

[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, tireless, 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]

Previously on Welcome to the Labyrinth

You stand in the center of the open air, truly awesome, Roman Colosseum. | You shrink down a bit behind your shield as a highly agitated lineup of seven creatures prowl out from their crates. | Nice dodge! Okay, the seventh of the attackers is going back to its crate. They're back in their starting lineup catching their breath. Now's your chance to get out of here. You still need to figure out the right direction though.

Um, quick, be clever!

Episode 4 - Thread

With said quick cleverness completed correctly, you pick a direction to leave the Colosseum and book it.

[HURRIED FOOTSTEPS IN DIRT TURN INTO HURRIED FOOTSTEPS ON STONE]

The pitch black tunnel leading out of the arena is a welcome compromise to escape the gruesome snarling of your new friends.

You speed down the corridor, slowing only once you round a corner that is beyond the reach of the dwindling light from the distant colosseum.

Those ferocious fiends are still a bit too close for comfort so you decide to push forward into the darkness. You keep your bearings by periodically brushing a shoulder or elbow along the passing stone walls. You operate your sword as a makeshift walking stick to probe your immediate surroundings.

[TRANSITIONAL WHOOSH SOUND EFFECT]

After an amount of time, it seems like there won't be any magical glowing ceilings to provide light this time. You continue to make steady progress into the labyrinth. At least, it's been progress as far as you can tell. Difficult to know for sure in the absence of light. Or is it? I mean, in reality you've only been listening to my narration and hearing sounds of your surroundings this whole time. Does it actually matter if you can see in an audio only format? It's actually pretty cool to think about how even just by itself, audio is able to evoke visuals, emotions, craft entire realities... I mean, stop me if I'm going on for too long, but when you think about storytelling, as an art form, I think there's really no better way to-

[SWORD SMACKS INTO SOMETHING WOODEN]

Huh!? What was that? You halt as your sword smacks into a large wooden object in front of you. You stretch your foot out a bit to get a sense of this thing's dimensions. "Treasure-chest sized," is how you would optimistically describe the shape of this thing. You carefully return your sword to its scabbard to free up a hand and... Oh yeah. That's definitely a treasure chest. The lid lifts open as easily as the others. You plunge your right arm in and feel around.

Hopefully you get something that'll cast light. Oh. you feel something. It's... it's...! It's a cassette tape. I might've guessed. You can't read the label, but you're familiar enough with the tape payer to operate it without looking.

[CASSETTE TAPE INSERTED AND "PLAY" BUTTON PRESSED]

Aster: Eh-hem. Hello again, listener, and welcome to "Aster's secret plan episode 3." By now you will have been told that in order to escape this place, you're meant to figure out the correct directions to travel at each intersection. But what they don't tell you is that the correct path leads to a locked door and the key for it is incredibly dangerous to obtain.

Another thing they don't tell you is that if you don't choose the right path or experience an untimely ending, you actually start over from the beginning and the labyrinth resets itself with all new challenges. This is why us narrators get stuck at the job for such a long time. But that gets me thinking. If this place developed such an intricate punishment for unsuccessful adventurers. I imagine there's got to be a punishment for unruly narrators. This is the main reason why I've had to be exceedingly vague up to this point. Make too many waves and I might meet one of those untimely endings that are all the rage down here. But I can't leave yet. Not until the plan is set.

Speaking of which, you may have noticed that the treasure chest items you've collected thus far have been perfectly thematic for your adventure. This item will be no exception once you convert the tape. I hope that if I don't tamper with what item is ultimately received, I'll maintain TLD. Which, for now, seems to be working. I'm at least able to continue these recordings. But the next tape I make. The next bonus item you find. I aim to alter it. So if you don't hear from me again, I hope you'll know what to do. So, goodbye for now... or forever.

[AWAY FROM MICROPHONE]

Yeesh. What a downer.

[TAPE RECORDER CLICK AND TAPE HISS STOPS]

Narrator: You take a moment and let that all sink in. Should you have been trying to find a key this whole time? What alteration is Aster planning for the next item? Did they already do it? Were they punished for it? What item is this tape going to turn into?

The lighting situation hasn't improved so you're still unable to read the label on the tape. "Only one way to find out," you think to yourself as you eject the tape and plop it back into the chest. You feel your way along the top edge of the chest to track down the lid.

[LID CLOSING, MAGICAL WHOOSH, LID OPENING]

You wearily reach your hand back into the chest. You hope this next bonus item isn't something with exposed blades or pokey bits.

