



Into the Dragon's Lair

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A New Era Begins

The King Is Dead. Long Live the King!

King Azoun IV of Cormyr and his eldest daughter, Tanalasta, led lives of epic heroism. They defended Cormyr alongside their loyal troops until they fell to a foe whose hatred for their nation was born from untold centuries of suffering. Mad with grief and loss, an elf wizard named Lorelei Alavara, whose love had been slain by the first king of Cormyr, swore vengeance on the Obarskyr name and all humans within Cormyr. Human wizards managed to imprison her over 1,000 years ago.

Since then, Nalavara (as the elf-dragon came to be known) sought a way to break free from her extradimensional prison. Through means unknown (though inadvertently fueled by the magic of Vangerdahast, Cormyr's Royal Wizard who was temporarily trapped with Nalavara), she brought Grodd, a city of goblins, to a level of civilization unheard of among goblinkind. She also created the magical creatures known as ghazneths from long-dead members of Azoun's family who had betrayed Cormyr in some way.

Eventually, she was able to open gates to the Prime Material plane and she dispatched her ghazneths and otherworldly goblins to attack the lands of Cormyr in preparation for her own return. However, through the efforts of King Azoun, his two daughters (Tanalasta and Alusair), Vangerdahast, and a host of brave warriors, Cormyr was saved and the ancient evil of Nalavara was ended.

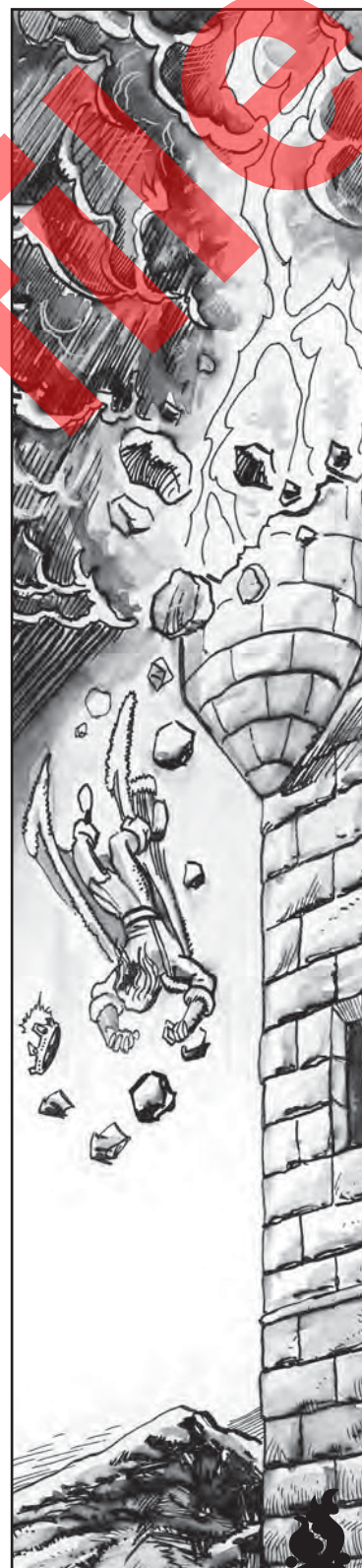
The victory was not without cost. The struggle cost both Azoun IV and Tanalasta their lives. Only through extreme measures was Tanalasta's child saved as life fled from her body. The babe, a boy named Azoun V, is the next king of Cormyr.

Now, wild-hearted Alusair, renowned for her prowess at arms and indomitable will, sits upon the throne as a reluctant Regent, ruling on behalf of her infant nephew until the boy comes of age. Many Cormyrean nobles and merchants do not believe Alusair can be trusted with the reins of power, even if Vangerdahast advises her as well as he advised her father. The events of recent months have pushed this once peaceful, well-ordered kingdom to the verge of anarchy.

Cormyr Today and Tomorrow

Cormyr is now a hotbed of intrigue, as regent loyalists, power-hungry conspirators, misguided patriots, monstrous foes, and sinister forces from beyond Cormyr's borders rush to secure their positions and undermine their enemies.

