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Chapter 17: The Labyrinth

MUSIC: (FADE IN) BLIZZARD OF OSBORN THEME

NARRATOR (V.O.)

You're listening to The Blizzard of Osborn by Michael Sheen Cuddy.

Chapter 17: The Labyrinth

MUSIC: BLIZZARD OF OSBORN THEME (FADE OUT)

Scene One: Ext., desert wilderness, day.

SOUND: footsteps walking, hooves, wind, birds

NARRATOR

The flat, open desert had gradually become more mountainous. The trail they'd been following had narrowed to the point where they were now surrounded by steep cliffs on either side. And up ahead, it looked like the trail just stopped at the the base of a stone wall.

MEMYSELFANDI

You said this would be a slower route, you didn't say anything about a dead end!

ASSAM

Well ... I'd heard of tales of a great labyrinth in the desert where many a traveler enters but only a few find their way out. But I always assumed it was just that—a tale told for thrills around a

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campfire.

NARRATOR

Boxed in on both sides by steep cliffs the trail simply vanished at the foot of massive stone columns. Once up close, Cassie and her companions saw that the columns were actually the ends of unscalable stone walls. Between each wall was a dark cave. Some caves were wide, others were too narrow for Assam or Memyselfandi to squeeze through.

CASSIE

I'm going to see what I can see.

SLY

Be careful Cassie, we can't afford to lose you.

SOUND: footsteps echoing

NARRATOR

The first cave Cassie peaked into ended only after a few steps. Same with the second cave. The third cave curved in deeper and darker.

CASSIE (gasping)

Ngahhh!

SOUND: running footsteps

CASSIE

There's a skull in there! I think it might be a horse's or a cow's!
I saw its skeleton in the dirt!

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MEMYSELFANDI

Oh dear! Now what do we do? We could wander through this labyrinth and never find our way out. We'll end up like that horse: bones rotting in the dust!

SLY

Hey aren't labyrinths supposed to have at least one way out?

MEMYSELFANDI

According to the myths, yes. But in the myths very few who enter the labyrinth ever find their way out. Instead, they end up as ...skeletons in the dust!

CASSIE

Hey—what's up there?

NARRATOR

Cassie pointed at the cliff above the labyrinth.

ASSAM

Looks like a road cut into the mountainside.

CASSIE

If we climb up there maybe we can see down into the labyrinth and find out which cave leads to the other side.

ASSAM

You're right Cassie, we might get a bird's eye view from up there.

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MUSIC: (mid-tempo)

[Scene Two: Ext., winding mountain road, day.]

SOUND: footsteps walking, wind, birds

NARRATOR

They walked and walked. Trudged and climbed. The mountainside was so steep everyone but Jet struggled. Gradually however, they made it up to the road where it was flatter and easier to walk.

SOUND: guzzling water from a canteen

MEMYSELFANDI

Cassie, you're not the only thirsty one. Leave some *O* for the rest of us!

CASSIE

Hey look!

SOUND: creaking wagon wheels, hooves

NARRATOR

Cassie pointed up the road to where a rickety mule-drawn wagon was approaching. Memyselfandi squinted trying to read the sign painted on the side of the wagon.

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MEMYSELFANDI

Professor Williwaw's Traveling Caravan of Stupendous Marvels. What's this about?

NARRATOR

The mule-drawn wagon made its way down the road until the man driving it came within hailing distance.

PROFESSOR WILLIWAW

Whoa—now—slow down there you old sack o' bones!

SOUND: wagon clattering to stop

NARRATOR

A strange looking man with woolly hair grinned out from behind a bushy black beard. His sun-weathered face was cragged with wrinkles. Big kaleidoscope glasses made his eyes look like disks of stained glass. On his head he wore a stovepipe hat striped in a spiral of rainbow colors.

PROFESSOR WILLIWAW

Halooooah my fine friends! Allow me to introduce myself. As you can deduce from the sign on the wagon, I am the one and only Professor Williwaw, impresario of the outer realms, aficionado of the extraordinary and epicurean of the arcane. And whom am I privileged to meet in this most inauspicious wasteland?

