moles.

a short play

by juan muñoz

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For our inner child. They were happiest playing alone in their room. May they never stop playing.

CHARACTERS:

GREG. A machine operator. Hopeless working class dope doing the best he can.

JOEL. A tightwad supervisor who had fun once, it was terrible. He works remotely from a tower miles away from Greg’s jobsite.

MISSY. Opinions as fixed as her income. Spends most of her time wondering what went wrong in her marriage.

STU. Former Peace Corp hippie turned office drone. After retirement he returns to his roots. Missy’s husband.

World of the Play:

A closed off construction site. Greg preps the land for a new building as Joel feeds him directions through the radio. If there was a set I imagine it would look like a 7-year old’s large scale playtime fantasy. Think puppets, toy-like machinery, and a giant sand-box.

Casting Note:

The casting in your mind should reflect the natural landscape of the country. With all the colors, shapes, and potential of a city-scape carpet.
Imagine the cutest mole you’ve ever seen. It peeks out from the edge of the stage as if burrowing out of the ground.

Suddenly, a large machine approaches. Greg runs the mole over on an industrial grade construction digger.

Joel exists separate from the jobsite. I imagine he’s sitting on an elevated platform eating flavorless oatmeal. Suggesting he’s miles away in a radio tower.

Static. Then Joel speaks into his radio.

JOEL
Okay! Get ready to move on to the next section! I think this one is taken care of.

Greg speaks into the small radio clipped onto his collar.

GREG
I don’t mind pushing my lunch back if you want me to keep digging.

JOEL
You’ll take lunch when you’re scheduled and not a second later. I’m not paying you overtime. Got it?

GREG
Got it.

Silence as Joel eats his flavorless oatmeal.

GREG(CONT’D)

Uh...hey, Joel?

JOEL
What?
GREG
How are you doing today?

JOEL
What?

GREG
I said how are you doing today, Joel?

JOEL
Stop trying to “relate” to me. It’s uncomfortable for the both of us.

GREG
Got it.

JOEL
Sector one has been excavated, we can move on to the next quadrant. You good to go?

GREG
Ready as my mom was for a daughter before she had me!

GREG begins digging.

JOEL
(Under his breath.)
They always stick me with the home schooled ones.

GREG
(Loudly, to be heard over the machine.)
Are you mad at me?

JOEL
What?

GREG
I said are you mad at me for trying to “relate” to you earlier? I was just trying to be friendly.

Joel puts down his oatmeal with the fervor of 1,000 stern dads.
JOEL
Greg. This is a multi-million dollar job. Your job is to press go and make sure the area is ready for when the real crew gets there. My job is to make sure you do your job. Are we clear?

Greg continues digging.

JOEL
I said are we-

The digging is interrupted by a deafening thud. Greg hit something pretty big. He keeps digging.

GREG
Uh-oh.

JOEL
Greg. What did you do? Don’t tell me you hit another pipe?

GREG
How was I supposed to know gas came from the ground?

JOEL
If I find out you hit another pipe I swear on my-

GREG
I think this is bigger than a pipe!

JOEL
You have ten seconds to figure out what you hit before I-

GREG
You’re not mad at me are you?

JOEL speaks in a firm whisper.

JOEL
Greg. Figure out what you hit.

GREG
Okay. Good. Got it.
JOEL

Be careful.

GREG

That’s awfully kind Joel. Didn’t know you cared.

JOEL

I was talking about the site. Don’t mess anything else up.

GREG

Got it. I’ll just move this dirt over so I can get a better look.

Greg continues digging. After a tense moment the ground around the pile of dirt he hits collapses creating a sinkhole. The sound shakes the earth.

GREG

Uh...Joel?

JOEL

What happened!

GREG

Uh...Joel? I think I made a little sinkhole.

Time stops in the remote tower. Joel is manically still. Greg fills the silence by talking himself into an even deeper hole than the one he just made.

GREG(CONT’D)

Kinda looks like Dolly Parton if you squint.

Dead silence.

GREG(CONT’D)

If I had a daughter I always thought I’d name her Dolly.

Dead Silence 2: Return of the Silence.
Might make momma happy. Silence so dead you inherit it’s timeshare in Maine.

You think Dolly Parton is ever sad she can’t move her face anymore?

If you don’t get out there and see exactly what happened I promise that I will personally take my Toyota Corolla and-

The rest of Joel’s tirade is cut off by the sound of Greg backing up his machine.

I’m going to look now, but I just want to let you know I’ve never heard that word used in a sentence before.

Go. A moment.

Joel?

Yes?

You might want to come down here and look at this.

I’m in a remote tower hundreds of miles away, let me just get in my car and meet you.

Really? Okay. I’ll...wait right here.

No, not really. What did you hit?
GREG
I think...I think it’s a bunker.

JOEL
It can’t be. We had the area scanned. No metal structures came up in my 3-D imaging.

GREG
Well...it’s there. I think?

JOEL
What makes you say it’s a bunker?

GREG
Because...uh...there is people inside.

JOEL
(Concerned.)
What? Are they okay? Are they active?

GREG
I don’t know what they do in their spare time.

JOEL
I mean are they still alive?

GREG
Yes. I can ask em’ about your first question though. (Yelling) Hey, would you say your active?

STU speaks from the hole in the ground.

STU
I keep pretty busy down here!

GREG
The guy said he’s pretty active. (Yelling again.) What about your friend?

