



ALL NEW EPISODE



## Book Gang Podcast Transcript: A Millennial Murder Mystery For Summer

L.M. Chilton (00:00)

Hi, I am L.M. Chilton and I'm the author of Swiped, which is a new murder mystery novel set in the terrifying world of dating apps.

Amy Clark (00:18)

Hey Book Gang, if you're craving a modern whodunit for your summer stack, Swiped by L.M. Chilton is a campy thriller that is as satisfying as a big bucket of buttery popcorn.

I'm so honored to host debut novelist L.M. Chilton on our little show today. In this fun podcast, we discuss why mysteries for millennials are so important.

Chilton's research and personal experience on dating apps that shaped this plot, I promise it will surprise you.

The compelling reason he offers to tell this story from a woman's POV. In a world of swiping right or left to find your perfect dating match, Gwen, our protagonist in this book, has been on more dates than she can count. But the fun twist in this story really begins when every miserable date she goes on becomes a victim to a serial killer in their coastal English town. Maybe she could call it a coincidence when the first guy dies.

But when a second and a third guy are in danger, she finds herself the number one suspect in a murder investigation. Is Gwen being set up by the app's algorithm, or is something more sinister at work? Prepare for amateur sleuthing, deliciously terrible people, and loads of red herrings.

If you're new here, hi, I'm Amy Allen Clark and I'm the voice behind the Book Gang Podcast. This podcast celebrates debuts, backlist books, and under-the-radar book gems.

If serial killer fiction is your jam, you're in luck today. This week we have a new booklist just for you. My co-host, Larry, on our Patreon Fully Booked Show helped me with this collaboration, which includes upcoming selections, new releases, and some backlist gems for this show's theme. Whether you need a campy kickoff like Swiped or a more sinister story, you can browse these titles while tuning in to today's show by clicking Bonus List in your show notes. Consider this a great way to build your perfect library stack.

Commercial-free conversations like these are only made possible because of our generous community. I am so grateful to our Patreon supporters who keep this show on air. If you enjoy it, that is really the only way that I can still stay here. I need you. We can hang out at book clubs and you can get today's spoiler chat with Luke to discuss the revealed killer. Now let's meet this month's guest.

L.M. Chilton has been a journalist for 15 years, working for TV shows like This Morning, The One Show, and Loose Women, as well as magazines and

newspapers such as The Times, The Mirror, Metro New, Cosmopolitan, and Glamour. He started his journalism career writing for, quote, real life magazines, interviewing people from all over the world about the terrifying, hilarious, and heartbreaking things that had happened to them. And also funny things their pets had done. He works from home in London, thinking of twists for murder mysteries, and practicing the banjo instead of writing, much to the annoyance of his neighbors. Swiped is Chilton's US debut novel from Simon & Schuster and it's available on store shelves now.

Remember if you love the show a free way to support my work is to leave a review on iTunes, whether that is a starred review or even better, a written review. It just lets people know that this is a cool place to hang out and I would really love to have them. Now let's get chatting.

Amy Clark (03:38)

Are you a serial killer reader? I mean, I have to know is this something you're into?

LM (03:45)

I thought you were going to say are you a serial killer there?

Amy (03:48)

Well, we could kind of start out with that if you want to spill some. I mean, that would be the best episode I'll probably have on here.

LM (03:55)

Well, that would be a very, you know, a very good idea for a book if a serial killer actually wrote his memoirs, it would sell millions. No, I'm not a serial killer. I do love serial killer books. Well, I like murder mystery books. So I was always a big fan of Agatha Christie - like all mystery writers, I think, all kind of plunder Agatha for her brilliant plots and ideas. So I like those kinds of murder mysteries. And I also used to love one of the first books I read as a teenager, first adult book with Silence of the Lambs, actually, which I sort of stole off my parents bookshelf and wasn't really allowed to read. I was about 13 and terrified myself.

But yeah, that's kind of the classic serial killer book of the 90s, I think, which probably set me off down a path of reading. But yeah, big, big books in Britain at the moment are kind of this cozy crime, which is a bit inspired by Agatha, which is all sorts of murders in a nice mansion or an old people's home or things like that. So that's what people are reading at the moment. Yeah, I wanted to write something a bit more millennial and a bit more current and a bit more for my generation, I think, when I was thinking of Swiped.

