

# THE MIXER

THE AUSTRALIAN MAGAZINE OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

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## TOO SCARED TO LIVE

I was a bit of a late starter when it came to drinking, didn't start till I was 17 or so. First drinking experience was at a party and I was dared to down 6 beers in 5 mins; not one to look weak, I succeeded and was promptly drunk, sick and on my way home from the party. I stayed away from drinking for a while after that.

I grew up with my father and didn't see my mother from the age of 3 till 14. She was a drinker and a user and that took her away from us. I spent my life feeling sorry for myself that mum wasn't around and that dad wasn't looking after us properly. I had one sister and fought with her constantly for dad's attention. I learned at an early age to lie about why mum wasn't around; this was from shame, and quickly spread out into me lying all through my childhood. I always felt alone and not as good as everyone else; this meant I had to make up reasons why you would like me and become whatever I thought you wanted me to be. When I was found out for lying or generally felt set upon, I would lash out violently at the drop of a hat, and got into a lot of trouble with family and friends

I was gifted academically and was accepted into a prestigious selective high school; I only applied because I thought it would make my father happy. When I started attending I told so many lies about myself that I was quickly isolated; really what happened is that I isolated myself because, if I spent too much time around the same people, they would start doing incredibly unreadable things like taking an interest in the fanciful stories I would tell them! This meant I would be found out for lying (it was too hard to keep everything straight in my head).

My mother started to make a slow appearance in my life around this time. I had wanted her in my life so badly I didn't even question why she hadn't been there and forgave her instantly; this caused more friction between my sister and me. More friction meant I now felt even more isolated, I was scared all the time of being found out as a liar, so isolated myself even more.

I rarely went to school (1-2 days a week) but was still managing to squeak through the tests and maintain a passing grade. This stopped around 15 when I stopped going to school altogether as it was too hard to keep up the grade whilst not attending classes, and quitting meant I didn't have to be kicked out, which was easier for me to face.

I kicked around with a couple of friends until around 18 and got a job. I ended up working around 70 hours a week at an electronics company and loved the pay check. This also

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meant I didn't have time to face my life. I felt more alone and isolated than I thought possible. Around then I met a girl who had a couple of young kids who was struggling financially badly, and we grew close. This was the perfect relationship for me as I felt like I was the knight in shining armour, I would swoop in, fix all her problems and she would love me forever! Secretly I couldn't understand why I was always afraid of everyone and everything and couldn't find a way out. 24 comes around and disaster strikes, I lose the job. I go off the rails and have to hide in my house until I run out of money. I am now convinced that everything will be ok and I will be perfectly happy if only I am married. There would be no stress, I would not be alone and then I would feel better. I marry the girl mentioned earlier, get a job and take responsibility for making sure we have everything in the world we could need. To me this means things, possessions etc. I would be perfectly happy if only I had this new car, lived in that house etc.

After a year of marriage, I have 3 sons (1 biological, 2 adopted) and I am afraid of everything: money, people, failure etc. This despite the fact that I now have everything I thought I wanted. What was I to do now?

Thankfully I found a solution! Alcohol. It started harmless enough, 1 six pack of beer a week to have with the football match on TV. I found that I could spend the week looking forward to that perfect time when I would drink them, I would relax and be at ease. It was really like I spent the week with a belt around my chest

## The Mixer Statement of Purpose

*The Mixer*, for "people who normally would not mix" (Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 17), is a forum for AA members in Australia to share their experience, strength and hope with each other, that they may stay sober and help others to recover from alcoholism.

Stories are collected by a group of volunteer editors around Australia, who form an editorial group conscience for the magazine, together with the General Editor and technical and design team.

We, the editors and other volunteers contributing service to *The Mixer*, try to practice the AA principles in our work, being guided by the 12 Steps, 12 Traditions and 12 Concepts. All contributions present the views of the contributors, and do not represent the AA Fellowship as a whole.

*The Mixer* can be accessed online at our website:  
[www.aamixer.com](http://www.aamixer.com).

You can subscribe, contribute or offer service to *The Mixer* by contacting us by email at: [editor@aamixer.com](mailto:editor@aamixer.com).



cinched tight; I would live for the 2 hours when I could take it off and feel comfortable.

