

## **Disclaimer & Notices**

**Copyright:** Many of these characters do not belong to me, and we know which ones do not. I, however, own the plot and other certain characters.

**Violence:** There is violence in this story.

**Subtext:** Any subtext becomes main text here.

**Summary:** The sequel to [To Find What was Mine](#). It's been almost three years, Xena is now the ruler of southern Greece, and she sets her sights on northern Greece. Gabrielle now discovers herself at a crossroad when the Conqueror, her lost friend, begins her march north and closer to her Nation. Just when Gabrielle decides to seek out Xena, a warlord surfaces near the Macedonia Amazon Nation and threatens to spoil the subtle peace between the Amazons and Centaurs. Meanwhile the Conqueror must keep the Romans at bay before they breach the Greek borders, and her old anger leads her into blindness.

**Feedback:** [redhope@redhope.net](mailto:redhope@redhope.net)

**Homepage:** <http://www.redhope.net>

**List:** <http://tv.groups.yahoo.com/group/redhope/>

Started: April 25, 2007

Series 9: **Destiny of Mine** – Story #2

## **To Take What is Mine**

by Red Hope

### **Chapter 1**

Faolan released a huge breath as if he couldn't be more bored right now. He sat on his hind legs, and his tail was still. He licked his chops when he realized it wouldn't be long before he'd have some dinner. He really couldn't wait either because he'd come to love the meals his human friend gave him.

At the thought of his human friend, Faolan lifted his head up, and his green eyes sparkled up at the trees. He focused on the blond beauty that was his friend.

Gabrielle sensed the wolf studying her so she gazed down at him. She smiled. She covered her mouth to stop her giggles when Faolan hung out his tongue at her. "I have to be serious, Faolan." She wagged a finger at the white wolf and tisked at him.

Faolan let his tongue hang out lower, but he behaved and dropped his head.

The Amazon Princess shook hers a few times. Then she shifted down the tree branch until her side rubbed against the tree's trunk. She hunkered down and continued to listen to the woods.

Princess Gabrielle of the Macedonia Amazon Nation had grown into a beautiful and highly respected young woman within her Nation. Since taking the late Terreis's caste, Princess Gabrielle pushed through rigorous training to break her prior mindset as a slave. The weapons master, Eponin, had devoted several seasons to shaping the girl into the Amazon she was today. Then in between the countless moons of training, Gabrielle was schooled as an Athens Academy bard and graduated at the top of her class. It wasn't long after graduation that Gabrielle was taken under Queen Melosa's wing and learned to be a true princess to the Nation.

Gabrielle was now nineteen springs old and in a couple of moons she would be twenty. She was reaching her prime on many levels. Gabrielle's body had transformed from a peasant's simple and scrawny body to that of a warrior's. Her skin shined with a healthy tan from being outside so often. And over time, her hair had softened to a golden hue. She was certainly many Amazons' favorite attraction.

Yet what put her ahead of many Amazons was her uncanny ability to understand people. Many believed it had something to do with her bardic side, but Gabrielle didn't think the same. She just concluded that it was a skill she'd honed over the moons by doing certain things like being a princess or going to Ambassador Majorie's lessons. Either way, Gabrielle had a knack for talking and for understanding so as a result many Amazons adored her and respected her.

The princess snapped out of her wandering thoughts when she heard an uncommon sound in the woods. She straightened up then reached behind her back. She double checked to make sure her staff was diagonally strapped to her back. She knew it was, but she had a habit. Also she kept her Amazon sword on her back but it was hooked diagonally the other way so that the weapons crossed on her back.

Gabrielle hastily grabbed her mask, which rested on top of her head. She pushed it down on her face.

A distinct bird call passed in the air, and Faolan's ears twitched in recognition to the order. He and Gabrielle had trained to work together. He followed his friend's request and stood up on all fours. His excellent hearing allowed him to hear Gabrielle's almost silent movements through the trees.

