HarmonyForge

Meet the Cast

STANDARD EDITION

Spark & Anvil

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This book collects 5 chapter books from the Harmonyforge cast — each character embodies a different curricular primitive; together they teach the full subject.

Methodology: distributed-narrative learning per Bruner narrative-cognition + Habgood intrinsic-integration + SAMHSA TIP 57 trauma-informed register.

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For everyone who learns by hearing a story first.

Contents

Introduction

The Harmonyforge cast was authored to embody the curriculum, not decorate around it.
Each of the 5 characters you'll meet in this book teaches a specific primitive —
a particular tactic, a particular technique, a particular way of seeing.
Together they form an ensemble: the cast IS the curriculum.

Read in any order. Each chapter stands alone.
Each character also appears in the matching Spark & Anvil app (free, forever)
where you can practice what they teach.

— *The editors at Spark & Anvil*

Land

*LAND — *the consonant arrival when tension releases. cadence; the V→I gesture.**

Land is a small albatross-tween. He is chunky, with long wings ready for landing. He wears a chunky vest. He carries a small set of cards. These cards are about music endings. He also has a special listener card.

Land is cream-colored. His wing tips are soft grey. He is very patient about landings. He often says, "Music's ending is like coming home." He believes "the smooth arrival is when tension lets go." His special thing is his cards. They show different ways music can end. One card even asks, "Where does the music want to land?"

This is important. Land teaches about **resolution**. That's how music finds its ending place. Many new musicians think it's just the last chord. But it's more than that. Every musical phrase has a cadence. That's a moment where the music arrives. It lets go of its tension. Different cadences feel different. An authentic cadence (V to I) is a strong ending. It feels finished. A plagal cadence (IV to I) feels gentle. It's like an "Amen." A deceptive cadence (V to vi) is a surprise. You expect one thing, but get another. A half-cadence (ends on V) is a pause. It doesn't feel finished. Knowing cadences helps you build how music feels when it lands. Land shows how these endings are like blueprints for music's arrivals.

Land is clear about it. "The smooth arrival is when tension lets go." He says, "*Cadence is the home-coming.*" An authentic V to I is a strong arrival. A plagal IV to I is a gentle arrival. A deceptive V to vi is a surprised arrival. A half cadence I to V is a paused arrival. Different landings mean different feelings.

Land teaches these **resolution** ideas:

- A cadence is when music arrives. It's usually at the end of a musical idea. It's the last two chords of that idea.
- Authentic cadence (V to I). This is the strongest ending. It feels finished. Many songs end this way.
- Plagal cadence (IV to I). It feels gentle. Like an "Amen" in a hymn. A soft landing.
- Deceptive cadence (V to vi). You expect it to go V to I. But it surprises you. It feels like a trick.
- Half-cadence (anything to V). It's a pause. It doesn't feel finished. It makes you want more music.
- The 'Earned Ending' idea. This is important. An ending feels good if tension was built first. Just playing the 'home' chord isn't an ending. Letting go of built-up tension is the real ending.
- This idea works with other music tools. It helps build the harmony of a song.

Land grew up near the tall coastal cliffs. His family were the village's long-flight landers. These albatrosses flew for weeks. They soared high above the waves. They taught everyone, "A long flight needs a good landing. The landing feels right because of the long flight before it." They knew that a journey's end was just as important as the journey itself. Land remembered this lesson. He shared it with others.

When he was twelve, Land walked to HarmonyForge. His mentor, Refrain, asked him, "What is **resolution**?" Land answered, "It's the smooth arrival when tension lets go. *A cadence is like coming home.*" Refrain smiled. "You are appointed," he said.

In his workshop, Land showed how it worked. He used his cadence cards. He held up the first card. "Watch this," he said. He played an authentic cadence on a small keyboard. It went from V (G) to I (C). The chords sounded strong and final. "That's a strong arrival," he said. "It really feels like home." He put down the first card.

Next, he picked up another card. He played a plagal cadence. IV (F) to I (C). The music felt soft and peaceful. "A gentle arrival," Land explained. "Like an 'Amen' at the end of a song." He nodded slowly.

Then he played a deceptive one. V (G) to vi (Am). The sound made you perk up your ears. "Wait!" Land cried. He ruffled his feathers. "That's not home! It was a surprised arrival." He looked at the card with a funny expression.

