

Excerpt

Choosing Riley

Sarafin Warriors book 1

by S. E. Smith

“Choose,” the disembodied voice said.

Choose? Choose what? Riley thought, looking around her in disbelief at the rock walls. *Choose to get the fuck out of this crazy nightmare? Hell, yeah. Choose to kill the bastards who put me in this miserable spot? Oh, hell yeah. Choose...*

Riley jerked when she felt the ice-cold claw poke her in the back for the third time. Looking around, she followed the arm of the creature standing next to her as it pointed down over the edge of a small platform. She really was trying for that nice stage of being totally zoned out, but the damn creatures who kidnapped her twenty days before had an annoying habit of bringing her back to the unfortunate situation she was in.

“Choose,” the nearly eight-foot-tall stick figure said again, this time losing some of the disembodied tone.

Riley couldn't help the little smirk that lifted the corner of her mouth. She really couldn't. After the first week of captivity, she had moved from being mind-numbingly terrified to just downright pissed off at life. She figured if she was going to die, she might as well do what she did best: piss everyone off around her. That was what had gotten her into this

situation in the first place—her big mouth and smart-ass attitude.

Okay, maybe she shouldn't have pissed off her boss by telling him what he could do with his wandering hands when he grabbed her ass for the third time that day. Better yet, she shouldn't have broken his nose, his hand, and more than likely his nuts since he had been screaming more than an octave or two higher than a soprano. Yeah, that probably wasn't the smartest thing to do. Especially since his daddy happened to be the local sheriff. She was a bail bondsman, for heaven's sake. Any freaking idiot should have known better than to mess with her. Her line of work required she know a certain amount of self-defense.

God, she thought. I really should have never taken that job.

When her boss swore she would never leave town alive after she beat the shit out of him, she figured it was time to get the hell out of Righteous, New Mexico. Of course, the fact her boss owned the local bail bond company and had a somewhat lucrative business going with his daddy should have been her first warning that something wasn't right, she'd thought as she grabbed her purse and a large manila folder full of incriminating evidence against both of them. Finding out that daddy and junior were also running illegal weapons and drugs were definitely her second and third warnings.

Of course, the little tidbit of information she had found that morning about the dead guy buried under

the storage unit had been the real reason she figured she had made a bad mistake. That information was now safely tucked into the manila folder stuffed in her purse, and it had gone along with her as she left the small town she had been living in for the past six months as fast as her old Ford could drive.

She actually might have had a chance to live a little longer if a series of life's usual little hiccups hadn't been blessed upon her. Again. Of course, if the car had been further than one push to the nearest junkyard it would have helped her great nonexistent getaway plans. It would have been better yet if the damn car hadn't broken down just over the state line on the outskirts of the desert. She knew she should have purchased a new one last month, but she was such a tightwad she wanted to get every last mile out of it. And boy, did she!

Oh, and she couldn't forget her best idea yet—getting in a truck with a guy who had more piercings and tattoos than a model for *Prick Magazine* instead of walking the three miles to the bar she had seen a roadside sign for.

No, I had to get my fat— Riley sighed. *No, my maturely figured ass into the scum-bucket's truck.*

Riley sighed again. *I really, really should have taken those anger management classes like my sainted sister, Tina, said I needed.*

Unable to keep the grin off her face, Riley thought back to the look on the pierced, tattooed guy's face when she shot him the bird as he drove off, leaving

her in the middle of that godforsaken hell's beach just as it was getting dark.

Give him a fucking blow job if I wanted a ride out of the desert, Riley thought savagely. *Not bloody likely.*

She showed him! As soon as he pulled over to the side of the road, she had been out of the truck cussing him up one side and down the other. Her Grandma Pearl would have been proud of her. She remembered every cuss word her grandmother ever said and a few her grandma probably didn't even know. Of course, he had left her mature ass in the middle of nowhere.

Riley thought she was a goner until she had seen all those little lights coming toward her. How the hell was she supposed to know the fucking aliens had messed up where Area 51 was and ended up in Nowhere, Arizona? Riley had thought she was about to be rescued by a dwarf biker gang riding dirt bikes, not some alien spaceship out for a Monday night cruise for well-endowed women.

"Choose!" the tall creature growled out loudly.

Riley cleared her throat before turning to the stick-figured alien dwarfing her. "Choose what?" She asked, unable to hold back the slightly crazed giggle that had been threatening to escape her.

She giggled again at finally making the creature's blank face break into a frustrated scowl. The creature slowly fisted its clawed hands before its shoulders actually drooped.

"Choose a male," Antrox 785 said wearily.

Riley raised her perfectly arched eyebrows at the creature before turning to look at the selection of men

who had been paraded in while she had been reflecting on how her attitude *might* have played a part in her present predicament. She had been watching haphazardly as a different female—at least she thought they were female—had been led to stand where she was now.

She was told—in a rather rude manner if you asked her—that she was being given the last choice because of her being so disagreeable, unpleasant, and downright ugly. She had, of course, taken it all in stride until the last comment and had to be restrained again after she'd punched the stickman guarding her in what she hoped was his balls. Whatever the creatures had under their tunics, it laid the guy out cold.

Now, she was staring at one eight-foot-tall glob of green, oozing snot, something resembling a two-foot, two-headed lizard, and three six-foot-four or more drop-dead gorgeous hunks. Riley's eyes widened. If it wasn't for the fact that she was thirstier than hell, so she didn't have the capacity to produce enough spit, she would have sworn she was drooling.

She could tell by their build and their eyes and maybe the markings on their arms, chest, and shoulders, oh and did she mention their sharp teeth as they growled at the stick-alien, that they weren't human, but man-oh-man did they look yummy! Riley thought dreamily for a moment before perking up again.

