



Blood of the Dragon Throne

Book 4 of the Shadow Dragon Saga

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Complete summary including spoilers.

Kess finds herself locked in a cell-like room—a barren pantry with no windows—within her brother Kife’s residence. Kife keeps her sedated by filling the room with the herb morass mercy, causing her to hallucinate, particularly seeing a ghostly vision of Riony with a bloodstained shirt.

Kess’s physical and mental health are deteriorating under the effects, leading to nightmares, migraines, and remorseful

thoughts, especially about her past antagonistic actions towards Riony.

She has heard Griskin nearby, perhaps searching for her, but knows he can’t reach her, and will abandon her too.

Kife aims to gain an audience with the king and reveal Dracuni’s existence to him in return for royal favor but is frustrated by his failures to gain a meeting. He mocks Kess for tainting the family’s reputation, claiming she’s the cause of his social struggles.

In a desperate moment, Kess fights back and manages to swipe a dagger from him before he locks her away again.

Her thoughts swing between vengeance on Kife for Riony’s fate and a lingering hope of rescuing Dracuni, though she doubts she’d be welcomed back by Riony’s friends who likely blame her for Riony’s death.

Haunted by regrets, Kess reflects on the years of calling Riony “Pony” as a way to avoid facing her own feelings for her slave. She promises the ghost she will never call her Pony again.

Meanwhile, in another part of the city, Dashiell—a young, non-binary dragon rider from the prominent Zarram family—is preparing for the traditional dragon taming ceremony that initiates new dragon riders.

Dashiell, however, has already bonded with a hatchling named Shiff, and argues with their father about rejecting the taming process, which would suppress Shiff’s free will.

Their brother Vance, a seasoned rider with a tamed dragon of his own (Viska), tries to persuade Dashiell that taming is necessary, though he openly sympathizes. The Zarram family are Rolanian, a rarity amongst mostly Taen dragonlords, so their standing in the hierarchy is already precarious so they must be careful.

Dashiell’s care for Shiff and rebellious spirit, fueled by stories of Rebel Riders, ignites a plan to fake the taming. When an old family friend, Eslinde, visits, she inspires Dashiell further.

Though once a staunch opponent of taming, Eslinde has grown quiet and subdued, even defending the practice of putting a stake into the dragon’s brains by likening it to dragons merely wearing jewelry.

After weeks of confinement, Kess is barely coherent when Kife drags her to the royal palace, hoping her presence will lend weight to his petition to see the king. Disheveled and weak, she tries to resist him, fumbling for her hidden dagger, but she's too incapacitated to make an impact, losing her chance at escape.

But Kife's abuse of Kess is noticed by others and Kess finds herself face-to-face with "The Guest" who had given birth at Heithorn Estate, who is visibly concerned by Kess's poor state.

When Kife attempts to manipulate The Guest into granting his audience with the king, The Guest, recognizing Kess as someone from her past, dismisses him forcefully, hinting at her royal influence.

Kess, in turn, hints that she holds crucial knowledge The Guest would want to know, particularly about Lyrrin, working out that Lyrrin was her baby. The woman reveals herself to be Eslinde the First, last daughter of the Dragon King.

The princess is intrigued but chooses discretion, leading Kess to her private chambers where they can speak in confidence. Here, Kess admits the truth: Eslinde's lost daughter Lyrrin is alive, though Kess is evasive about the full story, distressed by Riony's ghost who doesn't want her secrets shared.

The revelation stirs a mixture of disbelief, hope, and anger in Eslinde, who resolves to keep Kess close, both for protection and to uncover the entire truth.

As Kess recovers with the help of royal medical care, including a dose of silvernix, her mind clears, and Riony's ghostly visions fade, leaving Kess alone with her grief. The absence of Riony's hallucinations feels like losing her all over again.

Kess contemplates how to escape her new prison, planning her next steps, including revenge on Kife and the protection of Dracuni from those who would exploit or harm her, in Riony's memory.

Eslinde summons her mother, Queen Vellira, demanding answers. She reveals her knowledge of Vellira's past deception—that Lyrrin was stolen, not dead at birth.

Vellira confesses, explaining that she ordered the baby's execution to avoid scandal, using a disposable dragonrider and lamenting that she hadn't employed a trusted grayglim instead since the man failed and slaves ran off with the baby instead.

