

# Leveling up the World

## Chapter 8: Mending Labyrinth

Labyrinths came in different shapes and sizes. The oldest was said to have been built in Egypt and so complicated that no one at the time could complete it without the key. Dallion had completed a lot of labyrinth puzzles as a child. It was his passion earning him several rewards, including second place at the regionals Labyrinth Solving tournament.

This labyrinth was different from any Dallion had seen in a number of ways. For starters, its shape was highly irregular there were no set straight lines, but also no defined curves either. It was as if the labyrinth varied between the two based on its own free will. Several times the boy would start down a straight corridor only to have it twist and curve the moment he backtracked. Others, he'd spend minutes walking in zig-zag fashion only to find he had made five steps from the starting point.

All that wasn't the most confusing element, though. Unlike what the floating rectangle had said, his goal wasn't to reach the center of the labyrinth, at least not the only one; he also had to repair it as he wanted. Repairing, as he also found out, came in different forms as well. There were the standard cracked walls with pieces missing and scattered elsewhere in the labyrinth those could be repaired by placing the piece in place. The real trick, however, was fixing the overall shape. As it turned out, walking along a corridor not only got him from point A to point B, it also allowed him to stretch, straighten, curve, or squeeze the path he was walking on.

*Like trying to make a wall out of jelly bricks, Dallion thought.*

The concept was simple, executing it took some skill, a bit of luck, and a whole lot of persistence. Each time Dallion would repair a wall or lock a path in place, the same rectangle would appear.

### **Labyrinth section mended!**

### **Overall completion 96%**

The first time Dallion had returned a bone brick to its spot, his completion was thirty-seven percent. He had painstakingly achieved a lot since then. Even so, or maybe because of it, the missing four percent infuriated him. In theory, nothing stopped him from stepping through the archway at the labyrinth's center. The completionist in him, though, kept nagging him to keep on searching.

Where are you? Dallion grumbled.

The first thing he'd improve given the chance was his Perception. Maybe then he'd be able to see hints that would help him mend things better. Now he understood why his grandfather had been so tired after mending the table.

It's not the walls, the boy said out loud, in the hopes that doing so would give him an idea. It has to be the paths.

He had spent what felt like hours walking up and down, checking if any corridor could be changed. All of them appeared firm. Just to be sure, Dallion went through the labyrinth again, carefully looking for minuscule cracks or holes in the white surface. Yet again, there were none.

Okay. He closed his eyes. If it isn't the walls, and it's not the paths, is there anything that he suddenly stopped as a bout of inspiration hit him harder than a revolving door.

*Im an idiot!* Dallion rushed towards the center of the labyrinth.

There was one element he hadn't checked, something so obvious that he'd gone past it dozens of times and without paying attention the archway. Upon reaching it, everything fell into place. Looking at it now, the deformation was obvious. The keystone was so low, that only a child could pass under it without hitting their head. Taking a step forward, Dallion pushed it up. The top of the archway gave in, as if made of putty, before finally locking in place.

**Labyrinth fully mended!**

**The HAIRPIN is now flawless.**

Dallion could almost hear victory music in his head. A reward would have been nice, but at least he had the knowledge he had repaired the item to a hundred percent. Beaming with joy, the boy stepped through.

Instantly, the walls of the labyrinth sunk into the floor, creating a round hall.

**COMBAT INITIATED!** The familiar red rectangle appeared, followed by his new opponent.

**HAIRPIN GUARDIAN**

**Species: BLADE SPIDER**

**Class: IVORY**

**Statistics: UNKNOWN**

**Skills: UNKNOWN**

**Weak Spots: UNKNOWN**

This was very different from the guardian he'd faced before. There was nothing human in the creature, rather it was a mix between a Boston Dynamics robot and an avant-garde statue. The spider, for lack of a better term, was entirely white, as if made of plastic, the size of a desk, with eight blade-tipped legs, six eyes the size of golf balls, and a roundish body.

*I didn't know that hairpins look like that on the inside,* Dallion thought.

Before he could say or do a thing, green strings filled the air, starting at the creature's legs and ending all over the boy's body. A split second later, green footprints and shield markers appeared.

Damn it! Dallion started running.

The spider leapt forward. Faster and far more aggressive than the Colossus, it attacked the boy with a series of jabs while simultaneously jumping around him.

Deep in his heart, Dallion knew that his mother wouldn't give him a challenge he couldn't beat, he also remembers her words that it wasn't about achieving victory, but learning what he knew. Right now, though, his only thought was how to get as far away from the bladed menace.

*Follow the steps,* the boy said to himself, twisting as if he were walking on a tightrope. *Follow the steps and it'll be okay.*

Two of the spider's legs hit Dallion in the thigh. The pain was far less than the boy expected—the annoying sensation of a pinprick or an ant bite he'd get as younger. To Dallion's relief, the attacks didn't cause any noticeable damage, though they were still something he preferred to avoid.

*Follow the steps,* he focused on matching a set of eight footprints and two shield positions. As soon as he did, time went to a crawl.

Now it's my turn. Dallion grinned.