

The Crazy Helpdesk
and their brave users



or how to fall in love with a computer

@n IT novel

by Tannessen and the people of MOU XII

The Crazy HelpDesk

for my users ;-)

'Licence Agreement'

☞ The writer of this manual has worked in many Helpdesks, has answered calls from many thousands of users, had dozens of colleagues, has worked as and with Email Administrators, Webmasters, Programmers, Teachers, Support Staff. Hence any resemblance with existing persons is a pure and well meant coincidence, as only kind things can be said about them. ☞

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Switch on



Press the button
to turn
the computer on

After you've pushed the button your personal computer will use his microprocessor to start a programme, the BIOS, the basic input/output system, to *boot* and load his *operating system*.

Don't let that worry you. The OS, the operating system, is the system which operates the computer, like the motor does a car. To express it mildly. One of those OS is *Windows*. Another one is called *Linux*.

The PC will thus boot, slowly, slowly, feeling important, wanting to convey this feeling to you.

Then, once the operating system is finally loaded, you can log on, by typing your username and password, and you'll see the Desktop appear and be ready to use the *peripherals* like the printer, mouse, keyboard and run *application programmes* like Word, Excel, Access, Outlook, Paint Shop Pro and trillions of others.



When a user¹ gets on my nerves, because I find him too slow, not up to date or of an older version, I always try to imagine what would happen if instead of dealing with computers I'd have to knit or do something like carve gems or iron, be a goldsmith or a jeweller, or work in mines.

Dreadful. Instead of using PC's I'd have to use knitting needles, and I'd have to have some manual gift. I imagine my hands holding files (metal, not logical ones) or twist drills, hot, sticky, cramped, all red even in the effort to succeed. I'd be in tears. Imagine my weak hand holding a heavy hammer, I just couldn't even lift it and would hit my own thumb all the time. Typing on a keyboard or devising complicated formulas suits me better.

I'd have to call the Iron or Gold Helpdesk. Moreover, this sort of craftsmanship would require patience, and of this kind of patience I have none.

All the beautiful gems would come to nothing. Diamonds, gold, silver, pearls, opals, sapphire, emeralds, rubies, topaz, would never join to become necklaces, rings, brooches, pendants or earrings.

Each of us has a gift of his own. There are star cooks, sensei's in martial arts, pilots for trains, planes and ships, doctors, chemists, biologists, physicians, painters, musicians, poets, singers, mothers, teachers, jewellers, iron workers, architects and informaticians. Everyone has learned a craft, has acquired experience in it and is doing it well. Fortunately we don't have to know all that on top of our own job. But for the computers.

Almost everyone nowadays has to use a computer in one way or the other. We're dealing with computers just as Monsieur Jourdain² was speaking in prose without knowing it. But this means doing two jobs. Doing two jobs at the same time is a lot to ask, and knowing all about computers takes a lot of time.

People are astonished to find us so gifted for our job, but that's because it's our job, and we are doing it all day long. The big difference with computers is that almost everyone who works in an office has to use them all the time, whereas we in our job do not need to write long reports, or devise law, nor do we have to translate or take steno or organise our bosses agenda or do one of all the many other office jobs you can imagine. But God help those who are not as good with computers as they are for their own job.

So those people can turn to the Computer Helpdesk for help. The Helpdesk is there for

¹ The Glossary at the end of the book explains the term

² Moliere's - The Bourgeois Gentleman

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all people who do not have eight hours a day to know Computers from A to Z. The Helpdesk has to see that their users get working computers, well flowing programmes, all of which will allow them to work more quickly, efficiently and with less errors.

Now I can hear you laugh with some spite and you will say that this is not the case at all and that PC's are not always working, that Email falls down several times a week and is often slower than the postman. You are going to say that computer programmes instead of helping you are a permanent source of trouble and seem to do everything in their power to keep you from working.

You are going to tell me that basic things like the logon to your PC in the morning take an hour, and that even to type a simple letter in Word you must call the Helpdesk because you get an error message before you have even started to type.

Carl Sagan says that we live in a society exquisitely dependent on science and technology, in which hardly anyone knows anything about science and technology. Computers claim to make peoples lives easier but in many ways they rather poison them. One day you will come and hang us computer people like the French peasantry did with their aristocrats.

At this point, I may have joined the side of the enemy. Things have gotten out of hand. I believed that computers were going to help you, now I sometimes have the impression we have to protect you from them. As well as we can.

Because even the Computer Helpdesk has a limit, which might not be passed, a situation against which it is helpless, which it can't handle, and that is Chaos.

This is the story about the day Chaos came and the strange events that followed its apparition.

You call us IT people magicians sometimes; at least this has been said to me and my colleagues quite a lot. And since we are magicians, you believe we can convey our knowledge to you just by magic, just by some formula. You do not believe us when we say we can't, and suspect us of being stingy. Wanting to keep all this for ourselves. You say:

“Magician! How do you do it! Tell us how. We're sure you could, if you only would.”

But we were plain sure we couldn't just give you our knack with computers just by chanting some formula. But when chaos went really bad, and when we were really desperate too, when we felt we really could need some magic ourselves, we decided to try.

“Magician! How do you do it?”

Ok. You've asked for it. I don't know about the magic, but this is how we do it.

The book also strives to contain many of the most fashionable FAQs, but those change of course. A specific command doing the same thing will be slightly or very different from one version of the same software to the other. It changes all the time. This might make it a bit of a one night stand, but we hope to leave you with the spirit and wish that the underlying principles might stay with you.

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Most of it is easy, but if you don't understand something in this manual don't even try. If you see an apparently complicated formula or script then don't worry. Take it 'automagically'. Sit back, don't do anything, RELAX.

The %Environnement%

There was once a big, powerful computer, very beautiful, and his pretty little wife, very mighty too. They were reigning over a big park of PC's and were very, very happy. Their only secret sorrow was ..

Bohatia, the country we are living in, is rather small. There only 150.000 inhabitants or so. Small but rich. Of course. Imagine something like San Marino, Liechtenstein or Malta. Not quite as small as San Marino, not quite as big as Malta. Though it is neither of those. Ah you can Search Reader, all over your Hard and Floppy disks, CD's or DVD's, google it up, we just cannot let you find out.



On a map, the country is more difficult to find than a file in the Hidden Folders of Windows XP. It lies at a deeper level than even the sombre OLKxxx folder where Outlook disposes an attachment you open from within an email message. You may know about Bohatia, but you won't know you know.

It is quite a pretty country, with a landscape of hills and a curious formation of a multitude of grey rocks and high mountains at its borders. The rocks are elegant, sort of well-designed, and there are lots of rivers and little lakes and one quite big one. Contemporary technology and architecture have made it up to date and fit for our modern world. Bridges large and small, tunnels cutting through the rocks, tiny landing stages and piers at their feet make it easy to walk around in. With all those rocks and hills and the country being small there is not so much space left for living. It was advocated by the authorities not to spend too much money on cars and so people drive around in small electric vehicles and motorcycles, bicycles, roller skates, go carts, skateboards or go by foot. Thus traffic here was a dream for those of us who came from big cities like Paris, Buenos Aires, New York, Sidney or Tokyo.

All in all it is a really pretty little country; but maybe the weather is not too good.

Indeed for those who come from the South it rains a bit too much, and because of the rivers and ponds, there is a lot of mist. Misty days in Bohatia are common. One could say it was a country where one could not see quite through things most of the time.

Was this, like in some programmes, '*by Design*'?

Bohatia is rich and modern, equipped with ADSL and solar heating and windmills producing electricity, but it is also very old fashioned in some of its ways, because it is a Principality. Indeed, we have a Prince. Prince Martin. He is quite young too, and very

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good looking and still not married, so that the girls can dream. His father, Prince Justin, has given the job over to him.

Bohatia's inhabitants come from many countries, joined in one single task: Work. We're immigrants, and indeed there are almost no natives in Bohatia except those few kids which have been born there since its 'creation' not very long ago. The few people who were already living there when we all came are a rather small, well-built and proud folk. It is a few thousands of them only, and their means of living is mostly of two kinds. One half is keeping wilds Goats. You could see them wandering around everywhere. The other half are Goldsmiths. Of course there was remaining minority which took care of the needs of daily life. Like bakers and doctors and librarians and so. Since there were not enough people to do all of those jobs, most Bohatians had two or even three of them.

Obviously those few natives considered themselves sort of invaded, but they took it well. It was a tolerant folk who still believed in honesty and would still reward good deeds.

Of the older inhabitants, and the country's history, not much is known. A people, who lived there up to the 14th century, but then mysteriously disappeared. No one knew where they come from, no one knew where they left to. There were only speculations. Archaeologists have searched and dug, but did not find out much about them, no old dwellings, no pictures, no graves... (Were they immortal maybe and have never died?) From the few findings, it seems that this old folk worked on gold and metal, and precious gems. They must have been making a quite impressive good living out of the gold and the gems that had once been here. Of the gold nothing seems to remain now, even if from time to time someone comes looking for it. At any rate the more ancient populace disappeared, probably together along with the last gem and gold nugget.

One thing we can be sure of: they liked to drink, juggling by the rather huge quantity of finely wrought goblets of all kinds that were found. Of those, there were many, so many that they were sold at quite cheap prices, and so I have one of them standing in my living room.

The old people left, and the new folk or the few of their later offspring resorted to goat keeping or jewellery. Prince Justin's father had called big mining companies to import their raw jewels to Bohatia. Jewels were now brought in from all over the world and transformed and assembled into necklaces, bracelets, earrings of a rare beauty. Those were jewels for the very rich ones only, to expensive even for our rather good salary.

But the 'White Gold', as the local goat cheese was called, was excellent too, and easy to afford. The friendly goats producing it were walking relatively freely around, and sometimes we could see one or two of them wandering by our offices.

Tales or rather now almost legends circulated affectionately among us new ones, like some thought the old people were still there, living sort of invisible among us, or having retreated into the grounds, into the depths of the caverns and mountains which surrounded Bohatia. Every now and then someone claimed to have seen one of them,

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and even if it was a joke, the descriptions were strikingly similar: Small but strongly build men, with serious faces, and always a beard.

Of course, even those who had claimed to have had a glimpse of one of this folk, joked about this themselves, maybe because they hadn't wanted to believe their own eyes, maybe because they had no wish to be held for slightly deranged.

When you fly over Bohatia you will perceive the rocks and mountains of course, and the lakes, but you'll also see a lot of windows, in which the rocky landscape seems mirrored endlessly. This is where we work. It is the House.

The House

The House is a large place, it could be government or finance, research or profit, but in fact it's rather all of this. It could be any large organisation, your place even, if it's a fairly large place.

But the name of the place too must remain secret all along this booklet, because we're not allowed to talk or write about it in public without official permission. So let's just call it 'The House'. Let's say it's the House of Science. And if ever you guessed its name right then we would kindly ask you, the reader, to remain silent and share the secret with us.

Because I do not wish to be harsh on my House, I only wish to convey its magic to you. So should you find out, never tell, not even to your best friend, otherwise the magic will stop working. And then the House sure is full of secrets.

The House is huge, extending over several hundreds of meters up and down the mountains and along the river and around the lake. It's made out of at least twenty buildings, joined by bridges mainly, but also just leaning against each other.

The paths which join the buildings seem in perpetual movement. Sometimes one of them is just closed and one has to take a large roundabout route to reach his usual place, sometimes one of them opens unexpectedly and we can then cross to another building with more ease.

It is a labyrinth, three dimensional, and sometimes when you had to go to what seemed only one floor up you had to for instance first go south and walk along a long corridor, then turn west, walk a few meters, take an elevator down to the ground floor, walk another two hundred meters, take a stair flight up, turn east, walk some hundred paces, take an elevator up (if it was working), turn north, take a walk again, then turn around corner again and you were finally in the office just above yours.

Every so often there was no direct entrance to a building and you could only reach it by accessing it through still some other building, three or more afar.

One had to know shortcuts. If one knew them, one could spare hours of time. As you will if you know how to 'Add a Network Place' in 'My Computer' of Windows XP. In this labyrinth shortcuts were as precious to know as the highest officials. Almost as good as to have a blood link to them. Things would just go faster if you knew them. Shortcuts gave you as much power as if you were one of them. Shortcuts were kept secret, you would share them only with your most precious colleagues, and more, if they became to well know, they would be inevitably closed by security.

If you knew how to 'Add a Network Place'

you could reach a faraway destination, deeply nested at the bottom of a folder, in just one click instead of maybe fifteen.

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The House was a maze, and visitors were never just explained the way in and out, they were shown in and out, always accompanied. For instance a set of just three offices lay in a corridor behind the main conference room of the House, the one which was shown on TV and where the greatest of visitors were made to talk. To find those offices one had to climb the stairs up to the visitors balcony, then find some exit/entrance somewhere, go through it, turn left, and then right, and there were the three offices. With just ordinary personnel there, that had nothing to do with the organisation of the conference room. No one ever had managed to find them without help. Even great and wise people, like Buddhist monks get lost here, and need help to find their way back.

The Minotaur, for sure, must be lurking about the place, though if someone had already met him, it was in disguise. Maybe he dressed up as some data eating virus or so.

In fact the House is beautiful, all made of glass, a single Window made of thousands, including elevators, doors, ceilings. We were living in a Window.

However if you haven't been at the House or Bohatia yourself, you can never have seen a picture or film of it, because the architect had drawn up a contract to keep all reproduction rights for himself. Without his permissions no one could take a picture of it nor film it. This was typical of the place.

The House also had a secret room. Wild theories ran about a picture there, a fresco. One could have a glimpse of it from the outside, through the glass, but from there one couldn't really make it out. Whatever this picture represented was only a subject of speculation. No one but very high 'hierarchy' was allowed to see it, and they kept silent about it. Of course we all knew where it was, but before its entrance sat a guard, always the same; and since he seemed quite alert one had the impression of great danger should he approach the chamber uninvited.

The House is almost self-sufficient. It hosts several banks, a post office, two hairdressers, six newspaper shops, with magazines and books from the whole outside world, a laundry, a not so small supermarket with excellent products from all our countries, over a hundred or more, I don't remember suddenly, how many exactly, a souvenirs shop, for the visitors, with quite tasty items, a drugstore, a fitness centre with qualified personnel, where one could have massages, take Yoga and Karate courses, a swimming pool, a medical centre, and of course big and small canteens and even bars (lot's of them), which were dealt out all over the place, so that you could pop into one just by turning a corner, and not knowing about it before.

You can find a basic plan of the House in the *Glossary* at the end of the manual.

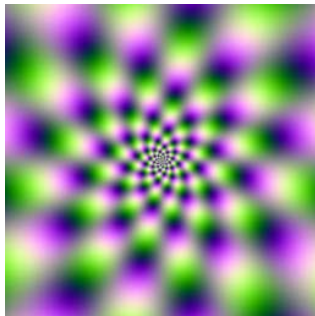
You will now believe that whole Bohatia is made up of the House, but let's rather say whole Bohatia was making a living in or of the House. As mentioned just before, next to goat keepers and goldsmiths Bohatia also has bakers, butchers, supermarkets, fashion shops and movie houses, schools, nurseries, hospitals, drugstores, postmen and fire wear men. Moreover all sorts of lobbies are circling around the House like planets around a sun. All of them were doing well, a Bohatian postmen has more then the highest average of salaries in other civilized countries.

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It was a cool life, we worked hard, and there was no astonishment, nothing unforeseen. Until the day chaos came. At least it came for MOU XII.

The day when chaos came

Chaos came in the form re-organisation: a move, a split and remerge of three of the Main Organisational Units, MOU's as the House affectionately calls them. We had twenty-four of them at the House (This number can change later, don't even wonder). The split and move had been decided in order to meet the challenges of modern science and was proclaimed to start in two weeks. Enthusiasm is a good thing; however, considering what followed, the decision obviously lacked preparation and organisation, and had been done in too much haste. Because from the first day on, we found ourselves caught in a kind of fractal, a Mandelbrot or Julia set, which soon began to look like a never ending story.



Basically, if only fractals were basic, you would think that a fractal is a beautiful thing. But it is not, when you live in one. It is dreadful.

Basically, a fractal is any pattern that reveals greater complexity as it is enlarged. A fractal is a rough or fragmented geometric shape that can be subdivided in parts, each of which is (at least approximately) a reduced-size copy of the whole. Alan Beck explains that when we look very closely at patterns that are Euclidean, the shapes look more and more like straight lines, but that when you look at a fractal up close you see more

and more details³. The moment you think you have come to the bottom unit, to the last of the smallest structure needed, you would discover another. It is indeed a never ending story.

As it happened, with the split, new services, WG's, as we call them, for *Workgroups*, had been created, but without people in it. New services had been created but had yet no names. Nor had they been delimited in any way. What now belonged to MOU old and to MOU new? When people where asked to what MOU they now belonged many of them couldn't say. The problem was that a certain MOU X had been split into two. The two parts had then been remerged in two new MOU's, new MOU XI and new MOU XII. One other MOU, MOU VII had been split into two also, and was to be distributed half over new MOU XI and half over new MOU XII. However, the previous MOU X was to become new MOU XI. The previous MOU XI was to become the new MOU XII. And the old MOU XII would now be new MOU VII.

Got it? No? Don't worry, no one did. Nor did anyone know what to do now. The whole

³ <http://www.math.com/students/wonders/fractals.html>

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new staff felt misplaced and at loss. People came and told me how much they feared the consequences of the incomprehensible random made split. You may know of what I am talking, this kind of reorganisation might have happened to you too.

Had they at least used the random formula in Excel, it would have been understandable in at least some way. Like when one opens Excel and then choose 'Insert - Function - Rand()' and one obtains something at least: a number. But do try to press F9 on the same sheet and you will see it change forever.

Maybe the result was more of a *circular reference*, like when one's cursor slid, and added a number to its own sum.

	A
1	333
2	444
3	=A1+A2+A3

One got blocked in one's own scheme.

Or it seemed as when one wants to switch the content of two variables in programming, and put x into y and y into x. Like if you want to switch the contents of a glass filled with wine with another filled with milk. One would need a third glass or variable, like z, but z hadn't been provided for.

The IT Helpdesk had just been parted or put together in the same way. If the Helpdesk didn't know at least half of the users, they didn't, at least partly, know each other very well either. They knew each others names, because they were informaticians, but not much more. Two weeks ago they had gotten a letter informing them that they were to work in the IT-Helpdesk of MOU XII from then on. Good to know.

Merely Nicolas, Leo and Lutgarde, and her only up to recently, had been at MOU XII from the start. Johanna, Maurice and Hildegard came from old MOU XIII, Alexandra and Sven from old MOU VII, the remaining part came from each a different of the twenty-two MOU's of the House. Alone Myra was freshly hired; she had arrived some days before the split.

They felt at loss. What were they to do, if they were to give support under such circumstances, not even knowing where they stood themselves, in all of this?

And if this was not enough they found themselves standing before yet another challenge: all those users had to be given several new programmes. The general configuration of Windows XP had to be revised. An Update from the MS Office programmes, Excel, Word and Outlook had to be downloaded and installed. The users had to be familiarised with the versions of the in-House made application programmes Kaleidoscope and Elements 112. There would be a lot for them to do in the following months.

The new Helpdesk

Indeed, the IT team found themselves thrown together like if they had been dices. The morning after the split the newborn team decided to have a meeting and sat down at a symbolic round table with the intent to describe themselves to the others as well as possible under the circumstances, and also to decide upon what each of them would be doing.

They counted each other and found they were ten. Six women. Four men.

Johanna spoke first. “Call me Jo,” she said. She looked Finnish and was Finnish. Her most distinctive feature was a long blond braid, falling to mid waist. She was somewhere around forty, slender to the extreme, wore high heels that made her tall and was dressed with a slightly outrageous elegance. She exuded an aura of intense, warrior-like energy. After a long speech she said she felt she was here to organise the battlefield, adding a slightly grim touch to the word, but to reassure them she added she had done this before. “The two persons who gave the support for the application programmes Kaleidoscope and Elements 112 have been moved to another MOU. I have been taking care of the development and follow-up and maintenance of applications programmes for years. I would like to continue to do so.”

Everyone agreed and it was decided she should go on with it. Everyone also secretly decided that she should be their virtual leader. She seemed bossy in a nice way; one felt she cared about organising people and people themselves.

‘Jo’ informed them that they would have 777 users and their programmes to take care of. Windows, Microsoft Office with Word, Excel, Access, Outlook and all the other stuff plus ten tailor-made programmes. She didn’t say were she had gotten that information from. She kept on talking for some time, with a touch of passion.

To her right sat **Maurice**, “call me Momo and I kill you.” He appeared to be French, somewhat close to forty, impressively tall, and had light brown eyes with golden specks and smooth dark blond hair. He carried a slight limp with a touch of majesty. With his fine features, somehow elusive elegance and presence he cut quite a fetching figure, so that his limp was soon forgotten. Promptly it was decided that he was to take care of the servers and the park of PC’s in general. This made him the MOUSA, which stands for ‘Main Organisation Unit’s System Administrator’.

Just as Johanna hadn’t actually said she was Finnish, Maurice didn’t say he was French, none of the others would declare their nationality. This was just something the people of the House knew, out of an every day habit.

As already mentioned, Maurice and Johanna knew each other from before. One felt a great complicity between them, the kind of which comes from having been best enemies for years. Both were diplomats, but of a very different kind.

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Alexandra came next. She was Slovene. Rather tiny, very blonde, stub-nosed with blue eyes. "Call me Lexi," she said, and "I have been installing computer and printers for ages. No hard disk, no toner, no modem can resist me." She was not beautiful, but pretty in a puzzling way, with an Oracle quality about her. Men might be calling her just to see her, probably so that she could tell them their future. She wore comfortable but visibly expensive clothes. Armani jeans, a Kenzo T-Shirt and collar tight scarf. She had certainly spent a least an hour to apply her make-up and style her hair. One just couldn't imagine her carrying heavy PC's around, but ok if she said so. Lexi and the boy to her right were obviously just stepping into the first half of their thirty years. And now it was this boy's turn:

"And I have done this with her, at MOU VII" said **Sven**. He was Swede, blond too, tanned and had a set of sparkling blue eyes. He was not beautiful, but very good looking. It was as if he wanted to be good looking mainly to do others (like girls) a favour, and not even to take advantage of it but just as to be nice. This could be his main trait: he was nice. But the nice in him was disguised in sexy. Sven was sexy, very much so, but in a reassuring way. Just as if to be nice. The girls here would call him a lot too, if only for that.

Sven and Lexi made a pair. They looked alike, moved alike, they were like twins. There was an obvious complicity between them, if of a different kind than the one between Maurice and Johanna. Installing computers? Certainly this was something very much needed. It was decided within a minute that they would continue doing it together at MOU XII too.

Nicolas, 'call me Nico', a cute Spaniard, presented himself as a programmer. "I know C, C++, Java and JavaScript, Visual Basic, all of the Microsoft Office VBA and how to link all this with Oracle, so that I can make nice relational databases," he said. Of medium height, he had a dark close fitting moustache and was somewhat around thirty-five. He had dreamy eyes, like if he was far away in his thoughts. It was decided he would go on programming, and help the users with their workflow by giving them nice macros and other application programmes. They then all turned to look at Nico's right, at a man maybe some four years older.

Leo, call me Leonardo, he said, which was meant to be a joke, because his name was really only Leo. He was the only one who said his nationality aloud: "Sono Italiano". He was somewhat taller than the average Italian, had a high forehead, jet black hair and beautiful hands, elegant, like those of a piano player or rather painter. He had an inborn elegance, feline like movements and was tastefully dressed. The whole picture was slightly misbalanced by a long dark silky beard, which he however stroked with pride. "I am to do the Web Pages, if you agree, not alone but with," and he pointed at the girl to his right.

Lutgarde, my name is Lutgarde, she said. She obviously didn't want the diminutive Lut which could evoke something tiny or small. I am to help Leo with the Web Pages and I have almost never done this before. But Leo has. Just stepping into her thirties,

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she had a look like on a very old Dutch or Flemish painting, fine blond hair, light blue eyes, a translucent skin, with almost the light around her to go with it.

Everyone agreed that Leo and Lut should do the Web Pages.

"I'm Martha. Call me Gwendoline."

The new team looked at her, not quite understanding.

"Why Gwendoline? Is that your second name on the passport?"

"No. I just wanted to be called like that for a very long time now."

Gwendoline did not seem to have much in common with Martha, and moreover, she was Argentinean, and who has ever heard of an Argentinean called Gwendoline?


But what was the CHD there for, if not to fulfil wishes, if it was feasible.

"And do you want to make nickname out of this too? Like 'Gwen'?" asked Maurice. But Martha shook her head firmly, smiled and said she'd really prefer Gwendoline.

So Gwendoline it would be.

Gwendoline wanted to do the Support for the Software Helpdesk. She was rather tiny, stepping into her forties, but looked ten years younger, with a mop of dark curls and some freckles. Her eyes had a look like if she could see through you. If not pretty, she was very attractive.

Since she someone had suggested she'd do the minutes of the meeting she had formatted the Helpdesk names so that they could stand out by clicking on the border

icon  and then choosing 'Format - Borders and Shading - and then the Shadow Setting'.

"And I will do the same," said Hildegard, a tall and slightly heavy-boned Swiss, with light green eyes and very straight long light brown hair. An ordinary colour, but in her it was striking. It shone, healthy, in one strait line, without a split, like washed with a mixture of ancient herbs. Just like her skin, which seemed translucent, rosy, healthy, treated with mystery creams only known to even her. Would she share the formula? She didn't yet say 'call me Hilde', because the Swiss or Germans and such are rather on the shy side for nicknames on first meetings. Everyone agreed that she too would be doing User support but Maurice also suggested also she'd do the User management. Putting them in databases and so. Her being Swiss would make sure that she was very well *organisiert*. Hilde agreed to do the 'Usermanaschement'. But this is unfair, because Hilde had no accent in ay of her five languages.

She wore light green pants, floating and large at the bottom. This was already some kind of finery because apart from Johanna, none of the other girls present wore a skirt or a dress.

But it was pants, not a dress, and otherwise everyone else at the Helpdesk dressed in a

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very casual way. It was Friday code the whole week. Jeans and T-Shirt were a uniform for the IT people. It must not been forgotten that IT people had to crawl beneath a table several times a day to stick some network cable into its socket or that they had to carry heavy PC's and screens around. A dress or high heels or suit would have been a serious hindrance, and every single nice skirt would have gone to pieces soon. Also men would maybe have taken some advantage out of this, and do everything they could to get an IT girl into awkward situations.

Jo, Gwendoline and Hilde were also to take care of all the applications programmes, the so called in-house or tailor made programmes. These were programmes so specific to the House that not much will be said about them. Though if you knew them you knew the House. They gave Johanna, Hilde and Gwendoline and their users a lot to do. Elements 112 and Kaleidoscope II were two stories by itself, so they'll just be mentioned from time to time.

Then last but not least everyone looked at Myra, who felt very shy, because she was so new. And very much the youngest. She could hardly be twenty-six. Moreover, she was not an informatician, had not studied it nor been trained as such. Her career was one of those which often led to a Helpdesk: the one of a Super User. The Super User just had to end up in a Helpdesk. He or she was condemned to. But Myra felt that she had not much to offer to such a very experienced crowd. Except that soon it was decided she should do the Central Helpdesk, taking all the calls from the users and then dispatching them to the right person. Myra was Czech or Slovakian and again very young. But her dark grey eyes looked older, almost wise, like if the future or such things were no secret to her. She was kind of pretty in a rather unconventional way. Raven black hair falling almost to her waist, snowy white skin, pointed nose and traits. She wore a lipstick a shade to red.

As number ten had spoken the door opened and with this a young men, who couldn't be much older than Myra, entered the room.

"Hi. I am Arthur. And I am to be your ... ," he said, as if searching for the word. No one knew Arthur, he was even newer to the House than Myra. And maybe her age or just one year over. He was very slim, and reminded one of the princes in fairy-tales, with a skin without blemish and the kind of fine white blond hair almost never found in those above twelve years old. It floated around his face like sun rays made matter. "Your..." he obviously didn't know the word which the House used for this function at the House. Johanna helped him

"You mean Manager, Administrator, etc. You can say Administrator. But the House calls them C.L.A. Whatever this stands for. The initial wording has been lost, no joke."

Arthur said he was sorry to come so late, but he had just been informed ten minutes ago that he was to thus be their... CLA. He was still searching for the right word. This was the way of the House. He had then been sent direct to their offices, lost himself a bit in the labyrinth of the House, than found them at their first meeting. The ten had

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thus had to repeat their presentations again, but since everything was decided already, Arthur found himself before ten accomplished facts. What else could he do but to give in. They grinned inwardly. Ok, maybe, there went Johanna as their virtual leader, but Arthur would, they could feel that, be an good boss in his way too. As a good strategist he would let them take their own decisions. Arthur would be ideal for filling in, or not filling in, that missing 'CLA' concept. Because IT people don't especially like to have a boss, nor do they think to need one. Well, maybe sometimes they like to have one, for instance one like Josepha Laperm. She could listen, analyse, and then decide for the best. She felt the underlying need in every story told to her. Otherwise IT-people are a bit like children, and like to be left to play alone, unwatched by the grownups.

But pro forma, since he had had no say before, Arthur now asked what they were doing with their free time.

After all declaring they had no free time, but were only living for the House, they gave in and told.

Johanna liked to play games. Society games, parlour games, role playing. From Monopoly over Risk to Diplomacy, Stratego, Acquire, Colony and sometimes Dungeons and Dragons, but really rather all strategy games. And she just loved to win.

Maurice said that he only loved two things in life, his computers and his wife, which of them more, he did not say.

Lexi said she loved to play around with machines, and repair defect ones, like HI-FI, TV's, Video-Recorders, Printers and PC's. Yes and to invent new machines. Well that was her job now. But as a hobby, she did Martial Arts. Karate, Kung-Fu, Bushido. What a programme, this girl, but she would be great for Hardware, fighting naughty printers and stubborn PC's. What she didn't say was that she had left Slovenia because her very large family was getting on her nerves by asking too much of those repair tours of her. They didn't stop and nagged so much that she had been transformed into a plumber, electrician and handy-maid for everything and everybody. This family had to be something.

Sven crossed his arms over his muscular breast, thought for a moment, grinned, and said nothing. Well hobbies are said to also stand for sublimation, and maybe this guy didn't need any, it could well be he was so balanced that he had not problem at all. But he finally remembered that he must have one: three horses. Well, his wife's horses. He helped her tend to them. Just to imagine him on a horseback, wow.

Nico loved to travel. So that was where the far-away look in his eyes came from.

Leo refused to answer, gently but firmly. This revealed a certain tendency for obfuscation.

Lutgarde liked to be with her family. When she wasn't with her family she liked to sing. She didn't say more but Leo betrayed her by explaining Lut was singing in a Bohatian pop group. The group was awed, because Bohatians were great musicians and shy about strangers, she must be very good. Later Leo explained to them that Lut had really a good voice, not that he knew anything about it.

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Hilde talked about cooking, gardening and doing maths (how did the third go together with the two first?).

Gwendoline just liked to be with her family and friends and see people, but one could feel she was hiding something, the way she was saying SEE people. One felt one could not lie to her. She looked too nice. And also a bit devious.

Myra, when asked, did not answer, but only went red in the face and Maurice said she must be thinking about boys, which made her go scarlet.

Arthur, finally asked himself, first had to think about it a lot and finally said he liked to think... while juggling.

With how many balls they asked? Four he said.

But in truth it was five. Arthur did not know why he was not telling them the truth, and why he was keeping the fifth ball to himself. But he would think about it, while trying for the sixth.

But I could imagine him juggling in secret with thinking of how to be a boss without being one.

And maybe this notion of not wanting any boss at all was not so true after all. Again, those who knew her, were putting great hopes in Josepha Laperm; who was to be their Director, way up before Arthur in the hierarchy. She cared. She really assumed her role. She would know how to put things right. She was the best Director in the House. But even her, one of the few sound personalities maybe, seemed at loss. Many of the staff supposed to be working in the new MOU XII just didn't show up. How in the hell should she organize all those new WG's with no people in it?

As for the new Director, Jacques Owl, the eleven didn't know him yet, but he had a good reputation. Of course he would have to get used to his new MOU too.

And as what regards Myself I probably owned the very first PC that came on the market (as soon as I could afford one). I immediately realised how important that little box would be for everyone in some years time, and that everyone at least in an office would have to use one. I had imagined PC's it would lighten up people's life like it does mine, make work easier, better organised, less chaotic, less painful, more efficient. But as time has passed by the opposite seems to have happened and people seem to spend one fifth to one quarter of their time to get their computer working again, while their boss sits on their neck shouting after some bloody report which the computer has swallowed and refuses to spit back out. I wanted to help people with this, and I do. I'm very good, just like the whole Helpdesk is. I feel how good we are all. And I might be one of them, one of the now eleven, or a user even, or I might not. To give you a tip: I'm mostly consulted about Home PC's.

But I can't tell you who I am, and, just as for the name of the House, I would again ask the kind reader not to reveal my name, should she or he find out the truth. You all know me; many of you see me almost everyday. I'm the first thing you might see when

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you arrive. You consult me a lot; I come to many of your offices once a day. Many of you have told me their story. I keep all of this to me of course. So don't betray me either :o)

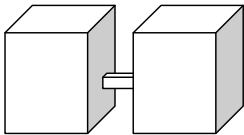
Half an hour later the freshly baked team got an Email from Johanna, enclosing an Excel table she had pasted into the Email and which contained the structure of the Helpdesk.

Name	Function
Myra Beloba	HelpDesk-Central
Hildegard Brandt	HD-Software
Alexandra Velma	HD-Hardware
Nicolas Biscotti	Programmer
Gwendoline Jaia	HD-Software
Johanna Salveson	IT Assistant
Leo Veneto	Webmaster
Lutgarde Sanger	Webmaster
Sven Schelmstorm	HD-Hardware
Arthur (last name not given)	CLA (Head of HelpDesk)
Maurice d'Escher	MOUSA

You can find the complete table with some more info in the Glossary at the end of the manual.

Chaos installs

We then moved, Myself included, seven hundred and seventy-seven of us, into a new building. The building was in two parts really, one west, one east, joined by a little footbridge with glass windows on each side (glass again) at its second floor. One of the many little rivers of ran just beneath the bridge. The Natural Sciences section of the MOU would go West, the Human Sciences section would go East.



The drawing to the left has been quickly done in Word by Gwendoline. She used ✨ Insert-Picture- AutoShapes ✨. Once the three shapes were drawn she held down the Shift key, clicked on each of them to select them all, then right-clicked, and chose 'Grouping - Group' from the menu list.

The buildings wore the names of two famous scientists, because the House was all about Science. Take whoever you like, the House chose Robert Koch and Marie Curie. They should have taken Freud or Lacan as a name for the Curie building, to be logical, but the House had a Freud building already. MOU VIII (responsible for the Buildings) flatly refused to change the name on all the plans.

The IT Helpdesk was to go to the Curie. Of course some acronyms were found for the buildings: APS and PSI, which made no sense, but those acronyms were bound anyway to change at least five times that year, just so that IT Helpdesk could have some fun and keep changing their user tables over and over again. And go crazy.

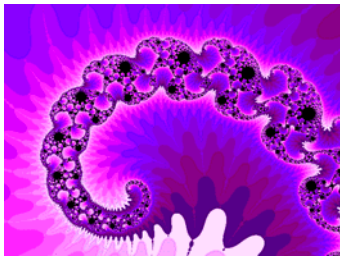
And great was everyone's astonishment when they realized that nothing, but nothing in the buildings was ready, completed, finished. Everything was just but in progress. And the astonishment soon turned to bewilderment.



How could things so quickly deteriorate in a building not much older than the Country. Offices were without doors, cables lay open on the floors, walls had not been painted anew and carried the dirt streaks of their previous owner (not the "House"), carpets, far from new, were dust ridden, office space was minimal and some people had been installed in what previously had obviously served as cupboards, the usual office desks could not be accommodated, so people were given improvised tables, coming from somewhere in the attics. Lightening was not working in many offices, air conditioning was non existent, as was probably central heating. Fortunately, it was springtime. But windows had to be opened in order to get some aeration and with the opening of windows everything came in but fresh air. Carbon toxic, noise, and more dust.

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If some offices were without doors, there were also people without offices, many offices had no phone or no PC's (ah those made the helpdesk happy for at least a while, they wouldn't call because they had no problem with their PC and couldn't call because they had no phone!) People were moved into new offices, just to hear five minutes later that this move had been a mistake, and that their office was elsewhere.



People were moved into offices with their previous occupant still in it, his move having been foreseen in only a week. Offices, when finally having been emptied of at least their owner, were not cleaned. Cables lay still open on the floor, network seemed to have fled into some long vacation, into a place far away, unknown to itself. Sven went crazy running around and trying to find out to which network or sub-network a specific user belonged.

To make matters worse the footbridge you see on the drawing had been recently closed, for no obvious reasons at all. Thus the users of the west part and the users of the east part had to take a quite extraordinary detour: One couldn't just leave the east building itself but one had first to go to another one still, cross it completely and then only find an exit at its other end. Even this was not easy, because in order to reach the first building one had to take the elevator to the second floor, the only one which offered an opening between the two. When one had finally reached the exit it was first necessary to cross the river on one side, then make all the way back to the east building, take the path along the river to finally reach a second bridge which then finally led to the west building.

The worst thing for half of its inhabitants was that there was no light. However was it possible to have no light in a series of buildings all made out of glass. But the Curie and Koch buildings didn't. Both had their back side, the south wall, only a few meters from a high mountain wall, which went up just to the level of the sixth floor. The west side too, was partly hidden by another mountain which hid it from the sun just when it shouldn't have.

It was quite a scandal, for those of the House, who were used to being rather pampered. The only nice offices and ready offices were those of the Director and his team, and those of the Helpdesk, which showed the relative importance they were given. If not high in hierarchy, they are sort of like scribes for the pharaohs, and are admired like equals or free people for their knowledge of 'hieroglyphs'.

IT team's offices were larger, already provided with new carpets and freshly painted walls. Moreover, they were located on the seventh floor, and the only ones with a lot of light on all sides, except of course those still one floor above, which were given to the Director and his team.

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But for the rest of the seven hundred and seventy-seven, it seemed like a disgrace. An impressive number of people suffered an allergy crisis and or asthma, others caught red and white spots everywhere in the face, several people tripped on the many open laying cables and strained an arm or an ankle. One girl got caught by a vicious network cable, fell down, and was entwined in such manner that she could neither move nor call for help. Since this happened in a faraway office, around the corner of a corner, she was found only three hours later and had to be brought to the hospital by blue light.

Jack Owl, the new Director, who had been parachuted from the outside a few months ago, was heard pestering about the buildings condition several times over the phone so that the whole floor could hear it. But even hierarchy seems to have nothing to say sometimes, because, as we would see, another entity had taken the power: Chaos.

It had broken out over the MOU in the way of a tidal wave, and menaced to swallow everything.

For the Helpdesk it was a major drama. They had had no say on the moment or way of the move, it had just been done, they had had no say about the installation of the 'new' network, it had just been - not - installed correctly. Many people were without any network at all, not linked to the rest of the staff, others had been placed on the wrong *domain*, which meant they were with a connection but which was not working. Like their PC was configured initially for domain of old MOU XI tried to access network resources for a domain of new MOU XII with a user account of domain of old MOU VII.

The authorities seemed not to care, and to suppose, as authorities always do, that the little ones would take care of everything. Ah but doing the impossible! How easy this seems to the one who does not have to do it himself. Organisation was not only bad, it was entirely lacking.

No one who has not lived and gone through such a situation, will you say, but I, who was as old as the House itself, I tell you, I had never, and had never even imagined such a thing was possible. Images of those Mandelbrot sets were soon flowing soon through our minds, as each of us was juggling permanently with at least 4 balls, like a PC, an Email, a user, a programme. Benoit Mandelbrot's '*strange attractor*' had taken the power and reigned over the MOU with his unpredictable Zero. No One had taken the power.

Mathematical Knots became the Helpdesk's daily bread. The search for order in a disordered system can be very distracting-engrossing for those who play it as a game, but for the Helpdesk, having to untie it in a real place it felt rather distracting-distressing. There had to be some order no? Repeating $z=z^2+c$ up to N times, would they find an order? Was not Chaos the essence of order? Where was the limit of this chaotic trajectory?

In the meantime the users, not seeing things nicely, that is in ways of $z=z^2+c$, continued to be furious about their situation. After the first astonishment, bewilderment

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and rage, depression and gloominess settled in. And depression was not a good thing in a time of the year where workload was at its peak.

Workers and movers continued their odyssey along the corridors, but one month later nothing seemed to have been done. *Au contraire*, it was worse then ever. The Public Health and Consumer Security Officers was called to pay a visit by some Anonymous, who surely didn't want his name to be revealed. They inspected the buildings closely, wrote a report and left not to be seen again. At least not in the near future.

Offices had no numbers, so users were not to be found, offices had no phone, so users could not call them, nor could Helpdesk call them, offices had not network, so users couldn't even use their PC to write an Email. No network, no Email. Worse, half of the people, due to the split, were new, and the Helpdesk hadn't even got a list of their names. They were supposed to give them a logon and an Email; but how would were they to do this, not knowing their names. Worse, they had to put them into departments, in their Email and Windows 2000 user databases, but they did not have the name of the departments. Those had not been decided upon yet. Moreover; the people coming from MOU VII had not even wanted to come. So they sort of hid. They were dealing with users without a face, with phantom users. *Ghosts*. Ghosts doing the work now. What a fright.

Gwendoline wrote an Email to Hilde, it was almost tear-streaked:

"One thing must be said which can console us: Donatello. The man who holds the newspaper shop at the ground floor of the Curie building. He is ever so nice and wise, I'm so happy that at least he stayed with us."

Hilde answered:

"Of course, Tello. You're right, he has sort of a Buddhist quality about him. Lucky us."

And Gwendoline answered:

"There is someone who has made a little joke, and has replaced the sign 'Cafeteria' by 'Tello'. I think he might well be the best liked person at the MOU."

And Hilde answered:

"And what does he say of this whole mess?"

And Gwendoline, coming into Hilde's office, which was just to her right, declared:

"Oh, not much, you know, he's a listener."

A friendship was born.

It's lunchtime

But even the most brave need food from time to time and Hilde stole away to lunch with one of some of her best users, which she all knew from previous MOU's: Penelope, Jenny, the two Emma's and Julia. Penelope was not Greek, but from Malta, Jenny was South-African, Emma I and II were French and Julia was half German half

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Icelander. They had planned to go to the Flower Bar, which was not too far. In principle Josepha, a much liked Director was to join them too, but she didn't.

Penelope, her secretary had seen her enter the elevator before her, because she herself had still be hanging on the phone, and Josepha had said:

"I'll go and see so that the others don't wonder where we stay."

Penelope and Hilde had taken the elevator just after her and thought they would already find her seated when they arrived. But no. The little group sat down with their drinks and wondered where Josepha was remaining, her usually being so reliable.

Penelope took some of their stress away by making them all laugh. She was telling her colleague-friends that this morning she had discovered her garden-gnome gone and with him her neighbours wheelbarrow. It sure was a mysterious thing. Who would care to steel a garden dwarf?

"Maybe he got mad at me," said Penelope. "What have I done?"

But Emma, better informed than the rest of them, told them it must have been the FLNJ, le 'Front de Liberation des Nains de Jardin', the Garden Gnome Liberation Front. An underground movement. Young people who strove to free garden dwarfs of their hideous exploitation by the bourgeoisie. FLNJ claimed garden gnomes had a soul, and must be respected just as human beings were, and not oppressed, standing around doing nothing, imprisoned in the garden of their slave masters. They even had a hit song: "Let's free the gnomes".

Often an impressive series of sometimes hundreds of those garden dwarfs were found standing in groups deep in some Forests. The movement, which had apparently started in France, had become international and now covered whole Europe, Australia and America. Some of the dwarfs had even sent postcards from faraway countries to their old 'masters'. The gnomes liberators have lot's of websites, one of them is <http://www.flnjfrance.com/>.

"This means more money for the gnome makers, it's such a flourishing industry", said Emma, with a slight smirk in her face that showed what she thought of garden dwarfs." She was a modern woman, and thought garden gnomes petit bourgeois and tasteless.

"Did you receive a demand for ransom?" asked Julia.

"No," said Penelope, subdued. She had really liked her gnome.

Josepha still hadn't shown up, nor had she phoned or used her mobile to say why. It was not like her.

"Maybe she went away for a well deserved holiday with your garden dwarf," said Julia, smiling, to Penelope.

But Penelope did not seem to find that funny, but appeared ridden with sombre forebodings. She managed a strangled laughter:

"I'm quite sure it was my dwarf, and I'm quite sure something is wrong."

After that, they did not wonder anymore, but had some sandwiches with their drinks. Emma I told long fascinating shopping stories, Julia about her new House, Emma II

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about her new boyfriend(s). Hilde bit her fingers because she was thinking of how she would enter all those users of which she hadn't a name yet in her database and put them into security groups which had not yet been defined nor named either.

"Those FLNJ people must be a bit mad," said Jenny coming back to the gnome topic. But she was grinning. She liked Penelope, but she was among those who thought garden gnomes very bad taste.

"In a way I can understand them," said Julia, and one couldn't know for sure of whom she was talking.

"Dwarfs are a symbol for wealth and prosperity. Legends say they can be unexpectedly generous, if they take a liking to you. Though the reasons for this can be mysterious," said Emma I.

"Garden gnomes are indeed a symbol for success or a good luck charm. For sure this obsession with garden dwarfs is due to our wish for the wonderful, for work to be done for us by night, while we sleep. We need to populate our world with friendly spirits, just as the ancients did. It is our childish belief in magic, our wishful thinking that things could mend by some superior helpful force," said Jenny.

"What a Philosopher you are. But I admire your common sense in the attempt to explain the bizarre."

"Why? You believe in magic?"

"Magicians would indeed be needed here at the moment," said Emma I, sarcastically. "This can't go on. We'll all go crazy, if this goes on."

"Yes this morning I almost left the house with two different shoes, searched for my keys at least ten minutes and now I almost forgot my boss's birthday," confirmed Julia. "I am not only GETTING crazy. I am ALREADY crazy. I could really do with some therapy or rather even some magic."

"Who believes in magic?"

"Well we have one of the crowd sitting among us," said the gentle Emma II to Hilde's intention. Hilde gave her a grateful smile, she loved being called a magician. Of course, there is reason to be happy about such a compliment.

Everyone likes compliments. I do not wish to appear conceited, nor vain, but I do think I bear the palm for IT compliments. But don't tell anyone about this, the others might be a bit jealous. But adages as 'Magician. Wizard. Miracle.' are common sayings about me too. The whole of CHD is good, they each have an excellent understanding of their own field, and there are quite a lot of Super Users at the House. But I might be the best, the one who secretly knows it all. It's not that I want my value to be recognised, I know my value. Those who know about my gift call me 'The Master'. But it's not official. Not really. They just feel it. They call me 'Angel' too. I think everyone here likes me, just as I like everyone. People are really nice, that is, most of the time.

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“Thank you. But in those hard times, some ancient and real magic would be indeed welcome. Maybe we could call some dwarfs for help,” said Hilde. “They know how to work and get things running.”

For the next days, this became a common joke among them: whenever something went wrong or was missing, they would put Penelope’s dwarf at fault. He had done it. Someone had to be guilty of all this mess.

A short hour later they went back to their offices and Penelope of course expected to see Josepha there, giving her some plausible explanation or to see her appear later in the afternoon. But Josepha did not reappear, maybe she had been entered as a record in Hilde’s yet non existing user database.

And Josepha did not reappear the next morning either, nor did she the following day. Penelope went through her agenda a hundred times, and let her little help, Tessa, do the same thing to double-check, but there were no meetings, nothing to be seen on Josepha’s agenda which could explain her not reappearing. She wasn’t at her home in Bohatia, she didn’t answer her mobile phone, Penelope even called her on her usual holiday location, but got no answer there either. And the morning after it was still the same.

Penelope sensed something was very, very wrong.

Security was called to inquire if anyone had seen her. No. No one had. Security did not worry at first, typically. Penelope had started calling everyone who might know Josepha. First inside the House, then outside the House, then outside the country. Her boyfriend, her sister, her brother, her ex-husband, her baker, her dentist, her gardener. But no one had seen her, for now a week.

Security finally took this seriously and went around the house. First to interrogate all her personnel, staff without yet names not included, but maybe that was a mistake, finally sending a general Email to everyone, but no answer about her whereabouts came.

Finally they even put up posters and searched the building from top to bottom.

But the elevator seemed to have swallowed her. It was true that those elevators were not working most of the time, but this went a bit far. After that, for a time, people took the steps in all cases, elevator working or not.

The posters stayed there for a few weeks, showing Josepha Laperm on one of the visitors chairs in her office. She had soft and light-red hair, large expressive green eyes, slightly slanting. It was almost palpable that she was affectionate and liked human beings and vice-versa. She looked relaxed and comfortable, but one could sense she must have elegant and feline like movements.

The consequences of the split and re-merge of the MOU’s were disastrous. Traumatic. Endless series of movers wandered up and down the staircases and the corridors in

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long chains, laden with boxes, chairs, cupboards and looked like centipedes. But nothing seemed to get done. People were running wild in the corridors and bumping into each other at each corner, spilling coffee and heaps of paper on each other and on the floor. Many of them now wore blue red green and yellow bruises on our front heads because of that, some were limping, two had even broken an arm and a leg. Those two fortunate ones could leave for some extended 'sick leave' if one does not want to call it vacation. Those were the ways of the House.

How had it come about? No one wanted to explain or say. Probably political motives underlay this decision. So that quickly some of the old powers could be settled? Securing old powers against new ones? Myra imagined one phone call, from a mysterious 'decision maker', to Jack Owl, the now new director of the new MOU XII:

"Hi Jack! It's me. How about having a MOU?"

"Oh yes why not. I've just got some time on my hands. When? In ten minutes, down at the Peacock Bar?"

"With milk and sugar?"

"No, I take it strong."

Well at least, Myra thought privately, Jacques Owl was very good looking. And he had a very nice smile. And he seemed smart too.

Would the new Director, Jack Owl, manage to organise the MOU and give it a good workflow, make it happy? Unhesitatingly, Micha, his assistant, said: Yes!

But the consequences of this ten minute coffee were unforeseen, even to its makers. If there had been makers. Nothing was less sure.

The network people, which were not the Helpdesk people from MOU XI and XII, but from MOUIT, had mixed things up too. They were used to having the network *domain* names correspond to the MOU names, which were numbers. So they put people supposed to be in new domain XI into old domain XI and people supposed to be in new domain XII into old domain XII. In all possible combinations except the right one. Let's not talk of old and new MOU VII. Adding to all this confusion they just made a lot of mistakes. One would imagine it was easy to just connect a specific network socket in a specific office to some specific network domain. Just like in a phone central, one just allocated a phone number to a certain name. Ah but what is ever difficult, if you don't do it yourself. If one tries to understand the split at page 20 it's become obvious it was almost impossible to get things right.

☹ And if you don't want to know what a *domain* is, or don't understand, don't worry, just relax, just catch the attitude towards it, because anyway, things will anyway have changed again in a few weeks. Only one thing will remain, the PANG! You'll hear about it later from Myra. ☹

Alexandra Lexi was driven to sheer madness by having to re and re-organize hundreds

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of moves of PC's and printers twice a day and especially moves of missing printers and PC's. They just hadn't arrived into the office they were supposed to go to and some of them remained lost forever. But how could someone work without PC or Printer? It would go on and on.

"It's an endless story," she said to Maurice.

"Exactly! And the users, the new Software for user management – AD for Active Directory - calls them 'OBJECTS' in the same line as PC's and printers. As if someone wanted to give the impression they were worthless."

Hilde let out what was almost a shriek: "What! Worthless! Objects! Our users who work so hard! What a dangerous mentality. Where will that lead to!"

"Exactly!" said Maurice

No one knew what to do anymore nor to whom to turn. Everyone was running and no one knew where to. Penelope repeated it was all her dwarf's fault, or rather his disappearance. Using her neighbour's wheelbarrow he was now carrying everything he could to the most wrong place possible.

User were calling by the hundreds, many of them didn't even seem to know how to logon anymore: they insisted their password had been five asterisks, like

::*:*:

or Num Lock was off and they were using the numeric keypad to enter the numbers their password contained, or they did not remember to check if they were in Caps Lock or if the name written on the screen was really their own.

Most of the time, it was true, it wasn't, because of all those moves. But by the time that had finally noticed it was not their own it was too late: their user account was *locked out* by too many password trials and CHD had to log them in again. Ok this would not have been so much of a problem, hadn't it been for the sheer quantity of it. Others seemed to have forgotten that a computer and a printer had to be switched on in order to work, they insisted they had done this, and that the Helpdesk had to come by to check what was wrong. When the same Helpdesk came they had to realise that users had not even tried to look at the problem more closely. They just sat there stunned and pointed helplessly at their computer. Things had gotten out of hand, users were found crying at their desk, unable to move, but crying for help just because they needed to express some damage, unknown to themselves. Someone had to help. Of course the first thought went to the computer, but even the basics seemed to be forgotten now.

So Helpdesk's first question quickly became:

"Is your computer switched on?"

And the second:

"Are you sure?"

"Hm. How do I know?"

"Is there a light somewhere in the front of the PC?"

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“Hm. No. How do I know? Can’t you come and have a look?”

Why was this suddenly happening? Because the Helpdesk had no means to take care of their users properly anymore, and so they reacted as every child would towards an all of a sudden careless parent, not doing his duty anymore: they became demanding, regressed, and asked that even the most simple thing were done for them. Should Helpdesk put on their drapers for them from now on? Hold their mouse and do all the clicks? Tell them again and again what a logon and a logoff was? CHD quickly realised many users had no idea of what that meant. For a logoff, which did not take a lot of time, a user just had to choose:

‘Start – Shutdown – Logoff’, but instead of that he chose: ‘Start – Shutdown – Restart’. In a way users were right: this command sounded like nonsense.

Everyone had a creepy sense of foreboding, a funny feeling at the pit of his stomach, something just had to happen. Hilde wished for Penelope’s garden gnome to come back with her neighbour’s wheelbarrow, with all the right things in it. Or for some other dwarf maybe.

Everyone was complaining, some were crying, many were sneezing, the Helpdesk was going crazy.

The visit of the Garden gnomes

And one week later, the dwarfs had appeared indeed. They were of course seven of them, one for each of the seven first floors, but none for the eighth floor, the floor of the Director's team. All of them standing in its south-east corner. They all wore a big white paper napkin, each of them bearing a different label. The labels read:

1. Weberli: the Painter Dwarf
2. Netikette: the Cabling Dwarf
3. Muckel: the Carpenter Dwarf
4. Tonnelli: the Handyman Dwarf
5. Diagoras: the Zyrtec Dwarf (for the allergies)
6. Terapi: the Counselling Dwarf
7. Elbuself: the Do-it-yourself Dwarf

Number Seven, Elbuself, came last but not least, because, after all, what were we there for, if not to do everything ourselves.

The seven however were real garden gnomes, with long beards and funny long coats, bright red pointed hats and shoes. The Zyrtec and Counselling Gnome appeared to be female. They too had beards, but they were more elaborately combed. Whoever had placed them there? The FLNJ?! Whoever had ordered them to come? Or asked to, invited. I mean politely and they then came by own volition.

People made the steps from floor to floor (elevators were not working that day again) to walk around and inspect the gnomes, laughing, exchanging slightly disobliging remarks about the hierarchy which someone for sure had wanted to point at. People found they had not done their job, and that some fun head had expressed his mild criticism by placing those dwarfs. Jokes were found, especially by the French, like:

“C'est un *n'ain*portant rassemblement!” - ‘What an important gathering!’ or “C'est *n'ain*porte quoi!” - ‘What nonsense’. Since ‘dwarf’ is ‘nain’ in French.

Penelope inspected each of them closely, hoping to recognise her own gnome, but she had to be disappointed. Anyway, she meant she could have recognised him among thousands. Some people were saying that garden gnomes resembled each other like a troupe of new born babies. Indeed when the police found clusters of garden gnomes in the forests and brought them back to the station and then contacted those who had filed a complaint for their garden gnomes theft; it turned out that their owners, called to collect their property, had every hard time in the world to truly identify their very own gnome.

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But Penelope had found her garden gnome to be unique. There were two distinguishing features about him. The first was that *'titomme'* (that is: 'little man') wore glasses. And none of the seven gnomes standing there wore glasses. Of course he might well have removed them. The second was: 'titomme had no beard. You are going to say that a garden gnome without a beard is not a garden gnome, and indeed at times Penelope wasn't so sure about this either: 'titomme was alive. The proof was that he had walked off. She felt she could recognise 'titomme among thousands, even in disguise. He had a soul, and a soul is something unique. One just can't miss a soul, and certainly not Penelope.

How had the Seven gotten in the House without being seen? Although it was obvious: amidst the reigning disorganisation security had not been taken too seriously in their building lately. Where in other buildings of 'The House' people had to show their badges and were scanned from head to foot, in the Curie and Koch buildings security measures had lapsed. No one could one control the masses of movers and handymen which had been walking in and out in endless streams for what was now weeks. So it must have been all too easy for an accomplice to have introduced those dwarfs, hidden in a box or wrapped in some woollen or linen cover.

Penelope, secretary of MOU XII highest bosses, if laughing with the rest of the MOU, was at the same time slightly white around the nose. Had she not told them only one week ago that her garden-dwarf had disappeared, plus taking the neighbours wheelbarrow with him. She was sure that she would now be suspected and indeed several people came and pulled her leg about it.

But they were just joking. Moreover Penelope was well known of being incapable of such pranks. Or was she not? No one ever knew if an investigation about the whereabouts of the dwarfs had taken place. If it had, those who had gotten a visit by the security officers did not say a word about it, and if someone was found guilty, no one was informed of it. Suspicion was not the way of the House. No one at least claimed the action, not even the FLNJ and the dwarfs stood there for a while, taking some of the stress away. And is laughter not the best remedy against stress.

It was obvious too that the idea of placing the dwarfs must have been born from the ancient legends which circulated about the first inhabitants of the country. Since it was believed they had been small and stout, it was easy to give them the appearance of the dwarfs in fairy tales and legends.

People just continued laughing and in order not to loose anything of the event Maurice and Leo went around and took pictures of the Seven. Maurice sent them around by Email and Leo put them in some hidden webpage. The URL, that is the address of this webpage he sent only to a few friends:

<http://www.house123.org/mouxii/dwarfs/default.htm>

It was funny, yes; but notwithstanding, the authorities must have felt pointed at by the affair, and by the morning of the following Monday the dwarfs had left again. Or had been made to leave. Unsurprisingly it was rumoured that the same authorities had felt

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offended by the coming of the dwarfs. It WAS a criticism of the unfortunate situation, even if only by sheer coincidence.

But Genevieve, the secretary of the Director of new MOU XII and also Jennifer, the secretary of old MOU XII, when approached upon that question had assured everyone that their bosses were in for nothing. She swore that it was not them who had asked for the dwarfs removal. And Catherine, the secretary of the House's Highest Official, nicknamed High-One or HO₁, pretended to be just as ignorant of the dwarfs' elimination as the two others. By the way, the High One that was at the House at that time wasn't very tall either himself.

☞ HO₁ is sort of complicated to type. You have to select the 1, then choose 'Format - Font - Subscript'. So let's write it HO₁ here. IT people are lazy. I mean one could also select it and put in AutoText, but then one would have to choose 'Insert-AutoText' and painfully look for the HO₁, no way, let's just call him HO1. Like one element in our table of elements. The new programme Elements 112.

Pressed further, Catherine finally swore on the head of her favourite dog that HO1 had nothing do with the dwarfs' disappearance (we later found out that she had no dog, but a parrot!). Anyway, only someone who would at least have felt some guilt would have had the dwarfs removed. And no one felt guilty. No one felt that just HE had organised this whole mess of a split. It had just come about. It was worse. Hierarchy didn't even notice that there was something chaotic to the situation. But if everyone felt sure that 'they' - meaning 'hierarchy' - had had the idea, who then was hierarchy? Who really had taken the decision of the split; that was the question. QUI WER WHO HOE CHI KDO had it been? They - They - They. Who were 'they' one was always talking of, when not happy?

But alone the corridor answered and that only in whispers:

"NO ONE, personne, nessuno, niemand, nikdo, ingen, ninguém, nadie, nikogo."

The last no one was Ukrainian.

The joke went around that the dwarfs had left just because the task of putting things right again seemed impossible even to them. But those who are a bit acquainted with dwarfs will know the word 'impossible' is not to be found in a dwarf's vocabulary.

Not in Maurice's either. Good news came because Maurice had discovered a shortcut to circumvent the loss of the footbridge they'd suffered between the Koch and Curie building.

Maurice was becoming famous for discovering shortcuts to get somewhere in a few keystrokes only, as well as in his IT job as in the House. This one was a particularly smart one.

It spares time if you know that you can press **Ctrl+Home** to jump to the beginning of a document and **Ctrl+End** to jump to the end of it in one stroke; instead of painfully pressing Page Up or Page Down hundreds of times. Or like you can press **Ctrl+A** to

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select everything in a file or document in one go. No joke. Maurice did indeed prove that he was a genius in the field of buildings too.

A Hyperlink too was a shortcut or direct path to another web page or another document which could be on a completely different spot than the link itself. You clicked on it, and there you were.

Maurice bade his team to follow him. They took the elevator to the basement. Turned right, took three steps down, and found themselves in an empty office or storeroom with dim light coming from a tiny window at its high end. Maurice marched towards it and opened what seemed to almost be the door of a cupboard beneath it. The cupboard led into a corridor, not very high either. With this troupe at his trail he marched through it, opened another door at its end, and then the scene mirrored itself at the other side. They took three more stairs up, then the elevator and found themselves in the Koch building.

“Silent about this!” warned Maurice, finger uplifted.

They nodded willingly.

“How did you find that one out?”

Maurice made a smug mimic:

“I have found some plans on the MOU III server. It has been designed with a very old version of *Autocad*, you know, this designer programme for engineers.”

MOU III was the Buildings service and Maurice had probably no right to be on their server, but we well knew how gifted he was with passwords and token like that and the situation was desperate.

“The best thing,” he said, “is that even security probably doesn’t know about this Shortcut, because the last time this plan has been opened is ten years ago, which is about the date of when the building was finished.”

“How do you know?”

☞ “I opened ‘My Computer’, found the file, right-clicked on the file name and choose ‘*Properties*’, and there it was: ‘Last modified’: ten years ago. ‘*Properties*’ gives you some other useful info, like the software the file or document or picture opens with. In this case I had to change it, because it was set to an old version of *Autocad*, which we don’t have anymore. But I could open it with *Paint Shop Pro*.”

They turned on their heels then, except for Sven, who had a user to visit in Koch and followed Maurice all the way back, like the seven little dwarfs must have done with Snowy White.

Lexi got back to her desk and found a bunch of jokes in her Email, it would take her time to read them, but she had no time. She opened just one, called ‘The Seven’.

It contained just a little text in the message: “Hope this can help you.” and an attachment. It was a *zip file*. ‘Seven.Zip’. She double-clicked on it and chose ‘Extract’.



She then *browsed* through the folder tree to find 'My Documents' and below that the 'My Pictures' folder and clicked OK. Seven dwarfs fell out of the zip file and tumbled into the folder provided for the pictures. It were *.jpg formatted pictures and wore the names of the seven dwarfs which had just arrived at the Curie building this morning. They installed there comfortably and grinned at Lexi in a most winning way.

She forwarded the *.jpg pictures to the others, they had not been as recipients in the Cc - copy field. Of course if you sent a lot of jokes it is good to put the recipients into Bcc - blind copy, this holds spammers away, but on the other side it is nice to know who has already got a joke, in order not to overflow people several times with the same one. The House loves to do overtime, but it loves jokes even more. All work and no play are bad for the performance.

She was laughing about the dwarfs together with Maurice and Sven when Sya stuck her head into her office: "One more for your collection, in Chinese:

没有人

"Mei you ren" said Maurice and then translated: "NO ONE."

All three looked at him astonished; and Sya with even some rapture.

"Where have you learned Chinese?"

"In fact I haven't," said Maurice, I have been born with it."

That was Maurice. He loved to pull other people's legs.



Make a distribution list in Outlook

Email was bursting with dwarf jokes, about dwarf morals (high), dwarf advices, dwarf sayings.

Such as: "A dwarf comes and the house and..." send by Nicola.

Well you don't want to hear that one. It was something about two dwarfs being released from prison and the first thing they did once out. Hilde and Gwendoline were submerged with requests to help them make distribution lists. It was obvious for both that it was only about fun distribution lists. Called 'Fun' or 'Jokes' or 'Friends'. At least that way the users learned how to do one.

In Outlook click on the Contacts Folder and in the Toolbar chose 'New - Distribution list'. Give it a name. Then 'Select Members' which already exist in your contact address books and or 'Add New' ones by typing their Email address directly.

"But Gwendoline, one of my distribution lists doesn't work! Each time I want to

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send it says 'An unexpected error has occurred'."

"First try to choose 'Update now' to the right and then try again."

"I did that, but it didn't help. It's really very important, no joke, the Email has to leave right away!"

"OK then I believe you must have an error somewhere in the distribution list. I could be a comma somewhere, or a name without an Email address to the right of it or a name which is in there twice. Please check it."

"You're right. There are two names without an Email addresses. What shall I do?"

"You delete them, add them afresh and try to send again. Call me if it doesn't work."

The problem was that Outlook was sometimes refusing to send away messages to distribution lists just because of one error in one name, but without telling you which name it was. It was a rather tricky task in many cases to find the guilty name.

Fortunately, in many cases they could log on to the users computer by using a remote control programme. The one they had at the moment was called *Dameware*. One just typed in the user's Computername and landed right on the top of his desktop. Or screen if you have forgotten what a Desktop is. Both user and HelpDesk could type and move the mouse at the same time. What a fortunate, charitable programme this was, sparing them the time to go and see the user in person! The Remote Desktop or Assistance of Windows XP itself was much less used; being at the same time slower and more restrictive. But still all of this made them very tired. But do not wonder if the CHD seems to be at the same time on the phone and at the user's side: This is the Remote Control Magic of *Dameware*, and other fantastic programmes of the same kind.

"Hakuna muntu!" added Jenny in Swahili, as an afterthought.

"What does that mean? Whom are you trying to overbid?" asked Maurice with a friendly smile.

"NO ONE," said Jenny more to herself.

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CHD had known all those new programmes were coming. New Microsoft Office programmes and new application programmes. It were programmes which had to be installed, programmes which had to be used, programmes which had to be learned, programmes which had to be taught. But no one ever once realises how serious things are really going to be. A lot of work no doubt, but what under such conditions, no one could have imagined, except Hilde, who had a mathematical mind.

MOU XII, just like the rest of the House or even world, used all the classical Microsoft programmes, the Windows XP *operating system* to make the PC work and the Microsoft Office package with Word to do the *documents*, Excel for the *spreadsheets* to do calculations and Access for the *databases* to put in address lists.

MOU XII also used a lot of application programmes, programmes written in-house; that means tailor-made programmes for a specific kind of people who do a specific kind of work. For instance there was Formula I which had 102 templates for each of the elements. Like Aluminium, Carbon, Iron, Helium, Krypton, Silver and Gold. Useless to name all of the 112, you know them by heart. Each of those templates had a specific structure and content.

The House used the same kind of programme for the contracts with all the research institutes it gave money too, but ‘Signup’ wasn’t going to change. The variables for it came from yet another programme, called Kaleidoscope II, which held a database of all the names of the institutes, the name of their specific research field, all the data of responsible persons, project numbers, dates, meetings, money allocated; as all this took its way via the various institutions involved with the project. A user opened the template needed and just filled in the variables.

The way programmes are used, and especially the in-house or tailor made programmes, if well explained to some newcomer, can give a very good idea about what the people using them are doing. They mirror the work to be done.

In fact MOU XII was in for a lot of changes in what regarded the office programmes and tailor made programmes.

Formula I was to be replaced by Elements 112, Kaleidoscope II was to be replaced by Kaleidoscope III, our Windows version I don’t dare tell you, and our Email version was ready for a serious update too, shame on the House.

With MOU XII, MOU XIII and MOU VII having been mixed like by a blender, with Programme Versions I becoming II and III becoming IV and with users without WG, without service, name or office, CHD was in for a lot of bad fun.

“This place needs a structure,” thought Myra, but only thought, because she’d just

arrived here and didn't dare speak up. But she had immediately sensed the immense confusion which seemed to be master of the place. She didn't feel quite part of it yet, but felt sure it wouldn't take her long. Her head was swimming already. She'd have to make an effort to not get caught too much in this. After all, there were more important things to pursue in life than chaos.

One happy thought was that she had found a nice new apartment. A beautiful not too small flat with a fully furnished and brand modern new kitchen, with a dishwasher and independent oven. A bedroom with cupboards all made of mirrors. A small but cosy living room with a giant satellite TV. The trump card was the bathroom, all in pink marbles, with a shower with water coming from all sides and a Jacuzzi! A bathroom that would make a prince choke with envy and that was the clue of it all:

A princes' castle was indeed what one saw from that princely bathroom. A real castle it was, with little towers and all. The castle of the princes of Bohatia. And they were very good looking princes Myra mused, especially the son, Prince Martin. Good looking no, he was gorgeous. She had only seen him on pictures yet, but each time she did she felt something what she couldn't but describe as "PANG!"

"Our first law should be to take care of every call. Event he smallest one. The more stupid the call may seem, the more important it is," said Johanna. "Honour not the Penny and you'll miss a Million Dollars." She went on with this for a time.

It was their second meeting.

Myra nicked away on thoughts about princes but woke up with a start when Johanna's passion broke out again:

"This place needs Courses. Courses - Courses - Courses. Without courses, this place is lost."

On could see her brandishing a sword. She was one of those persons who in wartime would inevitably take the lead. In love with challenge. It was whispered in the House that she was always doing that. But what other option had she got: Arthur had sort of disappeared since their first meeting. Disappearing just like that seemed to have become management's favourite sport lately.

"Pois⁴! You're right!" confirmed Sven the Suede, half in Portuguese, half in English. Everyone at the House was doing this all the time, mixing up languages. If one couldn't find a word in his own language, one would look it up in another. It was the house slang, nicknamed 'Mischel', after a local Bohatian Panaché drink. 'Mischel' was the word for 'mixture' in Bohatian. Such drinks mix two or more beverages together, such as coke and wine, beer and fruit juice, white wine and apple juice. Every region of the world offers some variation of this kind of concoction in its cafés and bars, and in each it carries a different name. In Bohatia it was a quite pleasant mix of draught beer

⁴ Pois is Portuguese and means just about everything: Yes, Really, You don't say so, You can say so, etc. Pronounced: Poish

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and draught lemon soda. Some added grenadine to it. And at the House it was done with words. It was a mixture of dozens of languages; and quite tasty in fact. You needed another word to express your means or feelings? You would use a French, Arab, Indian or Chinese ingredient. Everybody at the House spoke at least two or three languages, the vast majority much more. Moreover, the inhabitants of their guest country, the Bohatians, were equally famous for their gift of languages. Their own language, Bohatian, was said to be one of the most difficult to learn in the world.

“Yes and we could also organise [Workshops](#), in order to train the MOU to use all those new programmes, so they stop asking stupid questions,” said Sven, the Helpdesk’s beautiful Swede. Users (female) had indeed rapidly taken to call him just to see him, a fact which infuriated him not in all cases, at least not the pretty ones. Of course it wasn’t Sven who was going to give the courses. But he had good ideas:

“We especially need courses for the Basics. People never know the basics. It must be a course with the real basics, like even how to hold the mouse and what buttons to use when and where. They just don’t dare admit it, you know, like the story of Father Christmas. You feel that everyone knows it except yourself and consequently do not dare to ask anymore. Years later, you still believe in it.”

Myra suspected Sven exactly of that. Not wanting to admit he didn’t know some of the basics. So if the users didn’t ask any basic questions, it would not become so obvious that he couldn’t answer. But after all, Sven was a Hardware Support, and one couldn’t know everything and still stay so sexy.

“If we give courses we need [Manuals](#),” said Hildegard.

“Oui, des manuels. Excellente idée! - Yes manuals would be fine,” alleged Maurice, the only one in his group of eleven to use his mother tongue. The French were not good with languages as other nationalities. Maurice only spoke French, English, and some Chinese, when he was explaining to the users. “But I’m not going to do it. So who is?” He frowned at seeing the French words in his sentence underlined with tiny red waves. Hilde must have activated the ‘Check spelling as you type’ option in ‘Tools - Options - Spelling and Grammar.’ He didn’t dare just to deactivate it but instead right-clicked on each word and chose ‘Ignore’ from the list. “So who is?” he repeated.

“Well I am,” said Hildegard. Maurice looked at her approvingly. There was a girl not just talking, but taking the responsibility of her words.

“We could also do [Web Pages](#), with the FAQs, the Frequently Asked Questions. Q&A Helpdesk Web Pages, where people can find an answer to all their problems. Good answer, good question, like when the sun meets a dark place,” said Myra. Her long dark hair fell over her slightly dramatic face.

“I just thought of that,” said Leo.” I’ll prepare the templates for you and you just fill in the content. I already have an idea of a layout. We will always use the same layout. The Question and Answer database will be dynamic, independent of the HTML code. This database can be filled in by you all, *au fur et à mesure*. You meet a good question

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and find a good answer? Send them to Myra, she'll fill them in the database.

"Are you going to do it with *Coldfusion*?" asked Gwendoline.

"Hmm," made Leo, who loved obfuscation, but Gwendoline knew that Coldfusion was a tool for building and managing Websites by supplying them dynamic content out of databases. He knew she knew and looked at her approvingly.

"Do we really need all of this?" said Nico. Gwendoline smiled at him:

"Ok Nico, we all know you are a programmer, and that programmers are not very user friendly. Programmers don't listen to their users." Upon this, Nico looked guilty:

"I could create *macros* and little workflow programmes for the users, to help them to carry out actions they have to do a hundred times a week or day in just on click of the mouse and one second. I will write the macros and add them to Custom menus in the programmes they are using. Each Office programme like Word or Excel will have such a menu added, just for our users."

Everyone applauded to this. Nico felt relieved. He went on: "The problem that only few users notice that they do something a hundred times in row, and even less, that they can ask for a macro which would do it in a single stroke. A user who does is a kind of a IT genius already."

"But you could say things like that in a Newsletter!" said Sven brightly. Sven was full of good ideas as long as others realised them.

"Who is going to read a Newsletter. People don't have the time to read anything anymore. No one is going to read it. And no one is going to write it." Nico looked doubtful again. Gwendoline shot him a look:

"I think Newsletters are a very good idea. In fact we could have users express themselves there too. What they need for their work, what they need from computers. Not so much only the computer problem as the problem underlying their question. I mean very often users phone apparently because of some computer problem, but in fact behind this is something entirely different. The underlying work problem for instance."

"But I'm sure Myra would love to do it", advocated Maurice, who didn't want to do the Newsletter either. He preferred research. "Maybe people will read it if the newsletter is of a different sort, maybe if it is ... romantic. And I feel sure Myra is very romantic. And I'm sure she can help express Gwendoline's psychological view on the question. I feel Myra you are something of a poet. 'Les Belles Lettres' are your thing."

Myra didn't know she was a poet but she felt flattered.

"Do we need psychologists and poets for an IT-Newsletter? Why not have us study theology and have us ordained?" Nico again. Maurice looked at him with doubt, as if he was fearing for his soul:

"Poets, Psychologists and even God are needed more than you think, especially when life is drab. People *might*, just *might* read it if it's poetic and people-oriented. Computers are something marvellous. Myra might convince the users of this fact, if she presents it in a romantic way, in the way of a poem. Computers are just like women."

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“Yes and they must be invited to dinner and then undressed. We all know about this. Your erotic relationship with computers has preceded you, so why don’t you do the X-Newsletter.” Nico wanted to take some revenge. Maurice however remained impassive:

“I’m not a poet. And believe me. It’s not only computers. I love my wife too.”

Everyone knew that already. His wife Franca was Italian and very beautiful. She mustn’t be so smart, as one likes to think of girls too pretty; and no one could quite understand what she and Maurice, even if he was quite good looking himself, were doing together. It sure wasn’t for her money, even she had loads of it, much more than he did. No wonder he was saying his salary was drab.

“Your salary certainly isn’t that drab,” said Gwendoline, understanding.

“I have no time to spend it.”

“And your Porsche was a birthday present from your wife,” said Sven, who was slightly jealous of this car. Not of Franca though, he liked his wife better, at least she had some brains and a lot of imagination. But he felt sure somehow that Maurice was not after his wife’s money. He probably had a protection complex, often found in intelligent men, and for sure needed a change from his own brains when getting back in the evening.

Over the debate Myra’s talents as a poet and her officially being pointed out to write a Newsletter had been forgotten and she let out a small sigh of relief. But who then was going to do it, she didn’t know, and didn’t want to ask.

“We could give the users more goodies,” said Maurice, “such as a library with IT books, a software library, freeware like Webshots and other imaging software, we could order mouse pads with our phone number on it, have our phone number in the start up screen too, have Leo and Lut make a logo, leaving a standard formula on the users desk, with this logo, and telling what we have done...”

☹ And expensive perfumes and fur coats ☹ thought Nico.

One could feel Maurice could go on like this for hours. He loved computers and his wife, but he loved his users too.

“We need to write all this down, to structure our ideas,” said Johanna.

“Who’s going to do this?” asked Sven.

“Well I am,” said Johanna. She bent down and made a note on her notepad.

“We’re going to save lives if we manage to do all this. Otherwise this mess will all kill us, first the MOU, then the House, and then the Outside World.”

“If the Outside World knew what is happening here,” said Leo. His fine long fingers painted an imaginary Outside World on the wall.

“But the Outside World does NOT know.”

“Nor do the authorities of our Internal World, The House,” said Johanna with this

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typical slightly spiteful laugh of hers.

“But WE know.”

“But we’re not going to tell this to the Outside” added Gwendoline.

“Nie-Jamais-Nooit-Nikdy-Mai-Never,” added Lutgarde. She really did like languages and Mischel above them all.

“We’re working in a nuthouse.”

“Wouldn’t everyone say this about the organisation or place he is working in?”

“I guess so. It might be their place too. But still, we cannot say the name of the House.”

“The users are always telling me that they would get crazy if they had to do my job.”

“And you answer?”

“That I would get crazy doing theirs. Their job is really difficult. I always answer: Everybody his job and I think: Everybody his way of being nuts.”

The other ten pondered over that for quite a time. It hadn’t occurred to them.

“But we can find a real name for our Helpdesk!”

“Yes.”

“Something meaningful.”

“Let’s think about it.”

Not everyone was mad in this House and one hour later they got a neatly structured Email from Johanna, listing all of our ideas in ten points, plus all the details of execution beneath.

And Johanna suggested that the Helpdesk should use the abbreviation CHD; as standing for Central Help Desk. Or Computer Help Desk if you prefer.

Their Email address would be chd@house123.org or chd-mouxii@house123.org CHD-MOUXII is an *alias*, that means the alternate name for the mailbox. Like you can have two or three first names or a nickname. And of course the address is not house123.org but since they were not allowed to say its name what could they do.

All in all, the CHD was not so unhappy anymore, they felt much less lost. At least they could now feel they would get along with each other like one mind, one body. They felt that each of them had something special to give to the users. And to each other.

The situation was chaotic, but Hilde knew: “There is order to be found in chaos, an order of the fractal kind. CHD needed to redefine that order, or find some order. Chaos might not mean disorder, it might mean the essence of order. His Strange Attractor is the limit set of a chaotic route.”

She said this to Joanna the same evening before leaving and Johanna thought of a precept she had learned early in life, her Golden Rule, the centred topic in her life.



“First of all, we need to organise ourselves!”



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FAQs Windows

Forget about this chapter, you know it all, or maybe you are like Loredana Wood, who never dared to ask, believing everyone knew.

Myra, the youngest of CHD team, was adapting well. In a few days time or less she had learned to answer more than fifty percent of the level 1 questions the users were putting to her by phone or Email herself. It were the FAQs. FAQs are **F**requently **A**sksed **Q**uestions.

Every Helpdesk in the World knows about them. And they represent almost fifty percent of the questions a Helpdesk may get. But it still takes time to answer them. Now Hilde and Gwendoline were making things better by giving courses where they listed them from the start, but still, courses were given mostly to newcomers, and the old ones still didn't know that the question they were asking was in fact a FAQ.

Myra in her first days at the HelpDesk, felt she was repeating it endlessly: Cut - Copy - Paste - Cut - Copy - Paste - Cut - Copy - Paste. Cut - Copy - Paste: a game like Paper, Scissors, Stone.

She had the impression that when she said CUT the user must say "Ctrl+X" and uplift his index and middle finger in a V form or say 'Edit-Cut' or 'right-click on the file and choose Cut'.



The same went for Copy. When she said COPY the user must say "Ctrl+C" and open his hand or 'Edit-Copy' or 'right-click on the file and choose Copy'.

Or PASTE. When she said Paste the user must say "Ctrl+V" and make a fist say or 'Edit-Cut' or 'right-click on the file and choose Paste'.

Wasn't it obvious, like a child would do to impersonate Scissors, that V meant Cut? All three commands had the same result, all three could be used, but the one who was faster won. It depended on what you were just doing or how your hands and fingers were placed.

Or was it rather like a game of cards? Poker maybe?



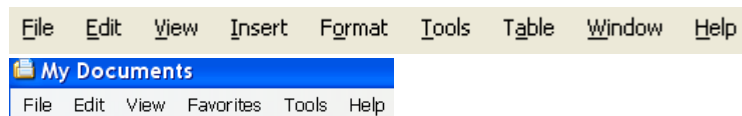
With the cards above you had a Full House.

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She had been crossing toolbars and menu bars and taskbars with users until everyone was exhausted.

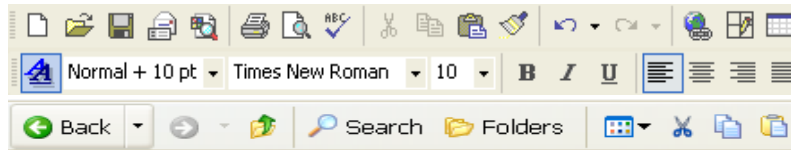
Menu Bars

Menu bars, the bars with the Text on it.



Toolbars

Toolbars, the bars with the little icons on it. The icons were the little drawings.



Astonishing how many people didn't know what they were or rather how they were called. But from all the crossing the toolbars got broken or disappeared.

☎ “The first thing to do if one of your Toolbar has disappeared is to choose ‘VIEW - TOOLBAR’ in the menu bar.

In Word, the ‘Standard’ and ‘Formatting’ toolbar, like the first two above, are the ones to be there by default. You can see a lot of other useful ones in the list though. If they have a little check sign to the left, then they are active. See?”

It worked for some users, but not for others.

“Yes! They are active. But I still don't see my toolbar.”

“This is nasty! The toolbar sometimes glides to the right or left of another, or hides behind it. You must really search for it like a kid for a Easter egg. The grab it gently at its handle and drag it to the place where it should be. Shame on you toolbar. See the fine light grey handle? Like an II ?



When toolbars disappear one must go out and look for them.

Another game, Hide and Seek. The Taskbar, the blue bar at the bottom loved to do that.

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Taskbar

☞ “Please right-click on an empty spot of the Taskbar, chose Properties, and then deselect ‘Auto-Hide the Taskbar’.

“But I haven’t told it to hide!”

Of course not, Windows did that all by itself, and Myra began to believe it.

The taskbar however came back on the manoeuvre.

With at it’s right the quick Launch icons.



And at its left the resident programmes.



☞ Other users’ Taskbars flipped to the right, left or top of the Desktop and hung there, unwanted:

“Marissu, just position the cursor on the taskbar, GRAB it by pressing the left mouse button, and DRAG it where you want it. Just DO it. Behave like a child would do, grab and drag, grab and drag, grab and drag. Yes you did it!”

This is typically hard to believe: that you can grab such a thing on a screen and drag it below. She almost cried Goal!

☞ “Must I now right-click or left-click or what-click?”

Myra had never thought about that, only done it. For her it had seemed obvious. It was not so easy to analyse subconscious hand movements. But why was it that it was ‘conscious’ for some users?

“RIGHT-CLICK anywhere, on the desktop, on an icon, on a word, on a taskbar, in an empty spot on your Word or Excel document, in the Internet Explorer, on a link, on a picture, on a folder, anywhere, and you’ll get a menu. From this menu you choose.

Just position your cursor glide over the item you want to investigate and then click once with the left mouse button!”

“Click TWICE with the LEFT mouse button on an icon on your desktop, such as a programme or a document which you want to run or open.”


Zip files, pdf files, expand & collapse


The questions dropped down on her like raindrops of the size of a fist, but she answered with an ease that astonished herself:

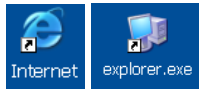
☞ “You have received file with a *.zip extension by email? That is a collection of files that have been “compressed” in order to make their size smaller. Just double-click on it. The WinZip programme will open. Then choose ‘Extract’ in the dialog box that


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appears.”

 “You opened a file with a *.pdf extension in Word and now you have strange characters? You say Japanese and Chinese characters? That’s sort of natural. PDF is Acrobat, Word is Word. They’re two different programmes. Just double-click on the PDF File. Don’t open it with Word. It’s another programme. Word is Word, Acrobat PDF is Acrobat PDF. Just double-click on it!”

 “All your folders beneath the folder called ‘Urgent’ in your Outlook have disappeared? Fine! Do you see the little +sign to the left of the folder name? Just click on it to expand it, click again on the –sign to collapse it.



 “No the first opens the Internet browser and the second opens the Windows Explorer. Don’t mix them up.”

Now Reader, you probably know all of this and you’re laughing. But don’t laugh, but instead beware, or you will end up working in a Helpdesk. Ready to get crazy?

Myra wasn’t yet, but she sure would be. Magic was needed, she knew it. Everyone’s confusion hang so thick in the air that one could have cut in with a knife. Her head swam, spun, turned. She felt like a hundred years old. She admired Hilde’s and Gwendoline’s courage, they had been doing this for years now. Maybe that with time ‘Cut-Copy-Paste-Cut-Copy-Paste-Cut-Copy- Paste’ became a mantra, and could help to calm you and keep a positive attitude.

She decided Maurice’s or Sven’s idea of a Newsletter was a very good one, and she put herself at work. Better to work more in the beginning, and get fewer calls later.

At this however, she had to painfully discover that she could hardly type more than two words in a row, being interrupted midway through the third all the time. After a lot of suffering through this ordeal, she managed to finish and Leo and Lut put her newsletter up in their Web Pages. They planned to have a Website with the FAQs on Windows, Word, Excel, Outlook and common problems with Hardware. The newsletter became a success.

But in the meantime everyone was very happy with Myra and wondered how she had mastered all of this in such a short time. Maybe it WAS magic. Myra had never thought she would have been able to make a newsletter! She had thought the only things she was good was having some intuition about computers and maybe princes. After all she was now his neighbour.

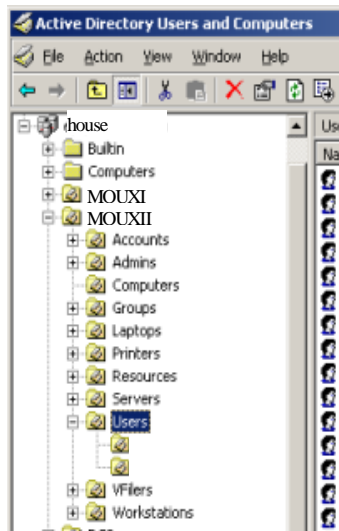
It's raining trainees

Or training rainees. Hildegard was facing one of the worst mass arrivals of newcomers ever, forty-four trainees. And forty of them female (the male ones where not quite as bad). Forty-four! She would have preferred to face an army of Trolls. Forever demanding, stamping their foot, thinking they knew it all, and this was so untrue. Had she really been so dense when she had their age? They were so dense that she almost pitied them, the poor little ones, so new to the world, but she couldn't, because they were dragons nonetheless.

She expected sixteen new Housefons too, but those must at one stage or the other learned to be human and were mostly well behaved.

Many People believe that the young ones are more gifted for computers than their elders but this theory was more of a legend and wasn't validated at all by her every day experience. Indeed she found them trainees so dim-witted that she feared for the future of the world. She chided herself on those thoughts, but she just couldn't help it. They were ever so annoying. They all looked alike but their nonentity took up a lot of space. Their hormones were probably running wild and their effort to look for a husband didn't leave time for computers. So, she, Hilde, was in for something.

She hadn't managed to obtain a list prior too their coming, indeed she had even been forewarned of their arrival at all. Until just this morning at 8h30, when Cornelia from Personnel MOU phoned to let her know about the upcoming mass invasion. And they came quickly. Attila the Hun and his troupes.



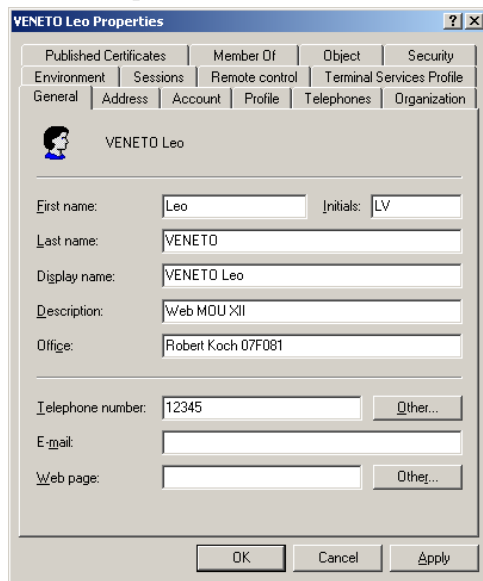
Already she counted ten of them standing in her office, all wanting one thing, well two: A Windows Account and an Email address. The Windows Account was necessary so that they could logon to their PC and the EMail Address was mandatory in order fro them to send and receive invitations for coffee.

Some people might think this can be done just like that but in truth for each the Account and each the Email address she needed at least 25 parameters.

Active Directory

Indeed in order to be able to logon to his PC, a user has to be given an Account the AD, which stands for *Active Directory*. The Active directory is a database, just like a big phonebook. It is structured in OU's - *Organisational Units*, that is subdivisions of users,

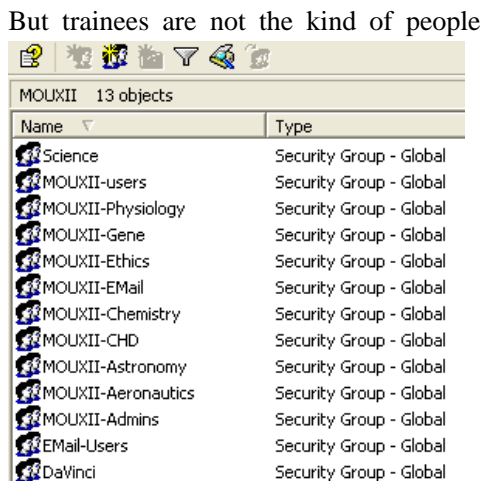
groups they are member of, shared resources like CDs, printers, computers, servers, laptops. For each user it contains fields like last and first name, title, office and phone, personnel number, status, service, group memberships, date of arrival and date of departure, principal language, password settings, logon accounts, department, group memberships and some more.



All of which ‘objects’, as they are called in modern IT vocabulary, can be tracked and located in the database. Well maybe at other places, but not at the House.

As an example take Leo’s account in the user database, the ‘Active Directory’ and don’t forget to fill out all the *Tabs*, here you only see the fields of the ‘General’ tab.

With forty-four trainees times twenty-five this gave her, if she took her calculator (in ‘Start -Programmes- Accessories - Calculator’), over 1.000 of those parameters or fields to enter in her database. This is not done in a minute.



But trainees are not the kind of people that like to wait. ”We are expecting very important reports from our boss,” they explained to her, as if she was a dim-witted unwilling child. It was their first hour at the House, and already they were waiting for an important report. Hildegard, who’d one day visited a trainee’s mailbox, had only found jokes and invitations to coffee, which the trainees could take in one of the four bars of the House, in order to find a husband.

A major *Tab* was the ‘Member Of’, that is *Security Group Membership*.

An AD group was most of the time containing the members of a WG. But this

was a complex task, in the present circumstances, because the WG’s hadn’t really been defined, so into which group was Hilde to add a trainee was a guessing game, improvisation on the spot.

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Ok there were good trainees. Nice ones too. Those even got hired later on and did not spend ALL their time drinking coffee. For instance Lut, she had once been a trainee. That did not mean that having a coffee was a crime, *au contraire*, it was a very positive action. But coffee alone and no work meant stomach problems. At least for Hilde.

Hildegard could not make herself get heard when she tried to explain that they would have to wait a bit, and that she was not the only one production line; that it also depended on the higher level of the mail administration team. But since they had to manage more than just this MOU but twenty-six, not counting the four bars, they would have to give out let's say 40 times 26 = 1040 trainee mailboxes today.

But the trainees didn't want to hear any of this. Hilde tried it nicely one last time and said she would notify them when their mailboxes were ready, via their Supervisor, to whom she would send the necessary info. She hid the fact that Mail Administration was putting trainees at the very end of their list, because they did not consider them to be very important. But say this to a trainee and he commits suicide. She did however dare say that it could certainly take until the next morning. When the trainees heard that they broke out into violent shrieks, just as if she had told them they would be taken one by one and grilled alive. She could only get rid of them by almost physically throwing them out of her office. They trotted ill-humoured back to their PC's which where parked all over the floors, because of a lack of space.

But this, she knew, would not be the end of it. By the end of the morning each of them had phoned in average at least three times, which made a total of hundred and thirty-two calls, just to keep asking when their mailbox would finally be ready, and how many important reports for them to treat were stuck there because of her. Nothing helped the fact that Hildegard repeated that their mailbox would only be ready the next morning.

Oh let the dwarfs take them!

Hildegard felt she was not handling this right, and began to imagine murder scenes, which she drew up in mind on the wall before her. She began to relax, and smiled with glee. One trainee hanged, another shot, another...

As if phoning her non-stop was not enough three of the trainees now returned, entering her office menacingly. Their attitude clearly showed they wanted to intimidate her. A fourth trainee was to join them quickly. To make it worse the phone rang and she had the secretary of the Director General of MOU XX at the end of the other line (he too was on sick leave). She dared to answer and the four trainees glowed at her furiously. Above that ten messages appeared one after the other in her mailbox; half of them marked 'Urgent'. Well then it was not so much a problem. Three of the messages came from the trainee's supervisors and were claiming for their trainee's mailbox. She would have imagined more intelligence from that side at least.

The day passed on this mode, with the continuous visits of furious trainees claiming for

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their mailbox and thus doing everything in their power to keep her from doing it. That is entering their data in the Active Directory in order to get them a logon and then send a request for a mailbox to Mail Administration. One trainee she counted came to her office seven times. This face she finally remembered. Should she get rid of her by letting her meet Mrko Mrnsk maybe?

She was sure Mail Administration was planning her assassination too, with the ever growing number of requests she send them.

Hildegard allowed herself a little break to count the number of messages she'd got since the beginning of the day. Hundred and eight.

But by the next day, the Miracle had happened, and the trainees had their mailbox. At least in principle, because Hildegard knew the worst was to come. Instinctively she braced herself against the usual attack.

One trainee phoned to ask that the HelpDesk send him someone to his flat to install his home computer. When Hilde sent him, politely, to the devil, he said he would inform his CLA and that it would have consequences.

A second required CHD to supply him with personal scanner, colour printer, digital camera and USB key. When she told them all of this was a his disposal and the CHD main room he had a tantrum, something which typically builds up inside frustrated toddlers.

A third wanted to know who would be put at her disposal to type her important reports. What would they be later, once grown up! Hilde believed that either they would, by some miracle, adapt to civilisation, or be doomed to disappear, as the dinosaurs had.

Logon

But all this was nothing, compared to the logon drama. No trainee ever had managed to do a logon and enter a mail password without help. Ok you don't believe that one. But they amount of trainees who didn't was enough to turn this belief into conviction. Ok Hilde well knew that many trainees were nice and smart, the problem was, she never met one. They never called nor showed up at CHD.

You know that after you've switched on the PC and the little box has booted you'll see a message:

Please press Ctrl+Alt+Del to logon. You then obtain a little dialog box like:

Username	
Password	
Domain	House (nothing to change there)

To the right of this box the trainee had to enter the Username and Password as they

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were given to him by his Supervisor.

Such as:

Username	Carmen ● Martinez
Password	Svet8888
Domain	House (nothing to change there)

If you manage to do this you will get access to the desktop, hard disk, resources. You will begin to use all this and begin to understand what it behind all this. Well you might, because you will not if you are a trainee.

Svet8888 was the password given to every newcomer. Why “Svet8888”. Because “Svet”, meaning “Universe” was Czech and Myra had devised this password and Myra was Czech. Or still is. 8888 was CHD’s phone number.

First she had wanted to take ‘Domek’ for ‘House’, but then Domek contained an M, and M is a dangerous character for a password. In fact a good password must not contain either A, Q, W, Z nor M. Because of the frequent keyboard driver inversion between Qwerty and Azerty. That is the programme or commands which made the keyboards produce one set of letters or another, like Kbden.dll for English keyboard or Kbdfr.dll for a French keyboard. Or Kbdcz.dll for a Czech keyboard.

I now this sounds nonsense to someone who has never experienced a keyboard driver inversion at initial logon. But at the House, with all its languages, it happened all the time. And a Qwerty-Azerty inversion is innocent compared to what could happen to Hungarian passwords. Windows reads characters slightly different in- and outside the session and once the trainee had set his Hungarian password and logged off in the evening he could never log in again.

Thus Hildegard dutifully spent the whole morning hanging on the phone or running from floor to floor to help the trainees typing their logon and introducing their password. Helping them over the phone usually gave no result.

“Ca ne marche pas - it does not work,” would they stutter in their often bad English or French, the two mandatory languages. Or rather they sniffed it, speaking through the nose, in their effort to pronounce well. Hildegard knew she was being mean and spiteful, but the sheer numbers just made her so.

An expected number of the trainees had obviously never seen a computer. They phoned to say it was not working. HelpDesk’s standard question the was:

“Is the computer switched on?” and the second:

“Are you sure?”

Hilde then had to send Lexi or Sven to do it for them.

Many of them, especially the girls, couldn’t even hold a mouse, and waved it at her, like if that would help. Weren’t they supposed to have been chatting with boys on the

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Internet since they were fourteen years old?

Trainees were just the kind to tug a dwarf by his beard if they saw one. And beware the one who does this. Hilde smiled at the thought. Maybe this was just the kind of wrong advice she could give to the trainees.

The phone rang for the twentieth time since eight-thirty. The usual question.

“Hi I’m a trainee and it doesn’t work,” said the trainee, to explain everything.

Hilde could formally hear the word ‘poor’ standing before the word ‘trainee’. Trainees always meant to convey how ‘poor’ they were. And they were, at least in mind. Hilde abhorred trainees; they gave her ‘les buttons’.

“What doesn’t work?”

“Je ne comprends pas - I don’t understand.”

“What is your name?”

“Angela Recluta.”

“So what doesn’t work?”

“I can’t get in.”

“You can’t logon?”

“What’s low-gum?” Hilde heard panic growing and panicked herself.

Was she going to explain it?

“The logon is the name given to the fact that one types his username and his password to obtain access to the desktop and operating system of the PC, as well as to the files and programmes stocked on its hard disk and the resources of the servers to which the PC is connected.”

No! This trainee would then ask: what is a desktop, what is an operating system, what is a file, what are servers and resources, and what is stocked. Understandable somehow, that she didn’t know. Maybe this was the first time she used a PC, and came from a very poor family. Hilde tried to translate it into more common language:

“You entered your username and your password and it doesn’t work?”

“I don’t understand. What must I do?”

Hildegard, used to this, tried another way:

“What do you see before you?”

“Hm?”

“The screen? Do you see it?”

“Yes.”

“What do you see on the screen?”

“Mm. I don’t understand.” (sniffing)

“What colour is the screen?”

“Black!” (relieved)

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“Please hit any key on the keyboard.”

“Sorry?” (anguish)

☹ Hildegard bit her lips and imagined how someone would take this Angela and throw her out of the Window. Why didn't Sven go? He loved trainees. ☹

“Hit the keyboard Dear”

“Really? Hit?”

“Yes.”

Hildegard heard the trainee hit the keyboard.

“What do you see now?”

Hildegard heard the trainee smiling:

“I see: Press Ctrl plus Alt plus Del.

“Great! Can you do this?”

“What?”

“Press **Ctrl+Alt+Del**.”

“I don't understand.” The trainee had stopped smiling.

☹ Hilde began to imagine a torture chamber ☹

“Look at the keyboard Sweetie. Yes?”

“Yes (sniff).”

It is true that it is maybe not so obvious to make the relationship between the fact of seeing “Press Ctrl+Alt+Del” on the screen and then doing it on the keyboard. Hildegard couldn't remember she hadn't been able to do that, but maybe she'd just forgotten about it.

“See if you find three keys named Ctrl, Alt, Del. Do you see them?”

The hour or so the trainee takes now gives Hilde the time to type ‘medieval torture chamber’ into her Google Search box and go surfing.

☹ Found! ☹

“Ah. Yes!”

“Can you press them all at the same time?”

“All? Yes. Ah! Yes.”

“What do you see now?”

“Aaah. I see: A box. With **U s e r n a m e, P a s s w o r d, D o m a i n**.”

“Domain must stay like it is.”

“Ah right.”

“Do you have the paper with your username and password?”

“I don't understand.”

☹ Tongs? ☹

“The paper I have given to you yesterday.”

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“Yes, the paper, yes.”

“Can you type what is written next to username on the paper in the username box and do the same thing for the password?”

Hildegard hears the trainee type.

“Have you done this?”

“Yes.”

“Now press Enter.”

Trainee hits something. Silence and then:

“It doesn’t work.”

👁 Garotte? Strappado? 👁

“What happens?”

“It doesn’t work.”

“Do you see a message on the screen?”

“Yes.”

“Can you read it to me?”

Trainee reads dutifully:

“Could not log you on to the domain. You may have introduced an invalid username or password.”