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MEMYSELFANDI

I am Memyselfandi, Egging of the Hinterlands, Class V Interactor Technical Specialist. This is Cassandra of the Dakota Realm; Assam who, despite all appearances to the contrary, claims to be of “pure Andalusian stock,” and last and certainly least in my estimation is—now where has he gone off to? Oh, never mind, typical anti-social reptilian behavior!

CASSIE

Do you know how to get around the labyrinth Professor?

PROFESSOR WILLIWAW

Well, that depends where you want to go. My own preferences? I avoid the labyrinth altogether by staying on this mountain road you see. It’s a rather circuitous route and some prefer to take their chances with the labyrinth because Skirlings have been known to travel this road.

ASSAM

A man who doesn’t fear the Skirlings? Well you must have some powerful magic, sir.

PROFESSOR WILLIWAW (laughing)

Hah—the magic of business, my friend. Let me tell you something. The Skirlings are famous for two things: one, mercilessly torturing their enemies; two, a passion for business. And I’ve learned to do business

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with the Skirlings. See this here canopy?

NARRATOR

He pointed to the brilliant white awning stretched over his driver's bench.

PROFESSOR WILLIWAW

It's made from 100 per cent pure *sa*, the so-called 'magic' silk for which the Skirlings are famous. I traded a Myrkyn falcon for this canopy. The Skirlings loved that falcon so much they threw in one of their legendary wind-proof tents at no extra charge—a great deal, I might add! Both the tent and the canopy have kept me alive many a day and night in this unforgiving desert.

CASSIE

Maybe we can trade something with the Skirlings and they'll let us pass through.

PROFESSOR WILLIWAW

Mmmm...not a good idea. The Skirlings have been known to sell children into slavery. As for the Eggman, they'd almost certainly scramble him for an omelette. And the ass, he's worthless. The Skirlings use camelrams for beasts of burden, they're far superior to the common jackass.

ASSAM

I beg your pardon—

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SOUND: rattling, howler monkey, knocking about

CASSIE

What was that?

PROFESSOR WILLIAW

What was what?

SOUND: howling

CASSIE

It sounded like ...howling.

PROFESSOR WILLIAW

Oh—well, that would be the howler monkeys, of course.

CASSIE

Why are they howling?

PROFESSOR WILLIAW

Because that's what howler monkeys do, isn't it?

CASSIE

Can we see them?

PROFESSOR WILLIAW

See them? Heh-heh, howler monkeys are an exotic species. I went to great lengths to acquire these so I don't just parade 'em around for

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nothing you know. It will cost you 5 glunken each for the privilege of observing these rare specimens.

MEMYSELFANDI

Excuse me, but I happen to know a swindler when I hear one. For you Professor, we have exactly zero glunken.

PROFESSOR WILLIWAW

Well then, I'll be on my way now. It was ...highly instructive to meet you.

SOUND: whip cracking, mule braying, wagon wheels creaking

PROFESSOR WILLIWAW

Onward you senile old fleabag! Hah! Hah!

SOUND: whip cracking, mule braying, wagon wheels creaking (fade out)

MEMYSELFANDI

Oh my! Strange fellow eh?

ASSAM

Yessir, strange and cruel.

MEMYSELFANDI

Cruel? How so?

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ASSAM

Did you see how he whipped that poor old mule? That was totally uncalled for!

NARRATOR

After the Professor was out of sight Sly crawled out from a hole in the ground.

CASSIE

There you are! Why did you disappear without telling anyone?

SLY

I uh... well um... nature was calling.

MEMYSELFANDI

Oh really? Since when did you become so discreet?

SLY

Well, that guy was approaching in his wagon.

MEMYSELFANDI

And you couldn't wait until he passed?

SLY

Well, nature was not only calling, she was uh, well, shall we say, *commanding*.

NARRATOR

Cassie looked at Sly, a curious expression on her face.

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CASSIE (v.o. W/ > reverb)

That's odd: Sly disappeared just as Professor Williwaw came into view, then reappeared as soon as he left. Was he avoiding the Professor? But why would he do that?

MUSIC: Dirge (FADE IN/OUT)

NARRATOR

Next: In a turn of bad luck the very thing they hoped wouldn't happen is about to happen!

MUSIC: Blizzard Theme (FADE OUT)

[end Chapter 17]