I ain't gonna get chewed up for uh suggestion like that."

The small woman grinned evilly. "Oh, she wouldn't chew you up... if you said it the right way."

Very slowly Melinda raised an eyebrow. "And may I ask how yo propose I tell her?"

Gabrielle's evil grin just broadened and her eyes sparkled. "I'll tell you exactly what you do. She won't refuse you...."

Chapter Seven- **Arriving and Explaining**

"This is... Amphipolis?" asked Janice with an unimpressed tone.

Xena sighed. "Yesss."

"Not exactly New York City," mumbled the small woman.

The warrior briskly picked up her speed of walk. "Hurry up," she ordered.

"I'm coming, grouch."

"I hear you, smartass," retorted Xena.

"Takes one to know one," called Janice as she watched the warrior walk ahead of her.

The Warrior Princess glanced back at the other woman and she shot an evil smile.

The archeologist shivered from the smile. "Yikes," she muttered. She slowed her pace down and studied Amphipolis for later use. *Welp, nothing like the real thing for research*, she joked inwardly.

Xena had gone into her mother's small stable with Argo.

Janice slowly made her way in and this time tried untacking Gabrielle's horse. This time around she managed to untack the bay. "Are we staying for the night, Xena?"

The warrior came around with a saddlebag. "Yup."

The archeologist nodded and took the saddlebag. She followed her friend out of the stable.

Xena went inside of her mother's inn, dropped her bag to the table, then she called,

"Mother?"

Janice placed her bag on the table as well.

An older woman came out of the kitchen with a curious look. She spotted the newcomers and smiled warmly. "Xena, Gabrielle."

Oh great... now I gotta act like that bratty bard, thought Janice.

"How are you, mother?" asked Xena as she engulfed her mother in a huge hug.

"Wonderful, now." The mother pulled away with a warm smile, she glanced at Janice. "How are you, sweetie?"

Janice tried smiling. "Not bad." She said with a lighter voice.

Cyrene pulled the archeologist in for a strong hug.

Janice's eyes widened but she hugged back.

Xena stood there with an amused expression.

The archeologist mouthed, what's her name?

Cyrene, mouthed back Xena.

Cyrene pulled back yet held onto Janice's upper arms. She studied young woman. "You keep looking more beautiful each time, Gabrielle."

Janice groaned inwardly. "Thank you, Cyrene." She smiled softly. "How are things around here?"

The innkeeper released the woman's arms. "Quite busy." She locked eyes with the young woman. That's when she noticed something odd. Those mint green eyes were a dark forest green, not their normal richness. "Are you sure you're okay, sweetie?"

Xena came up from behind and grasped her mother's shoulder. "Mother, I want you to meet Janice Covington... Gabrielle's decadent."

Chapter Eight- Where is Amphipolis, again?

"Are ya sure?" asked the translator for the zillionth time.

"Yes," growled Gabrielle. "This has to be it." She sighed and fisted up her hands.

The aristocrat saw the frustration and knew she had a hand in it. She neared her friend and rested a hand on Gabrielle's shoulder. "I'm sorry."

The warrior peered up. "Not your fault... I'm just pretty sure Amphipolis was around this area." She studied the surrounding wooded area in the sunset-lit land. "I just wish I had some kind of marking." She stopped then added, "The land has changed so much."

Melinda nodded then released her friend. "How 'bout tomorrow we take a gander around. It's getting late now tuh do anything."

The warrior-bard sighed deeply. "You're right." She ambled towards the truck. "Let's make camp."

The southerner nodded in agreement.

The pair had been traveling all day. They were lucky enough to fuel up in that small town. Now they'd arrived at the outskirts of the modern Amphipolis. This was the area Gabrielle believed the ruins lied. She just wasn't sure.

Together, they made camp. Next was dinner and that took no time at all. Soon the pair were relaxing and eating one of Gabrielle's dinner this time.

The late night came and the pair settled into their sleeping bags. By the time they got up, it was about mid morning, not late nor that early.

Gabrielle had gotten up last and with a groan. "I hate waking up," she muttered. *Especially without my warrior*, she added mentally.

"Mornin'," greeted the southerner. "Sleep well?"

The small warrior shrugged. "A little." She stood up with her hat and put it on. "We need to find Amphipolis," she stated.

"Let's get some breakfast first," mentioned the translator. "I reckon ya are hungry huh?"

Gabrielle grinned very slowly. "Oh yeah, I always am." She chuckled and strolled over to her friend. She soon helped the belle put together a nice breakfast.

Chapter Nine- **Finding Amphipolis for the Future**

"What time period are you from?" asked Cyrene again, still baffled by this.

"Nineteen forty-two," answered Janice. "Its completely different than here." She grinned while she leaned back in her seat.

The innkeeper chuckled and nodded. "I can't even imagine." She glanced over at her daughter across the table. "Have you figured out a way to help Janice get back to her time, dear?"

The warrior folded her arms as she studied Janice. "I can't," she stated and turned her focus on her mother.

The tavern owner gave a worried look. "Why not, dear?"

Xena grinned and averted her eyes to the archeologist once more. "Only Janice can, I have a feeling."

The archeologist huffed. "I wish I knew the answer then, so I could get home." She slumped in her seat.

Xena gazed back at her mother. "I don't think this has anything to do with the gods." She paused then added, "I think its more fate... destiny." She grinned. "Janice and maybe Gabrielle both have to learn a lesson to be able to switch back into their proper bodies."

"How you figure that?" asked Janice. "I mean Christ, this isn't quite normal."

The Warrior Princess shrugged. "Give me evidence to as how it was a god or supernatural force."

"For crying out loud, I'm in Gabrielle's body... that's evidence enough."

"No, switching bodies is simply an experience... not a god's handy work." Xena stretched her legs out. "If it was a god then they would have played some trick by now." She tilted her head. "Besides, Janice... you did mention my... soul invaded Melinda's body, just to stop Ares."

Cyrene slowly started nodding. "An epiphany," she whispered.

Xena shot her mother a smile for figuring out the puzzle. Now, if she could just get the archeologist to have that epiphany then she could get Gabrielle back. That is if Gabrielle has her epiphany if she was suppose to have one. She suddenly stood and gazed down at Janice. "How about a tour of Amphipolis?"

The archeologist blinked. "A tour?" she repeated and raised an eyebrow. "What for?" She grinned; she knew the answer.

"You're the archeologist," retorted the warrior.

Janice chuckled and stood. "Just testing you."

The Warrior Princess smiled at her mother. "We'll be back in time for dinner."

"I figured," teased Cyrene. "Take your time."

"Thanks, mother." Xena strolled over to the door. "Come on... archeologist," she taunted.

The archeologist shot a glare before she peered down at Cyrene. "Do you realize how much of a smartass your daughter is?"

The innkeeper smirked. "I do... she got it from me."

"Oh Christ," muttered the small woman. "Two of them." She sighed dramatically as her head shook. She went outside with the warrior.

"First, we'll got to my brother's tomb," mentioned Xena quietly. "It was one of the first thing Gabrielle wrote about in her scrolls." She went down the steps.

"Really?" asked the archeologist. "What happened there?"

"That was when I let Gabrielle into my heart," whispered the warrior. "This way." She signaled.

Covington was very alert to where they were going. She tried memorizing everything for future usage when she got home. Home... home... what is home? Wondered the small woman. Was it the tent, archeology, the scrolls, or her body? Janice sighed while she tried figure out what was home for her.

Xena went into her brother's tomb outside of Amphipolis. She slowly approached his

coffin and in each step she took, her heart filled with pain, her past with him flashed before her eyes.

Janice stood in the entrance way just as Gabrielle had over five years ago. She tilted her head, and stared at the warrior's back.

Xena ran her hand across the coffin and studied the top of the lid.

The archeologist, instinctively, brought her hands in front of herself and held her hands together. She was suddenly having a powerful *deja-vu*.

The warrior kissed her fingertips and pressed them down on the head of the coffin. She turned around and said quietly, "It's hard losing a sibling."

Janice considered the older woman's words. She took a steady breath then whispered, "It's harder never having one." She licked her lips for a moment then added, "Even if I had one that had passed away, I'd still would have been grateful to have one at all. To have those memories." Her eyes lowered then came back up and she said rather slowly, "You were blessed."

Xena swallowed while crystals formed in her eyes. "Janice, that's why we make our own families." Her voice faintly quivered from emotions.

Janice closed her eyes, as the inner pain was reborn from her past. She then whispered, "I... I can never... make my own."

"You already have," stated the warrior.

The archeologist opened her eyes when she saw a warm smile formed on the warrior's lips.

"You're apart of my family," whispered Xena in the shaping air of love.

Slowly tears rolled down Janice's cheek, and she shut her eyes tightly. Those words the warrior spoke revived the young woman's heart. So much so, that she began to cry harder, each ounce of pain welded up into each tear and was released from her soul.

