

The B/X Rogue



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Text and Layout—Gavin Norman

the-city-of-iron.blogspot.com

Cover and Illustrations—Nicolò Maioli

satanisjoy.tumblr.com

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Introduction

I am a firm believer in keeping the number of character classes in the game down to a bare minimum. When the selection of classes is limited, character concept takes prominence over the slightly altered mechanics of some new variant or subclass. On the other hand, it is nice for players to have *some* options for tweaking their character's abilities. Hence my preference for a limited number of classes (I usually keep this to the classic "core four": cleric, fighter, magic-user, thief) with some additional options sprinkled in. This book presents options for greatly expanding the scope of the traditional thief class, enhancing it to such a degree that a new, broader name—the rogue—seems appropriate¹.

As a replacement for the thief, the rogue greatly expands the flexibility and scope of the class, as well as providing alternate mechanics for many of its abilities. The most significant differences between the two classes are:

- Instead of a fixed list of skills with percentage chance of success improving as the character advances, rogues have talents with which they are fully proficient but whose number increases as the character advances. This change is intended to address a very common complaint about the thief class: namely that very poor skill percentages at low levels cripple the class' ability to do the very things at which it should excel. Once a rogue learns a talent, he or she is able to perform it at full efficacy.
- The rogue's list of talents incorporates elements of several thief subclasses which have appeared over the years in various editions (the bard, assassin, acrobat, and arcane trickster, for example). This addresses another common misgiving with the thief: the rigidity of the class, in terms of the set of available skills. The rogue is, on the other hand, a very flexible class, with a selection of abilities that can be tailored to many needs.

¹ Although the rogue class subsumes the abilities of the thief and is intended as a complete replacement of it, it is, if the referee wishes, perfectly possible to use both classes in a single campaign.

- The descriptions of the rogue's talents are designed to emphasise player skill and role-playing as opposed to character skill and mindless rolling of percentile dice. For example, no talent allows a rogue to disarm all traps with a die roll—the traditional *remove traps* skill has been deliberately reduced to only apply to small mechanical traps which can be disarmed with the rogue's knowledge and tools (such procedures would be difficult and tedious for most players to describe). Larger traps must be bypassed by player ingenuity and descriptive interaction with the imagined world described by the referee.

Rogue Talents and Other Classes

The talents described in this book represent adventuring skills which may only be mastered with many hours of practice and a good amount of in-born aptitude. All rogue characters are assumed to have this aptitude and, as a general rule, only rogues may learn and practice these talents. Situations will arise, however, where non-rogue characters may attempt to perform tasks which are covered by rogue talents. A note on how the referee may choose to handle such cases is in order.

The majority of talents simply require too high a level of specific training for a layman to stand any chance of success. *Activate magic scrolls*, *pick locks*, and *tightrope walking* are good examples. It is perfectly fine for the referee to tell a non-rogue player that their character just doesn't have the requisite training to even know where to begin. (All character classes possess skills which are beyond the capabilities of others.)

Occasionally, a character's background may imply proficiency with a rogue talent. For example, a fighter with a mountaineer background could conceivably know the *climb rock faces* talent. The referee must judge this, but it is not recommended that any non-rogue be allowed to know more than a single talent due to his or her background. (Insistent players may be pointed to the multi-classing rules, if such a system is used.)

Lastly, there is a small set of talents which *may* potentially be performed by non-rogues (or by rogues who have not practised the talent to true proficiency). *Climb rock faces*, *disguise*, and *garotte* are good examples. It seems reasonable that any character may attempt such feats. The chance of success, however, should be greatly reduced, when compared to that of a rogue who is proficient with the talent. The referee should judge this on a case-by-case basis, but the following guidelines, covering some of the most common situations, may be of use:

