

Rise of the Dragon Sworn

Book 3 of the Shadow Dragon Saga

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Complete summary including spoilers.



Riony, Lyrrin, Dracuni, Niskina, Aishena, and Benjin are passing through a rough settlement dominated by thugs and smugglers, restocking supplies after escaping the undercity.

The group plans to leave quickly, wary of attracting attention. Riony and Benjin inventory supplies from their journey, focusing on survival essentials. Riony is tense about the harsh conditions aboveground, made worse by their proximity to

violent strangers and frequent encounters with undead revenants ("revs").

Amid this, Niskina is recklessly indulging in alcohol and meaningless relationships as she grapples with her father's death, blaming both herself and him. Aishena is haunted by a sense of duty toward Benjin and struggles with her lost identity since Yoskar's absence, unsure whom to follow now.

Riony considers her old settlement in a secluded strip mine where she lived briefly with her parents when Lyrrin was younger. Despite her reluctance to face memories of her past life there, the others—especially Benjin, acting decisively like Yoskar—see it as a viable hideout from Kess and Lady Hjelzahn.

They also decide to explore a nearby Alderkin shrine, which might offer magical protection or gateways like the one they used before.

As Aishena attempts to get a drunk Niskina out of the tavern, Dracuni, hidden by Lyrrin, emerges in panic when she overhears Riony teasingly cry out. A thug sees Dracuni and moves to capture her, but he's taken down by Kess, who arrives with Griskin, intent on claiming Dracuni.

Riony's anger flares over Kess's betrayal, and despite Kess's claims that Riony can't protect the dragonling, Riony resolves to fight, willing to risk her life for Dracuni.

Lyrrin's distress over the potential bloodshed makes Riony hesitate, and as a crowd of ruffians forms, the group retreats toward the shrine, narrowly staying ahead of Kess.

Reaching the shrine, Riony hopes to activate a gateway to escape. Dracuni's presence energizes the shrine's magic, offering an escape route to their original shrine location.

Once at the first shrine, the group is disheartened to be back where they started but relieved to be safe, though they contemplate their next steps with tension over Riony's unresolved grudge against Kess.

Riony reflects on the necessity of killing Kess herself if they meet again, even though the thought is painful.

They begin to realize that Dracuni's presence can recharge the shrines, and through the shrines also recharge their other magical artefacts.

Recognizing the unidragon's significance, they agree to safeguard Dracuni without exploiting her abilities unless absolutely necessary.

They also believe that the shrines' magical influence can repel undead, providing safe havens, though they're still vulnerable to Kess's persistent pursuit.

Using the Alderkin map Aishena retrieved in the depths, the group plans to travel between shrines, recharging their artifacts while avoiding Kess's scent trail. Though the plan is promising, Riony remains unsettled by the thought of revisiting her old home.

Kess sees the process Riony's group uses to activate the gateway, but it closes before she can follow. As the thugs catch up to her, she has to run from them. After escaping, Kess tends to Griskin, injured by a crossbow bolt, using herbs Riony once recommended.

Memories of Riony's past care of her surface, stirring mixed emotions. Kess considers the silvernix she carries, a necessary component in dragon taming which she intends to do on Dracuni, but realizes she might need it to aid Griskin instead.

And with the use of the magical gateways, Kess is frustrated her chances of catching Dracuni are lower. Realizing she can't keep up on foot, Kess painfully concludes she'll need to seek help—from somebody terrible.

Months later, Riony and her group are on the move, their journey taking them to an abandoned village. Tensions are high; Riony is wary of Kess's pursuit, dismissing Lyrrin's hopeful view of friendship or forgiveness as naïve.

In the village, Dracuni, now the size of a large dog, is fixated on chasing chickens, and Lyrrin tries out her hunting skills with her sling, honing them to help sustain the group.

Niskina, struggling with both the bleak landscape and her own despair, wonders aloud if their efforts are in vain. From a nearby mountaintop, they observe a blighted region matching a site depicted in an Alderkin mural, suspecting it as the cursed location of the first dragon taming.

As refugees fleeing a revenant army arrive, Riony reluctantly agrees to help them reach safety.

