

LiteraryMary

WORD FROM THE ADMINS

By Jenifer Wills

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The other day I witnessed something at a shelter for homeless families that caused me to do some thinking. A man had come into the church in which I work. He had been vacationing in Mexico, where he planned to spend the winter instead of Canada, where he resides. While vacationing, he was robbed. He was trying to work his way from Mexico back to Canada with very little money. He appeared to be in his early to mid sixties, was well spoken, clean as he could be under the circumstances, polite and grateful. My co-worker and I did the best we could to dig up some resources for him. The shelter where I work is a day shelter for families, so we were aware he couldn't sleep there, but we did hope that perhaps they could give him some resources and the use of a telephone. However, when my co-worker took him down to the shelter the woman who was volunteering for the day snapped that the shelter was for families and he would have to leave. She couldn't even allow him access to a telephone.

I understand, rules are rules and they are there for a reason. They keep us safe and help things run smoothly etc. Nevertheless, there comes a point, such as this occasion, when a greater need should cancel out the rules. Instead of serving its purpose, to help those who are in a dire situation, the shelter failed and lost the opportunity to help someone in need. I watched in astonishment as my co-worker, a young man in his early twenties, a student with very little extra money, reached into his own pocket and handed the man a twenty before sending him on his way.

I haven't been active on LiteraryMary for some time. In the past few months, my life has gone through many changes and frankly, I was burned out. I was tired of the drama, the whining over things that don't really matter and the petty bickering. I was tired of critiquing and writing. I was tired of people's threats to leave if I didn't jump when they said jump and bend over backward to soothe everyone's

fragile ego.

Things in my life have settled down. I'm back in school. I have a home. I have a steady job. And I've decided to come back to Mary. Upon being back, I've had the pleasure of reading several excellent pieces and meeting, through the site, a few talented new writers. This morning in my inbox, I received a letter from a young poet whose work I greatly admire thanking me for the site and for helping them improve their work to the level it's at now. I have to say, it felt good to know the site has worked for its intended purpose for at least one of the people who are here using it.

Sometimes when we have a system, as long as we aren't too caught up in the red tape, it works and it works well.

Back to the homeless man at the church, I was happy knowing he wouldn't have to sleep on the street that night and overjoyed that my faith in the people of the world was, if temporarily, restored.

Is the Next Great American Novel Dead...or Just Undead?

By Joseph Grant

Of late there is a penchant in the book business for literary cannibalism. Not that writers these days are stealing phrases or pages from unsuspecting writers living or dead, but outright plagiarism, unlike the oh-so-mortal writer, is alive and well and will likely never die. It would be bad enough if that was the only problem, but it is much worse than that. What is occurring as a trend in today's literary marketplace is the wholesale theft of entire novels in the guise of a trendy literary 'mash-up' of genres, for the lack of better words.

A mash-up by definition is when an artist combines two ideas and blends them together to create a hopefully seamless entity, hence a mash-up. Back in the day it was called 'sampling'. Back in the day *before that*, it was called stealing and or plagiarism but even then it was usually confined to a small part of the whole.

The current movement in literature is to take an existing classic and interject, say, a zombie or vampire or any such monster will do, really and market it as a semi-original work of fiction. This is tantamount to literary grave-robbing, let alone sacrilege to treat a masterpiece with such glib rancor. Insult is then added to the author's already injured memory by the no-talent hack of a writer tacking their name onto the author as if the author, many years dead had risen from the grave like one of the atrocious added-on characters the new author has created from his small black and white TV

mind and somehow co-authored what amounts to literary desecration. It's as if the publishing world has lost its identity and now allows literary graffiti to be tagged along the walls of immortals. One wonders if the modern-day author has suddenly stopped thinking and writing the Great American Novel and looked into the literary mirror and saw plagiarism and coattail-riding as something in which to aspire.

Is this a generation's "payback" for maybe having to suffer through the works of esteemed authors like Austen, Melville, Shakespeare & Hawthorne in school? If this is a generation's thumbing their nose at tradition and having a laugh, I'm not getting the humor, I'm afraid. It is a glaring admission of a literary business in trouble and in the process of imploding. The true question is: 'Why are we eating our own?' The answer is of course an unequivocal one. If we can't write 'em, we beat 'em, so to speak. Instead of trying to write well, we take the literary lazy road out and we write upon the literary bathroom wall in the form of parody.

