



"If a story is in you, it has to come out." -William Faulkner

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INTRODUCTION: THE WAY OUT

In October 1972, a plane carrying forty-five people crashed in the Andes mountains. The survivors, a team of rugby players from Uruguay, took shelter from the elements in the plane's wreckage and resorted to cannibalism to survive. After waiting more than two months for a rescue team to find them, they decided to save themselves...or die trying.

Two young survivors, equipped with little more than the determination to survive, struck out on their own in search of help. Without so much as a rope between them, they scaled a nearly vertical glacier and then walked for ten days before finally finding help.

The story of the Miracle of the Andes has always inspired me, but only recently did I equate that daring escape from the clutches of death to self-publishing. When you think about it, though, it makes perfect sense.

The vast majority of aspiring authors exist on the slippery mountainside of obscurity, hoping beyond hope that someone somewhere will spot their talent and rescue them. But this hardly ever happens. In most cases, it's those who take matters into their own hands who ever achieve any level of success.

The Andes plane crash survivors didn't wait for a search party to find them. They accepted that their survival was entirely up to them, and they did something about it. Just as you must accept that your success as an author is entirely up to you.

Self-publishing is a lot like scaling a glacier without the proper equipment. Yet where the Andes plane crash survivors had to tackle it on their own with no help, you don't have to. This book was written in the spirit of sharing our knowledge of self-publishing with all who need it. May its pages guide you safely down the mountain.

CHAPTER 1: TRADITIONAL, HYBRID, OR SELF-PUBLISHING?

If you want to get published, you've got three options:

- ✓ Traditional publishing
- ✓ Self-publishing
- √ Hybrid publishing

Traditional publishing is when a company like Simon & Schuster acquires the rights to a book, pays the author an advance, produces the book, and makes it available to retail and online stores through established chains of distribution. The bar to publication through traditional publishers is very high (a bit more on that later), which leads many authors to seek out alternative routes to publication.

Self-publishing puts the author in charge of everything, including (but not limited to) editing, interior page design, book cover design, distribution, and marketing. That's a lot for a single person to do, especially if all they want to be is a writer and not a bookmaker. Anyone can self-publish their own book...but that doesn't always mean they *should*.

Last but not least, there's hybrid publishing, or "assisted self-publishing" as I like to call it. Hybrid publishing exists in the space between traditional publishing and self-publishing. These are companies that charge a fee to edit, design, publish, and (in some cases) market an author's book.

Not to be confused with vanity publishers, who'll publish just about anything as long as you have the money to pay for it, hybrids are more selective about what they publish and will often recommend editing services to improve the quality of a book before they agree to publish it.

The difference between traditional publishers and hybrid publishers is stark. Whereas traditional publishers cover

all costs associated with the editing, design, and printing of a book, they also exercise complete creative control and pay the author only a small percentage of royalties earned from sales. This is usually in the neighborhood of 10 to 15 percent.

Hybrid publishers pay their authors a significantly higher amount (typically ranging from 50 to 75 percent) and give authors say with respect to the book edit and the design of the cover. Some hybrids, like Glass Spider Publishing (insert self-tooting horn here), take no share of royalties, ensuring their authors receive 100 percent of book sales.

The obvious question now is: Why would anyone choose self-publishing or hybrid publishing when traditional publishing is clearly the cheapest route?

Put simply, getting traditionally published is hard. Even being a great writer with a genius book idea won't always get you picked up by a publisher. Why? It's simple math.

In a single calendar year, the average publisher receives between 5,000 and 7,500 book submissions. Of these,

only a tiny fraction—about one to two percent—are selected for publication.

That slim number is made even slimmer when you consider the fact that most traditional publishers won't even look at your book unless you're represented by an agent—and getting a book agent without already having a proven track record of publication is next to impossible.

While there are many independent publishers and smaller presses that don't require you to have an agent to submit your book, the competition is so fierce that the rejection level there can be even higher.

Chief among the concerns of traditional and independent publishers is profitability. Editing, designing, printing, and distributing a book is expensive, and publishers want to know their investment will pay off.

For this reason, one of the first things they want to know about an author isn't how many awards they've won or how unique their book idea is or even how good of a writer they are. It's how many social media followers they

have. An author with a huge social following is an author with guaranteed book sales. Put simply, these authors are seen as low risk and therefore looked upon more favorably by publishers.

