

LABYRINTHIAN

A GAME OF LIFE AND LEGEND

What follows can be thought of as a written 'trailer' for Labyrinthian, a new kind of game called an Immersive Improv Game (MMG), where players will be utilizing Improv alongside an immersive systemic engine to explore a world of slice of life and epic fantasy. None of the details within are theoretical or made up; every detail is playable.

*Labyrinthian ultimately does not care how you play
Only that no matter what you do, you are not merely ordinary*

THE ORIGIN

YOUR FIRST DAY

They gathered in the night... a horde of Goblins ten-thousand strong, closing around the city as the horns blared and lightning flashed across the sky. A storm was following these devils.

As the King drew up the guard and lined the walls, the people were ushered into the caverns and sewers below... but not all of us. I was already awake, baking and toiling away to fill the day's inventory. I'd gotten in these lovely herbs from a local adventurer. One of them...odd little thing...made me levitate for just a moment when I tasted it. I used it in a special sweet treat. I wanted to give it to the King as a gift; he loves muffins. I still might be able to.

The day was long though. The sun shone only for a breath before the storm swallowed it. The Goblins weren't good at breaking upon rock and stone, but they were many, and they had no fear as they charged up their weird ladders of bone and sinew. Soon, the call came down from the walls. The fighters were starving.

I steeled myself and made the run—up the wall, along the defense—passing out bread and water while the sky cracked above and below the dead stacked like firewood. The stench was awful, and the sound of the Goblin dead ringed through my ears. Swift as we could, those of us who stayed above got our stocks out to the defenders. They needed their strength. And then I heard it...The King...he's signaling something; the horn is blowing.

I think we're about to charge their ranks!

I look around. A sword...or perhaps a bow? The men rally behind their captain, the Goblins are faltering as the walls empty. I'm standing there with flour on my sleeves, sweat on my brow, and there's something else...something stirring.

What will I do?

That's the question Labyrinthian lives on. It doesn't ask who you're supposed to be, or how you're meant to win. It just gives you a world, breathing and moving without you—and says, live in it. Maybe you're the Baker who saves a kingdom. Maybe you're the Goblin general who tears one down. Maybe you're just someone caught between them, trying not to be ordinary.

Labyrinthian is a game of Life and Legend. You'll explore, craft, fight, fail, and improvise your way through a living, systemic world that doesn't just merely react to your choices; it can and will cause and solve its own problems, whether you get involved or not. The world does not care to sit and wait for you to be its hero, nor will it tolerate you being its villain. But if you go out there, and make a name for yourself, dare to be a legend, only you will be able to tell the story, for you had to live it first.

As the saying goes, there is no telling where you might end up if you don't kick your feet...

So where do you want to go?

THE LIFE

A LIFETIME IS AN ADVENTURE

After the siege, I drifted. My leg never set right. The burn marks on my arm faded, but they still itched when it rained. I slept beneath trees, under carts, in stables when I could find them. A few silver pieces for sweeping a tavern, a heel of bread in exchange for silence. The world didn't want me, and I didn't blame it. I didn't want me either.

Then one night, as frost crawled over the grass, a shadow sat beside my fire. The Goblin—her again. She didn't speak, just dropped a smoked fish beside my pot and stared into the flames. We didn't talk that night, or the next. Not until she handed me a wooden spoon and said, "You always make it too salty."

We wandered together for a while. No plan. Just two broken things stitched loosely by circumstance. She showed me how to move without being seen, how to read the shape of a stranger's intentions. I taught her how to make stew with nothing but herbs and regret.

There were days I hated the silence. Other days, I feared what might come if it broke. But in time, I learned to hear what wasn't said. The shrug before a storm. The hesitation before a lie. She saw things in people I never would have—not with my eyes, anyway.

Once, in a burned village, we found a child hiding under floorboards. Goblin, maybe. Or halfling. Couldn't tell through the soot. She gave it water and moved on. I stayed longer. I asked the child's name. They didn't have one.

