

They pulled the sizable piece of pottery out onto the ledge. The dark haired woman's hands were shaking too as they prised off the lid.

"Well...you can start breathing again. Hello, Gabrielle, welcome back."

Jan's fingertips played over the scrolls packed away so carefully so long ago.

Mel read the inscription on the cover of the olla. "You will hold my soul in your hands. Once again. Once and always."

"Nice. I like that." She had to clear her throat of the emotion.

"There's more on the underside. 'So that you may see my love for this woman--physical and spiritual, bound and unbound, finite and infinite.'"

Jan's eyes found her lover's gaze. "She wanted the right person to find it."

"She wanted 'you' to find it."

The younger woman swallowed, breathed out the breath of the chosen, a long quavery breath, felt Gabrielle's presence with her, within her. Quoted the Persian poet from memory, "I sent my soul through the invisible."

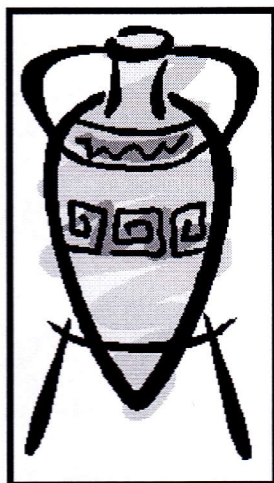
"And by and by my soul returned to me..." Mel completed and complemented her. "She took a gamble, bet on the future, and put her faith in...you."

Jan laughed lightly. "What's that song? 'Gonna sit right down and write myself a letter--'"

"'You hold my soul in your hands,'" Mel quoted again to her companion.

"She meant that for both of us."

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