



## THE CONSORT

Mabel, episode 30: The Consort. In which the moon relays a message.

### INTRO:

MABEL: You think you are the king of the bog, of the underhill, of the black wind howling between the stars? You think you are the monster at the end of this book? She is Saint Anna, Anna with the mouth of god, Anna with the fist of bone. I am the girl half burning. I am the bull in the maze. I am Mabel Martin. I am coming for you. I am coming for you. We are coming for you.

### [BEEP]

MABEL: Here is a story. It isn't very long. Once, there was a king who breathed lack around him. Once there was a hollow pit, and the earth surrounding it, defined by its hollowness. There was a girl who drank down the moon into her hair, her skin, and lack hungered. Lack swallowed her up. That's it. The end. This is a different story: a girl went into the underworld, the realm of the dead, the sidhe, into hell, and she ate their food and drank their wine. Now. Tell me. Is she alive? Is she trapped? Even if she didn't know, even if she only ate the smallest lick of sloe jam, the tiniest taste of honey wine - does it count?

ANNA: It always counts. But - we are only ever what we choose to be.

MABEL: No. We are what we are. That's all anyone can be. Why does it count?

ANNA: Because rules matter. Because laws can't be broken, they can only be bent, or swayed. At least down here.

MABEL: Yes. Precisely. The rules are all that matter. It is much like physics - every action has an equal and opposite reaction.

ANNA: I failed physics. Twice.

VERATRINE: You failed to defeat our be-hated tyrant as well.

ANNA: Thanks, Vera. I love knowing I can count on you.

MABEL: For all her pissiness, she is right. You did fail. Why?

ANNA: Hey, there's two of you! I don't know. I was distracted. He's stronger than I am.

MABEL: [CUTTING HER OFF] No. You need to not indulge your self pity, right now. [WRYLY] I know, imagine me, saying that. Do you trust me, Anna?

ANNA: ...of course I trust you.

MABEL: Good. Then tell me why you failed when you attacked him.

ANNA: I told you. I was – distracted.

MABEL: That's not it. You don't understand, it's – [PAUSES] you *were* distracted, though. Why was that?

ANNA: What do you mean, that's not it?

MABEL: That isn't why you couldn't do it. You didn't answer my question.

VERATRINE: Look at our girl, getting so bossy.

ANNA: You didn't answer mine. I thought - it was stupid. I thought I recognised someone.

VERATRINE: Sweet uncle Jack, with his shredded fingertips?

ANNA: What did you – ? Do you – that – that was him, wasn't it, I thought I was going *crazy* – [LOUDER, FURIOUS] I'm going to kill you, I'm going to tear you into –

VERATRINE: [LAUGHING]

MABEL: Who is Jack?

VERATRINE: Oh, Anna's poor, sad, would-be dead uncle, who she never met, who left her grandmother wailing and wailing -

ANNA: You're so pathetic. You're just *nothing*. When you tried to make Mabel want you, how did that go? When you tried to find out who made you, who scabbled you together from twigs and twine? When I kill you no one in any version of the world will miss you. Do you understand –

MABEL: Anna -

VERATRINE: What do you think you can – [PAIN NOISES]

MABEL: *Listen!* This isn't helping! We have to focus, I have to make you understand -

ANNA: Understand what? That I failed? I know, I get that, you don't have to keep -

MABEL: [FRUSTRATED SCREAMING; BANGING HER HEAD ON SOMETHING IN THE HOUSE PRESUMABLY, HARD]

ANNA: What the fuck are you *doing*, Mabel, *stop* -

MABEL: [BREATHLESSLY] See. See. You see. I stopped. I'm not hurt. Why, Anna? Why did I stop?

ANNA: Because I - told you to?

MABEL: Yes. Yes, *exactly*, Anna. You told me to. And those are the rules, aren't they?

ANNA: Maybe for us. Not for *him*.

MABEL: Do you think he too is not bound by rules, Anna Limon?

ANNA: I know you're serious when you call me by my full name. Why is that? Are you trying to invoke me?

