

Malevolent Maine

Episode 40: The Ritual of Blood

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INTRO:

Five covens of evil witches. Five rituals meant to charge the land for something far more sinister. And a prophecy of an ancient evil destined to wake and wreak havoc upon the world. These are the stories we've been bringing you all season and now it all comes to a head.

Before we get to today's part of the story, I want to take a minute to thank everyone who helped make Season 2 so awesome. I can't thank the boys, Lucas, Tom, and Mark enough for going on all the investigations and risking their lives to bring you twenty new episodes of the odd and the strange. We had a lot of help this season and I want to thank everyone who reached out to us with tips and information. Lastly, I need to thank all of you. Our little show grew tremendously this season and that's thanks to you. Thanks for telling your friends about the show, for checking in each episode, and as always giving us your positive feedback. It's incredible that this podcast has reached 40 episodes. That's a long way to come in just two seasons. And I say this with absolutely no hyperbole, Season 3 is going to be even bigger and better, I promise.

This is, and always will be, Malevolent Maine

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?

This one's a bloody good time, MMers. We've been tracking various witches covens all over the state performing bizarre rituals meant to imbue a region with immense magical power. These five covens have all been very different but all seemingly with the same goal in mind, all led by mysterious women known only as the Betrothed.

LUCAS: The first coven we encountered were attempting to seduce college students to join their ranks at the University of Maine Machias. They performed something called the Ritual of Fire, where they burned some sort of living sacrifice. Their Betrothed was a tall woman with red hair and a golden mask.

MEGAN: The next coven was a group of women who spent the majority of their time constructing altars and charms to attract or summon flies and ticks. They performed the Ritual of Air atop a mountain in Andover, focusing their magical energy into a skull suspended by a large wooden totem.

TOM: The third group sought out the grimoire of Grammy Grimes, hidden somewhere in the caverns outside of Fort Kent known as the Devil's Den. With her ancient spell book this coven, led by a Gothic Betrothed, performed the Ritual of Earth and vanished before we could catch them.

MARK: In Kennebunk, a group of teenage witches, under the guidance of a Betrothed with black and white hair, dug up the remains of Mary Nesson, the White Witch of York and performed the Ritual of Water atop the local water tower.

And lastly, we were tipped off to the fifth ritual, The Ritual of Spirit by a member of a chaos coven who had grown disillusioned with the work these groups were doing. This woman, Sybil, led me deep into the woods around Jackman and let me witness this final ritual.

We discovered that these five locations traced a pentagram across the state and at its center was a location we had already covered in the very first episode of this season: Mooretown, a forgotten witch's village from Maine's past.

If you haven't listened to Episodes 21, 24, 28, 32, 36, and 39 you may want to go back and catch up. There is essential information we simply don't have time to cover here.

Most of these rituals have been performed on or near one of the witches' sabbats. There is no sabbat more revered or more potent for magic than Samhain.

LUCAS: Samhain is most commonly associated with Halloween. It is the time when the veil between the physical world and the spirit world is weakest. For many magic users this is a time of great power, a time when spells and rituals are far more potent than any other time. It's also a time when the dark forces of the world are at their peak and do their best to spread their influence on the world.

Putting together everything we've deduced so far, we were convinced that whatever these covens have been building towards, whatever final ritual they hope to enact, would most likely take place in Mooretown on the night of Samhain.

We knew the where and the when, but we were still in the dark about what exactly was going to take place. Still, we knew where

we had to go. The four of us set out with our recording equipment, and a few pieces of protective magic we've come across over the years, and we were determined to do our best to disrupt this final spell.

TOM: As you may recall, Josias Moore and his wife Rebecca, along with her sister Mary Cummings, escaped Salem just before the witch trials began, some say warned by the Devil himself. They traveled north to the Skowhegan region and together with some loyal followers founded Mooretown, a village for, and dedicated to, witchcraft. The witches in Mooretown worshiped a being called Mother Witch, an all powerful being who had either transformed into or become trapped inside of a large, gnarled tree. The legends say that regular blood offerings would one day reawaken Mother Witch and she would bring about a new darkness upon the earth.

