



No Holes Barred

# THE AWAKENING

By

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## Chapter One

Britenia tossed an expressionless glance at her mentor. “Why should I even bother?”

“You have been wronged Brit. All of your people have been wronged.”

Britenia scanned the satellite, located at the end of the gateway that Rupshel had brought her through. It was a colorless piece of rock, floating in the galaxy, bearing nothing except boulders and stones and pits of various sizes. It was as dead as she was, as dead as the enormous bolder they stood in front of that burrowed nondescriptly into the satellite’s pebbled surface, looking as much a part of the terrain as any other of the enormous rocks. In its stone façade the words, *No Holes Barred* was carved appearing as though a passerby had haplessly scratched into the surface. But Rupshel told her it was the entrance to the spa club and resort that she would reside at for as many dawnings as it took.

“It doesn't look like much of a place to find deliverance.”

“Not true child.” Rupshel cast his glance to the large boulder. “Many travelers pass through the cosmic gateways to this satellite play land, some stay awhile and some go. Inside you will find creatures from the galaxies far and wide. Emotions abound.”

The elderly man tipped his head toward Britenia and scratched his ancient purple-gray beard. His voice lowered an octave though his tone was still firm. “You may find joy here my dear.”

“I doubt I'll ever have that gift again, Rupshel.” Brit stared at the rocky wall in front of her. “Nothing holds meaning for me. I remain empty.”

“Ah child,” Rupshel glided over to her, his long flowing robes caressing the ground as he moved. He was the epitome of a life time of wisdom and knowledge, four centuries of learning he put to claim under his belt. “Do I detect despair within you?”

Brit’s head snapped around so she could look her mentor in the eye. “It is an emotion, yes?”

“It is.”

“Well, it is not a very pleasant feeling.” Still, feeling a twinge of an emotion stimulated Britenia’s hope, another emotion. Perhaps she would stay awhile.

“Be patient my student. You’ve just arrived here. You will learn.” A wily smile played at Rupshel’s lips. “You may even discover passion in this place.”

Britenia stared impassively at her mentor for a moment. “Or anger. Maybe I will find anger here, or hate, or some sentiment I can feel strongly.”

“Passion is a strong feeling child and encompasses an array of pleasures or displeasures as the case may be sometimes.”

Ignoring the man who counseled her, the wise teacher who instructed all of her peoples at the University of Emotional Awareness, Britenia turned away, putting her back to her mentor.

“I should feel hate,” she said.

“Do you?”

Britenia stood still, not answering him right away. It was as though she was trying to conjure the emotion. She shook her head with numb regard. On an inhale, she looked at her mentor. “No.”

Her soul was an empty shell--void of emotion.

Empty.

“It doesn't even feel strange to feel...nothing. I feel nothing, Rupshel.”

Rupshel placed a caring, fatherly hand gently on her shoulder. “You will, Britenia, as time passes and you witness the vibrancy that naturally resides in others. Study them and what they feel, and your emotions will begin to blossom.”

“Like this satellite?” Britenia knew she should chuckle at her own humor, but the sentiment evaded her.

Rupshel chuckled for her. “Beneath it all, my lady royal, I think we’ll discover you are quite a delight.”

“I would wish to say I believe you.” Britenia lowered to sit on a small rock near the big boulder. She folded her hands in her lap. “How will I recognize the emotions when they come?”

“You were one of my finest students.” Rupshel knelt in front of her and placed a palm on her cheek. “Just keep your scrolls nearby.”

Britenia nodded. Four solar annums she spent at the University for Emotional Awareness. She supposed she was ready. “My scrolls, yes. They will tell me all.”

“Not all,” Rupshel answered. “Much you will discover on your own.”

Britenia would’ve given him a confused look then, if she possessed the emotion. Instead she merely said. “I have no choice but to try.”

“For your sake and for the sake of your people.”

“So that I may return to my planet and enlighten them, yes?”

“Yes. And to take your rightful place on the throne.” Rupshel stood and stepped back from her. “For now I leave you. There is the welfare of the other apprentices I must see to.”

“Just one more question, Rupshel.” Britenia stood, causing Rupshel to halt, just as he was about to step into the tunnel that brought them here. “How might I understand the many languages spoken here?”

“A thoughtful question,” Rusphel turned and faced Britenia. “The place is equipped with a universal translator. Just speak your own words and others will understand you, and likewise you will understand them.”

“Thank you, my teacher.” Britenia closed her eyes and bowed her head respectfully. “I will be fine.”

When she opened her eyes again her mentor was gone, leaving her standing alone at the entrance of *No Holes Barred--Alone*, but not lonely.

Britenia wondered what loneliness felt like.

Sighing for no other reason than releasing a breath, she picked up her travel bag and knocked on the rock. A tiny stone piece sank inward revealing a hole about the size of her hand. Flattening her palm over the opening, she presented the tattoo on her flesh. It was the symbol that would gain her entrance. “Invited member.”

She felt a small tingle on her skin as the surveillance scanner read the mark. The small hole sealed as she dropped her hand and then a crack appeared in the surface of the rock door.

It spread open, revealing a dark, silent cavern.

Britenia stepped inside.

But she wasn't inside at all.

As the rock doorway behind her scraped closed, there was a low rumble and a flash of light. The place began to illuminate and Britenia

discovered that she had entered an outdoor garden, full of colorful flowers and trees and soft music. A white, marble brick path ran the center of it. Off to one side there were several small pools and one larger one. Steam rose from the bubbling waters on the smaller ones and she assumed the water in the larger pool was cool. A few guests were relaxing within the waters' depths. Just beyond the pools, there were several raised, cushioned cots. The first four were vacant, but a male lay face down on the fifth one. He was nude except for the towel draped across his buttocks and thighs. A woman was kneading his shoulders.

Another relaxing activity, Britenia supposed, a way to relieve stress. What was stress like?

Britenia began walking along the path, catching the murmurs of conversations, hearing the animation in their voices and watching the assortment of emotions that played on the faces of the guests there. She could feel the tepid breeze of the air around her as it gently stroked her hair. The walkway was cool beneath her unclad feet. The garden that grew around her was an oasis of botanical scents. But despite all the delights the spa provided, Britenia was unable to *feel* any of it.

She could only observe.

From her studies, Britenia understood the various situations that should elicit certain emotions. Still, they evaded her. But that was why she was in this place. To explore--the life in others, the life that was missing in herself.

Passing a grouping of tables arranged along the garden terrace, Britenia's eyes locked unresponsively onto a man indulging in a meal. She stopped.

Something very slight stirred within her and Britenia blinked several times at the unexpected feeling, but it vanished rather rapidly just as every sensation that threatened to surface regularly did.

The man's head lifted and he smiled at her, and she acknowledged it with a nod. She didn't smile back, but did notice the way nearby women were examining the brawny male, bearing a gleam in their eyes that Britenia could only interpret as desire. It wasn't beyond her to comprehend the physical concept that the man was aesthetically pleasing.

*Passion. Will I ever fully feel passion?*

Her eyes flicked behind the man to an enormous tree, its trunk completely hollowed out. From the brochure the management sent her, Britenia recognized it as the club. Tipping her head she tuned into the sounds inside, catching a more upbeat style of music emerging from it. And there was movement. It was dancing. People were dancing on the main floor. And there was jovial talk and laughter. Her eyes flickered upward. The second level was of interest to her. Special services were offered there, personal fantasies and those of a more intimate kind. A twinge of anticipation seeped into Britenia's chest, a flicker, just a flicker of excitement before it vanished.

She would sample all the services if she could. One of them was bound to awaken her.

Britenia's gaze dropped downward. The man continued to watch her. Did he find her aesthetically pleasing?

No matter. She had work to do, emotions to discover.

Turning her head back to the path, Britenia sighted the grouping of thatched roof cabanas. One of them had been reserved as living space for her during her stay, and at the moment her body felt weary. Deciding on a nap



before the supper hour, Britenia continued down the path, thinking about nothing in particular.

## Chapter Two

Jicar watched the woman as she passed by.

*Stunning* was the only word that came to his mind and he smiled at her when she halted and looked over at him. Her hair was silvery and long--down to her waist. Soft peach highlights shimmered through it under the caress of the mid-day sun. The expression on her lovely face intrigued him. It seemed to hold much but at the same time, was void of all. Sitting back in his chair, Jicar let his meal settle in his stomach. His gaze remained fixed on the woman as her line of focus went up to the club's second level for a few moments before she returned her gaze to him.

*Was she sending a signal?*

But then she turned away and continued on to where ever it was she going. A smile played at one corner of his mouth, as he watched the flow of her silky skirts around her body and he caught an enticing view of the curves in her calves through the discreet slit on the side. She was barefooted and wore a sparkling, blue anklet made of *jura* crystal. An expensive piece if it were real. Jicar suspected that it was by the sharpness of its glint.

A sign of royalty.

*Interesting.* Jicar mingled with many royals when he was on holiday at the various clubs, but this beauty, he'd never seen before and wondered where she had been hiding.

Jicar's eyes drifted upward to the roundness of her bottom, watching it gently sway as she walked. His mind imagined his hands lain upon it, his lips on the naked flesh. A low, craving groan formed in his throat. It had been awhile since he'd had a woman, eons since he felt more than physical need. Yet, here and now, with just a single glance exchanged between two strangers, a sudden yearning was stirring. With quick inference Jicar recognized the feeling.

When had he become so lonely?

He shook the feeling away in a convincing sway of thought. Jicar wanted no woman except for the pleasure of bedding her--an eve of passion shared between them with only the desire to slake their lust.

Nothing more than that.

Still, he would ask the owner of the establishment, Trina Winsleng, about her.

If the woman was willing, Jicar might be offering.

*Just for a single eve*, he told himself. Rarely did Jicar indulge in a second eve with the same female, preferring to move on, else he might become attached.

Rising from his chair, he entered the club. A few guests danced on the floor, or dined at tables but at this midday hour, the place was more or less quiet. He found Trina in her usual place, at a table in the back corner.

It was unusual, but she was alone, for many sought her talents.

"Jicar," she said smiling broadly as he approached. "Please, sit."

Jicar took the seat next to her and leaning in, he gave her peck on her cheek. "How do you fare, Trina?"

“Business is good...very good.” Trina turned over the clean cup that sat on a saucer at the table. She then grasped the flagon from the table and poured Jicar a cup of herbal drink. “Are you enjoying yourself this visit?”

Lifting the cup to his lips, Jicar took a sip and then replaced it atop the saucer. “Tell me about the new royal who visits.”

“New royal?” Trina gave him a quizzical look. “I’m not sure of whom...”

“You know who I’m speaking of, Trina,” Jicar interrupted with a smirk. “You’re familiar with all of the guests who come here.”

Trina pressed a palm to her chest and cast an innocent expression in Jicar’s direction. “Do I?”

“Discreet as always, Trina.” Jicar took another sip of his herbal drink.

“Of course.”

“What can you tell me?”

Dropping her hand, Trina grinned. “I don’t think I’m at liberty to say.”

“Trina.” Jicar urged. “Give.”

“All right then. I can tell you this. Britenia is a royal and the reason for her visit is to find her emotions.”

A hearty laugh burst from Jicar. “I see. Did she misplace them?”

Surely it was only a jest.

“As a matter of fact, she did.”

Jicar sobered immediately. Drawing his brows together he stared at Trina, his expression part inquisitive, part disbelieving.

“It’s completely true, Jicar. I’ve met with her and she is indeed detached.”

“But how...why?”

Trina slashed a hand through the air. “All I know is that it was a sorcerer’s spell cast some forty annums back. All the inhabitants of her planet and their subsequent offspring are cursed...”

Jicar drew his brows together, a serious of questions forming in his head.

“Mistress Wensling.” A voice interrupted, and Trina looked up to see two guests, Lehran and Kmol standing at her table.

“Is it time for our match already?” Trina reached beneath her chair and lifted a small box, placing it on the table top. She opened it and removed a cylindrical cup, five multifaceted, clear *Shatib* gems and four compu-score cards.

Jicar took another sip of his tea as the two guests seated themselves.

“May I present...” Trina began indicating Jicar.

“Jicar Adi LarRhe, yes we’ve met.” Lehran’s eyes grazed along his torso, but Jicar pretended he didn’t notice. On his last holiday at the *No Holes Barred*, he partnered with her for a night, but the sex was inanimately boring. He never sought a second date.

“Pleasantry and peace to you,” the man who accompanied Lehran said. “Kmol Fegjr, Labordian galaxy, planet Graxor.”

Jicar returned his introduction with nod. “And peace to you as well.”

“Care to join?” Trina asked Jicar.

“Sure, why not?” Jicar shrugged.

“Good, then.” Trina dropped the *shatib* gems into the cup and pushed it toward Lehran, who tapped a dot on her score pad to indicate it was her turn. She then picked up the container, shook it and turned it upside down. The gems plinked to the table and started to spin, each glowing with shifting

colors. When they came to a stop two gems were blue, two were red and one was yellow.

“Humph,” Lehran eyed the pieces.

Since blue was worth more points, she picked up the red and yellow, dropping them into the cup. She shook it and dumped the gems on the table once more and was rewarded with one more blue and a green. Her score card automatically recorded the points she earned.

Kmol took his turn next, and after two tries came up with only two red gems and three other single colors.

“Guess I’ll take the pair,” he said and passed the game pieces to Jicar. “You’re up.”

It was then that Jicar’s eyes drifted toward the club entrance. Patrons were beginning to flow through the door, arriving for the supper hour. Scooping the gems, Jicar dropped them into the container. He shook it back and forth listening to the rattling sound they made as they shifted in the cup, but his eyes never left the entrance, his attention fixed on the beauty that had just come through the door.