MISSY
Who me?

GREG
Yeah.
MISSY
I’m his wife not his friend. I wouldn’t say I’m a fitness guru but I would definitely say I’m more active than Stu.

STU
Please Missy, as if swiping my card counts as an activity.

MISSY
I could swipe it if there was any money on it. Only thing I swipe down here is the Cheez-Its box from your fat Florida fingers, so you don’t eat ‘em all. (To STU.) You’re so quick to impress company aren’t you?

JOEL
You need to ask them what they're doing down there. This is a restricted area.

GREG
Hey, you really shouldn’t be here. Let me help you out of there so we can talk face to face.

STU
Ladies first.

MISSY
Oh, now you have manners? Probably cause someone else can see you.

GREG
I got you, just give me your hand.

MISSY
Your arms not long enough.

JOEL
USE YOUR LEG.

GREG takes a moment before deciding to dangle his leg over the edge. He hangs on the stage for dear life as Missy attempts to climb him.
There is a long and comedically exhausting struggle. Finally, Missy is on level ground.

STU
Sir. You could have just let us use our ladder.

We see the top of Stu’s ladder extend out of the pit. Seconds later, he easily climbs out.

Greg is dumbfounded.

JOEL
Let me talk to them.

GREG
Okay. They’re all yours.

JOEL
Do you realize you are trespassing on private property?

STU
With all due respect sir we weren’t on private property, we were below it.

JOEL
(Into his dispatch.)
He has a point.

MISSY
This is a free country

STU
We aren’t hurting anyone.

MISSY
Speak for yourself. I’m still not talking to you.

STU
I told you my ex wife’s profile just came up by itself.
MISSY
I knew there was a reason you wanted to bring the satellite laptop. I was amazed it even got a signal down here.

STU
She sent *me* a friend request!

MISSY
And *why* were you messaging Jolene?

STU
I was asking if she could share a dessert recipe for something she used to make. So I could make it for you. For us.

MISSY
We live underground. We don’t have dishes let alone a stove. We’ve been eating green beans and pancake mix for the past three weeks. Do you know how awful it’s been down here with your gas?

Their argument comes out so fast, these lines almost over-lap.

STU
I have a gastrointestinal problem.

MISSY
I feel like I live in a gas chamber.

STU
You can be really hurtful sometimes, you know that.

MISSY
The day you cook anything is the day they find Bin Laden.

STU
They found him already. They killed him. He's dead.

MISSY
That's what they want you to think!

STU
Well they found us!
ENOUGH! If I wanted to hear a couple arguing I would have stayed home with my wife and emotionally uninvested teenage daughter. Greg, give them the radio. They have two seconds to explain how they got down there!

A beat

JOEL (CONT’D)

One second!

Greg hands the radio to Stu.

STU

I dug a tunnel system a while back. I dug everyday after work.

JOEL

How’d you end up here?

STU

Found an entry point about 250 feet south of here. After Missy and I retired, we decided it’d be nice to settle down here. Away from everything that was going on in the world.

MISSY

I’m just glad we don’t have to deal with the neighbors. Last thing I wanted to do was spend my golden years staring at Carol gardening in a tube top. Classless. Trying to get the pool boys in a puddle. Plucking plums in her Patsy pumps.

JOEL

What’s the bunker made of?

STU

Natural clay. Technique I learned while in the Peace Corp. It’s where Missy and I met. The tribe we stayed with lived in tunnels just like this one. Thought if we tried living like that again it might... rekindle something.

MISSY

I miss those days. You were so hot.

Greg takes back the radio.

GREG

Clay? Explains why it didn’t come up in the ground scans.
JOEL
It explains it, but doesn’t excuse it. We’re going to have to alert the authorities.

STU
Over my dead body. Squatter’s rights. No one is locking up me and my Earth Partner.

MISSY
Earth Partner? You haven’t called me that since the 70s. Back when you had hair.

STU
(With love.)
Back when your armpits had hair. Back when you didn’t hurt me with your words.

GREG
Can’t we just settle this on our own? Why do we have to get the cops involved?

JOEL
Because they broke the law. Rules are rules for a reason.

GREG
But they seem like nice people. You know, mole people have feelings too.

JOEL
They aren’t mole people. They are a delusional elderly couple breaking the law. I’m not going to ask you again.

MISSY and STU begin a secretive conversation

MISSY
You want to?

STU
Think we still got it in us?
MISSY
I hope. You ready?

STU/MISSY
1...2...Book it!

Missy kicks Greg in the shin and her and Stu make a run for it.

GREG
Uh... Joel?

JOEL
WHAT? What’s happening?

GREG
The mole-woman kicked my shin...and then they ran away.

JOEL
Run after them? What are you doing?

GREG
I would but my leg really hurts. It’s the one she was yanking on. Plus, it’s my lunchtime and you said I can’t work overtime.

JOEL
I know what I said but can you just-

GREG
Rules are rules. Said so yourself. I’ll talk to you after my lunch hour.

Greg pulls out his lunch bag and limps over to sit on the edge of the jobsite. The edge of the stage. The edge of our world.

GREG (CONT’D)
Nice sandwich. Extra cheese. No tomato. Just how I like it.

JOEL
If you don’t get up right now, I swear on my life that-

GREG slowly dials off the radio as Dolly Parton’s Jolene plays.
GREG

(A relaxed sigh.)
-Please don't take him just because you can.

*End of Play.*