

# $x$ -Fast and $y$ -Fast Tries



**Giulio Ermanno Pibiri**

Ca' Foscari University of Venice

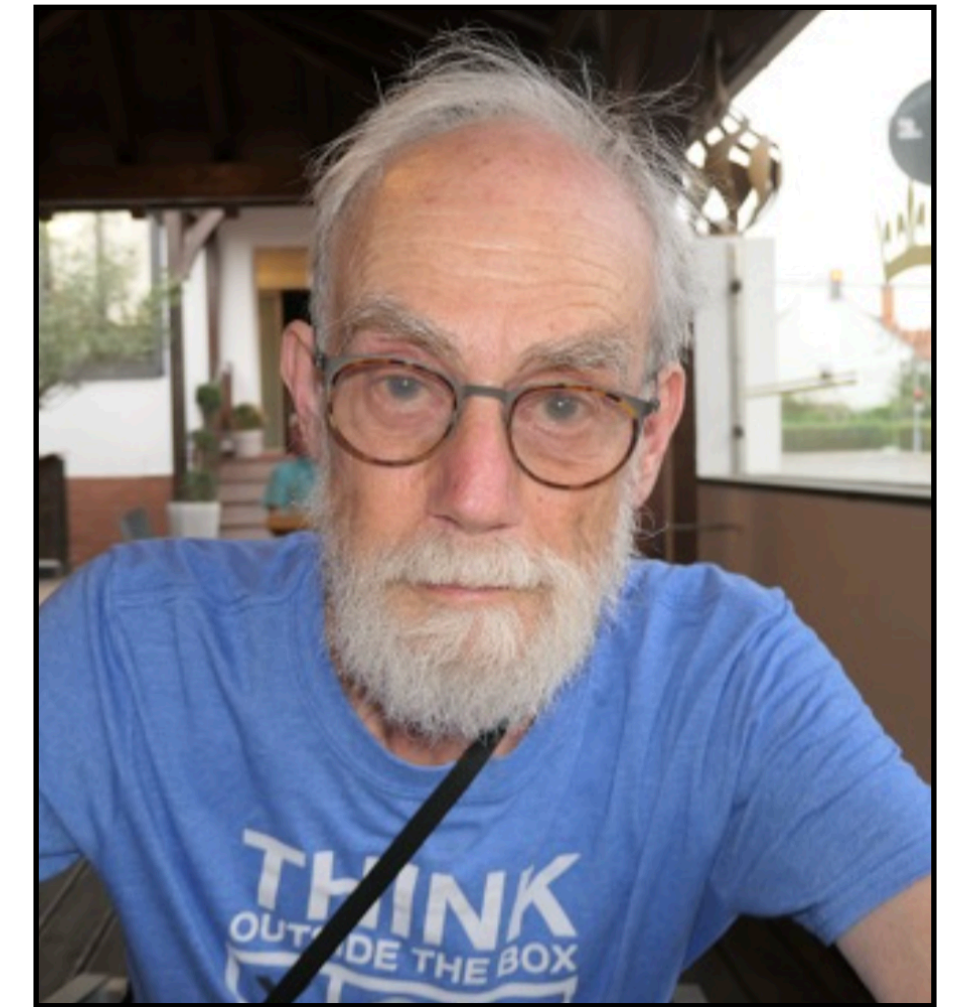
Venice, Italy, 10 February 2026

# Problem definition

- Maintain a **sorted integer set**  $S \subseteq \{0, \dots, U - 1\}$ , for some **universe size**  $U$ , under the following operations and queries for an integer  $0 \leq x < U$ .
  - $\text{Min}()$ : return the smallest element in  $S$ .
  - $\text{Max}()$ : return the largest element in  $S$ .
  - $\text{Member}(x)$ : return “Yes” if  $x \in S$ , “No” otherwise.
  - $\text{Insert}(x)$ : add  $x$  to  $S$  (assuming  $x \notin S$ ).
  - $\text{Delete}(x)$ : remove  $x$  from  $S$  (assuming  $x \in S$ ).
  - $\text{Successor}(x)$ : return the smallest  $y \in S$  such that  $y > x$ , or  $\perp$  if no such element exists.
  - $\text{Predecessor}(x)$ : return the largest  $y \in S$  such that  $y < x$ , or  $\perp$  if no such element exists.
- Let  $n$  be  $|S|$  in the following.

# Summary from last week

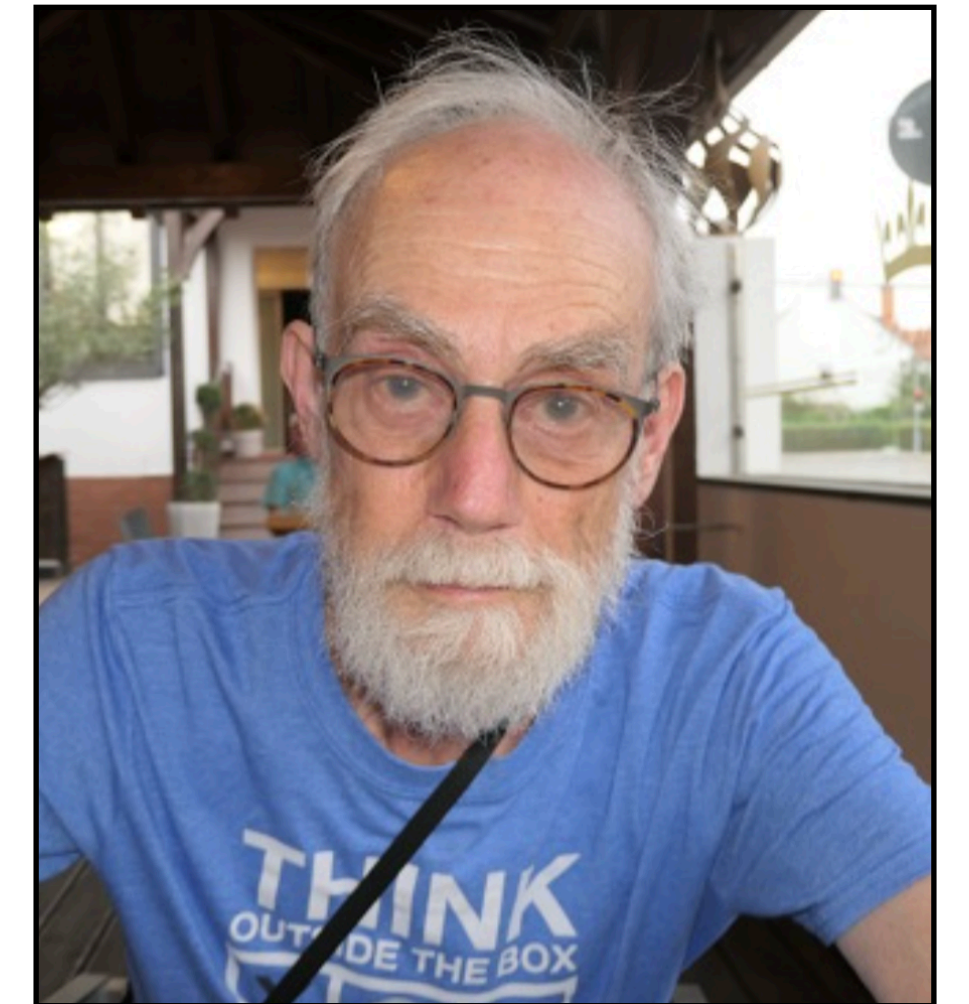
- **van Emde Boas** trees (1975-77) solve the problem in  $O(\log \log U)$  worst-case time and **space**  $\Theta(U)$ .
- When  $U = n^c$  for some  $c \geq 1$  then  $\log_2 \log_2 U = \Theta(\log \log n)$  and vEB trees are **exponentially** faster than AVL and RB trees. This is **optimal** for Successor/Predecessor.
- **Key insight.** The  $\log_2 U$ -bit representation of an integer can be split recursively to speed up operations and queries.



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- **Key insight.** The  $\log_2 U$ -bit representation of an integer can be split recursively to speed up operations and queries.
- **Q.** Is it possible combine  $O(\log \log U)$  time with **space**  $\Theta(n)$  ?

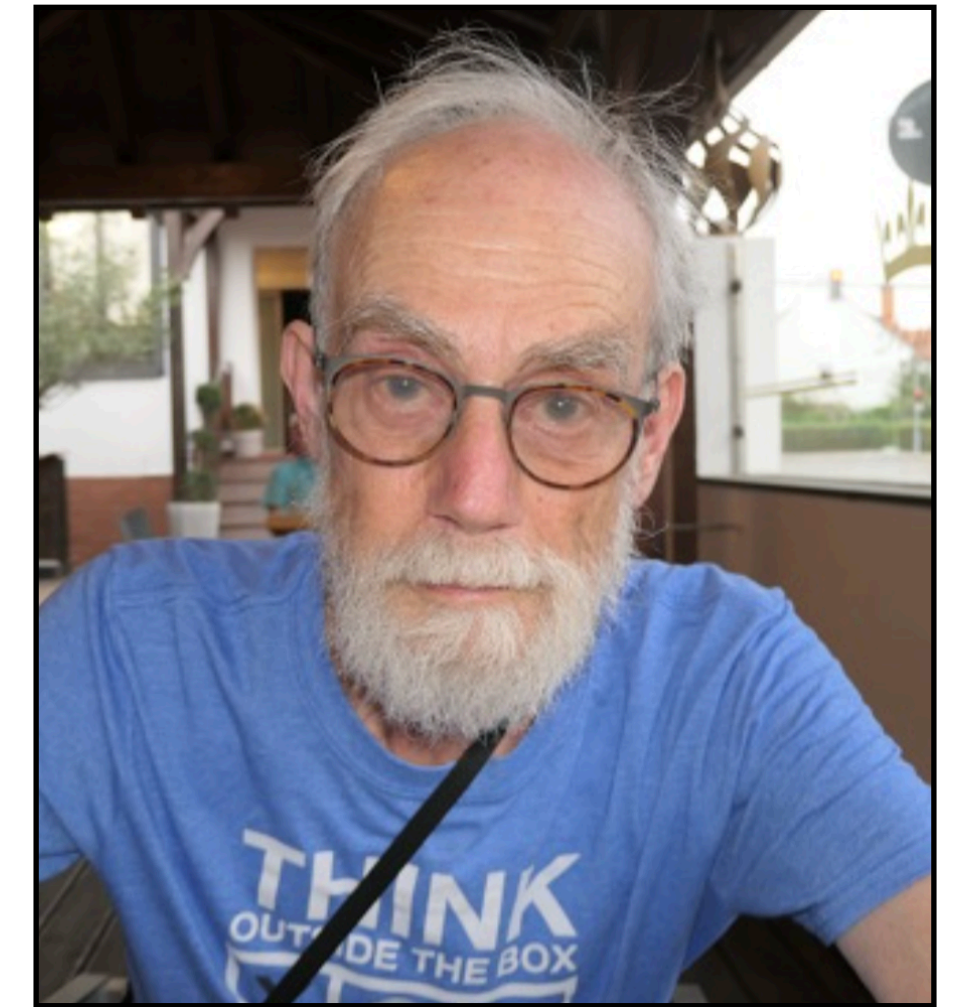


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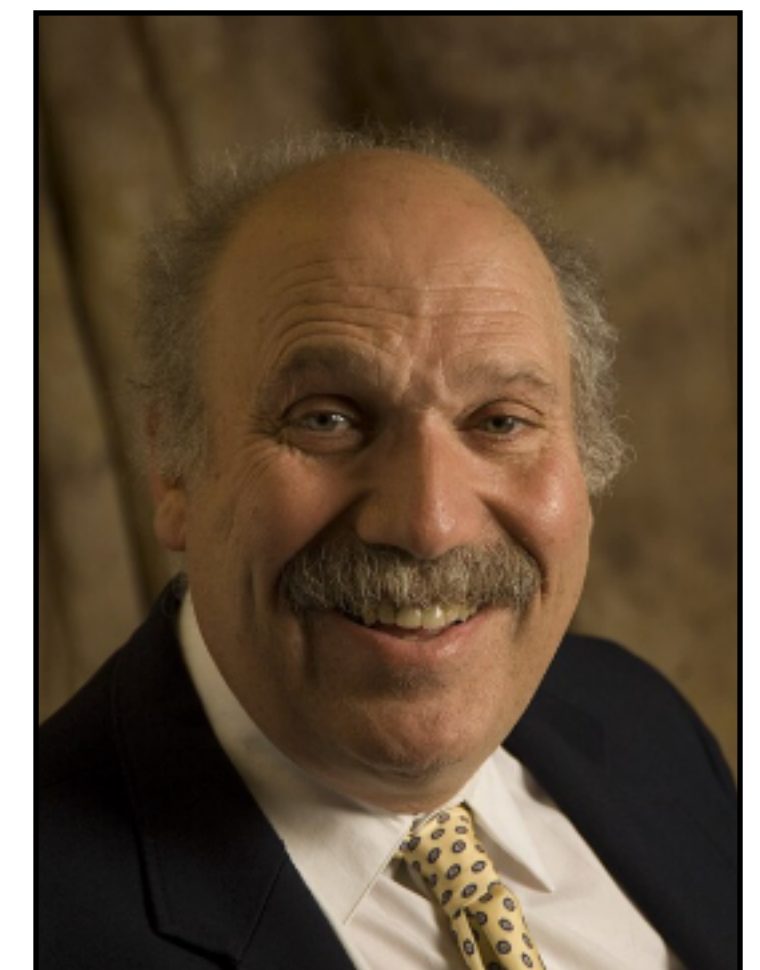


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- **Key insight.** The  $\log_2 U$ -bit representation of an integer can be split recursively to speed up operations and queries.
- **Q.** Is it possible combine  $O(\log \log U)$  time with **space**  $\Theta(n)$  ?
- **A. Dan Willard** showed it is in 1983, with the y-fast trie.



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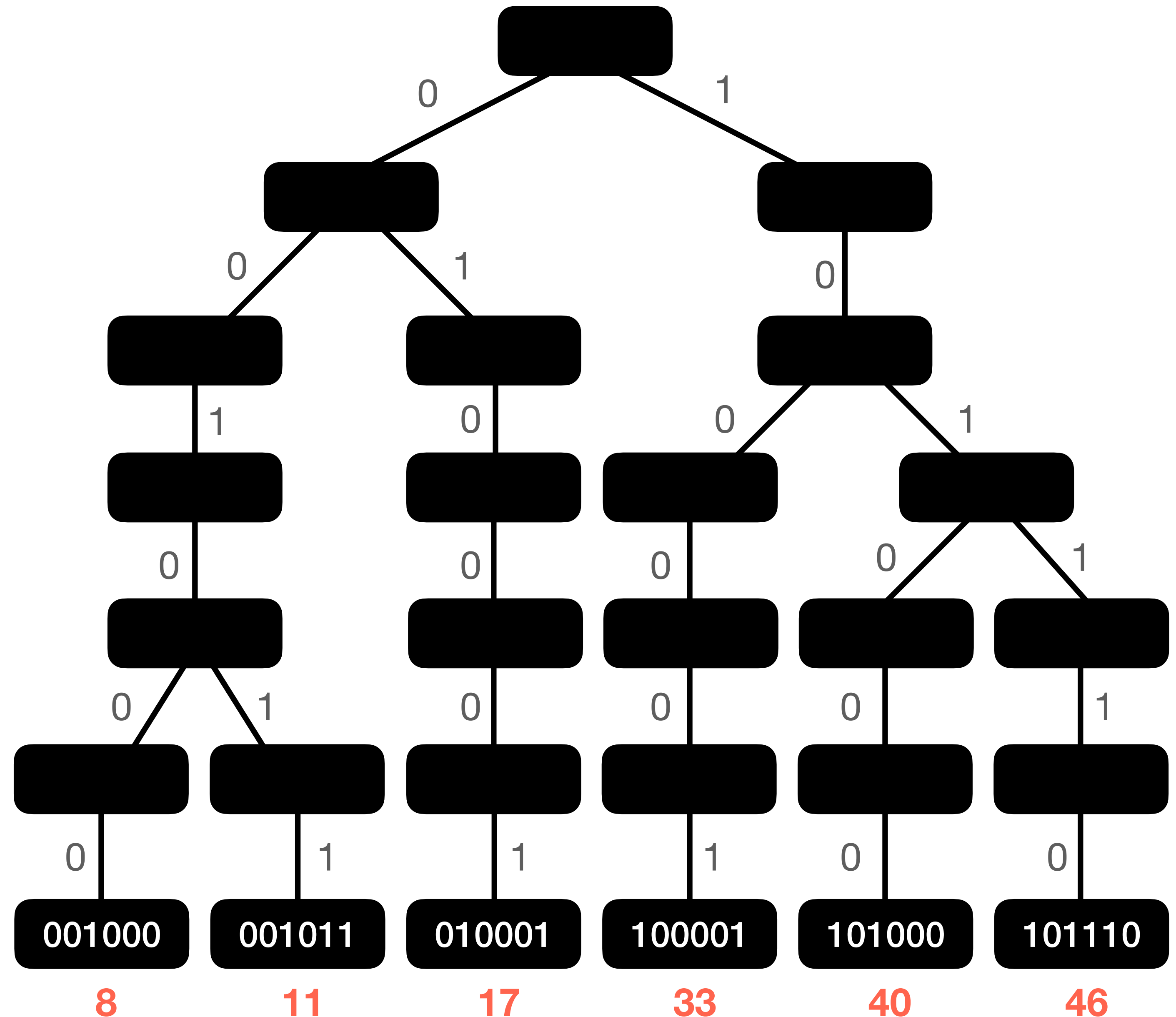


Dan Willard

# Bitwise tries for integers

$$S = \{8, 11, 17, 33, 40, 46\}, U = 64$$

- **Tries** are data structures to represent a collection of strings, where common prefixes are represented once.
- Integers are binary strings of length  $\log_2 U$ , hence the trie has  $\log_2 U$  levels.
- All operations in  $O(\log U)$  time.
- For example:  $\text{Successor}(x)$  and  $\text{Predecessor}(x)$  by following the bits of  $x$  and “walking backwards” if necessary.

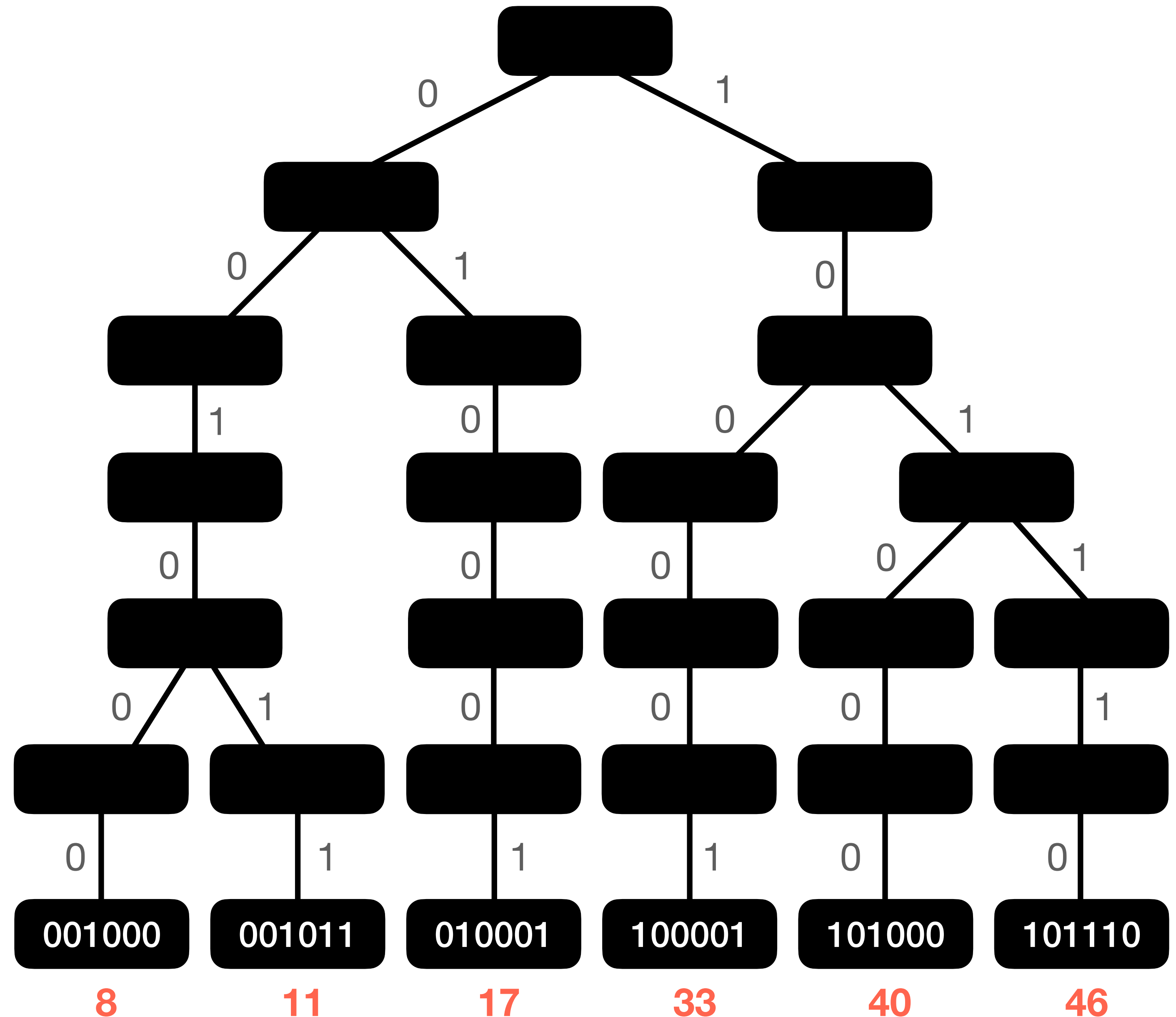


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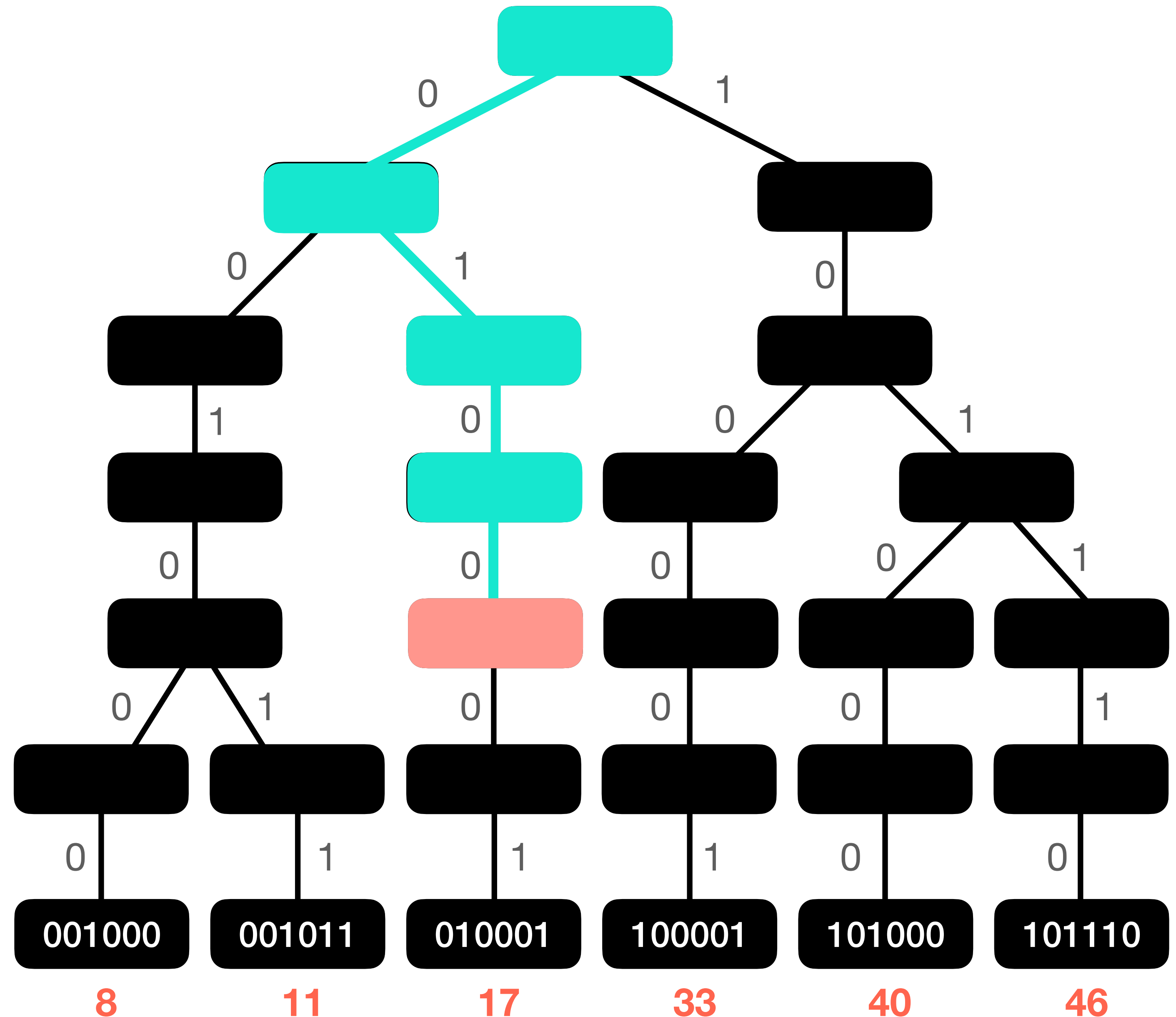