Xena closed in the distance instantly and pulled the small woman into her arms.

Janice quickly stole into the comfort. She needed a safe haven while she was at her weakest. She clung to the warrior tightly, the hurt and pain streamed out of her soul, and a new layer of Janice Covington deep inside was revealed to the sunlight.

The Warrior Princess kept silent, rocking their bodies in serenity while she let Janice reshape herself inwardly.

The archeologist opened her eyes, and she rested the side of her head against the woman's chest. Just faintly, a peaceful smile touched Janice's lips. She waited for a few minutes then whispered, "You're pretty mushy for a warrior."

Xena chuckled quietly and smiled to herself. "You're pretty mushy for a tough and stuff archeologist."

Janice groaned and sighed deeply. "Tell me about it. Knock me senseless, will ya?"

"Not happening." Xena released the small woman but still held her shoulders as she peered into green-red eyes. "Okay now?"

The archeologist nodded briskly while going back into gruff mode. "Of course." She grinned and nodded again. "No armor dented here."

"No... but mine is wet," teased the older woman.

The short woman glared. "Very funny."

"Actually it isn't." Xena let go of Janice completely while she grinned. "My armor could rust."

The archeologist rolled her eyes. "Are you done?"

"Not really..." Xena shrugged. "To be continued."

"Wonderful," murmured the small woman. She sighed and made her way out of the tomb.

The tall woman chuckled and followed out.

"Where to next?" asked the archeologist. "Any other emotional places you have in mind? So I can prepare myself for the next one."

Xena laughed and nodded back at the village. "Nope, follow me."

"Go then," teased the archeologist.

The Warrior Princess flashed a grin before she headed back into town. "Janice?"

The archeologist sped up her pace and came along side the older woman. "Yeah?"

"How about we mark Amphipolis..." Xena peered down. "Then you'll be able to find it in the future."

Covington's face quickly constructed into confusion- she had to wonder how Xena would manage that.

"Sssure."

The Warrior Princess grinned and led her friend down the main street- she headed out of Amphipolis. She stopped once outside of the town. She glanced around.

There, perfect- that small, rocky cliff wall.

Xena walked over with long strides to the tiny canyon side. "This'll work perfectly... granted it doesn't tumble over in a thousand years." She brushed her hand over the gray stones of the wall.

"A cliff?" Janice peered up skeptically. "This'll do what? There has to be tons of cliffs in Greece... especially along the coast here."

The Warrior Princess knelt down and extracted a dagger. "Not one with a dagger." Her grip went tight around the dagger, she raised it, pulled back her arm, and gritted her teeth.

"You're not..." Janice trailed off as Xena rammed the dagger hard between two large boulders in the cliff wall. "You did," she whispered in awe.

The warrior pressed on the dagger more, wedging it in permanently. "Perfect." She smirked down at her friend but still held the dagger's handle.

The archeologist studied glimmering, blue eyes then peered up at the dagger. She stared at it and the detailed pattern of hilt. After she blinked, she continued to stare at Xena's hand gripping the handle.

"Gabrielle!" called Melinda across clearing.

Gabrielle jogged over but came to a dead halt. She tilted her head and slowly walked up towards her friend.

The southerner shifted her attention back. Her right hand kept gripping the old dagger's detailed handle.

The dagger deeply wedged in between two boulders.

"Dis mus' be Xena's," she whispered in awe.

"It is," confirmed the warrior-bard. She touched the hilt when her friend released it. She narrowed her eyes as she considered this. "Janice must definitely be with Xena."

"They marked dis area," concluded the southerner.

"Exactly." Gabrielle grinned. "If I know my partner, they've marked Potidaea too." She stepped back and studied the old cliff wall- her memory started kicking in.

"Alright let's see..." She turned around and examined the surrounding land.

"Amphipolis' entrance would have been right over there." She pointed.

Melinda stood beside the small woman, she tried visualizing everything Gabrielle said.

"And once you went through; off to your right was the market." An excited grin creased the warrior's lips.

"To left was the weaponry store, blacksmith, stables... couple of homes." She then pointed towards a large tree. "That would be about where Cyrene's tavern was. And over that way..." Gabrielle pointed towards her right. "Was Lyceus' tomb." She shook her head before she chuckled. "I can remember it all."

The translator smiled happily and looked down at Gabrielle. "We should mark everything."

"You're right," agreed the warrior.

"I reckon dere are stake in the back of the truck," suggested the aristocrat.

"Let's go," replied the small woman excitedly. She quickly turned, and she strolled to the truck with a bounce in her walk.

Pappas shook her head with amazement since her friend hadn't been excited earlier. *Mus' be uh little Janice in her.* She laughed inwardly and followed after her companion.

By that late afternoon the pair had the area marked, relatively of what Amphipolis use to look like. Each stake written with what would have been whatever part of the buried town. The only thing the pair hoped for was that Amphipolis was still buried underneath all of the earth. Afterwards the pair decided to head back to camp near the truck. They started working on dinner immediately.

Chapter Ten- **Doing Some Instigating**

Janice settled down on the bed with a sigh. "So... this was your room huh?" she inquired while she turned her head left and right.

"Yup," replied the warrior as she placed her saddlebag beside Gabrielle's. "When I was a kid."

The archeologist formed a smug look. "Xena the Warrior Princess as a kid... hard to believe."

"So I've been told," deadpanned the older woman. She pulled out a chair beside the table. While she sat, she asked, "How old are you, Janice?"

Covington glanced over at the warrior. "Twenty-seven." She curved up an eyebrow. "Why?"

"No reason." Xena shrugged. "Trying to judge the age difference between you and Gabrielle."

Janice chuckled and queried, "How old is Gabrielle?"

"Thirty."

The small woman nodded. "She's an old woman," she joked.

"Thanks," growled the Warrior Princess.

"Hey, I didn't say you were," countered the archeologist.

"But I am older than Gabrielle." A smirk took Xena's expression.

The small woman held up her hands. "I am so sorry then." She laughed but suddenly saw the evil glint in her friend's eyes. "Uh oh... should I start apologizing?"

The Warrior Princess rose up to her tall height. "If you want to live."

Janice bounced up to her feet and backed away from the threatening warrior. "Couldn't pay me to apologize. Just telling you how it is, Xena," she taunted with a smirk.

A low laugh rumbled from the warrior as she stalked towards the small woman. She lifted her hands up. "Soon you'll be dying to apologize."

"I don't think so." Janice held her hands up as well and stepped back from the other woman.

Xena sprung forward after the short woman.

"Oh shit!" The archeologist just jumped out of the way. "Is that all you got?" she mocked while she kept going in a circle with her opponent.

"Janice, you're toying with fire."

"You call that fire? I call that a scared yeller chicken," countered the archeologist. "Come on, your decadent could do better than you."

Xena growled then she jumped more towards Janice's right.

The archeologist instinctively dodged to her left and stumbled down the small space between the bed and wall.

The Warrior Princess turned on her heels and evilly grinned now that she had the small woman trapped.

Janice took a step backwards and felt the wall smack into her. "Oh goddamn it."

Xena stalked towards her prey.

"You're really not all that old, Xena. Did I ever mention that to you?" questioned the small woman.

"Oooh really?" The dark warrior closed in.

"Definitely... I mean no gray hairs huh?" Janice's eyes flickered at the bed. *I could jump on there, not a problem.*

Xena caught the quick glance.

"Its just once you're thirty it's all downhill from there," taunted Janice with a laugh before she leapt towards the bed.

"Not so fast." The Warrior Princess grabbed the younger woman in midair and slammed her onto the soft bed. She quickly pinned Janice down on her back. Her grip tightened on Janice's wrists and she growled down at the small woman. "What were you saying?"

Covington sheepishly smiled. "That you have nice blue eyes?"

"Wrong."

Janice knew her friend was about to do something so she reacted quicker. She wrapped her legs around the warrior's waist and lifted her off the floor. She gritted her teeth and prayed that Gabrielle's body was just strong enough.

Without being able to do anything, Xena found herself thrown over the small woman and landed on her back on the other side the bed. She hadn't quite expected that nor Gabrielle's body being able to handle it. She bounced up onto her feet on the floor and spun around.

The archeologist was already on her feet, hands up, and a huge smug look. "Your partner's body isn't that bad."

"Thanks." Xena grinned at the compliment that she took for her lover. "But don't plan

on staying in it." She laughed and suddenly jumped over the bed, back flipped, and landed behind the archeologist.

"Oh shit!" screamed Janice as she ducked but large hands grabbed her sides and started tickling her like crazy. "No... no," she growled and tried getting away from Xena. She fell back on the bed either laughing or growling. "Xena!"

The warrior hit all the spots on her soul mate's body she knew were ticklish. "Give up, Janice?"

