

David foster wallace brief interviews with hideous men

David Foster Wallace's "Brief Interviews with Hideous Men": A Descent into the Abyss of Modern Masculinity

David Foster Wallace, the literary titan known for his dense, mind-bending prose and razor-sharp wit, crafted a unique masterpiece in "Brief Interviews with Hideous Men." This collection of interconnected stories isn't simply a series of vignettes; it's a brutal, darkly humorous exploration of modern masculinity, its flaws, and its desperate yearning for connection. **A Tapestry of Twisted Tales** Wallace's "Brief Interviews" are anything but brief. Each one is a long, often meandering monologue, delivered by a man wrestling with his own brand of hideousness. We encounter a motley crew: the self-absorbed, the insecure, the deluded, the violent, and the downright bizarre. They are men lost in a labyrinth of their own making, trapped by their own anxieties, insecurities, and toxic masculinity. Imagine a broken mirror, each shard reflecting a distorted image of the male psyche. Wallace doesn't shy away from the uncomfortable, the raw, and the disturbing. He dives deep into the subconscious, exposing the murky depths of male desire, fear, and self-deception. Take, for instance, "Little Expressionless Animals." The narrator, a man consumed by his own existential dread, finds himself drawn to a woman who represents a potential escape from his inner turmoil. But his attempts to connect are thwarted by his own self-doubt and crippling anxieties. His monologue, a torrent of self-pity and intellectual posturing, is a chilling portrayal of a man trapped in his own mind, unable to break free from his self-imposed isolation. **The Weight of Words** Wallace's prose is both captivating and challenging. His sentences are dense, layered with complex metaphors and allusions, demanding the reader's full attention. It's a style that rewards patience, offering profound insights into the human condition. Think of it as a dense forest, teeming with life and beauty. Each sentence is a gnarled tree, each paragraph a winding path, each chapter a sprawling landscape. You need to navigate carefully, pausing to examine the details, to truly appreciate the intricate beauty of the narrative. He uses humor as a shield, a way to deflect the pain and discomfort of the stories he tells. But it's a dark, twisted humor, a constant reminder of the absurdity of the human condition, and the grotesque nature of some of the characters' desires. **Beyond the Surface** Despite the darkness and the often unsettling nature of the stories, "Brief Interviews" is ultimately a deeply human work. It explores the yearning for connection, the struggle for self-acceptance, and the profound loneliness that can plague even the most seemingly successful individuals. **Actionable Takeaways** • **Embrace the discomfort:** Reading "Brief Interviews" can be uncomfortable, even at times disturbing. But it's through this discomfort that we confront the ugly truths about ourselves and our society. • **Challenge the status quo:** Wallace's work serves as a powerful critique of toxic masculinity. It encourages us to question the norms and expectations placed upon men, and to seek a more authentic, vulnerable, and compassionate form of masculinity. • **Emphasize the power of connection:** The characters in "Brief Interviews" are often consumed by their own self-absorption. We learn the vital importance of reaching out, building genuine connections, and fostering empathy for others. • **Embrace the complexities of human nature:** Wallace's work reminds us that humans are complex creatures, filled with contradictions and anxieties. This understanding leads to greater tolerance and acceptance. • **Find humor in the dark:** Wallace's dark humor can be a coping mechanism for dealing with the difficult realities of life. Learning to find humor in the absurd can be a powerful tool for navigating the world's complexities. **FAQs:** 1. **Is "Brief Interviews with Hideous Men" a difficult read?** Yes, Wallace's prose is challenging and requires the reader's full attention. But the rewards are significant, offering profound insights into the human condition. 2. **Why are the men in the stories called "hideous"?** The term "hideous" refers not only to their physical appearance but also to their internal flaws and the ways they project their insecurities onto the world. 3. **Is there a central theme in the collection?** While each story stands alone, they all explore themes of masculinity, self-deception, loneliness, and the yearning for

connection. 4. **Is this book appropriate for everyone?** Due to its mature themes, including violence, sexual content, and graphic language, it's recommended for mature readers. 5. *What other works by David Foster Wallace should I read?* "Infinite Jest" and "The Pale King" are considered his most important works, but "A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again" and "Brief Interviews" are excellent starting points. "Brief Interviews with Hideous Men" is not an easy read, but it is a deeply rewarding one. It's a journey into the dark corners of the human heart, a testament to the power of storytelling to expose the ugliness and the beauty of the human condition. It's a book that stays with you long after you've finished reading it, prompting you to reflect on your own experiences and your own understanding of the complexities of human nature.

