

From the fugue

I'd asked my therapist about the black holes. Did I need hypnosis. Were they bothering me? No, not really, I just found it curious, was all. 'Leave it alone and don't mess with your mind'. I am looking out into the back garden, neatly delimited by a man-high, holly-wrought hedge camouflaging an iron fence. Beautiful white-bellied magpie, I've always liked you the most. It hops from hedge to green maple. I see it off into the blue. It is fitting: you out there, me in here. Certainly if I consider the black holes I've uncovered so far. Four remain obscure. Ticking quietly away.

The veil on one was rather surprisingly lifted. When I awoke a good while after, I was able to reconstruct it, in accordance with what they told me. They showed me the uncensored version captured mercilessly by surveillance video, not the PG-rated edition issued by my mind. To impress upon me why I can never be let out.

I'm in my booth in the ladies department, happily getting into the sort of body-hugging black evening dress I've had my eye on for a decade, finally having arrived at the desired dimensions.

"Did you see the look on her face?" Next door. Nasal. Smoky. *Raunchy*. Two voices join in wicked laughter. The past is pulled up over the present and I'm in another booth, at school, surrounded by the heartless, my things snatched away. I'm standing in my underwear, alone, for hours. The howling goes on with the raunchy voice leading, while I cry and plea. We've come many years and countless self-defence classes. And since my most recent mugging I've taken to carrying a knife. Just a regular one, from the kitchen. But that raunchy voice is gone, and so is the black hole it was in.