Kess arrives at her family estate, only to find it in ruins, overgrown, and seemingly long abandoned. Shocked and saddened by its desolation, she encounters a few wandering revenants but no sign of her brother Kife or the other dragonriders meant to protect the grounds.

Discovering her parents' remains, Kess feels a conflicted sense of loss, recalling their cold attempts to "fix" her. She searches the estate for valuables, hoping to find the family's silvernix stash, but finds it gone.

Memories of her struggle to obtain her current silvernix resurface, including a harrowing encounter with smugglers and a revenant filled pit trap. Retracing old, painful memories with Riony, Kess's anger flares. Her brother was supposed to guard their family's legacy, but it seems he fled and let her family die.

Riony's group reaches safety at a shrine, sheltering the refugees they've encountered from the revenant horde pursuing them. The safety of the shrine's protection inspires the refugees to start a settlement there.

They prepare to stay the night and Riony reassures the wary villagers that Dracuni is no threat, even as they seem intimidated by the young dragon's presence.

Riony befriends an older woman among the settlers, Myrwa, who affirms that their aid has renewed the group's hope for survival.

Amidst discussions, Riony reflects on the ever-growing threat of the shadow dragon, connecting it to the legendary curse of the Alderkin. She wonders about the consequences of human dragon taming, suspecting it may have exacerbated the curse, though abandoning the use of dragons seems like an impossible solution.

As they prepare for the night, a young refugee goes into labor, Riony steps in, using her limited midwife training to assist. The baby's birth brings bittersweet relief, tempered by the nearby revenants.

Dracuni watches the event in awe, while Lyrrin curiously asks about her own birth mother, reopening old wounds for Riony, who feels the weight of her role in the lives of those she's trying to protect.

Aishena encourages Riony, reminding her of the good she's doing. Though exhausted and overwhelmed, Riony resolves to press forward, feeling inspired to continue helping those around her despite the harsh, uncertain world they face.

Kess arrives at a dragonkeep where she's given begrudging respect due to her family's name, Heithorn. The keep is starkly different than she remembers, with more poverty and tightened security.

She finds her brother, Kife, living comfortably with other dragonriders. Despite his initial disdain and mockery, Kess convinces him to help her pursue Dracuni by revealing Dracuni has silvernix blood.

Kife is cynical about their family, dismissing their past and flaunting his current status. She remains wary but needs him to access resources, including a map with shrine portal locations that can aid her mission, and a dragon to fly on.

Kess spends a night in luxury at Kife's, feeling a mixture of bitterness and longing for respect that her life has always lacked. She confronts Kife about his abusive treatment of slaves, a pattern that disgusts her, and attempts to free one of his current slaves.

As they prepare to set out, Kife reveals his dragon, the same purple etherdart she once admired, now hardened by time and battles.

Riony and her team watch over an ore mine where children and others are enslaved, including some familiar faces from the undercity, children they hadn't been able to save the time Lyrrin was captured by slavers.

Despite reservations, they decide to free them, with Riony issuing a warning to the slavers. The overseers resist, but her team takes control, disabling their signal tower to prevent reinforcements.

A fierce battle ensues, with Lyrrin using makeshift incendiaries to assist Riony. The overseers ultimately surrender, and the team guides the liberated slaves toward a nearby shrine for safety.

They take the freed slaves to join Myrwa's enclave, and there are celebrations. As they feast, Niskina dreams of future rescues, wanting to be a hero like the Rebel Riders she reads about. Niskina flirts with a group of men they met at the ore mine who escaped with them and encourages Riony to have a good time too.

Riony, meanwhile, reflects on her guarded nature and past intimacy with Kess. The festive atmosphere lifts everyone's spirits, but Riony remains alert, always worried Kess may still be near.

Aishena drunkenly reveals the true depths of her grief and confusion, and as Riony comforts her to sleep, she sees a glimpse of something like a shooting star in the night.

The next morning the group of men Niskina flirted with reveal they are part of a group of rebels, and want to take Riony and the others to meet and join them. Riony and friends follow the men to a nearby abandoned glass factory.

