

Right where she wants him:

an Evie story by KatieD

Part 2 of 2

Ranger Edition

March 13, 2019

Chapter 6: Meeting the Mark

The following evening, Ambassador to Varala Thomas Francis sent a carriage to bring me to his residence so I could attend the diplomatic ball as his guest. Ambassador Francis was also a member of the Codex Cryptae, and had helped me out on my recent mission to Vardengard. To be more precise, he had bailed me out of a great deal of trouble in Vardengard--twice.

Cassandra had reached out to Ambassador Francis and outlined my mission. Thomas wasn't in a position to refuse--while they were peers in the official Rithian government, she far outranked him in the Cryptae. Supporting my assignment became part of his assignment, too--again.

"Evie, my dear, you look beautiful," Ambassador Francis called out when I arrived. "Absolutely stunning." I twirled around for him in my cardinal red dress. It felt nice to be dressed up in a very feminine way after I spent so much of my time in my armored bodysuit. And it felt nice to have my appearance appreciated by a gentleman...as opposed to being alternately feared and ogled most of the time.

The dress was very special to me. I had befriended a talented designer who knew how to design for the female form, how to accentuate a woman's curves and call attention to her best features. For me, that meant my rear...and my breasts. The dress extended past my knees, but was split up both sides nearly to my waist, leaving my hips and the entire length of my legs exposed. Above that, it was tightly fitted across my tummy and under my breasts.

A sheer diaphanous panel in front showed every detail from my neckline to well below my navel, and nearly everything from nipple to nipple. A matching cutout, open to my bare back, exposed everything from neckline to just above my tailbone, and everything between my shoulders. It was elegant and sexy, and I was proud to wear it for the first time.

Arriving at the ball, I was pleased to see heads turn in appreciation of my look. Sure, there was some creepy leering, but mostly I saw sincere gestures of admiration. The guests here were senior political leaders and captains of industry, members of so-called 'polite' society, and would be on their best behavior...in public, anyway. That of course could

change quickly should any of the ‘polite’ men find themselves alone with me without need for self-control or self-censorship.

All of the society ladies at the ball were also dressed elegantly, and most of them nodded approvingly. Not all. Some appeared disdainful of my revealing attire, while others seemed to disapprove of me arriving on the arm of a man more than twice my age. As I looked about, I saw several other ‘couples’ where the older gentleman was accompanied by a much younger woman. ‘Perfect,’ I thought. If the councilman sees me that way, this will be even easier.

I spotted Councilman Goldwain, standing near the main entrance, and looking agitated while watching the doors. I knew why; after all, Vyndra’s failure to arrive was my doing. I was actually relieved to see him still actively looking for her, as rumors had spread quickly from the Devil’s Due about a ‘chick-fight between lesbian spies.’ Apparently he didn’t know she was gone yet.

I felt another pang of guilt for Vyndra, but the reminder of what I found when I searched her rented rooms quickly banished that thought. She had three identical stacks of notes recording their conversations and the defense details Goldwain had disclosed. One was in a courier pack ready to be shipped back to Sypharia. The other two stacks were addressed to known warlords and enemies of Rith. She was selling information as well as spying for her own country.

I kept an eye on Goldwain while Thomas and I mingled with the crowd. When it became apparent Vyndra was not coming, Goldwain headed straight for the open bar. It was time for me to act, and catch him somewhere between his second and fourth drinks--when he was frustrated enough to act impulsively, but not so drunk as to make a scene--or lose his libido.

I leaned in toward Thomas, who was busy chatting with some counterparts from Varala, and whispered, “we’re on.”

Thomas excised himself from the conversation, saying “Excuse me, lads, this lovely young lady and I need to freshen our drinks and say hello to a friend.” We took our time threading through the crowd; it seemed Thomas knew everyone here and had a kind word for each of them.

Fortunately, Goldwain was still standing at the bar, working his way through his third drink and chatting up a pretty redhead. Every so often he glanced toward the doors, and seemed more agitated each time he did. He must have really liked Vyndra.

"Percival! Good to see you!" Thomas said in a booming voice, and clapped him on the shoulder. Percival was tall, but lean, and he winced at the impact. Impeccably groomed and dandily dressed, Percival recovered quickly and stood tall, straightening his jacket as he did.

"Thomas, my goodness, it's been months! Glad to have you back in the country. Do have a drink with me--the whisky is a particularly racy single malt infused with--get this--beef fat, to smooth it." He paused to sniff his glass before motioning to the bartender for more.

Then he turned to me. "And who is your lovely companion, Thomas?" he asked as if noticing me for the first time. By my count, this was actually the fifth time he had checked me out since we approached.

"This is my niece, Evie," Thomas said with an unnecessary gesture. Percival was already focused in on me. "Ah, yes," Percival murmured as an aside to Thomas. "Quite a few nieces in attendance tonight, it seems. Heh-heh." he chuckled with a snarky sneer.

Thomas ignored the jab, and continued: "Evie, this is Senior Councilman Goldwain, a Leader of the High Council of Rith--and Chairman of the Borderlands Security Committee."

"Tut-tut, call me Percival, I get so tired of being called Senior Councilman," he said as he grasped my hand and brought it to his lips, taking the opportunity to admire my breasts close up as he bent forward. "Evie, the beauty of your dress is exceeded only by the beauty of its wearer."

Once his focus finally returned to my face, I locked eyes with him turned on a measured force of my seductive gaze and charm. "Why thank, you, Councilman...I mean, Percival." I matched his earnest tone with my own. "I don't think I've ever met anyone more senior than Thom...Uncle Thomas before. Why, you must be the most powerful person in the room."

From the corner of my eye I saw Thomas visibly cringe at my gushing remark, and I genuinely felt sorry to cuckold him like that. But he knew what I was doing; I had a role to play, and so did he. At least Thomas could reassure himself he would get the last laugh.

Goldwain beamed with a smug satisfaction. "I suppose I probably am, Evie. I find that I usually am, actually." His eyes saw only what he expected: awe and attraction on my face, the usual effect he had on young women who wanted to be close to the rich and famous.

"That must be very lonely," I said empathetically. "Was your...niece...unable to join you tonight?"

As if on cue--because it was--Thomas caught sight of another colleague passing by. "James! A word, if you might." Then he turned back to Goldwain and me. "Evie, if you'll excuse me, I must chat with Ambassador Hume about a meeting tomorrow. I'll be back to collect you before it's time to go home. Percival, do you mind keeping my niece company for a while?"