MABEL: Yes. The way one invokes any god - through prayer. Anna Limon, Anna Limon, steward of healing. Anna Limon, conquistador of my estate, Anna Limon with the hand of death. Anna Limon with the mouth of god. As Veratrine said, he cannot resist a challenge. So what must you be?

VERATRINE: A challenger, obviously.

ANNA: We have to go back, don't we? Back down below.

MABEL: Yes.

VERATRINE: Well. Here is where we part ways, dear girls -

ANNA: Are you kidding - this is you bowing out? Run out of insults? Is the incessant whining at us not holding your attention anymore?

MABEL: No, you can't. You have to come with us. We need -

VERATRINE: I don't care what you need. I would like to be alive, thank you very much, and though you may be devout, Mabel Martin, I lack your faith. Count me out. I'm an atheist.

MABEL: You will help us, Vera.

VERATRINE: [LAUGHING] And why would I?

MABEL: Because I'm - I'm asking you to.

VERATRINE: [SOME KIND OF PAINED NOISE]

ANNA: [TO HERSELF, OR THE HOUSE] Of course. Of course *that's* what gets her. Jesus. [DEFINITELY TO THE HOUSE] Are you going to let us go, or is there going to be a fight?

[HOUSE NOISES, STILL PETULANT]

ANNA: We *will* come back.

[HOUSE NOISES]

ANNA: Because - because I – [SIGHS] because you have my blood. Because you have my - shit, my *bones*. But you need a third thing, don't you? To make it *true*. So have my word: we will come back. We will come back. We will come back to you.

[HOUSE WHINING]

MABEL: What do you want! What!

VERATRINE: I do not like this -

ANNA: You asked me if I trusted you, Mabel. Do you trust me?

MABEL: Yes. Always.

ANNA: Then trust me. Tell it you'll come back.

VERATRINE: Don't listen to her, Mabel, she just wants to trap you -

MABEL: I'll come back. [HOUSE MAKING LOUDER NOISES] Do you hear me? I'll come back!

[HOUSE FALLS SILENT]

ANNA: Even your attempts to usurp me are pathetic.

VERATRINE: You're a fool if that's what you think I was trying to -

[HOUSE MAKING SPOOKY SOUNDS]

MABEL: Anna - what's -

[BEEP]

CULT 2: - don't understand. I'm serious, you don't get it. She's not just the top of the food chain in here, she's - you know what? Okay. You want to know what she actually is? Fuck it.

[FUMBLES WITH MIC, TAPS ON COMPUTER. BEEPING STOPS]

The feed is down. We have five, ten minutes tops before the guys back at the Exclave hook us up again, so you better not interrupt me. Right?

I was recruited out of school. A lot of us were, I know you were, too, [CENSORED]. I was in a – Jesus, what amounted to a high-security prison for teens with behavioural issues, one of those crazy places up in the mountains where rich parents send the kids they don't want to bother disciplining. I was a little punk, like most of the kids there. Nothing too psychotic, but I dabbled in drugs, I skipped school, I cussed at my dad, typical spoiled brat stuff. The place my parents sent me to was called Green Pines. It's been closed down since, but at the time it was one of our feeder schools. Miss Silver liked to assess the new recruits. Check for potential, all of that. She was more hands-on back then; the organisation was smaller, and she hadn't yet found – well, you know. So my first day there, I'm put in a room with three other kids, all of us ready to fight – I'd been snatched from my bed by a bunch of orderlies with a white van, blindfolded and driven who-knows-where for six hours straight without a bathroom break. And they call us the fucking cult, right? Whatever, I'm in this blank room with the others, we're all sweating and furious and just hating every single adult in the whole world – and then Miss Silver walks in.

You've met her, [CENSORED]. You know what she looks like. Tall, white hair, always dressed in grey suits that probably cost more than the average college tuition. Always wearing these big chunks of obsidian and jade round her neck. The way she walks, too, like scissors, going snip snip snip - like she's cutting something out of the world everywhere she goes. And her face, god. She walks into the room and the four of us are just floored. What do you do with someone like Miss Silver? She looked at the other three guys and just – waved them away. One of them started crying, I swear. And she looked at me –

It's like – everything in my life fell apart. None of it mattered anymore, none of the stupid shit I did out of boredom or idiocy or just sheer desperation. She saw something in me, she saw what I could be. She said - I never forgot it, she said, "You've been useless all your life. Would you like me to put you to good use?" I said yes. Obviously I said yes. It was like realising that's all I'd ever wanted. To be useful, to *someone*.