The witches of these covens, cast from various groups and belief systems of all types, revere Mother Witch as the absolute highest power. She is an all powerful being, perhaps the titular Goddess often referred to in Wicca and witchcraft, perhaps something else. According to their beliefs, Mother Witch is seemingly all powerful, capable of great and dark deeds unrivaled by any other force. Mother Witch has taken Satan as her consort, and he holds her place until she will one day return. That's why many of the covens worship the Devil. He grants the witches their power so that they might one day return the Mother to his side.

Secret societies and high councils are nothing new in our line of work. Whether it be the Illuminati, the Freemasons, the Hermetic Brotherhood of the Cardinal Court, or various other groups, we are quite used to secret cabals organizing and orchestrating nefarious conspiracies. One that we didn't know even existed was the group that calls themselves the Betrothed.

The Betrothed have pledged themselves to Satan and see themselves as his future brides in whatever dark hell they plan

to unleash on the world. These five extremely powerful witches have been pulling the strings of this entire plot, organizing the five groups that performed the charging rituals.

MARK: We think the witches believe they are enacting some sort of final blood ritual, probably at the roots of the tree they believe to be Mother Witch. They've been "charging" the state, attuning and preparing it for the reawakening of their dark matriarch. However, I'd like to point out that this is probably all a delusion they've convinced themselves of. We investigated Mooretown and couldn't find any trace of this Mother Witch Tree anywhere. My guess is that these women have convinced themselves this is all going to happen and everything they've done has been in service to this twisted, false belief.

Be that as it may, we have already witnessed some fairly dangerous effects of these coven's workings. The Coven of Fire caused nearly all of Machias to forget a man who worked in the library, a man going by the name Mr. Davis. The Coven of Air enacted spells and charms to summon large quantities of pests to our state, most likely in an attempt to drain blood from the population. The Coven of Earth led to the disappearance of a woman in the catacombs known as the Devil's Den. And the Coven of Water may have altered the path of storms and even Hurricane Lee itself to dump heavy amounts of water on the state. I myself witnessed the Coven of Spirit draw upon dark energies, and while we haven't seen any repercussions of their ritual yet, it's impossible to deny the sense of dread that's been hanging over us.

So, on Halloween night, while the rest of the state was dressing up and trick-or-treating, the four of us made our way back to Mooretown.

[In Mooretown]

LUCAS: Okay. So we're in the woods where Mooretown used to be.

CHRIS: We've got some protective charms and some other magical defenses in case the witches attack us.

MARK: None of us have guns, but we did bring some baseball bats and I have an old hunting knife.

TOM: I brought some pepper spray...you know, just in case.

LUCAS: All of our phones and recorders are fully charged and we plan to record everything. We strapped a Go-Pro on Mark so we can record it on video as well.

CHRIS: Ready?

TOM: Yeah.

CHRIS: Okay. Here we go.

Mooretown was located northwest of Skowhegan, in the vicinity of Embden Pond. Now it's mostly dense forested areas with some fields mostly gone to seed. There's very little to indicate that Maine's lost witch village ever existed at all.

The last time we were there, we were unsuccessful in our attempt to locate the Mother Witch tree. There were several we considered, but in the end dismissed because they didn't have the malevolent feel often described in the writings of the time. If the pentagram, the previous rituals had drawn over the state, was accurate, the center of all of this was Mooretown, which meant the various covens would be gathering there to complete this final ritual. We should be able to find them despite not knowing the precise location.

We parked our car along Route 16 and set off in the direction we knew Mooretown to be.

The witches of Mooretown were supposedly drawn to the area by the call of the Mother Witch. Since our first encounter with these covens, we've been researching this being. Various texts

describe her as the first witch, an evil goddess, and a primordial force of mystical energy. In all depictions, however, the Mother Witch is a dark and dangerous force. Many modern day wiccans believe in a balanced, non-denominational approach to magic, but followers of the Mother Witch tend to revel in their evil tendencies. They embrace cruelty and wickedness. We recently uncovered a creation myth for Mother Witch. We've asked Lucas to share it.

LUCAS: From the darkness came the Mother, first of all the witches. Some called her Lilith, but in truth she had no name. She walked the earth and shadows sprung in her wake. Evil woke in the hearts and minds of men, and dark thoughts led to dark intentions. As her darkness spread, her hunger grew. And the Mother's thirst could only be slaked with blood. In time, the Mother was trapped by a single white witch, who tricked the Mother into the shape of a small seed. From this seed grew a massive tree with the heart of the Mother trapped inside. This heart grew terrible and black over the centuries, and the tree grew twisted and gnarled with her hate, turning what should be a bastion of nature, into a haunting edifice. Trapped there, the Mother called to her children, whispering to them in the world between dreams. "Free me," she murmured. "Feed me a great dousing of blood and I will waken once again."

