

and cursed and praised and damned Jan's name over and over as the pressure built to a crescendo that would shake them both to shards. They would spend the rest of their lives piecing it all together. Their souls' journey continued here and now as they attempted to merge into a single being, to...come...together. Mel surged, riding the breaking wave, almost, almost, trilling, keening, a wild creature knowing only the moment, now, now, now...weeping Jan's name as she came hot and wet against the lovely young face in this ultimate intimacy. Jan knelt in prayerful solemnity as her blood coursed, pumping hard, racing through her, making her head reel. She crawled onto the bed, straddling, pressing her sex to the dark woman's overheated center, and moving slowly in the slick wetness. Mel didn't think anything could feel as lovely as Jan's tongue on her, in her...but...this... Jan rode against her, all the while studying her face, searching for something in her eyes and when she found it she quickened her motion and shouted her satisfaction, collapsing on Mel's breast and holding on for dear life. All searching ended. She heard the precious heart beating, rapidly, kissed the moist valley, ascended the peaks, began loving the body that housed this beloved soul, her mate, all over again.

She tipped her tongue into every crevice and concavity. Her fingers slowly navigated the delicate terrain where her tongue had known such delicious savors. She propped up on an elbow watching Mel's face at the moment of penetration. "I love you," she whispered. "Love you too," Mel gasped, the movements of her body in response an ebb and flow as the moon's light bathed them in its tender glow.

The younger woman stirred against her in transit from sleep to waking, nuzzling at her breast, dear blonde head nestled into the hollow of her shoulder. "My dearest one," she whispered into the honey gold hair.

They hadn't spoken much, let their hands and mouths and tongues and fingers converse instead, stirring the passion, swimming the Lethe waters, loving each other, banishing all pain-- "Gabrielle?"

"Mmm?"

"I just love to say your name."

The young woman hugged her. Clung to her. "You didn't lose me. You won't. I will never leave your side."

"I wanted you to outlive me."

Gabrielle sighed, her thumb stroked the side of Xena's breast. "Your story will be told."

"I didn't mean for that reason."

"I know, but it's the only thing that would make me want to go on without you."

But nothing had been solved, fate had not been avoided, Xena went back to sleep and was visited by the vision once again.

Mel tightened her arms around Jan as she woke suddenly, heart pounding so hard her breastbone was vibrating with it, painfully.

"You alright?" Jan asked.

"Dream. Just a dream. So...vivid. Do you think lovers can meet each other in their dreams?"

She shivered, or shuddered and Jan pulled her closer. "Sorry, mama used to say, 'someone just walked over my grave.'"

"Serve us right, huh? Occupational hazard."

Mel smiled weakly, still showing the effects of whatever had shaken her in her sleep. She had not been a regular churchgoer since childhood and yet the powerful iconography of a part of this dream that had started so beautifully, peacefully, comfortingly was still ringing throughout her psyche. Clarion and chilling. The name Gabrielle on the tip of her tongue like a mantra.

"You are my dream," Jan said huskily, aroused by the naked nearness of her lover in the