I quickly found that I could generate more reasons to drink if I had people over on the weekend for BBQs, socializing etc. I never really drank in bars because I was still afraid of people and wanted the safety of home. 1 drinking session a week turned into Friday and Saturday night. Thursday was also added to the list, as surely the weekend started on Thursday?

This continued for a few years before becoming worse; Wednesday then Tuesday were also added to the drinking schedule; but I didn't have a problem I would tell myself, I was not drinking in the mornings, had a stressful life (I told myself that), so drinking was perfectly acceptable. I tried repeatedly to cut down but found something always came up; I ALWAYS had a reason I couldn't not drink on a particular night. I still had a job, so everything is fine, I would tell myself. In fact, hadn't they promoted me several times, didn't I now have so much responsibility that of COURSE I had to drink? It was to be expected.

My wife stood by me, and now I am only living for the weekend. I am "maintenance" drinking throughout the week, just enough to knock me out for a few hours' sleep every night until Friday. Then it's on, Friday night drink as soon as I get in the door. Stop when I pass out. Wake up Saturday morning before everyone else and quickly drink enough to knock me out again before they awaken. Repeat on Sunday. I am now a prisoner in my home as I can't admit to them I have a problem, I have to hide the amount I am drinking (and we are talking huge amounts of cans here). This goes on week in and week out for 4-5 years, I am not 100% sure about how long. I decide I have to quit countless times, and can't.

I go cold turkey. After 3 days with no sleep at all I walk inside after having a smoke and everything goes black. I come to with the ambulance crew standing over me. I have had a seizure in front of my wife and kids. I am taken to hospital where I am told I have had a bleed to the brain. 3 days later I sign myself out so I can go back to work. Coming home, I tell my wife I am through with drinking; hell, I tell myself I am through with drinking. This dry spell lasts for a few months before I am secretly buying vodka on my way home on Fridays so I can drink when they all go to bed - god how I hate vodka. This continues for a few months until I no longer care if my family know, all that matters is that I be able to drink. My wife threatens to leave, my kids beg me to stop, nothing matters except the drink. I now hated myself for my weakness, I couldn't stop! Surely a decent man would stop for his family, I would ask myself, then get more to drink and tell myself, obviously, I wasn't decent.

I wanted to die but lacked the courage to end my life (another good reason to have another drink though). I am now 33, drink whenever I can and as much as I can, and have withdrawal symptoms every workday.

I can't go on. I contact the drug and alcohol centre in town and take some time off work. They tell me they will look into getting me detoxed and not to stop drinking in the

meantime as I will most likely go into seizures again. Excellent news! Someone has not only given me permission but actually told me to drink. I am too low to make use of my good fortune though, as the worst thing in the world has happened. There is no longer any relief at all in drinking. I might be able to drink enough to knock myself out but I have no peace.

I contacted a man who was described to me as being in AA by my aunty. He encouraged me to go to a meeting whilst I was waiting for my hospital bed. I saw at the meeting a glimmer of hope: here were all these people who weren't drinking. Even stranger, they appeared happy? I really couldn't figure that part out. They didn't mind that I was unshaved, smelly and drunk at the meetings. They said it was good to have me there and to "keep coming back". These people were really strange, I thought; but something really unbelievable happened. They were telling me the truth about themselves, they were not lying (by this stage I am pretty good at spotting a liar, as I am one myself), and for some unknown reason I started to tell them the truth as well.

I am still off work and get a call that they have a hospital bed ready for me. I go in and start the detox. This wasn't the best week of my life, I am seeing things that aren't there, hearing things that aren't there, and lying to the staff that I feel fine. I took a copy of the Big Book with me, as I remembered the last time I quit and didn't think I would be sleeping.

Well, something else very strange happened, I started reading this book written in the 1930s and it is all about me! Almost every line on every page must have been written about me!

The man I contacted in AA came to visit me in hospital. I had asked for his help by being my sponsor. I told him about the book being about me, he smiled and promised me that he could help me through the suggestions outlined in the book, that he would do anything he could to help.

When I got out of the hospital I started to work through the steps with my sponsor. I still felt terrible and afraid but knew I didn't have any other way out. It was this or die.

