

## Treatment,

### Kris Longknife – Relieved of Command.

Lt. Kris Longknife is having the time of her life. She's commanding her own tiny ship. She's leading PF-109 and three others like it in an attack on a battleship, using everything Kris and the boat ... and Nelly ... can come up with – and winning! As rockets smash into the target, the bridge crew cheer. The other two divisions failed to land a blow on the battleship. Kris has blown it to bits.

Or would have, if it was a real ship. Still, practice missiles have cut through a remote controlled target. The Commodore will be buying the beer and the crew can be justly proud of their work and their young skipper. Heading back to dock, Kris and her XO, Tommy Lien discuss their tactics, the need for an intel type to man the station Tommy's added to the bridge ... and the coming wedding. Tommy and Penny want a June wedding. Kris has promised them the garden at Nuu House, the same spot where Great Grampa Ray and Great Gramma Rita wed those 80+ years ago.

It can't get better than this. So, of course, it gets worse!

They dock, open the air lock ... and M.P.'s march aboard, relieve Kris of command, arrest and handcuff her and march her off the boat to the flash and click of waiting news cameras. The head M. P. refuses to tell Kris the charges.

Next morning, Harvey, the family driver, and Jack bail Kris out. Jack doesn't just wave his badge, but does it the slow, old fashion way. Kris soon finds out why. While Kris was cheering her test success, her father's government failed a vote of confidence. The opposition moved to form a new government and called for new elections. Someone in the temporary government immediately issued an arrest warrant accusing Kris of Misappropriation of Government funds on Olympia.

It couldn't get much worse, Kris thinks. Wrong.

Jack was ordered to the security detail of the new Prime Minister's daughter. He declined and is now on terminal leave until the elections. That's bad. Worse is waiting at Nuu House.

Father and Mother have moved back in. Kris and Father have an immediate collision over the extent to which the other is not supporting their career goals. This expanding blowup is only briefly interrupted as Kris discovers Mother has hijacked Penny and Tommy's wedding and is intent on turning it into The Social Event of the season!

And then Kris makes things worse.

She's been digging around and discovered that Grampa Al does indeed own quite a bit of slum property. He hasn't answered her friendly notes. Rather than live in Nuu House with Mom and Dad, Kris would rather move into a slum apartment. This proposal does not go down at all well with Father, a politician in the middle of the political fight of his life. Kris marches out to find her own place, Abby right behind her "Hon, you gonna move into my old hood, you better have

someone who knows the place watching your back.” Jack, claiming nothing better to do, tags along.

Before Kris actually signs for a lease, she and Jack are requested and required to present themselves to King Raymond soonest.

Grampa Ray tells Kris an old friend of his from the Iteeche wars is dying. Queen La’ha’lona is the Chief of State for the planet Four Winds of Paradise. He would like to be at her deathbed, her funeral, and it would cement Four Winds into the alliance if he were to present the crown to her successor Princess La’ha’sonta. He can’t leave. He wants Princess Khristine to go in his place. Kris accepts, and is rushed straight to the port, Abby following with 15 steamer trunks.

The rush comes from the opposition party’s effort to show it’s tough in foreign policy. It’s sending the entire fleet to support Yukon which is being threatened by Slocum’s Jackpot and its allies ... including Greenfeld.

What it means just now is that the Destroyer *Halsey* has to be away from the pier on royal business before it gets dragged along on the usual business. Since Commander Sandy Santiago commands, King Ray can expect full cooperation. Sandy does jump to obey Ray, but her greetings to Kris is anything but warm. Sandy views the Longknives as the curse of her family. Being close to them is an easy way to an early grave. She lets Kris know in no uncertain terms that if any chestnuts end up in the fire this time, Kris can dig them out herself. There will be no Santiago riding to this Longknife’s rescue.

Four Winds truly is a paradise. Gentle trade winds blow constantly. The sun is warm, the ocean fruitful and inviting. Kris is greeted with happy smiles and flowers, leaving Abby to observe, “No snake in this paradise.” Four Winds is a haven for the islanders of old Earth as they try to rebuild their ancient culture. Of course, there has been a long break between the disappearance of the culture on Earth and its reestablishment here, so they must rely on books like Margaret Meade’s “Coming of Age in Samoa” and other works of fiction. Just what their culture should be, is frequently the subject of heated debate, occasionally settled by formal battles.