David Foster Wallace's "Brief Interviews with Hideous Men": A Descent into the Absurdity of Modern Masculinity

David Foster Wallace. The name alone evokes a certain intellectual gravitas, a penchant for intricate sentences, and a deep, often unsettling, exploration of the human condition. His 1999 collection of short stories, "Brief Interviews with Hideous Men," stands as a testament to his unique literary voice, offering a darkly comic, painfully honest, and ultimately profound examination of what it means to be a man in contemporary society. This isn't a light read, nor is it meant to be. Instead, it's an invitation to peer into the less-than-polished corners of the male psyche, a place filled with insecurity, delusion, and a desperate yearning for connection. Wallace, a master of the footnotes and the sprawling sentence, uses these stories to dissect the often-invisible mechanisms of male behavior. He's not interested in the heroic archetypes or the suave romantics. Instead, he delves into the mundane, the awkward, and the downright bizarre, revealing the undercurrents of anxiety and entitlement that often define the "hideous men" of his title. The "hideous" here isn't necessarily about outward ugliness; it's about a certain moral or emotional ugliness, a warped perspective, and a profound disconnect from genuine human empathy.

Unpacking the "Hideous": Beyond Surface-Level Judgement

It's crucial to understand that Wallace isn't simply painting a portrait of irredeemable villains. His "hideous men" are often products of their environment, shaped by societal expectations, media saturation, and a deeply ingrained sense of self-importance that masks a fragile ego. They are the guys who mansplain, who exhibit questionable ethical choices in relationships, and who struggle to articulate their own emotions beyond a superficial display of bravado. These characters, through Wallace's meticulous prose, become almost pitiable in their desperation. They represent a spectrum of male anxieties, from the fear of sexual inadequacy to the terror of genuine emotional intimacy. The interviews, which form the structural backbone of the collection, are a brilliant device. They force the characters to confront their own distorted realities, albeit indirectly, and in doing so, they reveal the absurd logic that underpins their "hideousness."

The Art of the Interview: Unveiling the Psyche

The titular "Brief Interviews with Hideous Men" are not your typical Q&A sessions. They are fragmented, often one-sided, and frequently descend into monologues that expose the inner workings of the interviewee's mind. Wallace uses this format to great effect, creating a sense of voyeurism for the reader. We are privy to thoughts and confessions that would rarely, if ever, be spoken aloud. One of the most striking aspects of these interviews is the sheer banality of the revelations. These men aren't confessing to grand crimes, but to smaller, more insidious failings: the casual misogyny, the self-deception, the inability to take responsibility for their actions. It's this grounding in the everyday that makes the collection so unsettlingly relatable, even when the characters' behavior is extreme.

Exploring Themes of Masculinity, Isolation, and the Search for Meaning

At its core, "Brief Interviews with Hideous Men" is a profound exploration of masculinity in crisis. Wallace grapples with the performance of manhood, the societal pressures to conform to certain roles, and the often-damaging consequences of these expectations. The "hideous" men are, in many ways, failed attempts at fulfilling these roles, revealing the inherent contradictions and absurdities within them. Isolation is another pervasive theme. These men, despite their often-boisterous pronouncements, are deeply alone. Their inability to connect with others, particularly women, stems from a fundamental lack of self-awareness and a fear of vulnerability. The stories highlight the tragic irony of men who crave intimacy but actively sabotage their own chances of achieving it. And then there's the search for meaning. In a world that often feels overwhelming and devoid of inherent purpose, Wallace's characters are desperately trying to find something to hold onto, something to justify their existence. This often manifests in their warped philosophies, their obsessive pursuits, and their misguided attempts to exert control over their surroundings.

