

Dimension Shifter

Published by T.M. Nielsen

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Chapter 1

Kyryn crouched down behind a tall stone crypt and readied her flail in her hand. Her breathing was slow and steady. It wasn't the first time she'd been attacked, nor the first time she'd had to spill blood because of her past. She scanned the area around her with big brown eyes, eyes that darkened to almost black when she was mad.

She was a petite woman, but muscular from years of fighting. Though magic was her preferred weapon, she wasn't above using brute force if necessary. Her long brown hair was tied into a thick braid that fell down her back and brushed the back of her knees, and a thin scar ran along the side of her face.

She was beautiful, but hid behind lowered hoods and kept to the shadows. She took offense to being thought of or called beautiful. In her world, beauty was something that could easily get you killed and most who flaunted it were brainless and dim-witted. Beautiful women were sold as wives or bartered for the lives of the family.

She heard footsteps approaching, footsteps of the Shadowmere Consortium. They'd been following her for the past six years, ever since she escaped from their slavery. Since her escape, they sought her out as a lost prized possession. They'd spent years honing her magic and turning her into a powerful sorcerer, and the Shadowmere never let such time and money go to waste. They had use of her abilities, and her capture was their main focus.

“Come out, little one,” a gruff voice called out. Waymen was the head Apprehender for the Shadowmere Consortium, and was the first to find her trail into this new dimension, “You can't hide from us anymore. You're cornered here.”

Kyrin looked around carefully, searching for any sign that a portal was near. Her innate ability to dimension shift had kept her alive for the six years she spent on the run, but first, she had to find a key to open the portal. The Shadowmere weren't natural dimension shifters, but were quickly learning some of the portal ways.

This dimension was full of the dead. A place dimension shifters used to hide the bodies of loved ones so the undead Consortium, the Nosata, wouldn't find them and use their corpses as minions. Beautifully carved headstones and elaborately decorated tombs filled the dimension, and the smell of death was strong on the wind.

“She's here,” Waymen said to another of the Shadowmere.

“Aye, she is.”

“Kyrin, you can't hide from us anymore! Mika has promised you won't be punished if you'll turn yourself over to us. We won't hurt you.”

Kyrin knew it was a lie. The Shadowmere were master torturers and punished for even the smallest crime. Most of their devoted minions were tortured into submission, and Kyrin had spent many

nights in their torture rooms. It was during one of their brutal tortures that her magic began to form, and also when the Shadowmere found out that their indentured slave was more than just a new servant, she was a weapon.

Mika, leader of the Shadowmere Consortium, oversaw Kyrin's training and personally watched over her daily life. It was rumored he was going to add her to his concubine when she became of age, but when she ran from him at the young age of 11, she was still a year away from that.

Hiding, she was reminded of that night six years ago, when she first saw the shiny coin on the ground. At first, she ignored it. She had more on her mind at the time than scavenging lost coins from the ground. She'd just escaped from Mika's room, where his training had turned more into a personal nature, and her instinct to run kicked in. Using forbidden magic, she got away, and had hidden from the Shadowmere's Apprehension Crews in a small graveyard outside of the city.

By the time the Shadowmere passed, she realized she would need money to find transportation away from the city and away from Mika and his crews.

She also worried that the Clemency Consortium would be after her for breaking the laws. Their name was a far cry from their true nature, and they had appointed themselves the law enforcement. Breaking the laws of magic restriction was punishable by death, and Kyrin had used magic to get away from Mika's unwanted advances. All magic was banned by the Clemency Consortium because it was unnatural and seemed evil to the self-proclaimed Consortium of mercy.

As soon as the 11-year-old had picked up the coin, the doorway appeared in front of her. It wasn't like any doorway she'd seen. It was more of an outline, a tall rectangular outline that shone brightly in the night. Though almost blinding, it caused nothing to

cast a shadow, and didn't seem to draw the attention of anyone nearby. It opened slowly and beyond it, Kyrin had seen a new land, one covered in dead fields and dry wastelands.

Having no other choice, she stepped through it and looked behind her. In the bright light of day, the doorway was gone and only more hillside was behind her. There was no sign that the dark night had been there just moments before. She could feel it inside of her as soon as she stepped through the portal. She was born to walk between the dimensions, and the ability had saved her life.

