

Relationship Advice

written by Calle Dybedahl

For kitsune76. Gabrielle, Tara and a Cyber Cafe.
This story really didn't end up where I intended it to.
Spoilers up to the very end of Xena, and for season four of Buffy.

Featured fandoms: Buffy the Vampire Slayer, Xena: Warrior Princess

Featured pairings: Gabrielle/Tara, Aphrodite/Gabrielle

A.S.S Story codes: ff,first

Story rating: NC17

It started when Gabrielle got fed up with Amazons.

It was a summer's day, shortly after the tribal communal dinner, and she came rushing into her cabin staring daggers at anything that moved and almost kicking the door off its hinges. It was a good thing that she, as queen of the tribe, had a cabin of her own, or her theoretical cabin mates might not have lived through the night.

"Aphrodite!" she screamed at the top of her lungs. "Get your butt down here right now!"

One might think that such loud shouting of the name of a goddess not usually associated with Amazon tribes ought to cause comment in the village, particularly when originating from the queen. One would, however, be quite wrong, in this case. Not only was Artemis, the more common Amazon goddess, dead since more than twenty years, it also was relatively common for Queen Gabrielle to request the attention of the Goddess of Love. Why it was that Queen Gabrielle could address said goddess in such terms and not be blasted into a cinder was something that the tribe didn't know. Nor did they, to be honest, care. They were quite satisfied with the knowledge that having one of the few (some even said the only) still living goddesses at her beck and call made their queen much, much cooler than the other tribes' queens.

"Bad day, dearie?" Aphrodite said after she'd twinkled into existence in Gabrielle's cabin. "Let me give you a massage and I'm sure you'll feel much better."

"These Amazons are driving me nuts," Gabrielle said, not having listened to a word of what Aphrodite said. "All they're interested in is fighting. And sex. And, some of them, kinky dominance games. Except I think that's just sort of combining fighting and sex into one, to save time."

"So?" Aphrodite said. "You sure have done your share of fighting, and I *know* you like sex."

"But I like other things as well!" Gabrielle wailed. "They *only* like fighting and sex! No stories. No philosophy. No theology. No history. No drama theory. Ok, some singing and dancing, but only as preludes to either fighting or sex. Or both. Don't think they can't do both at the same time."

She grabbed hold of Aphrodite's very flimsy gown. "It's driving me nuts!" she said. "I need to talk to someone with interests at least a little wider than this, or one dark night they'll drive me totally over the edge and I'll kill them all."

"Calm down, pumpkin," Aphrodite said. "Dite's here now. Everything will be all right."

She whipped out a glowing card about as big as her hand from thin air.

"Here," she said. "It's a pass to the Olympus Cyber Tavern. Always open, very reasonable rates. Not very crowded these days, since Xena killed most of the customers."

"Cyber Tavern?" Gabrielle said. "What in Tartarus is that? And how does it help me?"

Aphrodite smiled. "Give me a kiss and I'll show you."

Gabrielle's foul mood melted away. Not entirely, mind you, but at least a little.

"All right," she said. She took Aphrodite in her arms and kissed her, deeply and passionately, and when they finally separated to let Gabrielle breathe all of her foul mood was gone. It's very, very hard to stay in a foul mood when you're being kissed by the Goddess of Love. Too hard even for a pissed-off Amazon Queen.

"Feeling better, cutie-pie?" Aphrodite said.

"Mmm-hmm," Gabrielle said.

Aphrodite smiled. "Good," she said. "Let's be off to the Cyber Tavern."

Through the Olympus Cyber Tavern, Gabrielle could talk to people who weren't there. In some way she didn't understand (and, frankly, didn't care about), her words were carried to far distant places where other people could read them, and write back to her. Through the long, dark winter nights, she counted the Cyber Tavern as the one thing that kept her even marginally sane. If there was one thing that was even worse than an entire village full of Amazons focused only on fighting and sex, it was the same village full of Amazons focused only on fighting and sex snowed in and unable to go anywhere at all. There was much fighting and much sex in the village that winter, and Gabrielle made sure to express her gratitude to Aphrodite in the most physical and intimate way possible. Repeatedly, and at length.

On a lovely spring evening, one girl with whom Gabrielle had had many long and rewarding discussions on the works of Sappho, mentioned that she had met a girl. Not met as in passed her by on the path down to the river, but met as in their eyes met, locked on each other and suddenly the rest of the world ceased to exist for a while. Which would be quite nice and good, if Tara (for that was the name of Gabrielle's friend) hadn't been almost painfully shy and not at all sure if the girl of her dreams was at all interested in girls in *that* way, as she put it.