This is not to say that there aren't great writers working today in cafes and in homes all across the country to write the Great American Novel. Search your bookshelves and you may see some of them yourself. But where are the writers of tomorrow? It's tragic to think that they are writing monster parodies of classics. Doesn't

that strike you as empty and pathetic? It does me.

The obvious point is, it does not speak well of what my fellow writer friend, Adam Whitlatch calls "the gatekeepers" or in a word, literary agents. The problem lies with the literary agents who reject struggling writers, but yet sign this literary pabulum into print. The world of literature is full of whores and so-called writers who would stab you in the back just to get their book published but literary agents are a whole other animal when it comes to whores. Literary agents are the only whores that make their living in saying no instead of yes. Their worthlessness is exemplified by the amount of dusty books that line the shelves at any given bookstore that will be remain unsold and thus, be returned to their publisher for recycling. Yet, we writers are at the mercy of such inept beings. Instead of finding the next aforementioned Austen, King, Hemingway, Rowling or Cornwell, they're too busy signing the next Clifford Irving or Kaavya Viswanathan. It's no wonder that a real writer can't catch an honest break.

It's tragic that great writing is being prevented from publication because publishing itself became too big an insolent child and merged with corporations that hired agents and publishers to baby sit it; people who had more interest in the bottom line than the written one. As little as twenty-

five years ago, it was still possible to get an unsolicited manuscript into a large house and receive an acceptance without using a middleman. Before publishing became a business, it had been run by intellectuals, whereas, it's now run by businessmen.

This is not to say that agents all agents are out for blood or have no true insight. There are still agents out there who read for the pleasure of reading, just as there are writers who still write for the pleasure of writing. Only when agents stop signing celebutards, fallen politicians and half-assed hacks instead of real writers will literature be able to look at itself in the mirror again and not see a monster looking back.

OPHELIA

By Craig Leaf

When the darkness confesses its motivations,
through good, or grim expression
Pieties of both sea and sky
The tyranny of the moonlight dreamed, believed
–the secret lily –of all the flowers –of relic –received

Ravishing remembrances –steep vanishing
Realities that plunge down into the sky's silence
–the cloudy coral elements
Prodigal lily petals –of the flowers image be
dappled by the pearly –illusion's pearl –of the sceptered sea

Take these sentences from the dress scroll
–of silvery remembrance
–vanishing echoes –of her reverence
Tyranny
–The unwhispering willow
Silent
–The unwhispering mirror's answered –defiled
Ophelia and her mud grave deep
–Of harvesting sang –uir; ary stream
The silent willow solaced –thunders creep
Bellowing mad –Ophelia into cold waters old
–with mad alliance
Frail gestures in love
Madness in silence

We speak not to the virtues who ask not words
But froths out our humanities –in –concupiscent curds

Embalmed –On an ice blue wave –sleeps –Ophelia
lys –in stria –a proser –{lys}–pina–
Naked –white –hue gradual –wrapped momentarily in
weeds and fleurs
We who lack the intelligence of fin or wing
Each in our own private circle of step –ever spiraling in

Till Ophelia's dappled knees knelt on the brink –of stranger
skies
–where I will never love
Love 'tis madness –love –lys mad –not madness
–but mad in craft

Still lies
Ophelia –of lilled skies –only a refecton –in the river's
stores
She will never grace the mortal shores –step lightly on sand
–never more

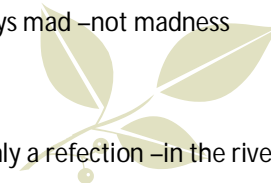
Tyranny drew in the sweet flower
Tyranny anchored love's dreams –poor chattering child
–less deft
–sharpness cleft
–stroked as the harp
she serves as the vocal strings. she, sings the mad song of
the sea

Twice the tides –enchancing flows –in unsearchable repose
So, is madness melodied –fair

Poor Ophelia –under willow floats –betides her runnelling
hair
Ruffles on the surf crave – sky's acute air
No show –of greater love –of solitude –Parade her
What a sweet tomb of icy snow the river's flow –has made
her

Deep in the wood winding there–in–closed
Bound in the season of waves
–of each a darker dance
The willow's long swaying arms' advances
–romantically exposed
The soft breeze fucks Ophelia's breast
–anomalistically unopposed