Kris is quickly taken to Queen La’ha’lona’s sick bed and introduced to Princess La’ha’sonta.

Kris has arrived just in time for the Festival of the Spring Moon. The dress code is strictly observed. An unmarried young woman (at 23, Kris is an old maid) wears a few flowers, but mainly her white and yellow tattoos. Married women wear more flowers, have usually covered over their girlish tattoos with new ones of red, black, blue or green, and some even wear sarongs. Abby figures Kris can get away with body paint; Kris insists on the Spider-silk body armor as the foundation for the night’s wear. (Jack, as an unmarried male, is wearing a gourd, so Kris gets to enjoy herself too.) (And Ellen insists I mention he’s doing his body paint over armor also)

Kris decides that being damn near naked isn’t so bad when everyone else is. Until she discovers that everyone else isn’t. A small knot of men and women in very conservative formal dress or dresses identify the representatives of the Mainlanders or, as the islanders call them, the Big Island. Here is a problem Grampa Ray forgot to mention. Refugees from the Iteeche wars settled on the mainland. It was supposed to be temporary, but they quickly put down roots as

they built a modern industrial society that has grown to a billion people. Some of the quick decisions made at the time of their landing are starting to pinch. They have no citizenship on Four Winds, thus no vote. Their growing economy provides the taxes that support the islanders in comfort as well as provides for the roads, health, schools and other civic needs of the mainland, but tax levels and what civic needs get met are decided by the assembly of tribal elders from the islands. This is not working as well as it once did. “No taxation without representation” is a growing mantra on the mainland, especially if taxes must be increased to pay for defense programs or for joining King Raymond’s United Sentients. Kris gets an earful.

And meets Hank Peterwald the XIII. He has a few nasty comments to make. It’s clear he’s decided the Longknives are the worse thing to happen to the universe since the invention of the Black Hole.

As Kris walks away from that, Nelly observes that the security cameras in the sacred Long House and Cave are showing the same thing over and over. The guards haven’t noticed yet, but Kris slips away to investigate, changing her body paint to flat black (and if you have to ask where she pulls her gun from, you’re not thinking enough)

Kris interrupts two figures in black breaking into a protected area containing a simple wicker chair. When challenged, they fire shots, then smoke grenades, and flee. Kris pursues, and runs into Jack in the dark, ending the chase. Guards arrive late, and with mistaken ideas. Kris and Jack are paraded back upstairs as potential felons (“2 planets down, only 598 more to go” Kris observes) until Princess La’ha’sonta straightens things out. The threatened chair is the throne critical to the coronation. No chair, no crowning, no new queen.

Next morning, Kris accompanies Queen La’ha’luna to a blessing of the fish and is let into more of what the old woman would want for her people, and of what she fears is headed their way. She asks Kris to help her granddaughter make the changes that will have to be made. Kris can’t help but notice the canoe’s helmsman, Tono, the grandson she kept bumping into last night. As son, he will inherit nothing but an obligation to keep fish on the royal table and some ceremonial duties. Once the queen is safely back among her nurses, he invites Kris out for a real sail and makes his own offer. Stay with him for a couple of years, enjoy the sun and sea, help his sister when she needs it but enjoy most of the moments with him. It’s a wide sky, a big ocean out here. Why follow any time but the rising and setting of the sun? He lives that way, why not her?

Kris tries that on for a few days while Queen La’ha’luna negotiates with her own counselors and wise women. They finally agree to have Princess La’ha’sonta visit the Big Island, meet with the city leaders and together with them, they will conclude a new relationship between the islanders and the refugees.

Kris invites Tono to join her in La’ha’sonta’s entourage. He has no taste for that and sails out to fish.

The trip starts well. Several ports are ready to empower their negotiators. But the largest, Port Brisbie, is sharply divided. Princess La’ha’sonta, the islander’s elders and most of the Big Island representatives meet there to haggle with Port Brisbie’s city council on what it will take to get some reps from there.

And the trap is snapped shut.