"I would be delighted," Goldwain replied. "In fact, since you're busy, you can trust me to get Evie home." The smug innuendo dripped from his voice.

Thomas stopped short, and turned to face up to Goldwain with the confidence of a man experienced in tense diplomatic exchanges. "Thank you for the kind offer, Percival, but I will return, and I'll be taking Evie home tonight." Thomas was playing his role perfectly...and he had just guaranteed Goldwain would stop at nothing to get me back to his residence.

I stepped closer to defuse the tension. "Uncle Thomas, of course I'll accompany you home when you're ready." I leaned in and stroked his arm more affectionately than the average niece would. "But while you attend to business, I'm sure Percival can keep me..." I paused and caught Goldwain's eye. "Entertained."

Thankfully Goldwain was smart enough to keep his mouth shut and allow Thomas to exit with some dignity. Thomas put his arm around my waist and pulled me a little closer, then gave me a peck on the cheek. "Very well, Evie. I'll be back soon." He turned and gave Goldwain a curt nod. "I'm sure the Councilman will be a perfect gentleman." Then he turned and joined his colleague.

Once Thomas left, I turned to Goldwain and tuned my seductive powers on full shoulder. "Well, which will it be, Senior Councilman? Are you going to be a perfect gentleman? Or are you going to keep me entertained?" I added a coy smile to indicate my preference.

Goldwain leaned closer and lowered his voice to a seductive tone. "Evie, Evie. If you don't think I can do both, then you've not been with the right kind of gentleman."

I first raised my eyebrows in surprise, and then lowered my gaze as if embarrassed. "I guess I haven't then...how does a gentleman like you entertain a girl like me?"

"My dear, a girl like you just needs a man like me to lead you. Simply put yourself in my hands and I will guide you through my world." He paused, watching my reactions, seeing

the shy smile creep across my face. “Shall we begin on the dance floor?” He gestured grandly off to one side, where pairs of guests were swaying to the music from a well-dressed band.

He did not wait for my reply. As I turned to look where he was pointing, he slipped his other arm behind me and placed it on my bare lower back. As he gave me the most subtle nudge, he took a step himself, and suddenly I was moving forward with him.

Goldwain guided me through the crowd with soft tugs and nudges from his fingers against my lower back, using his other hand to indicate our direction. He was tending me as a buck would tend a doe toward his favorite thicket. Along the way, he smiled and greeted other guests, while whispering their names and important titles into my ear.

His technique was actually fairly impressive, I thought. I could see why an impressionable young woman would be susceptible to his mixture of suggestive talk and subtle physical dominance. Despite my controlled demeanor, I could feel stirrings of a desire to follow him.

‘Good,’ I thought to myself, welcoming the feeling. Giving him some control would help me play my role. Or so I told myself..the life I led required me to be in control every moment of every day. Letting someone else lead me once in a while suddenly seemed very alluring.

Once we reached the dance floor, Goldwain became more overt with his physical dominance. Taking my left hand with his right, he pulled me swiftly toward an open space. Suddenly he stepped into my path and stopped, and my body came in contact with his from shoulder to knee.

I gasped and giggled for him as I felt my softer curves crush against his lean body. He had braced for the impact so I knew it was no accident. His left hand snaked around my waist, against my naked back, holding me pressed against him. His right thumb was in my palm, with his fingers gripping my wrist more than the back of my hand. The warrior in me bristled at the sudden sensation of captivity in his grip, but the woman in me thrilled at my own submission.

Goldwain proceeded to lead me in a swirling dance to the slow-tempo music. He maintained his grip on me while slyly looking down into my eyes. I returned his eye contact with a look of wonderment and arousal--while continuing to hit him with a steady dose of seductive gaze.

"You are so strong," I purred. "And such a bold dancer. The way you lead me...it's breathtaking."

"You seem like a young woman who appreciates having a strong man lead her," Goldwain murmured. He cocked an eyebrow, confident he was making progress with me. "And one who enjoys being the object of his desire."

As he held my tummy pressed against his abdomen, I could feel him hardening in his fancy trousers. He made no effort to hide it; if anything, he rubbed it more deliberately against me.

"I prefer a man who is up to the challenge of trying to control me," I replied. I twisted my wrist in his palm and tugged it, as if making a feeble attempt to escape his grip. I winked and gave him a more devilish grin. "And who knows what to do with me after he succeeds."

My mock struggle had a noticeable effect upon Goldwain, but it had a similar effect upon me. Between my interlude with Vyndra, my flirting with Alynnya, and even Reggie's handling, my libido had been stoked repeatedly with no relief. I was reacting to the banter and overt handling by Goldwain much more genuinely than a trained spy should. 'Next time,' I told myself, 'make sure you release some tension before the mission.'

"You are a remarkable young woman, Evie. How is it I've never encountered you at one of these events before? Surely I would have noticed you."

"This is the first time Thomas has brought me to a big fancy ball. Actually the first time we've been in public together outside of Varala." I gave a little pout.

"Well if you were my niece, I would want you standing by my side whenever I was in public. To let your beauty shine." He then brought his lips close to my ear. "And then in private, I would want you kneeling before me. So I can indulge my own carnal desires in your beauty."

I feigned shock. "Uncle Percival!...what a delightfully decadent thought!" I leaned in, my lips reaching up closer to his ear. "If we can be in private tonight, you can indulge yourself in me...after I show you my special talents." I suppressed a laugh as his eyes widened. And his pants twitched.

He composed himself quickly. "Evie, I would most enjoy that, but didn't you promise Thomas you would go home with him?"

"I promised I would go home with him. I never promised I would stay there." I gave him a wink. "Besides, that will give me a chance to 'freshen up,' and grab some attire suitable for...private indulgences."

Goldwain broke into a grin as genuine as if he had won a great honor. "Evie, you are exquisite. Yes, you shall receive my full attentions later tonight. I will show you how a gentleman like me entertains a woman such as you."

"Wonderful," I grinned back as if he was granting me a great gift. "Perhaps you can send a carriage to Thomas' house for me? Say, an hour after we leave?" I leaned in and whispered conspiratorially. "I'll give him a little pleasure with my hand on the ride home, and he'll be asleep before he's half undressed." I gave Goldwain an impish wink and grin.

Goldwain chuckled. "Evie, you naughty girl. We shall address this impudent streak in my private chambers."

"If you believe you're determined enough," I replied cheekily. I twisted my wrist in his grip again, and raised my eyebrows. "And if you're confident enough to let me go back to Thomas." What we should be addressing, I thought to myself, was my dangerous habit of throwing fuel on smouldering fires.

