

~ The Return ~

by Red Hope

Violence: Of course there is violence in this, its Xena Warrior Princess. *L To sum it up, there is sum gun shooting, weapon slinging, lightning bolts, flying daggers, deaths, and some blood.

Copyright: Xena, Gabrielle, Melinda Pappas, Janice Covington, Argo, Valasca, and the Amazons all are owned by Universal/MCA and Renaissance Pictures, not mine, I wish though. But, the story line is all mine Mwahaha as well as the character Vanessa, so don't "borrow" them.

Sex/Subtext: Yeah there is defiantly both of those. There is love between two women which if offends you, then don't read this story. If you are under 18 years of age or if this type of story is illegal in the state or country in which you live, please do not read it. Otherwise enjoy yourself.

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

redhope@redhope.netm

Part 1

Section One

~*Part 1*~

Melinda Pappas looked around again at her surroundings adjusting to the darkness, she saw that the two men held sharp and large knives very tightly pointed in her direction. Mel was wide eye at the sight of these two men each holding a knife. Before Mel could react or say anything one quickly came up to her and placed one hand over her mouth and the knife across her throat. Mel froze in place not wanting the knife to move any closer to her neck.

"Miss Pappas we recommend that you don't make any moves or peeps. Got that?" hissed the man with a hint of alcohol on his breath. Mel lightly nodded her understanding, with fear coursing through her body. "Good! Now my friend and I will teach you what it's like to be really fucked. Not by some other stupid dyke! Such a waste too." The second man put away his knife in his pocket and grabbed a rope that was hidden behind the table. The only thing Mel could think of was that she wished Janice was here to save her from these jerks. 'God Janice where are you???? I need you! HELP!' Mel continued to scream for Janice in her head hoping that some how Janice would hear her.

~*~*~*~

Janice tried her hardest to keep her speed down on her motorcycle, remembering her promise to Mel. Boy did she ever love her Indian bike; there were hardly any of these Indians left in existents. All of a sudden something seem to hit Janice, but not physically. She quickly turned off the road and on to the shoulder stopping the bike quickly. She then started to feel fear spreading through her body and goosebumps spreading up her body. She knew immediately that something was wrong and it had to do with her soulmate. She instantly started up her bike again and checked on her left side to make sure her revolver was in its holster, thankfully it was where she left it as

was her whip on her left side. She headed back on the road, going at a fast speed, but keeping a close eye on her surroundings and passing cars.

'By god, Mel better be all right or I'm gonna kill whoever or whatever is hurting her!' Janice tried to keep her anger down to a minimum but was having a hard time. She loved Mel more than any thing else in this world; she would give up her life and soul for Mel. As Janice was nearing the camp, she could feel that fear becoming stronger with every passing second. The archeologist was very worried about her lover, hoping that this was just a freak thing, but she knew that it really wasn't and that Mel was in danger.

~*~*~*~

Mel continued to scream for help in her mind. Now the two men had her tied up and gagged to a post in the center of the medical tent. One man stood relatively close to the tent flap of the entrance, keeping an ear open for any approaching "visitors." The second man who had talked to her earlier was double-checking the knots that he had just tied, with his knife still in his right hand. Being happy with his tying job the big built man came around to the front of Mel, he grinned wickedly at Mel. The tall raven-haired woman could feel a shiver rush down her spine ending with goosebumps. Now she became even more scared and worried, she knew what exactly was going to happen but was still hoping that her lover would show up. The man slowly walked up to her still evilly grinning at Mel.

"Now bitch, its time to show you what sex is really about" The stoic man then reached up and began to quickly un-button Mel's white blouse. After making quick work of the blue eyed woman's blouse, the man push Mel's blouse back and reached behind her, unhooking her bra. Then with his knife he cut off the small bra straps on the arms, revealing immediately Mel's perfectly round breasts. The big built man grinned wickedly and noticed the intense fear in Mel's eyes making him even more aroused at her weakening. As he was about ready to reach for Mel's breasts, he heard a motorcycle coming into the camp at a high speed. He glared at raven-haired woman and began walking away from her.

"Be right back bitch, don't go any where" the man lightly laughed at his own dumb joke. He joined his friend at the entrance to the tent. The smaller man kept his knife at the ready waiting to see if any body would come to the tent. The taller man then reached on the table and grabbed his gun and checked to make sure it was loaded, which it was. Mel's heart was racing; she began to wonder if that was Janice outside, who else owned a motorcycle. She began to pray that it was Janice and that she would find her.

~*~*~*~

Janice jumped off her bike quickly not worried about it. Her heart was racing, she knew for sure that Mel was in danger. She reached for her gun and pulled it out of its holster. The archeologist then looked around at the camp, everything was quiet and she figured that everybody was asleep. She wasn't sure where to go, then she spotted the medical tent, for some reason she knew that's where Mel was. She broke into a fast sprint, heading to the other side of the camp; she kept her gun at the ready, her senses alive and at their peak. As she neared the tent, she couldn't hear anything out of the ordinary. But she could just feel Mel's presence within the tent and telling her that Mel was scared out of her wits about something. As she neared the tent she slowed

up, something warning her that there was danger within and to be careful.

~*~*~*~

The two men within the tent had heard the fast movement of somebody outside. But it seemed that it stopped all of a sudden once it neared this side of the camp. They began to worry a little, wondering if somebody knew of their presence within.

Mel also had heard the sound of somebody running in their direction, and for some reason Mel knew it was Janice. Her heart was still racing, she wasn't sure though if it was because of the men or Janice's nearing. Her hopes began to heighten, but she was worried that the two men would surprise Janice and end up hurting or killing her. Damn she thought she wished she could think of a way to warn her lover.

Just then Mel noticed that something was moving in the back of the tent. She kept a close eye on the movement not sure of what it was. Slowly and quietly a form began to appear from behind a crate where the movement was earlier. All of a sudden Mel recognized a hat, a bit of a form of a whip on the left side, and a gun lightly sticking out, she knew then that it was Janice. She began to feel safe, but was still worried that the men might catch Janice off guard.

Janice noticed that Mel's blouse was pushed back and that her bra had been removed, she could also see the fear held within Mel's sky blue eyes. Anger was surging through Janice by now, all she could think of doing was killing these two men for what they have and were going to do to her lover. She took a few seconds to gain control over her anger, slowly and quietly she crept behind the crates nearing closer to the two men.

"HHM what you think?" Asked the smaller man. The other man didn't say anything at first and listened a little longer.

"I don't know. I'm tempted to check outside, but then if their out there they might spot us" the man stopped and thought for a second. He figured if he kept to the shadows he wouldn't be spotted. "Look I'm going to go out there and find out who that is and where they're headed. Stay in here and stay close to the bitch. If I don't come back get your butt out here! But of course if they come in here, ya might wanna consider using her as a hostage" he began to walk out and then turned back to the smaller man. "And oh if you do leave if I'm not back in ten minutes, kill her!" the man ended that with a snarl and eyed the young women tied up and head out the tent cautiously. The smaller man watched as his friend head outside and then walked up to Mel, he stared at her and noticed the fear written all over her face, he grinned. As he began to reach up to caress Mel's face, he felt a gun to his back.

"Don't even think of putting your filthy slimy hands on her" snarled Janice "Boy you and your friend are some sick puppies" as Janice finish those words with a small push of her gun into the small man's back. The man gritted his teeth, looked up at Mel with hatred eyes and replied back to Janice.

"Not as sick as you are and your bitch. You dykes need to be taught a lesson and put in your place, you make us normal straight people sick!" spat the man with anger spilling within his words. With his last word Janice lost her control over her anger and slammed the man over the head with her gun. He fell hard to the ground, blood seeping over his head. Janice glared down at the man, and kicked him hard in the gut.

"Bastard" was all Janice could say. She then looked up at Mel and saw all of Mel's fear, Janice's heart shattered into pieces at the sight of her lover. She was about to reach up to Mel, when she jerked her head to the right to hear the sound of feet coming towards the tent. The archeologist held her gun up near her face and ran over to the entrance of the tent and hid near it, but out of site. The taller man stepped in and spotted his friend on the ground. He cursed under his breath, then as he spun around to look at his surroundings he found a gun aimed right at his face. Janice narrowed her eyes and glared hard at the man.

"Drop the gun you prick!" At those words the man drop his gun and growled at Janice, annoyed at himself for not being careful. The blonde then smashed the taller guy in the groin, making him double over in pain. Once he did this Janice nailed him too over the head hard with her gun, making him fall to the ground in a heap. Janice looked down at that sickening man and cocked her gun. Janice then hear a small mumbled looking up, sky blue eyes met with sea-green eyes for what seemed like eternity. Mel begged Janice not to kill the man with her eyes.

The smaller women put her safety back on and placed her gun back in her holster. Looking over at the table the archeologist was seeking out something. Finding what she needed she grabbed the two sringe needles off the medical table and extra rope on the ground. She got down on one knee and jabbed one needle into the big man's arm, secreting the chemical within the needle into the big man. After that she tied his legs and arms tight making sure the knots wouldn't budge. She then got up and went over to the other but smaller man and did the same process. Janice knew that the chemicals within the needles should keep the two men out till the authorities find them in the morning.

After dealing with the two men, she looked up at Mel, who was scared and the fighting had taken a toll on her making her look exhausted. Janice reached in her pocket and pulled out her knife in her right hand, she then leaned down and cut the ropes around Mel's legs. Standing back up Janice removed the gag and buttoned every other button on Mel's blouse. Neither of them said anything, the smaller women comforting Mel with her eyes. Reaching up Janice carefully cut the rope binding Mel's hand's to the post, taking extra care not to cut the tall women's hands. Once the ropes were cut and fell to the ground, Mel fell into Janice. The archeologist quickly wrapped her left arm around Mel and put her knife back in her pocket with her right hand. Then with all her strength that she didn't even knew existed within her, she lift Melinda up into her arms and held her close. Janice could feel Mel shaking uncontrollably in her arms, making the blond tightening her arms more around the women. The short women could still feel the anger tearing through her body, fighting hard to control it as she walked back to their tent with Mel tightly still in her arms.

Once they reached their tent, Janice carefully laid Mel on their bed, who was still shaking some from what happened earlier. The archeologist quickly discarded her gun and whip close by the bed, not feeling safe at all, then taking her boots off quickly and hat with jacket. She crawled into the bed and wrapped her arms around the raven-haired women, one across her breasts and the other around her waist. Pulling Mel in close holding her tight, they both began to cry themselves to sleep both feeling the same pain.

~*Part 2*~

Slowly but surely the sun began to sneak into the lover's tent through the crack of the flap. Melinda began to slowly wake up; all her memories from last night came flooding back into her mind. Janice woke up from Mel lightly stirring in her arms, instantly the archeologist tightened her arms around Mel. At the feel of her lovers arms tightening, she turned in Janice's arms staring straight into sea-green eyes. Janice lightly smiled glad to see the twinkle back in Mel's eyes but not completely. Janice moved her hand that was on top of Mel's side and caressed Mel's face, making the taller woman smile at the feel of her lover's protective hand.

"How are you feeling, Hun?" wondered the concerned lover who was still caressing Mel's face. The Southerner smiled and realized she felt a lot better now that she was with her soulmate.

"I feel a lot better than what I did last night, especially since I'm safely wrapped up in your arms" Mel leaned in and kissed Janice on the forehead causing a large smile to appear on the archeologist's face. "Thank you for saving me, Janice. I was really scared, but I knew you would come....could feel it" Janice held her smile for only a second longer then it turned into a frown.

"I'm really sorry Mel that I didn't get there sooner. For some reason I knew I shouldn't of left last night, I'm really sorry I did that to you" After Janice finished those words, she could see Mel's eyes turn serious along with her expression. Then in her best southern belle accent she replied to the smaller woman with:

"Doctor Janice Covington, you had no idea that was going to happen to me last night. And besides you can't hang around me all the time to protect me. So you better damn well not feel guilt about last night, that wasn't your fault at all" Mel slightly began to grin. "To see you last night in the shadows was like seeing my knight in shining armor" Mel lightly chuckled at that thought, making Janice grin. Janice then looked down at herself curiously.

"Knight in shining armor huh? I don't see where you get that one....I'm not shining one bit" Janice laughed at that remark and grinned back at Mel who was also giggling lightly. The archeologist was happy to see her lover laughing some, making them both feel more relaxed.

"Well I would say you surprised those two guys, don't think they were expecting some small women to sneak up on them like that" Mel kept smiling which in turned kept Janice smiling. But Janice couldn't help but want to still kill those guys for what they did to Mel. She knew well enough that last night will leave a mark on Mel mentally, she just wish she could make all the pain and memories just disappear. But the smaller woman knew that could never happen and just had to comfort the woman as best as she could.

Janice and Mel both didn't say anything for a few more minutes and just absorbed their closeness, neither wanted to separate from their position.

"Mel, you think you can maybe sit up and I'll go get us something to eat? Or would you rather have me stay?" after Janice finished her words, the archeologist's stomach made its presence well known, Mel laughed quietly at the rumbling coming from Janice's stomach, Janice though just grinned.

"I think you better go get something to eat for us and your stomach" with a playful and

light slap to Mel's arm, Janice got up. She was about to reach for her gun then decided against it and just grabbed her whip, hat, and quickly laced her boots back on. She wanted to let Mel feel somewhat safe and she knew Mel could use a gun if necessary. As she started to head out the tent, she looked back at her soulmate smiling sweetly to her. She then walked out into the early morning and stretched a little, Janice then stole a quick glance over at the medical tent. 'Guess I should let somebody know about those jerks while I'm up and about. Damn I wanna kill those bastards' Janice gritted her teeth and held herself together and walked over to the tent where the kitchen was located.

~*~*~*~

Back inside the tent, Mel was stretching her leg and arms out. She then walked over to the left side of the tent where her and Janice's cloths were set aside. She was about to take her blouse off, but some of her memories came full speed back to her, the look of the taller man's face with the smirk. She thought at that sight she was going to be sick, taking a second to control her emotions before going back to changing. 'Melinda Pappas, you need to control these feelings and memories, other wise your lover will be worried sick to death about you.' Mel sighed at this thought and continued to rummage through her cloths, looking for something comfortable to wear.

~*~*~*~

Janice was slowly headed back to the tent with an armload of food in her arms. Well it seemed that her two favorite guys would soon be towed off to jail by the local authorities, she still wanted to kill them though! As she neared her tent, she thought she heard sobs coming from within. She automatically picked up her pace and jogged into her tent and spotted Mel in a heap on the edge of the bed crying. Janice quickly placed the tray of food on top of the trunk next to her, and raced over to Mel and cradled Mel in her arms. Sitting behind Mel, and lightly rocking her back and forth in her arms, Janice began to worry about her soulmate.

"Hey I'm here Mel. It's all right. Try not to think about it" Janice nuzzled her face lightly into Mel's left shoulder, trying to hold back her own tears. Mel all of a sudden turned around in Janice's arms and hugged her tightly. The archeologist couldn't hold her tears back any more, and began to cry along with Mel.

The tall women fought hard to gain control over her emotions. With Janice still whispering words of comfort into her ears and the pure touch of her soulmate, began to pull her back. She began to stop crying and pulled back enough to look into Janice's eyes. She smiled at Janice, who right away started to kiss Mel's tears away. Mel went back into the embrace and hugged the smaller woman again, wishing she didn't have to ever let go.

Once Mel felt secure once again, she got up out of Janice's embrace reluctantly. Janice knew where Mel was head and so got more situate-a-weighted in the middle of the bed, as Mel brought the tray of food over to her. They both sat in the middle of the bed, eating whatever looked and tasted good, which Mel had to admit was just about anything there. The raven-haired woman then looked up at her soulmate and decided she owed her an explanation to what happened to her.

"Sorry about that back there Janice. While you were gone I was trying to get change.....and well when I was about ready to remove my blouse, all the memories came rushing back" Mel finish her explanation with a sigh and a frown. Janice

reached up and caressed Mel's face, making Mel lean more into Janice's touch.

"Its all right, I didn't need an explanation....had an idea as to what happened. Just take your time with this okay? I know it'll be hard, but I'm here for you every step of the way Mel" Janice finished her words with a smile and caring eyes. Janice then pushed aside the tray and rearranged herself so that she sat behind Mel. The archeologist then placed her hands on Mel's shoulders and began to massage them; she then slowly worked her way down Mel's back. Janice could feel all the tension in Mel's muscles, making her a little worried. As she worked her way down, Mel sighed and reveled in the feeling of her lover and the massage and leaned more into Janice causing Janice to grin a little. As Janice worked on the massage she debated as whether or not to tell Mel about the guys.

"Well it seems like our boys from last night are going to be picked up by the local authorities and then go from there"

"HHHMM I hope they get a lot of shit for what they did" Mel then realized that she just cursed and began to blush as well as giggle. Janice chuckled a little.

"Now Miss Melinda Pappas there will be no swearing in this tent" Mel then lightly elbowed the archeologist in the stomach. "Uh huh what happen to my proper southern belle?" Mel then laughed at Janice's question.

"Well I think a certain Doctor has corrupted me....but we will leave her name-less to spare her" Mel finished with a smirk forming. But as Janice made her way down Mel's back and made it to her destination, she began to tickle Mel. Mel busted out laughing and giggle uncontrollably, she then fell on her stomach on the bed and turn over on her back thrashing under the small blond.

"A certain Doctor eh? Name less? To spare her? HHMM Well see about that one" Janice continued her assault on the tall women tickling her till she was teary eyed.

"Oh please Janice, I can't take much.....more. Sorry I....couldn't help...that one. I'm sorry please stop Hun" Janice automatically stopped her assault as she heard Mel finish begging. Mel then took a few minutes to catch her breath and stop laughing. Janice looked deeply into Mel's eyes and saw Mel's entire twinkle came back making her smile. Lying down on top of the southerner, Janice placed a kiss on Mel's left cheek and smiled down at her. The taller women looked up into very soft and loving eyes. She then reached up behind Janice's head and pulled her into a deep and passionate kiss, expressing all the love she held for this woman. After about a minute they broke for air, Janice began to feel her desires burn in her stomach. She then looked down into Mel's eyes and saw there was desire and passion were held within them. She lowered her head down into Mel's neck and began to softly kiss the southerner's neck; Mel in return let out a soft moan. Janice then all of a sudden stopped and looked at Mel worried about last night.

"Are you sure you want to do this Mel? After last night and everything" wondered the archeologist with concerned eyes and voice. Mel smiled up at Janice with passion and desire still burning in her eyes. Huskily she replied back to Janice.

"Yes, I want to feel like you own me, like you always do" Janice wickedly grinned back down at her soulmate.

"Well if it's too much for you or you just want to stop, just say the word okay?" Mel nodded to this and held her smile. She then went back to Mel's neck and kissed her softly starting at the top and slowly coming down her neck. As Janice slowly made her way down the tall woman's soft neck she began to unbutton Mel's blouse, taking her time not to rush Mel at all and a bit tense with undoing her blouse. Mel could well detect Janice's concern, which made Mel appreciate her lover even more for being so caring. 'Oh my God, I love this woman! What would I do without her....probably go crazy and kill myself.'

Once Janice had unbuttoned Mel's white blouse, she began to take it off Mel, who also helped remove the blouse. After discarding the blouse onto the floor, the archeologist began to kiss between the valleys of Mel's breasts. With every soft and warm kiss that Janice placed on her, the southerner's desires rose. As Janice continued her torturous assault, she moved her kisses to the left kissing around Mel's nipple. The blonde then brought her mouth over Mel's left nipple and began to suck on it, feeling it harden within her mouth, Janice became more and more inflamed. As Janice sucked on Mel's left nipple, she brought her right hand up to the taller woman's right breast and began to knead it. Mel continued to moan in pleasure, her core was on fire, each caress and kiss sent a shiver down the southerner and ended in her sex.

The small blond then switched breasts and began to knead Mel's left breast while sucking on the right breast, as well as flickering her tongue over the nipple. By now Mel was going crazy her body on fire and desires at their highest, she then reached down for the archeologist's head and brought her back up for a deep kiss. As they kissed, Mel removed Janice's hat and tossed it to the side, she then began to unbutton the blonde's kiki shirt. While kissing, Janice asked for entry into Mel's mouth, quickly Mel let Janice explore her mouth. Janice and Mel's tongues began to intertwine, in a seeming dance. Finally breaking for air, they both stared into the other's intense, passionate eyes dying to consume the other with their love. Mel then finished unbuttoning Janice's shirt and was pulling it off of Janice, revealing perfect breasts still confined by a bra. Coming in for another soul searching kiss, the dark-haired woman reached behind Janice and undid her bra, after breaking for air Mel removed Janice's bra as well. After hurling the bra to the floor, the southerner began to knead Janice's breasts. As soon as Mel's hands reached Janice's breasts, her nipples hardened at Mel's touch. Janice whipped her head back moaning at the intense touch of her lover's hands on her breasts.

Bringing her head back down to Mel's body, the archeologist began to kiss Mel's stomach. Immediately, the blue eyed woman tossed her head back, and arched her back into Janice. Running her hands down Mel's side and then running her right hand across Mel's stomach sending ripples across the tall woman's muscular stomach. Melinda continued to moan, but even louder than before, she was going mad with passion and desire and needed release soon. The archeologist brought her hands down to Mel's pants and unbuttoned Mel's light brown work pants and unzipped them. Lifting herself up slightly off the bed, Janice pulled Mel's pants off, throwing them over to where Mel's boots lay from last night. Janice then brought her left hand over top of Mel's underwear where her throbbing sex lay. Now running both hands down the southern belle's inner thighs and looked up to Mel with worried and questioning eyes. Mel quickly noticed her lover's worrying eyes on her and knew what she was asking.

Mel then was able to pant out to her lover "Please Janice I need you. I need to feel you

inside me, possessing me!" The archeologist grinned at those words, hearing what she needed to hear. Janice then hastily tugged off Mel's underwear, and kissed the dark patch of hair, shooting heat through the southerner making her shiver slightly. Janice grinned even more and inserted her tongue with the taller woman's folds; Mel threw her head back beginning to reach her climax. Janice thrust her tongue even further within Mel, making Mel scream Janice's name out loud. Janice could feel all of Mel's juices pouring out over her mouth making her go crazy. Janice then began to suck on Mel's nub; Mel climax picked up a fast pace now she was about ready to go over the edge.

"Oh...My Lord! JAAANICCCE!!!!!" Janice pulled out her tongue and replaced it with two fingers plunging them deep into Mel. Mel's muscles quickly tighten around Janice's fingers indicating her reaching her climax. The taller woman's body then began to spasm and her body shook violently, Mel then went spinning into another world feeling her release finally. Janice slowly and carefully removed her fingers from her soulmate's sex, and then she crawled up to Mel and cradled her tightly in her arms. The archeologist lightly kissed Mel on her forehead and waited for her to return to back to this world.

"WOW! Its never a dull moment around you Doctor Covington" lightly chuckled Mel. Janice looked into Mel's loving sky blue eyes and smiled.

"Ya got that right Hun, have to keep you on your toes" Mel grinned and softly shook her head.

"Ya all do more then keep me on my toes, a lot more!" Mel grinned evilly at her lover. Janice leaned in and kissed Mel furiously.

"I hope I do" growled the archeologist in Mel's ear. The southerner was about ready to wiggle out of Janice's arms when she felt Janice tighten her hold. "HHHM why don't we get some sleep Hun?" Mel smiled and thought about it for a minute and then decided not to fight her lover and she had to admit she was a bit exhausted. She then snuggled in even closer to the blond and laid one leg over top of Janice's legs intertwining them.

Mel then reached for the necklace that was around Janice's neck. A necklace much like Mel had on, the same design, and at one time their ancestor's wore. Both Xena and Gabrielle had exchanged necklaces after finding one another's love for each other. Now Xena and Gabrielle's descendants wore their necklaces symbolizing now their love for each other. Mel wore Xena's sea green necklace, while the archeologist wore Gabrielle's intense sky blue necklace.

Janice and Mel last month were in northeastern Greece by the Strymon River searching for Amphipolis, they had found Xena's home village as well as the tombs of Xena and Gabrielle. But the only thing was the actual sarcophagus was gone only leaving scratch marks leading out of the tomb but yet all the artifacts were left behind. Janice and Mel both wanted to despartly know what happened to the reminisce of their ancestors, Janice believe they might of possible been move to Poteidaia. So now with the help of the New York Museum and a little of Mel's own money they are now following Gabrielle's description of how to get to Poteidaia from Amphipolis.

The artifacts that were found within the tomb were all in good condition, considering the time period they were from. The archeologist had decided since the tomb was air

tight that it kept the artifacts from decaying in time. But the most intriguing thing that they found was Xena and Gabrielle's necklaces representing their love for each other. Mel had suggested to the blond that they claim Xena and Gabrielle's necklaces, instead of letting them end up in the museum to collect dust. That night after claiming them, Janice and Mel had exchanged necklaces just as their ancestors did once long ago.

Suddenly bringing Mel out of her thinking was Janice's hand over hers. Mel was still grasping the necklace around the archeologist's neck. The shorter woman lightly squeezed Mel's hand, making Mel smile. The archeologist then opened her eyes and leaned in to softly kiss Mel, then she began to caress the left side of Mel's face.

"Get some sleep Mel, you look very worn out" the southerner carefully released Janice's necklace and came in closer, wrapping her free arm tightly around Janice. Both Mel and Janice fell into a long, deep sleep absorbing each other's closeness and protection.

~*Part 3*~

Janice was the first to wake up, mostly due to the sound of shovels and talking going on outside in the dig sites. The archeologist didn't open her eyes immediately, she just concentrated on her surroundings and feelings, relishing in the feel of her lover on her.

Janice was worried about Mel, she wasn't sure exactly how her soulmate felt about staying here in Greece and continue looking for Poteidaia. Janice desperately wanted to see the relics of her ancestor and hopefully their bodies. But didn't want to put Mel through any thing that would be hard on her part. 'Well I guess the best thing to do is see how she feels about this whole thing.' After that last thought Janice felt the blue eyed woman stir in her arms. Mel grinned knowing her soulmate was up, but was keeping her eyes closed. Mel leaned her head in and kissed Janice passionately, exploring Janice's mouth. After finally breaking for air, Janice's eyes shot open with the look of surprise on her face.

"Caught ya'll didn't I? Can't pretend to sleep on me Doctor Covington, I know you too well" Janice lightly snickered at Mel's statement.

"Yeah caught me red handed...the Yankee. How did you sleep? We both slept pretty long, its late afternoon right now" the taller woman grinned back at Janice.

"Slept really well, feel refreshed thankfully" Janice smiled at that, happy to hear Mel was feeling better.

"How about we get up and see what's happening out there? We haven't really made much of an appearance all day, they might think we ran off with each other" They both chuckled at that, then thinking how much they would actually love to do that with each other, nobody to harass them. Janice reluctantly climbed out of Mel's arms and legs and gathered her cloths that had been thrown all over the tent. Mel then slowly climbed up out of the bed and stretched her muscles, which drew attention from Janice. The archeologist came up behind Mel in her bra and pants on, lightly wrapping her arms around Mel's stomach, pulling the tall nude woman into her embrace.

"Do you feel comfortable going out right now?" Mel just nodded and took a deep

breath. Janice brought her head up and began to kiss Mel's shoulders lightly, which caused a shiver to run down Mel's back. "Don't worry, I'll be right by your side" Just that small statement made Mel smile, making her feel more at ease. Janice then let go of Mel and began to search around the tent for her shirt. Mel on the other hand went over to where her cloths were, she pulled out a light sky blue shirt and another clean pair of khaki pants along with her underwear.

After looking around the tent for her shirt, Janice was buttoning it up while sitting on the edge of the bed, admiring Mel's body as it flexed to put on the clothes.

"Mel, you never did tell me why you went to the medical tent in the first place last night" the southerner didn't reply right away and finished up buttoning her shirt then turning to her lover.

"Well remember that cut I had gotten on my leg from digging yesterday?" Janice nodded while still finishing up buttoning her shirt. "Well, I was headed to the medical tent to get something to clean up the cut and of course we know the rest" Janice lightly frowned and got up off the bed starting another search, but for her boots this time. "That's weird how those two guys happened to know exactly when and where Mel was?" After that thought Janice spotted her boots and quickly she laced them up quickly eyeing Mel as she did the same thing. After lacing her shorter boots on, Mel decided to roll up her sleeves too since things seemed a bit hot.

"You ready sweetheart?" Asked Janice while grabbing her hat and placing her gun in her holster and attaching her whip to her left side. Mel looked up to the archeologist and smiled with a nod. The blond then leaned up and lightly kissed Mel on the lip sending small waves of desires through their bodies. As the walked out of the tent, Mel noticed how the archeologist's facial expression went from soft and caring to hard as nails with cold eyes. The southerner knew every time Janice went out into the open around people she didn't know, she would automatically make her expression hard to protect herself and Mel.

The smaller women scanned around the camp watching as the people moved about doing their jobs. She then looked up at Mel and smiled warmly, making Mel's knee's weaken. Janice then nodded towards the actual dig site.

"We better head over there and see if they found any thing new" Silently Mel and Janice walked over to where the dig site. Janice was keeping a closer watch over the people around her, as well as walking quiet close to Mel as if she were Mel's guard dog. The southerner had to grin lightly at this site; she loved it when the smaller women kept a close eye out for her.

As they neared the site, Mel and Janice could see all the workers taking special care in their digging habits as Janice ordered. Quickly the archaeologist scanned the dig site for her second in charge, Vanessa Tagger. Mel had recommended Vanessa to her lover for this dig, Mel believed Vanessa had a lot to offer in the way of archaeology. At first Janice was skeptical about letting a somebody new to archaeology on her dig. But after much persuasion, convincing, and a few magically looks and words, Mel was about to get Janice agree to letting her be second in charge. The blond had to admit that Vanessa knew her stuff, she seemed to be able to take charge of the workers easily and was easy to get along with. But the archaeologist had shivers running down her spine every time she came close to Vanessa or looked at Vanessa

and she had no idea as to why and didn't care to admit to them. Janice has been for the better part of the time keeping a close eye on Vanessa, she like her skills, but some gut feeling told the archaeologist that something about her wasn't good at all.

"Vanessa!?" Janice was still scanning the site, as was Mel. Mel then pointed to the right.

"There she is Janice, buried in dirt" Mel lightly giggled at seeing Vanessa dirty look, Mel knew that Vanessa enjoyed digging.

Once Vanessa heard her name she had brought her head up to where she thought she heard her name being yelled. Spotting Janice and Mel, she quickly got up off her hands and knee's and jogged up to them. Wiping the dirt of her hands and then rubbing her face on her sleeve to get rid of the dirt on her face.

"Hi, Doctor Covington and Miss Pappas. How are you two?" finished Vanessa with a smile. Then right on the button, a shiver went down Janice spine and ending with goosebumps. Smiling back up at Vanessa.

"We are great Vanessa! Have you found anything new in the dig?" Losing her smile quickly Vanessa turned to where she was last digging then turned back to Janice and Mel.

"Yes, it's not what we expect at all to find Doctor Covington" Janice curiously looked up at Vanessa, the question clear in her facial expression.

"Doctor Covington, I don't think I can really explain it to well without you actually seeing it yourself. Here follow me, and I'll show you what we found" Turning back to the dig Vanessa began to head back to where she previously was. Mel and Janice gave each other curious and worried looks then followed behind Vanessa. After making their way through the dig site not tripping over the workers and tools, they made it to the other side. Vanessa walked up slowly to where she was earlier and bent down pointing to a black patch of ground. "Doctor Covington, from what I've noticed, I think these are indications of a fire" Janice looked up at Vanessa then back down at the dark patch on the very edge of the dig site. Reaching down the archaeologist removed some the burnt looking dirt and rubbed it in her fingers. Janice could feel it was wood, what was left of it, and defiantly burnt. Slowly bringing it up to her nose, the blond could certainly smell a hint of fire to it.

"Shit!" After saying that Janice throw down reminisce of the burnt wood to the ground. Looking back at Vanessa. "Just find this?" Vanessa lightly nodded. "I don't like this one bit. If this is Poteidaia's entrance" Frowning, Mel too reached down and grabbed a bit of the burnt wood and smelling it and caught the smell of fire as well. Then looking back up to Janice while still frowning.

"Janice, you think Poteidaia might have been burned?" Janice didn't say anything at first and looked back down at the dark line running along the dig site's ledge indicating a fire. Finally looking back up at Mel, with a sad face.

"Its possible Mel" Janice then turned back to the dig site ledge and pointed to the dark line running along the ledge. "We need to dig more into Poteidaia to be sure that it was burnt and how much of it really was. Vanessa how long do you think it might be till, we can be sure that Poteidaia was burned down, or that is just had a small fire in

its history?" Vanessa didn't respond right away and thought about her answer for a second then looked straight at Janice.

"I think if we have all the workers on this, then it would take about two days tops. I mean the ground is pretty loose, so it won't be too hard to dig the dirt up" Janice nodded

"Great, go ahead and have the workers take the rest of the day off and tell them they have two hard days coming up starting tomorrow" Vanessa lightly smiled and headed off to report to the other workers of their duties. Janice looked back at the burnt wood, for some reason Janice had a huge wave of depression hit her. The archeologist thought she was about ready to cry but wasn't sure exactly as to why. As if sensing her lover's distress, Mel pulled Janice into her arms not caring what others thought about the scene.

"Maybe it was just a small fire Janice" Janice shook her head lightly while still in Mel's arms.

"No it wasn't Mel" Mel looked down at Janice with confused eyes.

"How can you be sure, ya'll haven't even gotten enough evidence to be able to tell yet"

"I don't know why Mel, but I just know that it wasn't just a small fire, I think Poteidaia was completely burnt to the ground"

Valasca glared hard at the other god, she hates this but she was free from the lava pit to take her revenge.

"Valasca you owe me a favor for my helping you get out of that lava pit. Any problems with that?" Valasca didn't say anything and just nodded in reply. "Good, I know how much you want to get back at Gabrielle, so that makes things for me easy. I want you to go head and find that little brat and kill her for me, but leave Xena alone and un-harmed. And make sure Xena sees that irritating blond die right in front of her. Got it?" Valasca grinned liking her deal that she just made with the God of War.

"I think I can handle that Ares" Ares lightly smiled and watched Valasca head off on her mission. Content for now at what he has accomplished Ares left the ruins and head back to Olympus to watch things unfold.

~*~*~*~

The warrior looked up the steps and yelled to her soulmate "Gabrielle you ready?" with no response Xena was about ready to climb the stairs when she heard familiar feet coming from a top. Smiling down at the taller woman, Gabrielle came down the stairs at a fast pace with her staff in her right hand and her scrolls in their satchel on her left shoulder. Reaching the last step Gabrielle leaned in and kissed Xena lovingly and then hopped off the last step into Xena's arms and smiling up at the warrior.

"Sorry I took so long, we ready to go?" Looking down at her bard Xena smiled back warmly and nodded. Wrapping one arm behind Gabrielle, they turned and headed out of the inn. "I can't wait to see Cyrene, it's been a while since we seen your mom" The raven-haired didn't say anything at first but reached for Gabrielle's satchel placing up

with the saddle.

"Yeah it's been a while for sure, be good to see Mom. I know she'll be really happy to see you" After finish that, Xena got up on Argo and set her reigns in her hands. "Do you want to ride up here with me today?" At first the bard was about ready to object, but then thought about being wrapped up in the warrior's arms and couldn't resist.

"Only if I get to ride in the front. Deal?" Gabrielle looked evilly up at her soulmate, who grinned down at her and offered her hand to the bard. Reaching for the ex-warlord's hand, Gabrielle was hoisted up in front of Xena. "Thanks Xena" In response the warrior wrapped her right arm around Gabrielle's waist and squeezed a little, pulling Gabrielle in closer. Xena then kicked Argo into a fast trot heading towards Amphipolis. "Xena, you think it's a good idea that we go to Amphipolis, before going to Poteidaia? I mean we told the Amazons we were headed to Poteidaia before Amphipolis, what if an emergency comes up?" Thinking for a minute not sure what to say exactly, Xena tried to come up with a simple response.

"I don't think any thing will happen really Gabrielle, and when we left the Amazon Nation everything seemed fine, no problems. And we both know how resourceful the Amazons are, they'll find us if something comes up" Gabrielle lightly nodded still a bit worried, but had to agree with her warrior.

"Yeah your right, I guess I'm just worried that's all, after Valasca and everything" At the sound of hearing Valasca's name Xena tighten her grip around Gabrielle, knowing that Valasca brought back bad memories for the bard.

"You have every right to be concern, my bard. You are their Queen, who is looking out for the nation's well being" Smiling lightly Gabrielle had to agree, she was happy though that her people all sided with her once Valasca was shown to be evil. Even more so, Gabrielle had found her warrior, once Xena had returned that night the warrior and bard laid in bed both crying in each other's arms. Both had thought they lost the other, Gabrielle especially thought she had lost the warrior. Xena and Gabrielle both that night had finally realized how much the other meant to them. Since Xena confessed her love for the bard, she has had no regrets about telling the young women, her fear of losing Gabrielle vanished the second the bard pulled her into a loving and passionate kiss. The next night, the bard and Xena had exchanged necklaces that they received from the Amazons solely for this purpose.

The necklaces that were exchanged to the other were magnificent necklaces with detailed work, both the same designs with only one difference. At the center of each necklace was a gem, on the necklace Xena received, was a intense sea green necklace that gleamed and sparkled when light landed on it, the gem center was a circular shaped emerald. The necklace the bard received from Xena's contained a sky blue sapphire at the center, which matched Xena's extreme blue eyes perfectly. Both were surrounded by Xena's chakram design, then Gabrielle's staff top and bottom was placed a skew through the necklace. The top half was attached at the up right and the bottom part of the staff was at the bottom left. From then on Xena and the bard wore the necklaces they exchanged neither ever removed their necklace.

After remembering those two nights, Gabrielle rests back into Xena who enjoyed the bard's body. For most of the ride to Amphipolis, Xena and Gabrielle rode in silence relishing the other's closeness.

~*~*~*~

Quickly Valasca headed to the Amazon village to find out where her prey was or headed too. Finally reaching the outskirts of the Amazon Nation, Valasca took a few seconds to decide what to do.

"HHHMM, think I might just go in there as noticed as possible demanding the Queen, sounds like a good plan" Lightly laughing, Valasca turned into a whirling tornado and headed into the Amazon Nation.

~*~*~*~

For once the Regent could find some rest and peace, happy at that thought Ephiny began to relax more in the hottub. Ephiny couldn't believe that her Queen and Xena had finally realized their love. 'Geez if they took any longer in figuring it out, I would of yelled at them' Thinking about that thought and site, Ephiny had to grin and wryly chuckle. She had to admit they make a great pair when it comes to anything, one always there for the other. Xena and Gabrielle both had expressed to Ephiny that they didn't want the Amazon Nation knowing about them just quiet yet. The bard wanted more time to get to know their relationship, as did the ex-warlord want to get adjusted to their newfound relationship. Ephiny didn't know how she was going to keep it a secret; it was too obvious to the rest of the nation that Xena and Gabrielle were soulmates.

Sinking more into the hottub the Regent began to let her muscles loosen in the warm water. For some reason Ephiny could swear she heard people yelling outside, but just thought it was her mind playing tricks. Then out of no where, a large log came flying into the tent in front of Ephiny landing inches to the right, away from the tub. Jumping quickly out of the tub, Ephiny threw on her Amazon cloths and grab her sword, charging out of the tent. As soon as the Regent made her way out of the tent, Valasca step up to her with gleaming eyes. Gritting her teeth Ephiny took notice to Valasca with a growl.

