



## Rules of Conflict

*Kristine Smith*

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## **Rules of Conflict** Kristine Smith

For eighteen years, Captain Jani Kilian has been hiding from her bloody past. Now she faces trial for what she once did, what she knows now, and what she has become.

Eighteen years ago, she was saved by a radical--and illegal--medical procedure that added alien genetic material to her own. But her hybrid body is breaking down. And so is everything else.

Relations between the human and alien *idomeni* races are deteriorating as rapidly as Jani Kilian's augmentation. And Jani's reemergence has caused old wounds to reopen and new wounds to form. Perhaps it's time for a damaged soldier to stop fighting; to let the desperate architects of a vast and devouring conspiracy keep the truth well hidden; to let the universe and everyone in it go straight to Hell.

Perhaps not...

## **Rules of Conflict Details**

Date : Published September 5th 2000 by Voyager (first published 2000)

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Author : Kristine Smith

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## **From Reader Review Rules of Conflict for online ebook**

### **Ron Holmes says**

This is a good sequel, I can't wait to read book three. There are twists and turns and just a touch of sex. The character development is getting better.

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### **Celia says**

Not having read the first book in this series (the library doesn't have it) is making this tough going.

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Argh, I couldn't finish it. It was just too confusing, I was reading bits and pieces in between other books, and I couldn't keep track of the politics. I liked the writing well enough though - I'd probably check out the first if I could find it.

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### **Bill says**

Captain Jani Kilian's hybridization (body adjusting to alien genetic material) is killing her and the politics of an 18-year old military evacuation (gone bad) in the middle of an alien civil war has her the target of mutiny and homicide charges. Plenty of twists and turns; a case of the sequel better than the first book in the series. Read 'Incident on a Small Colony' from Smith's website for more background.

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### **Macha says**

3 & 1/2 stars. this series isn't real ambitious, but it's not bad either. kind of a cross between Lois Bujold's Miles Vorkosigan saga and CJ Cherryh's translator diplomats, you might say.

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### **Jennifer says**

A good sequel, it gave depth and background to the characters and events from book 1. Though I don't really see where the rest of the series is going.

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### **Volpot says**

2 stars. Excessively convoluted to the point of boring. DNF

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## **Ian says**

for some reason Jani is a character who i find compelling , in the same way that i find lisbeth salander compelling , I'm really enjoying finding out more about Jani, such a good read

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## **Brownbetty says**

Gets blurbed by elizabeth moon, which makes sense; it has a certain elizabeth moon quality of being interested in military structures and logistics.

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## **John says**

Great stuff, though Ms Kilian so so roughed up and abused as the story goes on that I kept wincing. Still, it's a real pleasure to see characters being intelligent (if often not too smart).

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## **Timothy Bateson says**

Rules of Conflict is a great follow up to Rules of Conduct. Jani Killian continues to be an interesting lead character with a lot of depth.

Having been moved Earth-side, Jani's problems are only just beginning as she finds herself wrapped awaiting trial for her part in the events that put her on the run in the first place.

Now she ends up embroiled in the politics of the various Services, the Families, and the Idomeni. She must defend herself against the charges, or accept the consequences.

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## **Sherwood Smith says**

If anything, this sequel is even tighter, more fast paced, complicated, and involving than the first book.

Jani Killian is in a world of physical trouble due to what happened to her after Dr. Shroud put her back together again. Nema, the alien ambassador, wants to protect her--and to claim her. The handsome, elusive, very dangerous lieutenant Lucien Pascal is there to protect her--or is he?

Meanwhile, she definitely has enemies, and she's the only one who can solve the problems, before she collapses.

This science fiction has some space opera big questions though it's written like a thriller, with terrific character complexity and twists and turns that require the reader not to miss a page. So glad to see it reissued in the new ebook form; it's one of my favorite sf series.

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## **Gregory says**

Was just a continuation of the first book. Felt like a rehash of the same plot with no resolution.

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## **Barbara Sanders says**

### **Fascinating**

It's even more complex than the first one. Kind of reminded me of an old Dashiell Hammet mystery, moved into space. Liked it. Next...