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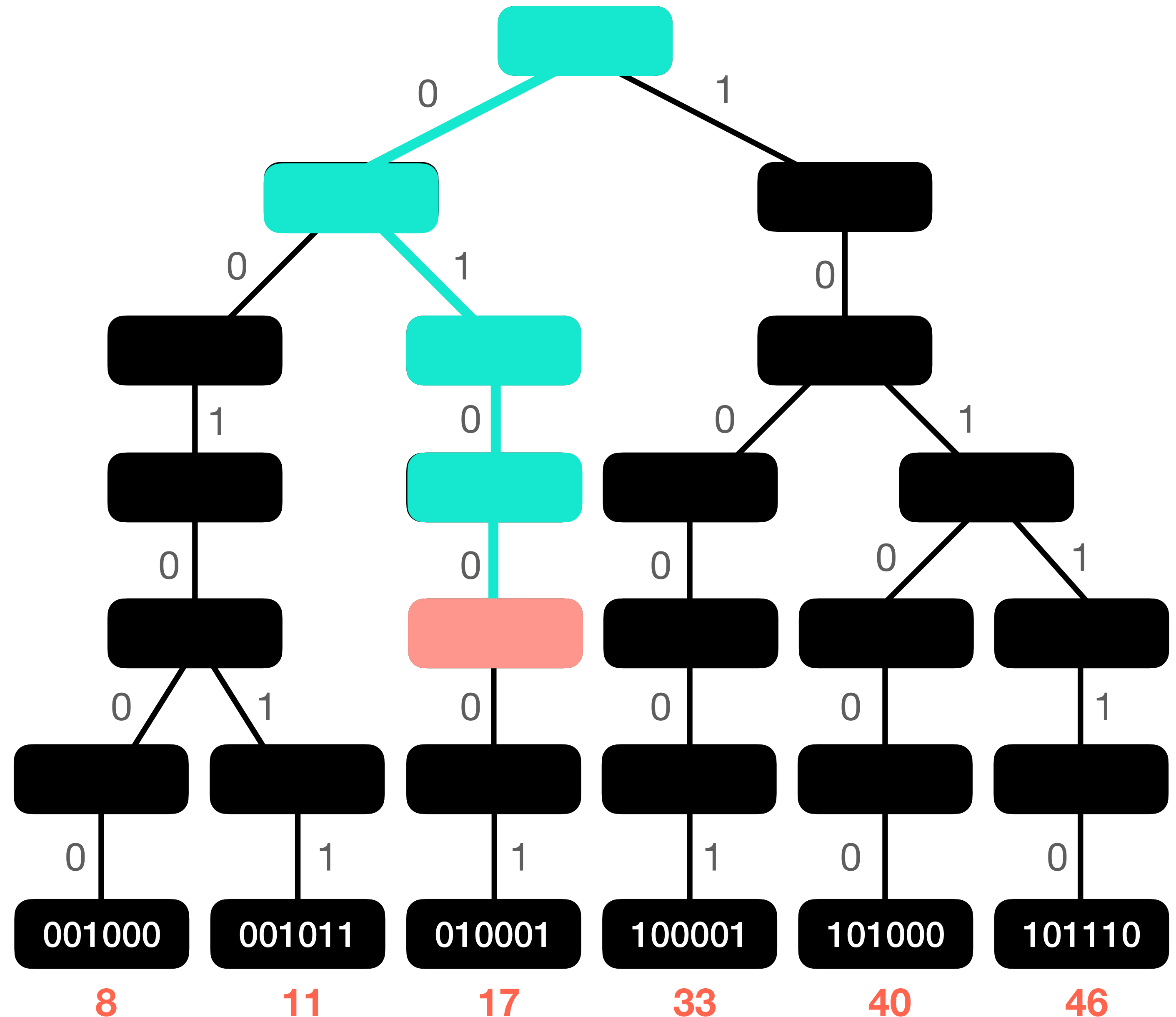
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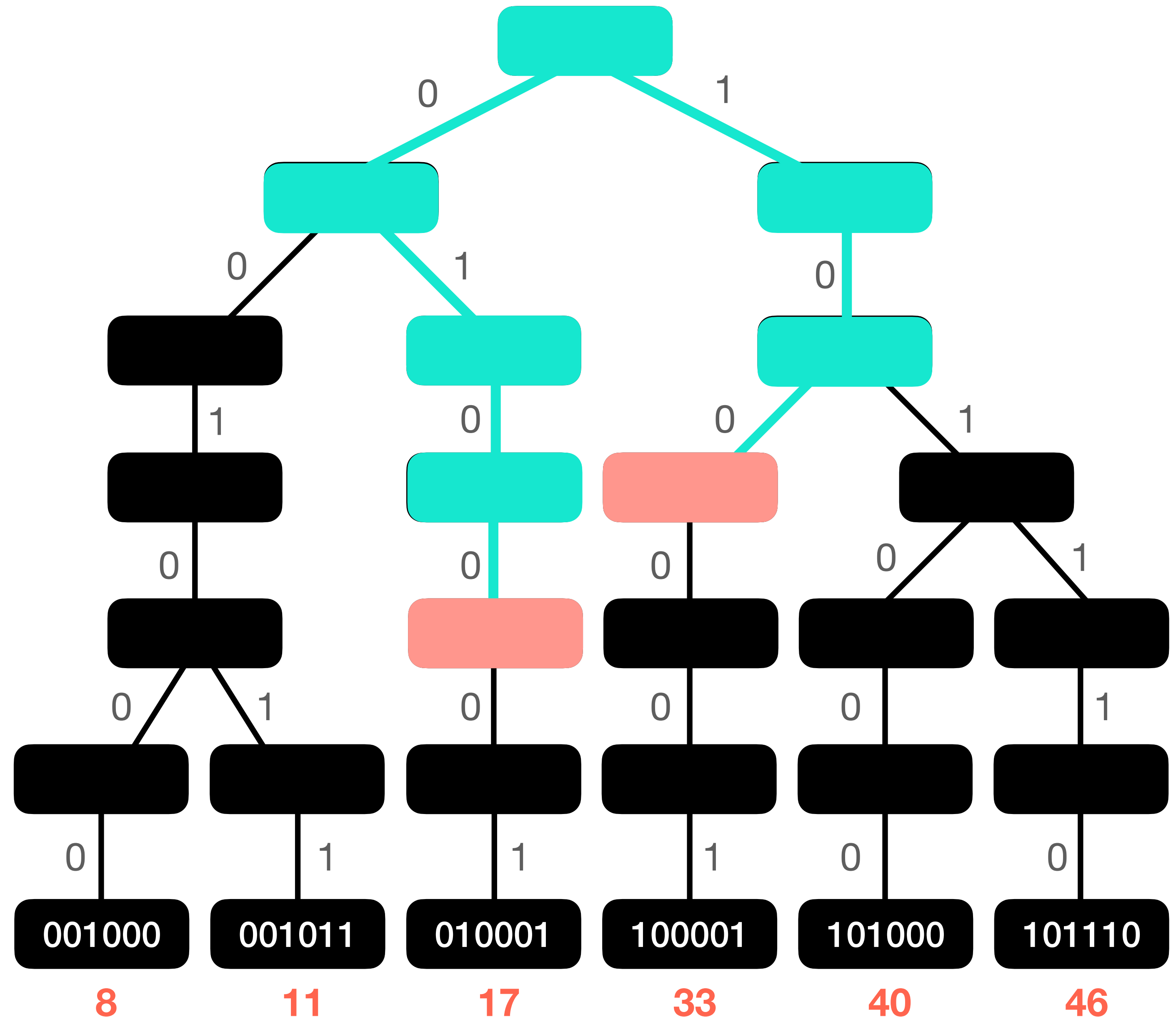
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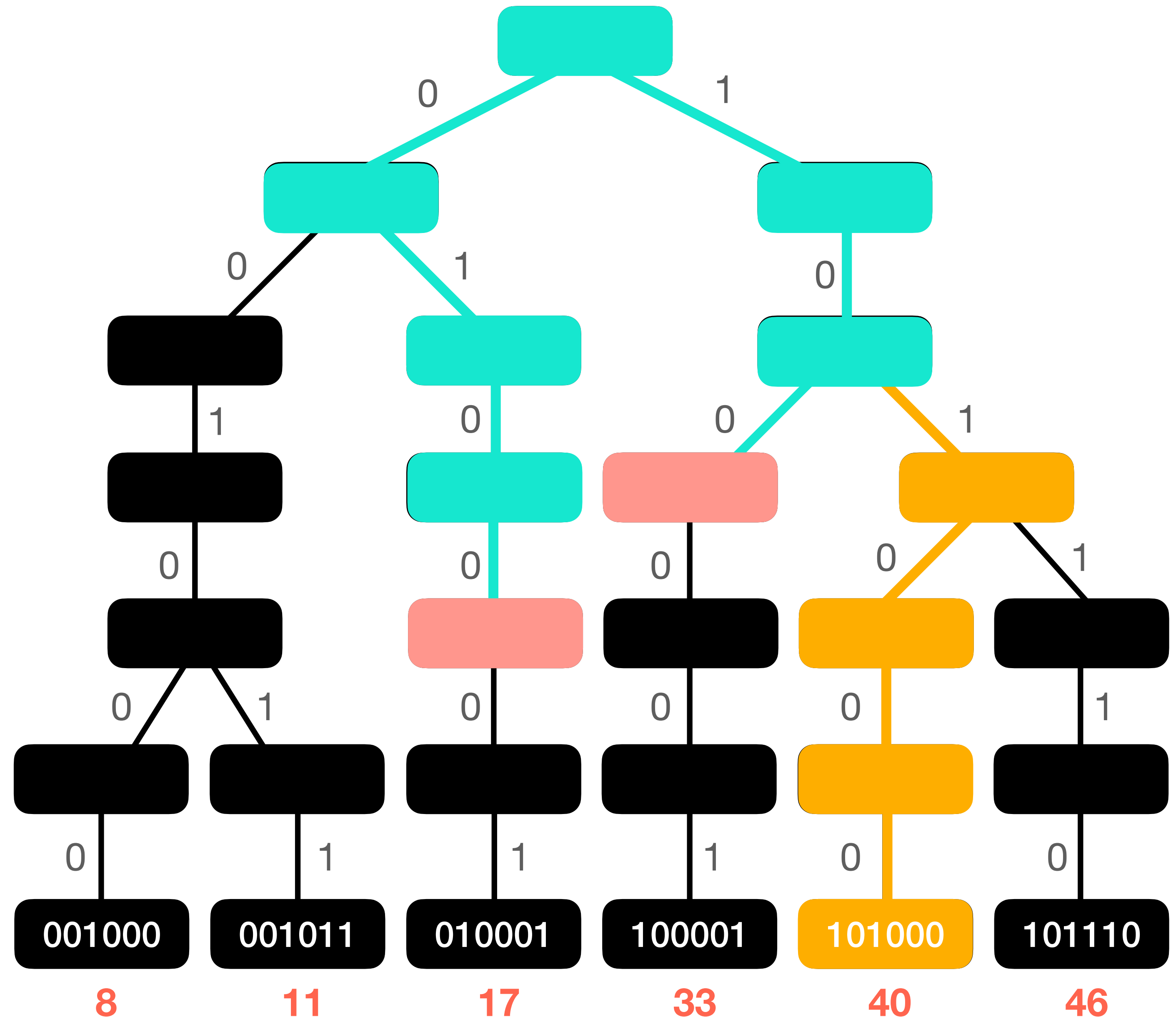
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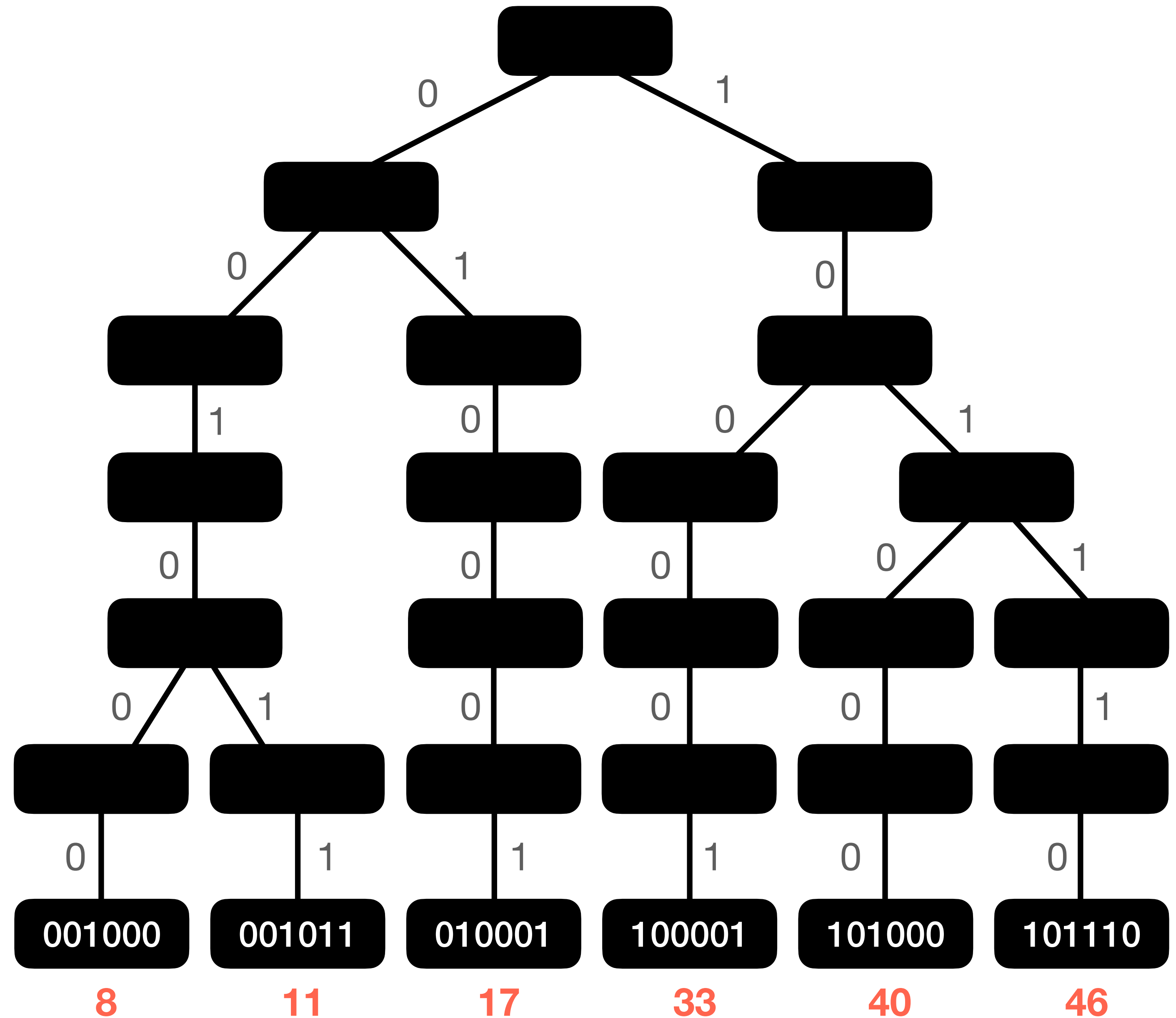
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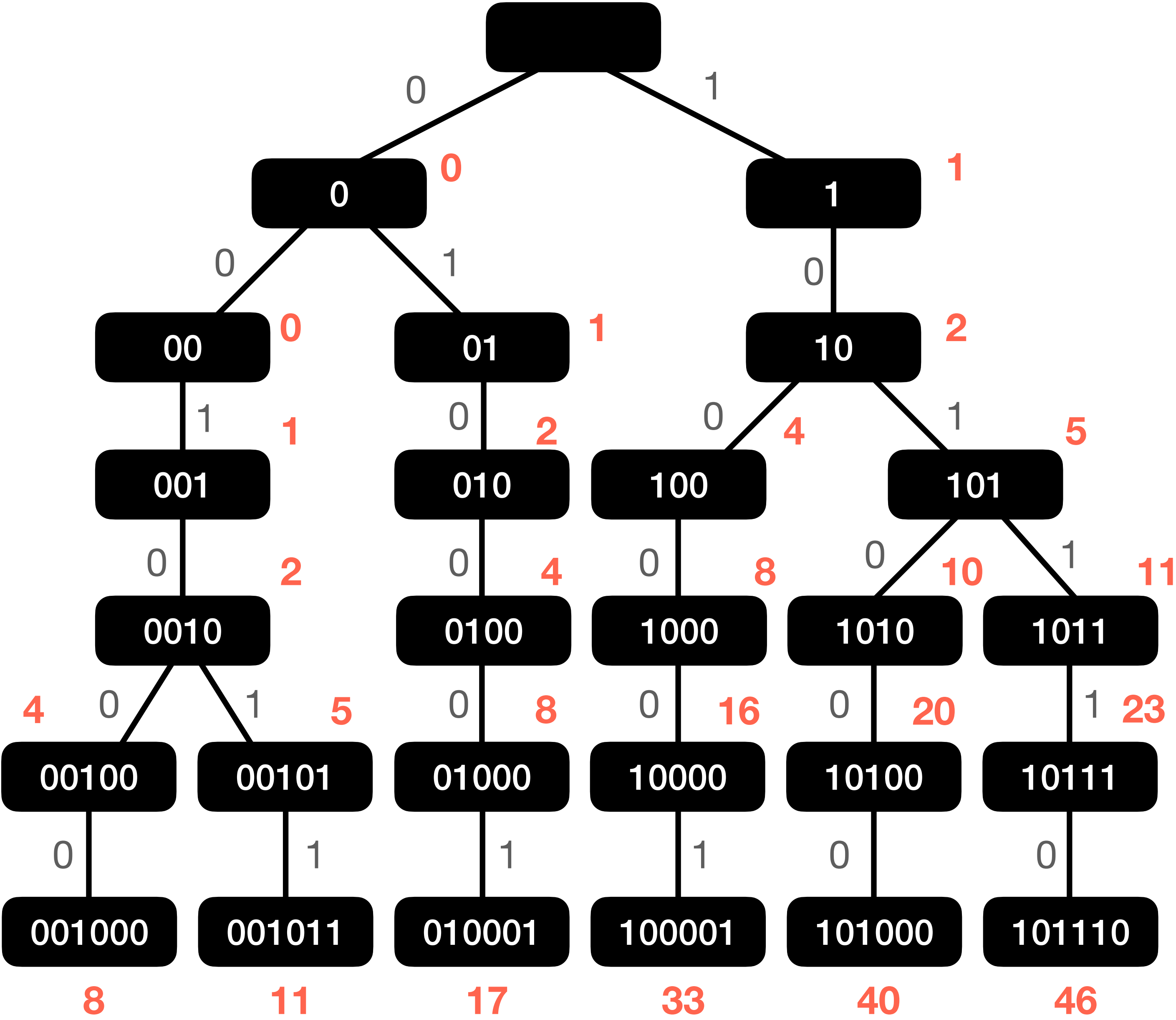
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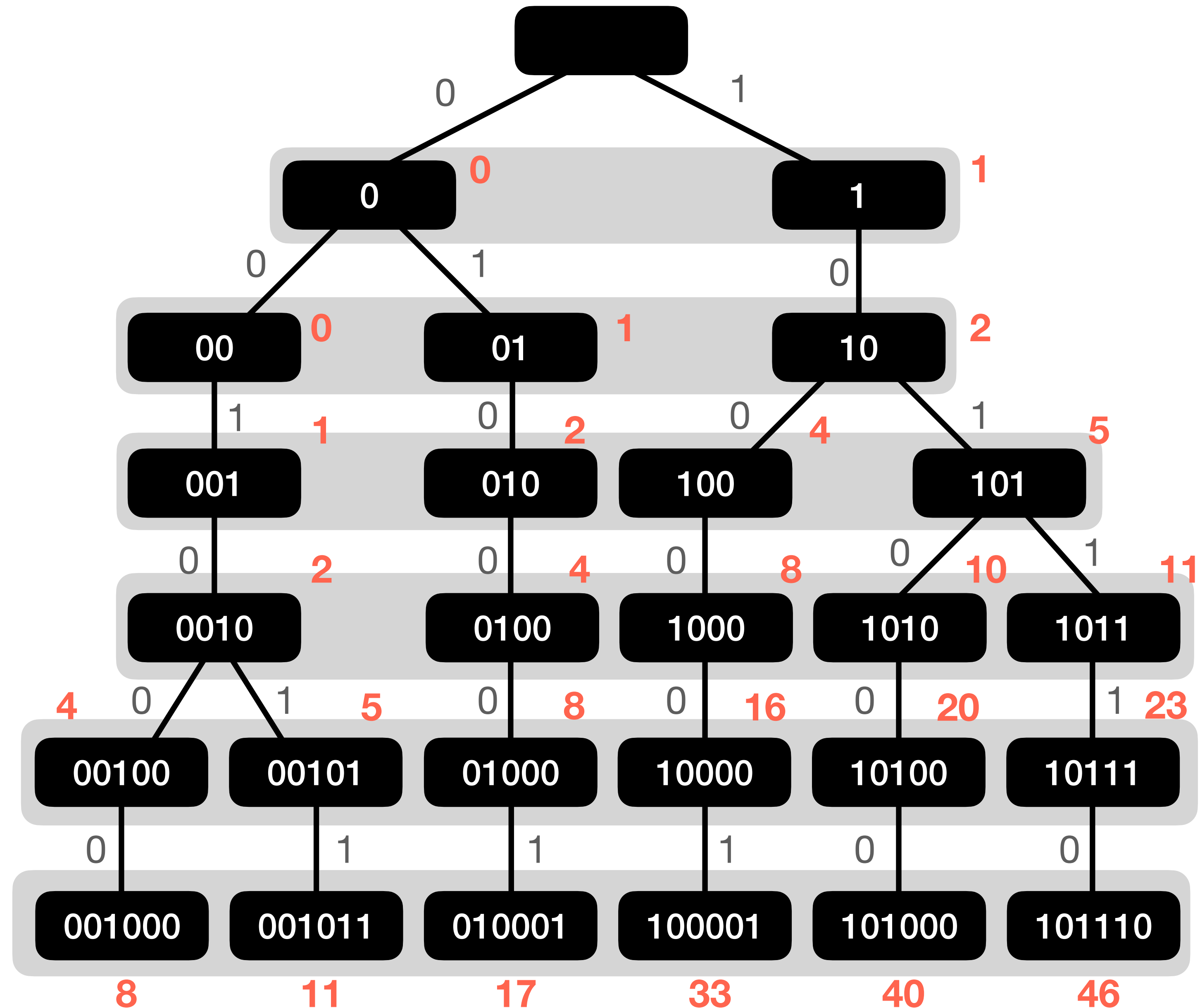
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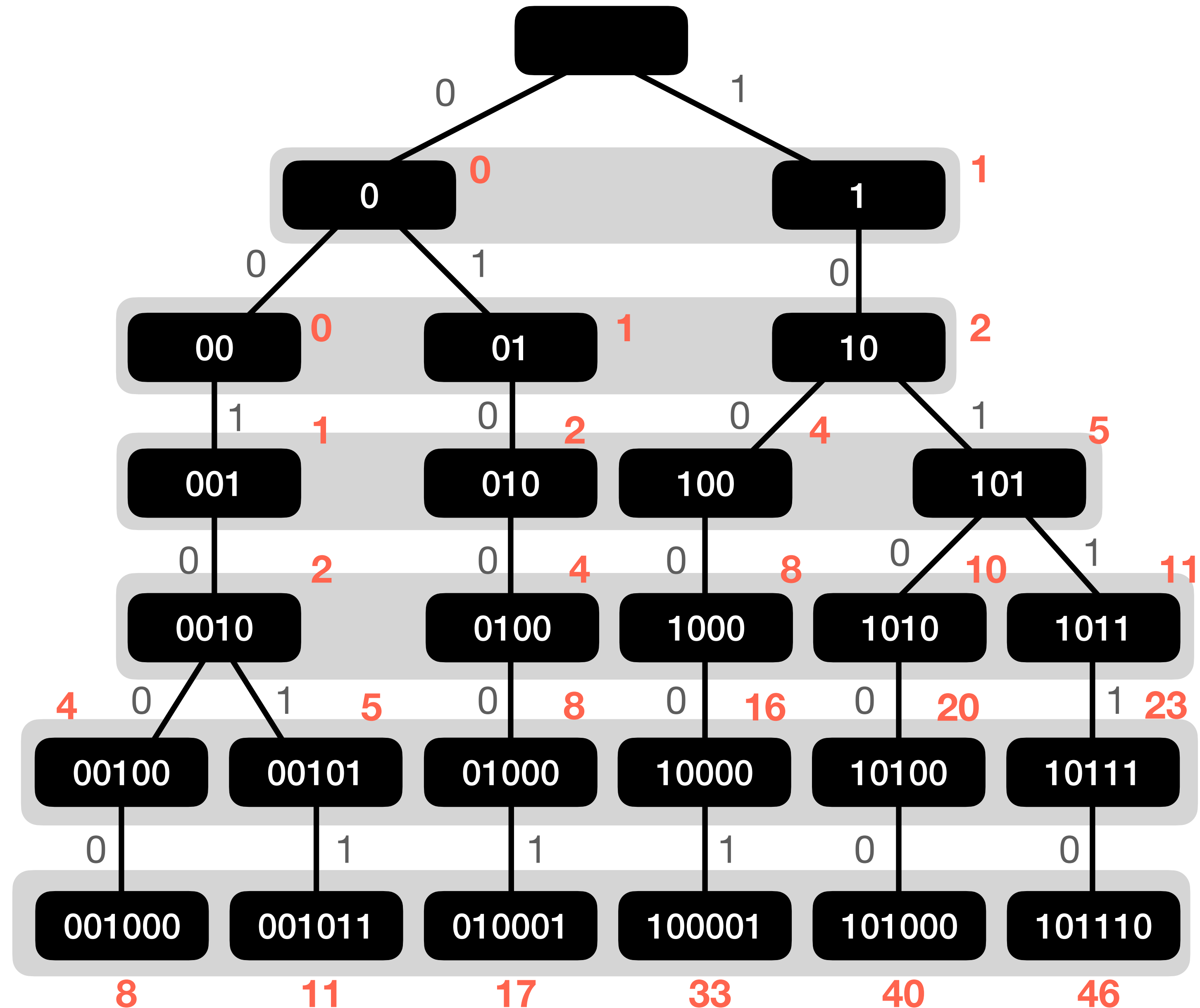
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- Claim.** Longer prefixes of a number correspond to larger numbers.
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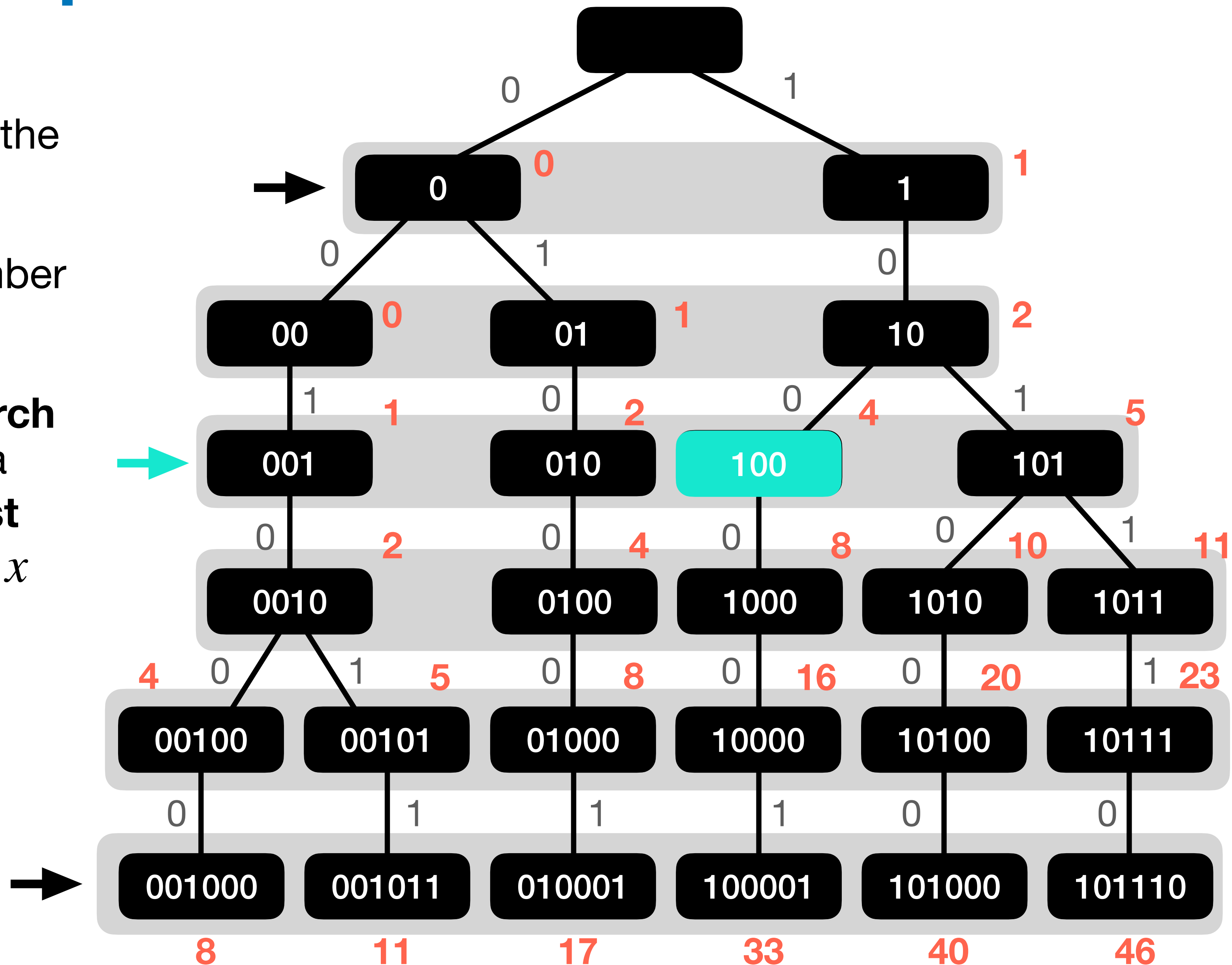
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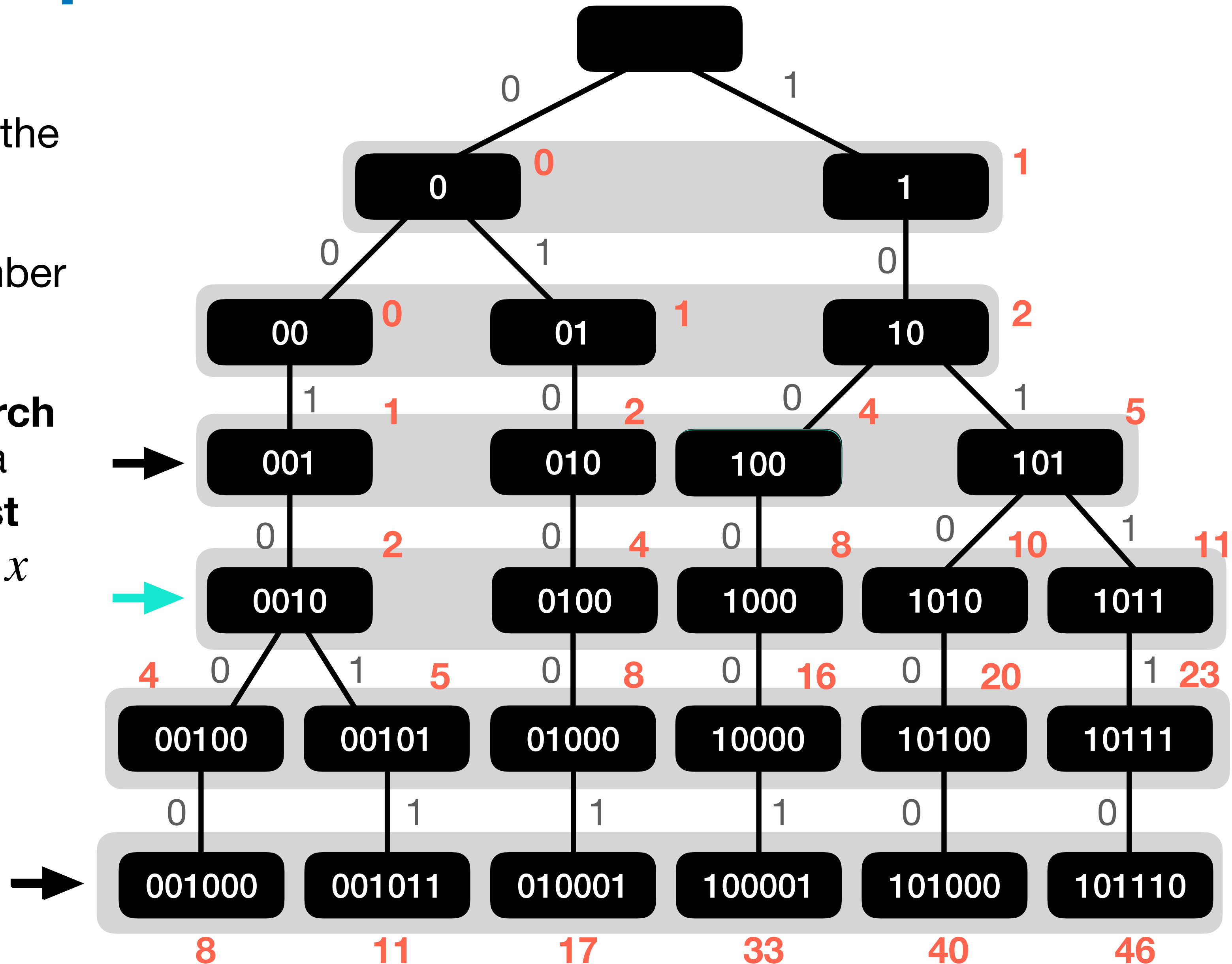