"VALASCA! What the hell are you doing here? How did you get out that lava pit?" Not making any moves Valasca slowly formed a grin, then kicked with her left leg behind her, sending an Amazon warrior flying into a hut. Turning her attention back to the Regent, Valasca quickly made use of Ephiny's shock, and grabbed her by the throat and lifting Ephiny up off the ground.

"Let's just say I had a little help, Ephiny honey. But I want to know one important thing, Ephiny. Where is Gabrielle, where is your Queen?" After waiting a second and no response, Valasca tighten her grip on Ephiny's throat. "Come now Ephiny, surely your Queen isn't worth your death?" Ephiny growled lowly at Valasca not caring what Valasca did with her.

"Get a life Valasca, there is no way I'm telling you where Gabrielle is!" Valasca glared hard at Ephiny showing her glossed eyes. Valasca turned her head to the village and with her free hand, began to shoot lighting bolts off at random huts and Amazons.

"Ephiny stop protecting her, or I'll kill every last Amazon in this village along with the village. So either tell me where she is and I'll leave, or don't and I'll have an Amazon baroque!" Not sure what to do exactly, Ephiny realized that she had a job to do and that was to protect the Amazons, hating her decision she finally responded to Valasca, praying to Artemis that Xena could stop Valasca again.

"Xena and Gabrielle left two suns ago to head to Poteidaia then Amphipolis" finally spitted Ephiny. Valasca happy with her work squeezed enough to let Ephiny slightly breathe, then released her, as well as ceased her lightning bolts. Ephiny fell to the ground in a heap, almost choking to death and tried to bring air back into her lungs.

"Sounds like I get to meet Gabrielle's family too, this is going to be fun. Well Ephiny, I think I'll be on my way, see ya soon, your next on my list!" Valasca then disappeared without a trace in front of a worried Regent.

~*~*~*~

Feeling Gabrielle shake all of sudden caused the warrior to tighten her grip in the bard, worried she might fall off.

"Gabrielle you all right?" The Amazon Queen took a few seconds to control herself and responded to her lover.

"Yeah I think so, I don't know what it was just it felt like something bad happened. I think I'm just worrying to much about the Amazons and Valasca" Leaning forward a little, Xena kissed Gabrielle on top of her head, then rested her chin on Gabrielle's head, while keeping Argo at a slow pace. Xena wasn't sure what to say, she felt the same way as Gabrielle all of a sudden, and she could feel there was something wrong within the Amazon Nation.

"Don't be Gabrielle, I'm sure things are all right back at the Nation. Just try and relax, Valasca isn't leaving that lava pit any time soon" Lightly smiling Gabrielle nodded, relaxed more, and began to tell Xena a tale of two gods and their struggles together.

~*~*~*~

Standing at the outskirts of her destination, she had to smile to herself. "This is easier then what I thought, take care Gabrielle and my deal with Ares all at once. Then next are the Amazons and their Regent Ephiny, their such fools!" Ending with that thought had to make Valasca spit at the ground in disgust of the once mighty Amazons. Peering back done at Poteidaia, Valasca scanned lightly over the village to see if she could spot the bard. With no luck, Valasca slowly began to stroll down to the village; eyes glossed over with evil and hatred.

~*~*~*~

"EPONIN!!!" Still trying to yell as best as she could, Ephiny slowly made her way off the ground with her sword still in hand. Scanning the destruction Valasca had created was great. Ephiny gritted her teeth, the Amazons had just finished their repairs from last time and now they would have to start over again.

Spinning around quickly, Eponin spotted her Regent with anger stricken eyes and face. She could tell that Valasca and her had words, Ephiny's neck was fairly red and she was still trying to get breathing adjusted with coughing here and there. After spotting Ephiny, Eponin stopped trying to put out the fire and ran up to Ephiny.

"Yes my Queen?" After finishing that statement Eponin lightly bowed to Ephiny.

"We need to get word out to our Queen and Xena about Valasca, she is headed straight for them" With a faint growl and big frown, Eponin tried to think of what to do, she knew she had no runners that could reach Xena and Gabrielle in time.

"Ephiny there is no way we can get word to Xena and Gabrielle about Valasca" Beginning to take notice to the Regent's even more anger tone made Eponin shiver. "Ephiny, we have no runners they're all busy stopping the fires and helping with whatever other damage. Even if we did have a runner, they couldn't make it in time defiantly with Valasca being a god" Realizing that her second in command was right Ephiny dropped her shoulders, frowning to herself the Regent responded to Eponin.

"I suppose your right Eponin" Seeing her Regent's anguish, Eponin placed a hand on Ephiny's shoulder and gave it a light squeeze with a small smile.

"Ephiny, if we know Xena as well as we do, she will be able to handle Valasca for awhile, she did once" Lightly nodding but still not satisfied, Ephiny sheathed her sword behind her and power walked with Eponin to help with the fires and other devastation.

~*~*~*~

The sun was in the high afternoon by now, showering over the small town of Poteidaia. By now Valasca had reached the center of town looking for the Amazon Queen, only to be receiving evil and hatred glares from the villagers. Getting quite sick of searching out Gabrielle, Valasca decided to bring her out. Turning to her right, Valasca stared at the inn deciding to start her demolition there. Valasca slowly brought up her right hand point her finger to the inn, while everybody's eyes were on her. A flash of light flew threw the air, sending the inn into toothpicks and starting a small fire.

"I WANT GABRIELLE OF POTEIDAIA NOW!!! WHERE IS SHE???" Hearing her sister's name being yelled by the god, Lila looked directly at the women with cold eyes. Feeling those cold eyes right on her, Valasca spotted Lila and suspected she knew of Gabrielle. Valasca slowly began to walk towards Lila, holding Lila in her spot by just staring her down. Lila wanted to run from the women headed towards her, but her legs wouldn't respond; now Valasca was upon her with white eyes making Lila shiver with fear. Valasca stared deep into Lila, aware that Lila some how certainly knew Gabrielle very well, probably sisters with those green eyes. Pulling her dagger out of her wrist band and placing it tip first against Lila's throat Valasca asked her the famous question.

"I can tell you know Gabrielle, where is she?" Lila could hardly speak to the goddess in front of her, but she managed to peep back to Valasca.

"I don't know" Valasca gritted her teeth, getting sick of playing cat and mouse for Gabrielle. Valasca pushed the tip of the dagger more into Lila's throat making her wide eye.

"And if you did would you tell me?" Instantly Lila's eyes harden, she wasn't about ready to let her sister die and should would rather die instead for Gabrielle.

"I would never tell you!" With anger and fury coursing through her veins, Valasca removed the dagger from Lila's neck and hurled it into Lila's chest, killing her instantly. Slowly removing the dagger from Lila's chest, Valasca stepped away and watched Lila's limp body fall to the ground and a small pool of blood began to seep out.

"Now see what she made me do. I WANT GABRIELLE! If she isn't here then this

town won't be here either" noticing no response from the shivering crowd before her, Valasca decided it was time to bring Gabrielle to her and end this game quickly. "Well I guess nobody knows where she is, guess that means the town is gone" Sending thunder bolts and fire balls through out the town, while enjoying the destruction of Gabrielle's home town. Now Gabrielle's life is being ruined much like Valasca's was once she lost the right of caste.

People within the town ran for their lives, some into their homes or other into random buildings, others tried to get out of the village, but all died trying. It took only a quarter of a candle mark for Valasca to destroy Poteidaia, she had scorched everything right down to the last blade of grass. No living thing was in the village, all that remained was small reminiscences of buildings that continued to burn and the town was covered with scorched corpses sending a strong stench through the village and on the wind. Finally stopping her annihilation, Valasca stared at what she had done and began to laugh vigorously which could be heard for miles around.

~*~*~*~

Xena stopped Argo abruptly not sure as to why, but something wasn't feeling right at all. The bard whirled her torso around in her seat and looked behind Xena and then she focused up at the warrior with scared eyes and quietly whispered.

"Poteidaia" Gabrielle immediately knew something was going on and wanted to know what was happening. Xena knew too that something had happened to Poteidaia, which made her turn Argo around. The bard knew that Xena was about ready to send Argo into a gallop, so she turned back to face forward in the direction of Poteidaia. Her owner then kicked Argo into a fast gallop; she made no hesitation and broke out into her quickest gallop. Gabrielle on the other hand, sunk into Xena with her shoulders slumping, making her lover worry.

For the rest of the day, Xena and her bard rode hard heading to Poteidaia for no reason other than being worried that something drastic happened. For the whole ride Gabrielle stayed slumped into Xena, while being in another world thinking. The warrior and Gabrielle didn't reach the outskirts of Poteidaia till very late afternoon, both Gabrielle and Xena could smell a certain odor in the air which either did not want to express aloud. Xena for her part didn't want her bard to see Poteidaia; she already had an idea as to what it would look like.

"Gabrielle, I don't think you should go into or see Poteidaia just yet" The Queen didn't say anything at first and debated whether or not she wanted to. Gabrielle knew adventually she would want to see Poteidaia and thought now was better than later.

"No Xena I want to see what happen too Poteidaia, we both know there is death there just by the smell being carried along the winds. Poteidaia is my home town where I was born, I want to see what happen for myself" Nodding lightly and not wanting to argue with the stubborn blond, Xena pulled Gabrielle more into her, to help comfort the bard for what she was about to see. Slowly at a trot, Argo made her way to the top of the hill overlooking Poteidaia, to see the view of the bard's hometown.

Gabrielle looked down at Poteidaia, not saying anything or moving. The smaller women scanned the town, as did Xena, both couldn't believe the death and destruction. Xena had never seen anything like it in her life, in all her warlord days had she ever seen something this massacring. The smell of death and fire lingered

heavily in the air, making Gabrielle lean far off to the right and heave-up her trail lunch from earlier in the day. Xena on the other hand was able to hold her food down for the better part, but even she was having problems with the mix of the smell and site.

Xena lightly kicked Argo on the sides, ordering her to make her way down to Poteidaia. As Argo made her way down, Xena kept her tight hold on Gabrielle and whispered reassuring words to her soulmate. Gabrielle was having a hard time grasping what was before her, nothing stood everything was burned all that was left was a black charcoal patch where Poteidaia once stood. Then littering over the rubble were burned bodies and blood trickling out of the bodies, the site was repulsive. With every step Argo took closer to Poteidaia, Gabrielle became more grief stricken with tears following. Xena on the other hand with every nearing became more angry and outraged, she never seen so much death and destruction. The jet black haired women knew that her lover was being torn into shreds with every passing second, Xena was going to make the person who did this pay with their life. The ex-warlord had never been so outraged in her entire life, she comprehended that whoever did this wasn't a warlord, but some god toying yet again with mortal's lives. 'No mortal could have done something like this. There is absolutely not one thing standing or alive, human or animal.' The taller women gritted her teeth holding back her anger and tried to focus on her bard and comfort her.

Finally reaching the entrance to Poteidaia, Xena and Gabrielle stared inwards at the once flourishing village. There was no way Xena or Gabrielle could enter the village, there was too much rubble and the amount of bodies were scattered every where, which would make anybody puke in seconds. Xena had noticed that some of the bodies had different items sticking through them, some had large pieces of wood or farming tools, a variety of things.

The bard couldn't take any more of the site, of her hometown. Gabrielle then dropped her head into her hands and began to cry grievously, Xena instantly grabbed Gabrielle by the waist and lifted her carefully turning her in the saddle so she now faced Xena and not Poteidaia. The bard then wrapped her arms tightly around Xena and settled her head into Xena's breasts while continuing to cry. The warrior wrapped her right arm her soulmate and lightly rubbed her back as well. Xena took one last look at Gabrielle's village before turning Argo around, while still gritting her teeth at the site before her. With ice blue eyes, Xena turned Argo around and quickly trotted her back up the valley.

The sun was only going to last another candle mark, for about three-quarters of a candle mark, Xena rode Argo hard away from Poteidaia with Gabrielle still enveloped tightly around her. Finally slightly satisfied with their distance from Poteidaia, Xena found a decent campground for the night. The warrior unwillingly let go of her bard and slipped off Argo, then helped Gabrielle get off of Argo without a problem. Xena quickly noticed Gabrielle was still in shock about what she had seen, in a flash the taller women lifted Gabrielle up off the ground and set her down on a log and kissed the bard on her forehead and left her there for a second. The warrior hastily took off Argo's tack and laid it aside leaving Argo to rest. Xena rummaged through her saddle bag looking for their bed rolls, finally finding them Xena laid them out on the ground close to the spot where she decided would be best for a fire.

Gabrielle on the other hand, still laid in a heap her face in her hands still sobbing and

not believing what she saw today. Xena quietly came up to Gabrielle and crouched down to look at Gabrielle. The warrior brought her hands up to Gabrielle's and carefully pulled Gabrielle's hands away from her face. Xena then saw her lover's face what seemed like forever, the bard's face was stained with tears, her eyes blood shot red. The ex-warlord mentally crumbled at that sight, she was anger stricken as well as depressed at the same time to see the Amazon Queen so grief ill-fated. Xena intertwined her hands with Gabrielle's and lightly smiled with warmth in her eyes.

"You think you can get ready for bed? I'm going to round up some firewood for the night. Okay?" Gabrielle lightly nodded with her head still hanging down not meeting Xena's eyes. Xena un-intertwined her right hand and lifted her chin so she could look straight at Gabrielle in her eyes.

"Everything will be okay, Gabrielle. It'll take time, but I'm here for you every step of the way" Gabrielle nodded again and both lingered in that position, the bard enjoying Xena's comfort and the loving sky blue eyes staring straight at her. Xena leaned in and fondly kissed Gabrielle on the forehead and headed into the woods, night beginning to settle on the couple.

Gabrielle slowly began to make her way across the camp to where Argo's saddlebag laid. With shaky hands, the bard found what she was looking for and pulled the two shifts out. Gabrielle placed the two shifts on the log she had been sitting on earlier, hers on the top of the two. Slowly and with unstable hands, the blond began to unlace her green top, then she removed her skirt. Placing them aside, the Amazon Queen retrieved her shift and put it on enjoying it's loose feeling. A second after Gabrielle put on her shift, Xena stepped in with an armload of wood dropping off to the side. She then began to set up the fire while Gabrielle went back to sitting on the log. Quickly Xena made the fire and had it started, she then went sit by Gabrielle.

"Are you hungry at all?" Gabrielle looked at Xena with sadness and still red eyes.

"No I'll be okay, just a bit cold" Answering an un-asked question Xena sat on the ground relatively close to the fire with a tree against her back and lightly patted her lap. Gabrielle forced a small smile and sat on top of Xena's lap with her back sunk into Xena. The warrior then grabbed a blanket lying in arms reach of her and placed it over Gabrielle and herself. She then lightly grabbed the bard's shoulders and pulled her back into her, placing Gabrielle's head in-between the warrior's breasts. Xena then tightly wrapped her arms around Gabrielle's stomach and rested her chin lightly on top of Gabrielle's head. Neither cared on a conversation, Xena knew Gabrielle need time to absorb what has happen, she had lost her home town, mother, father, sister, and a place of memories. The bard for about a candle mark, absorbed in thought and trying to taken in today's event, was hard on her. She was thankful for the comfort her warrior was proving and giving her time. From time to time the bard would cry and Xena would tighten her grip automatically and massage her soulmate lightly. After being in deep thought combined with the softness of Xena's body, Gabrielle fell into a deep sleep.

For about half a candle mark Xena let Gabrielle sleep on her lap, and then decided that her bard and especially herself would be more comfortable if they lay on the bedrolls. Carefully Xena removed the blanket covering her and placed it back on the ground close to the bedrolls. The warrior then unwrapped her right arm and placed her right arm under Gabrielle's legs. Xena then cautiously lifted Gabrielle up off her and

then stood up with her bard still in her arms. Gabrielle lightly stirred in her arms, the smaller women then looked up at Xena with sleepy eyes.

"Wha..." Xena leaned in and quieted Gabrielle with a feather light kiss to her lips.

"Ssshhhh go back to sleep love" Gabrielle let the feeling of Xena's lips linger for a second on her then she leaned her head against Xena's arm and closed her eyes. Slowly the raven-haired warrior carried her to the their bedrolls, Xena then leaned down on one knee and placed the sleeping bard on the bedroll. Searching for the cover from earlier, Xena placed it over top of Gabrielle and lightly kissed the bard's forehead. Deciding to take a quick look around the perimeters of the camp Xena unsheathed her sword quietly and took a quick glance at the sleeping bard. Creeping through the woods using the moon as a light, Xena didn't find anything out of the ordinary. With stealth and speed, Xena returned to the camp to find her lover still in the same spot, Xena then placed wood in the fire. She sheathed her sword and walked over to the log by the fire and changed out of her armor and into the shift that her lover left her. Leaving her leathers and armor on the log, Xena then grabbed her chakram and sword that she removed so she could change out of her leathers. Walking noiselessly to the bedrolls, the warrior placed her sword and chakram close by the bedrolls and lay behind Gabrielle. Sensing her warrior's presence, Gabrielle nuzzled into Xena while Xena placed a protective arm around Gabrielle's waist. The taller women pulled Gabrielle in even more with her strong arms before letting herself fall asleep.

"Good night my bard" After whispering good night, Xena drifted into a light sleep while Gabrielle was in a heavy sleep being worn out with eyes watching over them.

~*Part 4*~

Janice shot up in the bed, shaking and with tear stained face. Mel sat up in bed quickly and wrapped her arms around Janice comforting her.

"What happen Janice? Bad dream?" Trying to catch her Janice leaned into Mel and tried to recall what happened.

"I don't know Mel, I had this dream that I was Gabrielle and you were Xena. We were headed to Amphipolis and we had headed to Poteidaia all of a sudden because I thought something had happened. Once we reached Poteidaia, it was completely destroyed....leveled. Everybody was dead and nothing stood all there was a patch of burnt wood where Poteidaia once was. Then we rode for about two hours and I cried for hours on end trying to comprehend what happened and what I lost" Melinda kept her arms tightly wrapped around Janice while she tried to figure out why Janice might have had this dream. To Mel it seemed like as if she done this before but knew she had never done this.

"Janice, I think you're too worried about Poteidaia and finding out about the history of it. We'll find out tomorrow love, they dug up a better part today and Vanessa was right they'll be done tomorrow" Lightly nodding, but not satisfied that the dream was over her work and that it might have been real.

"But it felt so real Mel, and for some reason I feel like we've done this before, but of course we haven't" Mel released Janice and placed her hands on the archeologist's waist and pulled her back down on the bed. The blonde effortlessly lay back on the bed with her head resting in the crook of Mel's right arm.

"I know I felt like we all have done that before too, really freaky" Janice looked at Mel and smiled lightly, Janice's eyes were still red but she wasn't shaking any more. The taller woman leaned in and kissed Janice lightly, worried about how that dream could affect her lover so much. Janice was about ready to say something but Mel stopped her with another light kiss to her lips.

"Sssshhhh go back to sleep love" Both Mel and Janice stared at each other in shock, both their hearts skipped a beat. 'Why did it feel like Mel has said and done that before? She notices it too, she even lost her southerner accent when she said that' Janice lightly shook her head and grinned a little at Mel. "Just go to sleep" The archeologist lightly laughed and fell into a deep sleep as did Mel. Both slept fitfully with no returning dreams, morning finally arrived to the lovers several hours later after being woken up by Janice's dream. This day would bring either Janice's greatest discovery, or make her dream from tonight come true.

~*~*~*~

Janice slowly opened her eyes, to find a beautiful sight of her soulmate's face in front of her. Janice smiled and brought up her right hand to caress the southerner's face when Mel grabbed Janice's hand and smiled wickedly with her eyes still closed. A grin edged up the archeologist's face, and Melinda opened her eyes with the look of success in them. Mel then began to lightly kiss Janice's hand with feather kisses.

"Looks like I caught ya'll again, Doctor Covington, your getting easier and softer" The blond lightly laughed at Mel's comment and then intertwined her hands with Mel's.

"HHMMM I think I can blame it on you, Miss. Pappas, if you never stepped into my life I wouldn't be so soft, not that I'm complaining" Janice then leaned in and kissed Mel on the forehead and returned to her same position to continue to talk to her lover. "Mel I think we better get moving and see what unfolds for the day" Mel motioned in agreement and began to rise up out of bed. Janice followed right behind Mel and got up out of bed, worried about what today's discovery would be. The taller woman took her time in getting dressed, but she noticed the archeologist was dressing rather quickly. Grinning to herself, Mel walked up behind Janice and wrapped her arms around Janice's chest. The blond was surprised for a second then realized who it was and immediately fell back into the warm body behind her.

"Hey slow down some, there is no rush hun. Poteidaia isn't going anywhere any time soon" Janice nodded lightly and fell even more back into Mel, and began to feel depressive and sighed. Mel released unwrapped her arms surprisingly and grabbed the archeologist by the shoulders and spun her around to face the southerner. Both soulmates didn't say anything, Melinda stared straight into Janice's eyes and saw the sorrow and depression held within them. Almost like trading places, Mel became the stronger one and Janice the less strong one. The taller woman quickly pulled her lover into her arms, hugging her tightly while Janice began to cry. For both of them it seemed like a relapse, things felt like they were normal but then weren't. Mel felt like as if she was always the stronger one, but knew this wasn't true. To the archeologist

and the southerner, they felt like there were two people within their bodies.

Once Janice's cries stiffened, Mel released her and lightly kissed her to reassure her things would be fine.

"Ya going to be okay Janice?" The blond lightly nodded then smiled up at Mel.

"Thanks, yeah I'll be fine now. I don't know where that came from, it was like I was reliving some strong emotional experience, but I don't know what it was exactly" Janice's partner nodded in understanding and Janice smiled gently and went back to her dressing. Mel herself turned back to her cloths and head over to her khaki shirt and boots. Gabrielle's decedent headed over to the small wooden chair and put on her boots and began to slowly lace them up. Afterwards, Janice grabbed her hat and then snagged her revolver and bullwhip off the table. Quickly she hooked her bullwhip to her left side, then opened the revolver chamber and checked the bullets. The belle looked over to her lover all dressed and ready to head out. She watched carefully as Janice checked her gun, trying to make out what her soulmate might be thinking. Satisfied Janice shut the chamber and gave it a whirl, making it click, she then placed it in its holster. Smiling up at Mel, Janice indicated the exit of the tent and Mel was walking out when Janice clutched her by the left arm. Janice then pulled her in and passionately kissed her, expressing all the love she had for her.

"I love you so much Mel" whispered Janice with a grin forming with her lips. Mel smiled and slightly blushed, leaning her head closer to Janice's, she whispered back.

"I love ya too Doctor Janice Covington with all my heart and being" Turning back to the flaps in front of her, Mel smiled to herself and walked out into the early morning of the day.

Slowly emerging from their tent, Janice and Mel both scanned the dig site spying everybody moving about at a quick pace. Janice stepped ahead of Mel and headed in the direction the main dig was going on, Poteidaia. The archeologist was walking at a speedy pace to the site, Mel knowing exactly why too. As soon as the blond stepped into view, a set of hatred eyes set on her. Janice looked over in the direction where she felt those eyes, only to see Vanessa, with a smile forming on her face. A rapid shiver swept down Janice's back and again ending in goosebumps, Janice couldn't tell whether Vanessa held those hatred eyes, was to hard to see. Vanessa briskly walked over to Mel and Janice's side to update them on the dig.

"Good morning Doctor Covington and Miss Pappas!" Mel smiled sweetly at Vanessa and Janice lightly smiled in return.

"Mornen Vanessa, find anything new?" Vanessa frowned and shook her head lightly.

"No Ma'am, its been the same thing all the way in to Poteidaia, just burnt rubble" Janice kept her face expressionless, Mel on the other had cover her face with a frown.

"Well lets get this proven whether Poteidaia was burnt or not. Lead the way Vanessa" Vanessa nodded and then escort Janice and Mel to where she previously was. The three some for three hours straight, dug hard and along, as did all the workers on that site. Nothing seemed to change the only thing anybody came across was burnt reminisces. Then out of no where Mel seemed to hit something hard but still brittle, not a rock or wood but seemed like bone to Janice. In a haste, Janice and Mel dug out

the bones, taking care not to hurt the reminsce. After finally uncovering the bones, Janice, Mel, and Vanessa all study it.

"Oh GREAT!" Janice couldn't believe this, the bones had scorched marks covering it, and it seemed as if the person had been impaled by something at the heart. Where the heart had last lain, were now broken ribs moved outwards in a circle form. "Well seems not only this person burnt to death, but they were also impaled by something round, I'm guessing a spear possible. But I can't be sure, the space that was made from the weapon going through looks to big for a spear though. But this defiantly proves there was some kind of fight here, and more possible ended in the scorching of Poteidaia" Janice was still looking done at the human body with a bit of disgust to her features.

"Janice, how far do we have to dig to find out whether Poteidaia was completely burned?" The archeologist didn't respond at once, but kept looking at the bones, then looking up at her lover she finally responded.

"We need to uncover the center of town, then we can be sure that all of Poteidaia was burnt. Vanessa, do you think we can uncover the center of town by dusk with all our man power?" Vanessa nodded lightly as Janice met her gaze. "Good, lets get back to this. Vanessa why don't ya go around and check on ever thing and report back to us" Vanessa nodded again and turned around and head in the direction of where most the men were working at a rapid pace. After watching Vanessa disappear around the corner out of site Janice turned back to the southerner and smiled to her. "Awesome job Mel in finding those human reminsce" Mel lightly blushed and looked back done at the body then back at Janice.

"Well Hun, I had a great teacher that's for sure!" Janice grinned back at Mel, then her grin turn into a small frown.

"Mel, I really think Poteidaia was burnt, I just don't understand how. But I guess I'll worry about it later when we find more evidence about what happened"

"Love, I know you're worried, but what is done is done. If Poteidaia was burnt I doubt Xena and Gabrielle's reminsce are here, might of happened before they passed away" Janice lightly nodded and smiled up at Mel, she then hear the sounds of somebody coming up behind her. For the second time of the day, a shiver with goosebumps went off, telling the archeologist Vanessa had returned. Janice was getting quiet sick of this repetitive incident and wanted to know how a one young women could do that to her.

"Doctor Covington, I check out how the other men were doing. I think maybe by late in the afternoon we might hit the center of town hopefully, if all goes well. None of the men are complaining, and seem in full strength" Janice smiled, and the turned around to face Vanessa still with the smile in place.

"Sounds great Vanessa, thank you. Now we better get back to our digging"

The dig site was under heavy excavation; all the workers were at hard strength as were Mel and Janice. Through the day, they came across several more bodies, many having the same results. A scorched body and a possibility of have been stab with some item. They also continued to uncover nothing but dark dirt, bits of burnt wood here and there or small pieces of blackened metals. As every hour passed, Janice became a more and more depressed which in turned worried her lover more and more. Vanessa

on the other hand was perfect calm with an expressionless face, the smaller woman though could have sworn that a few times she caught a grin on Vanessa's face but couldn't be sure.

Reaching around two hours before dusk, the archeology team hit the center of town. They were able to finally see if Poteidaia was completely burned or not. Within the center of the town still stood the human size statue of Zeus. It had been well burnt, and was missing its right hand and was now lying on its side. Janice was completely overwhelmed to know that all of Poteidaia was gone. She stood for what seemed like eternity staring at the statue of Zeus, knowing that her proof had come. The only things they covered along the way were scorched bodies and ruins of seared down buildings. But what Janice couldn't understand, was how a whole town could be total destroyed, surely they would have been able to put out the fire. And if a warlord had passed through the town, some of the town would have still been standing if not rebuilt. Vanessa knew now that there was no real work left to be done, except finish uncovering the rest of Poteidaia. She went ahead and gave the rest of the workers the day off, let them rest from all their hard work. After reporting to Janice and Mel of her actions, Mel thanked Vanessa and told her she could go. As soon as Vanessa had her back to the archeologist and the translator, she grinned to herself with a face of satisfaction crossing over her features and headed to her tent, content for the day.

Once Vanessa made her way out of site, Melinda tenderly wrapped her strong arms around the still shocked Janice while standing behind her. Janice was still staring at the destroyed statue of Zeus. She just couldn't believe this, her ancestor's hometown had been burnt down to a crisp, and not even a single blade of grass still stood. All it was charred and blackened ground with wood here and there and bodies littering the site here and there too. Janice started to deny that it was Poteidaia, and that it lied somewhere else, but the blond knew the truth and felt utterly sick.

Mel lowered her head down and rested her head on Janice's right shoulder while still holding her tightly. Finally coming out of her trance, the smaller woman lightly shook her head and looked at Mel.

"I can't believe it Mel, well then again I kinda can. Gosh you realize how much death and destruction happened here? We found over fifty bodies and just on this side of town, one fourth of the town" Mel on cue tightened her grip on Janice wishing she could bring back Poteidaia to Janice.

"I know hun, it's pretty depressing thing to think about. How about we leave it alone for the rest of the day? I'm reckoned that you're tired like me" Janice motioned in agreement with her soulmate, and turned within Mel's embrace. Janice reached up for the back of Mel's neck and pulled her into a passionate kiss, each trying to consume the other. The kiss must have lasted forever; they didn't break until they both were desperate for air. The smaller woman grinned seductively up at the raven-haired woman, she loved torturing Mel with her looks.

"Janice, you better not be starting anything!" Quickly, Janice grinned up at Mel and wrapped her right arm around Mel's waist, who in return wrapped her own right arm around Janice's waist. They both peacefully walked into the camp together, enjoying their closeness.

Janice and Mel for the rest of the evening mostly spent time together after the hard

day's work of not having much quality time together. Janice was still suspicious about Vanessa, Janice didn't like her one bit, even though she seemed nice, but she didn't believe that it was Vanessa's true colors. But for now she would have to deal with her and not voice her opinion.

During the night, Mel and Janice went over the other possibilities as to where Xena and Gabrielle's bodies were buried. Both lovers knew that their remains weren't within or on the outskirts of Poteidaia. They couldn't explain as to why, but had the utmost true feeling that they weren't. Mel thought that possible Xena and Gabrielle's body could still be within Amphipolis, but Janice didn't think so. Then it hit them both at the same time, was it possible their bodies now lay in the ruins of the once great Amazon Nation?

"It's feasible Mel, I mean it makes sense. Gabrielle loved the Amazons as did Xena once she was committed to them" Both stared at each other with excitement in their eyes, maybe there was hope after all.

"But Janice, do we know where the Amazon Nation was once?" The blond lowered her head to the desk that they both were sitting behind then finally looked back up.

"I think there was a scroll I read, if I remember, that gave a detailed description on how to get to the Amazon Nation from Amphipolis" Mel smiled with happiness showing and a twinkle to her eyes. Janice sprang out of the seat and walked over to the other side of their tent. Carefully she rummaged through her leather satchel and found what she was looking for, the scroll. Unrolling the scroll while walking over to Mel, Janice began to read the scroll her ancestor had once wrote on.

The taller women continued to look up at Janice from her seat, curious as to what her lover was reading. Then leaning down on one knee, Janice pointed to an area on the scroll to Melinda. She read through where Janice pointed, it clearly described the directions from going to Amphipolis to Amazon Nation. Mel removed her black glasses and laid them on the desk and rubbed her temples lightly.

"That sounds like them Janice, I just hope there is enough detail there so we can still find our way to the Amazon's Nation" Janice smiled up at her southerner.

"I'm sure there is, you know Gabrielle, pretty detailed bard" Mel lightly grinned down at the archeologist then tried to stifle a yawn. Janice caught her trying to stifle the yawn and slightly grinned at Mel.

"Am I boring you Miss Pappas?" Mel looked down at the blond and smiled softly at her and leaned down to kiss Janice on the forehead.

"No sweetie, just I'm very tired from today" Janice nodded and lifted herself up and placed the scroll on the desk next to Mel's glasses. The smaller woman then reached down for Mel's left hand and guided her off the chair. Slowly and with style, she led the blue-eyed woman to the edge of their large cot. Setting her on the edge, Janice leaned down and unlaced the belle's boots and placed them out of the way. Returning to Mel, she began to un-button Mel's kiki shirt and then un-buttoned Mel's pants. Mel the whole time was entranced by her soulmate's touch enjoying every second of it and only moving her arms and her legs here and there to remove the shirt and pants. After discarding her pants and shirt to the side, Janice retrieved her lover's oversized T-shirt that she knew Mel would be dying for after a long hard day. Returning to her

lover, the blond leaned in and loving kissed Mel and she removed Mel's bra. Janice quickly placed Mel's T-shirt over her, before her passion got the better part of her. After the kiss, Mel's eyes slowly opened up revealing tired but yet passionate eyes to Janice. Janice lightly grinned at this site and laid Mel back in the bed. After covering Mel with the thin sheet, she went over to begin changing into her night cloths as well. Melinda watched intently, observing in awe as Janice's muscles flexed and she saw the blonde's smooth and muscular stomach making her die for Janice.

After safely placing her whip and revolver on the nightstand near her side of the bed, Janice crawled into the bed next to Mel. The aristocrat quickly pulled Janice into her embrace reveling in the feel of her lover. She then leaned in and kissed the blond on the shoulders sending shivers down Janice's back. Janice and Mel both wish the other sweet dreams and express their love for the other. Within in several minutes, Janice and Mel were in a deep and content sleep.

The warrior was the first to wake up, as always, the night for the warrior and her bard was a restless one. Many times Gabrielle would wake up in the middle of night from a nightmare about being trapped in Poteidaia when it was being burnt, with Xena on the outskirts unable to enter the town to save her. Other nightmares she continued to have been of her being right outside of Poteidaia, and standing there watching it burn to the ground with voices crying out in fear and one single voice laughing in enjoyment.

A few times the Amazon Queen would shoot up out Xena's arms screaming either for Xena, Lila, her mom and dad, or Poteidaia. Xena then would then cradle Gabrielle in her arms till her bard settled down and fell back into a light sleep. As every passing incident went by that night, Xena became angrier towards the person or persons that destroyed Poteidaia, she planned to make sure they got hell for what they did to her bard's hometown. Xena had not seen Gabrielle so grief stricken, since the time Xena died. Xena realized that Gabrielle just had gotten over the fact that Xena had come back to her, and now this.

As the morning sun began to rise, the ex-warlord continued to hold Gabrielle in her protective arms. Finally deciding that they should get moving, Xena leaned into Gabrielle and lightly kissed her on the cheek. Slowly Gabrielle's eyes open, but to Xena's sadness her eyes were red and blood shot from all the crying she had done during the night.

"You think you can get up hun? We need to get on our way" Gabrielle lightly nodded and began to lift herself out of Xena's arms. As soon as Gabrielle was up, the warrior got up and both changed back into their regular garments. Xena made quick work of her leathers and armor, while Gabrielle went about her's rather slow. While her bard took her time to get ready, she decide to make breakfast for them both, knowing that her lover was going to be extremely hungry. As if reading Xena's mind, the bard's stomach announced its state of opinion; Gabrielle quickly looked up at her warrior and sheepishly grinned.

"Guess I shouldn't have skipped dinner last night. Boy I'm defiantly hungry though" Xena grinned glad to see some of the normal bard back.

"Why don't you go wash up by that stream I told you about earlier and I'll make us

some breakfast" The blond nodded and grabbed her things and headed down to the small stream that Xena had described. As the bard made her way down, she felt as if she was being watched on the way there. Xena back in the camp herself felt like she was being watched but couldn't be sure. The warrior quickly grabbed some fruit and set them aside, debating on whether she should get fish from the stream or to have left over dry meat. Deciding that the fish would be a lot more to her liking and the hungry bards, she quickly tossed a few logs in the fire to start it up again. Xena then made her way down to where she last saw her bard head, as she made her way there she caught sight of Gabrielle washing her face off with water. Her bangs were now wet and pasted to her forehead and her face was dripping of water. Xena was enjoying this sight, and leaned up against a tree to watch her bard. After drying off her face, Gabrielle then brushed her bangs off to the sides and dried her face.

"I'll have to come watch you get ready more often in the mornings" Not at all surprised by Xena's presence, Gabrielle lightly grinned and turned to the warrior.

"Geez if you had stare any longer and I would have jumped you and awoken you out of that daze you were in" Xena slyly grinned and stood up straight and walked down beside her bard.

"So you knew I was there huh? Guess I'm getting weak on my hiding skills" Gabrielle lightly laughed and playfully slapped Xena in her stomach.

"No, who couldn't tell a pair of passionate eyes staring straight at them looking at every curve and line" Xena grinned even more and Gabrielle shook her head then look up at Xena with a serious face. "Xena, speaking of eyes and staring do you feel like..." Xena didn't say anything, but just nodded in agreement knowing fully what Gabrielle was asking. "Yeah that's what I thought to, sure is creep feeling" The warrior's grin had finally disappeared from her face.

"Don't worry, who ever or whatever will show themselves in due time, which they will regret immensely" The Amazon Queen lightly laughed at Xena's words, but knew that she would hold true to her word. "I'm going to hop in the stream, see if I can't find us some fish. How does that sound?" Gabrielle lightly smiled up at her warrior and nodded.

"Fish sounds good, defiantly early in the morning" Xena shook her head and then reach behind her head and put up her hair. Then turning to the nearest rock by the shoreline, Xena quickly placed one foot then the other and unlaced her boots and placed them aside. Once the warrior started to weigh in the water, Gabrielle sat on the rock the older woman had just used. "So what happened to our early start love?" Xena looked up from the water with a sly grin on her face.

"Well considering everything, I don't think it will matter much, besides I think we both need to catch out breath" The bard nodded in her approval then posed another question to her warrior.

"Where are we headed any way?" This time the warrior didn't look back at Gabrielle, nor respond to her. Instead her arms shot down into the water grabbing a hold of something. The Amazon Queen quickly prepared herself for what would be tossed her way. As if on cue, a trout came flying through the air and landed into Gabrielle's waiting hands. She then placed the fish beside the rock on the ground, keeping one

eye on it.

"I think we should head to the Amazons, they might have some idea as to what happened. How does that sound?" The bard was pleased that Xena had asked her if it was okay by her, she smiled at Xena and replied with a pit of pride.

"Yeah sounds great hun.....Thanks too" Xena stopped her hunting and looked up at Gabrielle with a curious face and the bard knew what she was asking. "Thanks for asking me what I thought" The warrior didn't respond but instead held sea green eyes with her sky blue eyes and let that speak her mind. Xena then returned to trying capturing at least two more fish, Gabrielle on the other hand began to fall into a silent trance.

The bard began to replay the images of Poteidaia once her and Xena had found it, Gabrielle winced. She thought she was going to throw up again, she could still remember clearly the sites of the dead bodies as well as the stench. Then slowly Gabrielle's mind started to create images of her sister, mother, and father being burnt to death by fire; she could hear them screaming for her. The bard had never had the chance to tell them about Xena and her, nor did she ever have the chance to reconcile with them about her leaving home, which she regret terrible. By now the bard had her head in her hands, trying to shut out the thoughts and images and was having no luck. Gabrielle was about ready to scream out in anguish, when she felt a gently and loving hand rest on her left shoulder. She then looked up with eyes that were about ready to burst into tears, what she saw was her soulmate's loving and tender sky blue eyes. Falling into her eyes, Gabrielle lost her images of Poteidaia and her family and began to focus on what stood before her and was thankful for that. The bard then stood up and wrapped her arms tightly around the warrior, Xena then immediately throw down the two fish beside the first one. She then tightly hugged Gabrielle and slightly swayed back and forth and waited for her bard to come back to her. The shorter woman for her part, kept a tight hold on the warrior and had her eyes tightly shut trying to block out the images for now. Finally releasing the raven-haired warrior, the bard turned back to the rock and picked up the three fish and handed one to Xena. As they walked back to the camp, they both had their arms wrapped around the other's waist in loving protection.

