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Editorial

Hoi zäme und willkomme bi de Visione,

I am currently at the VMP Board Weekend writing you from the beautiful valaisanne village of Nax. The new VIS board is also enjoying their life at a random slightly less cool French village an hour away from us, hopefully being very productive and efficient.



In this edition you will discover this new board: But not in a boring unintuitive text-based questionnaire, rather a fantastically creative one-inalifetime format never seen before (probably). If, on the other hand, you are intrigued by VMP board that I am on, read the significantly inferior VAMP:)

I wish everyone but the group of pensioners that entered my train at Arth-Goldau and were talking so loudly that they woke me out of the craziest train nap ever an enjoyable read of this edition

En schöne Tag wünsch I eu,

Benjamin Gruzman



Präsikolumne

MICHELLE - ASKED IF SHE NEEDED A BYLINE, WAS TOLD 'YES' AND NEVER SENT ANYTHING

Dear VIS members,

I am pretty sure that the midsemester crisis has hit by the time you are reading this. But since so far (approximately 1 month earlier) it hasn't struck me yet, I'm going to talk about the positive things that happened during the first few weeks of the semester.

As always the first week was quite stressful with the Erstitag and the Erstiweekend. Unfortunately I was only able to attend the latter, as I was still on holiday during the Erstitag (upsi). Erstiweekend was great! (Although I wouldn't recommend going there, right after a 16 hour flight.)



In the 2nd week of the semester regular events took place like VIS4U where we got many signups for our committees via our new members tool. If you would like to join a committee, it is not too late! You can still do so on members.vis.ethz.ch. At the ESF we dressed up as angels and distributed drinks at our heavenly bar. We for sure had the best costumes there. One week later at our bytecrash party, we had to dress up again - but this time the theme was cyberpunk and it was all about black clothes and neon makeup.



Last, but definitely not least was VIScon, our largest autumn semester event. It was great! At the hackathon you awesome VIS members developed many cool tools and applications, and at the symposium there were multiple interesting tech related talks and workshops to attend. I particularly enjoyed the food during the event:). A huge thanks to everyone who organised this year's VIScon and to all our amazing helpers!



As every semester, we voted for a new board at our MV. Thank you to everyone for putting your trust in me and my fellow board members! We already bonded with the boards of AMIV, VMP and VSETH and had the usual meetings with the department. Next weekend we will have even more bonding time during our offsite (a 3 day trip where all board members get together and improve VIS) in France. We are hoping that this will prevent us from the midsemester crisis, but I am pretty sure it will hit us all anyways...





At this year's Bachelor Graduation on November 14th by the latest, every single one of us will find ourselves drowning in the huge amount of work we should have already long done but just have not yet found the time to do so. Fortunately, FIGUGEGL will bring us joy on the 28th of November, so come by and join us there!

This has been my first Präsikolumne and I'm sure there is a lot of room for improvement. But we're all here to learn, right?



Hopokolumne

ELMAR - ENJOYS MEETINGS ALMOST AS MUCH AS LECTURES

Hey people, I hope that you had a wonderful semester so far.

Whether you are new at ETH or have been here for some time, chances are that you do not know me yet. My name is Elmar and I will be responsible for university politics within this great student association for this semester. What does that mean? Well, to some degree I am still figuring that out myself but I can already give you an overview over what we are actually doing in the university politics committee:

My semester began with a somewhat turbulent MV (general assembly) that showed me once more how great our democratic processes function at VIS. At the end of the evening, we ended up with a bunch of motivated people that can now officially call themselves "VIS-board".

From then on, I spent a great deal of time getting to know a lot of people. From respresentatives of VSETH, other student associations and our beloved department to actives within VIS, in the board and my amazing committee. Just for all the cool people I've already met in the first few weeks, I warmly recommend to all of you to consider being an active part of VIS!

But of course being the Hopo Präsi is not all fun and games (even though a surprisingly large part of it actually is). In what was probably the most important university political event I attended so far, we joined a demonstration against the increase in tuition fees in Zurich and later in front of the Bundeshaus in Bern. You really have to appreciate the insane effort people from VSETH



as well as from VSS, the swiss wide student association, put into the organization. We managed to send a strong signal to the political representatives and I sincerely hope that this actually might make a difference.

On a much smaller scale, we are working some stuff related to PakETH, a major restructuring of the academic calendar at ETH. I do not want to bore you with details, but if there is something that you always wanted to change about the structure of your studies, now is the time to talk about it! We are grateful for every input we get, so please reach out to me. You find my contact data on the VIS webpage, you can contact us at hopo@vis.ethz.ch or you can try to catch me on my highly frequented path between OVis and the coffee machine.

Until then I hope you enjoy this issue of visionen and I look forward to seeing you around CAB or at one of our amazing events!

Elmar

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LinkedIn: Clearly an HR and Marketing platform

AUTHOR: WANTS TO STAY ANONYMOUS, BECAUSE I JUST GOT A JOB AT A COMPANY LOVING

I really hope this article will be shared among HR and marketing people, and I hope you understand that this title is an insult. I hate LinkedIn. The idea of having a platform you can summarize your skills for finding suitable jobs sounds nice in theory but what a bad platform it became....