"No!" The archeologist struggled against the large hands and pushing for freedom. She wriggled more and more into the center of the bed.

Xena just crawled onto the bed and continued the onslaught of tickling. "Apologize," she ordered darkly.

"Okay... okay!" Covington sighed when the tickling stopped. "Oh Christ..." She breathed calmly and whispered, "Remind me never to tease Mel either."

The older woman grinned and pressed her fingertips against the small body. "Janice," she purred., "apologize."

"Alright, alright... sorry," Janice grumbled while she held her hands up in defense. "You're the youngest, struttin'est lady of all Greece." She dropped her hands on the bed. "Happy?"

"Very." The Warrior Princess slid off the bed and stood tall.

"Still grouchy though," muttered the archeologist.

"You still talk too much," grumbled the warrior and she sat back down.

Janice sat up in the bed and crossed her legs. She reached up with both hands in a motion of preparing to fix her hat. "Oh Jesus Christ." She dropped her hands. "I hate that," she growled and dropped her shoulders. "Gabrielle like her hair short?"

Xena nodded.

"Why'd she get it cut short?" The young woman pulled down a few strands and stared at the blond tips.

"I cut it with my chakram," stated Xena nonchalantly.

Covington snickered and whispered, "Wish I coulda seen that."

The darker woman knew there was still time before dinner and decided it was time for a good serious talk. "So what you know about Gabrielle?"

"Aren't I suppose ta ask you that?" chided the archeologist.

The warrior shrugged. "I wanna see what your perspective is of Gabrielle." She smirked. "Probably way off basis."

Janice rolled her eyes. "She's a bratty bard... what else is there to tell?"

"Hmmm." Xena tilted her head. "Oh definitely, nothing else to Gabrielle other than

her being a bratty blond bard." She shrugged. "Its not as if... well the best warrior in Greece has fallen for her or has been changed by her." She waved a hand. "She's not an Amazon Queen." She chuckled. "She's just... a bratty bard."

The younger woman huffed and laced her hands together... well Gabrielle's hands. She stared down at them along with the muscular legs. "Alright, I get da drift." She peered up. "Fill me in wit da rest of the pieces."

The Warrior Princess shook her head. "I'm not filling you in when you're not interested in your own ancestry."

Janice blinked and considered the words. "Is she more warrior or bard?"

"Warrior," replied the tall female.

"How come?" The archeologist's voice held concern. "I understand people change but that's no reason ta stop doing what you're good at."

Xena nodded slowly. "I agree." She sighed while slouching in her seat some. "I am not quite sure what broke her away from writing." She laced her hands together in her lap.

"Maybe its been all da fighting," suggested Janice. "You said yourself, that she fights more than she writes." She shrugged. "Cut back on fighting and she may get da writing in."

"Yes, no... maybe so." The warrior studied her hands then peered up. "Gabrielle is a very optimistic person... especially in her younger ages."

"Kinda figured." Covington grinned. "One of those peoples that doesn't let da black vale even fall down huh?"

"Yes." Xena smiled softly. "She finds the good in everybody and anything."

Janice lifted her legs, wrapped her arms around her legs, and settled her chin on her knees. "She must have helped a lot of people see things differently."

"Oh definitely." The warrior chuckled. "Even myself despite it took me awhile."

"That's cuz you're so damn stubborn."

"Aren't we both?" mocked the older woman.

Janice huffed but was grinning yet she lost the grin. "She's killed before huh?"

"Yes," whispered the warrior.

The archeologist shook her head. "That's not easy," she murmured, "I remember my first kill." She lifted her eyes to lock on sad blue ones. "There's just no turning back."

"There isn't." Xena brought in a long breath then stood up. "Let's go get some dinner huh?"

"Sounds good." Janice lowered her legs and got off the bed. She strolled out of the room with Xena behind her.

The Warrior Princess just stared at her lover's body and gave a heavy sigh. *I love you,*

Gabrielle, she prayed out to her soul mate.

Janice stopped at the top of the steps. "Younger women first," she teased and held her hand down the steps.

The warrior smirked and said, "Why thank you, old woman." She went down the steps quickly.

"Wait up, smartass." The archeologist hurried down the steps after her friend.

The pair ate dinner with Cyrene, thankful that the tavern was closed for the night. Xena decided on plans to leave in the morning and head to Potidaea so they could mark the area as well. Plus, she had hopes it would open Janice's eyes more to Gabrielle's life.

After dinner, Janice found herself leaning against the windowsill in Xena's room.

The warrior was in the bathroom- she got ready for bed. She slowly came out and saw Janice's back. She stopped short, leaned against the doorway, and stared at her friend's back.

The archeologist watched the stars far up in the dark night sky. She sighed and closed her eyes; she let the wind caress her face.

"What you thinking about?" asked the Warrior Princess when she silently came up behind the small woman.

"Melinda," whispered Covington. Her eyes drifted open slowly. "I miss her," she confessed quietly.

Xena grasped her friend's shoulder and squeezed before she released. "Do you love her?" she asked gently.

"Christ, Xena... I've hardly known her a day." The archeologist sighed, shook her head, and stared at the stars. "How da Hell could I just fall in-love wit her in a day?"

"I did," stated the warrior in a serious tone. "It only takes a second," she whispered. "But it can take a lifetime to tell somebody or even yourself."

The archeologist peered up at the older, wiser woman. "How'd you know it was Gabrielle?"

"I didn't know it... at first. I felt it at first and I know it now." Xena smiled warmly. "Go with what feels right, Janice." She folded her arms. "That's one thing you'll learn in life... its always the best choice."

The archeologist lowered her chin down onto her folded arms, which rested on the sill. She lost herself into the stars high above her that she thought she could just reach out and touch. "How do you... tell somebody you're in-love with them?"

"You whisper it in their ear or you softly kiss them." Xena sighed contently. "Or just look into their eyes with who you are," she uttered. She rubbed her friend's back. "Time to get some sleep," she ordered. "We travel tomorrow." She strolled over to the bed, sat down and removed her boots.

"Where are we headed?" Covington turned around and leaned against the sill.

"Potidaea." Xena stood up and carried her boots over to the table near her armor, weapons, and gauntlets. "You'll get to meet Gabrielle's family." She flashed a grin before she went into the bed.

"Oh no." The archeologist waved her hands and shook her head. "I don't do family." She lifted herself off the windowsill. "Xena, I'll have to act like Gabrielle."

The warrior put her hands under her head and smirked up at the younger woman. "Yup." She closed her eyes with a very smug look.

"Xena," snarled the archeologist. "I am not acting like that bratty bard," declared the small woman.

"Yes you are," countered Xena. "You're gonna be the bratty bard for a day. So suck it up and deal."

Janice fumed with anger for all of a minute and like a kid; she stomped over to the other side of the bed. "This is fucked up," she grumbled, flopped down on the bed, and took her boots off. She rolled into the middle of the bed and heard Xena blow the candles out at her nightstand. "Stupid body switching." She kept huffing as much as she was complaining.

"Go to sleep," commanded a deep menacing voice.

"And stupid grouchy warrior," yelled the archeologist.

Xena rolled onto her stomach and brought her right arm far out. Her hand slammed right over top of Janice's mouth. "Be quiet," she said calmly.

"Phy chu fig phacking stouchy forrior."

The Warrior Princess laughed and removed her hand. "Go to sleep, Janice." Her voice was more soothing.

"Not before..." The small woman rolled to her right as a smirk creased her lips. Half of her body crashed into Xena's body but her body was farther up. "Oh yeah, perfect." She pushed her body down on the warrior.

Xena gritted her teeth as the boob pressed down in her face. "Janice," she snarled so deeply. "Get the-"

"Alright, alright." The archeologist slid her body down; she removed her boob from pressing into her friend's face. She soon had her head resting on Xena's shoulder. "Better?" she asked.

"Mmm, much." The older woman sighed contently at the feeling of Gabrielle's body pressed against hers. She closed her eyes and just tried imagining her lover's soul and mind inside of the body.

"Goodnight, Xena," whispered Janice in much warmer voice than normal.

"Sleep well, Janice."

Slowly the pair fell asleep and escaped into their own dreams.

Chapter Eleven- **Time to Travel Again**

"Duh birds are up so we need to get up," ordered Melinda in a sweet voice.

"Oh gods," groaned the warrior. She covered her face with her hat. "You're definitely Xena's decadent."

"Come on, Gabrielle." The southerner was making breakfast. "It's uh lovely day."

"Ssssh." Gabrielle rolled over and tried disappearing down in her sleeping bag. "Hate mornings."

The southerner kept quiet but smirked as she continued with breakfast. She knew there was no way her friend would go back to sleep. She sat beside the fire while the water boiled. She pushed her glasses back up on her bridge of her nose and peered down at the map. She calculated the distance from Amphipolis to Potidaea... not too far, she decided.