"You have one hour." Goldwain said sternly with renewed boldness. "Then I shall take possession of you once again." He released my wrist just enough to draw my hand to his lips again. "Until then, Miss Evie...behave." He gave my hand a light kiss, this time without breaking eye contact.

"Never!" I whispered, and skittered away to find "Uncle Thomas."

Chapter 7: Into his grasp

Right on time, Goldwain's driver pulled up in front of Thomas' house. I was ready and waiting by the door, wearing a long coat and holding a small overnight satchel. Fortunately I didn't really have to worry about being discreet around Thomas, so I had plenty of time to prepare for my visit to Goldwain's chambers.

Thomas, of course, was not passed out in bed, nor had he received any pleasure from me on the ride home. In fact, I never divulged that detail from my conversation with Goldwain. I imagined Thomas would be mortified at the thought of any intimacy between us. He did, after all, outrank me and that would be inappropriate behavior with a subordinate--and I respected him too much for that. I actually did think of him much like an uncle!

Despite my protests, Thomas was watching from an upper window and had arranged for one of his security detail to follow me to Goldwain's residence. I wanted to tell him I could handle myself, but it hadn't been that long since he had compromised his position to rescue me from angry Varalan soldiers who had malicious intent--twice, actually, less than twelve hours apart.

For show, I pretended to tiptoe out of the house and down the stairs to the carriage. The driver opened the door for me and held my hand as I climbed in. I was surprised to see Goldwain waiting inside--I had assumed he would await my arrival at his residence. It unnerved me a little...my plans centered on being alone with him in his quarters...not riding around in public.

I flashed him a wide smile and he indicated the seat across from him, with my back to the driver's compartment. "Percival...I'm pleasantly surprised to see you...perhaps you were eager to see me?"

Goldwain shrugged nonchalantly. "I told you one hour. I thought I'd test your punctuality--and obedience--in person." Then he broke into a more natural grin. "And yes, I was eager to begin."

He was excited, I thought. Too excited to role-play the stern dominant, too ready to get on with his plans. This played in my favor--he would be more genuine and relaxed this way, I thought. Which meant I could be, too.

I raised my hands to the top button on my overcoat. “I was planning on a big reveal in your chambers, but perhaps I’ll share a taste with you now,” I said. Goldwain’s eyes were glued to me as I slowly released each button and opened the front. He let out a low whistle as I did.

The first image he saw was a white lacy dressing gown that also opened at the front, with a plunging V-neckline and a hem that stopped just short of my knees. The material itself was an exotic fabric from the far eastern lands that stretched and fitted itself tightly to my curves.

I slowly untied the white sash of the gown, revealing rose-pink two-piece lingerie of the same material. It also appeared lacy but was dense enough to keep details within hidden. While Goldwain’s eyes were exploring me, I slipped out of my heeled shoes, and reached into my overnight bag.

I revealed a pair of pink high-heeled bedroom slippers with pink marabou fluff and peek-a-boo toes. They were an expensive indulgence from a high-street shopping trip to Garrod’s in the Rithian capital. An indulgence because they were impractical anywhere outside a bedroom, and even there I often didn’t wear them for more than a few minutes.

I made a show of crossing and uncrossing my legs as I slid the pretty slippers over my bare feet. I then placed both feet side by side on the floor, brought my knees together tightly, and closed the white lace gown. I placed my hands in my lap and sat there poised and posed, letting him know the show was over until he made the next move.

Goldwain let his eyes wander over me for another moment. Then he cleared his throat and visibly composed himself. “Breathtaking, Evie. You are magnificent.”

I grinned like a schoolgirl being praised by the headmaster, making an overt show of soaking in his admiration, as if grateful for the attention of a great and powerful man like him.

“I must admit,” he continued in a more measured tone. “It was you who commanded me for a moment there. But shall we now revert to a more natural state? Wherein it is I who shall command you?”

I nodded happily, and lowered my eyes a measure. “Yes, Sir. I am yours to command.”

“As you should be,” he replied. “Open your gown again. Breasts such as yours are not meant to be hidden away.” He flicked his finger at me, as if he could wave away my cover-up.

As I complied, moving slowly and sensually, he continued: "The service you provided to my friend Thomas on the way to his home...you shall also provide for me, on the way to mine."

I nodded wordlessly. I saw him begin to move to one side on the rear seat to make room for me, so I moved first. I placed my hands on his knees and used them to brace myself as I sank to my knees in the moving carriage. He looked down at me and froze in place. I looked back up and hit him with my seductive arts gaze.

I could see him struggling to maintain composure again. This was fun. He viewed himself as such the bold dominant, using the veneer of his position, wealth and power to enthrall the typical women he entertained. I was not the typical woman he entertained, and that was throwing him off his game. I just needed to take care to seem spontaneous and not overplay my hand.

I moved my hands to the inside of his knees and gently spread them apart so I could ease myself forward between them. I then slid my hands up his thighs, feeling the muscles of his legs through the thin satiny feel of his fancy embossed trousers. I deftly undid the clasp at his waist and opened the buttons of the overlaying panel.

I glanced up at him, measuring his reaction. His eyes were transfixed on my fingertips, watching as I lifted his rapidly hardening member from his trousers. He had no undergarments, of course, which explained how I could feel him so well when we were dancing. He was fairly well endowed, with a pleasing amount of heft and weight. This might not be all bad, I thought.

"How much time do we have before we arrive at your home?" I asked.

He glanced out the window to see where we were. "Five minutes? Perhaps six?"

"Plenty of time..." I murmured, wrapping my hand around him, letting my palm warm him.

Once he was fully upright in my hand, I went to work with my fingertips, working around the tip with both hands at first, stroking the sensitive areas underneath and around it. Then I held the tip gently between my thumb and finger of one hand, while softly tracing my fingernails of the other down the length of him. My nails were gliding so gently he would barely feel them at all--yet his nerves would be tingling underneath. I moved up and down his length three times, until I could feel him squirming in his seat.

I leaned in closer, bringing my face within inches of him. I had no intentions of taking him in my mouth...at least not yet...but I wanted to plant the image in his head. It worked, as I heard a sharp intake of breath in his anticipation.

Instead, I slid my hand underneath him, feeling for and reaching under his balls. They were also of pleasing heft. I cupped them first, letting him feel my palm all the way around them. Then I delicately placed my fingernails against his skin behind them, and sooo slowly drew them forward, dragging through his coarse hairs and over the bumpy flesh.

