

VERMIN

Written by

Pat Semler

407 873-9449
PatriciaSemler@gmail.com

FADE IN:

EXT. FARM COUNTRY - NIGHT

Oklahoma. Clutches of old growth forest isolated in sprawling crop fields. Tiny homesteads just on the horizon.

A tanker truck tops a low hill, GROWLING along the two lane road, BELCHING diesel exhaust.

It crosses a lazy looping river.

Healthy fields of corn give way to stunted, wilted growth.

BRAKES SCREECH. The tanker turns into the CACOPHONY of a bustling construction site.

EXT. FRACKING WELL SITE - NIGHT

A small city closed in by wire fences.

STEEL BEAMS RING. RIVETS WHINE. WATER GUSHES IN TORRENTS.

The tanker passes a line of cargo containers. Workers jostle in and out of these temporary living quarters.

The Driver continues around huge water containment ponds and pulls into line with a dozen similar trucks, SHUTS DOWN.

The DRILLING RACKET drowns out any normal sound. Men shout directions, use hand signals.

The skeleton of a young oil well dominates the piles of piping, bricks and sundry derrick material.

A HIGH PRESSURE DRILL SCREAMS, jangling nerves, pulverizing the ground into dancing sand.

Behind the derrick base, a WORKER, (20s), gleefully POUNDS down mole tunnels with a flat-bottomed steel stanchion. His name GARY barely visible on his pocket.

Dirt shimmies under the pile of pipes. Gary grabs a shovel, spears it into the dirt, levers up.

A clutch of tiny animal babies wiggle on the blade. Gary dumps them to the ground, SMASHES them dead with the shovel.

A FLICKER OF MOVEMENT, this time under the pipes. Gary shines a light, spots the backside of a critter as it digs.

With a Bowie knife, Gary worms into the scant depression.

Half-way in his forward crawl stops. Stuck.

A moment of quiet then his legs kick. Feet dig for purchase.

A frantic YELP is lost to the MACHINERY RACKET. He tries to wiggle back out.

SCREAMS of pain and he kicks in a frenzy.

Dirt SHIMMIES all around him.

One second he's sprawled on hard ground, the next he's sucked into a quicksand. Gone. The dirt calms down.

Workers hit the ground as BULLETS PING off metal struts.

Outside a cargo container, DUKE NEWTON, (50s), wearing annoyance like armor, yells into a cell phone.

DUKE

You take that rifle away from that crazy woman before I have the State Police cart her to a nut house.

He ducks involuntarily under a SHOT over his head.

DUKE (CONT'D)

Look, Hunter, you were given the option to sell out. We can be civil neighbors or not. It's on you.

He shoves the phone in a pocket, eyeballs his workers, pulls a hand-held radio out.

DUKE (CONT'D)

Like I don't have enough headaches. Everybody inside. We're done for the night. Johnson, quit playing with those gopher holes!

WORKER JOHNSON, (20s), gawky lean, startles from his industry of pouring steaming water down mole tunnels.

Behind him a new tunnel puffs up. A dark mobile snout pokes out, nips at Johnson's heel, can't break through the boot. The creature sinks back down.

A bigger pile of dirt mounds behind Johnson.

He steps backwards into the mound. His foot sinks down to mid-calf. His arms windmill and he crashes to the ground.

DUKE (CONT'D)
 Quit screwing around and get in
 here. Where's Gary?

Workers tramp for the trailers. WORKER TAYLOR (30s), wheezing
 around a cigarette, looks over.

TAYLOR
 Haven't seen him.

DUKE
 Dammit to hell. Why can't you guys
 say you quit before you disappear?

Johnson yanks his foot out. A small creature clings to his
 boot laces. He kicks, flinging it off, scrambles to his feet
 and into the container, giving us a peek ...

At the living quarters set up inside. Beds, curtains for
 walls, tables and chairs.

Duke squints across the field to the 3 story farm house.

Lights show a door opening. Two people scuffle over
 possession of a rifle, retreat inside, then the door closes.

Duke grunts satisfaction.

EXT. NATE'S FARM - FIELD - DAY

SUSIE MICHAELS (26), a Berkeley grad gone Eco-warrior, moves
 carefully through stunted corn rows behind her phone.

Filming NATE HUNTER (48), as wilted as the corn.

SUSIE
 What kind of loss are you looking
 at, Mr. Hunter?

NATE
 We'll be lucky to salvage the back
 fields. This one here is a total
 loss. That derrick ...

He spits his disgust.

NATE (CONT'D)
 Between the fumes and the bad
 water.

She frames the oil derrick behind him.

SUSIE

You've had bad years before.

NATE

Oh yeah, that's farming. You get a month or two of drought or too much rain and the crop is ruined. This.

He rips a rotting corn ear off the stalk, shucks the outer leaves to show her the deformed kernels, frustration etching deep lines in his face.

NATE (CONT'D)

This is from that fracking. Lights on all night. Trucks in and out all hours. We talked to them, all the way up to the big wigs. Everybody says the same thing - tough shit. They got the right to be here.

He tosses the ear toward the road and the derrick site.

NATE (CONT'D)

What about our rights? Family's been here almost two hundred years. Its bullshit, plain and simple.

His fury abates, embarrassed.

NATE (CONT'D)

Sorry. That's how I feel. We're being treated like we're the problem, being in the way of their oil and all.

Susie lowers the phone, sympathy infusing her conviction.

SUSIE

We can stop.

NATE

No. Let's get this done so I can think on something pleasant.

He composes himself while Susie resets her phone to record.

NATE (CONT'D)

What you're doing here, is it really going to help?

SUSIE

Don't you worry. My YouTube campaign will put politicians on notice.

She moves position to get a better angle, steps into a mole tunnel mound, stumbles. Nate reaches to steady her. Susie peers at the ground.

SUSIE (CONT'D)

I've been seeing a ton of these.
Are there more than usual?

NATE

Moles don't much care for high pitched sounds. Likely they're running from the noise.

Susie stores the phone to get a sample of dirt into a baggie, pockets that and brings the phone out again.

SUSIE

Okay, let's finish up so you can get back to business. When did you first notice a problem?

NATE

The day the fences went up across the way there.

EXT. NATE'S FARM - FIELD - DAY

A Drone swoops and hovers over the stunted field.

Susie works a Tablet that's also the Drone controller.

Following the drone feed, she stops every few feet to verify a reading, adds data to a spreadsheet on a tab.

Mole tunnel mounds are all over the area. Some weathered, some freshly mounded. Susie scoops up dirt into sample bags, marks time and location.

She toe taps a mound. Several feet of tunnel caves in to an ankle-breaking depth of 6-8 inches, revealing water marks.

Susie looks over at the roadbed.

A residue of glassy oil-type slick crosses the road. On the other side, a pair of vast concrete containment pools.

Swinging the drone over, Susie takes video of the border between contaminated and pure ground, then lands the device.

More dirt samples.

Her digging unearths a dead mole. She pokes at it with her shovel, pulls a bag from her pack, wraps the creature and adds it to her samples.

FAR END OF THE FIELD

GABRIEL HUNTER (24), gangly and choking back a misery, lugs a wire cage on his way along a slow moving trickle of a stream.

Wisps of pollution scud. Clots of foam anchor in the rocks.

In the cage, three white lab rats shift around nervously under the DERRICK NOISE and water threat.

Gabriel sucks at sloppily bandaged fingers on his left hand.

GABRIEL

Told Daddy you didn't mean it.
Ya'll are my babies.

He hops along a series of flat stones across the stream. The rats freak out, bouncing around the cage.

Gabriel loses his balance, staggers. On the verge of falling into the water, he makes a desperate leap.

The cage flies from his hand, LANDS HARD. The door POPS open and the rats scurry out.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

Hey! No. Huey, come back here.

Gabriel darts as the rats run away.

The biggest rat HUEY investigates a hole in the ground, drops in. The others follow.

Gabriel stops, turns a circle, cradling the empty cage to his chest. There's obviously something wrong with his faculties.

He scratches a long ugly scar running from temple to neck.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

Huey! Dewey, come on back, boys.

Susie comes up to the opposite side of the water.

SUSIE

Hey, are you okay?

Gabriel shudders, crosses the stream. She looks at the cage, touches his hand.

SUSIE (CONT'D)
Your pets bit you.

His misery returns tenfold. He massages his bitten fingers.

GABRIEL
Didn't mean it. It's the noise.
They don't like that oil rig.

SUSIE
They're not alone in that.

TRUCK BRAKES SCREAM and they both cringe as another tanker pulls in with a BELCH of exhaust. Susie snaps photos.

She and Gabe retreat under a roiling fog of pollution.

He trudges to the farm house. Susie hops into a small camper parked against the fence on the far side of the driveway.

EXT. SUSIE'S CAMPER - NIGHT

POV through CAMERA LENS - An infrared filter turns the fracking site into a hellish commotion.

BACK TO SHOT - Susie photographs from the sun roof. She takes readings on thermometers and bottles air samples.

INT. SUSIE'S CAMPER - NIGHT

Dropping to the floor, she squeezes her camera and bagged samples between miniature forensic machines.

Specimens are processed to clean test tubes, labeled and set into the carousel of a mass spectrometer.

As the machine whirls, Susie enters notes into her laptop.

The machine stops with a PING. She pulls the read-out.

SUSIE
Methanol, diesel, urea, ethylene
glycol, gelatin. Formaldehyde? Yum.

She slips the paper into a folder, shuts everything down. Opens the fridge, chooses a pre-packaged salad.

INT. FARM HOUSE - MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

Airy, with the stolid furnishings of a farming family.

A wall of family photos. From sepia-tinted old west tintypes to beaming high school proms. Babies. Graduations. Sports headlines. Gabriel/Denise wedding. A horrific auto crash news report with Gabriel's injuries.

A MECHANICAL THUMPING HUM vibrates the entire house on a physical and subliminal level.

At the dining table HARRIET HUNTER (47) clips coupons from a newspaper, a mixed drink at her elbow. Former Prom Queen, she's put on weight and a permanent scowl.

GRANDMA HUNTER (73) comes in from the kitchen, unloads a rifle and stores it in a wall cabinet of guns. Spry and lean, she works efficiently, totally ignores Nate at her back.

NATE

You can't keep doing that, Mom.
Suppose you hit one of those guys?
That would be murder.

GRANDMA

Settle yourself, Nate. I'm not
aiming AT them. But if that lawyer
shows himself ...

Nate suppresses frustration, looks around for support. Harriet snorts into her drink.

HARRIET

Give 'em hell, Gram.

NATE

Don't encourage her.

HARRIET

Well, I'm not looking forward to
nosebleeds and migraines. Emmy
Watkins down to Evansville says
that's what happened to her when
the drill went up back of their
house. They had to move.

GRANDMA

We are not moving. This is the
United States. We have property
rights.

DENISE

Tell that to the Indians.

Right knee in a thick Velcro brace, DENISE HUNTER (24) makes a show of hobbling in, settles on a sofa with a tall glass of iced tea. She flicks the TV remote on.

Grandma locks the gun cabinet, glares at Denise.

GRANDMA

Why is it that brace comes on only when there are chores to be done?

DENISE

I am not faking. That noise makes my bones rattle.

GRANDMA

Sure its not the marbles in your head?

HARRIET

Oh dear Lord, do we have to listen to this again?

NATE

Everybody, just hush on up.

He waits, puffed up with what bravado he can muster.

NATE (CONT'D)

I've been talking to the foreman. He assures me the worst of it is almost over. Once they get the pipe down to the pool and oil flowing, all the trucks go away and we'll have peace and quiet.

HARRIET

And an oil rig in our backyard. Get that reporter girl to test the water. It's smelling foul again.

NATE

First thing tomorrow.

He drops into a chair, head down, limp hands shivering under the drill vibrations.

EXT. FRACKING WELL SITE - CONTAINMENT POOLS - NIGHT

Huge concrete containment pools, filled to overflowing with turgid liquid, simmer with slow internal chemistry.

A trailer door opens. WORKER HUME slips out, (40s), muscular and edgy. He crosses to the furthest pool, eyeballs the height of the water at the lip, looks around for watchers.

Creeping to a large spigot, he sits on the pipe, draws his feet up, opens the spigot. WATER GUSHES in a hissing stream.

Hume covers his face with a heavy filtration mask as vapor steams above the spreading water.

What little vegetation exists, shrivels under the assault.

The tide fans out across the road and into the corn field.

INT. MOLE TUNNELS - NIGHT

Water forms shallow pools in the compact tunnel.

A dark form undulates up to the pool. A mobile prehensile snout sniffs. The creature laps up the puddle, shudders then reverses direction and scuttles away.

EXT. FRACKING WELL SITE - CONTAINMENT POOLS - NIGHT

Hume flicks a flashlight across the ground.

Small dead bodies float in the widening slime.

He grunts, nods, makes himself comfortable.

Tendrils of pollution form above the pool. The RUSHING WATER cancels out even the DERRICK NOISE.

Hume's fidgeting heel gouges a rill into the dirt that catches a trickle of the escaping water.

A mole tunnel mounds up, aims for the man's TAPPING foot.

Hume's eyes close. His foot finds purchase on the ground. The mound inches closer.

Closer.

A prehensile snout pokes out to sniff.

A booted foot nearly squashes the creature as it plants.

DUKE

Got'cha!

His hand closes on Hume's shoulder, jerking the man half off the pipe. Hume's dragging foot widens the rill and water rushes for the mole tunnel.

Dirt trembles in a retreat under the flood.

Duke pins Hume in place, shuts off the spigot.

DUKE (CONT'D)

What the hell do you think you're doing?

HUME

Keeping the levels down.

DUKE

That's what evaporation does.

HUME

Weather's been off. Big boss said we're falling behind, so we should help it some.

DUKE

Did he also tell you to poison the local water? Folks find out this shit is leaking, they'll call in the EPA and we're shut down. Guess what that does to your paycheck.

