

~ Yours, Mine, and Ours ~

by Red Hope

Disclaimers: Violence ~ Won't have violence in this section but probably in the latter part of the story.

Sex/Subtext ~ No doubt, nothing but the best. Sex though... well we all will find out huh? Sex just happens sometimes eh? *laugh* And I only know... casual sex... whatever that is.

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Series One-**The Binding of the Soulmates of Time** Story-Nine

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

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Part 1

Section 1

~*Part 1*~

"This is disgusting Xena!"

The warrior slowly lifted her head towards Gabrielle at hearing her raving. "We'll be there soon."

"I don't care." Gabrielle was ahead of her Soulmate and she sloshed around to face her partner. "My idea of a vacation doesn't mean trekking through ankle deep mud."

Xena bit back a huge grin. "Sorry." She let that grin come free now. "But we did have a nice day yesterday."

"That was yesterday." The Queen grumbled and shifted her attention to her stallion beside her. "This is nasty huh Torqueo?"

The stallion nickered and bobbed his head up and down.

The warrior came up beside her partner with Argo on her right. "Well... at least when we make it to mother's we'll get a nice bath."

"If we make it to Amphipolis." The small warrior splattered the mud everywhere with a hard stomp of her foot. "With this mud we're liable to get stuck in it."

Xena quietly laughed and kept walking along hearing the sucking sound following her. The sucking directly coming from her boots pulling out of the mud and back in. "I can't control the weather love."

The warrior-bard grinned. "Why not? You can do everything else."

The Warrior Princess laughed and stopped walking again. "If I could we'd be in paradise now." She gave a wink.

Gabrielle came up to her partner and stood in the brown almost black mud. "Thanks." Her right hand rested on her sai that was in her belt now. She'd moved them from her boots to her belts to keep the mud from them. She leaned up and kissed her Soulmate and went back to trekking through the slosh mud in hopes to survive it. "Egypt... gotta remember that. I'll be in Egypt soon." She gave a dragged out sigh. "Wishful thinking."

The warrior faced her mare. "We need to lighten her up huh?"

The war-horse nodded in complete agreement.

"Yeah I agree.... Now I just need a..." Xena's eyes averted to her partner's back then lowered to the nasty mud. "Pillan." The vilest of grins took the warrior's lips, she slowly bent down after releasing Argo's rein. "Better get out of the way girl... this will be crazy."

Argo quickly obeyed and suctioned in the mud out her way from her owner when she straightened back up.

Gabrielle kept taking huge steps through the ugly mud.

"Gabrielle!"

"Yeah?" The young warrior turned around quickly. But she regretted it even quicker as mud came flying at her and stuck to her face.

Xena had a cat grin on her lips, as she stood with her hands all muddy. She bent down to pick up more mud and stand up with her hands going behind her back.

The Amazon Queen's head moved up and down as she released her reins. "Torqueo, get out of the way."

Torqueo quickly trotted through the mud to get out of the battle zone.

Gabrielle reached up to her face slowly wiping the mud off while walking up to her Soulmate. "You know Xena... I trust you to watch my back." Her head was still bobbing up and down while she smeared the mud over her face. "But no, instead you're throwing mud at me from behind." She came right up to Xena, her face smeared with the mud.

Xena bit her lower lip from laughing and she mumbled out, "Sorry slip of the hand... you know." Her hands were still behind her back

Gabrielle put her hands on her hips. "Right." She gave a loud laugh. She slowly leaned down to lift up a handful of mud. "You know since we're Soulmates...." Gabrielle raised herself back up. "You should join me." The small woman quickly smeared all the mud into her partner's face and let her hand slide down to Xena's neck.

The warrior's tongue ran across her molars as bits of mud fell off her face. "Right."

She suddenly brought both hands from behind her back and rubbed mud into her best friend's hair.

"Xena!"

Xena eyes widen and she laughed as she broke out running from her Soulmate. She wasn't going very fast either.

Gabrielle came running up from behind while shaking the mud from her hair. "You are going to be covered in mud when you get you warrior!"

"That is if you can get me!"

The warrior-bard poured everything into her run and she was catching up easily. That was due to the fact she was smaller and lighter so she could move through the mud faster unlike her Soulmate. Now she found herself right on Xena's heels and she took a deep breath to send herself flying through the air. Gabrielle caught a hold of her partner's legs and sent them both crashing into the mud.

Xena laughed and rolled onto her back.

Gabrielle quickly jumped on top of her warrior and pinned her as best as possible. "Don't start something you can't finish Xena."

"Oh I am not worried about that." The warrior's eyes twinkled and she suddenly rolled them both so that she was on top of Gabrielle.

The warrior-bard broke out laughing at seeing her partner's body cover in mud. She'd begun laughing so hard her stomach hurt and she tried to curl up yet couldn't with Xena's hold.

Xena kept a tight grasp on Gabrielle's wrists and weight on her legs. She let a grin slip into place and she lowered her head down close to Gabrielle's.

Gabrielle only broke out laughing more, her eyes watering. "Oh gods, you look so funny."

The Warrior Princess sighed and let go of the other woman. Then she decided to end the laughing with a strong kiss to Gabrielle's lips.

The Queen moaned in the kiss and then felt cold mud being spread over her stomach. "Xena," was mumbled out of her mouth.

Xena lifted her head back up with her twinkling eyes. "Join me... my Soulmate." Without further warning the warrior was smearing mud all over Gabrielle's body and leaping off the small form.

Gabrielle flipped onto her feet and glared at her smirking Soulmate. "Oh you're so toast warrior." She bent down and started throwing mud at Xena.

The warrior tried ducking out of the way but was finding no success in doing so. Taking an alternate route, she did a back flip to land behind her partner. Xena scooped Gabrielle up and held her tightly. "We're having to much fun."

The warrior-bard laughed at her brown-faced warrior. "I like mud... now."

"Good."

The Queen nuzzled her muddy face against Xena's muddy neck. She really didn't care at this point since they both were caked in mud. "Now I know why pigs wallow in mud."

Xena snickered and released the smaller woman to the mud ground. "Well... now where were we?"

"Heading to Amphipolis before this mud war."

"Right." Xena gazed down to the two horses that just stared at the pair with just dumb-founded looks.

Both Soulmates suddenly broke out laughing at their horses.

Torqueo looked to Argo.

Argo looked to Torqueo.

The stallion huffed and threw his head up.

Argo shrugged her shoulders and started trudging through the mud to her owner.

Torqueo whined in a laugh and started trotting along to go to his owner. When he came up to Gabrielle he sniffed her and went into a fit of whining laughter.

The Queen put her hands on her hips and stared at her stallion. "Laugh it up Torqueo... see if you get any feed tonight."

Torqueo suddenly stopped laughing and straightened his posture out into seriousness.

Xena snickered and took her mare's reins. "Don't you even think about it girl."

Argo batted her eyes and started walking beside her owner.

Gabrielle sighed while walking along beside Xena... well more like trudging along side Xena.

~*~*~*~

Cyrene heard a small boom from her stables outside, so she went around the bar and briskly walked outside into the cool day. She walked out onto the porch and gazed over to her stables glancing in for the reason of the boom. She didn't see anything and began to climb down the steps and once on the ground two people came trundling out of the stable like they owned it. Cyrene stared at them totally baffled. Baffled because it was certainly two women but covered in dried mud yet quickly she figured out who it was and her face brightened up. "Xena... Gabrielle what in Hades happened to you both?" Her hands went to her hips.

Xena smiled brightly.

Gabrielle however gave a very sheepish smile. "Long story Cyrene." Her head lifted to her Soulmate. "But your daughter had a big hand in it."

"Me?" Xena lowered her attention to Gabrielle. "You were the one complaining about

the mud... I just decided to do something about it."

The bard laughed and shook her head. "Right... keeping saying that... you owe me."

The warrior gave a wink. "I think I can get you to... forgive me."

Gabrielle raised an eyebrow but quickly face Cyrene again. "How you been Cyrene?"

"Quite well little one. You? You look well these days."

The Queen nodded with a sigh. "Definitely."

"Good." Cyrene smiled and glimpsed up to her daughter. "Dear how are you?"

"I'm wonderful mother." Xena crossed her arms against her muddy chest. "Mind if Gabrielle and I stay for a while?"

"Not at all." The innkeeper gave a small grin. "I'd hug you both... but..."

"Understandable." Gabrielle laughed and faced her Soulmate. "Get our stuff?"

"I'll take care of it. Get a bath ready."

The Queen groaned. "More like ten of them." She went her way.

Xena went her way back into the stable to collect their things.

Cyrene led the small warrior into the inn. "How have you and Xena been?"

"We're doing well Cyrene."

The tavern owner rapidly stopped walking when she came to the steps and she turned to Gabrielle. "Gabrielle, please call me mom... anything other then Cyrene." She gave a sad smile. "You're my daughter."

The warrior-bard dropped her eyes. "Thank you." Her eyes came back up. "Wasn't sure if I still was allowed too."

"Of course you are." Cyrene started climbing the steps with Gabrielle behind. "Just because you caked my daughter in mud doesn't mean you can't call me mom."

Gabrielle's mouth dropped. "Me cake Xena in mud!" A laugh escaped her from her lips. "She started the mud war."

"My daughter... never." The innkeeper gave a huge grin while walking down the hall. "Don't worry sweetie, I'll help you get even with her."

"I was counting on that." The Queen snickered as she came to Xena's old room. She went in first.

Xena's mother walked over to the washroom and began to deal with filling the tub. "How long are you and Xena planing to stay?"

"We're not sure yet." Gabrielle began to help Cyrene. "We're planing to leave for Egypt for vacation but we wanted to visit with you first."

The tavern owner smiled to the bard. "Thank you."

The young warrior's lips masked into a warm smile. "Anytime mom... I know we haven't visit in a long time."

"No... it's been lonely here."

"Toris hasn't come by?"

Both Cyrene and Gabrielle turned their heads to see Xena in the room.

"No dear." The mother shook her head. "He hasn't been by in three months I'd say."

The warrior dropped the saddlebags on the beds. "No word from him?"

"Afraid not." The innkeeper poured the last bucket of hot water in. "I'm a bit worried."

"Knowing Toris I am sure he's fine." Gabrielle studied Cyrene first then gazed over to her Soulmate for conformation but received non. "Then again... he is Xena's brother and could get into-"

"Gabrielle." The warrior had growled out her friend's name in warning.

Cyrene quietly laughed and glanced over to her daughter's best friend. "I'm sure you're right sweetie."

"I'm sure he'll come around for Solstice mother... he always does."

The innkeeper glanced over to her daughter. "I hope so dear."

Xena took a few steps into the washroom. "Mother, if he doesn't show soon or we don't hear from him soon Gabrielle and I will find him."

The older woman smiled up to her daughter. "Thank you." She then let a grin take her lips. "Well, I'll let you both bathe because I won't be able to take you both seriously any longer." She quickly powered walked over to the door.

Gabrielle lifted her eyes up to her partner. "Is she trying to say something?"

Xena shrugged her shoulders.

Cyrene broke out laughing and left the room in a flash while quietly closing the door. Her laughter could be heard all the way down the hall.

The Queen grinned to her Soulmate. "We must look real funny."

"Well... you do anyway."

"Oh oh..." Gabrielle paced up to her warrior. "Well, take a good look in the mirror yourself beautiful."

The Warrior Princess slowly raised a high eyebrow. "I only look as beautiful as you."

"Right." The warrior-bard ambled over to the tub. "So... how are we going to do this?" Her hands were on her hips. "I mean our clothes are covered in mud too."

"Well..." The tall woman came up behind her young warrior and put her hands to Gabrielle's hips as well. "We need to clean our clothes too." She lifted the small woman up.

"Xena!" Gabrielle tried to struggle out of Soulmate's hands but was instead dunked into the tub with clothes and all. She popped back up out of the water with the mud running down her face and chest into the water.

The warrior smirked at her Soulmate.

"Thanks... now you owe me twice."

"If I join you I won't?"

Gabrielle thought about that for a moment. "Nope."

"Good." The warrior quickly climbed into the tub with all of her clothes, boots, and weapons.

The warrior-bard's mouth hung open. "I can't believe it... the Warrior Princess isn't worried about rusting her weapons out."

"A good warrior only buys non-rusting weapons Gabrielle." The warrior grinned to her partner.

"Very true." The warrior-bard reached to her sides in the water to flip out her sais. She gazed at them to see the mud gone now then she placed them on the floor. Standing up Gabrielle felt the dirt mud roll down her body and into the water to make it brown. She lifted her right boot to untie it.

Xena did the same, standing, and untying her boots. Taking them both she dunked them into the murky water and rubbed them with her hands to clean them.

The Amazon Queen followed her Soulmate's example to rid herself of the mud in the small spots of her boots. After that she tossed them to the floor and slipped down into the murky water again.

The warrior remained standing and took her chakram off while cleaning the mud off. After gently placing the new chakram to the floor she cleaned her sword with its sheath. It shortly was resting on top of the chakram near the boots. Xena then began to unbuckle her brass armor.

Gabrielle rapidly stood up in the water letting the beads of dark water roll over her body. "Here."

Xena smiled and turned her back to her Soulmate. Carefully she felt small hands work her brass armor off.

"Tomorrow are we going to send a message to Cleopatra?"

"Yes." The tall woman slipped out of her armor and placed it into the water.

Gabrielle helped cleaned the brass breastplates. "It'll be beautiful to go down the Nile."

The older female smiled to herself. "It will be." She brought the brass armor out of the warm water and put it on the floor. Next her bracers and gauntlets were coming off to be cleaned and placed with her armor. She only was left with her wet brown leathers that she couldn't be sure where was the mud. "Egypt is mystifying."

The warrior-bard quietly laughed while sitting back into the tub to let the mud soak off her leathers. "I can imagine. And romantic I hear."

Xena's eyes began to twinkle. "We'll be lucky to make it through a night without... possessing each other physically."

Gabrielle corked an eyebrow as she moved through the tub to press against Xena. "Why don't you just say it?"

The older woman laughed low and smirked. "We won't make it through a night in Egypt without having sex."

"Mmm much better." The younger warrior leaned in to capture her Soulmate's lips. She slowly pulled back with an evil grin. "But what makes you think we can't get through the nights here in Greece without sex?"

A grin tugged at Xena's lips. "True... especially after yesterday in the forest."

"I told you Xen, it was a bad urge."

"So was mine." The warrior's lips were in a full grin as her hands rose out of the water to Gabrielle's shoulders. "Let's get these leathers off." Her voice was serious.

Gabrielle nodded in agreement and moved her hands to grasp the bottom of her leather top under the water. She saw Xena remove her leather straps and Gabrielle lifted her leather top off and tossed it to the chair near the entrance to the washroom. Next she stood in the water to slowly pull off her red-orange skirt and throw it over to her top. "Your turn."

The Warrior Princess nodded and stood up with the beads of the brown water falling off her body.

Gabrielle stepped closer and pressed her warm body against Xena's and pushed the leather straps off Xena's shoulders.

Xena efficiently slipped out of her leathers to hurl them over onto the same chair. She faced her Soulmate again and leaned down to capture Gabrielle's lips.

The Amazon Queen moaned in the kiss and put her hands to Xena's hips. She could, however, still feel the fine grit of the mud in her warrior's skin. She thought that was something rather different.

The tall woman lifted her head back up and smiled warmly. "How about you pull out some clean clothes for us while I take care of the tub."

"Sure." The young warrior kissed Xena's cheek and hopped out of the tub. She gathered first the weapons and armor to carry them near the window and spread them out on the floor there in the late afternoon sun's light. Going back into the washroom she saw her Soulmate emptying the tub. She took her and Xena's leathers into the

bedroom to let them rest on the chairs to dry, hopefully by tomorrow. Gabrielle ambled over to the saddlebags and pulled out a set of older leathers for Xena and she pulled out her red silk pajamas she'd recently bought.

Gabrielle began to stroll into the washroom but stopped and turned her head to the dresser. There on the top of the dresser were two dolls. Her eyes shut at the sight of the two little dolls while a sad smile creased her lips. Slowly her eyes opened again and she studied the two dolls on the top of the dresser.

The dolls had never moved from so many years back during Xena and Gabrielle's days last here. The doll with long black hair still held the other blond haired doll's hand.

The small woman slowly walked up to the two dolls on the top of the dresser with her sad smile. She released her left hand and kissed the tips of her fingers. Her fingertips came up to the black haired doll's chest to press there for a moment. "I love you Xena... for eternity," she quietly whispered. Gabrielle turned away and padded into the washroom with the clothes.

Xena glanced up at seeing the clothes as she dropped the last bucket of warm water in. "It's ready."

The young warrior nodded and placed the clean clothes down on the wood chair. Next she found Xena's arms circling around her and the warrior looking down with a worried look for Gabrielle still must have had that sad smile.

"You okay?" The warrior reached up and brushed some of Gabrielle's wet hair back.

"Yeah." The Amazon Queen lifted her eyes up. "Just saw... the dolls on the dresser. Brought back old memories." Her sad smile stayed covering her lips.

That sad smile mirrored onto Xena's lips. "I know." She kissed the top of her Soulmate's forehead. "They won't ever budge from that position." Xena's face brightened with a loving smile.

"I know." Gabrielle had a warm smile sweep across her lips. "Come on." She walked over to the bathtub with her partner.

The two women climbed in to finally clean the last bits of mud from their bodies and hair.

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Gabrielle stretched her legs out under the table and lifted her attention back up to her Soulmate and Cyrene's conversation.

They'd just finished with a warm dinner in the cool night. Luckily the tavern owner decided to have the tavern closed for the night so she could spend time with her daughters. So here was Xena sitting at the table in her old leathers with Gabrielle beside her whom was warm in her red pajamas, which she loved. Cyrene was on the other side of the table talking for the most part. And they listened to the faint sounds of the crackling fire in the background and nibbled on the small remains of the dinner.

"I can't believe that sweetie... you're the Queen of all the Amazons now?"

Gabrielle gave a nod. "I am now."

"That's wonderful." Cyrene leaned forward after having heard from her daughter about Gabrielle's new reign. "How'd you manage this?"

The warrior-bard smiled and sat up in her seat more. "Well, I ordered challenges between all the queens. So we went through all these challenges and by the end I managed to be on the top."

The innkeeper quietly laughed. "I hope you didn't get hurt either sweetie."

Gabrielle's eyes flickered up to Xena.

The warrior knew and spoke coolly. "Gabrielle was injured by two of the queens but managed to pull through fine."

The mother glanced between the two women but left her attention on Gabrielle. "What happened sweetie?"

The Amazon Queen sighed and gave a brief explanation. "I was hit hard to many times in my lower abdomen but thankfully my stomach healed over quickly."

Xena still internally cringed at the memory of her Soulmate's injury that could have been a lot worse off.

"That's scary Gabrielle. Glad you're alright now."

The young warrior gave a nod. "Me too. Was a good scare for Xena and I."

"I'm sure." Cyrene glanced up to her daughter. "But if I know my child, she took good care of you."

The warrior had a stoic expression over her face.

Gabrielle quietly laughed. "Definitely." She took a deep breath and now dropped her head against Xena's left arm.

The warrior glanced down to her partner and lifted that arm to encircle Gabrielle's shoulders. "Tired?"

"Mmm a little." The warrior-bard peered up. "After trekking through the mud today."

The Warrior Princess gave a small smug look. "That was my intent."

Gabrielle laughed. "I'd believe it."

Cyrene now stood up and collected the plates. "I think I may go to bed myself." She stood with the plates in arms. "We can all talk tomorrow. Sleep well." She studied the two women still trying to figure out their relationship. To whether her daughter and Gabrielle had repaired their friendship let alone love relationship. She could only hope so because soon she'd be probing for answers.

"We will mother. Thanks for dinner."

"You're welcome dear."

"Night mom." Gabrielle smiled and curled more up against her Soulmate. "Sleep well"

yourself."

"I will little one. Goodnight." Cyrene strolled over to the kitchen door to go in and rid herself of the dishes.

"Ready for bed?" Xena had her gaze down on Gabrielle.

"Mmm." The warrior-bard thought for a moment. "I think I may try to write some tonight."

The warrior's lips spread into a smile. "Yeah?"

"I think so." Gabrielle glanced up. "At least try... it's been awhile."

"I know." Xena lifted her eyes up at seeing her mother come out of the kitchen and head to the stairs. She flashed a smile to her mother and lowered her attention to Gabrielle again. "Give it time, it'll come back."

"I hope so." The Amazon Queen sighed and moved her head to kiss her Soulmate's shoulder. "What you going to do?"

"I think I'll work on my leathers, they need a little attention." Xena kissed the top of her partner's head.

"You don't mind if I work on my scrolls down here Xen?" Gabrielle took a deep breath. "I have a feeling I am going to need a lot of pacing room."

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Gabrielle sighed and balled up the parchment then tossed it to the floor below her.

The balled up parchment hit the other ones on the floor and rolled off them to hit the warm stone floor.

The bard shifted a little as she tried to come up with a new opening line for her story. Her quill went down to touch the new sheet of parchment but stopped. With a sigh Gabrielle's eyes turned to the fire next to her. She sat on the ledge of the fireplace that kept her warm. Her attention though went back to her writing. "You can do this Gabrielle." She took a frustrated breath. "Just put the quill to the parchment and let it flow from your mind like it use to."

The quill came back down to start creating words on the paper.

The young warrior stopped writing and glanced back at her opening line. "Now the Warrior Princess had become less aggressive, her mind coming to a mellow... state... these days..." Gabrielle shook her head. "What am I writing?" A growl escaped her lips and she wadded up the parchment to let it crash on the ground with the others. "Xena hasn't mellowed out... warriors don't mellow out." Her right hand went through her short hair. "Why am I bothering to write?" She shook her head and stared across the tavern. "I've lost it."

"You sso haven't babes."

The room twinkled with pink dust and there appeared Aphrodite in her normal skimpy pink clothes.

Gabrielle furrowed her eyebrows at the goddess of love. "Aphrodite?"

"The one and only girl, duh." She strolled up to the bard. "So how's it shaking sweet cheeks?"

"Not so good." The short warrior shook her head. "What you doing here anyway?"

The goddess of love gave one of her beaming smiles. "To check up on my chosen and favorite bard."

The small woman huffed. "Bard... hardly."

"Haven a bad... writer's block babes?" Aphrodite glanced over the other woman's shoulders down at the parchment. She read the single line and crinkled her nose. "Oh yeah you are babes."

"I know!" The warrior fell onto her back along the ledge of the fireplace, her hands covering her face with the quill. The parchments all fell off the small lap to the floor on top of the pile of balled up paper. "I can't write worth centaur poop."

"Girl, which you need is a little loven from Dity." The goddess snapped her fingers.

Gabrielle now was in a long sofa with Aphrodite sitting in a big couch next to her with glasses on. "What you call this?" They were still in the tavern however.

"A little break for the bard." The goddess sat back in the seat and lifted her left arm to the sofa's arm. She rested it there with her chin going into the palm of her hand. "Ssso, tell me why you can not find an assuagement in writing?"

Gabrielle gave a short laugh at the goddess's word. "Assuagement? Dity you keep surprising me."

The goddess of love gave a faint grin. "Well a girl can't just look good with her body. She's gotta know her stuff with the way she talks." She sighed. "Besides I think it's way cool to keep everybody thinking I am on a low level when I am way better with words than they think." She faintly shook her head. "But back to the bard."

"Right." The small warrior thought for a moment and considered. "I'm a warrior Dity, that's all there is to it. I lost the bard."

"Well babes with my introspective I'd say you haven't defunct your bard thing." The goddess shrugged her shoulders a little. "Just take a good look inside babes, it's still there... waiting."

"Dity, I don't have it in me anymore."

"Oh sure you do Gab." The goddess sat up in her seat and cross her legs. "We both know that writing still elates you. You just gotta get back into the groove of things. Dig?"

The bard chuckled at her friend's words she was using. "Maybe." She gave a brief sigh.

"In the name of me." The goddess sighed and straightened up. "Take a little beladour from your way cool goddess." She gave a warm smile. "Just remember what it was

like writing and well... you know go back to those days as just the bard."

Gabrielle glanced up with a sad expression. "You really think so huh?"

"Oh yes miss thing." Aphrodite snapped her fingers.

Gabrielle's quill reappeared in her hand and a new piece of parchment in her lap. She instinctively lifted her knees up so she could write on the parchment.

"Here's the plan Stan." Aphrodite had an excited look. "I'll read that horrific line that you wrote earlier because that was coming from the warrior side and not the bard." She took a deep breath. "So broach into your bard side babes."

Gabrielle took a deep breath. "If you say so Dity."

"Good." The goddess closed her eyes. "Now the Warrior Princess had become less aggressive, her mind coming to a mellow state these days." Her eyes opened again. "Think Gabrielle, how would have you written that better back a few years ago?"

The small woman sighed and stared at the parchment. She lifted the quill to chew on the tip. "Aggressive... dumb word right along with mellow." She shut her eyes and searched inside of herself.

Aphrodite relaxed back into her comfy sofa chair and coached on her friend. "Something more passionate to that Gabrielle. Let the old bard loose babes."

Gabrielle opened her eyes and put the quill's tip to the parchment and that old grin spread across her lips. The quill began to glide across the parchment with a new opening line for Gabrielle's story in mind. "There."

The goddess stood up and came to her friend's side to peer down at the parchment. She smiled as she read it aloud. "The Warrior Princess today has become less primal and let her passionate emotions rise from below to create yet a whole new form of a warrior." She took a deep breath. "Fabulous babes, that's beautiful."

The bard quietly laughed and rolled up the scroll. "It may be but it wore me out." She grinned up to the immortal woman.

Aphrodite shrugged her shoulders and sat back down. "But see, told you. You still have that bard stuff in you girl."

The young warrior quietly laughed and lay back down on the sofa. "So there has to be another reason why the goddess of love came down to visit her chosen."

The goddess took a deep breath and reached up to remove the glasses, she twirled them in her fingertips. "Just popped in to check on you... and the relationship."

"Uh huh." Gabrielle's lips creased with a grin. "The truth comes out."

Aphrodite quietly laughed. "Babes, I did come help with the bard blocking... just thought it would be a way perfect time to check on the relationship thing too." She gave a smug grin. "You two are my Soulmates of Time."

"Oh?" The small woman crossed her arms over her stomach. "I thought Xena and I were Artemis's Soulmates of Time."

"Well Art's too but I lay claims to creating you and Xena."

"Gee thanks." Gabrielle had an angry expression.

"Wait Gabrielle I didn't mean to make you irate by that uncool sassy comment." The goddess sighed at seeing her chosen's expression calm. "It's just I helped set things up." She shook her head. "If your souls kept going at the rate they were going you two would have never met until thousands of years later."

"Really?" The warrior-bard was now intrigued. "How's that?"

The goddess of love went very serious with no kidding held in her tone. "Both your spilt soul would have kept missing each other through the time frame until it finally met up way far in the future to bind together." She shook her head with blond locks moving in reaction. "See, now that your soul is bonded then both you and Xena will spend the rest of eternity together." She gave a warm smile. "Your soul that you share with Xena will be reborn over and over in the future together." Relaxing back in the seat. "Trust me babes, you'd be in major depression if I hadn't intervened."

"How could you Dity? I thought only the Fates could do something like that."

Aphrodite crossed her legs again. "Babes, remember whom you're speaking too. I am the goddess of love the most powerful emotion and power in the known world."

Gabrielle chuckled. "I'm glad I am on your good side."

"Of course babes." The goddess winked and gave an evil grin. "Ssso, tell me... what's she like in bed?"

Gabrielle's eyes bugged out. "You're kidding!"

"I'd hope so myself."

Both Aphrodite and Gabrielle looked up to the stairs to see the dark warrior staring down at them with an evil smug look.

"Hi Xen."

Xena's eyes warmed to her Soulmate as she walked down the steps and came around. "Ssso, did you help my Soulmate with her writer's block Aphrodite?" She coolly turned her head to the goddess. "Sure doesn't sound like it."

Aphrodite quietly laughed. "We worked through the writer's block." She then gave an innocent look. "But we decided to move onto... girl talk."

"Really?" The warrior walked over to her Soulmate and saw Gabrielle sat up. Xena sat down and pulled Gabrielle's head back down into her lap. "I think I'll join... since I am girl." She had a smug look.

"You're just no fun are you?" The goddess chuckled and crossed her hands in her lap with the glasses.

"I'm no fun?" The Warrior Princess glanced down to her partner.

The smaller warrior shrugged her shoulders. "I don't know where she gets that idea."

Aphrodite shook her head while narrowing her eyes. "You're just not the reticent warrior you use to be." She'd said that with a grin.

Xena lifted up an eyebrow. "No, my chatty Soulmate changed that of me." Her eyes lowered to Gabrielle. "Didn't think the goddess of love knew such big words."

Gabrielle evilly snickered.

The goddess sighed. "Not only has the Warrior Babe become talkative but she cracks jokes."

The warrior's hooded eyes raised the immortal woman. "Funny how that works huh?" She gave a sigh and reached down with her left hand to collect Gabrielle's warm hands. "So why the visit?"

"Well like I told your other half there... dropped in to check on you two."

Xena's head bobbed up and down a few times. "We're fine." She took a long breath. "And thanks for your help."

The goddess raised an eyebrow. "We ain't on the same wave length Xena."

The dark woman's lips formed into a grin. "Illusia."

Aphrodite quietly laughed. "That was way back warrior babe."

"I know." Xena rubbed her thumb against her quiet Soulmate's hands. "But I never thanked you for that."

"How'd you know?"

"Somebody had to help Solan with creating Illusia Dity." Gabrielle smiled to her goddess. "Thank you."

"You got me girls." Aphrodite smiled warmly. "Was worth it." But her smile went warmer. "And Art told me about your ceremony in the Amazon village."

"Really?" Gabrielle brightened up. "What'd she say?"

"That you both finally finished binding your soul." Aphrodite began to twirl the glasses again in her fingers. "Congratulations... there's no other Soulmates like you. You are the masterpiece for time without time."

"We had help." Xena gave an appreciative smile.

"Non the less Xena, you both would have totally bond your soul together. Either this time or way later but it's fabulous that you did it now." Aphrodite sighed sadly. "I just made sure it was now before my time ran out."

"What you mean?" Gabrielle furrowed her eyebrows.

The goddess shook her head. "The Greek gods will fade away in time."

"I highly doubt the goddess of love will." Xena had a serious look.

"No I will not." Aphrodite gave a grin. "But there will come a time I will need to hide

in the shadows but I will still watch over your soul."

Gabrielle sighed. "Why do all gods speak in riddles?"

The goddess of love laughed and grinned. "Because you mortals don't like to." She then sadly smiled. "Well I think I'll jet."

"Thank you Dity for your help." Gabrielle smiled warmly as she sat up and got to her feet.

"No problemo babes." A warm smile was on Aphrodite's lips. "Take care of yourself girls."

Xena gradually stood up beside her partner. "You too Aphrodite."

"Thanks warrior bade." The goddess peered up to her chosen. "And not more separations huh? I'm way way to old for those separations, they're uncool."

Gabrielle laughed. "We'll try not too."

"Glorious." The goddess of love winked. "Night Soulmates, I am outty five thousand." She disappeared along with the fancy furniture.

The bard peered up to her partner. "That was interesting." She still held her quill and scroll.

"It was." Xena held back a yawn now. "Ready for bed, I am."

"Yeah." Gabrielle wrapped an arm around her Soulmate's waist. "Let's go."

The warrior draped an arm over her best friend's shoulders.

Together the pair ascended the steps to their room. They were crawling into the bed first then into each other's arms. Sleep came and warped them to their dream together.

~*Part 2*~

The warrior was first into the small house, her partner came in right after. Xena went up to the long wood counter noticing nobody around.

Gabrielle came up along her soulmate's side and leaned against the wood counter. "Nobody home?"

A young man came ambling out of a doorway behind the counter and walked up to the two women. "How can I help you both?"

The warrior-bard's face brightened. "Michael?"

The young man's eyes widen. "Gabrielle?"

"That's me." Gabrielle straightened up with a warm smile. "Been awhile since I saw you last."

Michael quietly laughed. "Yes since you sent that message out to the Amazons that was over..."

"Three years."

The man shook his head. "Yes quite a while. I was thankful for Ephiny giving me a ride back in the dead of winter."

The Amazon Queen nodded with her arms going against her chest. "That's my regent for you." She then glanced up to Xena. "Michael I'd like for you to meet my Soulmate, Xena."

Michael smiled up to the taller woman and he held out his arm. "Nice to meet you Xena."

The warrior took the man's arm in a tight shake. "Good to meet you too Michael."

"Please just Mike is fine." He released the warrior's arms and her eyes flickered to Gabrielle and back to Xena. "However Gabrielle prefers to call me Michael."

The smaller warrior chuckled. "Mike is just to generic."

"Right." Michael grinned and peered up to the Warrior Princess again. "If I am right, your mother is Cyrene?"

"Yes." The warrior was very much in stoic form.

Michael's face now brightened up. "Gods, I almost forgot." He laughed and continued with, "You both were married that winter." He shook his head while resting his hands on the wood counter. "I completely forgot." He smiled up to Xena. "Now you received your citizenship back right?"

Xena nodded. "Yes I did."

"That's wonderful." Michael took a deep breath and gazed at both women. "So, what can I do for you ladies? What message do you need sent?"

Gabrielle's lips shaped into a grin. "Feel like traveling to Egypt?"

Michael's eyebrows shot up.

~*~*~*~

The warrior-bard was breathing in with depth. "Gods, I can wait."

The warrior smiled then grasped Gabrielle's hand. "It'll be great." She turned her smile to Gabrielle. "You'll love Egypt."

The pair was walking back to the tavern at a slow pace. It was rather cool outside being mid-fall so this lead to the Soulmates wearing their cloaks.

"How long you think we'll stay?" Gabrielle glanced up.

Xena shrugged. "However long you want to stay." She smiled. "But we do have to be back here on Solstice."

The smaller woman smiled warmly. "I don't care if we have to swim back. We'll be here for our anniversary."

"We'll be here." A confident smile tugged at Xena's lips. "Then where too?"

The Amazon Queen sighed. "Back to my feathers." She peered up to Xena. "I need to go over all those scrolls and get prepared to build the new Nation."

The Warrior Princess nodded. "You are?"

Gabrielle quickly glanced up. "No, I was hoping my partner would help out."

Xena squeezed her smaller warrior's hand. "Definitely." She smiled down at Gabrielle. "Wouldn't miss it for the world."

The short warrior laughed and shook her head.

The pair entered into the tavern to find Cyrene was busy preparing a huge meal for her patrons tonight.

"Hey mom, want some help?"

Cyrene glimpsed over to Gabrielle. "No sweetie, I'm fine." She smiled warmly. "Saada will come by soon to help out."

"Excepting a lot tonight mother?" Xena leaned against the cooking counter.

"Yes probably dear." The innkeeper went back to cutting carrots in the pot. "I hope you both will be here."

"Of course mom." Gabrielle smiled. "What time is the food feast starting?"

The older woman laughed. "Right at sunset sweetie."

"Great, I'll be there with an appetite."

Xena mumbled, "Don't I know." Then she received a small jab to her stomach.

"I think Xena and I will leave you alone."

Cyrene sighed. "Sorry I am not talkative. Just busy getting this stuff ready."

"We know mother." Xena smiled. "We'll catch you later." She headed out of the kitchen with her partner.

Gabrielle came out and sadly sighed.

"What's the sigh?"

The small woman shook her head. "I hate seeing your mom alone."

Xena nodded. "Me too."

"You think there's anything we... could do?"

The warrior evilly grinned. "Yeah, come on."

The Soulmates strolled out of the tavern again and soon found themselves in the Constable of Amphipolis's office.

"You have to Ferus." Gabrielle's hands went to the desk. "Cyrene would love to see you."

The constable sighed and sat back in his seat. "Gabrielle, I have a lot of paper work that can't wait."

Xena crossed her arms against her chest. "Ferus."

Ferus lifted his eyes to Xena.

"My mother could really use some company. You've lived here as long as she has. You both have lost spouses and it might be good to... talk." The warrior shrugged her shoulders. "What you got to loose?"

The constable rested back in her seat with sigh. Slowly a smile etched across his lips. "Alright ladies, I'll be there but not to long. I have a lot of work to do these days."

The warrior-bard smiled warmly. "Thanks Ferus. It'd be nice to see Cyrene have some company."

"I can understand that." The man shook his head. "A little lonely around my shack." He chuckled. "Okay, I better get back to my work."

"Bye Constable Ferus." Xena flashed a smile and walked over to the door.

Gabrielle followed and called back. "Thank you Ferus."

"You're welcome Gabrielle." Ferus glanced up to see the Soulmates leave the office. He sighed and chuckled. "Matchmakers."

~*~*~*~

"So what's the plan?" Gabrielle shrugged out of her cloak.

Xena took her partner's cloak and placed both their cloaks on the chairs. "Well, when Ferus comes we'll take mother's job. You can do the cooking and I'll-"

"Xena, you're not going to waitress." The warrior-bard chuckled. "You're liable to scare all your mother's customers away."

The warrior put her hands to her hips. "I can do it fine. What you think I am? A ruthless warlord?"

The smaller woman started to laugh and grinned up to her lover. "No it's just... you don't strike me as a barmaid."

"Welllll, I'm not going to have you do it."

"Why not?" The shorter warrior arched perked up an eyebrow while her hands went to her hips.

"First because I can't cook." Xena now grinned. "And second, I'm not having those... customers touching you."

"You've got a point there." The Amazon Queen's hands dropped. "And I know they won't touch you."

"Exactly." The Warrior Princess stepped closer to her Soulmate and circled the other woman's waist with her arms. "You're mine."

Gabrielle grinned. "All of me." Her grin went to a smile.

"Mmm, I know." Xena leaned down to take her partner's lips in a strong kiss. When she lifted her head back up, she had a grin. "Haven't forgiven me for that mud war?"

The smaller woman knew she'd never got angry to begin with but she also knew that her Soulmate wanted her to say no. "Not one bit, you still owe me... big."

"Good." The warrior's lip brushed over her bard's collarbone. "That's the right answer."

"Uh huh, it's trouble." Gabrielle chuckled.

The taller woman had an evil smile with twinkling eyes. "Have we played the quiet game yet?"

The warrior-bard arched an eyebrow. "Nnnno." She had a curious look.

Xena quietly laughed. "It's simple."

"Just be quiet huh?"

"Yup." The warrior leaned down to passionately kiss her warrior.

~*~*~*~

They hadn't gotten far in anyway in the later afternoon. Well they'd gotten far, just not in the way of going anywhere but into ecstasy. And they were still playing the quiet game.

Gabrielle's head dropped back while her eyes closed.

Xena's hand shifted a little on her lover's stomach. She was down on her knees.

The smaller warrior had her left foot on the bed, propped up. She still wore all her clothes and even her sais.

The older woman herself was still fully dressed, chakram and sword even. But right now she was under Gabrielle rather... occupied.

The warrior-bard was trying her damn hardest to not make any noise while her Soulmate's tongue controlled her. She'd opened her eyes again and glanced down at her warrior underneath. She clamped her jaw tight as a shockwave of passion ripped through her body.

Xena grinned knowing the effect she was having on her partner. Her tongue stopped going between the folds and directly went inside Gabrielle. Her mouth went more over her Soulmate's mound so she could thrust her tongue in and out.

That's the point Gabrielle started her small climax. She knew this was the small warm up her partner was giving her before the grand finale. And what a warm up that was becoming. Now, the small woman began to rock her hips down against Xena's touch hoping to increase the power of the climax. She liked a good warm up.

The warrior kept her tongue thrusting in and out of Gabrielle. Slowly her hands shifted to her partner's hips. She'd begun to help her lover rock against her.

The Amazon Queen's right hand came down to Xena's head. How she wanted to whisper a few words but planned to stick to their quiet game. She'd have to speak with her body, which she'd find the greatest enjoyment in doing. Quickly both hands went to the bed's post beam, her knuckles were white and yellow.

Xena moved her tongue a little faster and made her grip around Gabrielle's waist to help support her soon.

Gabrielle felt it, the small passion tore through her body and she dropped her head down onto her arms. She closed her eyes tightly and gritted her teeth to hold back the cry of passion.

The tall woman moved instantly, her tongue came out and she stood up with her right hand lifting Gabrielle's head. She saw the passion on Gabrielle's face that needed escape. She sealed her lips with Gabrielle's hot lips. Instantly her own name filled her mouth in her Soulmate's voice. Xena slowly pulled back with a satisfied smile.

The small woman lifted her head and grinned. Her chest was rising quickly but she was ready for the rest. She leaned in to kiss the warrior with need. Her left boot came back down to the floor.

The older woman understood what her partner needed. Her hands went from Gabrielle's waist to her top. Her fingertips grazed over the tops of her Soulmate's breast in the leather maroon top.

The Amazon Queen pulled back from the kiss with a deep need. Her hands released the pole and she easily took her top off. Her leather top went to the bed.

The Warrior Princess grinned and kneeled then leaned in.

Gabrielle's eyes closed when her Soulmate's invigorating lips took her right breast. She could feel the moan almost escaped her lips but she held back. Her hand searched out Xena's right hand. She lifted her lover's hand to her free breast to start kneading it.

Xena helped her Soulmate knead one breast while she sucked on the other. She sensed Gabrielle's other hand on the back of her head urging her on. So she slipped out her tongue to swirl it around the warrior-bard's nipple. Then her teeth closed over the nipple and she heard her small warrior suck in a breath. She loved that effect. She now decided to affect the other breast more.

The Amazon Queen's skirt she found sticking to her body from the sweat. She also found her bangs wet as her center. Her center ached with the need that it anticipated soon to come.

The warrior dropped her hand from the left breast now that her lips controlled it. Her right hand found Gabrielle's other hand to squeeze and press the free right breast. A breast may not be left alone. Xena now released the breast after working Gabrielle up the climax. She slowly trailed her tongue and lips down her Soulmate's stomach. She made sure to hold both the smaller woman's hands in control.

Gabrielle soon felt a warm press against her stomach. It sent desires roaring through

her body to heat her more. She sucked in a breath while opening her eyes. She held back the deep groan.

Xena's right hand shifted to hold Gabrielle's hand by the top. She slowly brought Gabrielle's hand under her skirt and to feel her between her folds.

The small warrior whimpered so faintly. She shut her eyes and held her breath to feel her and Xena's index fingers enter inside. Gabrielle instantly laced her other hand with Xena's and she held tightly. Her breathing picked up.

The warrior slowly brought her finger and Gabrielle's in and out. She brought their other hands to her mouth and kissed her Soulmate's hand. She saw how white her partner's knuckles were. She grinned knowing she'd never done this with Gabrielle. She'd never asked Gabrielle to help climax herself.

The younger woman felt an extra thrill at climaxing herself with Xena. She'd sensed her Soulmate slipping in their middle fingers with a faster pace. Gabrielle added on her rocking of her hips.

Xena's inhaling and exhaling took a dramatic rise at knowing Gabrielle was climaxing. Her breathing and her own desires ran strong. Her eyes closed as her body started to fall into the Gabrielle's climax. That's one of many things she absolutely loved about being Gabrielle's Soulmate.

Gabrielle's heart pounded, their four fingers moved rapidly, the water moved quickly down her body, and Xena's breathing sped up the process. She arched her back out, her eyes tightened, and her mouth clamped so tightly.

Xena had given a hard thrust and held their fingers high up as she felt her Soulmate's body convulsed and fell into perfection. Xena's body convulsed as well on the same scale. Her eyes shut and she gritted her teeth to stay silent.

Everything was dead silent as these two Soulmates held back the loudest cries. They didn't move, no breath made, and not a heart pound. Silence and stillness for a few seconds as they entered their world of passion.

The warrior came to and slipped their fingers out of Gabrielle.

The warrior-bard sucked her breath. Her jaw was still tightly closed. Her eyes swirled dark with passion.

Xena worked frantically and stood up to take Gabrielle's lips. Her hands grasped Gabrielle's waist.

Their names passed between each other's lips in the kiss.

The older woman moved to sit on the bed for her strength went right at that moment.

The small warrior followed and fell into Xena once the kiss broke.

The warrior pulled her lover into her lap and held her tightly. She felt Gabrielle buried her head into her breasts. Xena kissed the top of her partner's head and rested her head against Gabrielle's.

Gabrielle lifted her head slowly and kissed Xena lightly.

"You can talk now." The warrior smiled lovingly.

The Amazon Queen just nodded and dropped her head onto Xena's lap while lifting her legs onto the bed. Her calves dangled off the side of the bed. Her eyes closed.

"Did I wear you out?"

Gabrielle chuckled and quietly responded, "Yeah... still trying to catch my breath." Her breathing was slowly calming and she was on her side. She brought her arms around her warrior's waist and pressed her breasts against Xena's stomach.

Xena leaned forward to press her lips against her lover's temple. She then whispered, "I love you."

The small warrior smiled. "I love you too Xena."

A smile creased Xena's lips and she sat up.

The Amazon Queen now rolled onto her back to expose her breasts.

Xena's right hand was resting on Gabrielle's stomach however it came up between her small warrior's breasts. Her hand went to her Soulmate's right breast and lightly brushed over the hard nipple.

Gabrielle grinned and opened her eyes. Her hand came up to grasp Xena's hand. "You're going to kill me." She coughed faintly to help her slightly ragged breathing.

"Right." The tall woman squeezed her partner's hand. "Your beauty is killing me." But she went a bit serious after hearing her partner's cough. "You okay?"

"Yeah." The warrior-bard was breathing heavy still. "Just the cool air... and I'm getting old."

Xena shook her head with a grin. "You're making me feel real old."

"Nah." Her thumb rubbed against Xena's hand. "I'm still trying to keep up with you." She furrowed her eyebrows while pressing her head back more. "Where'd my top go? I can't even remember." Her back was arching up.

"Gabrielle." The warrior's voice was warning.

"Oh right." The Amazon Queen quietly laughed and dropped her back down realizing it was only tantalizing Xena. "Sorry."

"No, I love a nice view of your breasts." Xena evilly grinned but looked up for her partner's top. She reached over with her left hand to grab the top. "Here sit up."

Slowly the younger woman sat up and dropped her hand with Xena's to her lap.

Xena released her hand to only pull the top over Gabrielle.

Gabrielle easily slipped back into her leather top and fell back into Xena's lap.

The Warrior Princess's warm eyes lowered to her Soulmate. "Like that?"

"My own fingers? Yeah." The small woman slightly blushed. "Never done that."

"I know, wish I had." Xena sighed sadly.

"Better later than never." Gabrielle grinned and searched out Xena's hand to hold again.

The tall woman's other hand went up to Gabrielle's head to brush back her still wet bangs. "Glad you liked it."

"Mmm." Gabrielle evilly grinned. "I can't wait to have you do it to yourself."

Xena chuckled. "Gotta get me first."

"Oh don't worry about that Xena." The warrior-bard's eyes picked up pieces of darkness. "Worry about when it happens." She evilly grinned.

"I'll be enjoying the waiting period." Xena grinned right back at her best friend.

"Good." Gabrielle's grin wasn't as powerful once she sighed. "How much longer is it till sunset?"

"We've got about a candlemark."

"Perfect." The small warrior turned to her sides and shifted closer to Xena. "I'm feeling-"

"Vulnerable?"

"Very." The younger woman looked up with her trusting green eyes. "Xena?"

The warrior smiled and bent forward to kiss Gabrielle's cheek. "Sssh, come on." She pulled her Soulmate into her arms while laying back and pushing up into the bed more.

Gabrielle followed and crawled into her warrior's stronger arms. Her head lay resting on the larger woman's chest. Her breath was faintly shaky. She quietly chuckled. "Finally am a warrior and still get soft."

Xena chuckled and smiled closed her eyes. "You're not the only one."

The small warrior-bard lifted her head and kissed Xena strongly. When she pulled back Xena's blue eyes opened with warmth. "How'd we get so lucky?"

"I don't know." The warrior smiled and tightened her arms a little more. "But I'm not taking it for granted anymore."

"I know." Gabrielle smiled and lowered her head in addition to closing her eyes.

Xena contently sighed and closed her eyes.

"Xen, can we go on a small day trip tomorrow or the next day?"

The older woman's lips shifted into a knowing smile. "To the grove where we first

met huh?"

"Yeah."

Xena's lips pressed together. "You're ready to go back to Potidaea?"

"Yes, I haven't been there since it was burned."

The warrior faintly nodded and relaxed. "Let's go then."

Gabrielle smiled warmly. "Thanks."

"Tomorrow?"