She stood in a nondescript manner, the fingers of her two hands laced and hanging in front of her as she scanned the club’s main floor. Her hair was pulled tightly back from her face, emphasizing her strikingly beautiful features. At the top of her head, the orange sparkle of the gemmed, hair clip that bundled her mane, caught Jicar’s eyes, and when she turned her head to the side he noticed that the rest of her hair emerged from the clip and hung down her back in loose, but perfectly symmetrical coils. As he stared at her, Jicar had to wonder if she realized the sensual beauty and elegance she emanated.

In Jicar's eyes, she was a vision of grace and poise, yet her expression was blank, almost mechanical. It was as if she was merely going through the motions of living and it wouldn't make a difference to her if she were dead or alive.

Jicar wasn't overly sentimental, but something about her detached façade touched him in a way he was unable to explain.

He wanted to help her.

Call it chivalry or Jicar's enjoyment with meeting a challenge. Either way, he wanted to know more about this woman.

What did Trina say her name was? *Ah, yes, Britenia.*

"Why in the galaxy would you turn that down?" The sound of Lehran's voice jerked Jicar's attention from Britenia.

"What?" he said, his attention shifting toward the group at the table.

"Shatib...you had a Shatib...five blue gems." Lehran lifted questioning brows at Jicar.

"Did I?"

"You did." Trina tipped her head realizing that Jicar was paying little attention to the game. "But then you snatched them up and dropped them back into the cup."

"I guess I'm a bit distracted." Jicar shrugged nonchalantly and handed the cup to Trina.

"It would seem so," Trina answered, her eyes sweeping the club's main floor seeking what seemed to be so distracting to Jicar, but couldn't identify anything.

"The three of you play." Jicar picked up his cup of herbal drink and drained it. He leaned back in his chair, propping an ankle on the opposite knee. "I guess I'm not so much in the game playing mood."

His attention moved back to the entranceway, but Britenia was no longer standing there. Searching the now growing crowd he located her at the bar. A male *Tivartian* was handing her a foaming drink--*Licris*--light on the spirits, spicy in taste. She sipped it and nodded her head in approval. The *Tivartian* then leaned in and whispered something to her. She answered by bending her mouth to his tentacle ear, whispering in return.

Jicar's curiosity peaked as he wondered what they were saying. But when the male pointed to the second level and Britenia turned her head in that direction, Jicar tensed, suddenly feeling possessive of her, though he knew he had no right. Yet at the same time he wasn't about to let the male have her.

"Good game, Trina," Kmol said. "Nice win."

Lehran and Kmol stood and excused themselves, heading for the floor to enjoy some dancing. Jicar was glad they were gone.

"She's caught your fancy?" In the midst of the game playing, Trina had been studying Jicar and it didn't take her long to determine what occupied his mind.

But Jicar, being in the position he was on his planet was a man of discretion, so Trina waited until her guests had left the table before speaking about it.

Jicar looked briefly at Trina before his gaze drifted back toward the bar, and he clenched his teeth. Another *Tivartian* had joined the other and having a penchant for *ménages* it was obvious they intended to share Britenia. Both were pressing their bodies to her, one from the front and one from behind.



“Invite the woman to sup with us, Trina.” Something savage was stirring within Jicar, though he attempted to ignore it. “I want to meet this woman who has no feelings.”

### Chapter Three

Trina caught the bartender's eyes and sent him a series of hand gestures. It was a method that she used to communicate with her staff, beyond the understanding of her guests, which was most appreciated when one wished to be tactful.

The bartender nodded his understanding and leaned over the bar in front of Britenia beckoning her closer. She turned her ear and he murmured the Mistress Wensling's request. His head tipped his eyes fixing in Trina and Jicar's direction. Pulling back from him Britenia followed the line of his gaze and then said something to her male companions.

Jicar was surprised and pleased when she readily disengaged herself from the *Tivartian* men and started walking toward the table. He became immensely smug at the disappointed expressions that fell to the *Tivartians'* faces as she left them, though Jicar knew it was Trina's request that she was honoring rather than his undisclosed desire to have her there.

Watching her intensely as she approached, Jicar took in her entire presence. And then his breath caught when he snagged a view of what she was wearing, well at least with what she wore on top--a single strip of cloth that swept across her chest. Except for shimmering blue threads that weaved through the material, it was otherwise transparent giving Jicar an exquisite eyeful of her perfect breasts. The dusky areolas nicely showing through, and her nipples...

Jicar imagined drawing those jutting peaks into his mouth and sucking on them.

His cock twitched.

What she wore wasn't more revealing than the scanty garments of some of the other patrons. In fact, many, both male and female often donned clothing that was sheer top to bottom, showing off every one of their assets. But Jicar had grown accustomed to the attire and stopped leering long ago.

Britenia's skirt was opaque, revealing nothing except a view of her beautiful thighs that appeared and disappeared through the multi-paneled garment as she approached. The fact that he was unable to glimpse her pussy when many others were so willing to expose, made it that much more tantalizing to explore that part of her.

"Welcome to No Holes Barred," Trina greeted Britenia. "I hope you're enjoying your stay."

Standing at the table, Britenia gave Trina a pensive look. "Enjoy, yes, a pleasurable emotion. I will try."

Her eyes flicked to Jicar and she recognized his as the man she saw earlier.

He stood to present himself. "Jicar Adi LarRhe. Please join us."

Indicating the empty chair between his and Trina's, Jicar pulled it out for her, and she sat down. After seating himself, Jicar lifted an arm and crooked his index finger to signal a server.

Narla, who caught the gesture, was instantly at the table. "What can I get for you handsome?"

Tilting her head in a curious angle Britenia studied the woman's face, catching the twinkling of her eyes and the batting of her eyelashes that followed. "She has lust for you, Jicar Adi LarRhe."

Narla's face tightened and her cheeks heated with a discomfited blush. At the same time Jicar snorted. "And how do you know this my lady, Brit?"

With the utmost of sincerity and a completely blank facade, Britenia righted her head and looked Jicar directly in the eyes. "It says so on her face and her nipples are hard."

A roar of laughter burst from Jicar's mouth.

Mistress Wensling almost spit out her drink, but saving grace, she swallowed hard.

"Stars!" Narla gasped, her arms crossing over her breasts reflexively.

"Are you always so bold to speak, my dear?" Trina swiped at her mouth trying with all her might to keep from joining Jicar in his amusement.

Britenia turned and handed her a napkin. "I don't understand."

"Bring us a bottle of iced Burgin, a platter of roasted Tishi meats and mixed fruit, Narla," Jicar instructed the server, not bothering to suppress the smirk on his lips.

"Right away," Narla choked out and then gulped, her face still red with embarrassment. She shot Britenia a frosty glare before rushing off in a fluster.

"What the mistress means to say..." Jicar leaned closer to Britenia.

Tipping her head to listen, Britenia wondered at the quality of Jicar's voice, thinking the accentuation of his words and smoothness of the sound could be assessed as appealing.

"...you should be a bit more discreet," Jicar continued.

Turning her head, Britenia met his gaze, realizing belatedly that his face was very close to hers, their lips nearly touching. "Why?"

She felt a reaction between her thighs at his closeness. Merely physical, she'd had many of those before. Despite that, her eyes dipped to his bare chest and she noticed how muscular it was.

"Well...well because people have feelings, my dear," the mistress Wensling said to the back of Britenia's head.

"Feelings," Britenia whispered, her eyes lifted to Jicar's mouth. It was a full mouth and she had to wonder at the kind of passion his mouth could induce. "Feelings, yes."

"Of which you have none." Jicar was probing, finding it hard to believe that any

creature, not alone an entire race could be completely stripped of emotion.

How did they survive? What motivated them to rise each dawning?

Studying the lady Britenia's expression as she continued to stare at his mouth, Jicar became keenly aware that the simple action was causing his lips to tingle. Sucking in his bottom lip, he scraped his top teeth along the flesh, attempting to tamp the sensation--the urge to kiss her. "Tell me about this lack of emotion your people suffer."

He was curious--*no*.

It was more than that.

Jicar was intrigued, and most especially with the complacent expression she wore. Woman never looked upon him with such indifference. He was accustomed to seeing lust in their eyes, yet this woman seemed completely unaffected.

At his question, Britenia's eyes snapped up to meet Jicar's, but she remained quiet.

“Yes, yes! Do tell.” Trina stared intently at Britenia. “I for one am very interested in this sorcerer’s spell that’s left you and your entire civilization vacant of feelings. What’s it like?”

“Indifference is a word to use, I suppose.” Britenia answered without removing her attention from Jicar.

At that moment Narla reappeared with a tray. She set the order at the center of the table in a less than gentle manner, the platters and bottle of drink hitting with a clank. A sneer spread across her mouth at the way the lady Britenia and Jicar continued to stare at one another. Turning in a huff, she disappeared back to the kitchens.

Breaking the gaze Britenia held on him, Jicar reached for the Burgin and pried open the cork. Grabbing a mug he filled it and then placed it in front of Britenia.

“What more do you wish to know, Mistress Wensling?” Britenia looked down at the full mug of Burgin that Jicar Adi LarRhe slid in front of her and followed the path of a second that he passed in front of her and offered to the Mistress.

“Is it true you only feel physical lust and physical pain? And please, call me Trina.”

“Yes, this is true.”

*Interesting*, Jicar thought. Pain gave them reason to avoid that which might kill them and lust allowed them to reproduce.

“Have you ever tasted Burgin, Brit.” Jicar sipped his drink and then set the mug on the table.

Britenia picked up the mug containing the iced drink, the coldness of the liquid seeping through the container and cooling the palm of her hand.

“It’s a spirit, yes?”

“Yes it’s a spirit. A strong one.”

“An interesting choice, Jicar.” Trina shot him a knowing look. “Do you have something in mind?”

Jicar’s smile widened. He slipped his arm behind Britenia and rested it on the back of her chair. “I intend to get her drunk.”

He took another sip of the drink and Trina lifted her mug in like, nodding to him before also taking a sip of the Burgin.

“I’ve never experienced drunk, or tasted this spirit.” Britenia blinked at him. “But from what I know it loosens the body for the sexing.”

Jicar’s brows lifted. She was so forward, so outspoken. “What a delightful you are, my lady”

Britenia reached and took Jicar’s hand, curling her fingers around it. “Do you wish to sex me, Jicar Adi LarRhe?”

“Damn!” Jicar sucked in his breath as she placed his hand on her breast. His cock immediately hardened.

“Goodness me, not on the main floor, my dear.” the Trina interrupted. “That’s reserved for the next floor up.”

At the same time Jicar pulled back his hand, not that he wanted to. He had to. The urge to shed her clothing and tumble her on the table swept through him like a cosmic storm, taking him completely unaware.

Britenia merely looked at him, but she felt something at his withdrawal.

What was it?

Disappointment, yes, it was disappointment, an emotion. But immediately the unpleasant sensation was gone and she was numb again. Her attention drifted to the two circular wrought iron stair cases that twisted

their way up to a balcony gallery that circled the first floor. Several guests looked downward, watching the activity below.

“Is it up there that passion is found?”

“Sometimes,” Jicar answered, demanding his cock to settle down.

It wasn't listening.

Attempting to ignore his arousal, Jicar attended to the food platters, putting bits of Tishi meat and fruit on the plates and then passed one each to Trina and Britenia.

“I should explore that floor.” Britenia looked at her plate. Picking up a red chunk of fruit, she sucked it into her mouth causing a trickle of juice to trail down her chin.

Before he was aware of his own actions, Jicar leaned forward grasping Britenia by the shoulders and licked the liquid from her flesh. He then cranked his head back, shocked by his own actions, most certainly unapologetic, but also amazed at how natural it felt to put his mouth on her.

“Perhaps the two of you should move to the second level,” Trina suggested with a chortle before biting into a piece of meat.

Ignoring Trina's snort, Jicar kept his attention on Britenia, thankful that he did so when he saw the barely noticeable smile that graced her lips for a split of a light second before it vanished, but he saw it nonetheless. Proof of its happening was confirmed when the lady touched her lips with her own fingers.

“Pleasure,” she said.

“You felt pleasure?” Jicar grinned. He was most definitely intrigued by this blossoming flower.

“I think, but it's now gone.”

“You did feel it however, my lady.”



“Yes,” was all she said before her eyes fell to the cup of Burgin.  
“Why do you wish for me to experience drunk?”

“Let’s just say the drink has a side effect.” The Trina answered for him.

With a nod, Jicar agreed. “Those who indulge in it become, how should I say...”

“Emotional?” Tina finished for him.

Britenia’s head snapped around to look at the club’s Mistress. She lifted a pensive brow.

“Well if that is the case.” Britenia snatched her mug of Burgin from the table and put the rim to her lips. She gulped and gulped and gulped.

“Easy, Brit!” Jicar reached for the mug, but she tossed her head back and drained the drink before he could pull it from her mouth. “The drink has a punch to it.”

Staring at her, Jicar waited for a reaction, and then he had it.

Her eyes crossed.

“Oh.” A gasp left Britenia’s mouth. “I think I’m dizzy.”

She hiccupped and then held the mug toward him for refilling.

Jicar obliged, pouring another mug. “Are you always so trusting, Brit?”

“Trust is emotion that could easily be taken advantage of.” Britenia took a large swallow of the Burgin and then hiccupped again. She looked at Trina, and a twinge of a feeling emerged. “I believe it is trust that appears for you.”

And then she turned to Jicar. “As for you Jicar Adi LarRhe, I’m not so sure.”

“A wise woman!” Trina laughed heartily and Jicar joined her.

“I do make my decisions based on intellectual thought.” Britenia looked down at her mug and then put it to her mouth, draining yet a second serving of Burgin.

Trina and Jicar exchanged glances. “And does this intellectual thought tell you that if I were to get you drunk just to lure you into bed, it might be wise to abstain from the drink?”

“I wouldn’t have to fall into my cups to be sexed, Jicar Adi LarRhe.”

“But you know nothing about what I might do to you, what erotic things we might engage in. We’ve just met.”

“I am receptive to explore.” Britenia hiccupped yet again. Her head dropped and her bottom slid forward, off of her chair and onto the floor. Trina covered her mouth in dismay and Jicar grimaced as he watched her slither from her seat.

