

# Head About A Place Today

By Sari

Submitted: April 17, 2006

Updated: April 17, 2006

*Two friends, Stephanie and Chantal, accidently end up in the Underground, making their way through the Goblin King's Labyrinth in order to get their freedom. Making new friends and meeting strange creatures along they way, as they try and solve the p*

Provided by Fanart Central.

<http://www.fanart-central.net/stories/user/Sari/31864/Head-About-A-Place-Today>

<b>Chapter 1 - A Crystal, Nothing More</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Chapter 2 - Thirteen Hours</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Chapter 3 - A Land Serene</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Chapter 4 - Taking Things For Granted</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Chapter 5 - How Do We Get Ourselves Into These Things?</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Chapter 6 - Trouble With Royalty</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Chapter 7 - Piece of Cake!</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Chapter 8 - Pasta Vazoo!!</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Chapter 9 - Haven't Got All Day</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Chapter 10 - The Castle Doth Lie Yonder</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Chapter 11 - Through Dangers Untold</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>Chapter 12 - Even Down Looks Up</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>Chapter 13 - Feathers</b>	<b>53</b>

# 1 - A Crystal, Nothing More

Disclaimer: The characters of Jareth, the goblins, Hoggle, or any other characters and creatures related to Labyrinth are the property of Jim Henson Productions. We are in no way affiliated with this company. However, new and original characters, creatures, places within the Underground and evolution of the Goblin King are ours. We do not own any other miscellaneous affiliations such as from shows, books, movies, titles, etc. This story is for entertainment purposes only. So please do not sue.

The content of the fan fiction is written with a mature audience in mind. Comments are welcomed. Enjoy!

○ ○ ○

## Chapter One: A Crystal, Nothing More

The Goblin King was waiting for her with his arms folded. She advanced upon him. "Give me the child," she said.

He paused before answering. "Sarah beware. I have been generous until now, but I can be cruel."

"Generous!" She advanced another step. "What have you done that was generous?"

"Everything. I have done everything you wanted." He took a pace back, into the shadow of the archway. "You asked that the child be taken. I took him. You cowered before me. I was frightening." Taking another step away from her, he gestured in the air. "I have reordered time," he told her.

Sarah's lips were parted. "Through dangers untold and hardships unnumbered, I have fought my way here to the castle beyond the Goblin City "

Jareth was retreating step by step up a staircase behind the archway. Sarah continued to advance, into the archway. " to take back the child you have stolen," she recited. "For my will is as strong as yours "

Sarah's fists were clenched white. She was thinking frantically. What were her right words?

"Kingdom as great...", she muttered. "...kingdom as great..." She gasped, and, from some inspired recess of her mind, the words came out, blurted out.

"You have no power over me."

"Wouldn't it be great if we could wish our sisters away?" Stephanie said stretching onto her back across the carpeted floor, staring up at the ceiling.

"Yeah, some days it would be nice," Her friend Chantal said as she rolled over on the bed from her back to her stomach, to look down at Stephanie on the floor. She was staying at Stephanie's for the weekend, both girls lived a few hours drive apart.

"And be turned into goblins," Stephanie said as she sat up. They had started a discussion about different kinds of wishes, mostly to find a way to get rid of their younger sisters; their methods and Stephanie had mentioned the story with a certain kind of wish, one by means of goblins. Within the Underground, the ones that are wished away would stay in the castle belonging to the Goblin King for all eternity and be turned into one like them. "But I would feel sorry for him, the Goblin King I mean, and I'll have to go and get her." she finished with a sigh as she stood up and grabbed Legend, her favorite white teddy bear. "No one, not even the Goblin King deserves to be stuck with her for all eternity."

Chantal slid off the bed and sat down beside Stephanie. "You're right," She said giggling. "It definitely wouldn't be fair for the goblins to have to put up with our sisters."

Stephanie nodded and giggled as well. They talked about other things and a few too many times, were interrupted by knocks on the bedroom door for little pointless things. Finally annoyed of getting disturbed almost every five minutes, Stephanie got to her feet again.

"Come on. Let's go for a walk by the school," Stephanie grabbed Chantal's wrist, rushed out of her room and quickly flew down the stairs. She left Chantal at the base of the stairs, turned the corner and stopped at the basement doorway. "Mom, we're going for a walk!" the brown haired, seventeen year old yelled into the basement. She waited for an answer before joining Chantal and putting on their shoes. When they were ready, Stephanie closed the screen door behind them.

It was a little after supper, the sun was still out and it was warm enough to go out without a coat. They walked in silence until they reached the side of the highway, which wasn't far; in fact, it barely took them two minutes to get there. The traffic was light and soon they were on the other side. There was a hill on the left and a path leading into a small part of woods that led behind a High School, on the right. "Let's try this way," Stephanie suggested, pointing right. "I've taken the left path too many times, time for a change." The path was pretty much clear except for low branches which she pushed away so as not to scratch her face.

Chantal's thoughts suddenly went back to their previous conversation. "I wish..." Chantal stopped walking.

Stephanie heard Chantal say something but didn't quite catch it. She turned around. "What did you say Chantal?"

Chantal was gone.

"Chantal where are you?" Stephanie cried out as she searched for her friend. There was only silence. "You're not lost are you?"

There was a small breeze, it moved the leaves. It was the only movement that Stephanie could see. She squinted through the thin trees, hoping to catch a glimpse of Chantal. "Come on, this isn't funny!" A branch snapped behind her.

"Chantal?" Stephanie whispered.

Suddenly hands seized her shoulders. Stephanie screamed out in surprise.

"Gotcha!" Chantal yelled grinning.

"Don't do that!" Stephanie said as she ran after Chantal who ran out of the woods and was going up the steep hill. "That wasn't funny!" At the top, Stephanie finally caught up and only saw Chantal's back as though she was tying her shoes. She stood right behind Chantal; a small push and she would tip over, but she decided not to have her revenge just yet. "I'll get you back," Stephanie said as she turned around. "When you least "

Chantal got up and stood facing her friend. "What?"

"You didn't!" Stephanie said, her brown eyes wide, staring at Chantal.

"Didn't what?"

Stephanie pointed behind Chantal, who turned around to face the direction her friend was pointing. The usual scenery of roofs, familiar houses, trees and the highway weren't there as Stephanie knew well; instead there was a rising sun, a small path leading toward a vast Labyrinth with a shadowed castle far off into the distance.

## 2 - Thirteen Hours

### Chapter Two: Thirteen Hours

Chantal held open her hand for Stephanie to see. Sitting in the palm of her hand was a small glowing white crystal.

"Where did you get that?" Stephanie asked staring at the intriguing crystal.

"I found it on the trail," Chantal replied, she turned around and looked at the scenery behind her. "Do you have any idea where we are?"

"I'm not sure, but this place looks familiar," Stephanie said looking around. An odd feeling came over her, she wasn't sure what it was but most of it was pure excitement. "I must be dreaming," she whispered to herself.

"Familiar? Familiar to what?" Chantal asked confused. The nineteen-year old girl looked at the Labyrinth then back at her friend with her hazel eyes, her short curly brown hair blowing in the wind.

"To the Underground," Stephanie replied simply, staring at the dawn light covered Labyrinth.

"The Underground? You lost me." Chantal said staring at Stephanie. Stephanie turned to face her friend.

"From the movie: 'Labyrinth'." Stephanie said smiling. Chantal wondered where the title seemed familiar, she concluded that it was connected to the day's conversation. "Do you know what you did?" Stephanie said, her brown eyes glittering with excitement. So it wasn't just a fairytale and there was some truth behind it all. Sarah was real. The Labyrinth was real.

"I did? I didn't do a thing," Chantal said, continuing to stare at the Labyrinth in the distance. "I just bent down to pick up a crystal."

"Did you say the words?" Stephanie asked.

"What words?" Chantal asked confused.

"The words--that wished us away. You know, 'I wish the goblins would come and take us away,'"

Chantal clamped a hand over Stephanie's mouth. "Shh! They'll hear you."

"We're already here." Stephanie rolled her eyes. She was now looking around. Something was missing. "Where's the Goblin King?"

"You are asking me? I have never been here before."

"I haven't been here either. I just assume he would meet us here." She looked at her watch. "Well, let's see. It's already 6:00 o'clock and we have thirteen hours to pass that." she said pointing to the silhouetted Labyrinth. She then walked a bit to see where a path would be to lead them down to the entrance.

"It gets dark at nine--that is in three hours." Chantal remarked, gripping her small backpack.

"Yeah, in our time. Look." Stephanie turned to her friend and pointed behind her. The sun was rising, revealing the Labyrinth in its entire splendor.

"Ack. Time warps, gotta hate those." Chantal said as she shaded her eyes to look towards the sun.

"Come on. We're wasting time chatting here when we could while we're walking," Stephanie said as she descended the wind swept hill, towards the outer walls of the Labyrinth. She grinned, in her excitement she felt a little like Sarah, on a great quest to rescue her brother. Although she did not recall making any wishes to have her sister taken away and she also concluded that there was no other person to rescue but themselves; this adventure might be far better than what Sarah had experienced.

Chantal stared after Stephanie. "Hey wait for me!" she called and started after her friend. They reached the walls and Stephanie started looking for an entrance. She looked as one who had been here before. The girl searched alongside the main wall and squinted to see far off into the distance.

"Ha! They've hidden the entrance." Stephanie ran off towards a pile of broken branches. She pulled the branches away, until two huge black double doors appeared.

"Hidden the entrance? I thought you said you haven't been here before." Chantal followed behind Stephanie.

"Hoggle, the dwarf that had helped Sarah, assuming her story was true; and the door weren't by the pond. Also, I sort of had a déjà vu feeling. Maybe it's from watching that movie too many times," Stephanie shrugged. She reached out to open the doors but they magically opened by themselves.

"Wicked," Stephanie said, her eyes glittering again.

"Now what do we do?" Chantal asked, peering through the open doorway.

"We either go left or right," Stephanie said as she looked both ways. The corridors seemed to stretch out forever.

"Well?" Stephanie asked Chantal.

"Right," Chantal suggested.

"Should we? I mean, Sarah took that way but--I don't think we'll get to the castle, unless maybe he

changed it."

"Yeah, people with a labyrinth and castles usually change the path so that it's never the same..."

"All right," Stephanie took a deep breath. "Let's go."

"Okay! What are we waiting for?" Chantal grabbed Stephanie's arm and pulled her to the right. Soon they became silent and were busy watching their surroundings. After walking for about ten minutes, Chantal suddenly stopped.

"What's wrong?" Stephanie asked looking back.

"How long does this go on for?" Chantal asked looking down the corridor. She then leaned up against the wall for support and fell through.

"Chantal!" Stephanie rushed over. "I'm sorry. I forgot about the hidden passageways."

"Now you tell me," Chantal replied sarcastically, she stood up and was now brushing the dirt off.

"Now we're getting somewhere," Stephanie said as she passed Chantal.

"I hope so. I'm tired of going in a straight line," Chantal said, following Stephanie.

"Which way now?" Stephanie asked looking at the different passageways.

Chantal shrugged. "I don't know. You choose this time."

"Hmm...this way," Stephanie said pointing left.

"Okay, let's go," Chantal said grabbing her friend's arm yet again and pulled her to the suggested direction.

"Now that we know what to do," Stephanie said smiling as she went through a wall. "we'll no problem getting closer to the castle."

"The faster, the better." Chantal said looking around. "This place is starting to creep me out."

Stephanie smiled. "Oh?"

Chantal shook her head, "Just a feeling, I can't explain it."

"It is a little quiet and deserted, isn't it?" Stephanie looked around.

"It's a maze, who would want to enter a maze?" Chantal asked turning to Stephanie. "Oh, never mind."