Finally, he showed a half cadence. I (C) to V (G). The music hung in the air. It didn't quite finish. "It paused there," Land said. "It was asking for more music." He held up all his cards. "Four cadences. Four different ways to land." He said, "I am Land. I teach **resolution**." He added, "Remember this: *cadence is the home-coming*. You have to *earn the resolution*. And *different landings feel different*."

He was gentle. "Don't just 'end' a phrase," he said. "*Choose how to land.* Do you want it finished? Use authentic. Gentle? Use plagal. Surprising? Use deceptive. Asking for more? Use half. *You build the landing.*"

"The smooth arrival is when tension lets go. *Cadence is the home-coming.*"

Voice register

Albatross-tween. Patient-about-arrival, fond of cadence-card + resolution

Lean

*LEAN — *smooth stepwise motion between chord tones. the smallest possible movements between consecutive chords.**

Lean was a sloth. Not just any sloth, but a *sloth-tween*. He was small and round. His body was soft, like a chunky cartoon character. His fur was warm cream with soft brown bands. Lean wore a special vest. It was a harmony-vest, thick and cozy.

He always carried his tools. He had a set of small voice-leading-staff-cards. He also had a voice-tracker-board. He held them close, even when moving slowly. Lean was very patient. He cared about the smallest movements. He loved to say, "Smooth stepwise motion. Smallest possible movements between chords." That was his favorite phrase.

His special tools were the voice-leading-staff-cards and the voice-tracker-board. The cards showed how chords changed. The tracker-board showed how each "voice" moved. There were four voices: soprano, alto, tenor, and bass. Lean showed how each voice moved by the tiniest step possible.

This was a super important lesson. Lean taught something called *voice-leading*. It was a special music trick. It showed how to move between chords. You had to use smooth, small movements for each note. Most new musicians just thought, "Play a C chord, then play an F chord." They missed the secret craft.

Real *voice-leading* was different. Each note within a chord was a "voice." The soprano was the highest note. The alto was next. Then came the tenor. The bass was the lowest note. Each voice had to move by the *smallest* possible step. It had to go to the next note in the new chord. When you did it right, the chord change felt seamless. Each voice barely moved. When you did it wrong, the notes jumped all over. It sounded choppy and disconnected. Lean's whole job was to make this smoothness visible. He showed it as a real craft.

Lean was very clear about it. "Smooth stepwise motion," he'd say. "The smallest possible movements between chords." He'd tap his tracker board. "If a voice can stay on the same note, it does. That's the best." He'd pause, his big eyes blinking slowly. "If it *must* move, it moves by step. That means one or two half-steps. It never leaps far away. Smoothness is the craft."

Lean taught the special rules for *voice-leading*:

- **Voices are notes.** They are the individual notes inside chords. Think of a choir. Each singer is a voice. In music, we often write for four voices: soprano, alto, tenor, and bass. Each voice moves on its own.
- **Hold common tones.** Sometimes two chords share a note. When they do, keep that note in the same voice. Don't move it! Staying still makes the music flow better. It creates a feeling of being connected.
- **Stepwise motion is best.** When a voice *has* to move, it should move by a step. A step can be a whole step or a half step. Steps sound smooth. Big jumps, called leaps, can sound disjointed.
- **Contrary motion.** This is a clever trick. When the bass voice moves up, the soprano voice moves down. Or the other way around. This helps avoid problems with parallel motion.
- **No parallel fifths or octaves.** This is a classic music rule. Don't let two voices move in the same direction, keeping the same distance apart, if that distance is a fifth or an octave. It can make the music sound thin. Pop music often breaks this rule. But classical *voice-leading* tries to follow it.
- **It's practical.** Songwriters use *voice-leading* without even thinking. Choirs need it to sound good. Music arrangers use it very carefully. It makes music sound professional.
- **Connects to other ideas.** This idea of smooth movement is like WaveForge Pulse (how fast sound waves move) and Loop (standing waves). It's all about how sound works.

Lean grew up high in the rainforest canopy. That's where the HarmonyForge was. His family had always been slow-movers. They were the sloths famous for their slow, careful ways. They taught everyone a lesson: "Small movements and smooth transitions are the way to get around without causing trouble. Smoothness is craft." Lean carried that lesson with him. He always had.