CULT 1: Jesus.

CULT 2: Yeah. So, that was that. I didn't see her much after that one day. School was school, we were all still petulant little brats. There was this one

kid, Hunter, who hated me from day one. His dad was some rich televangelist, Hunter probably learned all his homophobia at the dinner table. Doesn't really matter, in the end; he hated me, he loved to torment me, him and all his nouveau-riche-trailer-trash friends. One day in my second or third year there he found me alone out somewhere on the school grounds and decided it would be a good time to fuck me up. He and his two buddies were kicking the shit out of me, I was curled up in a ball on the ground, just pretty much waiting for death –

CULT 1: Oh my god, are you –

CULT 2: Shut up. I'm there on the ground, and then – everything just stops. They stop kicking me, they stop laughing, no one's even saying anything – and someone grabs at my collar and pulls me up, and I see Miss Silver is there. These guys weren't part of anything, they didn't even really *know* her, but she shut them up as though she'd started blasting an air siren. She said, "Which one of you started this?" Just like that. I can guarantee you all three of us had been asked that a hundred times by a hundred different teachers, but this time - Hunter's buddies pointed at him, no questions. Ratted him out without even hesitating. And Miss Silver *looked* at Hunter, and then she pulled out this tiny little knife and cut his throat.

CULT 1: What the –

CULT 3: Are you –

CULT 2: No, you don't get it. That isn't even the important part. It wasn't the fact that she killed him, it was the fact – Hunter's father was important, he was wealthy and well-known and he had influence. Hunter wasn't just some replaceable no one, he was a famous TV personality's son; it's not the fact that she killed him, it's the fact she made it all – disappear. Somehow she made it so Hunter's friends never told what happened. The school never found out. Hunter's father never found out. The death report, it says Hunter died of an allergic reaction to *poison ivy*. There was blood all over – all over me, all over the other guys, there was his body with a fucking *hole* in its neck, but – *Miss Silver vanished everything*. Do you understand? She can do whatever she wants. There are no laws, no rules that apply to her. Do you even –

[BEEPING STARTS UP AGAIN]

CULT 2: We're back online.

[BEEP]

[RUNNING TUNNEL NOISES]

[WEIRD GROWTH NOISES]

[BEEP]

[GENERAL GLITCHING MORPHS INTO THE RUNNING WATER AND WEIRD SOUNDS OF FAERYLAND]

ANNA: - wasn't so bad, was it?

VERATRINE: Speak for yourself. I may vomit.

MABEL: I - if I didn't know better, I'd think - I'm. We're here. It's here. How did the house -

LUNA-THING: It folded you in a loop of its own history, in order to transport you back down into the kingdom below.

[GROUP CONFUSION]

ANNA: Who the hell are you?

MABEL: [TALKING OVER HER] Well-met. And by what nameless name do you like to be called?

LUNA-THING: The body I inhabit prefers to be called Spindrift, but she is only a vessel. You know me, Mabel Martin, as Luna.

ANNA: - Luna?

VERATRINE: Dear, Silver-Star, I had nothing to do with -

MABEL: We want out of the dark just as much as you do. Will you help to light our way?

ANNA: [MUTTERING] Oh, wonderful.

LUNA-THING: I am not your torch, nor am I your guidelight, snakeling. Surely you of all creatures should know that: a good pet is only worth the distance her leash might stretch.

MABEL: Of course. My apologies. I cling too much to your presence, the infectious nature of hope. What are they drinking tonight? And to whom?

LUNA-THING: Blackberry wine cured in a hollow oak, and lifting their cups to the foolishness of simple men, of course. And you, little fire? What prayer crosses your lips? Do you still dream of freedom?