“Ohhh, fuuuck, Evie, that is...ohhhh...” he fell silent again so all I could hear was his labored breathing. I glanced up, and his head was back, eyes closed. I glanced out the window. We were still a couple minutes away from his home. It was going to be close.

I cupped his balls again, and began rubbing the thumb of my other hand in small circles on the wrinkly flesh just below the head of his cock. I was pleased to see a bead of moisture form at his tip, and moved my thumb to catch it. The viscous bead left a trace as I brought it back down to his sensitive skin beneath and resumed my slow circles, the moisture helping me glide over him even more softly. His groan was loud this time.

I glanced out the window again. Two blocks. I had him now. I pinched my thumb and forefinger a little more firmly around him, then drew my nails back under his balls again, and continued in one long, slow movement upward until my hands met. One block. I listened to his breathing. If I did this two more times, he was done. My hand started downward again.

One more slow time I traced from the farthest point behind his balls to the top of his shaft, taking my time. His breathing was in sharp short bursts. His thigh muscles were clenching. All I had to do was glide my fingers down and up one more time, or better yet, cup his balls again, and he would erupt.

And just as I planned, the carriage jolted to a halt. The driver opened the sliding partition to the cabin, and called out “we’re here, Sir.”

Goldwain practically howled in frustration. “Are you flogging kidding me??” He pounded his fist against the seat.

At the outburst, the driver turned and looked into the cabin. If he was surprised by what he saw, he didn’t show it--it probably wasn’t the first time he’d seen a young woman kneeling between Goldwain’s legs. I couldn’t resist, I winked at him, and he hurriedly closed the partition before I heard barely suppressed laughter through the wall.

I sat back on my heels and kept my hands in my lap, my eyes on the floor, and remained silent. Now would not be a good time to provoke Goldwain. I needed him to recover his composure and reclaim control of the situation, to ensure he would still take me inside his home.

After a full minute, he sighed loudly. “That...that was incredible, Evie. But you failed to finish your assignment in the time allotted.” I could hear him struggling to sound stern.

“I’m so sorry, Sir. Please, please give me a chance to make it up to you.” I brought desperation into my voice. “I can do so much more than that for you, please. And...” Now I gave a tone of resignation: “I understand if you must punish me for my failure.” That, I knew, would end any resistance from him. Punishing me let him save face by making it my fault, and gave him a reason to indulge in one of his favorite activities.

His full bravado instantly returned. “Yes, of course you must be punished. That was unacceptable. You’ll need to do much better if you expect me to keep you around.”

“Yes, Sir. I won’t let you down again.” I tried to sound disappointed in myself, while inwardly I was giving myself a round of congratulatory applause.

Goldwain produced a short coil of soft red rope that looked like velvet drapery cords.

“Give me your wrists.” I appeared surprised, and lifted my wrists together in front of him.

He wrapped the rope around my wrists a few times and loosely hitched it in the most unsatisfying way. “Now don’t be afraid, my dear, I don’t want this to hurt, just to remind you you’re in my control.” He finished with a simple cinch between my wrists and knotted it off.

‘Hurt?’ I scoffed inwardly. I’d once spent an entire day in the back of a moving farm wagon, hogtied with baling twine. That’s what roping that hurt felt like. These velvety cords were more likely to fall off me on their own than hurt me. Still, it signalled Goldwain was getting back to a mood and intent that I needed from him in order to complete my mission.

He draped my overcoat over my shoulders, and buttoned up the front over the top of my bound hands. He fastened the belt of the coat over that, pinning my arms to my body. He took a look at the pink bedroom heels as if contemplating a change. Then he picked up my other heels instead and tossed them into my bag.

Goldwain then helped me to my feet, gripping me by my upper arms to steady me. He knocked on the window of the carriage, and the driver opened the door. Goldwain exited first, and handed the driver my bag while he himself helped me down to the ground.

Chapter 8: Waylaid

After taking my bag back from the driver, Goldwain gripped my upper arm and began leading me up the walk to his residence. With his lofty position in the government, his residence was connected to his official office space, and through tunnels to the ornate buildings of the Rithian High Council. As such, there was a guard posted at his door who moved to open it for us.

If the guard was surprised by my unusual footwear or my apparent lack of arms in my coat, he did not react. He kept his eyes forward as he intoned, “Evening, Councilman. Evening m’lady.” The way his voice dropped on the last word suggested his skepticism of my status as such.

Upon entering the residence, however, even Goldwain seemed surprised to see two more guards and an officer standing in his grand foyer. “Captain. What is the meaning of this intrusion?” he demanded.

“I’m sorry to disturb you, Councilman. There is a matter of security, and your safety, that has come to our attention.” The captain glanced my way, and confirmed my suspicion that I was the source of his concern. This was not good.

Goldwain seemed to not notice. “Well? Out with it, Captain. I’d not like to have our evening disturbed any longer than necessary.”

The captain looked uneasy. “Well, Sir, it’s just...of a sensitive nature. Could we speak privately?” He glanced my way again, this time noting that my arms seemed restrained in the coat. The relief on his face gave the impression he might know something about me.

Goldwain seized on the opportunity to impress me, and straightened his posture. “Absolutely not! I’ll not be delayed a moment longer than necessary. You can tell me here and now.”

“Yes, sir. Well...the Select Security team at the ballroom took note of your new companion, and...their concern is that she may not be all she seems.”

"What in flog's sake does that mean?" He looked from the captain, to me, and back.

'Oh, crap.' I thought to myself. Cassandra's reach in the government meant that she could have given orders to stand down and let me operate. But it also meant raising suspicions, and the Select Security Services operated independently of the military. These men were just doing their job protecting the High Council members. Unfortunately for me, they were good at it.

"You have heard of the Codex Cryptae, Councilman?" the captain said. He reached toward me and indicated the pendant at my neck. "This woman is an operative of theirs."

"She's a spy?" Goldwain exclaimed incredulously. Holy One, why did everyone assume that?? "But she's a spy on our side, right?" He turned to me. "Isn't that right, Evie?"

I gave a look of alarm. "I'm not a spy! I mean, yes, I'm in the Cryptae, but I'm just an analyst! And a really low level one, too...I'm not an operative! Or a spy!"

"Well, Captain? Do you have any evidence to the contrary?" Even I was surprised at his response. Goldwain was making his own safety, and national security, secondary to his desire to impress me...and secondary to his desperate desire to salvage his plans for the evening.

