



INFINITY MIRROR: INVOCATION

Mabel, Infinity Mirror: Part Four, Invocation. In which one corner of the puzzle reveals itself.

[INTRO]

BECCA: Dear listeners, this is Becca De La Rosa, co-creator of the Mabel podcast.

MABEL: And this is the rhizome occasionally known as Mabel Martin.

BECCA: In celebration of our upcoming fifth season, we're going to be running a little competition.

MABEL: A big competition.

BECCA: Our biggest competition, actually.

MABEL: We're going to be offering one of our loyal listeners a chance to stay overnight in the house that inspired the podcast: an empty mansion built over the cliffs of the Irish Sea.

BECCA: We'll pay to fly you over here from anywhere in the world. First class.

MABEL: No entries are necessary. Just keep listening - [GLITCHES]

[BEEP]

[LAUGHTER]

[STATIC]

TRESSA: - not possible, just because it's not - it shouldn't be happening like - the stupidest thing, that I'm too old, this kind of. This kind of world-altering *shit* doesn't happen to people like me, it happens to kids, that's the rule, isn't it? You're a wizard, Harry? You're the chosen one, insert some simpering pre-teen here, or at best teenager, god, there are *laws* you can't even - can't even fucking imagine, there are worlds stacked and balanced on top of worlds - but if that was true I would have known, surely I would have heard something, I'm twenty-three years old and I thought I *understood* -

[AUDIBLE ATTEMPT TO CALM DOWN]

I am trapped. In a house. That might belong to a podcaster's grandmother, and might be. A fucking. Faerie house from a *story*. Either someone is playing a - Jesus, an incredibly detailed and, and complicated joke on me, or. I was talking to two. *Characters*. Who shouldn't even -

No phones. No internet. No outside world at all. No one but me, and the house.

Fuck it.

[SHUFFLING PAPERS. WALKING SOUNDS. THE TAPE RECORDER JOSTLES AGAINST CLOTH, SKIN]

Mappae mundi. Charts of the known world, the glory of god's creation laid out in geometric precision. I have one on my bedroom wall, the Psalter Map: the world as a flat circle with Jerusalem at the center, Jesus and two angels above and dragons below. There's a list of 'monstrous races' inside the globe. *Serpent-eaters* is one of them. If you can -

[CATCHES BREATH]

If you can map something, you can understand it. That's all, right? All we've been trying to do since the beginning: find the limits of the world and of our place within it. Fill in the gaps of our knowledge. Once something's written

down, it's finite. Caged by the facts of itself. [LAUGHS, UNSTEADY] Am I starting to sound like Mabel? I think I'm starting to sound like Mabel. I don't know if that's a bad thing. Not if I'm where -

The house. It won't let me out. Becca - *Anna* said it doesn't want to. What else can I do? This is the only weapon I have: cartography.

[MORE SHUFFLING, WALKING NOISES]

[MUTTERING TO HERSELF] There's the kitchen. That's where I came in, though I think it's supposed to be a back entrance. A servant's entrance, maybe. Kitchen, then the big dining room with the sliding glass door out to the veranda, everything dark now. The sea and the moon. Welcome basket still on the table [LAUGHS]. Yeah, so welcome. Okay. Past the dining room -

Past the dining room, the hallway with the staircase. First door on the right, a - living room? Maybe? With green walls, with huge bay windows facing out at the ocean, with a cast-iron fireplace, with green velvet armchairs. That's -

That's what *Anna* called it. The Green Parlour.

[SINGING BEGINS FROM SOMEWHERE DISTANT]

I wish they'd shut up.

Through the door on the far side of the Green Parlour -

Wait, that can't -

[FOOTSTEPS, SHUFFLING]

I came through the dining room into the hall, and from there -

How can I be back in the dining room?

[WHISPERING, TRYING TO SOOTHE HERSELF] Okay, okay, okay. Dining room. Window. Ocean, moon. Through the door, into the - into the hall -

[SINGING GROWS LOUDER]

[SHOUTING] Fine! If you're going to be so fucking rude, I'll do it backwards. It doesn't matter. Far end of the hall, this door is *going* to take me into the library, I just have to -

Dining room.

Fuck. Fuck, fucking *hell*. I'm not going this. Are you listening? I'm not, I *refuse*, I'm going to -

[SINGING LOUD, EERIE]

Upstairs.

[TRESSA SCREAMING WORDLESSLY, NOT IN HORROR BUT IN ABJECT FRUSTRATION; SINGING REACHES A FEVER PITCH]

[STATIC]

[EVERYTHING CALM NOW. NO MORE SINGING, NO MORE FRANTIC SCRAMBLING BETWEEN ROOMS.]