As a result, Cormyr is a magnet for adventurers and mercenaries of all stripes, possibly for years to come. The people of Cormyr need protection from elements of their own nobility who test Alusair's power, the avaricious nation of Sembia to the east, and from the remnants of Nalavara's forces that helped bring low King Azoun IV and his first-born daughter. Rumors of a now unguarded dragon lair and its inevitable hoard of treasure, somewhere in or near Cormyr, draw an ever-growing number of treasure seekers to the forest country as well.





Into the Dragon's Lair brings the heroes into this chaotic situation. It remains to be seen if your heroes rally to the defense of the infant king and his Regent or allow baser instincts to rule them, and perhaps, the future of all Cormyr.

Running This Adventure

Into the Dragon's Lair is a DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game adventure for four 10th-level characters; if more PCs take part, the DM may wish to upgrade the opposition herein. A mix of classes is helpful, but there should be at least one fighter and one cleric in the group. Having an elf in the party also may prove helpful in the latter stages of the scenario.

The story line of this adventure takes place following the epic FORGOTTEN REALMS® novels *The High Road* and *The Death of a Dragon* (by Troy Denning and Ed Greenwood). Reading those books provides the DM and players with additional insight into the current state of Cormyr, as well as a better sense of what the extradimensional city of Grodd and its native inhabitants are like, but knowledge of these works is by no means necessary. Information from these novels should not affect players' enjoyment of this scenario.

This adventure is self-contained. You only need access to the *Player's Handbook*, *Monster Manual*, and the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide*.

Adventure Summary

This adventure falls into two distinct parts. The first section involves encounters that the PC party has while searching for the dead dragon's lair. The second section sees the party entering the extradimensional city of Grodd where they investigate the legacy of Nalavara and the city's remaining inhabitants.

The adventure starts with the party being asked to by a Cormyrean noble to undertake a quest to locate the dragon's lair. As the PCs cross Cormyr, they witness how the forest kingdom is sliding into chaos. They also have to deal with other groups that are searching for the lair for their own reasons. The PCs eventually reach an entrance into the dragon's lair—but the lair of the dragon that killed

Azoun IV is not a physical location in Cormyr itself. It can be entered only in a few places, none of which are easy to find.

In the second part of the adventure, the party explores the goblin city of Grodd. Here, the party learns details about the Grodd goblins and their culture. Eventually, the party comes face to face with powerful elven warriors who hate humans with the same great passion Nalavara did and who are determined to carry on her quest of vengeance, unless the heroes stop them.

This adventure assumes the PCs move about Cormyr using ground transport (such as horses or ponies). Player characters of this level may possess other means of travel, however. Note that *teleport* spells have a weight limit of 50 pounds per level and require knowledge of the destination. Thus, using this spell or others like it to reach the lair is impossible. (Even if the party knows the lair is on a different plane, the demiplanes prevent such travel as part of their natures.) Also, the *plane shift* spell requires a key, something the PCs do not have for their destination.

Heroes with *flying carpets* and other such devices can cover territory much more quickly than land-bound parties. Assume that aerial travelers take only one-quarter the time (for simplicity's sake) of ground travelers.

Aerial travel also has repercussions on the encounters and plot of this scenario. In this portion of the adventure, most of the encounters take place outdoors, and so aerial PCs simply witness activity below them (Spot check against DC 15) and must fly down to investigate. Flying parties also may foil an ambush or two (see Tax Collectors below), but the DM can alter the circumstances around these encounters (by having a storm come up that grounds the flying PCs, for example, or having the PCs witness the ambush of a group of NPCs from on high) or simply skip them.

Regardless of how quickly the PCs reach their destinations in Cormyr, much of the tension in this story involves that fact that the party is in a race to find the lair. The timeframes given for the other groups' activities should remain as written. In other words, Doxon's group is (at the appropriate point in the adventure) two days ahead of the PCs, however the heroes travel.



Starting the Adventure

The player characters have been asked to visit Lady Kestrel Vaylan (LG female human Ari6), a minor noblewoman who lost her husband, Olaf, in the recent monstrous attacks in Cormyr. Olaf died bravely, trying to defend the city of Arabel against the marauding goblins commanded by Nalavara. Lady Kestrel's manor is still under repair, as are most structures in the city.