Amy (05:02)

So when you say more current, more millennial, did you not see that on bookshelves before?

LM (5:06)

Well, I think psychological thrillers are aimed at a slightly older audience, actually. And you have a lot of people kind of buying a first house or starting a family or moving into a new area. It's sort of very grown up themes in psychological thrillers. Or they're getting married or their husband's a killer. But they didn't seem to be a huge amount for that sort of 20s and 30s age group. You have some brilliant young adult murder mysteries, but there didn't seem to be any in that sweet spot.

I think there are a lot more now actually, and since Swiped has come out in the UK, there seems to be a bit of a zeitgeist of young 20, 30 something year old women solving crimes or even committing crimes in this millennial space. So I thought, oh, well, I'd like to read a book about murder mysteries that set somebody like me my age. And they didn't really seem to be any. Yeah, they were all these sort of Miss Marple, old lady types solving crimes in a country estate, or they were a housewife who suspected her neighbor of murdering somebody. So I wanted to write something about somebody my age. And dating seemed to be right in that sweet spot of what millennials were doing at the time.

Amy (6:20)

Well, it worked for me. I will say I have only featured two murder mysteries, yours and Mother Daughter Murder Night and hers also, I think, what makes your story special and also her story special is that there is a route to that story. Like, why did you want to do that? Which we can talk about today, but I want to set people up for just an elevator pitch. One of the blurbs for your book said, as if Bridget Jones found herself in a *Scream* film, murderously clever.

So I love that for the description and how I stumbled upon it is, I was screening books, obviously, for our summer reading guide, which is why we wanted to include it. And I also read an article about you that you had written for *The Mirror*. And I want to pull people in about some backstory on the inspiration for it. So I'm going to use exactly their beginning part of their article. So I apologize to *The Mirror* if they get upset about this. But I want to make sure that I pull people in.

So it says, "online dating never went right for journalist Luke Chilton. In fact, all 212 dates he went on in nearly 10 years of flicking his thumb across his phone screen turned out to be a total swipe out. It was only when he wrote a murder mystery about online dating to cure his addiction to apps like Tinder that 43-year-old Luke finally met the one, ironically with one last swipe."

I can't do better than that. I don't even know. Did you have to write that blurb or did someone introduce you?

LM (07:59)

I think I wrote that blurb, but it's all true. I mean, I did get a bit addicted to dating apps and I had them all, not just Tinder. I had all the dating apps and I was going on. It may have even been more than 213. I didn't count them all because I was going on two or three dates a week from these apps. And that was really the germ of the idea is I sort of thought this has just become a hobby and I'm not really enjoying meeting these people anymore. It's just become a bit of a numbers game. And I did begin to think, oh, these people are a bit disposable. I'd learn everything about them over a two or three hour drink on a date and then probably move on to the next swipe and never see them again. So I did sort of start to think, well, maybe that would be an interesting arena

for a murder mystery. And in the book Swiped, everyone she dates dies. So she's swiping away on this dating app and meeting different guys then they start turning up dead. So that never happened to me, obviously. But I did think, what a great device for a serial killer to use to find victims because they're all there. And all their details and all you would need to do is to match on them and go over the date. So that's what happened. And as I said before, I loved reading murder mysteries. So I thought, how can I sort of combine what I love reading with what I enjoy doing, which is dating and reading the murder mysteries and combine them into one book?

But yes, I was very lucky in that just as lockdown hit in the UK, the pandemic came, I had to stop dating because we couldn't go out, you couldn't go on dates anymore. So it kind of cured my addiction a bit because I was forced not to go on any more dates. And I had to sort of find a new hobby, which was writing. And I wrote this book and I was kind of pouring out all my annoyance of online dating and all my frustrations with it and all my frustrations of not being able to find a partner.

And it all came out in this book. And I think that was actually quite therapeutic because when the lockdowns lifted in the UK and you're able to go out again, and I was like, I'm going to give up dating now. But I thought I'd have one more swipe. And that was when I met my partner, Daniele. And now it's perfect. I've deleted all the apps. I'm very happy. And the books come out. So I think maybe it was a very therapeutic closure of that part of my life, which is great.