But upon arrival, the situation feels off. The factory is dilapidated, full of dragon-binding remnants and carcasses, and quickly proves to be a trap set by Kife and Kess, who have allied with local bounty hunters to capture Dracuni and the Hjelzahns.

The shooting star Riony saw was the flare used to signal Kess and Kife that their bounty had been found.

The betrayal hits hard, especially for Niskina, as they realize the bounty hunters have arranged to hand Dracuni over to Kess, and Aishena and Benjin taken for their bounty put out by their mother as well, leaving Riony and Lyrrin as expendable.

Kess hesitates to finish off Riony herself and Lyrrin and Benjin manage to use Yoskar's magic staff to free their friends.

Benjin is furious when Lyrrin sacrifices Yoskar's staff in the process. The team barely escapes with everyone, including an unconscious Aishena, drugged with the sedative morass mercy.

Kess pursues the group as they retreat. Kess is conflicted; despite her alliance with Kife, she feels guilt when the refugees at the shrine rally against her to defend Riony, who escapes again through the gateway.

Once Kife catches up to Kess, they fly on his dragon to the shrine Kess knows the others have travelled to from having seen which symbol they selected.

Kife pressures Kess into surrendering her vial of silvernix, and continues to blame her for their family's ruin. Kess's determination to win her own dragon and the honor of being a dragon rider is strong, yet she's haunted by Riony's look of betrayal, and how everyone looks at her and Kife as though they are the evil ones.

Riony and friends escape through a gateway, but Benjin lashes out at Lyrrin for destroying Yoskar's staff. Lyrrin reactivates the gateway, running away briefly to retrieve Alderkin crystals to build Benjin a new staff. They bond as Benjin lets go of the staff's memory.

Riony struggles with feeling powerless to protect her loved ones against what they now face. Before they can rest, the group is forced to flee again as Kife and Kess track them to their new location, shattering the gateway behind them and destroying one potential escape route.

Kess and Kife continue their pursuit after destroying a geode gateway, and Kess recalls how she met Griskin: Kife once flew her far from home on a dragon, only to abandon her in the wilderness, claiming she held their family back.

Struggling for survival, Kess encounters an injured wolf caught in a trap. She feeds it her meager catch, freeing it and resigning herself to whatever fate the wolf chooses for her. The wolf, however, returns, and they form an unspoken bond, helping each other survive.

That night, Kess feels disillusioned with Kife's domesticated dragon, reflecting on the sadness of its broken spirit. She clings to Griskin for comfort, the only one she trusts, and silently vows never to depend on anyone else. During the night, she secretly steals back her silvernix.

Riony and her group are exhausted, having been relentlessly pursued by Kess and Kife for weeks, with little reprieve. The team strategizes to evade Kess by using newly activated portals unpredictably, but Kess's knowledge of portal locations continues to compromise their efforts.

Strained and weary, Riony suggests retreating to her old home, hoping it will offer some refuge and respite. Lyrrin presents an idea to use fungus around the shrines to stop Griskin following their scent when they travel on foot.

After successfully evading pursuit for weeks, the team finally arrives at Riony and Lyrrin's abandoned village. It is eerily quiet, showing signs of the undead's past destruction but no recent threats.

As they explore, Riony's memories of her parents' deaths resurface, and she's visibly shaken. In their old home, Lyrrin and Riony find remnants of their childhood. Riony tries to lift Lyrrin's spirits by revisiting a swing near the river. Meanwhile, Aishena and Niskina, searching nearby, make a loud noise that rouses lurking revenants from the water.

The team faces off against the human revenants, each fighting their own. Riony is overwhelmed with terror when she realizes that one revenant is her mother, distinguishable by her four silver rings.

Paralyzed by grief, she's unable to defend herself. In desperation, Dracuni releases her flame for the first time, but instead of incinerating the undead, her silvery fire strangely heals them, momentarily bringing Riony's mother back to an agonizing semblance of life before Riony has to witness her mother die again.

Grappling with grief and trauma, Riony flees to be alone.

Kife has grown frustrated with the search for Dracuni, nearly abandoning it, but Kess, guided by intuition, suspects where Riony may be hiding.

