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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 hatred leads her into blindness.

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One-Shot Fanfictions

To Take What is Mine

by Red Hope

Chapter 4

The Conqueror was astride her golden mare and quite alone on the dirt road. She was riding west and hoped to return to her army in about four days. But today she planned to pass through Potidaea after just visiting her brother's tomb.

The former warlord, now ruler of southern Greece, was known as a formidable warrior in battle and a passionate ruler on the throne. Foremost, she was a woman that believed in her destiny and honorably sought to fulfill it. It had taken her several long seasons to conquer southern Greece where most of the resistance rested.

The Conqueror had taken Sparta first then rebuilt the Spartan society to their glory days. It was a simple task once she made the Spartans remember their greatness. She rebuilt the Spartan's integrity

and honor when it came to being a hoplite. Once she succeeded in doing that then the hoplite armies vowed to follow the Conqueror to the ends of the Earth. The hoplites' high belief that they were greater than any other hoplites gave Xena the exact edge she needed to defeat the other Greek city-states. The Conqueror believed in her destiny as the liberator and protector for Greece, and the Spartans believed in their own greatness. It was a perfect fit for the Conqueror and the Spartans.

Xena marched the Spartan army east and aimed for Corinth. The Siege of Corinth lasted for a solid moon and the Corinthian king became absolutely desperate to stop the Conqueror. He threatened to have every Corinthian citizen killed if the Conqueror did not back off. He knew that was the Conqueror's weak point – she cared for the people. He backed up his warning by slaughtering two hundred people and let the bodies hang from the city walls for the Conqueror to see.

Most assumed that the Conqueror would have backed away in fear for the people's lives. Instead, she grew more enraged then hastily plotted to undermine the king. She used the king's own stupidity against him by turning the mouse like people into angry mobs of wolves. The Corinthian king lost control of his city within a day then the Conqueror's army merely strolled through the gates, which were opened by the Corinthian people. It wasn't much longer before the Corinthian king was put on trial before the people and followed the Spartan king's same fate. Hades welcomed two cruel Greek kings to his underworld.

After the Siege of Corinth, Xena continued her campaign further east and sought Athens. She didn't expect much of a problem with them. She also grew excited at the prospect of taking the Delian League, but much to her irritation the navy fled from the Athens port and took refuge in Amphipolis. She knew it would only be a matter of time before she had the Delian League under her command.

What was to the Conqueror's satisfaction was when Thebes annex to her growing Nation. A lot of news traveled through Greece about the Conqueror's honor, and her promises. They thought she was the next Alexander the Great and knelt before her.

The Conqueror then settled into a peace for a couple of seasons. She focused her efforts into reconstructing southern Greece so that there were no more city-states. She developed the polis into one powerful, central government, and she was the head of authority. Southern Greece now worked in harmony, and the people were beginning to prosper thanks to the Conqueror's labor.

The only hitch that kept the Conqueror increasing busy were the Romans. Those damn Romans couldn't seem to stay away from her borders. Often her dispatched armies of hoplites were caught in hit and run attacks from the Romans. They were nothing serious but enough to aggravate the Conqueror and her strategos, Borias.

Today though the Conqueror was taking time away from the duties as a ruler. She'd taken the vacation before she had to begin her next campaign. She planned to complete her domination within four seasons or sooner. She hoped that many of the northern providences would annex to her. She suspected they most likely would do so.

Xena was another candlemark from Potidaea. She hadn't stopped there in quite awhile, but she didn't plan to stay the night. She often had a hard time staying anywhere near the town because of the cold memories. She planned to go to the weapons store near the market that she'd loved ever since she was a kid.

The Conqueror heard a clanking sound down the road. She knew it wasn't her or Argo since it was so far ahead. She tilted her head and pushed away the sounds she wasn't concerned about, then she focused on the unfamiliar ones. She grinned when she picked out the men's voices.

