PyCon China · 2019

The Past and Future of GIL

Jiayuan Zhang

Who Am I?

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- Full-Stack Developer at IQIYI.Inc

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- Python, JavaScript, Lisp and (Rust)

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Who Am I?

- Full-Stack Developer at IQIYI.Inc
- Python, JavaScript, Lisp and (Rust)
- Open source contributor, werkzeug, requests, doom-emacs, etc.
- Coding with Emacs, organizing my life with org-mode

Outline

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- What is GIL

Outline

- What is GIL
- How GIL works

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- What is GIL
- How GIL works
- Remove GIL

Outline

- What is GIL
- How GIL works
- Remove GIL
- The future

Part I

What is GIL?

```python
# single_threaded.py
import time
from threading import Thread

COUNT = 50000000

def countdown(n):
    while n > 0:
        n -= 1

start = time.time()
countdown(COUNT)
end = time.time()

print('Time taken in seconds -', end - start)
```

```
$ python single_threaded.py
Time taken in seconds - 6.200240373611145
```

```python
# multi_threaded.py
import time
from threading import Thread

COUNT = 50000000

def countdown(n):
    while n > 0:
        n -= 1

t1 = Thread(target=countdown, args=(COUNT//2,))
t2 = Thread(target=countdown, args=(COUNT//2,))

start = time.time()
t1.start()
t2.start()
t1.join()
t2.join()
end = time.time()

print('Time taken in seconds -', end - start)
```

```
$ python multi_threaded.py
Time taken in seconds - 6.924342632293701
```

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Time taken in seconds - 6.200240373611145
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What is GIL ?

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- Global Interpreter Lock

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- Global Interpreter Lock
- Mutex, pthread (Linux) or win thread (Windows), controlled by OS
- Allows only one thread to execute Python code at any point in time
- Bottleneck in CPU-bound and multi-threaded code

What is GIL in Depth

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- Is Python thread safe?

What is GIL in Depth

- Is Python thread safe?
- "Lock" on what?

Is Python Thread Safe?

Is Python Thread Safe?

```
 1 L.append(x)
 2 L1.extend(L2)
 3 x = L[i]
 4 x = L.pop()
 5 L1[i:j] = L2
 6 L.sort()
 7 x = y
 8 x.field = y
 9 D[x] = y
10 D1.update(D2)
11 D.keys()
```

Is Python Thread Safe?

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```
1 i = i+1
2 L.append(L[-1])
3 L[i] = L[j]
4 D[x] = D[x] + 1
```

