

## thrice great hermes

#51

by stanley lieber

low bandwidth. remote storage was full, but things were still working. kind of.

thus ensued the manual process of standing up a new vm, copying data from the old vm, making the new vm live, verifying nothing had gone wrong, and decommissioning the old vm. all, hopefully, without dramatic data loss. étienne did this from his phone, taking it from, and replacing it to, his pocket, in-between glances to assess the transfer's progress.

he had isolated the trouble immediately: he had somehow neglected to set the temporary bit on a large index file, which consequently had been copied in its slightly modified state to permanent storage, over and over again, for some span of months. permanent storage being immutable and finite there was no available remedy once it had filled up but to start over again with a fresh file system. it cost money.

the process was also complicated by flaky connectivity, out here in the middle of who-knows-where. étienne had taken to walking in the woods that opened up near his house. not far off his back porch he would lose signal entirely. even inside his house, or even in certain spots downtown, signal was unreliable. each time he filled remote storage he had to walk or drive to the same location, near the old water tower, to sustain a connection long enough to initiate the now-familiar process of setup and restoral.

today, on a whim, he climbed the water tower. settling on top to take in the view, he pulled out his phone. very good signal, up here.

positioned as he was atop the tall structure, which was itself planted atop a tall hill that overlooked the town as it spread out (like a stain) in the valley below, he could see for an impressive distance—in all directions. the tops of different varieties of trees, mostly. at the mouth of the valley, where the steep incline abruptly terminated in miles of relatively flat expanse, he could see even more trees. it was like the town had fallen off the dining room table, slipping off the edge of its uniformly green tablecloth. if you didn't already know what was down there you'd probably never look.

étienne produced from his shirt pocket a small notebook and commenced to record his observations about the previous year, the unlikely combination of events that had brought him, almost against his will, to this perch atop the water tower in his grandfather's hometown. why was he here, what was the meaning of this life, and why was it so hard to establish a stable connection in this shithole when the tower was visible almost anywhere you went. his observations most often emerged in the form of a question.

chime. étienne had received a message inviting him to give a talk at a ted conference that would take place some one hundred miles away from his present location. due date: this weekend. haha, no thanks.

and with that he was out of time. étienne climbed back down the ladder and walked back to work.