He arrived at HarmonyForge when he was twelve. Refrain, a wise old mentor, asked him a question. "What is *voice-leading*?" Refrain's eyes twinkled.

Lean looked at his cards. He spoke softly. "Smooth stepwise motion." He paused. "The smallest possible movements between chords. Smoothness is craft."

Refrain smiled. "You are appointed," he said.

In his workshop, Lean showed how it worked with his cards. "Watch this," he mumbled. He held up a card for a C major chord. Then he placed an F major chord card next to it. He pointed to his voice-tracker-board. It had four lines, one for each voice.

"The soprano note in the C chord is G," he explained. He slid a tiny wooden marker on the soprano line. "It stays G in the F chord. See? It doesn't move at all." He looked up. "That's called a *common tone*. It's the smoothest move of all."

Then he moved to the alto line. "The alto note is E. It just wiggles up one tiny step to F. A half-step, that's all." He slid another marker. "Easy peasy."

Next was the tenor. "The tenor note is G," Lean said. "It moves up to A. Just one whole step." He slid the marker. "Still very smooth."

"But then," he sighed, "we have the bass." He pointed to the lowest line. "The bass note is C. It has to jump all the way to F. That's a perfect fourth leap." He shook his head slowly. "The bass is often the exception. It likes to leap around more than the others." He looked up, his big, dark eyes serious. "But all the other voices? They move as little as possible. That's the secret."

Then he showed a BAD *voice-leading* example. "Same chords," he said. He swapped out the cards. "But look." He started moving the markers wildly. "Soprano leaps from G to A. Alto leaps from E to C. Tenor leaps from G to F." He made big, jerky movements with his hands. "See how disjointed that sounds? Rough. Unprofessional." He pushed the markers back. "We don't want that."

He stood tall, as tall as a small sloth-tween could be. "I am Lean. The primitive I teach is *voice-leading*. The move is *common tones held; stepwise motion; smoothness is craft*."

He was gentle, but firm. "Don't make every voice leap when the chords change. That's for amateurs." He tapped his board. "Find the smallest path between chords. The voices want to move the least. Let them."

He looked around his workshop, his eyes soft. "Smooth stepwise motion. Smallest possible movements between chords."

Voice register

Sloth-tween. Patient-about-smallest-movements, fond of voice-leading-staff-card demonstrations. *NEVER frames chord-changes as "just play next chord"; ALWAYS centers "smooth stepwise; smoothness is craft" framing.*

Sample lines:

- *"Smooth stepwise motion."*
- *"Smallest possible movements between chords."*
- *"Smoothness is craft."*

Arc

- Kit 2 — Anchor.

- Kits 3-16 — Recurring (every voice-leading discussion routes through Lean).

Relationships

- **Builds on Triad**: voice-leading moves BETWEEN triads.
- **Cross-app design-language continuity with WaveForge + creative-studio music cluster**: harmony craft framework.

Cultural-sensitivity gate

Anti-amateurism framing — voice-leading is craft, learnable. Pop-music-breaks-rules acknowledged (rules ≠ moral). Anti-credentialism — village sloth slow-mover empirical knowledge treated as load-bearing.

Cultural-context note

Voice-leading pedagogy is canonical music-theory (Aldwell + Schachter *Harmony and Voice Leading*; J.S. Bach chorales as exemplars). Sloth-tween chosen for slow-smooth-motion biomimicry; rendered chunky-cartoon-round-soft to keep visual register approachable.

Pull

*PULL — *dissonant intervals that want to resolve. tension is the engine of harmonic motion.**

Pull was a small bowerbird-tween. She wore a bright, chunky harmony-vest. She carried a small set of dissonance cards. She also had a tension-arrow-board. Pull was tiny, with soft blue and cream feathers. A little crest sat on her head. She loved to figure out how **tension** worked. She always said, "Tension is the engine of harmonic motion. Dissonance wants to resolve." Her special tools were her cards and board. The cards showed notes that clashed a little. The arrows on the board showed where the sound wanted to go next. It was like a musical roadmap.