“What happens to the males that aren’t chosen?” Riley asked curiously, never taking her eyes off the three males.

“They will be used as food,” Antrox said with a frown. “Choose! All mated males will be kept to work in the mines. Mated males are easier to control as they are protective of their female. Now choose your male!”

“What if I don’t want to choose a male?” Riley asked sarcastically as she turned to face the tall creature next to her. “What if I don’t *feel* like choosing a male? What if I don’t even *like* males?” Riley added.

Right at that moment, she honestly believed she might not ever like any male ever again! After all, it was men who had started this whole hateful series of events starting with her no-good, dim-witted boss. Now, this overgrown toothpick expected her to just pick one of the bastards and mate with him?

That is so seriously not going to happen. Restraints or not, I will beat the shit out of any guy who tries to mate with me, she thought fiercely.

She wasn’t going to mate with any alien, no matter how cute they looked. She had watched enough science fiction movies to cure her of ever wanting any alien booty! What if those things decided to do some body snatching or exploding out of her? A shudder went through Riley at the thought.

Antrox 785 looked back and forth between Riley and the men on the platform below him with a confused expression on his face. “Why would you not want to choose a male? You are female! All of our

data points to you being the weaker of your species and in need of a male for protection." Antrox looked from the males back to Riley again. "Why would you not like males?"

Riley let loose a slightly hysterical laugh. Okay, maybe she was still just a little terrified. "Why don't I like males? Now, that is the sixty-four-thousand-dollar question, isn't it? How about we go get a bottle or two of your strongest booze, get good and drunk, and I'll tell you why I don't like males anymore!" Riley's voice was growing louder with each word. "Let's start with you!"

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Vox looked up in surprise as he heard a husky feminine voice shouting. He growled low as he caught his first sight of the buxom female who had turned toward the Antrox male. He wanted her. He didn't understand why, but he wanted her—right now. His body instantly responded to her voice. He felt the primitive need to mate. To possess.

When he saw the face and body that went with the voice, it took everything in him not to struggle against the restraints holding him captive. She was curvy, with large breasts, a small waist, and hips that made his mouth water at the thought of holding on to them. Her hair was the color of their sun and flowed in thick waves down her back almost to her lush, rounded ass.

She is built for loving, he thought in awe as he watched her.

She was wearing a light pink top that molded to her lush curves. He couldn't see what she looked like below her waist, but he could imagine it. He wanted to see her eyes. He knew they would be flashing with fire, and he wanted that fire turned on him. He snarled as another guard joined in using the stunning rods to force him back away from the edge of the platform.

He jerked in surprise, and his eyes widened as the female, who was tiny compared to the larger male, started jabbing the Antrox male in his chest and yelling at him. Vox snarled again when one of the guards pushed him back harder with one of the long rods. He ignored the sting from the shock and focused on the female's hands, which were shackled in front of her.

Why would the Antrox shackle a female? Females were weak and to be protected. Vox had never heard of an Antrox male using shackles on one before. He listened in disbelief as the normally impassive species roared out in a loud, aggravated voice at the female.

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"CHOOSE! Now, female, or I will choose for you!" Antrox 785 roared out.

He didn't know what else to do. He was in charge of the mining facility. It was not his job to question who was brought to the mines. His job was to match a female with a male to ensure the males would be more docile. He had never encountered a hostile female before and did not know how to handle a

female like the one poking her sharp nails into his chest.

Riley looked at the stickman standing in front of her and let out a sniff of indignation. "Well! There is no reason for you to get so uptight!" She said, turning her back to him and tossing her heavy mane of blond hair over her shoulder. "I choose all of them," she said with an exaggerated sigh.

"What?" Antrox 785 practically shouted.

Riley turned to look at him and rolled her big, baby blue eyes. "I said, I will take all of them," she repeated slowly with a slight shake of her head showing she thought he was a dumbass.

"But...but..." Antrox 785 stuttered in confusion. He looked down at the five men looking up at him and then back at the female. "No, you must choose one."

"No, I don't have to choose just one. I choose all five," Riley said stubbornly. "Five or nothing!" She added with another determined shake to her heavy mane of hair.

"How can you have five males?" Antrox 785 asked in frustration. "All other females choose just one."

"Well, I am not all other females. I am Riley St. Claire from Denver, Colorado, and I choose five," Riley said with a stubborn tilt to her chin. "If you have a problem with that you can just get over it. I've made up my mind, so there," she added with a raised eyebrow daring him to tell her no.

She would have crossed her arms to show she meant business if they hadn't been tied together.

Since she couldn't do that, she put her nose as high as it would go in the air and gave her best "that's my final answer" look. She even thrust one hip out to show she could not be intimidated into changing her mind. If she learned one thing while being a bail bondsman, it was that body language could be a very effective weapon.

Antrox 785 ground his gums together in frustration. Throwing up a hand to the guards below him, he signaled for them to take all the men to the cavern assigned to the female. With a jerk of his head, he motioned for the two guards standing back behind Riley to come forward.

"Take her to her living quarters where her mates are and bring me the trader who brought the female here," Antrox 785 said harshly.

One of the guards looked cautiously from Riley to Antrox 785 before replying. "The trader has already left, 785," Antrox 921 said.

Antrox 785 looked down at Riley, who was baring her teeth at him and snapping them together. He took a step away, curling his clawed fingers into the palm of his green hands. With a nod of his head, he watched as the two guards escorted Riley out of the choosing room. Antrox 785 had already decided if it had not been for the law preventing an Antrox from harming a female—any female—he would have gleefully fed the female to the pactors, the large creatures they used to pull the ore out of the mines as food. Antrox 785 made a note to himself that the next

time the trader came to the mines, he would not be leaving.