Within the next month, we started to go through the steps and were up to Step 4. It was time to go back to work and I wanted to just quit. He suggested I simply tell them the truth about why I had been away for the last month (they knew I was having "personal issues") but nothing further. The truth terrified me, it would be embarrassing (a fate worse than death in my mind!). He said the worst that could happen would be they let me go; and I really did like my job and had spent over 10 years climbing the ranks.

Because I had decided to go to any lengths to be free, I did as he suggested, convinced they would fire me on the spot for my problem.

When I explained, they didn't fire me, they thanked me for being honest! Asked if there was anything they could do to help, and assured me that if I need a protracted leave of absence it wouldn't be a problem.

Suddenly I had an example of where telling the truth, admitting my problem, didn't mean people pounced on me, they tried to help.

I set out on a course of action, working through the Steps as outlined in the Big Book like a man possessed. Every day brought me more relief and I started to feel whole, at ease and comfortable. I couldn't remember feeling this way my entire life.

By 2 months out of the hospital, I had completed most of my amends, with a couple outstanding as I can't track them down. I was doing the daily disciplines of Steps 10 & 11. I am studying the Traditions as they are helping me greatly to interact with people in AA and the world as a whole. I am starting to become free.

Today I am free of the desire to drink, I am at peace with my wife and kids, my family and the rest of the world. I know I will always be an alcoholic but I am recovered from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body. I am free from fear.

Just for today I have a peace in my life that grows each day, a faith in god's plan for me and a certainty that "just for today" can be every day if I am honest, humble & open minded. If I strive to share this gift of sobriety freely with all, it will ensure I am able to remain sober. These are the gifts I have been given in AA. My life is better than it has ever been and each day seems to be getting even better.

(Greg C)

## THE GREAT REALITY

The term "Great Reality" is used twice in the Big Book.

"We finally saw that faith in some kind of God was a part of our make-up, just as much as the feeling we have for a friend. Sometimes we had to search fearlessly, but He was there. He was as much a fact as we were. We found the Great Reality deep down within us. In the last analysis it is only there that He may be found. It was so with us" (page 55).

"The very practical approach to his problems, the absence of intolerance of any kind, the informality, the genuine democracy, the uncanny understanding which these people had were irresistible. He and his wife would leave elated by the thought of what they could now do for some stricken acquaintance and his family. They knew they had a host of new friends; it seemed they had known these strangers always. They had seen miracles, and one was to come to them. They had visioned the Great Reality—their loving and All Powerful Creator" (pages 160-161).

In both cases it referred to my own personal discovery of God, a Higher Power, a Power Greater than myself. And from page 55 in indicates that it must be found "deep down within us."

In other words I must find, decide, vision my own concept of God and it's not found out there in a book, building or another person.

For myself it's an ongoing process that is refined by my own experiences with that Power.

I have been quick "to see where religious people were right", their conceptions and guidelines were perfect for them and the basics of many coincided with my own moral principles.

But in the end it must be me who chooses faith over fear and becomes God reliant, no human power could relieve my alcoholism.

(Agatha M)

## RE: SPONSORSHIP

In reality, sponsorship began with the beginning of the Program.

In the early days, you had to be SPONSORED into AA.

Your sponsor introduced you to the Program and the meetings. Not only that, your sponsor was responsible for your behaviour in meetings; even for cleaning up after you if you got sick in meetings.

Here are short excerpts from the first pamphlet ever written concerning sponsorship, by Clarence H. Snyder in early 1944. Its original title was to be "A.A. Sponsorship...Its Obligations and Its Responsibilities", but printed by the Cleveland Central Committee under the title: "A.A. Sponsorship . . . Its Opportunities and Its Responsibilities."

### "PREFACE

Each member of Alcoholics Anonymous is a potential sponsor of a new member and should clearly recognize the obligations and duties of such responsibility.

The acceptance of an opportunity to take the A.A. plan to a sufferer of alcoholism entails very real and critically important responsibilities.

Each member, undertaking the sponsorship of a fellow alcoholic, must remember that he is offering what is frequently the last chance of rehabilitation, sanity or maybe life itself.

