

Excerpt

Star's Storm

Lords of Kassis book 2

By S. E. Smith

Star stared up at the glittering stars as a sense of peace settled over her. She was surprised. She thought dying would hurt but she didn't feel any pain at all anymore.

Her body was no longer trembling from the cold that had engulfed it only moments earlier. Now, she couldn't feel the shivers raging through her tiny body. She could hear her sister's tearful voice begging her to hang on. She could hear her best friend and surrogate sister, River, saying something in the background but none of it mattered any more. All that mattered was the sense of peace that was settling over her.

She stared up at the two moons in the dark sky. She frowned slightly. Why were there two of them? The Earth only had one moon. Her mind fought sluggishly to remember.

Oh yeah, Star remembered vaguely. I'm not on Earth anymore. I'm on Kassis.

The frown cleared only to be replaced with a feeling of deep sorrow as a name whispered across her mind... *Jazin*. The thought of leaving him caused a sharp pain to blossom inside her that had nothing to do with the injuries to her small body. A single tear

escaped the corner of her eye and ran down until it fell into the soft blond hair fanning out around her.

She heard her sister's anguished cry as darkness descended around her. Star felt her heart stutter as though it was actually breaking for the love she was leaving behind. As if from a great distance, she faintly heard Jo's cry echo quietly through the night as her eyes slowly drifted closed.

"No! Damn it, Star!" Jo choked out as she desperately tried to stem the blood flowing from the wound to her little sister's side. "You hang on! You are a fighter! You will not give in, damn you! You will not leave me here alone!"

"Let me take her." A hissing voice suddenly whispered out of the darkness of the night. "She must be taken to medical immediately."

Jo turned her head to stare at the huge creature burying its sharp claws into the stone pillar she and Star was perched on. Madas Tal Mod was the mate of the Leader of the Tearnats, a reptilian alien species that had kidnapped her and Star. Jo gazed at the creature for a moment before she glanced down at her sister's pale, peaceful face. She looked back up at Madas with pleading eyes. Her voice, thick with tears, was barely above a whisper.

"Please, you have to help her," Jo begged, looking into the black eyes of the creature.

"Let me take her. She will survive," Madas Tal Mod replied in a soft hissing voice. "It is not time for the little warrior to leave our world yet."

Jo watched helplessly as Madas gently picked up Star's limp body and cradled it tightly against her. Madas used her powerful back legs and tail to help grip the pillar as she climbed back down it. She refused to believe the Gods would call this little warrior home to their world. There were still too many dangers that needed to be dealt with and the strength and heart of this tiny warrior from another world was still needed.

Madas jumped that last few feet to the ground making sure she cushioned the body held in her arms. She didn't wait to see if the other warrior followed. There wasn't enough time. Already she could hear the little warrior's heart struggle to beat. She moved rapidly through the dark gardens situated between the four Houses of Kassis. The battle tonight had taken quite a few lives, both enemy and allied. Madas was determined that the one in her arms would not be another.

She burst into the South House, hissing out for directions to medical. She was just about to turn when a savage roar echoed through the corridor leading from the gardens into the main hallway. Wild eyes met hers briefly before they dropped to the precious body in her arms.

"She needs help immediately," Madas said. "Lead, I will carry her. It is best not to move her any more than necessary. I hear her heart struggling."

Jazin stared grimly at the large Tearnat. Every fiber in him wanted to rip the small body out of her arms and into his but he knew she was right. Forcing

himself to turn away, he roared for everyone to clear a path and took off at a run for the medical unit shouting into his link that he needed the healers to be prepared stat. He burst through the door just a millisecond before Madas. He watched as the healers, who had been waiting, quickly instructed Madas to lower Star's small figure onto the regenerative bed before they disappeared through another set of doors. He moved to follow them. He was stopped by Madas' large, claw-shaped hand that was gripping his forearm tightly.

Jazin swung around pulling his laser sword. "Let them care for her," the soft voice hissed in compassion. "You will only be in their way. Give them time to stabilize her before you go. Give yourself time to calm so you can be strong for her," Madas said looking down into Jazin's eyes.

Jazin swallowed several times trying to get control of his rage and fear. His eyes shifted to the doors and back to the huge Tearnat holding him. He knew she was right. He would not be of use to Star in the condition he was in. He would only get in the way. But... his eyes went back to the door.

"I cannot lose her," he said harshly.

"It is not her time yet," Madas said confidently. "Your little warrior has much to do still. This is simply a test by the Gods to see if she has the strength needed to face the battles still yet to come. She is strong. She will not fail such a simple challenge. Believe in her strength and you will find she is truly as much a warrior as you are. She will be a mate who

can stand by your side, not in your shadow," Madas quietly hissed out.

Jazin looked at Madas and slowly lowered his blade. "I can only pray that you are right," he replied. "But, know this. If she survives, I will never let her be exposed to danger again. I will protect her and care for her even if I have to lock her away to do so. Never again will I let anyone hurt her. On this I swear," Jazin declared passionately.

Madas chuckled as she watched the fierce determination settle onto Jazin Ja Kel Coradon's face. "Be careful what you say, Lord Jazin. There are some forces in the universe you cannot control. And some of them come in very small packages."