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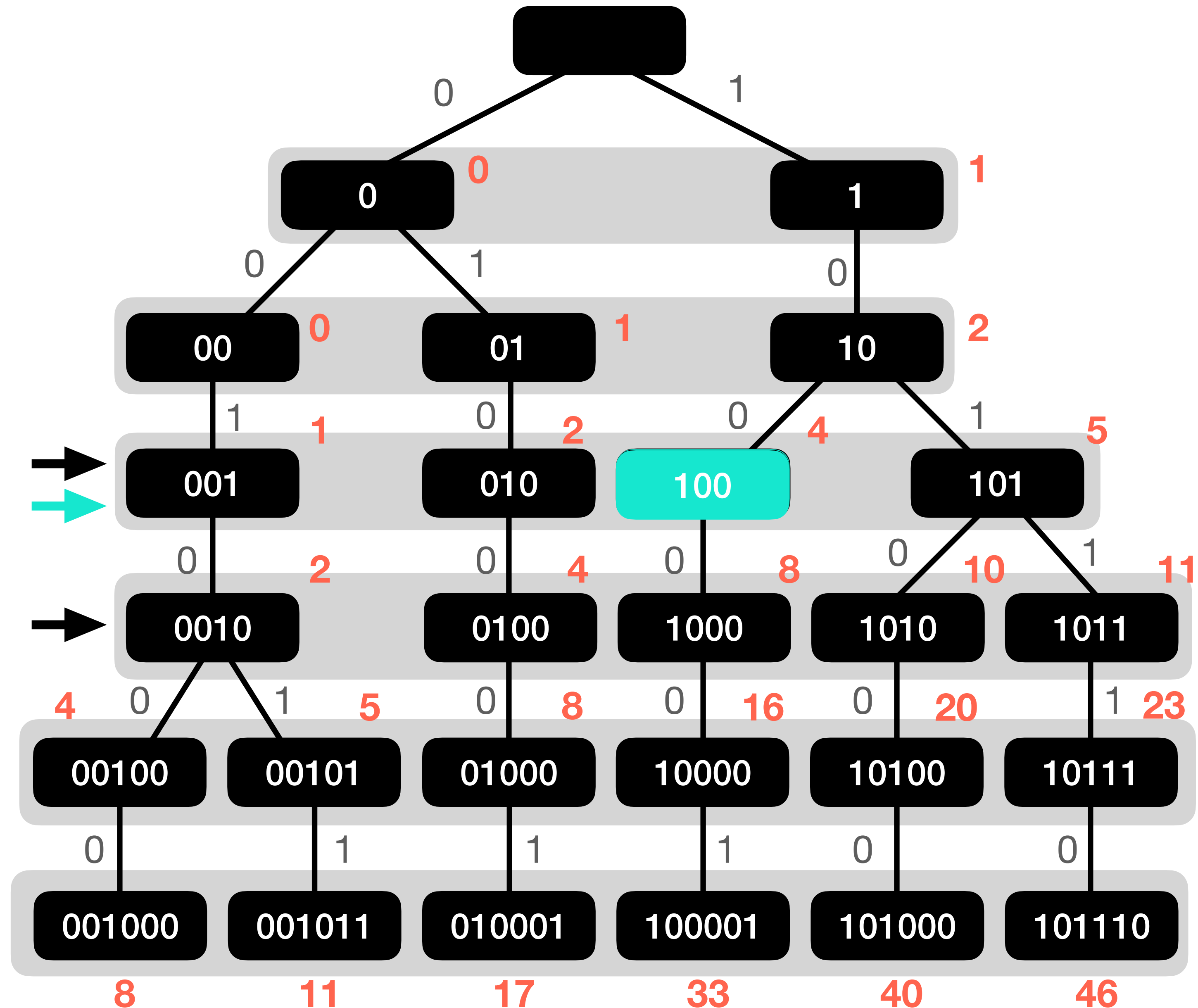
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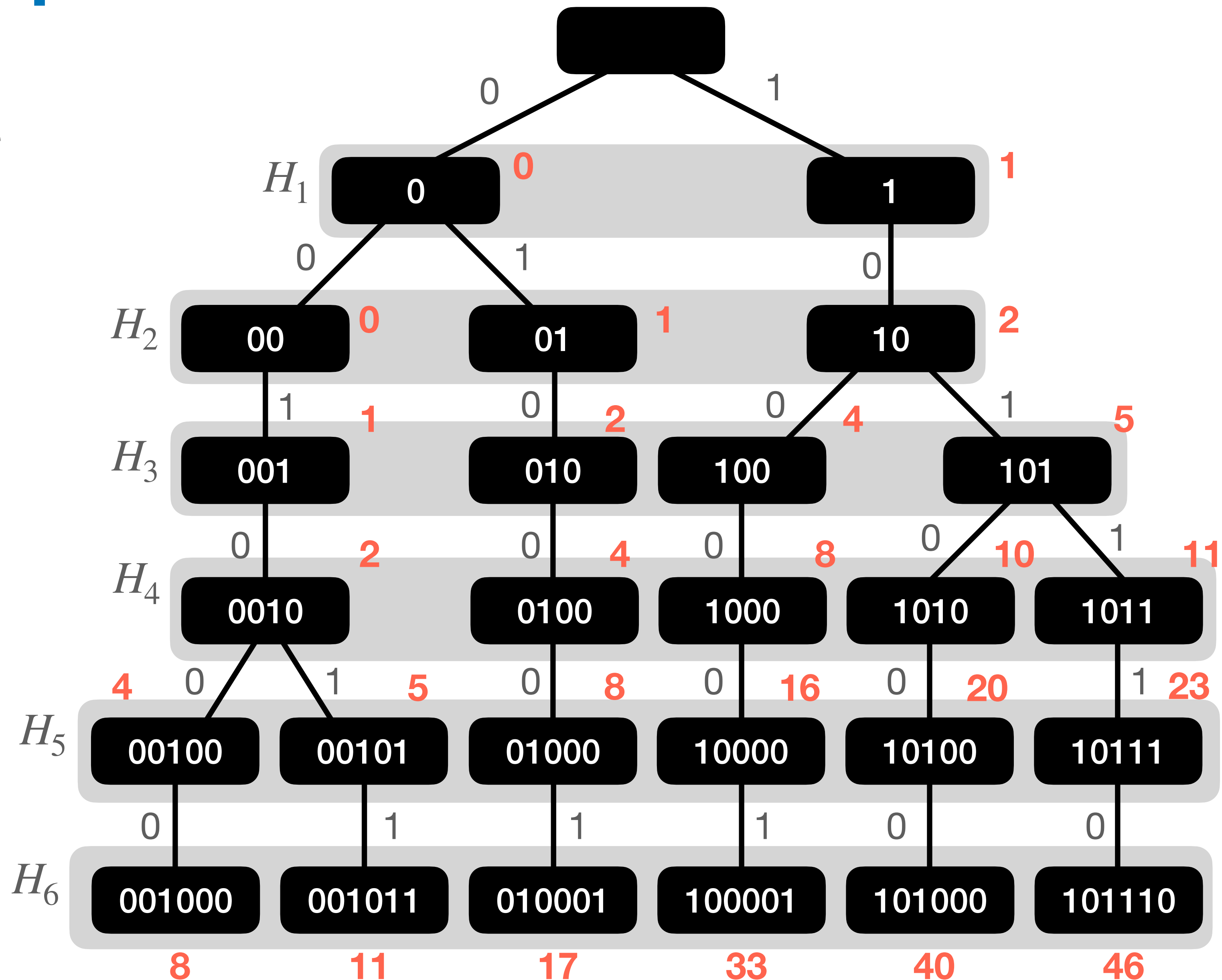
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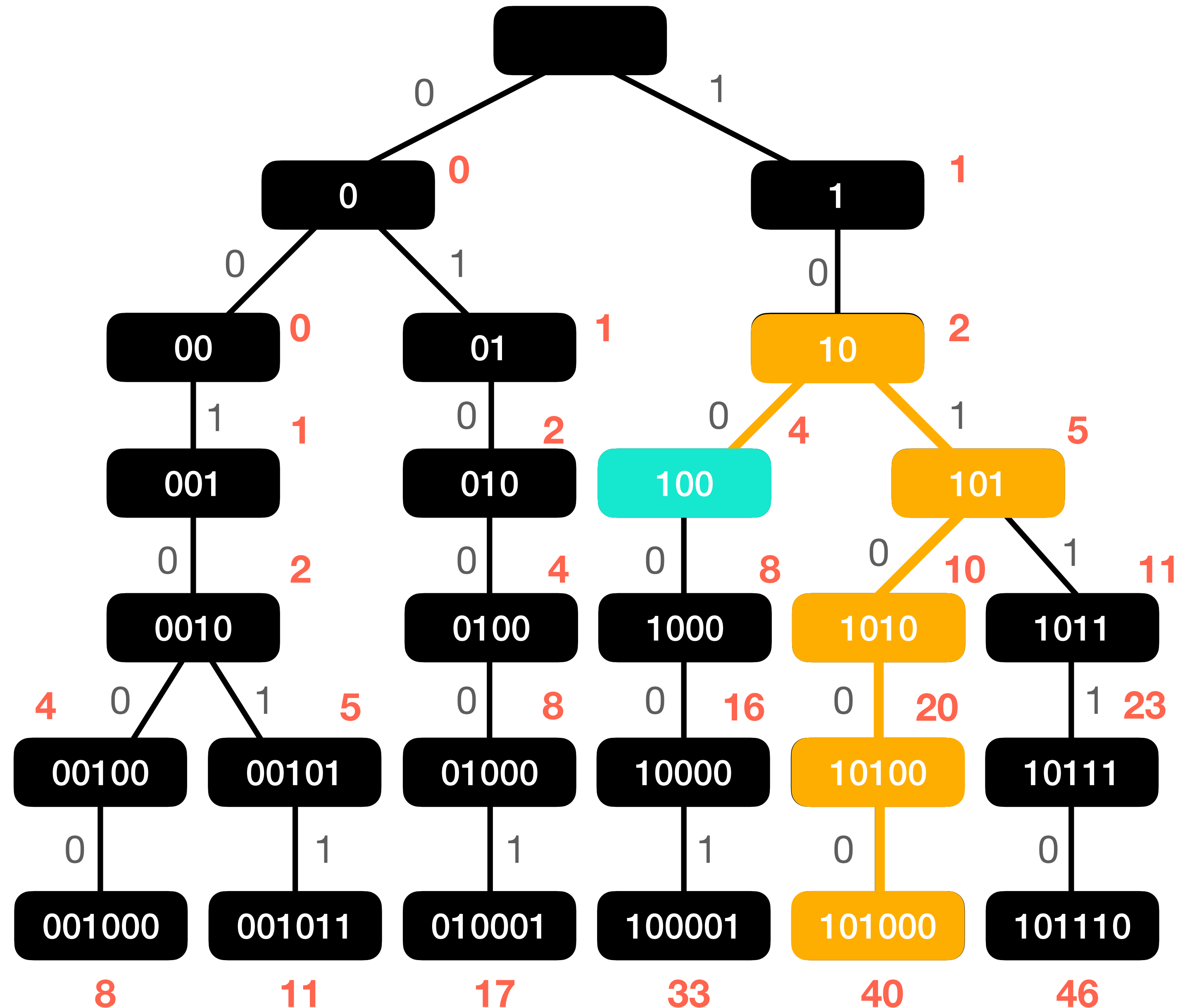
- Binary search needs to determine whether a given node (a prefix) is present at a level.
- So, all the nodes at level  $i$  are inserted in a **hash table**  $H_i$  with  $O(1)$  time per lookup.
- The LCP can now be determined in  $O(\log \log U)$ .
- **Bonus.** Member( $x$ ) now runs in  $O(1)$  by probing the bottom-level hash table.



# Successor ?

- The LCP can be determined in  $O(\log \log U)$ .
- From the node corresponding to the LCP we then walk backwards until we find a branching node with a 1 on the right and take the leftmost path from there.
- Still  $O(\log U)$  time in the worst case.

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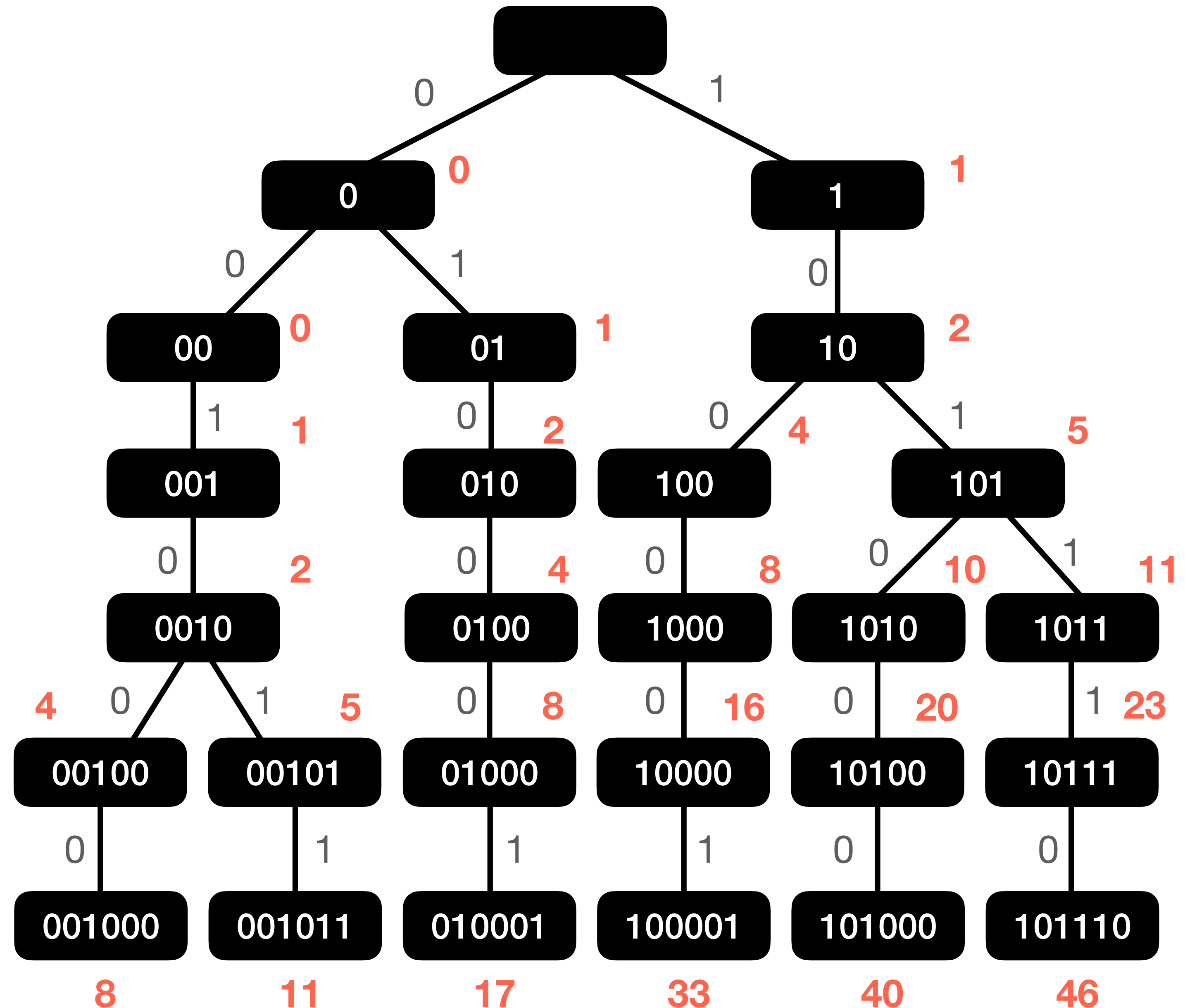


# The x-fast trie

- **Claim.** If the binary search stops in a node  $v$ , then either  $v$  is a leaf or it has **one child only**.

(If that were not the case, a longer match could have been found.)

- **Idea.** From  $v$ , **skip** to a leaf.



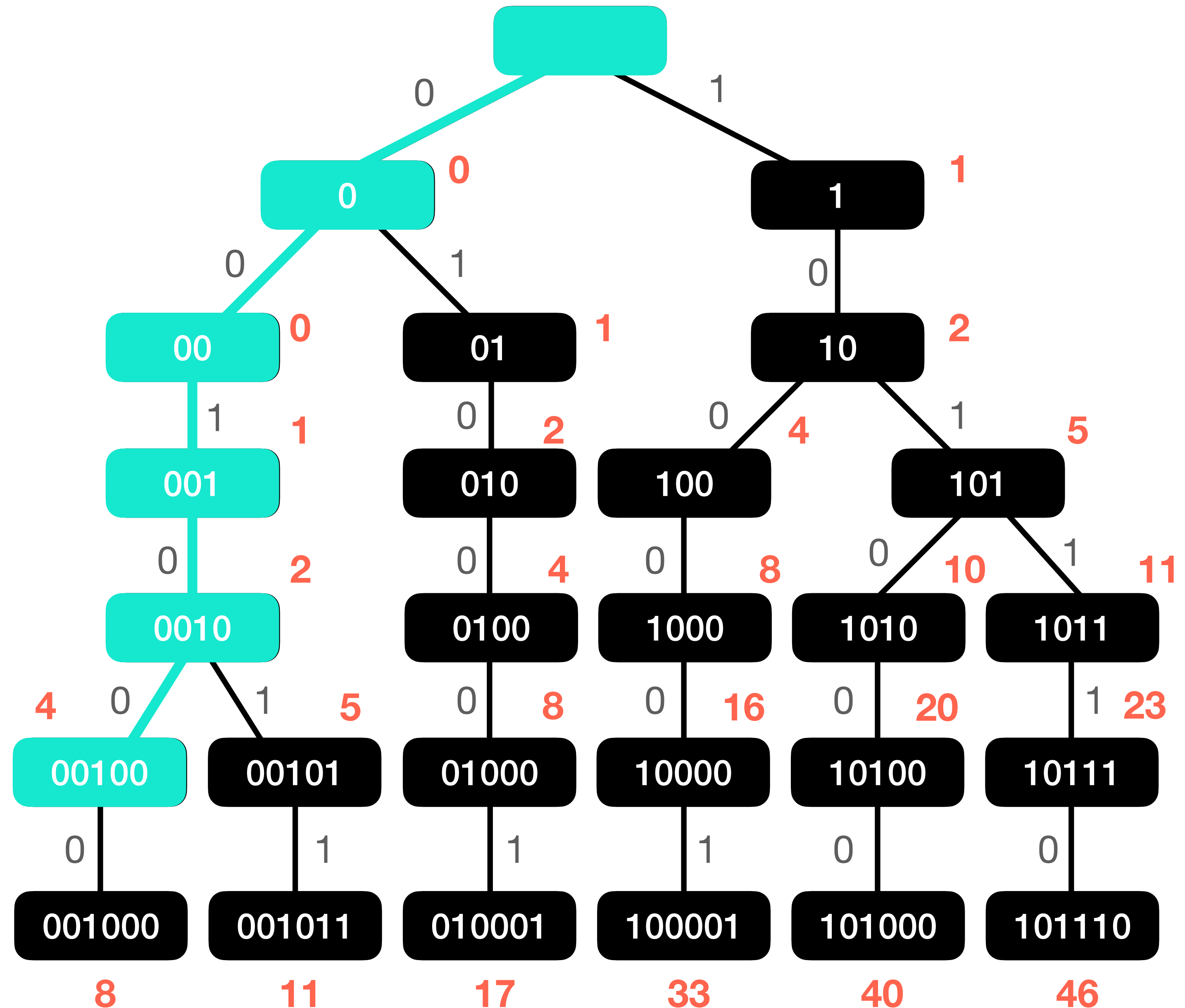
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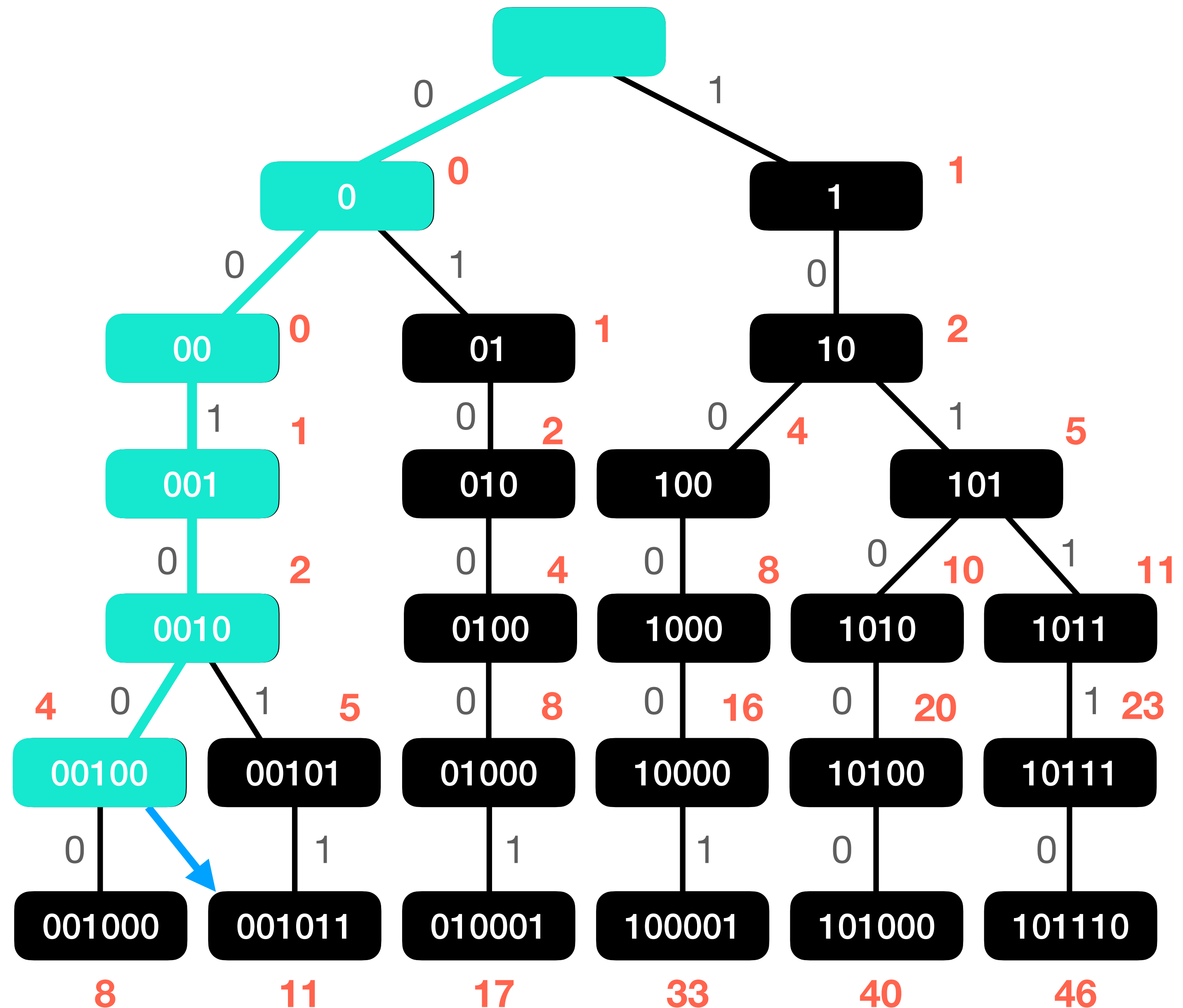
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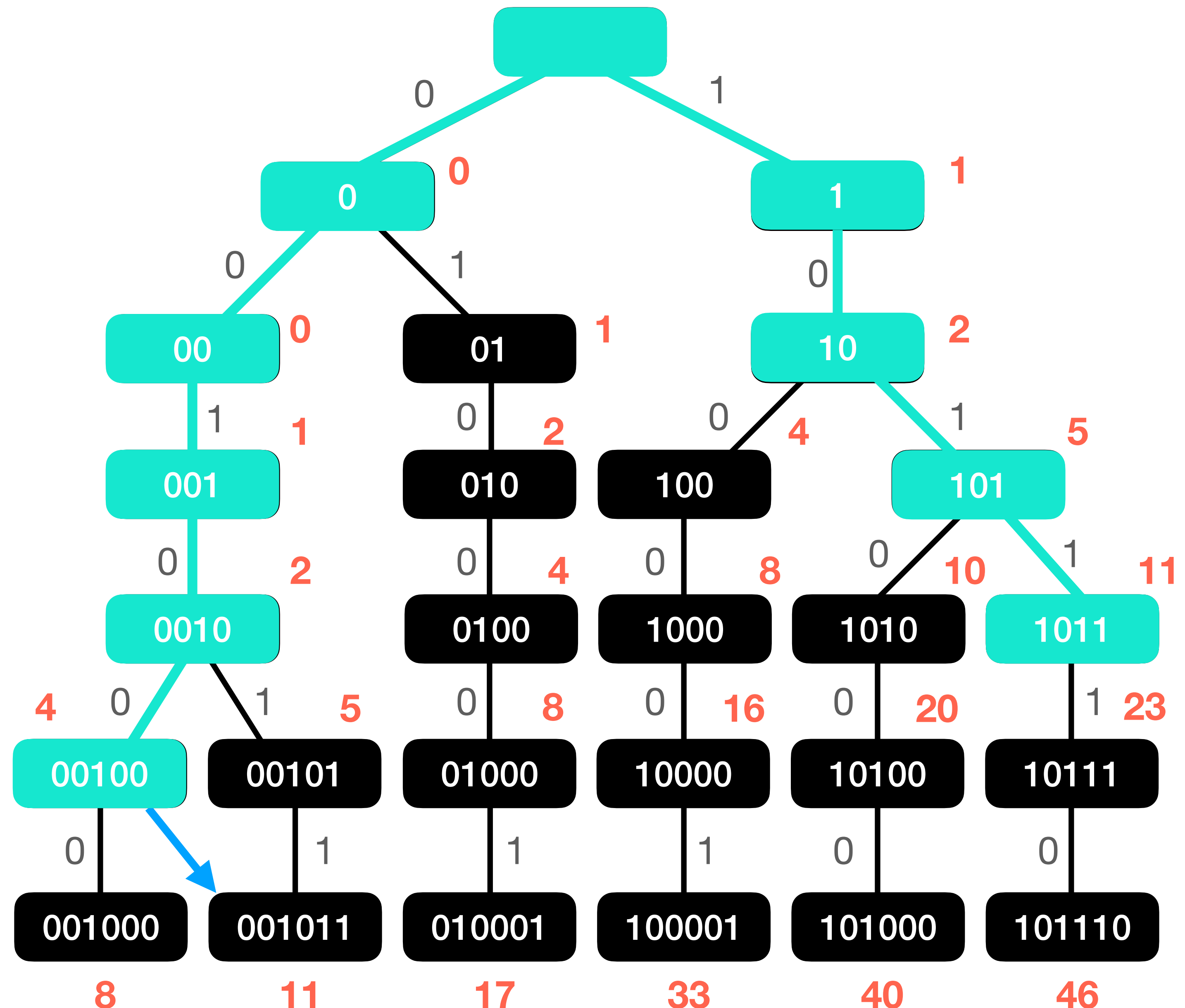
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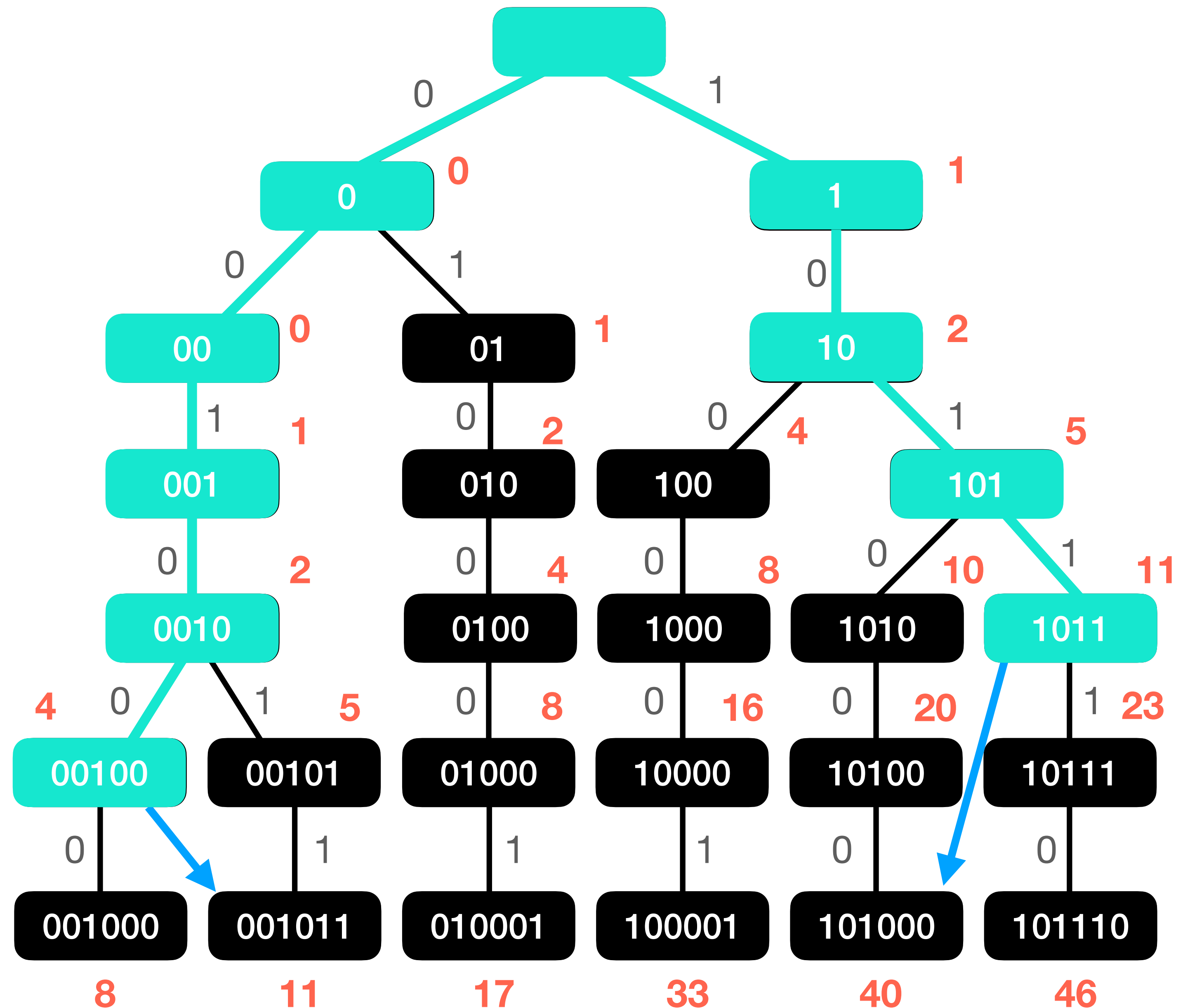
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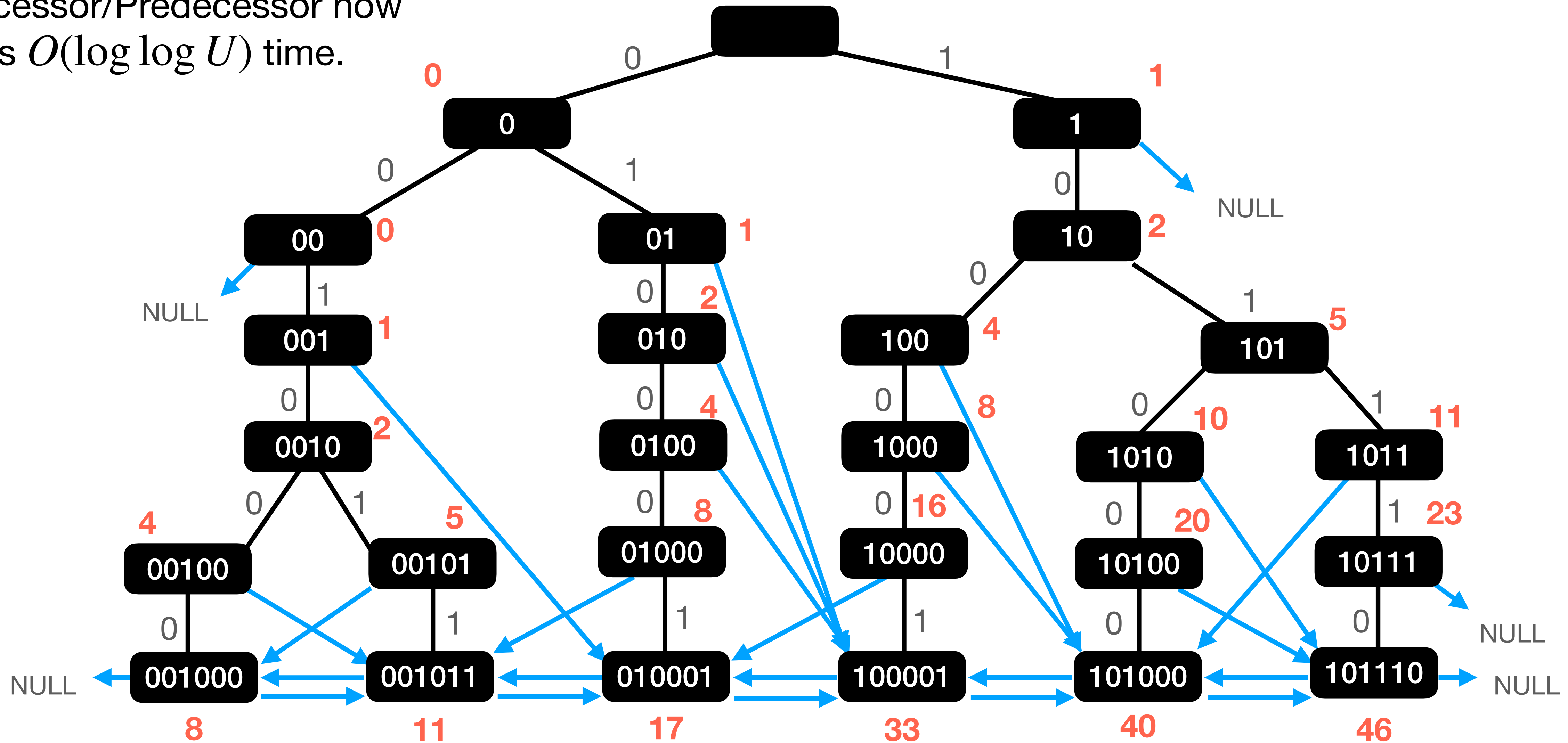


# Skip pointers

- Let  $v$  be a node at level  $i$ , with **one child**.
  - \_ If the child is labelled with **0**:  $v$  skips to the leaf  $\text{Successor}\left(\left[[v]_2.1.0^{\log_2 U-i-1}\right]_{10}\right)$ .
  - \_ If the child is labelled with **1**:  $v$  skips to the leaf  $\text{Predecessor}\left(\left[[v]_2.0.0^{\log_2 U-i-1}\right]_{10}\right)$ .
- Also each leaf has a pointer to the prev/next leaf.