Ah, there it is! It's, huh... It's actually quite soft. Spherical. About the size of a grapefruit and very light. It has an odd texture to it; Tiny ridges tightly packed together in all different directions across the entire surface. Hmm, something else... a piece of string, or thread dangling off of the sphere. You give it a pull and more thread begins to unspool itself from the sphere. Ah-hah! You realize the sphere you're holding must be a tightly wound ball of thread.

You take the dangling string and begin wrapping it back around the ball. As you take up more and more slack from the string, it becomes apparent that the end of the thread is not inside the treasure chest. The line travels out of the chest and as you continue to wrap up as much as you can, the slack begins to pull tight. The end of it is stuck to something very far away.

You might not have received an item to illuminate your surroundings, but it appears you have been given a path to follow. You timidly proceed in the direction of the thread. With a slight adjustment, you're able to hold the ball of thread in your shield hand as you wrap up slack with the other. You advance down a dark path this way for... you guessed it, an amount of time.

[TRANSITIONAL WHOOSH SOUND EFFECT]

You pull yourself slowly, methodically, onward through the dark. The thread leads you around a corner, then another. All in all it's pretty slow going. So while you don't have much else going on right now I have a confession to make. I think Aster is telling the truth in those tapes.

I recognize their voice actually. They were my narrator. But the thing is, I never made it out of the Labyrinth. I never found the end, or a locked door or a key or whatever it is you're supposed to do. Initially, I thought it must just be after you

serve enough time trying to escape you get shifted to narrator duty. But now I'm thinking, what if something happened to Aster? Ya know, what if this place... dealt with them. And then it needed a new narrator to fill in and that's when I got the gig without ever earning it.

Something for me to think about I guess. But hey, on a different note: In that last tape, Aster mentioned that the bonus items you get from the chest are thematic. So even without seeing it, I'm pretty sure you must be holding Ariadne's thread. You see, Ariadne was the daughter of the king who used to run this place. One time, he threw this dude, Theseus in here to die. But Ariadne had the hots for him, so she gave him a huge spool of thread so he could leave a trail of it to find his way out. He was actually able to kill the-

[DEEP ANIMALISTIC SNORING SOUND]

Okay. What was that?

[MORE DEEP SNORING SOUNDS]

whispering: The thread seems to be leading you directly past a sleeping creature. It sounds huge. A strong livestock scent radiates off of it. You don't feel like dealing with more beasts anytime soon, so you go into "super-stealth" mode as you carefully shimmy around this thing.

You're directly beside it now. Oh gross! A gust of hot breath hits you in the side of the head. Woof! That is atrocious. You cover your mouth to stifle your retching. You hasten a bit, too eager to be away from all this and you accidentally graze the beast as you pass. You feel a slimy, wet, bovine nose. And you get caught briefly on a large pointed horn.

[SHIFTING AND RESTLESS GRUMBLING]

[RUSTLE OF CLOTHING/ARMOR AND METALLIC ITEMS]

Woah now. Woah now! Easy, big fella. Let's call it what it is. The minotaur tosses in its sleep. And then settles back down.

You adopt a glacial pace as you circumvent the slumbering predator.

Once you're a few paces away, you speed up just a bit. Wrapping up the ball of string as you go. A flurry of questions fills your mind. "Where did that thing come from? When it shifted around, did it sound like it had armor, or weapons? Can it hear the narrator? Does he need to be whispering right now? It seemed like the narrator was about to mention the minotaur in his story about Ariadne and Theseus. Did he manifest it? Was it on purpose?" These are all great questions. And I'll tell you why they're such great questions. That's because I don't actually know that answer to any of 'em! My manual doesn't give me any specifics about the minotaur. I don't think it can hear me but I'm going with the "better safe than sorry" approach just in case. I was for sure about to mention the minotaur in my history lesson right as it showed up. Which is quite the coincidence. I didn't do it on purpose, okay? but maybe my narration created an opening that the labyrinth was waiting for.

[TRANSITIONAL SOUND EFFECT]

Hmm... I think I would have liked to process those last events a bit more, but it's already an amount of time later all of a sudden. Interesting. Well, the Minotaur is a long way behind you at this point. And you notice the tautness of the thread you've been following has been getting sharper indicating that whatever it's secured to must be close. Sure enough, you bump into something that the thread is tied to. Some sort of wooden plank or arm. The thread loops around it several times before continuing upward to another wooden arm, or rung! Ha! You've found another wooden ladder. The thread travels up it and you follow suit.

[LADDER CLIMBING SOUNDS]

[WOODEN TRAP CREAKS OPEN]

[WOODEN TRAP DOOR THUMPS SHUT]

Unfortunately, it's still pitch black here above the trap door. You get the sneaking suspicion that you're at an intersection with possible exits leading in four different directions. The

thread you've been following does continue beyond the trap door, but you leave it for now. You decide to feel your way around the walls of the room to confirm your suspicions. You have to duck under some stretches of thread surrounding the trapdoor to reach the perimeter. But after that, it's not long before you have the lay of the land.