Once making their way to the camp, Xena cooked the fish while Gabrielle watched her to make sure she didn't burn the fish. After breakfast and with a late start, Xena and Gabrielle made their way to the Amazon territory. The bard decided she wanted to ride Argo, but this time she sat behind the warrior, wanting to be able to wrap her arms around something secure, Xena. The ex-warlord for her part was grateful that her lover decided to ride, she still had the eerie feeling that they were being watched which made Xena's protective instincts kick in. At the beginning of the ride Gabrielle decided to thank her warrior for her support.

"Xena, thanks for being patient with me" Xena lightly frowned at that remark, it wasn't about being patient.

"Gabrielle, you know I would do anything for you! Its more about my love for you, I can wait forever for you" The bard squeezed Xena tightly and the warrior placed one hand over Gabrielle's hand, affectionately squeezing back.

"Well I know your trying hard to give me the space I need and trying to keep my mind

off things every once in a while. By the Gods I love you!" Xena grinned at those statements and felt the bard lay her head on her back.

"You can talk to me when your ready to hun, just don't let it stay in the beautiful head to long. Otherwise you are going to have one worried warrior" She lightly laughed while still resting her head on Xena's back.

"Yeah I know, it's still just hard to imagine it all. There is just so much there for me to comprehend and it scares me" The blue eyed rider lightly acknowledge that by nodding and then answered to her soulmate.

"Yes there is, but I'm there for you every step of the way. My bard I know you, you are more then strong enough to handle just give yourself time" Gabrielle thanked which ever god had sent Xena to her, she all ready felt more secure about the issue with her warrior then ever.

"I know, I'll only make it if you are there by my side Xena" Xena smiled a brilliant smile to herself, for a better part of their trip they rode in silence. Gabrielle was deep in thought about Poteidaia and her family's deaths while Xena continued to figure out who would have done such a thing. Both lovers still had the eerie feeling of eyes watching over them; occasionally it sent a small chill down the bard's back then she would have goosebumps to mount. As the day wore on the travelers were getting tired and worn out as well as Argo. All of sudden that eerie watching feeling left both travelers and was replaced by a presence now.

Xena slowed Argo down, and scanned the forest around them looking for any signs of trouble, and Gabrielle herself was mimicking the same movements as well as listening for anything. After a few minutes the sound of somebody whispering began to flow through the forest. Neither Xena nor Gabrielle could make out the whispers other then it possible sounding feminine. The whispers travel through the woods and encircled the travelers. Slowly the whispers became more understand able and more feminine, Gabrielle and the warrior both listen hard while the bard kept a tight grip on Xena.

"gggaaabbbrrriieeelllee.....gggaaabbbrrriieeelllee.....gggaaabbbrrriieeelllee... ..gggggaaabbbrrrrriieeelllllee....." The whispers continued and kept traveling through out the woods, sending Argo into a small scare knowing something was after them. The bard by now had a death grip on Xena feeling as if she was in a bad dream and would wake up soon. Xena though was getting impatient wanting to know whom the voiced belonged to, which seemed slightly familiar to her. The whispers continued and seem to start to confine to one area in the woods, by now Xena had pulled Argo to a halt. As the whispers began to surround by the tree next to them, Xena unsheathed her sword expecting a fight. The blond had finally came out of her scared trance and had retrieved her staff from behind her in Argo's saddle.

Slowly the whispers became a low voice that lingered in front of the tree before the lovers, then a figure began to slowly appear and now those whispers were a clear low feminine voice. Finally the figure appeared before them with the look of satisfaction on their face with a huge grin.

"Gabrielle, I believe I still have you at the top of my list and something to settle with you" The bard didn't respond but stared at the figure in shock, she could believe this. Could this person actually be standing before her, she then had the greatest sinking

feeling hit her. Her lover had noticed her quietness and responded to the new comer.

"What do you want?" The figures burning eyes turned away from the bard and onto the warrior mounted high on the golden mare.

"Simple I want your bard!" Xena grit her teeth and debate whether to fight them or to keep them talking then making her decision Xena cared it out.

"I wouldn't mind knowing how you managed to get out of that lava pit Valasca. Care to share?" Valasca's glossed eyes stared hard at Xena, while the goddess debated whether to tell the warrior or not.

"Let's just say I had a little outside help" Xena kept her glare on Valasca and then decided to press more.

"And I'm assuming that you were the one who burnt Poteidaia to nothingness" Valasca grinned evilly at Xena and slightly nodded then laughed. As soon as Gabrielle heard that laugh she recognized it as the one from her dreams last night. Without warning or expectancy, the bard leaped off the war-horse and charged Valasca, once reaching her, in a matter of seconds, Gabrielle swung her staff hard across Valasca's face. The ex-Amazon's head flew left from the blow and she quickly turned her head back to the small bard. Looking down into fury burning eyes, Valasca had to admit this bard had some bite but not enough to stop a god. Valasca abruptly grabbed Gabrielle by the throat and lift her up off the ground, much like she did to Ephiny. Xena by now was in mid-air with her battle cry wavering through the air, landing slightly off to the side, Xena gave a high kick to Valasca. Slamming Valasca in the abdomen, she doubled over in the strength of the blow. In achieving Xena's goal, Valasca dropped the blond to the ground. Once Valasca came around she took notice to her surroundings now, Gabrielle had backed off and Argo was no where to be found and then of course Xena was in her warrior stance, sword pointed in her direction. The goddess lightly grinned and lifted her right hand to send a thunder bolt in Xena's direction, the warrior responded immediately and leaped up and landed onto a low branch. Valasca looked up to see Xena grinning down at her, Valasca on the other hand could care less, she just lightly rolled her eyes and head towards the Amazon Queen.

Recognizing her destination, Xena leaped off the branch landing between her lover and the goddess. Valasca was getting rather sick of the warrior and wanted the bard with no hassles. With anger setting in, Valasca rushed Xena with surprised and lift the almost six foot woman by the waist and flung her up against a tree, knocking her unconscious. Satisfied that Xena wouldn't move, Valasca turned back the Gabrielle with white eyes gleaming with evil and terror. The bard by now was in a fighting stance; she wasn't about ready to go down without fighting, like any other Amazon.

"Gabrielle, why do you bother to fight me? You'll die no matter what you try, you can't defeat a god" The goddess lightly laughed her tormenting laugh to the bard, she then neared Gabrielle once again.

"Valasca, I keep fighting, because I plan to go down fighting with honor" Then grinning slightly to the goddess Gabrielle finished her statement. "Besides history has away of repeating itself, well you may just end up getting trapped again. We did it once, we'll do it again" With those last words Gabrielle lunged forward with speed and grace. Bring her staff across Valasca's right arm then brought the butt of the staff

up to hit the goddess square under the chin. After making her attempt, the bard was kicked hard into a tree. The bard slid down the tree and she began to rub the back of her head unaware of the approaching goddess, then out of no where came the famous war cry ring through the air. While stunned, the warrior leaped on the back of the ex-Amazon and wrapped her right arm around Valasca's throat squeezing hard. While trying to slow her down, Xena decided to make use of her breast dagger, and pulled it out and began to slash at Valasca's back only to see the wounds heal over instantly.

"GABRIELLE GET OUT OF HERE!" The ex-warlord was begging her lover to leave the scene from where she still laid against the tree, with her sky blue eyes; she didn't want to see anything happen to her soulmate. Gabrielle shook her head in a "No" response, with a look of "I won't leave you" set in her sea green eyes. Valasca finally getting her barrings, reached behind and hurled Xena over her shoulder and slammed her into the ground. Reaching for her wrists, Valasca forced Xena's arms with the dagger clenched tightly between both hands down to the warrior's body. With a strong force, Valasca thrust Xena's own dagger in the warrior's upper right shoulder. The raven-haired slightly winced in pain, the goddess then brought her dagger out of her shoulder and brought it down onto her lower left shoulder. Again Xena only winced in pain in a small amount, not letting the other woman know her pain. Valasca then decided to have more fun with it and she began to twist the dagger while it was still embedded in Xena's shoulder. Now the warrior screamed out in agony, this finally brought the blond out of her trance and sprinted towards Valasca and Xena. Aware of the approaching woman, Valasca nailed Xena hard in her stomach, and released her hold of the dagger but still grounded in Xena. Valasca then punched Xena hard in the face knocking her out once more. Meeting the sprinting bard with her fighting stance, Valasca removed her own dagger from her wrist guard. The goddess then threw that dagger at the bard, the dagger in mid-air then split up into five separate daggers all headed for the Amazon Queen. She quickly tried to dodge the daggers and getting them on her staff. The bard ducked from two, and two others slammed into her staff, the fifth, screamed Gabrielle's mind. Then a split second later the fifth made itself known and plunged itself deep into the blonde's leg. Gabrielle fell to the ground in pain from the dagger drowning itself into her leg, Valasca grinned wickedly and slowly walked towards the fallen Amazon. She was now crying out in pain, in her sites she could see Valasca head her way, she then looked in the direction where Xena was last laying. Not spotting the warrior where she once was, Gabrielle then knew exactly where her lover was head. On cue, Valasca stopped dead in her tracks, something had hit her in the right side. Looking at her side, Valasca found a circular weapon, Xena's famed chakram, which was well grounded into Valasca's side with blood seeping out over it. Valasca turned her back to the bard and stared straight at a blood cover face woman, with blood dripping down her shoulders and down her armor. Valasca then tore the weapon from her side and tossed it near where Xena's sword laid from when she was first thrown against the tree. But Xena's face on the other hand had been masked with the same mask she used in her warlord days, the look of a killer who wanted blood.

"You just don't know when to die do you?" The tall woman's eyes narrowed and her eyes ice blue with rage flying through them.

"Not when it involves the woman I love" Taking a small glance at her lover, Xena could see Gabrielle was in immense pain. Taking the distraction to her advantage Valasca charged the short distance between her and Xena and grabbed her by the

throat. This time Valasca didn't both lifting, instead she wrapped both of her hands around Xena's throat and began to squeeze tightly. As she started to ring the life out of Xena, she brought her knee up and bashed Xena in the stomach and this made the warrior lose air all to fast. As Valasca was about read to bring her knee up again to finally finish the warrior, she felt somebody tap her on the shoulder. Thinking it was the bard, and with no concern in mine, Valasca stopped herself and lightly turned her head to the person. As she did so, she was hit square in the face with a strong blow that she dropped released Xena to regain herself. The warrior after being released fell to the ground trying to catch her breath, not taking time to get a look over her new ally.

Spinning quickly around, Valasca saw who stood upon her and again another blow came her way, this one with more power and strength behind it. Now Valasca was flying through the air and slammed hard into a tree, lightly cracking the tree. Valasca acting as Xena did, sliding down the side of the tree and fell unconscious. As Xena fought for air, she was greeted with a hand from the newcomer, she accept and was pulled up to her feet. Finally able to see who had helped her and her bard, Xena was quiet surprised.

"Artemis!" The warrior was in shock about whom stood before her, then thought about her bard.

"Go to her Xena, I'll still be here" Xena nodded lightly, and rushed over to her bard. Artemis on the other hand headed over to the unconscious goddess and lightly touched the tree that she leaned against. As soon as Artemis touched the tree, did it begin to have tons of small branches entangle around Valasca, only to leave her head showing.

Xena leaned down on one knee and studied her hurt bard. Gabrielle was wincing in pain, but didn't care, she was just happy to see Xena alive and Valasca out.

"Xena your face and shoulders...." The warrior had stopped her words by placing a finger over the bard's mouth.

"Its all right Gabrielle, you're more important right now" Xena then noticed Artemis' presence beside them and looked up at the glorious goddess who was smiling lightly at them. Getting down on one knee herself, Artemis looked at Xena.

"I can help her, the both of you if you would like" The bard quickly nodded not wanting to enrage her own goddess of the Amazon's. Xena herself nodded in agreement, at that the Goddess of the Amazon's reached down for Gabrielle's left injured leg and ever so slightly caressed her leg where the dagger was embedded. The dagger disappeared and the dagger wound healed over leaving no mark behind. Then reaching up for Xena, Artemis lightly caressed Xena's stomach, shoulders, and then over her face. By the end, Xena looked the same as she did that morning, and no pain was running through her, as was the same with the bard. With the help of her lover, she was back up on her feet with a protective arm around her waist.

"Thank You my goddess" The woman then bowed to her patron goddess, and she smiled in return.

"Gabrielle, you are my chosen as is Xena, I'm always here to protect you both" The Goddess of Hunt then turned back to Valasca who was sound asleep all nestled in the

branches of the tree. Then turning back to Xena and Gabrielle she lightly frowned then looked straight at Gabrielle directing her statement more to the bard then the stoic warrior.

"It seems my brother, Ares, made a deal with Valasca. Valasca had agreed to kill you, my Queen, as long as Xena witnessed it and still lived. Unfortunately, I didn't find out till just a few candle marks ago and couldn't have stopped her earlier. It seems Valasca all ready took a rampage through Amazon Nation, but it wasn't too bad" The look of concern grew on the blonde's face as she heard that there was danger in the Amazon Nation. Xena then brought Artemis's attention to her with her intense eyes.

"What was Ares getting in return from Valasca for Gabrielle's death?" Artemis lightly roll her eyes at the answer she was about to voice.

"The same old same old, hopefully you coming back over to him because of the grief of losing your lover" Xena sighed lightly, wondering when the God of War would give up his quest to bring her back over.

"But don't worry Xena, I plan to confront him about it, of course I doubt it will do any good. He will certainly get plenty of hell for releasing Valasca, speaking of which" Artemis then turned back to Valasca to see glossed eyes staring hard at her. The goddess was beginning to struggle in the tree's grip, but was getting no where quick. "No Amazon of mine is aloud to turn her back on her own people, and then try to kill them and their Queen" Artemis's had her back straight and anger was coursing through her body, she hated this other goddess for who she is and was.

"What do you plan to do with her Artemis?" Not turning back to the two travelers Artemis explained her idea to her chosen.

"First I think I will strip her of her god hood, and then put her away for eternity" Finally spat the Goddess of Hunt with her voice stressing her words.

"I take it she will still be immortal?" Artemis turned back to the lovers and nodded to Xena.

"Afraid so Xena, I don't have the power to take away her immortality, only Zeus can do that. But she will remain with in a cave, blacken and just big enough to lie in, which would drive anybody mad after a few days, let alone eternity" After hearing her fate, Valasca struggled even more to remove herself from the tree, but the grip of the tree only tighten on her more. Looking up Valasca spotted Artemis walking in her direction with fury burning in her eyes. Once the Goddess of the Amazon's was in hands reach of the struggling goddess; she reached down with her right hand. Placing her palm on Valasca's head, a large glow began to form where Valasca's head and Artemis's hand met. It continued to grow in intensity, then Valasca cried out in pain and her head fell forward breaking the connection between the two. With her head still down, Artemis re-opened her eyes, for a split second, Artemis's eyes were a shade of red then went back to normal. Once again Artemis turned back to the couple, and she smiled to them. "There it's done, now I recommend you two head to the Amazon's, they'll want to know if you're safe. And I will take care of Valasca and especially Ares. For eternity, Valasca should be trapped within the cave so rest at easy"

"Thank You again Artemis, Xena and I would have more then likely died without

your help" Artemis smiled brightly at the bard for her words.

"Gabrielle, you and Xena always have my protection as long as you serve under me. You will come to find out that you are also the chosen of a few other gods and will be revealed to you in due time" Xena smiled a beautiful smile, happy to hear that her bard was being well looked after in case of something ever happening to her.

"Thank You too Artemis, I feel confident that nothing will ever happen to my bard with her your protection and the other nameless gods"

"You both are more than welcome, but I must be on my way. Good luck to you both in the future, I will be watching" With those last words Artemis replaced her right hand on Valasca, and both disappeared only leaving a slightly split tree behind. Xena then wrapped her other arm around her bard's waist, turning her towards her. The stoic warrior looked deep into sea green eyes while the bard looked into intense sky blue eyes melting in them. Leaning in, the taller woman passionately kissed her, both explored the other's mouth craving the other. Finally breaking for air, Xena whispered to her soulmate.

"I love you Gabrielle" The Amazon Queen closed her eyes and listen to the warrior say her name, which made the blonde's stomach curl. She loved it when the ex-warlord said her name and then finally opened her eyes once more.

"And I love you Xena Warrior Princess" Acting like Gabrielle, Xena's stomach curled at hearing her name being breathed by her soulmate. Still gazing into each other's eyes, they both were lost in the other's eyes not wanting to move. Xena was the one to finally break the trance.

"I think we better head to the Amazon's. Or they'll be sending ever Amazon out to find and protect you" Both laughed knowing Ephiny might just do that, to find their Queen. Xena then looked into the woods where she suspected Argo rushed off to. Whistling for her mare, the war-horse revealed herself not to be to far away with in easy running distance. Trotting quickly over to her owner Argo stopped dead in front of her keeper, in reward for not straying far, the warrior lightly stroked the mare's mane. Gabrielle then made herself present once more, but with Xena's sword and chakram in hand and then in her right hand was her staff. The warrior graciously accepted back her weapons, cleaning her chakram and placing it in its hook to her side. Before mounting the war-horse Xena sheathed her sword and took a quick glance at her surroundings, happy to not feel that eerie feeling any longer. The warrior and bard made their way at a brisk pace towards the Amazons. For the first quarter Xena let Gabrielle walk to let her catch her breath, and then for the rest of the way they both rode at a gallop towards the Amazon territory.

Part 2

Section Two

~*Part 5*~

Slowly and groggily the archeologist woke up to the early morning, from yet another dream. Janice couldn't but wonder if they were real, considering the fact that Poteidaia has been concluded to be burned down, leaving nothing. The blond slowly eased her

way out of Mel's arms without incident; she then slowly made her way to the flap of the tent. In wonderment, Janice looked out, only to find a silent camp with the workers still sleeping and waiting to hear their next orders. The small woman sighed, unhappy at the fact she had to now explain to the local workers why they were going to be packing up earlier than expected. Now Janice was debating on whether she and Mel should stick around to observe the finishing's of Poteidaia being unearthed. Stopping her thinking, the blond slightly heard movement behind her, realizing her lover was up now. Spinning around on her heels, Janice caught Melinda trying to sneak up behind her.

"Uh huh" Mel looked sheepishly at her soulmate and slightly blushed. Janice then strutted over to the aristocrat, and kissed her on the cheek.

"Good morning honey" After purring her words, Mel was still trying to come out of her sleep state, and did so once the smaller woman wrapped her arms around Mel's waist. Grinning down at her soulmate, Mel couldn't help but return her kiss but to Janice's forehead. "Hhhmmm, Mel we need to decide whether to stay here and help finishing in the dig or whether to go ahead on our own to find the Amazon Nation. Personally I think we should leave and start right away on finding the Amazon Nation. What you think love?" Melinda took a deep breath releasing it slowly as she debate what to do; she had to agree with Janice, there was no real use for them here. The raven-haired woman then looked down into emerald eyes and replied to her lover.

"I agree, I don't think there is anything left here of importance. With the evidence about Poteidaia being burned just suggests that there is really no artifacts to be found within or any other evidence" Janice smiled brightly and nodded in agreement, liking the way Mel backed up her decision with facts. "But who should we leave in charge of the site. Vanessa? I mean she is second in control, and she has an uncanny way of handling the men and the site" Janice distrusted her, she didn't know why she did, but knew she couldn't be trust no matter how much she looked it. Frowning Janice considered the idea, she knew Mel wanted her to take control of the dig and more than likely it would take a lot of Janice's efforts to stop her. Even if she did, whom would that leave to take care of the expedition? The archeologist then gave up, and decided Mel was right. Looking up at the tall woman with her frown still covering her face Janice retorted to the southerner.

"Yeah I guess that's our best bet is to leave Vanessa in charge...I just hope it's the right decision" Janice finished the last part of her statement with a whisper hoping Mel didn't catch it, but knew fully she did. Mel scolded her with her eyes then with her own words.

"Janice, I know you don't like her much, but that's all we have left. Things here will be fine hun, don't worry" Janice lightly nodded without looking into Mel's eyes. During the early morning Mel and Janice had breakfast first thing, after hearing the blonde's stomach grumble about the lack of food. After talking to Vanessa and the workers about their duties, Janice and Mel now were seated peacefully in their tent going over the directions in the scroll.

"I'm sure of it Janice" For what it seemed like the hundredth time, Mel repeated the same phrase. Janice look skeptical at the scroll, debating whether to ask the taller woman again and decided it was best left alone.

"Okay let me see what we have" The taller woman handed over her notepad with the detailed direction of how to reach the Amazon Nation from Amphipolis. Janice carefully studied the directions her lover wrote down from translating the scroll. Smiling as she returned the notepad to her lover, she finally answered Melinda's unasked question.

"Looks great, I think we are set Mel to head out of here. What you think? Ready for some more thrilling exploring and adventure?" Janice finished her last words with a teasing tone to try and lighten the mood. Her attempt worked beautifully.

"Oh I'm more than ready for some excitement after these past weeks of just digging dirt" The archeologist lightly glared at Mel, knowing she was teasing her back by saying she was only digging up dirt instead of history.

"Wonderful, because I'm ready to get out of here. Why don't you get our stuff, and I'm going to go make sure things are clear with Vanessa on what to do" Melinda nodded and turned towards their cot to see their bags resting peacefully on top, then she turned back to a staring Janice.

"I reckon you better go talk to Vanessa hun instead of gloating over me" Janice shook her head out of the trance and smiled at Mel. Lifting herself up off her knee beside Mel, the short woman headed out of the tent in pursuit of Vanessa catching the sun high in the sky.

~*~*~*~

The northerner figured her second in control was at the dig site where she should be. Finally making her way to the site where her ancestor's hometown was being uncovered, Janice looked about the site. Standing at the edge she scanned the dig site looking for Vanessa, then she felt it the shiver with goosebumps. 'Well gee guess who that might be!' Janice spun around to greet Vanessa with a smile.

"Hi Vanessa, Mel and I are about ready to set off here soon and I wanted to double check everything with you" Vanessa nodded and Doctor Covington began her questions and requests once more.

~*~*~*~

Mel finally removed herself from the chair and placed the notepad down on the desk. Walking over to the cot, Mel grabbed a hold of two of the four bags. Walking briskly out of the tent, Mel spotted the truck with tools in the back along with her lover's prized Indian bike. The aristocrat was rather happy to be leaving, now it would be just her and Janice together for a couple of days before reaching the desolate Amazon Nation. Opening up the truck from the driver's side she tossed the two bags inside behind the seats. Mel then returned to repeat the same process and throw in the other two bags. After scanning their tent, Mel was satisfied she and Janice had packed everything and she quickly retrieved the scroll and notepad from the desk. Walking back out to the truck, Mel noticed Janice and Vanessa walking from the dig site towards her and the truck. Mel saw Janice with her head down listening to Vanessa as she spoke, occasional her lover nodded in agreement with something Vanessa said. By now, the blue eye woman was on the passenger side of the truck watching her lover arrive in front of her. As she neared Janice looked up with a smile flashing at her lover. She leaned up against the truck and continued to watch her lover talk to Vanessa and nodded in agreement with something's and correcting others. Finally

reaching the truck, Janice stood to the right of Mel but slightly in front of her in a protective way.

"Sounds great Vanessa, let us know if anything comes up. More then likely Mel and I will be calling the museum soon to tell them what the news is. If you can yourself, report to them once a week as to your progress and I'm sure they'll let us know what is happening" At the end of her orders, the archeologist held out her hand, and Vanessa briskly shook it. The touch was nerve racking to the blond, this time she had a more intense shiver that last for a few minutes. Mel followed Janice's example and also shook Vanessa's hand.

"Thank you very much for taking care of everything Vanessa. You've done an excellent job for your first time" Vanessa smiled at the raven-haired women.

"No problem, the site is in capable hands, don't worry about a thing" Janice nodded and then walked over to the driver's side of the truck and hopped in. Mel did the same, as Janice started the truck quickly. Melinda thanked Vanessa for the hundredth time and waved bye to her. As the truck made it's way out of the camp leaving a small cloud of dust behind. Vanessa watched them leave, as they slowly disappeared out of site, a grin formed across her face with evil filling her eyes.

"Good luck to you two, I know you'll need all of it in the world to survive this one" As she finished those words, Vanessa laughed loudly, which rang through the site much like the one that did over a hundreds of years ago.

~*~*~*~

Mel had placed her head against Janice's should during the duration of the ride north and managed to fall asleep despite the bouncing of the truck. The blond had decided to drive a little slower for her lover's benefit, and now she only used her left arm to drive not to disturb Mel with moving her right shoulder. The archeologist drove north for hours on end, wanting for some reason to escape the dig site and the memories and dreams. Once the day reached dusk, Janice decided it was time for them to pull over and set up a camp for the night. Watching the passing area, Janice started to decide where would be best. Finally, spotting her perfect area for the camp she pulled off the dirt road and slowed the beat up truck and then parked it fairly far away from the road. She then turned of the truck and look at her lover sleeping on her shoulder and lightly smiled at the site.

"Mel?.....love?" Not getting any immediate response from the belle, she began to lightly shake her by the shoulders. "Hun wake up, we're going to make camp. I need your help" Mel's eyes finally fluttered open and she sat up right and rubbed the back of her neck trying to get the stiffness out. Janice then reached over and began to massage her neck trying to ease her stiffness. Mel then let her head fall forward, exposing more of the back of her neck as Janice continued to massage her neck.

"Where are we Janice? And oh thanks for letting me use your shoulder for a pillow" Janice continued to focus on Mel's neck and almost forgot that Mel had asked her a question. She then looked up at her lover then finally replied.

"I'm not totally sure, but we travel about six hours north...." Janice then turned her head to the meter in the dashboard to see how many miles they had traveled. "...and it looks like we traveled about 300 miles, maybe a little less, but we did make good time. I'll check out the map tomorrow morning to see how much further we need to go

before we reach Amphipolis" Mel lightly nodded and then brought her head back up to look out the window to see what her new surroundings were. Most of the land was now green and lush and a few trees here and there and a very small lake to her right. The archeologist then stopped her massage on Mel's neck and quickly took a look at their surroundings as well, now she noticed that the sun was going to be setting with in a half an hour or so. "Come on Mel, we better get moven, the sun will be setting here soon" She reached behind her seat grabbing two bags then removed the keys. Janice then stumbled out of the driver's side of the truck after not being up on her legs for a few hours. Melinda then made her way out of the truck once Janice did. Both soulmates then made their way to the back of the truck to remove two bedrolls they would need for the night. Janice was the one to hop up on the truck then hand Mel their stuff, after doing so she took a quick peep at her bike to make sure it was still good condition. Thankfully Janice's Indian bike was fine, she was happy with herself that she remembered to place a cover over the bike for protection.

After making her way out of the truck, Janice went to help her lover out with getting the camp organized. By sunset Janice and Mel had the camp set up and a fire blazing strong with spare wood for the night. The archeologist was enjoying immensely the night with being outdoors and having her lover next her, in which case Mel seemed to be enjoying this too. For once they were both alone in the middle of no where and no need to worry about interruptions or being to loud. The taller woman also took those facts in to consideration; slowly she made her way over to where the blond was sitting by the fire. Once she sat down she took the other woman's hand in her owns making Janice smile, and for a few long minutes neither said anything and just stared into the fire being memorized by it. The archeologist then decided to ask Mel a question that had been racking her mind for a few days, but never had the chance to ask after being to busy.

"Mel?" For a second the blond thought she didn't hear her name, then Mel shook her head lightly and looked at her with powerful sky blue eyes that were twinkling from the fire making Janice melt into them.

"Yes Janice?" Janice then brought her mind back to herself from Mel's eyes going back to her topic on her mind.

"How have you been feeling ever since those guys back in the medical tent?" The aristocrat then lowered her eyes to consider her answer, she hadn't really expect Janice to ask her this, but non-the less she could see the look of worry in Janice's expression.

"I feel better about it I reckon, I mean it still hurts to think about it. I'm just really glad you showed up hun, god knows what else they would have done" Janice didn't reply to her response and just thought about the incident for a few minutes. 'How in the world though did those guys knew when she would be coming, and to which tent at that? It doesn't make sense, the only thing I can think of is that somebody was watching her then told them where she was headed to' After considering that thought, Janice decided that was more then likely the case. 'Great, now all I have to figure out is who sent them, assuming its true. And why the hell Mel? And not me? Geez one question leads to another...I just hope I can figure out who and why' After not getting a response from her soulmate, Mel knew that she was in deep thought. Looking over at Janice, her suspicions were right, she could see the look of deep thinking and confusion written on her face.

"Love, what you thinking about?" Bringing herself back to the camp mentally, she looked at Mel with a small frown.

"I was just thinking about those two guys hun. I mean I find it really weird, that they knew when and where you were going to be. Defiantly since all the workers are suppose to go home after working on the dig site. I don't know, makes me think we were being watched and that they were doing what they did more then just for fun" The raven-haired southerner considered this idea for a few seconds.

"You might be right Janice, but wouldn't that mean that somebody had to be leading the two guys" Janice nodded and then went on with her suspicions to Mel.

"That's what I keep thinking. But what I don't get is why they would do something like that; there was nothing at that dig site any way. Boy if I do find out, their going to regret that mistake big time" Mel smiled at the way her lover was beginning to protect her once again.

"Well there is nothing much either of us can do right now. So don't worry too much about it hun" Janice nodded with an agreeing look.

"I suppose so, I'm sure we'll find out more later" Then turning her eyes to Melinda, Janice noticed in the southerner's eyes a hint of passion flaring in them.

"Probably, but I reckon we should find out more about something else right now" Releasing her intertwined hand, Mel brought her hand up and pulled Janice into a searing kiss, while using her other arm to pull Janice in. Finally breaking, both women were breathless for a few moments. The archeologist grinned wickedly at Mel, who still had a hold on her.

"I defiantly have to agree with you on that one Mel" By now Mel's eyes were glossed over in passion and desire. She then leaned in for another breath taking kiss, as they kissed, Mel started to push the smaller woman back, both ended up laying on the bed rolls that Mel had placed earlier. The taller woman had made sure that she didn't crush her lover any when they landed on the bedrolls. The aristocrat then brought her head down to Janice's exposed neck and began to softly kiss her. As she did this, Melinda began to unbutton her lover's light brown shirt then tossing it off to the side.

~*~*~*~

The blond slowly began to shift out of her dream. Taking in her surroundings, Janice started to recall all the recent advents. Like always, the archeologist didn't open her eyes immediately instead she enjoyed Mel's body against her own and the feel of protection. "This is scary if I like the feeling of being protected. Janice Covington you are getting quite soft these days. Oh well I just love Mel's feel and warmth." She then grinned to herself and turned with in Mel's arms. The taller woman felt the movement and opens her eyes to see emerald green eyes staring lovingly back at her.

"Hi" Mel cracked a smile across her face and tightened her arms around Janice and pulled her in closer.

"Hi to you too. How did you sleep Janice?" The blond smiled back and leaned in to kiss Mel lightly on the neck.

"I slept" one kiss on the neck "quite well" a second "hun." third kiss "How did you" a

fourth kiss "sleep?" after the fifth butterfly kiss, Janice snuggled her head into Mel's neck. 'Boy I'm getting soft!' Mel didn't respond right away, first she was trying to slow down her breathing and take control of her emotions.

"Um just great. But hun?" Looking up into clear sky blue eyes, Janice smiled and looked at her innocently.

"Yes Mel?" Just then Janice saw the dark haired beauty's eyes become consumed with passion.

"If you don't stop doing what you just did, we aren't going to get that far up yonder. I'm going to end up taking you right here and right now, and you are not making it easy just being naked " The shorter woman lightly laughed and shook her head, then she look back up at Mel grinning at her.

"Okay Mel, well I'll just get up then" Before the aristocrat could say or do anything, the strawberry-blond was up out of the bedrolls strutting around the camp in the nude. Mel sighed, and tried hard not to leap up and grab her lover, but she couldn't help but keep her eyes on Janice as she moved through the camp. The archeologist kept her grin hidden as best as she could and finally made her way to where her cloths now lied. Slowly she began to dress making sure that Mel could see her ever move. The raven-haired woman laid on the bedroll staring in "awe" at Janice as she dressed before her. After finally clothing herself, Janice made her way to the truck to check on it while Mel got out of her daze and got dressed as well. Once convinced that nothing was wrong with the truck or the bike, the archeologist came back to the camp to see what Mel was up too. As Janice started heading back, she felt a light shiver course down her back with goosebumps. Slightly worried she jogged back to the camp to make sure nothing was wrong. To her delight, Mel had the fire going once more and was preparing breakfast. The blond grinned and came up behind Melinda, wrapping her arms around her waist and pulling her in tightly.

"What you cooking hun?" The taller woman smiled and turned within Janice's embrace to face her.

"Nothing really special, some grits and oatmeal. We do have to get going soon right?" The archeologist slightly frowned and nodded her response. "How much further do you think we have to go before we reach Amphipolis?" The smaller woman didn't reply right away instead she leaned the side of her head against Mel's chest.

"Hhhmmm I'd say maybe two hours to three we should reach Amphipolis, if I remember correctly. While we have breakfast, I'll look at the map we used from earlier" The aristocrat nodded in agreement, then realized she needed to check their breakfast. Noticing that her lover had turned her attention back to their breakfast Janice released Mel. Then she received a 'thank you' look from the clear sky blue eyes. Melinda then leaned down by the skillet, and removed it from the fire. The archeologist on the other hand had left for a brief second to return with two bowls and spoons.

"So how is that bike of yours? I reckon its fine" Janice looked up to Mel while she continued to pour the oatmeal and grits together in the same bowl for the blond.

"Uh yeah pretty much, that cover is helping quite a bit" Mel grinned lightly and then grabbed her own bowl and started only pouring in grits in hers.

"Can't keep stop worrying about that bike huh?" Janice moved over to the log by the fire and looked up at Melinda, grinning.

"Guess not, expensive as it is. Can't blame me eh?" Mel smiled warmly at Janice then sat down next to her on the log.

"I reckon I can't, I would too, if I was into motorcycles" Janice raised an eyebrow at her friend. "I mean bike" The archeologist grinned then placed her spoon in the bowl of grits and oatmeal, reaching behind she pulled out her map from her back pocket. Unfolding it, Janice began to look over the map as well as the instructions she wrote on the side of the map to get to the Amazon Nation. Melinda continued to eat her grits, enjoying them even though they were a bit bland but was better then nothing. She took a deep breath breathing in the air, smelling the fire and the faint sent of her grits all intertwined. The aristocrat then looked up at the clear sky, no clouds and a light breeze, not a bad day at all. Lowering her head once more she finished up her grits within three more spoon fulls. Placing the bowl with spoon on the ground, Mel looked to her partner. She noticed that Janice was in deep thought by her posture and the fact she wasn't eating. When she wasn't eating something wasn't right, this made Mel worry a little.

"Is everything all right?" The small blond didn't respond right away, she continued to study the map then she looked up at Mel.

"There are mountains" Melinda raised an eyebrow at this and moved closer to Janice to look at the map on Janice's left leg. The tall woman studied the map as Janice took a few spoon fulls of her cold grits and oatmeal. Janice still remember they day when she first mixed her grits and oatmeal, Mel had made the most obscene face about it, couldn't believe it. The archeologist couldn't understand what was wrong with it, tasted good to her, that thought made Janice grin inwardly, the memory. Bringing herself back, she looked at Mel, watching her study the map. Janice could see her lover was trying to figure things out, her eyes moving up and down the map, as well as her eyebrows being furrowed.

"My Lord, there are mountains, good size ones too" Janice nodded after taking her last spoon full of grits and oatmeal, she then place the bowl and spoon down by her right foot. Looking back at the map, Janice pointed to where they are.

"That's where we are now, and this is where we need to get to by Gabrielle's scroll" Janice moved her hand tracing the path her and Mel need to follow to make it to the dead Amazon Nation. Where they are located now was on the southeastern part of Greece and need to travel north, to Amphipolis. Then from there going east into a small mountain range where the Amazon Nation once stood. The southern belle nodded in understanding and then looked back up at Janice, expressionless face.

"So how long you think this will take honey?" Janice looked back down at the map and considered the distance they cover yesterday in the amount of time with they needed to do. Looking back up, she met clear blue eyes, warming her all over.

"My guess is we will make Amphipolis by mid-day, then be at that mountain range near sunset" Mel nodded then reached down for her bowl placing it on her lap.

"So I guess there is no way to get that truck of ours over those mountains?" The

archeologist shook her head in a "No" response.

"Not unless you want to go all the way around, which will add hmmm about a day at the least. We can hike it easily; I have all our stuff we need to hike over them. I don't think they are that bad of mountains, I'm sure there is some path or another going through them" The blond continued to gaze into her soulmate's intense eyes, seeing the announce in them. The smaller woman reached over and grabbed her partner's hand squeezing it tightly. "Hey hun it won't be that bad, promise" Mel smiled lightly at the concern woman and squeezed back.

"It's not the hiking part, it's the part about getting over those mountains and not finding anything. That idea is what's getting to me, I reckon" Janice lightly grinned at her partner and watched as the southerner mirrored it back.

"Don't worry we'll find something or another, I know it" Mel nodded and rose up from the log, grabbing Janice's bowl as she did.

"We better get ready to get out of here love if we want to make it there by sunset" The small blond nodded and rose from the log as well, but quickly slipped an arm around Mel's waist. Leaning in the archeologist captured the taller woman's lips, tasting the grits on them. The belle herself could taste the mix of the grits and oatmeal on her lover's lips, didn't taste to bad after all, or was it because Janice made it that way? Melinda didn't care by now and deepened the kiss, exploring Janice's mouth tasting more of the grits and oatmeal. Finally the smaller woman broke the kiss, needing to breathe. She dropped her head against her lover's chest and grinning to herself.

"How do you manage to do that to me? Make me tingle all over, can't ever get enough of it" Melinda rested her chin on top of Janice's head, feeling the warmth of their connection.

"I don't know, but I love it but not as much as I love you" Janice grinned wildly at this and wrapped her other arm around Melinda. "You know Doctor Covington, your suppose to be the strong one here if I am not mistaken" The smaller blond lightly laughed and moved her head to look up at Melinda, with her chin resting on Mel's chest.

"Ssshhh don't tell anybody, can't ruin my reputation now" The southern belle regarded her with a smile and lightly chuckled at her.

"Come on honey, really better get moving before it gets any later" After finishing her words, Mel lowered her head kissing Janice's forehead. The archeologist unwrapped her arms, and turned back to the log grabbing her map off it. She then turned around to see a grinning Mel, Janice raised one eyebrow at her.

"What?" The taller woman's grin became larger as she gazed sweetly at her soulmate. "Your grinning about me being..." Janice snorted lightly and grinned up at her dark haired partner. "Just don't tell anybody" Mel's grin turned into a pleasant smile.