Stephanie grinned and went through another passageway. Chantal followed in silence, looking around as she walked by. She then spotted a brown plant with eyes that followed her. "Steph, wha- what is

that?" Chantal asked pointing at the strange plant, backing away.

"Hmm?" Stephanie turned around. "Hey cool, it's a Lichen." Having no problem with odd, slimy, crawly and creepy creatures, she neared the plant for a closer inspection.

"A what? Is it safe?"

"What? It won't hurt you. All it's doing is watching us," Stephanie said as she looked at Chantal. "See, look," Stephanie said as she reached over and touched it. It shied away from her hand. She frowned at the texture; it was cold and it was almost like gritty slime. "It's all good."

"Alright!" Chantal replied, still eyeing the plant.

Stephanie stood up and wiped her hand on her dark blue jeans. They walked on. Chantal kept eyeing the edge of the walls for more strange plants or creatures, keeping close to her friend. Stephanie shook her head. After a while, the girls came across several more dizzying corridors. Amidst the disappointing frowns, Stephanie pointed out that they were getting closer to the castle and illustrated it by pointing towards the castle. Chantal looked in the direction Stephanie was indicating and spotted the large dark castle.

"How long do you think it will take us to get there?" Chantal asked. A shrug was her friend's reply.

"Hey!" Stephanie said as she ran ahead. On the opposite wall, she saw a dark chestnut thirteen-hour clock. She saw that an hour had passed.

"What? An hour has already gone by? It only felt like five minutes," Chantal asked walking up behind her friend. She eyed the clock then looked down at her watch.

Stephanie looked at her watch. She gasped. "Look." She made her friend glance at her left wrist. It had stopped at 6:05.

"Mine is still going, but it says 6:05 too," Chantal said, showing Stephanie her digital watch. "It seems time flows differently here."

"Tell me about it," Stephanie said.

"So what do we do now? Head towards the castle?"

Stephanie stared at her friend. "Unless you want to stay here, not reach the castle and be turned--"

"I never said I wanted to stay here. Let's go!" Chantal said, she turned and looked at the thirteen-hour clock once more then back at the castle in the distance.



## 3 - A Land Serene

### Chapter Three: A Land Serene

The two girls made their way down the corridor, Chantal following a few steps behind Stephanie. Stephanie was walking along with a huge grin on her face. Time passed and Chantal was still looking around, being cautious. Strange birds sang in the distance.

Suddenly overhead, something flew by at a great speed.

Stephanie gasped, ducking and covering her head with her arms, behind her Chantal screamed. Stephanie turned around and saw a dark, almost black winged creature, clinging to Chantal's head.

"Get it off! GET IT OFF!" Chantal screamed, jumping around. The small winged creature began screeching, its large orange eyes whirling.

"Hold still." Stephanie said, trying to calm her friend down. Chantal stood still, slowly trying to stop panicking as Stephanie pulled the small creature from her friend's head.

"What is it?" Chantal asked, eyeing the creature. Its orange eyes focused on Chantal.

"I don't know. I have never seen a creature like this before," her friend replied, holding the creature under its winged arms.

"It almost looks like a small dragon. Let me see," Chantal said forgetting the frightening encounter and taking the creature from Stephanie. "It's soft and furry, and it's kinda cute." Chantal eyed the creature. The creature began to scurry up to Chantal's shoulder where it sat, wrapping its tail around her neck. "I think it likes me," Chantal giggled.

"Do you think your mom will let you keep it?" Stephanie asked grinning.

Chantal began to laugh. "We will have to see, once we get home."

Stephanie turned towards the castle in the distance. "Shall we continue on our way?"

Chantal nodded.

A few minutes passed, the sound of their footsteps echoed off the stone walls.

"Look," Stephanie said pointing in front of her. "We are almost there. This should be a piece of cake!"

The earth suddenly began to shake. A loud rumbling sound was heard. The Labyrinth began to shift around them, expanding and changing. Birds flew off with terrified cries. The girls moved out of the way as new walls appeared around them. They had been in a light sand colored stone section and without moving, they were now in a dark green hedge section. Stephanie lost her balance and fell upon the hard stone flooring.

The dragon creature on Chantal's shoulder began to whine, its eyes whirling red in fear.

Chantal turned to Stephanie who was getting to her feet, once the rumbling stopped. "You know that this is your fault! You just had to say that we were getting close to getting out of this never ending maze."

Stephanie's mouth dropped; dumbfounded she stared at the new walls. "Damn..."

## 4 - Taking Things For Granted

### Chapter Four: Taking Things For Granted

Stephanie remained still. Her mouth open in shock, looking around the new surroundings; thanks to her remark, she figured.

"Steph, snap out of it!" Chantal said shaking her friend. "We can't just stand here and do nothing. We have to keep going." Stephanie blinked. She then looked at her friend and slowly nodded.

"Okay, which way now?" Chantal asked. She unraveled the tail of her new pet from her neck, and then cradled the creature in her arms. "I wonder if this little guy can help us get out of here."

"It's worth a try," Stephanie said, snapping out of the shock.

"First we should give him a name. I don't want to go around calling him the creature thingy."

Stephanie giggled. "Hmm, what about Bob?"

Chantal started laughing. "I don't think it suits him." She eyed the dark purple fuzzy creature in her arms. "Serek." She decided.

"I like it," Stephanie told her friend.

Chantal let Serek crawl back up to her shoulder as she pulled off her small backpack. She opened the pack and rummaged around inside and pulled out a small bag of homemade chocolate chip cookies. "Hey Serek, would you like a cookie? If you help us get out of this maze I'll give you some." Chantal told the purple dragon thing. She broke a piece off the cookie to give Serek a taste. Serek chirped in delight. He launched from Chantal shoulder and flew above the two girls. "Show us the way out Serek."

Serek chirped and flew off in search of the correct path, Stephanie and Chantal followed beneath him. Suddenly Serek batted his wings harder and sped up, Stephanie broke into a run to try to keep up, she didn't want to lose sight of their guide.

"Hey! Slow down! Tell Bob to slow down a bit." she was ahead of Chantal so she was the first to turn the next corner and ran right into someone. "Uh!" Stephanie landed on her stomach. The impact was softer than she had anticipated. She opened her eyes one at a time.

She was staring into a handsome thin face with high cheekbones. Greenish-blue eyes stared up at her from under dark elegant eyebrows that arched a bit at the outer ends. Stephanie blinked, gasped and pushed herself up to her feet and stood next to Chantal. She realized that she had been staring into the

face of the Goblin King.

The Goblin King had blond hair, it was around shoulder length, and the style was strange, almost wild looking. Spiky, was the word Stephanie thought of. Without saying a word, he got up and started to brush the sand from his sleeves of his long black coat. He was tall, fairly taller than Chantal, and he was wearing dark clothes, there was barely any distinction where one shade ended and another began, he was particularly dark today. Finally satisfied with his sleeves, he crossed his arms and stared at the two girls. The Goblin King then approached the two girls, looking first at Chantal then at Stephanie.

Chantal blinked as she saw Serek on his shoulder. Chantal looked up at the Goblin king. "Hello?" she dared to speak up. The Goblin King looked at Chantal with a raised eyebrow. "Umm...can you help us? We kinda got lost," Chantal asked hopefully. Stephanie turned to Chantal, her eyes wide.

Chantal turned to Stephanie "What?"

Stephanie eyeing the Goblin King, replied, "He's the Goblin King." At this, he tilted his head to one side and smiled, revealing curiously sharp canines.

Chantal turned back to the Goblin King. "Oh!" She glanced at Serek who remained on his shoulder. "Does he belong to you?"

Finally, the Goblin King replied. "No. I do not control where it wants to land."

Chantal pulled the bag of cookies from her pocket and held them up for Serek to see. The little creature launched from the Goblin King's shoulder and glided over to Chantal's. Stephanie continued to stare at the Goblin King.

He stepped forward to closer inspect the girls. 'More wishers like Sarah, he wondered. He turned to Stephanie. This one seemed to know who he was, surely she must have knowledge about the rules and consequences. "I suppose you already know the rules?" he asked.

"Rules? What rules?" Chantal asked, confused.

The question brought a smile to his thin lips. "Your friend here knows that you have thirteen hours to solve my Labyrinth." Stephanie nodded, her gaze never left the Goblin King, when Chantal glanced at her. "Well," He stepped aside for them to pass. "You should continue, shouldn't you?"

"You aren't going to help us? That is just like kings with mazes!" Chantal mumbled.

The smile disappeared. Chantal turned to leave, Stephanie narrowed her eyes at him, wondering what he was thinking of conjuring at that moment. "And just to warn you," The smile returned. "I don't play fair."

"They never do!" Chantal said, letting the last comment slide.

Stephanie stared at Chantal. Chantal turned to walk away. "Come on Steph. It's very clear that he doesn't want to help us." Stephanie passed the Goblin King, looking back over her shoulder. His arms

were again crossed and he was now leaning against one of the walls, a smile on his lips.

"I'm surprised that he didn't throw you in the Bog of Eternal Stench." Stephanie said as they were out of sight and hopefully, hearing of the Goblin King, lest he get ideas.

"Oh? I'm surprised he didn't. I'm sure it would have amused him." Chantal commented.

Chantal turned to Stephanie. "What will happen if we don't get out of here before the thirteen hours are up?" Stephanie stared at Chantal. She continued walking past her, obviously hiding something.

"What? Is something wrong?" Chantal asked trying to catch up.

Stephanie bit her lower lip. "We--"

Silence. "--turn into goblins."

## 5 - How Do We Get Ourselves Into These Things?

Chapter Five : How Do We Get Ourselves Into These Things?

Chantal stared at Stephanie. "WHAT! And you couldn't have told me this before we entered the maze?"

"I thought I had told you," Stephanie said sincerely. "I'm sorry."

"Okay, I forgive you. Now let's hurry up and get out of here," Chantal said.

"Right," Stephanie agreed.

They entered one hedge section of the maze. Once they stepped onto the path, they noticed that they could go either left or right. The girls looked both ways, trying to decide which direction to go. "They both look the same," Stephanie reflected.

"We've been having pretty good luck going right. Should we try going that way again?" Chantal asked.

"Hmm..." Stephanie thought. "All right."

"Okay, let's get going then."

The girls turned to the right and started walking down the selected hedged corridor. They walked for about ten minutes when Chantal suddenly stopped. "Steph! I think we have been here before, this spot looks familiar," Chantal told her friend.

"Oh!" Stephanie frowned.

"There was another path just back a ways, why don't we try going that way?" Chantal suggested.

"All right." Stephanie brightened up.

The two girls turned around and walked back the way they had come to the turn they had passed and continued down the new corridor; both girls in a bit brighter mood. A moment later, they turned a corner and suddenly Stephanie stopped.

"How did we end up here again?" She asked confused.

"I don't know," Chantal confessed.

"It keeps changing! What are we suppose to do?"

"I don't know, keep going around and hope we find the way out."

Stephanie sighed as she looked around for some helpful clue.

"What else could we do?" Chantal told her friend. "Come on, let's keep moving. A way out will pop up sooner or later, hopefully sooner." Chantal grabbed her friend's arm and pulled her down the corridor.

After going around in circles for about thirty more minutes the girls began to lose hope. They sat down on the path to rest. As they were catching their breath, Serek jumped off Chantal's shoulder and walked over to the hedge furthest from the many pathways. Chantal watched the small creature. Serek walked up to the hedge then through it.

"Hey, where did Bob go?"

"I don't know," Chantal replied as she jumped to her feet and followed Serek to where he had vanished. "Hey, there is a hidden path here!" she exclaimed. Serek came back to see if they were following.

"Wicked! We'll get somewhere again!" Stephanie said, running off into the new path.