- *Blackjack*: Non-proficient characters may make attacks with a blackjack, but at a -4 penalty to hit, due to unfamiliarity with the technique.
- *Climb rock faces*: Characters without this talent can normally only climb rock faces with the use of proper climbing equipment. When properly equipped, a DEX roll is still appropriate, to determine success. Less difficult feats of climbing (trees, vines, etc.)—which a proficient rogue can perform automatically—may also justify a DEX check.
- *Disguise*: Of course, any character may attempt to conceal their identity with wigs, make-up, and so forth. Those without this talent, though, are likely to do a poor job, at best. Even casual observers should be allowed a saving throw versus spells to detect the disguise.
- *Garrote*: Other characters may make attacks with a garotte, but with reduced effectiveness: a -4 penalty to hit and inflicting no damage in the first round.
- *Hide*: Any character may attempt to hide, but without guaranteed success: a small chance of being spotted by passers-by (perhaps 1 in 6 or 2 in 6) seems appropriate.
- *Move quietly*: Characters wearing metal armour simply cannot move quietly. Lightly encumbered characters may attempt to sneak, but without guaranteed success: a 2 in 6 chance is reasonable, under normal circumstances. Even if successful, the character may still be noticed by attentive listeners, as described in the talent's description.

The Rogue Class

Those adventurers who make their living by stealth, wit, and deception, rather than skill at arms or magical might, are known as rogues. This class represents, in some sense, the archetypal adventurer, honing skills of exploration and infiltration—which every adventurer requires to some degree—to perfection. Characters of this class may follow many careers and fill many roles: tomb robbers and thieves, charlatans and con artists, scouts and spies, brigands and highwaymen, thugs and assassins—all are rogues and practice the talents of this class. Some rogues are self-made while others may be members of guilds, studying under master thieves, spies, scouts, or assassins.

The chief aptitude of rogues is the plethora of highly specialised skills of dexterity, stealth, intrigue, infiltration, and cunning that they are able to learn. These are known collectively as *talents*. The following section lists dozens of talents which a rogue may learn over his or her career, beginning at 1st level with four, as chosen by the player, and gaining one more talent per experience level gained. (For players who do not wish to spend time browsing the complete list, random tables and quick-start selections of talents are provided later.)

While some talents allow a rogue to learn specialised fighting techniques, rogues' skill in battle does not match that of true warriors. They are versatile fighters, being able to wield weapons of any type², but, due to their need for stealth, swiftness, and agile movement, are limited to wearing leather armour and may not use shields.

A rogue's prime requisite is Dexterity. A character with DEX of 13 or higher gains a 5% bonus to experience points. This bonus increases to 10% for rogues with a DEX of 16 or higher.

2 Rogues' ability to use all weapons is carried over directly from the *Labyrinth Lord* thief. Some referees may wish to reduce this somewhat, leaving heavy weapons as the sole preserve of true fighting classes. In this case, the following list may be used: club, dagger, dart, hand axe, light crossbow, longbow, longsword, shortbow, shortsword, sling, quarterstaff.

In advanced games, where PC race and class are separated, characters of any race may be rogues. Human rogues may advance without limit, halfling rogues may achieve 14th experience level, and other races a maximum of 12th.

Rogue Advancement Table

Level	XP	HD	Talents	AC0 ⁴	Saving Throws ³				
					BA	P/D	P/P	W	S
1	0	1d4	4	19	16	14	13	15	14
2	1,251	2d4	5	19	16	14	13	15	14
3	2,501	3d4	6	19	16	14	13	15	14
4	5,001	4d4	7	18	16	14	13	15	14
5	10,001	5d4	8	18	14	12	11	13	12
6	20,001	6d4	9	17	14	12	11	13	12
7	40,001	7d4	10	17	14	12	11	13	12
8	80,001	8d4	11	17	14	12	11	13	12
9	160,001	9d4	12	16	12	10	9	11	10
10	280,001	+2 hp	13	16	12	10	9	11	10
11	400,001	+2 hp	14	15	12	10	9	11	10
12	520,001	+2 hp	15	14	12	10	9	11	10
13	640,001	+2 hp	16	13	10	8	7	9	8
14	760,001	+2 hp	17	13	10	8	7	9	8
15	880,001	+2 hp	18	12	10	8	7	9	8
16	1,000,001	+2 hp	19	12	10	8	7	9	8
17	1,120,001	+2 hp	20	11	8	6	5	7	6
18	1,240,001	+2 hp	21	11	8	6	5	7	6
19	1,360,001	+2 hp	22	10	8	6	5	7	6
20	1,480,001	+2 hp	23	10	8	6	5	7	6

³ Saving throw categories in order: Breath Attacks, Poison or Death, Petrify or Paralyse, Wands, Spells or Spell-like Devices.

⁴ Modified attack roll required to hit Armour Class 0.

