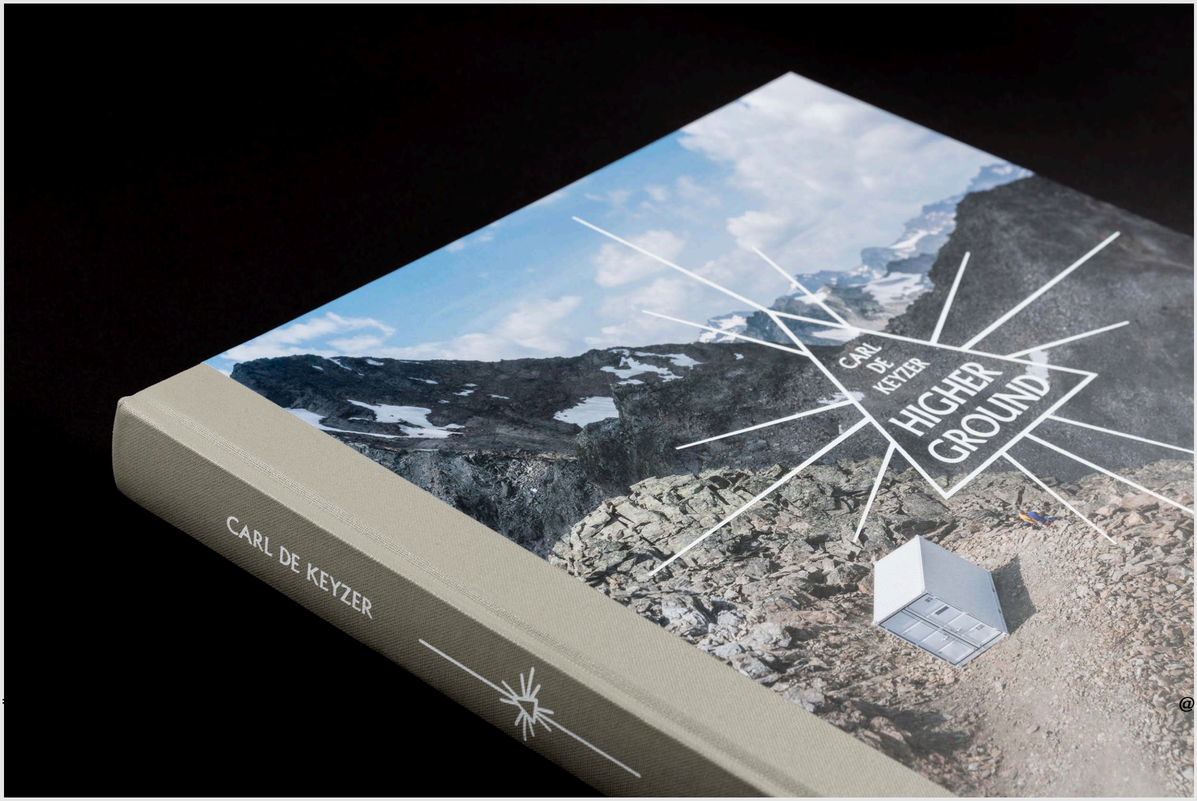
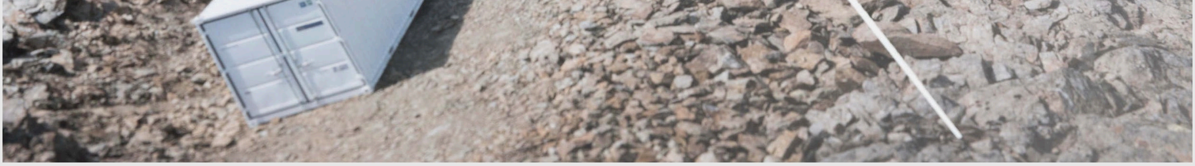