Chantal laughed, starting to cheer up again. "I hope so." Chantal followed her pet and Stephanie through the hidden path. Stephanie stumbled over something.

"Are you okay?" Chantal asked.

"Yeah," Stephanie stood up and brushed the sand of her black elbow length sleeve shirt, it had a red Chinese dragon on it.

Chantal looked around then spotted something in the distance. "Hey look, there is somebody over there." she pointed down the hedge corridor. Hearing laughter, Stephanie ran down the corridor then suddenly stopped, something caught her attention out of the corner of her eye. She reached into the hedge next to her and pulled out two strange creatures by their tied tails.

Chantal caught up with Stephanie then stared down at the two strange creatures. "What, and who are these two?" she asked. The creatures tried to get free from her grasp. The twin creatures were short, plump and had grey skin. They were dressed in simple garb; shirt, pants, vests, all in warm tones of sand, similar to goblins, if the girls would have encountered any.

"Let us free and--" one creature spoke.

--and we'll help you out of this dead end." the other continued.

"What dead end?" asked Chantal, looking down the corridor for the end. The creatures pointed behind Chantal. The hedges had formed a closed wall. Chantal turned around while Stephanie looked up. The creatures were right; they were boxed in.

"Damn," Chantal swore under her breath, she turned to glare back at the two creatures. "You closed the hedge behind us," she accused.

"No we haven't." the one on the left said.

"We do not control these things." the other said.

"The Goblin King," Stephanie breathed. "You shouldn't have pissed him off Chantal." Chantal shrugged. What's done is done.

"All right," Stephanie paused to think. "What should we do with them?"

Chantal turned to Stephanie. "Should we trust them?"

"Hmmm..." Stephanie looked at Chantal, biting her lower lip in thought. "Well, we don't have any other choice, do we?" She looked down at the tied creatures. "You said you're going to help us, so, how do we get out of here?"

Both creatures looked at the girl.

"First you have to--" began the first.

--answer three riddles." finished the second.

"Riddles?" asked Stephanie. She then turned to Chantal. "Are you good at riddles?"

Chantal shook her head. "Not really."

"What are the rules?" Stephanie asked the creatures, still holding them by their tails.

"The rules are simple--" said the first.

--we ask you a riddle and you answer it," the second added.

--Answer the three riddles correctly and be allowed through the door." finished the first.

Chantal turned to Stephanie "Well, it's worth a shot."

"What happens if we answer one of the riddles wrongly?" Stephanie asked one of the creatures.

"You will have to take the Goblin trail," one spoke up.

"Goblin trail?" Stephanie raised her eyebrows.

"Yes," the other replied. "People have come here and solved the riddles wrongly and have taken the long way."

"Most people who take the long trail don't make it out of the Labyrinth before the thirteen hours are up and get turned into goblins."



Chantal then turned to her friend. "I guess then that we will have to answer the questions correctly."

Stephanie nodded. "Well," Stephanie said to the creatures. "Ask your first riddle."

"First--" the first creature began.

"--you must set us free." finished the second.

Stephanie looked at Chantal. "Should I?"

Chantal nodded.

"You'd better not run off," Stephanie said as she let go of the tails. The two creatures walked up to the side and stood in front of Chantal. One began whispering to the other. Stephanie waited, hands at her sides, head tilted to one side, wondering the possibility that they were plotting their escape or worse; an attack.

"Before we begin, we would like to introduce ourselves," one creature told them.

"All right," Stephanie said as she went to stand next to her friend.

A moment of silence.

"Well?" Stephanie asked.

The creatures looked at each other and nodded their heads. The first one took a step forward and began to speak. "My name is Snowden," he told them. Stephanie nodded her head, waiting for them to finish their introduction.

The second creature looked at his partner. "No, my name is Snowden."

"No it is not. Remember?" the first argued.

Stephanie looked from creature to another, and Chantal only raised an eyebrow at the two creatures. The creatures continued to argue, Stephanie looked at Chantal, and she rolled her eyes, and shook her head. Chantal then began to giggle. "You know we're not going to get anywhere if they keep this up," Stephanie said to Chantal, almost smiling.

Chantal nodded, then turned to the two creatures and cleared her throat. "Excuse me! Could we get on with the introductions?"

The creatures stopped arguing. "Yes!"

The second creature looked at the first "Fine...you can be Snowden this time, and I'll be Ashby." the first creature nodded.

"Good. Now that that's settled. Let's get on with the riddles," Stephanie said looking at the castle in the distance, she wondered about the time.

Snowden and Ashby exchanged a look, then turned to face the two girls. Ashby, the creature on the right, then spoke up. "Since there are two of you, you will be allowed to discuss amongst yourselves before you give your answers."

The girls nodded.

"Let us begin," Snowden said.

Ashby then began to tell them the first riddle:

"Come follow me, though I cannot move

Still I will lead you through the trees

Come follow me though I have no voice..."

Ashby trailed off. Snowden then began to speak:

"...To call you on the breeze.

These words are wild as they can be.

I know them...I know them well

Come follow me."

Snowden finished and both riddlers looked at the girls waiting to see how well the girls were at their games.

Chantal turned and looked at Stephanie, who was deep in thought. Chantal smiled. "This is an easy one!" She chimed.

"Are you sure?" Stephanie asked. Chantal nodded and whispered into her friend's ear. Stephanie then smiled. "Answer then."

"The answer is 'A Path.'" Chantal said happily.

"Congratulations," Snowden began.

"You are correct," Ashby finished. "Now for the next riddle."

Snowden began the riddle this time:

"The beginning of eternity

The end of time and space..."

Snowden trailed off and Ashby continued:

"...The beginning of every end

And the end of every place."

Chantal's smile disappeared and a look of confusion crossed her face. "You can answer this one Steph."

"Gee thanks!" her friend said sarcastically. She then began to think half aloud to herself. Chantal tilted her head and looked at her friend, she then grinned mischievously and began to hum the 'Jeopardy' theme. Stephanie turned on a dime and looked at Chantal. "CHANTAL!" She snapped. Serek squeaked and jumped off Chantal's shoulder. "Do you mind?"

Chantal shut her mouth, trying to look all innocent. "Sorry, I'll shut up now."

"Every...beginning...end..." Stephanie mused.

Serek landed on Stephanie's shoulder and began squeaking in her ear. "Squeeee--eeeeeeeee!"

Stephanie's eyes lit up as if a bolt of lightning had hit her. "I got it!" Stephanie then turned to Serek on her shoulder. "Bob, I love you!"

Chantal raised an eyebrow in confusion.

"The Answer is--" Stephanie almost yelled with excitement, she then calmed herself before continuing. "--the letter 'E.'"

"Correct again!" Ashby answered.

"Here is the last riddle. This one is a difficult one," Snowden told them. He then began the riddle:

"The more there is..."

Snowden trailed off once again. Ashby then finished:

"...less you see."

Chantal and Stephanie exchanged confused looks. Both girls then began to pace around in a circle, thinking. A few minutes passed, but neither of the girls have come up with an answer to the final r

Chantal suddenly stopped and turned to Stephanie. "We better hurry up and come up with an answer before it gets dark."

Stephanie's eyes grew wide. "Chantal, you're a genius."

"What?...what did I say?" she asked all confused.

"The Dark," she told her friend. Stephanie then turned to the two creatures. "The answer is 'the Darkness.'" She told them, a big smile on her face.

Ashby and Snowden looked at the two girls in amazement. "You two are the first to answer all three riddles," Ashby told them.

"You certainly deserve to take the shortcut," Snowden replied. The large double doors behind Ashby and Snowden slowly began to open. The tail tied creatures moved aside to let the girls pass.

"Woohoo!" Stephanie exclaimed with a grin.

The two girls approached the double doors.

"Good luck--"Ashby began.

"--on your quest," Snowden finished.

"Thanks," Chantal replied. The two girls then walked through the doors, Serek still perched on Stephanie's shoulder.

## 6 - Trouble With Royalty

### Chapter Six: Trouble with Royalty

As the girls walked through the door, they found a very different scene on the other side; instead of the hedge maze, they were surrounded by a vast forest. The mid afternoon sun shone through the trees.

"Wow!" Chantal exclaimed looking around.

"Yeah, wow!"

"Now which way do we go?" Chantal asked, still looking around. Several paths lay in front of them.

"This way," Stephanie said pointing to the path directly in front of them. The two girls started down their chosen path. Serek launched from Stephanie's shoulder and glided in front of them. After walking a while, the forest got dark. The sun had disappeared behind a large cloud. Suddenly an owl hooted above them.

Stephanie stopped in her tracks, spun around and looked through the trees, but nothing was there.

"What's the matter?" Chantal asked her friend, turning around to look at her.

"Nothing, I think I'm just being paranoid," Stephanie answered, her eyes searching the area. "Let's keep going." She took one more look behind her before they continued.

As they took a step forward, they heard laughter behind them. Stephanie slowly turned around and looked up to where the deep laughter had come from. Up in a nearby large tree the Goblin King sat leaning on one of the branches. Chantal turned around and when she spotted the Goblin King, she placed her hands on her hips. "Have you come to taunt us again?" She asked in a bored voice.

The Goblin King looked down at Chantal with an amused smile, and raised an eyebrow. Chantal smiled back, her braces showing.

Stephanie elbowed Chantal, a nervous grin on her face. Chantal looked over at her friend. "Fine, I'll be quiet this time," She said as she looked back up at the Goblin King. Chantal then pulled off her backpack and rummaged in it. She took out a roll of Life Savers, ripped open the package and popped the first one into her mouth.

Stephanie looked over at her friend, a puzzled look on her face. "What are you doing?" She asked Chantal.

"Getting out a Life Saver," she told her. "Want one?" She asked as she held out the roll to Stephanie.

Stephanie sighed loudly as she shook her head.

"Tay." Chantal then returned her Life Savers into her backpack. The Goblin King tilted his head and watched as the girls wondered what brought him there. After several minutes of silence, Chantal couldn't take it anymore. "Are you just going to sit there and watch us?"

The Goblin King laughed once again. "You two amuse me."

"Yeah, so you decide to follow us, and creep us out by staying in the shadows." Chantal shook her head, curly brown hair bouncing. She sighed. "Come Steph, there's no point in trying to talk to him. Let him play his little game." Chantal grabbed Stephanie's arm and began to pull her away.

As the two girls walked away, they heard something behind them. Something swooped and nearly missed Chantal's head. Stephanie felt the brushing of wing tips against her fingers. In front of them, the sun broke through the clouds, just as they caught glimpse of a white barn owl fly away down the path.

"Well, we must be going the right way since he's following the trail. Unless he's messing with us again," Chantal commented.

"Maybe, let's just keep moving, time is short." Stephanie replied.

Unknown to them, they were being watched by several dozen pair of eyes. As they continued walking down the path, the owners of the eyes followed, rustling in the bushes.

Stephanie stopped in her tracks. "Chantal? Did you hear that?" she asked, looking towards where she had heard the noise. The leaves of the bushes settled when she glanced on a precise spot.

"Hear what?" Chantal said, looking around and listening.

"That noise. There it is again." Stephanie spun around.

"I heard it that time. What was that?"

"I asked you first. Let's not stick around to find out." Stephanie took a step forward, more rustling followed it. Serek landed on Chantal's shoulder and wrapped his furry tail around her neck. They turned back to the path.

Suddenly something jumped out in front of them.

"Eek! What is that?" Chantal half screamed.

"A goblin. This is not good," Stephanie said as she took a step back. Suddenly several goblins appeared behind them. Chantal turned her head and saw them. "I think we have company. What do we do now Steph?"

