

# Malevolent Maine

## Episode 39: The Ritual of Spirit

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Malevolent Maine is a horror podcast, and may contain material not suitable for all audiences. Listener discretion is advised.

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### **INTRO:**

**TOM:** Only one more episode and we hope to uncover answers to the investigation that has plagued us this entire season.

Hi. It's Tom here reminding you to follow us on social media for all of our latest news and cases. Make sure to give us a 5 star review where you listen to us. And if you're able and willing, consider joining our Malevolent Mob at Patreon. All six episodes of *The Black Tarot* are there, and we're about to launch our newest side story, *Cardinal Sins*. That's [patreon.com/malevolentmaine](https://patreon.com/malevolentmaine).

Enjoy!

The hooded figures stand in a circle, their identities completely concealed beneath their heavy cloaks. Suddenly you hear a voice, like the very night itself, intoning the words to an ancient spell. Your blood turns to ice and your legs are rooted firmly to the ground. You're in danger here. You never should have come. Whatever ceremony is about to be performed, it was never meant for your eyes. You are trespassing on a powerful secret ritual, and you may not make it out with your life.

This is Malevolent Maine.

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Guys, what was that?

I saw it with my own eyes

No, seriously, what was that?

It's just not scientifically possible.

I can't explain it.

Oh my God. Oh my God. Oh my God.

This stuff is wild, man. It's real wild.

But... what was that?

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Mirror, mirror on the wall, who's the most terrifying go them all, MMsers? Today's story you almost have to see to believe.

All season we've been chasing various covens of witches, all following different women called the Betrothed. Each of these covens, first in Machias, then Andover, Fort Kent, and finally Kennebunk, have performed rituals associated with the four classic elements: fire, air, earth, and water. All season we've been one step behind these covens, arriving after the rituals have been completed and with very little understanding of what these covens have been doing.

That may all be changing.

Recently, Mark was manning the front desk here at the Malevolent Maine office. He stepped out bak to get something for an unrelated investigation and when he returned he found a note lying on the front desk, written on a piece of square white paper.

Lucas and Megan were in the back, recording some lines for an episode of the podcast, but aside from Mark no one else was in the office. We even checked the surveillance recording; nothing. Mark walks into the back room and there's nothing on the front desk. A second later, the piece of paper is there. It seemingly appears out of nowhere, as if by magic. Mark, for one, doubts there was anything supernatural about it.

**MARK [in studio]:** I was gone for maybe a minute, two minutes tops. That's plenty of time for someone to sneak in, leave the note, and get back out before I come back. As far as the security footage... they could have hacked the system and erased the few seconds they were in the office, making it look to us, at least, that the note magically appeared.

For now, we'd like to focus on what the note said. Since Lucas was already in the studio we had him read it aloud:

**LUCAS:** There is a Fifth. Jackman, October 1st. 11:00 PM. Rixian cloak. Come alone. Signed, a Friend.

Below that were map coordinates.

The note itself was written in a black gel pen on thick white paper. It wasn't quite card stock, but it wasn't the cheap stuff we have in our copier, either. It was also exactly seven and half inches on each side. While uncommon, it doesn't appear to be especially unique. We found similar paper at our local office supply store, and it would be relatively easy to cut it into the precise square shape.

The coordinates were for a section of forest near the town of Jackman, Maine. Jackman is a small town in Somerset County, right on Route 201, along the shore of Wood Pond. Its regular population is just over 700 people, and it's mostly known for its hunting, fishing, and camping. If Maine is rural and remote to the rest of the country, Jackman is considered remote to most Mainers. It's about a four hour drive from our offices, close to the Canadian border.

The town itself is named for Captain James Jackman, the man commissioned to finish the road from the Forks to the Canadian Border. Known as the Old Canada Road, or sometimes Arnold's Road, for Benedict Arnold who took it on his march to Quebec, today, it has come to be known as Route 201. It runs all the way

from the Canadian border to Brunswick, at the Northern end of Casco Bay. Jackman is, for all intents and purposes, the true middle of nowhere, while at the same time being a premiere destination for those looking to spend some time adventuring outdoors.

As near as we could tell, there's nothing overly...malevolent about Jackman. It has its share of missing hunter stories, plenty of Bigfoot and UFO encounters, but nothing that would seemingly trigger the need to send us a mysterious, magically appearing note.