# The *x*-fast trie

- Successor/Predecessor now takes  $O(\log \log U)$  time.

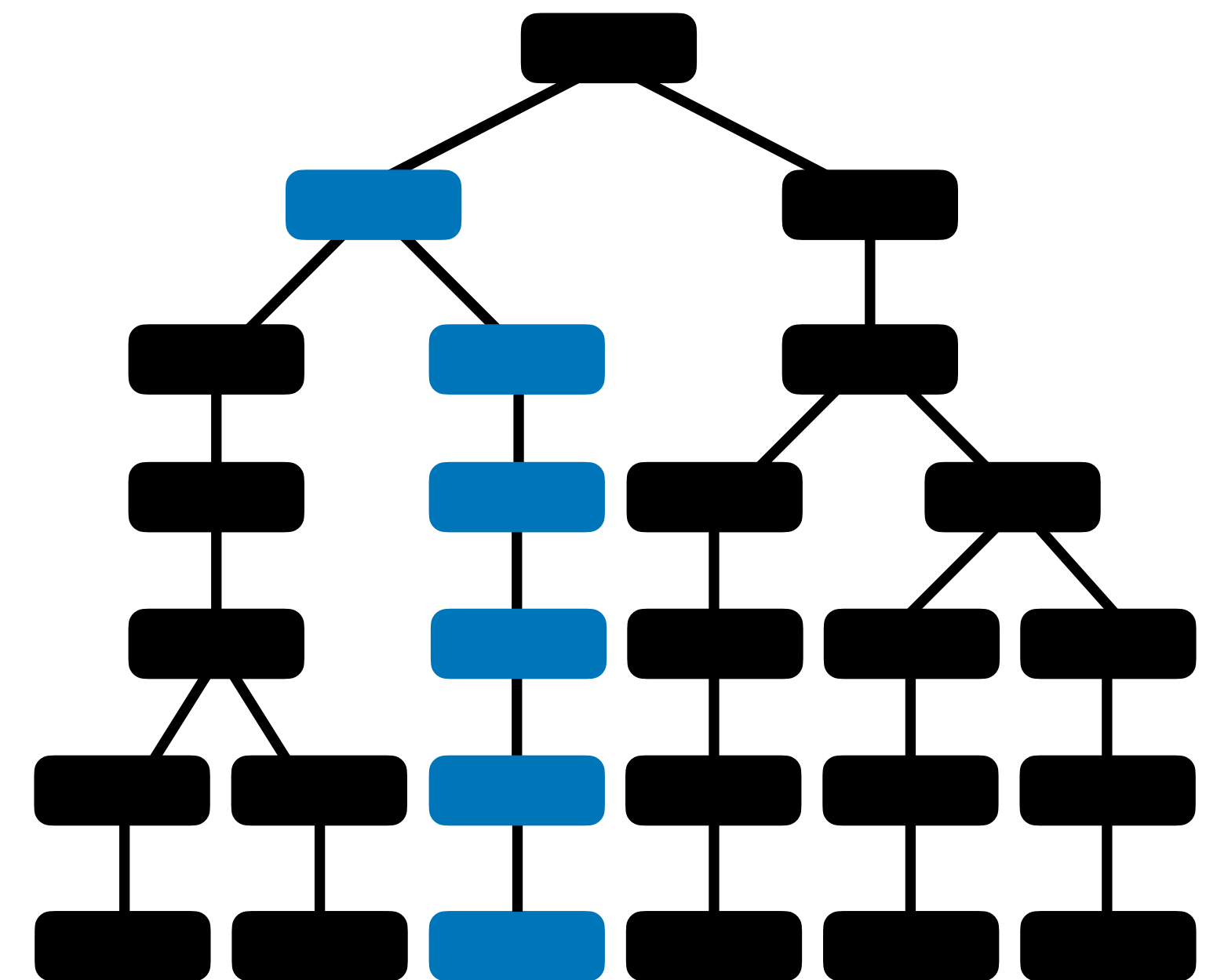


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- Min/Max in  $O(1)$  by caching these values.
- Member in  $O(1)$ .
- Predecessor/Successor in  $O(\log \log U)$ .
- Also,  $\text{Subset}(\ell, r) := \{x \in S \mid \ell < x < r\}$  can be returned in time  $O(\log \log U + |\text{Subset}(\ell, r)|)$ : scan the linked-list from  $\text{Successor}(\ell)$  to  $\text{Predecessor}(r)$ . (Range query.)
- **Q.** Space?

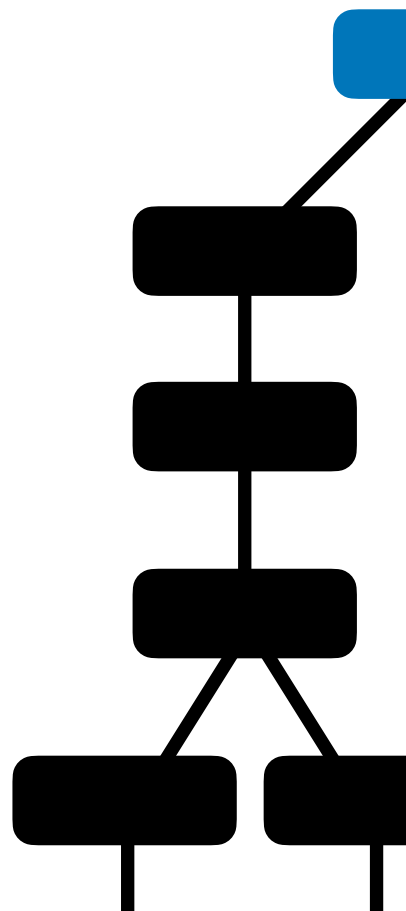
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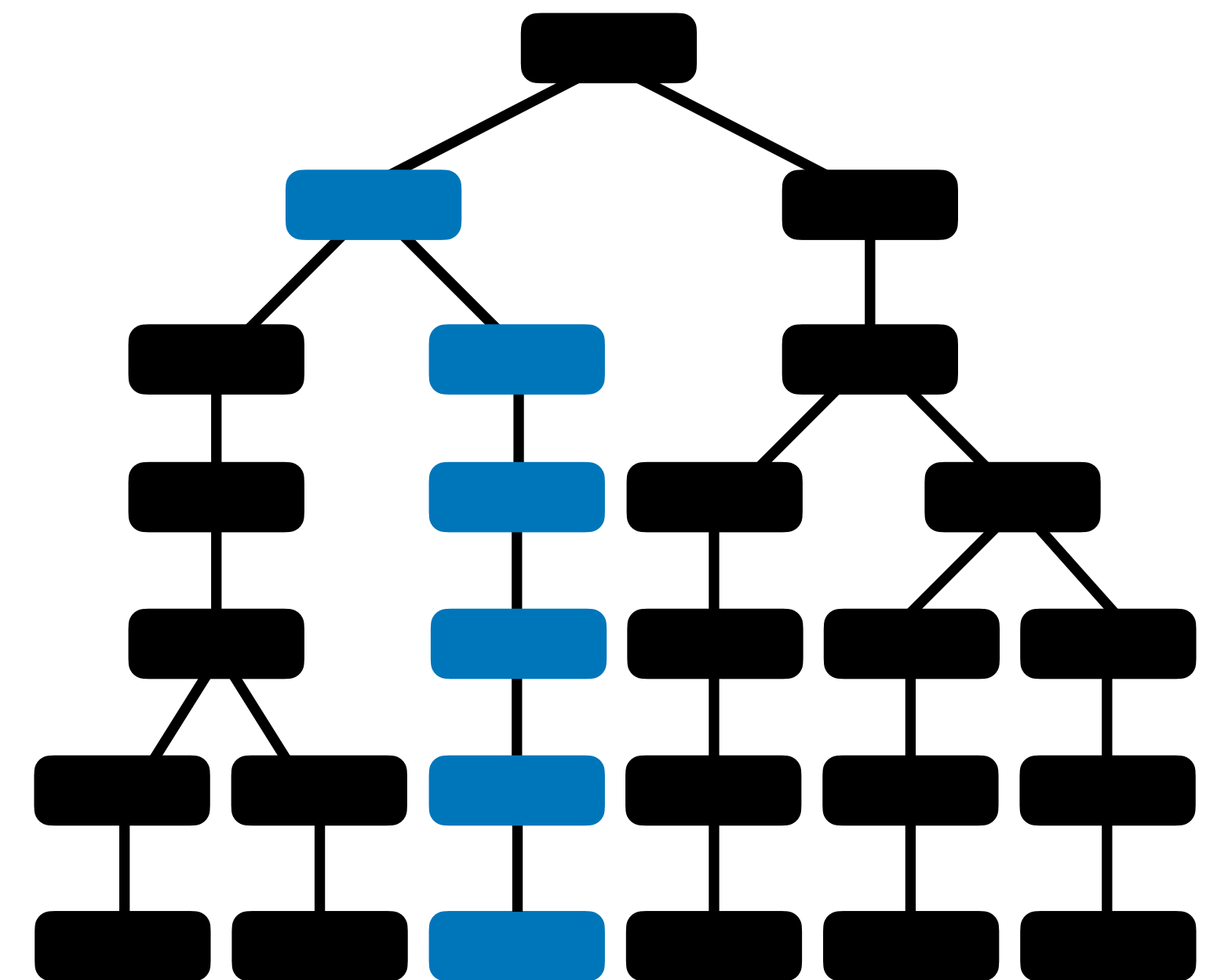
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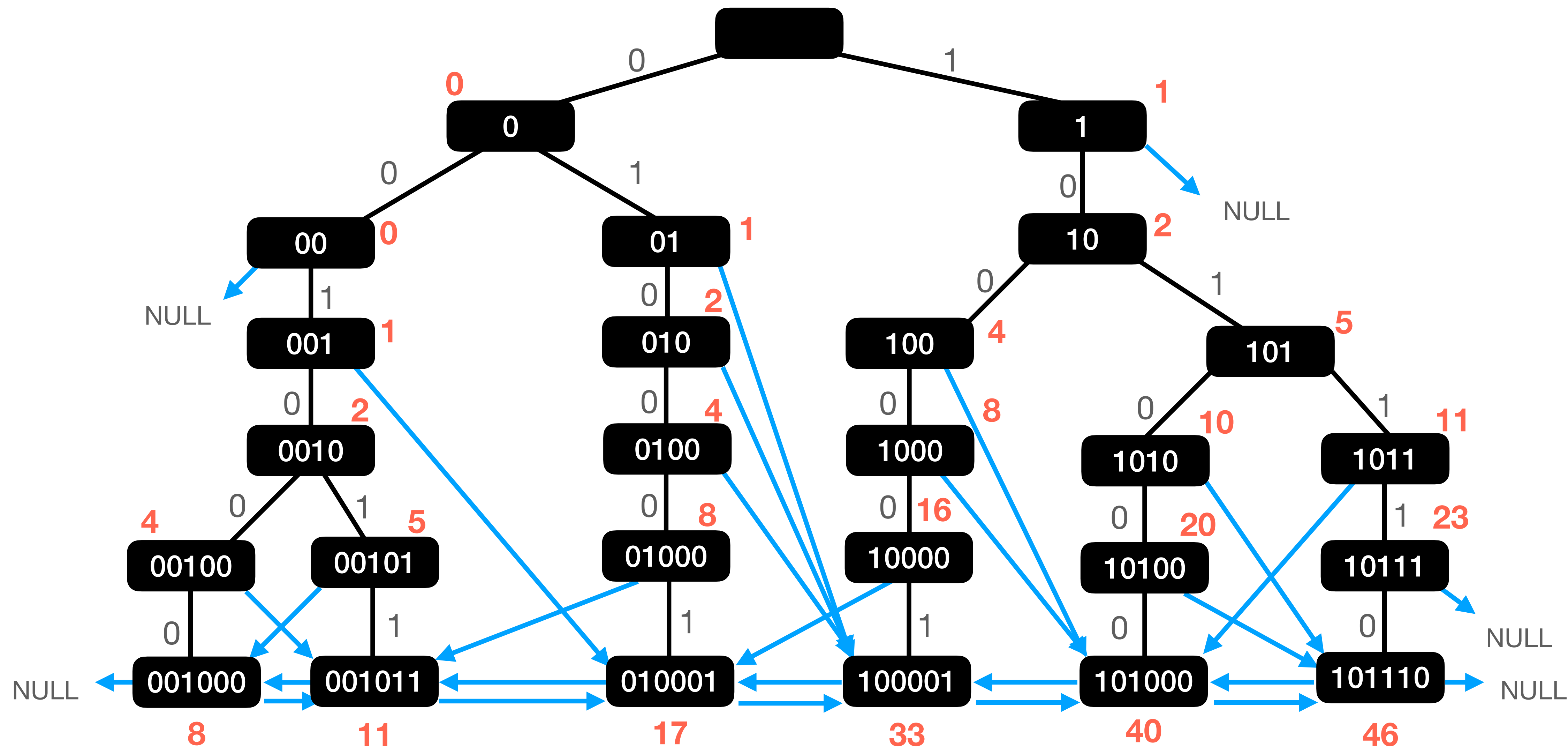
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  - **Q.** Insert/Delete?
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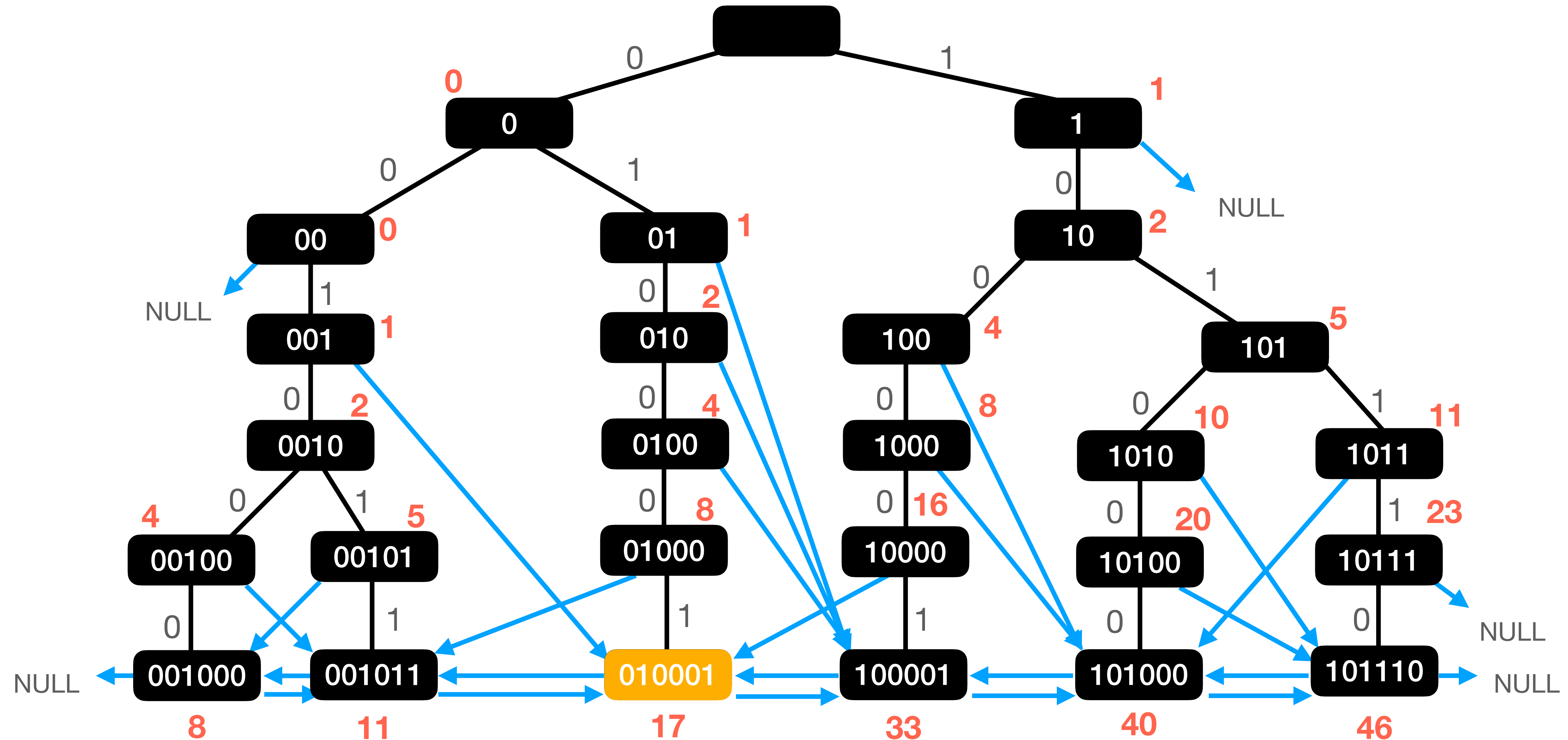
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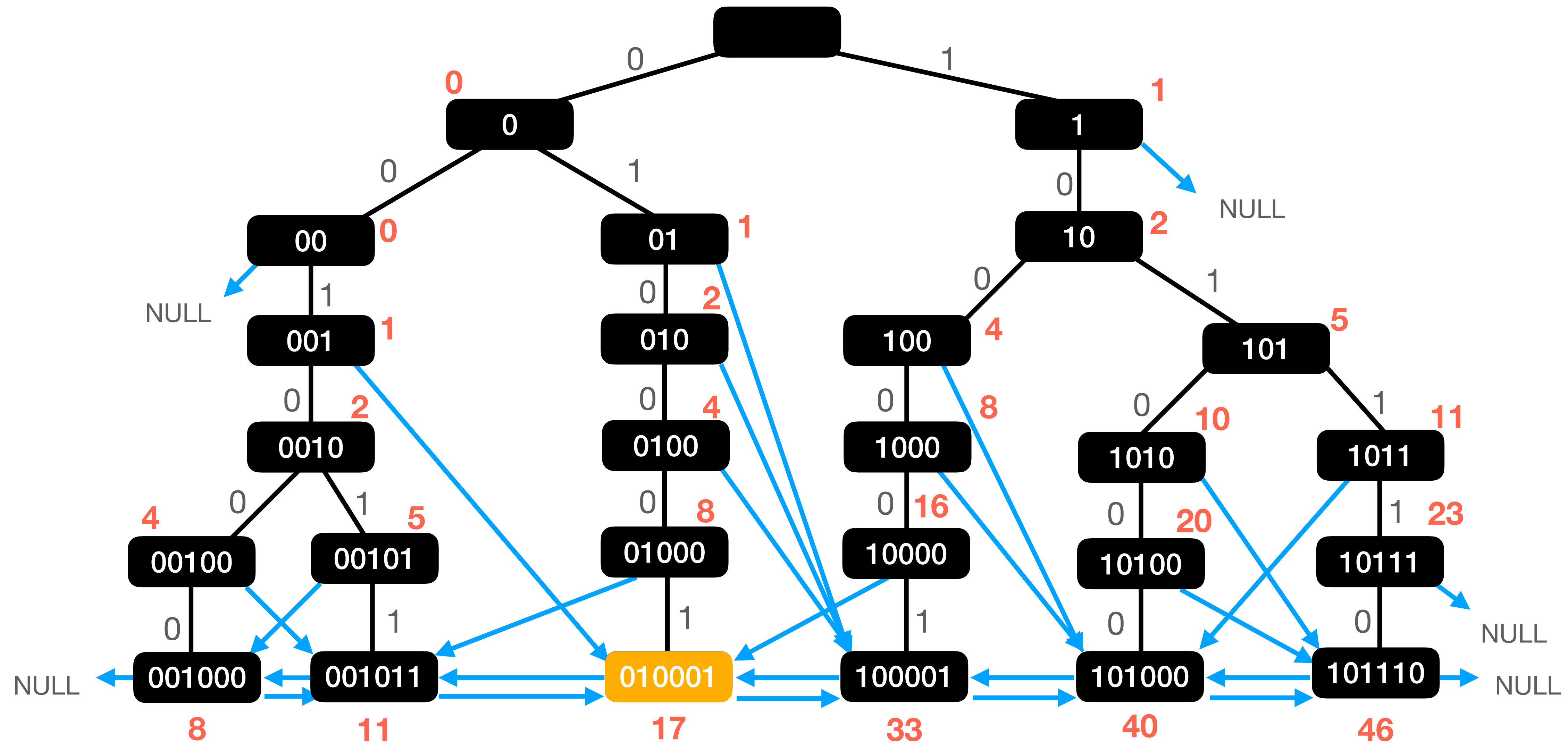
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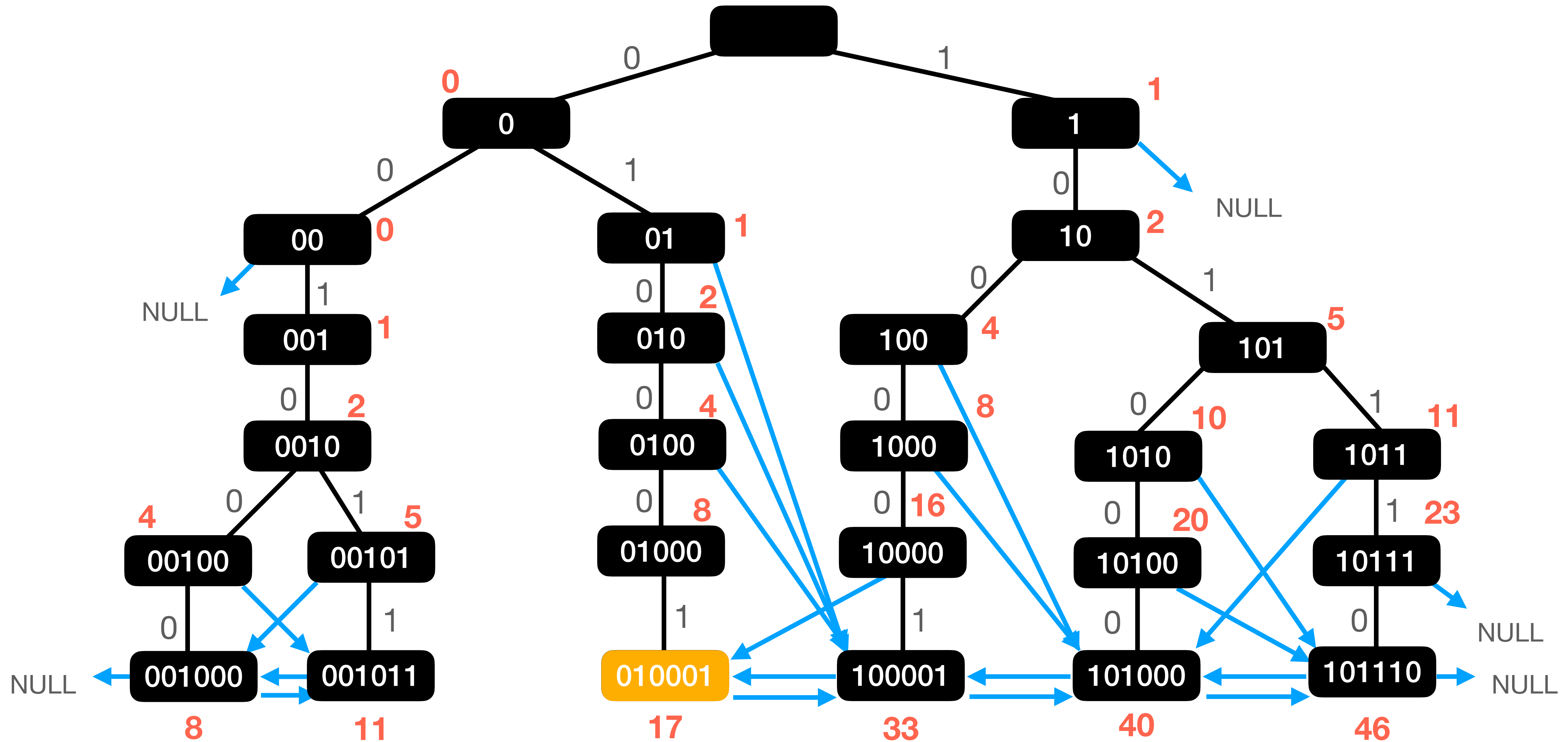
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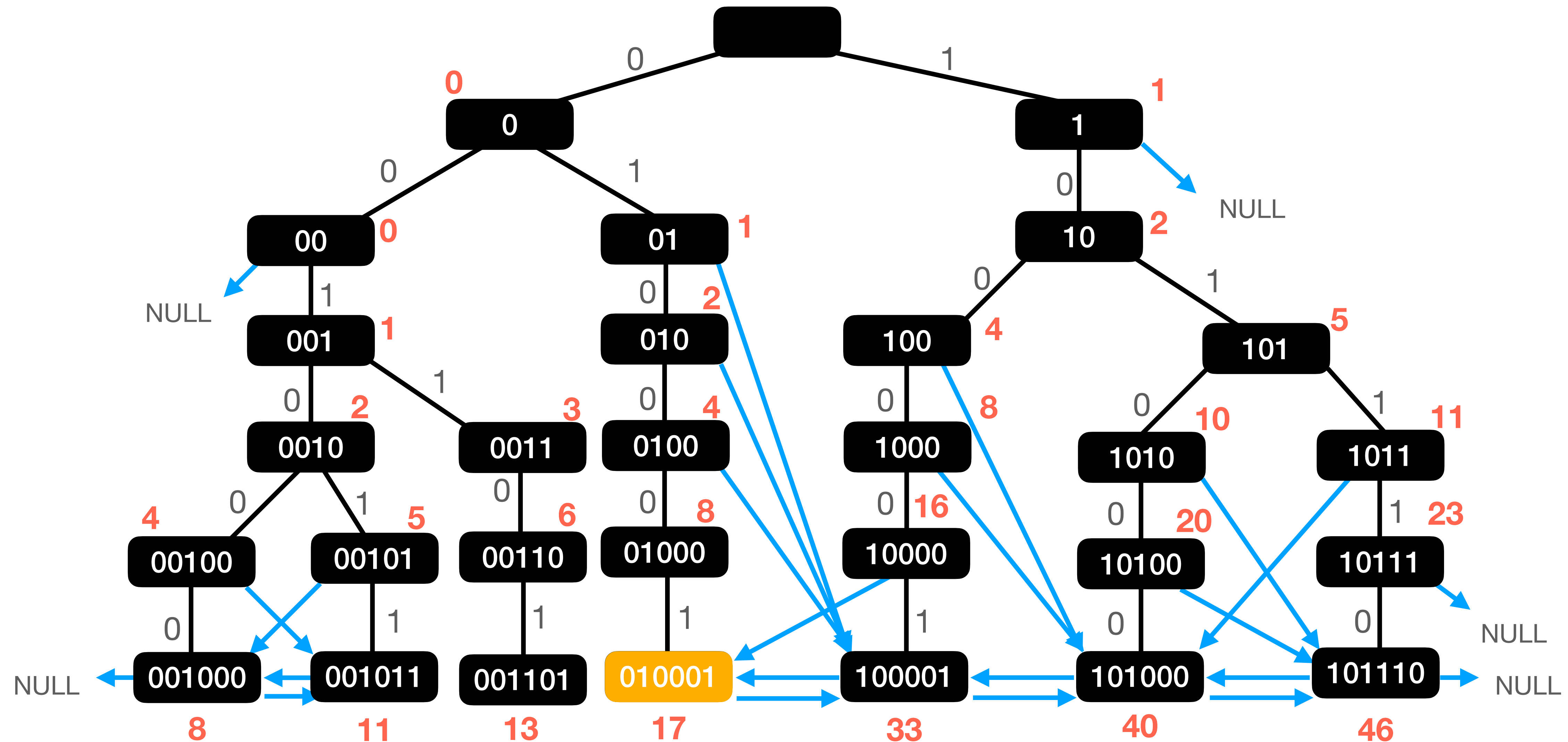
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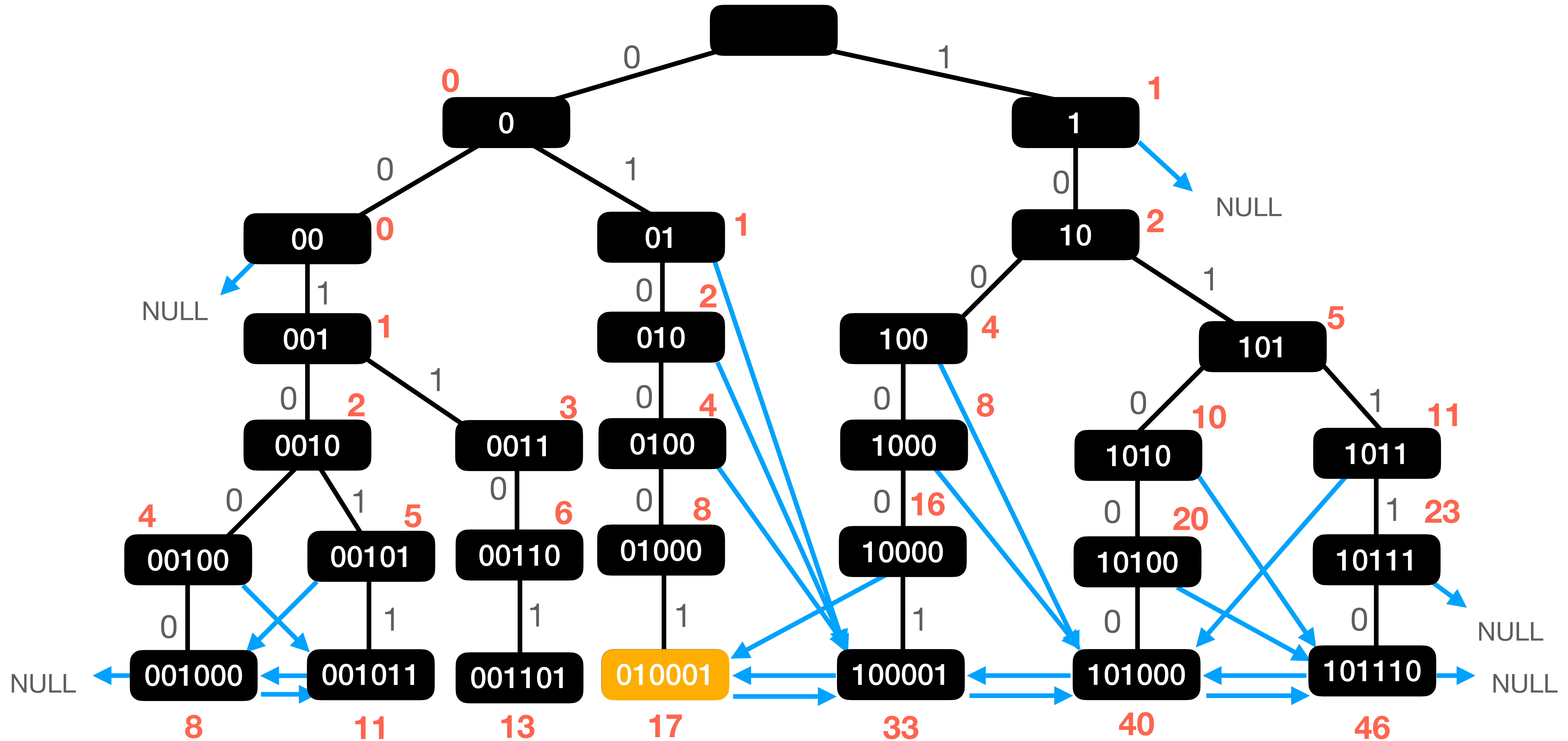
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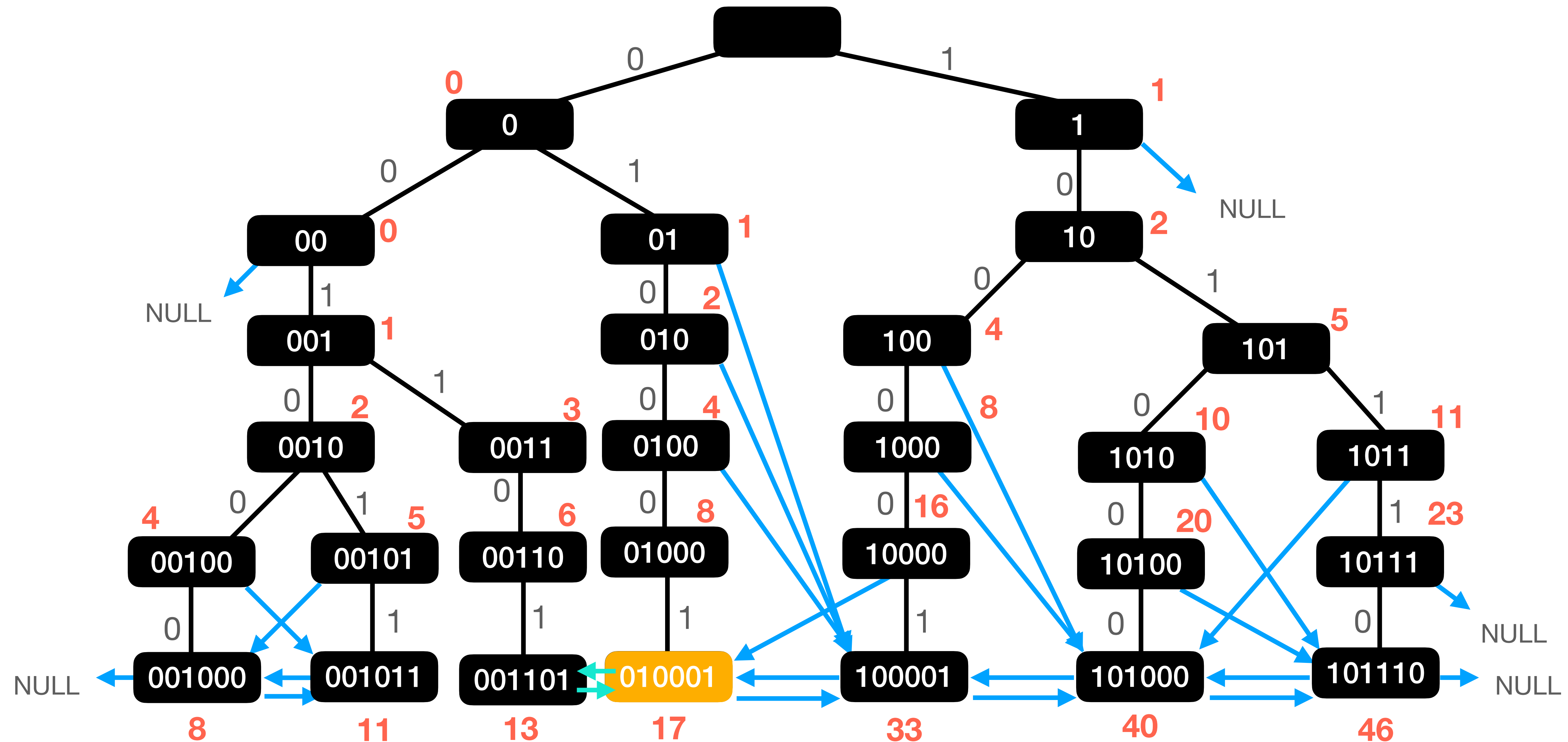
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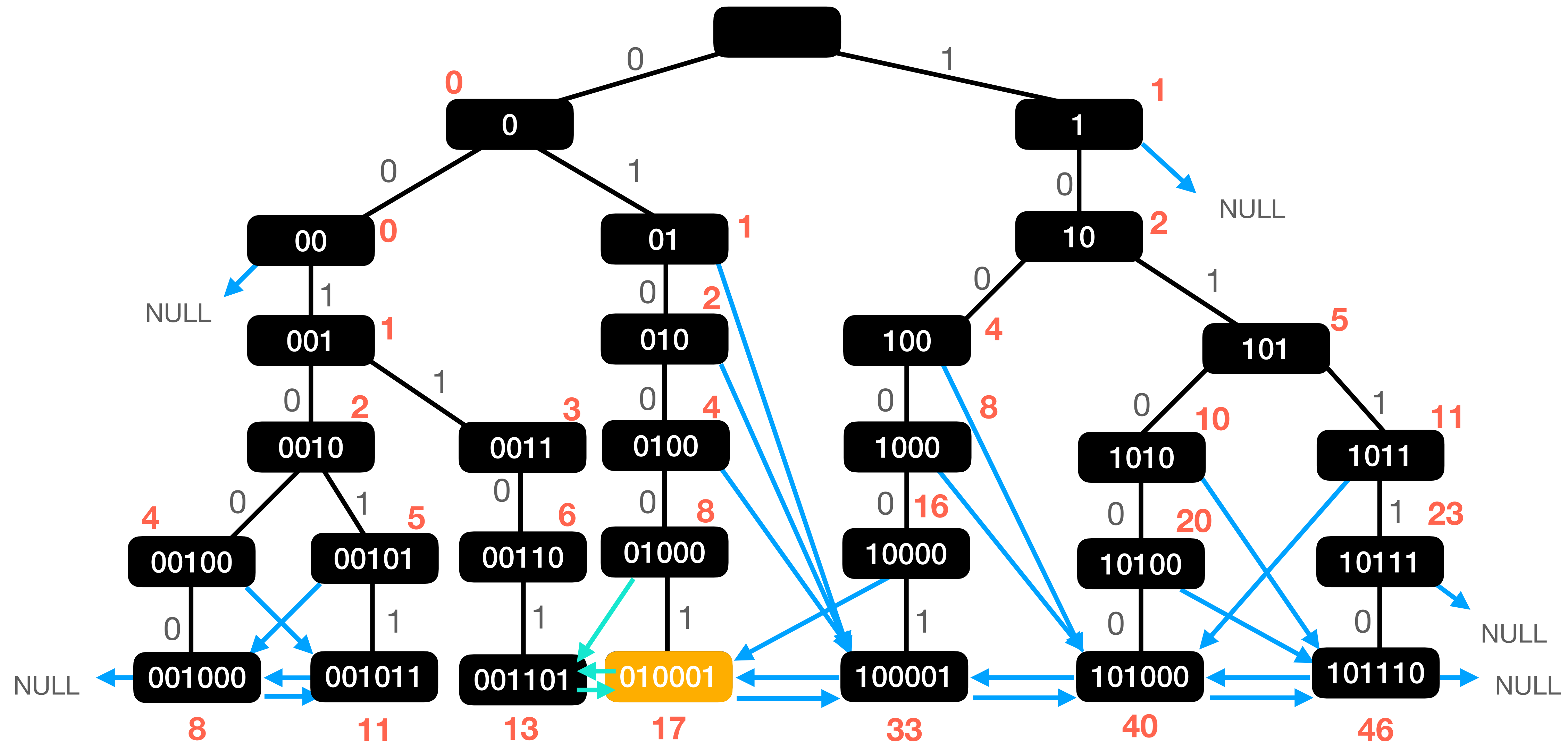
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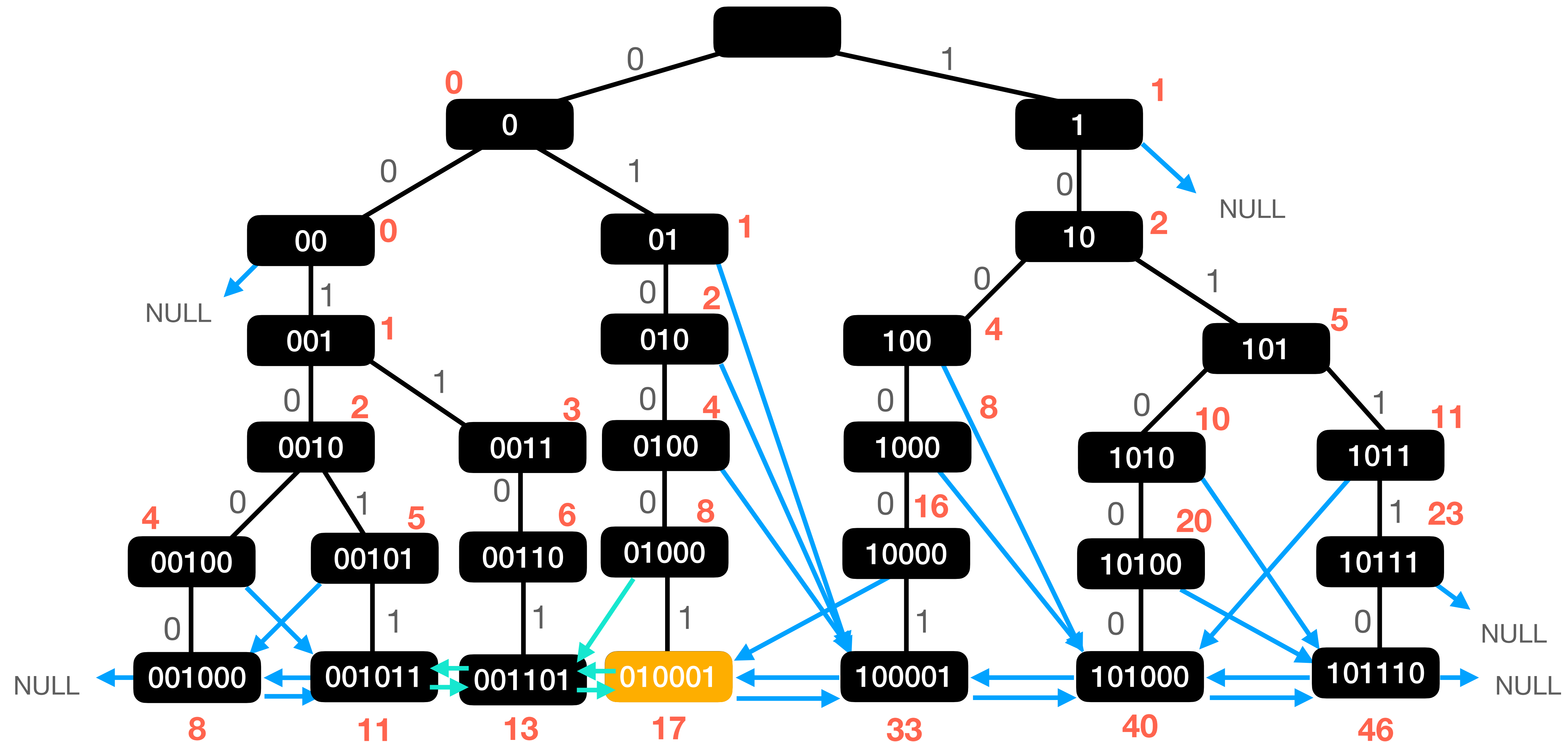
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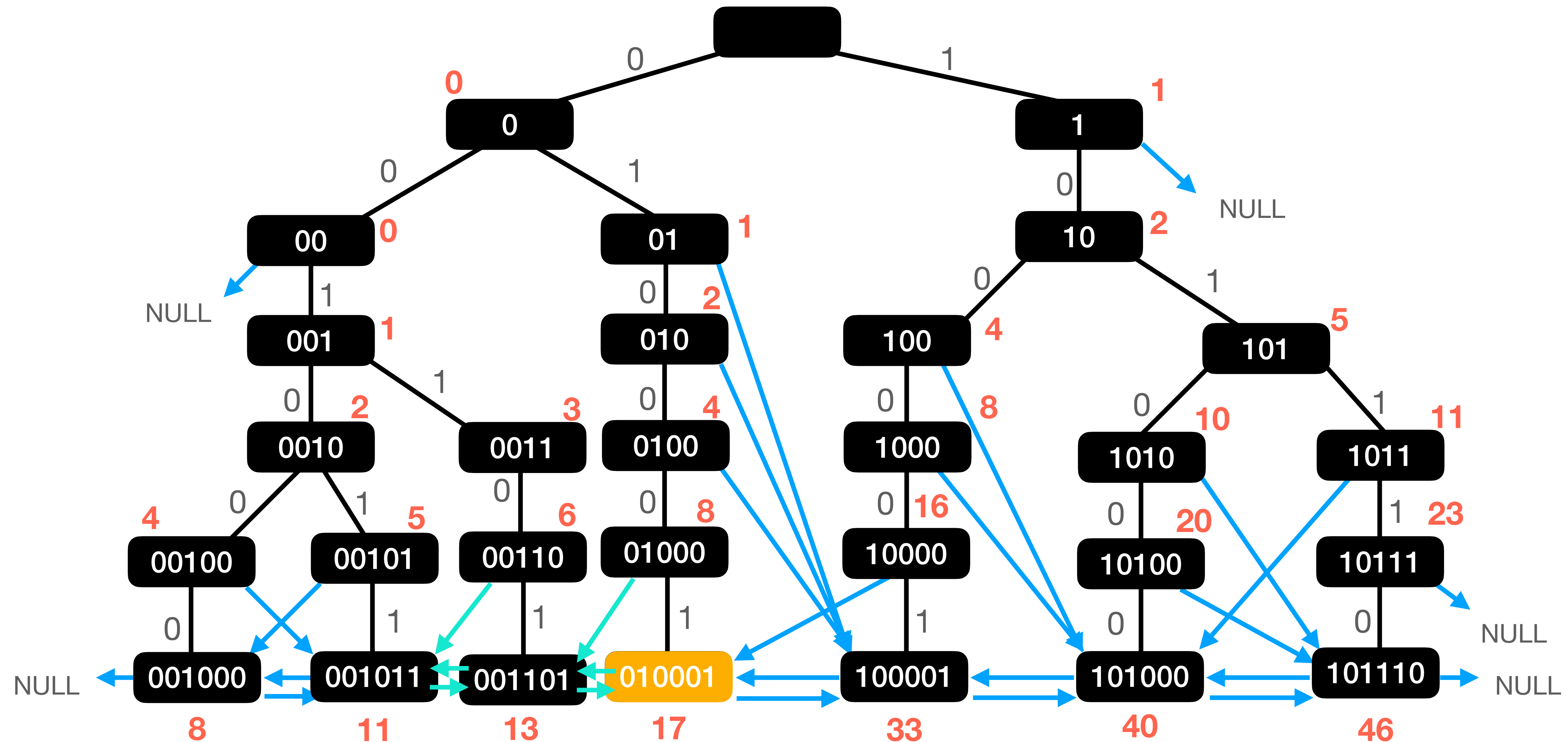
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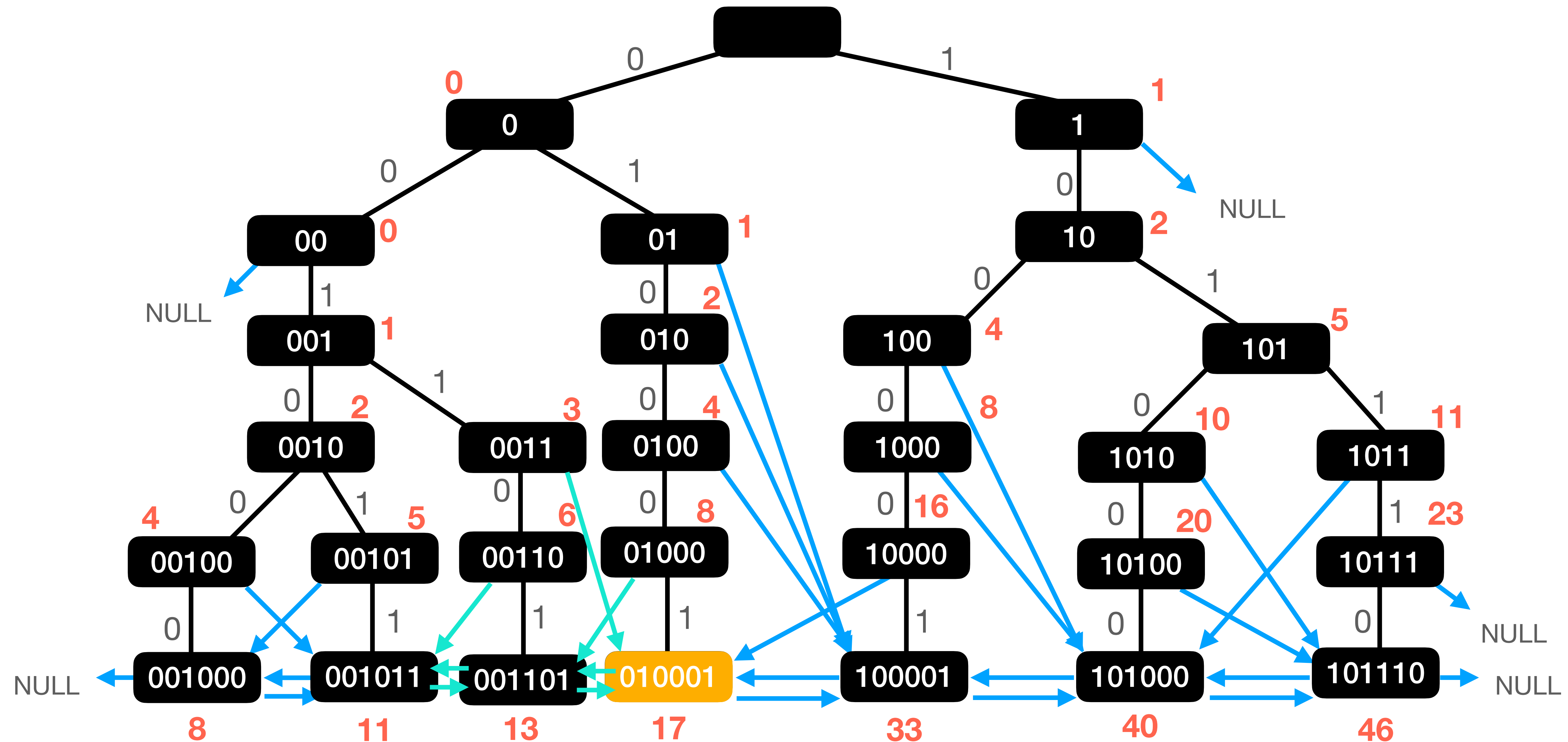
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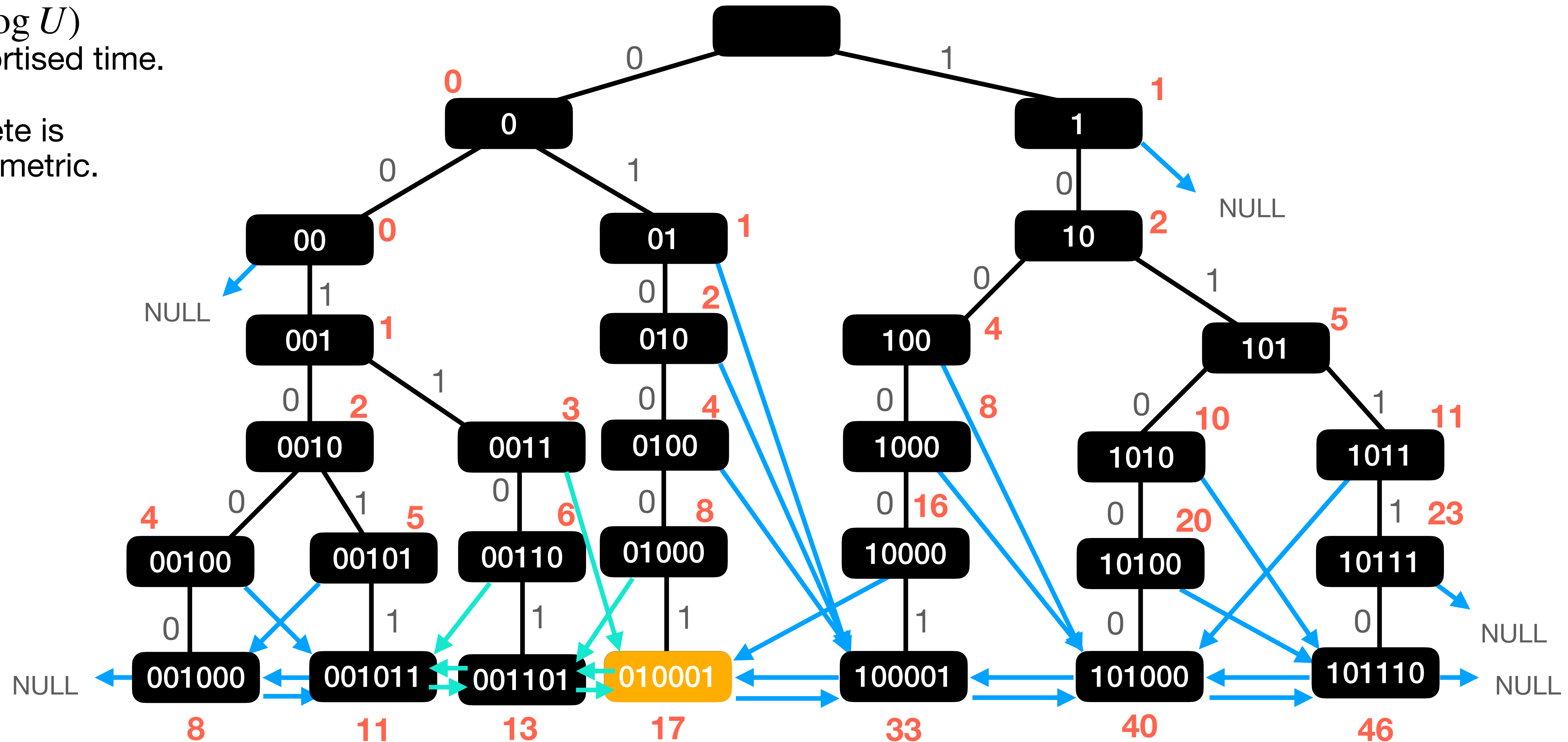
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- $O(\log U)$  amortised time.
- Delete is symmetric.