"No, Sir," the captain stammered. "What she says aligns with what we know...but why else would she want to be with..." his voice trailed off as he realized the gravity of the insult he was delivering to the councilman.

"Captain." Goldwain made a show of delivering a stern glare and a displeased sigh. "Here is what we are going to do. I commend you for your diligence and dedication." The captain looked visibly relieved already.

Goldwain gestured toward me and continued: "I do not believe this young lady wishes to do me any harm. But I will take her upstairs and question her very thoroughly as to her intentions, and ascertain for certain whether or not she is a spy."

He turned back to the captain, and spoke in a conspiratorial tone: "As you well know, Captain, upstairs I have the means and tools at my disposal to perform the most thorough of interrogations." He glanced at me to gauge the impact of his words on me, so I quickly appeared unsettled and shifted in place nervously.

After a pause to let that sink in, he added: "You may station both these guards outside my private chambers as an additional measure of security. You yourself may remain here as

well, if you wish. But..." he paused for more effect. "The lady and I are NOT to be disturbed for the remainder of the night, unless I specifically call out today's alarm word."

The captain considered this, then nodded. "Very well, Councilman. But after one condition: my men will thoroughly search the lady and her belongings, to ensure she has no weapons or other means of harming you. As a precaution, of course."

'Of course,' I thought. I fought hard to prevent an eye roll.

Goldwain looked at me, obviously considering what he knew I was wearing under my coat, and the embarrassment (to him) of such a search. "Absolutely not. You may search her satchel, but not touch the lady herself."

"Councilman Goldwain," the captain said in a more officious tone. "As the officer responsible for your personal safety and the safety of our government, it is my responsibility to eliminate any and all threats. I have the authority to respectfully insist, Sir." He turned to the guard closest to him, and said, "Search her. Thoroughly, like you've been trained. And you, search her bag."

While one guard grabbed my bag and began removing my belongings, the other sized me up for a moment before approaching. He was tall, broad shouldered, with dark--almost black--eyes and waves of thick jet-black hair accented with streaks of grey. Suddenly my evening was taking a turn for the better. I tried hard not to smile as he stepped forward.

"Miss, will you please remove your coat?"

I smiled, and gave my arms a little shake underneath the belt of the coat. "Umm...I'm going to need a little help with that." I gave a little girlish giggle.

It was the captain's turn to roll his eyes, and for Goldwain to look mortified. The guard hesitated for just a moment before he understood the situation. Then he himself smiled, and he undid the belt around my waist. He then unbuttoned the front of the coat, and paused for just a moment peeking at what lay beneath before lifting the coat from my shoulders.

The other guard nearly dropped my bag as he gaped in my direction. The captain was more composed, but still unable to avert his eyes. Goldwain set his jaw and ground his teeth. And the guard before me seemed to be saying a silent prayer of thanks to the deity of his choice.

After searching my overcoat thoroughly and tossing it to his partner, he again stood before me and moved to untie my wrists. Just as I was about to whisper, 'please don't,' the cap-

tain did it for me. “No. Leave her tied. Commence your search.” He moved his right hand to the hilt of the short blade at his waist, watching me with more suspicion than the other three.

I suddenly felt hyper-aware of my situation. Nearly naked, wrists tied (albeit poorly), surrounded by four men--three of whom were trained to kill. One less than usual for a Friday night, I thought wryly.

I calculated my odds, as I was trained to do. I could incapacitate the one in front, and probably disarm the captain before the third reacted, and Goldwain wet his pants. Or I could easily incapacitate both guards and probably fight the captain while Goldwain wet his pants. I ran through three more scenarios, all of which ended with me dead, maimed or imprisoned, and Goldwain with wet pants. I resigned myself to letting the scene play out.

“Hands over head, miss,” the handsome guard ordered. I placed my bound wrists atop my forehead. I watched him pause, then begin a visual inspection up and down me, all around. To his credit, he kept his eyes moving for the most part. When he finished, he stood behind me. “Hands down.” I felt him lifting my hair, combing through it.

“Check for skin-colored patches with something hidden underneath,” the captain called out.

The guard checked behind and in my ears, along my neckline, under my chin. He had me open my mouth and stick out my tongue. Then he began tracing his fingers over my skin starting at my shoulders and working his way downward, poking under the neckline of my gown.

“Hands up again,” he ordered. He lifted my gown off my back and ran his hands all over my back, top to bottom, and inspected the back strap of my lingerie top. Without a word, he popped the back clasp and my breasts fell free. Well, they didn’t fall far; I am, after all, young and quite firm there still. I still pass the pencil test. The guard seemed to approve, as well.

The guard quickly inspected the cups and underband of my top, then ran his hands around, under and between my breasts. He was mostly professional, but he prodded my flesh, feeling for anything hidden under the surface. He was kind enough to help me back into the lingerie top, even tucking my breasts neatly into the cups. I wondered if he had practiced this on live female models at some point, and if so, how one would get a job at the academy as a model.

He continued on over the rest of my exposed flesh, up and down both arms, both legs, between my fingers and toes. Then he removed my pink bedroom heels, one by one, and searched them for sharp edges and hidden compartments.

Eventually I'd been searched everywhere--except for under my lingerie bottoms. And I'd be lying if I said it wasn't making me feel pretty turned on to have the tall, dark and handsome guard's hands exploring me so intimately.

As the guard began prodding inside the waistband of my bottoms, Goldwain had had enough. "Really, is this necessary Captain?" he called out, exasperated.

"Councilman, if you were a female spy and knew you might be searched, where might you hide something?" When Goldwain didn't answer, he told the guard to continue.

It tickled as the guard slipped his fingers inside my waistband and began to tug the bottoms off my hips. He got down on one knee before me, slid the lacy material down to my knees, and inspected the garment itself thoroughly. For a moment I thought he might even sniff them!

That left only two places. The guard stuck out his index finger before me, looking at the smooth hairless flesh before him. He paused and looked up at Goldwain. "Do you have any, umm..."

"You won't need any for the front, big guy." I assured him. It was true. All this manhandling and probing had gotten me to a considerable state of arousal. Having it done with bound wrists, and while others watched, was heightening the experience.

"And if you do the front first, you won't need any for the back either."

The guard just stared at me wide-eyed for a moment. I shrugged and grinned in response. It had probably not been the smartest thing to say. After all, I was supposed to be scared and upset, not calm and sarcastic.

The captain definitely picked up on my reaction. "See, Councilman, I told you she was a pro."

