

"FAMILY MEAL"

By

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CAST

OLDER SIBLING\*, 16

YOUNGER SIBLING\*, 9

*\*Placeholders. Actors may choose appropriate names that best represent themselves and their characters for clarity's sake.*

CW: Implied violence, horror

SCENE

OLDER SIBLING and YOUNGER SIBLING sit around a bonfire. It is dark, and only the flames illuminate their faces.

OLDER SIBLING

Are you cold?

YOUNGER SIBLING

I'm okay.

OLDER SIBLING

The fire helps, doesn't it?

YOUNGER SIBLING

Yea.

OLDER SIBLING

What's wrong?

YOUNGER SIBLING

It's too bright.

OLDER SIBLING

The fire is too bright?

YOUNGER SIBLING

Mum always said to be careful-

OLDER SIBLING

I know what Mum said.

YOUNGER SIBLING

Someone will see.

OLDER SIBLING

There's no one around to see. I checked.

YOUNGER SIBLING

*Something* will see.

OLDER SIBLING

Look, even if it does, we'll scare it away. Like this.

OLDER SIBLING stands up and waves their arms, screaming gibberish.

YOUNGER SIBLING

(Stone faced) That won't work. Not against the monsters.

OLDER SIBLING considers the possibility.

OLDER SIBLING

Well, you just have to do it with me. The monsters can't handle both of us.

OLDER SIBLING gesticulates, like an aspiring modern dancer. They sound like an aspiring goat. OLDER SIBLING nods at YOUNGER SIBLING to join in.

A pause.

YOUNGER SIBLING gives in, making like a chicken. It is not very intimidating, but it is a genuine moment of bonding.

A twig snaps in the darkness.

Without a word, OLDER SIBLING pulls YOUNGER SIBLING behind themselves. They grab a flaming stick from the fire and holds it outward.

OLDER SIBLING

Who's there?

The darkness does not respond.

OLDER SIBLING

(Softly, almost to themselves) It may have just been an animal. It could be harmless.

YOUNGER SIBLING

There aren't any more animals.

Silence. OLDER SIBLING continues staring into the darkness.

YOUNGER SIBLING

Most of them turned to goo.

OLDER SIBLING

Yes.

YOUNGER SIBLING

And the rest turned into monsters.

OLDER SIBLING

I know.

YOUNGER SIBLING

So why did you say that?

OLDER SIBLING

Shh.

They stay frozen for a while longer.

OLDER SIBLING

I think it's gone now.

YOUNGER SIBLING

Was it a monster?

OLDER SIBLING

No.

YOUNGER SIBLING

How do you know?

OLDER SIBLING

I just know.

YOUNGER SIBLING

I don't like this.

OLDER SIBLING

Hey, don't worry. The monsters are afraid of us as long as we stick together, remember? That applies to all the noises in the woods too.

OLDER SIBLING, once again, makes like a goat. This makes YOUNGER SIBLING laugh.

YOUNGER SIBLING

Okay.

Before OLDER SIBLING can think of what to say next, YOUNGER SIBLING speaks.

YOUNGER SIBLING

I miss Stumpy.

Silence. OLDER SIBLING pokes at the fire.

OLDER SIBLING

I know. I miss him too.

YOUNGER SIBLING

He was the best dog in the world.

OLDER SIBLING

He sure was.

YOUNGER SIBLING

He didn't turn into a monster. Or goo, like Bubbles.

OLDER SIBLING

Bubbles is in a better place now.

YOUNGER SIBLING

And Stumpy?

OLDER SIBLING

Yea, Stumpy too.

YOUNGER SIBLING

What about Mum?

OLDER SIBLING freezes.

OLDER SIBLING

...yea.

YOUNGER SIBLING

[a sudden burst of anger] I'm going to  
kill all the monsters.

YOUNGER SIBLING stands up, yelling into the darkness.

YOUNGER SIBLING

Do you hear that, monsters? You took our  
Mum, and I'm going to kill you!

OLDER SIBLING frantically shushes YOUNGER SIBLING, and  
tries to restrain them. It's clear YOUNGER SIBLING is  
working themselves into a frenzy. OLDER SIBLING grabs them  
and shakes them.

OLDER SIBLING

SHUT IT.

This works.

OLDER SIBLING

[hissing] Look at me. Look at me. I know  
you're upset. I know you're scared. I know  
you miss Mum, and Stumpy, and Bubbles, and  
everything else that used to be. But this  
is how things are now. There're the  
monsters, and there's us. Just us. No one

is coming. If you call out to the darkness like that, the only thing that comes for you is THE darkness. Do you understand?

YOUNGER SIBLING doesn't, not really, but they nod anyway.

OLDER SIBLING

You can't just snap on me like that, okay? We have to stick together. We have to survive. It's just you and me now.

It is silent for a long time.

YOUNGER SIBLING

Why?

OLDER SIBLING

What?