Wallace's Signature Style: The Grand, the Mundane, and the Hilariously Dark

Wallace's writing style is, of course, a character in itself. His dense, multi-clause sentences, his encyclopedic knowledge, and his ability to find humor in the darkest of circumstances are all on full display here. He masterfully weaves together philosophical musings, pop culture references, and deeply personal observations to create a literary tapestry that is both intellectually stimulating and emotionally resonant. The humor in "Brief Interviews with Hideous Men" is not of the laugh-out-loud variety. It's more of a grim chuckle, a knowing nod to the absurdity of it all. Wallace finds comedy in the awkward silences, the misinterpretations, and the sheer patheticness of his characters' predicaments. This dark humor serves as a crucial coping mechanism, allowing the reader to endure the often-uncomfortable truths being presented.

Beyond the "Hideous": Glimmers of Humanity and the Elusive "Good" Man

While the title might suggest a relentless barrage of negativity, a closer reading reveals glimmers of something more. Wallace, in his own complex way, is also searching for the elusive "good" man, or at least the potential for one. Even within the "hideous" characters, there are moments of vulnerability, flashes of insight, and a desperate, if misguided, longing for something genuine. The collection doesn't offer easy answers or neat resolutions. Instead, it leaves the reader with a profound sense of ambiguity, a lingering question about the nature of male identity and the challenges of navigating relationships in a complex world. It prompts us to consider our own roles in perpetuating or challenging these "hideous" archetypes.

"Brief Interviews with Hideous Men" in Context: A Literary Landmark

"Brief Interviews with Hideous Men" is a significant work in David Foster Wallace's oeuvre and in contemporary American literature. It cemented his reputation as a writer who wasn't afraid to tackle the difficult questions, to delve into the uncomfortable truths, and to do so with unparalleled linguistic skill. The stories within this collection continue to resonate with readers today, perhaps even more so in our current cultural landscape, which is rife with discussions about gender roles, toxic masculinity, and the challenges of authentic connection. It's a collection that demands multiple readings, each offering new insights and a deeper appreciation for Wallace's genius.

Why You Should Read "Brief Interviews with Hideous Men" (and Prepare Yourself)

If you're looking for a collection of stories that will make you laugh, cry, and most importantly, think, then "Brief Interviews

with *Hideous Men*" is an essential read. Wallace's prose is challenging, his characters are flawed, and his themes are complex, but the rewards are immense. This is not a book to be consumed casually. It's a book that will burrow its way into your consciousness, forcing you to confront uncomfortable truths about yourself and the world around you. It's a testament to Wallace's ability to find the profound in the profane, the human in the hideous. So, dive in, but be prepared: you might find yourself recognizing elements of these "hideous men" in places you least expect. It's a journey into the heart of contemporary maleness, and it's a journey well worth taking. The collection of short stories, by the celebrated author, offers a starkly honest, often humorous, and profoundly insightful look into the male psyche. Wallace's exploration of modern masculinity, his use of interview formats, and his signature intricate prose make this a compelling and unforgettable literary experience. This **David Foster Wallace short story collection** is a must-read for anyone interested in nuanced character studies and incisive social commentary. The **themes of isolation and entitlement** are masterfully woven throughout the narratives, making for a truly thought-provoking read.

David Foster Wallace's brief interviews with the so-called "hideous men" offer a compelling and introspective lens into the complexities of modern masculinity, vulnerability, and emotional authenticity. These interactions, though sparse in form, carry profound weight, revealing how deeply personal struggles often lie beneath the surface of public personas—especially those shaped by societal expectations of strength and stoicism.

Unveiling the Paradox of Strength and Suffering

Wallace's approach in these short exchanges transcends mere reporting; he captures the tension between outward bravado and inner turmoil. By focusing on individuals labeled as "hideous" not just physically, but emotionally and psychologically, Wallace challenges readers to reconsider conventional definitions of ugliness—both literal and metaphorical. These interviews expose how societal norms push men to suppress pain, turning inner darkness into a kind of hidden ugliness that isolates rather than defines. In this light, the term "hideous" becomes less a judgment and more a symbol of emotional imprisonment.

Key Insights: Vulnerability as Resistance

One of the most striking insights from these brief dialogues is the quiet resistance embedded in vulnerability. Rather than masking pain with deflection, the subjects reveal how confronting their struggles—however awkwardly—becomes an act of defiance against a culture that equates weakness with failure. Wallace's narrative style amplifies this: his precise, reflective prose invites empathy, drawing readers into a shared space of understanding. This vulnerability, far from being a sign of fragility, emerges as a powerful form of courage—one that reshapes how we perceive strength in male identity.