Talents

Following is the list of talents which may be learned by rogues. Note that some talents (marked with an asterisk) are “expert” talents. These may only be taken by rogues of 5th level or higher and build upon another, prerequisite talent, which must also be known.

Activate Magic Scrolls*

(Expert talent, requires *decipher magical script*)

You can cast spells from magic-user scrolls with a 90% chance of success. If the roll fails, the referee may decide that the spell backfires in a comical or unfortunate manner. In any case, the scroll is always consumed.

Agile Fighting

When lightly encumbered and wielding a one-handed weapon, your practised speed, agility, and grace in melee allow you to dodge and whirl out of harm's way. When making a full retreat (see LL p. 53), you may choose one of the following options:

- *Evasion*: your opponent's attack roll is at -2, instead of the usual +2 bonus.
- *Retaliation*: you may attack and make a full retreat, in the same round. Your attack roll is penalised by -4.

Learning Talents

When a rogue learns a new talent upon increasing in level, it is normally assumed that the character has been practising the talent in the downtime between adventures and has now mastered the skill enough to put it to practical use. Some referees, however, may wish to impose the additional requirement of a period of training, before a new talent may be learned. The exact duration and cost of this must be decided by the referee, as suits the campaign. One interesting option is to require the rogue to locate a tutor who is an expert in the talent to be learned; this in itself can inspire adventure, as a suitable tutor may only be found in a distant land or may require quests or favours as payment for the training, in place of simple monetary reimbursement. (If such training requirements are placed on the rogue class, it is advised that other classes be treated in a similar manner, to avoid imbalance.)

Awareness

Your honed reactions and instinctual awareness of danger make it difficult for enemies to sneak up on you. When surprise is rolled, you are only surprised on a roll of 1 (instead of 1-2, like other characters).

Back-Stab

When attacking a humanoid by surprise⁵, you get a +4 bonus to attack with a dagger. If the attack succeeds, the precision of your strike inflicts extra damage equal to $1d4 + \text{your level}$.

Blackjack

When attacking a humanoid victim who is unaware of your presence and who is not wearing a helmet, you can attempt to knock them out with a cosh, blackjack, or similar implement. To do so, make a normal attack roll. If it succeeds, the victim suffers $1d4$ damage and must save versus paralysis. Failure indicates that they're knocked unconscious for one turn.

Blind Fighting

Training in the unusual art of fighting while blindfolded reduces the penalty to attacks against foes whom you cannot see. Instead of the usual -4 penalty, you only suffer -2 when making melee attacks against invisible opponents.

Climb Rock Faces

When lightly encumbered, you can climb rough rock faces unaided, with a successful DEX check. You can climb less treacherous surfaces without a check.

⁵ "By surprise" includes but is not limited to attacks made during the surprise round of combat. The exact definition of which situations count as "by surprise" is left to the referee's judgement, but may also include other situations where the victim is unaware of the rogue's presence (such as when the rogue is hiding and/or moving quietly) or his intent (due to bluffs, disguises, or intrigue). This definition also applies to the *garotte* and *sniper* talents.

Climb Rough Walls*

(Expert talent, requires *climb rock faces*)

Your climbing skills are so advanced that you can scale sheer surfaces with only minimal handholds such as the cracks between stone blocks. This requires a DEX check. You can climb less treacherous surfaces without a check.



Decipher Foreign Text

With an INT check, you can figure out the gist of texts written in foreign languages which are related to a language you know.

Decipher Magical Script

You can decipher arcane inscriptions, including those on magic-user scrolls or in spell books. There is a 1 in 6 chance that your understanding is inaccurate. This talent does not allow you to cast spells, but you can identify them.

Decipher Obscure Text*

(Expert talent, requires *decipher foreign text*)

With an INT check, you can figure out the gist of a text written in a language which is unrelated to any known to you, including ancient or obscure tongues, at the referee's discretion.

Disable Small Mechanical Traps

Your detailed knowledge of intricate mechanisms allows you to bypass or disable small mechanical traps such as those sometimes used to protect the locks, clasps, or lids of chests. (The mechanisms of larger traps can only be disabled or bypassed by describing to the referee how you wish to achieve this. Any character may attempt this; rogues have no special skill.) A set of thieves' tools, a turn of work, and a DEX roll are required. If you fail, save versus wands to avoid setting the trap off. You may retry failed attempts which did not trigger the trap.

