

Melissa's Tales



Melissa Anne Rogan

A "New Woman" Novel



Reluctant Press TV/TS Publishers

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Melissa's Tales

By Melissa Anne Rogan

FORBIDDEN PLANET

The spaceship "Restless" approached the planet and placed itself in a parking orbit.

"OK," the pilot, Mike Jones, said, "we are now in a standard orbit around the planet."

"Where are we?" asked Fred Dawson, the only other person aboard.

"According to the navigation charts the planet is unnamed. It is the fourth planet around the star GX12-5021K, a Sol type yellow main sequence star. The planet is very earth-like in both size, gravity and climate. It would appear to be ripe for colonization. I wonder why it hasn't been snapped up centuries since."

"Will we be safe?"

Mike and Fred were modern day traders - entrepreneurs, as they liked to refer to themselves. They would ship any cargo their medium sized freighter could carry to any location in known (or sometimes unknown) space.

Their concept of law was flexible. They were not out and out baddies, but were not averse to a little bit of smuggling, though they drew the line at running drugs. It was this white stain on their otherwise gray character which had landed them in this little difficulty with the interstellar Mafiosi.

They had unwittingly been hired to run some seriously bad drugs and when they realized that they had been tricked they went back on the deal. This had inconvenienced and slightly miffed the Dons, who now wanted compensation (pain, not finance).

What they needed was a nice, out of the way place to lie low for a few months until the Don's tempers had cooled a little.

"According to the computer's archive files, the planet was colonized, shortly after it was discovered, some three hundred and seventy years ago," Mike mused, scanning his computer screen. "The planet is now interdicted, full prohibition, no contact allowed, no reason given."

"That usually means native intelligent life being allowed to develop unsullied by human contact until they reach a technological level compatible with contact," Fred observed.

"If we land in an out of the way area it should be an ideal hiding place for a few months." Mike used his instruments to scan the surface. "There is evidence

of technological civilization in several areas,” he said, after scanning for several minutes.

“How high a level of technology?”

“Impossible to say with the fairly crude instruments on this rust bucket, but I detect radio waves and nuclear fusion plants.” He continued to scan, looking for a remote site suitable for landing and camping out for a few months. “There,” he said, pointing to an area in the northern hemisphere of the planet, “that looks ideal.”

The area selected was in the foothills of a remote, mountainous area, well wooded with good water sources to supplement their ship’s supply, and the promise of hunting to improve their ship’s eternal, but bland larder. All the evidence from the scans said that native life was edible, and both men would be happy not to have to eat a synthesized, nutritious gray blob for a while.

Their landing site agreed, Mike activated all the anti-detection gear he had installed to aid in their business activities and commenced landing maneuvers.

The ship was landed in an isolated clearing in a thickly wooded region in the area they had selected and made secure. Scans showed plenty of game but no sentient life that they could recognize within a hundred-mile area. They relaxed, secure in the knowledge that they were safely away from the prying gaze of the Mafia and could handle anything the inhabitants of the planet could throw at them if they were unfortunate enough to be detected.

By the time three days had passed since their landing, they were sure that they had not been de-

tected, either by the planet's inhabitants, or by anyone or anything else that may be interested in them. They were able to relax for the first time in many months, content to camp out under the stars, where they could breathe fresh air instead of the continuously recycled stuff aboard ship.

Growing in confidence, they started to experiment with the local flora and fauna, in an attempt to improve their rather bland diet. They were secure in the knowledge that if necessary, there was sufficient provision of food on board to feed them for over a year. The instrumentation they carried was able to analyze local foodstuff for nutrition content to ensure a balanced diet, as well as being able to detect any chemical or microbial content that might render them harm.

After a week, they managed to trap their first local animal, a small rodent-like creature not unlike a rabbit in taste once cooked.

"Ah, this is the life," Mike sighed contentedly, as he gulped down the last of the meal and lay back by the campfire, hands behind his head, staring at the night sky. The forest around them was full of interesting night noises, but their instruments detected no potentially harmful creatures.

"We should have done something like this a long time ago. Our batteries sure needed recharging. You can only live on adrenalin for so long before the body demands payment," Fred noted as he finished off his cup of coffee.