Goldwain sighed, and muttered, "just get on with it, will you?" While he was certainly enjoying watching my search, he likely would have been more aroused if I was crying and pleading, too.

Fortunately the handsome guard went about his business quickly and determined that I wasn't hiding anything in either locale. As he probed and explored, his touch was just as

gentle and careful as it had been over the rest of my body, and that felt as good as it could under the circumstances. But his fingers were also thick and strong, and that felt great.

As he tugged my bottoms back up over my hips, he whispered, “I’m terribly sorry about all this, miss.”

I leaned down closer to him and whispered, “I’m not. You’re good at this.”

He stepped back with a grin, and declared. “All clear, Sir.” The guard with my bag concurred.

“Councilman Goldwain, I’m still not comfortable with...” the captain began.

“Captain.” Goldwain interrupted. “You’ve done your due diligence, and I thank you. Now let me do mine. Have your men take her upstairs and tie her up between the posts. I’ll get to the bottom of her. Of this...I’ll get to the bottom of this.”

‘Yes!’ I thought to myself. ‘Now we’re getting somewhere.’ I tried not to look pleased, but my mission was suddenly and surprisingly right back on track.

Chapter 9: Right where she wants him

Goldwain's private chambers were a sight to behold. I would find it amusing if it hadn't been millions of pounds of taxpayers' gold--including a pathetic few of my own--that had paid for the garish display of opulence.

Of particular interest to me were the paintings that adorned the walls, showing kinky scenes of women in the throes of ecstasy, or distress, or both. There was one of a blonde woman locked in an intimate embrace with a large ork. Another with a blonde woman being tormented by a gang of goblins. Another with a blonde on a leash lying seductively on a bed. I was sensing a pattern. And the blonde looked somehow familiar, I felt like I knew her somehow.

The guards had been fairly gentle and polite as they led me up the stairs, wrists still bound in front. Once in the councilman's chambers, they led me over to two tall decorative posts set into the floor and anchored to the ceiling. The woodwork on the posts matched the four posts of Goldwain's large bed nearby. At intervals from the top of the posts to the bottom, there were thick rings set into the wood.

The guards positioned me directly between the posts, with the bed behind me. My satchel and overcoat had been set off to one side, and I stood there in just my pink lingerie, white lace coverup, and pink heels. The shorter bag-searcher guard held both his hands firmly on my waist so I wasn't tempted to resist. "Don't move," he warned, but I could hear wariness in his voice.

The taller guard eyed me carefully as he untied my wrists, and began tying them separately to two longer red ropes that hung from near the tops of the posts. I enjoyed the feeling of his hands on me once again; that they were binding me was even more arousing.

He seemed to have strong ropework skills. I watched as he laid several circles of rope neatly in rows around my wrist before he looped the end underneath the column of rope, back over the top, and knotted it off at the bottom away from my fingers. Then the knot was worked underneath the column to protect it from my teeth. Damn, he was really good at this. Perhaps he'd be interested in helping me practice escape techniques another day??

After repeating the process on the other wrist, he then pulled the other ends of the ropes through the highest rings until my arms were pulled upward and apart, taut, and I was balanced on just the toe portion of my pink heels. He then repeated the entire process on both ankles, pulling my legs further apart and making it even more difficult to balance on the toes of my shoes. I struggled to keep my feet from sliding on the polished floors.

Meanwhile, Goldwain busied himself arranging a display of his toys on shelves beside me. He made a point of holding each where I could see them before placing them neatly in his display. I could have predicted most of them: a flogger, a crop, various plugs and other insertables. There were a few more exotic surprises, however: a spiky wheel on a handle, small knobby balls on a string, some clamps, and some bottles with colored liquids.

In between setting out new objects, he would glance at me to gauge my reactions and give me mischievous looks. Though I still felt confident in my mission, I couldn't ignore the fact that some of the items he was threatening me with could actually harm me. The sense of mild danger only heightened the arousal I felt at being so securely restrained.

Once the guards had me secured between the posts, they abruptly stood aside. I had to suppress a sigh when the handsome guard's hands were no longer on me.

"Shall we stay and keep watch, Councilman?" the shorter one asked hopefully.

"No." Goldwain replied. "I can handle her 'interrogation' myself. You may station yourself outside the door, but do not come in unless you hear me give today's alarm word.' He paused, and suddenly I heard him directly behind me, felt his hand at my waist. "No matter what other noises you might hear."

"Very well, Councilman," the captain's voice came from near the door. Seconds later, I heard the door shut firmly behind them.

Goldwain slowly walked around before me, looking me up and down as if he was savoring the view, and letting the hand at my waist trace around me as he did. He didn't say anything for a while, just letting his eyes roam over me, trying to build tension.

He was enjoying putting on a little show, and I did my best to give him the anxious looks he was expecting. I actually did feel uneasy, so some of my apparent distress was natural. As tightly as I was tied, it would take a few moments to escape, and he could do a lot to me in that time.

"Finally, Evie, we are alone," he began. "And you are exactly in the position I planned to have you by this point, too. You look just as fetching strung up between those posts as I had hoped--perhaps even better."

He stopped to inspect the restraints on one of my wrists. "And likely more tightly restrained than I would have done. On the one hand, the guards saved me the effort of tying you up, but on the other hand, they denied me the pleasure of doing it myself."

I tried to make my voice sound as worried and small as he would expect. "What...what are you going to do to me?"

"Well the easy answer is, anything and everything I want. After all, you're not in any position to resist." I had expected him to smugly state the obvious. But his soliloquy was just ramping up.

"But the more complicated answer is that I promised earlier this evening to teach you the joys of serving a man like me. Teach you the pleasures of being dominated and controlled by a strong gentleman. And the freedom that comes from giving yourself to me, for me to possess you."

'Wait, what?' I asked myself. 'Was this guy for real? I mean, I'm all for getting tied up and dominated, maybe even being spanked and collared and taken roughly, but...joys of serving??' I took a deep breath. 'Dammit! I thought I might even finally get to release some of this built up sexual frustration!' Then I realized Goldwain had paused, waiting for my reaction.

"So you're not going to torture me? You're not going to interrogate me to see if I'm a spy?"

"Oh, heavens, no, Evie. Certainly I will use those toys to torment you--and I do still need to punish you for failing your assignment in the carriage--but I don't care about all that spy nonsense. If you are in the Codex Cryptae, then that means we're on the same side anyway."

"What if I was a spy, but not on the same side?" I wasn't sure if he was aware Vyndra was one.