It was the other detail that excited us.

A Rixian cloak is a specific term that few outside of our area of expertise would know. It is a specific piece of fashion associated with certain circles of witchcraft. The cloak itself is full length made of a silky black material. The sleeves and the hood are trimmed in purple thread work, stitched into specific intricate patterns. When one knows what they're looking for, it's easy to spot a Rixian cloak because of the very particular whorls and spirals. Originally these cloaks were all designed by one man, Gregor Rix, a noted warlock, in the 1600s. It was said that as he approached the end of his life, he taught his distinct pattern to thirteen apprentices who had willingly cut out their own tongues to show their loyalty. Rixian cloaks are extremely rare and valuable. They are hard to come by and not easy to imitate.

It also, just so happens, that I happen to own one.

I've spoken in other places about my grandfather. He was the man who started me on my path of exploring the odd and the unexplained. He was an historian, something of a treasure hunter, and above all else a collector of arcane knowledge. When he passed away he left his extensive collection to me. Amongst the many grimoires and trinkets, was a Rixian cloak in near perfect condition.

It was obvious we were meant to go to this location, in disguise, and observe something. If Rixian cloaks were involved this undoubtedly involved witchcraft. And if the first part of the note was to be believed, at least in the way we interpreted it, this was related to the elemental covens we'd been tracking.

To back up a step, we had previously believed that the various covens were performing charging rituals, imbuing something with incredible magical power. Often these kinds of rituals were used to charge up a specific location, typically an altar or magic circle, but it could be a home, or even just a region. Spread out to nearly the four corners of Maine, it was hard to see what these four locations had in conjunction with each other. If each region was being charged, we weren't sure how they were all related.

We had been thinking there were four elements, the classic ones that form the basis of all alchemy. What we didn't take into account is that in Satanic witchcraft there are five elements: Fire, Water, Earth, Air... and Spirit.

**LUCAS:** The four primary elements represent the physical world. All things are built from some combination of the four. That's why they are all depicted as different versions of triangles. We've found these triangles all over our investigations of the covens, from the walls of U Maine Machias, the skull of Mary Nasson [**Nass-on**]. Spirit, on the other hand, is depicted as a circle with a cross through it, dividing it into four equal parts. This is because the Spirit is not physical but metaphysical. It is the will that binds all things, the mind over matter.

**TOM:** Kinda like the Force in Star Wars.

Thanks, Tom.

If there is a fifth ritual, a fifth coven, then perhaps this whole thing isn't as over as we thought it was. It also meant I had to go up to Jackman.

Mark and Lucas were deep in another investigation, and Tom was on a little vacation, so it came down to me. The note had said to come alone, and the way I saw it if I didn't go now, we might never get the answers we were after.

Tom called me the day before I was supposed to drive up to Jackman.

**TOM:** Hey, man, I don't think you should go alone. This could be dangerous. What if they're setting you up? Wait for one of us. I can come back early and we can go together.

I assured him I would be fine. I promised I would be safe, and shared my location settings with the group. They would be able to track me, and if something went wrong they would be able to find me. I had no intentions of becoming involved, but I was determined to go and observe.

On the morning of October 1st, I packed my grandfather's Rixian cloak, made sure my phone and recording equipment was charged, and then started the drive up towards Jackman.

I was driving along the Turnpike, just north of Augusta when Mark and Lucas checked in.

**[on the phone]**

**MARK:** Hey, are you headed up to Jackman?

**CHRIS:** I am.

**MARK:** Cool. We're headed back from the camp in Sullivan. Nothing conclusive.

**CHRIS:** Find anything?

**LUCAS [in the background]:** Nothing conclusive. We still have some leads to check out, but I think we can probably cross this one off the list.

**MARK:** Listen, I just got an alert that Armitage College was broken into last night.

**CHRIS:** Okayyyy.

**MARK:** They took Elizabeth Howe's mirror.

Elizabeth Howe was one of the nineteen people accused and executed of witchcraft in Salem, Massachusetts in 1692. Mary had been born in Yorkshire, England but had moved to Massachusetts by the 1650s. A known witch, Howe was accused of sending her spirit out to do harm by several of the children of Salem village. She was found guilty of witchcraft and the unnatural murder of the young daughter of the Pearly family and hanged at Gallows Hill on July 19, 1692.