“I believe I am under the table,” Britenia said. She raised her mug holding it up toward Jicar. “I believe I shall have another, yes.”

“I believe you’ve had enough.”

“Quite,” Trina agreed.

Taking the mug from her, Jicar placed it on the table and then reached down to help Britenia rise, setting her back onto the chair. His hands remained fixed on her shoulders until he was sure she was steady.

“Drunk is interesting.” Showing not the least bit of embarrassment by her graceless topple Britenia scanned the lounge. Briefly she studied the movements of the dancers on the floor pondering the enjoyment on their faces and how their bodies seemed to move pleasurably to the rhythm of the music that flooded the atmosphere. “In answer to your question, Jicar Adi LarRhe, sexing is a natural physical act. There would be no reason for me to refuse any male who wished to join.”

With that Britenia stood, her focus remaining on the dancing guests.

“You don’t mean to say you’ll bed any male here shows desire in you?” Trina frowned with worry.

Jicar on the other hand shook his head in disbelief. First of all, he could hardly believe she wasn’t slurring her words or swaying on her feet with all the Burgin she drank. Secondly, her attitude about sex could be a dangerous thing. Especially when indulging at any No Holes Barred club. Many creatures from many galaxies came through the cosmic gateways to enjoy the carnal offerings. But some had sexual tastes that were quite odd or could be threatening to one’s health if the body wasn’t accommodating. A guest would be wise to select their partner carefully when dating.

“I’ll try this dancing, yes.” Britenia said.

And before either Jicar or Trina could say another word, Britenia was heading for the dance floor.

“I think we need to attend to her closely, Jicar.” Trina said as she watched Britenia mesh into the fold of dancers.

“We?” Jicar returned. Leaning back in his chair he folded his arms across his chest. “I have no intention of becoming a bulwark for a woman so vulnerable she wouldn’t know a threat if it stood upright and boomed its presence directly to her face.”

Jicar’s attention swept the dance floor, seeking the object of their conversation and he found her. “You forget, mistress I’m here for relax...”

His voice halted before he could finish the sentence, his eyes riveted to Britenia’s body. The sway of her hips moved to the beat of the music, the panels on her shimmering, purple skirt drifting aside revealing shapely legs and even more shapely thighs. On closer inspection, Jicar was sure she wore nothing beneath, hints of a dark thatch and bare buttocks teasing him with

their brief but tempting appearance each time she twirled. His eyes shifted higher, stopping to admire her bare belly, and her bare naval and the way her waist curved inward, visualizing himself grasping her smooth form, licking her tender flesh as he knelt in front of her, imagining her moans of ecstasy as he sucked on her pussy.

His cock twitched and then thickened.

Higher his gaze went higher, and since she was now at a further distance, Jicar once again allowed himself the pleasure of staring at her breasts. He choked back a groan as he stared at her nipples pushing through her top.

By the hell spirits she was making him insane with lust!

Inhaling deeply as if to bridle his arousal, Jicar tore his gaze from her breasts, his attention shifting to her face.

It didn't help.

She stared back at him and *damn holy starblasters* if he didn't see seduction in those lovely peach-colored eyes of hers, and invitation in her continued erotic moves. Yet she couldn't be aware of the effect.

Could she?

After all she had no emotions, right?

It didn't matter, his cock went fully rigid pressing painfully against the seam of his trousers.

And what was that fragrance permeating the air? It was sensual and arousing. Trina must be trying a new incense.

"Perhaps a single date would prove interesting," Jicar said aloud.

"I suspected as much," Trina chortled. "I think you would find her an ultimate challenge."

Turning his head, Jicar smirked at Trina. “Failing to arouse a female’s wild passion would be a first for me.”

“If the rumors about you are true, I’m sure it would.”

“I do recall you’ve tasted this rumor...twice.”

Returning his attention to the dance floor, Jicar discovered that Britenia had left the spot she was dancing in. His eyes threaded through the aggregate of dancers searching for her, but she was no where to be seen.

Finally he located her standing at the bottom of one of the staircases, staring up to the second floor. She began to climb the steps.

“Shit.” Standing quickly Jicar pushed through the crowd chasing after Britenia, but before he could even reach the flight, she was gone, having already gained entrance to the second floor mezzanine.

## Chapter Four

### *Galactic Virtual Fantasies.*

Briefly Jicar wondered if Britenia might have gone through that door, but almost immediately realized she likely would seek one of the other services that the club offered, specifically *Galactic Dates and Mates*.

She talked too much about sex and passion.

He was correct, spying her at once after the larger-than-life-itself attendant, upon recognizing Jicar, allowed him entrance.

*For the love of the cosmos!* The *Largalion* she was allowing to fondle her would tear her up. They were violent during the act of sex, finding climax by chewing and digging with their razor-sharp teeth into their partner's flesh. Britenia's skin was definitely not rigid enough to endure it. When it was over she would be a bloody mess, if she was even still alive.

Jicar stalked toward them. Towering over Britenia and the *Largalion* he narrowed angry, threatening eyes.

The creature looked up at him and sneered. "I saw her first."

"No, you didn't." Jicar returned, his voice low and menacing.

Removing his hands from Britenia, the *Largalion* raised them into the air in obvious surrender. He backed up and then moved away.

Britenia didn't react to the exchange between Jicar and the male, but instead continued to stare through the peeking window. Jicar stepped behind

her intent on making her comprehend the dangers in sexing indiscriminately. “Do you understand what that creature would do to you?”

He looked through the window she stood in front of to see what sex play she was observing.

It was two females, their bodies writhing against each other.

Britenia tipped her head with unconcern. “No. What would he do to me?”

“Had you consented to have sex with him, you would’ve been ripped to shreds during his climax”

“Oh,” she returned casually. “Then I should be grateful you’ve saved me from my doom.”

They both fell silent as they watched the females on the other side of the window. One was a *Mossitian* woman and the other appeared to be an Earth woman, who was arching and thrusting her pelvis, her legs spread wide. The *Mossitian* grinned and then lowered pussy downward, her tongue-shaped clit wagging back and forth, her labia opening and closing, smacking like the lips of a mouth, moving toward the Earthling’s mound. Both women began to float as the gravity in the atmosphere was eliminated. Their legs intertwined and their pussies met, the *Mossitian*’s clit thrusting inside of her partner’s vagina, the labia making suction noises as their pussies rubbed together.

Both females groaned.

Jicar dated a *Mossitian* female some time back. It was quite an interesting evening, but not interesting enough for him to ask for a second date.

Stepping closer to Britenia, Jicar pressed his body along the length of her backside. He propped his hands on the wall one on each side of viewing

window and around Britenia's shoulder as they both continued to watch the two women through the glass. "Have you had sex before?"

"Many times," Britenia answered. "With six males of my species."

Jicar's brows lifted. "All men at once?"

"No, separately. We mated and parted after awhile, to seek another."

"It seems like a rather detached way of sharing a relationship."

"Not much different from the way many live."

"How so?" Jicar asked.

"The joining is out of biological urges and nothing more," Britenia answered. "No love is shared, no mutual caring. Sate the need and move on. That is true, yes, especially with the males in many species?"

Jicar grinned at her wisdom. "I suppose."

"It's like that with you Jicar Adi LarRhe, yes?"

*Oh she is truly a sly one*, Jicar thought, realizing that her use of his full name impersonalized their acquaintance, friendship or whatever it was that seemed to be passing between them.

It made Jicar desire her all the more.

He inhaled, and caught Britenia's scent, the smell of her arousal taking him by surprise. It was sweet, intense. Jicar had never scented a woman so strongly before. Unable to resist, Jicar tipped her head back and nuzzled his mouth against the flesh of her throat.

"There is a difference between you and the males I am familiar with, however." Britenia added.

"Is there?" Jicar lifted his mouth from the flesh of her neck and gazed into her beautiful eyes.

"Where the males of my world would merely flip up our skirts and mount us when the need to mate struck them, your seduction is much



slower...teasing.” Britenia sidestepped, slipping from his grasp.

“Arousing.”

“You find me arousing?” At first, Jicar wasn’t sure if her delectable perfume that continued tease his nostrils was a result of his presence or what she was watching through the window. He was immensely pleased she admitted that it was him. “And what makes you think I’m trying to seduce you?”

Britenia turned and faced him then.

*By the sacred spirits!* She smiled broadly. It was a striking smile and Jicar knew there was emotion in it.

“You are here with me on the second level, are you not?”

*Cripe.* She was right. As much as Jicar tried to tell himself he came up to the second level, following her into the corridor of *Galactic Dates and Mates* for the purpose of protecting her, he had to fully admit to himself that he wanted to have sex with her.

That Jicar wouldn’t deny, nor could he deny that the bouquet that scented the air downstairs was not the result of incense. It had been Britenia all along.

Turning her back to Jicar, Britenia once again stepped in front of the peeking window. Jicar’s eyes flicked to females on the other side.

In what felt like a natural action, Jicar’s arms slipped around Britenia’s body, his palms sliding across her belly. With his cock growing fuller and more demanding, he thrust his hips forward, pushing his throbbing erection into the crease of Britenia’s bottom.

“Does that interest you?” he asked her, referring to the scene beyond the window.

“That does not,” Britenia answered. She pulled from Jicar’s arms once more and turned. Her eyes dropped to the bulge in his crotch. “That might however.”

“Good.” Jicar swept his arms around her, pulling her close.

“Your male part seems to be in wanting.” Britenia said, now feeling the hardness against her belly. Her own pussy had begun tingling from the moment he entered the corridor, and now her vagina was growing moist, flooding with need. “Do you wish to mate with me, Jicar?”

“Mate?” he whispered as he bent to kiss her neck. “No.”

Britenia tipped her head back as Jicar’s lips found the underside of her chin before they skimmed along her jaw line. “Then why do you continue to fondle me?”

“I request a date.”

“Explain please.”

“Establishment rules, twice a date, thrice a mate. I wish for an evening of sex with you, no more. I have no interest in finding a wife.”

“Yes, I was informed of these rules.” Britenia shifted her head, leaning back and putting space between his face and hers. She looked steadfastly, unblinking into his eyes. “On one condition.”

“And what might that be?”

“I wish for myself, more than just the feeling of climax between my legs. Help my mind feel passion. Help me cry out in pleasure.”

Jicar’s chest heaved.

The thought of it lit his cock on fire. But caution seeped in. There was much he could do to inflame her desire, things that his culture reserved only for their lifemates. Affections he’d never given to a woman.

He had to tread carefully or else he would lose himself in this challenge she presented.

He had to get control of his throbbing cock or else he might find himself slamming and thrusting into her, here in the very corridor they stood in, giving the peepers around them an up close and personal view of his raw lust.

Which at the moment seemed to raging.

On a guttural growl, Jicar's hand circled one of Britenia's wrists and, he pulled her further down the hall. He felt no resistance as she paced behind him willingly. Stopping in front of the door of his private dating chamber, he turned her so she faced him. His body met hers, forcing her backside against the door. Cupping her face, Jicar lowered his mouth, pleased when her lips parted for him.

His tongue swept between her lips and he groaned when she sucked on it and then slid her own tongue along the surface of his.

Abruptly she pulled back, breaking the contact between their mouths. "I have never experienced a kiss, Jicar.

"This was your first?" Jicar was astounded. She admitted to having sex numerous times yet none of her males had ever kissed her?

"Kissing is an act of affection, yes?"

"I suppose it is."

"It's called foreplay, yes? What the male uses to bend the female's mind into engaging in sex."

Jicar snorted as he thought about that. "I'm sure there are many females who use foreplay as part of the seduction as well."

"Show me more of this seduction, Jicar." Britenia tipped her face to him, her lips puckering with invitation.

And Jicar obliged, surrounding her lips with his own. His left hand smoothed along the curves of her waist and hip as his right hand hit a small plate on the wall.

Behind Britenia, the solid door that supported her back slid open. She and Jicar fell through.

## Chapter Five

Slipping his hands to the back of her head, Jicar deepened the kiss, seizing her mouth, his tongue thrusting inside, tasting her. She responded in like, mirroring his movements in a perfunctory manner. Her body remained stiff and unyielding except for her pelvis, which pushed against his erection in an almost instinctive manner. Jicar knew her body was willing, but her mind did not respond.

It was confirmed when he pulled his head back and saw the blankness in her eyes.

His body however shuddered with urgency and through the haze of his carnal, physical desires Jicar realized the need for Britenia was also flooding his mind.

He was quickly losing control.

*Slow down.*

On a sigh he broke contact with her, grasped her hand and led her to the bed on the other side of the room. Reaching over the headboard he hit a switch that dimmed the lights to a soothing, softer illumination.

He then reached behind Britenia with both hands, loosening the knot that held her top in place. It floated to the floor. Kneeling in front of her, Jicar grasped her waist and took liberty, kissing and licking her stomach, swirling his tongue around her naval, nuzzling his cheek against her warm flesh. His hands slid lower until they found the top edge of her skirt and he

pushed the stretchy material downward until the garment fell, pooling around her feet. Jicar admired the thatch of hair at her juncture, his nostrils flaring at the dizzying scent of her arousal.

And his mouth watered. His cock surged in demand as he brushed his fingers back and forth over the hair there, enjoying the silky feel of her soft curls. On a shaky breath, Jicar stood.

“Sit,” he said, his tone gentle and bidding.

Britenia lowered to the bed and watched as Jicar began stripping off his trousers. She studied the ripple of muscles in his stomach as he pushed the waist band over his hips, stared when his shaft jutted free, pointed horizontally and straight in her direction as if it was choosing her. The appendage was of a stature that others would say should inspire awe. A strange sensation swirled inside of Britenia’s chest and seemed to find a path directly to her throat. But as if the feeling hit a barricade, there it stopped, the physical attack leaving her mind untouched. Reaching out, she traced the swollen head with a single finger and Jicar released a gasping breath. But other than that, Britenia didn’t know what else to do.

