



# Reign of the Dragon Born

Book 5 of the Shadow Dragon Saga

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*Complete summary including spoilers.*

Having rescued Kess from the capital, Riony is shocked by Kess's dramatic pledge of loyalty. Both Riony's group and Eslinde's group are tense and wary of the other.

Riony wrestles with her emotions—her role in reuniting Lyrrin and Eslinde, lingering questions about Alderkin, and having dragonriders and grayglim with them.

A watchful Benjin alerts the group to approaching dragons, prompting accusations of betrayal from Riony toward Kess. The Zarram siblings, confused, wonder why they'd be targeted, and Eslinde confesses her escape with the Alderkin likely made her a target.

The group quickly devises a plan: Eslinde and the Zarram siblings will lead the riders away. The remaining group—Riony, Kess, Lyrrin, and others—will activate the gateway to escape.

However, as the plan unfolds, one rider circles back, noticing Dracuni, who struggles to fit though the gateways now. A battle ensues, with Kess and Griskin fiercely defending Dracuni, while Dashiell and Vance join the fray in the air. In the end, the group narrowly defeats the riders.

But it is clear that Dracuni was the target, meaning Kife survived and shared his information with the king. In the fight, Dracuni was also injured, revealing her silvernix blood to Eslinde's group.

Lyrrin feels overwhelmed by her mother's return and her own connection to the Dragon King's lineage. The united group visit Myrwa's settlement to resupply on their way to somewhere safer.

Eslinde, expecting a dangerous place, is shocked by the thriving community and its rejection of dragonlord protection. Lyrrin explains how they've used gateways to strengthen settlements, though they remain cautious about sharing such knowledge widely due to concerns for Dracuni's safety.

Eslinde's resemblance to the dragonlords and her grayglim guard draw unease, and Myrwa warns Riony to be careful.

Reaching Eslindekeep, the group finds it half-built and abandoned. Eslinde leads them to an underground base she secretly constructed during her rebellious youth. The base provides temporary safety, though food supplies are scarce, and Riony remains uneasy about trusting anyone—especially Kess.

Dracuni bonds with other dragons in the stables, especially the untamed Shiff. The other tamed dragons, Viska and Ambri, sadden her. The Alderkin approach Riony, commending her role as Dracuni's protector and emphasizing her responsibility. Their words leave her conflicted about past decisions, particularly her choice to leave Dracuni to find Kess.

A tense meeting follows. Eslinde confirms the shadow dragon's connection to the taming of dragons and proposes untaming them to weaken its power.

Riony vehemently opposes using Dracuni's blood, prompting debates over strategy. The Alderkin reveal that the shadow dragon grows stronger with every tamed dragon, making urgent action necessary.

Eslinde suggests contacting the Rebel Riders, who aren't just characters in a story, though Riony is wary after previous encounters.

Niskina announces her decision to return to the Undercity, inspired by her father's vision of improving it. Meanwhile, Kess reflects on the strained relationships around her, particularly with Niskina, who blames her for her father's death.

Unable to sleep, Kess encounters Riony guarding Dracuni. Their exchange remains fraught, but Kess returns Riony's acorn pendant, a small gesture of reconciliation. Kess also sees Yensen taking a dragon out to keep watch of their base during the night.

Riony and her group bid farewell to Niskina, who reminds Riony to stay safe and protect Dracuni. Once Niskina departs, Riony leaves with Kess, Vance, Eslinde, and Yensen to find the Rebel Riders.

Lyrrin, Aishena, Benjin, Dashiell, and the Alderkin remain at Eslindekeep to watch over Dracuni. Lyrrin is uneasy about Riony leaving again, but Riony reassures her that this mission won't take long. Dracuni tries to join them, attempting to fly, but cannot manage it yet.

Riony's team follow clues to locate the Rebel Riders, avoiding dragonriders spotted in the distance who seem to be out searching for them. At their destination, the group finds nothing at first until Riony notices nearby hot springs, reminiscent of locations in Rebel Rider stories.

Following clues from the stories, they navigate through several landmarks, including a narrow chasm. However, the chasm turns out to be a trap, and they are ambushed by dragons flying in from above.

At Eslindekeep, Lyrrin worries about Riony's safety, monitoring the paired heart stone that beats in rhythm with Riony's heartbeat. Dashiell and Aishena grow closer, and Dracuni seems to bond with Shiff.

The Alderkin explain that magic is sustained through proximity to unicorns and amplified by the standing stones of the shrines. They disapprove of humans using their magic, but Lyrrin defends her group, emphasizing that the magic is used for protection.

The Alderkin reveal that Dracuni is sacred, representing a new hope for magic, but refuse to teach Lyrrin certain advanced runes, including one mysterious rune on a crystal she has, claiming they are exclusive to Alderkin.