"I wont, I just think its cute" Janice rolled her eyes but still grinning and turned to their bedrolls and heading towards them. Melinda gazed down at her dishes in her hands and headed off to clean them. Janice on the other hand had quickly rolled up their beds and placed them in a pile where her and Mel's bags were. Taking the bucket by the fire full of water, the blond doused the fire, putting it out quickly. By then her

soulmate had returned from the lake with two clean bowls and spoons, placing them in their bags. Both women each picked up a bag and a bed roll and head towards the beat up brown truck. Once reaching the back of the truck, Janice took Mel's bedroll and handed her bag to the aristocrat. The taller woman took the second bag willingly and then made her way to the passenger side, hopping in. The archeologist quickly hopped up into the back of the truck, placing the bedrolls down. She then ambled out of the truck and walked up to the drivers side, climbing in. Janice reached behind her head pulling her hair up, but letting some hang loose, like always. The smaller woman then reaches for her hat on the dashboard putting it on. The archeologist next reached into her leather jacket, looking for a cigar, and then she realizes something, mentally kicking herself in the butt.

"You know Mel, I really miss my cigars" A pair of blue eyes looked over to her, meeting emerald eyes. The taller woman slow began to grin at her partner.

"Yes I know you do honey, but we haven't seen a place that sells them for over a month now" Janice light grumbled then cursed under her breath in Greek, which Mel just caught.

"We better find one soon" Mel continued to grin at her soulmate then turned her head back towards the front of the window. Now she heard the clear sounds of the engine starting, roaring and spitting out a black puff of smoke behind them. The blond turned her body to the right as best as she could, looking out the back window, she backed the truck up. Now they faced the small dirt road running north, putting the truck into forward gear, it roared onto the dirt road. The small woman leaned back into her seat, resting her right hand on her lap. She stared ahead, watching as the road passed by them, a small cloud of dust following behind them. Melinda looked over at her soulmate, she then reached over with her left hand, grasping Janice's hand. The aristocrat thought for a moment that the other woman would pull away, not wanting the affection. But she didn't, instead the blond intertwined their fingers, squeezing tight for a brief moment. Looking over, sea green eyes met with sky blue ones, Mel smiled to her and Janice smiled back. Turing her eyes back to the road, Janice concentrated on her driving and thinking about what laid ahead of them. Melinda caught the look of deep thought and her lover's eyes were drawn back, telling her she that she was in another world. The southerner laid back, still grasping Janice's hand as they drove on. Drove into their destiny.

The sun was high in the sky, casting shadows every where. No breeze, only a lightly cloudy day with the smell of nature in the air. It wasn't hot nor that cold, just perfect, how anybody would like it. The warrior sat back straight in the saddle, one hand grasping the reins while the other hand was wrapped around her soulmate's arms. Xena had to grin to herself, her bard was quite worn out from today's activities, and now was leaning against her, asleep. The tall woman could feel the slow rise and fall of breaths against her back as the bard slept. Xena kept her one arm tightly around the bard's, keeping her from falling. Gabrielle is never going to live this down. The warrior felt some chuckle's rising up but held them back not wanting to wake the blond. Ever since the warrior had known the smaller woman, she'd never slept while riding horseback and always whining how much she hated heights. Xena shook her head lightly and turned her thoughts back to the road ahead, things seemed peaceful

now. She is relieved about that; Xena had enough surprise for now. She still was angered about Velasca and her burning of Poteidia, it was going to take some time for Gabrielle to accept that. The warrior feared the worst about that, about Gabrielle never being able to accept the losses and it would drive her back, close her up. In reaction, the ex-warlord shivered at the thought of seeing her bard withdraw from her, losing her light. Feeling that shiver, the bard stirred slowly leaning back into the saddle. She released one arm from Xena's waist and ran her fingers through her hair. Finally realizing where she was, her eyes widened.

"I just did not fall asleep on this horse?" The warrior grinned yet again and held herself back from laughing.

"I'm afraid so my bard" Gabrielle whined then dropped her forehead against Xena's back.

"I can't believe I did that" Xena squeezed Gabrielle's hand she was grasping in response.

"Hmm and for a candle mark love" The small woman rose her head and leaned back into the saddle once more and lightened on her death grip around Xena's waist.

"I can't believe you let me get away with...pretty much hugging you for a candle mark. By the gods I'm sorry Xena" The taller woman frowned a little, but understood what the bard meant by that.

"It's okay Gabrielle, you were tired. You hardly slept last night" The bard nodded, remembering exactly as to why she slept badly last night, making her slump down in the saddle. Xena easily noticed this and started to feel the bard's grip around her waist lighten with every passing hoof beat. She quickly pulled Argo to a halt, half turning in the saddle Xena caught a sad face, with emerald eyes about to go red with tears. Reaching, the warrior grasped either side of the bard, lifting her out of the saddle. Lifting the woman through mid-air, Xena placed her soulmate in front of her sidesaddle, legs hang off the side. Gabrielle for her part was in another world, and didn't notice it happening till she felt a presence next to her instead of in front. Looking up, the blond's eyes met blue eyes staring down at her in concern, she could also feel Xena's arm wrapped behind her back, holding her. Gabrielle weakly smiled up at her warrior, then wrapped both of her arms around the warrior's waist, snuggling into her. The bard stayed in deep thought as she lay in the crook of Xena's arm as they rode on. Neither said anything, the warrior was beyond concern, Gabrielle was too silent more than Xena liked. The taller woman kept her gaze ahead of them watching as the mountains began to appear before them. She guessed that it would be around a candle mark till they made it to the mountains. As they rode on, for a better part of the ride towards the mountains, the bard was crying long and hard in the warrior's arms. Xena knew that there wasn't much she could do to help her bard, just let her work things through on her own. Soon Gabrielle would probably sit down and want to talk to Xena about things, she just had to be patient. Gabrielle herself all she could think about was her family and the senseless act of the destruction of her hometown. She hated Velasca for it, there was such a rage in the bard that yearned to kill Velasca. Now the bard only seemed to be filled with anger, sadness and rage. No light. The small woman continued to wonder if she would ever make it through this, but then something sparked in her. The one thing she knew that would save her, bring back the light from within, her love. Her love for Xena and the love Xena provided to her.

Right now that would be the only thing the despondent bard could hang on to and trust Xena to help her. Through all the suffering the bard had ever experience; Hope, Dahok, Solon's death, betraying Xena, Perdicas's death, and Xena's death, the only thing that kept her going was her love for Xena.

Finally opening her red eyes, the bard looked ahead to see the Amazonian mountains right before them. Her partner looked down at her with a small smile forming on her face. Gabrielle automatically tighten her hold on the warrior, need the reassurance. Xena leaned down and lightly kissed the bard on the top of her forehead.

"We are going to have to start walking" The smaller woman looked up and nodded to the stoic woman, she then slide down off the war-horse with Xena's help. The warrior pulled her feet out of the stir-ups and hopped off Argo beside the smaller woman. Gabrielle ambled over to the saddlebags and retrieved her staff, walking up to the waiting warrior with the reins in hand. Both women walked in silence as they began their trek through the mountains in the direction of the Amazon Nation. Xena looked ahead and gazed at a few snowcapped mountains to the side then straight ahead of herself to the narrow path twisting through the mountain range. She took a glimpse at her partner, to see her eyeing her footing and gripping her staff with white knuckles. The taller woman noticed that Gabrielle's eyes were still red, her face worn and her eyes not containing any happiness. Xena tried to figure away out to break their silence, quite sick of it, surprising the warrior. She then moved a little closer to the bard and lightly bumped into her, the bard quickly looked up at the grinning warrior. She then raised an eyebrow at the taller woman.

"Hey..." Was all the bard could managed out of her lips to her warrior.

"How you feeling?" The Amazon Queen stopped looking at Xena and turned her attention back to the path she was on.

"Like crap" The stoic woman simple nodded and came closer to the bard once more, wrapping a secure arm around the smaller woman's waist. The bard did the same, envelope her arm around the warrior's tall frame.

"So you hungry at all?" Gabrielle looked up into blue eyes, just grinning.

"Yeah all that thinking and crying can work an appetite up" The ex-warlord laughed lightly then and reached into her pouch hooked to her left side. Pulling out a beautiful red apple, shining, she handed it to her soulmate. The other woman took it gratefully and hugger Xena before looking back to the steep narrow path. To the bard, it felt good to be wrapped up in Xena, protected, something she needed more then anything. The smaller woman took a few bites from the apple, then turned to her warrior, hold it up for her. Xena kindly took a few bites from the apple, smiling down at emerald eyes.

"Well we'll make it to the borders in about a candle mark" The bard finish her chewing on the apple bit before responding.

"Hmmm I think my stomach can wait out till then" Xena grinned then looked down at the bard, tweaking her little nose.

"You my bard, I can't figure out with your stomach's appetite. One of the known world's mysteries" Gabrielle's eyes widen as she threw the apple's remains off to the

side.

"You are calling my stomach a mystery, Miss Warrior Princess of Mysteries. You have more mysteries to you than I can count" The taller woman grinned down at the other woman, delightful to see her smiling some and joking.

"Really? I have that many mysteries to myself?" Gabrielle rolled her eyes and then slapped Xena on the stomach lightly.

"Yes you do. I remember when I first started to get to know you, I wanted to figure out all your mysteries and secrets. Hmmm I think I have about only ten percent of you figured out. Ever time I thought I had you all figured out, wham you'd come up with something totally new, throwing me off course" The warrior lightly grunted at that and continued to look at their footpath, smiling.

"Ten percent eh? Why don't I believe that?" Gabrielle broke her gaze from the rocks on the ground looking up at the warrior, grinning.

"Well maybe a little more...twenty percent" Xena rolled her eyes and lengthen her strides to make it up this steeper part of the footpath. Both woman had been wrapped in the other's arms since the beginning, neither could bring themselves to break the contact, especially Gabrielle.

"Hmmm, I think its more like...ninety nine percent" The bard's mouth hung open at that statement.

"Ha I think not. I can never figure you out these days" Xena lightly shook her head and tightened her hold around the bard's waist.

"Then tell me why you can understand ever movement, line, muscle twitch, expression, and eye contact I do? You always know what I am up to, I use to get away with things better before we became lovers" The bard began to furiously blush, a deep crimson red. She was thanking whatever god, that she was out her in the middle of no where alone.

"Yeah well...I guess I learned a few things" Xena looked down at the bard, a twinkle in the warrior's eyes.

"A few huh?" The tall woman grunted and glanced back to the path. The bard then looked straight ahead as well.

"Yeah well I think you know me about...a hundred ten percent. The first year we traveled together I could be sneaky. Then just these past couple of years, since we have become...passionate lovers. I can't get away with one blinken thing. You keep an eye on me like hawk and know how I work. So don't you go telling me that I know you well Warrior Princess, you got nothing on me" Now it was Xena's turn to transfer a crimson red, reaching all the way up to the roots of her hair. The bard looked up at her and grinned widely at her.

Busted.

The bard stopped in her tracks, turning towards the warrior, gazing up into those sky blue eyes with an alluring erotic smile. Then she whispered up to her in an arousing husky tone.

"And I mean passionate seductive sexy deep lovers too" Now the normally stoic woman went another two shades crimson. Xena felt more then hot and she slowly released the bard, and walking in a daze back to Argo. She quietly grabbed the waterskin while keeping one arm against the mare's side, feeling the weakness in her knees. She ambled back to her bard, still red with embarrassment, while holding the waterskin. The warrior took a big gulp from the waterskin, then handed to the bard who took it with a devilish grin. After the blond took her sip, Xena retrieved the skin and placed it back on the saddlebag. She gazed at her partner, who was grinning at her with a seductive grin, eyes filled with desire. Xena raked her fingers through her jet-black hair, gulping.

"Umm" Is the only words the warrior comes up with and then the bard finally breaks her stare and falls into a spell of giggles. She fell into Xena, giggling and clenching her stomach against the pain.

"You...should have....se..seen your...self" The tall woman wrapped her arms around the bard while she continued to giggled. The bard tried to get her words out between the laughter.

"I'm taking it was pretty funny huh?" Gabrielle nodded and broke into and another fit of giggles as she ran the images through her head again. Finally feeling control over herself, Gabrielle stood up straight, looking back up at the warrior, who was still a bit red but smirking. They both then began to start off on their trek again.

"Pay backs sure are a bitch" Gabrielle laughed some at her soulmate's words and then smiled, feeling the goodness out of smiling and laughing. The warrior reached over then grasped Gabrielle's hand, interweaving their fingers. Soulmates.

Janice stiffened a yawn, tired from all the endless driving she had done today, first heading north then now east. Straight ahead of her she saw the mountains which are the markings of the Amazon Nation. The sun was just behind them in another western mountain range, but getting ready to set with in an hour or so. The small woman figured they make it to the Amazonian Mountains way before then. They needed to, considering the headlights of the rusty truck are broken and wouldn't do much good. She then glanced to her right, to spot a tall form slowly nodding off to sleep, that made her grin. Janice could see that the aristocrat was trying not to fall asleep, but she couldn't help it. The small blond reached over with her right hand and grasped the taller woman. Melinda was startled, but then looked over at her partner to see her concentrating on her driving.

"How much long till we make it there love?" The archeologist released her hand from Mel's and rubbed her temples from the days thinking.

"Um I'd say about fifteen more minutes" Mel smiled sweetly and gazed out the window, at the mountains. She was excited to be heading to the Amazon Nation. She could only hope that Xena and Gabrielle's remains lied there. Where else could they be? Melinda just hoped and prayed that the remains were located there, more then likely they would be. The aristocrat then looked from the side window the front window; the trucked slowed, going another five hundred feet, then cutting off. Janice

reached down putting the old truck's brakes on then reaching for her bag and Mel's as well. The tall woman looked to her, smiling, Janice smiled back and grabbed the keys, hopping out. Melinda herself slowly staggered out of the truck, straightening her back as she hit the ground. Both women walked up towards the front of the truck, both looking up. The taller woman pushed her glass back up on the bridge of her nose, Janice dropping the two bags to the ground.

"My lord!" Janice looked at Mel then back at the mountains that faced them.

"Jesus H Christ, there better be a god damn path through those big ass things" Blue eyes turned to face the gruff woman, frowning.

"Janice Covington!" Janice turned her head to her soulmate, slightly grinning.

"Sorry love, didn't mean that. Its just those are some fuuu...ntastic mountains" The taller woman placed her hands on her khaki pant hips and raised a dark eyebrow at her partner. "What? I didn't say the word....frigen or at least the bad version" Mel didn't change her composure, still lightly glowering at her companion. The small blond turned complete towards her lover, closing in the distance between. She then wrapped her arms around her soulmate's waist pulling them in closer, Mel not changing her posture one bit.

"You have to admit sweetheart, that I haven't been cussing that much lately...or drinking" Mel released her hands from her hips and wrapped them around Janice's waist, tightly. The tall woman leaned down, nose to nose with the other woman. Her frown forming into a sexy smile.

"No you haven't and I'm really proud of you Janice" The archeologist smiled back up into the pale sky blue eyes.

"Thanks, that means a lot. Been trying real hard...just for you" Mel lightly blushed, feeling the love. She liberated one hand and brought it up to the back of Janice's fedora. Grabbing the brim, Mel pulled the hat off throwing to the ground, soon afterward placing her hand behind Janice's head. Then she leaned in, capturing the blond's lips with a deep passionate kiss, both tongue's intertwining. The kiss continued on for several moments, sending waves through both women, heating them. Melinda was the one to break the kiss first, since she was the one going in frenzy over the intensity. The blond held on to her lover as she shook off the desire that almost over took her body and mind.

"I've gotcha Mel" The tall woman pulled her hand off her forehead, smiling down at her partner, lightly smiling.

"I'm okay. My lord, sometimes I forget just how intense one kiss can be between us" A devilish grin formed on the small woman's face. She then released her soulmate and gathered up her two bags and throwing her hat back on from the ground. Slowly walking closer to the mountain range with Mel beside her. Janice looked around at her surroundings, spotting a small stream coming from the mountains. Some brush surrounded it in a "U" shape, making a nice safe haven. Both woman ambled over to the spot walking in the center, Janice then dropped her bags and smiled up at the belle.

"Look good for you?" Mel gazed around at the spot, nodding in authorization.

"Looks fine to me hun" Janice nodded as well, then gazed at the mountains once more, seeing that the sun was a little above the mountain ridges.

"Mel, can you go in the back of the truck and get our bedrolls while I get use some fired wood" The southerner didn't respond, and head towards the truck instead. Janice turned her head away from her soulmate, the truck, and road, heading into the woods. Once Mel returned she laid out their bedrolls then unpacked their cooking supplies with food. After doing so, Janice reappeared from the woods, arms full of wood and twigs. Throwing to the ground, the archeologist and translator both began to make a fire. Within a few minutes they had a roaring fire starting, crackling and burning, with the sent of burning wood in the air. Standing up, the small woman gazed at the sun once more in the western mountains, at the tip of the mountaintops was where the sun lay. Turning her eyes to the taller form, Janice smiled sweetly at her soulmate.

"So you up to watching that sunset before starting dinner?" Mel grinned and padded over to her archeologist.

"Only if your stomach can last that long" Janice rolled her eyes at Mel then started to migrate out of their camp, Mel following right behind her. The small blond walked closer to the opening of the eastern mountains, which led to the Amazon Nation and found a small footpath between two massive mountains.

"Well looks like we are some what lucky hun, there is a footpath through the mountains. Kinda small but it'll work" Melinda stood beside her archeologist looking down the path, nodding in agreement. Then blue eyes ignored the path and looked around for a comfortable spot to sit, find one the southerner padded over to it. Green eyes looked over to the tall belle, dressed in khaki pants, light blue shirt, with boots and haired pulled up, glasses on. Janice grinned over to her soulmate lying down on the ground with her back against an olive tree, looking towards the mountains to the west and sunset. Sky blue eyes regarded Janice with a smile, Mel had to grin at her soulmate. She never changes, pun intended, Janice still wore her khaki pants, light brown shirt, leather jacket on and high boots. Her revolver to her right with her bullwhip to her side and hair up the way she always like it cover by her hat. To the belle her partner looked beautiful as always no matter what she wore. Janice slowly walked over to Mel, grinning to her then she stripped off her jacket, gun and whip placing beside Mel. The aristocrat opened her arms and Janice compiled, sitting into Mel. She then closed her arms tightly around Janice's waist, feeling the blond snuggle into her. For Mel this was very rare, to have her lover submit to something her lover would consider weak. The southerner knew that her partner was gruff, tough and hated being a mushball. But once in awhile Janice would let go of all that and just soak in their love, connection. Mel released one arm from Janice and removed her black glasses placing them beside Janice's stuff close by them. After placing her arm back around Janice's waist, the blond removed her hat placing it in her lap then lean against Mel.

"I can't believe I'm going to tell you this, but sometimes I just love this" The translator grinned to herself after hearing that submission and tightened her arms.

"I know what you mean love" Janice sighed and gazed up at the sun, seeing it begin to sink behind the mountains. Rays of light came streaming through the openings between the westward mountains sending different a ray of colors through the sky. Was pretty intense Janice thought, her mind began to slowly try and describe the

beauty before her. The small woman always had this natural wonder for describing things, and she always had a yearning to writing things down to be able to capture the moment. The bard in her. That's what Janice labeled it as, she hated that half of herself, the half of her that was the irritating blond bard descendant, Gabrielle. But she could deny the fact she always had the urges to create stories in her head, just the utmost vivid pictures. It always amazed the small woman how clear it came to her, and the enjoyment she got from describing things. She had always wondered why she saw so much beauty in this disgusting world, until she found out whom she was related to, that answered everything. Janice sighed and looked down from the sunset at her hands, Mel watching from behind in intent. The aristocrat squeezed Janice some and the blond placed her hands on top of Mel's, weaving their fingers together. She then rested her head against Mel's shoulder once more, gazing up at the intense colorful sunset.

"You know Janice, this reminds me of Xena and Ga..." The blond abruptly jumped out of Mel's arms turning to her with anger stricken eyes. Her right hand gripping her hat with white knuckles.

"I am not Gabrielle nor are we Xena and Gabrielle" Janice turned her back on the sitting female and padded off in front of her into the woods. Mel dropped her head and frowned while running her hands through her dark hair bangs.

"Stupid Melinda Pappas, you know she hates being related to them" The tall woman dropped her head against the tree and sighed, mentally kicking herself in the butt for what she said. She then looked in the direction Janice had stomped off to and rose up off the ground. Melinda picked up her glass from the ground placing them back on. Then she reached for Janice's jacket, gun, and whip heading off to the direction Janice had headed off to. After taking a good amount of paces in the woods, Mel could hear the roar of a small waterfall, closer to the mountains. Coming around a bend, she spotted the waterfall and her soulmate, leaning against a tree, staring across to the waterfall. The tall woman slowly walked up to Janice, no expression on her face. Janice had heard her awhile back ago coming in her direction, but decided not to acknowledge her till she came closer. Once the black haired woman came right up beside Janice, the blond turned to her with a serious face.

"Sorry about that Mel, didn't mean to snap at you like that" Mel shook her head and held up her free hand then lowering it once more.

"No its my fault Janice, I shouldn't have mentioned them when it comes to you and I" Now it was the archeologist's turn to kick herself in the butt mentally. 'What the hell is my problem? We are getting in to a fight over Xena and Gabrielle. I've just gotta accept the fact I'm related to that little bitch bard' The small woman reached down and grasped Mel's hand

"Us Mel, Us" A pause. "I need to really not lose my temper like that and recognize that I am Gabrielle's decedent whether I like it or not" Mel nodded some, but the sadness still evident on her face, making Janice's heart ache. "One of these days I'll accept who I am related to Mel. I am stuck as it, I am getting use to it don't worry" The belle nodded again then began to hand Janice her stuff.

"Here you left these back there" Janice smiled a little and took her jacket putting it on then putting her weapons back in their places.

"Thanks Mel, for bringing my stuff and for...putting up with me" The tall woman grunted a little and both woman turned towards the waterfall.

"Putting up with you is hardly the statement I am afraid" Janice rolled her eyes as she gazed at the waterfall.

"Well you ain't so easy to look after either Mel" Melinda turned to her partner, hands on hips and raising an eyebrow at Janice.

"I beg your pardon Dr. Covington" Janice turned away from the waterfall to face her lover, grinning wildly.

"Oh come on Mel, you do happen to get us into a lot of trouble and I am always saving you and I" The aristocrat stood up straight her hands still on her hips looking harshly at Janice, trying to intimidate her lover.

"Well doctor I'm afraid you are quite wrong, I never got into any trouble until I met you. So you are the one that is bring on all this trouble" The small woman rubbed her neck a little then dropping her arm back down to her side.

"Hmmm maybe, but I never had so many problems since you stepped into my tent about a year ago" Mel dropped her arms and wrapped them around the gruff woman's waist pulling her in. Blue eyes gazed down into stoic green eyes, seeing a sly grin covering the small woman's face.

"So are you complaining Janice Covington?" Janice's grin turned more seductive as she gazed up at her soulmate feeling their connection and the warmth, enjoying it.

"Oh no, I enjoy it way to much. I'd take you and the trouble any day" Mel rolled her blue eyes then leaned in, kissing Janice erotically. Janice opened her mouth letting the taller woman explore her mouth. The raven-haired woman's legs went weak, as their kiss became deeper. Finally the taller woman broke the kiss needing to take control over her emotions. Both woman looked away for a second taking a deep breath, but still wrapped up in each other's embrace. Turning back to each other, and smiling to the other. "We have to really stop doing that" Mel light laughed and continued to smile.

"Oh it's not really that bad of a thing I reckon" Janice smiled and released one of her hands, grasping one of Mel's hands from her own waist. The archeologist intertwined their hands smiling to the other, both pair of eyes warm with love.

"It just tells you how crazy we are for each other love" Melinda squeezed the smaller woman's hand and turned towards where their camp laid. They both strutted over in the direction of the campsite, hand in hand. Making their way into the camp, they both noticed their fire was still burning. The archeologist released Mel's hand and walked over to the fire, throwing a few large pieces of wood in. The taller woman headed over to their packs and dug through them, retrieving her cooking supplies and plates. As the belle stood up straight and turned to the fire, she gazed at the form staring into the fire, standing. The small woman had her hands on her hips and Mel was viewing her from the woman's side. Janice's strawberry-blond hair glowed with the fire while her face glistened with every flicker of the fire. Her whip stood half way out from the inside of the leather jacket, which was reflecting the yellow of the fire as it wavered across her worn jacket. Mel memorized the site of her soulmate, she didn't want to

move, she could just stand there and stare at Janice forever, and it was one of the most beautiful site to her. Finally after a few minutes of only hearing the crackle of the fire and a few wolf howls, Mel moved to the fire and her partner.

"Do you realize how gorgeous you look in front of that fire?" Janice looked away from the fire to Mel, across from her. Melinda wasn't sure, but she thought her lover was blushing over the compliment. Or was it just the fire? Now it became more evident, Janice's face was red and not yellow. 'Nope that is my soulmate blushing. She looks so cute too. I better not tell her that' Mel lightly chuckled to herself at seeing the archeologist flushing. Then Janice's face turned into a scowl, trying to keep Mel from laughing at her redness. But it failed miserably, only making Mel laugh more. Janice shook her head a little and then ambled over to the log near the fire, sitting quietly on it. Mel took some of the dry meat and vegetables out from the sealed bag and throwing them into a medium sized black pot. She then picked up a decent size bowl and heading over to the river. Janice watched her go then she stood, padding over to where Mel left the cooking hook with stand. Carrying it to the fire, the archeologist set it up over the fire, so Mel could boil and make the stew. Rising up, the small woman caught the tall figure coming from the river. Mel strolled over to Janice and leaned into the fire, hooking the bowl full of water over the fire, letting it boil. Straightening back up she turned back to Janice smiling at her. They both strutted over to the piece of timber together, sitting next to each other. The southerner wrapped one arm around Janice's waist and laid her head on top of the blond's shoulder. Janice grinned inwardly then rested her own head against Mel's head. Neither said anything, just relaxing in the other's warmth and presence. Janice would never admit to Mel, that she loved the protection feeling she gained from Mel's tall presences or strong arms. But she couldn't help but love it and well pretty much crave it inwardly. She sighed in contentment, she lifted her head and to her right at her lover, her blue eyes were closed. The fire's glow made Mel's own face luminescence with perfection along all her angular plains on her face. Carefully, Janice reached over removing the taller woman's glasses, placing them on her lap. Janice's heart almost seemed to stop, she couldn't get over the beauty of her soulmate, the way her face curved and perfect lips at the right hue. Slowly, intense sapphire eyes opened, the firelight twinkled in her eyes as they turned towards emerald eyes, which were reflecting the fire as well.

"Hey" Janice grinned down at her partner and responded.

"Hey yourself there sexy" The taller woman rolled her eyes then grinned back at the archeologist.

"My glasses?" To add to that, Mel held out her hand and smaller hand placed the black glasses in them. "Thanks You" Mel slowly rose from Janice's side, freed her arm from the blond's waist. She then put her glasses back on then walked over to the fire. "So was I really that interesting?" The small woman grinned across to her friend, eyes twinkle, but not because of the fire Mel quickly realized.

"Oh yeah, beyond interesting" Now it was Mel who began to blush before the fire, only making Janice grin devilishly. Melinda coughed a little then cleared her voice.

"Well I suppose so, of course the same always goes for you honey" Janice lightly grunted and lowered her eyes to the grassed covered ground.

"Uh huh, a gruff tough guy dressed girl like me eh?" Mel looked from the bowl over the fire to her lover.

"Janice Covington, you give yourself no credit do you?" Mel paused to let a frown shape her lips. "I think you are beyond gorgeous. And if anybody thinks different then they haven't seen all of Janice Covington" Janice lightly laughed at the end remark of her southerner's.

"I'd say not. Few people have seen all of me" Mel scowled the blond then lifted the bowl over the fire and by the pot containing vegetables and dry meat.

"You know what I mean Janice" The tall woman then knelt a little and poured the boiling water into the pot. She then lifted the pot and latched it over the fire, letting it cook for a few minutes. The belle then walked back over to the packs and bent down rummaging through her bag. Finding her target, the woman stood up holding the item behind her back. "Janice, close your eyes, please" Janice raised an eyebrow at the other woman, but did as she was asked. Seeing the verdant eyes closed, the tall woman walked over to her. Bending down in front of the petite woman, Mel began to grin. "Okay open up your hands" Janice sighed and opened her palms on her lap.

"Mel you know how I hate surprises" Mel continued to grin and said in a low voice to Janice.

"Oh trust me you'll want this one hun" The deep voice sent a shiver down Janice's back then she felt the article placed in her hand from a pair of warmer larger hands. Slowly the sea green eyes opened and looked down at the item, a large smile formed on the small woman's face. Contained in the woman's hands was small box of Janice's favorite cigars, Cuban cigars. Mel looked up into those pair of eyes she adored so much, seeing them twinkle with happiness and warmth.

"I'll be damned. How did you manage to stash these things?" Melinda lightly shrugged her shoulders and smiled up at Janice.

"Hmmm was hard, but managed to" Janice smiled even more brightly and reached for Mel, hugging her tightly whom hugged her in equal effort.

"Thank you so much Mel. When and where did you manage to get these?" The tall woman released the other woman and stood up and sat beside her soulmate.

"I got them before we left Charleston. I knew we wouldn't find any here in Greece. So brought them for back up once you ran out" Janice cautiously opened the box and gazed inside at the contents. As soon as the lid was lift, an extreme sent of the cigars overwhelmed Janice, making her sigh in pleasure. She couldn't believe how much she missed that sent and looking closer Janice noticed a pack of matches within. Janice was so tempted to have one right there and now, but decided she should wait till after her dinner. Turquoise eyes the entire time had watched in contentment at seeing her soulmate's happiness. Frugally, Janice closed the lid then ran her hand over the seal on the top of the lid, Cuba seal.

"I can wait till after dinner...I think" Mel chuckled a little and smiled at her soulmate. "Thanks again Mel, that was a great surprise. Really been missing these things" The dark haired woman reached over and clasped her hand over the other woman's. Blue eyes stared into green ones, both losing into the other's beauty and power. Each

woman's face glowed from the fire making them so radiant that the other thought they were in heaven, didn't want to be any where else. Janice reached up and with a feather touch, caressed the other woman's cheek. Mel sighed and leaned more into the other woman's touch, closing her eyes for a brief moment then opened them slowly again. The emerald intense eyes gazed into the warm blue ones that twinkled and flickered with the fire. The southerner then grasped Janice's hand lightly and brought the other woman's hands to her lips, kissing them tenderly. Now the green eyes closed in pleasure and opened once more idly looking into desire filled eyes. The tall woman then placed their hands on her lap and leaned in, obtaining the other woman's lips. Janice brought her free hand up and placed it around the back of Mel's neck, forcing the kiss deeper. As tongue's searched the other's mouth, they began to explore the other's lower torso. Finally they broke the kiss and Janice grasped Mel's hand and leaned her forehead against the other woman's.

"Mel, the dinner" Mel lightly laughed and tried to catch her breath then stood up as Janice released her hands.

~*Part 6*~

The small form looked up from her platter of food and gazed around at her surroundings, she smiled briefly. Then turning to her right she caught site of her tall soulmate, who was leaning back in her chair, arms crossed resting on her stomach. Her face was expressionless, it was easy to tell that the dark haired woman was just relaxing and listening to the conversation at the table. Gabrielle dropped her arm from the chair and reached next to her, to her soulmate. Xena caught this in the corner of her eye, and she slowly dropped her right hand. Mid-way the two hands clasped together, Xena acting like nothing happened while Gabrielle smiled at the warrior quickly. Then turning her eyes around at the table, at the other Amazons. To her right was the regeant, Ephiny, who sat tall in her seat, shoulder length curl blond hair hanging down. Ephiny laughed while clutching her stomach as she looked at Solari across the table. Eponin sitting next to Solari was just grinning as Solari told her joke to everybody at the table. Around the table there were countless other Amazons, ones Gabrielle recognized others she didn't Most of them she did, they have been in the Nation for long as the bard could remember. Once she brought her thoughts back to the dinner at hand, everybody was silent at her end of the table. Then Eponin looked to the strawberry-blond, faintly smiling, Gabrielle caught her eyes and smiled back.

"So my Queen, what exactly happened to Poteidaia? I mean if you prefer not to talk about it, it is quite fine. Was just curious as to how Velasca destroyed it" Gabrielle dropped her head for a brief moment and felt a squeeze at her hand. Keeping her head down the bard turned her sites to the other woman, Xena lightly smiled to her. The bard then rose her head back up, facing Eponin with serious eyes, in Eponin's eyes Gabrielle could see a ping of regret in them.

"Its all right Eponin, its better I speak of it then brush it off" She paused and let the silence soak in for a second as everybody's ears and attention were on her. "Once Xena and I arrived there, everything was scorched, nothing was left. Maybe a few burned bodies and burnt wood" Gabrielle took a deep breath at the memory and felt Xena intertwine their fingers, making the bard smiling inwardly. 'Gods I love her, my savior' "Once we started heading here, we um...bumped into Velasca kinda. Xena and I fought her and when we thought she had us, somebody popped up to help" Gabrielle

began to faintly grin, intriguing everybody.

"Who was that Gabrielle?" The bard looked back to Eponin at her question, but smiling now.

"Well Artemis showed up and stopped Valasca. She then took Valasca's god hood away, but she is still immortal, and now is currently living in a cavern" Eponin grinned at the Amazon Queen and nodded in happiness.

"That is defiantly good, hope she stays there for once" Eponin smiled then Ephiny turned to look at Gabrielle from her food.

"How the hell did Velasca even get out of the lava pit?" The bard frowned some and placed her free arm up on the table.

"Ares let her out, but made a pack with her" The curly blond raised an eyebrow at that in question. "She had agreed with Ares to kill me and in Ares' hope for Xena to return to his side" Ephiny nodded as well and then slightly grinned.

"I bet he'll get centaur poop from Artemis, her queen trying to be killed won't make her happy one bit" Gabrielle lightly chuckled and began to grin once more.

"Oh defiantly, her two chosen and her Queen" Ephiny's eyes widen at the statement and lightly shook her head.

"Two chosen? You mean Xena and you are both Artemis' chosen" The smaller woman lightly nodded in answer and tighten her grip on Xena's hand for a fleeting moment. "Wow that's great Gabrielle and Xena. Congratulations to you two" Gabrielle smiled sweetly at Ephiny and caught all the gazes in the room, between "awe" and shock.

"Thanks Eph" Now the silence masked the room once more, uncomfortable. Then Eponin began to speak, almost more out of thought, she had the look of deep thought.

"Sure is hard losing the ones you love" The bard's gaze turned to the weapon's master seated across from her. Gabrielle's expression went sad and she nodded a little. "Well everybody has to go sometime, even the ones we love" A shot of pain swept through the bard, making her heart ache with immense pain. She brought her free hand off the table and up to her forehead, she quickly rose from the chair, releasing Xena's hand. Eponin quickly realized what she had just said and was about to say a word of apology to her Queen, but it was too late. Gabrielle gave the Amazon a harsh look and power walked out of the dinning hall, head hanging low. Once the woman left the room, Eponin stared in shock, her mouth slightly hanging open. Then a tall form rose from the chair next to where the bard had sat and leaned over the table, staring directly at the weapon's master. Eponin looked up at the dark person, cold dark eyes borrowed into her's. The Amazon slightly shivered and could feel her hairs on end, standing up straight. Xena needed no words to express her anger, it was more than evident in her posture and eyes. The warrior continued to stare at Eponin with cold eyes, filled with anger, her hands gripping the table in control. Finally Eponin dropped her gaze to the table and Xena straightened up, turning on her heels. The tall leather-clad form walked out the dinning hall with large strides in pursuit of her soulmate. Once Xena made it out the doorway, she heard the sounds of somebody crying, her bard. Her heart skipped a beat; she could feel what Gabrielle was feeling in her gut. Looking to her right, the warrior spotted the bard, down on the ground sitting. Her arms wrapped

around her legs, which were up against her chest, she was in a ball hugging herself while rocking. Xena quickly hurried over to Gabrielle and the bard rose up, wrapping her arms tightly around the other woman. The small woman buried her face in between the warrior's breasts, crying the pain she felt. Xena wrapped her arms snug around the bard, enclosing the bard, as she cried. The both rocked back and forth as Xena rested her head ontop of Gabrielle's as the young woman weeped. The warrior's heart ached with pain at seeing her lover like this, she wish she could just wave her hand and make everything better. But she knew she couldn't so she did the second best thing and that was to comfort her. Finally the bard rose her head up, looking up into somewhat still cold blue eyes. The tall woman's eyes warmed for the bard, Gabrielle's herself were extremely red and sadden.

"Xena, can we get out here? Go for a walk or something?" Xena smiled slightly at the smaller woman and raised her hand, cupping the bard's chin in her hand.

"Yeah, come on, I know a perfect place to head to" The bard released the taller woman, but wrapping on arm around the tall form's waist. Xena leisurely placed an arm around the bard's shoulders, protecting her. They both headed out of the village and into the forest surrounding the Amazon town. The night was cool, with a soft breeze ruffling the green leaves ever so slightly. The sky was clear, the stars twinkling brightly with a full moon lighting the night. In the night air, there was strong smell of oak tree and olive trees as well a tint of figs. The tall leather-clad woman walked with a strong gate, her chakram shimmering in the night from the moon along with her bronze armor. Her blue eyes took on a darker color as well as sparkled. The small form that was secured tightly in the warrior's arm was walking with a strong gate as well. She carried her strawberry-blond head high, her eyes still a tint of red, but flickering as well. The young woman's hair was being brushed back by the small breeze as the moon's light brought out her dark tan generating her beauty. Slowly they walked deeper and deeper into the woods, enjoying their surroundings, letting nature overwhelm them with its beauty. Taking a few more paces, they came to a large lake, the moon lying right above the mountains in front of them. The moon's rays cascading over the lake making it shimmer and glisten with pure beauty, taking the bard's breath away. Xena and Gabrielle gradually walked down to the lake's edge, staring in awe at the lake and the reflection. Xena looked down at the bard's face, to see nothing but an amazement expression and wide eyes, Xena grinned. The small woman felt those intoxicating blue eyes on her, looking to them she smiled at her soulmate, who mirrored it back.

"This is really beautiful Xena, thanks for bring me here" The searching blue eyes continued to watch warmly at the bard.

"I wouldn't share it with anybody else but you, my bard" Gabrielle grinned, then hugged the warrior with a tight squeeze. After hugging the young woman, the ex-warlord looked around the bank and found what she was searching for. Grabbing the bard's hand, she led herself and the bard to a large rock by the bank. Releasing the small hand, Xena unclipped her sword placing it close by the rock. Then she sat down, back against the rock, legs spread as the bard sat down, snuggling into her. Strong protective arms enclosed the bard around her waist, warming her stomach, making her feel secure and safe. Gabrielle placed her head against the warrior's shoulder and continued to stare at the scene before her. She could feel her connection with Xena as she nestled in closer, she was only surrounded by warmth and safety, by the gods how she loved this. Xena also kept watching the lake, moon, stars, and mountains before

her, then she felt a small soft hand being placed on top of hers. The warrior clasped her hand with the other one, weaving their hands together. "You feeling better now?" Gabrielle nodded to this question and raised her head from the shoulder.

"Yeah I guess so, I shouldn't have over reacted to Eponin's statement" Xena frowned some to that remark.

"No you have right to, Eponin should have kept her mouth shut" The Amazon Queen lightly giggled at Xena's words. "What is so funny?" To emphasize her question, Xena squeezed the bard harder.