I know most people already know how bad LinkedIn is. But because every company is on LinkedIn, you also have to be. You have to keep posting, even if you have nothing to say, simply to meet a quota. If you don't meet the quota, LinkedIn decreases your reach and without the extra exposure you are less visible for said companies. I am not blaming you. Nor am I blaming the recruiter trying to find actual good people for their organization. But it seems to me very disproportional how much more bullshit is on LinkedIn than useful stuff. Maybe it is just me. Perhaps the algorithm hates me in particular.

Let me start with the main feature: finding a job. In theory, you complete your profile with your skills, educational background and apparently also your horoscope (I saw that a few times), so that HR people can stalk you. They actually get notified by LinkedIn, some months prior to your deadline of finishing your studies, so that they can harass you right before your master thesis deadline. I admit, this is exactly how I got my job. I love the place I now work for, and the recruiter

surely knew how to get me. HR and marketing tricks work on me, as they do on anyone. She used the "you are way too smart to fall for such things" trick, which is a very nice trick to get me. But that was one charming recruiter out of 12 that kinda did her job well, while the others failed miserably.

I did work as a data engineer for 2 years, but my interests lie more in the direction of business analyst, which my profile clearly states in the first paragraph! So many people offered me a job as Data or ML engineer. I have 0 experience in ML, besides the one introductory course at ETH. I know, they mostly seek people for their quota. But at least approach me with something like "I read your profile and I know you do not have that much experience in ML, but you might be a fit because..." and not "I read your profile and your Experience in ML is impressive!". In that case, why don't you hire me as a legal advisor? I am equally qualified to be an ML engineer as I am a lawyer. Seriously, 9 out of these 12 people clearly cannot read, and this is coming from a dyslexic person.

I checked their job offers on their sites and saw that they have entry level jobs open for Business Analyst. I replied that I rather apply for these positions. I never knew that being ghosted on LinkedIn by recruiters can hurt as much as

being ghosted on Bumble. A few wrote back, but declined me because I do not have enough experience in this area. But I will be the perfect fit for ML engineer?

Which leads me to the problem of the definition of "Entry Level Job". I understand that you have jobs where you want people to have some experience, but then don't label it as an ENTRY LEVEL. ENTRY LEVEL means first job right after university or FH! Most entry level jobs on LinkedIn I saw have the requirement of 2 to 3 years of experience. That is clearly not ENTRY LEVEL, or am I missing something? But again, most HR people don't spend more than 2 seconds looking at your profile before copy pasting their AI generated crap into your DMs. They probably never even read the definition of Entry Level.

Then there are "Skills". The next weird thing. Some jobs have a requirement for certain skills, which makes sense. You want to be an operation engineer at our company? Well, you should have some knowledge about Domain Name System, Firewalls, M365 and so on. It is fair to say that if you want to be a data analyst you need some knowledge in Python, SQL, and sometimes Market Analysis, depending on what the job is about. Fair, but here are some "skills" that mean clearly nothing to me:

- Problem-Solving: Nah man, I just leave problems as they are. Like all people at the workplace. But seriously, if you do your job, should you not automatically solve the problems you are supposed to solve?
- Lösungsorientiert: It means I focus more on a solution than the issue. Same with the previous point, if I just do my job, I automatically solve problems and create solutions.

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- Teamplayer: Even if I was not, why would I not just put this into my resume. Most jobs are all about working in a team. Feels like a very common "skill".
- Schriftliche Kommunikation (written communication): Yes, I can write. I learned this in school like everybody. I even wrote my name in preschool, call me Wunderkind.
- Analytical Skills: I am pretty sure that 10 HR
 people will give me a different answer if I
 ask them to define "analytical skills". I am
 also pretty sure anyone with an education in
 computer science has that. Hence, it is unnecessary to state this as an additional requirement. But sure, if there is a certification for
 it, sign me up.

The list goes on and on. Yes, I added all of them to my profile. You should too, because everyone has them.

Now to the front page. I understand you have to have visibility of your company on social media. I understand you have to post at least once a week, something. But quantity over quality is clearly the theme here.

ICH MÖCHTE MIT KI POSITIVE VERÄNDERUNGEN BEWIRKEN

Like 500 other people saying the exact same thing. Funny that I had to google your company to actually get a picture of what you are actually doing instead of elaborating it in your post. Of course, it is consulting.



Silent Generation (pre-1946)

Still serving on boards; shaped by duty and discipline

Baby Boomers (1946–1964)

~12% of today's workforce; value stability, loyalty, and legacy

Gen X (1965–1980)

~27%; independent, pragmatic, delivery-focused

Millennial (1981–1996)

~34%; purpose-driven, collaborative, growth-oriented

Gen Z (1997-2012)

~27%; inclusive, tech-native, values transparency

Gen Alpha

(post 2012)

The emerging workforce—digital-first, fast-learning, entrepreneurial

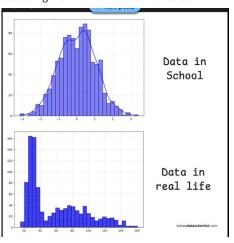
Ah, yes, some random ass post about generation stuff and bla bla. I just see it too much. I saw 32 posts within 10 minutes of scrolling about this topic. Also, very pseudo-scientific. There was no indication or citation of any study to determine these percentages or how the labels got determined. I have a large group of friends that are Gen Z and are clearly not tech-native, otherwise I would not have to help them so much with tech related questions. Why is Gen Alpha entrepreneurial, if they are as of now at most 13 years old? Feels like a creative vs analytical brain post, which was also debunked [1].