We now believe that the witches of these various covens have been working together, to enrich the land or imbue it with magical power in order to perform one final, grand ritual.

The witches of Mooretown called this ritual the Great Dousing, a time when a great bloodletting would occur, wetting the ground and satiating the Mother Witch's appetite. She would awaken once again, free from her tree form, and able to take her vengeance on the world.

If the elemental rituals were used to empower this final Ritual of Blood, it could be a more symbolic bloodletting than a

literal bloodbath, but really we had no way of knowing what we were walking into.

[In Mooretown]

TOM: How many of them will there be?

MARK: I don't know. Each of the covens seemed like a dozen people. Twelve times five...

CHRIS: And that's conservative. If other covens or witches are a part of this, but weren't tasked with performing the rituals, there could be hundreds of witches here.

TOM: And we're going to just walk up to them and ask them to stop?

[sinister chanting begins in the distance]

LUCAS: Shhh! Did you hear that?

MARK: What?

LUCAS: There. Voices. We're almost there. Let's try to sneak closer.

We made our way through the woods as quiet as we could be. In the distance we made out the ruddy glow of a fire and quickly turned off our lights. As we got closer we saw that a massive bonfire had been constructed in the middle of a clearing. Through the trees we could see the forms of many, many people, all with their backs to us. Across from the fire was the thing we had failed to find on our first trip to Mooretown.

For the first time, we saw the Mother Witch Tree.

TOM: It was huge. I mean, bigger than any tree I've ever seen. It wasn't like a redwood or anything, but it seemed to tower above everything around it.

LUCAS: It wasn't there the first time we came here. There's no way we would have missed this. I don't think the four of us could have circled the tree if we held hands and stretched out. It was so massive! And the trunk was covered in numerous growths and burls.

The tree's limbs twisted and stretched to the sky, like a giant arthritic hand or like the entwining tendrils of some sea monster. In the light of the bonfire the Mother Witch Tree seemed to warp and stretch up into the night.

Just seeing the tree filled us with a sense of overwhelming dread. Despite the roaring heat of the fire, it felt like the temperature had dropped thirty degrees and all of us felt a weakening, draining sensation. Each step closer seemed harder than the last, but slowly, as quietly as we could, we moved to the outskirts of the assembled witches.

[in Mooretown]

WITCHES: Lords of the Watchtowers of the West, ye Lords of Water, Lords of Death, we invoke you. Lords of the Watchtowers of the South, ye Lords of Fire, Lords of Rebirth, we invoke you. Lords of the Watchtowers of the East, ye Lords of Air, Lords of Tempest, we invoke you. Lords of the Watchtowers of the North, ye Lords of the Earth, Lords of Flesh, we invoke you. We do summon, stir, and call you up to witness our rites and guard our Circle.

MARK [whispering]: There's so many of them.

LUCAS [whispering]: Is that Mr. Davis from the library?

TOM[whispering]: Guys. Guys! That's Isabelle Houser.

CHRIS: What? Where?

TOM: It's her. I know it's her. It's the Witch of Woodland Valley.

CHRIS: You think she escaped her tree?

TOM: I don't know, but I know that's her.

Looking around, we saw dozens, maybe a hundred witches of various covens and affiliations. Some we recognized from our work in the field. Others, like the aforementioned Houser, we knew from fable and reputation.

Mark pointed out several young witches that he believed were the remnants of the Coven of Water, the teenagers that had been seduced by darkness in Kennebunk. We made out the covens we had encountered over the past year. They were all here, all of them and many, many more. It seemed every dark witch and warlock in the state had gathered before the Mother Witch.

And standing there, before the tree were five women. Five very special and very dangerous women: The Betrothed.

Each of the covens we encountered were led by a different woman, each calling herself the Betrothed. This was the first time we had seen them all together in one place

The Betrothed of Fire was a tall woman with red hair, completely naked. She wore a black domino-style mask across her eyes, with a veil of thin twigs sweeping back over her head. Nestled into the veil were thirteen small white candles.

Beside her was the Betrothed of Air. She wore a full-length gray robe. She was short with gray hair styled into a trendy pixie cut.