So I gave them mine. That's the kind of thing that changes you.

That's the sort of life this world asks for—not loud, not proud. Just true. A life of small moments that stack like stones, shaping you into something heavier than you meant to be.

In Labyrinthian, character development is not a spreadsheet—it's a lived process. You don't "roll stats" or "pick a class" and then get handed a narrative. You become your character through what you do, how you respond, and how you interpret your life in the world. This is The Life: where stories begin, and where the personal takes root.

Character Development includes:

- **Origins** – Begin through play. The Origin is not a backstory generator—it's a lived prologue that teaches the world's rhythms and builds the character you become.
- **Birthsigns, Bloodlines, Backstories** – Three defining forces form your starting foundation. Each contains meaningful choices, seeds for future events, and interactive traits. Together, they shape the early texture of your journey.
- **The Dual Progression System**
 - **Composure** represents your stress, resilience, and the character-defining Talents that shape your inner world.
 - **Acuity** is your speed, sensitivity, and the narrative intuition that lets you sense the pulse of danger and opportunity.
- **Skills and Talents** – 32 skills and 9 talents form a lattice of interpretative capacities. They modify gameplay but also exist to express who your character is. Every Skill and Talent is an extension of how you see the world.
- **Fate and Volition** – Birthsigns introduce not just bonuses, but moments of meaningful choice and interpretative challenge. These drive the *Milestones* in your journey.
- **Practice and Reflection** – Everything you do in Labyrinthian feeds back into your character's internal journey. It isn't just a record of what's happened—it's a mirror of who you are becoming. Growth is never separate from story.

THE REACH

THE SPACE BETWEEN

We never intended to become anything. Not friends. Not comrades. Certainly not... whatever we are now. We were just two figures on a road neither of us chose, walking in the same direction because there wasn't another.

But somewhere between stolen meals and sleepless nights, things shifted. Not all at once. A glance held too long. A question that lingered after the answer. I saw her tighten her grip on her blade when a merchant mentioned my name. I heard the rasp in her breath when I teased her too sharply. There was something building—quiet as moss, steady as root.

I started noticing others too. A barkeep who always poured me a little extra. A town reeve who eyed me like a puzzle missing a piece. The girl who spat at my feet, then left coins where I slept the next night. None of them were just strangers anymore. They were shadows in my story, and I in theirs.

I remember a farmer's son, eager to impress, who begged to follow us. I gave him a knife and told him to keep the edge dull until he had something worth protecting. A year later, I heard he'd become captain of his village guard. I don't know if he remembered me. But I remembered him.

That's the thing about people. You never know which of them will carry your name in their mouth like a blessing—or a curse. We are not islands. We are tides, washing against each other, carving shoreline from stone. You do not walk through this world untouched. You touch, and are touched in return.

That's what the Reach is. Not power. Not conquest. Just the space between us—closed, or left open, and everything that follows.

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The Reach includes:

- **The Talking Table** – An open-ended, prompt-driven dialogue system built around Thought and Tone. You don't choose from prewritten lines—you interpret, shift, and respond.
- **Relationship Building as Play** – Begin with Seeds—names and impressions. As you engage, develop Patterns—behaviors and traits. When deeply known, NPCs become Portraits—fully integrated entities with agency and memory.
- **The Relationship Forge** – NPCs can be friends, rivals, lovers, family, subordinates, or anything in between. All are opt-in. All grow only as far as you are willing to know them.
- **Influence** – Not all relationships are individuals. Cities, guilds, ideologies, even rumors can become "people" in the Reach. Each Node holds values, loyalties, and tensions.
- **Cultural Dynamics** – The people you know—and what they care about—shape the world. Entire cultures are emergent from your connections, and the Reach grows in scope as your influence spreads.
- **Renown and Reputation** – How the world views you depends on what it remembers. Your words, your deeds, and your silences all become part of a living memory.