HUME

Look around, boss. There's nothing out here but a few varmints.

DUKE

You better hope that's all we find. Get inside. If I catch you out here again you're gone.

Hume finds his feet, heads inside with a look of disgust.

Duke checks the pool level, a good two inches below where it was. Scans the now marshy field. He spits, heads in, squashing the tunnel mound without seeing it.

On the far edge of the run-off, something moves.

A dead bird jerks under a sudden stress. GROWLING and SQUEAKING erupts. The body is yanked underground.

EXT. FRACKING WELL SITE - DAY

Freshly washed and dressed in casual clothes, the workers wait in an orderly line outside the Office Trailer.

INT. FRACKING WELL SITE - OFFICE - DAY

Seated imperiously behind the desk, LAWYER HARRIS (40s), too preppy for the mid-west, checks time cards and doles out cash with bored efficiency.

EXT. FRACKING WELL SITE - OFFICE - DAY

Workers exit, form groups to car pool off property. Duke eyeballs the exodus as he fields a phone call.

INT. FRACKING WELL SITE - OFFICE - DAY

Duke slides past waiting workers, leans over Harris.

DUKE

Three of our supply trucks are held up. Train derailed and dumped cargo over 2 miles of track.

LAWYER HARRIS

We're already behind schedule.

Duke shrugs. Taylor half steps out of line.

TAYLOR

Any chance you're offering OT for anybody staying put?

Duke consults a schedule on a clipboard. Lawyer Harris makes a sour face, hating the additional expense.

DUKE

I'll take the first twenty to sign up, and don't think you'll be sleeping in. There's plenty to get done.

He sets the clipboard by the pay book. Men sign up to stay and head out. CATCALLS and WHISTLES SOUND OS.

Duke winces, heads out.

EXT. FRACKING WELL SITE - OFFICE - DAY

Susie marches up, ignoring the whistles and propositions. Duke blocks her from the door.

DUKE

How many times do I have to tell you this is private property?

SUSIE

This is public access right here. And the public has a right to protest what you're doing here.

DUKE
So where's your sign? And all your
hippie friends?

SUSIE
I'm a biologist, Mr. Newton. Your
well is polluting this area with
chemicals.

DUKE
No, we're not. Everything's
contained, cleaned and stored.

The derrick BELCHES a plume of oily black smoke. Susie folds
her arms, gives him a look.

DUKE (CONT'D)
Take it up with your congressman,
for all the good it will do. We
have permission to be here.

SUSIE
I'm going to publish my findings.

DUKE
You do that. We'll be somewhere
else by then.

He heads for the derrick.

SUSIE
I'll follow you. We will stop this
before you ruin the country.

Duke waves without looking. Susie huffs, heads back to the
road. Duke stomps a tunnel mound flat, turns.

DUKE
Hey, biologist, what can you do
about these critters?

SUSIE
Stop drilling. They're attracted by
the vibrations.

DUKE
Funny. Out.

A FACTORY WHISTLE gets the men over to the derrick.

INT. MOLE TUNNELS - DAY

Gabriel's rats explore, testing the air. They come to ...

INT. MOLE TUNNELS - BIG CAVE - DAY

A wide, shallow clearing. Tunnel entrances radiate like the spokes of a bike wheel.

A half dozen moles engage in a biting contest in the center. Scattered hollows in the walls harbor females giving birth.

Some loiter by the birthing mothers, gobbling down babies as they're born. Mother moles spit and snarl.

One mother mole rolls to put herself between the babies and a big aggressive male, BIG GUS. They snap at each other.

Huey comes into the cave, watches the undisciplined free-for-all. He SQUEAKS to his companions, sends them to opposing sides of the central fight.

Huey times a lunge into the biting contest melee, grabs a mole by the scruff and heaves it against a wall.

Startled, the moles break apart. The rats nip at paws and snouts until the moles cower in a subdued bunch.

A younger aggressive male moves in on a mother mole as Big Gus squints at the newcomers.

Huey pounces on the young aggressor, kills it with a quick, suffocating bite.

The cornered moles surge forward, teeth exposed.

Huey SNARLS. His brothers form up on either side to chase them back into a huddle.

Huey takes a bite out of the dead mole. The remaining aggressive males slither into the herd, except for Big Gus.

The females tend to their babies.

Big Gus is sharp enough to know a strong leader. He waddles over to Huey, rolls to expose his belly in submission.

Huey eyes Big Gus, gives a rat version of a shrug and continues eating.

Big Gus regains his feet, hovers close, snipping at smaller moles to assert authority as second-in-command.

INT. FARM HOUSE - CELLAR - DAY

An unfinished room with laundry machines and baskets of clothes, a wall of shelves loaded with homemade jarred goods.

Grandma tucks fresh jars behind netting strung across a shelf. The HUM of INDUCED VIBRATION rattles everything.

One jar of honey works its way out of security, CRASHES.

GRANDMA
Dammit to hell.

She scowls at the oozing pool of honey. Behind the fresh mess there's a pile of shattered glass and a dried pool with a dead mouse stuck in the syrup.

Grandma gets a rag to pick out the mouse, tosses it in the trash. She uses an old shovel to push the broken glass into the pile, leaving the honey to dry out. Heads upstairs.

INT. NATE'S FARM - BARN - DAY

A battered Ford pick-up comes up the road. The Ford turns into the driveway at end of the stunted field.

Nate POWERS DOWN. He drops out of the truck, grabs after parcels dancing around the bed under the WELL VIBRATIONS.

INT. FARM HOUSE - MAIN ROOM - DAY

Nate settles into his chair, eyes Harriet nursing a drink at the other end of the table. He's near worn out.

NATE
Rupert's hanging in. Don't know how much longer.

HARRIET
So why are we still here?

NATE
Mom can't run the farm by herself. I told you. It's temporary.

HARRIET
That was twenty years ago, Nate.

Grandma sets a plate of buns on the table, glares at Harriet before taking her seat.

GRANDMA
Nobody tied an anchor to your ass. Hunter family's been here since 1858. I'm not going anywhere.

NATE

We'll make do.

HARRIET

With what? Your hired hands took off. The town's drying up. Your son is crippled and his bride is more worried about ruining her manicure than helping with chores. And that god-awful noise is making me crazy.

His shoulders slump. He has no answer other than stubborn loyalty to the family legacy.

GRANDMA

Let it go, Harry.

HARRIET

No. They made an offer. We should have taken it.

She pushes to her feet, crosses to a liquor cabinet and pours herself a stiff shot.

EXT. FRACKING WELL SITE - DAY

Two workers, OSCAR and FISHER, on the outer edge of the site side step around tunnel mounds. The ground gives way and they fall into an expanding rut a foot deep.

Their co-workers laugh at them.

Without warning the floundering pair are SCREAMING and scrambling to get out of the hole, but the ground keeps collapsing like an ice sheet breaking apart.

A dark carpet of something flows around their lower halves.

Co-workers reach to help the men out.

Trousers shredded and legs ripped bloody from multiple bites make the workers shrink away.

The victims GASP and WHEEZE for breath. Duke runs up.

DUKE

What's the hold up here?

WORKER EDWARDS, (20s) ruddy and scared, breaks the circle, offers a dead mole by the stubby tail. He indicates the wounded men and the gaping hole that's now empty of critters.

Duke covers his disgust with a snarl, takes the critter.

DUKE (CONT'D)
Get them to medical. Somebody fill
in that hole. The rest of you get
back to work.

INT. FRACKING WELL SITE - OFFICE - DAY

Lawyer Harris lazes at his desk, trolling through computer reports. He would rather be anywhere else.

Duke barges in, drops the critter, now bagged in plastic, on the desk. Lawyer Harris barely glances at it.

LAWYER HARRIS
And this is?

DUKE
A mole, I think. It attacked my
men.

That gets a disbelieving scowl. Lawyer Harris pulls himself upright for a closer look at the creature.

LAWYER HARRIS
Grown men running from an over-
weight rat? An ugly overweight rat.

Duke smoulders embarrassment.

DUKE
What do we do?

LAWYER HARRIS
It's dead. End of problem.

He lounges back, attention returning to the computer.

DUKE
You wish. These things have been
burrowing all over the compound.

LAWYER HARRIS
So?

DUKE
So, we could have more issues.

LAWYER HARRIS
Something this small is hardly
worthy of panic.

DUKE

A lot of somethings this small
digging tunnels could cause the
derrick to mis-align, then we have
a major problem.

Lawyer Harris studies him, finding Duke a personal threat.

LAWYER HARRIS

Well then, if another of these ugly
little things pops up, kill it and
make up the lost time. We have a
quota to meet.

DUKE

Quota be damned. If this is a
result of that idiot releasing
contaminated water ...

Lawyer Harris pushes to his feet. He turns to the window at
his back. It resists an easy push.

Harris forces it open, picks up the bag in two fingers and
expertly flings the evidence into a contained pit fire.

Jamming the window back down, he turns to Duke, puffed up
with superior position.

DUKE (CONT'D)

That's your answer? See no evil.

LAWYER HARRIS

We are not polluting, accidentally
or otherwise. You are on a schedule
to deliver this well. If you have a
problem with that, you can find
another job. Are we done?

Duke marches out. The PHONE RINGS. Harris picks it up.

LAWYER HARRIS (CONT'D)

Harris here.

DOCTOR (V.O.)

Need you over to medical.

LAWYER HARRIS

Can't you

DOCTOR (V.O.)

Now.

INT. FRACKING WELL SITE - MEDICAL CAMPER - DAY

Lawyer Harris steps inside, sniffs at the starkly clean room.

DOCTOR TUTTLE, (40s) an unremarkable man except for the flush of too much booze, joins him at the door, checks outside.

LAWYER HARRIS
Afraid I brought cameras?

DOCTOR
You maybe should have. Come look.

He nods to the pair of sheet covered bodies. Harris feigns disinterest, whips one sheet up to view ...

the frozen agony in Oscar's face, drops it in a hurry.

Doc Tuttle lifts the second sheet. Harris turns away from Fisher's contorted features.

LAWYER HARRIS
Why are they green?

DOCTOR
Some kind of toxin, I guess.

LAWYER HARRIS
You guess?

DOCTOR
I'm an EMT. I stabilize accident patients for the real docs. I've never seen anything like this.

He lifts the sheet to show the chewed up legs. Harris swallows bile.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
The men said it was animals.

LAWYER HARRIS
Newton thinks we have a mole problem.

DOCTOR
Moles eat bugs. You're sure it wasn't rats?

Lawyer Harris squints at him in consideration.

LAWYER HARRIS
Yeah. Maybe that's it. We disrupted a family of rats.

DOCTOR

More like an army. You'd better get somebody down here to

Retreating to the door, Lawyer Harris checks outside, closes the door. He faces Tuttle with cold authority.

LAWYER HARRIS

Nobody's coming in here, and nobody's going out. We can deal with these *accidents*.

DOCTOR

Falsify records? That's ..

LAWYER HARRIS

That's keeping your job. If word gets to corporate we'll be shut down and somebody will get axed for the failure. Guess who.

Doctor studies him, annoyed, cowed.

DOCTOR

If this is something we did.

LAWYER HARRIS

We've done nothing wrong. Now put these guys on ice. If anybody asks you were too late to help and you're waiting for backup.

He holds Doctor's eyes until he gets a nod of compliance.

INT. FARM HOUSE - MAIN ROOM - DAY

Harriet listlessly dusts the photos. Her mouth tightens looking at her wedding picture - fresh-faced 20-year-olds with full lives ahead of them.

Nate comes in behind her, reads her posture. Undone by circumstance he's clinging to his last hope.

Harriet catches his reflection in a glass, resumes dusting.

NATE

This is not what I had in mind for us.

HARRIET

When life hands you lemons you make lemon vodka. Right?

NATE
Said you could leave.

She turns.

HARRIET
And go where?

NATE
On over to Enid or OK City. Find
yourself a job.

HARRIET
With what experience? The only
skill I have is raising kids.

NATE
Then I guess you're staying put.
You could lighten up on the poor me
business. We're all in the same
boat here.

HARRIET
Are we? I was Prom Queen. I was
supposed to be somebody, not some
damn farm wife.

NATE
Like I didn't have dreams! Not my
fault Eric got killed overseas and
no one else to run the farm. You
always were full of yourself.

Harriet huffs indignation, grabs at her glass, misses. The
GLASS SHATTERS on the floor.

NATE (CONT'D)
Suppose that's my fault too.

He exits, leaving her to fume alone.

EXT. NATE'S FARM - FIELD - DAY

Susie treks through the stunted rows with a pair of long
handled shovels, wire traps and a belt of small tools.

The dirt SHIMMIES ahead of her. She darts up, slams one
shovel down across the back tunnel, gets ahead of the mound,
shoves in the second blade to block the creature between.

She drops the trap, digs with a hand spade.

A tiny furry black body comes up on her spade, tries to dig a new escape path.

Before it can escape, Susie scoops it into the trap.

INT. SUSIE'S CAMPER - DAY

Still caged, the snarling mole is weighed. Susie notes the statistics. She spray paints a stripe down its back.

EXT. NATE'S FARM - FIELD - DAY

Susie opens the cage outside a mole tunnel. The branded critter scurries into the dirt in a blink.

INT. SUSIE'S CAMPER - DAY

A frozen dead mole lays on newspaper and plastic. Susie takes photos, uses a scalpel to slice open the belly.

With care she lays back the skin.

Spills out tiny crushed mole babies, winces stunned.

SUSIE

Oh gross. You must be hungry.

EXT. NATE'S FARM - FIELD - DAY

Nate and Grandma walk the stunted field. Grandma strips ears off the wilting stalks. Nate works with a hand-held soil tester. He tosses the sample, puts his kit away.

NATE

What do you think?

GRANDMA

Burn it. The ash should keep most of that mess from the other fields.

