

Welcome to Hear/Now, a season of audio theater from Keen Company!

We're an award winning nonprofit theater in New York City, championing identification and connection through stories about the decisive moments that change us.

I'm Jonathan Silverstein, the Artistic Director, and it's my pleasure to welcome you to DIGGING IN THE DARK by PEARL CLEAGE, the 2nd production in our season of audio theater.

Join us in embracing the virtual Off-Broadway experience. Grab a beverage from concessions, find a comfy front row seat, and dim the house lights.

It's time to settle in for a night at the theater, and enjoy DIGGING IN THE DARK...

*(A cacophony of outdoor sounds. Crickets, far off animal noises, and the sound of footsteps shuffling through the leaves is heard. A screen door opens. A woman's soft footsteps on a creaky porch floor. A low rumble of far off thunder. A match strikes and lights a cigarette. There is a long draw and exhale.)*

W:*(a slight southern twang)*The smell of something dead blew in on the wind this morning. I thought at first it might be him, but no such luck. It's funny how I sometimes think about him dead, but never her! Passing counterfeit money is *not* a capital crime. Not that I ever think of killing him! (chuckles) Not anymore. But people die of accidents and natural causes every day. He could be one of those. Walking across the street and *bam!* **Game over.** *(pause)* I always liked her. She'll do a lot better once she figures out how to stop lying. She's not very good at it, but if practice makes perfect, she will be. She's also gullible. Otherwise, why would she be out here with a *loser* like my brother, digging around in the dark like she believes this is treasure island and he's Long John Silver, the pirate one, not the porno one.

*[Another low rumble of thunder and the quiet sound of a shovel hitting the dirt.]*

They've been digging out there for *hours*. No telling what they might find. There's lots of stuff buried in these woods.

*[Inhale/exhale.]*

These are not really "woods". If you walk less than five miles in any direction, you'll hit asphalt. But city people aren't used to the quiet. *(pause)* That's one of the reasons I live out here. For the quiet. It made my brother so nervous he stopped coming around. That's one of the other reasons I like it. The less I see of him, the better. But I can still smell him if he's heading my way. Like tonight. I figure they'll be here within the hour. She probably has heels on which will slow them down.

Plus, they gotta be careful of the holes. Especially in the dark. That's the other thing my brother doesn't like. How *dark* it gets out here at night. There are holes *all over* the place. *(eerie music and sounds softly resonates in the background)* I dug 'em myself. When I first moved out here, I buried a bunch of stuff. Personal stuff. Jewelry too cheap to pawn. Letters. **Two** wedding dresses. A ring. Stuff like that. But once I ran out of stuff I wanted to put in the ground, I realized the digging gave me more peace than the burying so I ... just kept at it.

The woman who sold me the house said she always kept a couple of dogs to let her know when somebody was coming. I told her I was a cat person, which is not completely true. I don't give a

damn about cats any more than I do about dogs. I did feel sorry when they started showing up in the woods without their heads, but that didn't have anything to do with **me**.

I'd never had a problem with anything like that, but after Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans, a *lot* of people had to move up here. That's when it started. My daughter says it's not fair to blame people from New Orleans for the animal sacrifices showing up. I told her, no judgement, but they weren't there, then they were. Big, beautiful roosters... A small goat... Three cats and a good-sized dog. All *neatly* decapitated. (*Takes a draw from a cigarette*) I made the county come and pick up the carcasses. The guy asked me why I dug so many holes and I told him it was an art project. He asked me if I ever fell in one. Only a man would ask a question like that. Like he could come out here for two hours and identify a danger that had never crossed my mind. I told him anybody who'd dig a hole and then fall in it didn't have the sense of a headless goat.

After a few months, it stopped. The guy from the county called to see if I had any more "problems" and I told him no. He said good, but if I did, just call him *direct*, and he gave me his *home* phone number. It didn't dawn on me until later that he was hitting on me. I'm out of practice. By choice.

(*An owl calls in the distance.*)

When I realized she and my brother were headed this way, I wished I had left a few of those carcasses lying around. Imagine how loud that girl would holler if she found herself face to face with a headless goat. It was kind of exciting, though, in a perverse kind of way. I never knew what I was going to walk up on out there. I used to wonder if any of the animals ever broke free and hid until everybody was gone. Sometimes I'd look around hoping to see a very nervous goat nibbling on some acorns or a sleek black cat running between the pine trees. But I never did.

Way back when he was still known by the name his mama gave him, Leroi Jones wrote a poem, a great poem, about looking out the window of his apartment and wishing some strange looking animal would come along just so he'd have something new to consider. huh. My mother and father were married for 42 years and the day after his funeral, she burned their house to the ground. My brother never forgave her, but I thought about that poem and I think I understood. (*The wind floats through a windchime.*) There's only so many holes you can dig before you want to jump in one.