Six years later she was still on the run. Kyrin looked around again, hoping to find something that would point her to a new dimension. She silently prayed to her god that he would bring her help, but he often neglected his followers and enjoyed seeing them punished and abused. She tried anyway, and when she opened her eyes, she saw it from across the graveyard. The small stick was lying up against a rock wall, and would be inconspicuous to anyone other than those with dimension shifting in their blood.

Two of the Shadowmere were standing right beside it as they looked around for any sign of her. They were in the usual Shadowmere garb, worn black armor, their faces hidden behind thick metal faceplates. Kyrin knew that beneath the armor were bodies rippled with muscles and covered in battle scars and mutilated flesh. The Shadowmere never wore cloaks. They hindered their fighting, and the Shadowmere were well-known for and very much feared for their fighting skills.

Kyrin had to act fast. Portal keys were never around for long, and if she didn't get out of this dimension soon, the Shadowmere were going to track her down. She could only imagine the horrors she would face after being on the run for six years. During that time, she'd killed five of the Shadowmere's Apprehension Team and injured countless others. It was time to fight the best way she knew how, with magic.

She tucked her flail carefully into her belt and clenched her hands into tight fists. Anger fueled her magic, something else the Shadowmere had taught her. She knew of a magic shield that would protect her from projectiles, but wouldn't stop the hard steel from a sword, so it wouldn't help her now. Kyrin shut her eyes and whispered an incantation as her hands lightly clasped together, the spell would hopefully buy her the time to get to the portal and get the door shut behind her.

She felt the pull from within as her soul split and her exact image was projected off to the side of the graveyard. She had to work quickly. Any damage her split image took was inflicted on her when that part of her soul reconnected in her body. .

“Hey!” one of the Shadowmere yelled, and then readied his sword and ran at her image, followed by the other one. A thunder of loud footfalls sounded as the rest of the Apprehension Crew heard their call and came to help. They didn't take her magic for granted and knew she thought nothing of killing them to get away, so they sent full force in the direction of her image.

Her boots carried her faster than most mortals, a gift from a friend, and she rounded the tallest crypt and ran for the twig. Its image began to shimmer, and she cursed herself for waiting too long to make a break for it.

“Kyrin!” Waymen screamed just as she grabbed the stick, and a lit portal appeared. He wouldn't be able to see it. Only those born into dimension shifting could see the outline of an activated portal, but he knew what she was about to do, and that she used illegal magic to trick them.

Kyrin disappeared through the door and shut it less than a second after her alter-image faded, and her soul became one. Once she was sure the Shadowmere couldn't get through the same portal, she looked around. She wasn't familiar enough with the

dimensions to know which led to which, so she was always on guard when she walked through a portal.

As she surveyed the area, she drew her flail and felt its comforting weight in her hand. The black leather handle was custom fit to her hand. From the top hung three thick chains, each ending in a spiked ball and each of varying length. The Shadowmere were weapon experts, and their weapon specialists had made the flail, specifically to work off of her strengths. It was small enough to be easily tucked away if she had to change tactics and switch to magic.

Nothing jumped out at her from behind any of the trees in the dense forest she stood in. A tiny stream ran alongside where she had walked through the portal, and when she couldn't hear anyone around, she bent down and drank deeply. The dirty, tepid water was the first water she'd had in over a week and was a rare commodity in the dimensions. Water was what drove the formation of the Consortiums and made men rich, and other men dead.

From a small bag on her hip, she produced a leather flask, and she held it in the water and waited patiently while the slow trickle filled it. She put the stopper in and hung it from her belt before leaning down for another drink. As she stood, she carefully scanned the trees for anything she could eat.

Food was another thing she was used to doing without. It wasn't uncommon for the Shadowmere to use starvation as a punishment, and since being on the run, it was getting harder and harder to come by. Sometimes a small rabbit would give its life to keep her fed, but she would go days without seeing anything to eat.

Thievery was something Kyrin refused to do. The Shadowmere thought nothing of stealing, though the Dieb Consortium were the true thieves. Kyrin found it disgusting to take from others, even though her own god was often worshiped by the same Assassins

and pick-pockets that made up the Dieb Consortium. There were no deities in the Kyrstalis Dimension. It wasn't until she began to dimension shift that she even heard of such a being.

