After having enough of the world, of parties and taxes and automobiles, of parents and work and airplanes, the guy and the girl decided to hibernate. They were in love, which meant sometimes they wanted to chew each other’s fingernails and eat each other’s flesh, and it was hard to find time to do those things in the world, and harder still to do those things around other people, with their eyeglasses and dune buggies and business hours.

So they dug a hole.

The girl was a feminist, so she did most of the digging. Halfway through, she decided her ideas were making the ground too hard, so she fell back against the mound of loose earth, her red hair falling across the dirt like a pillowcase, while the guy took the shovel. “Now you’re gonna see some dirt fly,” he said, slicing into the ground. He hoped the girl would admire his demonstration of strength, proof of his health and virility. A third of the way down, the guy decided that tools were unnecessary and had led to the general laziness of mankind, so he abandoned his shovel and clawed at the ground with his hands.

“What shall we do when we get down there?” the girl wondered.

“Anything we like,” he answered. What he meant was that they would be free from all expectations and that they could create their own world, underground. What he thought was that their love would bloom in the dark like the birth of a mole rat.
And when they finally found their depth, the guy, exhausted, fell back upon the pile of dirt and allowed the girl to create their home. She decided to make the first chamber the baby’s room. What home doesn’t need a baby? She would pad it with pillows and blankets and fill it with soft, tinkling music. As she considered gender-neutral colors, she realized she had exchanged one idea for another, and she crawled up out of the hole, just enough so that her head was peeking out.

“I’ve fallen into a trap,” she said to the guy.

“Can you get yourself out?”

“I don’t know. I think it’s a trap of ideas.” She furrowed her eyebrows. There was dirt on her cheek, and it made the guy want to kiss her.

“If you can’t get out of a trap, there’s only one thing you can do,” he mumbled against her lips, the dirt from her mouth crunching between his teeth. “You have to chew off your own foot.”

“You’re right,” the girl said, disappearing back into the hole. Who needed a baby, anyway? She transformed the baby’s room into a listening chamber, where she and the guy could hear predators before it was too late. She lined the walls with her uterus and ovaries and fallopian tubes, so that all sounds would be magnified.

“Excellent job,” the guy said when he came in to look around.

“Thank you,” the girl answered. “I’m tired. You can do the rest.” She lay on her back in the listening chamber, her head snug against a pile of her own eggs, while the guy dug out the rest.

He made a sleeping chamber and an eating chamber, and a chamber to shit in. He gathered roots and the sloughed off skin of snakes for a bed, and the girl exclaimed with delight, making a sound that echoed through her hollow body and out through the hole. She ran and jumped into the bed naked. The guy followed her, bringing with him the skin of a vole he had killed with the shovel.

“This will keep us warm,” the guy said.

“I will keep us warm,” the girl answered.

The guy and the girl stayed in the bed for weeks without moving. They changed into what they wanted to become. They had thoughts, and their bodies accommodated those thoughts.

The girl wanted to contain the guy, and so she did. Without her organs, she was open and airy, and when the guy fucked her, it was like he was stirring a spoon in a tin cup. She wrapped herself around the guy and held him with her thighs, pinned him beneath her breasts, so that
there was nothing to see or smell or taste but her. She opened for him, she absorbed him, and she did not miss the world.

The guy wanted to ravage the girl, to ravage her thoughts and her eyes and her body. He turned her over and over until she made sense to him, and then, when he feared he was a slave to his manhood, he cut his penis off with the tooth of a mouse and threw it up, out of the hole. When he thundered into the girl and overpowered her and held her face in his hands as if to crush it, he recoiled from himself and his ideas, and he rolled over and became submissive, letting the girl curl his hair in her fingers and trace his eyes with the blackest soil. He caused the ground to tremble with his cries of love, and he did not miss the world.

After a while, the girl and the guy left the bed long enough to eat in the eating chamber and shit in the shitting chamber. They were quick and thoughtless about these activities, often grabbing a raw worm or a maggot and shoving it in their mouths on the way back to the sleeping chamber. They were in such a hurry they did not bother to bury their feces, and eventually the hibernarium became filthy. But they did not care.

Sometimes, between fucking, they slept for weeks at a time, until their muscles atrophied and tiny spiders spun webs between their arms and legs. Ants came to live in the hollows of their bodies. Their breathing grew faint and delicate, and everything about them was still.

They did not think of the world above, unless it was because an animal was passing by, usually a deer or some other ungulate, pausing above the hole to eat grass, and then they stood still, their naked bodies pressed together, coated in dirt, in the listening chamber. Once a badger came and tried to dig them out, but the guy poked it in the nose with a sharp stick, and they were not bothered again. They took baths on occasion in an abandoned turtle shell, and when they did, they admired each other’s bodies, clean and white again, if just for a moment. They fucked and they slept, and they did not dream of high-rises or of vacation destinations or of talk show hosts.