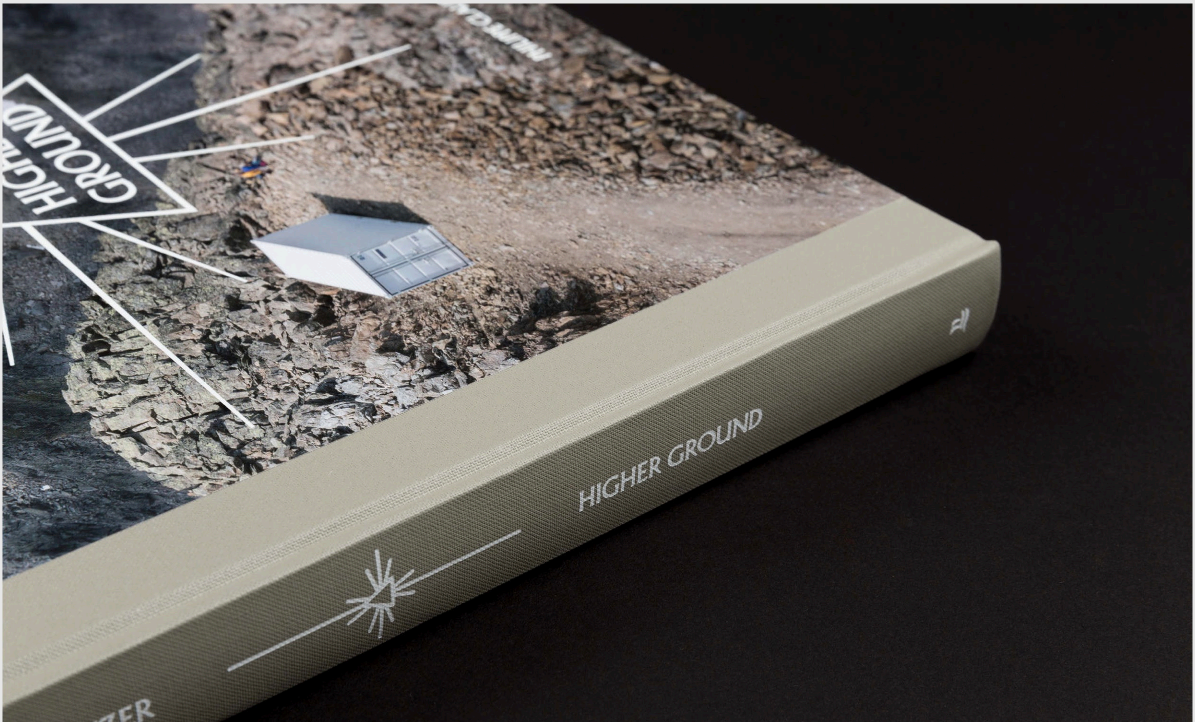
Book design for photographer Carl De Keyzer.

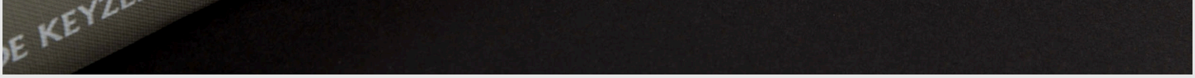
“In *Higher Ground*, Magnum photographer Carl De Keyzer depicts a fictitious world in which people have fled from the tidal wave, caused by global warming. The highlands as a place of refuge for the European population. The images have a haunting religious and even occult feel to them. It inspired the famous French author Philippe Claudel to write the short story Ararat in which he examines the psyche of De Keyzer’s characters.” – Lannoo

CARL DE KEYZER
HIGHER GROUND



CARL
DE
KEYZER
HIGHER
GROUND
LANNOO
PHILIPPE CLAUDEL





"I play. All day long. I'm not sad. I
I think they're also playing. Somewhere. I
We're fine. I love staying in the mountains."

"What about you, do you know whe
told? Do you think we'll be able to get out

"A bloke came up to the sheep. Th
They were there, like us. They were
ing at it. The bloke approached. I re
used to walk round the small reser
with wings or something like that. H
He bent down to pick up a big sto
the sheep one by one. The sheep d
They watched him kill the other
bloke went on and on hitting. Th
just killed one sheep, and the a
smashed in, and he moved o
tually got to its feet, un
intact once more
died. I th