I know there have to be at least ten rooms in this house, just from the size of it, the shape I saw getting out of the car earlier today. Yesterday. Whenever that was, a million goddamn years ago. But the house will only let me into three of them. The kitchen, the Green Parlour, and the dining room, where I am now, sitting at the table, watching the hills and the ocean and the sky. Even the room with the typewriter is gone.

There are things -

There are things that are real. Things that are true, the way I never -

I tried to rewrite -

[RUSTLE OF PAPER]

"Number ten." This is the last one. "Who is Lara Ouvriers?"

[LONG PAUSE, GIVES WAY TO SLIGHT LAUGHTER, AS IF CONTAINING SOMETHING]

I was six when my mom died. It happened not long after the - thing with the black bird, the yew berries. A car hit her. She died on the spot. My dad works for Amtrak, he wasn't home enough to take care of a little kid. It was one of my mom's friends who told her about Lang Primary. A boarding school for kids with physical disabilities, completely subsidised by a board of generous and anonymous donors. Lang Primary Conservatory for the Disabled. A while ago, long before I went there, it was called Lang Primary Conservatory for Crippled Children.

Lara Ouvriers is the principal. Was, was the principal. It's hard to remember what she looked like. I remember her being very, very tall, but I was seven when I first saw her. I remember her with blonde hair styled in a way that always looked sharp, as though she could cut you. I remember her with big necklaces, her hands folded behind her back when she came into class to observe us. In third grade we started having one-on-one sessions with her.

No. That's not. It's not true. It's just what I told myself. God, this - [SIGHS, GATHERS HERSELF]

After what happened with the ring, she started calling me in to see her. She'd ask me questions, like - did I have bad dreams? Did I hate my disability? Did I hear voices, did I see things no one else could see? Did I hate myself? What did I see when I closed my eyes? What did I see when I held this stone, or this piece of metal, or this little statue? Did I wish I could run, like Larissa? Did I wish I could throw myself around without caring how my body might react? Did I want to be strong, and brave, and tireless?

I started saying yes. I thought it was what she wanted to hear. It made her happy, she used to smile at me, just like - I don't know. Sunshine. I wanted to be good for someone. Miss Ouvriers told me -

She said: there are ways to get what you want. Don't you want to see, Tressa?

I said yes.

[SHIFTING, CHAIR CREAKING]

The day they killed the mourning dove was sometime in winter. If I thought about it now, I'd guess it was the midwinter solstice, the shortest night, because it just seems fitting. For what they wanted; what *she* wanted. I don't know if they have a name. Her - people, the organisation. I know there were

a lot of them, maybe fifty, maybe a hundred, all gathered around the stone, all wearing white, like - doesn't that somehow make it worse? All that white, when the blood went everywhere? Like it was intentional, a statement, *we are righteous*. A woman brought the mourning dove. Not Miss Ouvriers. He struggled, only for a minute. Not long. Miss Ouvriers said...

I remember what she said.

[IN A DIFFERENT TONE, COLDER OR MORE DISTANT] *We call him forth, from the depths of the black earth. From the coiled weight of eternity. We offer life in the blood we shed for him.*

It was Miss Ouvriers who cut the bird's throat. I started crying, one of the - whoever they were, one of them had to cover my mouth. There was - I didn't know what to do, I was the only kid there. I didn't know what -

I'm not a good person. I think you have to know that. I could have told someone, I could have run for help. I didn't. But I was *glad* that nothing happened. I don't know who or what they were trying to call up; he didn't show, and I was so fucking glad, it was the only thing I could think. Good. Good. Serves them right.

[ODD NOISE FROM THE HOUSE]

What -

There's another - there's something after number ten. It wasn't there five minutes ago, I - I know it wasn't. "Number eleven. Go into the Green Parlour."

[WALKING NOISES; DOOR OPENING; A GASP, MORE OF DELIGHT THAN ANYTHING ELSE]

It's - oh my god, it's just -

It's the dollhouse. The one - only it's different, it's -

It's this house. Sally's house. There's the kitchen, there's the dining room with the big window and the table, there's -

[CLATTERING SOUND]

It's me. A little doll, in the Green Parlour. I am - [LAUGHS] I'm holding myself in the palm of my hand. It can't be anything but a gift, can it? The house with its arms outstretched?

I don't -

[STATIC]

[OUTRO]

Mabel is written by Becca De La Rosa and Mabel Martin, and produced by Becca De La Rosa. The voice of Tressa Davies is Tressa Evans-Salvemini. The music in this episode was by Meydän, Stillborn Blues, krackatoa, and (morse), and all of it is available to download from the Free Music Archive at freemusicarchive.org. For more information about Mabel, including a full tracklist and transcript, visit us online at mabelpodcast.com.

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