"Its just the fact you said Eponin should have kept her mouth shut, kinda sounds funny" The warrior grinned and shook her head a little. "Well it does" Gabrielle then brought her arm down, resting it on Xena's left leg, caressing the warrior's leg lightly. Xena closed her eyes for a brief moment enjoying the warmth she was surrounded in, something she only dreamed about before. "I still can not believe though what happened to Poteidaia Xena. I am never going to be able to accept it" Idly deep blue eyes opened again, Xena pulled the bard in more all the way against her chest. The warrior knew the bard wanted to talk about things, making knots turn in the tall woman's stomach. She knew she wasn't very good at talking to people about their emotions, but she would do anything for her soulmate.

"Yeah I know, it's not an easy thing to accept. What you been thinking about since it happened?" The bard didn't respond right away, she thought about that, hatred filled eyes looked down at the sand.

"Just wish I could have stopped it, like I should have been there. And I just want to kill Velasca for it, for killing my whole family. Part of me really wants to coil up inside myself so I won't get hurt any more. Just to many things have happened to me these past years Xena" Xena leaned forward some, resting her chin on the other woman's shoulder.

"That's how I was after I lost Lyceus, just didn't want to be hurt any more, couldn't handle it" Xena sighed some, feeling some of that pain return. "But you can't let that take you over, let it destroy who you are. Just have to hang on to the things or people you love to help make things better" The younger woman faintly smiled and squeezed Xena's hand tightly.

"Yeah that's what I've been doing, hanging onto love, hanging onto you" Gabrielle didn't speak for a few heartbeats then took a deep breath letting her sadden eyes fill with unshed tears. The bard tried hard to hold them back and to keep a straight voice. "I hope I can make it though. Things feel dark and hopeless, but I don't feel that as much when I think of you, look at you, talk to you. You bring so much hope and love to my life Xena. By the gods, where would I be without you?" The warrior smiled some as she lifted her chin off the bard's left shoulder.

"Well you'd probably be at home, safe and sound, while I would probably be dead without you" Gabrielle shook her head some and laid back into Xena once more.

"I doubt it Xena, you're a warrior" The older woman took a deep breath as she leaned back against the huge rock, feeling its coolness on her back.

"Maybe, but I really truly doubt it. You're my light, my savior" The bard grunted some

and slightly grinned.

"You are my savior...in more then one way" Xena chuckled lightly and felt the warm hand on her leg tighten its grip for a few moments then loosen.

"Yeah I still have yet to figure out how you attract so much trouble my bard. Trouble follows you like your shadow" Gabrielle grinned and lightly patted Xena's leg.

"I guess you'll never get over or admit to the fact you are really the one attracting trouble" Xena laughed deeply at that, and squeezed the bard for a few seconds.

"Love, I think you are the one having the denial issue here" Gabrielle slightly turned in Xena's arms and raised an eyebrow at the warrior. The bard could feel their competitive streaks kicking in, a challenge

"Don't get me started in this big debt" The taller woman grinned devilishly at the other woman. She then leaned in and kissed Gabrielle passionately, feeling the bard respond with equal force. The bard then broke the kiss feeling the need for air, she then scowled the warrior with a look. "Now you made me forget what we were talking about" The warrior smirked and released one hand from the bard's back and began to stroke Gabrielle's left cheek. The bard leaned into Xena's hand, feeling the softness and gentleness of the warrior's, that always surprised the bard. A warrior that could be hard and stoic, could also be soft, gentle, and loving. Xena smiled warmly as the bard closed her eyes and let Xena's touch overwhelm her. Gradually the warrior leaned in and captured the bard's lips, this kiss more gentle expressing her love more then before. Leisurely they broke their kiss, but didn't bring their heads back as much. Slowly both pair of eyes opened a pair of intense sapphire ones with a glow to them from the moon. The other pair, emerald eyes, twinkling with the stars that cover the sky above. Both sets of eyes searched the other pair, seeing the love held within them as well as reassurance of things to come. Xena casually leaned back again on the rock, looking lovingly to the pair of green eyes gazing at her. Xena took a deep breath and looked directly into those intense green eyes, closing off the world around her for one rare moment. Then taking another deep breath, Xena sat straight up reaching for Gabrielle's hand, she intertwined their hands. Xena closed her eyes and began to sing in an elegant voice to her soulmate.

Stop your crying,

It will be all right.

Just take my hand hold it tight

I will protect you from all around you

I will be here, don't you cry.

For one so small, you seem so strong

My arms will hold you keep you safe and warm

This bond between us can't be broken

I will be here don't you cry

Because you will be in my heart

Yes you'll be in my heart,
For this day on and forever more
You'll be in my heart
No matter what they say
You'll be here in my heart
Always
Why can't they understand the way we feel?
They just don't trust what they can't explain
I know we're different,
But deep inside us
We're not that different at all
And you'll be in my heart
Yes you'll be in my heart
From this day on now and forever more
Don't listen to them
Because what do they know?
We need each other to have, to hold
They'll see in time
I know
When destiny calls you, you must be strong
I might not be with you
But you've got to hold on
They'll see in time
I know
Seweden together
Because you'll be in my heart
Believe me you'll be in my heart
I'll be there from this day on now and forever more
You'll be in my heart

You'll be here in my heart

No matter what they say

I'll be with you

You'll be here in my heart

Always

Always

I'll be with you

I'll be there for you always

Always

And

Always

Just look over your shoulder

Just look over your shoulder

Just look over your shoulder

I'll be there always

Xena opened her eyes once more, looking into green ones, which contain an intense amount of love and were somewhat red. The warrior noticed that the bard was crying some, her grip on the warrior's hand was strong. The taller woman leaned forward and placed a butterfly kiss on the bard's forehead. Gabrielle released her hold on Xena and leaned into the warrior, hugging her tightly. The warrior wrapped her arms around the Amazon Queen holding her tightly.

"How about we stay here tonight?" Gabrielle smiled at the words that were whispered into her ear.

"Yeah, can we?" Xena grinned at that the bard as she leaned back looking at the leather-clad woman.

"Hell why not? Hmmm Eph will be going crazy tomorrow morning wondering where you are" The small woman grinned some at the darker form.

"Yeah well she knows I'm safe with the best warrior in the world" The warrior rolled her eyes some and pulled Gabrielle in, letting her snuggle in comfortably. Xena held her tightly as the bard let the day's events catch up to her.

"Sleep well my bard" Gabrielle grinned and rested cozily in Xena's arms and on her body.

"You too love. Thank you for the song means so much to me. Got make sure I get you to write it down for me" Xena grinned and brushed some of the bard's hair back.

"I will love, get some sleep. Been a long day" Gabrielle nodded some and then let a deep sleep over take her as she slowly closed her eyes. Xena smiled and then rested her head up against the rock. 'I am going to be feeling this tomorrow, but its more then worth all the aches and sore spots' Now slowly blue eyes closed, putting the warrior into a light sleep, her sense still considerable awake protecting and watching over them.

The moon still glistened high in the sky along with the stars that twinkled. A dark figure watched the pair below, hiding high in the trees. The figure begins to lightly grin, eyes sparkle from the moon's glow. They then quickly leap from one tree to the other, making their way to an old rusty brown truck at the end of this long road. The form drops to the ground, hardly making a stir, and then they slowly amble over to the truck. Carefully and with ease, the figure lifts the hood up of the truck and leaves the hood up. Then they remove a dagger from the side of their belt, an old dagger that still shined as if new. Reaching in the body begins to cut wires then destroying a few hoses to add on. Next the form places their dagger back on the their belt and puts the hood back down. Backing up to a tree, the form grins wickedly and holds a laugh back. Doing a high back flip, the person lands on a tree branch once more. They then disappear into the early dawn within the trees, leaving two figures in a camp stranded.

~*~*~*~

Slowly a tall figure awakens, feeling her surroundings around her, she feels a warm small figure wrapped in her arm, she grins, their small arms wrapped around her. Taking a deep breath she breaths in the sent of the world around her; trees, grass, water, the remains of a fire, and mostly her soulmate's cigar sent. Now her grin turns into a smile remember the night before. Then she begins to listen to her surroundings; the waterfall in the distance, the birds chirping to welcome another day, and beside her the small form's breathing the slow rise and fall. She begins to open her eyes, they focus on the canopy above her, but still blurry as always. The tall woman raked her free hand through her black bangs and looked to her left, to her soulmate. The blond's face was happy, a small smile crossing her lips, making the other woman grin. Her bronze face was buried into the tall woman's side, her head resting on top of the strong arm. The tall woman loved this, when her soulmate for one instant in her day would look so innocent and at ease with the world around her. She would never tell the smaller woman of this, she knew that her soulmate would just brush it off and laugh. Reaching over the dark-haired female brush some of the small blond's bangs to ones side. Slowly, green eyes flutter open gazing into sky blue ones, a smile formed on the blond's lips. Releasing her arm on top of the tall woman's waist she began to caress the soft cheeks of the dark-haired woman.

"How did you sleep Mel?" The southerner didn't speak right away and enjoyed the touch of the archeologist. Then she slowly whispered to her soulmate.

"I slept well. How about you hun?" Janice smiled then leaned up and kissed the lanky woman with a light touch.

"I slept well myself. How about breakfast? My stomach is calling....don't even say a word" Mel laughed and then rolled her eyes.

"No comments need be spoken about your stomach I reckon" Afterwards Janice's stomach decided to agree with Janice making Mel laugh more. The archeologist tried to mask her face with the meanest look, but only made her soulmate laugh more.

For an hour, the two women readied themselves for their trek through the mountains to the Amazon Nation. After having breakfast, they both cleaned up the camp and trotted over to their worn truck. Throwing the two bags to the ground, the blond opened the driver's door and pulled out the other two bags. Janice then sat on the ground with the four bags in front of her, and then a tall figure sat down beside her. The small woman pulled all the belongs from the bag, sorting them into piles; food with cooking supplies, navigational supplies, spare cloths, and then anything dealing with archeology, most important; cigars, and last ammo. Splitting the supplies of each area into what they need to take with them through the mountains and what they could leave behind, she looked to Mel.

"Look good to you Mel?" The blue eyes stared at the seven long sticks of dynamite that lay in the pile of things to go with them.

"So explain to me why we need to take the dynamite? I mean I can understand the bullets for your gun, but explosives" Janice sighed and picked up the dynamite, tossing it up and down in the air some, nerving Mel.

"Incase we need to blow something up. Mel this stuff is always useful you should know that. Remember we stopped Ares that way?" The translator nodded slightly and held her breath till her soulmate placed the explosives back down on the ground, calming her.

"Well we didn't use the dynamite, you did love. I didn't want too, I still do not like the stuff" Janice looked at her soulmate, grinning at her with a small twinkle in her eyes.

"Don't worry Mel, watch us um me end up using it" The tall woman shook her head some and grinned to her best friend.

"Well you would know better what we need to take Janice. So are we set?" The blond nodded in response and packed the supplies up into two bags. Handing their bags for their trek to Mel, Janice took the others and threw them into the truck. The small blond slammed the truck door and locked it up and turned back to her partner. Taking a pack, both woman headed back into the camp, Janice quickly tied a bed roll to each pack and threw water over the fire, snuffing it out. Taking a deep breath, the archeologist could smell the adventure and thrill in the air then she began to walk towards the mountain trail, exhilarated. A tall silent figure walked beside her, smiling feeling the thrill herself, living for it ever since she met her soulmate.

~*~*~*~

Both women walked silently together for a couple of hours, going up and down the path and through jagged areas. Janice looked over at her soulmate, who had a serious expression on and watched her footing. Looking back to the path ahead, Janice then reached over, clasping her translator's hand. Mel looked over to the small form, smiling and not expecting her lover to do that. The archeologist felt those sky eyes on her, turning towards them she grinned under her hat. Then they both looked back to the trail through the mountains.

"So what you think Mel?" The translator reached up with her free hand, pushing her

black glass back up on her nose more.

"I think...that I can not wait to get there" Janice grinned, knowing that feeling.

"Hmmm me too, want to see Xena's remains" Mel nodded not making any comment to that. The tall woman also wanted to see Gabrielle's remains, but knew her partner didn't care much about them. Mel wanted to see the one woman that had captured the Warrior Princess's heart and could make the warrior do her wishes with ease. See the one woman that was protected by the greatest and most feared fighter in all of Greece. See the woman that never feared the strongest woman in the world and loved, accepted, and protected the warrior back. Melinda didn't just have a great appreciation for Xena but also for her bard, for sticking out the years with Xena when others wouldn't. The bard that forever changed the warrior, making the warrior into a hero the world needed so much. The Amazon Queen that broke through the warrior's walls and brought out the stoic woman's love, something so few could do. Melinda just wished her lover would realize that, maybe some day she will.

"Janice, I still have yet to understand how you wear all of that" The blond looked from her footing to the tall woman beside her.

"Wear what exactly?" Mel kept her eyes ahead of herself, grinning some.

"Wear your gun, hat, whip, and that heavy leather jacket" Janice shrugged some and looked back ahead of herself.

"I just got use to it, I love them" Mel grinned even more and laugh deeply at that. Janice looked at her briefly with a raised eyebrow.

"I kinda thought that by the way you wear the same thing almost all the time" Janice slightly frowned as she power walked up the steep part of the path.

"Well you know how I am about changing out cloths, kinda wasteful. But if you want me to..." Before Janice could finish her words, Mel cut her off.

"No I don't want you changing your style just for me. I love the way you dress, its you. If you changed it then you wouldn't be the same person I fell in-love with" Janice smiled and felt warmth cover her, she defiantly didn't want to stop wearing her gruff cloths.

"Thanks Mel, don't you change either...pun intended" The belle rolled her eyes and then looked to her lover, smiling at her.

"I reckon I wont hun" Janice grinned and turn her attention back to the path. The women walked along the path, around turns, up small hills, down and down steep areas, and past small lakes and streams. Neither woman knew though of the watching eyes and following forms. They darted in and out of small unseen areas above, behind, and across from the two soulmates. The figures watched and followed with intent as the two pair made their way through the mountains. The forms could feel the two women's intensity of love, which scared them. The forms watch them curiously reminding them of a story they learned along time ago from their mother, who learned it from theirs, from generation to generation. A story of two women that had the strongest love in the world that could be felt generating from them taking your breath away. Could it be these two women passing though the mountains are the ones from

the stories? They would have to wait and watch, let destiny and fate unfold before them, unfold for them all.

Part 3 Section Three

~*Part 7*~

A slim figure gazed around at her surroundings; it was dark, cold, and plain disgusting surroundings. Looking to her right she noticed the outlines in the darkness a torch and she padded over to it. Reaching down she grasped two flint stones and knocked them together above the torch creating sparks. Immediately the torch came to life, burning brightly. Looking around the woman spotted three other torches along the cavern walls. Going to each one she easily ignited each one, now the small room could be seen. All the figure could see were the four torches and rock walls and ceiling, she could hear the sounds of dripping water far off in the background. She was angry, she wasn't successful with her revenge only making her more mad. Suddenly a bright light flashed in front of her announcing the arrival of a god. Once the lightning bolts disappeared, the strong woman looked back to see a dark leather-clad man staring back at her. She gritted her teeth at the person before her, not him again.

"Velasca it is ashame you didn't kill Gabrielle" Velasca glared at the god, annoyed at the way he stood there. Just gloating with his arms crossed against his chest with a smirk on his face. She wanted to tear him apart, but knew she had no chances of that happening any time soon.

"Yes it seems your little Warrior Princess got in the way as always, I understand" Ares narrowed his eyes at the woman, then quickly turned on his heels walking to the cavern wall. Turning back around the god leaned back against the wall then spread his arms out.

"Nice place you are living in now. Hmmm I heard you also lost your godly powers but are still immortal. That sucks huh?" Part of Velasca's upper right lip twitched up at that remark, she held her temper.

"So what did you come here for Ares? To bother me for all of eternity?" Ares dropped his arms to his side and grinned at the ex-Amazon.

"No, I have better things to do then that. We still have a pack, Gabrielle's death for your lava pit release" The dark woman crossed her arms against her chest and continued to glare at the god.

"And how do you expect me to do that now that I am trapped in here? I take it that Artemis confronted you about your little scheme" Ares lightly nodded his head and brought up his right hand to rest on the hilt of his sword.

"Yes my charming sister was quite upset with what I tried to pull over so is my loving father. Seems as if no god is aloud to release you from here. Otherwise Zeus will imprison the person in a tomb till they are released. So as much as I would love to free you, I can't" Velasca began to grin and slowly walked up to the god of war.

"Well why don't you get one of your little warlords to come here and dig me out?" Ares stood up straight, off the cold stone wall and looked directly at Velasca.

"I could possible do that, my men are busy, can't always work out so nicely. But if it happens you that you are stuck in here I am sure some time in the future you'll be released, but you still will owe me" Velasca was now a few paces from the leather-clad man, with her arms against her side.

"And what happens if I am released in the future when Xena and Gabrielle are both long dead?" Now the god's lips formed into an evil grin as he leaned once more against the stone cavern side.

"That's the interesting part, you have to seek out Xena and Gabrielle's remains. Once done so you must read this scroll" Reaching to his belt side, Ares unhooked a scroll handing it to Velasca. Velasca unrolled the scroll and began to read some of the words then stopped looking back to Ares.

"And what does this do?" Ares looked at the scroll for a moment, feeling proud of himself.

"The scroll once read in front of Xena's remains, will bring Xena's spirit back to me. Upon doing so I will be able to reborn Xena, but with her under my power and command" Velasca nodded and rolled the scroll back up and hooked it to her belt side.

"And what's in it for me Ares? Gabrielle will be dead and more then likely the Amazon Nation will be long gone, it's falling now. So that leaves me with nothing to do" Ares didn't respond and stared at Velasca as she thought about it and noticed something came to the woman. "Gabrielle won't have Xena with her down in the underworld. And I might just have some fun with an eternity of destroying Gabrielle's descendants" Ares grinned and felt content that once Velasca was free she would do his bidding. He knew that with Xena's spirit in his hands in the future he would be able to conquer the world. This excited him to no end. Not only would he have Xena reborn under his control, but also he would own her soul. The god could repeatedly reborn her into the world under his power and be able to conquer the known world. Ares would have Xena forever.

"Well Velasca seems as if we both will be satisfied. That's the arrangement then. I will try to send one of my men to free you, if possible. Once Xena and Gabrielle are dead, you are to read that scroll over Xena's coffin" The woman nodded in understanding and watched as Ares disappeared in a bolt of lightning.

~*~*~*~

An early sun slowly began to rise sending different arrays of color through the sky. The calm lake reflected these colors along with the towering mountains. The night before was cool with a slight breeze blowing through out the night. Now the breeze seemed to die leaving behind a warm atmosphere as the sun warmed the new day. Along the lake's edge were two forms, snuggled tightly together from the coolness of the night. A pair of sharp blue eyes enjoyed the beginnings of the sun and the soft rising and falling of her soulmate's breathing. Looking down at the small strawberry-blond, the woman grinned, enjoying the warmth and her own feel of security at holding the younger woman. She knew she would pay any price to be able to always have this. The warrior would never change anything about her life if this were where she ended up. Xena would go through all those painful hard years if it meant she would find her soulmate, find her other half. She wondered if her soulmate even

realized that, probably did. But the tall woman made a mental note to tell Gabrielle later on. Taking a deep breath, Xena looked back to the rising sun, letting it calm her senses for once, something she rarely ever did. These were the moments she would log into her head forever, moments she'd hold tight in her heart forever.

The warrior was though very worried about her soulmate. She didn't want to see the destruction of Poteidaia also be the destruction of Gabrielle, of her goodness. Xena blamed herself more than anything for this. If Gabrielle had never met the ex-warlord then this would probably never happen, never met Velasca. Xena just hoped that Gabrielle never would turn to the darkness within her that was tempting her, the same darkness that had tempted Xena and she had willingly accepted. The warrior believed though no she knew that the bard had a stongier will than what Xena ever did. Gabrielle wouldn't be so easy to give in to the darkness, into the hatred and evil. Xena also knew that as long as she stood beside the Amazon Queen's side that she would never give in to the darkness. Love, the strongest force in the known world, can conquer anybody and anything, which Xena knew all too well. It had certainly conquered Xena, something the warrior doesn't regret, at least right now. Xena was concerned about her bard, but she knew Gabrielle would survive this in due time, she had high hopes and confidence.

As she gazed at the sun, watching it make its way over the mountains' peaks, a small form was slowly coming to. Feeling a stir in her arms, the warrior looked down to see sleepy green eyes gazing back up at her. Xena smiled and got a very tired smile in return. Leaning down, the tall woman kissed the bard on the forehead. This quickly brought Gabrielle out of her sleepy state, making her grin. Using her arms, the bard pushed herself up and more into Xena's arms. The warrior automatically tightens her strong arms more securely around the small blond.

"So how did you sleep Xena?" The warrior stared across into sea green eyes while smiling.

"Pretty well, how did you sleep?" Gabrielle grinned some and brought her right hand over to Xena's leg, caressing the warrior's leg gently. This sent a few shivers down Xena's spine as her body melted to the light touch.

"I slept quiet well amazingly. Was a bit cold for awhile but then this big warm thing seemed to pull me in closer, made my world nice and cozy" The tall form began to grin at the small woman.

"Yeah thought you were a bit cold last night. Nightmares at all? Felt you shiver a few times tensing up and then some heavy breathing" Gabrielle looked down but still ran her fingers up and down Xena's thigh lightly.

"Yeah I had one, wasn't as bad as the ones from the first night. I'll get use to them, they'll probably never go away" The bard shrugged her shoulders and kept her head down, remembering the dreams she has had for the past couple of nights. Gabrielle had yet to describe them to the warrior, but Xena didn't want to press it because she knew in time her bard would tell her. Xena just tried her hardest to be patient and let Gabrielle organize her thoughts.

Xena slowly reached for the bard's chin, lifting it and looking deep into the young woman's eyes.

"They will stop my bard" Gabrielle didn't respond, but the warrior knew the blond believed her. It was held in her pale green eyes, the trust and love. Leaning forward, Xena captured her soulmate's lips, kissing her gently. Resting her back on the rock once more, Xena smiled. Gabrielle just grinned back while resting one hand on the warrior's left and the other on the tall woman's muscular stomach.

"I love you Xena" Xena grinned at the whispered affection. Bringing her powerful hands up from the ground, Xena began to caress Gabrielle's sides. The bard shivered in reaction to the warm hands running up and down her sides. The young woman closed her eyes relishing in the feel, her breathing picking up some. Now the soft hands moved to her lower back and her mid back, making her shiver again.

"Gabrielle?" The Amazon Queen didn't respond and continued to focus on her soulmate's touch. "Gabrielle?" Hearing the deep tone, Gabrielle slowly opened her eyes peering into brilliant blue eyes filled with love. "We need to go before Ephiny freaks" Gabrielle laughed a little then sighed while still enjoying the light pattern touches on her back.

"Not before I massage your back Xena, after sleeping against that rock" The warrior grinned and dropped her hands to her legs. Gabrielle rose up from the ground and Xena. The taller woman then stood up and picked her sword in sheath up from the ground. Grabbing Xena's shoulders, Gabrielle turned Xena around, facing her back. The ex-warlord grinned as she felt small but powerful hands touch her back. First the hands worked lightly at the warrior's lower back and muscles. It felt wonderful to have her soulmate working them out. Finally reaching Xena's wide shoulders, Gabrielle massaged them after pushing the armor out of the way. Putting the shoulder armor back in place, small hands kneaded Xena's neck. The bard could hear a few bones pop in place, making Gabrielle wince. Feeling all the sore spots become less in intensity, Xena reached up grasping Gabrielle's left hand. Turning back around the warrior kissed each of her bard's fingers gently. Gabrielle's hear rate picked up as Xena did this. After kissing the blond's thumb the warrior clipped her sword on her back with her free hand while grinning. The older woman then moved Gabrielle's arm behind her tall form.

Letting go, the ex-warlord pulled Gabrielle in, hugging her tightly. The Amazon Queen returned the hug back in equal force, making her smile. Pulling back, the Warrior Princess held the bard in her arms.

"What was the hug for?" Xena grinned and held Gabrielle tightly in her arms.

"Can't I hug my own bard?" Now Gabrielle grinned and lightly laughed.

"Oh you can, anytime you'd like to" The leather-clad woman leaned in, kissing Gabrielle on the forehead.

"Besides I'll have to go back to that village full of rough and tough Amazons. I can't act all soft around them, bad for my reputation" Xena released the blond and both started heading towards the Amazon Village. Gabrielle looked over at her grinning warrior, then back to the trail.

"Xena, whatever, you know damn well they admire you and know what you're capable of. Mmmmm but I am sure they know about us" The warrior looked at her bard as she walked, Gabrielle caught the twinkle in her soulmate's baby blue eyes. 'Uh oh' was the

first thing to come to Gabrielle's mind.

"So you won't mind or care if I kiss you in the middle of the entire Amazon Nation?" Gabrielle laughed as she stepped over a large root.

"Depends on what kinda kiss. But I bet the Amazons are wondering why we haven't yet" The tall warrior didn't respond right away, but continued to walk along the path, ducking under a few low branches. Then she walked closer to the small woman, Gabrielle easily noticed this.

"A deep, searing, tongue kind of kiss in a tight embrace" The bard's world went into a blur at those words, she quickly lost her footing to a large rock. Gabrielle prepared herself to hit the ground but quickly two strong hands grabbed a hold of her waist. The Warrior Princess carefully lifted her partner back up on her feet. Xena's hold lingered on Gabrielle's torso, as the blond looked to the other woman. The dark-haired woman looked back at the wide-eyed bard, her mouth slightly hanging open.

"That kinda of kiss huh?" The ex-warlord grinned and slightly nodded as her thumbs lightly rubbed the bard's stomach. "I don't know there Xena. You think all those Amazons can handle something like that?" Xena chuckled deeply, then released one arm and slid her other arm around Gabrielle. The two soulmates continued on their trek back to the Amazons.

"They might be able to, find out" Gabrielle looked at her soulmate raising an eyebrow at her as she slipped an arm around the tall figure.

"Xena I am sure there is a...nicer way of breaking to the Amazon Nation we are lovers" The warrior kept her eyes on the small foot path through the Amazon woods, but let a devilish grin form on her lips.

"I am sure there is too, but it wouldn't be nearly as fun as this" The bard shook her head some and noticed the beginnings of the Amazon village.

"Xena, we really..." The warrior quickly stopped in her tracks and turned her partner to face her. Leaning in, Xena furiously kissed the bard, making Gabrielle's legs weaken, Xena easily holding her. Finally breaking the erotic kiss for air, Xena evilly grinned at her lover. Xena stared down into desire filled eyes, Gabrielle was clenching the warrior tightly. The bard's breathing had picked up and she could feel Xena's warmth encircling her. Waves of desire and passion shot through Gabrielle, making her hot. The warrior continued to grin then released the bard and started power walking towards the village. Xena noticed Gabrielle wasn't moving and just stood there in bit of shock. She stopped walking and gazed back at the bard who was still fighting with her emotions.

"You coming Gabrielle" The smaller woman turned her head to look at the beautiful leather clad dark beauty before her, she couldn't help but grin. Gabrielle shook her head some and then starts walking towards Xena. The small woman noticed a few patrol Amazons ahead towards them. The bard walked up close to the warrior and whispered up to her.

"Xena, you are evil...in a good way" Xena smirked down at her soulmate and saw the three Amazons in the corner of her eye.

"So I've been told" The Amazon Queen raised an eyebrow at her partner and saw how near the Amazons were. 'Perfect timing' the bard started to muse. Reaching behind, Gabrielle quickly pinched Xena's butt. The Warrior Princess jumped out of surprised and watched as her bard jogged off towards the three Amazons. The warrior chuckled some and started walking to her bard and the Amazons with a grin forming on her lips. 'Oh boy what have her and I started?' Xena had to laugh inwardly at that as she neared the four women.

"Hello Xena" The ex-warlord nodded to the Amazon and then smiled to her.

"How are you this morning, Solari?" Solari smiled back and felt the other two Amazons focus on them intently. The other two Amazons, Solari knew had never met the famous Warrior Princess. They were new to their tribe and heard many tales of the Warrior Princess but never believe in her existence. Solari defined the two Amazons as flat out chickens when it came to the ex-Destroyer of Nations. The two new Amazons were very scared of the warrior, of her reputation. That had made Solari laugh the first time, not too many people truly knew the Warrior Princess like she did.

"I am quite well" Solari then looked to both Xena and Gabrielle, directing her words to both women.

"Ephiny sent us three out to check up on you two, since you mysteriously disappeared last night" Xena slightly grinned and Gabrielle stepped up closer to Xena, this didn't go unnoticed.

"Well Gabrielle wanted to get out of the village for awhile. So we made our way down to the lake and just happened to fall asleep there" Solari raised an eyebrow at the end part of the explanation. The tall warrior in response crossed her arms against her chest, daring Solari to question her. The other two Amazons prepared to see a small fight to start. But the leader Amazon just grinned at Xena and looked to Gabrielle.

"My Queen, I would like you to meet two of our Amazons, newly joined to us from another village" Gabrielle smiled to each of them and held her hand out, each briskly shaking in return. Solari put her arm out to the Amazon to her right. "This is Teresa" Then Solari dropped her arm and looked to the other Amazon to her left. "This is Lysia " The bard nodded and looked both of them over. Teresa was a little taller then Gabrielle with short blond hair that shimmered in the early sun. Teresa was skinny but muscular more in her arms with brown eyes, standing tall. Her leathers covering very little, feathers hung from her hair as she smiled. Lysia on the other hand was taller, probably would reach to Xena's chin, her body was big built. Her dark brown hair was straight, reaching just below her shoulders. Gabrielle easily noticed that Lysia looked exactly like her soulmate, with the exception of her brown hair and hazel eyes. Her long arms lay on her hips as she gazed at Gabrielle and her soulmate. Her hazel eyes boring more into Gabrielle's Warrior Princess, nerving Gabrielle.

"So what Amazon villages do you come from Lysia and Teresa?" Lysia tore her gaze from Xena and looked to Gabrielle with a small smile. Gabrielle shivered some; something about Lysia bothered the bard. It seemed as if Xena caught this and stepped closer to Gabrielle and little more in front of her.

"My Queen I came from a village north of here, more on the borders of Greece"

Gabrielle nodded and looked to Teresa who had a warm smile crossing her lips.

"I am from a village to the southwest from here, my Queen" Gabrielle thought about that for a moment.

"You mean near Thessaloniki?" Teresa nodded and continued to smile.

"Yes my Queen, we are relatively close to them" Gabrielle nodded mentally picturing the distance. Then she looked to the two new Amazons.

"Please Teresa and Lysia, just call me Gabrielle. Save all that formal stuff for more needed times" Both woman nodded and smile.

"We will Gabrielle, Thank you. Its great to meet the well known Amazon Queen Gabrielle" The bard smiled warmly to Teresa, surprised that her name is that well known.

"Thank You Teresa. Its great to have you two both here" Solari looked to Gabrielle with an expressionless face.

"Gabrielle, Teresa, Lysia and I need to be finish up our patrol. If you'll please excuse us" The blond looked to Solari.

"Of course, and Xena and I better get back to the village" Now a grin started to form on brown haired Amazon's lips.

"Yeah or Ephiny will have your heads" Both Xena and Gabrielle grinned to each other then back to Solari. Gabrielle sidesteps to her left with Xena following behind.

"Bye" Solari smiled to her Amazon Queen and nodded to her two Amazons. The three continued on their trek. Lysia gave the Warrior Princess one last look then concentrated on where she was headed.

"So that was the Warrior Princess?" Solari looked to the taller Amazon with a stern face.

"Yup, that's Xena former Destroyer of Nations" Lysia slowly began to smirk as she walked along the trail through the woods.

"She doesn't look as hmmm dangerous as the stories make her out to be" Solari shook her head lightly. 'Another doubter, ah she'll find out sooner or later' The lead Amazon grin inwardly at that.

"Well if I were you I wouldn't underestimate Xena, she is dangerous even more then the stories make her out to be" The tall dark Amazon grunted some, not believing it.

"I thought the Queen was really nice" Lysia looked over at Teresa then back to the path.

"Yeah she is nice, if you like a non-Amazon Queens that are weak" Teresa frowned and felt a bit of her temper rise as did Solari's.

"Trust me Lysia, you don't know the Queen, nor her partner. They both are dangerous in their own ways. You are messing with fire, you'll get burned bad" Lysia didn't respond right away and just walked along the trail, admiring the area.

"Maybe, but did either of you noticed how close they stood to each other?" Solari grinned to herself while Teresa raised an eyebrow.

"Yeah I noticed that too. Are they..." Solari chuckled some and stepped over a large rock that looked a little out of place.

"Some think so, but they have never said anything about it. Everybody but them knows their in-love with each other" All three Amazons laughed some then took a right onto another trail away from the lake, circling around the village.

"And Lysia that is even more reason not to mess with either of them. They are very protective about the other. As nice and sweet as the Queen is she has a very bad temper on her hands" Lysia nodded some and didn't say anything but continued along the trail.

~*Part 8*~

"There you two are!" The tall warrior looked to her right to spot a bit angry regent. Ephiny quickly stomped over to the two women, face expressionless.

"Hey Eph, worry for the disappearing, but I had to get out with Xena" Looking a little to her right, the Amazon smiled some.

"Its all right Gabrielle. I know you were with Xena, safest place. Was just a bit worried with what's been going on" The small woman smiled in return.

"Thanks Ephiny. And you know what?" The bard looked at Ephiny then at Xena, whom raised an eyebrow in question. Gabrielle began to grin some. "We made it just in time for breakfast, all that walking made me hungry" The warrior rolled her eyes, Ephiny grinning.

"I am surprised your stomach didn't speak its mind earlier this morning" Gabrielle complete turned to face Xena, the warrior turning to her bard. The Amazon Queen grinned with her hands on her hips, Ephiny watching intently.

"Yes well my stomach wasn't necessarily hungry for food this morning" The curly-haired Amazon's eyes widen at this submission, in public, she couldn't believe it. The two soulmates stole a quick glance at their surroundings. Many of the Amazons in the village had stop their duties and watched the pair. Then two pair of passionate filled eyes met once more. Gabrielle saw that twinkle in her warrior's eye again. 'Already my warrior? Well can't and don't want to argue about a passionate kiss' Slowly the tall warrior closed in the distance between her and her soulmate. All eyes stood on them in amazement. Both women wrapped their arms around the other tightly, Gabrielle drowning in Xena's intense blue eyes. The bard for her part couldn't believe she was doing this in front of all her Amazons, by the Gods she is their Queen. Well at least they'll know who is her soulmate for eternity. Xena released one hand bring it p to caress the bard's cheek which she noticed were a bit red, probably from the crowd. Looking directly into each other's eyes, the world around them disappeared, leaving just the two of them, all sound drowned out. Moving her hand to the back of her lover's head, Xena began to lean in. As their lips met, both women closed their eyes. The kiss at first was gentle, and then Gabrielle ran her tongue across Xena's teeth, the warrior quickly opening her mouth. Tongues intertwined in a dance, tasting each other, soulmates wanting to consume the other. Xena and Gabrielle both felt warm,

and shivers running up and down their back. The bard felt her knees go weak yet again as she tingled all over. The warrior felt her partner knee's trembling some and tightened her arm around Gabrielle's waist to support her. Xena could feel the passion and desires course through her body, she had to end the kiss. Pulling back, emerald eyes and sapphire eyes met once more. They're breathing heavy, their hearts both pounding at the same fast speed. Then the realization came to the two women, where they were. Tearing their gaze they looked around to see their audiences different expressions. Some Amazons were shocked, mouths hanging open, wide eyed. Others Amazons that knew the pair well were grinning. Ephiny for her part was standing in non-shock, arms on her hips, feeling quite warm.

"Are you two finished? I am quite hungry" The warrior looked to Ephiny then Gabrielle did as well, both still in each other's embrace. They both slyly grinned at the regent, the Amazon intripiting the looks. "For food that is" Gabrielle started to giggle, Xena continued to grin as she held her bard tightly and protectively. The regent dropped her arms to her side and shook her head lightly. The strawberry-blond dropped her embrace from Xena, the warrior doing the same. Gabrielle was about to step up beside Ephiny, but felt a warm hand grasp her left hand. She looked to her tall partner who was grinning, this surprised the bard. She didn't expect her warrior to show affection in public beyond the single kiss. Ephiny smiled and then turned to the food hut, heading in its direction with soulmates following behind, hand in hand. Walking inside the smell of good food hit the three women, making Gabrielle's stomach growled in happiness. Xena and Ephiny both laugh together, the bard scolding them with a look. The warrior leaned down and kissed the Amazon Queen on her forehead, making Gabrielle grin back. The regent turned to the two women with a serious expression covering her face. "I need to talk to you and Xena in the privacy of my hut. How about we have our breakfast there while we talk" Xena nodded, and Gabrielle had no problem with it either.

"Sounds fine by me Ephiny" The Amazon smiled to the bard and power walked over to the cook's area. Xena and Gabrielle looked to each other, Gabrielle shrugging her shoulders. The warrior then looked back to Ephiny who was headed back to them. Silently the three women walked to Ephiny's hut, Gabrielle was a bit nervous as to what the regent might need. Making their way into the regent's hut, the muscular Amazon signaled to the table and chairs to the one side of her hut.

"Sit down, the food should be here pretty soon" Xena broke her hand contact with her companion and went to sit down, with Gabrielle right beside her. Ephiny retrieved a scroll from her desk and walked back to the table sitting to face the other women.

"So what is up Ephiny?" The Amazon sighed and relaxed back into her chair, slightly grinning.

"Well I figured since you and Xena made it...public with your relationship you might want to consider a joining" The smaller woman let out her breath that she didn't even knew she was holding, Xena catching this making her grin.

"I don't know, Xena and I would have to talk about it" The bard looked to her soulmate who was staring at the regent, Xena then looked to Gabrielle.

"Yeah we should, even though I think I know the answer" The small blond shook her head while Xena just grinned back.

"Well you guys talk about it. There are requirements that the Queen's future consort has to meet in order for there to be a joining" Xena and her lover both looked back to Ephiny in questioning. As the regent was about to speak a bright light flashed with in the hut, sounds of a lightning bolt. All three women looked away from the lightning, shielding their eyes. Once the bolts were gone they gazed back at a tall beautiful woman. Ephiny quickly got to one knee before the goddess. Xena and her bard sat in the chairs, expressionless faces. The warrior almost had to laugh, Gabrielle was getting use to these gods always dropping in on them.

"Please sit down Ephiny" The curly haired Amazon nodded and sat back in her seat, staring in awe at the goddess of Amazons. The goddess looked to Gabrielle and the warrior with a serious expression, arms crossed against her chest.

"It seems we have a problem with Velasca" Gabrielle dropped her eyes contact from Artemis to the floor, a shiver coursed through her back. The warrior sighed and grasped Gabrielle's hand, holding it tight.

"What happened?" Artemis looked from her Amazon Queen to the dark warrior.

"Ares is what happened yet again. He has a plan to free Velasca" Xena raised a single eyebrow at the goddess, Gabrielle looking back to Artemis.

"So he hasn't freed her yet?" Artemis took a few paces closer shaking her head some.

"No he hasn't. He has two plans; one he'll try to send one of his men to dig her out. The alternate plan is just to let her wait till she is freed by somebody else, maybe somebody far in the future" Artemis sighed and looked directly at Xena and partner. "If he does manage to free Velasca with one of his men, Zeus will in-tomb him for his defiance till he can be set free. But that will not matter, either way Ares wins" Then finally Ephiny spoke up in a serious tone.