The three bandits developed on the road, and they spotted the female warrior on the golden mare. They suspected the woman may have some nice goods on her considering she was so well dressed.

Xena was poised in her black leathers that covered her stomach and turned into a seeming skirt below her waist. She wore light-weight armor, which was merely swirling bronze rods that were molded to her body's shape. Then her cape flowed behind her and washed over the saddle. The cape was hooked to the large shoulder pads, which bestowed the matching armor design. Finally, she wore leather gauntlets, arm bracers, a distinct sword on her back, and hooked to her side was her famous chakram.

The Conqueror stopped Argo then leveled her ruthless expression on the bandits. "Hello, boys." She noted the bandit in the front had a wounded right arm, which was bandaged. She could only imagine who gave him that wound.

The leader, Goran, stepped forward and unsheathed his sword from his right side. "We just want whatever supplies you have."

The Conqueror arched an eyebrow at the demand. "It seems like you've already lost a previous fight."

Goran ignored the female warrior's remark about his arm. He gritted his teeth then threatened, "Get off the horse."

Xena chuckled then reached to her side. She unhooked her chakram and held it up in front of her.

"By the gods," a bandit called, "there's only one woman that carries a weapon like that!"

"It's the Conqueror," the other bandit squealed and back stepped.

"And it's your lucky day, boys," the Conqueror called out then instantly threw her chakram.

Goran swallowed when he saw the circular weapon coming for him and his partners. "I hate women warriors," were his last words before he was taken out.

The Conqueror had no problem dispersing the bandits before she continued on her trip to Potidaea. She made it to the town a candlemark before sunset, and she hoped the weapons store would still be open. She hitched Argo outside of town, grabbed her cloak, and threw it on as she aimed for the small town.

The old weapons master was preparing to close up his shop early because business had been slow. He opened the front door so that he could take down his open sign. When the door opened enough, he jumped back at the dark, lone figure at the bottom of his steps. He covered his pounding heart and caught the twinkling blue eyes under the hood. He held out his hand in signal and softly called, "Come in, Xena."

The Conqueror hastily ascended the steps and slipped past the store keeper. She pulled her hood back when she heard the weapons master closing the door and locked it.

The weapons master had aged a great deal since Xena's younger days. He was slightly hunched, salt and pepper hair, and still had brown eyes. "How have you been, Xena?" He smiled warmly.

The Conqueror turned to the store keeper. "I'm well, Dardanus. How are you?"

The weapons master came behind his counter and leaned on it some. "I'm still aging, my friend." He grinned at the joke.

"How's business been?"

Dardanus sighed and shook his head. "Its been slow."

Xena neared the counter and folded her muscular arms over her chest. "The market seems fairly busy though."

"It is... but people don't need weapons as much as food." The shopkeeper decided to change the hard topic and mentioned, "I hear you're preparing to come north."

"I am." The Conqueror tilted her head. "Do you hear talk in Potidaea?"

Dardanus slightly grinned and chuckled at another thought. "I don't think you'll have much trouble with Potidaea joining. They already know who you are, Xena. They remember the raid and what you tried to do for Herodotus's family."

"Mmmm." The Conqueror walked away and went over to another counter. She studied some of the weapons that rested on each shelf. "What of Amphipolis?"

Dardanus shook his head and bit his lip for a beat. "I think the Delian League greatly influences the city's choices."

"I thought as much," the ruler muttered. She came back over to Dardanus. "How is mother?"

The shopkeeper let his head bob for awhile then he revealed, "I saw her here about a moon ago. She's been busy with her taverna... she mentioned Toris's wife just had another child."

The Conqueror raised an eyebrow at this news. "Did you hear a name?"

Dardanus chuckled and replied, "The girl has been named Serene... after your mother."

Xena huffed and shook her head. "Typical Toris." She bent over and inspected the plethora of daggers that Dardanus had on hand. She'd been meaning to get a breast dagger.