Happiness, Health, Security, Sanity and Life of human beings are the things we hold in balance when we sponsor an alcoholic.

No member among us is wise enough to develop a sponsorship program that can be successfully applied in every case.

In the following pages, however, we have outlined a suggested procedure, which supplemented by the member's own experience, has proven successful...

### QUALIFY AS AN ALCOHOLIC

1. In calling upon a new prospect, it has been found best to qualify oneself as an ordinary person who has found happiness, contentment, and peace of mind through A.A.

Immediately make it clear to the prospect that you are a person engaged in the routine business of earning a living.

Tell him\* your only reason for believing yourself able to help him is because you yourself are an alcoholic and have had experiences and problems that might be similar to his.

(\*The masculine form is used throughout for simplicity, although it is intended to include women as well.)

#### TELL YOUR STORY

2. Many members have found it desirable to launch immediately into their personal drinking story, as a means of getting the confidence and whole-hearted co-operation of the prospect.

It is important in telling the story of your drinking life to tell it in a manner that will describe an alcoholic, rather than a series of humorous drunken parties.

This will enable the man to get a clear picture of an alcoholic which should help him to more definitely decide whether he is an alcoholic.

#### INSPIRE CONFIDENCE IN A.A.

3. In many instances the prospect will have tried various means of controlling his drinking, including hobbies, church, changes of residence, change of associations, and various control plans. These will, of course, have been unsuccessful.

Point out your series of unsuccessful efforts to control drinking...their absolute fruitless results and yet that you were able to stop drinking through application of A.A. principles.

This will encourage the prospect to look forward with confidence to sobriety in A.A. in spite of the many past failures he might have had with other plans.”

Even though SPONSORSHIP is not mentioned in the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* (the 'Big Book'), I would suggest that sponsorship was the rule, from the beginning, and not something added later.

Bill called Ebby his sponsor until death, even though Ebby slipped a few times.

But the chain of sponsorship starts with Rowland H., who sponsored Shep C. and Cebra G., who sponsored Ebby, who sponsored Bill, who sponsored Bob who, together, sponsored Bill D., etc.

In "Dr. Bob and the Good Old Timers," it's clear that NO ONE just sauntered in off the streets and decided to join AA. Instead they were sponsored into the group FROM a hospital, and wouldn't even attend a meeting unless they went through Dr. Bob's Upper Room treatment where they "made a surrender", often a key element missing from modern AA.

Also in that book, it's described how the group got together and pooled their money to bus a guy in who "supposedly" was the first to get sober on JUST THE BOOK.

When the bus arrived and a man, matching his description, didn't get off the bus, the group asked the bus driver. They were told of a guy under the seat drunk on his bus. The group of sober drunks, of course, helped the drunk off and began to sponsor him.

I always thought that was interesting and have often wondered if it was truly possible to get sober ON THE BOOK ALONE.

Even if you did, you would need to take the advice in A Vision For You and seek out drunks to form a fellowship, thus becoming a sponsor.

I think the real questions are, when did sponsorship become optional and how did sober drunks stop seeking to sponsor and started waiting for someone to ask them.

Or even the notion of being told, "you must get a sponsor," when did that start?

(Doris R)

## DEALING WITH DISRUPTION AT MEETINGS

At the 2019 AA Conference just held, dealing with disruptions in meetings was again discussed, as it has been over the years. *The Mixer* is probably a good avenue for those AA groups who have had to address this issue to share how they approached it.

I would like to pass on a procedure that came about over 20 years ago resulting from dealing with angry/abusive behaviour from the floor or the body of the meeting.

It was brought about in discussion in group conscience, with the intent of group members pursuing their responsibility to ensure the safe space and the First Tradition.

The main point of dealing with any disruption at a meeting is that it is not up to just one member in their role as Chair or Secretary, but for the group conscience to act as a whole, as not every member has the skills, confidence or presence to be able to act alone.

(This practice below would occur at a Sydney inner city meeting in the '90s to deal with a person with mental health problems. He would come to the meeting when affected because, although he could not work out the problem, he knew the group would respond and get him to a suitable safe institution.)

This procedure should be discussed at group conscience beforehand to have a plan of action for all group members to be able to assist.