"How is that? If Ares is in-tomb then it'll be doing the world a favor" The goddess looked to Ephiny dropping her arms to her side.

"Ares has made up an enchanted scroll" Xena could feel her gut turning now, she didn't like this one bit. Artemis sensed this and looked back to the warrior with a sadden face. "Supposedly once Velasca reads this scroll over your remains Xena, your soul will be owned by Ares. He'll have the power to reborn you in the world as many times as he likes and you'll be under his control" Xena felt herself sink some, but a small hand fell on Xena's left leg trying to relax her. The ex-warlord then gazed at Artemis once more.

"Is there any way to stop Ares?" Artemis slightly grinned as she heard somebody reappear behind her, stepping up to her side.

"Hey Sis, I believe this is my department" Artemis looked to the Goddess of Love smiling and nodded to her.

"Its all yours Dity" Aphrodite smiled back and turned towards the three women smiling at them.

"Well you see, Art and I decided to help you two out here, since you are Art's chosen and mine as well" Gabrielle looked at the goddess in surprise, Aphrodite grinning

back. "Well you and Xena are the best two that represent the purest of love, duh" Aphrodite paused then brushed some of her hair back. "Any way Art and I came up with our own...little enchanted scroll thingy" The goddess reached to Artemis' side unhooking a scroll, handing it to Xena. The Goddess of the Amazon's then took over Aphrodite's explanation.

"If the scroll is read once you two have passed away it will bring you back to life during the time you were in your prime, pretty much now. But if Xena's soul is already in Ares' hands only Gabrielle will come back" Aphrodite raised her hand to silence her sister, who did it with a bit of anger.

"Gabrielle babes, if that's the case you have to use your love stuff to win Xena's soul back. Only your love for each other can free Xena's soul from Ares" Gabrielle slightly nodded while her companion continued to listen in silence. Then the bard thought about the scroll wondering who would bring her or Xena back.

"Who will read the scroll in the future, or be sure some one will?" Artemis grinned some, as did Aphrodite, Artemis was the one to speak with a bit of pride.

"There will be two women, soulmates, in the future who will be determined to seek out your remains, they'll be the ones to bring you back. You need to hide the scroll in plain site where it will be waiting for them in the future" First Gabrielle looked to her partner, who turned her blue eyes to her. The small blond saw Xena held worry in her eyes, making Gabrielle's heart ache. Xena's soul in Ares' control, that is dangerous and they both know it.

**

The blond closed her eyes, letting the light wind brush her bangs back, she sighed. She felt so exhilarated by the adventure, she was so excited it started butterflies in her stomach. Slowly opening her green eyes she felt a tall warm presence behind her, making her grin. Now long arms wrapped around the archeologist's waist.

"Well love we just get down this last mountain side and will be in the old Amazon territory" Janice nodded some and gazed at the trees below at the base of the mountains. The small woman believed that the once village lay in the center of the forest, she hoped. Mel agreed with her, they knew they would find the village not matter what.

"Hmmm get down this last mountain side just in time for lunch" The tall belle chuckled behind her, rocking Janice's frame some. Mel dropped her chin on top of her archeologist's head, feeling the brim of the hat against her neck.

"Your stomach sure does work on a schedule" Janice grinned and let Mel's warmth surrounds her, making the blond tingle all over.

"Oh yeah it does, I think we'll be in the village or find the coffins by dinnertime hopefully" The tall woman laughed some and lightly shook her head as she tightened her arms around the small woman. "Come on, we better get moven, enough all this staring at the scenery stuff" Melinda lightly nodded and released her soulmate, both started on their trek down the mountain side. As the two women made their way down, three figures gazed at each other in questioning.

"You think they'll find the coffins?" The form in the middle shook their head in a no response. Then the figure to the right looked to the person in the middle as well.

"They seem pretty determined" The person in the middle sighed and gazed back at the two women walking down the foot path, their eyes narrowing.

"It doesn't matter, we have a duty here, no one is to find the tombs" Then the form to the left shook their head some.

"But what if their the ones from..." The figure in the center held up their hand for silence.

"They are not the ones, not after all these years" The person tore their gaze from their companion to their left and back at the soulmates. "Let's go, we have a job to do" Quickly the lead form rushed off with the other two figures right behind the leader.

~*~*~*~

Mel side stepped a few large rocks carefully and kept an eye on her lover ahead of her. The tall beauty could tell that they would make it to the bottom of the mountain by noon. She was glad too, she was getting fairly hungry herself from all the walking. Gazing head the translator could see better the woods that lay ahead, she was quite excited. They were so near to finding the tomb, the tomb of the greatest warrior and bard known in history. Mel had high hopes that the Amazon village contained the tombs, it had to. Where else could the remains be located? Taking a few more steps, the tall female hit the bottom of the base of the mountain. Her soulmate turned around to grin at Mel, she grinned back at Janice. Then turning back to the forest, Janice looked around for a place to sit, quickly spotting a log to sit on. Ambling over to it, the archeologist sat down, stretching her legs out. Looking up the blond caught a grinning female, whom moved to sit beside her.

"Well we made it in one piece Mel. Now we just need to get to the village, wherever that is" The southerner sighed some and removed her pack from her back, placing it on the ground beside her. Janice mimicked her soulmate's movements but also removed her hat letting the sun warm her face. Reaching in her pack, the blond pulled out a trail bar and a canteen, Mel doing the same. After finishing her bar and taking a few sips from the canteen, the belle felt pretty content. Looking to her soulmate, Mel saw her just finish her bar up as well. Janice looked at her translator, slightly grinning making Mel raise an eyebrow at her lover.

"I am still kinda hungry and I know I shouldn't eat any more food. There is just enough food for us to get back" Melinda began to grin, predictable Janice the belle had to think. Pushing her black glass back on the bridge of her nose the tall woman stood.

"Be right back Janice" Before the archeologist could say anything, her partner disappeared into the woods. Melinda walked through the woods, searching for something. Trekking more and more away from Janice, Mel kept searching. Looking to her right the southerner belle spotted her prize. She quickly padded over to the tree and reached up pulling a branch down. Mel easily removed three red medium size apples from the tree. Finding her way back to her soulmate easily, Janice saw what Mel contained in her arms. The blond grinned and hugged Mel tightly.

"Thanks Mel, you didn't have to do that" The tall woman grinned and handed an apple

to Janice.

"I did not mind, wanted to any way" Both females grabbed their packs, throwing their canteens filled with water back in the bags. Mel also deposited her two remaining apples into her sack and then threw the leather bag over her shoulders. Janice turned to her companion and began to walk into the forest while munching on the apple. As they walked through the woods, they took in their surroundings; tall green lush trees, the sent of pine in the air with a tint of fig. The breeze continued to blow, ruffling the leaves and small branches. The ground was covered in green grass and a few acorns here and there along with dead leaves. The atmosphere calmed the two women's senses, it felt good and peaceful. Janice finished her apple, throwing the remains off to the side. Then the archeologist thought she heard some branches break, she quickly stopped, grabbing Mel's arm.

"What's wrong Janice?" Janice didn't respond and continued to gaze around the forest. She heard the sound again, but it wasn't from the ground it was from above her. Quickly looking up Janice spotted three forms up in the tree staring back at them with detailed masks on. Mel followed her soulmate's gaze seeing the three figures, she gasped in surprise. The blond released Mel's arm and straightened her back up. The three forms dropped from the tree, one landing then the other two directly behind. Slowly the three forms walked up to the archeologist and southerner, Mel and Janice gazed at them. They wore very little, leather covering just below their mid-drift and breasts, arm bands and wrist guards. What surprised Janice more were they had swords sheathed on their backs with what seemed like a bird as the hilt of the sword. The masks were detailed with feathers hanging from the back that went down to their legs. If Janice didn't know any better, would have guessed them to be Amazons by Gabrielle's scrolls. 'Amazons in this day of age, that's crazy' Janice shook her head at that thought. 'They must be some weirdo's or something' but the blond couldn't help but notice how much they looked like Amazons, perfect representation of them. Now the three women pulled their masks back, revealing their faces. The leader was beautiful; she had curly dirty blond hair that hung down to her shoulders. Her eyes were amber, her face-harden with confidence. The female to the left was a little taller, straight dark brown hair that went just a little lower then her shoulders. Then the other woman to the right had a strong built, her face-harden as well from time, she cared no fear in her brown eyes. Her hair was dark black reaching far down to her back. Janice turned her gaze back the leader of the three females. The archeologist then began to reach inside of her leather jacket, nerving the two of the women, whom drew their swords quickly. The curly-blond held her hand up, making the two women drop their swords by their sides. The small blond pulled her hand back out of her jacket with a cigar and matches. She quickly lit her cigar and began to take a few drags on it after placing the matches back in her jacket. Slowly the leader walked up to the small blond, Janice took a few steps in front of her silent soulmate. Mel for her part was in shock about the three women. She couldn't believe how much they looked like Amazons. The leader reminded Mel of one of the Amazons that Gabrielle had mentioned many times in her scrolls. But the belle couldn't recall who it was. Now the leader was only a couple of paces from Janice. The archeologist held the cigar in her mouth tightly as she spoke out of the corner of her mouth.

"Was wondering when you and your little followers were going to show your faces" The curly-blond's eyes narrowed as she glared at the smaller blond.

"What's your business here?" Janice pulled the cigar out of her mouth blowing smoke

out of her mouth.

"What does it matter to you?" The leader took another step closer to the smaller woman, trying to stare her down.

"This is our territory, it concerns us. What do you want?" Janice placed the cigar back in her mouth, taking a few more drags from it. She then finally responded through the cigar and smoke.

"I want Xena and Gabrielle's remains. I am assuming you know who I am talking about" The small blond looked beyond the leader to see the other two women had raised their swords in defensive stance. Then she gazed back at the curly-blond before her, she was anger, and Janice could easily see that.

"And what the hell would you know about Xena and Gabrielle little girl?" The archeologist's eyes narrowed, she wanted to slug this woman badly. Mel caught Janice's anger and stepped up beside Janice.

"We know a lot about the Warrior Princess and the Amazon Queen" The leader looked up at Mel, still glaring.

"I doubt it very much, that's what they all claim. We can do this the easy way and you can walk out here or the hard way and we'll help you get out of this land" The curly haired woman turned around slowly walking with a strong gate back to her companions. Janice's eyes narrowed as she took another drag on her cigar. The gun or not? Mel caught her partner's hand movement to her gun, Mel quickly came up with something to say.

"Yes well I am sure you wouldn't mind showing the descendants of Xena and Gabrielle their tombs" The leader stopped in mid stride as Janice dropped her arm to her side away from her gun. The amber-eyed woman turned back around walking back to them.

"What did you say?" Mel gulp some, the archeologist was ready to stop the other woman at any cost.

"Xena and Gabrielle are our ancestors" The female's amber eyes widen as she took a few steps back away from the new comers. Then the two women from behind joined their leader standing beside her. The one to the right quietly whispered to her leader something in response she nodded to her follower. The lead female then grabbed the brown haired woman and they both went to the side talking argumentatively. The third woman stood guard watching Janice and Mel. Mel looked down at her lover, she could tell Janice was trying to be patient by the way she stood and the way she smoked her cigar. The belle knew that sometimes Janice smoked her cigar to calm herself, this was defiantly one of the times. The southerner leaned down to Janice some, whispering to her. "Janice you think that did it?" The archeologist took another drag and blew out the smoke.

"Mmmm either it saved us or is going to get us killed" Janice stared at the leader female debating something with the brown haired woman. The small blond could tell the brown haired woman was winning by the way the amber eyed woman was sighing and dropping her head some. Then the two women joined the third all talking while eyeing Janice and Melinda. After seeing an agreement, they all walked up to Janice

and Mel, the two followers sheathing their swords. The curly-blond walked up closes to Janice, whom took her last drag on the cigar and dropping the remains on the ground, smothering it with her boot.

"We will take you to the tombs of Xena and Gabrielle, follow us" Janice wasn't about to move she continued to glare hard at the leader.

"Before you take us any where, you better explain all this" The amber-eyed female crossed her arms against her chest, slightly grinning.

"Well I am guessing you believe us three to be Amazons, we are" Janice brought her arms up to her sides, Mel listening intently.

"How can that be, the Amazons died out a long time ago" The leader grinned at the small blond's words.

"Not exactly, some still remain through out the world. These two women and myself live here in the Amazon territory watching over the once Amazon Nation's land. The other Amazons that are located through out the world let us know if there are ever any people headed to these areas. If there is then they get word to us and we hunt them down and run them out of the territory. Now its a long trek to the once Amazon village, I suggest we walk and talk" Janice nodded and slowly all five women started their journey the died village of the Amazons. Mel stood beside Janice whom stood beside the leader, then the other two Amazons beside curly haired female. Mel looked at the three Amazons, not believing that Amazons still lived in the 1940's. Taking a breath the belle looked to the leader asking in her best southerner accent.

"So what are your names?" Amber eyes looked up to the tall woman, gleaming at her.

"My name is Starling, I am the Queen of the Amazons. This woman next to me is Sylvia" Both Mel and Janice looked to the brown haired woman who stared back and then nodded. "And the woman beside Sylvia is Hellenes, she is quite good with her weapons" Janice looked at Hellenes then to Starling with a questioning face.

"Interesting names they have, Sylvia Greek for woods and Hellenes is the name that the ancient Greeks called themselves" The Amazon Queen grinned at Janice then retorted to her comment.

"Yes those names are Doctor Covington, you are good with your Greek names" Both the archeologist and translator's faces were in a bit of shock, then it clicked in with Janice.

"So how long have you kept tabs on Mel and I?" Starling sighed some and looked back ahead.

"For quite awhile now. We were watching your father first, Harry Convington, then you took over his prosuite in finding the scrolls. Then of course Melinda Pappas steps into the scene, which actually worried us more. With her help we knew Janice that you would move faster with Mel's talent in translating that she learned from her father. We thought you two would never make it this far or even escape from Ares' tomb. But you have and with as much information you have discovered on Xena and Gabrielle there is no way the Amazons can cover up their existence any longer" The tall southerner looked to the leader Amazon, raising an eyebrow.

"Why would you want to cover up Xena and Gabrielle's existence?" Janice also looked to Starling with the same question covering her features. Starling sighed and gazed at the two women briefly then looking back ahead.

"Because there is a legend handed down from generation to generation, that says there once was an immortal name Velasca. One day she would be freed from her cave imprisonment. Once she is freed she would seek out Xena's remains and cast a spell. Supposedly the spell would let Ares the God of War control her soul, he would own her soul. He would be able to reborn her into the world as many times as he wished and she would be under his control. If Ares had Xena's soul, which would mean war would break out through the world. Ares only wants to..." Mel broke in, quietly finishing the Amazon Queen's words.

"conquer the world in bloodshed" Starling sighed shaking her head in agreement, Janice though was still not satisfied.

"But that doesn't explain why you decided to take us to Xena and Gabrielle's tomb" Starling grinned at Janice for a second then gazed back ahead, stepping over some fallen branches.

"Well the legend continues to say that sometime in the future that two women that are soulmates will come seeking the Warrior Princess and bard's coffins. And that will be quite determined to find them" The curly-blond sighed and shook her head some as a confused expression crossed her face. "But the rest of the story is a bit mixed up. There is one version saying that one of the soulmates will either set free Xena's soul, free Xena and Gabrielle, or bring back Gabrielle. We are not sure which one is true, but either way they will have the power to stop the bloodshed" Mel's face took on a questioning face as she pushed her glass back up and replied to the Queen.

"And exactly how are Janice and I suppose to free Xena and or Gabrielle?" The amber eyes continued to gaze ahead as Starling recognized familiar area close to the died Amazon village.

"Supposedly there is a scroll located within one of the tombs of Xena and Gabrielle, that will bring them or one of them back" Janice quickly looked at the Queen Amazon with angered.

"One of the tombs? What the hell do you mean one of the tombs? You saying you don't know if the tomb in the Amazon village is theirs?" Starling gazed down at the small blond with a stern face and replied in a deep tone.

"We don't know which tomb is theirs. There could be hundreds for all we know to throw off people. All we know is one of them contains the enchanted scroll that will bring them back" Starling paused then turned back to the woods. "We only still exist because we are to protect the knowledge and tombs of Xena and her bard" Janice took a few breaths calming herself, then she felt a warm hand grasp her left hand. Looking over to Mel, the archeologist saw her soulmate smiling down at her, which made Janice melt into. Then she looked back to the strong Amazon Queen.

"So why haven't any of the Amazons just found the scroll and read it?" Starling sighed trying to calm herself as well.

"Because the scroll can only be read by one of the two women in the legend. It wont

work otherwise, if it did we would have done it a long time ago" Janice took a few deep breaths finally feeling relief flood her senses.

"Okay well just show Mel and I this tomb and we'll figure this out" Starling nodded lightly and noticed smoke ahead, recognizing their destination.

"Well we are almost there now" The curly-blond pointed ahead to where there was a beginnings of a hut and an area in the woods that was clear of trees. Both soulmates looked ahead to see the hut with smoke flowing freely from the top. Mel then questioned the Queen in her deep accent.

"Who lives in the hut?" Starling smiled as she admired her small home.

"Sylvia, Hellenes, and I all live in there. That's our home since we were around twenty" Mel look at Starling with a confused eyes. "You see there are actually about thirty of the few hundred Amazons in the world that actually can fight. Us three were brought here when we were young and learned about this land, our duties, and how to fight by the three Amazons before" Starling paused as they all began to climb down a small hill into the dead village. "Probably within ten years or so we'll have three young Amazons brought here to take over our jobs once we teach them. Once done so we'll return to civilization" The belle nodded in understanding, intrigued by today's Amazons.

"So are all the Amazons direct descendents of the ancient Greek Amazons?" Starling nodded some as they walked closer to the village.

"Yes we all are, we all work together over distance to tell get status on people looking for anything on Xena and Gabrielle. It works out well our system, nobody other then you two know of our existence" As the five women stepped into the dead village, Starling gazed around searching for something. She quickly spotted the small hillside. "This way" The Amazon Queen stepped ahead walking towards the hill with the other women following behind. Mel began to release Janice's hand, but felt the small hand tighten its grip, making the tall woman grin. Once reaching the hillside, Starling began to move branches out of the way, revealing a gray stone door. The Amazon Queen began to push on it, but the door wouldn't budge. Then quickly Sylvia and Hellenes both helped their Queen. The door slowly began to jar open but not enough, the Amazons continued to push with their strength. Mel then joined in reaching high above the Amazons. The tall belle pushed hard and the stone door began to move more. Finally all four females managed to push the door back. As soon as the door was open a strong musty sent enclosed around the women. The archeologist couldn't help but grin, she always loved that smell. The women walked inside and ducked their heads down at hearing a loud snap. Quickly seven torches within self lit, making it easier to see within. Janice almost laughed at the memory the torches brought, Greek fire again. Janice gazed around inside of the tomb, her eyes widen as she looked around. This couldn't be, could it? Mel stepped up beside her soulmate gripping the blond's shoulder.

"Mel please tell me I am not seeing this?" The translator sighed feeling what Janice was in her gut. The three Amazons for their part stood behind the soulmates gazing around. "This is not real Mel, there has to be something in here. Why the hell would they put that big door out front for this?" The southerner didn't know what to say to her partner. She just continued to stare in the tomb. There was nothing inside, not one

thing to be found except dirt. Mel didn't want to believe this either, after all their work and traveling. Reaching behind, the dark haired woman rubbed Janice's back trying to sooth her soulmate. Janice just stared in disbelief, this wasn't happening to her. She had never had such a large sinking feeling before. Mel continued to search the room with her eyes, hoping to find something. Then she spotted something that seemed random to her. Moving to the wall next to her, the translator grabbed a torch and walked over to the thing she spotted earlier. Janice caught this and followed her soulmate to the wall in front of them. Mel ran her right hand over an "X" marked on a square stone in the wall. Janice gazed at it in questioning. Both women looked at each other and knew something, what the other was feeling. They both were feeling some kind of deja vu with this stone. Janice looked harder at the stone, seeing that it looked like it could be removed by the cracks around it. Reaching into her leather jacket, the small woman pulled her knife out. She easily wedged it into the crack and began to jiggle it. Finally pulling it out enough, Janice put her knife back in her leather jacket pocket. Mel grasped the stone and pulled it out of the wall and dropped the gray stone to the floor. Reaching in, the tall female felt something made of paper and wood. Quickly she pulled it out, revealing a scroll in her large hand. Both woman stared at it wide eyed, Mel gulped while Janice felt the excitement burn through her. Green eyes gazed at the scroll intensely as the belle unrolled it before them. Janice stared at the scroll trying to make it out but couldn't, Mel doing the same with no luck. Mel moved the torch away and looked to her lover.

"Janice we need to go outside to read this thing" Janice nodded and Mel placed the torch back on the wall heading outside with the scroll. The other four women following behind feeling ecstatic. Starling had to grin, the legend might just be true and she was beginning to believe it. Once stepping outside Mel stood in the middle as her soulmate was to her right, Starling to her left and the other two Amazons directly behind. "Well this isn't Gabrielle's hand writing that's for sure" Janice looked up at Mel.

"What does it say Mel?" The tall woman moved her glasses back up in place and gazed down at the scroll. Slowly the Greek letters began to translate to the southerner belle.

"Okay it says;

The power of Artemis and Aphrodite will bring the two greatest heroes back into the world to stop the evil that is trying to conquer the known world. No force can stop these two, they are protected by Artemis and Aphrodite, the chosen.

On this day the mightiest warrior in the known world, Xena Warrior Princess and the legendary Amazon Queen, Gabrielle, will be reborn once more"

As Mel spoke the last word, nobody said anything, taking in the meaning. Then looking up they all watched as the white clouds above began to swirl around in a circle. The wind began to pick up, making Janice reach up to hold her hat down on her head. Now the swirling clouds separated leaving an opening in the center while the wind picked up more. Then lighting bolts began to crash down into the ground from the opening, creating a dust cloud. The women all stared in amazement as the bolt continued to hit the ground, the wind blowing with the swirling clouds and dirty

flying in the air making it hard to see. Now the lighting bolts began to cease going back up into the sky. The clouds enclosed the center and began to slowly stop swirling. Looking in front of them, the females began to notice two forms; one tall the other small. Janice could only make out the outlines, not the faces or bodies. It was too hard to see with the dirt still in the air, but the wind was dying. As the two figures neared, the dirt began to settle to the ground once more. Janice was beginning to make the two people out better, it looked like the small form was carrying some kind of walking stick in her right hand. Finally the dust and dirt settled leaving the five women to gaze at the two new comers. Mel gasped in surprised, dropping the scroll to the ground. Janice just stared in shock, as did the three Amazons. The two figures gazed at each other with confused and questioning eyes. Then they walked up closer to the five females, only leaving a couple of paces between them all.

"Mel I think I am going crazy" The tall belle shook her head some and continued to stare at the two new people.

"Hun I think I am going crazy with you, we are soulmates" Starling walked up closer to Janice and Mel.

"Well we are going crazy with you two also" Janice looked at Starling with stunned face and nodded then looked back to the two figures. The archeologist took in her view, their faces, bodies, and clothes. The taller one had dark hair reaching below her shoulders and bangs. She could easily see the blue eyes from here along with her strong composure, brown leather and bronze armor. On her back was a hilt of a sword with a blue gem and on her side was a round weapon that gleamed in the late sun. The tall woman looked exactly like Mel, but with a stronger essence to her. To the tall woman's left was her smaller companion, she had long strawberry-blond hair, sparkling green eyes, a wood staff in hand that looked worn. Her clothes were simple, dark green halter top with a brown skirt and brown boots. She seemed to hold herself with a strong composure too, her features telling of years of experience. What Janice couldn't believe about the small woman the most, was that she look exactly like her, a mirror image. It almost scared Janice about the exactness of the two women before her. Janice finally shook her head out of the trance and took a step towards them and closer to Mel in defense.

"So I take it you two must be Xena and Gabrielle?" The tall warrior herself took a step forward in front of her companion defensively.

"I am Xena and that is Gabrielle" Janice could feel a shiver run down her back at the deep voice reminding her of Mel. "The voices were even the same, this is amazing. We are like carbon copies of Xena and Gabrielle" Janice looked back up into intense strong blue eyes.

"I am Doctor Janice Covington" The archeologist looked to Gabrielle briefly who was gazing back at her intently. Her green eyes contained surprise in them, probably because of the similarities. The small northerner then looked back to the tall woman before her. "I am Gabrielle's descendent...not like you couldn't tell or anything" Janice lightly grunted to herself and saw as the warrior's lips formed into a small grin. Now a tall form walked up behind Janice, the small blond automatically knowing whom it was. Janice turned to her soulmate. "And of course this is your descendent, Melinda Pappas" The taller warrior turned her hard gaze on Mel, looking deep into blue eyes. Slowly Xena began to grin and both tall women grasped arms, shaking. Now the small

blond behind Xena walked up beside the tall warrior. Xena looked down at her soulmate and smiled. Then she looked back up first to Janice.

"Gabrielle this Janice Covington" The bard smiled and took Janice's hand shaking it tightly.

"Just call me Janice" Gabrielle nodded and continued to smile. Then the ex-warlord looked to the tall belle smiling at her.

"And this is Melinda Pappas" The small bard also took Mel's hand shaking it as she gazed into intense blue eyes.

"And you can just call me Mel" Gabrielle grinned some and released the tall woman's hand. Then she finally spoke to everybody.

"Well this is certainly amazing. Didn't expect the two women to bring us back to be our descendents Xena" The warrior looked to her soulmate smiling at her.

"Yup, neither did I, kinda caught be off guard" Gabrielle rolled her eyes and spoke to the warrior in a teasing tone.

"Nothing catches you off guard Warrior Princess" The warrior grunted and looked back to the descendents, with a straight face. She then looked behind them, seeing three women dressed as Amazons. Janice quickly caught where the warrior's eyes went too. Turning around the archeologist called the Amazons over to join. Both Xena and Gabrielle stared again as the three Amazons approached. "By the gods, Xena they look just like..." Xena looked at her bard then back at the three Amazons as they stood before them. Then the warrior finished her bard's words

"Ephiny, Solari, and Eponin. This is really amazing how much their just like them too" After Xena said the names, the three Amazons looked at each other in questioning then back to Xena and Gabrielle. Then Hellenes spoke in a bit of a confused tone to the warrior.

"You must have us mistaken, I am Hellenes and our Queen..." The dark-haired Amazon nodded to Starling. "Is Starling and Sylvia is second in command" The bard looked to Starling, who was Ephiny's duplicate.

"So you are the Queen of the Amazons today?" The curly-blond smiled and then nodded.

"But you are Gabrielle, the greatest Amazon Queen ever?" Gabrielle stared at the other woman for a second then at her warrior who just grinned back.

"I suppose so, didn't think I was so great or anything" After the small blond's words, the three Amazons fell to their knees and bowed their head to Gabrielle. The small blond sighed and shook her head, Xena just continued to grin.

"What's the grin about?" The tall warrior bit her lower lip to keep from laughing.

"Love, their your Amazons" The bard didn't respond at first but lightly glared at her soulmate, then she began to grin as well.

"And you're my Amazon too" Slowly the warrior's grin turned more devilishly and

quietly whispered something into the bard's ear.

"I am and so much more of yours" Gabrielle's eyes widen and a deep red began to creep up her neck to the top of her head. The bard then lightly coughed and noticed all eyes were on her.

"I'll remember that Xena, good idea" The bard could feel everybody staring at her so she quickly changed the subject. "Please Starling, Sylvia, and Hellenes stand and as always just call me Gabrielle, none of that formal stuff" Slowly the three Amazons rose to their feet smiling to Gabrielle. Both Mel and Janice looked at each other in questioning. Neither could believe who stood before them, it had to be a dream. The bard then looked to Janice and Mel with a serious face. "So exactly what is going on here?" The archeologist was the first to come out of her daze as she looked back to her ancestor.

"What do you mean? Mel and I have been researching Xena and your history for a few years now" The bard arched an eyebrow and Xena quickly intervened.

"What we want to know Janice, is have you dealt with Velasca or Ares by any chance?" The small leather jacketed blond looked to Mel who grinned down at her then look to the tall warrior.

"Well we had a run in with Ares about a year ago. But not with anybody by the name of Velasca. Who is she might I ask?" The bard dropped her gaze from the descendents, but felt a warm arm come around her shoulders, the warmth and strength comforting her. Deep blue eyes stared back at Mel and the northerner with a serious face.

"Velasca was an Amazon at one time who wanted to be Queen. She lost the right of caste to be Queen by Gabrielle. She challenged Gabrielle and failed, but in the process she got a hold of some ambrosia. Once she became a god, she sought out revenge on Gabrielle and the Amazons, but only ended up getting trapped in a cavern. Since then we don't know what has become of her. We are assuming she is free by now and needs to be stopped" Janice dropped her gaze and stared at the ground, Mel could tell her soulmate was thinking. Then she slowly looked back up at the strong warrior.

"She is after your remains right?" Xena nodded in answer and the archeologist began to slightly grin. "Do you know where your tomb and remains are located?" The warrior nodded again as everybody listened to the small archeologist's words.

"They are not located far from here, in an out of way place. We had many dummy tombs made up to throw people off. The one in Amphiplois is the only one to contain our belongings" The small blond nodded remembering the tomb that her and Mel had discovered a few months back.

"Well what if we headed to your tombs? I mean think about it, more than likely this Velasca person has been stalking Mel and I" Janice tore her gaze from Xena to the curly blond Amazon Queen. "Starling you said yourself that you had been keeping records on Mel and I because we were making such progress" Starling slightly nodded and continued to listen to the small blonde. Janice then looked back to the ex-warlord and her bard. "So I am sure Velasca has been watching us, as soon as we make it known that we discovered Xena and Gabrielle's remains, she'll come after them" Xena looked down at her partner whom the warrior could tell was thinking by the way the

bard's face was constructed. The bard felt her soulmate's intense blue eyes on her and she looked up to meet a serious face.

"What you think Xena?" The warrior sighed and looked up for a brief moment then back at her partner.

"I just wish we knew whether Velasca is freed or not, that would help things out more. But I think its a good plan over all, I just hope we can keep an immortal from our coffin" Gabrielle sighed some and then nodded faintly then she looked to her descendant.

"Let's try it" The blond then looked back to her soulmate. "Xena, did Artemis say if we had a time limit or no on how long we are allowed to be alive?" The Warrior Princess thought about that for a few moments recalling the goddess's words from so long ago.

"No she didn't Gabrielle, only till we are done our mission" Janice smiled at the tall warrior and her, her min still in a bit of shock. Then she looked to Xena with a questioning face.

"So exactly where is the tomb?" The warrior looked down at her soulmate's descendant with a small grin forming on her lips.

"Its within the Amazonian Mountains on the western side, a bit more north" The small blond's expression dropped, temper rising.

"God damn it, are you serious?" Xena's face went serious as she nodded and crossed her arms against her chest. The archeologist then felt a warm presence step closer to her, calming her senses. "Well gee I can't wait" Janice then turned her head to look up at the translator "to go over those funtastic mountains mountains...again" One dark eyebrow raised at the small blond. Janice just grinned back at her soulmate, then looked back to Xena and Gabrielle. "What about food? Mel and I only have enough for each other" The small bard grinned to her descendant and playfully jabbed her soulmate in the stomach with her elbow. Xena quickly looked down at her partner with a curious face.

"Xena can hunt something down for us, not a problem" Janice merely nodded her understanding and then looked to Starling. The curly blond easily caught the gaze and knew what the unspoken question was.

"Janice, as much as we would like to help out, the Amazons have a job to carry out" The archeologist kept a straight stoic face and nodded. Then she put her hand out, Starling tightly grasped it.

"Thanks Starling for all your help. Mel and I will have to come visit. Would love to learn more about the Amazons" The Amazon Queen nodded and smiled brightly at her.

"Would be happy to tell you about the Amazons" Starling then reached into a pouched hooked to her side. Carefully she pulled out a small golden bird, the same bird on the Amazon's sword hilts. The Amazon Queen gazed at it in admiration then handed it to the small archeologist. "Keep a hold of this. All Amazons wear a necklace with this bird. Show that small gold bird to them and they'll know you're friends. The Amazon

will then help you with all their power" The small blond looked down at the article in her hand, watching it glisten in the sun. She then slipped it inside of her leather jacket, smiling at the Amazons.

"Thanks again Starling. Let Mel and I know if you ever need anything" The curly-blond Amazon smiled again and nodded, then she turned to her two friends. All three Amazons then walked into the woods, disappearing into it among the trees. Now four pairs of eyes turned back to each other. Xena looked to Janice and Mel with a stern face. She then spoke to both women in a deep rich tone.

"Lets go" The small blond nodded under her hat. Both Janice and her soulmate adjusted their leather packs on their backs. Xena and Gabrielle turned around to face the mountains and stared walking. Janice quickly followed behind, but saw her soulmate wasn't moving. Looking back the small blond spotted her partner grab the scroll of the ground she had dropped earlier. Mel then jogged up behind her lover and placed the scroll in Janice's pack. After placing the scroll in the bag, the belle patted the pack and evilly grinned to Janice. The northerner's face turned to curious over the grin she was receiving. The dark tall woman leaned down to Janice and whispered to her in her strongest southerner accent.

"I can't wait to hike over those fucking mountains" The belle grinned again and jogged off to catch up with her ancestors. Janice stood in a bit of shock over her soulmate's words, not expecting them. Then she started to jog up to the three other women while yelling to her lover.

"Melinda Pappas, I can't believe you said that! What happened to my polite southern belle?" Finally catching up, Janice walked beside Mel, whom walked beside Gabrielle, the bard next to her soulmate. The translator looked to her archeologist with an innocent face.

"Whatever do you talk about Doctor Covington?" Both Gabrielle and Xena looked at each other with a grin. The warrior then quietly reached over grasping the bard's hand. Xena then looked up from loving green eyes to her descendents and Janice. The warrior almost had to laugh at the archeologist's face, which was a mix of still shock and devilishness. 'Just like Gabrielle' the warrior began to muse to herself. The ex-warlord continued to watch them as Mel leaned down to kiss Janice on her forehead just under her hat. The blond smiled to the tall translator and wrapped her arm around the tall dorm's waist. The belle then brought her left arm around to the archeologist's shoulder securely. Janice then looked to her descendents, catching blue eyes already looking back at her. The blond smiled at the leather-clad woman and spoke in a deep voice.

"So Xena what is Velasca like exactly?" The warrior looked ahead, she then looked down at her bard. Gabrielle looked up and quickly understood the look on her lover's face. 'Time to do that bard thing' The small bard then looked to Janice with a small hint of anger touching her features.

"Velasca was one of the Amazons originally. She was really anger stricken and wanted to rule the Amazons. Bad attitude and will do anything to get what she wants" The archeologist just simple nodded and looked back ahead as they made their way through the woods. The tall warrior's anger shot up from this, Janice is disrespecting Gabrielle. Gabrielle caught this by Xena's jaw tightening in control over her anger

emotions. The bard tightened her grip on Xena's hand briefly, then loosened it. The warrior looked down to loving emerald eyes, making Xena smile. The warrior knew that her bard probably wanted to give Janice to get to know her first. Otherwise the warrior knew this wasn't going to be a pleasant trek.

For awhile the pairs walked in silence, Xena and Gabrielle close to each other, hand in hand, Mel and Janice wrapped up in each other's arms. Mel for her part liked it being quiet once in awhile, but this was nerving to her. She then finally decided to break the silence and spoke with her best southern drawl.

"So where are we stopping for the night?" The warrior was the one to retort to the question, somewhat glad of it.

At the foot of the mountains we should make it there close to sunset" Mel nodded and removed her dark glasses, then gazed at the western sun. She guessed it would be another hour or so till it hit dusk. Mel then placed her glasses inside of her shirt pocket, feeling the weight of them on her nose from earlier. Reaching up with her free hand, the belle rubbed her temples.

"What are we doing for our dinner?" The warrior grinned and looked to her bard, who spotted the small twinkle in her blue eyes.

"Well that's Chief Gabrielle's department" The bard grunted and lightly slapped the warrior in her stomach. "Hmmm and I think we'll make it there just in time for dinner" Gabrielle rolled her eyes while Mel chuckled some.

"You have that problem too? Now I defiantly know where Janice gets it from" The small archeologist looked up to meet loving sky blue eyes, she had to grin. Gabrielle herself looked up to meet another set of intense blue eyes. The small bard melted in them, she smiled up getting a smile in return. The Amazon Queen then looked back ahead, gazing at the woods. Then she decided to continue with the subject at hand.

"Xena we are going to be near a stream right?" The warrior nodded as she watched her surroundings. "How about you catch us some fish and I'll cook" The Warrior Princess nodded and let a small grin play on her lips. Mel thought about that liking the idea of fresh food for once. Then it occurred to her that more then likely that her soulmate would still be hungry afterwards. The belle then began to grin as an idea came to her.

"I'll take care of desert for us'all" The small bard looked to her left at Xena's descendent with a curious face. Mel caught those green eyes and looked to the small blond as Gabrielle spoke to her.

"What are you going to make?" The tall belle smirked at the bard, a twinkle entered her pale blue eyes. Then Mel spoke in her southerner drawl.

"Y'all will just have to wait till later" The blond archeologist had to chuckle some, she loved it when her soulmate did surprises. Janice would never tell Mel that though, but she knew Melinda knew her secret. The small blond was the first to retort to the dark-haired belle as she tipped her hat back some.

"Come on Mel, give" the belle turned her head to her left to looked down at a smirking soulmate.

"Oh no Janice Covington you can wait. Y'all like this surprise" The small archeologist

began to evilly grin back to her lover. She retorted to the southerner in a low husky voice.

"Oh I always am intrigued by your surprises" Mel devilishly grinned back to her soulmate and briefly squeezed Janice's shoulder in response. Both the warrior and her bard heard the conversation clearly, making Gabrielle grin to Xena. The warrior just rolled her eyes then looked back to the path in the woods. The bard giggled a few times and felt a warm hand tighten, Gabrielle grinned to herself.

As the four women walked over a small hill in the forest, the tall warrior recognized their destination. The archeologist looked around spotting a stream off to the right and an open area to the left of the stream. To Janice it seemed like a perfect spot, which amazed her, how the warrior knew of it. The blond bard quickly recognized the area she should have guessed. Xena looked down to her bard, Gabrielle was gazing at the spot. The Warrior Princess saw her soulmate, whom was grinning as the memories flashed across Gabrielle's face.

This is where they confessed their love for each other.

Slowly the two pairs made their way down the hill to the open circular spot. The bard looked to her soulmate, evilly grinning to her. Brilliant sky blue eyes turned towards the bard, both women became lost in the others loving eyes. The memories flooded their minds, both remembering that special night, the night everything changed. The night when the warrior's walls came crashing down and made both women complete.

As the two soulmates became lost, Janice and Mel watched with intent. They both knew this was a special spot to the warrior and her bard. Xena was the first to come out of the trance. She looked to her decedents, Gabrielle doing the same afterwards. The leather-clad woman was the one to speak in her hard commanding tone.

"Why don't you two collect the fire wood and make the fire pit, get it going. Gabrielle and I will take care of the fish" Janice nodded then smiled slightly to the ex-warlord. Xena didn't smile back, but rather her blue eyes went cold at the small blond. The archeologist could feel the hairs on her neck stand up. Both Mel and Gabrielle took quick notice of Xena's cold look. The southerner moved closer to Janice, protective instincts coming to life. Gabrielle though reached for Xena's arm, grasping it tightly, feeling Xena's muscles tense. Then Gabrielle spoke in a low quiet and soothing tone.