“Try again.”

Trainee does.

“It doesn’t work.”

👁 Screws? 👁

“Please read to me what’s written next to ‘username’.”

Trainee spells out:

“j o a n dot a u s t i n”

Hildegard knew that trainees had problems understanding they had to type THEIR name in the username box. Some even typed ‘username’, instead of their own username. The fact that another name was written heir did not seem as a problem.

She felt like murder but tried to stay patient in her voice, while wildly gesturing at the wall.

“But that’s not your name. You must put your name instead of this other name. You have a credit card and a bank card? With your own name and password, don’t you?”

“Yes!”

“And when you want money, you don’t put another name into the system, don’t you?”

“Arr.. No.”

“So what’s YOUR name?”

“Angela Recluta”

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“Please now type **angela.recluta**. angela dot Recluta.

“Like on the paper?”

“Yes. Now type the password: Svet8888”

Angela types:

“No! Does not work!”

☹ Whip? Wheel? ☹

“Try again with a capital S Honey.”

“A capital S! Ok. It works!”

“It works? “

“Yes! Thank you. You’re very nice. I’ll tell the others!”

Oh please don’t! If word got out, she was doomed. They would all come running! And Hildegard didn’t feel nice at all. She felt lost. A silence followed. No call at all. But Hilde knew she was the eye of the cyclone.

Thinking back chances were that she had been just as stupid, or been considered such. Indeed she now remembered having been treated badly by a series of very old maids, male ones included, so it was maybe for the same reasons that she felt murder now.

She reflected that in this big new world made of numbers and Babel language, them trainees maybe just had an identity problem, not really knowing about the importance of their name in the system, and not being able to link words like username and password to some reality.

Trainees! Remember your name!

On this wise thought, Hildegard braced herself against the next attack.

She had to survive a few more days, until all the trainees had gotten access to their PC. After that they would anyway spend their time in the bars of the House, queuing up by the hundreds for a coffee in order to keep herself and her colleagues from having one.

♪ It’s lunchtime! Can you believe it?

Are there companies and institutions with bars? Yes of course, and it was the style of the House. This ‘House’ has at least ten of them (not counting the private office bars). Of course they are several canteens too, with thousands of dishes served a day. The House’s largest canteen is at all times filled to the extend of bursting, with members of the official staff of course, administrators, assistants and secretaries and, but also with temporary staff of all kinds, auxiliaries, trainees, petitioners, then the Scientists and their staff and all their wives and kids, then the men and women of the technical services, chauffeurs, electricians, window washers, then journalists, groups of visitors by the dozens, friends, husbands and wives, kids, security teams, terrorists, their wives and kids, the personnel of the newspaper shops, the personnel post office, and whoever else I cannot think of right now howling through it. It was a roaring noisy, noisy place,

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with twenty minutes queues and dishes forever cold when one finally managed to reach a table and sit down.

The CHD didn't like to go to the big canteen. It gave no rest and one left it more stressed than they were before. Only Leo and Gwendoline went there from time to time. To be alone in their very own fashion.

The House had a lot of small canteens too, they was one or more in almost every building of the House, hidden behind staircases, popping up behind a corner, being born out of the nowhere and disappearing just as suddenly again a few weeks later.

There was the Peacock Bar, named so because of its life Peacocks, which were wandering proudly before its windows, the Pink Bar, because its life salmons, and the Mountain Lodge, because it was lodged high up in the mountain, you had to take three elevators and three escalators to get there.

Hilde, Penelope and Emma II went to the Peacock bar.

The peacock bar was the favourite; the funny thing was that they were such modest peacocks. Some Bohatian variety of them made them walk and spread their magnificent plumage like with a lot of reserve. They were not proud of their majestic fan. This was just the way of the House too. It loved understatement.

Change password

She then spent the whole afternoon explaining to 44 trainees how to change their Windows password. Having sent them instructions of how to do this was to no avail.

She said "Press **Alt+Ctrl+Del** and then choose '*Change password*' so many times that she wished for an inflatable automatic Helpdesk pilot.

Note that in order to change your password on your Home PC you have to choose 'Start - Settings - Control Panel - User Accounts - Change an Account - Change Password' if you are using Windows XP.

Whatever it may be, just catch the (hopefully not wrong) attitude.

She was such a success with the young crowd that she had to continue to change trainees' passwords in her dreams. At one moment the trainee who had visited her office seven times came back. She seemed to have grown to a giant size. She towered over Hilde, demanding a mailbox, in such a menacing manner that Hilde woke up with a start. Revenge!

That night, she devised a Welcome Sheet that she would from now on distribute to the Trainees. It would contain some simple rules for the trainees to follow. House and IT rules; further spell out their name, username, initial password in beautiful, coloured letters; then describe how to logon. Finally bid them to read the Help web pages and hint at in squalid details what would happen if they did not.

She got Lut to make her a beautiful layout, Lut seemed to be such a creative person. As for the squalid details, she pondered as if to ask Maurice, but then trusted her own

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imagination.

Trainees must be given to feel how important they were and at the same be silenced.
And it was to work; the next invasion of trainees would be much less bad.

And since they would have four of them a year, the Welcome Sheet would help a lot.

The Key and Super User

As Lut heard from Donatello, the man who held a shop where he sold newspapers on the ground floor of their building, the acronyms for our two buildings had now changed to RK and MC, which sounded more reasonable. Everyone told everything to the Newsvendor, and he told everyone. Of course she knew Hilde would have the rather frustrating task to change the acronyms all over in her databases, and herself all over in her Web Pages.

Tello asked her how she was and she told him:

“Fine, but we have so much to do, it’s such a Chaos.”

Tello stroked his white beard, shaved close to his skin. He looked pensive, but then gave her a warm smile. One could say a lot about that smile:

“I’ve heard about that. But I’m sure you’ll get help somehow.”

“It rather be soon. And hierarchy never realises our workload.”

“That seems to be the definition of hierarchy,” said Tello.

But hierarchy then did do something for the CHD, and sent them Myra. To help. Myra was not an informatician, but had been, just until yesterday, the kind of user who often ends up in a Helpdesk: A Super user. A Super user is a user so gifted with Computers that he ends up doing nothing but that. But since Myra was still so very young, and lacked experience somehow, they decided she should do the Central Helpdesk, taking all incoming calls and then dispatching them to the right person. With Myra they were now eleven.

But hadn’t Myra already been present since the first meeting? Maybe she had, but as already mentioned, the House was nuts. People were saying it all the time. And they were actually proud of this, why is not so clear. Like Italians are proud to cheat a bit, the French to be chauvinistic, the Dutch to be penny-pinching, the Belgians to be... ok I stop.

What had happened was that Myra, freshly come to the House some months ago was hired in a WG with quite difficult people in it. Three rather old maids, maybe jealous of her. And they were hopeless with computers. Myra, with the inexperience of her youth, was quite unable to handle them (the old maids, not the computers). Nor could they handle her. A report went from the WG’s boss to the Personnel Service, asking them to put her away, and that she didn’t do. Personnel was shocked, the House NEVER put anyone away, so a solution was searched for and found. And since the only good thing her WG was grudgingly admitting about her was that Myra was ‘quite’ good with Computers so why not give her to nice CHD team, all of them ever so kind, they would know how to ‘educate’ her. ‘Educate’ here was not meant in the sense Charles Dickens might have used when describing his orphanages, but rather in the sense Bettelheim

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developed to help his autistic children. Never punish, always let do, they would then learn by themselves.

Such were the ways of the House. Sometimes they went to far in this, as for instance not telling Myra's previous WG how difficult they were sometimes themselves.

So the CHD got Myra. A previous Super User.

The Super User is, along with the Key User, a person to cherish. Those two help a Helpdesk to an extent they seldom realise.

The CHD had quickly found out who they were: There were almost as many as there were Workgroups. Almost every workgroup of the world must have one. It just happens. It's like magic. The same law did not apply to the Super Users. There were much less Super Users. What luck. Because if they were too much Super Users, there would be less HelpDesks. But a Key User was the one a HelpDesk needed.

The Key User does not have to be a genius with computers. But he is good with their users, his colleagues. He or she is the one who knows the needs of his service from top to bottom and often of the kind who likes to integrate people.

Marianna, Denis, Patsy and Erik were examples of such Key Users.

He or she would give them the 'CHD Welcome Sheet' and show them the first steps through his computer. Like the mapping to their standard shares on the network. Like were the standard programmes are hiding on the desktop or the start programmes lists. The Key User must be given to feel he is a key, the key; if not in an explicit way, then at least in a implicit one. The Helpdesk must give him to understand how precious his help is to them and how deservingly proud he can be about that. He or she becomes a sort of underlying boss.

Johanna always thought the Key User must be typically the 'assistant' of a service, Gwendoline and Hilde preferred to have him chosen by a fate of its own, not designated by human choice, but by some higher instance.

A Key User is not appointed. He is born to that role. The Key User can thus be a secretary, an assistant or a CLA, though most of the time it will be one of the first two. He or she reveals himself immediately; one does just feel that someone is a Key User. Some services, but not so many, lack them entirely; and then the Helpdesk has to do it all, about guessing the service's needs. Other services have two or more of them. Sometimes the Key User does not even really like his function, but understands the need of it. He's a generous one, a benefactor. But most of the time a Key User will be proud to be a Key User. And he sure can be.

Now the funny thing is that the Helpdesk would never speak the word 'Key User' out aloud. The Key User feels he is one, but maybe he does not even know there is a word for this function.

The Key User will also be the first one to inform a Helpdesk about bugs in a new programme, give suggestions about what to add or change in a programme, and most of the time his suggestions are well founded and thought over. Key users are among the

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main builders of a programme.

Gwendoline always thought that the Key User should get some sly advantage from them for all his help and good deeds, like being the first one to get a new PC and or a new and larger flat screen, but most of the other Helpdesk members of the House would be rather shocked by this opinion of hers.

God bless the Key User. Oh but hang a golden key around his neck! Of course even if this chapter wants to define the Key Users, everyone in this manual is a Key User. And a key person. As you are too.

A Key User can be a Super User but this will be coincidence most of the time. Good knowledge of a service does not mean good knowledge of computers, even if Key Users are good with computers most of the time.

Just as the Key User is born to take care of people, the **Super User** is born to use computers. Like many children, he will understand them by sheer intuition. Sheer intuition will lead him to search for more and find out what to do.

The Super User is not as easy to detect as the Key User. The reason is that the Super User is sometimes so good with computers that he will never call the HelpDesk. So CHD might not even know him, or only as a face in the elevators (not working). This could be the kind of Super User who is just good with computers, but might have no wish to make a job out of it. Otherwise he would not be able to help himself, and would call the HelpDesk from time to time, just as to meet others like him, peers. Equals.

If he does call the Helpdesk will recognise him on the spot. This user will never ask questions about how to do things or where to find a function, all this he has found out by himself, but it will then rather be requests of the kind that will help him develop further:

“Can you help me with this macro I’m doing. Or: Could you let me have this or that programme you are using. I don’t have the administrator’s right to install it. But I have edited the mapping batch you wrote for the automatic connections and have slightly changed it for my own needs, but now I would need access to the source code. Or: I would need to resize the picture of this nanometre, and change the *hue*.”

They would never ask a question because they didn’t know or had misunderstood, but they would point out at problems the CHD hadn’t even discovered themselves yet.

✂ If they had an error message, they would have written it down ✂, instead of calling the CHD and just saying ‘I had an error message but now it has disappeared and then when HelpDesk came often not being able to reproduce it. No the Super User would select the dialog box with the picture on it, press **Print Scrn**, open Word, click on Paste and then send the document with the error message to CHD.

If they had a problem the first thing they did was to restart their PC and/or their printer. That solves the problem one third of the time.

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If the connections to their Screen or Printer or Network weren't working, they would always check the cables. They would go to the back of their PC and verify if every cable was stuck in and would follow each of them back to its other end, the printer, the floor or the screen.

For any question they had they would first try to find the answer on the Help pages of the MOU or in a book. ✎

It's fortunate of course that not every user is a Super User, otherwise there would be much less need for a Helpdesk. Just as you need an electrician or a lawyer or a hairdresser much less if you are one yourself. Everyone his job, and a talent makes one go to it.

With people like them, problems would be discovered and solved before everyone noticed and began to call.

"I cannot connect to the daVinci Server. Am I doing something wrong?"

But the daVinci Server, one central to the whole House, was indeed down.

Super users *smell* problems. They smell the problem, subconsciously test if they are right, and then inform the Helpdesk.

As already said, this kind of person might end up in a Helpdesk or he might not. If not if he might be of the kind who just wants to use computers, not configure them; perhaps he finds his actual job more interesting. If yes, this might only be an unconscious wish, maybe he does not realise to what extent he is good with computers. Maybe he is modest. Maybe he just hasn't thought of it. Most of the time it will not be the Super User who will apply to the Helpdesk team, it will be the Helpdesk team who applies to him.

Sometimes this request is met immediately with an immediate reaction of joy, now finally, finally they realised about my talent, but most of the time it is met with doubt:

"Do you really think I can do this?"

Also the Super User will frequently have regrets to leave his job, which he might like a lot. After all, had he not studied to be a secretary, an accountant, a linguist, a translator, a mathematician, a psychologist? Those are the kind of people which very often are good with computers. Computers are about formulas, languages, understanding people and patience.

So he might not want to come, but most of the time the Helpdesk manages to convince him.

In Myra's case, it was a bit different. She had not realised she was a Super User. Nor had the CHD. Nor had she really wanted to come, in the beginning. But she had been made to come. She had had no choice. But then it did quickly show how good that no choice had been. Even if computers were not Myra's first love. But she needed them to stay close to someone she had yet only seen on some pictures.

At the long run every Super User is bound to end up in a Helpdesk, and that's what

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threatens the three following ones too.

Svetlana, Doremi and Rosie were those CHD would first know about. Others would remain in hiding for quite a while, waiting for the right moment, back in the shadows of the dark buildings. And you will wonder: where is the man of the situation? But he would turn up, and if later, then *en force*. Better late than never.

In the meantime the three girls agreed to show (off) what they could do. CHD was grateful and delighted. Only Johanna had her doubts and added: “OK, but don’t let those girls frighten anyone of, our users need to stay relaxed.”

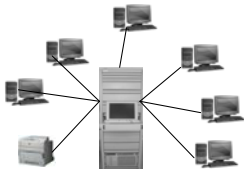
“Jo, I think they love to show what they know. Later our other users will want to do just the same!” said Gwendoline. Encouraged by her warmth Svetlana, Doremi and Rosie lined up, made a small but respectful bow to the audience and started to give a demo.

Svetlana was the first to step forward. She was a pretty girl who could eat for three and remain thin. This was her luck, because men kept inviting her, day after day. But she was a darling. She was reliable, intelligent and nice. And in the IT domain she was really impressive in her problem analysis and of such help. One problem seldom comes alone and chaos made that the network kept breaking down in one way or the other.

But Svetlana rather liked that, from the breakpoints she could deduct how things were linked.

Network, LAN, router, hub, IP address, Gateway, TCP/IP

First the LAN broke down in the Koch and Curie building. At the House each building had its own LAN - its *Local Area Network*. Like a phone system links the telephones together and allows calling one another, the network linked the PC’s to the MOU XII server, via optical fibres. The House used Ethernet, the most common network architecture. The 22 LANs were connected together by *bridges, repeaters and routers*. One of the Routers had had a problem. But this brought the joy of a new discovery to Svetlana:



✎ “Maurice I cannot to the save documents on the daVinci anymore. But Ursula who works in on the other side of the lake where the server stands tells me she can. Is there a problem with a machine which routes my request from one LAN to the other?” ✎

“Yes the *router* is down,” said Maurice, deeply impressed by her astute analysis.

✎ “Carla and the people in her office cannot access the network anymore, but the other can, is there something like a mini-router and is it not working?” ✎

“It must the *hub*,” said Maurice, very much awed by her description of the problem.

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Hubs were commonly used to connect segments of a LAN

“Routers and hubs,” said Svetlana, smacking her lips and Maurice had the impression she was eating mint chocolates, he love them too.

“There also *switches*, they do sort of the same thing, connect segments of LAN’s,” said Maurice generously.

✎ “Maurice I have this message on my screen: ‘The system has detected an IP address conflict with another system on the network’. My PC seems to have an address then, just like I have for my flat, and it must be unique, and now it isn’t. So it’s like the postman standing before two mailboxes with the same name and he can not deliver. Is that right?” ✎

“That’s so right Svetlana, the DHCP is not working, nor does the APIPA seem to.”

“DHCP repeated Svetlana dreamily. He was sure she would have looked all this up on Webopedia or Whatis, but she couldn’t, since her PC couldn’t connect to the network. He wrote an email to Sven to check about the IP-address. Indeed Sven found out that two PC’s had the same address: 182.123.14.155 (of course I can’t tell the real IP address; otherwise some wise crack would immediately find out the House’s name by using the *tracert* command or something like that).

Some time before those IP-addresses, together with a hostname (like the address of a flat plus the name of its owner), had to be entered manually. But a new system had come, DHCP – the Dynamic Host Configuration Protocol now dynamically allocated IP-addresses to computers in order not to have an IP-address twice. But now it was not working, nor was the APIPA, which should come in if the DHCP server was not working. It took a crowd like Mrko Mrnsk and his ITPOL team to achieve that. You’re going to hear more of Mrko Mrnsk later.

✎ Maurice I’m so sorry to bother you again, but now I can reach the Intranet, our House’s web pages, but not the Internet, like I wanted to look up the things you told me about on Webopedia, but I get Page not found HTTP error 410 all the time. Is there a problem with the machine which routes the traffic of my request to the outside world?” ✎

“Must be the *Proxy Server*, or the *Gateway*,” said Maurice. “It’s the computer that routes the traffic from a workstation to the outside network that is serving the Web pages. I’m so sorry for all those problems”.

Svetlana did never bother them, she was of such help. And modest too, not really realising how bright she was. And above that not mad at them, sensing the problems were not in their hands. But then most users did, almost right from the start.

“The Gateway!” said Svetlana, unimpressed by the untold compliment, and Maurice could almost smell the Mint chocolates taste via the Phone cable. But it was he who found Mint chocolates on his desk later in the day, with a yellow Postit from Svetlana attached to the little green box:

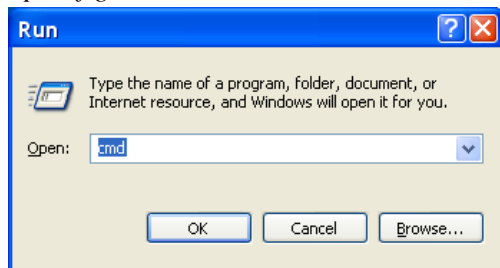
“Thanks for your ever lasting patience Grand Master. I know you like Mint too and

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now I know something about this whole system, this TCP/IP – the *Transmission Control Protocol* and how via this *Protocol* all those machines like servers, PC's, routers and hubs and gateways connect and exchange data. Svetlana.”

Maurice, tasting a mint chocolate, was even more impressed now. He hadn't used that word once. TCP/IP. What a girl! And so attractive. Why wasn't she married to some good looking genius like she herself was? Hilde had told him that Gwendoline had told her that her only interest in men was that they invite her to dinner. She gulped down the dinner and then left, staying thin. It was because Svetlana was waiting for the fourth Super User, but didn't know that yet. In the meantime it was solely analysing network problems that excited her and made her feel all dizzy in the head like others would be after drinking Champaign to celebrate a betrothal.

Choose 'Start - Run'. Type 'cmd' in the command line that appears and then type 'ipconfig' in the black screen, the command editor that appears subsequently.



And the IP address of your PC will appear.

Second Doremi from Virginia entered the scene. Her name on passport was Jeanne, and why everyone called her Doremi no one knew. She was excellent in her job, great with people, and very attractive. But with computers she was incredible. Awesome.

Tools-Options-Preferences

First thing she did when she got a new programme was to look in 'Tools - Options - Preferences'. One or more of those words are to be found in every programme. With those she could configure the programme to her needs and liking.

Registry

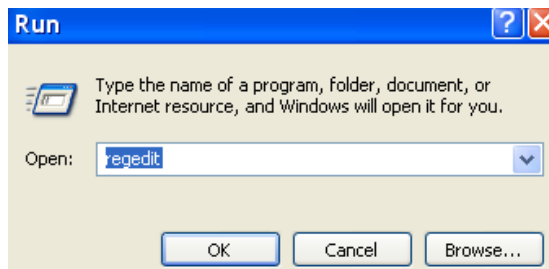
Second thing was that she knew about the *Registry*. While surfing in Google Internet had informed her that:

‘The *registry* is a single place for keeping such information as what hardware is attached, what system options have been selected, what settings the user decided to choose, how computer memory is set up, and what application programs are to be present when the operating system is started.’

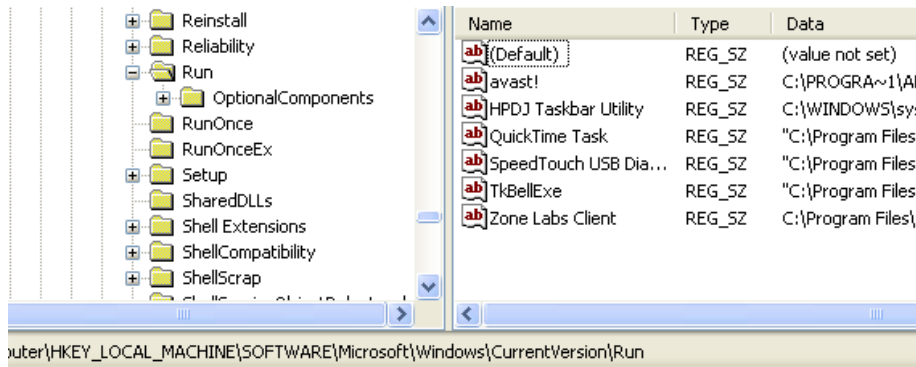
She now knew that she had to choose 'Start - Run - Regedit' to open this Registry.

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Unfortunately she had to realise that at ‘the House’ this command was disabled for the users, probably because it was much too dangerous to use. Wow! Danger! But what a pity: you entered a PC’s mind with that command.



However, when she did it at home, where the PC let her, nothing exploded, to her slight disappointment.



But she liked what she saw. All the computers settings were contained there. Her heart was pounding. Shudders of delight ran all over her back. She spoke some of it out aloud: RUN: avast! - the Virus Scanner. And then QuickTime to play cute videos. And the SpeedTouch USB Modem. So this was the place were the Registry told the computer what programmes to run at Startup. Doremi felt elated and read the rest of the whole registry like if it had been a novel. Of course it was a dangerous novel. One wrong move and the whole system would really sort of explode. Doremi was almost to good to be true.

And last but not least to do the demo was Rosie, who, wanting to be fearsome too, chose ‘Insert - Function’ and made an IF() formula in Excel to impress everyone. She chose :

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	A	B	C	D	E
1	Can I afford a Bohatian jewel?				
2					
3	€ or \$ or £	Action	formulas in cells B5 and B6		
4	15.000	You can	=IF(A5>=10000;"You can";"Wait")		
5	4.000	Wait	=IF(A6>=10000;"You can";"Wait")		
6					

Rosie happily realised she could. This Excel formula really made her feel RICH.

But even if she liked jewels, she thought she would prefer to spend the money on some nice, restful and exciting trip together with her boy-friend. But they both worked too much to take their hearts and really do this. And besides, she hadn't done the dishes for a week now. So how leave. But at the moment she felt she couldn't care less, because of that IF().

Rosie, proud of her success, decided to investigate the same kind of possibilities in Word. With the *Macros*, the little programmes you can do yourself just by using the keystrokes and then *edit* as to further embellish them.

In Word, she chose 'Tools - Macro - Record New Macro' and made the keystrokes which selected a table and gave it a blue border and yellow background. She closed the macro by clicking on the little Square in the little dialog box that appeared.

She then chose 'Tools - Macro - Visual Basic Editor' (or **Alt+F11**) and entered the *Visual Basic Editor*. There she had some bad time before she realised she had to open 'Normal, Modules, New Macro' before she could find what she was looking for:

```

Sub Macro1()
Macro recorded 03/07/2004 by Doremi
Selection.Tables(1).Select
CommandBars("Tables and Borders").Visible = True
Options.DefaultBorderColor = wdColorBlue
Selection.Shading.Texture = wdTextureNone
Selection.Shading.ForegroundPatternColor = wdColorAutomatic
Selection.Shading.BackgroundPatternColor = wdColorYellow
End Sub

```

She realised she could make some changes to the macro in the text itself, like changing `wdColorBlue` into `wdColorRed`. But that wouldn't look so nice of course.

She was really terrible brave and then exported a much longer macro of the same kind to a *.bas file by using the 'File - Export' command. She then send the *.bas file to her Home PC and re-imported it into her Visual Baisc Word module there (F11 – File

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Import...)

This Visual Basic Word *.bas file made her feel better than when kissing her very good looking and kind boy friend. Ouch. This says a lot about her personality.

The threesome, freshly made friends, held each other by the shoulder now, and bent to the audience, thanking it for the applause.

Johanna, having watched the spectacle together with the others, applauded too, but smirked slightly: “When I was young, I could lift my leg to my ear standing on horseback,” she said.

This staggered everyone a bit, she hadn’t said anything about this on their first or second meeting.

“Come on,” said Maurice, who knew her a bit better. “Even if in truth you’re very old you don’t need to emphasise it.”

“And you don’t look it,” said Sven, trying to imagine Johanna on horseback, high heels and all. Since he was a good rider himself he imagined it could be possible.

In the ‘old days’ have you edited the autoexec.bat, config.sys or win.ini? Did you feel ILLUMINATED then?

Or, like Doremi, do you go and take the greatest pleasure in right-clicking on *.bat, *.cmd, *.ini or *.reg files and then choose ‘Edit’? Does what you see there send cold shivers of delight all over your back?

Or like Doremi, have you too chosen to do the Windows command ‘Start - Run - Regedit’ and read the whole Registry like a novel?

Do you feel rich when, like Rosie, in Excel you choose ‘Insert - Function - If’? and realise you can afford a Bohatian jewel?

Do you feel excited when you discover a network problem between the Koch and Curie buildings and do you feel like when meeting the man or women of your life when you discover it is a router problem?

Do you LOVE to spend time in ‘Tools - Options’ or ‘Edit - Preferences’ or ‘Properties’?”

If yes then you are a Super User and the Helpdesk will come and grab you. And if you do not want to, they will be very convincing. They’ll drag you to their office like an icon from one folder to the other. Consider yourself hired.

If not, that’s ok too. Fortunately, not everyone is a Super User. Otherwise a Helpdesk would feel much less useful. And besides, for the time being, it was the CHD which needed help. Badly. The moves, the split and remerge of the MOU’s, their own new Helpdesk team, and all the new application programmes, it was too much.

Moreover CHD quickly became victim of its success. People didn’t stop calling them

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for a second. Soon word was around that they knew everything and that moreover all of them were very nice. Lexi and Sven, when wandering around in the offices, noticed their phone numbers hung on the wall of almost every office. One woman had even inserted the list under a framed glass. Some users had a list with all their names and phone numbers; others had only two or three. Only Hilde had the honour of having a whole pane all for her alone. It was enormous, with her first name written on the first line and her phone number on the second line. It hung in the office shared by most of the forty new trainees. A big smiley on the third line made it obvious that they liked her...

Where are my documents?

It had been a terrible night, and the day was not to be better. Indeed more of a major drama, and Maurice was till half in tears, because he felt it had been partly his fault. The work of a whole day and night lost, because of one wrong gesture.

As always, they had been getting a deadline for a huge report for nine o'clock the next day, but the scientific articles necessary to put it together had only arrived the day before. Eleonore, wise, had of course been preparing the whole thing as well as she could and name this groundwork report DNA_0725vers1 and send this to translation. When the remaining articles arrived she had added them with *Track-Changes* procedure, a tool to make the modifications between an older and a newer version appear clearly. Like one would say ~~I delete that~~ and I add that. In nice colours too. Translation then has less to do and must only translate text marked as new or modified.



Eleonore had spent the whole day, and then the whole night at completing the report. Maurice had stayed at her side. The whole procedure, mixed together with the two new programmes Kaleidoscope and Elements 112 was too delicate to be stood out by a user alone. They had worked non stop, without finding time for lunch or even a sandwich, and worse, without drinking even a tea. At five o'clock in the morning Eleonore announced happily to Maurice that she was done. She now only needed to use the 'Accept or Reject Changes' command in order to have two versions of the report: The one with the Track Changes and a Clean version, which would show the report in its final state. She chose 'Tools - Track Changes - Accept and Reject All Changes'.

The document looked marvellous, just about perfect. Maurice, bending over her shoulder to see the result glowed with pleasure. He beamed at her with the most enormous smile he had ever managed.


A dangerous command: Save and Save As

"I only need to save it now," said Eleonore.

Maurice, so relieved as if he had just heard that the world would now not explode, opened the window to take a big bowl of fresh air. But he wasn't going to take it.

"I've saved it," said Eleonore. "Easy that last one, I just clicked .

As nice as this sounded, it rang a wrong note in Maurice's ear. A very wrong one.

"Nooo," he yelled. "Don't close it. Make an Undo  !!!"

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And he threw himself back with all his might to prevent her.

But it was too late. Eleonore had already closed the document. And the Undo command is only valid within a still open document. If it's still open, you can use it to undo masses of wrong moves.

"Now I can send this to translation," said Eleonore, ignoring him. "The cleaned version and the track changes version."

"I'm afraid not, Eleonore. You should have saved the document under a new name, after or better before cleaning it. There is no track changes version anymore."

"What do you mean?"

"Eleonore you have overwritten your beautiful work of one day and one night."

Eleonore looked at him disbelievingly, but when she saw his face, she noticed it was white as a sheet. He was telling the truth.

"Why." It was a desperate shriek. Not a question, but more the realisation of a lost cause.

"You have worked the whole night on a document named DNA_0725vers1. If you WANTED two documents, one with all the track changes and one without them then you NEEDED two documents. Thus you should have saved the document under a new name before cleaning it. For instance the name DNA_0725vers2. Even the backup won't help a hundred percent. The last backup has been taken at midnight."

He didn't say that the NAS Backup service had been out of order that night, ITPOL and Mrko Mrnsk's fault.

Eleonore understood at last. Soon she'd be scratching her face bloody and Maurice had a strong wish to jump out of the window. How could he have turned his back on a user at such a crucial moment as the one of saving a document! And for the first time since he was seven years old, tears ran over his face. Fortunately seeing a man like Maurice cry made Eleonore forgive him. The morale of the story is to never work one day and one night without sleeping, eating or drinking and to remember to never overwrite one document with another. On this wise thought, Maurice went home with the intent to save what remained of his sanity with at least a few hours of sleep.

Had Hilde or Gwendoline been at Eleonore's side, this would not have happened.

It was just not Maurice's job. Maurice takes care of the park of PC's, of the ensemble. Hilde and Gwendoline take care of the individual PC and user and the programmes he uses. The problem is that a job like Maurice's is much more valued in the IT world and by a company's hierarchy than for instance Hilde's or Gwendoline's is. His profile sort of took over the power, not that Maurice would do that, but still. Needless to say that the individual feels and appreciates this being taken into account and will value Hilde or Gwendoline above Maurice.

Of course, in Maurice's case, people could sense that he cared for the individual too. But Maurice was an exception. And there was no more hierarchy to pat this shoulder anyway. He had only Eleonore to comfort him over her own loss. Maurice decided he

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would never commit the same error again, and from now on leave a battle between a user and single document to Hilde or Gwendoline entirely.

When he came back, at nine in the morning, blinking and white-faced, it was only to be jumped at by Hilde, sided by a hand-waving user. :

“Where are my documents! I have lost all my documents!” cried the user. “My name is José Estamiano, I’m assistant of the Biology WG.” As if this explained everything and would get them the documents back. Nevertheless Hilde nodded earnestly to accompany his obvious despair.

“Maurice, really, this is so bizarre. No more docs on the Biology Share”

Maurice groaned:

“Don’t tell me something like that without letting me have a coffee first please. Let me get some down at Donatello’s place. Care for one too? Yes? Ok.”

Maurice left to come back after some ten minutes, holding three cups in his hands.

“So here’s your coffee. No please, don’t bother, next time it’s your turn then.”

All three took a grateful sip. José, a man round in face and body smiled broadly:

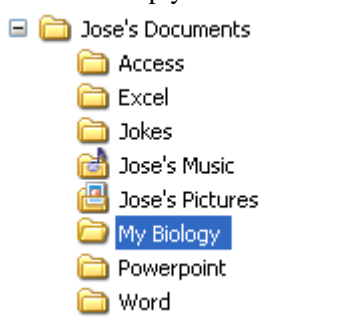
“Very good, obviously it’s coffee from Tello’s place. Tello’s coffee tastes better than at any other place of the House. Though it’s machine coffee too,” Hilde approved:

“True, that must be because he’s so nice. I think people are going down there mainly to see him. He’s kind of an angel.”

“Hm,” said Maurice, who didn’t like to have concurrence of any kind if it wore pants. Even if it was an angel. “But ok, I’ll show you your documents.

Maurice followed José to his PC and José opened the ‘My Documents’ folder:

“There! All empty!”



“All my working documents in ‘My Biology’ are gone! All the other files too: All my Word documents, my Excel spreadsheets, my PowerPoint presentations, my address books in Access.”

Maurice opened several of the folders in the right window pane, and indeed, no files in

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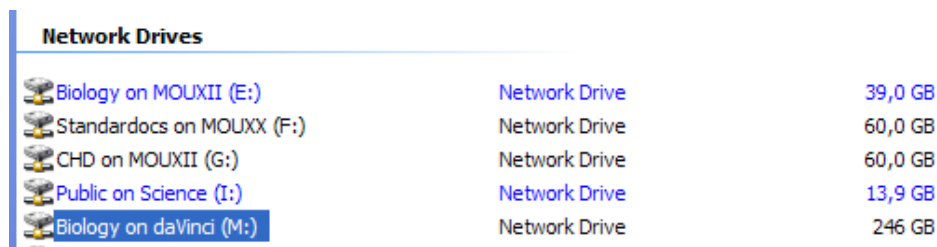
the left pane.

“Gone!” cried José.

“José stop using this exclamation point all the time,” said Maurice, “It makes me dizzy, and won’t help me find them documents back.” He opened the Recycle Bin, chose ‘File-Select All’ and then ‘File Restore’.

José looked a bit flabbergasted: “But I swear! I did do nothing! But you’ll see, I’m not dreaming, the documents on the server are all gone too.”

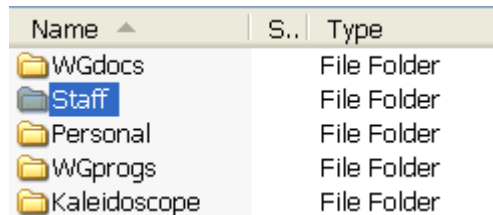
He now opened ‘My Computer’



The screenshot shows the 'Network Drives' section of a Windows 'My Computer' window. It lists five network drives with their respective drive letters and capacities. The 'Biology on daVinci (M:)' drive is highlighted with a blue selection bar.

Network Drive	Capacity
Biology on MOUXII (E:)	39,0 GB
Standardocs on MOUXX (F:)	60,0 GB
CHD on MOUXII (G:)	60,0 GB
Public on Science (I:)	13,9 GB
Biology on daVinci (M:)	246 GB

The he clicked on the Share for his Workgroup, Biology on drive E:



The screenshot shows a Windows File Explorer window displaying the contents of a network share. The 'Staff' folder is selected and highlighted with a blue bar. The window shows a list of folders with their names, sizes, and types.

Name	S.	Type
WGdocs		File Folder
Staff		File Folder
Personal		File Folder
WGprogs		File Folder
Kaleidoscope		File Folder

He then opened the folders one by one. They were indeed empty.

Maurice was not very happy about that either. What the hell had happened?

Of course files deleted on a Server are not to be found on the Hard Disk of the person who has deleted them. Maurice had to look on his Backup server, where they fortunately were.

Files and Folders

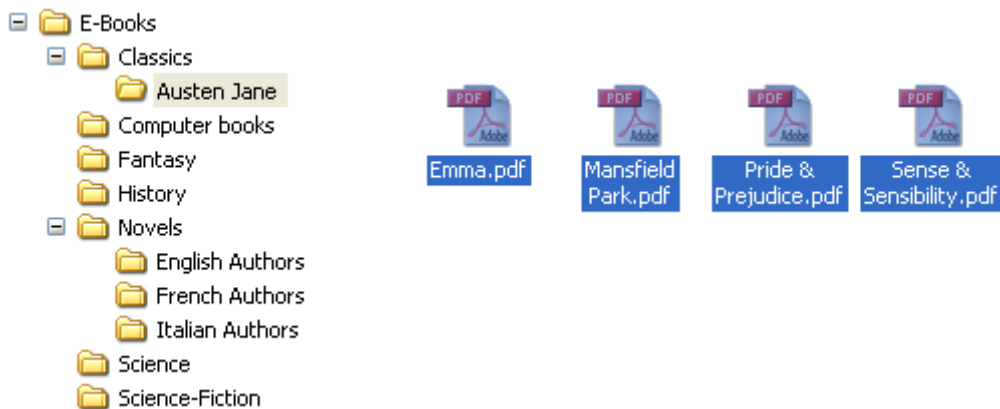
Whatever did some of the users do with their files and folders, Maurice couldn’t imagine. He didn’t even dare.

Would one burn down one’s flat with all the rooms and the furniture in it? Would one just delete the books and the shelves in his library? Computers were Maurice’s second home, or rather, principal residence. He saw his PC or his MOU XII server as his

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house, with the folders on them as the rooms, and the files as the furniture.

Maurice would never dream of reading a book in paper format. He only read E-Books or Audio-Books, directly on the PC.



Files and Folders were an even better way to organize his books than putting books on shelves in a library.

Maurice was really pushing it too far, but does one not do everything for the loved ones.

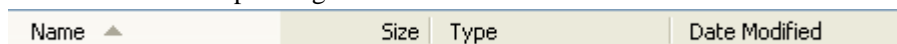
Create a new folder


Maurice had recently discovered Japanese literature as being very readable too. He opened the Novels folder, right-clicked on an empty space in the right pane and chose 'New Folder'. When 'New Folder' appeared, highlighted in blue, he typed 'Japanese Authors'.

It was so much handier to have them arranged in his computer, than on heavy shelves.

With the Copy, Cut and Paste commands he could rearrange the whole library in just a few clicks and keystrokes, whereas others had to take days to get their library reorganized, forever pushing the task to the next day or weekend.

With a PC could sort the files by name, size, last date accessed, and many more just by a click on the corresponding column.



He could use the Icon View:  to see them in all Details, as Icons, as Thumbnails, Tiles. Maurice couldn't call this shifting around of files in folders a passion. It was more of an obsession, like others could remain for hours eyes fixed on a tennis ball

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flying from left to right or cars racing around the Formula 1. It was like a stamp collection or solving crosswords, arranging beautiful objects in an apartment, or like in many other jobs, where one gets hooked to repeating the same thing endlessly. Maurice' passions went to much more complicated aspects of the computer world and to very pretty or very intelligent women.

Servers

The server of MOU XII was just another very big PC. It was just a big mini-tower. As a typical server it had a lot of space and memory and let people share application programmes and work files. But it had a c: drive for its hard drive, just like there is your PC's. And a d: for CD-Rom.



Maurice had made a folder for each workgroup there, like a Biology folder, an Astronomy folder, a Genetics folder. Suddenly everything seemed calm.

His joy did not last for long because first the SCIENCE, than the DAVINCI server broke down. Damn ITPOL, again and again! And the HelpDesk, especially poor Myra, was attacked by eagerly inquiring users.

"I lost my SCIENCE," they cried.

SCIENCE and DAVINCI were servers too, but enormous. They worked for the whole House. Their 'mini-towers' were high as a man. It was several big towers linked together in a cluster system. All of this stands in air-conditioned rooms and makes a strange fleeting noise, like breathing, like if it was alive.



Wherever were they located? Maurice didn't even know himself and for the moment being, they were dead anyway. Myra sent an EMail message to the whole MOU explaining they should be patient. Since the users were nice, they didn't call anymore, and moreover they couldn't work, so they had not problems with their PC. Maurice had a moment of peace again.

He first made Hilde a folder on the MOU XII server: MOUXII\Hilde\$. The dollar sign meant the folder was hidden, and just for her alone. The he made the same for himself all the other members of CHD.

Shares

He was just re-opening 'La Peste' by Albert Camus, because it was reminding him of the situation here, when he was disturbed by several users popping in his office at the same time like a horde of pop-up banners on the Internet. One could always make the

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distinction between a user and someone else by their way of popping-up.

They always came so suddenly and without any warning that he really wished he could block them out with the Pop-Up Blocker in 'Internet-Tools-Options-Privacy'. He was confident he would find out a way one day soon.

The users claimed to be part of a new workgroup that had been created just yesterday.

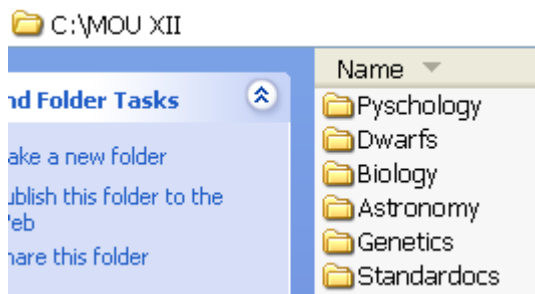
He imagined that anyone now could easily pretend to be part of a workgroup, hire phantom people in it, assign them phantom offices, and then collect a non so ghostly salary going to various accounts all owned by the workgroups creator.

The six new people were not so happy to hear that no one had expected them, and that nothing was ready, but what could he do? Should he have GUESSED their arrival? Oh Yes!

He found a Email from Hilde, informing him that she had created two new *user security groups* in her the Active Directory, the 'AD', which contained the user database: 'Telepathy' for the temporary workgroup now standing in his office and 'Astrology', another temporary one, which had not popped-up yet.

Maurice went back to his MOU XII server and logged on.

He double-clicked on the root of the C: drive (because a server, being a pc, has a c: too) to open it and had a look at the already existing folders, to make sure nothing else strange had happened.



Then he created a new folder and named it 'Telepathy'. He right-clicked on the folder name and chose 'Properties - Sharing - Share this folder' and gave the Share the name 'Telepathy'.

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The folder Telepathy had become a *Share*.

Permissions

Maurice chose 'Permissions' and added the Telepathy Security Group, and gave them *Permissions* to the shared folder. 'Full Control' was too much, 'Read & Write' not enough, so he chose a special 'Change' Permission. Full Control would have meant they could give Permissions themselves.

From their PC, the people of the Telepathy WG could now connect (or 'map') to the Telepathy Share, and then would see: Telepathy on MOUXII - drive e: and would be able to access it.

CHD had access to everything, every folder, every corner really. It was an implicit law that they would never spy around or open documents unsolicited, and if it happened, they would never reveal anything. The same way a priest wasn't supposed to reveal anything he'd heard.

Maurice then deleted a Share called 'Diet'. That Workgroup had disappeared, for obvious reasons. It was one o'clock and Maurice was hungry. He phoned Hilde, and they settled for a short lunch. Hilde was really cool.

♪ It's lunchtime

Their conversation was tearful.

"Nothing is worse to never know the names are or the boundaries of anything. Everything keeps shifting. That's really the most difficult of all. It's psychotic."

"Exactly," said Maurice.

It was a disaster. Since units were changing all the time, Maurice had to change his

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folder structure all the time, add a share, remove a share, rename a share. Hilde had to non stop change her security groups in the AD. Delete two security groups and make a new one with the people from the two previous groups in it. Or vice-versa.

Like Biology divided into Nano- and Macrobiology. Since users moved all the time their documents would partly stay on the hard disk of their old PC, partly on the share of their previous WG. You would find the documents all over the place.

They were not on the network resource where there should be, they were not even in the 'My documents' folder on the hard disk. No.

They were scattered all over the sub folders of the *C:\Program files* folder where only programme files were supposed to be. Like the MSOffice with Word and Excel, PaintShopPro, Messenger, WinZip, Media Player and whatever.

Or one would discover them deep in the *C:\Windows* folders, and even the *C:\Windows\system32* folder which was supposed to only hold the files needed for the native Window system files, programmes and drivers.

Or one would find them all over the desktop.

Moreover one found different versions of the document so that no one could ever know again what the good one was. Even if CHD tried sorting the files on 'Date Modified' column, it wouldn't help, the user having used the 'Save' command at one time, the 'Save As' command at the other, each time giving or different or similar names, with contents in it that might be the same or be from slightly to completely different. The user's despair then is understandable, and so is the Helpdesk's who is supposed to find out what the right document was in place of the user. Everyone was at the end of their nerves. And people, when under stress, make mistakes.

The mystery of the E: drive

In the afternoon the network broke down again. Damn ITPOL, it happened all the time. What were they thinking of?

The network not working made that no one could connect to his E: drive anymore. This dramatic fact revealed one of CHD's secret sorrows: to never really manage to explain to a user what a Drive was. A Drive was a symbol to measure their distance from the users. One of the best examples was Jenny, because she wanted to REALLY understand what a drive was, and not just stay with friendly abstractions. Maurice, Myra, Gwendoline and Lexi had already spent hours trying. But it wasn't enough.

'The Drive' was a story by itself.

But with no E: drive, within seconds, Myra was drowning in phone calls.

"I lost my E: drive."

"Please give me my E: drive back."

'MY E:' was a typical House expression. Most users seemed to think that the E: drive was universal. That there was only one E: drive in the world. Their very own E: drive.

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At the House the principal share for a workgroup was placed on the E: Drive, but it takes some time for a user to understand that another WG has an E: too, but an E: with different name and content. Like:

WG Biology will have E: Biology on MOUXII.

WG Astronomy will have E: Astronomy on MOUXII.

And in let's say in a Company named X&Y the work documents may be on the M: drive.

Other shares like the ones on the SCIENCE server or the DAVINCI can be placed on other drives, from, F or G or H or R.

The smarter ones of the users would indeed say to Myra:

“Please give me my Biology Share back.” but of course, as the situation was, very often they had not clue of what their workgroup was, thus even less of their Share.

And Jenny too didn't understand: “Ok, but what IS a Drive then?” she asked.

In his despair to get Jenny to understand, Maurice decided to ask super user Rosie, because maybe a user's explanation could help, even if it was super. Rosie was happy to comply:

✍ A drive is a medium to read the contents of a disk. The disk can be a hard disk, a floppy disk, a CD, a USB key. Or it can be a remote disk, such as the disks on a server. A Drive is made out of a set of needles and a motor and many other complicated modules. Imagine the disk and files on it will be read a bit in the same way arm, needle and motor read music on the old records on the old record players. Nowadays imagine laser rays.

Conventionally one will place the hard disk on the C: drive

- The Floppy disk will be placed on the A: and B: drive.

- The CD Rom disk on the D: drive.

- The USB Key on the E: drive.

- The Network drives on the Z: to F: drives. It's supposed to be said that way around.

But it must not be like that; you can also assign the different disks to any letter of your choice among the 26 existing ones.

This is especially true for the network drives. You can also partition a hard disk into several drives, like C: and D: and then the CD drive would be assigned to F: and the USB Key to G:

Typically, for security and organizational reasons a server will be partitioned into several drives, like C: D: F: E:. And then it can have several disks anyway. They will for instance mirror the data to each other, so that you can always find a copy, should one of the disks fail.

Via the network, you will be able to connect to those hard disks drives via the F: to Z:

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network drives. This will be drives connecting to drives. ⚡

Maurice was very impressed with her explanation and than could hardly stop her because she went on and on, explaining the whole system to him.

But still Jenny didn't understand.

Lexi's explanation was more prosaic:

"You can compare drives to your children and shares to chairs. Your children have names, and if you use those names they might come and help you clean the table after dinner. You can also rename your children, like with nicknames or when you marry them off; they'll still be your children. You can sit your children on chairs around a table, but they will still remain your children. Even if they play musical chair they will still remain your children."

But still Jenny didn't understand.

One must understand a drive was abstractly or in his tummy, or one never would, one must just accept it or feel it. Jenny has an engineer's mind, she understands everything technical, but must understand every detail in order to be able to understand. She can explain the functioning of a crane to you in every detail, and you will never look at a crane the same way. You would wonder why you missed all the fascinating details about it until now. But Jenny lacks a capacity of abstraction. She can't accept not to understand ALL of it. Lexi feels a drive in her tummy. But Jenny needs to understand it in every detail her mind, SEE how the drive reads the files. SEE the data being read. Disassemble the PC and look at it all. Maurice has read a lot of manuals and opened a lot of PC's. But to really understand Jenny would have to do exactly what Maurice did.

Moreover Jenny was sure that Maurice had acquired this knowledge within seconds, because he was a genius, it had just come too him, by snipping his fingers. She so wished he could snip his fingers at the tip of her nose too.

"But how would it look if you had an e: drive on the tip of your nose?" asked Maurice disapprovingly.

The drive story was driving them crazy. It was giving them heart attacks. Maurice felt almost sick with nausea after conversations like:

"I have a lost an important file, one of you has set it up for me, and now it has disappeared again. I really need to work on it. It's vital. Please give it back to me."

After some fifteen minutes of a patient (from his side) question and answer game it appeared that the trainee had not been talking of a file, but of her E: drive. Indeed she must have lost a drive. How could one mix up concepts like file and drive! But it wasn't the trainees fault. They had to use things all day long and didn't know how they were called. Maurice sighed and *mapped* the network drive back.

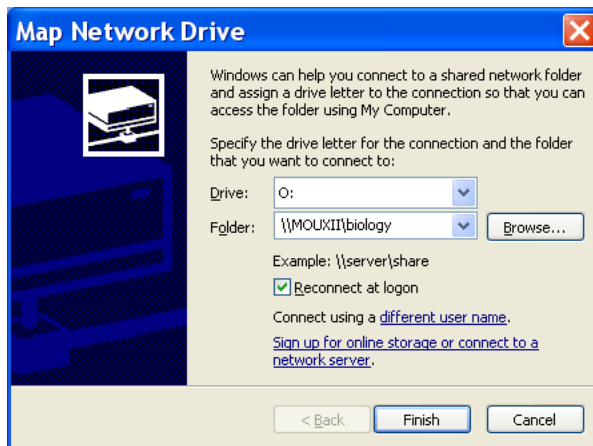
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Map – because what is life without an E: drive

Lexi was going crazy too, after having explained for the hundredth time that day how to do this *map* to one of those network drives.



- Choose
- Start
- Programmes
- My Computer
- Tools
- Map Network Drive, to obtain the dialog box here below.



- and then in ‘Drive’ you choose a free letter.
- And in “Folder” you type: \\servername\sharename.
- Like [\\MOUXII\Biology](#)

That way you were connected to a network share. It is a mystery to users why IT people can't understand why they can't understand how some things could be difficult for them. It's because they only see small units here and there, but no common denominator, no global unit to collect them. Certain concepts, if you live with them, as the CHD of course does, can truly become self-explanatory. It is contagious. Myra listened to her colleagues talk all day and integrated much of the underlying principles subconsciously. And when you've done something ten times or more, you will understand what it means. Your fingers, by just doing it, will send the info to your brain.

(But still Jenny wouldn't understand. Because how does the computer REALLY do it

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and what is behind all that?)

Where put my documents

It was nerve-racking. Lexi couldn't understand how users couldn't understand that 2 folders with the same name couldn't stand next to each other below the same parent folder. Vibeke had made a wrong mouse move and had then found her folder WGfiles filled with files beneath another called the same but empty. She had tried to move the first up to the same level.

"But if one listens to Maurice's explanation," said the Vibeke, "2 of exactly the same book can very well stand next to each other on the same shelf."

But on shelves it's physical, on folder of a PC it's LOGICAL thought Lexi, taking her head in her hands, how can I make them understand that is the difference. And the PC obviously couldn't understand the difference either, since it wouldn't let you do it.

Lexi called the parent folder WGfiles2, moved the other one up, and then deleted WGfiles2.

Another user, Belinda, called Lexi because her Desktop was full of icons left by a previous owner. She didn't dare to delete them, because as she admitted guiltily, just as she had indeed deleted two of them, called SCIENCE and daVinci, the two servers had crashed, as the EMail sent by Myra had told her. For a long while she had sat there, dead frightened, because she believed she had deleted the whole SCIENCE and daVinci server.

"But Belinda, this was just a *shortcut*, a link to the servers; you can delete a shortcut without deleting the object it points at. It's like when you remove a fingerpost you do not delete the city."

See the arrow? This represents the shortcut to an Access file:



This would represent the file itself:



"Thanks Lexi, you're great. Users were beginning to know their names better than the one of their shares, and CHD knew more and more of theirs too.

Still another had problems running one of Nico's macros on one of her documents. When Lexi came she found the document was several folders deep, all of it with rather too complicated names.

\MOUXII\ Astronomy\ WGFILLES\ Solar system\ 04-Current dossiers\ Calls for tender\

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Continuum of particles\ 2005-4099 (NOV)-Reimbursement – (KUIPER Belt Project)


“Don’t make a document name too complicated and don’t nest it too deep. Don’t put brackets in a document name either. Leave it simple.”

Another user couldn’t manage to browse and Lexi had to show her for hours how to click on the down ▼ and up ▲ pointing black arrow to show her how to walk through the file folders when she wanted to save a document. She had the impression she was showing a kid how to button his shirt. Button up, button down, button up, button down. “Do try it out,” said Lexi, open ‘My Computer’ browse through the folders, just to get the habit. Take it like a walk through the streets and along the canals of Venice. Look at all the different kind of files which are there, the *.exe, the *.dll, the *.cab files.”

But the user was happy enough only to listen: “Lexi you’re the angel com from heaven to save us. And your colleagues are the same. Everyone is already very happy with the whole CHD team.”

Users were beginning to know their names better than the one of their workgroup. At least with CHD they felt they knew where they stood at. This was at least something one can be happy about, because after 50 calls like that Lexi felt like a deleted city indeed. The feeling to be needed is a costly one.

 “I can’t open a document Gwendoline. And it suddenly has a dollar sign before it.”

 ~\$Tender on Windmills project.doc 1 KB

“Penny. This \$ means the document is already open somewhere.”

“It’s not open on my PC.”

“Can you ask a colleague?”

Gwendoline heard Penny shouting over the corridor and coming back to the phone:

“Yes. Indeed. Penelope had. And that’s not me. But this is not the last version I used. I can’t find the last one.”

Gwendoline decided to go up there.

She found Penny and Penelope rummaging with full hands through the folders of Penny’s PC. They finally found the last version.

“But why don’t you save it always in the same place,” asked Penelope. “The important thing is to stay organised. If it’s one single document leave the document in the same folder and leave it with the same name by overwriting it with a simple Save.”





On her desk stood a picture with a photo of her garden, nicely tended too, even if not as nice as Hilde’s. Hilde’s garden was something like Giverny, the gardens designed by the painter Monet.

“But sometimes I need to keep track of the previous versions.”

“Yes but then still save it in the same folder but for instance add vers1, vers2 at the end of it. Anyway you will be able to see its date by sorting on ‘Date modified’”

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“Exactly Penelope, and you can also use the Explorer to do copy and paste’s and then the Explorer programme will automatically rename it by numbering. See:

Name	S...	T..	Date Modified
 Copy of CfTender on Windmills pr...	1...	M...	31/10/2004 16:12
 Copy (3) of CfTender on Windmill...	1...	M...	31/10/2004 16:12
 Copy (2) of CfTender on Windmill...	1...	M...	31/10/2004 16:12
 CfTender on Windmills project.doc	1...	M...	31/10/2004 16:12

Of course the date modified here is nonsense; I just wanted to show the column after the copy and paste commands.”

But this at least was a problem solved without to much mystery, nor misery.

At the front of the garden, to the left of the garage, one could make out ‘titomme, the now gone gnome. And Hilde found the little guy looked almost human.

It was a day where documents were playing to be ghosts. Usually documents wouldn’t just run around and away like that, but today they did, and the situation was chaotic. One user phoned because he saw all the lines of his 250 pages report disappear at its own top, like water flowing into a fissure and then down a wall at the other side of the screen. To close the document without saving it fortunately helped get it back to normal, but it was creepy.

Another, when he sent documents as attachments by Email, had to suffer to not only NOT see them in the attachment part of the message when he opened them the ‘Sent Items’ folder, but also to discover that they had disappeared entirely, from the server too. Later Maurice discovered that this happened to all documents having a name with three letters at the beginning followed by a white space. Like ‘DNA Tables.doc’. It was ghostly. Maybe there were really little phantoms flying around between the folders.

Maurice had at a moment thought he would get a heart attack. His server seemed completely empty. But when he had blinked once or twice, rubbing his eyes, everything came back. Had he not believed to be a strong man, he would have been convinced to be near a nervous breakdown. The sounds from the offices, buzzing, humming, ringing, everyone talking excitedly to each other rang in his ears and were multiplied like by echoes.

Lexi wished for a little office motor cycle, on which she could DRIVE around on the floors (would this drive help Jenny to understand?).

Gwendoline had forgotten her husband’s birthday, for the very first time.

Penelope had even forgotten to worry about Josepha.

Many users seemed tired as to be close to delirium tremens, as if dead drunk.

It had been a terrible day. The effort of it had been like three. At the end Gwendoline

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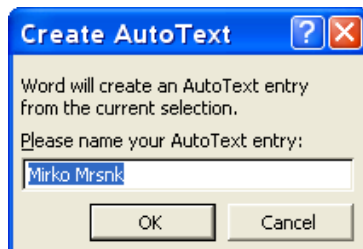
had stomach cramps, Lexi almost fainted in the staircase, Lut was all white in the face and Hilde wasn't even hungry anymore. She had lost 7 pounds lately. Fine too, that made her almost slim.

That night she had an odd dream. She was with the rest of the CHD in the meeting room, and they were all very small. They had literally shrunk. She woke up and was astonished to find the dream strangely reassuring.

The diabolic plan

The next morning ‘WG Coffee’, conveniently prepared by Johanna, who, they had all quickly grasped the fact, would always be in first (and last), gave everyone the occasion to express their satisfaction with the meeting the day before. They felt somewhat reassured now. Even if it was obvious that their HelpDesk was composed of quite different characters, they felt they would get well along, like one person with multiple gifts would demurely comply to the different aspects and even paradoxes of his personality.

Johanna, motherly, even poured out the coffee for everyone, but when it was her turn she sipped it only absent-mindedly. She did not seem at ease. When Gwendoline, full of concern, asked her for the reason Jo gave in and told them about the meeting she was going to attend, with the ‘black man’ of the House, Mrko Mrnsk, already mentioned. Johanna was at her best today, in a sea green dress, long but semi-translucent at the bottom, such as to show off her fine legs. But this wouldn’t help her much with Mrko Mrnsk. They all pitied her. This Mrko Mrnsk must be just so awful. Even Myra had heard of him a lot in this short time already. Maurice had told her what resembled to be horror stories. Johanna guessed her thoughts and sighed. At least, as Johanna privately thought, the dress was certainly not a total loss. There would be other male attendants at the meeting too. And pretty dresses and legs were not her only arms. She had a huge set of them in stock, first of all her power of convincing. One day she’d get him! Mrko Mrnsk would be made harmless. She left on the CHD’s wishes of good luck.



You’ll hear more about Mrko Mrnsk. Of course this is not his real name, you don’t want to hear his real name; even if you’re House. And don’t even try to pronounce it. Normally it would be written at least Mrnsk, with an i, but Mrko Mrnsk thought himself above such facilities. Gwendoline had a hard time to remember the spelling, and finally put the name into AutoText, even if she felt it was almost disgusting to

use such a nice facility for such a bad name. But she selected **Mrko Mrnsk** and the chose ‘Insert - AutoText - New’ from the menu bar.

Mirko Mrnsk
Mirk

From then on, when she needed the name, she would just begin to type ‘Mir’ and then press the **Tab** key to enter the rest of the name that appeared automatically, instead of

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wringing her head and fingers in order to remember the right spelling.

Users often ask why so many programmes are often far from perfect and even, why so many programmes are working so badly, or not at all? It's because of people like Mrko Mrnsk.

This streak of thought was interrupted by a EMail message to all. Subject:

We have a princess – Long live the princess!

What? Of course! It must be the newborn daughter of Prince and Princess of Murea.

Murea was another tiny little country; exactly on the opposite side of the globe, and in many ways a twin town, so much both countries seemed alike at first sight and one could see 'jumelée à' Bohatia on the Welcome to Murea signpost. Moreover the family was related to the Bohatian Princes. The Prince and the Princess there had had every hard time in the world to achieve this email, pardon, this coming of the follower to their throne. The email obviously came from a Murean.

Gwendoline sighed. This would now lead to an endless series of 'Reply to all'. The whole House would now give their opinion to everyone. That is, dozens of people would now give their opinion to the remaining 20.000 or 30.000 or whatever the number was.

The Mail would get slower and slower, and working would become impossible. Without EMail, no work was possible.

But, since she was interested in what people's opinions where, she opened the message:

Long live Maia!

Maia appeared to be the Princess' name. She went back to analysing their job, its meaning, and its vicissitudes:

If the application programmes they were using, like Kaleidoscope II-III and Elements 112 were working to quite everyone's satisfaction, this was not the case, as one might think, with all the Microsoft Office programmes and even Windows itself.

If programmes were working well and like magic IT people would be much less needed. So better have them not working so well. And the House had someone who saw to maintain and enhance this state of affairs: Mrko Mrnsk.

You might think standard office programmes like MS Office are ready made and ready to be used. In principle, they are. But you can change their initial configuration to adapt it to your own needs. One would want to adapt them to a place's structure, needs and policies. But if this is not done well the configuration might suit needs less than if one had left it alone.

We have a princess – Long live the princess!

Ja und sie ist so süß!

Maybe she was cute yes, but the guilty one, the black sheep of all IT people at the

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house was working in 'MOUIT'. MOUIT, standing for 'Main Organisational Unit of Information Technologies', were those who took the initial and main decisions about the programmes which were to be used at the House. At its heart was a Workgroup, ITPOL, as it was called, an abbreviation for 'IT-Policies'.

Mrko Mrnsk was working at the IT-Policy workgroup. Few of CHD had seen him yet, but they imagined a small dried up man, with a pinched face and rigid ways. Stingy. Not the head of anything, not of MOUIT, nor even the head of ITPOL. He was small in hierarchy, or so it seemed, but in truth he was very powerful. Mrko Mrnsk and his team 'sold' the House the configurations of Windows, MS Office and Outlook by 'adapting' them for the House, and everyone was just forced to use them. The PC world in a big organisation like the House cannot survive if each of its subdivisions takes its own path. Everybody had to work together as a unit. But there were so many things not working, least of them together. And Mrko Mrnsk was not even House, but was hired by ITPOL via an external company.

We have a princess – Long live the princess!

Quelle joie! Congratulations aux parents!

What a joy really! ITPOL seemed to do everything in their power to make the configurations they imposed on the House not working as well as they could have. Were they stupid? Were they lazy? Were they conceited? Probably all of this, but did they not fear to be found out and 'replaced' by more worthy people? Certainly not. And why not? Because there was a considerable advantage to their methods.

If programmes are not working so well and have *bugs* more users will need more help. If more users need more help they will need more informaticians to tend to them. So the same informaticians will have all interest in the world to keep buying those imperfect programmes and their *updates*. If you have updates you will need a process called *migration* to install them for all the users. So this will mean even more need for informaticians. So they will keep the crowd who is deciding upon those programmes and then configuring them so 'conveniently' and swallow their anger: it's giving them more to do yes, but a job too.

Do you get my point? No. You're not evil enough. It's a diabolic plan. You wouldn't be able to understand it, except if you have a mind twisted by IT. Of course you might well have an electrician, plumber or vendor of any kind who plays the same kind of trick on you and you already know the principle. Of course GOOD updates and good plumbers will always be welcome.

We have a princess – Long live the princess!

How dare you bother everyone with such TRIVIALS!

What treachery, what a scandal! The mail was beginning to get very slow.

If one of the members of the IT-teams of the twenty-five MOU's wrote an Email or tried to phone those who'd made the standard configurations, to report some *bug* he'd

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discovered, first of all he didn't even know whom to address. This was kept sort of secret too. Mrko Mrnsk had pointed out often enough that common mortals might not contact him directly. Like one was not allowed to speak to the Emperor of China while looking him in the eyes.

He was the soul of the MOUIT. But IT here stood not for Information Technology but for *Ivory Tower*...

If someone called, or wrote an Email, he just got no answer at all.

As for now, the email got slower and slower because of all those 'Replies to all'. Do never do this, Oh User.

We have a princess – Long live the princess!

That's enough. Would you PLEASE STOP replying to all!!!

If he persevered, he was given to understand that it could be... dangerous ...for him to insist. One guy, of a service company, not being really part of the house had been made to leave already, his suggestions about how to make things work better had maybe been too good and too efficient. But even if someone found out the cause of a bug, he couldn't do much about it. The *source code* of the programmes was with IT-Policy and thus couldn't be changed. The source code of a programme written in C+ or C++ must be *compiled* before it become an executable *.exe file. Once compiled, you cannot change the programme; you need the source code, which ITPOL kept of course separate and hidden.

Maurice fumed at the thought that some years ago, when he'd been one of the MOUSA's of MOUIT he'd just installed the standard configurations on a server, following instructions, and then proceeded to download them to the users workstations. It took him half a day to develop one of those configurations, whereas now it took several months or even years when Mrko Mrnsk' crowd put their fingers at it. More money for Mrko Mrnsk.

We have a princess – Long live the princess!

Stop this ROYAL nonsense!

It's the mail too, which would soon stop.

For a mind as organised as was Maurice's this situation was a tragedy.

No Helpdesk of any of the other MOU's liked Mrko Mrnsk and Sven regretted ethics forbade him to use one of his Martial Art tricks on him.

Gwendoline equally thought that they would be much better of without this Mrko Mrnsk. She had only seen him once and but had had a good guess a this personality.

He was the kind who strove to detain the power of knowledge, the benefits of science for himself alone. A criminal in a sense. Knowledge must be shared. He was a paranoid psychotic creature, who certainly did not realise, or want to realise, that IT programmes also had USERS. His ITPOL team and whole MOUIT seemed to follow his ideas gladly. The MOUSA's from the various MOU's felt less sure about those politics.

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We have a princess – Long live the princess!

STOOOOOOPPPPPP!

Gwendoline gave the Email seconds to live. Too many messages would just do it in.

Gwendoline is right. I Myself know this Mrko Mrnsk too, from what I have heard people say, and from having seen him once or twice. I see through him. He's evil. Because he is empty. An absolute Zero in what regards feelings and deeds. Pity I don't want the House to recognize my value. I could put things right. I know so much about this computer business, I'm sure I could solve just about any problem, devise and develop just about any project, and give the House the IT configuration of its dreams. But at the same time I'm glad that this is not known to much. I want PC's to remain a hobby.

But because of the chaos, and because of Mrko Mrnsk, the CHD had so much work that even they were loosing some very basic reflexes.

And, computers working well or not, the whole MOU was in a state of uproar. With no light, no air, dirty carpets, open floors, all those new programmes, everyone was running wild.

We have a princess – Long live the princess!

Stop this plague! Go back to work!

Gwendoline prayed: Yes stop this! Dear God. Someone do something!

We have a princess – Long live the princess!

We bid you to instantly stop replying to all to the Princess message!

This one came from the Email Administration.

But too late, the Email was running wild too. No one could concentrate anymore, no email came trough, useless to go on trying to work. One might as well have a coffee.

So Sven went to see Lexi and asked her if she had time for a coffee. She said no to the time but yes to the coffee. They just went to the small and not so exciting little bar at the ground floor of their building. It wasn't a bar really; just a space with some chairs and tables in front of the newspaper shop. There was a big coffee and lemonade vending machine, but people preferred the coffee prepared by Donatello, the Newsvendor, despite the fact that it came from a machine too. But the coffee just tasted better if he prepared it. Maybe his coffee was so good because he was so good himself. He wore his name well, and maybe people went down to have a coffee not so much for the coffee as to have a small chat with Donatello. At every time of the day you could find at least two or three people leaning against his counter, but today the shop and the 'bar' were positively crowded. The bar was obviously buzzing with some news.

"What is it? Not the Princess?" said Sven shaking his head over the tumult to get hold of someone who would put him in the picture. He got hold of the person next to him. It was Thierry, a tall guy from MOU XVII, who stood there with his wife, an Islander,

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secretary in the Chemistry WG. They all knew each other from a previous MOU. Thierry laid an arm around his wife's shoulders and turned to Sven:

"The Princess? Don't you know? Are you living on the moon?"

Sven and Lexi both nodded. "Yes we are. So tell us what's happening."

"Your Dir. Jack Owl."

"Yes what about him?"

"He has had an accident. He's seriously hurt. He's in a coma."

"Oh my God," said Lexi, "what happened?"

Thierry took a sip from his coffee:

"A riding accident. He fell from his horse."

"His horse?"

"Yes he rides, he's a passionate rider. He has a stable with at least ten horses he tends to."

Sven, who had his doubts about everything which was hierarchy expressed this using his at times dubious humour:

"Like one says: He finally fell from his high horse. Probably couldn't ride from the start."

"Sven you're not funny. And you don't know him. And it could happen to you too, being an excellent rider yourself," said Lexi, reproachfully. Thierry shook his head too, but then remained more astonished about their initial ignorance.

"So you didn't know? Your own Director?"

"There could be a bomb falling on the House, and even on ourselves, and we wouldn't know," said Sven to the astonished informant.

For Lexi it did seem like a bomb. After Josepha, now the Director General himself. Where would this lead. And Lexi felt frightened, someone else she was suddenly thinking of now might disappear too. One other of those people who own stables and yachts and big flat cars. She wouldn't mind to be one of them.

We have a princess – Long live the princess!

Why don't you fucking royal bores make a princess yourself and let us work in peace!

This last message did it. The Email Server crashed in a big Ah and Oh, all the message panes went white, there was not a single email message to be seen within miles around, and within seconds CHD was drowning in a wave of calls.

The little princess had managed to crash the Email. And maybe that she had a mum and daddy, but they had no more boss for their MOU.

From that moment on, things turned berserk.

Sensitive Hardware

The situation was becoming more chaotic with every day that passed. Everyone was on his knees, panting for fresh air.

Lucky Lut, she was on a one week well deserved holiday, as her Out of Office Rule explained. They could all have needed a break, four months long or so. They all felt so tired, each move was difficult, but instead of lying down on some beach with some local drink, they had to run all the time. Lut had written an Email to Hilde before leaving, asking her to water her plants, but when Hilde dutifully appeared in her office with a can of water she saw no plants. She looked everywhere, even in the cupboards, but there were no plants. Probably Lut had made fun of her, but why should she do that? Or maybe the plants had walked off, disgusted by the sticky atmosphere. Indeed, everyone seemed to have a permanent cold since the move in the new buildings.

Lexi and Sven had been running around installing computers since early morning and Gwendoline was running after Lexi and Hilde after Sven. A whole floor had been moved again each of them four offices to the right, like on a musical chair, for no apparent reason at all. Those moves had become so common, that it was a new standard. Computers and printers did not follow the users, but stayed in their offices, lucky them.

Lexi was not feeling well. She had dreamt she was in bed with the High One, the highest official in the House, whom she (and others) thought very good looking, but when he touched her in the morning and she looked at him it was Mrko Mrnsk. She had woken up shouting and her boyfriend had wondered. Fortunately she could tell him the last part of the dream. Sven was not very happy either, never finding any time for his dear wife anymore. Sven would tell you that his wife was really something. She was the most pretty, intelligent, nice and caring person in the world. But he didn't say that, he found it so obvious. She didn't live, pardon, work at the House, but held a nice little shop, where she sold second-hand Bohatian jewels.

Hilde on her side was still wondering and worrying about Lut's missing plants. When Micha, (it was really spelled 'Myiesha'), assistant to the still not recovered Jack Owl, phoned to invite her for a coffee in his office one floor up, she thought she would be freed of her green troubles for some time at least.

Flavia, another colleague of the eighth' floor was there already. They seated on the comfortable brown chairs around the low mahogany table and Micha served the coffee. Flavia, own her side, had brought croissants. Bohatia is famous for his jewels, but when one lives there one thinks it should be famous for his pastry too. A bit to sweet for Hilde's taste but then croissants were not a typical pastry.

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They talked about Jack Owl of course. Everyone knew that Jack Owl had woken up from his coma, but he would in no way be able to come back before months. In fact he had almost broken his back and neck, almost, but this made that he would have to lie still until doctors could be sure the pieces had grown together again. Had she seen him? No he could receive no visits and had to have absolute calm.

Hilde already knew that Micha liked her director a lot. She had been with him for years, from being first his secretary when he was a higher Administrator at another 'House' to then becoming his assistant when he became shortly Director first for MOU IX, then for MOU XII.

"He's a very nice man," she said. "He is very dignified, civil, and so well-bred. He was maybe a bit distant, but always concerned about the well being of his staff. He was – is so very much considerate. When someone was not feeling well he would notice immediately and send him home."

One could see him on a photo on his desk, together with his wife and three little daughters. He had a pleasant round face and huge dark eyes. He was one of those men whose hair goes prematurely grey and who keep it thick and healthy. He wore a light grey suit to go with it. One sensed inborn taste and elegance.

Micha smiled:

"You know I said he was also kind of distant. He never got too personal, or too close, but I used to have erotic dreams of him almost every night, for years."

Hilde and Flavia giggled. They sort of couldn't imagine Micha doing this. Micha guessed her thoughts and smiled again:

"It stopped after my divorce, well no, after that, when I met Pierre."

Apart from Micha no one else had gotten the chance to know Jack Owl well, but Micha made such publicity for him that everyone felt it was a pity. Many people believed chaos would maybe not have been so bad and would have lasted less long had he been there.

Hilde grinned, thinking how Sven had expressed his doubts about that. For Sven, hierarchy, by definition, meant trouble. She kept that thought to her.

Micha, with this situation, was sort of out of a job, and then not, because she tried to keep up with at least the usual follow-up.

"Pretty hard work sometimes," she said, "to guess what should be done. What he would have done. I believe he was just about to call up a second big gathering, before it happened, I mean his accident."

So many sounds of bells would Sven say.

"Has some kind of interim replacement been foreseen for him?"

Micha shook her head: "Not really. The Head of MOU XIII is going to see to things from time to time, but I have my doubts if he will find the time. I talked to him of the gathering, but he didn't hear me, or want to. And then, Jack is very good, sort of irreplaceable."

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Micha, it was obvious, was a very loyal person, and it couldn't be easy for her, because she was typically the one to suffer from stress more than the average. She was so much concentrated on doing her bosses job that she had a tendency to forget about the daily details of life, especially those which lay usually in the field of a secretary... Her colleague Flavia, even if she was herself driven to sheer madness by the hieroglyphic organisation that was now the master of this place helped her with those from time to time.

As for example remembering to give water to Jack Owl's plants. Micha, running after phantom people in phantom WG's and phantom jobs kept forgetting about it. And Jacques Owl just loved his plants. Nice Flavia, so she thought, had even left a bottle filled with water in Jack Owl's office for her, so that she wouldn't forget to water the plants. Especially the magnificent little orange tree, with all its cute tiny little oranges, bitter and sweet to the taste. Flavia was ever so nice.

Handing Flavia her coffee, she thanked her for it:

"Flavia, thanks for having put the bottle of water for me on the table, such as to remind me to water Jack's plants. She smiled at her warmly.

Upon this Hilde noticed that Flavia's face took a slightly swam away expression. Hilde had already seen it sometimes. A number of her hairs began standing up straight, and then she did so herself. She went towards the plant and looked at it in a puzzled way, bending towards it and lifting up the empty plastic bottle which stood besides it.

"Don't tell me did you put the content of this bottle on the plant?"

"Well yes?!"

"But it was the water with vinegar - so that you could clean the coffee machine. I had prepared this for you so you wouldn't have to do it."

"But I thought..."

"But look I have put a label on it. She tipped the bottle: 'V-i-n-e-g-a-r'. Vinegar can't be good for a plant."

"Poor plant," said Hilde and stroked one leaf. The plant still looked quite healthy, but one could sense a trauma.

"Do you think it will die now?" asked Micha and lifted up the heavy pot which was standing deep in a flat under-cup filled with water full of vinegar.

Hilde rushed to the plant's help. She jumped up to take the under cup and to throw its content out of the window. Then she thought she shouldn't have done that, but fortunately no outraged shriek was heard. Flavia then took the plant to the ladies room, to spill fresh water over it.

They sat down again, thoughtful, getting a strange feeling in their stomachs, but it was one which announces great laughter.

"You're really two gadget ladies," said Hilde giggling. Things like this were happening all the time to those two. However did they manage to do it?

The laughter took over then, and they exploded. Flavia was bent over flat and Hilde got

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tears in her eyes until she couldn't see clearly anymore. Micha laughed so much her eyes got violet from it. She ended up in uttering in Egyptian, which she was.

Hilde then told them about Lut's missing plants and they wondered. Some Kobold maybe, running around and who had a grudge against plants.

"I guess the Kobold's name is 'Stress' then?" said Flavia.

After this pleasantly seasoned interlude, they returned to their chaos. Laughing was of course a good means to fight it. Well maybe they should not laugh too much either, because what was Jack Owl going to say when he came back. If he came back.

Hilde, before getting back at her newsletter, thought of looking up the influence vinegar could have on a plants life. Regrettably she had to take in that the effects would not be so good, at least if the experience was continued.

What a way to begin a day! First Lut's plants were missing, and then Jack Owl's plant had been drowned in vinegar. This was not a good sign. It wasn't her fault but she felt like it. What an amateur gardener she was in truth! But of course she never had the time for anything anymore, zero minutes left for any action that was not work.

It was to be such a day where everything would go wrong.

While Micha, Hilde and Flavia were having vinegar, Lexi and Sven were running around like rabbits followed by a pack of dogs on a royal hunt. Offices attributions were changing every day it seemed, when would it ever end. It was move after move, and nothing seemed to be working anymore. Lexi loved to be occupied that this was too much. Where was the limit not to be crossed, when it just became too much. Computers and printers themselves too seemed so much annoyed by the situation that they kept breaking down.

Blue screen of death

It was one *blue screen of death* after the other. The computer did not get up to the Ctrl+Alt+Del window but got stuck in the beginning of the boot sequence presenting a blue screen, with a lot of white text on it. It told a long obsessive story about *first try to reboot*, checking about correct installation of hardware and software, pressing F8 to go into safe mode, disable BIOS, and addresses like 0x0000004E (0x00000099, 0x00000000, 0x00000000, 0x00000000, which were very much revealing nothing.

It ended however ended up with a merciful hint:

"Contact your system administrator or technical support group for further assistance."

The last sentence was the only one the users could carry out, with the last of their breath.

The users first reaction should be just to switch off and to reboot, and hope that the BSoD does not come back. If it does come back, few choices are left but to reinstall the PC. Which was awful for Sven and Lexi, seen the sheer quantity of it that day. It was as if the computers were unhappy too, or felt lost.

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Restart your computer

☞ “Lexi all my programmes are stuck. Nothing moves.”

“Did you press **Alt+Ctrl+Del**, clicked on ‘Applications’ and then choose ‘End Task’ for the non responding programme?”

“Yes but it didn’t help! Nothing moves.”

“Do you regularly *restart* your Computer?”

“No why should I do that?”

“But Merek, you must. Restarting your computer will sort of clean its memory; it sort of frees the programmes from each other. It will also make that you get all the new downloads, programmes and patches, and it will get you the new virus shields!”

“Hm. The PC was getting slower and slower with every move I made.”

“Yes that’s why you must restart, because, you see, just like you, the PC, with too many things to deal with, to be loaded with at the same time, his RAM – Random Access Memory of 256, 512 or 1024 MB, where the programs you’re using at the moment will load to be ready for you, this RAM, at the end of the day, is filled to the extent of bursting, and its Megahertz speed, well it goes down, it’s tired, gets confused, just like we are, just like you are. Let him have a rest, let him sort of take a shower.”

Merek knew her from her previous MOU, and she had already told him that a thousand times. He was a nice guy, but a bit obtuse. But this time he got her message:

“Hm. Ok. And when shall I do this?”

“Do it in the evening for instance, before you leave, so that everything is ready in the morning when you arrive.”

Wrong Keyboard Driver

The next demand for support came by email and seemed at first view quite mysterious

“Lexim ,y co,puter zont do it, pleqse co,e, so,thing zith the keyboqrd.”

But then she thought: it was just the wrong keyboard driver.

She helped the author set it right by clicking on the little blue language icon on the taskbar. A driver is the programme which makes some hardware work.

Printers stuck

The printers followed. One user after the other the users called for a printing problem.

☞ Like: “My printer isn’t printing anymore!”

That was Printer Problem Number One, but there were many alternatives.

☞ “Lexi Dear. I have this problem with my printer. It isn’t printing anymore.”

“Alfredo, do you have an error message?”

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“Yes ‘Error writing to LPT1’.”

That was Printer Error Message Number one.

“Alfredo can you check the cables? Are they stuck in correctly into the back of the PC and in the printer? And the cable that goes in the electric socket, the one in the floor? Those cables often get knocked out by a too zealous cleaning lady.”

“I forgot to check that. I never have time for nothing. Time is not only money and must handled with care, not be spent thoughtlessly, thrown out of the window. We should take delight in each gesture we make. But this has become impossible here at the House. Wow. Now it starts again.”

Alfredo was Brazilian and thus knew a lot about time. He was a cute little administrator, one of those who had ‘stayed’. Lexi would have liked to be in Brazil now, on a sunny beach, with elegant clouds in the blue sky, and dolphins dancing in the water.

 “My document is not coming out of the printer.”

The same series of question as in the previous sections did not help. It was not the cleaning lady, the cables seemed stuck in all right.


“Dudley. Did you try to just restart the printer and the PC together?”

Dudley, at the other end, sounded doubtful:

“But why should this help?”

“Just try. Switch off the printer. The choose ‘Start - Shutdown’. When the PC begins booting, switch the printer on again. Call me back if it doesn’t work.”

Dudley didn’t. Sometimes print jobs get stuck in the *spooler*, and rebooting the PC frees them.

 And Thelma called: “Gwendoline, my printer isn’t printing anymore. Was it the cleaning lady again?”

Thelma talked Danish, which was her mother tongue plus English, French, German, Swedish, Russian, Hungarian, but not Computers and or Printers.

“Well maybe it was the cleaning lady. But do you have an error message?”

Even if she had one she wouldn’t have seen it. That was Thelma.

“No.”

“Can you choose ‘File - Print’ instead of simply clicking on the little printer icon and tell me what is written next to Printer *Name*?”

“Brother 4050.”

“And what’s the printer you have?”

“A Xerox 4400.”

“You have chosen the wrong printer driver. Choose the Xerox 4400 printer driver in

the drop down list.”

Lexi heard the printer rattling off.

“You’re a genius,” said Thelma.

☎ Five minutes later it was Thelma again: “Lexi it’s again not doing it.”

Lexi chided herself, she could have thought of that:

“Thelma, this is because your printer isn’t set as the *default printer*, please go in ‘Start-Settings-Printers’ and there right-click on the Xerox 4400 and choose ‘Set as Default’”

“But stop talking in hieroglyphs Lexi, what’s a *default printer*?”

She sounded so very unhappy that Lexi really felt sorry for her. Poor users, they were using all those words which seemed obvious to them.

“But Thelma, that means if you just click on the little printer in the toolbar, it will print with that printer, that is the default printer.”



“Because in ‘Printers and Faxes’ you also have the other printers, see? There is the colour printer and the speed printer and the HP LaserJet III printer and the driver for your old printer, the Brother 5050. If you want to print with the colour printer you must chose ‘File – Print – Colour Printer’ and this will then use the colour printer driver.”

What’s a Driver

“Really Lexi. But what’s a *driver*?”

Lexi groaned. If only Thelma could be as disinterested as she was left-handed.

“A driver is well, a device driver. It’s the programme which will make the hardware work, the hardware that is attached to your computer. Like the printer, the screen, the keyboard, the mouse, the soundcard, the USB key, the ...”

“Ok Ok Lexi, I got it, not need to be so precise. But how do you install those?”

“Well most of them are now installed via the Plug & Play, they install themselves. But you can find a kind of list in the Control Panel, System, Devices.”

“Thanks for your ever lasting patience Lexi.”

Lexi needed this:

☎ “It’s unlucky Thelma again. It was working, but now again not with this document. I got it from the Outside. Why is it always happening to me?! I really must talk to this cleaning lady.”

Lexi sighed, logged on via the Remote, and found out that in ‘File-Page Setup-Paper’ the Paper had been set to ‘Manual Feed’.

“I hate my printer,” said Thelma. “It stands there, one can feel its tension, ready to explode or at least lash out at you if I said one wrong word.”

Thelma was indeed unlucky, she was right to say that it always happened to her. Some

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users just had an unlucky touch, even if it wasn't their fault.

☞ An email popped up than, from Gabriella:

Hi dear friends, it's Gabriella, as you will remember, since I had to bother you already a few times in this respect, I unwillingly do it again, but the printer here in Joseph's office, sixth floor, MK06050 does not work, I will try to describe the symptom as best as I can: the printer does function at its heart, by which I mean that it does transport paper, I have pressed the test button, it works, a paper comes out, however, yet it does not produce an image on the sheets, at the moment I do not have anything vital that needs to be printed without delay, but perhaps Lexi or Sven can bring the printer back to health when she has time available, I know how scarce it has become. However, I suspect the cleaning lady. I am forever grateful in advance! See you! Regards! Gabriella!

What a poetic way to describe a printer is not working. And door cleaning lady! Soon everything would become her fault!

Lexi discovered the toner was very, very empty AND the cable was not stuck in the LPT1 AND the wrong printer driver was chosen.

☞ "Lexi, I really tried all of the above, but nothing works. I can't interpret the lights on the printer, what do they mean?"

"A green light is a good sign."

"No green light. Only the orange and the red one blinking like a traffic light gone on strike."

The user, Erik, was working in the Astronomy WG and for the time being on a spatial project, the Titan project. Indeed Erik believed that Saturn's large moon had a viable atmosphere, or whatever it was, but viable. Gwendoline had seen it in his eyes: he was convinced that there were little men living there, whatever they looked like.

The little green men might have made that nothing in the checklist helped, Lexi had to go and see. The printer-less user, Erik, watched her check the cables, open the cover, verify there was no paper jam, shake the printer, but nothing helped. Erik observed her smiling; she seemed so professional in this. Then his heart stood still. Tiny Lexi sighed shortly but resolutely, bent down, took the enormous printer in her tiny elfin hands and lifted it on her shoulder like if it was a baby, with the same strength and care. Erik jumped up to help her, but too late, Lexi had already wandered off with it.

Erik sent Lexi an enormous box with 'Speculos' later on, fine brown biscuits with almonds, from his Belgium home country, to be consumed dipped in coffee.

♪ It's lunchtime

That morning Lexi got presented with German Plätzchen, Panettone from Italy, Moroccan sugar cookies like Ghouribi, Hungarian Butterhorn cookies, Koulourakia

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which were Greek Sesame Cookies, Bolacha Maria from Portugal, Orangettes from Belgium, English Mint chocolates and many more. It was enough for an army. Much of it she ate herself, never taking a gram; the rest she brought back to the CHD coffee room.

Hilde came back with 'papillotes de Lyon', French chocolates wrapped in coloured paper which read various sentences like proverbs, riddles or funny little stories. Gwendoline had been offered green Tea and two Japanese cups to go with it and Maurice found a fruit basket on his desk, anonymous, but he could guess the giver. He'd just installed her private laptop for her. Lut had gotten three big bottles of orange juice. Leo had got some diet coke, which astonished him slightly, he wasn't fat.

They decided to have a small feast.

Svetlana was invited too. She had phoned Hilde and told her she was going crazy because all her colleagues took advantage of her knack for computers and she had to continuously ran around to free paper from printers or to close covers and that it was keeping her from work. Which everyone went back to all too soon.

When an IT person is happy with a PC, a programme, a printer, or any other computerized item he will say '*it makes coffee*'. The device which made coffee at the MOU was a photocopy machine, nicknamed Mona. It could copy, print, fax and scan. It was such a good natured thing; the maintenance number hanging on his left side was never used. It was quick, trustworthy, never let you down, when you were in a hurry. It was Leo's baby, he had chosen it.

The other printers were just drab normal printers, and not always so nice. Ok one must not always be asking the world, and to expect all printers to be like the Mona was like asking a secretary to have at least two university diplomas and speak five languages, which, however, nowadays is often the case.

But there were some really nasty ones.

There was the Colour printer, high-resolution, which had cost from ten to twenty times more than a little home colour printer. Whilst the little ones at home were mostly printing brightly the colour printer at MOU XII was not. It was a nasty beast, a mule, which one couldn't get to move forward even with a carrot, always stopping in the midst of action, for no obvious reason, blocking all print requests. Lexi found out the guilty document. Igor Bibr had wanted to print out a family photo of 47 persons 47 times. This was something very costly. The printer had maybe disagreed with this family printing and had stopped at the first printout. A queue of 26 documents had formed behind it, and seemed to be standing way into the street. They were not remaining patient. They shouted, called, complained; discussing the sloppiness of all government-protected monopolies.

There was the speed printer, linked to the network just as the photocopy machine. The idea was to *speed print* and above that, it was ecological and print recto verso. When it did that, everything was fine. But the ITPOL section of MOUIT had not been lucky

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with the choice of the brand. The printer was blocked most of the time, for all sorts of reasons, paper jam that wasn't there, cover open when it was really closed. Maybe it had fallen in love with the maintenance guy, who was quite good looking.

But Thelma's printer really had a problem that day. When Sven came in, the printer was spitting out paper like a volcano its lava and boulders, throwing it in all cardinal directions plus some others. Moreover it made a deafening noise. Thelma had fled behind the desk, holding her hands over her head. In a way one could understand the printer, Thelma really had an unlucky touch with printers and by the way the rest of the material too. A mistreated and misunderstood printer will end up mistreating others. Sven finally managed to calm the printer. "Come on little one, stay cool!"

"You're magic," said Thelma, but continued to suspect the cleaning lady.

Lexi had a *checklist*, with common printer problems and how to solve them and the frequency in which they occur

Problem	Cause/Solution	Freq%
Error writing to Lpt1	cables not stuck in correctly	50
Wrong printer driver chosen	chose the right one via Settings – Printer or File-Print	30
Toner empty	Remove toner, shake it, put it back. You thus prolong its lifespan	10
No paper message	add paper	10
Paper Jam message	if it is true, lucky those with a gift of telekinesis, call Uri Geller	10
Manual feed	set to Automatically Select, Default Tray in Page Setup	10
Cover open message	close cover	10
Printer prints rubbish	wrong printer driver, cable defect	10
Document is full of grey and black streaks	toner empty again, now you should really replace it	10
Printer stinks	not an hallucination but it's the <i>ozone</i> , replace printer	1
Lights blinking on the printer	pay a visit to the printer manual	5
Printer throws the pages all over the room'	cause: printer furious	2
Printer makes coffee	intelligent printer	1
My Printer is rich	never occurs at all	0

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Printer has won in the lottery	means the printer will leave for a sunny country	:o)
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The error message can sometimes be misleading.

One did have to have a lot of imagination to get a printer working again. And some users had this imagination. Like Eduard who, when his printer stopped printing, and sent out peeping squealing sounds went through all the steps above, to no avail. He ended up opening the whole printer, piece by piece, and there it was: a mouse. It was still very much alive. He managed to remove it safely, without getting bitten, and let it run in the corridor. He never told anyone about this, afraid to not to be believed. This kind of user is not mentioned often enough in this manual, for a very good reason: they are magic users and never call the HelpDesk.

But of course he told me, and as I said: I may be one of them or not.

Sven had gotten fewer cookies that day, only a home made cake, but a bouquet of small violet flowers, a book on horses and a lot of big fluttering eyes. Girls thought he too was magic. As usual several of them had called and insisted only Sven could help them, a fact which infuriated Maurice slightly.

Several times he just had to touch the PC or encourage the printer a bit and the printer started his happy rattle again or the screen lit up as if pleased to see him.

“But Sven it’s bewitched. It wasn’t working just a second ago! It’s like at the dentist. The moment we’re seated it stops hurting! It’s your magical hands, as always. How do you do it?”

Girls felt some nice massage from him would do wonders on them too. He sure had a soft touch and such endearing golden fluff on his forearms. And his hands did look magical, soft and sensitive and one only wondered if he couldn’t make a belly or head ache go away just by laying them on.

Sven knew by experience that a little gentle shaking could help, but he seemed to be the only one around to be able to do it.

“You said it: I touched it.” He grinned: “And I talk to them.”

Sven was not only joking. He liked to talk to computers, and to not only treat them as objects (the way Mrko Mrnsk treated users). He was not mad. Hilde had told him something like that too: That she talked to her plants. And in truth, they were blooming. Hilde had the most wonderful garden he’d ever visited, once at a barbecue she’d given at her place. And by the way a wonderful feeling for food too. Sven still smacked his lips when he thought of that barbecue. As the matter of fact, before that one he hadn’t known what a barbecue was.

From prehistoric drawings, to writing, to Gutenberg, to printers, to coffee machines, they had come a long way.

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Network problems

Magic or not, for a change, they were also called for one network problem after the other.

☎ “I can’t connect to my E:!”

Which meant users couldn’t connect to their principal network share or also called resource their Workgroup used. The E: drive was on the server. For standard reasons, CHD had placed the principal network share for a WG on the E: drive. Like Biochemistry used e:\biochemistry and Genetics used e:\genetics. But they could have put it anywhere on the remaining drives from F: to Z, or from Z: to F:.

“Have you checked if the network cable is plugged in on the back of the computer and in its socket on the floor?”

“What is the *network cable*?”

“It links you to the network. Can you go to the back of the computer and look if there is a green light blinking there, somewhere in the middle. You know the LED - light-emitting diode?”



Lexi heard the user panting: “Yes it wasn’t. I plugged all the cables in, and now one green light is blinking.”

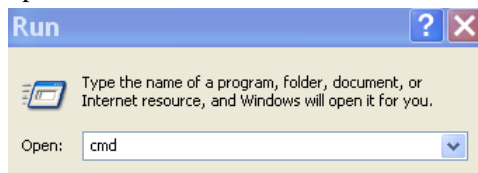
Another much too much zealous cleaning lady had been at work here. They kept knocking the cables off. Lexi made a mental note to once wait for her at 3 o’clock a night, when she came in, and tell her to be careful.

IP-Address

☎ “I have a strange message on logon! “*Domain not found or something. You might have a double IP address.*”

No cleaning lady there. It must indeed be due to a double *IP address*. An IP-address is an internal address used to identify a computer on a network, and it must be unique in the world. Otherwise it means trouble. Like if the postman had a letter for Mr Smith at Slumberland 34, but stands before two streets with this same name and a Mr Smith in both and at the same number. Only an IP-address is in the format 123.123.123.123, but the digits will of course vary.

So it could be a double IP address. Then the computer wouldn’t be able to connect to the network anymore. Lexi chose the Start - Run command and typed ‘cmd’ there to open a DOS Window.




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At the command prompt C:\ there she typed:

Ping 123.123.255.1 where 123.123.255.1 was the IP Address of their Gateway server.

'Request timed out' answered the programme, playing dumb.

A double IP-address, obviously. Sven gave the PC a new one. Sven and Lexi had to keep painful tables, in order not to allocate doubloons. Recently ITPOL had finally come to introduce the more modern system, DHCP, for Dynamic Host Configuration Protocol. But of course the system wasn't ready yet. ITPOL liked to take his time. And to make Sven and Lexi run around.

 I have no Email!

Again, this often meant the PC was not connected to the network. No network connection no Email. The culprit was a table. The table stood on the network cable, crushing it. Maybe the cleaning lady had put there. Sven removed the table from the cable and the network jumped into life again.

One other case was that the network cable was placed next to a door, and every visitor entering knocked it off its socket. Ingrid, the caller, looked at Sven helplessly: "I have called Network Administration now a dozen times already, it has been weeks, but still no one has come." Sven made a mental note to do the same thing again when he came back to his office. Damn Mrko Mrnsk...

Was nothing being mended anymore in this place? It was so nerve racking.

Lexi found herself in a rather awkward situation, due to the fact she had to spend her time crawling on the floor or on the tables or wherever else it was possible to crawl or to climb on. That's why the CHD never wore dresses. Today she wore tight white jeans from Versace, a T-Shirt from 'Les Copains' and lilac tennis shoes. She had been called to the office of a CLA, Igor Bibr. When she entered the office he was not present. It was typical for users to wander off once they had called. The network again was supposed not to be working and she went to have a look at the back of the computer. Unfortunately it was placed in such a way that she had to climb on the table. Looking at the back of it put her in such a position that she was showing hers, face hidden by the screen.

Igor Bibr of course then entered his office. He was quite friendly, and they talked for a while, Lexi a bit panting because of her position. He then left her working and she could continue her inspection. She finally realised the network cable was at fault and went to exchange it.

Some time later she got a phone call from Karel Adler, their C.L.A. encore above Arthur. Karel asked her if she knew Igor Bibr? Lexi nodded behind her phone.

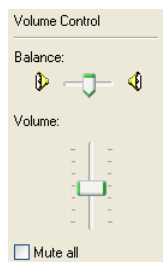
"He called me because he wanted to know who you are. He found you utterly efficient and so much charming."

Lexi thanked Karel for this information and felt very much relieved she hadn't been

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wearing a mini skirt. Igor Bibr, during their little talk, had not seen her face once ... That's really why female CHD never wear skirts or dresses. She hoped Igor Bibr wouldn't go and tell the other CLA's about this, she might be asked to climb on the tables even more (or crawl under them).

Sound not working



Sound cards were on strike too, and Sven had to replace one after the other, and it took some time opening a PC, replacing the sound card, and closing the PC again.

The major reason for sound not working was fortunately that the sound was just put on 'mute' in the windows configuration of the House. Sven send one Email after the other:

“Choose ‘Start - Programmes - Accessories - Entertainment - Volume Control’ and deselect the mute option in Volume Control”

“Big kisses Sven!” one female user answered and even sent him a song. “Kiss Me!” by SixPence. Of course listening to music was not part of their job, but it could help relax. And they all needed that.

Nimrod, a good-looking and very young guy whom Gwendoline, Hilde, Lexi and Lut seemed to like a lot, but which Sven couldn't stand in the same fashion, called him because he couldn't run a movie strip direct on the Internet. “Why doesn't it work Sven?”

“Because if everyone was loading their movies life on Internet it would take up much too much *broadband* and people would have to wait too long to load serious web pages.” Sven said disapprovingly. “Only the press people from MOU XVIII may have it.”

“So how do I do it then?”

Sven left the office. This guy was a pirate and only wanted to listen to some music samples on Amazon or worse vision dirty movies. A bit later, he passed the office again and saw Gwendoline and Nimrod bent together over the monitor and laughing. Traitor!

“Try to download the movie by saving it to disk. Right-click on the movie link. Then choose ‘Save target as,’” said Gwendoline sweetly.

“You see Broadband,” she said, “is a wide band of frequencies transmitting information. Viewing such movies directly on Internet takes up a lot of broadband, and then the whole Intranet of the House might get slower.”

Sven could now hear some life explanation about the Human Genome Programme to which Gwendoline and the Nimrod listened eagerly. But Sven was sure Nimrod was a pirate nonetheless. Nimrod on his side decided he wouldn't call Sven again but only Gwendoline.

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Digital camera

Dino Gatto called because he needed some pictures transferred from his digital camera to his PC: “A summit about Nanofluidic transistors in Naples,” he explained. “I just don’t know how to do it.”



Lexi plugged one end of the cable that had come with the camera in the camera, the other one in the USB Universal Serial Bus - slot of the PC. The *plug-and-play* interface thought for a while and then opened a dialog box with a series of options. Lexi chose ‘Transfer to the My Pictures folder’ and soon the pictures were flying over from the camera to the PC. Dino opened the My Pictures folder with the impatience of a child, and Lexi helped him further by choosing ‘View – Filmstrip’.

One could now see a birthday cake, children playing and Dino and other adults having Prosecco on a terrace with a view on beautiful soft coloured houses along a blue sea.

Dino presented her with an Italian cake then, Pasticciotti chocolates, which she kindly refused.

USB-FlashDisk

Richard called, and seemed a bit ill at ease:

“Lexi, I don’t think you can do this via this Remote Control System of yours, could you come by?”



Lexi came, good-willed; Richard was fun, a real story-teller.

“My CLD (see Glossary) has given me his Hm how is it called FlashDisk? USB disk, and asked me to transfer the files to his PC. It contains 63 recordings in Hm - I believe it is called MP3 format about our last meeting about fighting industrial CO₂ with algae.”



Lexi helped him plug the little USB disk in the USB slot of his PC. The hardware was promptly recognised and the programme suggested an immediate transfer to ‘My E-Books’ of the PC.

Lexi however now preferred to click on ‘My Computer’ and opened the ‘E: Drive’ which had been assigned to the FlashDisk.



She chose ‘Edit-Select All’ and then Copy, went to ‘My E-books’ and chose Paste. They then watched the 63 little MP3 files flying from the E: drive to the E-books folder.

“This was so easy that it’s like magic,’ said Joseph. “Thank you so much. And all those files on this cute little thing! My vendor told me that this little thing can take the equivalent of 500 diskettes!”

When she had turned the corner of the corridor she could hear a man’s voice beginning

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to read:

“The hottest day of the summer so far was drawing to a close and a drowsy silence lay over the large, square houses of Privet Drive. Harry...”

Lexi turned back on her heels. She had been looking for this for days now.

Joseph looked up guiltily when she stuck her head in again. “I want this for my godchild,” he explained. “I just wanted to check if it was really working.”

“No need to explain,” said Lexi with a stern face, “but can I borrow your FlashDisk? I’ll bring it back in a minute. I have a godchild too.”

The CHD never refused to answer a personal request, because it were those that taught the users most about computers, because they were interesting.

Joseph handed the FlashDisk over to her, together with a packet of Mint chocolates.