MABEL: [LAUGHING, A REAL LAUGH] Perhaps not, any longer. I don't know. Have I become too cossetted, Luna? Is love freedom? Or only a longer leash? Love is a leash that pulls both ways, I think. So is worship. So is adoration. And I'm bereft of wine, unfortunately.

ANNA: Not to - interrupt. You guys seem to. Have a thing. But - is there a reason you're here? Or why - someone is here in your place, at least?

LUNA-THING: Anna Limon. Small god of the haunted house. Do you think I come here just to admire your plaything?

ANNA: My -

LUNA-THING: You have made quite a name for yourself, even in so short a time as you have been with us. Your failure at the ball was nothing short of spectacular.

MABEL: She didn't know. She - couldn't know. She hasn't lived with us, not really. It's a fairly intricate maze, consort. Not a single one of us knows every single rite, every unchanging rule.

ANNA: [LAUGHS, SOMEWHAT IN SHOCK] *Us?* Really?

LUNA-THING: You disbelieve that your pet snake is one of His Eternal Shadow's citizens? If not by blood, then surely by nature. Is she not fae and feral as any creature found in the depths of the hill?

ANNA: You seem to know her better than I do. Answer your own question.

MABEL: I. I.

VERATRINE: Mabel Martin, the girl half burning. Do you feel at home now?

MABEL: My feelings do not matter. They never have. Luna. Consort of the howling wind, consort of the death-knell. What *have* you come to tell us?

LUNA-THING: The howling wind requests an audience.

ANNA: The king is *asking* to see us?

VERATRINE: Time to die.

MABEL: No, this is - our way in. It is. It's - Luna, leave. You know why.

LUNA-THING: I do. [SOUNDS OF FOOTSTEPS DISAPPEARING]

VERATRINE: Wait, wait - please, wait - [SOUND OF RUNNING AFTER HER LOVE]

MABEL: Well, I'm not going to pretend I know what Vera is doing.

ANNA: No? Your expertise failing you? I thought you were one of them.

MABEL: Excuse me?

ANNA: Sorry, maybe I misunderstood. I'm not quite so at home down here. Lucky I have you to translate, right?

MABEL: I - I - you're angry. Because I said - I said us, because I was trying to - I just wanted to say that it wasn't your fault -

ANNA: It is my fault, though, isn't it? I don't know what I'm doing. You're right, I'm not like you. I don't belong here. Isn't that the point?

MABEL: I thought you belonged with me! I thought we - were going to - that we could do anything if we were together, if - [FRUSTRATED] you're right, you're nothing like me, I have been twisted and pulled apart and made to kneel and you [LAUGHTER] you, Anna, you, there are people missing you, there are people who love you, and you can do anything you want, make anything you want, I have been twisted but you, you can *twist* things -

ANNA: Is that what you really think? That I can do anything? Or do you have to - make apologies for me, for how little I know? This is what it always comes

down to - I shouldn't be here, I should be up in the real world with - whoever, whoever you think I should be with - go brush your hair, Anna, go smoke a cigarette, go back where you came from -

MABEL: Isn't that what you want? Isn't that why you get *angry* at me, for thinking that I'm - not human, not a person? Too bad, Anna, I'm not! And that bothers you! Doesn't it! Rowan forbid I admit that I am more like them, down here, than I ever was anything up there -

ANNA: You think I want to be anywhere you're not? No matter how many times I - how *faithless* are you, Mabel?

MABEL: [DISBELIEF] [PAUSE] I'm not faithless, Anna. I remember everything you say. All of it. Every single *word*. So I will remember how you lashed out at me because I didn't speak as *precisely* as you wanted. [WALKING AWAY SOUNDS] Sally didn't like that either. I can see why you two got on so well.

ANNA: [MUFFLED SWEARING] Wait. Mabel, come back.

MABEL: Of course. *Mistress*. I can do nothing else, can I? How convenient, that you can say whatever you want, and I must listen! The same isn't true for me, though, is it?

ANNA: I'm trying to - you remember everything, you said. Do you remember what Veratine told you, back in the house? When she called me a murderer?