The Alderkin share details about Lyrrin's father, Alleem, who was tortured and killed by the Dragon King for gateway knowledge. His sacrifice protected the secrets, and the Alderkin urge Lyrrin to be willing to do the same. They decide to bring a gateway into the keep for emergencies, though it will have limited charge once removed from the shrine and cannot save the dragons in a siege.

The Rebel Riders ambush Riony's group but reveal themselves as allies rather than enemies. They trap newcomers as a precaution, monitoring the area for threats.

Riony meets Rider Jaym, Thallan, Norallei, Samor, and Zeina, characters from the stories, realizing the books were propaganda written by the Riders themselves. She bonds with Zeina, a confident and attractive rebel with a clear interest in Riony in return.

Riony is disappointed to learn that not all the Rebels ride wild dragons; many use tamed dragons stolen from the Dragon King's forces due to necessity. The Riders explain their hardships, including dwindling resources and growing threats from revenants.

They admit their resistance has become more about survival than proactive rebellion. Eslinde proposes an alliance to stop the curse.

Riony is uneasy about the Riders' inclination toward violent solutions, such as killing tamed dragons en masse. The group prepares to return to Eslinde Keep, spotting a massive revenant horde en route, highlighting the growing dangers.

Outside the underground base of Eslindekeep, Dracuni practices flying with Eslinde, Dashiell, and Shiff. Despite Dracuni's determination, she still struggles.

There are tensions among the group, particularly between Zeina and Yensen over patrol duties and his brief disappearance, but Kess defends Yensen's loyalty. Zeina impresses everyone by bringing back a large catch for the dragons, while Riony and Zeina continue their flirtation.

Kess examines her own feelings for Riony, her longing for her, but decides all that matters is that Riony is happy.

Niskina visits, reporting the depletion of magic at some shrines, and dragonlords beginning to flee the land entirely. She invites Riony and the group to move to the undercity with her, but Riony feels safer staying hidden.

Suddenly, all untamed dragons begin acting strangely, growling and converging toward Lyrrin, who has managed to activate the run the Alderkin wouldn't share with her.

The rune, revealed to be an Alderkin dragon-summoning rune used to protect unicorns, also draws in another dragon from nearby—Kife's untamed purple dragon.

Riony tries to defend Viska, drawing the purple dragon's aggression, and Kess saves her, leading Riony to start believing Kess's pledge.

The purple dragon brutally attacks the still-tamed Viska, dislodging the taming stake in her head and leaving her severely injured. The Rebel Riders on wild dragons manage to chase Kife's dragon away, who has clear aggression to any dragon that is tamed. Dracuni uses her blood to heal Viska, revealing her secret to the Rebel Riders.

Dracuni's unique abilities complicate relationships between the humans, Alderkin, and the Rebels who express frustration at being excluded from resources.

The rebels' discovery of Dracuni's silvernix ignites their desire to use her abilities to their advantage. Riony firmly defends Dracuni's autonomy, clashing with Thallan, who prioritizes the rebel cause over individual rights.

Discussions reveal that the purple dragon's aggression stems from its history of being tamed and then released. The Alderkin acknowledge their failure to fully educate others on rune usage, contributing to the chaos.

Some rebels suggest creating more dragons like Dracuni, leading to a journey to obtain an egg.

On the way back from a successful mission to secure food and a dragon egg, Riony's group encounters a shadow dragon raising revenants. A convoy of human settlers is also under attack, forcing a dangerous rescue effort.

Riony fights the revs alongside her allies, and is saved by Kess and Griskin again, causing her to examine her feelings towards Kess. The group's combined efforts, including strategic use of dragon abilities, ensure the settlers' escape, and Riony is buoyed by their success.

Returning to Eslindekeep, the team celebrate. Kess and Riony have a heartfelt conversation about past traumas. Riony is given the opportunity to spend the night with Zeina, but remains talking with Kess instead.

The Rebel Riders attempt to create another unidragon using silvernix and the newly acquired egg. The resulting hatchling bonds with Lyrrin but lacks Dracuni's unique qualities, indicating the process cannot be easily replicated.

It may have been Lyrrin's unique markings in the silvernix vial glass that are the key difference, but they don't know what those markings were.

The celebration is interrupted by Niskina's arrival, reporting an attack on Myrwa's settlement. The joy of the evening gives way to an urgent rescue.

The team rushes through the gateway to Myrwa's settlement, where they encounter devastation: burning homes, countless dead, and survivors scattered in nearby woods.