This is understandable. Publishers prefer working with authors who know how to promote themselves because it means less work for them. Unfortunately, this leaves out the vast majority of writers who aren't interested in becoming social media influencers but who simply want to be left alone to write.

Trying and failing to get traditionally published can be a highly demoralizing experience, leading many to explore their options in the realm of hybrid and self-publishing. If this is where you've found yourself, take heart. Going the hybrid or self-published route doesn't mean you've failed. It simply means you've decided to take matters into your own hands—just like the rugby players in the Andes.

If that comparison doesn't sound very enticing to you, think about this: the literary world is filled with selfpublished success stories. Some of them you've no doubt heard of, such as *Fifty Shades of Grey* and *The Martian*. Many others, you probably haven't. These are authors whose books may never appear on the *New York Times* bestseller list but who sell thousands of books per month and have cultivated audiences willing to keep coming back for more.

This kind of success is something entirely within the reach of every self-published author. But the way to achieve it is **not** by self-publishing your book to the Amazon Kindle marketplace and hoping for the best.

Successful books never happen by accident, and considering that there are between one and two million books self-published every year, you have to take steps to ensure that what you put out is of the highest quality possible.

You could write the greatest book in the world, but if it's poorly edited, filled with typos and grammatical errors, and has a forgettable cover, it'll never get noticed. Even if it does get noticed, it'll likely be doomed to an early death by negative reviews.

When it comes to self-publishing your book, there are a thousand ways to do it wrong and only one way to do it right.

This book is all about telling you what you need to do right so that you can count yourself among the success stories of the self-publishing world.

CHAPTER 2: EDITING AND DESIGNING YOUR BOOK

There are probably few words writers hate hearing more than, "You cannot edit your own writing." The fact is you can't. At least not competently. But that doesn't mean people don't do it anyway, often with disastrous results.

I get it. Hiring a qualified editor isn't cheap. An edit can range in cost from two to seven cents per word. For a standard 50,000-word book, professional editing can cost \$1,000 to \$3,500.

There *are* things you can do to reduce the amount of money you spend on editing. Since the cost is based on the complexity of the edit required, it's in your best interest to ensure your manuscript is as close to perfect as possible before bringing in a second set of eyes.

Before you do that, though, it's important to know exactly what a book editor does. The three most commonly performed types of edit are: copyedit, line edit, and comprehensive edit.

Copyedit: A copyedit is a line-by-line proofread that identifies and eliminates grammatical, punctuation, syntax, spelling, and consistency errors.

Line Edit: A line edit is more intensive than a copyedit in that it seeks to improve your manuscript by suggesting changes to writing style, clarity, and choice of words. Unlike a copyedit, which eliminates typos and syntax errors, a line edit improves quality of your book.

Comprehensive Edit: This is the most intensive edit your manuscript can receive. The editor will identify the presence of structural, pacing, and overall story flow issues and will make recommendations on how to address these issues to ensure your manuscript is of the highest publishable standard. Most of the time, a comprehensive does not include the additional service of a copyedit or line edit.

In our experience working with authors of various skill levels, the most commonly performed type of edit is a line edit. In a line edit, the editor will identify certain sentences and make suggestions on how to improve the wording so that you can get your message across more artfully.

Example:

Original text: Julie tried to stand up but she got dizzy and had to hold onto the chair so she wouldn't fall down.

Editor's suggestion: Julie tried to stand. A wave of dizziness swept through her, and she had to press her hands against the chair back to remain upright.

In this case, the difference between the original raw text and the editor's suggestion is clear. It's not just a matter of breaking the block of text into two sentences. It's a matter of infusing the narrative with a more artistic means of communicating the action. This is what differentiates mediocre writing from good writing.

A good edit can make or break a book. It can mean the difference between someone declaring your book "meh"

and someone calling it "awesome!" An edit won't change the direction of your story or alter your vision, but it can turn a bad book into a decent book, and a good book into a great book.

Another reason writers should never edit their own work is because editing a book requires an outside perspective that most writers simply can't achieve on their own. If you're too close to something, even its glaring faults become invisible.

Putting your book into the hands of someone who's not only educated in proper grammatical techniques but also experienced at improving the written works will give your book the boost it's going to need to compete with millions of other authors who are just as (and possibly even more) talented than you.

