



INFINITY MIRROR: REMEMBER THE MOURNING DOVE

Mabel, Infinity Mirror, Part Five: Remember the Mourning Dove. In which – In which – in which – in which –

INTRO:

BECCA: Dear listeners, this is Becca De La Rosa, co-creator of the Mabel podcast.

MABEL: And this is the rhizome occasionally known as Mabel Martin.

BECCA: In celebration of our upcoming fifth season, we're going to be running a little competition.

MABEL: A big competition.

BECCA: Our biggest competition, actually.

MABEL: We're going to be offering one of our loyal listeners a chance to stay overnight in the house that inspired the podcast: an empty mansion built over the cliffs of the Irish Sea.

BECCA: We'll pay to fly you over here from anywhere in the world. First class.

MABEL: No entries are necessary. Just keep listening - [GLITCHES]

[BEEP]

[LAUGHTER]

[STATIC]

[VOICE BEGINS THROUGH STATIC AND THEN SLOWLY BECOMES CLEARER]

TRESSA, BUT DIFFERENT: Do you ever look at the mess you've made of your life, and say, I didn't consent to this. I didn't ask for any of it. Why me? Why was I plucked out of the ether and given this terror called consciousness? Do you watch your actions, a silent figure in the play of your existence, and wonder why you're behaving the way you are? Why you get so swept up in the tide of other people?

That's all they are. Tides. They ebb and pull, and release back onto themselves. All the water that has existed since before any of us were born is still here. That's all we're swimming in - eternity. Pay attention.

Listen. Listen. *She's a snake.* They're all snakes, the whole festering company of them, and that isn't necessarily a bad thing. You asked yourself if you sounded like one of them. Consider that. Think on it. You will never get out of here alive if you aren't clever. That's intentional. She was, in her own way, doing you a kindness. You must remember that kindness isn't niceness.

MODERN TRESSA: How did - what did you -

[VOICE TURNS INTO STATIC, STATIC TURNS INTO WEIRD NOISES LIKE A COLLAPSING STAR]

That was me, it was - I know my own voice. I know what I sound like even when it comes from *inside a wall* -

[NEARLY HYPERVENTILATING]

Okay. Alright. It's. [SHAKY LAUGH] It's not like it can get any weirder, right? Isn't that what they always say in horror films, *it can't get any worse*, like the call to completely screw up things in the worst possible way, Murphy's law, is that what I'm doing, making it worse, I can't tell, I'm - am I hallucinating after all, did the plane crash and leave me burning in my own thoughts until the chemicals run out of me - is this what dying is like? Is it? Hey!

[BANGING SOUNDS]

I'm talking to you! Where are you now, huh! Is this just some - is this
[FRUSTRATED SCREAM] Come back! Come back and tell me -

[BREAKS OFF, QUIETER]

-just tell me what you mean. [LAUGHS QUIETLY] I understand this kind of madness. I do. Don't all women shut up in some room, somewhere, a room not their own? I thought I was better than this, though, going crazy so quickly. I thought I had a better grasp on my head, since I live so much inside it. I listened to Mabel's snide incoherence, to Anna's chilly descent and I thought, *I'd never do that. She's so angry, so full of rage and fire. She's losing her mind. I'd stay calm.* [BITTER SCOFF] We've all laughed or rolled our eyes at women screaming. It's *natural*, isn't it, in this stupid, ugly world.

[PAUSE]

Is this revenge for that, manor-by-the-sea? Green Parlour? Should I make friends out of the goddamn tables and chairs? I'll embrace being this crazy, then. It's a kind of freedom.

Now I definitely sound like Mabel.

[SHUFFLING SOUNDS]

The dollhouse. This sprawling, pretty thing - it just appeared, like it was swallowed and spit back up, like. I don't know. I can't map the house, it won't let me. Not by hand. But it lets me see all of it anyway. Like this. In pieces, in - toy form, minutia. If I pick myself up again, will I hear another one of my voices, coming through the walls like rats?

[SHUFFLING, PAUSE]

No. I guess not.

I'm getting hungry again. I wonder how long I've been here. *It won't let me.* Does that mean I think the house is - alive in some way? That it has a will of its own?

I should be screaming. Haunted houses - that's the reaction, isn't it? I think so. I was never allowed to go. My dad was always worried about my safety. I'm *fragile*. [SMALL LAUGH] Not so much.

I wonder what else is on the list. What's appeared, out of nowhere. Like clockwork. I wonder how many more will keep coming, scrawled darkness. Maybe there's an infinite amount of instructions I'll never understand, and be doomed to act out forever, increasing in terror and entropy. Maybe this is hell.

"Number twelve: Check the ratio of real to not."

[LAUGHS]

Am I supposed to know what this means? I'm supposed to read the mind of whatever you're - whatever this thing is, sentient *paper*, I don't even -

Is this about the dollhouse? Is this about - *me*, do you want me to like, go through and check to see if the toy you made of me is small enough, delicate enough -

I'm real. Whatever else is happening, I do know that. You get acquainted with yourself, being small. You learn to live in your own mind like a nun. So I know how to differentiate that way. I'm real. That doll isn't, the dollhouse - it's a delicate simulacrum. Pretend. Narrative architecture. God, I'm babbling. This is what being alone in this kind of place does to you. I haven't gotten any more good. It seems so long ago that I thought that the beauty of this house might do that, make a person better - how long has it been? I have no way of knowing, do I? I'm in a time capsule.

[PAUSE, AS IF SUDDENLY ENLIGHTENED] I'm - huh. Oh. It's.

