

[OVERLY EPIC INTRO THEME MUSIC]

Narrator: Welcome to the Labyrinth: A tangled and tortuous maze where the imprisoned are hunted in the dark by a towering, bloodthirsty monster. But don't worry, that was all a long time ago. Nowadays, the Labyrinth is all in your head.

[END OF THEME MUSIC]

Episode 1 - Nothing

You wake up to find yourself surrounded by darkness in all directions. You don't know how or why you would end up in an infinite void of nothing. The last thing you can remember is pressing "play" to begin listening to a podcast. You hear a voice - My voice - narrating your thoughts. You open your mouth to speak, but no one can hear you so nothing comes out. I will speak on your behalf should the need arise during your trials. Now this next part might be a little freaky, so brace yourself. You see, you're not actually enveloped by darkness in all directions, I simply haven't narrated your surroundings yet. By doing so now, I bid you a most regrettable welcome, to the labyrinth.

The chill from the stone floor creeps in through your shoes. You seem to be at a dead end of an immense stone hallway that extends off into the distance. Massive smooth grey limestone blocks have been stacked to form the towering walls around you. They stretch high enough overhead to where the dim light of your crackling torch doesn't reach the ceiling. The air here is stagnant and cool; Thick with the scent of stone and earth. Now that the environment has been narrated, you can picture it. Now that you can picture it, you can explore it. And you will need to explore it fully if you ever wish to leave. At least, that's what my narrator told me, when I was in your shoes.

Ah yes, I remember it like it was y- *[SOUND OF ECHOEY FOOTSTEPS]*
Oh! I see you've started walking down the hall already. Um- Yeah that's fine. I'm not really supposed to be reminiscing anyway. After walking for... an amount of time, you come to a 90 degree bend in the pathway. Rounding the corner, you're met with more,

bleak corridor continuing on into the distance. "Not much to do but press on," you think to yourself.

Did you know that, traditionally, a labyrinth doesn't actually have any branching pathways or intersections? They were tools for reflection and meditation. Just one continuous pathway that would twist and turn all over the place until finally stopping at the very center. This was the case back in ancient Greece when Daedalus first designed this thing. But, just like anything else that wants to survive throughout the years, our labyrinth continues to evolve. I mean, heck, we've even got 4-way intersections these days. We're actually due to hit one any minute. You're doing great by the way. One foot in front of the other. It's an admirable trait to be willing to make forward progress without knowing the destination. The labyrinth can actually provide all sorts of good lessons like that to take back to real life if you ever get out of here.

Wait... what's that? Ahead of you, you spot a canvas satchel on the ground, leaned against the wall. You crouch beside it to investigate and flip open the top flap. Inside is- what!? A portable cassette tape player. That's a touch anachronistic don't ya think? I don't remember reading about anything like this in the manual. Well, there aren't any tapes in it, or in the satchel. So it's probably best to leave it. But, I can see you've donned the satchel after placing the tape player back inside it. "This is sure to come in handy later," you think to yourself. "I wonder if the narrator is trying to trick me into leaving useful equipment behind." You ponder as you start to walk once again, deeper into the labyrinth.

After following the twists and turns of the pathway for few minutes, or maybe a few hours - You know, they play that transitional sound effect and it's tough to tell how much time has past - After an amount of time, you come to, what would be a dead-end, were it not for the tall, wooden ladder standing upright in the middle of the pathway. The ladder stretches up into darkness. You give it a shove, and another with more strength. It's set firmly in place. It's a little awkward at first climbing the ladder with one hand holding a torch. But you take your time with it and it's easy enough to find a

comfortable technique to ascend. Here, about two stories off the ground, the ceiling finally comes into view, more solid stone, save for a small wooden trap door directly overhead. The ladder leads you right under it. You're relieved to find the trap door unlocked, and not too heavy. It hinges up and out of the way as you climb through.

