



ETERNAL RETURN

Mabel, episode twenty-two: Eternal Return. In which everyone possesses a secret self.

[INTRO]

ANNA: - Anna Limon -

AUTOMATED TELEPHONE VOICE: - is not available. At the tone, please record your message.

[BEEP]

MABEL: How is this -

[BEEP]

ANNA'S DOPPLEGANGER: [SINGING] *I'll take you in and fill you up with lack of being fed*

[BEEP]

[RUSTLING, NIGHT NOISES]

ANNA'S DOPPLEGANGER: Oh, Mabel. Mabel Martin.

MABEL: Let me out. Cut me free.

ANNA'S DOPPLEGANGER: Or you'll what? What can you do to me, Mabel Martin? You are bound and bound and bound. You are tied to the earth, to the water, to this house. My house.

[RUSTLING]

My name upon this land. My hand in your proverbial *cookie jar*.

MABEL: It isn't yours. Your name doesn't even belong to you.

ANNA'S DOPPLEGANGER: It is carved into the stone of me. See, here? See it, in patterns and whirls? I am the only version that you can mold to your whims. I am the only one who can give you what you want.

MABEL: I don't want you.

ANNA'S DOPPLEGANGER: But you do want something. That is every story - the hungry thing wanted and wanted. And how does it end? Either they're satiated or they aren't. That's the only dichotomy that exists.

MABEL: No. It's as false as you are. I don't have to be in your narrative anymore, you or anyone else's. You can't give me anything I need, anything I feel. You're only the shadow of a ghost of a ghost of the woman I love.

ANNA'S DOPPLEGANGER: Your desire burns. What does it matter the flesh of me, if I am the same creature you have loved? I can give you more than myself, Mabel. I can make it not hurt anymore. Aren't you tired? Aren't you in pain? Don't you know I love you like weeds love water? I love you, Mabel. I love -

MABEL: Shut up! Be quiet.

ANNA'S DOPPLEGANGER: Make me, Mabel. [LAUGHS]

[SOUNDS OF A STRUGGLE]

You are a fish caught in my net. You are a bird in my fist. I'll tell you when I want to let you go.

MABEL: [LAUGHS] You are so small. You're so goddamn small.

ANNA'S DOPPLEGANGER: What?

MABEL: [MULTIPLIED, DISTORTED] *You are trespassing in my garden.*

[TEARING SOUNDS; MABEL SCREAMING IN PAIN]

ANNA'S DOPPLEGANGER: How did you - why would he -

MABEL: You're not the first person to call me a *bird*, you cowardly -

[ROARING; RUNNING SOUNDS]

[BEEP]

MABEL: Anna you are real. Anna you are real. Anna you are real and no one can take that from me, from either of us. You told me you wouldn't leave me. I believe you. I believe you. I believe in you. I can feel the red thread of your truth around my wrist, pulling me eternally towards you. No false idol will cause me to stray. I promise. You won't leave me. I'll never run from you. Never.

[BEEP]

ANNA'S DOPPLEGANGER: [SINGING IN THE DISTANCE] Mabel, Mabel, strong and able, you are trapped inside this fable -

MABEL: Anna. Can you hear her? It's like being in elementary school again. Primary school, whatever. Is this supposed to break me? Singing?

ANNA'S DOPPLEGANGER: [STILL SINGING] Round the table you must go, you must go, you must go, you were naughty, back around the other way, other way, other way -

MABEL: This is absurd. No one could ever mistake this caricature for you, Anna. No one useful, anyway.

[SHUFFLING]

What were your friends like? I've spoken to some of them, now. Well. In a way. Miss Reyes seems fine, except not very bright. She doesn't seem to understand how the flesh of you works, your spirit, your immutable, transfixed self. She sees the moss and sticks of another version of you and finds it - adequate. I am not so tolerant. There's nothing adequate here.

She's running from me. The false you. Or else I'm running from her. We are playing a rabid, violent hide and seek. The most primitive of children's games.

He tore the rope from my hair. The king. At least, I think it was him. It didn't feel like myself. He doesn't like when -

[BEEP]

[SCREECHING DISTORTION]

A TERRIBLE, HISSING, MONSTROUS VOICE: You worm your way into the soft white root of her heart.

MABEL: Yes. I do. I will. I have.

[GROWING ROAR]

[BEEP]

ANNA'S DOPPLEGANGER: - make a bargain with you.

MABEL: I don't have time for this.

ANNA'S DOPPLEGANGER: Come down. We'll talk.

MABEL: I'll pass, thanks.

ANNA'S DOPPLEGANGER: You think you can choose? Your coarse hair. Your misshapen eyes. Your hideous, twisted desire, searing you from the inside. How are you not a monster, Mabel? Who else will love you if not me? I will be whatever you want. I will be the adoring wife, the worshipful lover. I will fill every aching space of you.