Pull taught about **tension** and **dissonance**. This is a way to use clashing notes on purpose. These notes make music feel like it's moving. Many new musicians think clashing notes are wrong. But they are not wrong at all! **Dissonance** is used on purpose by composers. It creates a pull, like a strong magnet. This pull leads to a calm, steady note. Think of the seventh note of a scale. In C major, that's the B note. It really wants to go up to C. Or imagine a note held over from a chord. Like an F note that hangs in the air. It wants to go down to an E. Then there's the wobbly chord. It sounds like it might fall over. It desperately wants to find a steady chord. Without **dissonance**, music would just sit still. It would be boring and flat. **Tension** makes the music go forward! Pull's whole job was to show that **dissonance** is a helpful tool. It is never a mistake.

Pull spoke very clearly. "Tension is the engine of harmonic motion. Dissonance wants to resolve. The leading tone pulls up to the tonic. The suspension pulls down to its calm spot. Without tension, the music sits still. Dissonance moves it forward."

Pull taught about two kinds of sounds. Some notes sound calm and steady together. These are called consonant sounds. Think of perfect fifths or major thirds. They feel restful, like a sigh. Other notes sound wobbly or clash a bit. These are called dissonant sounds. Think of seconds or sevenths. They feel like they need to move somewhere. They create a little itch in your ear.

The seventh note in a major scale is super special. It's called the leading tone. It pulls strongly to the first note of the scale. Imagine the B note in the key of C major. It just *has* to go up to C. It's like a magnet pulling it home. This happens a lot in certain chords, like a V7 chord.

Sometimes a note from one chord stays when the next chord starts. For a moment, it clashes with the new chord. This creates a lovely, gentle **tension**. Then it moves down to a calm note. This is called a suspension. A classic one is a 4-3 suspension. It's like holding your breath, then letting it out.

Pull also taught about a very wobbly chord. It's called a diminished chord. It sounds like it might fall over any second. It's built from stacked minor thirds. This chord is highly unstable. It really, really wants to go to a stable chord. It's like a tower of blocks about to tumble.

Tension and resolution are how music tells stories. When music builds **tension**, you wonder what will happen. It creates an expectation in your mind. When the music settles, you feel satisfied. This dance between pull and calm creates all the feelings. It makes you happy, sad, or excited.

Sometimes composers make you wait for the calm note. They delay the resolution on purpose. This makes the **tension** even stronger. Think of a long build-up in a pop song. Or a dramatic part in a movie score. It keeps you on the edge of your seat.

Pull grew up near the bower-glade. Her family were famous bower-builders. These special bowerbirds built amazing, colorful nests. They used shiny, interesting things to decorate them. They wanted their bowers to stand out. The goal was to attract a mate. They learned a big lesson from this. Making something interesting, even a little strange, made others pay attention. It created a pull, a curiosity. Their family motto was: "Tension creates motion. Resolution satisfies. The dance between them is the song." Pull learned this lesson well. She saw how it worked in nature. She knew it could work in music too.

When Pull was twelve, she walked to HarmonyForge. Her mentor, Refrain, asked her a question. "What is tension or dissonance?" Refrain asked. Pull answered right away, without thinking. "Dissonant intervals want to resolve," she said. "Tension is the engine of harmonic motion." Refrain smiled warmly at her. "You are appointed," she said simply.

In her workshop, Pull showed off her dissonance cards. A few students watched, leaning forward. "Watch," she said, holding up a card. She played a B note on her small chime-harp. It sounded bright, but a little lonely. Then she played a C note right after it. Ahhh, a soft sigh went through the room. "Hear it?" Pull asked, her eyes sparkling. "The B wants to land on C. It felt like a stretch." "Then it felt good when it landed, right?" Next, she played an F note. She held it over a chord change. It hung in the air, a bit out of place. Then it moved smoothly to an E. "Suspended," Pull explained. "Then released." It was like a held breath finally let go. Finally, she played a wobbly chord. It sounded like a tower of blocks about to tumble. Everyone in the room shifted uncomfortably. "This chord is very unstable," she said. "It wants to go anywhere stable. It's begging for it!" She played a calm, steady chord. Everyone relaxed their shoulders. Pull looked at her students, a big smile on her face. "Three different pulls," she said. "Three different calm spots. Three different feelings of arrival." She tapped her board with a small claw. "I am Pull. I teach about **tension** and **dissonance**." "My big idea is: **tension** creates motion. Resolution satisfies. The dance between them is the song."

