

AMID THE STARS EXCERPT:

“You would run away from us so soon?” The bland question came out smoothly. He had been acting reasonably well, so why was she so scared?

“It’s not a case of running away. I belong on Earth.” Was she a prisoner here? Yes, for as long as this man decided to keep her on his planet. The saliva in her mouth dried up and her stomach felt as if it had become knotted.

“As I see it you have little to go back for,” he went on as if she hadn’t spoken. “Your life mate is dead. You were being threatened with your life, were in fact a moment away from being murdered by this...mobster. You have no other people of your own family.” He got up, put the tray containing her empty dish and glass on the bench and waved his palm over a red light in the wall. The lot disappeared.

“This is all true.” Melanie pushed her hair back and glanced at him where he stood, long legs astride, hands on hips. Totally at ease and arrogantly sure of himself. “But Irena promised you would take me back if I should want that.”

“That’s true also.”

Melanie nibbled on her lower lip when he stared at her in that strange way that sent odd alarm bells off inside her. It looked as if he wasn’t going to say any more on that subject. “What else did she say in her message?” she asked, for something to break the tension strumming between them.

“That you would make an excellent replacement for her in all ways.” Turning his back on her he began to press buttons on a keyboard.

“Replacement?” Melanie gulped—her shoulders going back as she stared at him. What exactly did he have in mind by that statement? Her throat went as dry as a desert while she continued to gaze at the wide expanse of his back.

“Irena shared all things with me.” The sentence was drawled. If she hadn’t seen proof that he was as straight-faced as a poker player she would have sworn he was having a laugh at her expense. Those great shoulders shook slightly. But when he turned back to her his face bore that same calm look, devoid of expression. She must be mistaken. This man didn’t know how to joke.

“Our lines have crossed here somewhere, mister.” Her voice was snappy.

“Lines? Crossed? I’m sorry, I fail to comprehend your strange phrases.” With a nonchalant lifting of his shoulders, he said, “Please do not forget that my brain has to take in your words, assimilate and then translate them. Only then can I understand you. But these odd phrases have no meaning for me. What have crossed lines to do with what I said?”

“All right.” Melanie got up, faced him and then wished she hadn’t. He was so large, so intimidating. Backing up she went to look out of the window. It was growing light. There were much fewer hours of darkness than on Earth. “Let me make it clear. I got the distinct impression you were hinting I should replace Irena in...your...” She couldn’t go on. They slept, but as far as their sex-life went, her training had obviously been pretty sketchy. She had no inkling of exactly how they mated. But if her senses alerted her correctly, this hunk was implying she take Irena’s place in his bed.

“Bed?” There was definitely a hint of a smile on those dangerous lips now as she glared hard at him. “Don’t look so shocked. I caught the word running around in that unusual brain of yours.”

These pieces of information made her feel a whole lot better. Now he was picking her brain.

“To set your mind at rest, we do mate much as you do on Earth. Women have the same rights as men in choosing their mate. Yes, I shared my body with Irena, and if you would be willing, I would share it with you.”