Mike smiled in agreement, thinking of the many scrapes they had managed to escape from in the nick of time, hearts in mouths, pulses surging. Now was the time to relax and unwind, and, enforced though

this little break may be, he was determined to make the most of it.

It was in the third week that things started to go wrong.

Oh, the camping was fine, the food great, the peace undisturbed by the presence of any other sentient being. However, something was amiss. Neither man could put a finger on it but both felt out of sorts.

Two days later they were decidedly ill.

The computer automedic showed them to have fever, malaise, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, sore throat; in fact all the symptoms of a viral infection. Its diagnosis was precisely that, but no virus could be isolated from the samples of blood, urine, faeces and throat swab that the machine obtained.

Two days later, Fred roused himself from stupor. Shaking off the blinding headache he staggered to see how Mike was. Mike was in a coma. He was obviously far more seriously ill than was Fred. Fred managed to drag the dead weight of Mike's body across to the automedic and plug him in once again, before collapsing, exhausted, onto the nearest seat while the machine repeated its investigations. Again it could find no cause but the outlook for Mike was bleak - he was dying!

Fred pondered for many hours before coming to the inevitable conclusion. The only beings likely to have knowledge of this obviously local disease were the natives. He must attempt to contact them. He couldn't fly the ship - Mike was the pilot, so he would have to get them to come to him.

If they were friendly, there was hope. If they weren't...well, they had nothing to lose now. His decision made, he activated the distress beacon before struggling back to Mike and making him as comfortable as possible. Then he waited, wondering what form the natives would take.

Over the years, he had encountered many intelligent species throughout the galaxy. Xenophobia was not one of his weaknesses. Still, he was always interested in encountering a new species. When they finally arrived, several hours later, their shape was quite a shock. They were as human as he was, something for him to ponder as they assessed the situation and injected him with something which thankfully relieved him of all pain, as well as consciousness.

When Mike finally awoke, it was several weeks later, though of course he was not aware of that. He was only aware of the fact that he was free of pain. He felt quite well but when he moved, he felt totally without energy.

It was obvious to Fred, observing his friend through a one-way mirror, that he was very, very weak, hardly surprising, considering he had lost almost half of his body weight, and his muscle tone was virtually gone. Watching Mike slip back into an exhausted, but restorative sleep, Fred knew that his road to recovery was sure, but long. He turned to the young lady doctor sitting next to him.

"It seems that we owe you everything," he quietly stated.

"When will you tell him?" The doctor smiled. "If you had observed the interstellar prohibition notice and stayed away from this planet you wouldn't have

needed our help. Now, you can never leave. The risk to the galaxy is too great. Still, at least we can offer you a congenial and cultured existence, especially as you are a male.

“Your friend? He is still far too weak to be able to learn the truth. We will refrain from telling him until he is somewhat stronger. We can’t leave it too long however. Now he has broken the fever, he will have increasing periods of consciousness as his convalescence begins and he will eventually become aware of the changes his body has already undergone, and will continue to undergo, due both to his illness and to the treatment.

“However. You are due for your own checkup. Come.”

They left the observation room and walked down the bright, sterile corridor of the hospital to an examination room where Fred was fully examined, and his final recovery confirmed.

“You were very lucky,” observed the physician, “very few adults suffer as mild a dose as you had.”

“It’s a pity Mike wasn’t so lucky,” Fred replied.

“Still, he’s alive at least, and will eventually make a full recovery. That’s something to be thankful for.”

Mike was full of a sense of anticipation as he dried off after his morning shower.

Today was the day that Dr. Adams had promised to explain all about his illness and its consequences. The long weeks of being confined to one room were coming to an end. He had spent many hours with his close and only friend, Fred. It had slowly become ob-

vious that Fred knew at least part of the story, but when questioned just clammed up, saying that Dr. Adams had sworn him to silence for Mike's own good.

