

HOLE

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My mother called to tell me she discovered a hole in her abdomen, right beside her belly button. *Like all the way through?* I asked. I imagined a peephole. A rare glimpse through another. *No, just a hole*, she said, *it doesn't hurt*. She didn't elaborate further. I didn't ask. / I wore a hole in the elbow of my favorite cashmere sweater. It was only then, with a thick grief, I realized I never learned the art of mending. / When I was three, my babysitter propped me on the toilet and said I couldn't move until I produced something worthy for the porcelain maw. Since I didn't have the urge, I sat. And sat. And sat. Hours passed. In my childhood restlessness, I began to pick at a flaw in the drywall. Eventually, my fingers dug through, the paint crumbling into a chasm the size of a silver dollar. I probed at it like a bird searching for worm. The babysitter, furious, called my mother. My mother didn't scold me. She understood the urge to burrow. / Bears create burrows to sleep through the winter. In this way, they miss the bright callousness of winter, the biting cold, the sterile snow. I mimic a similar grief behind locked doors. / A doctor explains my mother's hole is a natural phenomenon. Wound dehiscence from an earlier trauma. *The infection might be lethal*. I wanted to argue, to assert how it could be a simple emptiness of soul wanting to be filled. My inner surrealist is disappointed. / My mother told me the story of how as a child, she stumbled
 backyard. *It was just the right size for*
 in. *What else to do?* The hole, as it
 is how I define parables. / A
 in spacetime where gravity
 can escape. A black hole
 not even light, in all its
 A black hole is a slippery,
 unknowable, ever-present.
 over the loss of a star,
 grief can only be witnessed
 / In my loneliness, I peer out
 to witness a miracle. Instead, I
 woman, her voice displaced, her body
 lips. I consider writing a letter for his wife and
 poetic enough way to frame the act. This is how I define guilt. / *And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth.* Isaiah 2:19 / I think often of stigmata—how I would hold a pen if my hands were bored through with invisible nails, how I would manage cooking, how I would savor the pain, how over eighty percent of the recorded cases are in women. / My mother's wound is packed with gauze and treated with chalky antibiotics which make her mouth impossibly dry. I tease she's closer to taxidermy than woman. In that way, she might live forever. / Riddle: How do you escape a concrete room with no windows or doors, only a wooden table and rusty handsaw? Answer: You saw the table in half. Two halves make a hole. Place the hole against the wall and crawl to freedom. *No one considers placing the hole on the floor and discovering how deep it might go.* / I ask my mother if she wants to be buried in a hole underneath the fig tree we used to eat from when I was small. She says the idea of being planted like a seed disturbed her. *What might I grow into?* We agree on cremation. / The average human body has nine holes. The night she calls to tell me about her tenth, I find myself in front of my mirror, counting. Before I realize, I'm holding a silver sliver of knife against my palm, boring down until the skin on my heartline splits, deepens. Another emptiness to fill.