Nelly spots a disturbance and Kris and Jack trot out to investigate. That puts them on the outside when shots are fired in the city council and the doors snap shut. Kris does an about face, but Jack drags her backwards as the terrorists expand their perimeter quickly, seizing first Government Center, then City Center. Kris wants to fight the take over. Jack insists they get out. “You can do more with a dozen marines at your back than you can with just me.”

Kris takes the next lift to the *Halsey*. Sandy meets her with a situation map and they begin trying to figure out what’s happening. It doesn’t get any easier. Masked gunman bring out one of Queen La’ha’lona’s oldest advisors and one of the pro-compromise city reps – and shoot them. They will shoot two reps every six hours until it’s agreed that there should be one man, one vote rule. That sounds like a normal position, but under it, the islanders become a tiny minority on their own planet. Not even the most extreme Big Island types had suggested that.

They also say the princess will not be the last hostage shot so someone had better decide fast.

“I’ve got to take the marines down there fast,” Kris said. “There’s no choice.”

“You’re walking into an ambush. Hell, look at how they’re spreading out. You’d be running my marines into a dozen ambushes before they got to Government Center.” Sandy shot back

Kris studied the 3D map forming in front of them. She moved her fingers down halls, zigging and zagging, here dodging a blocking group of riflemen, there brushing them aside. “Comm, is this all there are?” she asked.

“No, ma’am. These are just the ones that have communicated. Most are still moving. Some aren’t talking much. It’s not a solid picture yet.”

“At six, they kill two. At midnight, they kill two more,” Kris told Sandy. “They get those four. No more.”

At midnight, Kris drops with a still incomplete picture. It’s at 2 p.m. before Sandy gets the leak that tells where the main ambush is waiting for Kris. If she broadcasts it, the terrorists will know that Kris knows. If she doesn’t, she either is hanging Kris out to dry, or she has to lead a strike team down to save another Longknife. Sandy drops.

As Kris approaches where she would put the main point of resistance, Sandy steps out from behind a corner and asks “What took you so long?”

Kris, now reinforced is able to take the rest of the terrorists down.

During the siege, the relationship between Princess La’ha’sonta and a young scone of one of the industrial families has grown. He put his body between the terrorists and her. Now, she brings him back to her grandmother. As all the planet watches on media, Queen La’ha’lona flowerfests her granddaughter to the young man she loves. This will go a long way to beginning the merging of the two peoples. The queen doesn’t know where it will end, but dies hopeful.

Kris is there at Tona's side as the future queen and her consort guide the old queen's funeral canoe out into the strong currents that will take it to its final resting place. Kris is also there to set the flower crown upon Queen La'ha'sonta's head. A lot of walls are coming down.

And Tona pops the question. As a Longknife, Kris has access to money and industrial wealth. She could settle on the Big Island and help it and the islanders. With Tona at her side, they could be just as powerful a current for change as the Queen. Will Kris stay with him, learn to love a day in the sun as he learns to love a day's work in the offices and plants of industry?

The offer leaves Kris with a hard choice. Still, she has to clear her name on Wardhaven. Penny is near desperate to get back to Tommy. Kris boards the lift to the *Halsey* with many a glance back. Tona says he will wait for her, but not too long. Already, several young women from the Big Island are eyeing him.

Back home Kris finds the usual smoke of a campaign but not much warmth from the fire. While the charges against her are talked about daily in the media, there is no real interest in bringing her to trial. There has also been no real effort to talk to anyone from Olympia. Kris sets out to get her name back in the only court open to her. It's a dirty job, but she has to do it.

Meanwhile, Mother has seized complete control of Penny and Tom's wedding. The only thing that keeps Kris from begging the two of them to elope is that she can't get a word in edgewise to the silent worship in their mutual gaze. Resigned, Kris prepares to do her duty as Maid of Honor to Penny. But the dress! The long flowing train invites half of Wardhaven to trip over it. And the front. Well, Kris was better covered during her streetwalking gig on Turantic. What is Mother doing to her!

Despite all evidence to the contrary, the wedding goes off without a hitch. (That's Kris's opinion, not Mother's) But as the young priest tells Tommy he may kiss the bride, beepers start going off. Not for Kris. Not for Tommy. The PF's have been dismissed as an example of the old administration's wastefulness and powered down. Commander Sandy Santiago gets beeped by her XO. Six battleships just entered the system and are making straight for Wardhaven. They have ordered the government to surrender to Greenwald or face the destruction of all orbital factories and stations.