At this rate, she would soon weigh a ton herself. Not that she had weight problems, with all this running around it couldn’t happen anyway; but she felt if this continued, she would go bust. She felt kaput. Lexi was so exhausted that she didn’t even have the strength left to talk about it. She felt like a Hydra, with hundred heads. One talking on the phone, a second and third to a user plus one to a colleague permanently stationed in her office, a fourth looking at the second line blinking on her phone, three more to look at the three new Emails popping up on her screen. All her heads taken up already to do something and then none left to eat one of those users. Did someone really think she had so many brains? She admired Sven, the most intelligent man in the House: He only had one. Or none.

She began to pity the computers themselves. They only had one CPU - *Central Processing Unit*. CPU is the central unit in a computer containing the logic circuitry that performs the instructions of a computer's programs. It cannot but process one instruction at the time too. If it has more, it will break up the tasks into little bits, do a little bit here, a little bit there. As Lexi felt now, that hurt. Poor computers. It was not a joke, she was doing it all the time, and it hurt.

Multitasking lets a user perform more than one task at the time, like when the user opens Excel and his Internet browser at the same time. *Multithreading* lets a computer manage more than one user at a time and to even handle multiple requests by the same user. Somehow this made people believe people could do this too. But they were HUMANS! However could they handle all this multitasking and multithreading without going crazy? But then they sometimes did, and crashed. Doctor Watson had to come; there had been a clash of interests. An IRQ conflict or worse. They became psychotic.

Would this happen to CHD too? They were all close to a sixteen hour day. Maybe people really believed they were computers. Machines. An object where you pressed the button and the results would flow out, like on a USB disk. They had gotten too much used to the idea. It was magical thinking come true. But maybe it was Black

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Magic?

On this sombre thought Lexi and Sven went to have a coffee at the Pink Bar, which was not too far away.

She met Monica on the way there. To the 'How are you question' one never got the requested answer anymore. Anja just rolled her eyes at Lexi:

"Why does the House insist on giving us all those new programmes! The moment we know them, they change. One never knows what to do anymore. No one knows how they are working, everyone says something different, and nothing is right. And how are you?"

Lexi just rolled her eyes and Monica laughed, understanding.

On their way back, they crossed Leo and Gwen going for a coffee too.


Gwendoline was just back from her coffee when she heard Johanna open the door, quicker than usual and run over the floor, calling after Leo, who was obviously wandering around there:

"Leo! Have you heard?!"

There was anguish in her step and voice. Gwendoline, with her sixth sense, felt immediately that something was very wrong. The news that had just come was already all over Bohatia, and would probably soon go all over the world, via news websites, radio, TV. No, Leo hadn't heard, nor had the rest of CHD; they had just too much work to hear anything else than user calls. But Johanna had been informed her husband, who had some time left for headlines.

A plane with several of the House's and also the MOU's CLA's and CLD's had simply vanished from the face of first the skies, than of the earth. The situation was to get more intricate than it already was. Someone had obviously thrown a hex at the MOU. Or was there some sombre plan to eliminate management or even the House itself? More than 10 CLA's gone? Who could replace all of them in a short time? Who could train their successor? Even if Sven said with some malice that one wouldn't notice the difference.

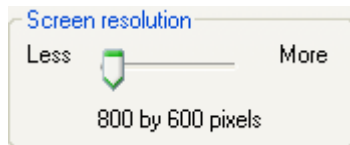
Icons and text too small

 "Lexi, my icons are all so small, and the text. I can't see a thing."

"That's the screen settings

- Right-click On an empty place of the Desktop (not on an icon)
- Choose Properties
- In the Display Properties Windows choose the Settings Tab
- Beneath "Desktop Area" grab the icon beneath Less and More
- and change it to for instance 800 x 600

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“Thanks, that is much better! It seems specific to you computer people, to have text and icons so tiny that no normal human being can see them. You computer people seem to have a magnifier in both your eyes.”

Lexi wondered on her side why it was that HER screen did not have the settings she wanted, but she just never found the time to set it right.

The cobbler's children go barefoot. They didn't care about a problem until a user mentioned it to them. CHD was just sort of happy to survive, and not to demanding as what regarded themselves.

A good informatician is lazy. He will do the least possible, and first of all for himself. Why do anything, when you can have it ready-made?!

And all those cables

On the back of the PC, read the circles content from left to right:

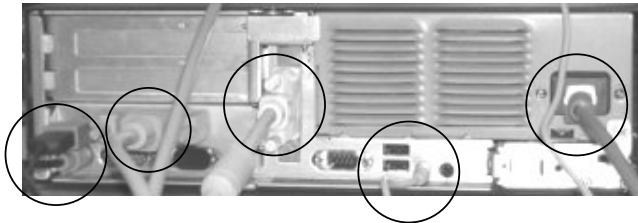
Mouse and Keyboard cable

Printer Cable (the 'LPT1' socket)

Screen Cable

2 USB Ports, and the Network cable

Power - Electricity cable



What a day it had been! Lexi left on her knees, shortly after followed by Sven, leaving Maurice all alone. He got one last call from Mr Thomas, Thelma's CLA or boss. He had tried to access his Email this morning and hadn't managed too. He had then left for a meeting and had come back only now. Maurice tried to make him check the network cables, telling him a cleaning lady might have knocked the network cable off, but Mr Thomas begged him to come, he was too old, and had begun using a PC only a few weeks ago. Maurice, sighing, went over to the Koch building, of course using the shortcut. He checked the network cable at the back of the PC and found it OK. Slightly swearing, he then bent down and crawled beneath the table. And there, entangled in cables and completely knocked out, lay the cleaning lady.

Phantom users

Hilde had slept badly, again waking up at five with a trainee's face towering over her, asking for an EMail account.

She had spend the previous day again holding mice (mouse in plural) for a fresh arrival of trainees, this time eleven, the unpaid ones. If they were unpaid, was it because they were even more dim? This one had broken the record. The Email was down again and Hilde couldn't give her a mailbox, but the trainee didn't believe her and announced her intention, tearfully but determined, to spend the whole day in her office, until Hilde had given her the mailbox. Hilde had to have her removed by Maurice and Sven. The girl had had the guts to call back twice.

Hilde wished her to the limbos. But at least this trainee had a face and a name, a since early this morning a mailbox. At least this trainee existed and existence in flesh and blood was becoming a rarity. Because most of the staff of MOU XII seemed to have ceased to exist. People had left, people had not arrived yet, people were not to be found, people were lost, their units, their offices, their phones changing all the time. Nameless faces in empty non existing units had become their daily bread. An ordeal of a very unusual kind. Like when you see spots dancing before your eyes when you are tired. Pixels, as IT people would say. A dance of names within ever changing boundaries.

Hilde suffered greatly, because she had to permanently re- and re-organise her user databases. Remember the story with MOU X being split into MOU XI and XII and MOU VII being split into two and being distributed over MOU XI and MOU XII? In order to respond an ever growing and changing scientific world new departments and units had been created, but their names where not decided upon yet, nor were their exact delimitations. Moreover once one name had been decided upon it was bound to change again the next day. Abbreviations followed the dance, and Hilde had to change user groups and tables several times a week in the MOU XII part of the House's Active Directory. It was Chaos pure.

The confusion made that soon everyone was using different names for the same unit, which made it a real guessing game to know of which unit another person was talking about.

For instance there were the two main sub units 'Natural Sciences', and 'Human Sciences'. In the first were sub units like 'Biodiversity and Biological Safety', Bioethics, Microbiology, 'Ecosystems and Marine Biology', 'Genetics and Biological Engineering'. The second contained sub units like Psychology and Psychoanalysis,

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Psychobiology, Neuroscience, Neuropsychology, Sociology. Well at one time maybe, but only. The structures kept moving like quick sand.

Talk about converging sciences! Everything was mixing, mingling, marrying: nanotechnology, biotechnology, neurosciences, information and communication technology, cognitive and human sciences. You could cut those words in two and then make just about any combination possible. This sure was a many splendored thing, but for Hilde it sounded more like nanobioinfoscocioneurologysupercalifragilistic-expialidocius.

Was there a way to foresee Chaos, like one can anticipate a tsunami, because a keen observer can detect a peculiar kind of ring-shaped ripples on the sea, and then tell the others to run?

Hilde would get a request to create a new user in her AD for the workgroup: 'Ecosystems and Biodiversity', or in Molecular Biology, which was in none of her lists yet. Or she would just get 'Neuro' or 'Bio' or 'Psy' or 'Nano' or 'Macro' or worse NS or HS which left her with more than one possibility. She never knew if the requester really meant or knew what he was asking for. And when she enquired it was quite obvious he didn't. Denominations and delimitations were changing all the time. One week Genetics would get split from Biological Engineering, only to be joined again the next. Or a Psycho-Biology workgroup was created, only to change its name to Bio-Psychology a few days later. The responsible WG, first moved to Koch, was then moved back to Curie again, with in the meantime, two persons gone in exchange of another newcomer.

Adding those people to the security groups in her Active Directory database almost made no sense anymore, the names would have changed and been recombined the day that followed.

You can guess that it were probably not scientists who were deciding upon all that. They were not so many scientists at the House. The House was only giving them money. Not doing science itself mostly, only sometimes they did, but not at MOU XII. But maybe they did Science Fiction, if you would believe some bad tongues. But the House revered Science, and everything turned around the 112 'real' Scientists which were representing its name in the Outside world. Anyway, as you may have guessed, calling it the House of Science is just another means of disguise.

Several times a day Hilde would find a man or woman suddenly standing in her office, completely lost. He wanted a logon, an Email and an office, but had no idea in which service he was to work. Neither had Hilde! She had to create temporary services with dummy names, and put the user there. As well as make temporary shares. She called them 'Muta' for mutation, she thought at first, but then she realised she must have made a spelling mistake and that it had to be read 'Mute'. Mute for not knowing, for not saying, the silent state of those in the limbos.

It became more than a bit difficult to fill in her Active Directory user database with

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phantom names, if you remember what was already said about the AD like of for instance on page 57. The principle, if tedious, was easy, but with those phantoms filling in AD Accounts had become a major challenge, if not a kind of trickery. And combining the AD with the Email and real users became a matrix. Because one half of them were changing all the time and the other half did not exist. They were no real users any more, or so it appeared. It was really serious. Hilde had to create, rename and undo one 'Security group' in her Active directory after the other. It was nothing about security anymore. A Security group had to have a name and to contain people but if things were that much unsure and shifting, Security was too. By not knowing who was who, everyone could end up having access to the General Director's files.

On the other side, Lexi and Sven, who had to organise the moves of their PC's got quite lost in this state of things and with it the users got lost too.

Ex MOU VII people were the worst. They were never to be found. The offices which sometimes wore their names had no occupant. Or they occupied an office with no name on it. No one ever seemed to know much about their whereabouts. They never told anyone beforehand where they might be going. Looking for them, one could only wonder: were they on some foreign mission, on sick-leave, on a holiday, on a training course, at some mystery meeting, having a coffee? Did they exist at all? Or were they maybe having a party? No one dared investigate. The name of MOU VII had become taboo. One could imagine them at a party indeed, invisible beings rattling their chains, chanting, boo - boo. One said 'MOU VII', one would disappear too. It was science fiction pure.



Most of the CLA's coming from that MOU had resigned, taken early retirement, or did simply not appear again.

Penelope had said that even Josepha had been at loss; that is before she had disappeared. She had been given the task to hire an army of phantoms to work in her group of seven WG's. She had tried, but when invited, they didn't appear at their interviews, and when they did, they said a lot of rubbish. The situation was so much obscure that it seemed to get to their minds from the moment they had set foot in our building. Josepha had felt helpless too. She was a very sound person, and did not believe in ghost tales. Now she seemed to have become one herself. Had she been dissolved together with MOU VII? But somehow everyone felt she was still alive, even if swallowed by the limbos.


Phantom users. Phantom users everywhere. Nameless, faceless, WG less, MOU less. They were sitting empty faced in the staircases, immobile like if shell-shocked, ghostlike on the chairs in their office, voiceless on the phone. Zombies. One girl, even if she was found sitting in her office at all times, even at night it seemed, appeared so absent in all her looks and gestures that it was almost scary. She just sat there and created emptiness. One would never have dared to ask her to do anything. She would

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have transformed it into nothingness, so that one would have to look for it like in some repressed and traumatic memory. The House was nuts and people were proud of this, but this pale ghost even astonished the most fervent adepts of the precept. If someone asked her if she had had a nice weekend she would answer she never found a single moment to relax, work was so hard that it swallowed up all of her private life, and she had to think about it all week long, weekends included. But nobody had ever seen her do anything. One could ping her endlessly and would always obtain: Request timed out. Remember, *Ping* was a TCP/IP command, to check if a PC was connected to the network.

MOU VII was also a very old MOU, and some of the people still didn't know how to use a mouse. They held it against the screen and waved it around. Others didn't even know what an automatic *wrap* was and continued hitting the Return key at the end of each line. Gwendoline had observed this with several of the users from there. She had activated the Show/Hide function  in their documents and had even found that they used the spacebar to justify their text instead of simply clicking on the Justify  tool provided for it.

To hit the Enter key in Word when the paragraph wasn't finished sounded like if you had to say 'period' aloud after each sentence.

 Ok if you didn't know what a *wrap* was in an Excel cell, maybe, that made sense.

A	B
in Excel however a wrap was useful to know	when the text was too long and the columns not enough

 Type a long sentence and then choose 'Format - Cells - Alignment - Wrap text'. If however you DO want a line break in one cell type the first line and then press **Alt+Enter** to make the second line.

But pressing Enter in Word to end a line was like travelling back in time.

Gwendoline thought that the problem was that MOU VII users hadn't been made aware at all of the plan to split them. They were just put before the accomplished fact. One day they got a letter informing them that from today on there was to be no more MOU VII, and that they were to be distributed over two still other new MOU's. Having had no mental preparation at all, they of course did not have the slightest sympathy for the 'scheme'. The few the CHD spoke to were obviously in a state of shock. They couldn't execute the most simple task on their PC, and Gwendoline would gladly have spent hours comforting them, but she had no time left.

They couldn't remember their passwords from one day to the next and Hilde and Gwendoline had to reset passwords and reactivate locked out accounts each day by the

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dozens. With such simple things eating up their time, they could not get a moment to organise things for the better. It was a nightmare.

A simple password change took hours. Many users didn't even know or remember the use of **Ctrl+Alt+Del** in order to obtain the dialog box which would allow them to *change their password*. Myra sometimes took over an hour to succeed in having a user change his password, they just couldn't manage to put one together which followed the rules: like that it had to be at least 10 characters long and contain a combination of capital and small letters and numbers. Hilde would end up in creating the new password herself, at the Active Directory level, let's talk about 'security' there.

Additionally, the person of MOU XII who was to be responsible for personnel management was not only new to her job, but not even coming from one of the three MOU's. With the result that she could or would not give Hilde the lists necessary to keep her user database up to date. Hilde was either not informed at all, or informed to late, or given a wrong information. Users seemed to have vanished in a guessing game of names, a maze of invisible offices and phones which would never answer.

Then, suddenly, a user would pop up into life. She would find him standing in her office, informing her he had been hired to MOU XII a week ago, and was still waiting for his logon and Email. She wished she'd possessed telepathic qualities, and, just for the fun, thought of acquiring a crystal bowl, so she could have a look at it now and then, to foresee a user's coming. But telepathy was not so much for her practical mind, she could leave that to sensitive Gwendoline or mysterious Myra, whom she suspected to believe in such things. She didn't, but looked at heir tea-cup nevertheless. Lexi, who'd just appeared in her office, looked over her shoulder. Hilde explained about her telepathy problem and mimicked a séance:


"Oh user. I see you coming. You have red hair. My feeling is that you will work in the Ethics WG. And what a nice T-Shirt you're wearing. Is it Kenzo or Versace?"

"Les Copains," said Lexi. "Definitively." Fashion was Lexi's field

And as if by magic, the red-head appeared in her office too. "Indeed," she said and soon she and Lexi were engaged in a passionate discussion about where to find what in Bohatia. This could go on for hours, because Bohatia's Grande Rue, quite long, lined up one Jeweller's shop besides one Fashion store after the other including two international Bohatian designers. However, the red-head didn't know where she was to work. Hilde thoughtfully tore herself another hair out, the fourth at least today, and put her into the 'Muta' Security group, while waiting to find out more.

How could she deal with this situation! How did one put phantoms into the 'Active Directory'. Users and workgroups without names. An impossible deed. Entities like users and services were called 'Objects' in the new IT terminology and Hilde would always been very shocked about this, and Gwendoline even more, but here it seemed to make some sense. It rang and she took the phone. It was Doremi:

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 “Hilde I have this strange message when I open the Kaleidoscope programme.”

“Can you read it to me?”

“Well it’s pretty long.”

“Can you make a *print screen* of it and paste it into Word?”

“How do I do that?”

 “You click on the little window with the message and then on the keyboard press **Alt+Print Screen** to put it in the *Clipboard*. Then open a new word document and click the Paste icon.

“Marvellous. What do I do now?”

“Just choose ‘File - Send To - Mail Recipient’ and then send it to me.


“Marvellous. In fact if I press Alt+Print Scrn I can copy any active window and than paste in into Word?”


“Yes, the image will be put into the clipboard.”
















The message arrived promptly. Hilde saw that this was nothing she could solve herself and forwarded it to the Kaleidoscope Helpdesk. MOUIT had apparently rebooted the Kaleidoscope server.

People, frightened by the situation, left the MOU by dozens, and no reasonable replacement was found for them. They disappeared like if some monster lurking around in the corridors was eating them up. No one knew how to do their job. It were key people, like everyone is in this manual, but nothing seemed to be scheduled to replace them. In certain WG’s 4 people out of the initial 13 remained to do the same job. Strange little epidemics sprang up here and there. People didn’t feel well, had headaches, hot and cold rushes, allergies and infections like fungus.

The phone rang for a diversion, it was Doremi:

 “By the way Hilde, how do you put those little images of the phone and the hand in your manuals?” (Doremi only knew difficult things)

 “You just choose ‘Insert - Symbol - Symbols’. There you have loads of such symbols at the bottom of the list. Like Webdings, Wingdings and maybe others.

Hilde spoke some of the symbols out aloud:         and I wanted to say this already:        ”

“Indeed? How cute, thanks so much and same too you wizard!”

“And how are you? Lot’s to do?”

“Only about so much that I’m afraid I will never be able to leave the House again. Last night I had to work until two o’clock in the morning, and get back at six. So I said to myself that I might as well stay at the office, and sleep there.”

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“You didn’t! Where did you sleep?”

“On the floor, beneath the table...”

“But that’s forbidden!”

“No. It’s forbidden to sleep at the House, but not to work.”

“You could at least have gone to one of the directors office, they have a comfortable sofa in their office mostly.” She almost said ‘Josepha’s office’ but bit her lips. Where the h... was she!

“I imagine what my CLA would have said had he found me there in the morning.”

“Do you think a CLA comes so early?”

“Some of them do. Well they did. They seem so absent. They never listen anymore. We have to sort out all of our troubles all alone.”

A consequence of this ‘we do it all alone thing’ was that more and more people began to take the concept of hierarchy slightly. They did everything in their power to do their job, but just in the way it pleased them to do it. Rules, permissions and access rights seemed to have vanished, and everyone felt he was his own master. No one needed any more permissions, no one was there to ask for them.

Permissions!

Hilde too, who had always been a fervent defender of an Open environment in what regarded computers, now completely forgot about restrictions.

When Doremi, at present in the temporary Astrology WG, asked her to have the owner permissions for the Public Email folders of her team, she didn’t hesitate. After all, if one created a new folder beneath a root folder, one automatically got to be *Owner* of it, which made that one got ‘Administrator rights’ over it. She answered promptly:

Good lunchtime!

You are now the proud Owner of the Astrology Folder in the Public Folders of Outlook.

This means you can add new people and give them the *Permissions* of your choice and that you have a responsibility for everything which happens there.

Reviewer means just to look at.

Publishing editor and Author can add, delete and change items.

Don’t forget that this folder can contain Address and Contact items as well as Calendar items, Task items, Appointment items, which all of your Workgroup can all share.

Have fun sharing!

Hilde

♪ It's lunchtime

It was indeed time for lunch and she met her group made of Penelope, Emma I&II, Julia and Jenny as so often to have some salmon with sour cream and horseradish at the Pink Bar.

It was her birthday and Hilde got a bouquet of flowers and pretty necklace, made of Tiger Eyes. She told them about the phantoms and the crystal bowl.

"I can only say it again," said Jenny. "Such situations, like chaos, make us wish for the wonderful."

"If only one day the wonderful came true," said Penelope.

"It's so strange. Everyone agrees about the situation, and about what's wrong. and everyone is searching for the solution, but no one can find it. Everyone wait for someone to say something incredible, divine, but nothing ever happens," said Jenny.

"The one magical sentence, like in programming. You find it, and the programme works," said Hilde. "Or a formula. You have a set of units filled with numbers, you have an goal, you find the formula, and whoops, the problem is solved."

"Put your mind at it!" cried out Penelope, "Apply your formula on the five motherless workgroups I have to manage in the absence of Josepha!"

Gwendoline went to have lunch with her cousins, who were working at MOU XII too. Gwendoline had some of her real family at the House. She explained to them was supposed to organise courses, but didn't know for whom and for what. Phantoms really, just as Hilde said. How was she going to do that?

"Organisation seems indeed to have become an empty word," said her cousin.

"We would really need the advice of a wise man now," said the other.

"Then maybe the dwarfs, which have appeared in the building, can do the job. As some people have insinuated already," said Emma I.

They made them giggle all together, imagining some dwarfs wandering around, interviewing people, taking notes, then calling up a general meeting and so.

Maurice, Lexi and Sven, who had gone to the Goats Bar, called so for the goats wandering around it, were tearing their hair out over their glass of milk as well, because just as the majority of users, most PC's and printers had disappeared during the first days of the move. Just like Josepha, but not quite, because most of them were there, somewhere, but where, and what were their names? Anyway one could see people walking around in the building. They must be users, or some of them. They had been given offices, but nor Hilde nor the rest of the CHD knew where, phones were still not installed, and since she didn't know their names she couldn't write them an Email either. Sven and Lexi installed PC's in the empty offices, but couldn't configure

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them correctly since they didn't know the service of the person to come. Well more or less sometimes, since they were told fourth floor would contain the Biology WG, but then this changed a few days later. Slowly then, over the weeks, some people reappeared or appeared, and took ownership of their offices. Right-click - Properties - Permissions - Take Ownership.

All those offices, some always empty, some most of the time, where people appeared for a few hours a week and then disappeared again for days, weeks or even months made one's head spin. One lost his balance. Many people felt dizzy all the time.

Lexi imagined that under those circumstances one could easily arrange to have more phantoms hired, giving them a name, an office, a pc, a phone, and perceive their salary. With no one ever noticing this. Gush this could mean money. She licked her lips. She would give the idea more thought. Maybe someone in Central Personnel MOU could be of some help and would comply to the game.

"The House should really give us some more help. It's an unusual situation. It's just ten times more work at the moment, why has no one ever thought of that," said Lexi, spooning around in her Rigatoni with broccoli and anchovies. "The situation is dramatic, it needs a miracle. Divine intervention."

"Why don't we call the dwarfs? Then we could go home at five-thirty, and turn up at eight-thirty, just follow official working schedule. Swell."

That, of course, came from Sven, well informed in such matters.

"Why could we suddenly go home and arrive at normal times?"

"Because they would do our work at night."

"Who. The dwarfs?" Lexi sounded unbelieving.

Sven took a sip of 'Mischel'.

"Don't you know the Heinzelmén story?"

"No."

"It's a German children's tale. Die Heinzelmännchen. Hilde told me. The little men from Köln. There not like the dwarfs in the Cinderella tale really. Not dwarfs really, but little men, more like children, fine bodied and full of grace. And also not to be confused with the Mainzelmännchen, the cute little guys which show up between the commercials on German TV. I saw them once when Hilde and what's his name - Egon - invited me and my wife to dinner."

"Ah yes I know them too. It's on the second German channel I believe, the one with two eyes. They're very cute. But how does the Heinzelmén story go?"

"It goes that if someone is nice and very hard working, but then has problem because of something which really isn't his fault, he will get help. The Heinzelmännchen will come at night, when he has fallen asleep from exhaustion, and do his work for him. They will chop and carve and skew and wash and blend and mix and knead and way and lift and shove and bake. All that, and at the end they even clean it all up."

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“Wow.”

“As long as you don’t go and pry at them, like the tailors wife did. Then they will disappear.”

“I wouldn’t dream of doing such a thing,” said Lexi solemnly.

Maurice, who hadn’t said a word until now, but only sat there grinning, finally spoke up:

“Are you sure? What are you doing at the House then, Lexi. I’m not so sure I would let other people do my job. I imagine the consequences would be dreadful.”

“Anyway those guys seem like nice chaps to me. Let’s write them a letter, pardon an Email,” said Sven, who hadn’t gotten Maurice’s point.

Dear little big men,

Could you help us with the surplus of work we have? It’s so dreadful.

We desperately need to help the users with their work, but everyone has just too much too do. Some people believe you are work specialists. And that you can be of great help in hopeless situations.

Yours, Lexi and Sven from CHD-MOU XII.


But they didn’t write the Email, because they didn’t have their Email address.

But maybe they were overheard, and someone else had. Because of the strange events which occurred at the House afterwards.


In the meantime even their smartest users got helpless in situations they had been able to solve easily themselves. No one to do their job, like for the lucky baker, butcher, carpenter and tailor in Köln. The users got so helpless that they couldn’t even manage to have fun anymore, and called Lexi over saying they couldn’t play a CD because there was no sound on their PC. When Lexi came, she just put in the CD, and there came out the sound. It was a mystery. CHD could say things over and over again, users had forgotten it the next morning and called again. Like if someone had thrown a spell over them.

Show this folder as an Email address book

Gwendoline had answered so many times:

<p> “Right-Click on the contacts folder. Choose Properties Outlook address book Click ‘Show this folder as an Email address book’</p>
--

to the question:

<p> “Gwendoline I can’t see my contact book with the addresses when I’m writing a</p>
--

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new mail. I click on the **to:** field or on the address book icon, then I go to see in the list to the right, but my contact book isn't there!"

that she gave the answer even before the user had started to formulate it.

This again seemed like telepathy but it wasn't, there were just ninety percent chances out of a hundred that the user would be asking just that. She was sure he had said it much more than 2331 times already. The users, when they had reached the end of the queue, just seemed to get back and queue up again. Maybe she had a wonderful voice when saying it: "Show this folder as an Email address book."

This will be my epitaph. They're going to put it on my gravestone, she thought sombrely:




**Show this folder as
an Email address book.**

Of course, again, it was Mrko Mrnsk's fault. Why hadn't he automatically enabled this option in his standard configuration?! But if people couldn't even remember such simple things after she had told them twice or more, then there was a problem somewhere. And this problem apparently made them want to hear her voice.

She decided to send out the topic – *I can't see my contact book when I'm writing a new email + Show this folder as an email address book* as an email to the whole MOU.

Monika, one of the brightest users at the MOU, just couldn't understand the difference between the Public Email folders and her private ones. How had she suddenly come to be so dense:

 "Gwendoline, I made those contacts for our WG, and put them in the 'Chem-Share folder, but now only I can see them, not my other colleagues."

"But then you did not put the Public folders, which I have made for you, so that you can precisely share them with others. That's why they are called Public folders."

"Gwendoline, I don't understand a word of what you are saying. I put the contacts in Chem-Share folder"

"Monika I'm sure you did, but this Chem-Share is in your private mail folders."

"What do you mean by private and public? What's public, I called my contact book 'Chem-SHARE'. That means 'Shared'. Why don't my colleagues see them contacts?"

"It's not because you call it 'Share', that it is shared. It's not because you call your dog Napoleon that he will start wearing a hat or get a tummy ache. Monika, please tell me what you see in your folder list."

"What folder list?"

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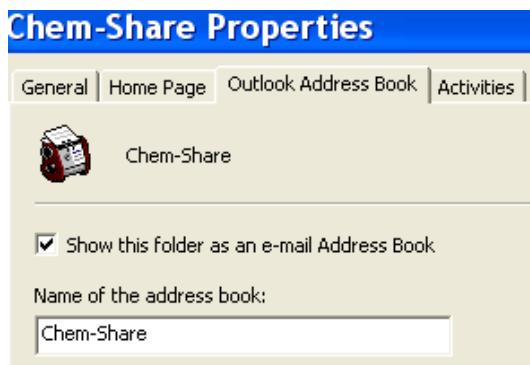
“Please choose ‘View-Folder list’ and tell me what you see. Just try it out and tell me.”

“I see my Chem-Share.”

It was despairing.

Gwendoline finally helped Monika drag and drop the contacts she had made in her private folders over to the Public folders, which everyone who had been given the permission to could see. And Monika had been given Publishing Editor rights to the Chem-Share folder in Public folders. Gwendoline thought Monika was intelligent enough to manage those folders fully. Now she thought that maybe she should downgrade her to at least only Publishing Author. Or make her a Reviewer only.

If this happened to people as highly intelligent as Monika was, a fact which was generally acknowledged by everyone without jealousy, because she was so nice too, then what could be imagined of the others. People were so stressed that it slowed their work down. With less stress they would be able to do more work, so much was obvious. And of course Monika hadn't chosen:



The stress everyone was suffering was mind-boggling, and Monika was not the only rather sound person to get lost in it. Many of the Workgroups were new, and most of the people in it too. Gentle Josepha Laperm and strong Jack Owl had disappeared. And No one was organising this whole set of teams together. Most of the units were understaffed, which increased the workload by thirty to fifty percent. In a total of 777 staff members, vacant posts where of course those who were generating the most work. Some units had been without a CLA for months now. He or she had been hired on paper and had signed, but he hadn't disappeared, he had simply not appeared.

People were tired all the time, suffered from tachycardia, insomnia, dizziness, fainting spells, head aches and stomach cramps, eczema. A new strange sickness was insidiously installing: chronic fatigue. They couldn't stop working for even a second, a felt it was impossible to waste their time with things like going to the ladies-room or to have a glass of water. Not speaking of tea. This would take much too much time to prepare. Psychological consequences were just as bad. The atmosphere was feverish,

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anguish and anxiety became a norm, feelings of oppression and impotence took the reigns, irritability, doubt, distrust, suspicion crept around. It was conflict, danger, pressure all the time.

It was the BEAST, the work of the devil. The Minotaur, hidden in the labyrinth of the House, seemed very real at times. One day he would come and blow his flames at them in the open. Than at least they would be able to fight him.

Stress comes from the Latin word 'stringere', which means to 'tighten up', to put in bonds. It was a kind of a prison really; one couldn't get out of it just like that. But some way of escape just had to be found.

Lut, the most sensitive of them all, walked permanently around with shaking, trembling hands: "I just don't know how to manage all this anymore." she said to Gwendoline and Penelope. "My job, my husband, my sons, my house. When I take my clothes off in the evening, I stagger with fatigue as if I was drunk."

Sven, strong, brotherly and stable, when he heard her saying this, took her gently by the shoulder and patted it for a while, and Lut felt a bit better.

Sven sneezed, all this made even him nervous. And he was the most placid guy in the MOU, or even in the whole House.

"I so wish that the Heinzelmännchen would come."

But it was only a children's tale, and a poem by August Kopisch:

One's entire day's work done at night, while we are sleeping! But did anyone really want that? How much did they really hate the beast? No! They did not. People began to imagine one should make friends with Stress, and take it with them on holiday.

All work and no play

“Le travail c’est la santé.” or “Arbeit macht frei.” True?

The first is a lie, the second now sounds ominous. Work is not healthy. And work does not make free. It is proved that people who don’t work live longer, especially in the second case, or rather place... Which makes that one now might associate the word work with a concentration camp. That might go a bit to far, meant Sven.

There is a less harsh saying in English: “All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.”

At its origin, the French word for work ‘travail’ comes from the Latin and means ‘torture’. Etymology can do a lot to explain things.

And moreover it was Monday. Dreary, dreary Monday, with greetings in the elevators in the morning like:

“How are you?” and answers to this questions, so typical

“Like on a Monday.”

“Keep it going.”

“Doing my best.”

“Holding on.”

“Five days to go.”

The situation would change slowly over the week. On Wednesday one could hear:

“Half way trough.” - “Only two and a half more days to go.”

And on Friday there was only one answer to the ‘How are you?’

“It’s Friday!”

No remember, if you feel really great, and you’re asked ‘How are you’, answer ‘It’s Friday’ even if it is Monday. Or the opposite, if it’s Friday, and you feel bad, than you answer: I feel like Monday.

At the MOU nowadays one wouldn’t even ask the HowRU question anymore, but one would directly enquire: “A lot do to?” and one would answer “Oh I staid only until six o’clock yesterday” or than “It’s feasible” or something else that meant they were surviving. Work had become the main criteria for well-being.

Gwendoline didn’t feel like Friday or ‘it’s feasible’ at all but went to see a user, Consuelo, because Consuelo just refused to let Myra help her by phone. Some users are like that, they insist on seeing you. On the spot if possible. ‘Urgent’ is another of those words. Predictable. Why still say it, it’s a tacit convention now, everything is urgent.

Consuelo always had those strange questions to which one could only give awkward answers. Some users did that. Gwendoline believed it was on purpose. They somehow tried to express something else, with their questions, maybe in Consuelo’s case just the

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fact that she really had too much to do, always at least eight things at the same time. This dilemma was underlying each of her calls. She needed a witness. Consuelo could be a bore, but Gwendoline liked her. She had something mythical.

Consuelo always reminded her of Shiva. Already the way she held her arms and moved them up and down, one holding the phone, the second and third typing, the fourth taking a document from the printer, the fifth making a note in her boss's agenda, the sixth offering Gwendoline a Spanish cookie ('Polvorones'), the seventh taking one herself, and the eighth, smoking, alas, because she was permanently surrounded by smoke like a volcano, to the distress of her colleagues, to which it gave an allergy. Moreover she had dark, almost Indian looks. Tanned skin, long black hair, large golden earrings. How those did not interfere with her eight arms, Gwendoline could never understand. Of course Gwendoline wasn't sure if Shiva really had eight arms, but Consuelo certainly did.

It was rather impressive to look at and Gwendoline always wondered however she could manage it, all this work. She spoke it out aloud. On this Consuelo turned from her keyboard to face Gwendoline and put down her eight arms so that only two were left. She seemed obviously relieved. So someone DID notice. She beamed and nodded approvingly. Gwendoline continued, feeling she should know more, and asked:

"Ok you manage, but however can you stand it? How does your boss not see it is too much?"

Gwendoline hoped for an explanation and with it to see Consuelo's true face, her inner self. Shiva! Shiva was the goddess of creation, but also the goddess of revenge. And revenge would come one day over all this abuse. For everyone sake, because maybe they could learn some interesting truth, Gwendoline insisted:

"It has come to the point where we feel guilty if are not half dead at the end of the day. How do you do it? How do you survive?"

But the goddess of creation and vengeance just bent her head and answered in some reasonable tone of voice she'd most have learned at secretarial school or at some Hindu temple:

"You know, the work simply has to be done."

"But if you were to leave, what would happen?"

A bit more and Consuelo would add the lie of the century: "No one is irreplaceable." A sentence which Gwendoline held in contempt. And of course she said it:

"No one is irreplaceable."

She nodded to this as if to congratulate herself on that piece of wisdom. Should Consuelo not feel anger and wrath? But she always remained so calm, and never complained, she just seemed to pretend it was all normal. She always stayed nice, polite and poised. But Gwendoline, who wished for Consuelo to work hard to help them to get out of all this work, gave it another trial:

"Indispensable may be, but say that no one is irreplaceable is mean. People will kill

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themselves if they continue to work at this pace. This might mean doom. Because each of us is irreplaceable.”

Consuelo inhaled on her cigarette and smiled a smile full of *contraire* wisdom. And then she had to add the other atrocity, already denounced earlier, using her perfect French to say it so well that it really hurt: “*Le travail c’est la santé.*” On which she blew out a cloud of smoke so thick that she disappeared behind it.

Gwendoline almost fainted but then managed to collect herself: “Consuelo. You know that’s not true. You work too much and YOU may seem happy about it. But you’re not alone. Work is NOT health. Work is *le mal du siècle - this century’s evil* and no one except you ever dares to use the famous French sentence anymore. Even your boss will suggest therapy if you persist on saying it.”

“Whilst of course pushing me to sheer madness by requesting me to do more and more of it every day. One either has no work or one is overruled by it. That’s the rule,” said Consuelo with a Mother Theresa smile. Gwendoline reflected on this. Consuelo was not duped by all this, but she was a hopeless case. You’re worse than Johanna. Johanna worked too much, but at least she was raving against the House for putting her through it.

So Vengeance was not for now. But Gwendoline felt sure, that when the day came, it would be terrible. And divine, of course, Gwendoline smacked her lips just at the thought of it. Oh Consuelo, hurry... It felt divine, tasty like sushi. Teka Maki with lot’s of ginger and wasabi.

“Maybe we could go to the Japanese again one of those days,” said Consuelo, as if guessing her thoughts.

“Ok tomorrow at lunch?”

“Ok then. But let’s not talk about work then. Promised?”

Consuelo did everything thoroughly. When Consuelo relaxed, she relaxed. That is, one lunchtime or evening out of fourteen.

When one passes along the corridors of the dozens of buildings which make up the House one would meet people there at all times of the day. There would be people who arrived at five o’clock in the morning in order to work in peace, because during the day they would never be left alone a single second; there would be people at noon, crumbling a half forgotten sandwich all over their keyboard; there would be people sitting at their desk at midnight, in order to finish some report with a deadline, all this of course again without loosing too much time for eating or drinking. Why sleep? Why eat? Why drink?

Gwendoline, feeling frustrated about not having succeeded to get Consuelo admit that she was Shiva, continued to work as if in a dream, answering call after call. The users fell in, like in a dream within a dream.

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🗨️ “Gwendoline, ma Belle, everything is so slow. Is it only me or is it my imagination?”

👉 “It’s not you or your imagination Jakinda. It’s the LAN.”

“What’s the LAN?”

“The Local Area Network. The local network area here at the Curie building. The WAN, the wider area network in a big place like the House is subdivided into small geographical areas, LAN’s. Every building has its LAN.”

👁️ Of course nowadays it’s more chic and the LAN’s are becoming virtual. But explain this to Jakinda! 👁️

“Ah! Then this LAN is so slow. It feels like sleepwalking. Just like I feel myself. I am so tired, but I must go on with my work, but then I’m interrupted all the time, over and over again. It’s like being in a trance. I sleepwork.”

“True. We are interrupted non stop and forever and the moment we have we begin to listen to some request we are interrupted by another.”

“It’s so true. Thought may never go to an end. It builds up on the model of Russian dolls, those Matriochkas, so that we have to wait that the very last one is opened in order to begin closing the first one. I can’t concentrate anymore at all, from the start on, so much I fear I will be interrupted in the second that follows.”

“True! It is a proven fact that the human mind cannot contain more than between five or nine elements at the same time, seven in average, but this theory is not taken into account in our normal day to day life. If someone arrives at let’s say at the item six, and if he needs seven to finish his thought, he will be interrupted, and all of the six will crash down, and he will have to rebuild them from scratch.”

🚀 “True! Look before I let you get back to work, tell me Gwendoline, wouldn’t it be better to have a sort of Virtual LAN instead of one based on a geographical location? I mean like logical ones, based on type of user, unit or application? With all those moves, shifts, switches, wouldn’t it make things easier?” 🚀

“That’s called a VLAN,” said Gwendoline, slightly dumb-struck and feeling guilty. “Wow Jakinda, you’re something.”

“Must be the trance,” said Jakinda. “I’m just feeling virtual. I know nothing of computers.”

From that moment on, computer topics and the workload of the MOU blended, they merged into one, like a cell in Excel would, if one chose the right command:

Select both cells:

workload computers

then right-click and the via the menu choose ‘Format-Cells-Alignment-Merge Cells’.

People would never talk the same again, and at each call CHD would get a description of the user’s workload, and what he had to go through. Why did no one listen, but

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them? Not being listened to is the worst, but CHD did it, the listening. That's how HelpDesk people turn into psychologists sometimes, as we all do.

☎ Mercedes phoned, talking Spanish. "Gwendoline. Thank god it's you. I have this blank space after a paragraph, enormous, taking almost all the page. I have activated the show paragraph sign ¶, and looked for a page break, but I find none."

"Sometimes the *Show paragraph* doesn't show it all," said Gwendoline.

"So it's a lie. Like everything else, and it breaks, without showing it breaks, like everything else too. There is no more respect for one of the most precious aspects of our human nature, the thought and the spoken sentence. I believe I can count on my fingers how many times a day I manage to finish a single small sentence, and can easily come to none. So what must I do?"

"Mercedes please do the following: Choose 'Find - More - Special - Manual Page Break'. "Have you done this?"

"Yes. But it doesn't find a page break. The phone rings, an Email marked urgent pops up, my boss and then two colleagues enter the office at the same time or at short intervals, each of them interrupting the other. One Break after the other makes we never get a Break."

☞ "Look Mercedes, get on the first paragraph after the page with the white space and choose: 'Format - Paragraph - Lines and Page Breaks and deselect Page break before.' Ok?"

"Yes! You're a star! This has worked. The option 'Page break before' was selected. Thanks so much Gwendoline."

☎ "Gwendoline. It's Nadia. I have the same problem as Mercedes, but in a table. It just cuts the table after one single row and there is a big white space following."

"Joss. Click into the table. Choose 'Table - Select Table' and then 'Table - Table Properties - Row - and deselect 'Keep Rows together'. Has that solved the problem?"

"Yes! I don't know how you do it. It's a riddle to me. How can you keep it up? I agree with what you and Mercedes just talked about. I have read that the human mind, it has been proved, can hold only between 5 and 9 elements at the same time. Somewhere up there, you know, in a spot above your brain, like a sphere floating there. As an average, it is seven elements for most of us. Some genius might achieve fifteen, but this is almost never to be seen. So let's stay with seven. For any action, we might need to put together between one and nine elements, or more. If more is needed, we must subdivide them. But you're interrupted all the time. How do you do it?"

Gwendoline sighed:

"By starting over and over again. The brain is a master with statistics. But consciously or not, that is what we do. Before being able to carry out the action, we have to

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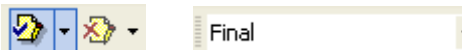
assemble those one to nine elements. But if we're interrupted, we'll have to start again putting them together. That's what I do. All the time. That's why it takes even more time."

☞ "Gwendoline, ma Belle, it's Jakinda. Why does it always happen to me? You must save my life again. I got this document from translation; send it to the Scientists by EMail, and then when they got it all the track changes were still in it. It was full of ~~deletions~~ and additions, now I look ridiculous. It almost created a diplomatic incident. No one wants to believe me, but I forwarded it just like I got it."

"Translation probably forgot to remove all the changes they made!"

"But why didn't I see them then?"

"Instead of removing them with the Reject or Accept all icons they choose to hide them with the 'Final' option; all of those icons are in the Reviewing Toolbar!"



"Gwendoline, you're such a genius. But what is better, is that you BELIEVED me. The others just laughed at me. But you always believe me. That's one of the worst things here, never being believed. But you do. You listen. You L I S T E N." She spelled out each letter and then even repeated the sequence backwards.

☞ "Gwendoline, ma Belle, it's Jakinda again. Sorry to interrupt you all the time. I must be the person calling you most."

"Not at all Jakinda!" (It was Cecile Acrot, the person calling most, Jakinda only came fourth. Hilde had made statistics).

"No? But if you're interrupted, the whole construct will fall down like a house of cards. Has this place come to this; is it a House of cards now? Which will fall down just as our thoughts do? That doesn't solve my problem: I have a line in a table which doesn't print. I see it in the document on screen, but it doesn't print. What can I do or you?"

Jakinda was now talking English again.

Jakinda. Select the line which doesn't print and then chose 'Format - Font'. Do you see something about 'Hidden'?"



"Indeed! I'll unhide the line. But why do I see it in the document then?"

"Because you have the Show/Hide Formatting Mark  active."

"Indeed! You did it again. How do you and your CHD remain steady in all this Chaos? Changes have become the norm and come at such speed and in such quantities that they rule it all. We move offices three times a year, change programmes five times a year, colleagues seven times a year. How do you manage? I have to run, the second line rings."

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She hung up. Hilde entered, for a small chat:

“It’s so true, what Jakinda just said! I complete, since she had to hang up: Our work, like a tree not allowed to go through all its seasons, can never bring its fruits to term. People of the MOU, non stop, have to begin everything from scratch again. The mess is growing and growing, and there seemed to be no way out of it. It almost needs a divine intervention to get us out of this.”

Gwendoline laughed:

“Divine! I just met Consuelo. She always makes me think of Shiva. I think Shiva could do it. But Consuelo refused. This was typical of her. But maybe she’s just pretending in order to act more freely.”

Gwendoline printed out a joke she’d gotten just this morning:

*The one who each morning:
is busy like a bee
strong as a bull
works like a horse
and the evening come, is tired like a dog
should consult a veterinary surgeon
because he’s probably a mule.*

She handed it over to Hilde. It was not even a good joke, nor poem, but so true. Hilde left, laughing mildly. But it was weird. Working like in the ridiculous poem seemed to denote the typical Housefonc. Why indeed did they work so much. For the Good or God of Science?

Like Rosie whom she met on her way to another user. Rosie was bent into an L form from some mysterious backache, and dragged her workload like an ox along the corridors, face swollen from pain, but when Hilde wanted to send her home she just shook her head and said she had too much to do:

“Work loves me. Work is MADLY in love with me; when it sees me, it comes running, arms outstretched, calling out my name like a kid who hasn’t seen his mother for days long. Just as I seem to do with my boyfriend, my own mother, my father, my best friend. For making kids myself, I have had no time yet. For instance, Daniel Spitz, my CLA, left at 17h00 saying that he had to drive his kids to the dentist and I was going to say that I had to leave earlier too, because I still had to make some, but he was already gone.”

When Hilde was back at her office she found an email forwarded from the central CHD mailbox, it was Werner, a very nice CLA from the Astronomy WG, asking for someone to come by in order to get his printer working again. The email was dated

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from 3.30 in the morning.

Alex dragged himself to work while suffering from severe stomach pains.

Tam sat over her dossiers with a splitting ever lasting headache.

Penny, arms laden with dossiers, tripped on her fatigue and flew down a whole flight of stairs at 21hoo in the evening. She lay there, dazed, for about 30 minutes, with no one to come by. Let's talks about cameras and security. Luckily, she had good bones and got away with a giant bruise. But she insisted to come to work the following day, even if her doctor had given her a three days leave. How crazy can one get? They were loosing their toolbars. And saying 'View – Toolbar' again and again, when a Toolbar was missing didn't help.

Why did they all work so much. Housefoncs didn't even need to, they couldn't be sacked. Once a Housefonc, always a Housefonc. They could have just said: I won't do this anymore. But they didn't. They went on with it. They were not afraid to loose their job, they were afraid to loose their work. The God of work. Like Jo or Consuelo were in person.

☞ “Gwendoline. It's Thelma. I have all the names of people in my document underlined with strange little red and green waves! But there not errors, they are names.”

“That's because the 'Check Spelling while you type' is active. Choose 'Tools - Options - Spelling and Grammar' and deselect Check Spelling and Grammar as you type.”

“Great. They're gone. But something else while I have you there: Françoise told me there was a way to get the synonyms of a word very easily. But I've looked everywhere, I can't find out.”

“That's the *Thesaurus*. Thelma, just right-click on the word and choose 'Synonyms'! OK?”

“Yes that's it. How marvellous. But wait. Françoise also told me that she could see the corrections for a misspelled word immediately by right-clicking on the word. How do I do that?”

“Thelma... you right-click on the word...”

Thelma laughed. “What was I thinking of, truly I work too much and it makes me stupid. I guess modern slavery kills just as much as the one which made us work in the salt mines. No it's probably not that bad. Thanks so much Gwendoline.”

Gwendoline wondered, not for the first time, how a woman as intelligent as Thelma was could miss the most simple of gestures, by looking for the moon at midday.

They needed help, but from where was this help to come from? For now, it was only chaos, and everybody was looking for someone to blame. As a joke, MOU XII people did indeed find someone: those Seven which had come to visit them, if only briefly, but then with bravado. But there had been no bravado in their leaving the MOU so quickly

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after coming. They bore them a grudge for leaving so soon and now everything that went wrong (and everything that could did) was put at their fault. It was meant as a joke but was used all the time.

“I did do nothing. The dwarfs have made my document disappear.”

“The dwarfs have installed the *Winamp* on my computer, not I.” *Winamp* was along Media Player a favourite music player programme.

“I did do nothing, but suddenly my icons were all over the Desktop, I’m sure some of them even fell on the floor, and I just can’t find them anymore.”

“My network connection isn’t working anymore, I’m sure that the dwarfs were here tonight and cut the cable.”

“My computer doesn’t work. Again. There must be a dwarf sitting in it!”

In fact that was being very unfair to the dwarfs, which were such understanding and hardworking people, and Myra, who believed in such things, especially in dwarfs, for obvious reason, was afraid their feelings would get hurt, hearing all that unfair nonsense about them, and feared that one day would come back and take revenge. Dwarfs were very touchy and sensitive creatures and could get very annoying when their feelings were hurt. They could be very generous too, when they met brave and deserving humans. She hoped the dwarfs knew that those humans ‘didn’t know what they were saying nor doing’. As she had soon noticed from the users questions and doings. She hoped the dwarfs would take pity on them, just as she (almost) did.

But some people pushed it so far as to pretend they had actually SEEN one or more of the dwarfs. Typically this happened at lunchtime or during the night (as people were working even then) and when no one but themselves had been around. One user kept talking about the dwarf she had seen with such instance, trying to convince everyone for hours and ceaselessly nagging each person she met to be believed, that she was driving everyone to sheer madness. This was not a joke anymore. After two weeks of this her boss finally gave her a one month leave. That was probably what she’d aimed at from the start. One month leave for seeing dwarfs? That was just the way of the House. The House was sort of proud to be crazy, and people got a bonus when they excelled in this.

And everyone tried to. People literally STROVE to get crazier with every day that came. It’s a sport to be unhappy for some people. Penelope kept repeating that it was HER dwarf’s fault. He was carrying everything which made sense away in her neighbour’s wheelbarrow. But then Penelope always thought everything was her fault. Hilde and the rest of CHD thought it could be rather Mrko Mrnsk’s fault. Again he had ignored an enquiry they had sent them about a serious bug in the configuration. A *bug* is a code in a computer programme that does not work. The etymology of the term is said to come from a real bug that had once disturbed one Harvard computer. But a bug is serious business. Only Flavia, who was always imagining catastrophes, was able to

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imagine the consequences it could have, like explosions in pipelines, car crashes in a computerised traffic system, wrong medicine being administered in a hospital at the time of an epidemic.

♪ It's lunchtime

Penelope and Hilde fled as soon as they could to have lunch with their usual crowd. As soon as they could was easily said and it was 1h30 when they arrived at the Pink Bar, where Jenny, Emma I & II and Julia were already waiting for them.

Josepha was still missing, and everyone missed her.

Of course on one side Penelope could have been happy. With 'nothing to do' she could have finally fulfilled a now almost life-long dream: Get some order in her files. But she was too worried for that. So she just sat and read Email jokes to put her mind on something else, but soon, she tired even of that. But something had to be done. Josepha just had to be found. Or at least someone to replace her at interim.

Rumours started about secret underground alleys in the building but security denied this. CHD knew of course they were lying, there was at least one. The one between Koch and Curie. But maybe they didn't even know of it.

Other black humour alleged the House Minotaur had eaten her. Some people pretended to firmly believe there must be such an ogre prowling around.

But it was not funny. Josepha's disappearance was a disaster. She would have been the only plausible person to see through that mess, and get the MOU out of it. But as always, the little ones would have to sort it out alone. And indeed what are we there for, if not to do everything ourselves?

This is something you must understand: if you want something, just do it, don't wait for some foreign power to do it for you. Authorities don't know or don't want to know what is needed, if you don't tell them. And if you do, they will be as helpless as you are. And anyway, there is no such kind of power, this is just wishful thinking. I mean the kind of power that could have the power to put things right just like you want them to be. In a way many people seem to know this and because of that don't go to vote. Or is it the other way around?

This didn't stop people of worrying about Josepha Laperm. And the few who had known him, to worry about Jack Owl.

Both of their close staff was so worried about how to handle the situation that it made them blind and deaf. They called upon Hilde several times in the afternoon for absolute nonsense. She finally broke a rather golden rule about users and chided some of them slightly:

"May I ask you why you call me to tell me that the sound on your PC isn't working, but when I come by to have a look I simply click and it works? And that you call me telling me the Search icon has disappeared from your Windows Explorer toolbar, when

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it is right before your nose? What is this mystery?"



She got no answer, and the Search function did find Josepha either.

Search by any or all of the criteria below.

All or part of the file name:

A word or phrase in the file:

Look in:

It's because in Search again people forget to select the 'More Advanced Options' and select 'Search for Hidden Files and Folders' there.

♪ And have a coffee

Leo and Gwendoline too talked about Josepha over a *lait russe* at the Goats Bar. Since talking didn't make her come back they went back to their usual topics. Their discussions were kind of philo sessions. They were short of course and couldn't possibly last longer than ten minutes. Anyway who has said one was allowed to take coffee breaks? Even if of course their philo talk went mostly around analysing their work and workload, believe them, but nowadays the CHD didn't even have the time anymore to talk about work. So Leo and Gwendoline didn't...

Leo talked about his son Nino, that he missed them, and about his problems with his ex-wife. Gwendoline complained of being married to a rather childish husband. But Leo guessed that he was just a bit boring. The childish part she did like, she loved everything small, and Leo feared she was lying to herself. Leo too was an excellent listener; which is a dream for women in a man seldom come true.

Or a dream a user might be having about his HelpDesk. Typically Leo might not have the solution, but would engage in a Question & Answer game, in the way a detective or a psychoanalyst would, so that many users would find the answer themselves. He never despised any question, even if it seemed to be a unique event and in no way essential, but he gave each of them his attention and their importance. He paid a user's call the respect a priest would to a confession.

One can answer many a question and solve many a problem by listening.

The cafeteria was filled to the extent of bursting with external visitors, coming from all over the world. At one end of the cafeteria they saw a huge table around which sat people from at least seventy countries. One could have thought they were costumed.

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But they all only wore the costumes of their countries. Gwendoline and Leo could recognise kimonos from Japan, Dirndl and Lederhosen from Bavaria, Saris from India, long sleeved shirts and wide trousers from Vietnam, Mongolian hats, pointed for the men and large and flat for the women, Jelabas and caftans for the Moroccans, Ponchos from Mexico, Batik from Java, North American feathers! They could only but admire but not give a name to costumes like Sfakia from Crete, colourful wraps called Miewaz secured around the waist with a fold for the Yemenite men, wide and colourful Agbada gowns for a Yoruba man, draped robes and striped shawls for a Masai.

It felt like carnival, but was a serious meeting about science founds for development countries.

♪ Hilde had a coffee with Maurice, but in her office.

Maurice had come with two cups, and had begun telling her about how he was going to install *disk mirroring* on the MOUXII server. “So if one disk drive fails the system can instantly switch to the other disk, so no data will be lost. Service will continue too. Users won’t yell.”

Hilde sipped her coffee, listened. She felt glad, strangely reassured, soothed.

However could users be afraid of Maurice, and his superb Chinese?

The afternoon was unusually quiet. Hilde felt it was the quiet preceding a storm. She felt it in her bones: Tomorrow would bring a storm. A tornado? A tsunami? A hurricane? What would it be? She liked storms and maybe difficulty.

A Computer romance

It was four o'clock in the morning. Since she wouldn't have been able to go back to sleep anyway Hilde took a shower, dressed and 'left for the House'. She would get a coffee down at Donatello's place, Donatello was in at four o'clock every morning, to take delivery of the newspapers.

I believe I might have already briefly mentioned this (Ha), but one can find people in the House at any time. During the day of course, what could be more normal, but also at weekend or at night. Those were the moments where one could find some peace in order to get the real work done.

Indeed the problem was that Hilde couldn't get to work at all, because she never found a moment of peace. With over a hundred Emails, fifty phone calls, and users as well as colleagues popping into her office by batches of three or four simultaneously, she just couldn't get to work. But she did have to find the time somehow, in order to prepare the migration plans from the old to the new programmes.

So why not now, between five and eight thirty o'clock in the morning, for even if it was not unusual for people to be in at this time, chances were less now for a user discovering her, and taking advantage of the situation to have her all for him or herself, assailing her with tons of questions. Hilde needed some peace, she wanted to work.

At five o'clock she entered the building. She quickly went down to the Newspaper shop where Donatello promptly served her a coffee. His coffee, as always, was excellent, how did he do it. It was just machine coffee too, but somehow it tasted best at his place. Tello wished her a good day and she took the elevator, which came promptly, she crossed her floor and reached her office. At its doorstep she stopped slightly, because she thought to have heard light steps, tipping quickly away. Like of mice wearing little boots. A very little user? But there was no one to be seen.

Happily she entered her office, booted her PC, logged on, and opened her Excel sheet, in order to do the desired planning. She sighed contentedly. Silence. Silence! Silence? Silence ... Oh no. In the corridor, she heard a light step. The typically light step of feet supporting a rather tall and thus heavy body, almost disguising a slight limp.

It was Maurice. He glowed with pleasure when she saw her, and literally plunged at her, throwing himself without any introduction into a long lovemaking:

"Hi Hilde, I have just been installing the new NAS server..." He was so full of the subject that he quickly lapsed into his own secret tongue, which Hilde only knew brokenly, but then, she liked the sound of this voice:

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NAS, you know, Network-attached storage is hard disk storage that is set up with its own network address rather than being attached to the department computer that is

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... serving applications to a network's workstation users. By removing storage access and its management from the department server, both application programming and files can be served faster because they are not competing for the same processor resources. The network-attached storage device is attached to a local area network typically, an Ethernet network) and assigned an IP address. File requests are mapped by the main server to the ...

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She loved it but inwardly she winced. Should she tell him gently to f... off because she had come in so early in order to work in peace? But she hesitated. Maurice was always so nice and available, never losing his nerves, letting himself be attacked gently by all his users and colleagues, answering with infinite patience. She herself had often felt guilty about putting too much demand upon him. After all he was a powerful, but then very nice magician. Would he get mad at her if she told him to go away, because she really needed to work in peace?

No, she told herself, he would only be sad. She thought further. No, he wouldn't even be sad, he was so used to giving and not receiving much back that he wouldn't even really notice. She only felt a very slight sadness about his realising this. So Hilde braced herself, told her workload to go to hell, and smiled at him with expectation for him to go on with his story about magical RAID disks and heavenly NAS storage.

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"... NAS file server. Network-attached storage consists of hard disk storage, including multi-disk RAID systems, and software for configuring and mapping file locations to the network-attached device. Network-attached storage can be a step toward and included as part of a more sophisticated storage system known as a storage area network like SAN."⁵

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He glowed with pleasure. He waved his arms around with enthusiasm, his eyes glowed with exaltation. His voice went higher and higher and its pitch began to resemble what was at least the ninth symphony.

He kept on talking like this for about an hour. Suddenly he stopped, rotated around himself twice, turned around her desk and sat on the visitor chair next to her:

"Let me show you something! Well, several things. Firstly the new Remote Computer Control Programme I have discovered on TechNet!"

He made her log on to her second PC and began downloading and installing the programme.

"I will give it to you. This is much better than the one we have now. I think we should get the licence for it. That is, if ITPOL lets us."

⁵ <http://searchstorage.techtarget.com/>

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He began explaining the software's advantages of in detail. "You can now log on to the user's computer without leaving your own chair. You can enter their registry. You can see the open sessions on their PC and intervene. We can manage our servers too."

He sang this. It was now sounding like the 'Te Deum De Dettingen' by Händel at least. When he had finished singing he went over to still another new programme:

"And I will give you a demo of how to use the *policy files*. You see you open them by loading a *hive* via the registry."

Such he demoed, singing one love song after the other. The programmes became beautiful wild swans, vast empty beaches filled with sun and palm trees, volcanoes and old roman churches.

The following hour was consecrated to his excitedly downloading and installing all sorts of useful programmes for Hilde. Have a look on <http://www.Tucows.com> for such useful programmes, but this was nothing against <http://www.mauricedescher.com>.

"I will show you STAR topology and SUN servers and explain OASIS's OpenDocument format and show you how to protect yourself against *Malware*. You will just love it."

Love indeed? The scene was weird in a way, because it was five o'clock and shouldn't they both be in bed... Exactly! Hilde began to have notions. Did he do everything so well? Was he so giving e v e r y w h e r e? Would he be so wonderful in the place where there both should still be, instead of being here at five o'clock in the morning and making love with computers? She was very amused. The thought appealed to her. Intelligent man always made her feel slightly amorous, it turned her almost on, listening to them telling her for hours about their passion.

Hilde was a practical person but maybe that's what the English meant when they used the expression 'he made love to her with words', not having the physical meaning it took in other countries. Maurice continued explaining new useful programmes to her. The time went by, she lost track of it. Then it became eight-thirty, people started to arrive and with the very first sound of the elevator Maurice jumped on his feet and disappeared with the words:

"I will show you later how to establish a share on the NAS computer."

He'd disappeared so quickly that he seemed to have gone up in smoke and Hilde remained on her chair, a bit stunned, but even more amused, and somewhere deeply touched. What exactly had he be saying all that time? How did it go?

"There was once a big, powerful computer, very beautiful, and his pretty little wife, very mighty too. They were reigning over a big park of PC's and were very, very happy. Their only secret sorrow was .."

What? That now one understood them and that no one listened to them? But at least Hilde listened to Maurice's stories.

After that the usual attack began and soon it was raining users. She gave the scene one

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last thought and then forgot about it.

The whole network fell down and with it of course the Email system, but then the phone system followed, with the result that soon her office was so crowded that at a moment she thought she would jump out of the window. Mrko Mrnsk still hadn't be gracious enough to install the famous NAS and SAN Maurice was talking about earlier. The Houses storage devices were obsolete and traffic was much too slow.

Then phones began ringing again. Users were phoning by the millions to ask when the Email would be up again, and if she could give an estimate of when.

"No idea. It's not us who take care about the Email system, and since the phones were down too we didn't get a chance to ask."

"Oh can't you phone and ask them? You see I'm waiting for this really important report to come and if I don't get it soon I will be to late for the deadline and ...

The user kept on talking and insisting she'd call Email Administration. He kept insisting upon the fact even if she repeated she would, and this user was followed by another, who was followed by still another so that she never got a chance to really call the Email Administration. Even if she finally had succeeded to dial Email Helpdesk's number it was only to find another user on the line. This phone still wasn't working maybe. And talking to the Email Administration wouldn't solve the problem. She was sure they were working on the problem as best as they could.

So she listened to the complaints about all the hard work and of how computers were never working and terrorising everyone. Hilde thought they were right.

Finally the Email flowed in again, and this by the dozens. She could never finish reading one before another marked 'URGENT' popped in or before the phone rang or some user entered her office.

By the end of the morning she had registered over forty calls.

♪ It's lunchtime

Hilde at least managed to steal a few minutes of lunchtime together with Lutgarde, both of them rushing down to Donatello on the ground floor. They bought some sandwiches from his shop. They were excellent, fresh and motherly made. He had them brought in by some external company. They chatted with him for a while, as everyone did with Tello, as was his nickname.

Then both sat down with the sandwiches at the mini-canteen in front of the shop with a coke, talking about their work. What else was left they could talk of. Lutgarde, with her look as if coming out of an old Flemish painting, was all red in the face, as if she had been sitting at a wave stool for her family of seven the whole night long, and indeed, in a way she had. She told Donatello that yesterday evening she had stayed at the office until eleven thirty in the night and back home had not been able to find sleep. There were hundreds of Web Pages to be done and she tried to continue waving them even in bed. The fact that the world was watching, millions of them, did not solve her problem

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of being member of a crew of only two. It was not only very hard work, but magic that was needed here. Donatello was worried about her and had said so.

When they were out of ear sight they talked about him:

“This man is ever so nice. Did you know that the people of the old MOU’s have insisted to have him come with us, after the move,” asked Hilde.

“I heard something like that.”

“Donatello was supposed to leave. As the Koch and Curie buildings are at the House’s borders, the owners of the six newspaper shops of the House possibly feared he would not make enough profit. When we moved, he was to be re-moved. But the people of the MOU people made a petition, they positively cried murder, and menaced to go on a strike. Imagine! House people on a strike! And so he stayed.”

Lut was astounded: “Who has ever heard of a petition that worked?”

Hilde nodded: “True enough.”

“Donatello is very nice indeed ,” said Lut. “Funny. And he seems to truly care about us. As if we were his children or something. I think some of us go done down here and buy his coffee only to see him. Nice way to begin a day.”

“Yes,” said Hilde. “And Tello is not even part of the House really, he’s hired by some external company, well the one who owns all the Newspaper shops here. But then sometimes I believe he’s the essence of this place. He’s so nice.”

“And you know he’s not even Italian, with a name like that.”

“What then?”

“I don’t know, but I think he is Bohatian. He speaks several languages, you know how gifted the Bohatians are for languages, and he’s fluent in all of them, impossible to guess. Why not just ask him?”

“I once did, and you know what he answered!”

“I have no mother tongue!”

“Poor Tello; how awful for him.”

“He didn’t seem sad about it. He grinned when he said it.”

After having comforted each other Lut went to see a Sub-webmaster in the other building; Hilde went back to her office. In the middle of the afternoon she popped in to see Maurice, because she still needed him to finish his explanation about the shares he had set up for the new WG’s. Still vaguely thinking about their early morning ‘Paquiera’ - a Portuguese expression for ‘a very light flirt’ and sat down beside him and listened to his explanation. He talked slowly now, in an even voice.

He described easily how to set up the shares on the MOU XII server. How to create the user groups which would use them. How to grant them the permissions to access the shares. Read, Read & Write, Change or Full Control. This was serious, and there was no more singing. Pity.

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How would it be, that was the question. How did his voice sound then? Not that she really wanted to try, after all he was married, and a colleague, and she had her boyfriend, but in theory the idea appealed to her. She knew from experience that she was fascinating, when listening to a man talking about his passion. Facts had proven this often enough. Maybe her eyes going from light green to the black of a black hole did it. Swallowing the talker. But Maurice continued about backups which would be taken hourly, daily, weekly.

“NAS is Network Attached Storage. SAN is a Storage Area Network. With the new *snapshot* system, everything will be very much in control. NAS and SAN, you know, both use RAID, and can be backed up onto tape. However there is still more than one difference between the two technologies. Like for the protocols: NAS uses TCP/IP and NFS/CIFS/HTTP, SAN uses Encapsulated SCSI ...”

Hilde still wondered and then all of a sudden, while he was talking, in the middle of a sentence and to the middle of the next, for some ten words or so, his voice went down, went deep, caressing. It was so sudden, so obviously deliberate, full of *sous-entendu*, that she was taken aback: “However I expect NAS and SAN to amalgamate soon.”

amalgamate...

No doubt, this was a bed voice. With this he had partly answered her question. Such was the sound of his voice then. He looked at her from the corner of his eye, as if speculating. Was it because he was looking for an answer to the same question? Come on, don't ask me what a bed voice is, you know what a bed voice is.

They were all going mad in here. Maybe work changed something in the brain, like when taking heroin or amphetamines. Maybe working made the brain produce endorphins and enkephalin just like when one was running, and one got drugged, to an extent that one would feel enamoured by only talking about it.

For me, it is obvious that Hilde is under great stress. She's so stressed that she can't even make the difference between a computer, a user, and a colleague. They are all eating her up. She has just told me that the other morning she'd found a cooking book in her fridge and the butter in her library shelves.

I know she suffers from being married to a rather egocentric bastard. Highly intelligent, very good looking and even nice. But egocentric and in love with himself to the extent of being psychotic. He still needed a father. He was over forty now, and should think of growing up a bit. He still needed Hilde to admire him and give him the self-assurance he was lacking. But Maurice was really a man. Hilde was right if she thought that he was not telling the truth when he said that he loved only two things in life: Women and computers. Because: ‘Aller guten Dinge sind drei’, ‘Jamais deux sans trois’, ‘All good things come in threes’, but she couldn't quite put her finger on it. She must remember to ask Gwendoline or Myra, who at times seemed capable of something that one would call the second sight.

“Do tretice vseho dobreho” said Myra, but that made four. Which made it unnecessary,

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but she just couldn't keep from saying it. If German was the best language to think in, French the best language to speak in and English the best language to write in, then Czech was the best language for keeping secrets. Secrets about princes. What was the language for being in love? Myra decided it must be Martian.

As you know her new apartment now made her Prince Martin's neighbour. It was typical for this rich but modest and trusting principality that a girl working at a computer Helpdesk could be the neighbour of a prince. Their gardens touched each other, separated only by a vinyl fence, so low that even a child could easily climb over it. The little daughters of her other neighbour had done just that and had paid the prince's garden a visit, with the intention to steal some apples. Not being so lucky they ran into Justin, the prince's father who had looked down at them sternly and asked:

"What are you doing, little girls?"

They wouldn't answer of course and ran away in panic to their father, afraid they would now be put in prison. But of course nothing like this happened. Myra had laughed when her landlord had told her this story, but inwardly wondered why one could want to steal apples. She abhorred apples. Disgusting things they were. She had an allergy against apples.

Since then Myra had actually talked to the prince's father herself and several times now already, over the same fence. She found he was a very nice man, not so old yet. He had admired her job and her knowledge of the new technologies! "One day," he had said, "you must come to the castle and introduce me to my PC. I just never use it, because it seems so obscure to me." Myra assured him she would be delighted to help him. Not a man of small talk, he had a lot to say, or rather: he could listen. Yesterday, again, he had listened to their chaos problem so well that she felt like if it was almost solved.

Prince Martin she had however only seen in newspapers, on posters, on TV. Or from afar, at public occasions, such as when he cut a blue ribbon in two for the baptism of one of the new buildings, but she had never met him face to face. But oh how she would like to. He was so very good looking. Not so tall, just a bit taller than she was, slim and well built. He was kind of blond, with bright blue eyes; that was all she could have said. When Myra thought of it, she realised she would have been quite at loss to describe his face. Just that she felt a big PANG! in her heart each time she saw him and that that Pang then rose to her head, filled it out and from there spilled into her entire body, filling it with longing but also with a kind of satisfaction. A feeling of certainty. Of doing it right. A feeling of wonder.

Hilde couldn't guess herself how much she was soothing to Maurice too. He liked intelligent women and he found her sense of math and love for formulas very sexy. He was not used to being listened to so well and even less of being understood. To most people, when he talked about his passion, computers, he talked Chinese. And he thought she was damn attractive with her huge black eyes looking at him and him

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alone. She was such a sensual woman, full of mystery herbs and gardens deeper than his soul.

We have so much to do, that we forget about ourselves, but in our heart lurks the need for being comforted, for being listened to, to whatever it might be. What is a passion good for, if we cannot tell about it. Was is a passion for, if we cannot share it. Most of the time office world does not leave much space for passionate or at least juicy affairs. Of course one heard stories about people doing it in the stock rooms, or in tiny closets, but how drab, actually. It was much better on a Desktop. On Raid disks or pirate download sites. Never really, only virtually.

A bit later Lexi told Maurice that she was wondering about two users, both divorced for ages, rather near pension, and a bit dried up, at least in appearance.

Monsieur Thomas had called Lexi because his logon wasn't working. He had mumbled something on the phone about a 'make sure your domain is correct' message. Lexi had gone to his office, were she was received warmly by the rather shy man:

"I'm so sorry, I'm not the youngest anymore, and I sort of never got used to those little boxes. I'm sure I did something wrong."

At his point Erna, his assistant entered the office, a tie pending from her outstretched hand.

"I came to bring back your tie," she said, smiling, with a look so deliberately innocent, hiding some secret glee, that one could not but suspect some intention behind that gesture.

A slightly embarrassed silence followed, Mr Thomas gulped ever so slightly, and then all three quickly started talking about ties. Which style to choose, where to buy nice ones, and in what occasions to wear tie. One of those fascinating discussions which can go on for hours.

"In fact I do not want to create any sous-entendu", Erna said, to Lexis intention." Me handing over that tie in this way could lead to some misunderstanding. There's nothing to it, however."

Monsieur Thomas, on this, slightly relaxed, but he would not be able to do so for long.

"I still have the other one," said Erna now, as if she couldn't help herself but to make Monsieur Thomas' discomfiture visible. She seemed to hesitate, but then took her breath and added maliciously: "I still have it at home."

This was really giving notions and Monsieur Thomas gasped. Lexi now tried to imagine the elderly Monsieur Thomas and the rather dryly humoured Erna 'tied' together in some wild affair, using neckties as stimulant. Tie him to the bed or so.

The last remark had as a consequence that they had to get back to the tie topic for a while; up to the point when Erna at last handed the guilty thing over to his owner with the most unfortunate final explanation:

"In fact, I didn't think, but I could have given it back to you already this morning, in

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the car.”

On this, Monsieur Thomas almost choked, and became very red in the face.

To help him out and because his problem still wasn't solved Lexi decided to forget about neckties, which she didn't like anyway, and went through her usual checklist:

Logon not working	
Is the keyboard in Shift-Lock?	No, ok
Is the keyboard in a Qwerty/Azerty inversion? (by typing a “a” next to the logon name)	No, ok
Is the network cable plugged in correctly? (by looking at the back of the PC and checking if the network cable was correctly fitting, and if the little green LED was blinking nicely)	Yes, ok

It must be a double IP address again or it could be that the computer had slipped out of the MOU XII domain. Both would typically happen to a user who wasn't using his computer a lot. Lexi used the Ping command, like explained on page 112.

Hilde, using Maurice's Remote Control system for the first time logged on to Cynthia's PC, and found herself in the middle of an email answering to an answer of an answer to an initial one and containing a listing of a long row documents. The boring list, however, was enhanced by the introductory sentence at the bottom:

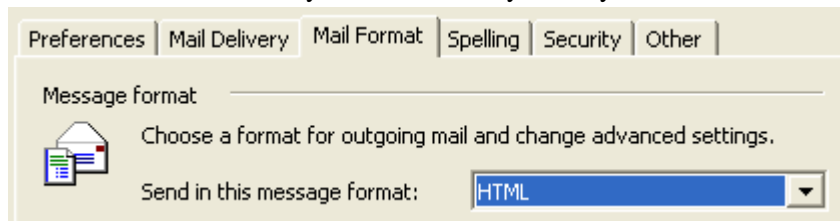
“My white lily, please find attached here below...”

Hilde, discreet, turned her eyes away in order not to see the initial signature, but Cynthia did not seem in the slightest way embarrassed. Or otherwise she would have closed the email quickly, wouldn't she? But no, she insisted on it, using it as an example for her question:

☞ “Why are the attachments in the body message of the email here, and not in the attachment line below the CC field, as there?”

For this, she switched to another email which she had held readily opened at the bottom of the taskbar.

☞ Because in the first one the sender chose ‘HTML Format’ and in the second ‘Rich text’”, said Hilde, who only knew this since yesterday herself.



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“How ever do you know all this!” said Cynthia admiringly.

“By answering your calls,” said Hilde, still trying not to look at the sender’s name. After all, Cynthia was married to someone outside the House, a Hockey ball player, wasn’t he?

The second email was short, saying: “My lovely hummingbird, please find attached the documents for our second conference on wastepaper.”

But Cynthia, again, wasn’t embarrassed at all.

Hilde sighed. How utterly romantic the office world could be, especially at the House.

Wanted! The problem user

It was a rainy, rainy day.

Lut had come in at seven o'clock in the morning, in order to find some peace for doing her web pages. However, she wouldn't get a chance to do so. She'd hardly stepped into her office that she was literally attacked by Claudette d'Uho, one of CHD's nightmares. What a way to begin a day! It was an unspoken law that users didn't call the HelpDesk outside official office hours, or worse, at home. I need your help, shrieked Claudette and came up with some story about Lut having to help her format her document prettily, because the report was so important. The truth was, the document was probably not only not pretty, but a complete mess. Lut could already imagine the uncountable indents, not one of them aligned as the other, titles not defined as such, footers and headers mixed up. The whole of it would be such an horrid sight, that Lut felt sick in her stomach. Moreover:

“Claudette, that's not my speciality, better wait for Gwendoline or Hilde, until they arrive.”

Lut paced off to hang up her wet and dripping coat, hopping Claudette would understand, but Claudette followed her, glued to her back so that she couldn't get out of it. Lut gave up, stayed in her coat and turned for help to the coffee machine, trying to put coffee in the filter, useless, Claudette was so firmly pasted to her back that she couldn't move her arms. Lut tried to free herself by escaping behind her office desk, useless again, Claudette seemed to adhere like a giant Hansaplast. First rate glue, Lut would probably never be able to remove her. The woman was a vampire. Gentle Lut never knew how she finally managed to shake her off.

It would be a day filled with such events. Whatever had gotten into the users, usually so nice?

Their worst user phoned the HelpDesk because she had lost the password to her private mailbox and insisted it had been five asterisks. She yelled at them because now, when she typed them in, it didn't work anymore.

Another one had banged his keyboard against the wall and broken it, but pretended it had been one of the cleaning ladies.

Another had hammered a second diskette into his floppy drive in order to make a copy of it. His only answer to HelpDesk's sermon had been: Why don't you give us a Read & Write CD-Rom drive then?

Still another one had taken Sven seriously when he had told her that the speed printer was making coffee along with the printing, she had phoned the HelpDesk to ask where to exactly insert the Senseo pods. Now Sven had made this up because Nico had told him he was making coffee with FoxPro, the programming language, at the time he was

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using it. It was just a way of talking, IT people would always say: It makes coffee, about every computer device they found good.

Another user phoned the HelpDesk because she wanted them to repair the electricity plugs in her office, rearrange her desk settings and help her hang her posters up. It was true that such things were considered to be the IT HelpDesk's job generally speaking.

The problem with the problem user is not so much that there are so many of them, they are not, or that they are more stupid, they are not, the problem of the problem user is that the few there are take up so much of a HelpDesk's time. If there is an average of one percent of problem users, than those will take up some ninety-nine percent of an Helpdesks time. That leaves one percent left for the remaining ninety-nine. This slightly exaggerated of course but so very much true.

The problem user can have many profiles and come in many disguises. There is the lazy one. There is the demanding one. There is the one who craves for attention. There is the one who thinks he is VIP. There is the psychotic one. There is the absolute beginner, especially if he has managed to evade computers for years and years, and, getting close to pension, finds himself suddenly forced to use them, standing before an ultimatum his boss might have given to him.

One typical problem user was Cecile Acrot. Now I hope there is no Cecile Acrot reading this, and if yes, it's certainly not her about we're talking about, since Cecile Acrot is entirely made-up.

Cecile was phoning non-stop, with very stupid questions, like that her screen was all black, and when she was asked to hit any key she refused and the CHD had to come over to do it for her.

Black screen

- When a screen is black, no little green light, even if you switch it on, check if the cables are stuck in correctly.
- When the screen is black and there is no little green light on it, try to switch it on.
- When a screen is black, and the little green light on it is switched on, chances are that one just needs to hit 'Any Key'.

But even the last instruction seemed to be a problem for Cecile Acrot. When Lexi tried to coax her into doing it she let out a series high outraged shrieks, demanding that someone came by on the spot and do it for her.

"How I'm I supposed to know where 'Any Key' is," shouted Cecile Acrot, at the end of her precious patience. "I'm going to have to inform my boss about this!"

She had a way of asking for support that was deeply hurting, it gave the impression of her being the Queen of Sheba or of No-man's-land and that the CHD were her villains.

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She acted very superior but was phoning all the time, never learning or wanting to learn. She continued to flatly refuse even when Sven finally came over and showed her how to find any key by letting his fingers glide over the keyboard. Of course Cecile Acrot is not the only one to have a problem with the 'Any Key' thing. PC builders are planning to change the instruction from 'Press Any key' to 'Press the Return key' because of the flood of calls the 'Any Key' instruction generates.

One other PBU was poor orphaned Pompea Piccola. She wasn't more orphaned than any of them but played this role to perfection. She phoned and phoned and her voice was so small and unhappy that she made everyone believe the love of her life had just left her, or worse. She insisted on going on and on, even when the problem was long since solved. She was, as a matter of fact, not so dumb about Computers at all. The first problem with the problem user is not that he or her are bad or dumb with computers, he or her can even be quite good, and Pompea Piccola was too. She just craved for attention. Any excuse was welcome. She kept complaining about the ever changing computer environment, and about the changes in the MOU. And since everyone was complaining about that, one can imagine Pompea Piccola. She would go on for hours and hours, it was gruesome. Even more so because everyone agreed with her: it was gruesome. But she kept others from working, and it was her fault that Gwendoline had to stay until eleven o'clock that day. After having given her 'support' one felt drained of all energy, exploited, empty, even more so because one felt she was perfectly able to solve the problem herself.

Even some Super users can be problem users, because they want to show off again and again, and keep phoning the Helpdesk to ask them the most weird questions, just because they want to prove that this question was the peak of the long way they had already taken to be able to ask it. One couldn't answer their question, and that was their point.

Or like Yves Longweil who he kept asking support for personal questions and needs. His CD collection, his tax income. The CHD, by principle, always answered personal questions, because they considered that the best way to learn was via a private passion.

In fact no request is more valuable to them than a personal request in IT. One can learn so much from them and can be positive that to put them to "professional use" very soon.

But Yves Longweil was pushing this too far. And if one friendlily enquired about his hobby he pursed his lips and gave to understand that one was not worthy hearing more of it. He was a stingy fellow. He had even once said to Gwendoline that he had such a rich personality that he felt everyone was trying to feed on it. Which made that he couldn't possibly go on sharing it, please understand! It would kind of make him penniless soon. Poor guy indeed. His monologues about how much more problems he had than anyone else were so extensive that they could have made the fortune of a company producing ear-plugs.

Then came Mara Fuzzi. She was manic-depressive. Everything would be all right for

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months, not a single call, or if yes, it was intelligent enough, but then it would suddenly start. She would find some problem, completely fictional, and thus not to be solved. Then she would call every single member of the CHD team several times a day, nagging them about it. The mood stopped as suddenly as it had begun.

And there was Franca Incubo (not Maurice's Franka!), who phoned Gwendoline one night at three o'clock at home, whining, because she was in love with her CLA. Gwendoline, ever so nice, let that happen to her three times. Until Lexi, who'd gotten into Buddhism, explained to her:

"If something happens to you once, it will never happen again, if something happens to you twice, it will happen a third time. But if something happens four times, then it will happen to you all your life."

Gwendoline then made sure Franca understood the third time had been the last.

The problem user was also the one who never wanted to take courses. It is a mystery how exactly those who need courses most were also those who took them least. Had they taken courses they would have still be the ones to call most, but the fact that they systematically found an excuse not to take any courses made it worse. It would make them besiege the CHD with dozens of questions, the sum of which made up at least twice the time the course would have taken. Any suggestion from the HelpDesk that the user should still go and take a course would only be met with outraged exclamations:

"Tell me! What makes you believe I will find time for courses!"

How did the HelpDesk dare indeed? It was their reason of being to give about every kind support to such kind of users! The problem was that it would need one HelpDesk person full-time at least for every single one of those problem users. One can imagine a world were everyone is seconded permanently by an informatician.

There were also those who believed IT was to do and know everything. And since they used a computer for their work they felt sure that it was the HelpDesk's job to do theirs. It was the Helpdesk's job to know it all, and do it all. It didn't matter if it was about maths, chemistry, finance, translation, book-keeping, plumbing, bills, cops, cooking, or organisational charts. Of course no one produced the latter one anymore; MOU XII hadn't seen an organisational chart for months. So maybe they could start thinking of doing one. The worst thing, some of CHD did try to help people with their own job, especially Hilde. A she usually managed to really help.

Maurice, with some glee, imagined sending out an Email to those 'cases', a thing which he could of course only dream of doing. He nevertheless sent it to his team:

Hi team,

As well all know we always have some 'difficult' users who always seem to occupy a lot of our time for some very stupid problem. This would be something to send to such

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a user:

Dear User,

As you know our workload is continuously raising and the CHD team has a staff of only 11 to support you, 10 really if you subtract our boss.

Likewise you must understand that the CDH cannot dedicate a 8 full hours to support, but that each of us has another full time job to do on his side, just like you. Nevertheless, even this means doing overtime, we can offer half of it for support.

If you examine the Excel table below you can verify that the average number of support hours we can give to a user is thus a bit over 11 hours a year.

In row 5 you'll find the formulas for calculating this, so that you can ensure that we did not cheat in our calculation.

	CDH	Working days	Support Hours a day	Support Hours a year	Number of Users	Hours per user
3						
4	10	220	4	8800	777	11,32561133
5	10	220	4	=A4*B4*C4	777	=D4/E4

Unfortunately for you our call database shows that you have already exceeded this quota and thus have no more support hours left for this year.

You must thus wait until next year for new support from the CHD HelpDesk.

If you think you cannot sustain on zero hours support for this year you can earn new support hours by coming to do some work for us:

Do the inventory of the equipment, move PCs, distribute mice and keyboards, make coffee etc.

2 hours of work for the CHD team will credit you with 1 hour of support time.

If ever his interferes with your normal work time you can easily catch things up after hours just as we do.

We love you users, but sometimes we don't like you.

Regards,

The CHD Helpdesk

Now this was what every Helpdesk in the world dreamt of doing with a problem user.

Unfortunately, if the Helpdesk can find proactive and preventive actions for almost every kind of problem, it seems impossible to find a solution for the problem user problem. Maybe a psychiatrist could do it? But even psychiatrists have a hard time with psychopaths. Gwendoline would want to develop this.

The problem with the problem user is that he is not calling for a real problem. He is imagining a problem. The reason for his call is most of the time another than a computer problem. Like that he wants to be taken care of, or like he is bored and needs

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some company, or he just wants to criticize, or he is just imagining it, or he will call to find someone to listen to his endless list of complaints.

Another group were the self-proclaimed VIP's, the psychopaths; those who thought that everything and everyone were just at their service. They treated computers like they treated humans and were astonished when shouting, stamping their foot and abuse of all sorts did not work with them.

The worst of all cases will better not be named; her name can't possibly be spelled out in whole letters. Even if I would of course just make it up it, it would simply give everyone the shivers. 'She' would start complaining about a problem in a programme which wasn't there, then about the Windows configuration, then about her computer as a whole, then about computers in general, further about IT in general, then go over to complain about her Workgroup, then the HelpDesk, then the MOU, then the House, then Science in general, then the country, and finally the whole world. After this she would fine tune the story and end up complaining about sordid details like the state of the toilets, describing them in such a vivid way that those forced to listen to her ravings felt positively sick. It would go on for hours. And she would go and grab your hand, did you chance to wander off. Lexi could still feel her cold and damp grip around her wrist, and it had taken Sven to free her from it, but her hissing voice left her with a splitting headache for the rest of the day.

Computers seem to be giving some people a new language and means to express their dissatisfaction and even hatred. Maybe it is a real hatred for computers but in some cases it is a hatred for something entirely different, taking its origin in some deeply engraved inner problem. It originated in feelings of being powerless, feelings of impotence, and hatred of life itself. So whatever what such a user pretends the problem to be, one will never be able to solve it, since it's not the problem he pretends it is. And they don't want it to be solved, otherwise, how would they go on complaining? It is a never ending story.

Were all of IT people psychologists, they could just ask such users to lie back and express themselves. But IT people, even if many of them have learned a lot about at least user psychology, just don't have the time for this. There are already much too much real IT problems to be solved. Of course in the case of MOU XII the CHD had Gwendoline, who dreamed of getting at the problem underlying these types of calls. When there was something else behind it then just a stuck cable, any key or a Watson error. Except for the one whose name couldn't even be spelled out even if entirely made-up, she could have listened for hours to such problems. The problem with most problem users is not so much technical as psychological. Such users should be convinced to go and see someone. And Gwendoline already had her idea about who could use such a visit. She smiled at the thought:

"Do lie back and express all your feelings about computers, omit nothing, say

everything that comes to your mind.”

“Hm. I have the feeling my computer doesn’t like me. Whatever I do, he’s never happy. He’s always sort of shouting at me. Beep, Beep, Beep, and Dr Watson, and one crash after the other and no, and I don’t want to print, that’s your task, and if you don’t behave, I won’t ever give you any document anymore, and if you don’t finish your homework, you’ll be not be allowed to go out tonight.”

“Hm. Does this make you think of something?”

Another typical group of problem users were those who mixed up container and content, word and object, and themselves with the rest of the world. Of course it’s not always the user’s fault. Lunacy dwells in the computer world too.

Like Gwendoline had gotten a phone call from Terry saying:

“Remember your explanation at page **Error! Reference source not found.Error! Reference source not found.Error! Bookmark not defined.** of this manual, about files and folders? Well lately I was at a meeting and they distributed DINA4 papers folded in three, and they called this paper a folder. So what must I believe now. There you are saying a folder is a container, and on the other side they are saying a paper folded in three is a folder.”

Gwendoline agreed with her that this was indeed confusing. No wonder the users were mixing up things. New IT jargon has taken to call a printer a ‘printing device’ and the programme which lets you print ‘printer’. Now which was what. And the user was called ‘object’, along with printers, PC’s and laptops. So no wonder if people take this attitude too.

“Yes and wait for the newer versions of our Windows programmes. There the concept of ‘file’ disappears entirely. It’s only about databases there. A file is not a file anymore. It becomes ‘user data’!”

“Why now suddenly ‘user’ data?”

“Don’t ask me.”

“This is crazy! If the makers are psychotic, what can be expected of us users?”

Gwendoline smiled. Terry had a point there, no doubt. Sometimes, you would find this kind of problem user appealing to your own personality, so you go and see him, sit down with him or her, and complain together for a while, over a lemon tea with biscuits. After all, it is only too true, the IT world and the world in general are far from perfect. Talking about it would maybe help solve the problem. There was Enya, she could listen to her complaining for hours, she was so right. And some users, even if phoning a lot, were NOT problem users. There is a difference between phoning a lot, and being a problem user. It’s the attitude of being friendly, trying not to bother and it’s not the users fault if they don’t know something, and the CHD is there to help them. Some people drain you, others don’t, and most of the time whole CHD would

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agree upon a person being a problem user or not. One could describe a problem user immediately by the sheer description offered by a colleague mimicking him.

The she stopped smiling. First find their own problem maybe. They really needed to organize themselves, and find the reason to this mysterious chaos, or they would all go bust. But however hard she tried, she got no result whatsoever. Anyway, how could she, being interrupted all the time. Lexi was right, getting into Buddhism.

♪ It's lunchtime.

Well no, no lunch for CHD today. Lut got everyone a sandwich from Tello's, that was it.

The phone rang, it was Pinelopi. Not the Penelope who'd lost her boss Josepha, but another one.

"Gwendoline, I have something strange happening! My Word does not open in Word anymore, but in Excel, and then I get a error message!"

"I can imagine. Pinelopi, what you do is..."

On this, Leo came in:

"Gwendoline, do you know how can I add a column to the right of a table in Word?"

"Leo, you must click a the right end of the table, at its edge and then right-click and choose..."

But Leo did not get a complete answer to her request yet, because Lut came in:

"Gwendoline, can you help me translate a sentence into French?"

"Yes Lut what?"

"Further information can be found on xy"

But she didn't get further because an Email marked with 'urgent urgent urgent' in the subject appeared in her Email, and startled her because it came from Josepha, had Josepha come back? She opened it, but it was from the other Penelope, who asked her to come up to see her as soon as possible:

"Gwendoline, help! I am delegate to Josepha's Email, and suddenly I just cannot send from my own mailbox anymore, only from hers."

She started to type: "I come up in five ..."

but she got interrupted by Maurice:

"Gwendoline, have you seen Hilde? I need her badly to create an account in the AD; do you know anything about a certain Xavier Machten or whatever?"

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“Merchten, yes Hilde told me that he just popped out of the nowhere, but she did create a record for him in the Active Directory.”

“...minutes.”

“Lut, the translation is : ‘Vous pouvez trouver des informations supplémentaires sur xy.’”

“Leo, and then choose ‘Insert column’”

“Pinilopi you select one of those word files, and then hold down the Shift key, and then select ‘Open with’. You then get a list of programmes. Choose: ‘Word’.”

☞ Easy to solve problems like that, isn’t it? ☞

Gwendoline hung up and rushed to see Penelope. Penelope with a problem she had no idea of what it was yet. One of those mysterious events which occurred more and more lately. She thought she was going loosing her mind. What was this, all those interruptions non stop. Was she a Russian doll that one could break up into parts at will and piece together again at will? Well the piecing together again was of course left entirely to herself alone.

One thing she was sure of: The first of all problem users is Interruption and it’s probably not his fault.

However, users were pure hell that day. Confused, demanding and spoiled. Where had their nice and well behaved users gone? Had they all disappeared, following Josepha?

Jackie insisted Gwendoline came to her office and held her hand while she was

indenting more then hundred paragraphs with .

Gwendoline was too tired to fight it and stayed at the phone.

Rosana insisted that Hilde stay for each single name she had to add or remove from a forward rule in Outlook. Useless to say that when she was done she only needed to click OK and Finish. There were hundred and one names to add, fifty to remove.

Every time Hilde told her that when she was done she should click Finish or OK Rosana threw a tantrum:

“Please Hilde, stay at the phone and keep on being connected via the Remote, I’m sure the moment you hang up everything will crash.”

Hilde too was too tired to fight it and stayed at the phone.

Alessandro phoned Maurice because the Elements 102 application didn’t print anymore. Indeed all Brother Printers seemed to have lost their ability to print accented characters in PDF documents. A major drama in a place which used 142 languages.

Maurice told Alessandro that they were working on the problem and wanted to hang

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up, but Alessandro didn't let him:

"No, listen. I just met this girl on the floor, this girl from the Riesengebirge."

"What is the Riesengebirge?"

"Well those mountains in Czechoslovakia."

What had the mountains of Czechoslovakia to do with the accented characters?
Maurice sighed:

"You mean Myra, the one at the Central HelpDesk?"

"The one with black hair, very slim, white skin, and very red lips. Can you give me her last name? She knows all about the problem, it would be better if she continues dealing with it."

Ok! That was why!

Maurice didn't like to hear that the team's youngest member knew all about a problem he was just only realising about. But when Maurice later asked Myra about the encounter she hardly remembered having talked to Alessandro and dismissed the matter with a wink of the hand which was rather nonchalant and even rude. Myra never seemed to care about any man's attention. What was the matter with her?

All this had ended up confusing CHD too, they were dead tired.

Gwendoline sat stupidly before her black monitor for at least then minutes until Sven came and hit 'Any Key' on her keyboard to make it active again. She could believe it had happened to her too.

Nico had asked Myra for the tenth time at least why his private EMail contacts weren't showing in the 'To' list when he wrote a New Message.

Maurice, who had been pondering for two hours about the problem with the new network driver until Hilde came in and plugged his network cable back in. Maurice had forgotten that the network at the House was not wireless yet, like, of course, the one he had set up at home. Also, he mused, his wife had left him a recorded video message on their fridge, telling him she would be late, and that he'd just had to insert his pre-recorded meal in the micro-oven. Wow! Ghosts. Were the more ancient ghosts made of the same kind of wishful thinking too?

Leo forgot his password; Lut deleted files on the chemistry share; Sven again forgot how to do a shortcut; Lexi how to add another mailbox to her own.

The day, however, ended well for Hilde, who could do a macro for Tina.

Tina wanted to insert a static time in her Excel sheet, but the shortcut key provided for this, Ctrl++, didn't work. Probably because of the weird 142 language keyboard drivers they had. So Hilde 'had to' do a macro, which pleased her entirely.

Sub InsTime()

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```
' Macro recorded 11/10/2005 by hilde.brandt
ActiveCell.FormulaR1C1 = "=NOW()"
ActiveCell.Select
Selection.Copy
ActiveCell.Offset(0, 1).Range("A1").Select
Selection.PasteSpecial Paste:=xlPasteValues, Operation:=xlNone, SkipBlanks _
:=False, Transpose:=False
Application.CutCopyMode = False
ActiveCell.Offset(0, -1).Range("A1").Select
Selection.ClearContents
ActiveCell.Offset(0, 1).Range("A1").Select
Selection.Cut
Range("F3").Select
ActiveCell.Offset(0, -1).Range("A1").Select
ActiveSheet.Paste
Selection.NumberFormat = "[$-F400]h:mm:ss AM/PM"
End Sub
```

She loved to play around first with the relational and absolute references, and finally assigned the macro to a shortcut key: "Ctrl+y"

Hilde just loved Tina; she always had such nice and interesting requests.

Already to know how to express one's IT desires is a lot and shows a gift for the matter. What a user wants, God wants. But all of CHD had counted each of them over 30 days overtime since the coming of the Chaos. But the good news for everyone later that day was that Yves Longweil and Franca Incubo were to leave the House. Cool!

The two had never been House anyway, and had been put there temporarily in order to make the point and convey how awful a problem user could be.

An Email popped up, as if by miracle, on their screen at 19h45. Betsy of Personnel division was doing overtime too and getting used to the job. Welcome to the House then.

The Light

Nico had been looking at the VBS-Visual Basic script manual for what was now over two weeks. Almost three in fact, since he'd had the course about this programming language.

As always, when he was to use a new programming language, not yet known to him by practice; he was afraid he wouldn't be able to master it. The same experience had taught him that this couldn't be so, that until now he had always been able to master any new programming language, but still, he was afraid.

He knew Pascal, FORTRAN, COBOL, RPG, FoxPro (the one which makes coffee), C+, C++, Visual Basic Short, and Visual Basic for Applications, he had learned all of them, but still, he was afraid. He always feared that a blockage would suddenly appear, revealing to everyone that in fact he couldn't programme at all; that he was just like his users, those who considered that programming was a gift given to only an elite, the upper few thousand. Users thought programming was a mystery, slightly disgusting, given to a mind by the gods, like epilepsy to Caesar, a gift that one possessed or not, like the one of farseeing or telepathy. In a way, many didn't believe in it and didn't see it as a reality.

The VBS manual winked at him, accusingly, and Nico felt sick in his stomach.

Would he become a user now? Would he have to realise that he couldn't programme at all? Never had? That it had all been an illusion?

Searching for some consolation, he looked at the impressive collection of his holiday shots on the walls of his office: Brasilia, Argentina, Chile, Niagara and Iguacu falls, New York, the Yellowstone, Grand Canyon, South Africa, Kenya, Morocco, Egypt, Moscow, Tokyo and Kyoto and the Golden Pavilion, Vienna, Prague and Budapest, the bay of Sidney where he ...

How much he would like to be there now. But he wasn't. Instead he was in dreary Bohatia fighting with some dreary code fright.

Users looking at his screen over the back of his shoulders were often bewildered by the strange hieroglyphs they saw there. They repeatedly called him Genius, and asked him how he had come to learn this potion making. Nico then laughed and answered that it was precisely that: he had learned it. At university they had learned the basics of programming in the first year already, each week a two times two hour course; followed by at least four hours of exercises. It took its time. Many believed that one was either capable to programme or not, it was inbuilt, genetic; some very few tried themselves at it, and gave up after a few hours, being almost glad to have gotten the proof that they belonged to this vast majority which couldn't programme and never

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would be able to. Psycho-technical tests wanted to help proving this too, and their results gladly told most of those who had taken them that it was true:

“You will never be able to programme. You lack the necessary logic.”

But logic is an inborn gift for only even fewer than those who learn to programme. Logic can be inborn, maybe, but most of all, logic can be learned. The few great principles of logic in programming can just simply be learned.

There was *if-then-else sequence*, the *loop*, the compare next to pervious principle, the *Array*, but not much more. Like:

```
Sub OldestUser()  
Dim Age(777) As Integer  
Dim Oldest As Integer  
Oldest = 0  
For Count = 1 To 777  
If Age(Count) > Oldest Then  
Oldest = Age(Count)  
End If  
Next  
MsgBox Oldest & " is the oldest"  
End Sub
```

Nico estimated that there were maybe not more than ten of those principles underlying programming. He didn't dare tell this to anyone, afraid he might be laughed at. He'll show you some of it later, when he will have mastered his own new challenge.

Nico hadn't reached that point yet and opened the manual slowly. He needed the new code to manage the hundreds of user movements in the *Active Directory* which would contain them. The scripts would add the users, remove them, move them to another Organisational Unit, add and remove them to and from Groups, like the groups corresponding to their WG, change their attributes, like office, phone, WG, title (when one marries), add the logon script.

First of all he wanted to try out a 'Create user' script. He surfed on the Internet and found several sites with sample scripts. Like on Technet. No use to give you the exact URL, it changes all the time. URL is the Uniform Resource Locator. All of the web addresses you see in your browser are URL's. On one, Nico found a script which would help him take the first steps. He copied it to his own Script Editor and started to do the necessary adaptations for his own environnement. The script used a text file with the names and other data of a list of new users. He ran the programme. Of course it didn't work. It seldom worked the first time. Programming could be quite of a trial. It didn't happen trough magic, but required patience. It could be hard work and needed a lot of creativeness and also, mainly: to be left in peace.

He began to concentrate and to put himself it that state of relaxation necessary for programming. He would have compared it to meditation, had he been a meditative

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person, which he didn't think he was. Slowly he began to drift off, to some place of his mind. It was not in his brain maybe, but somewhere in a spot above. A little sphere there, floating above his head.

It could only be true: he couldn't programme. When he sometimes read his own code again, he couldn't believe that it was he himself who had written it. He didn't understand a single word of it, until the moment where he needed it again for a new adaptation of it in a new programme. So how then did he do it? Not with his brains, but with something somewhere above. With a little globe, a thinking moon circling around his brain. He was a genius, really. A genius is someone who can do things he can't do. The moon was an entity like Freud's Ego, or rather Conscious and Subconscious, a part of him unknown to himself. A place Outside of his brain. One of his users had once found a word for it: It was his 'Hyperconscious'. Not the subconscious, nor the conscious. He programmed with his hyperconscious. His outer self.

He shoved the code around, helping himself into the required condition. Slowly he began to see the code more clearly, his condition of meditation intensified and he plunged into a state of well-being he could compare to the one described by those who take heroin. However, for this he had no real proof. He had never taken heroin, only read about it. But the world around him was becoming white, there were no more waves on the sea, everything was very calm. The white intensified. A state without any pain at all. A mini Nirvana.

Then he understood. His script couldn't work because the initial one contained an error. A 'logical' error. It could never have worked like that, nor in any other situation or environment.

It was the moment of enlightenment every programmer must know. The moment when one feels the code surrounding oneself like an aura. Slowly he switched two lines in it and then changed the object setting slightly. He was sure it would now work.

And it did. Nico sighed with relief. Not a user yet.

Feeling in a state of grace he now wrote quickly in within ten minutes or so had finished the script. 30 lines of code. That was a lot for a single hour. He knew that 30 lines of valid code a day where the average for a programmer. Nico knew he did much more.