*We will have sex*, the logic in her head spoke to her. It’s what they were in the chamber for.

Abruptly Britenia pushed further on the bed and turned to all fours. Lifting her ass in the air, she offered her body for mounting.

Under normal circumstances Jicar would’ve grasp her hips and plunge his cock into her wetness, a little slamming, a bit of fondling, a simultaneous orgasm and she’d be gone. Instead, he frowned as he watched her hips wriggle. Though Jicar found her movements quite erotic, the position was simply what she was used to.

But it wasn’t what she wanted.

“No,” he said and took her hips between his palms, urging her to turn over. “Like this.”

“Oh,” was her only response.

“Lie down on your back.”

Once she was fully reclined, Jicar slipped his hands behind her knees. He drew her legs up and parted her thighs and then settled his hips between her legs.

“This is like hugging, yes?” Britenia asked.

“It is.” Jicar had never thought about how intimate the position actually was. He was also keenly aware that he never mounted a woman like this before. It was the traditional marriage position--the *Coveting* position of his culture, reserved for the first mating.

But this was only a date, and what harm could it do? Besides it felt rather nice to Jicar--gentle and warm, almost protective of her body, possessive--the way he covered her. He sank further, pressing his weight down. “How do you feel?”

“Like I’m being crushed.” Britenia choked out a gasp.

“Sorry.” Jicar eased some of his weight and Britenia sucked a thankful breath into her freed lungs.

This wasn’t going very well.

With most women, Jicar had little problem sexing them, pure animalistic lust driving them to climax. Typically he and his sex partner would be entangled by now, humping wildly like two untamed creatures in heat. But Britenia wasn’t just any woman. It was pure animalistic lust she wanted to avoid.

“What do we do next?” she asked him.

Jicar thought about how mechanical she sounded, as if she were asking him to read the procedure to her step by step. He pondered that a moment and then said. “We stop talking and start feeling.”

When she opened her mouth to speak, he hushed her words by placing a finger on her mouth. Removing his finger he bent to kiss her, lick her, explore her flesh. His hand found a breast and he fondled it gently.

Her hips began to move and Jicar lifted ready to slide into her, but he stopped when he saw the vacant expression on her face.

Her eyes were wide open, no sign of passion in them. Not even a twinkle.

Frustrated and incredibly horny, Jicar rolled off of her and settled himself to her side. Britenia watched him intensely, but as he bid, she said nothing. Propping his head on his hand, Jicar traced circles around one of Britenia’s nipples. It hardened, she jolted and gasped in surprise. He smiled.

A reaction, and a nice one at that. “Did you like that, my lady?”

“Yes,” Britenia whispered hoarsely. Her breasts tingled, ached, yearned for more touching. She never felt that sensation before.

“Are you aroused?” Bending, Jicar drew her breast into his mouth wondering if this was the first time she’d been suckled there.

Britenia’s body jolted again. “Yes,”

“Here?” Jicar released her breast and his hand cupped her pussy feeling her wetness, her heat. He flicked his finger across her clit. Her hips tilted upward, gyrating to his touch.

“Or here?” Jicar’s hand left her mound and skimmed the length of her body until it reached her head and he lightly skimmed his fingers across her forehead. He lowered his head again, his mouth continuing its assault on her



breast, and Britenia, feeling the warm wetness of his lips, the gentle caress of his hand, began to quake all over.

“Touch me,” she said. “My body aches, Jicar.”

“What about your mind?” he whispered against her breast and then dragged his tongue across her hardened nipple. “Does it scream for my touch?”

Britenia just stared at him. Her body was certainly screaming. But in her head only reason dwelled. Even in this aroused state she could probably read an entire manual and cum at the same time. “It’s as if my head is completely detached from my body, Jicar. Like separate entities.”

Inhaling deeply, Jicar closed his eyes. Her scent flooded the air so thickly it nearly drove his head into a whirl. How could he make her feel the same?

*Slowly.* The woman had never been made love to properly.

Jicar grimaced mentally at his choice of words, yet it was true. If he wanted to awaken her, he would have to take her like a lover, not like some rutting beast in the throes of sexual need. He would concentrate on her pleasure, fulfill her needs, and for the moment disregard his own.

“Close your eyes, Brit.” And Jicar watched as she obeyed. “Don’t think, feel what I do to you.”

Tenderly, he ran his fingers along her body, touching her skin in feathery glances, down between her breasts, along her belly, through the hair of her mound. Briefly he grazed his fingers over the area, feeling the swelling of her clit as he did so. Bending he kissed her mouth as his hand moved upward taking one of her breasts, skimming his thumb over the top.

She didn’t move, but instead lay quietly as he touched her. His mouth left her lips and trailed lower, taking her other breast into his mouth and he

sucked gently at her nipple. Her body twitched and then settled, but her breathing began to deepen.

*Ah*, Jicar was enjoying this foreplay. It was sweet torture.

Slowly his hand left her breast and skimmed downward again. This time when he reached her mound, he let his fingers delve between her nether lips until he found her clit. He rolled it between his finger and thumb, over and over until a slight gasp left her mouth. Her hips moved subtly, but rhythmically. Without giving second thought to what he was doing, Jicar released her breast and began trailing kisses down her torso, her rising scent driving him, drawing him closer to her core. He slipped his finger inside of her and stroked, groaning at the building wetness and heat as her inner muscles clenched and unclenched.

He inserted a second finger.

She moaned.

And then his mouth was on her, his tongue lapping at her folds, his lips surrounding her clit and drawing on it, sucking, his tongue flicking as his fingers continued to thrust inside.

“Oh, oh.” Britenia began to writhe. When Jicar started to touch her she pushed every thought from her mind, concentrating only on the areas he stroked how he started gently and increased the tempo and pressure of everything he was doing to her. It pushed at her mind and Britenia grabbed onto the sensation, refusing to let go.

Like a key turning in a door, her pleasure center unlocked. An incredible surging force swept through her brain. It was dizzying, exhilarating. It was passion, powerful and steadfast it took control, ripped through her flesh, through every cleft of not only her body but her mind and soul.

Grasping his hair, Britenia thrust up at Jicar, begging his mouth to sex her. He suckled and lapped and thrust his tongue, his hands moving to clench her hips, her moans growing louder, encouraging him. She pumped faster, tensing and relaxing, panting and crying out and then panting harder.

“I can’t take it anymore,” he rasped against her pussy. His cock was about to bust.

“Please, Jicar don’t stop!”

It was a pleading cry full of incredible emotion.

“I need you now, Britenia!”

And with such quickness that Britenia barely felt him move, Jicar plunged his cock inside of her, the inward stroke so hard, so powerful, a jolt shot straight up her body and exploded in her mind.

She screamed, her hand grabbing his ass, in desperation.

Jicar’s passion soared and she took it. Pumping wildly into her, pounding, crying out her name, listening to the sounds of her frantic gasps as she struggled toward the edge of climatic passion, his lips suckling her neck, her mouth, her breasts and she clung to him for dear life and he clung back as her cries of ecstasy escalated and he knew she was cumming hard.

And he was there with her.

In one ferocious rush the power of his orgasm blasted straight through his erection and he thrust into her one more time, before slamming his pelvis tightly against her pussy, groaning loudly as her muscles convulsed around his spilling cock.

They both lay there for some time, their hearts pounding, their breathing erratic, entwined in a lovers embrace. And when Jicar finally lifted his head to look into her eyes, he saw the daze of a woman amidst her settling passion, satiated and content.

“Talk to me, Britenia,” he whispered as he planted kisses on her face.

“I...can't...speak.”

Her eyes drifted shut and Jicar smiled softly. Rolling to his side he took Britenia with him, carefully moving, shifting her leg over his hip, to keep his cock inside of her, allowing it to soften within her folds. His body relaxed fully and his lids closed as he held her, thinking about how good she felt in his arms.

## Chapter Six

Jicar's eyes snapped open and the first thing that reached his sleep fogged mind as he yawned and stretched his arms, was how perfectly replete he felt. He smiled and then wrapped his arms around Britenia again molding against her flesh, feeling the soothing warmth of her, listening to her quiet breathing as she slept.

Planting a tender kiss atop of her head, Jicar grinned widely when he realized his cock was growing hard and that it was still embedded inside of Britenia's body.

He could hardly believe he desired her again.

This woman aroused him more fiercely than any female he'd ever known. The orgasm he had with her was the most intense he'd ever felt.

Slowly, his hips began to move and he pumped, his hand began to roam, skimming her belly, cupping her breast.

He didn't think she'd mind.

"Jicar," she whispered, still half asleep, but her body responded, began moving with his, her leg shifted slightly so he could push deeper inside.

He groaned when he felt her hand come between their legs and she began stroking his balls with her fingers. Moving his hand under her arm, his finger flicked back and forth over her clit and she whimpered at his touch, her slick passage becoming even wetter.

She lifted her eyes to look at him, her detached expression was gone, replaced by a flood of desire that graced her face, her lids heavy, her brows drawing together in sexual anguish--begging, her mouth opening as she drew a passionate breath.

Again he detected her scent, her sweet, arousing scent. It wrapped around him, caressed him, taking hold. "You smell so good, Brit."

His cock stretched, thickened, grew unbelievably hard.

Jicar drew her lips to his, their breathing catching inside of each other's mouths, their tongues brushing in heated arousal, their bodies moving in rhythmic accord.

On heavy panting and increased pumping they found the cadence of mutual desire and their orgasms hit simultaneously, explosively, as one.

Still entwined, they both fell back to a blissful sleep.

A short while later, Jicar awoke. His eyes shifted to the time piece on the wall.

It was dawn.

*Shit.*

He had shared his bed with her for sleep--for an entire eve. This was something

he never allowed another female to do. Worry seized him as he recalled loving her with his mouth, and he thought of her taste, her passionate moans as he licked her intimately.

She almost came in his mouth.

This too was something he'd never shared with a female before. Both were meant only for his mate.

Jicar didn't want a mate.

But last eve he couldn't restrain himself. Her genuine responses to him drove his basic need to awaken her, to claim not only her body's lust but her mind's passion as well. Somehow, knowing he was the first to do this only served to further urge him on. And it didn't help that with her rising climax her scent increased, imbedded itself in his nostrils made a home in his mind. Even now, as Britenia slept, her fragrance taunted him.

He slid away from her and rolled to his back, propping his hands behind his head and stared at the ceiling.

"Jicar?"

Jicar glanced over at Britenia. She was sitting up, her beautiful breasts exposed, the bed covering across her hips, her mound only partially covered, hints of curls peeking out from beneath. Strands of her hair fell over her face, swept around her neck, tangled around an arm, a bit mussed but exquisitely sexy.

His cock agreed, twitching.

"Our date is over?" she asked.

Forcing his hands to stay put instead of reaching for her, Jicar clenched all the muscles in his lower abdomen, in his pelvis and groin, attempting to drive away the growing need to pump his hips, to seek her body, her sex, her passion.

"Yes." It was all Jicar could manage to say without fully losing control of himself.

There would be no second date.

No, there wouldn't.

Jicar waited to see if hurt would cross her face, but the expression never came.

With nothing except a removed expression, Britenia pushed the covers aside and crawled from the bed. Jicar tensed further at the sight of her naked body, but willed himself not to move.

Bending, Britenia picked up her skirt and top and put them on. “Thank you, Jicar Adi LarRhe.

Britenia headed for the door, tapped the switch plate on the wall and when the entrance was open she stepped through. The door slid closed behind her.

Jicar stared at the door for awhile examining his feelings, realizing he had an incredible urge to chase after her and bring her back to his room, cover her with his body, plunge deep inside of her again. Listening to the silence, Jicar waited for a knock, hoping she would return and at the same time hoping she wouldn't.

The knock never came, forcing him to wonder why he was disappointed.

He was horny, that's all.

And confused.

No not confused.

He was just horny.

His attempts to help her find passion had incited him. He found the encounter extraordinarily erotic. Of course it would be arousing.

Grasping his cock, Jicar began to stroke it. Once he had relief all would be well again.

Jicar attempted to form images of the women he sexed before, the carnal positions they'd had intercourse in, their lusty cries as they came, as he came.



What their hair looked like. The way they smelled--especially the way they smelled. But no matter how he tried, every thought, every sense, every image that crept through his mind brought him right back to one person.

Britenia.

*Forget her.*

Without satiating himself, Jicar let go of his cock. Sitting up on his bed, he rubbed a palm over his face, and then frowned.

*Why had she left so easily?*

She looked neither happy nor sad. She looked rather blank.

Maybe he hadn't helped her find passion at all. Maybe she faked it.

*No.*

Jicar was sure that wasn't true.

Why did he care?

He should've felt relief when she left his chamber without even a backward glance, but instead, her departure left him feeling very much alone.

## Chapter Seven

Britenia was suddenly seized with a strange feeling. She found passion last eve, and with it, confusion. She didn't like the latter emotion because it clouded her logical thinking, making it difficult for her to reason why there was a lump in her throat and why her chest felt so heavy.

Maybe she was becoming ill.

Barely having enough time to consider it, she tripped over her own foot as she descended the club's stairs and nearly toppled.

"Easy there, my lady." Two hands caught her before she fell to what was certain to be a skull fracture. "Are you all right?"

"I'm fine," Britenia answered, her stomach swirling at the near mishap. "Thank you."

The two stared at each other for a moment.

"Xander Alik," the man finally said releasing her and offering a slight bow of his head.

"Britenia," she nodded back slightly.

An awkward silence followed and then Xander spoke again. "I see you're descending the stairs, while I'm going up."

"Yes."

"Pity." Xander stared at her pretty face and then his eyes made a quick scan of body. Finding it delectable, he smiled. "Perhaps I might convince you to turn about?"

Britenia tilted her head up and toward the mezzanine. “I believe I am finished with the second floor.”

Studying her, Xander wondered what bad experience she suffered that had her looking so removed, for she certainly didn't look pleased. “Well then, perhaps another time?”