Why is everybody discussing politics on a JOB Platform? I like how anybody just shouts their opinion based on feelings and their own experiences. I saw a debate about AHV once, which is a very complex topic. But sure it can be summarized to "Why are old people taking my

well-deserved money" vs "Bruh, I paid for your grandma, so now pay for me." On a fricking JOB platform! A very complex topic that requires so much more facts, far exceeding the character limitation of LinkedIn, to actually make a sensible point. But some people on LinkedIn, which want to look like professionals, just want to behave like 2 children arguing what direction is left. ON A FREAKING JOB PLATFORM!!!!!



Yes, another "simple" framework. I can start collecting them now like Pokémon cards.



I do not know what school you went to, but I also learned about the latter and what maths to apply there.

But the whole point of this post was:

 Be flexible with imperfect setups: Real-world data is never as neat as what you see in school. This is why it is important to have many tools in your toolkit.

Educate stakeholders: Help them understand the value of setting up proper experiments and involving the data team early on to save time and make better decisions.

I'm curious, have you had similar experiences at work? How did you handle them?

Which again is just lots of bla bla bla. What a jump from "data is never as neat" to "hence you need many tools in your toolkit". You seem like the type of person reading articles with headlines as "More people watch Netflix, hence fewer people go to the gym."

But what would such a "tool" even be? What method, function or framework do you actually use in this scenario? What am I supposed to learn from your very insightful post? What was the accrual problem here with this dataset? I can still determine a maximum, a 95 percentile analysis, or construct an estimator here for statistical analysis. Based on your post, I would not hire you as a data analyst, because you are just talk. You are clearly not "Lösungsorientiert" nor do you showcase "analytical skill". You are not even a team player. You are trying to fish for solutions for your own gain and not sharing your insights with us.

6+3 = 9 but so does 5+4. The way you do things isn't always the only way to do them. Respect other people's way of thinking.

I get it, you respect others people's way of thinking in your workplace. Congratulations on having a normal work environment. Did you know 10 - 1 equals 9 as well? Meaning less is often more?

T ogether. E veryone. A chieves. M ore.

Really? Do I even have to comment on this post...

UNSUCCESSFUL **PEOPLE** 島 1 11 A Unproductive -Ø£ 3 000 prace chang ep a "to-do/projec

Much insightful analysis of two very extreme behaviour patterns which every person is at some point in their life. On a day-to-day business, you will do both, criticize and compliment people. That is how life actually works. But what does your company even do? Consulting, of course.

And just below this post....

WAYS TO BE **IRREPLACEABLE** AT WORK

- 1. Smile
- 2. Overprepare.
- 3. Be early to everything.
- 4. Own mistakes & learn from them.
- 5. Do what you say you're going to do.
- 6. Go the extra mile without being asked.
- 7. Embrace change with a growth mindset.

I think I have enough of LinkedIn for today. Been here now for 30 minutes and I already have an overdose of cringe.

Unfortunately, dear reader, get prepared for it. The first person you have to please in a job interview is an HR person, being very much horny about these inspirational quotes or pseudoscientific work-life balance stuff.

Remember, smile, be a team player and "analytical skills".

[1] https://drsarahmckay.com/left-brain-right-brain-myth/

Alles dabei? Wir auch. **Soft- und Hardware**lösungen – mach mit uns den Unterschied. **E**mbedded

Noser Engineering AG Basel | Bern | Luzern | München | Rheintal | Thun | Winterthu noser.com/jobs







PAPRIKA

"DREAMS KNOW NO BOUNDARIES"

29 OCTOBER 2025 Satoshi kon | 2006 | 1H30min | JPN/eng



BEING JOHN MALKOVICH

"A DOORWAY INTO ANOTHER'S MIND. "

12 NOVEMBER 2025 Spike Jonze | 1999 | 1#53min | ENG/eng



ENCOUNTERS AT THE END OF THE WORLD

"HUMANITY'S REFLECTIONS AT EARTH'S EDGE"

26 NOVEMBER 2025 Werner Herzog | 2007 | 1H39min | Eng



UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE

"SILENCE SPEAKS ACROSS ALL SOULS"

10 DECEMBER 2025 M. RANKIN | 2024 | 1H29MIN | FR/ENG



BLADE RUNNER

...WHAT DEFINES A TRUE HUMAN BEING?"

5 NOVEMBER 2025 RIDLEY SCOTT | 1982 | 1H57MIN | ENG/ENG



THE MAN WHO KNEW TO MUCH

..INNOCENCE SHATTERED BY HIDDEN TRUTH"

19 NOVEMBER 2025 Alfred Hitchcock | 1956 | 2h | Eng/eng



MICKEY 17

"IDENTITY IS DISPOSABLE IN COSMIC EXPLORATION"

3 DECEMBER 2025 Bong Joon Ho | 2025 | 2H17min | ENG/ENG



THE ROYAL TENENBAUMS

"GENIUS CANNOT ESCAPE FAMILIAL PAIN"

17 DECEMBER 2025 Wes Anderson | 2001 | 1H50min | ENG/ENG

Connections

Animals

by ni

| TURTLE | CHAMELEON | OWL | PUFFERFISH |
|-----------|------------|---------|------------|
| GOPHER | CAT | CRAB | BOAR |
| GNU | SALAMANDER | PENGUIN | PYTHON |
| PARTRIDGE | STARFISH | PANDA | CAMEL |





Make your own connections and submit them to visionen@vis.ethz.ch.