We had a pretty good description of the Betrothed of Earth from our contact in Fort Kent, but seeing the woman who went by the online username, Satan's_Bride2B, was something else. She had long black hair that fell almost to her knees and wore a black dress with bat-like wings. She had drawn the symbol for the

third eye in the center of her milky white forehead and wore heavy black boots.

Next came the Betrothed of Water, a woman Mark had actually met. She was young looking, half of her snow white, the other half, jet black. Her eyes were two different colors and she wore a silver chain with a crescent moon pendant around her forehead.

Last was the Betrothed of Spirit, a woman I, myself, had encountered just a few weeks before. She wore a black Rixian robe with purple trim, her face completely hidden by its dark folds.

[in Mooretown]

MARK: That's them.

LUCAS: The Betrothed.

TOM: What... what are they doing?

One by the one the Betrothed removed something from beneath their robes or dresses. The Betrothed of Fire seemed to reach up and pull an object out of her hair or the network of twigs surrounding it. She laid this item down at the ground at the roots of the Mother Witch tree. In the light of the blazing fire it was clear to see what it was.

The skull had been blackened and cracked as if it had been burned by a fire. Into its forehead had been carved a triangle with the point facing up, the symbol for fire. It appeared our suspicions were right and that a skull had been used in their ritual.

The other Betrothed, each placed the skull from their ritual at the base of the tree.

[in Mooretown]

BETROTHED OF FIRE: With the skull of Brother Avery.

BETROTHED OF AIR: With the skull of my mother, Celeste.

BETROTHED OF EARTH: With the skull of Grammy Grimes.

BETROTHED OF WATER: With the skull of Mary Nasson.

BETROTHED OF SPIRIT: With the skull of Gideon Hawthorne.

[low droning begins]

We had encountered each of the skulls, or heard mention of them before. They were all carved with the symbols for the elements they had been part of the ritual of. We believe the skull of Brother Avery must be one of that coven's members, most likely sacrificed to complete the ritual. We had never heard of the witch named Celeste, but whether she was sacrificed or her skull was kept for just such a ritual we don't know. Grammy Grimes was a powerful hedge witch from the Fort Kent area. Mary Nasson was a white witch from York in the 1600s, and Gideon Hawthorne was a warlock from the early part of the Twentieth Century who was said to have had two horn-like growths sprouting from his forehead.

TOM: We now believe the charging rituals held all over the state were used to empower these skulls, to supercharge them with magical energy to fuel the final ritual.

As we watched, the symbols or runes carved into the skulls seemed to glow, but perhaps it was merely the firelight reflected on their surface. The assembled Betrothed turned to face the assembled crowd.

BETROTHED OF FIRE: We the sons and daughters of Josias Moore.

BETROTHED OF AIR: Of Rebecca Moore.

BETROTHED OF EARTH: Of Mary Cummings.

BETROTHED OF WATER: Of our Dark Master.

BETROTHED OF SPIRIT: Of our Mother Witch.

BETROTHED OF FIRE: We have gathered tonight for the Great Dousing. Tonight we will awaken our Mother.

BETROTHED OF EARTH: Sister Sybil, bring forth the sacrifice.

At this point, the crowd parted and a hooded figure began making her way towards the Betrothed. It was Sybil, the member of the Coven of Spirit who had shared their secrets with me. Even in her Rixian cloak I knew it was her.

Behind her, hands bound with thick rope, was a young woman, probably nineteen or twenty. Her black hair was dirty with small sticks and leaves stuck in it. Auburn roots showed through the black, as if she hadn't been able to dye her hair in sometime. She wore a black t-shirt with a ripped long sleeve black fishnet shirt underneath it, and a short black skirt that showed off her pale and bruised legs that ended in scuffed black boots.

LUCAS: Tom, is that...

TOM: It has to be.

If you've been with us all season, you will recall that while exploring the caves outside Fort Kent, Lucas and Tom encountered a woman who was searching for her friend who went missing the night before during the Ritual of Earth. At the time, due to the sensitivity of the situation, we did not reveal the name of the missing woman. Now, it seems fair to reveal that the woman being led towards the Betrothed appeared to be Chloe Jackson, the woman who had been missing since late June. Behind her, guiding her forward with a hard shove was one of the more goth-looking witches that had likely kidnapped her. Chloe looked frightened as she was led before the massive witch tree.

