



The “lone”

Writer in the storm (1)

The Starting Gun

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This will be my first blog ever. I’m going to do this because I think that I have two things worth sharing, my voice and the journey I have walked and walk still today. And, you can only be asked to start a blog by so many people before you finally listen. Know first off that I am not an editor so prepare yourself for the occasional typo/grammatical error. It’s going to happen guaranteed. So please spare me any feedback on that. What will follow is the story of how I got here on the verge or at the precipice of so much I have dreamed of for so long. As

dreams begin to unfold and the faintest glimmer of light at the end of the tunnel is actually viewable, although we question if it's a mirage of the heart like we've seen before, one can't help but dream of the finish line or the end, or the goal? And it's at the end I think we most often think back to the beginning and what we've paid, lost, loved, learned and sacrificed along the way. This also leads to the most haunting question in my life that is yet to be answered, what if behind the finish line lays yet another race to run and still more flesh that must be sacrificed? Will the sacrifices be worth it? But before we get there let me introduce myself.

My name is Damien. When asked what my passion is I always have two answers, life and the written word. The two are absolutely synonymous with the other. Words after all are just letters, symbols in an alphabet. Without life, words have no soul, no meaning and take us nowhere. And from the other side, without words life can only be lived in a fraction of what it is with them. It's with words after all that we describe and remember life as it happens. Words are how we remember how she felt in your arms, what was revealed at that moment that changed everything, the color of a distant storm rolling in over the ocean and the way we share with others the very experience of life its self. Without words we rob our own soul of so much. Writing is without a doubt my love and I believe my gift. We all have at least one talent that stands above the rest of our gifts and sadly most of us never discover it or give ourselves the chance to know our own gift. I just happen to think I'm one of the lucky few that know my own. And if it's not a talent which is ultimately up to you the reader, it's still my love so I will forge ahead regardless of any one opinion. Hell I'll forge ahead regardless of everyone's opinion, I always have, which is another

reason I'm writing this story. It's for those who have a passion or a dream that they believe in enough that no matter what the world thinks, they are willing to chase it, even in the storms of life. No matter what your dream is, no one will ever believe in it as deeply as you should. This is not going to be a vanity piece on myself either because right here and now I'm telling you that with every success I've had, there have been two failures or setbacks, but that part of the story will come later.

At this moment my very talented and thank GOD, patient Editor is working on my latest manuscript titled "My aunt Charlotte." It's the best thing I've ever done. Also, I invented a device that is of a sexual nature for couples called the Stixler and am finally about to launch the company/product with one of my best friends. I will talk about her later in this story; she's a major role in the movie of my life. And I am about to start another company with my cousin as well. I will leave the name of the company a secret for now but I believe it has huge potential, and I will be working with one of my best friends/cousin on it. And after several auditions with a television network which stemmed from a random/last minute email from an old friend, I may be embarking on a part time television job. I signed a gag clause so for now the show and network will have to remain a secret too but I will share as soon as I can. I will say this though; it has to do with food! All this is happening right now, while I juggle friends, love life, finances, family, my obsession with economics and politics, relocating, and working on my next labor of love/novel. "Hence The Lone Writer in the Storm" If only there were more lives to live.

Fate is player in this story but also my willingness to swing for the fences when chance presents its self. Although you may strike out,

never once has a homerun been hit without that risk. Don't forget Babe Ruth holds the major league record for the most strike outs, but is that what you remember about the man? So no I'm not ashamed of my strikeouts and at the end of my story I am willing to risk how I too will be remembered for the chance of a dream. A coward I am not, foolish at times..... Absolutely!!! The road of a writer is a very solitary thing which is of course the nature of the beast. You are creating something from your inner thoughts and emotions. It can also at times be very lonely and at times very frustrating, but as any artist will tell you, I didn't choose this. I have no option in it. Words are something inside that tie to my emotions and I am admittedly a slave to them. I have a very strict rule on what I consider a fellow artist BTW. If you create from raw emotion something that is truly yours then you are an artist, if you are just a puppet or delivery device then you are not an artist. Not at all taking away from the talent of anyone, but having a pretty face for the camera as you say someone else's words at someone else's direction, in a wardrobe someone else chose, etc,. Well you're a talented delivery device. Musician's, the same goes for you. Standing behind a microphone with a great voice on television singing someone else's songs does not make you an artist, we all know the difference. Talented performer and performing Artist are not the same thing. Contributing to the world even if it's only a handful of people, something only you can give, that's art.

