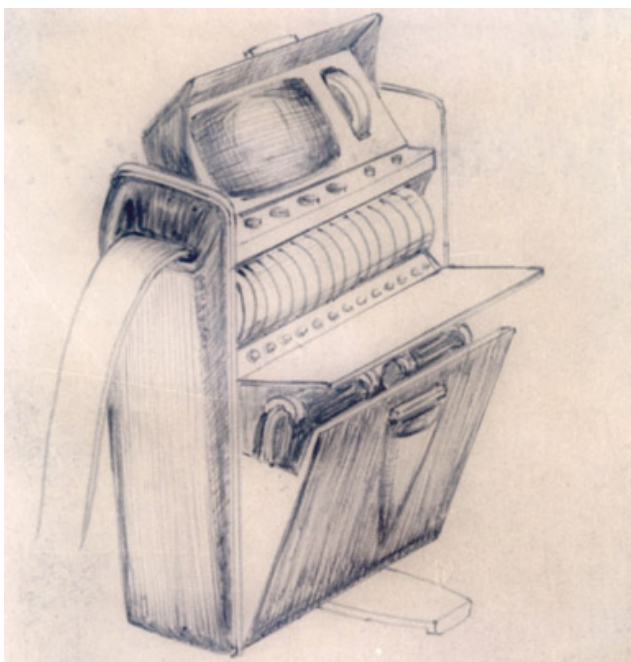




## All Known Surviving TOS Tricorders

This content represents the consensus findings of the world-class experts at the [TrekPropZone](#) board - used here with permission. Their eventual goal of creating a sister website to ours on the classic tricorders. Should you have any questions regarding authentic props, feel free to contact Kevin H., owner of that board, at [Kevin@TrekPropZone.com](mailto:Kevin@TrekPropZone.com).

Shortly into production, [Wah Chang](#) was asked to come up with a prop that would be some manner of recorder. This was his sketch:



Soon after, the device was apparently reimagined as a more versatile recorder./scanner./computer (a "tri"-corder), essential to the mission, so Wah simply rejiggered his design slightly to reflect those broader capacities:



Using the same black [Kydex](#) plastic he utilized a few weeks prior on his [communicators](#), Wah created two units:



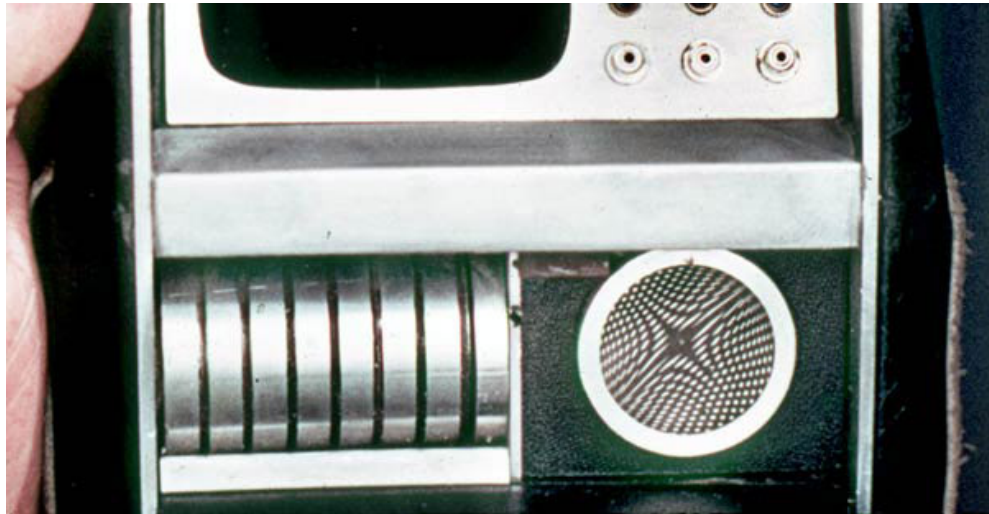
The swiveling top's control panel, with its view screen (a back-painted, heat-slumped clear plastic), incorporated the same [Aur wheels](#) (as knobs) and [transistor radio grill](#) (as its rectangular "vent") that he used in his comms, though the indicator lights were of Swarovski rhinestones, gemstone-capped Art Deco-styled watch winder crowns:



