



LA PEREGRINACIÓN

Mabel, episode 19: La **Peregrinación**. In which the present eats the past.

[INTRO]

ANNA: – Anna Limon –

AUTOMATED FEMALE VOICE: – is not available. At the tone, please record your message.

[BEEP]

[ROTARY PHONE NOISES]

Fine, let's try -

[BEEP]

-make a deal with you. A bargain. I'll trade something. What do you want? What do I have left that's valuable?

[CREAKING, DISTORTION]

I'll come back. I'll always come back. I promise.

[CREAKING]

I promise.

[BEEP]

[WIND]

What? No. No, I don't need - no, I'm fine. It's fine. It's -

[SCREAMING, EVENTUALLY TURNS TO LAUGHING]

Run, run, run. [LAUGHS]

[BEEP]

[BIRDS, WIND]

We are to be productive today, Anna. Today we will not mope. Today we will scourge and devour every piece of information available to us. (sighs) I have come to visit Sally's grave. I have come to see if she rests easy in death, if she is tossing and turning. If she's silent. It's a good day for it. The sun is out. Of all things I missed, I think the sun is the most significant. Light and warmth. Is it just a poor substitute for you, I wonder?

I don't have your real world skills, Anna. I had to walk here. I never learned to drive, did you know that? The thought's still a little distasteful to me. All that screeching metal. I'd rather know my feet stretch into the roots of the earth.

[INDECIPHERABLE TALKING]

What? No. No, I'm - I'm just -

[BEEP]

Protective camouflage. That's what you are, Anna. You can hear me, can't you, through the silver and green of it - but even if you couldn't, you are helping me. More than you know. I am unused to the laws which govern this land of earth cleaved from sky, this world of separates. There is no grace in liminality. There is no understanding of the will and autonomy of the individual. No one takes you at your word. Or at least the men don't. Back h-

back *there* they would have been skewered if they annoyed me too much. What good are men to us unless they can sing, unless they can weave stories like the very best silkmoth? Isn't that all people here do, anyway? Breed and die? [SIGHS] If only they were mouthless, too.

Someone tried to follow me here. I didn't realize it until I'd walked awhile. He called me dear and tried to speak to me about my hair, about the weather. I don't know why. He left me alone, though, after he stopped staring. My *method* of distancing myself from the rest of them has been....successful, but very, ah. [LAUGHS] Well, it's been effective.

But I realize even from this you will protect me, from small, boring annoyances. The dirt people watch me ramble into this phone and they think I am like them, as long as they don't listen too closely. And so you spare me from their endlessly mundane attempts at communication. Isn't that nice, Anna? I think it's very sweet of you to do. I know you want me to be comfortable and pleased.

[CHURCH BELLS]

The [CENSORED] cemetery is pretty. You were right. The gravestones are like the crooked teeth of a giant, moss covered and smoothed over with time. The ever infiltrating snake.

The house almost wouldn't let me leave. It opened - never mind. You don't care. I fear you've only ever felt tenderness towards the idea of me. The whole of myself would make you run screaming. Anyway.

We are making the same voyage, backwards. [LAUGHS] I remember you told me that you would come here with your girlfriend, or ex-girlfriend. Whomever. All those human pretenses, playing at bigger, more terrible things. Ooh, look at how frightening we are, clad in black, scaring the children. But then, I don't actually know. I don't know what your attachments are, what ties you might have to people still living. Or dead. I wish you were here now. I have the strongest urge to write over all of your memories, if they're still there. If you haven't already thrown them in the trash. Isn't that so terrible of me? What do you think of the wretched creature you've saved, Saint Anna?

[WALKING]

Sally's grave sticks out like balloon animals at a funeral. All new and unmarked, clean in a sea of history. A plastic bag against the tide of portent. There are flowers on the grave here, pink, effusive. Almond, I think. That means something, right? Somebody cared. I guess that's nice. I can't tell. I'm nothing like a person. I wouldn't have left Sally flowers. I like them too much, their infinite coloration, their variation of usefulness. I didn't like Sally much. I think that might be cruel to say, now that she's dead, but it's an honest assessment of myself. My heart is curved cruel like a claw.

Here lies Sally Martin, the wife. That's what it should say, her grave, instead of the clean slate she gets in death. That's all she ever wanted to be, right? Of all of these things, Anna, this I cannot forgive: that Sally was complicit in her reduction of herself. The way her mother was. The way my mother was. An endless line of women making the wrong choices, always for men. In this way even my own birth is a betrayal. (sighs) But I am not a faithless spectator. And neither are you. I remember what you told me. That you would never leave me alone, that you would come after me through death and beyond. And you did. There is something to that at least. That you keep your promises. I think if nothing else they will grant you clemency for that. I -

Wait there's - what's - there's something on the back of her - Sally's grave, it's - it's carved -

[CHURCH BELLS]

Oh, it's -

[CHURCH BELLS GROWING LOUDER, MORE DISTORTED]

Oh, Anna, your *heart*, oh you poor- it's been eaten - it's so beautiful, it's-

[BEEP]

- just that - of course. No, I - I am no one she knows. Knew. We were strangers.

