

Evie in ‘Disarming a Volatile Situation’

Vardengard, the northernmost large city of Varala, was home to the rogue wizard Karass, and was the location of my latest assignment from the secretive Codex Cryptae council. Karass himself was the subject of my assignment—or rather, some of his recent acquisitions were. My name is Evie, and on behalf of the Cryptae, I was there to ‘liberate’ some of those acquisitions.

Karass enjoyed a life of luxury and comfort as the personal wizard attending to the governor of the northern lands. He was well known for his lust for power and fortune, and his allegiance to the governor was dependent upon the governor regularly augmenting both.

The wizard was a collector of rare and curious items, many illegal, most stolen or purchased illicitly. Among his collection were some potent compounds and potions that no individual had any business possessing, much less an unstable and greedy wizard. The Cryptae council had chosen me to infiltrate his lair and remove some of the most dangerous and volatile items.

With my experience in alchemy and compounding elements I was the most likely candidate for the Cryptae to send on this mission. Since Karass was also known for his paranoia, it was unlikely these substances would be clearly labeled and sitting out, so my skill in cryptography and analysis would be needed as well.

My official cover assignment was to obtain the last known copy of a critical strategic map, one that Karass was known to have obtained as a collector’s item. The original map detailed the border lands between Vardengard and the ork-infested land of Glorg. Unlike cheap knockoffs, this map in particular had been created by the brilliant cartographer Lawrence Lucksworth.

And so I had set off for Vardengard with an official letter from the Strategic Forces committee of the Rithian Council, countersigned by Officers of the Crown of Varala. The letter detailed my authority as a Ranger of the Strategic Forces Division to travel through Varala to Vardengard, and to gain access to the public and private areas of Karass’ keep—for the express purpose of retrieving and safeguarding the Lucksworth map.

After several ‘relatively’ uneventful days of travel, I found myself at one of the gates to the innermost tiered level of the city, containing some of the most closely guarded buildings in the entire borderlands. Beyond the gate were the governor’s offices and residence, government buildings and banks, the Rithian embassy, and Karass’ keep.

Two guards were at the gate. They eyed me with interest in more than security as I approached. Though women of Varala were known for their beauty, most dressed fairly modestly. Modest was not a term that described my personally designed and custom-fit uniform I wore on official Strategic Forces business.

Most Rithian Rangers of the Infantry Divisions wore a snug but comfortable woven uniform under layers of metal armor. My uniform was better described as a form-fitting bodysuit accented with lightweight armor, but with plenty of opportunity to view my curvy-yet-toned figure. ‘Distracting’ was another way to describe it. Strategic Forces, indeed.

“Hello gentlemen!” I said cheerily. “My name’s Evangeline. My friends call me Evie. You can call me Evie if you’d like! I am here to see the wizard Karass, on official Rithian Council business.”

“Wizard Karass ain’t here, girly,” said the tall, pretty-boy one. “And you ain’t in Rith.”

“And no outsiders get inside the inner wall,” added the shorter, swarthy one.

“What I mean is, I am a Rithian Ranger, and I actually have permission, your Crown agreed to give me access...”

“You don’t look like no Ranger I never seen. Where’s your sword and armor?”

“I’m not a warrior Ranger. I’m a Strategic Forces Ranger. And...”

“You mean a spy.”

“Well, no...look, it is imperative that I obtain access to the wizard’s keep. I have this letter sanctioning my access...”

“Look at me, girly.” said the pretty-boy one. “Do I look like I waste my time doing stuff like learning to read? I do my communicatin’ in person, you know?” He gave a leering and suggestive look.

“Well, perhaps he has an assistant I could meet with then? An apprentice?”

“Heh,” chuckled the shorter one. “He don’t let her see visitors alone.”

“Look, I really need to get through. Can I go to the governor’s office? Or the Rithian embassy?”

“Girly you obviously don’t belong here,” said pretty-boy. “And ain’t no way you’re getting thru this gate without an escort. Unless you’d like me to escort you...” He reached out and put his hand on my waist, fingers splaying over my rear and beginning to squeeze.