Too easy or too hard? Complain at nmuendler@ethz.ch.

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808

super computing systems

KI als Co-Autor in der Softwarewelt

PASCAL KAISER, PROJEKT LEITER AI/ML BEI SUPERCOMPUTING SYSTEMS AG,
PASCAL.KAISER@SCS.CH

Braucht es in der Zukunft noch Software-Engineers? Wird KI bald das ganze Coding übernehmen? Über Chancen und Grenzen von künstlicher Intelligenz in der Softwareentwicklung.

Vibe Coding ist momentan in aller Munde. Künstliche Intelligenz generiert fixfertige Computerprogramme aufgrund ungefährer Beschreibungen innert kürzester Zeit. Vieles davon funktioniert. Wenn nicht auf Anhieb dann nach ein paar Iterationen. Das Verwenden von Copilot beim Programmieren ist quasi zum Standard geworden und immer mehr Source Code wird vollständig autonom von agentischer KI geschrieben (und getestet, gereviewed, etc). Man muss sich wohl zwangsläufig fragen, ob es überhaupt noch Sinn macht, Softwareentwicklerin oder Computer Scientist zu werden. Braucht es überhaupt noch Menschen in der Softwareentwicklung? Die Realität ist nicht ganz so simpel.

Wie LLMs Funktionieren

Alle modernen KI-Tools zum Programmieren basieren auf Large Language Models (LLMs).

Das sind Probabilistische Pattern Matcher, die aufgrund eines Kontexts das wahrscheinlichste nächste Wort vorhersagen. Nach Finetuning im QA-Modus sind sie in der Lage, Output zu allen möglichen Fragen zu generieren. Vorausgesetzt, die LLMs haben während dem Lernen genügen Trainingsdaten dazu gesehen. Haben sie das, können sie eine Antwort interpolieren. Generative KI funktioniert ausgezeichnet, wenn die Antwort auf eine Frage «dicht» in den Informationen der Trainingsdaten liegt. Das ist bei vielen Programmieraufgaben der Fall. Aber nicht bei allen.

Was KI nicht kann

Hateine KI zu einer Frage zu wenig Trainingsdaten gesehen, muss sie extrapolieren. Etwas, das auch für uns Menschen schwierig ist. Die heutigen KI-Modelle können das schlecht. Sie geben überzeugend tönende, aber falsche Antworten. Sie beginnen zu halluzinieren. Heutige KI ist nicht geeignet für das Lösen von Problemen, die es in einer ähnlichen Form nicht schon einmal gegeben hat. Software-Projekte haben aber häufig einen Nicht-Standard-Teil. Nämlich das Verstehen und Formulieren von Requirements und das Definieren einer geeigneten System-Architektur unter Berücksichtigung aller



volatilen Komponenten. Ist das einmal getan, ist das Problem automatisch in kleinere Teile zerlegt. Ein solches Teilproblem kann unter Umständen ein Standard-Problem darstellen. Dafür kann KI gut eingesetzt werden.

Was Entwickler*innen können sollten

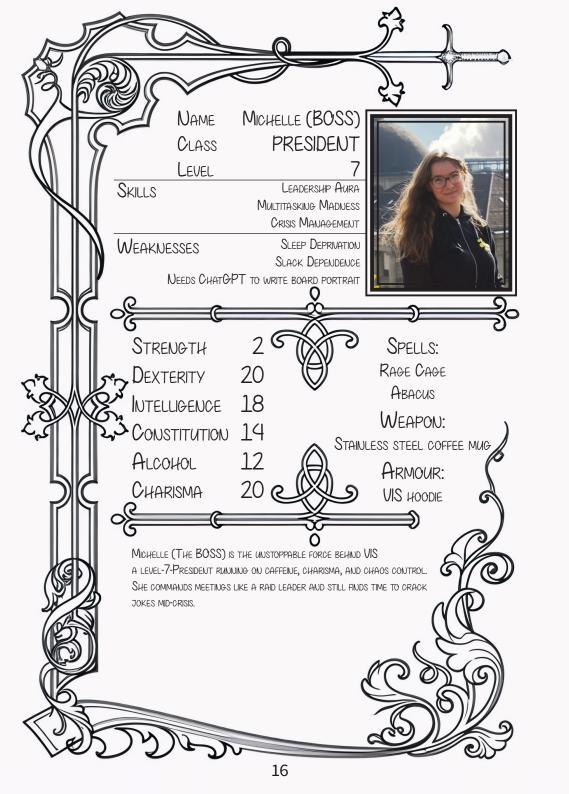
Computer Scientists Softwareentwicklerinnen haben heute einen schwierigeren Start ins Berufsleben als noch bevor es Coding-KI gab. Junior Positionen stehen in direkter Konkurrenz zur generativer KI. Bei beiden geht es darum, Standard-Probleme zu lösen. Menschen sind allerdings lernfähig. KI nicht. Eine KI kann nach Abschluss des Trainings keine neuen Informationen integrieren. Sie kann nicht besser werden. Ein Mensch schon. Ausserdem denken wir Menschen anders als KI. Unser Verstand ist (vermutlich) mehr als ein probabilistischer Pattern Matcher. Es ist das Outof-the-box-thinking, das Extrapolieren, das uns einen Vorteil gegenüber KI verschafft. Und ein Profil spannend macht auf dem Stellenmarkt.

