

Hansel and Gretel

by Jim Strobe

“Everyone sees hisself walking around with no one else.” Bob Dylan, *Talking WW3 Blues*

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Setting

Somewhere in North America during the Great Famine and Die-off of the 21st century.

Cast

Cramps - male or female 20-60

Maw – male or female 40 to 60

Sis – female 20 to 40

John – male 20 to 40

Shabby interior. 2 doors. Cooking pot. The smell of cooking meat.

Shades-of-grey costumes and props. Point-source lighting.

All dressed in ragged hoodies. Pale.

Cramps scratches his leg.

SIS

I hate touching anything you touched.

CRAMPS

Then get out.

MAW

Don't talk to your paw that way.

SIS

He's not my paw.

MAW

Same difference.

SIS

I want to scream.

MAW

A lot of good it'll do you.

CRAMPS

See if somebody else will take you in.

SIS

You don't even know what year it is.

CRAMPS

Can you eat a year.

MAW

You don't know either.

SIS

You don't even care what year it is.

Children crying.

MAW
(Shouting) Shut up in there or I'll give you something to cry about.

CRAMPS
Get the belt.

Maw slaps the back door.

The crying stops.

Knock on the front door.

Cramps and Maw are startled.

SIS
I told you he was coming.

MAW
The last thing we need around here is another mouth to feed.

Cramps looks at Sis.

CRAMPS
Or two or three, knowing you.

Knock.

SIS
He takes care of himself.

MAW
I bet he does. I bet he does all right by himself.

CRAMPS
I'm running him off.

SIS
He won't be empty-handed.

Knock. Sis opens the door. John enters.

MAW
What do you got.

John offers greens.

Weeds. CRAMPS

Mustard greens. You can plant the seeds. JOHN

Shit. MAW

And this. A potato. JOHN

You call that a potato. MAW

Get out. CRAMPS

It's green. MAW

Did you know if plant a potato, more will grow back next year. JOHN

How do know it'll be there waiting for you next year. CRAMPS

How do you know you'll be here next year. MAW

And this. JOHN

John opens his hand.

Cramps grabs the bullet.

A bullet. MAW

How do I know it's any good. CRAMPS

Been in town. JOHN

CRAMPS

I heard they ran everybody out.

Sound of children crying. Maw gets the belt and goes out back. Sound of beating. Crying turns to screaming and stops. Maw returns.

MAW

Yesterday they knocked the bowl over.

CRAMPS

More trouble than they're worth.

MAW

Should have seen them scrambling around.

CRAMPS

Just skin and bones.

JOHN

Hey Sis.

John sits next to Sis.

CRAMPS

Nobody asked you to sit down.

JOHN

How you doing with that, Sis.

CRAMPS

Don't start thinking you're getting any.

JOHN

Sis, you want to go out.

CRAMPS

Nobody said anything about going out.

MAW

You haven't eaten yet.

SIS

(Restraining her anger) Why do you have to rape them first.

CRAMPS

The more they cry the less they'll pee.

SIS

You spoil it.

MAW

Look who's royalty all of a sudden.

SIS

I won't touch it.

JOHN

What do you use for bait.

CRAMPS

Maw brings them in.

MAW

They're scared of men.

JOHN

Let's go watch the sunset, Gretchen?

SIS

Makes me want to puke.

CRAMPS

You'll eat what's set before you.

MAW

Starve then.

CRAMPS

See if I don't have your share.

SIS

I'll go live at John's.

CRAMPS

In a pig's eye you will.

MAW

Why do you suppose they'd want you there.

CRAMPS

You're too old to bear a child.

MAW

They'll all get a piece of you.

John produces a candy.

All stare.

Maw wipes her mouth.

Cramps reaches for it but John takes it away.

JOHN

Let's go out, Sis.

CRAMPS

I want my dinner.

Maw uncovers the dish.

Children cry.

Sis stands.

SIS

(Screaming) You ruined it.

John touches Sis.

Cramps gets his gun.

MAW

He's not worth it, Cramps.

John runs away.

Lights down.

Children cry.

Max Trauma

Sis emerges from the mythology of childhood to be in a world that she cannot bear, descending through a sequence of horrors.

Sis hates Cramps so much that even something he has touched is contaminated.

She cannot accept the contamination but rejecting it means her death.

The crying children represent hope because someone might hear them and save them.

Cramps and Maw are survivors.

John appears intelligent and resourceful. But why does he want Sis? What does his family think of Sis?

Avoid making it a hick thing. This is us.

762 words. About 7 mins to read.