As an instinctual reaction I grabbed his fingers and twisted them up and back toward him. The strain and pain made him howl and sink to his knees. While he was down there I kneed him in the nose. Not hard enough to seriously harm him, just enough to hear the satisfying pop of his nose breaking.

“Holy one, girlie!” cried out the swarthy one, drawing his sword.

I released the first one’s fingers, then held my arms out in front of me toward the other guard, offering my wrists in surrender. “Now may I please see someone inside? The captain of your guards, perhaps?”

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A few hours later, I found myself seated in the office of the Rithian ambassador, enduring a lecture about subtly, discretion, and international incidents. I tried hard not to roll my eyes. But then the ambassador surprised me by excusing his staff so we could speak privately. I was doubly surprised when he revealed a pendant hidden under his shirt that matched the one at my throat, the symbol of the Codex Cryptae.

“What is it you believe Karass has in his collection?” he asked.

“We believe he is in possession of some weapons of mass distraction.” I replied.

“You mean destruction.”

“No, distraction. For example, he may have a very large quantity of viper vine pollen—an entire stamen worth—and a means to disperse it over a large area.”

“Dear Holy Ones,” the ambassador muttered, pursing his lips and making a tent of his fingertips. “Imagine an entire crowd afflicted at once. Such as...I don’t know, the upcoming spring debutante ball...” His features took on an unfocused gaze and odd grin.

“Exactly,” I said. “And some other substances we don’t understand. We need to get them back to the labs at the academy for study and testing.”

“You realize Karass won’t give these things up willingly,” the ambassador said grimly.

“Yes. I need to get into his vaults before he returns tomorrow evening.”

“You shall stay in the embassy guest room tonight. I’ll post a specific guard at your door. I trust you can handle one guard?” He looked at me with one eyebrow raised.

“No problem,” I replied with a smile.

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In the darkness of the early morning hours, I hastily re-dressed and re-packed my gear. I clipped my backpack of gear onto my uniform. The integrated system kept my pack tight to my back regardless of my movement or position. I had traded out my everyday walking boots for soft-soled ninja-style split toed boots.

When I was ready to go, I took a deep breath and summoned my ‘seductive arts’ training. Had anyone been watching at the time, they would have observed my eyes take on a softer, doe-eyed look and a warm, inviting gaze. I cracked my door open to get the guard’s attention. As soon as he made eye contact, I was able to draw him in.

It took almost no effort to convince him to give a lonely girl traveling alone a nice kiss on the lips. It took only seconds more for the glossy potion on my lips to knock him completely unconscious. After catching his limp form, I dragged him across the floor and onto my bed. I stripped him naked, and tucked him into the covers, where he would wake alone in several hours. A pity, I thought, having observed his flawless physique and substantial endowment. Perhaps I should have not knocked him out so quickly.

I slipped silently out of the embassy and through starlit streets to Karass’ keep on the other side of the guards’ garrison. A guard had been posted out front, but soft candlelight from within highlighted the open windows, and I was able to climb through one unnoticed.

I found Karass’ assistant sleeping in a small bedroom closest to the kitchen area. The young redhead was lying naked on top of her covers, curled up with her hands plunged between her thighs, a suggestion of what she may have been doing when she fell asleep.

Curiously, she wore a thin leather collar with an attached leash that led to her bed frame. The other end of the leash was simply looped over the corner post, however, and not secured in any way. “Sometimes a verbal command is as secure as a padlock,” I thought to myself.

I silently knelt beside her bed, and leaned over to her. A gentle touch of my lips to hers, and she sighed with delight, her hands clutching tighter between her legs. A moment later, she lapsed into a deeper sleep that should last longer than my visit.

Now free to roam the keep, it did not take me long to find the wizard's vault hidden at one end of his workshop. The simple lock barely slowed my access. Soon I was perusing the contents of his shelves, deciphering his organizational and numbering system. A reference book of inventory cross-checked to locations on shelves with a simple substitution encryption. Apparently Karass didn't hold the intelligence of the locals in very high regard. As a first year cadet I could have cracked his cryptograph.