Faolan started into a slow run and followed the Amazon. He carefully scanned the woods with his sharp vision for any danger. Then his fur prickled when he sensed what may have alarmed Gabrielle. He slowed to a trot but remained on the front of his paws.

The princess halted in a very concealed spot among three tightly grown trees. She silently pushed the leaves aside and spied the lone intruder in the territory.

Faolan knew the next step. He casually trotted up to the intruder but stopped about a hundred paces from them. He tilted his head, hung out his tongue, and acted sweet.

The intruder stopped and cautiously studied the white wolf. She kept her sword concealed in her cloak because she wasn't sure what this wolf was doing. She adjusted the awkward headdress by the antlers then neared the wolf. There was something about this wolf that interested her.

Faolan cocked his head, and his fur relaxed against his body.

Gabrielle noted the wolf's ease with the intruder. She was quite curious about the intruder because she'd never seen somebody dressed that way. Then a thought occurred to her, and she wondered if it was possible already.

The intruder stopped a few paces from the wolf, and she smiled at him. "You're handsome, aren't you?"

She chuckled when the wolf twisted his head the other way. She already detected there was another presence close by, yet she waited for them to approach her.

Gabrielle decided to get it over with now. She extracted her staff and jumped off the branch.

The intruder remained calm and passive when the woman appeared from the trees.

The bard stood a few paces behind Faolan, and she raised her staff. "You're in Amazon territory. What's your business here?"

The intruder offered a smile from under her headdress. "I'm glad I finally made it." She tilted her head then introduced herself. "I'm the shaman, Yakut, from the Thrace Nation."

Gabrielle smiled behind her mask because she'd be informed about the shaman coming for an extended visit. She'd only been briefly told that Yakut would be getting some training from Narkissa and Priestess Maired.

The princess lowered her Amazon staff to her side then with her free hand, she pulled her mask back. She still held her smile, and the glow showed in her eyes.

Yakut held her breath when she instantly recognized Gabrielle from her visions back when Xena was in the Thrace Nation. She had to admit that Gabrielle was much older, but she knew this was certainly the same Gabrielle.

"I'm Princess Gabrielle," the bard informed. "Welcome to the Macedonia Nation." She moved forward.

The shaman shoved away her initial shock then stepped around the wolf. She lifted her arm just as Gabrielle did the same. She locked arms for a warm shake. She had a bright smile at finally meeting the legendary woman. Just from a simple glance with her two-spirit, Yakut knew Gabrielle was a powerful being, who still needed to reach her peak.

"We weren't expecting you here for another day or two," Gabrielle mentioned after releasing the shaman's arm.

Yakut nodded then explained, "There was little rain to speak of. I also left a day early."

The princess hadn't lost her smile and mostly because she felt a natural draw to the shaman.

Faolan released a yawn, which captured both women's attention.

Gabrielle softly laughed and held out her hand to the wolf. "I'm sorry. This is my friend Faolan."

The shaman peered down at the white wolf and smiled at him. "Hello, Faolan. I'm Yakut."

Faolan stuck his tongue out then wagged his tail across the ground. His tail shot off a small twig that'd been under it.

Yakut chuckled then gingerly petted him on the head.

Gabrielle carefully watched because it was rare that many people could initially touch Faolan. He was a sensitive wolf, Gabrielle had concluded long ago. "I'll escort you to the village."

Yakut shook her head. "I can find my way. You must be on patrol duty."

The bard shrugged then casually mentioned, "Duty is almost over actually." She spun on her boots and nodded towards the village. "It's about a quarter candlemark walk." She started the pace back to the

village, and Faolan took her right side like always. "You're just in time for dinner."

Yakut had a light spirit because of the princess's upbeat attitude and welcoming manners. "I'm starved too," she admitted.

The princess grinned – she could understand completely. "So, I was only briefly told why you came here...?"

The shaman watched where she was walking but explained her visit. "I've come to study the priesthood. I don't know very much about the worship of Artemis nor does the previous shaman of our village."

