

THE HOLE



BROTHER GAS BOOKS

Brother Gas

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“The Hole”

Along the Appalachian Trail in the mountains of Western North Carolina, Marshall Doe played hide-and-seek with his twin granddaughters, Opel and Dora. They called him Papa. He closed his eyes and counted to twenty.

The girls started running away—then stopped.

“Look, Papa!”

Marshall cut his count short and looked in the direction the twins pointed. A flickering blue flame burned out of the top of a boulder on a hill just beyond the girls.

A retired government geologist, Marshall was fascinated by the burning blue flame. He had never seen such a phenomenon. He moved toward it for further investigation.

The flame flickered low, then higher, teasing Marshall to speculate that various pressures from some types of gas were controlling the beautiful royal blue color. It could be a natural gas or mineral gas exchange that no one had yet discovered. The flame was so intriguing in color and intensity that it cast a spell on Marshall. He had to investigate. The flame was like an opiate attracting him.

His granddaughters, interested but cautious, stayed back. “Papa, it’s like a ghost!” They watched their grandfather climb the hill to investigate the flame. “Be careful, Papa!”

Marshall climbed the hill, grunting and huffing, until he reached the flaming rock. He stood there, spellbound.

He touched the rock, and it felt cold. That was strange. The flame steadily flickered blue and licked at the air above the rock. Nothing else happened.

Then the unexpected happened.

The ground under Papa's feet quaked and caved in. It swallowed him into a deep, hidden hole. The hole was just big enough for him to pass through as he fell.

Plummeting down the dark hole, he cried for help, but to no avail. Marshall thought he felt things gripping and touching him, and he thought he heard indistinguishable voices whispering in the dark hole as he plunged.

Finally, he hit the bottom hard with a thud, splashing into water and muck. The hole was so dark he could not see his hands before his face. But he could smell the gas rising from the splashed muck, and it sickened him. It stank like rotting flesh. He grew nauseated until he puked, adding to the horrendous smell that only hell could produce. "Where am I? And what is this dark hole?"

He felt air pulsating on his neck as if someone were breathing. It stirred his fears, and goose bumps formed on his arms. No light, no phone, no way to communicate with his grandchildren. He could only hope they would seek help for him.

With a quick examination of himself, he didn't find any injuries except for something pressing into his lower back. He had no room to twist or maneuver around, but he was able to feel behind him. Some kind of shaft or stick poked out from the side of the hole.

Marshall doubted his ability to escape this captivity, and he had no idea how to get out.

Fear, anguish, and pity began to work in his psyche. He yelled a second time, but no one answered. Marshall tried to climb the wall by sinking his fingers into the soft soil and pulling himself up. That effort resulted in pulling handfuls of wet dirt out of the wall. The only sound