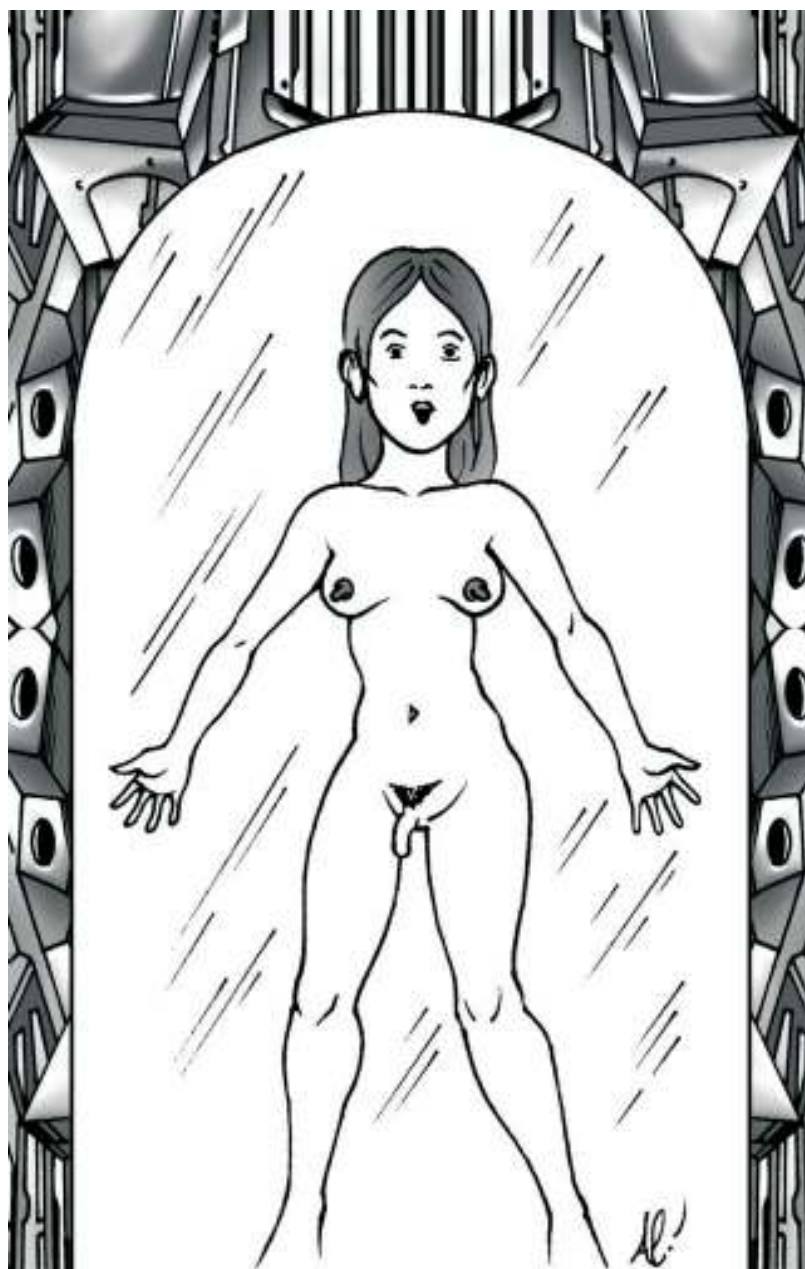
Oh well, he'd soon know. Standing in front of the full-length mirror on the wall, he surveyed the massive damage to his body. He had lost almost twelve inches in height and about half of his body weight. His new measurements were five feet four inches and just over one hundred and ten pounds.

Mostly, he bemoaned the lack of muscle tone; - he had been a fitness fanatic before, and was very proud of his muscular and athletic frame. Now, muscular was the last word that could be used to describe him.

His illness, whatever it was, had left him with little muscle tone, so his body appeared rounded, especially at the hips and rear. His pectorals, oddly enough, didn't seem to be affected so much. As his body shrunk, they didn't, giving the appearance of small, but definite, breasts. His nipples were larger, and very sensitive, in a pleasant sort of way. Unconsciously, he stroked them, enjoying the sensual feelings.

He did not become sexually aroused however; he couldn't.

His penis, the pride of his manhood, and the scourge of many girls in many space ports, had shrunk also, and more so. It was no bigger than a little boy's, and his testicles had ascended into his body, leaving his scrotal sac empty, the skin tight and smooth. He was not sure if he imagined it, but when he carefully felt behind his scrotum, he was sure he could feel a gentle channel, a groove along his groin.