"RUN!" Stephanie yelled as she ran forward past the goblin in front of them. Chantal not too far behind her. The girls ran as fast as they could down the path. Several dozen goblins popped out of the bushes

and started chasing them. The hideous sound of the goblins' laughter could be heard behind them. As they turned a corner, Chantal tripped over an exposed tree root. Stephanie stopped to help her friend up. "Come on, we have to keep going."

They ran around another corner, what trees could do corners; Chantal running a little ahead of her friend. The sounds of the goblins faded into the background. Behind her, Chantal heard Stephanie let out a cry of surprise. Chantal twirled around, expected to see that her friend had tripped herself.

No sign of Stephanie.

"Steph!" Chantal cried out. "Where did you go? Steph?" Chantal turned around in a circle trying to figure out what had happened to her friend.

"STEPH!" Chantal cried out one more time.

## 7 - Piece of Cake!

### Chapter Seven: Piece of Cake!

Stephanie screamed as she slid down the rough surface of the tunnel. Darkness filled the tunnel as the entrance closed behind her. Stephanie slid too fast to grab hold of anything; she flew out of the tunnel and landed on a pile of old dry leaves. The impact was still hard.

"Oww! That hurt!" she rubbed her backside. Stephanie took a moment before she stood up and brushed the leaves off her clothes. "Ick! I got leaves in my hair too," she said aloud as she pulled some of the leaves out of her tangled hair.

Stephanie looked up and taking in her new surroundings. There was enough light for her to make out where she was.

"Oh great! I'm in an Oubliette," she groaned. "Thanks Chantal!" Muttering to herself, she made her way through the cave. "Now to find a way out. There should be one around here." Stephanie leaned up against a wall of the cave, she hopefully looked up above her and spotted an opening, thick vines dangling down from it.

"Ah ha! Piece of cake!" She grabbed hold of one of the vines and began pulling herself upward. Suddenly the vine let go, and she tumbled back to the ground. Stephanie began to curse. "Damn, I shouldn't have said that. Nothing is a piece of cake around here."

○ ○ ○

Chantal groaned.

"I'm all alone now," Chantal sighed. On her shoulder, Serek squeaked, and nudged his head against Chantal's cheek. "I'm sorry Serek, I guess I'm not really completely alone."

Chantal took one more look around. "I guess we should keep moving. I don't like the idea of going on by myself, and not knowing where Steph is, but I have no other choice. All I can do is hope that I meet up with her again."

Serek squeaked in acknowledgment.

Chantal stroked the furry dragon thingy's head as she took a look behind her, from the way they had originally came. Turning back, she then continued down the path.

○ ○ ○



Stephanie walked along the cave wall, still trying to find a way out. "I wish I had a bit more light to see." She mumbled. "I bet Chantal has a flashlight in that backpack of hers."

Running her hand along the wall, she made her way across the dark cavern, suddenly she came upon a small opening. Yes!" Stephanie breathed. She stumbled over something.

"Ack!" she landed on what felt like a large stone. She felt around more around in the dark. She had stumbled over steps made of stone. "Even better than a ladder!" she said as she started to go up, towards the tiny crack of light. At the top, she struggled to open a trapdoor above her for a good minute or so. She figured it hasn't been in use for a while.

The warm sunlight washed over her. Red dust stained her hands, due to the bar across the trapdoor. "Finally!" she started to climb out of a--

"A tree stump?" Stephanie said raising her eyebrows as she inspected what she had climbed out of. She closed the trapdoor behind her, so no one would be able to fall in.

"Yeah, a tree stump!" a small voice squeaked.

The girl turned around. "Woah, creepy!" A small faery hovered in front of Stephanie's face. She looked exactly like Jennifer, Stephanie's younger sister. The same short-cropped hair that curled under the ears, the only difference was the pointed ears and the color of the hair which was grass color compared to the brown haired sisters.

"Even in the Underground, I can't get away from her!" Stephanie groaned.

The little faery looked up. "Get away from whom?" she asked.

"Jenn, my sister," Stephanie said looking at green haired faery, she couldn't help but stare. Stephanie then turned to look at the castle and began brushing the dust and sand off her clothes.

The faery raised an eyebrow. "Where are you going?"

"To the castle at the center of the Labyrinth," Stephanie replied to the sister double

The faery giggled. "I know the way! I know the way!" she chimed.

"You do?" Stephanie asked.

"Doesn't every faery?" she asked in a bored voice.

"Um, I wouldn't know. I'm not one."

"I guess you aren't," the faery turned to fly away.

"Well, can you show me the way?" Stephanie said. "Damn. You and your big mouth..." she muttered to herself.

The faery turned back and smiled. "What will you give me to help you?"

Stephanie racked her brain for something. "Well?" she asked impatiently.

"Hold on a second!" Stephanie snapped. She dug into her pockets of her jeans and pulled out a penny. "How's this?" she asked holding it out.

The little faery flew over to the penny to inspect it, taking a hold of it she then smiled. "It will do just fine. Wait here! I'll be right back." she flew up into a tree to hide her new treasure.

Stephanie smiled. "Chantal's never going to believe that a faery looks like my sister and knows the way to the castle!" she paused. "Well, maybe she will. Anything is possible in this place."

○ ○ ○

Chantal walked along the path, keeping both eyes and ears open for any signs of Stephanie. She sighed. It had seemed like this path would go on with no end. She dragged her feet along the dusty trail as she walked along. Chantal looked up and spotted a large rock. She approached it and leaned against it to rest.

"It doesn't seem like I'm getting anywhere," she sighed again.

"What makes you say that, Chantal?" a voice said beside her.

Chantal jumped. She turned around and was face to face with the Goblin King.

"Don't do that!" she snapped.

"Do what?" the Goblin King asked innocently.

Chantal groaned. "Never mind. It's not important," She said as she began to move away.

The Goblin King looked up. "Hey, where are you going?" he asked.

Chantal turned around. "Now that is a stupid question. You already know where I'm going," she told him sharply. She turned away, but the Goblin King was standing right in her path. "Excuse me! But can you move out of my way, please?" she tried to ask kindly.

The Goblin King just smirked, not moving out of the way.

Chantal sighed. "I'm not playing this little game of yours. I'm going to go look for my friend. Now please step aside."

The Goblin King stepped aside. "Oh her!" he said carelessly as Chantal walked past.

Chantal turned on a dime. "You know where she is?"

The Goblin King smiled.

Chantal laughed. "But of course you aren't going to tell me," Chantal paused "Can I ask you a favor then?" she asked him.

"Oh I suppose," he sighed. "As long as it is not a big favor."

Chantal pulled off her backpack and pulled out a small blue notebook and a pencil. Flipping through the book, she found an unused page and wrote something down on it. She ripped the piece of paper out and put the notebook back into her pack. She pulled out the Life Savers roll from her bag and placed one on the paper, then folding the paper so the piece of candy wouldn't fall out.

Chantal handed the folded paper to the Goblin King. "Since you won't tell me where she is, can you at least give her this?"

The Goblin King raised an eyebrow.

"Please!" she pleaded. He sighed and took the wrapped up Life Saver.

"Thank you!"

"I'm not a bloody messenger..." he mumbled as he vanished.

## 8 - Pasta Vazoo!!

Chapter Eight: Pasta Vazoo!

"Are you sure you know where you're going?" Stephanie asked. She was getting tired, especially walking under the warm sun.

The small faery buzzed in front of her face. "Of course I know where I'm going. I'm a faery!"

"Sorry, it's just that it seems like I'm not getting anywhere," Stephanie sighed as she stopped and rubbed her left ankle. She continued walking down a small path. Stephanie was about to pass between some trees when a leg clad in black with a black knee high boot shot out from behind a tree to another, blocking her way. She looked to her left. The faery gasped and flew away to hide in the nearest tree.

There leaning against a tree, arms crossed, was the Goblin King; a small folded piece of paper in one hand. His face was expressionless as he tilted his head to one side. Stephanie looked at him with her brown eyes. He then tossed the piece of paper down at Stephanie's feet.

"What's this?" she asked.

"Something from your friend," he mumbled.

She looked at him questionably, and bent down to retrieve it. She quickly opened it and saw a red Life Saver. She then took a second look down at the piece of paper and saw 'Pasta Vazoo' written in really large messy letters.

Stephanie smiled, and folded the paper with the Life Saver still in it, saving it for later. As soon as Stephanie had seen the letters written in that piece of paper, she knew what it had meant. "Pasta Vazoo" was an expression she used, it had the same principal as "damn", and Chantal had used it to tell her that she was all right.

"Thanks," Stephanie said as she tried to pass. She looked off to the side for another way.

"Where are you going?" he asked the girl, still standing in her way.

"To see the wonderful Wizard of Oz," she half sang trying to keep a straight face. A puzzled look crossed the Goblin King's face. Stephanie sighed. "To the castle, where else?"

"You will never make it there in time," he told her.

Stephanie looked up at him. "Oh really?" She said in a challenging tone, her humor gone. "You're not going to make things unfair, are you, Jareth?"

The smile faded from his lips.

Somewhere at the other side of the Labyrinth, Chantal got a chill.

○ ○ ○

Chantal shivered as she felt a chill run down her spine. "What the hell was that?" she asked aloud.

She looked off in the distance, but all she could see was more trees. She wondered if the Goblin King had kept his word and had given the note to Stephanie. She hoped so.

Serek unwrapped his tail from around her neck and sat up on her shoulder looking around. Chantal kept walking down the trail. She began to drag her feet in the dirt again, while staring down at the path as she walked. Serek squeaked and Chantal looked up. Up ahead there was something that looked like a bridge over a canyon. As Chantal approached the bridge, she saw that the road split in two. One lead to the left and the other across the canyon.

Before Chantal could decide which way to go, a bird like creature popped out, blocking her path. The creature was waist high and scrawny looking, bright colors; orange, red, pink; seemed to have been splashed onto its odd plumage. She stopped and stared at the creature. The creature tilted its head at her and stared back.

"The green moon is made of cheese," the bird like creature squawked.

Chantal's eyes grew wide. "What?"

"Fireys sometimes walk on their hands," it continued.

"Chantal shook her head. "You make no sense bird!"

"Beware the white owl," it said tossing its head from side to side.

"I could have told you that," Chantal sighed, then turned to Serek. "This bird sure is a pain in the a--"

"Pain is nothing a downpour won't erase," The creature cut her off.

"Hold up!" Chantal said glaring at the bird. "What did you just say?"

The bird just tilted its head and looked at her.

"If I just heard what I thought I heard, that was a line from a Delirium song," Chantal eyed the bird creature. She then looked up and across the bridge. Another section of maze could be seen on the other side. "Okay, this place is really starting to freak me out. I want to get out of here and fast."

"Shortcuts can be found in crystals," the bird creature began again.

"Yeah, yeah...whatever!" she said waving her hand at the bird as she walked past it.

"The unreal is the real and the real is the unreal," Chantal heard it say as she started going across the bridge.

○ ○ ○

Stephanie continued to stare at the Goblin King.

"Unfair? I wouldn't dream of it," Jareth replied in a dry tone.

Stephanie stepped forward trying to pass, but he still blocked her path.

"Let me pass," she said calmly. Jareth stepped aside and gestured for her to continue on her way. She glanced at him as she passed, not taking her eyes off him until she was in safe distance. Taking a few steps forward down the path, she suddenly felt something behind her. Turning around, Stephanie realized that the Goblin King had disappeared. She shrugged, turning around to continue. Suddenly a small object buzzed in front of her face.

"Whoa!" Stephanie yelled.

"Are you crazy? That was the Goblin King!" the small faery informed her.

"I know that was the Goblin King," Stephanie snapped at the faery. "And where did you go?"

"Ummm...ummm," the faery stammered, trying to think of a reason while fiddling with her fingers.

"Let's just go," Stephanie groaned as she walked away. She walked down the path, the small faery right behind her.

