



THE NEW
ADVENTURES
VOLUME
2

THE DYING KINGDOM

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COVER & INTERIOR ART
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FOG AND THUNDER

Are we lost?" Sindri Suncatcher asked. "I think we're lost."

"We're not lost," Davyn said, shooting the kender a nasty glance. The young ranger pulled himself atop a moss-covered boulder and looked about. Cold, clinging mist surrounded them, filling the valleys of the Vingaard Mountains. Davyn saw no sign of the path they were searching for.

"Not that I mind being lost," Sindri continued, scrambling up the rock. "My aunt Moonbeam was lost for the better part of thirty years once . . ."

"Why don't you do us all a favor and follow her example?" Elidor called up after the kender. Because the elf always spoke in light, pleasant tones, it was difficult to tell whether or not he was joking. He sat down on the trunk of a fallen pine tree and began cleaning his fingernails with his knife.

Catriona brushed some condensation from her hand-me-down armor. She lifted her head and peered up at the dark gray sky. "There's a storm brewing." She turned to Elidor. "Instead of needling Sindri, you might try contributing for a change. After all, you are supposed to be our guide."

Elidor shrugged. "I pretended to be your guide once. And, of



course, I most sincerely regret the deception.” He smiled and bobbed his head apologetically. “I knew just enough to stay one step ahead of the rest of you. Now that we’re actually in the mountains . . .” He shrugged again. “Sorry.”

“Don’t worry,” Nearra said. “I’m sure Davyn can keep us on track.” The thin, pale teenager pushed a strand of blond hair out of her eyes. Then she sat down next to Elidor and adjusted the dagger at her waist. It was a weapon she’d borrowed from Catriona after losing her own, and she still didn’t seem quite comfortable with it.

“Of course I can keep us on track,” Davyn snapped. His words came out more harshly than he intended. In truth, the fog had him confused. He had expected they’d make it to Arngrim by now. He knew it lay in a hidden valley over the first ridges of the Vingaard Mountains. He knew they were close. But with the blasted fog, he couldn’t tell just how close.

Ahead, the Vingaard peaks thrust through the clouds like a towering granite curtain. Tall evergreens clung to the lower slopes; snow reached white fingers down from the heights. Davyn and his four companions stood in the rocky zone along the mountain’s midsection—caught between hostile worlds of forest and ice.

The ranger glanced down at the others. He smiled weakly.

Sindri clapped his hands. “We’re lost! I knew it! What a great adventure!”

“We’re not lost,” Davyn repeated firmly. “Let me glance at that map for a moment, and I’ll tell you exactly where we are.”

Sindri reached into one of the many pockets in his purple cape and pulled out a battered roll of parchment.

Davyn snatched the scroll out of Sindri’s hand. He didn’t really need the parchment; he’d memorized it the first time he saw it. He was stalling for time, both to get his bearings and to decide what to do next. The world he knew well ended considerably to the east of here. In these wild lands, he had only his instincts and Sindri’s tattered map to guide them.

"I heard somewhere that Arngrim is tricky to find," Sindri said. He poked his head around Davyn's waist, trying to catch a glimpse at the map. "Some scholars consider the kingdom to be entirely mythical. Others say Arngrim's just too small to mention on most maps."

Nearra said, "There are many tiny out-of-the-way fiefdoms in Ansalon." A chill ran down Davyn's spine. He lowered the parchment and stared down at her.

"Do you know something about Arngrim, Nearra?" Catriona asked. "Are your memories starting to return?"

Nearra's memory was almost a complete blank. She knew practical things: how to walk and talk and the names of places and things. She knew the country they were in was Solamnia and the continent they lived on was Ansalon. But her entire past remained a mystery.

To Nearra, life had begun just a short time ago when Davyn and the wizard Maddoc rescued her from a terrifying green dragon. Nearra didn't know who she was or what the dragon wanted from her but she was determined to find out. Davyn offered to help Nearra in her quest. Together, they met Catriona, Elidor, and Sindri. The warrior, the elf, and the kender had agreed to help, too.

But trouble dogged their journey. Maddoc proved to be an enemy disguised as a friend. The wizard had sent an ogre, a dark dwarf, goblins, and the green dragon to attack Nearra and her companions.

The friends had survived those trials, but it seemed no one could help the amnesiac girl. Then Sindri found the map scroll. The scroll's legend said that Nearra's cure might lie in the hands of the Scarlet Brethren, a secretive group of wizards who lived in Arngrim.

"Well . . . ?" Davyn asked, fearing Nearra's answer. "Do you remember something?"

The pretty teen clenched her eyes shut, and ran her fingers



through her damp hair. She concentrated for a few moments, then slowly shook her head.

"No," she sighed. "There's nothing. I don't know why I said that." She drew her cloak tighter around her slender body and shuddered. "Why is it so cold here?" she asked. "What happened to summer?"

"The mountains are always cooler than the countryside surrounding them," Elidor said. "The higher you go, the colder they get."

"That's true," Davyn said, hopping down from the boulder. "But Nearra's right. It should be warmer at this time of year." He pulled his own cloak up over his shoulders.

Catriona gazed into the fogbound distance. "The mountains have hemmed in this chilly mist and trapped us as well." She turned and looked sternly at Davyn.

He knew that she didn't trust him. And could he blame her?

"We're not trapped," Davyn said sharply. "We're just getting our bearings." But it was a lie.