His bodily hair was affected also. His hairy chest was now hairless, as were his belly, back and arms. He could not remember shaving since he regained consciousness. The hair on his legs was very light, soft and downy. Even the pubic hair under his arms and at his crotch was silky soft. His crotch hair now only covered a small, inverted triangle, instead of the lush expanse of wiry hair he had once owned. Even his head hair was different, silky soft again, and growing at a rate of knots. It was already down to his shoulders:- he had kept it cropped for convenience and neatness when in space, so either it was growing at an abnormal rate, or he'd been here a lot longer than he was being led to believe.

Sighing, he donned a clean robe and lay on his bed. He would dearly like to start an exercise regime so he could begin to rebuild his muscles, but when he had broached the subject, the doctor had forbidden it in the most forceful of tones, saying that it would be extremely dangerous for him to indulge in strenuous exercise at this stage of his convalescence and they would tell him when, and how, he could exercise, in due course.

Left with nothing else to occupy his mind, he turned on the holovision set. This had been the mainstay of his entertainment during the months of confinement. (He'd tried to explore, but the locked door defeated even his great mechanical skills, left as he was, without tools). He was now an expert in the mindless drivel all planets seemed to screen in the daytime; soaps, hospital dramas, cookery and domestic shows, inane game shows. As for the soaps and dramas, he was becoming quite addicted, and looked forward to the daily episode of 'Neighborhood Friends' and 'District Infirmary'.

What was disconcerting was the mood swings he suffered. Gone was the cold, rational pilot. He found that he could get quite emotional over a crisis in the plots. He even, to his embarrassment, found himself weeping uncontrollably when one of the local heroes died in a car crash.

Mike was sitting in a small but reasonably well-appointed office of the type seen in hospitals throughout known space. Next to him sat Fred, who had given him a hug of greeting and reassurance when he had been brought to the room.

Behind them sat a nurse. At her desk, facing them, sat Dr. Adams, the very pretty young doctor who had been his physician.

'Funny,' he thought, 'all the staff are very pretty women, I don't recall seeing a single man, even as a porter.'

He dismissed the thought, putting it down to his lack of human contact due to his confined state. He turned his attention to Dr. Adams, determined to hear, and absorb every word she said.

"My story is a long and complicated one, taking in basic genetics, and the history of this planet," began Dr. Adams, "I would ask you not to interrupt me unless I ask a question as some of the concepts are difficult to grasp. When I've finished, you will be free to ask any questions you like, and if I cannot answer them, I will personally ensure that you are put in touch with someone who can. Agreed?"

Both men nodded their heads, looking at each other nervously.

“Very well. Then I’ll begin. First a question. Do you know, at least in principle, the genetic basis of the difference between the two sexes?”

Fred answered first. “I got a smattering of genetics in biology, way back in my college days.”

“That should be enough,” Dr. Adams noted, “how about you, Mike?”

Mike shook his head sideways. “No, I was never interested in biology. I was always going to be a pilot and mechanical technician, so I specialized in maths and physics.”

“At least you appear to be intelligent enough to understand what I have to say,” the good doctor countered with a bright smile before she continued. “As you are no doubt aware, every characteristic that we have, from eye color, to height, is determined by genes. These genes are arranged in strands on huge molecules in bodies called chromosomes, found in almost every cell in the body. Humans have forty-six chromosomes, arranged in twenty three pairs. Each parent donates one chromosome of each pair, in egg or sperm, so that any individual inherits characteristics of both parents.

“One pair of chromosomes is different from the others. These are the sex chromosomes, and as the name implies, they control the sex of an individual. A female has two identical chromosomes, called X chromosomes. The X chromosome is essential for life but you only need one. In female embryos, one is switched off shortly after conception, but it has been active long enough to set the embryo on a path of development to a female.

“A male has only one X chromosome. The other is called a Y chromosome. This is thought to be a degenerate X chromosome, with a little bit missing. This determines a male development for the embryo. From this, you can see that as only the male has both X and Y chromosomes, it is the male parent who will determine the sex of his offspring. If his sperm contains X, his child is female, if it contains Y, his child is male. The female parent can only donate X so cannot influence the outcome. That’s the end of the biology lesson. Do you follow me so far?”

Both men nodded and shrugged, indicating that they were still with her.

She then took her explanation off on a different tack.