Amy (10:22)

I'm really just baffled that you were on that many dates. I know you guys can't see Luke, but he's quite dapper. And I'm a little confused about what's happening here on these dating apps. What was your experience with it? And I know because you're a journalist, obviously you're a little bit inquisitive about why these apps aren't working for you. You weren't looking at it as just face value. I mean, you were really investigating what did you uncover about these apps and why do you think it wasn't working for so long?

LM

Well, number one, they are programmed to keep you dating. They don't want you to find a partner because then you delete the app. So it's in all these apps interest that you keep swiping away and you keep dating and they gamify it and they make it fun and you get a little buzz, you get a dopamine hit when you get a match and they play on that. So it was quite interesting for the book for Swiped, I had a look at how some of these algorithms work. And actually they keep top secrets quite hard to find out all the secret algorithms that dating apps use because they don't want you to know.

One of the things they do is they rank people. So how many matches and how many likes and how many hearts you're getting, they'll use to rank you on their algorithms. So all the people that you would find traditionally attractive, let's say, rise to the top and you'll get like a hierarchy and it becomes like a beauty contest. So they put all those people at the top who are getting the most matches. And those are the people you get you see first of all, when you swipe, if you're not lucky enough to be one of those people, you end up down at the bottom of the hierarchy and you don't get seen as much by other swipers, which is a horrible way to operate a system that doesn't - it's not good for true love is it? That's not good for finding true love, but they like that because they want you to keep searching for the next hot person on the app. So it's really interesting how that works.

And after I'd researched that, I was able to think, well, what if somebody could manipulate that algorithm? And what if you could get yourself higher on the app? Now, I don't know if you could do that in real life. But in the book, one of the elements is they think, well, what if people are manipulating this app to get more dates and to get in more people's eye line, which you would think probably is possible to do.

But yes, to answer your question, why I sort of got stuck on them is because I was enjoying the game of it. And like I said, it became a bit of a hobby. And it became a bit of an addiction because I was just waiting to see who was next down the line. I would go on a date and say, well, that date was fun. I was quite lucky with my dates. I enjoyed them. We had fun. Met loads of nice people, did loads of crazy things, but I would still swipe onto the next person because I'd

always be looking for that next hit, that next person to meet. Maybe the one was out there, maybe. But really, I should have been going on second dates, third dates, with those people getting to know them better. But instead, I was sort of trapped in the app world. And I think, yeah, like I say, I needed to leave that behind and get off the train of dating one after the other. And that's what Gwen does in the book. She kind of gets a bit addicted to just going on to the next app and the next date. And she's just looking for something that you can't really find in the digital world I think.

I don't have any experience with the dating apps. I married my high school sweetheart, so I didn't really date around a lot. So I am fascinated by it. But my sister did. She has since been married again, she found the love of her life, but it was someone that she knew before, not from necessarily the dating app. But she went through that. And it's weirdly transactional. I don't have any experience with it. But I can imagine that my self-esteem would be really tied to what is happening in this app and it would be very difficult to, like you said, not want the next hit. I mean, that's how all apps work, right? We wanna keep swiping, we wanna keep involved in it and we can't seem to turn it off. I'm guilty of the same thing on other apps. So that's really interesting to me to hear about your experience. Was it difficult then when you meet the one? I mean, was it really scary to like be like, I'm closing this app forever? Like, was it hard?

LM (14:36)

No, it was good. I think I had to look internally at myself and think, well, what do I really want out of this? Because it is fun going on dates. It's fun going on free dates a week. And you go and play mini golf, and you go wine tasting, and you go rock climbing, you do all these fun stuff. But at the end of the day, you've got to think, why am I really here? I really wanted to meet somebody and I wanted to meet a partner to spend my life with. And I didn't really want to keep going on loads and loads of dates. And it was becoming a bit tiring and a bit boring. I think I had to look at myself and think, what do I really want out of this out of life? And it wasn't.



I think I'd had my fun for 10 years going on all those hundreds of dates. I think I did enough of that. I was very pleased to, I was very happy to delete them and then write a book about it.

Amy (15:26)

Yeah. Well, that seems therapeutic to me. I have to ask a little bit about, obviously she's going on some really terrible dates. Did you have any terrible dates that you wanted to emulate inside of this story for your readers?