Gabrielle grew quite curious, and she walked closer. "You don't have a priestess?"

Yakut chuckled because she knew this would require a history lesson. "No, but we used to have a priestess four generations ago." She reached up and quickly tilted her head back. "We were solely a priesthood like the rest of the Nations."

"What happened?" the bard urged.

"Well," Yakut started, "many moons back a shaman from Germania stumbled into our territory. She was just wandering aimlessly through the lands with no rhyme or reason."

The princess had a perplexed face and asked, "What happened?"

"The queen, at the time, decided to take her in, but the shaman wouldn't eat and restlessly slept. It took awhile for the Nation to find out she was from a Germanic tribe. Her entire tribe was killed by the Roman Legions."

"Sweet Artemis," Gabrielle breathed. She didn't much like the Romans, and the problems they caused. They were already beating on the borders of Greece. "No wonder she just didn't care anymore."

Yakut's head bobbed some. "Luckily, our priestess at the time was able to reach the shaman. We don't know exactly what transpired between them, but the shaman moved past her grief. After the shaman recovered, she decided to stay with the Nation."

"The shaman and priestess must have become close," Gabrielle observed.

"Very," the shaman agreed. "Eventually they both ran the temple, and the Nation recognized that the shaman was important. So a new legacy started where the predecessor had to know both shamanism and the priesthood."

The bard smirked and joked, "A priestess?"

The shaman lost her earlier smile when Gabrielle's words sparked an old memory of Xena. It was the same joke Xena had said so many seasons back. She quickly recovered by grinning at the princess. "Perhaps." She then sobered and further told, "Unfortunately the priesthood has been lost because of one of the previous shamans. So I'm here to learn and record the priesthood."

Gabrielle could appreciate what Yakut was trying to do for her Nation. "I think it's really important you're doing this."

Yakut's cheeks went red, and she bowed her head. She nodded then softly replied, "I think it is too."

"I will introduce you to Narkissa and Priestess Maired." Gabrielle touched the shaman's deer-skinned

covered arm. "I think you'll really like them both. Narkissa is sharp as an arrowhead, and Maired has a great sense of humor."

The shaman showed a toothy smile. "I can't wait."

The bard lowered her hand and continued the journey to the village with her staff as a walking stick. Just ahead she spotted the gates, and she guided Yakut to the huts. She showed Yakut to a guest hut and let her put her pack down.

Yakut didn't need to do much else. She was more hungry than anything so she left the hut with Gabrielle. She strolled closely to the princess and struck up another conversation. "So are you a born Amazon?"

Gabrielle glanced at the shaman then shook her head. "No, not at all. I kind of... fell into it accidentally." She grinned at Yakut's quipped curiosity. "I met another Amazon when I was about fifteen springs old. We were studying at the Athens Academy together." She shrugged and quickly added, "We were roommates actually. And the Academy gave us a vacation so Ephiny invited me to come here."

"I take it you did," Yakut teased.

"Oh yeah, and it changed everything." Gabrielle wistfully smiled at her younger days. "At the time the princess was Queen Melosa's sister, Terreis. And I'm sure you know the battles between the Centaurs and Amazons, right?" She held out her right hand.

"Of course."

"Well, a group of us were just strolling in the woods. Then a group of Centaurs attacked us with arrows. Terreis was hit in the chest, and I tried to shield her with my body."

The shaman's shoulders slumped some, and she felt compassion for both Terreis and Gabrielle.

"Terreis.... didn't make it," the bard quietly revealed. "She handed her caste to me."

Yakut carefully chose her next words and whispered, "It's never easy losing a life." She peered into crystal green eyes. "Yet Terreis's death gave you life as an Amazon."

The bard's lips puckered some, and she slowly nodded. "It did." She knew it was true because otherwise she could still be a slave. She pushed her darker thoughts aside and noted the noisy food hut just ahead. "I hope you're hungry."

"Starved," the shaman declared with a grin.