Eslinde dismisses her mother, having confirmed Kess's truthfulness about her daughter. Eslinde shares her past: she's the last of the first-generation heirs, born out of her father's obsession with Vellira, whom he believed to be a reincarnation of his first wife.

Eslinde's youthful pregnancy led to harsh consequences but not exile or death due to her mother's influence. When Kess inquires about Lyrrin's father, Eslinde deflects, stating he's dead.

Kess reassures Eslinde that Lyrrin is safe, tough, and loved. Eslinde grows angry upon learning Kess once hunted her daughter and locks Kess in her chambers.

Kess, trapped in Eslinde's chambers, attempts escape but struggles against what seem to be magical locks. Her hopes of a future fade, haunted by abandonment, guilt, and the weight of past choices.

Clinging to Riony's acorn pendant which she's managed to hold onto since finding it in the ice cave, she finds the strength to continue, fashioning makeshift weapons and plotting revenge on Kife.

From her window, she spies a procession led by the Dragon King and notices Lady Hjelzahn watching from the shadows.

Dashiel prepares for the tamer's ceremony, planning to fake the taming using a modified collapsible stake. During the ritual, Dashiel manages to swap the real stake with the fake, but is injured in the process and the silvernix that was part of the ceremony fails to heal it, raising suspicions about the substance's authenticity.

Investigating, Dashiel finds a hidden crystal with strange carvings beneath a metal foil on the provided taming stake. Their father's arrival interrupts further inspection, as he speaks on the lucrative potential of dragon breeding and warns against any scandal that could jeopardize their family.

Eslinde and Kess attend the taming. Kess watches, feeling sickened by the brutal process as riders tame their hatchlings, and resolves to protect Dracuni.

Now wheelchair-bound thanks to Eslinde's gift, Kess finds herself both a spectacle and a target of disdain among an ableist Taen society. She almost reaches Kife who is also in attendance, only to be intercepted by Ulfren, the first heir to the throne, who probes her about her ties to Eslinde.

Ulfren even hints at rewarding Kess for any incriminating information on Eslinde, whom he dislikes. Eslinde arrives, rescuing Kess from Ulfren and taking her to meet the dragonlord siblings, Dashiel and Vance, who show unusual kindness toward Kess.

Vance, who has a prosthetic leg, empathizes with her struggle against the ableist culture. He was once a great dragonrider but lost that role when he lost his leg.

As a gesture of goodwill, Dashiel offers Kess a chance to ride Viska, Vance's dragon. Warily, Kess accepts, confused by the genuine consideration for her needs. For a moment, she imagines seizing control of the dragon, but she refrains, waiting for Dashiel to strike first as she's sure will happen.

Once landed again, Dashiel's kindness overwhelms her, and she breaks down, confessing her fear of further betrayal and remorse over her past actions. Before they can discuss further, Lady Hjelzahn emerges from the shadows, threateningly approaching them.

Kess draws her makeshift weapon, prepared to defend herself, but doubts its effectiveness and urges Dashiel to leave.

Before any confrontation with Lady Hjelzahn escalates, Eslinde, Vance, and their entourage arrive. Lady Hjelzahn immediately changes her stance, masking her aggression.

Eslinde inquires about Lady Hjelzahn's search for her missing children, with Lady Hjelzahn implying her court connections will help track rumors. Kess privately warns Eslinde that Lady Hjelzahn tried to kill her children, now hiding with Riony, Lyrrin, and others.

Eslinde questions Kess about Lady Hjelzahn's motivations and potential threat level; Kess admits she doesn't know Lady Hjelzahn's reasons but confirms Lady Hjelzahn is a threat.

Back in Eslinde's chambers, she presses Kess for more details, hinting at Kess's evasion and hidden truths, including her wary behavior around the electric lights.

Eslinde explains her complex relationship with the other heirs, noting that her position as the Dragon King's daughter involves constant power struggles and that the king's control stems partly from his exclusive knowledge of unicorn blood reserves.

Kess and Eslinde discuss potential threats, especially the ever-present surveillance of Eslinde's grayglim bodyguard, Yensen.

Falden (an advisor) arrives, revealing information about Kess's past, hinting at rumors of her obsession with dragons.

When Eslinde delicately requests information on shrines, Falden echoes court sentiments, describing shrine settlers as dangerous and attributing the rise of revenants to these groups. Eslinde plans to secretly contact her daughter via messages under the guise of official inquiries.

Eslinde confirms Kess's theory that taming dragons is what created the shadow dragon curse and is making it worse. She is frustrated that Kess isn't providing her with any more useful information, when Kess reveals they were able to untame and free a dragon.