Disguise

Often used in combination with *mimic voice*, this talent allows you to alter your appearance, gestures, expressions, and body language to mimic that of another person or type of person. Many disguises require the use of props—clothing, padding, make-up, fake beards, wigs, etc. To mimic a specific individual, you must have observed their appearance and mannerisms for at least one turn. When you are disguised, those who scrutinise you very closely or whose suspicion is roused may make a save versus spells to see through the deception.

Duelling

Practised in the refined art of swordplay, your natural agility enhances your ability to deflect your opponent's blows. When lightly encumbered and wielding a one-handed sword, your DEX bonus to Armour Class is doubled (to a maximum of +4), versus melee attacks.

Escape Bonds

When bound with ropes or chains, you can escape in one turn with a successful DEX check. If the check fails, you may retry. Escaping from well-tied bonds with a locking mechanism requires that you also know the *pick locks* talent and have access to lock picks or at least an improvised tool with which to pick the lock (this incurs a -4 penalty to the DEX check).

Find Hidden Mechanisms

Your chance of detecting secret doors or mechanical traps when searching is increased by 1 in 6. (For human rogues, this means an overall chance of 2 in 6, for demi-humans 3 in 6.) Note that you (or any other character) may be able to find such mechanisms without a roll by describing to the referee exactly how you search—for example, if a secret door is opened by a pressure plate on top of a dais, stating that you place something on the dais will naturally cause the door to open, without the need for a roll.

Forgery

With good quality tools and sufficient time, you can produce fake documentation and mimic handwriting. You must have a copy of the document or writing to be forged at hand to study. If someone closely inspects your forgery, they may make a saving throw versus spells to detect the fake.

Garrote

When attacking a humanoid victim by surprise, you can attempt to strangle them with a garrote or similar weapon. Make an attack roll. If the attack succeeds, you have the garrote in place, causing damage equal to $1d4 + \text{your level}$. Each subsequent round in which you maintain your stranglehold, the victim automatically suffers a further $1d4$ damage (you need make no further attack rolls). While being throttled, the victim may not make normal attacks, but may attempt to break free by making an attack roll against you, with a -2 penalty. Success indicates they've broken free of your garrote.

Hear Noise

Your acute hearing and practised detection of the subtle sounds of movement increase your chance of hearing noises when listening at doors. The base chance is increased by 1 in 6. (For humans, this means an overall chance of 2 in 6, for demi-humans 3 in 6.)

Hide

With sufficient cover, you can hide yourself from view. Passers-by will not notice your presence, though a thorough search may still reveal you. When lightly encumbered, you can attempt to move while remaining hidden, but this requires a DEX check.

Hide in Shadows*

(Expert talent, requires *hide*)

Your skill at remaining unseen is so honed that deep shadows provide enough cover for you to hide.

Identify Common Poisons

You can attempt to identify common poisons by examining a substance for one turn and making an INT check. If the check succeeds and the substance is a commonly encountered poison, you identify it by name and know its effects.

Identify Rare Poisons*

(Expert talent, requires *identify common poisons*)

Your comprehensive knowledge of poisons allows you to identify common poisons automatically, with a turn of examination, and to identify rarer substances with a successful INT check.

Knife Throwing

You can make two attacks per round with thrown knives or daggers.

Lore

Drawing on your knowledge of history, myth, and legend, a successful INT check allows you to recall historical information about unique treasures and magical items which you come across.

Manufacture Poisons*

(Expert talent, requires *identify common poisons*)

With an appropriate laboratory and a successful INT check, you are able to distil individual doses of poisons for which you know the formula. You must learn poison formulae by discovering them in play. The time and cost of the distillation process are determined by the referee, as are the potential consequences of a failed distillation. (Note that, in most cultures, poisons and the ingredients required to distil them are illegal and may only be acquired through shady sources such as thieves' guilds or the black market.)

Mimic Voice

You can mimic general accents with ease. To convincingly mimic an individual, you must listen to them speaking for at least ten minutes. If there is any uncertainty, listeners may make a saving throw versus spells to detect the ruse.