Look at it this way. If your home plumbing needs fixing, you don't do it yourself; you hire a professional. If your electrical goes on the fritz, you don't go poking around like you know what you're doing. Once again, you call a someone who knows what they're doing. Likewise, if your

book needs editing (and it does—all books do!) you don't do it yourself. You hire a professional.

If hiring an editor is something you cannot and will never be able to afford, then it's incumbent upon you to educate yourself as well as possible in the craft. Here are some helpful dos and don'ts to help you achieve that.

- ✓ Do utilize software programs such as Grammarly to help you identify errors missed by the naked eye.
- ✓ Don't rely entirely on these programs as the final word. Proofreading programs do a good job of catching errors, but none are intelligent enough to understand context. Often, these programs recommend changes that are not grammatically sound and that are contrary to standard rules. To make the most out of a program like Grammarly, you really need a fundamental understanding of grammatical rules.
- ✓ Do buy a copy of The Chicago Manual of Style: The Essential Guide for Writers, Editors, and Publishers. Read it cover to cover. You can also get a paid yearly

membership, which gives you full access to the constantly updated online database and a forum for asking questions. *The Chicago Manual of Style* (CMOS for short) is the final word on style and grammar for book publications.

✓ Don't expect that if someone is a good writer, they'll make a good editor. These skills are often mutually exclusive. Some writers are brilliant at putting their words together but abysmal spellers who have no clue what a serial comma is or how to use it. If you ask a friend or family member to edit your book, make sure they're familiar with CMOS. If they ask, "CMO-what?" then you should seriously consider finding someone who at least has the fundamentals down.

Your book will also need skilled page and cover design. Page design is the process of choosing proper font and font sizes, styling chapter headings, and setting margins to ensure the book has a professional look. There are many programs you can buy to guide you through the process of designing what your pages will look like.

However, when it's time to approach the concept and appearance of your book cover, there are few resources as valuable as an experienced and talented book cover designer. Not only does a book cover designer handle the artistic scope of the work, but they're also responsible for creating a file that matches the publisher's printing specifications with respect to the exact measurements of the book cover, setting the width of the book spine (which is dependent on the book's page count), proper placement of the book barcode, and more.

For these reasons, your book cover designer must not only be able to produce a captivating image but will also design and align the text on the front, spine, and back of your book cover. The cost of a book cover design can vary greatly, but be prepared to see estimates anywhere from \$300 up to \$1,000, and maybe even more.

CHAPTER 3: CHOOSING THE RIGHT SELF-PUBLISHING PLATFORM

Once your book is ready for the world, the next step is to choose a publishing platform. While there are many e-book publishing platforms, there are only a handful that publish both e-books and print books. Of these, the two most highly recommended are:

- ✓ Amazon KDP
- ✓ IngramSpark

If you've done any research at all about self-publishing, you've no doubt read about Amazon KDP. The letters KDP stand for Kindle Direct Publishing, but it's not only for Kindle e-books. It's also the platform for publishing physical print books through Amazon.

Amazon KDP is by far the simplest platform to navigate with respect to the uploading of manuscript and book cover files, performing an on-screen audit of your book's interior and exterior, and building the retail listing by inputting the book description, choosing keywords, selecting book categories, setting the price, and publishing.

IngramSpark is the alternative to Amazon and its main competition in the self-publishing space. IngramSpark offers all of the same functionality as Amazon KDP but has a significantly higher learning curve. Where Amazon makes it almost *too easy* to self-publish your book (a statement backed up by the presence of an enormous number of self-published books that look simply awful), IngramSpark requires a bit more effort and know-how.

With that in mind, why would anyone pick IngramSpark self-publishing over Amazon KDP? The answer can be summed up in two words: wide publication. Going "wide" in publication means that your book will be sold across a diversity of online retail platforms. IngramSpark is owned and operated by Ingram Book Company, the only

wholesale book distributor in the United States. When you publish your book through IngramSpark, your book enters the Ingram Book Company database and becomes available for thousands of outlets to order including independent bookstores, libraries, schools, and a vast assortment of online booksellers that include (but are not limited to):

Amazon.com
Barnes & Noble.com
Bookshop.org
Warmart.com
Target.com
IndieBound.com

Getting listed across these online book retail websites not only makes your book widely available, but it also helps get your name and your book's title indexed on Google so that it's more easily discoverable.