“Perhaps.” Britenia offered no other words and once again began moving down the stairs.

Xander's eyes flicked upward and then shifted back to Britenia. “Wait!”

Halting at the bottom step, Britenia turned to look at him.

With quick pace, Xander tramped down the steps until his feet reached the main floor, his body turning to face her as he did so. “Have you eaten?”

“Many times,” Britenia answered. “That is odd question, Xander Alik.”

Xander chuckled at her matter-of-fact response, her tone lacking both condescension and sarcasm. He knew she wasn't mocking him, but truly misunderstood. “I didn't mean ever, I meant this dawning.”

“That I haven't done.”

“Then I insist you join me for breakfast.” Holding out his arm, Xander waited for Britenia's acceptance. He smiled broadly at her when she slipped her hand around the crook of his elbow.

“Excellent!” Xander said and led her to an empty table.

Jicar watched the byplay between Xander and Britenia from the second floor mezzanine. He resisted the urge to rush down the steps and insinuate himself between them. But now that they were seated at a table, he could merely approach to join them without drawing suspicion from Xander.

Having grown up with the royal, Jicar and Xander were not only cousins, but best friends. Xander was pleasant in face and quite sensual in physique. He was like a magnetic force to the ladies. The last thing Jicar wanted his cousin to detect was that Jicar disliked him keeping company with Britenia.

Not because he couldn't shake Britenia from his senses--that it disturbed him to see her giving attention to another male--*no not that*. It was because Xander much enjoyed competition, and Jicar, never refusing Xander's challenges, didn't want to be forced to compete for the charms of a woman he really didn't want.

*Really he didn't.*

Aside from that, if Xander got even a whiff of her pheromones, he might be hopelessly lost, finding himself mated with the female. He needed to protect his cousin from her...*yes, he did*.

That logic made the most sense.

Descending the stairs, Jicar approached the table where Xander and Britenia sat. Without hesitation or invitation, he pulled out an empty chair and sat down. They both stared at him, Britenia with a blank look and Xander with a welcoming smile.

"Jicar! Searched for you last night." He smirked figuring that more than likely Jicar was enjoying female company. "So where have you been hiding?"

"Here and there." Jicar's eyes flicked to Britenia. She was studying a menu and paid him no heed. If she was experiencing any emotion, she certainly refrained from showing it.

"My manners," Xander said. "Britenia this is my cousin Jicar, Jicar..."

"*We've met,*" they both said simultaneously, both with the same subdued tone.

Silence followed, Xander's eyes shifting between the two of them as their gaze's fixed one on the other. Drawing his brows together he attempted to interpret the looks on their faces. Britenia's expression appeared nonchalant, blasé even. But in Jicar, Xander suspected he was suppressing something.

And then it dawned on him pretty quickly that the two of them had spent last eve together. His lips curled up on one side as he watched them stare at each other. "Then I guess introductions aren't necessary."

Jicar broke eye contact with Britenia and signaled a server. "Have the two of you ordered?"

"Not yet," Xander answered.

Britenia stood. "If you'll both excuse me."

"Where are you off too?" Xander frowned. "You haven't eaten yet."

"I don't believe I'm hungry," Britenia answered.

Before Xander could utter another word, she turned away from the table and headed for the door, exiting the club.

"What in the galaxy did you do to that woman, Jicar?"

"I didn't do anything to her." Jicar glared at his cousin. The man was too perceptive by far.

"Apparently. I met her on the staircase, and she seemed none too pleased." Xander smirked at his cousin. "Did the winky wither last eve?"

In no mood to discuss his sexual encounter with Britenia, Jicar shot him a glaring warning. "Stay clear of her, Xander."

"Why should I?" Xander snorted. "If you had trouble fulfilling her needs, perhaps I might remedy that."

A clear picture was forming in Xander's mind. Jicar fancied the lady, and he'd known Jicar long enough to recognize when he was jealous. What a perfect opportunity to tease his cousin. "We might even share her."

"I'm serious, Xander. Stay clear."

"So you're planning on having her again?"

"No."

"Then what's the problem here?"

"You're weaker in self-control than I am." Jicar stated with the utmost serious tone. "You might not be able to resist dating her, once, twice and then maybe even for a third. Do you really wish to take a wife?"

To that comment Xander laughed loudly. "I do think you project your own sentiments, my cousin. I hardly think a single date with the female with enrapture my mind."

"She's dangerous."

"She's a lovely woman, Jicar, if not a bit sedate. Still, it's the quiet kitten that is often like a wildcat in the bed. I just might be tempted to find out."

Jicar shook his head from side to side. "No, cousin you won't if you know what's good for you. Her smell, it's overwhelming, must be something from her species."

"I admit it's warm in here," Xander returned, his expression jocular. "But I really didn't detect the woman had an odor."

Jicar rolled his eyes upward. He'd known Xander long enough to recognize when he was teasing. "I'm talking about her pheromones. It's difficult to prevent yourself from being consumed by it."

"I didn't detect her pheromones."

“How could you not, Xander? The scent is everywhere. Even now as I speak to you it’s all around, lingering, though she’s left.”

“I see, my king. So you’re maddened by this female scent that’s all around yet no one but you can detect.” Xander laughed uproariously. “I think the scent is nowhere except up your nose.”

“You’re looking to have my boot up your ass, Xander.” Jicar really didn’t need to ask. He knew what Xander alluded to.

“I’ll prepare to depart and make the announcement to your kingdom.”

“You’ll do no such thing.”

“And why not?”

“We haven’t even had a second date.”

“No? Then I suggest you do so.”

## Chapter Eight

He wouldn't see her for a second time.

No he wouldn't.

He couldn't.

Well, at least he shouldn't.

Should he?

And why was he stomping through the garden with an aggravated pace? Jicar halted and looked around. It was just a hair past sunrise and most guests were still asleep.

Xander had to be incorrect. Scenting the woman was not an indication that she was his lifemate. He'd caught the fragrance of other females' pheromones before. Of course then so did all the other males in those cases.

*He's lying.* Xander probably did smell her fragrance but was pretending not to, trying to prove he possessed more self-control than Jicar. *No.* Aside from being acutely honorable, Xander put too much value in their friendship to deceive or persuade him. Xander's comments about Britenia possibly being Jicar's lifemate were spoken with an honest opinion. Rubbing his forehead, Jicar decided he was thinking too hard on it. His head was starting to throb and his muscles ached with tension.

He needed a massage.

Stalking to the cushioned tables, Jicar stepped behind a nearby screen and removed his clothes. He came out wrapped in a towel. After pushing his



request on a keypad, he reclined on the table face down. Within moments the masseuse appeared--a female just as he asked for. Her touch would force his thoughts away from Britenia, and if the masseuse was willing, he would date her this evening. It was just what he needed, to erase Britenia and her alluring scent from his mind.

Just what he needed.

Why did that determined concept seem so unconvincing...

And depressing?

Instead of relaxing into the seasoned hands of the woman who massaged him, he became acutely aware of her touch when she skimmed her hand over his ass several times in obvious gesture. It caused Jicar to tense.

The masseuse was willing, but he was rejecting.

Without a word to her, Jicar stood. He stepped behind the changing screen and donned his trousers and vest. He stalked toward the club with every intention of getting drunk, with every intention of drowning Britenia from his thoughts.

Xander sat alone at the table overlooking the spa garden, sipping on a cordial. He saw Jicar enter and waved him over. Smiling he indicated the seat across from him as he took another swallow of his drink. "You look miserable, cousin."

"It's a little early to be drinking, don't you think?" Jicar picked up the bottle that sat in front of the table, turned over the small glass that was sitting next to it and poured himself a jigger.

Lifting it to his lips he jerked back his head, swallowing the spirit down.

Xander lifted a brow. "It's never too early to drink, apparently."

He watched Jicar pour another and down that one as well. “So how many dawnings does this make, cousin?”

“Seven.”

“I see. But of course you’ve found relief with other females.”

“No.”

“Your faithfulness to her is astounding.”

“I’m doing no such thing. I’m just not in the mood.”

“Since when?” Shaking his head at Jicar’s stubbornness, Xander lifted his glass to take another sip as his eyes drifted to the window. He looked outside and nearly choked on his next swallow.

“Are you all right?” Jicar started to rise from his chair.

Through his sputtering and coughing, Xander started laughing. “Well isn’t that a sight for lust-deprived eyes.”

“What?” Jicar looked over his shoulder and through the window to see what had caught Xander’s interest. “Holy fucking shit!”

He stormed away from the table and headed outside, stalking directly toward Britenia who stood on the garden path just outside of the club’s window. His hand circled her wrist and he dragged her from the path, through a bed of flowers, through a bevy of bushes, to the seclusion of the forest that surrounded the spa.

He stopped and swung her around to face him.

“What in starblazing hellfires do you think you’re doing?”

Britenia’s brows lifted in questioning. “Walking back to my cabana.”

“You know that’s not what I mean, Brit.” Jicar waved a hand in front of her body. “I’m talking about this.”

Britenia looked down to see if something was strange. She was naked and couldn’t imagine what was wrong, unless something odd was attached

to her somewhere and she couldn't feel its presence. Shrugging, she tipped her head back up to meet Jicar's face. "What?"

"You're naked!"

"Yes?"

"Why?"

"I was cooling off in the large pool."

"You're not cooling off now."

"No, I'm drying off."

"But why are doing it naked?"

"I forgot my towel. It would be uncomfortable to don my clothes while I'm wet. So I didn't bother."

"So you thought it proper to walk back to your room naked?"

"Yes."

"Have you no shame?"

Britenia tilted her eyes upward and askew, as if to ponder that emotion. "I don't think so."

"You should." Jicar snatched the pullover top that she held in one of her hands, righted it and began tugging it over her head.

"Why?" Britenia pushed her arms into the short sleeves and then followed Jicar's movements as he knelt and tugged the hem as far down as it would go.

"Because..." Annoyed that it only reached the middle of her thighs, Jicar pressed his lips together. Standing, he glared at Britenia. "Because all of the men are looking at your naked body."

"And some woman too," Britenia added.

"Don't you give a care?"

"No."

Jicar slapped a hand to his forehead, pressing hard. He shook his head back and forth as he squeezed his eyes shut.

Of course she didn't care, but he surely did! It disturbed him that other males were looking upon her with lust on their minds.

And then he heard laughter.

Britenia was laughing.

Lifting his head he saw the mirth in her expression as she closed her lips, her eyes continuing to twinkle with the humor she found at his expense.

He frowned at her.

Britenia's expression sobered. "I am sorry, Jicar. I should not be finding my amusement at your...your...what is this emotion you suffer...jealousy?"

Jicar wasn't about to admit to that. "It's called frustration, Brit."

Searching her memory for a definition Britenia drew her brows together. Frustration was a disturbing, anxious emotion. "But why do you feel this sensation?"

How much would he admit? Stepping closer to her, Jicar grasped her by the shoulders. "It's you. I'm frustrated by you."

Sweeping his arms around her, Jicar dipped his head. Their lips met, his mouth taking hers in a searing kiss. He pressed his body along the length of her holding her tightly, yearning, craving to be inside of her.

His cock began to riot in his trousers.

Britenia's essence filled the air, wrapped around him, took up residence inside of his head. His chest hammered with an unfamiliar beat, and distraught by the overwhelming feeling, Jicar ripped his mouth away from her.

His mouth fell agape, but no words emerged. All he could think about was how magnificent this woman was, and how beautiful she appeared to his eyes.

With one finger, Britenia pushed his jaw shut. “Does this mean you request a second date?”

“No,” Jicar stated firmly and released her, letting his arms drop to his sides.

“Very well.” Turning, Britenia began walking away. “I will see you this eve then, Jicar.”

“I said, *No!*” Jicar yelled to her back.

“I heard you loud and clear Jicar Adi LarRhe.”

A smile tickled Britenia’s mouth as she walked away, and she lifted her fingers to touch it.

Pleasure.

And unlike some emotions, this one showed on her face. Ah yes, it was definitely pleasure.

And something else she was unable to identify.

## Chapter Nine

Britenia stood in front of the full length mirror that was near the circular wall of her cabana. Her clothes were made of the finest of materials—sewn by the most talented of craftspeople in the cosmos. She so very much wished to feel the delight of wearing such well made things as the other guests here on the resort seemed to do.

But it was not to be for now.

The choice of clothing was a matter of decision only, what felt comfortable and matched well. Her feet were bare as Britenia preferred, and this dawning she had chosen an emerald gown that rested nicely along her curves. It was made of a light, velvety material and was sleeveless. The neckline plunged to just below her breasts revealing the rounded flesh of her cleavage. A black cinch molded around her waist, and just as with many of the gowns Britenia wore, there were slits on the sides that ran the length of her legs from ankle to thigh. The temperature at the No Holes Bar Club and Spa was very warm, and the openings provided a nice breeze.

If it were not for the dark look Jicar had given her about her nudity earlier, Britenia would've chosen something much more indiscreet, transparent even.

Though she found her pleasure in his frustration, the jealousy he refused to admit did something strange to her heart, it didn't seem a fair thing to upset him. For as much as she enjoyed the obvious emotions that

seemed solely for her, equally, Britenia did not enjoy causing Jicar discomfort.

Looking in the mirror, Britenia examined herself, to make sure her clothes fit smoothly and the seams were all straight. She stopped to stare at her lower limbs.

“I’ve been told I have nice legs,” she spoke to her image and then shrugged. “They look like legs to me,”

Her attention went to the time piece that swirled in the orb on the bedside table. It was still early yet and she wasn’t hungry, so Britenia curled up in the cushioned, oversized chair in the corner, unrolled the Scrolls of Emotional Awareness and began to read. Her thoughts drifted back to Jicar. She found her passion with him, but the stirrings that were surfacing within her also went much deeper than that. There seemed to be a craving for him that was unbearable...almost like pain.

Shuffling through her scrolls, Britenia searched for the section on relationship emotions. While reading what the scripts had to say, Britenia suddenly realized she’d been stroking a hand up and down her leg, pretending it was Jicar touching her. She put the scrolls aside.