"Hades," growled the warrior as she let out a frustrated sigh.

"Problem?" queried the belle in a teasing tone.

"Yes, you woke me up and I can't get back to sleep." Gabrielle rolled onto her side and glared at her friend's back. "And we don't have that far to go to day." Her eyes went to slits. "Could have let me sleep in, you know?"

The aristocrat gazed sidelong at the small woman. "And what... is duh fun in dat?" she drew out in her southern accent.

The older woman glared at the belle's back. "Fine!" She got up to her feet. "You can deal with a pissed warrior for the day." She swiped her hat off the ground, slammed it down on her head, and stomped over. "Good luck," she growled as she flopped down on the ground beside Melinda.

The translator shrugged, folded up the map, and smiled warmly at Gabrielle. "You're gonna be dat grouchy huh?"

"Well you woke me up early," snapped the small woman.

Melinda tilted her head down and peeked up. "You're dat upset?"

"Yes," growled the warrior.

The southerner grinned before she leaned forward and kissed Gabrielle's cheek softly. When she pulled back, she got the delightful sight of seeing Gabrielle blush.

The warrior sighed and stared into the fire while the flush settled down.

Melinda chuckled and still felt her lips tingle from kissing Gabrielle's cheek, well rather Janice's cheek. "I'm boiling some water."

"Can I try that other stuff... oatmeal instead of the grits?" asked the short blond.

The southerner laughed softly but nodded. "I reckon so." She noted the pot of water boiling and shifted up onto her knees. She pulled the small pot off and settled it down beside two bowls. She filled both bowls with the hot water then she reached into the pack close by. She removed an instant pack of oatmeal and one of grits. Once the grits were in one bowl and the oatmeal in the other, she handed her friend her breakfast.

"Thanks." Gabrielle watched the oatmeal soak in the water while she waited for the spoon being passed to her. After she had the spoon, she stirred the oatmeal around.

"You're still writing huh?" asked the southerner.

The warrior shrugged. "Here and there," she murmured.

Melinda peeked over at her friend. "Like once uh week huh?"

"Like once a month... if that," stated the older woman. She didn't look up but kept stirring the oatmeal.

"Why?" whispered the aristocrat. "Ya are so good at writing."

Gabrielle shrugged and lifted up a spoonful of oatmeal. She taste tested it and found apple and spices zip through her mouth. She smiled at that as she slipped the oatmeal in.

The belle recognized the lack of verbal answer. She sighed because this was a very sore topic she'd selected. "I'm sorry," she uttered and locked eyes with her friend.

"For what?" asked Gabrielle.

"For bringing up yo writing when ya don't fancy talking 'bout it."

The warrior shrugged. "There's not much to discuss about my writing." She paused and added, "I am not a bard any longer. That's all there is to it."

Melinda thought for a moment then asked, "Then what are ya?"

Gabrielle did a double-take on the question. "A warrior," she stated.

The southerner shook her head. "So?"

"What you mean... so?" The small woman lowered her bowl of oatmeal.

"I reckon I mean so as in... what's yo point?" The aristocrat shrugged her shoulders. "Can't ya still be uh bard too?"

The short warrior picked up her bowl of oatmeal again. "One or the other, Mel."

"Who says?" inquired the tall belle.

Gabrielle sighed for a long moment and replied, "Its just the way it is."

"Well then, it ain't ever gonna make any sense," declared Melinda before she went quiet and ate her grits.

The older woman never responded and just ate her own breakfast. She'd always had a hard time discussing her writing, her bard days. She considered the bard long gone

and dead... but she missed the bard.

Within an hour, the pair had decamped, put their items back into the truck, and were climbing in.

Gabrielle started the truck up and settled into her seat. She drove the truck up onto the road. "You don't think anybody will mess with the stakes we placed around the area?" she inquired.

The southerner shook her head. "I reckon not, ain't many people for uh few miles 'round."

"Good." The small warrior nodded her approval while she drove the truck. She reached over and rolled the window down.

"How's yo arm?"

The warrior grinned at her friend. "You mean Janice's arm?" she joked.

Melinda chuckled and replied, "I reckon you're right."

"Its fine," answered Gabrielle finally. "There's no pain, just a wound to heal over."

"That's good," stated the aristocrat.

"On the map, how far is Potidaea?" queried the small woman.

The belle stared at the dusty road out the window while she tried recalling. "We'll make it there dis afternoon," she replied.

Gabrielle nodded and settled back in her seat contently. "Sounds good to me."

The translator pushed her glasses back up on her nose, leaned forward, and rolled down the window. For a few moments, she enjoyed the sensation of the wind caressing her face and sweeping her bangs back. "Gabrielle?"

"Hmmm?" The warrior didn't glance at her friend, her focus on her driving.

"Tell me 'bout traveling Ancient Greece."

The warrior chuckled and sighed. "Alright." She reached up with her freehand and brushed back her bangs. "It's a little something like trying to look for trouble." She grinned and went into an explanation of what it was like traveling with her soul mate.

"How you like it?" inquired Xena.

Janice shifted a little in the saddle while her expression went foul as if she ate something bad. "Not sure..." She rearranged the reins in her hands and settled into the saddle again.

"You squirm too much," stated the warrior.

"I can't get comfortable," replied the archeologist. "Not exactly a sofa here." She straightened her back out. "And my back is killing me, damn."

The Warrior Princess sighed dramatically. "Thank the gods Gabrielle doesn't whine

like you," she muttered.

Janice glared over at her friend. "I heard that, grouch."

Xena shrugged and kept her stoic attitude. "We'll be in Potidaea in about a candlemark if we keep this pace."

"Candlemark? What the Hell is a candlemark?" Janice laughed at the word and grinned at the other woman. "Have any relation to an hour?"

"A who?" inquired the warrior as her eyes twinkled.

The archeologist groaned and raised an eyebrow. "A minute?"

Xena tilted her head and taunted, "Is that sixty seconds?"

Janice growled lowly and leaned to her left to try and swat Xena.

The warrior laughed and swayed back as the hand went past her. "Touchy, touchy."

"Smartass," growled the archeologist.

Xena chuckle but was smiling. "It's one of my many skills."

"I'll say," murmured Covington as she looked ahead again.

"Janice." The warrior's voice was suddenly serious.

Janice turned her focus back on her friend. "What?" she asked quietly.

The older woman sighed and nudged Argo closer to the other horse. "I was seriously last night when I said you'll have to be Gabrielle."

The archeologist didn't say anything, her jaw clamped down, and she stared ahead absently.

Xena sighed at the silent treatment. She chew on her lower lip then whispered, "Gabrielle would appreciate it if you took just one second to give her a chance. I know I would too."

Janice released a long breath while she fiddled a little with the horse's reins. She licked her lips and uttered, "Tell me about Gabrielle and her family." She peered up with soft green eyes.

Xena's lips eased into a warm smile, and she touched her friend's leg briefly. "Thank you," she said sincerely.

The archeologist nodded. "You've been right." She shrugged. "I just..." She shook her head. "Just can't find my place," she admitted sadly.

"Your place is with Gabrielle and I, in our family." Xena hadn't lost her smile. "And I think I can speak for Mel too."

Janice nodded slowly and still stared down at the horse. She lifted her head up. "Tell me everything about you and Gabrielle." A peaceful smile touched her lips. "I want to understand... now."

Xena's eyes had melted into a rich soothing sky pastel as she leaned over and kissed Janice on the temple. "I think I can prepare you for Potidaea in an hour." She grinned.

The archeologist gave a small chuckle. "Gonna have ta."

"Alright, here we go." The warrior straightened up, trying to think like her lover... think like a bard.

~*~*~*~

Janice finished untacking her horse, and she chuckled. "Getting da hang of this."

The horse glanced back at the archeologist and nudged her from behind.

The small woman turned around and smiled at the horse. "Hey, boy." She rubbed his nose before scratching behind his ear.

Xena strolled down to her friend's stall. "Ready?"

"I think so." Janice shrugged. "Not quite like Gabrielle."

The bay nudged the archeologist, demanding attention.

The small woman chuckled and rubbed him so more. She suddenly had a concerned look as she peered up. "Does Gabrielle's family know that you and Gabrielle are... you know." She grinned but a little shyly.

The warrior folded her arms. "Yes they do know Gabrielle and me are... you know."

The archeologist huffed at the smartass reply yet couldn't help but grin. "Okay, time ta get this over wit." She came out of the stall. "I'll say one thing," she started while closing the stall door, "there isn't no way in Hell I'm gonna kiss ya."

Xena laughed and headed out of the stable with her friend along side. "Don't worry, I don't think Gabrielle's family is going to want to see that."