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Is Python Thread Safe?

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Safe

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Not Safe

What kinds of global value mutation are thread-safe?

Why?

How Python Runs?

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Python Source Code (.py files)

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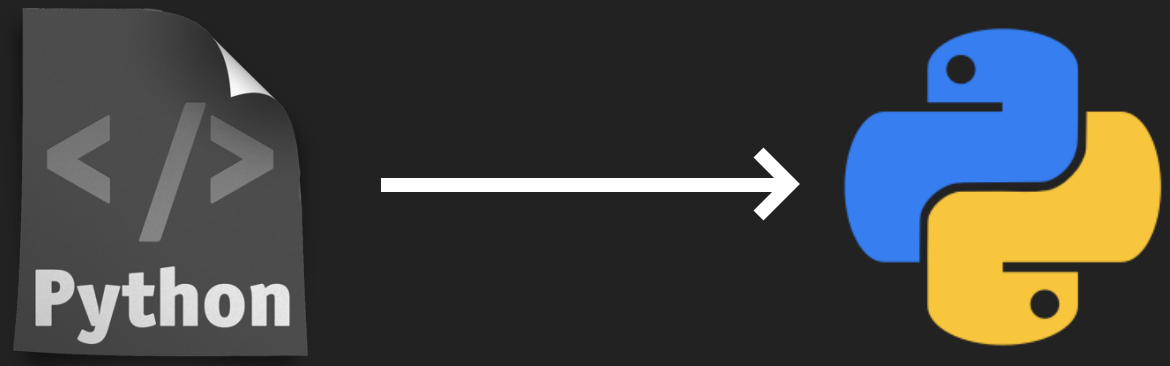

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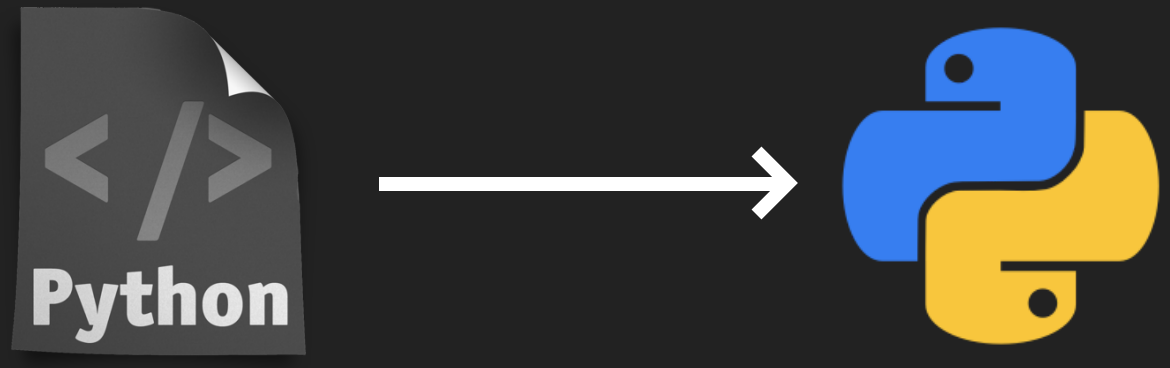
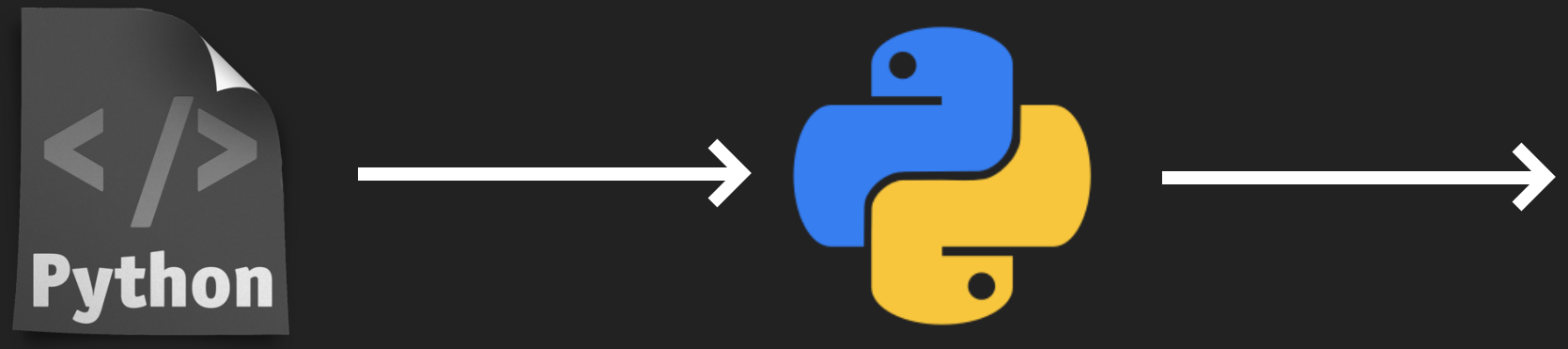


Python Source Code (.py files)

Python Interpreter

How Python Runs?



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How Python Runs?

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Python Interpreter

Result

What is Python Interpreter?

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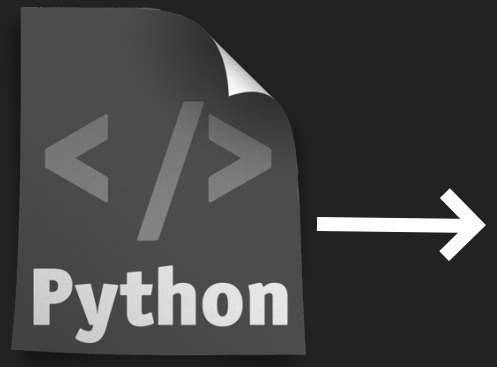

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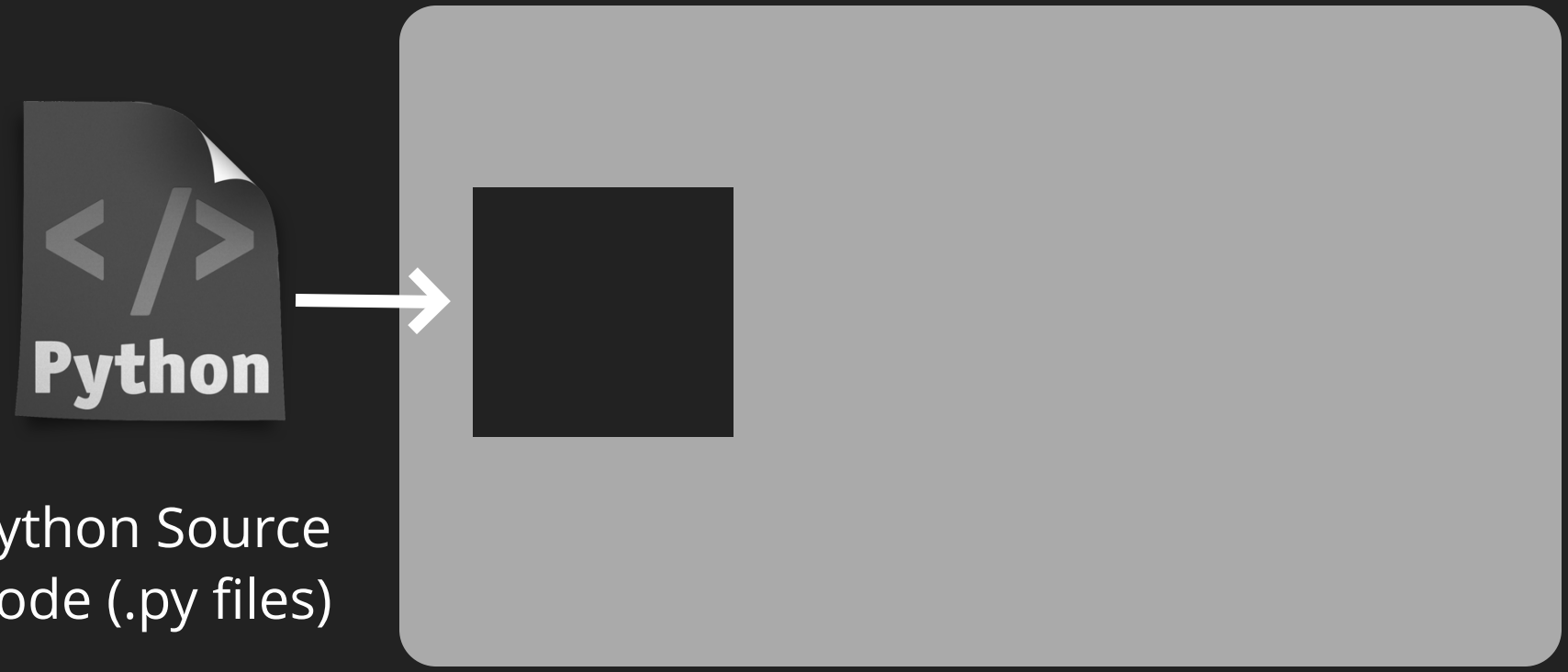

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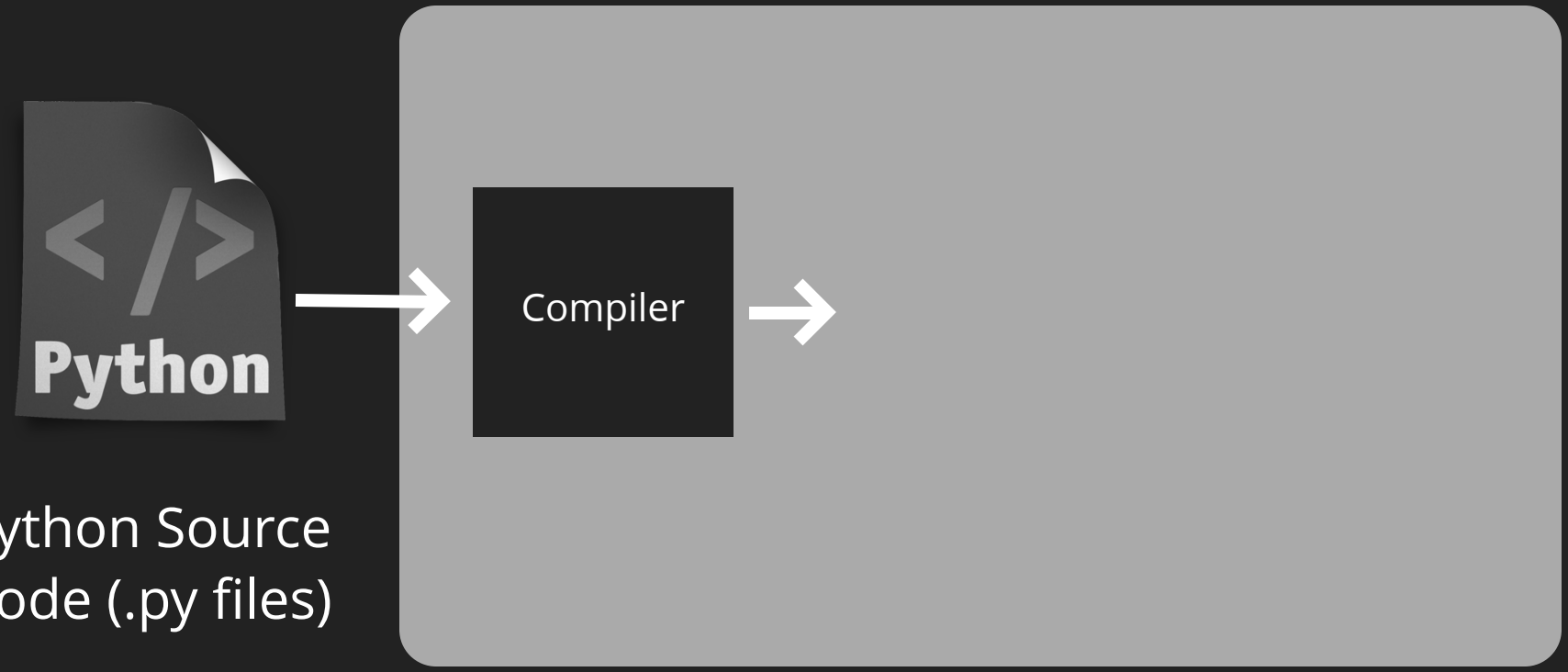

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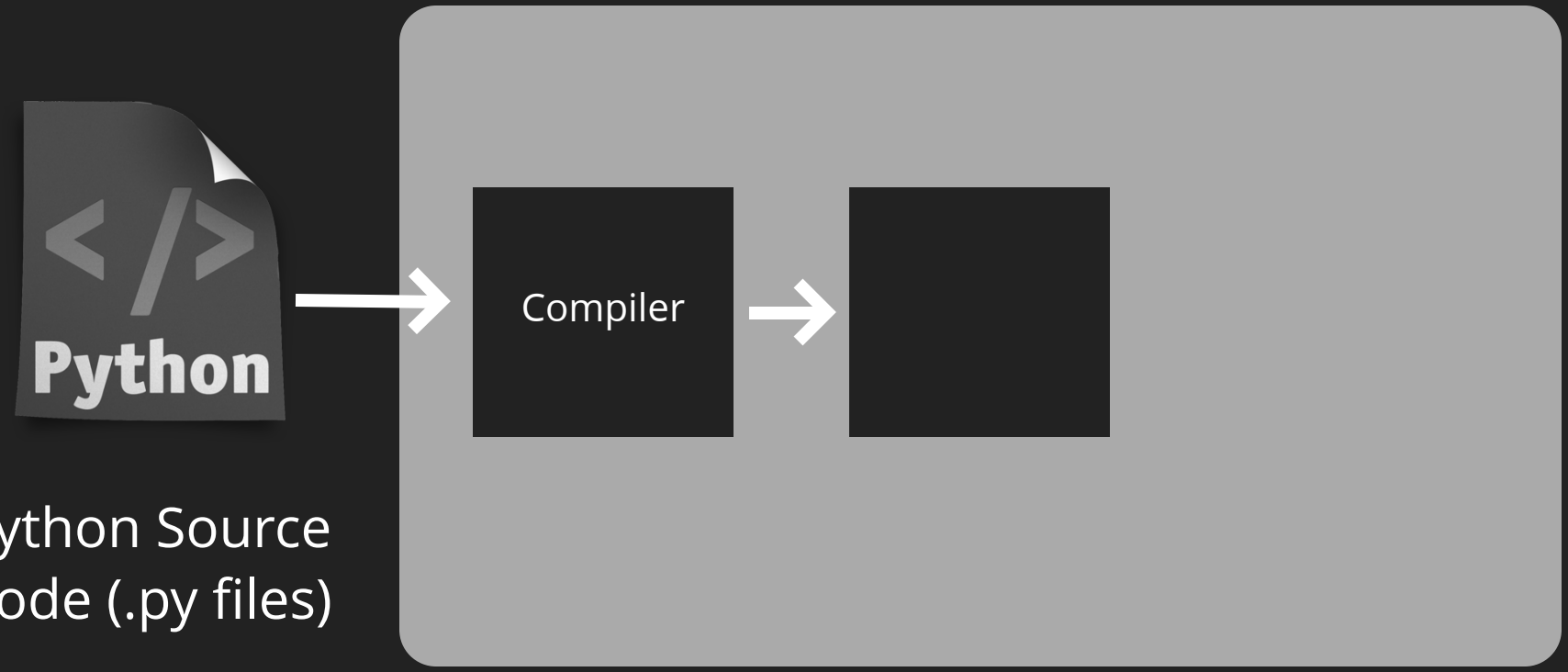

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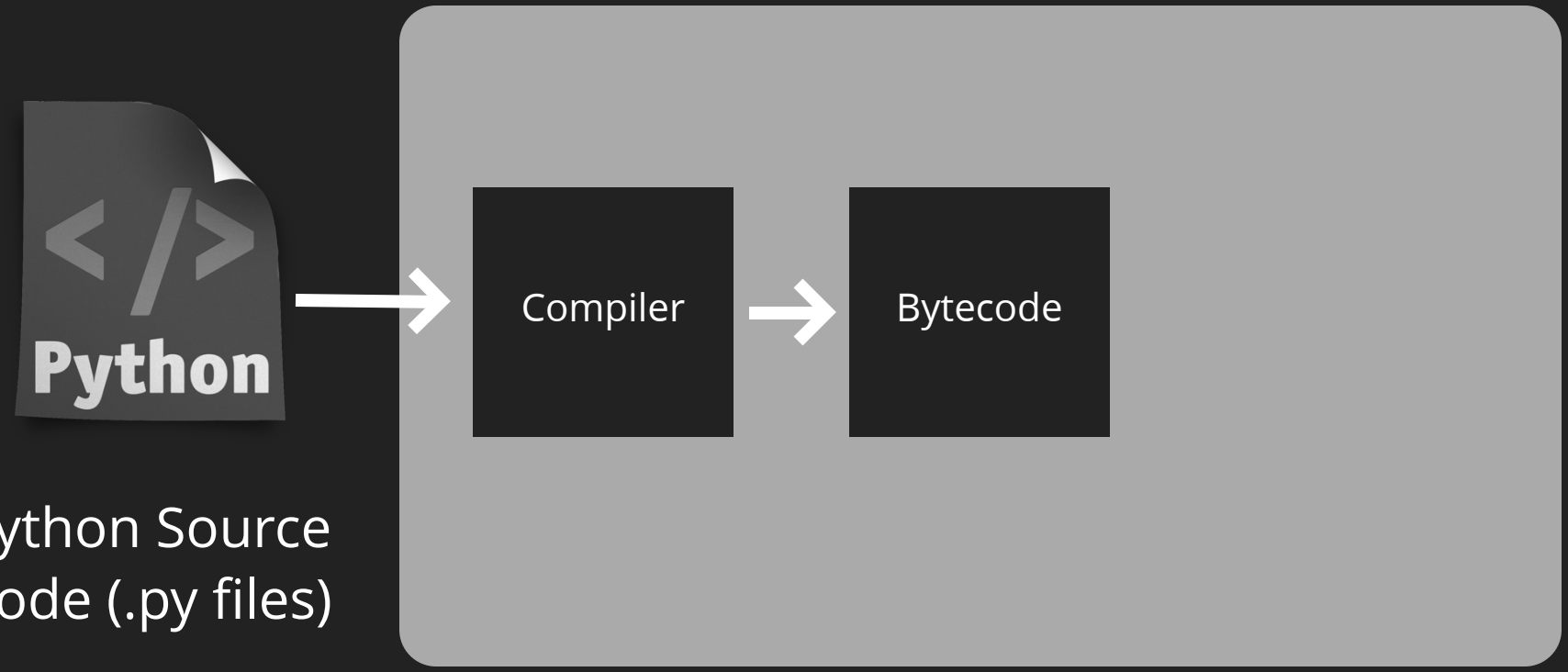

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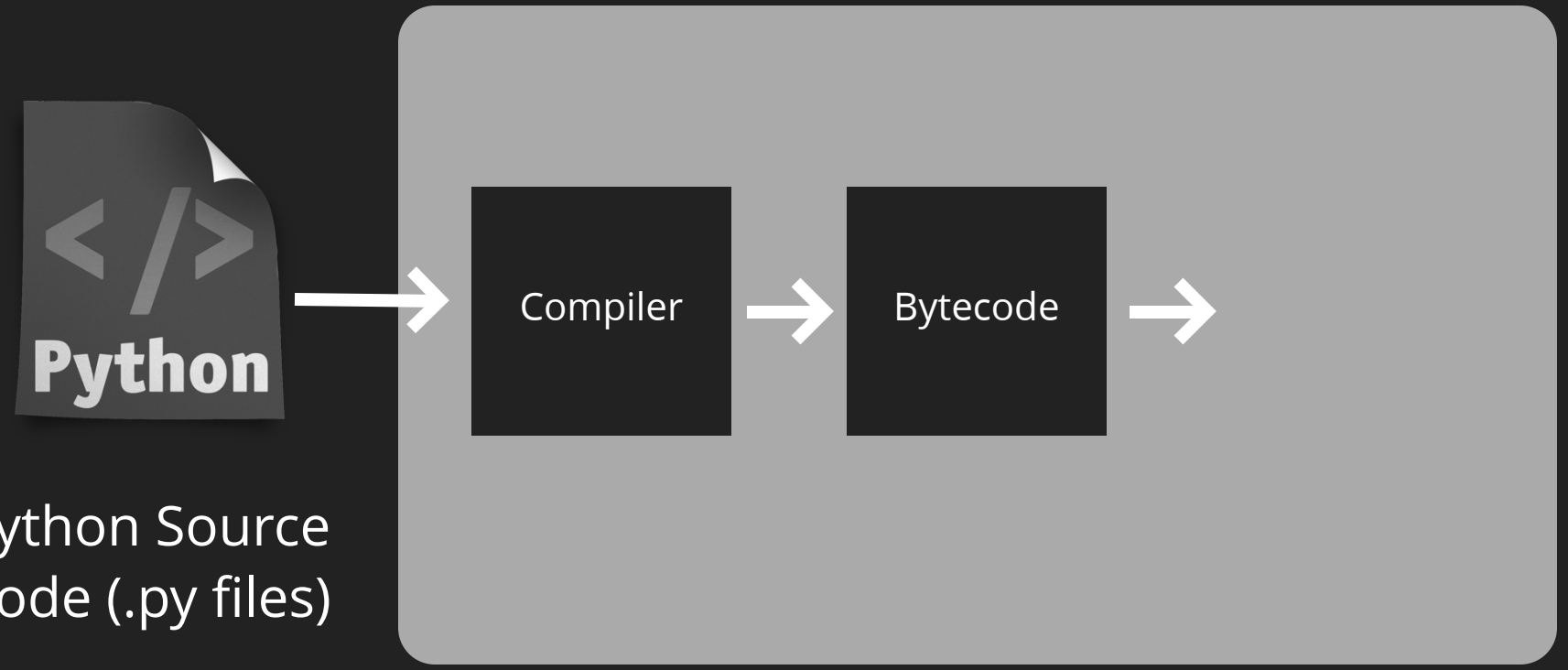

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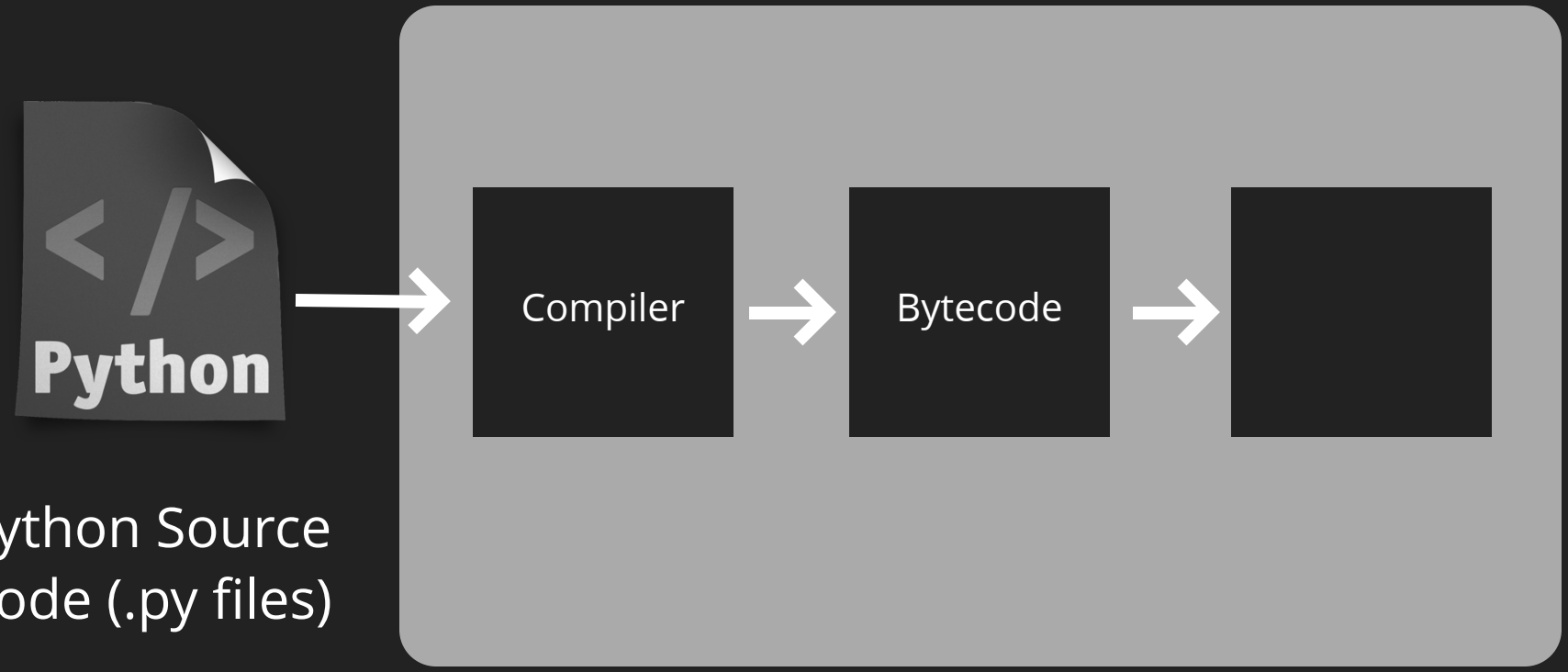

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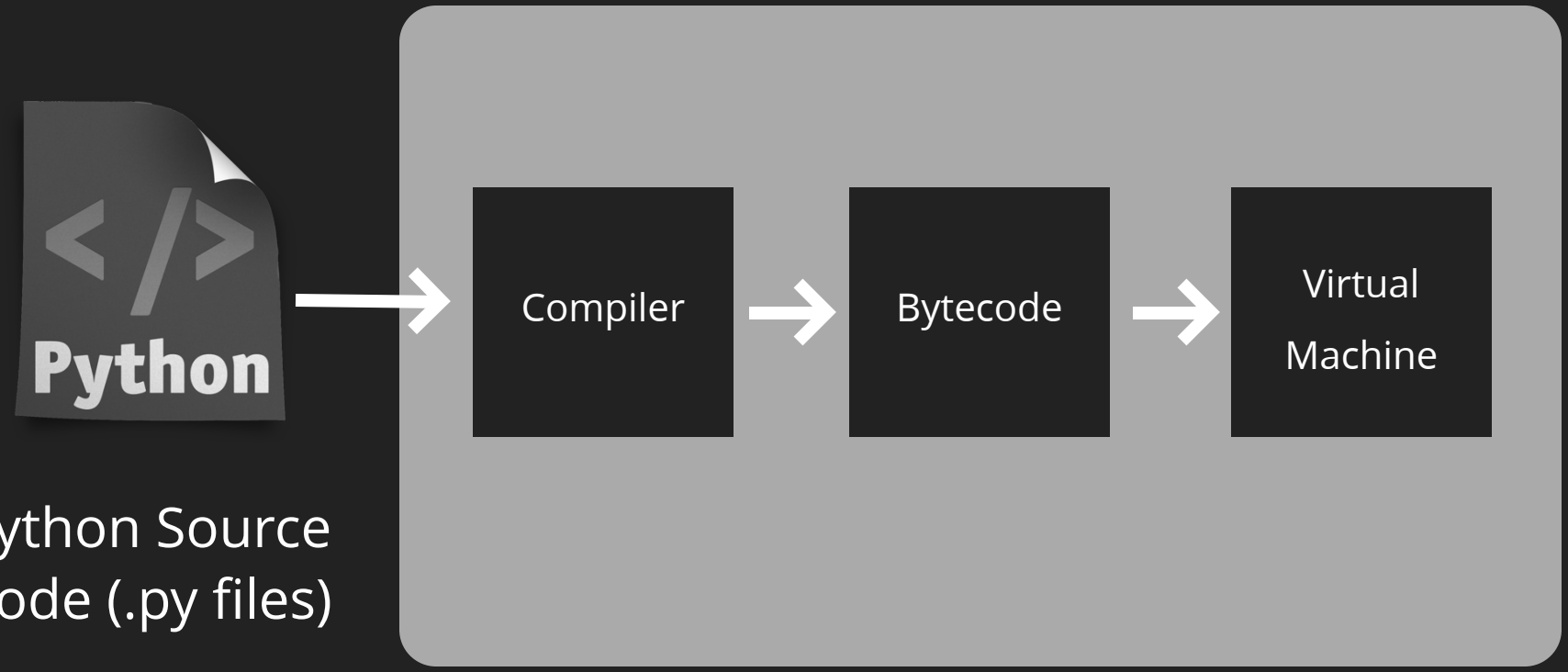

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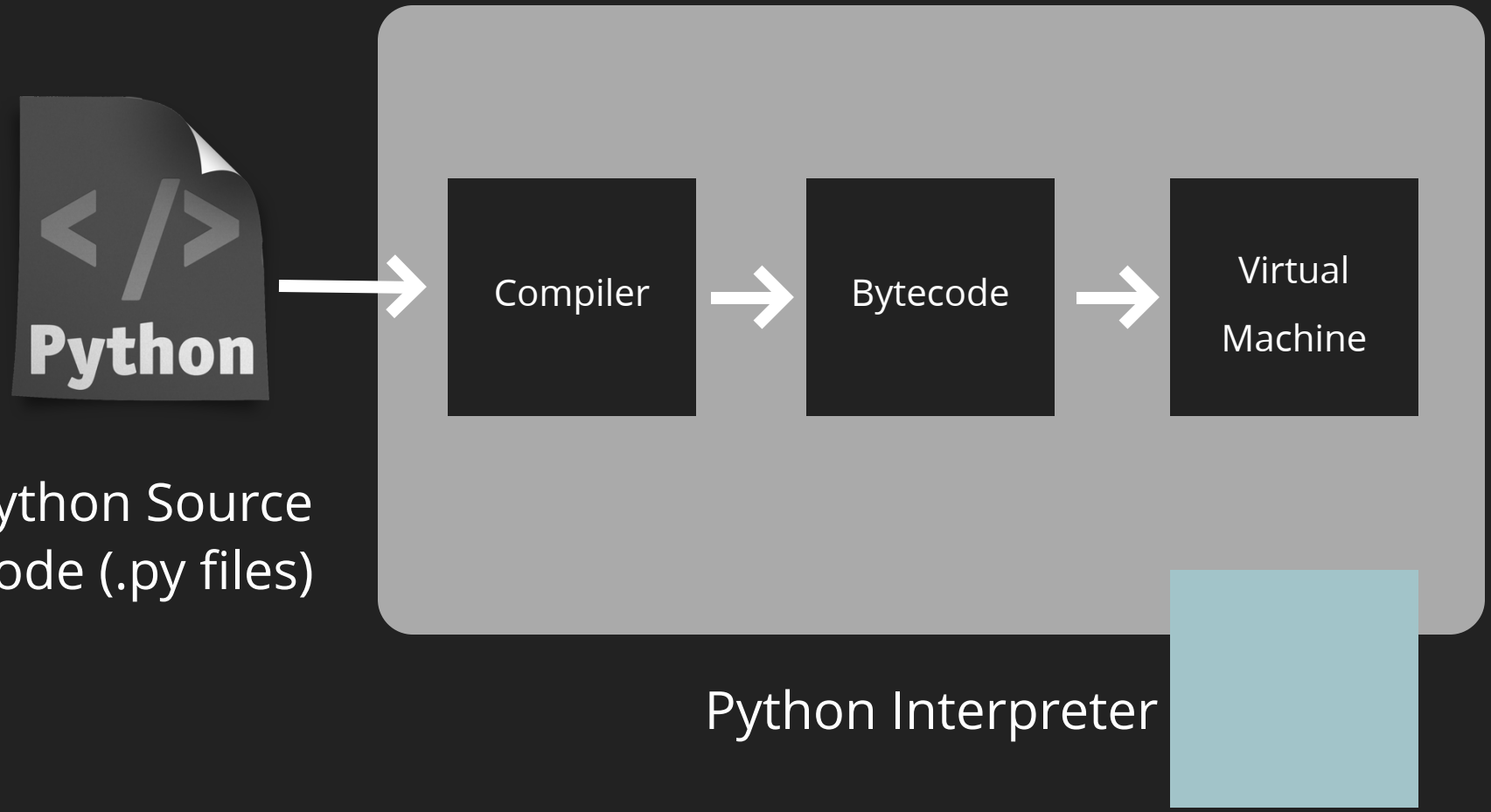

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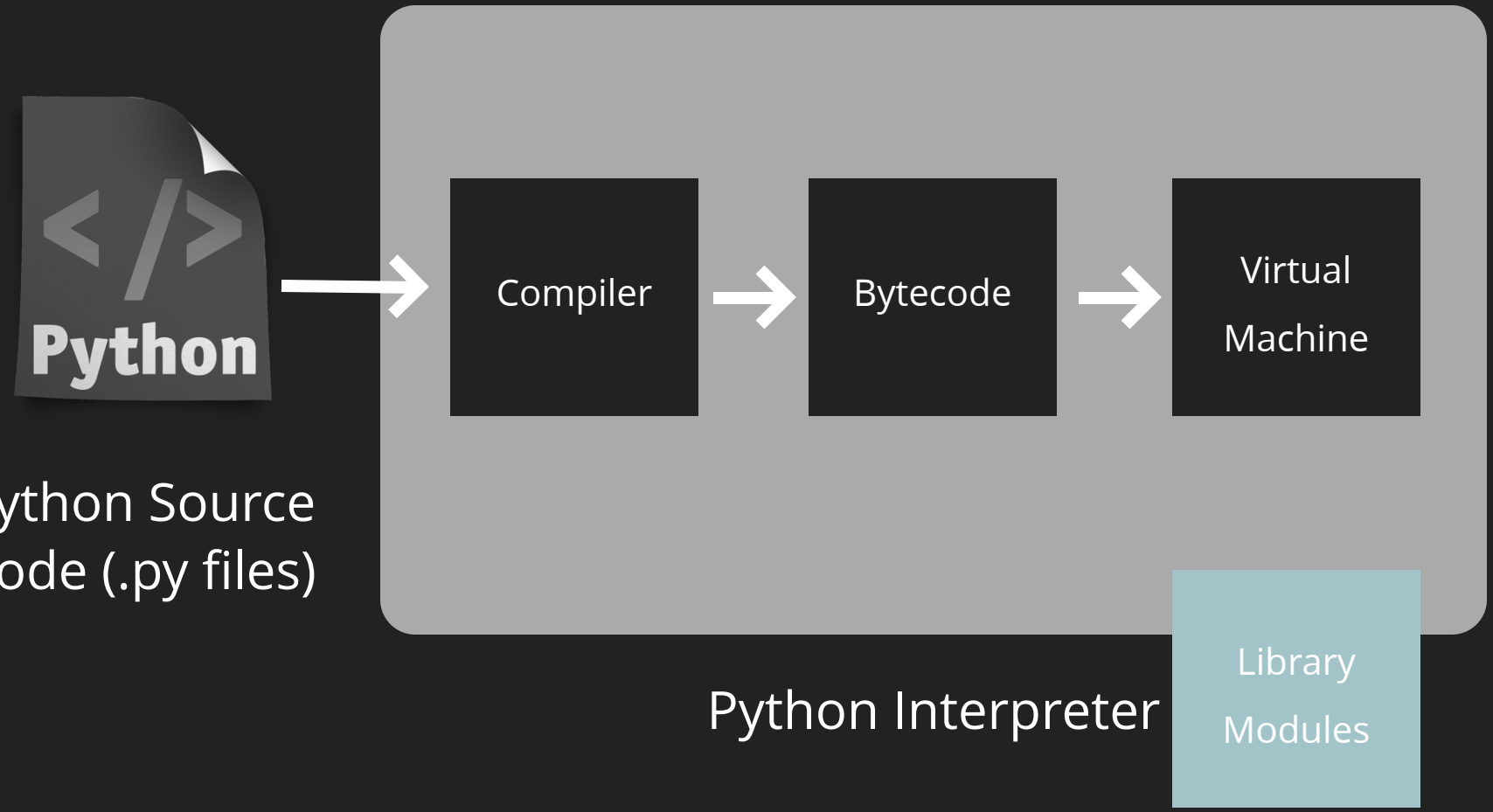

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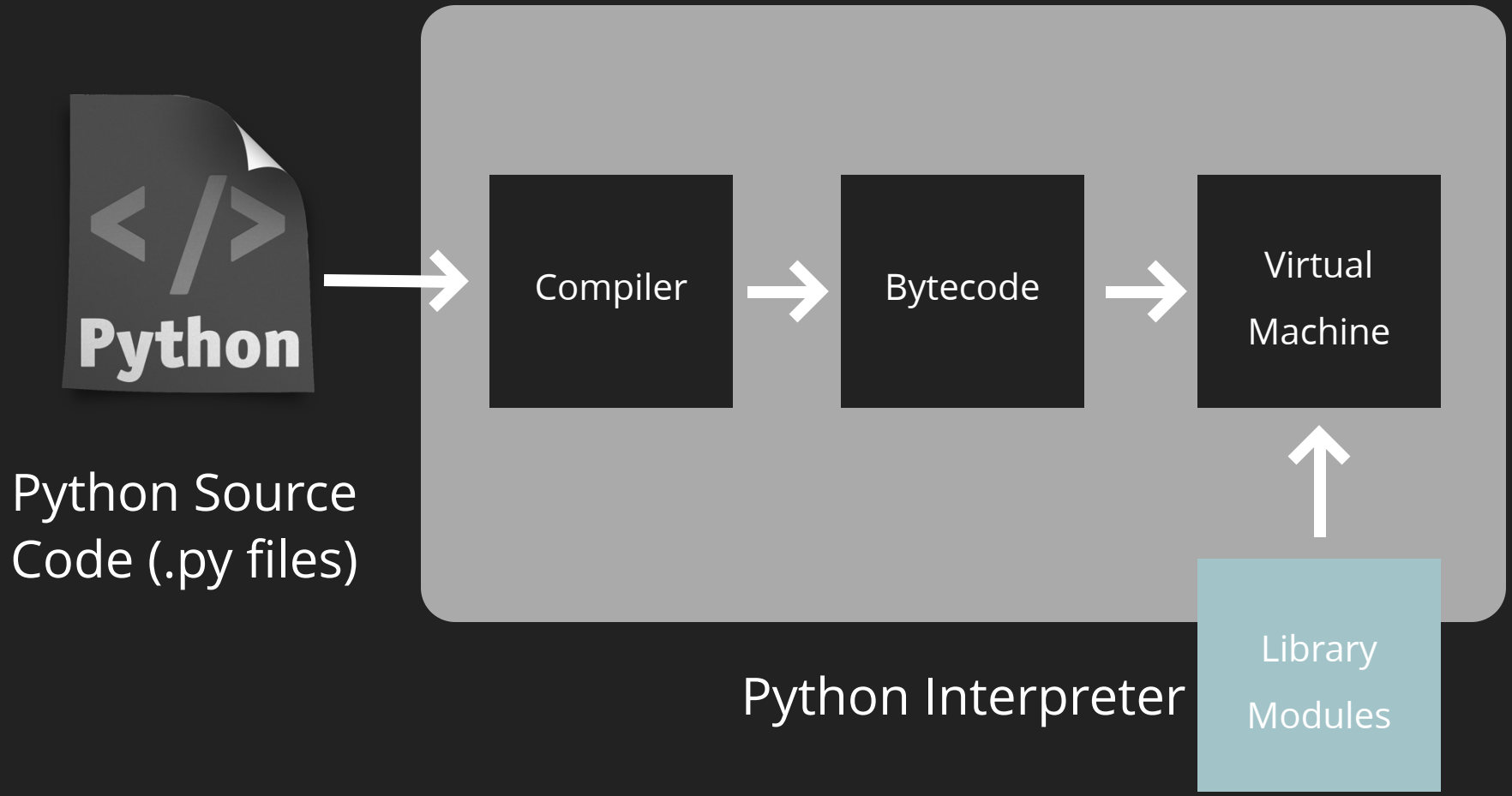

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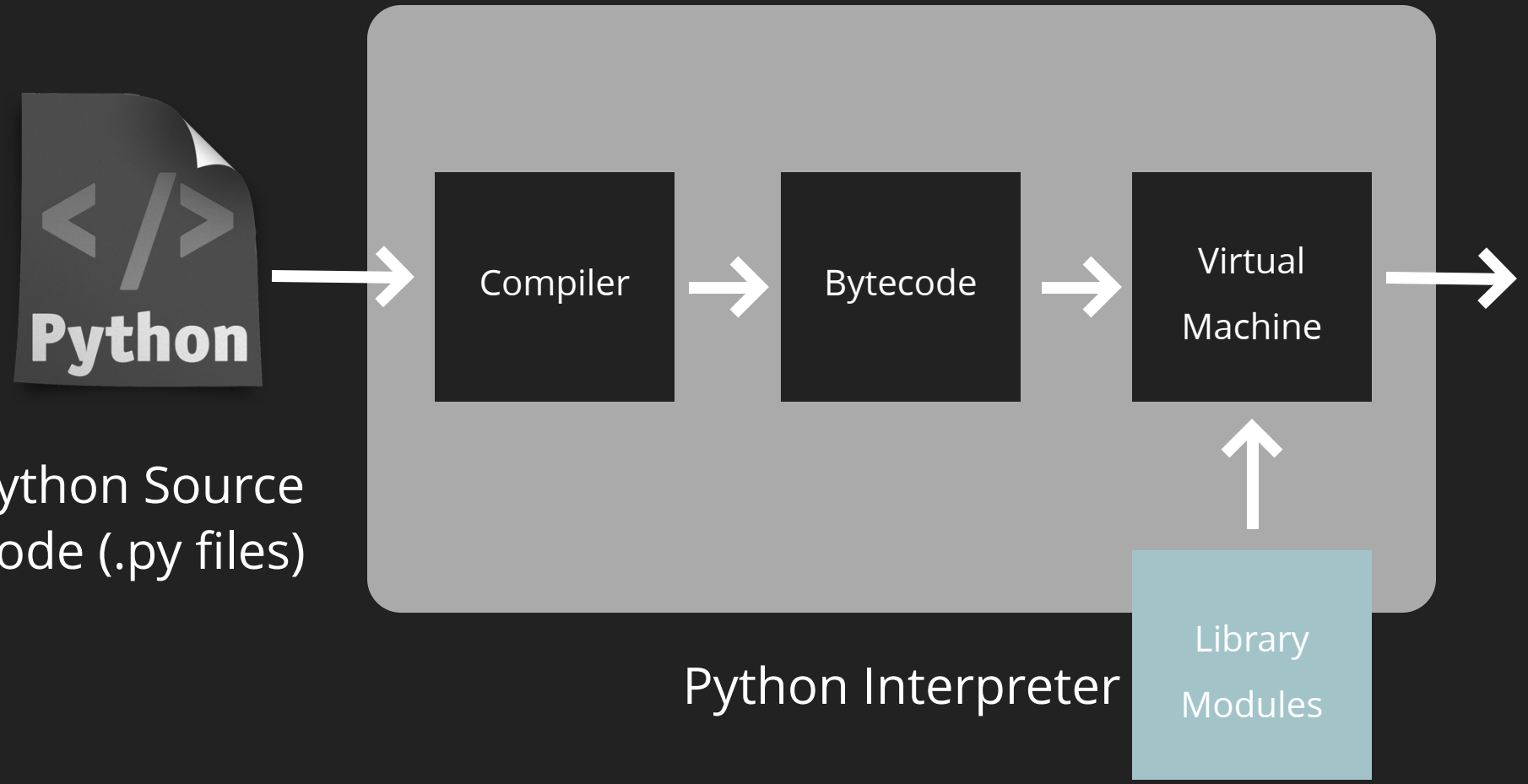

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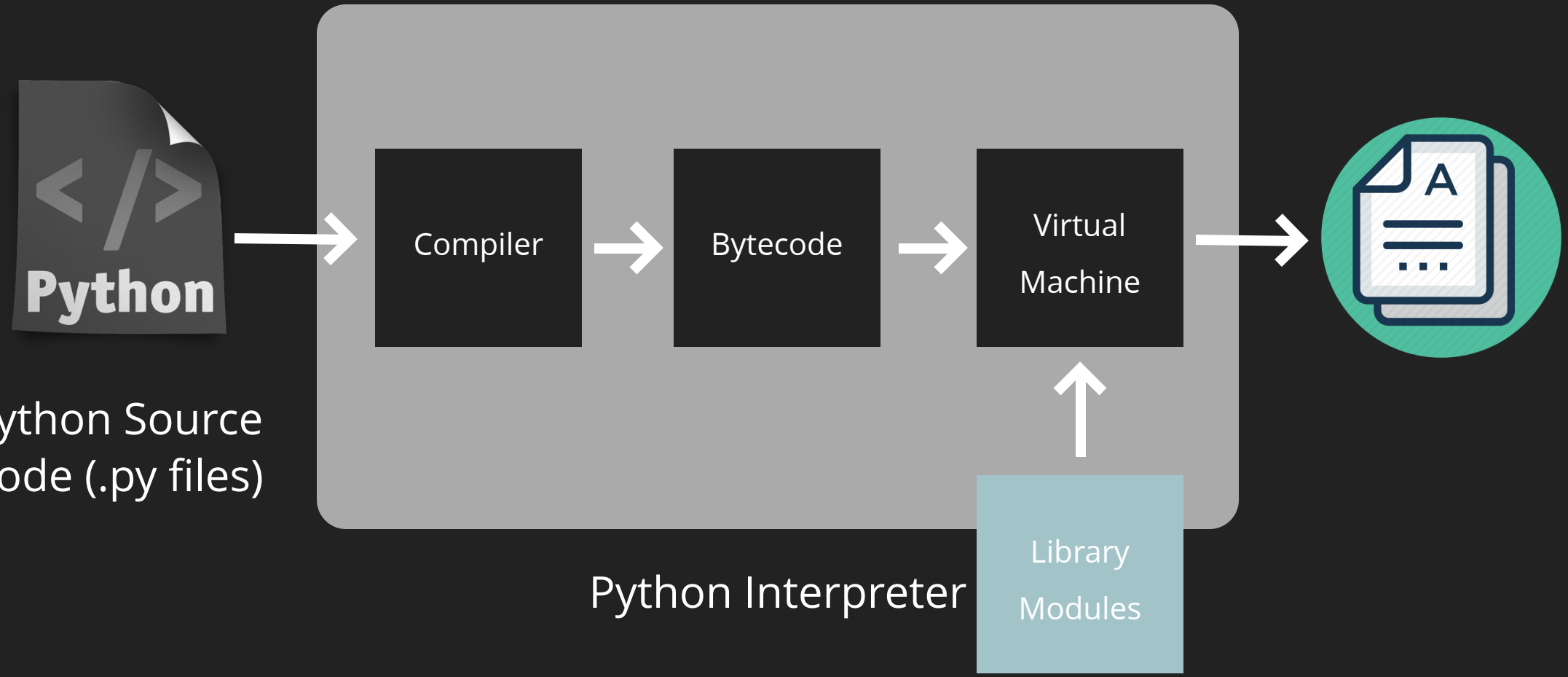

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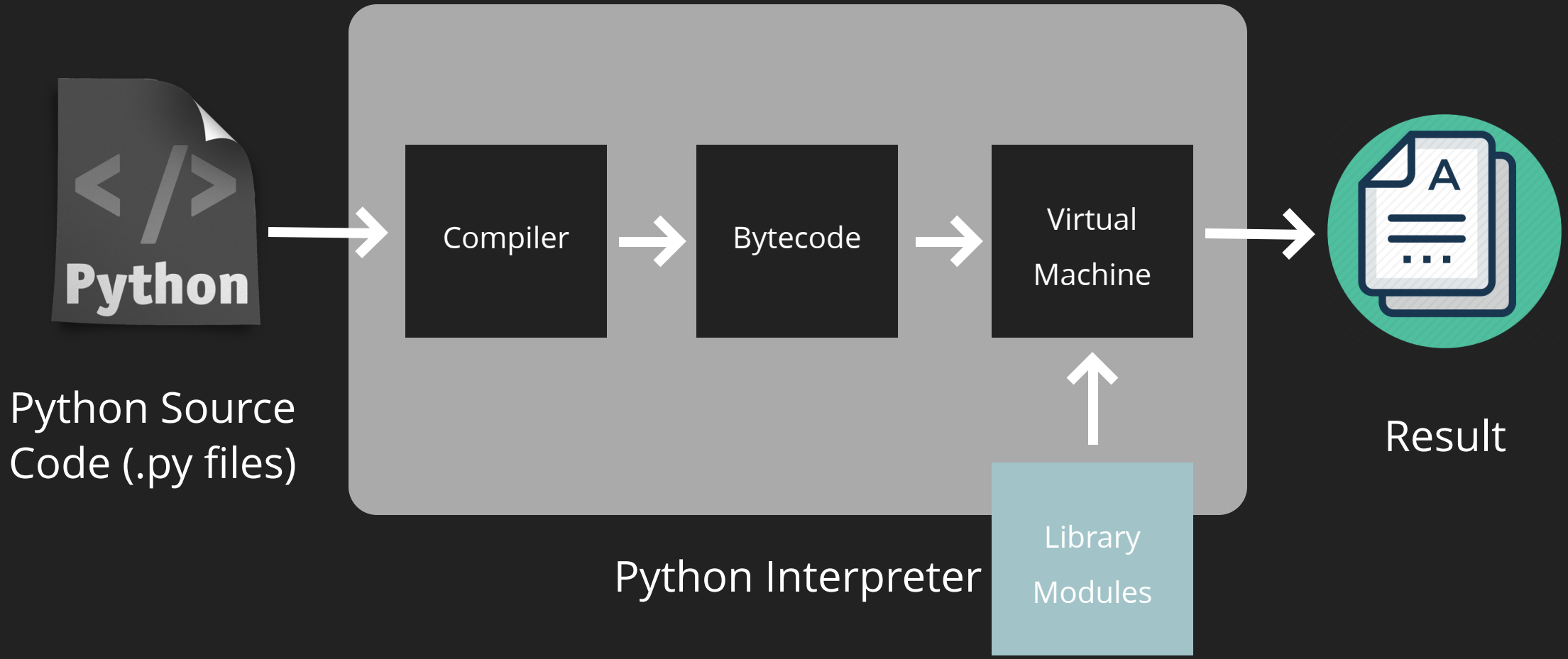
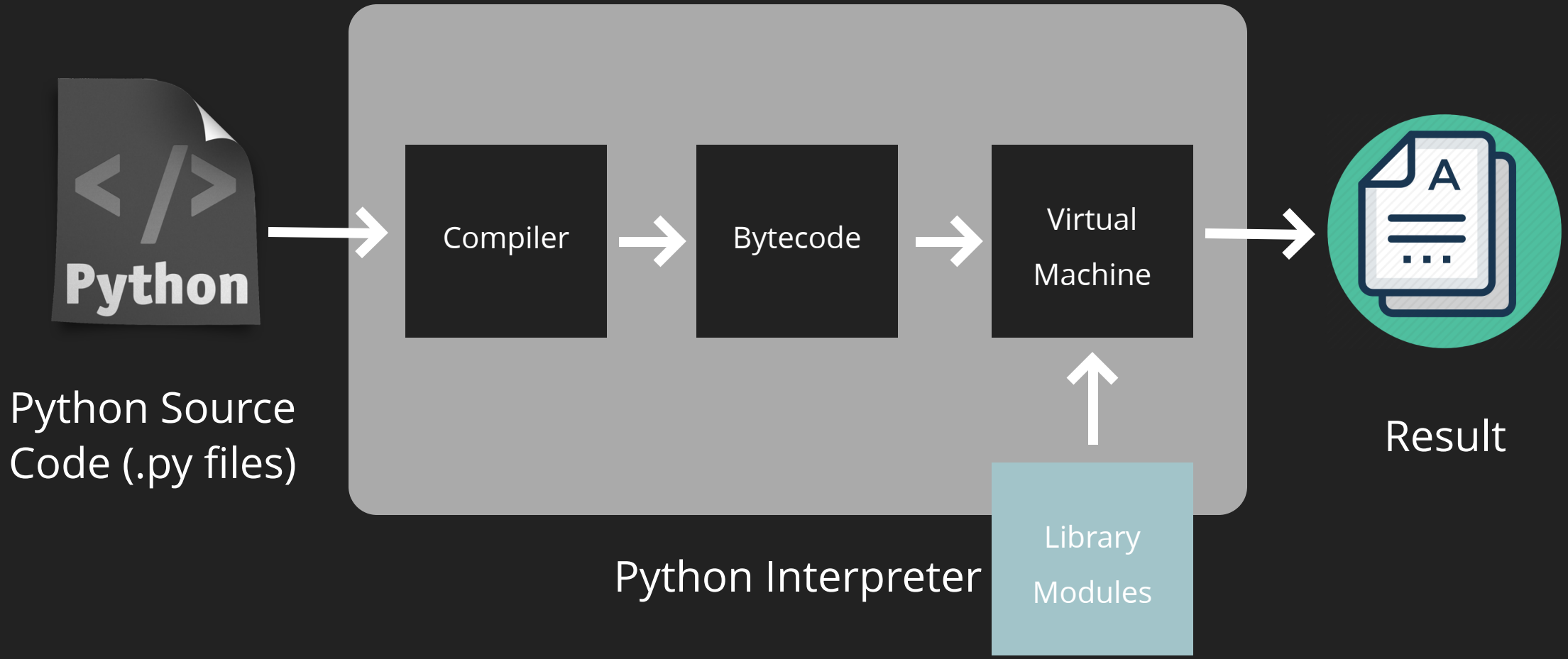


"Lock" on What?


Python
Compiler
Bytecode
Virtual Machine
Library Modules
Python Source Code (.py files)
Python Interpreter
Result

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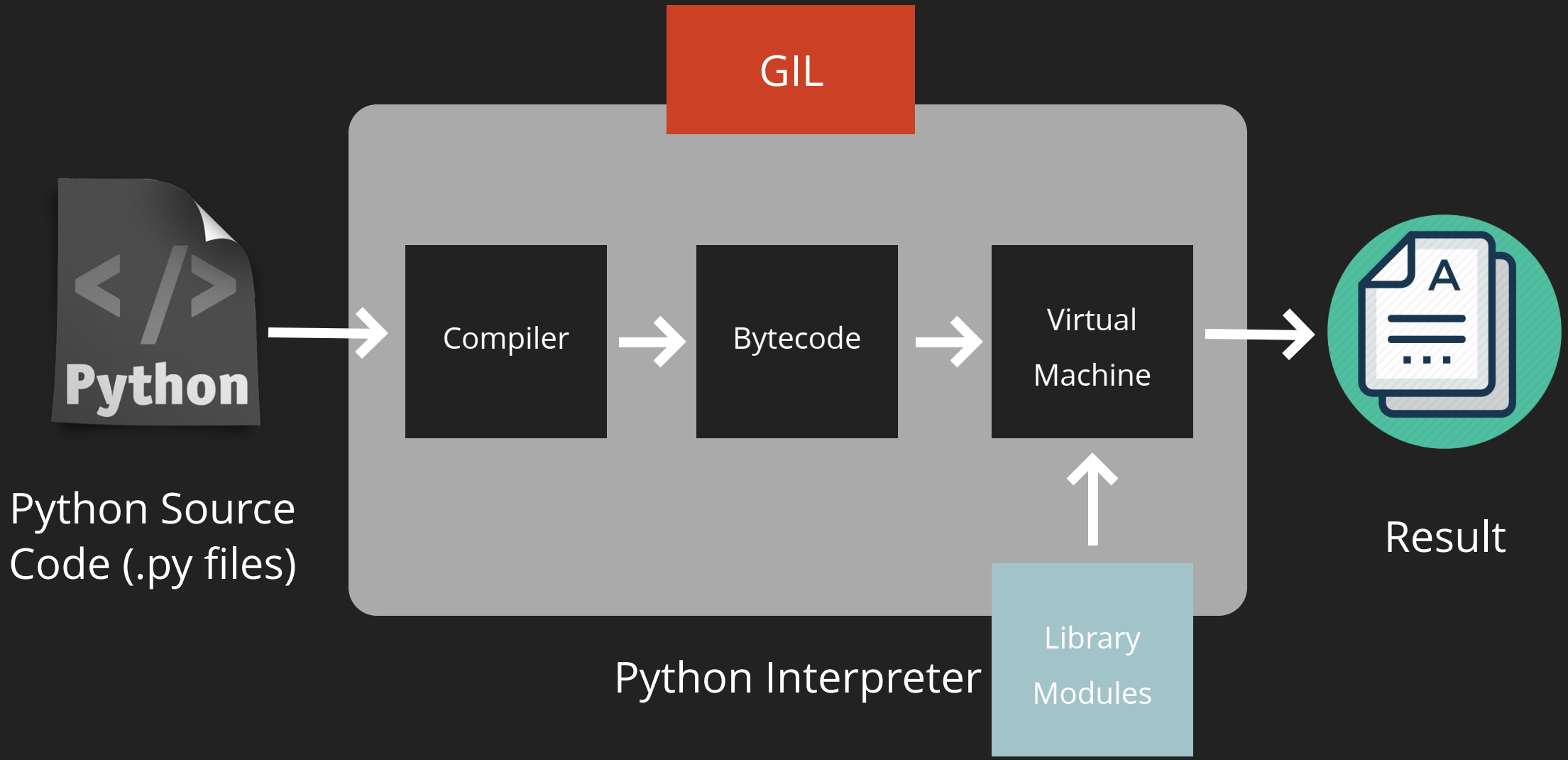
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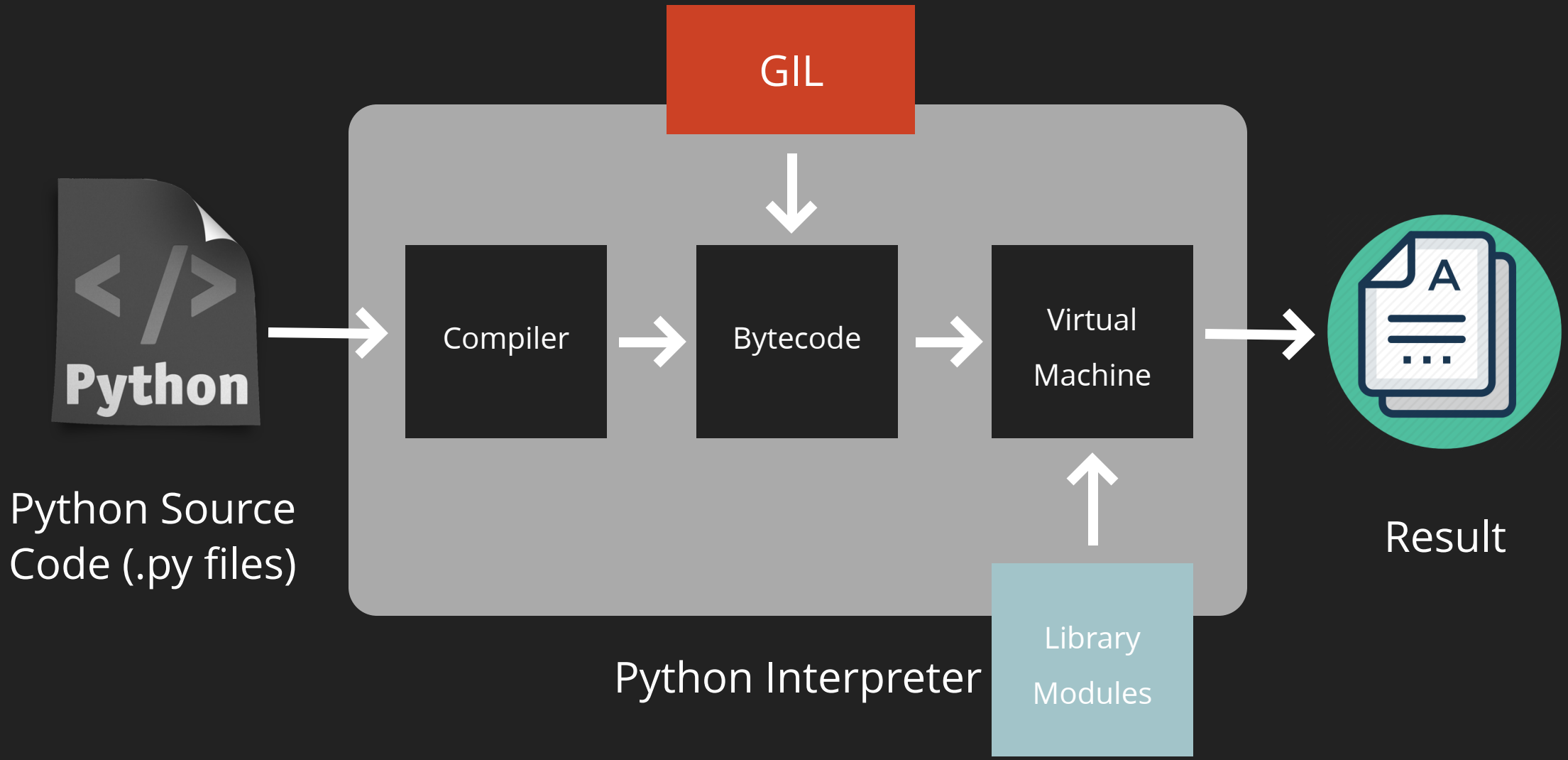
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Try Some Bytecode

Is `number += 1` thread safe?

Try Some Bytecode

Is `number += 1` thread safe?

