

Jan widened her eyes and waited for the other shoe.

Mel obliged. "Nothing more personal?"

"Thought you didn't want me to talk about it."

"That was your interpretation."

"Do I wish I had a woman like Xena in my life? Is that what my dream was telling me, Dr. Freud? Do I want to be swept away by passion the way Gabrielle must've been? What do you think....Doctor? You want me to lie down? Isn't that how it's done?" There was a warmly wicked tone in her voice. "Time for a break anyway. Come on."

Jan lay under the little olive tree that afforded the only natural shade to which they had immediate access and broke open the thermos of coffee.

Mel sat, her back against the bark. "You've been thinking about Destiny again," she accused.

"Have I? Well, I don't do it in a vacuum, do I?"

"Jan, just because 'they' loved each other..."

"What? Finish the thought." Mel leaned her head back against the bole and stared at the empty bluer than blue sky. "Alright. I'll say it. Because they were more than 'just' friends-- does that mean--ergo,therefore--"

"Stop teasing."

"Mel...Melinda...my beautiful friend...I do think some things are inevitable...does that possibility frighten you? It's so damn ironic. We seem to have changed places through the aeons. I'm the wild one, aggressive and...the way I am and you're the sweet innocent, shy and gentle...and kind."

"And afraid."

"Of what? Me? Love?"

"The...unknown."

"Oh. That. Mel..."

"Now, don't patronize... I've never--"

"I wouldn't expect you had."

"Not with anyone, Jan."

"I thought--"

"I know what you thought."

"Now, you're scaring ME," she smiled when she said it, though, and knelt, sitting back on her heels.

"Oh, don't look so...."

"So?" Jan prompted avidly, really wanting to know how she appeared to Mel at the moment. And then they both laughed. "That bad?" Jan managed with a breathless sigh.

"Sometimes I wish I had Xena's...drive," Mel's eyes were moist from laughter and they glowed with intensity.

"Do you remember what it felt like?"

"A little. Sometimes. I dream too you know." "Oh? And what would you do? If you had her...drive. What do you do...in your dreams?" Mel's face reddened.

"That 'good,' huh?"

"Hungry."

"Hmmm?"

"That's how you looked just now. Ecstatic."

"Yes, yes, all of that. Riding on top of the sheer terror. A lot on my shoulders, broad though they may be."

"And strong," she said with a surprising trace of envy.

"Thank you. But what if...you didn't like...it? Then what?" Jan's voice trembled momentarily, but then the ebullience she was feeling overrode the uncertainty. "But I'm a confident chap."