"True." Janice studied the small town that was littered with flocking sheep. "Must have plenty of wool around here."

"Mmm," agreed the warrior. "Just remember, smile and be positive."

"Right, right." The archeologist nodded a few times. "Smile till it hurts and no goddamn negative comments."

"And don't cuss," growled the Warrior Princess.

"Oh fuck, that's no goddamn fun," teased the small woman.

Xena sighed dramatically and glimpsed up as she spotted the fence in house. "Alright, here we go."

"Okay... I'm Gabrielle," couched the archeologist to herself. "Be sweet... I can do that."

The warrior laughed amusingly and opened the gate for the fence.

Janice went first followed by her friend. "You go first," she whispered in fear.

"We'll go together," suggested the warrior as she headed up the steps. "Go on, knock."

Covington grumbled and knocked.

The door flew open from a younger woman opening it.

Janice lit her face up with a bright smile. *I think this is Lila*, she decided. "Lila?" she whispered in a more warm voice.

"Gabrielle!" Lila squealed happily and sprung forward and hugged her supposed sister.

The archeologist widened her eyes in surprise but hugged back. "It's good to see you."

Xena grinned to herself and laughed inwardly. *Well this should do it*, realized the warrior but yet... she sighed sadly. *Mel, please help my... my bard*, she prayed hopefully.

~*~*~*~

"Here we are," declared Gabrielle as she put the truck in park and turned it off.

Melinda studied the forest like area. "Let's hope that something is left of Potidaea."

"I second that," whispered the warrior as she hopped out of the truck.

The southerner got out of the truck as well and met her friend at the back of the truck. "Make camp?"

"Uh." Gabrielle caught sight of the sun settling low in the west. "We better."

"Deja-vu," joked the taller woman.

"Really," agreed Gabrielle as she jerked out two packs.

Together the pair quickly made camp before the sunset. The fire was soon crackling and lighting up the surrounding area with a soft glow. This time, Gabrielle made the dinner and let Melinda relax.

The small warrior crouched in front of the fire. She peered through the fire at her friend.

The aristocrat stared absently into the fire, deep in her thoughts. Her glasses were off, which only heightened her gently chiseled face.

Gabrielle saw the soft blue eyes lift to her and lock on her. She slightly tilted her head and read her southern friend's eyes. The longing for need and love were deep in Melinda's eyes. And Melinda gazed upon Gabrielle as if she were another person, as if she were Janice Covington. "Mel?" whispered the small warrior.

"Yes'um?" asked the southerner as she lowered her head and put her glasses back on. She looked back up while she brushed back her bangs.

The warrior sighed and came around the fire after standing. She squatted down in

front of her friend and took off the hat. She placed the fedora on her knee and reached up. She laced her fingers through the southerner's much larger hands. "Tell Janice when she comes back," she whispered. She squeezed Melinda's hands.

"Tell her what?" uttered the aristocrat. Her eyes searching Gabrielle's eyes for answers.

"That you love her," replied Gabrielle quietly.

The only sound filling the air was that of the crackling fire, a fine breeze, and level breathing.

"I can't..." Melinda shook her head and lowered it.

"Mel?" whispered the warrior. "Look at me, please?" She tightened her hold on her friend's hands.

The younger woman lifted her sky glowing eyes to the warrior.

Gabrielle revealed a smile of comfort. "Janice loves you, I can promise you that. She may treat you like you're not important to her. But I know, I know you're very important to her." She paused before quietly adding, "She needs you, Mel. Don't take the time with her for granted nor let her take it for granted."

"But Janice and I hardly know each other," stated the southerner in a sad tone.

The warrior's smile went softer. "And it only takes a second, Melinda." She paused before whispering, "Just one mere second." She leaned forward and gently kissed her friend's cheek. "Talk to her," she uttered in a serene voice before getting to her feet and released the larger hands. She went back to the fire as she put the hat back on and she continued with dinner.

The aristocrat brushed back her bangs with plenty of emotions to contend.

Within half an hour the pair silently ate together and each dealt with personal turmoil.

Gabrielle felt too distraught to eat much food. She pushed the half-cleaned plate away on the ground. After a long sigh, she stared at the fire. She glanced over at Melinda beside her. "I'll be right back," she said and hints of sorrow tinted her voice.

The tall woman nodded and watched her friend leave the camp, heading towards the truck. She removed her glasses and at that instant in time, she felt a shift in her mind and soul. Melinda stood up and followed after the small warrior.

Gabrielle leaned against the front of the truck, her hat on the truck, and she stared up at the quarter moon and the dim stars surrounding it. She picked up on the sound of somebody coming towards her. She realized it was Melinda, and she forced a smile onto her lips while holding back hidden tears.

Melinda gave a knowing smile and came right up to the small woman. "Come here," she ordered in a much deeper tone.

The short warrior turned and quickly went in for a hug.

The tall woman drew her friend in tightly and held her close. She lowered her head

onto Gabrielle's head and swayed their bodies.

Gabrielle released all her stress and upset out in her tears as she dug her head into Melinda's chest.

The southerner sighed and lifted her head after a bit.

The small woman peered up and whispered, "For the life of me, Mel... I can't figure out how to get home." She slightly shifted out of the belle's arms and stepped back.

"I know." Melinda brushed back a stray piece of blond hair as if it were natural for her to do. She chewed on her lip and debated with the urge to speak. "Gabrielle... you're already home."

Gabrielle studied the blue eyes that captured her, and she realized they were more loving such as her soul mate's. "Oh gods, you've been here all along." She instantly slipped back into the larger woman's arms.

"Sssh," hushed the southerner, and she rocked their bodies together. "I'm always with you."

The small warrior pulled back and wiped away the tears. She laughed nervously and said, "I don't understand how I get back."

"There's only one way to get back to our time," replied the aristocrat quietly. She smiled sadly. "It has to come from within you, Gabrielle."

Gabrielle tilted her head in misunderstanding. "But I..."

Melinda chuckled at the confusion and lightly caressed her friend's cheek. "To return back to our time, you must return to yourself, Gabrielle." She lowered her head closer. "I'm waiting." She touched her lips against Gabrielle's and whispered, "Reawaken all of *her*."

Gabrielle moaned softly when the silk lips pressed more into hers. "Xena," she whimpered between the kiss. She opened her mouth and savored the long, loving kiss.

Slowly, the belle pulled her tongue out of Gabrielle's mouth as she began to break the kiss. She opened her eyes gradually while she lifted her head. Then the sensation of release came over her, and she regained control. "Gabrielle?" Her southern voice was filled with confusion.

The short warrior opened her eyes. "Oh gods..." She suddenly felt a flush wash over her. "Mel-"

"I'm sorry," cut off the southerner. "I reckon I don't know what came over me."

Gabrielle cleared her throat; she still hadn't shifted out of the other woman's arms. "Um..."

Melinda shook her head and said, "I reckon I understand what happened." She teased her expression with a grin.

The warrior lowered her head as her blush went a few shades deeper. "Right," she muttered.

The belle released the small woman and stepped back. "Maybe we should head back tuh camp...?"

"Yeah." The older woman grabbed the fedora and put it on. "I'm bushed."

"I reckon I am too," agreed the southerner. She made her way back to camp with Gabrielle.

Quietly, the two women crawled into their sleeping bags next to each other.

Gabrielle took the hat off and placed it over her face.

Melinda chuckled at the scene.

"What?" asked the warrior as she lifted the fedora up and looked over at Melinda.

"Ya act like Janice with dat hat," teased the belle.

Slowly, green eyes lifted up to the hat she was holding. A tiny grin found its way on her expression. "It just feels normal to do," she replied. This time, Gabrielle placed the hat down on the ground.

There was a bit of silence but the aristocrat broke it with a question. "Gabrielle... what do you think she meant?"

"By?" The blond haired warrior glanced at her friend.

"Ya have to return to yoself," whispered the tall woman.

Gabrielle sighed for a long moment. "Not sure," she admitted. "Its weird that she talked in riddles like that," she considered oddly.

"Maybe 'cause ya are suppose to figure this out for yoself," stated the younger woman.

The warrior pondered the answer and knew it was the truth.

"Well..." Melinda rolled onto her side and gazed across into moss eyes. "The answer lies widin ya."

"It does, it does." Gabrielle turned her head as her eyes focused on the stars.

The southerner released a breath and curled more up in her sleeping bag. She closed her eyes while she let herself drift off.

The warrior, on the other hand, continued losing herself into the stars. She laced her hands together on her stomach and repeated her soul mate's words in her head endlessly. She only had to return to herself.

Chapter Twelve- **Time to be Gabrielle**

"Oh my," whispered Hecuba, "I'm glad you're okay." She turned back around and continued preparing the dinner meal.

Janice grinned but softly. "You're not the only one."

Xena chuckled and pushed her chair back against the wall.

