



Mabel, episode 33. Primogeniture. In which new strands unravel.

INTRO

[BEEP]

[GUNSHOT] [BODY FALLING]

[SCREAMING]

[GLITCHING CRASH]

[BEEP]

Okay, guys, I'm Janet Kirk, this is Spook City, and it's Friday the 13th, so of course I'm out alone in the middle of the sticks, doing some casual B&E to bring you the best paranormal content on the internet.

Ow! God damn it, barbed wire. [RUSTLING NOISES; BREATHLESS, GRUNTING, OBVIOUSLY CLIMBING SOMETHING] They are not kidding with this place. If I die here, donate my Yu-Gi-Oh cards to charity.

[MUFFLED THUD] Jesus Christ. [BRUSHES HERSELF OFF] Well, we made it. The house is right out of a horror movie. Or a gothic novel, maybe. It's huge, made of, like, dark stone, all overgrown with ivy and rose-thorns and shit. I am definitely, seriously trespassing – there's signs all over the place. Danger,

keep out! Trespassers will be prosecuted! Oh, the things I do for a little bit of internet fame.

Anyway, here's the backstory. So once upon a time there's this old lady named Sally Martin. She's got no relatives, basically – her daughter died in a car accident in the '90s, her granddaughter's been a missing person for years, and this old lady has Alzheimers and psychotic depression and a bunch of other health and *mental* health issues, so she hires a woman to come live with her. This woman is Anna Limon.

[RUSTLING, KICKING SOUNDS] I know, I know. "But Janet, that story's just an urban legend! But Janet, you're supposed to only cover *real* paranormal events!" Well, listen up, losers. We all know the deal: live-in nurse goes missing, house turns up all this crazy shit like witch dolls and trees growing through walls, nurse is never heard of again. Only it turns out the story's *true*. Not just the missing nurse – you can look that up for yourselves online – but the stuff they found in the house, the missing granddaughter, the detectives who straight up quit after a week on the case, the weird lights and noises reported by neighbors, everything we were told was tabloid bullshit. All of it. *All* of it. Is *real*. And the really crazy thing? [WOOD SPLINTERING; JANET CURSING UNDER HER BREATH] This happened not even an hour away from Spook City HQ.

I heard about the Martin house yesterday. It's a funny story, actually, how I found out about it, I'll tell you guys later. The important thing is that I'm here, fighting some, like, mutant thorn bushes for my literal life, bringing you brand-new, exclusive, never-seen-before, all-access –

[CRASH]

[FALLING SOUNDS; THRASHING IN LEAVES. GASPS AND CRIES.

EVENTUALLY THE THRASHING STOPS. JANET CATCHES HER BREATH, PICKS HERSELF UP. HISSING IN PAIN]

[WHISPERING] What the fuck?

[BEEP]

MABEL: [SCREAMING IN PAIN]

ANNA: Oh my God, Mabel, what, what happened, please, let me -

MABEL: Don't touch me!

ANNA: Where is it - ? Where is it coming from, you have to -

MABEL: Leave me alone!

[BEEP]

ACONITE: Anna Limon. Mabel Martin.

Your names filter down to me the way silt and grist and flesh filter down to the deepest parts of the ocean, the black, heaving, pressurized mass of water and lightlessness, populated only by electrical impulses and luciferin. I am the anglerfish, the wide-eyed, light-bearing harvester of the unfathomable sea, chimerical monster, woman made god. I am the eater-of-men.

Anna Limon. Mabel Martin. They are saying your names in the ley-lines, in the salt-domes, in the mycorrhizal networks pulsing with memories of light. There is a girl who is king. There is a girl who is consort. They have seen the old lord toppled like so many sticks; they have come to carry us from this world into a new one.

There are many creatures down here in the dark. In the black. In the wet. In the mud. Not all of them are pleased to see you.

[BEEP]

MABEL: I didn't ask you to play mother to me. I don't need your help. [PAIN NOISES]

ANNA: Who's playing? You're going to dig this bullet out of your own arm?

MABEL: I would if you'd let me.

ANNA: Always the champion. Sit still. I did go to nursing school, remember?

MABEL: Yeah. Remind me of what happened with that?

ANNA: I was kicked out and fled back to my grandmother's house and got kidnapped by the King of the Hill - oh, wait. [FLESHY GROSS SOUNDS] I've almost got it. It doesn't help that you're still partially on fire.