"Come on love" The ex-warlord looked down at her partner and nodded. The two strong soulmates turned around and padded down to the stream, out of site.

"What the hell was that about?" The translator raised an eyebrow and reach into her shirt pocket. Pulling out her dark glasses, Mel started walking back into the woods with her partner. Mel looked to her soulmate as the blond straightened up with a log in her arms. Putting her glasses on, the belle spoke in a serious tone.

"Janice, don't you know what you've been doing?" The small archeologist furrowed her

brows trying to figure it out. "Love you've been really mean to Gabrielle" The small woman shot her head towards her soulmate quickly.

"What? Hell, I haven't said a god damn word to her" The belle sighed as she picked up

a few branches from the ground.

"Exactly Janice you have been ignoring her which is angering Xena real fast. You have no right to be disrespecting Gabrielle hun" The archeologist frowned as she collected a few large pieces of wood.

"But..." The belle straightened up and turned to her soulmate with a serious and stern face.

"But what? Love you know you have no right to be ride to Gabrielle. You need to give her a chance. Remember when you first met me you thought I was some spoiled brat, living on my father's reputation. Well look at where you and I are now together. Give her a chance Janice, you know I am right" The small blond sighed, feeling herself beat. Slowly she raised her emerald eyes from the ground to meet her soulmate's. The small blond slightly grinned, Mel mirroring it back.

"You're right Mel, I'll give Gabrielle a chance" The southerner smiled and stepped up closer to her soulmate and leaned down. Mel gently kissed her other half, feeling some of the branches press into her. The translator lightly chuckled in the middle of the kiss, making the blond laugh some. Ending the kiss over the laughs, the two soulmates rested their foreheads against the others. The belle was the one to break the silence with her slightly husky voice.

"Come on love, we better get that fire started"

Part 4

Section Four

~*Part 9*~

The small blond sat on the stream's edge, staff and gleaming chakram beside her on the gritty sand, while she threw in a few small rocks into the stream. In the water was a tall dark leather-clad woman, with her hands in the water, her hair up. The strawberry-blond looked up to her lover waning in the water.

"She'll come around Xena" The warrior continued to stare into the water as her hands felt around in the cool water.

"I know she will...one way or another" The bard sighed as she threw another pebble into the stream.

"Let me talk to her love" The tall woman looked up from the water to her soulmate, sitting on the sand. The warrior looked into serious green eyes. She knew Gabrielle was right and she knew she wasn't going to change her stubborn bard's mind.

"I just hope it works Gabrielle, or else I'll talk to her" The Amazon Queen raised an eyebrow at that.

"Alright tiger, just don't scare her too much if it comes to that. Janice is family as is Mel" The Warrior Princess nodded then looked back down into the water. Finally feeling her prize the warrior's large hands grasped a fish. Quickly she brought it up, tossing it to her soulmate. Gabrielle neatly caught the fish in mid-air, placing it on the ground. Looking back, the bard saw another trout coming at her, she quickly snatched

it out of the air. After placing the trout by the first one, the bard looked back to her grinning companion in waist high water. The small woman raised an eyebrow at the warrior, whom grinned even more devilishly. In a flash, the ex-warlord tossed another large fish at the bard, but a little to the bard's right. Gabrielle leaned to her right, just grasping the fish by its tail, almost falling over. The blond released her breath as she straightened back up, placing the third trout with the others. She then looked to Xena, glaring lightly to her, but also grinning to the warrior. Xena deeply chuckled then a twinkle entered the woman's eyes, worrying the bard. In a split second the leather-clad woman threw a fourth trout at Gabrielle, but higher and far to her right. The small female launched herself up into the air from her sitting position towards the flying fish. Small hands tightly grasped the wet fish around its middle section. After grabbing the fish in mid-air, the bard landed hard in the sand on her stomach, fish being held up by her hands over her head. Gabrielle shook her head, flinging some sand out of her hair. The bard rose up from the ground tossing the fish on top of the other ones. She then turned her head to look at her smirking dark haired warrior. Xena could see the anger written all over Gabrielle's face, her tightening jaw and hands balling up into fists.

"Xena!" The tall woman's eyes widen as she held back her laugh. Now the bard took a few steps back and took off charging towards the strong warrior.

"Gabrielle...Gabrielle!" The blue-eyed female caught what her soulmate was planning to do. As soon as the water reached the running woman's ankles, she leaped aiming for Xena. The Warrior Princess braced herself for the impact and to catch Gabrielle. The Amazon Queen slammed directly into Xena, sending the warrior off her feet. The leather-clad woman quickly wrapped her arms securely around the small woman. Both women went barreling into the deep water, Xena first then Gabrielle on top of the warrior. As the water engulfed them, Xena began to swim back to the top, the bard still in her arms. Finally they surfaced, both gasping for air and shaking the water out of their hair. Gabrielle looked to Xena as they both bobbed up and down in the water, wrapped in each other's arms. The bard spoke in an outraged voice to Xena.

"I can't believe you did that!" The warrior grinned then tightened her arms more around Gabrielle as she kept them afloat.

"Me? I can't believe you leapt into me like that" Instantly it was the bard's turn to grin, but more sheepishly.

"Well, I knew you'd catch me. Besides you know how I am when I am angry. I don't think before I leap" The stoic warrior grunted and grinned smugly to her soulmate.

"Quite literally too" The bard's eyes widen some and she released her hands from Xena. Now Xena felt water being splashed at her, she quickly released her partner. Both women splashed each other for a few moments, neither being able to see anything. Suddenly water stopped coming in the bard's direction, she stopped splashing. Looking around Gabrielle tried to find Xena, not seeing her.

"Xena?" The bard swam in a complete circle, looking for her partner, but not finding her. "Uh oh, I am in for it now...ah!" The small woman felt two strong familiar hands grasp each of her sides. Rapidly she was pulled under water, a pair of warm lips captured Gabrielle's. The kiss was deep and passionate, one trying to consume the other. As they kissed, the bard could feel Xena pushing them towards shallower

waters. Both women slowly rose up out of the water, still passionately kissing. The warrior was the first one to break the deep kiss from lack of air. Gabrielle opened her eyes to gaze back into passionate filled eyes. The tall woman pulled her soulmate in closer while both stood in waist high water. The Warrior Princess lowered her head, placing butterfly kisses on the bard's neck, tasting the spring water. The Amazon Queen moaned in reaction and rested her head between Xena's breasts, as well as wrapped her own arms around the tall frame. Gabrielle then realized where she was and spoke to Xena in a low husky voice.

"Xena, we can't do this here" The older woman stopped her pursuit and placed her chin on top of her lover's head. Both females closed their eyes, surroundings themselves in the other's warmth as they held one another. Slowly blue eyes opened once more, gazing at the sandy shore with four fish, she grinned. Gabrielle then leisurely opened her eyes, but continued to listen to the rhythm of her partner's heartbeat. The bard sighed, then she tightened her arms briefly, feeling the warrior do the same. Xena then dropped her arms, as did her partner. The stoic warrior decided to break the silence with a teasing tone as they both made their way onto the beach, by the fish, chakram, and the small woman's staff.

"We better get dinner going 'cause I know there's a hungry bard and archeologist" The small blond chuckled some as she treaded over to her staff. Reaching down the small female collected her staff in one hand and two trout in the other hand. Rising back up, the bard saw Xena release her wet hair, letting it hang down. The warrior then looked to the bard with a small grin. "We are going to be cold tonight Gabrielle" The bard leered back as she leaned against her staff, watching the warrior put her boots on tying them.

"Well I am sure we'll find a way to stay warm, besides it's your fault" The tall woman arched a bark eyebrow at the young woman as she reached down.

"And how you figure that, since you knocked us into the water?" The blond chuckled some and watch as Xena stood up straight with the other two fish in hand and chakram in the other. Gabrielle couldn't help but grin, as Xena glistened in the late sun, beads of water slowly trickling down her body, her dark hair wet, making her look alluring and powerful. Gabrielle noticed the water drops outlined the warrior's muscles and highlighting her soft skin. The bard then finally spoke to Xena, her voice a bit husky.

"You sure it was only my throwing the fish at you that tempted you to knock me into the water?" Finally the bard's eyes stopped wondering over the strong body before her and made their way up to Xena's eyes. The tall warrior saw that sparkle in Gabrielle's eyes become stronger, her beautiful lips forming into a sexy smile.

"Oh there could be defiantly be another reason as to why I got you wet" Now it was Xena's eyes that started to twinkle in the sunlight. The warrior took a moment to take in her soulmate's body. The sun behind the bard highlighted her strawberry-blond hair, her skin glowing in the sun. "The water as well rolled down the bard's body, making her glisten and sparkle. Her green top was darker from the water, making her breasts more noticeable as Xena followed a drop of water rolling down between Gabrielle's cleavage. Looking down more the tall woman watched as beads of water ran down the bard's muscular mid-drift which Xena longed to touch. Now she watched as the water traced the blond's well-defined legs and calves, Xena memorized the site. Gabrielle

felt herself go warm and not from the sun. The small woman was happy that she could freely let her eyes wander over Xena's body and Xena being able to do the same to the bard. Now the ex-warlord met the bard's eyes once more, she then leaned in, whispering to Gabrielle in an erotic voice.

"I bet there is, but I am glad you decided to get your self wet as well" The Amazon Queen felt by then extremely warm over the closeness and words and watched as Xena started walking towards the camp. The bard shook her head some and whispered to no one but herself.

"Anytime" Gabrielle grinned to her self then quickly walked to catch up with her partner, finally saying something to Xena. "You know that would have been your trout of it landed in the sand" Xena looked at her soulmate grinning to her as she walked.

"Could have washed it off easily. Besides I knew you would catch it with no problem" The small woman rolled her eyes as she walked along the path carrying the two fish.

"Would have been one crunchy fish, blah" Xena laughed deeply as she thought about that. She then looked at her smirking soulmate again for a moment then looked back to the footpath.

"Then I'd have had some of yours my bard" Gabrielle chuckled some as she kept her grin and retorted to that statement.

"Maybe, mmm only if you'd let me feed it to you" Now the ex-warlord felt a bit heated over the bard's remark.

"Oh you are a bad bard" The blond looked to the raven-haired woman with a smug grin.

"I've learn it all from my soulmate" Xena grinned for a moment then tried to look innocent only sending the bard into a spell of giggles. Finally stepping onto the camp, Gabrielle handed Xena her two trout. The tall form quickly padded into the woods to clean the fish for dinner. The bard quickly spotted the roaring fire in the middle of the camp, she walked over to it. On the other side was the Amazon's Queens descendent, sitting on a logs staring into the fire. The bard could tell Janice was thinking with the way her features shifted between thoughts. The blond almost had to laugh, amazed at how much her and Janice were exact. Slowly green eyes came to and looked up to meet another set of intense glowing green eyes. The archeologist patted a spot by her on the log, Gabrielle nodding in understanding. Walking around the bard sat on the log beside Janice and placed her staff on the ground behind the log. Then the small bard spoke to her descendent a quiet voice.

"So where is Mel?" The archeologist didn't respond right away, but continued to stare into the fire. Finally she looked at her ancestor with a small smile, which even warmed the bard's heart to see. Janice noticed the setting sun behind Gabrielle making the bard glow with different shades of red.

"Mel headed into the woods looking for something for her dessert" The small bard began to grin, happy that Janice was talking to her.

"Do you have any idea what she'll make?" Now the blind archeologist began to grin to

Gabrielle.

"I've got no idea. Could be anything when it comes to Mel, she is real good at surprises" The bard chuckled some, reminding her of her own soulmate. The Amazon Queen then watched as the archeologist removed her hat, placing it with her pack at the end of the log. Gabrielle was amazed once more how much her and Janice looked alike as well as their voices. Although she did notice Janice talked in a harder tone, the kind of tone Gabrielle would use if she were angry.

"Mmm Xena is quiet good with surprises herself" Janice grinned to Gabrielle, then turned her head to somebody walking into the camp. With strength, a tall dark-haired leather-clad woman walked over to the strawberry-blond bard. The Amazon Queen looked up into pale sapphire eyes, which moved down to her large hands. Gabrielle looked into Xena's hand, which contained fish meat, the blond grinned. Janice had caught site of the fish and had leaned over to her and Mel's packs. Finding the object, the archeologist sat back up and turned to the warrior and Gabrielle.

"Here you might need this" The small Amazon turned to a frying pan for cooking the fish in Janice's hand. Gabrielle gratefully took it smiling.

"Thanks Janice. I'd better get these cooked, I'm starved" The warrior grinned as did the other blond.

"I second that" The bard chuckled at her descendant then stood with the frying pan. Both Xena and Gabrielle padded over to the other side of the fire. Carefully the bard placed some of the fish into the pan from Xena's hands. As they did this, the warrior sensed a presence coming into the camp, a familiar once. Across from the fire from Xena and her bard, a dark southern beauty stepped into the camp. Janice looked from the fire to her right to spot her soulmate in her khaki pants with sky blue shirt on with the sleeves rolled up. The blond smiled as Mel looked to her and walked over to the small woman. The archeologist noticed the belle carried a small brown canvas bag filled with something or another. Mel bent down and placed the bad on the ground by their packs, then she opened her pack digging through it. Grabbing the article, Mel gazed at it in the bag to confirm it was what she needed. Finally she recognized it in the dim light of only the firelight and grinned. Closing the pack back up, she looked up to meet curious emerald eyes. The belle grinned to her soulmate, whom grinned right back in response. Slowly the translator stood back up and looked across the fire to see the warrior and her bard. Mel looked a little harder and noticed that the two women were wet.

"Oh my, how did you two get so wet?" The bard was the first to look up from the frying pan as she placed the last bit of meat on the skillet. The warrior then took the pan from the bard and stood up hooking it over the fire with the metal rack that Mel and Janice had setup earlier. Xena then looked to Mel with a small grin forming on her lips.

"We kind of fell in" Now Gabrielle rose up from the ground next to Xena and looked to Mel. The tall belle furrowed her brows as she considered that explanation.

"That must have been some fall, I reckon" The warrior chuckled some at her decedent and turned to Gabrielle who placed her hand s on her hips.

"Yes it was remarkable how we *just* fell in" The bard bit her lower lip from laughing

at Xena as she smirked at the warrior. Gabrielle then closed in the small distance, casually placing her hands on the warrior's hips. She looked up with a playful grin, her emerald eyes sparkling from the firelight.

"Yeah it was, but I enjoyed it" Slowly the ex-warlord's grin formed more into a sexy smile, the blond beginning to feel tingles all over. The tall dark-haired female leaned down, gently kissing her soulmate but the kiss became more passionate then she intended. Across the fire another pair of soulmates watched with intent, reminding them of their own relationship making them smile to one another in acknowledgement. Slowly the tall warrior pulled away, leaving the bard slightly stunned. Gabrielle easily came around and grinned up to her soulmate and turned her head towards the fish. Releasing the blond, Xena watched as the Amazon Queen pulled the skillet from the fire with well-cooked trout. Janice had noticed the food being removed and stood up from the log. Her legs ached for a moment from sitting so long, then she looked to her pack, pulling out four plates, utensils and some seasoning. Blue eyes followed her the entire time even as she put her hat back on. Janice looked up to smile to her translator, whom smiled back as she took Janice's seat from earlier. The archeologist padded around the fire to her descendants and handed over the plates to Gabrielle. The blond then opened the seasoning container and sprinkling it over the cooked fish in the pan that Gabrielle was holding and closed it back up. Next she placed the bottle of seasoning under her arm and used a small metal fork to place a piece of the fish onto the top of the plate that Xena held. As she was doing this a tall form stepped up beside Janice which made her faintly grin to herself, the bard catching it. After placing a fair amount, the archeologist lifted the plate of the stack of other plates from the warrior and handed to her soulmate with a fork. Janice repeated this until she had placed all the fish on the plates and everybody sat down to eat around the fire. Both of the dark tall beauties didn't really bother to talk to their soulmates, knowing it was hard to get them to talk when they ate. After finishing the meal, all the four women felt pretty content, Janice and Mel though were getting tired. Both wore out from the long day's trek and excitement of everything. Janice was at one end of the large log, closes to her bags, then Mel, next to the translator sat Xena then her bard. The archeologist slowly rose up and collected the plates heading down to the stream to clean them along with the small forks. After Janice had disappeared, Mel had began to move, gathering up her filled canvas bag, the object from her leather pack, a bowl, and a large cutting knife. She strolled to the opposite side of the fire, depositing the articles to the ground. Looking to Gabrielle and Xena, the belle smiled to them.

"I am going to go make sure Janice didn't "fall" in the water" The bard chuckled some while Xena just lightly grinned. Melinda grabbed the frying pan and then disappeared into the darkness of the woods. Gabrielle then looked back to Xena, smiling at her and spoke to her warrior with happiness filling her voice.

"Well love, looks like Janice is trying" The warrior nodded some and then smiled to her partner.

"Glad too, she needs to give you a chance Gabrielle" The bard grinned and leaned into Xena, resting her head against the tall woman's' shoulder. Xena quickly then brought her arm around the bard's body, protecting her.

~*~*~*~

"You were right Mel about Gabrielle, I shouldn't have been so ignorant" Mel smiled to

herself as she finish washing the last dish in the water. Rising back up, the belle shook the water off the plate and looked to her soulmate.

"Thanks for giving her a chance Janice" The small blond faintly smiled under her hat as she brushed the water of her now clean plate. Janice then turned around, collecting the clean forks of the rock. Mel the handed her partner her two plates and grabbed the pan from the rock. Janice placed them on top of her dishes, fitting neatly together.

"Well I owed her that much eh?" The blond then frowned, feeling bad about how she treated her ancestor, wishing she could take it back.

"Hun, don't beat up on yourself over that, you've given her a chance, that's what's important. I know how when you were young you had a hard time, especially with trusting people" The small woman sighed still not feeling like she had any right to act like she had.

"But still Mel, I shouldn't have been such a bitch to Gabrielle" The belle stepped closer and brought her hands to rest tightly on the archeologist's shoulders.

"Love you are not a...bitch" The southerner sighed and looked directly at her soulmate. "You are human and made a mistake, but you learned from it. You shouldn't feel bad about it, nobody is perfect. Not even the archeologist Janice Covington" The small woman let a form of a smiled edge onto her lips, standing up tall the northerner kissed Melinda on the cheek.

"Thanks Mel" The belle smiled and dropped her hands from her soulmate's shoulders. Slowly the two women began their walk back to the camp. As they started walking back the translator reached over to grasp Janice's free hand. The archeologist looked to Mel and smiled to her and they continued to walk to their safe haven. Suddenly the wind pickled up rustling the branches above them. Janice and the tall belle both stopped walking, the blond releasing her lover's hand. The archeologist listened carefully and then the sounds of branches being weighed down came to her. Then the blond quickly drew her revolver and frantically looked up into the tress, not being able to see through the darkness. Mel held her breath as she looked up to the trees as well, not seeing anything. Now the sound was clearer to the two women and it briskly moved towards them. Janice tried to pin point the sound but wasn't having any luck, but t was closing in. Now a large branch just above her creaked under something's weight. The soulmates looked straight up not seeing anything, but quickly a shiver ran down the blond's back and finished with some goosebumps. The branch jounced up and down under the thing's weight, Janice and Mel frantically looked for the source. Now the branch could be heard fling up as the sound of somebody moving within the tress began again, but its intent was to head straight for the camp.

~*~*~*~

The wind had picked up out of now where when the two lovers were just resting in each other's arms. Neither of them moved as if expecting something, Gabrielle could feel her soulmate's body tensed up. Listening hard, the warrior heard the sound of branches buckling under pressure and it was coming their way from the stream. Xena didn't move or even breathe nor did her bard, both listens to the sound coming swiftly. Now it was close to the perimeters of the camp and Xena reach behind for her sword, unsheathing it. They sat there as the sound stopped on the edge of the camp, Xena turned to where she heard it and couldn't see anything up in the trees. Now the warrior

signaled for Gabrielle to get up, which she did and kept her green eyes where she last heard the sound. The wind continued to howl, blowing the branches and leaves every which way. Beside the small bard the warrior stood in her fighting stance, sword in front to her as she eyes the trees. Now the sound came again and came directly at them from above. As soon as it came right above them, the bard felt her self-shiver and few moments then the thing in the trees rushed of among the trees to some wherein the woods. Now the shivers were gone and only left goosebumps on the bard. Xena watched where the thing had rushed off to listening to the fading sound, the wind though continued to blow. Now the ex-warlord heard the sounds of two pairs of running feet coming from the stream. Xena easily realized who it was and turned to them, and saw the archeologist and her soulmate coming, sprinting into the camp. Janice stopped just inside of the camp with Mel beside her, the blond looked around the camp with her gun still in hand, dishes and forks in the other. Slowly the wind began to die down and the archeologist stopped looking at the trees and to Xena and Gabrielle.

"Jesus Christ what the hell was that?" The strong warrior didn't say anything and looked to her soulmate, whom stood with her arms wrapped around herself. Xena placed a strong hand on Gabrielle's shoulder, making the blond turn her head to look at her. Quietly they exchanged glances, Gabrielle understanding what her partner was asking and nodding in response. The Warrior Princess removed her hand after a tight squeeze and watched as the bard dropped her arms back to her side, the feelings from earlier fleeing.

Janice and Mel had walked up to their descendents, the archeologist placing her gun back into her holster. The stoic dark-haired woman re-sheathed her sword with natural skill. Then two pairs of soulmates stared at one another, the same question hanging loose within the air. Janice was the first to offer anything out of the bunch, which was direct mostly to Gabrielle.

"Could have been an Amazon?" The bard shook her head in a no response and talked in a serious tone.

"They would have shown themselves. And we should have been able to see who ever or what ever it was up in those trees with that fire" The tall warrior nodded in agreement and looked down at Gabrielle then back to the group.

"I think its more of a who" Xena's remark was said coldly with an edge to it as she narrowed her ice eyes at the end. The bard closed her eyes to it briefly then opened them again and spoke once more.

"Besides I've never seen an Amazon move through trees at such a fast rate. The only person I've ever seen that is able to do that is Xena" The archeologist sighed, feeling a bit frustrated that she didn't have a clue as to whom it was. Mel could feel the strong tension lingering in the air, bothering her with ease. Then she decided to try and lighten things back up.

"Well there is nothing we can do about it right now. How about y'all sit down and I'll take care of the desserts" The small blond looked up at her belle, grinning some. Both Xena and Gabrielle had nodded in agreement about the idea. Mel then reached over and took the plates and forks from the small blond, now holding tight in her larger hand. The southerner grinned down at her partner and lightly pushed her towards the

log close by the fire, Janice understanding it. All three women padded over to the fire, Janice sitting down on the log followed by Gabrielle. Xena was headed to sit next to her soulmate, but stopped short and grinned to herself as she sat down on the ground. She positioned herself to in front of the bard, leaning back against the younger woman's legs. Gabrielle smirked inwardly as she felt warm leather, smooth skin, and cool brass all pressed into her legs while she reached down to run her small fingers through jet black hair. The tall warrior gave into the feeling, closing her blue eyes and letting her body relax some, but still partially tense from prior. The tall aristocrat across from the fire began to put together her surprise for her soulmate and ancestors. Janice kept a close eye on her lover, watching every move and flinch the belle made. Mel grinned to herself, realizing her partner was watching her, she loved the attention she got from this other woman. The southerner sufficiently put the dessert together then placed a certain amount on two plates. Carrying each, she first made her way over to Xena and her bard, the warrior opening her sky blue eyes from the movement and sound. Gabrielle looked up to the belle as she neared, Mel then handed one of the plates to the bard whom appreciatively took it. The ex-warlord peeked over her own shoulder to look at the plate's contents and grinned to herself as did the bard. Gabrielle then looked up to Mel from the plate with a smile she talked to the tall belle with a playful voice.

"Must run in the family, thank you Mel" Mel nodded and smiled back, out of the corner of her eye she caught her soulmate. Janice stared into the fire, but a smirk was edged into her lips, making the belle grin as well. Slowly the translator walked over to her soulmate just a few paces away to her right. Sitting next to the archeologist, the belle grinned as her soulmate kept looking into the fire with the same smirk. Placing the plate onto her lap, Mel had an idea come to her. Picking up one of the small objects covered in a thick, syrupy liquid, she put it in her mouth, but not biting down on it. Swiftly she grasped the side of Janice's face and turned the blond's head to her. Leaning in under Janice's hat, the tall woman kissed her soulmate passionately, getting her lover to open her mouth. With ease the translator slipped half of the object into Janice's mouth.

Janice for her part was utterly shocked about Mel's forwardness, she never expected her soulmate to do this in front of others let alone when it was just them. But the archeologist wouldn't complain as the taste of honey flooded her mouth. Finally, the small woman bit down, splitting the juicy object in half. Now the taste of apple zipped through her mouth, intertwining with the sweet honey. Janice thought she was in heaven, between the kiss, apple, and honey. Slowly Mel pulled back and opened her desire-filled eyes once more, gazing back into a grinning and happy lover. The belle lightly chuckled at the look of surprise and happiness on Janice's face. Then the blond spoke to her lover in a low voice for only Mel to hear.

"I'll confess, I love your surprises Mel" The tall woman began to erotically smile as she whispered back in a low but throaty voice.

"Yes, I kind of reckoned" At a leisurely pace the belle gathered another honey apple slice to give to her soulmate. Both were expecting it to be a long night with the desserts, as did another pair of lovers' close by the fire.

~*Part 10*~

Janice brought her hand up to rub her temple, but kept her green eyes shut. Gradually,

she dropped her hand back down, onto a large arm, she began to grin. She could feel the warmth of a stronger presence behind her, making her tingle all over. The small blond loved waking up into a new day like this, it always put her into a better mood. She laughed inwardly at that thought, how she used to hate mornings, always waking up early to a miserable life. But that all had changed soon as a tall southern accented beautiful woman stepped into her life. Now the archeologist could feel the heat of something touch her face, the sun, she knew it was dawn. She turned slowly in her soulmate's arms and opened her eyes to find sapphire eyes staring right back at her. The northerner began to grin and a small smug grin formed onto the belle's lips. The tall female leaned in to kiss her partner on her forehead, making Janice smile and her green eyes gleam. Mel was the first one to speak in a low soothing tone.

"We better get up love" The small archeologist nodded her agreement and felt strong arms release her. Casually a small blond got up from the bedroll followed Mel. Both women looked around the camp to spot their ancestors sitting on the log by the dead fire, eating something they couldn't tell from here. Janice looked to Mel whom shrugged her shoulder in response, making the small woman look back to the warrior and bard.

"I'll be damned they are up before us" The belle lightly grunted as she stretched her muscles, feeling the relief from it. She then turned back around to their bedroll, to see her black glasses, Janice's jacket with whip, gun, and hat. The translator reached down and grasped them and turned around to face her soulmate whom was tying her boots tight. Standing back up, the archeologist saw Melinda had her stuff and gratefully took them, slipping her gun into her holster and tying her whip to her side. Throwing her hat on over her pulled back hair, she easily slipped on her leather jacket. She then looked to her tall soulmate to see her dark glasses on once more. Slowly they headed over to sit with their ancestors. The bard was the first to look up as they neared, with a small piece of red apple in her hands over a bowl. As they sat down to the blond's left, the small bard rose up and collected two bowls from beside her lover. Gabrielle handed a bowl to Janice whom sat beside her then to Mel at the end. Both women took the bowls, to find different things contained in the metal bowl; apple slices, figs, cherries, and some kind of red berries. The tall warrior looked to her left to see her descendents with a small twinkle to her pale blue eyes.

"Was wondering when you two would decide to get up" The archeologist shot her head up and looked to the ex-warlord and saw the small grin forming on the tall woman's lips.

"Well Mel and I were quite tired from our trek across those mountains" Xena slightly nodded and continued to keep a tormenting grin on her face as she spoke in a teasing tone.

"Oh that's why...thought it was something else" Gradually the archeologist let a smirk form on her lips now as she stared back at the warrior.

"There could defiantly be another reason" Now Janice heard a snicker to her left side and knew it was her lover. The four women all went back to finishing up their breakfast, mentally preparing themselves for the long day. But they didn't seem to mind that part, considering they were all grinning as they sat in the morning's silence. Once the foursome had finished their food, they had begun their trek through Amazon's forest to the mountains. It was a pleasant walk with no problems accruing.

Nobody said much, all still in deep thought about last night's mysterious happening. For the two blonds' they felt like they knew, but couldn't quite put their finger on it. They racked their minds all day, trying to figure out what kept edging at their mind. Now Janice sat on a light brown rock, looking down the path as she took a deep breath. Next to her sat her tall soulmate who took another drink from the canteen. She then handed it to the small archeologist and Janice took a large swig herself. She then screwed the top back on the canteen and looked over to her ancestors to see them relaxing in each other's arms as they gazed at the view. The small blond looked back to the dirt path that weaved through the barren mountains, which only contained a few small trees here and there with shrubs. Janice figured it would be another half and hour or so before they made it through the mountains. She then looked up to see the sun just beginning its descent to the west, it must be one the blond figured. Slowly Janice opened her leather pack on her lap to place the canteen back inside. The blond then felt large hands fall onto her shoulders and then warm lips cover her neck, placing light kisses to her neck. The small woman sighed and felt a jolt rush through her, then she felt the warm presence move away from her neck and Mel stood up once more. The archeologist followed, stretching her arms some and then smiled to the other three women as she threw her pack over her shoulders. The warrior stepped up to Janice and faintly smiled at her as she spoke to everybody.

"Lets move" The Warrior Princess started walking down the slope at a fast pace, making Janice power walking. At this rate, the archeologist figured she would crash early tonight in bed. Xena seemed to have a never-ending high energy level, but then she was use to it from her own soulmate. Behind the two, were Gabrielle and Mel who took their time making their way down the steep hillside. The small bard looked up to her soulmate's decedent with a small smile playing on her lips.

"So how did you know Xena and I liked honey apples?" The tall belle looked down at the Amazon Queen letting a twinkle show in her blue eyes.

"I just reckoned y'all did, considering Janice and I do" The bard slightly chuckled as she hit flat ground.

"Yeah Xena has a bit of a sweet tooth I've come to figure out" Mel nodded as she retorted back in her southern accent.

"So does Janice, she tries not to show it though" Again the small blond chuckled at the aristocrat's words.

"The same with Xena, but after a while of traveling with her I began to take notice to small things" Slowly the belle's head bobbed up and down as she began to relate that to her relationship with the gruff archeologist. Then Gabrielle looked to her as she reached up carefully touching Mel's arm. The tall female in reaction looked down into serious intense green eyes. "I want to thank you Mel, for talking to Janice about giving me a second chance" The translator sighed as she felt the small warm hand release her arm then she looked back ahead. Melinda looked to her soulmate ahead of her talking to the tall warrior, making her smile some.

"She would have given you a chance Gabrielle, just would have taken a little longer. Janice just needed to hear the facts" The southerner took a deep breath as she continued to gaze ahead. "She has been through a lot, its hard for her to trust and like people" The small bard nodded her head, understanding just those feelings. The bard

kept her eyes on her soulmate, coming to understand something.

"You know Janice reminds me more of Xena and you more of me. Janice seems like the strong one like Xena and you seem more...talkative like me" The belle looked to Gabrielle briefly letting a grin play on her rose lips as she thought about the idea.

"Maybe, I see it more Janice being Xena on the outside and you on the inside. Then I am you on the outside and Xena on the inside, mix" The dark haired woman paused for a moment and let that sink in. "When somebody or something upsets me I become very upset on the outside but anger on the inside and closed up. Janice has to work it out of me" The blond grinned recognizing the same thing about her and Xena's relationship. "But when Janice gets hurt she becomes upset all the way around and defensive, she does try not to show it in public, but its defiantly a lot easier for her to talk to me" Now a small smirk formed on the blond's lips.

"Yeah I guess I could see that" Mel smiled some and then decided to take it a little farther, but in a funnier way.

"One thing I recognized about both you and Janice is the bard thing" The blond instantly looked to the belle with an arched semi defensive look, causing the aristocrat to chuckle deeply. "I've noticed that every time Janice and I go to a new area, she seems to...take in her surroundings enjoying the beauty of it all, something I can't do. Its almost like she tries to convey it in her mind in words as well as images, it amazes me" And she always seems to write descriptive, the same kind of style you use I've noticed from your scrolls. Just earlier I was noticing you watching the scenery taking it in, the same look was etched on Janice's face. I just wish though Janice didn't try to hide it so much nor push it down" The small blond nodded comprehending that Janice just didn't act like her, is the bard inwardly. Gabrielle looked around her surroundings as she mused about that, slowly the bard recognized the area, making her grin evilly. She then looked back to her soulmate ahead of her and saw that Janice was listening to something the warrior was saying. Xena finished talking and then looked around and then she turned her head to look back at Gabrielle. The warrior bit down on a grin as she looked to Gabrielle, whom was devilish grinning. Gabrielle then started to chuckle and noticed Janice had turned her head around as well to see the bard laughing to herself. The archeologist then looked to Mel, to see Melinda shrug her shoulders in answer and then Janice did the same. The small blond gruff female looked back up at Xena under her hat in questioning. The tall warrior shook her head at the small archeologist as she continued to pull herself out of the memory that the area brought up.

"Sorry Janice, but like I was saying you should tell Gabrielle" The archeologist nodded and turned her eyes back to the dirt path. She sighed feeling the anger fill her once more.

"You think Gabrielle will accept my apology?" The warrior looked to the small woman with a beautiful smile formed on her lush lips.

"Does Gabrielle love to talk? I know she will Janice" The Warrior Princess paused as she watched the smaller female grunt at her small joke. "But Janice, be proud to be Gabrielle's descendent, like I've said before. I am so honored to be her soulmate as well as so many other things to her" The small blond nodded as she felt something snap within her. She accepts who she really is and begins to release a part of her that had

been buried since she was a child. The part of her that's been hidden since her mother first left her and her father. A small sincere smile creased Janice's lips as she felt understanding come to her, filling her.

The four women continued to tread along the dirt path and made their way down the last mountainside walking back into another woods. Gabrielle and Mel had joined their soulmates and they decided all to head to Janice's rusty brown truck, figuring it to be a lot faster than by foot. Four pairs of boots stepped onto a gravel dirt road that lead north, just to the side of the road was an old beat up brown truck. They all walked over to it and Janice opened the passenger door, throwing her bag inside and then took Mel's throwing it behind the seats as well. The northerner then turned around to face the other women, and spoke in a serious tone.

"Let me check to see if this old thing still runs" Melinda chuckled some and watched as her soulmate walked over to the driver's side. She climbed in and inserted the key, turning it to her right. They all heard the engine whine but not start up, Janice cursed under her breath as she tried it again. This time Janice hit the gas pedal as well.

Nothing.

The starter only whined, but the engine wouldn't come to life frustrating Janice. The blond turned the ignition enough to let the meters work plenty of fuel, not over heated, and no dead battery. The small woman climbed back out of the truck and walked in front of the truck. She grabbed the hood and pushed hard, managing to open it with a jerk. The warrior gradually stepped up beside her and looked inside to see some weird metal stuff contained within the truck. Janice looked up at the warrior who had furrowed her brows together as she stared at the old Ford engine.

"I don't suppose you know anything about engines Xena?" The warrior looked to Janice then back at the engine. Xena quickly noticed something and pointed to it.

"No I don't, but I am guessing that could be causing some problems" Janice blinked up at the leather-clad woman then turned her gaze down to look at where the warrior pointed. Her amused expression dropped as she took notice to three hoses that had been cut. The blond curses in Greek, making the warrior chuckle some as she recognized the words. The archeologist instantly walked back to the driver's side, reaching behind the seat grasping a roll of tape. Janice walked back around, the warrior reach in, grasping the two ends of one hose and let Janice tape it. They did the same to the other two hoses, taping them tightly hoping it would last long enough. Closing the hood, the two women walked back around to meet their soulmates. Janice looked to the two women, more Mel than anybody.

"Well seems like somebody sabotaged the truck" Mel raised one dark eyebrow at that as she crossed her arms against her chest.

"And who could have done that all the way out here? There is nobody for miles around I reckon" Janice dropped her head in thought and then looked back to her soulmate with a confused face.

"I have no idea, only the Amazons could have done it" She then looked to the small bard beside her tall belle. "But they would have told us so" The Amazon Queen didn't respond, knowing Janice didn't need an answer to the statement. Gabrielle then turned her eyes towards her warrior, with a worried expression. Xena interrupted it easily

then she looked from her lover and to Janice.

"Janice who else knew about you coming this way?" The blond pondered about that with nobody coming to mind and then she looked to Mel. Then the archeologist's face lit up as realization came to her and turned to the warrior with an arched eyebrow.

"Vanessa knows we would be headed up here" The small gruff female let her mind wonder back to last night and of Vanessa, relating the two. Now Janice finally figured out what had been tugging at the back of her mind all day and she quietly whispered it aloud, almost out of thought. "Vanessa was in those trees" Mel was in shock about her lover's words, it couldn't be. Janice then looked over to Gabrielle with a questioning face. "Last night Gabrielle, when that thing came through the tress...did you have shivers and goosebumps?" The bard's eyes slightly widen at the words as she nodded.

"Yes I did, did you get the same thing?" The archeologist nodded and the bard raked her right hand throw her bangs as she thought about everything. "But I only get that when...Velasca is close by" Then it hit Janice as she understood the truth and she widen her eyes as she told everybody in a speedy voice.

"Vanessa is Velasca. Gabrielle gets those shivers and goosebumps when Velasca is near, I get them when ever Vanessa is close by. It fits, by god, why didn't I see that sooner?" The small archeologist growled as she remembers that she left Vanessa in charge of her last dig site. "I knew I couldn't trust that woman" Janice looked up to meet sky blue eyes, Janice was angry while Mel felt horrible for insisting to leave Vanessa in charge. The blond saw it conveyed in Mel's eyes, immediately Janice's eyes soften to her lover. The small woman didn't care; she walked over and hugged her tall soulmate, the translator feeling some of her regret leave. Janice then loosened her hold, but kept her arms around the tall form as she looked to her ancestors. "We better get moving" The warrior look up to meet the small woman's green eyse as she nodded. Slowly Janice released Mel after kissing her softly on the cheek. The belle followed Janice behind the truck to leave their ancestors alone. Carefully the aristocrat hopped up into the truck, careful no to touch the bike on the left side. She sat down with her back against the truck's window and listened to hear Janice jump into the driver's side starting the engine without a problem.

~*~*~*~

"She is a talked like you, don't do anything bad" The bard chuckled at her soulmate's words as she enjoyed the warm hand on right side, while leaning against her staff to the right. She then made an innocent face as she spoke in a sweet tone.

"I won't be bad" The Warrior Princess grunted, knowing her bard wouldn't, couldn't resist telling a story about her.