LUCAS: We've got to stop this.

MARK: They're not really going to-

From somewhere in her voluminous robes, the Betrothed of Water brought forth a knife. Its blade gleamed in the bonfire's glow as she held it high over her head for all to see. The murmurs of the crowd silence at once. She passed the blade to the hooded Betrothed of Spirit.

It was like we had walked into a different time or a different world. With the fire, the twisted tree, and the robes, this seemed like something out of a horrible fairy tale. The two witches led the girl closer. She had begun to cry, not full blown sobs, but small, hurt whimpers.

BETROTHED OF EARTH: Why do you approach, Sister? State your intention.

SYBIL [hesitant]: I...I bring an offering for the Great Mother.

BETROTHED OF WATER: And do you put forth this offer willingly?

CHLOE [whispering]: No. Please no.

There was something in the way she spoke, the way her body seemed to slump as the moments passed, that showed the robed witch wasn't certain of her own actions. We don't know what happened, what change of heart she went through, but Sybil had been the one to reach out to us, to conceal me, to protect me. She hesitated right then, when questioned by the Betrothed. She was struggling with the weight of what not just she, but all of them were doing. I was sure of that.

SYBIL [hesitant]: I do.

BETROTHED OF SPIRIT: Great Mother, we deliver unto you a sacrifice. A feast for you in your long slumber. We give of ourselves to you.

Before we could react the knife swung down and buried itself in Sybil's stomach, not Chloe's.

SYBIL: [cry of pain] W-why?

BETROTHED OF AIR: Did you think we did not know of your betrayal, Sybil?

BETROTHED OF WATER: That we would not find out how you tried to interfere? How you brought an outsider into our midst? An enemy?

BETROTHED OF SPIRIT: Let the Great Dousing begin!

Sybil collapsed to the ground, blood soaking through her robe. Her hood fell back and I saw the same face who had helped me in Jackman. Her eyes roamed about assembly before somehow finding mine in the darkness. Her eyes held mine as the hand that had been trying to hold in her blood slowly fell away.

The Betrothed fell upon her, ripping and tearing the priceless Rixian robe she wore. They smeared their hands in her wound, staining their hands bright red. Then they approached the skulls at the base of the witch tree. With a bloodied hand each woman grasped their own skull and they arranged them in the shape of a pentagram

[droning increases]

BETROTHED OF EARTH: Great Mother, darksome and divine. We invoke thee and call upon thee.

BETROTHED OF WATER: Mighty Mother of us all, bringer of all fruitfulness

BETROTHED OF AIR: by seed and root, by bud and stem, by leaf and flower and fruit

BETROTHED OF FIRE: By flame and blood do we invoke thee.

BETROTHED OF SPIRIT: Descend upon the body of this, thy servant.

The Betrothed of Spirit stepped into the center of the skulls. Now we were sure the eyes were glowing, pulsing with an infernal energy. And the tree... the Mother Witch Tree seemed to be writhing, changing, transforming.

TOM: The tree moved. Not the limbs, and not the trunk, but it moved. I know that doesn't make sense, but it seemed to change its... shape. I don't know how to explain it. Like it was growing, only it wasn't getting bigger.

LUCAS: It was pulsing with the energy of the ritual. It was swelling and shrinking like... like something getting ready to burst.

What happened next happened so quickly that we were helpless to stop it. In that moment, we knew we had failed. The rituals, all of them, including this last ritual of blood, had all been for this. The spirit or the essence of the Mother Witch, trapped for centuries, maybe milenia, in the tree, was finally ready to come forth.

A horrible eldritch light, a sickly green light, an electric shade of rot and decay, like a thousand year old pustule breaking open, suffused the area, somehow drowning out the crimson glare of the fire. A mist curled around our feet, seeping up from the cracked and broken exposed roots of the Mother Witch Tree. The awful droning sound grew louder, like a great leviathan awakening and shaking the very earth with it.

MARK: No.

CHRIS: Mark?

MARK: No, no, no!

TOM: What are you doing?

LUCAS: Mark, wait!

Before we could react, Mark broke from our cover and sprinted across the clearing. We tried to follow, but Mark had surprised us and was several paces ahead. We shoved witches aside as we raced to the front of the ceremony, to try and stop whatever dark act was about to take place.

