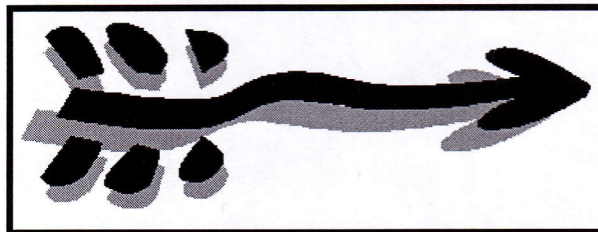


"Yeah, well, that's what she was afraid of--that Gabrielle would vow and do anything for that love, that passion even if she had second thoughts, even if Xena thought Gabrielle might fear deep down that it wasn't right for her. Fearing, finally, that possibility she never dared to face it."

"So...she probably never asked, never demanded... Allowed her soulmate to leave her, to marry, without a word said about it... What do you want, Mel?" Jan shifted onto her side and stared frankly into the Aegean depths Gabrielle had described so accurately so long ago. Mel carefully rolled the scroll and set it aside on a table by their bed. She turned to face Jan, lightly touched her shoulder, trailed fingertips down her arm, to finally take the smaller woman's hand in her own.

"You, always by my side. To have and to hold. From this moment, forever. As long as we both shall live. And then some."

"You've got me."



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