```
1 from dis import dis
2
3 dis(lambda x: x+1)
```

Try Some Bytecode

```
1    1           0 LOAD_FAST    <-- GIL        0 (x)
2                2 LOAD_CONST   <-- GIL        1 (1)
3                4 BINARY_ADD   <-- GIL
4                6 RETURN_VALUE <-- GIL
```

Try Some Bytecode

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1    1           0 LOAD_FAST    <-- GIL        0 (x)
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Not Thread Safe!!!

Try Some Bytecode

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```

Not Thread Safe!!!

Part II

How GIL works?

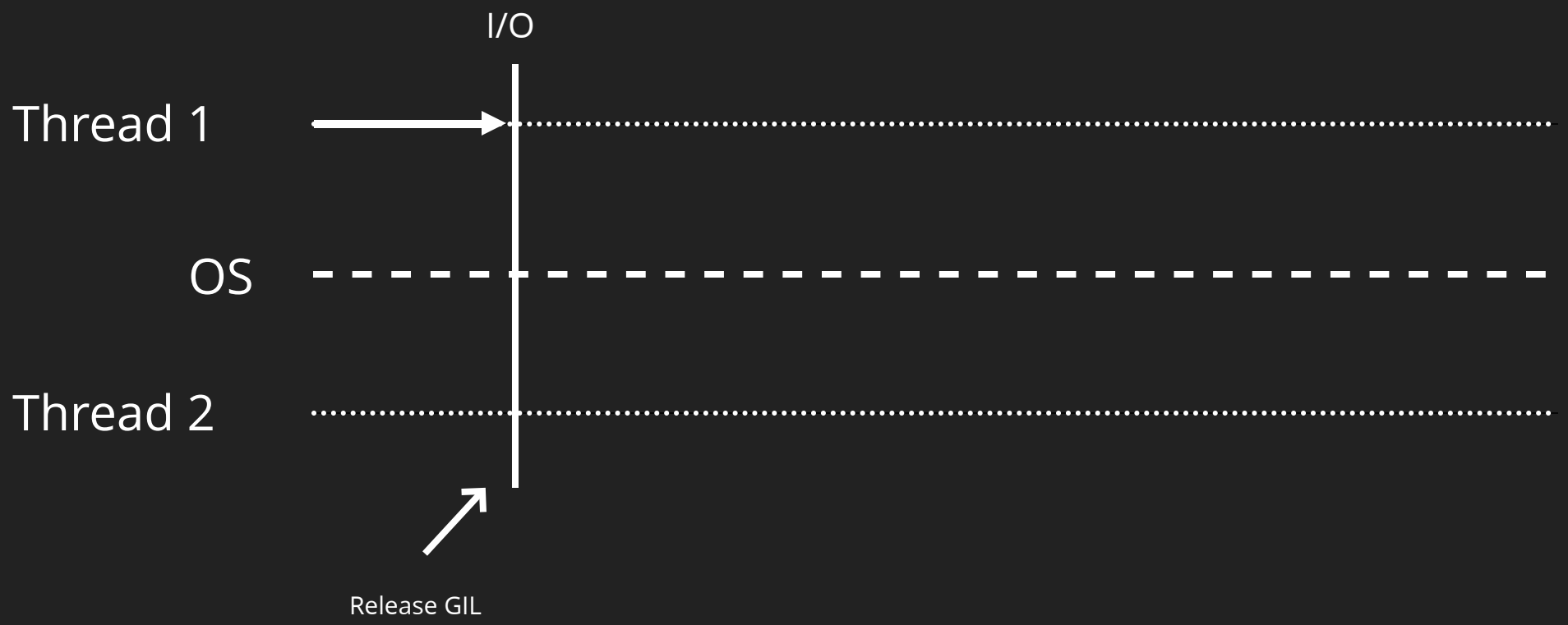
I/O Bound Module

I/O Bound Module

I/O Bound Module

I/O Bound Module

I/O Bound Module



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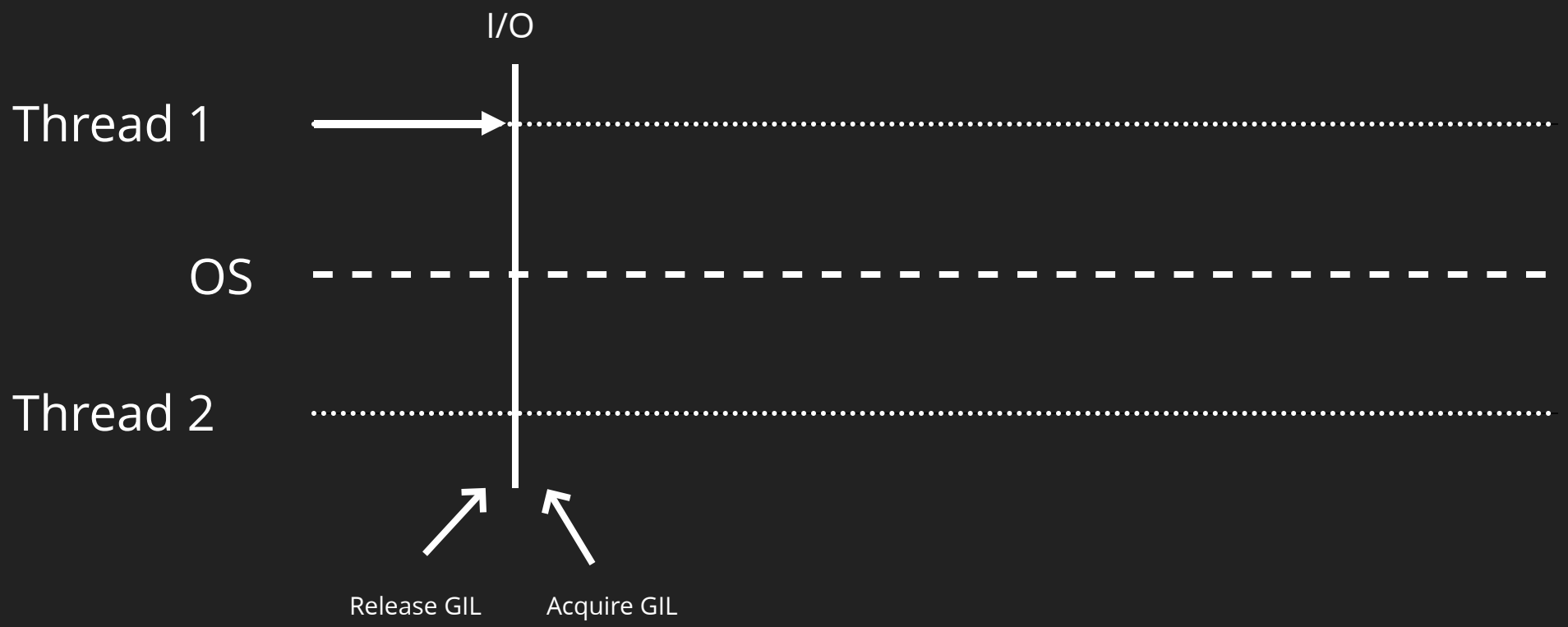

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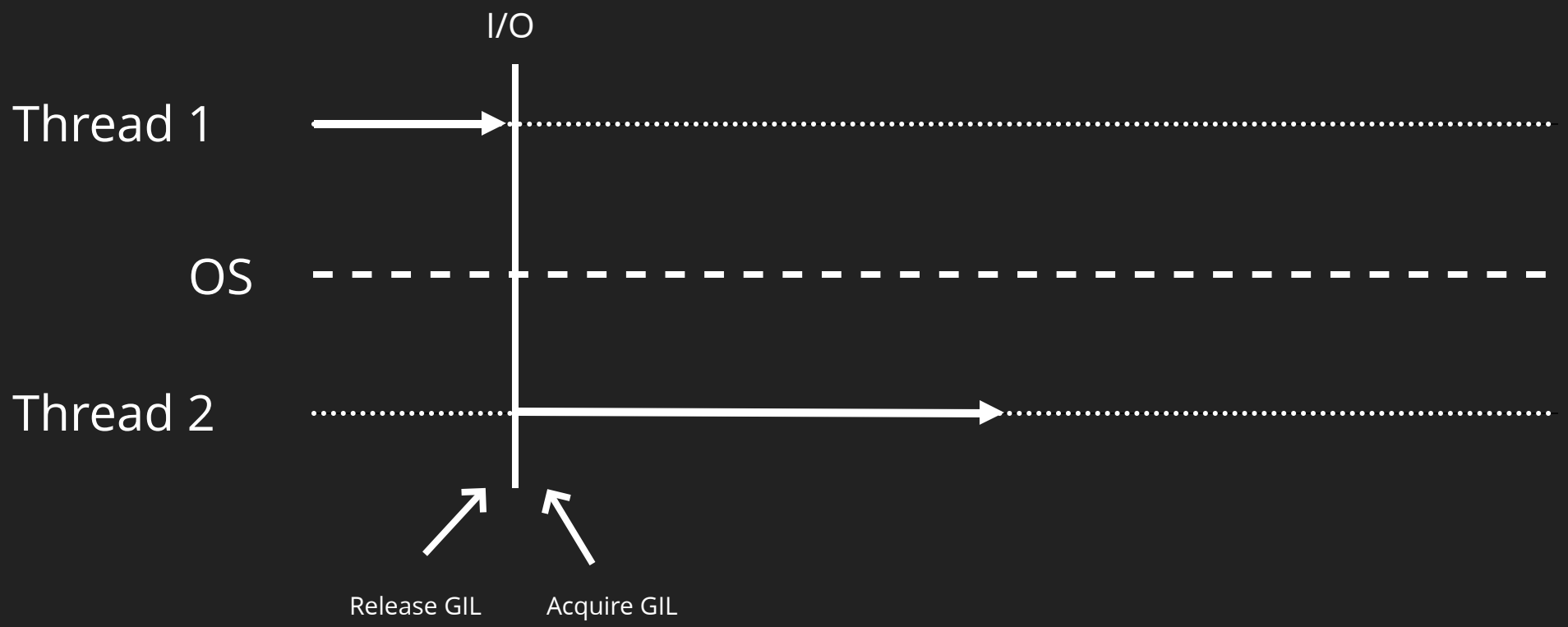

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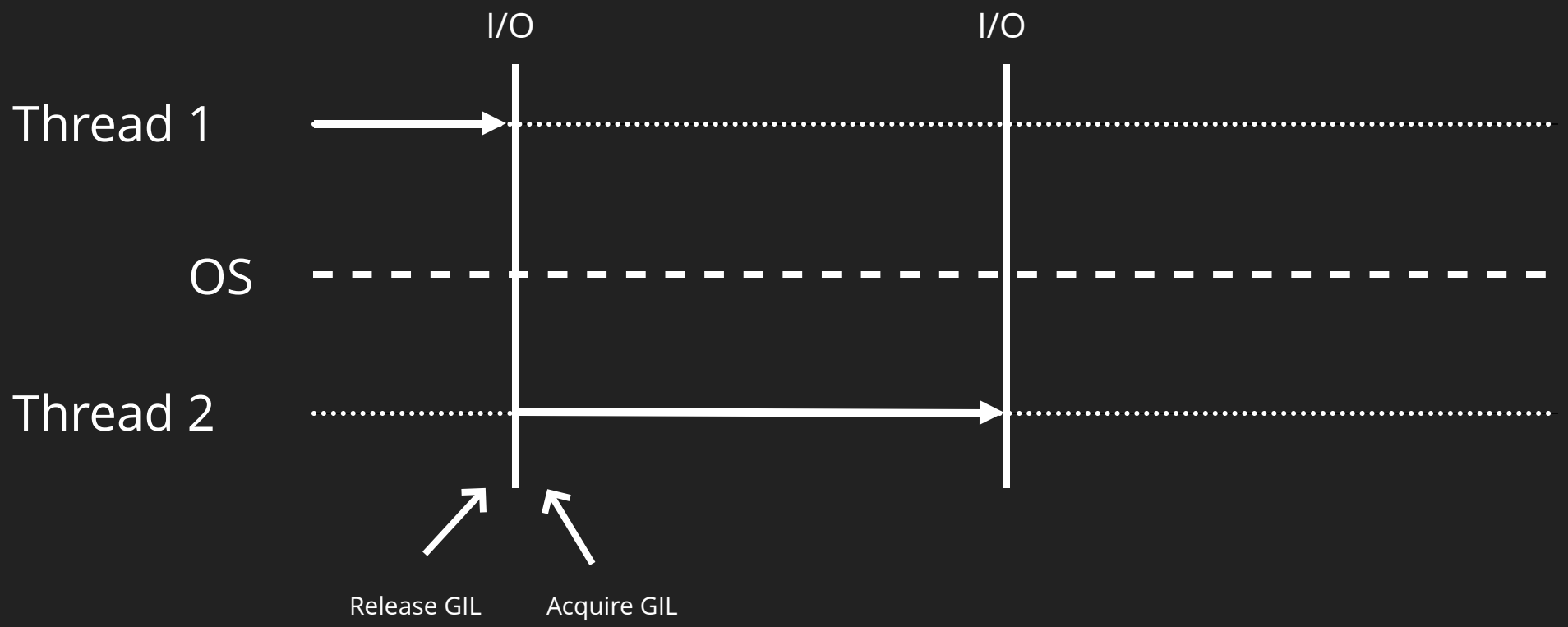

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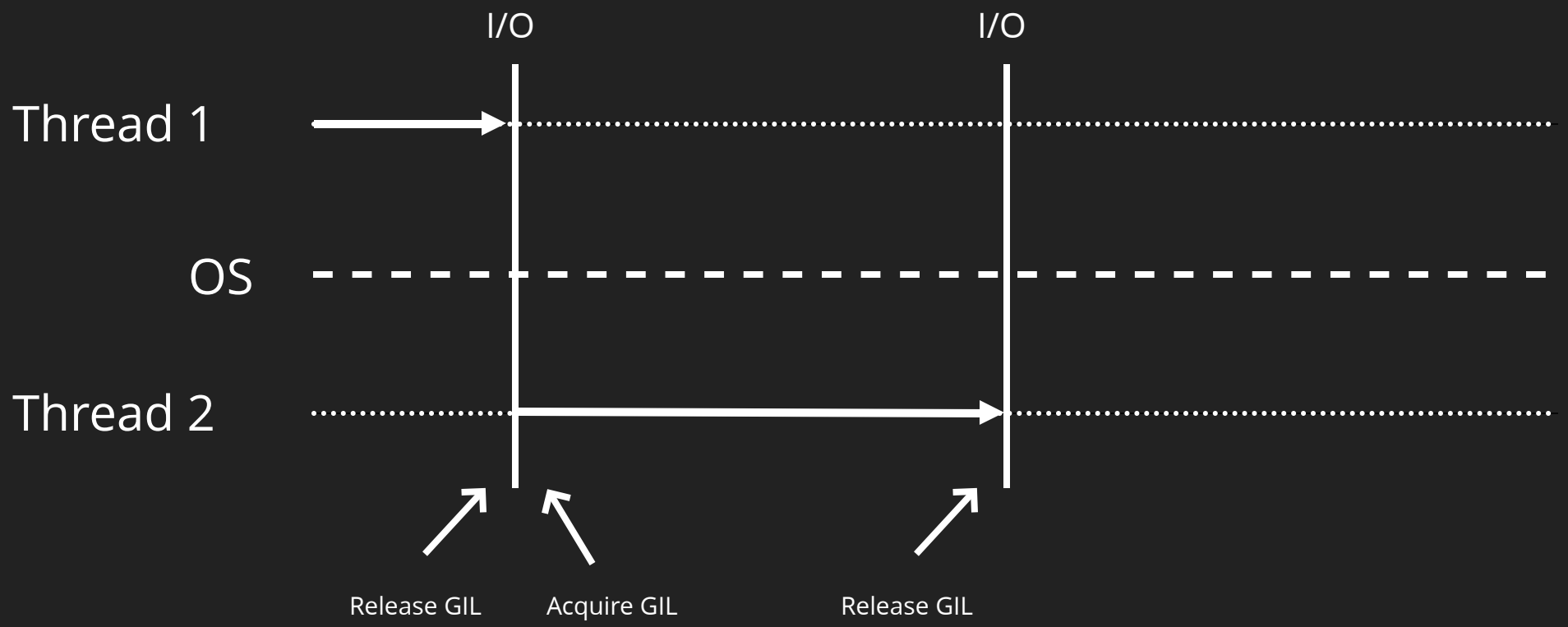

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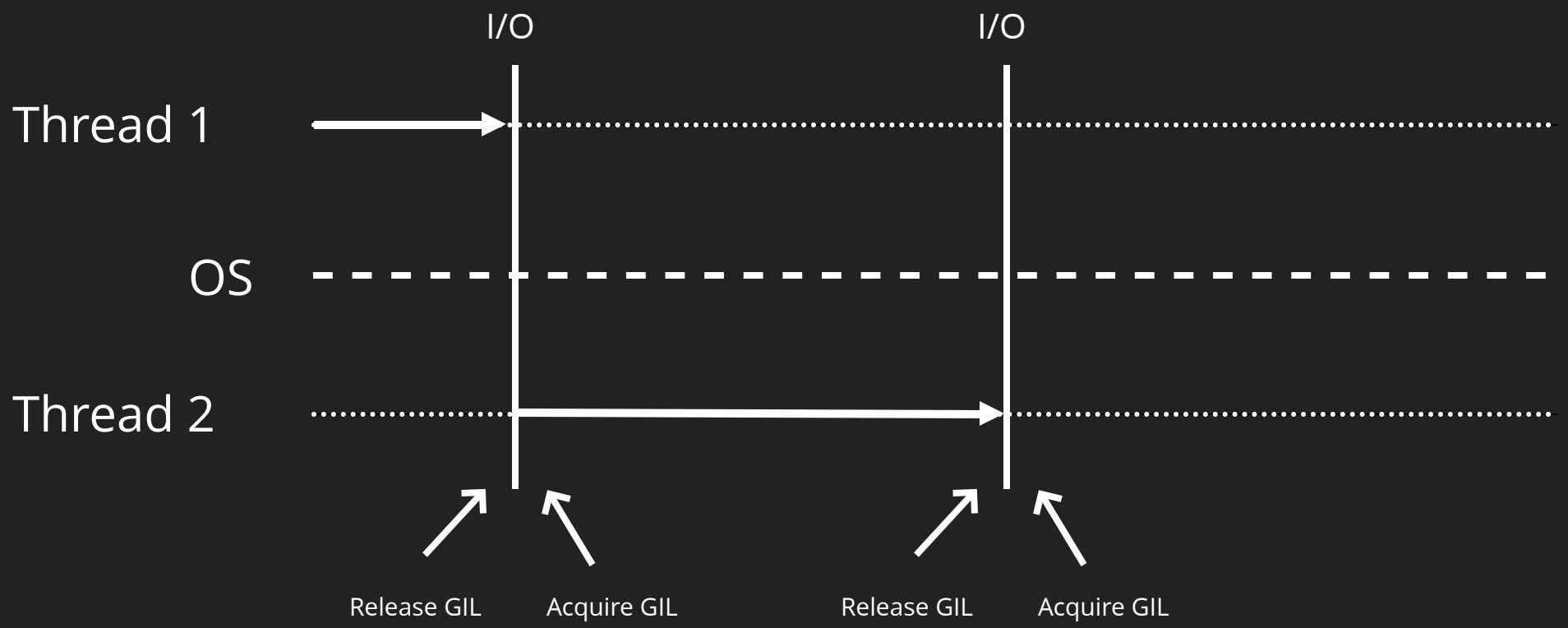

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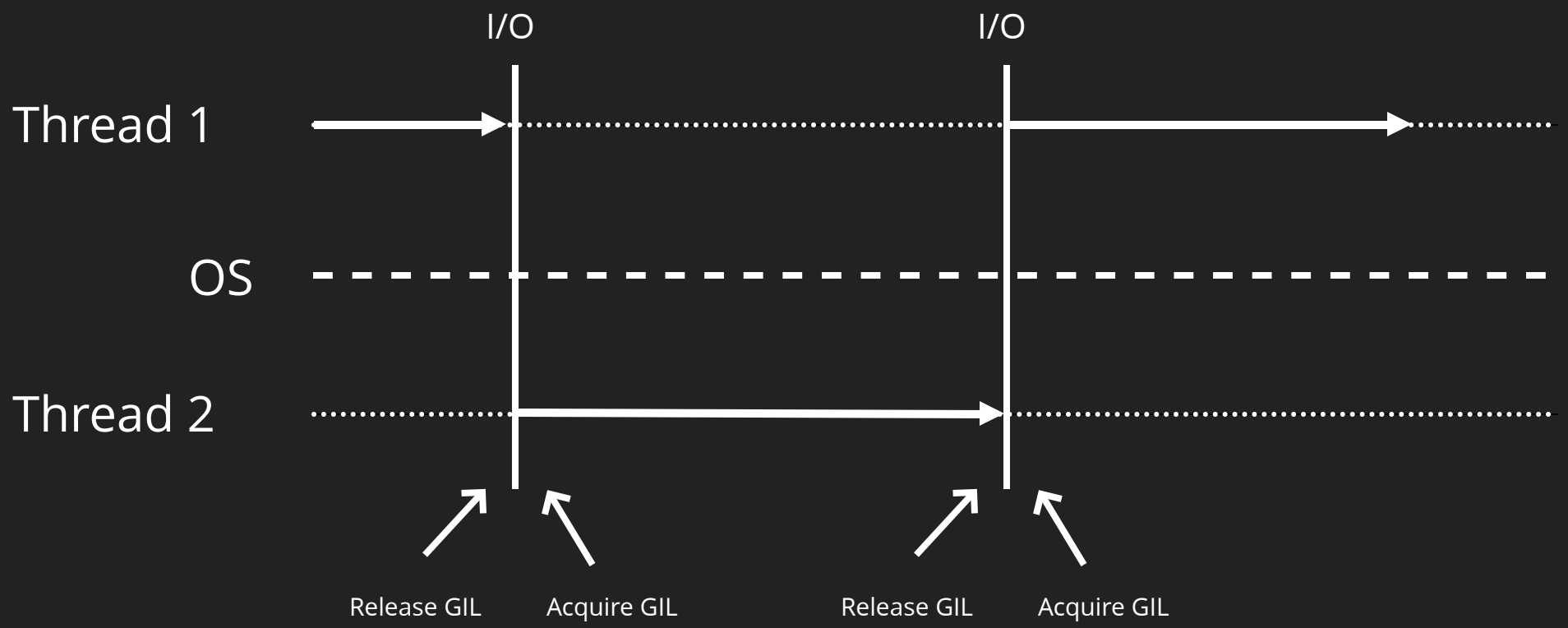

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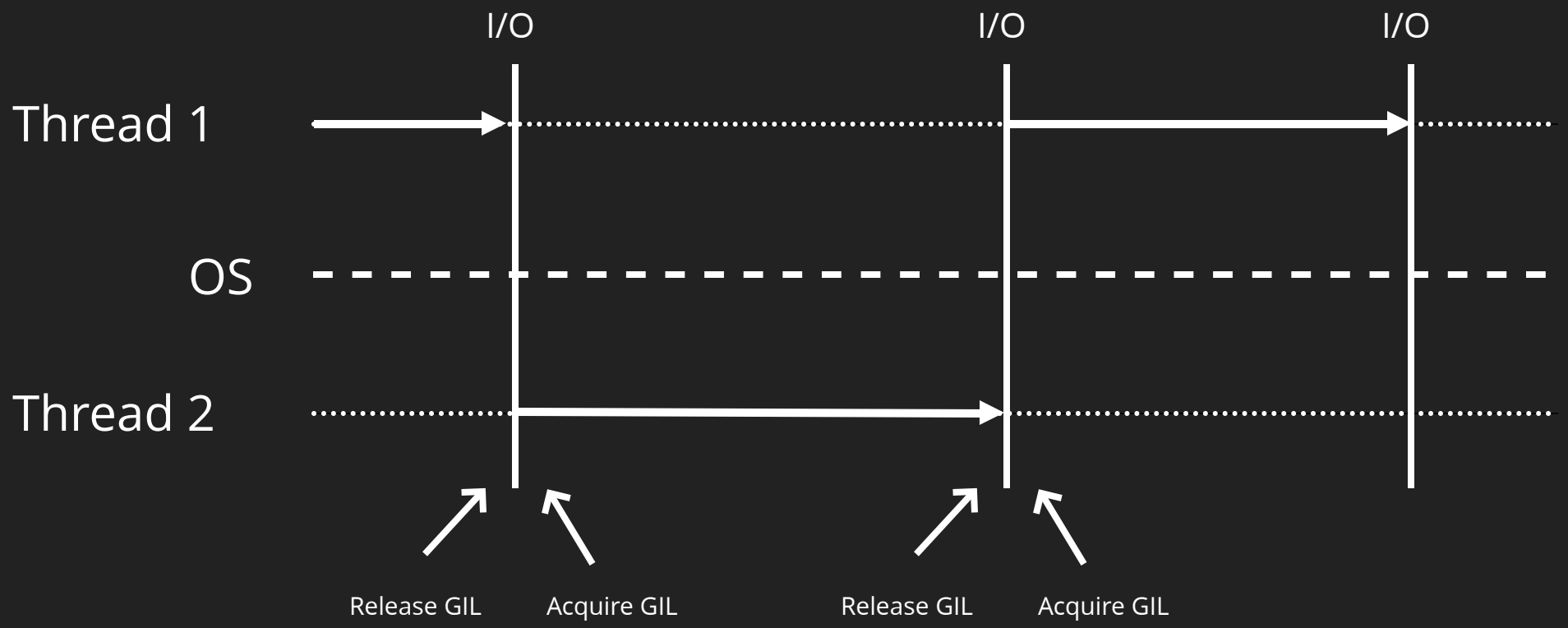

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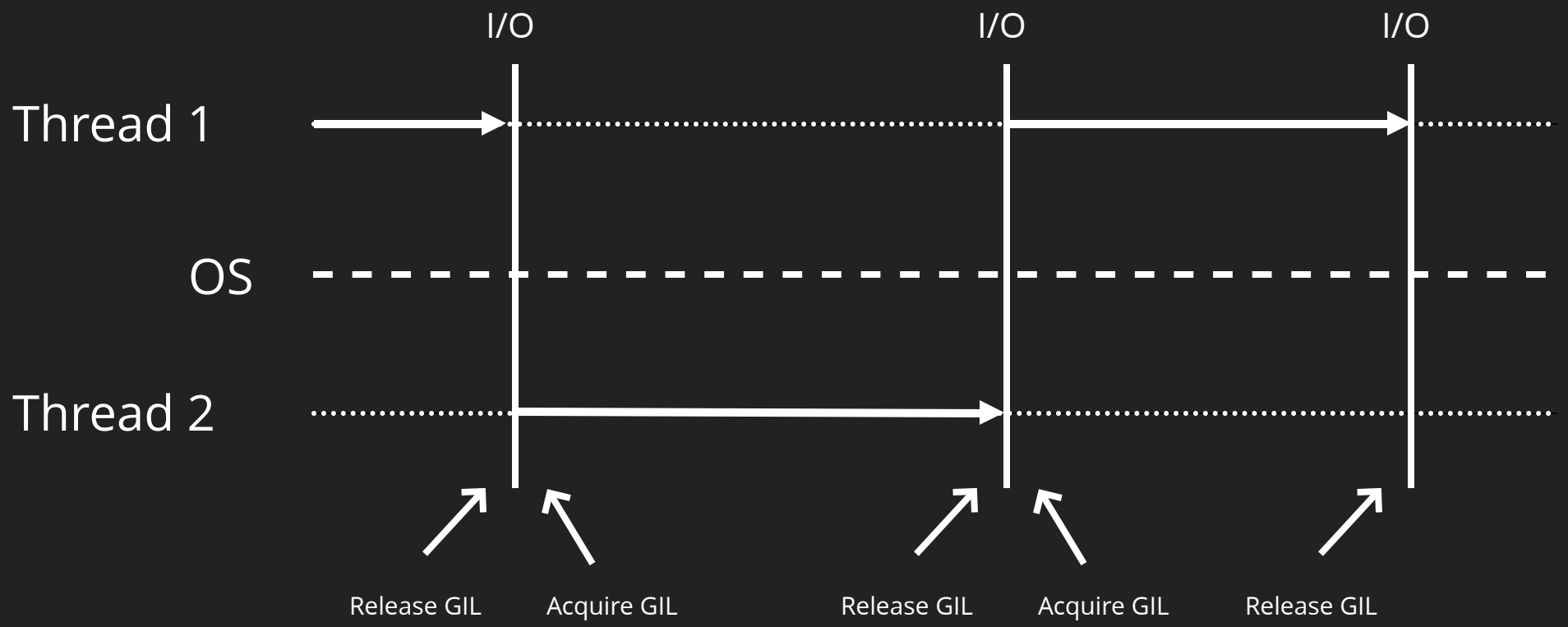

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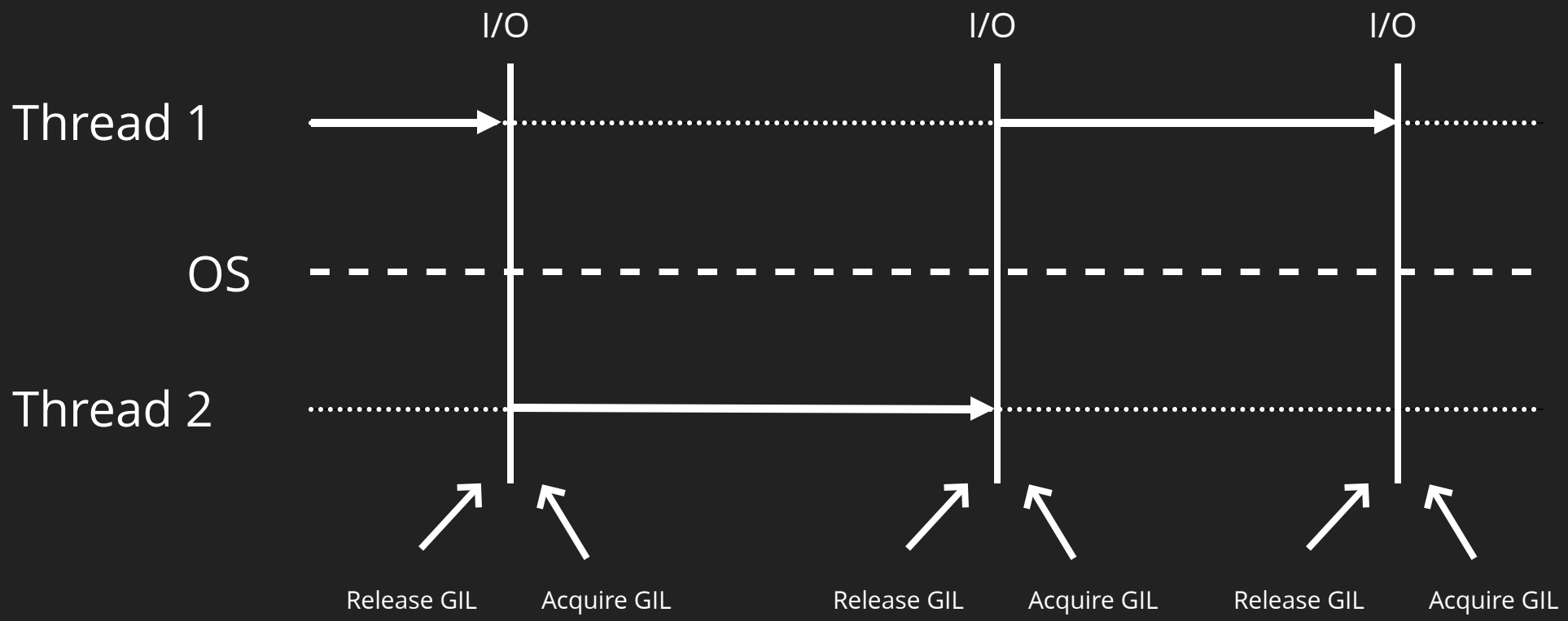

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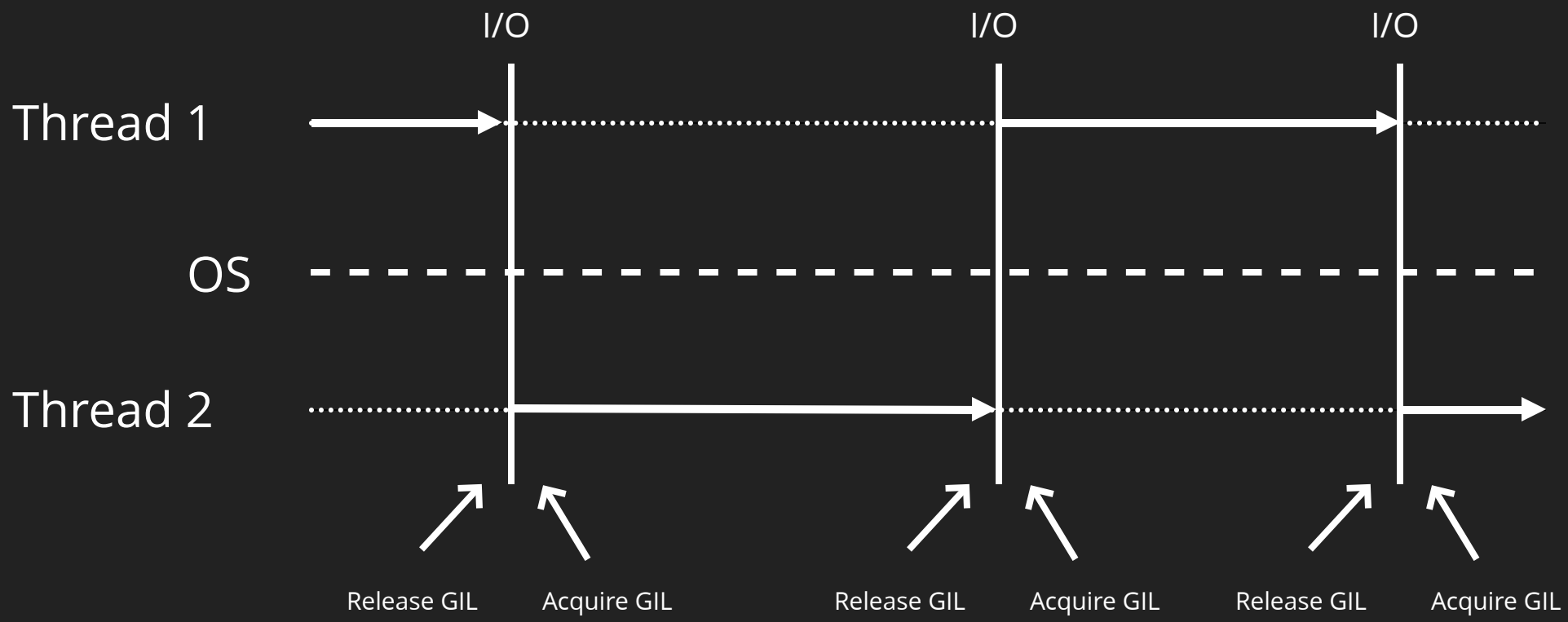

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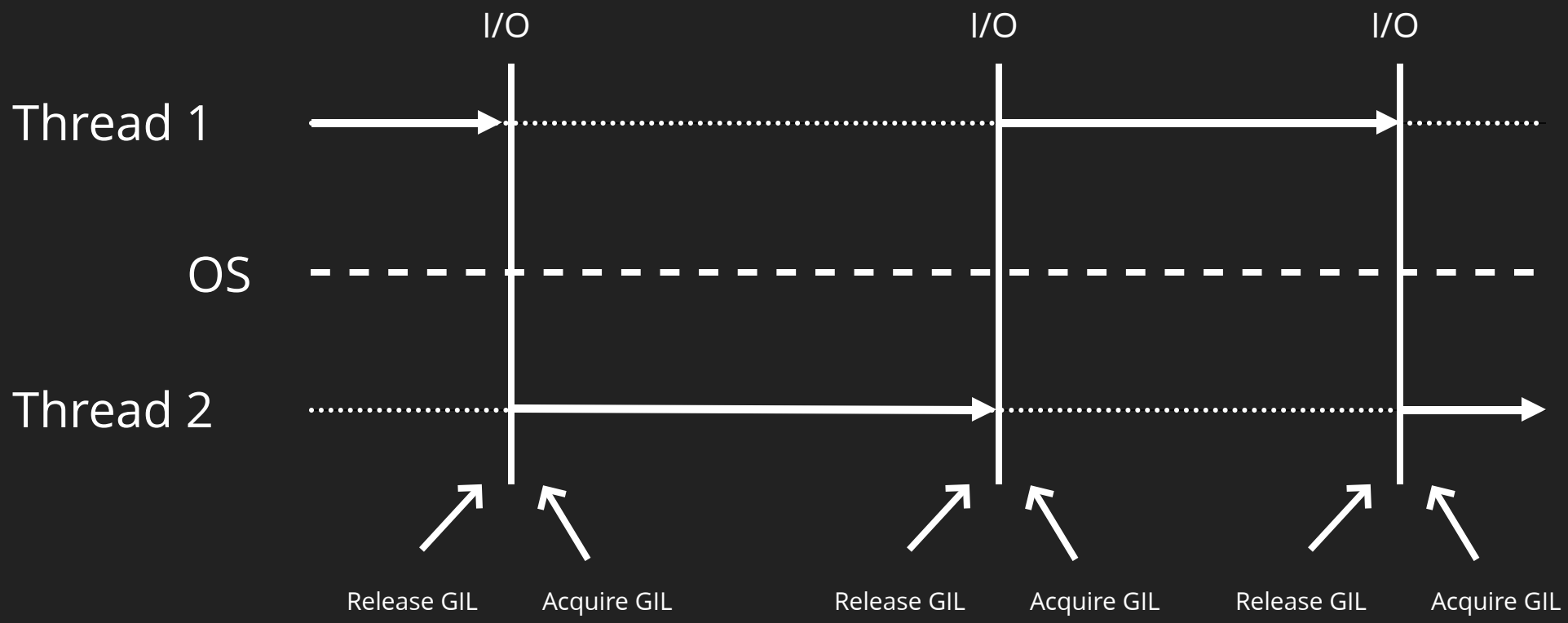

- When a thread is running, it holds the GIL

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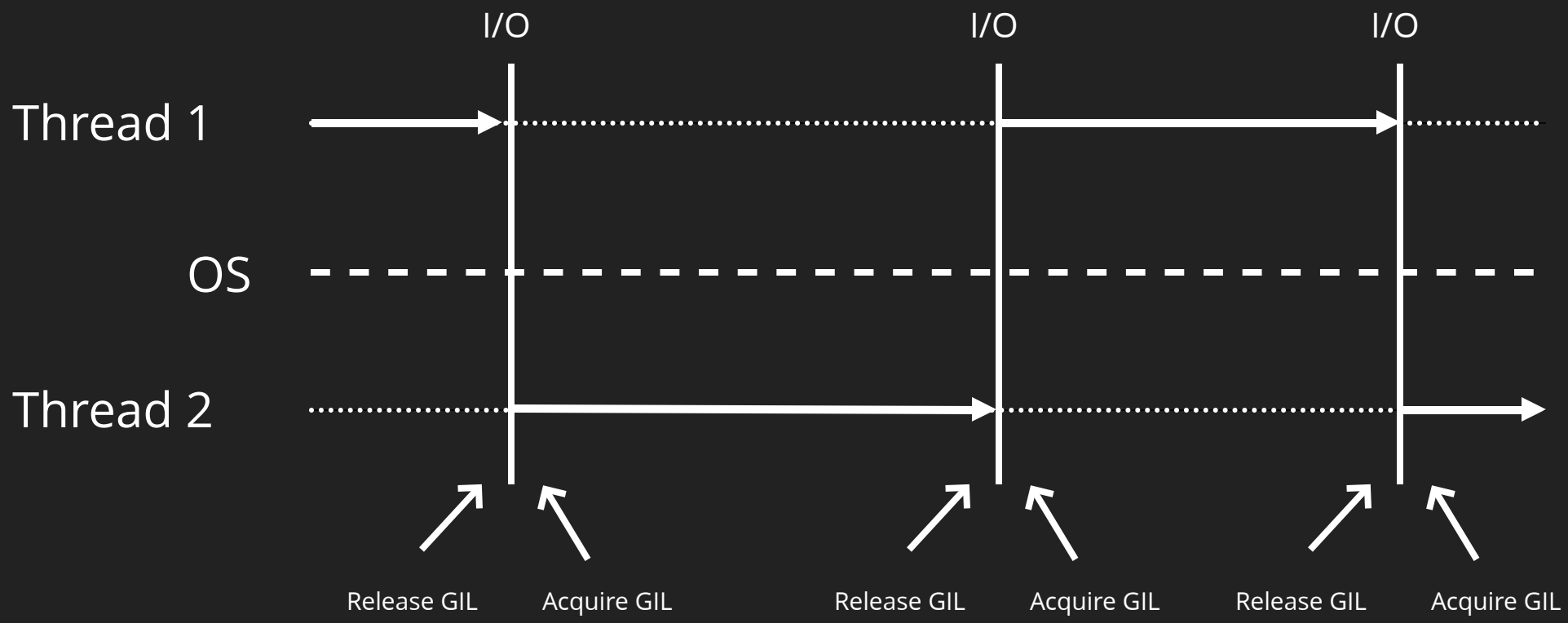