"How do your ivy daggers fair?" Dardanus strolled away and worked to organize some things in his shop.

"The craftsmanship has lasted quite well, Dardanus. Do you have anything else in stock from that smith?"

Dardanus was rolling up a scroll that he used to keep track of his money. "I think I do. There should be three daggers at the end... those are his."

Xena picked up one of the daggers that was certainly a breast dagger. This was exactly what she'd hoped for these past couple of moons. She hefted the small dagger in her palm and decided the weight wasn't bad.

Dardanus chuckled at which dagger Xena had taken from the shelf. "You know, Xena come to think of it..." He furrowed his eyebrows and shook his head. He tried to recall something he saw the other day.

The Conqueror straightened up and gazed over at the shopkeeper.

The weapons master peered over at the tall ruler and slowly came over to her while he finished with the scroll. "I saw this girl in the market a few days ago."

Xena arched an eyebrow and wondered where Dardanus was going with this.

"I swear the girl looked just like Herodotus's daughter." Dardanus took the strings of the scroll and

worked to tie it off.

"Gabrielle?" Xena supplied. She had narrowed eyes, and she was tense.

"Yes, Gabrielle... I remember you and her use to get into all sorts of trouble around here." Dardanus chuckled at the old memories, but he noticed how the Conqueror remained passive. "I thought I saw her in the market the other day, but I don't think it was her."

"Why you say that?"

Dardanus set his scroll down in the slot behind him. He turned back to Xena. "The girl was dressed like a warrior... she carried a sword on her back and walked with a staff." He brushed his hair back some. "I was fairly impressed by the workmanship of her sword hilt." He rested his hands on his hips and thought back to the sword hilt. "It was unusual, but I could even tell from a distance it was well made. The cross-guard was in the shape of a bird's wings then the pommel was a bird head."

The Conqueror grew suspiciously when the description rang certain bells. "Did the woman have feathers in her hair?"

Dardanus brightened at this question and nodded. "Yes, actually. She had a few." He tilted his head and recalled which colors he'd seen. "She had a golden feather and two blue feathers."

Xena knew exactly what those feather represented in the Amazon Nations. She knew this stranger in Potidaea was definitely an Amazon and was high ranking by the gold feather. The two blue feathers meant the Amazon had excelled in the ways of diplomacy. "How old did she seem?"

The shopkeeper had puckered lips. "I'd say your age." He nodded once. "Do the feathers mean anything?"

The ruler walked down to the table counter and set the breast dagger there. "Yes, she's an Amazon." She peered over at the silent shopkeeper. "She's most likely a princess from what you tell me."

Dardanus was amazed how Xena could figure this out from his simple information. "How do you know she's a princess?"

"By her age and the fact she had a golden feather." The ruler crossed her arms again. "Only Amazons in the royal line wear those."

Dardanus decided it was safer not to ask anymore. "She's most likely from the Macedonia Nation." He shrugged then asked, "Is there anything else you need, Xena?"

The Conqueror tilted her head and gazed up at the bare spot at the top of the wall. As a child, she recalled that beautiful steel sword that Dardanus use to have on display. "Do you still own that steel sword, Dardanus?"

The weapons master blinked and quickly recalled the beautiful sword that was his prized piece. "I do, in the back actually." He could tell that the Conqueror was still interested in that sword after all these moons. He adored the sword, but he was also an aging man. "I may be able to part with it."

Xena grinned at the prospect, and her eyes lit up. "I'll make it worth your wild."

Dardanus came down the counter and patted it. "I'm not concerned about that." He then disappeared into the back to retrieve the gorgeous sword.

The Conqueror soon had the sword's hilt in her right hand. She held it up with such ease as if the sword

had grown lighter over the ages. She knew it wasn't possible but simply that she'd grown stronger. Xena enjoyed the flashing light over the blade and how the sapphire gem matched her eye color. She wouldn't walk out of the store without it.

