



## HOME AGAIN

Mabel, episode 10: Home Again. In which a plan is made.

[Intro:]

MABEL: Hi, you've reached Mabel Martin. I'm not here to take your call right now, so please leave a message after the beep. Thanks!

[BEEP]

ANNA: This is –

[BEEP]

Okay, let me – let me try this again. You know what to do. Are you – are you there?

[ELECTRICAL BUZZ]

Wow. Okay. God *damn*. I can't – after everything, this is going to be the – the straw that broke the camel's back, or whatever. Even after that night, and –

Mabel, you can – do that, that thing again if you can hear me.

[ELECTRICAL BUZZ]

There's so much, I – so much I want to –

I didn't mean to leave you there. I didn't mean – I didn't know what was *happening*, I just started walking, and –

No, I know. I'm going to start at the beginning.

There are systems. That's what you said. There are systems, and systems within systems, and places where wires meet, where things – interconnect. God, I still can't believe – well. I shouldn't believe any of it, but most of all, more than anything, I can't believe you were there. You were real, you were – I touched you, I heard your voice, you were alive. You were a person, a true thing, not a figment or a fragment or a piece of history. Mabel, I –

[ELECTRICAL BUZZ]

Yeah, I know, ugh. Okay.

It's been four hours. Four hours here, in Sally's house – in this version of Sally's house – alone again. The snow's gone. The calendar and the papers are still missing, the clocks are still all stopped, but my phone's working. The first thing I did was call my sister, then my mother. They've been worrying, I don't blame them. I didn't realise how long – forget it. Then I took a shower, to wash all that red paint off me, and then I called you. Are you still there?

[ELECTRICAL BUZZ]

I –

[BEEPING]

Hang on, that's my mom on the other line. I really can't let her go to voicemail.

[BEEP]

Okay, I'm back.

She's really angry. They all are. They can't understand how I could just – just vanish, without saying anything, without telling anyone where I was going or when I'd come back. And it's not like I can tell them the truth. Kidnapped by – by what, by – a house inside a house, by a woman with – with moon eyes, a woman inside the walls of the world? It doesn't count, Mom, I wasn't really missing for days, I was only gone for a minute, for an afternoon, time there is all broken, it's not my fault – yeah, something tells me the truth isn't going to go down well.

I know you told me to keep talking but – it's strange. Now that I know you're real...I mean, I always *knew* you were real, the way you know Antarctica is real, but it's a completely different thing when you've only seen pictures in the National Geographic to when you're actually there, standing knee-deep in snow, staring an Emperor Penguin in the eye. And it's different, knowing the daughter of your client exists in theory to when – to when I saw you, there in the – when I saw you with your hair all wild, with your hands full of flowers. Now that I know you, I want to have a conversation with you. I don't just want to talk. I want –

[ELECTRICAL BUZZ]

No, I mean, I want –

[ELECTRICAL BUZZ]

Will you please –

[ELECTRICAL BUZZ]

Oh my god, you know what? Forget this.

[BEEP]

Yeah, I'm her home-health carer, I know I –

No, that wasn't –

*What? When?*

That's – no, that can't be right, I was – I'm not, don't, don't say that, she – is she still – ? *They had the – already?* But there was no one! There was no one

here! She would have been alone, they can't have, they – no, no, don't, I need to – hello?

[CRYING]

[PHONE RINGING]

Hello?

Yes, speaking?

Oh, no, I know, that was – it was a misunderstanding, I'm. I'm fine, really. Yeah, I should have called you, I was. Caught up. I'm only just back.

Mabel Martin?

Yeah, I know her. I mean, I know of her, she's Sally's –

No, I haven't –

...She's missing.

No one's been able to contact her. For how long?

Yes. I just. I just heard.

Okay. Yeah, I will. Thanks. Bye.

[PHONE RECEIVER SLAMMING]

I can't do this, I cannot [censored] do this. She's not missing, she's not! She's here, she's right here, she's in the house, you just can't – you can't see her but she's here, she's right *here* – !

[BEEP]

I know what I promised. I'm sorry.

Could you – could you say something?

[ELECTRICAL BUZZ]

Mabel, she's – Sally, she died four days ago. The nurse said it was her heart, it just – after that night she spent in the cold, she just faded. She slipped out of consciousness, and then she died. God, I'm sorry, I'm so sorry, I know there's – there's nothing either of us could have done, not where we were, but – she didn't deserve to die alone, she didn't deserve to have no one. And I know it doesn't *matter*, not anymore, because she's gone now, I know that; but I know you loved her, too. I know she loved you. Even if you fought. Even if you didn't speak. You mattered to one another. She wouldn't want you trapped, just like you wouldn't want her to have to die alone.