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- Member:  $O(1)$ .
- Predecessor/Successor in  $O(\log \log U)$ .
- $\text{Subset}(\ell, r)$  in  $O(\log \log U + |\text{Subset}(\ell, r)|)$ .
- Insert/Delete in  $O(\log U)$ .
- Space  $O(n \log U)$ .

# The *x*-fast trie

- Min/Max:  $O(1)$ .
- Member:  $O(1)$ .
- Predecessor/Successor in  $O(\log \log U)$ .
- $\text{Subset}(\ell, r)$  in  $O(\log \log U + |\text{Subset}(\ell, r)|)$ .

- Insert/Delete in  $O(\log U)$ .

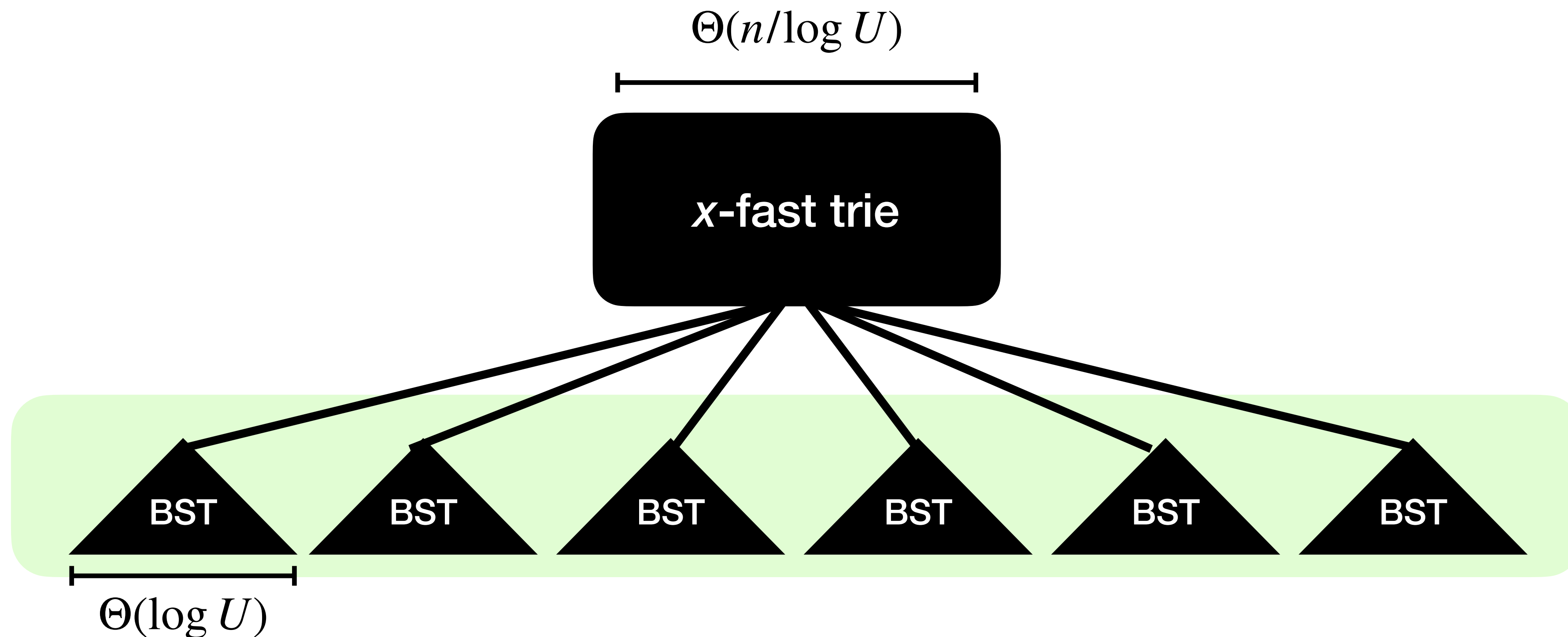
- Space  $O(n \log U)$ .

← This is what currently looks unsatisfactory...



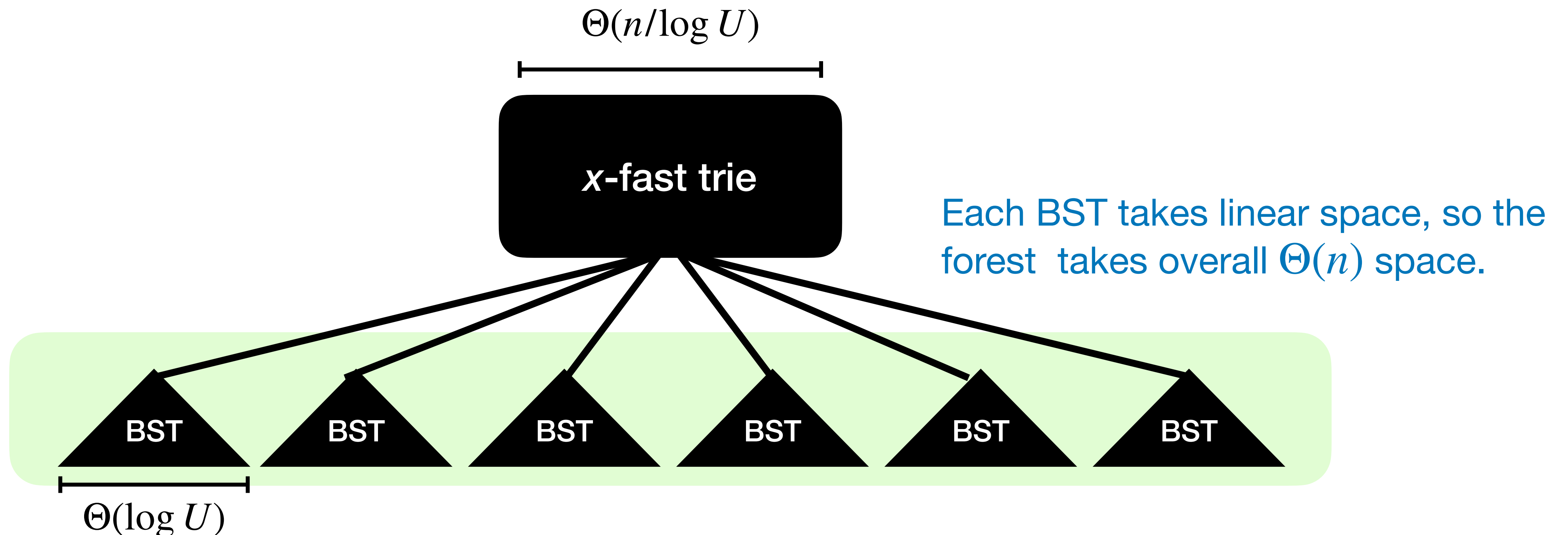
# The *y*-fast trie

- **Idea.** Chunking again! Split the set of keys into (mini) chunks of size  $\Theta(\log U)$  and store each chunk in a balanced BST. Choose one representative per chunk. The set of  $\Theta(n/\log U)$  representatives is stored with a *x*-fast trie.
- Use the *x*-fast trie as a *router* to identify the proper BST.