The truth is, I do love living out here, but every now and then, I wouldn't mind if that strange looking animal sauntered by my kitchen window. When you think about it that way, it's *almost* like I conjured them up. It won't be long now...

*(Insects chirp and cry in the night)*

*[As The Woman's brother and his girlfriend walk toward the next place they will dig, we can hear the rustle of the leaves underfoot.]*

GF: I hate the *country*.

Bro: This is not the "country".

GF: Can you see the road?

Bro: No.

GF: Then this is the *country*.

Bro: Two dirt roads off the black top. That's the "country".

GF: What does that even mean?

Bro: J-Ju-J-Just what I said.

GF: *Sh-h-h-h!* You hear that?

Bro: What?

GF: *That!*

Bro: I don't hear anything.

GF: Exactly. That's because it's the *country*. All you ever hear is a whole lot of nothin'!

Bro: Just hold the light still, will you?

GF: It's *heavy!* Why'd you get such a big one?

Bro: So we could see where we're going, why do you think?

GF: You should have got one of those miner helmets with the light attached to the front.

Bro: *(laughing)* Ain't no miners in Atlanta.

GF: You should have got two so everybody could be responsible for their own light and you wouldn't feel the need to be giving so many orders.

Bro: Ain't nobody told you to come in the first place.

GF: Like I'm going to trust you to look out for my interests.

Bro: Don't I always look out for your interests?

GF: Depends on what you mean by ... *sh-h-h-h-h!* Listen!

Bro: Don't start that again!

GF: No, I'm serious this time! It's like footsteps!

Bro: First you don't hear anything, then you hear something following us.

GF: Not *something*. *Somebody*.

Bro: I don't hear anything.

GF: Of course you don't hear it now. They stop when we stop for that exact reason. You act like you ain't never been to the movies. Freddie Kruger always sneakin' up on somebody like that!

Bro: Just point that light where I'm walking before I fall in one of these *damn* holes and then what are you gonna do?

GF: Get whoever's following us to give me a ride home.

Bro: (*mocking*) Ha-ha Very funny.

GF: You said you knew exactly what tree the right hole was under, but we've been walking around out here forever and nuthin'!

Bro: Is it my fault all these trees look alike?

GF: You should have tied something to it.

Bro: Like what?

GF: I don't know. A yellow ribbon or something, like that song.

Bro: We're *trespassing*, remember? If we can see it, she can see it, and that defeats the whole purpose of her not knowing we're out here!

GF: How come she dug so many holes in the first place?

Bro: Maybe what we're looking for is not the only thing she intended to bury.

*[Loud barn owl screech.]*

GF: That's it! I'm going back to the car!

Bro: *(amused)* It's nothing but a barn owl.

GF: I don't care what it is! I'm gone!

Bro: Go ahead then. Hey! Leave the light.

GF: How am I supposed to find my way?

Bro: Be guided by the stars like a runaway slave.

GF: Like I can run in these shoes.

Bro: *Ha-ha* Don't worry. If you fall in, I'll toss you down a rope.

GF: You don't have a rope.

Bro: I'll go get one and then I'll *toss it down*.

GF: What if you don't come back?

Bro: Why wouldn't I come back?

GF: I don't know. But *what if*.

Bro: Then you could wait until morning and holler for help.

GF: Who's gonna hear me?

Bro: She'll hear you. *(laughing)* My sister has ears like a dog.

GF: I never noticed that. What kind of dog?

Bro: *(baffled)* Wh-What?

GF: What kind of *dog* do her *ears* look like?

Bro: *(sigh)* She doesn't *look* like a dog. She can hear real good like a dog.

GF: Why didn't you just say that? You make everything so ---

Bro: *mhm Complicated*. I know.

GF: Then why do you keep on doing it?

Bro: Just relax, will you?

GF: If you could have ears like any dog you wanted, what kind of ears would you pick?

Bro: What?

GF: I'd want the kind that stand up when you get mad instead of the kind that just hang down. You can't tell how a Cocker Spaniel is feeling just by looking at it, but a Doberman? You always know where you stand.

Bro: *(in a harsh whisper)* Keep your voice down! We're getting close up on the house.

GF: How do you even know it's out here?

Bro: Where else is it gonna be? In a shoe box?

GF: Women hide stuff in shoe boxes all the time.

Bro: Those would have to be some pretty big feet.

GF: Well, there's a lot of options between a shoe box and burying stuff in the woods.