LUCAS: I grabbed Chloe away from the witch that still held her. I don't know if it was shock or resignation, but she didn't try to fight at all. She collapsed in my arms and I tried to drag her back into the safety of the darkened woods.

I fell to my knees when I got to Sybil. Her hands were cold, and her eyes were still focused on the distant spot from which we had emerged. I checked for a pulse anyways, but I already knew what I would find. She was dead.

The sound, like the world splitting apart, the sound of a dark god tearing free from the depths, was deafening. Just beneath that we could make out the screams of the shocked or perhaps excited. The ground shook - we were all sure of that - a tremor that vibrated through the earth into our very bones.

And the Tree.

The Mother Witch Tree was pulsing with a sinister green light from somewhere deep beneath its surface, as if some ancient and primordial swamp festered within its gnarled trunk. We all stopped and stared at it. All of us except Mark. The Tree was vibrating at a different frequency than the world around it. It seemed to lose its hard edges, to fade or...or soften somehow. One

moment it was there, the next it was gone, only to spring back into existence.

And something was coming. We could feel the pressure building, like the way your ears will pop when you drive up a mountain or the way the air feels before a lightning strike. It was pressing in all around us, grinding down into our perception of reality, screaming at us to accept the horrible change, the awakening, that was about to take place.

The Betrothed of Spirit was oblivious to all the commotion, and stood still, before the Mother Witch Tree, eyes closed, arms extended up and outward in supplication. The green light that filled the area seemed to swirl and focus, reaching with tendril-like shapes towards the Betrothed.

Just as the ritual reached its crescendo, as the thunderous droning reached its fever pitch, as the green light entered the ring of skulls, and the Mother Witch Tree split open to reveal its hideous secret...

Mark crashed into the Betrothed of Spirit.

She was not a large woman and caught completely unaware, she flew from the center of the ring, the pentagram of charged and tuned skulls, and fell to the ground. Her hood fell back from her face and we saw that she was a plain-looking middle aged woman, the kind of woman you would pass on any given day in the grocery store or in line at the coffee shop. Seeing the surprise on her face broke whatever spell had instilled us with so much awe and fear.

What happened next was... horrible.

LUCAS: There was a flash. Like the largest bolt of lightning struck the ground just in front of us. There was a sound. I'm sure of it, but... but I couldn't tell you what it was, what it sounded like. I don't know if it was loud or soft, a scream of rage or a cry of pain.

TOM: You could feel it. Like a thousand little bugs crawling over your skin, over your eyes, your teeth and tongue. The air itself felt alive, and I swear I smelt something burning. There was a-a- force. Like a sonic boom and I felt my feet leave the ground.

When our vision cleared a second later, we found ourselves laying flat on our backs. Slowly the assembled witches began to pick themselves up off the ground.

Where the pentagram of charged skulls had been were five scorched and smoking spots of grass. Mark, who had been at the center of that pentagram, of the final ritual of blood, was gone. He had completely disappeared.

So too, had the Mother Witch Tree.

[PAUSE]

With their ritual disrupted, the gathered witches began to slink off into the night. The bonfire had nearly burned out, and the witches were dark shapes, mere shadows sliding between the trees. Even the Betrothed slunk off in a kind of daze, as if drugged or perhaps waking from a strange dream. In only a few moments, the clearing that had been full of chanting witches was empty save the still body of Sybil, a softly sobbing Chloe, and the three of us.

TOM: I don't know what happened. He... Mark ran into the center of the ritual. Whatever was supposed to happen. It... it happened to him instead. We searched the woods. We spent hours calling for him, looking all over the place. There... there was no trace of him. It was like he hadn't been there at all.

LUCAS: The Ritual of Blood, the Great Dousing, was supposed to summon the Mother Witch, to draw her out of the tree. Our best guess is that she was supposed to take over the Betrothed of Spirit, to inhabit her body or maybe use her corporeal form to

reassemble her own form. The Betrothed would have had to attune her body, possibly doing purification rituals or cleansing ceremonies to prepare herself to become the Mother Witch's vessel. When Mark shoved her out of the pentagram... he ... he disrupted the entire process. Magic and witchcraft are like baking, one skipped step, one wrong measurement, and the whole thing can go sideways. There's no way of knowing what happened when he disturbed the ritual. Those mystical energies were incredibly powerful. It's possible that they... that he...

We stayed in the woods around Mooretown until the sun came up. We didn't find any signs of Mark. In the end, we decided we needed to get Chloe to the authorities. She had been missing for months and after everything she had been through, she needed medical attention.

