

Shadowbane Sidestory: “Really Don’t Do That”

By Erik Scott de Bie

*Bard’s Note:* This tale is a non-canonical “what if?” story, which presents an alternative version of the events of chapter 14 from the Forgotten Realms novel *Shadowbane*. It asks the question: “What if, instead of sending Rhett to “inspect” Myrin, Kalen had confronted the wizard himself?” Many apologies for this at times salacious story. ~ *Arita*

*Editor’s Note:* This bit of bodice-ripper chapbook drivel has absolutely no basis in reality. The obvious romantic tension is not at all present in the story of that blue-haired bint Myrin or that woolhead Saer Shadow. You really shouldn’t read it at all . . . except that you totally should. ~ *Fayne*

Kalen knocked on Myrin’s door three times.

“Go away!” came a voice from inside.

With a determined grimace, Kalen pushed into the room.

Myrin strode back and forth amidst a sea of her illusory selves once again, but this time she hardly bothered to maintain them. They twisted and warped into caricatures, then disintegrated entirely into the air. “If only I could order my memories, I could—” Her eyes shot to Kalen and her face turned livid. “No, you lout! Coming inside is the *opposite* of going away!”

“That—” Kalen realized he couldn’t really argue with that logic. He stepped in and closed the door behind him. “We need to talk.”

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“Oh.” The illusions shifted around Myrin, and each one of her tiny face reflected her distress. “Oh very nice. We’ve done so well up until this point with the talking.”

“That’s not what I mean.” Kalen strode to her and caught the collar of her robe. “Take off your clothes.”

“Wh-what?” Myrin looked shocked. Her illusions wavered and vanished, turning to flickering dust that disappeared before it reached the floor. “Kalen, I—”

Kalen reached down to the lacings of her robe.

“Ay!” she cried, and put out a staying hand. Thunder cracked, and a great force slammed into Kalen, sending him toppling back and into the far wall.

Myrin was huddled away from him, looking very nervous. Her lips moved. With his ears ringing, he wasn’t sure exactly what she said, but it sounded like: “—My first time in living memory! You could at least be a gentlesir about it.”

“Apologies.” Kalen with an effort. “I just need to check you for welts.”

Myrin blinked. “Welts?”

“I think insects carry the plague,” Kalen explained. “It makes folk angry or just insane, and then it kills them. I need to know if you have it.”

Myrin face went from shy and nervous to angry. She crossed her arms. “You should have said that first.”

“Apparently.”

They stared at one another, neither speaking, until finally Myrin waved a hand as though to signal speed. “Well?” she asked.

“Well what?”

Myrin made a dismissive gesture. “Off with them.”

“Off with what?” Kalen asked.

“Your clothes,” she said. “If you’ve got to check me for signs of the plague, then I have to check you. It’s only fair.”

“Myrin, I’m not just going to—”

“I am not going to disrobe unless you do it as well.”

Kalen opened his mouth to argue, then scowled. He fumbled at the clasps of his leathers. “Well.”

“Well then!” She unfastened her belt.

“I said *well*.” Kalen let his leather hauberk slip to the floor.

“*Very well!*” Myrin tossed her belt at his head.

They both disrobed, each racing the other, holding aloft articles of raiments like competing prizes. Quickly, they fell to hurling garments at one another, until the room became a mess with discarded clothing. Myrin, who had no armor to shed, doffed all her items first, then stood there holding up her robe over herself. Her face looked very pale. When Kalen pulled off his last undershirt and gave her a winning glare, Myrin unfurled the robe and tossed it at his feet.

“There, see?” Myrin turned in a circle. “Clean!”

Kalen stared. They stood there, wearing only their underthings, huffing and glaring at one another.

“Uh.” Myrin snaked her right arm behind her back and clasped her left elbow, a nervous habit. “What just happened?”

“I’m not certain.” It took a great deal of Kalen’s willpower to look away politely.

“You—you have a lot of scars,” she observed.

“Yes.” Even if she hadn’t said it, he still would have become aware of the marked difference between his body and hers. He was hard and coarse, his skin like leather ripped and restitched many times. He hadn’t felt all those wounds, but he remembered each and every one. By contrast, she was small and lithe, her skin smooth like cream. It shamed him, and yet the way she looked at him—it might have been worse.

He’d seen her naked once before, when they’d first met. She’d been covered in blue-glowing tattoos at the time, such that they’d clothed her in light. Wearing a thin linen shift, she looked considerably less arcane and much more womanly. Also, she bore several black runes tattooed on her body—one on her left hip, one on her wrist, and one just above her right breast—all of them connected by small lines of arcane writing inked into her skin. They glimmered faintly, as though they held power of their own. She might have had others hidden by her shift, which he tried not to think about.

“Those are new, I think?” Kalen asked.

Myrin looked down at herself, and her eyes widened. “How did those get there? I don’t remember—” She furrowed her brow. “Maybe they’re connected to my memories.”

“Right,” Kalen said. “Memories. Yes.”

“I have a question,” Myrin said. “Why haven’t we put our clothes back on yet?”

“Myrin—” The door latch lowered, signaling someone entering.

By reflex, Kalen slapped at his hip for one of his knives, but no luck. His blades lay on the floor. “Hide,” he said to Myrin.

“You hide,” Myrin said. “It’s my room!”

“Fine—but where?” He gestured to the bed, which was too low, and to the closet, which had no door.

“Oh, for Constantly-Reborn Mystra’s Sake!” And Myrin hid the only place she could: she ran at Kalen and ducked to her knees, using him as a shield between herself and the door.

Kalen arched on the balls of his feet. “Myrin, that’s not—”

Myrin looked up at him, eyes bright. “Sorry,” she said. “It was the panic. Is this bad?” She settled her hands on his hips, steadying herself. “How about this?”

*“Really don’t do that,”* Kalen said, but it was too late.

The door opened and Rhett came in. “Myrin, I—oh. Saer Shadowbane.”

Kalen looked over his shoulder to see Rhett gazing blankly at his naked back. “Well met,” Kalen said, because he could say nothing else.

“Well met,” Rhett said. “Look, have you seen Myrin anywhere? King Toy’s acting suspiciously and . . .” His eyes narrowed. He must have seen the clothes littering the floor and done a quick visualization. “I’m sorry, is there someone in here with you?”

“No,” Kalen lied.

“Huh,” Rhett said. “Because it’s a bit odd, you standing mostly naked and alone—in Myrin’s room.”

Kalen shook his head slightly in deterrence, but Myrin leaned around him to look at Rhett. “Hail,” she said. “Kalen and I were just checking each other for marks of the plague. You should take your clothes off, too!”

Rhett paused, apparently considering all the various implications, then blushed furiously. “Mayhap, I’ll just—right.” He backed out the door and hurried away.

Myrin looked up at Kalen, confused. “What’s wrong with Rhett?”

“Er, I think he thinks that—we—” He gestured at the two of them.

"Oh. *Oh.*" Myrin's eyes widened, and she scrambled to her feet. "Wait!" She put out her hand, and one article of clothing—Kalen's undertunic—swirled up to her hand and around her shoulders. She hurried out the door. "Wait, Rhett!"

Kalen hadn't expected that. He stood alone in the room—with only Myrin's clothes at his feet.

"Huh," he said. Then: "Shirt?"

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