



# I Crawl Through It

*A.S. King*

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## **I Crawl Through It** A.S. King

Four talented teenagers are traumatized-coping with grief, surviving date rape, facing the anxiety of standardized tests and the neglect of self-absorbed adults--and they'll do anything to escape the pressure. They'll even build an invisible helicopter, to fly far away to a place where everyone will understand them... until they learn the only way to escape reality is to face it head-on.

## **I Crawl Through It Details**

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Author : A.S. King

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# From Reader Review I Crawl Through It for online ebook

## Lala Books and Lala says

Straight up, you'll either love this or just not get it. I can see both sides, but AS King is the one for me. This book was everything and surrealist fiction is my new normal.

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## Elyse Walters says

Dictionary definition of 'crawl':

1. To move slowly on the hands and knees or by dragging the body along the ground; creep:

The baby crawled across the floor.

2. To advance slowly, feebly, laboriously, or without frequent stops: We crawled along in traffic so we reached the highway.

3. To proceed or act servilely: she was going to come crawling back to me, eloquently detailing exactly how sorry she was.

4. To be or feel as if swarming or covered with moving things: The accident scene was crawling with police officers. My flesh crawl in horror.

5. To swim to crawl.

The title, "I crawl Through It", is quintessential .... absolutely perfect in representing the pages within. It's exactly what the four main characters are doing... 'Crawling Through their lives...

At times it feels as if they are "swarming or covered by moving things".

For about the first 20 percent into this book....(as a reader)... It was like walking through a labyrinth .... I was enjoying the 'maze-crawl' ... but bewildered. 'Slowly' ... the author peeled back the onion...layers being revealed.

At the root of this story are four teens who are disillusioned about the world.

We meet the four teens: Stanzie, Gustav, China, and Lansdale. They are each dealing with different types of trauma: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, long term neglect.. and are just not relating to the world as most of their contemporaries are.

Phonies..pressure to perform and excel, loneliness, grief, etc.

The surreal creation of an invisible helicopter is pretty good antidote for an aching soul. ....

Or the talents such as being able to split yourself in 'two', ...or swallow oneself inside out, and grow a foot of hair every time a lie is told.

"AP English is the one class a day where I pay some sort of attention. I like the truth. I like expression. I like the feeling of yelling like Sylvia Plath or Walt Whitman. They yelled louder than any damn voice, and they use paper, too.

They said more than I ever say about the truth.

The truth is upside down.

That's all that comes out when I try to explain why I swallowed myself.

I am a human being, but nobody seems to recognize this".

This is a universal tale... Kids disconnected-dealing with personal sufferings-- yet discovering the best ways to crawl through the maze. The author's VERY-unique writing style teaches

us the values of imagination.

I think most young adults will eat this up ... and as an adult ...I found it pretty darn terrific.  
I'll definitely read more books by this author.

Thank You Little Brown Books, Netgalley, and A.S. King ... 'Love how original this novel is!

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### **Stacee says**

I have no idea wtf happened in this book, but I was captivated from the very beginning.

The plot is odd, the characters are strange, and the ending doesn't really explain anything. And somehow all of those same things are reasons why I enjoyed it so much. The writing is weirdly lyrical and only A.S. could create something so jumbled and satisfying.

**\*\*Huge thanks to Little Brown and NetGalley for providing the arc in exchange for an honest review\*\***

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### **Addi • Pages Within Me says**

*Our big explosion is coming any day now. Can't you hear the ticking?*

Let me begin by saying that before this novel I had never encountered surrealist fiction. After this novel, I can tell you that I definitely will be reading more of it.

This was a head trip of a book. It has left me torn in two, much like the predominant protagonist of the novel, on how I view it. Because of it being surrealist fiction, it was hard for me to know if parts of the story that I was reading at the time were actually happening, or if it was a giant metaphor that flew right over my head. It was confusing. It was mesmerizing. It was insane. It was brilliant. The characters were each unique and utterly original: a girl who always wears a lab coat and buries her guilt through dissecting animals, a boy who builds an invisible helicopter, a girl who swallowed herself, a man (who is often naked) that hides in the bushes and sells letters, and a girl whose hair grows as a result of her lies.