Applications Beyond the Page: From Therapy to Public Discourse

The implications of these interviews extend well beyond literature. In therapeutic settings, Wallace's work serves as a poignant reminder that emotional honesty, even in fragmented form, can be transformative. Clinicians may find value in using such narratives to destigmatize silence and encourage deeper self-expression. Moreover, in public discourse, these brief but profound interviews challenge media tropes that reduce men to stereotypes—whether hyper-masculine warriors or silent sufferers—by humanizing experiences often overlooked or oversimplified.

Benefits: Deepening Empathy and Fostering Connection

Engaging with Wallace's interviews fosters a richer emotional literacy. By honoring the quiet struggles of "hideous men," readers cultivate greater empathy, recognizing that true connection often lies in listening to what remains unsaid. This approach nurtures inclusive conversations where emotional depth is valued over performative toughness. For educators, therapists, and writers alike, these interviews model how brief, focused dialogue can carry immense psychological

weight, encouraging others to explore and articulate their own hidden truths.

Looking Ahead: The Enduring Relevance of Wallace's Voice

As societal conversations around mental health, masculinity, and authenticity grow more nuanced, Wallace's brief yet profound interviews with these men remain strikingly relevant. His ability to distill deep human experience into concise, resonant exchanges offers a blueprint for meaningful communication in an age often dominated by noise and superficiality. Future explorations of similar themes—whether in literature, psychology, or public storytelling—would do well to honor the quiet power Wallace infused into every unassuming word, reminding us that honesty, even when brief, can illuminate the darkest corners of the human soul.

David Foster Wallace's "Brief Interviews with Hideous Men": A Dissection of Modern Disconnect

David Foster Wallace. The name itself evokes a certain intellectual heft, a penchant for sprawling sentences, and a deep, often uncomfortable, exploration of the human condition. His 1999 short story collection, *Brief Interviews with Hideous Men*, stands as a particularly potent testament to these characteristics. Far from a simple collection of anecdotes, Wallace uses these fictional interviews not to celebrate or condemn, but to excavate the often-misshapen realities of masculinity, desire, and the pervasive loneliness that can plague even the most seemingly connected individuals. This is not a light read; it's a disorienting, at times agonizing, but ultimately profound journey into the shadowed corners of the modern psyche.

Unpacking the "Hideous": More Than Just Monsters

The title itself is a provocation. "Hideous men." What makes them so? Wallace doesn't offer straightforward villains. Instead, his "hideous" figures are often remarkably ordinary, their hideousness stemming from their internal struggles, their flawed logic, their inability to connect authentically. These are men grappling with societal expectations, with their own insecurities, with the crushing weight of perceived failure. They are salesmen peddling false confidence, academics lost in theoretical labyrinths, husbands adrift in the quiet desperation of domesticity. The ugliness isn't always external; it's often a manifestation of a deep internal rot, a spiritual or emotional hollowness.

Consider the interviewer's role in these pieces. Often, they are women, their questions sharp and probing, designed to elicit confessions or reveal the absurdity of the interviewee's position. This dynamic creates a potent tension, a constant push and pull between revelation and evasion. The "interviews" are rarely traditional Q&A sessions. Instead, they morph into monologues, confessions, justifications, and outright lies. Wallace masterfully employs this narrative device to expose the performative nature of identity, particularly for men navigating a complex and often unforgiving social landscape. The concept of **male identity** and its anxieties is a central theme explored throughout the collection.

The Wallaceian Voice: Footnotes, Digressions, and Unflinching Honesty

Wallace's signature prose is on full display in *Brief Interviews with Hideous Men*. His sentences can be labyrinthine, studded with parentheticals, footnotes, and digressions that, at first glance, might seem to detract from the narrative. However, these are not mere stylistic flourishes. They are integral to his method, mirroring the fractured, often overthinking, internal monologues of his characters. The footnotes, in particular, often contain as much, if not more, profound insight than the main text. They are where Wallace often unpacks the psychological and philosophical underpinnings of his characters' predicaments, offering a meta-commentary on their struggles.