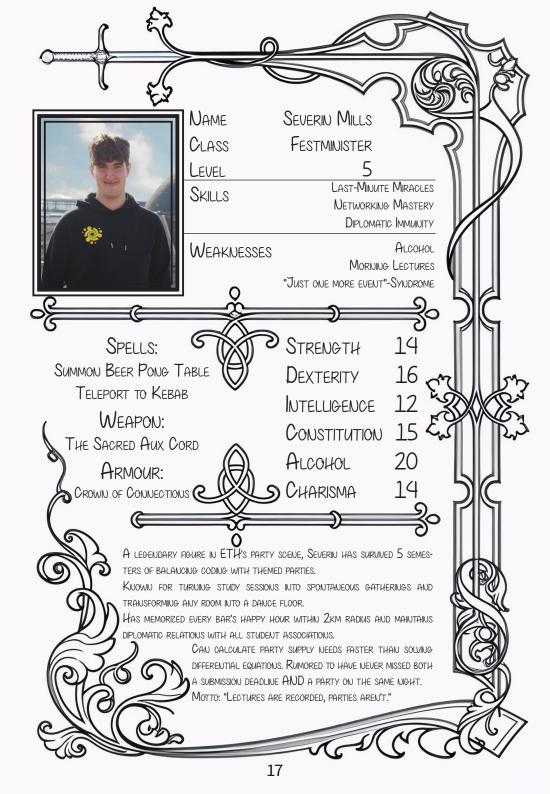
Gleichzeitig sollten wir in der Lage sein, KI dort einzusetzen, wo sie Mehrwerte schafft. In der Softwareentwicklung ist das momentan beim schnellen Prototyping (Vibe Coding), für eine intelligente Autocompletion (Copilot) und für das Lösen von Standard-Problemen (KI-Agents). In anderen Bereichen sind das Risiko und die Kosten von Fehlern zu hoch. Produktivsoftware muss 24/7 laufen. Fehlerfrei. Das ist nicht verhandelbar. Daran wird auch generative KI nichts ändern.

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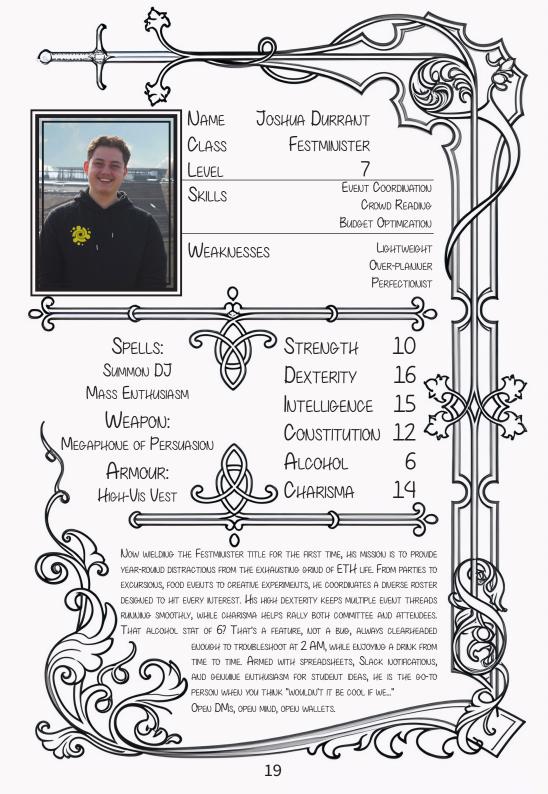
super computing systems

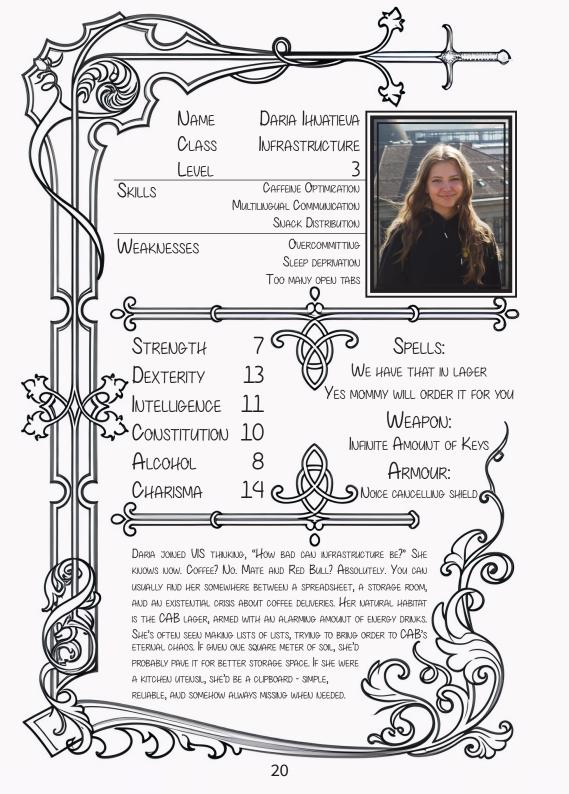
Supercomputing Systems AG ist laufend auf der Suche nach Mitarbeitenden, die selbständig Probleme lösen können und Eigeninitiative haben. Wir bieten auch Praktika und Studienarbeiten an. Wenn Du Dich für SCS interessierst, melde Dich bei Julia Hornstein (jobs@scs.ch) oder schau in unsere Website www.scs.ch/arbeiten-bei-scs/.



