



UNDERWORLD

Mabel, episode sixteen: Underworld. In which a final choice 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]

– a tree. An eye. Candle. Crown. Circle, circle, endlessness, girl on fire, girl on fire, girl on fire, girl on fire –

[BEEP]

[HOWLING]

[BEEP]

Say stay on the path. Say don't look back. That's what – oh, what's his name, he sang for the wild women, he sang for his – for his dead girlfriend, the halls of the underworld opened to him but it didn't matter, it didn't matter, it didn't – *you can't look back*, they say this to you, and I think – it's something to do with. Like. Fixity, isn't it? Isn't it? Mabel, can you – ? It's *flux*, that's it – things change, you know? They have to change, when you. When you shift your matter from one place to another, but looking at her, looking at her, it

pinned her in place, like a butterfly. That's it. Like a butterfly, like a luna moth. Luna. Luna. I couldn't look her in the eye and maybe that's good, maybe that's, the only one – the only one I could look at was you, and maybe I imprinted on you like a baby motherfucking duck or maybe there was just no one, no one, no one else for me, not since I set foot in this house, like setting foot inside your body. And that would make it my fault, wouldn't it? Me the trespasser, you the foundation, my feet on your timbers, my hands knotting on your lintels, and – god – Orpheus, that was his name. Orpheus got torn to pieces by the maenads because he said he'd play for them and he never did, Mabel, he never did, he just –

[BEEP]

[CREAKING]

[BEEP]

I just have to. Keep it together. Just. Breathe, Anna.

It's. The thread. You know? I can't just stop. I'm all you. I'm. I'm all you have. I have to keep talking because I'm the thread, I'm the thread you follow, if I stop you're lost – and I may not know much but I know this, *I know this*, I know – so I have to breathe. Keep my eyes. Keep them open. I have to tell you what I see.

Once I. There was.

No.

At first it was like the codeine pills my dentist gave me for my wisdom tooth extraction. A weight like precious metal settling in my stomach. Something – fluttering, in my chest. Felt. It felt. Plausible, felt like I could get through it. You know? My body's been thrown some difficult – some hard – you know what I mean. I haven't always been kind to it. It was just plants I ate, just mulch. But then.

Mabel, did you die?

Did you – ?

I think. I think I died. I think that's what it was, that. Hollowing. Like the world turning its back on me, but violent. I tasted metal, or. Blood, maybe. The bones of my spine all clicked and clacked. I thought –

– where did he take her from? Luna. When he tore her out of herself. Was it just – just Fairy Hill, just crabgrass and apple trees? *Could* it have been? I saw her – I saw her eyes, they were – no one has silver eyes, not really, no one looks so – so *endless* –

When I opened my eyes there was light. Light everywhere. Coming from the – from the floorboards, from the walls, from the skirting boards, from the door-handles, light like an invasion, it hurt, Mabel, I – I think I screamed. It took – I don't know. A long time. Took a long time for my eyes to adjust. When they did, finally, I saw – the light, it was. Lines, rivulets. Tracing shapes, tracing *patterns*. Dimensions I – I had never even – the room full of security lasers, do you remember when I said – ? Multiplicity, layers and layers and layers. There's a system. There's always been a system.

If you –

If you look closely enough. You can see, Mabel, there's. Symbols, etched into the walls of the light. Some of them I – they're in a foreign language, nothing I've ever seen written down. Some of them are more like. Like sounds, like music. But one of them –

It looks like a rabbit. So that's the one I'm. I'm following it, over – I think – the landscape of the house, it's. All changed. Altered. I can't predict. Boards and beams, everything in dissolution. There's, *how*, there's water in between the grains of the wood, here, and – I thought I saw a white deer, its antlers full of flowers, walking – in between the doorframe and the wall, where it shouldn't, by any goddamned right, have fit. Is this what it's like? Am I a ghost? Is this what ghosts see, these – all these disassemblings, like molecules all spinning on their own orbit, like –

[BEEP]

[SINGING]

[BEEP]

The first door is the door of stone.

There's a wall here, just. Come up out of nowhere. Grey rock and mortar and moss, a wall like the walls in the [censored] cemetery, like – is –

– that's. We wrote our names there. Me and my girlfriend. Me and Polly. It's still there, inside a heart. This is – this is the same fucking *wall*, how –

There's something else engraved onto it. My eyes keep. Shit. Keep blurring. [laughs] There was enough atropine in that cocktail to make me go blind, to make anyone – what was it, I learned in nursing school, there was a saying – *hot as a hare, blind as a bat, dry as a bone, red as a – as a beet, mad as a hatter*. How you know someone's overdosed on atropine. Fever, blurred vision, dehydration, flushing, delirium. Is that a good sign? Patient is symptomatic, probably not dead yet. Maybe. I think – I don't know.

What was I saying? Right. The carving. Hold on, Mabel, I'm getting closer.

It says:

My first is in poem but never in line.
My last is in sonnet but never in strain.
I'm sweeter than honey, I'm redder than wine.
A mouthful of me had a girl on a chain -
Or a queen on a throne, in a kingdom of rock.
My heart is in bits, like the heart of a clock.

It's. Of course it's a riddle. Why wouldn't – why wouldn't I think there'd be *riddles*? Jesus Christ, obviously there are *riddles*, Anna, you're – you're rescuing the girl from the labyrinth, you're poisoning your way into the heart of the hill, there are going to be *riddles*, for God's sake, it's not like –

Ugh. Okay. Okay, okay.

