

thrice great hermes

#40

by stanley lieber

every so often sl would grow tired of moving slowly. the blank page, the page filling in, the finished page covered in perhaps ill-considered marks. he watched it all happening and it always felt like time was standing still. the hand moved so slowly, and there was so much he wanted to give.

sl looked down at vidya's arm. he decided he would try to control it. slowly, at first, he allowed himself to feel each muscle as it flexed and relaxed, obeying vidya's intention to direct the pen in his hand. next he exerted minimal strain, causing vidya's hand to slip, then to catch itself before the pen slipped entirely out of his grasp. satisfied with his command of the instrument, sl began to write.

he scoured vidya's mind for textures. many he could readily repurpose, mixing and matching, recapitulating something that was nevertheless entirely new. with this he was well pleased.

after a time vidya's body began to complain. sl realized it had grown sore, hungry, as the session had wore on. he rose, to search for food.

what was it vidya had said about food? sl didn't care. sl would do what he wanted, with affection.

first on the list was cleaning the body. the boy didn't know what he was doing. he wet the bed. he touched things. vidya always washed his hands, but for sl this would never be enough. new habits must be set in place. he ambulated the body to the shower and turned on the water.

next the body must be groomed, and dressed. sl took a long look in the mirror, unhappy with what he saw. he went to work on the eyebrows, improving on god's best efforts. he shaved the face and the back of the head. he brushed the teeth. clothes, it seemed he remembered, were kept in the boy's room.

opening the closet he recalled a black t-shirt that would do. he pulled it on, followed by a minimally adequate jacket and a pair of jeans. all of it was black, but sl was quite beyond worrying that he might offend the town's inhabitants on the street. what was this? vidya trying to break through. the boy was actually succeeding.

sl remembered this part.

softening to the boy's pleas, sl slackened his grip on the body, which jerked away from him violently, and retreated to an obscure corner of the mind where he felt he was unlikely to be noticed. some manner of distraction would be in order.

vidya looked down and wondered what had happened to his notebook, why he was wearing different clothes. something was going on, but he couldn't imagine what it might be.

he got on with it.