"Yeah." The young woman moved her in agreement. "One day or two? I guess that depends on if we want to rush it or not."

"We're definitely not rushing it."

Gabrielle quietly laughed and smiled. "I agree."

"We'll tell mother tonight." Xena wrapped her legs with Gabrielle's.

"Great." The Amazon Queen let her breath out very slowly with a smile.

Xena did the exact same thing with the same smile.

~*~*~*~

"Gods, where is he?" Gabrielle fell back into her seat with a huff.

"He'll come." Xena shot a confident smile to her partner. "Just relax."

The warrior-bard chuckled and nodded. "Your mom is a great cook."

"Mmm, nothing like mother's cooking," the warrior agreed. She pushed her empty plate a little more on the table.

Around in the tavern were plenty of customers. Saada and Cyrene were busy cooking food and filling orders.

The small woman relaxed back in her seat. "What time you think we should leave tomorrow?"

The older female shrugged her shoulders. "Not to late in the morning." She paused while thinking. "I'd say we'd make it to Potidaea by late afternoon.... maybe mid-afternoon if we go at a fast pace."

Gabrielle moved her head in understanding. "You wake me up and I'll go."

Xena chuckled. "Right, you make me sleep in anymore."

The younger warrior arched and eyebrow while sitting up in the seat. "And you make me wake up early anymore." She smirked.

"Good, then you can wake me up." The older warrior had a smug look.

The Amazon Queen groaned and rolled her eyes. "We'll get each other up."

"Exactly." Xena smiled warmly and crossed her arms in her lap. She'd decided to look a little less... threatening tonight by not carrying her weapons. However she still wore her leathers and brass armor and oh yes her dagger was still wedged between her breasts.

Gabrielle herself left her sais back up in the room deciding she wouldn't need them to cook. Yet being Xena's Soulmate, she carried her small ivy design dagger. It was tied around her right ankle. "How long you think it'll take Michael to send that message?"

The warrior thought for a moment. "Seven days, give or take a day." She sighed contently. "Depends on the weather really but he said he'd take a fast ship."

"Good." Gabrielle nodded. "I wanna get down there."

"If we get invited."

"Xena." The warrior-bard chuckled. "We will, I can still remember the way Cleopatra... treated you."

The Warrior Princess chuckled. "She liked me huh?"

"Just a little." Gabrielle's protectiveness was flickering quietly in her eyes.

Xena evilly smiled and leaned forward. "Well, if she... hits on me while we're there you'll be the first to know."

"Oh, I know I will be." The small woman evilly grinned to her partner. "Either I'll see it or I'll feel it."

The warrior grinned. "I know, that's the fun part."

The Amazon Queen raised an eyebrow. "The part that I know what's happening to you without even being there?"

"Yeah." Xena sat back in her seat with a tugging smile. "I feel well... looked after."

Gabrielle chuckled. "Works both ways Xen." She smiled herself. "Have to keep tabs on what's mine."

The older woman grinned and lifted her head at hearing the door to the tavern open. "Show time love."

The small warrior glanced up to see the constable come in. "Let's go." She stood up.

Xena followed after her partner. "Constable Ferus."

Ferus turned his head to the right. "Hello again ladies, any exact spot you'd like for me to sit."

"Nope, anywhere is fine." Gabrielle smiled. "Xena and I will go get Cyrene."

"Thank you." The constable nodded and strolled through the fire lit tavern to find a table for two.

The Soulmates went into the kitchen right up to Cyrene.

"What are you two up too?" Cyrene put her hands on her hips. "I can tell its trouble."

Xena grinned and stepped closer to her mother. "You have a visitor mother."

"Who may that be?" The innkeeper arched an eyebrow.

"Constable Ferus wishes for your presence mom." Gabrielle smiled with encouragement.

"I'd love to go out there sweety." The innkeeper sighed. "But I need to keep up with the orders."

The small warrior grasped the tavern owner's arm to lead her out the door. "Don't worry, Xena and I have it all covered. We can handle it." She smiled. "Xena and I can do anything."

Cyrene arched an eyebrow. "I hope so sweety but I really should-"

"Don't worry about it mom. Go enjoy a visit with Ferus." The warrior-bard pointed to where the constable sat. "Go ahead."

The older woman sighed and shook her head. "Alright sweety, I can see I'm not going to win."

"Yup. Enjoy mom."

"Thanks sweety." Cyrene wiped her hands on her apron and strolled through the tavern.

Xena stepped out of the kitchen beside her Soulmate. Her eyes stayed pinned on her mother.

Gabrielle sighed contently as she saw Cyrene come up to Ferus and talk. "They'd be a perfect match."

"Definitely." Xena watched her mother sit down and start talking with the constable. Her eyes lowered to Gabrielle. "Come on, we better run this place."

The Amazon Queen chuckled. "Right, good luck Xen." Gabrielle grinned up to her partner and disappeared into the kitchen to start cooking.

"Now what's that suppose to mean?" Xena sighed and walked out to the tavern. "There can't be too much to this."

~*~*~*~

"I need more wine?"

Xena strolled up to the customer with stoic expression.

The man's eyes widen. "Xena?"

The warrior grinned. "How are you Potestas?"

The jeweler laughed and gave a warm smile. "Quite well. Retire from the warrior

life?"

"Nope." The dark woman crossed her arms against her chest. "Just filling in for mother for the night."

"Now that is something else." Potestas chuckled. "How you been?"

"Well." Xena smiled warmly. "Yourself?"

"Very good." The man smiled and crossed his legs at the ankles. "How is Gabrielle? She's here I hope."

The warrior nodded. "She's certainly here. She's in the kitchen cooking."

"Ah, now I know where this fine meal came from." Potestas stood up with his mug. "I'll go get myself a drink and visit with Gabrielle." He chuckled. "I haven't seen that one for quite awhile since... you both were here to get married."

Xena sighed. "Yup, that was the last time we were here for a long time." She shifted to the table to grab the man's empty plate and used utensils.

"Now I heard from your mother, you and Gabrielle were here about a year ago or so briefly. Then you both went to India?" The jeweler started walking through the tavern with the warrior.

"Yeah, Gabrielle and I... explored India for a few months." The warrior directed the man towards the kitchen.

"How was it?" Potestas stopped walking as he came to the kitchen door. "I've heard it's another world."

"It is." Xena walked into the kitchen with the dishes and held the door with her boot to let the man in.

Potestas came in and spotted Gabrielle at the counter chopping up meat. "Gabrielle!"

The warrior-bard glanced up and smiled. "Potestas, how are you?"

The jeweler quickly came over and gave her a one armed hug. "Very good."

Xena dropped the dishes on another counter where there were stacks of dirty dishes. She groaned and mumbled, "I hate dirty dishes." She walked to the kitchen door then opened the door to see a load of people come in. "Gabrielle, you better step it up. About ten people just came in."

"Hades." The small woman glanced to her partner. "Get Saada in here will you, thanks."

"Sure." Xena walked out of the kitchen to get orders from the newcomers. She glanced to the bar to see Saada. "Hey Saada, Gabrielle needs your help in the kitchen."

The barmaid nodded and got another drink for a patron then briskly walked into the kitchen.

The warrior walked over to the area where the newcomers came in. She came to a

table of four of them. "Gentlemen, what can I get you?"

The four men were all laughing about something and looked up to see the dark warrior.

One man coughed and asked. "You're the... barmaid tonight? What happened to Saada?"

"She's here." The warrior's lips shaped into an evil grin. "But, I'll be your... waitress tonight." She crossed her arms against her chest. "Sso, what can I get you?"

Quickly the four men made their orders for their drinks.

Xena went away with a huge smirk on her lips. Nope, this waitressing stuff wasn't too bad.

~*~*~*~

Gabrielle fell into her seat.

The warrior flopped down into her seat and groaned. "Oh gods, that was worse then a battle."

"Tell me about it." The warrior-bard groaned. "And we still have to do the dishes." She put her arms on the table and dropped her head into her arms with a groan. "I couldn't believe it Xena."

"I know." Xena stretched her legs out under the table. "They all came at once."

Gabrielle lifted her head up with a tired look. "Twenty-five people at once came storming in here. Was it planned that way?"

The Warrior Princess laughed. "I think they knew we were working the tavern."

"They must of." The Amazon Queen huffed and dropped her head down into her arms again. "I do not know how your mother does it," she mumbled.

"Neither do I."

"Not only that." Gabrielle's head popped back up. "But Cyrene is our ages put together and she only has one person helping her." She sighed and dropped her head down.

Saada came strolling up to the two tuckered out women at the table in the empty tavern. "Well ladies, how'd you enjoy the night?"

"It was great," the warrior-bard mumbled.

"I thought so too." The barmaid chuckled. "Relaxing with the extra help. Well goodnight." She strolled away.

"Goodnight Saada and thank you." Xena listened to hear the barmaid leave with a smile.

"Okay, let's get these dishes done." Gabrielle stood up and sighed.

The warrior stood up with a seeming pain. "Come on." She brought her left arm

around her Soulmate's shoulders.

The pair walked into the kitchen and stopped dead in their tracks at seeing the four stacks of dirty dishes.

The smaller warrior whined and wrapped both arms around her partner's waist. "Take me away from here Xena."

The older woman chuckled quietly. "Are we brave enough?"

"Yeah." Gabrielle straightened up and let go of Xena. "We have some c-c-c-courage." She ran her right hand through her hair. "Let's attack them."

"What you got?" Xena crossed her arms against her chest. "The water or the drying?"

"Drying... I know you like to play with the water."

The Warrior Princess laughed then sauntered up to the stacks of dishes.

The Amazon Queen came up with determination. "We're not going to bed till we clean all these."

"Then we're not going to bed."

Part 2

Section 2

~*Part 3*~

Cyrene lifted her head up to notice the newcomer in the tavern, a smile eased across her lips. "Morning."

"Good Morning Cyrene." The man tipped his head then strolled up to the bar to sit on a stool. "How are you Cyrene?"

"Quite well Ferus, yourself?" The innkeeper smiled while placing her hands on the table with a warm smile.

The constable chuckled and rested his hands in his lap. "Very good. Last night was rather lovely."

"It was." Cyrene chuckled.

"How are your helpers from last night recovering?"

The tavern owner sighed however quietly laughed with a grin. "Still recovering. I think my little ones won't be running the tavern again."

The man laughed and replied, "Ashame."

"It is." Cyrene grinned but went a bit serious. "Speaking of which, I think I may go check on them. My daughter said she wanted to get off a little early."

"Really?" Ferus arched an eyebrow. "Where they headed too?"

"To Potidaea for a couple of days."

"Potidaea?" The constable furrowed his eyebrows. "The same town that was southwest of here that was burned down mysteriously?"

"The same." Cyrene nodded. "Gabrielle is from Potidaea."

"Gods, I never knew this." Ferus shook his head. "I take it she's returning for mourning?"

The innkeeper nodded but said, "Partially... Xena and Gabrielle both met rather close there."

Ferus's head bobbed up and down. "I see."

"Well excuse me Ferus, I'll be right back. Just want to check on my little ones." Cyrene smiled and went to the stairs to climb up them silently. She came to the door to the Soulmates' room, which she quietly opened and peered in. Her eyes widen a little at the sight but a happy smile tugged at her lips at the scene.

And there was Gabrielle with the side of her head on her partner's right shoulder and her left arm draped over Xena's breasts. Her body was half on top of Xena's body and her left leg between Xena's legs.

Xena on the other hand had her head turned and resting against her partner's. Then her right arm was pressed against the small woman's arm as her hand rested on Gabrielle's shoulder. Her left arm was under Gabrielle but her hand was partially tucked under the warrior-bard's belt of her skirt.

Both Xena and the small warrior were dressed in their clothes, well except Xena didn't wear her armor only her leathers. And they both were certainly conked out hard.

Cyrene studied the pair for another moment while she held the door. *Thank the gods they're together again.* She closed her eyes and inwardly prayed, *Aphrodite please watch over them.* Silently the innkeeper closed the door and walked back down to the bar.

"Were they up?"

The tavern owner shook her head and grinned. "Dead asleep. I think they may have gone to bed rather late last night."

"Ah, better if they get their sleep."

Cyrene nodded in agreement. "Yes it would be." She chuckled lightly. "I believe they stayed up all night cleaning dishes."

Ferus chuckled and smiled warmly. "As big of a crowd that was last night it wouldn't surprise me."

"I know." The innkeeper chuckled and leaned against her bar.

"Did they just stop in to visit with you?"

"Yes." Cyrene nodded. "They plan on heading to Egypt soon then come back here."

"Egypt really?" Ferus chuckled with a smile. "I hear they travel all over."

"Oh they certainly do." Cyrene grinned. "I've heard stories from Gabrielle of their adventures."

"Really? Mind sharing?" The constable sat back a little. "This sounds interesting."

~*~*~*~

Gabrielle moaned lightly and tucked her head under Xena's more. "What time is it?"

"Late." Xena's eyes gradually opened while she turned her head to the right towards the window. "Hades, real late."

The warrior-bard lifted her head and looked out the window. "Oh no, there goes our plans."

"Nah... we just will have a late start." The warrior turned her head back and closed her eyes. "Not a big deal."

"I don't even remember when we got to bed last night."

Xena chuckled lightly but replied, "To late. Let's just say the moon was gone before we were."

"That's bad." Gabrielle groaned then brought her right arm over her head. "Didn't you carry me up the stairs?"

"Yup." The older woman grinned.

The Amazon Queen chuckled. "That was the best part of the whole night."

"Really?" Xena evilly grinned. "You mean the water war wasn't fun too?"

"Welll, that was too." Gabrielle's head popped up. "You know, you're in for it. First the mud war then the water war. What's next on your agenda?"

The Warrior Princess evilly snickered. "You'll just have to wait and find out."

The small woman groaned again and dropped her head. "Great." She sighed contently. "We're really tangled up here."

"Mmm yeah." Xena's eyes closed. "That's why we slept so long."

"Oh, is that why?" The younger woman chuckled. "Thought it was the late night."

"Nah, I was to tangled up to get up."

"Ha ha warrior." Gabrielle sighed and kissed her partner's shoulder. "I guess we should move huh?"

"If we get untangled first."

"Hold on." The smaller warrior began to shift and was on top of her Soulmate. "Better?"

The warrior opened her eyes as a grin creased her lips. "Oh yeah, perfect kissing

position."

"Mmm, I know." Gabrielle lowered her head to take her partner's lips in a warm kiss. She slowly lifted her head back up after the kiss. "Do we go or not?"

"We go." Xena lifted herself up with her lover still on her. Once she sat up she wrapped her arms around her partner.

The small woman encircled her Soulmate then lowered the side of her head against the warrior's chest. "I love you."

The older woman kissed Gabrielle's temple and whispered, "I love you too."

Gabrielle kissed her partner lightly, next she popped out of her arms onto the floor. "Let's go."

Xena laughed and shook her head. "The energy is back."

The small woman whirled around on her heels and gave a puzzled look to Xena. "Where are my boots?"

"Right over there." The warrior pointed to near the fireplace.

Gabrielle turned her head that way and saw them with her sais. "Hades forgot." She snapped her fingers and strolled over to her boots.

The warrior chuckled then shook her head. She rolled out of bed and scanned around for her own boots. "Where are my boots?"

"Right over there." The small warrior pointed near the wall.

Xena turned her head that way and saw them with her armor. "Hades forgot." She snapped her fingers and was about to move but stopped in mid action. Her eyes went over to Gabrielle.

Gabrielle was staring at her with a surprised look.

The pair both said in unison "Soulmates," then started laughing hard together.

The Amazon Queen breathed deeply and said, "That was scary."

"Uh huh." Xena walked over to collect her boots.

The small woman slipped her feet into her boots and walked over to the bed to tie them on there. "And why do we know where each other's boots are and not our own?"

"Just don't ask Gabrielle, we'll never understand."

The short warrior whirled around with her boots on and tied. "Just is."

"Exactly." Xena stood up with her armor after tying her boots on. She put her armor on then began to buckle it into place.

Gabrielle strolled up to her partner and helped buckle the armor on. "How long do you think it'll take to make it to Potidaea?"

"Depends, walk or ride?"

"Mmm... ride." The warrior-bard finished with the buckles.

So Xena faced her, asked "Gallop?" and folded her arms over her chest.

"I could go for that." Gabrielle grinned and chuckled. "Torqueo could use it."

"So could Argo." The warrior grinned. "So, we'll get there this afternoon I'd say if we leave now."

The Amazon Queen arched an eyebrow and crossed her arms. "We're having breakfast. I am not bobbing up and down-

"I know." The tall woman chuckled. "I was planning on your stomach."

"Right." Gabrielle chuckled. "I'll take our stuff down to the horses."

Xena nodded. "We'll meet downstairs."

The smaller woman moved to the saddlebags to lift them both. "Sounds like a plan." She walked over to the door. "Xena?"

The warrior quietly laughed while moving to the door to open it up. "Sorry."

"No problem, thanks." Gabrielle went out the door then down the steps.

"Morning sweetie."

"Morning mom." The warrior-bard smiled. "Good morning Ferus."

The constable smiled warmly. "Good to see you again Gabrielle."

"The feeling is mutual but I need to go see the horses." The Amazon Queen walked over to the doors with the saddlebags.

"Are you both leaving sweetie?"

"Yeah mom." Gabrielle glanced back. "As soon as we get breakfast we're heading out."

Cyrene chuckled. "That's my cue." Her voice was louder now. "I'll get something cooked up for you both."

The small warrior opened the door with her foot. "Thanks mom." She went outside to the stables and saddled up the horses. When she came back in she saw her Soulmate sitting at the bar next to Ferus. "Hey." She smiled up to her partner.

Xena glanced down with a warm smile. She patted the stool beside her. "Mother is almost done with breakfast."

"Fabulous, I'm starved." Gabrielle sat on the stool then glanced down to the constable. "So, what brings you here this morning constable?"

Ferus smiled while gazing down at the small woman. "Cyrene, came by for a visit."

"Another one?" The young warrior grinned. "I can't believe it," she said innocently.

The constable laughed. "Uh huh, both you ladies are quite big instigators."

Xena shook her head with a hidden grin. "Gabrielle and I never do such things."

The man corked an eyebrow. "I'll remember that for the future the next time you both ask for favors."

Gabrielle chuckled. "Welll, maybe Xena and I do a little instigating here and there."

"I know you both do." Ferus smiled warmly then turned his head to the right to see Cyrene come out with two plates of hot food.

After that breakfast the Soulmates were out of the tavern with their horses. Cyrene was lecturing them on being safe. She also gave them food to take with them. Both lovers groaning because they knew how much weight they were going to put on by the end of this.

Soon the Soulmates disappeared into the late morning sun to head southwest at a gallop. With the wind whipping by as fast as the world, the pair made their destination for Potidaea by mid-afternoon.

~*~*~*~

Gabrielle brought in a shaky breath as the cool breeze brushed her hair back. She slowly bent down to one knee while her right hand came forward.

Carefully and slowly the three red roses were placed on the partially grass covered land.

The small warrior gradually stood back up then dropped her head back a little. Her eyes closed from studying the blue sky. Three tears trickled down her cheeks. She felt warm arms circle around her waist to draw her in safely.

"I got you." Xena held her Soulmate tightly.

Gabrielle's eyes opened again to lower to the still faintly charred land. She stared at the area that once was Potidaea. That once was her hometown, born, raised, and loved. "I miss them, Xena."

"I know." The warrior kissed the side of her partner's temple. "I know." She breathed in heavily. "It's not easy losing family."

The small woman nodded and dropped her head against her Soulmate's chest. "Much less to a crazed god like Velasca." She felt a spark of anger rise up in her however she doused it with her forgiveness.

"At least you didn't lose them sooner... if that helps," whispered Xena.

The Amazon Queen's throat tightened. "It does and helps I didn't lose all of my family." She glanced up to Xena with a sad smile.

The warrior sadly smiled back. "I'll always be by your side." She brushed some of Gabrielle's hair back. "Go ahead, I'll be right here."

The small woman nodded and turned her head away. She closed her eyes while resting her head against Xena's chest again. Her thoughts took her to her mother, father, Lila, and then eventually to the people of Potidaea. How she tried so hard to apologize to them for bringing Velasca on them. And how she tried so hard to express her deepest love for her family despite her leaving them. This wasn't the way it was suppose to happen.

Within a half of a candlemark Gabrielle whispered that she was ready. So the warrior called the horses over. The pair took their horse's reins and walked away from the area that was Potidaea. They went into the surrounding forest and searched out the grove. The Soulmates walked side by side with their horses behind.

Once they came to the grove Gabrielle stopped dead in her tracks and reached over to take her Soulmate's hand.

Xena intertwined their hands and smiled while studying the grove.

That same smiled etched its way on Gabrielle's lips.

The Soulmates remained standing there together and relived the first day their paths crossed. Realizing everything changed from that point on. And realizing they could have just missed each other by mere seconds and only ended up worlds away from each other. But it didn't happen like that, it happened the way it should had happened.

Gabrielle squeezed her Soulmate's hand. "I can still see it all."

The warrior chuckled lightly. "Me too."

The small woman shifted to Torqueo and put the reins on her horse. "Stay here boy."

Torqueo moved his head in answer.

Xena laughed lightly with excitement and moved to her mare. She put the reins on Argo and said, "Stay here girl."

Argo nodded with a whine.

Torqueo quietly shifted closer to Argo. He moved his gaze away from his owner to the mare. He whined quietly in seeming question over what was important about this lonely grove.

Argo turned her head to the stallion in seeming to answer.

Gabrielle looked down at the ground and gazed over to her warrior. "It was right here."

Xena laughed quietly then took three steps to the left. "I was right here."

"Uh huh." The small warrior nodded with a smile. "And I remember you coming up to save us."

"There's no 'us' Gabrielle." Xena grinned. "I was planning to save you. The other woman just because they were there."

The Amazon Queen laughed while shaking her head. "You're bad."

"At least I don't lie." The warrior grinned. "But... you did have longer hair then." She arched an eyebrow.

"Yeah well you had a different chakram then. So?" A grin masked Gabrielle's lips.

Xena chuckled with a grin. "So let's see if we remember this all right."

"Okay." Gabrielle jogged her memory. "You were over there sitting right?"

"Yeah, after I'd buried my weapons near there." The warrior folded her arms against her chest. "You tried to spare your village from slavery."

"Hold on, who was that man?" Gabrielle had a confused look. "You know, the one that was Draco's second in command?"

The older woman thought for a moment. "Hector was his name, real idiot." She snickered.

The warrior-bard chuckled but kept her gaze across the grove to her lover. "Okay, so I tried to save my village, typical young me." She grinned. "And you came into the scene right?"

"Yeah." Xena nodded and walked over to her partner. "Of course I was just in my shift then."

"Yeah why was that?" The small woman arched an eyebrow at her best friend. "You never told me but I figured you were giving up the warrior life."

The tall woman sighed as she stood off to the side of her Soulmate. "I gave up on my life."

It dawned on Gabrielle. "You were... going to... commit suicide?"

Xena sighed. "Basically."

The small warrior's eyes widen. "You're telling me that I could have lost you on that day if... if..."

"If Draco hadn't decided to enslave Potidaea... yeah."

"Or if you hadn't decided to come near this area I could have lost you." Gabrielle shook her head. "That's crazy." She shifted closer to her partner. "Why... wha... you could have... I might have... give up... how come... suicide... I didn't... You didn't tell... by the gods... if-if... I could have lost you before I had you Xena!"

Xena only had a huge grin on her lips.

Gabrielle tightly grasped her Soulmate's arms. "Xena, it's not funny."

"I know." The warrior leaned forward and kissed her partner lightly. "I couldn't because I saw you, I almost killed myself because I hated myself, no I really didn't kill myself, you didn't lose me, I won't ever give up, like I said I couldn't because I saw you, suicide is nasty, no you didn't know, I just told you, it wasn't the gods, no if's, and you have me Gabrielle."

Gabrielle blinked up at her Soulmate. She opened her mouth to say something, anything but nothing came. She just pulled her Soulmate in tightly to hold her.

Xena smiled warmly and dropped her head down on Gabrielle's while wrapping her arms around her partner. "Hey it's okay."

The younger woman nodded as she tightly held her warrior as if the past was coming back to take her Soulmate away. She breathed with shakiness. "That is sso scary Xena."

"I know." The warrior sighed faintly. "But isn't every adventure in our lives?"

"There's a difference there." The warrior-bard raised her head up. "That's a 'our lives' and not a 'your life' Xena. That was before I knew you, that's really scary."

"Ssh." Xena smile warmly as she leaned her forehead against Gabrielle's. "It didn't happen, it wasn't my destiny. You're my destiny that's why I'm still alive here to tell you about what *could* have happened."

Ever so slowly that same smile creased onto Gabrielle's lips. "Yeah. Thank... our destinies for that."

The older woman chuckled a little. "It's just you and me love."

Gabrielle shifted her head to kiss her partner warmly. "Gods, that's a close one."

"Worse then all of our life threatening adventures huh?"

The small woman chuckled. "Yeah it is." She gradually released her warrior. "Okay, so where were we?"

"I was in my shift."

"Right." The young warrior took a few steps back. "And I was still here and caught sight of you."

Xena shrugged her shoulders with a small grin. "Wouldn't know, I was to busy getting knocked onto my face."

"What?" Gabrielle straightened up with her hands on her hips. "You weren't knocked down."

"Yes I was." The warrior shook her head. "Square on my face, where were you?"

The warrior-bard evilly grinned. "Me? I was to busy thinking how incredibly hot and sexy my savior was. I seriously didn't see you get knocked over." She still had that evil grin. "Besides, I was in idolize mode so I wasn't suppose to see you get knocked over."

Xena gave a quiet laugh. "How hot and sexy I was?"

"Yesss." Gabrielle chuckled. "Come on, how couldn't I notice?"

"Gabrielle, I was in my shift looking like crap. How could you even think I was hot or sexy?"

The Amazon Queen shrugged her shoulders. "How couldn't I?"

The warrior opened her mouth to retort but nothing came.

"Why'd you even get knocked over in the first place? That's not like you."

Xena's right hand came up behind her neck. "Uhh because I saw you."

"Woo woo Xena." The small woman chuckled. "This is to good." She put her hands on her hips. "So you're asking *me* why I would be thinking you were hot and sexy at that time when you get knocked over because you *saw me*. Oh, oh you've got nothing on me." Gabrielle chuckled. "You have no room to talk Xen." She snickered. "I had every right to stand here dreaming about how hot and sexy you were if you were getting knocked down because you saw me."

The warrior laughed then sighed contently. "You've got a point." Her hand fell from her neck.

"Sso, let's see. You were busy knocking Hector around." Gabrielle chuckled. "I kinda remember what he said... this village makes tough woman... or something."

The tall woman shook her head. "I don't remember totally, just plain dumb. That's when he tried to use the whip."

"Yeah, that's right." The young warrior smiled. "Then you went into action taking everybody down."

"Yup." Xena glanced to her left and pointed to a spot on the ground. "Right around there I had my weapons buried with my armor and leathers."

The Amazon Queen nodded. "Gods, seems like so long ago."

"It does." The older woman sighed a bit sadly. "Miss it?" She turned her head back to Gabrielle.

"Certain things I think." Gabrielle turned her serious facial expression to Xena.

"Mmm like what?" Xena took a few steps closer to her Soulmate.

The young woman breathed in for a long time. "I don't know." Her hands went to her hips. "Each year something was a little different and I'd miss something from the previous year. Yet the new difference I really loved you know?"

The Warrior Princess slowly began to move her head in agreement. "The protection?"

"Yeah." Gabrielle had a sad expression. "I really miss feeling so well look after." She grinned up to Xena. "Not that I am not now."

"Just you didn't know how to fight then, relied on me huh?" Xena grinned a little.

The small warrior nodded. "Yeah, that was so interesting. I didn't know a thing about a weapon then there was you that knew everything." She chuckled. "Such a contrast."

"Makes you wonder how we got along." The older woman laughed.

Gabrielle quietly laughed and sighed contently. "It's because I'm so easy to get along with."

The tall woman huffed at that.

"I am." The Amazon Queen put her hands on her hips. "Well, easier to get along then what you were at the time."

"Ha ha warrior." Xena had a smug look.

Gabrielle corked an eyebrow. "That's my line."

The Warrior Princess evilly grinned. "Since you're a warrior I can use it too."

The small woman's mouth dropped. "Fine, I'll just call you Warrior Princess for now on."

"You do that Amazon Queen."

"That's it, you're in for it now."

Xena crossed her arms against her chest. "Oh yeah? What you gonna do? Poke me with your sais?"

"Oh oh that's real rich Warrior Princess." Gabrielle stomped up to her partner. "You wanna know what I'm gonna do?"

The tall woman leaned towards her partner with narrowed eyes. "Yesss."

"This." Gabrielle quickly moved to hug her partner with all her strength.

The warrior felt her ribs being squeezed in. She started to cough and drastically try to breathe. She rasped out, "Okay Gabrielle... Gab... I can't... breathe." The squeeze went a little tighter. "I... love you." The hug suddenly went very gentle. Xena coughed and sucked in a deep breath. "Wellll... that was... a life threatening hug."

The younger warrior chuckled while still holding her partner. She dropped her head against the other woman's chest. "Servers you right."

"Last time I ask for a hug." The dark woman started to feel her partner's arms tighten again. "Not that I don't llove your hugs."

The warrior-bard snickered and loosened her hold again. "Thought so."

Xena smiled warmly and quickly shifted her hands to lift Gabrielle up into her arms. "Gotcha."

"To say the least." Gabrielle lifted her head up to kiss her warrior. "I miss this."

The tall woman nuzzled her partner's cheek. "Me carrying you?"

"Yeah." The warrior-bard rested her head against her Soulmate's shoulder. "Despite the fact I'm suppose to be a warrior now."

"Don't worry, I won't tell anybody I carry you." Xena grinned while starting to walk

back to the horses.

"Good, don't want to ruin my reputation."

The older woman laughed as she continued to slowly walk.

"Xena?"

"Mmm?"

"Think we can do some reminiscing tonight?"

The Warrior Princess's lips tugged into a smile. "Definitely." She came up to the horses then carefully slipped her partner out of her arms.

Gabrielle bounced up onto her feet and came over to Torqueo. "Okay boy, let's get you untacked."

Torqueo nodded in utter agreement with a whine.

The small woman grinned and began to untack her horse.

Xena did the same with Argo.

And within a candlemark the pair had their horses untacked, a fire going in a camp in the grove, dinner cooking, and reminiscing in high gear.

Gabrielle bellowed out laughing as she fell to her side. "Xena, you're never going to let that go."

The warrior snicker. "Gabrielle, it's one of my favorite memories of you." She stretched her legs out.

The small woman sat back up. "Oh gods, that nutbread was good though."

"Mmm, that was only because of the henbane in it." Xena evilly grinned to her Soulmate sitting beside her.

The partners were sitting directly beside each other as if they were only friends. They gazed over the grove where they first met. The fire was burning beside them with two medium size steaks cooking that Cyrene gave them. It was early evening still.

"No, nutbread is good." Gabrielle chuckled. "And I'm sssso excited your mom gave us some."

The warrior grinned in the fire lit camp. "I better test it to make sure no henbane is in it."

"Yeah you better." The young warrior sighed happily then turned her head to Xena. "Remember the time with Cynus the warlord?"

"Oh yeah." Xena nodded. "When I got that arrow in my side and stayed with Darius."

The small warrior turned her head to her lover. "Darius tried to get you to stay with him huh? Settle down with him."

"Yes but I was still a little to wild for settling down." The warrior grinned at Gabrielle. "Besides, I had a wild partner to keep up with."

"Right." Gabrielle laughed. "Did I tell you how I met Cynus son Sphaerus?"

The older woman arched an eyebrow. "All I know is we met up with them in that stream and you said that was the man you wanted to twine your branches with. Then I told we needed to have a discussion about choosing men."

The warrior-bard laughed. "Yeah that's right. We never had that discussion. But I met him... in the tavern."

"The one I left you in?"

"Yup." Gabrielle nodded. "Some drunk guy was hitting on me." She started to grin at her Soulmate. "So I kept trying to get him to leave me alone."

"No can do huh?"

"Oh no, this drunk guy stuck to me like fly to shit." The Amazon Queen sighed. "Then I saw Sphaerus just resting back in a seat and I told this drunk guy that he was my boyfriend and he'd just got done polishing his huge lethal sword collection."

Xena started to laugh at the mental image.

Gabrielle continued with her story. "Of course this guy didn't believe me whatsoever. I said fine and walked over to Sphaerus, sat in his lap, and kissed him."

"What?" The older woman laughed. "Sphaerus just went with it?"

"Oh yeah." The young warrior chuckled. "He liked it."

"I figured that, you're a great kisser."

Gabrielle blushed faintly. "He thought so too." She sighed. "After that the drunk guy left me alone."

The warrior chuckled. "This was happening while I was off with Darius?"

"Uh huh." The small woman arched an eyebrow. "Anything happen between you and Darius?"

"Gabrielle." The older woman shook her head. "No." Her gaze turned away. "Darius and I just pulled the arrow out of my side and I got to know his kids."

"Yeah." The Amazon Queen sighed. "His kids were so cute. Ashame they lost their mother."

"It really was." Xena sighed. "I wonder how they are."

Gabrielle glanced to her Soulmate. "I'm sure there happy. I know his daughter Sarita started to talk after we left."

The warrior smiled. "Cutest little thing. So were the sons." She sighed with a bit of sadness. "Like I said to Darius, I never thought about having any of those things until

then."

Emerald eyes averted to her lover. "Children, a home, and a husband?" She chuckled. "Or a wife."

The tall woman grinned for a moment yet went serious again. "No, never thought about them till then."

"Yeah." Gabrielle nodded sadly and lowered her eyes to the grass. "I've always wanted kids." She chuckled. "Would be so interesting to be able to make life like that then care for it."

Xena smiled warmly. "Have little Gabrielles running around."

The Amazon Queen laughed. "Little Xenas?" She evilly grinned at her Soulmate.

The warrior sighed dramatically with wide eyes. "Gabrielle, do you know how wild those kids would be?"

The warrior-bard laughed and shook her head. "They would be wild ones wouldn't they?" She grinned at her partner. "Between your... energy and mine, double the stubbornness and temper along with the intelligence."

"Don't forget the imagination."

Gabrielle groaned. "Oh gods, we'd have an interesting child... or children." She sighed sadly. "If only."

The older woman also sadly sighed. "Hey you never know." She glanced over to her Soulmate.

"Xena." The young warrior grinned. "We're two females, it ain't happening." She grinned.

Xena laughed then shrugged her shoulders while looking away. "I'm just saying... you never know between us." She glanced back. "We are Soulmates."

Gabrielle reached over to grasp her partner's hand. "I have to wonder the same thing myself." She took a deep breath. "Remember what Artemis told us?"

"Yeah, whatever we desire together will be ours."

The younger woman nodded a few times. "It has to make me wonder some times." She smiled warmly. "The great part would be knowing we created the child and not the gods. Considering it would be coming from our soul." She ran her right hand through her hair. "That's just wild you know? The possibility that we could basically make one of us pregnant because our soul is bonded so strongly is so amazing Xena."

"The idea is powerful Gabrielle."

Gabrielle nodded. "It is powerful, amazing, and beautiful." Her lips creased with a warm smile. "Think we could find out some time?"

Xena chuckled and squeezed her partner's hand. "Not now."

"Yeah I know." The small woman sighed. "Our life is still way to chaotic. We'll have

to settle down first too."

"Have you ever thought about that?" The warrior raised an eyebrow.

"Oh yeah sure, had two ideas." Gabrielle released her partner's hand. "I better check those steaks." She walked over to the fire.

"What your two ideas?" Xena asked.

The warrior-bard bent in front of the fire to find the steaks ready. "Well my first one was that we could find an area near the sea shore. It would be beautiful." She pulled the steaks away from the fire and placed them on two plates.

"What's the other?"

Gabrielle reached into the bowl next to the plates and put two pinches of herbs on the steaks. "The Amazons."

"Gabrielle, I am not living with the Amazons."

The Amazon Queen laughed. "Neither am I." She lifted the plates then carried them over to her partner. "What I'm thinking is we could live somewhere in the territory away from them." She handed her Soulmate a plate. "Hold on, I'll get the knives and forks."

Xena took both plates actually and placed one in her lap then the other on the ground. "That's not a bad idea."

"Yeah, that's what I thought." The small woman went to the saddlebags, opened one, and pulled out a cloth that held their utensils. "We'd be close to the Amazons incase they needed us and then we'd be in a protected area. But we won't be living directly with the Amazons." She walked back over with two forks and two knives. "I think it may work well." She sat as she handed her best friend a fork and knife.

The warrior took them and replied, "Maybe we'll get the best of both worlds."

Gabrielle lifted her plate into her lap. "What you mean?"

The older woman grinned. "Well think about it. Your southern tribes are along the coast down there on the Aegean Sea."

The Queen suddenly realized her partner's idea. "You're right, we may be able to find some open land there in a southern tribe. And being the Chosen we'll get first dibs on any land." She pressed her fork into the steak while she saw her lover start to cut up her steak. "You know that may work." She chuckled. "I mean I want to bring all the lands together and make one huge Nation." She laughed with a smile. "I really like that idea Xen."

The warrior grinned while lifting her piece of meat. "I can tell... but that's a ways ahead."

"True... besides we're suppose to be reminiscing on our past. Not making plans for our future."

"Exactly." Xena winked and ate her the piece of steak.

~*~*~*~

Xena shifted her hands under her head. She kept her eyes pinned on the stars above. "Gabrielle, it was nasty."

"Oh come on Xena." The small woman chuckled. "A duplicate of you can't be ugly."

The warrior turned her head to her partner beside her. "Oh yes it can be when my duplicate has black eyes."

Gabrielle cringed. "Black as pearls?"

"Uh huh." Blue eyes flickered to the sky again. "Ugly."

The small woman chuckled. "You never told me you fought yourself when you tried to get to my dreamscape."

"I did." A grin tugged at the corner of Xena's mouth. "I still remember you in that dress."

The younger warrior groaned. "I can remember it too."

"You didn't look bad in it."

"Xena, that's not my sort of thing."

Xena chuckled. "Well, they were planning to only kill you for Morpheus."

"Yeah you know... only." The young woman grinned. "Get that all the time. You'd think bad guys would do something different instead of trying to kill me."

The tall woman laughed.

"Hey Xena, you never gave me back my dagger."

The Warrior Princess suddenly went silent. "I called it payment."

"What?!" Gabrielle turned her head to her partner. "I paid for that thing."

"Yeah well, I had to deal with a chatty kid then." Xena suddenly got a hit on her stomach. "Oh, watch it. My food may come back up."

The short warrior quietly laughed. "Come on now, my breasts are big enough now for that dagger."

The warrior suddenly went in a roll of laughter of her partner's words and her memory of Gabrielle with the breast daggers.

Gabrielle sighed dramatically. "Like I said before," she began to mumble, "you're breasts are dangerous enough."

"Oh yeah?" Xena calmed and rolled to her right towards her partner. "Are they really?"

The Amazon Queen's eyes lowered to her Soulmate's breasts. "Mmm, a lot more these days."

The warrior chuckled lightly and leaned towards her best friend to kiss her gently. She pulled back with her left hand on Gabrielle's cheek.

"Xena?"

"Yeah?" The warrior's eyes were twinkling warmly.

The small woman took a deep breath. "Why did you have to fight your double in the dreamscape?"

The Warrior Princess let her breath out slowly while her fingertips came to brush over her partner's smooth lips. "She was the 'key' to making it into Morpheus's castle and she was basically my dark side. My dark side that I conjured up in my mind, emotions, and dreams."

Gabrielle nodded faintly, she reached up to take her lover's hand. "You want to hear something weird?"

"What's that?" Xena gazed intently into Gabrielle's eyes.

The younger woman's eyes lowered. "I miss... your dark side." She glanced back up. "I know, I know... it's crazy."

The tall woman studied her partner's eyes before asking, "Why?"

"I'm not sure." Gabrielle sighed. "I know my first few years I kept preaching to you to not give into the darkness. But since the past year or so I've began to understand it better because I've experience it." She sighed. "I liked how protective it could be... loved it." She shifted her eyes back up to her Soulmate. "I know that doesn't make sense."

"No it does." Xena paused for a moment. "My dark side did get out of hand."

"Yeah it *did*," the small woman emphasized. "But you have such a great control over it now."

"I do." Xena nodded with a small smile. "I've learned to over time and thanks to your help. You were right then to tell me to not give in considering I couldn't control it then."

"Now you can."

"Gabrielle." The warrior grin. "Just say it."

The Amazon Queen chuckled while she breathed deeply. "Well... is it possible... to let it loose more Xena?" She raised an eyebrow. "I mean you have control of it, it's not like it could get out of hand. And you've learned to reroute it to use in your own means. We both seen it and it's amazing."

Xena grinned a little while her eyes searched her partner's eyes. "You're serious huh?"

"Yes." Gabrielle smiled warmly. "I miss it for some reason."

"What you miss about it?"

"I don't know exactly." The small woman glanced down to their hands. Her thumb began to rub against Xena's hand. "Maybe it's because I enjoyed watching you work like that." Her eyes lifted. "I think I found a sort of... comfort knowing you had that darkness. It was like I know nothing could stop you when you become dark and powerful." She grinned a little. "I love seeing you become powerful like that, it's a thrill."

Xena chuckled at her best friend. "So, after all this time you're asking me to go back to it?"

"Not exactly that." The warrior-bard paused for a moment. "More like let it out at when we can use it."

"And you're not scared it may take me over like it could Gabrielle?"

"No." The young woman held conviction in her eyes. "I know it won't because even if it controls you, I control you and in turn control the darkness."

The warrior held worry in her eyes and her voice as she spoke. "But I do not want that darkness to control you too Gabrielle. It may be able to since we're Soulmates."

"Xena, between you and I we're the balance of light and dark. We balance each other." Gabrielle shook her head. "Besides, if it takes you then I want to go with you Xena."

"I know, you'd come right behind me because-"

"Because where you go I go." Gabrielle grinned and squeezed her partner's hands. "You control it, I control it, and our love controls it. It won't take you, me, or us. The darkness would be helpful in protecting us both Xena." Her eyes went very serious with her expression. "And that darkness is apart of who you are and I want you to be who you are. If that includes the darkness then please let it be." She smiled warmly. "I want you, all of you."

Xena rapidly leaned down to passionately kiss her Soulmate. When she pulled back her cheek pressed against Gabrielle's. "Gods, I love you Gabrielle." Her eyes shut. "Thank you."

"Hey come here." The small warrior pulled her partner into her arms and held her. "I love you."

"I love you too." The warrior grinned and rested her head on Gabrielle's chest. She twined their legs together while bring one arm over her partner's stomach. She chuckled a little. "Never thought you'd ask me."

The Amazon Queen grinned while she brought her right arm over to her partner's body. Her right hand lay resting on Xena's back. "Why?"

"Because you did always want me not to give into the darkness." The Warrior Princess took a deep breath. "But, I did needed to learn how to control it at that stage." She closed her eyes slowly.

"You have learned." Gabrielle smiled warmly. "I do miss it." A small grin played on

her lips. "And I know how you'll love to release it again."

"Mmm, definitely." Xena's lips shaped into an evil grin. "I miss it myself."

The smaller warrior chuckled, she lifted her head up and kissed Xena's head. "I already have pity for our enemies. They're in for it now."

The warrior's eyes twinkled when they opened. "They're problem."

Gabrielle snickered and tightened her arms around her warrior. "Very true, servers them right." She yawned a little.

"Go to sleep."

"Only if you get your weapons off." Gabrielle reached to the sword. "Got the sword." She unclipped it and placed it to closer to her partner.

Xena rolled to her left on to the ground on her back. She grasped her chakram and placed it with her sword. She sat up next and took her armor off and tossed it out of the way. Reaching to her left she grabbed a fur and rolled back to her Soulmate. Her body was half on Gabrielle's. With her left arm over Gabrielle's breasts, her head on Gabrielle's chest, and her legs twined with Gabrielle's.

Gabrielle brought her right arm around her warrior's waist while her right hand went back to Xena's back. "Wasn't this my position last night?"

"Mmm, my turn now." Xena tugged the fur over both their bodies. "Comfortable?"

"Yeah." The small woman chuckled. "The lack of armor makes a huge difference."

"It really does." The warrior brought her right hand up and grasped her small warrior's closes arm. "Nice and tangled." She closed her eyes.

"Gods, we're getting up late tomorrow." Gabrielle shut her eyes.

The older woman quietly laughed. "Go to sleep."

"Cranky." The small woman huffed.

Xena grinned, lifted her head, and kissed her Soulmate gently. "Sleep well huh?"

"You know I will." Gabrielle smiled and pressed her partner's head back down on her chest. "See you in our dreamscape."

"I'll race you." Xena closed her eyes.

The warrior-bard closed her eyes and replied, "You're on."

Soon both Soulmates were asleep and arrived in their dreamscape at the same exact time.

~*Part 4*~

Xena shifted in her saddle as she kept her eyes pinned on the old area of Potidaea.

Gabrielle ran her right hand through her hair. She took a deep breath then pulled on

Torqueo's right rein to turn him away. "I love you mother, father, and Lila," was whispered from her lips.

The warrior sighed sadly and turned Argo away as well. "Ready?"

"Just go." The warrior-bard gave hints of a grin.

The tall woman nodded. "We'll make it back to Amphipolis by the afternoon."

The Amazon Queen moved her head in understanding. She shifted her eyes to her Soulmate and she grinned. "Let's see who makes it there first." She kicked Torqueo into a gallop. "See you Xena!"

The Warrior Princess sighed, shook her head, and spurred Argo into a gallop. "I'm coming after you Gabrielle."

The small woman glanced back. "You better catch up or you getting to old?"

Xena narrowed her eyes. "Ha ha Amazon Queen."

"That's 'my Queen' Consort." Gabrielle laughed and gazed ahead again.

The older woman chuckled and spurred her mare to go faster.

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The Soulmates pulled their horses to a walk as they entered the village together.

"At least you caught up."

Xena huffed at her partner's words. "Gee thanks."

Argo huffed right in agreement.

Gabrielle chuckled while gazing back ahead. "I'm beat."

"Yeah." The warrior sighed as she swayed in the saddle.

Without warning the small warrior started to giggle uncontrollably. "Oh gods, Xena." She fell forward in her saddle and pointed to her left.

The older woman glanced that way and started to laugh.

There off to the left of the Soulmates was a fenced in area and a family of pigs. Two particular pigs were rolling around in the mud.

The pair was breathing deeply and began to straighten up in the saddles.

"Oh gods..." Gabrielle chuckled. "That was just funny."

"Uh huh." Xena grinned while she gazed ahead to see the tavern.

The warrior-bard's lips spread into a smile when she saw an older woman walk out onto the porch of the tavern with her hands on her hips.

"Gotta love mother."

"Patiently waiting for her daughter." The Amazon Queen grinned.

Xena chuckled. "You mean both."

Gabrielle shrugged her shoulders. "Now that's incest Xena."

The tall woman groaned and shook her head.

The young warrior chuckled at her warrior.

The two lovers dismounted and walked into the stables. As they untacked their horses they talked to Cyrene. The small group headed inside of the tavern and sat around to talk.

The innkeeper sat back in her seat while her expression was serious. "Mind if I ask you both something?"

Gabrielle shook her head. "No mom, ask away."

The older woman smiled warmly but lost it to her seriousness again. "Are you both together again?"

A warm smile creased Xena's lips.

The Amazon Queen smile a little more bashfully. "Yes we are mom."

Cyrene took a deep breath then contently let it out. "Thank the gods." She smiled at the pair. "The other day I came up to check on you both and saw you sleeping in each other's arms. Had to wonder."

Gabrielle was a little red but replied, "Sorry about that mom."

"Sweety, you know I don't mind that at all." The tavern owner chuckled. "Love is love."

The small warrior smiled warmly and glanced up to her partner.

Xena peered down at her Soulmate and flashed a smile. Her eyes lifted to her mother. "Sorry for all the confusion mother... things have been rough."

Cyrene nodded. "I can only imagine." She sighed sadly then crossed her legs. "I can still recall the way you both were when you walked in here after stopping Hope out there in the barn." She shook her head. "Knew something terrible wrong had happened between you both."

The younger warrior's head bobbed while she gazed at Cyrene. "Hope... had a lot to do with the separation."

Xena's right hand came up on the table and grasped Gabrielle's.

The warrior-bard glimpsed up to her lover to see the loving smile on her lips. She mirrored the smile then glanced back to the innkeeper. "Xena and I just got back together actually."