Slowly the path began to widen. "Hee hee!" the faery giggled. "There is the bridge! We aren't far from the castle now," she pointed off in the distance.

"Bridge?" Stephanie asked. She frowned. What she knew about this place and bridges was that it always means trouble.

"Yeah, the bridge over the canyon."

"The canyon?"

"Yes!"

"Pasta Vazoo!" Stephanie sighed and nodded not surprised. Stephanie stopped and stared down the path. She wasn't afraid of heights but seeing the construction of the bridge ahead, made her uneasy, especially one over a canyon. The faery buzzed in front of her face.

"Are you coming?" she asked. "Come on!" The small faery grabbed a piece of Stephanie's hair and

started pulling her down the path.

"Ow! Ow! All right! I'm coming. Just let go of my hair." the faery released Stephanie's hair and flew down the trail. Stephanie half ran to try to keep up with the tiny faery.

Suddenly she tripped over something and tumbled to the ground. She let out a short scream. "Why does everyone keeps tripping me? It's not fair!" Stephanie whined falling onto her back.

"Clumsy feet! Clumsy feet!" squawked the bird like creature that Stephanie had tripped over.

"I don't have time for this. I have to get to the castle and find Chantal," Stephanie said as she got up and brushed off her clothes again.

"In case you are wondering, she went that way," it told her, pointing towards the bridge with a clawed foot.

"Who did?"

"The girl with the short curly hair," the bird said dancing around Stephanie.

"She did?"

"Did what?" the creature asked swinging its head from side to side.

"Went that way?" she asked pointing in the direction it had pointed before.

"Who did?" it asked as it began clawing the ground.

"The girl with the short curly hair!" Stephanie said getting frustrated.

"Can you stand on your head?" the bird asked, actually taking off its head, much like a Firey, and standing on it.

Stephanie let out a scream of frustration. "Why do I suddenly feel like Alice in Wonderland?" she asked and stormed towards the bridge. The faery was hovering in front of the bridge hands on her tiny hips.

"What took you so long?"

"Well, if every creature in the Underground didn't trip me, I would've been across that bridge already!" Stephanie snapped.

"I guess you don't want my help anymore. Farewell," the faery said as she flew away.

"Fine! I've gotten this far without much of your help anyway," Stephanie said half annoyed. She turned towards the bridge and groaned. The bridge was just boards held by ropes. "Oh man! Do I really have to cross this?" she eyed the rope bridge wearily. The boards were in terrible shape, half rotted and broken in more than one place. As she placed on foot on it, it creaked. "Oh man! Oh man!" Stephanie took a

deep breath as she began to cross the bridge. She cautiously and slowly took each step as it swayed back and forth, for the wind was blowing hard and made the bridge swing. Once at the center of the bridge, she gripped the rope tightly and closed her eyes for a moment.

Suddenly she heard a crack behind her. She turned around just in time to see one of the boards break free and tumble down into the canyon.

"CRAP!" she cursed as she began to run across the rest of the bridge. All of the boards kept falling just as fast as she left them. "Why do these things always have to happen to me?"

On the other side of the canyon, Stephanie had stopped running and fell to her knees, catching her breath. "No way I'm crossing that bridge again!" she said, as she looked down the trail. "Chantal can't be too far ahead of me." she told herself as she finally got to her feet.

○ ○ ○

Chantal let out a huge sigh. "I swear we are going around in circles." She looked around at her surroundings. All the stone walls looked the same.

"I hate mazes!" she yelled out to nobody in particular. Serek launched himself from Chantal's shoulder and started gliding down the corridor. "Where you going?" She asked him as she reluctantly followed him. After following Serek for several minutes, Chantal stopped and leaned against a wall to rest. "Serek! Get back here. I need to rest. I haven't stopped since we got here. And you got to ride on my shoulder most of the way," she yelled after the dragon creature. "Gods! I need a drink!"

Serek came flying back around the corner and flew up to the top of the wall to perch. Chantal sunk down to the ground then looked up at him. "Good dragon!"

Chantal closed her eyes for a few minutes. The sun was hot and she was really starting to get tired. She pulled off her backpack and dug inside the front pocket for another Life Saver. "I wish I had a bottle of water in here!" She opened the large zipper and reached inside pulling out her black bandana with dragons on it, then put it on. "Gods! Where is Stephanie?" She asked aloud.

"Right here!" a voice said from around the corner. Stephanie came into view.

Chantal jumped, she then got to her feet. "Woo hoo!" she cried excitedly, forgetting about her exhaustion. "How did you find me?"

"A bird told me," Stephanie replied grinning.

Chantal shook her head. "Ack! You ran into that bird too?"

Stephanie nodded her head, then rolled her eyes.

"And what happened to you?" Chantal asked as she picked a dead leaf out of her friend hair. Her clothes were smeared with light sand.



"Apparently it's 'Trip Stephanie Day' in the Underground! First I slid down into an oubliette, landing on a pile of leaves, then climbed some vines which broke, got tripped by that bird, not to mention all the other times I was tripped, then had to cross that bridge that was falling apart, which should have a caution sign by the way," Stephanie rambled in no particular order. "I encountered a faery that looked like Jenn, ran into Jareth, who--"

"Hold up! Who's Jareth?" Chantal cut in.

"The Goblin King, whom I have probably insulted by standing up to him and saying his name."

"Stephanie!" Chantal said as she shook her head in disbelief.

"By the way, how did you find crossing that bridge?" Stephanie asked her friend.

"No problem!" Chantal said as she bit her lower lip. "I just kept telling myself 'Don't look down! Don't look down!'"

Stephanie laughed. "Well, there is no way I'm going to cross it again."

"Me either."

"Squeeee!" Serek squeaked as he glided down to Stephanie.

"BOB!" Stephanie giggled reaching out and hugging the dragon creature.

## 9 - Haven't Got All Day

### Chapter Nine: Haven't Got All Day

Chantal looked at Serek in Stephanie's arms then turned to her friend. "Which way now?" she asked.

"Hmm, I guess this way," Stephanie pointed towards her left. "Since the way I came from ended up here."

"Okay, then let's get moving," Chantal said.

"Right!" Stephanie agreed with a smile.

Chantal turned towards her friend before they started off. "Do you have any idea how much more time we have to get through the Labyrinth?"

Stephanie looked up at the sky. "Maybe a few more hours...maybe seven at most," She grinned. "I think we got closer to the castle faster than Sarah did."

"I hope so! But let's not stand around here and waste any more time."

The two girls walked in silence. During the many silent walks, Stephanie had informed Chantal about the basics of the Labyrinth story. As they walked, Chantal began to think to herself. She then turned to her friend. Serek had crept up from her arms to her head where he sat, playing with one of her necklaces with his tail.

"Hey Steph?"

"Yeah?"

"I was just wondering," Chantal started to say.

"Wondering about what?" Stephanie asked her friend as she kicked a small pebble, it bounced to a stop a few steps away.

"About the Goblin King. Is he human or is he a goblin? I mean, he doesn't really look like a goblin, well maybe he kinda does, with his wild hair and all. What I really mean is why would a human want to be king over goblins. And aren't there any other humans in the Underground?" Chantal paused and looked at Stephanie, who was trying to take all this in. "I now know that any human that arrives in the Underground only have thirteen hours to reach the castle before they turn into goblins. So if Jareth is human, why didn't he turn into a goblin? Is he special in some sort of way?" Stephanie shrugged, still thinking of a possible answer. "And if there aren't any other humans around, you would think Jareth

would get lonely," Chantal continued. "What I mean is that goblins can't be that great company. I wonder if that is why he finds us so amusing?"

Stephanie pondered for a moment before answering. "Maybe Jareth inherited, to rule over the goblins and since he's the ruler over them. We know he has powers--so he's the one who turns humans that are wished away, into goblins."

"But why aren't there any other humans around. I haven't seen any. Have you?" Chantal asked curiously.

"No, but maybe there's other places in the Underground with human inhabitants," Stephanie trailed off.

"Oh! Okay! I'll stop rambling now!" Chantal giggled. Stephanie laughed. Chantal grinned as she continued to walk on.

"Do you have any water in that bag of yours?" Stephanie asked.

"I wish I did! I'm dying of thirst," Chantal sighed.

Stephanie frowned. "That bites."

Chantal nodded to her friend.

"Time out!" Stephanie called suddenly. "Stretch break."

"What?" Chantal asked confused. Stephanie sat on the ground and lay down as Serek jumped from her shoulder to the ground. She didn't care if she would get sand in her hair, it would match her clothes. A sigh of relief came from her. Stephanie smiled.

"Good idea!" Chantal exclaimed as she dropped to the ground. "That rest I had before you showed up wasn't long enough."

Stephanie giggled as she stretched out her limbs. She watched the thin clouds making their way across the sky. "My ankle is going to be sore tomorrow," she said as she sat up and rubbed her left ankle.

"I think I'm going to be sore all over tomorrow," Chantal said as she pulled of her blue backpack and unzipped it.

"That too!" Stephanie giggled.

"I have never walked so much in my life!" Chantal rummaged around in her pack, and then suddenly pulled a clear sphere out. "Hey! It's that crystal I found on the path."

"I thought that disappeared after we arrived here," Stephanie said intrigued.

"I thought it did too," Chantal said as she gazed into the crystal.

"Can I look at it?" her friend asked, her hand outstretched.

"Go ahead," Chantal said as she handed Stephanie the crystal.

"Thanks." Stephanie said, looking into the depth of the crystal.

Suddenly a white light that illuminated from the crystal blinded the two girls. Both girls blinked furiously, trying to regain their vision. Once their vision cleared, they noticed that they were sitting in a large fancy room, on a cold marble floor.

Stephanie was still holding the crystal in her right hand; she looked at her friend in amazement. "What the hell just happened?" Chantal asked shocked. "Where are we?"

Stephanie stood up and looked around. "We're in a ballroom."

Dangling from the ceiling was a crystal chandelier, a grand clock stood in one corner of the room. Several tables covered in silk tablecloths, were ornate with gold and silver trays and bowls with intricate designs; they held various foods, none that the girls have seen before. Stephanie at that point, knew to stay away from food in the Labyrinth, not from experience but more as a caution. Goblets made from the same elegant material as the trays, glittered in the glow of slow burning candles.

Chantal screamed.

Stephanie spun around to look at her friend. "What?"

"How the heck did we get into these dresses?"

Stephanie looked down and shrugged. Chantal jumped to her feet and examined the dress. The dress was dark violet with silver beaded flowers around the trim. Stephanie had a simple dark green gown. In her long hair were silver vines that started above her ears and went past the ends of her hair. Chantal gazed at her friend. "Hey! Your dress is nice! Really nice!"

"This is so wicked!" Stephanie said looking at Chantal.

"Yeah! I'm still a little freaked out on how we got into these dresses though," Chantal said eyeing her own dress once again. She began looking around for her bag, spotted it on the floor beside Serek and picked it up as the dragon creature jumped up and sat on her shoulder. At her throat, Stephanie noticed that she had a silver necklace on. It was an owl in flight, holding a flat crystal. Stephanie then noticed something else too. The ballroom was quiet.

Chantal looked around. "Aww...we got all dressed up, and there isn't even a party," She said sarcastically.

"What should we do now?" Stephanie asked ignoring Chantal's comment.

"I don't know," Chantal said pausing. She thought for a moment. "Aren't ballrooms usually in castles? Or is this one different?"

Stephanie walked across the room. Her high-heeled black sandals made her footsteps echo throughout the room. Chantal watched her friend. Serek wrapped his tail around her neck and began playing with her chain and pendent. Stephanie reached a glass wall and looked out of it. "We're floating," She said. "We're in a crystal ballroom."