With some effort, Gabrielle refrained from giving her Xena's view on the subject (given enough mead, *everybody* is interested in girls in that way). While it was, in her experience, mostly true, she didn't think it was the sort of pep talk Tara needed. So instead she gave her the kind of advice older people have given younger people since time immemorial, and which the younger people almost invariably ignore. Talk to her. Be a friend. Pay attention. Be nice. Take initiatives, but don't be pushy. Be honest.

Tara thanked her, and, to Gabrielle's surprise, seemed to follow her advice quite closely. As far as she could tell from the letters that crawled down her scrolls in the Cyber Tavern, the romance was going pretty well. Remarkably well, she thought, once Tara mentioned that the girl in question had until recently been seeing a boy. It made her feel happy, seeing someone else's love story proceed a lot faster and smoother than hers and Xena's had. As far as was possible through the letters, which was a lot farther than she would've thought before, she grew to like Tara as a friend. A younger, less experienced, but very smart and nice friend. So when Tara one day wrote a letter that said "He came back" and not a word more, she got upset and worried.

"He came back," Tara wrote again the next day. "Willow's boyfriend came back, and he spent the night with her."

Gabrielle didn't know what to say. She'd figured out by now that Tara lived in a very different place and time, and at times she just didn't know enough to give good advice. As long as it was about people, fine. She knew a whole lot about people. But when it came to institutions, organizations or devices, she was lost. This seemed to be a social question more than a people one, so, not quite her thing.

"I wish I knew how to really make her feel good," Tara wrote. "We've fooled around a little, and it's nice and all, but I wish I knew how to really drive her out of her skull with pleasure. I wish I could make her come so much and so hard that she never ever looked at anyone but me for as long I live."

That, however, was well inside of Gabrielle's area of expertise.

She had used to think, way back when she and Xena was still traveling around Greece righting wrongs, that she was a pretty good lover. But that was before things got physical with Aphrodite.

Gabrielle had known for a long time that the love goddess liked her a lot, far more than she liked any other mortal Gabrielle knew of. But she hadn't really cared, it was just one more weird thing one of the annoying god types did. Sure, Aphrodite was much nicer than any other god she'd ever met, but that certainly wasn't saying much. She'd had diarrheas she'd liked more than she'd liked most of the gods she'd met. It was after Xena decided to stay dead that her relationship with Aphrodite changed.

She'd taken the long way home from Japa. Ship to Chin, then by horse all the way from there home to Greece. It was a very long trip, but she knew that Xena had done it before her, so she knew that it could be done. She'd cried a lot, the first few weeks. She missed Xena enormously. At times she thought she wouldn't have missed her own hands as badly as she missed her tall warrior. Every night, she cried herself to sleep.

Every night, Aphrodite showed up and just held her until she relaxed into the land of dreams. She didn't say anything, or do anything, she was just there. Waiting for Gabrielle to heal.

The breakpoint came in a tavern not so far from Varanasi in India. Gabrielle had been sitting alone at a table, eating, when Aphrodite showed up. They got to talking.

"You know," Gabrielle had said, "there's one thing about missing her that's only getting worse."

Aphrodite just looked questioningly at her.

"I'm getting really, really horny," Gabrielle said.

Aphrodite gave Gabrielle the most smoldering look she'd ever seen. "Just say the word, tootsie-pop," the love goddess said. "Anytime, anywhere."

In retrospect, she couldn't understand why she hadn't thought of it earlier. Of course Aphrodite was the Goddess of physical love as well as emotional and intellectual love. Who else would be?

That first night, she learned exactly how wrong she'd been about being a good lover. Oh, sure, she'd been quite decent. Anyone paying attention could be that. But Aphrodite was, literally, divine. She knew *everything* about lovemaking. Gabrielle wasn't usually much of a screamer, but after having had the Goddess of Love unleash twenty-five years' worth of pent-up frustration on her all night long she was hoarse for three days and didn't ride again for over a week.

And she sure wasn't frustrated and horny any more.

Gabrielle had had Aphrodite in her bed fairly regularly ever since then, and she'd learned a whole lot. It would've been hard not to, what with the highly explicit and muchly repeated demonstrations she got. It took her a long time to realize it herself, though, since she never got quite as good as Aphrodite and thus got used to thinking of herself as the less skilled one. It wasn't until after a winter solstice celebration that got extra heavy on the mead, herbs and mushrooms that it dawned on her how much she'd learned. Somehow, she'd ended up in the bath house with a couple of her prettier Amazon subjects and just generally enjoyed herself with them. It came as quite a surprise to her when, the day after, she suddenly found the already very high regard her tribe had for her elevated to levels close to outright worship. Apparently, the rumours of her bath house exploits had spread through the village like wildfire, and the sex and violence-fixated Amazons had been more than delighted to know that their queen wasn't just the smartest and toughest fighter of them all, she was also by far the

best lover.