If you are using this adventure in an ongoing campaign, Lady Kestrel (or her deceased husband) can be replaced by an NPC noble the party has had dealings with in the past. Also, you should determine beforehand how the heroes come to be in or near Arabel at this time. If they do not regularly visit or adventure in Cormyr, they may have heard of the forest kingdom's troubles and came to help. Perhaps they are only now arriving, or they may have aided the forces of Cormyr upon the battlefields themselves, fighting bravely to stave off Nalavara's mad quest for vengeance.

Note that a goblin army briefly overran Arabel. Before the Purple Dragons could retake the city after the dragon's death, the goblins damaged or set fire to as many of the buildings as possible. An exciting prequel adventure to this scenario could involve the PCs finding themselves in the city when the goblin army attacks.

Once the characters receive the summons and arrive at Lady Kestrel's home, read or paraphrase the following.

You have come to Arabel at the request of Lady Kestrel, the widow of a nobleman and merchant with whom your party has had dealings in the past. Workmen repair Lady Kestrel's manor in Arabel, and the hammering forces her to raise her voice as she speaks with you in her sitting room. Shafts of light spill into the room through cracks in the boards that cover the broken windows, cutting through the shadows in the room.

Lady Kestrel wears the black garb of a woman in mourning and the dark circles under her eyes show that she is still dealing with her grief. She does her best to appear strong.

"Cormyr faces dire times. Many have taken the death of good King Azoun as an opportunity to wreak havoc in our forest kingdom, to seize power, or to address grievances or feuds of the past.

"To make matters worse here, those who work for me and I are becoming targets of the Freedom Warriors, a group of renegades intent on ending the Cormyrean royal line completely.

"That is why I have decided to call upon you. Our bonds are ones of friendship, not finances or politics. All is not lost for Cormyr. I recently received word from a long-time friend of my late husband that he has a lead on the location of the lair of the dragon that killed our king.

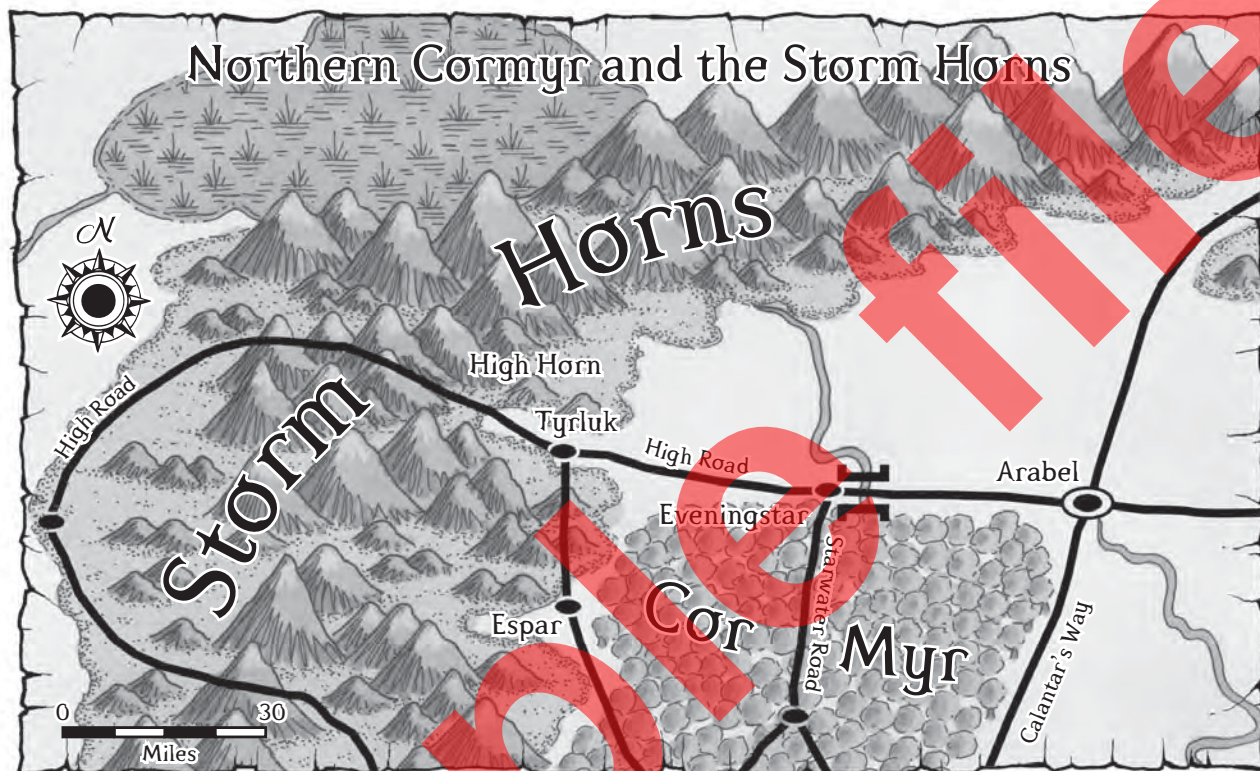
"I would like you to go to Eveningstar to meet with Gurrand Rannar, my husband's old friend, and acquire the map he possesses. He awaits your arrival at the Welcoming Hand Inn. I will give you my signet ring so that he knows you are my agents. After meeting with Gurrand, I would like you to follow the map to the dragon's lair and secure whatever treasure you find on my behalf as a noble of our fair land."