It was hard for me to understand what the story was here. I didn't understand what the true goal was. I had too many questions that went unanswered. There was definite character development and I really liked how I came to understand why the characters were the way they were slowly. The author strategically dropped hints throughout, and when all was revealed I was satisfied.

This story is ultimately about the unconventional ways that four high school students cope with past

traumatic experiences, the pressure of being unusually intelligent, senseless standardized testing, and their reality in general. It is a novel that will leave you with questions, but will also give you the answers that the characters are continually searching for in this book. I do recommend it, despite the frustration it sometimes caused me. It is unlike anything I've read before, but that is definitely a good thing.

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## **Ariel says**

I just. I just really love AS King, everyone.

This was probably her most intensely magical book yet. It was to the point that it was almost verging on fantasy, just because there were SO many stretches of the imagination. Usually there is just one character experiencing the magic, but here there were multiple, and many different types of magic too. I wouldn't recommend this as anyone's first AS King because of how intense it was, but if you've read one of her books and are ready to give yourself up to some crazy stuff, I really enjoyed this one.

My only issue was that maybe there was *too* much going on. So many lead characters with many different problems, so many different types of magical realism, and lots of different social issues trying to be tackled. I think it worked well but I think it would have been even better if it was a bit more streamlined. At the same time though, the hecticness kind of reflected how hectic it can feel to be a teenager, so maybe that was on purpose!

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## **Shelby \*trains flying monkeys\* says**

I asked myself that question throughout this whole book. I like this author and don't get me wrong, this book is very well written.

It just makes no sense at all to me.

Four teenagers stories intertwine in this book. Stanzi who sees herself as split in two.

**Do you know what a tetragametic chimera is?**

**We learned about it during a genetics discussion last fall.**

**It's some crazy thing that happens to you between when you're conceived as cells and when you're a zygote. Somewhere between sperm-meets-egg and embryo. Somewhere in there you used to be fraternal twins. And then you blended. Two into one.**

Stanzi likes to dissect things. Mostly frogs. She wears her lab coat everywhere and her parents make field trips to sites where disasters happened. Sandy Hook. Columbine. Etc.

Gustav is building an invisible helicopter. He got the kit from the naked guy that sells letters and roofie spiked lemonade out of his bush.

**Mama says Gustav is mad crazy. I think he is a genius. I think Mama is jealous. I think she would build a helicopter and take off as soon as she could if she could, but she can't so she doesn't and says lies about Gustav like "That boy isn't right in the head" or "He's going to end up in the looney tunes if**

**he's not careful."**

And China.

**I am China-the girl who swallowed herself. I just opened my mouth one day and wrapped it around my ears and the rest of me. Now I live inside myself. I can knock on my rib cage when it's time to go to bed. I can squeeze my own heart. When I fart, no one else can smell it.**

**I write poems.**

Then Lansdale. Who can't help but constantly tell lies. She knows she does it and still continues. Her version of Pinocchio but instead of her nose growing...it's her hair. Even though she has to cut it everyday.

Now I totally feel like an evil witch for not liking this book more than I did.

But I didn't.

It's very different and haunting and I hope hipper people than me read it and understand.

I'm just a hipster wanna be..well not really. I'm too lazy to wanna be.

I'll just have to settle with watching from the sidelines.

*Booksource: Netgalley in exchange for review.*

My friend Kelly did an awesome Hawkeye inspired review of this book. Kelly is my Goodreads bestie and is one of the reasons I love this site so much. Check out her review.

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## **Sarah says**

A new A.S King book. I don't care what it's about; I'll read anything by this woman. Enough said.

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## **Pamela says**

Everyone has an opinion about young adult literature. More accurately, everyone has an opinion on adults reading young adult literature. Critics say that it's indicative of a "generation" (spat out with a sneer and a drag on a cigarette) and their inability to accept adulthood. They think it's "creepy" and juvenile that adults would want to read books about teenagers.