You're in a sizable square chamber. Like if you widened a basketball court until it was square. There are indeed four exits out of this room, each with the words NORTH, EAST, SOUTH, or WEST that you can feel engraved in the wall beside it.

Exploring the middle of the space, you step on a little pathway of gravel that's been laid out in a large square within the room. There are several landmarks along this path that strike you as noteworthy. For starters, you find a tall, skinny, stone pillar in each corner of the gravel path. Then, in the center of the northern stretch of gravel walkway, you bump into a display pedestal with some sort of music box on top of it. In the center of the eastern walkway you pass by some windchimes. The southern walkway holds a pedestal topped with a bird in a cage. And the western stretch of walkway has a final pedestal with one of those little decorative indoor waterfall fountain trickle type of things.

Aside from the gravel path, the rest of the flooring is solid stone. The wooden trapdoor you popped out of is in the very center of the surrounding gravel path. The thread that led you here wraps around all of the skinny stone pillars, and some of the objects in between in a complicated, crisscrossing, overlapping trail.

You duck under several lengths of thread to get back to the central trapdoor. You feel around the edges of it to recover the thread just as it enters the room.

You slide along this thread which leads you to the Southwest stone pillar. Here at the pillar, your fingers feel a large knot tied into the thread. From here the thread wraps around the pillar before continuing off to the next thing it's wrapped around. You keep your hand on the thread as you follow it.

[FOOTSTEPS IN GRAVEL]
[TRAVELING PAST TRICKLING WATER]

[FOOTSTEPS ON STONE]
[TWO STEPS ON CREAKY WOOD]
[FOOTSTEPS ON STONE]

[FOOTSTEPS IN GRAVEL]
[TRAVELING PAST WINDCHIMES]

You feel another knot in the thread as you reach this stone pillar. There's a bunch more thread to follow though so you keep at it.

[FOOTSTEPS IN GRAVEL]
[TRAVELING PAST MUSICAL JINGLE]

[FOOTSTEPS IN GRAVEL]
[TRAVELING PAST TRICKLING WATER]

[FOOTSTEPS IN GRAVEL]
[TRAVELING PAST BIRD CHIRPS]

[FOOTSTEPS IN GRAVEL]
[TRAVELING PAST WINDCHIMES]

Hmm. Another knot in the thread here.

[FOOTSTEPS IN GRAVEL]
[TRAVELING TO MUSICAL JINGLE]

[FOOTSTEPS ON STONE]
[TWO STEPS ON CREAKY WOOD]
[FOOTSTEPS ON STONE]
[TRAVELING TO BIRD CHIRPS]

[FOOTSTEPS ON STONE]
[TWO STEPS ON CREAKY WOOD]
[FOOTSTEPS ON STONE]
[TRAVELING TO MUSICAL JINGLE]

[FOOTSTEPS ON GRAVEL]

And here's another knot at this pillar.

[FOOTSTEPS IN GRAVEL]

[TRAVELING PAST TRICKLING WATER]

[FOOTSTEPS IN GRAVEL]

[TRAVELING PAST BIRD CHIRPS]

[FOOTSTEPS IN GRAVEL]

[TRAVELING PAST WINDCHIMES]

Another not here. Popular pillar to have knots nearby I guess.

[FOOTSTEPS IN GRAVEL]

[TRAVELING PAST MUSICAL JINGLE]

[FOOTSTEPS ON STONE]

[TWO STEPS ON CREAKY WOOD]

[FOOTSTEPS ON STONE]

[FOOTSTEPS IN GRAVEL]

[TRAVELING PAST BIRD CHIRPS]

And a final knot here at this pillar. You've reached the very end of the thread and can feel a tiny inscription in the pillar where the end of the thread is tied in a loop. You feel some letters that spell out the words GREEK GOD, followed by five dashes or underscores.

That looks like everything you get to work with for this one. Fortunately we haven't heard a peep out of the-

[MINOTAUR ROAR IN THE DISTANCE]

Oh come on! Me and my big mouth. Do you think Minotaurs can climb ladders? I mean, I wouldn't stick around to find out if I was you. But I am genuinely curious. Cause, I figure it's got human hands for holding axes and stuff, right? But the legs and

hooves of a bull. That's not gonna work on a ladder. Again, I think the "better safe than sorry" approach: still the right call. So, chop-chop with the solving and subsequent leaving.

[MOTIVATIONAL ENDING MUSIC]