

Phases

Rachel Korr

Where did that come from? friends ask. I invited them to have dinner at my new place and now shoes are off and they are eyeing the white sickle-shaped foam deep inside exposed layers of gray rubber on the bottoms of my sneakers,

seemingly scooped out by a sharp implement. It is the last of all the moon phases of the soles of sneakers worn for walking, from the dark even blankness of an early season to dusky ash from scouring by winter salt and the rougher sidewalks and pebbles, and then to the beginnings of a form, a whisper of something deeper and wider contained beneath the scraped-up layers. By the time the heavy rains and puddles threaten to soak what's showing through,

more than half a moon has appeared, concave and nearly cored, just short of an interstellar hole, the other side of it having long since shaped itself under the heel from inside.

It's just from walking, I tell them, and they look incredulous, lifting their own pedestrian shoes for examination: light signs of wear but no phases, no crossing from clean unmarred peace of unbroken night to the disruption, the agitation, of something hidden till surfaces wear away - a depth or destination that, moon-like, may be understood in brief mental glimpses as a place that really can be reached because others have crossed over before, but only if you keep going,

shedding stage upon stage, bearing a private, staunch belief against all appearances that there is ground, there are hills, and somewhere, a place to land.

It's just walking, I say again. And not for the first time, they and I find, just for a moment, that the planes of our orbits have diverged, and we regard each other in our different, blurred speeds and trajectories. Then, with a hard shake, we grin and start getting out the plates.