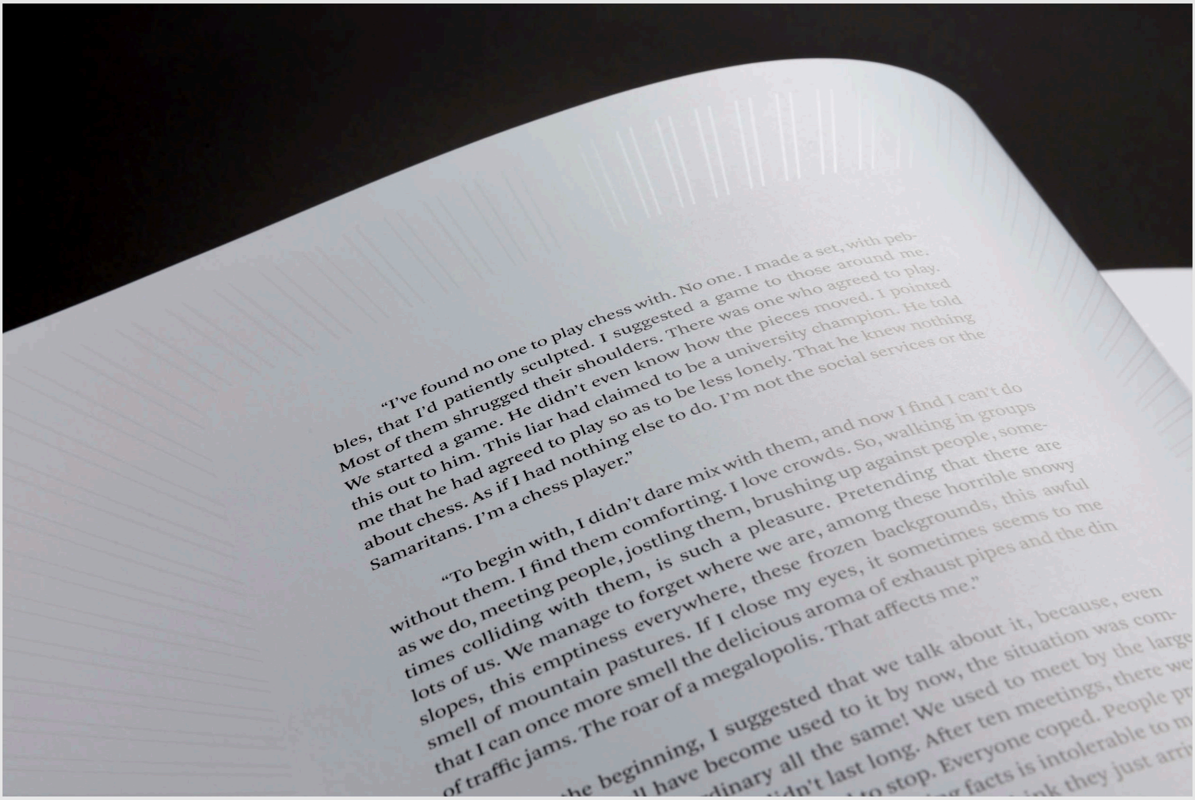
ARARAT

Inspired by Carl De Keyzer's photographs in *Higher Ground*.
By Philippe Claudel.
Translated from the French by Euan Cameron.

"When I was a child, I used to be frightened that the mountains would collapse and fall down on me. I was constantly asking the adults around me whether they really were secured properly, whether I was in any danger."

"Together with a guy I met at the beginning, who was in the same cable car that brought us up here, we rebelled. We reckoned that what had happened to us was unfair. We tried to escape by every means possible. We discovered some pickaxes in an equipment store – crowbars, tools like that. We started to attack the rock face. It was very solid. Exhausting. We took it in turns. We were worn out, but we didn't stop. We managed to dig a tunnel one metre in diameter and ten metres deep. It took us – I don't know, we didn't even bother to count – one year, perhaps two, how could we tell? In the end we gave up. What was the point? I don't know what became of the fellow. I don't come across him any more. I never knew his name. A guy like me."