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## **Bill Blocksom says**

I am really enjoying this series. Too bad I read the fourth book first. :) I was wondering why I was having such trouble figuring stuff out in that one. This book was good. Great characters. Probably not so easy to follow if you do not know the back story. A great read. Can't wait to start the next one, Law of Survival.

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## **Marc Goldstein says**

Despite its martial title, Rules of Conflict isn't military sci-fi (with all the carnage and cardboard characters that sub-genre usually implies). Rather, this sequel to Kristine Smith's well-received first novel, Code of Conduct, is a labyrinthian thriller emphasizing intrigue and personal politics. Smith has imagined an immersive future of believable characters, credibly convoluted political affairs, disturbingly realistic aliens, and fearsome technology.

To know Captain Jani Kilian, first you have to absorb her complex backstory. Twenty years ago she served as an archivist attached to a diplomatic corps on a mission to establish relations with an alien race known as the idomeni. During that mission she murdered her commanding officer after he took sides in an idomeni civil war. Mortally wounded by an explosion during her escape attempt, doctors John Shroud and Valentin Parini rebuild Kilian by introducing idomeni DNA into her system. Now, after twenty years on the lam, her hybrid body is breaking down.

When Kilian finally seeks medical care, she is quickly captured and brought back to Service HQ to learn her fate. She fully expects to be court-martialed and pilloried, but soon discovers that powerful political figures have a vested interest in making sure that no one ever dredges up her past. But years of guilt compel Kilian to investigate the motives of her shadowy protectors. With the help of Lt. Lucien Pascal, an intelligence officer assigned to "protect" her, and a strange archivist named Sam Duong, she begins to unravel the secrets behind what really happened during the idomeni civil war.

While Kilian struggles to make sense of the political interests behind the cover-up, she is allowed to assume some of her old duties and becomes the key figure in a tricky negotiation with the idomeni. The diplomatic

mission reunites her with an idomeni religious leader and ambassador she knows as Nema. Nema and Kilian have a relationship pre-dating the idomeni civil war. He refers to Kilian as his “Eyes and Ears” and takes a keen interest in protecting her.

Meanwhile, Evan Van Reuter, a politician from an influential family, has fallen from grace. He has been ostracized from his family and is held under house arrest pending investigation of his actions during the idomeni civil war. Van Reuter’s legal defense requires offering up Kilian as the fall guy, a situation further complicated by that fact that he and Jani used to be lovers. Van Reuter’s defense crumbles as the cover-up buries Kilian’s past, and he threatens to blow the whistle.

Critics of Smith’s debut novel attacked it for being overly complicated. *Rules of Conflict*, too, is a challenging read. (It should be noted that this is the second volume of a planned trilogy, so some back-story needs to be taken in, and not all of the loose ends get tied up.) The cast of characters is vast and diverse. The names of the idomeni characters and locations will leave your tongue in knots. And the conspiracy has more twists than a mountain highway. I don’t doubt that readers unaccustomed to such demanding text will be turned off. But I’d argue that any good conspiracy story ought to leave your head spinning – that’s part of the fun. The novel’s complexity accomplishes what good sci-fi is supposed to do: transport you to a future that is persuasively otherworldly.

Smith’s strengths as a writer shine through. Despite the story’s complexity, the plot moves briskly and never gets bogged down with unnecessary exposition. Smith has an exceptional way with character. Jani Kilian is a bold, intelligent protagonist. The supporting cast members are equally human, with their own ulterior motives and hidden agendas. It is a testament to Smith’s skill that her characters remain credible and never get subsumed by the machinations of the plot or the minutiae of the setting. Smith’s skill with characterization also bleeds into her idomeni characters. Their culture, which regards eating as a form of sacred worship and values open antagonism over diplomatic tact, is convincingly alien.

*Rules of Conflict* has enough ideas to fill several novels. It’s a conspiracy thriller chock full of suspense and intrigue, populated with compelling characters, and set in an absorbing sci-fi universe. Its richness and depth rewards committed readers.

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