One day, the guy sat up and threw off the vole skin blanket. “I’m getting fat,” he said with disgust. “I don’t feel strong anymore.”

“You’re not fat,” the girl said. “Please don’t throw the blanket on the floor like that.”

“Why? There’s dirt in the bed already,” the guy said. “Our whole lives are dirty.”

“That’s not the point,” the girl said, shaking out the blanket.

“You’re right. It’s not the point. The point is I’m getting fat and weak.”
The girl rolled her eyes and grit fell from her eyelashes like ash. The guy flexed his arms and looked down at his body. They both had ideas.

The guy went and built an exercise chamber. He twisted the veins of a mole rat into resistance bands, and he created a weight machine with fragments of marmot bone. He spent hours in the exercise chamber, his body accommodating his thoughts, and he did not miss the girl.

The girl, with grit falling away from her eyes, realized what a pigsty she was living in. She spent hours lining the bed with fresh snake skin and burying feces in the shitting chamber. She began to cook the meat of the insects in the eating chamber. And, while the guy looked at himself in the exercise chamber, the girl soaked herself clean and white for hours in the turtle shell, her body accommodating her thoughts. She did not miss the guy.

They both changed. It happened over time. They grew tired of sleeping.

One day the guy came in when the girl was taking a bath in the shell. She immediately covered her breasts.

“Check these out,” he said, flexing his arms. “Nice, right?” The guy’s arms were bigger, swollen with newly bulging veins.

“So? What’s that?” she asked, motioning to his penis.

“You know what that is. Why are you covering up?”

“I was trying to take a bath in peace and quiet. Anyway, why did you put that back on?”

The guy had stitched his manhood with the thread of a mole’s eyelashes.

“Because I wanted to. Because that’s who I am,” he said.

“I didn’t know that.” The girl climbed out of the shell and covered herself with part of a fox’s tail.

“Now you do,” the guy said.

That night, the guy pinned the girl to their bed of snake skin, and when she tried to curl his hair in her fingers and stroke him like a child, he pushed her away. He fell asleep after, but the girl stayed awake, listening in the listening chamber. She wasn’t sure what she was listening for. Maybe new ideas.

For a few weeks, the guy and the girl both made trips to the top of the hole. They tried to look out, but the light hurt their eyes. They had become blind during their hibernation, and their milky eyes could not accommodate the world.

The guy tried to cook dinner for the girl to cheer her up, but she
couldn’t eat. “All we ever do anymore is eat grasshoppers and spider legs,” she complained.

“But you need to eat. You need to fatten up,” the guy said, pointing a fork with a cricket antenna toward her mouth. “Sometimes when we fuck, I think I’m going to break you in half,” he said.

The girl thought about that, and then she had an idea, which at once seemed familiar to her, in a sweet way, like a lost dog. She ran into the listening chamber and took back her uterus and fallopian tubes and her eggs, and she stuffed them back inside herself.

She ran into the exercise chamber, where the guy was doing bicep curls with two naked mole rats.

“I’ve got it!” she exclaimed. “What if we have a baby?” She cradled her belly as if they were already pregnant.

“What are you talking about? I don’t want a baby, and neither do you.”

“I changed my mind,” the girl said.

“But why? What good is a baby? If we have a baby, I won’t be able to do my bicep curls with these mole rats, I’ll always be holding the baby, and feeding the baby. I won’t be able to maintain the exercise chamber at all, because the baby will wander off and strangle himself with my resistance bands.”

“But the baby will bring us closer together,” the girl said. “He can grow up to watch for badgers. He can listen for danger. We’ll make him our forever night watchman. He’ll protect us.”

“We don’t need him to protect us. I’ll protect us.”

“Well, maybe he’ll just grow up then, and one day leave the hole. He’ll go out in the world, work in high-rises and drive automobiles and wear glasses.” The girl began to cry, and miniature mudslides fell down her cheeks.

The guy put down the mole rats and stared at the girl.

“I didn’t know you felt this way,” he said.

“Well, now you do,” the girl answered.

That night, the guy and girl lay awake in bed, back to back. They didn’t speak. Their heads were full of ideas, and the ideas spoke enough to make the hole tremble, and the grasses outside the hole tremble. The girl rolled over once and grabbed a handful of dirt and stuffed it down her mouth, but she gagged and spit it out. The guy clutched the baby mole rats to his chest and tried to love them, but he felt nothing, and he threw them out into the shitting chamber.
They both realized they were no longer in love, which meant they wanted to strike each other and yell at each other and will each other to disappear. And they realized too that they missed dune buggies.

There was only one thing for them to do. In the morning, they climbed to the top of the hole, the girl leading, because she was a feminist.

The guy grabbed the shovel, in case of badgers.

“What shall we do when we get up there?” the girl asked, peeking up into the light. She could barely see a thing.

The man looked up at her, his face accommodating all his sad thoughts. What he thought was, their love had died, like a collection of animals, small bones in the back of the hole. And now there was only the same world, all over again.

“Whatever we like,” he said.