Mabel?

[STEADILY GROWING ELECTRICAL BUZZ]

I know. I know, I know. There has to – listen. I've been thinking. There has to be something I can do. There has to be something I can figure out, there just – there has to be. I'm going to get you out of there, I'm going to get you back – back into the real world, back here where things make sense, back with me. I swear I am, okay? I just – I have to work out *how*. They don't teach you things like this in nursing school. How to insert an IV line, how to clean a surgical site, how to rescue someone from a ghost house.

It's funny, though. I'm in your old room now, I'm lying on your bed – it's the only place that feels safe, since I've seen – and even though I know it's not true, it's like – everything, every part of the room, walls and ceiling, floorboards and wallpaper and everything, it's all you. If I touch the wall, it's to comfort you. If I look up at the light fixture, it's like –

You said...you said I was keeping you sane, but that can't be true. We both have to be crazy. I'm telling a lightbulb I'm sorry her grandmother died, and you're – yeah, what are you? Playing hide and seek.

[ELECTRICAL BUZZ]

Don't make that noise at me, you know it's possible. But – god, it's *boring*, too, that possibility, isn't it? If I'm crazy, if we're crazy, if this is some ridiculous folie-a-deux we're both feeding into – does it matter? This is reality for us, this is what we have to work with. What's the point of constantly questioning it, if questioning just wastes time and energy? So, I met you in the ghost of a place, in a sideways-world where everything was green and black and there were flowers hanging in ropes from the ceiling, where this house was a cathedral of ivy and singing and firelight. And now I'm back

here, somehow, and you're still there. These are the truths we're left with.  
Right?

[ELECTRICAL BUZZ]

Right.

Why – why do you think they let me go? Why...do you think they brought me there in the first place? I never asked her, I was too – I was afraid of her, I couldn't –

[LOUD ELECTRICAL BUZZING. SOMETHING RATTLING. A CREAKING SOUND FROM THE BONES OF THE HOUSE]

Mabel! Hey! What's happening, are you all right? Is it him? Damn it, it's him, isn't it. Okay, Mabel, listen to me. You're all right. Just stay still. Don't move, just listen to me. Close your eyes and listen, yeah?

Shit. Uh, okay. Did I ever tell you – yeah, did I ever tell you about my nephew Aaron? He's five years old, and he's the most serious kid you've ever met. He asks these questions, the kind that there's no real way to answer without getting into some intense scientific or rhetorical discussions. Last time I saw him he asked me how come animals don't cry when they're sad. He asked Mona, my sister, why she wore make up but his daddy didn't. He asked his teacher why people play sports if no one ever wins or loses for good. What can you say to those questions? His dad, Julian, thinks it's – I don't know, thinks it shows weakness to tell a kid you don't know the answer to a question, but I think it's worse to make up a lie. Especially to someone like Aaron. You can just see it, he takes everything you say to heart; he keeps a record in his head, he'll remember these conversations twenty years from now. He'll remember who lied to him, and who told him the truth. It's strange, too, because I always think he's so vulnerable, I always worry about him – he's so small, kids are so small, they go out into the world and it's a terrible place, and they're small and innocent and it hurts to think about – but he's stronger than I give him credit for, than any of us do. He doesn't crumble, he sticks up for himself, for his ideas. And there was one time [NOISES BEGIN TO FADE] – one time I was at Mona's house and I was crying about some stupid fight I had with my ex, and he drew me a picture of a bear and said its name was Bartholomew and it was going to protect me. I still have the picture, I keep it in my wallet. If – if I press the picture to a mirror, it'll protect us both.

[SILENCE]

Is he gone?

[ELECTRICAL BUZZ]

Are you okay?

[ELECTRICAL BUZZ.]

What did he –

I shouldn't have left. I shouldn't have left you, I thought you were – I didn't look back, they say never look back, I thought you were behind me, if I could I'd go back for you, I would, Mabel, I'm so sorry, I'm so sorry, please, please –

[WHISPERING] Please stay alive in there until I can get you out.

[BEEP]

[OUTRO:]

Mabel is written and produced by Becca De La Rosa. The voice of Mabel Martin is [censored] and the voice of Anna Limon is Becca De La Rosa. The music in this episode was by Ars Sonor, Ketsa, Mathieu Lamontagne and Emanuel Toledo, Grouper, Chris Zabriskie, and (morse), and all of it is available to download on the free music archive at [freemusicarchive.org](http://freemusicarchive.org). For more information about Mabel, including a full tracklist and transcript for each episode, visit us online at [mabelpodcast.com](http://mabelpodcast.com), or on Twitter, @podcastmabel.