- When a thread is running, it holds the GIL
- GiL released on I/O (read, write, send, recv, etc.)

CPU Bound Module

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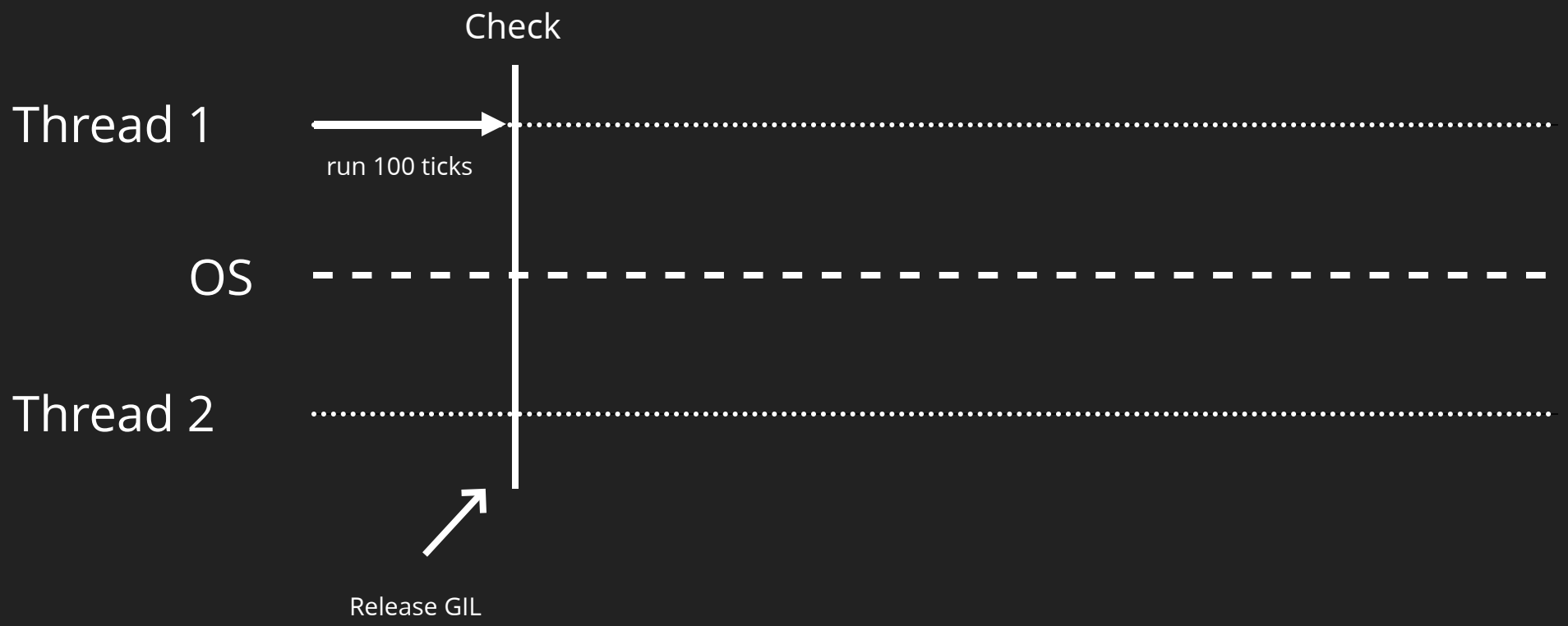

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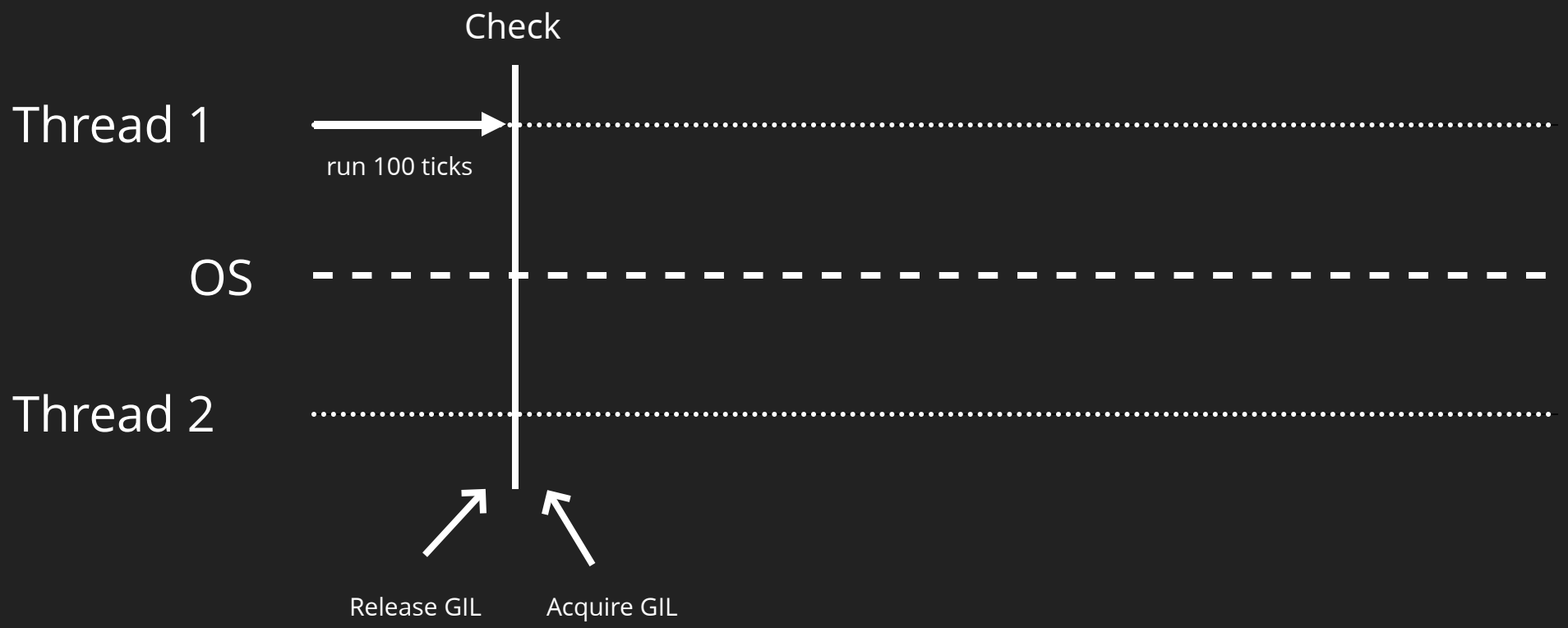

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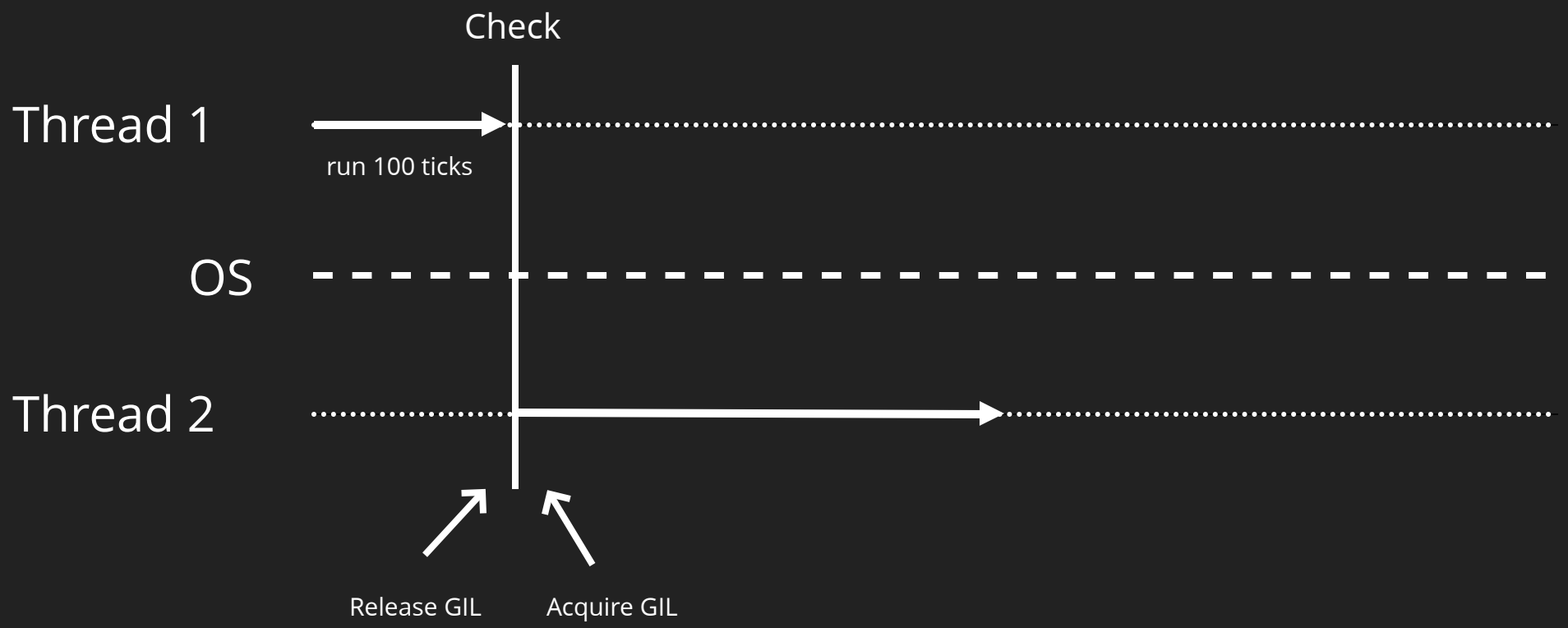

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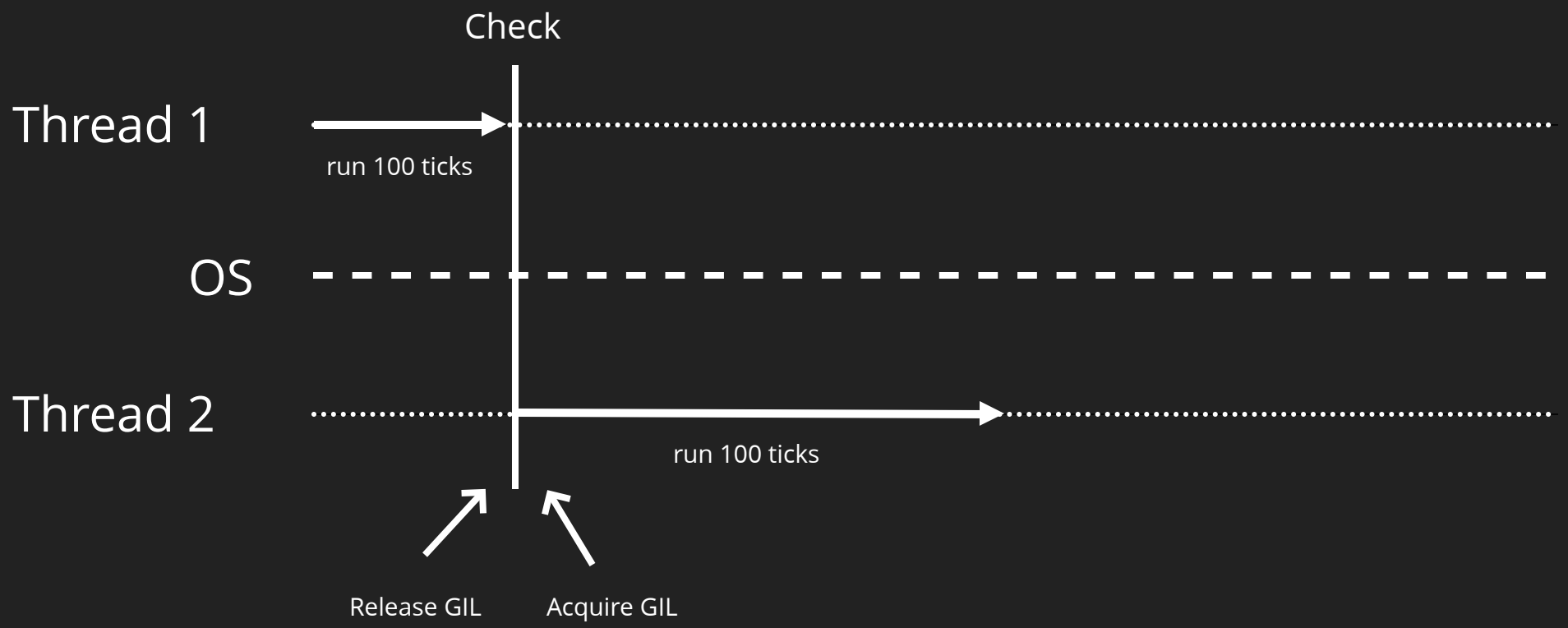

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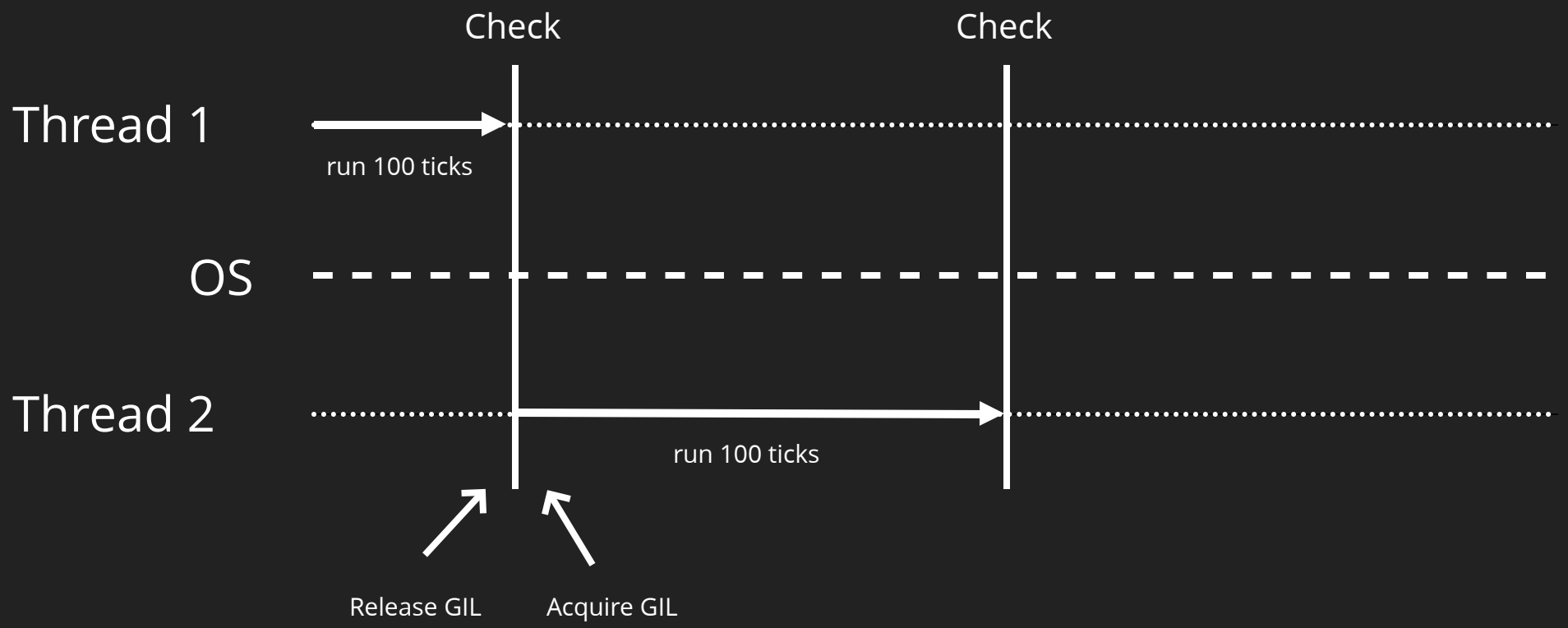

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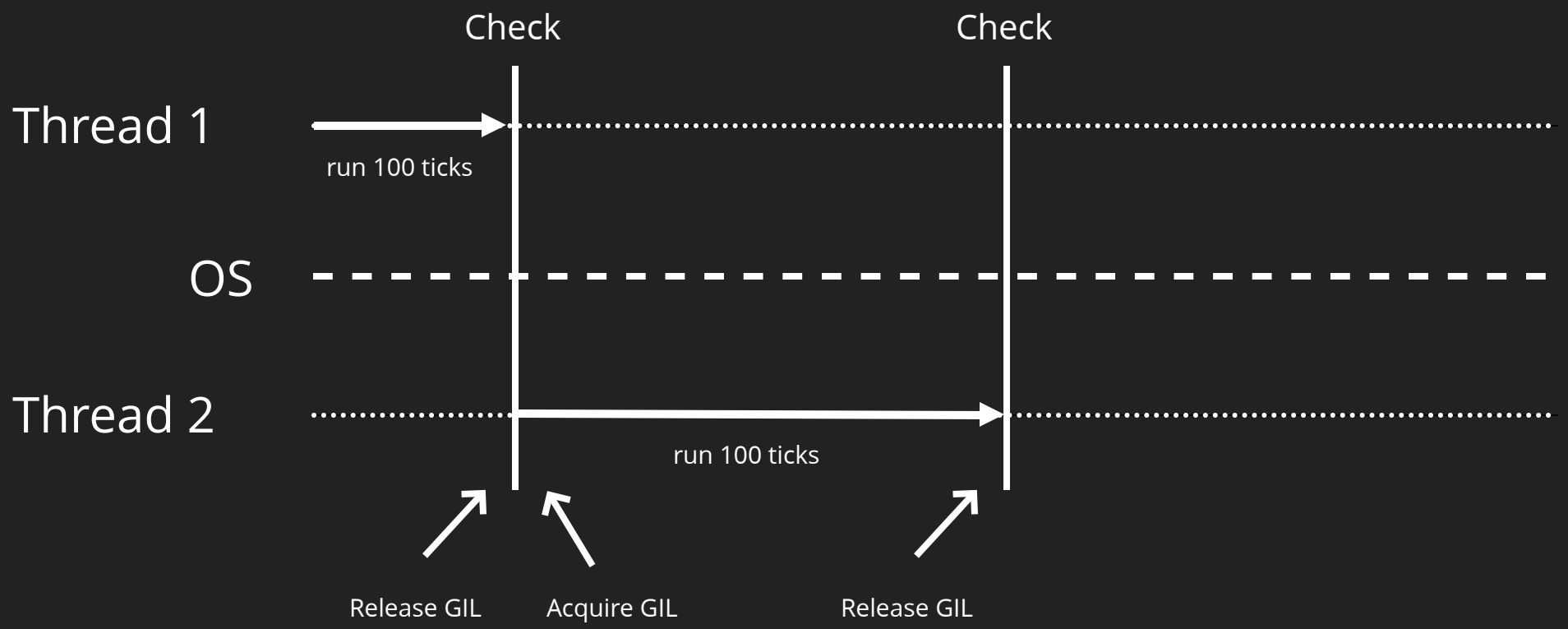

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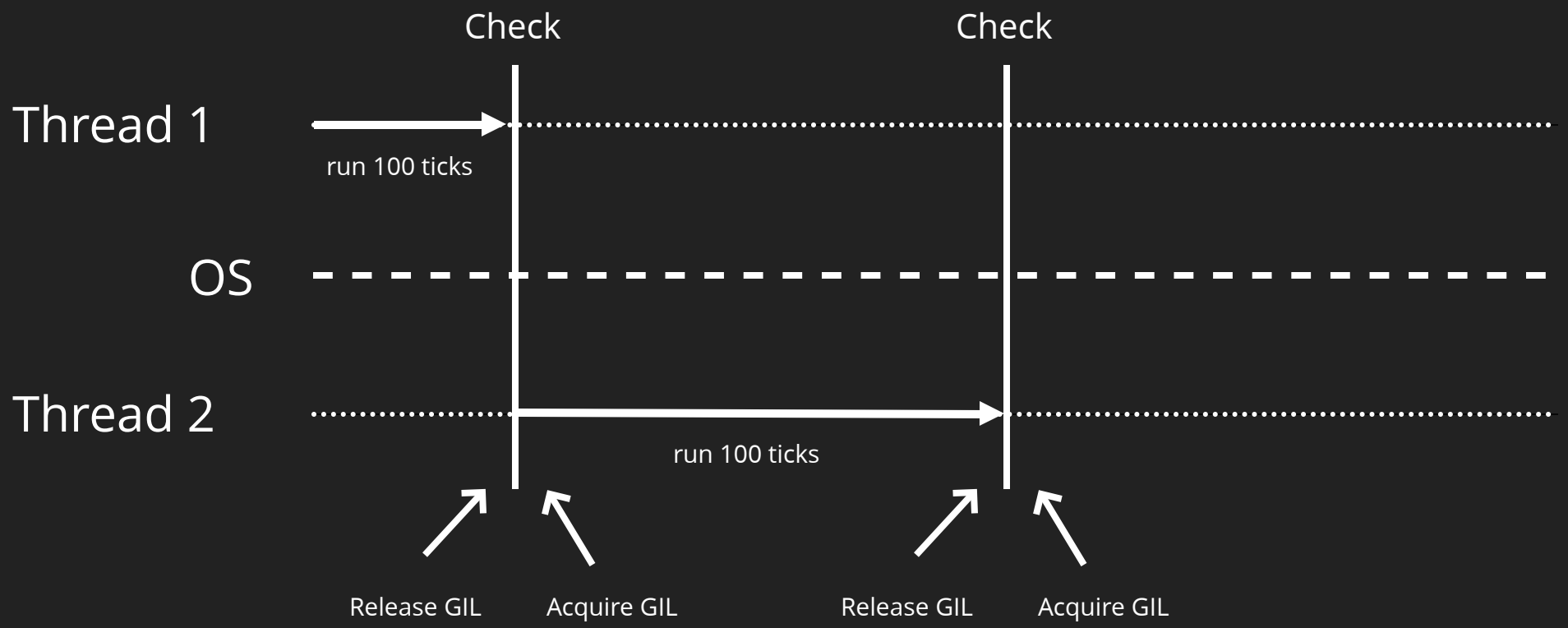

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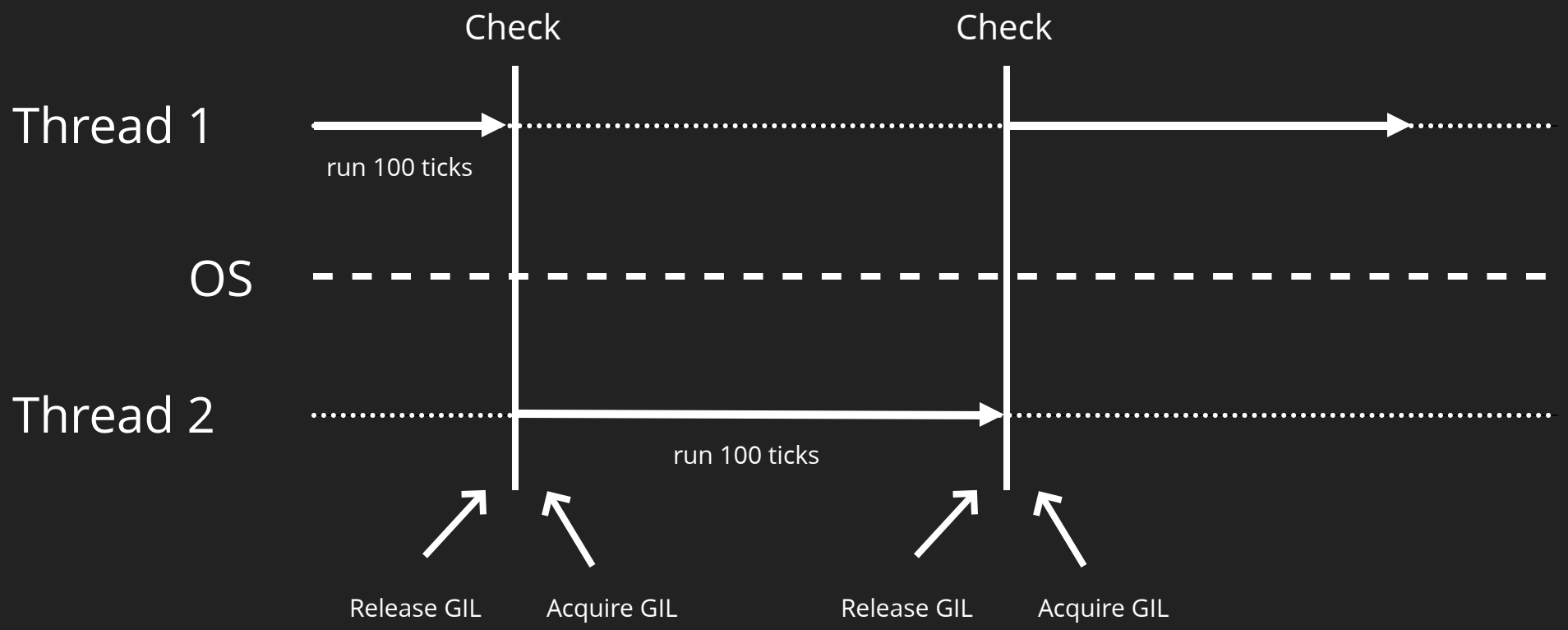

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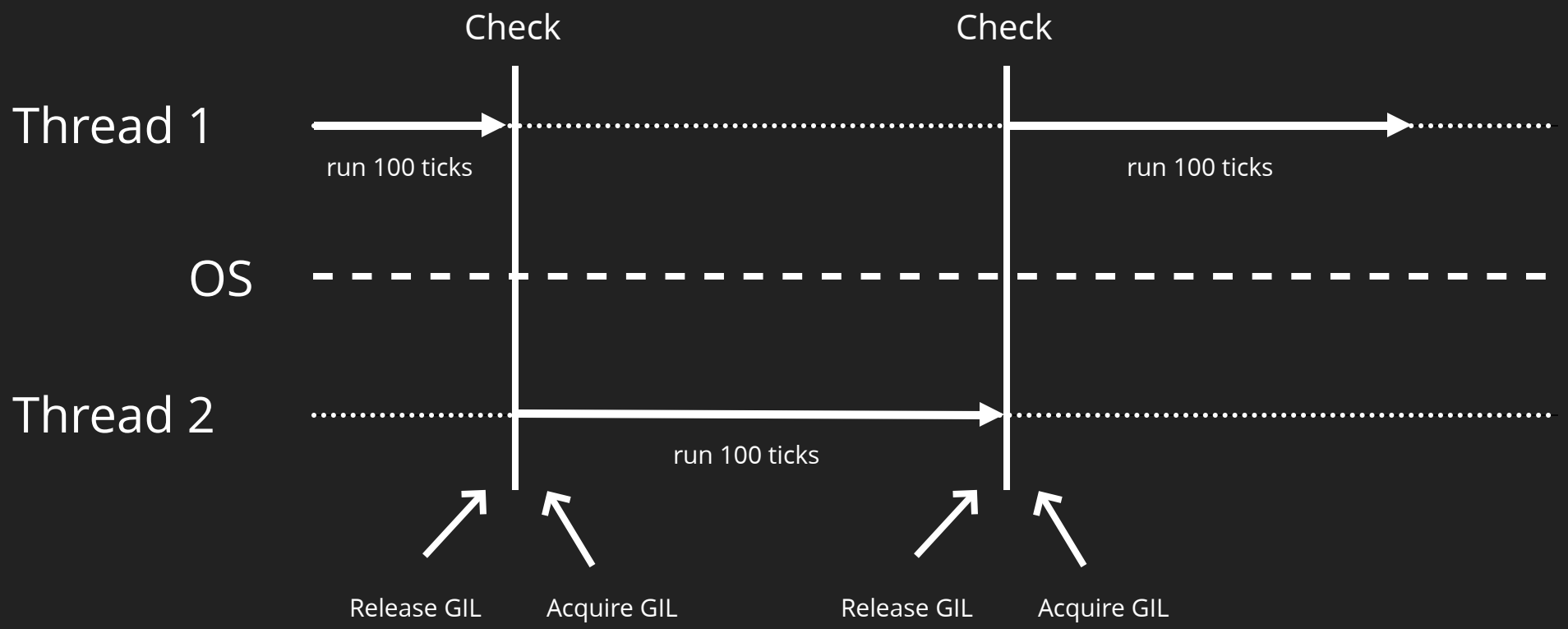

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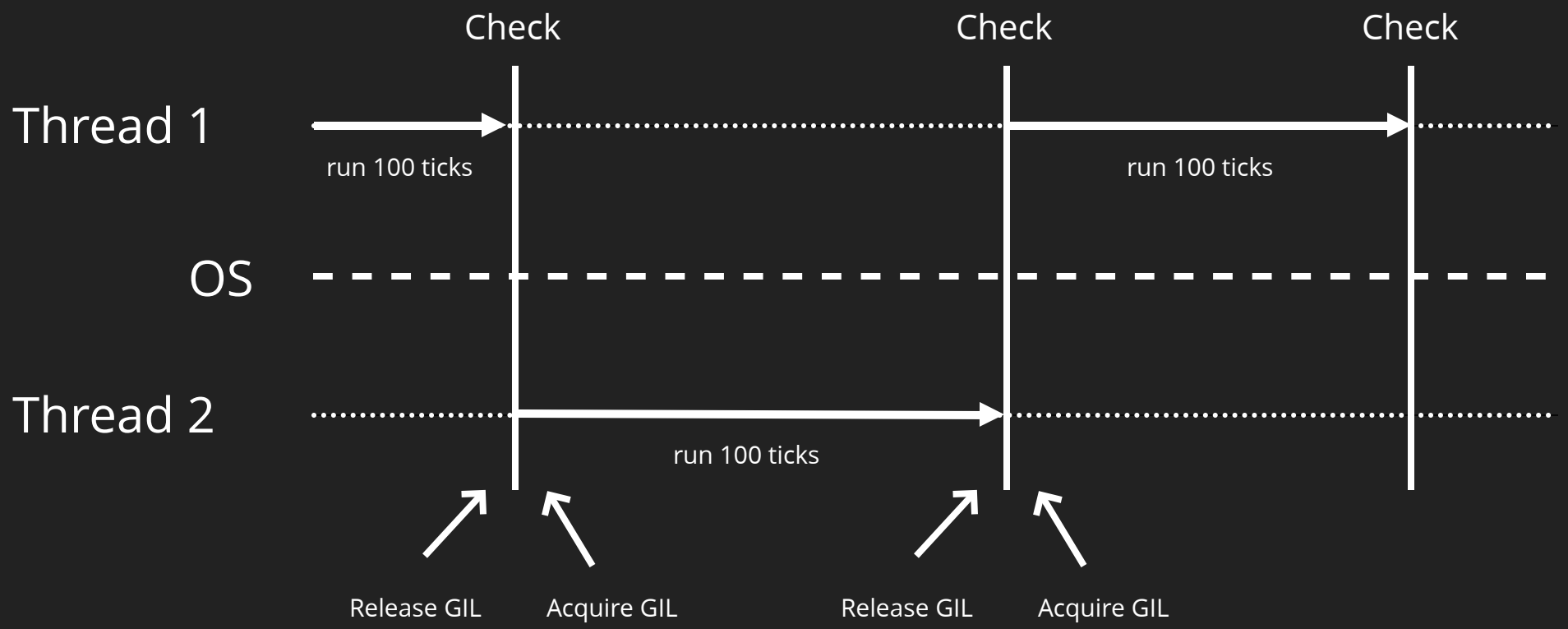

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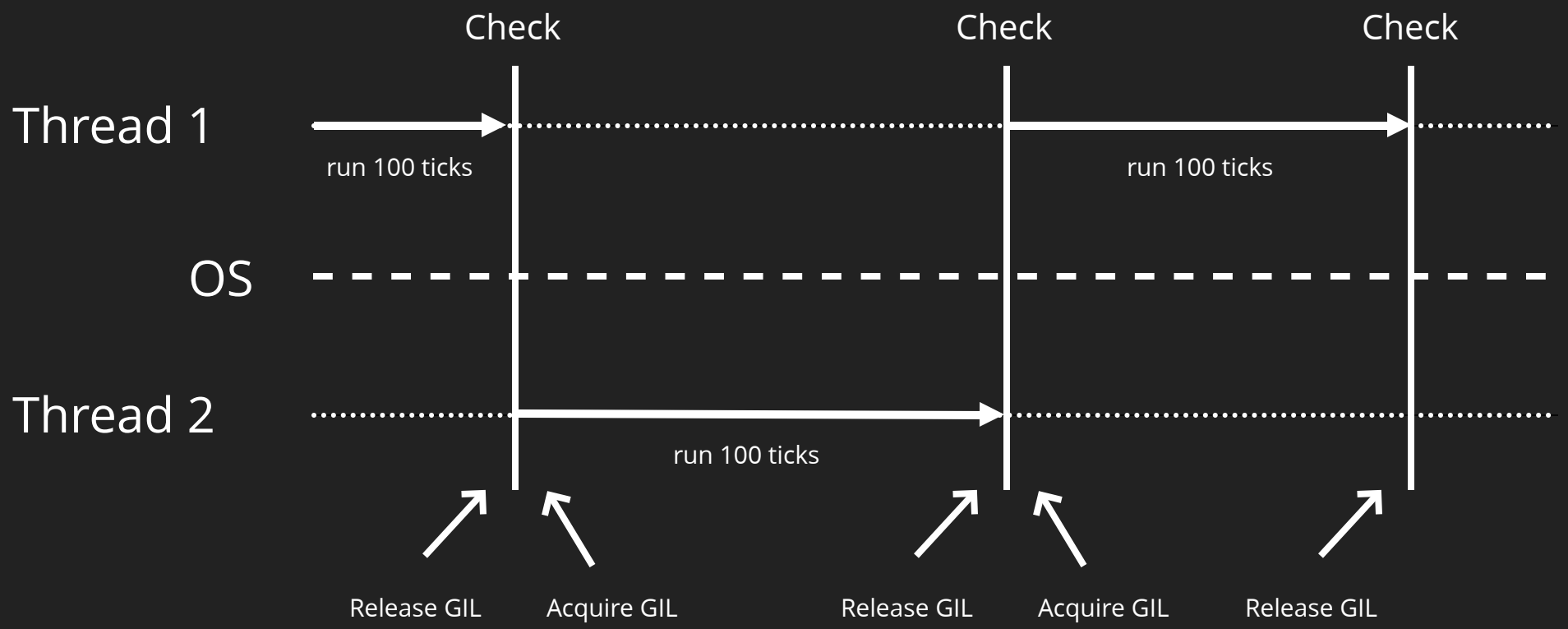

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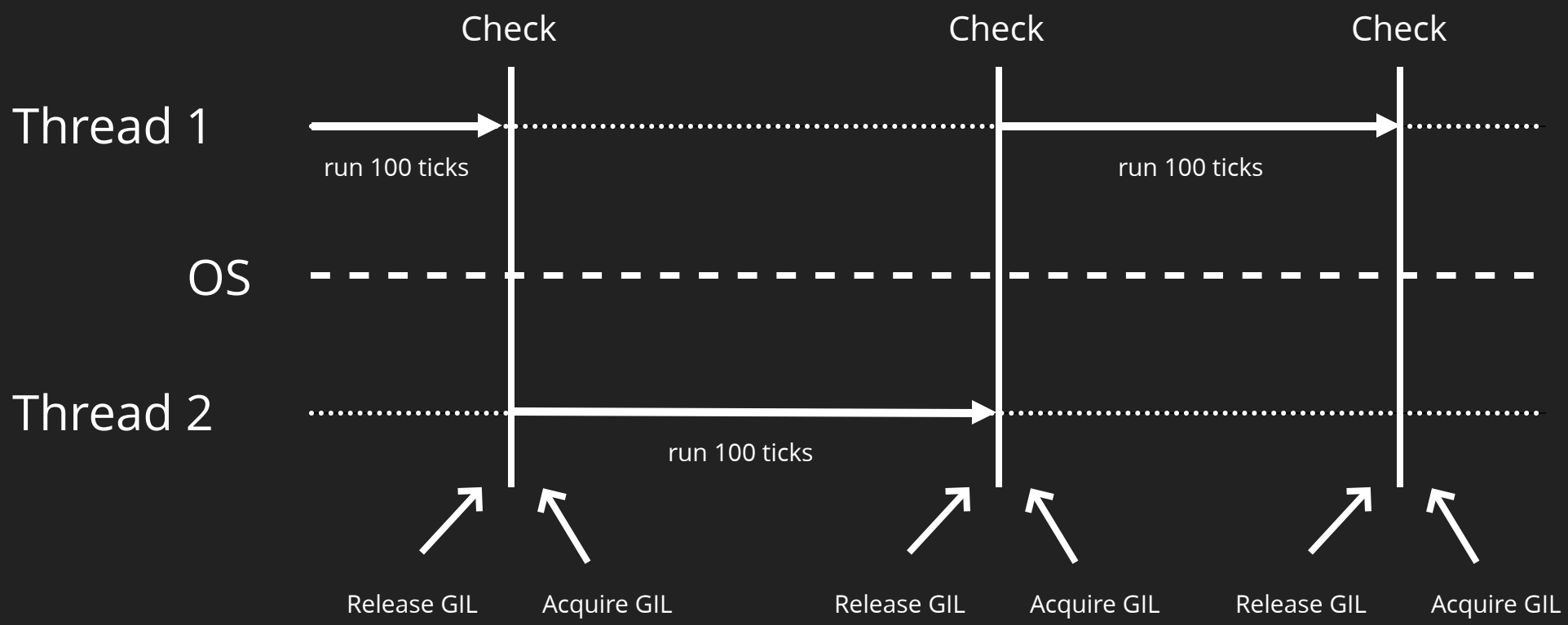

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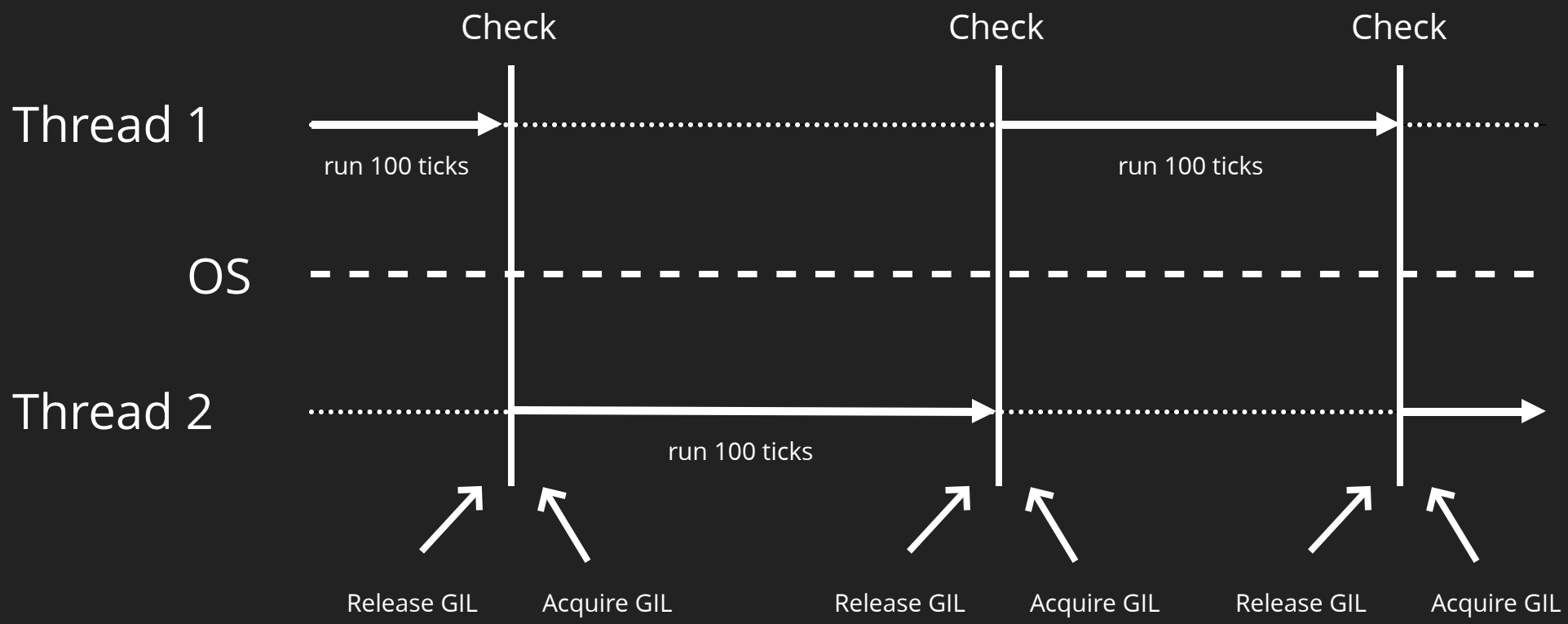

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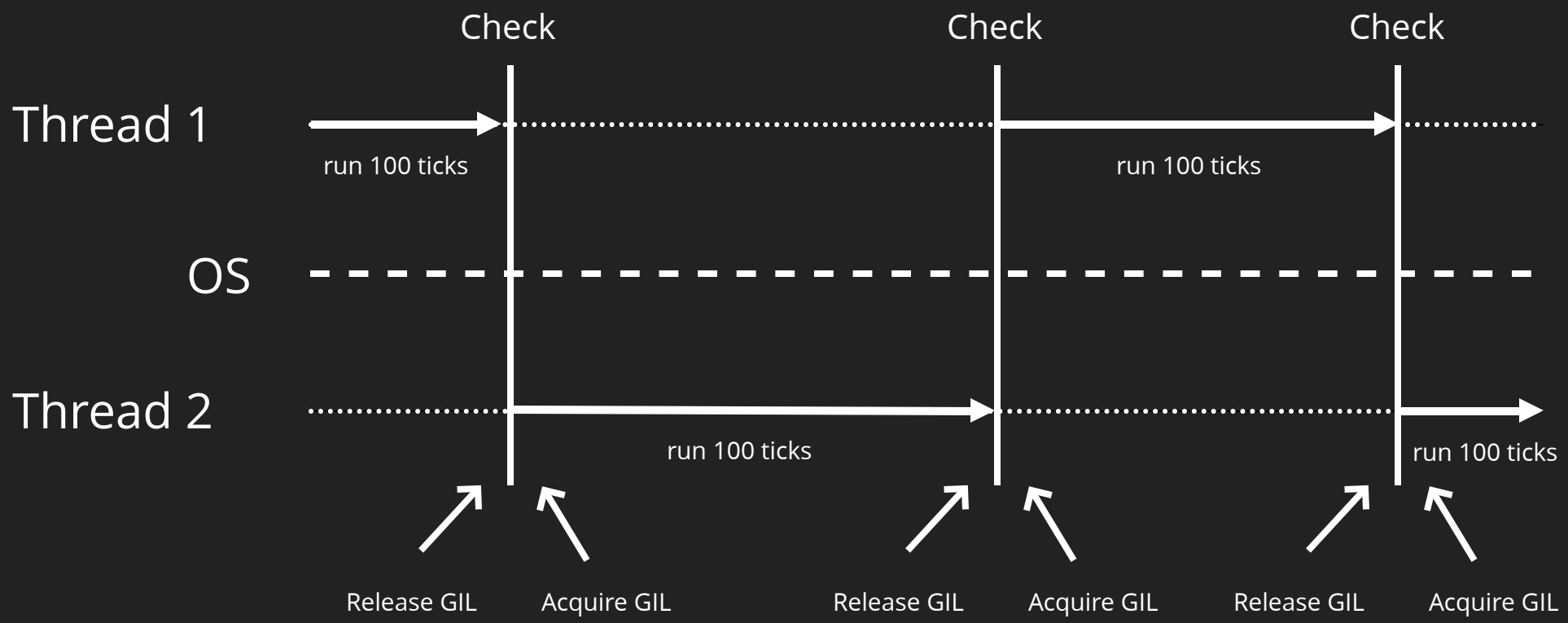

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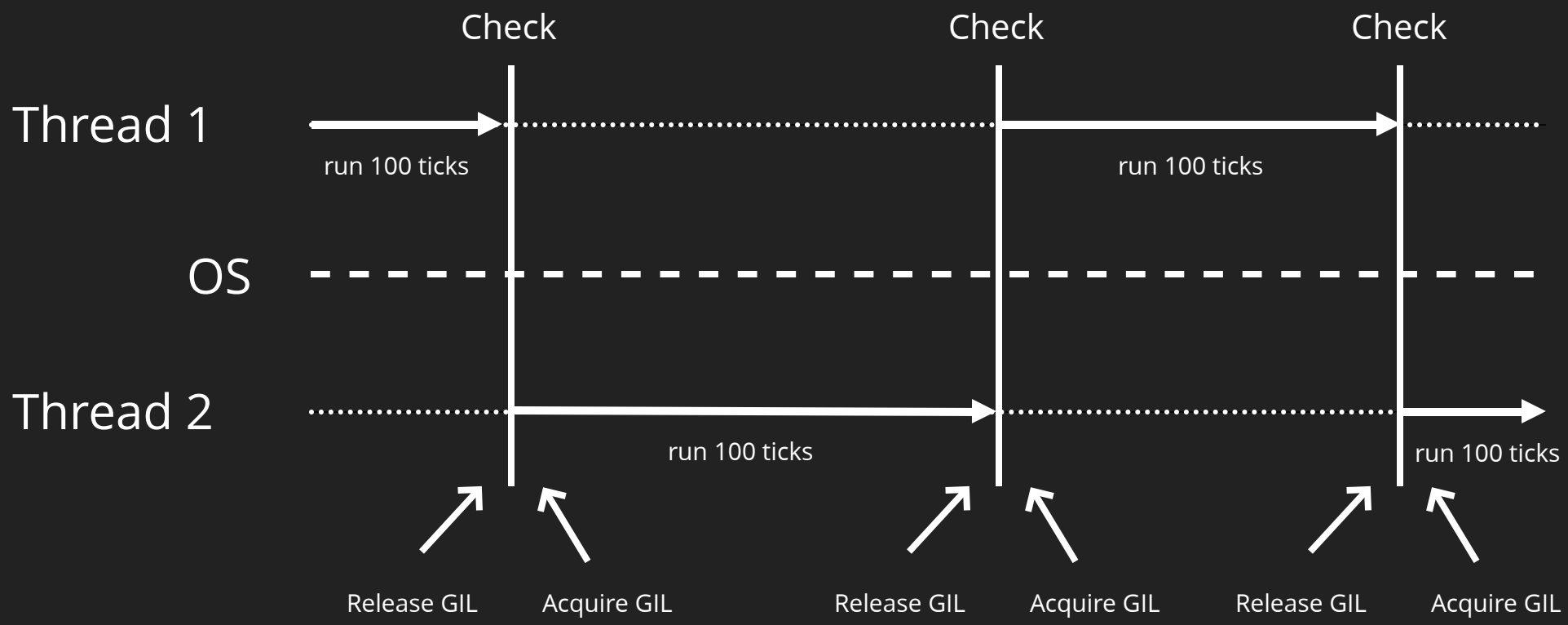

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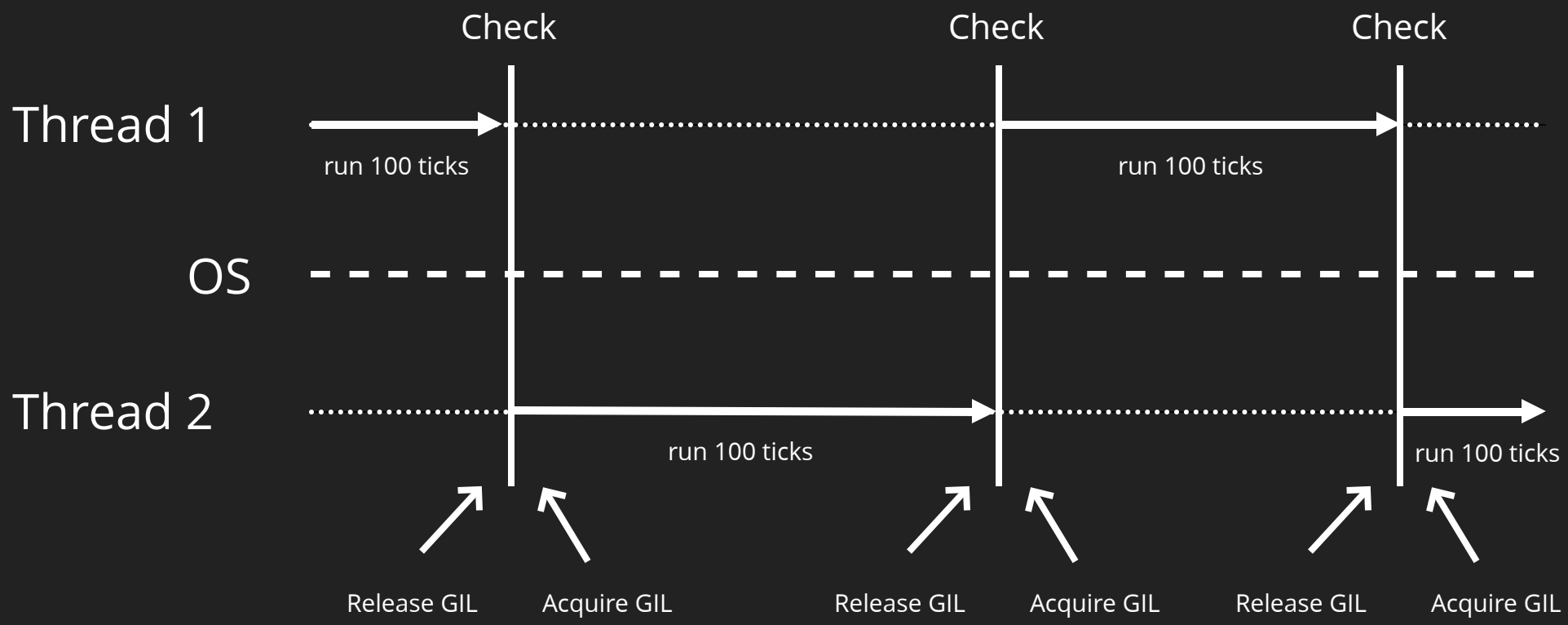

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- A "check" occurs every 100 "ticks"

Some OS Stuff

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- It may or may not be the signaled thread

Real CPU Bound Thread Situation

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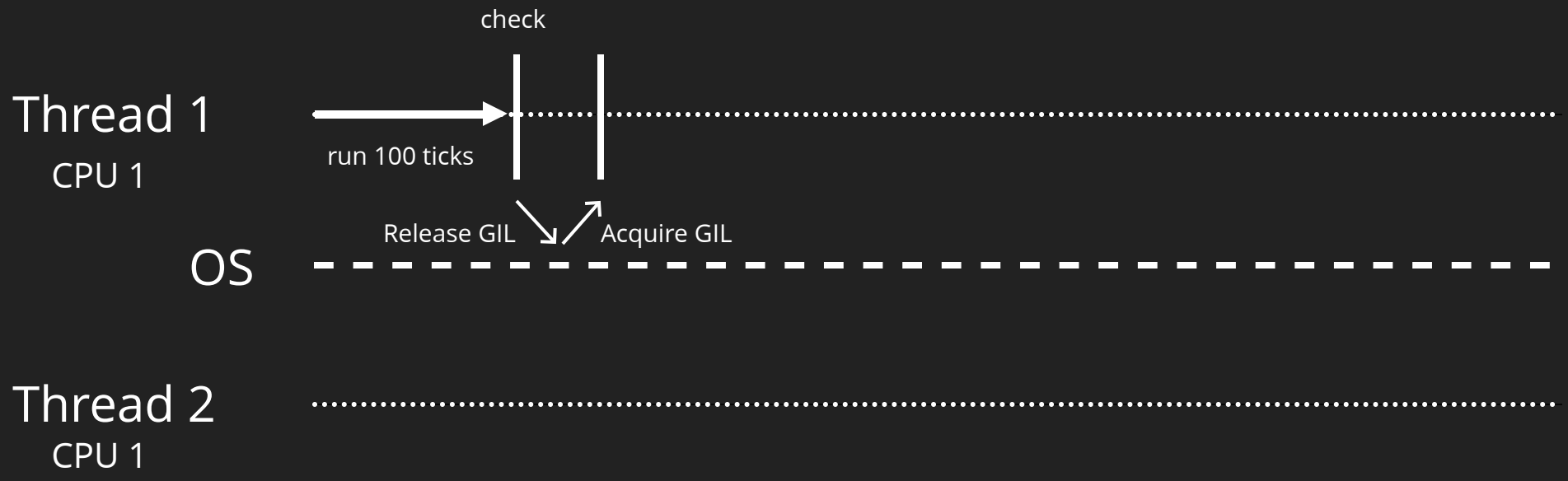