Move Quietly

When lightly encumbered, you can sneak quietly. In an environment with no ambient noise to mask your movement, an attentive listener may notice you with a successful save versus spells.

Move Silently*

(Expert talent, requires *move quietly*)

When lightly encumbered, you can sneak absolutely silently. Listeners cannot detect your presence by sound alone.

Pick Locks

With decent lock picks and a turn of work, you can attempt to open locks without the appropriate key. A DEX roll is required. You may retry, if you fail, spending a further turn trying to open the lock.

Pick Pockets

With a successful DEX check, you can nimbly extract items from another's person. Whether the check succeeds or not, the target may save versus spells to notice the attempt.

Sleight of Hand

This talent allows you to surreptitiously manipulate items, perform tricks of legerdemain, delicately extract or swap out objects from pressure plates, and so forth. A DEX check is required for success.

Sniper

When attacking a humanoid by surprise, you get a +4 bonus to attack with fired missile weapons (bows, crossbows, firearms). If the attack succeeds, the precision of your shot inflicts extra damage equal to $1d4 + \text{your level}$.

Thieves' Cant

You are fluent in the dialect of slang and metaphor used by thieves to recognise one another and for clandestine communication.

Tightrope Walking

Expert balance allows you to easily walk or dash across narrow walkways. Tightropes or beams of less than a hand's breadth require slow, careful movement or a DEX check to dash across.

Tracking

You know how to read the subtle signs left by a creature's passage through natural environments. In favourable conditions, you can find and follow tracks without fail. More difficult conditions (e.g. if the tracks cover hard ground, cross a river, or are actively being concealed) require an INT check.

Magical Talents (Optional)

Some rogues cultivate not only skills of cunning and dexterity, but also delve into esoteric matters, learning a smattering of magic to complement their more worldly abilities. These talents are listed separately from the others, as they blur the line between the rogue and the magic-user, which is not desired by all referees or suited to all campaign settings. Perhaps more so than with the standard, non-magical talents described previously, it is recommended that the referee only allow magical talents to be learned where there is a realistic in-game explanation as to how the character came across the required knowledge. The character's background may provide such a rationale (perhaps he spent some years as a wizard's apprentice, before taking to a life of adventure), as may items or NPCs encountered during play (perhaps the rogue PC steals and studies a spell book, claiming its secrets for her own, or is owed a favour by an unscrupulous wizard who is willing to share his occult lore).



Detect Magic

With a turn of concentration, you have a 2 in 6 chance of detecting the presence of magic in a 10' area or on a specific object. You may retry with another turn of concentration.

Memorize Spell

You can understand and memorize magic-user spells from books and scrolls, according to the normal rules for arcane spell casting. (Although, unlike magic-users, you may cast spells while wearing leather armour.)

You may take this talent multiple times. Each time you take it, you gain one spell “slot”. Each spell slot allows you to memorize one 1st level spell. When you reach 6th level, you may use your spell slots to memorize 2nd level spells and, upon reaching 12th level, you may use them to memorize 3rd level spells. The use of spell slots is restricted as follows: you may not memorize more than four spells of each level at a time (that is, a maximum of four 1st level spells, four 2nd level spells, and four 3rd level spells). It is thus possible to take this talent a maximum of twelve times.

Taking this talent does not grant you knowledge of any spells—you must find suitable spells to memorize by your own wit and cunning. You may purchase an empty spell book and transcribe any spells which you discover into it (at the normal cost for doing so).

In campaigns where different types of specialist magic-user exist (illusionists, necromancers, elementalists, etc.), the referee may allow you to cast spells of those more specialized types when you take this talent. The initial choice of specialization is final (for example, a rogue who decides to specialize in illusion magic may never memorize standard magic-user spells).

Spell Song

You have learned and mastered an enchanted song which you can sing or play on an instrument once per day to magical effect. (This talent presupposes a level of musical skill, with either vocals or one or more instruments.)

You may take this talent multiple times, learning a different spell song each time from the list of 1st level songs shown on the following page. When you reach 6th level, you may learn 2nd level songs by taking this talent and, upon reaching 12th level, you may learn 3rd level songs.