EXT. NATE'S FARM - FIELD - LATER

Grandma, Nate and Gabriel watch the burn from three sides to ensure the house isn't in danger.

EXT. FRACKING WELL SITE - TRAILER - DAY

Duke and Lawyer Harris watch the rising flames.

LAWYER HARRIS

How neighborly of them, burning the evidence so they have no case to bring to court.

Disgusted, Duke hocks spit that just misses Harris' foot. He crosses to the derrick to get his idling men to work.

EXT. SUSIE'S CAMPER - ROOF - DAY

Susie guides her drone over the sere fields behind the fracking site, making a big circle around the property.

On her screen, there's no evidence of moles here. Why?

As the drone hovers, she pulls up a geological survey.

SUSIE

Slate. Ah. That's why we're not getting tremors. And why the moles are staying on this side.

She continues to circle the drone behind the derrick site, checks over her shoulder as the smouldering field turns the sky orange and yellow.

INT. MOLE TUNNELS - BIG CAVE - DAY

The rats herd the moles out of smoke-filled tunnels into a deeper, larger cavern. The creatures huddle in a mass of 90 or so creatures.

One by one, more moles find their way in ahead of the smoke. A few automatically nip at the huddled crowd.

Huey jumps in, seizes an antagonist by the neck, throws it down, rips out its throat.

The newcomers draw back. They don't protest the rats or Big Gus herding them into the huddle.

A female herds her 4 offspring in. The babies go straight for the dead mole to feed.

INT. FARM HOUSE - MAIN ROOM - DAY

Denise labors at a crossword puzzle at the table. Harriet glues broken pottery together.

Gabriel enters from the kitchen with two glasses of iced tea. He sets a glass by a full one Denise already has, blinks.

GABRIEL

Oh.

DENISE

Just set it down, baby. Won't go to waste.

He shifts weight, nudging her leg in the brace, looks down.

GABRIEL

You hurt yourself.

Denise all but slaps down her pencil in an instant rage.

DENISE

Not again. Gabe, stop. Think.

She glares at him. Gabe's face puckers with the effort. There's some kind of mental block he can't break.

DENISE (CONT'D)

We were in the car ...

He flinches, a deep panic rising. Harriet drops her pottery.

HARRIET

Why do you torture him so?

DENISE

The doctor said it was the only way to help him build new ... syn ... Cinnamon ... new ways to remember.

HARRIET

He'll remember when he remembers. Hasn't been out of the coma that long. You're all right, Gabey.

GABRIEL

I made tea.

HARRIET

Thank you. We'll save it for Grandma.

She pats a chair for him to sit, squints a sneer at Denise, goes back to her craftwork.

HARRIET (CONT'D)

You want something to fret about? We're facing a hard winter unless something changes.

Grandma comes in, arms full of bowls of vegetables. She sets bowls down by each person at the table.

GRANDMA
 Won't starve long as everybody
 pitches in.

Paring knives get thrown down, then she takes a seat, begins trimming her bowl of string beans.

Harriet pulls over a bowl of peas. Gabriel nudges the tea across the table to Grandma. She smiles and sips at it.

Cheered, Gabriel digs into another bowl of beans. Denise makes a face, works on her bowl.

DENISE
 Wouldn't it work out better if
 Gabey and me got a room over to
 Evansville?

HARRIET
 Please do. Oh wait, you can't drive
 with that wrecked knee and I never
 learned stick. Guess you're stuck
 with us.

Denise sulks into her bowl.

INT. MOLE TUNNELS/FRACKING WELL - DAY

Gabriel's rats lead the mole colony through the tunnels. The VIBRATIONS from the drill almost a martial drumming.

A smaller rhythm interrupts the MACHINE NOISE. The rats stop, sniffing.

EXT. NATE'S FARM - FIELD - DAY

Gathering samples of the burnt crops and dirt into plastic bags, Susie balances awkwardly. Her leg quivers with an involuntary TWITCH.

A fresh tunnel mound forms not five feet behind her.

The samples go in a larger travel bag. Susie rubs her leg to ease the twitch, moves on.

The tunnel mound shimmies after her, closing in.

Susie hops up into the camper.

The mound stops. Nothing for it to follow.

A fresh THUMPING. The mound veers for the fracking site.

EXT. FRACKING WELL SITE - DAY

Johnson TRAMPS along behind a wheelbarrow.

Huey pokes his head out of a tunnel mound, eyes the man as he unloads the debris into the burn pit.

Johnson eases down the pit side to work the mess into a neat pile over the embers.

The rat retreats.

INT. MOLE TUNNELS - DAY

Huey SQUEAKS to his rats at the rear, pulls aside to let the moles advance and widen a new tunnel.

EXT. FRACKING WELL SITE - DEBRIS PIT - DAY

Johnson continues to stack wood and junk.

The pit wall behind him trembles, then a hole opens up. A mole snout sticks out, quivers.

Finished with his fussing, Johnson reaches to climb out. His hand gropes near the mole tunnel.

He YELPS, falls back against the pile, shakes off the mole clinging to his sleeve.

JOHNSON

You little ...

Another mole pops out of the hole, slides to the floor of the pit, followed by another and another.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

That's it. Keep coming. You guys are in for a surprise.

He ignites a fuse, uses a broken beam as a step ladder. Half-way up the pit wall Huey jumps at his face.

With a SCREAM Johnson falls, swarmed in seconds.

Before the trash fire blazes up, the moles retreat to the tunnels, leaving behind a cleaned skeleton.

Leaning out a window in the next trailer, Doctor Tuttle pulls his head in, horrified. He closes the window.

EXT. FRACKING WELL SITE - MEDICAL CAMPER - DAY

The door opens. Doctor Tuttle checks the ground for solidity, skips across to the line of cars and lets himself in one. ENGINE RUNNING, he waits behind the wheel, nerves frayed.

A truck fires up, RUMBLES for the gate.

Seeing his chance, the Doctor slips into gear, moves out, using the truck as a blocker.

INT. SUSIE'S CAMPER - DAY

Susie works at her computer. A machine stops spinning, BEEPS a ready. Susie waits for a chemical analysis to print out, looks it over, frowns puzzlement.

She digs in a cabinet, pulls out a Geiger counter, checks the batteries then runs the device over her samples. The CLICKS pick up enough to indicate more than chance radiation.

On impulse she opens the freezer, reaches in over the mole specimen. The Geiger counter GOES CRAZY.

Susie slams the freezer shut, stunned.

She goes back to her computer, brings up a new program, types. A graph chart starts low and soars geometrically.

SUSIE

Oh shit.

She grabs a camera, climbs a ladder to the sun roof.

EXT. SUSIE'S CAMPER - DAY

Braced in the hatch, Susie takes photos of the derrick grounds with a long distance lens.

CAMERA POV - Rows of tanker trucks, the rising derrick frame, dust and smoke eddies, workers busy at tasks.

The focus sweeps the road directly in front of the site, comes back and zeroes in for a close up.

The pavement shows stress fractures that SPIDERWEB down the road bed. Dirt TRICKLES. The fractures QUIVER, lengthen.

BACK TO SHOT - Susie pulls the camera from her face, wondering. She checks her shots.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

The exiting tanker truck makes its turn onto the road. It's picking up speed past the far end of the fracking site fence when the roadbed crumbles beneath it.

The tanker swerves and skids, looking for solid ground.

Too close behind, Doctor Tuttle panics at the metal beast looming over him. He swerves to the far left of the road.

Right into the path of an oncoming Semi, HORN BLARING.

The Doctor pulls right. The Semi pulls to his right, hits the soft shoulder. The roadbed gives way, swallowing the truck nose-first past the hubcaps.

The Doctor careens into the tanker.

The SEMI DRIVER kills his engine. Red-faced with rage, he wiggles out of the cab window, steams to the Doctor's car.

Susie's about to drop from her vantage point when the Driver starts kicking at the ground. A furry black wave boils up out of the rut that swallowed his truck.

The Doctor screams his horror as the Driver is eaten alive in front of him.

Susie's scream sticks in her throat as the swarm vanishes as fast as it showed up, leaving a bare bones skeleton.

One foot out of his truck, the TANKER DRIVER, having witnessed the attack, falls back inside, slams the door, sits rigid behind his wheel.

Hyperventilating, Susie finally remembers her camera, takes pictures with shaking hands. She checks the ground around her camper. Seems solid.

The Doctor wiggles out of his car, runs for the derrick entrance as workers stream out to check on the accidents.

SUSIE

(yells)

No! Get off the road.

The men can't hear her over the DERRICK GRINDING.

SUSIE (CONT'D)
Go back. Get inside.

Half-way to the gate, the Doctor stops, looks at the ground.

One second he's there, in the next he's sinking into a pit, gone under a wave of furry black bodies.

Hume, at the front of the worker exodus, pulls up short.

HUME
What was that? Where did he go?

The ground undulates and the pit widens, the chasm aiming for the workers.

Men back pedal, causing chaos as latecomers continue forward.

The commotion turns into a full-out chaos of pushing and pulling as the men race away from the flood of moles that pours out of the rift.

At the gate, Duke is pulled back inside by the fleeing men.

HUME (CONT'D)
Don't go out there. They ate him.
They're eating everything.

The Tanker Driver pounds on his HORN for acknowledgement. The workers keep running.

The moles retreat underground.

Duke stares at the mess of disabled trucks and ruined roadway. He looks over to Susie.

Clutching her camera, she's shell-shocked, drops out of view.

Duke shakes off fear. He has to stay strong. Checks the ground underfoot. No mole tunnels.

DUKE
Everybody into the trailers.
Get inside. Now!

Workers head for the trailers, pulling their buddies along, checking the ground.

DUKE (CONT'D)
Keep your radios on. Do not come
out until I give the all clear. Get
me a head count.

He keeps one eye on the ground, the other on the retreating crew, heads for the office trailer.

INT. SUSIE'S CAMPER - DAY

Susie drops to the floor, tabling the camera seconds ahead of dropping it. She folds into a chair, hyperventilating.

SUSIE

Oh God. Oh God. Oh God.

Fingers DRUM on the table. She looks at her hand, slaps it flat, stares at the camper door. Can they get in there?

Sliding her feet, she checks all the seams and rivets for damage. So far, so good. Now what?

Time to get out! She moves to the driver's seat, fumbles the key into the ignition. The engine GRUMBLES, won't turn over.

SUSIE (CONT'D)

You can do it. Come on.

The computer BEEPS. Susie SCREECHES, stares at it.

It takes her a moment to pull herself together and cross to the machine.

Her fingers aren't up to the task of typing. She studies the flow chart on the screen, showing a geometric increase in mole population.

SUSIE (CONT'D)

No. No, no, no, no. Help. This isn't. Send for help.

She forces herself to work the keyboard.

INT. FRACKING WELL SITE - OFFICE - DAY

Lawyer Harris huddles over the phone.

LAWYER HARRIS

We had a minor setback that's been taken care of. Everything's under control.

Duke enters, drops a finger on the phone cradle to cut Harris off. He grabs the receiver, cradles it undecided, scared to his core. Picks it up again.

LAWYER HARRIS (CONT'D)
What do you think you're doing?

DUKE
Derrick 670 calling. Get Thompson
for me.

LAWYER HARRIS
That was him you just hung up on. I
told him we had things in hand.

DUKE
Well, we don't. I got two trucks in
ditches that weren't there
yesterday and men missing.

Duke shoves him off when Lawyer Harris tries to break the
connection. He waits an eternity for the call to connect.

Fuming with anxiety, Lawyer Harris traces the cord, pulls the
jack from the wall. Duke slams the receiver down.

DUKE (CONT'D)
Are you out of your mind! We're in
danger here.

Lawyer Harris puts the desk between himself and Duke.

LAWYER HARRIS
According to you.

Duke glares at Harris, done with corporate blindness.

DUKE
Oscar and Fisher are dead, aren't
they? You let them die.

LAWYER HARRIS
There was nothing Doc could do.

DUKE
How is that not a problem? What if
those things get more aggressive?

LAWYER HARRIS
Moles? You're exaggerating.

DUKE
Then you better call Thompson
again. Because nothing's getting
done until I get help down here.

He gathers the phone cord to check the plug end. It's barely damaged. Duke pulls pliers from a pocket and worries the wires back into position.

LAWYER HARRIS

Corporate is not going to agree to more over-runs. We will handle it.

DUKE

With what?

LAWYER HARRIS

Improvise. Isn't that why we hired you?

Duke finishes his repair, looks for the wall socket, keeping a rein on his temper. Lawyer Harris trails him.

LAWYER HARRIS (CONT'D)

Newton. Dammit, Newton, think about your men. If we don't deliver this well on time ...

DUKE

This well isn't happening until we get a handle on these critters.

The line gets plugged into the wall. Duke picks up the receiver, glares victory at a dial tone.

Keeping between Lawyer Harris and the phone jack, he dials, waits for the connection.

Lawyer Harris puts the phone on speaker. The call rings, rings.

LAWYER HARRIS

Listen to me. This is not ...

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Two hundred yards or so, on the far side of the fracking site, another tractor trailer coming in hits a rut. The driver swerves as two tires on one side BLOW OUT.

His trailer SIDE-SWIPES a telephone pole, sends it CRASHING. He fish tails, manages to come to a stop.

The DRIVER gets out, walks back to the damaged tires.

A flowing carpet of furry bodies streams out of the hole. He's swarmed before he has a chance to scream.

The swarm retreats just as quickly, leaving bones and shredded clothes behind.

INT. FRACKING WELL SITE - OFFICE - DAY

The line GOES DEAD.

DUKE

Hello?

Duke taps the keypad. Nothing. He drops the receiver.

DUKE (CONT'D)

Still think this isn't a problem?
If we can't get help down here,
we're screwed.

He turns for the door.

LAWYER HARRIS

Where are you going?

DUKE

Up top to see what happened to our
phones.

Lawyer Harris scrambles to follow.