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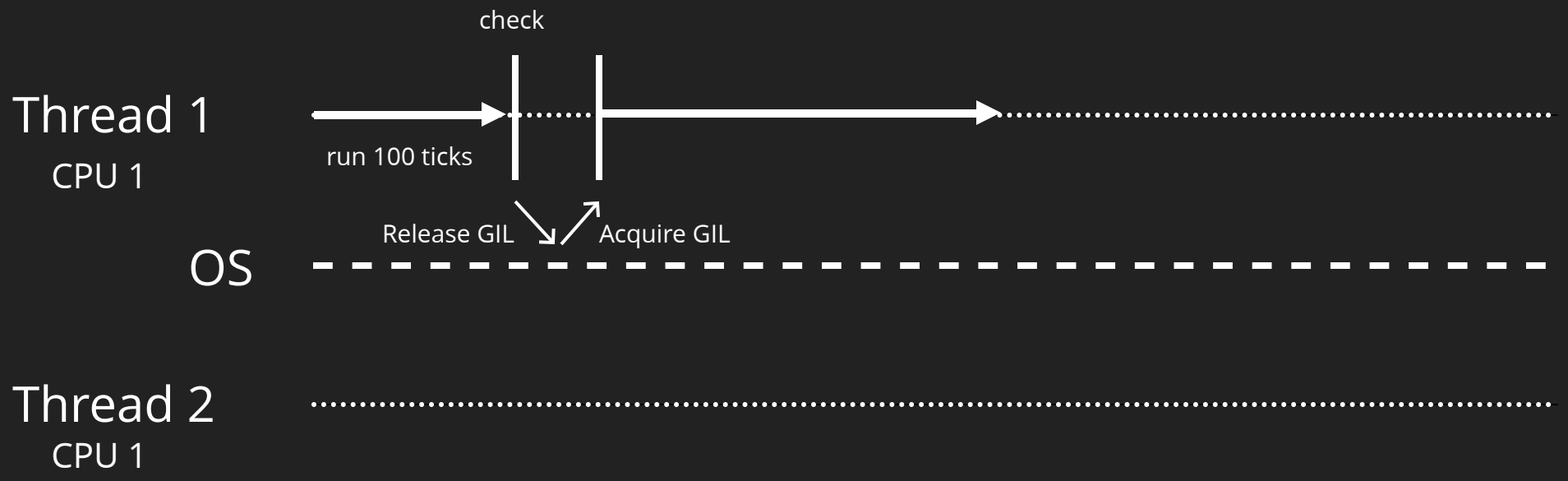

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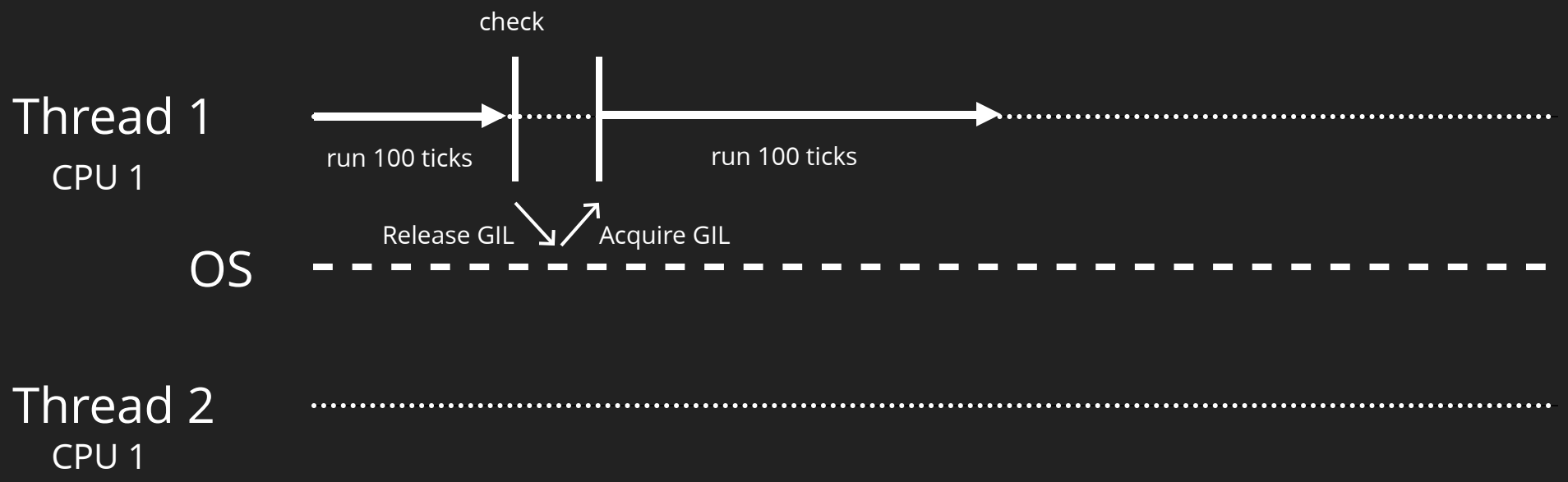

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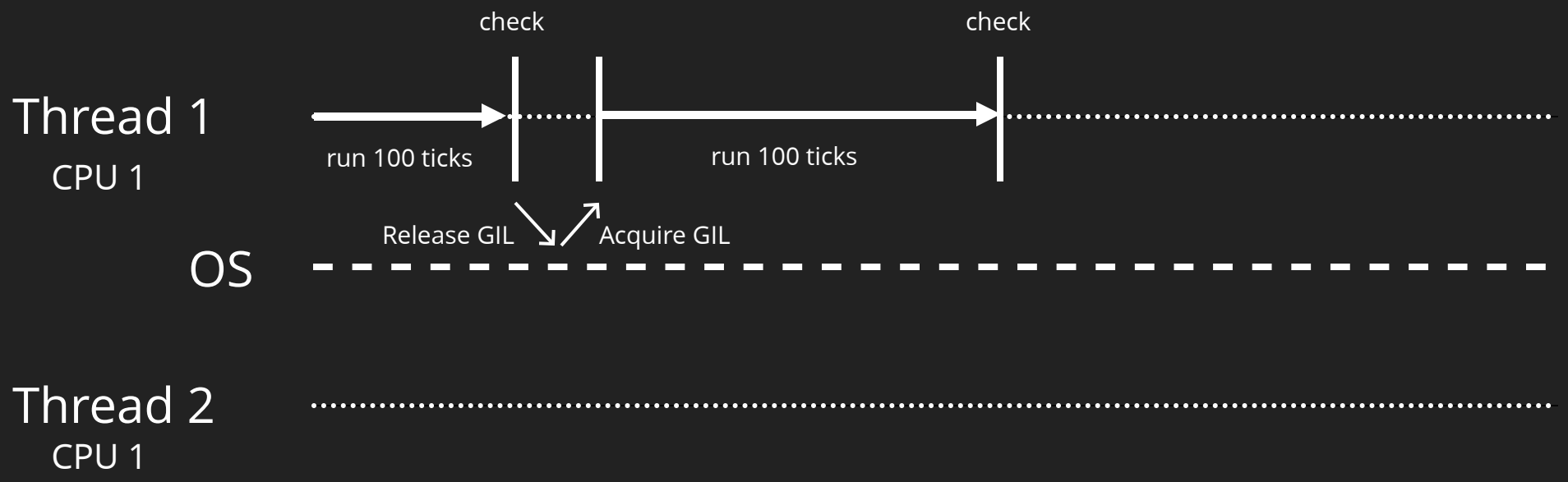

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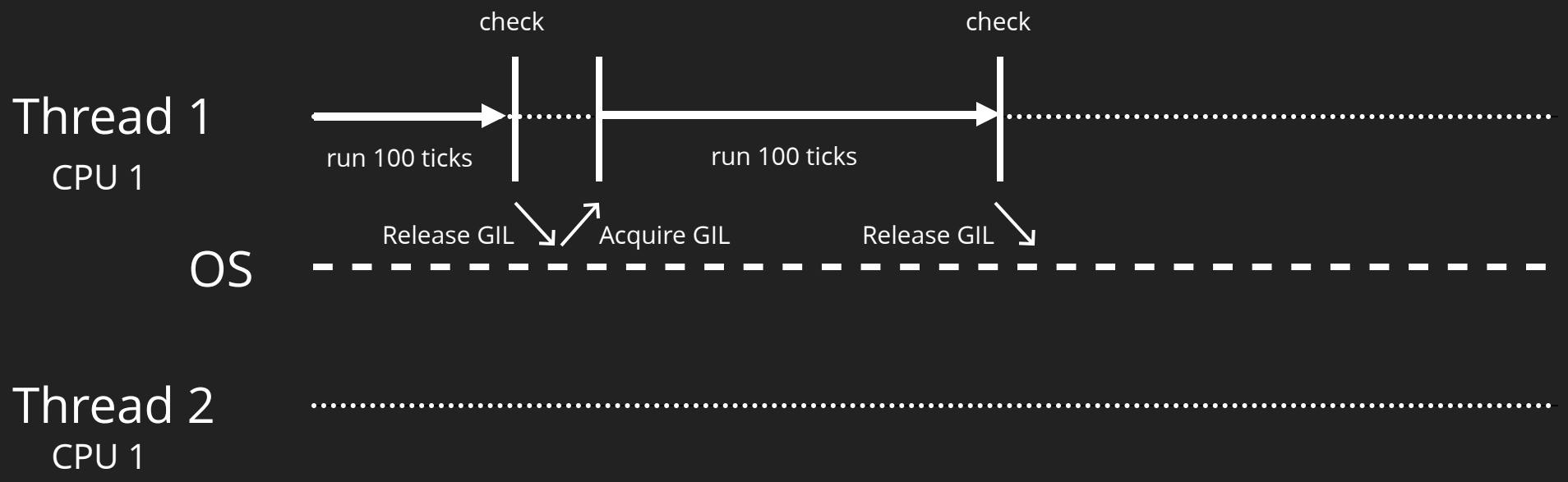

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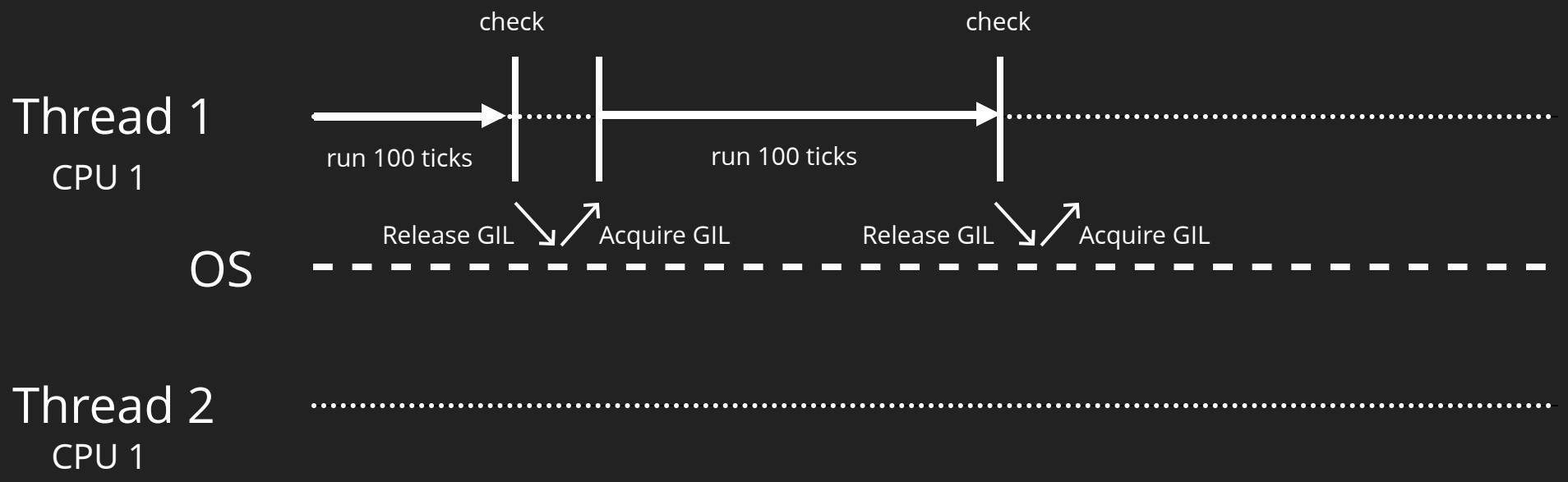

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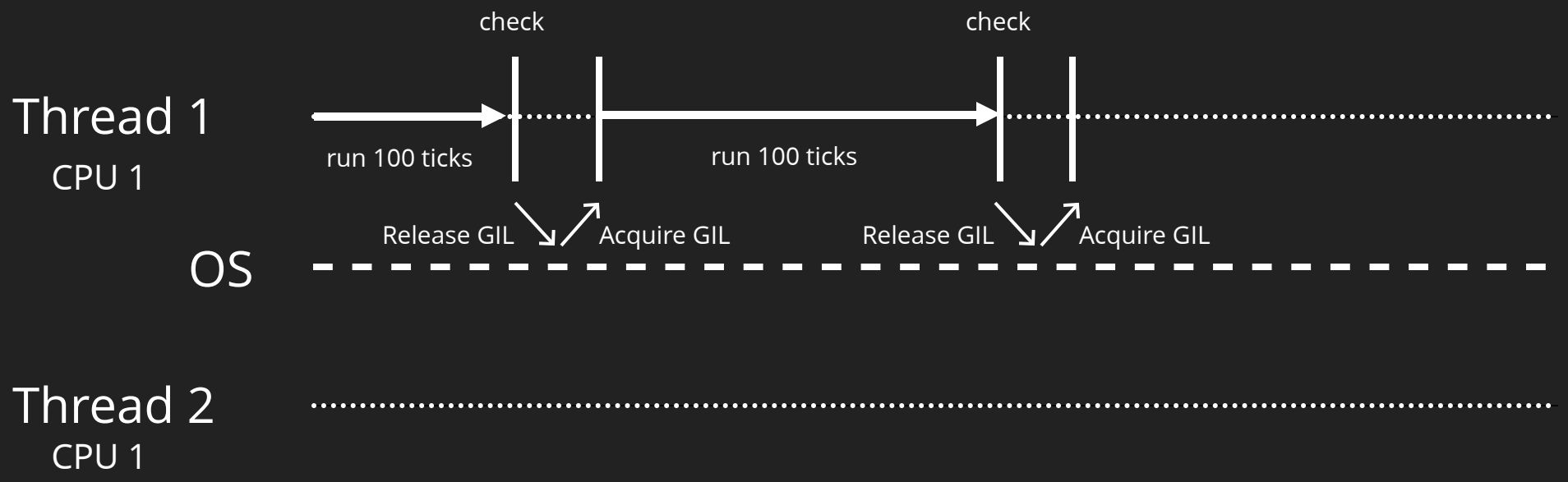

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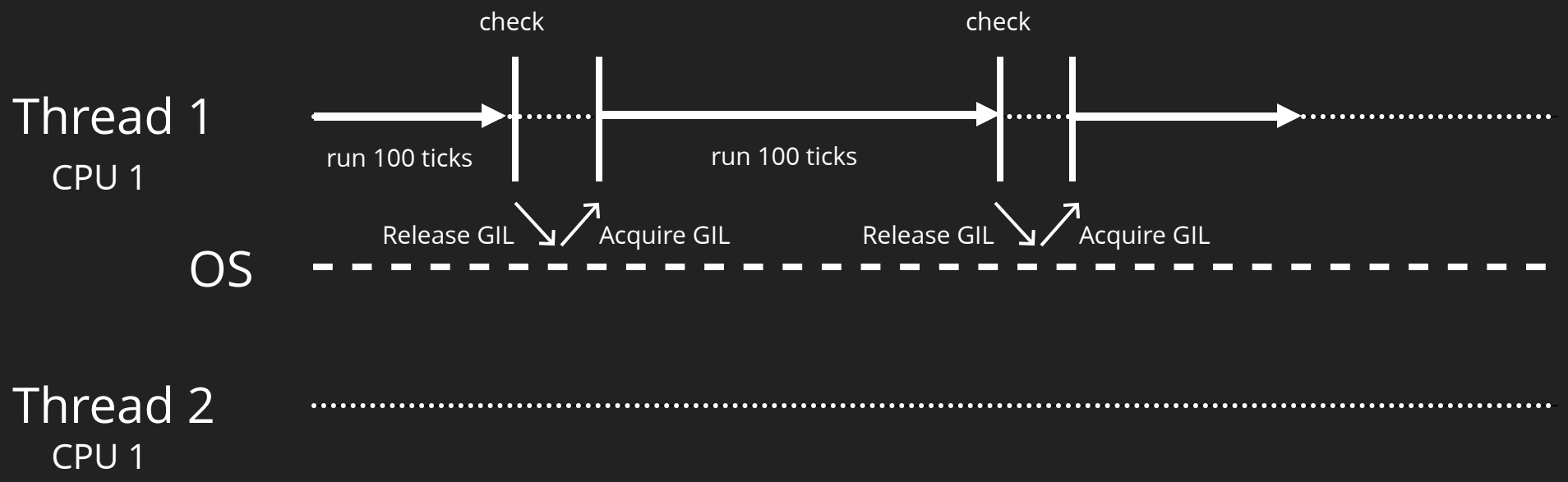

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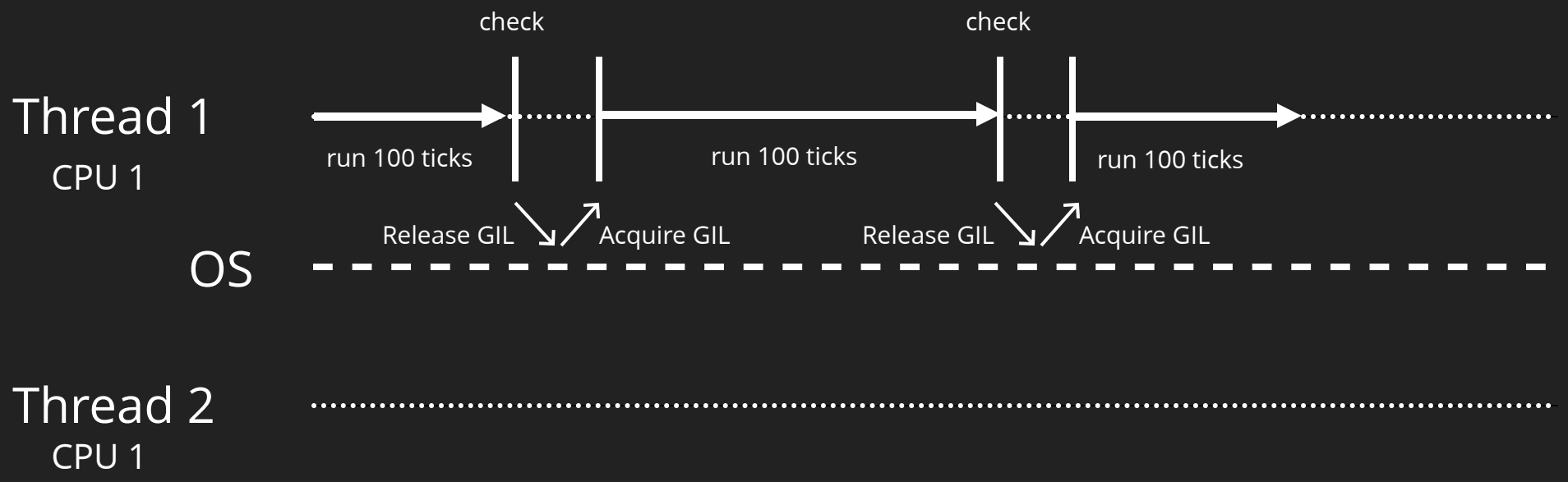

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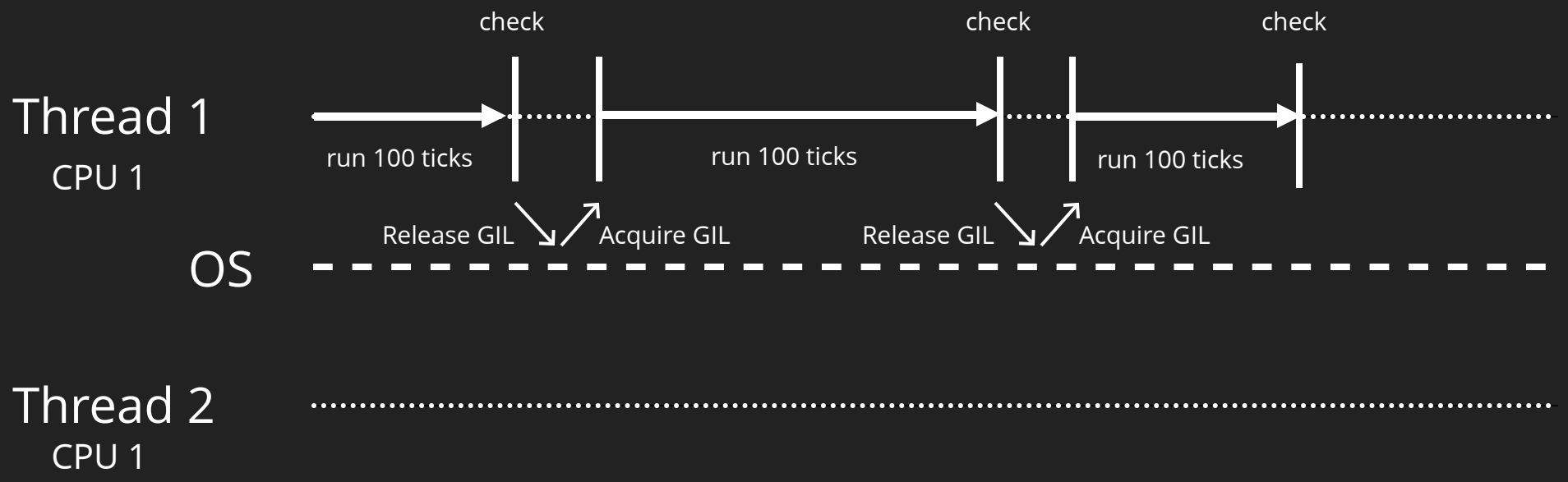

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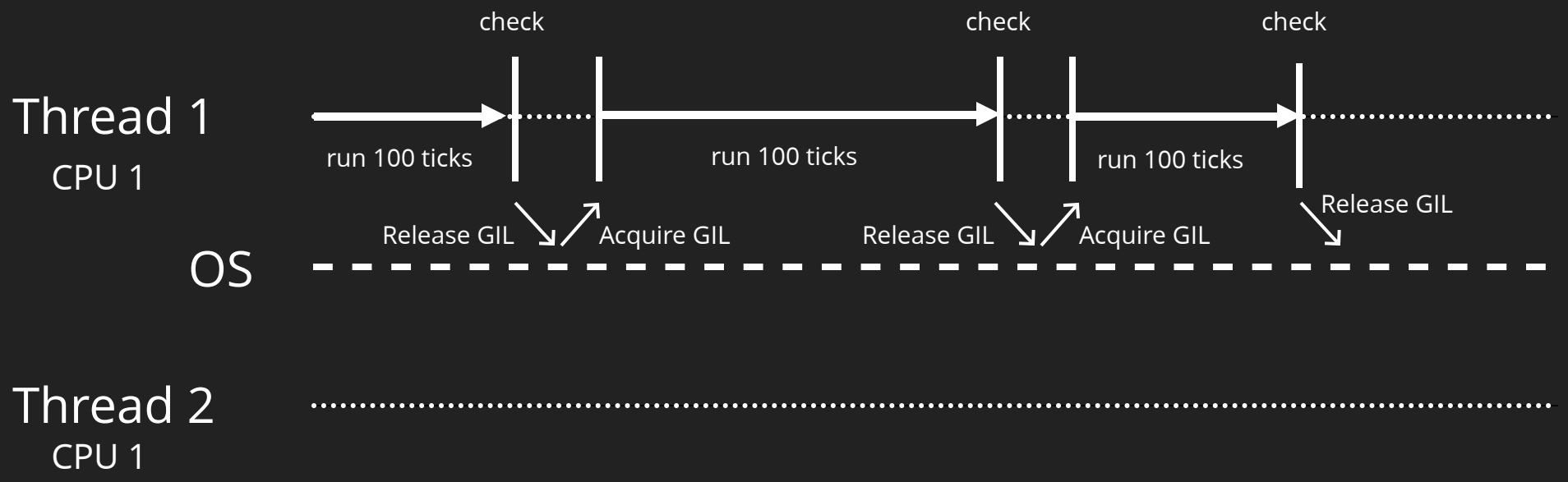

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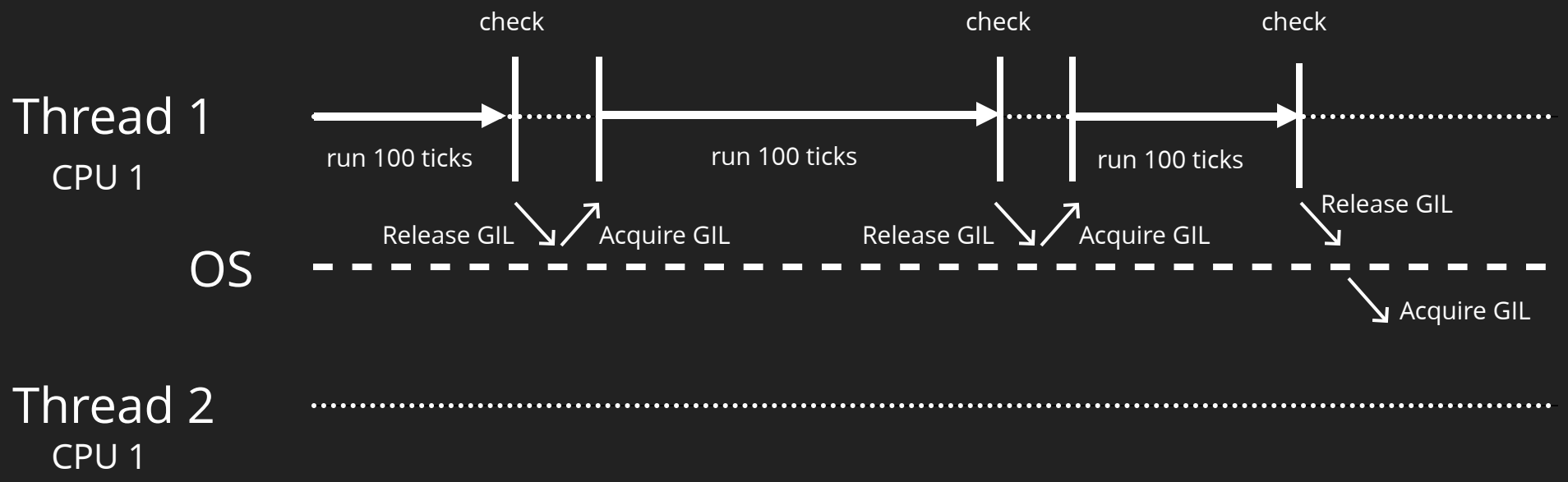

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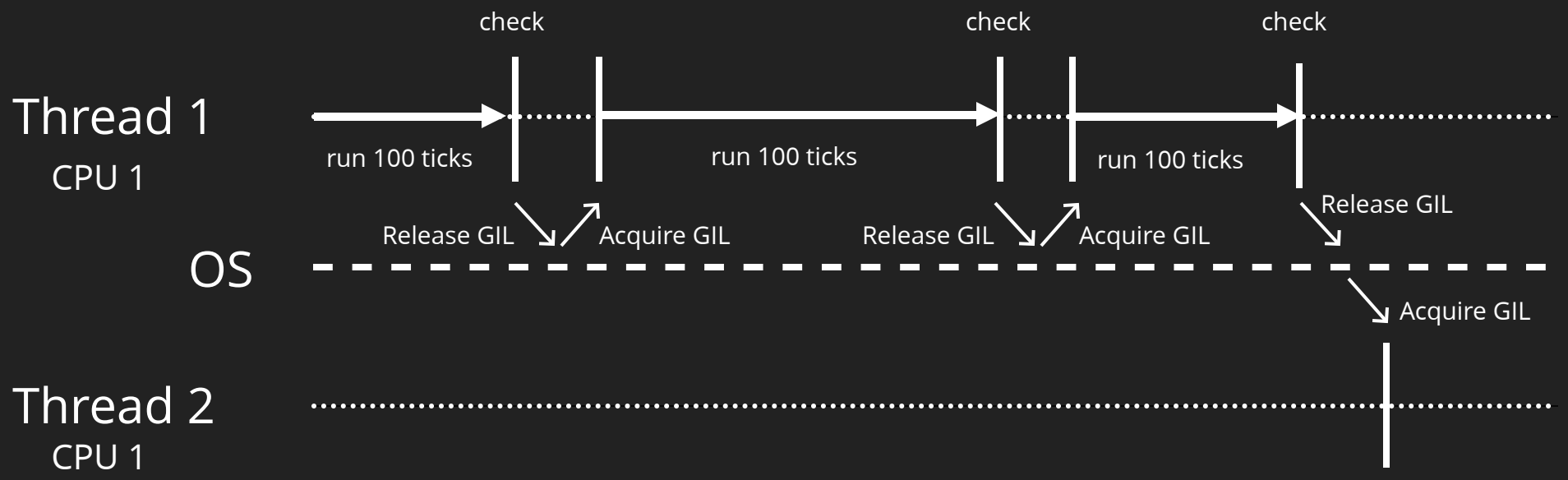

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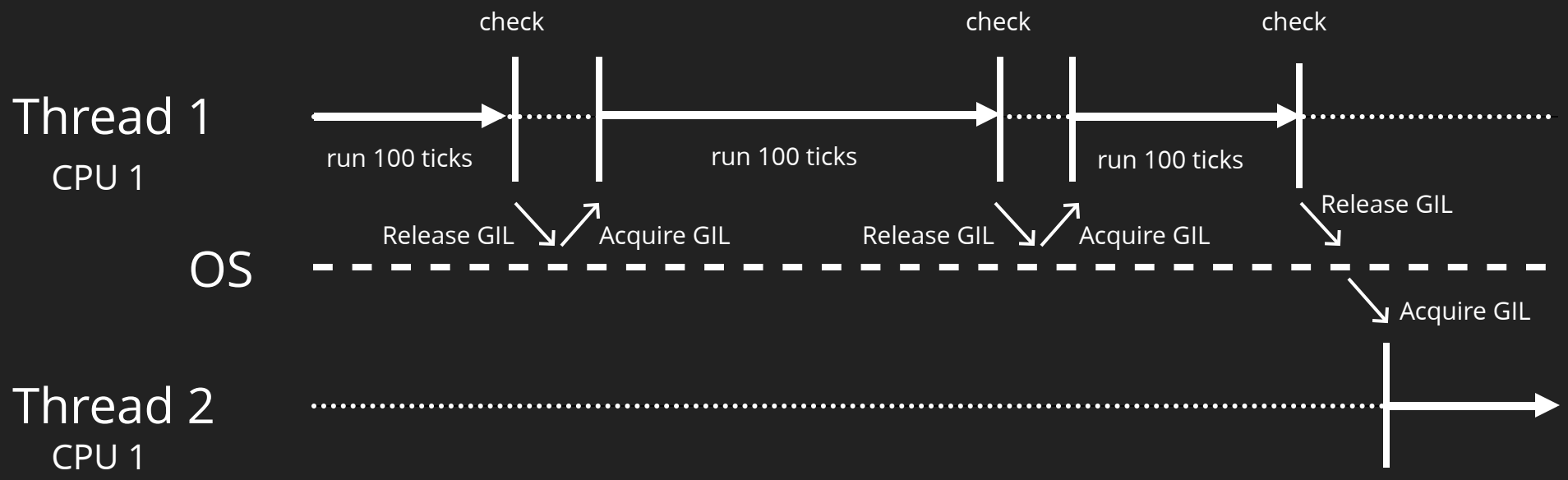

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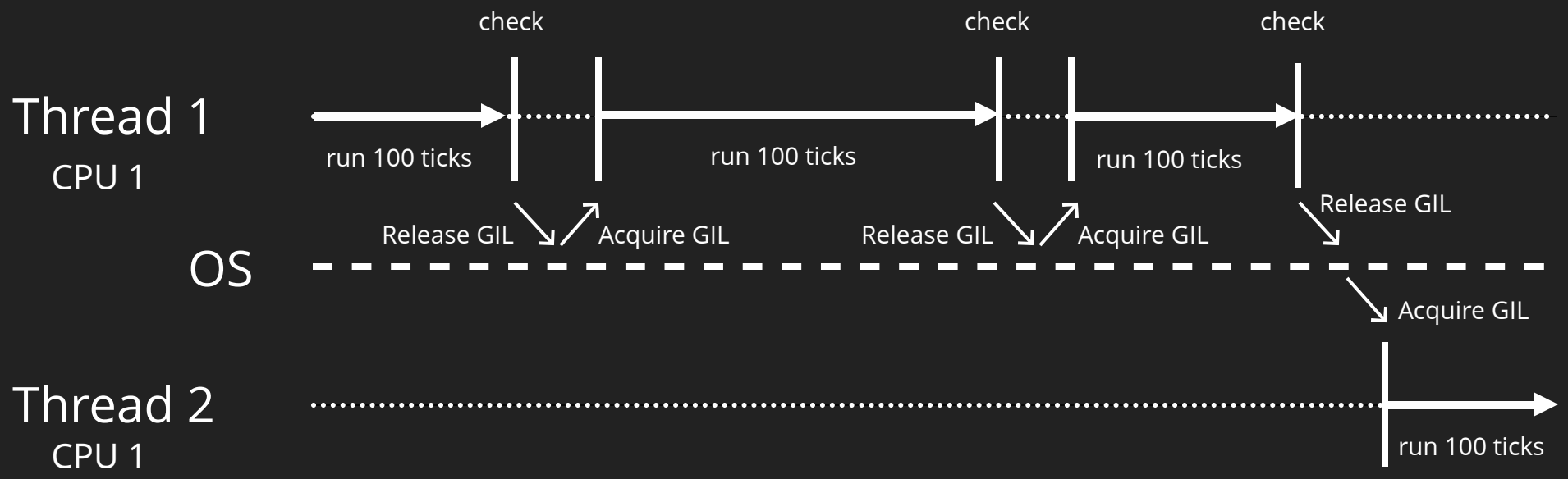

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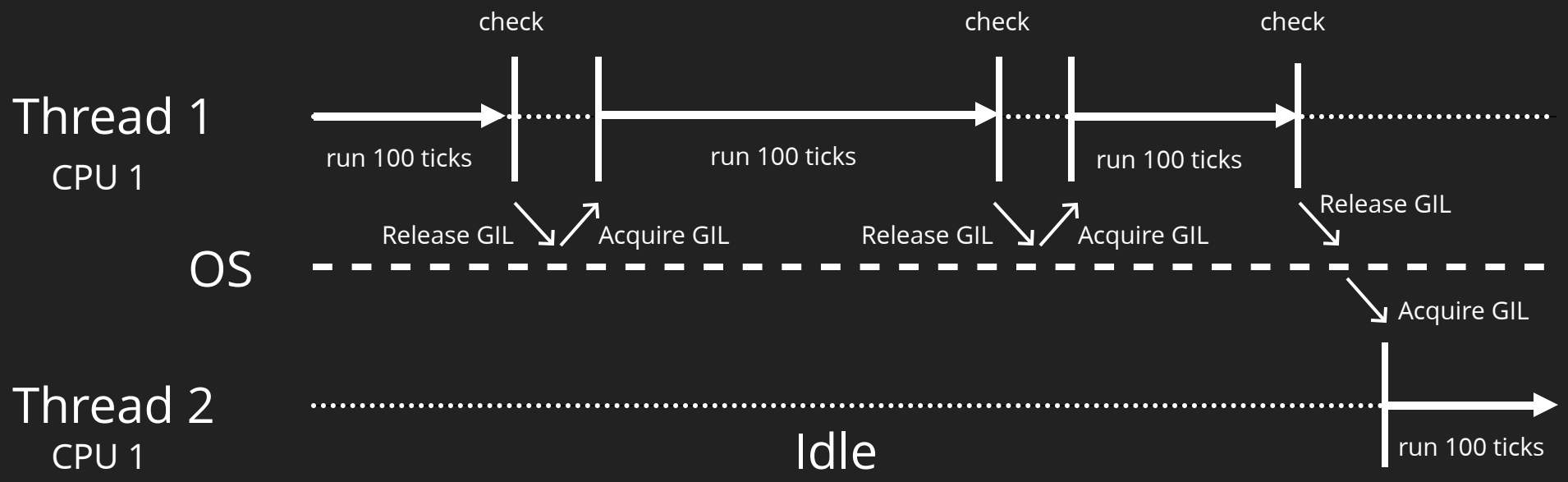

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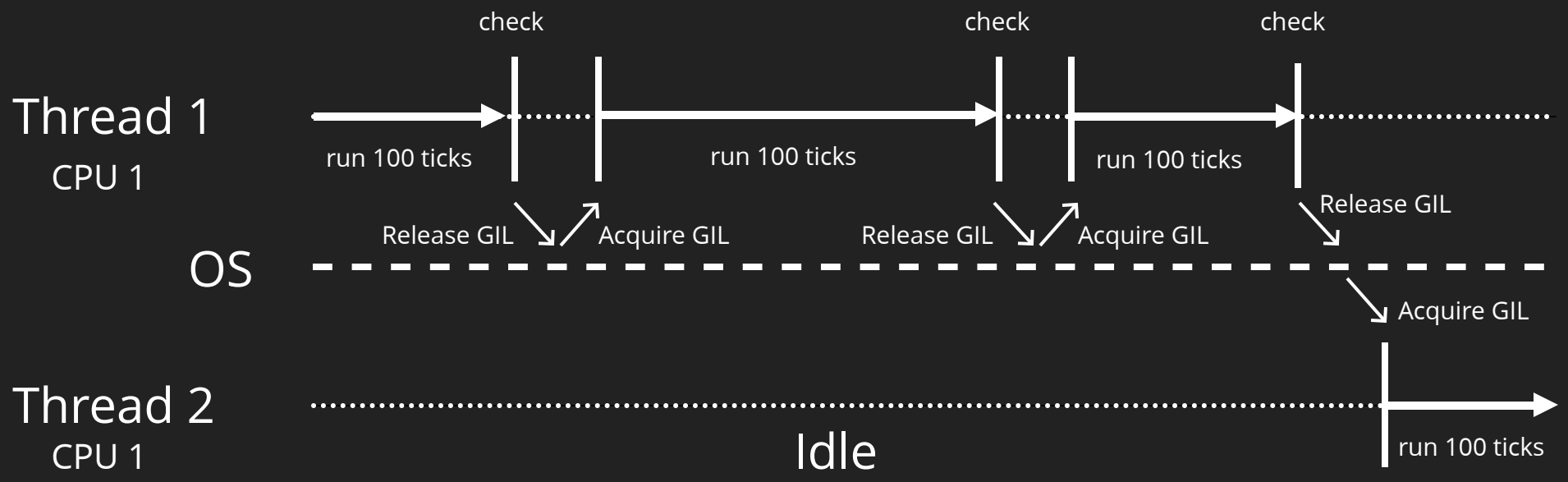

- Hundreds to thousands of checks might occur before a thread context switch

Thread Thrashing

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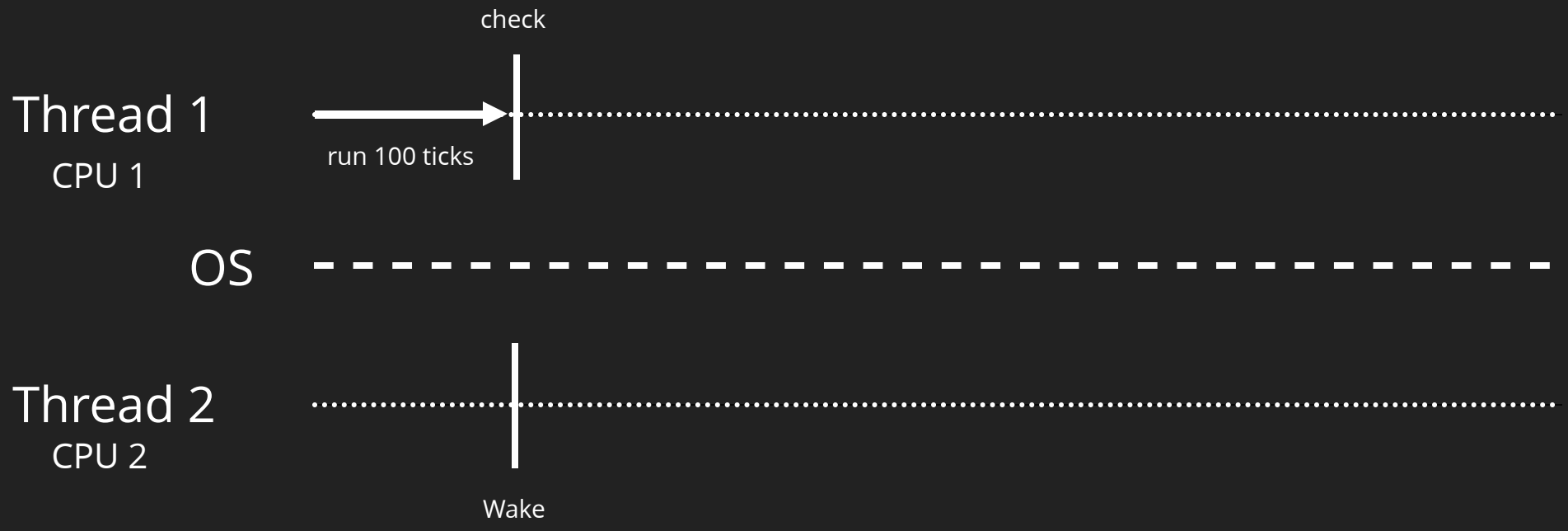

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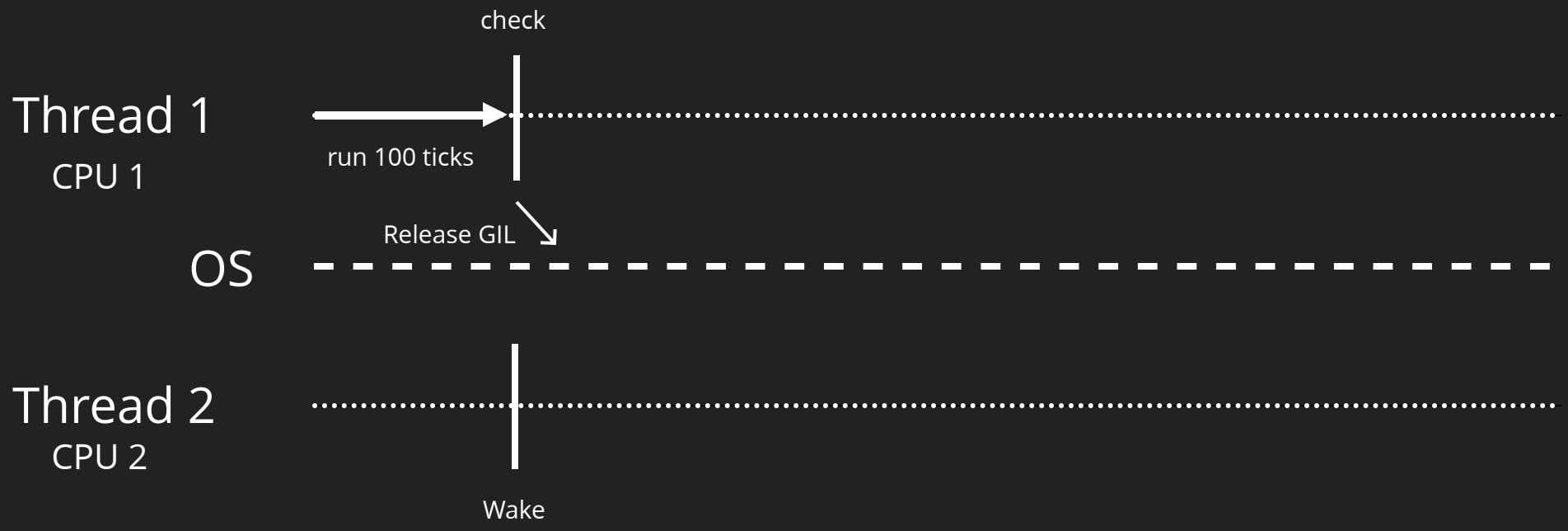

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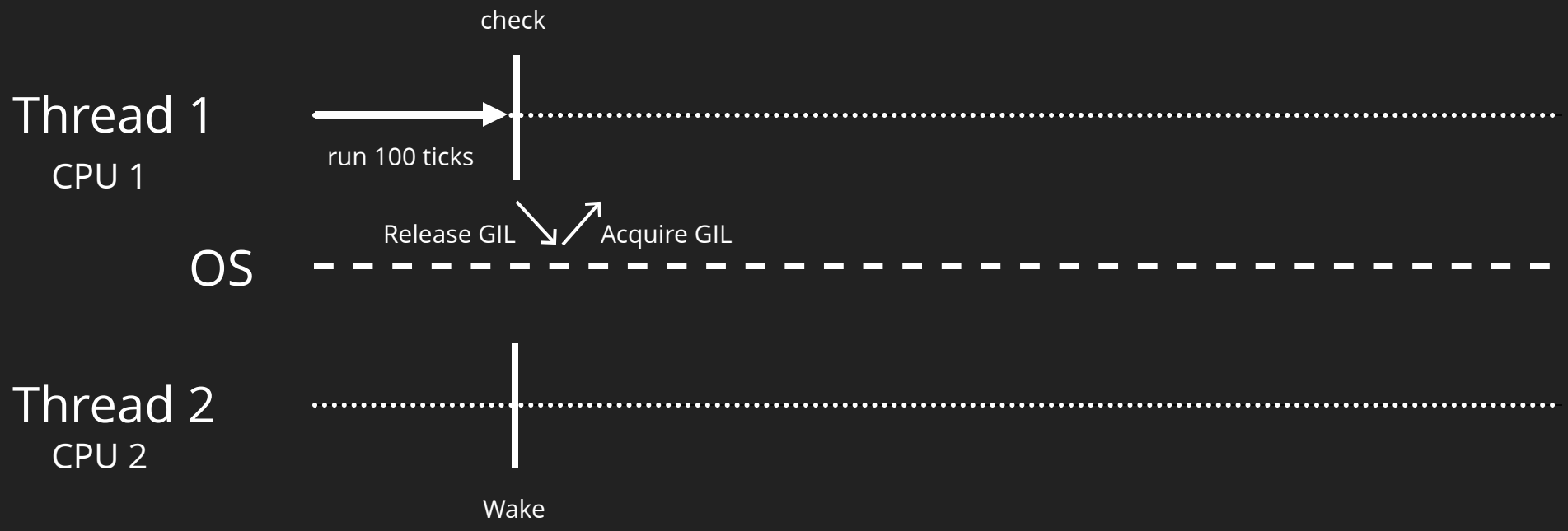