Gabrielle smiled and led the way into the hut. She took to the back of the line and Faolan stayed at her side while Yakut remained behind her. She spotted several of her friends ahead in the line so she waved to them.

Solari spotted the unusual woman behind Gabrielle. She lifted an eyebrow at Gabrielle.

The princess just rolled her eyes and waved at Solari to be polite.

Solari rolled her eyes back, huffed, and decided to ignore her friend.

Gabrielle chuckled and turned to the shaman. "I'm sorry. We don't often get Amazons from other Nations."

"Particularly Amazons dressed like me," Yakut joked in good humor.

The bard sighed and touched the shaman's shoulder. "If I could get away with wearing leather all over, I would do it too." She smiled at Yakut's laugh. "But I get too hot with all the practicing." She removed her hand.

Yakut settled down and smiled. "I don't wear this all the time... especially in the summer."

"I couldn't imagine if you did," the bard joked. She scooted down the line and collected a wood plate along with utensils. "I hope you don't mind sitting at the head table....?"

"Not at all," Yakut replied.

Gabrielle nodded. "Well, I hope you're good with names."

The shaman grinned wildly because that was one trick she had down pat from her days of training. "That's what I do best."

The bard chuckled and moved down the line. She collected her favorite foods, which was almost everything. Then she came to the end of the line and grabbed a mug of water. She waited a beat for Yakut then escorted her to the head table.

Faolan followed along, and he would wait patiently like always for his dinner after his human friend ate. One of the few rules he had to follow was that he couldn't eat while Gabrielle ate at the head table. The woman that sat at the head of the head table who had dark, curly hair wouldn't let Gabrielle feed him. However on the rare days when the curly, grumpy human didn't show up, Gabrielle would feed him when she ate too.

Gabrielle was relieved that nobody was at the head table yet. She set her stuff down but didn't sit because she needed to be on her feet when she introduced Yakut.

The shaman knew too. She merely set her plate, mug, and utensils down then already spotted an Amazon coming to the head table.

The princess smiled at Eponin and greeted, "Good evening, Eponin."

The weapons master set her items down at her usual spot. "Evening, princess." She then looked to the stranger on the opposite side of the table.

"Eponin, I'd like you to meet the shaman Yakut."

The weapons master reached across the table and collapsed arms. "We weren't expecting you for another day or two."

"I travel quickly," the shaman offered and smiled.

"Welcome to the Macedonia Nation." Eponin released arms then she saw the stratègos joining them.

The stratègos set her plate down then turned to the princess and newcomer.

"This is our stratègos," Gabrielle introduced, "Commander Kaylee." She waited until the shaman and stratègos took arms. "Stratègos, this is the shaman, Yakut, from the Thrace Nation."

"We're glad to have you here, Yakut." The stratègos released arms. "How long will you be staying?"

Yakut shook her head. "I'm not exactly sure yet. It depends on how my training goes with Priestess

Maired."

Commander Kaylee was short, about Gabrielle's height, but her imposing mannerism made up for her lack of height. She placed her hands on her hips in a traditional habit. "If you end up spending anytime with Narkissa then you might want to consider a more permanent hut."

Gabrielle bit her lip to stop from laughing.

The stratègos's eyes flickered to the bemused princess then back to the shaman.

Yakut remained serious and nodded. "I'll keep that in mind, stratègos."

Commander Kaylee cracked a hidden grin. "Well, good luck with your studies." She then moved down several chairs to take her spot.

Princess Gabrielle then repeated her introduction until she covered everybody except for the delayed queen. She and Yakut almost sat down when the queen finally appeared. Gabrielle waited until Queen Melosa placed her plate and fork on the table then she did the introduction.

Queen Melosa was her usual terse self. She had quick questions and wanted quick answers. She did smile though at Yakut despite it was somewhat forced. The queen just was rarely known for being friendly, and she honestly left that aspect to Princess Gabrielle's more natural abilities.