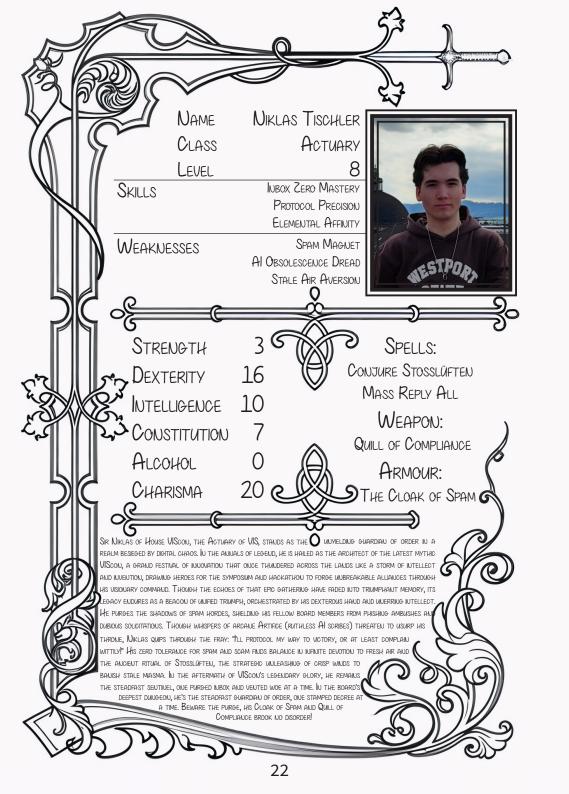




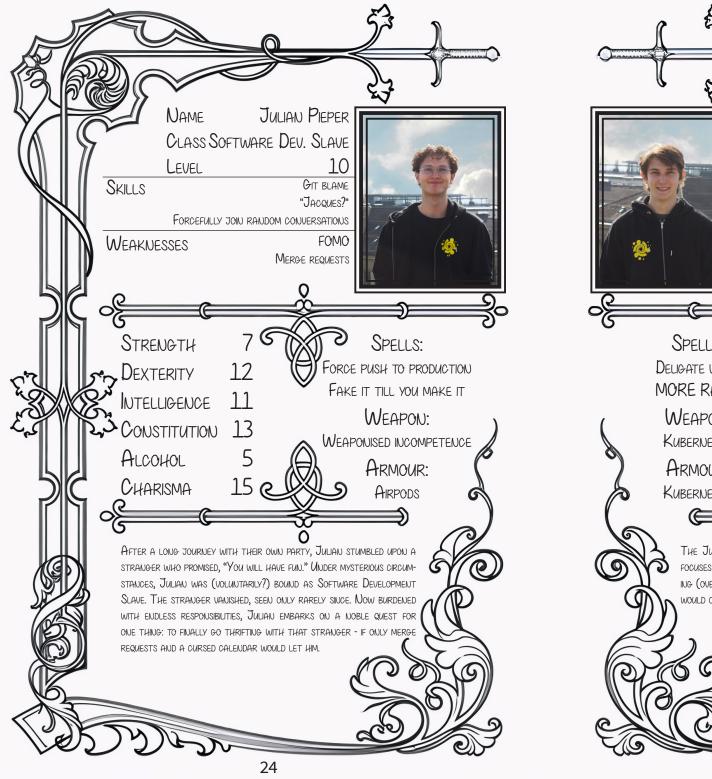




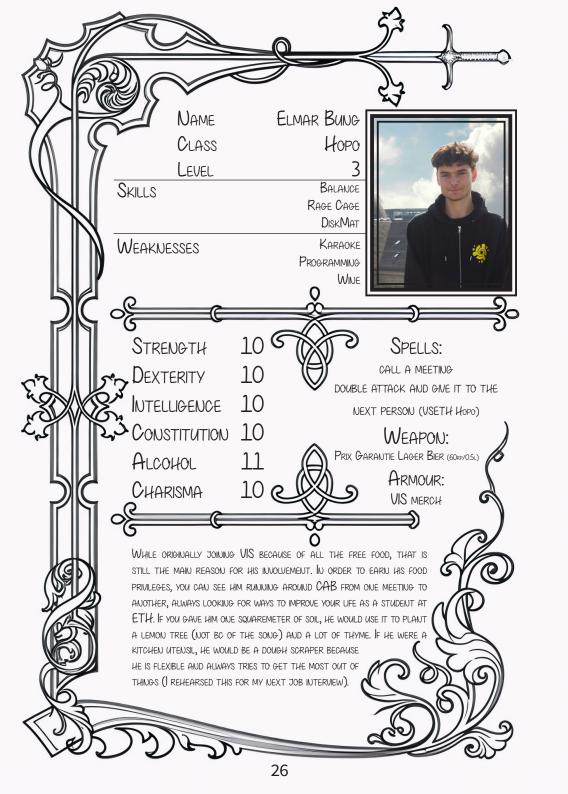


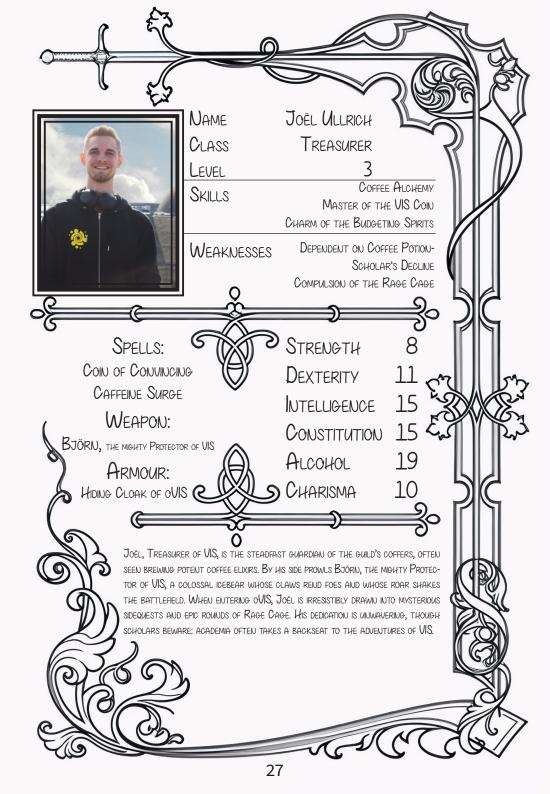












THE SECIAS CORPUS: THE ALMANDINE TAPE

I wonder what time it is. How long have I been tossing and turning? Finally, I open my eyes. Moonlight shines through the half-open blinds, bright enough to reveal my clock's face. 4:30 a.m. Since I got a high grade on my exercises, I should be okay. Yet here I am, lying on a pillow that's too warm, in a room that's too bright, with a dull headache throbbing behind my temples.

My mind keeps circling back to everything I haven't done. Subjects I've been ignoring, half-finished assignments, appointments I need to schedule.... There's no point in trying to sleep now, and a pill would only leave me groggy during the oral exam. For now, I'll just do whatever I can to feel less like shit. I take a long, hot shower after which I take my time with my hair and skincare routine. After five minutes of staring into my closet, I pick out clothes that match my grandmother's jewelry. Ever since she died, I've worn it to every test, like a lucky charm. Each earring holds a smooth oval almandine, framed by a thin rim of gold, while the necklace has the same deep blood red stone, carried by a golden chain. Mascara is the final touch, my last line of defense against crying. Even if the exam goes badly, at least I'll look fine afterwards. At the door, I rummage through my backpack. Purse, iPad, and most importantly, my Legi. I glance at my mother's bedroom. She asked me to wake her up before I left, but I don't.

At 7:30 a.m., I arrive at campus Hönggerberg, an hour and a half early for the exam. Plenty of time to find the room, grab a coffee and maybe relax. I head into HIL and go straight for the elevator. Which floor was it again? I open myStudies on my phone and check. H 37.1, no idea where that is. I've only ever had lectures on the lower floors. The elevator doors slide open. I step inside and press the button. Instead of going up, it plunges downwards to floor A. The doors open to a middle-aged man with a utility cart stacked with books. A strange scent follows him in, fading before I can place it. He wheels the cart in and gives me a friendly nod. I nod back, trying to be polite. Most likely a professor I haven't seen before. The elevator doesn't move. I look at the panel, somehow my floor is no longer lit. I press H again, while the professor selects G and the elevator's gears kick into motion.

"Do you have an oral exam on floor H as well?"

Taken aback by the sudden question, I answer before the silence stretches for too long.

