



Infinity Mirror: Tressa

Mabel: Infinity Mirror, Part One; Tressa. In which we encounter our own reflections.

[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: Hi, oh, is this - ? How do you work this –

Hi, this is Tressa Davies. A couple months ago I entered a competition run by the creators of the podcast Mabel, and – God, I sound so stupid. Fuck, fuck, fuck.

...Hi, this is Tressa Davies. A couple months ago I entered a competition run by the creators of the podcast Mabel; I won travel expenses to Ireland and a night spent in the house that inspired the story, this – it's really beautiful, this old house that belonged to Becca De La Rosa's grandmother, before she died. So, I'm –

Okay. Uh, it's. The rules of the competition are that I have to record my night here. I think they're going to use it to promo the new season of Mabel, or something. Yeah. Um. I'd like to thank Becca De La Rosa and her partner for this, and for everything – they flew me out here first class, there was a limo driver waiting at the airport, this place is – like I said, it's beautiful. It's right over the ocean, all the rooms on the ground floor have these big bay windows, all you can see is just blue and green and the little islands in the middle of the Irish Sea. Two days ago I was looking at the cement courtyard of my apartment block, so. This is definitely an improvement.

I'm – so, there was a welcome basket waiting for me on the kitchen table. A bunch of, like, organic Irish chocolate, some fresh scones from the village bakery, apples, a tub of honeycomb, this voice recorder, and – [LAUGHS]. They left me a – an instruction sheet, I guess, of things I should talk about. [READS OUT LOUD] "One: tell us about yourself. Where you come from, what you do, what you like, what you want to do with your life. Two: go upstairs and into the second door on the left. Tell us what you see."

Okay. Tressa Davies, I said that. I'm from Ithaca, New York, I'm a college – or, I guess, technically – I did just drop out of college. I was, um. I was studying medieval history. I like. Oh, god, what do I like. I don't know, embroidery. Weird monastic plainchant from the Spanish hills. I like – growing things, I like my cats. This one poplar tree outside the apartment building, it's. It's,

like. You know how you can tell when something is good, when it's just breathing goodness in and out. Yeah, it's. It's like that. I like, um. Caravaggio. Richard the Third. Old gothic novels that involve moors and lots of running.

What do I want to do with my life? [VERY SOFTLY] I'm not – uh, I don't know. I'm sorry, that's kind of a. It's kind of a hard question, you know?

All right. How do you turn this thing –

[STATIC]

"Number two: go upstairs and into the second door on the left. Tell us what you see."

Okay.

So, I have – one of the [VAGUELY SARCASTIC] *things* about me is that I have this condition called Nemaline Myopathy, which can cause, among a bunch of other stuff, some difficulty with mobility and carrying my own weight very far – this, this staircase is, it's big, it's like a proper old manor house, you know, and – I'm only saying this because it might take me a while to get to the top, so. It might not be *riveting* audio drama. All right. What else is –

"Number three. Talk about a time in your childhood when you truly understood what it felt like to experience fear."

That's...that's a little weird. I know it's a horror podcast, but – well, I'm a guest here. I guess I owe these people – their kicks, or whatever it is. Material. Is that what this is? [LAUGHS]

Okay.

There was this –

Once when I was six, I think, my mom took me to the playground across the street from our apartment. I wasn't a super rambunctious kid, obviously, I liked to, you know. Pick flowers, make houses out of dead leaves and twigs, collect weird mushrooms. I read a lot, by myself. I wasn't loud or precocious. I went to this - anyway. So this one time, I wandered away from the main area with all the jungle gyms and slides and everything, and I found this tree – a couple years later I figured out that it was a yew tree, but at the time I just

thought it was a pretty, glossy green, had these red berries all over it. I sat down under the tree, and.

There was a bird, it was a raven. It hopped over and started eating the yew berries, and it – I know how this sounds, and yeah, I was, I was six, but I remember it, I really do remember it. It was *watching* me, the whole time. Big black bird, bigger than my whole face, my whole chest, sitting just a foot or two away from me and snatching the berries from the tree. And it – [LAUGHS, in a self-deprecating kind of way] it *inclined its head at me*. Like: please, eat.

I grew up on Narnia and Harry Potter and Disney movies. Animals know things, right? If a bird bigger than my cat is sitting practically in my lap and offering me something to eat, am I ever *not* going to eat it? Of course I ate the berries. They were – there's – they have a strange texture to them, almost plastic, just. Too symmetrical, too smooth. They tasted like – the red part was sweet, *oddly* sweet, but the seeds – they stuck in my teeth, they tasted like industrial chemicals.

I don't think – there's no way you don't know this, you guys, of all people, but yew seeds are poisonous. [LAUGHS] Every part of the yew tree is poisonous, except the red berry covering the seeds. Taxine, the poison is called. It causes vomiting and headaches and convulsions and, eventually, it stops your heart. I know this now. I didn't know then.

The bird – I swear, it *laughed* at me. It flew away – you know how ravens fly, they're heavy, you can hear their wings almost whining through the air. And I was alone, and I knew, I knew, I knew that I was going to die. That I'd been tricked. That bird had looked inside me and seen how useless and foolish and disposable and, and *impermanent* I was, and it offered me a poisoned apple like Snow White's stepmother and just flew away and left me alone to die.

[LAUGHS AGAIN] Anyway. My mom found me, I went to the ER, they pumped my stomach, nothing happened. Not really. I was a stupid kid who ate some poisonous berries. The end.

Here, top of the stairs. Okay. Second door on the left.

It's – light switch, light switch. Oh, it's an office, I guess. Bookcases on the wall. A desk with an old typewriter. I thought – I did think in her email Becca said – I thought she said her grandmother had died two years ago, and no

one had been living here since. They...must have good cleaners. There;s no dust, no boxes. Lots of books on the shelf, a piece of paper in the typewriter. There’s something on –

[TYPEWRITER UNSCROLLING]

“A black-eyed bird with a mouthful of berries tried to sing her down under the ground.”

| –

[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, Chad Crouch, Filmy Ghost and Peter Edwards Ambient, Blue Dot Sessions, Sara Alfonso, 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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