[INDECIPHERABLE SPEECH]

Of course, I - actually, may I use your phone?

[BEEP]

I have a confession to make, Anna Limon. I have a suspicion. I do not think the phone inside my house has its wires snaked into the true earth, into the here and now. I do not think it will show me the roots of what I want to know about you and so I came here, to hallowed ground where my kin lay in death, to see if I could pick the truth of you out of the air, out of electricity. It's a long way for a phone call. You might laugh. But ritual is important. I think we both understand that.

I snuck you inside this place, Anna. The woman who manages the cemetery, she's sweet. I think she might have let me use her phone even if she saw that I carried you with me obsessively, like a dragon and her hoard. But I think I'll still put you in my pocket. I cannot, after all, risk losing any connection to you. Who knows what fickle habits enchanted objects might possess? So I am hiding you for a little while. Do forgive me.

[BEEP]

- just a...flower bracelet, ha, something my siblings made to for me to remind me of them. You don't mind giving me some privacy, right?
[INDECIPHERABLE VOICES] You're so kind.

[DOOR CLOSING]

A lie thrice told. A lie thrice told. A lie thrice told. [PHONE BUTTONS BEING PRESSED] Hi, this is Nadezhda Stark, home insurer from the Bluebell Wood Foundation, I'm calling for Anna Limon? I have important information regarding her home *protection* policy and I'd like to know if she -

Oh. Are you - that's.

Oh, is that - is that so? Row - ah tha.....ank you. You've...been helpful.

[LAUGHS] Oh, Anna. I think you are not a girl. I think you are a *spider*.

[BEEP]

[WIND, BIRDS, ALL DISTORTED]

Something's...there's something wrong. The edges of the trees have all gone flat. I went back to Sally's grave and looked and it's - there's something *off* about it. Too bright, too obvious.

The people at your old job, they said - they said you'd had a bit of an absence, that you were out for awhile for personal problems, a family emergency, they said, but that you- you were back now, and you were doing your job splendidly and seemed to have no issues with going right back to work and they could get in touch with you if I wanted, coordinate a meeting to make sure that - I got all the information I -

It isn't you. It isn't. It isn't. I know you. I do. I know that much. They must have - it just can't be you. You went into the dark for me. You can't be here - you can't be within my reach and not -

[BEEP]

I have been thinking about my deal with the house. The mouth of it, curled around me, unwilling to spit me out or swallow me up. Just leave me in stasis. But I can't bear that. I am an ever chaotic thing. I coaxed my way out, just to peel the curtain back on you. I got more than I bargained for, that's for sure. [DISTORTION] But I had to.

After all, what do I have left in me, left of me, that's worth anything? The same thing you have, Anna. What separates us from the rest, if I'm right about you. You told me you would help me. You told me you wouldn't leave me alone. In every way, that is now true.

My word, Anna. I have my word. I gave my word to the house that I would always come back. I am giving my word to you now. This creeping thing in the world, taking orders under your name - I won't let it stand. I know what it is, to be subsumed by a plethora of - of *selves*. I know what it is to be *trapped*. Being an object of desire, of love - it still renders you an object. [DISTORTION] I am angry at you, for being gone, the way a child might be, but I would never let you be caged.

I will keep you from the dissolution of self. Time, like any fabric, can be unpicked, and I am a connoisseur of taking things apart. [DISTORTION] If I -

If I can still trust myself. If I can still trust the world around me. The house has fed and nourished me. Eat me, drink me. It slithers itself into dark places and accompanies me into hell, into that which is outside of myself. Outside of itself. Is it looking out through my eyes, trying to find new ways to see the world? To *infiltrate* it? I think - I think the house won't ever let me be *alone*; won't ever let me be too far from its clutches. Won't ever **share** me. The house would fold itself up and let me carry it in my pocket if I asked that of it.

All I ever need do is call. But it might not let me do the opposite. It might not give me the chance to keep my word - I - I don't - Anna

[ROARING]

Anna - I - I don't think I've left the house, after all, Anna, *I think I'm still inside it* -

[OUTRO:]

This is Becca De La Rosa, one of the co-creators of Mabel, and before I read the end credits I have a special message for you: because you all constantly amaze us with your interest, your talent, your analytical skills, and your dedication to the show, we have hidden somewhere within season three a secret message. The message will not be complete until the season is finished. The first person to send us the finished message in full through the messaging system on our website will receive a substantial prize, and one we both frankly want to keep for our own. More details will be made available soon, but for now, all you need to do is keep consuming the show.

Mabel was created by Becca De La Rosa and Mabel Martin. This episode was written and performed by Mabel Martin, and produced by Becca De La Rosa. The music in this episode was by Ars Sonor, Blue Dot Sessions, Real Vocal String Quartet, 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.

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