I soon found what I was looking for, and more. A glass jar held an entire full stamen from a viper-vine pod. A bag with symbols on it in the alphabet of the Xiaohau lands contained fine black grains I recognized as "flash-bang powder." A vial contained an unknown greenish-glowing liquid; another held a viscous metallic-looking plasma that seemed to have a life of its own.

(I noted with a shudder of discomfort that nearby was a contraption of classic "Arturo" design with attachments that had a residual greenish glow. A similar device was used at the academy to build up my resistance to Blue Shambler toxins. I shuddered again at the memory of two weeks of hell strapped into that thing).

So intent was I in collecting the dangerous collectibles and concealing them in hidden partitions of my bag, that I almost forgot to locate the Lucksworth map. I secured it in my pack, and was perusing other scrolls and documents when I heard the soft squeak of a floorboard behind me.

I whirled about to see the captain of the guard and four other soldiers blocking the only doorway out of the workshop. Among them was the now-not-so-pretty-boy with the broken nose. I drew my short blade from its sheath at my hip and crouched in a ready-stance, looking warily from man to man.

To one side stood Karass' redheaded assistant, now wrapped in a robe. "Evie, is it? You already have quite the reputation around here. It didn't occur to you that a wizard's assistant would have built up a tolerance for sleepy-drugs?" she asked sarcastically.

"You know, it honestly didn't," I replied evenly.

"Silly rabbit," she smirked.

The captain of the guard spoke up: "So it appears you're just a common thief after all. We have ways of dealing with thieves here."

"Fuck yeah, we do!" chimed in the boy formerly known as pretty.

"Shut it, Percy," hissed the captain.

“No!” I yelled. “I keep telling you, I am allowed to be here, by order of...”

“Yeah, yeah, you have a letter. No one here can read, and no one here cares! You’re a thief and you came to rob the wizard. Get her, men.”

The four advanced toward me, swords drawn. I adjusted my fighting stance and watched them creep closer. In close quarters, I would be able to get inside their long blades and do damage to two, three, maybe all four. But it was just a matter of time before they would overwhelm me, and I could be fatally wounded in the process.

“Fork me,” I muttered, and dropped my blade to the ground. I raised my hands slowly, and placed them on the back of my head. The action caused my waist to narrow, and my breasts to rise and jut forward. My eyes softened with a practiced allure. At least three of the men were mesmerized.

“Knock it off, you hussy!” hissed Karass’ assistant. “Dammit, you boys are pathetic.”

The captain shook his head as if trying to rattle himself awake. “I said, get her!”

The approaching men jolted as if woken from a nap. “C’mon girlie, let’s go,” said one boldly, as if he had never lost his focus.

One soldier moved to each side of me cautiously and gripped an arm. When it appeared I wouldn’t fight, they were emboldened, and began dragging me forward to Karass’ workbench. They bent me forward over it, and twisted my arms up painfully behind me. My breasts were crushed against the rough surface of the table.

“Ay! Dammit, take it easy!” I cried out. “Let up, or I’ll kill you with your own swords.”

I felt a brush of fabric against my rear, and then something decidedly harder than fabric prodded against me. “You can have my sword right now, girlie,” said the now-familiar nasally whine of once-pretty-boy.

“Ok, I’ll kill you with THAT.” I told him through gritted teeth.

“Someone shut her up,” said the wizard’s assistant. She removed the waist-tie from her robe and tossed it to a guard. He pulled it between my teeth and yanked it hard back into my mouth, drawing the sides of my mouth back harshly, and knotted it behind my head.

“Enough of your words, wench.” He gave it an extra tug.

The captain produced some manacles on a short chain and tossed them to one of the guards holding me down to the workbench. The others held my arms down while he affixed a manacle to each wrist.

When my wrists were secured in the irons behind me, the first two guards each grabbed one of my upper arms and stood me up straight. The captain of the guard sneered at me. “Let’s go, little wench. We’ll show you what we do with thieves.”

The guards at either side of me let out suggestive laughs that made me cringe. The way they were holding my arms meant that their fingers were pressed into my breasts, and the fact they kept twitching and sliding their fingers told me they were well aware.