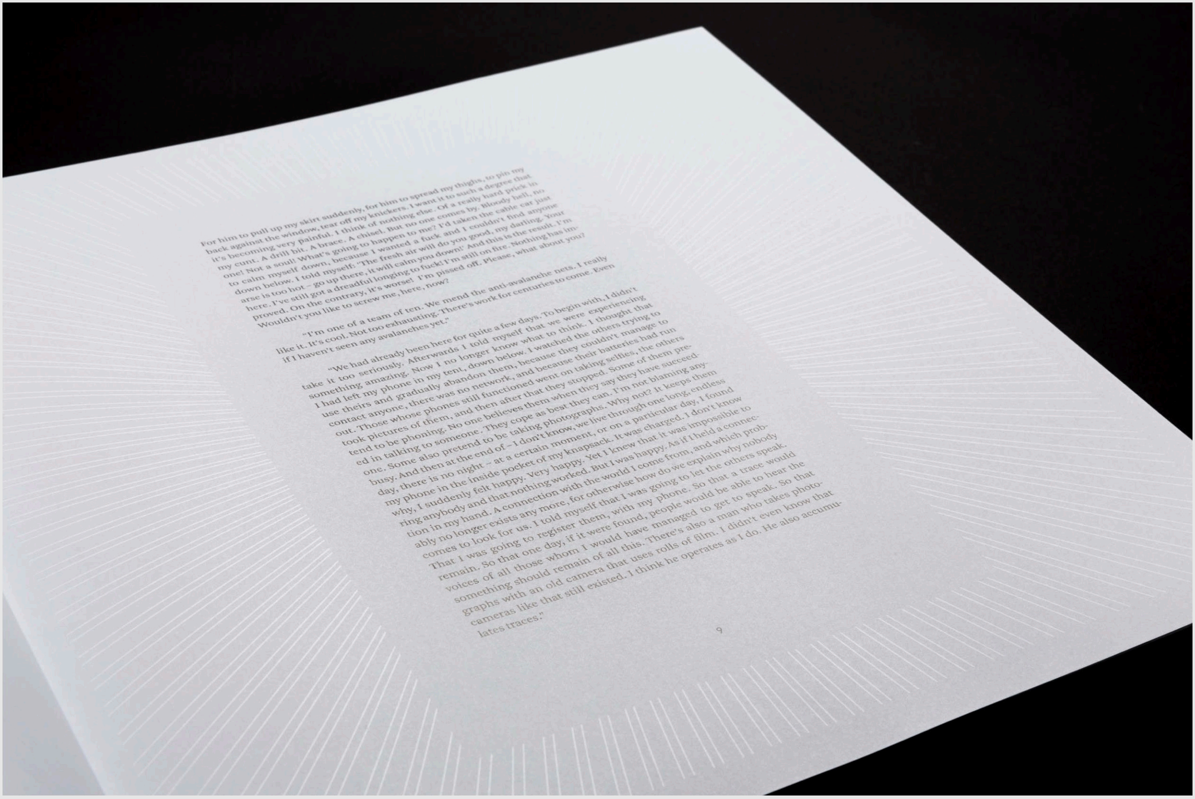
"I think that all the people who are here are vaguely aware that nothing exists any more. At the beginning, I tried to talk about it. No sound came out of my mouth. Nor from the mouth of any of the others either, and yet I could see them trying to pronounce them. The sounds die immediately; they dissolve in the atmosphere. Or else I've become deaf. I really don't know. We are dumbfounded. Before, I was a writer. I wrote novels and plays. There are no books here. Nothing. There's nothing to read, other than the advertising hoardings, always the same ones, and various notices, here and there. That's all. We go round in circles. I miss reading more than writing. Well actually, I'm not sure. What I really do miss is talking to someone. I'm unable to speak. And it's the same for the others. The moment we open our mouths, when we try to utter sounds or words, nothing happens. The words subside, like water, liquid gas, mist. Nothing substantial. You'll have noticed there's no noise. It's the same with the birds. No chirping. No singing. Just their wings are silent. Are you able to read me? I've always had [illegible] Give me back this little scrap of paper when you've finished. [illegible] very little left."



"I've found no one to play chess with. No one. I made a set, with pebbles, that I'd patiently sculpted. I suggested a game to those around me. Most of them shrugged their shoulders. There was one who agreed to play. We started a game. He didn't even know how the pieces moved. I pointed this out to him. This liar had claimed to be a university champion. He told me that he had agreed to play so as to be less lonely. That he knew nothing about chess. As if I had nothing else to do. I'm not the social services or the Samaritans. I'm a chess player."