We left the body of Sybil wrapped in her cloak. Without knowing who she really was, the best we could do is let the police know where we had left her. They were already skeptical, but when they informed us that after an extensive search of the area there was no sign of a body, it was obvious they didn't really believe our story.

We've let Mark's family know about his disappearance and we have filed all of the paperwork in order to open an official investigation.

To be frank, we struggled with this episode. We debated whether or not we should release it. In the end, we decided the best way to honor our friend was to share his story. If Mark really is gone, what better way to remember him than in that instant when he selflessly sacrificed himself to prevent the dark future the five covens had planned.

TOM[emotional]: I tried to catch up to Mark. I don't know... I thought that if I could just get to him everything would still be okay. We'd find a way ... or...or...I don't know. I just knew I had to catch him. But I couldn't.

We're not going to stop looking for Mark. If you're out there, buddy, please, please reach out to us. We miss you and we want you to come home.

[pause]

With the five skulls destroyed and the Final Dousing disrupted, it would seem the mission the five covens set out on has been thwarted. We're not sure what to make of the Mother Witch Tree disappearing. It could mean her essence is gone for good, it could mean she is somewhere else. According to all our connections, the Maine witchcraft scene has gone quiet, many of the witches known to be involved have stopped attending meetings or communicating with peers. It's as if, with their spell's failure, they are going into hiding or at least some sort of seclusion. For now, at least, the state seems safe. Mark's last desperate act was not in vain.

And yet, I can't stop thinking about chaos magic. If the Coven of Spirit is right, and chaos magic can be harnessed by willing it into a form, if one can manifest their intentions by the power of belief, then what does that mean what transpired on Halloween night? According to the followers of Chaos Magic, the universe has a twisted sense of humor, it's the monkey's paw.

And that night, while standing around the fifth skull, while every other witch was manifesting the empowering ritual, I was praying for a way to stop all of this.

In some twisted way did my intention become reality? Is Mark gone because the universe answered my call in some perverse way?

We're going to take some time after this to regroup. It has been a long and taxing year, and while we haven't given up hope for our lost friend, we are heartbroken, weary, and in need of some rest. But, we will be back. There's too much we don't know, too much we can't explain. There are too many dark corners we still need to shine a light into. We'll rest and recoup, and when

we're ready we'll be back with more stories of the odd and the unexplained.

Until then... stay safe out there, Maine.

[pause]

[answering machine]

KATIE [kinda spacy, tripped out, brainwashed, etc.]: Hello? Is anyone there? This is Katie Clark. I think you've been looking for me. I was gone. I was across the desert. I was with the Fool and the King. But I'm back now. And the King... the King Beyond the Desert ...came with me.

[jingle of bells]

Woo boy! What an ending! I want to start off by thanking everyone who's been listening. Whether this is your first episode or your 40th episode, we're happy you're along for the ride with us. As we said, we're going to take a little break, but don't you worry, we've got more Malevolent Maine wickedness coming your way. We'll be back with more Malevolent Minutes in the off season, this time with user submitted stories as well as our own investigations. Remember, if you have a story off the paranormal, something that your friends and family just don't seem to believe, pass it on to us! We believe you. Over on Patreon we're going to be launching our new side story, Cardinal Sins, real soon. If you've been following Lucas's investigation of the mysterious group known as Heremtic Brotherhood of the Cardinal Court, you're not going to want to miss this. Head on over to patreon/come/malevolentmaine where for a small monthly fee you'll have access to Cardinal Sins, as well as all six episodes of The Black Tarot, plus we've got a few more secret projects coming out. Lastly, if you haven't join the investigation on social media, make sure you do so. We're on all the major platforms and we'll be posting all sorts of news and updates in the coming months. Oh, and we've probably got another Christmas special coming out around the holiday that you won't

want to miss. Last, but certainly not least, don't forget to give us a five star rating on Apple Podcasts and Spotify if you have the time. It helps us appease the dark algorithm goddess who rules that corner of the internet.

Season two was a heckuva ride, but I promise you Season 3 will be even better. As always, this has been a Malevolent Maine production. Thanks again for listening, and don't go too far, MMers; there are dangerous things in the dark.

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/

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

Thank you for listening to Malevolent Maine.
And as always, stay safe out there, Maine.