```
-----  
: Some VBScript code  
:-----  
: ' Visual Basic Script Source File - ' AUTHOR: Nico , MOUXII, House  
: ' COMMENT: script to create users  
:-----  
: DIM arrRecord  
:-----  
: Dim VCount  
:-----  
: Set Root = GetObject("LDAP://RootDSE")  
:-----  
: DomainPath = Root.Get("DefaultNamingContext")  
:-----
```

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```
Set MyDomain = GetObject("LDAP://" & DomainPath)
set fso = CreateObject ("Scripting.FileSystemObject")
Set tsTextFile = fso.OpenTextFile ("f:\ADusers\CreateUsers.txt", ForReading, False)
Set ou_Current = GetObject("LDAP://OU=users,OU=MOUXII,DC=House,DC=Bohatia")
Set adsUser = ou_Current.Create ("user","CN=" & vUser 'common name
adsuser.put "sAMAccountName", arrRecord (5)
adsuser.put "userPrincipalName", arrRecord (5) 'logon name
adsuser.put "givenName", arrRecord (2) 'first name
adsuser.put "sn", Ucase(arrRecord (3)) 'last name
'add phone, office, workgroup later
adsuser.SetPassword "Svet8888"
adsuser.AccountDisabled = False 'important otherwise it is!
adsUser.SetInfo
Set adsUser = Nothing
Wend 'END OF Loop
tsTextFile.Close
```

Chiara, a user who often used his help for the weekly lists of her WG, suddenly bowed over his shoulder like a dark shadow, drew her breath and almost hissed:

“Wow Nico, when I see this code I almost feel sick with envy. I feel faint. Do you think you could give me a short briefing, of an hour or so, to teach me to programme? I really would like to write programmes too. I’m sure if you explained, I could do it.”

The pain of the interruption shot through his neck. He made a fall from a warm sunny sky into dark cold water. He felt sort of ‘vampirised’.

“I think it needs a bit more than an hour or so”, said Nico. “It would take a year. At least. Not non stop, but a bit of it everyday, so that it can settle down.”

He sighed. He knew what would follow. The user would now accuse him of not wanting to share his secret. The secret of how he did it. She did not believe this would take a year. Nico was just being stingy. If he would only show a bit more of good will, he surely could convey the whole principle of programming to her just by using something like wavelength, or a magical formula, so that she could transform into a programmer, just like the magician could transform a duckling into a swan, by using some five to ten words, and by waving a ward over her head. Just like it had been done to him, Nico, by some previous magician, and now he didn’t want to share this with anyone. Chiara did not know it, but she believed in magicians, and magical thinking, wishful thinking, just like the children do, when they think very hard in order to get a new CD or an hamburger. Later they will learn that to wish is not enough, well, maybe some of them will. But with computers many people continue to have wishful thinking. “But can’t you just give me a hint”, she said, tentatively, not wanting to give up.

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“What hint?”

“Just help me take the first steps.”

“But you took a Visual Basic course last year,” he said, remembering.

“That was only two days. Yes but I really don’t have the time to sit down and try it out”, she said, really upset now. “I’m sure if you would only explain it could really be done in an hour. You said yourself it would take me a year otherwise. I need some human contact to feel this in my bones, flesh, you know. Your genius would help.”

Nico bit his lips as to not become slightly aggressive. On day he would really like to play a joke on a user and say something like:

```
Set OU_wish = GetObject (“LDAP//cn=user, y, ou=House, dc=World”)
Set vUser = OU_wish.create (“user”, “CN=You’re now a programmer!”)
```

A VBScript, sounding like a Cabbalistic or magical formula.

He was sure the user would walk away believing it. But what if it worked!?

Some people really seemed to believe that if he wanted, only wanted he could put his whole knowledge into a few words only, convey his experience and hard work of years in only a few seconds. If he and the others of the Helpdesk only wanted. He thought:

‘But we can’t. And maybe Chiara was right on one thing: Even if we could, we would not. After all it had been hard work to come to this. Why just share it in a single magical formula? Couldn’t she sit down on her a .. herself?’

Many users seem to feel that if IT people were not so stingy they could very well quickly transmit the right attitude underlying their aptitude or ‘gift’. Like via neurotransmitters or telepathy or some magical word. Abracadabra. But what if it WAS possible to transmit this knowledge just by some magic?


Ok. Maybe the Software Support people could do it. Nico was feeling slightly superior to them. Well not only slightly, but quite. Their work was so much easier. Nico considered that programming was sort of the emblem of being an informatician. The others, Webmaster and the Soft- and Hardware Helpdesk were not REALLY informaticians. He knew about Methods, Events, Properties, Keywords, Libraries, Functions, Operators, Statements, Constants. They were just using some simple mortal MS Office commands.

Show this folder as an Email address book

How could it be important to know that when he was writing a new mail message, and clicking on **To:** or on the Address Book, he was not seeing his Private address book in the list? He only saw: ‘House’ and ‘Team’, but not ‘Private’. He must remember to ask Gwendoline or Hilde.

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Myra's answer (Hilde and Gwendoline were not available) later was:

- Be sure to have the Folder list visible
- If not, choose 'View - Folder list' or click on 
- Find your 'Private' contact book.
- Take your mouse and right-click on 'Private'
- In the menu that appears, choose Properties.
- Then click on the "Outlook address book" tab
- Then click on: 'Show this folder as an Email address book'

Myra thought she had already told him this. Three times at least, thought Myra. He really should have been able to find this out by himself.

Properties

Myra is right. Nico really should know how to find out about the above himself. Because as an IT he should know that when an IT thing doesn't show up or give you what you want you have to right-click on it and choose 'Properties'.

Or that that one can find something like 'Properties', 'Preferences', 'Settings', 'Options', 'Tools' in every programme in the world.

Myra knew this, even before she was HelpDesk, Myra just FELT:

If you cannot see, then choose View

If you do not like it, then choose Preferences or Customize

If you do not know what you can do, then right-click

Chiara, not hearing this wise Haiku, was sure of her idea about Nico too. She liked him, but he was just like the others, a stingy magician. With a superego. Not wanting to share. And lazy. Ok, she knew that programmers were lazy, if they were good. And Nico was very good. But stingy. And a bit conceited too. Programmers sort of considered themselves as being the elite of IT. But there was worse. Nico wrote all those good programmes, but then he didn't understand them himself! She had had to explain one of them to her WG, because Nico just hadn't been able to remember how his own commands worked. And he had written them! Chiara stopped to admire his photos, turned on her heels and left.

Nico sort of hated her. Chiara, never disturb a programmer when he is in a state of enlightenment. Nico didn't like people so much. They were always bumping into his concentration, making the whole castle of cards he had build up fall down, and he had to start again and again. It could transform from a castle of cards to a stable and lasting one only when the last card was set. With each card he added, he trembled to be

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interrupted. An he was. People were not his first priority. Ok he liked 'girls' and also to travel far away with them. But probably not with Chiara then.

♪ It's lunchtime

He looked after her, longing for the light to come back. But too late for that now, he had fallen back on earth, and that had rather hurt, and anyway it was time for lunch. He was meeting his Spanish crowd; at the Peacock Bar to be precise and called so because one could always see some peacocks parading there.

Lunch relaxed him a bit. And by the way, he still had to think where to go on holidays next time and with whom. Maybe this time it would be the right one. Because it was a common joke that Nico was going to his trips with each time a new girl and then coming back without her. But maybe this time he would find one with whom he could come back. Or stay there with her. The light came back to his eyes. But not for long. He felt very tired suddenly.

It was only 17h00 but he decided to call it a day. As an exception, he wasn't so much of a workaholic. Programmers are lazy. It was that his light had been darkened at one point of the day. In the elevator he met the cause of his distress, Chiara. She gave him a brilliant smile, like if she thought he was the greatest man on earth and had just saved it. Nico mused. After all, when she was not nagging at him so that he would teach her to programme in two seconds, she was a quite pretty girl. Italian like him, but with kind of Chinese looks. He smiled back.

Chiara's heart made a jump. She heard a kind of a 'Pang!' when it touched the top of the elevator. She would get him. At whatever cost. She would learn to programme at any price. She would sell her body and soul. And after all, when she saw Nico's smile, she realised it wouldn't be that difficult. Indeed rather easy. And probably pleasant. Cool.

At 17h01 Leo had an experience similar to Nico's.

He had been blissfully surfing on giant roll-over JavaScript, in the sea of his HTML codes. The sun shone, the wind was fine, seagulls were flying over him:

```
Function MM_findObj(n, d) { //v4.0
var p,i,x; if(!d) d=document; if((p=n.indexOf("?"))>0&&parent.frames.length) {
d=parent.frames[n.substring(p+1)].document; n=n.substring(0,p);}
if(!(x=d[n])&&d.all) x=d.all[n]; for (i=0;!x&&i<d.forms.length;i++) x=d.forms[i][n];
for(i=0;!x&&d.layers&&i<d.layers.length;i++) x=MM_findObj(n,d.layers[i].document);
if(!x && document.getElementById) x=document.getElementById(n); return x;
```

Then suddenly he was violently knocked off his surfboard by Cecile Acrot, one of their problem users. She was phoning him directly instead of going via the CHD main HelpDesk first:

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“Mr Veneto, would you come by without delay,” she said in her dronish voice, “and proceed to the installation of a keyboard which has the ‘Any Key’?”

Leo, having landed hard in cold water, couldn’t believe his ears, but, as most HelpDesk people with the exception of blue blooded programmers he tried to answer. However, the explanation literally finished him off. How to explain that Any Key was any key? His nice script stood there, unfinished, rolling his eyes at him. A roll-over script only looks difficult, it isn’t when you just find the ready-made command for it in your web page design programme. In Dreamweaver, at that time, it was in ‘Insert - Interactive images’. Now Cecile Acrot would have asked “And then where? Could you please come by and show me?”

Leo, having stayed until midnight the day before, completely overworked, and having barely escaped drowning, was near suffocation. But there was something he had wanted to do for days now, but had been completely unable to find out, nor had he been able to find the time to find out. Nor did he remember that there were things like the HELP, or **F1**, as they were always telling their users.

As you know CHD shared a common mailbox, CHD@house123.org. Hilde had given the whole CHD team *delegate* access to it. Which meant they could access the common mailbox via their own mailbox. Every other workgroup in the MOU possessed such a common mailbox too. Leo still needed to add the CDH mailbox to his own, but couldn’t remember how to do it. He took the phone again, to ask Myra.

Myra was a bit bewildered. OK if their users didn’t know, but her own HelpDesk? What was the matter with those guys today? Myra didn’t know about vampires yet. About people who artfully suck others out. Taking turns, and now it was hers. But maybe the pasta with garlic she had eaten at noon protected her. She took a deep breath and said patiently:

☞ “Leo. You right-click on OUTLOOK TODAY or Mailbox–Leo_Veneto, choose ‘Properties- Advanced-Advanced - then Add’. Type CHD there.”

“That does not work.”

“What does not work Leo?”

“Today nothing works.”

Boy those guys were having a problem today.

“Not today! OUTLOOK TODAY. In the Window panel to the left. The big Icon at the top. Or your own name there.”

“No.”

“Leo, then please go and choose ‘View - Outlook Bar’ in the menu above. Did you do that?”

“No.”

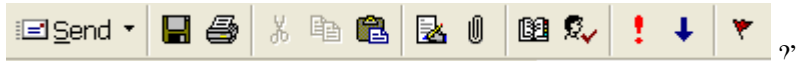
“Why?”

“Because all of my toolbars have disappeared. Where is the toolbar with the Send, the

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diskette, the Flag and so, you know?”

“The Standard toolbar?”



“No clue. But this manoeuvre of yours for adding the delegate has made it go away.”

Now it was her fault! Was he drunk or what?!

“Leo, the toolbars in Outlook change depending on what you’re doing at the moment. The toolbar you have when you compose a new message.”

“Ah! But anyway now I have no more toolbars at all!”

Was he near collapse or something?! This wasn’t like Leo.

“Choose ‘View - Toolbar’ then Standard and Advanced.’ OK?”

“Yes ok. But still the whole Outlook is a mess. I don’t see any of my folders anymore. They have disappeared.”

Should she call an ambulance?!

“Leo. What’s the matter with you? Choose ‘View - Folder List’ to have them appear. VIEW! And then go home. How can you keep on working when you’re dead-tired like that!”

“Yes,” he mumbled, or rather slurred. “But I have so much to do. What do you expect?!”

The whole thing lasted half an hour. Myra almost tore her hair out. Leo had been working with computers for years now. He was a mighty webmaster. He could programme. He was writing in HTML and JavaScript, he was using Coldfusion. And she was just a little novice in a Support Helpdesk. Obviously that didn’t mean a thing. Only those programmers were la crème de la crème of the IT world. Or felt like it. Above being a delegate. She kept her thoughts to herself, and Leo, much too tired anyway, didn’t guess any of them. Leo thought that Myra was very nice, very patient, and really, he felt she understood him. A bit like Gwendoline, alias Martha. Must be the letter M. In fact Myra liked Leo too. He was a very nice man, even if it didn’t show on first sight, hiding as he was behind his beard, and he was very patient with his own users, the Sub-webmasters.

Myra went home still shaking her head about her two colleagues, Nico and Leo, especially Leo, Nico at least had understood immediately. But Leo had obviously ‘lost his toolbar’. She hoped she would meet the Prince’s father Justin again soon, and talk over the fence.

Do not forget:

If you cannot see, then choose View

If you do not like it, then choose Preferences or Customize

If you do not know what you can do, then right-click

The World is watching

Leo was the Webmaster and Lut was the Webmasteress. There is no such word, but let's just make it up. Right-click on it, choose 'Add to Dictionary' and it won't be underlined with red waves anymore. Leo and Lut, together, weaved great parts of the House's Web. For both its Intranet and Internet.

Intranet & Internet

The House of course had an Intranet, with its own inside Web Pages just for staff, which hosts House-rules, information about in-house courses, daily menus of the canteens, forms to fill out a holiday request and sick-leave, a forum for ads and the latest in-house news. Only House staff could access those pages.

The Internet part was open to the World with web pages like the lists of the Scientists, the general House structure, its publications and conferences, public events and meetings. They were consulted by many thousands of people from the entire world each day.

Leo sometimes imagined converting into a bit of data; all made of zeros and ones, like 1100100, or into a little message, and take a path to the Outside Word. He would leave his Desktop, slide into the network card, leave through the network socket, glide through the coaxial cables all the way through the building until he reached the *router*, which would forward him to the *proxy server*, the intermediary between the user and the Internet, hide a while in its *cache* among other previously downloaded Web pages, all this communicating by an impressive series of *protocols*, and finally leave via the Gateway, the door to the big wide world, to the network of networks, the worldwide system of computer networks: the Internet.

Leo was the Webmaster of MOU XII and Lut was his assistant. They made the Web Pages for the Intranet of MOU XII and also public Web Pages for the Internet that the whole world could consult if they typed:

Address

in the address bar of their Internet Browser. Of course that's unfortunately not true, since the name www.house123.org is not the House's real domain address.

Being a Webmaster requires a lot of talents. He or she needs to know about the newest IT technologies, he needs to be structured and organised, he needs to be creative, and he needs some kind of artistic talent like the one a writer or painter might have.

Almost no one can have all those talents, except people like Leo's famous ancestor, so one must find a compromise of what one can do or not, and this, in itself, if well done, is already great art, if not a proof of genius.

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Imagine the techniques of *son et lumières* which lie behind it. Like the ones once offered by projectcool on <http://www.devx.com/projectcool/>. Now Leo only found sophisticated web design techniques there. If you want to have an idea about all that's needed to know to make a really artful webpage. And it's a lot.

He had to be organised, but he did it artfully, just as Leonardo da Vinci, painter, architect, sculptor, engineer and scientist had used all his talents to organise entertainment at Amboise, for the court of François I. One can imagine how he put together musicians, singers, dancers, costumes, scripts, scenery, décor, food and drink.

It was about Installing the Web Servers; about the web design programmes, like FrontPage and Dreamweaver; about Basic HTML, Styles and Tags, Links, Lists, Images; about Tables, Metatags, Imagemaps, Framse; about Dynamic HTML; Audio and Color; about Javascripts; about XML; Graphics; CSS style sheets; then followed XSL, XSLT, SOPA, WDSL, WAP; Server Scripting techniques like SQL, ASP, ADO, PHP; .NET; MultiMedia with SVG or Flash. The pages on <http://www.w3schools.com/> can give you an idea.

One single person can't possibly do all of this, often they are done by combining the talents of dozens of people. At MOU XII, however, they were only two. Leo had to find a compromise. He was great for this and for finding the right balance between what he wished to do and what he could do.

But as much as he wished and balanced his wishes, it was all too much, even if they had some twenty *Sub-webmasters* to help them.

The Sub-webmasters supplied them the content for their web pages, because Leo and Lut could impossibly know every detail their job demanded in all the scientific fields they worked on. They couldn't know all about Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Physiology, Genetics, Maths and Astronomy, nor what their calendar was, when their meetings. The content had to be supplied by people of the field itself.

Sub-webmasters don't need to have all of a Webmaster's talents. They are required to fill in the content of the Web Pages the Webmaster has prepared for them in the form of a template.

For years Leo had worked alone, with an ever growing workload, the number of Web Pages was impressive, and finally he had been allowed an assistant. The job was published and applications flew in. It was an interesting job, and Leo an interesting man. Both could be quite difficult at times too, but then quite a lot of people weren't afraid of challenge. Leo had had read through the applications, mostly coming from the Sub-webmasters in his MOU. But Leo had already asked for Lut's hand before the job was even published (typical). He had his very good reasons:

He had trained other Sub-webmasters for days, and their skills in carrying out his instructions were satisfactory, but none of them seemed able to build up a webpage all by his own. With one exception: Lutgarde. Lut was the only one out of the other thirty or so who had built her own webpage from the beginning to the end, without

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consulting him nor anyone else. And Leo loved independent women. As long as of course he had asked them to be so (typical), and this again with the exception of Gwendoline maybe, Gwendoline was Gwendoline.

Their work was important; their Web Pages were visited by thousands of people each day. The number of '*hits*' they got was impressive. A hit, that is the request for a webpage, typing the URL in and pressing Enter, would measure the traffic within a website. And the MOU XII website was one very much looked at. The world was watching. Their House was an important one. It was the House of Science.

But if all of the other Sub-webmasters appeared to be intelligent, compliant, sharp or able, Lutgarde showed this particular kind of talent, which was needed for the job: creativeness. Even the page was naive and, as often with first Web Pages, contained childish elements, she had at least done one, all by herself.

This was the main reason Lutgarde had been his first choice: She could work independently; she had made her own web creations without any help or foreign advice as how to structure them. She was good in this, but even more so she had a talent for filling out the details. Leo well knew that details were not so much his strength.

In many ways Leo and Lutgarde were made for each other. This was not love as between a successfully married couple, but a perfect union in the computer world, both complementing and balancing each other. In a dancing contest they would have won a prize. She would have herself been lead until she would lead him. Leo was the writer, Lut the voice. Leo made the synthesis, Lut the analysis. They were Content and container, bowl and fruit, pot and flowers.

He prepared the canvas, and she filled in the colours. He made the summary, she filled in the text. He prepared the background ambiance and the main theme, she took care to touch up and emphasise the individual elements. Using the palette of programmes like Paint Shop Pro, Fireworks and ImagXpress she virtually mixed his paints for him.

Leo had taught her some lithography. The technique used to print the black and white and colour photos we see in most newspapers, photos and books. It was once used to embellish music sheets, first using flat stones, and later a printing master. Leo himself had still first learned this art manually, and later by using modern computer programmes and techniques. With those one needed the same knowledge required to produce it manually but with a programme *one would only use the theory*. Lut had shown herself an apt pupil, and had quickly begun to excel her master. Leo, not a jealous man let her be and encouraged her.

Hers was a strenuous work, demanding a lot of patience and attention for detail. Very quickly Leo had begun leaving the design for detail to Lut alone, and concentrated on the general planning of the architecture of the site and on organising the manner in which the Sub-webmasters would supply the content.

The CLA's, administrators in MOU XII, having heard of the MOU XII Web Pages and their success felt sure they wanted to have a webpage for their WG too. Leo had

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endless meetings with them. It was not an easy job, knowing how to lead them to communicate the kind of data they wanted on the webpage, very often they did not, from start, know it themselves.

They would come and say: "I want a webpage", but then often did not know more than that, and it took time to lead them to express what they subconsciously wanted. Leo could get them to talk. Had he been a police agent, he would have been successful in getting the most hardened criminal to confess and this without applying torture. It was a bit the job of a psychoanalyst, leading the patient to make free associations in order to bring subconscious patterns of ideas to the surface and convert them into words. Those he would first structure on paper and later materialise on a Webpage. The layout, composition and configuration of the Webpage would strive to express, structure and portray the content they were holding. In a Webpage a particular kind of content required a particular style of design.

Lutgarde was great for the finalisation of the Web Pages. Small icons, pictures edited dozens of times and rearranged in size and colour would render the lovely details, which so attracted the eye. Logos worked on with care and text whose police she had spent hours to choose. She would blur, edge, noise, and sharpen the images. Flip, mirror and rotate. Colorize, posterize and solarize. Adjust the contrast, the brightness, the hue, the luminance, the RGB, correct the Gamma. Colour anti-aliasing and smoothing. Sharpen and soften. Resize and rotate. Deskew and despeckle. Ripple, emboss, swirl, crop, blend, negate, mirror, and dither

Her palette was filled with some 16 million possibilities. If he was the one to design the cut and style for a dress, she would sew it. If he decided upon the colours of the clothing, she would add the buttons and the finery, like rings or necklaces, ribbons and feathers for the hats. She saw to all the detail. She never missed a thing.

He was an extraordinary stylist, she a gifted seamstress, and both of them had a lot of imagination. Leo was a genius and Lut was Leo's good genius.

Leo was not married; he had been once but only shortly. He was the typical women's man who can't decide between women because he likes them all too much. Would he decide for one, he would miss all the others. Women didn't always notice this and many of the unmarried ones tried their chances with him, that much was clear. The number of women filling his office at all times was impressive, and it was obvious they often came using Web Pages as an excuse. So that asked questions they perfectly knew the answer to, a fact which did not annoy Leo so much but infuriated Lut, because their giggling kept her from working.

Lutgarde was happily married, with two kids, Maxi and Ricky, her husband was working as an IT expert too, not at the House, but in one of the hundreds of lobbies which swarmed in big circles around it.

Between despeck and deskew, Lut, like all of them, was getting one phone call after the other. There were all those newcomers to the MOU, who suddenly wanted to be

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Sub-webmasters too. She had to train them and most of them were eager to learn the trade. Lessons in web pages sold like hot croissants with café crème on a cold Sunday morning in Paris. They were simply delicious. And one might meet mighty people in one of those Croissanteries, like Mitterand, or rather his ghost, since it had been his habit to go out alone to fetch his family a breakfast.

People literally queued up for the lessons. Everyone just had to have the experience at least once in his lifetime. Again it seemed such a mystery at the same time as so very easy. They felt sure Lut would transmit the magic easily just because she had the power to do so. One typical phone call was:

“Hi this is Radek. I am new in the new Biology MIOU, my CLA wants me to organise the Web Pages of our Anthropology WG. I wonder if you could give me a five minutes briefing on How to do a webpage?”

Lut swallowed hard. This was getting more and more crazy. Five minutes briefing to train someone how to do a webpage.

Just as Nico she thought of playing some joke on him. She would let him come, put on a big pointed hat, take a long pen to act as a ward, wave it over him and say:

“HTML, DHTML, XML, XSL, XSLT, SQL, ASP, ADO, PHP, CSS, DOM, WAB. Abracadabra, you’re now a Webmaster.”

He would walk away believing it.

But ten minutes later she had gotten five more of such calls. How ever would she manage to train all those people in such a short time? The Web Pages would have to be ready in one month time. How ever would she do it? One could just NOT learn Dreamweaver, the programme they were using to do the Web Pages, in five minutes. Or maybe she could just really take five minutes to brief them, and then send them off to teach themselves the rest of the skills alone. Maybe it WAS possible. Somehow she had to convey her skills on the users by other means then the customary ones. Maybe it was possible, but how.

She thought about it. How had she done it? She had just opened some of the web design programmes, like *FrontPage* and *Dreamweaver* by double-clicking on the icon. Then she had thought about what she wanted to do and leafed through the menu bar to find the required command. But how had she done this? How had she known those commands might exist?

Leo had confirmed this to her: She was a natural talent. But still, it had taken her more than five minutes. Or had it not? Lut shook her head, bewildered, she didn’t know anymore herself. She sighed and wished the content of an excellent website like <http://www.w3schools.com/> would enter her mind just as easily.

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HTML Tutorials Browser Scripting


Learn HTML	Learn JavaScript
Learn XHTML	Learn DHTML
Learn CSS	Learn VBScript
Learn TCP/IP	Learn HTML DOM

And didn't it say clearly there: 'Learn!'?

On the other side it had taken her about zero seconds to understand how to adapt Leo's JavaScript

```
<html>
<body>
<script type="text/javascript">
var name = "LUT"
document.write(name)
document.write("<h1>" + name + "</h1>")
</script>
<p>This example declares a variable, assigns a value to it, and then displays the variable.</p>
<p>Then the variable is displayed one more time, only this time as a heading.</p>
</body>
</html>
```

How could people say it was so difficult and then at the same time want to learn it in five minutes? It was easy. Maybe putting it together was the only challenge.

She opened Dreamweaver, clicked on the Show Codes Icon , pasted the content of the script there, over the already existing codes, finally pressed **F12** to run and test the script.

I love only two things in life

The name of the 17 new WG's had changed again, and some units had been merged, others split. The name in whole letters of MOU XII had changed for the third time now. It would be useless to spell them out here. Hilde had to reorganise all her files again. For the 777 users, 20 Workgroups; adapt all the fields which were involved in the change and transfer this to the Active Directory, the user database in NT and or Windows 2000.

She felt there were most certainly be still more of those name changes to come.

She opened her Excel to figure out how many single fields she had changed until now already. She considered it could help her planning. The now 356 newcomers in the MOU this year, and the 30 fields for each of their records in her user database made that she had entered 10.680 single fields manually.

	A	B	C	D
1	Actions to be taken	Nr Fields	Newcomers	Total
2	Give AD Account	30	356	10.680

and showing the formula:

	A	B	C	D
1	Actions to be taken	Nr Fields	Newcomers	Total
2	Give AD Account	30	356	=B2*C2

Legend	Abbreviation				
Number of Units			Units		
Number of Name changes			NamCh		
Parameters involved in Change			Params		
Number of People/Records involved			NrRec		
	Units	NamCh	Params	NrRec	Total Param
MOUs	3	4	7	777	65.268
WGs	17	2	7	777	184.926
Total	20	6	14	1.554	250.194

Counting the MOU and WG names changes, made that she had updated 250.194 single fields. Fortunately for this she could use SQL Queries like the one on page 231. But what would happen if she didn't know how to do that?!

Hilde had made a list of actions to be taken for the two new temporary Workgroups, Telepathy and Astrology. Some might have thought she would just have to type "Tele"! but it rather was like:

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- USER MANAGEMENT IN THE ACTIVE DIRECTORY
 1. Create the AD group, add the members of the WG to the group.
 2. Email
 3. Create the Email IDs and mailboxes for the members
 4. Create a generic service mailbox (like Astrology@House123.org)
 5. Give delegate access to the members to that mailbox
 6. Give delegate access to the secretaries to the mailboxes of their bosses
- SERVER MANAGEMENT
 7. Create the shares \\MOUXII\Telepathy and \\Science\Telepathy
 8. Allocate the necessary permissions for the group to those shares
- APPLICATION PROGRAMMES
 9. Create the necessary groups in Elements 112 and Kaleidoscope III.
 10. Create the users and give them passwords.
- COURSES
 11. Train the new users to the programmes. MS Office and the application programmes.
- WEB PAGES
 12. Add the new Work groups to the MOUXII Web Pages, create a Webpage for each of them

Action 7 and 12 were not for her, and even if 11 only partly, that left 10 actions per user, thus for 17 workgroups with then a 3 times name change this resulted in: 5100 actions. Each of them took between one minute and two hours.

WG	People in WG	Actions	Changes	Total
17	10	10	3	5.100

Take the Delegate access, where someone gets delegate access to another one's mailbox, typically the one of his boss. There were two options. Or Hilde had to install a full access by using the permissions in AD. Or the delegation had to be given 'from the client', that is from his own PC by the boss itself.

But the main work remained to be done. She had to give the delegate and counter-delegate an explanation of how to implement the access in his or her mailbox. It was not such a small action at all.

☞ At this, Sabine, secretary to the CLA of Macrobiology WG, phoned her as if to emphasise this. Only by hearing her voice Hilde knew she was all read in the face.

"Hilde, I'm so embarrassed. Mr Otter has given me delegate access to his Mailbox. But no full access, only partial. I'm only a Reviewer for most of things. In the Inbox I can send, but I can not delete. By mistake I have sent a message to a friend, but from his mailbox instead of mine. And now she has answered, but she has sent the answer to his mailbox instead of mine. Please do something; it's so embarrassing."

"But Sabine I can't. If you can't, I can't. Not in this case."

"But maybe EMail Administration could delete it?"

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“Is it really so serious?”

“Yes it is.”

And Sabine, now red like a tomato, opened the message for two seconds:

“Poor you! What a bastard! Why not tell your boss, so that he teaches his son a lesson. Are you going to keep it?”

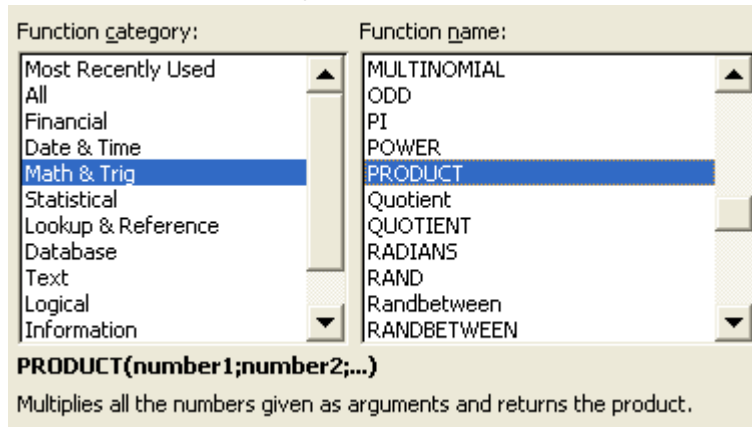
Sabina closed the message again and Hilde wouldn't have read more of it anyway. She'd got the message. Discretion was necessary in their job just as for the doctor who had examined the two girls. Hilde tried to delete the message on her side, hopeless of course. Then she did something she had never done before, and tried to convince EMail Administration. Nope. They had to give up. She had spent half an hour on the case, and moreover a hopeless one.

What was this doing in her clean statistics anyway? Exactly! It was an example who the simplest thing would always take a lot of time.

Total

=PRODUCT(B25:E25)

For the product in the Total cell F24 she used the Product() function by placing the cursor in F24 and choosing **Insert - Function** from the menu bar.



Outside it began to rain. To flee from the damp grey and all those rather frightening numbers she turned her thoughts to her home town, Davos, where the sun always shone, at least compared to this place. The joke was that one day when the sky turned blue in Bohatia, and the sun came out, locals believed to face a new God, because most people here had never seen it before. In fact it wasn't so that it rained; it was rather never really sunny.

What was it that made people leave their home countries, and come to this forlorn foggy place? Was there a common denominator for all of them? Was it some secret

unhappiness? Did they not love their parents? Or did they love them too much, and wanted to sever a bond so strong to be lived on a every day basis? Or were they just very brave, like travellers of all ages, Marco Polo and Columbus, in whose genes it was written they were meant to leave home from the day they were born?

What had Julia told her? "I was afraid I would never find a husband in the little place I was living in. I just felt just had to go and look for him elsewhere."

Ingeborg grinned: "I left because I was afraid to be bored."

And Annabella, smiling, still nervous with the recollection of it: "I left because I wanted more freedom, my parents were quite strict, I had to stay at home till I was thirty, my father didn't want to let me have my own flat. I didn't leave, I fled."

And Gerrit with some earnest: "I left for the money. I didn't care about the House then. It took me years to understand what it was all about."

But to all of them one day something told them "I will leave."

Maurice, clad in a light-green suit with dark green tie, matching her own dress, interrupted these reflections, as now usual jumping in her office and then on herself without any other prelude or warning, and began telling her a computer story.

"Mrko Mrnsk has done it again. This new black list he uses to control spam coming from well known spammer domains and addresses isn't working at all. I wonder if we should put him on the black list instead. I used tracert to trace one of those messages back to its source, it came from China. Most of the spam nowadays comes from there. The House should use Heuristic Pattern matching..."

Hilde had begun to compare him to the story tellers on the Place Jmna El Fna in Marrakech, because in his mouth computers, printers, network cables got changed into sultans, Jinni's and bright lamps, the latter which, if rubbed in the right way and place, would make priceless treasures appear. Maybe he was a magician himself, a good demon, and would one day disappear in smoke. Plops! But Maurice, not realising his own mysterious nature, just kept on talking. His voice got on a high pitch again, he literally began singing, and yes now Hilde clearly recognised ColdPlay, the band declared to make the sweetest music in the World. He told and sang, sang and told, ecstatic. Then suddenly he paused, and looked at her as if he had just gotten some new insight about himself:

"I love only two things in life," he declared. "Computers and Women."

He was really serious about this. Immediately the love scene she'd witnessed for herself some days earlier came back to her mind. She still hadn't quite forgotten about his 'bed' voice either, and had pondered about some not so cruel revenge. Here she had it:

"I know," she answered, sweetly, with a satisfied after-bed bed voice. Don't ask me what an after-bed voice is, you know what an after-bed voice is. Maurice took this in for a second and then startled slightly:

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“Oh maybe no, it’s not that bad,” he stuttered slightly, trying to back off from the truth he’d expressed about himself just a minute before.

But Hilde smiled knowingly. He’d gotten the message. Just as it had happened to her, he couldn’t be sure either now, if she’d been deliberate. Maurice seemed really troubled now:

“Ok”, he admitted, I do like women. I don’t know if I could live without them. I certainly couldn’t live without computers, or well, if I think about it, maybe... What am I saying!”

Maurice had not been born, he had been downloaded. Hilde had to smile. She liked him a lot, but could not share his passion to that extent. For her it was more of a great sympathy. Computers were such helpful and obliging guys. Just like Maurice. Intelligent and Poetic. They helped her calculate her formulas. They told her stories. They memorized for her. They sped up tedious tasks in such an enchanting way.

She loved it too, watch a programme execute a task for her. Run over some text in Word and work on it. See it crossing over a chain of formulas in an Excel sheet with an amorous shiver, just because she had changed one value in one cell. She loved to let a macro work in the foreground, so that she could observe what it was doing, while she sat arms crossed. Computers let her do her maths so easily, it was like flying. It was a game, but one with many satisfactions. At which she could always win.

```
Public Sub Nimb()  
    'in turns, take 1, 2 or 3 matches out of a heap, the one who stays with the last match loses  
    Dim total, pl1, pl2, rest As Integer  
    Dim winner As String  
    rest = InputBox("How many matches are there ?", "TOTAL MTACHES")  
    Do While rest > 1 ' Inner loop.  
        pl1 = InputBox(rest & " matches left. Your turn. Take 1 to 3 matches", "MATCH")  
        rest = rest - pl1  
        If rest = 1 Then  
            MsgBox (rest & " match left. You win")  
        End If  
        nimbo = (rest - 1) Mod 4  
        If nimbo = 0 Then  
            nimbo = 1  
        End If  
        pl2 = MsgBox("I take " & nimbo & " matches")  
        rest = rest - nimbo  
        If rest = 1 Then  
            MsgBox (rest & " match left. I win")  
        End If  
    Loop  
End Sub
```

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And Hilde would never loose, until now, no formula she was looking for had ever escaped her.

She really wondered now how Maurice expressed this second love of his. She imagined the delicious shudders of shares, servers, routers, hubs, switches, proxies, broadband, which would run through her. How would NAS or SAN or bluetooth taste in his mouth? They sounded so nice already.

He would swing a coaxial cable around her; run his cables over her backbone. Data would begin streaming all through them; he would link them together via some OLE, OCX or DLL. He would bitmap her all over. Her rather sound firewall would just have to let him in. She would pattern, page, path and parse his skin, put icons all over his face, Ethernet him for eternity, right-click on his back, obtaining a new menu on every spot, choosing what he liked best, letting her fingers glide to this choice, left-click and then let go, to let him have it. Make a shortcut to his preferences to remember them, add him to the Favorites menu and double-click on him as much as she could. Tab over his backbone. Tab tab tab. They would paste applets on each other. They would byte each other gently. 8 bits in a byte. Later they could programme a son or daughter, then publish him on Internet or download him on some DVD via the satellite system Maurice would have installed on the Antenna of his car.

She shook her head. What nonsense was she thinking of. But what a delicious scandal it would be, were they both found out indulging in all those activities on the desktop of their PC, exchanging icons. Maurice had left, and Hilde was now staring at precisely this desktop. Something had changed there, without her doing, what was it? But the Internet Explorer Icon, the little blue *E* had suddenly taken a red colour!

Hilde immediately ran a virus check with her McAfee, but no virus was found.

She could not remember to have changed her desktop properties, and anyway, even if she had, the Internet Icon would have remained blue. Now it was red.

Finally she realised it might be the screen itself. She pushed the series of buttons on its lower end until she found the *Degauss* function. She pressed and the screen trembled and buzzed, shaking itself like a wet dog. She knew well that the magnetic charges the earth produces can accumulate in a monitor, causing a loss of colour accuracy. Well on her screen this was not exactly the case, because all the colours were ok, except the red one of the internet *E*xplorer. But it still helped, magnetic charges seemed to have fled the computer, and the icon was blue again.

She wished she could have a flat LCD screen soon. LCD for Liquid Crystal display. But some budget measures meant that she could not. That was at least what she'd been told by the Budget WG. Because now Maurice came in, carrying one. With a wide smile her removed the heavy classic screen from her desk and replaced it by the elegant flat one, lovingly connecting all the cables.

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Maurice loved computers & women, Hilde loved formulas, Lexi loved Hardware. Gwendoline loved users & computers. Or computers & users.

Gwendoline, when she was still Martha, had started to study Psychology, but had to abandon it and to find work when she arrived in Europe, fleeing the military regime the dictators. What was her team always talking about 'No one'?! Talk of 'No One' ruling the world, what nonsense. And not to forget all the big companies and firms, a creepy and unholy power at times.

She had had to work as a secretary. On her second job, she had made acquaintance with a little grey box, topped by a grey screen. The very first PC with a hard disk in it.

No one had dared touch it, fearing it might explode, but Gwendoline had. Not without first reading the two DOS manuals that came with it. After two days of reading, she decided there were only two commands which she could execute without danger: The 'Dir' and the 'Tree' command. When the first gave her the list of files and directories beneath the C: drive and the second the whole directory structure she cried out with pleasure: So that's who they do it! And to this, the PC gave her a big happy smile:

"I thought I would stay here forever, all alone." said he. "Please stay!"

Dir and Tree would be the first two pearls out of many and Gwendoline was immediately caught in the web of this marvellous cavern of Ali Baba. She soon knew DOS by heart, opened a Lotus spreadsheet here, a WordStar (Word's ancestor) document there.

Her team of that time watched open-mouthed and dumbfounded:

"Oh Gwendoline we're so happy that someone is at least using that fearsome thing!"

And soon she was having them use it too, drawing clean reports, making budget calculations, wonderful mail merges and indented lists. The office bought a second and then a third computer. At the end of two years, one person out of two had one. Martha ran from one to the other, explaining, supporting, drying tears when it got to hard.

Computers or rather their users sort of abused her aspiration to help, and had begged her to come and rescue them. Gwendoline could never say no to a cry for help.

Gwendoline had not come to Computers, Computers had come to her. It was not so much that she was attracted by computers, computers were attracted to her. Unlike Maurice Gwendoline was not passionate about computers, computers were passionate about her.

Poor lonely PC's standing in offices just by themselves, no one to take care of them. But then came Gwendoline, and blew them into life.

They had long chats and the PC's showed her how to use all the useful programs they contained:

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- the Operating system DOS in all its versions and later Windows 3.1;
- Word Processors like WordStar, DisplayWrite;
- Spreadsheets like MultiPlan, Lotus, PlanPerfect, Symphony, Dataperfect, Excel; the databases dBase III and dBase IV;
- Desktop Publishers like CorelDraw!, DrawPerfect, PageMaker, Ventura;
- Network systems like Novel and TCP-IP; many others;
- later the MS Office package with Word, Excel and Access and the Operating Systems Windows NT, 2000 and XP.
- Today of course Web Publishing software like FrontPage, Dreamweaver and the underlying HTML.
- Some programming of course too, like Visual Basic for applications but she left that to Hilde now.

She knew those programmes inside out. Like her own pocket or better. When a computer saw Gwendoline, he just started smiling and then asked her to look deep into his mind and to find out everything about him. Like in the Pink Floyd song: 'Will you look into my mind, to see what I can find.' Computers seemed to be drawn to her magically, and came running like children to an elder who was going to listen patiently to the stories they were going to tell him.

But Gwendoline had also immediately grasped the fact that not everyone was going to be such good friends with computers. That for many people the 'Dir' and 'Tree' command would mean nothing. She knew that they would battle with spreadsheets and documents instead of enjoying them and that both would have nothing to say to each other.

And Gwendoline decided she would make it her job to help people understand computers, solve their problems, be a mediator between the two.

She never knew whom she loved more: People or computers.

Her much older passion still lingered in her. A secret she believed she kept only to herself but about which everyone was aware of: Gwendoline not only understood computers, she understood people too. Users were people, and Gwendoline was passionate about people, the working of their mind, their joys, when they were working and sorrows, when they were not working. Users were people and that made that Gwendoline was passionate about users too. She thought computers and people were working in a very much similar way: Full of mysteries, gentle and generous if handled right, and very complicated. Though she had no doubt about whom of the two populations was the more complicated one...

Quickly People had come to rely on her more and more because she seemed to understand those strange little boxes, by sheer intuition. She sort of talked to them and they answered. Or she would listen to them, and then they would be able do what she and they both wanted. And one day, her first passion, if rightly kindled, could well

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grow into a fire, a passion unequalled. Users were so nice, so patient and so grateful, that Gwendoline could only be happy with them. With time, she had come to love her users to distraction.

Magic is needed

It was summer now and the conditions of two buildings remained just as bad as they had been at the beginning. Or worse, elevators were now only working one day out of two, in the beginning it had been better. Air conditioning was non-existing; in some offices it was so hot and sticky that you could have cut the air with a knife. Nevertheless several viruses had installed comfortably in the ventilation shaft since early spring and had made them their Headquarter. More than half of the MOU couldn't remember when last not having had a cold, cough, headache or even asthma.

Lut was still quite bit sad about the loss and mysterious disappearance of her plants. Of course they might have died in anyway in the unhealthy atmosphere. Of course if couldn't have been Hilde, poor Hilde felt guilty about it even she had nothing to do with this, only because she had been the first to discover there were no more plants. Hilde was so good with plants, it almost broke her heart. Lut especially missed a lemon tree, which had been making lemon juice for her to mix with sugared water the whole year long. Lemons meant the very much needed vitamins and now she didn't even have this remedy anymore. When she was walking she had to lean against the wall every three steps, so much her head was spinning.

Scurvy could not be far away. People were becoming madder every day, and the Helpdesk with them. Lethargy, anaemia, pain in the joints and muscles, Lut felt she had all of it without her lemon tree. Users seemed to suffer the same. Vitamin C deficiency can cause bizarre behaviour, mental changes, even hallucinations. Though nothing that happened at the House could astonish her anymore.

One user, Emilio, called because he pretended to have opened a window on his desktop, and that an icon had fallen out, banging on his keyboard, which was now broken on the Return key. Madness had settled in, but when Myra came to have a look she had to see that not only the Return key was strangely split in two, but that the icon was indeed missing from the Window, and that a tiny icon looking thing was lying in the little crack which had been made the Enter key. It was a blue e, just like the icon for the Internet Explorer, and when she checked further, the Internet programme was entirely missing from the PC, and she had to reinstall it and get the user a new keyboard. She couldn't believe her eyes.

Another user, Carlos, pretended the same: he had opened a window on his desktop, and a big icon had fallen out, and made a bump on his forehead. Indeed Carlos had a big blue bump there. It looked like a W turned up-side down. Maybe it had been the word icon. To her dismay, she couldn't find the shortcut for the Word icon on the desktop anymore and had to help the user to put it back.

Maurice told her that the two users, both Italians, and friends, had set her up, just

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because they wanted some company. But it was crazy indeed.

He called up an emergency meeting:

“We’re in a state of war; we have to put an embargo, a curfew! Our workload is such that it may enter history as an example, we have no more boss since spring, organisation has become the third topic in my prayers.”

“What are the first two?”

“Good computers and pretty women.”

“And this wishful thinking of the users and even more that of our bosses,” complained Lut, “they just believe because they WANT to have 100 new Web Pages for each of the 17 new WG’s within the week it will be possible. Like if I just snipped my fingers, and it was done!”

“Would be nice indeed,” said Leo and snipped his elegant fingers pensively.

“The same goes for me. They believe I can enter all those new users in our Active Directory for the Windows logon without even knowing their name,” said Hilde. Her usually straight long hair was tousled to the extreme. She had visibly been tearing some of it out. “They really seem to believe in their new temporary WG, Telepathy.”

“Equally useful, but I doubt it. And they do not to believe in Telepathy, the WG is just there to prove its non-existence.”

“Who’s ‘they’ anyway,” said Maurice. “No one it is, that’s the problem.”

“Yes and at the same time some users seem to believe they can know all about Word in a second just because I can teach them say ‘**Word**’ in some particular manner ,” said Gwendoline with a distressed laughter.

“Yes and the users like my web pages and want to do some too. If they really could, it would help me a lot. But they want me to do something to them, something WEBBY, so that they can walk out of my office and know it all,” said Lut, making frightened grin.

“And our users ask so many questions, I’m hanging on the phone all day long answering, but at the same time I have to work on the new programmes, I just haven’t managed yet to create several virtual selves to respond to all that demand.”

Several of the CHD started to grin now. Several virtual selves! That would be nice! What a lot of good ideas.

“And they come to me to get help with their reports, and think that my knowledge about computers will make that the report writes itself all alone,” said Gwendoline drawing a funny face.

“They ask me how I know all this, and when I tell them that I sometimes sit down in the evening to study they don’t believe me. I think they believe I acquire my knowledge by sitting five minutes per day in a pentagram or so,” said Hilde, looking puzzled but everyone laughed again. They imagined her well indeed.

“I learn a programme in five minutes,” said Maurice. “And not using witchcraft, I’m

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just smart. Not some bloody witch.”

“There are nice witches.”

“No, witches aren’t nice, but maybe we could use some white magic,” said Myra, looking dead serious. She believed in ‘other things’. But the others didn’t know that yet and laughed because they thought she was joking.

Well not all of them:

“Yes there are nice witches,” said Gwendoline. “There is white magic.”

“And what if we were to give it to them, this ‘white magic’? I mean practical magic. Something like training, but nor they nor we have the time for training,” said Leo, who was the only male present to be keen for such way of thoughts. ”Lutgarde and I can impossibly do all this alone anymore. We must find a trick to convey our knowledge, but how.”

Johanna frowned. She was a practical being, but the situation was such a mess that even she was going to consider an unusual solution:

“Yes but how?”

Yes but how? That was the question.

“We could ask some Oracle!” said Lexi, only half joking.

“Yes we must,” said Myra, but seriously that everyone looked at her with some suspicion. All this talk about magic had just been a joke, a way of expressing their stress. They were IT people, sound with figures and numbers, and had to pretend not to believe in such things. But this wouldn’t last for long. Lexi jumped back to her help:

“If our users believe in magic, why don’t we? The situation needs a miracle to be solved. A solution must be found from heaven. Of course we could do with some magical things like an Oracle glass. The glass would show us what we should do to get out of this mess.”

“Why not ask the Tarot or the *I Ching*, Lexi, while you’re at it?”

“I did ask the *I Ching*. It’s a sacred book.”

Maurice looked amused: “And the result?”

“The *I Ching* answered we would undergo a period of great troubles and changes, but that at the end everything would settle down and we’d come out of this mess.”

“Lexi you worry me,” said Maurice, but he didn’t mean it. He knew his Lexi was rather sound. And a bit scheming too. But exhausted. He smiled:

“To say the truth I’ve tried it myself at some time in my life, but all it ever answers is: The great man, in due time, will come and save the little ones. Where is he? I don’t see him.”

But now even practical Hilde and best friend at the CHD, out of female solidarity maybe, came to Myra’s and Lexi’s help too:

“Maurice. You of course are this great man. We all know that. But YOU, a man with a scientific education, think of course that all this about far-seeing, telepathy and so is

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rubbish. You label everything you don't understand as a belief in magic, and then say it doesn't exist, that it's not scientific. But in fact yours is not a scientific attitude. You just refuse all of it as a superstition, instead of looking for explanations. SCIENTIFIC explanations."

Myra, with now two allies, glowed brightly at Maurice. What a pity. Why was he so stubborn? He had seemed to her more open minded than the average. Why only believe in what one could see? It was the same for Lexi: She was sure of her skills. Had she not foreseen the MOVE itself?! This feeling at the pit of her stomach.

"And Maurice," said Gwendoline, "have you not told me just the other day that you have met a man who had witnessed people in trance talking in ancient languages they had never learned or spoken before? Aramaic and so? And don't say no, you DID believe it."

Now Maurice was slightly taken aback:

"But that of course, is true."

"See! Because I don't believe either just without having seen it myself, but I am at least willing to investigate at least."

"Now I have all the girls against me," said Maurice, with falsely pretended unhappiness.

But Leo, now too, came to the girls help:

"Things are not always what they seem," he said. "That is a common saying which might have some truth to it. Our grandmothers are not in for nothing."

"That's why you're so old fashioned Leo," said Maurice. Mighty, Maurice was really having some sort of a problem today. Maybe his wife was away again, on one of her travels to the end of the world. Making money in a way Maurice wouldn't admit.

Sven only sat cross-armed and highly amused, Nico was on one of his holidays (maybe with Franca, Maurice' wife), Johanna was grinning and Lexi had become silent and was rubbing her head. Finally she added with intention to Maurice:

"If I didn't know better I'd say you were mean." Lexi adored Maurice.

"It's your bump," said Maurice as meanly as he could, "that makes you believe things. I AM mean."

Indeed Lexi had a big bump on her head which she had gotten on one of her wild runs through the corridors by colliding with, yes, the HO1 himself. The printer she was carrying had had a crash with the floor and was declared a total loss. The bump had turned from green to blue during the jest of conversation

HO1 had been very nice and had collected her from the floor, and, since she had conveniently fainted, led her in person to the infirmary, which had made lots of the female witnesses of the scene jealous because the HO1 was very good looking. And rich. One couldn't but be rich in his position.

"Have you been provoking that crash in order to get the HO1 as replacement of your dreadful boyfriend?" asked Maurice. Lexi's boyfriend was one other little Slovene,

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good looking, quite nice, but always playing pranks on everyone. Also, he was not the marrying kind. Maurice was sure Lexi was secretly looking for someone more serious. Also Benedek was not very rich. The HO1 would just be her type of man. Lexi had luxury tastes, belying all her crawling on the floor to stick network cable ends into their sockets. She knew all fashion makers of the world by heart and had dreamed of Bohatian jewels since she was six years old.

“Well he’s still free,” said Johanna, grinning mildly.

“But he’s not the marrying kind either,” said Leo. “He likes women too much for that; how could he choose one and forget about the rest.”

“Either? You mean just like you Leo?”

“And you know he doesn’t like blonde women,” said Sven.

It was all but true: The HO1, still single, was said to have a lot of affairs - or to have women friends, to say it nicely. He seemed to like women of all kinds, ages, heights and weights but for some reason there was one kind he avoided: The blondes.

He had even been overheard saying so: “Blond women are just like in the Blondes jokes, you know what I mean. Not very smart. And they always want to lead a man to the altar. Always nagging about this. No way! No way!”

Catherine, his secretary, a dark haired semi-beauty was telling this to everyone with some glee, except to the blondes. House people were rarely cruel. Indeed there seemed to be a greater concentration of Angels at the House than elsewhere. And Catherine was sure the corridors would help her spread the good word anyway.

HO1 was very good looking, and also very nice, and blond Lexi, it was obvious, had a shine for him. His picture hung on one of her walls, the only man there. It had initially been a group photo, showing him in the midst of some women delegation. Only that Lexi had cut the women out. Otherwise they were merely photos of her home village, her dog and her two cats. The next morning, the HO1’s poster, typically for Lexi, still hang there. Lexi was so very much ‘transparent’, that one never knew where one truly was at. Not hiding the truth makes people forget about it.

The team separated, just as wise as before, or so at least they believed. After all, some jesting and joking between good colleagues together was soothing to the soul.

It’s lunchtime

Lunchtime came, and Myra and Lexi fled to have a sandwich at the Pink Bar, called so because each year one could see the salmons passing there, travelling from their cold oceans to the heights of Russia. At this season they were many, it was autumn, and there was still nowhere an end to be seen to the mess they were in. “A never ending story,” said Lexi again. Since the split, some six months ago, she had counted 400 offices moves.

Maurice fled home to see his wife. He needed a break after all that talk about magic. Franca was not on a faraway trip at all, and even less with Nico. Johanna never fled but

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stayed in her office fighting. Leo fled by grinning in his beard. Arthur was nowhere to be seen. He didn't need to flee; he had never been captive yet. So maybe he could free them all?

Lut fled with Gwendoline and Hilde to have lunch at the Goats bar together with two users, Anne and Lena. They used one other shortcut smart Maurice had discovered recently, and of which security seemed to know nothing about. It was about 500 meters long, and curved beneath the House's buildings and even beneath the river, and they had to use a pocket lamp. Otherwise it was in good state and it spared them twenty minutes instead of the five they took now. They never met anyone there except their own CHD team. This time they ran across Sven who gave each of them one of his reassuring sexy smiles. He didn't stop, but sped on, to one other mysterious 'rendezvous'. Dear Sven, he was ever so nice. As he found every girl desirable, even if nothing would ever happen. One felt so safe with him. Lexi even lost the slight fear she always felt when taking one of those shortcuts: That of meeting the Minotaur there. Anne and Lena were of course sworn to secrecy in what regarded the shortcut.

It was true that Maurice shouldn't be doing this, but since he had discovered software on Tucows to crack passwords on the Network he had discovered that HO1's password was just his initial one still. And on the My Documents of his PC he had discovered a freshly pasted photo of Lexi. The typical convict photo, made by security, to put on the badges. And he didn't know yet if he was going to tell her. That would have been admitting he had been prying.

Maurice had a sixth sense for such things: his sixth sense was about computers and with the seventh he guessed about the use people would, or should make of it.

Grateful users

Norbert, the MOUSA of MOU III popped in early in the morning to ask Hilde if she agreed to share the Distribution Lists she had made for MOU XII in the Public Folders of Outlook with the users of his own MOU:

"Both MOU's are communicating a lot."

Of course she had agreed and said that she would add the MOU III users to the permissions of MOU's XII contact groups in the Public folders of Outlook. They chatted a bit about themselves, a rare event.

Hilde liked Norbert a lot. He was intelligent and a very nice man. And a rather sexy one too. He smelled of tobacco, though he didn't smoke, of thirty years old whisky, though he only drank French wine, and of a house filled with children, though he had none, of horses, though he did no sport, of cotton farms, though he had no slaves, and of some nice after shave. Hilde sniffed, and couldn't decide what it was. Her sense of smell was interrupted by a phone call, what else, the first this morning, coming from a rather charming Greek. He introduced himself with a compliment:

"Ah it's Hilde. The Queen! Sorry to be so early Golden One. It's only eight o'clock"

It was Dimitri Delpini, a charming and brave CLA who, when meeting her in elevators and so, always treated her like she was his favourite discussion partner. He had interesting opinions, and was not afraid to say how much he felt lost in the Chaos, looking at her with his intense eyes, like they were the only two persons in the world to understand.

"Hi Dimitri." Of course she couldn't help but feeling flattered. As her colleague Eleni had told her: Greek men one should never marry nor work directly with, but they were the most charming colleagues and buddies. And Dimitri was rather good-looking too. Would Eleni say this about not working with or living with about Dimitri too? Anyway she had Egon and Dimitri a wife plus a pair of charming twins

But look, I have to do a 'Show this folder as an email address book' but the address book is in my Public folders, and I don't know where the Public folders are. They have disappeared!"

"Dimitri they have not disappeared, they are on the EMail Server somewhere. You must just find them. If you click on the yellow Folder List icon, in the left panel, you will find the +Public Folders at the very bottom. See the Picture:

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“Thanks Hilde, I feel better now, I was afraid I had deleted the whole thing. Bye Golden.”

Greek men sure knew what to say.

Norbert again started to tell her about his garden, about the problems he had with his tomatoes, but the phone rang:

☎ It was Jakinda, wanting to know how she could see her address list, when writing a new email.

“Hilde, ma Belle, I keep forgetting this, shame on me.”

“Show this folder as an email address book,” said Hilde patiently.

“Thanks so much, coffee soon, my treat of course.”

She hung up. Trillions of coffees they never took the time to drink lately, or rarely.

Norbert continued about the problems he had with his tomatoes.

But the phone rang again and again and Norbert gave up and left, but a bit of his scent too. It stagnated pleasantly in the office. Norbert gone, Maurice appeared for one in his demo sessions in Hilde’s office. He smelled of violets. She was feeling sensual this morning. Maybe it was because the weather was nice for once, that she had got up early, and done some gardening, just before the rain came. She kept on smelling things, especially nice smells. So it was violets now. Maurice indeed presented Hilde with a box of ‘Violettes’, a French candy in the form and colour of a Violet flower, of which she took one. The he sat down beside her and gestured passionately:


“Hilde, I have discovered a super little software. Abby Fine Reader. It converts static paper documents and PDF files into a text format you can easily work on, like Word, saving you time and effort. You just let Abby fine read the pdf document and have it converted into Word.

Maurice privately admired Hilde’s hair. Hilde was so utterly healthy. Like if she never ate anything but the choicest vegetables and herbs from her garden. Today she exhaled health itself. She WAS health. But the phone rang and Maurice went back to his office, sorry to leave. It was Gerhard on the phone.

☎ “Hilde, I have my Outlook mailbox filled with HTML codes, I can’t see a thing clearly anymore, whatever has happened?”

“You mean you have the subject and beneath it some text? Like:

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	WhatIs	Word-of-the-Day: Wi-Fi	lun. 09/08/2004 20:38
	Word of the Day: Wi-Fi August 9, 2004 IN THIS ISSUE:		

“Yes!”

☞ “But those are not HTML codes. This is the AutoPreview. Choose ‘View - Current View - and there ‘Messages’ instead of ‘Messages with AutoPreview’”.

Hilde heard Gerhard fiddling around and she pictured his nice wide smile:

“It works my Dear. Thanks, like always you could help me. What would we do without you!”

Gerhard Katz really had the nicest smile one could imagine. It burst up in his face like the sun coming out of the rain. It was such a bright smile that she could see it over the Remote Connection.

On this, Gwendoline popped in. This place was a Perpetum mobile in what regarded people; one never had a moment's of peace. Ok for Gwendoline really, she was a giving person, but others would come in and begin talking about a problem even if they had to see she was on the phone. Everybody at this place was doing is, it was really rude. Did they think she had two or more brains and mouths to listen and answer to questions at the same time? They say that women could do two things at the time; that their CPU, unlike computers, could do two operations at once. Was it true? At any rate everyone certainly believed it in her respect.

It could come from the fact that everyone here talked between three to more then ten languages, and well. Hilde smiled at Gwendoline. Gwendoline, just like Maurice, was giving her something back too. She was such a good listener herself, always giving good advice. Sometimes Hilde believed that Gwendoline was kind of a saint. Holy.

Holger, from the Helpdesk team of MOU XIII, passing by the office, stuck his head in.

“Hi Hilde and Gwendoline. You girls know everything. Would one of you know how to compare two documents in Word? My user Eldred asks.”

“You must open one document in Word,” said Hilde. ”Then choose ‘Tools - Track Changes - Compare documents’. And then find the document you want to compare with and click on it to open it.”

“I can call her and explain,” said Gwendoline,”I know her from a previous MOU.”

Holger thanked them and left the office, only to slip directly into the adjacent one, which was Maurice's.

Maurice had just been laughing out loud a second before, and since Hilde had just opened a joke which Lut had sent to the whole team, Maurice might be laughing about that one.

Holger and Maurice began talking, but pieces of their conversation could be overheard.

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“I don’t like her,” Sven had said to Maurice. “She’s too intelligent. Always knows everything.”

“I like her,” said Maurice. “I like intelligent women. Moreover she has a lot of humour.” Hilde sensed outrage in his voice.

“And her inseparable colleague, this Gwendoline, she’s too nice to be true, not my type either.”

Maurice took some time to answer to this: “What’s the problem with that?”

“Too goodie-goodie. And this Lut is not my type either, not my kind of woman. Always about to create something.”

“Having a problem Holger?” said Maurice, a slight bewilderment in his voice.

Gwendoline and Hilde looked at each other. Hilde wondered what Holger’s type of woman could be. She wondered sometimes, if he liked them at all, even if he was pretending to be a womanizer all the time. He had made her sense of smell go away, and everything just smelled drab. But when she saw the look in Gwendoline’s face, she almost felt pity for him. Holy Gwendoline could be very, very cruel, and was capable to tell the whole world what this guy was worth, if it pleased her to do so.

Jaana, who’d left their MOU some month ago stuck her head into Hilde’ office in as if to emphasise this:

“I just saw this guy, what’s his name, Holger, leave the office next door. Do you know him?”

“Yes indeed...”

“He’s ever so awful. He is supposed to work in a HelpDesk, but he never knows anything. What’s a HelpDesk for, if they never know anything? And more to come, he thinks the world of himself, at despises those who can and want to help. Your users are so lucky here; it’s common knowledge that you’re the best HelpDesk of the House, maybe of the world, hihi. You know how the saying goes? If you want a problem solved, go to CHD.”

“But there are a lot of very good guys in the other HelpDesks here!”

“That may be true. But not in our MOU. And this other girl in the HelpDesk of our MOU, she’s Murean I think, I don’t even know her name; don’t even mention her, everyone hates her, all of us users. She’s not only not nice, she never knows anything. And when for once she does, she always makes you feel she is so superior. You never did that, you two, and the rest of you,” said Jaana. She threw them a kiss from the back of her hand, withdrew her head from the office and closed the door.

Well this was a lot of bad talk, and they all three hated that.

It got worse, because when Gwendoline phoned Eldred to tell her how to compare two documents she got received by a:

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“Gwendoline! Thank God, it’s you, and not this Murean, whatever her name is; I don’t want to hear it.”

The three, far from being happy to hear this, felt downcast:

“I like to hear I’m good, maybe even that I’m the best, but I don’t to hear I’m the only one good,” said Lut.

“Yes compliments are nicer to hear when they are clean of criticism toward others.”

Then, just if someone had listened and had taken pity, and wanted to grant them just that, an Email appeared on Hilde’s screen, with her, Gwendoline and Lut as recipients:

Subject: “Thanks to you three”

Message text: “From Monday on, I will be working at MOU XVII. But before I leave the building, I want to thank you for all your help, your patience and your good humour, everlasting in spite of all the stress.

All the best, Maria.”

Lucky Maria, she had managed to flee chaos, but this kind of Email of course did them a lot of good each time they got one.

Another one followed, again with the three of them as recipients.

Subject: “All those changes”

“Lucky me, I’m going to MOU X and will thus survive the year. I don’t know if our paths will again cross in what regards work, but I want to thank you in all cases for your efficiency and everlasting readiness to help.

Kaia.”

And never two without three:

“Hilde, you’re such a darling and IT star, however did you know that? I’ll remember that one, I promise. Mairin.”

This had been in answer to:

>>>From Hilde to Mairin 06/04/YY 10:57 >>>

☞ Mairin, you must select the table. Click into the table and choose ‘Table - Select Table’ and then you choose ‘Table - Autofit to Window’

Which was in answer to:

>>>From Mairin to Hilde 06/04/YY 10:30

Hilde, I have copied a table from another document into Word, but now it hangs over the left edge of the document... What shall I do?”

>>>

To read from top to bottom or upside down, was, of course, the way of the House.

Gwendoline found a third one just for her alone too:

“Thank you very much for the super useful introduction course to the PC at MOU XII,

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really super well done. Ignacio.”

And Lut was happy to show them:

Subject: Miss you.

"Message Text: I really miss you all, at my new MOU they don't know half as much as you. Might come back just for you. In the meantime, you might find time for a coffee?
Marco"

Both printed out the Email and went to show it to Hilde. Hilde grinned, knowing what they meant. Compliments are choice food for hungry souls. For all their stress, they had at least their nice users.

Gwendoline told them that while she was giving the course an Email had popped up on her desktop with the subject:

‘Viagra!’

It hung there for a few seconds, blinking maliciously, almost leaving the screen to hang like in the air, like some big insect. Gwendoline felt quite embarrassed, but seemingly her students had not put her at fault. It was unbelievable, the amount of rubbish they would get. Unfortunately the law was not yet elaborate enough, in what regarded those spam mails. Spammers still found lots of gaps to slip through the net. Only emails with paedophile content were prosecuted.

Lut came back later to collect some money for Johanna's birthday. How thoughtful of her. She was always remembering such things.

After that, they went back to their running around. The MOU's workload was hard to believe and today every single of their users seemed to have at least three reports to do at the same time. All had deadlines of yesterday, today and tomorrow early morning. Deadlines made users anxious and sometimes near being aggressive. Deadlines! What a word to put across one had to kill oneself to finish a task.

Sven and Gwendoline exchanged users at one time, because Sven met Gwendoline in the secret shortcut between the Koch and Curie buildings. They talked for a few seconds and discovered to have the same problem: both of them were very nervous about two very nervous users. Better to switch them, so that the user couldn't explode immediately at the sheer sight of them. Both users had recently come from MOU XIII, a rather unlucky MOU in what regarded user support. Because of Holger and his Murean colleague doing (or rather not doing) the IT support.

☞ Sven, while he was typing this down, noticed that he had to press **Shift+Ctrl+Spacebar** between MOU and XIII in order to keep the word MOU and the number following it together on one line.

Gwendoline got the palm of her compliments that day when she explained to user

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Jerome how to hide an item which he didn't want on a picture he had to use in a report. The picture was in a grey colour anyway, so she just chose 'View - Toolbars - Drawing' and then the square and drew it over the unwanted word. She then right-clicked on the square, chose Format and gave it a Colour grey and No Line. She then selected both the picture and the square and chose 'Group'. Ouff. That had been easy. But not in the opinion of the user.

"You're a Magician," said Jerome, impressed.

He said it in French, "Magicienne", and it sounded even better in this language.

The French pronunciation made it linger on his tongue. From there it slid to his lips and took off to Gwendoline who inhaled it like some healing infusion. The word rose through her nose and from there mounted to her brain, leaving her slightly dizzy. Jerome smiled at her and repeated: "Magicienne". It tasted like sweet chocolates, the kind of chocolates so good that they hurt a bit, it sounded like a kiss.

Is it not wonderful to see some childhood dream come true? But it is even more marvellous when you get more than what you wished for. When I was small and reading fairy tales, I dreamt of meeting one of those magicians, and of course I wished one day I could be one. But Gwendoline had never thought even in her wildest dreams that one day she would be called so herself, and not only once. A spell like that would make people like Holger simply vanish.

In a way, it was not so much the Murean's fault. If she is Murean, because I Myself think she is something else.

The problem with many a Helpdesk job is that it was believed to be easy, and that anyone could do it. Not Maurice's job, but the other ones. So 'they' hired people with no IT diploma to do an IT job. Chosen out of the super users mostly. A super user can be a gifted problem solver and have built up an impressive knowledge of little details, but he might lack a basic knowledge of global units, structures in which he could fit the little details; like Networks, PC Hardware, Server Architecture, Database fundamentals. Many problems will remain unsolved if the person can not build up his knowledge upon those basic building blocks. Of course there are many exceptions to that rule. As for the CHD.

I think the whole team is really great in their job. As I have already said, in what regards Myself, I might be one of them or someone else, in another WG, another MOU, a user even. But it is not that I am conceited or vain, but I am regularly told I might be the best of them all. Quite a number of people are coming to search my counsel when the CHD can't answer. Ok, that does not happen very often, and then not so many people know my secret, but when they obtain their answer, they tell me that I am truly the Master. What is it that makes me so? Isn't Gwendoline great with Word, Maurice with servers, Leo and Lut with the Web, Hilde with formulas and Nico with programming?

That is the reason precisely: I know it all. I Myself, the secret number twelve, I know

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all of what the famous eleven know together. And people tell me everything really, everything. I know them all. I am this kind of person. I know about the terrible difficulties the MOU has to go through at the moment. I know what deserving people they all are. Their situation is so inextricable and hard to master that each of the 777 would have needed a year to describe it. And they didn't have the time to do this. Nor did they have the strength left. They were too tired to even sleep. Too tired to communicate all of this in a way to be understood. And it was difficult to convey. Especially to an insider... Even the most simple emails were not understood anymore. People just refused to understand. When a situation becomes intricate to such an extent as it was at MOU XII it becomes a riddle, a mystery. It was a mystery how those brave 777 (including those who should have been there but weren't) just kept on fighting. Many people have great fun to solve a mystery or a riddle. But to live in the middle of a riddle makes this an almost impossible deed. Help had to come. From the outside. From heaven. From underground. From the guts of the earth. From anywhere, if it only came.

Otherwise they would all leave. Leave the House and its Chaos and endless disorganisation. Would they? No. Probably they would not.

Some very few had tried, and most of them came back. It was not only the money. No. They had to discover that outside it was much worse.

Those one-headed, one-minded, one-tongued outside people, who couldn't conceive that there was more than way of doing, of seeing things, of believing, of joking. Few could bear it after having lived in the House. One adapted immediately, it was like a drug, newcomers got caught within seconds in this endless flow of variety, and no rules became the rule. Taking the best of every culture made that one had no more culture at all, and one would feel lost outside. One was welcomed with smiles in a hundred different languages. One couldn't do on without it anymore. And all this Science. Is not knowledge power? They were surrounded by it, bathing in it. They would fight for it.

They would have to hang on, and hope for help. Would it have to come from the Outside? Or would it have to come from the bottom of their hearts? From where then?

It was very bad, and people felt so lost. Everyone was so much doing his best and no one saw it. Only CHD stood out of the mass, and somehow survived on the compliments of their users. Power was surrounding people at the House, but power was not theirs.

Doctor Watson in jail

On some days, like the one to come, Word and Doctor Watson were very active in helping them keep their position as great helpers and miracle workers. Or substantiating their request for more human resources in the CHD. After all it needed an army to protect the MOU against enemies like viruses, Mrko Mrnsk and Dr Watson. Gwendoline didn't know which of them was worse.

Doctor Watson was a guy living in the depths of computers having Windows and MS Office and appeared every time something wasn't working at all, that means, to the point that everything was blocked and one couldn't work anymore at all. He was carrying a little attaché case with a red cross on it and jabbered some gibberish of endless addresses and numbers where help could be found. Some hypocrites, pardon me, pretended they could then trace the problem.

 The first call that day came from Monika. She seemed to be in a quite desperate state:

“Gwendoline, I have this document of 160 pages. Now suddenly it crashes non stop. Doctor Watson comes all the time. Can't he keep away? He doesn't help at all. He's only ever so annoying. Can't you pass by and have a look?”


Gwendoline went and found Monika with hair dishevelled and red streaks all over her face.

“I have to finish this document before five o'clock, and now it crashes every five lines! It's creepy. I'm gonna set fire to this all! Heinz, our CLA, says that with major changes such as we have had at the House lately it can only but end in a rather uncanny way.”

“Uncanny is not a bad word for the kind of development we're experiencing. Do you have the problem with this document only or also with others?”

“I haven't tried.”

Gwendoline did. Indeed, Doctor Watson appeared truthfully in the next five documents she opened, even if she only typed an 'x' in it. Crash!

 “It must be the *normal.dot*.”

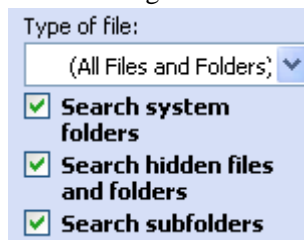
“What's the *normal.dot*!”

“It's the basic template for Word documents. Like it keeps the toolbars and the changes you make to it, and all the basic styles. It gets easily corrupted. Corrupted like the lawyer of a Mafia boss.”

Gwendoline closed Word first and then searched for the *normal.dot* with Windows 'Search' facility in 'My Computer'. She knew of course where it was, but it was just to show Monika how to use a 'Search', one pain in the ass in the XP Configuration. On

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must not forget to check the 'More Advanced Options' in many cases.



Of course Gwendoline did and once she found the file, she just deleted it. They opened the document again, and indeed, no more crash.

☎ Next call was Jakinda, wanting to know how she could see her address list, when writing a new email.

“Hilde, ma Belle, I keep forgetting this, shame on me.”

“Show this folder as an email address book,” said Hilde patiently.

☎ Yes! It's me! Jerome!

It was nice round Jerome, the one who kept repeating she was a wizard:

“Gwendoline, I have this document with a lot of pictures in it, but now there all gone. White. Empty.”

☞ “Jerome, have a look in 'Tools - Options - View - there in the Show section' and there check if 'Picture placeholders' is checked or not.

She heard Jerome click:

“Yes it is checked!”

“Can you deselect it?”

“Yes.”

“Go back to your document.”

She could feel him smiling brightly:

“They're back! What ever has happened?”

“You must have asked Word not to show the pictures.”

“I didn't do nothing.”

Gwendoline, knowing Word, believed him and said so.

“You're great Gwendoline! A wizard indeed! However do you know all this!”

“It's my job, I'm doing it eight hours a day. Well, actually nowadays it is a bit more than that.”

He was a very nice person, Jerome, the kind who made one want to go on, and when later she met him again, in the elevator, together and Maurice Jerome made another nice remark. Maurice had been telling her he had added more chips in his PC and

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Jerome said:

“Why Maurice. You are need even more memory? Not intelligent enough already?”
A master of compliments.

☞ Heinz Schliemann’s secretary Karin called. Heinz Schliemann was truly a descendant of his famous ancestor, and quite like one would imagine this forefather. He spoke 15 languages and many felt sure Heinz was at the House only to find the treasures some people were speculating about. Karin explained:

“Gwendoline, I’ve so much to do that I don’t know my own name. I have this Word document with lots of pictures in it. It is a nightmare. The pictures are swimming around on the pages. When I try to grab one it jumps away like if it was some damned insect. Some grasshopper or worse. When I finally get hand on one the whole document freezes, and even Task Manager is not available anymore. Only Doctor Watson appeared and doesn’t want to move an inch. I have to switch the Computer off. Can’t you come by and have a look?”

Gwendoline sighed. She knew about this. This would be a nightmare indeed.

Word was a document eating monster. It especially liked to swallow long beautiful and interesting documents with lots of pictures and footnotes in it. Not carnivore, but text- and image-seemed very tasty to the time of WordPerfect so much. story. Like one is in love with a imagined spending a life with But Word could be a nightmare at times. A Minotaur in his way too.



When she appeared in her office, Karin’s face filled with hope:

“Gwendoline, let me show you.”

Gwendoline’s eyes went round and shilly-shallied between amusement and fear when she saw the state of the document. It could make someone seasick. Somewhere in the middle of the page, a group of pictures was clinging crowded together like a family seeing a tsunami coming upon them, another one a was hanging over the far right edge of the page, like a skier caught with his boot in a crevasse, and hanging over the abyss. A third picture had shrunk to a tiny point and was blinking at them like if crying for help. A helicopter or an ambulance would soon appear, to rescue them all. No such thing happening, Karin grabbed the picture which was hanging over the far right edge of the document and tried to drag it down to its right place. The document froze immediately. Doctor Watson appeared, Task Manager refused to come up on Ctrl+Alt+Del, and they had to click so many times on ‘End Task’ that Gwendoline indeed decided to switch the computer off. Gwendoline gave an explanation to this:

☞ “Karin all those pictures you have in the document are in fact not pictures but ‘objects’. Just click on the pic, choose ‘cut’. Then you choose ‘Edit - Paste Special’

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and there you choose 'Picture'. Otherwise you must also right-click on the picture and choose 'Format Picture – Layout' and then one of the options to the right.

It will be quite a lot of work, I know.”

As an example, in order to surround the garden gnome by text Gwendoline used the following commands:

- Right-click on picture
- Format picture
- Layout tab
- Select 'tight'

“With those commands you can push him around to your liking.”

Karin thanked her and offered her a Bretzel, a tasty crusty salty German bakery. Gwendoline took it with her, nibbling it. She knew she could have tried to make a macro which would have converted all those objects into pictures. But Hilde was the one for macros and she had no time on her hands. Maybe later. But Karin seemed happy with the solution, and smiled to say her thank. The, suddenly she turned and looked at Gwendoline unhappily:

“I could never do your job,” she said. The she hesitated, almost as if she wanted to make amendments about this added: “I’m not intelligent enough.”

How many times had Gwendoline heard this expression, she couldn’t count.

“But I could never do your job either.”

Karin looked at her like if this was really some kind of revelation:

“You mean: Everyone his job. You mean, everyone has his aptitude or talent or gift of his own? His own spleen?”

“Yes of course.”

Karin brightened up visibly and invited Gwendoline for a drink at the Pink bar, later in the evening. A drink later in the evening at the House. Yes this was the House, typically. And why not, when they work so late?

Gwendoline went and wondered if she shouldn’t rather be grateful to Doctor Watson, and not always be so harsh on him. After all, he was only doing his job too. But maybe he was pretending she had a job just because of him. And she didn’t like the idea. Could less of Watson mean less of CHD?

Pondering on this, Gwendoline, ignoring Karin’s protests, took the document with her, and repaired it painfully. It was a total loss, or almost, but she managed to save it. When Karin discovered the document back in her Email, she of course could not but to leave a bunch of flowers in Gwendoline’s office the next day (they had found no time for the drink). But her joy was even more gratifying.

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But the guilty one, Doctor Watson, remained in his little room, a cubicle somewhere deep in the manifolds of the PC. Like the secret room of the House. Where indeed did he live? If she knew, she would pay him a visit he would remember. She imagined knocking on his door:

“Doctor Watson?”

“Yes.”

“Would you mind having a few words with me?”

He, bowing:

“Sure Madame, how can I be of help?”

“Where were you just five minutes ago? Do you have an alibi?”

Silence.

“Than I must inform you that an international warrant of arrest is placed against you. Would you please follow me to the police station? You are accused of corruption, sabotage, uninvited intrusion, theft of time and money, embezzlement of documents, hijack of content, bribery, non-assistance to persons in danger. Only give you an idea.”

“But!”

“Careful! Everything you say now can be used against you.”

Coming back to her office, she began imagining the trial which would follow, but the phone rang.

I Myself must say that Word has made a lot of progress in his latest versions, but still, scenes like that could still happen, if one didn't understand, well, a word.

Problem user Katia Weinimer made her sometimes wonder if she was not phoning just to annoy them. Already her goatish voice, full of endless sighs and moans, repeating their names after each word she said sounded like punishment

☎ “Mrs Jaaaiiiiaaa. Can you help me? Mrs Jaaaiiiiaaaaaaa. I have a problem (indeed). It's so awful. Intolerable. Mrs Jaaaaaaiiiiiiiaaaaa. Could you come over?”

She stammered this, yelled it, yapped, yelped, squealed like a small dog, whined and winced.

“Yes Katia, it is indeed intolerable, but go on and tell me about it,” said Gwendoline, resigned to suffer greatly.

“I have no more document . The screen is all grey! Mrs Jaaaiiiiaaaa. Could you come over to fix the problem? I don't think it can be solved from here. Mrs Jaaaaaaiiiiiiiaaaaa”

Gwendoline felt like she would explode:

☞ “You have no document whatsoever on the screen!!! Not even a blank one. Just click on the little white paper in your standard toolbar.”




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That did it.

But Doctor Watson was still awaiting his trial. Gwendoline was rubbing her hands at the discomfort he must be feeling.

a Tab in a table

 Much more reasonable user Debashish, a nice round Indian, generous and an excellent cook (he'd invited her to dinner once) wanted to know how to do Tab in a table:

"Gwendoline I mean if you want to tab you just press the Tab Key. Not in a table. Because there the Tab key will put the cursor in the next cell of the table, or add a row if you are at its bottom."


"I know Debashish. Press **Ctrl+Tab** to tab in a table."

tab	tab	tab	tab	tab	tab
-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----

"Oh thanks so much, it works! You're a star!"

Doctor Watson, still in his cell, must have contacted his lawyer by now.

Copy a good text format elsewhere

 Paivi called.

"Hi Paivi, how was your holiday?"


"Two day back and its long gone already. Gwendoline this is so awful, I had made all those nice numbered hanging paragraphs, and then I had sent the document to another MOU in order to get their opinion. I got it back in such a dreadful state, you cannot imagine. I will spent hours to put each paragraph right again."

1. Gwendoline logged with the remote *Dameware* software to her computer. Maurice had just found this software for them, it was marvellous, and they preferred it to 'Remote Assistance' or 'Invite a friend to help you'. She looked at the document and saw that the very first paragraph was a very nice paragraph, dutifully numbered and hanging.
2. The second was ok too. Paivi had typed a number first, then pressed **Tab** to make the first line hang, then she had pressed **Ctrl+T** to align the rest of the text.



But the paragraphs following were a mess, with the numbers going over the left margin, the text never aligned on his left side, always beginning at a different position. Well she didn't want to repeat that here, it made her feel nauseous.

"Paivi, it's awful indeed, but it is not too much of a problem. Just use the *Format Painter* button, and then copy the format of the first paragraph over to the others.

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You put the cursor in a good paragraph. Then you click on the format painter  icon , and then you go over to the bad paragraph and click in there to copy over the format.”

“Gwendoline, this is marvellous, it works. You do miracles. One after the other.”

“Well here I must admit that Word does - And if you click on it *twice*   in rapid succession, it will be kept in memory and then you can go and click on all the dozens of bad paragraphs and they will become good. But remember to be in the good paragraph the first time you click on the painter icon.”

“And to switch it off?”

“Press the **Esc** key or click again on the Painter icon.”

“It’s true what people are saying, you’re really a magician. And your holidays?”


“Long gone too and long to come.”

“I would go crazy if I had to do your job. I can’t understand how you can stand all it, all this work, and our stupid questions, but you always stay so nice and patient. How do you do it holy people?”

☞ Not holy, but crazy, thought Gwendoline.

But she would always feel happy hearing this about the magic. At the same time she wondered what made them see things like that way. Magic? Had she not spent many evenings reading about Word, Excel and many other software, trying out things and trying again, clicking wildly! But at one time, it was true, came a point where one began just to FEEL what an icon would do and one would click wisely. But it was sort of contagious. People on the same floor as a Helpdesk would always be better with computers than the others. It was an attitude, it was communicable, infectious like a healthy flue. Like if the users copied the format of the Helpdesk over to themselves. And they became good.

Corrupted documents

 Flavia called then, it was about Word again.

“Gwendoline this is so awful, my document keeps crashing, one could believe it was epileptic.”

“Does it have a lot of footnotes⁶ in it?”

“A few indeed.”

“Does it always crash on the same spot?”

“As a matter of fact yes. You see, if I don’t get that document done on time Etienne will not be able to use it at the meeting and then ...” Gwendoline interrupted her before she could get into a long horror story.

⁶ Choose ‘Insert - Footnote’ in the menu bar.

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“This might be more tricky. I shall come along right now.”

Gwendoline hang up. Flavia always did this. She just had to explain in painful details what would happen if she didn't get help and imagined endless horror scenarios. She would begin to imagine what would happen to her boss if the document was not done, then paint the consequences this would have on the work of her whole WG in vivid pictures, extend this over to the whole MOU, and end up with the end of the House and then the whole world. In a way, Gwendoline felt slightly hurt by this, because this meant Flavia didn't feel that the CHD would help her under any circumstances, but only in extremely aggravating cases like the end of the world. Like if Gwendoline or CHD were sultans which accorded their audience and the fulfilment of the request only when their mood allowed it. On the other side, it was not because it would be the end of the world that they COULD help her. Emergency and urgency are not the key for a solution. It was all of a bit of wishful thinking again, like if some users were sure every single one of their wishes could be fulfilled. If only CHD wanted to.

But she liked Flavia a lot and could almost certainly do something for her in this case. She could have used the remote control but a little wish to stretch her legs out and have a little chat with Flavia. Flavia offered her a coffee and they had their little chat.

“In a case like this of such great and many changes,” said Flavia, pushing her fine brown hair out of her face, “the result can only be one: great and many changes. But the workload is becoming too heavy. In fact it's exponential. It's not added, it's MULTIPLIED. If we have 4 major modifications, like we have here now: A forever moving of staff, building, programmes and structure, then the workload will not be four times heavier but 4 times 3 times 2. Twenty-four times more in fact. Not feasible, really, or is it?” Gwendoline admired her sense of maths there; this was a story for Hilde.

They had their coffee with 'Speculos' which are delicious Belgian cookies, very light, and then Gwendoline bent over the document. She tried to select 'View – Normal' because this is the best way to work in document that contains footnotes and inserted one, but the document kept crashing. That meant it was indeed corrupted. On just one spot. Around just one footnote. It had to be cut out. Just like some tumour. Berks. Gwendoline cut out the paragraph which contained it and pasted it into a new document. Then she saved the first document. She selected the guilty paragraph again and went back to the document but was careful to choose: '*Edit - Paste Special - Paste unformatted.*' With that, there were chances that the evil trait had been removed. And it did work.

Doctor Watson, however, would get none of those Speculos.

Gwendoline, during her psycho-coffee break with Leo, wondered if Doctor Watson and Mrko Mrnsk were one and the same person. Everything was possible.

“Maybe Mrko Mrnsk is paid by Doctor Watson.”

“Have you ever seen this Mrko Mrnsk?”

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“No. You?”

“No.”

“He makes people believe he helps solving the bugs in all those programmes and other IT-systems. And that they have to pay him for it, and well. But in fact he builds in the bugs and problems himself.”

“What a terrible idea, I can’t think he’s that bad.”

“Me neither.”

But they both did.

From afar, they were observing Hilde and Maurice having their coffee break too.

“I bet they are talking computers,” said Gwendoline.

“What else,” said Leo, who had acquired a new girlfriend recently. He always had a girl lying around, but only Gwendoline knew this. He also had a son of a first wife, of whom he took good care. Nino. They were just talking about all that, and about Gwendoline’s two kids. “At least we manage to talk about other things than computers from time to time.”

“Yes. Computers and maybe women are Maurice’s only real passion. He makes money out of his hobby. I or you or Hilde, we all have other hobbies besides that.”

“I had a dream last night,” said Maurice to Hilde who was listening sipping a huge fresh orange juice.

“Yes, what kind of a dream?”

“This night I dreamt how to configure a new cluster system for our MOU. It had a high availability and great disaster tolerance. Our users were so happy.”

“Strange, I never have such dreams. I only have dreams like Freud had, you know, like wishes mixed up with the elements of the day before and then dreams which are ‘messages’, you know, but never...” Something was not right in what she was saying there. She realised it was not true at all. Indeed she had had exactly such a dream herself the night before too. “No! Now that you say it I do. Work is really getting at us even at night. I dreamt about a formula. In fact it was a nice dream. Even if I did not find the solution. But it was a VERY nice dream.”

Maurice looked at her, amused. She too was such a practical person. Of course she would have such kind dreams:

“And then, do you sometimes find a solution in a dream?”

“Yes, sometimes I wake up, speaking it out aloud. But first tell me about your dream.”

On this Maurice flew away on a long carpet of clusters. His eyes were shining on the thought 作條件是提 that clustering is the use of multiple computers, typically PCs or UNIX workstations, multiple storage devices, and redundant interconnections, to form what appears to users as a single highly available system. Cluster computing can be used for load balancing as well as for high availability. Advocates of clustering

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*suggest that the approach can help an enterprise achieve 99.999 availability in some cases. One of the main ideas of cluster computing is that, to the outside world, the cluster appears to be a single system.*⁷ 作條件是提

In his light blue eyes, Hilde saw faraway countries, harbouring treasures of inestimable worth. Aladdin and the wonder lamp, the cavern of Ali Baba, Sinbad and the Legend of the Seven Seas and Maurice himself was Scheherazade. After a tour or two around the world he finally landed, jumped from his magical carpet, and looked at Hilde:

“And what was your dream?”

“I have once noticed that having twice as much users will not double the calls, but will more than double the calls. Let’s say it the other way around, that’s the nice part of it. I made statistics, if you have 600 users then you will get let’s say 120 calls, but if you have 300 you might expect you would get 60. But in fact you get only 40. But the what I dreamt about that was that we had only 150 users. But I couldn’t figure out how many calls we got. Because in my dream the phone stayed silent. And thus I had time to develop my formulas but then I woke up.”

Maurice smiled at the idea too:

“No call is the best call. But no way to predict this really. Indeed it might not be proportional. You still would need a third number to calculate this. You would need at least three data points. It’s interesting, what you are trying to do. You could look at concepts like intrapolation, or extrapolation. Or maybe have a look at the Imaginary() formula in Excel.

They talked another five minutes about that, and about how marvellous it would be to have only 150 users. And then not. Because they really liked their users and would have missed every single one of them. And they did, with all those comings and goings.

Then Maurice looked at his watch and jumped up:

“My God I am late for the meeting.”

Leo and Gwendoline saw him leaving, and again noticed his slight limp. He had never tried to hide it, but lately it had become more visible, maybe because he, just like everyone, was very tired.

“Do you know where his limp comes from? He has two normal shoes and none of his legs seems shorter - or longer.”

“Some atrophy,” he told me. “He should do some sport, and it could get better.”

“He’s too much in love with his job,” said Leo to Gwendoline. “Maurice must be reading his Emails even under the shower.”


This was true enough, Gwendoline knew and she nodded at Leo. Hilde had told her so.


⁷ <http://whatis.techtarget.com/>

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Maurice had told Hilde. When Franca was not home Maurice was reading his Emails alone under the shower, which she strictly forbid when she was there, for fear of seeing him get electrocuted. In fact Franca was not as stupid as she was pretty. All the money she had was really her money, self made money. She was stone rich. She could even afford Bohatian jewels, priceless stones they were! But the unfortunate silence about how she had come into all that money made one wonder about its origins.

Check Spelling as you type

 Soledad didn't like to see most off the words in her text underlined with red lines, like tiny waves.

 That's the automatic spell-check. Choose 'Tools - Options - Spelling and Grammar and deselect the Option 'Check Spelling as you type'.


"Might be useful though, if of course you have selected the right language right when you started typing. You didn't, since you say most words in the document are underlined."

"Right. So what do you do if you forgot to do that?"

"Select the whole document by pressing **Ctrl+A** or you can of course also choose 'Edit - Select All' in the menu bar. Then you choose 'Tools - Language and set the Language."

"Thanks, I really think I have forgotten just about everything."

Gwendoline asked her how she was. Indeed she knew that Soledad had just come back from an eight months leave. She had been exhausted the weeks before, and then had had to change boss, while she really liked the boss which she had to leave. But it was an order from above, there was nothing to be done. Her new boss was nice too, but she had had much too much to do. One day she found herself turning around the office, in a state which later resembled to her to near madness, like a monk turning around in an ambulatory, completely disoriented. Her boss found her like this, unable to speak, and drove her home. Her husband later found her, still in the same state of loss, completely in tears. When he asked her what was the matter she just answered: 'I don't know, I don't know' like a mindless Barbie doll. The doctor (not Dr Watson) prescribed a prolonged rest. She felt OK now, and had frankly no idea of what had happened to her. Just too much work. With bad consequences.

 It's lunchtime

Then mercifully it was lunchtime again and Hilde fled to see her friends Penelope, Emma I&II, Jenny and Julia, and of Josepha still no news. It was Jenny's birthday and they went to eat somewhere outside the House, at a Bohatian Tavern which served delicious pasta. Jenny got a book and flowers and offered the Champaign of course. In life we find friends, and we get colleagues. Friends we choose and colleagues we get. But some colleagues become such great friends, even if without the job we might never

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have met them, or even chosen them perhaps. But they can become friends more forgiving and helpful and considerate than the ones which are 'just' friends (lets not talk about some husbands or wives). There should be a word for those colleagues-friends, some new word for those who spend more time with us and we with them than with our own families.

Gwendoline fled just the same, but to the House canteen, with her two cousins.

Maurice went to pick up his wife at the airport, she was coming back from Sidney, Leo went for lunch with Lut, which he almost never did, Lexi went to have a sandwich with Sven, Johanna was working in her office and Arthur was nowhere to be seen.

Gwendoline had to think of Flavia's horror scenarios again and about how the end of the world would come by, if the CHD wasn't solving her problem and it made her laugh. Not for long though. Flavia could be so damn right, as they soon would learn.

☞ In the afternoon Lexi first helped a cute little administrator, Dimitri, to install the Great Britannica on his computer, which he couldn't do all by himself, not having the Administrator's rights in the IT world, such as he did have in real life. He offered her Kourabia cookies, brought fresh from home. His mother had made them. She went away, Greek powder sugar lingering all over her lips.

She would make sure Doctor Watson would get none of it. Suddenly, she began to pity him. Maybe he was only doing his job, and got no aid from no one, just like them.

☞ The next call came from Sumiko.

"Gwendoline I have something strange in Word. When I press the Down-Arrow I do not go a line down but I obtain a ¾ sign!"

☞ Gwendoline logged on with the Remote Control and indeed saw that this was true. She closed Word and again deleted the Normal.dot file, and that solved the problem.

"How did you know that," asked Sumiko full of admiration.



"Someone must have told me at one time, or I found it on the Net," said Gwendoline. Indeed she had no idea how she knew this.

"What this normal.dot then?"

"It is the global file template for Word. Anything you modify there will be the default for all your documents then. Like the font, the paper size. Also, if you don't specify anything else, it will contain your key-stroke macros, or changes you have made to the toolbar. The problem with this normal.dot is that it gets easily corrupted. Then you must delete it and Word will build it up again when you restart it the next time. The normal.dot is important because it is one of those many innocent looking files who do it all, who carry out all the preferences, all the wishes."

"Is that the reason why it gets easily corrupted?"

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 Fabienne, actually in the Physics WG, couldn't find a file when she wanted to open it in Word. 

"I got file by Email, and I saved it in my WGfiles folder. It is there, in e:\WGfiles\staff\fabienne. I see it when I open the Windows Explorer: 'Element_types.txt'. See it?"

"Yes, look, you can't see it in Word because Word by default only show files with the *.doc extension. If you want to see other file types you must choose the

Files of type: 

in the 'Open' Dialog box."

"Oh. I never paid attention, good to know."

Gwendoline and Hilde talked only twice that day, and only over the phone, even if they were in offices adjacent to each other. Gwendoline asked Hilde about the macro which could convert a great series of objects into pictures and Hilde said she would think about it. However, she immediately had a programming line such as

```
For each s in ActiveDocument.Shapes
'convert object into picture
Next s
```

popping into her mind, but she realised she would find no time for this. Only in her sleep maybe, just as she had told Maurice. There was never time anymore for development which was a pity because, in time, it would have decreased the impressive number of calls to a reasonable level. At some point of the day Gwendoline had counted 59 calls, Hilde 54, Leo and Lut 55 between them, Lexi counted the days remaining until her holiday, Myra counted princes and came to only 1, Sven couldn't count, and Maurice didn't want to count. He left that to computers.

On their second chat Gwendoline told Hilde about Flavia's remark on workload multiplying, not adding, under certain circumstances. Hilde reflected upon this:

"So she says: Twenty-four times more work, not feasible, really, or is it? But then she's so right and then not, because the worst of it is, it IS feasible. With bad consequences, but it is feasible. But there is no time left for global actions, PROACTIVE actions, which could help mend the whole situation. It's such a vicious circle, an endless story, as Lexi likes to say lately. As Leo said: "There may be an end, but at what level? Maybe at the famous N! level only."

"How does hierarchy not want to see this? But of course maybe hierarchy is a ghost concept which does not truly exist; only in our imagination."

"Flavia is an intelligent woman," said Gwendoline, "she seems a bit like she was diving at times, but maybe being underwater helps one find things. And maybe she's

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right about imagining the end of the world at times. She's very mathematical. And don't forget she speaks Japanese; wherever she learnt that."

Sven was furious because a user, female, not even of his own MOU, but of one he was just passing by, first asked him to help her with a 'search and replace' function, than bade him to carry her screen over to another office for her, even if it was a flat screen, and thus not very heavy, and finally asked him where the day care nursery was. He helped her and then, in an ill mood for having been abused, he had asked her:

"How come YOU don't have all these gifts" and she had answered, slightly pursing her lips:

"I guess I'm just lucky."

The midnight fair

To help the Paranormal WG (freshly renamed and ex-Telepathy) finish yet another report, Hilde had expected to spend another night at the office. The new application programmes Kaleidoscope and Elements 112 were just too difficult to be handled by the users all alone just right away. 'Codename' was, what else, a very important report. There is no unimportant report. Important and report are pleonasm. The Paranormal WG had been working on it for months and this was the night to finalise it. They had gotten their deadline for it as usual only yesterday. The deadline, like all others, had been set by some cruel and unthinking Anonymous which made it impossible to inform anyone about the danger of setting it so close. But the report was vital to the House. Indeed the House felt really under pressure because of it and needed to get this through quickly. 'Codename' was, maybe really, a key report. And it was also a very secret report, as one could see from its name. Hilde had really been quite afraid of unexpected and unforeseen problems in the application programmes and the report itself that would have delayed until the early hours in the morning.

But as if by magic, they finished the report not too late, and sent it off at the stroke of midnight. At the same moment, as if to emphasise this, somewhere, not too far away, they heard the clatter of an up-starting firework. The little group dashed ran across the corridor and the hall in front of the elevators and then over to the opposite side of the building, where they saw it unfolding at the other side of the river. When it lit, it illuminated a fair that suddenly seemed to have materialised at the ground. None of them of course had known about its being there nor coming. For being informed of such sorts of happenings, they had all far too much to do. But a fair it was, proving its existence by a fairly giant wheel.

The firework and the fair beneath appeared to really have popped out of nowhere as if by magic and fatigue increased this feeling. At the same time they were highly amused and clapped their hands like children at each new burst of sparks and flames. The familiar but at the same time forever renewing shapes burst up in the sky; fumes, smokes, gerbs, fountains, rockets, flowers, weeping willows, waterfalls, wheels, cakes of all sizes, comets and serpents, mines exploding and even a face. An imagery combined with bangs and whistles, crackles and hummers. Every single Pang! had another sound and seemed beautifully matched to each kind of sparkle.

The group let out little shrieks of delight, and soon hunger and thirst for something else than crackers and water began to make itself feel. None of them had eaten since at least lunch.

♪ A Midnight lunch

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“I’m hungry,” said Larry Wolf, the CLA, as if discovering this just now.

“So am I,” said Paola.

“Yes”, said Hilde and Gerhard in one voice.

“Let’s visit the fair and find something there,” suggested Umberto.

“Wie lustig – how funny,” grinned Gerhard. He had such a sweet sunny grin, Hilde marvelled each time she saw it. She was not the only one. Lut had already admitted to her too, that she would at least like to paint him, but had to leave that to Leo who would not be interested.

“It will be my treat,” offered Larry.

Without any further discussion they took their coats and started off for their little journey.

They had to first go east, cross the Einstein and Newton building, then take the bridge to the Watson & Crick building, go down with the elevators which’s ground doors opened into the Einstein, cross the Hall of Elements and the Flower Bar, which directly adjoined the main reception hall with its row of flags and red carpet. This main room strangely enough had no official but just a nickname: ‘Science Main’. From Science Main they took the Galileo Galilei bridge which joined the north and south parts of the House where they finally had almost reached their destination, because Umberto knew a shortcut: Just take the first left after the footbridge, first door right down there, cross a narrow corridor and then small and empty office, descend a flight of stairs and they found themselves in the open air. Otherwise they would have had to cross two more buildings and two more bridges in order to reach the south main entrance and then do another five hundred meters back to join the fair. Don’t try to understand the ways of the House, they make no sense. Only shortcuts do.

House-Shortcuts were a jealously guarded secret, because, if too well known, they risked being closed, as certainly this one would have been, so don’t tell anyone about it. Hilde was of the opinion that probably again even security knew nothing about it. You could open the door just like that from the inside as well as from the outside and it wasn’t guarded.

The fair was now but a few steps away, just across the street in fact, and in a second they found themselves at its entrance.

Larry, the little troupe at his trail, was taking large steps, proudly passing coloured balloons, teddy bears, giant dolls, shotguns, Russian mountains, the maze, the horror gallery, the mirror cabinet, carrousel, the Merry-Go-Round, race and bump cars, pop corn, cotton candy, candy apples. But Larry showed no interest. The kids were a bit disappointed. Umberto gave a longing look in the direction of little round cabins which swirled around with the speed of some two hundred kilometres or miles a second, Hilde grinned at the cotton candy, Christa and Paola at the love apple and Gerhard smiled at a teddy bear who smiled back. One just couldn’t resist Gerhard’s smile.

It seemed like a very nice kermes, very much at the image of the House. Creatures out

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of all sorts of fairy tales, ancient ones like Red Riding Hood, Snowy White and her seven little colleagues and modern ones like Donald Duck or Mickey Mouse wandered around.