LM (15:38)

I wish I had some worse stories because obviously I get asked that question all the time now. What was your worst date? What was your terrible date? And like I say, and I think this is the advantage of being a man and the heterosexual man going on dates with women. Most of my dates were lovely. And I think men have a lot easier time of it than women do, to be honest. So I was ghosted, you know, they're not replied to and I was stood up and things like that. I never had to climb out the bathroom window, you know.

I didn't have to go through half the stuff that Gwen does in the book with her toxic dates. I think the worst thing that happened to me was the woman left in the middle of the meal to take a phone call. We were having a lovely pizza together. It just arrived, the pizza, actually and then she went out to take a call and never came back to the table. I was left with two pizzas to eat, which was nice. I must admit, 99% of my dates were lovely. I wish I had some terrible dates because it would have been useful for the book. But what I was able to do is normally when you go on dates, the other person's on dating apps too and you'll be like, oh, how long have you been on the app? And what have your dates been like? And they'll tell you some horror stories of their worst date. So I took a mental note of lots of the bad dates when I went on the dates that women told me about. So I was able to put those into the book.

You'll see that the dates that Gwen goes on in Swiped, female friends and readers tell me, Oh God, I know a person I went on a date like that. Oh, the guy mansplaining to me about my own job when I went on a date. So yeah, I think they're ringing true to people, which is good, I guess not good that there are

men like that out there. But yeah, I think people are recognizing the toxic dates in squires.

Amy (17:25)

Luke, why do you do it from the female perspective? Did you ever entertain it from your own perspective?

LM (17:32)

Yeah, it's a really good question. And I did. So I think it's my debut novel. I think when you write your debut novel, people say, write what you know and write about yourself, which makes a lot of sense.

I started writing Swiped as a male protagonist, in a male point of view, but very quickly I did realize that in order to do that, all the victims would have to be women. All my dates would be women and then the dates of the victims. You would end up with yet another serial killer book with five female victims. And I thought the world does not need another serial killer book about somebody killing women. So I switched the protagonist to a female point of view. And immediately that felt a lot better.

And I think, as I said, I think men have a lot easier time of it dating. We don't, we, most women are quite nice. Yeah, I get ghosted, I might get stood up, but I'm not going to get groped or mansplained to or half the offensive stuff that men do to women on dates. So immediately I had all this rich material for the awful dates that Gwen goes on. And I was able to be a bit funny about it and have a bit of dark humor, which I don't think would have been easy to do because the toxic men are the ones getting horribly murdered. And that's quite fun in a way. Like, no one's too sad when this toxic, horrible date gets stabbed.

So immediately it clicked a lot better and it felt much more current and less problematic to have it from a female point of view. And it was a lot of fun to write from a female point of view. It was something that I thought hard about because as a man, you know, what do I know about the female experience? And I was, I was worried that female readers might think, well, what does this guy know? Why is he writing from a female point of view? So I had lots of female

beta readers and friends to read it and, hopefully I've captured that voice okay. And obviously I went on lots of dates with women and I asked them about their experience dating. So hopefully I have captured that without offending anybody.

Amy (19:32)

Yeah, no, I totally make sense. And I feel like lately I see more of that, like where, yeah, we don't want to see so many women being victims. And a lot of the storylines, I think, for Murder Mysteries are starting, you know, not starting, but becoming more empowering for women. And it's easier, I think, for someone like me to escape into a story like that, because I'm like, yeah, these people too, they are devilishly awful, right? They're not great people. So it does feel deliciously wonderful. It's like a good, big, buttery, you know, bowl of popcorn. You're like, okay, let's go. Let's take them out, right? Like, you're really setting us up for that kind of campy, like, let's go for it. And I can see why *Scream* might be the comparable you know, offering a four year book because that is exactly the feeling that I got.

LM (20:26)

Oh, yeah. Well, I'm a big fan of *Scream* and all those sort of nineties and early 2000s slasher movies. So I did really like that idea. And you don't get many British ones of those sort of films. They're all American. So I thought it would be quite interesting for a British person who's a bit more cynical, a bit more like not not as terrified to put them into one of those films and see how they react. If you had a sort of *Bridget Jones* type character, what would she do if all the people around her were getting murdered? So hopefully it's a fine balance, isn't it? Because the book's quite, it's humorous, but it's not a farce. And I think *Scream* does that balance really well of being scary and thrilling, but also quite funny and quite meta and quite cynical. So hopefully I've pulled that off in the book, because it's not easy to do.