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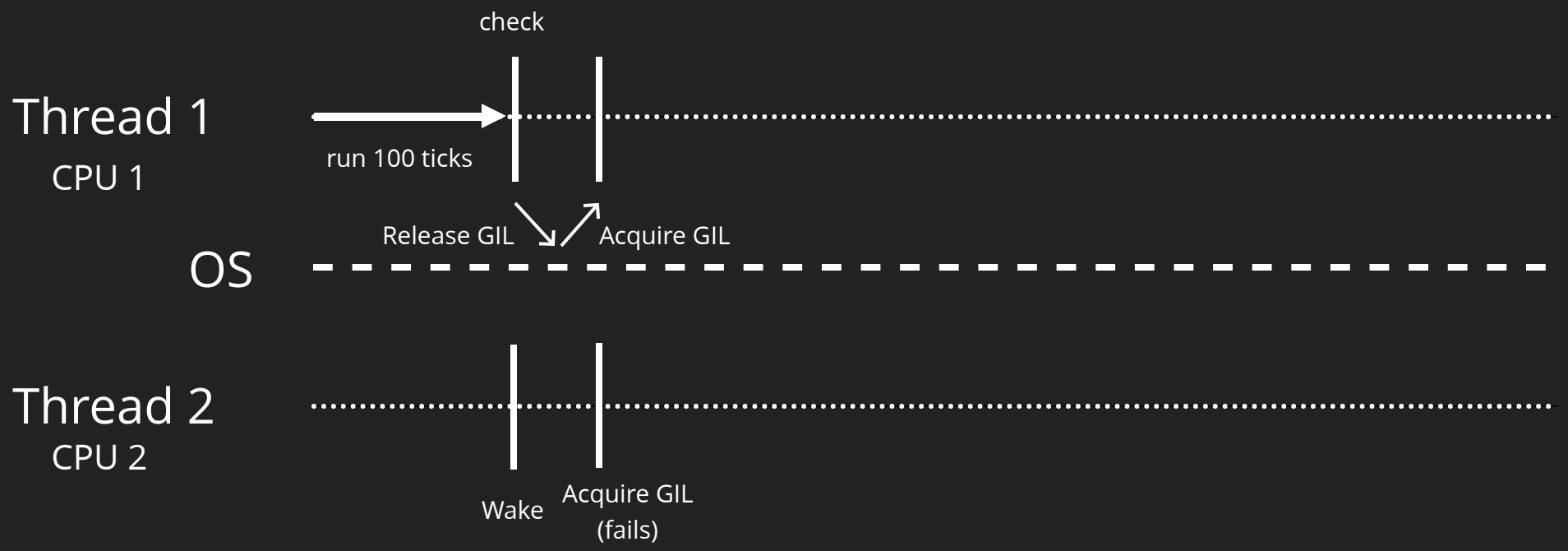

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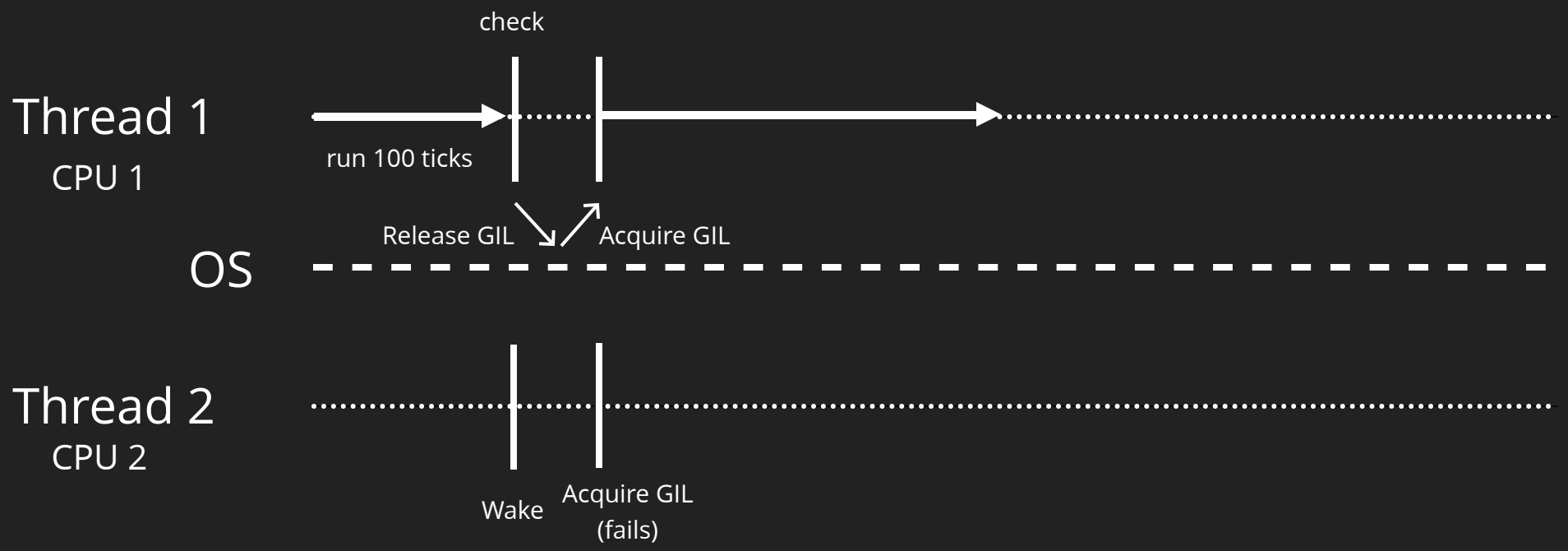

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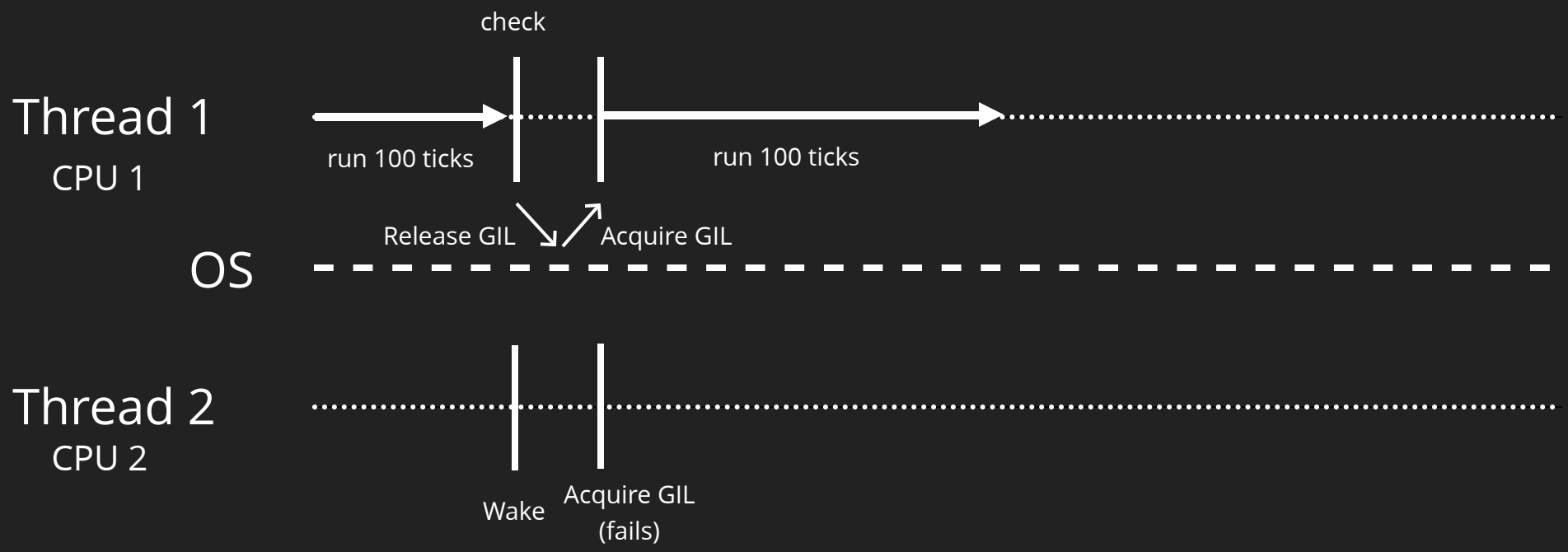

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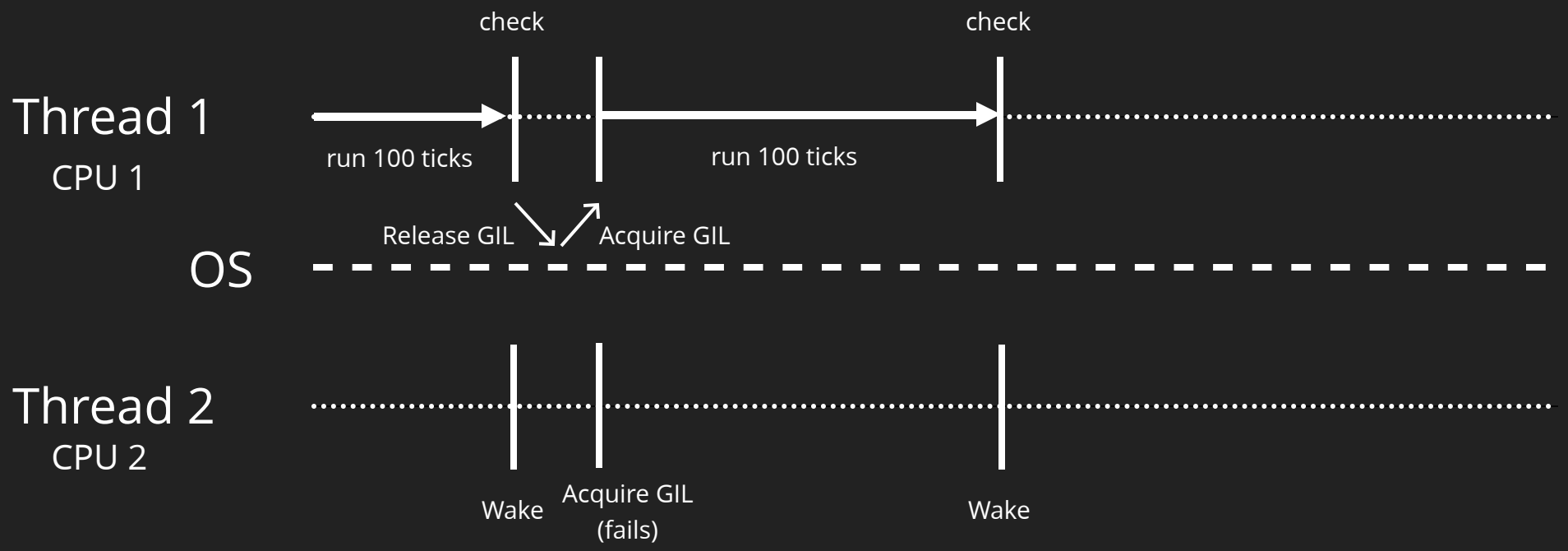

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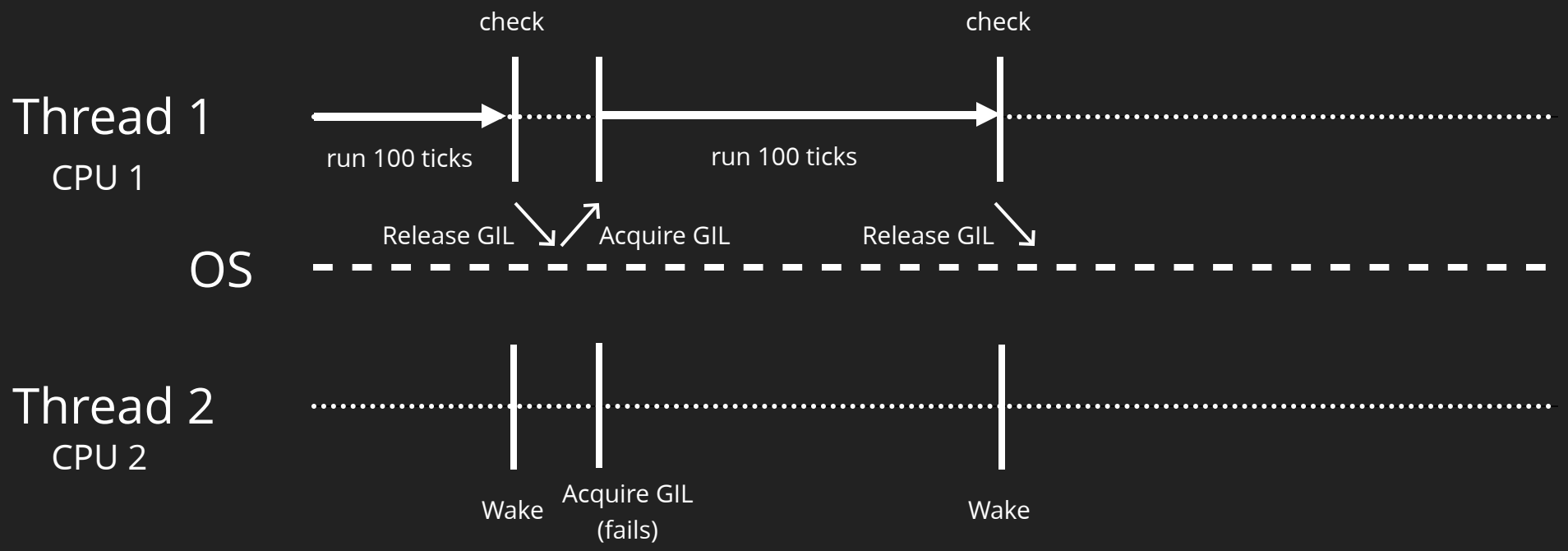

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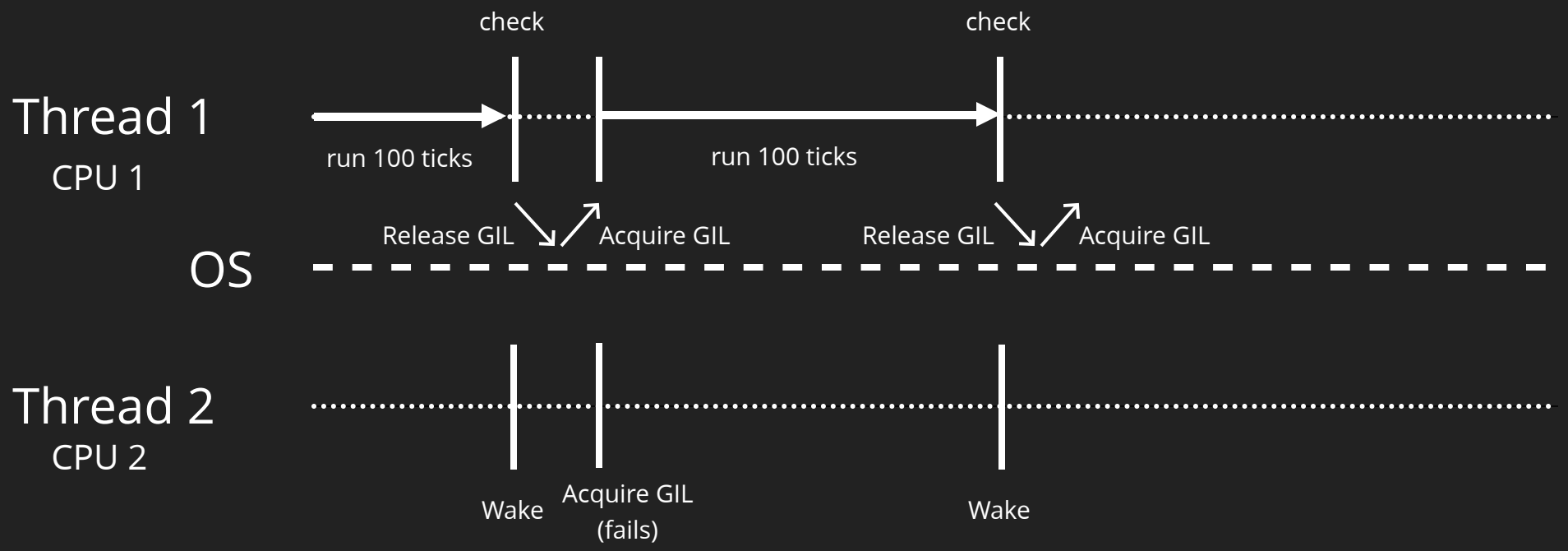

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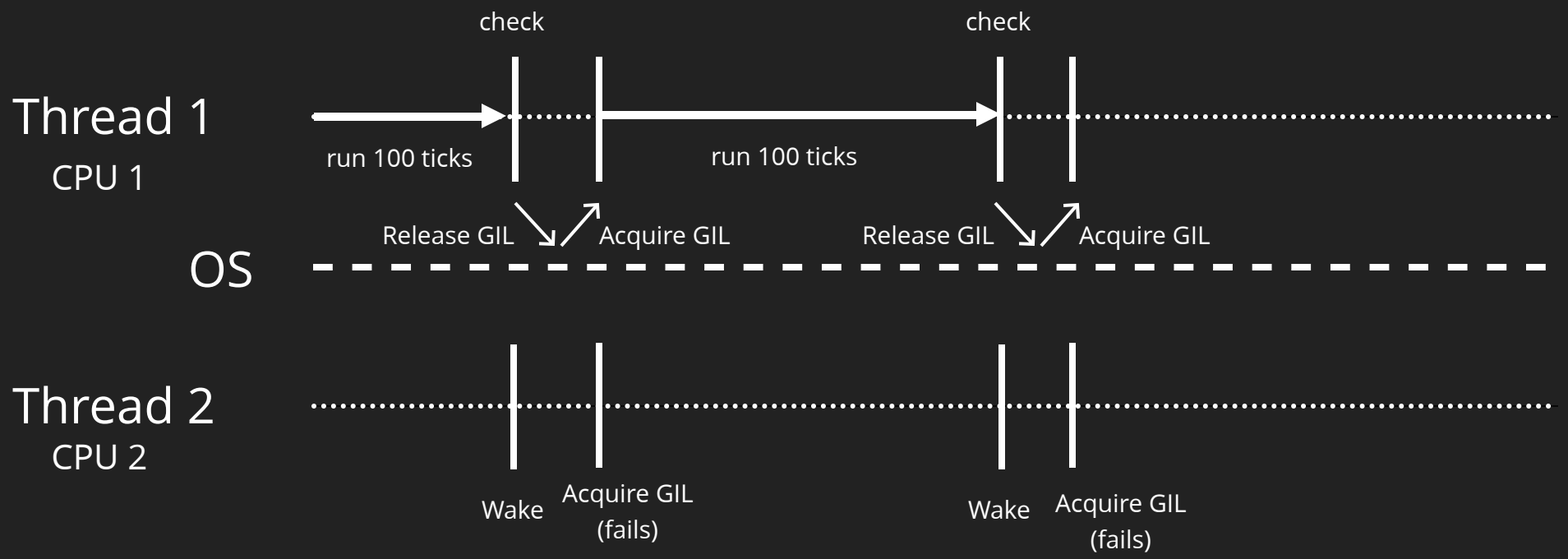

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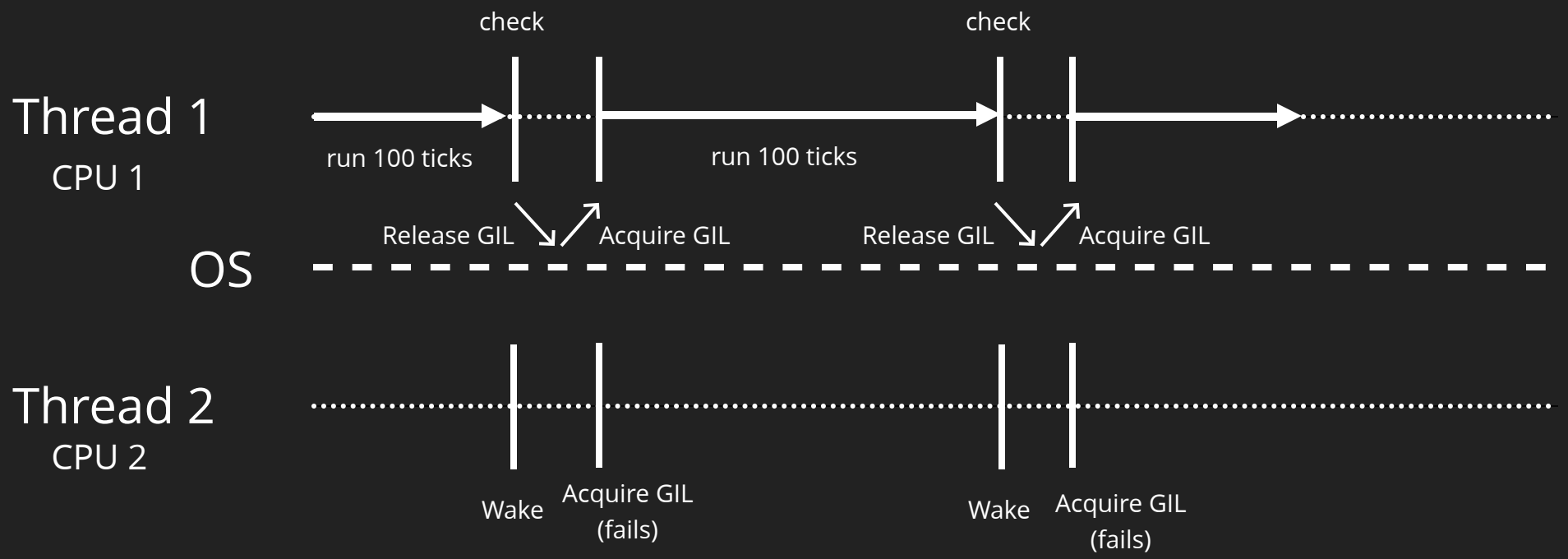

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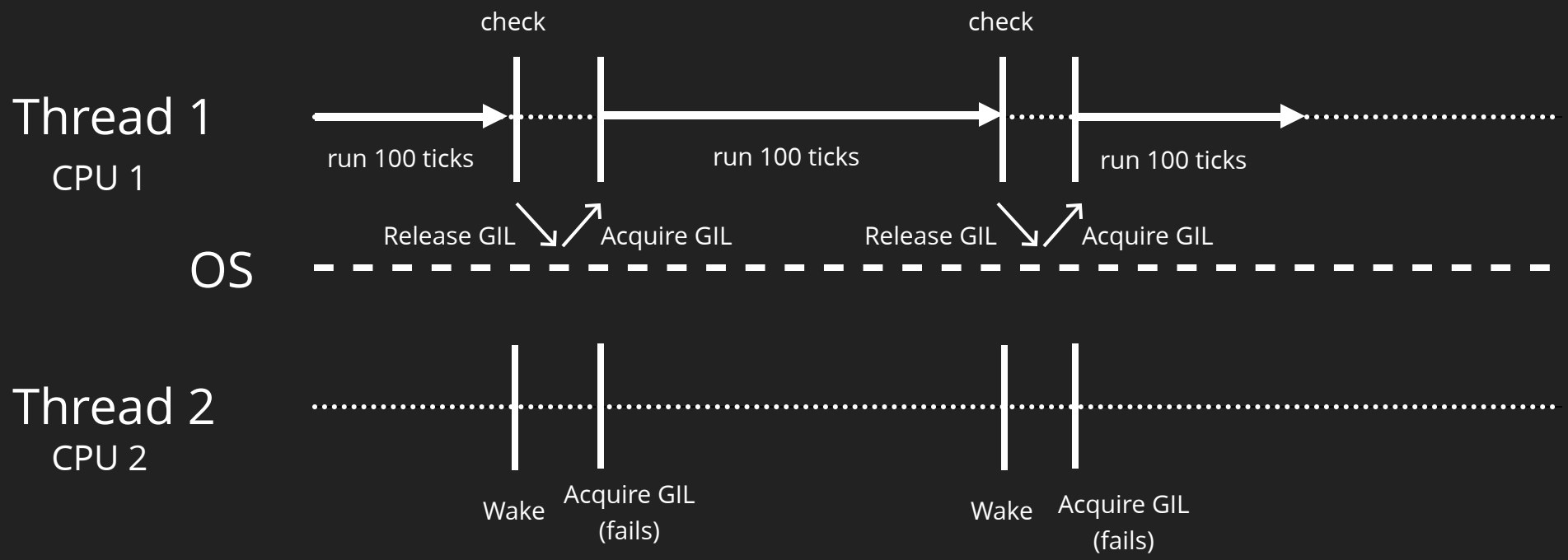

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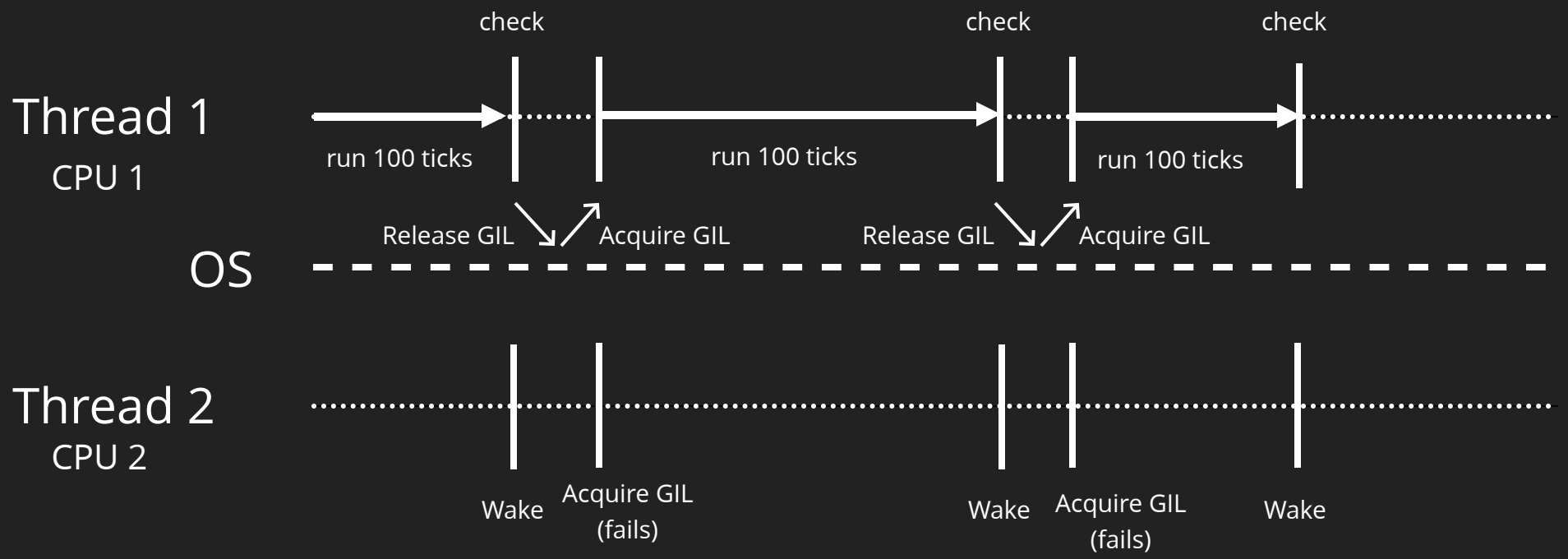

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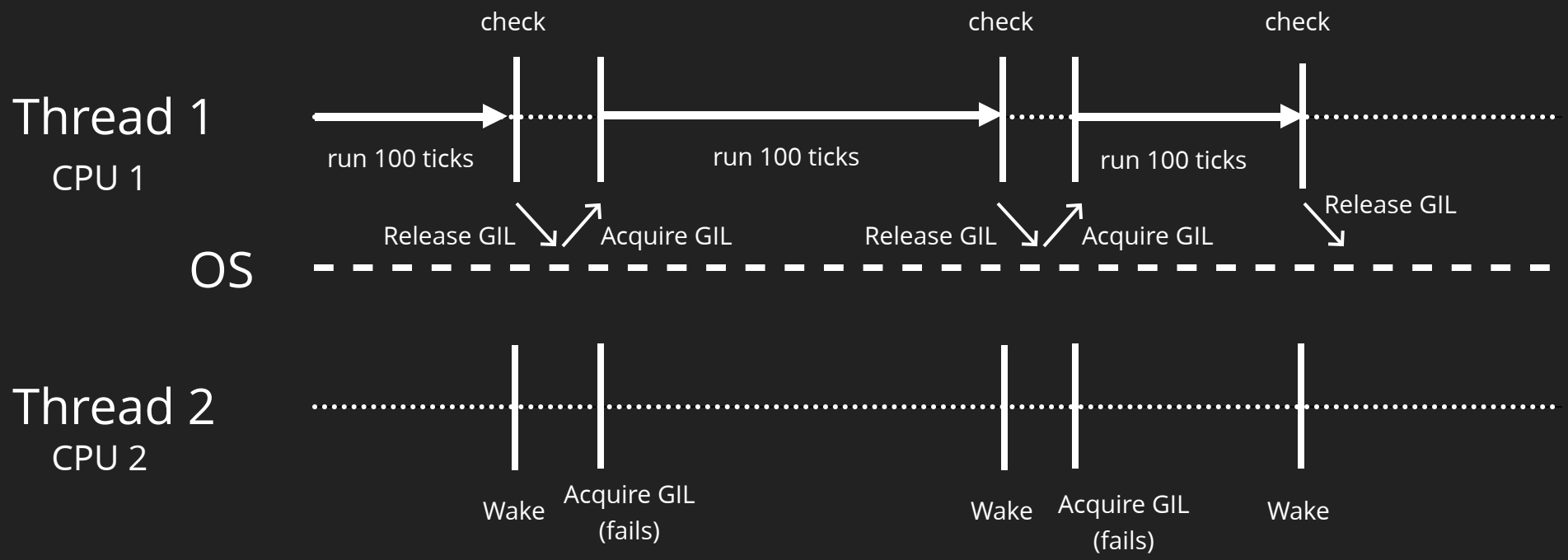

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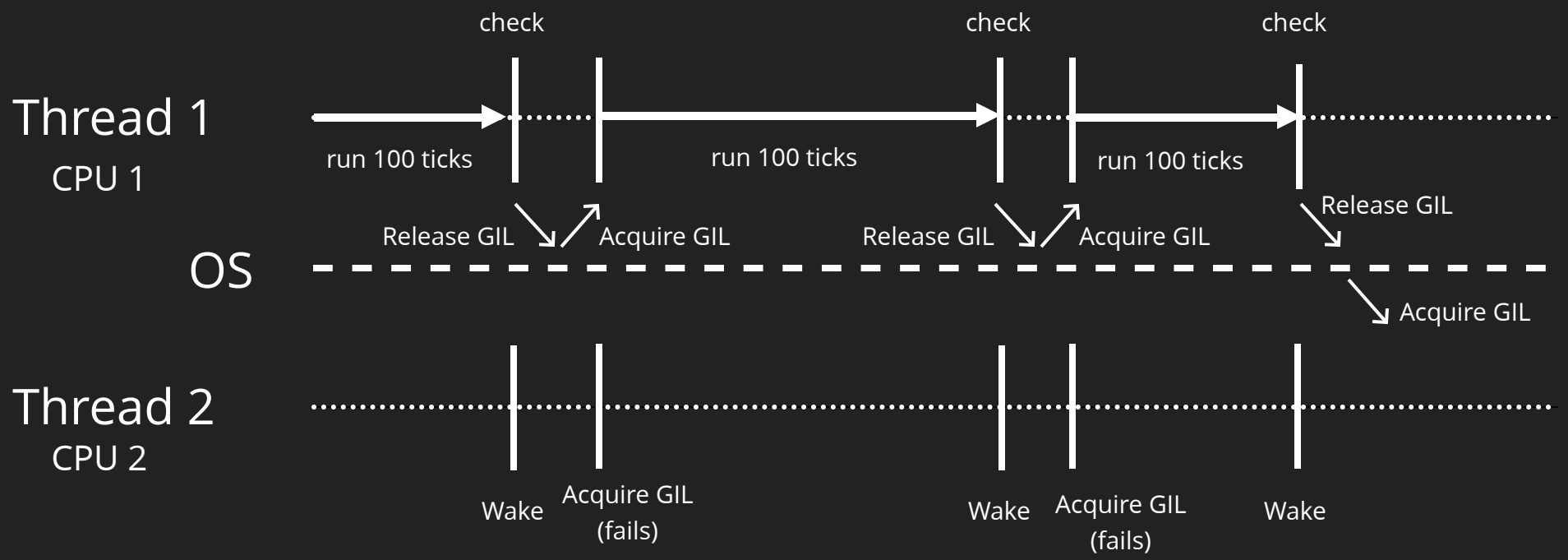

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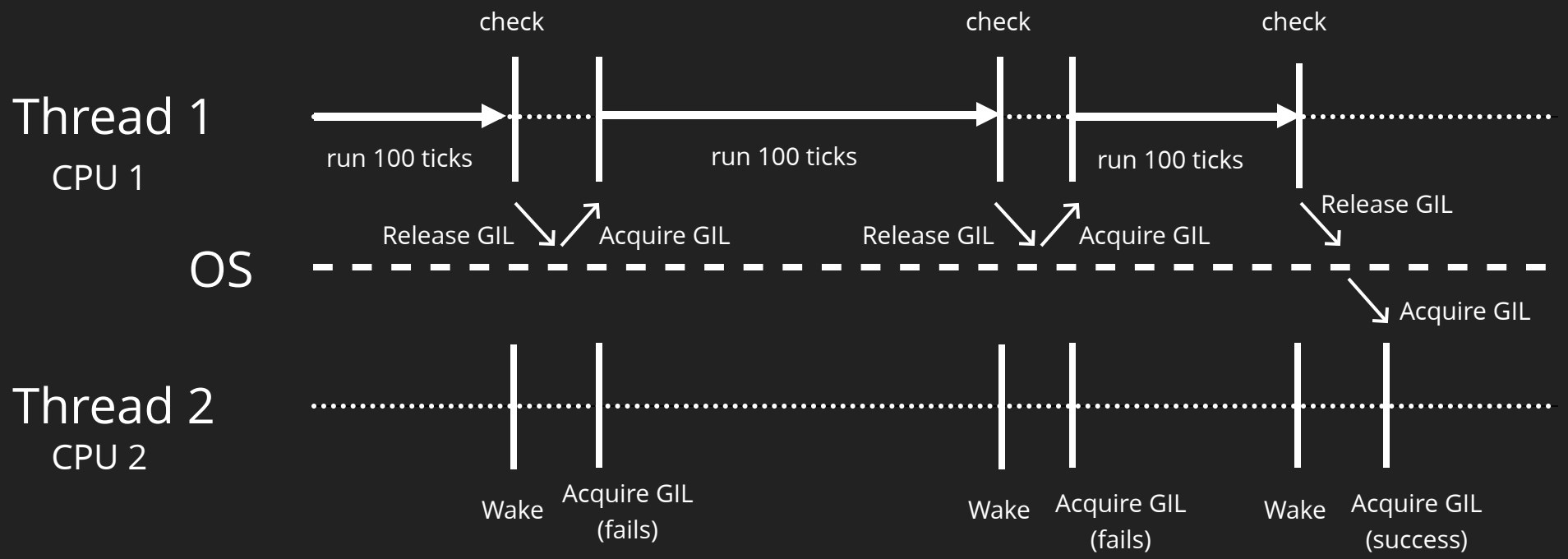

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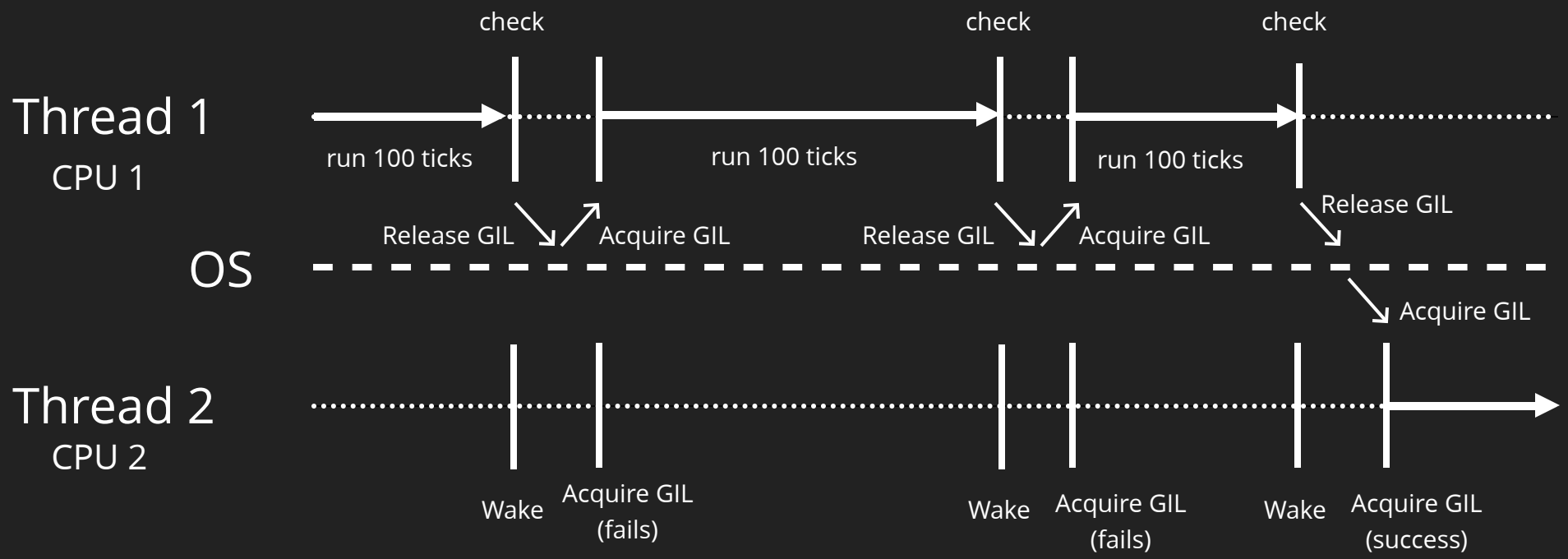

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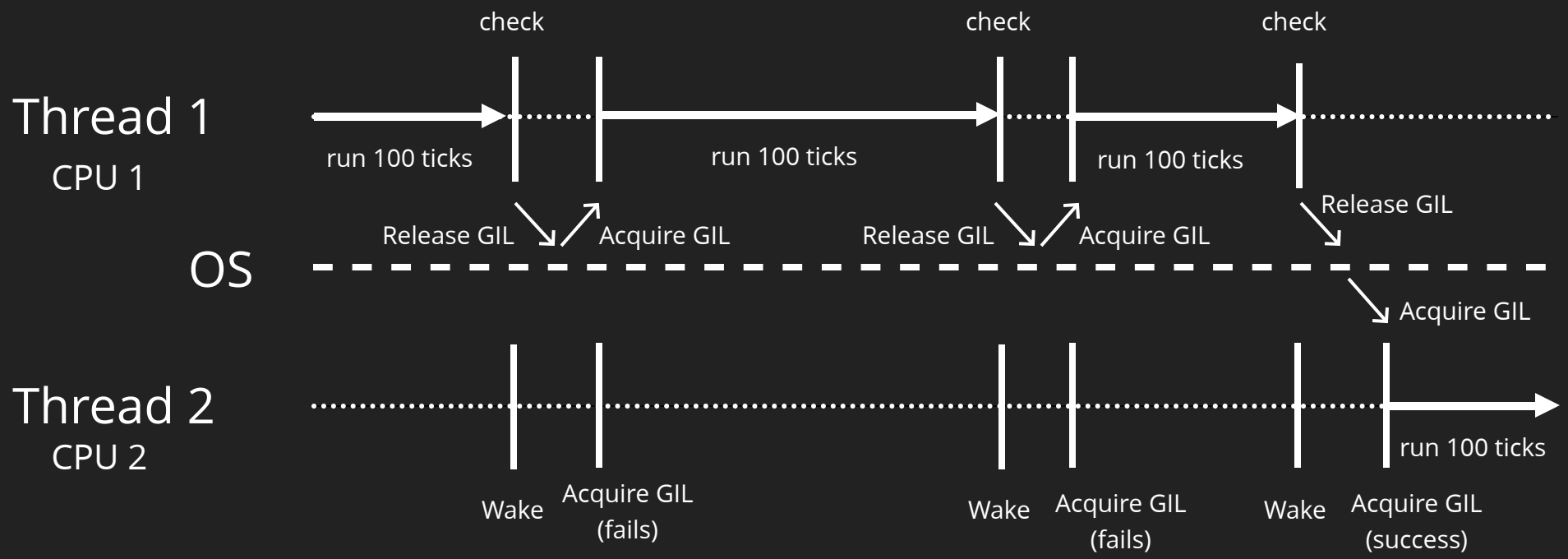

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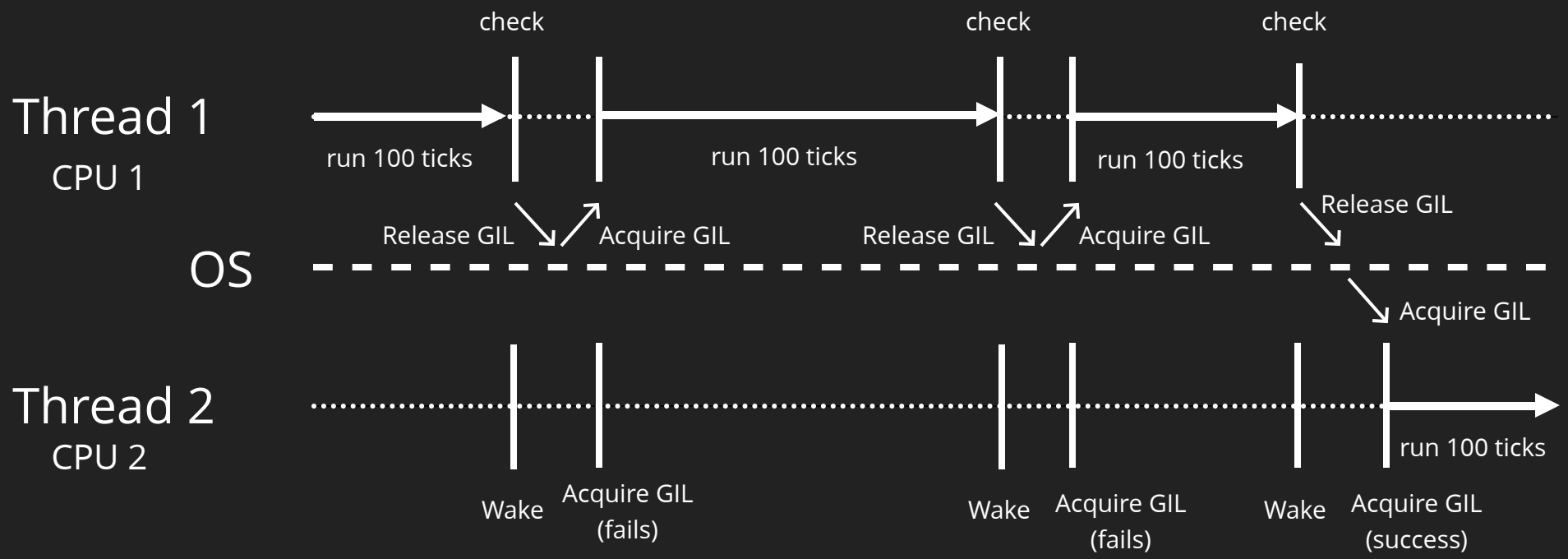

- When thread 2 wakes up, the GIL is already gone

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- If other thread acquire the GIL, the current thread will release the GIL after 5ms
- A thread runs until `gil_drop_request` gets set to 1

But, the GIL is still there...

Part III

Remove GIL?

Why GIL?

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- CPython uses Reference Counting