A girl on a chain or a queen on a throne. A mouthful of me – ? It's. Sweeter than honey, it's food, okay, what – what is the story, come on, Anna, it was in that *book*, that stupid book that appeared on the kitchen counter – king of the – king of the underworld, Hades, Hades and Persephone, right? Isn't that right, Mabel? He gave her – pomegranate! Pomegranate, he fed it to her! First is poem, right, my heart is in bits, yeah, they're – arils, isn't that what they're called? pomegranate, pomegranate, you stupid smug ghost house, I figured it out, it's –

[BEEP]

[SINGING]

[BEEP]

– faith, you said, have faith, have faith. It was a dream but it felt so *real*, it felt like –

[BEEP]

The second door is the door of spirit.

Mabel Martin. Mabel Martin. It's me, the bundle of thread in your pocket. Didn't I say I wouldn't leave you here alone? Didn't I say I'd come after you, hand over hand, fist over fist, into the rot of the black earth, into the labyrinth? I would never leave you to face the monster on your own, not even if he is your brother. I never would.

There's another. Another wall, here. Brick, this time, smudged with black like – like there was a terrible fire somewhere, it rubs off on my fingertips. It's – the riddle is written in char, scribbled over the brick. Okay. Hang on.

Our first rhymes with heat that blooms over your face
When you hear a cruel joke or your true lover's call.
Our second's a self-contained, insular space
in a house or a mansion or castle or hall.
We grow in the dark, like all terrible things,
laying traps for your feet when we grow into rings.

God, I can't – I can't *think*, there's – Anna, Anna, Anna, Anna, use your brain, use your fucking *brain* – okay, heat that blooms over your face – blush, right? You blush when you hear your, your true lover's call? I blushed when I saw you, I felt it, *Christ*, Mabel, I can't, I need – I need you, I need something from you, please, please, anything –

[THUD] Ugh! No. No. Self-contained, insular – oh, it's – room and something that rhymes with blush, it's *mushroom*, just like that – fairy ring, all of them bleeding, do you remember? Do you remember, Mabel, how I said –

[BEEP]

I used to think about purpose. What – what we're here for, what I'm here for specifically. I used to think – it's all meaningless, isn't it? Isn't it just nothing? If I can help someone before they die, I thought, maybe – maybe my life won't be big and important but it'll have impact, it'll push away the emptiness for a little while, at least. If I can take care of a person who's weak and would have no one without me. Just one person, maybe. And I did it for years, I watched people die and die and die and it didn't matter, not really, not in any permanent way, and I thought – well, maybe some people just aren't meant to matter. Maybe some people are supposed to be insignificant. Maybe that's me, a dandelion seed floating through the air and never landing anywhere, and that was okay, Mabel, it was fine, because if I didn't matter then at least nothing else did, either –

And then I came here. And there was Sally, and Luna Thorne, and there was – you, god, flower-girl, labyrinth girl, girl in the mirror, you, and I thought –

[GRINDING NOISE]

– I thought if I could save you, that would matter. If I could get you out, away from him. I might not be big, I might not be *visible*, but I'm important because of you, because of what I can –

[BEEP]

The third door is the door of flesh.

The corridor just –

The corridor just stopped.

Maybe if I –

– I can't go backwards. There's. There's nowhere for me to move. I can't. The light, it's still *here*, it just – there's no wall, no floor, I'm –

– god, ow, what –

it's. Mabel, it's. I pulled – I pulled up my shirt, and it's – it's inked onto my stomach, there's – it's still bleeding, still dripping black ink, I can't –

my head. It. Everything hurts so much. I can't breathe right, I feel like – ah – depressed, depressed respiration, it's – maybe I didn't die before, but. I'm not, I'm.

Okay. Okay.

It says –

My first is in absence, the heartbreaking lack.
My second in never, my third is in need;
My fourth in abyss, that great swallowing black –
My whole an exchange, so that she might be freed.
A gift tied in ribbon, a flame without spark
In the cold. In the hill. In the dark. In the dark.

Mabel –

Do you know that I love you? Can you hear me? I feel you, I can feel your heartbeat if I press my hand up against my own chest. What do you think happened to the thread, after Theseus had found his way out of the labyrinth? I think he left it there, like a memento. Like an offering. There is something – something in me that has curved around you. If I let you stay down here, if I let you die down here, that part of me will die. So maybe I'm selfish, really. I don't know. It doesn't matter. I love you, I love you.

The answer is me. Anna.

[LOUD ROARING NOISES]

MABEL: Anna? You – no, you shouldn't – I didn't want you to –

ANNA: It's okay. It's okay. Mabel, it's okay, I promise, it's –

[NOISES]

MABEL: Anna? Anna! Anna, *Anna*, no, no, Anna, come back, come back, *please* –

[BEEP]

[OUTRO]

Mabel is written and produced by Becca De La Rosa. The voice of Mabel Martin is [censored]. The voice of Anna Limon is Becca De La Rosa. The music in this episode was by Ars Sonor, Scott Holmes, c4, i AM esper, Lloyd Rogers, Rebecca Foon, and (morse), and all of it is available to download at the Free Music Archive at freemusicarchive.org. For more information about Mabel, including a full tracklist and transcript for each episode, visit us online at mabelpodcast.com, or on twitter, @podcastmabel.

Season two of Mabel might be over, but that doesn't mean we're going to disappear – keep on top of our news, extras, and updates by making sure to follow us on tumblr, twitter, facebook, and on our mailing list. Season three is going to see some changes come to Mabel, and we don't want you to miss any of it. Thank you, as always, for being so interested, so involved, and so receptive to our strange, scary story.