Myrwa is initially unaccounted for, and the mother and child Riony had helped during birth are confirmed among the deceased. Evidence points to Kife's involvement, marked by his signature cruelty—glass shards from the glass factory litter the ground, injuring survivors.

Riony, heartbroken and enraged, discovers all the shrine settlements are under attack revealing a coordinated assault.

Aishena creates a plan and divides the team: Lyrrin, Dracuni, and Eslinde return to Eslindekeep for triage and survivor care. Riony, Aishena, Dashiell, Vance, Benjin, and Yensen split up amongst the shrines to fight off attackers and save who they can.

The Alderkin manage the gateways to help survivors escape, and the Rebel Riders will bring their dragons to defend settlements from the air.

Riony convinces Kess to accompany Lyrrin and Dracuni, worried about their safety. Kess wants to protect Riony, but reluctantly agrees.

Amid the chaos, Riony fights ferociously, nearly succumbing to attackers when her partner, Yensen, disappears instead of assisting her. She later learns Yensen abandoned her to check on Eslinde, citing distrust of Kess.

The team secures the last survivors, but Myrwa's body is found at sunrise, leaving Riony distraught.

Later, Riony confronts her grief and guilt in solitude, smashing objects in frustration. Kess approaches her, offering comfort. Their conversation leads to an emotional reconciliation as Riony breaks down, embracing Kess and sharing their mutual pain over lost loved ones.

The conversation leads Kess to a dangerous decision in order to help Riony more.

Kess steals the Zarram's dragon, Ambri, to lure out the aggressive purple dragon, which has remained nearby, attacking tamed dragons.

In a daring maneuver, she leaps onto the purple dragon mid-air, connecting with its emotions and calming it. The purple dragon remembers Kess as the one who freed it and agrees to stop its attacks, beginning a bond between them.

Fueled by anger and a need for justice, Riony leads the Rebel Riders on an assault against a nearby dragonkeep, despite Eslinde and Lyrrin's objections.

The battle is fierce. They take out dragons and riders, but the keep proves more fortified than expected. The purple dragon unexpectedly joins the fight, aiding the Riders and Kess.

Riony fights recklessly, leaping between dragons with her magical sword. Despite heavy losses, including Norallei's death, the team achieves significant damage against the keep.

As they retreat, Yensen emerges carrying an unconscious and possibly dead Aishena, highlighting the cost of their retaliation. The victory is bittersweet, and the group is left grappling with their grief and the weight of their choices.

Riony returns to Eslindekeep with a woozy Aishena, scared for her safety. Despite Aishena's reassurances, Riony is haunted by guilt over Norallei's death and Aishena's injury.

A Kess challenges Riony's actions and the violence influenced by Thallan, revealing her love for Riony's compassionate side, which also inspired her to choose kindness.

Their return is marked by mixed reactions: the Rebel Riders console one another, except Thallan, who isolates himself. Dashiell treats Aishena's wounds, avoiding silvernix use. Eslinde challenges Riony's readiness to lose allies with every mission, making her question her actions.

The next day, news arrives of the dragonkeep they weakened being destroyed by revenants—a consequence of leaving the keep vulnerable after their attack. The group debates their culpability and strategizes on how to prevent future devastation.

Lyrrin, worried after an earlier argument, tries to console Riony. They bond over shared struggles, with Lyrrin reflecting on the weight of responsibility as her bond with the new hatchling, Elumon, grows.

At a meeting, Thallan pushes for more attacks, deeming the keep's fall a victory. This sparks conflict, with Riony calling out his disregard for lives lost.

The Rebel Rider group fractures: Zeina and Jaym side with Riony, while Samor reluctantly stays with Thallan. Tensions rise as the group learns of an undercity attack by dragonriders, forcing them to set aside differences temporarily.

Escapees from the undercity start flooding through the gateway to shelter at Eslindekeep. They report dragonriders, led by Kife, taking control of the undercity. Before many can reach them, the charge in the gateway runs out.

The group debates their next move, with Riony insisting they act to protect the people trapped. A dangerous plan is devised to infiltrate through a hidden entrance, aiming to disable the riders and their dragons.

Thallan and Samor agree to protect Eslindekeep, while Lyrrin and Dracuni stay behind with the Alderkin, Eslinde, Yensen and Vance for safety. Riony struggles with guilt about leaving Lyrrin and Dracuni but believes it's the right decision.

Lyrrin, angry and worried, provides Riony with a rune crafted with the Alderkin to affect tamed dragons as a parting gift.

Riony leads her team with Kess, Griskin, Aishena, Benjin, Dashiell and Shiff into the caves, facing haunting memories of the area. They encounter civilians hiding, including Niskina, who reluctantly guides them to the dragonriders' command center.

