

Even Xena was breathing hard, groaning with momentary physical exhaustion. It was a long time before she moved, her hand, now still, and softly placed was pressed to, cupping Gabrielle's damp mound, wet silk beneath her fingers.

"Sometimes I think you try to make up for the lost time before we were lovers," Gabrielle said, usually the first to speak after the act. The Celebration, she told herself. She felt Xena's mouth quirk into a smile which opened to take her nipple. Gabrielle gasped, but rather tiredly, for the moment. Amazed she was in any shape to still feel the thrill of that intimacy, the tightening of already taut flesh, the twitch of muscle deep in her womb. Moments like these, she knew she could die, gladly, for this woman, this love.

Sitting up, the straw tickled her, and Xena released the firm plump nipple and gazed up at her, question raising her brows.

"Don't you dare move that hand," Gabrielle pleaded. She stretched, luxuriating, arched her back, breasts deliciously pointing, looked up to one small high window at the sun drenched sky then let her eyes take in their

surroundings. Still alive, still together, still in love. She sighed in complete contentment.

Xena watched her lover, each of them processing, saving, pressing in the heart's book every minute detail. Finally, Gabrielle's glowing green eyes met Xena's. Time suspended itself. The earth stood still and then shifted crazily, momentarily, spinning them round, the emotion lurching in their breasts and bellies.

"Anything," the warrior whispered. "Anything you want." Gabrielle smiled, the sun shone and Xena's heart was pure again, cleansed and virginal and waiting to be plucked from her chest.

"Slay me with a look, will you?"

"Give me a...pigeon's egg...or two, huh?"

Their shared grins split wide open and both women laughed. Gabrielle spotted her skirt laying atop a hay bale. "I hope you didn't throw the rest of my clothing over the side..."

Xena reached behind the bard with her free hand. "Here," she handed Gabrielle the saffron hued bodice. The young woman inspected the cloth for any damage. "Intact?" Xena queried.

"This time," Gabrielle acknowledged. "Surprisingly--but the next time you tear it, you repair it."

"Sure," Xena showed her perfect white teeth in an impish grin. "I know how to sew."

"On second thought...the object is not to minimize scarring, but to mend fine fabric. Flesh is different."

"Mmm, I know," Xena assured as she nibbled at Gabrielle's thigh. The young woman opened her limbs, signaling her readiness to continue. Xena smiled, tipped her tongue into the navel as her thumb stroked wetly, sliding smoothly against the swollen ripe bud of her sex. Xena's tongue travelled the short distance through golden down to the ruby prize. Her mouth closed on it as her tongue swirled and stroked and played and now her thumb was moving up and down the lovely length of the double lips until it finally dipped into the sweet honey hole at Gabrielle's flowing core. Xena took it slow this time, took her slowly, loving every excited and satisfied sound the woman was making.

"Deeper," Gabrielle begged as she began to near her climax. Xena lovingly repositioned her and now Gabrielle arched like a bow, rearing back on her hands and knees, offering herself like an animal in heat, crying out repeatedly as Xena thrust into her from behind. Once Argo seemed to neigh in answer and both women paused for a moment, Gabrielle looking back to meet Xena's eyes as they both laughed.

Gabrielle's body suckled and lapped at her deeply embedded fingers, pulsing, throbbing and Xena remembered the tidal pool she'd played in as a child, fascinated by the delicate pink anemones, slicky soft and smoothly contoured, wet and pulsing...open and closed. Over and over again. Xena leaned into the softly gyrating woman and whispered hotly in her ear, followed by the heated wetness of her tongue and the pulsing sea anemone inside Gabrielle clutched at