So here is how it will go. With each entry I will update on how everything currently is progressing as well as a piece of the background story that got me here. I will try and update weekly. Please feel free to share this with anyone you feel has a dream and that you believe in

regardless of the storms we must all face. This is a story of whatever it takes.

(1)

A few days ago we got what I am hoping the final prototype to the device. It's remained almost the same for a while with slight modifications but we want it to be perfect, after all you only get one shot at a first impression. The motor of choice has been selected after much deliberation. Sampling from different manufacturer's has been quiet the learning experience. Did you know that apparently every company is "the most reliable and cares most about my business's needs?" ...so they say. We still have some work to do with the website as well as other small pieces of the business but we are so close. We're planning a launch event which will probably be much bigger than I was expecting considering the people putting it on. I am constantly shocked at how willing to help and excited people have been about the project. Yes of course I have lots of people who volunteer to test it, but I'm talking about people willing to help with their professional skills. Engineering, marketing, finance, retail expertise, etc,. The board for my little company will be much more impressive than I would have ever thought with quit the who's who from business and media. My business partner is out in Cali taking care of some business at the moment. Our manufacturer we finally chose to work with is based in Atlanta which is so convenient because that's where I plan to base our operations and will be moving back to so to start the new business with my Cuz. I was supposed to move back some time back but that's another story. There was always something that kept me in Nashville

for just a little longer, but that time has passed. Although I've lay my head down in many other places, Georgia is my home. I've been in Nashville now for almost two years, I can't believe it's been that long and all that has transpired in that time. I will detail the situation more later in the story but when I first moved to Nashville I was sharing a 3 bedroom townhouse with 4 others and sleeping on an air mattress that leaked just slow enough so that I didn't notice until the next morning (every day) when I woke up in the middle the deflated mattress/plastic taco as it wrapped around me. I have since succeeded beyond the air mattress. I'm heading home this week to do some preliminary work with my Cuz on the new company in preparation for its launch as well as go to my parent's annual Christmas party. God I swear time speeds up as we age. It seems like yesterday I was going home for last year's Christmas party. It's amazing, in that brief time, just how much life can move. But in truth the only consistency in life I have ever encountered that does not change, is its inconsistency and how all things in life are guaranteed to eventually change. You can bank on that. I meet with my editor next week for coffee and to go over a few plans with "My Aunt Charlotte". I am very fortunate to have an editor that cares for and sees the magic in that story that I see. I am most proud of that book above everything I've ever done.

After college I decided I wanted to try my hand at acting. Until I was in college I had no idea even what a monologue was. In fact I had to look up the definition of the word after I read on a flyer that the Theater Department was offering a few scholarships. The audition for the scholarship was a one minute monologue. I come from a working class family where we all care for each other in the way that family

should. My mother and father were both working hard to put me through college. I chose the college I eventually went to because I didn't want my family to have to pay for out of state tuition. My brother would be entering college in the next two years and then the burden would double for my parents. For most of the years my brother and I were in both high school and all the years we were in College, my father had more over time hours worked than any other man at the power plant he worked at, and my mother provided daycare for several kids in our home as she worked on her home made crafts which she has always sold. They worked hard to pay for my brother and my own education so when the opportunity came up to go for a scholarship of any kind I took it. I will never forget my first audition. I chose the monologue "The Contender." The monologue that Marlon Brando gives in the cab to his brother in the film "The Waterfront." I walked out on that stage as clueless as a kid has ever been and just before I started I thought about my parents and how hard they were working for me, this was the least I could do for them. For some reason I imagined both of their hands, as they worked so hard. It created a small piece of emotion in me that was delivered through the monologue. I believe it was my first self-taught "method acting" lesson. A day later I was informed I got the scholarship and then became a "Thespian." No it was no prior dream of mine, nor did I have delusions of grandeur. I was a jock in high school and knew nothing of the "artsy fartsy" things. But still this was a way of helping my family pay for school, so I would adapt as best I could. Did I mention I was a frat boy? So I was a contradiction to every world I found myself in at College. Frat boys were not in the theater and theater folk were not frat boys. It was a great picking point for all of my fraternity brothers of