MABEL: No. I know what I am. I know what you are. You can call me whatever you like. It might even be true. But you're still nothing. You are no one.

ANNA'S DOPPLEGANGER: You've cornered yourself up there. There's nowhere for you to run. I'll circle you like a shark and wait until you're asleep, and then I'll tie up your hair again, and you'll be mine, and mine, and mine.

MABEL: All earth fears the purity of fire.

ANNA'S DOPPLEGANGER: Excuse me?

MABEL: I brought my matches *with me*, you stupid, useless *branch!*

[MATCH LIGHTS; FIRE CRACKLING]

ANNA'S DOPPLEGANGER: [SCREAMS]

[BEEP]

MABEL: Is this what you really think of me? Is this only a part of you, cut off from the whole and set loose? I am feeling uncharitable towards you, Anna, with your average life, your average losses. What am I to you, really? What use do you have for me? I am not the only girl you have ever immortalized. Why don't you crawl back to your beautiful *moment* with your pretty teen magazines, your perfect lip gloss shade of normalcy?

You cannot love me, Anna. I am thorns and mist. Do you know that? Do you know what I really am? Or do you only want to *matter*? You told me that I made you matter. I could have been anyone then, couldn't I? I could have been any girl made of your moonlit reflection. You had your little adventure, then, Anna. You had your flirtation with danger, your flirtation with the abnormal, with anything that exists outside of yourself. I will only eat you from the inside out. I am death, silver and black, come to ruin you. Do you still want me now? Do you still want the biting thorns of me?

I'm sorry. I'm sorry. You don't deserve this. I just - push and push you, until you dissolve. I am a sharp and vitriolic thing, Anna; you must be unyielding. Or else all we will do is hurt each other. I have no real desire for that. Despite my outbursts, despite my cruelty, I have no real desire to ever bring you anything but feral joy. If I can't, then I will let you be.

Out here, in the mist, I can nearly hear you. In the reeds, in the bushes. *Why must you make yourself the villain*, you'll say, and I'll tell you, because it is my nature. And that's that. I'll sting you, Anna, and you'll drown. And -

The story is better if it ends this way. If it ends with separation, and grief, and the lack of you. I will only wear you down. What kind of ending is that, with you in ribbons, in tatters? The bad ending. The one I will not allow to happen, not in this version. But I want to have my cake and eat it too, you see. She's right. The need for you twists me up.

Anna. Anna. You left your friends for me, Anna. You left your mother and your sister and her little baby and all the people you love for me, Anna. I think I might be furious at you for that. I cannot conceive of a world where this is a kindness you have done me; where this is anything but one thrust of a sword that must be met with another. How could you wound me this way? Why couldn't you have left me to die, loving me afar, like the moon? It would have been a good story. Instead I am mired in this mess, this *shit*. I don't *like* this, Anna. I want you to come *back*.

Or...stay away, then. Be a hero and save me and die like that, with your name untarnished, the good, the pure. Saint Anna with her halo of curls and her hands full of weeds. I am too rotted and curled in on myself to be anything curative. I can only curse. I wish I was good but I'm not. I wish I was good. I wish I was. I wish -

[BEEP]

ANNA'S DOPPLEGANGER: [DISTANTLY] Mabel Martin. Starling. Fitcher's swan. Shrike, sparrow, bluejay, Anna's hummingbird -

MABEL: Enough! Come find me, then.

[RUNNING]

[BEEP]

MABEL: I will not find solace in my subjugation. I will not decorate my cage and call it freedom. I will tear you down to build myself up. I will tear all of it down. (shaking) I will tear all of it down. I will tear all of it down.

[DISTANT LAUGHTER]

[BEEP]

[BRANCHES CRACKING]

ANNA'S DOPPLEGANGER: Oh, Mabel. Sweet girl.

MABEL: You can't feel anything. Your heart is a ball of acorns.

ANNA'S DOPPLEGANGER: My heart turns as white as yours does, for your pretty lover.

MABEL: [LAUGHS]

ANNA'S DOPPLEGANGER: What's so funny?

MABEL: He said - he *told* me - [LAUGHS] What's it like, to be on the trailing end of every joke? To know everything only after the fact?

ANNA'S DOPPLEGANGER: Didn't you ask me about the mirror, about the story?

MABEL: I asked Anna, not -

ANNA'S DOPPLEGANGER: Did you know devil meant troll, troll meant werewolf, werewolves mean the horror of flesh *splitting* where you least expect it, where the body becomes other -

MABEL: I know what I am! I don't care about the terror of myself. I will be as terrible and as hideous as I choose. Nothing and no one can make me palatable or beautiful. It is my right to be as I see fit. Anna understands. You understand nothing.

