

beside her in the silver moonlight. "You are quite...adorable, you know."

No one had ever called her that. Feisty. Flinty. That was what she usually heard. But there was an undeniable blush of feeling as she heard the growing affection in it and felt the full impact of the fresh loving gaze. She was glad Mel couldn't see her redden in this light. She had a reputation to protect--but...with this woman she instinctively knew that was unnecessary, that they could always allow each other to be vulnerable, could always let down any guard and be completely open and honest with each other.

"I'll never lie to you," she found herself stating before she'd even thought the words, before they'd even formed in her mind.

Mel smiled, hovering above her like some beneficent goddess who deigned to reach down from on high and touch this mortal. The long fingers traced the young woman's ear. "Really quite enchanting...charming." The goddess bent down to run a tongue over the fine pale curve of an ear. Jan's skin rippled, electric, each gold hair on her arms stood erect. Mel's thumb stroked across her mouth, the woman whispered, "Mine," and kissed the corner of that sweet, soft mouth. "When you smile there's this irresistible thing that happens, right here," her tongue licked the spot, "and your eyes sparkle with mischief. Do you have any idea how beautiful you are? I'll bet you have no idea."

Jan felt something moving on her temple and realized in shock that a tear must have trickled somehow from her own eye. No one had ever moved her to tears. Yesterday she would've prided herself on that. The goddess was praising her.

"And this," Mel touched her breast, rubbed the nipple tinglingly erect. "I want this," her mouth closed on the hard candy bud. "And this," she enumerated as her graceful long fingers moved down the silken flesh to hip and belly, crisply golden pubis, and silky soft inner thigh. "Yours, all yours," Jan whispered, barely breathing. With utmost delicacy the deceptive fingers, strong and gentle, melted into her and Mel gasped at the sensation. It was fire and the wettest wet, the warmest warmth, wound so tight around her exquisitely sensitive fingers and she thought she'd come again just from the sheer delicious sensation of touching another woman like this, especially someone she knew she was destined to love.

"Oh, yes," Jan whispered hotly, fervently, moving her hips with the hand. Her climax was right there in those piercing blue eyes and she reached for it. And Mel sensing that--really, why had she thought she wouldn't know, quite naturally, what to do with another woman, this was knowledge older than time--spreading the limbs, diving in to the sweet honeyed welcoming womanness of her.

It was like coming home. Familiar territory, not terra incognita at all as the Romans say...said. The taste of her, the scent equal parts sea and spring rain and mulled wine...sugar and spice, indeed, Mel thought as she snaked her greedy tongue through every cunningly made crevice, the prominences and the deep valleys. Oh, she loved it. She could do this all night.

Finally, an exhausted Jan had to restrain her

after coming an unprecedented third time in a row. "I never thought I'd say it, but please stop--for now. You'll wear it out. And yourself. Can't have that. I want to wake up in the morning and take you like a demon."

The woman moaned in anticipation and curled up in her arms. "Do you think they spent the rest of their lives together?"

"Xena and Gabrielle?" Jan asked, though she knew. "I know they did." Not just their lives, but ours. An eternity. Together. Always. And forever. Amen.

"I think they died together, Jan." That dream was still with her. "They vowed...to each other...always...there was no other way. Not with how much they loved each other."

"These are dangerous times. I hope you know I would never leave you. Love IS what survives," she kissed the spot over Mel's heart. "It's the old yin-yang. Isn't it? Reversed polarities. Gabrielle civilized Xena and you have that effect--or try to-- on me. You're the writer, the