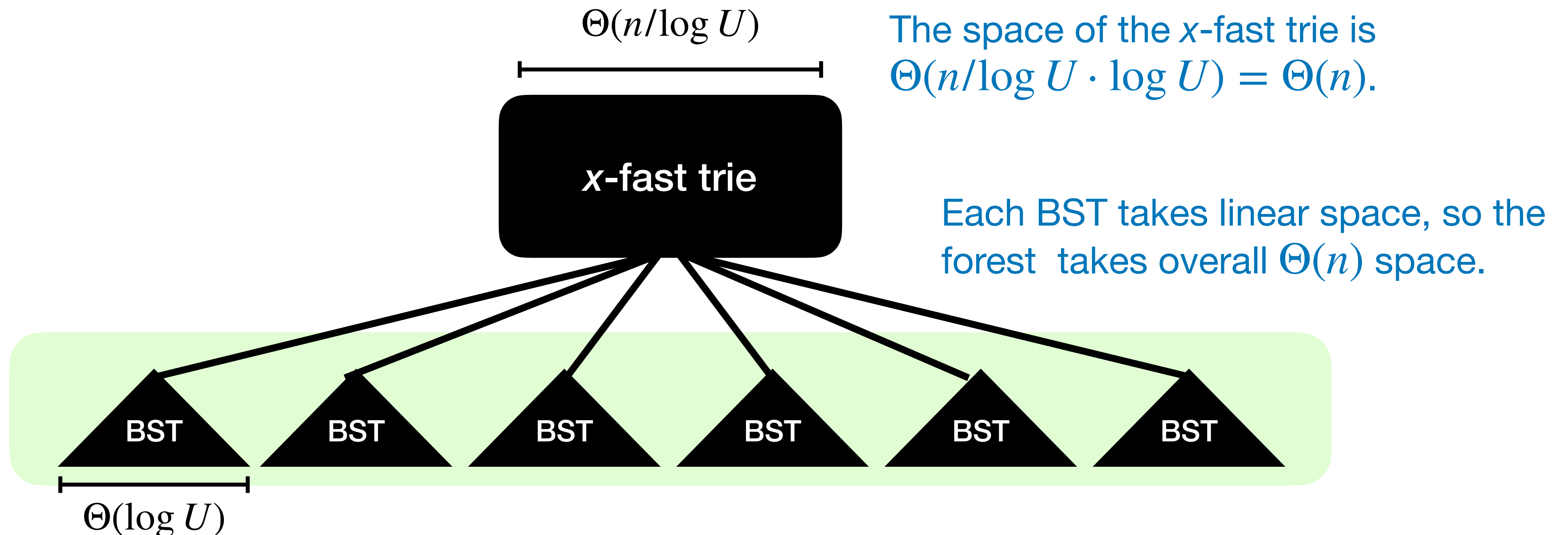
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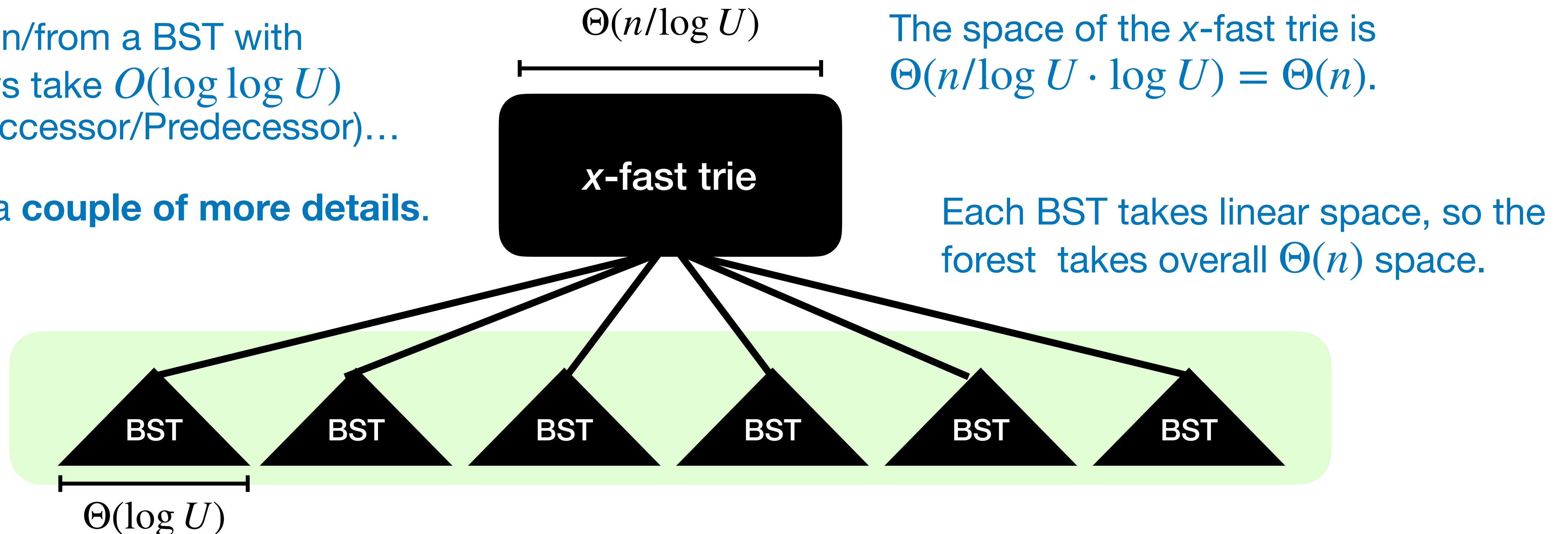


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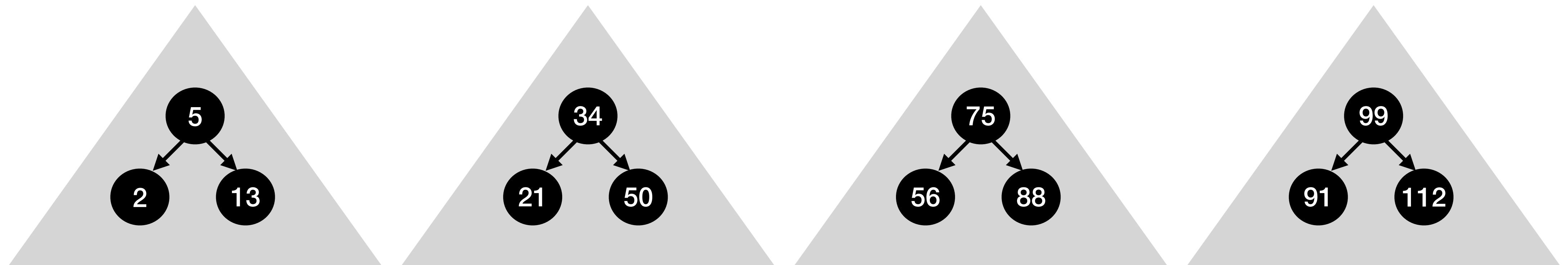
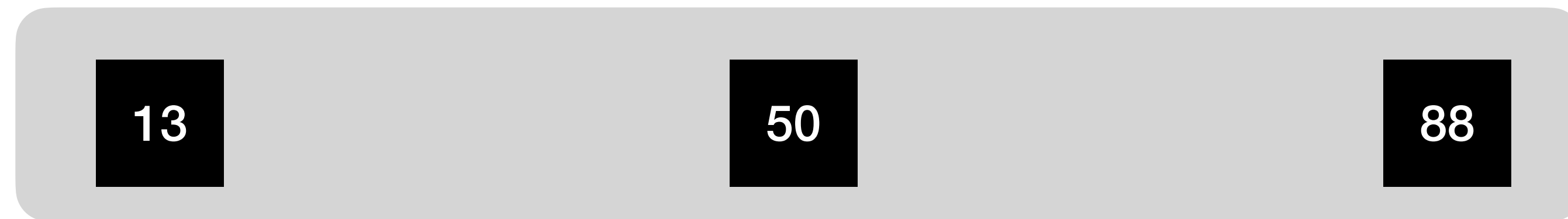
Insert/Delete in/from a BST with  $\Theta(\log U)$  keys take  $O(\log \log U)$  (as well as Successor/Predecessor)...

But we need a **couple of more details.**



# The *y*-fast trie — Successor and Predecessor

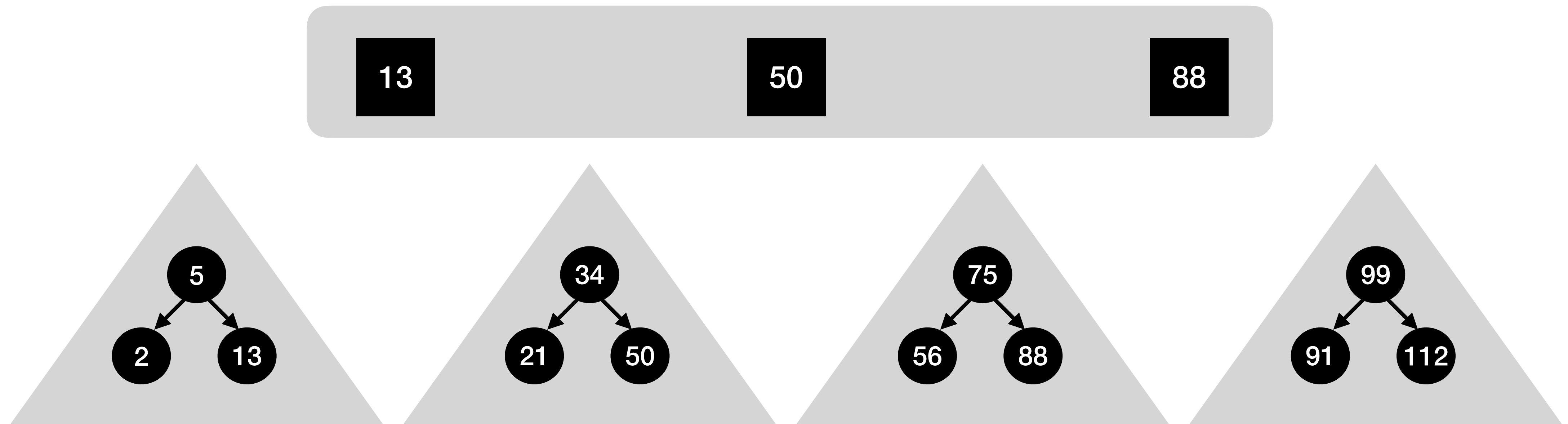
*x*-fast trie



# The *y*-fast trie — Successor and Predecessor

Successor(50)

*x*-fast trie

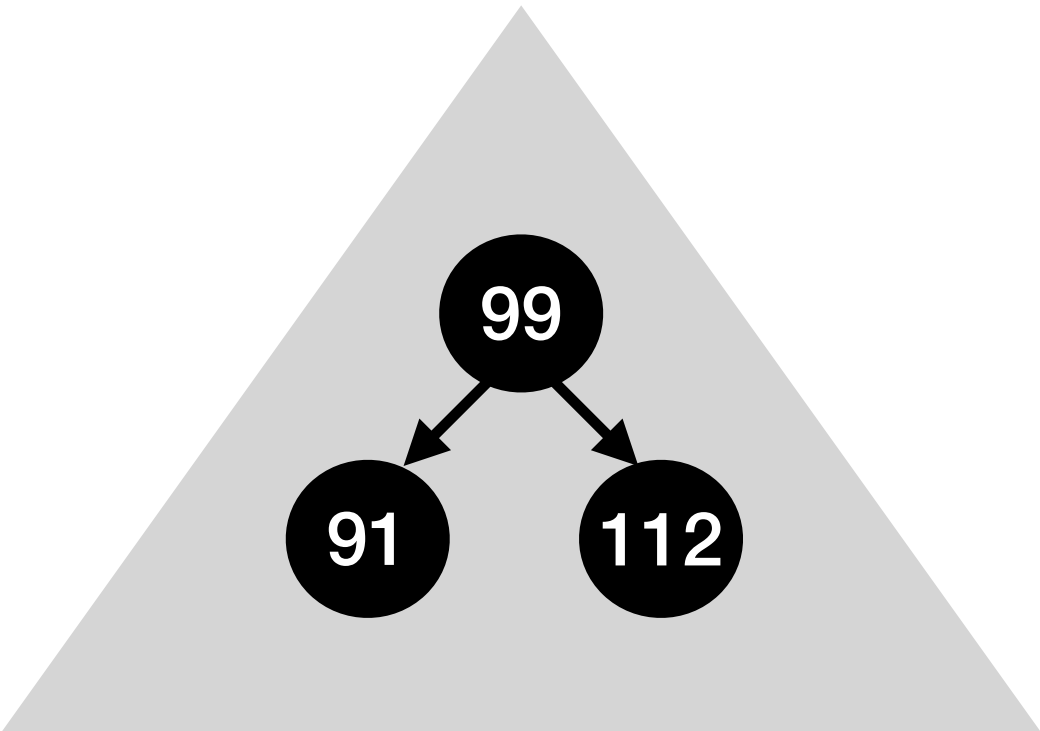
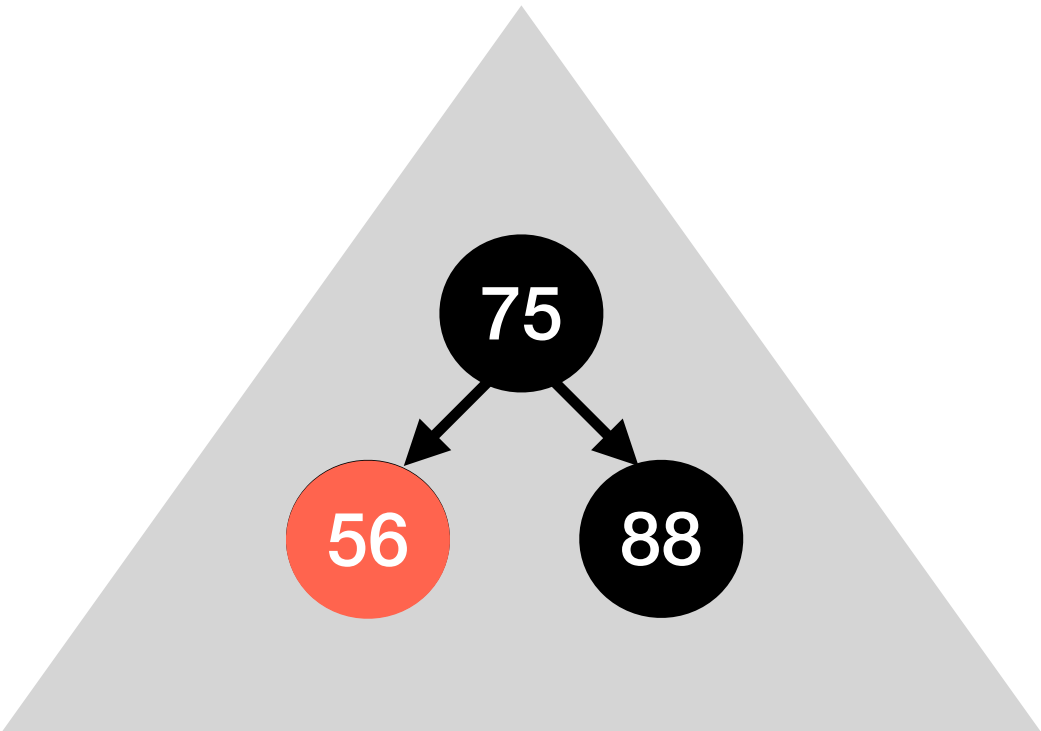
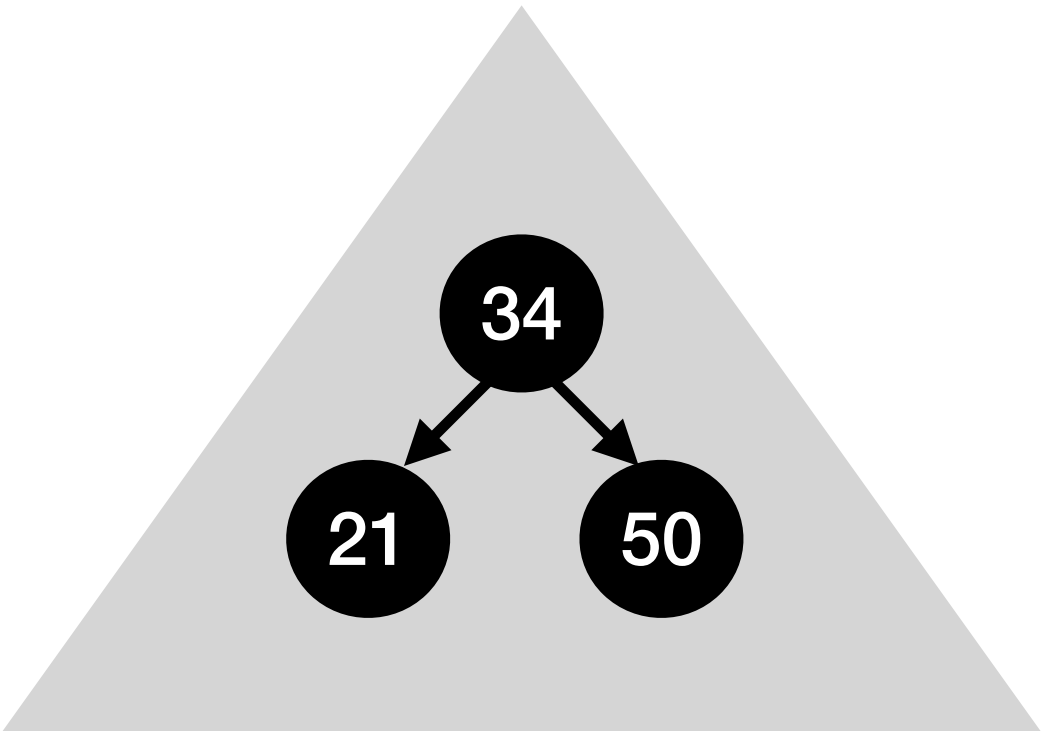
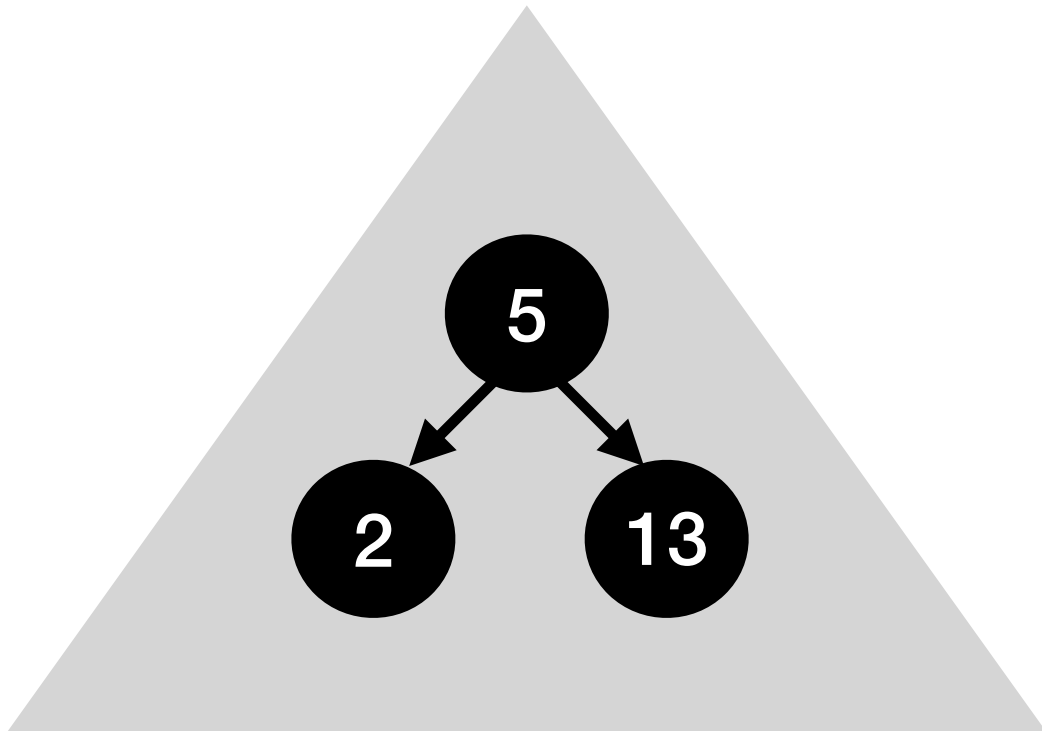
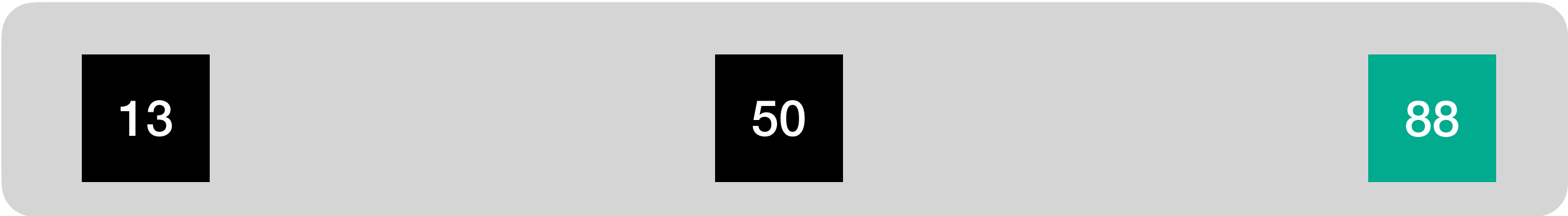




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Successor(50)

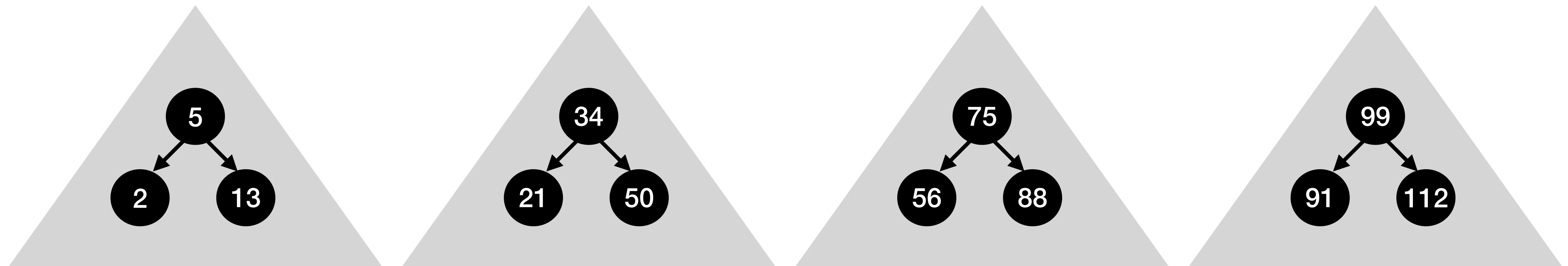
*x*-fast trie



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Successor(50)

*x*-fast trie

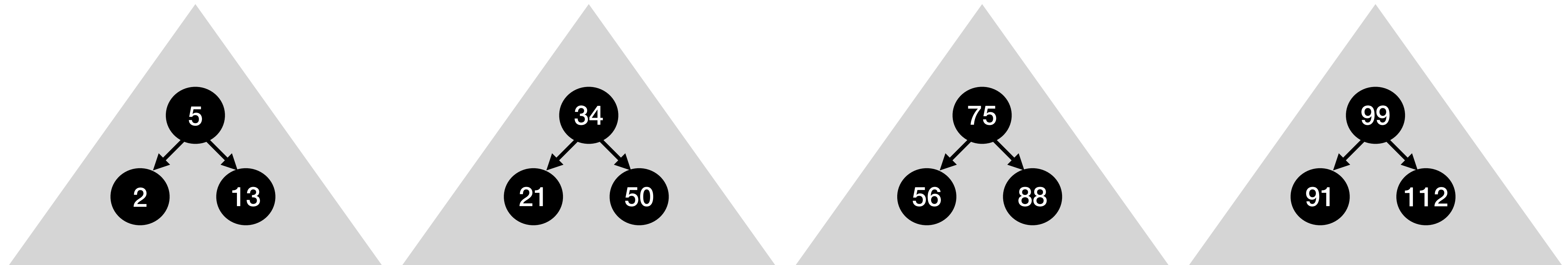
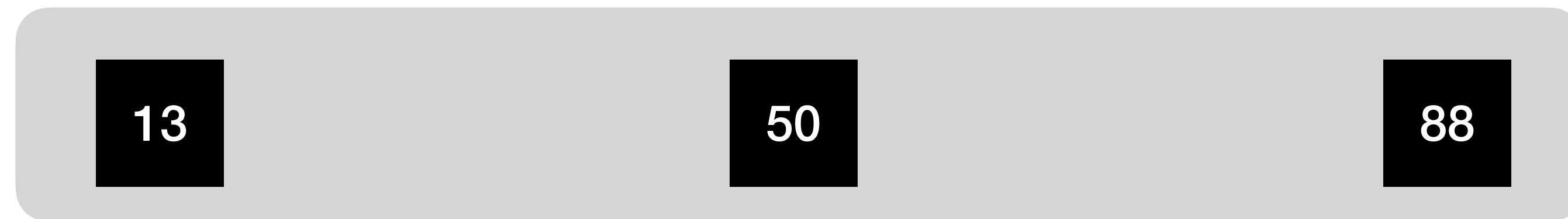


# The *y*-fast trie — Successor and Predecessor

Successor(50)

Successor(101)

*x*-fast trie

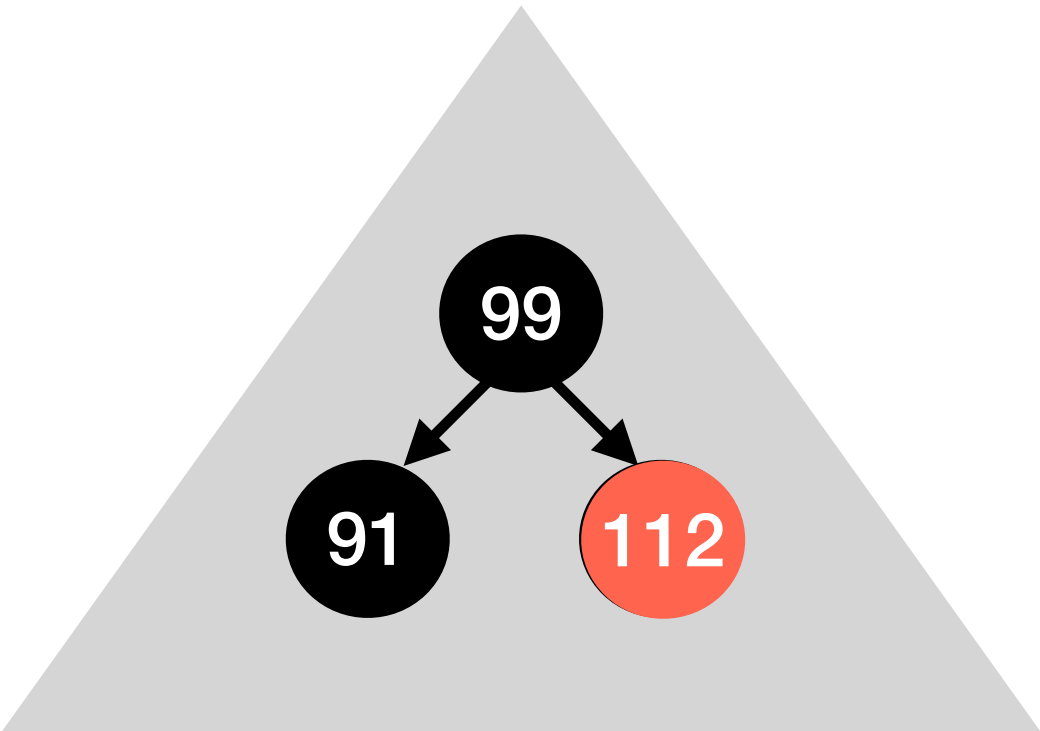
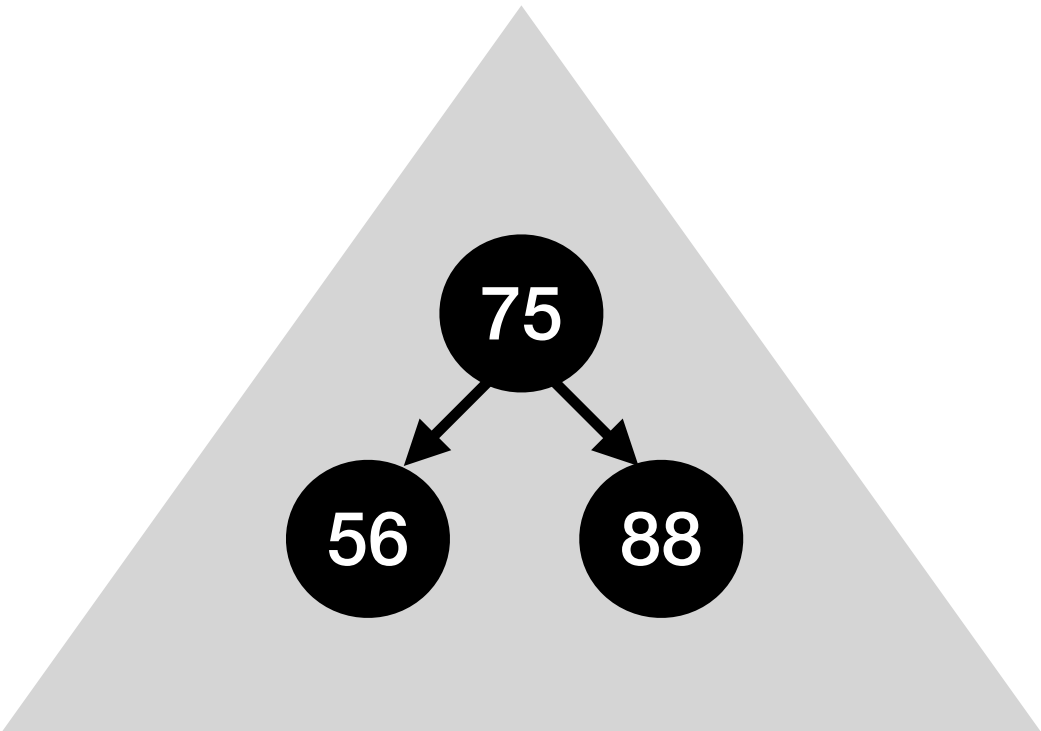
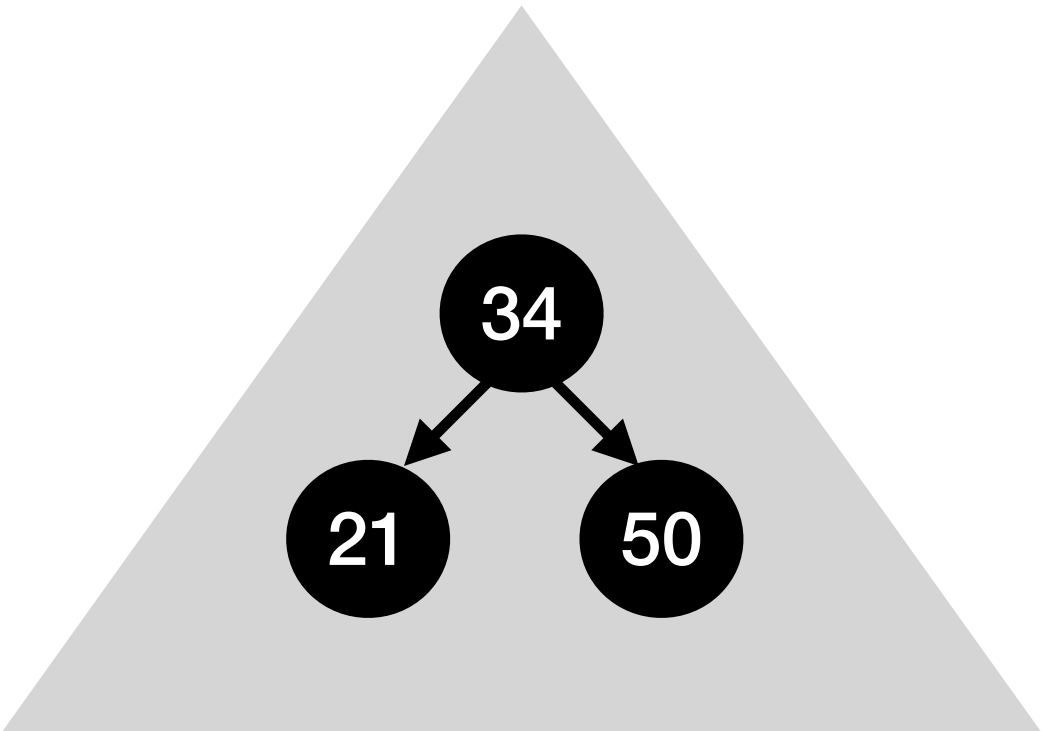
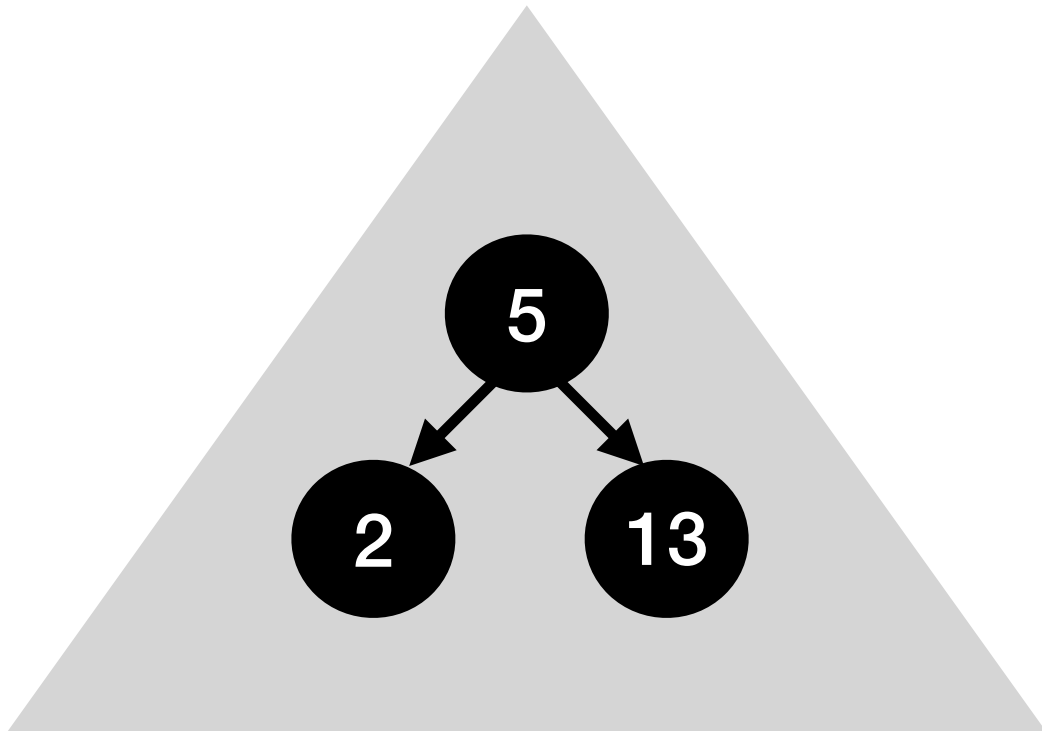