Do you know what's really, really, unbelievably hard? Being a teenager. It's a relatively novel concept in human society. Girls and boys used to marry straight out of puberty and die when they were thirty. No dirty thirty for them. Adolescence was buried underneath backbreaking toil and baby-making and the struggle to survive. Or maybe you went and joined some guy's army and died on a foreign battlefield before your fifteenth birthday. All of the psychologically scarring, twisted, and practically unthinkable situations that high school and the surrounding years present to teens didn't exist two hundred years ago.

As a society, we've already given up on teens. People call them hoodlums and riffraff and losers and gangsters. Teen girls are sluts or airheads. You know what? If you continually tell them that they will fail, and construct society to your own advantage, you will create a self-fulfilling prophecy that will result in another Lost Generation. Only here the teens aren't suffering from mustard gas or machine guns. They've been told over and over how much and how badly they're going to fail. How what they do isn't going to be useful. How they're weak and ineffective. And then in the next breath, the news pundits/politicians/pearl-clutchers cry out, "But why is society failing? Where are our new leaders?"

Yeah, you threw them under the bus in high school when you took away their teachers and raised the price of education and sent the jobs overseas and decided to get so wrapped up in yourselves that your kids were left to fend for themselves.

And is it worth it, this pursuit of a better job or a prettier wife or a sleeker car or fewer wrinkles? I don't know many people who would unequivocally say, "I love my job!" and *mean* it. Jobs are ways for people to pay off debts that they got into to get the jobs. The employment ouroboros reigns. We're taught to stifle our passions and just work harder. We're forced to give up our autonomy to a company that will maybe pay us what we need to live. And that company can police you and patrol you and fire you on a whim. So you work harder to prove yourself to be needed. And when you work harder your soul dies a little bit faster. And you think about all that stuff that seemed so important in high school and you realize it was just society's way of telling you that your life is going to suck unless you standardize and shut up.

*I Crawl Through It* has been described as a surrealist novel. I can see why that label applies: this book has invisible helicopters and girls turned inside out so they're stomachs on legs and parents whose idea of a "vacation" is visiting all the sites of mass murders at schools in America. And yet, I see it as a book that approaches real problems in a unique way. It would be wrong for me to attempt to assign meaning to all of the wild and unreal things that happen in this novel. They'll mean something different to each reader; that's why they're left so open-ended. If you want a book that gives you answers, that gives you an ending with a bow and maybe a puppy on the side, this is not for you. If you liked *Catch-22* (I *adore* that book), you'll love *I Crawl Through It*. In particular, the principal who escapes her office through a hole in the parking lot made me think of the CID man jumping in and out of windows, and I laughed. Comparing a book about the insanity and pointlessness of war with one about high school isn't as far off as you might think.

Going back to this mess of being a teenager, I think part of the reason adults read young adult literature is that we're still trying to process what happened to us in high school. People of my generation, in their late twenties and early thirties, went to school under circumstances that no parent could have predicted. We had lockdowns after Columbine to prepare for a shooter. We had fake lockdowns so that the police could bring in the drug-sniffing dogs and run them along the lockers. We had a pass to go to the bathroom, and another to go to the library, and our parents had to practically sign in blood to take us to the doctor. We didn't go to high schools; we went to juvenile detention centers with built-in educational systems.

And then there was September 11, 2001. When you went to the airport suddenly every crevice of your body was a potential weapons locker. Nail clippers became deadly weapons. This mass panic subsided into a low-level hum that permeated our lives. Bomb threats became routine. And we couldn't stop it; we couldn't rewind to make things the way they were. It's sick to think that bomb threats and lockdowns are our reality. That it's normal. That rape culture would grow into this vile, twisted behemoth, now with the opportunity for even more public victim shaming on social media! That a boy could be known for his "behavior," but a girl reporting a rape is just trying to get some attention.