Dardanus wanted to gift his old friend with the sword, but Xena refused his offer. She instead paid him very well and told him to keep the business going for her. Dardanus became distraught by the ruler's persistence to promote him, but he thanked her for her patronage. He made sure to supply the Conqueror with two wet stones and some oil. He thanked the ruler and received a promise that she'd return soon.

The Conqueror pulled her hood over her head and entered the quieted streets. She needed to get back to Argo and make dinner before it got any darker.

Dardanus worked to close up his shop. Then an after thought occurred to him so he unlocked his front door, threw it open, and scanned the quiet street. He didn't spot Xena, and he cursed under his breath. He meant to tell Xena that the strange Amazon warrior had a white wolf with her. He berated his aging memory and went back to closing his store down for the night.

The Conqueror made it back out to Argo, who huffed at her. Xena quickly untacked her mare and brushed her down for the evening. While she busied with getting Argo settled, she thought back on her conversation with Dardanus. She thought it was strange that an Amazon Princess would be traveling alone in these parts. She suspected the Amazon most likely came to Potidaea for supplies. It could be that the Amazon was headed to the Thrace Nation, but still it didn't explain why the Amazon traveled alone. They always traveled in pairs or more and especially the royal lines.

The Conqueror finished with Argo and unpacked her saddlebags. She made a campfire and decided to hunt for some rabbit or quail. She hoped for quail more than the rabbit. Xena left the camp and began her hunt, which brought her closer to the road.

Xena knelt and removed her ivy dagger from her right boot. She raised it so that the blade faced downwards. She was prepared to pounce on a nearby rabbit. Just when she was going to make her move the rabbit tore off in a fright and not from the Conqueror.

The ruler cursed and listened for what had scared the rabbit. She picked out chatting voices coming from the road. She decided to investigate now that the local animals were probably scattered deeper into the woods. Xena easily jumped and landed onto a large tree branch. She silently moved through the trees and neared the road without being easy to spot. She narrowed her eyes at the three traveling woman, who were blatantly Amazons.

"I hope she's there," Medora decided.

"She has to be there," Solari agreed who was walking in the middle of the small group. "The queen said she was headed there."

Jocasta shook her head and sadly mentioned, "I just hope the princess can handle the situation."

Solari sputtered and waved her hand. "The princess can do it. Why you think Melosa wanted us to find her?"

Medora glanced over at the younger Amazons. "Solari, I know you have faith she can handle this, but this is pretty serious."

The Conqueror narrowed her eyes and wondered what the Amazon were rambling about. She easily followed through the trees so she could keep up on the conversation.

"Where did this guy come from though?" Jocasta looked to the other Amazons. "I mean a warlord just doesn't pop out of the ground like a weed."

The Conqueror arched an eyebrow at the news of a warlord. She hadn't heard anything, and she didn't like that fact.

"I don't care where this Draco came from," Medora argued, "I'm more worried about what he'll do to the Nation. If he gets those Centaurs to side with him then it'll be a slaughter."

Solari worked her fingers through her hair. She was pretty worried too about what could happen, but she was optimistic that Gabrielle could keep the Centaurs with them. If Gabrielle could do that then the Centaurs and Amazons could defeat this warlord together.

"Not to mention," Medora started up again, "the Conqueror is headed this way."

"She'll flatten this warlord," Jocasta offered.

"That's if she hears about him in time," Solari reminded. "I mean granted she's smart and a damn good fighter, but her luck is going to run out." She shook her head. "Nobody is that perfect."

The bemused ruler grunted, but she kept following the Amazons. She hope one day she'd personally meet this Solari, and she'd have some fun then.

"I did hear one thing," Solari, the gossip queen, mentioned. "Supposedly this Draco has something personal against the Conqueror."

Xena shook her head because the name didn't spark anything in her memory. She figured Solari was most likely wrong.

"Well he should wait in line," Medora joked. "What's he have against her?"