As the politicians around her discuss ways to gain political leverage from this situation, Kris puts her long train over her arm and heads for her room. Quickly, she changes into uniform. As she opens the door, there are Tommy and Penny, out of formal and white, back into uniform. They salute. "What are your orders?" Tommy asks.

"Ask the Commodore to have the squadron skippers on the *Cushing* in an hour. Have the crews prepare to get away from dock."

"We have no power," Tom pointed out.

"I know," Kris says.

Jack, still without badge and gun blocks for Kris as she, Tom and Penny head up the beanstalk as mobs head down. The temporary government can't form a policy. The Commodore greets Kris as she comes aboard the *Cushing*. He has no new orders. Kris faces her fellow captains, relieved

of command and indicted.

“By right of blood, by right of name, by right of title, I propose to take command of this squadron. Do any of you contest my right?”

And the door opens and Commander Sandy Santiago pushes past the Marine guards. “Have I missed anything important?” she asks as she pulls up a chair next to the Commodore.

“Only the gal here announcing she’s taking command of my squadron.”

“Good, then,” Sandy said, then turned to Kris. “So, Princess Longknife, how are we going to fight those bastards.”

They come up with a plan, and Sandy orders plasma sent from the *Halsey*’s reactors to jumpstart the cold reactors on the boats.

The battle is close run; several PF’s are blown to bits. The *Halsey* is left drifting in space with her captain near death. Tommy saves Kris’s life at the cost of his own. Penny is a widow before she is properly a bride. However, all six battleships are hammered to the point where armed yachts crewed by angry Wardhaven citizens are able to demand their surrenders.

The usual meeting with General Mac can’t serve for an ending for this story; too many people have died at Kris’s order. Jack will dig Kris out of her room at Nuu House and drive her to a quiet Navy bar to join Ray, Trouble and Mac as they watch the early returns from the election. This time, Kris will have to grow up and make her own assessment as to what she did and was it worth the cost paid in blood and tears. The others will affirm her not by anything they say or do, but simply by sharing the quiet and letting her into their thoughts on the world they’ve made and the price they’ve paid. This time, Kris will enter their world an equal.

## Treatment

### Kris Longknife – (A Very) Independent Command

With her father re-elected, Kris is given a command about as far from Wardhaven as the Prime Minister can arrange. Naval District 41 is tiny, just the planet Tobruk, and its last commander retired ... as a lieutenant.

As Kris wanders the space station that is her base, she begins to wonder if her first independent command is also a solitary command. The station is deserted!

All Kris has is Abby, Penny and Marine 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant Jack Montoya. Grampa Trouble helped Kris find the rules that let her draft her ex-security guard into the Marines and into her Chief of Security slot. Now Jack's found the newly minted rules that let any Chief of Security have a lot of say so if they serve under a Princess of the blood. "We've both been had," is all they can conclude.

Down on the planet, Kris finds that her spacers have disappeared into the colony's population and will not be given up. She can have the leavings of the drunk tank, the wild eyed kids who think a uniform is more fun than a regular job ... and some old times.

She's going to need those old timers cause tied up to the space station is a relic ... the cruiser *Patton*. She was hauled out here during the defense build up so the locals could see their defense taxes at work and feel that something was being done to protect them. The long list of down checks by the now gone contract crew raise serious doubts that this boat will ever leave the pier. But it's all Kris has to patrol several local jump points ... including the jump point that doesn't show up on any of the maps that were made when Grampa Ray had access to the Star Map of the Three in his head.

Come to think of it, that rock chip that Aunt Tru added to Nelly, and which Nelly has been working on is starting to give Kris dreams about star maps and other stuff ... and there isn't supposed to be several jump points where there are points now.

Naval District 41 is as far from Iteeche space as you can get. It's also off in a dead end corner so far as the Three were concerned. Is there a reason for this?

Can the old farts brigade of Tobruk get the *Patton* ready for space (it sounds more like they want it for a museum)? Can Kris do some snooping around this edged of the galaxy or will the Peterwalds come calling ... or something worse ... before she is ready? Stay tuned.