“This planet was first discovered by the interstellar exploration corps, over five hundred years ago. They stopped only briefly, but sent back a report that indicated a class one planet, compatible with earth life in all major areas, without detectable indigenous intelligent life forms and with no harmful local micro-organisms:- ripe for colonization.

“The first colonists arrived slightly less than four hundred years ago, and quickly confirmed the earlier report, establishing several colonies in this Paradise. The colonies thrived for ten years, exceeding all expectations, until the day that disaster struck; in the form of a plague, the like of which had never been seen before in known space. The plague was unique for it specifically attacked the Y chromosome. It only attacked males, females were totally unaffected. The effect on men was devastating, for the organism was attacking that which was fundamental to their masculinity.

“Over 99% of our men folk died in extreme pain. Less than 1% survived. Those that did survive, once they had recovered, were perfectly normal, and apparently immune from further attacks.

“All the medical and scientific resources of the young colony were not enough to solve the problem, especially as our best scientists were male, and therefore dead. The Interstellar Colonization Authority backed us with their considerable resources. The best scientific minds of the galaxy were called upon, to no avail. We thought, and still think, that the causative organism is a virus. It transmits like one. If it is a virus, it is like no other virus ever before seen. We could not isolate it, or grow it in the laboratory. No antiserum could be made from the blood of the males fortunate enough to survive, no vaccine was successful in preventing infection.

“Finally, after years of fruitless research, the Authorities acted in protection of the galaxy at large. A Class one indictment order was placed on the planet:- no one on the surface, including any of the top female scientists which had been brought here, were to be allowed to leave - ever. No one was allowed to land. Satellite beacons were placed in orbit to warn visitors of the order. Any that did land were condemned to stay here for ever.

“From what you say, those satellites are not now functioning. That will be rectified. You are now subject to that order, your ship is confiscated, and you will spend the rest of your lives on this planet, happily, we hope.”

Mike stirred, but a nudge from Fred kept him from opening his mouth.

“Because we have never, even now, been able to isolate the agent responsible,” Dr. Adams continued, “we cannot tell if women, though not affected, may be carriers, which is why they also were forbidden to leave. The colony was left to it’s fate. The Authorities maintained only hyper radio contact. If we required goods they were sent in by unmanned drone ship. But as we could not export goods we could not trade, so we were eventually forgotten.

“It was expected that the colony would die out in time. As you see, we not only did not die out, but actually thrived, after many years of struggle. We were able to father offspring from our surviving males, mainly by artificial insemination.

“Our men were prizes indeed. Many was the fight over them between horny women. Eventually we had to act in defense of the colony and place them off limits to all but the chosen few. Be assured,” she smiled, noting the look of glee in Fred’s eye, “it was not the male paradise you imagine. We were hoping that the immunity of the recovered males would be passed on to the next generations. Alas, this was not to be, though a higher proportion survived, presumably due to the resilience of youth. Of all male babies born, only 10% survived. Many decades later, studies of our local animals showed that they too are susceptible, the female to male ratio of all our higher animals is 9:1. You probably condemned yourselves as soon as you made contact with a native animal.

“Back to our story. Although we had years of failure, we never gave up looking for a cause, and a cure, for the plague. We still look today, centuries later. Just over a hundred years ago, however, one of our leading bioengineers, the famous professor Nadia Gromeko, came upon a solution which was as radical as it was unexpected. Using her bio techniques she

was able to create a harmless bacterium which carried a very special, tailored virus. When a male animal was infected with the bacterium, it multiplied and released the virus when the body's natural defenses attacked the bugs. This virus attacked the Y chromosome just like the plague.

“However, and here's the amazing bit, instead of destroying the chromosome, it altered it by adding some of it's own nucleic acid. The very clever professor Gromeko tailored the virus so that the bit it added on was the bit that was missing from the Y chromosome that made it different from an X chromosome. In other words it changes Y chromosomes to X chromosomes. If this organism is given to a child in the terminal stages of plague, it changes their beleaguered Y chromosomes to immune X chromosomes. It has the obvious side effect of making them genetically female but it saves their lives. Although it could not boost our male population, it meant that 90% of our male babies were no longer condemned to die, a great breakthrough.”

Mike felt rather uneasy. He most definitely did not like the direction this lecture was taking.