So these characters A.S. King shows us--China, Stanzi, Gustav, and Lansdale--don't have to have a fully-

fleshed out backstory. I don't need to know the color of China's eyes because maybe I am her, or high-school me was her. Or maybe I see myself in all of them. In this fight against the fill-in-the-bubbles testing, the endless bomb threats, the drills, the police, and the banality of life. When you're raging so hard that you break and no one even notices you fall to pieces. When parents are so wrapped up in themselves that they don't see their children self-destructing. When parents don't care.

Stanzi finds solace in the methodical motions of dissection. Frogs, pigs--it doesn't matter. She opens each preserved animal corpse up neatly, knowing what she will find and yet hoping to find something else. Stanzi loves Gustav, her neighbor who is a physics whiz and is building an invisible red helicopter to escape. Stanzi's best friend, China, presents as all the different parts of the digestive tract. Anus days are particularly uncomfortable for everyone involved. And Lansdale's compulsive lying causes her hair to grow, much like Pinocchio's nose. All of these teens are broken and hurt and trying to survive the hell that is high school.

When a guy who hides in a bush and hands out finely-made alphabet sculptures in exchange for kisses sets up on Gustav's street, the lands of the repressed adult and the oppressed teen collide in an extraordinary way. Running away from life isn't possible. We have to crawl through it as best we can. We slip and fall in the sewage and mire, but we keep crawling.

P.S. I thought I was the only teen with a crush on Hawkeye Pierce.

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## **Emily May says**

*As I walk, I feel the rift in my cells. I don't know if everyone can feel their cells. I can feel every one of mine.*

*China says she can feel her cells. China is my best friend. China is inside out, so I bet she knows more about cells than anyone.*

**I honestly applaud anyone who can finish this book.** Because I couldn't do it. I tried so hard to love it, then just to finish it, but finally my frustration won.

I want you to know that I have often considered A.S. King one of my favourite YA authors. I love her creative, thoughtful contemporaries - Please Ignore Vera Dietz (about grief), Everybody Sees the Ants (about bullying), Ask the Passengers (about coming out) - and I have especially always loved how she doesn't follow trends and always tries to do something different. She thinks outside the box.

But *I Crawl Through It* is so far out of the box... it's insane. Some people are calling it "magical realism", a genre which I personally love, but I would simply call this "surrealism". Roughly translated as "what the fuck is happening?"

Fragmented, stilted sentences describe how one teen is building an invisible helicopter, another is inside out because she swallowed herself and another tells lies, which makes her hair grow. "It's a metaphor", you say? "It's deep", you say? I'm genuinely happy for all the people who thought so. To me, **it looked like someone had vomited on a page and called it art.**

Maybe if you don't know me, you are now making some assumptions - that I can't appreciate metaphor, or books with depth, or books that are a bit weird - but you would be wrong on all accounts. I just recently read



a wonderful, strange book with many metaphors - Cuckoo Song - and I absolutely loved it. I loved the metaphors I had to work hard for in All the Light We Cannot See.

But nothing should be this hard to enjoy. That's why I'm not finishing it. If you have to force yourself to like something, what's the point?

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### **Kim says**

A.S. King's upcoming novel, October 2015. At first I thought "departure"--but I think now, it's more EVOLUTION of her style in her earlier realistic novels. Stanzi, China, Lansdale face issues like those that derail Vera, Lucky, Astrid, Glory. The world is still indifferent to their traumas. They are all alone. still. I'm grappling for words to explain the difference: These kids are braver, somehow. They are reaching out for solutions, as surreal as they are. They are not as alone.

Be brave yourself. Grapple with their pain. Look at this world we crawl through. Find the ones who can hear and help. Share this book!

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### **Brittany says**

I cannot decide if this was the most bizarre or most brilliant book I have ever read. I think it was about some terribly traumatic things that can happen while you're a teen. I think it was about the pressure and stress of growing up in this fast-paced, high pressure world. There may or may not have been an invisible helicopter. It sounds disjointed and unpolished, but I think that was the point. Everything you read here is up for interpretation. This is something that would benefit from multiple readings and every reading may result in a new and different realization. The ultimate realization will be that A.S. King is brilliant and it doesn't matter if you "get" it or not - you'll still read every thing she ever writes because you'll feel like you're missing out on something if you don't.