In the next compartment down was a rack of "memory" or "data disks" - actually an aluminum tube with lathed grooves, extending one on the right. That one was probably removable, though never done on screen or imaged in any photographs. To those was a static circular moiré element, like in the communicators. It had no illustrated use on the show, nor have fans ever to what its imaginary function was. It just looked cool. As measured from photos, the outside diameter of this circular element

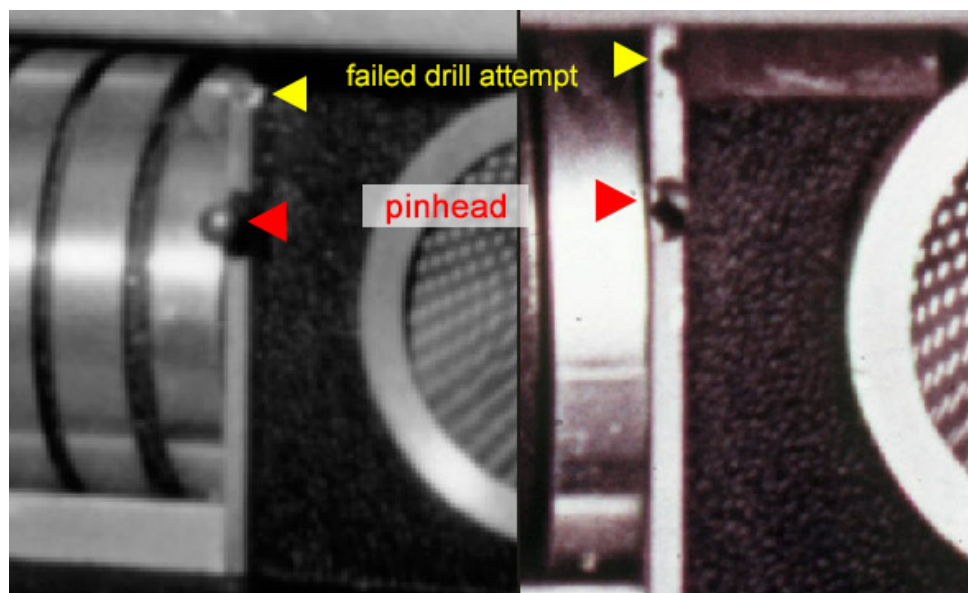


was in the vicinity of the same 1.245" as the [comm moiré bezels](#), so it's safe to assume they, along with the disk rack, were the same aluminum tube.



The third compartment at the bottom was empty, though could be opened for storage. This capacity was also underutilized only a few times when McCoy stashed away his medical scanner. While the tricorder had an appropriately high-tech appearance, some aspects of its design may have ultimately exceeded the more-basic needs on set. The separate data disk was reported to be stored around inside, and putty-like blobs eventually seen on the inside surface of the middle doors suggest they needed help staying in place.

You may have noticed in two of the pictures above what looks to be a pinhead mounted on the edge of the vertical aluminum plate dividing the data disks from the moiré element. This is seen installed in only one of the units (the "Wah A") and well after the tricorder was built. A half-century of debate in the hobby has yet to settle what it actually did. One fun theory has the pin being part of a system for that (presumably) loose right-most data disk, with the pin connected to a wire extending back that would push the disk out of its resting place. However, knowing how precision-perfectly the hole for the pin shaft would need to be drilled down through the narrow plate, and observing the likely failed first attempt at such a drilling higher up on the plate's edge...



... plus given how the top half of the disk is the absolute worst place to locate a mechanism that had to also push the disk out of the bottom rack plate, we here can only surmise it was simply a door stop, preventing the mid-compartment door from getting being pushed in too far.