"To begin with, I didn't dare mix with them, and now I find I can't do without them. I find them comforting. I love crowds. So, walking in groups as we do, meeting people, jostling them, brushing up against people, sometimes colliding with them, is such a pleasure. Pretending that there are lots of us. We manage to forget where we are, among these horrible snowy slopes, this emptiness everywhere, these frozen backgrounds, this awful smell of mountain pastures. If I close my eyes, it sometimes seems to me that I can once more smell the delicious aroma of exhaust pipes and the din of traffic jams. The roar of a megalopolis. That affects me."

he beginning, I suggested that we talk about it, because, even
ll have become used to it by now, the situation was com-
dinary all the same! We used to meet by the large
dn't last long. After ten meetings, there we
to stop. Everyone coped. People pr
facts is intolerable to m
ink they just arri



For him to pull up my skirt suddenly, for him to spread my thighs, to pin my back against the window, tear off my knickers. I want it to such a degree that it's becoming very painful. I think of nothing else. Of a really hard prick in my cunt. A drill bit. A brace. A chisel. But no one comes by. Bloody hell, no one! Not a soul! What's going to happen to me? I'd taken the cable car just to calm myself down, because I wanted a fuck and I couldn't find anyone down below. I told myself: 'The fresh air will do you good, my darling. Your arse is too hot – go up there, it will calm you down!' And this is the result. I'm here. I've still got a dreadful longing to fuck! I'm still on fire. Nothing has improved. On the contrary, it's worse! I'm pissed off. Please, what about you? Wouldn't you like to screw me, here, now?

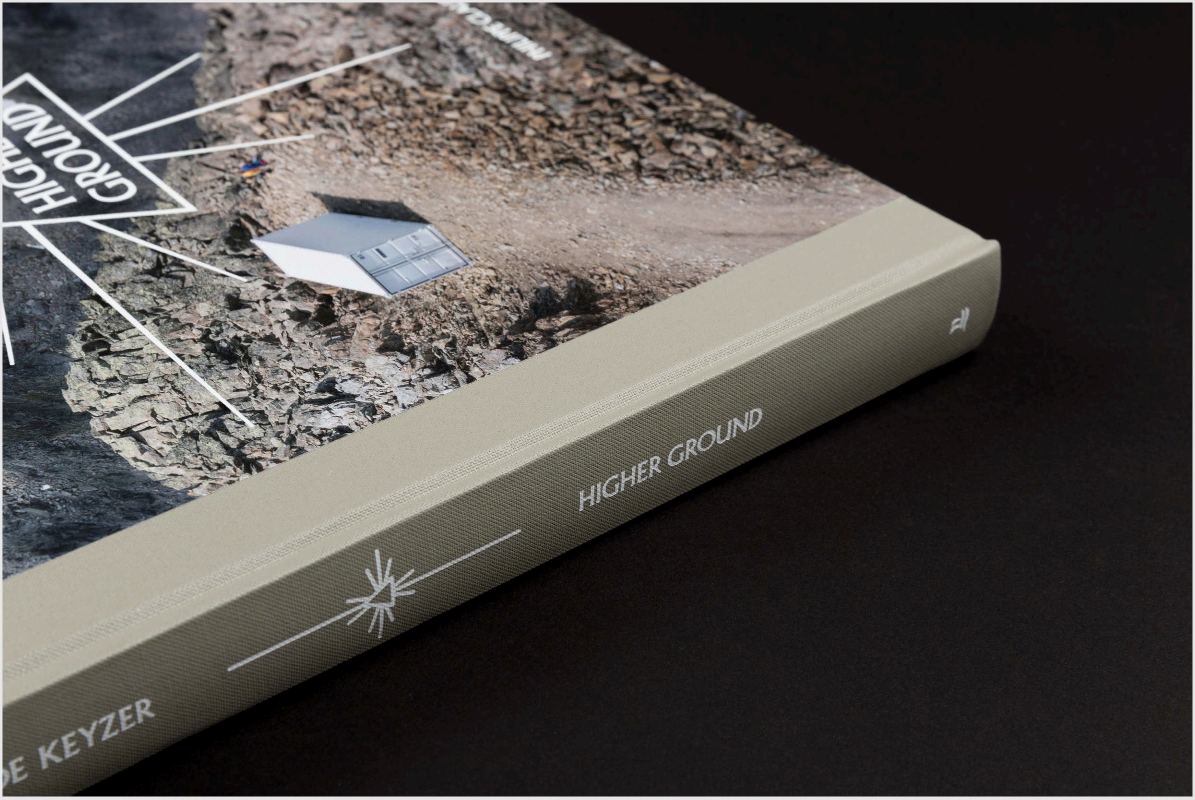
"I'm one of a team of ten. We mend the anti-avalanche nets. I really like it. It's cool. Not too exhausting. There's work for centuries to come. Even if I haven't seen any avalanches yet."