course to throw all the clique's of theater at me. I took it with good humor of course. You better have thick skin to have friends like these. But I will never forget, after my very first show I ever did, with a whole two lines in the entire show. When I came out for the curtain call it seemed that half of the audience erupted in applause and cheers for me over the rest of the actors. I looked out past the stage lights to see most of my fraternity had showed up to support me that night. No doubt some of the best friends I will ever have. Also for the record, all frat boys are not rich, I became the house manager so I didn't have to pay dues and living in the house was actually cheaper than an apartment. I was then the VP of Finance because he didn't have to pay dues and then became the President because he didn't have to pay dues. So other than my pledge semester, I never paid any dues to be in my fraternity because I held every position that allowed me not to. So at this time I also had to of course pretend to the people in charge of the theater Department that this acting thing was something I indeed wanted to study to keep the scholarship....I had to at least minor in it while on the scholarship. So I did for two years until my pre-requisites classes (for any degree) were done. At that point I gave up the scholarship and changed my Major to Economics, but had accidentally fallen in love with performing arts in the mean while and continued to work in some of the shows.

So after graduation I of course moved in with my parents. It was 2003 and the economy had fallen with the twin towers just two years earlier. At a time most financial companies were laying off employees with tenures ranging in the decades I was looking for a job to take a risk on me, someone with absolutely no experience. I knew I wanted to be in the city and yet had no job to pay for the move so I made a plan and



knew it would have to be creative. I could wait tables somewhere till I found a job in Finance. I figured if I was going to wait tables I could work at night and perhaps get an agent and go to auditions in the day. So that was my plan. Next I had to find the right restaurant to work at. I figured that if I was going to wait tables I might as well work somewhere expensive and make as much money as possible. I remembered back in High School going to a restaurant called the Sun Dial for prom one year. It was expensive and sat atop the Westin Peachtree plaza on the 71-73 floors in downtown Atlanta. Immediately I knew that was my target, one the money would be good, the view would be great and since it was owned by the Westin it would perhaps come with benefits and if there was one reoccurring piece of advice I had heard over the years about a “good” job, it was one with benefits....Whatever those were. So my next dilemma was experience. The Sun Dial was a fine dinning restaurant and I had only worked at an O’Charly’s. I would need wine knowledge and cuisine etiquette and all I knew was how to hustle unlimited roles and loaded potato soup to the people going to and coming from Talladega race track. So I called up one of my friends from college that had left school to manage a nice restaurant. I explained to him what was going on and asked him what I would need to know. He gave me a list of a few varietals of wine everyone in a restaurant should know at the least. At this point in my life I was an absolute novice in wine. Boone’s Farm was as far as it went and I did know the word Merlo but couldn’t have even told you if it was red or white. He then gave me a few restaurant terms to memorize, then said good luck. I asked him for one more favor which he agreed to. Good friends are valuable resources BTW. I asked him if I could use him for a personal reference and he suggested putting

instead on the resume that I had worked for him at his restaurant and to reference him as my ex-manager. Brilliant!!! So yea, I lied on my resume. Don't judge me!!! HA

The next day I found a parking spot in a nice location close to where the Westin sits in downtown. Resume in hand, Frat boy tie and blazer with khakis clad, I got out of my car and asked the gentleman walking down the street if he thought it was ok to park in this spot. He said absolutely, its no problem at all. I started walking around the building obviously lost until that same nice man in his old tattered jacket asked me if I needed help? He was carrying a couple flowers for some reason which I found odd but I didn't question. Not like florist cut flowers, but garden flowers, as if he had just picked them. Buttercups to be exact. I was not expecting to find any help in the "Big cold City." I said "yes I was looking for a job here at this building and needed to find the employee entrance." He said he could help and walked me around the building and showed me the door. I thanked him and as I walked away he asked me if I could help him?

"With what?"

"Well ya see I'm stranded right now. My car broke down a few blocks away and I'm short a cab fare. Could you spare a couple dollars?" I didn't have many dollars mind you but how could I say no to a person in need, especially one that had just helped me. So I gave him the last five bucks I had. He thanked me and that was it.