"Evie, I wouldn't care if you were. This is all part of a grand game. Here you are, a beautiful woman, tied up tight in my bedroom, completely at my mercy. I could tell when we were dancing that you get turned on when I dominate you. And you were so enthusiastic

in the carriage. I just can't wait to enjoy the rest of your body. And see what other talents you have."

'Ugh..this is so disappointing!' I thought. 'Well, if he's not going to torture me, let's get this over with. He just admitted he didn't care about seducing a foreign spy. Now for a full confession...'

But Goldwain continued, with his hand tracing across my tummy. "I am curious if you've gotten aroused simply by being tied up, Evie? And I wonder how much you would enjoy having an orgasm while tightly bound?"

'Hang on!' I told myself...'Let's see where he's going with this...'

Goldwain held his palm flat on my tummy while he walked around behind me, stepping through the ropes between me and the post. He stood close behind me, close enough for me to feel his breath on my shoulder. His hand began to slide downward, fingers probing at the top of my lingerie bottoms.

"I'd bet 20 gold I'll find you dripping wet, Evie." he whispered as he slipped underneath the top band. He continued sliding fingers along my smooth flesh until he found his suspicion to be true.

I didn't try to conceal my reaction, and didn't need to fake it. "Ohhh...yessss. Yes, you will, Sir."

"Delightful," he whispered. He began moving his fingers around slowly. "And do you believe I can make you climax while you are so tightly bound?"

"Ohhh...yessss. Yes, you can, Sir." In fact, if he kept his fingers moving like that, he'd find out in just a moment...

"Of course I can," he whispered. He placed his other hand on my hip and pulled me back against him. I could feel the hardness of his cock again through his thin trousers, pressing against my bottom. "And would you beg me to give you the gift of an orgasm, Evie?"

'Oh, for Holy One's sake,' I thought. He was ruining the mood. Still, I was so close..."Yes, Sir. Please. Please give it to me," I panted.

"Very well, let me disrobe," he said, and pulled his hands away, breaking contact and my focus.

'What! Is he forking joking?' I had to suppress a whine. No, no, no. Dammit! I'd suddenly had enough of Senior Councilman Percival Goldwain's game. I needed to end this, now. I looked back at him and hit him with the full force of my seductive powers.

"No, please, Sir, please keep your hands on me. I want to feel them all over me."

Goldwain paused, taking on a glazed look I had caused in countless men. And women. "Of course, Evie." He leaned into me again, putting both hands back on my waist. And his manhood against my rear.

"Please, Sir. Please run your hands up over my breasts."

Goldwain did, gliding upward until he reached the bra part of my lingerie. His hands caught at the thin material, and slid it upward onto my chest, exposing my breasts.

"Would you like to hold them, Sir?" I whispered.

He didn't hesitate. He reached back under my breasts, cupping them in his palms, his thumbs reaching around the outside of each and his fingers splaying across their fronts, squeezing. I could see him looking down over my shoulder at them.

I lifted my chin and gave a soft moan of pleasure. It actually felt pretty good to have him gripping them so firmly. I turned my head to look up at him, letting all my hair fall away, baring my throat next to his mouth in a sign of submission. "Kiss my neck, please Sir." I breathed.

Goldwain began nibbling at my neck, while his hands worked over my breasts and his cock ground against my bottom, and I let out another soft moan.

"Do you make all your girls moan like this, Sir?"

"Yes, you know I do, Evie."

Now perhaps I'm obstinate, or perhaps I crave the danger, but I just love that moment when a mark realizes they've been had, that moment of clarity before I spring my trap. A more cautious person would spring the trap, then gloat. But where's the fun in that?

"Did you make Vyndra the Sypharian spy moan like this, Percy?"

Goldwain froze for a moment. His fingers clutched into my breasts involuntarily. Then he mumbled, "uh...what...huh???"

Just as he began to pull back from my neck, I clenched down on my teeth, hearing a soft pop from my incisor. Then I bit the side of his neck, hard, feeling the skin tear and tasting blood.

Goldwain reeled back, clutching his neck. "What the flog! You bit me! You little wench!" He took three steps around the post to stand in front of me. He looked at his hand, then returned it to his neck. "I'm bleeding!"

"Good! That means the poison is inside you now."

He began to raise his hand toward me, but then his body clenched, and he sank to his knees. Then he slumped back on his rear, and fell back against the leg of the table. "Poison? What have you done? Evie! Why?" He looked to the door, as if to call out.

I calmly began sawing at the rope attached to my right wrist with the sharpened blade stuck under the rim of my index fingernail. "Percival Goldwain, you have committed treason against Rith by way of your reckless behavior and by passing national security secrets to a foreign spy."

"What? I never!" he sputtered.

The red rope snapped, freeing my right hand, and I moved to free my left. "You did, and I have proof. You shared details of our defenses along the border of the Ork lands with a Sypharian spy by the name of Vyndra. I retrieved a written record of the details from her possession. Your pillow talk meant to impress her is actually an act of treason."

"That doesn't mean...you can't prove..."

Now both hands were free and I moved to release my ankles. "Perhaps, Councilman. That is why you are going to call in the captain and the guards and give a full confession."

"I'll do no such thing!" Goldwain sputtered.

Having freed both ankles, I stood tall and stepped forward to hover over him. "You will, or you will die here on your floor while I watch. Or call in the guards, and I will give you the antidote."

"You're bluffing. You wouldn't murder a High Councilman."

I shrugged. "You're right. But since, as you say, I'm a spy, it's not murder. You're being executed for treason. And for being a shitty lover."

"Give me the antidote. I'll pay you. I can make you rich."

"And now we'll add bribery. Better call the guard soon, Councillman. The poison should be making it harder to breathe now. Another few minutes and you'll lose the ability to speak and it will be too late to confess. A few minutes after that, you will die."

I could see the resignation cross his face, but also anger. "Flog you, you little wench. I should have whipped your skin to shreds while I had the chance." He glared at me, daring me to respond. When I didn't, his capitulation was complete. "Guards! Guards! Raspberries!"

"Raspberries?" I laughed out loud. "Raspberries is the secret alarm word of the day?"

"We ran out of decent options," he replied weakly as the captain and his men burst through the door.

Chapter 10: Confession & consequences

The captain's face held an amusing blend of shock and alarm as he took in the scene before him. When the captain left the room just moments ago, I was securely tied to the posts and the councilman was standing over me boasting about how he would torture me. Now Goldwain lay propped against his table of torture implements, while I stood over him with the columns of severed red rope still wrapped around my ankles and wrists.