# The *y*-fast trie — Successor and Predecessor

Successor(50)

Successor(101)

*x*-fast trie

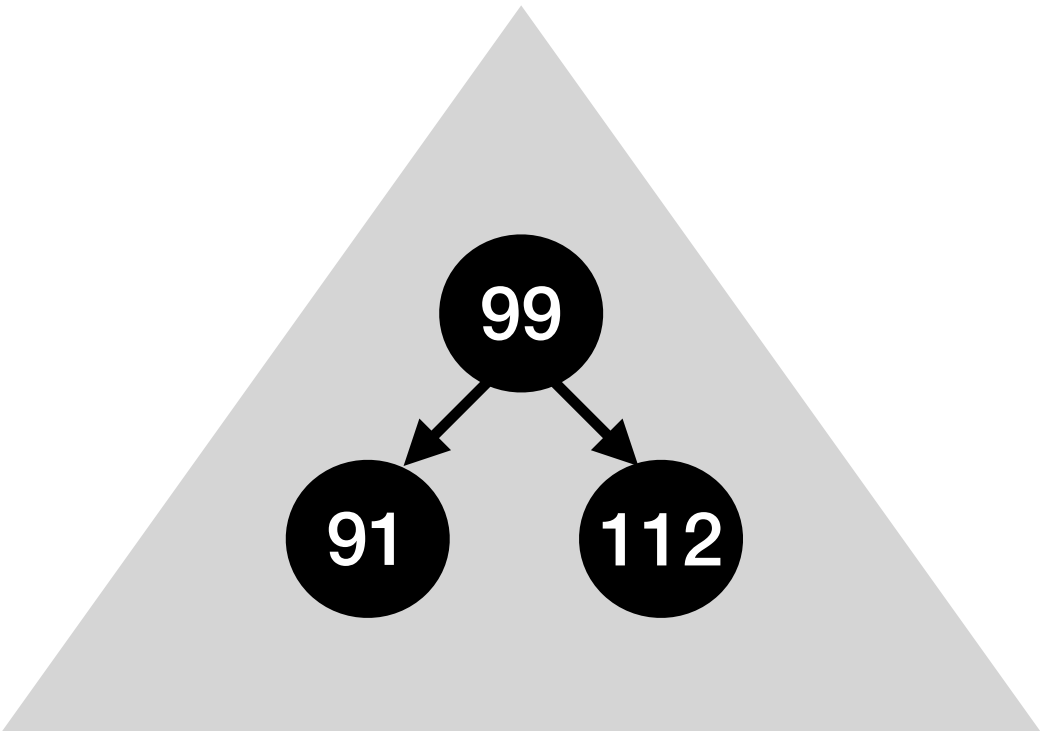
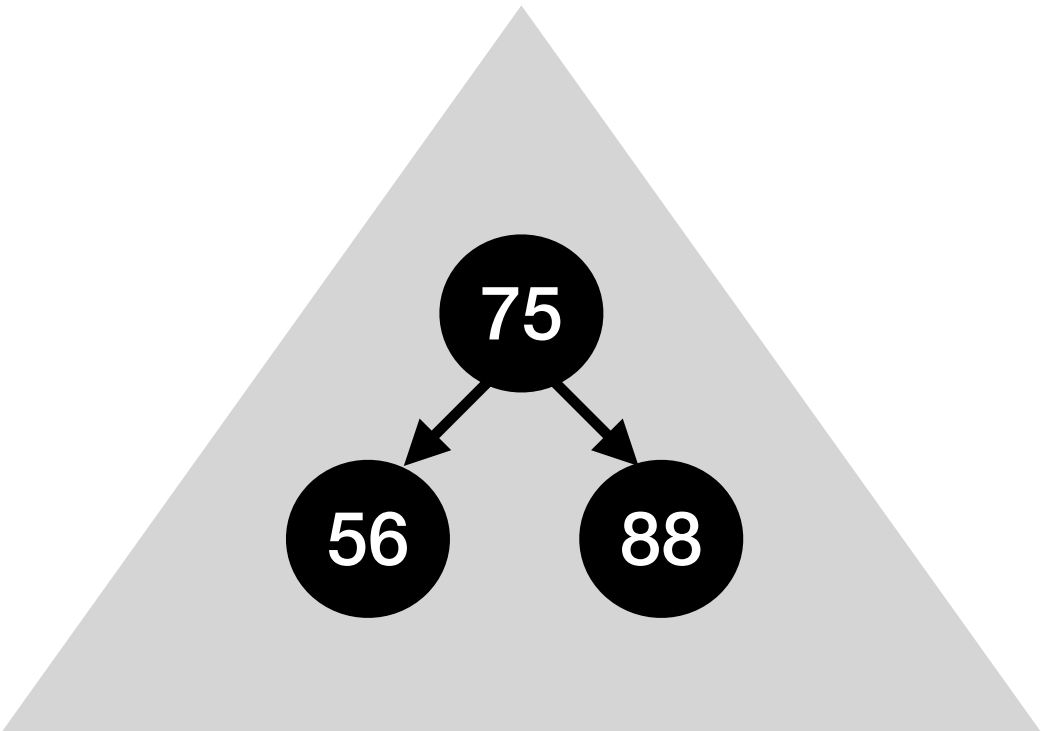
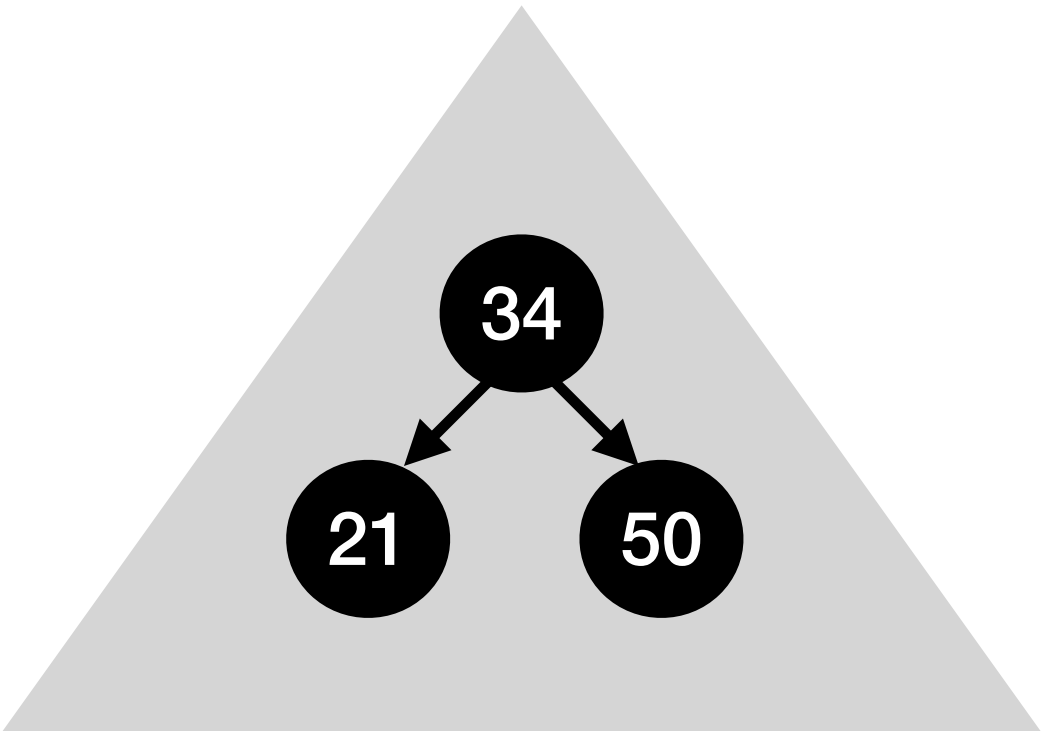
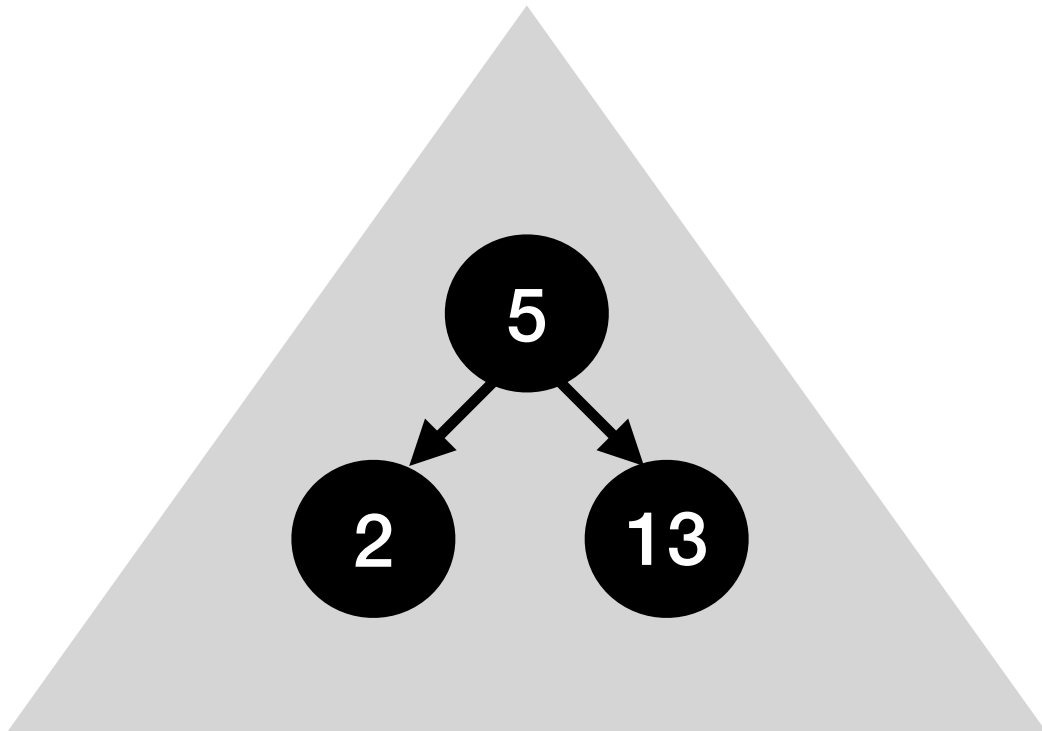
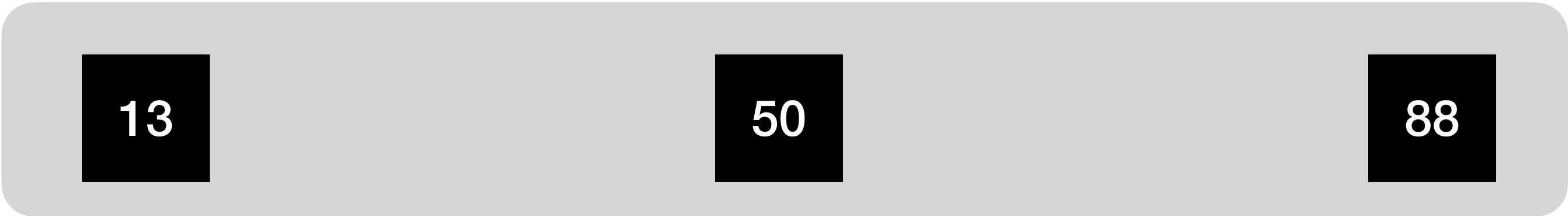


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Successor(50)

Successor(101)

*x*-fast trie



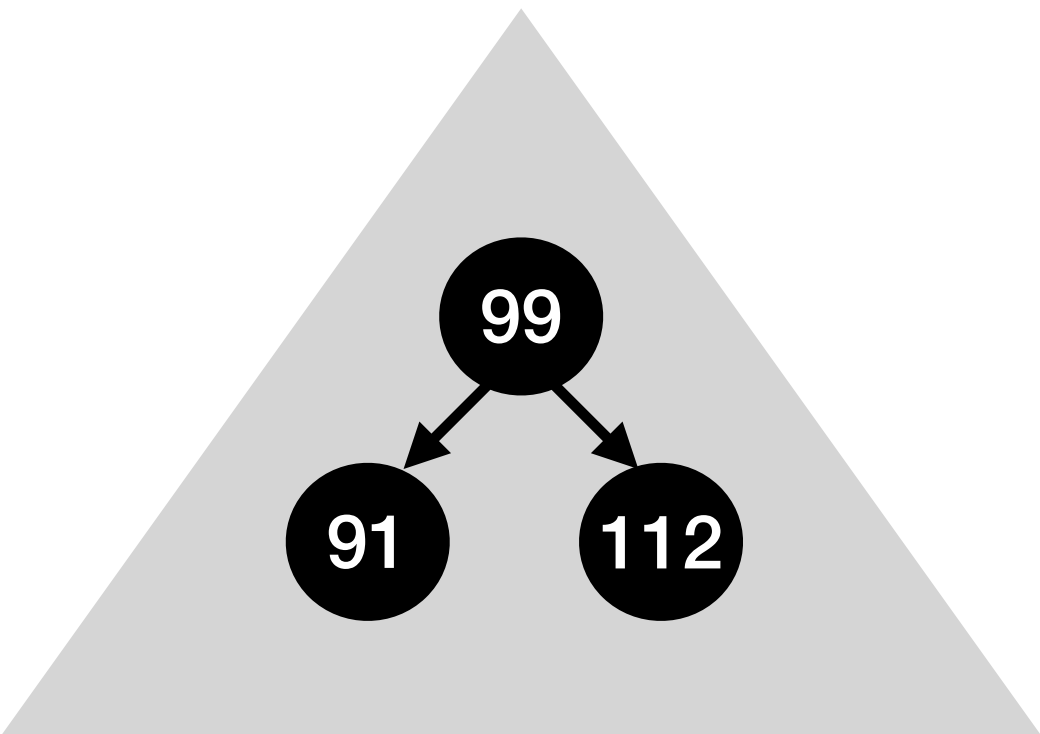
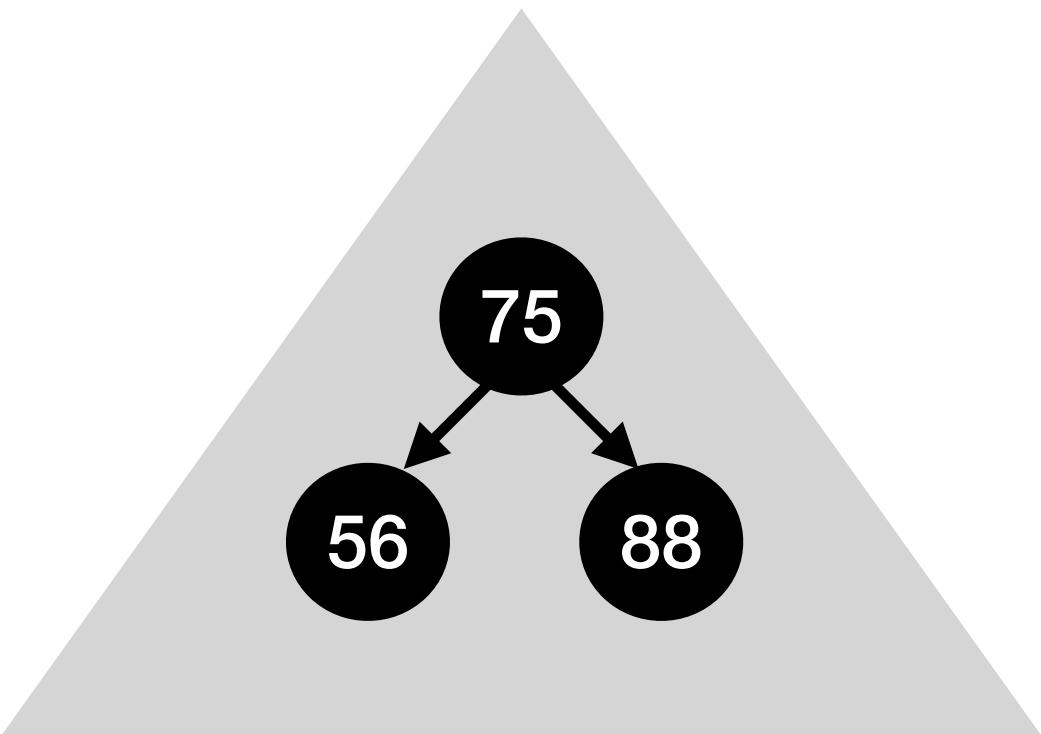
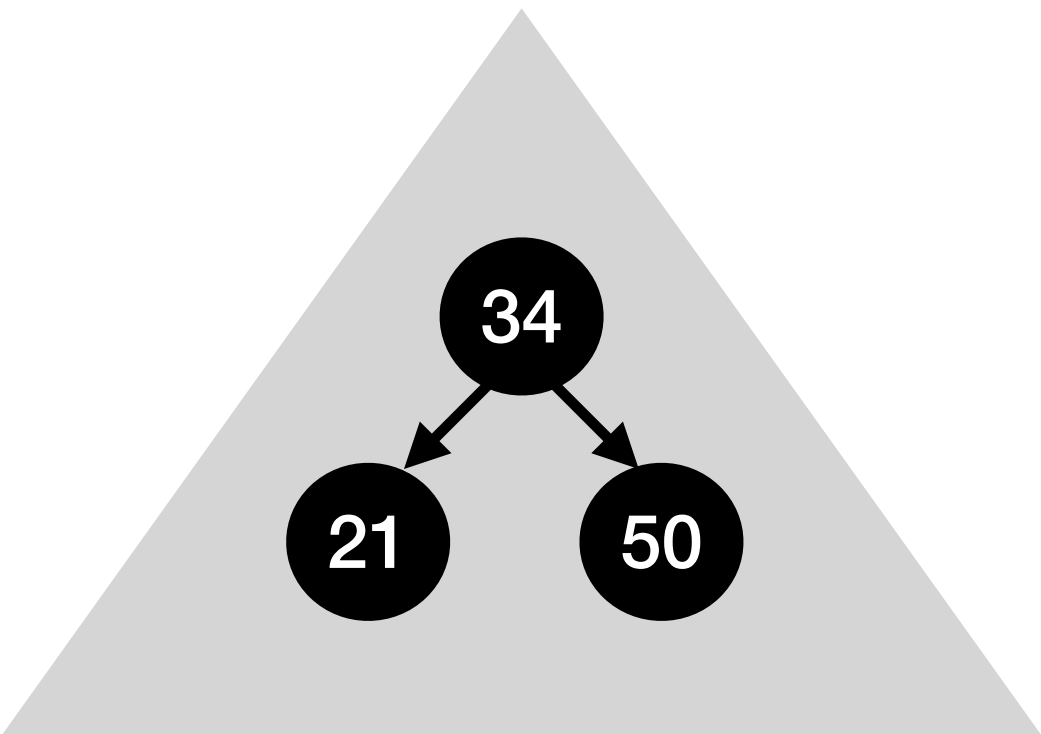
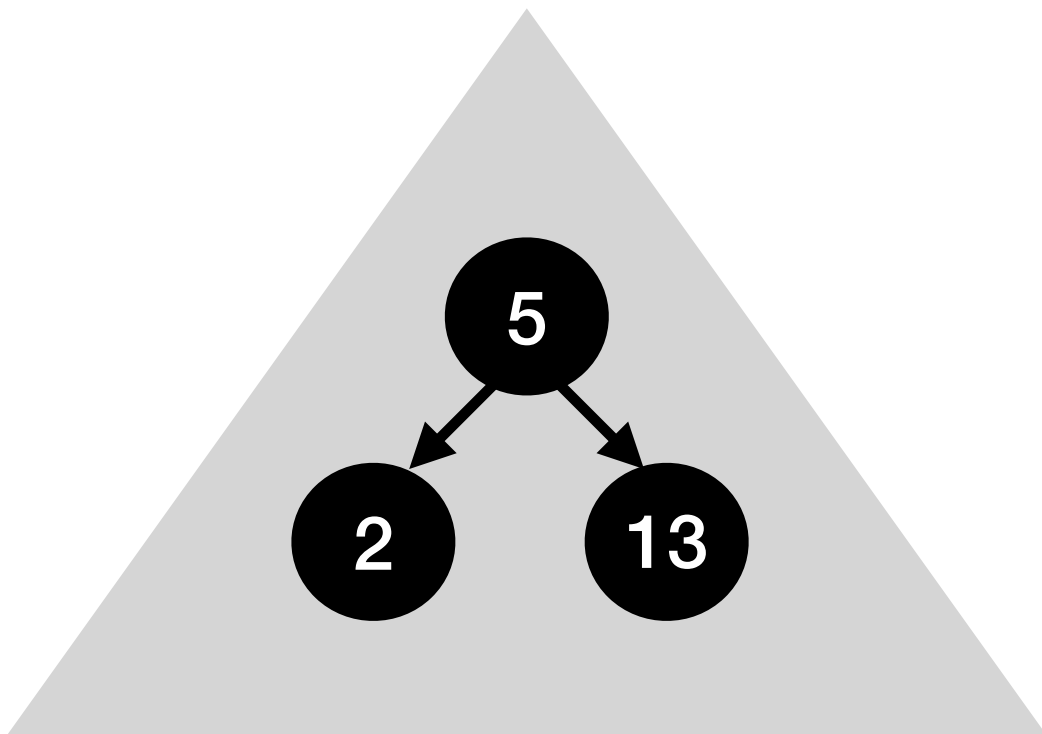
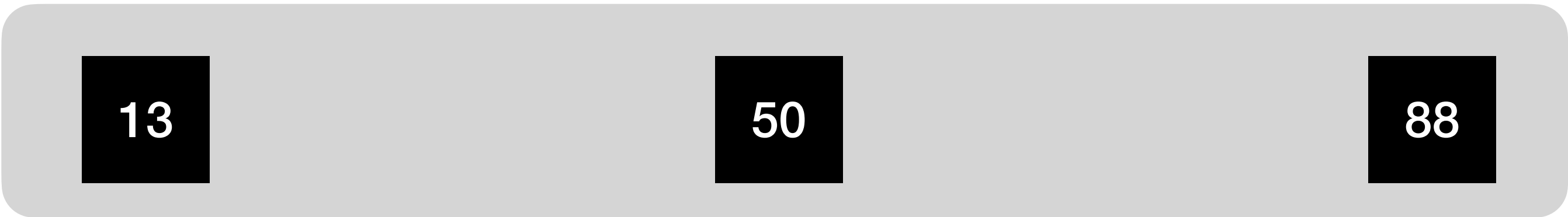
# The *y*-fast trie — Successor and Predecessor

Successor(50)

Successor(101)

Predecessor(24)

*x*-fast trie





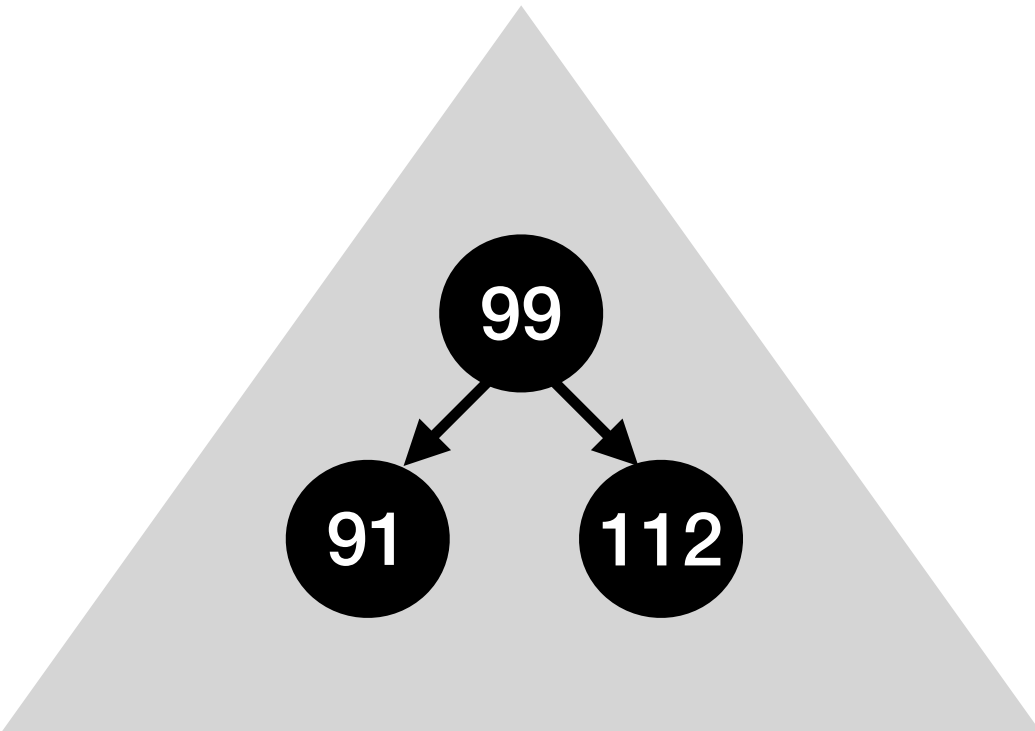
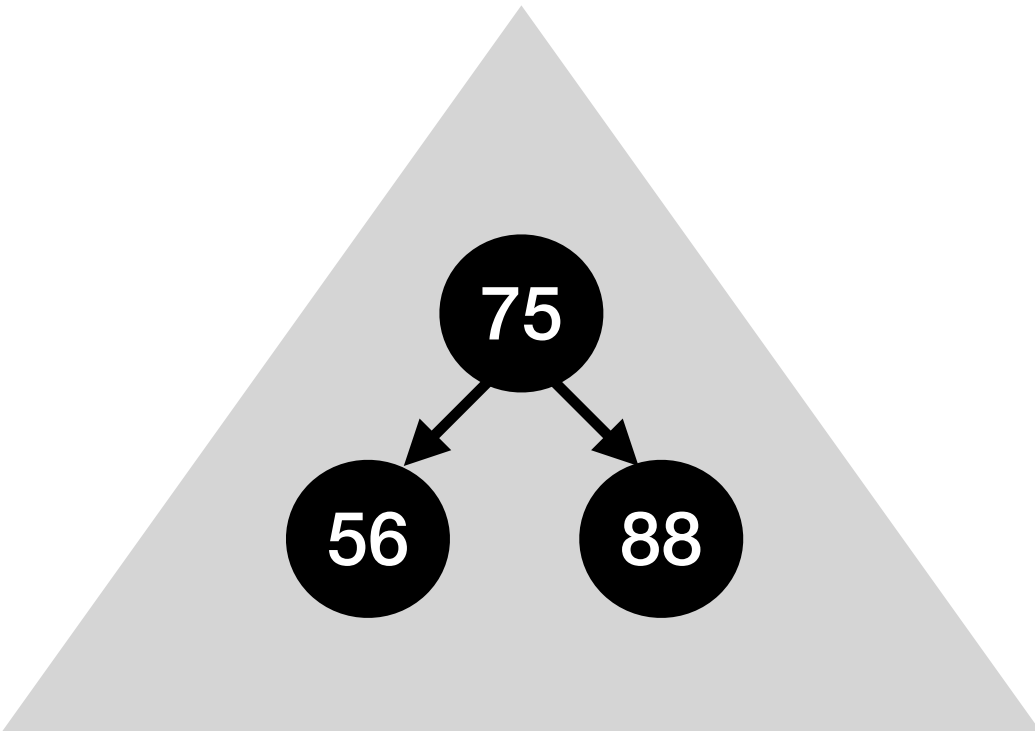
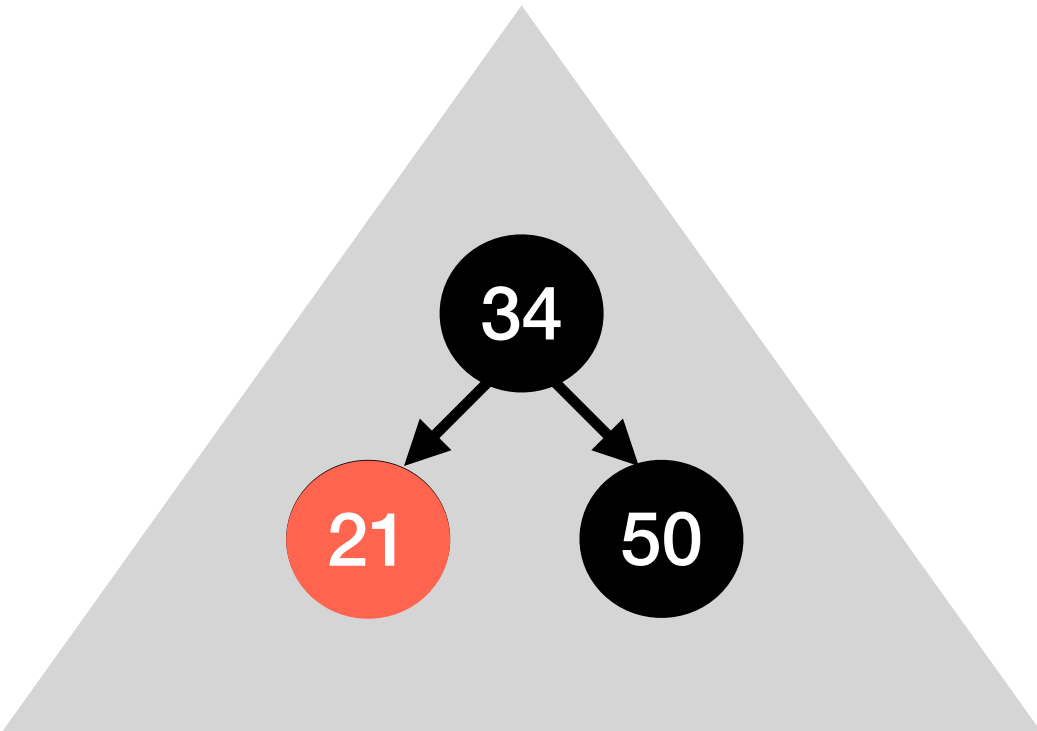
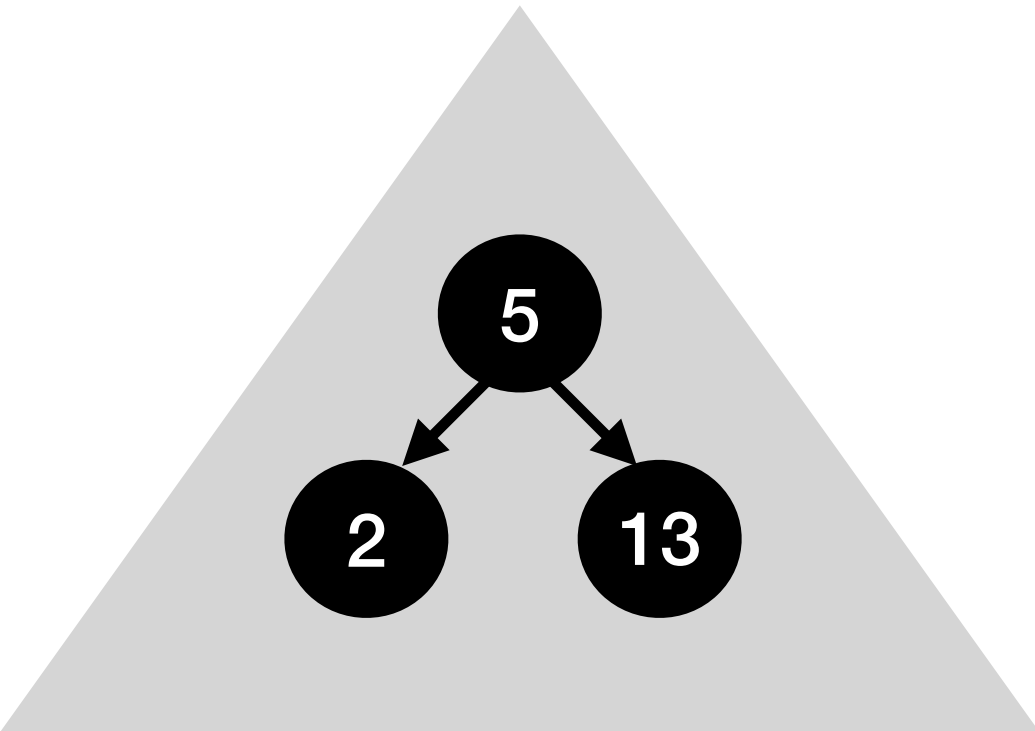
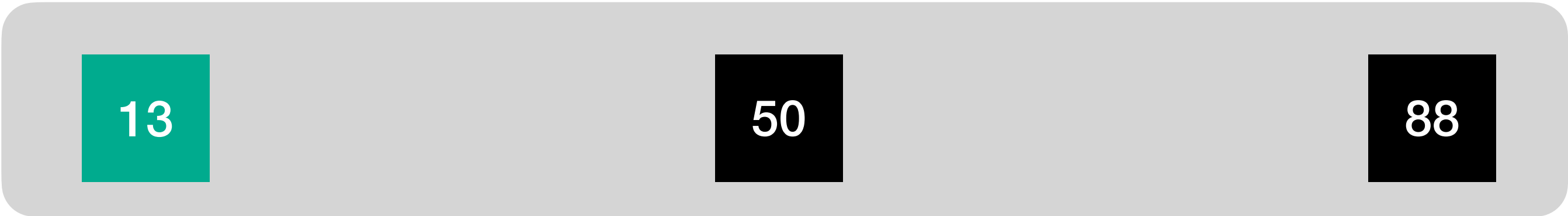
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Successor(50)