\* \* \* \* \*

An artistic habit of Wah had him adorning each of the multiple iterations of his props slightly differently, even when conceivably they were to be identical. Bless him for that, as it allows us to easily identify and track each unit today. So here's how the tricorders looked when they arrived fresh on the set:



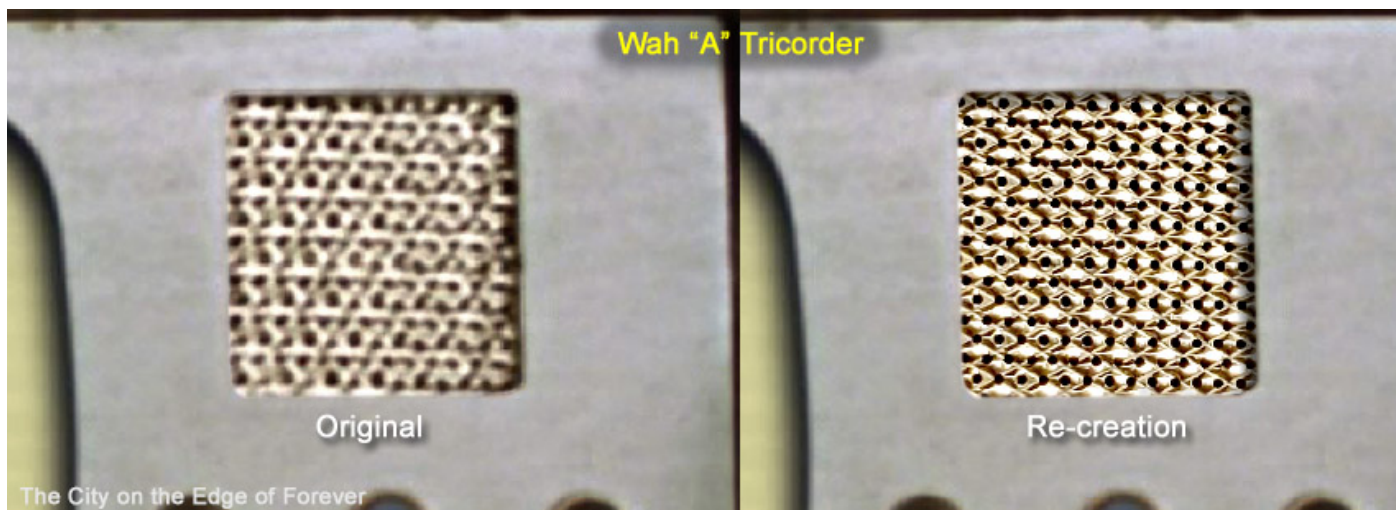
This above unit is by far the best known tricorder, having been photographed the most, and thus is almost exclusively the one copied (or forged). The three watch crowns are blue sapphire, and the "X" moiré pattern in the circular element came from overlapping of two Edmund Scientific patterns Wah earlier used in his hero communicators, simply cut further away from the center of those printed images. Plus the outside compartment handles are straight aluminum strips slotted into the doors – the intense finger grip needed to open it. As a result, all others had "L"-shaped handles.