Amy (21:16)

Yeah, America is kind of a mess, so we need a little bit of escape through slasher films, I guess. Yeah. Well, I want to talk about your writing process a little bit. Tell me about how long this took, like what you had to do to map out

things like your red herrings that you're throwing in for the reader. I'd love to hear about your process.

LM (21:37)

Well, as I said, there was the pandemic, 2020 and like the rest of the world, the UK had its lockdowns and I was working from home and had more time on my hands. So that's when I started writing it and I think it probably took about a year or 18 months. But those ideas have been bubbling and I think any debut novelist will say, oh, it might have taken a year to write, but you've probably taken 20 years of your brain formulating these and thinking about this sort of stuff. So I didn't have like a spreadsheet or anything that I sort of planned this book out.

I sort of did the process of writing a first draft, getting that story down. And once I'd sort of decided who done it, because the big who done it in the book is very much a murder mystery. There's a list of suspects of possible people who could be this mysterious serial killer. And Gwen has to find out which one. And once I decided who it was, and I'd written out that basic first draft, I then could go back and pop in all the red herrings and clues - which is the advantage of being an author, is you can see, you can stand above like God and look down and say, right, I can see this whole story and I'm going to put a little red herring in there and a clue there. And yeah, like I said before, I think I learned from the best of Agatha Christie, the queen of crime and how she does that. And she's done every variation possible. She's done, you know, the detective is the killer, the narrator is the killer, the little child is the killer. So you can go and read all her books and see how she pops in or her red herrings.

But it's difficult because, you know, if you've got a list of five suspects, the reader expects it to be one of those five suspects and there's no getting away from that. So how do you make that ultimate killer a surprise and that reveal a surprise because they're always going to be thinking what's one of these five people that have been in the book. So it's all about misdirection and sort of leading the reader down one path. And I think having credit for your readers' intelligence and I know that thriller readers read lots of thrillers. So they expect certain things and they know the tropes. So I sort of thought, well, what

tropes do they know? What will they be expecting? And they tried to invert those expectations. So I did get a bit obsessed with kind of structure and twists and how twists work and how to wrong foot the reader. Once you get into that rabbit hole, it's quite fun to see how other authors have done it.

So, so far, lots of readers say, oh, well, I didn't guess who did it. So I take that as the biggest compliment actually, if I manage to sort of trick people and surprise, because that's the best feeling, isn't it? As a reader is when you turn that page, the final reveal and like, oh, gasp, it was that person that did it. And I think as a mystery writer, that's what you're really going for. And it's not easy to achieve and you're never going to fool everyone. So hopefully like 80 % of the people who read Swiped will not get the answer.

Amy Clark (24:32)

Well, I feel like I read a lot of thrillers. And for me, I would say that typically, I've already guessed the ending. And it's just kind of like, okay, I've got there. But I'm not saying this because you're on the show. I did not guess. And I did not guess right up until the big reveal, which we'll talk about in our spoiler episode. But I was completely thrown. And I had thought at different points, I knew who had done it and I was like, I already know, like, we're just going to get there. It's inevitable, right? And I was like, well, I'm still going to enjoy it. I'm still going to enjoy the ride. It's fine. I know what's going to happen. And you really did fool me. So I was curious about the red herrings. Was there at any point you were like, this is not the killer, like the one that you settled upon, or you always knew you were going to head in that direction?

LM (25:21)

Do you know what? I think I probably wrote a third or a quarter of the book before I decided. And just because I sort of making up as I went along, you know, I was one of those like a pants I think they call that, don't they? When you don't really know what you're writing and you sit down and you do it. So I think at the beginning, it was all up for grabs and it could have been any of them. But once I decided on the person who was going to be everything slotted into place. And I think, yeah, fairly, fairly early on in the writing process, I knew, ah, that's it. And it is that lovely moment when you just think, yes, that's

right. That's good. This is going to work. And yeah, and then it stuck for the rest of the process.

Amy (26:00)

Can we briefly talk about why the title got changed in the US?

LM (26:02)

Yeah, well, it's not a very exciting story. So when I wrote the book, I think originally my sort of working title was Ex E-X, like an ex, because I was going to have all her ex-boyfriends getting killed rather than date. That was a very early idea. Then I changed it to dating and I called it Swiped because of the swiping on the apps.