As she walked slowly toward the rising suns, she thought this dimension held nothing of value. It was beautiful, something she didn't find appealing. Beauty was useless. What she needed was wildlife and plants to eat, and a good cave to hide in so she could nurse her wounds and find some sort of peace. She'd neglected her god long enough. It was hard to pray when looking down the long sword of an angry man, but he demanded a certain level of reverence, and she didn't want to cross him.

Kyrin sighed, looking around the quiet forest, and wondered if there was anything alive at all on this dimension. She was reminded of the death river dimension. She didn't know the true name of it, but all it held was a river that brought death if touched. Bodies floated in it, bodies that were bloated and decayed, but were still able to reach out and grab you if you got too close.

For hours, she walked along the little stream. When she found water, she wasn't about to lose sight of it, most certainly not in this quiet land. If there was any sign of civilization, it would be around the water. When the suns began to set at her back, she found a clearing alongside the stream and sat down for the night.

She had no blankets, no warmth, but she was used to sleeping on the ground under the stars. This dimension had three moons, and she watched as they rose above her. Once the moons were directly overhead, she knew it was time to thank her god for helping her out of the world of the dead.

Kyrin pulled a dagger out of her bag. One embellished with jewels and stained red with blood that would no longer wash off. She drew an elaborate 'D' into the dirt around her and then knelt inside of it. She lowered her hands and dropped her eyes to the ground.

Her voice was quiet and passionate as she concentrated and thanked her god for his help. When she was done, she braced for it. Daemionis often required blood in return for helping his faithful, and there was no telling when he was appeased with words, or when he required pain and suffering.

Kyryn fell back against the ground when the pain hit. An intense burning filled her chest, and she writhed in agony as a scream escaped her lips. Blood-stained her tunic and spread quickly across her chest, then began to pool beneath her on the ground. Her back arched as the pain continued and her screams pierced the night.

When it stopped, she rolled onto her hands and knees and fought to catch her breath.

“Repayment is complete.” The stern voice sounded from around her, though no one could be seen. The voice seemed distant and uncaring.

She nodded and finally whispered, “Thank you.”

Without moving from the blood-soaked ground, Kyryn collapsed and instantly fell asleep.

The sun in her eyes woke her up, and she opened them slowly and looked around the small clearing. She got lucky that the Shadowmere hadn’t caught her while she recovered from Daemionis’ influence.

Her stomach growled as she crawled over to the water and drank, grimacing at the stale taste of it. When she got up, she stretched and checked in her shirt to make sure Daemionis hadn’t left a wound. He never did, but it was still something she checked.

After trying to eat a leaf and finding it bitter and inedible, Kyryn gathered her small amount of personal items into a bag on her belt and started walking up the stream again. When the trees ended, a

dead grassland stretched out before her, and she continued to follow the stream. The suns beat down on her, and she debated heading back into the trees, but was still hoping to find something to eat.

It had been five days since she'd had a bite to eat, and then it was only a rat that she found burrowing under a bush. She didn't have fire, but devoured it, tearing its flesh with her teeth as it squealed and tried to get out of her grasp. She grimaced at the thought, and wondered what would become of her if she didn't find a place to rest for a while, a place with fresh water and food.

As night fell again, she made camp beside the stream and then laid back and looked up at the stars. The moons were partially hidden by clouds, and she turned to look off to her left when a bright light flashed. The crack of thunder sounded moments later. She didn't plan on finding refuge from the impending rain. Water was water, and she wouldn't turn it away at any cost.

Before falling asleep, Kyrin felt pangs of loneliness and wished she could find Paramide Dimension again. Her only friend lived there, and it was also home to her god. She knew of one dimension that attached to Paramide, and that was Kyrstalis, home to the Consortiums that were out to get her.

Kyrin rolled onto her side and was soon asleep with her hands under her face and her flail tucked in at her side.

A noise woke her up, a soft snap from far away. In such a quiet land, that small sound jerked her senses, and she flew to her feet with her flail in her hand, readied to defend herself. She scanned the grass around her, and nothing moved as far as she could see. Not even a breeze came up to shift the grass, but she felt like she was being watched.

Kyrin squatted low in the tall grass, and she was thankful she was small enough to hide behind it. Her height often helped hide her in

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