Timelessness is a prison. Being stuck inside it - it's a cage.

That's what I always thought happened to Luna, when she was - pigeonholed. That the king tore open some cave of the universe, and threw her inside it. Is it? What happened to her and Vera?

[MORE SHUFFLING SOUNDS]

Where did *they* get set like fine china.

[MORE SHUFFLING SOUNDS]

Tiny furniture. If I rearrange it -

[RUMBLING SOUNDS FROM IN THE DISTANCE]

[TAPE REWIND SOUNDS]

[BOY SCREAMING, OVERLAPS INTO TRESSA SCREAMING]

[BLOOD SPURTING]

The dollhouse is *bleeding*, why - why are you doing this! Why -

[TRESSA CONTINUES TO SCREAM]

What do you want - what -

[NOISES CONTINUE]

I don't understand! I don't understand why you're doing this to me! I'm no one! What the fuck is -

[SLOWLY FADES IN, AS IF PLAYING ON AN OLD RECORD]

"Do you ever look at the mess you've made of your life, and say, I didn't consent to this. I didn't ask for any of it. Why me? Why was I plucked out of the ether and given this terror called consciousness? Do you watch your actions, a silent figure in the play of your existence, and wonder why you're behaving the way you are? Why you get so swept up in the tide of other people?"

TRESSA, OVERLAY: *Stop it!*

[BOY SCREAMING, MELTS INTO TRESSA'S FRUSTRATED YELLING]

You don't have to tell me over and over!

I thought this house was hell. I was wrong. It's purgatory. You can only leave if you've really faced your sins, if you've. Repented. Which requires contrition.

I was wrong. I was young, and foolish, and wanting, but I was still wrong, and none of this absolves me. Isn't that right?

Is that what you want to hear? That it was wrong? It was wrong! I was wrong, I should have done something I - my excuses aren't good enough, are they? I knew right from wrong, I knew good from evil, the way every child in a fairytale knows - there's no excuse! There's no justification! I want to take it back!

[WIND HOWLING]

I confess! I want to take it back!

[HOUSE SCREAMS]

[STATIC]

It's a strange thing. When you are shown the absolute truth of yourself, the world is very uncomplicated. The beginning and end, good and evil, sunrise and sunset. Simple.

Or maybe it's not so simple. Maybe time curves back on itself the way Mabel is always saying, a disc repeating over and over again. I think her eyes look like this room. Like new growth, like arsenic.

It keeps moving. The color. Shifting on itself.

[HOUSE NOISES, AS IF SPEAKING]

I know. I'm going. I'm collecting my thoughts.

[SIGHS]

I remember thinking how happy I was that something was finally smaller than me. The mourning dove. Bones like glass, they said. Don't birds have hollow bones? I thought I read that somewhere.

I thought Miss Ouvriers was different, at first. She didn't ask me why I was so weak, or treat me as though I was at all, honestly. She behaved as though I had something to offer that wasn't only going to be mined for sympathy or guilt. I cared about her, I think. I thought I could even love her until she slit his throat. The boy. The one we called the mourning dove.

He had – he had – we didn’t have the same disability, but we were always classed together, in that way they had of dividing people. [AS IF MOCKING] You’re broken in this way, you’re broken in that way. Never enough to be considered a whole person. It weighed on me.

That doesn’t - I’m not trying to excuse myself. I can see everything clearly. It doesn’t weigh on me, now. I feel...strangely light. I think I could reach back into the whole of myself and become anything, a brave girl who fights against monsters and teachers both one and the same, a fairytale princess who solves every clue. An intelligent, inquisitive bird, trying to show another wayward girl the right path. Or any path at all.

He was kind. He didn’t deserve to die like that. I will make sure it doesn’t happen. I know how, now. This is a gift. Absolution is a gift.

I can stitch things together. And unstitch them. It’s easy. Anna and Mabel, Mabel and Anna, Becca and Anna, one and the same and many, all circling around each other - I unstitch myself from the both of you. And, against the rules as it may be: thank you.

[PAPER RUSTLING]

“Number thirteen: does the snake eat its own tail?”

[LAUGHS] Yes. Yes, she does.

[HOWLING WIND]

[TRESSA LAUGHING, JOINED BY BECCA AND MABEL]

[STATIC]

OUTRO:

Mabel is written by Becca De La Rosa and Mabel Martin, and produced by Becca De La Rosa. The voice of Tressa Davies is Tressa Evans-Salvemini. The music in this episode is by Meydän, <1, Parvus Decree, and (morse), and all of it is available to download from the Free Music Archive at freemusicarchive.org. For more information about this episode, including a full tracklist and transcript, visit us online at mabelpodcast.com.

Thank you to all our listeners, brand new and longtime veterans, who have downloaded, interacted, made fan art, posted theories, and otherwise involved themselves with Infinity Mirror. Mabel will return with season six at an as-of-yet undisclosed time near to All Hallow's Eve, and the new season will be bigger, longer, angrier, more poetic, more magical, and more dangerous, with new characters and plotlines and complexities and relationships and rules and roles and mysteries – but until then, if you miss Anna and Mabel and their exploits under the hill, please do check out our Patreon, where Becca and Mabel are always working to produce new content, from mini episodes to blog entries to real, physical spells sent to your own home. This month we're opening up our highest tier, Chimera, for only the second time ever; the very limited number of participants will receive a riddle item and a handful of clues, and will have to work together to come up with answers that will lead them to – well, something brand new that we're very excited about. You can find this, and more, at patreon.com/mabelpodcast. We'll see you in the dark part of the year.