Britenia’s fingers circled higher and then she slipped them inside of the slit at her thigh. As she closed her eyes, Britenia’s hand moving directly to her pussy. Flicking her finger back and forth across her bud, the titillating sensation caused Britenia to moan.

She’d never played with herself before, but thoughts of Jicar, his smile, his affectionate touches, his deep, erotic voice kept urging her on. Both her physical and her emotional desire for him spiraled, collided, entwined. Her hips began to move as she thought about how his tongue

licked her clit, and she thought about what it would be like to suck on his shaft.

Britenia wanted to do that for him, feel him hard and erect and cumming in her mouth.

Opening her eyes, she caught sight of herself in the full-length mirror and brushed the skirt of her dress aside. She spread her legs and watched her own finger moving over her flesh. Moisture seeped from her vagina, but despite that Britenia sighed and removed her hand.

She needed Jicar.

Standing, Britenia smoothed out her dress and rechecked her appearance in the mirror. She dragged a brush through her hair before heading for the club. As she walked the path, Britenia suddenly realized she had a feeling weaving its way through her veins.

It was called *nervousness*...and she knew it had something to do with seeing Jicar and possibly being rejected by him.

Taking a deep breath, Britenia moved closer to the club's large opening. The music grew louder enveloping her as she walked through the open doorway. It mixed with the chatter of an unusually large crowd, that she had difficulty seeing around. Searching for Jicar amidst the wall to wall patrons, Britenia drew a deep breath, wondering if he had arrived or if he was even intending on showing.

Britenia wasn't a fool. She knew that Jicar was making every attempt to avoid her. That is until he reprimanded her for walking naked through the garden.

She found her humor then.

And then he kissed her. She wanted more of his kisses, more of his touch, more of the passion he coaxed from her.



Pushing her way through the crowd as she sought a place to sit, Britenia wondered where the other more pleasurable sensations she was promised were? Though Jicar gave her passion, he abruptly took it away claiming that their encounter was for one time only.

That thought, in and of itself made her empty again. But the emptiness was different this time. It had her heart aching, in both the physical and the emotional sense. The emotion found its place inside of her, and it seemed to be stuck there. It was one sentiment Britenia wished she could rid herself of. That and all of the other unpleasant sensations she seemed to be experiencing of late--disappointment, anxiety, loneliness and again, the horrible ache in her chest, which she had yet to identify.

Britenia hoped there wasn't something physically ailing her heart.

Perhaps she should seek out a healer, the problem seemed to be growing worse with every dawning.

The song playing had ended and there was a pause before the next set. Dancers left the floor, giving Britenia a better view of the surrounding tables. Scanning the crowd, she looked for friendly faces. Upon spying two females chatting happily at a table, she decided to approach them.

"May I join you?"

They both looked up and one of them nodded. "Why sure!"

Britenia sat down and one of the women pushed a platter of food in front of her. "Help yourself."

"Thank you." Picking up a skewer of roasted meats and vegetables Britenia started to eat.

"I'm Sheva," one of the woman said.

"And I'm Licress," the other added.

"*We're earth cats!*" they laughed in unison.

“Earth cats?” Britenia asked.

“Well not exactly earth cats,” Licress told her. “We, sort of displaced ourselves to the planet.”

“The creatures there are so tasty.” Sheva grinned amorously.

“And the food isn’t so bad either,” Licress added. “So who are you?”

“I’m Britenia.”

Sheva leaned in. “Do you shift?”

“Now and then,” Britenia answered. “From place to place.”

Sheva laughed. “Oh darling, that’s not what I meant.”

Xander watched from a distance as Britenia made acquaintance with the two shape-shifting females. He changed the direction of his attention, his eyes moving to the table in a far corner where Jicar sat alone.

Jicar was glaring at him, a warning Xander assumed by the way his cousin narrowed his eyes, that he better keep his distance his from Britenia.

Ignoring his cousin’s threatening expression, Xander pushed away from the wall he’d been leaning against, and took a leisurely stroll toward the table where Britenia sat. “Excuse me, my lady, but I was hoping for a favor.”

Britenia looked up at Xander. “It would depend on the kind favor you ask.”

Xander chuckled softly and held out his hand. “Nothing too dangerous, just an experiment.”

“O-o-o-h! An experiment,” Licress said as her eyes grazed carnally along the length of Xander’s body. “You can experiment with me, good-looking.”

Sheva pushed a shoulder against her and chuckled.

Xander grinned at the two felines, and still holding out his hand he said. "I assure you, Britenia it won't hurt. I'm just curious about something."

"Curiosity killed the cat," Sheva said.

"I'm not a cat," Xander smirked and then nodded when Britenia accepted flattening her palm against his own.

His fingers curled around her hand, and Xander pulled Britenia to her feet. He stared into her beautiful peach-colored eyes. "You are a lovely woman."

"Thank y..." Britenia hardly had time to respond, when Xander suddenly grasped her by the shoulders and jerked her closer to his body. He buried his face into the side of her neck and sniffed, drawing a long and hard breath through his nostrils.

He pulled back, and Britenia's eyes grew wide in questioning, but before she could say anything else, Xander dropped to his knees and buried his face in her crotch, rubbing his nose back and forth at her juncture and again sniffing.

Britenia's head dropped downward. "What are you doing, Xander?"

"Sniffing you."

"Oh me oh my!" Licress exclaimed. "Will you do that do me?"

"Maybe." Xander said as he stood. He grasped Britenia by the shoulders once more and turned her around. Pressing a hand between her shoulder blades he forced her to bend. Her hands came up reflexively, propping on the table and she leaned on them.

Xander crouched, and stuffed his nose in the crook of her ass. Again he sniffed.

For the first time, Britenia understood shock. She knew the males of her planet who wished to have sex would act as such, but it wasn't a behavior she expected from a patron here.

Stiffening, she stood and turned around. At the same time Xander rose and faced her. He smiled broadly at her, and then he pivoted, turning to where Jicar sat. Britenia followed the line of his gaze and caught sight of Jicar sitting at a far table.

Her heart skipped a beat and began leaping erratically in her chest. Immediately her pussy clenched with arousal.

Xander looked at her, perceptive of the lust and longing she could barely hide as she gazed at Jicar.

“Are you aroused by him, my lady?”

At first Britenia said nothing because she was attempting to control her breathing, which had become strangely uneven and rapid.

“Yes,” she finally said, her voice a hoarse whisper.

Her gaze shifted and she looked at Xander through the corner of her eyes. “You're not going to start sniffing me again, are you?”

“Tell me, Britenia,” Xander smirked at her question. “What would you do if I sent one of these sexy women over to sit on Jicar's lap?”

Britenia angled her head, this time facing him directly. “Are you attempting to rile both Jicar's jealousy and mine, Xander?”

“As a matter of fact, I am,” he said.

“Jealousy,” Britenia decided. “Is a ridiculous emotion, and I will not have it.”

Xander laughed at her determined expression. *Good for her. The woman would need that stubbornness to be married to Jicar Adi LarRhe.*

But he wasn't finished with his experiment yet, especially now that he knew she was aroused.

His attention darted back to Jicar, and he smiled devilishly before grasping Britenia and pulling her in front of him, so that her back was to Jicar and he was able to keep his eyes fixed on his cousin.

*And if looks could kill...*

Xander's arms swept around Britenia and he dipped his head, burying his face in her cleavage and taking one last whiff. Moving higher, he planted his mouth upon hers and made every attempt to give Britenia a passionate kiss, but her lips pursed together in resistance.

It was all he needed to know.

Releasing her, Xander straightened and then snorted at Jicar's intense irritation and his flaring nostrils and he knew that Jicar was catching her scent.

Lifting upturned palms, Xander shrugged.

*Nothing*, he mouthed.

Although Xander was extremely aroused himself, it was more by his own antics

than by any pheromone that Britenia emitted. If Jicar thought Britenia's scent was available to all around, he was sorely mistaken. And since it seemed that only Jicar could smell her, it meant only one thing.

Britenia was his lifemate.

"What a man!" Licress exclaimed as she squirmed in her seat. "Come here tomcat and sniff my ass."

"Licress! How bodacious."

"My experiment is complete, Britenia." Ignoring the she-cats, Xander pulled out Britenia's chair for her and then pushed it in as she seated herself.

He turned and walked away.

“Suck my furry tail,” Sheba said. “You’re one to talk. If I recall it was your bodacious pussy wriggling as you walked that tree limb, driving Pedris so mad with it that he had to mount you, filling your belly with those kittens.”

“Kittens?” Britenia asked.

“Why yes, offspring.” Licress answered.

“I had one of those once.”

“Once?” Licress asked. “What happened to it?”

“I gave it away.”

“Away!” Sheba gave Britenia a stunned look. “But why?”

“I had no need for it.”

“Oh my, horrible!” Licress said.

“No more horrible than your luring Pedris from me, Sheba.”

“I didn’t lure him. He wanted me because he loves me.”

“Catshit!” Sheba growled, pushing at Licress’ shoulder. “He loves me. You are merely his whore-cat.”

“You bitch! Take that back.” With that, Licress slapped Sheba across the face.

## Chapter Ten

“I’m sure it was necessary to be so thorough,” Jicar snapped.

“I assure you, my king.” Xander took a seat next to Jicar. “It was for your benefit, and safety I might add. Jicar glance down at Xander’s crotch, noting the bulge in his pants from his swollen member. “I think you enjoyed yourself a bit too much.”

“I enjoyed myself immensely.” Xander picked up the glass in front of him and took a drink.

Once again, the music began to play, and the guests started moving to the dance floor.

“If I didn’t know you better, Xander, I would’ve been sure you were preparing to hump her at the table.”

“Tsk, tsk. I’m more discreet than that. I would’ve taken her upstairs and humped her in the corridor. I’ll bet she has a sweet, little pussy.”

“How dare you take liberty talking about my...” Jicar clamped his mouth shut.

“Your...what?”

“Nothing.”

“Your paramour?”

“No.”

“Your business partner?”

“No.”

“Your sister, your friend...your woman?”

“No, no and definitely no!” Jicars voice raised an octave. He inhaled deeply through his nostrils and his lids drifted shut as if he were captured by some exquisite dream.

Xander snorted. He knew that look, had seen it on the faces of many betrothed. “You can smell her.”

Jicar’s eyes snapped open. He glanced in Britenia’s direction but her table was blocked by the dancers crowding the floor. Resisting the urge to stand and search over the tops of their heads, he instead shifted his attention back to Xander. Jicar slumped in his chair. “Even through the smells of the food, and the incense, and the array of perfumes worn by the guests here.”

“And I swear on my loyalty to you, that I cannot.” Xander tapped the rim of the glass in front of him. “She admitted after seeing you sitting here that you aroused her, Jicar, and still I detected no scent coming from her.”

A crash so loud it penetrated through the booming music interrupted their conversation. Several women shrieked. The dancers cleared the area rapidly with guests running for cover. Xander and Jicar both stood and at the same time the music died.

Across the dance floor, on the opposite side of the club, the table that Britenia sat at had been turned over, the food, the drinks spilling to the floor. The two women that Britenia was making acquaintance with were snarling and hissing at each other, feline fangs appearing in their mouths. Long, sharp claws emerged from the tips of their fingers and they were swiping them through the air.

And Britenia stood right in the thick of it, unmoving, her head poised in a tilt, her attention steadfast on the women, as if she were studying them.



That's all Jicar needed was to watch her get the hell scratched out of her or possibly have her throat torn out by being caught in the middle of a couple of infuriated, shape-shifting panthers.

Both he and Xander moved at the same time. Security personal were also closing in. Jicar's heart pounded as one of the woman raised her hand--a hand that had morphed into a big, black paw. She was ready to strike, and spirits help him, Britenia took a step closer, probably to get a better look. He reached her just as the claw slashed, snatching her by the arm and pulling her out of harm's way.

Xander stepped between the women trying to sooth them.

Jicar thought it was an idiotic move/

Security closed in and all hell broke loose. The women completely shifted and two wild panthers leapt over the top of Xander's head and lunged at each other.

Patrons screamed and scattered for the exits. Tables were toppled, chairs were thrown back, and the sound of breaking glass shattered the air.

"This is anger, Jicar." Britenia broke free of his clutches and started to turn back "I want to experience it."

"You don't want to experience this, Brit." Jicar attempted to tug her away again, but she fought him.

Irritated by her foolishness and lacking the will or the time to argue with her, Jicar bent and wrapped an arm below her bottom. She gasped when he lifted her and tossed her over his left shoulder so that her upper body draped upside down along his back. He didn't care about the indignity of it all.

She probably wouldn't either.

But he had to get her out of there.

Britenia grunted as Jicar readjusted her on his shoulder.

“Put me down Jicar.”

“No.”

With her firmly in his grip, Jicar headed up one of the garden paths, the sounds of crashing and growling felines and distraught guests fading behind them. When he reached a three-way split in the path, Jicar looked, around, realizing he didn't know where Britenia was staying.

“Where's your cabana, Brit?”

“I don't know.”

“What do you mean you don't know?”

“I'm not sure where we are, Jicar. The only thing I can see right now is your ass and the ground.”

“Which view do you like better?” Jicar smirked and then jumped slightly when he felt her teeth nip at his backside. Just that simple gesture sent heat racing through his flesh. And the fact that her crotch was so temptingly close to his face, her unique scent taunting him mercilessly, only served to intensify the sensation which seemed to whirl its way through his chest and gut merging into a powerful force that shot straight into his groin.

Jicar blew out a breath, his shaft pulsing, swelling and throbbing, hardening to a full-blown erection before he even had time to comprehend what was happening. His body fell into an instant quaking that had his head spinning and his knees nearly weakening with need for her.

Despite his resolve to refrain from dating Britenia for a second time, and holding her thus was pure torment, for some blazing reckless reason, he couldn't put her down. Something deep inside of him was erupting,

something obsessive, inherent and completely base. “Just tell me which path to take, Britenia.”