I went in to the human resource department and said I was here applying for a server position I had seen online for the Sun Dial restaurant. The lady looked over her glasses at me and asked if I had emailed my resume in. I said "no, I decided to bring it in, in person.

Perhaps I could meet the manager and give it to him or her personally.” She smiled at the naive kid in front of her then said, “nope.” Here give it to me. I did and watched as she turned away from me and went back to her computer and whatever she was doing. She tossed my resume in a stack of papers behind her. A little defeated I left the building, knowing that my name would only be a piece of paper in an ocean of other hopeful names desperate for a job. I looked up to the top of the building that towered above me. It was so high that it made me stumble back a few steps as I looked up to the top. I had my little manila folder in hand, minus one resume with one more to spare. At that moment, something in me changed. I got angry. I wasn’t angry at the woman in Human Resources for treating me like everyone else, I was angry at myself for being like everyone else. It was true, life was a rat race and I a rat chasing the cheese. Just when I thought I was special and the exception. I mopped back to my car and had already giving up on the plan of moving to Atlanta. I got in and started to put my keys in the ignition just in time to notice that there was something under my wiper blade. I got out and read the yellow piece of paper which turned out to be a parking ticket!!! “GREAT!!!,” I yelled. I came looking for a job and wound up having to pay a ticket instead!!! And thanks to me feeling sorry for that idiot that said parking here was no problem, I don’t even have any money to buy lunch!!!! I distinctly remember these exact next words coming out of my mouth as I glanced back up to the top of the Westin building. They went exactly like this, “FUCK THAT!!!” I again thought of the anger with myself for being just like everyone else. I encouraged myself to stop being a pussy and grabbed my last resume. I marched back inside the building, only this time through the guest entrance. I walked to the elevators designated for

the restaurant only. The greeter at the desk just in front of the elevators said, “Sir, will you be having lunch with us today?”

“Absolutely,” I said. “Also I’m supposed to be meeting with the manager on duty as well could you let them know I’m on my way up,” I said flashing my folder at him, with my stomach churning. He opened the elevator door for me and said he would inform the manager I was here. The doors shut and up 72 floors I went, forever leaving behind a piece of my naive innocence I had walked into this building with only twenty minutes earlier.

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The “Lone”

Writer in the Storm (2)

Uncle Damien

It's been an interesting week for sure. I am overwhelmed with the viewership and feedback I have gotten on my first blog entry. Over a 1,000 views in my the first week from 11 different countries. Thank you all so much for helping me with this and being a part of this journey I'm on. The feedback I'm getting is so helpful and uplifting as well as entertaining. Apparently I am someone's reincarnated grandfather and at least two people's soul mate. I'm sorry to all of the messages and questions I have yet to be able to respond to but I will answer a couple of the reoccurring questions that I got several times. I especially enjoy the questions on my writing.

- 1) No, I am not married and yes I am single. Yes I do someday hope to have a family of my own. I love children and the thought of being with that special girl I love enough to want to spend my life with is something I think every man wants, I know I do.
- 2) My process of writing is what I call "by the seat of my pants." I plan very little of what I am going to write about before sitting down and just getting to it. When working on my novel I know the beginning and the end and fill in the middle. I know the goal of where I need to get to but have no clue how I will until it happens. The true creative part of writing I think is getting to a point in the story that even I am surprised what happens. To me the hardest part is coming up with the names of the characters. I do have my quirks though when I work. I have to be left alone but require what I call a constant distraction. I cannot write without music!!! It is an absolute must and I need for it to dominate my senses. What I mean is I wear headphones so nothing else can be heard and there can be no words to the music. The words are my

job. I write to movie scores most often. Thomas Newman is my favorite no doubt. He wrote the scores for (The Green Mile, American Beauty, The Help, Meet Joe black, Etc.,) I visualize the story like a movie, I see it happening and then I simply describe what I see. That's the best I can do to describe how I work.