Cyrene furrowed her eyebrows. "When was that exactly?"

"While Gabriele and I were with the Amazons doing the challenges," Xena said coolly.

"That was rather recent." The innkeeper sighed. "How long was the separation?"

"Oh gods." The Amazon Queen gazed up to her partner. "Two years?"

The Warrior Princess's attention went to Gabrielle. "A little under two years." She sighed. "One year, ten months, and twenty-three days."

Gabrielle studied her Soulmate's eyes as she took that in and it made her squeeze Xena's hand so tightly.

The warrior smiled confidently however she gazed over to her mother. "To long."

The smaller warrior faced her mother-in-law.

Cyrene sighed. "It should have never happened." She frowned and asked, "What happened?" She paused. "If I may ask."

"A lot happened." The warrior-bard shifted a little in her seat. "It started when we went to Britannia mom. We went there to stop Caesar while Xena fought Caesar I was with a cult." She paused. "This cult believed in a one-god so we took this temple and the cult decided to do a sacrifice." Her eyes went shadowy while she continued her story. "I stepped in the middle of the sacrifice and only killed a young woman. After that Xena came in to save me but the cult's main leader transformed into this... monster name the Deliverer." Gabrielle took a deep breath. "While Xena fought him I was taken by this one-god named Dahak and infected with a baby."

Cyrene quickly cut in. "You were raped sweetie?"

"Basically yes mother." Xena ran her right hand through her hair. "But I made it to Gabrielle to late. After that we were getting ready to leave Britannia but Gabrielle became pregnant in about a week's span." She paused to breathe. "So we fled into a forest so Gabrielle could have the child away from the villagers who knew the evil. We happened upon a castle and there Gabrielle had the child."

The innkeeper sat up in her seat. "What happened to the child?"

Xena's eyes lowered but came back up. "I tried to kill Hope but Gabrielle took Hope and tried to run from me."

Gabrielle shifted in her seat while holding her Soulmate's hand tightly. "I sent Hope down a river in a basket right before Xena caught up to me. I told Xena that I killed Hope myself and after that we returned back to Greece." Her freehand went through her hair. "Xena next got caught up in an old promise to a woman in Chin. So she carried it out and I became angry because I thought Xena was betraying herself and Ares sent me to Chin. I tried to stop Xena from carrying out her promise and in turn I was actually betraying her."

The warrior's thumb rubbed against her partner's hand. "After Chin we came back to Greece and I wanted to visit Solan."

"Solan?" Cyrene had a confused look but she gazed directly at her daughter. "A son?"

Xena nodded. "I never told you mother. I had Solan about thirteen years ago and I didn't tell anybody about him."

"Because you didn't want to risk his life dear?"

"No." The Warrior Princess shook her head. "It was to risky and after his birth I gave Solan to a centaur named Kaleipus. Kaleipus raised Solan as his own for me." She heavily breathed. "So, Gabrielle and I decided to visit Solan."

"Now did Solan know you are his mother Xena?" The tavern owner had a worried look.

"No he didn't." Gabrielle shook her head. "He does know now." She had a sad smile but continued. "While Xena and I visit him, Hope showed up and released Callisto. Hope was already at the age of around five. Callisto kept Xena and I busy while Hope took the chance to kill both Kaleipus and Solan. Xena stopped Callisto and I stopped Hope. Then Xena and I separated for awhile before we were sent to a land of illusions where we healed partially."

"Not fully." Xena glanced to her lover then back to her mother. "After Illusia Gabrielle and I stayed together as just partners. A little later into the year Hope returned with the help of Callisto and Ares. Hope was reborn and she looked exactly like Gabrielle so there was a little confusion there. Eventually we made it to Hope's castle to try and stop her from releasing Dahak. Now I'd planned to use a dagger with hind's blood to kill Hope but Gabrielle jumped in and threw herself with Hope down a pit."

Cyrene nodded a few times and gazed at the smaller warrior. "That's when you came back right sweety?"

"Yeah mom." Gabrielle let her breath. "I made it out of the pit as did Hope and you know the rest of the story."

"Yes." Cyrene nodded. "I can still remember when she came here." Her eyes narrowed. "I knew that wasn't you sweety."

"I'm just happy nothing happened to you mom." Gabrielle shook her head. "Hope was angry about everything. When I found out she was here I was scared she might try to kill you."

The innkeeper chuckled. "No sweety, I played dumb and acted as if she were you." She gave a warm smile while reaching forward with her right hand. Her hand fell on top of the Soulmates' hands and squeezed. "I'm glad you both are together again." She shook her head. "I feared for your soul." She grinned a little. "Don't do it again please, I've got enough gray hairs." She released the hands.

The Soulmates chuckled together.

"I'm serious." Cyrene grinned while grabbing a lock of gray hair in the front. "You see, this is from your separation." She released her hair at hearing the laughs.

"We'll try not to mother." Xena grinned with a deep breath. "I couldn't handle another."

Gabrielle groaned. "Dido."

"Well, that's good." The innkeeper stood. "But I better get back to my cooking. You both did enjoy your trip?"

"Oh yes." Gabrielle smiled. "Was nice to reminisce about our first day we met."

The tall warrior sighed dramatically. "Yes when I first met that annoying blond."

"Hey!" The young warrior mock glared at her partner. "You know you loved that annoying blond."

"Maybe."

"Pffft, you got knocked over." The Amazon Queen smirked.

"Yeah well we won't say what you were thinking when I came into the scene to save you from Draco's men."

"I do believe this is my cue." Cyrene chuckled with Xena and Gabrielle. "Both be here promptly for dinner." She walked towards the kitchen door. "Because you're both waitresses tonight."

Both Soulmates' heads instantly turned to the innkeeper with wide eyes.

The tavern owner chuckled.

"Mom, Xena and I won't make it." Gabrielle gave a pout.

Cyrene grinned. "I was fooling." She winked as she turned to the door. "But if you want to let me know."

"Hey mom." The Amazon Queen evilly grinned. "Can Xena and I work the bar?"

The innkeeper turned around while holding the door. "Sure if you really want to sweetie. It'll give me extra time to cook."

The small woman glanced to her Soulmate. "What you say Xena?"

The warrior grinned and lifted her eyes to her mother. "We'll be here mother."

The older woman smiled warmly. "Wonderful." She went into the kitchen.

Gabrielle laughed with excitement. "This is going to be fun."

"How you figure?"

"Oh come on Xen." The young warrior glanced to the older warrior. "We can toss those mugs every which way, throw the liquor around, and sail the mugs down the bar to the customers."

Xena laughed. "Great, we'll have more port on the floor than in the customers' stomachs."

Gabrielle chuckled. "Are you saying we're not coordinated enough to do that?" She arched an eyebrow.

"Nnnow that you say that, we'd be perfect."

The smaller female grinned and leaned over to kiss her lover lightly. "Let's go upstairs."

The tall woman stood up and peered down at her partner. "We're also perfect for-"

"Snuggling, I agree."

Xena grinned a little. "You call it that and I won't do it."

Gabrielle's nose crinkled together. "You've got a point there. Warriors don't snuggle together."

"No." The older woman leaned forward and lifted her Soulmate up into her arms.

"Wahoo." The short warrior wrapped her arms around her partner. "Take me upstairs Jeeves."

The warrior had a coolly look as she said, "Gabrielle, do you want to get a good look at this floor?"

"Oh no." Gabrielle frantically worked to wrap her legs around her Soulmate and arms around the warrior's shoulders. "Ha, try to drop me now."

Xena chuckled and kissed the top of her partner's forehead. "I wouldn't. Ssso, I'm your slave now huh?"

The small woman meekly smiled. "Welll... how does love-slave sound?"

"Ooooh really good." The warrior's arms shifted a little to hold Gabrielle better. Then an evil grin crossed her lips. "Ssso we still snuggling?" She began to move her arms to try and carry her partner again.

Gabrielle went with the flow and rested back in her lover's arms. She dropped her head against Xena's shoulder. "Nnno, thought we could... cuddle."

"Gabrielle." The warrior warned as she started to climb the steps. "Warriors don't-"

"Cuddle... yeah yeah." The warrior-bard chuckled. "Okay what about... nuzzling?"

Xena huffed. "Try again." She came up to the hall.

"Oh oh I got it now!" Gabrielle laughed. "We'll nestle together."

"Gabrielle!"

~*~*~*~

"Mmm, this is nice... sitting here nestling together."

"Gabrielle," the warrior growled. "I told you, birds nestle... warriors don't."

"Okay okay." Gabrielle continued running her right hand through her warrior's hair. "How about we go from the lover's perspective."

Xena glanced up to her partner. "If you go by that perspective there is no... nestling

it's all sex." She had her head laying in Gabrielle's lap.

The small warrior laughed. "True..." She wrinkled her nose. "Or fondling." She sat back a little into the headboard of the bed. "How about the... partner's perspective?"

The pair was sitting in the middle of the bed with their weapons gone. Gabrielle resting into the headboard with Xena's head in her lap. Her right hand was running through Xena's hair while her left hand rested on the warrior's leather clad stomach.

The warrior however had her right hand grazing up and down her Soulmate's leg. Her other hand on top of Gabrielle's hand on her stomach. "Partner's perspective... mmm only strictly business, no nestling."

"That's true. How about friends?"

"Only in times of pain to comfort." Xena chuckled. "There's only one left."

"Strangers?" Gabrielle suggested.

The older woman squeezed her lover's leg. "Ha ha my Queen."

"Oh that's better." The Queen grinned. "Sso, what other then strangers?" She had an innocent look.

Xena chuckled. "Soulmates."

"Oh yeah." The small woman evilly grinned. "Completely forgot."

"Right." The Warrior Princess's hand started to glide up and down her Soulmate's leg again.

"Well... since we've done the nestling like Soulmates." The young woman now rapidly moved to press her body against Xena's. "Let's try the lovers aspect."

Xena's eyes went a little dark while her arms went around her partner's waist.

"Gabrielle, we only have about twenty or so minutes before we need to work the bar."

The small woman lay resting on top of Xena. "Leaves me plenty of time to take care of you." She sat up with her legs straddling Xena's hips. Her right hand slipped between her lover's leather skirt. "I always take care of my lover's needs."

"Gabrielle," growled the warrior.

Gabrielle grinned and leaned down to her partner. She whispered into Xena's ear, "Do you really want me to stop?"

The warrior closed her eyes and ushered back, "No." She arched her back a little. "I always need your touch."

"I know." The warrior-bard kissed her Soulmate deeply. "You're mine." She sat back up while pressing her hips against Xena's. Her fingertips came up her partner's legs more and slipped between warm folds.

Xena kept her eyes closed and grasped Gabrielle's hips. "Gabrielle." Her voice held a deep plea.

"Don't worry." Gabrielle rubbed her thumb down between the folds as she watched Xena's breathing rapidly pick up. "Gods, everything about you is amazing Xena." She slipped two fingers in Xena's center.

"Oh gods." The warrior arched her back.

The young warrior's eyes were sparkling and she began to draw her fingers in and out of her lover. Her left hand went to Xena's stomach and pressed down there. She loved to talk to Xena at these points to make her climax faster. She knew her words and voice held power over Xena. "Can you feel me inside of you Xena?"

"Yess." Xena clenched her teeth and opened her cobalt eyes.

Gabrielle smiled with love while saying, "I'll take you higher and higher."

The warrior's eyes slammed shut when she felt two more fingers come inside of her. The tempo picked up leaving her dying for air. She held Gabrielle's waist tightly and felt the fire flame up from her center, to her chest, to her arms and legs, to her head, and it took her over. Her body went over the edge and she dropped her back on the bed.

The small warrior grinned with satisfaction. She carefully pulled her fingers out then rapidly leaned down to kiss her lover. Her named was passed into her mouth.

Xena breathed heavily once her partner ended the kiss. "That was... nice."

Gabrielle chuckled and dropped her head into Xena's neck. She spread her legs out to rest on Xena's. "Feel good huh?"

"I always do." The warrior grinned. "Since I met you." She wrapped her arms around the lower half of her best friend's waist. Her chest still rose up and down quickly.

"Feeling is definitely mutual." The warrior-bard chuckled. "Guess we better head down huh?"

"Mmm yeah." Xena's eyes opened with a twinkle as she lifted her lips close to Gabrielle's ear. She whispered in a deep voice, "But I take care of my lover's needs too."

Gabrielle's eyes shut instantly when two fingers entered inside of her. "Oh gods Xena." She buried her head down into her partner's neck. Her legs came back up to clamp on Xena's sides. "Xena please."

The warrior wasn't moving her fingers instead she kept them idle. "Do you want me to stop... want me to remove my fingers?"

"Gods no." The small warrior's arms tightened around her lover.

"Want me to move my fingers in and out? Then add more?"

The Amazon Queen nuzzled her warrior's neck. "Yes."

Xena grinned while she slid her two left fingers in and out. Her right arm was still around Gabrielle's back holding her down.

"Xena... gods I love you."

The warrior's grin shifted into a smile. She continued moving her fingers at a moderate pace. She pressed her lips against her partner's temple. "I love you too." Xena could feel her partner's body breaking out into a sweat with her coarse breathing. "I still remember seeing you in the grove. You were so gorgeous then and you keep looking more beautiful each day."

Gabrielle whimpered and clung tightly to her Soulmate. She hadn't felt this vulnerable in so long but she loved it in Xena's arms and touch.

Xena smiled knowing what her Soulmate was feeling. "You're the most precious thing to me." She carefully slipped in a third finger but kept the same pace. "I'd do anything to have you Gabrielle." Her left hand was gliding up and down her partner's hot back. She then started to feel her Soulmate's tears on her neck. She kissed Gabrielle's temple again. "Do you like this?"

The small woman simply nodded for that was all she could manage between the powerful emotions bubbling up and physical feelings.

"Me too." Xena now slipped a fourth finger in while feeling Gabrielle's center begin to tighten. "I love having you feel vulnerable only to me. But you feel protected too huh?"

Again Gabrielle only could nod yet she did faintly kiss Xena's neck. She still was crying.

"I love you." The warrior held Gabrielle again with her left arm. "I'm going to take you." She moved her fingers fast as she felt her Soulmate's head bury more into her neck. She felt her partner after a number of thrusts suck in a deep breath and go very still. Xena closed her eyes at feeling her lover's center tighten over her fingers.

The warrior-bard's chest rose high and stopped as her jaw clamped down.

The older woman cautiously brought her fingers out of Gabrielle. Her left hand came under her friend's chin to lift her head and claim her lips.

The Amazon Queen filled her lover's mouth with her warrior's name in a scream. After the kiss she dropped her head back into Xena's neck while she tried to breathe.

Xena wrapped both her arms around Gabrielle while waiting for her Soulmate to come back. "I've got you." She shifted her left hand back up to lift her partner's head. "Okay?" She smiled warmly. She then saw the look on Gabrielle's face and it sent her into a frantic worry. "Gabrielle?"

"Xena, please don't ever leave me again." Gabrielle went into tears. Her voice was shaky as her body and emotions. She spoke frantically. "I don't want to separate from you again. I wouldn't make it." She was shaking her head. "Gods please don't leave me again. I don't want to lose you. Gods please Xena. I hate separations. I'm sorry for everything. Please Xena, don't leave me again. Please-"

"Sssh, it's okay." Xena's eyes were wide with fear and she tightly held her partner with protection. In frenzy she pushed Gabrielle's head down into her neck. "I won't leave you." She started to cry and her voice started to shake now. "I promise, never." She

felt her Soulmate clung to her tightly, shaking, and crying hard. "I won't Gabrielle, I swear. I'm yours forever." She dug her head into Gabrielle's. "Forever."

The Soulmates remained grasping onto each other in sheer desperation of love as if death was coming to take the other away. As if something was coming to separate them again. However in those minutes the Soulmates didn't only find a physical release by a soul one.

~*~*~*~

"Are you both okay?" Cyrene stepped up to the two Soulmates after noticing their red eyes.

"We're fine mom." Gabrielle smiled in reassurance. "Xena and I just had a... good cry."

The innkeeper put her hands on her hips. "After what we talked about?"

"No." Xena shook her head. "Something else mother." She'd noticed the customers already coming into the tavern. "Hey, you don't mind if Gabrielle and I go into the kitchen for a second before taking over the bar?"

"Sure dear." Cyrene smiled but her eyes held worry. "There's nobody in there, take your time."

"Thanks." The warrior walked into the kitchen with her Soulmate. When they came in, she bent down to be eye level with Gabrielle. She lifted her right hand to brush back Gabrielle's faintly wet bangs. "You'll be okay?"

"Yeah." The small warrior smiled and leaned into her partner's hand. "You'll be okay?"

Xena smiled with love. "Yeah." Gabrielle took her hand.

"Just need to relax."

The tall woman chuckled. "And enjoy the night."

"Thank you." The Amazon Queen breathed in deeply. "I feel better."

"Me too." The older woman held her partner's hand tightly. "Forever." She stood back up with her smile. "Come on, let's go toss some port around."

The small woman snickered and walked out the door with a new strength. "We have the c-c-c-courage."

Xena followed behind with the same new strength filling her too. "Hades yes."

The pair came outside and took over the bar. Cyrene went inside to start cooking up orders and Saada went around the tavern taking orders and handing food out.

"Two mugs Gabrielle."

The small warrior grinned, reached to her left, turned towards Xena, and tossed to the two mugs to her Soulmate.

Xena caught them by the handles and whirl around on her heels to the two barrels of

port.

Gabrielle took a step, reached out and slammed down the taps for the barrels. She saw the mugs fill up and she rammed the taps back up.

The warrior spun around then stepped up to the bar. "Look out." She put the two mugs on the bar and slid them down.

The customers all rapidly lifted their mugs out of the way and put them back down after the mugs went by.

"Wahoo." The two men reached out to grab their mugs. "Thanks Xena and Gabrielle." They'd held their mugs up in jester and drank.

The small warrior grabbed another mug. "Vintage wine."

"Got it." Xena leaned back to reach under the bar. She pulled out a skin of wine then turned towards her partner.

Gabrielle tipped the mug as she saw her warrior pour the wine in.

The warrior lifted the skin up and down but stopped the flow once the mug was full.

"Be back." The warrior-bard strolled from behind the bar to go to a patron at a table.

Xena corked the skin and placed it under the bar again.

"Can I get some more port?"

The Warrior Princess grinned. "Toss it to me." She caught the mug thrown to her. She whirled around to fill the mug up, after that she slid the mug down the bar back to the person.

"Thanks." The customer smiled and drank his port.

"Hey Xena, can I get that wineskin?"

"Sure." The dark woman reached under the bar to get the skin. She lifted it up. "Catch Gabrielle." She threw it towards her Soulmate across the tavern.

All the customers watched the skin fly over their heads.

Gabrielle simply snatched it out of midair. "Thanks." She uncorked the top and poured it into the mug she held. Once the mug was full she placed it on the table in front of the man whom ordered it.

"Hey can I get some of that wine?"

Xena glanced away from the woman that asked at the bar. "Hey Gabrielle, done?"

"Yup, coming at you." The Amazon Queen corked the top and threw it back. She grinned at seeing her Soulmate catch it.

The Warrior Princess uncorked the skin as she poured it into the mug the woman held towards her. She was grinning from ear to ear.

Gabrielle started walking back towards the bar.

"Excuse me miss, can I get some more ale?"

Gabrielle stopped in mid-step and backed up. "Sure thing." She took the mug. "Hey Xena, got a mug coming at you."

The warrior laughed with a smile. "Gotcha covered, send it."

The warrior-bard threw the mug across the tavern and chuckled.

"What you need Gabrielle?" Xena caught the mug.

"Ale." The small warrior glanced down to the man. "Full... half?"

"Half a mug would be great," the man answered.

The small woman lifted her head and started walking again. "Half a mug Xena."

"Grab it at the end of the bar Gabrielle." The warrior called off and she turned to the bar. She slid the mug down the bar as all the mugs lifted.

Gabrielle came up to the end of the bar with a grin. She reached out and caught the mug by the handle and spun on her heels. "Thanks partner."

"No problem." Xena chuckled.

The younger warrior strolled across the tavern back to the same man.

"Can I get some peanuts down here." The younger man waved at the end of the bar.

"Right, sorry about that one." Xena reached under the bar to pop up a bowl of peanuts. "Watch out, coming through." She slid the bowl down.

The people at the bar simultaneously lifted their mugs to drink and let the bowl fly by.

"Hey Xena, can I get a towel over here?" Gabrielle looked up from the table that was dirty and empty with a plate.

"Coming at you." The warrior balled up the towel and threw it.

The small warrior whipped it out of midair and started cleaning the table. "Hey Xena, can you handle a plate?"

"Sure, dirty?"

"Yup." Gabrielle straightened up with the plate. She laughed. "Ready?"

The warrior looked up. "Throw it to me."

"Here it comes." The warrior-bard threw the plate across the tavern like a disc.

The plate spun past the people and one woman ducked.

The Amazon Queen cringed. "Sorry about that one ma'am."

"S'alright." The woman smiled and went back to eating.

The warrior caught the plate and walked into the kitchen. "Cover the bar for me Gabrielle."

"Gotcha covered." The small warrior went power walking behind the bar. "Anybody need anything?" She slung the towel over her shoulder.

"Yup, can you get me some water to wash these peanuts down with?"

Gabrielle chuckled. "You got it." She grabbed a mug and flipped it in midair to catch.

The Warrior Princess came out of the kitchen with Saada behind her. She came over to her Soulmate's side and slammed down the tab for the water barrel.

The small woman grinned as she let the mug fill up. "Thanks."

Xena winked and flipped the tab up when the mug was full. "No problem."

An older woman came up to the bar. "Can I pay my tab?" She smiled warmly.

Xena came up to her behind the bar. "Sure, what'd you get?"

"Two wines and two specials."

The warrior nodded. "Six dinars."

Gabrielle wiped her hands on her the towel over her shoulder.

The older woman fished out eight dinars. "Thanks Xena, keep the change."

"Thanks, have a goodnight."

"You too." The older woman smiled then headed out of the tavern.

Xena turned to her partner. "Money coming at you."

The small warrior stepped back five steps to the jar, which held the money for the tavern, she held her hands out. "Lay it on me."

The tall woman laughed and tossed two coins at a time.

Gabrielle caught them while reaching back to deposit them into the jar with a huge grin.

"How about some port over here?" asked a younger man from across the tavern.

The Amazon Queen turned her head. "Coming up!"

And that was how the entire night went for the Soulmates. The air in the tavern that night light with the Soulmates laughing and chuckling over their style of bartending.

~*~*~*~

"Thank you both, you were a great help."

Xena grinned. "Didn't think bartending could be so fun." She kicked back in her seat.

Gabrielle chuckled. "Yeah mom, we'll do it again anytime."

Cyrene chuckled. "Great sweetie, I could always use the help. Saada and I are grateful." She smiled while sighing contently. "I had a number of people thank me tonight."

The Amazon Queen corked an eyebrow. "Really?"

"Oh yes, they said how great you both were."

The small warrior glanced up to her partner. "I think we've been in the wrong business all these years."

The older woman chuckled. "Should have been doing bartending instead of fighting huh?"

A quiet laugh came from the warrior-bard and she gazed back to innkeeper. "It was fun mom." She held back a yawn. "And it wore me out."

"I am sure, between the travelling and bartending tonight." The mother smiled. "Why don't you both get some sleep."

"Sounds like a plan." Xena's chair came back down onto the floor. "Sound good to you?" She peered down at her partner.

Gabrielle glanced up. "Yup." She stood up slowly. "Goodnight mom."

The tavern owner stood up herself and came over to hug the small warrior. "Goodnight sweetie and thank you."

"Anytime." The young woman smiled warmly then stepped out of the way.

Cyrene moved to hug her daughter. "Thank you too Xena."

"As Gabrielle said, anytime." Xena chuckled and released her mother. "We'll see you tomorrow."

"Yes of course." The innkeeper stepped aside. "You both sleep well."

"We will mom." Gabrielle sluggishly made her way towards the steps. "Sleep well yourself mom."

"I will sweetie." Cyrene folded her arms against her chest watching the Soulmates slowly head to the steps. She walked over to the kitchen door and peered up the steps to see Xena and Gabrielle slowly ascending them.

"Do I need to carry you up?" A tease tone.

A laugh came from Gabrielle. "Yeah."

The innkeeper chuckled quietly at seeing her daughter lift the other woman then carry her up the stairs. She lowered her head and went into the kitchen.

The short warrior ran her hand through her hair as she walked into the washroom. "That was a blast Xen."

The warrior chuckled. "Wasn't bad."

Gabrielle came back out of the washroom in a few seconds after washing her face. "If we retire from fighting we should do some bartending."

Xena laughed and shook her head. "One thing at time huh?"

"Yeah." The small woman smiled but lost it. "Xena, I'm sorry about early when I broke down like that."

The Warrior Princess moved to sit on the end of the bed. "Come here."

The Amazon Queen slowly walked over with her head a bit low. She moved to sit in Xena's lap then wrap her legs around her warrior's waist and hands holding Xena's sides.

Xena didn't say anything right away, she just brought her right hand up to brush back her lover's hair. Her other arm was supporting Gabrielle from behind. "I'm sorry too." She breathed deeply. "I should have known you were still hurting from that."

"Xena, I should have been over it."

"Who says?" The warrior shrugged her shoulders. "I wasn't either." She paused. "Thank you, you're the one that had the... c-c-courage to say something."

Gabrielle chuckled yet went stern again. "I don't know what happened." She sighed. "I don't know if it was your words, your slow touch, your body, the conversation with Cyrene, or just me... maybe everything" She shook her head. "It just all came at once and took me. I kept thinking how I couldn't loose you." Her eyes were stinging as she brought her right hand up to pull her bangs back and she held them there. "If we separated again I would die Xena."

"It's not going to happen." Xena smiled with conviction and she saw her Soulmate drop her hand back down. "I promise you won't loose me ever." She smiled warmly. "Soulmates right? Only Soulmates could do what we do."

The warrior-bard grinned. "Definitely."

The warrior sighed happily. "I love you." She leaned in and kissed her partner tenderly. "I'm not going anywhere but inside of you."

"Dido." Gabrielle grinned and leaned her forehead against Xena's. "You know what?"

"Mmm?"

"Separations suck."

Xena laughed and drew her partner in. "Gods they do."

The young warrior held her lover tightly. "You know what else?"

"Mmm?"

"I love you."

The older woman grinned and kissed Gabrielle's shoulder. "I know." She then lifted her boots up to the bed and pushed herself into the bed more. Then she began to lie down.

Gabrielle unwrapped her legs and tangled them with Xena's as she rested her head on her warrior's chest. "Hey Xena?"

"Yeah?"

"You're getting real good at these sensitive chats."

A grin tugged at the warrior's lips. "Do I have the Sensitive Chat Queen's stamp of approval?"

Gabrielle chuckled. "I don't know because you're getting better at them than I am."

"Oh?" Xena's arms tightened a little more. "Wonder why?"

"It's the Soulmate thing." The small warrior grinned. "Would explain a lot of things."

"True." The Warrior Princess sighed contently. "Like the part of why you're such a good fighter?"

The small woman lifted her head. "You make me sound like a Warrior Princess here."

The older woman smiled with appreciation in her eyes. "Gabrielle, you are good."

The Queen stared into her lover's eyes. "You never hand out compliments lightly."

"No I don't, so that says a lot right there Gabrielle."

Slowly a smile eased across Gabrielle's lips. "Thanks... I try to match up to you."

Xena quietly laughed. "You do a real good job." She saw her partner's head come back down.

"Yeah I know," a teasing voice.

The dark woman smiled warmly. "Let's get some sleep huh?"

"Sounds good... let's get out of our clothes huh?"

"Yeah." Xena sat up with her partner.

The pair was soon undressed then crawling into the bed and each other's arms. They went on their journey to their dreamscape only to see each other there. They never wanted to leave each other's presence in any world.

~*Part 5*~

Xena jumped back and twirled her sword. "Alright, let's try something really different. Up for the challenge?"

Gabrielle pointed her sai at her Soulmate. "You do realize who you're talking to right?" She grinned. "Bring it on."

The Warrior Princess laughed, tossed her sword in the air, caught it by the blade, and held the hilt to Gabrielle. "Switch weapons."

The Amazon Queen corked an eyebrow. "Seriously?"

"Are you up for the challenge?" The tall woman evilly grinned. "Can you handle it?"

Gabrielle placed her right sai with left hand. She grasped the hilt of her partner's sword. "The real question here is, can you handle it?" She took the sword and tossed her sais at her lover.

The warrior caught the hilts of the sais and spun them. "Haven't used sais in ages." She flipped them out and in from under her wrists. She took a step back, held the sais out, and bent her knees. "Ready?"

The smaller warrior spun the sword trying to get use to the heavy weight. She stanced herself accordingly and her special grin creased her lips. "No, just go."

Xena quickly moved to go on attack.

~*~*~*~

"Excuse, Cyrene?"

The innkeeper looked up after fixing the chair under the table. "Yes young lady, how can I help you?" Her eyebrows creased together. "Wait a moment, I know you."

The woman chuckled. "It's... been a while since I was last here." She smiled warmly.

Cyrene put her hands on her hips. "You're that Amazon friend of Gabrielle's.... Ephiny correct?"

"That's me." The regent smiled and chuckled. "Myself and a few friends of Gabrielle's rode here."

The tavern owner moved away from the table. "Is there something wrong?"

"Oh no, not at all." Ephiny chuckled. "We just came by for a visit to see her and Xena."

The older woman smiled very warmly. "I'm sure they'd be happy to see you." She stepped up to the Amazon. "Are you here for just the day?"

"Probably."

It was late afternoon.

Cyrene shook her head. "Now wait one moment." She grinned. "You and your friends can stay here for the night." She shook her head. "There's no need for you all to go tromping around in the night back to your Nation." A smile took her lips. "Besides, Xena and Gabrielle would like for you all to stay longer."

The regent quietly laughed then smiled warmly. "Thank you but there is five of us total."

"Oh no problem Ephiny. I can handle five of you." Cyrene chuckled. "And Xena and

Gabrielle are off in the woods sparring."

The Amazon shook her head. "What is it with them? That's the second time I've come here and they're sparring. Are they always sparring?"

The innkeeper grinned. "No, first time actually."

Ephiny shook her head. "Thank you, we'll go find them."

"You're welcome. You can stable up your horses and I'll have some rooms waiting. How many?"

"Um three would be fine."

Cyrene nodded. "I can do that."

"Thank you again Cyrene." Ephiny smiled and headed to the door. She walked down the steps and saw the other Amazons all standing around.

"So, where are they?" Amarice shifted her weight to her other foot.

"They're in the woods some where sparring."

Eponin chuckled. "Typical."

The second in command grinned. "Yeah really, those two can't sit still."

The regent huffed and came up to Teresa to take her horse's reins. "Thanks Teresa."

"No problem." The third in command arched an eyebrow. "Are we going to go see them?"

Ephiny nodded. "Yup, lets go untack our horses for the night first."

"For the night?" Amarice put her right hand on her hip. "I thought we were staying for a few candlemarks."

The regent grinned at Amarice. "Change of plans princess." She towed her horse towards the stables. "Come on you four."

~*~*~*~

Gabrielle jumped back, twirled her sword, then asked in a tease, "Come on Xena, I know you're better than that."

The warrior laughed then without warning she quickly did a roundhouse kick.

The small warrior simply ducked, rolled away, and popped back up with the sword. She went on attack trying to get an opening in her Soulmate's defenses.

Xena threw a punch at Gabrielle.

The Amazon Queen quickly brought up her left hand and caught the fist. She smirked. "Learned that one from you."

"Oh?" Xena disappeared to drop down and do a sweep.

Gabrielle fell onto her back plus got the wind knocked out of her. She quickly raised

the sword to stop the sais coming at her. Lifting her feet she pushed Xena back by the stomach. Next the small warrior flipped onto her feet. She slashed at Xena's upper chest.

The Warrior Princess straightened up as the tip of the sword breezed past her breasts. "Thought you liked those?"

"Nah, love them." The warrior-bard grinned. "Xena, attack me."

The tall woman nodded knowing her Soulmate wanted to try something.

Gabrielle stepped back and lifted the sword. Her left hand grabbed the end of the blade. "Come on." She grinned.

The dark warrior came at her partner while flipping the sais' blades out. She lunged them forward trying to get Gabrielle.

Each time the younger warrior caught the forks of the sais along the blade. To adjust to the sais' attacks she would easily lower the blade up or down to catch the sais between the forks.

Xena decided to plunge forward with all her strength with both sais.

The small woman caught both the sais' forks between the blade but she was stepping backwards due to Xena using her strength against her.

Gabrielle gritted her teeth and she jumped to give a kick.

The Warrior Princess went stumbling back from the connection to her stomach.

The small warrior took the second and swiped Xena's feet from under her.

The older woman crashed to her back in a sprawl with the sais still in her hands.

The Amazon Queen bent down to one knee and pressed the sword against her Soulmate's neck as she started to move. "Gotcha."

"Hold on." An evil grin spread across the warrior's lips. "Freeze... two things Gabrielle."

Gabrielle nodded. "Okay what?"

"First." Xena lifted her hands with the sais. "Stand-still." She grinned. "If your enemy is fast enough they could kill you before you could kill them." She paused. "Don't get so cocky without good reason first. If you'd knocked the sais out of my hands first then be damn cocky."

The small warrior nodded. "Second thing?"

"Know your enemies abilities." Xena dropped the sais on the grounds and lifted her finger tips to her partner's neck. "I could do pressure points on you."

"But more then likely my enemy won't know pressure points."

"True." The warrior lowered her hands. "But you can't be sure. You could have fought

somebody like Lord Sinteres without knowing he knew pressure points."

Gabrielle shook her head. "Yeah but you knew he had pressure points and hardly anybody knows pressure points."

Xena chuckled. "True and true."

The small warrior grinned. "So basically I should have been weary with the sais."

"Yes definitely."

"Anything else?"

The Warrior Princess took a deep breath. "I'm bigger and stronger than you right?" She saw her lover nod. "Don't bend down near me at all because I may take a chance to try and snap your neck." She cocked a grin. "Stay standing and keep the sword's tip against my throat." She sighed slightly. "Keep your body away from your enemy's area as much as you can. You endanger yourself if you're close to me like this."

"Okay." The small warrior nodded but asked, "What if I have my enemy scared like the dickens?"

"Then go ahead and bend down but not unless you're positive you have them fearing you. Got me?" Xena narrowed her eyes a little. "It's a mind game Gabrielle. Who controls the most power, strength, and fear. You could be Joxer, not know how to use a sword, but scary people and win fights." Her expression was serious. "Always think like your enemy. What would you do to take down this person. Alright?"

"Yeah, thanks Xen." Gabrielle smiled and moved the sword away to place it on the ground. "Always learning something from you."

The warrior chuckled but went serious again. "You know what else is dangerous?"

"What?" The small warrior raised an amused eyebrow.

"What's dangerous are our lips." Xena brought her hand behind the small woman's hand to kiss her deeply.

Gabrielle moaned in lover's mouth. She lifted her head back up then narrowed her eyes. "Five, by the clearing's edge behind us."

"That's what I got too." Xena grinned. "But they didn't draw swords."

"Yeah, I didn't hear them draw swords or anything either." A grin took the Amazon Queen's lips. "I have a feeling they're feathery friends."

The tall woman chuckled. "I think you're right."

"Mmm, they can wait a few seconds." Gabrielle put her right hand on her warrior's chest and leaned back down to kiss her.

Xena put her hand behind her Soulmate's head to deepen the kiss.

Their tongues grazed passed each other as they entered each other's mouths. And after those few second of kissing the pair stood up together with their weapons. They

turned around to see five Amazons all smirking at them.

Gabrielle gazed up to her partner and grinned.

Xena chuckled as she handed her lover the sais back.

The small warrior took them and held the sword out to Xena.

The Warrior Princess took her sword to sheathe it behind.

Together they walked up to the five Amazons at the edge of the clearing.

The young warrior smiled warmly at her Amazons. "What are you five doing here?"

The Amazons chuckled together.

Ephiny took a step forward. "Came for a visit before you two shipped off to Egypt."

Gabrielle still was smiling warmly. "Thank you." She took a step towards her regent to hug her tightly.

That's when the Soulmates did their rounds of hugs to the five Amazons.

~*~*~*~

"Masika?!"

The five Amazons laughed together at their Queen's reaction.

Ephiny took a deep breath and smiled reassuringly to her friend. "I promise, Masika can handle it." She grinned. "As Masika said, she can handle all those young whipper snappers."

Gabrielle groaned and slumped in her seat in the middle of the tavern. "Masika, I can't believe it." She ran her right hand through her hair. "She's really running my Nation while you five are here?"

"Yeah." The regent nodded. "I tried to get Solari to stay."

"Hades no." The second in command folded her arms against her chest. "I wanted to see my friends before they leave."

Ephiny nodded. "That's why she isn't there. Then I wanted Amarice to stay to run the Nation."

The princess looked to Ephiny then her Queen. "There's no way." She shook her head. "I'm a loyal friend especially after traveling with you and Xena."

Gabrielle chuckled.

"Then there's Teresa," Ephiny said.

The third in command chuckled. "Can't miss out on seeing my friends since the whole Velasca episode."

"That was Teresa's reason." The regent grinned. "Then there was Ep I asked last."

The weapons master shook her head. "Known you both since Gabrielle's princess

hood."

Ephiny shrugged her shoulders. "See, so that left me with Masika." She grinned. "Masika will run the Nation fine for a few days."

The Queen sighed again. "Ephiny... Masika?"

The regent reached out to pat her friend's hand. "Gabrielle, she's the oldest Amazon there, she knows how to run a nation, and she'll be strict with the Amazons. The Nation will be in once piece when we get back. Relax."

The small warrior chuckled. "Alright, you've got good points."

"Yup." Ephiny relaxed back in her seat. "Besides, you two have your five favorite feathery friends all right here at this table."

Xena chuckled. "Thanks for coming by."

Solari glanced up to the warrior. "You know, your mom is awesome." She grinned. "Good food, nice rooms, a stable... and great drinks." She chuckled. "You two have it made here."

The warrior laughed at the Amazon's words. "Yup, that's why Gabrielle and I run away to here."

"Yeah I can see why." Amarice grinned. "Why didn't you two bring me here on our travels?"

Gabrielle chuckled. "Because I wanted to keep you in shape when you came back to the Nation."

The princess huffed. "I have a high metabolism."

"Right." Gabrielle smirked at her princess.

Eponin cut in now. "So when are you both headed to Egypt?"

"We're not sure yet Ep." The Queen shrugged her shoulders. "We're still waiting for a message from Cleopatra."

The group was in the tavern having just finished dinner. Cyrene deciding to close for the night and spent her evening over at Ferus's house. So that left this group of women together in the tavern to yammer away.

Teresa had a confused look. "You're going to stay with Queen Cleopatra?"

The short warrior nodded. "Yeah, Xena knows her."

The Warrior Princess huffed. "Hardly."

Gabrielle glanced up to her partner. "Uh huh, right. I remember her 'thank you' she gave you."

"Ssso?" Xena raised an eyebrow.

The small woman chuckled and glanced back to her Amazons. "Xena and I sort of

know her."

"Hey, can I go too?" Amarice perked up.

"Amarice," growled Ephiny. "Remember whose in training?"

The princess chuckled. "Yeah but don't I get a small vacation?"

"Afraid not Amarice." The Queen grinned. "Gotta get your regent's approval first."

"Wait." The princess blinked. "Why do I have to get Eph's approval and not yours? I'll never be able to go on vacation then."

The regent glanced over to Amarice. "After that comment, you're definitely not getting a vacation."

The princess's jaw dropped. "I'm hurt." She turned her head as she whined, "Gabrielle?"

The Queen grinned. "You better do some brown nosing princess."

"When you guys coming back?" The second in command sat back in her seat. "Before Solstice right?"

"Yeah." Xena nodded. "We'll come back here for Solstice then come to the Nation."

Teresa shook her head. "That's right, you're going to read all scrolls in the Nation huh?"

The warrior-bard groaned. "Yup."

"Good luck." Eponin grinned.

Gabrielle chuckled. "Thanks."

The conversation continued late into the night. Amarice and Teresa both telling a few exploits during their training that left the group laughing hard. After that late night the group went to bed with excited feelings about the visit.

The following day would mean the sixth day since the Soulmates went on vacation in Amphipolis. It would also mean the fifth day that the message had gone out to Egypt by Michael, the messenger.

Part 3

Section 3

~*Part 6*~

Xena's middle finger continued to do small circles around her Soulmate's stomach.

The small warrior moaned and turned her head to the right on her partner's chest. "I'm still tired."

"Me too." The older woman sighed while she debated whether to get up.

"Yes we should get up."

Xena chuckled. "You think your Amazons will be up by now?"

"Them? Yes." Gabrielle turned over to press her stomach against her warrior's. She was lying on top of her warrior. She now nudged her head down under Xena's chin.

"Neither of us feel like getting up."

"True." The Amazon Queen chuckled. "Let's give it another candlemark." She just held back a yawn.

"Mmm, sounds good to me." The warrior kept her arms tight around her partner. She shut her eyes again and felt herself slip into her dreamscape.

Gabrielle followed behind and met her in the dreamscape.

~*~*~*~

Ephiny slowly opened the door a crack and poked her head in. She spotted the Soulmates asleep and she slowly closed the door again.

"Aren't awake huh?"

The regent shook her head at Solari. "Sound asleep. We musta kept them up to late."

Solari chuckled.

Amarice put her hands on her hips. "You gotta be kidding me? They're getting old or something. They never slept this late when we were traveling."

"They're on vacation, I'd do the same." Ephiny shrugged.

"Hey Amarice?" The second in command evilly grinned at the princess. "I dare you to go in there and jump on the them."

Amarice's eyes widen. "No way!"

Solari snickered. "Chicken... look at all that yellow."

The regent groaned inwardly, she knew this was trouble.

The princess narrowed her eyes at the second in command. "Fine, I'll go in there and jump on the bed but not them."

"Okay fine." The second in command crossed her arms over her chest. "I bet you couldn't do it."

"Watch me." Amarice grabbed the door's handle.

Ephiny's right hand instantly came up to the door to hold it shut. "Don't Amarice."

"Eph." The princess shook her head. "They won't kill me, don't worry." She saw the regent drop her hand.

"Fine." Ephiny stepped back next to Solari.

Amarice opened the door silently and evilly grinned. She slowly tip toed towards the bed.

The regent turned her head to the second in command. "Why'd you egg her on like that? They won't kill her but Xena might kill her."

Solari snickered. "Good learning experience for her."

Ephiny sighed deeply and glanced back to see Amarice come near the bed.

The princess took a deep breath, took a few running steps, and leaped into the bed beside the Soulmates. "Xena, Gabrielle!" She hit the bed hard, bounced a little, and she whipped her head up with a huge grin. However her eyes instantly widen while she lost her grin. There pressing into her throat was a tip of a dagger and steel blue eyes locked on her. She quickly realized Xena was one pissed warrior. "Morning." She had a huge sheepish smile.

The Warrior Princess narrowed her eyes more. She still held her breast dagger's tip against the Amazon's throat.

"Amarice!" Gabrielle whipped her head towards the princess. She noticed that first Xena's arm around her was tight in protection. She then noticed her warrior held Amarice at dagger point and had every intent to inflict injury if she moved closer to them.

The princess lost her shy smile. "Xena?"

The warrior didn't remove her dagger as her eyes swirled with darkness.

The Amazon Queen narrowed her eyes. "Amarice, get off this bed now." She coked an eyebrow. "Xena will do something if you don't."

"But-"

"Now," growled the Queen but she added more in calmer tone. "You just messed with our personal space. Just get off the bed okay?"

Amarice nodded faintly and slowly lifted herself up. She saw Xena remove the dagger and she got off the bed carefully.

Gabrielle sighed in relief while she saw her Soulmate slip the breast dagger in its home. She patted her lover's stomach and got off the bed.

Xena sat up next and narrowed her eyes at the two Amazons in the hall. "Going to jump on *our* bed too?" she growled.

The small warrior put her left hand on her warrior's shoulder to calm her.

Ephiny shook her head. "No, we promise. Sorry about Amarice."

The princess walked over to stand in the middle of the room as she felt herself shaking a little.

The Amazon Queen glanced up from her partner to her Amazons. "Guys, can you please leave. Close the door to huh?" Her voice was low and calm.

"Sure thing." Ephiny gave a sad smile. "Come on Amarice." She came up to the door to grab the handle

The princess nodded and left the room quietly.

The regent took a deep breath while saying, "Sorry Xena and Gabrielle for the bad awakening. I'll take care of it."

Gabrielle briskly nodded. "It's alright, thanks Eph."

Ephiny nodded her head back and closed the door silently.

"Hey, you okay tiger?" The small warrior bent down in front of her partner on the bed's side. Her right hand came up to rest on the warrior's knee.

Xena sighed and ran her right hand through her hair. "Yeah, sorry."

"No." The young woman shook her head. "You had right to do that." She sighed. "I'm sorry, that was my Amazon." She frowned. "Wouldn't have expected something like that out of Amarice."

"Really?" The warrior cocked an eyebrow.

The warrior-bard grinned faintly. "Well... maybe a little." She went a little serious. "Protectiveness kicked in huh?"

"Just a little." Xena grinned however lost it. "I over reacted huh?"

The small woman shrugged her shoulders. "No, she did mess with our personal space. I'd done the same if I were you." She chuckled. "I wasn't too pleasant about it either." She groaned and dropped her head into her Soulmate's lap. "That was a rude awakening."

Xena sighed dramatically. "Was a good dream."

The Amazon Queen snickered. "Really good dream." She lifted her head and wrapped her arms around her warrior's leather-clad waist. She dropped her head on Xena's chest. "Wanna go back to the dream?"

"Tempted too." The older woman lifted her Soulmate into her lap. "When Amarice did that, it was my dark side coming to life."

"Yeah I know." Gabrielle chuckled. "I felt it... felt good. She'll be scared of you for a few."

Xena grinned a little "It did and she will be."

The small woman's legs hung off the side of the bed. She closed her eyes. "Just for that I think we should sleep for two candlemarks."

Xena quietly laughed. "I agree."

A knock came at the door.

The Warrior Princess lifted her head. "Who is it?"

"It's Eph, sorry but can I come in for a sec?"

"Sure Eph." Gabrielle started to get up.

The tall woman held her partner in place and whispered, "Please don't."

The young warrior smiled and relaxed back in her partner's arms. "I won't."

Ephiny slowly opened the door, came in, and then closed the door behind. "Look, I'm really sorry. Solari dared Amarice to do it."

"It's okay Eph." Gabrielle shrugged. "She just went into the personal space zone there."

The regent chuckled lightly. "I know I told her." She sighed while brushing back her curly hair. "Oh, also Michael is here."

The Amazon Queen's eyes widen. "Michael really?"

"Yeah Mike came in with an Egyptian too." Ephiny folded her arms. "The Egyptian didn't say whom he is."

"Go back down there Eph and tell them we'll be right down."

The Amazon nodded at Xena's words. "Alright. I have the Amazons down there staked out."

Gabrielle chuckled. "My body guards."

The regent evilly grinned. "You have no idea." She walked out with the door closed behind.

"What you think she meant by that?" The small woman glimpsed up to her Soulmate.

"I don't wanna know." Xena sighed.

The younger woman chuckled and stood up. Her partner followed. The pair quickly dressed as well as collected their weapons. After they were ready, they trekked down the steps into the tavern.

Michael looked to his left to see the Soulmates. "Xena, Gabrielle." He stood up with a smile.

The Egyptian stood up with a serious face. He was easily noticeable as an Egyptian by his dark skin, fine black hair, small size, clothes, make-up, and stern expression. Considering his Egyptian attire wasn't fit for the season of fall in Greece he wore a cloak as well to keep warm.

The two warriors came up to the table and saw that the other Amazons all sat at the table as well.

"Glad you made it back Michael." Gabrielle hugged the young man. "Thank you."

"Quite welcome." Micahael smiled warmly. "Fortunately Cleopatra sent a ship back up to bring me safe passage and take you both back."

"Yes, Michael is quite right." The Egyptian had a deep voice. He straightened his legs together with his arms against his sides. He bowed his head while speaking, "My name is Torrid, Queen Cleopatra's second minister and your protectors for your duration of the stay in Egypt. Anything you may need you ask of me and I will use all my powers to assist you both." He raised his head with his still serious expression. He relaxed his posture once more.