Eslinde and Kess later visit Dashiell and Vance to experiment with reversing the taming of dragons. Although Vance hesitates due to the risks involved, Eslinde offers her own dragon, a snowshimmer they have stabled for her, for the test.

The process works but leads to the snowshimmer resisting captivity and displaying aggressive behavior. They manage to cage the dragon safely again with only minor injuries, during which Kess notices Eslinde and Vance's affection for each other.

Dashiell is enthusiastic about the ability to untame dragons and Vance is apprehensive about consequences. The Zarram's show the others the taming spike from the earlier ceremony with the strange markings. Kess and Eslinde both identify the Alderkin runes.

Determined to act, Eslinde and Kess confront the Dragon King, presenting evidence of dragon taming's potential role in the shadow dragon's spread. Ulfren and the King remain dismissive, valuing the society's reliance on dragon power over addressing potential consequences.

Eslinde cleverly redirects the discussion, feigning concern for Lady Hjelzahn's missing children as a ploy to search for Lyrrin, though the king refuses her request to leave the city.

Eslinde decides they need to find more allies, and spread the word of the reason behind the curse among the nobles in an attempt to create change. They attend a formal court event to do so.

Kess, feeling out of place and intimidated, reluctantly attends but uses the opportunity to observe court dynamics. She discovers that Ulfren funds extremist religious factions and plots to eliminate Eslinde's influence.

Dashiell shares his progress communicating with Eslinde's untamed dragon and his hopes the next attempt will be even better, though Vance warns him against further risks.

The gathering is abruptly interrupted by news of Ylva's death, one of the few first heirs Eslinde trusted. In the ensuing chaos, Kess, left behind, encounters Kife, who has overheard her talk of untaming dragons.

Enraged, he accuses her of treason, and in a violent confrontation, he physically assaults her, lifting her from her chair and strangling her against a wall.

Dashiell rescues Kess from the attack by Kife. Kess, slightly attracted to Dashiell, scolds herself for romanticizing simple kindness.

Reunited with Eslinde, who expresses grief over losing her sister Ylva, Kess is inspired by Eslinde's renewed drive after hearing vague rumors at the event of Lyrrin's potential actions and whereabouts. But the rumors suggest Riony is no longer with that group, leading Kess to believe she truly is dead.

Eslinde shares frustrations in gaining allies and considers Kess's advice to seek non-dragonlord support.

Eslinde, trusting Kess more fully now, reveals protective runes around her chambers and shares a secret: Lyrrin's father was an Alderkin prisoner in the palace, and there are others still alive.

Eslinde, recalling past rebellious visits, takes Kess to see the Alderkin prisoners. After bribing her way into the hidden prison, she shares that Lyrrin's grandfather may still be alive.

They find the Alderkin weakened, forced to craft taming runes for the dragonking, who's seeking control beyond silvernix. The Alderkin explain the shadow dragon's creation—resulting from dragons' magical subjugation.

Eslinde shares news of Lyrrin, reviving their spirits, and promises to help them escape. Kess is overwhelmed, torn between aiding Eslinde's ever riskier plans or betraying her to ally with Ulfren for vengeance against Kife.

Determined to untame another dragon, Dashiell releases one they feel bonded with, but an attack from a shadowy figure disrupts the dragon's control, causing chaos as it breaks free of the dragonhold.

Despite Dashiell and Vance's attempts to recapture it, the dragon sets part of the city aflame before being killed. Dashiell finds a dagger marked with the Heithorn's crest, realizing they were sabotaged.

Vance and Dashiell are arrested, accused of releasing a wild dragon.

As Dashiell and Vance face punishment in front of the king, Kess suspects Kife's involvement. Ulfren accuses Eslinde of conspiracy, demanding consequences.

Privately, the dragonking pressures Kess to confess to the crime in exchange for the Zarram siblings' freedom. Realizing she can shield those she cares for, Kess confesses, taking full responsibility and is sentenced to imprisonment.

Eslinde secures Kess's final night in her chambers, where an advisor reveals more information about the group with Lyrrin in, revealing Riony did survive Kife's attack.

The news spurs Kess's longing to reconcile. Eslinde discreetly hints at escape, leaving Kess unguarded and armed. Kess contemplates escaping but feels her sacrifice secures the others' safety.

She stays put in Eslinde's chambers until intruders break in.