Like many of the accused from Salem, there is some uncertainty that Elizabeth Howe was indeed a witch. Modern interpretations of those tragic events depict the accused as innocent victims of a town-wide hysteria, however many records from the time indicate the presence of Satanic witchcraft, with Howe's name appearing in several books, written in what appears to be her own blood. That Elizabeth Howe was a witch cannot be called into doubt.

One of the few artifacts to survive the witch trials in Salem, was a mirror said to have belonged to Elizabeth Howe. It was oval, about the size of a sheet of paper. It was said that Howe would gaze into its depths and send her spirit out through the looking glass to attack her victims. She would also divine the future for any who paid her price and it was said she communicated with the Devil himself with the mirror.

After her death, her husband, James Howe, who had been "named" in the court, but not officially charged, was forced to sell

their home. His reputation in the area was ruined, and it was said he sold quick and left quicker. The man who purchased the land that the Howes lived on was Reverend George Burroughs, who would eventually come north to York, Maine. It is said that he was the one who brought the cursed mirror to Maine. It was a curiosity, one he kept in a locked trunk and only removed on special occasions, usually when he wanted to impress, or intimidate, members of high society.

The mirror eventually made its way to the archives of Armitage college. It has been kept there since the 1850s, one of the college's prized possessions and an invaluable artifact from American history.

When Mark told me the mirror had been stolen, I couldn't help but feel its theft was related to the Ritual of Spirit. It was just too much of a coincidence that on the eve of the ritual a sacred witchcraft artifact was stolen. If it was indeed the Coven of Spirit that stole the mirror, it meant they were more powerful and capable than we had imagined.

The boys warned me to be safe and made me promise to check in regularly. I told them I would, then continued my trek north.

I checked into a room at Bishop's Motel in what amounts to downtown Jackman. I couldn't help but consider the irony - Bridgette Bishop was one of the women executed with Elizabeth Howe, another Salem witch.

Everyone who lives in Maine knows, and has done their best to forget, that at one point Maine was considered a part of Massachusetts. The two states are relatively close and to this day people come and go between the two regions frequently. We talked in Episode 21 about Mooretown. Josias and Rebecca Moore, along with their sister-wife Mary Cummings escaped Salem just before the trials to found their witch community in Maine. Now, with Elizabeth Howe's mirror going missing, I couldn't help but feel these connections to one of America's darkest historical past.



With time to spare before the midnight meeting, I decided to check out the nearby Whipple Cemetery. Ever since I purchased a vial of graveyard dirt from a man at a craft fair (all the way back in Episode 23), I've become fascinated with graveyards and cemeteries. In our line of work they are also good places to find wandering spirits, and of course, the Coven of Water met regularly in a cemetery. I don't know what I expected to find there, but I felt an urge to check it nonetheless.

It was near dark when I decided to head back. As I made my way back through the rows of silent stones, a black figure stepped out from behind a tall monument.

It was a woman, a little shorter than I am, dressed in black robes, the hood pulled low to hide her face. I can't swear that she wasn't in the cemetery when I got there, but I hadn't seen or heard her until the moment she wanted me to. She seemed to glide across the grass towards me.

"We are the Sisters of the Crescent Hunt," she said. "Do not say a word. Not even if spoken to. And wear this." She pressed something into my hand. Her hands were cold, like ice, but her grip was firm.

I looked down to see what she had given me and when I looked up again, she was gone. As near as I could tell, the Whipple Cemetery was empty save for me and the dead.

What she handed me was a tube of eye black, like the kind athletes put under their eyes before a game. I was curious and raced back to the hotel to do some research.

The next three hours were spent finding out whatever I could about the group known as the Sisters of the Crescent Hunt. This was the first time we had been given a name for this group, and I was unsure whether this was the particular coven we were dealing with, or if it was the name of the larger group organizing all these rituals.

The Sisters of the Crescent Hunt are a group of Dianic witches focused on female experience and empowerment. They claim Diana, the Roman goddess of the moon and the hunt as their matron. They are always women, typically virgins. They are a select group and not much is known about them outside of what they let the world know. Men are strictly forbidden in their rituals and groups. The eye black was because during rituals, they often blacked out their eyes with thick black paint, like a blindfold painted across their face. It would help hide my true identity, as would the Rexian cloak. If I kept quiet, I might be able to infiltrate this group and learn what they were doing.