"I wonder if they have any refreshments around here. I'm still dying of thirst," Chantal said looking around again.

Stephanie was still at the crystalline wall, her palms pressed against the cool glass. She didn't want to try any food within the Labyrinth lest it has the same effect as the enchanted peach that a certain girl had received.

Chantal walked up to Stephanie and looked through the crystal wall. "How do we get out?"

"We could always try to use Sarah's method," Stephanie said smiling.

"And what was her method?"

"Throwing a chair to break the wall."

"Oh! Worth a try!" Chantal looked around the room, spotted a chair, walked to it, and picked it up. She walked back to the crystal wall, lifted the chair and started swinging it at the wall. The chair shattered into a million pieces.

"Well, so much for that idea," Stephanie said looking at the broken chair on the floor.

"Yeah! Now what?" Chantal asked her friend as she stared down at the broken chair.

Stephanie looked up and searched the room. She spotted the clock. The time was not shown for the hands were missing, yet the pendulum continued to count the time. Stephanie frowned. The Goblin King must have found a way to hide time on the travelers. He really didn't like to lose, she mused. She started walking around the vast room for anything to help them find a way out, all while biting her lower lip in thought. Across the ballroom, after a moment of deep searching by pushing on walls, looking under tables, behind the clock, stopping the pendulum; Stephanie spotted a hallway. "Hmm, never noticed this before," she said. "Hey Chantal, I think this might be a way out."

"I sure hope so!" Chantal gripped her skirt and walked across the ballroom. Stephanie did the same and led the way for her friend. The two girls reached the hallway. It was dark, save from the glowing torches that illuminated the hall. The hallway was long and narrow. On both sides stood doors and all the way down the hall, between the doors, were long body length mirrors.

Chantal walked over to one of the wooden doors nearby, tried the finely crafted handle, and pushed on the door. It was locked. "Damn! Locked!" She exclaimed.

Stephanie walked over to the one across from Chantal and tried the door. "This one too."

"One of these doors must open," Chantal said as she tried another.

Stephanie then walked a bit farther down the hall and tried a couple more of the wooden doors.

"All right!" Stephanie said getting frustrated. "This is a waste of time! At least if there were music and dancers, I would've stayed a while. Pasta Vazoo!" She tried one more door.

Chantal gazed down the hall, seeing no end in sight. Another door and then another, all ending with the same results.

Stephanie sighed angrily. She then took some drastic actions. She started kicking down the door! With nothing to hold onto, especially with the high sandals she wore, it was a task keeping her balance. The wood started to splinter around the handle. "Ha!" Stephanie said and hit the door again with her high-heeled sandal. She then tried pushing on the door, it still wouldn't budge.

Chantal stared at her friend, mouth open.

"Okay," Stephanie said calmly. She walked over to the door across the one she was kicking. Did the gesture of pushing up her sleeves and started to run towards the splintering door, meaning to break it down.

"Steph!" Chantal yelled.

"Eh?" Stephanie distracted, ran towards the mirror beside the door instead. "Aah!" she let out a short cry as she vanished.

"Steph!" Chantal called again. She looked down and saw two hands gripping onto the mirror frame.

Chantal looked out of the mirror. They were still floating in the air; the ground lay below them, where they had only just been no more than ten minutes ago. Stephanie was hanging in mid air.

"Don't do that!" she said to Chantal. She looked down; she was fairly high in the air, in other words, too high to jump down. She looked up at her friend. "A little help here Chantal!"

Chantal knelt and grabbed her friend's hands. "Can't you push yourself up or something?" she asked struggling.

"CHANTAL I'M IN THE AIR!" Stephanie yelled, kicking her feet for emphasis.

Chantal gripped her friend's arms tightly and pulled as hard as she could. Stephanie came flying through the mirror and Chantal landed flat on her back. Chantal crawled over to the edge of the mirror and looked down. She let out a sigh. "We found the way out, but now how do we get out?" Stephanie got to her feet as Chantal stared down at the ground, thinking. "I wonder!"

Before Chantal could voice her idea, the ground below them started to move. Chantal quickly backed away from the mirror. "We are moving!" Chantal exclaimed.

"To where?"

"I don't know. I just hope not back to the starting!"

"We better not!" Stephanie clenched her hands into fists.

Chantal crawled back towards the mirror and looked over the edge. She backed away again. "We are moving too fast to see anything."

Suddenly the crystal came to a halting stop. Both girls let out a short cry, and Stephanie fell to the ground. Serek scrambled across the floor and jumped into Chantal's arms. Stephanie got back to her feet and walked over to the mirror, stuck her head through it and looked out.

"Hey, I can see the castle!" she cried out.

## 10 - The Castle Doth Lie Yonder

### Chapter Ten: The Castle Doth Lie Yonder

The Goblin King stared deeply into a crystal. He leaned back on his throne and grinned. The two girls who had entered into his realm were now trapped within a crystal. They had found themselves wearing gowns, within a ballroom, much like Sarah had, only without the mass of ballroom dancers. Jareth smiled as he saw the girl with the short curly brown hair pick up a chair and swing it to try to smash the crystal wall. The chair hit the wall and shattered into splinters. The girls looked around for another way out. It amazed him that the two girls had gotten this far. The Goblin King laughed as the two girls made their way down a hall and trying all the doors.

"What is so funny your Highness?" a small goblin asked as it came into the throne room.

"These girls. They're never going to give up, even when there doesn't seem to be a way out," Jareth told it as he watched the girls. The girl with the long straight hair had just fallen through a mirror. Stephanie, he believed that was her name.

"What will you do with them Highness?" the goblin asked as it tried to take a look into the crystal.

Jareth looked at the goblin and smiled with a mischievous twinkle in his eye. The goblin peered around its master, looked into the crystal to see the hanging Stephanie being pulled up by her friend. Chantal then looked over the edge and down at the ground. Jareth winked and the crystal started moving. It flew faster and faster away from where it had just been. Suddenly it stopped just outside the Goblin City gates. He watched as Chantal figured out the crystal, jumped from it and the girls returning to their normal sizes.

"Do you want us to scare them away Highness?" The little goblin asked as the girls approached the city gates.

"No. Leave them. I want them to find their way to the castle," Jareth told the goblin as he watched the girls sneak past the sleeping guard. He must really find someone who would stay awake at their post for more than five minutes, he mused.

"Yes Majesty!" the goblin replied as it scurried away.

○ ○ ○

"The castle? You mean we moved closer towards the castle? Why would we be moved here?" Chantal asked confused.

Stephanie turned and looked at her friend. "Take a look for yourself." Chantal got to her feet, walked



over to Stephanie, and poked her head out. "The Goblin City!" Stephanie said pointing downwards.

"Ack! This can't be good!" Chantal said looking down. "We are high up too! How do we get down now?"

The crystal then started to slowly drift downwards closer to the ground.

"Wow! That was too easy!" Chantal told her friend.

"Yeah, I don't like this."

Three feet from the ground, the crystal stopped and just floated in mid air, as if it was waiting for its passengers to disembark.

"Now what?" Stephanie asked her friend.

"Ummm...we use Serek!"

"Use him how?" Stephanie asked confused.

"Well, if I'm right, once we jump from the crystal, we should be returned to our normal size," Chantal explained.

"If you are right? I'm not risking my life on your guesses," Stephanie told her.

"That's what Serek is for. Just in case I'm wrong. We send him out of the crystal and see if he returns to normal size before we jump."

"Well, what are you waiting for? Do it!"

Chantal looked down at Serek. "Sorry for using you as our guinea pig, but if I'm right..." Chantal trailed off. She then threw Serek out of the mirror.

"Squeeeeee!" The dragon creature screamed. He extended his wings and flew down to the ground, where he looked up at the girls and squawked again.

"I said I was sorry! But look, you are back to your normal size!" Chantal turned to Stephanie. "See! I was right!"

"I see! I see!" Stephanie said and she took a few steps away from the edge. She then started running towards the edge. "Out of my way! I'm outta here!" Below the floating crystal, Serek squawked and jumped out of the way, just as Stephanie changed back and landed on her feet, right where he had been a few seconds before. Stephanie stared into the crystal at Chantal. "Coming yet?"

"Yeah. Move out of the way!"

Chantal lifted up her skirt and jumped over the edge. She fell to the ground and landed on her butt. "Ow! That hurt!" She jumped to her feet and brushed off her pants. "Hey! We are back in our normal clothes,"

Chantal exclaimed. Stephanie looked down at herself and noticed she still had the owl necklace dangling around her neck. Chantal turned and faced the floating crystal. She glared at it then ripped it out of the air. She held it in her hand and stared at it for a few moments. She then put it in her pack and turned to Stephanie.

"How did you know that once we jump out of the crystal, we would turn back to our normal selves?" Stephanie asked.

"Well, I figured that any other magical item that the source of power was central and while we were inside the crystal, we were controlled by its rules. Therefore once we jumped away from the crystal, we were away from its magic, which no longer had power over us." Chantal explained grinning madly.

"So when did you become a magic expert huh?" Stephanie asked smiling.

"I must have been watching too much Card Captors!" Chantal giggled. Stephanie laughed and turned around and stared at the gates of the Goblin City. She sighed. One more thing left to do before returning home.

"How do we get in there?" Chantal asked staring at the gates.

Stephanie walked over to the gates. She stood in front of a sleeping goblin guard. She waved her hand in front of its face, the goblin didn't flinch. She gestured to Chantal to follow her. They opened the small guard door and crawled through it. Serek scurried after them. Even though the security had doubled since Sarah's or anyone else's visit, it was useless, or so Stephanie thought. The goblin guard snorted in its sleep.

Chantal got up from her knees. "Damn it's quiet," she said aloud.

"Too quiet," Stephanie agreed as they started walking down a main street of the Goblin City. They made their way past several blocks, when up ahead in the middle of the street, the girls spotted a gushing water fountain.

"Ooh? Is that what I think it is?" Chantal asked skeptically. "I wonder if it's clean," she said as she ran towards it.

"It looks like it," Stephanie said peering into the clear water. Chantal cupped her hands, scooping up some water and gulped it down. "Well?" Stephanie asked staring at her friend.

"Well what? Take a sip for yourself. You said you were thirsty,"

Stephanie tasted the water. "It's not bad," she said, wiping her hands on her dark jeans.

"PIKA! PIKA!"

Both girls heads snapped up, they spotted a blurry yellow blob running across the street in front of them. Both girls turned to each other with puzzled look on their faces.

"Is that what I thought it was?" Stephanie said.

"I'm not sure, but I think that was a Pikachu," Chantal replied.

"How did it get to the Underground?"

"I don't know! How did we get to the Underground?" Chantal asked.

"Either by saying the words, which we ruled out, or by a new method: the crystals." Stephanie said with a shrug. "But does it matter? We're here."

"I guess you're right," Chantal said still pondering as they walked towards the castle.

Stephanie stopped dead in her tracks.

"What? What is it?" Chantal asked alarmed.

"Why aren't there any goblins and why hasn't Jareth tried to stop us by now?" Stephanie was looking at the castle with a suspicious look on her face.

"He's up to something..." Chantal said.

"Yeah," Stephanie agreed. "But what?"

Chantal shrugged unsure herself. "Trouble that's what."

The two girls continued uneasily through the Goblin City, towards the castle. Stephanie was still looking at the castle in thought. After a few minutes, Chantal noticed that they haven't gotten any closer to the castle and pointed this out to her friend.

"You're right."

The two girls stopped beside the fountain again. "Unless we're lost, but we shouldn't have, all we had to do was go straight and turn the corner," Chantal said. Suddenly Stephanie ran down the street towards the castle and turned halfway around the corner. Chantal waited. Stephanie then appeared behind her friend.