"That's sso cool, Brie," piped up Lila.

"Lila," warned Herodotus in a deep tone from across the dinner table.

Lila sighed, folded her arms, and slouched in her chair at the table. "Can't even have an opinion around here," she muttered.

The archeologist grinned down at Gabrielle's sister or rather her great, great, great, great etc... aunt. "Have you met any boys lately?"

Lila perked up at the question. "Of course I have, you know I have."

"Yeah?" Janice crossed her arms on the table. "Any cute ones?"

The Warrior Princess grinned at how well her friend was playing her lover.

"Well, your sister needs a betrothed soon," cut in the father.

Janice shifted her focus to Herodotus. "Come on dad, Lila will find the right one."

"Honey." Hecuba turned around with a wood spoon in her hand that dripped of water. "Your sister is getting a little old."

The archeologist just recalled the custom of the ancient days about how young couples were suppose to be wedded. "Any of interested?" she asked her aunt.

Lila chuckled and answered, "The black smith."

Janice grinned, sat back in her seat after winking. "Good choice, sis."

Lila blushed and lowered her eyes.

"Here we are." Hecuba started placing the food down on the table.

"I'll help," announced Lila as she climbed to her feet. She quickly helped her mother set the table of food, flatware, and plates.

"Lila, get your father something to drink," ordered the mother.

The young woman quickly got something for her father.

Within a minute or two, the family was sitting down to a nice meal.

"Let us begin," declared Herodotus as he picked up his fork.

The women all began eating after Herodotus's had started.

Janice quickly realized she had nothing to drink nor did Xena for that matter. She stood up and touched the eating warrior's shoulder. "Want anything to drink... love?"

Xena suddenly choked on her food and started coughing.

Everybody else around the table stopped eating briefly and stared at the pair before going back to eating.

The Warrior Princess coughed several times but looked up at the small woman, whom

she saw was smirking. "Just some water," she croaked through her choking.

"Sure, sweetie." The archeologist sauntered over into the kitchen part. She followed Gabrielle's instincts and found the cupboard of mugs.

Xena still was coughing up the bit of food that went down the wrong pipe. She patted her chest and shook her head. *Damn, I owe her for that.* She lifted her fork and went back to eating.

Covington came back over with the two mugs of water. She settled one down in front of her friend and the other in front of her plate. She sat back down.

"Thanks," muttered Xena, and she narrowed her eyes at Janice.

The archeologist smiled sweetly. "Anytime." She bit her lower lip, trying not to laugh. She took in a calming breath and returned to eating, as did Xena.

"Whatever happened to that young man that traveled with you both?" spoke up Hecuba.

Xena inquired, "Joxer?" A tiny smile teased her lips.

"Yes," replied the mother. "Is he still..."

"Alive?" finished Lila with a smirk.

"Hush, daughter," warned Hecuba.

Janice sighed and answered, "Yes." She gave the Warrior Princess a look for her to take it away.

The warrior sighed and glimpsed at Gabrielle's mother. "We haven't seen Joxer in awhile but he's been around," she informed.

The mother smiled and stated, "He is such a nice young man."

Xena chuckled and replied, "He's a good man." She continued eating.

"How long do you both plan to stay?" spoke up Herodotus.

Janice glanced down at her great, great, great... well very old grandfather. "Xena and I plan to leave tomorrow," she replied coolly.

"Well, we're glad you both decided to come through." The mother smiled warmly at the warriors.

The archeologist chuckled and said, "Thank you, mother."

For the rest of the meal, the group talked idle chitchat before clearing the table.

Xena then directed her short friend out of the house into the evening.

Janice walked down off the porch and smirked to herself. "So what's up, love?" She peered up as her expression went smug.

The Warrior Princess shook her head and huffed. "Gods," she growled, "I can't believe

you said that in front of her parents." She chuckled and headed out of the gate.

The archeologist followed behind. "Christ, you said they know."

"They do but they don't exactly like to be reminded," stated the warrior.

Janice shrugged. "Its good for them," she expressed nonchalantly.

Xena chuckled and waited for her companion to catch up. "Come on."

"Where to?"

"We need to mark Potidaea like we did Amphipolis."

"That's right," whispered Janice.

The tall woman lifted an eyebrow. "And you forgot?"

"Ha." Janice skimmed her fingers through her short blond hair. "I guess... I did." She smiled at Xena. "Thinking too much about Gabrielle and who she is."

The warrior revealed a warm smile as she lifted her left hand up to the small of Janice's back. "Come on," she said softly.

~*~*~*~

"Well... what you think?" inquired the Warrior Princess as she stood back up and lowered her hand, which held a hammer and chisel.

"Its original," replied Janice with a soft laugh. She studied the huge 'X' chiseled into the large, half-buried rock at the entrance of Potidaea. "Definitely a dead give away."

"I thought so myself," agreed the warrior, and she put her hands on her hips. She tilted her head and smiled while standing in the full moon's light.

"If this rock disappears between now and my time, I'll be amazed," admitted the archeologist.

"Nah," brushed off Xena. "Its too buried. Nobody would bother to remove it."

The archeologist shrugged. "True."

The older woman sighed contently.

"Tired too?" asked the short woman.

"Yeah," admitted the warrior as she released another sigh.

"Well... how about we return the hammer and chisel then hit the hay?" Janice folded her arms. "I'm beat."

Xena glanced into the village while she said, "Let's go." She started off.

Covington laughed and strolled along side.

The warrior grinned at her friend. "I have to say, you did a good job of acting like

Gabrielle."

"Goddamn it, I knew you'd say that," grumbled the archeologist. She rubbed back of her neck but the sheepish smile still formed on her lips. "I did huh?"

"Yeah." Xena gave a smirk. "Sorry," she teased.

Janice dropped her hand. "I like her sister."

"You mean your great, great, great, great-"

"Yea, yea my aunt," cut in the archeologist. She waved it off before adding, "She's pretty nice... hyper too."

The Warrior Princess chuckled faintly. "It runs in the bloodline."

Covington peered up at that comment. "Tryin' ta say something?"

"Not a thing, Janice." Xena smirked, pattered her friend's back, and walked up the steps of the jeweler's store. "Be back," she called.

The archeologist huffed and leaned against the railing along the steps. She studied the surrounding sheepy town. "I can't believe she lived here," she muttered, "I can understand why she left with Xena." She shook her head with a small laugh.

"Yup, pretty up beat place huh?" joked the warrior as she stood at the top of the stairs.

Janice turned a little and gazed upon her dark friend. "Yeah, I'd like ta see what they do for fun around here."

"Knit wool." The older woman chuckled and came down the steps.

"Ya know, if Gabrielle was here, she'd probably had been pretty pissy about those comments," taunted Janice.

"Gabrielle? Nah." Xena folded her arms. "She'd agree with me."

Covington just shook her head, but she couldn't stop the grin. She decided to start walking back to Gabrielle's home.

The warrior sighed contently and followed along side.

"So... what's the plans for tomorrow?"

Xena peered down at the young woman. *To get you home*, she mentally replied. "Not sure."

"Are we staying here?" inquired the small woman.

"If you want, we can or we can leave."

Janice gave a shake of her head. "Not staying, its too thrilling for me."

"Alright, so we'll leave... simple as that," chided the warrior.

The archeologist's shoulders slumped. "How does she put up wid you? It's a miracle

she can take it."

"Oh, Janice." The warrior reached out and clamped her hand around the back of the archeologist's neck. "You just don't understand my relationship with Gabrielle." She playfully jerked the small woman closer. "She normally joins in with me." She opened the gate with her freehand.

Janice faintly growled as she pried the large hand off her neck. "Probably cuz she can't get you ta shut up anyways." She stumbled away from her friend and entered through the gate. "Can't beat 'em join 'em." She smirked at the tall woman.

"Are you defending the bratty bard?" taunted the warrior.

"Damn straight I am." Janice stopped and faced the warrior. She pointed at Xena. "You got da worse, grouchy, smartassy attitude I've eva' seen." She threw up her arms. "Its simply amazing Gabrielle can put up wid ya at all!"

The Warrior Princess shrugged and said, "She loves it."

"Yyyeah, I bet." Janice turned on her heels and strolled towards the house once more. "She just probably smiles and nods."

That amused smile hadn't left Xena's lips as she headed into the home. "Just like Gabrielle," she whispered before heading into the home.

Chapter Thirteen- **Home Again, Home Again... Jig-Ga-De-Jig**

Gabrielle brushed back her strawberry blond bangs and gazed around. "Mel, you ready?"

The southerner reappeared out of the woods with clean dishes from breakfast earlier. "Yes ma'am, how 'bout yoself?"

"Yup." The warrior leaned to her right while bending forward, she swiped her hat off the ground and put it on. "Let's go find Potidaea."

