SHOES

by Richard Hoffman

My mother cut holes in her shoes so her corns would stick out, not torment her, standing all day in a mill folding woolen sweaters.

Her shoes stank. They were ugly. Twin lobsters in a tank at the market, laces defeated antennae, children tapping at the glass, saying “Eww.”

And she cut linoleum to cover, from inside, the holes in the soles because those were the only shoes she could bear to wear to work

and because she needed to work. And she soaked her feet in the evening and smoked and listened to the radio and dreamed of walking — where?