Successor(101)

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*x*-fast trie



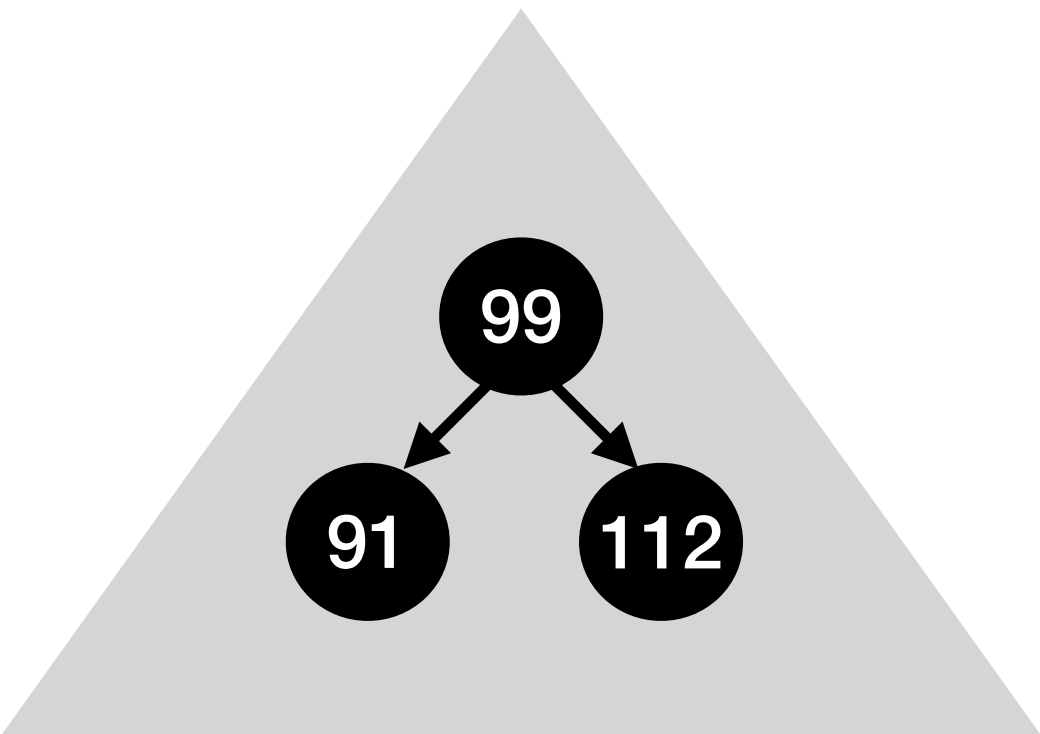
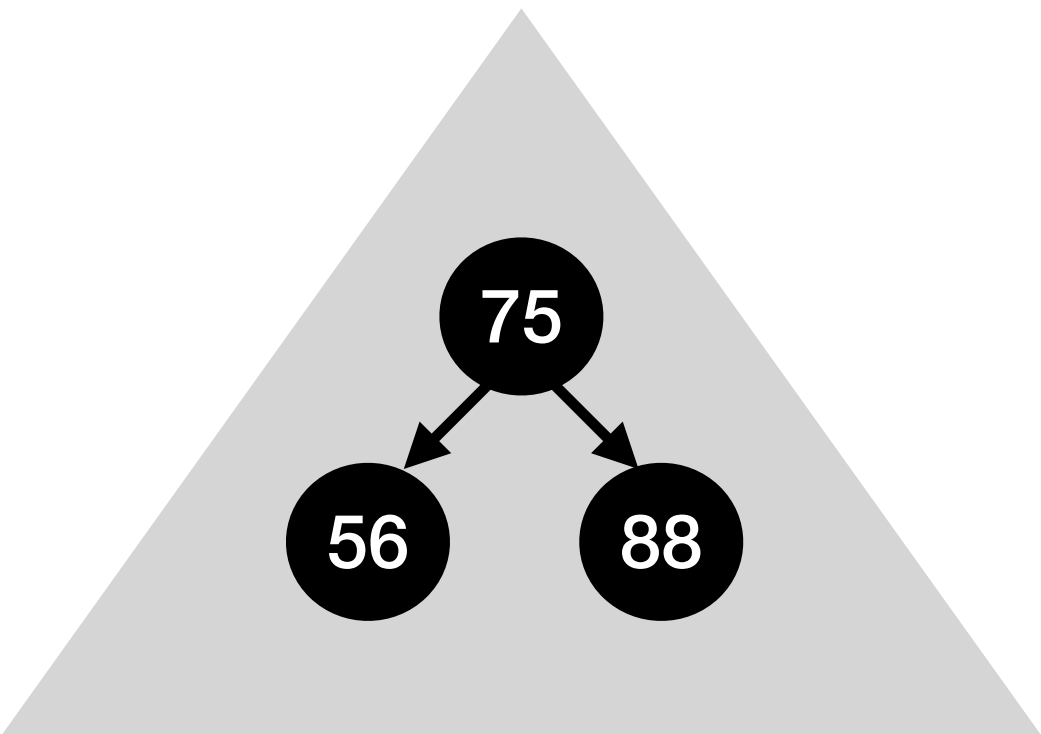
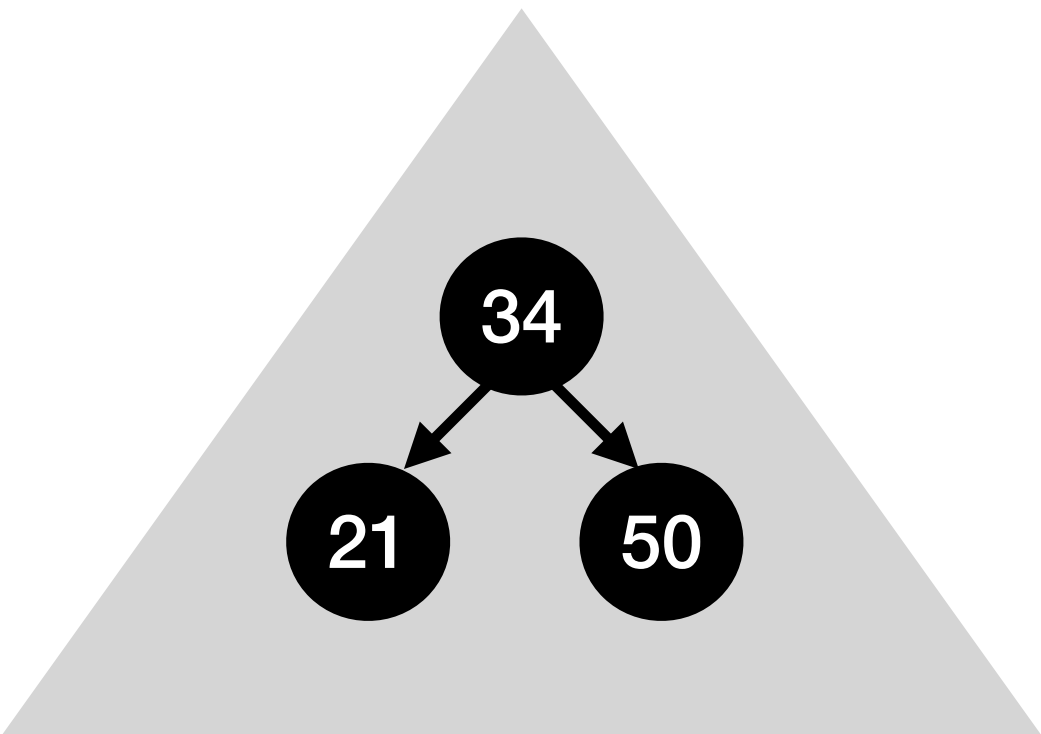
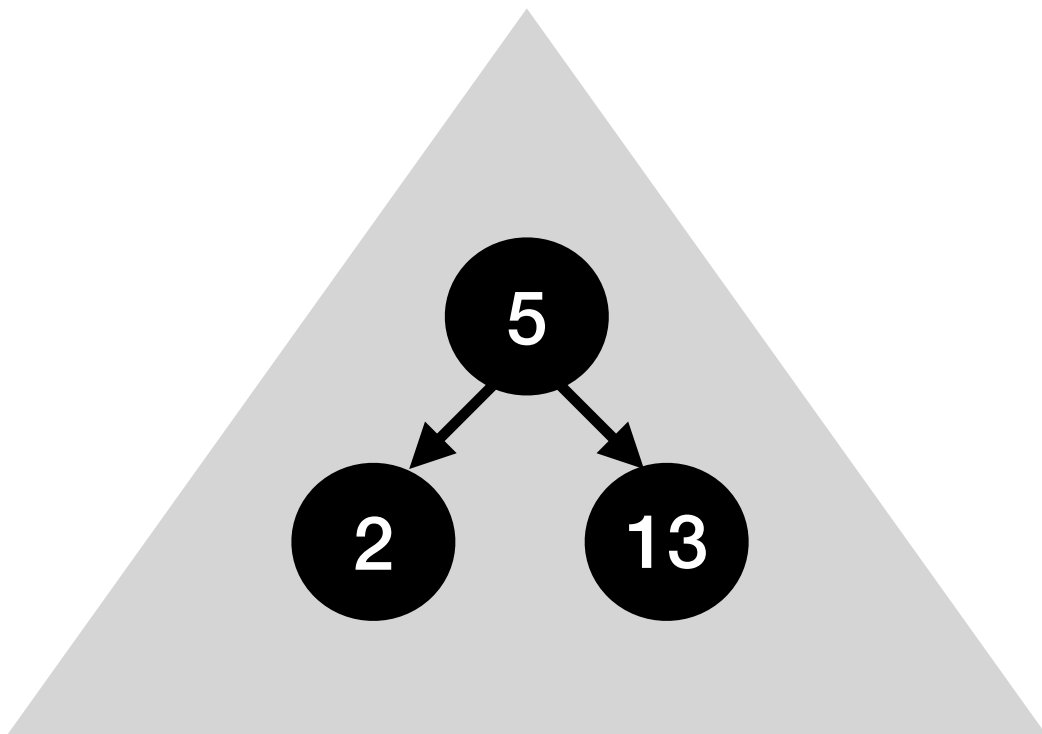
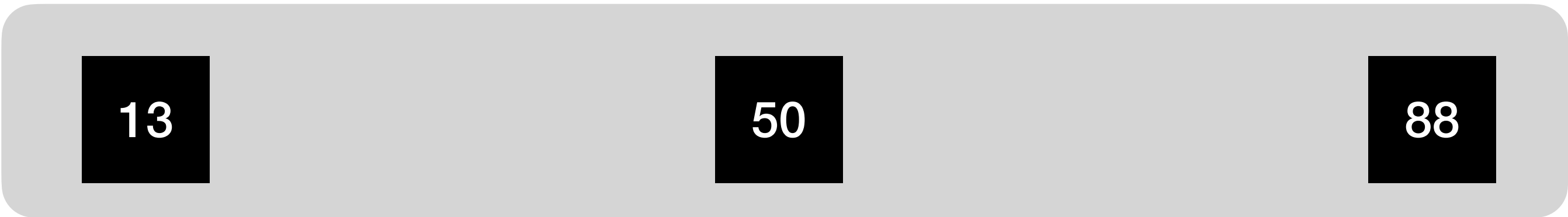
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Successor(101)

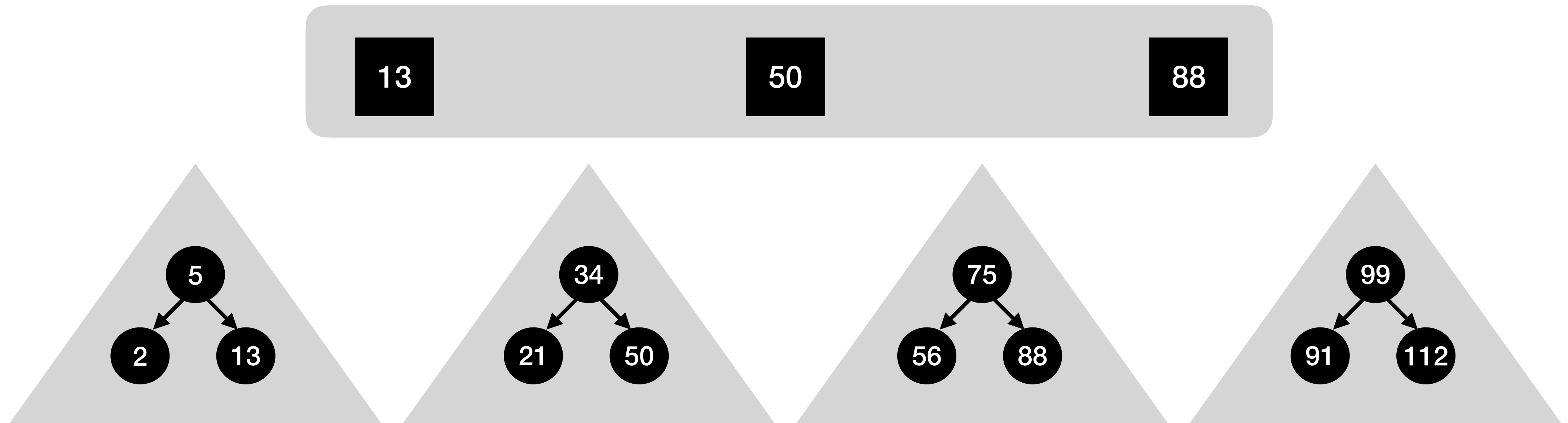
Predecessor(24)

*x*-fast trie



# The *y*-fast trie — Insert and Delete

*x*-fast trie

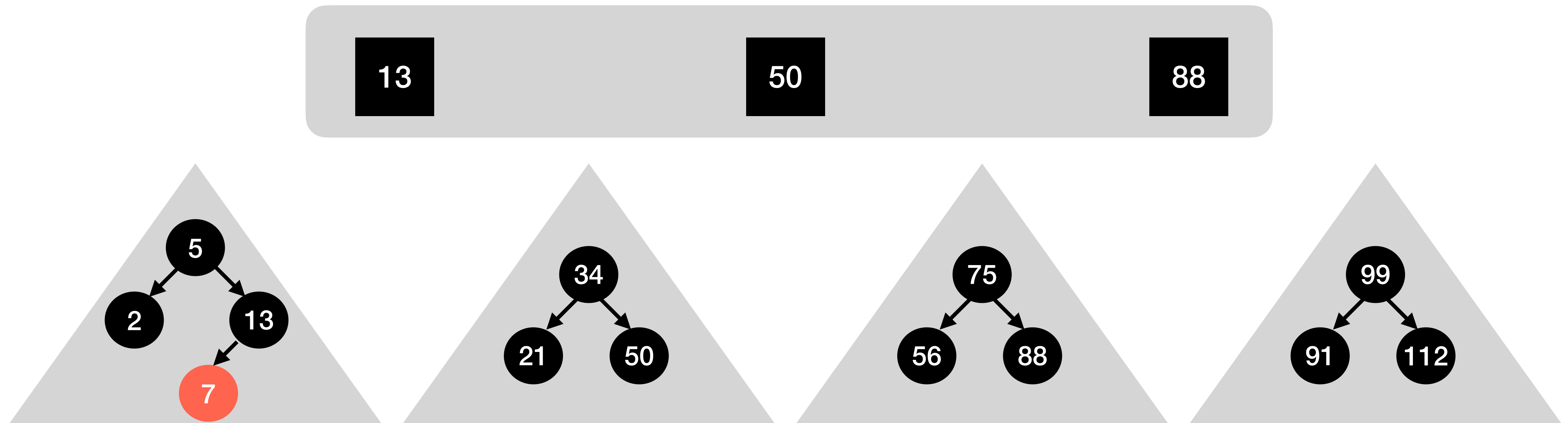


- Maintain the invariant that each BST contains at least  $(\log_2 U)/c$  keys and at most  $c \log_2 U$  keys, for some constant  $c > 1$  ( $c$  controls a trade-off between queries and updates).
- **Split (on the median element) and merge trees** to maintain the invariant in  $O(\log \log U)$  time. (This needs to augment the internal nodes of the trees with the size of their subtrees.)
- Update the *x*-fast trie accordingly in  $O(\log U)$  time.

# The *y*-fast trie — Insert and Delete

Insert(7)

*x*-fast trie



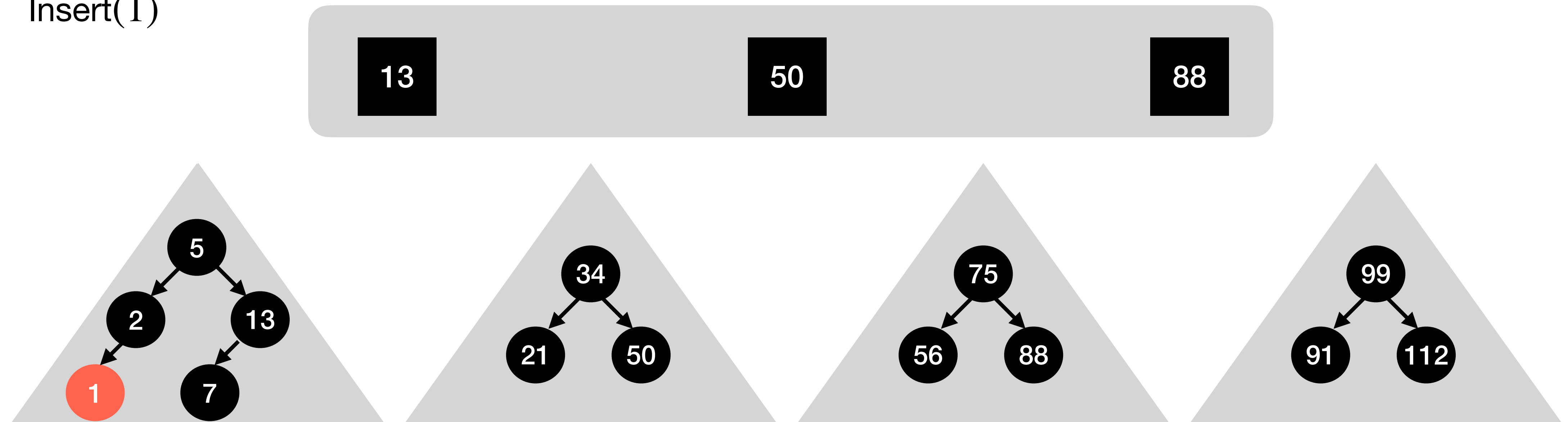
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# The *y*-fast trie — Insert and Delete

Insert(7)

Insert(1)

*x*-fast trie



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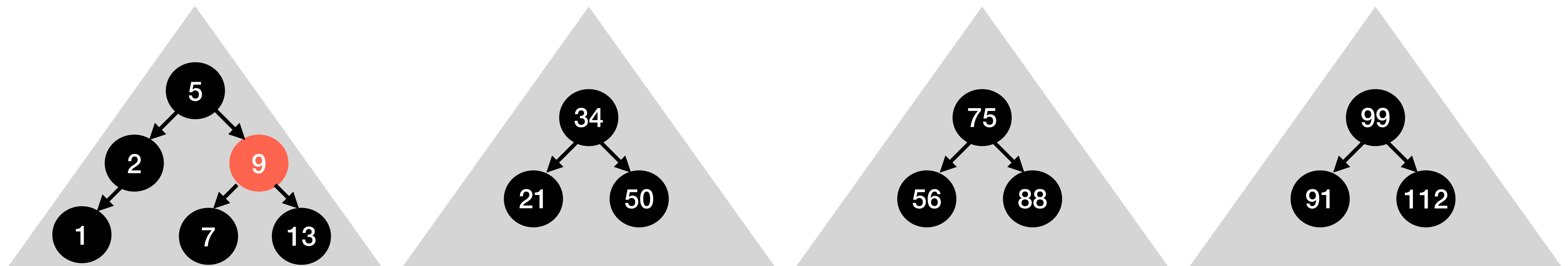
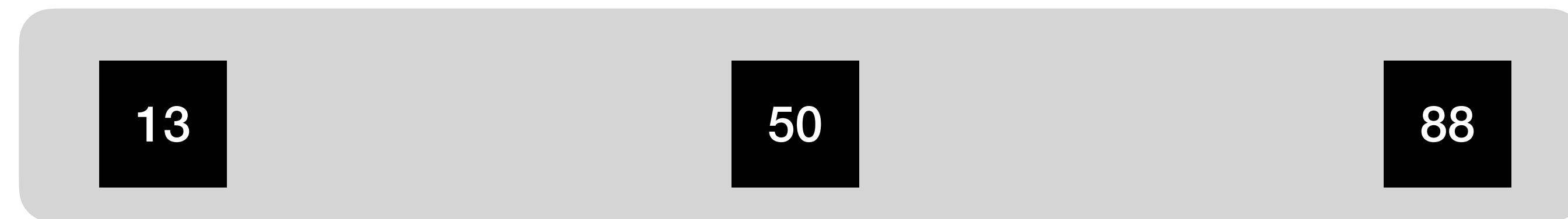
# The *y*-fast trie — Insert and Delete

Insert(7)

Insert(1)

Insert(9)

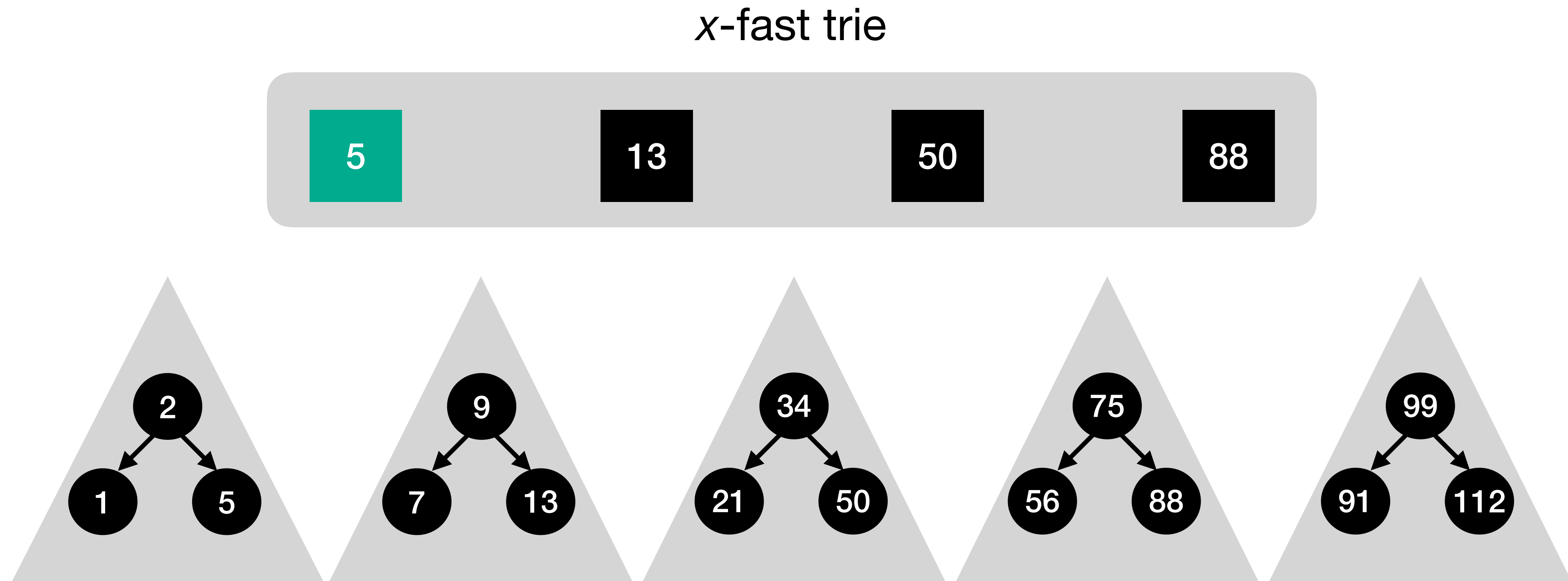
*x*-fast trie



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- Update the x-fast trie accordingly in  $O(\log U)$  time.

# The *y*-fast trie — Amortisation

- If we **do not split** upon Insert, we pay  $O(\log \log U)$ .
- If we do, we pay  $O(\log U)$ . But note that to split, we must have done  $O(\log U)$  insertions to a tree, hence on average we pay:

$$\frac{O(\log U) \cdot O(\log \log U) + O(\log U)}{O(\log U)} = O(\log \log U).$$

- Logic for Delete: if a tree becomes too small, we merge it with the next tree. Split again the resulting tree if necessary and update the *x*-fast trie.

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- Logic for Delete: if a tree becomes too small, we merge it with the next tree. Split again the resulting tree if necessary and update the x-fast trie.
- We have a **sorting algorithm** that runs in  $O(n \log \log U)$  amortized-time by simply inserting each integer in a *y*-fast trie! Radix Sort takes  $O(n \cdot (\log U)/r)$  time. Sorting with an *y*-fast trie is therefore better for  $r = o(\log U / \log \log U)$ .

# Summary

	<i>x-fast trie</i>	<i>y-fast trie</i>
<b>Min/Max</b>	$O(1)$	$O(1)$
<b>Member</b>	$O(1)$	$O(\log \log U)$
<b>Predecessor/Successor</b>	$O(\log \log U)$	$O(\log \log U)$
<b>Subset</b>	$O(\log \log U +  \text{Subset} )$	$O(\log \log U +  \text{Subset} )$
<b>Insert/Delete</b>	$O(\log U)$	$O(\log \log U)$
<b>Space</b>	$O(n \log U)$	$\Theta(n)$
<b>Main tools</b>	Binary search on key's prefixes stored into a hash table.	Sparsification and amortisation. A suboptimal structure might be ok if used on few elements.

# The last question is...

- Why the names “x” and “y” ?!
- Quote:

*“...the more you think about what the B in B-Tree means,  
the better you understand B-Trees!”*

# References

- Dan E. Willard. *Log-logarithmic worst-case range queries are possible in space  $\Theta(N)$* , Information Processing Letters, 17 (2): 81-84, 1983.
- P. van Emde Boas, *Preserving order in a forest in less than logarithmic time*, FOCS, 75-84, 1975.
- P. van Emde Boas; R. Kaas; E. Zijlstra, *Design and implementation of an efficient priority queue*, Math. Syst. Theory, 99–127, 1977.
- P. van Emde Boas, *Preserving order in a forest in less than logarithmic time and linear space*, Inf. Process. Lett. 6, 80–82, 1977.