INT. SUSIE'S CAMPER - DAY

Susie's two seconds from hitting send when the computer goes dead. She bats at it, checks her cell. No bars. Whimpers.

EXT. TRAILER ROOF - DAY

Standing on the roof behind a pair of binoculars -

DUKE'S POV - Just visible, the truck lays on its side across the road, downed phone lines covering it like a spider web.

INT. FRACKING WELL SITE - OFFICE - DAY

Duke thumps the binoculars on a shelf, opens a cabinet to reveal a short wave radio, pulls up a chair and hits the power switch. He digs a notebook out of the drawer.

The HUMMING ELECTRONICS suddenly die. Duke looks up.

The plug dangles from Lawyer Harris' hand. This one he yanks out of the radio set.

DUKE
That is possibly the dumbest thing
you could have done.

Looking around, Duke spots a megaphone, grabs that.

EXT. TRAILER ROOF - DAY

Duke faces the road, raises the megaphone.

DUKE
Susie! Susan, pop out if you hear
me.

He waits.

Susie appears in the sun roof.

DUKE (CONT'D)
Are you okay?

SUSIE
My computer link died.

DUKE
The lines are down. Need your help.

SUSIE
Yeah right.

DUKE
We get out of this you can say I
told you so every day for a year.
How do I keep these critters off
the property?

SUSIE
You can't. Unless you sink a fence.

DUKE
How deep?

SUSIE
Twelve, fifteen inches. They don't
burrow much deeper than that. You
can try flooding the tunnels, but
they'll be back soon as the ground
dries out.

DUKE
Much obliged.

SUSIE
Hey. Are you expecting help?

DUKE
We don't report in somebody's going
to come see what's what.

SUSIE
Okay. Good. Be careful.

She watches him down out of sight, checks the ground under
her camper, drops down.

EXT. FRACKING WELL SITE - OFFICE - DAY

Duke stands in the door, estimating the run to the tanker
trucks. There aren't many mole tunnels between here and
there. He shakes his head, darts to the next trailer.

INT. FRACKING WELL SITE - TRAILER - DAY

Workers are gathered in a knot when Duke enters.

DUKE
What's the count?

TAYLOR
Sixteen. What are those things?
Where did they come from?

DUKE
Don't know, right now I don't care.
The phones are down. We're on our
own until Monday earliest.

Worried murmurs go through the men. Duke has himself under
control, a strong face to encourage his people.

Thick-set WORKER GREGOR (40s) pushes to the front. WORKER
NOLAN (30s), tiny next to the hulks beside him, shivers.

GREGOR
We can't leave?

DUKE
Both roads are blocked to vehicles
and its a ten mile hike either way.

TAYLOR
What do you need from us?

DUKE

First thing we do is slow those critters down. We're going to release water from the trucks, then we dig a ditch around a perimeter and plant siding as a barrier.

Tall and bulky, WORKER ASHCROFT (30s) breaks to the fore.

ASHCROFT

What if they come back?

DUKE

Half the men will stand watch. The first sign of trouble we hotfoot it back into the trailers.

GREGOR

It's never going to work.

DUKE

Best I can do, boys, unless you'd rather take your chances and hoof it out.

TAYLOR

I saw what those things did to Doc. It was like watching piranha go after bait.

EXT. FRACKING WELL SITE - DAY

The trailer door opens. Duke checks the ground. A deep breath and he lopes over to the nearest tanker truck.

The men cluster in the door to watch.

Duke climbs onto the truck, releases the rear spigot. Water gushes across the ground, fanning out across the dirt. Several moles tunnels collapse. Nothing else moves.

Encouraged, Duke goes to the next truck, opens the spigot. Now the dirt becomes a sea of muck.

INT. MOLE TUNNELS - DAY

The moles SQUEAK as the water floods in. The animals retreat from the collapsing tunnels.

EXT. FRACKING WELL SITE - DAY

Duke studies the ground, hops off his perch.

DUKE
All right, let's get to it.

EXT. FRACKING WELL SITE - OFFICE - DAY

Four men dig with shovels and pitchforks along the outside fence, opening a narrow gouge in the muddy dirt.

Two come behind to hammer long metal sheets in place.

A third team shovels dirt and tamps it around the metal.

Four men in high waders stand guard at either end of the work, armed with flat bladed shovels.

Lawyer Harris pushes open the trailer door to look out. Disgusted he scans the area. All other activity has stopped.

EXT. TANKER TRUCK - DAY

The driver checks a window as water spreads onto the road.

He opens his door, drops to the road. A few cautious steps forward then he runs away from the site.

EXT. FRACKING WELL SITE - CAR PARK - DAY

Tunnel mounds pop up just inside the fence, skitter along between and under cars. A snout pokes up here and there.

Moles emerge to sniff at tires.

EXT. NATE'S FARM - BARN - DAY

Tunnel mounds converge on the barn.

INT. NATE'S FARM - BARN - DAY

Nate stacks empty gasoline cans.

Against the wall, hidden by a mound of spare parts, dirt SHIMMIES, mounds up.

Nate finishes his project, spots something unusual behind the heap of junk, reaches through the pile.

He hunches down lower, looks, reaches in again.

His fingers fumble, RATTLE LOOSE CANS close to the mound.

He's reaching at his limit when ...

A cat JUMPS out of the hiding spot with an ANGRY YOWL.

Nate rolls away, startled, calms his nerves as the cat eyes him from a tall box.

NATE
Minerva! Damn you, cat.

He reaches in again, brings out a full whiskey bottle. A great sadness settles on him.

NATE (CONT'D)
Guarding your drinking buddy's
stash, are you?

Nate opens the bottle, swigs a swallow or two, closes it up again and returns the bottle to its hiding spot. He pushes to his feet, exits the barn.

Not far from the whiskey stash, dirt SHIMMIES, mounds up.

Minerva watches intently. She growls a low challenge.

A second cat comes out of hiding, sits back a ways to watch.

A mole pops up, snout quivering exploration.

Minerva drops to the ground. Both cats sink into attack mode, tails twitching readiness.

Minerva bats the mole with an extended paw. The creature backs away, CHITTERING angrily.

Minerva swats the thing a full blow, sending it tumbling. She pounces after it, confident in her superiority.

The mole digs furiously at the ground, CHITTERING. Unable to break the packed dirt, it turns to the cat, shows teeth.

Minerva studies the creature. What kind of game is this?

The other cat YOWLS a warning. Moles are popping out of the hole. All show gnashing teeth.

Both cats retreat backwards. Moles pile up, pull forward as more critters come up, fast becoming a swarm of snapping teeth and grasping paws.

A startled mouse skitters out. It's pounced on by the moles, eaten in a blink.

The cats turn tail and run from the barn.

EXT. NATE'S FARM - BARN - DAY

The cats nearly bowl Nate over in their flight.

NATE (O.S.)
What in the royal hell is wrong
with you two?

He turns back to the barn door, stops when he sights the moving mass of furry bodies. Astonished.

INT. NATE'S FARM - BARN - DAY

Nate grabs a pitchfork, jabs into the foremost critters. Before he can raise the fork to clear the tines, the fallen are eaten and the swarm moves forward.

He tosses the pitchfork, backtracks out the door.

EXT. NATE'S FARM - BARN - DAY

SLAMMING the door, Nate holds it shut.

The door doesn't move. The ground does. Tunnel mounds pop up across the front of the barn.

Nate breaks for the house. The tunnel mounds follow him.

Gabriel and Denise lounge on the front porch. Nate waves.

NATE
Get in the house!

DENISE
Whatever is the ...

NATE
Don't ask questions. Move!

Standing, they sight the dirt mounds following Nate.

DENISE
Oh my God, is it an earthquake!

Vaulting the steps, Nate pushes them into the house. He hesitates at the door, looking back.

The tunnels stop about ten yards out, but they're everywhere.
Nate backs into the house, slams the door.

INT. NATE'S FARM - BARN - DAY

The moles pop out of their tunnels, search for food.

The rats nose into an elaborate habitat in one of the stalls to check their feeders.

Moles climb on each other under the truck, attracted to the oil and brake lines. Chewing through, they drown in fluids.

The majority of the swarm retreats to the tunnels.

INT. FARM HOUSE - MAIN ROOM - DAY

Grandma comes from the kitchen as Nate peeks through curtains. Denise and Gabriel huddle together.

DENISE
What was it? What's out there?

GRANDMA
Is it the law?

She heads for the gun locker.

NATE
Critters. Lots of them. Never saw anything like it.

Grandma looks at him like he's crazy, crosses to the window.
Everything's quiet.

She looks at Nate, worried.

GRANDMA
Critters?

NATE
Chased the cats clear out of the barn. Swear I thought they was going to follow me up to the door.

He looks out again, points out the tunnel mounds.

GRANDMA
Gabriel, you got rid of them rats?

GABRIEL

Yes ma'am.

NATE

I'm not addled, Mama. It wasn't his rats. These things were dark, like moles, only I never seen moles work together and never a whole carpet of them.

GRANDMA

Well, whatever it was, its gone now. Put your mind to figuring how we're going to pay for seed next year.

Grandma heads into the kitchen. Nate looks out again, doubting his sanity.

INT. FARM HOUSE - CELLAR - DAY

A rumble of machine turns out to be the WASHING MACHINE. Harriet lounges, thumbing through a gossip mag.

She drains the last drop of a whiskey bottle into her glass, tosses the bottle in the trash.

Sour eyes fall on the horizontal outside cellar door.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - CELLAR DOOR - DAY

One of the double doors yaws open. Harriet eases the panel down, looks across to the barn. She listens for VOICES, mounts the steps.

INT. NATE'S FARM - BARN - DAY

Harriet darts inside, closes the doors to a crack. She looks for watchers, FEET BEATING a nervous TATTOO.

INT. MOLE TUNNELS - DAY

The rear guard of the swarm stops and sniffs out VIBRATION. They turn back to investigate.

INT. NATE'S FARM - BARN - DAY

Harriet pulls out the hidden bottle, plops on a hay bale. She downs half the booze in one shot, holds the bottle to her temple to wait for the buzz.

Huey peeps out of the habitat. He slinks through the bales until he finds Harriet, holds ground, tail twitching.

EXT. FRACKING WELL SITE - DAY

The men gather, dirty and sweating. A "fence" lines the perimeter facing the road. Lawyer Harris eyes the work sourly, looks around for Duke. Crosses to the derrick frame.

LAWYER HARRIS

Do you plan to enclose the entire site?

DUKE

I'd have to tear down the derrick for that. No, we're going to enclose the trailers.

LAWYER HARRIS

This is company property.

Duke glares at him.

DUKE

And it's being used to protect my men as I see fit.

LAWYER HARRIS

Empty the containment ponds to drown these things.

DUKE

Contaminated water. That's what started this in the first place.

LAWYER HARRIS

You're worried about environmental impact now? Your men are being decimated.

Duke hesitates, eyes the fence building. Hours of work and they only have partial safety.

DUKE

Fine. Get everyone inside.

Lawyer Harris heads for the men. Duke turns to the containment ponds.

A tunnel mound erupts under the pile of pipes where Gary disappeared. Moles skitter out in a flood.

Gregor hears something, looks behind himself. He cries out, lashes with the shovel.

Lawyer Harris skirts the work party as more watchers swing shovels at the growing furry carpet.

LAWYER HARRIS
Everybody, inside! Drop what you're
doing and get inside.

The men run. Shovel bearers form a barrier between the escapers and the moles, bashing as hard and fast as they can as they back toward the trailers.

Above their heads, LIGHTS FLICKER. A generator box SPARKS AND SPUTTERS an ungodly racket.

Lawyer Harris darts into the office trailer. Four men follow him inside, not waiting to cram into the other trailer as the shovel bearers break off and join the retreat.

The moles break off, scarfing dead companions on the way.

EXT. FRACKING WELL SITE - CONTAINMENT TANKS - DAY

Duke walks around each tank, checking for seepage, undecided about releasing the water.

INT. FRACKING WELL SITE - TRAILER - DAY

The workers pile furniture away from the walls.

WORKER LORDS (20s), dirty, sweaty and on the edge of panic, backs away from the effort.

LORDS
We have to get out of here!

HUME
These things are everywhere. We
can't even get to the road.

ASHCROFT
How long before they get in here?
This is a crummy aluminum single-
wide.

People look around with misgivings. Nolan edges closer to the trio to listen in.

HUME

Shit. What about the trucks?

ASHCROFT

Can't move them.

LORDS

But they have closed in cabs and steel frames. No critter is eating its way through that.

Lords leads the way to the door. Nolan follows.

EXT. FRACKING WELL SITE - DAY

Crowding the door, the men check the ground for mounds, gauge the distance to the line of pumper trucks. A 25 yard dash.

No one wants to be the first or only one out.

LORDS

Come on, we're faster than those things. Last one to the cab buys the beer.

Lords gets nervous nods all around, takes a breath and darts out, followed closely by Ashcroft, Hume, then Nolan.

The remaining men watch the mad dash. YELLS erupt from the trailer as tunnel mounds POP UP, zero in on the runners.

Ashcroft stumbles, almost takes Hume down with him. They hold each other up, keep going.

Lords gets to the truck, hops up, yanks the door open.

It's a pushing match to get inside as the next two sprint up.

The last runner, Nolan, makes the mistake of looking back, catches his foot on something and sprawls in the dirt.

The men in the cab and in the trailer SCREAM for him to get up. The tunnel mounds close in fast. More popping up in a tsunami of piling dirt.

Nolan scrambles to his feet, lunges for the truck as moles pop out of the ground.

EXT. FRACKING WELL SITE - CONTAINMENT TANKS - DAY

Duke backs away from the untouched spigot. He listens, unsure if he's hearing screams under the DERRICK DRILL.

EXT. FRACKING WELL SITE - DAY

The truck door closes Nolan out. He POUNDS on the metal. The men inside frantically try to get it open, but the lock jams.