PROCEDURE: (in essence)

1. If a disruption is occurring during a meeting - at some point/signal, the members of the group conscience stand as one and pause... (this may be enough to stop the disruption).

2. If the disruption continues - a spokesperson says: "your behaviour/comments are disrupting the meeting and the group conscience requires you to stop immediately and quietly allow the meeting to continue."
3. If the disruption continues, the spokesperson calls upon all those in the meeting who consider the behaviour/comments disruptive to the purpose of the meeting carrying the message - to stand as well.
4. If the bulk of the meeting stands in support, the spokesperson again calls on the person to stop immediately and quietly allow the meeting to continue, and that members will discuss their concerns at the end of the the meeting (where a group conscience may occur).
5. If the disruption persists (which by now would vindicate that the person INTENDS solely to disrupt the meeting, and is not just venting inappropriately) OR other members present 'side' with the disruptor and arguments follow - then the meeting has broken down and should be called to a close with the Serenity Prayer.
6. On closing the meeting, packing up and leaving the premises: if outside, the disruption persists - then it could now be a matter for the Police.

This is based on experience and may serve as a starting point for discussion at meetings. It would be interesting to hear the experience of and methods used by other groups to address disruptive, abusive or domineering behaviour.

In service,

(Peter J, Sydney)

## EXCERPTS FROM *CASTLE OF SHADOWS* BY ARCHIE MCKINNON

(We have attempted to find out who are the copyright owners of this remarkable book, long out of print, without success. Anyone with information please contact us at the email address at the bottom of this page)

"In 1964, I retired from the New South Wales Department of Public Health after more than thirty years as a psychiatric nurse. During those thirty years I saw many great changes in the care and treatment of those suffering from neurotic and psychotic illness, but with only one kind of patient have I seen what I believe to be definite and lasting arrestment of the condition.

That class of patient is the alcoholic. The change was wrought by the unique blend of group therapy, spiritual regeneration and fellowship offered by Alcoholics Anonymous. I saw the birth of Alcoholics Anonymous in Australia. In fact, I a non-alcoholic, acted in the role of midwife.

The story of the first group of Alcoholics Anonymous in this country is closely identified with an old castle-like building at Darlinghurst, Sydney, New South Wales. This grim, sandstone edifice, known as the Darlinghurst Reception House, was the receiving house or admission centre from 1865 to 1961 for people of the State of New South Wales who were thought to have strayed from what was considered to be the norm of human behaviour.

The modernising of the building in 1936 introduced many changes that permitted better care of and comfort for patients, but in the process we lost what had been considered the most important room in the "House" (as it was called), the padded cell. However, when the reconstruction was completed it was still a secure castle from which few inmates ever escaped, and in the minds of so many who passed through its portals during nearly one hundred years, it still remained a "Castle of Shadows".

To this old House came people who lived in a fantastic world of make believe, the maniacs, the depressives, mental defectives, the victims of the schizophrenia that is the scourge of youth, alcoholics and drug addicts, attempted suicides, and all the odd characters who constitute the lunatic fringe of a great metropolis. The Reception House was a half-way house for the mentally disturbed, for after admission, they were held for observation on a Court remand. On the reports of the staff on their behaviour during the remand period depended their fate: either discharge back into society, or committal by the Lunacy Court to a psychiatric hospital for treatment...

(p.8) As I became interested in chronic alcoholism, I read all the material available on the subject, most of which was quite familiar to me from actual experience; but in mid-1944 I discovered an article in the *American Journal of Psychiatry* which opened up a quite different approach to the matter.

The article that changed - or crystallised - my whole thinking concerning the problem of chronic alcoholism, and which was to lead to the founding of Alcoholics Anonymous in Australia, was written by a prominent American psychiatrist, Dr .H. M. Tiebout. It was called The Therapeutic Mechanism of Alcoholics Anonymous. Dr. Tiebout described this organisation, popularly known as "A.A.", and analysed its methods of working, quoting a recovery rate of 75% of those who sincerely tried its methods.