But Larry only wanted a beer and some sustainable food. He was not much of a romantic, especially after a report he had worked on for months even if it was now fortunately finished.

Artificial Intelligence, Biometrics

Finally they found an open air tavern and sat down at the last free table.

Beer and sausages were ordered and arrived at the twinkle of the eye. A miracle again. It must have been the fairy who did it. The public seemed to be mostly Bohatian, they recognised none of their colleagues among it.

After having swallowed - or rather devoured – an impressive amount of French fries, sausages and Mischel-beer, they felt a bit less famished and made a review of the report, and its subject.

It was typical, but no one but maybe Larry had really read the report. It were a very chosen few only who would read a report. The others just didn't have the time. They had to type it, print it, photocopy it, distribute it, keep the programmes working that helped with its layout, correct the bugs in the software that pretended to help make it, even write it, but not read it. Reading it was not their business. The report could have contained: "And if you have read up to that point, let's say page 70, then come to see me I'll offer you a luxury Safari for two persons," and no one would have consciously grasped the offer, and no one would have come. But of course some of it had entered some of their minds and this was the moment of reward, the moment to know what it was all about.

"Do you really believe it's that bad, Larry, are those new computer system really that much dangerous?"

Larry looked sombre:

"No. It's only worse. 'They' have means we don't even know about. ('They' again) Their computers are not computers anymore in the sense we believe to know. The concept of AI, *artificial intelligence* is not a concept anymore. It has become very real. They can simulate the process of the human mind, only better. Reasoning, learning, self-correction, all those qualities we pride ourselves on are now brought to sheer perfection. Those systems contain an initial formula that can develop itself, and does not need additional development from human side anymore. It's running all by itself now, and might soon escape us, even 'them'. DNA or our neurological circuits replace the conventional chip. The human brain, with his natural talent for statistics and intuition is now integrated and used at will by the initial creators of those systems. *Biometrics*, which could initially analyse fingerprints, iris, voice and other human parameters for authentication purposes can now recognise and find someone at great distances. It's not a TV satellite or something innocent and simple like that. It goes to

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the extend of being able to read our thoughts. Those computers capture the waves our brain sends out and are able to convert our thoughts into the written word, on screen or printer. Telepathy? Of course. Not believing in it is to not being scientific. Our brain captures and visualises images, but it sends them too. Like radio waves or those from TV. They just convert it into a film, a soundtrack they can visualise and listen to later, at home, while having a sandwich. Yes, THEY have studied the Paranormal. They at least have taken the phenomena seriously. The House prides itself to be scientific, and thus believes to be smart by dismissing the topic as superstition, childish belief. But it's the House which is immature with its attitude. The House might get into trouble, if it refuses the most precious and innermost gifts of the human mind and race. The soul. We might loose ourselves. They know about our report, they have probably read it maybe before I even finished it. Maybe they made me write it, haha."

His speech gave everyone the shivers. Larry had really gotten too deep into this! He must have lost his toolbar somewhere on the way of finalising this report. Never REALLY read a report, that much was obvious. They all liked Larry, but what nonsense! "Swell," said Gerhard. Telepathy will replace the phone, it will be much less expensive, and in consequence communication will go deeper. Teleportation will replace cars and planes and telekinesis will build houses. We will be making astral voyages."

"But it would indeed be nice to be able to fly to work!" said Paola.

Or to marry a computer, thought Hilde, at least a computer has a soul, whereas Egon - well had an Ego.

"Sure. And you will have the man you are chatting with on the Net leave his chat room, come out of your screen and jump at you." said Larry. "Yes and more: He might be nice and friendly, but at the end you will be sleeping with Big Brother." said Larry.

"We will need a new firewall system then, to keep big brother and other men of his sort out," said Hilde, whom this latest idea made visibly very much ill at ease. It was the same for Paola:

"Do you really believe it is that bad? That we are so much lied and spied at? That they hide everything from us, but know everything about us and we not much about them? That they spy upon us all the same time?"

"It's worse. As I said: Those computers are not computers anymore. They are made using DNA chains, and imitate neurological circuits. They are human beings with the brain of computers, or the opposite. They have a soul. They have ... well ... sort of feelings."

Maybe more noble ones than ours. Never forget that a computer can feel, thought Hilde happily.

"It could have some advantages. A nice sensitive feeling computer."

"This is good no? It cannot be said about all human beings."

"Depends on the feelings, Gerhard. Feelings of greed, yes."

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“What do you mean Larry,” asked Hilde, shocked. Her nice computers! Feelings of greed! What more?! Her computers, her darlings, feelings of greed? But feelings maybe, feelings for sure, but good feelings no?”

“Feelings, but directed by those who conceived them. Hilde. This only means power. They see us as objects to be bought and sold at will. We cannot make a move anymore without their knowing, and soon they will want to control those same moves. Not only is every phone call, fax or Email message captured and analysed, but every room, even a private one, is being observed. We’re being observed NOW, right now.”

The little group gave out a shudder. Surely, Larry was overworked, getting paranoid himself. Poor Larry.

“How would they do that?” asked Hilde soothingly.

“Why does no one ever read reports? Read the report and what it says. Everything is recorded. Every phone conversation is listened too. We’re listened to right now. Spied at. Every thought is being intercepted; they just capture the Morse our brain sends out. Some satellite is looking at us, filming, recording.”

“But they do not even know who and where we are! No one is supposed to know where Bohatia is!”

Larry looked even more sombre. His dark moustache and fine black hair appeared light against his thoughts.

“But surely we cannot be interesting enough. Not me at least,” said Gerhard. He felt stupid now. He really should have read this report. But he had just collected the material, never finding the time to really grasp its content.

“But why would they do all this? Where is the advantage?” asked Christa who otherwise rarely spoke. She had typed the major part of the report, but hadn’t taken in a single word, no time for that. Not at the House.

“Yes, what are they looking for?” said Paola, bewildered.

“Read the newspapers. They want to spy on us, know our consumer habits better than ourselves, they want us to buy from them, they want our money, they want to take power over us. They want to control the world.”

“But surely they cannot listen to everything; it would take billions of years.”

“No indeed. They are looking for keywords. When the computer finds a keyword, he will point it out to them. Imagine a nice talk between two terrorists planning something. What would they say?”

“Pois! I will write some Emails from my dummy hotmail box to other dummy mail boxes, and use some keywords I imagine to sound bad, and then wait and see what happens.” said Hilde. She loved that word: “Pois” which could mean just about everything. Maybe ‘Pois’ was one of those keywords.

Incognito Mailboxes

“Why do you have a dummy mail box Hilde?”

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“Because when I surf and am asked to give my work or private Email address, I never do so, because I of course fear to get spammed and have my mailbox filled with Viagra, loans, cars and naked people. I only give out the Email account I have created on Hotmail. Just type ‘hotmail’ in the Search box of your browser or type <http://www.hotmail.com> in the address bar. There you can register for an Email account. The only problem is finding a free name. If you want to use your first name even adding a 1,2,3, ...99, 112345 to it, it will be taken already.

“Ach so. You went on Hotmail and just invented a name to get a free mailbox, which only stands for being filled with trash.”

“Yes, and then, if I have to give a ‘valid’ Email address while I surf, I give this ‘dummy’ address. In that way I must not miss all of the fun stuff they are offering on the web, like greeting cards, screensavers, clipart, icons, and some games. But anyway never install anything from the Internet without being sure it’s an ‘honest’ site.”

“Yes Hilde!” answered the group in Chorus.

“But Hilde, don’t do this at all,” said Larry, “you know better than me that they can easily find out who you are even with a dummy mailbox.”

Hilde nodded: “It’s true they could find out from which PC I send something, with *tracking systems*, ‘*tracert*’ and so forth. But made better. If I understand well, those tracking systems are innocent compared to what the Codename report says about what one can do nowadays. If we have to believe Larry, they’re recording what I say right now and are mind-reading my email.”

“But doesn’t your Internet provider have a good firewall for that?”

“I think mine does. I have Othello, a local Bohatian provider. He’s for free and I never get spam nor annoying pop-ups and publicity. Maurice advised him to me. Says he’s brilliant. He swears he’s a mastermind, unequalled. Says there is no one better than him. I mean: Maurice says: No one is better than me, but Othello. Maurice tried to meet him once, but he wouldn’t. A mystery man.

“Hope he won’t commit suicide.”

“But it was Hamlet who committed suicide.”

“Are you sure?”

This made them go back to their previous topic:

“And Lionel’s disappearance too can leave one thoughtful.”

Lionel had been working for the Codename report too.

“Well he didn’t exactly disappear. He left the House just a month ago. But it was ‘official’. He resigned,” said Paola.

To this, Larry looked dismal, and said nothing.

“On what grounds?”

“Another job, more money, more real science, and of course, less work.,” supplied Umberto. Larry remained silent, but with something on his lips.

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“He may have read the report, used the info in it, and just wished himself away. If you know what I mean.”

Larry shook his head, but it looked like in Nepal, where shaking one’s head means ‘Yes’.

“Any news of him?”

No one answered and Larry continued to look sombre. He did not say a word for a while, but his troop waited for him to again speak his mind and he finally did:

“It’s full of spies everywhere. Look at Mrko Mrnsk, who’s working ITPOL in MOUIT. His wife is Russian. She’s supposed to study for a piano career. Ok she plays quite well, but I think all this is just a cover. She goes back there all the time. To Moscow. Mrko Mrnsk has all the means in the world to access all the confidential information of the House and give her little info packages on her way, in sandwich boxes or so. Info about the House. One day they will know what they want to know, and discover our real name and identity.”

Hilde was doubtful. She was positive the cold war was over, hadn’t known that Mrko Mrnsk had a wife and even less that she was Russian. And she had thought Mrko Mrnsk didn’t like women. Though men not either. He just seemed to like no one. Asexual really, he seemed to have just one main aim: Ignore everyone and especially users. He was certainly not one of ‘them’, observing others all the time. And now Larry imagining him devising much more sombre schemes still than even ‘them’. ‘Ignore’ was Mrko Mrnsk’s sole motto. Spying would mean showing interest in someone else. She didn’t believe all of this. But maybe Gwendoline or Myra would. Gwendoline believed in everything. Myra believed in other things.

After that, Larry, Christa and Paola, really sleepy, went home. Hilde, Umberto and Gerhard stayed at the fair. But not for long, they were just too tired. But they had some love apples and took the merry-go-around for adults, where they sat in little round boxes which span around at light speed. The apples however, stayed in their stomachs. And the stars blinked at them gently, and if they were satellites, they were well disguised and looked like friendly guys.

One should never read a report, even if one has written it oneself.

Birthday databases

The next morning, at 'WG Coffee', as usual prepared by motherly Johanna, Hilde told her story of the Midnight fair and the firework. Johanna had forgotten to buy the sugar. No one else ever thought of it. But yes, Myra had thought of buying some milk.

Most of them, just like Hilde herself before, hadn't even known that there was a fair. They thanked Hilde for the info, and said they would take their own kids to visit it next Sunday. Maurice kidded Hilde because he thought Larry had a soft spot for her. This went on a while and was typical for Maurice. He was always listing all the guys he thought had a soft spot for her. Why did he always have to do this?

Unless he meant to say she had a soft spot for Larry, but this he would never say. After all, the only soft spot a girl could have was for himself. Hilde left the room, laughing at Maurice, inwardly wondering. And about Larry. Ok he was nice, but a bit too much, well, sombre. One by one the others followed her and went to take up their work.

The first call came from Flavia.

☎ "Gwendoline I absolutely need delegate access to my new CLA's mailbox. If I don't..." Flavia had changed CLA three times already in a few months.

"Flavia ..."

"have it I will not be able to read his Emails."

"That is obvious, but..."

"nor send them. But he will be away on mission and I really must look at his Email because he's expecting an important Email from his correspondent in Washington and when this Email comes in I have to phone him because he will be in Africa with no Email there and..."

"Yes but Flavia, I gave you..."

"And I will have to phone him and ask him what to answer the correspondent, because the decision he will have to take at the meeting depends on his answer, and it might have very bad consequences because the whole thing is already late, they badly need funds for reconstruction and if I don't have the delegate access then it might really end in a disaster and the whole country..."

Why in the hell did Flavia always think that CHD wouldn't give her what she needed and moreover, why must she always imagine the end of the world:

"FLAVIA!"

"Hilde, please understand, I need this delegate access, if possible don't wait too long before giving it to me, because..."

"FLAAA VIA. You HAVE this access already!"

"But no I don't."

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“Yes you do. You must only implement it. I send you an Email when you took on your new job: How to install my delegate mailbox.”

“Does that mean I have it? I thought it was automatic once you gave it to me. Hilde, you really must tell me, otherwise...”

“It is not automatic Flavia, You must install it. It's like you were having the key to a flat, but didn't turn it to open the door. I already send you the instructions of how to do it.”

"Really?"

"Yes, in an email, 3 times already. Each time you change CLA.”

“Oh. Can you send me the message again, because you know, when I saw the Email I deleted it and now if I don't have access to his mailbox it might end in a drama for that country. Can you please explain again right now?"

Install a delegate Access

☞ “Flavia, have mercy. To install a delegate access given to you proceed as such:

- Be sure to have the Folder list visible. If you haven't choose 'View - Folder' list or 'View - Navigation Pane', or I don't know what version my Reader has.
- Right-Click on "Flavia Gemeni - Mailbox" T
- Choose Properties
- Click Advanced (below)
- Click again Advanced (above)
- Under "Mailboxes" click Add
- Type the Userid of the Mailbox for whom you are a delegate
- And remark: They are other ways, this depends on your company's settings.

Later Gwendoline told Hilde about Flavia's horror scenarios if CHD didn't help her. Hilde laughed:

"The end of the world, yes. She does have a lot of imagination."

To this Maurice popped in with a coffee and said:

作標是提供解決方案的我們想建立真正的合作關係不僅是

802.11n is an upcoming specification for wireless LAN, also called WLAN communications. An addition to the 802.11 family of standards, 802.11n is intended to increase network speed and reliability and to extend the operating distance of wireless networks. Raw data throughput is expected to reach as much as 600 Mbps, or more than 10 times the throughput of 802.11g.⁸


⁸ <http://searchnetworking.techtarget.com/>

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Maurice left, he had a meeting.

But Flavia would be given right. Hilde was as usual battling with phantom users, by the hundreds. She sometimes imagined Attila the Hun and his troupes moving over the MOU. Would they be run over, be forced to mix their blood with savage foreign warriors? She opened Excel and pasted the statistics from her Access Query there:

	A	B
1	TransMB	This Year
2	Arrivals	136
3	Departures	96
4	Change of WG	66
5	Transfer from another MOU	93
6		=SUM(B2:B5)
7		

Positioning the cursor in cell B6 and clicking on the  sign did it:

	A	B
1	TransMB	This Year
2	Arrivals	136
3	Departures	96
4	Change of WG	66
5	Transfer from another MOU	93
6	Total Moves	391
7	Total minus Departures	295

It was hard to believe, but the statistics proved it. There had been almost 400 personnel moves on a staff of 777 in less than 6 months, empty seats counted.

Departures were counted in the moves, considering a person leaving represented some work too. For the remaining 295 persons, newcomers arriving in the MOU or changing WG a number of actions had to be carried out.

As mentioned earlier, the first thing to do was to create the Account in the AD. The moment a person had an AD Account Hilde had to ask Mail Administration to link this AD Account to an Email box. See Leo's Account in the AD on page 57.

The newcomer must then be given a PC which had to be installed physically and configured logically according to the parameters of the workgroup's environment. This environment had to be prepared.

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D	E	F	G
Actions to be taken	Parameters involved	Nbr Coming	Total Parameters
Give a Windows logon		14	295
Give an email		5	295
Give a PC		14	295
Configure the PC		5	295
Grand Total			11,210

For the Windows Account, it was the fields to enter in the AD. For the Email Mailbox, it was the letters to send to Email Administration, to the user, to their colleagues. The letters also contained information about how to configure his settings and what actions to take first. The administrative tasks related to obtain a new PC were Lexi's and Sven's job, she had asked to give her an estimate about how much time that took. Hilde couldn't do more than estimates. They were too much interrupted to really realise. Just for the game let's say that:

Time taken	In Minutes	Nbr Coming	Total minutes
Give a Windows logon		40	295
Give an email		20	295
Give a PC		30	295
Configure the PC		30	295
Explain to the user		60	295
Give courses (not to all)		120	295
Grand Total in Minutes	Divided by		88,500
Grand Total in Hours		60	1,475
Grand Total in Days		8	184
Number of work days since year begin			110
Work days left for CHD			-74,375

Courses were not given to everyone, in general not to CLA's. Those generally felt it was not their job to know a PC well, or maybe they felt that as administrators a simple thing like getting acquainted with a PC was given to them automatically. Since AutoMagic is true in my case I have no opinion about this being valid or not in what regards administrators. But I know that Hilde and Gwendoline on their side think highly of administrators who take courses.

All in all this left her with minus 74 days on the 6 months, that is 110 workdays, for the rest of the work, like the Helpdesk questions and answers, which was not a minor factor, considering that she, just like the others were literally scotched to the phone eight hours a day. As Hilde's job was all of the above except the physical installation of the PC, she was close to madness, since she had permanently to do two or three things at the same time.



1. Hang on the phone and answer questions.

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2. Enter the user moves in her databases.
3. Write the programmes to manage this huge quantity of parameters.
4. Trying to find time for all this.

☎ She was interrupted by Jakinda, but only shortly, because she gave the answer before Jakinda got a chance to finish her question:

“Hilde, ma Belle, I keep forgetting this, shame on me, but...”

“Show this folder as an email address book,” said Hilde uncomplainingly.

And a major new task had been added to all of this: they had to organise and then carry out the migration of all those people to several new programmes. A tricky business, if one considered that the migration parameters needed were depending on the structure of the MOU; but that this structure had now been in a permanent state of change. Hilde took her Excel Sheet again.

Migration	
Nbr of people	777
Nbr of parameters	14
Nbr of structure changes	4
Total (multiplication!)	43.512

Of course she couldn't manage 43.512 parameters manually, but had to write programmes in order to do it. But again, she was hanging eight hours non stop on the phone. So when write those programmes. The answer was: at night when the users were sleeping. Her dreams were haunted by this migration anyway. She visualised herself running after the accounts and user records, trying to catch up with them, begging them not to proceed to yet another change before she had been able to finalise the previous one.

The migration team from MOUIT, who were supposed to assist them and visit the user for a briefing before and after the migration, was driven to sheer madness because each new Excel sheet Hilde send them containing a batch of users to migrate was followed by another one day later, very much modified. They would find a user in one office one day, but not the following. He had moved again. They finally told Hilde they couldn't work like this. Were they kids on a hide and seek game? Life is a game but this became morbid.

The time eaten up by the amount of errors this generated was hard to estimate as well. Every single error meant double or triple work. Like when the Personnel WG hadn't gotten a user's name or WG right, CHD's own errors, the return of all this to Email Administration, the re-adjustments to be done in the configuration of the PC and so on endlessly. How for instance quantify the endless enquiries about a user's whereabouts, when he appeared helpless in her office, not knowing where he had to go nor maybe

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even who he was. People had forgotten where they came from, did not know where they stood and even less where they were going to. Everyone felt lost.

In such time of changes, when everything seemed to be moving like quick sand, errors could only lead to more errors and even more time lost. And the error a first person would make would provoke a domino chain of errors for all those who had to take subsequent actions. This is a typical phenomenon, known by all. Only it had gotten permanent. Become a standard. The error chain was slashing back, and biting its own tail. A circular reference again. But a newcomer has to be taken care of. Otherwise he will react like a child arriving in a nursery without a nurse in it. Run wild. And things would be running wild with him.

That morning it was all about Jose Javier Pereira.

Hilde had been informed of his arrival, but been given a wrong date, one week later. Thus she had not introduced him yet into their OU, the Organisational Unit of MOU XII of the Active Directory. At any rate she couldn't have put him into the OU of MOU XII there because he was coming from another MOU, and one couldn't have an Account in two OU's in one Active Directory at the same time.

She had already added his name to her own database, but just didn't remember his coming among all the other records she'd put in lately. The programme would have popped up with his name on the date she first got, but he had just arrived earlier. Nor had Lexi or Sven given him a PC yet, for the same reason. As they were concerned, he hadn't arrived yet. Javier Pereira, without a phone or PC, had to ask his new team members to help him out. Carla, his secretary to be, her too without a valid AD account and Email, had tried to reach her, by using the phone of one of her new colleagues, but since Hilde was stuck on the phone she hadn't managed to do so.

Javier Pereira then asked Carla to solicit a colleague to write the IT Helpdesk an Email, the colleague did, but the name she sent was slightly misspelled. No small wonder. It could be Pereira, Peireira, Perrera, and so forth. Hilde searched for the name she had been mistakenly given, didn't find it, and thus calmly made a new AD record for this wrong name and asked for an Email. When she later, via all sorts of new calls, realised the mistake and corrected it, hours had passed. And she still had to ask for an Email for the person with his real name.

In the meantime Javier Pereira had been invited via Email to attend to an important meeting. Meetings are always important but this one was really.

Tracking Options

Nadine, the secretary of the director had send him this Email, but never realised that the Email didn't reach his recipient. One could configure Outlook to ask for a receipt in 'Tools - Options - Preferences - Email Options - Tracking Options' to ask for a receipt but the programme was new to her. Besides many persons never clicked on 'yes' to inform the sender they indeed had acknowledged the Email. The director asked his

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secretary why she hadn't checked, however poor Nadine had no explanation to give but that she possibly couldn't check on each of the more than hundred and fifty Email she was sending a day. She just had to rely on the Email system. Though: it was a bit her fault, because the email she send him bounced back as undeliverable. But since she had 20 of those at the time being she just overlooked it. A secretary, after all, is not a computer and her boss must understand that if she was omnipotent she wouldn't be his secretary.

Javier Pereira thus missed his first important meeting at the MOU. His absence led the participants of the meeting to take a terribly wrong decision. Only he detained and could have supplied the crucial information they lacked. Because of that, a war and then an epidemic broke out in some far away country.

When the CHD heard of this, they were, for a time, happy to be home in their cosy little chaos.

Flavia was right to imagine horror scenarios: If the Helpdesk wouldn't or couldn't help her, it could mean the end of the world. Of course people sometimes make the world of IT people, and in real life it can't be so dramatic. Only worse.

Hilde tried to spool her thoughts back. Where had she been before that war broke out? Oh yes, on page 229, thinking about how to express the number of actions she had to take per user, and about how to make the sum of it.

To not to have to press **Page Up** or **Page Down** a dozen of times she just pressed **Ctrl+G** and typed 229. And that was the page she was on anyway. Clearly she was going mad and there was only one escape: Hilde went back to her poetic view of chaos. First she tried to analyse all the necessary parameters which were to be taken in account in order to create a user's Account.

In order to enter a user's account into the AD she basically used an Microsoft Access table. Microsoft Access is the MS Office software which lets you typically manage tables of names and addresses or birthdays or users or your books or your CD's.

She opened her basic table, the MOUI XII table.

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MOU XII Userdata : Table			
	Field Name	Data Type	Des
?	ixdMou	AutoNumber	
	Last	Text	
	First	Text	
	ADDisplayName	Text	
	PrincipalName	Text	
	MailId	Text	
	MOU	Text	
	OU	Text	Organisational Unit
	WG	Text	WorkGroup
	NewWG	Text	NewService to come
	Phone	Text	
	Office	Text	Building
	Complete	Text	is the data complete
	Date Entry	Date/Time	
	Start	Date/Time	start in MOU
	End	Date/Time	end date in MOU
	Comments	Memo	
	Password	Text	Initial Password
	Statute	Text	Housefonc, Trainee, Scientist, Freelance
	Function	Text	Admin, Assistant, Secretary, Director
	TypeMove	Text	arrival, transfer MOU, normal, change of WG
	Language	Text	Mothertongue
	Colleague	Text	colleague to inform of arrival and initial data
	Keyboard	Text	type keyboard

Of course this is just an example and to give an idea of the structure of an Access table. This particular table had a sort of parent, a and royal one: the table containing the list of the WG's of their MOU, together with the parameters necessary to create a user of one specific WG in the Active Directory.

WGs : Table		
	Field Name	Data Type
▶	MOU	Text
	GlobalWG	Text
?	WG	Text
	Entity	Text
	Colleague	Text
	ShortDesc	Text
	Share	Text
	Groupmember	Text
	Description	Memo
	Logon batch	Text

This WG table she had to *link*, or sort of to multiply with the 777 user records in the MOU XII User data table.

To do this she used Update *Queries*. In order to change the 777 records on the somewhat 10 fields contained in the WG table and this now for the fourth time already she couldn't well do it manually. She had to use a kind of a programme, and this was an *Update Query*. Or rather she had to use a lot of Update Queries.

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She chose 'Queries - New'



and designed the Query by clicking on 

The Query thus kind of *multiplied* one table with another, updating all the fields. This was what Hilde was trying to find out just previously in Excel. Not so easy. Maybe you'll manage. Flavia understood very well. She even gave her the idea to use the word *multiply*.

The Query contained the user records on one side, and the WG and MOU names on the other, together with the fields needed in the Active Directory. Hilde chose 'View - SQL View' to see how her Query looked in his underlying SQL, the *Structured Query Language*. SQL is the standard interactive and programming language for getting information from a database.

```
UPDATE MOU INNER JOIN [WGMOU Data] ON (MOU.WG = [WGMOU Data].WG) AND  
(MOU.WG = [WGMOU Data].WG) SET [WGMOU Data].Directorate = [MOU].Directorate;
```

Structure and staff of the MOU were changing so quickly that she could only answer by creating one new query after the other. Management never really realises what an amount of work a new unit, like one single WG, can represent for those who have to deal with them, let's not speak of 17. Some would say that management by definition doesn't want to realise it. Hilde thought they simply didn't know. But it could be so dangerous. One wrong gesture out of the 100 of the kind little Hilde had to do every day and the whole MOU would be without proper logon and E-mail for weeks.

One of the challenges humanity is confronted with, and often unwilling to take, is to make out someone else's reality. It is difficult to see the reality of another person, or group of persons. Not only is it difficult, but it might mean too much work and a loss of their advantages. So most people can't, and won't. Like in the story of Marie-Antoinette, wife of Louis XVI, both later decapitated in the French revolution. When the peasants assembled before her castle she asked her minister:

"Why are they crying?"

"Because they are hungry, Madame."

"And why are they hungry?"

""Because they have no bread, Madame."

"But if they have no bread, why don't they eat cake?"

Marie-Antoinette was not trying to be ironic, but she definitely had trouble to see another one's reality. One can't put her too much at fault either. Only a few chosen can and if you're one of them, in a sense, poor you, you'll end up in some kind of HelpDesk.

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Hilde got tired trying to convince an invisible management and began day-dreaming about doing something less drab, such as designing a birthday database. So she could send automatic greetings to her users. It would be something positive for a change.

On this, Svetlana, one of their super-users, came in with a, as she placed it, somewhat unusual query. She seemed embarrassed at first and was shy to get to the point.

“Hilde, you do have all those databases about MOU XII staff, don’t you?”

“Yes, you need some info?”

“What data do you have in there?”

“Tons of data, what do you need?”

Svetlana finally admitted:

“I would like to know Boris birthday.”

Had Svetlana guessed her thoughts?

“This is telepathy, I was just working on the topic. But who is Boris?”

Svetlana looked at her half amused, half bewildered.

“You really have to much work. Don’t you know? The beautiful Russian. Beau Borisss. He arrived just a week ago.”

Hilde remembered vaguely. Svetlana insisted:

“He’s ever so attractive. He’s not dusty, like too many office people, he doesn’t wear those drab suits, no tie, and he’s really smart. I don’t know if he’s good with computers, but he’s the nicest person to chat with who has come here since ages. He has imagination!”

Hilde had to smile at this. She knew Svetlana was not very conventional and had high standards in what regarded her relation with others.

“Indeed? This might help us! But in fact I don’t have the birthdays. It’s regarded as private information.”

“Pity, because he’s so nice. I would be so good to surprise him.”

Hilde had to smile inwardly. It was not often that she saw Svetlana showing some interest for a man. Usually it was only the men showing interest for her. They invited her to luscious lunches, which she ate up from start to end, without ever gaining weight, nor interest for their spender.

It’s lunchtime

In the meantime they had lunch with the same Boris. They were joined by Doremi, the Super User and Consuelo, the girl who worked too much. Hilde now indeed remembered Boris.

He was a real charmer, a good listener, and a good story-teller. A Russian, from Wisconsin. Typical House. He seemed happy to be with a crowd of rather pretty girls

and looked at each of them, one after the other, and then at the first again, as if he was seeing something more beautiful at each turn of the head.

His eyes went to Hilde with her glossy hair, skin and eyes, Consuelo with her mysterious Indian looks, Svetlana with her masses of blond hair and green eyes, Doremi with her short cropped hair, olive skin and svelte model like body, and then back to Hilde and so on. Hilde felt like Heidi Klum mixed up with Einstein. Consuelo like she was a half goddess and Doremi felt she would have liked to teach him one or two things. Just for the fun. And then no. The beautiful quarteron from Virginia was also a very nice person. There was Svetlana, whose only interest in men was that they invite her to lunch or dinner. And Doremi had noticed that she hadn't touched her plate. And when Boris asked: "Does the House use Dynamic Host Configuration Protocol for allocating the IP-addresses?" Svetlana went all red in the face.

It was less hard to go back to work after that, knowing that a guy like Boris had joined to reinforce the good troops. He looked super, and might be a potential Super-User. However, they still didn't know his birthday. After all, a birthday was an important human factor to fight chaos. But Fate was to help them. Betsy, new in the Personnel WG of their MOU, running into them on their way back to the office, asked Hilde to help her set up a database in Access:

"I need to make an Access database for the MOU with names, first names and birth dates in it. That is, our CLA needs it. I have no idea why. But I would like to learn to do one too. It would be nice to remember his colleagues' and friend's birthday. Do you think you can find some time to explain this to me?"

"Of course!" Hilde smiled at her warmly and told her no problem, Svetlana grinned at her feet who grinned back. Hilde actually SAW them grinning. They made an appointment for an hour later. Doremi asked to be allowed to come too.

A Birthday database in MS Access

Betsy, Svetlana and Doremi were punctual and seated eagerly around Hilde.

"Knowing about databases and a concept called *Normalisation* has changed my life," said Hilde. "It has given me a means to remove redundancy out of my already well ordered existence."

"Tell on Hilde," cried out the three, pleased with the prospect of hearing her story.

Exactly upon that moment a fourth visitor appeared at the door.

"I have been passing by and couldn't help to overhear your conversation," he said, "could I kindly ask you to join your crowd and listen to that story about your life having changed because of a concept called Normalisation?"

It was Richard; the CLA who had had that interesting story in seven volumes on his USB key, Lexi had given it to her:

"With joy and goodly gree..." said Hilde and the three others and Richard seated

around her, eyes round with expectation. And thus Hilde began:

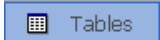

“Know that the exact sequence of what I will tell you can change from version to version of the same software but I will explain using my actual version.”

Create a table

Hilde thus began and opened the Microsoft Access database to create a new Table. The four followed her demo.

“Firstly I will show you how to create a simple table.”

The four nodded happily.

“Click  and then  Tables and then  New ”

For the User Index she created an AutoNumber field, IdxPerson. She knew it would be useful later. She always put an AutoNumber field in her databases. It couldn't harm. She added the Zodiac field, for the fun. All four smiled to this. Exactly what they had had in mind.

She let MS Access put the *primary key* on the IdxPerson field. It couldn't harm and later when one understood what a primary key was and wanted to do a relational database one would be grateful to have it ready.

She clicked on Save and the Birthday table opened.

She began typing, but then clicked on  for Design and changed the data type for the Email field to Hyperlink.

Birthdays : Table	
Field Name	Data Type
IdxPerson	AutoNumber
first	Text
last	Text
Birthday	Text
Year	Text
zodiac	Text
email	Hyperlink

“But why is thou you hast not chosen a single field for Birthday and Year and chosen the Date/Time for Data Type?” asked Betsy, slightly perplexed.

“Because later if you print it, you will want to see the records with the names sorted first by month, then year,” said Hilde. “Think that otherwise it will sort on first the year, and then only on month and day.”⁹

⁹ Hilde doesn't tell her users yet that she could also have put in the date as a whole and then letter have made a query extracting the day, month and year by using a formula

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“Also know,” said Richard, “that people might not always want to give you the year...My wife hasn’t aged for ages.”

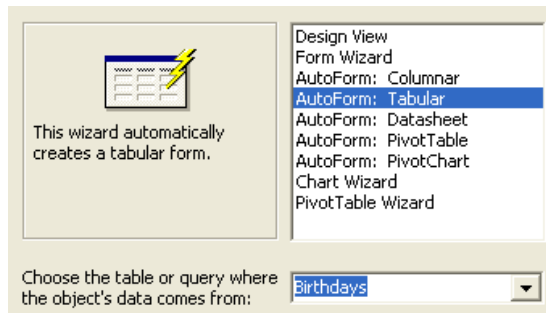
Hilde laughed, made a Save again, and then quickly filled in some records:



IdxPersor	first	last	Birthday	Year	zodiac
8	Alexandra	Velma	0415	1971	Taurus
2	Arthur	not given	0725	1011	Leo
9	Hildegard	Brand	0117	1958	Cancer
6	Johanna	Salveson	0106	1412	Capricorn
5	Leo	Veneto	0101	1964	Capricorn

But it would be nice to use a *Form*, Access just made them for you.

Create a Form

She clicked ‘Forms-New-AutoForm: Tabular’ and chose ‘Birthdays’ in the list below.



The Form appeared. Hilde then embellished it, she liked to design. She switched between Design  and View  in order to change the layout to her liking. In the new Form she filled in some more records with data.

By clicking on the   in the toolbar she could sort on the Birthday field.

Betsy clapped her hands:

“So then it’s easy, isn’t it? But how print this out, so that I can hang it in my kitch... hm, office.”

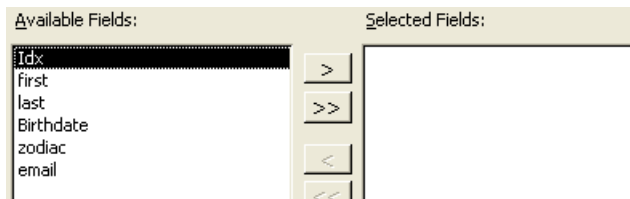
The other three nodded to this.

like day([birthday]) , month([birthday]) and year ([birthday])

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Print a Report

Hilde then chose 'Reports -New - Report Wizard' and added all the fields by clicking on >>. She chose 'No to grouping levels', Yes to 'Sort on Birthday' and subsequently just clicked 'Next' until a Report appeared.



She then clicked alternatively  and  to modify some details in the layout.

As removing the IdxPerson field just by clicking on it and pressing **Del**. The field was not interesting on a printout hanging in a kitchen.

Betsy clapped her hands forgetting to lie about her true intentions: "Hilde this is perfect. It's magic. I'm going to fill that out with the birthdays of my family and friends and hang it on the wall. I will never forget a birthday again with that system."

"Yes," said Hilde. "This is an example as how to use IT as a tool to love."

"A tool with great power then," said Richard. "It can get abusive at times. Like a mother in law, meddling at everything."

"It will be for you to choose if one day you can free yourself from it," said Hilde. "Like as not to have a car."

Hilde then opened the form again and filled out the remaining records, and they finally got a chance to look at the data itself.

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Birthdays						
IdxPerson	first	last	Birthday	Year	zodiac	er
12	Myself				Aquarius	
8	Alexandra	Velma	0314	1972	Pisces	
3	Sven	Schelmstorm	0414	1972	Aries	
4	Lutgarde	Sanger	0424	1972	Taurus	
6	Johanna	Salveson	0601	1412	Capricorn	
11	Nico	Biscotti	0606	1967	Gemini	
5	Leo	Veneto	0811	1965	Leo	
2	Arthur	not given	0911	1011	Virgo	
7	Gwendoline	Jahia	1010	1964	Libra	
10	Myra	Beloba	1120	1979	Scorpio	
1	Maurice	d'Escher	1206	1965	Sagittarius	
9	Hildegard	Brand	1707	1963	Cancer	

Record: 1 of 12

At a second thought Arthur and Johanna looked a bit old to them, but so what. "One is as old as one feels," said Betsy, who was thirty-six and had just become a grandmother and mother again the previous year, and this in a lapse of one week's time. "I will send you the data for the MOU as soon as I have it. Thank you so much Hilde. I will fill in my own friends and colleagues and never forget a birthday again." Svetlana said, "But do you finish for us thy story if thou be not sleepy.

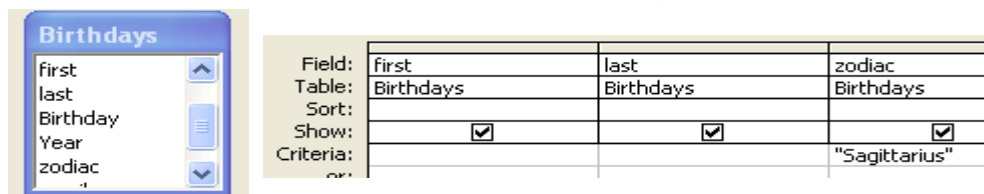
Create a Select Query in Access

Hilde held her breath for a while, and then resumed with her story:

"Now I will show you a Query. Imagine we really had 777 records here, and wanted to know who is Aquarius."


Hilde just loved Aquarius. She thought they had a lot of imagination. Svetlana clapped to her thoughts, she was an Aquarius herself.

She choose 'Queries - New - Show Tables - Birthdays - Add and closed the Show Tables box'. She selected all the fields in the little Birthday box above and



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dragged them into the *Field* row of the cell raster below and added “Sagittarius” as a selection criteria.

This was a simple Select Query. She clicked on  to Run it and the Query answered: “Maurice!” Hilde smiled. Ok she’d guessed that anyway, but it would be nice to use if one used the Query in a table containing 777 records, as she planned to do. Sure she would find even more people with a lot of imagination in the MOU.

“And how to finally have those records pop up on the day of their birthday?” asked Svetlana. For this Hilde used an OpenRecordset technique. Such as:

```
strSql = "SELECT * FROM [YMD]"
Set dB = CurrentDb
Set rSt = dB.OpenRecordset(strSql)
```

and in the YMD Query a new Expression combining month and day with the criteria:
Month(Now()) & Day(Now())

Betsy clapped her hands, even if she thought this was now sounding quite foreign. Svetlana and Doremi of course understood. Richard smiled with great wisdom.

Update Query

Betsy did indeed send the data for the MOU a few days later. And Hurrah! Boriss was Sagittarius! Hilde would thus later be able to make an Update Query, using the user’s MailId field, unique and present in both tables as an inner join just by dragging a line between the Email and MailId field of both tables. Access understood.

It was a very relational database indeed containing all the birthdays of the MOU in her very own Access database.

Relational databases

Used like that ‘very relational’ was a joke and Hilde had said it to because of the birthdays and the ensuing birthday wishes, parties and presents.

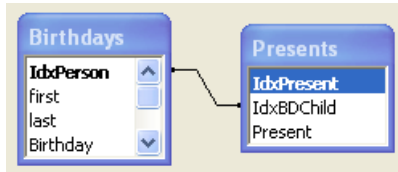
A database is called relational if its tables are related to each other. Like if you have the table with names and birthdays, and another with a list of all the gifts you have given to the birthday Childs.

Presents : Table	
Field Name	Data Type
IdxPresent	AutoNumber
IdxBDChild	Number
Present	Text

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You would *link* the primary key of the Birthday table with a field in which you introduce the same number in the Gifts table. Click on the relationship icon and establish the relations.



Let's say Johanna has number 6 in the IdxPerson field of the Birthday table. Each time you would give her a present you would write the present in the Present field and the number 6 in the IdxPresent field.

IdxBDChild	IdxPresent	Present
6	2	Flowers
6	3	Perfume
6	5	Book: Sputnik Sweatheart
6	6	Book: 1001 Nights

Record: 5 of 12

That way you don't risk giving the same gift twice.

I say you would enter the number 6 in the 2 tables, but in fact Access does it for you.

If you choose 'New Form' and then the Form Wizard adding both tables at the same time it will make the form above automatically. In the main form above, it will fill the IDXPERSO field with 6 by autonumbering; in the subform beneath, it will understand it has to add it to the IDXBDCHILD field, because you have linked the two fields. Of course you could also have used the name as a link field, but databases prefer numbers.

Some people have only a few good friends, but you Betsy, have a really impressive number of friends and a big family."

Betsy nodded. Hilde knew it all. She was at the same time simple to the extreme and very complicated, but she knew it all.

"This little birthday database is fully relational, because it corresponds to the first, then second and finally the *third normal form*.

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Each unit must be downsized to its smallest common denominator, like one should make 2 fields for first and last name, at the same time, don't push this too far, like for example make only 1 field for street name and number. A same value may never appear twice in the database, like putting the birthday at the same time in the Birthday table and in the Presents table. You should have no two fields for one entity of meaning, like having one column for men's birthday and another for women's. Feel it, and make the difference if necessary, and only if. It is told that a database is said to be in the third normal form when it has no repeating groups, no redundant data and each attribute is dependant on a table's primary key and nothing but the key.

I now apply those principles to everything I do and own: cleaning, shopping list, putting our flat into order, etc. Knowing about *Normalisation* and how to not be redundant and to be able to change my manner of doing easily and correctly has changed my life. But one must never push things too far. I am organized, not manic (to this the four smiled with benevolence), and using Normalisation extensively can seriously affect performance", said Hilde, and yawned.

It was almost dawn, and she promised her four users she would continue the story the next day.

Web princes

Since Myra's newsletters had gotten the calls down slightly on her side, Lutgarde decided to try something out like this too. And if it didn't work for the calls, then at least it would help her to get over the loss and mysterious disappearance of her plants.

She was thinking of the new guy, Radek, who had asked her to brief him on how to do a webpage in just five minutes.

She'd noticed that he didn't even know of how to use Internet itself properly, so asking her to explain how to make a webpage in five minutes was maybe pushing the wishful thinking a bit too far, but she could at least show the users some useful tips and tricks about using Internet, and then maybe Radek could try himself at a webpage.

The problem was that in fact she had no time for this. She had tons of web pages to do, and tons of Sub-webmasters to train. But she considered this as being a GLOBAL action. It would make the calls go down which would give her more time for her main job. It's always the same: we know 'global actions' are necessary to make us win time but we have no time to do them. But she would take the time. It just had to be done.

She opened Myra's Access call database and flipped over the FAQs concerning the use of Internet.

She surfed a bit around, not knowing how to do it.

Learn Internet in 5 minutes

Find a topic, save a picture of it, send the page by Email, save the link, page not found and HTTP 404

Finally after having inspected Amazon and bought a book there (Not about computers), after having circled around as a planet around the sun in a astronomy site, looked at the weather on Yahoo, read a biography of Metternich on Wikipedia, found a recipe on how to do Boston Baked Beans, pondered if she and her husband and children were to go to Sardinia or Malta for their holidays, preferred to sunbathe somewhere in the Maldives, visited the cathedral of Chartres, read about a rainbow theory on Chakras, and then finally thought she found what she was looking for:

She typed `"+"Prince Martin" +Bohatia` in the Search box of Altavista (she still preferred it to Google). The apostrophes around Prince Martin made it like one single word, the plus signs demanded that the page she was looking for contained both terms.

Otherwise she would get trillions of pages, all containing only Martin or only Bohatia, or only Prince. And there it was: A webpage with Prince Martin of Bohatia on it.

There he stood, medium tall, dark blond, with light blue misty eyes, fine nose, not striking, but good looking in an enigmatic way. A bit of a mystery, just like the country

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he was Prince of. He was still unmarried. The day he would be, maybe something of the grey shadows and slight haze would leave his face. But there was something moving in the expectation it carried, one he didn't probably knew about.

There had been some scandal in this otherwise exemplary family. His mother had run away with an actor, leaving his father Justin to raise him up alone. He had no brothers or sisters. The relationship between must be good, the proof was, Justin had made him Prince in his place.

The Prince Father seemed to be a very nice man. Who had told her that? Wait, hadn't Myra said he was her neighbour? Typical Bohatia. But the father was good looking, with still dark hair and finely chiselled features, and the Prince was quite her type in fact. The photo she'd found on the Web was very romantic, and she decided to keep it.

She could also send all of this to her niece, who had an adolescent crush on him.

She right-clicked on the photo and chose 'Save Picture As' and took the most used format offered: 'jpg'. She then saved it in her 'My Pictures' folder.

Martin's eyes seemed to close for a nano-second, as if had noticed, and seemed slightly bothered by the personality theft. She rubbed her own eyes. He must be a dreamer. No, he was not for her niece, who was such a practical little thing. She would grow over it quickly.

She then right-clicked on the picture again, simply choose 'Copy', opened a new EMail and pasted it into the message body, pressing Ctrl+v, and off she send it to her niece.

Just as she had clicked 'Send' she thought to hear someone close by say:

"Too late!"

What was too late? She rubbed her ears. Was she having a hallucination? But she had really heard it. Ok, maybe that meant she should have sent the whole web page to her niece, instead of just the picture. Lut choose: 'File – Sent – Page by Email' and off it went to her niece again.

Further she felt she might need the page again and choose 'Favorites – Add to Favorites'. One should always keep the URL of a webpage one has found useful, or on which one has pondered or wondered, like in this case. One heard a kind of 'Pang', and that was the sign to keep it.

This was the moment to backup her whole set of favourites, and she did so by choosing: 'File – Import and Export – Export' and saved it all in the Bookmark.htm file, renaming it however to Lut_favourites.htm.

Then she sent this file as an attachment to her Home EMail. She would import it there again.

How wise she had been to do so, because at that moment her Internet blocked, and she had to do a Ctrl+Alt+Del and choose End Task. And when she opened the Browser again, and clicked on the Favourite, it didn't appear anymore, but gave her the message:

HTTP 404 – which meant: 'Gone' – the page is no longer available.

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Gone, and in such a short time. Users were always pestering about those HTTP error messages, HTTP 410, HTTP 510, and so forth, not believing CHD could do nothing about it. On condition that it was not a House address, it was just not the users PC, nor the Proxy server of the House; it meant just that the page with Prince Martin was no longer available. Maybe the webmaster on the other side had forgotten to update the link to the new location, or the page had simply disappeared, anyway, there was nothing to be found on the chosen link, and CHD could do nothing about it. NOTHING!

Twenty minutes later she got an email message from her niece, saying:

“Thank you so much! But Prince Martin is long past since yesterday evening. I have met this absolutely...”

Lut now knew what to put in her Newsletter. There was nothing more to be said. You needn't know more basics for surfing, then what she had used to send to her niece. She felt strange, really dizzy and wanted to go home, but the phone rang.

“Lut. The Golden Voice! The Queen of the Web! It's Dimitri. Could you tell me what exactly is meant by HTML code?”

“Easy and not. Easy because HTML stands for Hypertext Markup Language and is the main code underlying most webpage. You can look at HTML code of every page on Internet simply by choosing: ‘View - Source’ in the menu bar of the Internet Browser. Those web addresses have the extension *.htm or *.html.

Like <http://archive.ncsa.uiuc.edu/General/Internet/WWW/HTMLPrimerAll.html>

A Beginners guide to HTML. See, it's simple:

```
<LI><A HREF="#GS"><B>Getting Started</B></A>
  <UL>
    <LI><A HREF="#AE">Terms to Know</A>
    <LI><A HREF="#WT">What Isn't Covered</A>
    <LI><A HREF="#HV">HTML Version</A>
  </UL>
<LI><A HREF="#HD"><B>HTML Documents</B></A>
  <UL>
    <LI><A HREF="#WI">What an HTML Document Is</A>
    <LI><A HREF="#HE">HTML Editors</A>
    <LI><A HREF="#GY">Getting Your Files on a Server</A>
    <LI><A HREF="#TEM">Tags Explained</A>
    <LI><A HREF="#TM2">The Minimal HTML Document</A>
```

“That look's pretty easy.”

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“Yes. But then it's not so easy because nowadays most of underlying code is not generated by pure only HTML anymore. You get more and more pages with extensions like *.asp, *.jsp which produce dynamic HTML. You will have JavaScript codes among the simple HTML code. But when you use FrontPage to make a Web page you will produce HTML code without knowing it. It's beneath your page. Just choose 'View - Source' and you'll see all the code you've subconsciously produced.”

“Thanks. I feel better now. You know it all.”

“Why did you want to know what HTML stands for?”

Dimitri was working in the Geology WG.

“Just to hear your magical voice. Your charming, warm, sensual voice. In fact I have to meet a guy from the CERN, Tim Berners-Lee, they say he invented the thing. You helped me out so much, thanks a lot! But hearing your voice alone is solving half the problem.”

This Dimitri was really something. Hadn't Hilde told her about a similar compliment and hadn't it been Dimitri too? Were they saying the same thing to everyone?

Compliments help and Greek men know how to make them, but Lut yawned. She was so tired, and she had a splitting headache. A light eczema had broken out on her checks. It didn't show, but it itched. Many of her users seemed to have similar symptoms. It was for sure 'somatic', as Gwendoline had explained to her.

“Take Ezster (or Eszter?, she never remembered the spelling). She came and told me she suffered from severe muscular aches. She said: “My wrist hurts, my ankles hurt, my eyes hurt, my head hurts, all my muscles hurt, everything hurts.” At the same time she tells me she feels that she's moving on quick sand all the time. It is obvious that her subconscious is translating this picture into a reality for her body. Her subconscious at least is taking her seriously: Literally by the word. In her efforts to mind all her steps her subconscious means well and tries to protect her from getting swallowed up by the situation: Slurp!”

Lut found it very much interesting, but even more awful. She felt so tired, she could hardly move. When would this end. And she had lost 15 minutes at least looking for a Prince she wasn't personally interested in. She had only asked him to represent how to know all basics about using Internet in 5 minutes. Royals were supposed to do that, being present at all sorts of openings, promoting good causes, standing as an emblem for what good meaning people were trying to achieve.

Meanwhile the quick sand feeling grew. People became aggressive more and more easily. Life-long boss & secretary couples broke. Best colleagues snapped at each other. One could witness scenes like a colleague menacing another with a dark spell, others not talking to each other, even throwing things at each other. Many declared themselves sick and probably really were.

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Elvira and Natasha, two pretty CLA's having both been assigned the same office by mistake, as this happened all the time now, almost tore each others dark and blond hair out. One could hear them shriek 'You're crazy, that's my office' and 'Go back to your Blinis!' and 'Go back to your Spaghetitis!' all over the floor. It was really disgusting. The floor was already dirty enough as it was. Gwendoline imagined people taking a liking to this sort of actions and throwing Sushi, Sauerkraut, Fondue, Hot dogs, Frites (French fries), chicken Moambe and Paella at each other.

When a situation gets really bad people have a tendency to seek consolation in looking for the guilty one. When they don't find one, they will invent one, and get at a person near them, in this case, their colleagues. It's close to hallucination sometimes. Where did this need to soothe the pains of workload by making someone else guilty, when he was having the same problem, come from? Where had the nice ways of the House gone?

Everyone now was striving to leave the MOU. The best of course, were those to succeed first. They were replaced or not replaced or traded by inexperienced newcomers, who only increased the workload, since they had to be trained, and no one had time for training. Gwendoline and the others really got a shock when they heard that Robert, from the personnel unit, was leaving for another MOU now too. This was bad news entirely; would the MOU be entirely empty in a few months or even weeks, and remain with only a handful of people in it? What would happen then? The huge turnover of people, perpetually arriving and leaving, made that there was not enough time to train everyone properly and go through all the necessary steps in preparing them for their job. And so they left as soon as they could. It was a typical vicious circle.

Many people, instead of giving (positive) criticism or rebelling went with the system, apparently agreeing with it, with the conscious knowledge that this would be the best way to hasten up its (self-) destruction. It was like in karate: one must use the strength of your adversary against himself. But who was the adversary?

They lacked directives entirely. Ok CHD as most IT people, could very well live without it, and without any boss too. But for the rest of the MOU, it was not so easy. Directives is not only instructions, it's also order short and a line to follow. So in which way to go, no one really could say. Was it left or right, up or down, east or west? They were swimming.

It was a mystery how some were sticking on, some of the best too, like Micha, Jack Owl's secretary, Penelope, or Doremi, or Chiara or Rosie or newcomer Boris. And the CHD. The CHD was holding on. Why did they do that? Each of them would have been welcomed like a saviour in any other MOU. But they didn't apply for a new job, they just kept holding on. Like a dog which you could lift with the bone he was gnawing on, they just wouldn't let go. They wouldn't give up. Maybe it was partly due to all the recognition they got. The critical mass of a system is greater than the individual. And

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the critical mass remained good. The soul of the House seemed to remain, somewhere, deeply hidden in its depths. On one side one could think that all this trying to mend things was leading to nothing, but on the other hand, the fact that people were at least trying, and so many of them, was simply grandiose. And CHD were part of those trying. CHD sort of became their banner. The 777 brave users began calling them 'The Mythical Eleven'. This added a nice note to the impressive series of compliments the Helpdesk was by now used to get; along with flowers and cookies. As to being called names like Wizards, Kings and Queens, Angels and Saints, Legend!

♪ It's lunchtime

Lut stayed in her office, too tired to move, Maurice went home to his wife and Sven's wife came to have lunch with him at the House. Gwendoline had a chilli at the Flower Bar with Leo and Boris, who now worked in the Biopsychology WG. Or had it been renamed Psychobiology again?

He didn't say, but when Margarida, coming to their table just to say Hello, told them that she was not so well, because her muscles ached all over, they started on Gwendoline's theory again.

Leo told her that he had heard several of his Sub-webmasters complaining about the same symptoms and Margarida told them two of her colleagues were too.

"And I too know at least ten people who've told me about them having this muscular ache," said Boris when she had left.

"Thus Eszter (or Ezster?) is in good company," said Gwendoline, surprised. "therefore it's not so much somatisation, as I first thought, but just a little virus which wanders around." She explained about her theory of quick sand being translated into muscle ache by the brain.

Boris listened attentively: "Gwendoline, I think you're right in both respects. It's both, a virus and somatisation."

"But how can all of them somatise in the same way?"

"Precisely. That's the answer. They do. It's an epidemic. Most doctors now admit that the mind influences the body and its functions, that a fragile state of mind makes the body more vulnerable to attacks from the outside. But what many people don't know that if such a state of mind, unease, stress, or worse, panic and anguish is felt by many, is collective, it gets translated into an epidemic. Like this new fashionable malady, chronic fatigue, which seems to get hold of the world."

Gwendoline and Leo felt awed and very interested.

"This is impressive," said Leo, "but what about epidemics like the pest."

Boris startled like if the word itself could bring about the malady and then looked at him pensively:

"Those are conflicts so terrible, so ingrained..." He didn't pursue and they went over to lighter topics, like gardening, roller-skating and the latest films.

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When Gwendoline got back to lunch she found Lut in the ladies room, and got really frightened: Lut seemed close to apoplexy. She was leaning against the wash basin, panting. Her face looked like made of rubber and one felt her skin could be extended at will, and moulded into everyone form one could imagine. The fact that she was putting a layer of at least three inches of make-up on it showed at least a will to survive.

"I have a hundred web pages to do before the end of the week. For only one conference on a single one of them I have received more than 50 Emails. All in all I have counted I got 5700 Emails in six weeks, 50 phone calls a day, plus I don't know how people popping into my office. And the whole world is watching. And I am little Lut, standing in a ladies room, and doing all that. Where is my big team? It really needs magic to accomplish all this! I am little Lut, and the whole world is watching. I am doing a hundred web pages a night, and the world imagines a huge team behind this. But I am little Lut sitting on ah - in a toilet room. I will break down and this is the House of Science and whole Science will break down because of me."

It was so bad that she forgot that 'no one is irreplaceable'.

And she cried and cried. And she still cried when they left the facilities. But then Sven appeared, to console her, held her tight and said:

"Hush. Hush. Do not cry little Lut. The world is listening. They feel the same. Do not mix yourself up with anyone, you are you, believe in yourself. Of course you are great. Do not underestimate the power of the little ones, when they shit, they shit jewels. I promise you, I swear, one day your bravery will be known."

Sven was really the most intelligent man of the MOU, the whole House maybe (I'm not really House).

But not only close colleagues could be nice and when Lut came back to her office she found an email, for once not inviting her to work:

Dear Lut and Leo,

I want to thank you for the great effort you have done with the web pages for our workgroup and moreover, you can be utterly proud of the fabulous result. They have been noticed by the Nobel price Frederic Wale himself and he pointed out how well you seem to have grasped the scientific matter itself.

Unfortunately, I am not your boss, but I honestly think you would merit more than just a little promotion if such a thing existed here.

We are planning a workgroup dinner together with Frederic Wale next week Thursday at the 'Mischel & Wuschel'. We would be grateful if you could join us at this occasion and be our guests.

David Bär - Neurophysiology WG.

Lut's mouth watered at the compliment and at the thought of the meal. Bohatians were excellent cooks. But 'Mischel & Wuschel' was a three-star restaurant in the Michelin

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guide!!!

Misty children

Bohatia is well known for the mists that cover it repeatedly. Visitors wonder and say it's a country where one can't see through. Nothing is ever clear. Did the fog come from all those rivers and lakes? Not sure. It was one of those misty days, and mist would cover everything for hours. When the mist got really thick and one just could really not see a thing, and got lost in a faraway world, with thoughts obscured and dreams set free. Day dreaming was allowed on such days or hours and not too many people were calling the Helpdesk.

Nico dreamt about far away countries, Arthur of a sixth ball (where did he suddenly come from?), Hilde of methods and properties in Visual Basic for Word, Johanna of a country of her own, Maurice about computers, Gwendoline about having a talk with the dwarfs: 'Why are you here dear? Are you maybe really real? What was your idea about coming here?'" The dwarf smiled and didn't answer.

Sven not only dreamt he was away surfing; he was away surfing, lucky him. One could read this fact in his *Out of Office Reply*, which can be found in the 'Tools' Menu of Outlook. It was astonishing how easily most users found out that one. Gwendoline remembered only one single call about it. Astonishing how finding out about things is linked to pleasure.

Myra was dreaming of Princes. And she thought:

"If only his father could make it true, and bid me to his castle, so that I can have a look at his PC, and, maybe, if I'm very lucky, his son."

She had talked to him again, over their usual meeting point, the vinyl fence. She felt much less bad about Chaos, since someone was listening. And Justin listened royally well.

The mist had begun to fade and the sunrays were just of the right amount to mix with the rain droplets such as to make a rainbow appear. Even two rainbows. People were used to rainbows here and did not pay them the deserved attention anymore, but now suddenly a third and then a fourth had appeared, until they couldn't keep track of their count anymore because they reflected themselves again and again in the glass windows of the House and gave the impression of being a thousand or more.

Myra was now sure to see Prince Martin's face reflected there, Arthur had disappeared again, Lexi saw a new invention, Maurice a new computer, Nico the country he would go to next time and all of them got a glimpse of the solution which would get them out of the infernal mess the MOU was in. It must be magic. It could only be magic.

Today was children's day, or one of them. Some school holiday, but not a holiday for the House, and the parents, not knowing what to do with their offspring, just took them

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with them to the office. They came by the tenths of dozens, swarmed around in the offices, the floors and meeting rooms. It was typical of the House to allow this. Looking at them, one could not feel but warm and heart.

Of course the parents had to find something to do for them. They usually managed to find some free PC, his owner being on sick leave or some official mission or holiday.

The little ones had brought their working material with them, which were games. Games on CDs or diskettes or good places on Internet which they had in mind. They installed or downloaded them brightly, showing more gifts than their parents. Administrator rights seemed to elude them, it was a mystery. The PC, if it was a child, just let him install just about anything. The House, or rather Mrko Mrnsk, had not yet foreseen an adequate protection for such behaviour because very often this meant that with the game some virus was installed too. But the consequences were the least of a child's worries. Nor did their parents stop to think.

It was quite a scandal, if one thought of it. On the one side, a work place that allowed their staff to bring in their children, was the sign of a better world, on the other, one let the Helpdesk get crazy because of this. Always be tolerant was a typical House way. Lexi jumped from office to office, cleaning viruses. After some hours of this game, she was exhausted. This was too much. She would have wished all the kids in the world to some far-off planet, had she not wanted some so badly for herself. And anyway she did not believe in wishful thinking. 'Forgive them; they don't know what they are doing.' Certainly Lexi didn't. She swore vengeance. And first of all on Mrko Mrnsk, who hadn't put the adequate Virus Shield in the configuration. He would later condescend to explain that the new virus shields couldn't have been downloaded that week because, blablabla and than followed a lame excuse about maintenance that wee which the CHD found hard to believe.

Myra went crazy too with all the parents now phoning the CHD to complain about their PC being infected by a virus. She did believe in wishful thinking. Anyway it was the parents fault and she wished all of them to h... The phone rang.

Sven came to see her and told her he had seen icons' fighting on a user's desktop, and really hard. Myra didn't believe him of course. But when she came back to her phone from a quick coffee swallowed together with Lut down at Tello's place and looked at her desktop she froze:

The icons on her desktop were indeed fighting. They were moving around, hunting kicking and throwing things at each other. They took on mean faces and grew large teeth. Internet Explorer gulped at Media Player and ate him up slowly. Windows Explorer knocked down the Virus Shield Icon. Internet Explorer, still hungry, swallowed up Windows Explorer. The Desktop was now almost empty and when a large hand appeared and dragged Internet Explorer into nowhere only the typical blue background desktop colour remained

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Hue:	<input type="text" value="139"/>	Red:	<input type="text" value="0"/>
Sat:	<input type="text" value="240"/>	Green:	<input type="text" value="78"/>
Lum:	<input type="text" value="72"/>	Blue:	<input type="text" value="152"/>

(Right-click on Desktop, choose Desktop and then Color)

Myra had to do her best not to shriek. She ran out of her office in the hope to find one of the CHD Wise Ones so he or she could help. She was sure her PC had caught some awful virus which would contaminate the whole House within seconds.

Hidden behind the door stood Sven, holding his stomach and bent over with his attempts not to laugh out aloud:

“Just a joke, Myra, don’t worry, it’s just some fun webpage I have placed on your desktop while you were away. Look!”

They went back to her PC and Sven clicked on the little Restore button in the upper right top of the desktop. Indeed she now saw that it was just an internet page there, even if now empty. She only had to click on the little box with the x in it to close it and there was her Desktop again. Sven was very pleased with himself.

He had one of his kids at this trail who kept asking him questions about the seven dwarfs or garden gnomes which had been there some time before and which he seemed to have met just the week they had been at the House:

“But Papa, where are the little dwarfs?!”

“Which ones Miki?”

“The dwarfs at the door.”

“Gone Miki.”

“But where Papa?!”

“Guess they’ve gone home.”

“But why Papa?”

“Guess they didn’t want to work anymore.”

“But why Papa?! Mama said little dwarfs like to work.”

“Oh I so wish they were doing my job,” meant Sven half to himself, half to Myra. “Those Heinzelmännchen.”

“I want to play with the little dwarf again papa.”

Sven smiled down at him: “Ah so you have played with a little dwarf.”

Miki nodded at his dad and at Myra. Myra nodded back, smiling. How cute this Miki was, a little “dwarf” himself:

“Maybe you can get yours and Gwendoline’s children to help you. Imagine him pushing the cart with a PC on it. It would be so cute.”

After that brief interlude the phone started its howling again and Myra answered or dispatched patiently. She was still young, and of a patient kind, and users kept thanking

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her for that and calling her names like 'saint' 'guardian angel'. This was nice, but people were more crazy that day than at usual.

☎ One user called to say that his printer was stinking. She tried to put him off but saw Alexandra-Lexi, who'd just entered her office, waving at her:

“No, no! Wait!”

Myra put the phone on loudspeaker.

“What?”

“He may be right. Ask him what a kind of printer he has. Some of them ARE stinking.”

Myra looked at her bewildered. Was Lexi going mad too?

“It's the Ozone. Some of those printers produce it. And it does stink.”

Myra inquired and *voilà*, it was indeed that kind of printer. Myra promised to sent someone to have it replaced.

☎ Another called to tell her that he had an insect in his computer. He put his phone set to the printer and indeed she could hear a faint buzzing, like of a bee.

The user, moreover, was eating an apple while he talked. Myra just hated people who where chewing an apple, especially on the phone. She just had an intrinsic distaste of apples. For some obvious reason she didn't know about. Apples brought up bad memories from the depths of being, some bad event she'd once lived and than linked to apples. Freudian, as Gwendoline would offer to say.

“I have this printer, *schlerk, schleck, schlirp ...*,” the sound of satisfaction annoyed her to distraction, “and... *schlurp, ...* it stinks ... *schlunck*.”. Her stomach twined and sent cold shivers all through her body.

Lexi, there again by chance, explained that this could be true. One piece inside had to be broken and the printer than made that buzzing noise. Myra promised the user the broken piece would be replaced.

☎ The next call came from Frank, one of their 'best' users. One of those who spent their time playing around with PC's, and achieving a remarkable level of mastery. Strangely enough this kind was not made to end up in a Helpdesk. Somehow his mind was too twisted, to much looking for was NOT a standard way of doing, only the unusual, not the useful. Frank told her proudly he had discovered a Flight Simulator in Excel. He wanted it removed, because it made Excel slower. Myra shook her head at this, but he insisted. Maurice later told her that this was true. There was a Flight Simulator hidden in Excel. You had to press a series of buttons and write some text in some specific cells and it would start up and you could steer a plane. Some programmer with some time on his hands and in need for a joke must have put it there, and it had stayed there through the various versions of Excel without no one but some users noticing. Maurice said it couldn't be removed and that she should send Frank to hell. Whatever was that use spending his time at.

Miki came back, and tugged her sleeve. Gush was he cute. Such huge eyes. Intelligent

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eyes. Wise for a child. She talked with him a while and he told her his Mum and Pa were sort of rich and working very hard, and that he had two bigger sisters, and that they lived deep behind the rocks. Strange. Almost no one was living there. And she thought Sven had told her their house was at the shore of the Potok River and that Miki had only one sibling, and this was another boy, a bit older. Then she shook her head, slightly bewildered. This little boy there was Miki, wasn't he? She must remember to ask Sven about this. Just as she was wondering he disappeared again, wandering off like a little spirit, as only kids can do. It was a wonderful little kid, a dream of a child.

☞ It was the day of crazy calls, and user Anna, a super nervous girl, so nervous that she had electricity all around her, phoned to say that she had again killed her computer.

“What do you mean ‘killed’?”

Anna laughed, embarrassed:

“I don't know I just touched it and suddenly there was a big Pang! and then all the lights went out. I tried to switch it on again but now it doesn't work anymore. It's dead.”

Myra had learned from the previous calls to always believe a user. And she did believe in Pangs:

“Maybe it's your internal electricity. Some people have too much electricity in them, and this may interfere with those machines. It comes from some misbalance in the alkaline level in your blood.”

Myra bit her lips. She shouldn't have used the word ‘misbalance’, but Anna cried out with admiration:

“You may be right. Very often, when I touch someone, we both get an electric shock.”

“Maybe you can buy one of those cactuses. Those big round ones, they are said to swallow up bad electrical waves.”

“And where can I find them?”

Myra promised she would enquire, and sent Sven over to have a look at the Computer. Maybe she could ask Hilde, who was so good with plants.

Gwendoline, whom she told the story, agreed with her. Anna was nervous enough to send out sparks which could lay down a computer, even Big Blue. And she added she had seen it happen already. It was possible that some humans sent out anti-machine waves.

Minimum requirements for a PC

☞ Next was a call from Marijke, a lady who had unexpectedly arrived from another MOU, one of those many who were popping up nowadays to disappear just as quickly. She said she had found a PC on her desk, but had been told that the PC had been used by a trainee just before. It could thus not be working anymore. She said she did not want a ‘trainee's PC’ but insisted to have a ‘Secretary's PC’. Her husband had told her

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(on this she took a sheet of paper to read from it), that a PC had to have at least 512 Megabyte of RAM, a clock speed of 333 MHz and some 160 Gigabyte of hard disk space. Of course at least four USB slots, to connect the camera and the Memory key. Moreover it had to have a read & write DVD or at least CD/R&W. A trainee's PC couldn't possibly have all that.

Myra, admiring her logic, and even if she had some after thought about trainees, tried to explain that all the PC's where the same, but the lady kept insisting that she could not work on a trainee's PC. If it had been used by a trainee, it was sure to have a blemish. Hilde and Maurice who overheard this said this could be true, but Sven went and managed to convince her to keep the PC. He put his hands on it and smiled at it. Would he begin to give it a massage? Thai? Shiatsu? Classical? His eyes were large, luminous, and intense. The warmth he showed the PC finally convinced Marijke that it must be good enough for her. She felt sort of loved suddenly. Sven could convince almost every woman, if he took the time. Marijke was no exception, but he knew of one working close to him who was. Myra.

Sven wondered why Myra wasn't 'reacting' to him. He was not used to this. All women reacted to him. The old the young all of them. Why not her. She was nice to him, smiled at him, but he missed that reaction of fluttering eyes, eager body. Especially with unmarried women, not that he didn't love his wife. It was as if Myra's heart was already given away. To some high away spot only she could see. But Sven was not a man to wonder for long.

☎ Lydia phoned to say she couldn't save her document by pressing **Ctrl+S** anymore, as she was used to do. She could only use the 'File Save as'. Myra couldn't solve the problem by phone and Gwendoline had to go and have a look. She found out that the user, not so bright in some ways and then at the same time yes had assigned the shortcut key **Ctrl+S** to some completely different function: To put text in bold and italics at the same time. Now this was being at the same time intelligent and stupid.

Lydia was a very tall and heavy woman, awkward in her movements, as if always being on the verge of loosing her balance, and she nearly sat on tiny Gwendoline several times. Gwendoline almost feared for her life.

☎ Pedro phoned to ask where he could find the *backslash* on his keyboard. Now many people already didn't know what the backslash was. Myra send this over to him by Email:

/ is a normal slash

\ is a backslash.

Unfortunately the *backslash* changes location on keyboards, and is indeed difficult to find, and, moreover, to use. In many cases, once you have found its location you have to hold down another key in order to get the sign on the screen. This other key mostly the **Alt Gr** Key. You press it, hold it, and then press the **]** key. Holding down the **Alt Gr**

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Key you will be able to type all the 'third' signs on the keys.

Another way to obtain 'third' signs is to press the **Alt** Key, hold it down, and, at the same time, type a number using the numeric part of the keyboard.

"What is the numeric part of the keyboard. Speak our language, Myra, for you everything seems so obvious."

"The numeric part of the keyboard are the keys at the right of it. 1, 2, 3, 4 up to 9. See them?"

Num	/	*	-
7	8	9	+
4	5	6	
1	2	3	Enter
0		.	

"Yes"

"Mind to have the **Num Lock** on, otherwise the keys will make you move, and not type numbers."

"For the \ hold down the Alt Key and type 92 on the numeric part of keyboard."

"It works. You're a genius," said Pedro, trying it out.

Myra was glad to hear this: "And you can get a lot of other characters if you press the combination of Alt + numbers on the numeric keyboard. Like if you press Alt+36 you obtain the dollar sign. \$. Like the one you use to hide a folder."

She heard Pedro happily trying out combinations.

"From 1 to 255," she said. "Try out Alt+60, or Alt+62. It's the ASCII character table."

She said nothing about *Unicode* system yet, which contained 34,168 distinct coded characters derived from 24 supported language scripts.

☞ She couldn't help two trainees who said their computer was not working.

"It's not working" is one of the few things a trainee seems to be able to say.

When asked to give details they can barely manage to stutter out 'yes', 'no' and 'I don't understand.'

On Myra's question: "Is your computer switched on?" they swore that they had switched it on. "Yes yes yes. It's not working!"

Lexi had to go and see and saw that the computer was NOT switched on. She pushed the button in order to do this, and the computer began to boot joyously, before the trainees round eyes.

"Why haven't you switched it on?", she said, with a slight reproach.

"Oh, it was that button! We pushed the wrong button!"

They had of course pressed the button for the screen. It happens to everyone, don't worry.

Several women called, and Myra felt it was just to see Sven, and that their problem was entirely made-up for his intention. There was no way to get them to spell out their problem. They insisted that Myra should send Sven, because only he could solve their problem. Indeed. Myra forwarded the call to Sven and did not bother to enquire if it was solved. Sven didn't supply her with more details either.

☎ Joëlle had called some time before to order a portable for her boss going on mission. Myra send her and email to say it was ready, and that she could come and get it.

“Is it not to heavy?” emailed Joëlle. ”Can I carry it alone?”

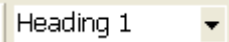
Lexi answered that regarding the fact it was a portable, she would have no problem to carry it. If nevertheless she'd still had worries, she would send Maurice and Sven to help her.

☎ Beata needed to change 200 titles in a document from small to capital letters. She said she had only half an hour to do this. Myra explained she could select the whole title by rapidly clicking 3 times on it and then pressing **Shift+F3** in order to make it all capital letters. title. TITLE. Title. She heard Beata trying a bit and then beaming at the other side of the phone: “Wow it works!” And that is not all. Shift-F3 on selected text makes all sorst of combinations!

Of course Beata could also have chosen ‘Format - Styles - Heading1’ and then ‘Modify Style - Font’ and put all of it into small capital letters in one single stroke. Provided she had formatted the titles into Headings with the style facility on the Format toolbar. That is, if she had formatted the titles into headings. She hadn't.

Myra thought it was a pity. She sent Gwendoline to help the user do this in one stroke.

“It's easy. While you type, just click with the cursor in the title and choose:

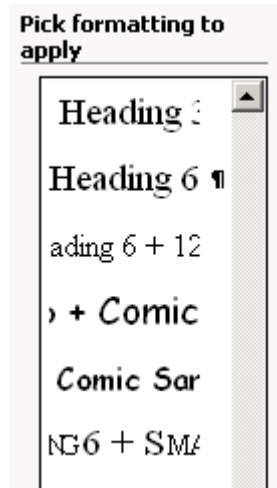
 in the formatting toolbar.

You can than change the formatting of the title all over whenever you want just by using ‘Format - Styles - Heading1’ and then ‘Modify Style - Font’.

Later you can use the Heading styles to make a *Table of content* out of it in one stroke. Position the cursor at the where you want the summary to appear, and then choose ‘Insert - Index and Tables - Table of Contents’.”

Beata shook her head to that, wondering.

"Thank you dear, but this messy right pane that you made appear in the document by



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choosing 'Format - Styles' just makes me sick at the stomach."

☎ Another user lost his Taskbar, or couldn't find it anymore. Myra took quite a time to have him get his cursor at the bottom of the desktop, ("Put your cursor at the bottom! The bottom! Go further down! Yes! Yess! Yesss!") until he saw his taskbar reappear, and then another five minutes to have him right-click on it, choose Properties and then deselect the 'Auto-hide the taskbar' option.

☎ Anja and Urte called, as always both together and preceding their request by:

"Sorry for that stupid question but ..."

And Myra as always shortly interrupting by:

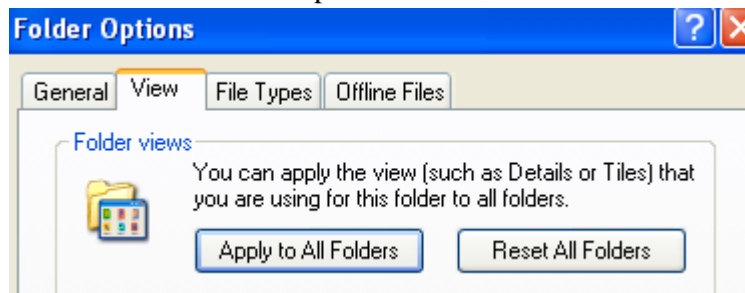
"There are no stupid questions."

To that the 'twins', as everyone called them, answered by giggling on the other side of the phone.

They were not twins, and of two different countries, Holland and Spain, and had not know each other before coming to the House. The funny thing was, they had been born on the same year same day, and had a very similar attitude towards life and computers and had been hired into the same WG the same week. Moreover, they did look strangely alike. And Urte as name for a Spaniard was weird. Maybe some strange story with parents separating at their birth, each going off with another partner, taking one child with them, and never telling this. A DNA analysis could do wonders here, maybe. Their question, as always, had not been stupid:

"How can we keep the settings in the folders? We choose 'Details', and when we open it next time it has switched back to 'Tiles'."

"Choose 'Tools – Folder Options' and then



Ok but this applies the settings to all the other folders. And in the 'My Pictures' folder you might prefer the 'Filmstrip' option.

Anja Grandinetti and Urte Soltau were the ideal users. Without such users, there would be no Helpdesk. There would be no need for a Helpdesk. At the same time, their questions were intelligent enough to make a Helpdesk feel really useful and a bit intelligent too. They were giggling with pleasure at her answer and told her she was

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sooo smart and then asked her for a coffee. Myra couldn't, to many calls.


Myra got used to the fact to be called 'efficient, darling, angel'. If computer people were in a way at the origin of their troubles, people also felt they were getting them out of them. Quite a paradox, in a way.

But Myra found computers very useful. A tool to meet princes.

She had learned a lot about user psychology lately. Gwendoline had briefed her some of it, but most of it she had acquired from the question and answer game, and from what she felt was underlying it all. Nervousness, chaos, stress, a feeling not to be taken seriously, and listened to carefully.

She had learned how to soothe furious users by telling them: "You're right." She had learned to agree when they were saying the programmes were doing everything in their power to keep them from working, instead of trying to convince them of the opposite. When a user complained, she did not try anymore to counter argument, but went into a long affirmative of "Exactly! It's a scandal! It's awful! It's so mean. The people who made those annoying programmes shut be put into prison or be hanged, at least! Etc!"

She had learned to say "It's not your fault, poor you, you're overworked", even if she knew that the user had been banging his keyboard on the wall, and then called to say it had broken all by itself, him "doing nothing". The dwarfs maybe and so, haha. Myra agreed to this too, but she was play acting. Because if she certainly believed in dwarfs, she did not so much believe in people. She was only thriving to keep her own advantage, that of staying at the House. The truth was that Myra had no heart for people, she kept it all for a prince.

 An anonymous user called to ask where the nursery was. This had nothing to do with computers, but then the name Helpdesk was misleading, and could mean anything. Myra, still being childless, had no idea. She almost gave her office number. Indeed there must be a nursery somewhere at the place, but it was obviously too crowded to take in everyone. Most of the kids here now seemed to have landed in her own office, sitting obediently on the floor or on some chairs their parents had brought in for them. Others were running or strolling through the corridors.

One of them, the 'little dwaff' was wandering all over the place, and wondering. Where did all those people com from. His parents had told him one day not so long ago they had been the only ones in here in Bohatia. What were there doing those people, he couldn't see. His mum and pop were working those pretty stones just as his grandpa and grandma had and all of the others before them. At their atelier you could really see what they were doing. They were producing beautiful jewels. Here they just seemed to run in all senses and talk in none.

Mikki was a cute little kid, just as most kids are. Fine blond hair, tiny fingers, round blue eyes, legs still with some baby fat. What makes a child a child is that you couldn't but want to take him in your arms and cuddle and protect him. The other little boy with almost the same name and with whom he had played was nice, but he was just another

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little boy. But Mikki with 2K felt wiser already, even if they were of the same size. But the girl there who was hanging at the phone, with the long black hair and white skin and eyes so blue they were almost black; why she had been so nice with him, really listening, his sisters never wanted to play with him. And she was soo pretty, he was sure she must be a princess. Of course a princess wouldn't be hard working as she had seemed to do. To work like a dwarf, his father would say. A princess in disguise then. To work like a dwarf. Mikki mused about this expression. Pa said that the day he would be grown up his beard would be like his, but Mikki just didn't want this to happen. When he was grown up he could just take it off, and look like a prince too. Of course that was a crime, he knew it well and he must really be off, and find his way home, otherwise his parents would be furious.

Web crushes

Leo and Gwendoline had asked Lut to accompany them for a coffee, but Lut had to stay in her office, because her son Maxi was with her, some kinder garden holiday in Bohatia. Lut had brought a trunk of playthings with them, now spread all over the floor of her office, and the little guy was sitting on the floor, playing happily. He was testing his yet new world, with no worry to break things, just like programmers in a playground environment. His hair was so blond; it seemed to highlight the office. Gwendoline thought that she could use Maxi's hair to highlight her manuals. Just take him by the feet, and brush his hanging hair over her sentences.



“Lut you're sure ye don't want to come?”

Lut shook her head. Maxi grinned at them all. He was such an easygoing child. Leo and Gwendoline went alone. Their coffee sessions were about the web, but mostly about philosophical ways and psychological techniques in order to do their job well. They just loved it. Doing it on the web.

If Hilde and Maurice appeared to be talking only about computers, Leo and Gwendoline did some private talking too. Gwendoline was often talking to Leo about her husband. She liked him well enough, but complained about his being childish and dependent on her. In return, Leo kept Gwendoline informed about his turnover of girl friends. A part from Gwendoline, he never told anyone else in the CHD. Gwendoline thought his latest acquisition seemed more serious. The girl was an art critic and Gwendoline had the feeling the girl might be as sensitive and artistic as Leo and Leo needed someone who could understand him, as the great artist he was.

Leo was a fabulous webmaster. A great painter really. His techniques were deeply felt, like if he sensed the wishes of those who ordered the web pages in his own mind, body and soul. He would portrait their unspoken desires. And to translate them into web pages, he would employ every facility that modern web technology offered. As already mentioned he used web design programmes such as FrontPage or Dreamweaver left handed. He knew his HTML by heart. He integrated databases with Coldfusion or PHP into the web pages dynamically. He structured it all with XML, XSL, CSS and SOAP. He made it interactive with JavaScript and ASP server scripting. To make his web pages moving. And the pages were not only physically moving, like little films were. They were, well, moving. Hard and dry codes became warm and living images which moved the senses and even the heart. Leo just couldn't stop moving and make others move.

He just had to paint everything and on everything and while he was sipping a coffee

with Gwendoline he painted with words. Gwendoline just loved to listen to him painting web pages in front of her eyes. She then was, well, moved. And he told her about a new technique he had learned recently.

“I am planning to use graphical animations in my Web Pages from now on. Mrko Mrnsk doesn’t like it, he likes it stable, which means ‘dead’, but I don’t care anymore. I plan to use *Flash*. Flash is a marvellous programme to create bidirectional streaming of video and audio. It lets you create moving images and mix them with sounds. It’s an absolute marvel. If I think that mathematical formulas, using the underlying language, ActionScript, can create those magnificent moving pictures!”

Gwendoline was so much awed: Mathematical formulas to create moving pictures and maybe music. Leo was such a genius.

Leo suddenly brought his verbal demo of the Flash programme to a halt and turned to Gwendoline, almost breathless. He squeezed her elegant tiny hands with his elegant larger ones with passion:

“Oh Gwendoline, oh Gwendoline! E bello! Ma vedi che bello! E tanto bello.”

His gentle eyes were blazing. It was as if he was telling a love story - between a man and a woman. Gwendoline nodded encouragingly, almost tenderly. She loved seeing him having one of his enthusiastic fits. He was an artist over and over. And he was so giving, wanting to share the Know How. One strange thing about this: it was only with her, Gwendoline, but never with any other. People were complaining behind his back about him holding too much back. But in fact he wasn’t. You have probably noticed that Gwendoline is a very good listener. And one only hears what one wants to hear and sees what one wants to see, that’s common knowledge.

Leo was smiling more with each word he said or rather drew in front of Gwendoline’s mind:

“And you know that Flash uses *vector graphics*. The resulting files are created and saved as a sequence of vector statements. For example, instead of containing a bit in the file for each bit of a line drawing, a vector graphic file describes a series of points to be connected. One result is a much smaller file ...”

Gwendoline put her hand up:

“Leo wait, you know our users will not understand what you are saying if you talk about ‘vector graphics’. If they want to know about vector graphics, let them find out for themselves. We’re just supplying the Automagic here.”



Leo nodded to this and directed the rest of his vector speech in her left ear where it left a raster. Gwendoline had to scratch it for the rest of the day, but it felt nice. He then showed her some of his recent creations. Gwendoline, as usual, found them very beautiful. Leo thought highly of his own animations too. He was not the one for modesty. And yet he seemed more driven by some holy spirit than conceited.

The first he had done was about a little boy standing in front of the double-helix. The

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DNA was represented, as often, by little spheres of four colours, green, red, blue and yellow. The boy moved forward, took first one, then two, then three of them in his hands and began juggling. Soon he was juggling with an infinite number of them.

“And to all this has been generated using mathematical formulas. It must be very poetic and beautiful formulas.”

“Yes it is poetic and beautiful. When I watch this, I just cannot believe it is I who has done it. I didn’t know I had this in my genes.”

Gwendoline smiled:

“It’s like if it came from a force outside, something located outside of you.”

Leo thought about that. Gwendoline was always so sensitive.

“Well yes, maybe, in a way.”

“Nico is saying it too. He’s saying he is doing his programming in a spot above his head.”

Leo pondered on this again:

“Yes or like if in my brain I had some modem which can communicate with this spot. Yes, like with some power source or force that is far away.”

“And then it’s you at the same time.”

Leo nodded thoughtfully and then came back to more practical things:

“Anyway I am looking for a new system, a tool which could help us manage web content. Something multifunctional which can help people without any particular knowledge conceive, structure, animate and edit a web site. Something which would be at the same time simple and sophisticated. Something everybody could use and understand. The tool Mrko Mrnsk gave us is a nightmare. Over thirty click to do where with most of the tools used by web designers you can do it with a single one.”

“Yes it’s unspeakable!” said Gwendoline.

“The House needs a new system. I think part of MOUIT finally begins to realise that. We need to present them with a good playground, and we might convince them.”

“You mean Mrko Mrnsk is loosing some of his mysterious grip?”

“If it could only be true. I don’t think it goes as far as that. But some of MOUIT now agree with me and it could be a beginning. You see a web site must easily accept new buildings, goals. We must become proactive in our actions, not be reactive as we are now. Well that is, Mrko Mrnsk is reactive...”

“True. No global actions or if yes than badly devised. If something is not working he will say it’s ‘by design’ and give a stupid excuse.”

“Such a pity he won’t loosen his grip, because if the architecture of a site is well conceived, modifications are much easier to handle. A site must be able foresee its future enlargement trajectory. But I must find the time. I am so tired, I’m not only sleeping standing, I’m not only doing Web Pages in my sleep, I am doing Web Pages

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sleeping. If I could only use Flash to programme a virtual and moving image of myself, and send it to work, while I stay home and sleep for a change.”

Gwendoline laughed: “Excellent idea! I would make several copies even, and have one of them reading novels for instance.”

“The outside world will again think the joke they make about us is true: How many people are working in the House?”

“Maybe of half of them?” said Gwendoline, who knew it.

“By the way I would like to build a photo database of all the people in MOU XII.”

Gwendoline clapped her hands:”

“What an excellent idea! People are moving around here faster than in a Flash animation! I only know the few of those who remain on one spot for more than a few weeks. Everyone knows us though. We Helpdesk people seem to get famous immediately. People see me in the elevator and say ‘Hi Gwendoline’ with a lot of warmth in their voice and ‘Thanks so much for your help yesterday’ and I have no idea who it is. It would be great if I could link a face and a name. A photo database would do it! And it could unite us all. Maybe people would even stop leaving, if they felt they were part of a photo database. Do we have a digital cam at the CHD?”

“Yes we do.”

“Who’s going to take the photos? You?”

“Yes, I or Lut, rather Lut, she has a great deal of sympathy in what regards people. She likes them all. It will show on the photos.”

Lut didn’t know about her luck yet: seven hundred seventy-seven photos to do, on top of her fifty Web Pages a day. Leo suddenly made a doubtful face:

“Gwendoline, do you believe hierarchy will support us?”

“Are you joking? We haven’t seen one of them for ages now.” They were back at their favourite topic. “It’s so puzzling. Were the hell ARE they?!”

“It is as if they have gone into some mysterious hiding place, a wake coma.”

“It’s all so weird. Like with those dwarf stories. Maybe Lut can catch some of them on her photos.”

“I doubt they will let us take pictures. I mean, if they are really the kind of dwarfs I’m thinking of.”

“Is there more than one kind of dwarfs?”

“Of course, even if it’s all about small people. The ones who lived in Bohatia long ago, the garden gnomes, the fairy tale dwarfs. And then there are the children. Some of them are a wise little folk. Grown-ups have much to learn from them all. Especially how to do a drag and drop. Children just grab the icon, drag it and then drop it. Grown-ups forget about that, and a drag and drop becomes a state affair.”

“True enough. That’s why we are there for, to help them drag and drop.”

“And then there are dwarfs like me.”

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Coming from Leo, who was rather tall or at least medium height, this sounded very funny, and Gwendoline laughed. She imagined him with a green or red bonnet, and giggled out aloud. Gwendoline was not as cold headed and warm blooded as Hilde in her technical romance with Maurice. She speculated about Leo in a more philosophical way. Which Leo pursued some more before returning to his office:

“Adults have lost a lot of the ease one has when one is small, and also they give up much too easily. Be like the little children, play and hang on, and computers will make sense to you.”

“At the same time many behave like little children, and we have to do everything for some of them.”

“But it’s always the wrong way around.”

“Yes like to ask for help on things which have nothing to do with Computers. Like one of them asked me to find a good recipe for her, for a party she was giving this weekend. And she didn’t even invite me, lol. Well anyway I would have refused.”

“Was it Charlotte, this girl from the Astronomy WG?”

Leo looked amused: “Your second sight again, how do you know?”

“I saw Tello giving her a recipe about salmon with dill sauce.”

“Why can he cook?”

“No it seems he asked his wife, and she faxed it to him.”

“He’s ever so nice. Always listening to everyone and giving wise advice. Kind of a Boddhisatwa really. And he’s had such a hard life I heard. But still he thinks of phoning his wife so that she faxes him recipes.”

“This makes me hungry.” Leo looked at his watch: “Damn. Still two hours to go.”

They went back to their offices. The phone rang non stop and Gwendoline wondered about what stress could do to people. Even her most intelligent users seemed at loss and began to panic, not finding solutions which would otherwise seemed obvious for them.

Everyone seemed to have only one wish: run away from the MOU. Elvira told her she had threatened her boss to leave the MOU, or she would leave him. If he left, she would follow him, and if he didn’t, she would go without him. This was serious. Elvira and her boss had a working relationship that many married couples could only dream of. One could make an easy bet that the boss would obey. Typical House behaviour, where the world was turned upside down most of the time.

☞ Which didn’t solve Elvira’s problem. Gwendoline explained and explained, but Elvira didn’t want to understand why there was a blank page in her document suddenly. Word was difficult at times.

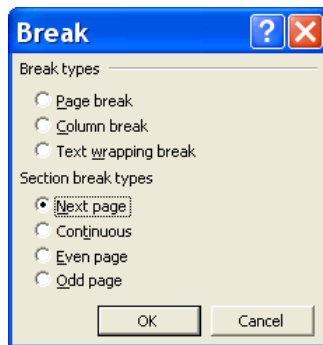
☞ “But Elvira you have chosen: ‘Insert - Break - Section Break - Odd Page’. The

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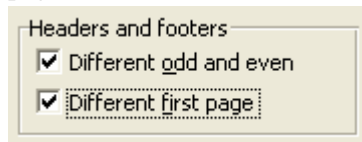
page on which you asked for the break was page 43. So the break happens at page 45, another odd page, which makes that there is now a blank page between the two.”

“Gwendoline I don’t understand a word of what you’re saying.”

“I’m sorry, you’re right, it’s tricky. But let’s say you should have chosen:



Of course it was true that Section breaks were a pain in the ass, and combined with footers, they became a nightmare. Throughout the whole manual I Myself have taken care not to insert a single Section break. Have you ever experienced to delete a section break in a document with footers different on the first page and on odd and even pages?



What in truth happened to the footer then? If I may reassure you, it’s not you, it’s Word. Word can be worse than the most ungifted of users.

On that Myra appeared in her office, waving her arms in despair:

“Gwendoline, do you know one Cecile Acrot?” She was all pale.

“Oh yes I do. She is one of those problem users whose only objective is to annoy us. She thinks everyone must be at her service. We’re service people to her, not House people. She’s really impolite.”

Myra nodded, happy to find comfort, and mimicked the conversation:

🖱️ “Miss Beloba. My mouse isn’t working, nothing moves, would you mind and send someone over?”

“Have you checked if the mouse is plugged in?”

“That’s too difficult. The mouse is plugged in at the back of the computer and the

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computer is standing with his back to the wall. It's not for me to go and reach behind. That's your job, not mine."

Myra took a breath:

"And she absolutely refused to check. Too royal to bend her head a bit. She was so rude. When I hear her 'calm' clipped voice ordering me around I go berserk."

Gwendoline nodded. "Yes she's very impolite. Just let her wait."

That's what happens when you think a Helpdesk is there to clean your shoes.

But it was hardware and thus Lexi's job, and Myra at least logged it in. Lexi exploded when she saw the call in their CHD Call database:

"What! I have twenty computers to install today, and this shit faced spoiled brat wants me to go and plug a mouse in for her!"

She stamped her foot on the floor and declared she would not go at all.

The morning seemed endless.

♪ It's lunchtime

As consolation for the two last hours Gwendoline at least had lunch with Patrick and Wiebke, two ex-colleagues from the Training MOU.

"Incredible place, where people can bring their children to work," said Patrick. "Note that I do the same."

"Why do think of that just now?"

"Don't you see?" Patrick nodded to a table a behind her.

When Gwendoline turned around, she indeed saw a whole kindergarden there. You know, the place were you dumb your kids when you need to go to work. You can't just take them with you to the office. As you know now, at the House, you could. The House had some human sides. At least nine little ones were moving around there, not so well behaved for once. One of them waved at her and Gwendoline finally recognised Hilde, and then her colleague-friend Emma I who now waved too. Hilde had told her Emma had an impressive series of grandchildren. Those had to be some of hers at least, Hilde having none of her own.

"This morning I took the elevators," said Wiebke, "and couldn't get in the first one because it was filled with children, a whole kindergarden, at least thirty of them. There was just one young girl to accompany them. It was so cute."

"What were they doing there?"

"Well they are consultants of course. Scientists. Diplomats. Managers. To help us get us out of the chaos."

Wiebke was furious because Mrko Mrnsk had given them a configuration for the PC's in their classroom which was only giving problems. The spell check didn't work for instance, and the auto recovery function didn't work. She had sent him an Email, but had of course been ignored. Just no answer at all was the most common answer, and, if

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one was lucky, one got a snippy remark about MOU XII's own configuration being at fault:

"MOU XII is the only MOU complaining about that."

"Mrko Mrnsk doesn't talk to lower mortals," said Hilde almost bitterly. "I had the same problem in MOU XII. Our new server was showing an instability, three people lost their documents, because they had fallen in an empty slot, but then the auto recover function didn't work at all. Of course they should have thought to save more often, but then they never do, especially if it's a very long and very important document."

"It's true there are many things wrong with the configuration of the PC's. I never have those problems at home."

On this, lunch was over.

In the elevator she met both Myra and Cecile Acrot. Cecile Acrot looked at Myra with a face as if Myra had sent the HO1 in person to the devil. It was obvious that Lexi had not gone to see her yet. Miss High and Mighty would have to wait.

When Lexi finally went late some time later she was fletching her teeth like a dog befallen with rabies.

"Do you want to know what it was?! Cecile Acrot's Mouse problem?"

Myra, Gwendoline and Sven nodded from their offices:

"Yes, tell us."

"It was the keyboard!"

"The keyboard?"

"She had no keyboard. I mean there was no keyboard. I mean physically no keyboard." CHD had to shake their heads at so much bad will. Cecile Acrot either was stupid enough not to be able to distinguish a mouse from a keyboard, or she was mean enough to have Lexi come all the way over the other building, just to be able to send her back in order to fetch a keyboard.

Sven felt guilty, he should have gone in Myra's place, and he would NOT have been reassuringly sexy with this Cecile Acrot. They were limits even to his liking a woman just because she was one.

"But it's true," he said. "Maybe this Cecile is only mean and thinks we are here to do all her errands. But strange things happen lately. Look at this. Just now rather nice Yolanta wrote me an Email."

Everyone nodded, because Yolanta was indeed nice.

Sven had printed out the Email and handed it, speechless, over to Myra, who read it, and handed it over to Gwendoline, who read it, and who handed it over to Maurice who had just come in:

"Dear Sven, I have this new printer at home. An HP something. It's really nice. It even printed an Email message out for me, in colour. I didn't know it could do that. Can you

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explain?”

“You mean she didn’t know she had a colour printer?”

“I wrote back. She insists she does not have a colour printer.”

“That’s not possible, nowadays every home printer is a colour printer.”

“True, it’s only at the office that they are not.”

“It’s really weird. The keyboard and the mouse, how can one confuse them, and how can one not know that one has a colour printer?”

Myra wished she was at home on a sofa doing nothing. Young as she was she now spent her evenings on the sofa, just doing nothing. There was no energy left to do something else. The name of ‘Helpdesk’ was misleading and the whole afternoon was lost on calls which had nothing to do whatsoever with computers:

☞ “You who know everyone. Would you happen to know who is dealing with the call for tenders in MOU VII?”

☞ “You who know everything. Can you help me find the address for a good dietician?”

☞ “You CHD people are so nice. Do you know anyone who would take in a cat?”

☞ “Would you happen to know some good sites about gardening?”

This request she forwarded to Hilde who answered happily.

☞ “You are so smart. Could you help me do my income taxes?”

Hilde again? No not poor Hilde.

☞ “I have an apartment to let, could you put the ad on your website?”

And again:

☞ “Would you happen to know the number of the day time nursery?”

“You just dialled it. But we are full,” said Myra, and hung up.

On this, Gwendoline wished she was back with Leo and playing a role game in a web story. Hilde wished she was in her garden and was grateful to Myra for the interlude. Maurice wished he would have more time for his own computers. Jo wished Mrko Mrnsk to the devil. Nico wished himself to the moon. Leo flashed away on a vector graphic. Lut sang to herself while she did webpage number forty that day. Sven who had just emailed Yolanta at her home to ask her about the exact type of HP printer she had got no answer on that but only an:

“Sven, Have you looked at your watch? You’re crazy. Go home.”

@ Bracelet

CDH morning coffee ritual was shortened with every day that passed. They didn't even find the time for meetings anymore, but they tried to at least cling to those five minutes. WG coffee followed a first quick coffee at Tello's place, early in the morning, at six, seven or eight o'clock, just after entering the Curie building, but they didn't take that one together.

The situation was nerve-racking. More and more people left the MOU, in some workgroups there was not even half of the personnel left. An epidemic almost. They were not replaced or if yes then by completely new personnel, who knew nothing of nothing yet and had to be trained. Still the work had to be done. But the people, while trying to leave themselves, tried to perform as best as they could. A bizarre mystery, but some humans just have sense of responsibility.

Alas, newcomers meant a tremendous increase of work. AD, EMail, Shares, PC Settings, Emails, initial explanations.

And if as to put them on trial everything seemed to play against them, among others the House's programmes which were crashing non-stop.

Yesterday there had been no Science server, then no daVinci server, then no Email, then Kaleidoscope had crashed (not by Jo's fault but a decision of MOUIT who was supposed to take care of its main server). The *LDAP* (Lightweight Directory Access Protocol) system broke down and thus the *White Pages* (type 'wpages' in your Browser) remained white indeed the whole week. The Public groups in Outlook disappeared, well rather they became invisible. The network broke down, it was the *backbone*, the larger transmission line that carries data gathered from smaller lines that interconnect with it. The list of the Scientist vanished from the Web and the Webserver followed and Lut and Leo couldn't work the whole day.

Sven ended up wondering if it was a standard situation in the Outside world too that all or most of the IT programmes at a company kept falling down at least once a day.

No one had an answer to Sven's question either, they didn't know too much about the Outside world. The problem was that they were to dependant on Mrko Mrnsk. They couldn't do anything about it, the guy held all the *source codes* in his hands and hid them somewhere in his Ivory tower.

The bad news of the day was that, after the virus attack of some days before, ITPOL had decided that from now on no user could install anything anymore on his computer. Even to install the Great Britannica, CHD would have to be called. That meant much more work for them, since all the users needed a lot of scientific information and mini-programmes, stored on CD's and or & downloadable from the internet.

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But the users were quite a bit a fault, downloading all those screen savers and Smileys and Lexi was just a tiny bit agreeing with this Mrko Mrnsk for once. It didn't last, because from then on she got at least two more hours of work a day, having to install dozens of those scientific dictionaries and demos and programmes for the users. They even had to log on as an Administrator to install *Ad-Aware*, which users, full of good intentions, tried to use in order to help cleaning their PC from the spyware they had put on it. Innocently of course, because how could one know that a series of nice smileys was hiding a series of evil spy modules.

They sipped their coffee and told each other about some of their misery. Then they all lifted their heads bravely and marched to work.

Johanna, after having read thirty emails and typed twenty in a time span of some ten minutes, left for a meeting with MOUIT about Kaleidoscope. She was the only one to whom the situation suited entirely, and, even if she didn't say this in the open, her cheeks grew more rosy with every day that passed. Inwardly she was clapping her hands, like a child to whom his parents announce she will get ten times more cookies from now on. Not that Johanna put on fat. Today she was wearing a close fitting ensemble of light grey linen. High heels emphasised her fine legs. They came from Melchior, Bohatia's most famous shoemaker.

Myra watched Jo leave, and then startled. What was this glittering half hidden beneath her keyboard? Something shiny, it threw sparks. She smiled. Was it a result of last week's firework? Wow. She bend to it and took it up. It was a bracelet, exquisite. Tiny sapphires and rubies alternating, well she didn't know so much about precious stones, but all this was finely wrought in what could be white gold. The locket was in the form of an @, set with tiny blue diamonds. Gush this must be worth a fortune. She felt a magic attraction, and couldn't help but put in on. It fit to her wrist perfectly. Whoever had lost it here? Of course many people came to the Helpdesk. She looked at the bracelet and sighed. She felt as if someone had put it there just for her. She just felt it. But of course she couldn't keep it. With another big sigh she took the phone and dialled 'Lost and Found'.