ADVENTURING

A WORLD OF TRIAL AND DISCOVERY

We followed the river until it turned against us.

It had been weeks since the siege. My leg had healed crooked, but I could walk. She kept pace ahead of me, never looking back but always slowing just enough when I stumbled. Our trail curved through forests that hummed with strange birdsong, across meadows where the wind whispered things I didn't want to understand.

Once we found an overturned cart, half-buried in mud and moss. No bodies, no wheels—just a child's doll nailed to the underside, staring up with one button eye. Another time, we stumbled into a festival in a village none of the maps knew, where the people danced with lanterns on their heads and offered us soup without words.

The world was like that. Silent, but never still. Beautiful in ways that hurt if you looked too long.

We came to the bridge at dusk. The sky, already thick with clouds, broke open with a sound like the world being torn in two. The river rose—fast, angry. She dashed across without hesitation. I froze halfway, caught between the thrum of the water below and the sting in my ruined knee. Then I remembered:

I still have my treat...I can fly!

Adventuring is the lifeblood of Labyrinthian, the primordial root of everything you can do. But Adventuring is more than just mere travel or caloric minutia; Adventuring is the relentless march of Time itself.

As time goes on, the world will *pull you forward* into its wonders and dangers, and whether you choose to linger, to look around and explore, dawdle and hesitate to move for fear of what lurks ahead, or indeed, charge on into the unknown, every move you make is an opportunity for an even richer adventure.

Built around a system called '**The Crawl**', Adventuring is the basic mode of playing Labyrinthian, and you are free to move about and explore the gameworld as you wish. But as you do, Time is always creeping by, and eventually Time will interject in your adventure. It might not always be with some terrible obstacle or surprise, you might not even know what happened at all, but no matter what, time marches on, and the world moves in lockstep.

Adventuring includes:

- **The Crawl** – Move freely through a systemic, interpretive world. Travel has pace, pressure, and tension, but no grid or hex map to restrict your imagination.
- **Time as Opponent and Ally** – Time is a character in this story. The longer you take, the more the world changes. You can't pause the storm—but you can dance with it.
- **The Diversion Table** – Tangents become tales. Get distracted. Wander. Let the random become meaningful.
- **Discovery Systems** – Vantage Points, Research Tables, Towers, Lore Banks—tools to uncover the past, the present, and the world's emotional weather.
- **Survival, not Simulation** – Manage food, rest, exposure, and gear—but always through the lens of experience, not math.

COMBAT

THE DANCE OF VIOLENCE

The Goblin betrayed me. I should have known not to trust her; she was just too eager when we took this job. Nobody gets this excited over fetching some stupid trinket for some noble with more money than sense. We fought our way into this labyrinth by the skin of our teeth, and had to spend a day sneaking around a dragon that managed to find its way down here. So much effort just to get stabbed in the back as soon as we found it...too bad she forgot I had her antidotes on me.

It did not take long to catch up with her; she taught me well after all. I grabbed a spear from the Orcs we fought earlier, and as she tried to make her way out of the chamber, I threw the spear at the door, pinning it shut. She didn't turn around...not yet. I squared up; I do not forgive betrayal.

She acted first. A knife came flying as she charged the center of the room, drawing her axes. I reacted; the knife shattered as I deflected it, and I took up my stance to brace against her next move. She jumped up to bring her axes down on my head; I barely stepped aside. She didn't get me, but it rattled me to be sure. I returned the favor, swinging my sword at her neck, which she dodged effortlessly, just as I wanted her to. I elbowed that bitch in the face, and left a piercing wound in her knee as I swung my sword back around. She wasn't getting away this time.

She went wild and grappled me. Our weapons clattered to the floor as we fought hand to hand. She was skilled, so many techniques she knew, but she was floundering. I just hammered her wounds, and broke her leg outright, bring her low and weak. I knocked her down one more time for good measure, a clean right hook to her jaw.

I took up my sword...and had no mercy.