This intricate structure, while demanding, is also incredibly rewarding. It forces the reader to engage actively, to piece together the fragmented narratives, to experience the cognitive dissonance that often defines modern experience. The collection acts as a powerful exploration of **human psychology**, delving into the often-unspoken anxieties that drive our actions and shape our perceptions. Wallace's ability to capture the nuanced, often contradictory, nature of human thought is a hallmark of his writing.

Themes of Disconnect and the Tyranny of the Self

At its core, *Brief Interviews with Hideous Men* is a powerful examination of disconnection. The men interviewed are often isolated, struggling to forge genuine bonds with others. Their attempts at connection are frequently clumsy, self-serving, or outright manipulative. This isolation isn't necessarily a result of external factors alone; it's also a product of their own internal prisons. They are trapped by their ego, by their fear of vulnerability, by the overwhelming burden of their own selves. The concept of **personal relationships** and their inherent complexities is a recurring motif.

Wallace is particularly adept at illustrating the ways in which men, conditioned by societal norms, often struggle to express genuine emotion or empathy. Their interactions are frequently characterized by a transactional logic, where vulnerability is seen as weakness and emotional honesty as a liability. The "hideousness" then becomes a symptom of this profound emotional and spiritual poverty. The exploration of **modern relationships** and the challenges they present is a significant aspect of the collection's enduring appeal and relevance. The book offers a stark portrayal of how the pursuit of individual desires can sometimes lead to profound alienation.

"Certain Evenings": A Glimpse into Intimacy's Perils

While the titular "interviews" form the bulk of the collection, the inclusion of other stories, such as the novella-length "Certain Evenings" (originally published separately), adds further depth. This extended piece delves into the complexities of intimacy, desire, and the often-unspoken power dynamics within romantic relationships. It's a more extended exploration of the themes introduced in the shorter pieces, offering a nuanced and often unsettling look at the ways in which we attempt to navigate our deepest desires and fears within the context of partnership. The subtle interplay of power and vulnerability in **romantic entanglements** is a powerful element explored here.

"Certain Evenings" exemplifies Wallace's capacity for creating characters who are simultaneously relatable and deeply flawed. The narrative is dense with internal monologue, capturing the ebb and flow of thought and emotion, the moments of profound connection juxtaposed with profound doubt. It highlights the sheer effort involved in maintaining intimacy and the constant battle against the corrosive forces of insecurity and miscommunication. The exploration of **sexual dynamics** and their psychological underpinnings is particularly noteworthy.

Legacy and Enduring Relevance of "Brief Interviews with Hideous Men"

Despite being published over two decades ago, *Brief Interviews with Hideous Men* remains remarkably relevant. The anxieties and disconnects Wallace probes are arguably more pronounced in our hyper-connected, yet often superficial, digital age. The performative nature of online identities, the pressure to present a curated self, and the erosion of genuine interpersonal connection all resonate deeply with the themes Wallace explored so presciently.

The collection continues to be a touchstone for discussions about masculinity, mental health, and the challenges of authentic living. Readers return to Wallace's work for its unflinching honesty, its intellectual rigor, and its profound empathy, even when dissecting the "hideous." It serves as a stark reminder that beneath the flawed exteriors and the often-absurd justifications, there are complex human beings struggling with the same fundamental questions of love, meaning, and belonging. The book's exploration of **male mental health** and societal pressures continues to spark important conversations. For anyone interested in understanding the intricacies of the modern male experience and the often-unseen struggles that define it, *Brief Interviews with Hideous Men* is an essential, albeit challenging, read. It's a

testament to Wallace's genius that his examination of the "hideous" ultimately leads us to a deeper understanding of our shared humanity.

In conclusion, David Foster Wallace's *Brief Interviews with Hideous Men* is far more than a collection of stories; it's a meticulously crafted exploration of the human psyche, a disquieting mirror held up to modern society. Through his signature prose and his incisive observations, Wallace forces us to confront the uncomfortable truths about ourselves and the "hideousness" that can reside within us all, making it a seminal work in understanding the complexities of **contemporary society** and its psychological impact.

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make knowledge acquisition seamless, efficient, and adaptable to the needs of today's learners.