ANNA'S DOPPLEGANGER: I understand your thirsty, yearning, pale heart, shriveled from *lack*. I understand more than you think. I know something you don't, Mabel. I know where you are, stuck like a loose stitch in time. (all background noise stops) I know where you really are.

ANNA'S DOPPLEGANGER [CLOSER, NOW, TO ANNA'S VOICE]: Mabel. Mabel. Are you alright? Everyone back home is worried about you. You haven't picked up your phone. You're supposed to be getting better here. You're supposed to be ridding yourself of these kinds of delusions.

MABEL: No. No, no, no.

ANNA'S DOPPLEGANGER: It doesn't seem to be working, does it? What is going to penetrate that thicket in your head, I wonder. Don't you miss the real world. Come back to us, Mabel.

MABEL: [SCREAMS] Stop it!

ANNA'S DOPPLEGANGER: Mabel. Mabel. Mabel. Aren't you tired? Don't you just want to let go of all this? They don't call it a white room only because of the color, Mabel. You are fading, colorlessly. You are becoming a parodic, spineless version of yourself. Are you lighter? Is your mouth smaller? Are you decaying, in pieces, every bit of you?

MABEL: I don't believe you. I am and have always been only myself. I have *faith*.

[TEARING NOISES]

MABEL: By nibbling away at this world, I can consume all of it. Just a little bit at a time. You don't understand. You couldn't, because you aren't real. You're not a true thing, to cast your net into the world and see the truth, you're just a phantom I -

[BEEP]

[RUNNING]

MABEL: Hide and seek and hide and seek and hide and hide -

[BEEP]

MABEL: What do I know? What is the truth of me, divorced from all else, all this nebulous mess? Is it violence? Or is that only an internalized knife in the blooming organs of me, the fraught carcass of the inner chambers of my heart? Every creeping space. Does it matter? I don't think so.

Anna. Here is our story. All our pasts, all our presents, rising up like a river to converge, to flood into one another, the deluge. Here is the antediluvian truth: I have always loved you. There is no world bereft of my love for you. What are we willing to sacrifice? I know I am not willing to sacrifice you. And you are not mine, anyway. You are your own; you belong to yourself. I love you as you are.

Would you ever betray me, Anna? Would you ever force my hand, show my vulnerability to all, shame me to the world? You wouldn't, I think. You are not a traitor. I know what it is to be a traitor, Anna. They put god in my mouth and I spat him out. Nothing gets inside me without my contempt. When they tried again god was a woman and I was more receptive. It was a truth-in-disguise. But any small amount of give is a betrayal of self. There can be no compromise without treachery. [LAUGHS] You have no idea what I'm saying, do you? You couldn't. Here is the whole of it: I have made a religion out of you, Anna Limon. Pure grace, pure favour.

It is what I mean every time I say your name. Anna, Anna. If I am the devil, Anna, what does that make you? You are beloved, you are holy.

You are also the king of me, Anna. The kinged queen of starlight and flowers, song and mirrors. I will make a [throne](#) of myself for you. I will do anything you want of me, and you will let me do so. This is what a king is. This is what a king does. Can you blame me, for only assuming you to be the highest point of enlightenment, the sun towards which I will always turn? Oh, Anna. Oh, mi reina. Oh, most holy. Where is your unsparing rod? Where is your crook, your flail? How are you to tell if I will come to heel, if I will crawl at your commands? You are to keep me, Anna. You have bitten into my heart and laid your kingdom there. And all ownership requires ruling.

[RUSTLING]

MABEL: You know what this story is, Anna? *Not-Anna?*

[RUSTLING GROWS LOUDER]

MABEL: It's a *trap*.

[SNATCHING, RUNNING; SOUND OF A VINE BEING RIPPED]

ANNA'S DOPPLEGANGER: [CHOKING]

MABEL: I am never playing the game

[SOUNDS OF A STRUGGLE]

- you think I am!

ANNA'S DOPPLEGANGER: Mabel, don't -

[SOUNDS OF A FIGHT]

M: What did I say? Did I say narratives were a cage?

[SOUNDS OF THE CHANGELING BEING BEATEN]

ANNA'S DOPPLEGANGER: [CHOKED] You will regret this. You will regret this.

M: Did I say I would never be trapped again?

AD: [DESPERATE NOISES]

M: I am not the frog, you stupid ball of twig and moss. I am always the scorpion. I am not the helpless girl in a trap. [DISTORTED] I am a many-webbed spider.

[FINAL SOUNDS OF TEARING LEAVES, SNAPPING BRANCHES]

[LAYERED, ECHOING, DISTORTED] *I am the labyrinth, Anna. And I am also the minotaur.*

[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 voice of the changeling was supplied by a cold northern wind blown over the top of a broken witch-bottle. The music in this episode was by Ars Sonor 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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