Gabrielle smiled warmly to Torrid. "It's nice to meet you. I am Gabrielle."

Torrid held his hand out. "Yes, Queen Gabrielle of the Amazons."

The small warrior took the man's hand and gave a brisk shake. "The same."

The Egyptian released her hand but he was still stern. He turned his attention to Xena hold his hand out to her.

Xena took the man's hand. "Xena. Thanks for your help Torrid."

The minister nodded while briskly shaking the woman's hand. "Egypt is in debt to the Warrior Princess." Torrid released the hand and gazed at Gabrielle. "And Queen Gabrielle for the help back a few years." He smiled faintly. "Egypt would not have such a great Queen if it were not for both your help."

Gabrielle sighed inwardly at the memory. "Thank you Torrid."

"Thank you." The minister took a deep breath. "Now then, I've come by one of Cleopatra's navy ships. We're docked currently at the port of Stagira and the Captain of the ship would like to leave soon as possible. However he is not in a great rush considering this is Greece and he has a deep fondness for this country."

The Amazon Queen quietly laughed. "Well, I believe we can leave today." She gazed up to her Soulmate for conformation.

Xena nodded in agreement. "We can leave soon as possible. Did you ride or walk?"

"We walked." Torrid gave hints of a grin. "I lack skills in riding a horse... only camels."

The Soulmates chuckled together.

"We prefer walking and we'll leave late this morning." Gabrielle smiled warmly.

"All of us." Ephiny gave a smile to her Queen.

The Queen's eyes flickered over to the regent. "We'll discuss this later." She gazed back to Torrid. "So, make yourself a home and give Xena and I a candlemark or so. We'll be ready to go."

"Sounds fine." The Egyptian nodded.

"Have you eaten?" Xena folded her arms against her chest.

"Not since we left the ship." Michael grinned. "I don't know how to cook and we wanted to arrive here right away."

The warrior grinned. "I'll have something for you both." She turned her head to her lover. "Let's go get ready."

Gabrielle moved her head in agreement yet glanced over to her regent. "Come with me Eph."

Ephiny nodded then stood up. She followed behind Gabrielle.

"I'll be right up." Xena stood in front of the kitchen door.

The young warrior nodded. "Meet you up there." She climbed up the steps with her regent following.

The Warrior Princess went into the kitchen to talk to her mother.

~*~*~*~

"Ephiny, no." Gabrielle put her hands on her hips. "Somebody needs to get back to the Nation to run it properly."

The regent sighed while folding her arms against her chest. "We're escorting our Queen to Stagira."

The Queen stalked up to her regent. "No Ephiny, that's risky."

"So is letting you go on that ship pretty much alone."

"Alone!" Gabrielle stomped off and turned back around. "Xena is a one man army. I don't need all my officers coming to Stagira."

"Gabrielle, the Nation will be fine. Masika can handle the Nation." The Amazon took a step closer to her friend. "I have no problem sending Eponin back to watch over things."

"Ephiny," growled the Queen. "You're risking my Amazons safety."

"And I'd be risking my Queen's life by letting her go on this ship without checking for safety first."

The small warrior narrowed her eyes. "You're going back to the Nation."

"We're escorting you."

"Are you disobeying your Queen's orders?" Gabrielle felt her chest rising up and down high in anger.

Ephiny narrowed her eyes as the anger came to her strongly. "Are you disobeying Artemis's orders?" She shook her head. "Her orders to protect our Queen... our Chosen?" She paused. "I am not letting you go on that ship that may contain enemies. Gabrielle, there are people out there that would love to get a hold of you to ransom or sell to slavery. Especially now that you're the Queen of all the Amazons, you hold a high price over your head." She stopped to breathe. "The Amazons will be nothing... nothing without you and Xena." She shook her head again. "I will not risk your safety because that would be risking nine hundred family member's safety. So do not tell me to back off, we'll follow you."

The short woman sighed while dropping her head. Her right hand came up to her forehead. "Ephiny my Amazons-"

"Will be fine." Ephiny put her hands on her friend's arms. "Please, I can't risk your life. It happens to much as it is." She smiled sadly. "Besides, you're my sister... I wanna see you off." She squeezed her Queen's arms. "Please Gabrielle."

The Queen sighed and dropped her hand. "Alright, just send a message to the Nation."

"I will." Ephiny smiled. "Thank you."

"And I do want Ep to come." Gabrielle ran her right hand through her hair. "Ep is always smart about seeing enemies."

"She is, good experience she has." Ephiny smiled sadly. "I really can't risk your life."

"I know." Gabrielle lifted her head. "I just don't understand why."

The regent shook her head. "You're important, don't you understand that? You're important to those Amazons, your Amazons Gabrielle. We'd be lost without you. You're Amazons see you as hope and the way to utopia." She smiled warmly. "And you're very important to me."

"And me as well." Xena stood in front of the door with her arms against her chest. She walked up to the regent's side. "Ephiny is right love."

The small warrior gazed up to her Soulmate. She turned her head to Ephiny. "Just make sure to get back to the Nation right away."

"We will... promise." Ephiny smiled. "Thank you." She pulled her friend in for a tight hug. She released Gabrielle. "I'm going to go get them ready. Meet you in the tavern."

"Alright." The Queen nodded and watched her Amazon leave. Her eyes lifted up to Xena.

The warrior smiled with reassurance then moved quickly to draw her partner in tightly. "She's just being protective of you."

Gabrielle chuckled. "Isn't everybody around me." She placed her head against her Soulmate's chest. "Why is that?"

"Everybody loves you." Xena grinned. "But you're mine."

The small woman smiled. "Mmm, and how lucky I am too."

"No, I am."

"And we could debate this all day." Gabrielle lifted her head with a grin. "Those Amazons are going to drain me."

The warrior groaned. "Me as well."

"Of course." The Amazon Queen patted her partner's chest. "You're my Soulmate."

"The best thing of yours."

"Oh yeah." Gabrielle reached up to pull Xena's head down. "I love you." She kissed her partner tenderly.

Xena smiled at the end of the kiss. "I love you too." She lowered her head to brush her cheek against Gabrielle's. "Ready for Egypt?"

"Gods, can't wait." The small warrior smiled while nuzzling Xena back. "I just don't like the water part."

The Warrior Princess quietly laughed while kissing her partner's cheek then lowering her lips to Gabrielle's neck. "You'll be fine."

"You really think so huh?" The warrior-bard dropped her head into Xena's neck as she enjoyed her Soulmate's touch.

"Of course." The dark woman's lips traveled over her best friend's neck and collarbone. "You're my Soulmate so you'll get use to it."

Gabrielle groaned. "I hope so. You still remember that time I ate squid?" She shivered in her lover's arms.

Xena chuckled while lifting her lips back up to travel over Gabrielle's shoulder. "Don't use the pressure point this time. I promise you'll get use to it."

"Thanks." The young warrior's lips spread into a smile that pressed into the warrior's neck. She sighed. "I wish we had time to..."

"Do trouble?" Xena suggested.

Gabrielle chuckled. "Yeah." She felt her warrior's lips go down to the top of her breasts and it made her suck in her breath. Her body's reaction was to spread her lips then her tongue came out. Her tongue traveled up the older woman's neck with her lips to take Xena's lips in passion. She ended the kiss though a little too fast and kept her lips close to Xena's. "Gods we can't, somebody will burst into here."

The older woman's hands went to Gabrielle's hips. She stepped back taking Gabrielle with her. She pressed her back hard against the door. "No worries." She leaned in to kiss Gabrielle. "We've got time."

"Yeah we do." The warrior-bard tried to come with more reasons. "Besides, we'll be stuck on that ship."

"Exactly." Xena's hands went between Gabrielle's belt. "And that'll be at least five days."

"Then we'll be traveling with the Amazons, so no space there." Gabrielle's hands went to Xena's buckles. "And I really need your touch."

"That's the most important reason there." The Warrior Princess grinned while continuing to kiss her Soulmate. Her hands traveled up her lover's stomach to under her leather top. "I need to feel you inside."

"Oh, that's even more important." The small warrior grinned and pressed her body against Xena's. She dropped her head back when Xena's lips came to her chest again.

and traveled down. "Xena."

"Sssh." The older woman evilly smiled. "Like I said, I always fulfil my Soulmate's physical needs." Her fingertips slipped under Gabrielle maroon top to began to lift it off.

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"So we ready to go?" Ephiny mounted her horse and glanced down to her Queen.

Gabrielle lifted her head. "You did send Michael with the message to Masika?"

"Yup." The regent nodded. "And I wrote in it to make sure somebody gave him a ride back here."

"Perfect." Gabrielle shifted the pack on her back after putting her wool and leather cloak on.

Torrid stood beside her with his cloak tightly on.

Gabrielle, Xena, and Torrid were all walking together while the Amazons rode.

Xena came down the steps of the tavern putting her heavy dark cloak on. Once she hit the ground she was slinging her pack on her back.

Cyrene came down the steps with Ferus beside her. She came directly up to the Soulmates. "You both be careful."

The warrior-bard smiled at the innkeeper. "We will, promise."

"Good." Cyrene smiled warmly as she kept her arms against her chest to stay warm. "And enjoy the vacation."

"We will mother." Xena smiled warmly. "We'll be back here soon as we get back."

"I'll be expecting you." The tavern owner grinned. "Solstice I have plans."

The Soulmates groaned together and asked at the same time, "Food plans?"

Cyrene put her hands on her hips. "Now I thought you like the cooking."

Gabrielle laughed. "We do mom, just it... makes me a little larger then I should be."

"No it doesn't sweety, you're the skinniest thing ever." Cyrene sighed. "Okay, you should go." She took a step forward and hugged Xena. "Take care dear."

"You too mother."

The innkeeper pulled back but not before placing a kiss to her daughter's cheek. She then drew Gabrielle in for a strong hug. "You be careful to sweety. Look after my daughter."

"I will, promise." The Amazon Queen released the older woman. "We'll miss you, take care of yourself mom."

"Of course." Cyrene took a step back to stand beside the constable again.

"Come on." Xena glanced at her partner.

Gabrielle was a bit hesitant at first because she saw the worried look on Cyrene's face. But she turned around to walk beside her Soulmate.

The Amazons kicked their horses into a walk to follow along side.

Both Soulmates glanced back and waved to Cyrene with smiles.

The innkeeper smiled back and waved, as did Ferus.

"Enjoy ladies!" Ferus called.

Xena grinned. "Take care of my mother Ferus!"

"I will... promise Xena." The constable smiled warmly.

Xena and Gabrielle turned their heads away and kept walking along side the Egyptian, out of the Amphipolis.

"You're worried Cyrene." Ferus turned his head to the innkeeper.

"I am." The older woman sighed sadly. "Something is going to happen to them in Egypt."

The constable tried to smile reassuringly. "I'm sure they'll be fine."

"Yes they will be..." The tavern owner turned her worried eyes to the man. "But at what price?" She turned her eyes back to rest on the Soulmates disappearing in the distance. "I love my little ones."

Ferus reached over to grasp the woman's hand in comfort. "Just as long as they make it out in one piece together."

"You're right." Cyrene squeezed the constable's hand. "That's what matters in the end." She sighed sadly. "But it's their destiny." A sad sigh escaped her lips again as she whispered, "Aphrodite please protect them on this journey."

~*~*~*~

"No Queen Gabrielle, we have numerous gods and goddesses like the Greeks." Torrid straightened his cloak out. "Each lifetime we receive a new god or goddess... depends on whom is our ruler. "

"Really?" The warrior-bard shifted the pack on her back. "How does that work?"

The Egyptian smiled at the small woman's high interest. "Well, our ruler at the time is basically our god that's descended down upon us to rule. They are the pharaoh of Egypt and once they pass into the next life we hold them as our god."

Gabrielle nodded a few times. "So Cleopatra will be known as a goddess once she dies."

"Basically yes. She is our pharaoh that will protect us from the evil of the world."

The warrior glanced down to her partner. "Ask Torrid about their equivalent to our

Elysian Fields. You'll like it."

The small warrior grinned and turned her head to Torrid again. "What's your after life called?"

Torrid's lips shaped into a small grin. "The Fields of Food."

The Amazon Queen's eyes widen. "You're kidding? Ha, that's where I wanna go."

Xena chuckled while mumbling, "Wonder if they have a field dedicated just to nutbread." She lifted her head with a grin while she kept walking.

The Egyptian quietly laughed but went serious again. "I can not await to see the Fields of Food myself Queen Gabrielle."

"I can understand." Gabrielle's right hand came up to grasp the man's shoulder. "Please call me Gabrielle. I don't go in for that formal stuff." She dropped her hand.

"Very well." Torrid bowed his head and lifted it back up. He smiled warmly to Gabrielle. "Then you both may call me Ra." He went serious again. "It is my nickname given to me by my friends."

The small warrior nodded. "That's an interesting nickname."

The Warrior Princess turned her head to the Egyptian. "How'd you manage to get the nickname Ra? It is the name of the great sun god."

The Queen glanced up to her consort then back to Torrid.

The man took a deep breath. "Torrid they say is not quite Egyptian. So a number of my friend's nicknamed me after the sun god Ra for Torrid means hot." He grinned. "Not quite sun however the sun is hot." His grin was gone. "Everybody refers to me as Ra... few know me as Torrid."

Xena nodded at that explanation while turning her head away.

Around the warrior, Queen, and Egyptian were the Amazons on horseback. The group walking along the southwestern road to Stagira.

"Ra is your sun god?" Gabrielle crossed her arms against her chest. "He's important?"

"Very." Torrid gazed ahead. "For if were not Ra's light Egypt would be left in the darkness." He took a deep breath. "He's the second most powerful. There is Amun-Ra whom is the most powerful. He is Ra and Amun god put together."

"Two gods in one?" The young woman quietly laughed. "That's different. Sounds menacing."

"It is powerful." Torrid gave a small grin.

Xena glanced to her left to see the shore to the Aegean Sea. She sighed while looking forward again.

"I feel like walking out there." Gabrielle lifted her eyes to her Soulmate.

The Warrior Princess nodded in agreement. "Me too."

"Hold on everybody." The Queen stopped walking.

Ephiny glanced over to her friend. "What's going on?"

The young warrior grinned up to her regent. "Xena and I are going to meet you guys up in Stagira. We're going to go along the shore."

The regent opened her mouth to do a protest.

The Queen cut her off saying, "Deal Eph." She grinned.

Ephiny closed her mouth. "Very well my Queen." She grinned back some. "We'll escort Torrid to Stagira safely."

"Thank you." Gabrielle smiled and turned her head to Torrid. "You don't mind Ra?"

"Not at all." The Egyptian uncrossed his arms. "I've dealt with women before." A grin crept along his lips.

The Amazons all laughed together.

Solari gazed down to Torrid. "We'll keep you busy all the way to Stagira."

"I can only imagine." Torrid glimpsed up to the second in command then back to Gabrielle. "Enjoy the walk along the shore."

"We will." The Queen smiled and turned to her Soulmate.

Xena took her pack off. "Hold this for me."

"Sure." Gabrielle took the pack as she watched Xena take her cloak off.

"Hey Amarice." The warrior came up near the Amazon's horse.

The princess quietly replied, "Yeah?"

"Can you take my cloak for me?" Xena came up to the horse with the cloak in her arms. "I trust you." She smiled warmly.

"S-sure." Amarice let go of one rein and held her hand down.

The dark woman gave the princess her cloak and patted the Amazon's leg. "Thanks." She kept her warm smile.

Amarice placed the dark cloak over her saddlebag plus glanced back to Xena. "You're welcome." She gave a shy smile.

Xena strolled over to her partner while getting her pack back.

Gabrielle smiled to her Amazons. "See you guys in Stagira."

The warrior turned her attention to the regent. "Eph, it'll take Gabrielle and I an extra half a candlemark or so."

The regent nodded. "We'll meet you both at the port."

"Perfect." Xena turned her head away and started walking into the woods towards the beach.

The small warrior followed before calling off, "Bye."

The Amazons together said, "Bye."

The Soulmates walked through the small portion of woods and onto the beach. Immediately they both were taken over by the wind and sounds of the waves crashing onto the shore.

"Gods, I love walking along the shores."

Xena chuckled. "Dido." A grin crossed her lips.

The small warrior chuckled. "Nice to get away from them."

"Uh huh." The warrior reached behind to bring the left strap over her shoulder. "Peaceful."

"Really is." Gabrielle smiled while walking along side her partner. "Do we keep walking along the shore to get to Stagira."

"Yup." Xena grinned. "Once we get a ways ahead you'll see the port coming out over the water."

"You think we may see the Egyptian ship?"

"Possibly." The warrior smiled at her Soulmate for a moment yet looked ahead again.

"I'm amazed that she sent a ship to pick us up."

The older woman shrugged her shoulders. "She's just feels indent about our help from the other year."

"Must." Gabrielle shook her head. "She's rolling out the red carpet."

"Oh don't say that Gabrielle." The dark warrior grinned. "She may just do that."

A laugh came from the Amazon Queen. "I hope not." He eyes gazed over the beach as she did she noticed a small bird running alone the shore ahead of them. "Xena, what kind of bird is that?"

The warrior glanced at it studying it for a moment. She replied, "A Solitary Sandpiper. Surprise it's still here as late in the fall as it is."

"It's really cute." Gabrielle chuckled. "It keeps trying to come up to the water edge then runs off."

"Yeah, he's trying to get food." Xena studied the small bird with a long thin beak. "What they do is try to grab at small fish along the water's edge." She saw a wave crash near the sandpiper and the sandpiper scurried away from the threatening water. "Or he may be drinking it too." She turned her head to Gabrielle. "They'll eat small

fish or kelp. Usually they're around here between spring, summer, and fall."

The small warrior glanced up with a hidden grin. "How many eggs can they lay at a time?"

"Average... three." Xena shrugged. "Sometimes two sometimes four." Her eyes rested on the sandpiper running ahead of them. "Now, that's a female actually because it's so large. Males are a little smaller."

Gabrielle shook her head and gazed up in the sky to see a seagull fly by. "How about seagulls... any difference between them?"

"Oh sure." Xena looked up to that same gull. "That specific gull is a Ring-Billed gull."

The Amazon Queen studied the flying gull. "Because of the small black ring around its beak?"

"Exactly." The warrior glanced around to see another one. She pointed at the flying gull. "That gull there is Bonaparte's gull... one of the most common with the Ring-Billed." She sighed. "I hate them."

Gabrielle laughed while peeking up to her Soulmate. "Why?"

"They crap all over a ship's deck." The older woman shook her head. "It's the most annoying thing. That and they'll leave remains of fish bones everywhere."

The smaller woman quietly laughed. "What about that gull?" She pointed at it sitting on the beach.

"That's a Laughing gull."

The warrior-bard started to laugh. "For real?"

"Yeah." Xena grinned. "I think that's why it's called a Laughing gull."

Gabrielle was taking in a deep breath. She saw that Laughing gull fly off. "I have to say... seagulls are ugly."

"Definitely." The warrior crinkled her nose. "Loud too."

"Yeah, squawk squawk huh?"

The dark woman sighed. "Oh yeah, they're brassy too." She walked along closer to the water. "Come here."

The young warrior flowed along as she saw her partner stop walking.

"See that?" Xena pointed down at the water's edge. She bent down to her knees.

The Amazon Queen bent down as well. "You mean the jellyfish? They sting like the dickens."

"Oh yeah." The warrior grabbed a shell off the beach and turned the jellyfish over. "Hate these too."

"Been stung before?"

The older woman nodded. "Yeah, once." She pointed at the long tentacles of the jellyfish. "That's actually the part that stings."

"Yeah." Gabrielle grinned while slowing reaching forward to it.

The Warrior Princess grabbed her Soulmates hand as she turned her head to Gabrielle with a smirk. "Don't think about it." She started to stand as well as lace her hand with her partner's.

Gabrielle chuckled and stood up. "Just testing you." A small grin creased her lips.

"Uh huh."

The pair started to walk together again while holding hands.

"Have you ever seen a man-of-war?" The warrior gazed at her lover.

"No." Gabrielle shook her head. "Like a jellyfish?"

"Sort of." Xena sighed in addition to explaining. "Instead of the jellyness they have like... a bag with air in it that keeps it afloat."

The young woman moved her head in understanding. "They sting too?"

"Oh yeah about ten times worse." The warrior looked over the sea then back to her partner. "I've heard stories of how men die from it."

"Really?" The warrior-bard furrowed her eyebrows. "People can die from that?"

"Personally, I don't think so." The tall woman shrugged her shoulders. "I think what happens is... say a person is swimming in the water. They get tangled into three of these man-of-war's tentacles they'll just repeatedly get stung."

"Then they're body probably can't handle it so it knocks them unconscious."

"Exactly, then they just drown." Xena let her breath out slowly. "Then the body just washes ashore with the man-of-war's and the person thinks they died from that."

Gabrielle crinkled her nose together. "What a way to go."

The warrior quietly laughed. "Tell me about it."

The Queen shook her head. "Xena, how do you manage to know something about everything?"

Xena grinned at her partner. "I don't know everything... like cooking."

The young woman laughed. "Oh come on Xena, that's like the only thing you don't know. "

"Like I've said-"

"I have many skills," both the women said together.

Gabrielle laughed with a smile. "Seriously though, I don't understand how you learned so much." She shrugged her shoulders. "I mean if I just pointed at what I thought

would be a weed you'd tell me it's name it's uses, season it grows in, it's climate it likes, and how to kill it."

The Warrior Princess laughed while smiling. She sighed with her same smile. "Learned a lot from just traveling." She peered down at her best friend. "Just like you've learned a lot in these past five years."

"That's true." The Amazon Queen grinned a little. "But we're only three years difference and I hardly know what you do."

"But you haven't been traveling for twelve years like I have."

"That's true too." Gabrielle chuckled. "I just love the fact you're a book of knowledge."

"Not quite." Xena grinned as well as squeezed her lover's hand. "Just picked up a few things in my time."

"Right." The small warrior smirked up to her partner. "Admit it, you know everything."

The warrior growled. "Not everything."

"Uh huh." Gabrielle quietly laughed. "You know as more then five scholars put together."

"Nah, maybe four." Xena evilly grinned.

The Amazon Queen chuckled and stopped walking.

The warrior faced her partner with a corked eyebrow.

The younger warrior gave a warm smile and pulled Xena's head down.

Xena fell into the kiss her Soulmate gave her. She slowly lifted her head. "That was not just random kissing."

Gabrielle laughed while holding her lover's hips. "Not totally... always to show you that I love you."

"And?"

"And for being so damn amazing."

The tall woman grinned while replying, "Just for you." She lowered her head to brush her lips over Gabrielle's.

"Mmm, is that why?" The warrior-bard grinned. "Was that planned from the beginning?"

Xena chuckled while wrapping her arms around her Soulmate. "Welllll figured there'd be a good reason to all my knowledge someday." She slowly slipped her hands in between Gabrielle's cloak to hold her there. "I know it would come to this day along the beach that my... bird knowledge would come in handy."

Gabrielle snickered and lightly kissed her warrior. "Good planning."

"Thought so myself." Xena took her lover's lips in a passionate kiss. "We better keep moving."

Gabrielle sighed. "Yup." She grinned. "Can't be late."

"Nope." Xena slowly released her Soulmate however still held her hand.

The pair began to slowly walk in silence. They listened to the crash of the waves and the blow of the wind. Both of them smelled the scent of the seas and her salt. And it left both of them with a grin curling their lips.

"Hey Xena?"

"Mmm?" The warrior glanced over to her Soulmate.

Gabrielle peered up with wonderment. "How did you meet Hercules? You met him in the Parathion Province right? "

Xena glanced ahead while breathing deeply. "Yes and no. I met up with him twice, once just outside of the Parathion Province and then later in the province."

"What happened?"

The Warrior Princess ran her left hand through her hair. "A lot." She chuckled with her partner. "The stage at which Hercules bumped into me I was beginning to give-up on my life." She sighed. "I was at the point where I knew the reality of my past but I still tried to deny it. So basically I became a low key warlord just so I could fight and try to run from reality." She shrugged her shoulders with a grin. "Didn't work to well."

The small warrior chuckled. "Was that when you met up with Draco?"

"Yeah." Xena nodded. "Draco and a lot of other warlords... but Draco was one of the few I worked well with." She lifted her gaze up to the long beach. "For some reason I decided to take on the challenge of trying to kill Hercules. I had this entire plan made up, which included Iolaus because I knew he wasn't quite that... bright."

Gabrielle snickered. "He's a good man though."

"Definitely."

"So what was your plan?" The warrior-bard had a huge intent look.

Xena grinned for a moment but lost it as she started to tell her tale from so long ago. "I pretended to be a traveler on the road. Iolaus just happened upon me when my horse went lame, so I said. Iolaus helped me out and escorted me to a village near he was headed to, to see Hercules. That's when I met up with Hercules and I was trying to gush all over Iolaus so that he'd... develop a thing for me."

The Amazon Queen shook her head. "If I know Iolaus it didn't take long."

"Not at all." The warrior wiped away her grin. "Iolaus and I stayed together after Hercules left. I continued to gush over Iolaus and fed his ego. At that point I said I wanted to stop the ruthless warlord Xena whom destroyed my village with my army."

"Neither Hercules or Iolaus knew who you were?"

"No, hardly." The warrior took a deep breath. "I asked Iolaus to help me stop the warlord and he agreed. While Iolaus and I traveled to my army I sent my second in command to try and kill Hercules knowing he wouldn't be able to. I'd given my second in command this necklace that I'd worn in front of Hercules."

"Oh, so when Hercules saw the necklace and he knew who you were then. Of course he musta came after you and Iolaus to save Iolaus."

"Yes, by the time he was coming for Iolaus I was in my fortress with my men. I took one of my men and went to attack Hercules. Hercules beat my man instantly so I ran off to return to Iolaus but before I did I tore my cape and rubbed dirt all over so it looked like I'd been in a struggle. I told Iolaus Hercules had done it and he'd gone mad. That Hercules was coming to take his job over like he couldn't handle it."

The young warrior nodded. "Obviously Herc and Iolaus fought huh?"

"Yeah but Herc wouldn't fight Iolaus, eventually Iolaus figured things out. Basically I just told my men to kill them both. Didn't happen and I escaped to go get a new army to fight Hercules later."

"That's a good plan."

"Only fault was the tight friendship." The warrior sighed. "I was pretty sure that Iolaus was going to kill Hercules then realize what was going on."

"If Herc had fought Iolaus back it may have happened."

Xena nodded.

"What happen in Parthian Province?"

"Well in a nuthsell... I was raiding villages in the province. Herc found out and came to stop me. At the same time my second in command, Darphus, took my army and kicked me out. I fought Herc, lost, left and then Herc with a few friends tried to stop Darphus. I later on helped out and stayed with Hercules, started traveling with him."

"Darphus put you through the gauntlet right?"

Xena moved her head in answer. "I just made it through the gauntlet."

Gabrielle shook her head. "I know I wouldn't."

The tall woman grinned at her partner. "You would."

"How you figure?" The Amazon Queen raised an eyebrow.

"Because you're my Soulmate."

The small warrior chuckled. "That's your answer to everything."

"Do I need to say more?"

Gabrielle smiled warmly. "No, that says a lot right there."

"Exactly." The warrior smiled as she looked ahead again.

The warrior-bard evilly grinned. "Did you and Hercules-"

"Gabrielle," growled the warrior.

"Oooh." The Queen quietly laughed. "That was answer enough." She evilly grinned again at her Soulmate. "Was he good?"

The Warrior Princess had a stoic expression as she turned her head to Gabrielle. "What you think?" Her eyes were twinkling with mischief.

"Mmm, I think he probably was a one time use."

Xena laughed then shook her head. "What's that suppose to mean?"

"Wellll..." Gabrielle shrugged her shoulders. "He was great the first time but a second time wouldn't be quite as good."

"You're probably right actually." The older woman chuckled with her Soulmate. "I wouldn't know."

"So was he?"

The warrior raised an eyebrow at her best friend. "Why you so interested anyway?"

Now it was the small woman's eyes sparkling with mischief. "Thought the next time we saw him I'd invite him for a threesome."

Xena laughed for a few seconds yet went dead serious. "I don't think so."

"Oh come on." A grin came over the Amazon Queen's lips. "You must have done a threesome once Xena. I know you."

"I forget." The tall woman ran her freehand through her hair.

"Two males, two females, or one of each?"

"It was one of each." The warrior grinned. "Different." She chuckled. "I tell you, the guy wanted included another man said it would be a blast."

Gabrielle's eyes widen. "Ha, that's crazy."

"That's what I said." The older woman sighed. "Now if you wanted a good guy... mmm probably..." She started to chuckle. "My old friend Jonathan. Now he can show a good time."

The small woman raised an eyebrow. "Nobody like Draco?"

"Nnno." Xena shook her head. "He wouldn't want to include me."

Gabrielle laughed. "That's right, the spell."

"Uh huh." The warrior chuckled.

"Maybe we should just stick to Herc." Gabrielle's eyes were sparkling again.

"Like I said, I don't think so." Xena turned her head to her partner with a serious look.

The small warrior evilly laughed. "Why not? It would be fun."

"First, we have enough fun as it is and second I'd kill anybody that touched you."

"Now that's true." Gabrielle chuckled. "I'd kill anybody that touched you."

The Warrior Princess nodded. "Exactly."

"So why didn't you stay with Hercules?" The warrior-bard glanced up with an arched eyebrow.

"See what happened." Xena was grinning at her partner. "Is I told Herc I couldn't stay with him. He just didn't do it for me. So he broke down crying like a baby, I patted his back, and said I had to pick up this hot chic in Potidaea."

Gabrielle stopped walking because she exploded into laughter at her Soulmate's words. She let go of her warrior's hand as she bent forward holding her stomach.

Xena put her hands on her hips while she grinned at her lover. "Was that funny? The poor man was broke up and you're laughing."

The Amazon Queen fell down only laughing more. She was bright red from all the laughing with her body heating up.

The warrior chuckled and squatted down in front of her small warrior. Her arms rested on her knees while she waited for Gabrielle to settle down. A huge amused grin crossed her lips.

Gabrielle shook her head while breathing heavily. She lifted her legs up to drop her arms on her knees. "Oh gods... that's the funniest thing... ever." She sucked in a deep breath and opened her eyes that were stinging from the tears. "Hot chic in Potidaea?" She quietly laughed a few times and leaned forward. "Gods Xena." Her right hand came up to wipe the tears away.

Xena shrugged her shoulders. "Didn't think it would be that funny." She reached forward to spread her Soulmate's cloak open noticing something. "Must have been really funny." Her eyes stayed pinned on the other woman's chest.

The young woman glanced down to see her chest all broken out with redness. "Gods, I broke out into a heat rash." She chuckled. "Wahoo... I still feel hot."

"Come on." The warrior stood up and held her hand down.

The Amazon Queen took her warrior's hand to be hauled onto her feet. "Gods I need to take this off now." She started to take her pack off.

The tall woman walked behind to take the pack then slowly remove Gabrielle's cloak. She noticed Gabrielle's shoulders red as well from the small heat rash. "Poor Herc, I'm glad he doesn't know."

The small woman chuckled as she put her pack on again. "Thanks."

"No problem." Xena walked forward while holding her Soulmate's cloak in her left

arm. She held out her right hand.

The young warrior took the other warrior's hand and started walking again. "So Herc was pretty broke up huh?"

"Oh yeah." The Warrior Princess sighed. "Actually not really, I was the one broken up."

"Yeah?" The Queen gazed up to her friend. "First person to touch your heart."

"That's what I said at the time." Xena shrugged her shoulders. "Wasn't even that, I just idolized him up till I had sex with him. The idolization wore off real quick."

"He must have not been good."

"Not really." The tall woman grinned down to Gabrielle. "S'alright."

A quiet laugh came from Gabrielle. "We're bad." She sighed. "What was bad?"

Xena laughed. "No play." She cocked an eyebrow. "Just a big..." She was holding her left hand up to describe how big, big was. Her lips pressed together. "Mmm."

"We'll say sexual organ."

The dark woman laughed. "Yeah, spare him."

The small warrior shook her head. "Poor Hercules, we're walking along this beach and just disrespecting him and his reputation."

"What, his sexual reputation?" Xena cocked an eyebrow. "If you'd been with him too you'd understand."

The Amazon Queen's eyes widen. "Xena, you're getting worse than me." She snickered then crinkled her nose. "Besides, I couldn't sleep with big muscled guys."

"No, only big muscled women."

Gabrielle squeezed her Soulmate's hand. "Xena, you're not hulking and busting with muscles like him." She shivered. "I can't stand that. He's just too big built." She shook her head. "See, he'd make me feel crushed while you make me feel safe." She grinned up to her warrior. "Actually you make me feel perfect."

"That's because you are." Leaning over, Xena kissed her partner lightly.

Gabrielle whispered back, "Not like you."

The tall woman smiled then looked away. "So feel crushed. What else?"

"Hmmm, just he isn't quite smart enough for me." The warrior-bard kept thinking. "And... he's a he."

"Ooooh." Xena grinned. "Into women are we love?"

"Only one." The Amazon Queen evilly grinned.

"Same here." The warrior grinned back.

"Okay okay... we need to fix this man's reputation." The small warrior took a deep breath. "Hercules is a good man, good hero..."

"Gentleman." Xena nodded. "Nice looking."

"Yeah." The young woman nodded as well. "Great friend too. Very careful with people today."

"He tries to understand people." The warrior grinned. "And help them."

"Yeah, exactly." Gabrielle chuckled. "He's just a good man."

Xena laughed while saying, "That does bad sex." She shook her head. "With a big... sexual organ."

"Xena." The short warrior laughed for a few seconds. "We gotta stop talking about Hercules's bad sexual life, it's just really wrong."

"True." The warrior sighed. "I'll be nice."

"No play though?" Gabrielle glanced up in question.

"No!" Xena threw up her freehand as she sighed dramatically. "I have yet to understand that."

"Gods..." Gabrielle shook her head. "I love play."

Both the Soulmates started laughing together.

The small woman sighed then stopped walking. "Okay, I'm starting to feel the cold." She started taking her pack off. After she did she turned her back to her partner.

The dark woman slipped her Soulmate's cloak on her back. And saw her putting her pack on slowly. She evilly grinned while taking steps back she bent down to collect a handful of sand. "Gabrielle, you love play?"

The Queen pulled the last strap on while turning around. "Yeah." She coked an eyebrow.

"Good." Xena stood then threw the handful of sand at her lover.

"Xena!"

The Warrior Princess evilly laughed but stopped when she saw Gabrielle's look. She knew she was in trouble however she urged it on. "Come on Gabrielle."

Gabrielle wiped the sand away from her face. "I'm going to have you eating this sand."

"I'd love to see you try." Xena kneeled down to collect more sand in her hand and this sand held more water.

The small warrior's eyes widen. "Xena... Xena." She stepped back but ducked as sand went flying over her head. "Hades." She bent down to start getting handfuls of sand.

The Soulmates stayed squatting in on the beach chucking sand at each other and laughing. Midway through the war they threw their packs off as well as Gabrielle took

her cloak off.

"Xena!" Gabrielle's voice boomed as a pile of sand went right down between her chest.

Xena laughed loudly as she held her pile of sand in her hand. "I dare you Gabrielle."

The Amazon Queen still held her right hand with the wet sand. "I dare you Xena." She narrowed her eyes with a grin. "You don't have the guts."

"Neither do you." The Warrior Princess shot back with a smug look.

It was a standstill.

"Who's gonna make the first move?" Xena grinned as small bits of sand fell from her hand.

The small warrior narrowed her eyes, dropped the sand from her hand, and sprung forward.

The older woman's eyes widen and she frantically threw the sand to the ground. She reached forward as her Soulmate came crashing into her.

The pair hit the sand and started rolling to their left into the cool water with laughter. They stopped as a wave came crashing over them.

Gabrielle shook her head to get the water out. She smiled down at her partner. "Cold water."

"Feels good considering how hot I am."

The Queen lowered her head down close to Xena's as she felt Xena's arms come around her back. "I know you are."

Xena chuckled then moved her left hand behind Gabrielle's head. She brought her small warrior's head down to kiss her, with her tongue going into Gabrielle's mouth.

A wave came crashing on them.

Both Soulmates pulled back laughing and smiling.

"This is something you read in the trashy romantic scrolls." The warrior-bard chuckled with a smile.

The tall woman grinned. "But our romance isn't trashy."

"Definitely not." Another wave came to bump into them while Gabrielle kissed her warrior again. She could taste the salt on her Soulmate's lips and it made her moan. When she pulled back she saw the huge wave coming at them. "Hades!" She ducked her head down into her warrior's neck.

Xena wrapped her arms tightly around Gabrielle. "Hold on."

The wave came down on the warriors and washed up the beach to leave the Soulmates laughing.

Gabrielle shook her head. "We better get up." She slowly stood up.

The tall woman nodded and got up after her partner was off her. "Oh gods." She lifted her right hand to brush back her wet bangs.

The small woman did the same thing and sighed. "Now we'll be sandy and salty." She quietly laughed. "But it was worth it."

"Definitely."

The pair walked up to pick up their bags and Gabrielle's cloak.

"Hey you going to be warm enough?" The small woman gazed up to her lover. "The wind is strong."

"I'll be fine." The tall woman grinned some. "Just stay near me."

Gabrielle chuckled. "Deal." She started walking with her arm around Xena's waist.

The warrior kept her right arm draped over her friend's shoulder.

~*~*~*~

"Where have you two been?" Ephiny stood with her hands on her hips. "That must have been a Hades of a beach walk. And why are you both wet?"

Gabrielle tried to keep a serious expression. "I tripped on a clam shell and took Xena with me into the water." She shrugged her shoulders. "That's why we're wet."

The regent corked an eyebrow. "I don't believe that for a second."

The Queen shrugged her shoulders again. "Fine, don't." She grinned and turned to Torrid. "Nice rest of the way?"

"Yes." Torrid smiled. "Your Amazons were nice."

"Good." Gabrielle grinned and saw her four other Amazons coming.

Amarice walked up to Xena. "Here's your cloak." She handed it over.

"Thanks." The warrior was more than glad and put it on to keep warm.

"Here's the ship." The Egyptian turned to his right while holding his arm out towards the huge ship.

Gabrielle gawked.

Xena stepped up to her partner. "Small huh?"

The Amazon Queen shut her mouth and peered up. "Oh yeah, real small." She grinned. "How big is it?"

Torrid stepped up beside the young warrior. "The Isis is over a hundred and seventy-five feet." He smiled warmly to the women. "Capable of handling quite rough seas." His eyes rested on the navy ship again. "And it's manned by sixty-two men... excluding the cooks."

"How many cooks?" The small woman gazed over to the Egyptian.

"We have exactly six cooks on board."

The small warrior nodded a few times. "Sounds good to me, I think I may make it to Egypt."

The minister laughed quietly and put his hands behind his back. "We can board anytime you'd like." He gazed at the Queen. "And if you'd like I can give you a tour of the ship with your Amazons before we leave."

"That would be great Torrid." Ephiny smiled warmly. "We'd like to check it ourselves."

"Of course, right this way." The Egyptian minister led the way onto the ship.

The group of women followed behind. As they boarded the ship there were two Egyptian guards on the ship that bowed to them. They wore masks that were much like a dog's head.

Solari leaned towards her regent. "How about those masks?"

"Those masks are the faces of Anubis." Torrid stopped and faced the women. "Anubis is our god that omits people to the afterlife by judgement."

The Amazons nodded together.

Eponin smiled. "Sorry about that, we were masks ourselves in our Nation."

"I've heard." The minister smiled. "Masks of the bird." He nodded and turned on the heels of his sandals to start walking.

The Soulmates glanced at each other with the same thought. *Torrid has done his homework.*

The Egyptian led them to the middle of the ship. "Here is the main deck." He pointed to his left. "There the bow with our forward mizzen mast." He lifted his right hand to rest on another but larger mast. "Our main mast." His arm stretch out towards the back of the ship. "Then our stern with our second mizzen mast." Torrid turned his head that way. "And as you can see there is the ships helm on the poop deck." He lowered his arm. "Now I'll show you below deck."

The group strolled along the main deck to go down a large ladder and entered into a large room. On the left and right side it was lined with bunks with tables, chairs, and hammocks.

"This is the middle cabin for our sailors. There are exactly a hundred bunk beds in here." He guided them though the room. "The next room is longer which contains five hundred bunk beds." He walked into the cabin.

The seven women all turned their heads each way studying the inside of the huge ship.

"This is the main quarters for our soldiers. Naturally we do not have any need for them on this journey. The next area is the galley with a large dining quarters." Torrid walked ahead stepping past the door to the next quarters. "The galley is fully equipped

for our cooks. And the table will seat one hundred at time." He walked past and opened the door ahead. He swung open the door and stepped into a small corridor. "Now then..." He held his hand to the right. "That is the Captain's quarters, the next one is the second mate, then the third mate, the one after that is a guest quarters which is mine currently." His left hand held out to the last room as his attention went to the Soulmates. "And this will be your quarters for the duration of the journey. It is rather small so you will have to make do till we arrive in Egypt." Torrid walked over to the door and pushed down on the handle and swung it open.

The group all shuffled in to gape at the size of the room.

"I hope this will qualify Xena and Gabrielle." The minister glanced around then to his new friends.

Xena nodded. "It'll do." She grinned.

"Yeah." Gabrielle chuckled at seeing the huge bed, the large windows to the left. A large dresser against the wall then off to the right was another doorway to probably the head. Overall the room was large and comfortable with a light air. "Can we leave our packs in here?"

"Of course."

The Soulmates took their bags off and placed them on the bed.

"Now then, I'll show you the rest of the vessel." Torrid walked out with the women.

~*~*~*~

"Sso, what's your final decision regent?" The Queen crossed her arms against her chest.

Ephiny was standing on the dock with Gabrielle and Xena. Her eyes travel across the length of the ship. Her eyes shifted to her Queen. "I do believe I should go with you." She grinned a little. "I have a horrible feeling you two will enjoy Egypt to much."

"I don't think so." Xena narrowed her eyes with a mock glare.

The regent chuckled. "Or I may not and let you both enjoy being alone."

The Queen patted her regent's shoulder. "Thanks regent, glad I have your approval."

Ephiny sighed happily. "Safe travels huh?" She smiled warmly but her eyes held sadness.

"We will Eph." Gabrielle stepped forward to pull her regent in tightly.

The other four Amazons had gone after getting their Queen's hugs. They were collecting the horses and waiting for their regent to return home.

Ephiny tightly hugged her friend. "I'll miss you Gabrielle."

Gabrielle quietly laughed while pulling away. "I'm never in the village to begin with."

The Amazon shrugged. "But you're normally somewhere in Greece. Now you'll be on another continent." She smiled a little sadly. "We'll come to Amphipolis to see you

when you get back."

The small warrior grinned. "You mean you're not going to be here when the ship comes in?"

"Now, that's tempting."

"Wouldn't surprise me." The Queen grinned in tease.

Ephiny chuckled and glanced up to the warrior. "Well, old warrior. I'll miss you too."

Xena corked an eyebrow. "Gee thanks Eph. You know you're not looking so young yourself."

The Amazon gave a laugh and pulled the taller woman in for a hug. "Take care Xena."

"You to Eph." The warrior gave a hard hug and pulled back with a smile.

"Ladies, the captain says it's time to depart from the port." Torrid stood on the gangplank with his cape flowing in the wind.

Gabrielle sighed sadly and peeked up to her partner. "Ready?"

"Yup." Xena flashed a smile to the regent. "See you Eph." She turned to stroll up the plank.

The Queen jumped forward to give one last strong hug. "Take care Eph and watch over my Amazons."

"Of course my Queen." Ephiny released her friend and watched her walk onto the ship to join Xena.

The gangplank was pulled up onto the ship by the two guards.

The regent turned her head to the right down the dock to see her Amazons coming with the horses.

The four Amazons came up and stood beside Ephiny. They all gazed up to the Soulmates and began to wave while shouting words of goodbye.

Ephiny locked eyes to her Queen as a warm smile eased across her lips.

The ships sails came down, the ropes taken aboard, and the hands on deck running around getting the ship in order. The helmsman was glance behind, to his left, and to his right. He began to navigate the huge ship out of it's slip.

The Soulmates waved with warm smiles to their friends.

"Here we go Xena."

"Uh huh." The warrior grinned with a small laugh. "Egypt here we come."

"Mmm, sex here we come." Gabrielle kept waving even though she felt her snicker coming up.

"Let's... plan on it."

The Queen lowered her arm and stepped up to the railing and leaned against it.

The ship came out of the slip backing out, it glided through the calm water to the left in front of the dock. The helmsman twirled the steering wheel to send the ship slowly moving to the left towards the Mediterranean Sea.

Xena was behind her partner and lowered her head a little. "Send a kiss to them for me."

Gabrielle snickered and straightened up. She grinned at her Amazons on the end of the dock. She kissed her palm and blew it at her Amazons. "It's from Xena girls!"

The five Amazons all laughed. And it was Solari who blew a kiss back. "Just for the warrior babe!"

The Warrior Princess laughed with her smile.

Amarice now yelled off to the Soulmates at seeing the ship turn. "Bye you guys! Sorry about this morning! I'll miss you!"

"Bye Amarice!" Gabrielle grinned. "Don't mess with beds!"

Ephiny took a deep breath and yelled, "I love you my sisters!"

The Queen smiled with love. "Love you too Eph!"

"I can't say I don't love you Eph!" Xena grinned with a wink.

The regent chuckled with her warm smile.

The ship kept turning and just began to turn the stern to the docks. Her sails picked up the wind and began to enter out of the small cove into the sea.

Gabrielle sighed and leaned back against the rail. "I'll miss them."

Xena chuckled. "Like you said, we hardly see them."

"Like Eph said, at least we're always in Greece."

Teresa, Amarice, and Eponin began to walk down the dock with their horses.

Solari turned her head to her regent. "You're worried."

Ephiny nodded as she turned her head to Solari. "Yeah."

Now the second in command could see the concern in her friend's amber eyes. "About what?"

"I don't know." The regent turned her eyes back to the stern of the ship. "Something tells me it won't be a vacation for them."

Solari sighed and with her freehand she placed it on Ephiny's shoulder. "They'll be fine. Even if we're not there Artemis and Aphrodite will be."

Ephiny's head bobbed up and down. "Let's hope so." She sighed and smiled to her second in command. "Let's go home."

Solari handed her regent the reins to her horse. "Sounds good to me."

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Xena took a deep breath to smell the salty sea. She closed her eyes and her memories took her back. Her body began to sway with the ship. She stood on the bow of the boat.

Gabrielle chuckled. "You make it look so simple."

Torrid grinned at her friend. "It's rather simple Gabrielle. You just keep a straight course."

The small warrior lifted an eyebrow. "Ra, this is only a ship about a hundred times larger than me."

"And you control it with just this small wheel Queen Gabrielle." Torrid smile warmly. "Go ahead and try again."

The small woman took her friend's position and grasped the steering wheel.

The helmsman stood beside the minister. "She's Queen of the Amazons?" he whispered.

"Yes." Torrid glanced up to the bigger man. "Highly regarded."

The helmsman nodded. "Good." He glanced back to the small woman steering the ship.

Gabrielle kept her hands on the wheel while gazing ahead in the night. Her eyes then settled on her Soulmate all the way on the bow of the ship. She sighed sadly. *Something is going on.* She glanced to her right at Torrid and the helmsman. "Can I try it later?"

"Yes of course." The helmsman smiled. "Besides, it's safer if I steer in the night." He came up and took the wheel.

"Thanks." Gabrielle smiled and walked over to Torrid.

The minister followed his friend to walk down the steps off the poop deck. "Is there anything else you need Gabrielle?"

The smaller woman glanced back to her friend. "I think we'll be fine."

The Egyptian had a small confused look.

The Amazon Queen quietly laughed. "Xena and I."

Torrid quietly laughed. "Yes of course. Do enjoy the rest of your evening. I think I may retire to my room."

"Sleep well Ra."

The man bowed his head. "You do the same." He raised his head with a small. "Goodnight."

"Goodnight." The small warrior watched the man walk across the deck of the ship with his cloak flowing. She sighed and began her pursuit to her Soulmate.

Xena's eyes drifted open when her body went warm. "Like steering the ship?"

"It's different." Gabrielle came to stand beside her partner. "You'll have to show me."

The warrior glanced down with a smile. "Love to." She studied her lover whose cloak whipped in the wind strongly as her smile.

Gabrielle reached out to take her Soulmate's hand. "What you concerned about?"

"I don't know... yet." The tall woman's lips escaped with a sad sigh. "I can't figure it out."