Dr. Adams continued.

“When we received your distress call we were surprised, to say the least. Nevertheless, we mounted an immediate air rescue operation. Finding a spaceship and two sick young men, we were able, very quickly, to establish what had happened. You,” she said, indicating Fred, “were semiconscious, but not seriously ill. Though from the way you must have felt, you probably wouldn't have agreed with us at the time. All you needed was bed rest and good quality nursing care to bring you round. You were one of the very, very few adult males to survive this infection. You

however,” she said, indicating Mike, “were a very different story. You were completely comatose, and already entering the terminal stages of the illness.”

She stopped, gathering herself for the final part. The atmosphere of the room was electric.

Finally she spoke again.

“I’m very sorry to have to tell you this, Mike, but in order to save your life, we had to administer our tailored virus. Even then, you were so ill, and we have so little experience in treating adults, that it was touch and go for a very long time whether you would live. I’m glad to see that you did, and your recovery, though slow, is assured.” Again she paused, looking to Mike for comment. Although he said nothing, his eyes held a thousand questions, were full of horror, of fear. “You are cured, but genetically each and every one of your body’s cells is now female. You are already experiencing some of the changes your body is undergoing as that essential femaleness pervades your body. Your blood hormones are already entirely those of a young woman. In time, your physical self will catch up. You will be a woman, and I think, a very attractive one.”

Finally, the horror of what he was hearing became too much for Mike.

“Don’t be stupid,” he exploded, “you can’t just calmly sit there and tell me you’ve changed me into a girl! You’re talking nonsense. It’s impossible, some kind of tasteless joke.”

He was obviously becoming hysterical.

At a signal from the doctor, the nurse quietly got up, and, exposing the injector she had been hiding,

quickly administered a fast-acting sedative to Mike's neck. As he slumped to the floor, she quickly fetched an orderly and between them, they loaded his recumbent form onto a trolley and wheeled him back to his room.

"Whew," Fred exhaled, slowly. "That was pretty bad, wasn't it?"

"Actually," replied the doctor, "given the extraordinary circumstances, it went rather more smoothly than I expected."

Fred gave her a very shrewd look. "There's more, isn't there? What haven't you told us?"

"You men may not realize it, immersed as you are in your own egos, but women are driven by their emotions, their feelings, as much as their intellect. We are very sensual and sexual beings. It's probably due to our biological, animal urge to reproduce, even despite our veneer of civilization. The whole reason for the way we bring up our young girls is to provide them with the psychological armory to control those urges. Mike does not have that upbringing. She is going to experience feelings and urges that she has no idea how to deal with."

"Don't you have drugs, analysts, that can help him? Hypnosis even?" he asked.

"Assuredly, we do, and we will use them in due course. They will take time, however, and until they are effective, Mike will be a very vulnerable young lady. We cannot even consider using them until Mike makes the first step herself. She must accept her new femininity. Until she does then nothing we can do will be effective. You are her closest and only friend. She will need your strength and support in the coming

months. Notice that I am already using female adjectives when referring to her. You will be doing your friend no favors by using words like 'He' and 'Him'. They will serve only to remind her of her past, a past to which she can never return. You might wish to consider a more feminine name for her also; perhaps a female version of her own name."

Fred thought on this for a time.

"Very well," he replied, "I'll do all I can. After all, there but for the grace of God..... I've always liked the name Michelle, but I will have to introduce it very carefully. Now, what else do you have to say?"

"My final comments are for you," replied the doctor. "As I explained, our males are very precious to us. Left in our society, the massive excess of females exposes them to tremendous sexual pressures, as women try to get them to give them babies in the 'natural way'. Most of our women never experience the joys of sex with a man. Very few males can withstand this pressure for any but the briefest of times. Most of our males live in a separate part of the cities, in communes where women are forbidden. They are content with this. After all, they have been raised to it.

"You, however, have not. Having been used to so much freedom, you will almost certainly find the tedium of such an existence unbearable. It is your choice and your right to choose, but as I said, living in a world of women, where you may be the only man in the neighborhood, is not a male paradise. Few men have the physical or mental constitution to survive it. We will find you work suited to your talents. Where you live is up to you."

"Once I make my choice, is it reversible?" asked Fred.