You find yourself standing in a large square room. It's well lit thanks to several braziers and torches suspended from the ceiling and affixed to the walls. Dozens of artist easels stand all around, each holding a white canvas with some amount of writing and sketching scribbled upon it. Despite a welcome bit of warmth from the braziers, the room doesn't feel all that hospitable. Checking for exits, you see four obvious passageways leading out of the room. One to the North, one to East, One South and One West. They are labeled thusly with chiseled lettering just above each exit.

Ah, see! It's one of those four-way intersections I was talking about! Totally snuck up on me there. As narrator, I'm required to inform you that there is only one correct direction out of this room. But don't worry, because with the appropriate application of observation and wit, the correct direction for safe passage can always be discerned.

To that end, It is my pleasure to provide some additional details about the room you're in. You take a closer look at the marked up canvases propped up on the easels around the space. For the most part, the sketching and writing across them seems to be incoherent notes on geometry and mathematics. Lots of circles with different measurements and equations being worked out. There are two canvases, however, that grab your attention. For starters, they are the only two canvases placed side-by-side. And they're the only canvases with words painted in large block letters.

One canvas has a list of, seemingly, unrelated words. Eight in total, they are:

RETALIATE
UMBRELLA
NUTRIENTS

NEGLECT

OXBOW

RADIONOVELA - apparently that's a word.

Then, TSAR. spelled T, S, A R, like a an old-timey russian emperor

And HOMESTEAD is the last in the list. This same list can also be found in something called, "show notes." Um, I guess you're supposed to know what that is because I've never heard of it.

On the other canvas, the only words written are EXTRACT PI. And that's pi like P, I, the number pi. Oh hey. Did you know that "pi" was first discovered by this guy Archimedes? He was this scientist, inventor, mathematician sort of guy back in Ancient Greece, he could totally be connected to this labyrinth somehow. Legend has it that he was working on a math problem when Roman soldiers burst into his house after they captured the city of Syracuse. Faced with his own death, Archimedes last words to the Roman soldiers were, "Do not touch my circles." I know, right?! So rad. I bet it sounded ever cooler in Latin! Actually, do you think, where we are now, could this actually be his workshop?

You take in the surroundings once more and very quickly come to doubt the narrator's juvenile musings. Everything in here seems way more likely to have been staged as some sort of themed challenge as opposed to a lived-in space.

Okay, geez. You know I can hear your thoughts when I narrate them, so I can tell when you're being rude.

You return to sizing up the strange list of words. Something about them is supposed to tell you which direction to choose. You're pretty good at puzzle solving, so right away you spot that the first letter of each word spells out: RUN NORTH. "That was easy" you think to yourself. "Maybe too easy?" You take another look at the list. You try a quick scan of the last letter of each word and see that it spells out: EASTWARD. Just as you suspected, there seems to be more going on here. The other canvas that reads, "EXTRACT PI" feels like it's meant to help identify one letter from each word to consider.

[DISTANT MINOTAUR ROAR]

Oh my. He is here much earlier than expected! Um, well, I didn't think I would need to do this yet, which is why I hadn't done this yet. But it sounds like I should give you a bit of info about your fellow occupant of the labyrinth.

[ANOTHER ROAR]

Did that sound closer than before? Sound really carries down here so I'm sure he's further away than it seems.

[SOUNDS GET CLOSER]

I might just take a quick peak at my manual here just to play it safe. Let's see...

[FLIPPING THROUGH PAGES FRANTICALLY]

Minotaur... minotaur...

You know what? In the meantime, you might as well go ahead and figure out which way to go.

[GROWLING AND STOMPING GETTING CLOSER]

Also, maybe do that as soon as possible.

[OUTRO MUSIC]

Spencer: Thus concludes episode one. Welcome to the Labyrinth is written, edited and narrated by me, Spencer Beebe. If you like puzzly stuff I have some other offerings you can find at my website, www.spencerispuzzling.com

If you're so inclined, please leave the show a review on whatever podcast platform you're enjoying right this second.

If you would like to share comments, questions or any good knock-knock jokes, the episode description has links to my facebook group, as well as a link to the puzzle people discord server where you'll find a Spencer is Puzzling channel along with a bunch of new friends for you to make.

That's all for now. Thank you so much for listening and adventuring. Now get lost already.