Gabrielle couldn't make up her mind if she ought to laugh or cry, so as a compromise she locked herself in her cabin for a week and tried very hard not to think about how many propositions she'd get at the next Meeting of Amazon Tribes.

"Tell you what," she wrote to Tara. "If you can figure out a way to come here, I can teach you a thing or two."

She rolled up the magic scroll, put it back in its storage slot and waved the card that brought her back to her cabin. She was tempted to stay and wait for a reply, but she knew from experience that doing so would only make the time until the response came feel much longer. So she returned home and made herself a cup of tea. It wasn't as if the trip to and from the Cyber Tavern took any time anyway.

Long experience with various gods and other powerful critters helped her keep her cool when, all of a sudden, a blonde long-haired girl in weird clothing appeared from a puff of smoke in her living room.

Gabrielle looked sternly at the girl. "I'm sure there's a perfectly good explanation for this," she said.

"Um," the girl said, bowing her head so her hair fell in front of her face, "you said if I could figure out a way to g-get here..."

Gabrielle's annoyance evaporated like a drop of wine hitting a parched Amazon throat.

"Tara?" she said. "Is that you?"

The girl -- Tara -- was quite pretty, Gabrielle thought. She hid it well behind a too large sweater, a wide skirt that went all the way down to her feet and a dismal posture, but she was. The look and behaviour wasn't news to Gabrielle. She'd had plenty of young Amazons in her tribe with the same kind of lack of confidence.

"Y-yes," Tara said. "I'm sorry if I startled you."

"That's fine," Gabrielle said. "Have a seat, will you. I'll get you a cup of tea."

It was quite obvious that the girl would need to do some serious relaxing before she'd be able to enjoy anything else.

Tara sat down on the nearest reasonable surface, a bear skin in front of the roaring fire.

"I've never really been with a woman," she said. "I've fantasized about of for almost as long as I can remember, but I've never really done anything."

"I thought you said you'd fooled around with Willow?" Gabrielle said. She poured a mug full of herbal tea, added some honey and handed it to Tara.

"With our clothes on," Tara said. "I don't think that counts."

She took the mug and carefully sipped the hot liquid.

Gabrielle sat down next to her on the bear skin.

"This is what we'll do," she said. "First, do you find me reasonably attractive, in a purely physical way?"

Tara took a good, long look at Gabrielle, from her short blonde hair down past her red sports bra-like top, bared midriff, short red skirt and muscular legs to her bare feet.

Tara nodded.

"Good," Gabrielle said. "Then I'll get naked, and you take all the time you want to experiment with me. When and if you feel like it, you get naked too. Does that sound all right to you?"

"Ex-experiment?" Tara said.

"Explore. Investigate. Examine. Get your hands all over me to see what it feels like and how I react."

"What if I hurt you? I mean, not that I mean to, but if I do something wrong?"

Gabrielle smiled. "Then I'll tell you," she said. "But since you worry about it, I doubt it'll be a problem. I'm a woman just like you, so I think you already have a pretty good idea about what feels good and what doesn't."

"And wh-when I g-get naked?"

"Then I get to do the same to you."

"All r-right," Tara said.

She looked about equal parts afraid and determined, Gabrielle thought, and her stutter had got worse once Gabrielle started talking about getting naked. But it didn't look like it was more than the girl could handle, so she decided to keep going. She reached behind her back and undid the knots holding her top in place, shrugging it off and letting it drop to the floor.

Tara's eyes immediately focused on her breasts. Gabrielle couldn't help smiling. It sure looked like the girl had a healthy enough libido. She undid the knots on her skirt and unwrapped it from her hips, leaving her stark naked.

"Th-those clothes were very easy to take off," Tara said.

"Traditional Amazon garb," Gabrielle said. "And yes, it's made that way for all the reasons you imagine."

Tara sat leaning against the wall with her legs stretched out in front of her. Gabrielle straddled her thighs, so her knees were at each side of Tara's hips and most parts of her were within easy reach for the girl.

"Y-you're pretty," Tara said. Her cheeks and throat were turning reddish, and Gabrielle could see her swallowing nervously.

"Thank you," she said. "It took Xena years before she managed to tell me that."