A little before eleven pm, I found myself walking through the woods, dressed head to toe in black robes, my face shadowed from the dim moonlight. I had my phone out recording and trying to find the coordinates I had been sent.

**CHRIS [in the field]:** So, if these really are a Dianic coven, I could be in big trouble if I get caught. I mean, they don't like men on a regular basis, let alone during a super secret ritual in the middle of the night. Is it possible that this group has been behind everything? That doesn't seem likely. All of the other covens, except Air, had males in the group. More likely this is just the newest Coven to

**SYBIL:** You make too much noise.

**CHRIS [starts glitching]:** Woah! Where did you... who are you? What are you planning tonight?

At this point, my phone started glitching, and shut off completely. I tried to restart it, but even though my battery was at ninety-five percent when my new friend stepped out of the shadows, my phone would simply not turn on.

It was the same woman who had appeared to me in the cemetery, and, I assumed, sent the note in the first place. She placed a

hand on my back to guide me forward and leaned close. She whispered one word in my ear as we started toward the ritual site. That word made my blood run cold.

"Chaos."

**LUCAS:** Chaos magic is a very dangerous form of witchcraft. The idea has become popularized lately in Disney and Marvel's *Avengers* movies with the character of Scarlet Witch, but in real life, while chaos magic is equally powerful, it is much, much more sinister. According to practitioners of chaos magic, "the essence of magic is that perceptions are conditioned by beliefs, and that the world as we perceive it can be changed by deliberately changing those beliefs."

What this means, in a nutshell, is that a person's belief that they can change and affect the world is all the power they need to do it. Others believe that magic can be achieved by performing specific rituals or phrases or by calling upon certain deities or beings. Chaos magicians believe no specifics are required to perform magic *unless the practitioner believes it*. If calling upon the power of Satan or performing the third sacred rite of Solomon works the witch, then it is real for them.

It is a particularly powerful form of magic and one that, as its name describes, is incredibly wild. One of the beliefs is that the universe has a bit of a twisted sense of humor and that unless you are specific with your intentions, the universe will find a way to twist what you are trying to manifest.

**MARK:** If you, like many high school freshmen in this country, ever read W. W. Jacobs's short story, "The Monkey's Paw" you have a good idea of what we're talking about. In that story, an older couple wishes for money on a magic monkey's paw. The next day they receive the money... but as a goodwill gesture from the company where their son works because he has died in a horrible accident. They then

wish him alive again, but before they can open the door to his knocking, they become afraid that whatever they wished back won't *exactly* be their son. Chaos magic is like that. You manifest the idea to become rich and the next day be struck by a car. You might be horribly injured but the injury settlement makes you rich.

With chaos magic you need to be incredibly specific and direct with your intentions. Once you alter your perception to change the world, you need to work hard to contain that power.

If the Coven of the Spirit, the so-called Sisters of the Crescent Hunt, are chaos magicians, the danger I was in had just increased exponentially.

My guide directed me towards a clearing in the middle of the woods. The moon, not a crescent like I had imagined, but a waning gibbous offered only limited light, but it wasn't the only source.

Thirteen candles had been placed around the small clearing. They were white, each one about a foot tall, their flickering flames offering extra light. Behind some of the candles stood a pair of people dressed in Rixian cloaks, their faces hidden by the deep, dark hoods. My guide led me to an empty spot behind one of the candles and motioned for me to stand behind her. As we waited more hooded figures emerged from the woods, taking their place behind one of the candles.

When each of the spots had been filled by two witches, one of the hooded figures took the smallest of steps forward and raised two hands to about eye level. On cue, the robed figure who had been in the back, took a step to their left and stepped forward, completing a circle of twenty-six witches... or twenty-five, plus myself.

The Rixian cloaks made it almost impossible to determine who was beneath their folds, and the eye black made sure that not even their eyes shined from beneath the cowls. Looking around the

circle, I felt strangely exposed, and yet completely hidden. I tried to make eye contact with my guide on my right, but she kept her focus on the center of the ring.