MABEL: Yes. I didn't ask. Because I trust you. Even when you don't trust me.

ANNA: That's not - [SIGHS] Okay. There was - a few years ago, I made. A wish, maybe, or maybe it was a spell of some kind, I don't - I don't know. I was in nursing school. I kept - god, it shouldn't feel so insane to say I was having visions, is that really the craziest thing I could tell you? It does feel insane, but it's true, too. I could, like, see - something.

MABEL: I don't know what this has to do with us, explain to me -

ANNA: I *am* explaining. I *know* I'm not doing it particularly well. That's the point, I don't remember what I saw, just that it was - someone, a connection, time unravelling, me and - I couldn't bear it. No, that's not. That's not fair, I was just too - weak, I was too weak to bear it.

MABEL: To bear what? What was it? What did you do?

ANNA: I - tore it up. I snapped the connection, like a thread. I said *I'll never see her, I'll never know her, not in this world.* I tried to cut it out.

MABEL: You. That was. It was me, it was our - you -

ANNA: I shouldn't have done it, I know, I don't even - that's what she meant, when she asked why I came to the house. That's why she -

MABEL: No, you wanted to be *normal*, didn't you, poor Anna, you wanted to be left *alone* from this bad scary girl come to ruin you -

ANNA: No, that's - I just wanted it to *stop* - it wouldn't stop, I thought I was going crazy, I didn't know - it was worse, afterwards, everything was grey and bleak and - and *empty*, but I thought if I could kill it then I could at least - I don't know, *pretend* to want to live through it, the stupid, ugly trash of every day, but I couldn't, Mabel, I couldn't -

MABEL: What do you mean? What are you saying?

ANNA: Nothing. I'm just trying to explain.

MABEL: Then explain, Anna! I can't read your half truths!

[BEEP]

LUNA-THING: Little twiglet. You have altered yourself since the last time I saw you.

VERATRINE: Yes. And you have taking to wearing...make up.

LUNA-THING: If that is what you would call her. [PAUSE] I did not expect you to ally yourself with them, the girls half-dead and half-burning. I did not expect to see you again.

VERATRINE: I did not expect it myself. I have been...surprising myself as of late.

LUNA-THING: What does it taste like? Does it taste like liberty?

VERATRINE: No. It does not. That is most surprising of all.

LUNA-THING: What would, then, Veratrine?

VERATRINE: You, I think.

[BEEP]

MABEL: You have to promise me you'll never - ever - do anything like that again. No matter what happens. Even if this goes sideways and something - something happens to me -

ANNA: Nothing's going to happen to you. Don't even say that.

MABEL: Promise me.

ANNA: I promise. But I didn't tell you so you'd - feel sorry for me, or forgive me, or whatever, I just - it's not fair for you not to know. I don't - I don't want to have secrets from you.

MABEL: Do you still want - to be separated from me?

ANNA: No. That was never what I wanted. I only want - to be with you, in every way.

MABEL: I don't want to have secrets from you either. [PAUSES] I don't think I can go back. Up there. To playing at being human.

ANNA: I wouldn't make you. I can't, even if I wanted to. I'm stuck here, or - all the iterations of 'here', whatever that means. I shouldn't have gotten mad, Mabel, I'm sorry. Will you -

MABEL: I forgive you, I - i'm sorry too. I shouldn't keep holding your past against you. This is all that matters now. Us, together. Who we were - it's not important. I don't care about that. [PAUSES] Would you. Go back, if you could?

ANNA: Back to what? Everything is grey without you. None of it was real. There's only you, will you finally believe me when I tell you that? There's only you, only you, only -

[GRABBING ONE ANOTHER]

MABEL: Let's go gut a tyrant.

## 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 music in this episode was by Kai Engel, Ketsa, Martin Rach, Sergey Cheremisinov, Lobo Loco, and (morse), and all of it is available to download from the Free Music Archive at [freemusicarchive.org](https://freemusicarchive.org). For more information about this episode, including a full tracklist and transcript, visit us online at [mabelpodcast.com](https://mabelpodcast.com).

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