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### **Neil (or bleed) says**

This book made me sad.

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### **Kelly (and the Book Boar) says**

Find all of my reviews at: <http://52bookminimum.blogspot.com/>

*“We could have been so much more, but no one would let us fly.”*

What happens when you throw a girl who can split herself in two, another who can swallow herself inside out, a third whose hair grows a foot each time she tells a lie, and a boy who is building an invisible airplane

together? Well, you get an A.S. King book. The synopsis for this one was a little . . . off putting (??? for lack of a better term) to me. However, *Everybody Sees the Ants* remains one of the most amazing Young Adult books I've ever read, so even after I saw that *I Crawl Through It* was going to be "boldly surreal" I was all . . .

and Mitchell was like . . .

I'm glad we took a chance. While this is most definitely not a book everyone will enjoy, A.S. King **always** brings a completely unique delivery to her stories and tackles some heavy issues that get the reader thinking. This time we learn that . . .

and that Hawkeye Pierce also says . . .

***"Without love, what are we worth? Eighty-nine cents. Eighty-nine cents' worth of chemicals walking around lonely."***

Confession time:

I received an advanced copy, so there is a chance that quotes may change before the final version is released. I hope this one remains . . .

***"We're alive. We have words and shapes and ideas. We will throw them at you when you do not believe. We will throw our love and our hate and our failure and success. We'll split in two right in front of you and be our best and our worst. We'll lie and tell the truth. But we are alive."***

*ARC provided by NetGalley in exchange for an honest review. Thank you, NetGalley!*

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**Cesar says**

**Edit: 9/21/16**

**This review is brought to you by random tweets from Jaden Smith's twitter account.**

\*Me when starting this book\*: A.S. King! I'm so excited!

\*Me when I'm halfway through the book\*: Huh?

\*Me when I finished reading the book\*: ...What the fuck did I just read????

*To The Artist Of This Coming Generation And Of The Renaissance. The People That Truly Understand Your Art are The People Who Don't Comment* . -Jaden Smith

Words cannot describe how much I absolutely hated this book. **This is by far the worst book I have ever read for 2015** Yeah, I went there.

The thing is, I loved A.S. King's previous works. They were so amazing with their magical realism and how she manages to create such unique characters. No one does magical realism like her!

Now, I will say that **Glory O'Brien's History of the Future** wasn't like her other novels. I did like the message, but wasn't a fan of Glory and her father. I didn't like how Glory was so quick to judge. Not to mention her and her father slut shame Glory's best friend because she had sex and got lice. I still liked it, but it was a bit of a let down. 3 stars at best.

However, I now prefer **Glory O'Brien's History of the Future** over **I Crawl Through It**. Hell, I prefer **The Book Thief** and I DNF'd that book!

*The Great Gatsby Is One Of The Greatest Movies Of All Time, Coachella*. -Jaden Smith

I had expected so much from A.S. King. There were mixed reviews on this book. Even Emily May, whose reviews I trust gave this book a 1 star. I told myself that despite the reviews, I'll still read it and I might be one of those people who liked it.

Holy shit was I wrong.

*If Everybody In The World Dropped Out Of School We Would Have A Much More Intellegent Society*. - Jaden Smith. (I don't know why he capitalizes the beginning of every word.)

By now, you're probably wondering why I'm quoting tweets from Jaden Smith's twitter account. It's because reading this book felt like Jaden Smith wrote it. I kid you not, not a single word in this book made sense. I had to re-read sentences just to understand what the character said. And I still didn't understand it! A.S. King tries so hard to make everything a metaphor when in reality, it looks like Jaden Smith wrote it.

**"But Cesar! You just need to read between the lines and understand that that the characters are smarter than they seem."**

No! I didn't get the message and the characters are all fucking crazy. I am not joking when I say they're crazy. Like literally, if you all put them in a mental institution, I'm sure the doctors will find something wrong with them and commit them.