Combat in Labyrinthian is not a numbers game—it's an expression. A clash of styles, a back-and-forth of choices, where what you do and how you do it matters more than what your stats say. It's a system designed to evoke the feeling of cinematic choreography, where each move flows from the last, and improvisation is your sharpest weapon.

This is **Tactical Improv**.

It's not a contradiction—it's a philosophy. You react, you predict, you adapt. No two battles play the same because no two characters fight the same, and no two players think alike.

The world will not wait for you to be ready. And when violence comes, it comes with momentum, with stakes, and with memory. Your wounds carry forward. So do your choices.

Combat includes:

- **Expressive Fighting** – You are not forced into rote patterns. You can formulate your own, personal fighting style using the expressive core of Tactical Improv, and the cross between four fundamental Combat Styles (Melee, Magic, Mysticism, and Leadership) and the numerous *Techniques, Spells, Powers, and Commands* available to them. Will you fight with Grace? *Or will you go fucking feral?*
- **Tactical Elegance** – A full on Tactics game like any other, but tuned to be accessible even if you have nothing to your name and no fighting skills to speak of. But be wary, for this means even a peasant can get lucky...
- **The Reaction Table** – A simple, player-facing system to drive your Enemies towards you, so that you may push through them with gusto, as you benefit from its resources or falter under its relentless onslaught, and interpret the emotional undercurrent of the fight. There is no fight that is not a story all its own.
- **The Choice to Not Be Violent** – Death is not the assumption of combat. All combatants, whether you, a friend, or foe, must deliberately choose to kill, and it will not happen automatically. You are empowered to find another way, whether by violent incapacitation, negotiation or surrender, cowardice or peace, you have the choice. Power Fantasy doesn't *have to be* violence incarnate. Peace through power indeed...

CRAFTING AND GATHERING

THE BEAUTY OF CREATION

The Noble stiffed me—because of course he did. So I robbed him that night. What was he gonna do? Not like he had his trinket anymore. I pawned it in Coldstool. Didn't fetch much, but it was enough to do a little shopping. Interesting little village, Coldstool. Famous with travelers for its sprawling food market. Dozens of family vendors, all shouting over each other, hawking their meals and treats.

I stopped by one vendor, a particularly fat Pidgin. This huge bird towered over me, and sounded absolutely ridiculous, but I knew better than to laugh. I asked what he was selling, and through the borks and clucks I gathered they were Elixirs, perfect for adventurers. A shimmering blue one caught my eye. 'This'll give you the speed of a rabbit,' he said—or something like that. I bought it and set out, leaving Coldstool behind.

As I wandered, my stomach stirred. My back still ached from where she stabbed me. I took a swig of the Elixir, and suddenly I felt like I could outrun a wolf. I dashed into the woods, senses blazing. I smelled a rabbit. Found it. Killed it. But as I dressed it for the cookpot, I heard something, or someone, coming.

So I ran again. Fast and far. The sun was low when I finally stopped.

I made camp. I still had some tubers and onions from the other day, and had picked up some herbs from a lovely Dwarf woman; she was taller than the bird, but at least I could understand her. I rendered what little fat I could from the rabbit and thought about what I wanted from life. Salt. Onions first. I didn't expect to be a sellsword, but fate, it seemed, had other plans. Potatoes... ooh, I've got wine.

I let it stew, and soon I was eating, and later, I slept beneath the stars.

Crafting in Labyrinthian isn't just about tools or gear—it's about expression. It's about remembering the smell of firewood soaked in rain, or the taste of copper on your tongue when the potion went wrong but saved a life anyway.

Every item you make tells a story. Not just what it is, but how it was made—rushed or reverent, improvised or inspired. The system doesn't just simulate creation, it gives you the room to reflect, define, and refine what those creations not only do, but also what they mean to you, even if you eventually throw them away.

And before you can make, you must Gather. Every journey can be foraging story, a chance to dig through ruin, field, or cave for the perfect Material.

