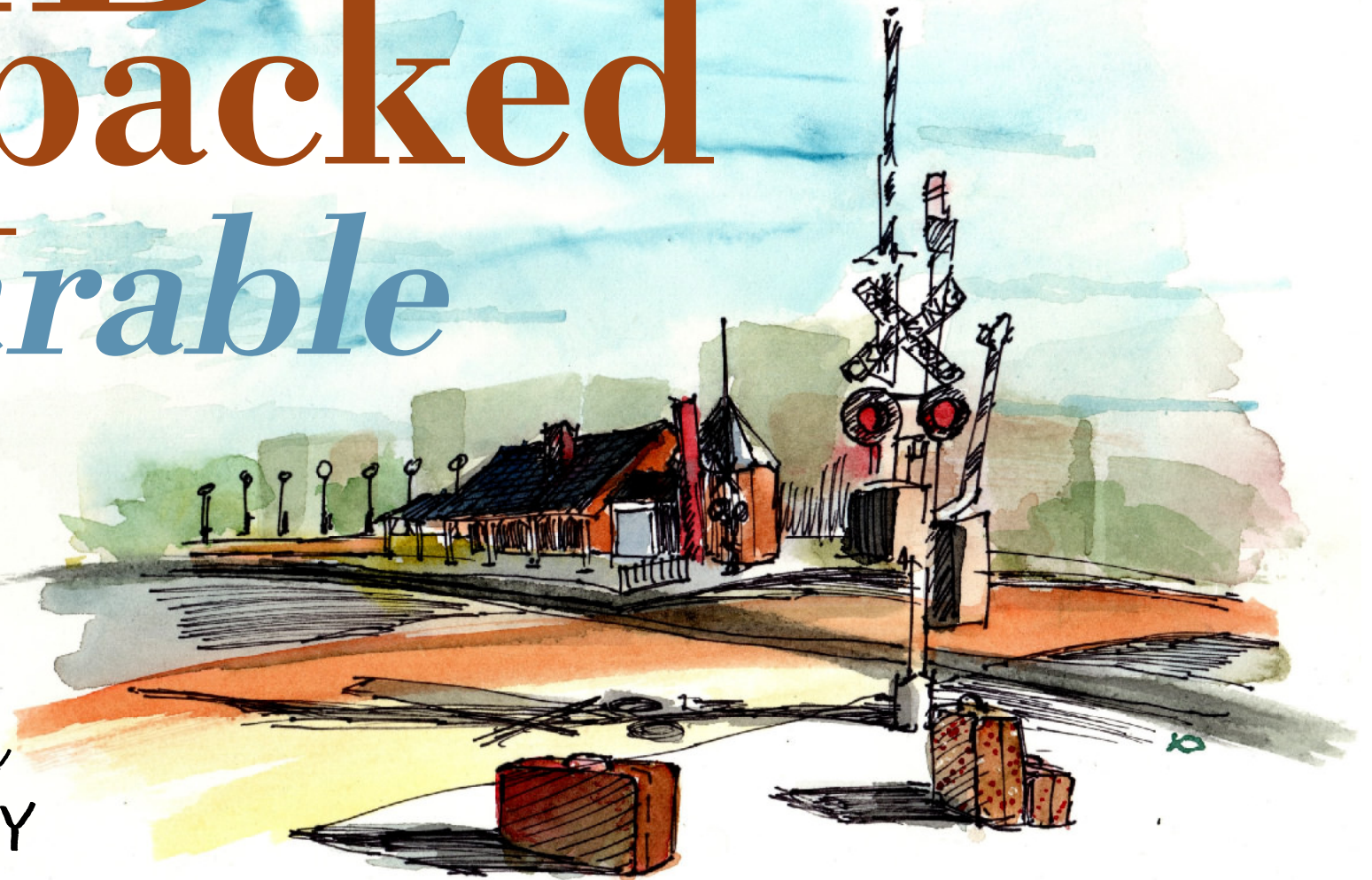


Lyn Barrett

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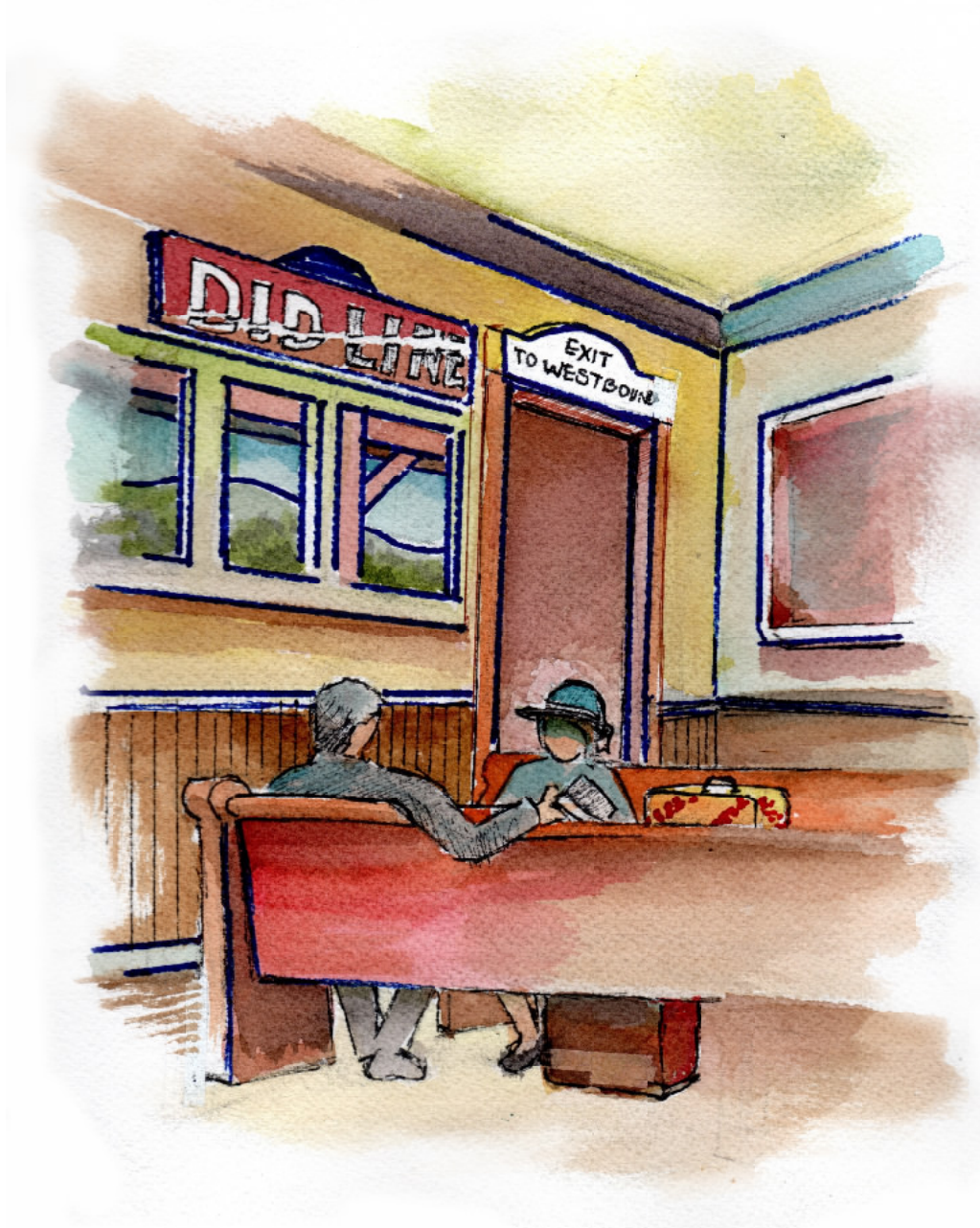
ILLUSTRATED BY
RIC FEENEY





One day, Tom and Sally each began a journey at a train station. They didn't know each other. Their destination was a Good Life and it was the last stop on a train line called DID, also known as dissociative identity disorder, or multiple personality disorder. Like most people, they wanted to find good jobs, safe places to live, and people to love at their destination. Most of all, they wanted to be happy.