They get the window lowered to pull their buddy inside.

Nolan grabs hands, SCREAMS as moles run up his legs. His bucking prevents the guys inside from pulling him in.

Eyes bugging out, gasping, the toxin works into his system.

Lords, behind his mates, rears up to look down. Moles cover Nolan's legs, up his hips, shredding flesh as they climb.

LORDS
Close the window.

HUME
But ...

LORDS
He's done for. Shove him out and
get that window shut before we join
him.

More dead than alive, Nolan is pried loose. The window goes up. His hand locks onto the mirror bar. The moles swarm him.

The workers are helpless as he's eaten in front of them. They cower together as critters seek a way into the cab.

INT. NATE'S FARM - BARN - DAY

Two empty liquor bottles CLINK on the ground as Harriet sings and staggers through dance moves.

A mole pops up. She squints, grabs a bottle to chuck at it, misses completely.

HARRIET
Damn mice. Go on, get out of here.

Huey slinks out. A SQUEAKING call and more moles come up, numbers building into a full swarm.

Harriet sobers a bit, not sure what she's seeing, backs away. She finds a broom, swings it at the swarm.

HARRIET (CONT'D)
I'm not playing with you. Git.

Huey scurries away, gets behind her.

The broom misses him a second time. Focused on the rat, Harriet totally forgets about the moles.

HARRIET (CONT'D)
Yeow!

She staggers, lifts a foot. A tiny baby mole clings to a toe by its teeth. Harriet shakes the baby off.

Plopping down on a hay bale, she rubs her foot. Blinks at the sea of little black bodies and gaping mouths of teeth.

HARRIET (CONT'D)
Oh hell.

INT. FARM HOUSE - MAIN ROOM - DAY

The family putters around, not invested in any real work. Harriet's SCREAM is overlaid by the DERRICK WHISTLE.

Everyone jerks under the sound. But it's just the whistle.

Nate wonders, fear crawling up his back. He looks at the door, sure he heard something else.

Looks around. Where's Harriet?

INT. FARM HOUSE - CELLAR - DAY

Nate drops down the steps. The washer dormant now. Then he realizes there's extra light coming in, finds the open hatch.

Crossing over, he has a direct line of sight to the barn.

NATE
Harry.

EXT. NATE'S FARM - BARN - DAY

Nate opens the door. One step in and he stops short, gags.

The ground TREMBLES next to his feet. He SLAMS the door shut, races a mole tunnel back to the porch steps. The tunnel stops short twenty feet out.

INT. FARM HOUSE - MAIN ROOM - DAY

The family jolts when Nate SLAMS the door. Back against the panel, he sinks to the floor.

GABRIEL
Daddy?

GRANDMA
Nate?

He's too overcome, just shakes his head.

Denise counts heads.

DENISE
Where's Mom?

NATE
She's gone.

DENISE
Gone? She left us here! That selfish ...

GRANDMA
Denise!

NATE
She was never happy here. She's in a better place now.

Denise catches on to his meaning, sits heavily.

Grandma drops to the floor beside Nate to console. Gabriel clings to them both. Denise huffs at being left out.

INT. FRACKING WELL SITE - OFFICE TRAILER - DAY

Four workers busy themselves checking floor seams, pulling furniture away from the walls. Lawyer Harris scowls at them.

LAWYER HARRIS
Checking for bogeymen?

Mid-western cowboy gruff WORKER YELLEN (40s), glares at him.

YELLEN

Ya'll didn't see what they did to
Tommy.

At the far end, a rat squeezes through a hole in the base of a wall, eyes the inattentive men. It turns back to bite and widen the hole, CHITTERS.

A mole pops in, snout up and sniffing.

Lawyer Harris heads for the coffee table, probably wishing it was a booze bar. He spots the mole, looking like some trash.

LAWYER HARRIS

What is that?

All the men turn. The rat finds something to hide behind so all they see is the mole.

Snout up, sniffing. Blind eyes useless, six-fingered paws tapping the floor.

YELLEN

Here's how we deal with varmints in
Texas.

He grabs up a long handled hammer, steps forward. With a huge swing he smashes the mole flat. And makes the hole wider with a dent in the floor.

Lawyer Harris allows himself to be nudged to the back of the group as the rest of the men bunch up to look.

A new mole pops out of the hole, then another.

Yellen steps back, bravado fading.

A surging wave of small furry bodies floods the hall from the corrupted wall, snouts quivering in the men's direction. Sharp teeth show every tiny mouth.

Lawyer Harris backs away with deliberate quiet steps.

The workers grab up anything as weapons, attack the critters. But the hall is too small and they get in each other's way.

The moles have no such problem and surge forward. Men YELP.

Lawyer Harris darts outside --

EXT. FRACKING WELL SITE - OFFICE TRAILER - DAY

SLAMS the door, locks it. Backs away without taking his eyes off the panel. Duke comes up from the derrick.

DUKE

Hey, we need another plan. I'm not dumping those ponds.

Lawyer Harris shrinks away from him.

Duke stares from Harris to the door. SCREAMS from inside raise hackles on both men.

LAWYER HARRIS

I had no choice. We have to get out of here.

Something SLAMS against the door, pushing at the hinges.

Unnerved, Duke is tugged into motion to the car park.

EXT. FRACKING WELL SITE - DAY

Duke and Lawyer Harris run down the line of vehicles.

First car has flat tires.

Second car sits in a pool of fluid leaks under the chassis.

Lawyer Harris darts ahead as Duke examines a third for damage. Duke opens the driver's door. No keys. Next car.

More tires are chewed flat. More fluids in puddles. Dead mole bodies here and there.

The last car in the line seems untouched. Lawyer Harris runs.

Jumps in, turns the engine over.

Pulls out. Duke gets a hand on the door, pounds the window.

DUKE

Open the door. Harris, you open this door.

Lawyer Harris throws the car in reverse to shake Duke off, swerves out to the road. Zooms away.

DUKE (CONT'D)

Son of a bitch.

A mole tunnel mounds up. Duke checks all around for sanctuary. It's a long run back to the trailers.

His eyes fall on Susie's camper.

He darts across the road, leaping between small cave-ins and larger ruts of mole tunnels.

More mole tunnels erupt, follow him.

INT. SUSIE'S CAMPER - DAY

Susie startles badly when the door SLAMS open and Duke jumps in. He pulls the door shut, huffing for breath.

DUKE
Sorry for the intrusion.

Susie reads his fear, eyes the door with dread.

SUSIE
Don't bring them in here.

DUKE
We're good. Just out of curiosity.
How many moles are we dealing with?

SUSIE
What? I'm not sure. Possibly
hundreds.

Fighting his fear under control, Duke hangs onto the door.

DUKE
Thousands?

That's unthinkable bad. Susie starts a look at the computer, stops herself. She offers a graph print out.

Duke takes the paper, studies it, worry deepening.

DUKE (CONT'D)
So, not to spoil your Save The
World agenda, but how do we get rid
of these things?

INT. LAWYER'S CAR - DAY

Lawyer Harris barrels down the road at top speed.

He looks over his shoulder as he tops a soft hill. Turns forward and shrieks, stands on his brakes.

The car screams to a stop bare inches from the over-turned Semi-truck that sprawls across the road.

White knuckles on the steering wheel slowly flex.

Panic under control, he puts the car in reverse.

Stops twenty feet from the wreck.

But there's no room to pass. Stout fences and downed power lines on one side, heavy thorn bushes on the other.

POP. POP. The car lists to one side, tires blown.

Lawyer Harris backs up further, stops. Drops into drive, aims for the brush and guns the engine.

The car spurts forward, careens into bushes, forcing a path.

His remaining tires blow just before a solid bush tangles into the front wheel well, forcing a stop.

He sits there, stunned. Finally shuts the engine off.

Forces the door open.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Lawyer Harris squeezes out. There's no way through the bushes without shredding himself on thorns. He retreats to the road.

Checks the road bed for faults, circles around the truck and picks his way thru the downed fencing.

He doesn't see the rut, or the pile of bones as he quick walks up the road.

INT. SUSIE'S CAMPER - DAY

BAM. The camper tilts as a front wheel drops below ground.

Duke and Susie peer out the front window. Mole tunnels circle the camper.

Susie gets behind the wheel, tries to START THE ENGINE.

Duke watches the tunnels. The engine won't turn over.

SUSIE

Come on, come on. Please, come on.

DUKE
They're going to bury us! Get this
thing started.

SUSIE
I'm trying! It gets temperamental.

Duke leans over her to test the key. The dull CLICK sounds familiar. He looks back at her equipment.

DUKE
Where are you getting the juice for
your machines?

SUSIE
The camper.

DUKE
With the engine running?

SUSIE
Of course not, that would be adding
to your pollution.

DUKE
Well, honey, without the engine on
to run all that stuff you drained
the battery.

POP. HISS. A second wheel thumps down.

DUKE (CONT'D)
We need to bail. Now.

Susie won't abandon the driver's seat, numb with fear. Duke puts a shoulder to the side door.

There's resistance as the bottom digs into the ground.

Any second now they won't be able to get out.

Susie shakes herself, darts to grab her notebooks and thumb drive, adds her weight behind Duke to inch the door open enough to escape.

They look across the field. The farm house seems far away.

Right in front of them the ground seems solid.

SUSIE
We can't.

DUKE
I'll take my chances.

He darts out, skipping around the biggest tunnel mounds.
Susie yelps as the camper rocks, dashes out.

SUSIE
Wait for me.

EXT. NATE'S FARM - FIELD - DAY

They run, leaping mole tunnels.

The camper sinks hubcap deep. A carpet of moving black and brown fur pours out of the ground, explores the machine.

Just as quickly, the creatures dive underground again.

Tunnels track after the runners.

Susie looks back, shivers and puts more effort into running.

FEET POUND. The GROUND VIBRATES.

The tunnel mounds expand, converge, pick up speed as older tunnels are intercepted and used as short cuts.

Susie gets to the field fence, yanks at the gate, can't get the latch unhooked. The ground itself trembles.

The tunnel mounds are catching up.

Susie loses her notebooks. Her fingers won't work right, she's so panicked.

Duke squeezes her shoulder, leans past her to rip the lock wire off the post. He shoves the gate open.

They run side by side.

The tunnels don't even hesitate at the fencing.

The runners dash across the open yard to the front porch.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - DAY

The door's locked. Duke heaves for breath, head down. Susie POUNDS on the wood.

SUSIE
Let us in. Oh God, please, let us
in.

GRANDMA (O.S.)
Go away.

SUSIE
 You don't understand. The moles.
 They're coming ...

DUKE
 You can't leave us to die out here.

GRANDMA (O.S.)
 You from that damn well?

Duke looks back for the tunnels, leans against the door.

DUKE
 Ma'am, we can debate the right or
 wrong of drilling some other time.
 You're going to have the blood of
 two people on your hands if you
 don't let us in. Now!

GRANDMA (O.S.)
 Go to hell.

DUKE
 Appears hell is coming to us.

They put backs to the door to watch the tunnels. The mounding
 stops twenty yards out.

They wait, breathing hard. A furry body pops out of the
 ground, followed by another, more until the ground is
 carpeted with critters.

SUSIE
 Oh shit.

Duke POUNDS the door.

DUKE
 Ma'am, I'm begging you.

The door opens. Duke nearly falls inside, grabs Susie in.
 They SLAM the door.

INT. FARM HOUSE - MAIN ROOM - DAY

The door JOLTS under a force, doesn't buckle.

Grandma stands at the far end of the room, shotgun LOADED and
 ready. Nate braces a shoulder to the door, trying to comfort
 Gabriel and his HIGH PITCHED SCREAMING.

Angry SCREECHING sounds outside. The assault on the door
 eases up. The PADDING of hundreds of little feet fades.

Duke and Susie face a circle of hostile faces.

GRANDMA

You are damn lucky my boy has a good heart. I'd have left you out there. What in the royal hell is going on?

SUSIE

The containment pool leaked. A lab has to break out the chemicals but there is detectable radioactivity.

DUKE

That couldn't have been us.

SUSIE

It's in the deep rocks. The crap that's in your slurry pulls it up. Because the moles are so small it doesn't take much to affect them.

Appreciating her intelligence, Duke's attitude softens.

DUKE

So they're born hungry?

SUSIE

Basically, then your chemicals killed off everything they normally eat, so yeah, they're eating people.

Gabriel and Denise react with dread.

GABRIEL

Eating.

DENISE

People? We have to get out of here.

GRANDMA

Can we all fit in the truck?

NATE

Don't see why not. Getting across to the barn will be the trick. Maybe go across quiet-like.

Susie hesitates. The family gives it a moment of thought.

GRANDMA
Gabe, get yourself the over under.
We'll pepper anything that dares
show its face.

Gabriel opens the gun cabinet, pulls out a shotgun, checks for ammo.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - DAY

Nate hesitates on the step. Grandma takes up position to his right. Gabe to the left, armed, with boxes of ready ammo.

Nate swallows his fear, steps onto the ground. Waits. Quiet.

He slides his foot into another step.

One step at a time across the yard. Everyone watches for the slightest disturbance. All's quiet.

Nate's nerve gives out and he dashes the last ten feet to the barn, leaves the doors wide open.

INT. NATE'S FARM - BARN - DAY

Nate slides his feet along the ground. He gets a quick look at what's left of Harriet, resolutely keeps his eyes on the ground and his truck.

There's a dark stain under the engine. He goes to his knees for a look, dips fingers into the stain, groans.

NATE
Gabe, I need you in here, son.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - DAY

Gabe makes the trip across, followed by Duke.

INT. NATE'S FARM - BARN - DAY

Nate is under the engine block when they enter. Gabriel's stopped by the skeleton, bewildered. Duke passes him.

DUKE
What can we do?

Nate wiggles out with a chewed-up hose in hand, disgusted.

NATE

Don't suppose you got a brake line
in your back pocket?

