

thrice great hermes

#25

by stanley lieber

mother had been born here.

grandmother had been born here.

great grandfather had been born in these woods. dad claimed that mom's family had arrived in the area from ireland in 1735. why here, of all places? and how had they even found it?

the little town connected via narrow roads to other little towns, twisting through the forest over hundreds of miles to eventually intersect with a small city. mom had visited such places, but only with the car doors locked. here, things were quieter.

further from the roads the forest was quieter still. inside the abandoned structure sound seemed to stand still. the detective could follow him here, but seemed, for whatever reason, unable to enter. vidya breathed in the moldy air and waited for the man to lose interest.

perversely, the man never lost interest. beyond the walls of the abandoned structure sounds of the forest suggested that he was, whoever he was, still out there. for his part, the detective peered into the holes where windows should have been, straining to confirm the boy was still inside. vidya could see brief flashes of reflections cast by the mirrored lenses of his sports glasses. what did he even want?

no, this wouldn't do. vidya ripped the page out of his notebook and tore it to pieces, then stuffed the remains into a crack in the mantle. he was embarrassed that he'd written it. dumb, boring, childish work.

ignoring the gesture, the detective circled the perimeter of the abandoned structure, searching for a way in. based on the condition of its exterior, this hardly seemed an impenetrable fortress. still, no easy access points were apparent. he decided to document his lack of progress, perhaps post-scenario analysis would provide a clue, but it dawned on him he had forgotten to bring his camera.

vidya crouched in the pantry and wondered when the man would leave. time seemed to crawl. vidya wondered aloud what the man could possibly hope to find, all the way out here in the middle of nowhere, who he was and why was he here, how had he managed to follow him through the woods, what was the meaning of any of this, and why he had written it all down.

nothing was working.