The train to a Good Life was almost always late because time is sometimes lost along the DID Line. Since Tom and Sally often forgot the things they were supposed to remember, they simply sat down across from each other in the station and waited for the train to arrive.



They began to talk. They each explained where they were going and discovered it was the same place. Neither of them knew much about their trip and they were anxious to learn more.

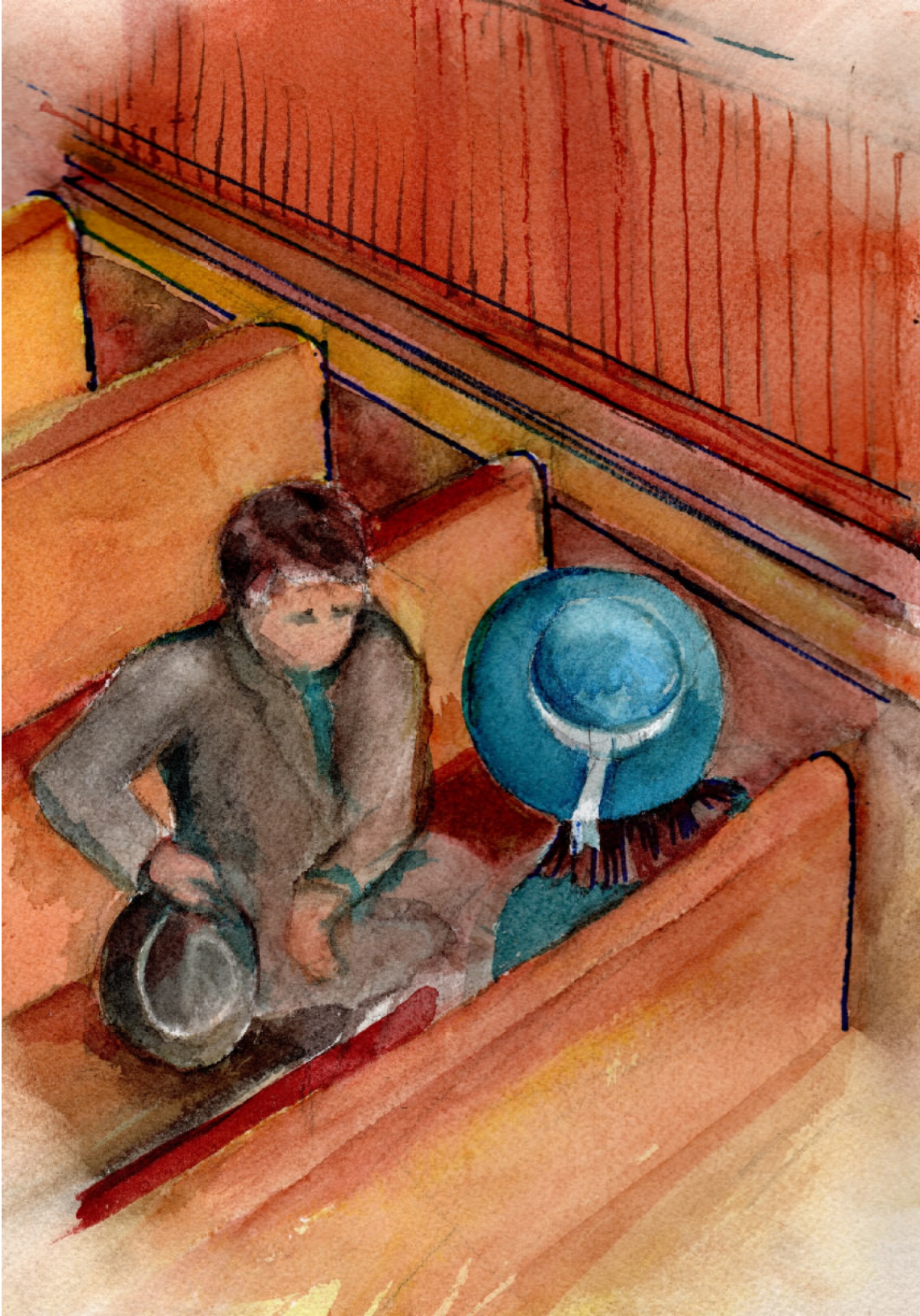
Both Sally and Tom were carrying a special suitcase. They were similar, but also different. Inside their suitcases, they kept their secrets because DID is a hidden disorder. Since they were on the same train line heading for the same destination, they decided to show their secrets to each other.