The downside of publishing through Amazon KDP is that your book will *only* be available for purchase on Amazon.

Considering that a lot of people buy their books through Amazon, this isn't exactly a bad thing. But the exclusivity is something many authors find undesirable for several reasons.

For one, not everyone likes to buy their books through Amazon. Some buyers go out of their way to support more independent online booksellers. Publishing through IngramSpark gives these people more options to buy your book.

But probably the greatest difference between the two, and one of the reasons many authors choose to publish through IngramSpark instead of Amazon, is bookstore availability. If a bookstore decides it wants to carry your book, they're far more likely to do so if they can order through Ingram Book Company instead of giving their business to Amazon, which the vast majority of bookstores refuse to do business with.

To better help you determine which self-publishing platform is ideal for you, here's a list of the benefits and drawbacks inherent in each platform.

Paperback Distribution

- ✓ IngramSpark: Wide distribution makes your print book available on Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Bookshop.org, and dozens of other online booksellers.
- ✓ Amazon KDP: Your print book will only be available for purchase through the Amazon.com website.

E-book Distribution

- ✓ IngramSpark: Wide distribution places your e-book on dozens of online retail sites including Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Apple, Scribd, Kobo Plus, and more.
- ✓ Amazon KDP: Your e-book will only be available for purchase through the Amazon Kindle market.

Bookstore Availability

- ✓ IngramSpark: Bookstores can order your book at a discount, making them far more likely to carry it.
- ✓ Amazon KDP: Bookstores will not stock your book if it's printed and sold by Amazon.

User Interface

- ✓ IngramSpark: The user interface of the publishing dashboard can be difficult.
- Amazon KDP: Boasts a highly user-friendly publishing dashboard.

Hardcover Availability

- ✓ IngramSpark: Hardcover books can be printed with dust jackets or in case laminate.
- ✓ Amazon KDP: Supports printing in hardcover, but books are limited to case laminate with no dust jacket.

CHAPTER 4: MARKETING YOUR SELF-PUBLISHED BOOK

If you think the work is over the day you publish your book, think again. In many ways, it's only just begun.

Before you take another step, consider this: You are going to be in the business of self-promoting your book (and any books that you may later write) for the rest of your life. The sooner you get used to that idea, the easier everything will go.

In a perfect world, authors wouldn't have to promote themselves or their work. Their books would simply appeal to readers based on the book's merits and those readers' tastes, fueling organic sales and giving you the freedom to work on your next book. The problem with that idea is that it's wholly unrealistic. Perhaps that may have been possible a long time ago when publishing a book was something only a traditional publisher with millions of dollars could do and there were fewer books in the world—but the self-publishing revolution democratized the process and made it possible for anyone to publish their book.

Nowadays, there are so many books being published every day that without a good marketing effort, even the most brilliant novel ever written could get lost amid the noise.

Book marketing, arguably the most difficult nut to crack when it comes to publishing a financially successful book, requires just as much hard work and dedication as writing the thing in the first place—maybe even more.

It's a job that no author really wants to do, but one that every author has to undertake. Even famous authors have to promote themselves and their work. If you doubt that, ask yourself why some of the most successful authors in the world are so active on social media.

Hint: it's not because they're bored or lonely. It's because they're working. Hustling. Keeping their names out there, ensuring they remain relevant. So that when their next book is released, people will know and care.

Even traditionally published authors have to spend time and money to market themselves.

One of the greatest misconceptions about book marketing and publicity is that traditional publishers handle all of the marketing efforts for their authors. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Major publishers have the attention of the book industry, and often an author and their work will be given the kind of visibility and media access to give their book a boost. But the vast majority of these authors also have publicists who they pay out of their own pocket to run an effective marketing campaign.

Hiring a publicist can cost you anywhere from a few thousand dollars to a few hundred thousand dollars. There's literally no end to the amount of money you could pay a professional to do all of the heavy lifting with respect to reaching out to the media, running your social media, organizing online ad campaigns, and so forth.

If you're like most of the world and don't have access to unlimited funds, you'll likely find yourself looking into some of the tasks you can perform on your own when publicizing your own book. With that in mind, here are some things you can do on your own to market your self-published book.