The small woman nodded. "I can feel that... you're confused about something."

Xena nodded. "It'll come to me." She confidently smiled to her partner. "Come here, I wanna show you something."

Gabrielle stepped in front of her partner as she felt warm hands grasp her sides.

"Hang on." The warrior lifted her partner up in the air high and brought her back.

"Ya! Xena!" The small warrior found herself settled down on her partner's shoulders. She instantly wrapped her arms around her Soulmate's neck. "Okay, this is frightening."

"Look to the sea."

The Amazon Queen gave her focus to the sea. Her eyes narrowed in question as she noticed the small white glow in the horizon of the sea. "What is that?"

"It's the Pharaohs Lighthouse."

"In Egypt?" Gabrielle's mouth dropped. She'd forgotten about the part of being high up.

"Yup." A grin creased the warrior's lips. "It's not in Egypt, it's actually on a small island just off the shores of Alexander." Her hands tightened a little on her Soulmate's calves.

"That's amazing." The young warrior shook her head. "They must burn a huge fire to do that."

"They do." Xena took a deep as the boat crash into the water. "There are mirrors in the lighthouse to reflect the light out over the sea. Then they don't have to see the light in Egypt."

"Yeah I bet." Gabrielle quietly laughed. "You'd never be able to sleep with that much light."

The Warrior Princes quietly laughed. "Speaking of sleep."

The small woman sighed. "Yeah, I'm tired too."

"I know." The warrior brought in a deep breath.

Gabrielle took a deep breath and slowly lowered her chin down onto her Soulmate's head. "Haven't been up here in a few."

The older woman grinned. "Yeah, you still remember going through that village?"

"That was chaotic." Gabrielle groaned. "Just because of the Dionysus festival."

Xena sighed contently. "Use to the height yet?"

The Amazon Queen thought for a moment. "Considering I am not throwing up... yeah. If I can handle being high up and on a ship... I'm doing good."

The warrior grinned while patting her smaller warrior's calf. Then she started to hear her partner giggling a little. "What?"

"I was just thinking about the time..." Gabrielle shook her head. "When we went to find Argo and I had fungus."

The older woman was now groaning. "Me and my lice."

The small warrior snickered. "I tell you, that little bunny was mean."

"All I know was you said you'd get us dinner and you come back with bite marks and no rabbit."

The young woman laughed while keeping her eyes locked on the dark water that reflected the stars. "You don't understand Xen. That was one mean rabbit, the thing had fangs."

"How could a rabbit have fangs?"

"I keep asking myself the same thing." Gabrielle sighed. "This one did and it beat me up."

Xena laughed a little and grinned. "My chakram."

"Oh gods." The small woman closed her eyes. "I admit, using your chakram to..." Her eyes opened again.

"To scratch your fungus was bad."

"Yeah." Gabrielle laughed as she remembered the entire scene with her partner. "I couldn't believe you were going to use your pressure points on me."

"Hey, you were messing with my chakram."

"True." The warrior-bard grinned. "That was ssso funny." Gabrielle laughed as she could remember what she said to her friend at the time.

"The whole adventure was rather funny."

"Yeah it was." Gabrielle sighed. "I wonder how Joxer is? We haven't seen him in a while."

"I'm sure he's fine and he'll find us."

The young warrior groaned. "I've gotta talk to him about his..."

"Interest in you?" suggested the warrior.

"Yeah." The small woman gave a quiet laugh. "That's not going to be easy." She paused for a moment. "We've never told him about us huh?"

"Never had the chance." Xena lifted her eyes to the stars. "I can always talk to him." A small grin creased her lips.

"I still want Joxer alive now." The small woman received a snicker. She grinned in reaction and lifted her attention to the stars. She saw the three bright stars of the warrior in the sky. "Oh gods," she whispered.

"More memories huh?" The warrior smiled up at the constellation that she'd shown her Soulmate so many years ago.

"I've always loved the constellation," ushered the warrior-bard. "Reminds me of you."

"Reminds me of the night in the Amazon village." Xena sighed a little sadly.

"Dido." Gabrielle closed her eyes a little. "Xen?"

"Come on." The warrior smiled to herself. "Lean forward a little." She sensed Gabrielle's warm stomach pressing into the back of her head. So she reached up to her lover's sides and lifted her up and over.

The Amazon Queen's feet made contact with the deck of the ship. She leaned back into her warrior. "This rocking is putting me to sleep."

"Mmm me too." Xena's right hand came to press against her friend's stomach. "Ready to get some sleep?"

"Yeah." The small woman furrowed her eyebrows. Her hands came down to grasp Xena's hand. "Hades, your hand is cold." She took the larger hand into both of hers and rubbed. "Let's get inside."

The taller woman quietly laughed. "Motherhen."

"Because you love it." Gabrielle turned around to smirk but she went serious. "Come on." She squeezed her Soulmate's hand and released it.

The pair slowly made their way across the deck to the door to go into the cabins. In a few seconds they found themselves inside of their large cabin.

Xena was only in her leathers. She was glancing out the open window to watch the water that was only a few feet below.

Gabrielle was out of her boots and was coming up behind her lover. She wrapped her arms around Xena's waist so she could pull the warrior in. "Miss that life?"

"Sometimes." The warrior sighed. "I miss the waters, yeah."

"Why'd you stop being a pirate?" The small woman lowered her head to Xena's back. "I know what happened with Caesar."

"After Caesar I became lost in the darkness." The tall woman shook her head. "Wasn't about protecting Amphipolis anymore."

"It was about searching some form of revenge huh?" The young warrior sighed sadly while starting to sway their bodies together.

"Yes... revenge on the world." Her large hands came down to rest over Gabrielle's. "I'm pretty lucky."

"What you mean?" She felt her warrior turning so she lifted her head up.

Xena smiled at her Soulmate. "I mean I'm lucky to have you after my past."

Gabrielle smiled warmly. "Xena, after what you went through in your past you deserve so much."

The warrior's right hand came up to trace over her lover's lips. "I'll never find anybody else that will forgive me like you."

"That's because nobody else is your Soulmate." The smaller woman had a content smile.

The Warrior Princess lowered her head with her smile. "Very true." She tenderly took her Soulmate's lips. When she pulled back the smile never faltered. Her strong arms came around Gabrielle and pulled her in.

The Amazon Queen sighed happily while closing her eyes.

"Go to sleep."

A small laugh came from Gabrielle. "On you?"

"I'll take care of you." Xena was starting to sway with the rocking of the boat.

"You're gonna fall asleep at the same time." Gabrielle tightened her arms.

"Think so?" The warrior grinned while lowering her head on to Gabrielle's.

"I know so." A small grin crept along the small warrior's lips. "How about this, you carry me to bed, let me lay on you, and then I can sleep on you?" Now she found herself being lifted into strong arms. "I guess that's a yes."

The older woman grinned while slowly carrying her partner to the bed. "I love you Gabrielle." Before she went into the bed she found her lips being taken into a warm kiss.

Gabrielle slowly pulled back with her eyes gradually opening. "I love you too."

Xena grinned at that and the sleepiness she saw in her lover's eyes. She climbed into the bed and lay down with her Soulmate on top of her.

The shorter warrior settled onto her friend's body while closing her eyes. "Night Xen."

"See you in the dream, love." The dark woman kissed the top of her lover's head. Her head came back down to the pillow. Her eyes slowly closed.

The Soulmate's breathing eased together. The wind continued to drift through the open window and cool the room. Yet the Soulmates never felt it in the heat of their bodies and love. And soon they would awake to another day on the waters of the Mediterranean Sea. Destination- Egypt.

Part 4

Section 4

~*Part 7*~

Gabrielle slowly stood up in the hot water with the beads of water rolling down her body.

Xena came strolling in and saw the scene, she grinned. "Gods, I love perfection."

The small warrior corked an eyebrow. "How about a towel sexy?" A small grin spread over her lips as she got out of the tub.

The older woman quietly laughed and tossed the towel to her partner.

The Amazon Queen snapped it out of midair and opened the clean towel to dry herself off. "I'm still amazed they have a tub in here."

"Lucky for us." The warrior began to dry herself off as well.

"Yeah really... after the sand war." The small woman looked up with a false glare.

Xena just grinned while brushing her wet bangs back. "You love the wars."

"Considering neither of us ever win... yeah." Gabrielle began to run her hands through her hair to straighten it all out. "Gods I hate this part about short hair."

The taller woman was leaning against the doorway of the head. Her towel she'd slung over her shoulder. "It's cute."

"Right." The young woman growled low and just shook her head. The hair and water went everywhere.

"That's... one way to do it." The warrior chuckled and saw her Soulmate brush her hair back again to see it a little darker. "You're hair looks good wet."

"Yeah?" Gabrielle put her towel over her shoulder now and strolled up to her partner. "Looks good or-"

"Sexy?" Xena chuckled. "Both." She shifted off the doorway and leaned down to kiss her lover.

A small moan came from the shorter warrior. "I'll get our clothes together." She went into the bedroom.

"Oh yeah, our salty clothes."

"They're not salty!" Gabrielle laughed. "Don't tell me that."

The dark woman snickered and walked over to the tub. "Hey catch." She threw her towel to her partner.

Gabrielle caught it. "Thanks." A small grin formed on her lips.

Xena winked and walked over to the tub. "Well, you can do this tub if you want."

"Hades, I'll never figure out how to work that thing."

The older woman shook her head with a smile while she strolled over to the tub to let the water out.

Gabrielle had on her top and skirt. "Hey Xena, where'd my boots go?" Her voice was a little shy. She glanced into the head to see her partner fiddling with the tub.

"Where you left them last night." Xena's voice held a tease.

"Really?" The small warrior stared at the bed to see the towels. She evilly grinned and picked one up. "Where might that be Xena?"

"You think I keep tabs on your stuff?"

"Yes." Gabrielle was sauntering into the head with the towel. "I know you know where they are." She began to twirl the towel. "And I highly recommend you tell me."

The Warrior Princess got the tub to drain the water out. Then her head whipped to the left to see what her Soulmate was about to do. "Don't even think about it."

The small warrior evilly laughed while she held the towel stretch out in front. "Tell me where my boots are or you'll be feeling it."

"Gabrielle," growled the warrior. "Don't you dare whip that towel." Her eyes narrowed. "Don't start this."

"What you gonna do huh?" Gabrielle snapped the towel forward to hear it crack in the air right near Xena. "I want my boots and you put them somewhere to drive me nuts." She stalked into small room towards her lover. She was stooped a little with the towel ready to be whipped.

"I don't know where your boots are." The warrior held her hands up and stepped back. Her eyes were twinkling. "Why would I know where your boots are?"

"Because you know where everything of mine is." Gabrielle took another menacing step. "Last chance, where are they?"

Xena shrugged with her hands still up. "Do you think I know where your boots are?"

"Do I look like your Soulmate?"

"Yup." The warrior jumped back as the towel's end snapped at her stomach. "You're dangerous with that thing." She stepped back.

"Come on Xena, you're almost out of room here." The small warrior took another.
"Where are they?"

Xena grinned while still holding her hands up. "I threw them out the window, they're headed back to Greece."

"Right, yours are going to be going with mine real soon then." The young woman took another step still holding the towel up with sparkling eyes. "If you don't tell me where mine are I'm not going to tell you where yours are."

"What you mean?" Xena narrowed her eyes. "I better find my boots."

"Oooh, you want them?" Gabrielle whipped the towel with the end just nicking at Xena's left arm. "We'll trade."

"No can do." The warrior took another step back as her back pressed into the wood wall. "I've got plans right now." Her eyes narrowed.

"Like what?" The Amazon Queen snickered. "Getting your ass whipped?" She took two more steps.

"No, getting yours." The dark woman blurred to move quickly away from her Soulmate.

"Hades." The warrior-bard tried whipping the towel at Xena as she skimmed past her. She whirled around to spot her lover in the bedroom with a towel now and putting her leathers on. "Hades you're fast."

Xena grinned. "When I need to be of course." She twirled her towel. "Come on Gabrielle. Two can play this." She pulled her leather strap on her shoulder and started stalking towards her prey.

The small woman's eyes widen. "Oh boy."

"You got that right." Xena stretch the towel out. She came right up to her Soulmate and snapped the towel at her.

The Queen had ducked and rolled up to spring up near the tub. She brought up her towel to twirl it.

"Oooh." Xena laughed and shifted around the tub towards her friend.

Gabrielle shifted away with her towel up and aimed. "Stay back."

"Or what? You can't get away." The Warrior Princess had her towel up as well ready to whip. "Come on, it's only a small sting."

"Xena, all I want are my boots."

"And you'll get them when I say."

The small warrior narrowed her eyes. "Then you won't get yours till then either." She stuck her tongue out.

Xena whipped her towel across the distance of the tub and it snapped right in front of

Gabrielle.

Gabrielle jumped back with a snicker. "Miss, you getting old?"

"Never." The warrior jumped onto the tub's edge with a grin.

The small warrior took the opportunity to whip the towel at her Soulmate's legs.

The older woman just jumped again and landed behind her partner.

"Oh gods!" The young woman just jumped away from her lover's grasp. "Aaaahhh!" She went running into the bedroom with her towel.

Xena laughed evilly and came in slowly. She twirled her towel again as she saw her warrior standing in front of the foot of the bed. "Let me just get you once." She came stalking up with twinkling blue eyes.

"No way!" Gabrielle snapped her towel at her lover. "Stay away."

The tall woman jumped back with a grin. "But you're mine and I want what's mine."

"Yeah well right now you're not being nice."

"Me?" The older woman's eyes were wide. "Who started this?"

"You did!" The Queen had her towel twirled again. "You put my boots somewhere."

"You just forgot." Xena smirked. "You must be getting old."

"Pffft, you don't know where yours are either." A smug look came from the younger warrior. "Suck it up Xena."

"I may just when I get you." The warrior took a few steps closer.

Gabrielle smirked at her lover. "If you can get me first." She whipped her towel to keep her partner back.

Xena just took the whip as the towel cracked at her leathers. "Try aiming for skin... like for example your stomach." The warrior laughed and began to whip the towel at Gabrielle's stomach.

"Ah!" The small woman jumped in time to only receive the sting on her legs. She was on the bed now and stepping back while whirling the towel. "Okay you stung me on my legs. I want my boots now."

The Warrior Princess bounced onto the bed. She bobbed on the bed a few times with her evil grin. "Getting desperate are we?" She whipped the towel again.

The young warrior yelped as the tip of towel stung her stomach. "Xena," she growled. She dropped her towel in her right hand. "Just try it again." Her eyes narrowed.

"I think I may." The older woman whipped the towel again.

The Queen quickly moved her hand to watch the towel. "Don't mess with me Warrior Princess." She jerked the towel hard to bring Xena's body smashing into hers.

The pair went stumbling back on the bed to hit the wall.

Xena's arms were above Gabrielle's head. Amused blue eyes gazed down. "Was that really your plan Gabrielle?"

"Your hot body pressed against me? No but I like it." Gabrielle peeked up with a shy smile.

The warrior grinned. "You still have to pay a price to get your boots."

"What's that?"

"This." Xena leaned down and kissed her Soulmate.

The warrior-bard moaned as Xena's tongue slipped into her mouth. She let her own tongue go inside her warrior's mouth. Her right hand came up to the side of Xena's head.

The taller woman's right hand came down to press her lover into her more. Slowly she lifted her head.

"That's my payment?" Gabrielle smirked and added, "Yours is a lot higher."

"Now that you mention it, I think the price just went up."

"Mmm." The young woman pressed the palm of her hands against her lover's breasts. "Let me see if I have enough here."

"I know you do." Xena wrapped her right arm around her Soulmate's back while claiming Gabrielle's lips again. Then she pushed back to fall into the bed.

Gabrielle laughed and grinned down at her warrior. "Gods, I love you Xena."

The tall woman smiled while pushing Gabrielle's hips down to her own. "Oh, I couldn't live without you Gabrielle."

The small woman lowered her head to bring her lips scarce inches from Xena's. "Good." She took her Soulmate's lips while pressing her body into Xena's.

~*~*~*~

"There you go." Xena grinned. "Not that complicated huh?"

Gabrielle chuckled. "Not when you're helping." She stood holding the steering wheel.

The warrior was standing behind her partner with her hands on the wheel as well. "Just steer straight." She glanced to the left to see Torrid coming up the steps slowly.

The Egyptian smiled warmly and said, "Morning ladies."

"How are you Ra?" The warrior-bard glanced to the man with a smile then back to the sea.

"Quite well." The minister took a deep breath while crossing his hands over his chest. "I must admit ladies, you both are quite the loud neighbors."

Gabrielle went red.

The Warrior Princess turned her head to the man with a stoic expression. "When you have a partner like Gabrielle, nothing is ever dull let alone quiet."

"So I've heard."

The small woman groaned and dropped her head into the steering wheel.

The tall woman leaned her head towards Gabrielle's. "You can quite steer the ship well with your head there."

"Right." Gabrielle chuckled and lifted her head. She gazed over to Torrid. "Was it my voice you heard or Xena's more?"

"Well..." The minister gave a small grin. "I know your partner is normally quiet until she enters that cabin alone with you. This I have truly discovered." He sighed dramatically. "We may have to give you a room at the end of the palace for your partner Gabrielle."

The Amazon Queen snickered.

Xena went red as the breeze tried to cool her down. "Next topic."

The small warrior glanced up to her lover and saw the redness and she only giggled.

"Watch where you're steering," growled the warrior.

"Yes ma'am." The young woman went back to steering. "Did you get something to eat Ra?"

Torrid nodded with a small smile. "I did, thank you for asking. I hope you ladies did."

"Oh yes we did."

Gabrielle huffed.

The Egyptian gazed around. "Where's the helmsman, I just realized?"

"He went below to get breakfast." Xena gave a little smile. "We relieved him for a little while."

"Ah, that's quite nice." Torrid chuckled. "He doesn't get to many chances to break." He went a bit serious. "I do hope you know where you're heading to."

Xena nodded. "All in my head."

"Ah, so I take it you've been to Egypt before."

"Once."

"And once is good enough to know the way?"

Gabrielle turned her head to the man. "For Xena, yes." She smiled reassuringly.

"Well then, I will trust your judgement Gabrielle." He smiled back.

"Thank you." Gabrielle smiled briefly then glanced back to the seas.

The warrior leaned towards her partner. "You have this?"

"Yeah, go ahead." The warrior-bard flashed her smile to her Soulmate knowing the warrior wanted to do something.

"Be back." Xena started heading to the steps to head onto the main deck.

Torrid took a step closer to his friend. "Where is she going?"

The small woman glanced at the Egyptian. "To get some water."

The small man gave a confused look. "How do you know?"

"I know Xena."

Torrid quietly laughed while looking ahead again. "Amazing." He smiled at the seas. "It will be wonderful to return home."

"Back to the deserts huh?" The Amazon Queen's tone was teasing.

"Yes, the great sands of Egypt and the glory of the Nile."

"Will we go down the Nile to get to Alexandria?"

The minister shook his head. "Unfortunately not." He sighed. "Alexandria is a long the coast. And there's a small cove of Alexandria."

Gabrielle nodded with a sad smile. "I hope I get to see the Nile."

"Oh, I am quite sure you will." Torrid gave a small smile. "Queen Cleopatra loves to dine on the Nile on her golden barge. So I am rather sure she will take both you and Xena."

"That would be grand."

"Then I will put in a special request to Queen Cleopatra to take you both on the Nile." He smiled warmly. "I am sure she would be excited to take you."

The young warrior quietly laughed. "Thank you Ra."

"You're rather welcome."

"What are we thanking about?" Xena came up beside Torrid with a mug in her hand.

Gabrielle glanced to her partner. "Ask Cleopatra to take us on the Nile."

"Ah." The warrior nodded with a small grin. "With her golden barge." She turned her head to the minister. "I hear she likes to wine and dine on this barge."

"Oh quite." Torrid chuckled. "She is rather fond of the Nile and her beauty... which I can not blame her."

Xena grinned. "I can understand." She walked over to her partner and handed the mug over.

Gabrielle carefully took it with one hand. She drank some of the cool water then handed it back to her lover. "Thanks."

The older woman smiled with a wink. She held the mug and turned her head to Torrid. "Now I was wondering, exactly how massive will our room in the palace be?" She had an amused grin on her lips.

Torrid quietly laughed. "The guest rooms are a little smaller than Queen Cleopatra's room."

"Ah, and exactly how small is... small?"

The Egyptian thought for a moment. "Well... in comparison... it would be about as big as that tavern."

The short warrior's mouth dropped.

Xena grinned. "That small huh? Horrible."

The minister chuckled while smiling warmly. "It is rather horrible. There is only a hot tub, large queen size bed, twenty pillows, a ledge, closet, two fireplaces, two washrooms, and a personal servant." He sighed. "I've mentioned to the Queen she should improve the quarters... they're rather insufficient." A tiny grin crept along his lips.

"Oh yeah definitely!" Gabrielle threw up a hand. "Horrible." She chuckled. "In my Amazon hut we have five hot tubs, three queen beds, three washrooms, forty pillows, ten servants, and a ballroom branching off." She sighed overly dramatic. "I don't know what Cleo is thinking."

Both Torrid and Xena laughed together.

Xena lifted her mug to drink the rest of the water, she lowered it with a grin. "Gabrielle, you'll have to fix up the hut too. It's been looking a little to rough."

"Yeah I know." Gabrielle's sighed dramatically again. "That Hades of a marble floor keeps cracking a little. The gold needs cleaning with the silver and my diamonds I have scattered across the floor need polishing."

The Warrior Princess snickered. "I told you to keep that place in order."

"Yeah well, I girl can only keep control of her gems and gold so much." The small woman smirked a little.

Torrid raised an eyebrow. "I do hope Egypt never gets that... wealthy. We'd never be at peace with the world." A small chuckle came from his lips.

Xena turned her head to the Egyptian. "Well, nobody has an Egyptian navy."

The minister nodded a few times. "True." He sighed a little. "And what troubles that can bring."

"Oh?" The tall woman cocked an eyebrow.

"Matters that should not be discussed." Torrid bowed his head. "I apologize for

bringing the topic arise." His head lifted again.

The older woman narrowed her eyes after noticing how raw of a topic it was to discuss the Egyptian fleet. She had to wonder why Cleopatra did send a navy ship to pick up her and her Soulmate. It was strangely odd yet it made sense to her when she thought of Rome.

The small warrior glanced to her partner to see her eyes glossed over with thoughts. She quickly began to speak to keep Torrid from noticing. "Ra, what's Alexandria like?"

"Very grand Gabrielle." The minister sighed with happiness. "It is a thing of beauty that I can never describe... only the eyes can fully reveal the genuine beauty."

"Then I can't wait." The Amazon Queen grinned. "She sounds magical." She noticed her Soulmate coming out of her phase.

"She is." The man grinned. "So much magic that she can make a person act not of their self." He frowned a little. "That can be the scary beauty of Alexandria... all of Egypt. She can be deadly as she can be beautiful."

"Reminds me of Cleopatra herself."

"Ah yes." Torrid lifted his attention to the warrior to add, "Cleopatra is Egypt. Egypt is mysterious, dangerous, and beautiful therefore Cleopatra is the same. She is a power to reckon."

Xena sighed sadly. "And I am sure one day she will be reckoned."

"That is the day Egypt will gravel to her feet before a new power." He shook his head. "Egypt will not survive without Cleopatra's wisdom."

The warrior-bard stayed silent while taking in this information. She didn't like any of it. Torrid's words began her fear and questioning of this trip to Egypt.

The dark woman glanced to her smaller Soulmate to see her expression of strength. That's when she knew her Soulmate would be very weary in Egypt.

Everybody heard a small stomp on the deck, so they glanced back to see the helmsman returned. He smiled while strolling up.

"Full belly I believe?" Torrid crossed his arms against his chest.

"Very full." The helmsman chuckled and turned his eyes to Gabrielle. "Would you care for me to take back over?"

"Would you like to take over again?" The small warrior grinned.

The helmsman sighed with a friendly grin. "Considering I love to do my job, yes."

"It's all yours." Gabrielle smiled while stepping away from the wheel.

The helmsman took the wheel again.

The small woman gazed up to her Soulmate in question.

Xena nodded to her left towards the main deck. She was signaling to leave with her to talk.

A faint nod from the warrior-bard and she gazed over the minister. "I think Xena and I may go below deck."

"Yes of course." Torrid smiled. "I must speak with the captain."

The group strolled off the poop deck, went below to the corridor of rooms. Torrid went his way while the Soulmates went to their room.

"What's up?" Gabrielle glanced to her lover.

"I saw that look." Xena sat on the foot of the bed.

The small warrior sighed while coming up to her partner. "Sorry."

"Nothing to apologize about." The warrior grasped her Soulmate's hands. "I'm just worried. You'll be stressed in Egypt."

"Not stressed... just cautious." Gabrielle smiled a little while squeezing her warrior's hands. "Aren't I always being cautious these days?"

"Yes but this is different."

"I know... I know." The warrior-bard knelt. "I'd like to think we were safe... but after Torrid's words I don't feel that way." She shook her head. "I can't afford to let all my guard down Xena." She squeezed the large hands. "Not with us. I've let my guard down one to many times on us. It's not fair to you or us." She leaned down to kiss her Soulmate's hands.

Xena studied her lover's eyes while a gently smile came across her lips. "Alright, just don't get overly stress."

"Count on it." Gabrielle smiled while squeezing her warrior's hands. "Don't you either."

The older woman quietly chuckled. "Don't worry."

~*Part 8*~

That day had gone and passed as calming as it was on the gentle sea. However today was not another gentle day on the sea, it was a rough day at sea. The sky above contained a storm and the bed in the cabin contained the Soulmates of Time. Both women being tossed every which way on the bed. Then a small flood of water came crashing into the room by way of the one open window.

"Hades, Gabrielle stay here." Xena only wore her leathers.

The Amazon Queen was on top of her Soulmate and was grabbing a hold for dear life. "Don't."

"And get water logged?" Xena grinned. "I don't think so."

The ship gave a strong toss and the pair rolled to the left into the center of the bed.

Xena was now on top of her partner. "Stay here." She rolled out of the bed to hit the floor as another toss came to the ship. She went slamming into the wall with a groan. "I hate this." She lifted herself off the wall and with her arms up to balance herself, she went to the window.

The Egyptian navy ship rolled left hard then whip lashed to the right again.

This sent the warrior flying to the foot of the bed and she would have gone out of the window but that's a would.

Gabrielle held her lover's hands tightly. "Don't go swimming without me."

The Warrior Princess grinned while feeling the ship rock back to even out. She quickly let go of her warrior's hand and turned around. Jumping, her hands came over the window to close it with the other one and she locked the windows. As soon as she did a large wave crashed against the window and streamed down. Xena sighed in relief and was thankful the window was made of thick glass.

The warship went pitching to the left.

The warrior was prepared and leaned forward as the ship came rolling back.

"Xena, get back over here." Gabrielle was still on the foot of the bed with concerned eyes.

Lying in bed was about all one could do during storms when you didn't operate the ship.

The tall woman carefully made her way back to the bed with her muscles tense to deal with another roll of the ship. She came near the bed and soon found herself thrown into the bed by another pitch of the ship.

The Soulmate were laughing hard now for Xena had landed on Gabrielle and became tangled up.

"What a morning." The warrior-bard sighed deeply while she felt her friend untangle them

The older woman moved to lie on the bed normally and in the center.

The smaller female came crawling on her partner's body to hold on tightly. "How long will this go on for?"

"For a few candlemarks or all day."

The young warrior groaned loudly while dropping her head between her lover's breasts. "Don't tell me that," she mumbled.

The dark woman quietly laughed as the ship pitched again. "Don't worry, it'll stop."

"Gods, I hope so." Gabrielle had her eyes closed. "Xena, I hope I don't-"

"You're not going to throw up."

The Queen whimpered. "I feel like I am going to toss my cookies."

"Don't even think about it." Xena chuckled. "Just keep a hold of me huh?" She'd had her arms tightly around her partner. A small grin crept along her lips. "If we keep talking you won't notice it then your body will get use to it."

"Alright." The small woman lifted her head as the room filled with a small bang from a wave hitting the window. Then she cringed as thunder echoed into the boat. "Know any good jokes Xena?"

"Mmm, can tell you a cheesy one."

"Start telling it." Gabrielle propped her arms up on her Soulmate's chest to rest her chin there.

"Alright." A funny smile was on the warrior's lips. "A mushroom walks into a bar-"

"Wait wait, it's not going to be that cheesy?"

The Warrior Princess sighed with her grin. "I told you, it's cheesy." She cleared her throat. "Anyway, a mushroom walks into a bar and comes up to the bartender." She paused at seeing her Soulmate's raised eyebrow. "So the mushroom asks the bartender if he can get a drink. The bartender said he doesn't serve mushrooms and the mushroom asked, "Why not? I'm a fun-guy."

Gabrielle laughed while shaking her head. "That's the stupidest thing I've ever heard." She laughed quietly with a grin. "How about a riddle?"

Xena arched an eyebrow. "You know I hate those."

"Oh come on." The small woman evilly grinned while swaying a little to the right from the roll of the ship. "You're good at them... or can't you handle them hmmm?" Her eyes sparkled. "Let's see who's better huh?"

"Alright." The older woman's eyes twinkled. "You go first with the riddle."

"Fine." Gabrielle paused for a moment. "Okay, what animal walks on four feet in the morning, two at noon, and three in the evening?"

The older woman sighed dramatically while rolling her eyes. "Everybody knows that, man." She grinned at her partner. "Here's a practice one for you love, how many months have twenty-eight days?"

"Shoot, all of them Xen." Gabrielle shook her head. "This is hard."

"I told you, practice." The dark woman quietly laughed. "Go ahead, riddle away."

"What is black when you buy it, red as you use it, and gray when you throw it out?" Gabrielle smirked while keeping her chin on her arms.

Xena thought for a few moments while feeling them both rock to the rolls of the ship. "Coal."

"Hades."

The tall woman grinned while she thought of a riddle. "Okay, here's a perfect one for you. What is easy to get into but hard to get out of?"

The Amazon Queen furrowed her eyebrows. "Easy to get in and hard to get out."

The older woman had an amused smile with twinkling eyes.

Gabrielle's eyes widen. "You... you're just so funny Xena. It's trouble."

A small laugh came from the warrior. "Yup."

"Okay... try to get this one smarty." The Queen paused for a moment while getting a thinking expression. "What... has two arms, two wings, two tails, three heads, three bodies, and eight legs?"

"What?!" Xena shook her head as her left hand shot onto the bed to stop them from rolling to the left. "That's ridiculous."

The young woman shrugged her shoulders. "Figured you couldn't handle riddles."

Xena narrowed her eyes. "Let me think." She wrapped her arm back around her lover's waist. "Eight legs?"

"Uh huh."

"Ooooh, a man on a horse holding a chicken." Xena shook her head. "That imagination is still working well."

Gabrielle laughed. "You're not bad at this."

"Thanks." The warrior gave a smug look. "What cannot be seen but only heard, and will not speak unless it is spoken to?"

"Will not speak unless..." The small woman's eyes went unfocused. "That's a good one... but not hard." She grinned while her eyes focused on Xena. "Echo?"

The tall woman nodded. "Exactly."

"Mmm, here's a good one for you." Gabrielle evilly grinned. "The more you crack it, the more people like you. What is it?"

"Oh that's real rich Gabrielle." Xena sighed with a grin. "A smile." She took a deep breath. "What question can you never answer 'yes' to?"

The small woman was silent in answering. She tilted her head a little trying to think of the answer. "Is it, are you asleep?"

"Yup."

"Sweet." Gabrielle laughed while coming up with a riddle. "What has six legs but walks with only four?"

"Oh gods, a horse with a rider." The warrior grinned. "What grows larger when you take more away?"

"Xena, a hole. What else?" The small woman sighed. "Okay, neither of us are getting anywhere."

The older woman sighed in relief. "Thank the gods for once."

The ship tossed hard and the Soulmates went rolling to the edge.

Xena eyes peered down at the floorboards as she held herself and Gabrielle from rolling off while the boat still tilted. "Hold on."

"Yeah," peeped the warrior-bard. She could feel her side off the bed.

The ship went crashing back to normal and it took the women rolling back to the middle like nothing happened.

"Okay, let's talk about something funny." Gabrielle took a shaky breath while a small grin took her lips. "How about we come up with some new put-downs for when we fight bad guys?"

Xena laughed then the thunder crashed. "Sounds good. I guess my line, I have many skills, is getting old huh?"

"Nah... it's you, it's classic." The Queen grinned then said, "Here's one, you're so narrowed minded, you can look throw a keyhole with both eyes."

The warrior laughed but snickered. "Sounds like Nyx should have given that line to you."

The young warrior groaned. "Gods she probably should have." Then she suddenly started to laugh hard. "Oh gods I just came up with a good one I can use on Cleopatra if she touches you."

The older woman corked an eyebrow. "Oh, please share."

"Why don't you get yourself a kitten? You could certainly use a new puss."

Xena's eyes widen and she started to laugh hard. She settled down and growled, "Gabrielle."

"Ha!" The small warrior evilly snickered. "It would serve her right for messing with my Soulmate."

The warrior grinned. "Maybe I'll have to use it."

The Amazon Queen corked an eyebrow. "I doubt it."

"Never know." Xena chuckled quietly. "How about a new line for a regular thug on the road?"

"How about... let's play house. You be the door and I'll slam you down."

The warrior chuckled. "Mmmaybe." She grinned. "I could say nice things about you but I'd rather tell the truth."

"Oooh that's not bad." The warrior-bard's head bobbed up and down. "I've hears so much about you. What's your side of the story?"

The older woman snickered. "That's real nice."

The ship tossed to the left with a roll of thunder. And this time it was Gabrielle holding onto her lover from falling off. "Hold on."

Xena smirked and replied, "Yeah." She then dug her head under her partner's head when the boat went rolling back into position.

Gabrielle found herself back on top of Xena. "Xena.... I'm gonna really toss my cookies here." She dropped her head when the wheeze feeling came.

"Come here." The warrior reached to twine her hands with Gabrielle's. "Just don't think about it."

"How can't I?" The Queen dropped her head down while closing her eyes.

The tall woman sighed. "Let's get you on your back, it won't help to rest on your stomach."

"I don't wanna move." She squeezed Xena's hands tightly.

"Please Gabrielle, it'll help us stop rolling too." The Warrior Princess smiled when Gabrielle glanced up. "Right beside me."

The small woman nodded faintly, let go of the large hands, and rolled to her right off Xena. She crashed into the bed beside her lover and her head on Xena's arm. "Oh gods." Her eyes shut.

"Feel a little better?"

"Yeah." Gabrielle opened her eyes. Her right arm crossed over her stomach as her Soulmate's large arm encircled her. "I can't wait for land."

"Mmm, yeah." The dark woman sighed a little. She then rolled onto her right side to peer down at Gabrielle. Her expression was serious.

"What is it?" Gabrielle grasped her warrior's side to hold her. "I don't like it when you get this serious over vacation."

Xena grinned briefly however went stern. "I want you to understand something before we hit Egypt." She sighed. "It's been nagging at me."

"I know." The small woman kept her eyes locked with Xena knowing it would come.

The older woman lowered her head to place a gentle kiss to Gabrielle's lips and raised her head back up.

The ship gave a tiny pitch and the window shook from a wave crashing into it.

"As Torrid said Gabrielle, Egypt can be very mysterious... it can be dangerous." The warrior sighed while her eyes filled with worry. "The magic of Egypt can possible take control of people. It may just take control of either one of us and make us do things we normally don't." Her left hand wrapped around her partner's body found Gabrielle's hand. "It won't affect both of us but it's possible it may happen to one of us." She shook her head. "Understand, whether it's you or me if at all, the other must pull back the person into their arms." Xena's eyes narrowed a little. "If say I started acting distant and ignoring you, you need to remind me who owns me. Do you

understand?"

"Yes." Gabrielle nodded. "But why do you think it would only affect one of us?"

"Because we've always been a balance Gabrielle. You are the light, I am the darkness. You are the love and I am the coldness... in theory. So it's possible that I may not think clearly at all and you think so clearly you understand the world or visa versa."

The small woman nodded. "You think it may really happen?"

"I don't know, it may... it may not." The Warrior Princess shook her head. "Either way, we are stronger then the power of Egypt... our love is." She smiled warmly and held Gabrielle's hand tightly. "Remember, your mind, body, heart, emotions, half soul... everything of you is mine and it's yours. Everything of me is yours and it's mine. And the world that is created between us is ours." She lost the smile. "We just may have to keep control on the other."

"Sso, you're saying if one of us strays it's up to the other to remind who owns who?"

"Yes." The warrior nodded. She closed her eyes while the boat tossed a little. Her eyes opened again. "This is our world Gabrielle, we won't loose it to a little thing like Egypt's magic."

Gabrielle smiled warmly. "No we won't." She let in a deep breath. "What is yours is mine and what is mine is yours... it's ours."

A loving smile was on the warrior's lips. "Forever."

~*Part 9*~

"Well ladies, I hope yesterday did not spoil your perspective for the blue seas?"

It was the following day.

Gabrielle groaned. "No, I was just turning blue."

Torrid quietly laughed at his friend. "I completely sympathize." He glanced over to rail off the bow of the ship. "You can see the great Pharaoh's Lighthouse from here."

"We saw." Xena smiled while standing on the poop deck with her Soulmate in front of her. "Are we expecting to dock tonight?"

"Possible." The minister sighed. "That reminds me, I need to speak to the captain about that. Please excuse me then I may let you ladies know the plans."

"Great, thanks Ra."

The Egyptian smiled at Gabrielle and made his way off the poop deck to go below and find the captain.

"I still can't believe how huge the lighthouse is." Gabrielle shook her head. She was completely mystified by the size of the lighthouse. She began to wonder if it touched the skies.

"Mmm, a bit big." The warrior was grinning as she placed her hands on her lover's

shoulders.

The warrior-bard chuckled. "Do you think we'll really make port tonight?"

"It's possible." The tall woman shook her head a little. "I can't believe we're already here."

"You think that storm had anything to do with it?"

Xena nodded. "I think they were south bound winds. Got us here faster."

"Must have." The small woman sighed contently.

"Look that way." The warrior lifted her left hand to the left off the starboard side. "See that strip of land there?"

"Yeah."

"Over there are the three entrances to the Nile." Xena grinned as she gazed at that direction.

"Really?" Gabrielle had a confused expression. "Three entrances?"

"Yes." Xena took a deep breath. "The Nile is a rare river. It flows north instead of south. So it dumps out into the Mediterranean Sea. Now rivers carry silt, rocks, pebbles, sediment, etc. and so what happens is when the river flows into the a greater body of water it releases all the articles it carried."

The small woman lost her puzzled look. "It's a delta."

"Exactly." The older woman shrugged. "This certain river has three main entrances to pass through the delta and into the Nile."

"That's interesting." The Queen breathed in deeply. "Exactly where are the three entrances?"

"There's an eastern entrance, western, and the middle one is relatively more close to the western entrance." The warrior paused. "If we were to enter the Nile coming from this direction, it would be best to enter the eastern entrance through the delta." Her gaze went back to the Pharaoh's Lighthouse. "Let's hope we make it to Alexandria tonight."

"It would be nice." The small woman smiled as she stared at the grand lighthouse. Her eyes then flickered over to the bow of the boat to notice two Egyptian sailors lifting a line with markings and dropping it into the water, yelling out something, and then redropping the line. "What are they doing?"

Xena glanced over to the two sailors. "They're doing soundings."

"What's?" Gabrielle glanced up to her lover. "Depth?"

"Yes." The Warrior Princess nodded a few times. "I imagine being off the coast of the Nile can be a bit dangerous. The depth shifting constantly." She lifted her right hand to point at the men. "See on that rope how there are marks at every certain length?"

"Yeah." The young warrior kept studying the men and heard them call, "Mark twenty-

five." She shook her head. "So, they drop the line into the water to find the depth?"

"Yup, they'll throw the rope ahead of themselves with a weight at the end. By the time the ship reaches to the thrown line the rope should be at the bottom of the water."

"Now, why does he say 'mark'?"

Xena took a deep breath. "Mark is basically telling the helmsman that he's talking about the sounding. You may have somebody on the ship yelling numbers out and getting the helmsman confused between which are the sounding numbers." She turned her head to the helmsman. "Now he..." She saw her lover glance over to the helmsman. "Is suppose to listen carefully and steer through the right depths. Usually the ship is going slower but it sounds like we have good depth."

"Mark twain!" called the Egyptian sailor.

"Twain?" Gabrielle chuckled.

"Twain means twenty." The tall woman shrugged her shoulders. "Don't ask me why... never been able to figure it out."

"They should just call it twenty."

"Well... why not just call a dozen twelve?"

The small warrior snickered. "You've got a point. Like decade and ten huh?"

"Yup, same difference."

"That's neat." Gabrielle nodded a few times. "There's a lot to sailing huh?"

Xena nodded a few times. "Amazingly enough there are, not many people think so. They think you just drop the sails and go. Never quite that simple."

"I can see." The Amazon Queen smiled with respect. "I like it... a lot."

The warrior quietly laughed. "Is my side coming out in you?"

"I think so." Gabrielle dropped her head back with a smile.

The older woman smiled back and watched her partner lift her head again.

Torrid came up the steps to the poop deck. "Well ladies, the captain believes we'll be docking late this evening." He smiled warmly. "Get ready to enter another world this evening."

Both the Soulmate glanced to each other with excitement but small worry was tinted into their eyes.

~*~*~*~

"Now then, follow me this way." Torrid strolled off the gangplank onto the small dock. "This is the small personal dock of Queen Cleopatra and only used on special occasions. So feel special." He grinned a little.

The Soulmates chuckled together while shifting their packs on their backs.

"Let's go." The minister lead the way across the limestone walkway to come to numerous steps up to a huge pillared entrance. "Now this is the main entrance to Cleopatra's palace."

It was certainly late evening for their was torch after torch going up the steps to light the way. And every other step there was an Egyptian guard with a spear, sword, and an Anubis mask.

"Queen Cleopatra is awaiting for us inside with your servants to take your things."

"To our room at the remote end of the palace?" Gabrielle's voice was a tease.

The minister chuckled a little. "Yes, rather remote."

Xena narrowed her eyes at her lover with a grin. "You'll be so lucky to be silent tonight."

An evil grin creased the small warrior's lips. "I don't know silence... except in the silent game."

The warrior snickered but didn't respond while seeing the entrance to the palace come.

The group walked through the huge marbled entrance, that even left Xena feeling small, to come into a large room that was lined with torches. There was another doorway with two guards.

"We are to wait here for Queen Cleopatra's greeting." Torrid turned to stand behind the two women.

The two guards stepped out of the way of the door. Four young women came out of the entrance in single file and flanked off to each side. Next came two guards with no spears but armor instead and they flanked to each side.

Next came out a dark skinned woman with gold swirled around her breasts, arms, and legs. From her hips to her upper thighs was cover by a thin red silk skirt then in her black hair were beads of gold. Her eyes were bright amber with black eyeliner circling around to swirl to her temples. She slowly strolled up to the Soulmates with a radiant smile. "I am so happy and honored that you both could make it to Egypt." She came directly up to the Soulmates. She glanced between both women. "I hope the trip was pleasant enough, I heard of the strong storm."

"Nothing to worry about." Xena shrugged with a small grin. "We stomached it."

Cleopatra gave a small grin. "Good to hear." She glanced back to Torrid. "And I do hope my second minister was helpful enough."

Torrid bowed his head with his arms against his sides.

"Yes he was." Gabrielle glimpsed back to the minister then to the Queen again. "He was wonderful."

"Well then Queen Gabrielle." Cleopatra smiled warmly. "He will remain as your aid through the rest of your stay. And speaking of which, I hope your stay will be long."

"We're not quite sure yet." The warrior folded her arms against her chest. "Depends on

how things go. Playing by ear."

"I can understand." The Queen of Egypt put her hands to her hips. "I still thank you both for your help in Greece on stopping my assassin." She bowed her head. "It may have been a year ago however Egypt never forgets her friends." Her head came back up to gaze at the Warrior Princess. "And thank you for taking me up on the offer to come see the magical lands." Her eyes flickered over to Gabrielle. "I had high hopes you'd both come."

The Amazon Queen held back her instinct to narrow her eyes.

"But I will let you both go to your room. I'm sure you're both quite tired from the journey." The Egyptian Queen stepped up to Xena first. Her hands rested on the warrior's arms. "This is how we say, welcome back to Egypt Xena." She leaned into to kiss the taller woman.

Xena felt small flickers of coldness dot her body. When the woman pulled back she gave a small smile.

Cleopatra then stepped up to Gabrielle. "And this is how we say welcome to Egypt Gabrielle." She leaned down to take the small warrior's lips in a warm kiss.

The Warrior Princess slowly arched an eyebrow while watching. Only fair.

The Queen of Egypt pulled back with a smile and stepped back. "Sleep well tonight. If you need anything please ask your servants or Ra." She folded her arms over her chest. "They will assist in anyway."

The warriors nodded together and said words of thank you and goodnight.

Cleopatra only gave them back and left the room with all the people that entered with her.

Torrid stepped up beside the women. "I'll take you to your room." He smiled warmly and began to walk slowly through the entrance to come to a huge corridor that ran left, right, and straight ahead. He turned to his left to walk down the corridor slowly.

The Soulmate's followed in silence. They just glanced around taking in the size of the palace and all the doors leading every which way. They were led to two double wood doors to the left.

Torrid reached forward to grasp one of the gold rings and pulled the door open. "This is your room ladies, I do hope it's adequate enough." He stepped back holding the door with his head bowed.

The women made their way into the room. Again Gabrielle only found herself gawking and Xena was stoic.

The room, naturally, was by no mere means small, for it stretched out and across for a great length. Off to the right was a huge size bed big enough to hold four people comfortable. The ceiling of the room stretched out for a certain distance but stopped as the floor kept going to make a balcony that overlooked Alexandria. To the left and right were doorways to two other rooms. Then on the right side of the bed was a huge dresser made of fine wood. To the women's left was a long red couch and two large

comfortable chairs with a glass table in front of the couch.

"It'll suffice for now." The warrior was nodding.

"Gabrielle?" The minister turned his head to the warrior-bard for her response as he grinned.

The Amazon Queen's head started bobbing up and down while she closed her mouth. She lost her surprised look and turned her head coolly to Torrid. "It's a bit small in comparison to my hut in the Amazon Nation." She put her hands on her hips. "But I think it's... livable." She grinned at the man. "It's horribly small."

"I know, it's rather quaint I do say."

"Yes rather." Gabrielle chuckled while smiling to the Egyptian. "Thank you Ra. You've been great help."

Torrid bowed his head. "Thank you." His head came back up. "I try but my serves are not ended till you both leave Egypt." He smiled warmly. "Now then, I'll let you both settle in for the night. Sleep pleasantly."

"We will." Xena smiled to the man. "Sweet dreams Ra."

Torrid chuckled. "Certainly. Goodnight ladies." He turned to head out of the door and closed it behind quietly.

The Queen glanced up to her warrior. "I've got the right, you've got the left."

"Right... I mean left." Xena chuckled while power walking to the left doorway.

Gabrielle jogged over to the right doorway on the other side of the room. Her jog instantly stopped as she entered into the extravagant room. "By the gods!" She shook her head. "Xena check this out!"

The warrior shook her head at staring at the huge washroom that included two huge marble tubs. She spun around on her heels and power walked over to her partner's side. She glanced around in the huge room. "Not bad... at all."

"Ha." The small woman shook her head. "Feel like going for a swim?"

The Warrior Princess snickered as she looked up and down the length of the gigantic hot tub that only needed to be filled with hot water, incensed, and bubbled. "So what you think?"

"I think we're in the lap of luxury."

"Uh huh." Xena put her hands on her hips. "I think we need to get one of these when we settle down."

The young warrior laughed. "Right, I'll make sure to tell Eph to build us one. No we'll get two... one outdoors and one indoors." She nodded. "I am the Queen... not that it means anything."

The older woman quietly laughed and turned her head to Gabrielle. "Ready to try out that huge bed?"

"Oh yeah." Gabrielle grinned but sighed. "Too tired to play though."

The warrior wrinkled her nose. "Me too."

"I tell you though." The warrior-bard shook her head. "It's hot here."

"You should get your cloak off." Xena turned to take her Soulmate's pack and remembered her own so she took it off. She walked back to the bed to settle the packs there.

The small woman came strolling up to drop her cloak on the bed and she closed her eyes. "I feel like I am still on the boat."

"Still rocking huh?"