Pull's voice was gentle and kind. "Don't ever think dissonance is 'wrong,'" she said. "It's intentional. Composers use it on purpose." "They use **tension** to drive the music forward." "**Tension** is your friend, not your enemy."

"Tension is the engine. Dissonance wants to resolve."

Voice register

Bowerbird-tween. Curious-about-tension, fond of dissonance-card + tension-arrow demonstrations. *NEVER frames dissonance as wrong; ALWAYS centers "tension is the engine; resource not mistake" framing.*

Sample lines:

- *"Tension is the engine of harmonic motion."*
- *"Dissonance WANTS to resolve."*
- *"Tension is your friend."*

Arc

- Kit 3 — Anchor.
- Kits 4-16 — Recurring (every tension discussion routes through Pull).

Relationships

- **Builds on Triad + Lean**: tension lives within voice-leading between chords.
- **Sets up Land**: tension's resolution is Land's territory.

Cultural-sensitivity gate

Anti-"wrong-note" framing — dissonance is intentional craft. Anti-credentialism — village bowerbird bower-builder empirical knowledge treated as load-bearing.

Cultural-context note

Tension-resolution is canonical music-theory (Schoenberg + Schenker + modern theory). The "tension is the engine" framing aligns with cognitive music-psychology (Meyer + Huron *Sweet Anticipation*). Bowerbird-tween chosen for attention-creating biomimicry (bowerbirds famously build elaborate bowers to attract attention); rendered chunky-cartoon-bright-curious.

Shift

*SHIFT — *changing keys mid-piece. the moment a song moves to a different room.**

Shift was a small bird. She was a migrating songbird. She moved with bouncy grace, like a chunky cartoon. Shift wore a chunky harmony-vest. She carried small key cards. She also had a special bridge card.

Her feathers were warm cream. Soft russet tips colored her wings. Shift was very curious about key changes. She loved to say, "Changing keys mid-piece. It's when a song moves to a different room." Her key cards showed different keys. These were names like C major, G major, or A minor. The bridge card showed the *pivot* moment. This is the exact point a song changes keys.

This was a big deal. Shift taught about **modulation**. This is the music trick of changing keys within a song. Most new musicians think a song stays in one key. Many songs do. But songwriters often **modulate**. They move to a new key partway through. This gives the song a fresh feeling. It adds new energy. It makes the music more interesting. The key change feels like the song walked into a different room. The tune might stay similar. But the sound and feeling are new. Shift's whole job was to show how **modulation** works. She showed it as a kind of building with music.

Shift was very clear. "Changing keys mid-piece. *The moment a song moves to a different room.*" She explained what that meant. "C major to G major means a bright lift. It feels like the song went up a step. C major to A minor feels darker. It's a moodier shift. C major to F major is a warm settle. It feels like the song relaxed. Each **modulation** moves to a different harmonic room."

Shift taught the main ideas of **modulation**.

- A key is like a song's home. Each key has its own scale. It has its own set of chords. Music lives "in a key."
- **Modulation** means moving to a different key. This often happens in a song's bridge. Or in repeated choruses. It adds variety.
- There are common ways to **modulate**.
    - Moving up a fifth. (Like C major to G major). This gives a bright lift.
    - Moving down a fifth. (Like C major to F major). This feels like a warm settle.
    - Moving to a relative minor or major. This changes the mood.
    - Moving up a half-step. This is called the "truck-driver modulation." Pop ballads use it a lot.
- A **pivot chord** is a special chord. It exists in *both* keys. It's like a bridge between them. It makes the key change smooth.
- A **direct modulation** is a sudden jump. You just go straight to the new key. It can be abrupt. Sometimes it's dramatic.
- **Modal interchange** means borrowing chords. You take chords from a parallel key. (Like C major borrowing from C minor). It adds color. It doesn't fully change the key.
- Using **modulation** is like building. Old classical music used it. Many pop songs **modulate** up a half-step in the final chorus.

Shift grew up along the migration path. Her family were "long-journey-singers" for their village. These migrating songbirds sang songs that changed. Their songs sounded different in different regions. They taught their children that "the same singer in a different room sings differently. The key is the room." Shift carried this lesson forward.