Compared to standard arcane spell casting, song magic has slightly different rules, as follows:

- *Casting time:* In order to manifest a spell song's enchantment, you must play it for one turn.
- *Maintenance:* Spell songs which produce an effect of non-instantaneous, non-permanent duration need not be physically played or sung for longer than the initial one turn casting time. Instead, once the spell song takes effect, you may stop playing, allowing the melody of the song to linger in your mind, maintaining it until the duration expires. During this time, if you play any other magical song, the maintained spell song comes to an end.
- *Enchantments:* Songs which have the effect of enchanting or beguiling another person must be audible to the target in order for the magic to take hold.

The list of spell songs is given on the next page. All spell songs replicate the effect of a standard cleric, illusionist, or magic-user spell (see the *Advanced Edition Companion*)—these are denoted in parentheses, alongside the name of the spell song.

1st Level Spell Songs

1. Ballad of the loyal companion (*charm person*)
2. Dance of worldly appearances (*doppelganger*)
3. Hymn of radiance (*light*)
4. Incantation of lost lore (*identify*)
5. Psalm of serenity (*remove fear*)
6. Song of glibness and wit (*allure*)
7. Tune of rebinding (*mending*)
8. Warding chant (*protection from evil*)

2nd Level Spell Songs

1. Lay of balm and cheer (*cure light wounds*)
2. Litany of binding and closure (*arcane lock*)
3. Lock charm (*knock*)
4. Lullaby of deepest midnight (*sleep*)
5. Mantra of disappearance (*invisibility*)
6. Ode of great endeavours (*bless*)
7. Serpents' frolic (*snake charm*)
8. Song of dreams (*phantasmal force*)

3rd Level Spell Songs

1. Hymn of the gardens of paradise (*purify food and drink*)
2. Incantation of the fates (*augury*)
3. Mercurial mantra (*haste*)
4. Song of respite and shelter (*tiny hut*)
5. Symphony of the birds and the wind (*fly*)
6. Warding chorus (*protection from evil, 10' radius*)

Quick-Start Talent Selection

Some players may wish to get a quick start into the game, without having to spend the time to read through the complete list of talents presented in the previous section. In this case, the following set of pre-determined, themed talent selections may be chosen (or rolled randomly) for a 1st level rogue.

The last two themes in the table include talents from the optional magical talents section. When selecting a theme at random, if the referee allows the use of these optional talents, roll a d10. Otherwise, a d8 should be used.

Roll	Theme	Talents at 1 st Level
1	Acrobat	agile fighting, escape bonds, knife throwing, tightrope walking
2	Assassin	back-stab, hide, garotte, move quietly
3	Charlatan	disguise, forgery, pick pockets, sleight of hand
4	Highwayman	disguise, duelling, hide, sniper
5	Scout	awareness, hide, sniper, tracking
6	Swashbuckler	agile fighting, climb rock faces, duelling, tightrope walking
7	Thief	back-stab, climb rock faces, move quietly, pick locks
8	Tomb robber	decipher foreign text, disable small mechanical traps, find hidden mechanisms, pick locks
9	Arcane dabbler	decipher magical script, decipher foreign text, memorize spell (one 1 st level magic-user spell), move quietly
10	Bard	decipher foreign text, lore, sleight of hand, spell song (one 1 st level spell song)

Random Talent Selection

Talents may, alternatively, be selected at random using the following table. Doubled or inapplicable talents (for example an expert talent for a rogue who does not meet the requirements) should be re-rolled.

d66⁶	Talent	d66	Talent
11	Activate magic scrolls*	41	Hear noise
12	Agile fighting	42	Hide
13	Awareness	43	Hide in shadows*
14	Back-stab	44	Identify common poisons
15	Blackjack	45	Identify rare poisons*
16	Blind fighting	46	Knife throwing
21	Climb rock faces	51	Lore
22	Climb rough walls*	52	Manufacture poisons*
23	Decipher foreign text	53	Mimic voice
24	Decipher magical script	54	Move quietly
25	Decipher obscure text*	55	Move silently*
26	Disable small mechanical traps	56	Pick locks
31	Disguise	61	Pick pockets
32	Duelling	62	Sleight of hand
33	Escape bonds	63	Sniper
34	Find hidden mechanisms	64	Thieves' cant
35	Forgery	65	Tightrope walking
36	Garrote	66	Tracking

⁶ To roll d66, roll two six-sided dice, denoting one as “tens” and one as “units”. In this way, a number between 11 and 66 is generated.

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