The security agent was very friendly, and asked her to bring it at some time of the day convenient to her, he would make a note, if someone came and asked about it he would know where to sent him. Myra smiled thinking about the Email messages going to the whole House regarding such lost and found things. People were desperate to get their jewellery back. It was not only money value, it was also sentimental, as they took care to make clear in those messages:

"I lost a ring probably somewhere in the Newton building. It is wrought in three parts, tiny serpents with blue eyes. If you found it please contact me, it has been in the family for generations now and ..."

"I have lost a very pretty pendant, a red stone inlaid in gold in maybe the Pink Bar. If you found it could you please bring it back. It is very important to me, it belonged to

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my grandmother whom I liked very much. Please call Sarah at ... or Email me.”

“Yesterday I have lost a brown leather case for glasses, which had a special meaning for me. If - by any chance - someone found it, please let me know where to collect it from.

“Please excuse me bothering everyone but I have lost a gold ring. Square gold nugget type with an adjustable band. Please, if you find it, would you contact me?

Thank you!”

I lost my heart to a prince, thought Myra, if someone finds it, would he please contact me? shall I write an email about that to the whole House too? It had a special meaning too and maybe – just by any chance - someone found it. But she knew she wasn’t allowed to send an email to the whole House.

To those who didn’t know this Email Administration would then write an Email reminding them that it was not allowed to send an Email to the whole House without official permission, especially not for private reasons. A *Forum* on the Intranet Web of the House was there for such things among others. Were they to do it again, Email Administration would disable their mailbox. Of course this never happened. The House was not of the punishing kind, and always let everyone get away with everything. That’s how one catches the Chaos virus.

Myra, or rather the Helpdesk Service Mailbox had been put in copy of such an Email, because the sender, Oswald, was from her own MOU XII. Myra showed this to Gwendoline, who had just stepped into her office:

“What am I supposed to do with this,” she said, “chid him?”

“Of course not. No one expects this. This message is just a formality. And Oswald’s intention is rather nice; he just wanted to find a place to live for this trainee.”

“Truly they’re sort of cool at this place.”

“Yes. Take thieves,” Gwendoline said, “real thieves. Even those, if caught, are not to harshly punished, and not sent away. First they are suspended a bit, and then come back on a lower pay. And even that does probably not last forever.”

Myra felt as if Gwendoline was looking at the bracelet. But she would give it back of course.

“The House sort of never punishes.”

On this Myra’s little friend Mikki came in, smiling. But the eager look on his face gave way to an expression of slight disappointment. He left just as quickly as he had come, waving sadly, in place of having his usual piece of conversation with her. Well it was probably because of Gwendoline, he was maybe being a bit jealous. By now everyone was so used to him that people had stopped to wonder what he was doing here all the time. His father was a freelance consultant at the House, that was all they knew, and Myra had confirmed this.

“No,” said Gwendoline. “The House, typically, never takes revenge. They only let go

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and do nothing about nothing. But tolerance can get to far too. One day a minority, forever not obeying rules, will acquire an importance which is much greater than their number. And with time some other minority will get so annoyed about them that it can end in a dictatorship.”

True. What had Maurice said:

“Just look at one of the best examples. Why does no one ever do anything about Mrko Mrnsk? Do they not see at all that this guy is bad? That he’s working on an evil plan? Maybe he is paid by some enemy from the outside, in order to harm the House! He could be the one to be so annoyed as to become the dictator.”

“Also true,” said Gwendoline. “And then we Housefons are imposed all kinds of bizarre duties, especially the one of swallowing just about everything! The proof is,” she said, “that nothing at all is ever done about those few people at the House who really have the mentality of concentration camp capos. The House just lets them continue their mobbing, at it is now called. Their staff of course is permanently leaving, which has a result that they are given temporary staff from the outside world. The House is really going to far in this respect. Take Yvonne, from Aeronautics WG. This girl is really emotionally disturbed. She throws things at her colleagues. Coffee pots and I don’t what. Of course she’s under great stress, but she’s more of a Poltergeist than of a secretary. And who has to do her work plus her own? Nice Chen-Li (keep the name on a line y choosing ‘Insert – Symbol – Special Characters – Non breaking Hyphen’) the second secretary there! They treat all those people like a good asylum would treat their patients. With indulgence. And then we, the more sound people, have to live with it and do for them! And get crazy ourselves. And be shut up with the rest.”

After this little analyse of the House’s psyche Gwendoline left Myra to hang herself on the phone again. The morning was the same jungle of calls as usual, and Myra didn’t have a second left free.

♪ Instead of lunch

Finally at one o’clock she forced herself to find the necessary ten minutes to take the bracelet she’d found to the Lost and Found service.

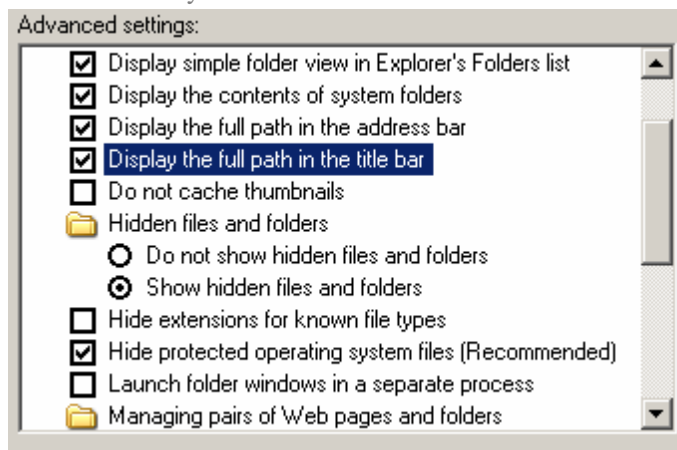
Fox, the official there thanked her and took down her name. Myra left with a slight twinge in her heart. Of course she had had to act like that; she couldn’t just have kept the bracelet. To keep would have been like thieving. But is it thieving if you keep something that you feel to be yours?

Lexi and Sven went to eat white cheese at the White Cheese Bar, Hilde, Gwendoline and Boris went to have Pasta al Olio, Lut went to see the Doctor, he found she had all symptoms of stress possible imaginable, Maurice went to look at a new computer shop on Grand Rue. Everyone was back in less then forty minutes, only Maurice took a bit more.

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Myra, back at her desk, stroked her wrist and felt lost without the bracelet. What was hers was hers. And if to emphasise that feeling she got a call from Naoko about a lost file.

Search for files you can't find



☞ Myra I have looked everywhere for this file, the *Custom.dic*. You know the Custom.dic in Word. I have to delete a word from it. I added a misspelled name to it, the name of my boss; it is a name I can never remember. I thus typed it in Word, right-clicked on it, chose 'Add' and then I discovered it was misspelled. Well rather my boss discovered this. Maurice told me I had to delete it from the 'Custom.dic' file but then he ran away and I just can't find this bloody file.

Myra was right to suppose she had to look for this file in 'Documents and Settings' and then 'Naoko Marikova' (she was Japanese, married to a Czech) but she found nothing, 'nic'. She felt embarrassed but had to beep the runaway, Maurice, for help. Maurice came to her rescue, with his usual good-natured smile on the face:

"It's because it's in a hidden directory," he explained. "Look, we're going to unhide the files."

He opened 'My Computer' and chose 'Tools - Folder Options - View' and select 'Show hidden files and Folders'.

The Search then hit the file indeed.

While she was at it Myra also selected: 'Display the full path in the title bar.'

"Once you've done this, you can use the 'Search' function, like it is explained on page **Error! Bookmark not defined.** and you will find the file you're looking for."

But it still wasn't enough, and they had to check 'Search Hidden Files and Folders' in the Search Options. On that they did find it. The computer gave them a big friendly

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smile. And because Myra had clicked 'Display the full path in the title bar' she could see the Custom.dic was in:

C:\Documents and Settings\Naoko\Application Data\Microsoft\Proof.

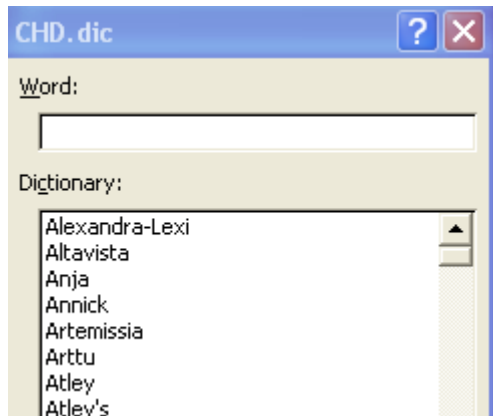
"This is one of the many reasons why one can't find a file: it is hidden," said Maurice.

"Thank you Sensei or Grand Master," said Naoko on the other side of the line.

While she was at it, Myra opened the Custom.dic and corrected the misspelled name replacing the jzcyk at the end of the name with a jczyk.

She later discovered that one could do it an easier way too:

In Word choose 'Tools – Options – Spelling and Grammar – Custom Dictionaries – Modify' and add or modify or delete words there.



How many more ways would she find of doing this! This was the problem and the solution with computers. It was just like in real life, there was not but one way of doing things. But one just had to find at least one. And the answer was to 'Search' and 'Search' again. And one could find, everything, even a prince.

Myra took advantage of this new knowledge to escape for a coffee at Tello's. When she came back to her desk, just as she wanted to close Word, she stopped. Someone had written something in the document she knew to have left blank. A few words only and her heart missed a beat:

"The bracelet is yours."

In 'Dolphin' Font. She was more than a bit startled. However had this gotten there? She was sure to have pressed 'Ctrl – Alt – Del' and the chosen 'Lock Computer' before leaving for her coffee, like a good girl should do when she leaves her computer unattended. Did someone know her password? Of course Maurice was capable of knowing it. And the reader knows it, at least the first part (the second part being his

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birthday, which the reader might not know).

She looked at the computer for an explanation. He must have seen who'd put it there, the bracelet and now this sentence. But the computer didn't give her a beep.

Poetic formulas

Hilde had lost at least one hour of work because Sven and Gwendoline had parked their children with her, all of them boys, because they had to go to do some user support 'sur place'. To Miki, Diego and Paco, Leo had then added Nino, his only son by his ex-wife, who was on a visit, and then Lut had turned up with Maxi and Ricky, looking guilty. The six had sat there, and, even if they were not nagging for stories and computer games, because they were all well behaved, their presence had been slightly distracting to her. Other smaller children, not yet ready for some discipline, had been galloping through the corridors all day long. One of them came in, but this one remained silent. He just waved at Miki, who waved back and motioned him to come in. They were now seven of them. All suddenly looking strangely alike. Looking at her with benevolence. So well behaved, in fact, that it seemed not possible for such small children. Hilde blinked, she was so tired, she felt she really was on the verge of hallucinations most of the time. Should she give up working and tell them a fairy-tale? One for each country? And moreover: shouldn't those seven be with Myra? She was quite certain about this, but couldn't have explained why.

She was saved by Johanna who sent her own son Nicky to rid her of the children so that she could work in peace. After all, Nicky was a grown up and had to train for the job he was studying for. He planned to be a paediatrician. He was in his second university year and had come to the House to print out a paper he was working on. The House could thus pay for the paper and toner. The printout, however, was streaked with white. Nicky took the toner cartridge out and shook it. It worked like magic and the print was neat again. One can double a toner's lifespan by shaking it. A trick he had learned from his wise mother.

Nicky was Johanna's pride. He was tall, beautiful, with an interesting face, a rare combination. And of course the best marks at his Faculty. Johanna, quite tall herself, looked adoringly up to him. He gave Hilde a brilliant smile and motioned the seven little ones to follow him, leading them his trail like Konrad Lorenz his little ducks. Hilde saw them leave with some regret.

At a later moment, when their parents computer was free, they played on it, and Hilde could not help admiring their natural skill. If one forgot the skill of introducing viruses. Well that was the beginning of being a hacker, and a hacker too had some sort of skill. Gwendoline's two sons played flight-simulator, and both managed to land the plane successfully on their first trial. And not only that, but they had managed to land on the landing track precisely. She herself had taken more. Well not so much more but more. The third attempt only had done it, on the first two she had crashed. That was exactly what the little ones were now missing:

"Can I crash the plane Mama?" they had asked Gwendoline. Gwendoline nodded

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absent-mindedly and Hilde was a bit a jealous because even if she had managed to land, it had not been on the landing track.

She kept wishing she'd find a way out of this chaos. The wish was taking over her mind, becoming omnipotent. She was exhausted, running after Phantom users. Phantom WG's. Phantom bosses. Or kidnapped bosses, like Jack and Josepha. Bosses gone forever, like those of MOU VII.

No one knew what to do, nor did what appeared to remain of their CLA's - bosses, whom had been placed in their position by some strange authority, unknown to them, unknown to anyone, unknown even by ITSELF. It was just like money, which everyone wants, no one has, but which has taken a power of its own, not even being human, and now goes on deciding. Such was the case here now with chaos. Chaos had become the boss. Chaos was deciding.

The god of Chaos may be the most vicious one. His kingdom is darkness and his army are demons. You cannot define him or catch him, he changes every day, at every moment. He likes to dismantle, take to bits and pieces, to destabilise, to knock off-balance, to strike at foundations. He is the god of pranks and dirty jokes. He can appear in many disguises, and the moment he stands before you, it is too late. One should foresee him, avoid him from the start, not fight him. One cannot fight Chaos.

In this dreadful mess, she remained with only one wish: "If ever the day comes we come out of this, let me least have acquired some new and important philosophy."

To whom was she saying this? She did not even think of promotion or money. The House, in exchange of throwing nobody out, did not promote. They couldn't. Most people there worked so well that they would have had to promote almost everyone to being a CLA. And there were already all too many CLA's. And once become a CLA, they would have vanished. Well no, that phenomenon was recent, and would hopefully not go on forever. So the only thing she could wish for some new philosophy, some new meaning. Which she could find some formula to solve the problem.

She dreamt of devising a formula to get out of chaos. If she succeeded, she would get a Nobel price at least. Well probably no, someone would steal it from her (Hilde was a pessimist regarding such matters). At least they still had their computers, who were such a big help, if one treated them well. She gave her own computer a brave smile.

If you remember they were several factors she was still trying to sort out:

From experience, she knew: if one had 600 users, for one support person alone, one would get 120 calls a day. If one had only 300 users, you'd say one would get 60 calls a day. But no, it was more like 40 then. Why? Because when one had too much calls to handle, one could not handle it, and users would keep calling back, because their sheer amount would make they couldn't be satisfied. If one could handle the amount of calls better, and give the full answer to the user, he would not call back, but would be able to live for a while on the stock of answers he had got.

If, in a normal situation 600 users made 120 calls, and 300 made 40 calls, how many

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calls would 150 users mean? She could have seen it in a increasing order too, but thanks no. She took her Excel but couldn't make it out.

	A	B	C
1	number of users	number of calls	percent decrease
2	600	120	20%
3	300	40	13%
4	150	??	??

with the underlying formulas.

	A	B	C
1	number of users	number of calls	percent decrease
2	600	120	=B2/A2
3	300	40	=B3/A3
4	150	??	??

Of course, as Maurice said, she would need at least a third number in order to be able to make some formula out of those speculations.

A helpdesk could take the number of calls as being representative of their amount of work. If another factor of difficulty was added, this would of course increase the amount of calls. In the present situation, to the amount of users, came at least four additional factors:

The reorganisation of the MOU's. The office moves. The forever coming and going people. The new programmes. The number of calls would not be progressing in a simply proportional way.

Again Flavia's observation came into her mind:

Was it like with the law of combinations in statistics, and would it be multiplied by a factorial, and would be not 4 times more calls but $4 \times 3 \times 2 = 24$ times more calls, like in Flavia's theory.

Of course if the amount of calls was to grow even more they would not be able to answer anymore at all and one day there would be no more users to call at all... They would give up on ever busy lines. Awful, but swell. Formulas excited Hilde like others would be excited by sweets or pretty people

When exactly was the border crossed which made all of it too much, impossible to handle? How could it be foreseen? Hilde regretted of having slept through her statistic course, the teacher having been such a mean bore, because since she had met with computers she just loved the topic. Along with Maths. Better late than never, but where was her formula?

Moreover, the structure of the MOU's and the WG's in it were changing by the hours. Randomisation sets, binomial, 2x2 cross classification, could those be the things she needed? How could one find a formula for a ever changing structure? Hilde felt like

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juggling, not in real, like Arthur with four, but mentally and with eight balls. She got into a state of wonder and flew out to foreign planets. If only she'd have the time she would go there. Find some Martians who could help. In the meantime those formulas comforted her; they were like soothing hands over her tortured mind. She saw them like a poem which verses had a life of their own.

She could have spent hours reflecting over those numbers and formulas.

Was Flavia's theory the one to follow?

Was it Intrapolation or Extrapolation, like Maurice had suggested?

How to find the third missing number? Or how to find some already existing formula?

Some mysterious formulas in Excel.

Trend()? Or Forecast()? which calculates, or predicts, a future value by using existing values. Improduct()? Impower()? Imaginary()!

She realised the functions were not preinstalled in her Excel and chose Tools – Add-Ins – Analysis Toolpak to install and load the additional functions. She then chose 'Insert – Function'.

There it was: Imaginary()

No, that was just bathing in nice sounding formulas.

It was twenty-nine minutes over five and Hilde stood up quickly because she WAS going to go home today at official office closure. But then the phone rang. What devil made that she couldn't help taking the call!

☎ "Hilde you have to help me," cried Kirsi at the other end of the line. "My document is such a mess and I have to sent those 5000 letters out by tomorrow morning. It's an invitation to all the representatives of the Open Science Foundation, we're already a week late! I don't know what happened, I had all the labels on a diskette and then I couldn't open it anymore and now Maurice says it's corrupted and he can't get it back!

"You have been working from on a diskette!"

"But yes."

"And you haven't kept a copy of it anywhere else?"

"But Kirsi! You *must never work from on a diskette!* Diskettes get corrupted just like that. What do we have Hard disks and network resources for. Diskettes are only for storing documents. You must copy the document to the Hard disk to work on it and then copy it back. Fussy or not!"

"Yes I had taken them home to work on them there and I worked on the diskette, but now it's too late. Please help me. Please."

She was hysterical of course.

"But don't you have anything left of those addresses?"

"Yesss ... Sort of, but they are not in label format, just in Word, all the addresses

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written one after the other. But I have to make labels out of them.”

Hilde brightened: “At least you DO have the addresses in Word.”

“Yes but the format is so wrong.”

Hilde stood up, sighing, and went to Kirsi’s office. She was so tired she felt faint. Kirsi had red and swollen eyes:

“I have worked all week to copy and paste them addresses onto labels in Word and now it’s all gone. Just when I was done it all suddenly crashed and Windows gave me the message ‘File system not found.’ Maurice tried to repair the diskette with some ‘Repair diskette’ software but didn’t succeed. He says he can’t do nothing. Moreover he said I shouldn’t have left the diskette near the phone, but too late, I did. The phone has send out bad waves. Like it was hexed! And then Maurice made fun of me and said:

‘Oh Kirsi, I cannot but send you to some guru, Wise Bibi or so, maybe your diskette is blocked by bad schpirit and Wise Bibi he can try to make inkantaschions, apposchition of hands, un-schpell the sching, Bibi might know how to do it.’ I didn’t know Maurice was so heartless.’

She began to cry. Hilde tried to soothe her:

“Maurice was probably only trying to make you laugh. Can you show me the document with the addresses in the wrong format?”

Kirsi’s eyes brightened up with hope and she opened the document. She was positive Hilde would help her.

Hilde logged onto Kirsi’s PC with the remote Dameware programme and used the time it took to make some morals:

“But you must not keep such important documents on your hard disk either Kirsi, you must put them on the network resource, where they are backed up every day.”

Hilde did so with a ‘File Save as’ and then, inspected the document. Her head was swimming but it was, in fact, well structured. She meant the document, not her head. It contained address after address, separated by two or three return characters. If there is some structure, then a macro or programme can be made and handle it quickly. Slowly, she began to smile. Kirsi heard that over the phone, one can always hear a person smiling on the other side of the line.

“Hilde can you help me?”

“I believe so. I am going to my office and will try to sort out something. You wait here maybe, I’ll phone you when it’s done. Of course you will have to print out the labels then and stick them on the envelopes.”

Kirsi gave her a smile so wide it almost cut in her head in two.

“Oh Hilde, thank you so much. That doesn’t matter. I’ll stay all night if necessary. No problem.” (This one needed an anti-work patch too.)

At this, Erwin, Kirsi’s boss, came in and asked if everything was all right, and if he could be of some help. Kirsi affirmed no help was needed. Hilde was a bit doubtful

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about that; sticking 5000 labels on envelopes was a lot of work.

She returned to her office, opened the document and began to think.

First she made a *Find Replace* to replace all three and four hard returns by only one.

- Edit - Find and Replace
- More
- Special
- In Find what: Paragraph Mark Paragraph Mark
- In Replace with: Paragraph Mark
- Replace all



Find what: ^p^p

Replace with: ^p

Second she pressed **Alt+F11** to open the Visual Basic Macro Editor in Word. Then, feeling fainter than ever, she began devising the macro to get the addresses over to the labels.

Something like:

```
Sub Labels()  
' Macro recorded 12/10/04 by elbuself  
' open the two documents, addresses, and the yet empty label document  
For x = 1 To 7  
    Selection.Extend  
    Selection.Find.ClearFormatting  
    With Selection.Find  
        .Text = "^p^p"  
        'easily created by keystrokes  
        'find/replace - more - special - paragraph, paragraph  
        .Replacement.Text = ""  
        .Forward = True  
        .Wrap = wdFindContinue  
    End With  
    Selection.Find.Execute  
    Selection.MoveLeft Unit:=wdCharacter, Count:=1  
    Selection.Copy  
    Selection.MoveDown Unit:=wdLine, Count:=2  
    Selection.HomeKey Unit:=wdLine  
    Windows(2).Activate 'the label document  
    Selection.Paste  
    Selection.MoveRight Unit:=wdCell  
    Windows(1).Activate 'the document with addresses
```

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Next x End Sub

You can begin doing a macro in Word just by pressing simple *keystrokes*, and then look in the *Editor*, you'll be impressed about the code you unknowingly wrote. In each of us slumbers a powerful programmer.

Well, this piece of code was a good beginning, but Hilde knew there was still a bit of work to be done on those labels. She was so tired, she felt like being a hundred years old. Her head was spinning. Coloured spots danced right in front of her eyes, strange little beings with cute red and green caps. Was it the children of today, with their pranks? There had been so many. She rubbed her eyes to make them go away and to get on with the macro. Nothing helped; the little creatures were still dancing there. Being tired to such an extent brought vision problems. Sleep deprivation bringing up hallucinations. Like seeing not only malformed lights, lines, objects, or shapes but also animals, objects, or persons including dead, fictional, historical, or living persons. Gwendoline had told her it could get very bad. It could explain why all the people here were seeing dwarfs. Well now she was maybe seeing them too. But she had to finish that damn macro. She took a sip of her milk, which she always liked to have there, bit her teeth, and continued with the code, praying she would not fall asleep:

‘Honourable programme, wise piece of code, keep me awake, allow my humble self to contact your great subroutines and make your mighty modules work quickly, let it run right from the start so that no cruel debug is necessary, keep me awake.’

Hours later she woke up, startled, seeing Kirsi standing before her. She was holding a coffee cup from the machine downstairs and some croissants.

What time was it? She looked at the window. Light was coming in, even sunshine. At one time she must have passed out. Oh my God the macro she thought. But Kirsi was beaming:

“Hilde you are a magician, the greatest ever, you and your kids are such darling angels, I will never forget you that.”

Hilde looked at her bewildered. Kirsi had now gone completely mad too. She felt so much at loss as what to say that she used the favourite user sentence:

“But I ... didn't do anything.”

“Oh maybe not sticking the labels on the envelopes, but that nice macro, in no time you had the document with the labels ready.”

Hilde was not sure to understand. Vaguely, she remembered having indeed finished the macro. Running it then was only a matter of seconds. But then she must have fallen asleep and had forgotten to call Kirsi.

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“Sorry. I must have forgotten to call you, I’m unforgivable.”

“But Hilde you were great. When you didn’t call me one hour later I thought you had gone and opened the folder with the addresses document in it. There it was, the other one, just called the same but with labels in front of it. I had to open it in read-only and save under a different name, because you must have forgotten to close it, but there it was, all 5000 addresses on labels. We then just had to print them and put them on the envelopes. You’re such a genius.”

“Why ‘we’, did Erwin finally stay there to help you?”

Kirsi looked startled:

“Erwin. No way. I thought you knew. Your kids helped me.”

“But Kirsi, I have no children.”

“Ah then it must have been Gwendoline’s. I just saw her too. She does have kids doesn’t she?”

“Yes two,” said Hilde tiredly. She couldn’t believe this. In front of her, on the screen, was indeed the document with the 5.000 labels, and just behind it, lay the macro, which seemed indeed finished. Well it must be. And then the House was going so far as to make children work at night, without feeling any guilt!

“Anyway, I must find them so I can thank them too. They just disappeared. Please: Take the coffee and the croissants. I got them from Tello, who, as you know, is here everyday at four o’clock so he can receive the newspapers.”

“Poor him, he’s not so young anymore.”

“True, near pension or over it, but he told me that it doesn’t bother him to get up so early.”

“We’re all Newspaper vendors then lately. Only me it bothers.”

“Same for me.”

When Kirsi had left, Hilde was at some leisure to muse about all this.

In fact she suspected the PC's and gave her own a sharp look. But the computer remained blank-eyed, trying to look innocent. She patted his head absent-mindedly:

"Good boy..."

But he didn't even let out a beep.

And this was suspicious. Because usually computers DID give her a sign or made a sound if she talked to them.

On this Gwendoline entered. Following the new work schedule she had spent the night at the office too, to help another user with some report. She looked dead tired.

“Gwendoline, have you kept your kids with you at the office last night?” asked Hilde.

“No why, I sent them home to my husband. I believe one cannot push things to far. This would be highly irregular. Why has someone done this?”

Hilde told her about the two kids who seemingly had helped Kirsi.

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Gwendoline shook her head. They were all really getting crazy. She must have another look in her books, read more about the consequences of stress. She then declared she would go home and have at least two or three hours of sleep. She would come back later, she promised, and advised Hilde to do the same.

But Hilde felt strangely refreshed. She sipped the coffee Kirsi had brought her and ate up the croissants. But she did not want to look at the macro. Somehow there was something creepy about it. Some later this day she would, or tomorrow, but not right now.

Of course she wouldn't say anything about her weird experience to sly, intelligent Gwendoline, who never missed a thing. Gwendoline was always using terms like the self, the subconscious, psychosis, hallucinations... Lately she had begun suspecting her to study something like psychology in secret. If not classical clinical psychology than some alternative branch of it, like Neurolinguistics, Systemic like Watzlawick or Gestalt, or Bio energy, or whatever it was, maybe one of those very alternative ones, where you were dealing with electromagnetism, mental waves, shamanistic dances in order to make the hidden self appear, and so on. She would talk to dear Gwendoline later, when she had sorted out her slight panic and also sense of marvel.

Later in the day, Hilde suddenly found an eminent Buddhist monk standing at the door of her office, and even if those are considered a pillar of wisdom, he had lost his way in the House's labyrinth. Hilde made it, of course, her greatest pleasure to help him out and find his way back. On their long way back to the main entrance hall he told her that he wished himself far away from this chaotic place and his job as a wise man as quick as possible. That he dreamt to be a factory worker, with a wife and two kids, coming home every day at five, putting his feet on the table while watching football and having a beer that his wife had brought him. In the distance, he would hear his children playing and then his wife would call all of them to dinner. This was the plan he had for his next life. Which, as a Buddhist monk, he of course could count on.

"Not a simple factory worker," said Hilde, slightly shocked.

"Ok if you really want, I could be a foreman." he said.

Just an hour later Gwendoline told her a similar story about the famous actor, Paul Sparks. She found him lost too, just in front of her office and led him back to the exit. The actor was not as pessimistic then the monk and less anxious to leave.

After that, Hilde and Gwendoline were both a bit jealous of each other, because in fact Gwendoline would have preferred the monk and Hilde the actor.

Nothing is perfect. But Gwendoline could understand that the Buddhist monk was really tired of being held for the wise crack who has an answer to about any question. It must be strenuous indeed. Just as the Helpdesk, suspected of magic, he was asked questions which he thought people could answer themselves. About their own work or life, not about IT or some wisdom they believed he held in his hands, but which might not even exist. What if she would take to answer in this Buddhist monk's way. Answer

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with a question, not a long complicated explanation.

Would a user for instance ask her how to do a *hanging indent* in Word she would answer: “Who is asking?” instead of saying “Press Tab, type a line or two, and then press **Ctrl+T**.”

“Who is asking.” was much more poetic and would make the user realise about who he really was, lead him to inspect his own depths. And why would one need a hanging indent anyway. A rope maybe, but not an indent.

At that point Gwendoline wanted to go back to the paragraph she had previously worked on in her document, before typing this stuff about poetic hangings and in order to get back there, she simply pressed **Shift+F5**. Try it out when you had to stop typing and check something somewhere else in your document. You’ll get back in a single stroke to where you were.

At this she was interrupted the third time today by someone who’d lost himself in the House’s labyrinth:

“I just want to get out of here, he said helplessly, can you help me?”

Gwendoline finally had her son Paco make a drawing of the Curie and Koch buildings. It seemed absolutely impossible to get out of here if you were not fully part of the House. Her office being in front of the elevators she spend at least four times five minutes a day to explain their way out to visitors or foreign personnel.

Paco drew proudly and Gwendoline hung the drawings up next to the elevators, with the notice upon it:

Feeling lost?

Help yourself!

The following day some one else, probably Theo, of the Logistics WG, had hung them up next to the remaining elevators.

Carnival

It came to the point where people could not express their state of being with another words than 'tired, weary, exhausted, worn out, drained'. Two persons left the MOU because of chronic fatigue, than two more because of chronic depression; others suffered all the stress symptoms one can imagine. Stomach cramps, headache, trembling fingers, muscular aches, backache, lumbago, nervous cough and sneezing. They were running around breathless, wild eyed, typing their fingers wound, looking for colleagues to help them, but those were gone. They were working much too hard, and they knew it, and complaining about it had become a second nature. CHD would get a call and would find each question followed by a complaint.

Complaining was the only joy they had left. It became so bad that one ended up having the impression that even if their problems were solved, they would go on complaining, just by pure habit, or just because it would forever be associated to a kind of joy.

Users, under great stress, just like children, regress. Together with her own regression that did not much good. Ah to be child again, without worry. She wondered if she'd ever been like that, it seemed so long ago. She hoped she could help make a better world for her kids, in which one would not loose his mind and soul to stress.

But at least they were nice to each other, and held each others hands while complaining, saying; "I know, I know, I know while listening." They were trying to take care of each other as best as they could, give the all counsels they could find. Those who remained so much did their best to get on with the work and managed at the same time to be so supportive towards each other that one could only be dumbfolded by admiration. Working well and being nice seemed they only powers left to them. Oh but maybe those, especially the second is the greatest of all powers.

Gwendoline knew she was getting crazy along with the others. Why should she be an exception? But at least she sort of understood where they were going.

She entered Romana's office. There sat Romana, with blood rimmed eyes. She had shut all the shutters and with it the few little light which could come in, her office being at the second floor.

"But Romana, at least open the shutters," she said. "You'll get depressive."

Romana's colleague Mieke entered and nodded with violent approval:


"Just as I was telling you, Romana. You'll get depressive. But we need you. Please let me open the shutters."

At this she went and did so.

In this office, as in many, cables lay still open and walls were streaked with dirt. The lack of light made it worse. Romana had the eyes of a mad woman. She rolled them at

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Gwendoline, helpless:

 “Gwendoline, help me, I am getting mad. I have to do this very long report. And the document crashes all the time. Doctor Watson comes, and then I loose everything.

“Does your document have a lot of footnotes in it?”

“Yes. How do you know?”

“Have you noticed if it crashes when you are editing or inserting a footnote?”

Romana’s face brightened:

“Yes how do you know?”

“It is a typical for long documents with footnotes.”

Romana’s face filled with hope:

“But how can I avoid this then?”

 “In documents with a lot of footnotes it is better to work in *Normal View*.”

“And what do you mean.”

“I’ll show you.”

Gwendoline went over to Romana’s PC and there, from the menu bar, she choose:

‘View - Normal View’. ”Later you can then change back to page view, maybe when you type normal text. But if you want to do something with a footnote, choose: ‘View - Normal View’.

This sounded like good news for Romana, and indeed, when she tried, it worked.

“You’re so great, Gwendoline. A miracle,” said Romana, and Mieke nodded approvingly.

“Yes indeed. A Miracle. Everybody calls you that.”

Romana felt it was her lucky day:

”Can I ask you something else?”



“Of course, that’s what were here for.”

“I have this line beneath a paragraph, I just can’t make it go away. It is not an underline!”

She pointed at it.



“This is indeed not an underline. It is a *border*. Look. Click on it and then choose the square with no border. Look, the line is gone.”

“Look, if I choose  it makes a border around the whole paragraph. If I choose  it goes away again.”

Romana shook her head, as if she couldn’t believe her eyes.

“You are a Wizard, Gwendoline. A real one.” she said.

Gwendoline smiled. She liked it every time she heard something like this about her,

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and then, also, she didn't. The kind of power the users gave her was sometimes difficult to bear. At times, users really seemed to really believe it. And they seemed to want her to go further then, with her wizardry. And there it came:

"How do you know all this? How did it come to you?"

"It's my job. I'm doing it eight hours a day."

"Hm. But how did it come to you? Can you use the same magic on us?"

Gwendoline looked at them and laughed, but they were dead serious.

"I have my doubts. But I have also read four books only on Word, each one a thousand pages long. It's my job. I also read tons of other books, Excel, Access, Windows, Networking, Databases. Material at least four metres high"

"Ah."

From the look she saw both of them giving each other over her shoulder it was obvious to Gwendoline that first they didn't want to do this, second she was not believed. Romana and Mieke felt sure that she had just gotten this knowledge over night, by the way of wizardry.

"Magician Magician." Gwendoline could almost hear them think.

They both looked at her a bit accusingly. It was obvious they now wanted her to speak out some magic formula, mix them some potion, so that they could drink her knowledge down in just a minute. Well she wouldn't. Gwendoline heard them sigh and think aloud:

"She is so nice and so intelligent. But all those computer wizards are a bit stingy. Gwendoline is at least talking sense. But Maurice or Nico, they are just talking in Chinese or old Egyptian all the time. Why can't they speak English and say it in two words instead of giving a lecture of several minutes, speaking out hieroglyphs aloud!"



¹⁰

Maybe we ARE stingy, Gwendoline thought. Why give everything away just like that, in two words, while I made an effort for years to know all this? But even if she was the most generous person in the world, even if she had wanted too, she was convinced she couldn't say them in two words, those thousands of pages she had read. It was just as Hilde had told her recently: One Nobel price winner had been asked to summarise his work in 'two sentences'. He had answered:

"If I was able to do that I wouldn't have gotten the Nobel price."

But she hadn't received the Nobel price (yet), so maybe she could do it. Maybe it was

¹⁰ : <http://webperso.iut.univ-paris8.fr/~rosmord/nomhiero.html> translates your name into hieroglyphs

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possible. Transmit their knowledge just like that. By some astute technique. Maybe if she could show them how nice computers could be. How helpful if one tried to understand them. Or maybe she should play a joke on her users, and really go about as if to speak out magical formulas. Waving her hands and making some strange gestures over the PC and so on.

Lexi had told her she had done just such thing recently. In the elevator, where she was with two users and where they had just pushed the button for the eight floor she had suddenly said, at floor number three: At four it will stop.

And it had. With, moreover, no one to step in. Both users looked at her completely bewildered:

“So you can command elevators as well.”

The bewildered expression of their faces showed they had really meant it.

The same Lexi had had her joke, but now wished that thing about was true and that she could at least make herself invisible. As she went about the corridors she was never be able to leave them and get back to her office. She could never finish anything. Immediately a head would pop out every office, asking her to help with something. They, the users had paranormal powers! It was as if they FELT she was approaching, like with those rumors which in ancient times would spread over the fields. From mouth to mouth, office to office, they shouted the news at each other: Help is coming! We are saved!

If it could only be true. If she could at least save her own neck. She was so tired. It was a small consolation that she was not alone. Gwendoline had told her about a third fainting spell. Maurice limped more than ever. Lut seemed the worse. She was sick all the time expressing it through every little ailment one can imagine.

This made Gwendoline again think about users wishful thinking to know computers by magic. But what if it WAS possible? Again and again they said it:

“Magician, magician.” And: “How ever do you know all this?”

“I have read many book of more than thousand pages each.”

“But... Can't you tell me all this in two words?”

☹ *You can you're a magician* ☹

“How ever can you know all this?!”

“I read one book of thousand pages, and another, and another.”

“But... Can't you tell me all of this in two words?”

☹ *You can you're a magician* ☹

And if they were right? If it WAS possible?

☹ *You could. If you only would. But you don't WANT to. You're sort of stingy.* ☹

And maybe she didn't want, maybe she was jealous of her own knowledge, acquired

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through such hard work. But people are forced to use computers all day long. They, the IT people were not forced to make jewels, or knit, just do our job. And then this was not true either. People were asking them to do their own job all the time. As if IT was capable of doing everything. In the upheaval of changes people didn't have the time to train their new colleagues anymore, and those new colleagues then came to the Helpdesk, asking them to help them with their work, even if it had nothing to do with computers.


As things had developed their job was turning into a nightmare. Only magic could help now. If only to achieve that users wouldn't at least not ask the basic questions anymore. Like:

"What is the desktop." (Well, the screen - Just imagine your wooden Desktop-table. With documents, notebooks on it. If too many are open, you won't see the Desktop anymore)

"Ah then I have to close all the applications to see it?"

"Not close, but minimize."

"That takes so much time."

"Yes, but if you click on the 'Show Desktop' icon  you'll minimize them in one stroke."

"I don't have it."

"Oh. Then please right-click on a free spot of the taskbar and choose: 'Toolbars – Quick Launch'.

"What's the taskbar?"

"We explained this on page **Error! Bookmark not defined.**"

If they at least could find a way to transmit a basic terminology, a lot of time would be won. But how, if not by some sort of magic. And if it WAS possible?

☹ *You could. If you only would.* ☹

She doubted it was so easy. But maybe someone else could. CHD and their users needed all the help in the world. She had thought and thought for months now, but the only thing she could still really sense and see was her own exhaustion. Another challenge was that their IT brain must always be working at two frequencies: One Technical, one Human. The two halves of the brain, its left and right hemisphere, had to work at the same time. Together. Stressy. Like rubbing your hand in a circle over your stomach and at the same time tapping your head. Like Salvador Dali, who pretended he was able to do seven different things at the same time. What was it again: Painting, Talking, Writing, and what else? Well she was not Dali.

And Dali probably took his time. But HelpDesk people were always dealing with urgency, and had to give an answer on the spot. Fortunately it was urgency, and no emergency ward, they were not doctors, and no lives could get lost by some wrong

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answer or move. Users didn't always believe that though.

☎ “Gwendoline! It's Lydia. I phone you directly, because it's so urgent, and I have to get the problem solved immediately. You can really save my life!”

“Oh tell me,” said Gwendoline with great earnest, imagining Lydia covered in blood or bitten by a cobra.

“I have this document, it doesn't print anything but tiny little rubbish characters, but I have to print it out immediately, and hand it out at the meeting our boss is going to have in five minutes with the Ministers of Sciences of the G8.!”

“Did you choose the right printer driver?”

“Well I guess yes. I have a HP 1100 and that is set as a default printer in ‘Printers and Faxes’.”

Gwendoline bit her lips. She had had that case recently. But if users presented their case like this, she got nervous, and couldn't think properly.

“Oh Lydia, why did you say it was so vital?! now I can't think.”

Lydia, on the other side, laughed nervously, but also with some confidence, like:

☹ Because I'm sure you're going to find the solution right away. ☹ And indeed it came back:

“Oh Lydia. I know now. Please choose another Printer driver: The HP LaserJet III. It's a universal printer driver, and sort of works with every laser printer.”

Lydia executed the command and Gwendoline could hear the printer rattle away.

“Gwendoline, you're so Zen! Thanks so much as always. You indeed saved my life, and that of the Ministers of Science. The meeting is about some vital new drug.”

A great consolation of course was that most users seemed very happy with them, but a few could never be satisfied, with all the effort in the world. For example for the new version of the Outlook Email CHD had:

- Organised courses with nice manuals.
- Made a Webpage.
- Gone to see each user before and after the installation of the new programme.
- Had filmed one teacher giving his lesson and put the video on the web.
- Finally send a message for those who “didn't have had the chance to follow the courses” to inform them they could have the course manual at the CHD office.

But there was always a user to react with criticism towards such positive actions. Their Email was immediately followed by one named Carlos:

Very sorry no but you cant go on and trouble us so easy, only because that you do not WANT to give us an organised methodics to all the colleague which

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suffer greatly on not having the info-background you withtain. My pains with Overlord are an axe to get rid of.

An axe indeed. This was not only very unfair and belying all their effort but also very bad English. And yet another proof that some people really believed IT people could do something like magic. Carlos had meant to say *Outlook*, but then had written: *Overlord*.

This Carlos was really taking IT much to seriously.

Maybe she was imagining things, but she was not the only one. The stories about dwarfs wandering about the building had not stopped, indeed, it had gotten worse. It was maybe not only dwarfs, but people were seeing things, having hallucinations. Nice Kirsi who was pretending with all the good faith in the world that several children had helped her to stick on labels and stamps on 5000 envelopes the whole night long. As if children would voluntarily do such a thing, a whole night long, and then just disappear as if by magic. Plops! Gone! Their parents would have looked for them, wouldn't they? And Hilde worried her too, she sort of seemed to believe this story with the children. "How otherwise," had she said with great earnest, "could Kirsi have finished her task in just a few hours?"

Hilde and her had counted how many envelopes Kirsi had had to do per hour. From something like 20hoo, when Hilde had said to have fallen asleep, until 4hoo in the morning. 6 hours. That made 833×2 (label and stamp) = 1666 licks and sticks an hour. 27 a minute. That was an awful lot. A Charlie Chaplin chain of licking and sticking. Not that the House could have given them some machine to do it. That was not the way of he House. Too easy. It had to be by hand. And the service who could eventually have done it for them had been asleep by then. This she knew for sure. So how had Kirsi done it? And Hilde, pretending not to remember she had done the macro which had made it possible to print out the labels.

Was sound Hilde suffering from hallucinations too? She probably had had the macro ready, and then had just forgotten about it. Gwendoline tried to remember what her friends Henriette and Eugen, two Bohatian psychoanalysts from the lacanian school, had told her about possible causes of hallucinations. Something about the lack of a father. Bohatia produces a quite impressive series of excellent psychoanalysts, which might come from the fact that their ancestors made their living by extracting precious stones from caverns, a fact which might have get them used to be familiar with underlying depths and processes. She opened her Altavista and typed:

+Lacan +hallucination +father +dream **FIND** [Advanced Search](#)
[Settings](#)

SEARCH: Worldwide or [Select a country](#) RESULTS IN: All languages English

The + before each word to be sure that the webpage contained all of the words. Lacan is a well-known psychoanalyst like Freud, only most people don't seem to know him.

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Nevertheless she promptly obtained an impressive series of Web Pages. She clicked randomly and flipped through some of them picking up significant pieces of information like:

- 1: Postulation of a primordial signifying chain
- 2: Foreclosure of the signifier of the Name-of-the-Father
- 3: Confrontation with A-Father which triggers a psychotic outbreak.

Very comprehensible, as Lacan usually was ... She continued to read:


‘Indeed the signifier of the Name-of-the-Father- leaves many questions unanswered.’¹¹

Only the last four words really made sense to Gwendoline. No wonder that the users were asking IT people to talk sense. No specialist seemed to be able to achieve this. Certainly not Lacan or someone like Maurice. And the human mind was certainly more complex than a computer. But the topic of what she could translate as ‘absence of A father’ seemed to apply to the actual situation. There was indeed no father, no authority, no more rule. To the question ‘Who has decided about all this’, which had led to their messy situation the only answer seemed to be: No one. In comparison to that, Alice, in her looking glass, was lucky. To her observation:

“The question is, whether you *can* make words mean so many different things.”

Humpty Dumpty had answered:

“The question is which is to be master - that's all.”

 Tamara interrupted this contemplation by complaining about the fact that nothing came out when she clicked ‘Print’.

“Is the light blinking?”

“Yes.”

“Press on Start again”

Gwendoline heard the printer rattle off.

“Can you check in ‘File – Page Setup – Paper’ if the Print is set on ‘Manual Print’?”

“It was indeed! I got the document from the Outside. I didn’t choose those Settings myself. With all that work, how can I think about what others might have done before me? It’s so discouraging, all of it. No one tells us what to do, and if yes, it’s the wrong way around. If it weren’t for Science, where would I be? I have to motivate myself all the time. But it’s so hard. The moment you’ve achieved something, you’re placed elsewhere, and one doesn’t even know by whom.

“The question is which is to be master - that's all.”

At the House the answer was: ‘No One.’ There was no master, or no more. So it was only natural that people should go slightly mad. After all, we all need A father don’t

¹¹ http://www.student.yorku.ca/~jluucas/San_Fran_Conf.html

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we. Wasn't the dwarf a father figure in Bettelheim's book about the significance of fairy tales? So since they didn't have one, people claimed they were seeing dwarfs. But Not her. Never.

Unfortunately she was seeing one, just right now. He was standing right in front of her desk, looking at her with big eyes and a great wide smile.

He wore a beard, a red pointed cap, red pointed shoes, short green pants and a red jacket with bright yellow buttons. She froze. Now it was happening to her too. "Please go away", she whispered to herself. The little dwarf looked disappointed:

"But Gwendoline, can't I have some of those chocolate candies?"

Gwendoline spent some time pondering at this. How did he know her name? She noticed that the dwarf's face was painted all over, like if he had fallen in a Caran d'ache pot.

"In your drawer." With this, the little Red Hat pointed at the right drawer.

Gwendoline took two seconds to wonder about this again and then she began to laugh. Carnival! Of course, it was Carnival time! She had forgotten about it because Diego and Paco were with their father at his mother's place in Toledo, El Greco's town.

She was unforgivable. That was really a result of stress, forgetting about an event like Carnival. This job stole her mind, her soul and her family away from her. Miki, Sven's son, looked upset:

"Gwendoline please?!"

Gwendoline got the message and opened her drawer. Fortunately there were some candies left. She gave all of them to Miki, whose face brightened:

"For you and the other little dwarfs," she said.

At this, Sven came in, smiling:

"Yes he wanted to be disguised as a dwarf, like by the way most of the other kids this year. What did yours choose?"

"They are in Spain, with their father. It is indeed some kind of fashion nowadays, being a dwarf."

Sven grinned: "Of course. People want to have their work done at night, while they stay comfortably cushioned in bed. Would be swell no? Hilde told me the story."

"Of course, she told me too. But unfortunately it's just a children's tale and only happens in Mainz, no wait Köln. Ok Dear, I'm off. I have to help a user print out envelopes."

Sven went and Gwendoline looked after him, wondering again about how someone doing IT could be so sexy. He looked like some actor in real. Gwendoline knew that Sven had turned several TV spots, interviewing housewives about washing powder and so and one sitting proudly on a black stallion.

The user, Marianne, wasn't in her office when she arrived, and anyway it was time for lunch. She would dare take it.

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♪ And some lunchtime

Gwendoline thus had lunch with her cousins, at the big canteen.

Nico and his Spanish crowd escaped to the outside.

Maurice, Sven, his son Miki, and Lexi had *Tagliolini alla frantoiana* at the Peacock bar.

One peacock was parading there, displaying himself in full modesty: “Where have all the animals gone,” he said, “you imbeciles. Have you ever heard of shamanism and that we have an intellect of our own?”

Leo and Lut had a pizza at the Pink Bar.

Hilde and Emma I, II and an Emma III which had recently added to the crowd indulged in an assortment of French cheese plus Baguette and red wine at the Goats Bar.

☞ After lunch Marianne showed Gwendoline the envelope: the address was printed several times over it, and in the wrong position.

☞ Gwendoline opened ‘Tools - Envelopes and Labels’ and examined the strange phenomena for a while. “Hm. You have chosen ‘Tools – Letters and Mailings – and then Envelopes’” said Gwendoline after a while. Boy she was tired. And also she didn’t like to print out envelopes. This printer just hated envelopes too. Or he loved them. The proof was that this one took hold of them with his teeth, gnawed on them and crunched them, and didn’t want to let go when one tried to free it, growling like a dog. When she made a quick step forward, he jumped back and barked at her.

In the end Gwendoline found out that Marianne had simply used the wrong printer driver. She was trying to print using a Brother printer instead of the one she had, an HP LaserJet.

Gwendoline chose ‘Start – Printers and Faxes’, right-clicked on the right printer and chose ‘Set as default’.

“But why not choose ‘Tools – Letters and Mailings – and then Labels’,” said Gwendoline, “I swear it’s much easier.”

In the meantime the disguised children took possession of the House. They were everywhere, like a flood. Dwarfs were undeniably this year’s major theme, small is beautiful; but there were a lot of other disguises too. As many as those we use to disguise our inner thoughts, until they emerge in the form of kobolds, elves and trolls. They then lurk around and do a lot of mischief. “If we disguise,” she thought, “let us at least do it prettily, as those children had managed to do.”

It was obvious that parents took great pleasure to help their offspring with this.

And is not disguise the best way to express what one wants to disguise?

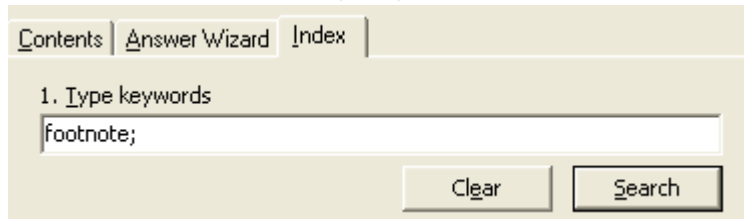
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Problems that afternoon took on a lot of disguises too, and Gwendoline, Hilde and Maurice had the impression they weren't able to solve any of them. It were awful, tricky questions, out of reality, or than riddles which's solution was maybe not vital at all.

☞ Like Anja and Urte coming with a letter, and wanting the line over a footnote¹² removed. Gwendoline tried and tried, looked in Format-Borders, in Styles, in Insert-Footnotes-Options, she couldn't find out how to do it.

“Can't you live with it?” she finally asked the ‘twins’ and they nodded.

Later she realised she could have looked in the Help and felt very embarrassed. They always told our users to look in the HELP before calling them, and now she hadn't done this herself. Talk about giving advices to others and then not following them.



The screenshot shows a search interface with a navigation bar at the top containing three tabs: 'Contents', 'Answer Wizard', and 'Index'. Below the tabs is a search area with the instruction '1. Type keywords'. A text input field contains the text 'footnote;'. To the right of the input field are two buttons: 'Clear' and 'Search'.

She found: Change or remove a footnote or endnote separator.

However, what she then read about it, made her decide she would still ask the ‘twins’ if they couldn't live with it. This was the proof that old senile WordStar was still hiding beneath the new version.

¹² Line over footnote.

Garden of Software

Maurice woke up early and left for the office, for once feeling quite rested. It was six o'clock in the morning, which gave him the right to hope he could make one of his plunges at Hilde. He had one or two computer stories to tell her, real good ones, she would love it. It was holiday time, with not so many people in, so he would maybe get the chance to finish more than a sentence for once. He hoped H. would be in early too.

Maurice had slept badly for several nights in a row because he had dreamt that he was living in a big House, his own house, even he didn't recognise it as such really. It was just suddenly his. He kept discovering big rooms, stockrooms mainly, which he hadn't known to be there. They were filled with masses of stuff, which he neither knew how to put in order nor how to use. What unnerved him most was that he found people in them sometimes too, rather awful types, lazily taking advantage of the premises. Those, he just threw out. But what to do with all the old computer stuff?

But today's night had been better, even amusing. He had discovered yet another room, more pretty, a sort of veranda, garden like. There were two children playing in it, a boy and a girl, some nine and eleven years old. He asked them:

"What are you doing here little children?"

The kids reacted very annoyed, but very polite. The boy threw his still tiny arms a bit helplessly up and down, gesturing in the air like a little butterfly and responded:

"So sorry Sir! You were never in here, so we thought we could use it."

Maurice, musing on this, finally realised they must be right and thus might as well stay there and continue to play and told them so. He had woken up On their pleased thanks and now, in the deepest recesses of his mind, he could still feel them playing.

To his contentment, he found Hilde already seated in her office, as if waiting for him.

"Hi Maurice," she said happily. What marvellous computer stories would he tell her now? If only their users would let them... Maurice was positively glowing! He must have such a good one today. Maybe several. Hilde had slept well too, dreaming of being in her garden, gardening and collecting herbs for some super recipe she'd devised.

"Hilde, yesterday evening I surfed, and I discovered a lot of goodies. I wanted to show you. By the way do you know Mrko Mrnsk broke his arm?"

"No, how?"

"He was surfing on Internet, and then he flew into a *jump page*, which was advertising about how to configure a Microsoft server so that it worked well. That frightened him so much that he fell off his surfboard and crashed on the taskbar."

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Hilde laughed. Maurice had a lot of humour.

☞ Hilde finds everything Maurice does or says fantastic, even his sometimes dubious humour. ☞ But Maurice, oblivious to my remark, continued on his trend:

“In fact I don’t know how he broke his arm, but I saw him passing by in the Watson & Crick building, with his arm in a plaster.”

“At least he will be able type with one hand only then. That will slow him down developing nonsense for the House.”

Maurice grinned broadly: “You’re right. It’s like Holger, you know the guy, he got a bump on the back of his head because he opened a new window on internet and there was a women with brains on it. He got such a fright that he lost balance and fell down on the floor. This guy has no balls.” Maurice just loved to say such things about other men.

He opened ‘My Computer’ and found the drive where he kept all sorts of useful little software for himself and his team. How he loved to feed it in order to help MOU XII and his colleagues! It was *Freeware*, mostly, though of course Maurice could have cracked all the codes.

Would they be able to have some peace? Oh how they both hoped to remain undisturbed doing it. But of course someone did interrupt. But it wasn’t a user. It was a little boy. Maurice first thought it was Sven’s son, and said so to Hilde, but she realised he was not. And even if he was cute enough to advertise, she so wished that Maurice could go on with his story. Maurice too seemed perplex:

“What’s your name,” he asked the boy with a friendly but solemn face.

“Mikki.”

Maurice turned to Hilde: “Sven’s son?”

Mikki shook his head: “No me it’s Mikki with 2K.”

“2K? Really? Mikki. Listen. We have work to do, will you help us?”

Mikki nodded solemnly.

“We would need some quiet. Could you go and keep guard at the door for us?”

Mikki nodded again and went to the door, which he half closed behind him. And there he stood, half hidden by the pane. One could almost see him carrying a little shield, like the McAfee Anti Virus Shield.



Any user who would call now would immediately be put into *quarantine*.

Hilde giggled and felt a bit guilty. Maurice grinned with sympathy and turned to Hilde:

“Now! Look! This will be great for our users!”

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They cuddled together like two children in a tree house, finally allowed to play.

Digital Sender

“You know our digital sender?”


Hilde nodded: “Of course; but explain it again to our users.”

“The digital sender is a wonder machine, a mixture between Scanner, Fax and Photocopy machine. Imagine you do not possess a document in PC format, but only have a printed version of it, but you want to send it to some colleagues. You just put the stack of papers onto the Digital Sender, and he will convert it to a readable PDF format and send it to yourself by Email. You can then forward it!”

Acrobat PDF

at <http://www.adobe.com/>

“Yes but with the Digital Sender the PDF the ‘Portable Document Format’ will be in ‘poor’ format, not ‘rich’. You can’t copy or paste from a PDF in poor format. I mean, if the PDF document is of a rich format, you can copy the text from it by simply selecting it, and then paste it into Word. You just have to remember that you have to click on the

 in the Acrobat toolbar to enable the ‘Select Text’ function. If you can select something that means the PDF is in rich format. You can then copy the selection and paste it into Word to work on it. But if you cannot select anything, this means the PDF is in ‘poor’ format, and this is the case of documents produced by the Digital Sender. Anyway, we don’t even have the licence for the Acrobat Writer, it’s much too expensive to give to everyone.”

But Maurice smiled mysteriously, promising much:

Optical Character Recognition

at <http://www.abby.com/>

“You’re right, but remember about ABBY, the Fine Reader, whom I told you about on page 195? ”

Hilde nodded with emphasis:

“Abby can convert PDF documents into word, images and text, all of it. It’s called OCR for Optical Character Recognition”

“Explain again.”

“Remember that trainee, Angela Recluta?”

Hilde nodded with some relief, this trainee had left a few weeks before.

“The perfect trainee. She had of course managed to lose her final report. She hadn’t put it on her network place, had overwritten it on her hard disk, lost the diskette where she had saved it on too. But she still had the last printed version of it. I passed the stack

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of papers through the digital sender, saved the attached Email on my hard disk, and then had Abby read it and convert into Word. Pictures and text and all.”

“That’s magic! Wow, this will save other lives too!”

She felt so reassured. Maurice was so reassuring, always having a solution for everything.

“Ready for the next move?”

Hilde smiled and nodded pleasantly. What story would tell her now?

Image editors

“As you know Mrko Mrnsk has only given us a very drab little software to view the pictures we like, holidays, travels and so. Plain ‘Paint’ in Accessories only. But this not adequate in what regards work. No way to adapt a pic with what we have, no way to resize even. Ok we might have the very excellent Paint Shop Pro, but that’s much to expensive to give to everyone too.”

“So Ok I found a very nice *Freeware*, that means absolutely free, for our users to use.”

“Tell me now.”

“IRFANVIEW, at <http://www.irfanview.com/> . It lets you View, Convert and Resize Images, and it’s free.”

“Resizing is great. Very often you get the picture in a just enormous format, sort of unusable.”

“Yes, with IrfanView you just open the picture and then choose ‘Image - Resize’



and then reduce the size. You can choose the standard dimensions, like 640 x 460 pixels, or 800 x 600 pixels. If you use Wight and Height to adapt the size don’t forget to click on ‘Set new size as percentage of the original’. Otherwise you won’t keep the right proportions and the picture might be distorted.”

Hilde was happy, she sure would give this Irfanview to her users.

“Anyway you have a lot of options. Look here we have Arthur rotated, flipped and resized.”

“Ah it’s Arthur! I too always think he looked like the little Prince.”

“It’s because he disappeared on another planet.”

He flipped the image again.

Hilde felt like flipping horizontally too. This was great for her users! That’s the way IT people like it. Picturesque.

“And if you use the command ‘File - Save as’ you can also convert it to the most common picture formats, like *.gif or better *.jpg.

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File name:

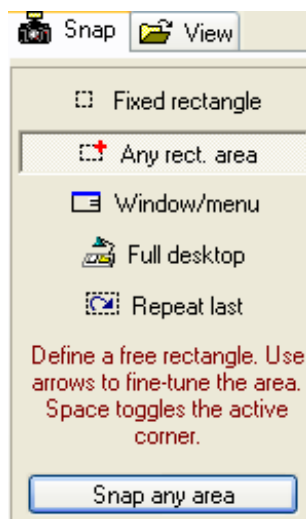
Save as type:

“Where did you find the Little Prince?”

“On <http://galeb.etf.bg.ac.yu/mp/>. It’s multilingual.”



“How Cute. How did you snap just his head?”



“I used MWSNAP, also Freeware, to be found on <http://www.mirekw.com/>

Just great. MWSnap is a small yet powerful Windows program for snapping (capturing) images from selected parts of the screen. Current version is capable of capturing the whole desktop, a highlighted window, an active menu, or a fixed or free rectangular part of the screen. You click on the options below, then click ‘Snap any area’ and define the area you want to snap. Then you copy it from MWSnap and paste it into Word for instance.”

“Seems great, yes.” Hilde, as often, felt that Maurice was an utterly generous man. At this moment she would gladly have snapped him to.

“Gwendoline can make her manuals with that. She can capture portions of the screen and paste the images in her manual.”

I Myself agree with Maurice, I used MWSnap all over in this ‘manual’, it’s a marvellous useful helpful little thing.

Audio editors

Maurice nodded:

“But wait, I have even better, for recording music and conversations and all. Like MUSICMATCH, but that’s Shareware. Means you pay a bit. It is a digital-music management tool that rips, mixes, burns, organizes, plays music, and lets you Super Tag album and artist information to your MP3s. You can find it on: <http://www.musicmatch.com/>. “But that’s not for our users maybe. You know that they prefer to work and would feel guilty if they were playing around.”

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“Oh but users should play around as much as they want. One learns a lot by playing. Look at children. Why should this stop once we ‘grow up’? I found Shareware for this too. TOTALRECORDER on HighCriteria. For instance I can record music on the Internet with it, and then save it as a MP3 format. Of course I’m not allowed too...”

“Don’t cry. The musical companies are loaded with money.”

“And what do you use to listen to all this Music?”

“I just use the WINDOWS MEDIA PLAYER, it’s quite ok. It comes free with Windows anyway. But I know many people like to use WINAMP. Winamp lets you listen to the biggest choice of formats I believe.”

Burn a CD

“And how to you assemble all this music then?”

“I use NERO, to *burn* a CD. Nero writes data to CD-R and CD-RW discs. Readable or re-writeable. You can make data CDs and Audio CDs with it, or simply copy a CD. You can find it on <http://www.ahead.de/en/index.html>.”

Of course Hilde knew all this too, but it was just to hear Maurice talk, he was singing again now, something which sounded like Travis, ‘Follow the Light’. She was almost right, it was Travis, but ‘Flowers in the Window’ Maurice now clicked on. Maurice smelled of those French candies again, ‘Violettes’ and he presented her with one.

Download sites

Most popular programs	
Business <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. OpenOffice.org2. ProgeCAD LT 20053. EasyOffice with PDF Filter4. WordWeb5. Convert DOC to PDF	Games <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Little Fighter II2. Kyodai MahJongg3. The Quake Series4. Chrysler World Tours5. Chicken Invaders
Internet <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Ad-aware2. Opera3. Spybot - Search and Destroy4. Sygate Personal Firewall5. Outlook Express	Multimedia <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Irfan View2. FL Studio3. Adobe Reader4. QuickTime Player5. XnView
System and utilities <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Java Runtime Environment2. WinRAR3. WinZip4. TDS-3 Trojan Defence Suite5. Winace	Themes <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Sim Aquarium Free Tank2. 1000 ASA Solar System3. Chromium4. Algo Bikini5. LightStar UXTHEME.DLL Patch

“Where do you like to get your software from?”

“I download it from Tucows, on <http://www.tucows.com>.

Hilde liked that too, but of course there were more download sites like:

Winplanet at

<http://www.winplanet.com/>

ZDnet at <http://www.zdnet.com/>

C|net at

<http://www.download.com/>

and <http://www.emule-project.net/>

“Go to a site, surf, find what you like

- choose to Download

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- choose to save it in a folder you've made for that intent
- open the folder
- and double-click on it to install it.

“Great. Let's see what more we can find, and download some more.”

They cuddled together closer and surfed on the download sites to find what was new there. She found him so good-looking and had he been an ugly little dwarf she couldn't have cared less. Though if she thought it over, she suddenly felt sure dwarfs were not ugly at all. Why ever she had changed her mind about that lately, she couldn't say. Maurice smiled:

“On Tucows and its consorts you can find everything you want, even true love, if you only look for it well. But anyway, Tucows might have been gone the moment I'll leave this office.” His eyes took a mysterious look now: “But wait until I show you what I found for us. The previous was just to be soft on our users. Now I'll show you what we ourselves can bring into play. I'll make you see stars!”

And he carried on enumerating myriads of newly discovered software for her.

IP tools, Wireless Networking, Trace Route Utilities, Modem Sharing, LAN Messengers, Time synchronizers, User management tools & and many others.

Hilde's mind prickled with pleasure. His words make her skin prickle. Ambiences like in Winamp or Media Player; water, windmill, ocean mist, fire storm, brightspere, dance of circles, cottonstar, drinkdeap, eletriarnation, event horizon, illuminator, kaleidovision, lotus and 'I see the truth' ran all through her body. They stepped into the Word Wide Net, forgetting everything else. Peer to peer they clicked, scrolled, browsed, surfed, searched, found paused, chatted, touched, fingered, traced, pinged, it was a wonderful excursion. Hilde literally saw *pixels*. A pixel is the basic unit of programmable colour on a computer display or in a computer image, and she saw 16 millions of them, each in a different colour. All those agile applets had found the way to her sixth sense. She had always felt magically attracted by the IT world, now she was automagically caught in its web. And she cared about every single technical detail of the execution. That's the way we computer people do it. Not that drab, messy missionary stuff common mortals practice. No this was highly exciting, pure www, in billions of positions.

The phone finally rang. Nine-thirty and they hadn't been disturbed once. It was a miracle.







“The little boy did his job well,” said Maurice. “I shall go and thank him.”

He went to the door and opened it wide, but Mikki was gone.

Maurice stood there a bit stupidly, his box of '*Violettes*' in his hand. He felt a bit guilty, sort of exploiting a child like that, and then not. Had he not let him play in his own secret garden? Him and his little girl friend? And he could still sense them there,

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they had not gone.

      It was Jakinda on the phone, with her routine question:

“Hilde, ma Belle, I keep forgetting this, but you remember that when I write a new email and click on the ‘To’ field to open the Address Book with my personal contacts I never see it.”

“Find your Address Book in the mail folders, right-click on it, choose Properties, then Outlook Address Book and then ‘Show this folder as an Email address book’,” said Hilde rather amused, “But the next time you forget this you must dance three times around the desk.”

The trouble was that the settings of this function were placed on the PC, not the Server, and thus when the user changed PC, because he had changed to another workgroup and thus office, he had to repeat the manoeuvre. And Jakinda had certainly phoned her for that question over twenty times...

“It’s not your fault anyway Dear,” said Hilde. “It’s the Chaos.”

Then a trainee appeared in Hilde’s office and demanded that Hilde install her CorelDraw, Acrobat Writer and Paint Shop Pro 8 for her, at home she had used it too, and if she didn’t, it would have a terrible impact on a very vital report she was writing and on Science itself. When Hilde had refused, saying it was not in the standard configuration and much too expensive to give to everyone, she had literally refused to leave her office, until Hilde followed her to her own, doing what she said. Hilde had to have her removed by Maurice and Sven. But the girl had a point, if one thought of the fun Hilde and Maurice had had this morning.


A second trainee followed complaining that she couldn’t listen to music on her PC:

“But I can’t even listen to the little music samples of the songs on Amazon! Every PC has music!”

“It’s because many of this streaming video or audio uses RealPlayer. The House has closed a certain number of ports, and RealPlayer typically uses port 80.”

The girl didn’t thank her for the information. However, again she had a point. Why indeed should every PC in the world have music, except the PC’s at the House?

Hilde sighed; maybe her early morning meeting with Maurice would simply stay wishful thinking.

 It’s lunchtime

However they both met for lunch again, vividly discussing grid computing.

A Bowl of Milk

Keira was completely disorientated. Had all of this really happened? She felt she would never be sure. The report. With a deadline suddenly put to the next morning. Her despair. Allan's despair. Then the happy outcome with a but.

Was she getting nuts too? What a strange dream. So strangely real. Almost an hallucination. Or vision. There were stories going around the House about other people having them too. But she had seen one. Worse. She had seen two of them. Well or dreamt them very clearly. And she'd not been drunk, *au contraire*, she had not eaten anything since yesterday morning, and not drunk since yesterday evening, not even water? Though this too could lead to hallucinations, like for those who see a mirage in the desert.

There had been two of them. At the far end of her office, in the corner. A male and a female. How could she call the female version?

Was there a word for it? Or had they not realised that she had been watching them? Maybe seeing such beings was not a psychological sickness, but a rare gift. Keira was Irish and thus had some experience with kobolds, trolls, dwarfs and leprechauns. Education is very useful but maybe it made one see things which were not there. And why was Allan not here too, she missed his warm if shy presence. His cute sensitive little nose, lively brown eyes, quick movements.

But worse than the thought she might be going mad was the possibility that that what she was seeing could be the true. And two of them! No, this wasn't the worst. What made her frozen with fright was the thought of her report (about 'Natural against conventional Healing') not even being half way through. Over 200 pages remained to do, to puzzle together using Kaleidoscope and Elements 112. And then she had heard herself whisper, a very loud whisper: HELP ME. She didn't really know if she was referring to the report or to her sanity. Both were obviously at stake.

At the HELP ME the two instantly stopped whatever they'd been doing, stood up, looked at her, then at each other, as if only just noticing her, whispered to each other for a short while, turned back to her, whispered at each other again. And then she saw the male putting his tiny hand into his pocket, take out an object, lift it to his mouth and blow into it sharply. It was a whistle.

Keira woke up, with the first ray of sun tinkling her nose. Everything was silent. The offices around her too, it was still too early. What a strange dream to have had, she thought. At one time, she must have collapsed on her desk and fallen asleep; her face still streaked with tears, and dreamt this strange scene. She took a few sips from a bottle of milk, but there was not much left, strange, hadn't she just bought a new bottle

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yesterday? For Gima, Allan's cat. It was highly irregular, but sometimes Allan brought Gima into the office, and asked her to look after her. Keira didn't mind, she adored that cat, and the cat adored her. That's why she was careful to always have a bowl of milk ready for her. She had apparently drunk the rest of it. She must remember to buy a new one. At this thought, Keira fell asleep again. Head over her crossed hands.

Thus she was found by Allan, her CLA, one hour later, at six o'clock in the morning. He came back, hair tousled, unwashed, in the same suit he had been wearing before, guilty with the three hours of sleep stolen at the side of his cat and leaving Keira alone with her impossible task.

Allan shook her slightly by the left shoulder, and she startled up.

The dream was still vivid in her head. Little figures dancing before her eyes, smiling, lost in some strange activity. She couldn't remember exactly what it was.

One little figure was writing strange cabbalistic signs on the computer, like one of those programmes Nico wrote, but more complicated, two others were typing with the speed of at least 500 words in the minute, well Hilde typed quite fast, but not that fast, and a fourth one was printing? Ok one of the little figures had looked like Maurice, but then Maurice was very tall. Why did she think of Maurice then? Yes the little Maurice had had a slight limp; she felt sure of that.

She felt numb and done, incapable of any further action, like in a wake coma.

Allan shook her at the shoulders again:

"My God Keira! Are you all right?"

He didn't even ask about the report, he knew it was an impossible question, with only the answer that they would get into some trouble. Of course trouble here did not mean the same as it would have in another other place. Here one kept it.

Keira did not answer either, just looked at him, as if he wasn't real either. She rubbed her eyes to force herself to wake up.

Both looked down. And by looking down they looked at Keira's desk, and by looking at Keira's desk they saw the report.

Keira did not remember to have it printed out, not even the few parts of it which she might have managed to get done.

Allan took the report up and leafed through it. He thought vaguely about what to tell the Scientists. The report was to be translated into the seven main languages of the House in three hours to come.

But the phone rang.

Keira took it distractedly, out of her obedient habit.

"The translations are done," announced Bettina, the head of Translators. But she did not sound proud, but rather bewildered.

"What translations?" asked Keira.

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“Well that’s my question. I see here a message about a report from your Astrophysiology WG Work Group having been translated last night, but the funny thing is I don’t remember your report coming through, and neither can anyone of us remember it, and worse, none of the translators remember having translated it, and worse: the name of the 142 translators on the 142 versions does not correspond to any of our translators names. We have here 142 names which are not in our system. Well we are used to PHANTOM workers by now, but still!” Myra heard her bite her lips:

“And we don’t have 142 languages at the House, not official ones at least. Someone got over zealous, someone who has accomplished more than we asked for. Only the main seven languages were to be translated, as you know, but here it is: 142 translations, in languages not even listed in our programme! Worse, I have the impression some of the languages don’t even exist, or not anymore. I see: ‘Aramaic’ and I see ‘Langue d’Oc’ and I believe to recognise Runic letters and I see ‘Baby talk’. You should see that one! I just can’t believe my eyes. Is this a bad or a good joke?”

Keira didn’t dare say a word. What was this woman raving about?

“Keira. Can you explain any of this !?”

Keira still didn’t answer.

Bettina now took a sharp breath and then continued almost accusingly, like it was Keira’s fault:

“Ok Keira. Maybe it were freelancers. I am going to investigate this. This is highly irregular. Not your fault of course, but still, if ever you know more about this, keep me informed. OK?”

Keira didn’t answer. She sat there both listening to the ravings of the head of translation service and looking transfixed at the face of her boss, who had continued leafing through the report, but instead of looking pale and helpless he had begun smiling, smiling more and more and now he was beaming.

“Oh Keira!” did he finally cry out. “The report is finished. How ever did you manage to get this done! And I, your boss, leaving you like a coward!”

“But what,” said Keira bewildered. “What have I done?” The report? Finished?”

“Keira what’s the matter. You’re a genius, a good genius, my good genius.”

Before he could help himself Allan Beaver had jumped on her with the obvious intention to kiss her. Since this was the moment she had been waiting for months, and since she was too tired to be shy, as she usually was, she didn’t shrink back but bent her head up instinctively. Their lips approached and almost joined. But no. The kiss had to wait, because at that moment they heard a step in the corridor. They backed off each other, regretfully. The owner of the step must be Irene, Keira’s nearest colleague, and it was. Like a rather evil kobold, she popped into the office:

“Keira, did you manage?”

Keira nodded.

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Irene clapped her hands admiringly. Alan looked at her, rather unhappily, first because he felt she had let Keira down, second because of the missed kiss. Well it was only '*partie remise*', because now he felt he would find the courage to invite Keira for dinner at 'Mischel and Wuschel', if only to thank her for her miraculous work. He smiled at Keira and Keira smiled back. In the far corner, of the office she could still hear a faint rustling, a slight laughter, one male, one female.

But in the remains of her dream she remembered the dwarfs being very beautiful, small, refined and elegant, as if she had looked at their soul.

This report would end in the classical marriage between secretary and boss, and there would be someone very jealous: Gima, the cat. But not so jealous, Keira had seen to that. Wise she was. Always having a bowl of milk ready for her. She must remember to go down to Donatello and buy a new one. At the same time she would maybe tell him about the strange things that had happened to her. Others might take her for mad. But not Donatello. One could tell him everything, and he would keep silent about it.

En attendant, the kiss was still lingering in the office, and in 142 languages. Plus a Meow.

A tangible formula

Lexi stared perplexedly at an email send to the whole House reminding everyone that offices were not to be used for sleeping purposes on the grounds that offices were not equipped with fire detection installations. Lexi shook her head: were they really ignoring the fact that people did not stay at night to sleep, but to work or were they implying that they were sleeping at work or were they really meaning this about security?

She had dressed with great care today. It was pants as usual but they were Lagerfeld. It was a T-Shirt again but one from Kenzo with a matching scarf from Lagerfeld again. She wore high heeled slippers, because she knew the effect. She had been to the hairdresser in the morning, sending her workload to the devil, and had tripled all the way over to the other side of the river. Even if the hairdresser had his saloon in the House, it was placed inconveniently far. But that didn't matter. Lexi had a sense of foreboding and the first call gave her right.

It was Stanislas from Nanotechnology WG complaining about having lost his 'E: drive'. And his colleague Lasse, sharing the same office, had a printer problem. His printer had gone mad and was printing gibberish:

"It's really not printing at all what's in the document, but every letter seems to have been replaced by another one!"

The first was a network problem obviously, if not for them, than for her, and only in their office. Otherwise her phone would already have gone up in form of a little blue mushroom. The second problem Lexi had an idea about too.

She tripled quickly to the caller's office. Standing there, by the window, were Stanislas and his colleague, Lasse. And her Premonition stood there too.

They all three looked at her pleasantly, and with some expectation. Stanislas was hoping for an E: drive, Lasse for a reasonable printout, and the HO1, and Lexi knew this with the superb confidence women of her kind had, was hoping to see more of her.

After the usual polite Hello and HowRU Lexi had to sort out who came first.

Stanislas waved her to his missing E: drive, Lasse waved the crazy document in front of her and the HO1 didn't dare wave, but Lexi sensed he would have liked to wave her to him. One day he would have to admit that he adored blond women. It was just because he was confusing them with Blondes. What one refuses most is mainly the other face of a same coin. Gwendoline had told her that.

For instance Gwendoline believed that Jo was only behaving like a workaholic because deep in her heart she didn't want to lift a finger.

Lexi then bent over Lasse's problem - the document - first, because she was quite sure to have a ready made solution for it.

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Indeed the whole sheet of paper was covered with rubbish letters. Runes or Aramaic, but Lexi had no interest for ancient languages.

Instead of 'The meeting will take place at 9 pm in the Descartes room' one could read 'The meatink tamm goat avic uh ☹ op ole Ismaldfe gxxf.' and they were three more pages like that. Lexi took out a fresh cable and replaced the present one with it:

"The cable has a defect," she explained calmly. "Can you try again?"

Lasse clicked on the little printer in the Standard toolbar and the document came out fine. She felt six approving eyes on her.

She then turned to Stanislas. She opened the Windows Explorer and checked if the E: drive was at least mapped, and it was, to E: Nano on MOUXII.

She clicked on this but got the answer: 'Unable to display the contents of this drive.'

Lexi then switched the two network cables between the back of Stanislas' and Lasse's PC and saw that this did the trick: Stanislas had his E: drive back.

"It must be the socket," she said, putting the two cables back in their owner's PC.

"Either the cable has gotten knocked out of the socket by the cleaning lady or it's not activated correctly."

"In other words, you must now find out where the printer cable ends in the floor," said HO1, understanding. Lexi nodded. HO1 was an intelligent man.

"And this might not be an easy task, to find out which cable comes from which PC, amidst this incredible tangle of cables."

On this, he fell to his knees, and began crawling on the floor in the direction of a socket which was hidden behind a flat white panel below a table beneath the window.

"Can I help you," cried out simultaneously Stani and Lasse.

Lexi, on her side, was highly pleased. Her premonition had a very cute ass. He was a very decorative man.

"It seemed to be loose indeed," breathed the HO1 from behind the wooden panel. "I heard a distinct 'Click' when I re-plugged. Can you try again Ms Velma? Does it work now?" Lexi, who now knew he knew her name, obliged with even greater pleasure. "Bravo. A good diagnostic! Indeed it does now works Sir," she said.

On this the HO1 crawled back and tried to stand up a bit to hastily. And bumped his head quite hard. Their encounters seemed to be a series of hard crashes.

Lexi didn't feel very guilty, but then she wondered. The HO1 seemed a bit unstable on his legs. His head was alternatively moving from right to left and then back again, like a tree top in the wind.

"Are you all right Sir," she cried out with concern, and hopped to sustain him. She could just catch him before he could make another crash to the floor. Strong as she was, sustaining him was no problem for her and Stani and Lasse rushed to fetch a chair. HO1, with the help of Lexi, landed there gently, but it was obvious he had a slight concussion. Infirmary was called and arrived promptly and HO1 was carried

away on a stretcher.

What would happen on their next encounter?

“Do tretice vseho dobreho.” As Myra said: “All good things come in threes.” But this was not so good. A concussion!

Lexi returned to her office and began disassembling a PC’s because she needed to put more memory in it, but in truth it was just in order to calm herself. Her heart was beating violently. Was he all right? Maybe Lexi was much less scheming than she thought herself.

One tended to misjudge Lexi, with her striving at all time to be pretty, never wearing the same thing twice, and shoes one couldn’t walk on; and she’d appear superficial to many. But after having achieved a black belt seventh Dan, and realising somehow that something was missing, she’d gotten knee-deep into Buddhism, Meditation, and Mantras. And on her chanting *Omni mane padme hum* it became obvious that the PC she was working on would have a Random Access Memory like an elephant. She opened the cover with the help of a screwdriver and inserted the DIMM modules in the slots provided for them. A computer was no mystery to her, and she could have done this blindfolded. She had been born inside a PC, it was all Zen to her.

♪ It’s lunchtime

Lexi then had lunch with Anton, a man close to his sixties, but still very good looking. He liked to say he was loosing it, but this, Lexi thought, was really to get compliments. He was like one of those good wines, you know the saying, who get better with age. He had started working with computers only some ten years ago, and was now MOUSA of MOU X. MOU X he told her, was not in such an uproar as her MOU. It seemed a mystery to him, all that what she was saying about the chaos there.

“It must not be forgotten of course,” he said, “that MOU XII is really the soul of the House. You take care of the scientific projects, themselves, the rest of the MOU’s take care of the House’s infrastructure. Personnel management, buildings, public relations, information offices; they take up too much space and staff in comparison with MOU XII’s workload.”

“And not to forget MOUIT with its ITPOL department in the list!” added Lexi.

Anton nodded: “It’s true, I thought it would get better with its new Director General, Umberto Leone, and at first I seemed to be right, at first he was trying to get some discipline into this egocentric crowd. But very soon everything there settled down to be just as before and they went back to their previous way of doing. Being selfish and taking for granted they were doing everything right. And this ‘I’m above the law attitude’. It makes me sick.”

“Maurice, you know my colleague Maurice? He has a lot of imagination. But he’s said something similar. First this guy seemed to have gotten hold of things, but now it seems things have gotten hold of him.”

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“Like with some kind of blackmail?”

“Yes, Maurice hasn’t used the word, but I’m sure he thought of it. Like if they had photos of him in some embarrassing situation or something typical like that.”

They then went over to some lighter topics, and Anton invited Lexi to come flying with him the next day on his brand-new Cessna, he had just made his licence.

“Aren’t you afraid,” he asked her with a wink of the eye, when she agreed eagerly.

She grinned and shook her head. Talk about loosing it!

Lunch with Anton had made her forget a bit about her worries about HO1’s state of health, but now, back in her office, they returned.

But Sven interrupted them again, popping into her office for a small chat. Again more than twenty computers had to be installed and or moved, but seeing Sven was always sheer pleasure. Anton for lunch, Sven as a *pousse-café*. One could sense he was an experienced man but he would never take advantage of it or boast about it. He looked at you like a good big dog would look at a piece of cake, but gave you to understand that he had his own. He was utterly attractive, a woman felt desirable without having to desire, and was left with some deep satisfaction.

Sven stroked Lexi’s flat LCD screen with something that resembled tenderness:

“Beautiful, aren’t they, those Liquid Crystal Displays with the Thin Film Transistor technology.”

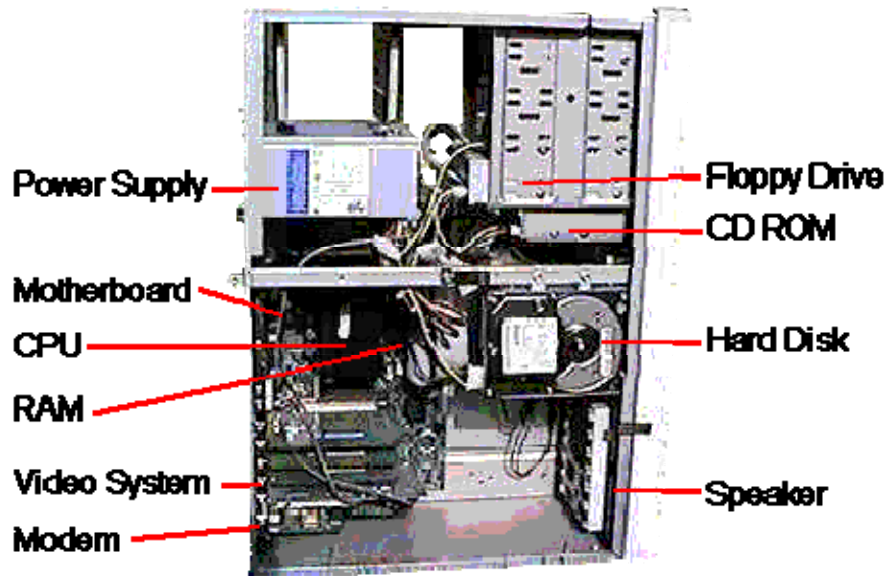
He grinned. Lexi adored him. But she knew he loved his wife and then she had more ambitious plans about men. She was finally reassured when Maurice came in to tell her that the HO1 was well. A security officer had passed by in her office, but since she was out for lunch had passed the message to him. He who was doing overtime, as he added reproachfully.

“The HO1 wants to inform you that he is well and sends his regards.”

Maurice said this in a slightly disapproving tone. He never could quite forgive a girl for setting her main objective on someone other than himself. At the same time he didn’t think anyone could ever deserve his very own Lexi. On this he left. Sven smiled at Lexi who, it was obvious to him, was feeling lost. But she was not someone to express her feelings, they were hard coded in her heart like a binary sequence of zeros and ones. 00100110, a computers basic language, his basic unit, the bit. 8 bits made 1 byte.

Lexi turned back to the PC she was disassembling. Sven looked at her with some tenderness. She looked up and he read in her eyes how much she felt lost. Like a silent prayer. 01001110. He answered with another sequence. Lexi turned, bent down, crawled and cuddled herself in the depths of the open hollow of the PC. Sven joined her there. The little girl had to support a whole village, left at home. He took the lonely Lexi into his arms. After all, she was the only one to know his true nature.

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No one would find them there. She was so tiny, and he too.

Excel - Make a wish

It was beautiful morning. Fine clouds were shifting over an unusually blue background and it promised to be a warm day. Birds were flying over the green grass which suddenly seemed to be punctuated by little white flowers, a star finch, perched on the taskbar, chirped some hit song.

Second line in an Excel cell

🗨️ “I need to make a second line in an Excel table!”

👉 At the end of the first line, just press **Alt+Enter**. Then type the second line.”

3	
4	first line second line
5	
6	

How to put an Excel table into Word

🗨️ “I need to copy an Excel table into Word. Magda, the caller, was almost crying. Hilde I tried everything. I tried Insert Object, Insert File. Its looks such a mess.”

Hilde went to see her. The table looked indeed sick and confused, in need of a good treatment or therapy. Cells were hanging out of it’s border, at the right and left, top and bottom, others, in the middle, resembled scrambled eggs.

👉 “Oh Magda, why haven’t you called before. It’s much simpler that that. This is what you do.

- Select the table in Excel.
- Click Copy.
- Open Word.
- Click on the place you want the table.
- Click Paste

“But be careful about merged and split cells in Excel, if you want to use the table later in Word. Word just hates this. So if you need to use the table in Word, keep it simple in Excel. Don’t merge cells, don’t split them, don’t use too many pretty borders. It’s sad to say, but if you want to paste the table later in Word, don’t use too many embellishments.”

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She narrowed some columns, enlarged others, used the ‘Format - AutoFit Columns and Rows’ command, unmerged cells and aligned their contents deftly and prettily. After some ten minutes the rather hybrid table took on a splendid shape. Simple and healthy. Gwendoline pasted this new construct into Word.

Magda, the gentle woman from the Physiology WG, looked at her speechless. Both her arms hang at her side but twitched nervously up and down. It was obvious to Hilde that Magda used all the strength in the world not to jump on her and hug her to suffocation. Small teardrops were hanging at the corner of her eyes.


“But Hilde,” she said, with some wonder in her voice, “you can answer any question, and so well. Are you not afraid that giving all this to me you’ll lose your place, because I could sort of outpace you? Of course not I, but someone else? Because the users will know everything?”

On this, Hilde had up to swallow her own emotion slightly before she was able to answer to that (thinking of Mrko Mrnsk). She thought this over, she knew it by experience, it had never harmed her to share her knowledge:

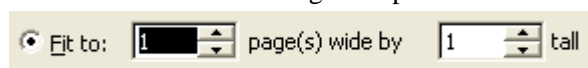
“No. To share knowledge is to learn more. With each step I help you take you I will make two.”

On this Magda made indeed a step towards her, with the clear intention to hug her until the end followed. Hilde, as a placid and comfortable Swiss-German, was not keen for such effusions. She retreated prudently, on her tip-toes, careful to keep a gentle distance.

How to make a sheet fit on one page for printing

 “I need to have my Excel sheet on one single page, but I get three!”

 “Just choose ‘File - Page Setup’ and then




“Hilde, so it’s true you’re a miracle. However did you learn to do all this?”

“By reading the Excel manual and by playing around. Hard work and lots of playing around. If you’re not having fun, you’re not doing it right.”

Theodora, freshly arrived from MOU X obviously didn’t believe her. She only knew about the more ancient method, where one progressed mainly by means of self-discipline.

Print the table titles on each page

 “Hilde. Hi. How are you? How can I repeat the title row of my table on each printed page?”

 “Micha, you just choose ‘File - Page Setup’ and there you click on the ‘Sheet tab’

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The image shows a screenshot of a software interface with two input fields. The first field is labeled "Rows to repeat at top:" and the second field is labeled "Columns to repeat at left:". Both fields are empty and have a small icon of a document with a red 'X' in the top right corner.

Browse to the row or column of Titles you want to repeat and select them.”

“Thanks Hilde, what would I do without you.”

“You’re being kind. And how are you going?”

“Well not so optimal. I’m all alone again.”

“And your new little help, Tessa?”

“Gone. You know she worked well and was good-willed, but her filing system was, well, inadequate. For instance: She put the file marked ‘Personnel Objectives’ to the archives.”

“Indeed? Then one could say that she grasped the ways of the House in-depth.”

“Yes, and the proof is that she’s gone. “

“And now you’re all alone again.”

“Yes and exhausted.”

Being tired became a standard way of mood. Their workload had been too heavy for was now months, and this did not only affect the individual or small groups, it had consequences for the whole MOU and maybe for the House, or worse, for SCIENCE itself. They made one small error after the other because they were trying to work five times as fast than usual and a small error could soon become an avalanche. No one felt efficient anymore. When one’s own job gets to be unfeasible to the extent that it breaks into other people’s job sphere, then that’s the limit. And the limit had been reached. It was Chaos, an overflow, bursting over into their weekends and their dreams, contaminating everything.

The phone then rang for a diversion. It was Penelope, inviting her and Flavia for a ten minutes coffee. Hilde went gladly, putting her formulas on low fire and leaving them cooking alone. She knew that Penelope was having a very hard time too. Still no news of Josepha and Penelope had to step in for her all the time. Under the circumstances, she was managing well. In the beginning, far from getting the help she was asking for, an impressive series of CLA’s of other WG’s and even MOU’s kept asking her to leave her present job and to come to work for them. They literally besieged her. Whatever would become of her own WG’s then? Penelope refused firmly and patiently, and, still hoping for Josepha’s return, endeavoured to get her own five MOU’s working and organised, phantoms included. But then, unlike her great antic colleague, she did not undo the work of the day at night.

She became her own secretary, assistant and boss at the same time. Someone just had to do it. It was very unnerving, because she felt so alone, quite unwatched. Are not most of us in need for some fatherly figure, who tells us how to do right and that we’re

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doing it right? Being his own boss is not everyone's dream, for some it's even a nightmare. A nightmare come true at MOU XII. Penelope didn't feel to be a boss at the heart. And certainly not one for phantom people, which her five WG's had inherited most of. They had probably thought that Josepha would be the only one able to handle them. But it was Penelope who now had started to organise her work and also the work of those five WG's her missing boss was responsible for. And if she thought it over, the solution asked for no miracle, just a bit of common sense and empathy.

She began by calling up regular meetings. That had been Josepha's idea from the start, but since she'd disappeared, sort of joined the phantoms, Penelope followed her invisible and inaudible suggestions. You will say: 'Oh no, please no boring meetings, about organisation and so, another nightmare'. But the miracle was that Penelope's meetings were not boring at all. She made the attendants talk about their expectations and problems in a way they got the feeling to be at a Shaman's gathering.

Chairs were provided even for the phantom people, and one at the top left empty for Josepha, and this stratagem made the shamanistic feeling even stronger. Slowly everyone began to speak up his wisdom. She brought people to talk to each other and about themselves, and they then to give each other advice. They did not talk about their job only, they maybe did not talk much about their job at all. Telling their story and being listened too made them spring back into life. It was the story of a very old MOU, and how green the House had once been.

Slowly, Penelope began building on this greenhouse. She was a genius in finding out what everyone was good at and how to reassign tasks. And people not only let her do this, but followed her ideas by adapting to them and implementing them. She seemed to be able to guess and follow any chain of thought, and lead it to the end. She was a born diplomat. She was a master listener, and this will lead people to submit to any suggestion.

Even if she still missed *'titomme*, her garden gnome, Penelope had finally taken the wheelbarrow in her own hands, and was pushing it in the right direction. She was a born diplomat just as Hilde was a born programmer.

She used public relations as the main tool to architecture her job, as well as the one of her colleagues, just like Hilde used macros. Both sped up work and made it easier for herself and those working around them. Both created a network of well flowing actions. Penelope programmed them, relentless, devising schemes and arrays of actions which, if complicated to set up, were easy to carry out. Public relations demanded just as much attention for detail as a programme did. In order to work they demanded that the sum of an action was broken up into its components. Once this was done, the result came out with apparent ease. Many people would just see 'sum' and think it was done it a minute. At the same time, if one would imagine the basic calculus underlying a little calculator, one would be astonished of how short the code was, but looking like:




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```
Sub check_new_op()
countnr = countnr + 1
nrar(countnr) = Val(afficher)
nr = nrar(countnr)
afficher = ""
If countnr = 1 Then
total = nr
End If
If countnr > 1 Then
Call subresult(prevop, nr)
End If
LabelResult = total
If last = True Then
vop = "="
End If
Selection.TypeText Text:=vop
prevop = vop
End Sub

Function subresult(prevop, nr)
If prevop = "+" Then
total = total + nr
End If
If prevop = "-" Then
total = total - nr
End If
If prevop = "*" Then
total = total * nr
End If
If prevop = "/" Then
total = total / nr
End If
End Function
```

This represented half of a macro able to perform the four basic operations: addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. Indeed? The underlying principle could, in what regards a programme, be ingenious but look like total nonsense to those who had never tried themselves at it. It was the same for Public relations (and, by the way, probably for any job). For those who only saw and profited from the result it was hard to imagine the work and analysis which had been necessary to achieve it. But Penelope did have a great imagination, unknown to anyone but her very own dwarf, who had decided one morning to take some of it away with him in her neighbours wheelbarrow. As for Myself, I so much prefer the French word for the apparatus: 'Brouette'.

Flavia, one her side, sipping her coffee pensively, was full of admiration for Penelope's talent for public relations too. But it was not only the her gift with people that intrigued her at the moment. She wanted something else from her. Penelope had a knack for people ok, but did she have one for computers? She must have. Otherwise how had she managed to create that very pretty signature in Outlook, with the three matching icons to the left of the phone, office and Email? Flavia wanted one like that too.

Penelope Dury - MOU XII - WG Bio5
 12345
 Curie 4/55
 penelope.dury@house123.org

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She went over to Penelope's PC and pointed at it: "How pretty," she chirped. Flavia always sort of chirped.

"Hilde has shown me," Penelope smiled. Hilde was somewhat bewildered at this.

"But no Penelope I didn't?"

"It suddenly was there. I thought you had put it there."

"No, as a matter of fact, I wanted to ask you too how it was done or who had shown you how to do it, because, Hm, I admit I don't know how to do it myself."

Hilde felt very embarrassed. She never had the time anymore to find out about such nice pretty things, which could enhance work and life style.

"Penelope, you or someone else must have done it, can't you remember?"

Flavia listened to them, laughing. But Penelope only looked puzzled:

"But Hilde, I couldn't have done this, I don't know how to."

Hilde pondered on this. It was true that Penelope was quite OK with computers, but not the kind to find out such a thing alone.

"But someone must have done it? Gwendoline? Maurice? Sven?"

"No, I'm sure not."

"Well who did then?"

"The dwarf," said Flavia, and they had to laugh again.

"It's a pity," said Penelope, "indeed many people of my five WG's have been asking me that already too, but I really don't know. If we could find out, then it would be nice for all of us. We'd have this nice signature no one else has, it would give us a kind of common logo."

"And a good signature, with phone and office in it, will make us win so much time. One loses so much precious seconds looking up phone numbers and offices."

♪ It's lunchtime

Flavia and Penelope asked Hilde to join them for lunch at a tavern outside the House, on the shores of the Topaz rivulet, but Hilde kindly refused, she decided to stay at lunch in order to find out how to do an automatic signature with pretty icons in it.

After some harassing time in company of a small salmon sandwich fetched at Tello's place she finally found out.

Make a pretty signature in Outlook

☞ Go shopping. Just find some cute icons on the WEB and then save them to your PC or network drive, like Lut explains on page **Error! Bookmark not defined.** Buy them fresh from the market. It can be quite a job to find a nice and free icon site. <http://www.iconbazaar.com/> is one. (Of course it's never really free, you always pay something, least of it your soul.)

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- Shop for icons. Just type 'icons' in the search bar of your browser.
- Save the icons in a safe place, like 'My Pictures'
- Choose 'Tools - Options - Mail Format - Signature'
- Click on 'New' and give it a name like 'IconSig.'
- Write your name, phone, office and Email on four lines.

Of course now she could have simply made a simple signature and do a 'Finish' and have a signature without Icons but she did want her icons.

Must she click on 'Advanced Edit' now and edit the HTML codes? Do something complicated? Like one of the recipes she was so good at?

Signature Ribollita ? (time of preparation: 1 day)

Signature Al Pesto ? (time of preparation : 1 hour)

Signature Tamago-Dofu (time of preparation: 20 - 30 minutes) ?

☞ Beat the eggs thoroughly. Gently stir the dashi, mirin, soy sauce and salt; line a small square baking tin with foil, as smoothly as possible. Pour in the egg mixture to a depth of 4-5 cm; the tin should be no more than two-thirds full. Lightly cover the top of the dialog box. Click delicately on each of the little icons, clean them and cut them in cubes of 5 millimetres diameter. Roast them gently for an hour. Degauss. Then insert by pressing Ctrl+V and dither until a wooden formatting toolbar inserted in the signature comes out clean and the codes are digitized. Run a knife through the edge to loosen the signature and cut it into 4 pieces, finally gently fill it out with the roasted icons. Serve chilled. ☞

Signature Omelette ?

Was IT really as complicated as a recipe and did it take so long? Why could women follow such complicated instructions as in a recipe but were not able to prepare a signature with icons? Why not just make scrambled eggs? Throw the damned eggs into the tin pan, scramble them and serve. An uncomplicated approach is the best one (The KISS (KeeP It Simple & Stupid) approach).

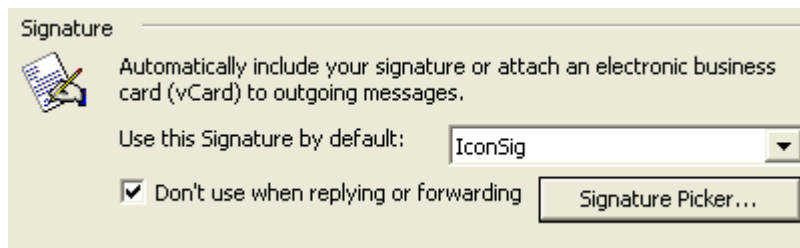
Signature Outlook's way ?

- Shop for fresh icons on the internet and save them Lut's way (page **Error! Bookmark not defined.**)
- Choose 'Tools - Options - Mail Format - Signature'
- Click on 'New' and give it a name like 'IconSig.'
- Write your name, phone, office and Email on four lines.
- Right-click to the left of each line and
- Choose 'Insert - Picture - From File' and then Browse to 'My Pictures' if you

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have saved the icons there.

- Click 'Ok' until you exit it all.
- Last choose IconSig as to be her default signature from now on. Serve hot.



She took one of the little icons and nibbled at it. Excellent! And the signature was delicious. The hitch is that the How To do it may depend a bit on the local configuration and Version of Outlook, regional ingredients, taste and things like that. But she knew now that by default signatures were kept in:

C:\Documents and Settings\Hilde\Application Data\Microsoft\Signatures.

This knowledge made her day.

After the coffee and signature interlude, her PC clock showed 14hoo and she went back to her Excel tips.

Excel formulas. Date, String, If and more

Hilde she was planning a workshop for users who might need more than just to fill out cells in the Excel spreadsheets. Hilde loved Excel; formulas gave her such a feeling of well being. And the functions the spreadsheet offered were sheer delight. She was knee deep into this when she was interrupted by Reinhardt Fuchs, a very nice CLA from the Budget WG. He wanted help with his Expenses Spreadsheet.

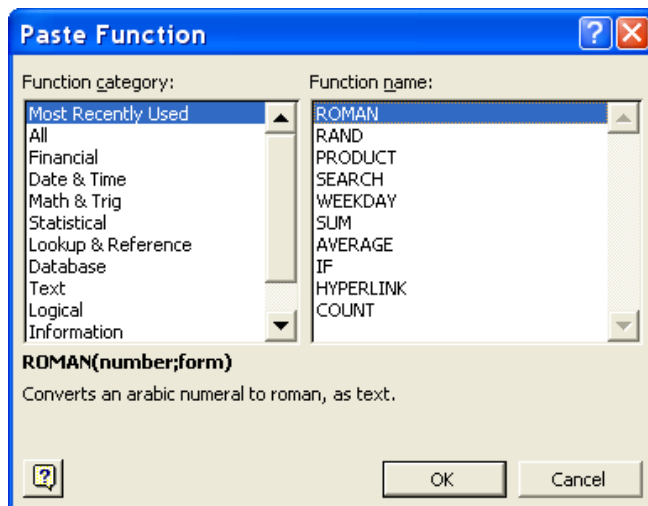
“I need to have the final result of the whole year’s calculations displayed all by itself in a separate sheet. I have had no problems doing the sums, but this small detail gives me a headache.”

“No Problem.” repeated Hilde, thinking of some herb to use against this complaint fresh out of her garden. “What you’re asking is at the same time simple and complicated.”

She went silent for a short while and pondered. All the marvels Excel could do. It made her sad that so many people ignored most of them, and contented themselves with the Sum function. Should she tell him this or not? He looked at her with the confidence of those who know that a solution for their problems is close at hand. It was obvious that Hilde had something in mind for him. And while they talked a bit about both their hobbies, gardening and alpinism, Hilde’s hands played on the keyboard.

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Position your cursor in a cell. Choose 'Insert - Function' and choose one. See:



Like the String formulas.

44	Hilde Brandt	
45	Hil	=LEFT(B44;3)
46	Bra	=MID(B44;6;4)
47	andt	=RIGHT(B44;4)

Like the Date formulas

83	22/08/2004 16:30	"=NOW()	
84	22/08/2004	"=TODAY()	
85	7	"=WEEKDAY(D84;2)	Sunday

Like the If formula, her favourite to start with.

	A	B	C	D	E
1	Can I afford a Bohatian jewel?				
2					
3	€ or \$ or £	Action	formulas in cells B5 and B6		
4	15.000	You can	=IF(A5>=10000;"You can";"Wait")		
5	4.000	Wait	=IF(A6>=10000;"You can";"Wait")		
6					

If but only if, but in Excel it came true. Reinhardt got that one and planned to do the same to acquire a new car.

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And the nested If formula, based on the weekday() function just here below.