MABEL: Only in the right light. [PAUSES] I didn't flee back to her house. Sally's. I didn't *flee* anywhere.

ANNA: Sorry. I forgot. No one has ever made you do anything you don't want to do. Here, hold this.

MABEL: No.

ANNA: You'd rather bleed to death?

MABEL: [DISGRUNTLED NOISES]

ANNA: Do you know who that was?

MABEL: Who? The endless night of - of who I *thought* was a tyrant, or the moon running away with your double who looked *significantly* more smug than she had any right to or the man with the gun who *shot* me when he - he - [HYPERVENTILATING]

ANNA: I was talking about the last one, but - any or all of the above, I guess. Maybe I shouldn't be surprised that some kid broke into the house and shot himself in the head. It's not like it's any more insane than - [MORE GROSS FLESH SOUNDS, MABEL MAKES PAIN NOISES] Hey, want to know a secret?

MABEL: Yes. No. I've already eaten too many secrets. [HISSES IN PAIN] Tell me.

ANNA: I had to do a wound closure course in school. We learned how to suture on peaches and raw chicken breasts. I always really liked it. It felt - right. I was good at it, even when they graduated us to real live people. Women have been sewing for thousands of years. It's a birthright, kind of. There - *ouch*. [CLINK OF FALLING BULLET] Did that *burn* you? Mabel - no, don't look, just - it, like. Cauterized itself. You're not bleeding, not where the bullet -

MABEL: I would not taste like a peach. [LAUGHS] That looks better than I thought it would. Can I make a necklace out of that bullet?

ANNA: You taste sweeter. And - no. I'm not finished with you, I still have to sew this up. How do you feel?

MABEL: Was that your secret? That you like sewing people up?

ANNA: That was one of them. You want them all?

MABEL: Yeah. I'll never tire of yours. You're not boring.

ANNA: Parts of me are. [PAUSE] I asked how you're feeling.

MABEL: I'm - I - I don't know. I do not know. Do we have to talk about it now?

ANNA: No. Of course not. Look at this. [RUSTLE] The hill wanted us to have it. Sphagnum moss, it grows in peat bogs. Women used to use it to soak up menstrual blood.

MABEL: You have to burn it after. So no one knows your scent.

ANNA: [CONCERNED] Mabel? Look at me, let me look at your -

MABEL: I always used to - burn mine after so that no one could - ever find me [PASSES OUT]

[BEEP]

[FAIRY CHATTER, LAUGHTER. THE HILL MOVES]

[BEEP]

ANNA: It's okay, it's okay, it's okay, you're safe, I have you, it's okay -

[BEEP]

[SILENCE, THEN -

SHIFTING NOISES FROM INSIDE THE HOUSE.]

[THUDS, PAPERS SHUFFLING]

[CLICKING, POWERING UP, SLIGHT DISTORTION]

[CULT RECORDING]

[FUZZY, RECORDING QUALITY] ARTIFICIAL VOICE: Subject 4583, section 12, test 4.

[SCREAMING]

[MURMURED VOICES]

[SCREAMING INCREASES IN PITCH]

ANNA: What the....?

[SCREAMING TURNS INTO WEIRD BELLOWING, LIKE STAG-CALLING]

AURORA SILVER: Make sure he -

[WET SPLATS]

AURORA SILVER: Goddammit! God - turn it off, you're useless -

[BEEP]

ANNA: I tried to wake you. You wouldn't wake up. I bandaged your arm with sphagnum moss and a strip of my own shirt, like a knight in a song. When I went to pick it up the bullet burned me. Again. I left it there, in a pool of your blood.

When the house brought me that sphagnum moss – the walls folding and refolding like peristalsis – it brought something else, too. You didn't see it. A box full of SD cards, a small voice recorder. I put one of the SD cards in and played it. I don't know what the house expects me to understand from all that – noise.

Mabel. There is a certain flavour to this. You are here but you aren't here. I remember that, I remember hugging my phone even when I slept, I remember how I turned towards it, even before I knew you, like every light in the world. You used to be fictional, Mabel. The story I told myself. Now you are real and I can't bear for you to be anywhere else but beside me. I am jealous of your sleep. I am jealous of your sickness. I need you in a way that feels like death. Everything else – the king, Luna, Veratrine, the boy who shot himself in the head – all of it is –

– I can *feel* the house, how it was wounded. Not the way you were, just. The echo of trauma. I can feel his – his dead body, there on the floor, his blood on the floorboards. I can feel the absence of the king's absence, which has to mean something, some kind of transitive relation, right? A novel kind of *presence*? I can feel Luna's absence too, and Vera's, and the way the hill is shifting to reacquaint itself with its own form of reality, and – none of it matters. None of it matters. None of it –

MABEL: Who are you talking - to?

