

## Excerpt

### *River's Run*

#### Lords of Kassis book 1

By S. E. Smith

"Do you think the men will help us, River?" Star asked hesitantly as she pulled the arrows across her back.

"Yes. I don't know why, but I feel like they are our only hope. The huge creature cut one man's head clean off, Star. He plans on killing all the rest of them. I don't know why, but I feel like we have to save them." River looked into Star's eyes before turning to Jo.

"Well, let's go kick some alien ass," Jo said with a smile. "Hell, if I'm going to die today I plan on taking as many of those assholes with me as I can."

"Showtime," the three girls said as they linked their hands. It was their favorite saying right before they were to perform.

Heading down the vent, they quietly came up onto cell block eight. Jo lifted the grill. It was located in a small unlit corner of the cell. This cell was much larger than the others.

River jumped down, crouching low until she was sure she hadn't been heard. Nodding up to Jo, she stepped aside as Jo lowered herself down, followed by Star. Nodding for each sister to take a side, they had decided River would come up the middle. It gave

her more freedom to throw her knives with both hands.

With River holding up a hand, the girls listened as the one-armed creature talked about how he was going to kill each of the men before killing the man fighting against the restraints. River heard Star catch her breath when the young man said good-bye to his brother. That was all the three of them needed to hear to know they were making the right decision.

Torak watched as Progit raised his sword with a harsh laugh. He refused to look away from his brother's face. Just as Progit was preparing to bring his sword down to sever one of Jazin's arms, he froze in place. Torak watched in disbelief as he turned halfway around, then backward onto the metal floor, a knife protruding from between his eyes. He jerked when the other two creatures, who had been on each side of his brother, met the same fate.

Glancing up with undisguised hope, he softly called out. "Manota?"

River wasn't sure what to do when the man tied to the wall called out for someone. She looked around the room to see who he was talking to but didn't see anyone else. Nodding to Jo and Star, she moved slowly into the room. They would cover her back if these guys turned out to be bad too. Pulling her short swords from her back, she held one in each hand as she moved into the light.

Torak's breath caught in his throat as he watched a figure move cautiously out of the darkened corner. He had expected his middle brother, Manota. He had

not expected to see the most beautiful female he had ever seen walk slowly out of the shadows carrying two battle swords. He watched as the female stopped just inside the room. She looked at the three Tearnats first, moving over to them and kneeling down to make sure they were dead. When she was satisfied they were she pulled the knives out of their foreheads with a disgusted look on her face, wiping the blades gingerly on their clothing. She then slid the knives into her boots.

Rising up, she glanced at him briefly before moving her eyes over each of the men watching her so intently. She moved to stand in front of Jazin looking up into his eyes. She slid one of her swords into the harness on her back before slowly raising her hand to the cheek with the blood on it. Torak growled low when she reached up. The female froze, then turned to stare at him a moment before she turned back to his younger brother.

River's heart had almost broken when she heard the man standing in front of her say good-bye to his brother. When she had looked at him after making sure the green scaly creatures were dead, she had been horrified at the blood running down his cheek. She had put one of her swords up so she could pull out a tissue to see how bad the cut was.

It had shaken her when the man on the wall growled at her. She had looked back at him to make sure he was still chained. She had to make sure she, Jo, and Star would be safe before she released any of them. What she hadn't expected was the immediate

response she felt to him. It was as if her body knew him. She had to fight not to run to him and release him. Shaking her head at the craziness of it, she turned back to the younger man chained in front of her. Gently wiping the blood away, she was relieved to see it was just a thin, shallow cut. She had had plenty of cuts to know what a bad one looked like.

The man chained to the wall was watching her intently, following every move she made. She figured he was the leader of the group since the one-armed creature had been addressing him and not the others. It also seemed the other men looked to him as well, and she remembered him being next to the man in the shuttle bay who was killed.

She needed to know if she could trust him enough to help them. If not, she didn't know what they would do. She sent up a silent prayer she was making the right choice. Calling out softly, she motioned Star and Jo to come into the room.

"Star, see if you can stop the bleeding and make sure it isn't too bad. Jo, see if you can figure out how to open the locking devices on the chains, but don't unlock them until I ask you to," River said as she turned toward the man who had growled at her.