



# FARTHEST REACH

THE LAST MYTHAL  
BOOK II

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## PROLOGUE

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*26 Kythorn, the Year of Doom (714 DR)*

**I**n a gentle summer rain shower, Fflar Starbrow Melruth and his company fought for their lives on the outskirts of Myth Drannor. The streets of the Sheshyrinnam—the Temple Ward—were choked with blood-maddened throngs of gnolls whose battle cries sounded like the barking and snarling of hyenas. Towering mezzoloths, insectoid fiends armed with heavy iron tridents or simply their own sickle-like claws, waded through the feral gnoll warriors to reach the elven ranks.

“There are too many, Fflar! We cannot reach the tower!” cried Elkhazel.

The sun elf swordsman was not generally given to despair, but Fflar could hear the hopelessness in his voice. All morning long the armsmen in Fflar’s command, a sturdy company of Akh Velar infantry, had fought alongside many others to repel the

assault on the Temple Ward. But the evil warriors came on without a break, heedless of their own lives.

“We cannot abandon Crownfrost!” Fflar replied. “The arms-major is still fighting inside!”

He turned away from Elkhazel to meet the attack of a pair of axe-wielding gnolls. He cut one down with a quick drop and thrust into the warrior’s midsection, deflecting the blow with an expert turn of his left-hand dagger. The other simply disappeared into the confused melee. Unfortunately, Elkhazel was right—there *were* too many foes, more savage warriors and hellspawned fiends than Fflar could have imagined in the whole world. So many gnolls lay dead or dying in the street surrounding Fflar’s company that the elves could not form ranks or fight the battle of maneuver that might have favored their quickness and skill over the gnolls’ brute strength.

Only forty yards ahead of Fflar’s embattled company, the pale walls of Crownfrost Tower rose over the streets. Home to one of the city’s wizard schools, it held no great secrets that Fflar knew of—but it happened to be a strongly built building on the city’s outskirts. As such, the fiendlord commanding the enemy horde had chosen to launch his assault on that part of the elven city by seizing Crownfrost. Arms-Major Olortynnal had had no choice but to deny it to him. Somewhere in the tower Olortynnal and a small company of elite bladesingers and champions fought to repel the horde’s attack, but the press of gnolls, mezzoloths, and other foul warriors had surrounded Crownfrost, keeping the elf armsmen outside from going to the aid of their commander.

We need a better plan, Fflar thought.

He stepped back from the front ranks, searching for some alternative, some order he could give that would change the character of the fight. As long as his soldiers were under assault from nearly all sides at once, there was little he could do.

He glared at Crownfrost, so near, and yet so unattainable, and to his surprise he spotted a pair of elves fighting desperately on the broken battlements—Arms-Major

Olortynnal himself, commander of Cormanthyr's army, and his second, Arms-Captain Selorn. Mezzoloths attacked the two recklessly, coming on despite horrible wounds, and nycaloths flapped ponderously in the air above the tower, closing in for the kill.

"Fflar! The arms-major!" Elkhazel called.

"I see him," Fflar answered. He didn't know how he could help the beleaguered champions, but he had to do something. Shouting a war cry in Elvish, he dashed forward into the line again, and hurled himself against the press, slashing and cutting on all sides as he struggled step by step for Crownfrost.

By the random opportunities of battle, or by the fury of his own counterattack, Fflar found a narrow space around himself.

"Follow me!" he called, and pressed ahead.

When next he found the chance to look up to Crownfrost, he saw a nycaloth alight behind Selorn and cleave the arms-captain to the breastbone with its heavy axe. The blow crumpled the warrior to the ground at one stroke. Olortynnal half turned to meet the new threat. With his back unguarded, the mezzoloth that had been in front of him stepped close and jammed the points of its trident between the elflord's shoulders. More weapons flashed, and blood splattered the wet stone of the tower's top. The arms-major sagged, only to be seized by the nycaloth and hurled down from the battlements with a shout of infernal triumph.

"Arms-Major!" Fflar cried.

Olortynnal struck the white flagstones of the street only a few feet from Fflar and lay still, his sword Keryvian clattering from his loose fingers. The gnolls all around Fflar hooted and yipped, shaking their weapons in delight, while the young captain stared in dismay at the broken body of Cormanthyr's great champion.

"Olortynnal. . . ." he said.

A gnoll standing near the fallen elflord stooped and split the dead arms-major's skull with its battle-axe. It howled in delight and shook its gory weapon in the air. Fflar's

momentary horror vanished in an instant, replaced by a white-hot fury. Without even knowing how he did it, he hurled himself through the remaining gnolls and rammed the point of his long sword through the breastbone of the gnoll that had struck the fallen Olortynnal. The creature spun away, Fflar's blade lodged in its heart, and wrenched Fflar's sword from his hand.

Gnolls all around the young captain snarled with hate and moved in, axes and maces raised. Fflar found himself standing astride Olortynnal's body, wielding only a dagger in his left hand.

At least I will die defending a great champion, he told himself.

Then his eye fell on Keryvian, the arms-major's sword.

Quick as a fox, Fflar discarded his dagger and stooped to pick up Keryvian. It was a heavy hand-and-a-half sword of arcane blue steel, its edges slightly wavy, its hilt worked in the shape of a blue dragon's head and wings. Whether it was meant for him or not, he was in need of a sword, and better that he should take it than leave it to be stolen by gnolls or broken by demons.

A brilliant azure gleam sprung from the blade as his hand touched the hilt, and a cold steel voice seemed to whisper in his mind. *I am Keryvian, last of Demron's blades. I will not fail in my strike, warrior.*

Fflar nearly dropped the weapon in astonishment, but he was already in mid-swing, a wicked uppercut that sliced through the throat of the nearest gnoll and ended by cleaving the snoutlike face of a second one standing nearby. Keryvian burned with holy fire, and Fflar wheeled to face any other gnolls nearby.

They were backing away from him, yellow eyes fixed on the mighty sword. Fflar's soldiers cried out in acclaim, and surged forward to drive off the savage warriors, cutting down any who did not run. A great shadow fell over Fflar, and he looked up to see the nycaloth who had slain Selorn spiraling down toward him, great black wings spread wide, axe dripping in its claws.

“Get away from my prize, fool!” the monster bellowed. “I slew him. I claim his arms!”

Keryvian burned bright in Fflar’s hands, and the captain raised the sword above his head in a high guard. The big warblade felt as light as a willow switch in his hands, and he could feel it burning with holy wrath against the infernal creature approaching. Fflar met the master with a grim smile.

“There is no prize for you here, hellspawn!” he called to the nycaloth. “Come any closer, and I will send you back to the foul pits from which you crawled!”

The nycaloth roared in wrath and plummeted down on Fflar. Despite his defiant words, terror knotted his chest—but then Keryvian spoke again in his mind.

*I will not fail in my strike, the sword promised.*