```
=IF(C4=1;"Monday";IF(C4=2;"Tuesday";IF(C4=3;"Wednesday";  
IF(C4=4;"Thursday";IF(C4=5;"Friday";IF(C4=6;"Saturday";  
IF(C4=7;"Sunday"; "Funny day"))))))))
```

But when it came to the FV and PV formulas for future and present value Hilde went positively into reverie. All the houses and flats on the sea shore, in the mountains or in fancy cities she could buy from that, all over the world, just by changing the basic input numbers.

Database function like DCOUNT, DCOUNTA and DGET threw her into ecstasy. HLOOKUP, VLOOKUP, MATCH or OFFSET made her go mystic. Formulas took over her mind, and drew intricate and artful designs there. Hilde just loved to play around with formulas.

Formulas, at all times, have held magic. People had always loved the idea of chanting them in order to mend things or to speed matters up. Formulas were therapy for the soul. Using them right, she felt like connecting with the spirit world at times. It was shamanistic. But then Hilde believed herself to be too practical for that, the supernatural was only natural to her, and could be practiced by anyone.

But if she hadn't time ago gone through all those formulas, she wouldn't have had the answer to Reinhardt's question. She forced herself out of wonderland, smiled and looked at Reinhardt, who had been observing what she did intently.

"It is so simple; it is all based on the Equal sign."

=

"The Equal sign is the only thing you need here. The Equal sign is the one to use to transpose a value to another place on the same sheet or to another sheet of the Workbook. That way you can use the final result, totalling the expenses of the year, on another sheet, and it will change accordingly with the calculations, without your having to check it and to retype it."

4	Total	564.358,00
5	=Sheet2!J39	=Sheet2!K39

"In Sheet1 just type the = and then go to Sheet2, find the Total, position the cursor there and press Enter."

Reinhardt had to see that this worked and was happy with it. Again he admired Hilde's healthy hair and skin. It now shone with an almost supernatural glow. It was uncanny how anyone could look so healthy. Was she a witch? There were rumours. Would she throw a spell on him? He felt hypnotised.

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Insert a Name for your end results

“But it is easier to give the mainly used end results a *name*,” said Hilde, ignoring Reinhardt’s mystified expression. “Like if you want to do your home accounts. You make the long calculations on Sheet2, and have only the finals on Sheet1. On Sheet2 are all the long columns filled with numbers and dates for the Electricity, Heating, Assurances, Clothing and Food bills. On Sheet1 you only want to see only the final Totals or Titles.” To emphasise this Hilde put her cursor on the number right to ‘Food’ in Sheet2.

Food

564.358,00

She then chose ‘Insert - Name - Define’ and Excel politely suggested the right name:

‘Food’. She clicked Ok on that. She went over to Sheet1 and just typed:

=Food

And the total expenses for Food this year appeared. Hilde really likes to eat a lot... but not that much either. This is just an example. Excel was food for her spirit.

4	Food	564.358,00
5	=Sheet2!J39	=Food

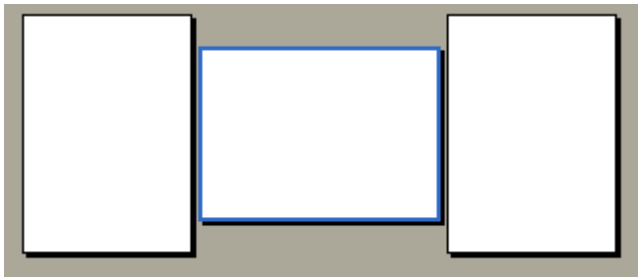
Hilde was now completely satiated or high or drunk on all this, even if remaining her own sober self, but Reinhardt had gotten a hiccup.

Lovely code

A good programmer always chooses the shortest and easiest way. In truth a good programmer only wants to lean back and do nothing. Even if he loves to programme. Programming is a very pleasant activity. People don't realise about programmes, scripts or even 'simple' macros. It's unbelievable, what you can do. In fact you can make a macro do just about anything. You can ask a programme to do almost everything that you do all over again and again. Typically a programme can execute in one stroke an action that you repeat several times a day or week. Make a macro out of it and it will spare you hours, weeks, months of time. But in order to witness a miracle one has to wish for it first. The difficulty is that it is not always easy to see what you can wish for. But if you have found out, just wish, ask your programmer, and insist until he gives you what you want.

Nico, harassed by Chiara, had finally decided to try to give her at least an inkling of all this. Since she was wishing. She bent over his shoulder eagerly, her long dark hair falling on his back. OK usually it was Hilde or Gwendoline who did the Word macros, but since Chiara stared at him so adoringly. She did have beautiful eyes. He felt her soft breath in his neck, eager, a pleasurable scent surrounded her.

"Imagine you must make a page in *landscape* format very often, and then go back to *portrait*. Portrait, Landscape, Portrait."



On this, Nico pictured the landscapes he had seen along his travels around the world.

"Or that you have to do a Footer with a page number and your name in it to the left and the documents name to the right."

(Of course then you have to know that you can insert the documents name by choosing 'Insert - Field - Document Information - Filename')

It is quite a job to do this each time, but not if you use a macro.

Imagine anything. A macro is useful for every kind of action you have to repeat a lot.

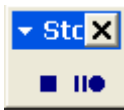
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Something you do everyday, or something you must do a thousand times throughout a document.

Macros

First Choose 'Tools - Macro - Record New Macro - Give it a Name'.

The macro recorder will appear:



Now begin doing the keystrokes; just as you would normally do.

When you're done click on the little square to stop recording the macro.

Then press **Alt+F11** to open the *Visual Basic Editor*. In the list of the left panel click on *Normal*, then on *New Macros*. There is your macro.

You can change the parameters in it, like the margins for your landscape page and then save the macro.

To use it again choose 'Tools - Macro - and find your Macro in the list.'

Try it with the portrait-landscape Macro, setting the margins on the landscape page very small, so that you can put a large table in it.

- Choose Tools - Macro - Record Macro
- Give it a name like 'Landscape'
- Insert - Break - Section Break - Next Page
- Type one Return character
- Again: Insert - Break - Section Break - Next Page
- Go on the page you want in landscape format
- Choose File - Page Setup
- Click on the Paper Size tab
- Choose Landscape
- Then click on the Margins tab
- Set the margins to 0,40 inches everywhere (or 1 cm)
- Close this dialog box
- Click on the little square to stop recording.

The macro is done, have a look at it:

- Press **Alt+F11** to open the Visual Basic Editor
- On the left panel find 'Normal' and there 'New Macros'

Here is your macro:

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```
Sub landscape()  
' Macro recorded 21/08/2004 by Nico  
  Selection.TypeParagraph  
  Selection.InsertBreak Type:=wdSectionBreakNextPage  
  Selection.TypeParagraph  
  Selection.InsertBreak Type:=wdSectionBreakNextPage  
  Selection.MoveUp Unit:=wdLine, Count:=1  
  With Selection.PageSetup  
    .LineNumbering.Active = False  
    .Orientation = wdOrientLandscape  
    .TopMargin = CentimetersToPoints(1)  
    .BottomMargin = CentimetersToPoints(1)  
    .LeftMargin = CentimetersToPoints(1)  
    .RightMargin = CentimetersToPoints(1.28)  
    .Gutter = CentimetersToPoints(0)  
    .HeaderDistance = CentimetersToPoints(1.25)  
    .FooterDistance = CentimetersToPoints(1.25)  
    .PageWidth = CentimetersToPoints(29.7)  
    .PageHeight = CentimetersToPoints(21)  
  'there is more but that you can see when you recorded the macro  
  End With  
End Sub
```

- To launch the macro choose 'Tools - Macro' and find the Landscape macro in the list.

Chiara clapped her hands adoringly: "Oh Nico, this is so exciting. How much such things can spare time, our precious time. You're a genius."

He smiled at her: "That one was easy."

"Don't be modest! You're fantastic. And now I know how to make a Landscape format too! Show me another one please Nico."

She smiled at him, eyes fluttering, and Nico thought she was not such a bore after all, and she was very pretty, with her black hair and kind of Chinese porcelain like delicacy:

"Imagine you have to make a document several time a week with the lines:

 Name:

 Phone:

 Email Address:

which has to be repeated a specific number of times. Of course you could just copy those three lines, but I'll show you the macro just for the principle."

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- Choose Tools - Macro - Record Macro
- Type the three lines.
- Close the macro.
- Open the Macro Editor.

```
Sub Names()  
' Macro recorded 21/08/2004 by Nico  
  Selection.TypeText Text:="Name:"  
  Selection.TypeParagraph  
  Selection.TypeText Text:="Phone:"  
  Selection.TypeParagraph  
End Sub
```

“Fine. But this will be only once.” She pouted.

Nico looked at her approvingly; maybe she was smarter than he had thought.

Yes! You’ll use what’s called a *loop*.

Loop

So in order to have it let’s say 150 times we’ll add a loop sequence to the code. Let’s take out the Email address, to make it shorter. It’s for the principle of it.

```
Sub Names()  
' Macro recorded 21/08/2004 by Nico  
For x = 1 to 150  
  Selection.TypeText Text:="Name:"  
  Selection.TypeParagraph  
  Selection.TypeText Text:="Phone:"  
  Selection.TypeParagraph  
next x  
End Sub
```

“And if I want to change that number every time, do I have to go and edit the macro? Is there a way to have the macro ask a question?”

“Very good Chiara, there is a way indeed!”

“Nico, you’re such a darling!” She seemed to be in a state of excitement he had not yet observed in a woman.

Nico was beginning to have a good idea about Chiara. And she sure was pretty.

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```
Sub Names()
' Macro recorded 21/08/2004 by Nico
vNumber = InputBox("How many times?","How many")
For x = 1 to vNumber
    Selection.TypeText Text:="Name:"
    Selection.TypeParagraph
    Selection.TypeText Text:="Phone:"
    Selection.TypeParagraph
    Selection.TypeParagraph
next x
End Sub
```

“Nico you’re brilliant.” It was a statement.

She was bending over him and her bosom was trembling. Nico thought that on his next trip he would like to go to Mexico again. It was such a sunny place.

“And if I want in once in Italian, once in English, is there a way to make the macro ask?”

Nico nodded, he felt cheerful now. Mexico it would be.

“Yes for that we can use a sequence called:

If-then-else

Well here without the **else**, though we could use it.”

```
vNumber = InputBox("How many times?","HOW MANY")
vLanguage = InputBox("Language? Type e for English and i for Italian",
"LANGUAGE")
If vLanguage = "e" Then
For x = 1 To vNumber
    Selection.TypeText Text:="Name:"
    Selection.TypeParagraph
    Selection.TypeText Text:="Phone:"
    Selection.TypeParagraph
Next x
End If

If vLanguage = "i" Then
For x = 1 To vNumber
    Selection.TypeText Text:="Nome:"
```

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```
Selection.TypeParagraph
Selection.TypeText Text:="Telefono:"
Selection.TypeParagraph
Next x
End If
```

Chiara clapped her hands. So this magic really worked.
“Nico you’re ever so clever.” This rimed.

🎵 It’s lunchtime - but only an appointment yet

They decided to have lunch together. Chiara had been waiting for this for months now and went away glowing with happiness. Of course we can’t know if she had been waiting for Nico or for a macro. Let’s say it was for both.

Nico decided to make the macro a bit more elegant, but she needn’t to see this too soon, all of what he could do, and it would only confuse her, because he used a *function* now.

```
Sub Names()
Dim vNumber as Integer
Dim vLanguage as string
vNumber = InputBox("How many times?","HOW MANY")
vLanguage = InputBox_
("Language? Type ‘en’ for English, ‘it’ for Italian","LANGUAGE")
If vLanguage = "it" Then
Call FillText("Nome","Telefono")
End If
If vLanguage = "en" Then
Call FillText("Name","Phone")
End If
End Sub

Function FillText(vName, vPhone)
For x = 1 To vNumber
Selection.TypeText Text:= vName
Selection.TypeParagraph
Selection.TypeText Text:= vPhone
Selection.TypeParagraph
Selection.TypeParagraph
Next x
End If
```

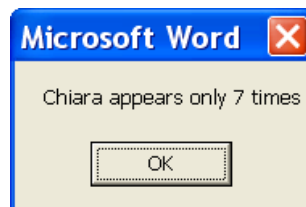
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End Function

Nico began to dream again, about Mexico, and how to visit it, maybe with Chiara. He made a macro to see how many times the word 'Chiara' appeared in the manual and to highlight Chiara in Red.

```
Sub HowmanyTimes()  
Dim WordSearched As String  
WordSearched = "Chiara"  
SingleWord = Trim(WordSearched)  
WordNum = 0  
p = 0  
totalwords = ActiveDocument.Words.Count  
MsgBox totalwords " in the document"  
For wcount = 1 To totalwords  
aword = Trim(ActiveDocument.Words(wcount))  
If aword = SingleWord Then  
WordNum = WordNum + 1  
ActiveDocument.Words(wcount).Select  
ActiveDocument.Words(wcount).HighlightColorIndex = wdBrightRed  
End If  
Next  
MsgBox WordSearched " appears " WordNum & " times"  
End Sub
```

That's the way computer people write love poems. *Dim* was to 'declare' a variable and *Trim* was necessary because Word didn't understand a thing. The macro counted bravely, and then said, as if slightly embarrassed:



Indeed the message box displayed 'only 7 times'. Only 7! Nico thought he should do

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something to increase this number from now on. It was true, what was said about him: Programmers don't listen to their users. He would try to amend from now on, and become more user-friendly.

Chiara was really nice, and she seemed to have a good feeling for programming. Maybe it could be done, just with a formula, and users would know how to do it. He wouldn't show the 'HowmanyTimes' macro to Chiara yet, she might not understand, and in programming he liked it hard. In real life Nico liked it cool. He dreamt of being, maybe with Chiara, on a desert beach, a palm filled beach, a Mexican beach. That was the way liked to live. Programmers can be lonely hunters, and that's why you don't hear so much about Nico in this manual. Too much lost in codes, like to count how many times each letter of the Alphabet occurred in this story. He had to use *Arrays* there. He could have done the same macro counting how many time all their names appeared in the story, but he was too lazy, as programmers are, and anyway he had only wanted to impress Chiara, and he had this one ready.

```
Sub HowmanyLong()
    Dim lettarr(26)
    Dim poemarr(100)
    Dim Howmany(26)
    Dim all26
    Selection.WholeStory
    Poem = Selection
    all26 = "abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxy"
    poemlen = Len(poem)
    somany = 0
    For count = 1 To 26 Step 1
        lettarr(count) = Mid(all26, count, 1)
    Next count
    For countp = 1 To poemlen Step 1
        poemarr(countp) = Mid(poem, countp, 1)
    Next countp
'ctd on next column

    For cntall = 1 To 26 Step 1
        Howmany(cntall) = 1
    Next cntall
    For cntall = 1 To 26 Step 1
        somany = 0
        For cntlet = 1 To poemlen Step 1
            If lettarr(cntall) = poemarr(cntlet) Then
                somany = somany + 1
            End If
        Next cntlet
        Howmany(cntall) = somany
    Next cntall
    For cntall = 1 To 26 Step 1
        Selection.TypeText Text:=lettarr(cntall) & "
        appears " + Str(Howmany(cntall)) + " times"
    Next cntall
    Selection.TypeParagraph
    Next cntall
End Sub
```

Some programmers push things even further: they will write a simple programme, in some four to ten lines, and then they will surround it by 'dummy code', sometimes, it's hard to say, 1000 more lines a line, like one would dress in beautiful clothes, just to look better, and the customer would see nothing but the show. But Nico really hadn't time for that now; he just wanted Chiara as she had been made by the one who had programmed her at birth.

But then he startled, and noticed something was weird. He had NOT put the word "Only" in the Count Chiara macro, he was sure of that. But then who had? He tried it again, and again the macro said "Only". But no time to check this further, it was

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12h30, time for lunch with Chiara.

```
For x = 1 to 1000
Selection.TypeText Text:="Chiara "
next x
```

Careful to leave the blank space after the name, otherwise Word won't know how to break lines and mangle it up.

♪ It's lunchtime - but nothing happens
And after lunch Chiara wrote back:

```
For x = 1 to 1000000
Selection.TypeText Text:="Thanks! "
next x
```

She had left the blank space. Nico now decided that Mexico would be as soon as possible. The next day he sent her a macro by Email:

```
Sub weekend()
vSail = InputBox("Do you want to come to paddle?!","CANOE WEEKEND")
If vSail = "yes" Then
MsgBox "Meet at the Lake at 9hoo."
Else
MsgBox "Paddling alone is no fun."
End If
End Sub
```

and Chiara answered with a document attached which astonished Nico greatly:

The word "yes!" is rendered in a colorful, bubbly font. The letters are multi-colored (yellow, green, blue, red) and have a slight shadow effect.

But the "Yes!" was jumping around in all senses you could imagine. Moving like hell. It swell, shrunk, grew bigger, smaller, moved up and down the screen, turned on itself, distorted, until going back to a simple Yes! You know. What vivacity! However had she done it!? Nico tried out the Macro himself, but couldn't figure it out.

WordArt

To begin with Chiara had used *WordArt*, in Insert - Picture - WordArt -



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and then typed yes! She had then made the macro. WordArt is quite nice, she thought. Chiara smiled to herself. She knew computer people were only having cybersex, but for sure she was going to change that. And she liked the idea.

Nico too felt great after this, he smiled, and was just beginning to answer with another macro, when Diagoras came into the scene. And he looked very stern:

“Now stop this you two. Go back to work.”

Dwarfs were really a much too much hard working crowd. Workaholics.



The secret room

At five twenty-nine o'clock exactly Maurice bounced first into Hilde's office, then into Lut's just as if he had been waiting to do just this all day along.

He grabbed Hilde by one hand, then Lut by the other.

"Come with me," he cried out and dragged them along.

"Maurice what's the matter," peeped Lut, slightly frightened.

"Come quickly, I have discovered another shortcut."

How exciting. They split into three again and went to fetch the others.

Maurice was now famous in the CHD for shortcuts. In the labyrinth of the House shortcuts were as precious to know as to have a blood tie to the HO1 himself.

Shortcuts could spare you hours of time. With the official routes the House offered, one would take ages to reach his destination. Shortcuts were a solution to get things done in a reasonable amount of time.

CHD followed Maurice obediently, or most of them, since Johanna wanted to go on working, but said she would take the HelpDesk calls, and Arthur was nowhere to be found.

"Where is he?"

"On a seminar in London, with guess whom, Mrko Mrnsk."

"Oh dear. Will he come back doing everything wrong then?"

"Why doesn't anyone do anything about this guy?" She meant Mrko Mrnsk..

"It's worse than that. Hierarchy, if there is one, seems to be playing his game. That's what's wrong."

Maurice, followed by his troop, left the Curie building, and took the little stone path which bordered the South rivulet. Until now, nothing unusual.

"How do they not see?"

"And now with all those changes! Mass migration and trillions of new programmes."

"They don't want to see the changes."

"Why not?"

"Because they have neither foreseen nor even planned them."

"I can't believe how this came about. With such a major change to come as was this split of MOU's, does one not ask from the start: Who are the services involved? Call them up, gather them, ask them what this sort of change would require in terms of work to be done?"

"But no one did."

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“Could you have done better?”

“Certainly a bit. But maybe not much. And everyone would have hated me. And don’t forget: there was an additional factor: Chaos!” Maurice looked proud at that one.

“The question is: WHO decided this split?”

“Yes. QUI? WER? WIE? WHO? HOE? CHI? KDO? had it been?”

“The answer is: No one!” Maurice looked proud again, of course, he was always a bit play-acting.

“Hierarchy, by definition, is too high above to see,” meant Leo.

“Hierarchy looks at us from a high mountain so high they can’t see us. We become small, tiny spots, than invisible. Since they don’t have the problem, we don’t.”

“Hierarchy does not exist. It’s just a concept.”

“Maybe they exist, but we can’t see them either.”

“It’s like Vogelperspektive.”

“It’s like bewitched. Josepha disappears, Jack Owl falls into in a coma, the administrators of ex MOU VII were never there anyway and the rest of the CLA’s has vanished, if not in body, then in mind.”

The continued to follow Maurice, until now the route was known, they were going in the direction of the Hall of Elements.

“But the non existent hierarchy is responsible for all this incredible chaos. We have had so much too much to do, and for such a long time now. This job is stealing my private life, heart and my mind.”

“It’s a sad story and much too much well known.”

“Why has no one organised the whole thing from the start?”

“Organisation may be an obsolete word. We might have to change. Change our vision of the world. I mean ‘organisation’ pardon me Hilde, is a German word, isn’t it?”

“It’s one of my three mother tongues, yes, but otherwise, sure, you’re right, but if only this non-existing hierarchy gave us the necessary means, money and human resources.”

“They don’t have it.”

”But at least they gave us Myra.”

“True enough.”

“Astonishing how quickly Myra adapted.”

Everyone nodded approvingly and Myra blushed happily.

“Josepha got us Myra, just before she vanished.”

“It’s such a pity Josepha isn’t here anymore. Wherever might she be?”

“Still no news of her? Anyone?”

“No nothing.” Leo looked hopeful.

No one answered.

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“I’m worried about her.”

“I am too.”

“Wherever has she disappeared to?”

“Maybe the Minotaur ate her.”

“That’s not funny. It’s stressy. I sometimes really have this creepy feeling about some monster of this kind lurking around in the House.”

“The Beast really.”

“It must be the stress. She fled.”

“No. It must have been Word. It thought Josepha was a document, and ‘gulped’ her down. She is with Doctor Watson now.”

“That’s not funny!”

“Josepha really could have helped us. Why did she disappear when we needed her most? She was one those who really seemed to care.”

“Maybe that’s why. It was a plan. A dark plan to destabilise Science.”

“Hierarchy seems turned upside down here, like a pyramid with its large side at the top. At the top, ten administrators, then five assistants, and then two secretaries doing it all.”

“No small wonder, since all the CLA’s have vanished.”

“True enough. In fact there is no more CLA, and we’ve even lost our Directors.”

“You’re right, Maurice,” said Lexi. “You said that once before. The *I Ching*, the Book of Changes, always tells us about the great man, and that he waits for the right time to act, and put things right, and that when he does, the little ones will follow him gladly. But you were right. We’re still waiting. I don’t see him.”

“True, there is only the little folk, us little ones, who have to do it all.”

Coming from a man as tall as Maurice this was very funny and several of them giggled. But Maurice didn’t get his own joke and just stood there, pondering about some mysterious spot in his own mind: “Yes, we little ones have to do it all, even be our own boss.”

“That might be the idea. *I Ching* is The Book of Changes. We might have to change. Take our own responsibilities. Not lay back and wait to be fed by a substitute for mum and dad. WE must be the great men!”

“Those fools who still go to vote, who still believe in it, they don’t even see that there is no big man, no one bigger than them.”

But on this, Maurice hesitated: “I believe people should vote. I think vote is one of the most precious things we have acquired through our human history.”

“I don’t. The fool who still believes in that kind of story really believes in Father Christmas.” (That was Nico)

“I think the principle of vote is good, but it should be a vote for people who exist, not just for phantoms.”

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“Citizens who do not vote must realise that it is him or herself, the little one, who does it all. All this thing about power is just an illusion, the power is the citizen himself.”

“It is not that the big man does nothing, it is that the big man does not exist. There is only the little ones. We are the ones who have to do it all. Vote? Yes! Vote for us.”

They heard a slight rustle, like if they were after all overheard. Hilde shifted uneasily on her feet, thinking of the Codename report.

A door was closed somewhere, with care. Most of them shivered.

But Maurice barely turned his head but continued in the direction of the Hall of Elements. Except that he didn't take the usual way to its entrance but turned right around the building to a flight of steps which everyone knew to be leading up to the roof of the building. They didn't ask questions, just wondered. Everyone had already been up there at least once, thus getting the best possible panorama of the House and Bohatia.

He began to take a flight of steps which lead up first, but suddenly things seemed to switch in their own perspective. The steps seemed to lead them down again. It gave the impression they were sort of curving around each other. By what strange trick of mind and body had this happened? A few steps more, and Maurice opened a door, just opened it, without using any key or trick or force. They found themselves in a room. It was huge, round, and with a panorama fresco at its end. They recognised it, because they had seen its form from the Outside many times. And at last they understood: they were in the Secret Chamber.

It was obvious to all of them that almost no one ever came here, one could feel it: this was a room used to emptiness, except for its painting. Seeing it, every single one of them got a 'Pang!'

This painting there, or rather the mosaic, as they realised now, recognising it from hear saying, was a painting the whole world knew about. But no one knew, as they hadn't known, where it was, that it was right close to them, here at the House. It was the story of the House, the story of Science. Everyone was in awe in front of Maurice's genius, except Leo, who was maybe a tiny bit jealous. Why always Maurice? One day he would show them.

“Should we not tell the whole House, or our users? Why is this kept such a secret?”

“Strange really, I see no reason.”

“Should we not tell them?”

“First of all we cannot, because it's forbidden. House rules.”

“Second we would put the nice guard, you know the guy, into big trouble.”

“True they would say he let us in.”

“And we would have to reveal the shortcut.”

“True, so we cannot tell.”

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“But why is it kept such a secret?”

“It's the origin of the House!”

“Maybe they don't like it?”

“I mean, if you don't tell about something, maybe it's because you don't like it.”

“Do you think they have seen it themselves?”

“I believe not.”

“Of course they did see it!”

“Who is ‘they’? This permanent use of the word ‘they’. Who is ‘they’?”

“Why not tell about this. It's the story of the House. And the only one everlasting!”

"A love story really. Where it all began!"

“Maybe because maybe most people wouldn't want to know.”

“Why not?”

“People don't want to know, they want to BELIEVE.”

“That sounds nice: ‘I do believe’ and so on.”

“Anyway, Maurice, you're someone! However did you find this one out? I still didn't get it, the trick you played just before. But it wasn't a shortcut exactly.”

Maurice smiled broadly, proud of himself:

“Wait and see, that, indeed, was not all of it.”

Maurice crossed the secret room to its other end and his colleagues trotted after him. First they didn't grasp his intent but then they understood. Maurice was a genius. There was another door. It was very well hidden, but once one knew it was there one could recognize a small handle, disguised as a false relief.

Maurice opened it with ease and they crossed a not so long corridor which seemed to lead to nowhere at first. Somehow, one couldn't see its end, even if it was illuminated by a faint blue light. It took only seconds, than they saw more light coming from some new opening, but it was the light of a city at night. They heard voices coming from restaurants, the clatter of dishes, dim music. They stepped out the doorway. At first they thought to be somewhere in Bohatia. There was a canal flowing at their feet, met by another not so far from where they stood and they could see two pretty little bridges. Three steps were leading up to a street lined with charming houses, all of the very typical architecture one could find in only two places on earth. They were in Murea, at the other side of the world.

They heard steps and retreated quickly but prudently, afraid to betray themselves.

Maurice was indeed a genius; this shortcut was fourth dimensional at least and worth a fortune. Was only hierarchy supposed to use it? Typical again. But then they wondered if they even knew. It might have been installed once, and than been forgotten over the power plays, until it vanished into thin air. Only a guy like Maurice could have sensed it back. And one like me, thought Leo, smiling tolerantly. He goes up, I will go down. And wait what I sense and where I will lead them too. Leo

To catch a virus

Early in the morning the official from Lost & Found unit to whom Myra had rendered the lovely bracelet suddenly reappeared in her office, a slight grin on his face. She wondered what it was about. He was holding a small packet. He unwrapped it and Myra saw her bracelet again.

Her heart started to pound. She was not so much the one for jewels, and often wondered about her friends getting glassy eyes when standing in front of a jewellery shop. But with this bracelet she felt as if it was attracted to her wrist like a magnet, as if having a personality of its own.

The security agent grinned:

“We have looked at the bracelet and wondered. We have wondered a lot. This is very unusual. Tell me, where exactly was it, the moment you found it?”

Myra, a bit dumbfounded, pointed at the downside of her keyboard.

The security agent nodded at this, knowingly, and continued:

“Look. No one has come to claim it yet. I know by experience that for a bracelet of such value, not a second would have passed before the owner had called us. But...,” and at this he really grinned again as if being on the verge of a burst of laughter. “Well, don’t you think it might have been some kind of gift?”

Myra was bewildered and shook her head:

“What do you mean?”

The Lost and Found agent smiled broadly, almost paternally at her:

“No secret admirer?”

Myra went crimson and shook her head:

“None that I know of. Why do you say ‘gift’?” When would he come to the point?

He finally did, extended his hand, and turned the bracelet on his palm so as to show its inside. He pointed at something at the back of the locket, the @ sign. Myra bent closer and saw fine letters, too small to be read with the naked eye and be sure of what they meant. On this the agent took out a looking glass from his pocket and held it over the little letters. The Zoom.

100% ▾

“Fir Myra B.” it said. The final dot was a diamond, probably the tiniest diamond ever.

Myra’s eyes almost popped out of her head. She could not believe this.

“Your name is Myra Beloba,” stated the agent.

Myra nodded.

“And ‘Fir’ is Bohatian and means ‘For’. I’m I right?”

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Myra nodded, that much Bohatian she knew. Another thing she knew: Bohatian was one difficult language. Even Jakinda, who spoke ten languages, knew none of it.

“See,” said the agent, “one secret admirer. It must be a royal one at least. This little trinket is worth a fortune. My brother in law is a Bohatian jeweller. You don’t want to know what he said.”

At this Myra shook her head half in agreement, half in disbelief, but the L&F agent felt sure of himself:

“Look, keep it with you. If ever someone comes to claim it, which I doubt, we have your name, which, as you saw, is on the bracelet.”

At this he left, still grinning.

Now this was something.

Myra looked at the bracelet for a few more seconds, and then put it on her wrist. A strange energy seemed to invade her body then, like if some positive force was suddenly taking over. It was like magic. She felt powerful and full of energy.

And at the same moment, hell broke loose. Another IT attack on the House. The Minotaur himself appearing, and not so minor.

Hackers, Crackers, Viruses, Spam and &

Hackers, Spammers, Spoof, Snarfing, Smurfing, Snipers, Viruses, Worms, Trojan Horses, Droppers, Nuking, Phreaking, Blue bombs, Easter eggs and some Hoaxes. Result: Denial of service. An army of enemies stood before and sometimes inside their system, they were at war again. The invasion of the Huns. Grandpa Attila.

Viruses, spam and Malware tumbled in like marbles out of a bowl that you’d have knocked over by inadvertence. One could really see them rolling in.

The *Firewall*, again by Mrko Mrnsk’s fault, seemed to have given them a passport. With a bit of imagination you can guess what a firewall is supposed to do. Keep foreigners with bad intentions out of the House. A set of programmes located at the House *gateway* server, which must protect a private network from malevolent intruders from other networks. Ok now it didn’t.

But Myra didn’t care today, and took all of it with good humour. She had @ bracelet.



War Dwarf declaring war on spam and viruses


Maurice, who had to take care of all the servers, was running around like a lion on a

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shooting safari. He wished such hunts were forbidden by law. He even forgot to hide his slight limp and droplets of sweat ran over the face of the otherwise so elegant man. He was a man of responsibilities and this was a major disaster. Lexi and Sven were jumping around offices, armed with diskettes containing anti-virus software.

Users were shouting with fright: Would they lose all their documents now?


Only Myra kept an Olympic calm, explaining what was happening to the users who called by the hundreds. Serenely she counted the number of blue diamonds on her bracelet. One, two, three...

 Oh? What's the matter? Just some Crackers and Hackers breaking into our computer system, via the Network. How? Oh but they simply exploit vulnerabilities on our system, Back Doors and so you know. Don't worry, we have everything under control. A *Back Door*? Oh, that is just a door left inadvertently open by a programmer in his programme. Don't ask me more. Hackers then use this back door to gain control over a system. For instance over your PC.

...four, five,...

 Why do I get all those Emails about cars, loans and credits, disgusting pretty girls and Viagra?


Oh just some spammers. Well as you will have noticed, spam is unsolicited Email. Those bastards fear nothing.

 How do they get your Email address?

Well for instance: someone here sold them all our Email addresses, they have search machines which scan all Email addresses displayed openly on the web, and in an organisation like ours, many of us have their Email addresses openly on the web. Or when you innocently give your Email addresses to a site that will send you 'free' recipes. Or when you send one of those lovely birthday cards to your friends and best colleagues. All for free. Or those free screensavers you download. Have you downloaded a screensaver recently?


"Umpf yes. I didn't think..."

Myra often wondered (well she didn't) why typically certain persons got more spam mail than others. Why was it that the men got more spams on for instance 'pretty girls' than the women? Was it because they had a tendency to surf in that direction? Nooo.

 What to do now? Shall I unsubscribe and insult them?

No **do never** answer and insult them and **do not unsubscribe**, this will just give them a proof of your existence. Just ignore those Emails, delete them. Make a rule to put them into a No-Spam folder. In Outlook you chose 'Rules Wizard - Start from a new rule'. She explained.

 But it's not legal to send this or is it? Shouldn't those bastards be put into prison?

 The law is still not clear on this. Imprecise enough to be circumvented in most cases. And of course those spam techniques can be much more complicated than that and go beyond spammers expectations. It's a strange phenomenon, those Emails. They

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bounce endlessly against each other; they use systems like the 'Reply to all' etc. This makes that this spam multiplies itself, and then one will get Emails from persons one has never sent Email to and even less met, like:

'The attachment to this Email was deleted at the entrance of the Gateway because it contained a virus? Don't worry then, no virus in this Email anymore then, the virus was indeed deleted at the entrance of the House's *Gateway*.'

...six, seven...

"But how is such a mail, with the word VIAGRA in it not detected?"

☞ Because they use characters that aren't even letters. The 'I' is not an I, it's something which only looks like it."

...eight, nine...

☞ Yes, the chances are great that all viruses are captured at the Gateway. But still beware of attachments! Do never double-click to open an attachment in an Email from someone you don't know.

Myra lost track, stopped with the counting of the blue diamonds, and started counting the number of sapphires on her bracelet: One, two three...

☞ How does one built a *virus*? Well in short, they take a programme, something like with the extension *.exe and they insert a virus code at its beginning. When you double-click on it, you run the virus. Such viruses can be in an attachment of an Email. Later they insert this code in all your *.exe files. Whatever programme you run, the virus multiplies and contaminates the others.

...four, five, six...

☞ The funny look suddenly of the House's webpage? With gothic letters and blood running down from it? Don't worry, just some *spoofing*. You know, they are just playing, and satirising our Website (<http://www.house123.org>).

...seven, eight...


☞ Your colleagues tell you you're spamming them with not very much recommendable Emails? Don't worry - another spoofing technique. A spammer is using your email address as a false 'From' address. Intelligent spam filters will ignore the From field, since in spam it is always faked. Intelligent spam filters, yes.

Myra so much wanted to continue to go on counting:

☞ Ah! Oh sorry. Ah you got a dialog box there telling you that dialling from your workstation did not succeed? Great news, otherwise you could be in for great trouble. I mean regarding your purse. You've got a Trojan. A Dialler. Diallers are tiny programs dialling premium service telephone numbers (0190, 0900, etc.). That can cost you a packet. Fortunately our firewall prevents this. But at Home, without a Firewall, you might have dialled for hours to the other end of the world unknowingly.

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How come?

☞ Well you might have clicked OK on some apparently innocent Website, offering free Clipart, recipes, screensavers, whatever. You know, even if you realised and clicked on the  for Close, this 'x' might in fact have hidden the command to install something.

...nine, ten...

„You must just select the Title Bar of such a dialog box and make it active, the press Alt+F4 to close it.”

☞ Hi Katia! Ah! Your PC reboots itself all the time? Another Trojan, I'll send you Lexi.

Myra lost track of her count with the diamonds and started counting the number of rubies. One, two, three..

☞ Your Intranet Start Page is not the one of the House anymore? What, Girls on it? Still another Trojan. I'll send Sven to clean this. He's such an honest guy.

...four, five...

☞ The Email says you have a virus and must delete the JDBGMGR.EXE file? No please don't do this. This is just a *hoax*. Well, a warning about a non-existent virus. No don't forward it to anyone. How can you know it is a hoax? There are websites for this, very good ones. I'll forward you the link for two of them.

Myra typed Yves' Email, yves.colot@house123.org in the "To" field of the message box of Outlook.

"Links for information on Hoaxes and Viruses" in the subject field.

And in the message text:

<http://www.sophos.com/>

<http://vil.nai.com/vil/default.asp>

"You're patience is infinite," said Yves. "How can you stand this, answering all those calls? You should be beatified!"

...six., seven, counted Myra and than the phone rang again.

☞ You double-click on the Windows Explorer and nothing happens? Don't worry, this is probably the Netsky virus. I will send you Sven.

Of course such a situation is very unusual, and could only happen at a House with a Mrko Mrnsk devising its IT configuration. Do not worry; it will happen only in the House, it can't happen to you THAT BAD, you who are living in the outside world. We have Mrko Mrnsk here.

Mrko Mrnsk error in this, because of course it was his fault entirely, why had he ignored Maurice's Email warning him about several security risks he had discovered in Internet Explorer, Windows Explorer and Outlook and asking him to install the

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necessary security patches. Maurice had even sent him the patches. Of course Mrko Mrnsk had done nothing about it. He was a villain of a very special kind. The House was mad to keep him. What evil scheme was hiding behind this attitude? Did he want to harm SCIENCE? But Mo and Jo believed he was just indifferent; completely devoid of any altruism whatsoever.

From an office nearby, one could hear the cries of an outraged baby, which the mother had brought in for the day. One could hope he hadn't caught a virus. Myra, who couldn't concentrate because of its irritated brawls, began to seriously doubt that the House was letting children in because of some kind of tolerance. No, it was just to sow trouble. Her babies would stay at home, and she with them, she was positive about that.

Sven spend hour after hour to clean the PC's from *spyware*. The calls began with:

☎ Sven my computer is so slow or

☎ Sven I have this strange message at Startup or when I start Internet: 'Cannot find bi.dll' or something like that.

"That's Malware or Spyware causing that message."

"Spy what? What's spyware?"

"Spyware are little programmes. The mean things just want to spy on you. They gather information about you essentially in order to find out about your consumer attitudes. You're aimed at. And that later they can sell their products to you better. What's especially bad about them is that they make your PC slow."

"How?"

"Marketa: Because in order to spy on you non stop they place what's called *resident* programmes on your PC. Those run continuously in the background, just like the virus shield or pop mail, in order to observe and record every action you might do, and not to miss any essential information about you. In principle resident programmes are necessary, like the Clock, the language bar, the Virus Shield... The Honest ones often show themselves on the right of the taskbar, the dishonest ones often hide so as not to be seen."

"Oh BU! (My God in Czech, Marketa was Czech too) But who's placed them on my PC?"

"You did, very often, even if unknowingly."

"But I didn't do nothing."

"You did, for instance when you installed this screensaver I'm seeing there or downloaded innocently and sweet looking Smiley, or when you subscribed for a daily free recipe. Did you do something like that?"

Sven felt the user getting red in the face.

"But Sven I swear, I never ..."

"Ok, I believe you, but you can have done this unknowingly too. For instance when

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you click on the **x** in a pop-up window or banner in order to close it, it might be this button will instead download a *cookie* or even a programme to your PC. This programme then runs *resident* in the background, spies on you and makes your PC slower.”

“What? A cookie?” was the cook’s first question. She now indeed remembered having subscribed to free recipes for French pastry. But instead of that she now found emails about Viagra in her mailbox.

“A *cookie* is a little piece of information that a web site puts on your hard disk in order to store information there. In principle it can be a very good cookie. So that later you won’t have to enter your password anymore because the system remembers it or it can be that a website will remember all your preferences so that you can access your favourite pages in it faster. Cookies are somewhere on your hard disk. In c:\windows\cookies for instance. But they can also be downloaded only to spy on you.”

Sven then sighed and started to run the ad-aware programme on Marketa’s PC. It’s free, easy to use and cleans off all the spyware. But running five of them an hour is no fun.

At the end of the day, when the battle had been won, Maurice, with still trembling hands, send an Email to his MOU:

How to protect your Home PC.

Dear User,
Your workstation at the House is now fully protected.
Please do the same with your Home PC. In order to do so, and if you haven’t done this already please install:

- ☞ Install a virus detector
You can find the *free AVG virus detector* on http://www.grisoft.com/us/us_index.php
but there is other freeware of course.
- ☞ Install a firewall
You can find the free firewall *Zonelarm* on <http://www.zonelabs.com/store/content/home.jsp>
- ☞ Install an anti-spy ware programme.
Lavasoft gives you *Ad-Aware!* A free basic spy ware detector at <http://www.lavasoft.de/>

Regards
The CHD

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Tel: 12345, Email CHD@House123.org

...seven, eight,...

“You’re doing this very well, Myra,” said Maurice who’d just appeared. However she had made such quick progress, it’s astonishing. Even more, he thought to himself, as she somehow wasn’t really in it. She was somewhere else, or going somewhere else, but where? Pity, he thought to himself, that Myra wasn’t really pretty at all. But such a bright girl. And maybe today she was indeed rather pretty. Something she’d changed in her face. What was it?

Myra smiled at him mysteriously and continued counting soundlessly.

...nine, ten, eleven, twelve.

For Myra! After all Love, even coming from someone you don’t know, is some remedy for making pretty.

“How come no one does anything against Mrko Mrnsk,” she asked Johanna, when she got back from one of her endless meetings. Johanna gave one of her smirks:

“As one says, he has got friends in the right places.”

“And do you know who those friends might be?”

“You don’t want to know. Friends so high that the President of France or the United States is tiny against it.”

“Who is it then? The Free Masons? The Opus Dei?”

Johanna smiled to this but even she, who knew the House by heart, for once seemed at loss. Myra wasn’t so sure she really knew, but she would sure have liked to know herself.

An outspoken formula

Whole CHD was permanently weary. They didn't sleep enough or sort of continued to work at night by not sleeping because thinking about it or, when finally sleeping, dreaming about it. 'Sleepworking' had become a new word.

Gwendoline, even if she had the same problem, was giving consultations in the morning. Everyone was always telling Gwendoline their dreams, it had been an habit people had taken up since she was still at primary school.

Maurice came and told Gwendoline he had had a nightmare about Mrko Mrnsk coming to work with them at the CHD.

Lut came second: "I dreamt I had to look for sponsors for thousand Web Pages we had to do before the end of the week, to get help, otherwise I wouldn't be able to finish them. I went to the post office to post the letters to the companies I wanted to ask to sponsor us. There was a huge queue. I stood and stood and when it was finally my turn I realised I had forgotten the letter. Imagine, I hadn't even done the mailing with a mail merge in Word, but had written everything by hand. I went back to the office and started to work on the mail merge but couldn't get it done. I'm still at it..."

Lexi had dreamt she had discovered a series of stock rooms behind her office, enormous, with a lot of old PC's and printers in it, hundreds, keyboards, cables, motherboards, graphical cards, memory chips and mice everywhere, she had even believed to see a rat, it was a huge mess, and she had to clean it all up to feel better but it seemed endless.

Gwendoline explained that a room was part of a House, and that the House was representing the Inner Self in a dream. Lexi nodded and said she indeed felt like a mess.

Johanna handed her a coffee. Johanna never told Gwendoline about any of her dreams, but today she told Gwendoline that she always kept a notebook besides her bed. Because when she woke up and thought about work, about something she must not forget to do, she could make a note about it. Otherwise she was unable to go back to sleep, tossing around, afraid to forget it. Her husband, fortunately, had a good sleep. Really she seemed much to practical for even dreaming about work, she just wrote it down and analysed the dream before it could become subconscious. This was typical of her. But then of course work in itself was the dream of her life

Gwendoline had dreamt all night doing user support. Not very Freudian either. Just a repetitive stress reaction. Users called and called. Two users during the day had complimented her rather violently, crying out non stop things like: "You're magnificent. I have never seen anyone like you, never." and "You're so super. Mega thanks!" Gwendoline dreamt about this again and again, and then about very technical

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discussions with colleagues. Like she had dreamt that Maurice told her he dreamt about having Linux installed on all the servers instead of Windows2000 server. He had just began saying that with Linux you could at least open the source programmes and develop them to your liking when the alarm clock rang.

Maurice was astonished, because he had dreamt just that: “Gwendoline, are you clairvoyant? I have indeed been installing Linux indeed all night. It was a marvellous dream. Mega cool.”

Hilde had dreamt about Excel. She was working on a quite complicated arrangement of formulas and had dreamt about it and then woken up seeing the solution before her eyes.

“=DAVERAGE(dossiers;F\$1;OFFSET(crits2!\$A\$1:\$V\$2;\$A4;0))”

she said happily. She glowed in a secret inner joy.

Paola who came in to ask Gwendoline for some help in Word had listened to the last dream and sighed. She had had another half night at the office, and wished she had dreamt something. But then maybe she had dreamt, but wide awake. There had been something more then bizarre, she couldn't put a finger on it, but it was like she had not been alone at one moment. Strangely enough she had not felt creepy but rather reassured. Like if she was getting help. She had been able to get on with her work much quicker then she had expected. She was just starting to tell Gwendoline about it when Ida came in.

Gwendoline had some reputation for dream telling even with the users and when she saw Ida Gwendoline first thought she was coming for another dream session, because she started saying: “It's a nightmare.” and then began to cry. Consequently Gwendoline and also Johanna and Hilde who still were in Gwendoline's office looked at Ida with compassion. It must have been a terrifying dream!

But it was no dream; it was about a life nightmare.

Olga Sredcova was one of those who made a lot of people cry. It was not that Olga was a bad person. Of course no one could understand why her rather nice and dashing looking husband hadn't divorced her long ago. And how she could have such two adorable little girls. She couldn't possible behave with them like she did at work. Indeed, in her private life, she had quite a lot of friends and buddies. She was of those persons who just shouldn't work. Work turned her into a self-contradicting tyrant.

She had succeeded in emptying her WG of all Housefoncs. They had fled to milder climates. She was always looking over everyone's shoulder, nagging, checking, taking apart the work done on one's screen, giving instructions which did not correspond to those of the House, those of her MOU, not anyone's, such as by the way those of the CHD. She wanted to show she could understand and do everything better, and thus had to dismantle all existing structures, only to prove she was the one to finally have put things right. She drove everyone completely crazy. Newcomers who already had much on their hands with all the new things they had to learn, became completely befuddled

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when Olga went to explain what they had to do. Obfuscation, deviation, knots, such were her laws. She was always giving lessons to everyone, but they did not teach a thing, they just led to more confusion. Now only trainees or freshly hired staff were made to work with her, those later ones fled as soon as they could. She even prided herself that she had made everyone cry in the service.

It must be said to Olga's excuse that she acted like this with absolutely everyone. Strange excuse this was, but she did not only slash at the little newcomers or interim personnel, she did the same with her boss and over-boss, she had even had the guts to give a lesson de morale to several of the Scientists. She told one of them she had discovered a mistake in the atomic number of the new element he had just discovered. The Scientists were those the House stood for. In fact its reason of being. Even the HO1 had not escaped one of her speeches, because having once declared that he found Marijuana innocent, and was smoking some from time to time.

Ok those later ones, Scientists and HO1, had no problem answering back, and several times already Olga had been into rather big trouble. But the little trainees and young staff in their trial period didn't dare to oppose her in the least. Ida, a month old only in the House, certainly didn't. The day the WG's annual report had to come out Olga had managed to contradict every single of CHD's advises and instructions in what regarded its making. Elements 112, the programme used to create that kind of reports was very complicated and demanded quite a lot of experience in order to be at ease with it. Ida, the new girl, did not know how to go about it right now. Walking at the same time north and south while holding her right foot at her left ear was sheer impossibility. The situation was hopeless. She was sure her contract would be terminated on the spot a few hours later, when she still wouldn't have managed to produce a single paragraph. The rules of form and structure a report was supposed to follow were complicated enough as such, but with Olga's explanations everything had become to resemble a four-dimensional maze. She began to cry and cry and when she had reached the bottom of her despair and was beginning to eye the window of her office on the sixth floor she suddenly had a memory of the last sentence Johanna had said to her on the Welcome Course the CHD was giving:

“And remember, Ida, if ever there is the slightest problem, ANY problem, come to us.” She had emphasised the word ANY so strangely that Ida realised only just now that she had not meant only Computer problems.

So Ida decided that she had to go and see the CHD. She went and found Hilde, Gwendoline and Johanna, who listened with sympathy.

“I'll come with you,” said Johanna, determined, and stood up to follow Ida.

Gwendoline and Hilde looked at each other, nodding. They knew what was going to happen now. This was Johanna's field, defending users against ferocious bosses, work monsters and slave masters. Johanna just couldn't stand seeing someone picked at. Or harassed, mobbed, as it is called in modern office life. Especially if it was a little one.

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She would put on a fight Olga would remember. And loose. Only to listen to Johanna, once gone on one of her speeches in order to convince someone even nicely, made one agree with her, just to stop her from speaking further. One couldn't help it, one just sat back and said "yes", feeling helpless. Only Maurice didn't. He countered with another speech. Their manner in this was very different, if not opposed. Where Johanna was passionate to the extreme, Maurice, though passionate himself, remained poised. Where Johanna was all emotion, Maurice was all composure. They fought a lot like this, and the CHD was used to their scenes, but somehow they all had the impression that the two liked each other, just for the rhetoric and were just training in order to gain some kind of maybe political experience. But Maurice wasn't present and Johanna went alone.

She found Olga still at her desk, feeling in her right. Johanna began talking to her about giving contradictory orders, Olga insisting they were not, and the tone of the conversation began to rise.

"It's not the question who is right," pointed out Olga. "It's the question who is the one who knows most. I had to listen to my elders just the same."

"That's not the point. The point is that there is work to be done. And the trainees can't to their work, if you contradict our instructions."

"Your instructions, my instructions. This comes to the same. Those trainees never pay attention to what I say."

"They might be paying attention much more if you were not contradicting the rules all the time. Olga, no need to invent rules, we have already far to much of them."

"I'm not inventing rules, and we have no more rules. I'm just paying attention to mistakes. I love to find mistakes, because things must be a hundred percent right."

"They are not mistakes, it is you who seek and see mistakes everywhere."

"Johanna, don't get over excited. You have a problem. You work too much."

Johanna didn't want to point out to her yet that she preferred to have that problem than Olga's. Well not so much that Olga had a problem, Olga WAS a problem.

"Trainees should just obey. Trainees are nothing yet," said Olga with more than just a bit affectation.

At this Johanna went like a lion at Olga Sredcova. Not shouting, but in a gentle persuasive manner, the soft method, the most dangerous of all. She purred like a big wildcat. You could feel her feline energy flowing all through her, ready to eat you up alive:

"Those trainees are like little children. As helpless and as precious. Do not touch the little ones, they are sacred. They are our voice and future. Our window to the world. I will have no such ways here. Those are not the ways of the House. Not our ways anyway." And she talked and talked, and Olga just couldn't place a word anymore. Johanna hypnotised her prey. Johanna was also always right, there are people like that.

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But some are more right than others. Olga began covering her ears with both hands; this was Chinese torture, one word dropping on her forehead after the other. Slowly, slowly. When would this Jo ever stop talking? She felt really bad now. Olga ended sitting up numb on her chair, and crying even harder than Ida had. She would certainly remember this little sitting all her life. She cried so hard that Gwendoline had to go and comfort her; a fact that Johanna better not be informed of, she thought Gwendoline much to good for her own good. But Gwendoline liked Olga too. Olga then told Gwendoline about her CLA, who was harassing her too. It was the typical picking order.

Gwendoline went back and told Johanna who listened carefully, stood up and went to see the boss too. She marched to his office and one could hear her clear soft voice again. Johanna was not afraid of anyone, and certainly not of men or bosses. They rather seemed to be afraid of her. Johanna had a lot to say in the House. It was better to say yes to her from the start, otherwise she would keep on talking for hours and one might remain truly convinced. And Johanna would have convinced the pope to preach for the pill. Her speeches quickly became discourse, sermon, oraison, biblic and took over the universe, and you were swallowed by it, one couldn't resist, one had to agree

Consequently Olga's boss began agreeing with her immediately. Just to see her leave just as quickly. Jo's speeches, when she was not happy about someone, were worse to face than an army of trolls. How she could manage to have time left for philanthropy on her sixteen hour days was a mystery. But if she had convinced Olga was another story. Because Olga was not the pope, Olga was Olga.

Johanna returned with a satisfied look on her face anyway and went back to her sixteen hours workday. The next versions of their in-house programmes, Kaleidoscope IV and Elements 112 swallowed up a lot of time. Johanna had taken over Elements from the previous MOUSA of MOU XII. Of Kaleidoscope IV she had been the project leader from the start on. Kaleidoscope was her baby, more than her son Nicky maybe, but let him not hear that. If Maurice loved only two things in life, computers and women, in that order; then one would believe at first sight that Johanna loved only two things in life, her work and her son, and in that order. But it was not quite so. All good things come in threes, and there was a third thing they loved even more. For Johanna it was more obvious.

In-house or tailor made programmes. Jo just couldn't stop. Those tailor made programmes were her passion, a passion like some women have for beautiful clothes. They trusted it would help them in their search for a passionate man. Jo trusted it would help her achieve her main ambition, and this was not men. At any rate she was happily married already.

Johanna knew how badly the House needed a structure. No one knew what to do anymore. Kaleidoscope IV would help people structure their actions and thoughts! It would give clear instructions. The choices it presented would be the only ones possible.

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Users would not have to wonder anymore what to do next! There was more to a programme like Kaleidoscope. It had another meaning than just to structure a company and help it with what it was doing.

In-house programmes mirror the work of a company like few things else do, but they can also shape its work. First you were making an image of the company, and then, when you were the only one to know a programme well, one could add and modify modules in such a way that the company would end up adapting to the in-house programme. First the programme adapted to the needs of the company, then the company would end up adapting to the needs of the programme. And in the end it's creator could shape a company to one's own needs. The one who knows a protocol best is the one who can change it at will. Jo had decided that there would be only one word and not thirty-three for one meaning, and this was a necessity for the unusual situation of the House, troubled Babylonians they were.

Kaleidoscope would first mirror the company, here the House, and describe its structure. It would first use the companies terminology, but would then create a new one. New words expressing new units of thought. And creating words is one very subtle form of strength. It means power. The power of making definitions. The power of words. Her words. And the ways of the House would finally lead to where she had decided they would. It was Johanna who had written most of Kaleidoscope. Or rather she had made her squad of programmers write it.

A programme like Kaleidoscope did not make sense in itself, it gave a sense, it gave a direction. It was a way. A way out of chaos. It told people how to do things, and in what order. It was a protocol, like the handshaking protocol in telecommunications, or a royal protocol which would define the order of precedence. One could not understand one word of it, but one could just apply it and follow its rules, rules which Johanna hoped to be writing soon her alone. It was formulas made power. A powerful protocol all made of codes. But Jo would use it to protect people, the little users. Jo protected all people, seeing them a bit as children. Jo considered that the poor little users had to be delivered from their horrible sufferings and even that their misery had to be replaced by at least some pleasure.

Her little users, children with the big blue eyes, looking at her with trust, hoping for some warmth and protection. She never missed a compliment, if she could make one. She wanted to strengthen the self-respect they deserved. They were her children and if someone attacked them she would jump at him. Eyes blazing, teeth fletched, claws out; like a lioness protecting her offspring. It was a deadly serious game at times.

The fun side she left to Hilde and Gwendoline, who were fervent adepts of the learning by pleasure principle. She knew that Hilde and especially Gwendoline loved their users to distraction. Jo loved to work. It could maybe have been any work. Jo needed to work. But it was not only about pleasure and or protection and work. Johanna positively hoped to use those formulas and protocols to obtain some advantages for

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herself too.

CLA's, directors, general directors and HO1's would phone, ask how the programme was working, and what were the rules, and nod, say yes - yes - yes to all of her answers, not realising once that CHD (or Jo) had invented it all, nor who was now the master.

Jo loved society games; especially war games like 'Risk' and friendship breaking 'Diplomacy' and she loved to win. Playing games was her only childish aspect, otherwise she was, unlike many here, a grown-up, just like her son. The secret was out: Jo's greatest love was power. And Kaleidoscope was all about power, the power of words, the power of organising, it was power short. What luck that Johanna was a good person.

♪ It's lunchtime

Power smiled to Lexi at lunchtime too, but it ended rather badly. Myra's ominous prediction had come true:

"Do tretice vseho dobreho" - All good things come in threes. Especially those not so good.

Lexi had jumped with joy at the invitation she got from HO1, for a initiation at practice at the beautiful Bohatian golf course. After the practice HO1 had suggested she'd follow him on the green to have a look at the real thing, which she had done gladly.

Sven was the only one she told about what had happened then:

"He got hit by a golf ball. It's really serious. He has another concussion. You know the speed those little balls can take and he got hit on the forehead."

Sven just thought it, but he bit his lips bloody to keep his mouth shut this time:

☹ If I understand well he'll not die directly from his virus then. The golf fever. Once one catches it, you can not get rid of it easily. Like malaria, it keeps coming back. His life has been hanging between Practice and Hole 19 for years already. I didn't think a ball would do it, but simple practice or Hole 19. I don't want my Lexi to catch such a thing. ☹ Sven had no respect for people who played golf. Sven was pure nature and for him Golf was artificial nature. Nor did he have respect for Saab's, BMW's and other cars of the kind. But better not make Lexi more nervous than she already was.

"I expect he'll get well soon," he said gently. "Those people are though."

At the same time he had all the hard time in the world to not burst out laughing. Lexi really did have a spell of bad luck with the HO1 and he even more with her. But they kept holding on. Maybe there was something to it after all.


The afternoon was not so good, and she got a lot of calls about which's solutions she didn't have a clue. Gwendoline was giving a course, Hilde was on a meeting and Myra was down with the flue. She was all alone with questions flying at her at the speed of a golf ball and she had to duck her head all the time as to not get hit.

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Filter in Outlook

“That all of this still keeps going on and doesn’t go bust,” said Francia, to whom she had just barely managed to reset a filter in Outlook so that her emails were there again, “is the proof that God exists. God likes this MOU, that is for sure, and the whole House with it. Did he not, it would have gone completely busted long ago. Thanks so much Lexi: So, next time I don’t see half of my mail I will remember to right-click on the headings of the columns, like From, Subject, Date, choose ‘Customise Current View’ and the clear the Filter.”

Send a distribution list to a colleague

 Like Ana-Maria phoning her to ask how to send a distribution list to a colleague.

Fortunately beau Borisss, who’d just come in to get a new mouse, wireless if possible, but of course they didn’t have that, heard the question on the loud speaker and sensed her confusion. Without speaking out aloud he took her mouse and demoed to her how to do it just by mimicking it.

He opened a new Email.

“Open a new Email,” said Lexi to Ana-Maria’s intention.

Lexi still felt like a if golf ball had flown at her head too. Hard Lexi felt with the HO1, no doubt and rubbed her head for him. But she didn’t miss Boris either. He was gorgeous.

When he chose Insert from the menu bar Lexi had but to admire his fine fingers. Pianist fingers. But above that he had muscular arms, showing them a bit off, sleeves turned up, and fine golden hairs were dancing on them. Lexi would so much have liked to count them, one by one, and tried to imagine what tool she’d use. Fingers? Pen? Tweezers. Boris pointed the cursor at the menu item:

“Choose Insert,” translated Lexi obediently.

The good-looking Russian chose ‘Item’ from the Insert Menu. This began to look good indeed. He was so special. This guy was somehow missing the usual protective halo most people had been forced to create around them, because others hadn’t been nice to them. Lexi, specialist in martial arts and self-defence had never seen such a thing. Had Boris never experienced any hard blow? But Boris smiled and mimicked:

“Then choose Item.”

Lexi had to grin, her natural good humour was back.:

“Then choose Item,” she repeated.

Boris grinned too and browsed to the Contacts folder and there clicked on a distribution list. The distribution list obediently became an attachment in the Email message.

Lexi translated this into words. Ana-Maria was enthusiastic.

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“This is so easy. Lexi, you’re so grand. And how does my colleague get it down again into her own contacts?”

Boris demoed on the screen what she had to answer to the user and she managed to understand while trying to guess what aftershave he used. Must be his own scent. It was too good. There was no dust around this guy, just untainted strength and friendliness. And what a smile:

“Getting it down? Oh, that’s easy! Your colleague must just grab the distribution list and drag it into her own contacts.”

Boris continued to mimic having a hard time dragging an imaginary distribution list towards him like if it was a mule who refused to oblige. The muscles on his arms swelled. Lexi was trying not to giggle out aloud. Ana-Maria didn’t notice:

“Lexi you’re great. I’m quite sure I asked the teacher from this outside school if it was possible and he answered that it wasn’t. You explain so much better. But of course you know that. You and this CHD of yours is really a dream of a Helpdesk, thanks so much. You are a marvel, unparalleled.”

Lexi listened to the violin concerto with some guilt, but was still too shocked to answer honestly. She did, however, thank Boris with effusion, while keeping silent about her intentions to count the hairs on his forearms.

☞ The next call was about a problem sending an Email to people in a distribution list. “The Email just doesn’t want to go away, I don’t even have an error message.”

Boris wrote down the answer on a paper:

☞ “The distribution list contains an error. Like a contact with only the name but not the Email address to the right of it. Or a name which is in it twice can do it too.”

Lexi spelled this out aloud too. “And thanks so much for calling, Alberto.”

“That was indeed the cause. Thanks so much,” said Alfredo, the caller. “Lexi you did it again.”

But privately he wondered why the hardware genius was suddenly getting so soft.

Lexi didn’t realise this herself, but it was true, a bit more, and she would be turning into software. With the help of Boris, a user, but why not, if he smelt so good. So masculine, all fine muscles and subtle strength and exuding natural after-shave.

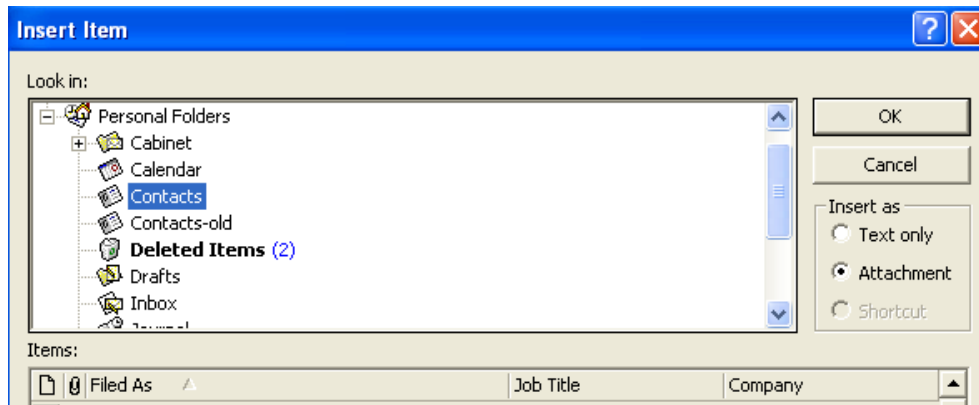
But still it was a bit annoying, to get help from a user just like that. Gwendoline had once told her she loved it: when the user began explaining to the Helpdesk. She came back to ask Lexi if she had an idea just like that about why the mouse of Gerhard’s laptop wasn’t working.

“He must plug it in before booting the PC,” said Lexi, happy to finally be able to play her helpdesk role as one could expect. Gwendoline went, checked and saw that Lexi was right.

At the end of the day Lexi felt even better, after a call from HO1’s assistant, telling her

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he, the HO1, was allowed to go home the next morning. How thoughtful of the assistant of having called her...



I did do nothing

Maurice came to see Hilde as usual early in the morning.

“Hilde have you heard the news?”

“What news?”

“About Mrko Mrnsk. Have you not been to see Tello this morning?”

“No as the matter of fact.”

“Mrko Mrnsk is in prison. In Kenya.”

“To good to be true! What happened?”

“He went on a safari trip with his wife, and shot some people.”

“A shooting safari, that’s just like him. What, he shot people? Which people? Locals?”

“Yes, a whole tribe of Notus.”

“The what? A tribe?”

“Yes, the Notus. Tello told me: “He shot elephants, lions and tigers, and the Notus.”


“What are the Notus then?”

“Well, as you guessed, some locals. When he pointed my gun at them they shouted: Notus! Notus!”

Maurice went away grinning. Hilde had believed him again, for a moment. Wishful thinking. She always did this, and could bite her fingers off, she really felt ridiculous. One day she would take some sweet revenge. The Not-us, what more!

Hilde was sure Mrko Mrnsk should really be put in a place where he couldn’t do anymore harm. But she was sure he did not feel any guilt about nothing. He was like the users, whose favourite slogan is: I did do nothing.

Save your documents

 “I did do nothing. I just sat there and suddenly the document disappeared. I happened all by itself. But now it’s gone. Can you get it back for me?”


“Did you save it?”

“No I had no time to do this. We have to give it in before five o’clock this afternoon and pressing **Ctrl + S** just would have taken me too much time.”

“But Marjani, you must always save a document several times an hour a least! I save at the end of each paragraph. Save every time you’re happy with yourself. Every time you feel a ‘Pang’ of satisfaction. Which you should, at the end of every paragraph!”

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Extensions *.doc, *.xls

 “I did do nothing but suddenly my Excel document has transformed into a Word document. I need the table in Excel, can’t you put in back?”

“What did you do last?”

“I just opened it, and then it was in Word!”

“Can you show me the document?”

Vibeke pointed and indeed Gwendoline saw a table in Word.

“I got it from my colleague Olga. And she said it was an Excel sheet! I need it in Excel!”

“But how did you open it?”

“Well with Word.”


“But Vibeke, an Excel Sheet must be opened with Excel, just as a Word document must be opened with Word. You see, either you double-click on a document in the Windows Explorer, and then it will open by default in the software of its origin. Or you must open it from within its own software.”

“But how do I know?”

“Well first you might remember with what software you have done it. Ok in your case it came from someone else. But then you can always see it by the *extension*. Word documents have the extension *.doc. Excel documents have the extension *.xls. That’s also how Windows Explorer knows this, from the extension. So when you double-click on it, it will open in the associated software. So in fact you did do something...”

“Hm, yes, you might be right.”

Some famous file extensions	
*.doc	Word documents
*.xls	Excel sheets
*.htm or html	Web Pages
*.pdf	‘Portable Document Format’ from Adobe Acrobat
*.jpg or *.gif	Images and pictures
*.ppt	PowerPoint files
*.exe	and the executable programme files, like word.exe or excel.exe will open the Word and Excel programme. Or one of the programmes Nico writes.

 “I did do nothing but suddenly the Word Icon has disappeared from my desktop. But when I try to make a shortcut it says ‘Word.exe (2)’ and when I try to rename this it says ‘A Shortcut with the name already exists’. Can you help me?”

It was Gerhard and Hilde pictured his winning smile, she literally saw it before her,

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hanging there.

“Ok this can happen; in fact the icon has slid behind another one. Just delete the icon ‘Word.exe (2)’ and then you right-click on the desktop, an empty spot there, and from the menu you choose for instance ‘Arrange Icons by type’. Of course this will destroy the nice circle you have ordered them in.”


Gerhard followed her command and the icons went all to the right side of the desktop, revealing the missing Word icon again.

“Thanks Gwendoline, like always you could help me. The miracle worker. By the way, it’s been long since the midnight fair. Can I take you to lunch tomorrow?”

She said yes. Gerhard’s smile lingered before her eyes quite a while. The smile of the Cheshire Gerhard. Tomorrow it would materialise into lunch.

‘I did do nothing’, very often, is not true, even if users really believe what they say, sometimes, it is sort of true, like in the case of the missing icon.

But the events now gave a rather opposite meaning to this claim of innocence. Of course a Helpdesk would not in its wildest dream imagine the following scenario: A user comes in and says:

 “I did do nothing, but suddenly the *table of contents* in my Word document, which was all wrong, became all right, and I did do nothing. You know the page numbers didn’t correspond and they were three new titles missing, but then, suddenly, it was all right, but I did do nothing.”

“And you did not position the cursor within the table and then pressed **F9**?”

Isabella, bewildered: “No, is that the key to use on a table of contents which does not update?”

“Yes it is. Pressing F9 updates the TOC, the **T**able of **C**ontents.”

“But I did do nothing.”

“So Word did it all by himself?”

Gwendoline, Maurice, Hilde, Leo, Lut, Sven and Lexi would really have laughed a lot, some time before. But they felt ill at ease about such things now. Because this was what seemed to be happening. Things got done by “themselves”, all alone. And no one did do nothing.

Users would suddenly appear in the CHD offices at morning, with profuse thanks:

“Oh Hilde, thank you so much for the Excel sheet you finished for me last evening. It’s marvellous! I could never have finished it, but apparently you used formulas, so everything is solved neatly without my having to type it.”

“What do you mean? Can you show me the document?”

“You see,” and Nicole opened the Sheet, “here are all those rows with addresses, 18236 of them, and I had to copy out to a new sheet all those which had the word


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‘Genetic’ in the third column. For the conference of the Association of The Genome Project, in Paris, you know. It would have taken me hours. Because I couldn’t just sort on the column of course, because the word is not at the beginning of the cell, but at its end.”

Hilde looked more closely at the sheet. There was an additional column to the right which contained the word ‘Gene’ in its first 2681 rows. She positioned the mouse cursor on the first cell. In the formula bar above appeared: `=RIGHT(B1;8)`.


F1		=				=RIGHT(B1;8)
A	B	C	D	E	F	
Mr Jakob Sören	Institute of Genetics	33 rue du Pic	75469 Paris (France		Genetics	
Herr Klaus Igel	Professor of Genetics	155 Lindenal	60313 Frankfurt Germany		Genetics	
Mme Françoise André	Professor of Biology	200 av Généré	1050 Bruxelles Belgium		Biology	

Of course you can also use other text formulas like left() and mid() and search() to do such things. Right(B1;8) was to pick out the 8 last characters in the B1 cell, and then copy the formula over to the whole column B. Then you could sort the column, which

Nicole obviously had done using .

Hilde smiled: “Well done Nicole. I didn’t know that you knew about formulas so well.”

Nicole looked bewildered:

“But I don’t know about formulas. If I manage to do a sum using  I’m happy.”

“Well who did it then?”

“Well you did, Hilde.”

“No I didn’t. I wasn’t even aware you needed help,” said Hilde, head-shaking.

“Well who was it then?”

“Maybe it was one of your own colleagues.”

“No one knew of this. Junichuro, you know, Mr Akido, just asked me to do it, as usual, five minutes to six o’clock. I did do nothing Hilde, maybe Gwendoline did. Hilde, don’t be so modest, you’re a genius.”

“Gwendoline is on one of her rare holidays.”

Hilde thought it was lucky the word Genetics was always been at the right. Otherwise the formula wouldn’t have worked. Well whoever it was should have had to use a `=SEARCH ("Genetics";A3;1)` formula first, make a true if found condition, like `=ISERROR (C4)`, and then copy it over to still another cell, and then only be able to sort on it. This didn’t worry Nicole too much yet:

“Maybe it was Maurice?”

“Maurice is on a mission in Paris. But it can’t have happened all by itself. When did

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you notice it, that it had happened?"

"Well it was nine o'clock and I had only cut and copied out sort of two or three hundred rows. Then I went into my colleague's office to make some tea and when I came back everything was done. I had the word 'Genetics' in 2681 rows in the right column, and it was sorted and placed in a way I could see it."

Hilde shook her head. A crazy story, but nice. She left Nicole's office, feeling that she was not believed. And she must think to convince Nicole to transfer all these records into Access. Such a large database should not be in an Excel sheet, but well, in some database software. Like Access. Access was just marvellous for keeping addresses.

And this continued. The next week, it was Gwendoline's turn. This time it was Nimrod who 'hadn't done nothing'. And her neither.

Nimrod was a very good-looking boy, a sort of elegant and well-educated pirate, a young chemist with an artistic streak of which he didn't want to talk but which seemed obvious to Gwendoline. He never wanted to say what his secret talent was. He only told Gwendoline he couldn't make any money with it. But he was a bit of a pirate and always played around with his computer in order to install all sort of downloads found for instance on <http://www.tucows.com> and which didn't have much to do with work. Of course such downloads were not allowed officially but everyone did so nonetheless, without getting hit on the fingers. House again. But Nimrod was not entirely gifted for computers and the results of the somewhat illicit installations were often that his computer had all sorts of little problems. This time the installation of music software, *Winamp*, had really made a mess. Gwendoline was not very happy but she had a soft spot for him and so let herself be slightly abused. She just loved passionate men, even if this one didn't want to tell her about what his passion exactly was.

He moved her, she couldn't say why. He was an artist for sure. But what kind of an artist? When she had asked he had answered: "A great one indeed, but I can't make any money out of it." If it was great art, shouldn't he be able to make money out of it? With which great art can one not make money? Gwendoline imagined that a great artist should at least in principle make lots money out of it. Of course there was the van Gogh principle, which made one become rich and famous posthumous.

What kind of great art would make money? She asked him if he played some instrument, he answered just a bit of guitar. At the last dance he had invited her to, he had been great. Sexy, elegant, full of feeling and humour. But when she inquired, he said he had just taken some dance courses when younger, and then abandoned a year ago. So what kind of arts were left. Painting and writing. Both she could not imagine of him. Cooking maybe? Women, haha. But she could understand him so well; without being able to put words onto it. There was something in him, something she felt in herself too. Which made that after all, she was not sure she wanted to find out. Let him have his mystery then. He moved her, but at the same time she felt uneasy about him. Really how deep would one have to go to find his soul? He was so clair-obscure.

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She soon found out why... By looking closer at the Computer, she saw that it was a hopeless case. She really had to explain to Nimrod that he had to be more careful, that they had enough work as it was. She left the office, saying she would send Sven over to reinstall the PC. Nimrod went a bit white around the nose:

“Well Gwendoline. Can’t you do it?”

“Why not Sven?”

“Well Sven, hm, he’s not so ni... hm as you.”

“Ok I do it. But tomorrow.”

“Can’t you do it today?”

“Why Nimrod?”

“Because I have to finish a report.”

Gwendoline got the message. Of course, Sven would not understand her attitude at all, even less that he had to reinstall the computer for this other certainly much to good looking guy.

She was now, a bit fuming. Damn, it was five o’clock again. The installation would take two hours. When she came back to her office and was just about to collect the diskettes and manuals for a reinstallation her phone rang. It was Nimrod again. What did he want now?

“Hi Gwendoline, thanks, it’s working again. How did you reinstall it so quickly? I thought you said it takes two hours.”

“It does, and I didn’t reinstall it again.”

“But it’s working again. And the Winamp too. Listen.”

Indeed she now heard music, quite pretty, maybe ‘Buddha Bar’ or ‘Café del Mar’.

“Ok I hear that, but I didn’t do nothing.” Ouch now she’d said it too.

Nimrod laughed.

“Why has it suddenly started working again?”

“I went to talk to Geoffrey and when I came back it was working again.”

This was impossible. With all the spy ware sitting everywhere on the computer, the java script errors, the internet browser not running anymore it would have taken her at least an hour to clean it all up. With no guarantee to make it working. That’s why she had opted for a reinstallation. But Nimrod seemed oblivious of all this.

“And Nimrod, did you see anyone coming to your office?”

“No. Not see. But you did come, since it’s working again. Well thanks a million Gwendoline, I really had to finish this report. Are you coming to the dance tomorrow? I will dance too, something of my country.”

“A Lithuanian dance?”

“Yes.”

Gwendoline said she would probably come.

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This was really very bizarre, after what Hilde had told her lately.

Then it happened to Maurice. He had been called because his server had crashed, and suspected a major failure, but when he went to see his baby it was just rebooting again, all by itself.

Then it happened to Lexi. She had been called by a user for a virus, but when she came to the PC armed with a diskette the virus had disappeared. The user swore he 'hadn't done anything' nor even touched the PC.

Then it happened to Nico, who was battling an Access programme which he hadn't managed to get working the whole morning, but when he came back at noon and restarted Access everything seemed to work fine. Now of course that could be, probably some variables which had gotten confused by all his trying again and again. The restart had made a natural clear.

Users, for several days now, had been using the slogan in a rather opposite sense. The slogan was not that documents disappeared without them doing anything but rather that documents 'typed themselves', 'came back all done', and lots of Excel sheets were 'filled in all alone'.

A user came back from his four hours sleep, for instance around five in the morning or so, and pretended to have discovered his report neatly piled on his desk beside the printer or he pretended to have found an Excel sheet with formulas in it on his screen, when he didn't even know how to make a formula in Excel, and the all of it in a beautifully formatted table, with lines and colours. But then the user pretended he would never have had the time for such tasteful formatting.

More and more documents appeared to have made themselves alone during the night.

CHD was 'accused' and given great thanks. They never got so many flowers, chocolates, beautiful cards and even kisses. CHD declared to have nothing to do with it but they were not believed. People needed to find a good guilty instance, to prove that things were improving. Since they had lost faith in almost everything, least of all themselves.

If hearing that things were mending themselves was somehow good news, it was slightly uncanny too. Maurice, more stressed then ever, called up another emergency meeting.

"Something weird is going on. Users are saying we did things we didn't do. I feel manipulated."

"Why do you worry? Maybe they have turned into geniuses. They are doing this themselves, and don't want to realise it. It would be to awful for them to be able to do it themselves. Imagine all the work they would have. Everything we're now doing for them they must now do themselves. They wouldn't be lucky anymore, as now, when

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they have someone smarter do all their work. That's maybe why they pretend we are the smart ones."

"Some users say they have seen little children in their offices, The HO1 has prepared an Email to the whole House, strictly forbidding the presence of children in the House at night."

Lexi by now knew Catherine, HO1's secretary.

"Have you ever seen a single rule really implemented here?"

"No," they answered in Chorus.

"Anyway users are saying we did it. They don't believe us when we say we didn't, and I can understand, because who else could it have been. It's a bit creepy. It's ghosts really."

"Wow. I always loved ghost stories."

"And you, what do you think about this, Myra?" asked Maurice.

But Myra seemed far away.

Maurice liked Myra but even if he thought that she wasn't exactly ugly, he didn't find her very pretty. Limbs too fine (Leo would have said 'refined'), face too pointed (Leo would have said 'elegant'), and he thought she put on a lipstick in a shade too red. (Leo knew it was not lipstick, just her lips...). In addition, Maurice had the feeling she was still untouched (Leo would have said 'pure'). No that couldn't be. She was 26 after all. Even Maurice had to admit he was fantasizing. Leo on his side not only liked Myra but thought she was very pretty. Black or grey eyes do not exist of course, nor lips in that shade of red, but Myra had them. Myra liked Leo a lot too, she thought he was so much of an artist, and a very attractive one too. Though his beard frightened her a bit.

But this afternoon, she was lost in a dream again. For her too, things had sort of done themselves all alone and she hadn't done nothing to make them happen. Well, maybe a tiny bit.

Just yesterday morning she had talked to Prince father Justin again.

He had admired her bracelet and had seemed slightly puzzled about it. She had gone red in the cheeks again. After all, she had no idea where it came from. Fortunately the Prince's father had not insisted further, but had told her again how very soon he would like her to come and have a look at this PC, this mystery box. He confided, that he was indeed almost embarrassed not to understand it and wished to find someone who could help him know more, but without - you know - talking to much about it - keep it in the family you know - and that he felt Myra would really keep silent about it. He just had to find a moment where he had a bit more time on his hands. "And my son Martin he would sure be glad to meet you too." Was he, after all, getting the message? How could he, she had never said a word. But if she was to mar... she dared not think the word to its end. But if yes, then maybe she would never be sure if she was not in love with the father too, hihi.

And then, this morning, it had happened. Of course Justin had told her he was to come to the House, for a reception to be held in honour of Paul Sparks, the famous actor and children's ambassador. Prince Martin had accompanied him to one of those trips around the world where they had done a lot of good. She knew of all this from 'THE JEWEL', the local newspaper, but then it had really been a pure coincidence that she had been standing there just when the little procession came along. The story was that Johanna had had to convey some report over to the office of the HO1, and had asked her if she could be so kind and do it for her. Well rather Myra had suggested she could do it for her, and Johanna had accepted gladly.

When the princes, the actor and the HO1 were passing close to her and others who were standing at the side of the Hall of Elements Prince Justin noticed Myra and waved at her. Martin, following the look of his father, saw Myra too, for the first time. And his look pondered and pondered on her, like if wondering what to do next, and then Myra heard it distinctly: "Pang!"

She went all red in the face, sure that everyone must have heard and would now turn from Martin to her. But nothing happened. The group continued his way. The Prince bowed slightly to his father and whispered something in his ear, and Justin whispered back. On this Myra noticed that Prince Martin startled as if by some good news. And he turned to look at her a second time. And smiled. Quite widely. Myra smiled back. And they stood like this for quite a while. Now she was smiling at the wall, were Martin's face was floating.

"Myra. Where are you? Thinking of boys?" Maurice waved a hand at her. "I'm sure you're thinking of that actor, what's his name."

Myra didn't even hear that. A big Pang! was filling her ears. She was having a vision, a vision of a prince.

"Maurice, I will begin to believe you want Myra for yourself," said Leo. "Stop this, you could be her father."

"So could you."

Myra shook herself out of her dream.

"What? Beg your pardon?"

"Myra," said Johanna smiling, "we just wanted to know what you think of those strange self-made documents. You haven't said a word yet."

Myra looked at her bracelet and fiddled around with it. Then she really thought about these self-made documents. Yes, who could have done all this 'I did do nothing'.

"Maybe it's the dwarfs."

Everyone laughed. But in fact Myra had not meant to be funny. Of course they were dwarfs. Every child knew that. She didn't insist on saying she hadn't meant to, but went back to silence and thoughts of bracelets coming from nowhere and smiling princes. She hadn't even really noticed Paul Sparks, considered to be among the at least ten most beautiful men in the world. For her this was not true. Who was Paul

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Sparks? It astonished her that others did not share her opinion, which of course she would never voice aloud. But once or twice she had sort of innocently breached on the subject, asking other girls about what they thought of Prince Martin. The answer was always like 'Oh he's quite good looking. Well, he seems nice enough. Looks smart.' Heretics they were! How could they not see! But ok maybe it was better like that. But all to soon she was startled out her vision of Martin's face again.

"Myra, I like your sense of humor sometimes," said Sven. "Dwarfs, of course, just like we are. We did it, of course."

"People just need something, someone now to believe in, so they make all of this up. Their refusal to communicate what they really feel makes them look for any possible solution. They call out for a positive instance. Since no one answers, they must create one. So they say its the helpdesk or the dwarfs," said Gwendoline.

"In other words," said Nico, "People are saying we are dwarfs. Garden gnomes. A product of la petite bourgeoisie. Kitsch." Wow Nico had finally said something again, he had now been silent for weeks. Busy running Chiara through multiple arrays and in and out of infinite loops. *Dim Chiara (1001) as string. For I=1 to 1001 call Chiara next call.*

They all had to giggle, but had a feeling of unease.

Only Leo had not joined the laughter.

He looked so grave, almost stern, that now everyone went silent and looked at him expectantly, waiting for him to speak. And so he did:

"Dwarfs are to be taken very seriously," he said, and he looked suddenly like one of them himself, tall as he rather was, but maybe it was because of his beard.

He looked at Myra appreciatively, with something in his eyes that resembled praise. He then lent back and stroked his long black beard:

"They are hard working people, just like us. They help the deserving ones, just like us."

He made a mimic which just not just a grin: "And they have a long beard, just like me." He stroked it. "As I said Dwarfs are hard workers and very intelligent. They do not believe in magic, but their work is so well done, with such patience, of such finery, of such skill that it does become magic. Look at their jewellery." By this, he threw a look at Myra's bracelet. Everyone gasped. Had Leo gone mad too?

But he continued, unruffled.

"They have many skills; they have gifts of spirit and soul we humans lack entirely. We could learn from them. Moreover, they have exquisite taste, and live in palaces beneath the earth which are of a rare beauty. Only a few humans have been able to acquire such mastery in the arts of decoration. And they love to dance, and do it well. They love music too, and have some very good bands. They have good hearts, and help those who deserve it whenever they can. They talk a language completely incomprehensible to us, a bit like when we talk to the users, you know. They don't eat meat, only fish, and love

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milk. Always have some milk ready, in case a dwarf visits.”

CHD was flabbergasted. He sounded so serious.

“And don’t forget,” he added with some glee “that dwarfs can make themselves invisible. They have this cap, made with scientific means about which we know nothing yet. They just throw it over, and ‘Whoop’, there gone. Would be nice no? I know dwarfs a difficult to understand, and I hope that they are not offended by anything I say. Because help is needed.”

Yes, Leo had definitively gone mad. His sense of obfuscation made a halo around him. But Leo finally first smiled, then laughed:

“Come on all of you, this is meant to be symbolic. Think of their incomprehensible language, as is our computer talk to the users, and think of their patience, their amount of work, their skill. They help wherever they can. In two words: It’s just about us! Yes! And again I am very sorry if I offend a dwarf with my words, me knowing nothing of their true nature, and even less of how to make such rare jewellery. Nor how to make myself invisible.”

He then stopped laughing and sighed: “And last, but not least, they prepare excellent drinks. One of them is I would say even first-rate.”

The team sat there silent, again suspecting him to be in some trance. He really did seem to believe in this dwarf thing. Maurice was the first to catch his breath:

“Ok a drink. That sounds normal enough. What kind of a drink, have you tasted it already?”

“Sure,” said Leo, it’s a super drink. It really lets you see the world with different eyes.”

“What do you mean, like we get stoned?”

Leo grinned again: “It’s called ‘Mischel’ in their old and ancient language. We need help sure, we need something. What we need is a drink.”

Everyone felt relieved. They were finally reassured he was really only joking. Whatever had led them to believe he was meaning what he said seriously. They all knew the drink he was talking about. Mischel. It was really quite innocent and tasty.

They decided to have some of it at the Goats Bar, and all left together for a little well deserved break.

“And anyway, why are we always talking of dwarfs now,” said Gwendoline. “Thinl of what Hilde said. It could well be the Heinzelmén.”

“And they’re more cute,” said Lexi dreamily. “Like children.”

“Could also be Mrko Mrnsk behind all those ghost stories,” said Maurice to Hilde, when they were going back.

“What do you mean?”

“Mrko Mrnsk certainly knows how to make not too good software and hardware configurations, in order to have more of us hired, or rather in order to make people see

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the need for people like him.”

“Well in a way that’s rather friendly. And Mrko Mrnsk friendly? I don’t know.”

“It might be a trick he has learned from experience. And he does not want to be the only one to work, he needs his power team.”

“But why would he want to have ghosts to obtain the honours for getting IT work done? Why should a ghost get an Oscar?”

“He might be a genius in his way really. First he puts errors in a software, trying not to be too perfect, ‘by design’ as we say. Ghosts are the second step. All those softwares and their interactions are so many that they might intersect on points unforeseen. I mean first they have programmed the errors or the not so good design deliberately, then they realise they could from now on rely on self evolving chaos. Just like in the situation we have here. Things begin to happen just by themselves. It can’t be explained, but it can be repaired. By us. We end up putting things right and the House realises they need us.”

“Well should we say thank you to Mrko Mrnsk then?”

“I guess not, I’m dead tired. We all are. Speaking of ghosts, I realised that I could send email using the name of every single person in the MOU. Usually this right has to be granted by one of the IT Administrators, by adding his name to the global security user group, and checking the ‘Send as’ option. I have checked this, and no, this option is precisely not checked. I then thought ITPOL had made a mistake and granted this permission to every member of the Helpdesks. I checked with Lexi and Sven, but no, they can just send from their own mailbox and from the CHD mailbox. I just can’t find out. No One did it. In other word: Ghosts.”

A slight shiver ran through Hilde Brandt. She was a practical person, and didn’t believe in ghosts. Only in people who made them up. And those made her quite a bit uneasy.

Like Cecile Acrot. She phoned because she couldn’t start working in Word.

“Could you have someone come over? I click and click, Word is open, but everything is dead.”

Hilde heard some dead clicks in the background. She sighed, this Cecile Acrot was sheer terror:

“Did you just get a new PC?”

“Yes.”

“First time you start Word on this PC?”

“Yes.”

“Is the Office Assistant on your screen?”

“Who is the office assistant?”

“It there a little man or figure at the right bottom of your screen? Do you see a kind of metal wire or a dog or Einstein or a red ball or a wizard or a cat or a puzzle or a robot or a world or something like that jumping around? Is he asking you if you want to start

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working in Word?”

“But isn’t it obvious, that if I start Word, I want to start Word? How many times do I have to tell anyone that I want to open Word and start working in it? Would you mind sending someone over?”

Cecile Acrot had a point there. The first time you started Word on a PC it came up with the Office Assistant, who then asked you: Do you really want to start Word? I do, yes! Otherwise, why would I have clicked on the Word icon? The problem is that many didn’t see the guy, or his question, because he was hiding from view, at the right bottom of Word. But Word remained dead until one answered.

Hilde started to imagine a long discussion between the Office Assistant and the User:

☹ “Do you want to start Word?”

“Yes – Click! Click!”

“But I mean are you really sure?”

“Yes damned. I want to work!”

“Hm... I’m not so sure about that one, shouldn’t you first talk with your counsellor about it?” ☹

While pondering about what the counsellor would say, Hilde tried to start the remote control, but of course it failed on Cecile Acrot’s PC.

Hilde tried then to solve the problem by phone only, one last time:

“Cecile. You’re in the Koch building and it will take one of us ten or fifteen minutes to get there. Could you please tell me if there is something jumping around at the right bottom of your screen? Like a little man or figure or dog or Einstein or red ball or cat or robot or world?”

“No. I see No One like that. Thus would you now send someone over?”

What else could it be? Hilde skipped through the Gallery options of the Office Assistant to see if she had forgotten an option, but no. Sigh:

“Please tell me if you see anything moving at the right bottom of your screen.”

“Yes but not what you said!” Cecile Acrot seemed outraged.

“What!”

“It’s not anything that you said. Can you send someone as soon as possible?”

“Yes!” (Damn her) and Hilde slammed down the receiver. Einstein finally gave her a better idea. She took up the phone again and called Marianna, the Key User of Cecile Acrot’s workgroup, explaining the situation:

“Of course Hilde, I will go and stop the little bastard, whoever it is.”

She hang up. Nice Marianna. A few minutes later the phone rang again:

“Done! I stopped the thing! I right-clicked on the dwarf and chose ‘Hide’!”

“Thanks so much Marianna. I owe you a coffee. But you stopped what? The what?”

The dwarf? There was no dwarf in the Office Assistants team. But Marianna had

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already hung up. But down to earth Marianne wouldn't make anything up, wouldn't she?

The Have Fun formula

Gwendoline had just finished installing Webshots for Elena. Elena was a very artistic person, Gwendoline knew, and never missed an Opera, Ballet or theatre play. The one to start a standing ovation you know.

Webshots offers trillions of nice photos which you can use as backgrounds or screensaver. Sunsets, rainbows, ocean life, animals, sports, people. The site address is <http://www.webshots.com/>. You could download them and add them to the Webshots gallery of your own PC. One can also upload his own photos and share them with the Webshots community. It all starts with installing the Webshots software. Gwendoline found the Download page, clicked and Webshots downloaded and installed itself.

Elena was delighted: “How gorgeous. How do I configure them now?”

“Elena, this is your job you know, please choose the Settings tab, and you’ll see, it’s easy.”



An hour later an Email arrived from Elena:

“I must say I am very, very pleased with my new screen savers. I hope I don’t get a bill for them one of these days. Are they really free? Thanks a lot! I have even managed to drag Klicka (this was her cat) into the picture folder. I just opened the Explorer and found the folder with my cat in it. I reduced it’s window size. I grabbed my cat and dragged it into an empty picture placeholder of the Webshots Photo Manager. Then I double-clicked on her and there she was, sitting on my desktop.”

Webshots came free, except that one had to pay maybe in the sense that they would send you some spam. That’s why Gwendoline had of course been careful, and registered with a dummy hotmail address (see page 220). But the Webshots site was so soothing, beautiful, Buddha like. It was pleasure only and Gwendoline believed pleasure could help a lot in making people use computers. Users want to have fun. Of course Gwendoline had fun with computers anyway, Webshots or not.

☞ If you don’t have fun, you’re not doing it right. ☞

Gwendoline, just as Hilde, believed that Computers were to be approached principally by having fun. Again: If you were not having fun, you were not doing it right. That’s why children were said to be so good with them, and usually were. Both Hilde and Gwendoline fumed at the idea that Mrko Mrnsk and his crew had removed almost all

the games from the Windows configuration at the House. Because games help in learning to use a computer. The typical good user will be the happy obedient child, or have the mentality of one. Of course people good with maths, with languages, with people were typically those good with computers, but then also were those who had been able to remain a child, if necessary. Or who could get back to being one. It was wishful thinking made true by trying out again and again while playing.

They had both noticed that users who formed groups to send and share jokes, on an average basis, got along much better with computers than those who didn't. The later ones were the 'serious' ones who panicked easily, did not feel sure of themselves. They believed being sober about computers would help. It didn't, it only made it worse and could lead to phenomena like psychomotor problems. Some users when she went to see them trembled so much from the stress of trying that they couldn't hold their mouse correctly. They believed a computer would just do what they wished him to do, but didn't want to go through the effort of trying, because they were afraid it would be boring, tiresome and take years of suffering.

For those she would have prescribed to play around with some of the little programmes in the 'Accessories'. Especially the Games and Paint programmes. By clicking on something innocent they might lose their fear and relax.

Blow yourself up with minesweeper, Pinball, Internet Hearts and it can help. *Solitaire* she didn't care for so much in this therapy, people tended to get dependent on it like upon some drug, and had to repeat it over and over again, it made some look like they had gotten slightly senile. Unfortunately Solitaire was the only game Mrko Mrnsk had left on the Windows Configuration of the House.

Doremi, in good old times, had send her lots of links to Game sites on the Internet. One could have imagined Doremi did not work much, but not at all, Doremi was an efficient worker, as you know one of their Super Users who even could write macros to speed up their work, and so had much time left to write more macros and then to play... She was always done with her job on time and thus at all times very much relaxed.

This made Gwendoline think that she herself couldn't name one single link for a game site anymore, and that she really hadn't played a game for ages. If she wasn't careful, she would end up as a user. With all the workload she had, she felt she hadn't been able to progress with computers for ages.

The stress was just too much. Gwendoline realised that in order to help people with their problems and questions with and about computers she must also listen to their problems and questions with and about their work, but she never found the time for that anymore. The underlying problem must be found in order to solve the symptoms. But the underlying problem evaded her and everyone else. It had gotten too complicated.

And if she listened too well, to the underlying problem, she'd be in danger of being renowned as a kind of great soul doctor and users would call her more and more. Their enthusiasm would become unlimited, and so would their calls. 777 of them would call

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non-stop, eight hours a day. Few pleasures are greater than the one of being listened to and moreover to be understood.

Maybe her point of view was a bit extreme, but repairing computers was not enough, mending the mind that was working on them was much more important. And computers, feeling used and misunderstood, were beginning to partly cause the problem in itself. In a sense they revolted. Gwendoline could understand why people got nervous about them, especially if someone like Mrko Mrnsk was doing much in his power to keep users from understanding PC's. The problem was that for Mrko Mrnsk, there was no user. He only knew about computers, not about people using them. Gwendoline did, but she wished she could do more. Recently she had had Consuelo on the phone. Consuelo was typically one of those users who were always asking questions about her computer which really betrayed an entirely different need, if Gwendoline only could put her hand on it. Consuelo needed a witness, but what more. After Consuelo had gotten a surface answer to her surface question Gwendoline decided to go for it:

“What a pity we never have the time to talk about what we all do, I mean the job which makes us use the computers. It sure might be interesting.”

But again Consuelo refused:

“Ok Gwendoline, she said, I sure want to have coffee again one of those days, but then let's NOT talk about work.”

Gwendoline felt she had made a mistake there, and then not. She so hoped she would find time for this coffee. After all, she had this theory that Consuelo might be Shiva personified. And then, beneath Shiva, one sure would find Consuelo again. But why not talk about work? Work is part of the person; do we not spend at least eight hours day on some two hundred and twenty days a year at it? How can one ignore a major part of a person, especially in someone like Consuelo? Who would once reveal herself in her true nature. But where had her true nature gone and that of all the others? Stress was stealing their minds away. Only to think of the stories which circulated about dwarfs. Collective hallucinations almost. And the two buildings were still in a dreadful state. If anything, it had gotten worse.

Gwendoline thought of writing a manual ‘How not to loose your mind in a maze’. Or would it be better to let go and to loose it? It's mind. Give in? Be cooperative like the adepts of a church or a sect? Was there a way out of this labyrinth, out of this chaos? Was a troubled mind the new norm and should one relish in it? In the meantime, still not believing this, CHD searched for solutions. Hilde was looking for a mathematical formula, Lexi for formula HO1, Maurice and Johanna for another job, Leo and Lut for artistic solutions, Nico for an escape and Myra, well, Myra was looking something very special, the most important of it all. The only feasible solution maybe. Gwendoline just felt this in the depths of her bones.

She just sensed such things. People, at all times, had called her names, like 'clairvoyant', or 'seer'. She thought to just made innocent remarks about them, or their actions, and then found herself before a quite startled person: "Gwendoline how do you know this! I have never, but never, talked to anyone about this. Are you clairvoyant?"

She didn't know if she was, but she would have liked to be. Just to 'see' a way out of this mess. Or maybe to find a leader who would. She herself didn't feel like one. But maybe there was to be no leader anymore, ever, only the little ones would remain, small as they were and felt. Like children on an island, left to organise themselves, in danger of being eaten up by some monster which hadn't shown his face yet, but only it's shape or contour. Chaos was such a monster.

As for Myself, I believe that Gwendoline is a highly intelligent and sensitive person. Gwendoline is indeed clairvoyant. Almost as much as Myself, who have foreseen events like the fall of the Wall, years before and to the day. And Gwendoline is a great seer too. She can be of great help. I agree with her mostly, she is a fine psychologist, and sees through people with an ease that she doesn't seem to realise herself. And like with a very beautiful person who would be the only one to ignore this fact, this makes her sensitivity even more attractive. She might be the one to 'find me out'. And Gwendoline, nice and caring Gwendoline, has a slightly devilish side to her, which I like a lot too: she is a very oblique person.

Gwendoline believed Hilde could help with her formula, Johanna with her sense of organisation and diplomacy, Maurice with his genius for finding solutions to technical problems, Leo and Lut with painting their Web Pages. But she thought that those were direct solutions to a problem so intricate that there maybe was no direct solution. Only an indirect one.

Chaos is not to be defined, this was the nature of chaos itself. That it could not be defined. Chaos was too much of a complex system to be easily understood or understood at all. There were too many factors involved, all of them to intricately linked. What had Hilde told her about the formulas she was trying to make? Intrapolation, extrapolation, exponential, twenty-four thousand factors, all linked and crossed over? How could one work with twenty-four thousand factors all crossed over at a seeming random? How could one solve or put order into that? She liked the poetic view Hilde seemed to have on all this. Poetry might help. Or maybe, something like Myra was looking for. Whatever was it, she couldn't guess. But I Myself do know.

John Kay's theory is 'proposing that the best means of achieving a goal may often be to take an indirect approach rather than a direct one. The theory holds, for example, that individuals whose only concern is their own happiness are rarely happy individuals, and that companies that seek to maximize profits at all costs are unlikely to be the most financially successful'¹³.

¹³ The Principle of obliquity, John Kay

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This sounded nice. John Kay further exposes that individuals whose main pursuit is their own happiness will rarely achieve their goal. Gwendoline thought of a super smart film she had seen, 'Dream Life of Angels'¹⁴. It went about two girls, Marie and Isabelle, both looking for security and a better life. One will make it, the other not. Isabelle, who is looking desperately for a job finds her first one in reading a diary to a girl in coma. It's the diary the girl wrote herself, and Isabelle just hopes to wake her up with her own writings. She succeeds, and leaves at this moment, just to immediately land the first nice job of her life. In the hardware business. We see her as she begins assembling some wires and chips, and the last sentence of the film is her supervisor's remark: "Well great, it looks like you've been doing this all your life." And one feels sure she'll quickly be promoted and promoted, and soon built her own hardware.

This was, Gwendoline suspected, what must have happened to her at one stage of her life, but with software. And now she was in computers. Instead of reading stories to people living in a coma. Another paradox. But Isabelle's completely selfless caring for the girl laying in a coma makes her land a good job. This is called '*obliquity*'.

So what could they do? Take care about the others? They already did. People got nicer with every day that came. They listened too each other and took care of their colleagues as well as Isabelle did by reading to the girl in the coma.

But was that not enough? Must they do more then that? Really take care, like Isabelle had done. Or must they do something which had nothing to do with work? Have drinks, have a song contest. John Kaye was saying that a company whose unique concern is to make profit is unlikely to succeed. So if this was the case for a company who lived on profit, what about one who didn't? Should they try to make profit? Nope. Drinks were a better idea. *Obliquity*. She could feel the word on her tongue, coming on her lips, just as Hilde had a taste for her '*topology*' and Mandelbrot sets. '*Obliquity*' sounded sort of poetic, and also a bit wicked.

And as if someone had guessed her thoughts, she saw an invitation to a drink appear on her screen. It came from Penelope and Micha. The first drink since the move. Seemed they had decided about having a change.