Inside Tom's suitcase were many different parts of him. He sometimes called his parts alters, insiders, or headmates. He counted ten parts and each of them had a different name. They talked to him and to each other and, sometimes, to other people. Inside Sally's suitcase were three parts. She thought there might be more. She didn't know their names but they talked to her in her journal.



Some of Tom's parts remembered when they were brought into being. He was very young, and the people he loved abused him a lot for a long time. Some of these parts carried his memories, some carried his difficult feelings, and some of them acted like everything was normal in the real world. They managed the abuse so Tom could forget the abuse. Sally's parts were confused and couldn't remember anything about their childhood. She was still getting to know her parts but they told her their roles were to help and protect her.



Sally pulled feelings of being unreal out of her suitcase. Sometimes she looked at people and felt like she wasn't there. Instead, she felt like she was perched in a corner of the ceiling looking down at everyone.

Tom's suitcase held similar foggy feelings. Sometimes he sensed his house or his work or his garden weren't real, and he was actually in another place where his memories took place.



Both Tom and Sally pulled a box out of their suitcases. Their boxes held the pain they each carried from memories, the ones they could remember and ones they couldn't remember. Sally's pain made her crawl into a ball in her bed sometimes. On occasion, Tom's pain made him hurt himself to take his mind off his memories.

Some of the pain came from their different parts that didn't agree with each other. Some of the pain was because they had trouble trusting other people. Some of the pain was because they were afraid. Some of the pain was from confusion about who they were and what had happened to them. Sometimes the pain was so acute that they didn't want to live anymore. That's why their pain was in boxes. To keep them safe when the pain got too bad.



Tom and Sally looked at each other in amazement. They were surprised that their suitcases carried similar experiences, even though they were different. They were glad to know they weren't alone.

Soon they heard a train whistle. The station master told them their train had arrived. They put their parts, their feelings of being unreal, and their pain back into their suitcases, closed them up, and walked to the train carrying their suitcases with them. They boarded so they could begin their journey.



Inside the train, Sally and Tom found helpers called therapists. These helpers listened to the stories of all of their parts, no matter how hard it was to hear those stories. The helpers invited their parts to talk to them and to each other too. They encouraged them to feel all their feelings and express them safely. They helped Tom and Sally learn how to manage the pain in their boxes.

