

My husband and I have never had a problem that we have not been able to solve together save one, water. It began the first February of our life together with frozen pipes in our house. We spent the next three months tethered to our next-door neighbors' outside faucet by a garden hose snaking through our yards not unlike a long green umbilical cord. For the next seven years I let the water drip in our bathtub 24/7 October through April.

When our children were old enough to require more running room and my husband and I were bleary eyed from listening to the drip, drip, drip of water all night we bought a house in a quiet subdivision outside the city limits. It was here that we encountered our next problem, the water well.

Being the first up each morning, I noticed right off that our pipes clanked and air gushed from the faucet like a severed artery. My husband assured me that this was only air in the pipes and that it was "normal". After three weeks, I was more than skeptical and threatening to call a plumber. My husband, who I swear "knows everything", promised to prove his point.

With a smirking smile on his face, he beat me out of bed the next morning gleefully ready to prove me wrong. Leaning against the bathroom door, arms folded over my chest, one toe tapping on the cold floor I watched him drop a flaming match into the sink as the faucet spewed its morning ration of "air". Whoosh! His smirk was gone, along with his eyebrows. The plumber showed up before lunch.

We came to find out that our water well is over three hundred sixty feet deep and passes through three seams of coal. We don't have air in our water pipes; we have coal bed methane gas. We're sitting on a fortune. I could be the next Molly Brown.

The humorous thing is that in Montana, where we live, it is next to impossible to apply for and receive a permit to produce coal bed methane gas. There are even ominous rumors about big interest groups back East funding state environmental groups to lobby against the production of CBMG and so far they've been very successful. Montana ranks last in living wages.

We don't put a lot of stock in rumors and although we don't consider ourselves environmentalist, we are responsible adults. One end of our basement houses a mechanical room with a very large tank the purpose of which is to bleed off the CBMG from our water supply and vent it into our septic system. We don't want to be responsible for single handedly depleting the ozone layer.

Although this solution is costing us money, it is keeping me off doomed ocean liners and I can tell you this, with a smirk on my face; the grass really is greener over the septic tank.