Bro: Why else you figure she moved way out here? We have never been country people.

GF: I thought you said this "wasn't country."

Bro: It's a figure of speech!

*[Low rumble of thunder.]*

GF: So now it's gonna rain? That's just perfect!

Bro: I don't control the weather!

GF: You didn't say nothin' about no rain.

Bro: What am I supposed to say? Cloudy with a chance of showers?

GF: You could have picked another night.

Bro: *Look!* It's not raining now, is it?

GF: What do you think comes after thunder?

Bro: Just shut up, can't you?

GF: I *can*. I don't choose to.

Bro: (*huff*) Fine!

GF: You know what I think?

Bro: Stop thinking!

GF: I *think* she's been out here walking around and she noticed those new holes you dug last weekend.

Bro: No chance. She would have called me.

GF: She ain't been callin' you.

Bro: If she had seen anything out here that she hadn't dug herself, she would have.

GF: To say what?

Bro: To say she already got one just my size if I don't quit nosing around.

*[Another louder night owl screech.]*

GF: I'm outta here!

Bro: Slow down, girl! Where you goin' with that light? I can't see my hand in front of my ...  
*(yowls as he stumbles and thuds at the bottom of a hole) Gah-Owwwww!*

GF: What? What happened?

Bro: I fell in a damn hole! What do you think happened?

GF: I told you!

Bro: Owww! I think I broke my ankle!

GF: Can you walk on it?

Bro: How the hell can I walk on it if it's broken?

GF: *Don't snap at me!* I didn't tell you to come out here, digging in the dark like some grave robber!



Bro: Okay, okay! Pull me out.

GF: How am I supposed to do that?

Bro: Lean down and grab my hand!

GF: *[Struggling to help him climb out of the hole.]* Careful! You're about to pull me in!

Bro: There's nothing to grab onto! *[She lets go and he drops back into the hole with a thud.]*  
Owww!

GF: Here! Lean on the shovel!

Bro: It's too short! *(whimpers)* Owww! *(falls again)*

GF: Well, we can't stand here all night.

Bro: *(through gritted teeth)* **YOU NEVER DO WHAT I TELL YOU!** AND THIS IS WHAT HAPPENS!  
EVERY TIME! You never learn, do you!? Always running off half-cocked like you don't have the  
sense you were born with!

GF: If that's how you feel, I'll go on then and you can wait for your dogeared sister to come  
and dig you up like a bone.

Bro: That's not funny.

GF: Do you see me laughing?

Bro: You shining that light in my face! I can't see you at all!

GF: You never could.

Bro: Say what?

GF: Nothing. *[Shifts the light to herself so he can see her.]* How's that? Now can you see me?

Bro: I can see you but I don't see you doing anything about my situation.

GF: Okay. Let me ask you this. She wouldn't really hurt you, would she?

Bro: What do you think?

GF: But that's just between you two. Regular brother, sister stuff, right? That's got nothin'  
to do with me.

Bro: What are you talking about?

GF: How close are we to the house?

*(Thunder rolls)*

Bro: Less than a mile. Why?

GF: I'm going to go on over there and ask for her help as a personal favor. Woman to woman.

Bro: *(forced chuckle)* You're crazy!

GF: Why? She always liked me.

Bro: She never liked you!

GF: How's she not gonna like me? She doesn't even know me that good.

Bro: You passed her some counterfeit money!

GF: One time!

Bro: What about when she asks you what we were doing out here?

GF: I'll tell her we were coming for a little surprise visit to apologize and we got turned around in the dark.

Bro: Apologize for what?

GF: Everything! Nothing! Whatever! Look, in spite of everything, you're still her big brother, right?

Bro: So?

GF: So blood is thicker than water.

Bro: That's what I'm afraid of.

GF: You got a better idea?

*[Barn owl screech much closer than the last one.]*

Bro: *[Resigned]* Leave me the light.

GF: You scared of the dark?

Bro: Hell no! I just want you to be able to find me when you come back.

GF: Wait about ten minutes and then start hollering.

Bro: Okay. Hurry up then. This hurts like hell.

GF: I'll be back as soon as I can.

Bro: Eh! You wouldn't really *leave* me out here, would you, baby?

GF: No, *baby*, I won't leave you out here.

Bro: Because you still love me, right?

GF: Because you got the car keys.

*[She leaves him alone in the hole. Deep music plays as she approaches the house where W is waiting. It's starting to rain.]*

W: That's close enough.

GF: *(slightly out of breath)* Hey, Sis! Don't shoot! It's just me.

W: Don't call me *Sis*. I didn't hear you drive up.

GF: We wanted to surprise you so we parked off the road, but we got turned around in the woods.

