



Kingdom's Swords

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*The Marines were told it was a simple peasant rebellion–
but the mission proved to be far deadlier. . . .*

Gunny Charlie Bass isn't the only Marine mystified by the order sending the entire 34th to put down a few seditious serfs on planet Kingdom. Rumors swirl of a deadly alien invasion. But few believe that such sentient beings exist. Except Gunny Bass and the Marines of the 3rd platoon, who once fought enemy aliens called Skinks—fierce, fanatical fighters with hideous weapons who attack for no other reason but to kill.

Then, while slogging through Kingdom's fetid swamps, the Marines are attacked by awesome unseen weapons that could destroy half a platoon with one shot. Clearly they are facing no normal enemy. And if their adversaries are Skinks, one FIST isn't enough. Third platoon's orders are to penetrate deeper into the bloody jungle hell—and find out what happens when a few good men bite the bullet. . . .

Kingdom's Swords Details

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Axel says

Once again, I could've lived without the skink PoV chapters, didn't really add any value to me...

Scott James says

I'll admit, with this 7th book in the series I nearly jumped ship. the second part of what I now know to be a tightly written 4 book arc, Kingdom's Swords finally gets into the messy stuff, as the 34th bogs down in some of the worst action they've ever seen.

Part of why I like this series is the authenticity of the characters and their military lives. but for the first time, the book felt like just another iteration of a formula, and there's only so many times I can read the same book before getting tired of it.

Luckily, the book rights itself before the end, and I purchased the next volume mere seconds after finishing this one.

Brian Turner says

Another good entry in the Starfist series.

Lew Conorado is called back to earth to face court martial for his part in the incident on Avionia.

Elsewhere, the Skinks that 34th FIST encountered previously start attacking a planet that is run along religious lines.

As usual, any non-Marine that is encountered is generally a self-centred, useless idiot. This book ramps that up with the various religious groups seeing the Marines a bunch of heathens (but secretly using that to hold on to their own power base by keeping the populace ill informed of anything).

Plenty of action, and a well established central group of characters makes it a good read, but the "Marines vs everyone else" approach makes it drag in places. Can be read standalone without needing to know the details from the other books but it does benefit if you have.

David Dail says

I can't put this series down. I bought the first 5 books at thanksgiving and received some for christmas and ordered others online and they have been pretty much my exclusive reading material since then. A must read for any fan of military fiction science or otherwise.

I.F. Adams says

Each one in the series is a bit better than previous ones. Definitely not high literature but starting to crawl its way out of forgettable action-pulp (which to be clear, I love that category.... it is what it is however)

Per Gunnar says

As usual David Sherman's books in the Starfist series are solid books making for some good reading. The marine grunt theme of these books is not really my favorite subject but I have nevertheless found the Starfist series quite enjoyable. I like the way Sherman & Cragg writes and you cannot say anything else than that these books are fairly action-filled. This book in the series is no exception to that.

The official book blurb above actually only speaks of a part of the events in the book. Sure it is the main plot but a good chunk of the book is also spent on a separate chain of events resulting from the bitch scientist from the 5th book in the series filing complaints against Captain Conorado. Another sub-plot involves the kidnapping of Captain Conorado's wife although this is more of a filler than anything else in my mind. Then there are some complications in the dear captain's love life which spans the two sub plots.

I was afraid that the diversion from the main plot, were Captain Conorado gets dragged before a court, would be a nonsense-filled bore and there are indeed some of that silly lawyer and politics nonsense but there are also some unexpected events that Captain Conorado gets dragged into which were quite fun to read. Needless to say it involves Captain Conorado doing some "marine stuff". I am a wee bit disappointed that the bitch didn't get a good public spanking in court but the end was at least satisfactory.

The main plot revolves around the FIST's deployment to a peasant world which happens to be the next planet where the aggressive aliens from the 4th book have decided to make another try. The deployment is, of course, bungled up by the usual chain of incompetent bureaucrats and pencil pushers so the marines not only not do know what they are up against but also deploy with totally inadequate equipment. Just for fun the planet is populated by religious fanatics that, despite the fact that they called for help in the first place, are less than helpful.

In general the book is good reading. A fair amount of action both in the main plot and the sub plots. It is as well written as the previous books. However it has a certain amount of "deja vue" feeling over it. Again the marines go in without knowing what awaits them and, most importantly, without the proper equipment to do the job. Been there, seen that, done that. This entire idea of the aliens being kept a secret, even from the people that really need to know, is just annoyingly stupid.

So the bottom line for me is that it is a good book but not fantastic.

Al Datum says

In this book, we see the marines of the 34th FIST at their best. They are sent to a swamp planet where they encounter the Skinks, an alien intelligence that no one believes exists. The Skinks are decidedly hostile, and combat breaks out, with some excellent military action.

The thing that becomes obvious in this book, and carries over to future books featuring the Skinks, is that the authors were both in Vietnam. The Skinks are very obviously the North Vietnamese (down to their cultural practices, how Skink women fit into the society...there is even a tea ceremony that is a virtual photocopy of what you'd see in some Asian cultures here on earth).

It's really easy (and I mean REALLY easy) to feel that you're reading a book that takes place during the Vietnam War. And that's not bad. Sherman and Cragg lived it, and they know what it looks like. They bring their stories to life by inserting their own experiences in this way.

If you like military sci-fi, and especially if you're okay with the stories being an off-world retelling of the Vietnam War, pick up this book. Read the whole series in order, in fact. The books are a fun way to pass an afternoon on the beach or sitting in your favorite backyard hammock.