"Uh huh, we'll see" Xena then leaned in and kissed Gabrielle, feeling waves of passion crash over her. The ex-warlord pulled away and released her bard, she looked down at Gabrielle with a smile while her blue eyes shined in the sun light. The bard smiled back and the tall woman winked then walked behind the truck, hopping up into the truck and sat beside her descendant. Gabrielle shook her head as she stepped up to the passenger side door, opening it the bard tossed her staff in. Janice caught it and moved it behind the seats where her and Mel's leather bags lied. The Amazon Queen then sprung up into the seat, slamming the rusty door behind her. Immediately the truck roared up onto the dirt road, off of the grass side. Gabrielle then took quick

notice to the scent of something lingering in the truck, making her look to Janice. She saw a small round brown item coming out of the blond's mouth. The archeologist exhaled and a cloud of smoke came out of her mouth, lingering in the air then disappeared. Janice then reached down and wound the window down, letting fresh air sweep into the truck cabin. The blond northerner then removed the brown item from her mouth and looked to Gabrielle and saw her trying to figure out what it was she was smoking. Janice lightly chuckled and smiled to her ancestor.

"It's a cigar" The blond Greek nodded as she took in the scent, not minding it one bit, kind of liking it more than anything.

"It doesn't smell that bad" Again the archeologist wryly chuckled at the words as she placed the cigar back in her mouth, taking a few drags. She then spoke back to her ancestor through the cigar, faintly muffling her words.

"Yeah but their not good for you" The bard looked to Janice with a bit of a puzzled face.

"Then why you smoke them?" The small woman shrugged her shoulders as she considered that, trying to remember how she first got into them.

"Well my dad use to smoke them and I just got into them because of him. But they help me relax and calm me down" The Amazon Queen nodded and looked back ahead out of the window.

~*~*~*~

"How long have you and Janice been together now?" Mel looked to the other woman with a smile forming on her lips at the question.

"My Lord seems like forever, it's been about...nine months now" Xena nodded, thinking about the time when her and Gabrielle confessed their love for each other. Slowly the tall leather-clad woman let a smile slip in, while the memories came to her. She at that moment looked back to the aristocrat with an expressionless face after wiping off the smile.

"How did it happen?" The translator dropped her head remembering the day in her life she thought she was going to lose everything, right down to her soul.

"Well after Janice and I had met, we had gotten into a bit of a tight spot. She ended up getting badly injured by a gun wound, thought she was going to die that night. That's when I told her how much I truly loved her, but the next day when everybody reckoned she would be dead, Janice was feeling better. I mean at the time she was under a major concussion, but she managed to pull through and she said she had heard me, made her want to fight to come back around" The warrior nodded reflecting that to her own memories.

"Funny how it always seems to take something life threatening for somebody to confess their true feelings" The aristocrat nodded as she continued to think about that time in her life, when everything changed her, it made her smile.

"Yes but I am glad for them in a way, I would have never told Janice otherwise" The warrior smiled to Mel while feeling the breeze blow by her.

"Same here" Xena then thought she heard some laughter and turned to look into the

window to see her soulmate and Janice, Mel does the same as Xena. Xena watched as Gabrielle leaned forward clutching her stomach as laughs rocked her body. The bard then leaned back in the seat resting her head back as she held her stomach, laughing, tears coming down her face. Melinda though was looking to her soulmate to see her gripping the steering-wheel tightly as she laughed, a few tears coming down her own flushed cheeks.

"My Lord, what are those two laughing about? Looks pretty funny" The ex-warlord looked at Mel then back to her soulmate, knowing her to be the source of the whole thing. She watched her bard, trying to figure out what they were talking about. Gabrielle released her left hand from her stomach to try and talk again. She said something that the warrior just caught from lip reading, and watched as Gabrielle acted out her words. The bard sat up straight and stiffened her face with the look of shock written all over her face, Janice watched as she kept an eye on the road. Then both blonds broke out laughing all over again for what seemed like forever. The Warrior Princess sighed and shook her head as she spoke to Mel with a small smirk to her lips.

"Gabrielle is telling a rather funny story about me that she loves" The tall belle grinned and soon afterward her grin broke and Mel's eyes slightly narrowed.

"Janice has a few of those herself" The warrior widen her eyes seldom and looked to Janice in the truck. Xena nodded her head towards Janice, the southerner hastily looked to her soulmate. Mel watched as Janice was still somewhat laughing, but she was talking between her laughs telling some kind of story. That was easy to tell by the way the archeologist moved her lips, one hand free from the steering wheel, freely moving to describe the story better. What did make Mel happy though was her soulmate was using her hands, letting her be herself. Next the aristocrat noticed her lover started to laugh again between her words and so was Gabrielle. Now the archeologist finished her story and it sent the bard into a fit of laughs. Now it dawned on the translator what her lover was saying to Gabrielle. Then the tall southerner looked to the warrior with a serious face. "Janice is going to get it for that" The leather-clad woman chuckled deeply and began to grin as she mused about what she was going to say to her bard about it.

~*~*~*~

Janice moved her free hand from her stomach and grasped the wheel again, happy that the road was straight. She finally felt her control come over her as she slowed down on her laughing. Gabrielle felt herself calm as well as she wiped the tears from her eyes. Janice then looked to her ancestor briefly then back to the road.

"But Xena was really that shocked huh?" The bard nodded as a few giggles bubbled up.

"Yeah she really was that shocked I said those words to her" Janice shook her head at that idea.

"So that's what you and Xena looked to each other about in the mountains?" The Amazon Queen nodded and grinned to Janice.

"Yes, she remembered as well as I, one of my most favorite memories. Can still remember how shocked she was when I said those words; sexy, deep, passionate lovers. I've never let her forget that time" Janice grinned as she continued to drive the

brown trick down the gravelly road. "Speaking of which" The bard turned around to look through the window, to see her soulmate talking to Mel, rather whispering to her. The small female corked an eyebrow at seeing the two women talking and looked to Janice. The archeologist caught the look and looked through the review mirror to see her soulmate listening to the warrior leaning into one another. Mel chuckled deeply, and Janice could swear she saw that twinkle in her soulmate's eyes. Now she felt butterflies enter her stomach as to what Mel could be up to with the warrior.

"Gabrielle, can Xena by any chance read lips in her list of many skills?" The blond bard's eyes widen as she realized what could have happened. She slowly sunk down in her seat, answering Janice's question.

"Yes she can, now we are going to get it for those two stories" The northerner grinned as she looked to Gabrielle, watching her rake her hands through her blond bands.

"Ah what can they do?" The small bard looked to her descendent with a look making the gruff archeologist chuckle deeply.

~*Part 11*~

The small blond stretched her arms with her staff in front of her as she stood in the green grass. Slowly a tall form stepped up beside her, making the blond tingle some. She dropped her arms by her side as she looked to her left at her dark-haired soulmate. Sparkling blue eyes looked down at her and gradually a small smile formed on lush lips. Behind them they heard a door slam and two other figures walked up beside them looking ahead at the small mountain side. Janice shook her head as she hefted the leather bag over her shoulders, she was getting sick of these mountains. Now they had to walk up a mountainside to this cave that the warrior said that contained the tomb, at least Janice hoped. Reaching inside of her leather jacket, the blond removed a small cigar and a pack of matches. She easily lit the brown cigar and began to smoke it, letting the smoke slowly flow out of her mouth. Mel looked down at her grinning, the archeologist looked up and meagerly grinned to her. The warrior had turned her gaze to the other two women; she had her stoic form on as she spoke.

"Let's go" The tall leather-clad woman stepped ahead knowing the path ahead was probably gone, but she remembered the exact path to the tomb. The warrior also knew that the footpath was only meant to be traveled single file. Xena though had to grin as she felt her soulmate following behind her, she guessed Mel next, followed by the protective archeologist. The ex-warlord was on edge, expecting Velasca to show her face sooner or later, she was stalking them, and the warrior could feel it in her gut. Xena was looking forward to finally settling this, to stopping Velasca forever, leaving the warrior and her bard in peace for eternity. Gabrielle had expressed to Xena numerous times that she was worried about Ares taking Xena's soul from her. The warrior had just faintly smiled and told her soulmate that only Gabrielle owned her soul. Xena grinned inwardly as she remembered the biggest smile that covered her bard's lips and the look of pure love washed over her small features. Now the warrior stopped in her movement, the bard and the decedents stopped automatically. Xena looked around as she let her memory kick in, looking at her surroundings, it was all covered in vegetation, the path was defiantly gone. The tall woman looked to her left recognizing the area, now she remembered as she reached behind, she instantaneously unsheathed her sword. Taking a few steps left, the warrior chopped a few large thicket bushes down, making it easier to pass through. Sheathing her sword once more, the

tall female walked past the thicket bush walking up the mountainside, letting her memory guide her. Janice kept a close eye to her surroundings, not liking how quite everything seemed. She took another drag from her cigar, blowing the smoke out as she walked along the path. The blond continued to scan the mountainside expecting Vanessa to jump her or Mel. Janice pulled the remains of her cigar from her mouth, throwing it to the ground in front of her, then stepping on it to smother it. She then let her eyes settle on Mel, the translator was looking around at their surroundings, which seem to calm Janice, some. The archeologist was glad to see the southerner was watching out for anything. Looking more ahead she caught site of Gabrielle, whom was looking around as she walked, occasionally she spun her staff in a full circle in her hands. Janice also notices the bard walked rather close to Xena, as Mel walked more closely to Janice. Or was Janice walking closer to Mel? The archeologist snickered at that question, wondering who was walking closer to whom.

The warrior looked up and over to her left seeing a small opening, she grinned to herself. Xena cautiously weaved her way up the mountainside closer and closer to the opening. Melinda could feel her heart pounding, she was so close to seeing Xena and the bard's cadavers. But why is she so excited? She is here walking on a path on a mountainside with Xena and Gabrielle. The belle figured it had be the archeology side of her, the adventure side. Now she knew exactly how her soulmate felt, actually the aristocrat knew this was how Janice was feeling, their connection told her. She looked back to her lover and quickly intense green eyes looked back to her. The bell began to grin, seeing her gruff soulmate return the grin then it slowly drifted into a loving smile. Looking back ahead, the four women were face to face with the dark opening that was covered in cobwebs. Xena reached to the ground grabbing a stick, she easily removed the spider webs out of the way. Tossing the stick back to the ground, she turned around to face everybody with a serious face. "Wait here" After those words, the tall woman disappeared into the darkness of the cave. Within seconds the sound of rocks being hit together came to them, then the cavern mouth began to glow as the smell of fire hit them. Now a tall dark warrior confidently reappeared from the cave as she nodded to the entrance. That bard walked up beside Xena as they made their way in, Xena and Gabrielle first, then Janice and Mel right behind them. They walked for what seemed like forever to the archeologist, turning right then left then going straight then it happened all over again. The entire way the wall side was lined with lit torches, Greek fire once again. The cavern sides wide enough to leave a small space between two people walking together. The ceiling on the other hand was rather low, just high enough for Mel and the warrior to stand up straight, once in a few they would have to duck. Janice looked ahead through her ancestors to see that it began to become brighter, more torches her guess was. Slowly they came around another left bend to walk into a large circular room that was completely lined with torches, which eliminated the room. In the center was a large rock sarcophagus, it seemed to be carved directly from the cavern floor. The bottom was in fact attached to the cavern floor. This surprised Janice that Greeks would take the time to carve the crypt from the cave's stone. Xena and Gabrielle slowly walked up the foot of the tomb that faced the entrance and exit of the cavern. Mel and her archeologist walked passed them circling the tomb and now stood by each other as they faced their ancestors and the tunnel leading out. Both Janice and her translator looked at the coffin's cover, seeing descriptive carvings of Xena on the right side of the lid and Gabrielle on the other side. The archeologist did notice the bard was wearing a different outfit in the carving then she was wearing now. She guessed it to be the Amazon Queen's outfit from the description she remembered in the scrolls. Slowly and carefully Janice ran her right

hand over the lid as she felt her hands tremble. Then a large surge of emotion shot through her, she had the burning desire to open it. She then looked up to her ancestors across from her and Mel, they both were looking down at the lid as well. Janice watched, as did Mel, as Gabrielle moved closer to Xena and slid her right arm around the warrior's waist. She then rest her head against Xena's shoulder as Xena brought a protective arm around the bard's shoulder and dropped her own head on top of Gabrielle's head. The archeologist and belle looked to their sadden faces, their eyes frilled with unshed rears. Suddenly both Janice and her soulmate felt a wash of sadness hit them. Janice removed her right hand from the lid and reached for a larger hand that quickly clasped her small warm hand. The archeologist gripped her lover's hand tightly as she felt the urge to open the coffin left her, she couldn't or didn't want to. Janice and the southerner could feel their happiness drop, realizing something inside of themselves. Janice looked up once more and to Xena and Gabrielle as she felt a lump in her throat.

The blond bard looked up from the lid as a few tears slid down her face, she faintly smiled to her warrior. She spoke in a low voice to Xena, trying to hold her voice from cracking.

"We had a lot of good years together" Xena looked down to her soulmate with a small smile as well, then slowly the warrior let her guard down, letting tears roll down her cheeks at the memories.

"Yes we did" The ex-warlord leaned down kissing the bard on her forehead, she then reached up with her free hand. Lovingly the warrior wiped away her partner's tears from her eyes as she felt her own dry up. Xena looked down at the sarcophagus as she took a deep breath and slowly released it. She then look to her descendents with faintly redden eyes. "We should stay at the mouth of the cave, see how long it'll take Velasca to show up" Janice looked up first followed by the belle, both nodded in answer to the warrior. The ex-warlord and her bard turned around to face the exit and they slowly head back to the entrance, with Mel and the archeologist right behind them. Xena and the bard walked arm in arm as the belle and archeologist walked hand in hand, all still feeling sad. As they came around the last corner, the tall warrior kept her back to everybody as she spoke in her deep commanding tone. "Stay here, I am gong to go get us some fire wood and food" With that Xena released her soulmate and headed out into the dusk day, hunting. The bard watched as her lover disappeared into he early night, knowing that Xena wanted sometime alone to compose herself. Xena has rarely ever shown her emotions to others, it had actually surprised the blond to see her soulmate show them in front of Janice and Mel. The small bard conceived that her warrior trust the archeologist and belle. 'She defiantly has changed' The bard grinned to herself at that concept. Gabrielle at a leisurely pace turned around to face her descendents with a small smile crossing her lips.

"Janice, we have a pot and fresh water?" The small archeologist smirked under her hat as she reached for the straps over her shoulders. She efficiently took off the large leather pack from her back and setting it on the ground. She began to sit down as her partner joined her and the bard walked over and sat on Janice's other side. The archeologist dug through her bag, easily finding the pot and handing it to her ancestor. Pulling out a large rope, the blond grinned as she placed it on the ground and kept searching. Digging around a little more the northerner found her large canteen filled to the brim with fresh water. She handed that as well to Gabrielle and spotted her spoon for cooking as well and she handed that to the Amazon Queen. Then Janice felt to her

left her soulmate nudge her and she looked up with a questioning expression.

"I know you packed those dried vegetables in your pack? I don't reckon you want to eat a stew without them" The bard giggled some at Mel's words while the archeologist just shook her head and grinned.

"Course I did Mel...I think" The belle arched a dark eyebrow at her lover as Janice went back to looking in her pack and quickly found a jar. Janice lifted it up and glances into it to see carrots, mushrooms, tomatoes, and onions all tightly sealed within. Janice grinned to herself then handed the jar to her ancestor, Gabrielle just shook her head then spoke to the archeologist.

"So I am taking it that I am doing the cooking tonight...again?" The blond looked up from under her hat to the beautiful bard with a wry smile.

"Well you did ask for the stuff" The bard rolled her eyes and Mel decided to join in the conversation.

"I'll help you Gabrielle" Janice looked to her partner with a serious face then looked back to the small bard.

"I'll take care of the dishes...again" The next thing that could be heard was a little yelp from the archeologist as she moved closer to Gabrielle. An offended look covered her features as she glared at Mel with a grin. The tall belle chuckling deeply as Janice rubbed her left side some from her soulmate tickling her.

"You know love, I did help you clean those dishes as well" The blond archeologist raised an eyebrow at Mel as she dropped her hand from her side and leaned back closer to her soulmate. Janice then reached for the rope from earlier slipping it back into the leather bag as she retorted back to the southerner.

"I never asked you to" To Janice's right she could hear the bard begin to chuckle some while Mel just slightly glared to the northerner, her blue eyes gleaming from the late sun peaking into the cavern entrance. "But I am not complaining one bit" The southerner's glare fell and was replaced by a sexy smile, making Janice take a bit of a gulp. Before anybody could say anything, a tall powerful form appeared in the entrance of the cave. Janice and Mel looked up in surprise but Gabrielle knew her partner was coming a while back through their connection. The bard looked up and smiled to her soulmate, whom smiled back in return. Gabrielle watched as her partner stepped in more, dropping some wood against the wall side of the cave. The warrior then sat down in the small circle with them, stern face. The bard was the first to say anything.

"Were you able to find anything for dinner?" Xena looked to her left at the bard, her pale blue eyes warming to the blond.

"Yeah, rabbit its outside skinned and all" Gabrielle nodded as she reached for the canteen and jar of vegetables placing them inside of the pot. She then stood up with the pot, the warrior looking up at her. Xena reached in between her breasts and pulled out her dagger, handing it to Gabrielle. The small blond took it with a smile, heading out of the cave and taking her cooking articles with her outside. "It's to the right" Right before the Amazon Queen disappeared outside, the warrior just caught the bard's nodded in understanding. Turning her head back to her descendants, Xena stood

up and turned around to the firewood. Janice and Mel took notice and stood up themselves moving out of the way as the warrior began placing the firewood in certain positions. Once done, the leather-clad female reached for a torch from the cavern wall, placing it into the fire pit, directly in the middle. Within a minute or two, the wood began to burn, warming the cavern tunnel as the sun began its final minutes of decants to the west. The northerner and her partner were now sitting next to each other close by the fire, the warrior setting up a spit over the fire for the pot. Once the fire was well on its way, the bard re-entered inside, pot filled with water rabbit meat, and an array of vegetables. Xena took the pot and hung it over the fire to let it cook, then both women settled down on the cavern floor, remotely close to Janice and the aristocrat. The archeologist finally spoke to the group with a serious tone.

"So how are we going to handle Vanessa or Velasca?" Gabrielle looked over to her descendant with a stern face

"Well one thing is obvious is we can't let her get to the sarcophagus" Janice nodded and thought of a way to stop her assistant from the dig site.

"Janice do you have anything explosive?" The question came out of thin air, the warrior's had spoken with a cold edge. Janice looked away from the fire to the dark-haired warrior, to be met with powerful blue eyes. The small blond nodded her head then began to talk in a small voice.

"Yeah I do. What for?" Xena tore her gaze from the archeologist to look at her lover, then back to Janice.

"We need to trap Velasca and permanently as well as destroy the sarcophagus" The small blond opened her mouth to say something, but didn't. She closed her mouth, stunned look washed over her features. She opened her mouth again to retort, but Mel did it for her, southern accent cutting in deeply.

"Now why would you want to go and do that?" Xena sighed, knowing just why her decedents didn't want the remains destroyed. Before she could reply her bard backed her up, bardic mode coming to life.

"Because we can't let Velasca nor anybody else for that matter get a hold of the remains. Ares never said that it only had to be Velasca to read the enchanted scroll, its possible anybody could do it. Beside that, it'll be easy to trap Velasca in here rather than let her be out in the world causing chaos" The bard paused, as she took a deep breath and then spoke in a low, quiet voice. "Besides Xena and I would like to be able not to worry about the situation any more" Janice dropped her head at the last part, reaching up to remove her hat from her head, placing it in her lap, blond bangs falling down on her forehead. She then looked to Mel who had removed her black glasses and was rubbing her temples. She dropped her hand with the glasses to her lap and looked at Janice, bit sadden face, frustration written all over. Both gazed into one another's eyes, asking the same question if they could really do this. Destroy the largest archeology find ever, the one thing Janice has been searching for all her life as well as her own father. Now she had the chance to not only prove their once existence, but show it. The archeologist nor translator couldn't be sure if they could destroy the remains, end a life's worth of work. The fire burned deep inside of the translator and Janice's mind to recovery the remains and show it them, to the world. They both though looked deep into their heart and soul, placing themselves in Gabrielle and

Xena's position. Realizing what they would want done in this same situation. Knowing that this is family, knowing that Xena and Gabrielle are them, are their souls and knowing this is

The Greater Good.

Janice nodded to her soulmate with understanding, their connection sharing ever emotion and feeling. The archeologist turned to look back to Xena and Gabrielle, both ancestors already knowing the answer. The warrior and bard knowing through the connection they held with these other two women through soul. The northerner finally spoke in a very stoic voice, which sent a chill down the bard's back.

"I have enough explosives to take this mountain down" The warrior faintly smiled as did the bard, Janice and Mel returning a wry smile. Xena reached over and grasped Janice's knee briefly, squeezing it then releasing.

"Thanks Janice and Mel" A coked grin slipped onto the archeologist's lips while Mel nodded to her descendant. The four women for the remainder of the night sat back, working out a plan to stopping the immortal. Expecting Velasca to show soon, knowing she was waiting for the right time to come after the remains. All had discussed their plans while they had eaten their dinner, feeling their stomachs full from the bard's dinner. At the end, Janice had left the cavern with Mel to take care of the dishes. The entire time both women could feel eyes watching them, sending Janice's instincts into protective mode.

Once they returned back to the cavern, they spotted the warrior sitting up against the cavern wall. A small form snuggled in between her arms, chest rising and falling at a slow pace, sleeping. The stoic woman's sword on the ground beside them with the bard's staff beside it. Xena had opened her eyes to watch Janice and Mel walk in, Mel smiling over at the scene. The warrior smiled back and nodded her head towards the firewood. Janice looked at the fire and then padded over to the wood, hefting up a few large pieces and slipping them into the fire. The fire came back to life, warming and brightening the tunnel up. By the time Janice had that done, her partner had put the dishes back into the leather pack. She straightened back up from leaning over, she removed her dark classes and placing them into her blue shirt pocket. She then reached up, undoing her dark hair, letting it fall down beyond her shoulders.

The belle then sat down, the opposite side of the fire from the bard and warrior. Her back pressed up against the cool, smooth rock, feeling it begin to warm from her body heat. Janice looked down at her soulmate and grinned to her, emerald eyes sparkling. She removed her hat placing it beside her leather pack. Then the blond took off her leather jacket and gave in to her desire. Janice sat down, snuggling into Mel's chest, feeling the warmth and comfort, not regretting her actions one bit. 'Sometimes I just need to let my tough act go' The archeologist grinned inwardly at her thoughts as she brought her jacket over her and Mel. The leather coat just covering their upper portion, holding in the heat of their bodies with more comfort. The belle had wrapped her arms tightly around the blond's waist, feeling a smile crease her lips. The northerner then rests her head against Mel's chest, the tall female dropping her chin lightly onto Janice's strawberry-blond head. Slowly emerald green eyes became heavy, the smaller woman's body relaxing and her breathing going even.

Mel continued to smile to herself as she looked down beside the leather pack to see

Janice's hat and seven sticks of dynamite. All the ends of the sticks twisted together, ready to be lit within seconds notice. Mel sighed at the site and then brought her eyes up to look across the fire to Xena, blue eyes already looking back. The leather-clad woman then quietly whispered over to the aristocrat, not allowing her soulmate to hear her.

"Go to sleep" Mel nodded and then smiled, getting one in return. Xena had agreed earlier to take watch over the night, knowing she couldn't sleep any way. The tall belle let her head rest against Janice's, sleep taking over.

~*Part 12*~

Janice brought her head up from Mel's shoulder, feeling the comfort of it all. She let her eyes come into focus as she gazed around. The fire was beginning to die out but there was a faint light becoming noticeable through the mouth of the cave. She figured it to be early morning, or not to far off, it was still fairly dark outside. Janice then looked across the fire, to where she figured Xena and Gabrielle to be, not seeing either woman. She took notice to the fact the bard's staff still rested on the ground, close to where they were earlier on, but the warrior's sword was gone. Janice felt something unsettling rise up in her over the scene, worrying her. The blond then reached for Mel's leg, just lightly squeezing it while whispering up to her soulmate.

"Mel wake up" The southerner felt the movement and stirred to hear the words, slowly blurred eyes opened up. Mel removed one hand from the archeologist's stomach to rub her eyes as she spoke with a hoarse tone.

"What's wrong Janice?" Once Mel dropped her hand to move back under the jacket to the smaller woman's stomach.

"I think something is going on. Xena and Gabrielle aren't here and Gabrielle left her staff behind. She never goes any where without that thing" The belle looked over to where her ancestors were originally, seeing the spot vacated except for the staff. Carefully Janice stood up, feeling the cool air against her back but quickly slipped her jacket on. She then reached for her hat, putting it on swiftly. She grasped her leather bag and pulled out her coiled rope, putting her arm through the center and pulling it up to her shoulder. After doing so a tall form rose up from the ground, stern look set in. Janice looked to Mel with a serious face as she felt under her jacket to feel cool metal, her revolver. "I am going to go check outside, I want you to stay here" Mel opened her mouth to protest but was cut off before she could. "Mel I need you to stay here, know you're okay and to watch over everything" A pause. "Besides knowing your luck you'll get into trouble" A dark eyebrow rose up from that remark as she grinned to the smirking archeologist.

"Be careful love" Janice smiled as she nodded and turned around jogging out of the grotto, but called out to Mel before vanishing outside.

"Always" The southerner smiled and then walked over to the firewood, throwing in some wood, bringing the fire back to life.

~*~*~*~

The archeologist stopped moving, hearing the sound of voices, she listened hardier.

Three voices.

All Female.

Xena, Gabrielle, and Vanessa.

Janice quietly cursed under her breath as she closed her eyes, pointing their location.

Down the mountainside.

And to the left.

Janice looked over in that general direction and took notice to a small cliff that overhung to where she heard the muffled voices. Stealthy the blond made her way over to the cliff's edge ahead of her. The voices began to come clearer as she neared the small cliff's side. Once she came to the cliff's ledge, she removed her revolver and took off the safety, but didn't pull back on the hammer. Carefully and soundlessly the archeologist got down on her stomach and moved along the ground to the edge of the cliff's side. She peeked through a bush on the ledge and looked down to take in the scene. Velasca had her back to the base of the cliff, the bard wrapped up in Velasca's right arm. The immortal held a small dagger in her hand that was to Gabrielle's throat. Xena was about ten paces away, sword unsheathed and in fighting stance.

"Come on Velasca let her go. You don't get anything out of this!" White-eyes stared at the warrior, gleaming as she flexed her wrist closer to the bard's throat. Gabrielle sucked in her breath, wishing she hadn't left the cavern earlier in search of food. She mentally cursed herself for not bring her staff, knowing the risks. Xena could feel her frustration kick in, but became aware of something metallic at the top of the cliff. It gleamed in the early morning sun's rays as the sun peaked over the mountains. Her eyes moved up to the object and noted the barrel shape of it, realizing it was a gun. She then quickly lowered her blue eyes to focus on Gabrielle's, the bard slightly nodded in understanding. Finally Velasca responded to the warrior's earlier comment with a harsh loud tone.

"I get plenty out of this Xena. You think I'd really kill Gabrielle" A pause as the ex-Amazon reached over with her left hand lightly grazing her hand over the bard's stomach. Gabrielle's stomach crawled at the touch, she thought she would be sick with disgust. "I'd rather have her see your soul be under Ares control more than anything" Blue eyes were iced over with hatred and rage, jaw taught with a little amount of patience refraining the warrior from lashing out. The Amazon Queen took quick notice to this and knew her lover was on the brink of letting her rage out. Without much thought, the bard slammed the left heel of her foot down on Velasca's right foot. Velasca growled in reaction as a small form leaped off the cliff ledge from above. The person landed directly behind the immortal and Gabrielle. Velasca quickly tried to get her barring but was too late, the new comer grabbed her right wrist, and the dagger pulled from the bard's throat. Gabrielle ducked under and moved from Velasca's reach, closer to Xena. The next thing Velasca felt was a fist and cold metal connecting with her face, sending her stumbling backwards. Velasca shook her head some and focused her eyes on the new comer, a small blond in a leather jacket, hat on, gun in hand, and danger eyes flashing.

Janice Covington

The immortal gritted her teeth and moved closer to Janice. Janice took notice to what

Velasca is wearing nothing like from the dig site. She had tight brown leathers on, hair pulled back some, gauntlets on with a short leather skirt, braids in her hair and a gleaming sword on her back. Velasca looked beyond the archeologist for a moment and saw the bard and warrior behind the archeologist hastily talking. Velasca just made out the words.

"Gabrielle get back to the cave and Mel. Get things setup" The ex-Amazon growled and leaped towards Janice, taking the blond down on her back. Gabrielle watched it happened and looked back to serious blue eyes. "Go now!" The bard nodded and broke off running towards the cave, leaving two women behind to slow an immortal. The bard sprinted through the small trees and vegetation, getting swiped by branches and thickets. She caught site of a thicket bush in front of her in the eastern sunlight. Two more sprinting steps and she leaped high over the brush, landing neatly on one knee and foot. She stood back up and looked up a ways to see the cave's mouth, glowing with a fire.

~*~*~*~

The belle stood up from the cave's floor and stepped up closer to the mouth, possible hearing somebody moving this way. She was right, fast moving feet were headed towards the entrance. Mel knew it was either Janice or Gabrielle by the footfall, recognizing them immediately. She walked over the very entrance, as a small figure could be seen sprinting up the mountainside. The belle looked hard and saw it to be the bard. Gabrielle moved quickly, seeing the belle at the mouth of the cave, watching her with concern eyes. As she neared she called up to Mel with, breathing hard in between her words.

"She is here Mel! Go get the explosives!" The belle vanished into the tunnel, briskly walking over to the leather pack. She grasped the dynamite as well as a pack of matches Janice had left behind beside the explosives. Listening she heard Gabrielle jog into the cave and come over to her, dropping a hand to the aristocrat's left shoulder. The bard's breathing was ragged as she spoke to the belle as she stood up with the two items in hand. "We ready?" The translator turned to face Gabrielle and nodded with a stoic face. Gabrielle looked hard, taking notice to how the belle seemed to let something within her take control, a stronger side. The bard nodded and took a deep breath and walked over to her staff grasping it tightly and then neared the entrance of the cave. She scanned the low trees and shrubs a tall form stepping up beside her, holding the explosives and matches. They both gazed around, looking for something, anything. Then they both heard a shot and a deep voice yell Xena's voice. Gabrielle held her breath her heart rate picked up and stomach twisting and a certain anger following through her veins she knew to be her soulmates. Now the sound of feet running in their direction came, quick paces head directly up the mountainside. Then the two women could hear a second shot and a sword being sheathed, two people sprinting hassle.

The bard gazed in the direction she heard the shot to see a tall form and small form moving through the brush. The Amazon Queen pointed at them, Mel nodded her head and kept pale sapphire eyes on the figures moving rapidly. Within a minute Xena and the archeologist were at the entrance in front of Mel and the bard. The Warrior Princess was the first one to say anything, Janice sprinting up behind with her revolver in hand.

"Are we set?" The translator nodded her head and showed the explosives and matches

to the warrior. Xena looked back up and nodded briskly, her head turned down towards where she and Janice had been earlier. "Let's get back there. She'll be here in a matter of seconds, that rope won't hold her much longer" All four women turned to face the tunnel, they all ran quickly single file to the back of the cave to where the sarcophagus was located. The torches still burned brightly inside of the cave, making it easy to find their way. As soon as they reached the end they could hear somebody enter the mouth of the cave and a loud voice echoed down the tunnel.

"You can't win this one, I am immortal or have you forgotten that?" Quickly to follow was a loud laugh and the sound of somebody's boots moving along the dirt floor headed their way. As Velasca neared the sound of her sword being unsheathed was preceded by Xena's own sword. Mel and the bard moved to the very back of the room, and stood at the head of the sarcophagus. The belle kept her hands with the articles hidden behind the tomb, the bard's hands held up with her staff. Janice was off to the left side of the sarcophagus, Xena directly in front of the entrance to the barrel chamber. Velasca walked in with a strong gait, sword down by her side, her eyes flashing. The warrior's cold eyes were fixed on the immortal, her body tense as she talked with hatred seeping into her voice.

"You'll regret this Velasca" Two swords met with a loud clash, the warrior stepping back to her right, drawing Velasca in more. The warrior and immortal's swords continued to connect, ringing in the chamber. Velasca could tell Xena was holding back, she kept moving back as Velasca pressed harder and harder. As the two women fought, Mel, Gabrielle and the archeologist shifted closer to the single exit of the chamber. The ex-Amazon didn't take notice to this, but kept fighting the tall warrior. They both moved in a seeming dance, Velasca coming close to hitting the ex-warlord, but not close enough. Xena kept gradually moving to the head of the sarcophagus bringing the immortal with her, the other three women still moving towards the exit. Finally reaching the head of the tomb, the warrior held her ground against Velasca, agitating Velasca. Gabrielle then dropped her fighting stance and looked to Mel and spoke in a low voice.

"Here you go Mel" The translator traded with the bard, handing her the dynamite and matches and getting the Amazon staff in turn. Gabrielle looked up to see her soulmate keeping Velasca busy, buying them all time. The blond looked back to Mel and to Janice then spoke in a low but commanding tone. "Get out here!" Mel brought up a hand and squeezed the bard's right shoulder and dropped it quickly. "Thanks Mel, now go" The aristocrat nodded with a small smile, stepping back a few paces to her soulmate. Now to pairs of emerald green eyes were locked, one pair conveying apology another with love. Gabrielle smiled to her decedent, which warmed Janice's heart, she smiled back lovingly and nodded. Janice grabbed Mel's upper arm and they both turned around, breaking out into a run down the tunnel, leaving behind an immortal, warrior, and bard.

The two women ran with all their being seeing the mouth of the tunnel, they continued to hear swords clashing together. Mel was leading with Gabrielle's staff in hand then Janice with her gun in her left hand. Janice spotted her leather bag to her right near the mouth and began to bend down some. Once close enough the archeologist swiped her bag up off the cavern floor, slung it over her shoulders as she kept running behind Mel. The pair bursted out of the cave's mouth and out into daylight, slightly stunning their eyes. They quickly adjusted and sprinted down the hill towards the brown truck.

~*~*~*~

The warrior looked to her left towards her partner to see the bard holding the sticks of dynamite. The end was flickering and sparkling, it was lit and burning quickly towards the end of the wick. Velasca followed the ex-warlords gaze and spotted what the bard held in her hand. The immortal's eyes widen in realization, knowing from experience at dig sites just what the bard had. Before she could react, Velasca lost focus, Xena caught her opening and kicked her sword out of hand. Velasca's sword went skidding to the ground as she looked back to the grinning warrior. The leather-clad female kicked again to the immortal's stomach making her bend forward. Xena then brought the hilt of her sword down over Velasca's head, knocking her out in seconds, her body hitting the ground limp. Gabrielle rushed over to the warrior's side, Xena looked over at the coffin to see the seven sticks of dynamite on top, slowly coming to the end of the fuse.

Quickly Xena sheathed her sword and pushed Gabrielle over to the corner of the cavern wall. The tall female shielded the bard's body with her own as they heard the hissing stop for a brief second, then a loud explosion. Xena grimaced in pain as stones large and small came crashing into her back, embedding themselves, then a large rock came crashing down over her and Gabrielle. The last thing they heard was Velasca screaming out "No" in anger over all the sounds of the cave crashing in. Pain shot through both women, they screamed out in agony as their bodies became smothered beneath rocks. As soon as the incredible pain start it stopped, they could feel themselves leave their bodies. Their souls left the life-less bodies and began to float closer and closer. Then the bard's and Xena's souls began to intertwine, becoming whole, fitting together with perfection, perfection of love, completion. The two linked souls vanished into another world.

~*~*~*~

Janice stood beside her Indian bike that now is settled on the ground while she packed away the staff and her hat to the back with three leather bags. Both women heard the loud explosion and looked up. They watched as the mouth of the cave burst out rocks and dusts that all came crashing to the ground. As rapidly as it all happened, a large rockslide began. Mel's eyes were wide open, mouth gaping open.

"Holy Shit!!!" Janice knew she had given her ancestors an ample amount of explosives but not this much. The archeologist hopped on the bike followed by the tall belle. Janice brought up the kickstand as she watches the rockslide coming towards them. The blond frantically pushed down on the starter of the bike with her boot, getting no response from the engine. "Come on come on!" The translator looked up at the rockslide coming at them and felt her heart rate pick up. Janice frantically continued to start the bike as the avalanche neared them, dust beginning to surround them. "God damn it come on!" With one more hard kick the Indian bike kicked in, smoke coming out of the back. Janice looked up at the rockslide hitting the base of the mountain and still coming at them, she felt a tight grip around her waist.

"Janice!!!" The archeologist put the bike into gear, spinning down the road followed by the avalanche at their heels. Janice put the bike into fourth gear, speeding down the dirt road, the sound of rocks tumbling after them and the whisk of dusk flying through the air. The blond looked in the mirror to see the rockslide still right behind them, she then looked ahead to see the old large lava pit they crossed over a day ago in the truck. She didn't see the bridge that they went over, she kept scanning furiously, not spotting

it. She cursed under her breath knowing they couldn't make it across the wide gap without it and the rockslide was still coming at them and fast. She figured Velasca had destroyed the small bridge some how or another. Mel herself also noted that there was no bridge, letting Janice know with a tight squeeze. The archeologist kept scanning for something as they neared the edge of the pit, then she found it. Driving over to the left some as they sped ahead, Janice aim directly for something.

The gigantic avalanche still came rushing at them, its speed not slowing up. The pair now neared the edge of the dormit lava pit, Janice coming head on towards the pit. Her stomach twisted her heart rate picking up, the pure knowledge that she and her soulmate could die if this didn't work. No, she couldn't let Mel die, not here, not like this. Those thoughts fueled her as she picked up speed towards a small hill she was aimed for, the rockslide's dust started settling on them. Janice stood up, Mel doing the same as they went flying high into the air, using the small hill to lift them high in the air. The wheels spun in mid-air as they flew through the air, wind whipping past them, no ground or safety below them, just pure rocks waiting far below. Both women could make out the sound of rocks crashing down into the lava pit and dust clogging up the air. The next thing to happen was the Indian bike making contact with the ground, whiplash, and then a jounce.

The bike kept moving on the ground, getting them distance between them, the rockslide, and the edge of the sleeping lava pit. Going a few more hundred feet, Janice slowed up and then finally stopped the bike. Both soulmates couldn't stand up, their legs feeling too weak from earlier. Janice turned the bike half way around and they both gazed back at the lava pit. They watched as a few more rocks tumbled down into the pit, filling it, dust still rose up from the bottom just coming up over the ledge. The blond then looked to her soulmate with a small smirk.

"Ready for a vacation?" Both Mel's eyebrows rose up at the question as she took a deep breath.

"My Lord yes, I might need a year's worth after that little escapade" Janice chuckled deeply as she gazed back at the pit watching the avalanche finally end.

"That was something else, I think we should retire" The tall belle laughed deeply as she also turned her head to stare back at the mess. The couple stared for awhile, remembering the entire adventure from start to finish, and amazing them that they made it through. They could feel the lost of their ancestors, but knew it had to happen. Janice looked to Mel, the belle kept her eyes on the scenery. "I told you that dynamite would come in handy" Slowly sapphire eyes turned to look back at emerald ones, a corked grin appeared on the tall figure's lips.

"I reckon it did. Next time will you be more careful on how much you use" The archeologist laughed and turned the bike back on the dirt path. She twisted the handle, sending the Indian bike down the path towards civilization and home.

The End

Last minute Disclaimer: The song "You'll be in my Heart" is copyright of Phil Collins from Disney's Tarzan of 1999, it belongs to them.