The woman who had given the directions to form the circle, walked slowly towards the center and pulled something out from beneath her Rixian cloak. She set it down in the center then stepped back to her place in the circle.

As she resumed her place either another direction was given or the assembled group simply knew what followed. In unison, each woman standing in front of a candle stepped behind the circle and took the place of the woman two places on her left so that they were once again standing in front of a candle. Then the rest of us took a step forward and moved two spaces to our right. The ending result was that I was now nowhere near the woman who had brought me. I was surrounded by dangerous enemies.

Maybe it was the dim light or everyone in the Rixian cloaks, but suddenly I felt disoriented. It was difficult for me to find the woman who had brought me, and I was equally confused as to who brought the item placed in the center.

It was only then that I actually noticed what was on the ground before us. It was a skull. A human skull. Carved into the middle of its forehead was a circle, split into four equal quarters with a cross or plus-sign. This was the sign for spirit in witchcraft. Protruding from the skull on either side of the symbol were two black horn-like shapes, each about three inches long, curling upwards like devil horns. These weren't glued on or attached some other way. They appeared to be growing directly out of the skull.

There was only one skull I knew that looked like this and it belonged to Gideon Hawthorne.

**TOM:** Gideon Hawthorne was a notable warlock from the early Twentieth Century. As a teenager Hawthorne began growing horns on his forehead which started as black moles on

either side. Eventually the moles cracked open and the horns began to sprout. Doctors have determined that the growths were homoplastic osteoma, which are different from cutaneous horns more commonly seen in cases of human horn growth. Cutaneous horns are keratin growths, made from the same thing as fingernails. Homoplastic osteoma, on the other hand, is when new bone grows on existing bone causing protuberances beneath the skin. These are typically benign tumors, and while fairly rare, have been known to occur in humans. Gideon Hawthorne, however, believed that his horns were a sign that he was destined for great magical power. Hawthorne dedicated himself to the study of magic becoming a seventh level warlock by the time he was twenty-one. He founded Disciples of Sheomal [**shay-oh-mal**], an order dedicated to reaching higher planes of existence through pretty intricate blood magic. He moved this group all over the country, eventually settling in Newport, Maine on the shores of Sebasticook Lake. Hawthorne died in 1973 of complications from an undiagnosed heart disease. He was buried in an unknown, unmarked grave by his disciples.

Skulls, again. This coven of chaos witches had somehow come into possession of Gideon Hawthorne's skull, and as I started at it, I realized something else. Mirrors had been placed inside the skull's eye sockets reflecting the light from the candles. It didn't take much for me to draw connections between the stolen witch's mirror and this warlock skull. The Coven of Spirit had broken the mirror and inserted the glass into the skull.

"Tonight," one of the women said. "We adopt the aspect of the Mother Witch. Take a moment to shift your perceptions."

I assumed this woman was the same one who had placed the skull, but she wasn't standing where I had thought she was. I couldn't see any faces from beneath the folds of the thick cloaks or any other discerning features.

After a moment of silent meditation, the lead spoke again. Only this time I could have sworn her voice came from another witch across the circle from me.

"The skull of the horned warlock. Married with the glass of a fallen Sister."

The woman raised her arms in a gesture of supplication towards the skull in the center of the ring and the group followed, then said, "Let the ritual begin."

Again the woman, the Betrothed of this coven, spoke. And again her voice seemed to come from a different woman than the one who had just spoken.

"Mother. Mother of spirit. Mother of all. We evoke you."

It was the same voice each time the Betrothed spoke, but each time it seemed to come from another woman of the circle.

"With the Lavation of Spirit, with our promise to you, we seek your guidance."

Once she was on my left a few witches down. Then diagonally across from me. Finally, I heard the voice come from the witch directly to my left.

"Dark Father who watches from the towers in the North, South, East, and West we ask that you come into your loyal Betrothed and grant her your power."

With the ritual complete the skull in the center of the ring began to rise off the ground. It levitated two feet in the air and slowly started to spin.

"Now we must manifest our intention," the Betrothed said from a different position in the circle.

In chaos magic, an intention is what you want, an outcome from the magic you are performing. It must be specific and direct, something you can actually measure and to manifest that intention is to will it into existence, to manipulate the essence of the universe towards your goal.