I thought about this Alcoholics Anonymous organisation for some weeks and finally made up my mind to write to the editor of the *American Journal* for information. In answer to my enquiry, I received by air mail, on September 29th, 1944, a copy of the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* sent by Bobbie Berger, then General Secretary of A.A. in New York. It told the story of how thousands of men and women recovered from alcoholism through adoption of the A.A. way of life...subsequently I found that Dr. S. J. Minogue, a Sydney psychiatrist, had received a copy from Bobbie Berger on February 2nd, 1943, more than eighteen months earlier...

(pp. 14-16) Bill was a patient of long standing and of frequent admissions; in fact, he had the second largest official file of all the alcoholic patients at that time... I had hoped that

he would be the one to start the first group, and was very dependent on his attitude to the A.A. book, for I felt that if his reactions were negative I may have second thoughts about the therapeutic value of A.A.

Bill studied the book carefully, and it was evident that he was deeply impressed - so much so that he sat up late that night transcribing many pages for future reference. On the following day, December 11, 1944, he was removed to Morisset Mental Hospital, where he remained for nearly twelve months.

With Bill gone, I was continually on the look-out for a prospect to start a group... Then on February 28th, 1945, an alcoholic was admitted who seemed to be the person I was waiting for. His name was Rex, he was 38 years old, a member of a prominent banking family, educated at a famous school and was divorced...

I gave Rex time to get sufficiently well to be interested, then introduced him to the A.A. book. He studied it carefully for two days, during which we also discussed every aspect of chronic alcoholism that we knew. It was evident that the book impressed him in much the same way as it had impressed Bill, and soon he made up his mind to try the A.A. way of life.

So Rex became the cornerstone of the first Australian A.A. Group, which was to be the mother group of all A.A. in Australia, and the first group in the world outside America...

(p.26) A.A. was nearly a year old, and my old friend, Bill, the first reader of the A.A. Book, had just completed his period of detention under the Inebriate Act. Instead of getting straight on to the liquor, as he had always previously done after discharge, he remained sober and came direct to the Group...

(p.79) Alcoholics have a radar-like sensitivity towards their own kind and seem to know without telling whether or not a person is an alcoholic. This was frequently demonstrated at the old Reception House. Newly-admitted alcoholics, after completion of formalities, would be turned out into the courtyard amongst a mixed collection of schizophrenics, paranoids, paraphrenics, congenital mental defectives, sufferers from mania, attempted suicides and alcoholics.

The newcomer, after surveying this motley collection of humanity for about thirty seconds, would walk over, sit beside a fellow alcoholic, and immediately drop into a conversation with him, for all the world as if they were old friends. I used to check up on this until eventually I got tired of it; for, invariably, they had been unknown to each other.

Although I often seem, among members of A.A., to have been accepted into this masonry of alcoholics, yet I always feel like an intruder, and sense that I am more tolerated than welcome. A few who correspond with me with unflinching regularity from far distant places, or others who sometimes speak of me at A.A. meetings, reassure me to some extent in the belief that I have made some slight impact on these so very exclusive people after all. Yet, I often wonder . . .

The choice of a group by a member is much more important than is generally thought. I believe that a new member must move from group to group until he finds the level at which the greatest rapport can be developed; for although alcohol is the great leveller, bringing all eventually to rock-bottom, one of the main therapeutic benefits springing from group therapy is a high level of rapport between members. With this rapport comes an easing of tension, a sense of freedom and of belonging which is demonstrated by participation in group activities and discussions, and in a sense of togetherness.

## GENERAL EDITOR'S NOTE

As mentioned in the previous issue, this is my last issue as General Editor of *The Mixer*. To date, no-one has volunteered to take over my service role, so *The Mixer* will be in abeyance. The website and email will be maintained for a year more: if anyone is interested in taking on this commitment, please get in contact at the email below.

I would like to thank that small group of members who have helped to keep *The Mixer* going for these last three years, including the committee of editors and the many contributors from Australia and overseas, including repeat contributors. We have had some great shares. In an age where many AA members have become conscientious scholars of the Big Book and other literature, I believe there is an important need for members today to share their own experience, strength and hope in print in their own terms, in the language of the heart, to keep the AA message fresh and relevant.

## AA PREAMBLE ©

*Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.*

*The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for A.A. membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. A.A. is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy, neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.*

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