DUKE

Fresh out. Looks like they got to
your oil pan too. What about the
Harvester?

They head outside, unmindful now of their steps.

EXT. NATE'S FARM - BARN - DAY

Nate and Duke stop at mole mounds surrounding the harvester.
The machine looks off somehow.

DUKE

Is she sitting in a ditch?

NATE

No. It's ... Goddammit! Those
little bastards ate my tires.

GRANDMA (O.S.)

Nate. Come on back. We got company.

The men look around.

Dirt SHIMMIES in several mounds, headed in their direction.

Nate and Duke break for the farm house. Tunnels veer after
them. They make the porch steps.

NATE

Gabe! (calls) Gabe!

INT. NATE'S FARM - BARN - DAY

Gabriel shakes himself alert, spots Huey at the tunnels by
the wall. He lights up with a grin, takes a step.

Moles pop up behind the rat, forming a blanket of bodies.

Gabriel backs into the skeleton. Revulsion turns into
horrified recognition of a piece of the shredded clothing.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - DAY

NATE

Gabriel, now!

Gabriel makes a broken field pattern like a running back.

Animals pop out of holes behind him. Grandma and Denise FIRE blanketing shots to cover.

He hits the steps with a hurdling leap. Grandma SHOOTS into the surge of moles behind him.

They all retreat into the house, slam the door.

INT. FARM HOUSE - MAIN ROOM - DAY

The group huddles together, eyes on the door. Grandma reloads her rifle. Nate takes the shotgun from Denise.

Wait. Silence. Heave for breath.

DENISE

They won't come in, will they?

DUKE

They ate through metal. Wood won't stop them long.

GRANDMA

Slate will. This house was built on a solid plate. Foundation beams were all treated with pesticides. Hundred and fifty years we never had a mole come in here.

SUSIE

Do you have phone service?

NATE

Lines are down. We never did get cable out here.

SUSIE

Satellite?

He just laughs, bitterly.

NATE

May as well pray for the hand of God to come down and scoop you up. If we can't walk out, we're stuck.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Sore feet in tight shoes trudge up a soft hill. At the crest Lawyer Harris stops.

Ahead lies miles of forest and empty land. A small dirty sign half off its post: Evansville 12 miles

His feet twitch for comfort. He whimpers, turns back.

INT. FRACKING WELL SITE - DAY

The truck door opens. Lords eases out. Ashcroft and Hume follow him.

They cut around the rear of the site toward the vehicles, eyes everywhere.

Tunnel mounds pop up in front of them.

The men stop. Lords takes a step or two.

The tunnel mounds turn his way. He stops. The mound stops.

He looks at his mates for help. At least a dozen tunnel mounds lie between them and the cars.

The mounds advance. The men back up step by step.

The mounds come in faster. The men turn and run.

The ground under their feet threatens to give way. They make for the containment pools.

Lords mounts the spigot piping, squats precariously.

Hume and Ashcroft climb the containment pool wall.

The mounds come right up to the pool. A mole pops up to sniff, then another. Soon there's a crowd.

Lords loses his balance, grabs for anything to keep from falling. His hands slide off the wall and he hits the ground.

His SCREAM is choked off by the swarm of moles.

On the wall, Hume freaks out, falls into the pool, dragging Ashcroft with him.

They flounder. The water BUBBLES around them furiously. Noxious fumes erupt. Choking, they slip under dead.

The moles snort disappointment, retreat to the tunnels.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Tie loosened, jacket on his arm, Lawyer Harris trudges.

Coming up on the truck and the rut, he's stopped by the scattering of bones. Looks around in terror.

Nothing's moving.

He circles the hole, shuffling his feet, eyes on the ground for tunnel mounds.

Looks to the disabled car. Should he take refuge in that? The brushes look like they've grown two feet since he started walking. Not an option.

He heads toward the drill site, one mincing step at a time.

INT. FARM HOUSE - MAIN ROOM - DAY

Susie checks out the window. Duke takes a look.

DUKE

How soon before they figure out how to get through wood?

SUSIE

This is all new behavior. When they're hungry enough?

The family glares at him, almost a physical threat.

DUKE

Look, we don't deliberately go out to ruin people's lives. It's not our fault that the oil reserves are under farms and developments.

SUSIE

How long has water been leaking?

Duke deflates a bit.

DUKE

I don't know. It wasn't my policy.

Grandma snorts derision, settles at the table, gun at hand.

GRANDMA

Surveyors were around last year or so. Started the dig soon as the ground thawed end of February. Tankers showed up beginning of spring. They've been rattling bones ever since.

Susie works on her phone. Denise looks over her shoulder.

DENISE

How do you have service?

SUSIE

I don't. Note pad. Moles are territorial. A farm this size we should see a couple of dozen tops and all spread out. This swarm has hundreds of individuals. They're not only breeding at an accelerated rate, they're acting in concert. That's totally out of character.

NATE

Maybe they're getting smarter?

DUKE

Not that smart. They're eating brake lines and tires.

SUSIE

Something else changed in their environment.

She looks up, right at Gabriel, and a thought hits.

SUSIE (CONT'D)

Your pets. The ones you lost at the stream.

NATE

Lab rats. Hospital gave him a litter to raise to help with his TBI recovery. They were a handful, always getting out of their run.

SUSIE

They're also foragers. Known to work in groups, with an established hierarchy of leadership.

GRANDMA

Now I've heard everything. Rats and moles working together.

SUSIE

Everything we've seen is abnormal behavior. What did they eat?

GABRIEL

Same as us. Table scraps.

SUSIE

Water?

GABRIEL
Gram said I had to use a special
bucket, water from the well.

Susie winces.

NATE
That contaminated water got into
our well?

SUSIE
I'd have to take samples, but its
likely.

Hard eyes turn on Duke again.

DUKE
Said I didn't know people were
doing this.

GRANDMA
Some foreman.

DUKE
Hey. My job was to keep the well
working. You want to pin blame, pin
it on our Lawyer, Harris. He
ignored me when I laid out the
problem.

NATE
Never mind who's to blame. How do
we get out of here?

DENISE
We could tip toe real slow.

GRANDMA
Dear God, girl, use the brains God
gave you once in a while.

Gabriel starts a KEENING WAIL from his corner. Grandma and
Nate try to soothe him quiet.

Susie looks out to check the animal activity.

SUSIE'S POV - The rats scuttle underground in a flash. The
moles mill about uncertainly.

Gabriel's WAIL rises to an ear-piercing pitch.

The moles retreat in a hurry.

BACK TO SCENE - Susie peers out the window, turns.

SUSIE
 Hey. Hey! Dammit, everyone be
 quiet!

They all look at her. Nate gets Gabe calmed and quiet. Susie holds the curtain open.

SUSIE (CONT'D)
 They're gone.

Duke looks out as slower moles flop senseless.

DUKE
 Got a few on the ground. Looks like
 they're stunned. What happened?

SUSIE
 Noise. They're sensitive to
 vibrations.

DUKE
 The shouting?

Susie shrugs, locks onto Gabriel.

SUSIE
 No. His scream. He must have hit
 range they couldn't handle. If we
 can duplicate that, but bigger, we
 might be able to fight them.

DUKE
 Boy ain't got the lungs. How about
 a siren?

She considers that. Nate listens in, thoughtful.

DUKE (CONT'D)
 Our well siren is big enough to
 take out the entire herd. If we go
 slow, can we cross the field
 without them following?

SUSIE
 Moles can hear a worm wiggling. We
 must sound like elephants to them.

NATE
 Cover your footsteps.

Everyone turns to him.

NATE (CONT'D)
 A vibration to hide your vibration.

SUSIE
White noise.

DUKE
Like a generator?

NATE
Got my emergency one parked upside
the house.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - DAY

A ground floor window opens. Nate, wearing hip high wading boots, slithers out with help from Gabriel and Duke. Barely moving his feet, he works on the generator.

NATE
Gas is pretty low. How much time do
you figure you'll need to get
across the field?

DUKE
Running? Five minutes.

Nate nods, pulls this, twists that. He shrugs.

NATE
Well, I'm pretty sure I can give
you that much. Let's see if she'll
start without a fuss. Keep an eye
peeled for those critters.

GRANDMA
Got you covered, Nate.

She appears in a neighboring window, shotgun ready.

NATE
All right. Get over to the door.
When you hear the motor, take off.

DUKE
Got it. Luck.

NATE
Amen.

Duke disappears from the window. Gabriel comes up to watch.

Nate primes the generator. It COUGHS, SPUTTERS. He tries again, and it catches, CHUGS. He waits.

GABRIEL

Tunnels.

He gives Nate a hand up into the window. Tunnel mounds converge on the generator.

Susie and Duke race to the field.

NATE

Cross your fingers, boy.

EXT. NATE'S FARM - FIELD - DAY

Susie and Duke make it to the fence, dart through. They run a zig zag pattern through spidery tunnel mounds.

A tunnel collapses forcing Duke to jump sideways, then another caves in and Susie stumbles.

From her knees she sights along the ground. There doesn't seem to be a stable path.

Their mad dash slows to a side-stepping jog. They're only half-way through the field.

Duke avoids a mound, holds himself back from falling when a deeper hole opens up in front of him. This one is almost two feet deep and six across - the community chamber.

He gets his breath back with an effort, listens.

Susie senses his stop, turns.

SUSIE

What?

DUKE

Listen.

She holds position, searching the ground for danger. Shrugs.

DUKE (CONT'D)

Generator. He was lower on gas than he thought.

SUSIE

I don't hear a ...

The generator COUGHS, STOPS. They look at each other.

SUSIE (CONT'D)

What do we do?

DUKE

Give him a minute. Maybe he can get it going again.

Without moving his feet, Duke twists to eye the house.

Nate drops out of the window to work on the machine.

Susie's balanced with an awkward foot position.

They wait and watch all around. So far, so good. Then ...

Her right leg starts TWITCHING. She grabs at her thigh.

SUSIE

Oh no, not now.

Duke turns to her. Susie offers a weak smile.

SUSIE (CONT'D)

Nerves.

DUKE

You can't stop it?

She shakes her head, frantic as the SPASM gets worse.

Duke checks the ground around them. Loose dirt is DANCING by her foot. That's more vibration than an earthworm.

He hauls in a breath, takes two steps to her side, sweeps her up in his arms. Susie clings to his neck.

SUSIE

I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

DUKE

It's okay. Every soldier is scared out of his socks facing combat. Is he still working?

She lifts her head to look over his shoulder.

SUSIE

He's ... Oh my God.

SUSIE'S POV - Nate dances, kicks. The SHOTGUN CRACKS.

BACK TO SHOT - Susie squirms out of Duke's arms.

SUSIE (CONT'D)

Put me down. Run!

They haul ass across the field, avoiding the tunnel mounds as best they can. A SECOND GUN backs up the first.

Susie chances a look back. New mounds are headed their way at high speed.

Running. Panting. Getting closer, but the drill site and the office trailer seem so far away still.

Duke veers away from the camper in the sink hole. Susie stumbles. He holds her up, pulls her on.

EXT. FRACKING DRILL SITE - TRAILER - DAY

Tunnel mounds erupt from the car park.

The first furry bodies pop out of the ground.

Duke yanks the trailer door open, pulls Susie inside and SLAMS the door shut just ahead of the swarm.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - DAY

Nate reaches for the window. The moles can't get a good grip on the rubber waders. Gabriel starts out.

NATE

No! Stay inside. Pull me in.

Gabriel anchors himself, hooks an arm through Nate's. Nate kicks moles off as Gabriel leverages him up and in.

INT. FARM HOUSE - MAIN ROOM - DAY

Gabriel sprawls under Nate. Both scramble to look for critters. Nothing's made it inside. They share a hug.

NATE

Did they make it?

GRANDMA

They made it.

He winces pain, checks his ankles. There are a few tears in the waders from bite marks.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - CELLAR DOOR - DAY

The rats investigate the walls, find the open cellar door. After a sniff they scurry down the steps. Moles follow them.

EXT. FRACKING WELL SITE - TRAILER - DAY

Duke and Susie lean against the door, heaving for breath. They both laugh a little as their nerves settle.

GREGOR (O.S.)
What's the trouble-maker doing here?

Duke straightens, anger spurting.

DUKE
Saving our hides.

The door opens. Everyone cringes, readies to attack.

Lawyer Harris enters, stops just inside. Tired eyes evaluate the threat in front of him.

LAWYER HARRIS
Really? They're opening doors now?

DUKE
Thought you ran out on us.

Lawyer Harris' bravado wavers.

LAWYER HARRIS
Trust me, I wouldn't be here if the car hadn't crapped out. Why is she here?

DUKE
We have an idea to get rid of these critters.

LAWYER HARRIS
How convenient. As if she didn't start this mess.

SUSIE
Me! Listen here, dickwad, your people spilled that contamination.

Duke gets between the two of them.

DUKE
Save it. Our first ...

LAWYER HARRIS
Remember your obligations, Newton.

DUKE

My first priority is protecting my men and that means putting those creatures out of commission. Help us or get the hell out of the way.

Lawyer Harris makes a show of a shrug, backs down.

DUKE (CONT'D)

Anyone else have a problem with Miss Susan helping out?

He glares around the gathered faces, daring trouble. Nobody rises to the bait.

Duke nods, crosses to a cabinet, rifles through files. Susie weighs the hostility in faces, backs up to Duke.

SUSIE

Don't you guys have an emergency radio or something?

DUKE

Had. Somebody thought it better that word didn't get out. Fire up that computer, if you would.

Susie settles in a chair. Lawyer Harris sidles up to Duke.

LAWYER HARRIS

You are not giving her access to confidential materials.

DUKE

Do you want to get out of here alive? I do. Taylor, how many men do we have?

Taylor does a fast count.

TAYLOR

Eight.

Duke looks over, stunned. He checks on Susie. She has a password screen up.

DUKE

User name Drill Super. Standard four digit password.

