

This is the final treatment for Kris Longknife – Defiant, used for the sales meeting.

Lieutenant Kris Longknife is having the time of her life. She has her first command. It's a tiny Fast Patrol boat, but it's all hers. And she and her pet computer have worked out a plan that will allow these mosquito boats to blow even a mighty battleship out of space.

And the first time they test it – it works!

It just can't get any better. Right up to the time Kris docks ... and the MP's march on board, relieve her of command and take her off in cuffs!

Only next morning does Kris find out that her Father, the Prime Minister, failed a vote of confidence, and the new opposition government is using the charge of Misappropriation of Government Property against Kris as a major issue of the campaign.

Kris arrives home to discover that Mother and Father have moved back in with her! And Father expects her to resign her commission to work for his reelection campaign. And Mother is taking over the nice quiet wedding Kris had been offering her two best friends, Tom and Penny and turning it into a social circus.

Before Kris can go ballistic, Grampa Ray, otherwise known as King Raymond I calls and asks Kris for a favor.

An old war buddy of his is dying. Normally he'd drop everything and go to her side, but things are out of hand at the moment and will Kris go in his stead? Oh, and could she also help persuade the people of Hikila to come into United Sentients? Preferably without blowing up their space station. She agrees; it's her best chance to get out of the house.

On Hikila, the People are trying to restore the lost Pacific Island culture of old Earth. To fit in, Kris agrees to Dance the Spring Moon up with Oholo, the dying queen's great-granddaughter. Only then does Kris discover the dress uniform for that is a few flowers and full body tattoos. Oops.

Kris does fine with the flowers, and her maid has a full set of body paints, so Kris does manage to pull the dance off. And while most of the island is involved in a later dance, she and Jack stumble on someone busy rigging the crucial Coronation Stone with explosives. They put an end to that ... and get caught by the late arriving security crew who arrest them for the crime they just stopped.

Princess Oholo sets things right, but this shows that Hikila needs to resolve the internal conflict between the Islanders and the refugees who have converted the mainland into a growing industrial society. Kris accompanies Oholo to the mainland and keeps a low

profile while the locals start to reorganize their government.

So Kris and Jack are outside when terrorists take over the Constitutional Convention and demand the government they want.

Kris returns to the destroyer that brought her to Hikila intent on mounting a rescue mission, and runs smack into Commander Sandy Santiago, its skipper. One of “those” Santiagos who have been at the Longknives’ elbows through thick and thin, this one does not intend to provide any more good troopers to die for the Longknife legend. Before she lets Kris ask for volunteers, Sandy advises all hands not to volunteer. Kris gets Jack. Penny insists on helping since Tom is one of the hostages. Abby the maid volunteers! And six marines step forward. Maybe.

The terrorists have set up a radar to spot a drop mission coming in and have rockets to shoot them down. Kris’ solution to this is to drop not in standard armor, but in Spidersilk body stockings. Even the Marine sergeant is a bit pale at going into battle in underwear!

Still, they follow Kris ... and at the crucial point in the rescue, Sandy leads a Marine/Navy team that covers Kris. Sandy wasn’t averse to the rescue, she just wanted to see if Kris would lead from the front, or hide in the rear.

Kris has found her Santiago.

The hostages are rescued. The Queen dies as a new government is agreed upon that will respect both the majority and minority ... and the vote to approve the new Constitution will also cover going into United Sentients.

Kris returns to Wardhaven feeling like a job well done.

To discover that her friends from Olympia have stepped up to defend her from the charges and get them dropped.

And Mother has totally taken over Tom and Penny’s wedding. Kris manages to get most of what Penny really wants out of Mother ... at the cost of letting Mother chose the Brides Maids’ dresses. Ugh.

The wedding goes off smoothly. But the planned 6:00 pm burning of the Brides Maids’ dresses is canceled when six battleships pop into Wardhaven space and demand the planet’s surrender.

The temporary government, as a show of force, sent the entire fleet to a demonstration at Boynton. Now Wardhaven is defenseless. The only ships in system are Santiago’s destroyer that took Kris to Hikila, the old one that leads the Fast Patrol Boat squadron ... and twelve fast patrol boats that are up for sale and were closed down with no care for their systems.

Kris shows up for a Patrol Boat Squadron meeting to discover that they've been ordered to stand down. The temporary government is having a hard time figuring out how to react to the battleships and in the mean time, no one in the Navy is to look mean.

Kris faces her friends and shipmates no longer charged, but still relieved of command. Still, she chooses action. "By right of blood. By right of title. By right of name. I, Princess Kris Longknife, am assuming command of this squadron."

While the boat skippers and the squadron commodore are struggling to react, Santiago bustles in, and proceeds to support Kris. "We're going to have to fight, and wouldn't you rather hide behind the legal fiction of her Princesshood than sit on your thumbs?"

For the next four days, while the battleships close, Kris and her tiny band beg, steal, recruit and borrow anything that might improve the odds. Yachts are commandeered and volunteered to have target drones welded to their snouts so they can fake it as battleships and cruisers. Army stores are rifled to equip system runabouts and container ships as missile boats. Tugs are drafted for search and rescue ... and maybe for more.

And volunteers step forward for this suicide mission. First come reservists and merchant sailors, then Coast Guard Reservists and salvage crews. Finally, any club or family that knows how to survive in space and can push a small boat around the system are standing in line to fight for Wardhaven's freedom.

Kris pulls all kinds of surprises out of her hat, and quite a few hats that people throw in the ring. Still, the enemy battleships are more than just warships, they are planet killers with names like *Ravager* and *Avenger* and have the power and weapons to bombard Wardhaven back into the Stone age.

When the ships set sail for battle, Tommy put a song on the Battle net. When they charge the battleships, it's to Heather Alexander's "The March of Cambreadth." "How Many of Them Can We Make Die!" echoes through the fighting ships.

They kill the battleships, but the cost is appalling.

Kris finds herself attending funerals and being eaten alive by grief. Jack drags her out for a bite of lunch ... and dumps her at a table with Grampas Ray and Trouble, and Sandy. Kris finds out how people of action survive actions that don't go nearly as well as planned. And when General Mac McMorrison drops by to report that, with Kris's dad is winning reelection, he'll be taking back over Wardhaven's General Staff, Kris is ready to chose her own punishment for still being among the living.

She asks to lead the training command that will be teaching other planets how to get the most out of their new, improved Fast Patrol Boats.

Kris finishes "Defiant" no longer the little girl, junior officer, hoping the navy can find some place for her. Now she's ready to take her place beside the legendary Longknives. And in the troubled times ahead, human space is going to need a whole lot of the stuff from which legends are made.