Davyn still hadn't told his friends the truth about his own identity. And though he had broken away from his father, he had not entirely escaped Maddoc's grasp. Davyn knew something none of the others knew: Maddoc had planted the map they followed. Why did the wizard want them to head for Arngrim? Was it part of Maddoc's plot to trigger the Emergence in Nearra? Davyn had no idea.

He longed to tell his friends what he knew of Maddoc's plans. But he knew he couldn't reveal his father's plot without betraying his part in it. His only hope was to protect them as best he could. Catriona had been right; they were trapped. At least he was.

Sindri closed his eyes and turned in a circle, pointing as he went. The silver ring on the middle finger of his right hand glinted dimly in the fading light. For a moment, it looked as though the magician might topple off the cliff face and fall down the mountainside.





"My magic tells me that we are very close to the city of Arngrim now," he announced. "I'll be able to tell us exactly which way to go shortly." He kept spinning.

"Quit it, Sindri," Catriona said.

"But my magic. . ." the kender began.

Davyn felt another stab of guilt. The kender was a magician only in his own mind. What magic he possessed—the ability to move objects telekinetically—came from a ring that once belonged to Davyn. Maddoc had given Davyn the ring. But when Davyn decided to defy his father, he had discarded it where Sindri would easily discover it. The kender had been performing spells ever since.

Catriona locked eyes with Davyn. "If you're unsure of the way," she said, "perhaps I should lead for a while."

Elidor stood and stretched. "I suppose it's too late to turn back?" he said.

Nearra looked at him, crestfallen.

"Yes," the elf grumbled. "I suppose it is."

"Look," Davyn snapped, "that storm isn't going to wait forever. If you'd all just stop babbling, maybe I can figure this out."

Davyn pretended to consult the map scroll, all the while trying to pick landmarks out of the fog. The mist parted slightly, and the ranger spotted the prominence he'd been looking for.

"There," he announced, trying not to sound too relieved. "We'll pass through that narrow gorge and, if Sindri's map is right, a trail on the other side should lead us to Arngrim."

Catriona looked at Davyn, skeptically. "Well, if our ranger's sure that's the way," she said. "Let's go before the storm catches us." She shouldered her traveler's pack and headed for the pass, as thunder rumbled behind her. The rest of them followed.

Davyn watched Catriona as she forged ahead. He wished he shared her will and sense of purpose. Catriona had vowed to protect Sindri and Nearra, and she'd stuck steadfastly to her promises. She

never wavered, never complained. Despite her incomplete Solamnic training, she seemed the perfect knight.

As they passed through the gorge, it began to rain. The cold droplets inched their way through the companions' clothing and onto their skin. The countryside leveled out on the other side. Low boulders jutted out of the ground at awkward angles. Scrub pine trees clung to the slope like spiny animals. The air reeked of fog and distant lightning.

"Where's the path?" Elidor asked.

"I see it," Catriona called from the front of the group. She nodded at Davyn. "Good work."

"Hey, what about me?" Sindri asked. "It's my map, after all."

"Well, your successes go without saying," Elidor replied. "We just expect them of you."

Sindri grinned, missing the sarcastic twinkle in the elf's eyes.

"The storm's about to hit hard," Catriona said. "We need to find some shelter before this rain freezes us. It'll only get colder once darkness falls."

Davyn looked around, but saw little through the fog. "Let's keep going," he said. "There's nothing for us here—not even a rock overhang. We'll have to find something along the way."

As darkness crept in around them, driving rain and biting sleet poured down on their heads. Their damp, uncomfortable clothing quickly became sopping wet. Soon, the entire group was shivering. Lightning crashed, casting strange and menacing shadows all around them. The rain did nothing to disperse the clinging fog.

"What's that?" Nearra asked. She left the path and stumbled toward a hulking shape in the mist. They all sprinted after her.

"Thank the gods. It's some kind of building," Nearra said. "But it's a mess."

The structure might once have been a farmhouse, but its best days had long since passed. The timbers supporting the roof were



blackened from fire. Holes riddled the walls. The door hung on its hinges, barely clinging to the doorframe.

Davyn put his shoulder to the door, and shoved it open. They all crowded inside the entry hall.

"At least it's dry," Catriona said, casting off her sodden cloak. "I'll light a torch."

Thankfully, Catriona's traveling pack had kept her torches dry. After a few strikes with flint and steel, one blazed to life. Catriona set a second torch alight and handed it to Davyn. "You all stay here," she said, "I'm going to have a look around."

"I'm coming with you," said Davyn, passing the torch to Elidor. Catriona rolled her eyes but she didn't object.

"See if you can find a fireplace," Sindri called after them.

"Right," Elidor said, "we wouldn't want to burn this 'mansion' down when we build a fire."

The building had once been two stories tall, but its second floor had collapsed. Rubble filled the structure's central stairway. Davyn and Catriona exchanged a worried look, then edged around the rubble into the adjoining room.

They entered a large chamber. A wide stone fireplace—big enough to cook a whole pig inside—took up most of one wall. Long, cracked timbers spanned the room's plaster ceiling. Several of these beams had snapped and crashed down to the floor. Others hung half-broken from the ceiling.

The far side of the room had once been a wall of windows, but the wall had collapsed, leaving a tangled jumble of wood and plaster. Mist peeked through the cracks in the rubble.

Next to the wall crouched a shadowy shape. As Davyn and Catriona came closer, the figure turned. The light from Catriona's torch cast long shadows across the thing's lion-like face. Its eyes blazed red in the darkness.

With an incoherent snarl, the beast charged.