She leaned forward and kissed Tara very lightly on the lips, then sat up straight again. "Don't be afraid," she said. "Remember, *I* suggested this. If I don't like it, it's entirely my own fault."

Tara reached out a hand and put it on Gabrielle's upper arm. She let it slide down the arm until she reached Gabrielle's hand, which she took in her own and lifted up. She played with the fingers, bending them, and looked carefully at the palm and back of it.

"You have a lot of scars," she said.

"Comes from being a warrior," Gabrielle said. "Probably wouldn't have had nearly as many if I'd stayed a bard."

Tara let go of the hand, and instead put her fingers over Gabrielle's mouth. She traced the lips with her fingertips. Gabrielle couldn't resist the temptation. She opened her mouth and with a quick move caught Tara's finger between her teeth. She sucked on it for a moment, and then let it go.

Tara giggled. "That tickled," she said. "In a good way."

Gabrielle put her own finger to Tara's lips. Keeping eye contact all the time, Tara took the finger inside her mouth and sucked on it a little, just like Gabrielle had done. Gabrielle held it there until Tara let it go.

"And that?" she asked.

"Different," Tara said. "But also nice. Although I can't tell why."

"Why is for later," Gabrielle said. "Nice is for now."

"Can I really do whatever I want with you?" Tara said.

Gabrielle nodded. "Pretty much," she said. "If that worries you, promise me that

you'll stop if I ask you to. That may make you feel safer about trying things."

Tara looked into her eyes again. "I p-promise to stop when you ask me to," she said.

"Good," Gabrielle said. "Now what do you want to do?"

Tara's hands descended on Gabrielle's breasts. She cupped them, gently squeezed them, felt their slight weight.

"Mmm," she said. "I could play with these for a long time."

Gabrielle laughed. "If you wish," she said. "But I think you'd miss out on the rest of me."

"I guess," Tara smiled. She moved her hands further down, brushing by the hair on Gabrielle's mons and continuing down the front of her thighs. Rounding the knees, she started upwards again, but now along the insides of the thighs. When she came to their end, she moved her left hand outwards to rest on Gabrielle's hip and slid the right one in between her legs to very, very gently stroke her outer labia.

Gabrielle made a strange half-swallowed sound.

Tara stroked a little harder. "Do you want me to stop?" she asked.

Gabrielle shook her head.

Tara pushed her finger in between the labia, into heat and slick wetness. Moving it slowly back and forth, she moved her other hand up to one of Gabrielle's bare breasts, stroking it and feeling the now very stiff nipple.

All of a sudden she took both her hands off Gabrielle's body. Gabrielle looked up, confused, but understanding came quickly when she saw Tara at work taking her sweater off. She smiled and waited patiently until Tara sat in front of her with her torso bare.

"Do you want me to move so you can get your skirt off?" she asked.

Tara shook her head. "Would you p-please fondle my breasts?" she said.

Gabrielle didn't bother replying in words, but simply did as she was asked. Tara's breasts were quite a bit larger than her own, and she couldn't fit her hands all around them like Tara could on her. She stroked them, felt their firmness and the rubbery hard feeling of her substantial nipples.

"They're very nice," she started saying, but before she was more than halfway through the sentence Tara suddenly slid a finger inside her and the last word only came out a grunt.

Tara giggled. "Sorry," she said. "But you said I could experiment."

"Mmm," Gabrielle said. "Keep doing that."

Tara did as she said, moving her finger slowly in and out of Gabrielle's vagina while Gabrielle kept fondling her breasts. For a little while, they simply sat like that, not speaking.

Tara broke the silence. "I want to take my skirt off now," she whispered.

Gabrielle moved off of her, and laid down on her side on the bear skin, resting her head in her hand. She waited while Tara took her shoes, socks, skirt and panties off, ending up entirely naked in front of the fire.

"Come here," she said, indicating the spot beside her on the bear skin. Tara laid down next to her, also on her side, facing Gabrielle.

"My turn now?" Gabrielle asked.

Tara nodded. She looked a little nervous again.

Gabrielle put her hand between Tara's breasts, pushed her down on her back and stood on all fours over her.

"Good," she said.

Gabrielle bent her arms, so she stood on her elbows and knees and, more importantly, so she could reach Tara with her mouth. She started planting kisses around her throat and along her collarbones, moving steadily down her chest. She kissed her way around Tara's breasts, under and between and beside them, and finally, when she felt Tara squirm a little under her, up on top of them. She caught her nipples in her mouth and played with them, one after the other, until Tara started making little noises.