..Yes. I do."

He tilts his head down. "I see."

There's a hint of pity in his tone, though it feels hollow. Baffled, I take a peek at him. A cordial smile is plastered across his face, or rather, an attempt at one.

"It's the one for geodetic surveying, isn't it? I saw a crying student leave the room next to my office earlier."

That's my exam, yes, and I have heard it's difficult, but someone left crying? What am I supposed to say to that?

"But you seem confident. So composed. I'm sure you'll be fine."
I'm not so sure about that anymore.

"I'm so sorry if I'm scaring you," he continues. "I just hate to see it happen again, year after year. Don't take it too hard if it doesn't go so well. Many fail the first time. It doesn't help that he keeps prodding at the same topic until you can't answer anymore."

"That's...good to know."

The elevator slows down as we reach the professor's floor. This ride feels longer than it should. The professor meets my eyes, his smile widens as he leans a little closer.

"Good luck on your exam."

Despite the smile, his tone's more mocking than kind. As he's leaving, it hits me. His expression. His mouth smiled, but his eyes didn't. They stayed unchanged, unmoving, no matter what. No wonder he felt so uncanny. The elevator gets moving again and breaks my strange train of thought. Forget it. I don't have time to dwell on this. Am I prepared enough? How does the fault in a polygon train happen again?

The elevator reaches my floor. I step out, relieved to leave behind what might've been the worst elevator ride of my life. I'll check my notes once I've found the room. One thing at a time! The morning sun spills through the large terrace window, reflecting off the old tarp-covered piano and submerging the hallway in a pale gold light. I look at the clock hanging above the piano. 7:45 a.m. No need to hurry. A plaque on the wall reads H 57.2 Chair of Landscape Architecture. I must be at the far end of the south wing. Walking down the hallway, I leave the winter sun's gentle warmth behind. The room numbers get smaller, one by one. Brown carpet, brown closets, brown lockers, white walls, all

covered under white fluorescent light, blending into the same dull palette. Only the odd poster for a project or exhibit breaks the monotony. At the end of the corridor, a glass door leads into the central corridor that links both wings. The three elevators, the main stairway and a path to the north wing are locked away behind a glass wall. Has this always been here? I pass the toilets, scanning the central corridor's rooms, 38.2... 38.1. Almost there.