W: I hate surprises. *Where's my brother?*

GF: He fell in a hole.

W: A *deep* one?

GF: He can't climb out.

W: Is he *hurt*?

GF: He broke his ankle.

W: You couldn't pull him up?

GF: He's too heavy! He almost pulled me in on top of him!

W: So he sent *you* to ask *me* for help? He's got brass balls, I'll say that for him.

GF: He didn't send me. I'm asking as a personal favor. Woman to woman.

W: You don't know me well enough to ask for a "woman to woman" favor.

GF: How well do I have to know you?

W: Better than you probably ever will.

*[Sound of champagne being opened and being poured.]*

GF: So you won't help me?

W: I haven't decided yet.

GF: You do know it's raining, right?

W: Why don't you come up here and have a glass of champagne?

*(Glasses clink and is filled)*

GF: What about ... sure. Okay. What are we celebrating?

W: Nothing in particular. Sometimes champagne is just champagne.

GF: I'll drink to that.

*(They both laugh)*

*[They toast with a clink of glasses.]*

GF: That's funny.

W: What?

GF: You're sitting out here all by yourself and you got real glasses.

W: Champagne in a plastic cup is just sad. What's the point?

*[Low thunder rolls as steady rain continues.]*

GF: You know your brother's not that bad.

W: My brother is the type of crook who plans an outdoor heist and forgets to check the *weather*.

GF: He's no worse than most, no better than some. But I do believe when he finds what you got buried out there, he'll be in a very generous mood and I intend to be first in line.

W: First in line for what?

GF: For whatever's going around.

W: That's a hell of a way to make a living.

GF: You got a better idea?

W: I got fifty ideas better than that right off the top of my head.

GF: Yeah, I bet all of 'em take money, too.

W: You need a job.

GF: I got one.

W: What is it?

GF: I make men give me what they got.

W: Dangerous game.

GF: I'm good at it.

W: Yeah, I can see that.

GF: I did some counterfeiting. I was pretty good at that.

W: You got *caught*.

GF: I got *probation*.

W: You know what I think?

GF: What?

W: I think you need a change of scenery.

*[We hear Bro shouting from a distance down in the hole.]*

Bro: HELP! HELP! I'M OVER HERE! HELP!

W: Is that my brother?

GF: I told him to wait ten minutes and then start hollering.

Bro: HELP!

W: Why?

GF: He was afraid we couldn't find him in the dark.

W: Are we looking for him?

GF: Not yet, but aren't we going to?

W: Why?

GF: He's stuck in a hole with a broke ankle and it's raining!

W: *So?* we already know where he is.

GF: Yes, but...

Bro: HELP! O-V-ER HERE! HELP!

W: Don't worry. I'll get a county guy to come over tomorrow morning and collect him. They pick up animal carcasses over here all the time.

GF: He's not dead!

W: And he's not gonna die from spending one night outside.

*[We are aware of the continuing sound of rain.]*

GF: It's still raining.

W: I know. It's nice, isn't it?

GF: Can I have a little more champagne?

*(Champagne pours)*

W: Sure.

GF: Is it really buried out here?

W: How many women do you know who ever buried something they intended to dig up later?

GF: None.

W: Exactly.

GF: Why'd you dig all those holes then?

W: I was hoping my brother would come around and fall into one.

GF: *(laughing)* That's cold!

W: It worked, didn't it?

GF: What did he do that was so terrible?

W: Why don't you ask him?

GF: I'm asking you.

W: He taught me how to do all the things he liked then sent me out into the world to find some other men who liked it too.

GF: *(serious)* What do you mean?

W: You know what I mean.

GF: I don't believe you.

W: Sure, you do. You're the one who left him in that hole.

GF: *(trying to sound lighter)* Well, we all gotta learn it from somebody, right?

W: That's what he said, too.

GF: Maybe one day, you can find it in your heart to forgive him. I'll bet you he's forgotten all about it.

W: Whose side of the ledger would that go on?!

GF: I just meant ...

*[Rumble of thunder.]*

W: Never mind. I'm sorry you came out on such a bad night. Especially since it's not even buried out here, no matter what he told you.

GF: Where is it then?

W: In a shoebox.

GF: That's what I told him!

W: Go inside. My bedroom is at the end of the hall. It's on the top shelf of the closet. Go get it.

GF: Why? So you can show me how stupid we were to be out there digging in your backyard?

W: I want *you* to take it.

GF: Are you serious?

W: I'm always serious.

GF: I don't know what to say.

W: Don't say anything. Do what I tell you before I change my mind!