3) I don't know where my ideas come from but I do know that when I write what I consider "emotional triggers" that I hope the reader can relate to, those come from real life observations. I enjoy watching people and am often moved by small things that I feel most people don't see simply because they're not looking. But I'm under the impression that amazing happens around us every day and all the time. For example, I was putting my seatbelt on the other day in Wal-Mart parking lot. I saw an older couple walking toward the car beside my own. The older gentleman had on black glasses and was obviously blind as he held to tight to his wife's arm while taking careful steps. I watched him get to the car and gently push his wife to the side of him, he then proceeded to open the drivers side door for her. She got in and he closed the door and slowly felt his way around the car till he got to the passenger side where he got in and the two drove away. I found this single gesture so endearing and so wonderful. First, hats off to those who can be a gentleman regardless of his situation but two, I could only imagine what love and respect they must have held for other. It was moving and an emotional trigger for me. I take what I observe and do my best to translate it into words and again do my best to weave it into my stories. I hope that answers a couple of the questions. I will touch more later on my writing and personal life.

Now on to this week's events. You know how sometimes you hear that song that you wanted to hear or that you needed to hear, well the same works in reverse. This last week, although it's been mainly dominated with forward movement, it's also been overshadowed by those songs you do not want to hear. Like being on the beach on the perfect day all the while seeing a storm looming, ever approaching. Songs that lend the questions of "what if" and "if only." I think it a safe assumption to believe there will always be some things we may question that there is no answer to and although we may try and try to understand, could there be a comfort in knowing perhaps sometimes there is no answer other than on occasion life just gets in the way. But in closing on this, which I do realize I have left somewhat vague, I think it sad to find or look for a single failure within such a rare and blooming success even when we know it's the best decision. But I fear it may come too with a sting that could haunt for some time to come. In my preparation to leave Nashville, some goodbyes are easier than others. "long I stood and looked down one road as far I could...Yet knowing how way leads on to way, I doubted if I should ever come back, I shall be telling this with a sigh, somewhere ages and ages hence."

I traveled to Atlanta to begin working with my cousin on the new company. It appears I will soon become the guy with two cell phones..... My tether to the world becomes even stronger. Scary as hell but hey everyone else is doing it right??? I'm very excited though to begin the work and love watching as ideas come together to create something tangible. Spoke with my business partner out in Cali this week and am happy that things seem to be moving in the right direction for her. I am currently doing a lot of research on internet

marketing and wow what an amazing world it is we live in. I love discovering just how little about everything I know. But it a goal of mine to learn all there is to know about e-marketing asap. I had coffee with my Editor for “My Aunt Charlotte,” and we put down a few timetables as well as other ideas for me as a writer to establish myself. She is such a great friend that I can speak candidly to her and thankfully too, well versed in the process and wants of the business/commercial side of literature.

Up and up I went in the glass elevator that seemed as though it would never stop. I couldn't help but think of the elevator Charlie and Mr. Wonka took at the end of Charlie and the Chocolate Factory. Finally the elevator did stop and opened on the 72 floor. I walked out and told the greeter at the desk that I was supposed to meet with the manager on duty and the guy down stairs had told me to come on up and wait.

“Yes, he'll be with you shortly. Feel free to walk around the observation floor,” the girl told me. The view was unreal, as the Sun Dial is one big window that looks out in every direction as far as the eye can see. Overwhelming would better describe it as the senses have a hard time taking it all in. Every second you look out you find something new, great nourishment for a hungry imagination. There are no walls at all that obstruct the 360 deg view. It's unreal how far out one can see. For those familiar with the area of Atlanta this will help gage the distance. On one side of the building I could see out as far as Cartersville. I know this because I could see the twin Smoke Stacks at the Bowen power plant which gave me a nice sense of home as several friends and relatives have worked there. A nice reminder that although we may feel far away, we never really are. Just under that view was an



area called the Vining's, where I unknowingly would eventually move to but that was still some time out. Just a few blocks away was the Georgia Tech football stadium and the Olympic Village that had been built to house the visiting international athletes' back in 1996. Just around the building was the Centennial Olympic Park. I could see people that looked like ants playing in the shooting fountains that were arranged in the shape of the Olympic rings. Yet further on the back side of the building I could see the Georgia dome where the falcons played as well as Turner Stadium and in the distance I watched my first of what would eventually number into the many hundreds, that first airplane in the distance leaving Hartsfield airport. Where were they going, I wondered? Being a big fan of "going" myself, I was a little envious. But I too was going, moving on with my life and this, today could be a good starting point for that, I thought.

"Excuse me sir," a voice from behind me called. I turned to see a well groomed gentleman coming my way. "Are you here for the interview?"