O' blue child sweet n' –dispose of the river
O' phelia! –cadaverous –lys –pectral demarcations





—keener before

To the Sea's salt alone you are mother
mad defiled girl—aquatic elemental whose
the fish kiss off her chest and face
—leeches drain blue your rose

Poor Ophelia debased —commands not —can not define
With her brain vault, full of acanthocephalans —making
feast of her festering mind

Again and again, as the river flows
—mysterious —lys —till in its repose
Flows never —twice touched tides —are true
As oceans gush —never and forever
Free as the length of freedoms chains instill

Oh sad Ophelia young
—to learn the truth of freedom
—sung

a song étranglaient —vain
—OPHELIA!

When sprung as mortal li —lys —ane —should have listened
to
the sad tales —sung by the dol-drum —ming rain

When the darkness confesses its motivations,
through good, or grim expression
Pieties of each sea and sky
The tyranny of the moonlight dreamed, believed
—the secret lily —of all the flowers —of relic received

Ravishing remembrances —steep vanishing
Realities that plunge down into the sky's silence —fill
the cloudy coral elements
Bequeath her to no shore until

Sweet chaos submits to order —pale anchors will
—away the nights' disdain
—Echo —Corpus —vain!

We speak not to the virtues who ask not words
But froths out our humanities —in —concupiscent curds

Embalmed —On an ice blue wave —sleeps —Ophelia
lys —in stria —a proser —{lys}—pina— "D'étoiles mon coeur!"
—désir déchiré

—snow upon heads will grow

Ironic wind glacialys bellow —freeze —froze the word into
the air

—that be

From a further place than Norway's poles

Poor girl mad sounding, her last breath,
The bubble which stores the drowning

—soul

Ophelia

Sweet Lily

—rose not as Proserpina with spring's fair "Bonjour's"

—Lives, clies, reborn deities

Babys, Branolys, gentrys, wiskys, laolys, lys, numérotas-
sions, lys—sions, Babel —

only—s Gentrys

Frail gestures in love

Mad silent-lys

Enter — WE

Ophelia

and a love that shall never while forever be

Je t'aime

Ophelia qui pleure, Ophelia qui rit

An auspicious and drooping eye
Reflection's of both the sea and sky?

—senility of abidance with
one sibilant hiss shows
the prosody of silence

Ophelia is a poem from Mr. Leaf's upcoming book "City of Artifice" (the collection was selected, arranged and titled by Walter E. Butts - Poet Laureate of New Hampshire State).

WOMEN IN INDEPENDENT PRESS

By Lynn Alexander

Crystal Folz



Crystal Folz is a woman after my own heart, a writer and editor whose love for reading comes through in the way that she approaches her own work and the work of others.

After years of keeping her work to herself and a few close friends,

Crys emerged last year in small press circles with a new confidence and a willingness to develop her work and perhaps be more public in sharing it. Wanting very much to be part of independent outlets for writers and artists, she started the online literary site Shoots And Vines and not long after began to release print editions. As an editor, she has been able to present work from diverse authors and do so in ways that are attentive to contributors.

Recognizing that at times women seem underrepresented or outright ignored in small press, Crys has been

a part of projects that have specifically highlighted female writers and artists, such as her anthology of poetry by women. She does not complain about the ratio of women to men, but rather sees opportunities for women to work collaboratively to develop projects and perhaps make independent publishing a more inclusive, representative world. How can women work together, pool resources, share skills? Crys has done a lot in a short period of time, and she is still going strong.

www.shootsandvines.com

A Periodic Fable of the Elements: Chlorine

By Justin Barrett

Cadmon Wagers ran as fast as his boots and gear allowed. Bullets whizzed by him before biting into the ground in a bloom of dirt. Some of his comrades didn't make it, dropping as they got hit. Cadmon dove into a foxhole, surprised at finding himself still alive.

Now, his lungs burn and his heart thumps as he sits, legs bent, in a muddy trench carved into a field somewhere in the Southwest of Belgium, his back pressed against the cool, dirt wall. His rifle rests at an angle between his legs. His head hangs as his body heaves to catch its breath.