A plan to free imprisoned delvers and use the dragon-summoning rune goes awry when Riony intervenes to save civilians, leading to a confrontation with dragonriders.

Lyrrin and Dracuni stay behind with Eslinde's team but sense something amiss. Yensen reveals his loyalty to the Dragonking, orchestrating events to strand the group without escape. His true mission: to capture and deliver Lyrrin and Dracuni to the Dragonking.

Yensen attacks, injures Vance, and takes Lyrrin and Dracuni captive, leaving Eslinde helpless and guilt-ridden over her misplaced trust.

The fight in the undercity escalates. Riony splits the team, entrusting the summoning rune to Aishena and ordering her to continue the mission. Aishena, Benjin, Dashiell and Shiff flee.

Kess and Riony fend off attackers but are eventually overpowered by Kife and his forces. Kife captures them, taunting Riony with a public execution to come, and that she fell for their trap by leaving Lyrrin and Dracuni unprotected.

Yensen forces Dracuni to comply by threatening Lyrrin. He delivers both to awaiting dragonriders outside Eslindekeep. Lyrrin fights Yensen but is forced onto a dragon and taken alongside Dracuni.

Sensing Lyrrin's distress through the paired heart stones, Riony panics but is unable to escape. Kess sacrifices her chance to flee, ensuring Griskin gets away.

Stripped of weapons and dignity, Riony and Kess are paraded through the undercity. Kife prepares a gruesome public execution, relishing the power over his prisoners.

Riony and Kess are tied together on the whipping post in front of a crowd. Riony reassures Kess that she'll endure the punishment while Kess either finds a way to escape or others enact their plan.

Kess, however, struggles to bear seeing Riony hurt again. Kife uses the moment to deliver a speech, proclaiming his dominance. He intends to make an example of Riony. However, Kess distracts him by goading him to whip her first.

Riony watches in anguish as Kess is whipped, shouting for the crowd to stand up against Kife's tyranny. Her pleas resonate with those she has helped in the past. Kess appears to "break," begging for Kife's mercy and claiming to know how to replicate Dracuni. To prove her loyalty, Kife demands that Kess whip and kill Riony herself, giving Kess an opening to act.

Kess struggles with Riony's belief that she has betrayed her again but knows she must act for the greater good. Benjin and Dashiell are also being brought in, captured, but Aishena is spotted moving freely within the crowd. Kess takes her one chance to defeat her brother for good, grabbing onto him and throwing them both into the nearby lake.

They sink, and Kess resolves to drown him, even if it means her own death.

Aishena activates the crystal Lyrrin gave them, which causes the tamed dragons to scream mournfully, rendering them unresponsive to commands.

Witnessing Kess and Kife disappear, Riony's fury enables her to rip herself free. The crowd, inspired by her defiance, rises against Kife's forces who are struggling with their incapacitated dragons.

Riony fights desperately while searching for Kess. With help from Aishena and others, the allies turn the tide. However, Riony panics when Kess doesn't resurface.

Just as hope dwindles, the cave otter, Butterfur, dives into the water and rescues Kess, who is unconscious.

Riony revives her with silvernix gifted by Dracuni. Kess apologizes for her ruse, but Riony reassures her she never believed Kess was betraying her again. As the remaining enemies are subdued, the undercity residents prove their resilience, though the victory is bittersweet—Lyrrin's heartbeat stone stops entirely.

On Yensen's dragon, Lyrrin cleverly hides a crystal rune, planning to escape. As an explosion from Samor's dragon self-combusting rocks the area, Yensen is momentarily distracted.

Lyrrin uses the modified heart stone to blind him, but he retaliates, knocking the crystal from her grasp. During the chaos, Dracuni falls from the dragon but manages to fly for the first time, guided by Lyrrin's shouted instructions.

Dracuni struggles but escapes, leaving Lyrrin heartbroken yet relieved. Yensen, furious at the failure of his long-laid plans, decides to retreat with Lyrrin as his captive, heading toward the Dragon King.

Back in the undercity, Riony prepares to return to rescue Lyrrin, only to discover Dracuni, Eslinde, Vance, and the Alderkin have come to them having narrowly escaped with their lives. They report Yensen's betrayal and Lyrrin's capture.

Though devastated, Riony is bolstered by her allies' support and Dracuni's survival. She intends to go after Lyrrin and rescue her. Yet, before they can act, a massive force of dragons descends upon the undercity, forcing them to barricade inside.

Lyrrin is brought to the Dragon King, who rebukes Yensen for his failure to also bring Dracuni. The King demands Lyrrin's loyalty, claiming familial ties, while the Dragon Queen insists she is an abomination. Refusing to bow, Lyrrin stands defiant, denying they are family at all.



## The Shadow Dragon Saga

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