

JANUARY THAW

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Disclaimers: Xena and Gabrielle belong to those rather fortunate individuals, whoever they may be, that happen to own the rights to Xena: Warrior Princess. The only thing I'm gaining from them here is the personal satisfaction of toying with the characters in my own image. All other fictional characters named are mine.

Series Credit: The characters of this story originate from my Embrace/Freedom Conqueror Series <http://amazontrails.com/xena/theembrace.htm> However, this story takes place in the present time. So, although technically it's an uber, it's not an uber in the same vein as most stories out there in the Fanfic world. The "Xena" and "Gabrielle" characters of this story are not simply modern-day likenesses of the TV characters, but rather, they have a direct connection with the Conqueror and Bard of my series. The mode of that connection will be duly explained within this tale, thus a thorough understanding of this story will be achieved only if the stories of the Series are read. If you haven't read the Series before, I do hope that you enjoy it.

Story and Character Warning: This story will be presented in chapters. Unlike the preceding Series, the story will be told in narrative form. Also, because this story does take place in the millennium, the modernized versions of the characters have contemporary indulgences, both positive and negative.

Sex Warning: Lesbian. 'Nuff said?

Profanity Warning: Some swearing, but nothing that rises to the level of an Eminem CD.

To all of my beta readers: Once again, thank you! You're angels!

Comments and Feedback: As I have been on a rather long writing hiatus, and being that this is my first venture into uber territory, any and all are welcome and appreciated.

CHAPTER ONE

THE BANKS OF THE LETHE

I dream about Gabrielle and me. We are in a strange bed in a very unusual looking bedchamber. The bed is small and the chamber has dozens of lit candles and other strangely illuminated objects throughout it. Strange looking tapestries hang from the walls and

somewhere from inside of the room, strange music can be heard, although there are no musicians present. It is as if she and I are in a different place and time, but it is definitely Gabrielle with me in that bed. She is lying on top of me and begins suckling my nipples before bringing her lips to mine. We begin making love. My entire body quivers at the feel of her pulsating sex upon mine. I grab the creamy backs of her upper thighs and let out a deeply throaty moan as I feel heat, moisture, passion. As we make love, the bed mysteriously creaks to the rhythmic movement of our bodies. Gabrielle then breaks the kiss, runs her luscious tongue across my lips and then looks at me with those sea-green eyes. "I'm coming, Warrior Princess," she says. "I'm coming." At that moment, climax hits her in the dream and me in my reality....

"What the hell was that about?" Lindsay whispered as she jarred awake from the strange dream. Turning on her side and tightening her thighs together, she allowed herself to ride out the wondrous orgasm. Once released, she relaxed her body and cocked her head over to make sure that she didn't awaken her husband, Martin. Letting out a breath, she lay dazed, wondering about the dream. *Why was I dreaming about having sex with a woman,* she thought, *and who is she?*

Who is she?

* * * *

Rejeanne Piscard poured her coffee and wandered over to her living room window to raise the blinds.

"Aw shit, another frickin' six inches," she grouched as she noticed the fresh layer of snow on the ground outside. "I am so over this," she said as she turned on her TV to hear Al Roker's confirmation.

Here in the east, look for temperatures that hover in the 20s. Parts of the Midwest, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and around the Great Lakes should expect four to six inches of new powder. High winds in the mountains and moderate temperatures are expected out west. San Diego will hit 74 today. That's what's going on around the country. Here's what's happening in your neck of the woods.

As the Today Show cut to the local meteorologist to deliver the bad news in detail, Rejeanne sipped her scalding coffee and contemplated her day. After five years with the Dell Valley Gazette, she was finally going to get her big break, covering the Alasdair Family Foundation's annual fundraiser. It wasn't just that the Alasdairs were the wealthiest and most philanthropic family in Dell Valley. Their fundraisers had been known to attract some of the most influential people in the state; people that Rejeanne could meet and interview. Coverage of the fundraiser would most certainly land a

full-color front-page article. That would have the potential of being picked up by larger dailies, greatly increasing the circulation of the story. All this, and Rejeanne's name is under the byline. As a smile crept across her lovely face, clearing snow off her car was no longer a burdensome prospect.

"Good morning, everybody," Rejeanne announced as she stepped into the main newsroom of the Gazette.

"Yo, Jeannie-P," replied Tyler Brunswick, the assistant sports editor, as he raised his hand for a high-five. "It's caviar and cham-fuckin'-pagne tonight for you."