And I think the only reason is, I don't know why they changed that in the UK to Don't Swipe Right. They actually played with a few different titles. I can probably say that what was the title they wanted to say was 10 Ways to Kill Your Date, I think was the first title they wanted to use. And I wasn't that keen on that one. So then they came back with Don't Swipe Right.

I don't know what their thinking was. It works. At first I thought, oh, well, Swiped is so simple and I could see Swiped in my head. I had a visualization of the book. Lots of authors visualize themselves as bestseller lists and all that. I visualized my book cover and it was always Swiped. But when it came out in the UK, it's Don't Swipe Right. It looked good. It looked fine. I got used to it. I'm quite pleased the US is with the original title because is exactly as I envisioned it in my visualization, my manifestation when I was thinking about it. So yeah, the short answer is, I don't know why they changed it, but now I get the best of both worlds.

Amy (27:27)

Yeah. So you have an adaptation, right? Is there an adaptation planned for this book?

LM (27:32)

For the TV, yes. Hopefully, fingers crossed. You never know because TV world is a crazy world of changing minds and money and different decisions get made and it's all out of your control. But the option has been sold to a really cool production company who did Barbie and Wonka and Paddington. They made all those movies and now they're making TV shows too. So fingers crossed it is currently being worked on by those people. But I don't want to say yes, it is definitely going to come out because I don't want to jinx anything. But yeah, fingers crossed you will see it. And I don't know what title they'll choose. But hopefully they'll call it Swiped too.

Amy (28:17)

Yeah. Well, as we close out on this main show, I just want to tell you this was so much fun. I really hope that our listeners will pick this book up. I'm not typically drawn to murder mysteries. And this was like my favorite summer kind of book. And I'm so glad that we got to talk to you about it. After I tell you how awesome I think you are, I always like to reflect on maybe what you're personally proud of with this project or just your writing career in general, Luke.

LM (28:45)

Well, I think it is amazing to get your book published. And I'm a journalist. So I see my name in print occasionally. But it's a totally different feeling. And I think it's a bit of it might sound a bit of a cliché to say any book to have read a reaction, to have people read your book and say they liked it, or even if they say, oh, I didn't like it very much, it's just amazing to have people read.

Because when I was sitting in my garden in 2020, thinking all the world's coming to an end, I'm going to write my book, I didn't think anyone would ever read it. And it is crazy to think that that was only a few years ago. And now it's in bookshelves all over the world. So you can't replicate that feeling anywhere else. And to have people say, I read your book is insane, really. So that's been the amazing thing for me. And whatever happens with it, I'll always have that and I'll always have that on my shelf with my name on it. So I'm very proud of it.

And but you know, I hope it's really nice that you enjoyed it. I want people to enjoy it. And that's why I'm always like, they say don't read your reviews, don't they? On Amazon, the Goodreads and things like that. I do tend to read the reviews. That's why I wrote it. I wrote it for people. I want to see what people think of it. I'm like proud of it. You want to show it like if you had a little baby, you want to show people the baby, come and meet my baby. I want to know what you think. So yeah, it's been a crazy roller coaster year, but I wouldn't swap it for anything else.

Amy (30:12)

Well, it's likely if you leave feedback for Luke, Luke will read it and he may even reply because this is his book baby. And we definitely want to support his book baby.

LM (30:24)

Thank you. Yeah, I will.

Amy (30:25)

Well, I love that.

As we close out, I just want to say thank you to everyone for tuning in to Book Gang. We appreciate each one of you for listening. Before you go, we would love your support. If you enjoyed today's discussion, subscribe to the podcast for more adventures and take a moment to leave a review on iTunes. Your feedback truly does mean something to me and financial support helps us keep supporting debuts, backlists, and under the radar novelists. If you would miss this show, if it was gone, just please consider joining the community, which also gives you access to our book club.

You can check out our show notes for easy access to all of the books we've discussed today. We are including a serial killer summer book list that expands beyond Luke's book. As long as you are into this kind of topic, you are going to be really, really happy because I know a few things about serial killer books.

Patrons, you can follow me over to our spoiler-filled episode where we will discuss the revealed killer, all the red herrings, and how Luke got to this



incredible ending. Swiped hits US shelves on May 21st. Thanks so much for being here, Luke.

Luke (31:34)

Thank you.

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