Crafting & Gathering includes:

- **The Sequence** – A systematic item creation tool that lets you not only craft mere items, but define them down to every major detail. From the core metal of a sword, to the wood in its scabbard, and it all matters.
- **The Crafting Table** – An interpretative framework for all Crafting, and even Artistry like Singing, or Painting, driving how well you crafted, and giving you the opportunity to add your own flair to your items.
- **Creation Through Decay** – Using a clean, automated Durability system, your items will eventually break on you, but by repairing, or reforging them, you can imbue them with new capabilities, and further still, you can Customize them to further augment them. A sword hilt of gold and jewels is not just a matter of vanity; it could very well be the key to defeating your greatest foes...or it could just be vain...
- **A Playground of Creation** – With a staggering amount of potential Materials and a vast toolbox of Sequences to let you forge, form, build, bolster, and even raise all manner of items, vehicles, buildings, and beasts, there are very few limits to what you can bring into the world. *The game does not ask you if you fail, only what you can create.*

THE LIVING WORLD

A WORLD OF MEMORY AND MOTION

Why? Why didn't I just leave this man alone? I didn't even get much from his stupid trinket, and who even knows what happened to it after all these years? Absolutely incredible. The man held a grudge for years, and now after this long war to put my friend on the Throne of Oarmouth, he's come for blood. I should have paid attention; the signs were always there. Rumors of a man seeking me, those random attacks I took for sport. I could have ended this long ago.

Oh well, I suppose. Just another bastard to put down. My rogues made quick work of tracking the man after his pitiful attempt to assassinate me and my friend at his coronation. He had fled south and across the sea, to the island of Brandr, the land of the Dwarves and Dragons. They tell me there was some sort of upheaval. A Dragon, just a child wyvern, set upon the man's entourage and scattered them. While the Dwarves managed to draw it away with one of their giant oxen, they lost him in the struggle. They've been searching high and low across the island, and today I hear news that he may be coming back this way.

'Enough of this', I thought, as I geared up and left Oarmouth behind. I would put an end to this. I set out on the road alone; I did not fear what might come. Days stretched into weeks as I travelled, and as more news of the man's whereabouts came in. He made landfall in Aflask just yesterday, just 30 miles away. I knew the land well, I knew where I could...wait. Who is this? A child? And is that...no, it can't be. How on earth does he have that damn...

And that's when he stabbed me. Little bastard.

Labyrinthian isn't just a system or a setting. It's a world in motion—a place with memory, cause and effect, where history is written whether you're part of it or not. You can be a hero, a villain, a bystander, or something in-between. The world won't wait for you, but it will remember you.

Built from the ground up to simulate narrative consequence, the Living World of Labyrinthian bridges all of the game's Pillars. When you Adventure, Craft, Fight, or grow into the Reach, the Living World is watching. It tracks reputation and motivations. It turns offhand comments into Quest Lines. It lets the past come back to haunt, or help, you. This is what makes the game systemic and expressive. It plays you as much as you play it.

Every decision ripples. Every silence echoes. Even the smallest acts can spark revolutions, awaken monsters, or win unlikely allies. And just like the baker, you might find yourself facing down an old ghost...in a world that never forgot your name, and never will ask if you are ready.

The Living World includes:

- **Nodal Influence** – Dynamic, scalable entities that represent regions, ideologies, factions, and key actors. Nodes evolve, communicate, and conflict based on systemic values.
- **The Calendar and World State** – Time drives change. Quest Blocks resolve with or without you. Entire arcs may occur “offscreen” but leave fingerprints for you to find.
- **The Relationship Forge** – Fully developed relationships evolve into autonomous agents—like Nodes themselves. Friends become rivals. Enemies become myths.
- **Ambient Intrigue** – Through murkiness of cause-and-effect, the game simulates rumor, misinformation, propaganda, and secrets. What you don't know is as important as what you do.
- **Cultural Pools and Procedural History** – Regions develop their own social memory and identity based on who lives, who dies, and who chooses to care.