Melinda put the clean dishes away and strolled up to her friend while she dried her hands on her pant legs. "Ya lead the way."

The small woman nodded and strolled through the forest. "It should be this way." She gazed around. "Should being the key word," she muttered under her breath.

The aristocrat heard the comment and chuckled to herself.

The pair came over a small hill and down in the tiny valley it was free of woodlin. It simply was open fields of green grass.

"Bingo," whispered Gabrielle as a smile creased her lips. "I'm home." She chuckled faintly.

"What's that?" Melinda pointed down towards a huge rock.

"The rock that's been at the entrance of my town for as long as I can remember."

The southerner nodded in agreement. "I can see dat but I also can see somethin' on it."

Gabrielle squinted and tried figuring out what was that something. "Come on." She headed down the small hill towards the rock.

Pappas quickly followed and came up to the rock with her friend.

Gabrielle amusingly smiled as she knelt down and her fingertips traced the large 'X' chiseled into the rock.

"Well... X marks duh spot," joked Melinda.

"In more ways than one," whispered the warrior, she held back tears as thoughts of her lover came to her. She sighed and stood up. She gazed across the open area and her memory created the town before her. She folded her arms.

"Is dis where ya and Xena met?" whispered the belle.

"Near here, yes," replied the warrior quietly.

"Then ya left here?"

Gabrielle sadly nodded and uttered, "I left with her, became her sidekick, and her bard."

"Sidekick?" Melinda glanced at the short woman. "Partner," she corrected sternly as if she were Xena.

Gabrielle peered up with despaired moss eyes. "Her partner," she whispered and her voice quaked.

Janice felt warm hands slide over her shoulders. She didn't stir or say anything as she continued to just stand there and watch the town pass by.

"Horses are ready to go," Xena mentioned but got no response. "What you thinking about?" she whispered, and she squeezed muscular shoulders.

"Gabrielle and Mel," replied the archeologist in a soft voice.

"Will you talk to Mel when you get home?"

"Yes... if I get home," stated Janice. She bit her lower lip and shook her head. "I'm ready to go back," she admitted quietly.

Xena lowered her head close to her friend's. "Who ever said you left?" She paused before saying, "Melinda and I are the same person as you and Gabrielle are."

"Melinda is so different from you," countered the archeologist.

"Is she really?" challenged the warrior with a hard tone.

Janice truly considered then finally whispered, "No."

"Ya never answered my question earlier," stated Melinda in a small voice. Her gaze still overlooked the field.

Gabrielle never shifted her attention away from the spot that her hometown once

resided. "What question was that?"

"Why ya can't be uh bard and uh warrior."

The short warrior closed her eyes. "Its complicated."

"It always has been complicated," stated Janice with a hard tone.

"Or you make it that way," debated the Warrior Princess but her voice wasn't accusing, just stating facts.

The archeologist huffed, her back still to her friend. "How can I uncomplicate it?"

"Just by being yourself," replied the warrior. "What could possible hold you back from Mel?"

"Fears," uttered the archeologist.

"Ah yes." Xena nodded a few times. "I'd thought by that many years, Gabrielle and I would have gotten past those fears," she joked before chuckling.

Janice couldn't help but give a small laugh before she lowered her head. "I don't want anything to happen to Mel... by either me or anything around her."

"I know," agreed the warrior. "But you'll never be able to completely protect her."

"Yeah." Janice tightened her arms across her chest.

"Those days are over." Gabrielle shook her head. "You can't fight with a scroll and quill."

"Whose talking 'bout fighting with uh scroll and quill?" inquired Melinda. "I, personally, reckon that ya are a bard, that's yo way."

"Mel." The warrior faced her friend, her eyes holding Melinda in place. "I am not a bard," she stated clearly. "I am a warrior."

Melinda sighed, faced her friend, and lowered her head. Her eyes pierced through Gabrielle's and into Gabrielle's heart. "You are a bard."

"Mel-

"No," cut off the southerner. "You are a bard."

"No, she's not a bratty bard."

Janice nodded in agreement. "I know... now," whispered Janice quietly. "You were right, Xena." She turned around and peeked up into soft sky eyes.

Xena smiled warmly while she brushed back short blond hair. "About what?" she questioned quietly.

"Gabrielle is an amazing woman."

"I am warrior," growled Gabrielle, her eyes going to slits but there were soon tears coming down.

"Gabrielle," whispered the belle. She grasped her friend's arms as she smiled sadly. "You were born a bard, don't stray from your true self."

The warrior blinked at the aristocrat's strong words. "I can't write any more," she uttered in agony.

"Yes ya can," replied Melinda, her voice still strong. "I've seen yo work, it's the most beautiful thing I've ever read. Ya make Homer's work look like crap," she semi-joked. "I wouldn't lie," she stated seriously.

"I can't do it anymore, Mel."

"Why?" whispered the southerner. "Because ya are uh warrior?" She shook her head. "Ya are not even a true stereotypical warrior, Gabrielle." She smiled softly and caressed the small woman's cheek. "You're a soft warrior and you're a bard."

"There is no nobody quite like her huh?" whispered Janice while a smile formed.

"No, there isn't." Xena's face lit up with her own brilliant smile. "She's very special and rare." She paused then whispered, "Just as you are, Janice."

Janice started wiping at her eyes as the tears rolled down. "Goddamn it," she muttered.

The Warrior Princess chuckled and said, "You're apart of my family and Gabrielle's family. Don't ever forget that."

The archeologist couldn't say much back, she just pulled the tall woman in for a hug.

Xena drew her friend in close and buried her deep into her arms. "Gabrielle and I love you," she whispered while she lowered her head onto Janice's. A few tears slipped free.

Janice's body shook uncontrollable with sobs and she murmured, "I love you and Gabrielle too."

"Believe me," stated Melinda. "You are a bard, Gabrielle. Are you not dying to write again?"

Gabrielle closed her eyes while the hot tears rolled down her cheeks. "Yes, I miss those days intensely."

"Be Gabrielle again," whispered the southerner. "The bard and the warrior... the warrior-bard," uttered Melinda, and she revealed a glowing smile.

Gabrielle's tears became stronger and her chest tightened with the pain.

Melinda wrapped her arms around the small woman.

The warrior encircled her friend's waist and dug her head into Melinda's chest. "I need to write again," she whispered.

"And ya can do it," said Melinda confidently. She swayed their bodies together. "Awaken the bard in ya, Gabrielle... please."

Gabrielle lifted her head with a powerful smile. "I already have, Mel."

The southerner's expression softened as she wiped away Gabrielle's warm tears.
"Thank you."

"Thank you," whispered back the warrior-bard. "I love you, Mel. I couldn't have done this without your help."

"Nor could I," admitted the translator. "I'll snare Janice yet," she joked lightly.

Gabrielle chuckled but said, "Mel, you're family... mine and Xena's. Okay?"

The belle smiled and nodded. "You're apart of mine and I know you're apart of Janice's. Despite she doesn't care to admit it."

The warrior-bard laughed lightly and hugged her friend again.

Melinda chuckled too and tightly held the small woman.

This is what Xena meant... I've returned to my bard. And with that thought, Gabrielle closed her eyes tighter and prayed out, *I love you, Xena.*

Xena lifted her head slowly as she felt the small woman in her arms calm down with her tears.

The short blond lifted her head, her soft mint eyes capturing Xena.

The Warrior Princess swallowed as more tears developed and trailed down her cheeks. The pain inside of her finally released as if the rains came to wash the pain away.

"Sssh," whispered the small woman, and she brought her hand behind Xena's head.

The warrior lowered her head and felt her lips seal over soft ones. She moaned while her knees buckled at the sensation of finally tasting them again.

Tongues slid over each other and pleased the other as they tasted one another. Soft moans filtered between the kiss as the love went stronger each second.

Xena broke the kiss at a slow pace but kept her head low. "Welcome back," she whispered while breathing heavily.

Gabrielle traced her fingertips over Xena's velvet lips. "Gods, I've missed you." She leaned in and tasted Xena in another gentle kiss.

The warrior sighed at the end of the kiss and whispered, "I love you, Gabrielle."

"I love you so much, Xena." The warrior-bard and shifted in for a strong hug.

The Warrior Princess rocked their bodies and whispered, "I finally have my bard back."

Gabrielle smiled, a few tears released from her. "Yes, your bard is back."

Janice stepped back and peered up. Her eyes widened. "Mel?"

The southerner grinned and said, "Yes'um?"

"Holy shit!" The archeologist bounded forward and practically strangled her friend in a powerful hug.

"My lord." The belle laughed and hugged her partner back. "Miss me dat much huh?"

Covington blushed as she pulled back but gave a scold. "I just missed your... accent."

The translator grinned at her friend's words. "Did anybody ever tell ya Doctor Covington, dat ya are the worst liar?"