Hidden, Kess watches Ulfren and Hjelzahn plot to poison Eslinde, convinced the dragonking favors her as heir. Lady Hjelzahn arrives, killing them both.

Realizing she can't let Eslinde walk into a trap, Kess chooses to escape, leaping from the window and sustaining injuries. She manages to find and warn Eslinde, who decides they must flee the palace.

Eslinde confronts her handmaidens and advisor, asking for their aid in helping her escape her grayglim bodyguard Yensen, only to find they were never truly on her side. Realizing she and Kess must escape alone, they prepare to fight the highly trained guard.

Yensen reveals he truly is loyal to Eslinde and will help her escape rather than keeping her imprisoned in the palace.

Eslinde, Grayglim, and Kess make their way to the Alderkin cells, facing resistance from guards who are under orders to stop her. Eslinde calls to the Alderkin, triggering an explosive escape using a magically modified taming spike crystal Eslinde provided them.

In the chaos, they escape with the freed Alderkin and face Eslinde's mother, who is horrified by her actions. Eslinde rebukes her mother and asserts her independence with Yensen's support.

News of the bodies of the dead heirs in Eslinde's chambers spreads and the group realizes they must flee the palace to avoid consequences. They plan to regroup with the Zarram siblings to escape via dragon but are confronted by Lady Hejlzahn, intent on capturing Kess.

Dashiel and Vance, although cleared of crimes, face their father's wrath as he confirms Dashiel faked the taming of Shiff, and plans to tame the hatchling then and eliminate Eslinde's untamed dragon.

Riots erupt in the city over news of dead heirs and Kess's apparent involvement, and a mob forms around the Zarram dragonhold for their role in releasing the destructive wild dragon. Dashiel and Vance worry for Eslinde and Kess and prepare for an inevitable confrontation.

Lady Hejlzahn attacks Kess and Eslinde's group, displaying unnatural undead strength. They manage to escape, and the Alderkin explain the woman is possessed by the shadow dragon, controlling her actions.

They steal a carriage to flee, but flooding forces them to continue on foot. As they approach the Zarram dragonhold, a mob spots them, driving them to take a back route inside.

The group are stuck in the dragonhold's double-gated entrance, and Kess volunteers to stay behind and hold the gate open for the others. Eslinde gives Kess a silvernix-filled earring for survival. Alone in the room, Kess prepares to face the mob as she grips Riony's acorn pendant, bracing for her fate.

Riony and Griskin arrive just in time to save Kess, driving off the mob in a dramatic rescue. Riony teases Kess about past betrayals but came to save her regardless.

Kess, overwhelmed by the gesture, accepts Riony's offer of another chance. They flee together to catch up with Eslinde and the others.

Dashiel and Vance free Shiff from being tamed and meet up with Eslinde, Yensen, and the Alderkin. They rush to escape the mob who have broken into the dragonhold. On their way to escape on dragons, they confront their father, who refuses to leave his wealth and status behind.

Riony and Kess encounter Kife blackmailing Dashiel's father to secure a dragon. They intervene, defeating Kife momentarily, but he escapes again amidst the chaos. Kess is still badly injured from her earlier fall, and Riony is also wounded as they are cornered by the angry mob.

Trapped and desperate in the dragonhold's lower levels, Kess releases Eslinde's angry, untamed dragon, whose electrical breath wreaks havoc on the rioters. The pair manage to escape but don't catch up to Eslinde and the others in time. They take another dragon for themselves to escape on, and Kess uses Eslinde's gifted silvernix to heal them both before they fly off.

They witness the Zarram siblings' father overwhelmed by the mob but are unable to go back. As the hatchery burns, Kess decides her loyalty now lies with Riony, vowing internally to protect her at any cost.

Kess and Riony reunite with Eslinde's group at a shrine.

Eslinde meets Riony, who immediately recognises her as Lyrrin's mother. Warily, Riony agrees to bring Lyrrin to meet her, and the rest of Riony's friends all come through the gateway to join them.

Lyrrin meets her birth mother for the first time, and the Alderkin reveal subtle recognition of Dracuni's unique nature.

When questioned on her loyalties, Kess pledges herself to Riony before everyone, vowing to serve her cause, leaving Riony speechless.

Kife, battered and desperate, is brought in before the Dragon King to explain his part in Eslinde's escape. He takes the opportunity to inform the Dragon King about Dracuni's true nature.



The Shadow Dragon Saga

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