He had to get to Britenia’s cabana or he was going to throw her down and mount her there on very path.

Pressing her palms against Jicar’s butt for leverage, Britenia lifted her head and twisted to look around the side of him, but she didn’t say anything.

Jicar inhaled and then exhaled, the air leaving his lungs in lengthy, shuddering breath. “Well?”

“Right.”

Jicar took a step.

“No left.”

“Which path Britenia?”

“The world looks different upside down.”

“Right, left or middle?”

“Not the middle.”

“Then which?”

“Put me down.”

“No...which path?”

“Right,” Britenia decided. “The cabana at the very end.”

Figured it would be the last. Jicar began walking again, his strides growing longer and quicker with each step, and when he finally reached her dwelling, Jicar bent and set Britenia on her feet.

Looking up into his eyes, Britenia glared at him...an actual glare.

“Good eve, Jicar.”

She turned her back to him, opened the door to her room and walked through.

## Chapter Eleven

Jicar stepped into the door opening before Britenia could close it on him. He grasped her upper arm.

Turning, Britenia glanced to where he held her and then shifted to look up at his face. “Did you want something, Jicar?”

Hesitating, Jicar lifted his free hand and smoothed his palm along her cheek. “Let me in.”

“You had no right to pull me from the club when I was studying emotions.”

“I was afraid you would get hurt.” Jicar released her arm and slipped it around her waist, pressing her body to him.

“What I decide to do is none of your concern.”

“I’m making it my concern.”

“Yet you avoided me for several dawns.”

“I did.” Jicar pushed his fingers through her hair. Tipping her face upward he brushed his lips with hers. “I’m sorry.”

“What right did you have to order me back into my clothes?”  
*Especially when I would prefer that you were stripping me out of them.*

“I feared another man would desire you.”

“And what if one had?”

“I would’ve had to kill him.”

“I offered you a second date and you clearly said *no*.”

“I was being foolish.” Jicar pressed his lips to the side of her neck and inhaled her fragrance before suckling her flesh.

“You helped me find passion and then you took it away.”

“Let me help you find it again.” Smoothing one of his hands lower, Jicar cupped her bottom and pushed at her with his hardness.

“I’m upset with you Jicar.”

“I know.” He grinned. “But I want to be by your side for every emotion you experience, Brit, good or bad.”

“You do?”

“Let me in.”

“No.” *I mean yes, I mean yes, yes, yes!*

Jicar backed Britenia into the cabana.

She didn’t resist.

Lifting his booted foot he kicked the door closed.

“You’re exquisite,” Jicar said and pushed the cloth of her dress from her shoulders.

A soft cry left her mouth as he cupped her breasts. Her mind emptied of reasonable thought as desire swept in. Reaching forward, Britenia pushed the vest of him and her hands skimmed his sides, feeling his muscles tense beneath her touch. His mouth came down on hers, their tongues collided, sucking, their mouths sealing hard and demanding.

Britenia’s hands found the waist of Jicar’s pants, the fastener that held them closed, and she fumbled a bit but finally undid it, and jerked them over his hips pushing until they fell downward. Her hands sought his shaft and she wrapped both her fingers around it, stroking the hardened flesh, running her palms along the length, feeling it pulsate in her grasp.

Her thumb grazed the head capturing the moisture seeping from it, and Jicar groaned with pleasure.

Pulling her mouth from his, Britenia stared into his eyes, noticing for the first time how dark and sensual his gaze was.

She opened her mouth. Her chest heaved and she panted her exhales before dropping to her knees in front of him.

Giving him no time to speak, Britenia sucked his cock into her mouth, her tongue swirling around the swollen head.

Jicar's hips jerked and he gasped out a grunt of approval, his hand thrusting through her hair to steady her head.

He pumped, in and out of her mouth, his lust rising, his chest expanding with his hard breaths of air.

Britenia's tongue swirled around the head and he growled with the pleasure of it. He was close to orgasm, too close, but didn't want their second date to culminate into his satiation from the carnal bliss Britenia offered him right now. Jicar attempted to pull from her mouth and as he did, Britenia sucked harder, refusing to let him go. Stilling his hips he relinquished to enjoying more of her mouth while struggling to keep from cumming at the same time.

And then she did the most glorious thing. Her mouth slid off of his cock and she licked the underside of his erection straight down to his balls. Britenia's hand came up and she cupped and lifted and squeezed his sack, her tongue lapping at the same time. Swallowing hard, Jicar pulled back and dropped to his knees, his hands still laced through her hair. Tipping back her head their gazes met. Jicar lowered his head and dragged his tongue across the crease of her lips dipping between them slightly as he did.

Britenia explored Jicar's body with her hands. His body was firm beneath her touch, and she felt the physical essence of him, felt the powerful need building inside of her, driving its way to her head. A bevy\* of emotions ruptured in her brain. She choked back a cry, a mix of her arousal along with sadness, understanding fully that this would be their last time together. When he left her this eve, left her forever, Britenia knew it there would be emotional hurt, but she pushed it back, grateful for the comfort of being in Jicar's arms, of the passion that swept her body and mind, even if it was only for this night.

Melting against him, Britenia sighed and pressed her weight heavily against his body, forcing Jicar back onto the floor. One of his arms reached back, the other slipped behind Britenia's back and as he reclined Jicar brought Britenia down on top of them. Her thighs immediately spread, her knees resting to each side of his hip. Lifting up, Britenia pressed her palms to his chest and she stroked her pussy up and down his shaft in an urgent, almost restless motion.

"Ah, yes, beauty." She was captivating. Jicar watched the motion of her hips, the head of his cock appearing and disappearing beneath her nest of curls.

And she was hot and wet, her carnal moisture dripping, glistening on his shaft, making it slick as she skimmed along the length.

Britenia arched and threw her head back, her breasts juttied forward gently bouncing with her rhythmic motion. Jicar reached for them, cupped them in his hands, ran his thumbs over her nipples.

"Jicar." Britenia's voice emerged in a rough whisper. "Please."

Sliding his hands down her sides, Jicar grasped her bottom and lifted her, poised to slide her onto his throbbing cock, feel her tightness, thrust up inside of her.

But he stopped.

*Damn holy hellfires!*

He was struck by a compelling thirst.

Jicar wanted to rub his mouth on Britenia's female flesh, thrust his tongue upward and into her as her juices flowed down. He wanted to know what she felt like, tasted like, smell what it was like to have her cum while he was licking her.

His body quaked, and he dragged her hips forward, slid his body downward until she was seated on his face, and he sucked on her.

On a gasp, Britenia fell forward, her body arching over the top of his head, her pussy on his mouth, shocks of pleasure running through her.

She moved, rotating and rubbing, seeking and feeling, her heart thumping her breath coming in short pants.

And then she was on her back, Jicar still tasting her, his tongue flattening as he licked and licked and then suckled on her.

She was cumming. Like tiny little prickles it began, surging when Jicar plunged a finger inside of her. His thumb replaced his tongue, and he pressed it to her clit as he moved over her and sank his cock inside of her.

And the sounds of Britenia's own voice, in the throes of ecstasy, echoed through her mind and her hips moving frantically as Jicar slammed into her. She arched up and grabbed Jicar's ass pulling him hard as the impact of her orgasm hit, burst, rushed through her flesh and seized her.

Jicar was lost in her, swept away by her cries of pleasure, his entire body on a rampage, his hips plummeting, his cock swelling, quaking,



rupturing. His orgasm shot through him like a cosmic explosion that culminated into only one thought...

He loved Britenia and she was his lifemate.

## Chapter Twelve

“How is it that your entire planet is without emotions, Brit.” Jicar snuggled next to her, pulling the covers of the bed higher, nestling them as their bodies laced.

Britenia nestled her cheek against Jicar’s shoulder. “My father, the king always a man to consume power and control found that he couldn’t suppress the constant civil uprisings against his harsh rule. He feared being overthrown.”

“It’s something many rulers fear, even the good ones.” *She’s the daughter of king...interesting.*

“But a good ruler would never do such a horrible thing as my father did, to his, or her own people.” Her father’s distorted thinking seeped in and sadness at the insanity of his actions took hold. “To remedy the problem, my father paid an errant sorcerer in priceless gems, items needed to conjure stronger magic. In return he cast a spell that would remove the emotions of my people for the extent of six generations.”

“Why six?”

“The sorcerer informed my father the spell would only last that long.”

“How is it that you, the king’s daughter was chosen to be the ambassador of emotion seeking?”

“I was born with emotions.”

That surprised Jicar and he cranked his head to look down at her. “But how is it you were born with emotions, when all others from your planet were not?”

“Since the king and my mother retained their emotions, when I was born, mine too were intact.”

“But why did he strip you, his own child of feelings?”

“As I grew, I became more aware of what my father had done. I rebelled.”

“A rebellious adolescence,” Jicar chuckled. “How unique.”

“But it angered him, Jicar. Still I was relentless, telling him what he did was wrong. I was angry with him, and that anger intensified when my mother died. I felt so lonely. I made every attempt to teach my people how to feel again.”

“I bet that went over well with your father.”

“Yes, so well that when he realized he had lost control of me, he summoned his sorcerer and paid him to empty my mind.”

“Your father is a sick man.”

“It matters not anymore, Jicar. My people need me...”

Jicar was about to ask her more when she revealed the name of her home planet.

“...and since I’ve experienced emotion its felt that I’m Reba Lou’s only hope.”

Jicar went very still. “What did you say?”

Britenia blinked and met his gaze. “I don’t know. What did I say?”

Jicar rolled away from her and stood. Anger shuddered through him. “Why didn’t you tell me who you were?”

“I did tell you who I was.” Britenia sat up and gave him a questioning look.

“No. Not your name, your title, who you were the daughter of.” Jicar heard his own voice rising to an irked pitch. “Your planet!”

*Hellfires! Was she sent here to spy on him?*

“You didn’t ask.”

That was the truth. He hadn’t pried into her background. But he should have.

Jicar reined his anger for the moment and forced himself to calm. He lowered his voice when he spoke, but underlying it he could still hear disdain in its tone. “Your father had a trade pact with my father.”

“He did?”

Eyeing her suspiciously, Jicar continued. “He betrayed our trust, invaded our planet, took many of our people into slavery, tortured some, slaughtered others.”

Britenia dropped her eyes and shifted them back and forth along the floor. Her father’s actions were always questionable. But was he really that evil? “I was unaware of this, Jicar.”

Studying her, Jicar wondered if she lying. “Thankfully, we fought back soundly, forcing a retreat. But it was at great loss. My two sisters and my father were killed.”

“This is a terrible thing, Jicar.” Britenia felt sorrow, it was meager at first, but as it trickled in, the emotion grew stronger.

It hurt to know her father had done such a thing, though she knew her expression didn’t show it. What appeared on her face in response to sensed emotions was something that seemed to be inconsistent.

“My people and yours have been enemies ever since,” Jicar told her.

The silence thickened between them then, but finally Jicar spoke again, his voice firm, controlled...

*Cold.* Britenia shuddered from the chill of it.

“There will be no third time for us.” Jicar’s heart wrenched at the thought. He could swear he felt it shatter.

He couldn’t trust her.

“I didn’t think there would be.” Britenia returned. “You told me yourself, twice a date, thrice a...”

“I know what I said!” Jicar bellowed angrily. He stalked across the room, stopping in front of a dresser. Propping his hands on the surface, he leaned heavily on it. Her lack of reaction only fed his scorn and fury.

*By the god spirits, was he really thinking about taking her for a mate!*

Jicar lifted his head catching her reflection in the dresser’s mirror.

“Don’t look at me with innocent eyes, Brit. You used me.”

“I did?” Britenia lifted her fingers to touch her face, her eyelids. What did innocent eyes feel like?

“You did!” Jicar turned on her. “To gain access to my planet. How clever of you, pretending you had no emotions!”

“It was my understanding that we were enjoying the date, Jicar. I don’t know of this deceit you talk about.”

Jicar narrowed his eyes. Her calm voice was infuriating. What a fool he’d been. How could he have been so careless as to put his planet at risk? How could he have let her steal a piece of his heart! “You’ve betrayed me.”

When she didn’t answer his charge, Jicar took it as an admittance of guilt. He stalked toward her, grabbing her roughly by the shoulders and she yelped at the pain. “You’re hurting me, Jicar.”

He was hurting her in mores ways than just physical.

“I’ll hurt so much more than...” Jicar closed his eyes. If he didn’t tamp his rage, his hurt, his breaking heart, he was going to kill her. Opening his eyes, he glared at her. “How could you do this to another person? Don’t you care about a damn thing!”

Britenia blinked. Her mouth opened and her body shook. She would examine the reaction to his anger later. But for now...

“I care about you, Jicar.” The sentiment was genuine, falling from her lips without regard. Britenia felt it and said it aloud before she could even reason the words in mind.

“Like hell you do!” Jicar pushed her so hard she fell backwards onto the bed, the force of it causing her to bounce. Grabbing his trousers from the floor, Jicar quickly donned them and then stomped from Britenia’s cabana, slamming the door behind him.

Britenia pushed out a hard breath, relieved he was gone, fearing he would never return. She felt moisture in her eyes.

It was tears.

*Crying is a strange thing.* Britenia thought as she touched the drop of moisture at the corner of her eye. From her studies she knew that one might cry for many reasons, sadness, pain and even joy.

This assuredly was not joy.

Britenia was tempted to fight the tears back, but now that Jicar had departed, she knocked down what she assumed was a protective barrier she held up attempting to keep her feelings in check.

Emotions flooded in--distraught, anguish, even a twinge of anger, but most of all devastation--devastation of Jicar’s misinterpreted accusation.

## Chapter Thirteen

Britenia awoke with a beastly headache that felt as though it were charging through her skull, goring her brain. She had cried herself to sleep, begging the spirits to shed the horrible emotions stomping through her, give her reprieve.