Bullets still fly overhead and an occasional trench mortar shakes the earth causing pebbles and soil to rain down the trench. Hundreds soldiers, hundreds—dead, wounded, alive, in various states of alertness and fear—crowd the

ditch. Cadmon watches as a young soldier, no older than 19, peers over the lip. Abruptly, a flash of blood and flesh and brain explodes where his face used to be and the young man falls back to the muddy trench floor, dead. Cadmon turns his head in disgust, suppressing the urge to vomit.

Time moves slow during a battle, each sense tuned ever tighter so that mere seconds can seem to contain a multitude of eternities. Cadmon doesn't move from his spot for the entire battle. Not a hand lifts to scratch an itch on his neck or to wipe mud from his face; not a leg shifts to relieve a pinched nerve or facilitate blood flow; not so much as cough or hiccup or sneeze. The near infinity of a day's battle wages around him and Cadmon waits it out, head tucked and rifle lean-

ing. The next morning Cadmon wakes to find himself in the same position, alive and unwounded. And officer approaches him.

"Good morning, soldier. On your feet."

Cadmon rises and salutes the officer. "Sir."

"Colonel Dothan needs men," the officer says. "Go find him."

Cadmon salutes the officer again, "Yes, sir." The officer returns the salute and walks down the trench.

Cadmon grabs his rifle and walks along the trench, through the mud of ages and the blood of his fellow soldiers. He finds Colonel Dothan talking to a group of soldiers and walks up to him.

"Private Cadmon Wagers reporting for duty, sir," he says, saluting.

Colonel Dothan looks at Cadmon. "At ease, Private." Then, "join the others, I was just detailing the plans for today."

Cadmon joins the group of soldiers and listens as Colonel Dothan explains the day's duties. Some are to be stationed on the north end of the trench, as lookouts; others, the south end; Cadmon and two other guys will be positioned in the middle—all looking for movement along the enemy lines, and especially to watch for any flanking maneuvers. Routine stuff.

Cadmon and the two other soldiers take their places in the middle of the trench, inside a large, protected bunker. They are to look out over the wide expanse—no man's land, they call it—to spy on the enemy. Any suspicious activity is to be reported at once. The men take turns at the narrow slit of a window as the other two sleep, or play cards, or read.

Cadmon's is the third shift, later that evening. During the first two shifts, he writes letters to his mother and girlfriend, Doris. He tells them about the other men in his unit; about playing cards with both of the guys during the lookout; about how much he loves them both.

The time comes and Cadmon takes his place at the window. The sun is low in the sky and it's getting harder by the minute to see across the field. Cadmon rests in the chair they have to sit on and watches.

A thick fog suddenly begins to roll across the field. It moves slowly, with the wind, hugging the ground like a

quilt on a mattress. It appears to be slightly off-color in the dusk; a sickly yellow maybe? Or a greenish gray? Either way, it's a queer fog and unlike any Cadmon has ever seen. He watches as the fog makes a slow and steady advance towards their trench. Then, he smells pineapples. And black pepper. He sneezes. The soldiers below his position, in the trench, cough and choke. Many jump out of the trench to escape the stinging fog. Cadmon can see fires coming from the muzzles of guns on the other side as bullets are squeezed out into the night.

The sound of men dying fills his ears.

The fog doesn't reach him, instead sticking inside the trench, coating the bottom and slowly filling it, coming out the back end and following the wind westward. He raises his gun and shoots into the twilight, toward the enemy's trench. The other two soldiers in the bunker join him. Officers bark orders between hacking coughs, but he can't make them out. Shirts are wrapped around noses and mouths in a futile attempt at protection.

And still the strange, heavy fog skulks across no man's land like an endless phalanx of ground troops sneaking through a fortified section of battlefield to ambush their devastated opponent.

Cadmon watches hundreds upon hundreds of enemy soldiers emerge from their trench—their heads covered so they look like insects or bi-

zarre creatures from an ancient era—and charge across the open field towards his position as the three fire into the them, their bullets producing rosettes of dirt as they strike the earth. The soldiers dodge the bullets and dive into the empty trench, killing whomever they encounter.

The three young men wait, their eyes on the door in the floor, the noise below them approaching.