"Yeah." Tired green eyes opened. "How about you?"

"The same." Xena grinned. "Aren't I always the same as you?"

A small grin took the Queen's lips. "But of course." She chuckled then glanced to the bed to see all the pillows. "Now what are we suppose to do about those?" Her hands went to her hips.

"Oh boy, no pillows when we settle down."

"Two are good, three fine but twenty is ridiculous." The warrior-bard sighed dramatically. "Gods, we have to take them off tonight then put them back on tomorrow. What's the point?"

Xena laughed with a grin. "I'll show you... later." An evil grin crossed her lips.

Gabrielle cocked an eyebrow at her lover. "You do that." She sighed tiredly. "I don't know about you, but I'm stripping tonight. It's too hot to be sleeping in clothes." Her hands came down to snag the packs and cloaks. She started walking over to the dresser.

The warrior was shaking her head with a grin. "Guess I'm stripping too," she said with an amused voice.

The young warrior whirled around after placing the stuff on top of the dresser. "Yeah you are." She winked at her partner.

The tall woman was still grinning with an amused look.

The pair was then quickly undressing. Their clothes left on top of each other's on top of the dresser.

Gabrielle was lying near the edge of the bed on her side. She had her back to the washroom and eyes closed.

The warrior was in the washroom and slowly coming out. She stood there with a smile and gazing at her Soulmate's smooth body. She sighed happily then came up silently behind. She slid half her body onto Gabrielle's while she rested on her side. Her left arm went around the small warrior's stomach and her top leg crossed over Gabrielle's. Her right hand came up to disappear in Gabrielle's short hair. Leaning in,

her lips pressed against the other woman's neck. "Tired?"

"Yeah." The warrior-bard's breathing was very quiet. "I couldn't believe Cleopatra."

"Mmm, you mean the kisses huh?" Xena's right hand worked to massage Gabrielle's head. "Yeah... was a disrespecting on our part."

"Uh huh." The small woman sighed. "She knows about us... anybody does by glancing at us."

"Except for Joxer."

"Except for Joxer." Gabrielle chuckled while feeling her lover's hand slip down to her lower stomach.

"You were the one wanting a threesome."

"I don't think so Xen."

The warrior laughed quietly. "Oh... I see now." Her thumb rubbed against her Soulmate's warm stomach. "Don't want that threesome now?"

"I do... but with a man." The Queen snickered. "I didn't say anything about a woman... let alone Cleopatra."

The older woman was grinning as she drew Gabrielle in closer. "I don't think you have to worry. She knows we're together and respects that."

"I don't see the respect."

Xena sighed for a moment. "Not yet you don't. Give her a chance love." She nuzzled her lover's neck. "She was just welcoming us."

"Some welcome," mumbled the small woman.

The dark female chuckled. "I'll agree to that." A small sigh escaped her. "Give her a chance though huh?"

"Yeah," Gabrielle whispered. "I guess I'm still a little raw about the last time... especially considering you weren't mine then."

The warrior kissed her Soulmate's shoulder. "I'm always yours, no matter." She placed her head back into her small warrior's neck. "I'd be the same way Gabrielle." She chuckled a little. "A little bitter she kissed you tonight."

"Dido." Gabrielle rolled around to face her lover. "Let's fix that." She leaned into to kiss her Soulmate deeply and with ownership.

Xena fell into the kiss and poured her ownership into the kiss. Slowly she pulled back with a smile. "That's better."

The Queen chuckled with a tired smile. "Doesn't matter in the end because I know what's mine. She can't touch you."

The warrior grinned and replied warmly, "Dido." She leaned in again.

Gabrielle was chuckling as her partner was about to kiss her. She stopped with a smile and sealed her lips with Xena's. When she pulled back she dug her head under Xena's.

"Let's get some sleep."

"Sounds good." Gabrielle gave a small laugh. "Think we should maybe... try the center of the bed."

"Uh huh." Xena released her warrior.

The young woman lifted herself up to crawl into the middle of the bed and flop down.

The taller female came over next and slowly laid down. She pulled her lover in tightly. "Sleep well." She kissed the top of Gabrielle's head.

"Night Xen." The small warrior kissed her warrior tenderly and kept her body pressed against Xena's. "I love you," she whispered.

"I love you too Gabrielle." Xena tucked her Soulmate's head under her chin and closed her eyes with Gabrielle's.

The Soulmates soon disappeared from this world to enter their world of dreamscape.

~*Part 10*~

"I do hope you ladies are ready for an exciting day?" Torrid bowed his head. "I've made arrangements."

"Really?" Gabrielle smiled while crossing her arms against her chest. "What's the plans?"

"Wellll..." The minister lifted his head. "I, myself, plan to give you a tour of Alexandria." He smiled warmly. "Following thereafter we are to stop into the Alexandria's great library. Then following that it will be near lunch. We are to return here and the Queen said she would reside with us. This morning she has important affairs to attend but sends her wishes and apologizes for not going herself."

Xena smiled warmly while putting her right hand on her lover's shoulder. "We're ready."

"Wonderful." Torrid smiled. "Right this way." He turned on his heels to head to the same doorway that was to the forum of the palace where they met Cleopatra last night.

As soon as the group came through the doors two guards followed behind and walked down the steps with them.

Gabrielle glanced up to the minister. "Why shadows?"

The Egyptian slowed down to now walk beside his friends. "Queen Cleopatra authorized that we should be escorted by two guards for precautions."

The small warrior patted her Soulmate's stomach while saying, "I think we have all the protection we need right here."

Torrid quietly laughed. "Very true however the queen would be rather furious if I did

not allow the guards with us."

The Soulmates nodded together at that answer.

The group went into the main streets of Alexandria where they were bombarded by vendors and their customers. They kept walking together following Torrid.

The warrior kept eye on her partner whom continually was getting her sights caught up in the items the vendors were selling. Xena couldn't blame her Soulmate one bit considering how unusually anything was in Egypt. She leaned towards her partner whom was staring at a jewelry stand. "Interesting stuff huh?"

Gabrielle nodded while looking back to her lover. "It really is, I'd love to take a better look later."

Xena turned her head to Torrid beside her. "Ra, later this afternoon Gabrielle and I would like to glance around in the market."

"Of course." The minister nodded with a smile. "I would never pass up a good bargain from an Egyptian vendor. They have quite fine things here."

"I know they do." The Warrior Princess's lips shifted into a smile.

Torrid gazed over to the warrior-bard. "Gabrielle, I would recommend you buy some papyrus scrolls. They are very rare and wonderful."

"I've heard." The small warrior folded her arms over her chest while glimpsing to the minister. "Grow along the Nile correct?"

"Yes, papyrus reeds grow naturally along the great banks of the Nile. The papyrus makers take great care in making their scrolls and papers. Hard to find anywhere else in the world."

The Amazon Queen gave a small grin. "Any bard would die to write their stories on papyrus from Egypt."

The minister was quietly laughing. "I've heard."

The darker warrior looked at Torrid again. "Do we do camel rides?"

Gabrielle's head quickly whipped up at hearing this one.

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"So you found the library intriguing?"

The Amazon Queen nodded with a smile. "It was amazing Queen Cleopatra. I've never seen something so huge."

The Queen of Egypt chuckle while shifting a little in her large chair. "Yes, I am rather proud of Alexandria's extensive library. Scholars from around the world come here just to use our library. We hold the most recorded history, knowledge, and stories known."

Gabrielle nodded after drinking some of her wine from the golden goblet. "I can imagine. I've never seen anything quite that amazing. Just isle after isle with

everything carefully categorized, numbered, and summarized."

"Yes, we keep the library orderly. There are actually twenty-five librarians hired to watch over the library."

Xena placed her hands on the arms of the chair. "I noticed you had guards there as well. Problems with people stealing the scrolls and books?"

Three servants came in to clear the table of the dirty plates.

"Unfortunately yes we have a small problem with that." Cleopatra sighed sadly. "The problems have lessen quite a bit since we've placed the guards inside and outside of the building. No one is allowed to take the scrolls or books out of the library. The people whom use them are heavily monitored to make sure they don't ruin the items. Since then we hardly ever have problems."

"That's good." Gabrielle nodded. "It would be ashame if you ever lost all of that knowledge."

The Egyptian Queen's face was written with a little fear. "I pray that Egypt never loses her wondrous library." She glanced away as the thought disappeared from mind. She smiled at the two women. "I heard from Ra..." Her eyes flickered to the minister whom sat to her right at the round table. "That you both wish to take a... ride down the Nile."

Torrid bowed his head while speaking. "If that is not a problem my Queen."

Cleopatra turned her head to her second minister. "Not at all."

The man lifted his head with a smile. "Thank you."

"Ra, you know how I feel about cruises down the grand Nile." Cleopatra's expression lit up with a grin.

A small chuckle came from the minister. "Of course my Queen, but I wanted to make sure you had time to take our guests on a cruise."

"I always do." The Queen of Egypt turned back to the Soulmates. "The affairs can be put off for one night." The grin had came back. "You both will love the Nile." Her eyes gleamed. "It's very magical and it's the center of Egypt's magic."

Gabrielle glanced up to her warrior then back to Cleopatra. "I can't wait to see."

"Wonderful." Cleopatra turned her attention to her minister again. "We'll depart near dusk from the port."

Torrid nodded. "What of the preparations?"

"I'll take care of those Ra. You just bring our guests." The Queen gazed back to the warriors. "The cruise will be rather long. We'll enter the Nile and head through the delta. Normally we cruise down to Memphis but we'll go a little beyond Memphis this time then come back up. By the time we make it back to Alexandria it will be fairly late, I hope neither of you mind."

"Not at all." Xena grinned. "I think we can handle that."

Cleopatra slowly stood with her dark skin reflecting the sunlight. "Very good." A radiant smile crossed her lips. "Then I will see you both at the port." Her smile transformed into a grin. "Prepare yourselves for a mysterious night." She spun around and strolled out of the lunch room with three guards and two servants.

Gabrielle kept her cork eyebrow up after the other Queen's departure. She slowly turned her head to Torrid. "Sso... what about that camel ride?"

~*~*~*~

"Hold on, how do I get him to stand again?"

Xena laughed while slowly positioning herself on her sitting camel. "Just lightly tap him on his sides. He'll stand up." She did it herself in example and lightly tapped the heel of her boots on the camel's sides and instantly her camel stood up high.

"Okay." Gabrielle chuckled while lightly tapping her camel's sides in the ribs.

The camel started to stand.

"Wahoo!" The Amazon Queen soon found herself high up and gripping the reins tightly. "He's a little taller than Torqueo."

Torrid pulled on the right rein of his camel and came up beside Gabrielle. "Camels are physically differently from horses however they're ridden the same way."

"Really?" The small warrior glanced down at her camel then back to the Egyptian. "That's easy."

"That was the idea." Torrid gave a teasing grin. "Egyptians did not want to complicate any foreigner's lives by confusing them with riding camels."

"Ha, ha." The warrior-bard mocked glared at the minister. "I didn't think ministers could be funny."

"It seem this one can be." Xena pulled back on the reins as she came closer to the pair.

Torrid raised an eyebrow with a grin. "My apologizes yet it is quite true about horses, camels, and foreigners." He glanced to his right to see the two guards mounted on camels to follow. "Let's go then ladies." He tapped his camel's sides to send her into a walk heading down the road out of Alexandria.

The Soulmates followed behind then the guards followed behind them.

"So explain to me why camels have humps?" Gabrielle placed her hand on her camel's hump slightly studying it. "Must be for storing food or water."

"It's for water mainly." Torrid smiled to his friend. "Camels can go days out in the deserts without water."

"That's interesting." The small woman nodded few times while collecting the bright colorful cloth reins in her hands again. "That would make sense."

"It's just a natural adaptation." Xena glanced to her Soulmate. "Horses wouldn't make it for long in the deserts."

The young woman nodded a few times while bobbing up and down on her camel. "So exactly where are we heading to Ra?"

The minister slowed his camel down to come along side the woman. "To a small area outside of Alexandria. There is a small pyramid that was built hundreds of years ago."

"For what pharaoh?" Xena glanced to the Egyptian.

"It's actually a pyramid built for a family member of Ramses the second."

The warrior furrowed her eyebrows. "The same Ramses that fought the Hittites?"

"Yes." Torrid smile warmly to the Warrior Princess. "King Ramses the second was an excellent general and kept the Hittites away for centuries. He also was a marvelous builder and this is one of his pyramids to his sister. It's rather small that he did in the beginning of his reign." He kept smiling while gazing ahead on the road. "He also built the temple, Abu Simbel which is in southern Egypt."

Gabrielle shook her head. "There's a lot of history to these lands."

"There is." Torrid smile warmly. "The lands of the pharaohs goes back thousands and thousands of years while Greece had yet to be conceived."

"Who was your first king?" The young warrior glanced to the minister.

"Our very first king was the glorious Narmer." Torrid sighed contently with a smile. "He brought Egypt out of her civil wars and united upper and lower Egypt."

The group continued talking about Egypt's history while travelling south of Alexandria. They soon made it to the sight of the 'small' pyramid. The group stopping with their camels to stare at the pyramid.

"By... the... gods." Gabrielle shook her head plus lifted her right hand to shut her mouth. "I've never... gods."

Xena lifted her right hand while running it through her hair. "Good engineering." A small grin creased her lips while her head bobbed.

The small warrior slowly turned her head to her Soulmate. "Do you see this thing?"

"Kinda of." The warrior grinned to the partner. "I think I need to lean back to get a full view."

The young woman laughed. "Really." She turned her head back to the old sand tan pyramid that seemed to reach the skies. "It's a wonder."

Torrid smile with such satisfaction. "Now ladies, if you believe this to be a marvel you haven't seen anything till you've seen Khufu's great Giza pyramid."

"I've heard of those collection of pyramids." Xena turned her head to the Egyptian. "That's where the Sphinx is right?"

The minister briskly nodded. "Yes Khufu's son, Khafra, built the legendary Sphinx and the second pyramid at Giza."

"Egypt seems to have a lot of wonders." The warrior-bard stared at the huge pyramid that just stands along side the road as if it were just a tree.

"Ah yes this she does." Torrid studied the pyramid with happy eyes that gleamed. "Non-such in the world." He tapped the sides of his camels to have it lower and sit down. "Now for a better look."

The Soulmates did the same and climbed off their camels. The guards slowly shifted their camels to stand beside the other three camels to watch over them. The warriors with Torrid slowly strolled up to the huge pyramid.

"So this is small compared to the ones in Giza?"

Torrid nodded a little. "Yes this pyramid is rather minuet in comparison to the Khufu's pyramid."

The young woman shook her head because she couldn't completely take this in. She noticed how much larger the pyramid grew as she neared. "Is there anyway to get inside?"

"Yes of course." The minister walked to his left around the pyramid. "Yet we may not enter for it is the resting place." He came around the corner of the pyramid in the brown dirt. There ahead he spotted a huge door in the pyramid's side. "This is the door here."

The group came up and stood beside the door.

Gabrielle was the one taking a step closer to notice the odd images chiseled into the door. "What are those?"

Xena took a step up beside her Soulmate. Her right hand came up to run across the images. "Hieroglyphics." Her hands kept running along as she glanced down at her partner. "They're the ancient writing style of the Egyptians." She lifted her eyes to the doorway again. She started pointing at each hieroglyphic while saying, "Here... is the tomb... of the great... Ramses the second... sister..." She stopped while furrowing her eyebrows. "I believe the name is Hathor." Her expression went back to concentration. "That was one of Egypt's... needed women..." She kneeled down to read the rest, her hand still on the door. "Fear entering this... tomb of the late Hathor... for it is... guarded by powers... of Anubis himself." She slowly stood up with her arms against her chest. "Interesting."

Together the Soulmates gazed back to Torrid noticing how quiet he'd become.

The minister blinked, closed his mouth, wiped away his expression of awe, and glanced up to the warrior. "You can read hieroglyphics?" he peeped out.

Xena quietly laughed with a grin. "One of my many skills."

"That is one of the most impressive things I've seen." Torrid shook his head. "Very few can still read ancient hieroglyphics."

The small warrior peeked up to her partner wondering exactly how and when her warrior picked up reading hieroglyphics. She glanced back to the minister. "Why don't

many know?"

The Egyptian sighed sadly. "People have forgotten over time. There are still a few whom know but they are limited. Queen Cleopatra has tried to preserve the ancient hieroglyphics by keeping a few scrolls on the language in the library. Yet it can be rather hard because hieroglyphics can be a little different in each region of Egypt as if it were a dialect."

Gabrielle nodded a few times. "They look hard to do."

"They are very complicated." Torrid started walking back towards the camels with his friends. "Queen Cleopatra would love to teach her people the old ways of hieroglyphics but she's not sure if it would ever be possible. I have a feeling they may be lost in time." He shook his head.

The short warrior had a sad expression. "It's ashame to lose such things like that." She lifted her head up in time to catch sight of her camel spit on the ground. "Lovely... I'm glad Torqueo doesn't do that."

The warrior chuckled at her partner. "I'll have to teach him." She received a playful hit to her stomach. "Then again I might not."

"You better not." Gabrielle narrowed her eyes up to her warrior. "You're not going to have a chakram if you do."

Xena grinned evilly.

The small warrior sighed with a grin. She came up to her camel and found a water skin.

The warrior came up behind her lover and whispered, "Feel like walking around the pyramid?"

"Sure." Gabrielle turned around with a smile and her attention went to Torrid. "We're going to go get a better glance at this pyramid."

"Of course." The minister bowed his head. "Take all the time you want. I'll wait here."

"Thanks Ra." The Amazon Queen followed her Soulmate as she still carried the water skin. She uncorked it and drank some then handed it to her best friend. "Pretty amazing."

"It's beautiful." Xena glanced at the pyramid and drank some of the water. She corked the skin and brought the strap over her right shoulder to carry it. "You'd be mystified by the Sphinx in Giza."

"Have you seen it?"

"From a distance." The warrior grinned at her Soulmate. "Wish I'd seen it up close and personal."

Gabrielle chuckled and noticed they were coming around a corner of the pyramid. "Where'd you learn to read hieroglyphics?"

The older woman sighed while trying to remember. "The one time I was here in

Egypt."

"You're kidding?" The small woman glanced at her warrior. "How long were you here for?"

Xena shrugged her shoulders. "I'd say... two weeks or so. I was a pirate then and was hiding from an enemy for awhile. Picked up on hieroglyphics then while waiting for my men to repair my ship."

The Queen shook her head. "Gods, you're amazing."

The tall woman's lips crept along into a grin. "I try." She came around a second corner with her partner and knew they were completely out of sight from their guards. "Come here." She stopped walking.

Gabrielle turned to her lover and reached up to pull her head down. She claimed her Soulmate's lips in a tender kiss.

Xena placed her hands on her warrior's sides. Slowly she pulled back with a smile and she let her arms encircle her partner.

"I hate Xena withdraws." The young woman grinned while resting her hands on Xena's upper arms.

"They're right up there with Gabrielle withdraws." Xena grinned while lowering her head. Her forehead resting against Gabrielle's. "I love you."

"I love you too." Gabrielle finished the distance to kiss her warrior deeply. She soon found her body pressing into Xena's hard. She slowly pulled back with a groan. "Gods." She dropped her head onto her warrior's chest.

The warrior kissed the top of her friend's head while dropping her chin down. "Been a nice day."

"Uh huh." The small woman closed her eyes. "Tonight will be interesting."

"It will be." Xena slowly closed her eyes. "We'll have to be on guard with Cleopatra."

"Oh yeah?" Gabrielle chuckled a little. "I gotta keep her hot lips off you."

"Ha." The tall woman was grinning. "You mean I have to keep them off you." Her arms tightened. "I don't share."

"Neither do I." The young woman lifted her head with a grin. "You're mine." She took Xena's lips in a strong kiss. She then lowered her lips to her lover's chest to press there. "Gods, I love you."

"Sssh." Xena stepped back reluctantly with a sad smile. "Come on love. We better keep moving."

The Queen's eyes sparkled in a flash. "Tell me about it." She held out her left hand.

The warrior carefully took the smaller hand and twined their hands. She lifted her partner's hand and kissed the top. "I love you Gabrielle." She winked and lowered their hands to keep walking.

Gabrielle squeezed back while turning her loving gaze ahead. "We're gonna sleep really ggood tonight."

The dark woman snickered with a twinkle in her eyes. "Oh yeah."

The warrior-bard laughed then smiled. "Oh gods." She shook her head while grinning. "At least we have our late late night planned." She shrugged her shoulders. "Just a little sex."

"Who said anything about little?" Xena evilly grinned at her partner. "There's nothing little between us."

"Except for me." The young woman snickered.

"Mmm." The Warrior Princess slowly turned her head away as a happy grin controlled her lips. "Good things come in small packages."

Gabrielle's eyes drifted shut as she felt the rushes go through her body. Her eyes slowly opened again. "And my other half is perfection." Her head slowly turned to the warrior.

Xena smiled with love and squeezed the small hand. "Almost... I don't know how to cook... yet."

They came around the third corner of the pyramid.

The blond warrior laughed with a smile. "The Warrior Princess... the Cooking Princess." She started to roll with laughter.

The tall woman sighed with a shake of her head. "You never know." She grinned at her partner.

"That will be frightening." The young woman grinned at her partner. "We'll ask Cyrene to give you an apron and everything."

Another sigh came from the older female. "Just a little credit." She gave a pout to her partner.

"Okay okay... you pick good fruit." Gabrielle grinned but squeezed her lover's hand tightly. She went serious. "If you really want I can teach you."

"Would love it." Xena glanced ahead. "But when we settle down. It would be to stressful to learn now."

The Queen chuckled with a smile and sighing. "Yeah true." She grinned up to Xena. "Guess that leaves me still as the cook between us."

"Yup." The warrior grinned, saw the corner of the pyramid, stopped, and pulled her Soulmate in again. She leaned down to kiss the younger woman.

Gabrielle pulled back with a sigh. "Come on, we'll survive till tonight."

"Let's hope so." The dark woman released her warrior while starting to walk again.

The young woman started walking again with her partner.

The pair came around the last bend and saw the camels with the guards and Torrid. They started making a beeline for the camels.

Xena adjusted the strap of the water skin on her right shoulder.

Gabrielle suddenly stopped walking and grabbed Xena's arm. "Xena," her voice was low and hinted with fear. Her eyes stayed pinned on the ground ahead.

The warrior glanced ahead to see what her Soulmate was fearing of and it made a small grin slip on her lips. "It's just a spider."

"A really huge one."

"It's a tarantula." Xena started walking towards it.

The small woman tightened her grip to stop her lover from walking. "Don't mess with that thing." She glanced up to Xena.

The Warrior Princess lost her grin. "Don't worry, it won't do anything. I swear."

The Queen slowly coked an eyebrow but forever trusted her Soulmate and released her arm.

Xena slowly walked up to the tarantula that scurried away for a second, stopped and turned towards her. She knelt down to one knee and held her right hand out.

Gabrielle's eyes widen as she watched the huge spider slowly walk up into her Soulmate's palm. She shivered instinctively.

The warrior cupped her palm while turning back to her partner. "The fangs are poisonous."

"Ah great." The young warrior folded her arms over her chest. "It looks good from a distance."

Xena grinned while lifting her left hand to let the spider crawl onto that hand. "They won't bite unless you give them a reason to."

"I just won't touch it so I don't have to worry at all."

The dark woman stepped up in front of her partner. "Come here."

The small woman shook her head. "No thanks."

The tall female saw her Soulmate shiver. She lifted her eyes from the tarantula with a trusting smile. "Come on, it won't do anything. It actually tickles." She reached forward with her right hand that didn't hold the spider.

Gabrielle whined. "I hate spiders." She grasped her partner's hand tightly.

The warrior slowly brought her left hand over with the tarantula and she let it slowly crawl on top of her lover's hand. She felt the life threatening hold Gabrielle had on her hand.

The small woman held her breath while watching the black spider began to crawl

along her hand and search her hand. "Oh... gods," she whispered. Her fingers were white from holding Xena's hand tightly. She could feel the small little hairs of the tarantula's legs come up her hand and head towards her wrist.

Xena watched intently and lifted her eyes to her friend's face.

Torrid put his right hand to his hip. His head tilted to the right while he kept his focused attention on the Soulmates up ahead. "Interesting."

Gabrielle took a calming breath as she saw the spider begin to climb up towards her arms. "It's going up my arm." Her eyes widen to see the spider picking up a little speed to head up the small woman's arm. "Okay, okay stay off the arm."

The warrior quickly lifted her left hand to her partner's arm. The tarantula crept into the large hand.

The Amazon Queen sighed and released her Soulmate's hand. "Always played with them when you were young?"

"Yeah." The tall woman nodded while watching the spider crawl between her hands. "They're interesting I think."

The small warrior nodded, she took a deep breath, and placed her right hand up. She watched intently to see the spider go onto her hand. "I can do this."

The older warrior grinned while seeing her best friend let the tarantula crawl between the hands. "Not so bad huh?"

"Yeah." The warrior-bard took a deep breath. "I'm just not doing it on a daily basis."

Xena chuckled quietly. "Just think of all the mosquitoes that could be biting you if it weren't for spiders."

Gabrielle nodded at that. "True." She chuckled as she finally let herself realize that the hairs of the tarantula were tickling here. "They are a ticklish feeling."

A grin came over Xena's mouth. "Yup." Her eyes lifted from the black spider to her partner's eyes.

The small warrior glanced up and slowly let a smile come into play. She glanced back down to the spider and held her left hand out with it.

The older woman lifted her right hand with a smile to take the tarantula. Once it was on her hand she took a few steps away, bent down, and let the spider leave her hand. Slowly standing up again she joined her Soulmate in heading back to the camels.

The midnight tarantula stood in place for a moment then slowly began to crept away in its own direction.

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"We'll be fine." Gabrielle placed her right hand on Torrid's shoulder. "What could happen between Xena and I?" She grinned.

The minister slowly raised an eyebrow. "Considering what I know, a lot."

The Amazon Queen dropped her shoulders then hand. "You've got a point." She peeked up to her partner with a serious look however her eyes sparkled. "Think we can really handle being on our own in Alexandria?"

Xena's lips crept along into a grin. She slowly turned her head to Torrid as her grin disappeared. "I think we can handle it."

"I do believe the Queen would be furious with me if I left you both alone."

"How about this..." The warrior reached up between her breasts to pull her dagger out. "I hold you at dagger point..." She put the tip of the dagger to her fingernails. "So then you go to Cleopatra saying I threatened you. She can get... furious with me." She flipped the dagger so the tip pointed at Torrid and she took a step closer. "Sound like a plan?" Her eyes twinkled with wildness.

"Uhh..." The minister stepped back with his hands up. "However, I think I may be able to deal with the Queen's wrath."

"You sure?" Xena ran her right thumb over the blade. "I don't mind... I'll just give you a little niche so it looks believable."

"That's quite alright Xena." The Egyptian chuckled with a sheepish smile. He suddenly went serious with a straight back, he snapped his right fingers. "Guards."

The two guards came stepping up beside the minister on either side.

Torrid took a deep breath. "We will head back to the palace to await our guests return from the market."

The Warrior Princess pressed the blade against her lips while she grinned. "Toodles boys."

The two guards huffed while turning on their heels.

Xena's eyes widen for a second with a chuckle. She slipped the dagger back in.

"Thanks Ra." Gabrielle grinned. "See you tonight."

"I'll come by to pick you ladies up." Torrid turned to saunter off. "Enjoy your time in the market." He glanced back with a broad smile.

"Bye." The small warrior watched him disappear in the crowd and she sighed. "Nice going." She glanced up to her partner.

"Hey." Xena grinned. "That's what you get for asking me to get rid of our shadows."

The younger woman grinned amusingly. "Who said I never liked it?" She turned to start walking into the heart of the market.

"Your look did." The tall woman walked along side her Soulmate.

"Whatever." A grin creased the warrior-bard's lips. "I grinned... I didn't give you a disappointing look."

The warrior's head bobbed a few times. "True."

"See." A chuckle had come from her. "Besides, I wouldn't have asked you to do it if I knew what you were going to do."

"True too."

"Uh huh." Gabrielle gave a grin to Xena for a second but lost it. "So where we going first?"

Xena shrugged. "You're the one that likes to shop."

"Not like I use to." The small warrior stepped closer to her partner as a few people tried to run into her. "Nice crowd."

"Mmm, stay close. I don't need somebody trying to steal you."

"Is that a crack on my height?" Gabrielle mocked glared to her lover.

The warrior evilly grinned. "Only if you want it to be." She chuckled while glancing around. "You know I love... vertically challenged people."

"Gee thanks." The small woman sighed with a smile. "I feel the love here Xen."

The tall woman smile warmly, lifted her right hand to Gabrielle's back, steered her to the left, and said, "Come on." She soon led them back to that same stand from earlier that held jewelry.

"You're good." Gabrielle glanced at her warrior then to the stand. "How'd you..." She shook her head with a laugh.

"I just know." Xena stood behind her Soulmate while Gabrielle looked. She folded her arms while keeping her eyes on the people around as well as her lover.

The Amazon Queen ran her right hand through her hair while gazing down at the first table.

Slowly a short dark tanned man came up to the two women with a smile. "Anything I can help you ladies with?"

"I think we're fine." Gabrielle glanced up with a smile.

"Let me know if you need anything." The man put his hands on his hips. "Everything here is made only in Egypt." He smiled before strolling away.

"Don't believe everything you hear," the warrior-bard mumbled.

Xena chuckled while lowering her head down closer to Gabrielle's. "You may just find them stamped with, 'made in Chin.'"

The younger warrior laughed while shaking her head. "You're probably right." She reached forward to lift up a silver necklace. "How you like this?"

The dark female stepped around to face her partner. "A y-necklace?" She held her hand out.

Gabrielle brought the tail end of the y-necklace to Xena's palm.

The warrior studied the blue gems and lifted her eyes with a grin. "Blue?"

"I love blue." The small woman grinned.

The older warrior took the necklace, stepped forward while unhooking the necklace, and she brought it around her partner's neck. She carefully hooked it again and took a step back to see it on her partner's neck. "I like that." She lifted her eyes to Gabrielle. "You'd have to wear it on nice occasions though."

"Yeah that's true." The Amazon Queen reached behind to unhook it while staring it in the palm of her hand.

The warrior folded her arms again. "You're thinking you have enough necklaces as it is huh?"

Gabrielle glanced up. "Yeah, I do as it is." She carefully placed it back down on the table. "I mean I have our necklace then this tighter one." She sighed. "Can't do rings... bracelets... anklets... or necklaces really." She crossed her arms over her chest. "So that leaves me with armbracelets."

"And earrings." That was at the point Xena had collect a set of earrings from the table. She held them out to her Soulmate in her palm.

"Hey... those are nice." The small warrior carefully took them from her lover's hand. The earrings were small and were deep red scarabs that gleamed when Gabrielle turned them. "What kind of stone is this?" She peered up to her Soulmate.

"It's carnelian stone... it's a native stone of Egypt."

"I thought turquoise was big here."

"It is." Xena nodded while adding, "Turquoise, gold, copper, carnelian, and feldspar come from Egypt mainly and the amounts are vast."

Gabrielle grinned while shaking her head. She lowered her attention to the earrings again. "They're not too heavy." She lifted them up and down in the air to figure their weight.

"Here." The warrior collected them and carefully slipped them into her lover's pierced ears. She stepped back while studying her partner with the earrings in. "Those look real good."

"I have the red thing going on." Gabrielle chuckled. "They do huh?"

"Yes." Xena smiled warmly.

"I like them too." The small woman smiled while slowly slipping them out one at a time. "I don't wanna think about the price."

"Good, don't." The tall woman scooped them up to hold on to. "I will." She winked.

"Oh no you don't." Gabrielle narrowed her eyes. "We only have so much money."

The older woman grinned. "Let me worry about that." She turned to the table and walked down the second table.

The Amazon Queen followed in a huff while mumbling, "Sneak." She came up to her partner's side to see her glancing at an array of arm bracelets that were gold. "Oh no, you're not-"

"Try these out." Xena lifted up a set of bracelets that were gold and twisted with something black.

"Xena-"

"Come on." The warrior grinned while holding out the pair of bracelets.

The young woman sighed dramatically while giving her partner a glare for this. She took the bracelets and slowly slipped them on to let them lay over the thin black ones she had on.

The tall woman stepped back with dark eyes. "Oooh I like those on you."

"Xena," growled the small warrior.

"You don't?" The warrior glanced up with partially concerned eyes.

Gabrielle corked an eyebrow slowly. "You know what I am Xena-ing about." She gave a sigh with a serious look.

The older woman gave a confident smile. "Can't I spoil my Soulmate?"

"Only if I can." Gabrielle crossed her arms with a serious look.

"Hades," grumbled the warrior. "You're going to get even huh?"

"Uh huh." The small warrior nodded with a serious look. "Only fair."

Xena chuckled with a smile. "Okay, okay." But she went serious again. "You like those?"

The Queen sighed. "Yeah."

"Good, I like them too." The warrior grinned. "Anything else?"

The small woman clamped her jaw down shut. "No."

A quiet laugh came from the warrior. "Okay, I got the hint." She reached forward to take the bracelets off her lover's arms. She turned to see the merchant coming down. Soon she was extracting twenty-seven dinars for the earrings and pair of bracelets with a silent partner the whole time. After she'd paid for them she was pulling the small leather bag tightly closed. "Ready?" Her eyes lowered to Gabrielle.

The younger warrior nodded and stepped up to her Soulmate. She wrapped an arm around her lover and whispered, "Thank you, I love you."

"Anytime." Xena smiled while placing a quick kiss to her best friend's temple. "I love you too."

"Hold on to that stuff." Gabrielle grinned up to her partner. "I'm bound to lose them."

The tall gave a small laugh while hooking her bag to her side. "So where to now?"

"Your kind of store." The small woman evilly grinned.

"Oooh, I could like this." The warrior chuckled while walking alone side her partner.

The pair soon found a weapons shop and were inside glancing around together.

The Warrior Princess soon found herself kneeling down in front of a display of daggers.

Gabrielle came up beside her lover and squatted down. "Daggers?" She turned her head to Xena. "You do have a dagger."

"One can never have enough daggers." Xena grinned at her Soulmate then glanced back to the display. "Besides, it's only a breast dagger."

"My breast dagger at that."

"And you have such good taste too." The warrior lowered her eyes to the next row of daggers.

Gabrielle laughed while smiling. "I still remember when I bought that."

"Yeah? What happened?" The older woman was now starting to study the last row of daggers.

The young warrior grinned while saying, "I remember the guy giving me this huge sword to try and I could barely lift the thing." She chuckled. "Then I asked for something more... petite."

The dark woman laughed then carefully reached forward to extract a dagger in a sheath. She pulled the dagger out of the sheath and turned the handle every way to see the blade. "How you like that?" She handed the dagger to her partner.

Gabrielle took the dagger by the blade after noticing it was made of gold. She glanced at the hilt seeing it was made of solid gold with cuts made in rings around the hilt. She looked at the top of the hilt to see a turquoise stone embedded in it. "I like how they put these cuts in the handle." She pointed.

"Yeah, for better handling."

The small woman then just held the dagger in her palm lifting it up and down. She glanced at her partner with a concerned look. "You don't mind it that heavy?"

Xena shook her head. "The weight is fine. It's not exceedingly heavy."

"Now you think it's made of solid gold?"

The warrior shook her head. "Oh no, it's mixed with other stronger metals. The gold is just for looks... and expense." She grinned at her partner.

Gabrielle grinned back however gazed back down at the dagger. "It's not to shabby."

The dark woman was chuckling while taking the dagger. "Definitely not shabby." She

sheathed it while reaching forward to put it back.

"So let's get it." The small woman grasped her partner's hand that still held the dagger. "Only fair." Her eyes locked with Xena's.

The warrior opened her mouth to protest just trying to imagine the cost. "Gabrielle-

"Don't start up the Gabrielle-ling." Her hand slipped under to pull the dagger from her lover's hand. "You want it, you got it." She stood up with the dagger.

Xena was now grumbling as she stood.

"And no grumbling." Gabrielle grinned at her lover and walked over to the where she saw the owner of the shop.

The tall woman sighed with a content smile. She followed along and came up beside her partner.

"Can I help you ladies?"

"Yeah." The Amazon Queen smiled warmly. "Can I get this?" She placed the dagger in its sheath on the counter.

"Yes of course." He smiled down at the dagger. "Ah yes, everybody keeps glancing at this dagger. Very popular one."

"I can see why." The small warrior placed her hands on the table. "Can you do engraving on it?"

"Yes." The shop owner smiled up to the young woman. "Free of charge. What would you like?" He reached under the counter to lift up a quill and a piece of papyrus.

Gabrielle unsheathed the dagger and pointed to one side running down the length. "Along here can you write 'Xena' in fairly big letters but not overly noticeable."

"Uh huh." The man wrote the order down. "Anything else?"

"And then." Gabrielle flipped the dagger over and pointed directly underneath where the hilt and blade meet. "Across here in small letters can you engrave, 'To my Soulmate. Love forever Gabrielle.' But place 'To my Soulmate' on one line with 'Love forever Gabrielle' below."

"Okay." The man nodded while jotting the instructions down. "Is that it?" He glanced up with a stern expression.

"Yup." The warrior-bard smiled. "How long you think that'll take?"

The shop owner took the dagger and sheathed it while picking up the papyrus paper. "A little less then a half of a candlemark."

"Great, we'll be back then."

The man nodded with a warm smile. "It'll be ready."

"Thank you." Gabrielle smiled while turning to leave with her partner.

The women left the shop quietly and went into the market again.

Xena slowly turned her head to her lover. "You're bad."

The small warrior grinned up to her partner. "It's so you don't lose it."

"Right." The tall woman chuckled while walking closer to her Soulmate. "Now I'm not going to want to use it."

"Oh sure you will." The warrior-bard grinned up. "A little engraving won't stop you." She smiled warmly now.

Xena smile back warmly back.

~*~*~*~

Gabrielle tilted the dagger up and down while smiling. "It looks good."

The warrior nodded while coming out of the washroom after drying her face. "It really does."

The small warrior turned the gold dagger around to look at the smaller engraving on the top of the blade. She contently sighed. "He did a good job."

"Yeah." The older woman came up behind her Soulmate to wrap her arms around Gabrielle's waist. She lowered her head down near Gabrielle's. "Thank you."

"You're welcome Xen." The young warrior lifted her head to kiss her lover tenderly. She pulled back with a smile. "The Warrior Princess has a new toy."

The Warrior Princess laughed with a grin. "Uh huh."

Gabrielle sheathed the dagger while leaning back into the other woman.

They were back in their room in Cleopatra's palace.

"So what's the plans now?" The warrior-bard peered up into warm blue eyes.

"Mmm, thought we could relax."

"Sounds good to me." Gabrielle sighed with contentness. "I'm beat."

Xena evilly grinned. "But the day has only begun."

"Right." The Amazon Queen sighed dramatically this time. "That... cruise is going to be our undoing."

The taller woman laughed as a grin spread along. "Probably." She nuzzled her lover's cheek. "I'm going to get out of my armor and boots."

"Dido." The small warrior let a grin play over her expression. "Wanna test out that couch?"

"Definitely." Xena released her lover.

The Soulmates were soon out of their boots, weapons, and Xena out of her armor. The warrior stretched out on the couch with her Soulmate laying on top of her stretched

out.

Gabrielle lowered her head back onto her friend's chest. "This is really comfortable."

"Maybe we'll have to take this couch home with us."

The small woman laughed. "I wish." She suddenly closed her eyes tightly realizing the stiffness in her neck.

The warrior's hands went to Gabrielle's shoulders and pushed her forward. "Lean forward."

The Queen did that and soon found strong warm hands massage her neck and upper shoulders. "Thanks."

"What's that from?"

The young woman shook her head a little. "Maybe from leaning back to see all of the pyramid."

Xena quietly laughed. "Maybe."

Gabrielle chuckled. "Wouldn't surprise me." She soon felt her neck loosening up due to her Soulmate's perfect touch. "That's got it."

"Good." The older woman's hands worked the shoulders for a moment then she carefully pulled her warrior back into her body.

Leaning back, Gabrielle let her breath out slowly. "Gods." Her hands rested on top of Xena's on her stomach.

"No, just you and me."

"Just us." The small woman grinned while closing her eyes. "I'm still trying to understand this."

"Mmm?" Xena lowered leaned the side of her head against Gabrielle's. Her eyes drifted shut.

"Understand how I was the one to get you."

"I keep asking myself the samething with you."

Gabrielle shook her head. "But Xena, people didn't know me like they know you." She paused for a moment. "There are and were people who would love to be yours."

"And there are people whom would die to be yours." Xena smiled to herself. "So?"

The small woman chuckled. "You're the Warrior Princess."

"And you're the Amazon Queen."

The warrior-bard chuckled lightly. "You're not going to give me any space."

"Because there is none." Xena tightened her arms. "There's nothing special about me here."

Gabrielle corked an eyebrow. "Now that's a lie." She slowly moved so that now she straddled her lover's hips and could face her. "People know who you are."

"And they know who you are." The warrior smile while circling her Soulmate's waist.

"Nnnno they don't Xen." She rested her hands on the other woman's shoulders.

"Oh really?" The older woman soon had an amused looked. "Then tell me why Ra and Cleopatra both know whom you are. They know you're the Amazon Queen."

"Yeah but they heard from somebody else."

The warrior grinned. "Exactly, whom heard from somebody else and that person from another and another then another... people know who you are Gabrielle."

"If they know that then they know who we are together." The small woman raised an eyebrow in questioning. "They know you're my consort."

"Uh huh. I'd say they may be able to figure it out." Xena reached forward to lift the chakram and staff necklace her partner wore. "I think they can." Her hand came down to Gabrielle's left hand to study the two rings of engagement and wedlock. "Don't you?" She lifted her eyes up as that grin creased her lips again.

Gabrielle smiled warmly while collecting her partner's hand. "Yeah, just a little." She carefully released her lover's hand to place her fingertips over Xena's lips. She carefully felt them and studied them. Then leaning in, she with care took her Soulmate's lips. When she pulled back her eyes were still closed with a tear rolling down. Lifting her head back she sadly smile and asked, "You're mine?"

"I'm yours," whispered the warrior while she tried to smile with love.

Gabrielle's lips were held in a sad smile. Her right fingertips came to Xena's forehead where she brushed back the bangs to have them fall back over her hand. Her eyes stayed pinned on her own fingertips. She traced her hand down to her lover's temple and brushed back midnight hair. The small warm fingertips then glided down the smooth cheek then trailing along the jaw line. She brought her fingers over Xena's warm lips again and then over Xena's other cheek.

Xena stayed motionless. Her eyes fixed on Gabrielle watching her expression the entire time. She noticed her Soulmate absorbing this as if it were the first time she'd seen this body.

The small warrior's hand glided down the other woman's neck then down her chest. Her eyes still were fixed to the movement of her hand. Her fingertips came over the top of the breasts but came back up. Came back up and they traced over the warrior's shoulder and down the right arm. Gabrielle studied the muscles in her Soulmate's arm with small tilts of her head. She sent her hand down to the inside of the elbow followed by the forearm.

The warrior watched the small fingers study her forearm and come to her wrist. The small fingertips went into her palm and just Gabrielle's index finger followed the lines in her palm. She watched for a moment yet lifted her eyes to watch her partner's face.

The young woman carefully lifted her Soulmate's hand up in the air. She watched as

she pressed her palm against Xena's. She examined the size difference in hands. That's when the sad smile went into love and she lifted her eyes to Xena.

The warrior's smile came back over her expression. She let her fingers lace with Gabrielle's as she began to pull her Soulmate in.

Gabrielle went with the command but kissed her lover's chest over her heart. Then she rested the side of her head against her best friend's chest.

Xena kissed the top of Gabrielle's head.

The Amazon Queen began to shift on the large body so that she rested on the side of her body. She curled her body up against Xena's and closed her eyes as she tucked her hands against her chest.

The older woman smile while keeping both her arms around Gabrielle's body. Her legs were over top of Gabrielle's.

The small hand slowly slipped down to grasp one of the large hands. Gabrielle brought her hand back up with Xena's and twined their hands together and tucked them under her chin.

A smile slipped onto the warrior's lips while she let herself slip into her dreamscape.

Gabrielle was right beside Xena in entering their dream.

Part 5

Section 5

~*Part 11*~

The sun had disappeared by Ra's command. The night was left lit by a half moon, bright stars, and the wavering light of the Pharaoh's Lighthouse. The singular great river of Egypt twinkled the world around as it carried a large golden barge up its lengths. The barge itself contained numerous people of Egypt including the Queen herself. The barge also held the Soulmates of Time.

Gabrielle reached down to lift up a vine that held very small grapes. "What are these?" She peered up to her lover. "I know they're too small for grapes."

Xena grinned faintly. "They're called Champaign grapes. Very sweet."

"Really?" The small warrior lowered her eyes to the bowl of grapes. "Interesting."

The warrior reached across her partner to lift up a handful of cherries.

The air around the barge was lively and held soothing music along with people chatting away.

Gabrielle had let go of the grapes and plucked up an orange from a basket at the wood table.

Together the pair walked along the barge, taking things in. They'd already drunk two

goblets of wine each on a fairly empty stomach. Soon they would receive dinner on that same table, which would be laid out. The Soulmates now had taken a bench that lined along part of the barge.

The small warrior slowly began to peel her orange.

The older woman however rested back in the bench eating each cherry slowly and one at a time. Her eyes flickered across the people trying to take them all in.

The short warrior shook her head feeling a little out of it from the wine.

Xena glanced down to her partner. "Feel the wine?" She grinned while holding the cherry near her lips.

Gabrielle slowly gazed up to her lover. "Yeah." A grin crept along her lips. "How about you?"

"Oh yeah." The warrior's eyes twinkled now as she brought the cherry partially into her mouth to suck on it.

Slowly the Amazon Queen's eyes narrowed with hints of darkness coming on. "You're going to cause trouble."

"Oh?" Xena's tongue darted out over the cherry to pull it fully in her mouth. She plucked it off the stem and began to slowly chew. "But that's the plan... right?"

"Yess." Gabrielle's hands were finishing with peeling the orange. "But is it our plan in public?"

Slowly the taller woman let an evil smile come on. "Definitely."

That evil smile found its way onto the warrior-bard's lips as she glanced away to finish peeling her orange. The skin found its way into the river as small hands began to work on the remains of the orange.

It was time for the Soulmates to play.

Gabrielle slid the slice of orange into her mouth slowly. After she finished it she pulled another slice of orange apart and studied it. "Xen, when was the last time you had an orange?"

"It's been a few." Xena's right hand still held three cherries and she propped her elbows up on the rail of the barge.

"Mmm, feel like a slice?" Gabrielle wasn't glancing up to her lover.

A grin crept along the warrior's lips. "Would love one."

Slowly the younger woman shifted her body to turn in the warrior's direction more. She lifted the orange slice in her left hand to her lover's lips. She let the orange glide into Xena's mouth slowly.

The dark warrior's eyes drifted shut as she let the soft fingertips brush her lips. She began to eat the orange slice with ease. Her dark eyes drifted open again.

Gabrielle grinned while her hand came down to rest on her lover's thigh. "Xena?"

"Mmm?"

The small warrior's hand pressed against the warm skin. "We're in real trouble."

"Uh huh." Xena winked while lifting her eyes to see Cleopatra and Torrid talking. She nodded her head at the pair.

Gradually the young woman turned her head to study the minister and queen talking. She couldn't hear them talking at all, only see their lips move. "I wonder what's that about."

The Warrior Princess lifted a cherry near her mouth while saying, "They're talking about affairs... not us."

"You can hear them from here?"

The older woman chuckled while opening her mouth with the cherry still near her lips. "No, I can read their lips." The cherry went into her mouth.

"Really?" The small warrior chuckled while lifting her attention to Xena again. "You can read their lips from here?"

Xena simply nodded. She brought her hand to Gabrielle's side and leaned down towards her.

Gabrielle forgot the previous conversation and closed her eyes when warm lips took hers. She moaned quietly then leaned into her lover's body. With surprise, she found a round object being inserted into her mouth and she knew it was a cherry.

Torrid nodded a few times and pivoted on his right foot to stand beside the queen now. "I do hope things turn out for the better my queen."

"I do too Ra." Cleopatra sighed deeply while lifting her wine to drink. She lowered it while saying. "Let's not talk anymore of the affairs." Her eyes became fixed on the two Soulmates pulling away from a kiss.

"They seem to have a rather... close relationship my queen." The minister turned his head to the Queen of Egypt with a hidden grin.