She moved on downwards, over her smooth belly past her belly button into the coarse hair above her vulva. As she got closer to that, she felt Tara spread her legs more widely apart. She kept going downwards, probing at and separating Tara's labia with her tongue, running it along the slick insides. She ran her tongue from the hard little nub at the top to the hole at the bottom and back again, up and down, up and down. She felt the muscles in Tara's thighs tense and release, tense and release.

The little noises that Tara had been making had grown into full-fledged whimpering, and Gabrielle was starting to believe that that was about as vocal as the shy girl was going to get. This time, at least. She concentrated her licking around Tara's clitoris, changed her balance so she could use one of her hands. She played around the opening to her vagina with her finger for a little while, dipped a fingertip inside and then pulled it out, rubbed around the opening and, finally, pushed it gently inside. All the while, she kept sucking and licking at the little bundle of nerves near the top of the vulva.

When Gabrielle was sure that her moving finger was causing far more pleasure than discomfort, she stopped licking and moved upwards again, while keeping her hand at its task. She ended up stretched alongside Tara, one arm under her head and the other working rhythmically at her groin. She planted a kiss tentatively next to Tara's mouth, testing her reaction to the strong smell of her own juices that were liberally spread around Gabrielle's lips. It seemed that she didn't mind them at all, or were too far gone to notice them, because she eagerly turned her head towards Gabrielle and kissed her deeply. Gabrielle kissed her back, and moved her hand a little so the heel of it pressed down at Tara's still engorged clitoris. As she did so, she felt Tara twitch all over. Gabrielle kept going as she was, and a little while later she heard Tara drew in her breath and hold it at the same time as her entire body went rigid. She stilled her fingers, but kept the pressure on Tara's clitoris until she relaxed again. When she did, Gabrielle removed her hand from between her legs and instead gave her a plain old hug.

"Nice?" she asked when she thought that Tara was able to speak again.

"Very," Tara said. "Although I kept thinking of Willow. I hope you don't mind?"

Gabrielle smiled. "Of course not."

She eased her hold on the girl and got up on one elbow so she could see her face clearly.

"Relaxed?" she asked.

"Oh yes," Tara said. "Entirely."

"Good. Much less nervous about the whole sex thing?"

Tara thought about it for a few moments. "Yes," she said. "Much. Not that I have anything to compare with, really, but it felt like you're very good at this sort of thing."

"I had a very, very good teacher," Gabrielle said.

"Sappho?" Tara asked.

"Goddess, no!" Gabrielle said. "Great poet, not so pleasant person. Although for a

while I wondered about her and Xena... No, not Sappho. Aphrodite."

Tara's eyes widened. "The goddess of love?" she said.

"Just her."

"No wonder you're good, then."

Gabrielle grinned at her. "You don't even know the start of it, dearie," she said.

"Now that you're less nervous, I can start showing you the *good* stuff."

When Tara got back to her room the entire campus was dark. Some kind of blackout, obviously, since not even the streetlights were on. She sat down in her room, looking out the window. She was pretty tired, both from performing the magic that had taken her to and from Gabrielle's time, and from several long hours of constant lovemaking. Not that she minded it in the least. Gabrielle had been extremely nice and the entire experience had been *extremely* educational.

Although, now that she was back all her doubts and fears and hopes regarding Willow returned in full strength, and brought their friends and relatives as well. Learning how to reduce Willow to a quivering orgasmic heap was all nice and dandy, but pretty useless if she never got to touch her in that way again. If she decided to return to Oz.

At about that point in her descending spiral of despair, there was a knock on her door, and when she opened, there was Willow.

"No candles?" Willow said. "Well, I brought one. It's extra flamey."

Tara didn't know what to say, so she didn't. She stepped backwards into the room, and Willow followed her inside, closing the door behind her.

"Tara, I have to tell you," Willow said.

Here it comes, Tara thought. Now she tells me it's all over.

"No, I-I understand," she said. "You have to be with the person you l-love."

Willow smiled at her, her oh-so-very beautiful smile. Tara didn't want to see it. It hurt too much.

"I am," Willow said.

Tara's descending spiral of despair came to a screaming halt.

"You mean...?" she said.

"I mean," Willow said. "Okay?"

"Oh, yes!"

"I feel horrible about everything I put you through," Willow said. "A-and I'm gonna make it up to you. Starting right now."

Tara raised an eyebrow ever-so-slightly. "Right now?" she asked.

Willow nodded.

Smiling, Tara blew out the candle and put it aside.

She'd save the hot candle wax thing for another day.