- ✓ Build a support network. Before you publish, get your friends and family to commit to ordering your book the day it's released and leaving a review on Amazon or Goodreads. This will help your book's visibility.
- ✓ Write a press release with a compelling headline. Include a brief synopsis of your book, a short bio about yourself, your book's release date, and where people can buy it.
- ✓ Reach out to various local media outlets—newspaper, radio, and television—and include your press release.

- ✓ Arrange a book launch event at an independent bookstore that supports local authors, or at your local library.
- ✓ Host a virtual book launch via social media.
- ✓ Network with other writers. Join local author clubs and organizations and take part in group events.
- ✓ Get active on social media. Share information about your book with as many groups and online communities as you think might be interested—but be careful not to spam the internet.
- ✓ Enter your book into contests. A win or honorable mention can bring your book some excellent exposure.

If this seems a bit overwhelming and something you'd rather have someone else handle for you, there's no shortage of book marketing companies out there who'll give your book a necessary boost.

Some offer robust and well-rounded packages with varying price points and campaigns that last a specific period of time. Having a definitive start and end date for marketing helps you control how much you spend.

Just make sure to do your research, comparison shop, and ask plenty of questions before you commit.

CHAPTER 5: COMPARING HYBRID AND SELF-PUBLISHING SERVICES

If at any point in your self-publishing journey you should come to the conclusion that you just can't do it alone, you don't have to throw in the towel and call it quits. You have lots of options.

The hybrid/assisted self-publishing model as developed by Glass Spider Publishing is by no means unique. There have been people offering similar services for ages, even long before the advent of e-books and print-on-demand self-publishing. But if there's one important takeaway, it's that not all publishing services are the same.

Some, like Glass Spider Publishing, are operated and staffed by creatives with a passion for helping others achieve their potential and tell their stories to as many readers as possible. Others appeal to people's hopes and dreams, making pie-in-the-sky promises of becoming the next E.L. James or Andy Weir in exchange for far too much money.

To save you valuable time and money, here are some pointers on what to look for (and what to look out for) if you decide to enlist the services of a third-party hybrid or self-publishing company, based on our own comparison research.

- ✓ Many hybrids and self-publishing companies grab your attention with affordable prices but fail to mention that editing services cost extra. With editing arguably being the most important step in the entire process, this failure to disclose editing costs is downright shady.
- ✓ Beware of claims that your book will be placed in bookstores. The vast majority of hybrid publishers don't have this capability, but that doesn't stop many of them from making the claim. If you read the fine print carefully, you will likely find that the publisher will

make your book available for bookstores to order. Which is in no way the same thing as ensuring you a display at Barnes & Noble bookstores across the country. Keep an eye out for misleading claims.

- ✓ Some hybrid publishers charge for services but also insist on sharing the profits from your book sales. If this kind of double-dipping sounds wrong, that's because it is. If you pay someone to edit, design, and publish your book, you should retain full ownership—in addition to earning 100 percent of the royalties generated by sales.
- ✓ Some hybrid and self-publishing services operate like vanity presses in that they accept all and any submissions as long as the author can pay the cost of publication. Others, like Glass Spider Publishing, are invested in producing quality books and may reject manuscripts that are not yet ready for publication.
- ✓ Don't sign away your book rights. Some hybrid publishers will require you to sign over the publication rights to your book for a certain period of time. While

standard practice for traditional publishers, this is not always required with hybrids. Beware of this practice, as you could find yourself locked into an agreement that you can't get out of for up to seven years.

EPILOGUE: GETTING HELP WITH SELF-PUBLISHING

Self-publishing a book is probably the most difficult "easy" thing you'll ever do. The fact is, there are about a thousand ways to do it wrong, but only one way to do it right.

The good news is that if you find yourself stuck at any point during your journey, there's always help. You don't have to scale the glacier all on your own. You can hire someone to guide you out of the wilderness and onto the green valleys of self-publishing success.

Glass Spider Publishing offers all of the services you'll need to prepare, publish, and market a professional manuscript in digital e-book format, plus paperback and hardcover formats.