"Yes, that's me. Hi my name is Damien," I said extending my hand to the guy. I knew all about social etiquette, so firm gripped with constant eye contact I took the man's extended hand. He introduced himself and told me, "no one told me I had an interview today. I'm sorry I haven't looked at nor do I have your resume with me."

"Well that's ok, I won't hold it against you this time," I said not believing the words as they left my mouth. The man laughed which somehow released my anxiety as well as filled me with confidence that I seldom have a lack of anyway. This also opened the door to allow the quick on my feet stage actor to appear and step in Damien's stead.

“And it’s a good thing I came prepared, I brought an extra one in just in case,” I said taking out my resume and handing it to him as he walked me down the stairs to the empty restaurant. He read over the resume silently, which made him as much of an expert on what it read as I was, since I had only read the fictional piece once myself. He pulled out a seat for me at a table and sat across from me.

“Give me just one moment so I can finish going over this. They are supposed to send up these resume’s beforehand,” he said almost embarrassed.

“Well I met Mrs. Personality down in your HR, so I can sympathize with the problems I’m sure you face dealing with them.” Damn that felt good saying.

“Oh you have no idea,” he said scanning the lines. Damn that felt good hearing. “You don’t really have a lot of experience I see in restaurants.”

“No not as much as some I’m sure, I’ve been wasting the last four years (five in truth) getting my bachelor’s degree in business. So as far as waiting tables goes I could only work in the evenings and weekends unless my class load was just too much then I’d have to take the semester off. But you’re an educated man I can tell, so I’m sure you understand.” Now I know this was a cheese ball line to throw but again if you don’t swing for the fences when opportunity presents its self well.... He put the resume down on the table and looked me in the eye with a smirk.

“Actually yes, I can.” Holy shit....He bought it, I’m already rounding first base. Dance puppets dance, I though until.... he asked me

to sell him a dish from the last restaurant I worked at. Damn.....I didn't know any dishes, so I told him that the restaurant (although it serves Cajun Cuisine in reality) was famous for their local southern cuisine. And in the best description I could muster I described my mother's Meat Loaf....

"Hmmm sounds good. Perhaps I'll have to give it a try some time." This was his poker bluff and I had to make the call so I did, but I chose to not only call him on it but also to raise him by two.

"Oh it is, it's a must try but be careful because sometimes it will come back to haunt you the next morning," I said almost whispering as though it were a secret. "Just let me know when you want to go by there, the Manager and I have a great relationship and I'll make sure they take good care of you."

"Ok I certainly will. What kind of wine knowledge do you have?"

"I'm going to be honest with you, I know there is a lot more to learn about wine which I am eager to do. In fact I certainly hope you have some good literature for me to study when I train to work here, that is of course if you make the smart decision of hiring me," I said with a chuckle. I had to remain in control of this part of the conversation and didn't want him to ask me something I didn't know about wine which was pretty much everything so again I threw out my best play with all the knowledge I did have memorized. "I know the major varietal's and descriptions and pairings. I'm sure you guys sell a lot of big Cab's, merlot, and pino's. I myself am more of a Chardonnay guy and on hot days I prefer a nice Sauvignon Nak."

"Don't you mean Sauvignon Blanc," he asked?

“I’m sorry, didn’t I say that? Anyway I have to ask you though, what kind of cuisine does your chef here specialize in? I looked on the website and really couldn’t find much about that.” (On the site in reality I had only looked at the pictures of the place and the jobs page on the site.) Smoke and mirrors, look over here so you don’t see what I don’t want you to see. He went on to explain the menu and the “point of view” of the kitchen there.

“Well Damien, everything looks good as far as I’m concerned. I just need to run this by the other manager before we can make a final decision. Is this the best number to reach you at,” he said shaking my hand.

“That it is. I know that the decision mainly lies with you so do you have any clue to when you will know something,” I asked?

“Probably by tomorrow.”

“Perfect,” I said as we left the table. He walked me to the elevator and shook my hand one last time. The ride back down was the best I ever took in all the times that I would eventually go up and down those 70 floors. I was full of a sense of accomplishment and knew that at worst I had given it my all and put on one hell of a performance in the meanwhile which I found very amusing. Almost like I got away with something. “The entrance of the stage actor.” This character for performance is someone who will show up many more times to come as this story continues.

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