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2021 NEIU Student Research and Creative  
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## Keepers of the Wizard's Labyrinth

Samuel Hiebert  
*Northeastern Illinois University*

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## **KEEPERS OF THE WIZARD'S LABYRINTH**

Samuel Hiebert, Department of Art & Design, Northeastern Illinois University, Chicago,  
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My presentation will be a twelve-minute artist talk about my current exhibition project. It is called "Keepers of the Wizard's Labyrinth": an 11-page comic, drawn in ink on bristol board, digitally edited, and printed. The project is a dark fantasy story that explores the contradictions of obligatory professional relationships and the ways in which people with common goals can undermine one another with selfish impulses. However, I frame these relationships with humorous, fantastical, and horrific imagery, so as to emphasize the more natural and relatable moments and create a compelling emotional complexity. Illustrating the comic in ink allowed me to capture a bleak, dramatic darkness, but also the intricate contours of 16th century woodcuts, synthesizing the two to compliment the grim and archaic subject matter. I chose to abide by somewhat gruesome aesthetics because they harmonize well with comedy. The dread, evil, and ugliness of the labyrinth and its inhabitants are disarmed by their goofy demeanors and comedic ineptitude, which makes their fumbles funnier. I also chose the comic format so as to add the additional dimension of time and progression to the illustrated format. Drawing a comic allowed me to use certain strengths of literature, particularly the ability to command pacing and development. This provides a truer image of how growing tension in these relationships can change them into something brutal. Balancing comedy, whimsy, and horror throughout a gradual building of antagonistic tension and subterfuge will create something that sticks with my viewers and compels them to reflect on how these relationship dynamics relate to their own lives.