Glass Spider Publishing services include:

- ✓ Book editing (including proofread, line edit, and comprehensive edit).
- ✓ Book cover design.
- ✓ Interior page design.
- ✓ Book descriptions and blurbs.
- ✓ Unique Glass Spider Publishing ISBNs.
- ✓ Library of Congress registration.
- ✓ Publication in e-book, paperback, and hardcover formats.
- ✓ Global distribution.
- ✓ Marketing and publicity.

What makes working with us a positive and unique experience is that we offer all of the services you'll need under one roof—and throughout it all, you'll have one main point of contact. To learn more about the services we provide, visit www.glassspiderpublishing.com or give us a call at 801-917-4340.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Vince Font is the founder and chief editor of Glass Spider Publishing. He launched the company in 2016 to help bring recognition to underrepresented writers. He is the author of the award-winning books *American Sons: The Untold Story of the Falcon and the Snowman, Shadows on the Page*, and *More Shadows on the Page*.

TESTIMONIALS

I recently published a memoir with Glass Spider Publishing, and I couldn't have asked for a better partner. There is a plethora of online choices in self-publishing, but I believe having a smaller company like Glass Spider made a big difference in terms of the service we received. —John D. Cumming, No Such Thing as the Top: A Father-Son Expedition

As a first-time author, it was important for me to feel I was in good hands. Working with Glass Spider fit that need perfectly. Vince and the team educated me on the process, handheld me through the steps patiently, responding to my many questions quickly and giving me the personal touch that made me feel like we were partners in making my dream come alive! –Brian Gahan, Failure Leaves Clues: The Mindset to Turn Them Into Success

Glass Spider guided me through two novels with the highest quality editing, publishing, and book cover design. Vince Font, editor and publisher, has been readily accessible to answer questions and to make invaluable suggestions. In over twenty years of novel writing, I have found Glass Spider to be superior to other publishers in expediting and creating an excellent finished product. I recommend Glass Spider Publishing as a worthy publisher who can make a novel most attractive and inviting. –A.J. Harris, author of *Murder in a Small Town* and *Ship of Dreams*

If you're looking for a great publishing company that will treat you like family, look no further than Glass Spider Publishing and Vince Font. Being a first-time author myself, the hardest part was finding the right publisher to work with. It was important that they understood the story, and most importantly, my voice. Vince Font incorporated my sense of humor and pace with all the suggested changes. Couldn't be happier, and this is from someone who is never happy—just ask my kids! —Matt DeBoer, author of *Until Tomorrow...Little People*

It's a difficult and sometimes lonely experience to write a book. But if you find a good editor, someone to help you to the finish line of your goal, you can count yourself lucky. That is what Vince Font at Glass Spider Publishing did for me. He took the third draft of my novel and said, "Yes, this is good, but you're not finished yet." Then he helped me see the ways it could be better. Editing can be a painful process for an author, but God bless the editors who help us through that process. Vince helped me finish my creation of the book I'd always wanted. —Rachel Anne Cox, author of *A Light from the Ashes*

I am a published author because of the skills, abilities, knowledge, and expertise possessed and used by Vince Font of Glass Spider Publishing. There are many qualities Glass Spider Publishing exhibits that made me glad we have begun a partnership: a high level of professionalism, reasonable contractual terms, personal one-on-one time with me, no changes to the original manuscript without a consultation, in-depth knowledge of the editing and publishing process, patience and understanding, and honesty. –G. Louise Beard, author of *Right Next Door* and *Mail Ordered*

I was blessed to stumble onto a review of Glass Spider Publishing early in the summer of 2020. I had been trying to get my book published for about six months, and I had finally been offered a contract by a hybrid publisher. The contract was less than fair, and I had made a counteroffer but was really turned off by the publisher's apparent lack of care for its authors. I read about how thorough and passionate Vince and Glass Spider Publishing were about making their books the best they could be, and I called immediately. After chatting with Vince about my book, it was so clear to me that Glass Spider was the right choice, and I am confident it is absolutely the best book it could have been. I never doubted for a second that Vince really cared about the book, and that he was doing everything he could to publish a great product. I am so fortunate to have found Vince and Glass Spider Publishing. –Brandon Wainwright, author of Tyson's Gift: How an 8-Pound K9 Became a Man's Greatest Spiritual Guide

For more author testimonials, or to contact Glass Spider Publishing, visit www.glassspiderpublishing.com

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