"I don't know," Solari replied. "I just heard he really despises her." She sighed and muttered, "But that still doesn't explain why he's targeting the Nation."

"You would think he'd be more concerned about going after the Conqueror," Jocasta agreed.

Medora shook her head then mentioned, "I doubt she knows, but I bet when she hears about him she'll be after him."

"Yeah, you remember when she creamed that warlord east of Tricca? Who was that?" Solari racked her memory.

"Talmadeus," Medora recalled.

Solari laughed and nodded. "Yeah, she really ripped his army apart."

The Conqueror smirked at the memory of getting Talmadeus, and despite she won the battle it'd been a hard one. Chuang had been killed by Talmadeus himself, which sent the Conqueror ballistic that she lost her long time friend. Chuang had been loyal to her since Chin and was a strong warrior. His loss still angered the ruler after all this time.

Xena shoved her memories away and noticed that the Amazons were chatting about something else. It was nothing important to her so she stole away and returned to her earlier hunt. This time she managed to catch something and it was two fat quails, which was just what she wanted.

The Conqueror went back to camp and worked to get the birds cleaned and herbs put on them. She

placed them on the spit over the fire and took a seat on the ground. She rested her back against the log. She thought about this warlord, Draco, and wondered what he was planning to do. She thought it was odd too that he was targeting the Amazon Nation and specifically the Macedonia Nation.

She decided she would skip her plans to start the campaign in the Epirus Providence and instead go straight to the Macedonia Providence. If Draco wanted her then he would give him everything. The Conqueror slyly smirked and thought out her plans to destroy this warlord.

Xena ate her meal quietly, and she wondered back to the earlier part of the Amazons' conversation. So she'd been right in her assessment that the woman Dardanus had spotted was indeed an Amazon Princess. It would seem these three Amazons were trying to find the princess. The Conqueror knew the road that the Amazons traveled because it led directly north to Amphipolis. It sounded as if this princess held a lot of leverage in the Macedonia Nation, and that somewhat surprised the Conqueror. There weren't many princesses in the Nations that held that much power because the queens typically consumed it. Then again it was strange for such a young Amazon to have two blue diplomacy feathers.

As Xena considered it more deeply, she realized she knew every queen's name and princess's name except for the Macedonia Nation's. She knew that Melosa reigned over the Nation, but she didn't know the princess's name, which was odd. If this princess did indeed have the power she seemed to have then her name would be well-known. Just how did this mysterious princess become so popular without her name being spoken?

The Conqueror cleaned up her camp and set out her bedroll. She crawled into it and watched the stars that blanketed over her. The fact that the sky sparkled, and she was close to Potidaea made her think of Gabrielle. She closed her eyes and conjured up Gabrielle's young face from her childhood. Then she focused her thoughts to the bard, who probably no longer walked this earth.

Xena could block all her emotions out at will, but when she thought of Gabrielle it was too hard. She felt that ache come back to her, and it would never leave her. She felt that similar ache whenever she visited her brother as she'd done the other day.

Xena had no idea if Gabrielle was still alive. Yakut had told her that Gabrielle was alive, but Xena doubted it more each day. She'd become so powerful that her title, the Conqueror, had spread throughout all of Greece. She thought that Gabrielle would have tried to contact her then. It never happened. So she either believed Gabrielle was enslaved under a harsh master or she was dead.

Each time Xena came upon a slaver or slave owner, she searched the slave's faces but never found one familiar to her. She hated it, and she hated the slavers. She'd dedicated many of her resources to eradicating the slave markets in southern Greece. She wouldn't completely succeed until she had northern and eastern Greece in her hands.

Finally, the Conqueror found some sleep, and it was rather light. She awoke at dawn from natural habit, and she gathered up her camp after a quick breakfast. She decided she would ride hard back to Tricca where her army waited. Her vacation was just cut very short. The Conqueror had a challenge before her, and she had a destiny to fulfill.

To be continued.