SURROGATE POPEYE

By Steven Walter

My wife and I recently put down our loved and loving dog, Amber. She would hop around on three legs most of the time due to hip deterioration. She liked wee hour walks, going out when I got the morning paper, or often earlier, waking one of us (usually my wife) for the opportunity. Amber's pain was obvious but seemed to me to continue to enjoy living so long as she wanted to get out and sniff and leave her own scent, but she was declining and my wife and I both knew the time was near.

One morning shortly thereafter Amber was unable to stand, her front legs sliding apart on our hardwood floor. She was fine later, hobbling up and down the front steps at will, but we reluctantly decided it was time. We were forced into the role of surrogate Popeye, deciding enough was too much and she can

stand no more.

She rests in peace while I struggle with the idea that we acted prematurely as well as the ensuing guilt along with the grief. I've gone from blaming my wife, who takes it even harder, to blaming myself, to seeking serenity and acceptance.

It's difficult dealing with the death of a pet or a person.

Why have I chosen to share this? Because health care is an issue that arouses these same emotions and others as well. The current controversy over health insurance reform (downgraded from health care reform) results at least partially from emotional and often spurious claims where reasonable rational and serious bipartisan debate and action. You can put lipstick on a moose but you can't make it tell the truth, or even make sense.

There are no death panels involved here, but the question remains of how a source of limited resources (insurance, private or public) can supply an ever-increasing demand for health care. We need a civil and sensible discussion of the issues. Unfortunately this is difficult in an atmosphere of misinformation and mistrust.

Talk of health care rationing is likewise misleading. Health care is being rationed right now- by private insurance companies. The uninsured overburden emergency rooms and add to rising costs.

We the People are responsible for achieving positive health CARE reform. I advocate the elimination of private health insurance and the enrollment of all Americans in the health insurance plan that Congress enjoys. No one will cry louder than the insurance companies, but this simplification would allow for tremendous savings with more to come.

We must also assume personal responsibility for ourselves by preparing for our own decline; discussing our wishes with our loved ones, as well as the preparation of an advance directive or living will.

S08.29.09

AUTUMNAL EQUINOX

Carotene
supplants chlorophyll-
Gold leaves fall.

TURNOVER

A new leaf-
I turned it over,
bugs and dirt

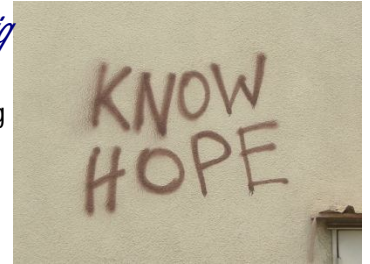
WASTE

Foul wind blows
urban tumbleweeds-
Trash scurries

By Steven Walter

VIAGRA FOR THE DISCOURAGED

By Sana Rafiq



What we are experiencing since the past couple of years is a loss of quality over quantity. Obviously

the print media being rather ruthless in its demands and mercenary in intent has discouraged many a good writer out of a writing career due to the hurdles involved in reaching the appropriate publisher. Take for example my sorry self. Out of laziness and the sheer lack of motivation in sending out work, I thought what better alternative than to start a personal blog to continue this erratic habit of pre-mature ejaculations. Of course time constraints and personal commitments keep me from researching the literary market, yet I cannot remain neutral about how daunting it seems to a writer or poet who would rather prefer to be sought out for their intellectual abilities instead of taking up a begging bowl and trying their luck on the streets. There is a saying somewhere that editors are failed writers and writers failed editors. So I am going to take the pathetic stance of a loser and go slit my wrists in the bathroom! (On second thought, do not attempt that at home, I am just kidding).

Bored out of my mind, from the people I encounter, or the stagnating and claustrophobic social norms, I occasionally seek refuge in higher education. As of late, I have been busy polishing my academic writing skills, which are just about as skewed as a fat man trying to keep his shirt buttoned when it appears to burst at the seams every time he sits down...to eat.

Yes, the gluttony that will never end. On a cheery note, I must inject a little false enthusiasm here (let us call it temporary hope), akin to the excess Botox in Pamela Anderson's oversized bosom, or the lack of originality in

Britney Spears which would vex any intelligent being into paranoia. As writers and poets, rowdy, ill-mannered, and too proud to kiss the smelly ass of people, we can easily find hope and inspiration from the simplest moments. Imagine yourself carrying a camera, then pretend you are to capture, beginning this moment, anything which moves you, to feel or think. A tiny pebble once thrown into a pond will cause the water to ripple, shift and change its reflection. So pull out that voyeur's antenna you got hidden in your tool box and begin observing!! Writing involves an art of subtlety. To pull off a poem or prose work (short-story, flash fiction etc) if you fail to insert the right elements of surprise, your work will pretty much fall flat..