At least now, some of it had subsided.

Her thoughts moved to Jicar and immeasurable hurt set in again.

He blamed her for his planet's woes, his loved ones' deaths.

The throb in Britenia's head pounded harder.

Her stomach didn't feel much better.

"I'll go vomit and then take a bath," she said to the empty room as she rolled from her bed. Just as she reached the bathing chamber a sensation struck her. It was painful, tortuously painful.

Dark and horrifying intense emotions began flooding in-- hopelessness, depression, anxiety, grief, anger...hate...terror...

They seized her in one tremendous sweep.

Britenia started to scream.

\* \* \* \*

"I tripped over your sheets this dawning." Xander commented. "Why were they thrown in the hall?"

“I don’t know what you’re talking about.” Jicar feigned ignorance. Unable to look Xander in the eye less his cousin see the pain there, he instead looked around the club’s outdoor patio where the three of them sat.

Trina gave Xander a woeful look. “I believe he was growling something about her scent being in the sheets.”

“Hmm,” Xander’s brows rose. “Did tossing them out help?”

“I don’t think so,” Trina answered. “He still looks miserable.”

Jicar gritted his teeth and glared with ire, first at Trina and then Xander. “Will the two of you please let it be?”

Pinching a chunk of fruit on the platter in front of him, Jicar stuffed it in his mouth. He sought to turn the subject. “So what were you doing on the second floor, Xander, like I need to ask.”

“Mmm,” Xander examined his nails. “Nothing much, just making a couple of kittens purr.”

“Good for you,” Jicar said dryly. “And where are our rampant kittens now?”

“Inside, cleaning the mess they made of my place last eve,” Trina answered. “With their remorseful tales stuffed between their thighs.”

An agonizing screech suddenly rent the air surrounding causing the three of them to startle.

“Why that sounds like...” Xander began, but Jicar was already on his feet and running.

Trina signaled security, then she and Xander shot from their chairs and they too ran toward where the sounds were coming from.

The anguished cries grew louder as they neared Britenia’s cabana. Rushing toward the door, Jicar burst through it, finding Britenia wrapped in the bed sheets and curled up into a tight ball on the floor.



She screamed between heavy weeps, her hands clutching the top of her head, and her face buried in her arms.

Jicar went on the defense, quickly scanning the room for an attacker, but nothing seemed amiss, nothing was out of place.

“Britenia,” Jicar rushed to her and knelt at her side. He reached out to touch her but decided against it. “Are you hurt?”

“Leave me alone, Jicar.”

“But you need help.”

“You hate me!”

Wincing at her words, Jicar again reached for her. “I don’t hate you, Brit.”

“My father’s dead!”

With a bewildered expression, Jicar looked over at Trina and Xander who were standing by the open door. Trina turned, dismissed her security personnel, and then closed the door, leaning against it. She looked on worriedly.

“She seems to be having a melt-down,” Xander stated.

“I am a horrible person! I feel horror...terrible, terrible horror.” Raising to all fours and screeching as though she were in pain, Britenia attempted to scamper away.

Jicar reached out and grasped her by the waist, pulling her backward and into his arms, cradling her between his thighs. “What brought this on?”

“Let me go! I hate you!”

“Brit, talk to me.” Jicar knew in part that she was reacting to his anger from last night, but there seemed to be more to it than that.

“Leave me alone. I want to die.”

Sagging, Britenia leaned heavily on him and wept. Again, Jicar looked helplessly at Trina and Xander.

They both shook their heads, shrugging at the same time.

Stroking Britenia's hair, Jicar attempted to sooth her. "Did you have a nightmare?"

*Did I cause this?* He's been so cruel to her last eve and his heart filled with guilt and regret.

"No, no!"

"Please, Brit. Tell me what's going on."

"I am a horrible mother!" Britenia pulled back from him, her hand flying to her mouth, her eyes widening, her head shaking from side to side.

Jicar looked at her in shock. "You have a child?"

"What have I done?"

She tensed and tried to break free of Jicar, but his arms around her tightened. "Please, Brit, talk to me."

"I...I traded my baby to an acquaintance because I had no use for him." Britenia shuddered, her eyes squeezed shut. Anguish riddled her features. "I received a pet to eat the rodents in my garden."

Wrenching, Britenia released yet another hair-raising scream and Jicar couldn't

help but to look her over, the painful cry leading him to believe she must be wounded, but subconsciously he knew that the wound was to her emotion heart.

"Oh Jicar!" Britenia screamed. "And you...you...just go away. Stop torturing

me."

The sensations simultaneously attacking Britenia were too much for her to bear. Slumping in Jicar's arms, her head fell back over his arm and her body went frighteningly still.

"I'll get a healer," Trina said as she turned and rushed out the door.

## Chapter Fourteen

“She’s catatonic.”

“What?” Jicar glared at Trina with complete confusion.

“I sent word to Rupshel, her mentor and explained what happened before she passed out. He said it’s a reaction to the sensory overload.”

“You mean every time she feels a strong emotion this...this...” Jicar waved a hand toward the bed where Britenia lay comatose. “Will happen?”

“Maybe a couple of times, if she’s too overwhelmed, but as she adjusts to the discovery of her emotions, the catatonia should subside.” Trina frowned at the unconscious Britenia. “There’s just one problem.”

Taking notice of Trina’s expression, Jicar’s worry escalated. “And what might that be?”

Trina’s eyes lifted to meet Jicar’s. His anxiety was apparent and it suddenly occurred to her why his mood was less than pleasant the last few eves. “You’re in love with her.”

Jicar pressed his lips tightly together and gritted his teeth. His body stiffened but then he closed his eyes. He dropped his head and his shoulders sagged because Jicar was unable to deny the overpowering sentiments consuming him.

“Yes,” he whispered. “I love her.”

His head snapped up, his demeanor becoming rigid once more. “Now tell me what the problem is with her present state!”

Trina bit her lip, but she had to let him know of the consequences. “If she remains catatonic for too long a period of time, her heart will stop beating and she’ll die.”

Anguish filled Jicar as he stalked toward bed. As he sat down beside Britenia and stroked her hair, a tear fell from the corner of his eye. He swiped it back and gathered Britenia to him, kissing the top of her head, begging. “Come back to me, love. I’m so sorry I hurt you. I’m so sorry I wasn’t here to help you through this.”

“There’s something else, Jicar.”

Jicar stiffened, he didn’t want to hear anymore disturbing news, but at the same time had to know.

“Her mentor believes that if the emotions she suffered were devastating enough to put her in this condition, she might be detached again if she rouses.”

For a moment Jicar was silent as he thought about the consequences.

“When she rouses.” He had to believe Britenia would come through this. And didn’t care what her emotional condition would be. He just wanted the catatonic state to lift.

And wouldn’t leave her until it did.

Three dawns later, Jicar still sat with Britenia, but there was little he could do. She rested in the bed unmoving and it amazed him how her body was in complete shut down. He thought she would at least wet the bed, but she didn’t. The only sign of life coming from her was the continued beating of her heart.

For which he was tremendously grateful.

By the fourth dawning she began murmuring in her sleep. Emotions emerged, laughing, crying, anger, moans that sounded sensual. She spoke his

name a few times, though she seemed unaware of his presence. Despite that, Jicar spoke softly to her, words of promise to her hoping she could hear him, stroked her body gently, hoping she could feel him.

She quieted again and said nothing more for the length of another dawning.

By eve she began to stir.

Britenia opened her eyes and for a moment felt disoriented. Pushing to a sit she searched the area around her and slowly recognized her own cabana.

She felt numb.

Jicar was looking out the window, his back to her and she tilted her head to the side thinking how larger-than-life-itself he appeared to her.

His shoulder length, black hair was tied back in a queue, wet from what appeared to be a recent washing.

Britenia felt a tingle in her fingers, a craving to touch it.

Her attention turned to his clothing. He wore a deep green velvet vest that was tight around his trunk, the hem meeting the waist of the black leather pants that molded nicely around his firm butt and muscular legs.

His feet were bare.

She thought about how well the garments were made for his body and that they were of high quality too. He looked strong in them--powerful.

“Your clothes fit you well, Jicar.”

At the sound of her voice, he spun around and stood shocked for a moment, wondering if he was imagining what he was seeing. Britenia sat up in the bed, clutching the sheet, her mass of peach-silver hair tangled around her body, her face pale, dark circles under her eyes, her demeanor appearing fatigued and weak.

She was the most beautiful sight he'd ever seen.

Inhaling an immensely relieved breath, Jicar went to the bedside, and unable to restrain himself he sat on the edge and dragged her into his arms.

A strange feeling swirled through Britenia's stomach, her chest, her mind, as Jicar embraced her. She interpreted it as hunger, for she was feeling a bit lightheaded too.

Britenia took a deep breath "You smell very clean, Jicar."

Jicar closed his eyes, his heart grieving. She was void again. The comment was simply an automatic response to her olfactory senses.

"I'm thirsty."

"Of course." Jicar released her and reached for the pitcher of water and the cup that sat on the bedside stand. He poured her a drink.

Taking it from him, Britenia guzzled it down, her eyes riveted to his. When she emptied the cup, he took it from her and set it aside. Britenia's eyes drifted shut and she inhaled again.

Realization trickled in.

Jicar didn't just smell clean, he smelled wonderful.

It was then that awareness struck her.

The numbness faded. Every emotion she'd experienced thrived, but as much as they existed, they also seemed to be settled quietly inside of her, finding their place, waiting for the appropriate time to emerge.

"We should talk." Britenia took Jicar's hand.

He looked down wondering about the gesture. It felt like affection.

Not wanting to cause her any more upset, if she could even be driven to that state anymore after what he'd done to her, Jicar shifted his gaze back to her face. Her stoic expression seemed to soften, but he thought he was

imagining it--wishful thinking. "You've been catatonic for several dawns. Wouldn't you like to eat first?"

"No." Britenia slowly shook her head in the negative. Her lids lifted, her eyes meeting his. "I have a child."

"You told me."

"This is an issue for you."

Jicar released a soft laugh. "Not at all. But I am concerned about your sorrow for your..."

"...son." Britenia finished his sentence. "My anguish over trading him away was an overreaction. I see him every dawning. He lives in the castle with a royal guard and the guard's mate. He's perfectly fine."

"I would like to meet him."

"You would?" Britenia blinked at Jicar and a twinge of joy filled her, but it was overtaken by a feeling of shame. She lowered her gaze away from Jicar. "I'm sorry for what my father did."

*She's sorry?* Jicar furled his brows.

His hope rose. She appeared sincere.

Pouring her another cup of water, he handed to her. "How did your father die?"

Britenia took a small sip and then rested the cup on her thighs.

She sighed as she stared at the liquid in the container. "What goes around has a tendency to come around, hence when the king became critically ill one year later after cursing his own child...me..." She looked up at Jicar. "No one came to his aid. No one cared. He died alone and no one felt guilty or ashamed."

Britenia took another sip of her water. "And no one grieved, not even me, until..."



Her words broke off and the silence grew thick between them.

“I should’ve never accused you of the things I did, Brit.” Jicar grimaced as he thought about how vicious he’d been to her. “It wasn’t a very diplomatic way for a king to behave.”

Britenia pressed her fingers to lips. “Your position is understandable. You were thinking about the safety of your planet.”

Curling his fingers around her hand, Jicar kissed her the tips and then lifted them from his lips.

He lowered her hand and pressed his palm to the center of his chest. “My thinking was selfish in part. I didn’t give you a chance to explain.”

“There isn’t much more to it than I’ve already said.” Britenia felt the beat of Jicar’s heart beneath her flesh. It caught cadence with her own thumping chest. “Other than I’m now leader to an entire planet of numb-minded people.”

“Why didn’t you just have the sorcerer reverse the spell?”

“That would’ve been an easy solution if he was anywhere to be found. Unfortunately, he was a deviant. After my father died he had stolen half the stock of gems in our coffers and vanished.

I sent a plea to the reclusive sorcerers who lived high in the Crystal Mountains, asking them to take pity on our plight of her people, and they did, but were unable to remove the curse.”

“Rupshel is one of those sorcerers?”

“He is, yes.”

Jicar’s expression went sullen. “I’m so sorry I hurt you, Brit.”

“Why did you?”

“Since the first time I saw you I’ve been trying to determine why the savage urges to possess you have been seizing me.”

She didn't respond and Jicar was thankful for her silence, giving him time to think about how her scent, how his ferocious need for Britenia kept growing stronger and stronger with each new dawning despite his futile attempts to resist.

Finally Britenia spoke. "Have you determined what it is that taunts you?"

The tension within Jicar drained as he slowly accepted and embraced the flood of emotions conquering him.

"I have." No longer could he deny what his heart was telling him. "You're my lifemate."

"I see," Britenia watched as Jicar stood.

He unfastened his vest and shrugged out of it. The garment dropped to the floor. Britenia swallowed hard. Her body shuddered with instant arousal.

"This is a

good thing."

"How so?" Jicar pushed his trousers down along his hips and then stepped out of them. He stood naked before her.

The rhythm of Britenia's heartbeat increasing and her chest heaved with longing as she watched his erection grow. Her mind soared with happiness as she tipped her head to look up at his face. "Because I love you."

Jicar expelled an ecstatic groan as he reached forward and yanked the sheet from Britenia's body, exposing her naked form. His nostrils flare at her scent and the sight of desire on her beautiful face.

She opened her legs invitation and Jicar settled between them, on top of her, stroking his cock along her folds, kissing her mouth, her face. "I want you Britenia. Accept me as your lifemate."

“But I’m your enemy, Jicar.” Britenia was acting much like his foe at the moment. She arched and pressed her pussy against his cock, her clit swelling with arousal her mind bending, her heart committing to giving herself only to Jicar.

“I’m calling a truce,” he responded hoarsely.

And Jicar sealed the treaty by plunging deep inside of her, stroking into his wife with every ounce of emotion and longing he possessed, whispering to her, the mating words of promise and devotion.

The End