"Quite." Cleopatra chuckled while swirling her wine in her glass. "When I was in Greece they were not together."

"Really?" Torrid sized up his queen then turned his attention to the Soulmates that were kissing again. "I can't imagine them apart."

"Neither could I." The queen shook her head. "But they certainly were when I was in Greece last year."

The Egyptian man shook his head. "I can't imagine a wedge between them... other than you my queen." He was grinning at Cleopatra again.

The queen chuckled while drinking a little wine. When she lowered the cup she said, "Not even I could wedge between them Ra."

"But my queen, you're the most powerful-"

"Not when it comes to this pair." Cleopatra turned her head to the man in the firelight. "I would not dare toy with them unless I was asking for my death." She grinned a little. "Not even the power of Egypt can tear them apart."

Torrid's expression was a little shock. "My queen how can-"

"I've seen the world Ra, you have not." Cleopatra stopped while studying the Soulmates. She lifted her right hand with the glass to point at the Soulmates. "That is the strongest power in the known world. I find it frightening that only those two women hold that great power."

The minister folded his arms. "What power might that be?" He tilted his head in examining the Soulmates.

"Love."

Gabrielle pulled away from her partner with a grin. "I'm going to get some more wine. Want some?"

"Yeah." Xena began to move. "I'll come."

"Thanks." The Amazon Queen stood. "You help keep the conversationalists away."

The warrior laughed while standing beside her lover. "I don't understand that. You'd think I didn't like talking or something."

The small warrior snickered while ambling across the barge with her friend. She made her way to the table that held rows of wine filled glasses. "What I want? Red or white?"

"Mmm... red." Xena lifted up to golden goblets of red wine. She handed one to her Soulmate and kept the other.

Gabrielle took the goblet and held it by the brim. She leaned up to kiss her warrior.

The warrior kissed back just as warmly but eventually pulled back with a grin. She lifted her wineglass to drink.

The small warrior laughed. "You realize how drunk we're going to be?" She began to drink some of her wine. She started walking with her warrior.

The tall woman chuckled while lowering the goblet. "Very."

"We're going to get silly." Gabrielle took a heavy drink and swallowed it then glanced around the barge at the people. "We're going to get silly and you're going to get chatty."

Xena laughed and lowered her eyes to Gabrielle. "Is that such a bad thing?"

"Oh no." The Queen smirked up to her lover. She glanced ahead to see Cleopatra and Torrid. "Ra... Queen Cleopatra."

The minister bowed his head with a warm smile. "Gabrielle." His eyes lifted to Xena.

"Xena."

The warrior nodded then took a drink.

Gabrielle glanced over to the other queen. "Exactly when will we arrive back into Alexandria?"

Cleopatra's lips shifted into a grin. "A little after the moon sets."

The warrior-bard's eyes widen but she grinned. "Not bad."

"I thought so myself." The Egyptian queen bowed her head and lifted it again with darkness in them. "I assume you both are starting to enjoy the cruise?"

"Yes." Gabrielle nodded. Her hand shifted on the wineglass to hold it by the brim again.

"Wonderful." Cleopatra chuckled while saying, "It will only get better." She glanced up to the bow of the barge. "I highly recommend going to the front of the barge. It's a beautiful view. And very... romantic."

The Soulmates chuckled together, they were doing romantic.

"Oh we will." The Warrior Princess grinned yet went serious again. "I assume the other guests aboard are... important to Egypt's government."

"Yes." The queen nodded her head. "Rather loyal and powerful allies in the Egyptian world." She smiled warmly. "Some are my officers, advisors, and some are just politicians of the sorts."

Xena's head moved up and down a few times. "Interesting."

Cleopatra stepped off to her right and held out her hand to the bow of the barge.

Gabrielle glanced up to her partner with a raised eyebrow.

The warrior grinned and started walking.

The smaller warrior followed along side.

Torrid chuckled while watching the warriors go. "It is definitely love."

Cleopatra straightened up with a grin. "It is... even I would bow."

The tall woman placed her wineglass down on the rail. She reached over to take her lover's and place it down as well. Her left hand came up to Gabrielle's back to give her a command.

The Amazon Queen followed the command to stand in front of her Soulmate. She leaned into Xena when she was drawn in.

The pair was silent for a little while. They stared across the smooth river's waters. The only thing seen were small ripples brushing across the water by the breeze. The moon and her stars reflected off the black water.

Gabrielle took a long breath. "Remember way back when I asked you about us taking

our relationship public?"

"Yeah." Xena lowered her head closer to Gabrielle's. "And I said we'd figure it out together."

"Uh huh." The small woman chuckled a little. "I'd say we did decide."

The warrior grinned. "Didn't we a while back?"

"Yesss." Gabrielle dropped her head back with a smile. "Xena?"

"Mmm?"

A small hand came up to caress the taller woman's cheek. "You're are beautiful."

The older warrior quietly laughed with an amused smile. "You told me that over four years ago."

The Queen's eyes furrowed as she thought, her hand lowering to Xena's on her waist. Then her expression brightened up with realization. "You're not going to let me forget the henbane are you?"

Xena laughed while reaching over to take a mug. "I told you..." She grinned while bring the glass close to her lips. "It's one of my favorite memories." She began to drink.

Gabrielle grinned then when her partner was done with the wine she took the goblet. "What other memories are your favorite?" She began to drink some of the wine herself.

"Oh gods." Xena chuckled. "The time with the Titans... or the time when we had to stop Aphrodite's thugs. Then she put us under those spells."

The small warrior laughed after she placed the goblet back on the rail. "Oh gods, when I was high on myself."

A strong chuckle escaped the warrior. "Oh it was cute to watch." She furrowed her eyebrows for a second in thought. Then a grin took her lips as she said in a sing song voice, "Well listen to m'story 'bout Gabrielle, cute little gal that's looking pretty swell, perfect hair, such-" She was cut off by the hand over her mouth.

"Don't even." Gabrielle laughed with sparkling eyes. She lowered her hand.

Xena started to laugh. "But it was such a great song."

"Yeah but as I remember you were worried the fish would be... armed," she growled.

The warrior evilly grinned. "They were."

"Hardy har har Warrior Princess." The small woman grinned while turning in her lover's arms to face her. "At least I wasn't obsessed with fish."

"Hey, a good day of fishing can do wonders." A grin was creeping along the tall woman's lips.

"Uh huh and I'm not your Soulmate." Gabrielle grinned but lost it a little. "What other

memories?"

The dark female took a deep breath while an amused smile played on her lips. "Well, on that same adventure... I loved it when I unsheathed my sword and you grabbed the blade to look at yourself."

"Ooooh yeah, looken good." The small warrior laughed hard as she remembered saying that so long ago.

Xena shook her head with a huge grin. "Gods, how'd I get you?" She lifted her right hand to brush back Gabrielle's hair. "I don't understand how I got this lucky." She lowered her head to lean against Gabrielle's. "You're beautiful, talented, intelligent, a perfect warrior and bard, a perfect friend, a perfect partner, a perfect Queen, a perfect lover, a perfect Soulmate, and I've got you. How is that?" Her right hand came down to caress Gabrielle's neck to her upper chest. "It took me so long to understand why you accepted all of me. When I understood it was the love... I couldn't understand why you loved me. Then I eventually understood because I reversed perspectives." Xena's hand went across the valley of her lover's breasts while she lifted her head up.

Gabrielle's eyes closed while she listened to her lover.

A loving smile formed on the warrior's lips. "Now you want my dark side to come out again." The smile went sad. "As crazy as it is, I will do it." She lowered her head close to Gabrielle's as the breeze slipped around them. "I love you more every step we take together." Her head came lower, which let their air combine. Her hand came down to slip down between Gabrielle's belt. "Why?" she asked in a whisper with her lips brushing over the warrior-bard's cheek.

"Because we are Soulmates," was the whispered response. Gabrielle's left hand came up to the back of Xena's head. "It answers everything between us." She sealed her lips over Xena's in a warm tender kiss. Her right arm slipped around the warrior's waist as her side stayed pressing into Xena's body.

The taller woman kept her lover in tightly against her body while still kissing her deeply. When they did pull away from the kiss she was nuzzling her Soulmate's neck. "You're beautiful."

Gabrielle smiled to herself then started to giggle a little.

The Warrior Princess kissed her partner's neck. "Mmm?"

The small warrior grinned while closing her eyes and dropping her head to the left some. "You're getting chatty."

"I know," growled the warrior. She had better access to her lover's neck. "And you're getting quiet."

"I know," growled the smaller warrior. A small moaned escaped her lips. "Alright, we better calm down." She could feel her breathing picking up.

Xena didn't calm down immediately and brought her lips traveling down to the top of her lover's chest.

Instantly a shiver rippled up and down Gabrielle's body. "Xena?" Her voice was in a

plea.

The older woman brought her head back up and kissed her partner gently. When she finished the kiss, she pulled back with her eyes slowly opening. A grin tweaked her lips.

Gabrielle's chest was rising fast. "Okay..." she whispered while taking a deep breath. Her eyes finally opened to study twinkling navy eyes. "What other memories did you like?"

The tall woman laughed while pulling her Soulmate's back into her stomach. "Mmm a lot." She reached over to pick up one of the goblets. "The bunny." The goblet's brim went to her lips to drink from.

"Oh no." The small warrior shook her head. "Like I said, that rabbit was mean."

"Right," drawled out the warrior. "You show me this mean rabbit one day." She lowered the goblet.

"Fine, don't believe me." Gabrielle shrugged as a grin creased her lips. "Wait till you get a killer bunny on your hands." She was give the wineglass and easily took it.

"I'll just have you come kill it for me." Xena rubbed her thumb against her lover's stomach. "Since you have experience with them."

"Pffft." The small warrior placed the cup of wine back on the railing after drinking. "It'd kick my butt again."

"Maybe both of us could kill it."

Gabrielle giggled. "Maybe." She shrugged. "Maybe not."

Xena chuckled and glanced over the river.

The short woman herself was staring over the majestic silver river. "I think when we get back to Greece I'm going to get a new outfit."

"What?" The older woman shook her head. "You just got this one." She grinned while continuing. "You need more leathers?"

"I don't think so." The warrior-bard evilly grinned. "I was thinking velvet."

"Velvet... keep going."

The Amazon Queen grinned at the interest. "Red soft velvet."

"Uh huh... halter-top and skirt?" A grin was peaking along the warrior's lips.

"Oh definitely." The young warrior's tongue ran across her teeth. "Short skirt too with a black belt and jewels on it." She felt her warrior's arms tighten around her body.

"We'll see." Xena lowered her head down a little.

Gabrielle evilly grinned because she knew she'd getting a new outfit soon. She reached over to grab a goblet to drink from with her Soulmate.

~*~*~*~

Xena stumbled a little down the torch lit corridor.

Gabrielle laughed a little and caught her Soulmate. "You're losing it."

"Nope." The warrior kissed her lover. "I'm getting it real soon."

The corridor in the palace was empty.

"Mmm if you can make it to the room." The small warrior started walking again. "If you do, you'll get a lot of it."

"Mmm." The tall woman started walking again with a grin. "No problem."

The younger female continued her walk. In only the instantly that she glanced away she found herself pushed against a wall. Her lover's warm and strong body was over hers. Then without a word strong lips took hers.

The warrior grinned into the kiss and started anew when the first kiss ended. Her hands were pressing Gabrielle's body against the cool wall.

It was late at night, almost five candlemarks till dawn and they'd just returned from the cruise.

The small warrior slipped out of the embrace easily. She started down the hall but turned around to grin at her lover. "Coming?"

Xena said nothing as she started power walking towards her lover. Her eyes were rich and twinkling.

The younger woman saw the intensity of this and knew there would be little sleep tonight if any. She kept walking backwards but glancing here and there to her right for their room. "Xena I am all yours."

"I know," the warrior purred. She kept her pace at a certain speed so she stayed a certain distance from Gabrielle. She spotted the double doors to their room and automatically picked up her pace.

The small warrior soon found herself rammed up against the door. Her head fell against the door and she opened her eyes to peer up into her lover's eyes. "Made it to the love room."

Xena laughed a little and lowered her head down to Gabrielle's. "Mmm, as I call it the lovenasium."

The Queen started to laugh hard. "Oh gods," she whispered. She soon stopped as Xena's body shifted against hers.

The warrior placed both her hands above Gabrielle's head. Her hips pressed into her lover's body as she peered down with passion written into her expression.

The small warrior looked up with a loving smile and grasped Xena's hips. She rocked her hips into Xena's while having Xena kiss her.

~*Part 12*~

The Soulmate had finally made use of the twenty odd some pillows after their two candlemarks of sleep.

Gabrielle had her back propped up on them. She was still nude since last night.

The warrior herself was nude and laying in her lover's body and arms. She sat between Gabrielle's legs with her back pressed into the small warm stomach. Her head lay resting on the small warrior's chest with her eyes closed.

The small woman had wrapped her legs a little around her lover's waist. Her head resting into the pillows in the middle of the bed. Her hands however were busy relaxing the warrior.

Xena was done in by the small hands massaging her breasts gently. The small warm hands gently massaging her breasts without ever threatening to turn on her passion. That was one thing that amazed her. How Gabrielle could touch her anywhere with a specific touch to bring out certain feelings. And now her lover's touch was soothing over her breasts and not lustful.

"Mmm bath?" questioned the small warrior.

"Soon," whispered the older woman.

"Don't fall asleep on me." Gabrielle began to grin.

"Trying not to." Xena felt the need to press her body into Gabrielle's. So she turned in the embrace and snuggled her head into her lover's breasts. "God's I'm tired," she whined.

The younger woman laughed because she hardly ever got to hear her Soulmate whine. "Dido." She wrapped her arms around Xena tightly. She kissed her warrior's forehead. "We should really move."

The Warrior Princess sighed dramatically. "Soon as my headache leaves."

"Here." The warrior-bard lifted her hands to the warrior's temples. She began to massage them gently. She kept at it while asking, "How's that feel?"

"Mmm, better." The Warrior Princess kissed her lover's chest. "Was worth it."

"The headache?" Gabrielle nodded in agreement. "Definitely." She grinned while ushering, "Thank you for last night."

The tall woman chuckled a little. "Thank you." She sighed softly. "Let's do it again sometime."

The Queen moved her fingertips a little to massage. "Sometime soon." She chuckled with a smile and lowered her hands to her lover's back. "How's that?"

"A lot better." She took a deep breath and let it out slowly. "Let's get that bath."

"In that swimming pool?"

A small laugh left the warrior. "Yeah." She sat up out of her partner's arms and rolled out of bed.

Gabrielle followed and stood up with a small groan. Her headache jumped in intensity from the quick movement. Her right hand went to her forehead with her eyes closing.

"Hey come here." Xena moved to her friend and put her hands on Gabrielle's forehead. She did the something to Gabrielle's temple.

The young warrior moaned softly and leaned into her warrior. "Thanks, that was bad."

"I know." The tall woman continued massaging. "So, a hot bath with bubbles?"

The Amazon Queen chuckled with a grin. "The Warrior Princess in bubbles?"

"Just don't tell anybody huh?"

"It's our secret." Gabrielle grinned while peering up into warm blue eyes. She smiled then closed her eyes again.

The smile formed onto the warrior's lips. She finished the massage and leaned down to kiss her warmly. "Come on."

Soon the pair had figured a way to fill the huge bathing tub with warm water. Afterwards they went in to relax and sooth their bodies from last night. It was late morning in Egypt. After the bath they were out of the tub, dried, Gabrielle on the bed writing, and Xena on the couch yet to dress.

Slowly the small warrior put her quill down. She was still nude. She lay back and raised the scroll up to start reading it. She stopped for a moment and glanced over to her lover. Her right hand patted her stomach faintly.

Xena chuckled a little and hopped off the couch. She sauntered over and crawled onto the bed. She lay on her side with her right arm slipping under Gabrielle, her head on the warrior-bard's stomach and her left arm over the warm stomach. She closed her eyes with a content sigh.

The small woman went back to reading her scroll while her right hand was running through dark hair.

The Soulmates stayed in this position until the Amazon Queen finished reading over her scroll.

Gabrielle read the last bit of it and dropped the scroll to the bed. "Xen?"

"Mmm?"

"Who was Queen Cairiona's second in command?"

"It was Liz." Xena shifted a little. "Why?"

The small warrior-bard shrugged. "Just couldn't remember her name."

The warrior nodded a little. "She was a little tough and not talkative."

"Strong silent type, I'm good with those." Gabrielle evilly grinned.

"So I've noticed." The warrior chuckled while smiling.

The Amazon Queen went a little serious. "I think Caitriona was the only one I trusted... other than Yakut."

The older woman sighed a little. "Let's hope we never have to test that trust."

"Yeah really." The Queen shut her eyes. "I was considering sometime this winter letting you be Queen for a week or so."

Xena's eyes flew open. "What?"

"Make you Queen for a week."

"I got that." The Warrior Princess had a serious look. "But... why?"

"Because it'd be good for you and the rest of the Nation." Gabrielle's hands rested on her lover's shoulder. "It'd be like running an army."

The dark woman lifted her head to gaze into open green eyes. "There's a huge difference."

"Then more the reason why you should do it." The small warrior carked an eyebrow in suggestion. She sighed and lost the look. "Xena, I'm just saying there may be a day when I'm not around and you need to be acting Queen." She shrugged. "A little practice would be good 'cause you have a different system of running things that the Amazons need to learn." She smiled a faintly. "And you'd learn a little bit yourself."

The warrior sighed dramatically and lowered her head onto her partner's stomach. "And Ephiny?"

"Can deal." Gabrielle chuckled. "I set up rank, she's after us."

"Alright." The warrior kissed her lover's stomach. "I'll try it this winter."

"Thank you." The short woman hugged her Soulmate tightly. "Feel like a walk along the beach?"

The warrior lifted her head with a smile. "Sure. Let's go."

~*~*~*~

Torrid came into the bathing room with his hands behind his back. He bowed his head to the queen. "My queen."

Cleopatra nodded her head. "Speak."

The second minister lifted his head. "Queen Cleopatra, Rome is on the brink of an all out civil war." He sighed at the affairs.

The Egyptian queen raised an eyebrow while studying the warm water. "And why should *that* interrupt my bath?"

The minister sighed a little. "As you said my queen, you command the greatest navy in the world- the strategic price if your name happens to be Brutus or Antony. Whichever one of them gets control of your navy will rule the empire." He bowed his head in apology.

The queen sighed while resting back against the tub. "Well, sounds like they'll both be courting me then doesn't it?"

Torrid lifted his head with worried eyes. "Or trying to eliminate you."

Cleopatra looked away.

The minister dropped his head again. "There are those that say with you out of the way, the Egyptian navy will go the highest bidder." His eye drifted shut.

"You worry too much Ra. I have always known how to protect Egypt... my people... and myself. I will keep the Romans at bay." She snaps her fingers and one of her servant comes over with a scroll and quill. She begins to write while speaking to Torrid. "See that my Chief Admiral receives these orders Ra." She lifted her eyes to the minister while rolling the scroll up. "

Torrid nodded while walking around the tub to his queen. "As you command." He bowed his head while taking the scroll. "Anything else my queen?"

"Take care of yourself Ra." The queen sadly smiled. "You've been of great services." She saw the confused look on Torrid's face. "Now go."

The minister said nothing. But straightened up and briskly left the room.

Cleopatra glances up to one of her servants. "Hmm... is it just me, Shiana or do crises only happen when I'm naked?"

Shiana chuckled a little. She looked up to see a messenger come into the room. She strolled over there to take the scroll. "Cleopatra... an urgent message from Rome." She looks up from the scroll then walks back to her mistress.

The Egyptian Queen takes the scroll while unrolling it. Once she unrolled it a long black item fell from the scroll and into the water. While caught in the middle of her reading, she felt a strong sting came to her in the chest. "Shiana..." Her breathing caught. "Another scroll and quill." She sucked in her breath as her heart rate began to slow.

The black snake disappears under the water.

The servant hastily knelt down to her queen. "My Queen?" She handed the objects over with a concerned expression.

Cleopatra finishes writing as her breathing went shallow. "Shiana ... take this to our guests." She handed over the scroll while closing her eyes.

Shiana now knew what happened as she saw the head of the snake reappear in the water. "I will my Queen," she whispered. Her eyes stung from the tears that wanted to form. "Egypt is in safe hands my queen." She quickly stood up and looked to the other servants. "Take her to rest in her room."

The other servants nodded and moved to lift the shallow breathing queen out of the tub.

Cleopatra died the moment she was placed in her bed.

~*~*~*~

"Xena, Gabrielle!" The servant yelled while running down the beach.

The Soulmates stopped walking and turned around to see the small dark haired woman running after them with a scroll.

Shiana came up to the pair. She started breathing heavily. She bent forward while handing the scroll over.

Xena took it and unrolled it. She silently read it with her Soulmate.

The small warrior finished and peeked up to her lover. "Are we really going to do this?"

The Warrior Princess went stoic while rolling the scroll up. "Yes, we're really going to do this."

The Amazon Queen felt her defenses come to life. "Do you have a plan?"

Shiana looked up at hearing the question.

The warrior turned her head to her partner. She grinned. "First we become Egypt... and then we take on Rome."

~*~*~*~

"Are we in order?"

Gabrielle nodded. "Everything is set." She kneeled down to close the golden cuff on each of her Soulmate's ankles. She stood back up while lifting the golden chains. "Xena, I don't-"

"I know Gabrielle." The warrior was nude just outside of the palace entrance. "Tell me if you don't want to do this. We'll drop it and leave." She grasped her partner's shoulders.

Four Egyptian guards and a rug surrounded the Soulmates on the ground. Gabrielle still wore her regular maroon leathers but Xena had put on a wig of short black hair.

The small warrior locked eyes. "This is a dark adventure."

"Yes." The tall woman nodded briskly. "I will get dark and gods' only know what I will do."

Not to mention Egypt's power over you, Gabrielle thought. "No, we need to do this." She smiled confidently. "Bring back the darkness." She leaned in to kiss her warrior as she locked the band around her lover's neck. She pulled back. "Be careful Xena."

"Always love." The warrior smiled warmly but dropped it. "The key."

Gabrielle moved her head in understanding. She reached between her breasts, slipped the key into her mouth, and moved in to kiss her again.

Xena felt the warm key pass into her mouth.

The Amazon Queen pulled back and nodded to Xena.

The Warrior Princess winked and walked over to the rug. She lay down and crossed her arms against her chest. She locked eyes with Gabrielle to show her love.

Two guards shifted and started to roll her up in the rug.

Gabrielle looked up to the four guards. "Deliverer her to Mark Anthony and await for her return outside of the perimeters. Understood?"

The four Egyptian guards nodded.

"Good, now go." The small warrior folded her arms and watched the four guards lift the rug together and march out of the entrance and down the road in the night towards Mark Anthony's camp. She sighed and walked into the place to find herself a disguise.

~*~*~*~

Mark Anthony looked up as one of his soldiers entered.

"Sir, Queen Cleopatra bids you welcome and has sent you a gift."

Anthony nodded a little showing small interest. "Queen Cleopatra has sent me a gift... bring it in."

The soldier saluted. "Sir, yes, sir!" He glanced back out the tent flap. "Bring it in!" He watched the two men carry the rug in. He glanced to the Roman commander. "It's a carpet, sir."

The Roman commander nodded and watched his men place the rug down gently. "Dismissed." He watched the soldiers leave and he ambled over to the rug. He looked at it questionable then took the scroll off it. He read it aloud. "Will Rome enter Egypt?" He raised an eyebrow. In what way? He wondered while lighting pushed the carpet with his foot to unroll it.

Anthony watched a tall dark woman with short black hair roll out of the carpet and crouch before him. He saw dark blue eyes lift up to him. He saw a powerful seductive smile crease the woman's lips. The firelight in the tent reflected off her tan body and the golden chains. Her voice name came out in a deep purr.

"I am Cleopatra. Queen of Egypt. Slave of Rome."

~*~*~*~

"I must speak with Cleopatra at once!"

Shiana raised her hand. "Brutus, is she expecting you?"

"No, she is not. But I fear for her safety." Brutus took a menacing step but he stopped when another woman entered in.

"What does Cleopatra have to be afraid of, Brutus?"

Brutus did a double take. "Gabrielle?"

The small warrior smirked with her arms folding. She was in her Egyptian attire. "I'm alive." She turned her head to Shiana. "I'll hand this."

Shiana bowed her head and left the room.

Brutus faintly shook his head. "You survived the crucifixion?"

Slowly the Amazon Queen turned her head back to Brutus. "You should have been there." She walked over to a bowl of fruit on a table. She pulled out a few grapes.

"What are you doing here?" The Roman now crossed his arms.

The small woman ate the grapes slowly. "I'm paying a visit to an old friend." She shrugged while eating the last grape.

Brutus narrowed his eyes. "Where's Xena?"

"She's with Cleopatra." She began to speak louder in hopes to be heard by her partner.

"Well, then I'll see them both."

Gabrielle shook her head while folding her arms again. "It's not a good time Brutus." She smiled with fakeness. "But I'll relay your... concerns about her safety."

"I'd just as soon do that in person." The commander began to shift.

The small warrior narrowed her eyes and tried to stop him. "Brutus, stop."

The man kept walking towards the bedchambers and right in them.

Gabrielle sidestepped the man. "Stop," she growled. "Nobody is allowed to see Cleopatra."

"Gabrielle, this is ridiculous. I have information that could save Cleopatra's life!" Brutus narrowed his eyes in anger. "I insist on -"

The small woman quickly cut him off. "You're in no position to make demands!"

Brutus was about to yell back but stopped when he saw the tall dark Warrior Princess appeared.

"Ave Brutus." Xena stood back in her leathers and armor. "You know you're in the Queen's bedchamber."

The Roman commander sighed deeply. "I have come to warn Cleopatra there are people plotting against her. Under no circumstances should she trust either Antony or Octavius. They both want her dead."

The warrior raised an eyebrow. "Octavius... Ceasar's adopted son?"

The man nodded quickly. "He claims to be the rightful heir of Rome. He's just a murdering opportunist."

Takes one to know one, doesn't it Brutus? Xena smirked at the thought. "Well then, I'll be sure to tell her. I know she'll appreciate your concern." She started to turn away.

"I would like to see her myself," yelled Brutus.

Slowly the warrior turned back around. "She's busy." She put her hands on her hips.

Brutus looked between the two female warriors. "I'm glad you and Gabrielle are

well..." He turned quickly and left at a power walk.

Gabrielle watched him go and whispered, "Good timing."

Xena nodded and peered down at her partner. "Thanks for yelling."

The younger woman nodded. "Figured you would hear me." She grinned a little. "Between that and my franticness that you felt, I'm sure you'd know."

The tall woman chuckled a little.

"What's the next step?" The warrior-bard folded her arms.

"We wait for Octavius to show." Then an evil grin creased the warrior's lips. "And keep Antony busy."

~*~*~*~

Xena relaxed in the warm water. She felt her Soulmate's hands on her chest rubbing there. She dropped her head back at the soothing touch.

The door to the bathing room opened and in stepped Anthony with three Roman guards.

Slowly the warrior-bard lifted her eyes and raised her hands out of the water to the ledge. She was on her knees.

"Welcome, Antony." Xena smiled and held her hand out to Gabrielle. "This is my companion... Iris."

Anthony raised an eyebrow at Gabrielle and looked up and down her length. Slowly a grin creased his lips. "If I were in your hands, Iris, I would be fortunate indeed."

The warrior felt anger come alive in her. She narrowed her eyes. "Leave us."

The small warrior began to stand but soon found her Soulmate's hand grasping hers. She understood the signal and sat back down.

"No, I have business to attend to. Besides, I have supped full of pleasures this night ... perhaps by morning we can put this issue of trust behind us, and move on." He put his hands to his hips while watching the servants return to their former duties.

The Warrior Princess bowed her head slightly. "Then continue with your business."

Mark Anthony bowed his head and turned towards the door. "Goodnight Cleopatra."

Xena watched with intent as the man left.

Gabrielle shook her head while glancing down to her lover. "God, Xena. I thought he was going to accept your invitation. How did you know he wouldn't?"

"I didn't."

The small warrior clamped her jaw down from saying more.

~*Part 13*~

The small cloaked form entered into Cleopatra's bedchamber by way of the balcony.

Xena was lying in the bed by herself and instantly heard the movement. She leered out of the bed and saw the figure.

"Are you Cleopatra?"

The Warrior Princess narrowed her eyes. "Are you my assassin?"

The small man shook his head. "No!" He raised his hands to show no weapons. "I was coming to see you."

"Really?" The warrior raised her hands with a grin. "We have a front door for that."

"But his was the only way... believe me." The man stepped back but regretted it as an oil pot on fire landed by him. Soon more were flying in to the bedchamber and a fire began.

Xena grabbed the man and ran out of the bedchamber in time to see Anthony coming with guards.

"Cleopatra!"

The young cloaked man tried to sneak away.

The warrior quickly moved to grab him. "Where do you think you're going?"

"Away from him. He wants me dead. Those assassins were after me." The small man nodded his head towards the Roman commander.

"Oh, aren't you the center of attention. Isn't it more likely they were after me?" Xena spotted her Soulmate come around the corner with a few Egyptian guards to help put the fire out.

The young man frantically shook his head with the hood down. "That's why we must ally. They want us both dead."

"And who are you?" growled the dark woman.

Anthony took a step closer to intervene. "Octavius." He turned his head to Xena. "Queen Cleopatra, may I introduce to you the grand-nephew and adopted son of Julius Caesar ... and a traitor."

Octavius narrowed his eyes at the commander. "I'm a traitor? What would Julius Caesar think of his closest friend denying me his throne?"

"Uncle Julius was too busy to realize how ill-equipped you are. It's not that I love Caesar less, I love Rome more."

"Antony ..." The Warrior Princess slowly turned her head to the man with a grin.

Octavius saw the look and began to protest. "Cleopatra, please! He'll kill me."

Xena studied the young man's eyes. She turned her head to Gabrielle. "Take him away! I'll deal with him later."

Gabrielle briskly nodded and looked to two guards. "Take him."

The two guards moved and arrested the man. They hauled him off.

"How do I know you weren't somehow involved in this?" The warrior peered at Anthony with interest.

"I came here to put out the fire." Mark Anthony raised an eyebrow with gleaming eyes "We have unfinished business, you and I." He whirled around to leave with his guards now that the fire was gone.

Gabrielle watched him go. She turned her head back to her Soulmate to study her dark profile. "Xena?"

"Yes?" The warrior didn't look at her lover.

Gabrielle walked up to her partner's side. "I'm losing sight of your plan, Xena. Are you trying to flirt him to death?" She crossed her arms.

The Warrior Princess turned her head to her friend. "I'm getting him to trust me so I can do what I want with him."

The small woman's head bobbed. "Be careful," she whispered, "He's your type."

The older woman quickly looked back to her lover. "You think?"

"Yes." The small warrior looked away as she felt the jealousy coming back to life. "What's this 'unfinished business'?"

"He's going to try to seduce me into letting him use Cleopatra's navy."

The small woman slowly began to nod. "And then?"

"And then I'll have him on his knees." Xena gazed down at her lover with dark expression. "Figuratively speaking, of course."

Gabrielle laughed halfheartedly with a smirk "Of course." She turned to start walking away.

The warrior moved quickly to grasp her partner around the waist. "I won't sleep with him."

The small woman looked up with worried eyes. "I can't trust that."

"Why?" Xena had a confused look. "Because you don't trust me to control my dark side?"

"No, because I don't trust Egypt." Gabrielle pulled out of her lover's arms and walked off. "We have work to do."

The Warrior Princess watched her Soulmate disappear around the corner. She ran her right hand through her bangs and walked off.

~*~*~*~

Gabrielle narrowed her eyes as she watched her Soulmate lean in to kiss Anthony

deeply. She clamped her jaw down tightly and fisted her hands up.

Shiana glimpsed to Gabrielle then back to the warrior and Anthony. "She's good," she whispered.

"To good," was the warrior-bard's quiet response. She watched the kiss become deeper between her Soulmate and the Roman commander. She saw Mark Anthony's hand come to her warrior's shoulder and push her back. Gabrielle was instantly moving. She'd been watching this seduction game to long. She came right up to the pair and cleared her throat. "Erhem... Queen Cleopatra, don't forget your meeting with your advisors."

The warrior slowly pulled back from the warm kiss with annoyance. "Ah, my advisors. Yes, they're such busy bodies."

Anthony smiled while caressing the woman's cheek. "Rome wasn't built in a day." He stood up with a warm smile and left.

The Warrior Princess watched him go then shifted her eyes to Gabrielle. "What do you think you were doing? I was in complete control."

The Amazon Queen narrowed her eyes at her Soulmate. "How far were you going to let that go, Xena?" She leaned in a little. "And with me here?"

Xena's tongue ran across her molars. "Until he begged for my navel."

"Your navy?" Better suggested the small warrior. She raised an eyebrow in proof to Xena's lost of control.

The tall woman looked away. "I know what I'm doing."

"Xena, what happens if he's the one who killed Cleopatra?" She reached out to grasp her partner's hand.

The warrior looked back to her lover while thinking. "He's the one I'll kill if I have to. I have no real feelings for him, Gabrielle, believe me."

Gabrielle was about to reply except Shiana came up and bent forward between them with a flower. "This is from Antony."

Xena took the orchid while studying it. "Really."

The servant slowly nodded. "He invites you to meet him tomorrow night under the pyramid."

Slowly a grin covered the warrior's lips. "Tell him I'll be there ... got him right where I want him."

"I bet." Gabrielle stood up and walked off.

"Hades." The dark woman stood up to turn in Gabrielle's direction but she was gone. "What's happening?" she whispered to nobody but herself.

Shiana furrowed her eyebrows. "Xena?"

The warrior looked to the servant. "Sorry, we have plans to carry out."

"As you wish." Shiana smiled warmly. "What do you need?"

"Bring Ra to me."

The servant bowed her head and left to seek out the second minister.

~*~*~*~

Gabrielle slammed the door shut. She started pacing back and forth in the room.

It was the same room Xena and her had shared when they first came. But now Gabrielle only slept in it while her Soulmate slept in Cleopatra's bedchamber. She hated it.

She stopped in the middle of her pacing. Her hand went through her short hair as she stared at the ceiling. "What's happening?" Her eyes closed. "I want what's mine," she growled as a few tears rolled down her cheeks.

"Then take what's yours babes."

Gabrielle opened her eyes at the familiar voice. She sadly smiled at Aphrodite. "Dite?"

"Hey sweet cheeks." The goddess folded her arms against her chest. "How's it hanging?"

"Not good." The small warrior turned away and walked over to the balcony to lean against the railing. "Something has Xena."

The goddess came out onto the balcony with her friend. "I've heard."

The Amazon Queen looked up quickly. "You've been watching?"

"Yes." She slowly nodded. "Cyrene asked me to watch over you both babes." She sadly smiled with a shrug. "Couldn't refuse that offer."

Gabrielle knew now what Cyrene's worried look had been about. Cyrene knew. She looked back over the scene of Alexandria. "Dite, do you know what's going on?"

Aphrodite took a deep breath. "Gabrielle, she's being controlled by the mysterious of Egypt." She had sad look with a serious voice. Her surfing accent dropped. "She wasn't lying about what she said on the way over here."

The warrior-bard glanced up then away. "I know," she whispered.

"Then you also know babes that you can easily get her back." Aphrodite shrugged. "She's always yours... just grab her."

"That simple?"

Aphrodite grinned. "That simple babes, she wants you too." Aphrodite disappeared with her voice in an echo. "Soulmates, it answers everything."

Gabrielle's eyes drifted shut as her mind began to toy with ideas. And as she did a grin

slowly crept along her lips.

~*~*~*~

"Ra?" The small warrior walked into the center of the palace's main hall.

Torrid glanced up with a concerned look. "Gabrielle." He bowed his head.

"Has Xena left?" Gabrielle was back in her regular attire.

"Yes." Torrid lifted his head. "She left soon as the sunset came."

The Amazon Queen began to walk down the hall with her friend. "Then about five minutes ago correct?"

"Yes." The minister walked along side. "Xena requested that I... stay beside you."

"Really?" Gabrielle turned her head to minister. "Any certain reason?"

"None that she said of."

The small woman slowly grinned. "Any certain reason you know of?"

"My reason is she would not like for you to not be around her and Anthony tonight."

"Ah." Gabrielle nodded as she came to the doorway of the entrance to the palace. "My assumption is the same." She walked into the entrance room.

"Gabrielle, you are not going to the pyramid are you?" Torrid had a worried look.

"Mmm, I don't need to." The small woman grinned while she walked out of the entrance room and to the steps of the palace outside.

The minister stopped in his tracks thinking about that. He shook his head and jogged to catch up. "Gabrielle, wait."

Gabrielle stopped midway down the steps and glanced back up.

"You need a plan." He came down a few steps. "I believe there may be a way." A warm smile took Torrid's lips. "I know what goes on between you and Xena."

"You're right." Gabrielle folded her arms. "Get me a cloak."

Torrid nodded and left to seek out a cloak.

The small warrior gazed over to the two guards by the entranceway. "Find me some of Brutus's soldiers."

The Egyptians guard nodded and walked down the steps briskly.

~*~*~*~

"Why have you hailed for Brutus's soldiers?" The Roman soldier took one step up the staircase to the palace.

Torrid bowed his head. "We only wish to help." He gazed up the stairs to see Gabrielle coming down the steps with a dark cloak on but the hood off.

Gabrielle came up beside Torrid and gazed at seven of Brutus's soldiers. "I wish to

lead you to where Cleopatra and Mark Anthony are. They're alone and it would be the best time to take them." She grinned. "Is that worth the hailing for?"

The leader soldier quietly laughed. "Quite." He stepped back. "Lead the way."

The young warrior nodded. "Right this way." She pulled her hood over her head. She walked through the busy torch lit streets of Alexandria towards the pyramid. She weaved through the streets with the Roman soldiers behind her. She then came out of the streets and went directly to the pyramid. She stopped and raised her arm to point at the pyramid where there were two forms laying on each other.

The leader grinned and turned his head to the other soldiers. "Take them." He unsheathed his sword as the six men went racing towards Cleopatra and Mark Anthony. He followed behind.

Gabrielle folded her arms against her chest and watched with interest. She saw her Soulmate stand up quickly with Anthony to fight the soldiers. Slowly a grin creased her lips because she knew she'd just interrupted something.

Xena was forced out of her daze of passion as she started to fight the soldiers. She had to wonder how these soldiers had perfect timing on finding her and Anthony. And knew where to find her and Anthony.

After a few moments of fighting she had them taken out with Mark Anthony's help. Her eyes searched around and fell on a dark figure in the distance, a small dark figure that watch with interest. Slowly a grin creased her lips.

Mark Anthony glanced over to Xena. "One of Brutus'?"

The warrior quickly turned her head to Anthony walking over to a still living soldier. "No, wait, Antony." She looked to the spot where the dark figure was or rather had been, the figure gone. "He could be useful to us." She walked over to the hurt soldier and grinned. "Tell Brutus he missed. Tell him Antony and Cleopatra are alive, well, and together."

The soldier nodded and got up to hurry away.

The Warrior Princess watched him go and then turned her head to Anthony. "Tomorrow."

"Tomorrow then." The Roman leaned in to kiss the warrior warmly.

Xena felt the shock wave of coldness rip through her body. She gave a fake smile to Mark Anthony when he left her side. Taking a heavy breath she headed for the palace. After going through the streets in the mid evening she came to the steps of the palace, she stopped dead. Her eyes became fixed on the small dark figure that sat on the stone rail to the left of the steps. She grinned while climbing the steps.

The figure never shifted, just stared at the warrior.

Xena came to the last step after making a beeline for the dark figure.

Slowly the figure lowered their head to push back the hood.

The Warrior Princess lips etched into a smile. "Thank you Gabrielle."

Dark green eyes peered up after pushing the hood back. "I figured you wanted a... distraction."

"I did." The warrior's eyes were twinkling. "It was to involved."

"So I noticed." Gabrielle stood up from the stone rail and took off her cloak. She put it in one arm. "Let me remind you who owns you." She took her Soulmate's hand. "Even your dark side." She turned to lead her lover through the entrance room, into the grand hall, and to their room. When she entered she tossed her cloak to the couch. Xena's wig followed behind.

Next the warrior found her lips taken into a passionate kiss. She took a step forward while pushing her sandals off. Small hands worked her clothes off during the kiss. After that kiss ended Xena started a second and while she did she pushed Gabrielle's top off. She pulled back and lifted the top over her lover's head.

Gabrielle felt her Soulmate's warm body press into hers. She ended the kiss rapidly as her body heated up. She kneeled down and untied her boots to toss them out of the way.

Xena lifted her partner back up to kiss her again. She was pushing her lover towards the bed while slipping her hands under the belt.

The warrior-bard helped push the skirt off. After that she climbed into the bed. "Come here." She held her hands out while lying on her back.

The taller woman crawled in and knew what her partner wanted. So she straddled her lover right at the neck.

The young woman pulled at Xena's thigh for her to scout up a little more.

Xena grinned and simply did that. Her right hand came down to spread open her folds. Her eyes closed when two warm hands went to her inner thighs. A soft moan escaped her lips when a hot tongue slipped between her folds. The fire had been sparked deep in her.

Gabrielle brought her mouth over the hot center to suck strongly. Her hands glided between her lover's thighs to her stomach.

The warrior felt intoxicated. She arched her hips out and into her Soulmate's mouth. She felt the small hands trail up her stomach to her breasts. The small hands began to knead her breasts. She moaned deeply. "Gabrielle," she ushered.

The young woman grinned while still sucking on her lover's center. Xena's essence filled her and she kept teasing her partner to heights.

The taller woman moaned while dropping her head back. Her free hand came down to grasp Gabrielle's shoulder. She began to grind her hips into her lover's touch.

The Amazon Queen dredged her tongue through the folds then eased her tongue inside.

"Gods," the warrior growled. She gritted her teeth and looked down to see her Soulmate immersed in her pleasing. She moaned deeply as her breathing. Her body was soaked in sweat now. Her hand was still grasping her lover's shoulder tightly. She sensed the small hands massaging her breasts stop and now go to hold her hips.

The warrior felt the small yet powerful climax dropped her into satisfaction. She groaned deeply while suddenly falling forward. Her hands came down to hold her up from hitting Gabrielle.

The small warrior grinned as she wrapped her arms around her lover. "I'm not done with you."

Xena slowly opened her eyes to gaze down into dark green eyes. "I know," she whispered faintly. She was still heavily breathing. She lowered her body onto Gabrielle's.

The short woman kissed her lover's temple and pushed her body up more onto the bed. Xena's hips were now over her stomach.

The tall woman slowly sat up with a grin. "Now, I do want what's mine as well."

"Oh." Gabrielle grabbed her partner's hands. "I'm not doing this alone." She evilly grinned as her right hand with Xena's went under the warrior's hips. "This body is yours as much as mine." One of her fingers with Xena's entered inside.

"Gabrielle," growled the older woman. Her other hand's grasp went strong. She began to rock her hips into the pumping fingers.

The small woman was breathing heavily as she felt her necklace tight around her throat. "It's both of us doing this to your body Xena," she whispered. "Gods it's perfect."

The Warrior Princess whimpered while dropping her head back. She felt the passion roar through her body and take her into a strong daze. "Please Gabrielle," she pleaded quietly.

The Queen smiled with perfection while letting herself and Xena slip another finger in each. "Faster?"

The older woman faintly nodded while holding Gabrielle's other hand in desperation to stay in reality a little longer.

Gabrielle twined that hand together in reassurance. Sometimes for either of them this could be overly powerful.

The four fingers began to slide in and out of the warrior's center at a rapid pace. "We're taking you Xena."

Xena couldn't respond to that for she was too busy grinding her hips, sweating, moving her fingers in and out, breathing heavily, grasping her lover's hand, and having heat flashes through her body.

The small woman smiled at seeing the lack of response. Then she felt her lover's fingers stop moving with her own. Nothing was heard for a brief instant.

Xena's eyes were closed with her head dropped back as, "Gabrielle," erupted from deep inside.

The small warrior slipped the fingers out as Xena's body went crashing into hers. She took the strong crash easily as she held her Soulmate tightly.

The warrior dug her head into Gabrielle's neck with closed eyes. She tried to come back to this world.

Gabrielle waited with a smile on her lips. She rocked she and Xena's body a little. She tried to calm her own passion as well.

The dark woman kissed her lover's neck and shivered a little.

"Hey, you okay?" The Amazon Queen rubbed her friend's hot back.

"Yeah," whispered the warrior. She lifted her head with a grin. "A little more intense."

"Mmm, because it was both of us." Gabrielle grinned. "Love it when that happens." She chuckled a little.

Xena grinned slowly while leaning down to kiss her lover gently. After the kiss she hopped out of the bed.

"Xena," growled the small warrior.

The older woman winked while strutting dramatically over to a sofa.

Gabrielle rolled out of the bed and came to stand in front of her Soulmate whom sat in the sofa. Her hands were on her hips with a huge smirk in her expression.

The dark woman chuckled and reached to grasp Gabrielle's hips. She pulled the small warrior onto her lap.

The Amazon Queen straddled her partner's legs.

Xena smiled and slowly lowered her eyes to scan her partner's strong body. "These past two days have been... out of hand." She peered up with hooded eyes.

"Xena-

The warrior had leaned forward to kiss Gabrielle into silence. She sat back while spreading her legs open wide, which only caused the warrior-bard's legs open wide. "Just listen?" She looked up with a plea.

The small woman nodded knowing this would be a rare moment. Her held Xena's sides in support.

"Thank you," whispered the older woman. Her hands went to her lover's lower stomach. "Fast or slow?" she quietly asked as her fingertips went between the folds.

"Slow." Gabrielle grinned a little.

Xena smiled while two fingers gently slipped into her lover. "I love you Gabrielle." She looked up with a warm smile. "I'm sorry for the past days."

The small warrior opened her mouth to protest but stopped herself remembering her agreement. She felt the two fingers begin to slide in and out slowly. A moan left her lips.

"I should have been more careful."

Gabrielle pushed her hands against her lover's stomach. She just rasped, "Please don't say... this." She closed her eyes. "It's over," she whispered as the passion ripped through her body.

A sad smile crossed the older woman's lips. Her left hand came under her lover's ass to help her. "I need to. Please?"

The small warrior's hands shifted to press on the taller woman's strong thighs. Her head dropped forward as her chest raised quickly. She noticed her lover's skin go white around her hands from pressing down so hard. Slowly she nodded to answer from earlier.

"Thank you," ushered the warrior. Her fingers continued to slowly go in and out of her Soulmate's center. "Thank you for finding me." She leaned in to kiss Gabrielle gently. "I was looking the wrong way." She pulled back from the kiss to see she only stole breath from her lover.

Gabrielle whimpered and dropped her body into her lover's. She could feel the two fingers slowly raising her higher and higher.

Xena felt droplets of sweat roll off her Soulmate and onto her own legs. She breathed coarsely. "Gods, what would I do without you?"

The younger woman dug her face more into her lover's neck. She just faintly kissed Xena's neck.

The warrior continued moving her two finger slowly though her Soulmate's sex. Her left hand slowly began to move up and down Gabrielle's back in a soothing motion. "I'm so sorry," she whispered in her partner's ear.

The Amazon Queen lifted her head slowly and leaned in so she could warmly kiss Xena. When she pulled back she smiled briefly but the smile did so much because she saw her lover's eyes now twinkling. Knowing her accomplishment, she leaned back into Xena. Her hands went down to her warrior's thighs to press down hard.

The older woman had a loving smile on her lips. She carefully let a third finger glide in with the other two.

Gabrielle sucked in a breath. "Xena," she whispered.

"Faster?"

The warrior-bard shook her head. "Keep it... slow," she rasped. She leaned back into Xena's left arm.

The warrior leaned forward to suck on her lover's right breast.

The young woman closed her eyes as she passion shot around in her body. "I'm..."

gonna die," she ushered. She sensed her Soulmate's touch on her breast more gentle than anything. Then those warm lips were covering her other breast. Gabrielle lifted her hands to run through her partner's dark hair.

After several moments, Xena finished teasing the breasts and lifted her head back up. She kissed Gabrielle lightly while entering a fourth finger.

"Xena." The small woman's voice was in a feared plea.

"I got you." The Warrior Princess's left arm went around Gabrielle's waist to hold her. "Just enjoy."

"I... am." Gabrielle wanted to chuckle but this was definitely not the time for it. She grasped her lover's shoulders tightly. She leaned her head forward.