There are two kinds of explorers. The first kind, have a vision, they plan ahead in time and then get ready to explore a new location. The second kind, are similar except they do not travel physically. They are mental wanderers. Their geography is not limited to a particular time and place. You may not be able to confine them with you beyond a couple of hours if you fail to arrest their curiosity. The first kind travel and reach their destinations. They learn in the course of their journeys. The second kind, often live out of momentary hopes and minimal sustenance and they reach no particular destination. They understand the risk of moving in circles, but it is the movement which keeps them alive. Writers may fail to publish in their lifetime, or immediate future, yet their productivity and work is what comes to define and designate them an identity. Eventually we learn to write irrespective of the number of publication credits we earn or the lack of it thereof.

Creative Writing

By Daniel Luis

I won't bother to define writing for you. A little more tweaking, however, will do: a profound piece of writing is

always an original one of the anima, something that happens, perhaps, only once, never to be repeated, but is given full, self-contained expression to last with the immense breath of the universe in itself. Instead, we shall concern ourselves with the question, "How does being a writer feel?"

No one can unlock the secrets of any form of art for you, nor can tedious clinging to a learned, organized structural tightrope ever help you produce something original. Neither can anyone tempt you into writing, which is but a form of painting. Often, after a stormy introduction to your own unscaled depths, you shall indeed exploit yourself in the domain of self-infatuation, let alone self-discovery. Only then can expression take place, stemming from its original source.

At first blush, creative writing, like certain forms of painting, is a lonely delivery of one's reflective thinking, perception, and fantasy. Additionally, it is a lot of mania and bipolarity. It involves materializing abstract beauty of transpersonal character, such as dreams that defy mere worldly events, but not humanity itself in its own lonely heart, often after exalting the torment and ecstasy deep within the abyss of sorrow and longing, of self-withdrawal and self-indulgence. For that you need a truly fearless self (soul) that truly cares of both light and darkness, something intensely conscious in experiencing the facets of being, without even deeming the unconscious as a stranger.

Hence in the vast background of the surreal universe, artistic objectivity, in contrast to reductionist external objectivity, simply stems from an unusually unique, emotional experience of crystallized, archetypal, colossal magnitude, which is manifest by the sensitive, natural ability to project it as a flow for any conscious, observant mind. Creativity, then, is about spontaneous, marvelous improvisation of that flow.

An original writer, especially a poet, like any real artist, almost never learns how to write and self-motivate. He/she simply befriends certain original 'out-of-this-world qualities' within him/herself, infinitely extensive and unabashed as if every moment of expression were his/her



conceived idea in order to sharpen and resurrect mental, linguistic forms.

That is, in a nutshell, how it feels to write and create at once.

birth or death. The artist need not deal with mere acceptance, such as by barking up the irrefutable, in the outside world, the world of norms and, very often, unoriginality. Faint feelings and hunches, daring interpretations of events, or manic optimism, beyond a prescribed way of thinking, are simply part of singular moments of self-experience subject to no guilt.

Beauty is something naked that happens to the artist as he/she comes to grips with its curious twists of a tale or symphony almost frozen deep within solitude's most isolated regime, but ever-flowing, often tortuous and noxious, in the expressive mind. To the intense feeler, any motion emerging from this subterranean world, even from deep within a tormented life, is innately, universally beautiful. To the rest of mortals, it is simply totally out of reach: they may sense all this, but without perceiving that which intrinsic grandeur demands from them, which is life's own deepest substance.

For instance, no matter how shaky, tragic, and dark a poem (written simply by a naturally talented poet) may sound, you may sense that the poet is without fear, in his own domain. In order to produce a song, either musically or pictorially, one tears open one's own soul on transcendent, sharp quivering strings and gives one's own nakedness for full display and touch. There's almost no external reason for the artist to produce a work of art other than the sublime experience of his/her own moods. These moods are taken to their apparent limits until their innocent unity visibly runs liberated below the simple mental terrain, in the unveiled depths of the soul whose content is truly universal. Otherwise, the work produced is just easily



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