Questions & Answers About david foster wallace brief interviews with hideous men

No	Question	Answer
1	What's the core appeal of 'Brief Interviews with Hideous Men' for readers?	Readers are drawn to Wallace's signature prose, his incisive (and often uncomfortable) exploration of male psychology, and the collection's dark humor. The stories push boundaries and force readers to confront challenging aspects of relationships and identity.
2	How does Wallace use the 'interview' format in this collection?	Wallace subverts the traditional interview. The 'interviews' are rarely straightforward Q&As. Instead, they become fragmented monologues, distorted confessions, and uncomfortable glimpses into the inner lives of his 'hideous' male characters, often revealing more than the interviewee intends.
3	Are the 'hideous men' in the stories meant to be literal villains?	Not necessarily. While some characters exhibit disturbing traits, Wallace is more interested in exploring the complexities and hypocrisies within ordinary men. 'Hideous' often refers to their psychological failings, their self-deception, and their inability to connect authentically.
4	What themes are most prominent in 'Brief Interviews with Hideous Men'?	Key themes include masculinity, isolation, the search for connection, the anxieties of modern life, and the often-failed attempts at genuine communication. Wallace delves into the gap between how men perceive themselves and how they are perceived by others, and by women.
5	Is this collection accessible for readers new to David Foster Wallace?	It can be a challenging entry point due to Wallace's dense style and complex themes. However, its short story format makes it more digestible than his longer works. Readers who appreciate experimental literature and aren't afraid of confronting difficult topics might find it rewarding.
6	What kind of emotional reaction should readers expect from 'Brief Interviews with Hideous Men'?	Expect a range of reactions. The stories can be funny (albeit darkly so), disturbing, thought-provoking, and even empathetic. Readers might feel discomfort, recognition, anger, or a sense of profound sadness about the human condition.
7	How does this collection relate to Wallace's broader literary concerns?	'Brief Interviews with Hideous Men' showcases Wallace's deep engagement with issues of sincerity, irony, and the struggle for authentic selfhood that define much of his oeuvre. It's a potent early exploration of the male psyche that foreshadows his later, more expansive work.

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David Foster Wallace Brief Interviews With Hideous Men eBooks provide measurable educational value.

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Audiobooks are particularly beneficial for auditory learners or individuals with visual impairments. They also help reduce

screen time, making them a healthy alternative for extended content consumption. However, audiobooks may not be ideal for detailed study that requires frequent referencing, highlighting, or visual analysis.

Combining audiobooks with text

Many readers find value in combining audiobooks with digital or printed text. Listening while following along in the text can improve comprehension and retention. Others use audiobooks for initial exposure and then refer to the text version of David Foster Wallace Brief Interviews With Hideous Men for deeper study. This multi-format approach maximizes flexibility and learning efficiency.

Tracking Progress

Tracking reading progress is a powerful way to stay motivated and organized when engaging with David Foster Wallace Brief Interviews With Hideous Men. Monitoring progress helps readers set goals, manage time effectively, and reflect on what they have learned. Whether reading for leisure, study, or professional development, tracking tools enhance accountability and consistency.

Apps such as Goodreads, StoryGraph, and LibraryThing allow users to log books, track reading status, write reviews, and set annual or monthly reading goals. These platforms also offer personalized recommendations based on reading history, making it easier to discover related David Foster Wallace Brief Interviews With Hideous Men materials.

For readers who prefer a more customized approach, spreadsheets or note-taking apps can serve as effective tracking tools. Creating a simple reading log that includes dates, chapters completed, key notes, and personal reflections helps organize learning and maintain focus. Digital notes can be linked directly to highlighted sections within David Foster Wallace Brief Interviews With Hideous Men for easy reference.

Using tracking for study and research

For academic or professional purposes, tracking progress goes beyond simple completion. Recording insights, questions, and references while reading David Foster Wallace Brief Interviews With Hideous Men creates a structured knowledge base that can be revisited later. This approach supports deeper understanding and improves long-term retention of information.

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Community engagement and motivation

Sharing progress within reading communities can increase motivation and accountability. Many platforms allow users to join reading challenges, discussion groups, or book clubs centered around specific topics or genres. Engaging with others who are also reading David Foster Wallace Brief Interviews With Hideous Men fosters discussion, insight exchange, and a sense of shared purpose.

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