"We had already been here for quite a few days. To begin with, I didn't take it too seriously. Afterwards I told myself that we were experiencing something amazing. Now I no longer know what to think. I thought that I had left my phone in my tent, down below. I watched the others trying to use theirs and gradually abandon them, because they couldn't manage to contact anyone, there was no network, and because their batteries had run out. Those whose phones still functioned went on taking selfies, the others took pictures of them, and then after that they stopped. Some of them pretend to be phoning. No one believes them when they say they have succeeded in talking to someone. They cope as best they can. I'm not blaming anyone. Some also pretend to be taking photographs. Why not? It keeps them busy. And then at the end of – I don't know, we live through one long, endless day, there is no night – at a certain moment, or on a particular day, I found my phone in the inside pocket of my knapsack. It was charged. I don't know why, I suddenly felt happy. Very happy. Yet I knew that it was impossible to ring anybody and that nothing worked. But I was happy. As if I held a connection in my hand. A connection with the world I come from, and which probably no longer exists any more, for otherwise how do we explain why nobody comes to look for us. I told myself that I was going to let the others speak. That I was going to register them, with my phone. So that a trace would remain. So that one day, if it were found, people would be able to hear the voices of all those whom I would have managed to get to speak. So that something should remain of all this. There's also a man who takes photographs with an old camera that uses rolls of film. I didn't even know that cameras like that still existed. I think he operates as I do. He also accumulates traces."

"They set us down in front o
likes beer. But he's not touching it.
touching it. Why he doesn't taste it. It's
of him. He doesn't try it. I really don't u
but he often looks outside, at the peaks
look at me again, I have the feeling that he
well be a stone myself or a block of ice. It's th

"I tried to eat, but it doesn't go down. In a
or thirsty. All I feel like is a cigarette. But no one h

"I'm dreadfully cold. I'm almost naked.
don't know why I'm like this, in my underpa
people are dressed warmly. I'm convinced
people took the opportunity to steal
inhuman. Frankly, it's disgustin
feel the biting cold, the icy w
lous. I'm in pain. I'm all
awful, but I don't di
sore throat. Not a
weighs a grea
probably
Basta



The highlands as a place of refuge for the European population. No one knows whether it will ever be possible to return. In *Higher Ground*, Magnum photographer Carl De Keyzer depicts a fictitious world in which people have fled from the tidal wave. It inspired the famous French author Philippe Claudel to write the short story *Ararat* in which he examines the psyche of De Keyzer's characters. The result is an intriguing and prophetic book—cinematic, poetic, apocalyptic. *Higher Ground* is the sequel to the highly praised *Moments Before the Flood*.

"The most important thing, it seems to me, is to pretend. To go on pretending. I can't help thinking that none of this is real."

"Please forgive me, but I no longer speak to anyone except God."

"The funniest thing is that my son, who wasn't awake on the morning I wanted to take this trip - my son whom I'd left sleeping in the hired apartment - do you know what his first name is? Noah! Yes. Noah. I'm not making it up."

Les montagnes comme refuge pour la population européenne. Personne ne sait si un retour sera encore possible. Carl De Keyzer, photographe de l'agence Magnum, imagine dans *Higher Ground* un monde où les gens se sont réfugiés pour échapper au déluge. Ce monde a inspiré à l'écrivain français Philippe Claudel la nouvelle *Ararat*, dans laquelle il se penche sur la psyché des personnages de De Keyzer. Cela donne un ouvrage intrigant et prophétique – à la fois cinématographique, poétique et apocalyptique. *Higher Ground* est la suite du très applaudi *Moments before the flood*.

– Ce qui me semble le plus important, c'est de faire semblant. De continuer à faire semblant. Je ne peux pas m'empêcher de penser que tout cela n'est pas réel.

– Je vous prie de m'excuser, mais je ne parle plus qu'à Dieu.

– Le plus drôle c'est que mon fils qui ne s'est pas réveillé le jour où j'ai voulu faire cette excursion, mon fils que j'ai laissé dormir dans l'appartement de location, savez-vous comment il se prénomme ? Noé ! Oui. Noé. Ça ne s'invente pas.

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