*[We hear her walk rapidly across the porch, open the door and go inside. We hear Bro hollering in the distance.]*

Bro: HELP! HELP! CAN YOU HEAR ME?

*[GF returns.]*

GF: Here it is.

W: Did you open it?

GF: No. *[Pause.]* Yes!

W: You're still the worst liar I've ever *seen*. Can you drive?

(upbeat music plays lightly in the background)

GF: I can drive.



W: Do you have a *license*?

GF: I said I can drive!

W: Okay. Take my car.

GF: Take it where?

W: Anywhere you want as long as you leave right now and drive at least 250 miles before you stop. Atlanta has a strange gravitational pull on hustling Negroes like you. It's like a force field. You gotta break it or you'll get sucked right back here playing the same old games. And for what? You've learned almost all the lessons this place has to teach you.

GF: Almost?

W: There's *one* more. You'll know it when you see it.

GF: I need to go home and get my stuff.

W: Get new stuff. Drive all night. Stop someplace you've always wanted to go. You ever been to New Orleans?

GF: No.

W: Good. Start there. Check into a fancy hotel. Order room service. Take a long hot shower. Wrap yourself up in one of those big white robes, grab some overpriced cognac from the mini bar and kick back.

GF: Is this your dream or mine?

W: Does it matter?

GF: Why are you doing this?

W: I never cared about it in the first place. I just didn't want him to have it. Besides, I always liked you. Woman to woman.

GF: I told him that too.

Bro: [*fainter*] HEY! HELP! OVER HERE! HELP!

GF: How long are you gonna leave him out there?

W: Until I get tired.

GF: Tired of what?

W: Tired of hearing him holler. *(laughs)*

Bro: *[fainter]* AAAHHHHHH!

GF: What about your car?

W: It's a rental. Contract in the glove box.

GF: I owe you.

W: You better get going if you're going to make New Orleans by morning.

GF: Why don't you come with me?

W: I've already seen New Orleans.

GF: I'll send you a postcard.

W: Fair enough.

*[Pause. Jazz music continues to play]*

GF: Can I ask you something?

W: Sure.

GF: If you could be any kind of dog you wanted, what kind would you be?

W: A Doberman. No contest.

GF: Yeah, me too.

W: Break a leg, kid.

GF: You be careful out here.

W: Careful as I can!

*[We hear her walk away. She opens the car door. Slams it. Starts the car and drives away.]*

W: I told you she was gullible. And greedy. An irresistible combination. She'll make out okay for a couple of weeks. New Orleans is full of men on the lookout for a pretty woman with a shoebox under her arm until they realize it's just smoke and mirrors and decide all bets are off.

*[Bro continues hollering]*

That's when she'll get the last lesson, standing in the middle of Bourbon Street with a shoebox full of nothin', realizing I'm not as dumb as she thought I was.

*[We still hear him hollering and crying, but not as loudly.]*

W: I figure he'll get tired of yelling in another hour or so. He'll be exhausted and filthy, but maybe he'll finally fall asleep, sitting right there in the mud. That will be phase *one*. Phase two begins when he wakes up and nobody has come to rescue him yet. That's when it dawns on him that I'm not coming and neither is she. He'll start hollering again but nobody will answer, most especially **me**, since I'm leaving as soon as I finish this champagne. I told my friend at the county I'd be out of town for a month and asked him to come out and look around in a week or so just to be sure nothing else had shown up uninvited. *Headless or otherwise*. He said no problem and wondered if I might like to have dinner when I got back. I said sure, but I won't be back.

*(Thunder cracks in the distance)*

I kind of wish I could be here when he hauls out whatever's left of my brother, but not enough to stick around for it. I've already learned the most valuable lesson this place had to teach me. Turns out every now and then, one of those animals marked for sacrifice escapes the executioner. You can see them on a night when there's no full moon. Slipping between the pine trees or screeching in the dark like wild birds; *merciless, relentless, redeemed*.

*[The sound of owls. The sound of Brother's cries for help. The rain.]*

Thank you for listening to this performance of Hear/Now, Keen Company's season of audio theatre

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You've just listened to Digging in the Dark by Pearl Cleage  
Directed by Taylor Reynolds  
Starring Rachel Christopher, Russell G. Jones, and Janelle McDermoth  
Sound Designed by Fan Zhang  
Stage Managed by Norman Anthony Small  
Audio Engineered by Garrett Schultz

This performance is part of Keen Company's Hear/Now Season of Audio Theater, led by Artistic Director Jonathan Silberstein.  
The Season's Audio Consultant is Garrett Schultz.  
The Hear/Now theme is composed by Billy Recce.

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Thank you for listening. I look forward to joining you at the virtual theater again soon!