

## Introducing Evangeline aka “Evie”

by Katie D

Evangeline, or Evie, is a Rithian Ranger—the female warriors of the Rithian forces and graduates of the Ranger Academy. While many Rangers excel in combat and brave military action, others are known more for their tactical and strategic savvy, their command of information.

Evie is one of the latter, and a member of the Codex Cryptae, a secret classification within the graduate classes of the Ranger Academy. Officially, Evie reports to senior Ranger leadership as a scribe, a historian, and a cryptographer—while acting on behalf of the Cryptae council and their spymaster.

Evie’s assignments allow her to scout and gather intelligence, document events and conversations, and move about with a minimum of suspicion. Her Ranger title gives her access to the most secret and guarded places and the most sensitive information. But of course, even Rangers are not immune to danger, mishaps, and being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Members of the Cryptae are always on the lookout for youngsters who show potential and can be groomed into future members. Evie was identified in her early teens, and the Cryptae mentors who guided her knew right away she was special. But she required a little more intervention at the beginning than many of her peers.

Evie was born into poverty. She was raised on the streets as much as in her broken home. She survived on her wits, becoming an adept thief and a con artist.

She kept a low profile, and was never in trouble. But when she was 13, her 18 year old sister found trouble; she was abducted by slave traders and taken out of the city. In less than a day, Evie tracked them down. She infiltrated their hideout—and killed six henchmen with a blade no bigger than her hand.

When she found their leader, she slit his belly wide open and slowly pulled out his entrails while he screamed for mercy. She shut him up by removing an essential body part and forcing it down his throat.

When she opened the cage where her sister was kept, Evie was

covered in blood and gore, and the story goes that her eyes held a crazed fury. Her sister screamed in horror and refused to leave the cage. To this day, her sister has never spoken a word to her, won't even look her in the eye out of fear. And Evie has lived in fear of her own rage ever since.

To this day, the murders of the slave traders remain unsolved. Evie was never arrested, not even questioned. Other than her sister, who won't speak of it, she left absolutely no trace behind. If nothing else, a Cryptae recruiter wrote, she would make a damn fine assassin. But certain other members realized she could become so much more.

So after she caught the attention of the Codex Cryptae, they got her out of her home situation and placed her with a stable family, into a good prep school. It's amazing what food, clothes, a clean home and a loving family can do for one's academic progress. She earned her way into Ranger Academy without the Cryptae's help. They just ensured she followed a path of study that would develop her abilities.

Evie quickly demonstrated that she had many intellectual gifts. Recording and interpreting events, and analysis. Tactical and strategic savvy. Debate, persuasive speaking and writing. Cryptography, both code building and breaking.

But Evie also possessed an extreme level of empathy. She was adept at reading people, their motivations, their intents—and manipulating their desires. While her Intellectual Intelligence was high, her Emotional Intelligence was off the charts. Such duality had rarely been seen in even the most highly trained Cryptae members, and to Evie it all seemed to come naturally.

As her mentors helped develop her 'soft skills,' she also embraced the esoteric arts, and through that, healing arts. Potions and compounds became part of her tools of trade, not from origins within magic or wizardry, but from a newer field of study known as alchemy.

And...Evie also excelled in some unofficial curriculum that the more puritanical faculty of the Ranger Academy disdainfully called the 'seductive arts.' Blessed with striking beauty and a most desirable form, Evie would never have been lacking for suitors regardless of her station in life. To Evie, though, her appearance was just another asset to be leveraged; seduction was just another skill such as code

breaking or running a con. Empathy and her ability to manipulate others helped Evie leverage her beauty into a tool deadly as any sword or potion.

These conflicting facets of her identity once threatened to consume Evie—or tear her apart. The ruthless assassin, the scholar-spy, the sultry seductress—sometimes she wasn't sure who or how to be. Some experiences haunted Evie; others emboldened her.

One mentor noted that at times, Evie's eyes would show the workings of a highly analytical mind—noting, classifying and cataloguing every detail around her at once. But in an instant, the analytical spark could suddenly flicker out like an extinguished lamp, replaced instantly by a soft sensual gaze and sweet smile that captured attention wherever she went.

Curious, the mentor thought. And beguiling. Were he not aware of her abilities, he might be enraptured. Woe be to the man—or woman—who foolishly underestimates this one, he thought.

Without the Codex Cryptae, Evie might never have gained control of her own identity. Her mentors helped her harness strength from each facet of her identity, and she learned how and when to employ the best parts of each.

In her own words:

“To see all that I have seen is not a choice I would recommend to anyone. But had I not, I might be a single shadow of who I am today. And I would not hold the power to choose which shadows I want to unleash.”

-Evie