SUSIE

Seriously?

DUKE

Got no rocket scientists here, hon.

Susie enters the info, waits for the new screen.

LAWYER HARRIS

You won't have anybody here after corporate is dialed in.

Duke pulls a file, drops into the chair beside Susie, takes note of the shake in her hands.

DUKE

You okay?

SUSIE

Yeah. I guess. I don't know. I'll probably dissolve into a puddle of nerves when the adrenalin runs out.

He almost smiles, taps the keyboard to bring up a new screen.

DUKE

We're not the enemy, you know.

SUSIE

Speaking logically nobody wants to be dependent on foreign oil. But putting these things in people's backyards. Come on. Would you want to live next to this?

DUKE

We have to go where the oil is. Okay. The siren is on the far end of the derrick. In case of fire or lightning.

Duke brings up a satellite overview of the farm and fields, the road and the river behind the containment tanks.

DUKE (CONT'D)

That's a lot of land to secure when you can't cover ground.

Susie studies the screen, despairing, perks up.

SUSIE

Drones! Do you have any?

DUKE

One or two maybe. Not much use now. Why?

SUSIE

We can use them to direct sound from the outside in to herd the moles into a more compact space. Knock them out with the siren, then flood the tunnels.

He studies the chart. The workers edge closer, interested.

DUKE

I can't do anything that will damage the well. But we can redirect the water. They didn't much like mud.

SUSIE

Too dense to dig through. What about a cement slurry? You can aim that under the road.

Duke peers at her, thoughtful. He turns to his men. Four or five huddle, heads together.

GREGOR

We can fix up a soup of sand and cement. Road needs work anyway after all their digging.

LAWYER HARRIS

Just redirect the methane run off and burn them out.

Duke considers that. Susie frowns disapproval.

DUKE

No. There's no way to control that kind of fire. Too many people on site still. First we got to contain them all. We're not going to be able to track these things underground, not without infrared scanners.

SUSIE

Where's your geo survey? I had this area plotted out.

Duke points her to the cabinet. Lawyer Harris blocks her advance. They glare at each other.

DUKE

Unless you have something useful to contribute, stand down, Harris.

Lawyer Harris reluctantly stands aside under Duke's scowl.

LAWYER HARRIS
You won't have a job after this.

DUKE
Won't need one. I'm crawling into a
bottle and pulling the cork in
after me.

Susie drops a book of maps on the desk. Duke flips through to a detail of the strata. Susie sketches in details.

SUSIE
There's a big hollow here.

She marks mole tunnels, puts a circle in the corn field not far from the road.

SUSIE (CONT'D)
It could be their primary nest.

Lights FLICKER. The AC sighs off. The computer shuts down. Lights go out. Lawyer Harris shoves the door open for light.

LAWYER HARRIS
Now what?

Duke gets up, checks outside.

DUKE
They got into the power lines. Ate
through brake lines and tires.
Hungry for oil now?

SUSIE
They might think the stronger
electrical pulses are bigger prey.

LAWYER HARRIS
This is not our fault. We've
drilled thousands of wells and not
once has anything like this
happened.

DUKE
Can we take care of the problem
before laying blame?

Lawyer Harris tries to hold a glare, throws his hands up and finds a chair to flop into. Susie focuses on Duke.

SUSIE
I have drones in my camper.

DUKE

Uh huh, and how are you getting there and back?

SUSIE

How hard is it to drive one of your tanker trucks?

Duke startles, laughs.

DUKE

Let's go before I remember all the reasons not to go outside.

INT. FARM HOUSE - MAIN ROOM - DAY

Gathered at the table, the family frets. Nate wipes sweat from his forehead.

SMALL SCRATCHING noises from the cellar go unnoticed.

The DERRICK NOISE STOPS.

Everyone looks up at the sudden SILENCE, eerie after so much noise. Then, SCRATCHING below their feet.

GRANDMA

Something's in the root cellar.

She picks up the shotgun, crosses to the door.

DENISE

Don't.

Grandma holds the shotgun at the ready, nods for Gabriel to open the door. Nate readies a broom.

Frightened, Denise limps to the stairs to the second floor, pulls herself up several steps.

Grandma nods. Gabriel pulls the door open.

The steps are awash with moles. The rats leading the way.

GRANDMA

Close it!

She steps back. Gabriel shoves. Two of the rats scamper in before the door shuts out the pack.

Grandma tracks the rats, gets off a SHOT that misses.

GABRIEL
 Don't shoot them. I can get them.
 They'll listen to me.

GRANDMA
 If those critters get through that
 door we're all done for.

NATE
 Go upstairs, Mom. We'll handle
 this.

GRANDMA
 Hold this.

She shoves the shotgun into Nate's arms, enters the kitchen.

Comes out with a canvas bag bulging with CLINKING GLASS.
 Opens a jar of honey, pours it out in front of the door.

NATE
 What?

GRANDMA
 When all else fails, improvise.

She takes the shotgun back, pulls boxes of shells to add to
 her bag, heads for the stairs, shooing Denise up.

Gabriel grabs cages from a closet, sets them on the floor.

Nate goes to the kitchen for food scraps and a heavy butcher
 knife. Gabriel sets out a sparse trail of treats to the
 cages, squats behind to wait.

GABRIEL
 Come on, boys. It's all right.
 Nobody's going to hurt you. I got
 food for you. You hungry?

INT. FARM HOUSE - CELLAR - DAY

Huey sniffs at the door. The moles mill behind with growing
 agitation.

Big Gus snaps at one adventurous mole to back off the crowd.
 Huey sticks his nose in the crack, chews at the wood.

INT. FARM HOUSE - MAIN ROOM - DAY

Gabriel waits with infinite patience. He CHIRPS rat squeaks.

The rats look out from under a sofa, whiskers twitching. Nate tries to blend in with the wall.

GABRIEL

Hey, guys, come on. You know me.

One step at a time, the rats emerge. Dewey snaps up the first tidbit. Louie makes a rush for the next bit.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

That's it. Come along now, right into your houses.

On the verge of entering the cages, both rats stop. Gabriel reaches over the top to tickle fingers over fur.

He's not ready for both rats to snap at his fingers. Rearing up, he HOWLS with pain, rats clinging to his hand.

Yanking them off his fingers, he strangles one then the other, drops them. Nate CHOPS OFF heads just to be safe.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

Bad rats!

Sucking his bitten hand, Gabriel sights a white nose edging out between the door and the frame, points.

Nate sets himself at the door with a cleaver.

Chips of wood skitter. The nose disappears.

Nate sweats, holding his pose.

A narrow nose appears. The head squeezes out.

Nate CHOPS down.

INT. FARM HOUSE - CELLAR - DAY

The lead mole trembles with the shock of death, goes still.

The group agitation increases. Huey paws the dead mole out of the way. It's snatched back to be eaten in a flash.

Big Gus' opportunity has arrived. He chomps on Huey's tail.

Huey whips around, trades SNARLS with Big Gus. Gets bit again. Huey blinks, shudders under the mole toxin.

He backs up under Big Gus' advance, climbs side beams to disappear into the woodwork.

The pack grows anxious. Some turn on neighbors. The rear guard retreats back down the stairs. More push at the hole in the door, splitting the swarm.

Big Gus snarls and shoulders newcomers out of the way to be the next out the hole.

INT. FARM HOUSE - MAIN ROOM - DAY

The door SHUDDERS under the weight of mole bodies. Wood CHIPS out of the opening.

A snout shows. Nate waits. Big Gus gets his head out. Nate CHOPS down. Before he can clean the mess, the body behind the door is gone and another snout takes its place.

He CHOPS again. The hole gets wider with each animal killed.

Another hole opens up on the far side of the door. That animal gets trapped in Grandma's honey spill.

Nate looks from one side to the other, to his cleaver.

NATE

How many of these things did she say we had?

GABRIEL

Hundreds. Thousands.

And another snout pushes through the hole.

NATE

Let's go.

Nate herds Gabriel for the stairs.

INT. FARM HOUSE - SECOND FLOOR - DAY

The men make the landing, look back down.

The cellar door CREAKS, SHUDDERS. Moles shimmy through. The first wave gets stuck in the honey. More bodies simply crawl over them.

Like a slow tide, the moles follow a scent trail to the stairs. As the first to arrive pile up, more climb over them.

The pack keeps piling on until they can mount the step.

And keep on coming. The floor becomes a furry blanket oozing up the steps.

NATE

Get the bleach from the bathroom,
son.

Gabriel darts up the hall. Nate opens doors, pulls furniture out to barricade the last step with a waist high wall.

He eyes Grandma and Denise huddling at the far end window as he drags a bureau into place.

He's huffing with exertion, sweating, seeing double.

NATE (CONT'D)

Go on up into the attic.

Grandma hauls on the draw string to bring down a folded ladder. She climbs up. Denise, hampered by her leg brace, hesitates.

NATE (CONT'D)

Let's see you bastards climb this.

Gabriel returns with a jug. Nate takes it, spills some at his feet, then SPLASHES the rest down onto the animals.

Moles SCREECH and fall away, but more take their place.

Gabriel's attention goes to a TINY SCRATCHING up the hall opposite the attic ladder. He tracks the NOISE, down to floor level. Seems to be coming from behind a low bookcase.

He shoves the bookcase, revealing a hole in the base board.

Huey edges a nose out. Gabriel lights up with joy.

GABRIEL

Huey!

He hunkers down to offer an open hand.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

Come on, boy.

Nate heads for the ladder, looks back.

NATE

Gabe! Leave it and come on.

Gabriel doesn't move, focused on the rat as it edges out slowly, sniffing the area.

GABRIEL

That's it. Come on. You know you're not supposed to be rooting around the house like this.

NATE

Gabe! Gabriel Tucker.

GABRIEL

It's Huey, Dad. I can't leave him.

Huey nudges Gabriel's hand, submits to a caress. Gabriel rises, cuddles the rat to his chest, inspects him for damage.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

That's my good boy. Where are your brothers?

He looks to the hole. A snout appears. Not a rat.

A mole pushes out, sniffs around.

Behind Gabriel the moles push at the barricade.

Nate looks back from the ladder. He wants to go drag Gabe along, but the wobbling chest gives him pause.

Denise hops up a few steps on one leg. Her brace snags on the hinge and she almost falls on top of Nate. He pushes at her.

NATE

This is no time to be fooling around. Get up there, Denise.

DENISE

I'm stuck.

Nate has to turn away from Gabriel's danger. He tries to pry her loose. Grandma comes down two steps.

GRANDMA

What are you all doing down here? Denise, you idiot, take the brace off. We all know you don't need the damn thing.

Denise scowls up, tries to undo the straps, but the Velcro binds into the hinge worse.

Grandma looks up the hall.

A throw rug trembles, floorboards mound up like dirt tunnels.

GRANDMA (CONT'D)
 Good God Almighty. Nate, they're in
 the crawl space.

Sure enough the moles have circumvented the chest.
 Floorboards splinter and burst out as moles climb out.

NATE
 Gabriel, now!

Gabriel finally looks at the living carpet closing in on him.
 The SHOTGUN ROARS and a swath of moles erupts.

GABRIEL
 Daddy?

NATE
 Come on, son.

Gabriel high steps over bodies. More moles surge to cut him
 off. Huey shudders in his arms, dying.

The moles swarm faster.

Frantic, Nate finally remembers a pocket knife and he slices
 Denise's Velcro free. He gives her a shove up the ladder.

NATE (CONT'D)
 Mom.

GRANDMA
 I don't have a good shot without
 hitting him. Try this. Might slow
 them down some.

She lowers the CLINKING bag. Nate looks in on glass jars of
 honey, jams and other sticky stuff.

Wading into the moles, SLAMMING the jars to the floor, Nate
 beelines to Gabriel.

Honey, jam and furry bodies make a sticky mess.

The moles continue to push up through the floor and out the
 hole in the wall, using honey-stuck bodies as bridges.

Nate gets to Gabriel. He knocks moles off Gabriel's pants,
 drags the boy toward the ladder.

Gabriel's eyes glitter with tears, stroking the comatose rat.

GABRIEL

They bit him all up. I think he's
poisoned.

Nate stares at Gabriel, putting two and two together over his
own bites and current weakness.

NATE

Nothing we can do for him. Come on.

He tugs Gabriel along, kicking his way through the mounding
critters, wincing at bites.

Grandma checks her load and takes aim.

SHOTGUN ROARS into the advancing carpet. Moles turn on each
other in a feeding frenzy. More pop up.

Nate and Gabriel get a breather of a few steps closer to the
ladder. Nate nudges Gabriel to climb first.

GRANDMA

Get your heads down.

The men duck. Grandma fires another round into the floor.

GRANDMA (CONT'D)

Move!

Nate chances a look back. Animals writhe in a frenzy of dying
and eating, still swarming with intent and closing in.

Gabriel falters on the ladder. Huey drops out of his hold and
a column of moles breaks off from the main herd to attack.

Nate shoves the boy.

NATE

Move, move, move!

Grandma backs up into the attic. Gabriel drags himself up.

Nate starts up, stops on the second rung, shaking his head to
clear fuzziness. Looks at the ladder. How will they raise it?

He looks up at his family, drops back down and lifts the
bottom third up.

GRANDMA

Nathaniel, don't.

Moles swarm up Nate's legs. He folds the ladder, releases the
spring to let the whole thing snap up into place.

INT. FARM HOUSE - ATTIC - DAY

Holding back her emotions, Grandma lights oil lanterns around the space. Gabriel and Denise hold onto each other.

DENISE
What if they come up here? There's
nowhere else to go.

The house RATTLES as the Derrick VIBRATIONS resume.

Grandma crosses to a window, swings open the pane to look across to the derrick site.

GENERATORS DRUM with muted power. LIGHTS come on.

EXT. FRACKING WELL SITE - DAY

Duke pauses in the door of the trailer, listening to the GENERATORS, feeling the VIBRATIONS through the floor.