They kept pushing me forward with unnecessary nudges and tugs at my arms, keeping me off balance and reminding me of my imprisoned status. We stepped out into the first rays of morning sun breaking over the walls of the city.

From the wizard’s lair it was a short walk to the guard house attached to the garrison building. I was taken through to a courtyard within. There the white walls of the keep had turned to a dingy grey, peppered with splotches of what looked like dried blood. The red stains appeared in streaks and impact splatters, and occasional full handprints.

I was led to a wall with a few metal plates set into the stone blocks, each with bolts through them and a short heavy chain attached. At the end of each chain was a similarly heavy manacle. The two guards held me steady with both hands...one hand still on my arms, the other encircling my body to hold me tight. I wriggled in their arms but their strength was imposing.

Other guards applied the manacles attached to the wall to my wrists before taking off the smaller set. Then they secured my ankles as well, and attached those chains to bolts in the wall.

Once I was secured to the wall, the guards became emboldened. They began helping themselves to gratuitous handfuls of my flesh, squeezing, groping and rubbing on me. I snarled at them and tried to lash out with my feet, but the heavy chains gave me little range of motion and their sheer weight resisted my efforts.

Verbal taunts accompanied the physical affronts, with the soldiers describing in lewd detail what they would do with me if their captain would just give them a few minutes.

“Ah foo minits ’s all it ‘ood ‘ake,” I snarled through the gag, but my muffled insult simply generated more laughter. I was growing angrier by the moment and beginning to see red. I could feel the rage I fought so hard to control starting to build upon itself, felt tensions flaring.

The captain stood before me and opened up my backpack.

“Nah!” I cried out. “htay oot uf hare.”

The captain ignored my demand and began rummaging around inside. He began pulling things out at random and dropping that which did not interest him on the ground. Delicate and dangerous things were being pulled from the pack and tossed casually around. I tried lunging at him, trying to get his attention, trying to keep him from accidentally opening something beyond his ability to control.

“Nah! Nah! Heve hit uh-rhone.” I was furious now, screaming, and trying to kick, and still lunging at him. Only the sheer strength of the chains held me back.

Not-so-pretty boy moved in front of me holding a long bullwhip with a knobby handle. He began poking at me with the end of the handle, prodding my breasts and belly with it, rubbing it along my sides, trying to force the end into my mouth. I resisted him with what little motion I could, even tried to spit at him through the gag.

Just as he was beginning to uncoil the bullwhip with a devilish look in his eyes, I saw the ambassador enter the courtyard. “What is going on here? What is the meaning of this?”

I saw that he was closely followed by the governor, looking sheepish and embarrassed to be called out by the ambassador in front of his men.

“This woman is a thief,” asserted the captain of the guard.

This time the governor himself spoke up. “No, this woman is here by permission of your King and on a mission to benefit both of our nations...didn’t you read her letter?”

“Um...well...no...” stammered the captain.

Now the ambassador spoke up. “This woman is a citizen of Rith and is now under my protection. I demand you release her into my custody at once.” He took my backpack from the captain of the guard, and held out his hand for the keys.

Once the captain handed him the keys, the ambassador came to my side, and began to unlock one of the manacles from my wrists. Then he paused and looked around.

“Oh...you men all may want to make yourself scarce before I free her.” He looked pointedly at broken-nose boy. “You...with the whip...you may want to RUN.”



The injured guard didn't think twice. He dropped the whip to the ground and hustled away inside the garrison.

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I felt proud as I was traveling back to Rith, my mission a success. The compartments in my backpack held the illicit compounds liberated from the wizard. The Lucksworth map was rolled up inside a protective tube. Since the original map had never been in danger, I decided I was keeping this copy as a souvenir.

The ambassador, pleased with the way things turned out despite the chaos I left behind, would smooth things out both in Varala and with my superiors back in Rith. And the governor of Northern Varala had compensated me for my 'inconveniences' with a hefty bag of coins.

The only thing that still weighed heavily upon me was the fact that I had just made an enemy of a spiteful and powerful wizard. And his sassy assistant.

Oh well, I thought. What were the odds we would ever cross paths again?

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