

## thrice great hermes

#41

by stanley lieber

no one would understand about the phone. how it could not be replaced. how he had not even wanted it, at first, but how it had come to serve as perhaps his most important window to life beyond the forest. nobody else in town had a phone, and nobody else in town wanted one.

vidya wanted his phone. irrelevant now, as it was gone. his books were gone, too. raided at school, confiscated at home. by all outward appearances he now seemed normal. that is to say, illiterate. but he'd continue to serve out his sentence even if nobody could remember his crime.

two more years.

at eighteen, in theory, he would be on his own. he could hardly imagine what that would be like, but he was confident that he'd put at least as much thought into it as anyone else. namely, these maladjusted adults who had chastised him for reading between the lines.

he tried to push through the sludge in his mind, but he was neck-deep in something that was seeping out of his ears. he couldn't... grasp... the words...

he couldn't breathe, he couldn't think, he couldn't see his way to an idiom that didn't carry contradictory connotations, defying what it was he had intended to convey. he had to change the liner in his wastebasket three times a week. the shapes and the colors mocked his efforts to tame them.

the real sl would not recognize himself in vidya's notebook. and what could vidya say? there was nothing for him to say. there was no one to hear. there was no point in complaining, and there was no one to adjudicate his complaints.

vidya threw it all in the trash.

fade to

Beige. Bent white gallery. Lay out the laundry. Shadows wash windows. This photo is no longer available. Pull the red thread. Red polka dots on white drapery. Into the doll's house.

and then

This photo is no longer available. What was it, Spain? The owl in daylight. Rock blunts scissors. This photo is no longer available. Beyond the smeared rainbow.

and then