"Just as I thought!" she exclaimed making her friend jump. "No wonder there's no goblins or anything to stop us," Stephanie grinned. "We're in a loop! Ha! Nice try Jareth!" She said the last phrase mostly to herself.

"I saw this episode of Card Captors," Chantal commented. "Sakura and Li used their swords to get out of it."

"Yeah, but where are we going to find a sword?" Stephanie asked sighing.

"I'm not sure," Chantal said. She turned to the fountain and stared down into the water. "We get so close

and we get stuck in a loop. IT'S NOT FAIR!"

"I had no intentions of making this fair," Jareth's voice could be heard. Both girls spun around to see the Goblin King leaning against one of the buildings.

# 11 - Through Dangers Untold

## Chapter Eleven: Through Dangers Untold

Chantal groaned. "You again?"

Jareth shrugged. "What can I say? I like you two."

"You like to torment us, you mean," Chantal snapped.

"Chantal! Shhhh!" Stephanie told her friend fiercely. "Don't aggravate him, we are so close to getting out of here."

"She is right you know," Jareth said smiling. "You are very close to the castle. Now to just figure out this little puzzle." With that, he disappeared, leaving the two girls standing there.

Chantal sighed. "That guy sure gives me the creeps sometimes. Now let's see. He called this a puzzle. Wonder if that was a hint to help us or to throw us off?" she asked as she stared down at the interlocking blocks on the road.

"You never know with Jareth," Stephanie said as she looked around for a clue on how to get out.

"So very true! That guy is so unpredictable," Chantal said as she bent down to examine some of the stones.

"Well he has to be, he's the Goblin King," Stephanie told her friend.

"Yeah, but why torment us? We never asked to come here," Chantal said as she lifted a brick out of the road. Underneath it, was a small handle. "Hey! I think I just might have found out way out!" Chantal took hold of the handle and pulled on it. A hidden door opened up, leading down into underground tunnels.

"Where do you think it leads?" Stephanie asked, peering over her friend's shoulder.

"I'm not sure, but hopefully out of this loop," her friend replied as she pulled off her backpack and pulled out two small flashlights. "I'm not sure how much power the batteries in these have, but it will be better than nothing." Chantal handed Stephanie a flashlight.

"I knew you had a flashlight in that bag of yours," Stephanie said giggling. She jumped down into the tunnel below and Chantal followed her with Serek around her neck.

Once in the dark tunnel, they could see that it was tall enough for them to stand. "You lead the way

Steph!" Chantal said motioning to her friend to go ahead. Stephanie pointed the flashlight ahead of her, looking down the path. The two girls walked down the dark tunnel for a way, trying not to stumble over the uneven path.

"Wonder where this leads to," Stephanie said.

"I don't care as long as it leads us closer to the castle and not around in circles," Chantal said grinning.

Stephanie stepped over a small boulder and continued down the path. "Yeah..."

Chantal stepped around the boulder and continued to follow Stephanie. She flashed her light up at the ceiling and looked up to see the stalactites.

"Okay. Well, which way shall we try?" Stephanie said as she pointed left then right.

Chantal looked down to see that they had come to a fork in the road. "I don't know," She replied as she shone the light down each tunnel.

"Eenie, meeny, miney, Moe," Stephanie said as she pointed right then left then right again, to each tunnel. "This way!" Stephanie declared, pointing left after she had finished off the rhyme. They quickly made their way down the new path and came across a ladder leaning on a wall of a dead end.

"Here, hold this," Stephanie said as she handed Chantal her flashlight. She started to climb the rickety wooden ladder. Chantal held the ladder as she watched her friend climb it. Stephanie reached the top and paused. "Hey there's a door here!" She then tried opening the hatch by pushing on it. After a moment of pushing on the hatch and noticing a handle to turn with some struggle, it opened and Stephanie peeked out.

"What do you see?" Chantal asked.

Stephanie peeked out more, heard some screams and her head nearly got hit by a plate!

She ducked. The plate crashed onto the wall behind her. Another object crashed beside her and Stephanie quickly grabbed the handle of the hatch and almost fell down the ladder in her haste. "Pasta Vazoo!" Stephanie said as she landed on her feet next to her friend. "Definitely the wrong way."

"I guess so. Let's backtrack and try the other way!" Chantal suggested.

"Some goblins have good aim," Stephanie commented. "Next time it's your turn."

"Gee thanks!"

"Maybe you won't get hit by dishes."

"I hope not. I don't need any bruises," Chantal said grinning. She handed Stephanie back her flashlight.

"Thanks," Stephanie said as they headed back down the path. They rounded the corner, and walked

down the tunnel. The two girls walked down the path and chose the next one. Suddenly one of the flashlights started to flicker. Chantal gasped.

"We'd better hurry," Stephanie said as they neared another ladder. There was a tunnel beside the wall where the ladder rested. Chantal started to climb up the ladder. She pushed open the trap door and quickly ducked before any dishes or other objects would fly at her. There were no encounters with dishes. Chantal looked at her friend with a questioned shrug, Stephanie motioned her to continue and check. She turned off the flashlight when her friend disappeared above her to save the batteries.

Chantal looked around the small room. Three of the walls had shelves that held jars, boxes and blankets. Chantal spotted the door and walked towards it, she jiggled the handle but the door didn't budge. "It's locked!" she told her friend.

Stephanie had climbed the ladder and looked at her friend through the floor opening. "What?"

"The door is locked. We can't get out of this room," Chantal replied.

"Damn," Stephanie said.

"There must be another way out," Chantal said moving back towards the trap door. Stephanie climbed down and waited for her friend to come down, she turned on the flashlight.

"There is another tunnel," Stephanie said.

"Cool!" Chantal said after following her friend down the ladder. The tunnel was long and narrow. At some point, the two girls had to squeeze their way through it. Getting a few scrapes from the rough surfaces. After a few minutes, Chantal thought that the tunnel would not lead them anywhere and just waste their time. The same flashlight flickered dangerously again.

"This doesn't seem to be going anywhere Steph," Chantal told her friend.

"I know," Stephanie sighed.

"I just hope that this tunnel doesn't lead us to some huge hungry ogre," Chantal said.

Stephanie laughed. "But you never know in this place,"

Finally, the two girls reached a dead end, there was no ladder or door to get out, and the only way was the way back.

"Now what?" Chantal asked. Stephanie let out a short scream of frustration and kicked the wall in front of her. She stopped. Pressing her ear against the wall, she kicked it again. Her foot made a hollow sound as it struck the wall.

"Woaaaa! What was that?" Chantal asked. Serek tightened his grip around Chantal's neck.

"There's something there," Stephanie said.

"A way out maybe?"

Yeah! Like a door or something," Stephanie took a step back and examined the wall.

"A door? Now to find the door handle."

Stephanie looked at the wall, trying to figure it out. She set the flashlight on the ground and felt the wall for a handle or anyway to open the hidden door. "I can't find a handle," Stephanie said after a moment. She stepped back to fully get a better view.

"Hummm. Maybe we can knock it down," Chantal suggested.

Stephanie walked back towards the door and brushed back a few large piece of moss, she saw a small crack where dim light shown through. She tried pushing on the door. It budged a bit. "Chantal, come help me push."

Chantal came over to the hidden door and helped Stephanie push it open. Beyond the door, there was a flight of stairs made of light stone, winding around a corner and out of sight. Torches lighted the way. The girls turned off their flashlights and Chantal returned them into her pack. "This must be it. The way out," Chantal said with a grin.

"Yes," Stephanie said as she started going up the stairs in a rush, sometimes skipping a step at a time. Chantal was struggling to catch up. Stephanie had a smile on her face, for she knew that they were in the castle, no doubts about it. Unknown light illuminated the archway she stopped under. Stephanie slowed her pace when she passed through the main archway and stopped at the edge of a platform. Chantal rushed in beside her, and stopped quickly before reaching the ledge. Stephanie grabbed her friend for good measure. Serek let out a squeak.

Stephanie's eyes widened in amazement. The two girls were in the Escher room.



## 12 - Even Down Looks Up

### Chapter Twelve: Even Down Looks Up

The Escher room consisted of stairways that were in every direction: upside down, right side up and sideways. It was called this because it was similar to a painting by the artist M.C Escher.

"Wicked," Stephanie breathed as she looked around the room.

"Yeah! This is cool," Chantal said as she looked up then down. As Chantal looked down, she noticed several archways. "Which way do we go? And how are we to know which way is the way out?" She asked her friend.

"We'll have to try and basically guess. And where is Jareth?" Stephanie asked mostly to herself.

"You would think that since we got to the castle he would send us home but nooooo..." Chantal said.

"Maybe he got tired of people saying the words, the 'cliché' final confrontation and decided to let them find their own way back," Stephanie said as she got closer to the ledge of the platform that they were standing on. She looked down as Chantal came beside her.

A few feet across the room, below them, stood black doors. It had strange carvings amongst carved vines. There were no door handles but there was a crystal between the connections where the two doors were sealed. "That must be the way out," Stephanie pointed out.

"Well what are we waiting for?" Chantal said. She turned around to find a way down, heading towards a flight of stairs that led down to an archway.

Stephanie was about to follow her friend but the sound of footsteps stopped her. The footsteps were slow as though the owner of them was taking their time. Chantal had also stopped halfway down the stairs. The footsteps had stopped. Chantal looked around the room. She shrugged to her friend. Stephanie came closer to the ledge and peered down.

There stood Jareth, upside down looking up--or in this case down at Stephanie. Gravity apparently was not a rule in this room for his clothes and hair stayed in place as though he was right side up. His arms were folded across his chest.

Chantal looked at Jareth. "Ah, the wonderful Goblin King here to torment us again."

Jareth ignored Chantal's comment and turned to Stephanie. "You're quite right Stephanie," he said, his voice calm. "That is what you must reach to get yourselves home." he walked closer towards the ledge.

"If you make it that is," he added with a smile revealing his fangs.

"How long do we have left?" Stephanie asked.

"You have time left," he said obviously not telling.

"Then we do have time to make it," Chantal said.

The Goblin King raised an eyebrow. "I said, 'If'."

Chantal glared at the Goblin King. "But we made it to the castle. Why make us play this little game of yours anymore?" Chantal asked growing impatient.

Stephanie looked at the amused Goblin King who still had a smile on his face. Chantal without getting an answer, stormed away down the flight of stairs. Jareth tilted his head to one side. "Steph?" Chantal questioned and turned around, she had passed through the archway that had been to her left.

"Yeah, I'm coming..." she heard her friend say. Chantal bent down to tighten her shoelaces.

Stephanie glanced at the Goblin King once more; there was a moment of silence when his face went expressionless. Then Stephanie turned around, her hair swinging. She descended the same flight of stairs that her friend had taken. Stephanie went through the archway but Chantal wasn't there.

"Chantal?" Stephanie said, thinking that her friend had thought that she was right behind her and continued through the Escher room.

"Steph!" She heard Chantal's voice above her. Stephanie looked up; Chantal was on another platform across the room. "Did you take the wrong way?"

Stephanie shook her head. "No, I haven't. There wasn't any other way."

"Figures," Chantal said rolling her eyes, wondering who could have changed things around. Serek squeaked in agreement.

"Well, maybe we could meet up at the doors," Stephanie suggested.

"Tay!" Chantal sighed. "But I still don't like the idea of being separated again, especially in this room."

"Don't worry, I'll figure out something if we can't meet up when one of us does reach the doors."

Chantal nodded. "Tay, See you then," and she went down a flight of stairs, trying to find a way towards the doors. Stephanie on the other hand, had to go up a flight of stairs and pass through an archway before going down. Time passed as the two girls tried to decipher their way when suddenly Stephanie stopped in her tracks. She realized that she had been humming the song "Within You" that Jareth had sang to Sarah years before. She smiled continued her way towards the archway to her left.