As the coven focused its intention a sickly purplish light began to emanate from the skull's eyes, or was somehow reflected in the pieces of Elizabeth Howe's mirror that had been placed there.

The skull began to spin faster and faster and the light became more intense. I know this sounds impossible, but I saw it with my own eyes. The light became brighter until it seemed to illuminate the entire clearing. I closed my eyes to block it out, but I could still see the purple light pulsing as it spun around and around.

While the other witches were manifesting their intention, whatever dark wish they had agreed upon, the only thing I could think, over and over in my head, was: "Find a way to stop this. Find a way to stop this."

I don't know how long it lasted. Time seemed to have no meaning as I prayed over and over to get out of there in one piece. All I knew was that the skull kept spinning and its dangerous purple light kept splashing over us again and again.

And then it was over.

The clearing was dark again. Slowly I opened my eyes. The horned skull of Gideon Hawthorne was gone. One by one the black robed witches pinched out the candles and disappeared into the darkness. As one of them passed by me, her hand brushed ever so gently against my own, and I understood that it was my guide. I followed her as she moved off into the darkness. When we had walked for several minutes, I tried to speak, but she shook her head.



It was only when we had gone all the way back to my car, parked on the side of a dirt road that we stopped. I pulled off my robe and asked what had just happened, what had I just seen.

"The Ritual of Spirit," she said. "The Fifth ritual, but this is not over yet."

"Who are you?" I asked. "Why are you helping me?"

The woman pulled back the hood of Rixian cloak then, and I saw she was a thin-faced woman with striking brown eyes and long black hair.

"Call me Sybil," she said. "And not all of us agree with what the Betrothed have planned. Go quickly. It is not safe here. Go ."

She traced the sign for protection in the air, nodded once, and was gone, blending back into the darkness of the night.

I am not ashamed to admit I was more than a little scared. I drove back to Bishop's Motel and hastily checked out. I drove straight back home, not stopping once during the four hours. I was somewhere near Skowhegan when I thought to check my phone. It had turned on sometime during the drive and appeared to be operating perfectly fine.

When everyone was back in the office we called a meeting to discuss everything we had learned so far about these rituals and the covens.

**LUCAS:** These rituals were all charging rituals, as we've talked about many times already. They prepare an area or person for a more complex, more powerful spell in order to have a greater effect.

All five covens we've encountered have been different. Different people, different styles, different beliefs. And

yet they all performed the same style of ritual, and all follow a woman they call the Betrothed.

**MARK:** As near as we can tell all of the rituals have involved skulls of some sort. At least, we think so. We're not sure about the Ritual of Fire because that one seemingly happened before we got word of it. Also, I double checked with the Fort Kent police the other day, asking for any updates on the missing girl who went into the Devil's Den to help perform the Ritual of Earth. The officer I spoke to had no real updates, there have been no signs of the missing woman, but he did tell me something interesting. Someone recently snuck into those caves outside of town where the coven had descended. He told me they had further desecrated the grave of Grammy Grimes, but he couldn't say any more. When I asked him if they took her skull he was silent for a few moments, then reluctantly said, "yes."

**TOM:** So there were actually five different covens and five rituals performed in all different parts of the state. Sybil told Chris that this wasn't over yet, which makes sense since these have been charging rituals. So it sounds like there will be a sixth one. We don't know where or when, but Samhain [Sow-wen] is coming up soon and that's one of the major witch's sabbats. It's likely the final ritual will be performed then. We still don't know where, exactly, so I was plotting the five points on a map of the state. That's when I figured it out. If you connect all five towns where the rituals took place you get a pentagram drawn across the state. If I had to bet, the center of that pentagram is where the final ritual will take place.

And that center? The space where all five points converge? It's an area just northwest of Skowhegan. A place we know very well.

It's Mooretown, the long lost witch village.

Stay safe out there, Maine.

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Malevolent Maine is Lucas Knight, Tom Wilson, and myself, Chris Estes.

If you'd like to read more about our investigations check out our website at [malevolentmaine.blogspot.com/](http://malevolentmaine.blogspot.com/)

While there, don't forget to check our merch store. And, if you're so inclined, support us on Patreon at [patreon.com/malevolentmaine](http://patreon.com/malevolentmaine)

Thank you for listening to Malevolent Maine.

And as always, stay safe out there, Maine.