During the dinner, the conversation was mostly filled with Yakut's voice. Many Amazons were curious about the Thrace Nation because they really hadn't been there. Some Amazons knew the other Nations such as the Illyria and Thessaly Nations because they were not too far. The Thrace Nation, however, was so far east that it almost touched the Greek borders.

After the long meal, Yakut was mostly engaged with Priestess Maired. They were swapping stories about their own rise to the temple in their Nation. Where as Maired took her priesthood because she was a daughter, Yakut took her shamanism through a selection process. They had opposite backgrounds, yet their personalities melted together.

Gabrielle was the only one left at the table, with the exception of Faolan behind her. She idly listened to the priestess and shaman chat, but she touched Yakut's arm.

The shaman stopped and smiled at the bard.

"I'm going to go visit some friends of mine." Gabrielle pointed at the table far back. "I'll be there if you need me."

The shaman nodded. "Thank you."

The princess collected her dishes and decided to take Yakut's too. She silently left, and Faolan was on her heels. She knew he had to be starving by now. Gabrielle rid of her dishes first then caught up with Crystal for the scraps or rather Faolan's dinner.

Gabrielle carried the satchel of scraps while she walked to her friends' table.

Faolan bounced along side and licked his chops. He couldn't stop eying the hefty bag.

The bard took her usual seat at the end of the bench. She opened the large pouch, set it down, and fanned it out so all the food was displayed. She chuckled when the hungry wolf made a graceful nosedive for the food.

"How are you, Gabrielle?"

The princess smiled at her blood sister. "I'm great. How about you, Andra?"

The blacksmith returned the smile. "I'm good too."

Solari leaned over the table and called, "Gabrielle?" When she had her friend's attention, she asked, "What's with the girl with the deer on her head?"

Gabrielle slotted her eyes at Solari.

Solari dazzled her best smile when she successfully got the bard's goad.

"You better be careful, Solari," the princess threatened, "Yakut is a shaman."

The realization washed over Solari, and she asked, "So she's the shaman from the Thrace Nation?"

"Duh," quipped Adonia from her spot across Solari. "Like how many Nations do you know have a shaman?"

Solari could have almost smacked her friend back. "And unfortunately for this Nation we have you."

Adonia gasped and covered her chest with her hand. "You're not my favorite anymore, Solari."

Jocasta sat beside Adonia and glared. "I thought I was your favorite."

"You are now," Adonia teased.

Jocasta sighed and shook her head, but she knew the truth.

"So why is she here?" Solari inquired.

"You mean you don't know from the gossip ring?" Ephiny teased from her silent seat beside Solari.

Solari lifted an eyebrow at her friend. "You probably know more than I do, Eph."

Ephiny blew up some air, which caused her curls to flutter slightly. "Not really."

Gabrielle glanced at Ephiny and lowered her gaze just before Ephiny looked at her. She knew Ephiny was studying her for a few beats, yet she refused to let it bother her. She decided to answer Solari's earlier question. "Yakut is learning the priesthood from Maired."

"Oh god," Solari ranted, "that could take all of Yakut's life."

Gabrielle chuckled and shook her head. She leaned to her left and glanced at Faolan.

Faolan now rested on his belly and was happily working on a bone. There was nothing else left.

The bard leaned over more and picked up the cleaned satchel. She closed it up then set it on the table and rested her hands over top of it. "You should talk to Yakut if you get the chance. She's pretty interesting."

The Amazons mostly nodded or smiled at Gabrielle's words.

Solari again leaned against the table and took another shot at the bard. "You think she can give good dressing advice?"

"Solari!" Ephiny smacked her friend's side and quite hard too.

Solari grunted then scolded her friend for the mean slap. "It was a honest question."

Ephiny dared her friend with a dark challenging face.

"Sorta," Solari muttered and kept rubbing her side.

"You and Yakut seem to get along well," Andra noted aloud.

Gabrielle smiled, but it didn't reach high. "Yeah... we do."

