

## The Hole

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It was strangely silent, but for the scuffing of Thomas' and John's shoes, and the clinking of their climbing gear as they made their way toward their destination. Light filtered through the trees, playing on fallen leaves, and coloring brown dirt golden. It led almost like a path to a pile of leaves and branches on top of a tarp.

"Help me pull this off." Thomas directed John to one side of the tarp. They carefully carried the tarp until what was underneath was completely uncovered, a hole. The filtered light shot toward the hole until it encircled it completely, and touched on its entrance. But the light could only reach so far, the hole bled nothing but inky black, and it was too deep for such a small amount of light to make a difference. It was a misshapen circle of a hole, but big enough that a person or two could fit through.

These holes had been popping up around the area lately, usually found by other's in the villages closer to the forest. They were hard to find and hard to keep track of, but Thomas had finally gotten his own.

"So, this is it huh?" John asked as he stepped toward the hole's entrance, toeing the ground around it as he leaned forward to get a better look in the hole. "Pretty damn cool. Can't believe you found one, but it's so far out here. How'd you find it?"

"You know I like taking walks." Thomas replied. "Glad I remembered where it was. Soon as I saw it I knew I wanted to see how deep it was."

John nodded and kicked a nearby pebble down the hole. "Looks pretty deep, wouldn't want to fall in something like this." John looked over at Thomas, the latter was staring at him in

an odd way. He waved his hand in front of Thomas' face, "Earth to Thomas, why're you looking at me like that man? Creeping me out," he chuckled out. *Sometimes Thomas' eyes had to be the most unnerving thing about him. Blue with flecks of gold and green, such a vivid color, but dead in a way. His eyes didn't really ever reflect what he presented on his face.* Thomas smirked in response leaning away from John's hand and looked over toward the hole.

"So let's start. I'll count the gear while you set us up." Thomas shrugged off his backpack and placed it next to his feet. He pointed to a nearby tree, "You can anchor the rope I gave you earlier over there." John nodded in response and made his way over to the tree.

"Ya know, I'm glad we came out here man," John said digging into his backpack and pulling out his flashlight, climbing harness, a thick black rope, and a couple of carabiner clips. "Seems like forever since we hung out, you're always locked up in your apartment. So I'm surprised you called me out." John tossed his backpack over to Thomas to look through.

"It was about time for it I guess." Thomas replied as he crouched down to count out their gear. John glanced over at his crouched form in confusion, expecting more of an explanation, but there was nothing but silence from his end. John shook it off and slipped on his harness and clipped his flashlight onto the right side of it. He quickly tied the rope around the tree and attached the carabiner clips for extra hold, and made his way over to the hole throwing the excess of the rope down into it. It blended in a little too well, a line of black into more black.

John looked over at Thomas, "Need a hand?" he asked.

"No."

“Quiet down, I know what to do,” Thomas mumbled, low enough that John didn’t hear him.

John slowly inched away from Thomas, and crouched down next to the hole, when he noticed his lips continuously moving. *Why the hell did I come out here, I know how strange he can be now. Thomas hadn’t always been someone who talked to himself.* He unclipped his flashlight and made a move to shine it down the hole.

“*I got it already!*” Thomas spat. John’s head popped up in surprise as Thomas abruptly stood up from his crouched position. Thomas reached behind his back and John looked on in confusion as Thomas’ shadow slowly closed in on him. And suddenly a hole, though much smaller than the one they stood next to, was pointed at his face.

“Woah, man, what are you doing?” John slowly rose up from his crouch, one hand in the air and his flashlight in the other, as Thomas glared at him down the barrel of his gun.

“It was about time for everything to start, so I brought you here.” Thomas replied, “Now I’m gonna need you to get into that hole.”

“Wait, what?” John’s hands fell to his side and he made a move to step toward Thomas.

“Stay where you are or I’ll shoot your kneecaps out! I’m not fuckin’ around John!” John halted and looked at Thomas in disbelief but moved back to his previous position.

“He said that I have to do it. So you just need to climb down that hole John.” Thomas said as he stepped in John’s direction, herding him closer to the hole. “Of your own will or it won’t work the way I need it to. You just need to climb down it. I could shoot you and throw you down but it won’t be complete, it won’t work that way.” Thomas said almost as though he were

speaking to himself. His eyes locked on John's every move, but they seemed far away, as though he were looking at something else.

"He said that I have to do it, so I will. You've become a problem and in order for us to prosper, you must be offered. I have to appease him."

"*He, us?* Come on Thomas, would you calm down. Just put it do-"

"Shut up!" Thomas growled out. "Give me the fucking flashlight, you won't need it where you're going," Thomas snatched the flashlight out of John's hand and shined it into his face. John squinted at Thomas in disbelief, tears of frustration began to gather in his eyes.

"You're joking right? What the hell Thomas, why-"

A giggle interrupted him. It was a strange sound coming from Thomas, along with a smile so wide it looked painful. He covered his mouth with the side of his gun as his eyes flicked over John's face, and clicked the flashlight off.

The clouds began to cover the sun, black slowly crawled up the path of light until it disappeared.

"Climb down the hole, John," he pressed out through gritted teeth, smile still present, waving toward the hole with his gun.

John hesitated but he knew that Thomas's aim was true. Either way he'd be going down this hole, whether it be by force or of his own will. So he begrudgingly made his way into the hole, wheezing in fear as he made his way further and further down the rope. It felt as if the darkness was choking him and his faint form finally disappear into black, but Thomas stared down into the darkness for a moment, dead-eyed, and faintly smiling with just a hint of teeth

peeking through. He walked to the tree, unclipped the carabiners, and began to slowly loosen the knot on the rope.

“Thomas, wait!” John warbled out from the darkness. The sound of the rope whipping out from around the tree drowned out his shouts as he fell.

“Are you happy now?” Thomas turned the flashlight on and pointed it down the hole. He could see nothing but black past the point the light could reach. He tossed it into the entrance, flashes of light spun around highlighting different parts in the hole until it disappeared completely.

“Yes, it’s as deep as I thought it’d be.”

The End