Xena did the same and let her forehead press against her lover's forehead.

The warrior-bard watched her Soulmate's fingers pump in and out of her sex. She growled a little and closed her eyes.

The older woman closed her eyes as well and sped things up. She tilted her head back a little to kiss Gabrielle.

Gabrielle was just able to respond. She ended the kiss fast and gritted her teeth. She could feel herself reaching the limits.

The warrior felt Gabrielle's hands grasp on her shoulders go incredibly strong.

The Amazon Queen threw her head back and arched her body out. "Xenaaa," exploded from her mouth in a long scream.

The dark warrior then caught her partner falling into her body. She waited for a minute or two to let her lover revive. She felt her warrior's chest rising rapidly with her body beginning to cool. She lifted Gabrielle up carefully and just made it to the bed.

The young warrior realized she was in the middle of the bed. She noticed her Soulmate's arms wrapping around her in protection. Taking a deep breath, she made the effort to wrap her arms and legs around Xena.

The warrior smiled and helped pull Gabrielle in close against her body.

"I like that slow stuff," ushered Gabrielle.

Xena chuckled a little. She pressed her lips against her lover's forehead. "Good." Her eyes drifted shut. "We'll try it again later."

"Mmm, I can't wait." The short warrior's eyes closed. "I love you so much Xen." Her grasp on Xena's body went tighter.

"Ssssh." The Warrior Princess rocked their bodies a little. "I know." She held tight to her Soulmate. "I love you Gabrielle. Don't leave me."

"Trust me, I won't."

The tall woman smiled while still rocking their bodies. "Go to sleep huh?"

"See you in our dreamscape."

"No, I'll see you there." Xena quietly laughed. "You're pokey."

"Whatever Warrior Princess." Gabrielle kissed her lover's neck. "I'll beat you this time."

"Then go to sleep and show me."

Gabrielle snickered. "You're on." Her breathing relaxed dramatically as much as Xena's did.

Part 6 (Conclusion)

Section 6

~*Part 14*~

She walked out onto the ledge and let her arms cross over her bare stomach. Her green eyes studied Alexandria in the eastern sunlight. Gabrielle wore her Egyptian attire but hadn't put her wig on yet.

Xena came up behind her partner and slipped her arms around her lover's waist. Her nude body pressed into Gabrielle.

The small warrior moaned softly and dropped her head back. "What are the plans?"

The older woman rested her chin on her Soulmate's shoulder. "To put Octavius in power, leave Egypt in Roman hands, and go home."

Slowly the warrior-bard let a grin crease her lips. "I like that plan."

"Me too," whispered the warrior. "By this time tomorrow we'll be heading home."

"I'm loving the plan." Gabrielle chuckled as she glided her fingertips over her lover's arm.

"It'll take us three to four days to make it back to Greece."

"That's fine with me," admitted the smaller woman. "I'll have you there, that's all I need."

The Warrior Princess kissed her Soulmate's neck. "I love you," she whispered.

The younger woman turned in her friend's arms and pulled Xena's head down for a long warm kiss. At the end of the kiss, she pressed her forehead against the warrior's. "I love you," she uttered back. She closed her eyes and let a grin twitch at her lips. "And you better get into some clothes before..."

Xena's sly smile started to appear. "Before?" she pressed on.

"Before I take you," rumbled the not so normally hard voice.

The darker warrior chuckled and kissed her partner quickly. She let go and strutted across the room to collect her Egyptian outfit for the day.

Gabrielle clenched her hands. "Control Gabrielle... control." She watched the tall, dark, perfectly tanned, and muscular warrior shift through the room. "Control... don't ravage her... she's innocent... it's not her fault she's sexy."

Xena laughed after picking up her clothes. She came around to stand tall in front of her Soulmate. "That's me." She winked. "Innocent." Her eyes darkened before she turned around and went into the washroom.

"Control." The warrior-bard closed her eyes tightly. She breathed deeply and opened her eyes to stare at the entrance to the bathroom. "To Hades with control." She power walked into the bathroom with darkening eyes.

~*~*~*~

Xena adjusted the wig on her head with the gold wraps flickering the light. She walked out of the washroom and saw her Soulmate lying on their bed. A grin spread across her lips as she sauntered over to her partner's side.

Gabrielle slowly opened her eyes to peer up into crystal blue eyes. She smiled contently. "Hey."

The warrior laughed quietly. "Satisfied now?" She sat down on the edge of the bed. Her right hand came over the warrior-bard's stomach as she leaned down to kiss Gabrielle's stomach.

"For now," whispered the Amazon Queen. She combed her fingers through her lover's hair. She then pulled Xena's head to her own and kissed her Soulmate deeply.

The older woman lifted her head a smidge to let her lips just touch Gabrielle's. "We need to get back to business." Her voice was deep.

"Right," ushered the smaller woman. "What's the plans?"

"I am going to take care of Antony and you take care of Octavius. We'll meet up and let Brutus know we know his murder."

"Alright." Gabrielle smiled before pulling her lover's head back in for a long kiss. After the kiss, she started a second.

The tall woman moaned when she felt small hands grasp her sides and try to pull her onto the bed more. She pulled back from the kiss. "Gabrielle," she growled.

The younger warrior chuckled and grinned. "Sorry."

Xena smiled warmly and sat up straight. "We can handle it."

Gabrielle sighed dramatically and sat up. "Maybe." She ran her right hand through her short hair and glanced around the room for her wig. She spotted it but furrowed her eyebrows as she looked for her sandals. "Where are my sandals?"

"Where you left them earlier." Xena stood up and made her way hastily to the door.

"Xena," yelled the smaller woman. "Do not leave here without telling me where the

sandals are." She turned her head towards her partner.

The dark woman laughed and opened the door. "Try under the sofa." She winked and left.

"Warriors," grumbled the small warrior. "What am I saying?" She laughed and went over to the sofa to get her wig and sandals.

~*~*~*~

"And what about Octavius? I hear he is a good man."

Marc Anthony peered up from the map on the floor. "He may be a good boy, but I cannot let him live to be a good man."

The warrior sighed inwardly. Her right hand came up to tip Anthony's head up. "Antony ... take my navy. No, I insist. This gesture of yours is very sweet, but I get the point. I know that you love me. I've had reports that Brutus' fleet is approaching the Nile. Draw him into battle there. At the appropriate time, I will reinforce you. Brutus will be crushed."

Slowly, Anthony let a smile etch its way on his lips. "Rome is eternally grateful." He stood up to leave the large room.

Xena watched the man disappear as she sighed. She stared at the map again and narrowed her eyes. As she studied the map, an evil smile found its way in her expression. She then felt her body go extremely warm, which made her look up.

Gabrielle folded her arms and smiled to her Soulmate across the room.

The dark warrior stood up then came over to her lover. "Half the plan is set."

The warrior-bard nodded. "Good." She shifted her weight to her right foot. "Now we need Brutus."

"Yesss." The warrior raised an eyebrow. "And what of Octavius?"

"He's idealistic. His heart's in the right place, Xena." The small woman dropped her arms.

"Sounds perfect." The tall woman bent down to kiss her friend tenderly. When she pulled back she whispered, "Let's take care of Brutus."

The Amazon Queen nodded in agreement and headed out of the room with Xena beside her.

~*~*~*~

"Queen Cleopatra."

Xena felt a grin curl her lips. "Approach, Roman."

Gabrielle watched Brutus step up to the throne. Xena's grin reflect her lips as she watched her Soulmate lean forward and say, "Boo!"

"Xena?" Brutus narrowed his eyes instantly.

"That's right, I've been playing the part of Cleopatra ... because you killed her."

The small warrior raised an eyebrow as she stayed silent to hear Brutus's response.

"You have to understand. I needed that navy and knew that I could never compete with Antony for the affections of a beautiful woman. I thought if she were gone, I would have a chance to negotiate with her admirals."

Now the warrior-bard retorted to that snidely. "That's your justification for murder?"

The Roman Commander lifted his eyes to the Amazon Queen standing stoically beside Xena. "When I killed Caesar, I crossed the Rubicon of blood." His eyes shifted back to Xena. "Why have you called me here?"

"It seems we have a common enemy." The Warrior Princess leaned forward in her seat to lock eyes with the small man. "Marc Antony."

"You see what a dangerous man he is."

The warrior inwardly chuckled. "Oh, yes, I do. His fleet is moving toward the mouth of the Nile. You meet him there and I'll reinforce. Together, we'll chop him into little pieces."

"Why should I trust you?" Brutus shook his head in disagreement.

"I'll go with you." Gabrielle folded her arms against her chest as she gave a smug look.

"I can't ask for a better guarantee than that. You won't regret this."

Xena laughed faintly and sat back in her seat. "I won't regret this." She watched Brutus study her then walk off.

Gabrielle turned her head to her Soulmate. "The trap's been set. Perhaps you won't have to..."

"Kill Antony," finished the warrior. Xena narrowed her eyes with her hands folding her lap. "I can't wait to kill him," she whispered darkly.

The small warrior couldn't hold back the tiny grin from tweaking her lips. She did suggest Xena's dark side coming back... didn't she?

~*~*~*~

"Perhaps when we have dealt with Brutus, a journey on the scented waters of the Nile ... on a golden barge with oars of silver which will keep stroke to the tune of flutes and make the waters which they beat to follow faster as though amorous of each stroke."

The Warrior Princess closed her eyes to hold back her anger. Slowly her eyes opened again. *Only with my Soulmate, Antony.* "Antony, we're about to go into a major sea battle."

Marc Anthony turned his head to Xena as his body swayed with the ship's rocking. "With Egypt's navy, we cannot lose."

~*~*~*~

"Once we engage Antony, you'll give Xena the signal?"

"Yes." Gabrielle smirked inside of herself. *If only he knew... prices to pay.*

"Then we'll see who will become Rome."

The warrior-bard turned her head to the man. "You've become an ambitious man, Brutus."

The Roman Commander narrowed his eyes a little at the small woman. "People change, Gabrielle. I remember when you spoke only of Peace ... and now you're a warrior."

Xena's Soulmate clenched her hands. "And you're a murderer," she whispered angrily.

"I killed Cleopatra for the good of Rome."

"How many people have to die for the good of Rome?" asked the Amazon Queen with a harsh tone.

~*~*~*~

Octavius looked across the Nile as his eyes widen. "There!" He pointed to the signal. "Time to order the Egyptian fleet against both Antony and Brutus." He ordered the Egyptian men to, "Prepare for battle!"

~*~*~*~

"The Egyptians are attacking our fleet!" yelled Brutus's soldier.

"What?!" Brutus turned to Gabrielle. "You knew?"

The small warrior backed up while kneeling.

~*~*~*~

"Cleopatra's navy is attacking both Roman fleets from the rear!"

"Both Roman fleets?!" Marc Anthony turned towards Xena and saw her stepping back. "Xena!" He drew his sword instantly. "You win my trust ... my love ... and then you betray everything."

Xena's eyes darkened as she drew her sword. "Antony..." *You're asking for your death*, she continued mentally.

"I did..." The Roman stabbed forward with his sword. "...love you!"

~*~*~*~

Gabrielle ducked and spun her sais forward. "Come on Brutus, an eye for an eye." She grinned and went on attack against her enemy.

Brutus growled and spun his sword to stop the warrior's attack. He soon made quick use of his strength and anger.

~*~*~*~

"You should have saved yourself," whispered the Warrior Princess as she rammed her sword through Marc Anthony's heart.

Marc Anthony dropped his sword and leaned into the warrior's sword. His eyes closed at knowing he was defeated by the person he loved. "I lost you," he ushered back.

"You never had me," answer Xena. She jerked the sword hard and felt the warm blood creeping into her hands. "You played with fire." She pulled her sword out and watched the man fall to his knees. Her navy blue eyes flickered across to her Soulmate. She spotted her lover on her back with Brutus over top of her. "I don't think so." She took running steps to go after her partner.

Gabrielle narrowed her eyes at the man above her. "Brutus, don't." She had felt herself go warm and saw her Soulmate out of the corner of her eye coming towards her.

"This is your price for betrayal, Gabrielle." The Roman raised his sword up.

The warrior-bard gritted her teeth, spun her sai out, and sat up rapidly. Her sai went plunging into Brutus's stomach simultaneously as Xena's sword. She jerked her sai hard and said, "Your price for murder, Brutus."

Brutus closed his eyes, dropped his sword, and was connecting to the wood planks.

Gabrielle sighed in relief as she watched Brutus's body slip free of her sai and her Soulmate's sword. She rapidly turned to Xena beside her. "Xena?"

"Got you." The warrior dropped her sword and pulled her partner in.

The Amazon Queen held tight as the darkness from even inside of her began to fade out. She was shaking.

~*Part 15*~

"Xena ... Rome owes you a debt of gratitude." Octavius smiled to the Warrior Princess.

"Rome owes me nothing. Octavius, you'll soon be the new leader. It is you who must support and recognize this new alliance. It cost Cleopatra her life. Make sure it was worth it."

Octavius nodded as he watched Xena and Gabrielle walk down the pier towards a Greek merchant ship. Why couldn't he shake that feeling of 'it wasn't suppose to happen like this?' But he couldn't explain that part, he could only stand there and watch the Soulmates of Time board the Greek ship.

The Soulmates quickly went on the ship and went below. Down there, they rid themselves of their articles. They did want to see the last seconds of Egypt that they could on deck.

Before Gabrielle climbed the steps to go above deck, she stopped. "Xena?" She grasped her Soulmate's hand.

The warrior shook her head. She knew what her lover wanted to ask and responded to that. "Cleopatra always put the well-being of her kingdom ahead of her own. Respect this. She died in the hopes that the Egyptian people might for the first time choose their next great leader. She was Egypt."

"I know," whispered the small warrior. "But you know I think it's wasteful... her death."

"I agree." The warrior bent forward to kiss her lover's cheek. "But I think it was unavoidable." She lifted her head a little.

Gabrielle sighed sadly and climbed the steps. She knew her Soulmate was right.

Xena licked her lips. She knew that was the answer and the worst one but it was fate. She ascended the ladder behind her partner.

Once on the deck, they found Torrid standing tall with his hand behind his back, waiting.

"Ra," whispered the warrior-bard. She crossed the distance and pulled the minister in for a hug.

The warrior smiled faintly as she stood near the main mast.

"Safe travels, Gabrielle." Torrid released his friend. "I'll miss you."

"And I'll miss you, Ra." The Amazon Queen squeezed the Egyptian's shoulder. "Thank you for all your help."

"Quite welcome." He smiled then lifted his eyes to Xena.

The Warrior Princess smiled warmly and strolled up to the man. She pulled him in for a hug. As she pulled away, she whispered, "Thank you for helping Gabrielle."

Torrid nodded and gave a wink. He took a step back towards the gangplank. "Egypt is in your debt once more." He bowed his head. "Ask of her and Nile, and she will deliver."

"We need nothing, Ra." Gabrielle folded her arms. "Just Egypt's prosperity."

"And this will come true due to both your hands." The minister lifted his heads. "I'll see you in the future, ladies." He walked over to the gangplank. "Take care."

"You too." Gabrielle smiled warmly and waved.

Torrid nodded briskly before disappearing off the boat.

~*Part 16*~

Gabrielle moaned and closed her eyes tightly.

Xena tightened her arms around her partner. "Hang in there."

"I'm good," whispered the short warrior. She opened her eyes to stare at the wood planks. Her left arm hung out from the bed.

The Soulmates slept together in a bunk in a cabin with other sailors. It was surprisingly a large cabin to begin with. But here they laid as they stuck it out in a small storm. They'd been at sail for three days now and Greece was in their horizon.

"Hey, come here." The warrior turned her partner.

The Amazon Queen snuggled into her lover's warm body. Her head tucked under Xena's chin and she wrapped her legs around the older woman's legs. "Thanks," she whispered.

"No problem." Xena's eyes closed gradually. "The storm is almost over."

"How you figure?"

The taller woman chuckled to only shake Gabrielle. "Because the rocking is lighter."

"Right," whispered the younger woman. "Just testing you."

"Glad I passed." The warrior kissed her lover's forehead.

"Me too," teased the small woman. She lifted her head a little and kissed her lover.

The warrior deepened the kiss and placed her right hand behind Gabrielle's head.

A hatch slammed.

The Soulmates separated instantly with a giggly Gabrielle.

The small warrior rolled to her other side so it looked like nothing.

The sailor walked along the wood planks with tense legs against the rolling. He peered up to the bunk with the two women. "How you be, mates?" He walked spread his legs while swaying with the boat.

"Fine," smiled the warrior-bard. "How's it going up on deck?"

The sailor rolled his eyes. "Bloomin ridiculous up there." His lips creased into a grin. "Loven every second of it."

Gabrielle chuckled. "Good, we'll come up there when it's... drier."

"I don't blame ye." He chuckled and started walking. "Excuse... gotta use the loom."

"Not needed information," whispered the small woman.

Xena chuckled and dug her head a little more into her lover's neck.

"We're always getting caught like a couple of kids," grumbled the small warrior.

Again, the older woman chuckled. "Maybe 'cause we're a couple of love sick kids."

"I know that," jibed the Amazon Queen. "We always have been."

"Keeps getting worse too," added the warrior.

Gabrielle laughed then patted her lover's thigh. "No... keeps getting better too... you mean."

"Yeah... just testing you."

The small woman snickered and mocked her partner with, "Glad I passed."

"You're relentless."

"I had to get it from somewhere." Gabrielle heard the door to the head open and saw the sailor walking by again.

"Wasn't from me," ushered the warrior.

"Cha'right." The small woman said loudly. She smiled sheepishly to the sailor when he turned around.

"Beg me pardon, mates but..." The sailor stumbled to his right from the strong rock. "But... why didn't ye two get separate bunks?"

The short warrior opened her mouth, getting ready to respond but was cut off.

"We like sleeping together," deadpanned the warrior.

Gabrielle shut her eyes and mouth. She groaned inwardly.

The sailor smiled shyly. "Right... was jus' wonderen.... I'll be on me way." He turned and scrambled up the ladder to go above deck.

"Oooh gods!" Gabrielle turned to face her partner. "And I'm relentless?"

The warrior shrugged. "Was just telling the man the truth."

"Uh huh." The small warrior poked her lover's chest. "You're nothing but trouble."

"Mmm, with a capitol 'T' too."

The Amazon Queen snickered while brushing her fingertips over her warrior's lips. "More like all capitol letters."

The boat rolled hard to the left.

"Oh Hades!" The small warrior-bard clung to her lover as she felt herself getting ready to fall out of the high bunk bed.

Xena pressed her boots hard against the wall to hold herself in place. She pulled her Soulmate in tightly. "Hang on."

"Agreed." Gabrielle closed her eyes as the boat settled back to normal. She let her breath out slowly. "What a way to ruin a moment."

"Uh huh." Xena lifted her head a little and reached for a blanket. She pulled it over their bodies. "Getting a little cold."

"Yeah," replied the small woman. She pressed her body against the older woman's tightly. Her fingers curled around the blanket as she tugged it over their bodies. "Hey, snug as a bug in a rug."

"You're a poet and you didn't even know it."

"Oh that's so rich, warrior."

Xena chuckled and closed her eyes. "Wasn't trying to be."

"Sure." Gabrielle sighed and snuggled in with her eyes closing now. "I can't believe... what happened *back there*," she stressed.

"I know," whispered the dark woman. "It's over."

"Thank the gods."

"Thank love, you mean."

The Queen nodded and nuzzled her lover's neck. "Hey, you have to admit we did well. We beat Egypt's power. How many people do you think get to say that?"

"Only us."

"Exactly," added Gabrielle. She went silent for a moment but ushered, "I was scared of the darkness at the end."

"I know." Xena fell quiet as she started thinking. "Is the darkness what you really want from me?"

"I want you." The younger warrior lifted her head with powerful green eyes. "That includes the darkness."

"Gabrielle-"

"Xena-"

"Gabrielle-"

"Hold on, Xena-"

"No, Gabrielle-"

The small warrior moved her hand over her lover's mouth to stop her. "Don't, damn it." She narrowed her eyes. "I was scared." She removed her hand. "But I didn't say I didn't like it."

Xena stared into her lover's eyes as she let her friend's fingertips warm her lips. "Why were you scared?" she whispered in concern. She knew the reason why but had to hear her partner say it.

"Because I enjoyed it... because I felt it too and enjoyed it."

"That's the risk we run, Gabrielle." The warrior shook her head as she became worried. "That's the risk... you getting the darkness too through our bond. I don't like that... I do not want you to fall into something like that."

"Wait." The short woman paused and relaxed. "Okay... we share emotions... share everything." Gabrielle rested her hand on her lover's shoulder. "So... that means better control."

"That also means things are more intense."

"Maybe so but..." The small woman held her hand up. "But we have the same

emotions at the same time... its shared. Ssso, the darkness is split between us. Then that means the darkness is only half as strong on you."

"But it's got you too."

"I can deal."

"No deal." The warrior narrowed her eyes. "You can't handle it like I have over time."

"Xena..." Gabrielle narrowed her eyes now. "You are me... I can handle it fine." She shook her head while raising an eyebrow. "And the light between us? It has and never will disappear. That's shared between us as well and it's balancing the darkness. It works perfectly."

"No," growled the warrior.

The small woman leaned in so that their noses touched. "Yes," she growled back. "Don't be stubborn."

"Mule," growled the older woman.

"Ass," growled back the short warrior.

Xena dropped her jaw. "I'm offended."

"Ha!" Gabrielle poked her partner's chest. "So am I." She narrowed her eyes. "Darkness."

"No," responded the hard voice.

"Yes."

"I don't think so."

"I think so."

"That's only you than."

"Pffft." Gabrielle rolled her eyes. "I know you agree with me." She pressed her nose harder against Xena's. "You couldn't hold that darkness back if you wanted to."

The warrior's eyes narrowed. "This isn't funny."

"Who's laughing?"

"You're trying to trick me into this."

Gabrielle shrugged. "I'm just pointing out the fact you're scared."

"That's the last thing I am." The tall woman's eyes shifted into darkness.

"Oh, there it is." The small woman breathed deeply. "Come on Xena, you know you wanted the darkness free."

"Gabrielle," whispered the stoic voice.

"Oooh, look at those baby blues twinkle." Gabrielle moved to kiss her partner

tenderly.

Xena ended the kiss quickly and ducked her head under her lover's. She breathed heavily. Her eyes closed tightly in control.

The small woman pressed her lips against Xena's forehead. "I'm sorry but... protection, Xena."

"What could this darkness protect?" The warrior lifted her head with eyes that wanted to understand.

"Us." Gabrielle brushed her Soulmate's hair back as a sad smile formed. "We can't lose what we have between us." She kissed Xena's cheek. "We can't lose the love." She kissed Xena's forehead. "We can't lose the bond." She kissed Xena's nose. "We can't lose our soul." She kissed Xena's lips.

The warrior collected her lover's hands as the understanding did come clearer. She smiled partially when the kiss finished. "As long as we have control over the darkness, then it could be helpful."

"And we do with everything, together." The Amazon Queen had a reassuring smile. "Everything is yours, mine, and ours." Her eyes narrowed. "If anybody... or anything tampers with our love and soul then the darkness will come to snub it or them out." She shook her head and held tightly to Xena's hands. "It's time to make use of that darkness and its time we protect us."

"What perfect way for my darkness to pay back in full than to protect our love." Xena chuckled a little. "How ironic."

"Only in the stories." Gabrielle grinned and winked. "Then it's agreed?"

"Agreed... the darkness to protect our love." The warrior raised an eyebrow. "But there will always be a price-"

"That I'll be willing to pay for if it means we walk off together in the end."

Xena nodded with serious eyes. She couldn't say anything more only promise in her kiss that followed.

~*Part 17*~

Gabrielle tilted her head back as she tugged her cloak close against her body. She stared up the main mast. "What's that?" She pointed.

Blue eyes gazed up the mast. "It's a crow's nest." Xena glanced at her lover beside her.

"Interesting." The small warrior looked across the ocean and saw Greece in the horizon. "I can just smell your mother's cooking from here."

The taller woman chuckled and folded her arms so she could keep her cloak close against her body. She gazed over the bow towards Greece. She saw how smooth everything had become after the tiny storm. However, there was still a good breeze to catch the sails, which sent them homeward.

The Amazon Queen gazed upward at the crow's nest high on the main mast. "I bet

there's a nice view from up there."

"Uh huh." The warrior cocked an eyebrow at knowing her partner was formulating a plan. "Nice view from on deck too."

"That too." Gabrielle smirked up towards her Soulmate. "Let's get a better view." She strolled over to the ladder for the crow's nest.

"Gabrielle," warned the warrior. She came up behind her partner. "Heights and you don't mix."

The young warrior grabbed the ladder and went up a little. "I know but you're coming. So us and heights mix." She looked down at her warrior. "See you up there." She started climbing again.

The dark woman sighed but grinned. "Right behind you," she whispered. She started climbing up the ladder.

The Amazon Queen popped through the small opening and came into the crow's nest. She peered down the open hatch. "Come on, pokey."

Xena looked up and rolled her eyes. "Be patient with the elderly will ya."

The short warrior laughed and kneeled down. She held her hand through the open hatch.

The Warrior Princess came up a little more and took her lover's hand. She felt herself actually being hauled into the crow's nest. She bursted through the opening and landed on the planks of the crow's nest. She shook her head and raised an eyebrow at Gabrielle. "Have you been working out?"

Gabrielle started to laugh hard and leaned back against the mast that went through the center of the crow's nest.

"Did I say something funny?" whispered the warrior.

The warrior-bard smiled as she stopped laughing. She pushed herself off the mast and slammed the hatch down with her foot. "You saying something funny?" She came up to her partner. "Always." Her body was pressing into Xena's.

"Glad somebody thinks I have a sense of humor." Xena encircled Gabrielle's waist with her arms. She pulled her partner in.

"They just don't understand you like I do." Gabrielle grinned while slipping her hands through her lover's coat.

Xena lowered her head when a cat grin took her lips. "And what you understanding about me now?"

"That you're loving this incredible view."

"Mmm, true..."

Gabrielle trailed her fingertips to her lover's thighs. "But... there's more."

"Yesss." The tall woman lowered her lips closer to Gabrielle's.

"I understand there's some kind of need going on." The Amazon Queen placed her hands between Xena's legs. She gave a certain command.

"You're getting real close." The warrior kissed her lover gently and spread her legs out.

"Mmm, I'm getting hot," whispered the warrior-bard. Her right hand crept up the muscular thigh past the leather skirt.

"Me too," ushered the Warrior Princess. Her body straightened up without warning. She dropped her head back, placed her hands to the railing of the crow's nest, and sprawled her arms out. Her knuckles went white plus she leaned against the railing.

The Amazon Queen let her lips creep along into a grin. "I think I found the understanding." Her right hand was slowly pumping in and out from Xena's cloak.

"Definitellyyy." Xena closed her eyes tightly.

"Lean into me, Xen." Gabrielle wrapped her left arm around her Soulmate's waist.

The warrior was more than happy to do just that. She let go of the railing and leaned against her lover. Her head dropped down onto Gabrielle's. She sucked in a breath and gritted her teeth.

"This looks better." The small warrior's right hand was still moving and picking up speed. "Now it looks like we're just trying to keep warm."

The dark woman wanted to laugh but she could only moan. "I think we... accomplished... that," she rasped. She felt a strong thrust given to her body and the passion washed over her.

Gabrielle closed her eyes and nuzzled her Soulmate's neck. "I love you, Xena."

The warrior whimpered faintly and held tighter to her partner. She felt the speed increase.

"It is a nice view from up here," she chuckled.

Xena grinned for a brief second. "I'll... look... later."

"A little busy?" teased the small woman. She took a deep breath.

"I think... the bottth of us... are."

"True." The Queen pressed her lips against her lover's neck and lifted her head. "Hold on tight."

The warrior knew that meaning. She clenched her teeth, tightened her arms around her partner, and let the feelings take control. She let her Soulmate take control.

And within a few seconds, Gabrielle had complete control of her Soulmate. Gabrielle, however, gave the control back in a kiss to her Soulmate.

It all left the warrior breathing heavily and holding onto the warrior-bard, in hopes not fall to her knees. These were some of her most favorite feelings.

"Yup..." Gabrielle bobbed her head. "The warriors are nestling in the crow's nest."

Xena groaned dramatically.

~*~*~*~

"No, I'm serious."

The tall woman shrugged and lifted her eyes to the horizon. "Prove it." She shook her head. "I see no proof that the known-world could be round." She grinned at another one of Gabrielle's ideals.

"Common sense tells you the earth is not flat... it's stupid."

Xena chuckled. "And people today would pronounce you insane for saying the earth is round."

Gabrielle rolled her eyes. "Then people are stupid," she grumbled.

The warrior smirked and lowered her chin on top of her partner's head. "Maybe."

The Soulmates still stood in the crow's nest together in each other's arms.

"No... people are just... uneducated." Gabrielle breathed in relaxation. "But the world is round."

"Prove it," urged the warrior. She knew her partner was right but wanted to hear this ramping and raving.

The warrior-bard made a smug look. "First, everybody says there is a huge waterfall at the edge of the world. Where in Hades do we get all this water to replenish the oceans? That's a lot of water going over a waterfall that size."

"We get water from the gods."

The Amazon Queen chuckled. "Right... come on, Xena. You believe in the gods as much as I do." She drummed her fingertips on the railing. "Okay, the sun."

"What about it?"

"How it sets." Gabrielle tilted her head as she studied the horizon and the sun's reflection on the water. "If the known-world was flat then the sun wouldn't move across the sky like it does." She grinned. "The sun arches across the sky instead of going straight across."

"So?" shrugged the warrior.

The small woman didn't reply instantly as she studied the horizon. "That's it... the horizon." She pointed at the small strip of land that was Greece. "If the world wasn't round we'd be able to see farther. But since the world is round there's a horizon and we can only see for a certain amount." She peered up to her partner. "And the stars, they're around us not just above us." Gabrielle arched an eyebrow. "You know I'm right."

Xena laughed quietly and kissed her lover's temple. "You are." She looked up at the horizon. "We just better not tell anybody."

The Queen chuckled and nodded. "True... we'd probably get hung for it."

"Probably," agreed the warrior with a grin. She sighed contently then tightened her arms around her Soulmate's waist. "It'll be nice to see Amphipolis again."

"Yes it will be." Gabrielle dropped her head against her best friend's shoulder. "I wonder how many Amazons will be at the port... waiting for us."

"I don't wanna think about that."

The small woman chuckled and smiled. "Just our admirers."

"Yours... not mine."

"What's mine is yours," teased the warrior-bard.

"Hades," replied the older woman with a chuckle. "I just want you."

"You got me." Gabrielle took a deep breath. "But I still want a new outfit when we get home," she whispered.

"Gabrielle," growled the warrior.

~*~*~*~

The small warrior slung the pack over her back and walked down the gangplank.

Xena followed behind with a grin.

As soon as their boots connected with the dock, they heard a yell.

"Queen Gabrielle!"

"Oh no," whispered the Amazon Queen. "Hide me, Xen."

The Warrior Princess chuckled and brought her arm across her lover's shoulder. "Come on, my Queen. Be brave." She walked down the dock.

Gabrielle sighed and peered up to Xena. "A little c-c-courage."

The older woman winked down at her smaller warrior. She lifted her head up to see two Amazons come sprinting down the dock towards them. "Here we go," she whispered.

"Gabrielle and Xena!"

The Queen was slammed with a hard hug.

The Consort was rammed with a powerful hug.

Peeling off the two Amazons is exactly what the Soulmates were doing in a few seconds.

The small warrior sighed in relief. "Hi, Joan," she rasped then chuckled.

The redhead Amazon smiled warmly and released her Queen. "It's guid to see you, lass."

Teresa patted Xena's back hard and stepped back. "You look tanner."

Xena rolled her eyes. "Thanks."

The Queen smiled to her two Amazons. "Figured somebody would be here."

"A lot of somebodys, lass." Joan folded her arms. "There's a whole lot of us."

"Oh no." Gabrielle glanced between her Amazons with desperation. "How many?"

The third in command started counting with her fingers. "One... two... three, four five... six of us."

The small warrior dropped her jaw. "I do not need my whole Nation here."

"Awe lass, we're not all here." Joan grinned and put her hands on her hips.

"Where are the rest?" questioned the warrior.

Teresa glanced back down the dock. "They're coming." She gazed back to Gabrielle. "Three of them are new."

"Gabrielle!"

The Queen was pulled out of the conversation at hearing the familiar voice. She peered between the two Amazons to see her regent. She smiled so warmly. "Ephiny!" She chuckled. "Excuse me." She broke off running towards her friend.

Xena smiled and crossed her arms. She watched her Soulmate engulf the regent with a large hug. She chuckled and walked down the dock with her two friends.

"Xena?"

The Warrior Princess corked an eyebrow at the regent. "Ephiny?"

"Stop being stubborn," Ephiny joked.

Xena laughed at her friend. "Like I haven't heard that before." She stepped forward to hug her friend tightly.

"It's sssso good to have you both home." The regent pulled back with her smile. "How was the trip?"

"It was... interesting." Gabrielle grinned and moved to stand beside her Soulmate.

Ephiny put her hands on her hips. "Did what happen... happen?"

"Yes," whispered the Queen. "Later."

The regent nodded in agreement. She brightened up. "We have three new Amazons in the central Nation."

"Really?"

"Yup, brought them along for the ride." Ephiny turned in time to see these three new Amazons.

The three Amazons strolled up with warm smiles and stood beside their regent.

Ephiny held her hand out to the farthest away. "That is Lesia, from the northern tribe." Her eyes went to the middle Amazon with dirty-blond hair and looked older. "And this is Renotta from the western tribe." She grinned to the last Amazon closes to her. "And beside me is Karena." She turned her head back to her Queen. "Karena is from the southeastern tribe."

Gabrielle smiled warmly to each of the new Amazons of her Central tribe. "Nice to meet you three."

The three new Amazons smiled right back.

"We heard about your challenge a month or so back."

The Amazon Queen focused her attention on Karena. "Seems like awhile ago." She chuckled.

Lesia grinned. "You're famous." She put her hands on her hips and tilted her head. "I wish I could have seen the challenge against you and Mairead."

"It was something to be had," whispered Renotta.

"I take it you were there?" Gabrielle raised an eyebrow at the older Amazon.

Renotta laughed slightly and nodded. "I was, sweetie. You did a beautiful job of handling Mairead."

The warrior-bard crinkled her nose with a smile. "Thanks." She turned her head to Ephiny. "Who's in charge in the village?"

"Reece."

Gabrielle's eyes widen. "And she's... trained enough to run the show?"

The regent nodded and grinned. "It'll be good for Amarice, Gabrielle." She laughed quietly. "Don't worry, Solari and Ep are there to watch over things."

"Good." The Queen nodded in approval. "And how did things go with Masika earlier?"

"The village was in one piece and the Amazons were shaking in their leathers."

The small warrior laughed.

"Figures," mumbled Xena.

Ephiny peered up to the dark woman. "You two still not getting along?"

"Masika and I?" The warrior shook her head. "Never, it's a platonic agreement between us."

The regent laughed then shook her head. "Right on." She sighed contently and smiled

to her Queen. "Ready to head to Amphipolis?"

"More than you can imagine." Gabrielle held her hand out towards the end of the dock.

Ephiny nodded, stepped aside, held her hands out, and bowed her head. "My Queen."

The Queen just rolled her eyes and strolled off with her Soulmate. "Thank you, my regent." She turned back and smirked to Ephiny. "And please walk behind me like any other regent."

The regent laughed and straightened up. "That's the last thing I'll do." She power walked along the dock with Gabrielle's Amazons bringing up the rear. "I'm not like any other regent."

"How true." Gabrielle smiled to her friend walking beside her.

Joan came up beside Ephiny and glanced over to Gabrielle. "So lass, any guid capers to share?"

The warrior-bard chuckled as her head bobbed. "A real good one, Joan."

"I can't wait to hear this caper."

Ephiny turned her head to the third in command. "TC, where'd you stable the horses?"

Teresa looked ahead from Ephiny and pointed to a left of the port. "Over there." She shrugged and dropped her hand. "Didn't cost anything."

"Probably because they know we're Amazons," cut in Lesia.

"Amazon explains a lot of things," said Renotta as she elbowed Lesia in the side.

Lesia snickered evilly.

"I'm missing something guid here," whispered Joan. "I know I'm new but for Teufates's sake."

Karena chuckled and patted Joan on the back. "It's for Artemis's sake... you're an Amazon and not a Celtic warrior anymore."

"Under my reign she's still a Celtic warrior." Gabrielle shot a smug look to Karena. "I do like versatility in my Nation." She was still grinning but seriousness was in her eyes.

Karena chuckled and bowed her head. "Yes of course, my Queen." She gazed back up with a grin. "Then I can call all my friends... mates."

The Queen laughed and gazed forward. She saw them coming to the end of the dock. She peered up to her lover. "I'm glad we're back," she uttered.

"Me too," whispered back the warrior. She bent over to kiss her Soulmate's cheek. "Soon we'll be home."

The smaller woman nodded in agreement and she smiled with her rare smile.

~*~*~*~

"So things are going well with Amarice?" Gabrielle spread her legs a little and propped her elbows on her knees. She turned her head to Ephiny.

"Yes." The regent sat back against the rock. "I'm very happy with her results so far." She looked away from the fire. "She's learned a lot, Gabrielle."

The Queen smiled and glanced across the camp in the dark. "Good suggestion."

Xena smiled to her partner. "I had help." She winked and went back to stoking the fire.

It was fairly late at night. The group had dinner, everybody was asleep but Ephiny and the Soulmates.

The warrior-bard smiled however went serious when she looked back to her Amazon. "How are the other Amazons responding to her?"

"Very well too." Ephiny folded her hands in her lap. "She's shaping to be a very good Princess." She chuckled a little. "She's matured in a few days."

"She stopped jumping beds?" the warrior joked as she walked across the camp.

The regent grinned to the Warrior Princess. "I think she learned her lesson."

"Good," responded the warrior evenly. She walked over and sat on the ground in front of her Soulmate.

Gabrielle moved her left hand then ran her fingers idly through her lover's midnight hair. "How about Teresa?"

"Solari has her well trained." Ephiny nodded her head to the new third in command sleeping beside Renotta. "She's perfect for the job." Her eyes averted back at Gabrielle.

"Good to hear." Gabrielle sighed with a contented smile. She lowered her eyes to Xena and she thought for a moment. "Mmm." She turned her head towards the regent. "This winter."

Ephiny raised an eyebrow in question.

"This winter... Xena will be Queen for a week or two."

The fire crackled in the silence.

The regent opened her mouth to reply but she said nothing. She closed her mouth and thought. She opened her mouth again but nothing came. She chuckled and shook her head. "Just... why?"

"It'll be good for both the Amazons and Xena." Gabrielle went serious and spoke lowly. "Because I'm worried something may happen to me in the future and Xena might need to run the show." She saw Ephiny about to protest but she held up a hand. "I know Ephiny... you're the regent." She lowered her hand. "But Xena is my consort and the chosen... she should be next in line to run the Nation."

The regent sighed deeply and flickered her eyes over to the silent Warrior Princess.
"Xena?"

The warrior corked an eyebrow. "I couldn't fight her either, Eph."

The Amazon laughed deeply. "What the Queen wants... the Queen gets." She grinned at the Queen.

Gabrielle shot a smug look back. "Naturally." She chuckled and gazed at her partner.
"Tired?"

The older woman dropped her head back. "Yup."

"Get some sleep you two." Ephiny stood up. "I think I will."

"We will." The small warrior smiled. "Sleep well, Eph."

"I will, you too." The Amazon smiled before glancing away. She went to the other side of the camp and settled down beside Lesia.

"That... went well," confessed the younger woman.

The dark female chuckled and dropped her head against Gabrielle's leg. "Seemed too."

"You know..." Gabrielle shook her head. "I'm still rocking like last time."

Xena patted her companion's leg. "You'll feel better tomorrow."

"True." The short woman sat up straight so she could stretch her back out. "I am exhausted."

"We're gonna need a vacation from our vacation."

The Queen chuckled and leaned forward once more. "We did... work when we were in Egypt."

The warrior nodded before reclining back. "We still have a month before we go to the Amazons." She lowered her head back into her lover's breasts.

"Yeah, thank the gods." She encircled her arms around Xena's chest. "Plenty of time to fatten up and sleep."

"I don't think so." The warrior narrowed her eyes. "We're going to be exercising."

Gabrielle pouted. "No fun."

"Let me put it this way..." The dark warrior started to grin. "Do you want your Warrior Princess to get her butt kicked by mere thugs after our vacation?"

"On second thought..." The younger woman chuckled. "I don't feel like getting my own kicked."

"Gee thanks," snapped the warrior.

The small woman dropped her forward into her lover's head. She muffled her giggles.

The warrior let a smile twitch at the corner of her lips. "We're exercising," she declared.

"Alright..." Gabrielle lifted her head. "I don't think I could be that lazy anyway."

Xena formed her expression into disgust. "Nasty feeling."

"Uh..." The warrior-bard bit back her yawn. "Huh."

"It's way past our bedtime." The warrior stood up and peered into unfocused green eyes. "The seas got to you, huh?"

The small woman nodded. "Yeah." She ran her fingers through her hair. "I'm pretty exhausted." She lifted her eyes high up to Xena. "Boat rides keep me tense."

"I know." The Warrior Princess stepped forward, leaned down, and scooped her partner up into her arms.

Gabrielle nuzzled her lover's neck. "Be quiet, I don't want my Amazons knowing you carry me."

The tall woman chuckled. "I'll tiptoe."

"You can't..." The small woman dropped her head against her Soulmate's shoulder.

The Warrior Princess maneuvered silently through the camp. "Why not?" she whispered.

"It's not in the warrior's religion."

Xena stopped beside the fire. "And carrying you is in the warrior's religion?"

"Sure." The Queen smirked. "It's fine if warriors carry each other... we just can't tell anybody."

The dark woman just grinned as she knelt down next to a bedroll. She placed Gabrielle in it then reached down and removed her lover's sais. Standing up, she removed her own weapons and placed them all together above the head of the bedroll. "Scoot over," teased the warrior as she lay down.

"Excuse me, Miss 'I wear my armor to bed,'" remarked the warrior-bard.

"Hey you never know... an army might attack."

The younger warrior rolled her eyes and rolled into her Soulmate's arms. "Always prepared huh?"

"When around you... yes."

"Now now... we established the fact that we both bring in the trouble... together."

Xena chuckled and smiled. "True." She kissed her companion's forehead. "Get some sleep... enough of the sarcastic jokes."

Gabrielle chuckled but sighed. She lifted her head. "I love you," she uttered.

"I love you too." The warrior kissed her Soulmate warmly. When she pulled back she studied the warm emerald eyes. She opened her mouth to speak but didn't say anything at first, she still composed her words. "Gabrielle... thank you for..." She didn't know how to phrase it right.

"I know... I know." Gabrielle caressed her lover's cheek. "You'd do the exact same if part of me strayed." She smiled warmly. "We made it though... right?"

"Yeah," whispered the warrior. She knew that was all that mattered. She studied her Soulmate's eyes and saw all the answer for everything she'd ever have questions about.

Slowly, Gabrielle let a smile crease her lips. Just times like this sent her stomach quivering with excitement. She lowered her eyes with a small nervous laugh.

"Every time." Xena grinned and leaned forward.

The Queen felt the lips brush her nose. She moved her head and pressed her lips into her lover's. At the end of the kiss, she wrapped her arms and legs around Xena. Her head tucked under Xena's chin.

Xena held tightly to her Soulmate with a smile. "Gods, I love perfection."

"Dido," whispered Gabrielle. She closed her eyes with another rare smile.

Xena mirrored the smile herself and shut her eyes slowly.

The Soulmates of Time...

~*Part 18*~

Xena leaned against the post of the tent. "What's taking her so long?" she mumbled under her breath.

Cyrene raised an eyebrow at her daughter. "Patience honey, I'm sure she's putting everything on perfectly."

The warrior huffed and crossed one leg over the other.

"Dear, she isn't doing this for herself."

The dark warrior glanced back to her mother. "Then tell me why she's getting a new outfit?"

The mother chuckled as she brushed back her hair from the slight breeze. "Try looking in the mirror, dear."

The taller woman sighed because she knew her mother was right. She stared across Amphipolis's market place.

They'd made it back to Amphipolis yesterday afternoon and glad for it. The Amazons headed back to the Amazon Village as soon as they left the Soulmates in Amphipolis. Today, Gabrielle decided to go hunting for that new outfit. So here was Xena, waiting for her partner to reappear with her new outfit she had in mind. She'd also realized, while standing here, that Gabrielle had snuck the two Egyptian armband bracelets

along.

Gabrielle took the tight necklace off and placed it down on top of her other clothes. She looked down at the silver jeweled belt and adjusted it perfectly with the short red skirt. "I think I'm good," she whispered to herself. She gazed out of the crack of the tent flap and smiled to Cyrene.

The innkeeper knew the meaning. She grinned at her daughter. "Come here, dear."

The warrior lifted herself from the post and stood beside her mother facing the tent.

The Amazon Queen chuckled and walked through the tent flaps with her head down.

As Gabrielle raised her head up, Xena raised an eyebrow up.

Gabrielle took a step forward, clenched up her hands, and stood in waiting judgement of the new outfit.

Xena blinked.

Gabrielle grinned evilly.

Xena stared.

Gabrielle chuckled deeply.

"Cat has her tongue, sweetie." Cyrene laughed quietly and smiled to the young woman. "You look beautiful, Gabrielle." She shifted her weight to her other foot. "The red is you." She tilted her head. "Velvet?"

The warrior-bard nodded. "Yup." She reached up with her right hand to adjust the golden armband on her opposite arm. "Still getting use to this."

The tavern owner shook her head with an awed smile. "Very impressive."

The young warrior smiled. "Thanks, mom." She peered up to Xena with hidden concern in her eyes. She was needing her Soulmate's words.

Xena never shifted her stoic expression. She unfolded her arms, walked up to her partner, placed her hands on Gabrielle's shoulders, and lowered her lips close to Gabrielle's ear. "Please, explain to me why you keep looking so much more incredibly sexy?"

Gabrielle's tongue ran across her molars as she came up with a good response. "Trust me," she whispered back, "I only do it for you." Her voice was deep and in a purr.

"Keep it that way." Xena licked her lips and her voice went deeper as well as more into a whisper. "The moment we're alone..." She didn't finish the sentence and straightened up. Her eyes twinkled to Gabrielle.

The small woman grinned and her eyes sparkled back.

The warrior stepped backwards to stand beside her mother again. "Not bad." She nodded.

Cyrene chuckled. Oh, she knew the truth. "So, the sweetie gets a new outfit?" She

peered up to her daughter.

"I'm gamed." Xena crossed her arms with her eyes locked on Gabrielle. "Love?"

The small warrior nodded. "A little cold for it but I'm... liking this outfit."

"Good." The Warrior Princess strolled off to find the merchant.

Cyrene watched her daughter leave and chuckled to herself. She turned her head to Gabrielle. "You've done her in."

"I know," whispered the warrior-bard. "I'm afraid of what will happen to me." She chuckled and walked into the tent.

The innkeeper followed and helped her daughter-in-law collect her things. "Now, where'd you get the arm bracelets?"

Gabrielle peeked at her arm bracelets. "Xena bought them for me in Egypt."

The older woman smiled as she studied the bracelet on the woman's left arm. "They're lovely, sweetie." She glimpsed up to the warrior-bard. "She's spoiling you, huh?"

"Oh yeah," she chuckled. The small woman straightened up with her old leathers, skirt, and jewelry.

"But I have a feeling she doesn't get off that easy either."

"Never," confessed the young woman with an even voice. She strolled out of the tent with a smile.

Cyrene smiled to herself and headed out.

Xena came up beside the other two women. "Paid for." She reached forward to take her partner's now older outfit. "Got these."

"I can handle them," refused Gabrielle.

The taller woman leaned towards her Soulmate. "Trust me love, you want me busy carrying these," she uttered.

The short warrior laughed nervously and let go of the leathers. "I'm in big trouble."

"With a capital 'T' too." Xena sauntered off with her lover's leathers.

"I do believe I'll be... visiting Ferus this evening." Cyrene nodded briskly as she stared at her daughter's back. "For supper." She flashed a smile at Gabrielle and strolled off.

The small warrior's head bobbed. "I won't be walking for a week... minimum." She made a grin tweak her lips. "And I can't wait!" She laughed with excitement and jogged after her Soulmate.

The End