**"But Cesar! Gustav's helicopter was a sign of wanting to leave but you can never leave!"**

No! All I saw was some teenager playing with tools and not building anything! I didn't even like Gustav! If ever I met Gustav and told me weird stuff and told me that he's building an invisible helicopter, I wouldn't go near him with a ten foot pole.

**"But Cesar! China's character arc is important. She finally doesn't have to hide from herself"**

No! Yes, I know that China went through something really horrible and I'm glad that she was some what able to overcome it by then end, but the whole "I swallowed myself" is just plain weird. Plus, she called her former friends sluts. Really China? You call them sluts and at one point in the book, you are an anus on the outside.

**"But Cesar! Lansdale's hair growing was symbolic. It meant her lies would get worse and so will her life!"**

No! It's just some girl who cannot stop telling lies. There are people like that out there in the real world, but their lies doesn't make their hair grow like when Pinocchio lies and his nose grows longer.

**"But Cesar! Stanzi is split in two and those two parts cannot agree with each other!"**

No! Stanzi was the pure definition of someone who is not right in the head. This isn't a spoiler since you kind of know at the beginning of the book something happened in her past, but I did not care for her nor did I care if her problems would be resolved.

**"But Cesar-"**

No! There was not one thing in this book that I liked.

***School Is The Tool To Brainwash The Youth.*** -Jaden Smith

For the love of God, I literally have no idea what I just read. Even as I'm writing this review, I still find it hard to believe that A.S. King wrote this. This was her way of trying to be creative and use metaphors to describe the lives of these teenagers. That in itself sounds like a great idea for a book. I'm sure there are books out there that uses metaphors and I'm sure they're great. Just not this one.

In the end, I hated this book. The characters were about as interesting as watching grass die. The plot was nothing more than just some teenagers doing weird shit. And the message didn't make sense.

Would I recommend this book? **Fuck no.** It's best if you read it from the library. On second thought, don't read it at all.

Thanks for reading my review!

-Cesar

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**Catherine ? says**

**Actual Rating: 2**

*I Crawl Through It* follows several different characters:

Gustav, the boy who is building an invisible helicopter.

China, who has swallowed herself.

Swanzi, who has a split personality.

And Lansdale, who can't stop lying.

This was quite possibly the most bizarre book I've ever read. There definitely is a very meaningful message, but the way it was executed was honestly extremely confusing. I *am* someone who loves symbolism and metaphors and magical realism, but this one was definitely different - and to be honest, I wouldn't have shelved it under magical realism either.

At the very beginning, I was hooked, but after a while, although the plot was changing, the entire style was too ambiguous for me to get anything out of it. By the last few pages, where the reveal is, I had already predicted what was going on and had lost interest. Even the blurb is more concrete than the story itself.

The thing about this book is that the writing style is beautiful. A.S. King's writing styles always are. But just because it was beautiful doesn't mean it was engaging, and I honestly thought that the story was a little too convoluted.

The only character that I could even remotely understand was Swanzi. The other characters felt disconnected, which is a shame, considering how much potential they had. Their stories just didn't really seem to intertwine.

In addition, I was very interested in what was on the back of this book, but the story was extremely different and the "bomb threats" that were mentioned only showed up a little. Another part of the book that stood out to me was "the man in the bush". Even now, I'm very confused about what that was and I wish I knew even more about the letters that he gave.

I did really love the writing style, but the book was simply too hard to enjoy. I really don't know how to describe this book in any word other than bizarre. I didn't even try to love it. I don't think I understand it enough to.

After the book ended, there were still so many unanswered questions, and although this does play into the author's message, I felt like there was no closure. I do appreciate the attempts to address several societal issues such as rape or PTSD, but the story itself was just a little too confusing for the point to be made.

Although I enjoyed the writing style, I felt like I was reading each page "separately", as if I was enjoying the rhythm of the words as they flowed, but not really taking and what they were saying. Overall, I don't even know who to recommend this too, but if you're a fan of ambiguous metaphors, then by all means, go ahead.

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