"Seize her!" he ordered his men as he drew his sword. "Councilman, are you ok?"

The two guards approached me warily but grabbed me nonetheless. Each man gripped my upper arms with one hand and twisted my wrists behind my back with the other.

"She poisoned me! Quick! Get the antidote from her!" Goldwain croaked.

"Councilman, I'm disappointed." I sighed, shaking my head. "Captain, the Councilman actually called you in so that he could confess to treason and live, or else he dies."

"She's lying!" Goldwain croaked. "Find the antidote."

"You admit to poisoning him?" the captain asked me. He pointed his blade in my direction. His men adjusted their grip on me to keep me subdued. Each pressed their knees against the backs of my thighs. Their technique was good; pulling my shoulders back and pushing my wrists and waist forward reduced my leverage and footing.

"Yes, I do, and I suggest you listen carefully as he doesn't have much time left. You're familiar with the exotic dark haired beauty with generous curves he's been bringing here for weeks?"

The flicker of recognition in the captain's eye told me he was. Vyndra would have been hard to miss.

"She's a foreign spy. A Sypharian. Councilman Goldwain has been sharing security secrets with her in exchange for kinky sex. She's been captured and we have documented proof."

"A Sypharian? Why would she want to...oh. I see." I could see the captain processing the ramifications not only for the councilman, but for himself. "What proof..."

"Captain!" I interrupted. "The Councilman does not have much time left, and you have a choice to make. You and your men can be the heroes who discovered the Councilman's scandal and obtained his confession. Or your career can end with you explaining how you let TWO different spies get close enough to compromise and kill your protectee."

It didn't take long for the captain to process his decision. "You have an antidote?" I could see him looking at me trying to figure out where I was hiding it.

"I do. As soon as he confesses, I cure him, and you can arrest him."

The captain turned to Goldwain. "Let's hear it. Whatever you did, it's not worth dying over."

Realizing the captain was no longer on his side, Goldwain started babbling a wide-ranging confession, desperately giving up every criminal act and scheme he'd ever participated in. The captain made notes for a while, then sighed and gave up.

"I think that's enough for now." He signaled to his men to release me. "The antidote?"

"Of course." I smiled at the captain. I stepped closer to Goldwain and leaned down. Even in his distressed state, he couldn't resist looking at my breasts. I pulled my right arm back and slapped him across the face as hard as I could.

The impact knocked him away from the table and over on his side, and the sound echoed in the room. Since he couldn't move his arms to catch himself, his head impacted the shiny polished floor with a satisfying thud.

"You're cured." I told him with a smile. "Sea anemone toxin. It will wear off in a couple hours."

"What!" Goldwain blubbered. "You flogging wench! I'm going to kill you!"

"Oh I almost forgot the other cure. The one that will cure you from preying on young women." I pulled my leg back and gave him a solid kick between the legs. His eyes bulged and he howled, but his body was still other than a few twitching tremors. "You're going to feel that a whole lot more when the paralysis wears off." I assured him.

I turned to the three men who stared at me wide-eyed. None of them wanted to speak or move and become next on my list of grievances due.

"Captain, why don't you and one of your men," I directed as I pointed at the shorter guard, "take the Councilman into custody and take him to the Capitol Infirmary. I think he's going to need some healing time before he's formally charged. That will give you time to write your report of how you and your men uncovered his scandal."

The captain nodded, and motioned to the guard to help him retrieve the councilman.

I turned to the other guard. "Captain, I'll need your other guard to stay here with me and help me check out the rest of the room." I winked at the handsome guard and he broke into a grin.

"Yes, of course," the captain replied without looking up, as he and the other guard lifted the red-faced Goldwain off the floor. They dragged him out of the room as the councilman sobbed and gasped. As they left the room, the unlucky guard looked at his more fortunate partner with undisguised jealousy.

Epilogue: Finally, some relief!

I closed and locked the door behind them. “So that our ‘investigation’ is not interrupted,” I said in response to the guard’s raised eyebrows.

“I see,” he replied. “And am I allowed to know the name of the beautiful spy who managed to sneak a weapon past my strip-search, and escape my best ropework?”

“Evangeline,” I replied as I walked slowly back toward him. “But you may call me Evie. And two weapons, if you count the blade I used to cut your ropes.” I looked down at the column of red still wrapped around my wrist. “It was a shame to cut them, really. Your ties are beautiful and effective.”

“William,” he replied. “Not that you asked. Friends call me Will. And there are more ropes here on the bed...” He pointed to where four more lengths of the red cord were attached to the four bedposts.

“Easy there, Willie,” I chided, stopping before him with my wrists lifted before me, the two red columns of rope pressed together just asking for something to join them. “You’ve just captured a dangerous spy. Don’t you think you should make sure she hasn’t concealed any more weapons first?”

“First,” he said, as he grasped my slender wrists in his big hands, “I’m going to re-tie these in a way that your little fingernail-blade can’t cut them. Second,” he paused as he nodded at the shelves covered in Goldwain’s toys. “I’m going to figure out what some of those things are for and use them on you. And third,” he said in a low voice as he pulled me closer to him and looked down into my eyes with a menacing look. “If you ever call me Willie again, I will spank you until you beg forgiveness.”

I let out an uncharacteristic giggle as I looked back up at him. “Do your best...Willie.”

Special thanks to:

CallMePlissken, who helped bring Evie to life with his amazing artwork, designed most of her attire, and who provides spot-on constructive criticism. And for welcoming Evie into his world, allowing her to meet Alynnya, and lifting Evie's ban from the Devil's Due after that unfortunate incident with the Coldplay cover band and the 'missing' drumsticks. Technically, they were never missing, and the lead singer's surgeon was able to remove them.

WeAreAllMadHere, who always has great character name ideas (Vyndra) and maintains the canon for the World of Rith--helping me keep my details straight. And for borrowing his character, Lawrence Lucksworth, and apologies for implying Lawrence had casual sex with Evie. There should have been no implying about it. They did, and a lot.

Wyland, for the smart editing points he shares in the Writers' Lounge, and providing a great example for a sassy heroine with a cutting sense of humor. And for agreeing to the appearance of the 'red haired bard' and her 'green-haired warrior friend.' Though we all know Prim had veto power over whether she appeared or not.

Jaded Entity, for constant encouragement to write, and providing a great example of what it means to 'love' and 'protect' your OCs. And for calling me out when I had Evie do things that were out of character for her. When Millie's wizard finally needs a good butt-kicking, Evie will be ready and willing to help.