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> *I'd welcome a set of patches into Py3k only if the performance for a single-threaded program (and for a multi-threaded but I/O-bound program) does not decrease.*
> *-- Guido van Rossum*

Related Works

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- 1995, Greg Stein, a fork of Python 1.5

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- Many other implementations...

It's Hard!!!

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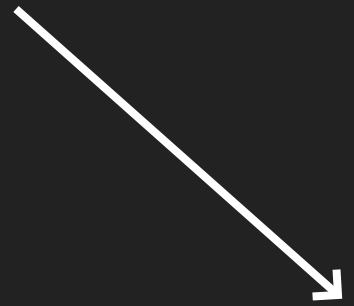

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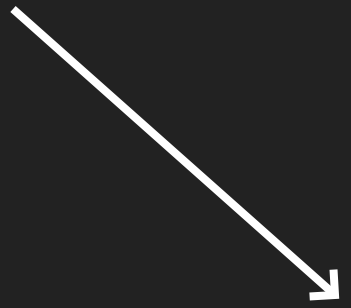
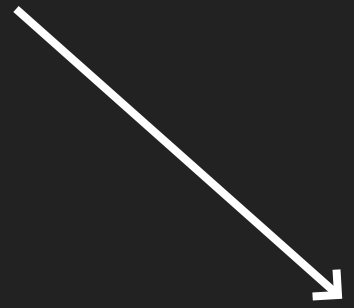


Use C extensions!

But, Who Cares?

- Users with threaded, CPU bound Python code
- Basically no one else



Use C extensions!

Other Solutions

- Multi-processing (not recommend)
- C extension modules
  - Rewrite CPU bound code in C (you need to control memory by yourself)
  - Release the GIL around that code
- Corountine

Part IV

The Future

PEP 554

PEP 554

- Multiple Interpreters in the Stdlib

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- By Eric Snow (to GIL or not to GIL: the Future of Multi-Core CPython)

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- CPython has supported multiple interpreters in the same process since version 1.5 (1997) via the C-API

PEP 554

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- CPython has supported multiple interpreters in the same process since version 1.5 (1997) via the C-API
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PEP 554

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- Introduce the stdlib interpreters modules, high-level interface to subinterpreters
- Functionality for sharing data between interpreters (channel)

Subinterpreters Model

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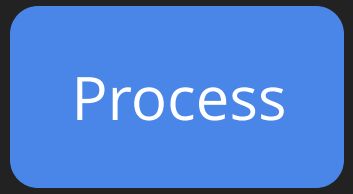