While gathering water, Kess catches sight of Riony washing her wounds and grief beneath a waterfall. Stunned by Riony's vulnerability and beauty, Kess is filled with conflicting emotions and retreats to camp without alerting Kife of Riony's presence.

Kess recalls a bitter memory when Kife manipulated her into harming Riony to prove her knife throwing skills, which then led to Kess lashing out and whipping Riony herself for the first time in her confused shame, and Riony returning the violence, revealing Kess's lack of care for her own life.

At the waterfall, Riony allows herself to fully experience the grief and exhaustion of her journey, feeling the weight of her losses and the emotional strain of being a leader.

She realizes that despite physical strength, she is unprepared for the emotional pain of losing loved ones. As she leaves, she notices wolf tracks, confirming that Kess has found her trail. Alarmed, she rushes back to her group, finding Lyrrin comforting Dracuni.

Riony fears Kess attacked Dracuni, only to learn Dracuni's weakness came from using her flame. Aishena and Niskina express remorse for leaning too much on Riony and commit to sharing the burdens she's carried alone.

Together, they build a pyre, adding tokens for their lost friends, and hold a somber funeral for Riony's mother. Uncertain of their next steps, they ponder staying put for safety, but Kife and Kess suddenly arrive on a dragon, having seen the burning pyre, interrupting the fragile peace.

The group scrambles as Kife and Kess's dragon lands, targeting Dracuni. Riony realizes it was Kess she saw at the waterfall but is baffled by Kess's hesitance to attack.

Kife boasts as the dragon seizes Dracuni. Riony injures the dragon's wing, but it manages to take off with Dracuni in its grip. Riony sustains a serious head injury, on top of her other wounds from earlier.

As Kess and Kife fly off triumphant, Kife betrays her yet again, pushing her off the dragon. Riony, dazed from injury, confronts a fallen Kess.

Kess confesses remorse, and is ready for her life of pain and betrayal to end. Despite her anger, Riony hesitates, influenced by Lyrrin's pleas, then collapses from her injuries.

Riony's friends rush to her aid, unable to easily help her with Dracuni gone. But Kess reveals her vial of unicorn blood, offering it without any bargaining to heal Riony.

Once Riony is healed, Kess tries to leave, but Lyrrin and Riony ask her to stay and help rescue Dracuni. Though distrustful, Riony accepts Kess's help, knowing they need Griskin's speed if they are to catch up to a dragon.

The team devises a plan to intercept Kife at Heithorn Estate, where they assume Kife will stop to retrieve what he needs to tame Dracuni. There is a shrine at the estate which should activate when Dracuni is close, so they can gateway there.

Riony and Kess split up from the others for speed, and ride Griskin to the closest shrine, while the others promise to catch up. The gateway activates a path to the estate, and they see Kife there, bleeding Dracuni's blood into bottles and gathering taming supplies.

Kife's dragon sits to the side, alone, and Riony trusts Kess to control Kife's dragon in a risky maneuver.

But Kife gives it additional voice commands, causing chaos. Kife's dragon ignites the hatchery, setting the building ablaze. In the heat of battle, Riony offers Kife a chance to surrender, but he refuses, falling beneath a crumbling wall and flames as Riony secures Dracuni.

After reuniting with Dracuni, Riony questions why Kess didn't flee on Kife's dragon after the fight, taking it for herself. Kess expresses disappointment, realizing a tamed dragon pales compared to the freedom of a wild one.

The rest of the group arrives and they decide to free the dragon, pulling its taming spike out and healing it with silvernix to reverse the taming. The dragon reawakens after a strange wisp of smoke returns to it, and it soars away into the sky.

Kess is left broken and confused about all she wants and her role in the world. As the group considers their future, Lyrrin proposes helping others reach the shrines and sharing their knowledge.

As they prepare to leave, Riony opens up to Kess, expressing a desire for peace between them and offering Kess a place with them. Before Kess can respond, Kife is revealed to have survived, by using the silvernix he'd already bottled. He drugs Kess and Griskin with the sedative herb and then stabs Riony in the back.

Kife takes Kess away leaving Riony apparently dead and her friends blaming Kess for the attack.



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