Eponin had been silent most of the time. She glanced at her blood sister, Ephiny, and noticed how Ephiny had a touch of annoyance because of Andra's comment. She inwardly sighed at the still knotty friendship between Gabrielle and Ephiny. Ever since the break up, nothing had been right between the princess and Ephiny but that was to be expected.

The weapons master lifted her gaze when she spotted the shaman coming towards them.

Gabrielle felt the hand first then she twisted her head up. "Hey."

Yakut glowed warmly, yet it was obvious she was tired.

The princess knew she needed to introduce the shaman before she could get Yakut back to her hut. She decided to take it more casually. So she announced, "Everybody this is Yakut."

The group of Amazons greeted the shaman and some gave waves. Then they were each introduced by Gabrielle's pointing.

Gabrielle first decided to be polite, and she scooted down the bench. "You want a seat?"

The shaman considered it then shook her head. "I'm rather worn from my trip here."

The bard couldn't agree more by the way Yakut seemed to have lost the last of her spark. "I'll walk you back to your hut."

"I know the way," Yakut argued.

"I was just getting ready to go." Gabrielle picked up the empty satchel then stood up. She and Yakut then said goodnight to the group.

Faolan climbed to all fours and held the bone between his teeth. He remained at Gabrielle's side.

Yakut followed Gabrielle over to the kitchen and observed Gabrielle returning the leather satchel. She then took pace beside the bard and headed for the exit. Yakut stole a last glance at the group, and she detected Ephiny's reasonless dislike for her. She could only guess why Ephiny and her were already off on the wrong foot. She decided not to take it too personal.

"Did you and Maired have a nice talk?"

Yakut inhaled the cool spring evening air then nodded. "Yes, we did actually. She has an extensive knowledge about the priesthood."

"She and her mother do," Gabrielle agreed. "I sometimes think that Maired is still learning from her mother about the priesthood."

The shaman chuckled because she could truly relate. "I still learn lessons from my mentor as well."

A grin creased the bard's lips, and she playfully joked, "Perhaps someday we'll surpass our teachers."

Yakut gingerly pushed her headdress back then reminded, "That is when we become the teachers."

"Very true," the bard agreed. She glanced down at her furry friend and quickly ran her fingers through his white coat.

"You went to the Athens Academy?" Yakut inquired.

"I did... Ephiny and I both. We graduated almost three summers ago."

The shaman had never met a bard, until now. She was intrigued so she had to ask. "Do you still perform?"

Gabrielle bowed her head because it'd been some time since she'd gone before an audience. She really hadn't since her graduation requirement. The only times she'd done any performance was before the Amazon children and that was always kids' stories. "It's been awhile," Gabrielle finally admitted.

Yakut briefly studied the princess's emotional expression. The two-spirit ability told her that somehow the bardic side of Gabrielle had become a wound. She didn't know exactly why though. She carefully thought out her pending words. "Well if you feel inspired while I'm here, I know I would enjoy a performance."

The bard felt bittersweet, but she was grateful Yakut wasn't pressing her. "Maybe I will." That was about all Gabrielle could offer for right now.

The shaman came upon her hut, and she thanked Gabrielle for all her help. Gabrielle promised she'd come by in the morning and take her to breakfast. Yakut asked for it to not be too early because she wasn't exactly the crack of dawn type of Amazon. Gabrielle had merely laughed and had no qualms about coming a candlemark or two after dawn.

The newly formed friends bid each other goodnight, Yakut petted Faolan, and they parted ways. Yakut was relieved to finally have a warm, soft bed tonight. Gabrielle, however, just couldn't wait to be alone in her hut. She and Faolan entered the quiet and dark hut.

Faolan easily found his usual spot near the dead fireplace. He flopped onto the floor and worked on his bone again. He also watched his friend stoke the fireplace then light the wood.

The princess sighed contently once the hut warmed up and grew lighter. She went near her desk and propped her staff up against the wall beside the open window. She then picked up the mat from the floor and hooked it over the window.