"You know that's right, dog," she said as she slapped Tyler's hand and brought her shoulder to his chest for a hip-hop embrace.

"You nervous?" he asked.

"No...uh, yeah... what do you think?" At that point, other staff members began grouping around.

"I think that you're shittin' your pants, Jeannie," chimed in Becky Schaff, the courthouse beat reporter. "If not now, you will be."

"Thanks for your vote of confidence, Beck," Jeannie remarked. "It's very much appreciated."

"Hey, I'd be shittin' bricks too, Jeannie-P," Becky said. "I mean, have you fully thought about who all's gonna be there? Practically everybody who's anybody in the state."

"I realize that," Jeannie replied.

"This is one of the biggest stories of the year," added Dennis Ruhl, another beat reporter. "Once you score with this, Jeannie, you can write your own ticket with the editing staff."

"Provided your story doesn't flop to the point that they have to juggle tons of rewrites," Becky adds.

"Again, thanks for the vote of confidence," Jeannie sneered at Becky.

"Don't sweat it, Jeannie-P," Tyler spoke up. "Just make sure you hobnob with Lindsay Alasdair-MacMahon."

"Why?" Jeannie asked as her eyes raised and her heart mysteriously pounded harder.

"Cuz she's the finest white chick in this motherfuckin' county... well, next to you, JP," he responded.

“You have such a way with words, my dear Tyler,” Jeannie said as she wondered why the name of Lindsay Alasdair-MacMahon caused such a strange reaction in her.

In preparation for this very special event, Rejeanne spent most of her day attending briefings with the managing staff and the editorial staff. She also met with Douglas Linton, who would accompany her as the article’s photographer. But it was what she had to do before leaving the newsroom for the day that made her beam with excitement. Walking up to Doris Marks, the elderly newsroom receptionist, Rejeanne extended her right hand. In it, Doris placed the coveted Dell Valley Gazette Press Pass, her ticket into the fundraiser.

Gripping the laminated pass, she looked over at Doris. “This is really going to happen tonight.”

“Yes, dear,” Doris replied. “It is.”

* * * *

Rejeanne stood in front of her closet dumbfounded, staring hopelessly at its contents. *What to wear? What to wear?* she repeated in her head as she grabbed an outfit only to return it seconds later. After almost an hour of that futility, Rejeanne decided on the deep turquoise dress that she had worn to the newspaper’s Christmas party two years ago. It was probably the fanciest article of clothing in her closet and she rationalized that the color would perfectly accentuate her jade-colored eyes.

Before putting on the dress, Rejeanne was concerned that it no longer fit. She was convinced that, with what she’d had to deal in the last twelve months, she had put on weight. That last year had been really trying for her. Work had become increasingly stressful; her father, never a stranger to drama, had remarried and divorced for the fourth time; and she had learned through the grapevine that her ex of almost four years married a man. However, as the dress slid down her torso almost gracefully, she was instantly relieved that a crash diet would not be on her agenda for the immediate future.

Stepping over to her full-length mirror, she twisted her body so that she could get a thorough look at her backside. “Nice ass,” she said jokingly to herself before sitting on the edge of the bed to slip on her hose. It was only moments after applying her makeup and jewelry that the doorbell rang. After running down the stairs of her townhouse, she peered out of the front door window and saw the smiling face of Doug Linton.

“Right on time,” she said to the photographer as she opened the door. “Take off your boots.”

“Sure thing,” he responded as he bent over to unlace them.

“You want a beer before we head out?”

“Nah,” he said as he wandered over to her kitchen table and sat. “How are you feeling?”

“Dude, I am wired for sound,” Rejeanne announced.

“Maybe you should have a beer,” Doug commented.

“Actually, I was hoping that you had something better?” Rejeanne asked as she sat at the table as well.

“As a matter of fact, I do,” Doug said as he unzipped the chest pocket on his coat and pulled out a thick phillies blunt. “Already rolled and ready to go.”

“I only need one hit, Doug,” Rejeanne said. “I don’t need to go to this important function totally fucked up.”

“I hear you,” Doug replied as he lit the blunt, took a drag and then passed it to Rejeanne.

She took her smoke. “That’s good,” she said as she stood up from the table. “I don’t want to jinx this thing.”

Doug burst out in laughter. “What’s to jinx, Jeannie?” he asked. “Those rich assholes won’t even be looking at you tonight... not that you ain’t nothin’ to look at.” Doug eyed Rejeanne provocatively in her eveningwear before taking a second long drag on his joint.