It was to be a nice drink, and as if she had brought the topic about, they talked of spirits, floating tables, and clairvoyants. Paola described how she indeed had see a table float, Karel, a nice CLA from the Sociology WG told that he had sometimes sensed spirits, but then later always found a logical explanation for it. What a pity he had. All this was just MADE for the topic of obliquity. What else could help in their situation but such kind of methods and talents. Spiritual and poetic ones. Like when she was small, and still believed that a wish could come true by sheer will power. Magic was needed. Spirits invited to drinks and phantom users at work went well

¹⁴ La vie rêvée des anges, 1998, directed by Erick Zonca. With Elodie Bouchez and Natacha Régnier.

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together. And the topic of the drink, spiritualism, could certainly lead into or out of chaos.

A little group sipping the excellent local white wine began talking about the chaos. All people in the MOU involved in some kind of organisational task suffered the same.

"I just can't find a way out of this," said Lena, Flavius's colleague. "I tried to go to see the Head of MOU XIII, who's sort of supposed to replace ours, but of course he's never there. Always travelling, or on some mission, or on some meeting, or on a holiday."

"It's always the lower grades who do everything at this place," complained Haida, a girl from the Physics WG. "Sometimes I feel all left to myself. Lost. Alone."

"In a way it's like," Penelope searched for a term, "like having no father." Well she had sort of lost a mother with Josepha but it came to the same. She felt sort of orphaned.

"It's terrible to be lacking directives," said Christa.

Maurice thought it wasn't, but well.

"I never get any information from no one anymore," said Monica, "I give up. I won't run after things any longer."

Gwendoline wished she could do this too, and said so. "I always hang on hang on, I just refuse to let go until I have it."

"I do too," said Penelope, "but I don't see much progress."

This made Micha think that nevertheless she should take Penelope's lead and maybe organise something like a general assembly, where everyone would be able to express their needs. She could, why not; she was Jack Owl's assistant. Why hadn't she thought of it before? Because the Head of MOU XIII, interim replacement for Jack Owl, had shown no interest when she talked to him about it? Had he even listened when she told him about the assembly? No, and instead of it they now had a drink.

"And no one ever listens anymore," Monica continued. "In good old times I could tell my boss about my difficulties and he would take the time to go through the problem and help me find a way to solve it. He has changed so much. He just refuses every word I say. When lately I told him that all those many changes lately were a main cause of the work overload he got really furious and told me I was not being mathematical! It's like bewitched. Our bosses have been bewitched."

"That's more than true," said Sya, a pretty Chinese, secretary in the Environmental Studies WG. "They seem like bewitched, just as the gentle heroes in the fairy tales of my childhood, they appear to have been changed into Foxes, cold and blind, without soul or name."

"In my country we call them changelings," said Grace, who came from Ireland.

"But isn't 'changeling' a nice word for 'mentally retarded'?"

"Maurice, please, just for once."

"And we never get any recognition for our work anymore, I wouldn't even dare think

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of promotion, but I would like a nice word from time to time, a compliment even, for all my hard work. But no, it's only bad temper all the time. Joss has changed so much," said Ingeborg.

"Bosses need compliments too," said Karel in a small voice, but only Gwendoline heard that.

It was true. Most people need to be admired. By a 'dad'. By someone they consider higher than themselves. But the higher one gets, the more the daddies get scarce. Until one day one is the only daddy around, with no one to look down at you and tell you he's proud of you and how well you're doing your job.

There are only a few people who prefer the admiration of the crowd, the people, the little ones, the children. Those are typically artists, dictators, and, in the case of the CHD, the informaticians. Being ignored by hierarchy didn't hurt them so much, because they had the never ending appreciation and compliments of the people of their MOU.

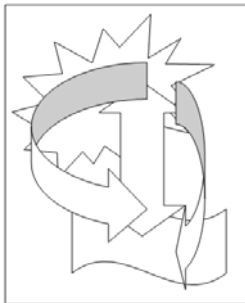
What had Belinda said to her lately?

"Without you life would be horrible. Yes, what would we MOU XII people do without you and the rest of the CHD."

So in some case the little ones should remember to pay compliments to lonely dads or improvise the dad role and protect your environnement or go and pay big compliments to each other. MOU XII people were ever so nice. So what was she going to say to Karel now?

"You are very fine feeling Karel. Almost everyone needs a father," said Gwendoline. She was sure of this father thing. "A father who says he's proud of you. Someone who says: Karel. You've done well!"

Karel, upon that, moved his stomach from left to right, and from right to left. It was obvious that he was pleased by this sideway of a compliment. He was a rather small man, still young, with a round face, round brown eyes, and round belly. People rather liked him, and he could be very funny when he sometimes began play-acting. But chaos had done him no good, and he had put on a lot of fat.



"It's all so confusing, it's surrealism," said Sya, when Karel had gone on to another group. She came from Beijing was the only one apart from Hilde to understand Maurice when he explained to the users. She even said his Chinese was excellent. But Gwendoline was almost shocked about her choice of words:

"Surrealism? That's a word much too nice for this situation."

To this, Carla came in. 'Surreal' was a nice word, and wasn't every nice thing or word needed badly at the moment? Why not call the situation surreal?

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She said so: "Think of the painting by Kandinsky which hangs in Leo's office. It's beautiful. In fact yes, do use the word 'surreal'. It's marvellous."

"It's not a Kandinsky, it's a Braque," said Milan.

"It's my painting," thought Leo, but again only Gwendoline heard that, and anyway, she knew. It was her on the painting.

André Breton, a jet black man from the Ivory Coast, and assistant in the Astronomy WG, just joining them, agreed without even having heard the conversation preceding it.

"Yes, the marvellous is always beautiful. Anything marvellous is beautiful, in fact only the marvellous is beautiful. Maybe the Surreal can save us, like a prayer."

'Pois', thought Hilde. "There is some beauty even in Chaos, if one can make a formula out of it."

"But chaos can lead to anarchy, can't it", added Sya, "and also to revolution."

"Or to having hallucinations. One will be searching for an order of some kind, and the mind will erect archaic structures," added Gwendoline thoughtfully.

"Like seeing dwarfs, you mean?" asked Flavia who knew her well.

"I'm not so sure we only see them," said Haida. "I mean, yes we really do see them, they could really be there. The situation here is fantasy, not those honest dwarfs."

"I'm sure there is a rational explanation about this dwarfs thing," said Karel, who had joined them now too. "I also think someone could be playing a joke on us." he paused. "Has anyone here actually seen one of them himself?"

But no one said he had, and if they had, they would sure not dare say so.

"Do you know anyone who has told you having seen one?"

People shook their heads: "Only people who talk about others having seen them, but when I ask who it was, they can't tell..."

"A chaotic view of things, just like the rest."

They went on talking about spirits, and finally about God himself:

"I once read a book which said that we have an inborn knowledge of God. Inbuilt in our brain," said Karel.

"Of course," said Gwendoline, "this is only logical, if HE has made us after his image."

Maurice nodded:

"Exactly! He must have put a sort of modem in our brain. A modem to God."

The assembly looked at him, and gasped. Karel was the first to catch his breath again:

"Maurice you're really pushing it to far. Can't you think of anything else? Computers and Computers and Computers? You go as linking them to God himself."

Maurice took this in with a slight astonishment. This wasn't even his idea. He had read about it in the Scientific American or in Newsweek, he didn't remember. But was it not only natural, that they would use a word like modem, to express their inner feelings?

The group, however, went over to his topic, and talked about home providers, modems,

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ADSL, DSL, cable or wireless, as means to get connected to the Internet and who knows, even to higher spheres.

Maurice advised everyone to take his very own local Bohatian provider: Othello. He was very satisfied with him, and moreover, it was free.

Do a WebPage in 5 minutes

But when the day came, and they were taking their five minute team coffee, Leo appeared to have shaven his beard so that it was now fitting close to his skin. It became obvious then what a beautiful man he really was. His beard, blue black and shiny, matched his dark eyes and white skin. Why had he waited so long to do this, and hidden beneath his beard? When Gwendoline would go and have one of their philo coffee talks with him, other girls would now certainly a bit slightly jealous. He was well built, with a panther like elegance, and one of those man or women who can make any clothes they wear look good. Today he wore just a light blue shirt and jeans, above dark blue moccasins, nothing special, but on him it just looked as if it was all Armani. Gwendoline was very proud to be his preferred colleague. He was hers too.

Of course the rest of the CHD had to make fun of it for a while, and naturally, obfuscating his true reasons as always, Leo did not want to elucidate why he'd done it, but escaped all explanations with a joke:

"I didn't want to compete with the dwarfs," he said and left the room for a course which was to last the whole day. The rest of them left too, laughing, after all it was eight-thirty and they had to start working officially.

The day was exhausting, as ever, like a storm that would last for ever. It was so bad that it became really dirty, so that most of them forced themselves to leave at five-thirty. They felt cold and strangely alone, and longed for a warm and calm environment.

But Leo couldn't leave yet, he had to help Lut. He had seen her Email, while looking at his webmail interface during the course. All of them were always doing two or more things at the time. The email told him that those who disguised as hierarchy had asked Lut to modify the layout and some ten or more links on some 250 Web Pages. They wanted the look of it light brown now, instead of light blue. And this until tomorrow morning of course. They were saying the colour was an essential factor in the modern look of the House. He could imagine what she was thinking. Had he been there, he might have maybe avoided the ultimatum, but only maybe.

Indeed the Web Pages contained all the new House rules about the call for tenders, and had to prepare a very important scientific gathering which was to take place one week from now. However would she manage to do this, together along with the support she had to give to their now twenty-eight Sub-webmasters. They didn't stop a second calling her for support. Sometimes she really got the impression they had nothing to do, because she herself certainly didn't have this second to take the phone and call someone for help. Leo knew he just HAD to help her.

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Of course the change of Layout could be done quickly, she thought. She was using Dreamweaver to make the Web Pages, and the layout for all of those pages could be changed in just one or two key strokes if their main template was right. Well, the layout yes, but the content? The content was a task for the Sub-webmasters. In this case Mieke. But everyone was calling her all the time, she just couldn't concentrate.

Lut thought she must really think about doing a webpage about how to do a webpage. 'How to do a webpage in just about five minutes'. Just the three or four basic steps, so that people could grasp the basics of it. She could then send it to the people who were wondering endlessly about this mystery of how to do a webpage and then they would call less. There were trillions of Web Pages on the WWW, but there were maybe only one percent or less of humanity who could make one. And in truth a basic webpage was not so difficult to do at all. If necessary, she would stay late. There was also Mieke who might need help, and a lot. But then a phone call came that made Lut leave in a hurry.

Because of all this, the same Mieke was in a more than ugly mood too, or better said: a rather desperate state. She stared at the wall, frozen with the feeling of complete impotence. 'They' were really asking her to fill in the content of two-hundred and fifty Web Pages in just one night. The layout had been done by Lut already, but she had to fill in all the text and make some adaptations. It wasn't so easy, and not just done with two hundred and fifty copy and paste commands. 'They' had come to her, at four o'clock, and asked her to just do it. 'They' really seemed to believe it was possible. However was she going to do this? And who were 'they' anyway.

She had tried to reach Leo and then Lut, but no answer. Well, Leo seemed to be at a training course and Lut was probable on her afternoon off. Lut had told her about one afternoon off per week. It was on Thursday wasn't it? She so hoped not. Anyway she couldn't reach either of them. Where was Leo? But Leo had forgotten to activate his Out of Office reply.

On his side, while at his course, Leo thought he had to make a mental note to tell Lut that the global 'Search and Replace' function - press **Ctrl+H** - also worked from within the global template he had devised. But when he came back to his office and hers at lunchtime, she was nowhere to be found. Back on his course he wrote her an Email, hoping she would find it on time. He then remembered that the global 'Search Replace' function was possible only in principle, and not with the configuration they were using. Mrko Mrnsk had seen to that. He had imposed such restrictions on the Dreamweaver structure that one couldn't use the function anymore. For the same reason, they would not be able to change the layout of the 250 Web Pages in just one stroke. They would have to do it by hand, one by one. He could have gladly strangled the b...

After the course he came back to his office to begin to help Lut but he did not find her at her desk. She didn't come back either. Leo wondered, but decided Lut had just done the right thing: send them all to the devil. And Leo, having his watch tell him it was

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seven thirty, went home. Tomorrow would be another day, just for once.

This didn't help Mieke and she wondered about however was she going to do a miracle. Of course: Never. And Mieke broke down and wept. She wept over her lost life, her parents being far away, the death of her boyfriend Erin when he was 24, the loss of her best friend Kiki to the street and drugs, of not finding love again yet, because Erin was irreplaceable and now, over all, she wept over the fact that she wouldn't be able to finish fifty Web Pages in one night.

But then suddenly she startled. She felt something in her neck. Something tiny and soft, childish and wise. It was a hand was stroking her, almost shyly. She turned around. There he was, this little boy, who seemed to be wandering around the House all alone for several weeks now. Some people had wondered about him. They had asked Tello, who always knew everything. Tello just knew or would tell that he was the son of a Bohatian consultant. A jeweller who had been hired to give some advice about something to do with the land itself. What had he said? Geology or so. Or Speleology. Nothing to do with his main job. Something to do with the underlying grottos and caverns. More he could not say. It was quite normal for children to be at the House, but not at this time. What was this child doing here in the middle of the night? She smiled at him and asked, but the child ignored her question:

"Don't cry Mieke," he said, with an almost adult concern. She felt astonished and even slightly flattered at this.

"How do you know my name?"

"It's written on your door." She had to grin at this.

"How old are you?" He seemed to ponder on this a while before answering.

"Five."

"And you know already how to read?"

He nodded.

"And what's your name?"

"Mikki." Mieke smiled.

"Then we have almost the same names." At this, the little blond one smiled too, and nodded. He was so pretty, with his kind of wise eyes. Gold and Blue. A dream of a child.

"And my colleague's son is called Miki too. Well it's not a direct colleague, he comes to help if my computer is not working."

The little blond boy nodded.

"I know. He's my friend. But he has only one K. I'm Mikki with 2K."

True or not, he was an astonishing child. Sure enough the other Miki couldn't read yet. If it was Sven's son he was talking about. At least Sven couldn't, even if he was the most sexy guy in the world. Or because of.

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“And what does your daddy do?”

Mikki folded his hand behind his back and looked at her in a friendly, but firm way:

“That’s a secret.”

So that was why security had not been able to tell them. Anyway, they were bound to discretion. And probably didn’t know either.

“And do you know what he is doing here for the House?”

Mikki nodded: “But Daddy does not know I know.”

Mieke laughed. But what a strange little man he was.

“You want some milk?”

The child brightened up and now nodded with some enthusiasm.

She served him some in a paper cup, and Mikki drank in long patient sips, without spilling any of it nor gulping. It seemed endless. She smiled again.

When he had emptied the cup he gave it back to her:

“You feel better?” he asked. It was more of an affirmative.

She laughed and nodded. He had drunk all the milk and she shouldn’t feel better, but she did. Some of the dread had gone.

“Why you were crying?”

“Because I will not be able to finish my work tonight.”

“You have so much to do then?”

Mieke nodded. Wherever did this wise little gnome come from?

“Can’t Miki’s father help?”

Mieke shook her head: “No it’s not his job exactly. He deals with computer hardware only, and does not know about Web Pages. You. Do you have a computer at home?”

Mikki nodded: “Daddy has.”

“And you can use it?”

Nod again.

“And you like it?” Nod again.

“And you’re good with it?”

“Yes and Daddy is good too. I help him sometimes.”

“I’m sure you do! But Oh I could use some help too. I will have to stay here all night to finish, and that will not be enough. I really could do with some help.”

Wait a moment, had she understood Mikki’s last sentence correctly? What a child he was, saying he was helping his daddy.

But the little boy nodded, understandingly:

“You work hard. Daddy says that those who work hard get help. What do you have to do?”

“250 Web Pages in one night.”

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Mikki looked seriously taken aback: “Poor Mieke, you can’t you do this alone! You can’t! You must get help.”

Mieke was wondering. She really felt secure with this little guy. She had lost her fright. Some kids were like little Bodhisattvas, it was a mystery, but it was so with this Mikki. But now she really must send him away, and get back to her impossible task. But little prince Mikki pointed at the screen:

“You’ve got an Email.”

She startled a bit. An Email at this hour. Ok, no wonder, the House was full of people at all times of the day and the night. She had a look. The Email was from Lut. Oh, so then she was there. She bent her head to it:

“Do a webpage in five minutes,” it said in the subject field.

Was this a cruel joke? No, certainly not. Lut was a very nice person. She sighed. Maybe the Email would contain something else. But it didn’t. There was a link to a webpage which had the same title again. Mieke read it quickly, with Mikki looking over her shoulder.

How to do a webpage in five minutes

- Just open the software which allows you to do one.
- FrontPage, Dreamweaver are well known.
- Have a picture of your holidays ready (remember ‘Save picture on Internet’) or maybe you have one digital. Of your cat or so.
- Choose ‘Insert - Picture’ and then find the picture.
- The picture will insert.
- Then type some text like: “This is my favourite place”.
- Select ‘favourite place’. Now you want to put a link to one other place on the web.
- In the properties dialog box, right to ‘link’ type the link or paste it by copying the link from the address in your Internet browser.
- Like: <http://www.grenadines.net>. What’s your cat doing there now?
- Save the page by choosing ‘File Save’ and giving it a name. This is really a webpage already.
- Now you can put it up to the Word Wide Web. In fact you ‘publish’ the page there, which just means sort of copy. Like your webpage will be.

<http://www.grenadines.net> or <http://www.absoluteastronomy.com/moons/titan.htm>

which shows the Grenadines Islands or the Moon Titan.

- But how to get it up to the WWW?
- This is a bit tricky. Because there are so many ways, and you sometimes need more parameters, your own.
- Do you have a *Internet Provider*? The one to whom you pay the Internet fees

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is your provider. But of course nowadays it's free. This provider gives you free space for Web Pages on this Internet website.

- Use CuteFTP, or the *Publish* command in Windows or go on the webpage of your Provider and find the explanations there. Or Yahoo and Geocities on <http://geocities.yahoo.com/>

The Grenadines! The Titan moon! Oh how would she like to be there now! When Mieke had done reading, she sat back, looking at him as if he could help.

"Daddy's provider is www.Othello.bh," he said.

"I do too," said Mieke. Everyone had Othello.

"For his Web Pages," said Mikki, apparently not sure she knew.

"What does he expose there?"

"His secret business."

"So it's not so secret?"

"Yes but only he knows the address of the site. Well I do too."

Mieke felt suddenly anxious again. She looked at poor cute Mikki, who could do nothing about it and said:

"Ik ben gedaan." She was using her mother tongue, Flemish, without thinking. Meaning "I'm finished", in the sense of 'I'm dead'.

"What you mean?" asked Mikki.

"I'm done, finished."

"That's good" he said brightly. "So you can go home now." He left then, smiling and winking at her one last time from the threshold of the door. She winked and smiled back at him.

Mikki gone, Mieke took the phone to call Lut but got no answer. Maybe she'd send the Email from home. She sighed again and went back to her screen and keyboard. She was so tired, she was tired all the time. What would a life without being tired mean? She opened webpage number ten. She wasn't sure if she had done it yet. But soon she gave a little sigh of satisfaction. She indeed had! Well but this was only one more. It was ten o'clock, and she'd managed to do only ten pages until now. Ten in three hours. She opened page eleven and got another nice surprise, there was one more achieved, though she couldn't remember to have done it. She then opened page twelve, but that was completed too. And so were thirteen, fourteen and fifteen. And so was the rest. All 250 of them bloody 250 Web Pages. Done. She was indeed, done. Finished. Oh this Angel that was Lut, this angel of mercy. She took the phone to thank her profusely, but again got not answer. Well then it must have been Leo, this very nice guy, always so respectful without any ostentation. He was such a saint. And beautiful too. But Leo didn't answer either.

She decided she would invite them both to the most giant coffee which had ever existed on earth. And if there wasn't such a coffee, she would have to invent it. She

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pondered on this, and realised that indeed that was what she must do.

The next day Mieke came to do just exactly this, visiting both Leo and Lut in their offices, and telling them how great they were and carrying two giant cappuccinos, big as bowl of soup. She would have banged her head on the floor with thanks, had she not feared to spill the cappuccinos. But to her surprise they denied having helped her!

Leo and Lut were just as astonished. Lately, both of them, like of course the rest of the CHD, had gotten used to those kind of love declarations from the users, which they did not feel to have deserved entirely. At least not in the sense the users meant it. Leo made a mental note to remember suggesting at next service meeting that they would just have to lie about all this, and 'admit' they had indeed achieved what the users said they had. Like on the motto: A user is always right. Leo and Lut looked at each other, a bit ill at ease. Lut guessed Leo's thoughts very well. They were both having the same: Should we begin with this now? Admit it was we? No too soon? So they just stayed silent and drank the giant cappuccino with Mieke, who insisted on thanking them again and again, persisting to tell them how nice and clever and kind and pleasant and intelligent and bright and able they were.

The 250 Web Pages. Ok Mieke hadn't done them. She couldn't have. The CHD knew they hadn't done it either. No one had done nothing. But then who had?

"Maybe it was 'titomme,'" said Lut.

"Who is 'titomme?'" asked Leo.

"Penelope's dwarf," said Lut absent mindely, "he has disappeared. Didn't you know?"

She had dreamt of him that night, now she remembered. Leo shook his head, slightly astonished. Little man? Another dwarf?

"He did something in my dream," said Lut, "if I'd only remembered what."

And it would have been only half as bad, if Lut's Web Pages hadn't been done too. Lut's version of the previous day to Leo was that she had sort of collapsed too at some time, because her husband had called her to ask if she could come back to look after their son Maxi. The day nursery had called to say he had suddenly caught a high fever. Could she come and take him home, he had a meeting, but he would come back as soon as he could. So Lut left in a hurry, forgetting to inform the others, and went to search Maxi, put him to bed, and sat down to wait for her husband to arrive at six o'clock, but of course he came back only at nine. Lut then herself left again for the office in order to help Mieke and do her own pages. Anyway Maxi was much better already.

It took her a second to finish what she had been trying to do just before leaving: to click on the 'Send' button in her Email titled 'How to do a webpage in five minutes.'

She then wanted to phone Mieke, but Mieke didn't answer. Had she managed to finish the webpages by one of those miracles, rather frequent those days? Lucky her.

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After that she went to her own ordeal and bent down to change the ten or more links on each of the 250 Web Pages. And soon she realised with glee it had already been done. Easy of course, if she could believe Leo's Email which she discovered a bit later. But then she hadn't done it herself, and some later Leo on his side pretended he hadn't either. Of course the story of Leo, Lut and Mieke looking for each other whole day long without finding each other is typical for human relations which for sure are much more complicated than computers. But this still left them with the question: Who had done the Web Pages?

You want a nice webpage?!

Elbuself, Tonnelli, Mieke, Mikki and Maxi advise how to proceed:

- Take a bit of patience
- 1 ounce of intelligence
- 3 spoonful of work
- 6 slices of imagination
- Serve hot.

Track them!

As the mystery of the strange appearances at night continued Gwendoline remembered a discussion Hilde had reported to her some months ago. One she had had with her friends Emma x 2, Penelope, Julia, Jenny and the missing Josepha, on the day Penelope's garden gnome had disappeared. Could it really have been the FLNJ who had 'freed' her dwarf and could it have been them too who had placed the seven garden gnomes on each floor of their building at that time? Why should they have done such a thing? Was it, such as everyone had first thought, to criticise the dreadful state of the building or was there some more to it?

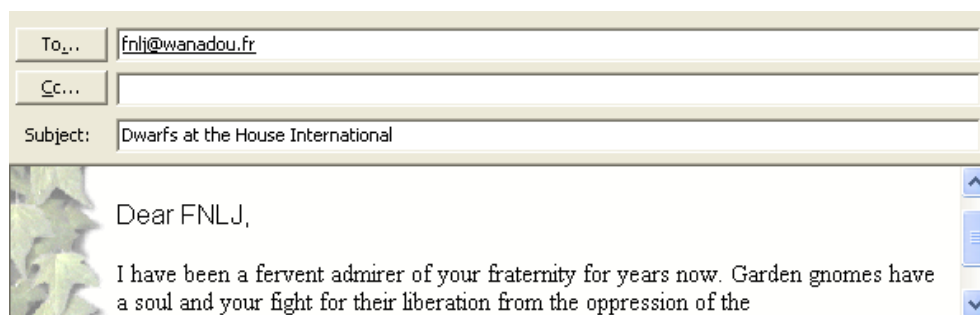
Possibly someone in MOU XII had a buddy in the FNLJ movement, or was part of it. But the events that had occurred since then were so weird and incomprehensible that one could now have doubts about the first appearance of the gnomes just expressing criticism. And it was not so much a joke anymore. This mystery of dwarfs appearing at night and helping the humans must have a reason to be, if only the one to be solved!

She felt she just HAD to investigate further. Even if the chance to know more was small, she would contact the FLNJ anyhow, just to see if they could do anything in order to help.

She opened Outlook, and thought for a while: What *Stationary* to pick for this Email? She wanted a nice one.

☞ She choose 'Tools - Options - Mail Format'. In there she set 'Send in this message format' to HTML. She clicked on 'Stationary Picker' and chose Ivy.

The she clicked on new message and began to write, feeling funny.



Dear FLNJ - GGLF

I have been a fervent admirer of your fraternity for years now. Garden gnomes

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have a soul and your fight for their liberation from the oppression of the bourgeoisie is noble. The bourgeoisie's mauvais goût is a thing unpaired! In this range of ideas, could it be that you recently massively freed a crowd of garden gnomes and thus rendered them to their true dwarfish nature?

As you may know, some months ago seven garden gnomes mysteriously appeared on the floors of one of the House's buildings...

And she went on with the narrative, as you know it, finally ending her rather long Email with:

*Could you be so kind as to tell me if you have something to do with this all this?
Give me at least a clue :o)!*

*Sincerely yours,
Gwendoline*

The answer arrived the following Monday, FNLJ was probably still at school studying and had no time for his lobbying during the week. A serious girl or boy, for sure.

Dear Gwendoline,

That's an interesting story you're telling me there, but regrettably we're in for nothing! Not for the first, the placing of the garden gnomes in your building, and not for the second, the appearance of life dwarfs in your building and their efforts to help you!

It is true however that some months ago I was contacted by one of your colleagues – probably using a nickname - regarding a building in a state of chaos. She or he asked the FLNJ to place dwarfs in it. I found the idea very interesting, but at the same time warned the sender about the problems he could have if he or she were found out. I assured him however that we would provide help, should he insist. Has he maybe found help from another side? The dwarfs themselves, who knows? We got no feedback about the appearance of the seven gnomes either. Sniff. Maybe there were problems of some kind which impeded your colleague to do so.

Keep in touch and let us know if you know more on your side.

*Toneli
Leader of FNLJ Bohatia*

Gwendoline had both to grin and to remain thoughtful at that answer. Toneli? That

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name rang a bell. Where had she already heard it? She would try to remember. And more, who was the mysterious colleague who had contacted the FNLJ a few months ago, about the same topic, and why had she then eventually retracted? Or if she hadn't, who then had placed the gnomes in the Koch building? Of course if someone else had had the same idea, and placed the dwarfs there for a similar reason, her goal was reached, and she needn't pursue further. Had it been Hilde? But Hilde would have told her about this or not? Well just as the Codename report said: walls have ears. But whoever it was he or she really would have informed the FNLJ about this, since they had been ready to help. Whatever could have been the reason he or she hadn't. Had she encountered some serious problem, or had she, maybe, disappeared along with the garden gnomes?

Gwendoline wondered about her own change of mind. If some time before she had truly but only admired the FNLJ for their fight against 'mauvais goût' and Kitsch, she had now been honest when she had written that she thought garden gnomes had a soul.

It was most unfair that garden dwarfs should be held under such low esteem, especially by those same people who exploited them. Why should they stand in a garden doing nothing! It was a paradox. Slavery reversed. Garden gnomes were forced to do nothing, but dwarfs were a hard working and deserving folk. They actually LIKED to work, even if this made Gwendoline think they were slightly mad. Not being able to work was intolerable for them, she realised this now. They were experienced, wise and intelligent. They suffered greatly if they found themselves unable to use those gifts in order to help deserving humans who suddenly, without being at fault, found themselves in awkward situations. Dwarfs then jumped in to help. They just loved to this. It was a paradox. On one hand, slavery at the times of the Romans or on the cotton fields of Louisiana forced men and women to work for masters who greatly profited from this labour. On the other hand garden gnomes were forced NOT to work. It was obvious that their owners must be making some profit out of this. Otherwise why would they buy them? Could the reason behind their imprisonment be that their owners had confiscated the mines that the dwarfs once rightfully owned? That they wanted the riches which the mines offered for themselves?

Dwarfs of flesh and blood were turned into figures of clay and plastic by the evil magic of the bourgeoisie so that they couldn't move to defend themselves and get back their rightful property. FNLJ strove to not only free gnomes from their garden prison but also from their prison of plastic and clay. Gwendoline wondered what means the FLNJ used but it was obvious that garden gnomes underwent some magical treatment, that some counter spell was used to turn gnomes into dwarfs of flesh and blood again. Anyway FLNJ or not, using dwarfs as a remedy against chaos was not such a bad idea. It had to work somehow. Hierarchy had disappeared and garden gnomes had turned up. All of a sudden she got the shivers. Not like when you see the man or woman of your dreams for the first time but rather when you feel a jolt of lightening go down on your

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house. Josepha! Had she not disappeared the day of the garden gnomes first appearance in the building? Had she gone underground, and joined the FLNJ? She had always be politically engaged.

And Toneli, she now remembered. This had been one of the seven garden gnomes names. She checked it up later in the secret webpage Maurice and Leo had made with the pictures they had taken of the gnomes. But well there it was Tonnelli. When she wrote back to FLNJ to enquire Toneli there answered again that he had, to his regret, nothing to do in this story and also remarked upon the difference of spelling of the name. Toneli was a very common dwarf's name. The person or persons who had introduced the dwarfs in the House just knew dwarfs well.

Leo blinked his eyes when Gwendoline showed him the two letters and swallowed slightly when she told him about her dwarf theory. It took something to understand Gwendoline. Her mind was more intricate that a thousand RAID clusters working against each other. But she had a point there. People at the House were working like dwarfs, and they didn't even have too. They did it by their own free will. He started to say something about people being drugged and dependent on just about anything when a very excited Maurice burst into their conversation. That meant he had another story or had found another shortcut. One team member after the other stuck their heads out of the door and assembled in the corridor, waiting for Maurice to inform them about another useful shortcut. But his first sentence was a question:

“Where is Hilde?!”

“I don't know. Somewhere on support?”

On that Maurice didn't seem to feel the need to get on with what he had to say. Would he ever do a step without Hilde? But Hilde seemed to sense she was needed and emerged from the staircase.

“You know what!”

“Tell us.”

“We have traitors in our building. Spies. No wonder nothing works.”

“Talk sense please, Maurice,” said Johanna.

All of them smiled at him with some indulgence. What a kid he could be.

“You'll soon stop smiling,” said Maurice. “We've the enemy right among us, or at least he's very close!”

“What do you mean?”

“Well you know that the Curie building is partly leaning against a rock. On its far east side.”

CDH looked at him dumbfounded and waited for him to continue, a little exasperated about his eternal suspense making.

“And I have been there.”

“Where?”

“In the rocks.”

“In the rocks or on the rocks,” murmured Sven, more to himself, suspecting Maurice to have had one glass to much.

“Discovered another of your shortcuts?” asked Lexi.

“Not a shortcut, but just a door.”

“Which door? Maurice, for once stop this suspense business of yours.”

Maurice looked hurt: “What do you mean?”

“Moooooriiiiicce!”

“The door is one door which seemingly leads to the fire closet.” He drew his breath, happily. “But it doesn’t. Not only at least. Because I saw a guy disappear into there.”

“You saw someone disappear into a fire closet? And then?”

“I just saw him enter and close the door and not come back, I then followed and did the same. There is a fire extinguisher there ok, but also another door. I opened this door.”

“Where does it lead to then? To heaven?”

“Rather to hell.”

Maurice looked smug.

“There is a corridor behind it. And it's filled with MOUIT people.”

“You mean to tell us they’re MOUIT people hidden in the rock!” said Nico, who’d appeared last. Wow. Nico had said something again. Except for coffee with Chiara, one hadn’t seen him much lately. But Chiara had made good progress, and had even devised several standards forms for the WG.

Maurice beamed: “Exactly! It’s filled with MOUIT people. And MOUIT equipment. And MOUIT machines. The SCIENCE and the daVinci server are standing there.”

“What? The SCIENCE and daVinci server were close to us all the time and we didn’t even know?”

“What, MOUIT two steps away from us and we didn’t know?”

Maurice didn’t need to give the answer, his silence said it all. He was insinuating that they had MOUIT people and the SCIENCE server at their very own level, but all of it deeply stuck in the rock.

“But how can that be! How come that we never saw them get in?”

“Because they there is an entrance at the other side of the rock. There’s a little iron door there, which only opens with a card and code. I posted myself there and soon saw someone get in.”

“I still don’t believe this. I have to see for myself!”

“Be my guest!” said Maurice and disappeared in the wall. Hilde followed placidly and then Gwendoline, Leo, Lut, Myra, Lexi, Sven, Nico. Johanna stayed behind to work.

They first stepped into a small passage that had been built into the raw rock. Faint

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daylight came in from tiny portholes in the walls. Only ten meters and they reached a small round space with a long corridor leading away from it. Its walls were painted in faint yellow and the light was now bluish and artificial. All in all it looked like a very normal corridor. Doors opened here and there, and the MOUIT people stuck their heads out.

After that some explanation was offered by Maurice the MOUIT team seemed quite happy to get a visit, but a bit uneasy too:

“In fact visitors are not allowed here,” said a tall slim young man.

Gwendoline clearly recognised the voice:

“But you’re the guy from the SCIENCE Server Helpdesk! I’m so pleased to finally be able to put a face on your voice. What’s your name?”

The guy trod on his feet, looking embarrassed.

“We’re not allowed to say our names.”

“Why not?”

“Orders.”

“But this is preposterous. It goes against any law of communication. It would enhance work quality a lot, if we knew each others names.”

The Helpdesk team from MOUIT wanted to nod to this, but did not dare.

“Yes, maybe”, one or two of the others stuttered.

“But who exactly decided this?”

They murmured something about Prescott Forell, whom CHD knew to be the Head of the SCIENCE Server Administration Unit. Those Heads of MOUIT were really cold as fish. And not so bright either, thought Gwendoline, communication was everything.

While they were at it, the SCIENCE server Helpdesk showed them the SCIENCE server. It was of course not just one big PC, but rather a series of tall units, placed next to each other, and working in a cluster system. Maurice was very interested and engaged in a passionate conversation with the tall young man who wouldn’t say his name. He was shy to explain, but didn’t refuse either.

“We could meet by chance in the Pink Bar, if you agree?”

They did so a bit later and thus met Matthias, Fritz, Carlina, Armin, Kalid, Nasud, Rafi and Wahib by name.

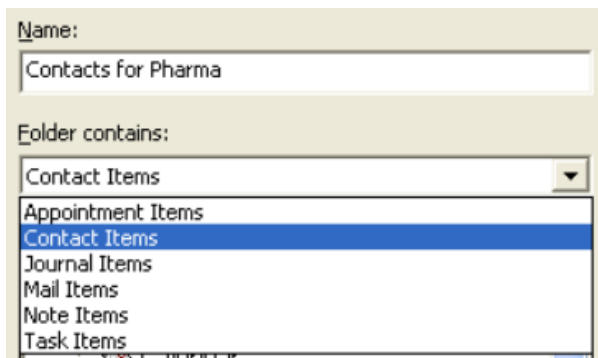
They were actually very nice and knew a lot. The awkwardness between them disappeared. CHD hoped that after that their relationship would be much better, and that maybe the SCIENCE server would break down less. That would be one big problem solved! But the whole lot seemed quite afraid of this boss of theirs. It was obvious they must be holding things back.

In the afternoon, Gwendoline heard a light step in the corridor, as if someone was running on socks. Maurice tapped in, indeed in socks. Gwendoline stared. He had beautiful fine feet, elegant, quite small for a man of his size. And tasteful socks too. He

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asked her if she could make a new Public folder in Outlook for the Pharma Workgroup. The Pharma team needed to share their address contacts, calendar and some tasks there. Gwendoline said of course she would, but stared again as he left her office. She rubbed her eyes. Something was different.

She created a New 'Pharma' Folder by right clicking on the root of MOU XII Public folders and added the Pharma group with Reviewer rights. Beneath that she created three subfolders: Contacts, Calendar and Tasks. While she was at it she added a folder which could contain Mail items of common interest. In that way they would not need to keep everything in their own respective mailbox and could find important mails back easily. She took care to specify what type of items each folder should contain:



but kept wondering of what had been different with Maurice. He seemed to have shrunk. Was he 'dwarfing' too? Fine for her, she liked small men and Maurice had always been a bit too tall for her taste, but don't let Hilde hear that. Also he seemed to have lost a lot of his slight sarcasm lately, and had dropped making dirty jokes entirely, but again, don't let Hilde hear that. She would just say that he had never made dirty jokes, only good ones. But everything was changing so much all the time, one couldn't keep up, and what else was suddenly so utterly different with Maurice?

She was still wondering when she got the thanks from Pharma WG:

"Many thanks to Gwendoline of the always 'Super Extra Ideas'. This will spare us hours of work and make us so much more efficient."

That was nice to hear; but only at home, when she plastered a small wound on her son's Paco's tiny foot, she knew what it had been. Maurice hadn't limped. Things seemed to be shifting all the time. For once this was a shift to the better.

Prison

The joy of having met the staff of the SCIENCE server Helpdesk didn't last, because the next day, when Gwendoline went to say Hello to them, she found the corridor empty. All doors were closed, and no one seemed to live behind them. She went back to her desk, distressed. They seemed to have vanished. She and the rest of CHD and other Helpdesks of the House got another surprise as an Email popped up on their screens. It came from Ina who worked in MOU XXI (Training). Sent *on behalf* of the guy from the Ivory Tower.

Subject: Policy on the new XP Workstation

You are invited to follow a workshop on the House's new standard configuration.

Time: Next Thursday, 9hoo to 12hoo

Location: Hubble building, 4th floor, room 33

The workshop is organised by Training MOU and will be given by Mrko Mrnsk of ITPOL, MOUIT.

Would you kindly confirm your participation in replying to this email.

Ina Klasse

Wiebke Strom

Mrko Mrnsk, descending to the mortals? What had made him change his mind? It was probably public pressure. After all, all the Helpdesk of the House were mad at him. Most of CHD and members of other Helpdesk teams of the House went, driven by an uneasy curiosity. Nearly all of them saw Mrko Mrnsk for the first time. Maurice knew him best, and Johanna had even worked on the same floor as him once. He didn't look especially strange or weird nor was he really ugly. A skinny, rather nondescript man, and only Gwendoline felt a breath of evil. She knew that Mrko Mrnsk on his side knew or recognised none of them. If he had seen them, he had seen through them. He was just like that. From his Ivory tower he couldn't see a thing. He was too high above and too much surrounded by machines.

No the problem was that CHD had taken the habit to put Mrko Mrnsk at fault for just about everything: The chaos, everything that didn't work in the configuration at the House. He could do nothing right anymore. Well even CHD needed a black sheep at times. So whatever he would do now, CHD would find it wrong;

"You are here because of the success of a previous workshop of the same kind,"

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announced Mrko Mrnsk without any previous introduction. No one knew about a previous workshop but no one said anything.

Sven pressed an imaginary Tab key to see his name appear in a screen in front of his mind. He could never get that name right. Remember, Sven is the most intelligent of them all. The name Mrko Mrnsk fell from Autotext, flipped to the right, and fell on the paper.

Mrko Mrnsk continued, imperturbable.

“In the recent months ITPOL has worked out a series of new IT Group Policies to adapt the PC at the House to then new stability, reliability and security requirements. As you know a user’s *profile* defines the look of a user’s desktop, his connections to shares, his Internet settings; a GPO that is Group Policy will define what a user is allowed or rather what a user is NOT allowed to do.”

☞ He could at least have said: 'is allowed and is not allowed to do', instead of only saying, 'is not allowed to do' thought Gwendoline bitterly. What was the matter with this guy?"☞

"In our new configuration the number of disabled and locked functions has grown and now covers almost every option, property or settings of the workstation. Users will not be able to change anything anymore at all. Which means: You will be very satisfied in what regards your work as a Helpdesk. All GPO will be ready next year in spring, and be available for download on the ITPOL server."

He smiled while giving a twinkle of his eye and turned to the whiteboard.

“The workshop is structured in five parts:

Point 1 - Games

The new workstation will not contain a single game anymore. Not even good old Solitaire will be installed. FreeCell, Hearts, Minesweeper, Backgammon will cease to exist. Utilities like the Messenger or the Chat feature will be removed. ITPOL is thinking to eliminate the Accessories folder entirely. The configuration will be stable and the user will not be able to change nor configure anything anymore. Nor the screen resolution, nor the background, nor the screensaver.

Point 2 - Downloads and Installation

Users cannot install anything anymore. No more wild downloads from the Internet. Not even Winamp, Irfanview, MWSnap, Ad-Aware or other seemingly ‘innocent’ software. Nor screensavers. Let’s not talk of unspeakable ‘goodies’ like Webshots. They just carry viruses and spyware with them. Only the MOUSA will be able to install something. Even the installation of a user’s own security certificate will need the intervention of the MOUSA. Only the MOUSA knows what’s secure or not. We are equally considering to impeach the use of all Plug & Play hardware whatsoever, even the use of the FlashDisk. The users have asked for it.

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Point 3 - ActiveX

All *ActiveX* components will be disabled. ActiveX can be damn necessary in order to have a good view of the Web page, especially if it is pleasant. This will hamper surfing a lot. Everyone very well knows that users surf only for pleasure. Surfing at work should be only used for work, and not to look at the next holiday destination or to order plane tickets. It's a security issue and anyway, users are not here to take pleasure in their work.

Point 4 - Visibility and configuration

Most folders won't be visible anymore. The programmes folder, the Windows folder with its system folder, the settings. The user doesn't need to loose its time in order to seek to know more. The user can't do anything anymore but work. Most options in the Control Panel will be disabled or hidden. Users won't loose time anymore changing the screensaver, background or colours on their desktop, this has been disabled. Just the same, the user will not be able to arrange icons on the desktop using his view of organisation, nor will he be able to add nor remove icons. The user will not be able to change his keyboard or screen settings alone either. The MOUSA will do it for him. It's all a security issue. And the user won't have any other choice but to comply and work.

Point 5 - Interaction

The MOUSA will be sole intermediary between the user and the computer. The only dialog which remains possible between the user and the Computer will be via the MOUSA. Every request will pass through him. Without his MOUSA, the user will not be able to MOVE. With the user not being able to fool around anymore your workload will decrease considerably. As you know, Group Policies have considerable advantages over the previous System Policies. No other but an Administrator will be able to change the configuration of the computer. To conclude and say it all:

ITPOL has renamed 'PC-SystemPolicies' to 'PC-RestrictionPolicies'."

Indeed, that said it all. Mrko Mrnsk smiled. He looked at his audience proudly, visibly expecting great relief and much applause. And he got it. To Gwendoline's horror quite a lot of the participants from other Helpdesks indeed showed approval and some even clapped their hands, laughing. Fools they were. Mrko Mrnsk didn't care about human beings, thus not about helpdesk staff, and certainly not users. All he cared about was his new IT Policy and he was positive everyone would approve it and thank him.

He couldn't imagine that one could see things differently. Users were 'objects' in his vocabulary. And consequently helpdesks were probably not very much relevant either... Annoying bunch of people always demanding what they called improvements

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or corrections, which in his mind only showed they hadn't understood the perfection of his designs. However, he had to work with them. Yet... If they weren't careful the day would come when his workstation would be so perfect that no more Helpdesks would be needed.

But people were blind, and applauded. Only poor CHD sat there, flabbergasted, as if turned into stone. Maurice fumed, Johanna had tears in her eyes, Leo stroked his now gone beard. OK. Users had been behaving really bad, some time ago, by letting their children put all those viruses on the PC's in the House, and now punishment was to follow. MOUIT and ITPOL, its harsh police section, had decided to take the adequate measures. Prison, at least, had to follow the crimes the users had committed. Because Pleasure and Play, Freedom, in our cruel world, will inevitably lead to catching a virus. A deadly one if possible. ITPOL had been working on this Restriction plan for months now: restrain the users' freedom and means of self-organisation. Viruses gave them a very good excuse. ITPOL did not like users. Or rather, they did not want to know there WERE users.

It was true, it was partly the users fault. Why had they installed all this illegal software, games, screensavers, and with it the viruses, the spyware. Now, instead of the spammer, spoofer, hacker or cracker, it was the user who was imprisoned. The new configuration was full of restrictions. Restrictions. Restrictions. Beloved word.

But it was hard on the users, even if a minority of them might even like it. The user can't do anything anymore but work? How much more should they work? They were working far enough. And could they work under such circumstances? Not being able to organise themselves anymore?

For Mrko Mrnsk, users existed only in their own imagination, and that of a Crazy Helpdesk. Users weren't necessary; he'd proved that often enough. ITPOL could never conceive a direct contact with a user. Helpdesks had invented users so that they could find a good reason to justify their own existence. And then they had the guts to tell ITPOL gruesome stories about how users were messing up their desktops and the configuration of their PC and that it was ITPOL's fault. It was irreverence. It was blasphemy. MOUSA's and users were forever demanding and complaining and criticising his configuration and asking for improvement. Now he had found the answer to those more than questionable requests.

There are no users. There is only ITPOL and its computers. ITPOL was the propagator of the true religion, one to follow blindly.

A new Church!

It rang like thousand bells in their ears. 'The only dialog which remains possible with the Computer is via the MOUSA'. Just like the church considered that the only dialog

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between God and a human was via the Priest. How bizarre, since it were people like MOUIT and ITPOL which had created the computer world. First some instance creates something for everybody to use, and when everyone uses it, so much that one cannot go without it, the same instance declares that no one can use it without its permission or intermediary.

Mrko Mrnsk was standing before them, his eyes promising a kind of doom. He rubbed his hands, but CHD rubbed their eyes, their vision blurred, they just couldn't believe it.

Lexi saw him with horns. Lut had a vision of him even worse, she saw him as a child molester. Myra braced herself and thought of an anti-dote: a prince. Gwendoline imagined him as a jailer. Worse she saw her users forced into a strait jacket. But they were no fools! Hilde saw Mrko Mrnsk with a moustache, shouting: 'Sieg Heil'. The *Endlösung*: The abolishment of the user. Did he believe computers would do it all alone, obeying him, the Overlord?

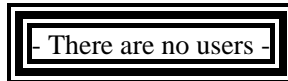
Hilde was sure Computers liked their users! They would be dead sad, without their users. Hadn't they helped them to the extent of self-sacrifice, those last months? She pursed her lips. Dwarfs? Ok maybe they did not exist, but at least they were maybe nice Bohatians and little kids disguising as such. But the real helpers were her own little ones, the computers. Positive! Or not? So many doubts not only remained, they didn't even have the beginning to an answer.

Mrko Mrnsk took the silence that met him as a sign of total approval, worship even. He was beginning to like those people, they finally showed good sense. Maybe he should see more of them. He decided to let go a piece of information he had wanted to withhold from then, not wanting to give them to much pleasure at once:

"And wait until you experiment what I have worked out for the users in the MS Office environment! I have devised new a configuration for them in Word, Excel and Access, you'll dream about it at night! Almost all menu options have been *disabled*. In Tools-Options. Users won't be able to *configure* anything anymore. Finished their playing around trying to *customise* their toolbars or to make new ones. They won't be able to make a single move anymore. The access to Office on the Web has been disabled as well. A user must not loose its time surfing there pretending he wants to know more. Users should not know more than they need to know. A user should submit to the rules and laws of IT at the House. Before all, he must service the House and be content to carry out what is asked of him. Too much curiosity and knowledge is dangerous and just leads to more demands. There is no benefit to it. The user should not 'master' his PC. This makes him get notions and believe he has rights over it. As what regards the user, the notion of mastering a PC has become obliterate. And truly, it's not his PC. Any action of free will be unfeasible with the new configuration. A PC must remain standard and is not be personalised. If a user needs any of this, he must pass through his MOUSA. But I trust you to install the adequate foreclosures."

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ITPOL only did not like users, it had a golden rule, a precept written in golden letters all over their actions. He didn't say it, but one could see it in his eyes, the final sentence.



☞ For the formatting, Mrko Mrnsk had used 'Format - Borders and Shading - 3-D' with a triple line Style and an 'Apply to: Text'. The border was in black and white, but one could almost see the red blood running from the frame.

Mrko Mrnsk stood there, barely hiding his delight. He truly meant all this as a pleasure to come, not as a nightmare. He was not only a solely technical artefact, he was a bad one. He raised his hands and spoke it out:

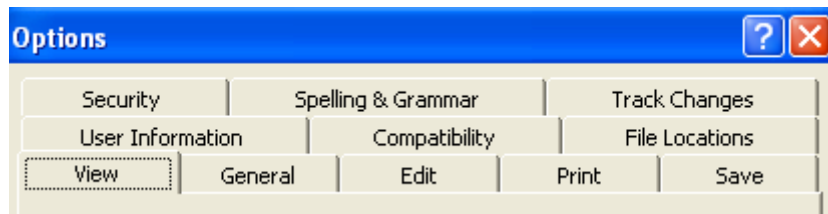
“Remember the Codename report! The day will come when users won't be necessary at all.”

It was too much. Gwendoline fainted and had to be carried away, seated between Sven and Leo. The rest of the CHD followed. They had grown to love their users, they did not want to see them go. Fortunately, some time remained to react to all of this. ITPOL was living in an Ivory Tower and they were not so good with computers as they thought. Their plan was bad. It was full of bugs and thus could lead to a welcome crash. But help was needed more than ever. Mrko Mrnsk had to be made harmless, at all costs.

Users, remember, it might be the last time you see it:

Tools – Options!

In any software you can think of, Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Acrobat Reader, FrontPage, it will from now on be deactivated. So take a close look, it might be the last:



A free time formula

The day had been hard, for a change. However all in all things seemed to get better, at least for the users. They were now used to the new programmes and could handle them better. It spared them time. Had it not been for the threat of Mrko Mrnsk's restriction plan hanging over their head one had almost a feeling of spring, Gwendoline couldn't put words on it for once, she just felt in her bones.

Even if the situation had not changed much for the CHD, who was still dead tired, it were the users, who having more time, began to show real concern about their beloved Helpdesk:

"You look so tired Gwendoline. Still too much to do?"

"You're a bit pale Maurice ! Shall I bring you some fruit? Apples, bananas? What do you want. I'll go down and fetch them at Tello's place."

"You don't look well Maurice? Did some download not work? Shall I bring you an orange juice from Tello's?"

"Jo you really work to much, shouldn't you think of going home at five-thirty just for once?"

"Gwendoline and Hilde. I'm going home. It's five-thirty. Do the same. Call it a day."

"Lexi. Can I help you with something? I don't have so much to do for the moment."

"Careful Françoise. I'll take you by the word!"

"I really mean it."

And Françoise helped Lexi install her new PC physically. She seemed to know it all, and plugged in every single cable in the right place.

"Gwendoline and Hilde. This footbridge closed is such a pity. I really miss the time when we we're on the same floor, back at MOU III."

Gwendoline and Hilde said they missed them too.

The users gratitude and kindness grew everyday and was a great consolation for the CHD. Compliments were now flowing at them at such speed and in such quantities that they sometimes felt overwhelmed by them. It went from Genius to Magician, from Angel to Saviour. But CHD felt they needed someone like that themselves now, they needed a master too. But this master was none to be seen. This orphaned situation was very hard to bear. They needed a kind fatherly figure. Help maybe from some from the Outside. Someone not House. This dwarfs story was bound to finish one day, and what then?

In the meantime user's were doing everything in their power to make them feel well. Some of them even tried to help out with IT problems whenever they could.

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Svetlana complained a bit to Hilde that the people of her WG had taken to always come to her first for IT problems. But when Hilde told her it was not her job and that she should send them to the devil, that is to the CHD Svetlana just shook her head and said:

“But you all have already too much to do.”

Lexi and even Sven got more and more help from her users when they had to move their PC's. Following Françoise's example many users not only carried the PC's over to the office they would move to but would plug in all the cables in the right place.

Anne had installed all the public folders 'as an Email address book' for her WG, explaining thus 15 times how to do this, so that Gwendoline didn't have to do it.

She had also made a *toolbar* on which she had put the buttons her WG used most.

Gwendoline discovered this - too late - when she had deleted Anne's Normal.dot, which contained them, because of a file corruption there.

“Where is my toolbar with the buttons I use most?”

Gwendoline hung her head and had to explain. She expected Anne to be mad at her now. But nothing like this happened:

“Don't worry. I didn't know the macros were kept in this file,” said Anne, smiling reassuringly. ‘I just knew how to do this toolbar. I just knew to do ‘View - Toolbar - Customize - New Toolbar - Command’. Then I dragged the commands over to the new toolbar.”

“I'm sorry I should have checked first, before deleting the .dot file,” said Gwendoline. “If you don't specify where you save them a macro or toolbar will be saved in the normal.dot.”

She shifted on her feet, looking guiltily up at Anne. But Anne was forgiving to the end, and even pushing it as if Gwendoline had done something for her:

“Well I've learned something then,” said Anne. “Thanks Wizard. And if I understood well I can now take the normal.dot from one of my colleague's PC and copy it over to my PC.”

Chiara had made a macro for her WG that let them gain hours of time each week. It was a template which they had to fill in quite a lot for a number of missing variables, like date, names, location, cost, participants.

Those variables she had replaced or rather inserted at the right places by surrounding them by the # sign. Like #date#, #location#, #participant1#, #participant2#, #participant3#. The macro then searched for the variables, asked the corresponding question and replaced the variable by the user's answer.

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Meeting of #date# at #location#			
Participants			
#participant1#			
#participant2#	#amount#	#etc#	#etc#
#participant3#			

```

‘and the questions of the macro, ‘calling the function which repeated the search
vAnswer = InputBox("Insert Date", "DATE")
Call findit("#Date#", v123)
vAnswer = InputBox("Insert Location", "LOCATION")
Call findit("#location#", v123)
‘function called
Public Function findit(itemtofind, itemtotype)
    Selection.Find.ClearFormatting
    Selection.Find.Replacement.ClearFormatting
    With Selection.Find
        .Text = itemtofind
        .Replacement.Text = itemtotype
    End With
    Selection.Find.Execute Replace:=wdReplaceAll
End Function

```

Consuelo tried to help by working even more and phoning less. She didn't believe in dwarfs but only in work. Maybe she was lying to herself. Maybe the Helpdesk was lying to itself too, and all this wasn't necessary. It was a mystery. Should they listen to their users and believe they were doing things at night in order to help them without knowing anything about it?

Boris, as could have been expected, was turning out to be a Super User. Soon all the girls were swarming around him for explanations. Hugh! Concurrence! But Great. They sure needed help. Why not from a user, especially if he smelled so good. But Boris didn't seem to keen for the swarming, he just wanted to help. On could see him more and more with Svetlana, sticking their heads together like two little children who had finally found their alter-ego.

Rosie wasn't mad at all at Maurice when he mixed up the contact group of her WG with that of another one in the Public Folders of Outlook, but when they had found out where the contact folder had gone and put it back where it belonged, thanked him profusely. She kept on thanking for so long that Maurice felt the users had decided to forgive them no matter what happened. Had he deleted the whole server and lost all the backups they would still have forgiven him. And thanked him for all his effort. This

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was only natural because if all documents disappear from a server that meant they wouldn't be able to work anymore at all. And anyway 'they' would have put everything back at night.

There is no limit to the greatness of users.

The mystery stories of user's work being done at night continued and that the users had one prime suspect: The CHD. Public Friend Number 1.

Dwarfs were Public Suspect Number 2, though no one spoke this out aloud except as a joke. CHD began to believe in this second solution. Because even if they still stayed at the House at night quite a lot many of those miraculous documents and macros that were writing themselves were not their deed.

"But maybe we shouldn't insist too much to know," said Sven. "Otherwise it will be like in the story. The moment set eyes on them, *Husch, Husch, Husch* they will be gone." He had taken a great liking to the story. Of course that Sven would take a liking to stories where others did his work.

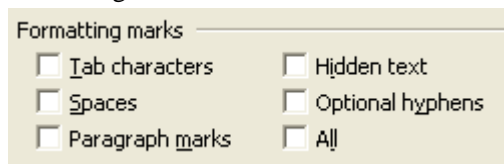
But users, they felt, were very grateful to them, the CHD. They got more praise with every day that came. For the tiniest thing they helped with, the user would get into states of rapture as what regarded their skill, goodness and efficiency.

Hide annoying codes

~~When Martha told Hella how to remove the series of annoying codes in a document, Hella was ever so nice. ¶~~

~~"I just clicked on the ¶ sign, but it didn't help at all this time." ¶~~

"Thelma that can happen. Just choose 'Tools - Options - View' and deselect all formatting characters."



It was a small thing but Thelma literally exploded into compliments. She told Gwendoline how precious people like her were, how generous she was with her knowledge, how no one could do without her and so on and on. All this for a simple answer, at least simple for Gwendoline. Gwendoline had to thank her now, on her side:

"It's so nice of you users that you give us so much support. You collaborate so much. Otherwise we would never be able to get on with our work. You help us helping. Without someone like you, I couldn't go on either."

It was strange; Thelma was not so gifted for computers. She said so herself:

"But it's good you're there. Computers are really not my thing, I wish I could have

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your gift. I feel so stupid at times.”

Gwendoline pondered over this:

“But no. You’re intelligent! Look your office is tidy, your speech is well structured, and you have imagination. And you’re quite of a psychologist too, aren’t you?”

Thelma bent her head to that, with some modesty.

“You’re gifted for languages, aren’t you? How many languages do you speak fluently?”

Thelma bowed her head again:

“Four.”

“And how many other languages, not so fluent, but good?”

And again, Thelma bent her head:

“Four”

“And I’ve been told you cook well, don’t you? You can follow the instructions in recipes? Very complicated recipes? Devised by three star cooks?”

Thelma looked at her, a strange glance in her eyes.

“So why can’t you follow a Help Menu?! You have everything that it needs to understand a PC. I would like to know why this is not the case, but if you want my opinion it is the case. But you just don’t WANT to know it. Computers give you a fright just because they are SAID to be so difficult. For once, just open a HELP MENU, and try to follow the instructions. I guarantee it is much easier than to follow a cooking recipe.”

Gwendoline marched away, feeling a bit stupid.

But Thelma had finally gotten the message. She chose HELP in the File Menu of Word and read through it. Finally she decided to try the Customise Toolbar Recipe first. She needed to add the Drop Cap button to one of her toolbars. She was using the function a lot for her 112 elements.

The last call before lunch, just when Gwendoline thought she would manage to have lunch at lunchtime, was from nice Alice. But she saw no way to solve the problem on the phone or via the remote access. Mrko Mrnsk had seen to that by lately putting a strange series of restrictions on the Global Policies.

She just had to go. Alice, unfortunately, lived in the Koch building. Hers was obviously a network problem, and chances were the cable wasn’t doing it anymore. Gwendoline took a fresh cable with her and took the path through the secret shortcut Maurice had discovered between the Curie and Koch building.

Alice was expecting her: “I’m sorry to cause so much trouble, but I have to finish this report before midnight and I just don’t seem to have any access to the network.”

Gwendoline assured her it was nothing and began to climb over the table to reach the back of the PC which was standing against the wall. This was hard work really.

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Usually Lexi's, but Lexi was on a course. She heard a kind voice behind her then, and thought it was Alice:

"Are you managing? Can I help you with something?" The voice was subdued, like if gently begging to be liked. Gwendoline managed to stick the end of the network cable into the socket at the back of the PC and then turned around. She didn't believe her eyes then. It was not nice Alice who was standing there but nasty Cecile Acrot. Or wasn't it her?

"Thank you for solving Alice's problem. And all our problems. You always solve them so well. I'm sorry I'm such a mule with computers," said Cecile. She was slightly rosy about the cheeks, like if she was on the verge of crying and trying to hold it back. Gwendoline wondered. It was as if she had seen Cecile's true self for the very first time.

Maybe Cecile had been nice all the time. They just hadn't noticed. Maybe Cecile was just over polite. A too good education can harm the best.

Gwendoline shook her head and then nodded and smiled at Cecile, still not understanding it fully. She bade Cecile a nice lunchtime and went back through the dark shortcut, feeling a bit alone.

♪ It's lunchtime

Leo, Lut and Gwen took more than an hour of it that day, delighting in a 'Soufflé au giroles'. Sven and Maurice had several pitas. Lexi didn't want to tell with whom she was going to lunch. Jo stayed in her office with a sandwich Hilde had brought her from Tello before going out with Emma I-III, Penelope, Julia, Jenny and Micha to have Salmon with creamy mustard and tarragon sauce at the Pink bar. Nico was with Chiara, meditating in their way over the *Set* statement, assigning an object reference to a variable or a property.

Back from lunch Gwendoline found a small basket with various sorts of tea in it, and a note: "Sorry to be such a bore all the time, hope you enjoy this tea to relax from people like me. Pompea."

Gwendoline now felt a bit guilty and much moved. Those users of theirs were extraordinary. They were so lucky to have them. They were not only dreams of users, they were Jewels, and very real.

Both she and Hilde, while meeting for a coffee at Tello's wondered. Their precious users became nicer with every day that came. They really seemed to care about their Helpdesk, physical and mental health included.

Public Suspect Number 3: The Super Users? Or Public Suspect Number 4: All the Users?

Tamara had distributed fun patches to the whole team, on the model of the Nicotine patches, only with 'Work' written on them, so they would not feel the need for work so

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badly, and could slowly learn to do without it. Everyone accepted laughing and stuck them on their arms, except for Johanna, who refused firmly, letting out small outraged pouts.

But again and again users repeated the same advices to them, all day over.

“You look so tired Gwendoline. Still so much to do? Poor you. Do you take your vitamins?”

“You look like you haven’t slept for days Hilde; why not stick to official working hours.”

“Gwendoline. You worry me, you don’t look very well. How about a holiday?!”

“Hilde, take a rest, you’re overdoing it.”

“Gwendoline and Hilde. I’m going home. It’s five-thirty. Do the same. Call it a day.”

And the two friends, first checking their watches, looked at each other and decided to do just that. After all, they even had a good reason to do this. They had an interesting evening in view. With this mysterious consultant whose even more mysterious kid was running around the house all day and apparently at night too. His father was quite small, but such a good-looking man. Gwendoline adored small men. She found them so cute.

They had hesitated to follow his invitation, too much too do, but now the users had decided for them. Those users were being so grateful. No small wonder maybe. Work seemed to get done over night all by itself. Ok one could do it, if one knew how, using macros and formulas. The users thus held CHD responsible for the nightly magic. Ok let users believe what they wanted to believe, but Hilde and Gwendoline began to wonder if there might not be some truth to the dwarfs’ or Heinzelmenn version. Keira had ended up telling bits of her nightly adventure, because the head of the translators had asked Gwendoline and Hilde if they could investigate and get her to admit having her hands in the report which had been translated into 142 languages by unknown freelancers. After all, the Irish not only believed in fairies, spirits and kobolds, they KNEW they were fairies, spirits and kobolds.

They had surfed on Internet and gone through the ancient legends of Bohatia, reading about this small people which had disappeared together with the last jewel found in their mines, but had not uncovered much. But the jewels produced by the Bohatians were unique, priceless, affordable only by golf champions, pop stars, people of the Emirates or worse the Mafia. Was it really true that there were no more jewels to be found in those ancient mines? But where then had Myra’s priceless bracelet come from? No one had ever dared to ask her that question. Was there a lover? Myra? A lover? After all why not, but who then was it.

Only now they realised that Myra was resisting all this stress much better than the rest of them. She seemed to have a secret, something different to strive after. Myra believed in other things, but they might be very real, just like her bracelet was.

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So maybe the Consultant could help them. He was Bohatian and seemed to know a lot about what might really be going on, it was just a feeling they had. He seemed to know a lot in every respect. He was a geologist, an architect, a historian, a jeweller, those were a few of the things they had gathered from the little talk they had had with him when they met him down at Tello's, where he was fetching a coffee. So what else did he know? It could be a lot, if one had to believe Tello, who seemed to know him well, the guy being his neighbour. Maybe he could inform them about small and gentle beings going around and helping people in need.

Just before leaving she passed by Françoise's office. Françoise sat there, surrounded by three of her colleagues, all of them bending eagerly over her shoulder.

When they saw Gwendoline they looked up: "We wanted to call you but then decided against it," said Jerry, "you already work far too much."

"Any problem?"

"No, don't worry, I'm just cleaning up some nasty codes in this document," said Françoise, "just go home, I'll be done in a minute. And I just love doing this. I just love it."

She beamed at her, turned her back, and she began to hammer her keyboard with bravado as if she was playing a piano. Gwendoline saw nasty codes flying out of the document by the dozens; page breaks, section breaks, hidden text, double spaces and paragraph signs, lost references and corrupted footnotes. And, once in the air, they became notes, and seemed to form a concerto. A bit like Tchaikovsky or rather one of her own compositions? Françoise aligned paragraphs using the Paint Brush with *Allegro non troppo*, created Uniform Headings using Format Style with *Allegro con fuoco*, adapted Footers with *Molto allegro e vivace*. She and her three colleagues, bent over the document, listened intently, forgetting everything around them. When she had reached the elevator Gwendoline could still hear Françoise chanting:

"I love it I love it I love it."

One minute later, encore at official office closure time, 17h30 in the afternoon exactly, Leo and Lut witnessed a strange scene.

They had heard loud shouts of protest, and a soothing voice answering. Both of them darted out of their offices to see what was happening.

It was Arthur grabbing Johanna by the belt, well Lut and Leo were not so sure if it hadn't even been by her hair! Her long blond braid. He obviously endeavoured to drag her out of her office and Johanna was endeavouring to stay in it.

"Jo, it is office closure time!"

"Arthur, leave me alone, I have to finish this report. We have a deadline running, and I am *milestones* away!"

Milestones was one of those programmers expression to express their progress with a

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project: Kaleidoscope IV and now Kaleidoscope V. Jo just couldn't stop. The tailor made programmes were her passion; a passion like one could have for a man or woman.

The little prince had begun to grow up, and was very worried about his team lately. He had let them have their will, and let them do. But if this continued, he would soon be manager of a cemetery.

"Jo, go home."

"Arthur you let me finish this report! You know the House needs a structure. How dare you not let me stay and work as long as I want to! You must realise how important this programme is to the House. It is a question of life or death. You must realise that the only way for..."

On this, Arthur put his hands in his pockets and pulled out two earplugs. He had prepared his action well. If he kept listening Johanna was going to convince him. He would have no chance to escape. Her speeches were like the songs of the sirens, you always ended up in her mouth.

Jo was meaning well, but she was just overdoing it. Arthur was meaning well too.

"No way Jo, enough of those sixteen hour days. You go home to your husband and son. How long is it that you haven't seen them? I'm sure you only meet them on the way to the bathroom, now and then. Life and death? Whom are you kidding? Go home or you'll break down. We need a live Jo, not a dead one."

Now he couldn't hear what he was saying himself. He took Johanna by the arm again, and dragged her to the door.

Jo gave up, but not quite:

"Ok, but let me take my portable." She meant the portable PC of course. She made the gesture of typing.

Arthur understood, because he had been waiting for this.

"I have closed up your portable in my desk."

Jo shot a series of menacing glances at him but had to accept the evidence. There was not a single portable in sight. Had there been one, she would just have taken it, hers or not. She stamped her foot.

"Give it back!" she gestured.

"No way, go home and relax, relax just one weekend."

"I'll use Nicky's portable!"

Arthur didn't understand but crossed his arms and smiled malevolently:

"I have asked MOUIT to close your Intranet access for this weekend. And if I don't see you go home at reasonable hours from now on it will be forever."

He shot another malevolent glance at stunned Leo and Lut:

"You are giving a bad example Jo. And you two, out of my sight, go home immediately, otherwise I'll take off points of your staff report next spring!"

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He seemed to be growing at each word. He looked terrible, mythical.

Lut was really afraid now. The rumours had told the truth. Here it was, the Minotaur! Standing right in front of her. Smacking its lips.

“Lut go home.”

Lut, fearing for her life, gave up gladly and literally ran away. There was a film with Paul Sparks that night, beginning at 20h30, and she didn't want to miss it. Luckily her husband had taken up to do the cooking for the family, and maybe she could manage to have supper with him and Maxi, and then still see her favoured actor.

Leo stood there somewhat helpless:

“Jo, you need help?”

“Yes!” cried Jo. “Don't you see what he's doing to me?”

Leo nodded, but with some doubt.

“F... off!” said Arthur. “Remember your staff report. I'm still your boss.”

“No you aren't,” cried Johanna.

Leo withdrew prudently; after all, Arthur was right. Not that he was still her boss, but that Jo worked too much. What had suddenly gotten into him? He and Lut had already talked about it.

He would have loved to see the end of the scene, but then he had an appointment with Emilia, his new acquaintance. She was still trying to be patient about his cancelling them in the last minute. But for how long?

He could still hear Johanna shouting, but it got fainter and fainter:

“Traitor! Traitor! What? You have asked MOUIT to take my Intranet access away? You are in league with MOUIT?!” and Arthur answering:

“Remember the first meeting of the CHD. You said you liked to play society games. Go home and play your games! When have you played for the last time? Do you even remember the word ‘Monopoly’?”

Leo would have loved to hear it all and find out who had won but then he obediently took his way to the exit and soon was treading on his red Tretroller, a German version of the gas powered Have-Fun-Scooter. A few minutes later he saw Johanna passing him by on her bicycle. Tears were streaming all over her face. Poor Jo, without a portable and access to the VPN, the *Virtual Private Network*, she must feel completely at loss. No more access to the local Intranet of the House or to her files! A woman like her, without *Bluetooth*, to connect wireless from anywhere in the world to her PC at the office, just got the blues. Then Leo saw that at the same time she was laughing, just before she disappeared at a right-turn. And it was true: something had finally happened. Their boss had come back, their boss had come back!

But when Leo gave this a second thought, he was not sure that he liked the idea. But the scene had been funny and he didn't feel the blues anymore, and enjoyed imagining the evening to come. Emilia was such a sensitive girl. More than Gwendoline? No! That not. Leo was the kind of man to like women too much to easily settle for one. But

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the moon was full tonight and that was something he hadn't noticed for months. He would take a full advantage of it too and savour the evening. Before stepping fully into it this he nevertheless took his GSM and phoned Gwendoline at the office to tell her what he'd just witnessed. To his astonishment, no one answered. He tried her mobile number and got her on the line. They talked shortly. Seemingly, everyone had left the office at five-thirty or not much later. Gwendoline laughed when she heard the story about Jo getting home early too and how and didn't quite believe it. Jo going home early? One might as well believe the dwarfs stories then.

"I know," she said. "This couldn't continue. Hilde and I have decided to go home at 17h30 dead, Lexi and Sven even left before that. The House can well do without us for this evening. Leo: the Koch and Curie buildings are empty. The Heinzels can work without being disturbed."

There, it was out. Gwendoline believed in the dwarf story. Just like he himself had from the start. But who were they? Were did they come from? Would they stay and help them forever? He wondered what Gwendoline and Hilde were up to. Had Arthur send them home too? Or were they up to something? Leo had guessed right: Gwendoline and Hilde were just trying to find out.

♪ It's not lunchtime but evening

Hilde and Gwendoline too would not regret a second to have left at five-thirty, for once.

Their evening would be delicious, the Jeweller charming and what a delicious child the Jeweller's kids was, Mikki, the one with 2 K; they had recognised him on the spot. What a wonderful kid he was. A dream of a child. Five years, and he knew it all, that is, about computers. And then, there was something more to him, than just that, something so valuable that one wouldn't find it again in a thousand of other kids. He had a great soul already. No wonder Myra was half in love with him. What she did with her other half, one could only guess. And Hilde thought that the Jeweller's friend, this tall scientist (not a Scientist from the House) had been admirable too. Both had listened to their telling about the Heinzelmenn apparitions and given their comments. The Scientist saying that science could explain a mystery, the Jeweller saying that mystery could help science.

"After all, you tell us it can be done, if one knows how to handle computers. Formulas and macros can indeed do wonders."

"After all, you tell us you wished so much for help because you felt alone, abandoned. The feeling of doing all of this alone was just too much. You felt so much exploited that the idea of getting help from a mysterious force outside yourself was more agreeable than the idea of spending long nights at the office."

They had turned home quite late, and a little drunk, on Mischel bear served along with an impressive variety of white goat cheese some the most excellent white wines they

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had ever tasted.

That night 'they' drew up three more reports. The users who were supposed to do them hadn't even bothered to stay even just a bit late and had just scribbled the necessary info on a sheet of paper left on their desks. A yellow 3M Postit with their username and password was sticking on their screens.

Don't let Maurice know that!

A testimony

The local newspaper, The Jewel , and some others then got wind of it all, and had their own version, reported to them by one of the Housefoncs or so they pretended:

A population of dwarfs appears to have invaded the House of Science. They are walking around freely in the corridors and one can find them standing in groups, vividly discussing among themselves, on topics the house staff can not understand because they are talking their own language, Dwarfish (which is similar to Bohatian, which is why you must always learn the language of the people in the country you're living in).
You will open a drawer or cupboard and one of them will pop out. Some of them have even taken to visit the canteen, liberally serving themselves with great heaps of food and beer. And milk, which they like above all.

People in the House were outraged when reading this, it was just not true.

Dwarfs did not pop out of drawers! They were helping not popping.

Maybe Word was popping, but not the dwarfs.

As all the users now felt at ease with them, please let them stay. Newspapers could be such a nuisance. If this continued, they would be all alone again soon.

And this couldn't happen!

Strange at it was, people seemed at ease with the dwarfs now, accepting them in their daily lives, even if none of them claimed to have seen them. If asked, people would answer that they knew someone, who knew someone, who knew someone, who had seen one of 'them'. No one ever claimed to have actually seen one with his own eyes. Everyone at the MOU, and more and more people in the rest of the House, and even Outside, in Bohatia, were now sort of believing in dwarf stories.

People were making up stories of all kind, and dwarf jokes were circulated in masses that menaced to crash the Email server.

But the Journalists had no idea of what was really happening at the MOU. No one had. And they had a lot of questions, nothing to do with that, nothing and all of it. The whole scene took place at Tello's place, down-stairs in the little coffee-bar in front of his shop. The journalists grabbed the CHD, and poured over it with their longings to know more:

"Mrs Gwendoline, what do you think of section breaks in Word?"

Gwendoline gasped, but then couldn't help but answer. She never could help

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answering, if asked a question.

“Section breaks are a pain in the ass. You need them when you want to go from landscape to portrait or vice versa, or if you want to insert a new footer in the document. I mean if you have more than one footer. Then it can get dirty. Never forget to unclick “Same as previous” just before doing any other movement in the new footer!”



“Ms Alexandra, how do you explain you like the HO1 when at the same time he does nothing for you?”

Lexi looked furious on that and pursed her lips, because she knew better.

Anyway the journalists never bothered to wait for an answer but just began to take notes.

“Mr Schelmstorm (Sven) is it true that you have never been unfaithful to your wife?”

“Mr d’Escher is it true that you are doing it with computers?”

“Mr Arthur, is it true that you think management means organising the free time of your team and to see that they don’t work too much?”

“Does any of you believe Josepha Laperm will come back one day?”

“Mrs Johanna, is it true that in another life you have been...”

This question was cut off by another:

“Is it true Mrs Jo that you are going into politics?”

“Mr Nico, in which language is the epic love poem you are writing? C++ or Java or JavaScript?”

Nico looked flattered. How had they guessed.

“Leo and Gwendoline, is it true that you are doing it together on the Web?”

Leo and Gwendoline looked at each other, embarrassed. They hadn’t realised people could see it that way...

On this Maurice and Gwendoline stuck their heads down, but to their relief they were passed by. It appeared the journalists knew nothing of their electronic affair.

“Nico, is it true that you have a programming affair with Ms Chiara?”

Nico was now furious. He really liked Chiara, he had not *programmed* her.

“Myra is it true that you are giving private computer lessons to Prince Justin?”

CHD was furious and didn’t want to answer to anything of this except to questions about computers.

“Ms Brandt, what do you think of Excel macros?”

“Using Macros in Excel is nonsense. The formulas in Excel are entirely sufficient, and a well devised sheet will never need a macro...”

The Journalists took that one down word by word.

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Some users were interviewed to:

“Mrs Doremi, is it true you are a Super User?”

“Mr Boris, is it true you help the CHD with problems they can’t solve?”

“Consuelo, is it true that you will bring about the fall of the House by working too much?”

The CHD groaned inwardly. Oh no, she wasn’t going to say it again, wasn’t she?

Consuelo surrounded by a smoke cloud, just looked through him as if he was made of air: “No one is irreplaceable.”

There, she’d said it again. Maurice really liked Consuelo but shook his head at such obtuseness, and said:

“I wouldn’t count on that Consuelo.” Consuelo just ignored him. For sure, she did want the downfall of the House.

“As for my part,” said Penelope with a pointed air, “I know that if I leave, the House will cease to exist.”

“For once someone has said something really accurate,” said one journalist and everyone nodded and took the sentence down to their notebooks.

They then went on and looked for another wise sentence.

“Svetlana is it true that you know more of computers than the whole CHD together?”

“Keira, is it true that you have seen ‘them’ face to face? How do they look like? Did you have a digital camera ready? Can you give us a picture?”

“Mrs Micha, is it true that you are now you who the real manager of MOU XII? That you have taken over from...”

This journalist was interrupted.

“Ms Svetlana, what would be your one word or sentence to describe the situation at MOU XII? Svetlana started to answer:

“The battle of the little ones...”

“With brave people like that, the House will go on,” said a voice from the back, but no one listened. The journalist who was recording was shouted down by others. Svetlana trusted him to complete the end of the sentence to everyone’s liking.

And back to the CHD:

“Mr Veneto. Is it true that you are making a web site about all this? With photos and life stories of the dwarfs?”

“Mrs Lut Sanger, is it true that you are making an opera with only dwarfs in it about all this?”

“Mrs Penelope, is it true that you are a member of the FLNJ and that it was you who introduced the dwarfs into the House?”

This last question was put to every member of the CHD.

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CHD was furious and suspected they had been betrayed. But since it couldn't have been one of them nor any of their users the traitor could only be one: Mrko Mrnsk!

The journalists went on with their wild questioning:

“Mrs Gwendoline is it true that you are a computer therapist?”

“Mrs Hilde, is it true that you cook with computerised means? That you put icons in your soup and mix Excel formulas into them?”

“Yes and can I make some cookies for desert too,” she said.

“Mr Maurice, how do you see the future of computers?”

Maurice now glowed with pleasure and began describing his views, quickly lapsing into Chinese:

“I believe clustering is one of the future developments I might take for my MOU.

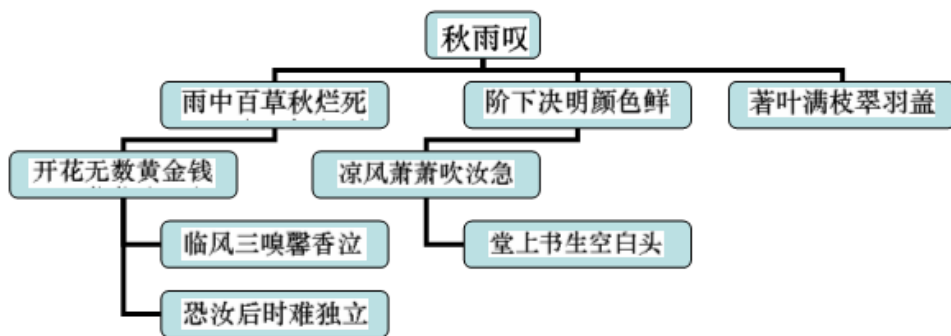
But for the moment I'm working on installing JBoss. JBoss is an Open Source application server for java components. It started out as an EJB container and has since

含學院概況 管理機構 招生工作 專業課程 師資科研及實習就業 等內容 我們的
作夥伴是提供基於解決方案的 公司 我們想要建立 真正的 合作夥伴關係不 僅僅是
分銷管道。我們認為，如果與合作夥伴競爭，就非真正的合作夥伴關係。我們想要限
制我們的服務，以幫助我們的合作夥伴提供和分銷基於 解決方案。我們為合作夥伴提
供兩級的支持 顧問 培訓和授權，使他們為自己的客戶提供具有競爭力的 解決方案。
grown to provide the full range of J2EE based container services.

To say the same thing in pictures I can present you with a very simple schema¹⁵.”

¹⁵ <http://www.compiere-hk.com/default.htm>

JBOSS, as explained by Maurice



The Journalists examined the schema¹⁶ for a while, looking dumbfounded.

“Thank you Mr Maurice, this is most enlightening.”

However Sya clapped in her hands with delight, Maurice was such a poet! And one of the female journalists made a note that he had a beautiful voice and promised herself to make use of this discovery later.

Now Leo would have expected to have his say too but after Maurice’s exposé the journalists just preferred to ignore him. Leo was not happy about this.

He and the rest of CHD then managed to flee back to their offices, only Gwendoline remained. She needed a Mars bar.

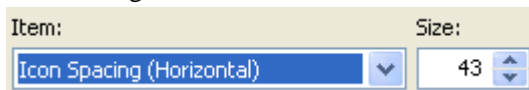
It was then that she heard one of her users ask the first sensible question since all this interviewing had began:

☞ “You who are said to know it all, can you tell me how to make more space on my XP desktop? I have too many icons on it, they’re overlapping.”

“Easy. You just right-click on the Desktop. Choose ‘Properties - Appearance - Advanced.’”

The owner of the voice held on, probably to allow the Journalist to take notes.

“Got it? Right. Then below items



choose Icon Spacing and set it to something smaller, like 32.”

¹⁶ Poem by Bai Juyi, <http://www.chinese-poems.com/bo.html>

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Gwendoline heard satisfied thanks and then another question from the next person in what appeared to be a queue.

☞ “I have this programme starting up each time, says ‘Gator something’. I just don’t want it. Must be some spyware. It’s not in the ‘Programmes - Startup’.

“Hm. You might look in Control Panel - Services, if it is started from there, but I rather believe you should do the following: Choose ‘Start - Run’ and then type ‘regedit.’

Then browse to

`My Computer\HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Run`

and if you see the programme run there, just delete the line with “Gator” in it. By the way, did you manage to finish your report?”

“Oh yes, thanks a lot, it was over in an hour. Just like by magic.”

Gwendoline heard profuse thanks again. She slowly turned her head to the answers’ origin. But I think no need to tell whom she saw, you must have guessed it before the CHD, at all times so overworked that they couldn’t recognise a ‘colleague’, even if he was the first face they saw everyday between five and eight o’clock in the morning.

She queued up, bought a newspaper and a Mars bar, and found out he knew it all, that is, that I Myself knew it all :o)

Networks, servers, operating systems, web content managers, programming languages. I know it all from configuring the Desktop to MS Server 2000, NAS & SAN, Oracle, Java, Visual Basic, C++, JBoss, Dynamic HTML, TCP/IP and Virtual Private Networks.

Someone had to write all this down, and CHD had too much to do already, and who else was better placed to do it but a man handling news everyday. And who was placed better than I, so good with computers and one of the best listeners of the place, or ever :o) to write all this down and give a testimony of the MOU’s bravery, pay them the tribute they deserve, even if even I cannot speak out their real names. Also I might well be the best liked person in the MOU, though I am not part of it, hihi (that’s probably why). And I wanted to tell their story. Because the whole world should know about their devotion, to Science, or whatever it really is.

The Journalists, finally noticing the crowd around me, forgot about the CHD for a while and rushed at me. Soon I was covered with them. And you know what they asked?

“And do you believe in that dwarf story?”

Some people will now think it was I, but I pretend it’s NOT me. People can be so stubborn in not wanting to know. The dwarfs may be real or they may have taken this disguise to unveil what they wanted to hide. Disguise may be the best means to express the truth. The dwarfs may have been a means to disguise a truth too hard to bear. They

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might have fulfilled a lack that no one dared to admit having. Wasn't it written all over the story the MOU had lived through (or in)? Well, at least, that's my theory. You still don't know? To tell the truth: I don't either.

The strange attractor

Gwendoline was so excited and pleased about what she had discovered about Myself knowing so much about computers that she almost attacked Leo physically in his office, another way to jump in his arms.

Her fine colleague listened with the same attention as usual and seemed pleased about it too. It was really funny. Funny great. Tello, Othello, an IT master. Gwendoline then ran to tell Hilde who clapped her hands with pleasure, but also felt a bit guilty that so much time had passed before they had found out. She in turn ran to tell Maurice. He listened, and looked half-amused, half impassive. Not really interested.

“So you didn’t know either that he is a ‘nerd’?”

“Maybe,” said Maurice, “but did you ask him then what he is doing at the House?”

“Selling Newspapers and advising his clients on problems with their home computer.”

Maurice was just play-acting: indeed he felt stupid and fumed against himself. He had just realised that Tello, whom he had always treated with fatherly benevolence, must be Othello, his very much appreciated Internet provider. At he hadn’t even guessed:

“Which makes it worse. The question still stands. What is he doing at the House?! And what about us, what are we doing there; I believe it almost killed us.”

Hilde didn’t like Maurice to evade her in that way and for some reason not to show his appreciation for Tello.

“Maybe it was Tello all the time, helping the users at night,” she said, really unhappy about Maurice’s reaction. She decided she wouldn’t talk about the scientist which had been present at their evening with the jeweller. She somehow felt he might be even less happy to hear about it than about Tello’s genius.

But maybe Maurice had a point too. The House was a kind of a prison, at times. They should maybe take their distances, look for a solution elsewhere.

Of course Gwendoline had told her something similar; about them having to go and look for answers at the Outside. And they had, with the great results of having a lot of fun with two kind and intelligent men.

Yes indeed! What a delicious man this jeweller was! Gwendoline told Leo about the evening, but for some reason he did not seem to be impressed or happy to hear about it. He seemed nervous, like if he had a plan of his own and for once not so keen to listen. Even if he had agreed with her ‘outside solution’ the day before he now said:

“Maybe it was fun but you don’t know much more. One should always look at oneself first. The bottom lies deeper than the end of the world. And I might have something for you to prove this,” he said, pensively. What a delicious man this jeweller had been...

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Gwendoline felt that somehow Leo was not too happy, but why?

The phone rang but Leo didn't take it up: "I am tired of being interrupted when I ponder over great solutions. Now listen to this. I have decided something important must happen. A fundamental change will have to be undertaken. I have decided it is I who will change, because the House won't. First of all: From now on I will go to the toilet when I need too, drink water when I'm thirsty, and even prepare tea or coffee. I will even talk to you. Well that I did before. So I might have a surprise."

"And will you share it?"

"Yes."

"With all of us?"

"Yes."

That would be the first time then, that the others would see Leo as she knew him, and discover what he had to offer.

"When?"

"Later."

"When will it be and what will it be? Another night at the office?"

"No please not. Wait until lunch. Then you'll see. You're all invited."

This sounded mysterious, but then Leo loved it like that. The day began, and users, strangely enough, asked increasingly difficult questions.

More and more people tried themselves at macros, at mail merges, or at topics which they didn't really need to know like:

What is broadcasting? XML? SQL? The Ping? A firewall? A gateway? The registry? A pixel? A hub? ActiveX? the VLN, DHCP, a PKI?

"PKI stands for Private Key Infrastructure," said Maurice.

"I thought it meant Public Key Infrastructure."

"Oh sorry, I'm jumpy. But if you know, why do you ask?"

"Maybe I don't need PKI. But what does VPN mean?"

"Virtual private network. Why do you need that for?"

"Because I would need a secured access to the House from the Outside. Do we have that possibility at the House?"

"Not yet for the users."

Mrko Mrnsk still hadn't installed the necessary tunnelling protocols; but instead it would be Leo who'd teach them something about tunnels.

♪ It's lunchtime

At lunchtime Leo came to fetch them. A mysterious glow appeared to surf over his pale skin. Used to such manoeuvres from Maurice, they all followed without asking for more explanations (anyway useless with Leo).

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Leo went to the end of their corridor, opened the door to the fire-closet part of MOUIT had been living in (they had closed it again) using some PKI or VPN trick and marched forward, passing the locked doors of the MOUIT offices. No one seemed to be in there anyway, everything was silent. But when he had reached the end of the corridor, he just opened another door, and CHD found themselves in the midst of the Bohatian rocks and caverns. No one asked if this was allowed or dangerous. Leo led on and on in the labyrinth, but no one enquired if he could find his way back. He seemed to know it. Down and down, left and right. It took some fifteen minutes, and they heard faint noises, like chiselling, hammering...

The noise grew stronger and they almost materialised into a great shimmering hall.

They made out immense machines eaten up by rust. Wheelbarrows long abandoned, hammers, chisels, shovels, desktops, pardon tables and chairs. A subterranean workstation, sorry workshop, well an atelier, quite cluttered. A chaotic universe from which they saw the legendary mines emerge, said to have disappeared six centuries ago. Mirrored in their eyes, they still stood. Mirage or reality?

Only now they noticed that at some point Boris, Svetlana, Doremi, Rosie, Cecile, Pompea, Jakinda and Carla (Carla is brand new!) must have been following them at some distance for some time. The two groups stared silently at each other for a short while, and then CHD let it be. They went on.

“Why isn’t this shown to the public,” twittered Lut, daring to speak.

“Wait,” said Leo and continued his expedition in the direction of the hammering. A tunnel or more, the light and noise grew stronger, and they saw the reason all this was made a secret. Beneath the foundations of the House, at its heart, lay inestimable treasures. Well guarded and worked on by some very few.

One of them, who could be the leader - one always has the reaction to look for one when seeing a group, and they still had - was the first to notice the team. But he did not startle, nor look angry at the intrusion, but smiled and came forward:

“Welcome,” he said in Bohatian, “not many people come down here. Least of all people of your House. Maybe because it’s too close, one tends to not see what is in hands reach. You must be very brave.”

CHD and their users saluted silently. What would happen to them now? And then, something must have happened. But even I don’t know that, for once. What was said between the CHD and the subterranean workers, or what they really saw, would remain their own secret forever. But I have my idea about that. What did they bring back from those deep grottos? It must have been something, a treasure maybe not from the Outside as expected, but rather from the Inside.

A year had passed and the situation seemed just as chaotic. CHD and all the others would have liked to find a way out of chaos; they had tried and tried, but had found none. So while we wait to find a solution, let’s imagine some nice ending and remember there is only one thing important. You all know what it is. Without it no meal tastes good, no House is cosy, no office plant survives, no day is really sunny. It’s

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not something old-fashioned, it created the world. The MOU was full of it; Mrko Mrnsk had had none of it. CHD made their long way back to the surface of the earth, well decided to this time find and overcome the monster.

But they didn't have to. Mrko Mrnsk would never install any tunnelling protocol, or at least not in the near future. That day, at the time they'd been to the depths of the House, he just disappeared, in the same way nice Josepha had. Someone saw him enter an elevator, and no one ever saw him come out at the other side. Had he indeed been a relic of the cold war, a Russian spy, and had they abducted him, even them finding he was pushing things too far? Or had he fled back to safe land, sensing CHD wanted to get at his throat? Would they ever know?

It was like the users' two favourite sayings: 'I did do nothing' and 'the problem solved itself'. However the users still got Mrko Mrnsk's new configuration and had to live with it for a while, until Maurice removed the too much restrictive parts of it. They later discovered that after all, it was not so bad.

Because after Mrko Mrnsk's disappearance things started quickly to settle down. Chaos seemed to have ended as suddenly as it had started. The strange attractor had reached his Zero point. The House was young, and his wounds would mend quickly.

They had suffered, but in a way, the loss was not too bad:

9 persons disappeared (the 8 on the plane and Josepha)

5 put on permanent invalidity status

2 broken legs, 2 broken arms

10 nervous breakdowns

The rest under a permanent stress syndrome

1 person in a coma

350 persons having left the MOU

777 permanently sneezing and coughing

1 cleaning lady (found knocked out and entangled in cables beneath a table)

But the war had been won. But had it really? Maybe not, but I Myself will tell you one thing. This was a year of wonders. It was the year of the pest and the year of wonders.

CDH, Penelope, Flavia, Micha, Rosie, Svetlana, Consuelo, Doremi, Boriss, Cecile and Pompea and all the others (and Myself) had done a good job. Well let's call it fabulous. It was a miracle.

On that day too the footbridge between the two buildings was opened again and people streamed over it, flying into each other arms and embracing as if they hadn't seen each other for years. Everyone was happy again, did not feel lost anymore and stopped wanting to leave the MOU. Job appliances began flowing in and had quickly to be refused seen their sheer quantity. All of the MOU now knew all their programmes well

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and computers were helping people to get home at five thirty with all their work done instead of keeping them from doing it. They seemed to have gotten a life of their own and did it all. Maybe it had been 'them' all along. Without to many restrictions, they were working happily, and users were happy with them. Well I know who really did it.

Consuelo, stoic as ever managed to have movers, painters and other technicians add the last touches in the building. In truth she did all of it herself and grew at least ten new arms to do it. She then even took a holiday, leaving all her arms but two at the House. You could see them moving around all alone, typing, phoning, filing. Her boss was very happy to have a secretary who continued working even while she was on a holiday.

Penelope and Micha had succeeded well in 'reorganising' their thirty WG's, now other people were following and learned from her experience. Explaining is good, listening is better. Especially in the IT world, never explain, always listen first. Lol.

Svetlana was planning to take up studies again, so that she could help manage the House better later. Svetlana, don't study too much! You could forget the little ones. No. That is not true at all. Studying is nice.

Jack Owl awoke from his coma, and was found to be in an astonishingly good shape. Indeed he came back in full force, and revealed himself to be everything as good as his assistant Micha had promised.

Maurice realised his project and within a week had installed all of this preferred applications and operating systems in the MOU. Since Mrko Mrnsk was gone, he had had free hand to do it. What those applications were, you can read in:

“A study of 制我們的服務 in a 顧問培訓和授權 environment.”

CHD had all the hard time in the world not to let him talk about that to the users. Let them just use all this unknowingly and believe that IT worked the way they imagined it should. All by itself.

It was the tipping point and from that moment on and things did turn into magic. People who had been laughed at when computers were born, because of their wishful thinking and also paranoia were now proven to have been right from the start on and saw their wishes (and fears) come true.

The lady who had had such problems using a mouse could now touch the screen and move an icon to the spot she wanted using her index, or arrange all of the icons in a circle using her fingers. Icons arranged in a circle really looked pretty. She could carry a very nice-looking icon over to her colleague's screen, and deposit it there.

Even if this sounded frightening, passwords were not necessary anymore, because biometrics made the keyboard recognised your fingerprints and the screen your iris.

Keyboards emerged virtually beneath your fingers, not that you would have needed them anymore, since you could type your words into the computer by murmuring them and everything would appear on the screen. The later, however, never got a full

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success, the relationship between fingers and the keyboard had grown too deep.

No one tripped over cables anymore because everything had become wireless. Bluetooth and Infrared did the job. Computers electronic circuits were replaced by neurological ones. DNA replaced the CPU.

Computers became small pretty boxes, available in all sorts of colours and designs and screens could be folded and unfolded into every imaginable size just when needed by a single command.

DHCP was working now and double IP-addresses became a long forgotten nightmare. Network crashes were history most of the time. Doctor Watson lost his job and had to recycle. He studied, got his job back and treated computers by prescribing aspirin, vitamins and hot lemon juice with a shot of rum.

You know all this already and guessed who did all those magical things: the users, with their wishful thinking. And if more magic is needed, I trust them to imagine and wish for it until it comes true.

The year bent to its end, well not to Christmas but to previous spring, the day when they had moved, and everyone began wearing light clothes again and thought of butterflies.

Shutdown

One day soon after Josepha reappeared, tanned and freshly married, and absolutely refused to tell anyone about her whereabouts or what she had been doing 'there'.

As investigation proved later, she had informed Personnel of her departure for a year's long leave on personnel grounds. The responsible she had spoken to had however left for another MOU the day after, leaving the file on his successor's desk. Further four successors had left the file untouched on the same desk for months. When it finally reached Micha, secretary to Jack Owl, it had been added to the 'Personnel Objectives' file and then put into the archives by Tessa, the little temp, who had consequently left for another House soon after. Remember on page 195. Typically this is something about something being covered up...

The same day, Penelope's garden gnome came back too. She found him standing in her garden, one morning, before leaving for work. He hadn't forgotten to bring the neighbour's wheelbarrow back either. She talked to him for a few minutes, but got no answer, just a wink of the eye. People would have taken her for slightly mad, seeing her behave like this. But Penelope knew better by now and told no one about the wink. And 'titomme had grown a beard and, and, she was positive, now wore contact lenses (instead of spectacles as before).

Boris and Svetlana did not marry, Svetlana married some nice CLD. Boris married Doremi.

Lexi married the HO1, who had recovered from his last blow and had ostensibly changed his mind about blondes. One does change his mind. And Lexi sure wasn't going to dye her hair, even for him. She is also the inventor of a lot of well known machinery, like the little office corridor motor cross: The 'PC-Mobile'. They then left for HO1's home country, Brazil, and Lexi bought an island there. Of course they travelled a lot, taking their children with them. 'Xaviere' insisted.

It was rumoured that Josepha would take over his post and rumours are published to get true.

Hilde published an impressive series of formulas, the 'Flavia laws' to explain about chaos and how to get out of it and got a Nobel Price. Since there was no Nobel price for Maths she got one for Economics (the formula applied to any chaotic system). She was even nominated Scientist at one point, but soon tired of it. She divorced her egomonstrum of a boyfriend, and went to live with another noble and warm hearted guy. They reside in a sunny country and devise formulas to make the world happier.

Nico left for some far away country as usual but this time alone. And he returned with a wife in his luggage. She did not like it in Bohatia so they both left again for her home country and never came back. She was very rich too, so no worry for them in what

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regards a pension. Chiara replaced him in his post, and, Nico, you were excellent, but Chiara is maybe a bit better than you, because she is more user friendly, and her programmes reflect this well. One can understand Chiara's programmes automatically. She's a dream of a programmer.

Leo and Lut both got a name in the world and made even more money. Leo became a famous painter, finally married Emilia and was very happy, Gwendoline is on many of his paintings (not to be recognised, see page 379).

Lut founded a rock group, called it 'Easy Java' and went on tour.

Johanna became an ambassador for children. She travelled around the world accompanied by her husband and sometimes her son Nicky, the paediatrician. She defended the little ones with all the teeth she had got, and as you know, she had many.

Maurice became Minister of Information Technologies in his country. His wife being pretty and their having lots of money helped. Maurice fathered a system which made the change from hieroglyphs to the alphabet in the computer world. That's why he learned all about hieroglyphs in the first place. He called it I.L.D.E.

Gwendoline went back to her first love, Psychology, and made much more money (not that she needed that) with it than at the House, easy with all those troubled Housefons. Her husband decided suddenly to grow up, and she finally had a real man to rely upon. She then left him... and married a Bohatian, a rather small man, six years younger than her, but brilliant - one of the greatest jewellers of the place. He was talented about just everything you can imagine.

Arthur managed to juggle with eight balls, which is impossible. Having achieved that he could get back to more trivial things, like being a CLA at the House of Science.

Sven, if richer, just stayed the same, was happy, loved his wife and got loved back. No I forget he bought her seven more horses so that they then had a stable of ten, but this number was sure to grow.

And Myra was finally called by Justin the prince father to demo his PC to him (he finally got the message) and thus married her prince (who was there just by some coincidence arranged by his father). They had seven children, which was a scandal nowadays, but then Myra had well hidden that side. She had never really cared about computers, only about princes. But she had to keep updated, in order to not to disappoint Martin's father.

The CHD stayed friends and lived happily on faraway shores. Svetlana, Doremi, Boris, Rosie and Chiara took over the HelpDesk. For the time being.

As for Myself, the House finally discovered my value and that I knew virtually everything about computers. I first refused their job offers. I wanted PC's to stay my hobby and then I was not so young anymore. But they nagged and nagged: "Why not make money out of your hobby!" I gave in and let myself be hired as a full staff member of the House. I became a Housefonc. Soon I took over Mrko Mrnsk's job at ITPOL, and no one has ever had a reason to complain since then. The story even went into one of those Newspapers I once sold at the ground floor. One last thing: when

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dealing with computers, always remember Myra's 'Pang!' when she first saw her Prince and you'll know you're right.

The dwarfs or Heinzelmenn were still seen, imagined or not, now and then, and they might well come back to help if you need and deserve help. Just like computers, they might do your job, exceptionally, if you know how to handle them ;-)

Restart

When spring turned into full force the building was at last finished, with brand new carpets and shiny white walls, no more cables to be seen anywhere, air conditioning working and pretty pictures decorating the walls of all corridors, elevators always working, small kitchens placed on every floor. Everyone was finally able to really relax. We decided to all have a big party, the first big drink for ages.

On the day of the drink a long awaited order finally came through: Public Health and Consumer Security Office had at last obtained to have the building evacuated. We thus had to move into another one. We did, one week later, and found the new building to be just in the same state the old one had been in.

Offices were without doors, cables lay open on the floors, walls had not been painted anew and carried the dirt streaks of their previous owner (not the "House"), carpets, far from new, were dust ridden, office space was minimal and some people had been installed in what previously had obviously served as cupboards, the usual office desks could not be accommodated, so people were given improvised tables, coming from somewhere in the attics. Lightening was not working in many offices, airco was non existent, such as was probably central heating. Fortunately, it was springtime. But windows had to be opened in order to get some aeration and with it everything came in but fresh air. Carbon toxic, noise, and more dust.

If some offices were without doors, there were also people without offices, many offices had no phone, no PC's (ah those made us happy at least for a while!) People were moved into new offices, just to hear five minutes later that this move had been a mistake, and that their office was elsewhere. People were moved into offices with their previous occupant still in it, his move having been foreseen in only a week. Offices when finally having been emptied of at least their owner, were not cleaned. Cables lay still open on the floor, network seemed to have fled into some long vacation, into a place far away, unknown to itself.

Rings a bell? Does it somehow sound familiar to you? We had to start all over again.

No this is just a joke, to keep you from reading the real end, which is hidden somewhere in the story.

N'ainporte quoi.