Gabrielle removed her scarab from her back and briefly stared at her sword. She'd earned her sword and mask not long after graduating from the Academy. She was most proud of her mask and beating the Amazon Judgment.

The princess came out of her memories and leaned her sword against the wall near her staff. Then she removed her mask from her head and placed it on a wood peg near the front door. Now that she felt like she'd lost some weight, Gabrielle took a seat at her desk.

Gabrielle dug out her journal and plucked her quill from the inkwell. For awhile, she focused on her journal and recording today's events. She didn't have much to say about her day, yet she had plenty to say about Yakut. She was fascinated by the passionate shaman.

The bard finished her entry, slowly closed the leather journal, and slipped her quill back into the inkwell. She then opened the top drawer and set her journal inside, yet she came up short. Gabrielle

sadly stared at her rolled up scroll, which she'd left unfinished many moons back. It always pained her to leave it unfinished, however, it hurt her more to look at the scroll's story.

Gabrielle slammed the drawer shut then propped her elbows up on the table. She roughly combed her fingers through her bangs and hair. She almost hooked some of her prized feathers that were tied in her locks.

She had her eyes closed, but slowly she opened them and stared at the slumped and aged object in the left corner of her desk. Gabrielle's heart sank, and she released her left hand. She gingerly touched Lila's stuffed sheep, Lammy, and toyed with the loose button eye.

Lammy just stayed quiet, and his sad smile was fixed in place.

Gabrielle released the black button then placed the flat of her palm on the desk. She thought back about earlier this evening just after dinner. She considered Ephiny's clipped attitude with Yakut, and how Yakut tried to be polite about it.

"What a mess," Gabrielle grumbled and shook her head. She leaned her forehead against her right palm. She had to stop letting the guilt of the break up eat at her. She'd been letting this go on for over six moons now. It was just so damn hard because everyday Gabrielle saw Ephiny, and everyday Gabrielle saw Ephiny's pain. Gabrielle kept reminding herself that it was better this way or else she and Ephiny would have plunged even deeper with the way things were between them.

Gabrielle flopped back in her desk chair and stared at Lammy. "I need a break," she mentioned to Lammy.

Lammy didn't reply, but if he could have, he would have agreed with the Amazon.

Gabrielle really considered the idea because things were getting to her lately. She hadn't been to see her grandfather, Cornelio, in some time. She also hadn't seen her mother or father in a season or two. Then it would be nice to go to Amphipolis and visit Cyrene and Toris. She'd received word that Toris's wife just had another child. She really hadn't seen any of her family since the Winter Solstice.

The princess pushed her chair back and got up. She came over to Faolan and asked, "What you think of a vacation, boy?"

Faolan released his dwindled bone and twisted his head up. He dropped his tongue and wagged his tail over the floor.

Gabrielle chuckled and teased, "You just want to see what treats Cyrene and Mary will give you."

Faolan's eyes sparkled, and he replied, "Rrrruh." He then thumped his tail on the floor.

Gabrielle laughed, knelt down beside the wolf, and fluffed his fur on his back.

Faolan lifted his head and closed his eyes. He was grateful whenever his human friend touched him.

Gabrielle leaned over and kissed the wolf on his temple. She then murmured, "Love you, Fao."

The wolf answered with a lick to Gabrielle's cheek. He seemed to smile when the bard giggled.

Gabrielle scratched her friend behind the ear then stood up. She decided it was time to get ready for bed.

Faolan briefly watched the bard go into the washroom then he returned to his bone.

Gabrielle changed out of her Amazon garb, which were her plain leathers. She rarely wore her Amazon Princess attire unless it was for ceremonial reasons or something political in nature. The bard cleaned up in the washroom then came out and changed into her night shift.

Finally, she said goodnight to Faolan and kissed him again. She then crawled into her cool bed, and it warmed against her body. Gabrielle tried to settle her ramped thoughts so that she could get some sleep. And just before she dozed off, she decided she would indeed put in a request for a vacation. It was about time.

**To be continued.**