“You need to watch your double negatives, Doug,” Jeannie said jokingly before putting on her dress shoes and the one full-length coat that she possessed. “Let’s go.”

* * * *

The words on the page were not taking on any meaning.

“Lin.”

She read the same paragraph for the third time and still, nothing. In fact, nothing from the last three pages actually registered. She wasn’t sure how much time had lapsed either.

“Lin.”

What clouded her mind was the image of that woman from the dream that she had had several weeks before. The woman’s name was now a forgotten memory, as were her distinctive facial features, but the seductive voice, shoulder-length strawberry-blonde hair and beautifully tanned skin were still very vivid.

“Lin.”

The orgasms that they both experienced... vivid was an understatement.

“LIN!!”

Lindsay looked up at the irritated expression on her husband’s face.

“By golly, woman,” Martin exclaimed. “You were really daydreaming there.”

Lindsay looked back down at the documents before her on her desk. “Yes, I guess I was.”

“Have you reviewed the entire minutes from the meeting and the itinerary for the presentations tonight?” he asked.

“Sort of,” she responded.

“What do you mean, ‘sort of’?”

“My eyes are tired,” Lindsay said as she handed to Martin the documents that she had been trying to read.

Grabbing the documents from her, Martin sat down on one of the chairs that faced Lindsay’s desk. “What’s troubling you, Lin?”

“Nothing, really,” she replied. “Perhaps I’m not really looking forward to tonight.”

Martin chuckled. “Why not?” he asked teasingly. “This is your yearly family gig, Lin. I thought that you loved looking drop-dead gorgeous while all of the local snoots rub their noses up your fine Alasdair ass.”

Lindsay’s shoulders tensed. “You needn’t complain, Marty,” she fired back. “My yearly ‘gig’ also affords you the opportunity to check out your latest jailbait conquests. I hope that this year’s choice has her driver’s license at least.”

Martin crossed his arms and smirked. “Who says I’m complaining,” he said before rising and exiting the office.

* * * *

As Doug’s vehicle approached the valets standing outside of the main entrance to the Dell Valley Pavilion, Rejeanne regretted not taking her Subaru Outback. Although not a luxury vehicle by any stretch of the imagination, it would have still been a better representation than Doug’s rusty ’92 Chevy S-10, which stood out like a sore thumb amongst the Benzes, Beamers, Hummers, Rovers and limos that lined the arched

driveway of the conference center.

Two young men stepped up to the truck. One opened the passenger door and helped Rejeanne exit the vehicle after she hastily grabbed her notepad and pen. The other opened the driver's door. Doug handed the valet his keys after grabbing his camera bag from the exposed bed of the truck. "Let's do this," he said to Rejeanne after extending his arm for her to take.

Walking into the massive pavilion after checking her coat, Rejeanne was almost overwhelmed by the sights and sounds before her. To her right, a string quartet performed. To her left, a full service bar provided beverages of every sort to event guests. Positioned in front of her was a gauntlet of people greeting the newest arrivals. Amongst the greeters were the mayor of Dell Valley, all of the town's council members, four county commissioners, two state representatives, a state senator and all of their spouses. Rejeanne made it a point to introduce herself to each greeter and announce herself as the reporter covering the fundraiser for the Gazette, although the press pass was prominently featured hanging from a string around her neck. She didn't specifically ask for any quotable comments from any of the politicians, but rather made mental notes of the more interesting quips from them. As Rejeanne spoke, Doug snapped away at everything and anything around him that was remotely worthy.

When she reached the end of the gauntlet, Rejeanne initially looked out at the massive congregation of guests talking, dancing or eating hor d'oeuvres. But then she looked to her right and her eyes fell upon the person of Lindsay Alasdair-MacMahon. After moments of stunned gawking, Rejeanne looked briefly at the man standing next to Lindsay before returning her attention to the brunette beauty.

"Hello," Lindsay said to Rejeanne as she extended her hand. "I'm Lindsay Alasdair-MacMahon and this is my husband, Martin Stuart MacMahon. Welcome."

God Almighty must be cruel, because she is truly the most beautiful woman I have ever seen, was all Rejeanne could think as she shook the hand of the married woman before her. Tall and lean, perfectly attired and adorned, with bright blue eyes, a boldly beautiful face and an intoxicating smile, Rejeanne felt as if she could collapse right there.