ANNA: What? No one. You, I guess. Are you okay?

MABEL: I'm fine. [PAUSES] Where's my bullet?

ANNA: If I said "in the trash where it belongs", what would you do?

MABEL: That came out of me. It's mine. I birthed it.

ANNA: It came out of a gun. With which some kid just killed himself.

MABEL: [DELIRIOUS] Fatherhood is a myth. Ephemera. Motherhood is the only reality...

ANNA: You need - something. What is it? Is it food, water? What can I do for you? There has to be - there has to be something.

MABEL: Is there - in the house, is there that silver-water? [GULPS, GATHERS HERSELF] The kind hippies like?

ANNA: Hippies - you mean colloidal silver? What they put on burns?

MABEL: Yeah. Sally used to - I think there should be some in the house, if it's still - if we're in the same -

ANNA: I can get that. [GLITCHING ROAR] [SOUNDS OF TINCTURE BOTTLE OPENING] Sally used to give this to you?

MABEL: [LAUGHS] Oh, no of course not. [DOWNS ENTIRE BOTTLE] Tastes like wellwater.

ANNA: Oh my god, *Mabel* - [SOUNDS OF A SCUFFLE] God damn it. Why did you - how did you survive down here for so many years without being *stepped on*?

MABEL: Silver isn't - I'm not going to get hurt by it. [LAUGHS] Anyway I'm already king. What's it going to do, make me a true blueblood?

ANNA: I don't know what's going to hurt you. I don't know what the rules are for either of us. But I was actually saying, hey, what if you want some of that later? Ignore me.

MABEL: As if I ever could. [PAUSES] The house will bring it. Whatever we need. Womb and tomb.

ANNA: The house is. Upset. [MOVEMENT NOISES] Someone died in it. Again. Can you feel it?

MABEL: Yeah. It's vibrating inside of my teeth. Like ghosts. They curl up in all your crevices.

ANNA: Sit back down. You have to rest. I'm not going to let you - make this worse. Listen to me.

MABEL: Yes, Saint Anna.

ANNA: Thanks, King Mabel. [PAUSE] I feel like we should talk about - who the fuck that was, and what we have to. I don't know. Do about it. But -

MABEL: Yeah. Not now. Let's just - let's rest, okay? We'll figure it out later. I'm....I'm tired.

ANNA: Oh. Okay. Of course. Lie down, I'll stay with you. It's going to be all right.

[BEEP]

ACONITE: I exhumed myself from my bed of wood-ash and arum lily to find the two of you. Bone-handed girl, girl on fire. The cells of me dispersed and reformed to spy you, the walls and rafters of your bower. I saw you bent close together, like flowers.

They say you are the rightful king, her rightful right hand. They say you fought him, bested him, took his throne in the manner of this this kingdom, that you are walking on the most righteous path. But this is a lie. This is a lie the hill is whispering to you. There is a line of succession that must be followed, and no usurper can pervert it, not even one like you – little god of the house on the hill, little witch of the rowan and gorse. There is blood, and there is *right*, even underground. I feel it in me like gold. Coruscating, metamorphic.

Absolute primogeniture. Absolute, meaning unalterable by woman or god; *primus*, meaning first, *genitura*, begotten. Here is the law of no-man's-land. You are trespassing, Anna, on what ought to be mine. You have stolen my birthright. It is *my* throne you sit on, and I will see you cast off it like dead leaves, the way you cast my *father* into the nothing, into the in-between. I am the daughter of the King Under the Hill. This kingdom is *mine*.

OUTRO:

Mabel is written by Becca De La Rosa and Mabel Martin and produced by Becca De La Rosa; the voice of Mabel Martin is Mabel Martin, and the voice of Anna Limon is Becca De La Rosa. The voice of Janet Kirk is Dorrie Sacks. The voice of Aconite is Alexandra Serova. The voice of Aurora Silver is Meg Dixon.

The music in this episode was by Bob Roberts, Monplaisir, Sergey Cheremisinov, Kevin MacLeod, 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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