

thrice great hermes

#13

by stanley lieber

it was unusual for him to climb the water tower this late at night. but here he was. vidya never noticed any workers at the tower, in fact, he rarely encountered anyone at all, but he knew someone must perform the site's routine maintenance. he supposed that someday someone would ask him what he was doing up here.

tonight broke the usual pattern of silence, as two, then three, then five police cars streaked by below, lights and sirens engrossed in their (to his mind) inscrutable dialogue. he tried to imagine what vocabulary they must employ that negotiated the ordered pattern of their flight, preventing each cruiser from colliding with the next, but he faltered on the strained analogy. words had strangled his notional curiosity in its crib.

his phone battery had already died. he had remembered to double-check the weather, but hadn't gotten to today's delivery schedule before it ran out of juice. today's weather was the usual tornado watch, nothing to ponder, and the ups man never showed up this late, anyway.

climbing down the tower he flinched as several more police cars whipped past, sirens blaring. at the foot of the ladder he discovered the package he had given up on. attached was a short note from the ups man explaining that he figured it would be okay to leave the parcel unattended since it was unlikely anyone else would happen along this late at night. vidya folded the note carefully and filed it in the back room with all his other day-to-day ephemera. the ups man's handwriting was by now a fixture of the archive.

he opened up the package, cutting the brown tape with his pocket knife, and removed each perishable item. satisfied that the foodstuffs had arrived intact, he began to eat his snack.

vidya walked all the way home, still thinking about what he would wear to school the next day.