She reaches to the floor beside her and retrieves two carefully folded, plain-looking bags. "These are two bags of holding that my husband kept from his days as an adventurer. These should make it easier for you to transport the treasure you will retrieve from the lair. They are yours to keep, as part of your payment for helping me in this matter.

You are also welcome to keep twenty-five percent of any treasure you find, but I would request that you bring back the rest for Cormyr. I need only twenty-five percent to hire additional guards for my caravans and to help rebuild Arabel. The rest I intend to donate to our regent and infant king, to aid Cormyr in its time of need.

"Please do hurry. Cormyr has need of stout hearts and strong convictions now. Do whatever you can to help bring justice and peace back to our land."

At this point, Lady Kestrel slips a jeweled golden ring off her finger and hands it to the party leader or spokesperson. It features her family crest (a sword,



point-down, with a snake wrapped around the blade). It is clearly the signet ring she referred to.

The party may have questions of Lady Kestrel and she answers them to the best of her ability. Here are a few of the more likely ones. The DM can extrapolate other replies based on these.

Who is Gurrand Rannar? Can he be trusted?

Gurrand was my husband's oldest friend; he was like a brother to Olaf. He is the sixth son of minor nobility from the North, so he became an adventurer to make his way in the world. He has spent the better part of the past thirty years traveling Cormyr and the Dalelands. I trust him implicitly.

Why is Gurrand not going to the lair himself?

Gurrand is no longer young. In fact, according to his letter, the battles he took part in against the goblins took a severe toll on his health. He fears that he would not survive the trip, and he is in no condition to fight. He and I both believe it is vital that whatever funds wait in the dragon's lair fall into the hands of those with the future safety of Cormyr in mind.

Who are the Freedom Warriors?

They are a loose confederation of minor Cormyrean nobles and wealthy merchants who do not trust the regent. Many of them fear that Cormyr will soon be turned into a despot's plaything and that their land and power will be taken from them. They are wrong, of course. Alusair shares her father's sterling, upright spirit. Her lineage is the one that made Cormyr great. They are merely concerned with their personal status and wealth!

Oh, I suspect there are a few Freedom Warriors who believe they are acting in the best interests of Cormyr, but they are led by grasping fools who may doom the kingdom if they are not stopped.

How can you be sure the Freedom Warriors are so bad?

One of their leaders, Lord Hyraken, is a self-centered man of low character. He keeps the company of followers and priestesses of Loviatar and has been known to work servants to death! He and my husband shared a deep personal enmity toward one another, and I firmly believe that Hyraken or his hirelings are behind at least some of the attacks against my people and caravans. He made it clear to