YOUNGER SIBLING

What's the point? Everything's gone. Everyone's gone. You said that. There's nothing out there but the monsters. We haven't seen anyone else in ages. Every day the world gets smaller and the monsters get closer. We don't do anything but run, and run, and last week I turned nine and all we did was run and I don't want to run anymore.

YOUNGER SIBLING is trembling. OLDER SIBLING takes a long moment to choose their next words.

OLDER SIBLING

I'm sorry.

YOUNGER SIBLING says nothing.

OLDER SIBLING

I'm sorry I forgot your birthday. It's-it's hard, not knowing what day it is. I knew it was coming, I swear. I was going to-[OLDER SIBLING rummages quickly through their bag] Look. I made this for you.

OLDER SIBLING pulls out a badly carved...something. YOUNGER SIBLING doesn't budge. OLDER SIBLING makes it dance.

OLDER SIBLING

It's Stumpy. I carved him out of wood. For you to remember.

YOUNGER SIBLING takes it and turns it over in their hands. OLDER SIBLING waits expectantly.

OLDER SIBLING

Well?

YOUNGER SIBLING

Thank you.

OLDER SIBLING

[visibly relieved] I'm sorry. I know it's not much-

YOUNGER SIBLING

I know what Mum did to Stumpy.

OLDER SIBLING freezes.

OLDER SIBLING

[Very carefully] What?

YOUNGER SIBLING

I saw.

OLDER SIBLING

I don't know what-

YOUNGER SIBLING

I know I fainted, but then I woke up. I heard you crying and Mum yelling at you.

OLDER SIBLING

I don't-it's not-



YOUNGER SIBLING

She said we had to eat, or we'll die. You ran away, but I saw what she did. I watched her do it.

OLDER SIBLING doesn't speak.

YOUNGER SIBLING

It wasn't your fault.

This surprises OLDER SIBLING.

OLDER SIBLING

I-

YOUNGER SIBLING

She was right. We wouldn't have made it if she hadn't-

OLDER SIBLING

I'm sorry. We don't have to-

YOUNGER SIBLING

I'm old enough, you know. You didn't have to lie to me. You didn't have to say Stumpy ran away. I knew we weren't eating rat. There aren't any more rats.

OLDER SIBLING

I just wanted to-

YOUNGER SIBLING

I know.

OLDER SIBLING

We didn't have a choice. You were too weak to walk and I couldn't carry you anymore.

YOUNGER SIBLING

I know.

OLDER SIBLING lets out a strange noise. A bark of laughter?  
A sob?

OLDER SIBLING

I'm sorry I ran away. I didn't know what  
else to do.

YOUNGER SIBLING

It's okay. It wasn't pretty.

OLDER SIBLING laughs nervously.

OLDER SIBLING

I believe it.

They stare into the fire.

YOUNGER SIBLING

Thank you for making Stumpy.

OLDER SIBLING

You know...I was going to say something  
about it being a talisman. That it'll  
protect you. But...

YOUNGER SIBLING is already nodding.

OLDER SIBLING

But I think you know that's not true.

YOUNGER SIBLING

I know you'll protect me. I don't need a  
talisman.

OLDER SIBLING is overwhelmed, and hugs YOUNGER SIBLING.

OLDER SIBLING

Hey. Like I said. We've just got each  
other now. It's my job as your big sibling  
to protect you, and you can help by not  
telling the monsters to come get us,  
right?

YOUNGER SIBLING

Okay.

OLDER SIBLING sniffs the air.

OLDER SIBLING

Smell that?

YOUNGER SIBLING is already reaching towards the fire.

YOUNGER SIBLING

It's ready.

OLDER SIBLING grabs their hand.

OLDER SIBLING

It's hot. Let me do it.

YOUNGER SIBLING

I'm hungry.

OLDER SIBLING

Patience.

OLDER SIBLING pulls a something out from over the fire.

YOUNGER SIBLING stares hungrily.

OLDER SIBLING

Here.

They eat. It's over too soon.

YOUNGER SIBLING

Is there any more?

OLDER SIBLING

I-I don't think so.

YOUNGER SIBLING

I wish you hadn't buried the rest of her.

OLDER SIBLING starts.

OLDER SIBLING

What?

YOUNGER SIBLING licks their fingers.

YOUNGER SIBLING

It's okay. I know.

OLDER SIBLING is losing their grip.

OLDER SIBLING

Just what do you know?

YOUNGER SIBLING

I told you, you don't have to lie to me anymore. I heard what Mum told you that night. That we're out of food again. That we-you had to survive. That I'm too weak.

OLDER SIBLING unravels.

OLDER SIBLING

You know.

YOUNGER SIBLING

I know a monster didn't get Mum. I know you did it protect me.

Silence.

YOUNGER SIBLING

Thank you for choosing me. It was smart.

OLDER SIBLING finally looks up, puzzled.

YOUNGER SIBLING

Mum had more meat than me anyway.

BLACKOUT