"I'm Rejeanne Piscard," she croaked before discretely clearing her throat, "from the Gazette. I'll be covering this fundraiser. It's an honor to be here and a pleasure to meet you, Mrs. MacMahon."

Doug cleared his throat. "Oh, and this is Douglas Linton, our staff photographer," Rejeanne added.

"The pleasure is all mine, and it's Lindsay to you," she responded as Rejeanne noticed that they were still clasping hands.

At that moment, Martin extended his hand. “And mine,” he stated. Rejeanne took his hand, but her gaze had only left Lindsay momentarily.

“After you’ve made your rounds with the guests, come back to me,” Lindsay said to Rejeanne. “I’ll provide you the full itinerary for tonight’s presentations and give some workable quotes for your story.”

“Thank you very much, Mrs. Mac... Lindsay.”

* * * *

Lindsay was almost paralyzed with boredom as milquetoast after milquetoast lined up to shake her hand and kiss her ass. Martin was right about one thing. Most of the people shelling out the \$500 to attend the fundraiser weren’t doing so to benefit the charities to which the money would ultimately go. Most were there to see and be seen. Lindsay herself was only as important as the press photographers and TV video camera operators standing near her.

Thus, when the shapely, diminutive, green-eyed beauty announced that she was a newspaper reporter, Lindsay should have had utter contempt for her. Instead, she found herself strangely feeling as lightheaded as a schoolgirl on prom night. Something intangible drew her to this blonde-haired woman. She didn’t know what it was, but she needed to be near her, needed to talk to her, and soon.

For many brief moments in the first hour that Rejeanne was “working” the guests at the fundraiser, Lindsay found herself eyeing the young woman. Much to her surprise, on a few of those occasions, Rejeanne looked back. When that happened, Lindsey smiled at her and felt a childlike delight when she smiled back. Unfortunately, by the time Rejeanne returned to Lindsay for her comments, she was scheduled to start the presentations.

“Please stay right here,” Lindsay asked of Rejeanne before dashing off to address the guests. “I still want to talk to you.”

“As you wish,” Rejeanne said with a smile.

Lindsay stepped up to a podium and announced the names of the most charitable supporters and the amounts of their gifts. She then presented the representatives of the three charities benefiting from the fundraiser. After each representative spoke, Lindsay made some additional remarks about her family’s foundation and her hopes for its future. She then invited her honored guests to enjoy the rest of the evening’s food and festivities.

Stepping away from the podium, she was confronted by Martin. “That was rather rushed, don’t you think?” he whispered as he grasped her upper arms.

“No, I don’t,” she replied.

“Well, I think that you could have said more about the foundation’s future,” he said. “You hardly even mentioned anything that was covered in the meeting minutes.”

Lindsay pulled her arms away from Martin’s grasp. “Who died and made you my father?” she said as she brushed past him and approached the eagerly awaiting Rejeanne.

“I fear that we’re not going to have much time to talk, Rejeanne,” Lindsay said to Rejeanne as she handed the young reporter a copy of the minutes and itinerary. “But use these for your story.”

“Thank you,” Rejeanne said as she took the documents. “You know, I was thinking,” she continued. “Perhaps I’m going out on a limb here, but would you consider meeting me for an exclusive interview?”

“You want me to give you an exclusive interview about the fundraiser or my family’s foundation?”

“Actually, neither,” Rejeanne replied. “Between you, me and the wall, my paper pretty much regurgitates the same report about the Alasdair Family Foundation’s fundraiser year after year. I’d like to get an exclusive interview from Lindsey Alasdair-MacMahon about Lindsey Alasdair-MacMahon.”

Try as she might, Lindsay could not suppress the smile that swept across her face. “I’d love to meet with you... for an interview,” she said. “I can’t promise that I won’t totally bore you to death, however.”

“Let me be the judge of that, Lindsay.”

“Very well,” Lindsay said. “When and where?”

“You tell me the ‘when’ and I’ll pick the ‘where,’” was Rejeanne’s reply.

“Tomorrow at 11:00 a.m.,” Lindsay stated.

“At the Karmic Java Coffeehouse on Madison,” Rejeanne added.

“I’ll be there, Rejeanne,” Lindsay remarked as she extended her hand.

“Great! It’s a date,” Rejeanne announced as she shook Lindsay’s hand before returning to Doug.

As Lindsay watched Rejeanne walk away, two words escaped her lips, “A date.”

CONTINUED IN CHAPTER TWO...