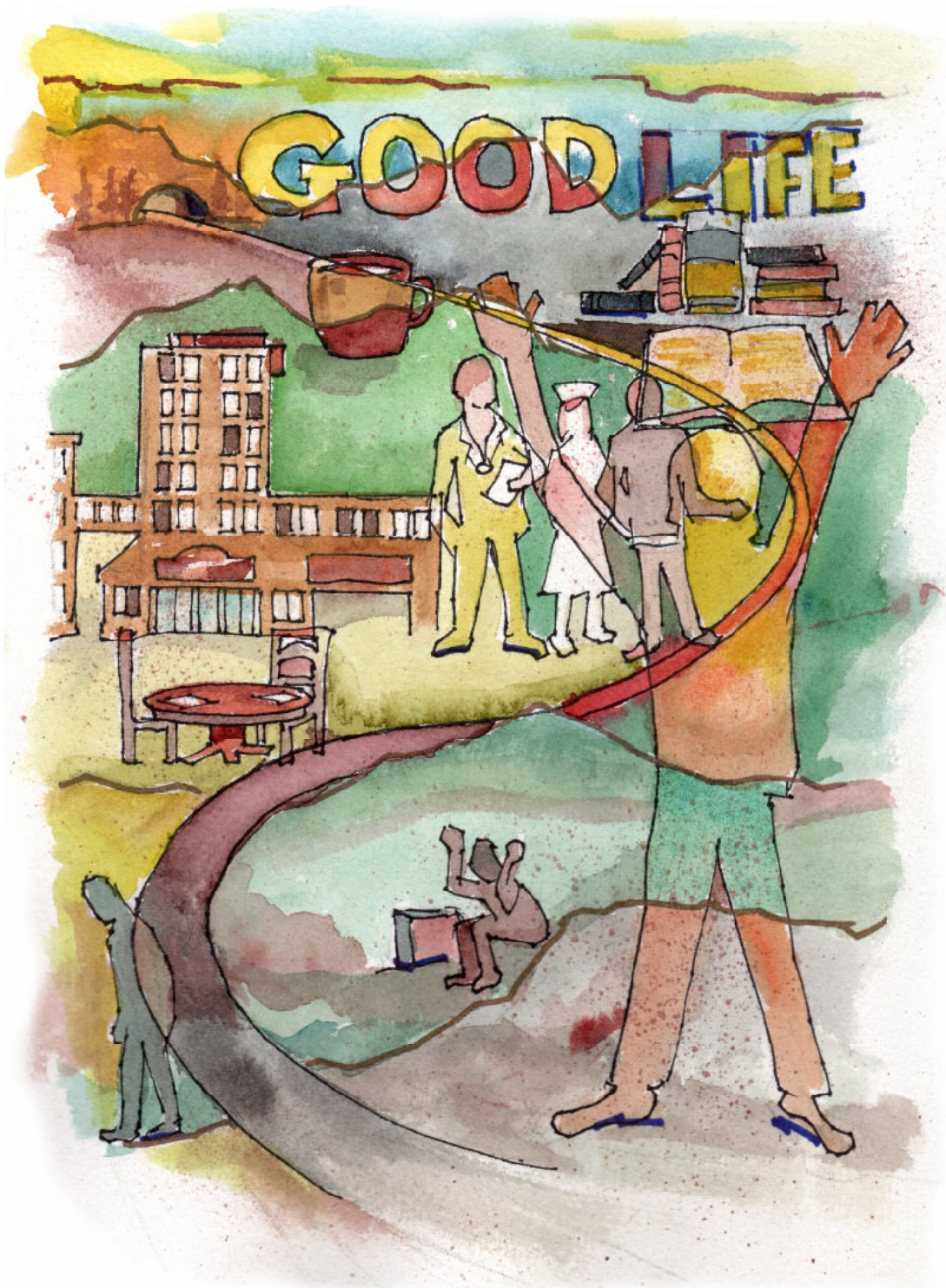
Sally and Tom met other people on the train who had suitcases like theirs, the same but different. They were traveling to a Good Life too. As they got to know each other, they slowly began to trust each other. Eventually, they began to trust the other passengers too.



On the wall of the train was a large billboard that said:

Everything everybody feels is okay, valid, and important.

This message made them feel safe.



The trip to a Good Life along the DID Line took a long time. Sometimes the train took detours to places like support groups and hospitals. Sometimes there were books to read, affirmations to write, and questionnaires to fill out. Sometimes the ride seemed dark and scary. Sometimes it was exhilarating and free. Sometimes Tom and Sally felt so alive they couldn't go to sleep and sometimes they felt so depressed they couldn't stay awake. Sometimes they cried and cried, and sometimes they laughed and laughed, and sometimes they hid under their covers. Sometimes, they got very, very angry.



Sally and Tom gradually noticed that getting to know their parts, feeling all their feelings, finding friends they could trust, and knowing where they were going made them feel real. They didn't feel so foggy anymore. They began to forget less and remember more. After a long while, they didn't need their pain boxes because the pain was very small. They rarely wanted to die because they wanted to live.



By the time Tom and Sally and all the other passengers on the DID Line got to the end of the route, they had a choice. Their long trip to a Good Life made them ready to either bring all their parts together into one whole person without parts. This is also called integration of alters, or fusion. Or, they could choose to live with all their separate parts in harmony and collaboration. Some chose the first option and others chose the second option.



It didn't really matter which option they chose because the long trip along the DID Line to a Good Life had prepared them to be happy. Tom and Sally got their wishes for good jobs, safe places to live, and people to love. Even though they had the same ups and downs as everybody else in the world, Sally and Tom were able to live their own good lives, happily ever after, as the people they were always meant to be.

The End

(or really,
The Beginning)

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