He checks the ground. It's only a twenty yard dash to the nearest truck.

He palms keys, gives Susie an encouraging look, runs. Susie zips after him.

They make it to the truck before mole mounds start after them, safe inside the cab.

INT. TRUCK - DAY

Duke gets the ENGINE STARTED.

DUKE
So, what's the plan?

SUSIE
Get close enough so I can go in
through the sunroof.

Duke nods, puts the truck into gear. With a RUMBLE he takes it out of the yard.

INT. FRACKING WELL SITE - TRAILER - DAY

Lawyer Harris paces out agitation. He pulls out his cell phone, pokes at the screen. No response.

Growling, he tables the phone, tries the land line. No dial tone. He slams that down, goes to the computer.

Taps keys. Still no internet connection.

EXT. SUSIE'S CAMPER - DAY

Susie teeters across the truck hood, makes the jump to her camper roof, nearly skids off.

Grabbing holds, kicking for leverage, she catches herself just before falling off the side.

Breathing deep to combat her fright, she crawls to the sun roof. Opens the panel, shades her eyes to look inside before climbing down.

INT. TRUCK - DAY

Duke taps fingers on the wheel, eyes roving all around for danger. The road beyond the downed trucks is so inviting.

DUKE

I could make it. Cut across to the
shoulder and head for the hills.
Wouldn't take much. Just back up
and hit the gas. Just back up.

His hands tense. A foot hits the gas, REVVING the ENGINE. One hand drops to the clutch.

BAM! A TIRE BLOWS OUT. The front passenger side drops.

DUKE (CONT'D)

Dammit!

He leans out the window to yell.

DUKE (CONT'D)

Susie, get a move on.

EXT. SUSIE'S CAMPER - DAY

One flat box, then another pops out of the sun roof. Susie climbs out.

SUSIE

I'm coming.

She stuffs the boxes into bags that she can drape over her head and shoulders, makes her way forward with wary steps.

She checks the ground, looks at the truck.

SUSIE (CONT'D)
You lost a tire.

DUKE
We're about to lose everything.
Jump.

Susie checks her foot holds, braces for the lunge.
BAM! Another TIRE BLOWS OUT, leveling out the truck hood.
She jumps, skidding, throws herself flat on the hood.

DUKE (CONT'D)
Hold on!

INT. TRUCK - DAY

He SLAMS the gear shift into reverse, STOMPS on the gas.

Susie gets fingers into the windshield wiper well, clings as Duke backs the truck up in a rush.

Moles surge up in the hole, return to the tunnels.

Duke clears the gate, BRAKES to change gears, brings the crippled truck inside close to the trailers.

POWERS DOWN and takes a moment to settle his nerves.

Looks out at Susie, face down and knuckles white on her grip.

He TAPS the window. It takes a beat, then she opens one eye, looks up. Recognizing that they're stopped, she pries one hand then the other off the hood.

Duke barks a short laugh, relieved.

EXT. FRACKING WELL SITE - TRAILER - DAY

On top of one of the cargo pods, Susie and Duke work with two men to modify the drones and program laptops.

Workers Taylor and Edwards send the drones into the air.

Susie and Duke watch over shoulders.

EXT. NATE'S FARM - FIELD - DAY

The drones spread out to the far end of the fields.

EXT. FRACKING WELL SITE - TRAILER - DAY

TAYLOR
In position.

DUKE
Fingers crossed. Go for it.

Susie works a module, initiates the SONIC.

EXT. NATE'S FARM - FIELD - DAY

The HIGH-PITCHED WHINE would annoy any animal. Birds scatter.

INT. FARM HOUSE - ATTIC - DAY

Grandma pokes a finger in her ear. Denise whimpers.

GRANDMA
Am I hearing things?

DENISE
Sounds like a drill.

Grandma pushes the window open, looks, can't find anything. Gabriel comes up, squints out, points out the nearest drone.

GABRIEL
It's coming from that.

GRANDMA
Well, that's worse than the damn
drill. Guess those fools are going
to annoy the critters to death.

INT. FARM HOUSE - SECOND FLOOR - DAY

The moles retreat under the SONIC. Those stuck in the honey mess writhe and shiver, SQUEALING their pain.

EXT. FRACKING WELL SITE - TRAILER - DAY

Climbing down, Susie and Duke check the ground around the trailers. Seems to be quiet.

DUKE
You ready?

SUSIE
No.

Duke grins at her, gives her a nudge into motion.

They dart across to the derrick, weave in to a series of junction boxes.

DUKE

We're here.

Susie looks at the wiring without a clue. Duke runs a finger down the numbers, finds the one he wants, throws the switch.

Nothing happens.

Tries the switch again, checks his numbers against a card from his pocket, squints up the tower.

SUSIE

What?

DUKE

Generators are wired to the trailers. We'll have to hot wire something.

He looks around. Tanker trucks are parked close.

DUKE (CONT'D)

Batteries should do it.

He rummages in a tool bag, pulls out a spool of wire, hands her the bag.

DUKE (CONT'D)

Find me some dikes while I undo this panel.

Susie digs in the bag. Duke works the face panel free.

SUSIE

Got them.

DUKE

Strip the ends on that wire. Give me a good two inches of lead.

She worries the wire ends clean, looks for the drone fliers.

SUSIE

(calls)

How are we doing?

EXT. FRACKING WELL SITE - TRAILER - DAY

Taylor and Edwards fine tune the video feed. The field shimmies in a tidal wave of converging tunnel mounds.

TAYLOR
It's working!

EXT. FRACKING WELL SITE - DERRICK - DAY

Duke takes the wire from Susie, winds the ends onto terminals in the panel.

DUKE
All right, honey, look at where my leads are.

He brings her close to show the leads he wants.

DUKE (CONT'D)
You take this wire and climb to that box up there. Cut the line, and give yourself plenty of slack, then you strip the ends and hook to the same leads. Got that?

SUSIE
(looking up)
I don't think I can.

DUKE
If you don't, we're toast. I got a bum knee. I'll never get up there and I have to run a second line to the battery.

Susie hesitates, scared. Duke takes the wire spool, threads it over her arm, puts the dikes in her hip pocket.

DUKE (CONT'D)
You can do it. Come on, I'll give you a boost.

He helps her up onto the first cross beam.

Feeling her way, Susie climbs girder to cross bars.

Duke checks out the ground around the derrick. Dirt SHIMMIES as tunnel mounds converge on the generators.

He grabs out dikes and a spool of wire, quickly strips ends and attaches the leads to the box, then eases to the ground,

Two long steps to the truck bumper, and he climbs up, raises the hood to get at the battery.

EXT. NATE'S FARM - FIELD - DAY

The drones patrol the field, tightening the area. Dirt AGITATES inside the boundary, converging.

EXT. FRACKING WELL SITE - DAY

Duke readies his feeder lines, looks up for Susie.

DUKE
Sing out when you're ready.

SUSIE
Almost there. Got it.

DUKE
Okay. Drop down a bit and cover
your ears.

He waits for her to ease down a level or two, attaches one line to a battery terminal, touches the other terminal.

The SIREN BLARES.

INT. MOLE TUNNELS - BIG CAVE - DAY

Moles screech and go senseless under the SONIC ASSAULT. Some smaller ones manage to scurry a ways before succumbing.

EXT. NATE'S FARM - FIELD - DAY

The few moles on the surface spasm then go still.

EXT. FRACKING WELL SITE - DAY

Duke disconnects the battery line, letting the SIREN DIE, WHISTLES to the men at the slurry truck.

Hoses are shoved into tunnels. The trucks FIRE UP and slurry gushes out.

INT. MOLE TUNNELS - DAY

Senseless moles are swallowed up by the tide, swept along.

INT. MOLE TUNNELS - BIG CAVE - DAY

Slurry flows in and over the inert moles.

Fills the cave, sloshes into farther tunnels.

A few alert moles try to swim out, get swept under.

EXT. FRACKING WELL SITE - TRAILER

The trailer door eases open. Lawyer Harris looks out at the focused men. He quick steps to the office trailer.

Hesitates a moment, then steels himself and unlocks the door.

INT. FRACKING WELL SITE - OFFICE - DAY

Swallowing back bile, Lawyer Harris grabs his briefcase, unlocks drawers to retrieve the payroll funds and books.

Back and forth across the room with heavy steps.

HALL

A stunned mole shakes itself alert. More pop up from the rip in the wall. Snouts up, they track the vibration.

OFFICE

Lawyer Harris grabs the briefcase, opens the door. His foot comes down on something soft.

Squealing, he jumps backwards, looks down at the carpet of moles. He slams the door shut. The lock doesn't quite catch.

Looks around for escape. The window behind the desk!

He lunges over, pries at the window. Stuck solid.

The door pushes open under the mole advance.

Lawyer Harris grunts as he puts his weight on the window to no avail. Frustration mounting, he looks for something to throw. Picks up the megaphone, swings.

The window doesn't crack. Harris is jarred backwards, hits the desk, falls to the floor. He lies, stunned.

Scratching noises behind him. He cranes his head for a look.

The moles are half-way across the room, inching forward.

Horrified he scrambles, catching his feet in the phone line.

The line trips him when he tries to stand.

Frantic, he tries to kick free, only tangles his ankles more. Reaches to tug on the wires.

The phone edges off the desk, just misses hitting his head.

He cringes and curls to tug the phone line. Gets a loop free.

Something brushes his ear. Harris rears back, stares at a mole inches from his nose.

He eases a hand for the dropped phone receiver, eyes never leaving the mole as it sniffs the air.

LAWYER HARRIS

I'll get you anyway, peewee.

His fingers close on the phone. Moles squeal in unison. The first mole launches himself into Lawyer Harris' mouth, eats its way down his throat.

EXT. FRACKING WELL SITE - DAY

Ready to drop off the truck bumper, Duke checks the ground.

Mole tunnels pop up from below the derrick platform, head for the trailers.

Duke WHISTLES an alarm that gets lost in the noise.

DUKE

Gregor! Dabney! Watch your backs!

SUSIE

They're behind you! Guys, behind you!

Duke turns back to the truck engine, resets the battery leads. The SIREN blares. The men cringe, don't stop working.

The moles SCREAM and shudder, fall senseless.

EXT. FRACKING WELL SITE - DAY

Duke cuts the siren, drops to the ground. He runs for the workers. The ground caves in under him and he's up to his hips in a blink with the slurry flowing his way.

SUSIE

Duke! Stop! Somebody, help him.

Susie climbs down as fast as she can.

Gregor, earplugs stuffed deep, keeps the slurry coming.

Duke's sinking, stuck as the slurry molds around him.

Susie hits the ground, runs to him.

SUSIE (CONT'D)

Help! Dammit, look over here. Help us.

She passes a cart of stray tools, grabs a wrench and throws it at the workers.

It falls short.

She gets a hammer, flings that with no better luck.

Getting to Duke, she maneuvers around the slurry, tugs on his arm. Her weight can't budge him out of the quicksand.

DUKE

Go.

SUSIE

No. I won't let you go like this.
There has to be a way.

She slips, scrambles back out of the slurry, hitting the cart. Loose nuts rattle around the rim.

Susie grabs a handful, peppers the workers as fast as she can.

Gregor gets nicked in the shoulder. He turns to look, gapes at Susie and Duke. Dropping the slurry hose he grabs the nearest co-worker. They run to help.

But the slurry is setting. Duke cries out as the pair pull on his arms.

Dabney comes up with a sledge hammer, pounds the ground to break up the block. Another tremendous tug and Duke is free.

The ground slurry hardens into a lava-like flow, little bodies stuck here and there.

EXT. FARM HOUSE - DAY

Wrapped in blankets, the shell-shocked Hunter family are led into a van by MEN dressed in medical scrubs.

The doors are closed, revealing the Fracking Company logo. The vehicle drives away.

EXT. FRACKING WELL SITE - DAY

Men direct methane pipes into the slurried corn field. Everyone falls back and the gas is IGNITED.

Duke watches the blaze, angry. He reads a paper.

DUKE (V.O.)

A pocket of methane caused an explosion, took the lives of several workers. A neighboring farm family was evacuated. The well has been capped and decommissioned. Survivors have been sequestered for PTSD treatment.

Disgusted, he folds the paper. Taylor and Gregor come up. Duke hands the paper to Taylor.

DUKE

Here's the story. Make sure everyone gets it.

The men glance over the document, head to the clutch of workers. Duke looks over to Susie dealing with an OFFICIAL.

SUSIE

No, I don't have any documentation. It went up in the fire your people started to cover up the truth. You can't lie to people like this.

Duke crosses over to tug her away. She glares frustration.

SUSIE (CONT'D)

So that's how its going to be?

Duke takes a moment.

DUKE

Kid, I'm not good at being noble, but it doesn't take much to see that the problems of two little people don't amount to a hill of beans in this crazy world.

SUSIE

What?

DUKE

Casablanca. I paraphrased. Catch it sometime. You might learn something about choosing your battles.

She makes a face, huffs disappointment. Duke sighs, keeps one eye on the officials talking to cops and pointing at Susie.

DUKE (CONT'D)

Corporate will pay for a new rig to buy your silence on this site.

SUSIE

That is so --

He silences her with a finger to her lips.

DUKE

Take the offer, then go to the next site and make sure this doesn't happen again. That's the best use of your energy.

Duke raises a questioning eyebrow. She nods. He backs off.

Susie hesitates on the verge of giving him a hug. Reading her intent, he shakes his head no.

Susie blows him a kiss, then marches toward the officials.

SUSIE

Hey you, company man, break out the checkbook.

EXT. FRACKING WELL SITE - NEW SITE - DAY

Not far outside a desert community, a new derrick under construction. A hairline crack in the containment pond wall seeps contaminated water down a soft hill and into a stream.

Downstream, a pack of domestic dogs laps up the bad water.

THE END

FADE OUT: