

CHOOSE YOUR ADVENTURE PATH!

In a Paths of Doom™ adventure book, you and the hero travel together through fantastic realms. You face many dangers and it will be your choices that determine if the two of you survive to continue the quest or you both meet your DOOM!

- 1) Will you journey with Prince Delvin of Sea Reach Hold on a desperate quest for his family's magical sword, Havoc, on an island in which strange magic has run wild? If this is your choice, turn to page 3 to begin the adventure.
- 2) If instead you choose to remain in this world and continue to lead a humdrum, boring life, then put this book back on the shelf.

**IN A PATHS OF DOOM BOOK,
THE CHOICE IS YOURS!**

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THE LOST SWORD

A PATHS OF DOOM™ Adventure Book

by Nancy Virginia Varian

Sample file



To the memory of my parents,
Rose and Harry Varian, who taught me to
love stories and storytelling, I dedicate this book.

THE LOST SWORD

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Margaret Weis Productions, Ltd.
253 Center St #126
Lake Geneva, WI 53147
Tel 262-725-3518
Fax 262-725-3521

Visit our website at www.margaretweis.com

You've picked up an exciting story that you read a bit differently than normal books. In reading a PATHS OF DOOM book, you quickly begin to enjoy the characters and the action. During the first important action of the story, you—the reader—are offered a choice. It's your decision what the main character does next!

The process reads something like this:

The hero attacks the enemy. Go to page 999.

The hero carefully checks for traps. Turn to page 888.

You make the choice, turn to the proper page, and continue reading, but the story's main character is acting the way you decide. It's up to you if the exciting adventure comes to a successful ending or the main character faces a terrible doom!

When reading a PATHS OF DOOM book, you can go back and experience the adventure again, following a new and different path each time.

Enjoy! Now let the tale begin...



"Pi-i-i-rates!"

The bellowed warning thundered, interrupting Prince Delvin's sleep. Like waves on a stormy sea, a crash of voices followed. Delvin tried to move and couldn't get an arm or leg. Outside his darkened window shouting became screaming, cursing, and weeping. The clash of blade against blade rang like bright and terrible lighting. The pounding of booted feet echoed from the walls of the keep. Sea-raiders swarmed up the stone stairs from the beach.

The king is dead!

Father—!

Fire crackled, lurid light leapt up the stone walls. Smoke filled even the prince's high tower room. He tried to call out, but he had no voice. He didn't think he was even breathing.

Delvin came crashing awake. Wide-eyed and gasping for breath, he bolted up in bed. Shaking off the dream, he plowed his fingers through blond hair. His bedchamber was cluttered with clothing, boots, and hosen. In the chill night air, he snatched tough woolen breeches, thick socks, and stout brown boots from the nearest pile. Finally, he tugged a shirt of bleached wool over his head. The shirt strained a bit at the shoulders. He was his father's son, broad shouldered and tall. Schooled from childhood in the battlefield arts by King Larant's finest soldiers, sixteen-year-old Delvin had proven himself worthy of his tutors. No young man his age was as keen with

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mace or pole-axe. Few older men could best him.

The room shone white in a broad spill of moonlight; the blue tiled floor looked like a still pool. Delvin leaned out the window and saw points of light on the sharp pikes his father's watch carried as they paced the wall. That stony height stood between the ocean and King Larant's granite fortress, Star Keep. Pirates would have to be birds to pass it.

Beyond the wall, the night sky spread out like velvet. The moon-spangled sea sighed peacefully against the piers below the headland. No smoke roiled up from below, no one screamed or cursed. There were no pirates, no pirate leader called One-eyed Jack.

Yet the sounds of Delvin's nightmare persisted, clear as though they were memories of a terrible day. A superstitious prickle skittered on the back of his neck. Had the dream been a true-seeing?

It couldn't have been! He believed what all the folk of Sea Reach Hold did—magic and prophecy were not things right-thinking people talked about. That was for the wit-wondering, the drink-addled, and tricksters. Delvin believed that.

Mostly.

But he couldn't deny that two years ago Tessa, the daughter of the head cook, had caused her father to be cured of a deadly blood fever after she'd slipped a charm under the sufferer's pillow. After two nights, the sick man was sitting up and demanding his breakfast.

Delvin shuddered at the memory, and at the same time, he felt a surge of hope.

The damp air smelled heavily of the briny sea, wind moaned around the keep. On the four high towers, white pennants stirred in the cool night, red embroidered edges rippled like flames. The breeze caught the banner opposite Delvin's window and unfurled it.

A crimson phoenix blazed out against silk whiter than the moon. In its talons, the noble creature gripped a sword whose red hilts were shaped like spread wings.

The prince nodded as though he'd heard a call. He slipped a long knife into the sheath at his belt. He slung his bow and a quiver filled with arrows over his shoulder. Silent as a shadow, he left his chamber, went down the spiraling stone steps, and slipped across the moon-dappled great hall. Using a wooden brand from the barrel by the door, he borrowed fire from a nearby torch.

Out in the cobblestone courtyard, Delvin waved to one of the watchmen on the battlements, who tossed a casual salute. His father's men were used to seeing him out early to hunt. No one would think he was up to anything else.

The breeze stiffened, tugging at Delvin's hair, flaring the torch. Certainly no one would think he was going to the one place the

people of his father's hold when only went in desperation—down to the sea caves and old Blind Rhysa.



Delvin stood straight and tall before the mouth of the cave. Gulls hung in the sky, dark against the dawn. Wind drove growling waves against the rocks behind him, dashing them into plumes of white spray. He gripped his torch, peering into the darkness. Something stirred in there—a squat, hunched figure. Blind Rhysa, he thought, for who else would sit in an unlighted cave, not even the ember of an old fire to relieve the darkness?

“Eee-ee-ee . . .” creaked a voice from the darkness, brittle as a gull’s. “Hear ‘at,? ‘At’s the sea tellin’ the names of all the people she dragged down to her terrible deeps.”

Delvin squared his shoulders. Head high, he said, “Are you Blind Rhysa?”

Again, the gull-sound. “I’ve been waiting for you, Delvin, son of Larant.”

Delvin’s heart thumped rib-rattlingly hard. He nodded, then remembered the ancient woman couldn’t see that. “I’m here. Tell me—”

“Your dream is a true-seeing, boy.”

The clamor of his nightmare still in his mind, Delvin forced himself to go into the cave. Orange torchlight ran on the slick stone walls. Its gleam made the glistening ring of little pools in the center of the floor look like miniature lakes of crimson fire. On a broad stone in the middle of the pools, a woman sat huddled in a rust-colored robe. She flung the hood back, and Delvin saw a face like crumpled parchment. Bluish-white cauls covered her eyes.

“Eee-ee-ee!” Blind Rhysa cried again. “It’s a true-seeing, that dream o’ yours.”

Boldly, Delvin stepped closer to the ring of water. “If you know this is true, tell me if there’s a way to stop it from happening!”

She laughed, a dark, throaty sound at odds with her gull-shrieking. “Ain’t no sense in knowing, eh, if there’s no undoing?” The old blind woman snorted. “That’s just boy-thinkin’. Plenty of things you know right now you can’t undo.”

Delvin’s heart sank. It seemed he could hear the terrible cry again: *The king is dead!*

Blind Rhysa stirred then settled. “Well, not this time. This time you can change fate, prince, if you dare to try. If you have the belly for the challenges.”

Delvin’s hope sparked. “What challenge? Tell me—show me—”

“Eee-ee-ee! Not chall-ENGE, boy. Challen-GES. Challenges,