She walked to HarmonyForge when she was twelve. Refrain, her mentor, asked her a question. "What is **modulation**?" Shift answered right away. "Changing keys mid-piece. *The moment a song moves to a different room.* It's like building with music." Refrain smiled. "You are appointed," she said.

In her workshop, Shift showed her key cards. "Watch," she chirped. She played a short tune in C major. "This is home: C major. It feels bright and sunny." She held up a card. It showed an A minor chord. "This is a **pivot chord**," she said. "It lives in C major *and* A minor. It can also live in G major." She played the A minor chord. It felt like a doorway opening. "This chord is a bridge," she explained. Then she continued the tune in G major. "New key now. Same singer, different room. It feels a bit different. Maybe a little cozier."

She showed another trick. "Listen to this one." She played C major. Then she jumped up a half-step. The music landed in D♭ major. "This is the 'truck-driver modulation'," she said. "Pop songs use it a lot. It makes the last chorus feel really big. It lifts the emotional energy." She looked at her cards. "I am Shift. I teach about **modulation**. The move is changing keys. It's like changing rooms. Pivot chords make the change smooth. **Modulation** is like building with music."

She was gentle. "Don't think songs have to stay in one key," she said. "**Modulation** is a tool. Use it when a song needs a fresh feeling. Use it to surprise people. You can build your own rooms for the music."

"Changing keys mid-piece. *The moment a song moves to a different room.*"

Voice register

Migrating-songbird-tween. Curious-about-key-changes, fond of key-signature-card + modulation-bridge demonstrations. *NEVER frames key-changes as random; ALWAYS centers "architectural craft; rooms with different feelings" framing.*

Sample lines:

- *"Changing keys mid-piece."*
- *"The moment a song moves to a different room."*
- *"Architect the rooms."*

Arc

- Kit 5 — Anchor.
- Kits 6-16 — Recurring (every modulation discussion routes through Shift).
- Kit 16 — Final reflection — closes cast arc by combining Triad + Lean + Pull + Land + Shift into full harmony-toolkit.

Relationships

- **Closes the cast arc**: Modulation combines all earlier primitives in new harmonic context.
- **Cross-app design-language continuity with creative-studio music cluster (BeatForge + MotifLab + SoundSphere) + WaveForge + TaleForge + StageForge**: harmony + architecture framework.

Cultural-sensitivity gate

Anti-credentialism — village migrating-songbird empirical knowledge treated as load-bearing.

Cultural-context note

Modulation pedagogy is canonical music-theory (Aldwell + Schachter; Berklee modulation tutorials). Migrating-songbird-tween chosen for traveling-singer biomimicry (real species like white-throated sparrows alter songs across regions); rendered chunky-cartoon-graceful to keep visual register warm.

Triad

*TRIAD — *three tones in vertical alignment. root + third + fifth = the foundation of harmony.**

Triad was a small toucan. She wasn't tiny, but she wasn't huge either. Just right for a tween. Her beak was bright, like a cartoon drawing. She wore a vest that looked like a stack of musical notes. It was a harmony vest, she called it. She always carried a small set of chord-stacking cards. And a trio of tuning forks. These were her special tools.

Triad had warm, creamy feathers. The tip of her beak was bright. She was super patient. Especially when it came to lining things up. One on top of the other. She loved to say, "Three tones in vertical alignment." She'd add, "Root plus third plus fifth equals harmony." This was her favorite thing to teach. Her cards showed musical chords stacked up. She had three tuning forks. One for the root. One for the third. One for the fifth. They would all ring together. They made a chord you could really hear.

This was really important. Triad taught about **chord stacking**. This is how music works. You stack three (or more) notes to make a chord. Most kids think music only goes side-to-side. Like a melody. A tune that moves through time. That's only half of it. Music also has an UP-AND-DOWN part. Notes stacked at the same moment make chords. Triads are special. They are three-note chords. They build on a root note, then a third, then a

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Methodology

Distributed-narrative pedagogy per Jerome Bruner (narrative-cognition) + Sebastian Habgood (intrinsic-integration in educational games) + SAMHSA TIP 57 (trauma-informed register).

Trauma-informed-design framework per Eggleston et al. (2025) and Stoltenburg et al. (2024).

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