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The Hole

Gene Zeiger

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THE HOLE

Today I ironed a woolen shawl which a woman in Calcutta spent six months embroidering. She sold it for a song because the buyer, my ex-husband, found three moth holes at one end. I'd never bargain with that woman, I'd never offer her fewer rupees because of a few small holes.

The hole in the shawl is the hole in the screen that lets the flies in, is the hole in the world through which people come and go, is the "luch in kup" my father ascribed to the truly dumb. The rabbit scurries into it, the snake, it is the space between the rocks through which the sheep flee, through which the world enters, shyly at first, then brazen.

The hole is the proverbial eye of the needle, the gap between the teeth, the rip through which the dead return with their old coats and hats, the sound of feet stamping to unloosen the dust.

Mend it—fill it, glut it, wet it, stitch it, paste it, stuff it with vowels, consonants, entire dictionaries, nothing works. What can you do? There's the hole! How can you fit into that tiny space gracefully, then live there with so little room?