"I think I've been informed once or twice," joked the archeologist as she happily adjusted her fedora. "Miss this too." She signaled her hat.

The aristocrat folded her arms. "I can jus' imagine. Must have miss yo cigars too."

"You got that right, sweetheart." Janice was checking the inside of her leather coat for her cigars. She smiled when she found them and her zippo lighter. She peered up at her partner. "So how'd it go wid Gabrielle?"

"Oh my, she is somethin' else," replied the southerner in awe.

Covington grinned evilly and said proudly, "I know, that's my ancestor for you."

Melinda's jaw suddenly dropped. She took a step closer and put her hand on her friend's forehead. "Are ya feelin' alright, Janice?"

Janice brushed her friend's hand away. "Yea I am." She smirked and put her hands on her hips. "I've just come to see the light."

"Musta." The southerner stood there, shaking her head, and in amazement. "This'll go down in duh history books," she joked.

The archeologist laughed and folded her arms. "You have no idea." She dropped her smile and took a step closer. "Look, Mel... uuuh."

"What?" whispered the translator and she grasped her partner's arms. "Somethin' wrong?"

Janice licked her lips, the nervousness coming to life. "I have to tell you something, Melinda."

The belle knew it was serious since her friend used her full name. "Go on," she whispered.

"Um well..." The archeologist rubbed the back of her neck, trying to get the courage. "I... uh... well.... Damn I can't say it," she murmured hotly.

"Well I have somethin' tuh tell ya too," whispered the belle, "but I ain't sure I can do it."

The small woman laughed quietly and suggested, "Let's both say whatever at the sametime, alright?"

"Oh lord dat's jus' -"

"Hey, it'll work," cut off the archeologist with a smirk.

Melinda laughed softly and nodded. "Alright, you count."

Janice took a deep breath, fisted her hands up for this, and said, "Okay... on the count of three. One... two..."

The southerner braced herself for the five words she'd say.

"Three," stated Janice.

"I'm in love with you," whispered both women, hesitation in their voices.

Melinda's eyebrows shot up into her bangs. "Oooh... mmmmy..." she rasped in surprise and a blush crept up her neck.

"Oh my is right," joked Janice as she laughed nervously. Yet, her mouth revealed a bright smile as she stepped closer to Melinda. "I'm glad we agree on that," she teased.

The southerner chuckled, reached up, and removed her glasses. "Doctor Covington, I would have never guess dat 'bout ya."

"Trust me," started Janice with a smug look, "even I can have a soft side." She grinned while she gently caressed the southerner's cheek. She sensed how hot her friend's skin was from her reddening.

The translator slowly removed the archeologist's hat and held onto it then wrapped her arms around the small woman. "That I did know 'bout." She lowered her head closer to Janice's.

"Good," whispered the archeologist, and she closed in the distance. Her lips pressed into Melinda's at just a caress. Soon, she was opening her mouth to slip her tongue into Melinda's.

The belle moaned gently but soon entered Janice's mouth. She quickly found her body taking in all the sensations of early passion and it left her burning.

Janice gradually pulled back with a sigh and a smile. "Damn, you're a good kisser, sweetheart," she joked before chuckling.

Melinda was grinning and shaking her head.

"Mmm, I reckon I'm gonna faint," taunted Janice as she pretended to swoon.

The southerner laughed as her partner leaned back and draped herself in Melinda's arms with a gasp. That only made the tall woman laugh more. "Alright Janice, what happened tuh ya while ya were wid Xena?"

The archeologist straightened up and wrapped her arms around her partner. "I found peace," she whispered honestly.

Melinda smiled at those words, she lowered her head again. "That's what you needed," she uttered.

"Yeah it was," agreed the archeologist. She gently kissed the translator. "Jesus, I'm

already dating my partner in digging," she joked after the kiss.

The dark beauty grinned while releasing Janice. She put the hat back on Janice and jerked the front of the brim down.

Janice growled before she straightened her hat out. She was about to chide her love but quickly noted Melinda's spacey look. "What?"

The southerner narrowed her eyes and whispered, "Do ya hear dat?"

The archeologist tilted her head and listened more carefully. "No."

The translator shook her head. "I can jus' barely hear it."

"What's it sound like?"

The belle closed her eyes and focused in on the sound. "Sounds like... uh truck."

"What?" snarled the archeologist and it finally registered with her that she was in the ancient Potidaea. "Mel! we're at Potidaea."

"Yes," answered the translator but she still was listening to the sound. "Janice... I reckon we better go see what dat sound is."

"Or rather who's making it," whispered the archeologist as she reached into her coat. She pulled out her gun.

The belle caught the sight of the revolver. "She's definitely back," she teased.

The small woman grinned and held out her hand. "Come on... love."

Melinda smiled and took the small hand.

Quickly, the pair went up the hill and once in the woods again, they trekked towards the camp and Melinda led.

"Janice?"

"Yeah?"

"I forgot tuh mention this."

The archeologist groaned and asked, "What's that?"

The southerner sheepishly smiled. "When Gabrielle and I left the camp back in Macedonia we had uh few Nazes after us."

"What?" roared the archeologist. "Christ, who was it?"

"Uh few Nazes with uh commander named, Schiller," answered the translator. She glanced back ahead, through the trees and knew the camp would come up any moment.

"Oh no," groaned the archeologist. "Not Shit-Iler, he's Smit's boss."

"I know," uttered the belle before she stopped. "The camp is ahead."

"Alright." Janice fell silent briefly and heard the sounds of men talking. "Wonderful," she muttered. She peered up at her partner. "Look, stay here and I'll take care of them."

"Janice, I don't reckon so." Melinda grasped her friend's arm. "I ain't lettin' ya go on your own."

"Mel, you'll get-"

"Sssh." The tall woman grinned faintly and kissed her love's cheek. "I'll be fine."

The archeologist considered for a moment but knew she was Xena's decadent. "Alright... here's the plan."

Gabrielle chuckled and a smile eased into her expression. "Thank you, Xen." She smiled at her lover, who was bobbing up and down on Argo. "Its good to know Janice sees things different now."

The warrior moved her head in agreement. "It is." She smiled at her soul mate. "She really came full circle in those few days," she mentioned proudly.

The warrior-bard chuckled and readjusted the reins in her hands. "I know.... I know."

Xena nudged Argo closer to Gabrielle and her horse. She grinned evilly. "She has a mouth though."

The short warrior huffed and nudged her horse closer to Xena's as well. "I bet. She tries to be tough and stuff, I can tell ya."

"Mmm," agreed the warrior. She shook her head while brushing her bangs back. "She kept saying I was a grouch." She pouted to her partner.

Gabrielle bit her lower lip. "Oh," was all she could manage. Her face held all the laughter she was containing inside.

The older woman narrowed her eyes at her partner. "Uh huh."

The warrior-bard cleared her throat, just controlling herself. "Well," she muttered, "glad somebody could tell you." She nudged her horse away quickly.

"What?" growled the warrior but softly.

"Hmmm?" The short woman glanced at her lover as if she didn't hear anything.

"You heard me."

Gabrielle laughed suddenly and shook her head.

Xena sighed but none the less, she urged Argo closer to Gabrielle's horse again. "So I'm grouchy huh?"

The warrior-bard smile amusingly. "No you're not grouchy, sweetie." She leaned over with her hand cupping Xena's opposite cheek. "You're perfect," she whispered and kissed her lover's closes cheek.

The warrior chuckled before repositioning herself in her saddle. Her lover's warm hand slipped from her face.

The blond warrior's right hand rested on her lover's thigh. "Where we staying for the night?"

"Where ever you want," replied the warrior. She laced her hand through Gabrielle's hand. "Town or forest," she teased.

"Missed me that much huh?"

"Oh yeah," teased the warrior further. She lifted their hands and kissed Gabrielle's tenderly. "A lot."

"Mmm, the forest." The bard grinned evilly. "I think the... isolation is what we need."

Xena laughed and asked, "For snuggling purposes?" Her eyes twinkled.

"Well if you just wanna snuggle," mocked the warrior-bard.

The older warrior laughed. "Then some." She winked and released her lover's hand. "Come on." She urged her mare ahead.

Gabrielle grinned and kicked her bay's side. "Hey Xen?"

"Hmmm?"

"Did Janice tell you about Mel?"

"Oh yeah." The warrior flashed a grin. "They should be kissing about now."

The bard laughed and nodded. "I hope so." A lopsided grin formed on her lips. "Now, if I could just meet Janice, I'd be set."

Xena's eyes widened and she looked at her partner. "Oh gods," she uttered in fear. "Two of you at once, I couldn't do it!" Her response was Gabrielle's laughter echoing loudly. She grinned and shook her head. "Family," she muttered and a happy smile took her lips as mirror in Gabrielle's expression.

The End