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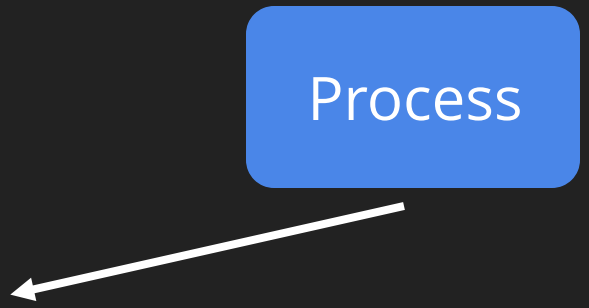

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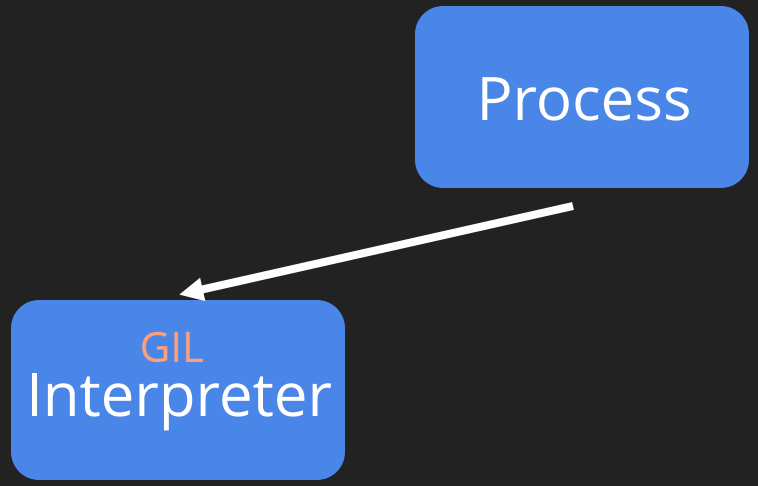

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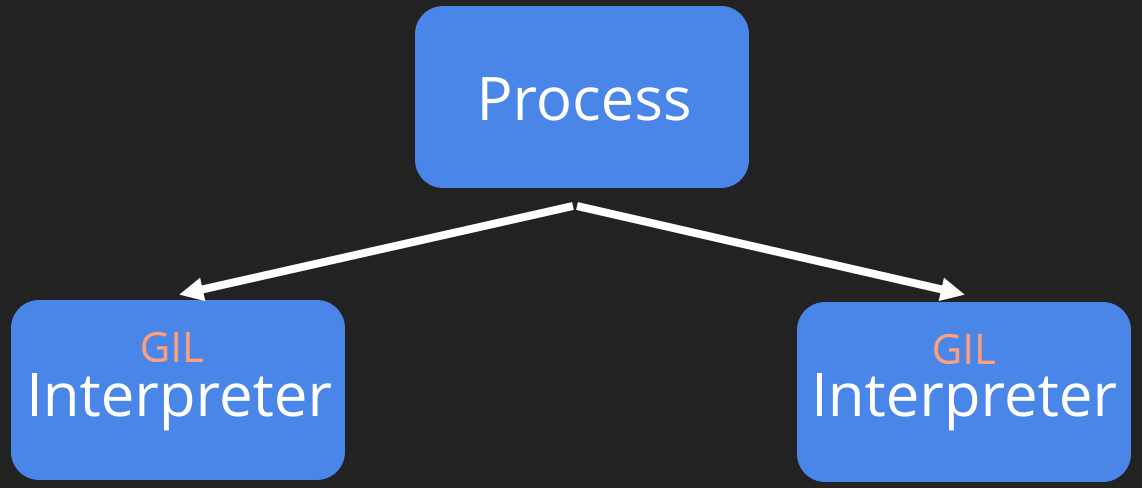

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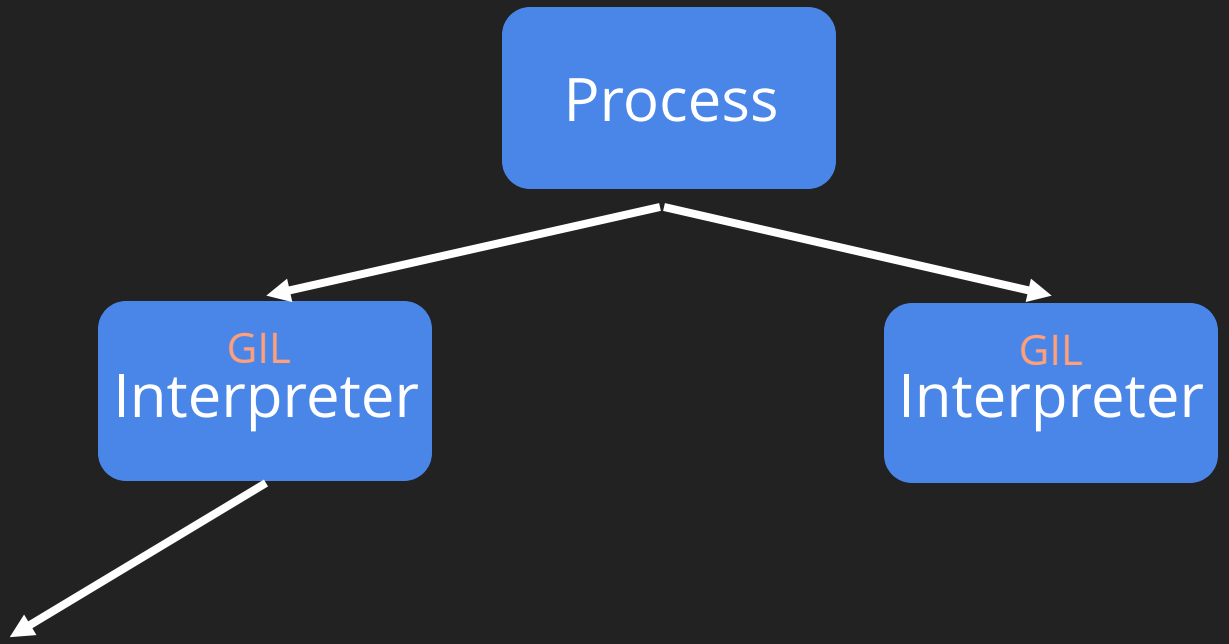

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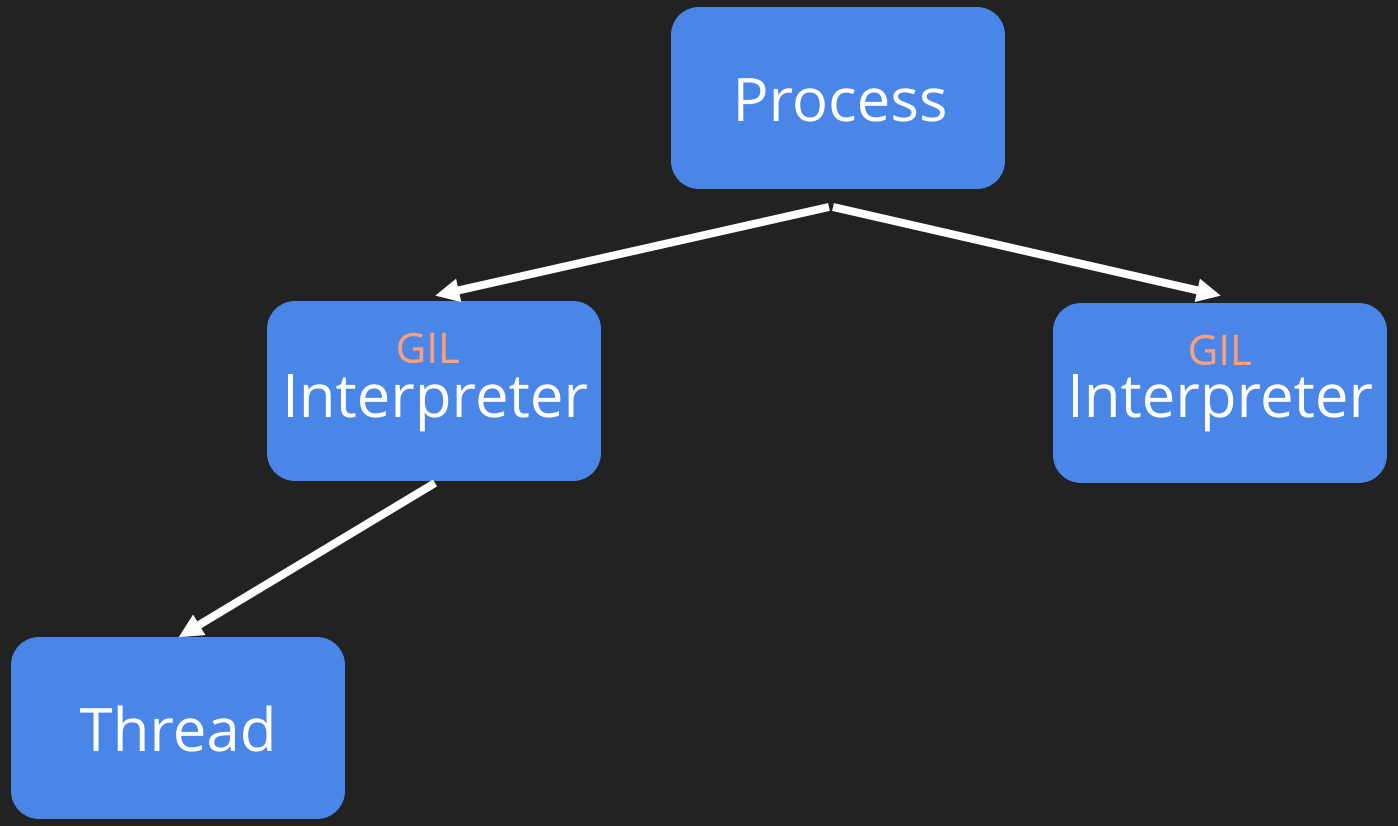

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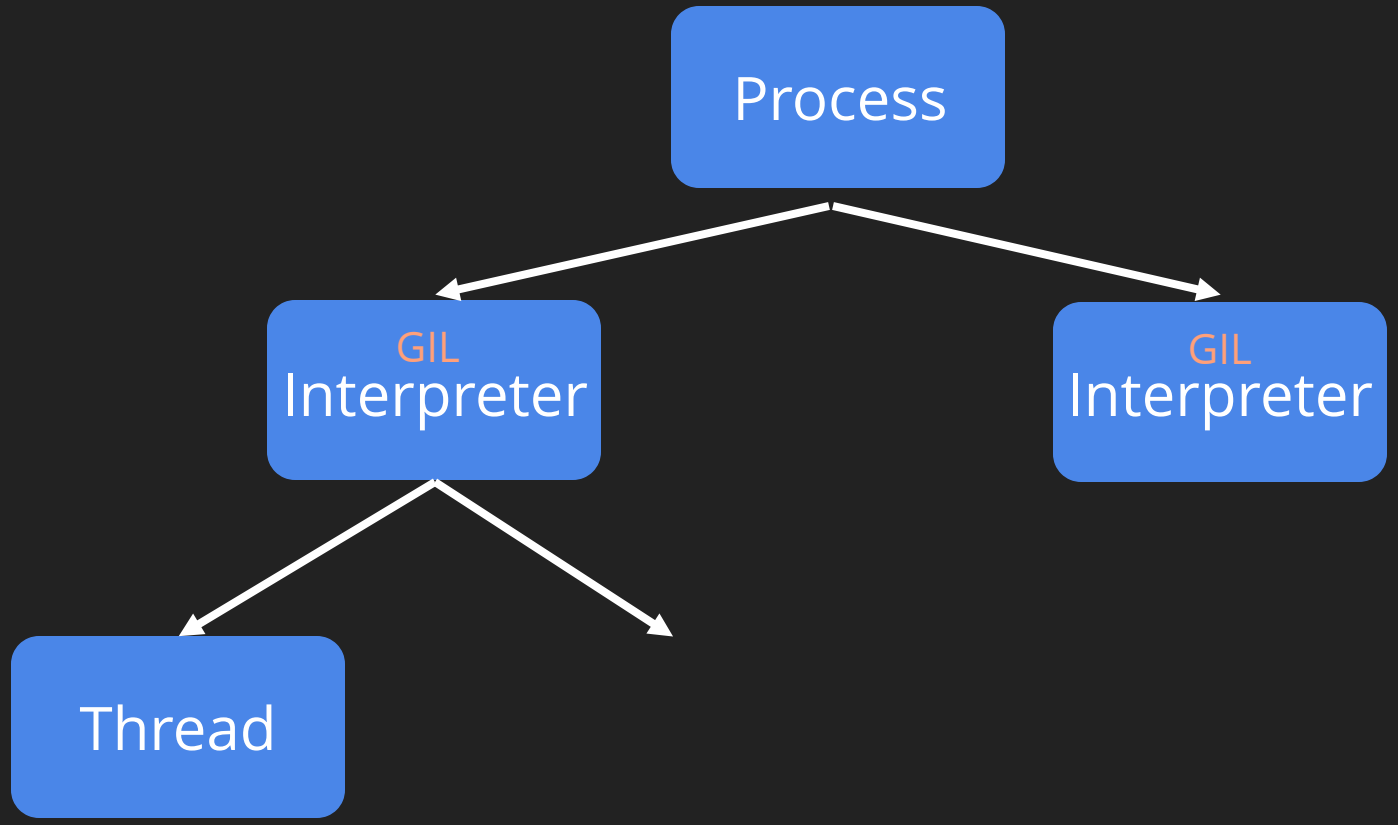

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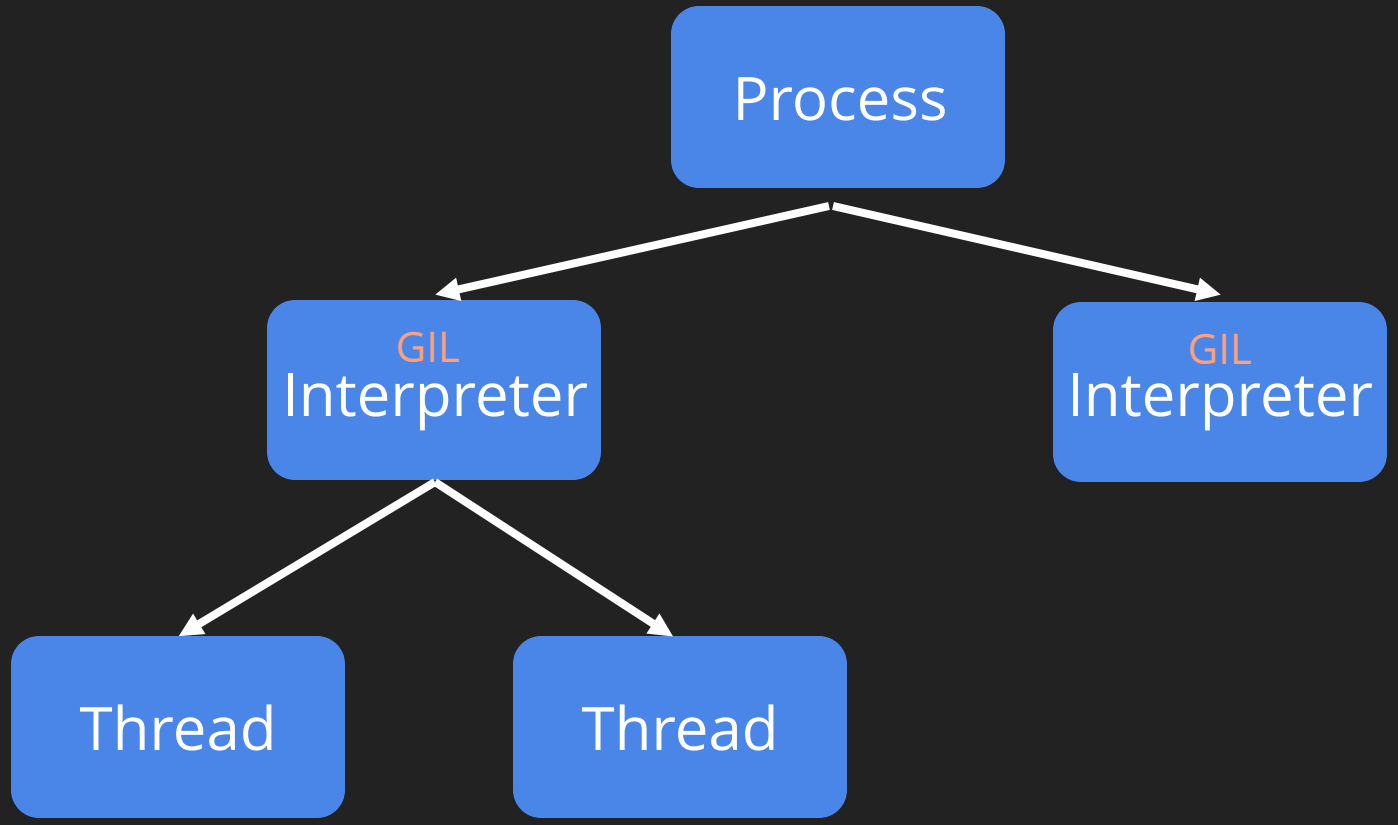

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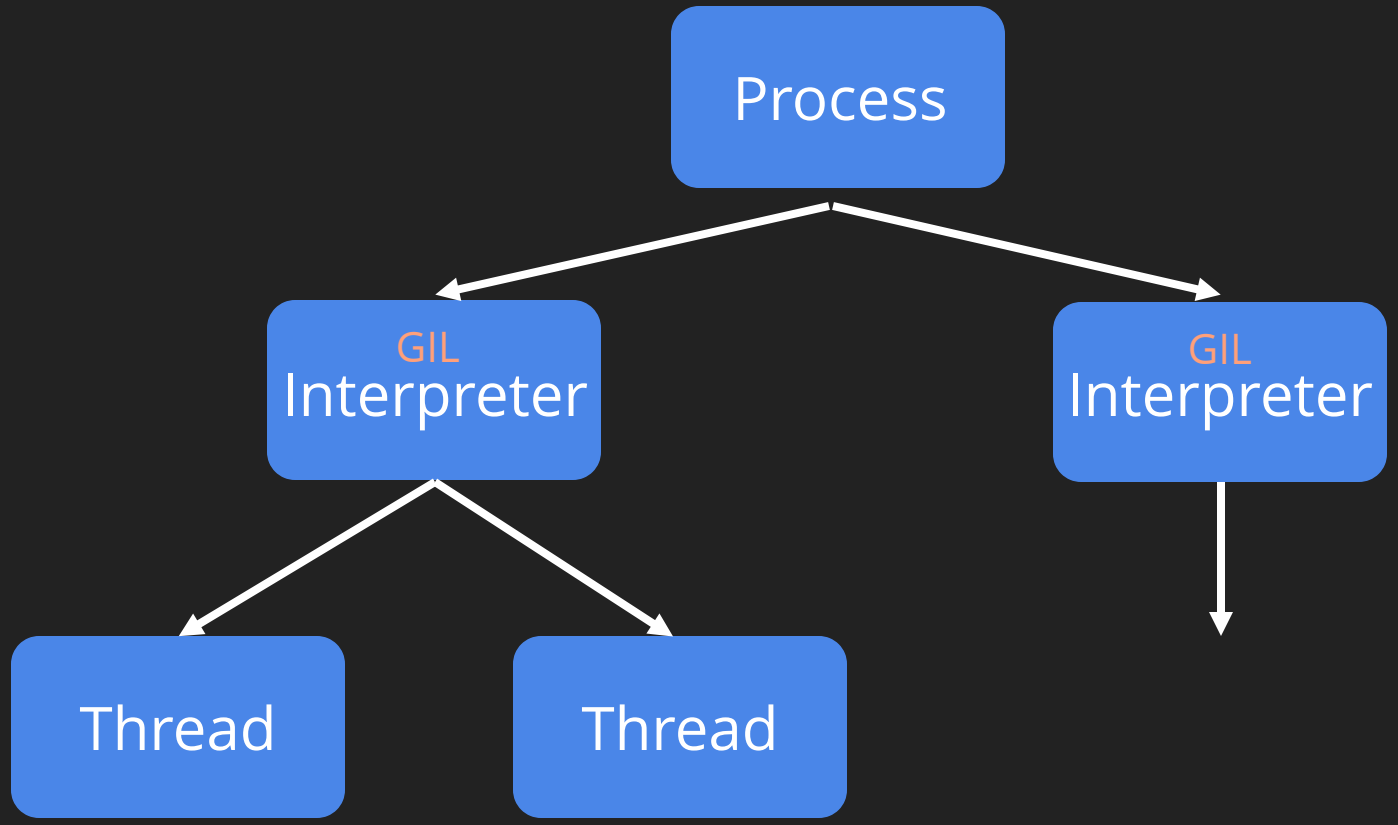

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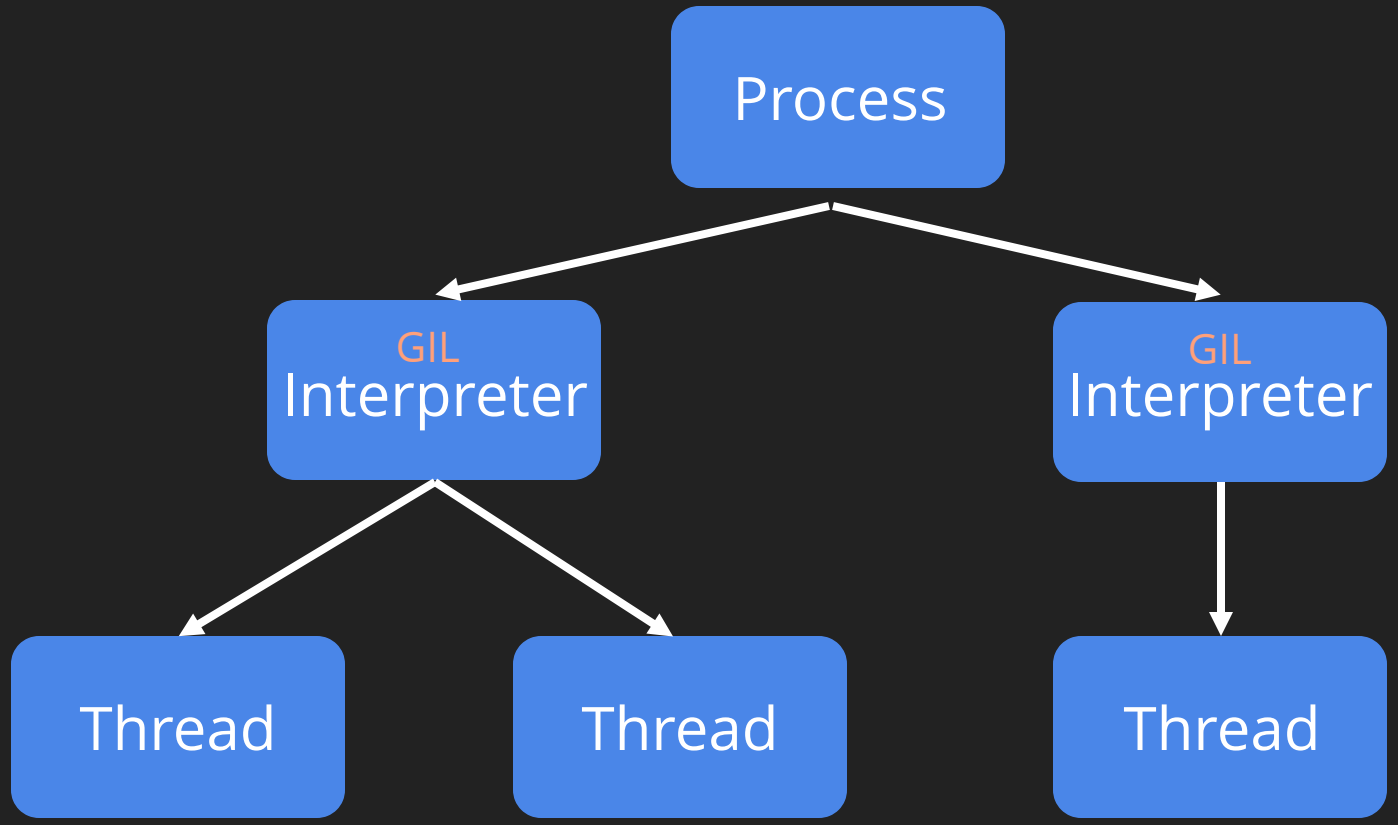

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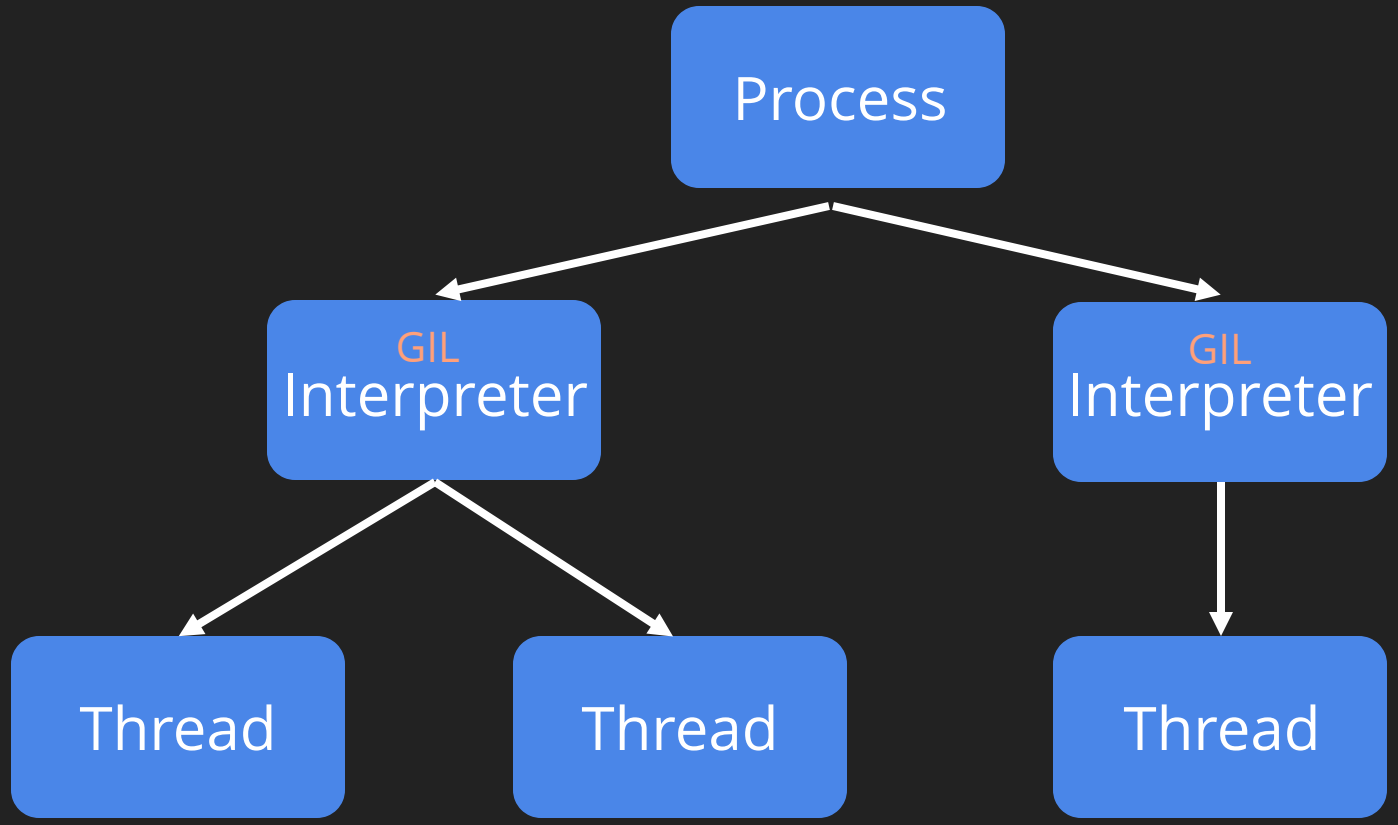

- Sub-interpreter can't access other sub-interpreters' variables

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Support for other basic types (e.g. bool, float) will be added later

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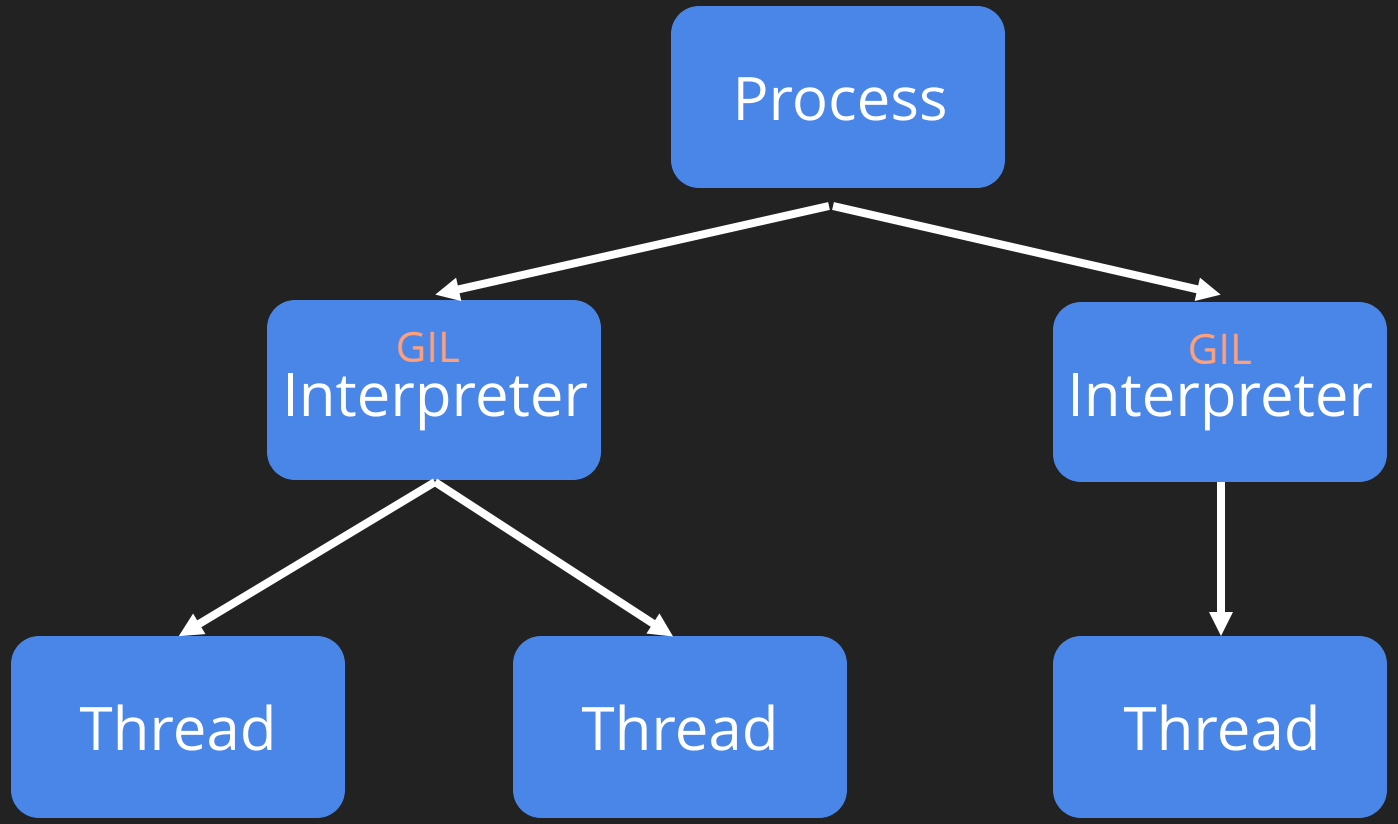

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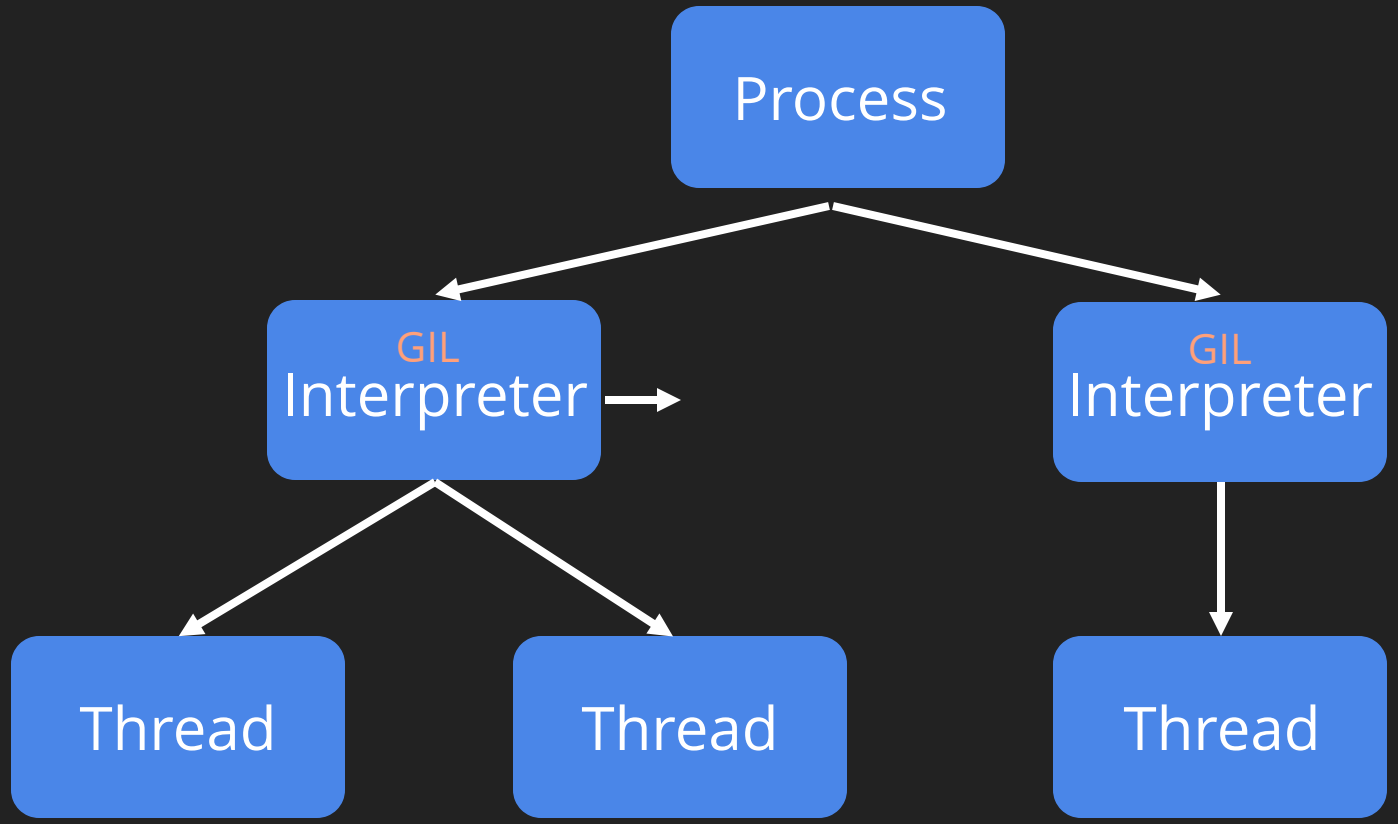

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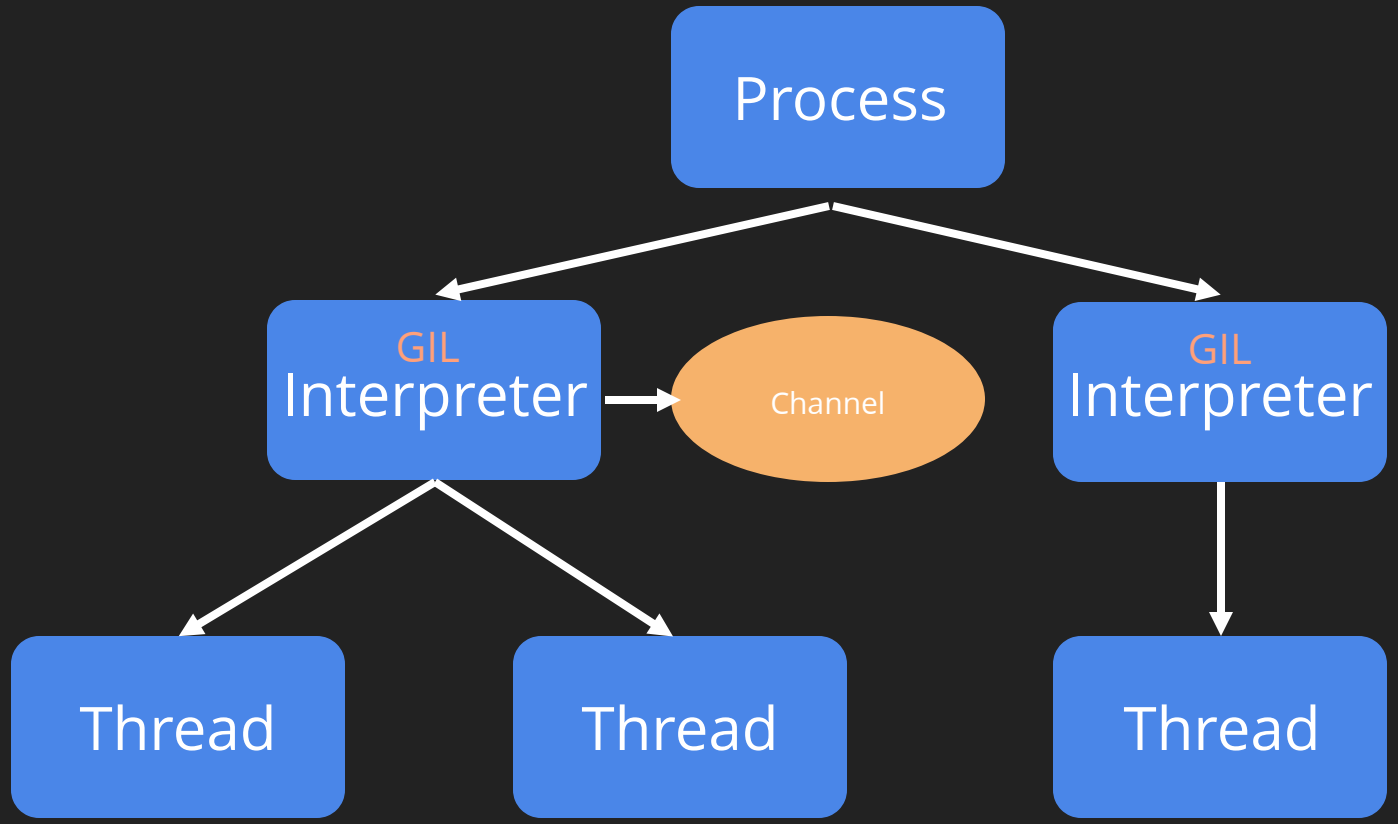

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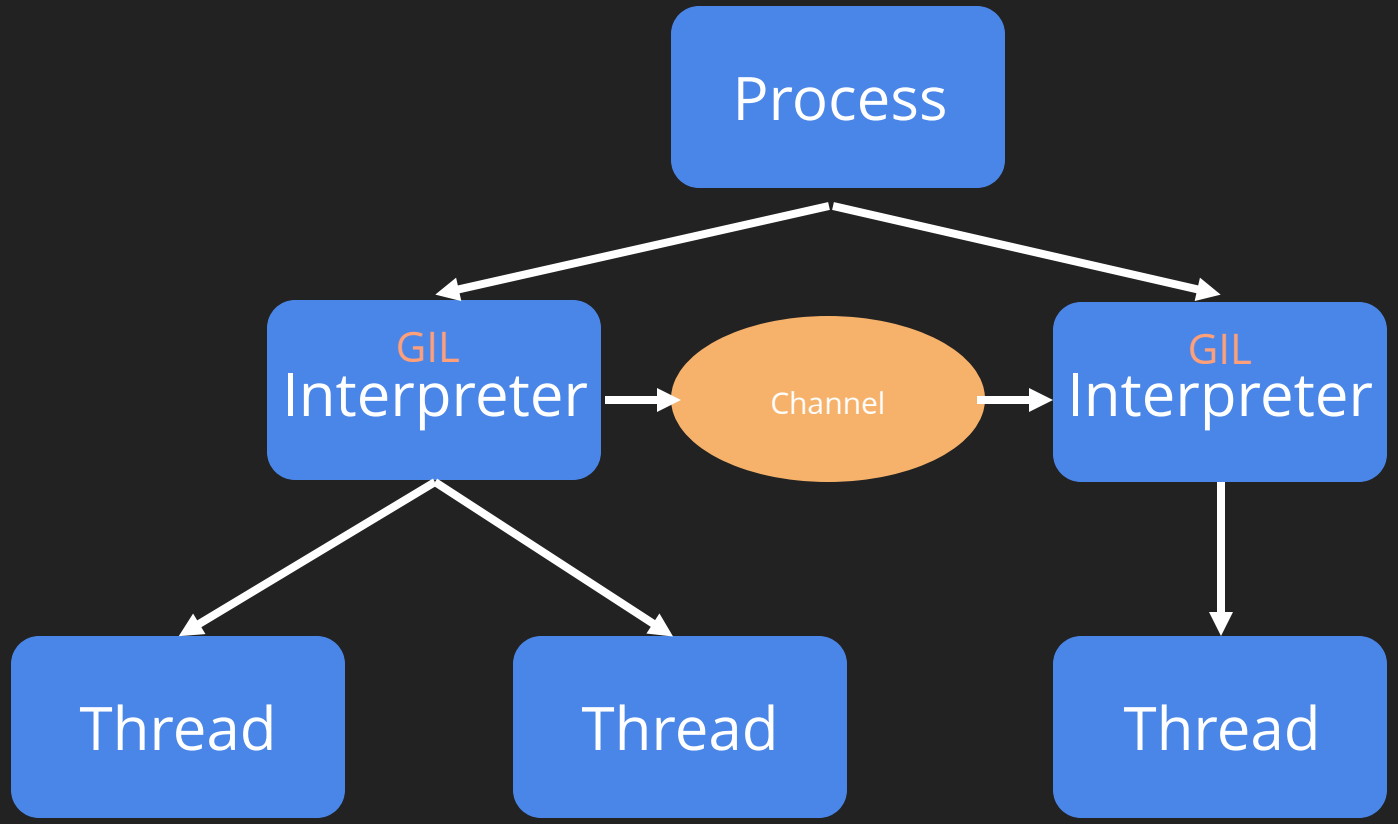

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- Provide a direct route to an alternate concurrency mode

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  - Including the GIL

That's All. Thanks!!!

Contacts

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- Twitter: https://twitter.com/tisoga

Wechat

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