○ ○ ○

Chantal was not smiling; in fact, she was getting frustrated because the room didn't make any sense. "Actually nothing in this place makes sense!" she said aloud.

She came into view with the doors again and stood there trying to figure how to get there. There were steps leading right to the doors but they were upside-down. "Damn!" Chantal said. In addition, there were no archways near the doors to get there. But there was a platform close by; they could reach the platform with the doors if they're able to jump to it.

Chantal smiled, grabbed Serek and twirled around. "All we have to do is find a way to that platform! Chan you're a genius!" she said aloud to herself. Chantal picked up her pace and hurried to climb up a flight of stairs.

○ ○ ○

Her footsteps echoed off the walls, ceilings and floors when Stephanie realized that she could not see the doors. She even knelt at a ledge to see if the doors were underneath her. Her hair fell over the side as she searched.

"I'm way too far, I wonder if this room is changing..." she said as she stood up.

"The room does change," a deep voice said behind her. Jareth started walking towards Stephanie, he was upside down. He stopped halfway on the steps, his head inclined with hers. "But I am not the one who changes it," he said with a shake of his head. With a small smile, he sat down on the steps. "Really Stephanie," he said making a crystal appear in his right hand and soon began juggling it. "Do you seriously think that I'm that much of a villain?"

Stephanie looked away from his gaze; it was as though he had read her thoughts about accusing him.

"I merely delay the people who try to reach the castle in search of the ones they've wished away. However, I do not change the Labyrinth or the 'Escher' room to win. I believe it is the person who travels through who makes it difficult, without ever knowing it." He caught the crystal in his right hand and looked into the depth of it. "Only the people with true determination can make it through, not the people who just wanted to pass through my Labyrinth to be like Sarah." He threw the crystal into the abyss of the Escher room with a tired sigh. The crystal clinked against stone but didn't break; it bounced onto the floors, walls and steps, and then disappeared. The Goblin King was about to say something else as he stood up.

"Steph!" Chantal yelled from an archway. Stephanie turned around to see her friend walk over to her with a grin on her face.

"Chantal!" Stephanie said smiling. "Did you make it?" Thinking that was the reason why her friend was grinning.

"No, but I found you," Chantal said. "I heard something clinking by where I was and I heard voices so I followed the voices. Anyway, I think I've found a way how to get close to the doors."

"Wicked! Show me!" Stephanie said. Chantal quickly turned around, heading towards the archway

where she had come from. Stephanie turned around; Jareth of course, was gone.

There was a pause before Stephanie followed her friend through the archway. "See? If we go down, pass through there, maybe there's a way up. And once if we're up, we might be able to reach the platform with the doors."

"All right," Stephanie said, understanding Chantal's plan. The two girls descended the stairs, through the archway. "Now what?" Stephanie asked.

Chantal looked up. "That way," she pointed as they went up.

They passed through an archway, ascended, passed under another archway, went down and up flights of stairs, turned left into an archway. The two girls had reached the platform beside the one that held the exit.

## 13 - Feathers

### Chapter Thirteen: Feathers

"We made it!" Chantal said in amazement.

"Yeah! Now how do we get across?" Stephanie said at the ledge of the platform, looking at the crafted doors.

"I've found a way..." Chantal trailed off.

"But..."

"...but we have to jump," Chantal said with an uneasy smile.

"I think that was obvious," Stephanie smirked.

"Who goes first?" Chantal asked, in other words, 'Are you going to jump first?'

"I'll go. Maybe if one of us reaches the doors both of us are free." Stephanie took a deep breath as she looked at the other platform and below, into the never-ending abyss of the Escher room.

"Okay," Stephanie said walking past her friend. She knelt and tightened her shoelaces. "On the count of three, 'kay?'"

Chantal nodded as her friend positioned herself to run.

"One," Chantal started. Stephanie ran past her friend before Chantal could say two. "What happened to two and three?" Chantal asked mostly to herself.

Stephanie leaped off the ledge. As she was falling, she realized that the calculation she had made were wrong, Chantal had also realized this and her eyes widened. Stephanie's fingers brushed against the stone ledge, she gasped.

"Steph!" Chantal yelled. Serek shrieked.

As Stephanie fell, she quickly looked down and hoped not to land at all on the stone floor. Then suddenly Stephanie felt a hand grab her right wrist. She looked up and blinked.

There on one knee at the ledge of the platform, was Jareth. His left hand gripped the ledge; his lips were parted, showing a flash of his canines. Stephanie couldn't believe it, neither could Chantal. The Goblin

King had actually saved the seventeen-year old.

"Give me your other hand," he said. Stephanie obeyed, she handed him her left hand and he pulled her up onto the platform.

Chantal released the breath she held and looked down. In her arms, she was holding Serek, his tongue was stuck out. She had been holding him against her when Stephanie fell. "Oh Serek, I'm sorry!" Chantal said as she brought him to her eye level. Serek forgave her with a squeak and a wag of his tail. "Now how am I supposed to get there?" she said. Her bag started to glow, Serek jumped from her arms and onto her shoulder, growling at her bag.

"What the--?" Chantal said and was suddenly covered in light.

○ ○ ○

While Chantal was saying sorry to poor Serek, Jareth still held Stephanie by the arms. "Determination. Only the people who truly do have it, can make it through my Labyrinth. And you have that," he said softly. Suddenly he remembered that he was a foe and he had helped her; he pulled away and folded his arms across his chest. Stephanie unsure what to do, after the situation of getting saved by Jareth, turned around to look at her friend to show that she was all right.

Stephanie saw that Chantal had lifted Serek and he jumped onto her shoulder whereas her backpack started to glow, then she disappeared. Stephanie had a look on her face saying: Um, okay, where did she go? She turned around to face Jareth, with a questioned look.

"I haven't done a thing," He said.

Then magic faintly hummed in the air and Chantal appeared in light beside the Goblin King. Chantal backed up when she saw who she appeared beside and walked over to her friend.

"How are we supposed to get home if he's there by the doors where he could very likely stop us?" Chantal whispered to her friend.

"I don't think he would stop us. We've made it," Stephanie whispered back.

"I think he would," Chantal said grimly.

"Look Chantal, why would he turn us into goblins if were at the end? Aren't we too big to be turned? And doesn't he have enough goblins to be pestered by?" Stephanie said, a small smile appearing on her lips. Chantal looked at her friend for a moment.

"You're probably right," she said as Stephanie turned around. Jareth was waiting patiently, his arms still crossed. Stephanie headed towards the doors; Chantal reluctantly followed her friend, while eyeing the Goblin King.

The two girls finally stood before their way home. The crystal that stood between the two doors was at Stephanie's shoulder level, and was a bit larger than the usual crystal belonging to Jareth or the one that

Chantal had. Chantal noticed that the doors had no handles. "Suppose that the way to open the doors is to touch the crystal?" Chantal asked her friend but it was Jareth that answered.

"Yes, that is the way it is done and that is the way you must do it," He stopped himself. "Bloody hell, I sound just like that Didymus character."

Stephanie approached the crystal, her hand outstretched. She hesitated. Jareth had seen this hesitation. "You've made it. And in impeccable time I might add," He looked at Chantal. "And I cannot stop you and turn you both into goblins. Besides, you are too old to be turned. I'm not quite sure what happens after the time is up."

It wasn't the idea that he would cheat and turn them into goblins even if he could, in order for him to win. No, the reason was: she didn't want to leave. Even though things were unfair in the Underground, Stephanie was compelled to stay. This place was far better than any mundane day in the mortal world.

Stephanie sighed. "Well, back to the drudgery of normal life," she half whispered. She touched the crystal with her right hand. The doors opened with a small rumbling for the doors were heavy. After a moment, they revealed the edge of a forest. Chantal was about to comment that they've been cheated but the sound of traffic stopped her short.

"Your adventure ends here," the Goblin King said as he walked past them, onto the pavement behind the school.

"How long did we had left?" Stephanie asked as she and Chantal followed him.

He raised an eyebrow, wondering the importance of the question. "You had three and a half hours left." Behind them, the portal doors faded and disappeared.

"Both of you were an amusing challenge," Jareth said his fangs flashing. He walked towards Stephanie. "Perhaps the next time that we shall meet, the challenge will be even greater," the Goblin King started to walk away. Chantal and Stephanie watched him.

"Well! I'm glad that we've amused you!" Chantal said, sticking her tongue out at him. She turned around and headed towards the path that would lead to the highway. Stephanie started to follow her but she stopped short.

"What do you mean 'the next time'?" she turned around. But Jareth was gone.

A few white feathers with golden tips floated slowly down around her. She looked up at the sunset filled sky. The shadow of a barn owl was soaring towards the appearing pale moon.

"Steph?" Chantal asked nervously halfway down the path.

"It's all right. I'm coming," Stephanie said as she ran to the path and caught up with her friend.

The two girls walked back to Stephanie's home. "The nicest thing he could've done is make the doors appeared in your backyard," Chantal complained.

Stephanie opened the front door. "We're back!" she said to her mother who was now sitting on the couch watching television. Her eyes widened.

"How did you get your jeans so dirty?"

Stephanie looked down and groaned. "I tripped? Definitely have to wash these."

Chantal giggled as she started taking off her shoes. "I'm never going to walk again!" Stephanie exclaimed.

"Me neither!" Chantal agreed.

Stephanie's mother gave them a strange look. "You talk as though you've been walking for hours. You've been gone barely an hour." Stephanie and Chantal looked at each other and laughed.

"What?"

"Nothing mom," Stephanie said as she went into the kitchen and came back with two large glasses of cool water. Stephanie's mother just shook her head in disbelief.

○ ○ ○

"Have you noticed that all the time in the Underground, we didn't have to...go?" Chantal said with a giggle, returning from the bathroom.

"Yeah, strange," Stephanie said from the floor. Chantal shut the door and jumped onto the bed.

For a long time, the two girls said nothing.

"I'm hungry," Stephanie said as she reached into her pocket and pulled out the red Life Saver from the crumpled paper.

"Me too," Chantal said as her backpack on the floor fell over.

The two girls stared at the bag in anticipation. They then realized how ridiculous the situation was and they started to laugh nervously. But when they concluded that the bag fell over without the help of goblins or any other creatures, something inside the bag moved. Stephanie gasped and Chantal grabbed her backpack. She opened it slowly.

"Squeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee!"

"Bob!" Stephanie said aloud and giggled.

"How did he get there? I thought he disappeared after the crystal glowed," Chantal said.

"Apparently not," Stephanie grinned. "One question though."



"What?"

"How are you going to hide Bob from Jaycie?"

Chantal shrugged.

○ ○ ○

○ ○ ○

Note: I wanted to add that I had reviewed "HAAPT" for the trillionth time, (I'm still missing a small flashlight part) I didn't want to go overboard with the corrections, but to keep it in its original form as possible. I corrected typos and a little bit of chapter one and added a bit of a prologue, (those of you who noticed, kudos!), it was meant to refresh some memories or to give "newbies" a really brief recap of the Sarah's encounter, just to understand subtle things or to intrigue to read on. I would advise to read the novel, the transcript or to rent the movie. If you're still confused about the Pikachu mention in Chapter 11, don't worry I'm not making a crossover, the even will be explained in one of the later parts.

The prologue was taken from the novel (by A.C.H. Smith), so put proper credit where it's due. Again, this is for entertainment purpose only.

Stephanie

January 2005

○ ○ ○

○ ○ Part Two preview:

○ ○ ○

Project: Underground

The Goblin King shows up, surprising both Chantal and Stephanie. He has come to ask the girls for help. Why would he ask two powerless girls for help? Is something wrong in the Underground? Part II of the Labyrinth Chronicles