Leaving the midsection, I push through a different glass door that leads to the left side of the south wing. The first room is 41.1. That can't be right. Turning back, I notice a long plaque. D-SECIAS, Department of Systemic Environmental Computational Interdisciplinary Applied Sciences. I read it again. That's a long name for a department and why haven't I heard of it before? I follow the hallway to its end, but there's no 37.1. Across the hall stands the elevator I arrived in. Maybe the room's in the north wing instead. Back in the central corridor, I try the glass door leading to the north wing, but it's locked. Why would it be locked at this hour? The brown door beside it at least opens. It leads into a narrow side corridor linking the two wings, but another glass wall blocks access to the stairs and elevators. I walk through the short north wing, checking each number twice. Still no 37.1. No open doors, no typing, no voices, only the hum of fluorescent lights and their occasional flicker.

I open the campus map on my phone, but it won't load, no matter how many times I refresh. My phone has no Wi-Fi or reception. It's a brand-new iPhone 6s. What's the problem? Just one more hour until the exam. Coffee and a quiet place to repeat a few derivatives are all I want right now. Back in the central corridor, I try the door to the elevators and stairs again, but no luck. Perfect. Back to where I started. At the south wing's elevators, I press the button. Minutes pass, every display stays stuck on A. Fine, I'll take the stairs instead. On my way, I pass the old piano. Its tarp is gone. This entrance to the stairs is also locked. Just like the other. I turn back, the elevators stay frozen in place. What am I supposed to do now? Less than an hour before the exam, trapped on floor H and unable to find the room or a person. Is it because it's exam session?

Each round through the halls feels longer and longer. Even the bathrooms are empty, no cleaning staff in sight. Back in the north wing, a clock above room 29.1 catches my attention. 8:25 am. Forget about getting coffee, I need to go over my summary again, but how can I focus, when I still don't know where my exam room is? A faint sound breaks the silence. Small and sudden. I think it came from room 29.1. Relieved, I knock, surely they can tell me where 37.1 is. There are footsteps inside, but the door doesn't budge. I knock again.

"Hello?"

No reply, so I push down the handle cautiously. Locked, of course. No view inside except a narrow window above the door. I glance up, then at a chair nearby. That's a stupid idea. I check my phone again, still no Wi-Fi or reception. I'll look ridiculous. What if someone shows up-

I flinch as something slams against the wall inside. Okay. What's going on? I drag the chair to the door and climb up. The metal creaks under my weight. Even on the chair, I'm not tall enough to see, so I jump. For split second, I see the inside. Empty. I land, jump again. No furniture, only papers scattered everywhere. Jumping again. Some pages are smeared with dark ink, thick and uneven. The wild pattern looks like blood splatter. Why would there be a room like this? Maybe the noise came from room 29.2 instead.

Climbing down, I knock on 29.2. More noises, louder this time, a wet squelching thud.

"Hello? Is anyone there?"

No answer. This is absurd. I drag the chair over and climb up again, feeling ridiculous. Then I jump. This room's different. A table, two chairs facing each other, but one tipped over. I hear it again. The same dull, wet thud again. It's coming from 29.3. Grabbing the chair, I hurry to the next door. Somehow the hallway feels emptier than before.

"Hello?"

I'm not even surprised anymore. I climb up and jump. An office, finally something normal. Shelves, plants, a desk, an office chair. I jump again, no person in sight.

Again. There's something on the table, a rope.

Again. The end is frayed, as if torn apart.

Again. It trails off the desk's edge.

Again. I can't see what it leads to.

Again-

It's gone.

I lose my balance. My stomach drops, pulling the rest of me down.

Somehow, I land on my feet. I knock on the door. Someone knocks back. I stumble backward, too stunned to breathe. Is this a joke? Then I notice it. It's faint, off-key notes drifting through the corridor. The piano in the southern wing. Finally! Someone's here. I run, down the northern hallway, through the connecting door, into the central section. The piano grows louder, soft notes twisting into a deafening crescendo. As I enter the south wing, I see it.

37.1.

I freeze. No way I missed that before. My phone vibrates. I press the home button. Nothing. I press again. This time, it flickers to life.

8:55 a.m.

Amidst the wailing piano, duetting with something I can't identify, I try to suppress the rising feeling of doom. None of it makes sense. It can't be right. But maybe the professor's already inside. Maybe it's fine to just go in. Everything will be okay. A sliver of hope outweighs any resemblance of logic. Ignoring the unpleasant symphony of a concert I didn't ask for, the strange rooms I left behind and the bright red light, flooding the corridor like a sunset bleeding through glass. My hand grips the ice-cold door handle.

It opens.

Silence.

The piano has stopped.

A table, two chairs facing each other, an exact copy of room 29.2. Devoid of anyone.

But the larger shadow, the one standing long and still in the red glow, tells a different story.

"You're late."

EaST

Solution to Connections

Animals

PROGRAMMING LANGUAGE
CAMEL, CRAB, GOPHER, STARFISH

UNIX
CHAMELEON, GNU, PENGUIN, PUFFERFISH

PYTHON (LIBRARIES)
CAT, PANDA, PYTHON, TURTLE

O'REILLY BESTSELLER
BOAR, OWL, PARTRIDGE, SALAMANDER



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