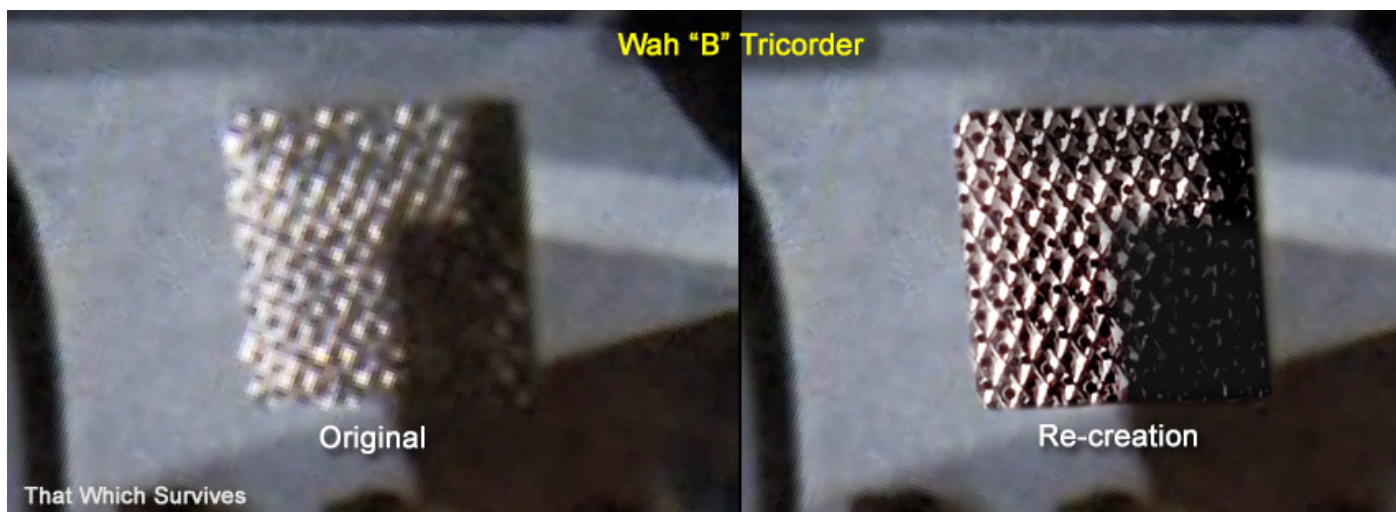
The four big differences that set Wah's less-famous second tricorder apart are: **1)** the mixed color watch crowns (emerald sapphire), **2)** the bent "L"-shaped door handles, **3)** a small black electrical slide-switch (never connected to anything as far as we know) atop the right side of the main crossbar, and **4)** the radiating-prism disk in the mid-compartment's circular element. This was [Jewelarama](#), also from Edmund Scientific, which were incorporated into groovy pendants, pins and earrings of the day. All more clearly in the above-left screenshot the gap between the unitized rack of data disks on the left and the (separate?) one on the right.

A final tiny difference between the two Wah units was in the orientation of the vent grill material. Our study shows that in the "Wah A" unit the embossed diamond pattern (unlike, to our knowledge, every other prop he built with this material) ran horizontally:



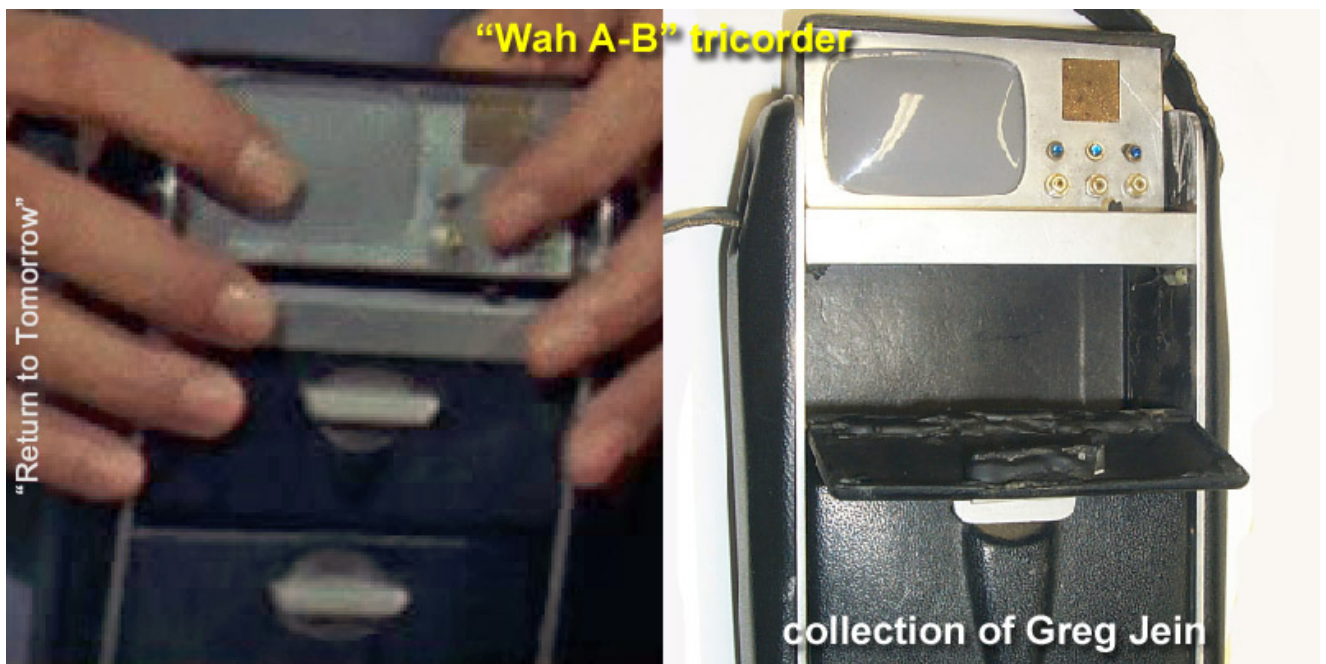


With his "B" unit, the diamond pattern ran the usual vertical:

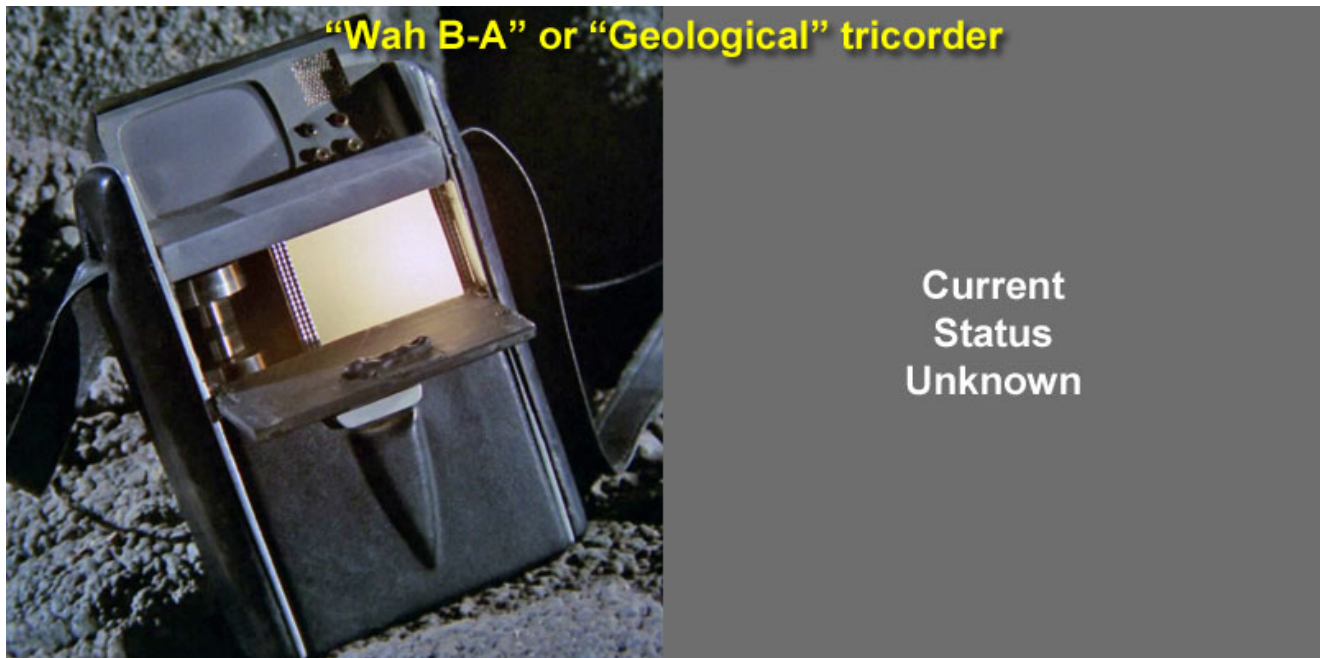


The look of these two props, however, was about to change...

Approaching the end of Season 1, it was decided more tricorders were needed. The studio's prop shop took apart at least (or maybe both) to help make their copies - in fiberglass, as detailed later - and once done they reassembled the original(s), a with wide seam gaps and a heat-damaged top hood edge in the "A." Then, some months later during the break between the second seasons, Wah's two were again disassembled and put back together, this time with significant alterations. The contents of "A" went into the body of "B" (and vice versa), so now the crossbar black switch is seen with the all-blue watch crowns. The shoulder straps were replaced with all-black. Most dramatically, though, the guts of both middle compartments were discarded to be seen again in these or any other copies. This means that ANY alleged "screen-used" tricorder today that has its disk rack element is an absolute fake.



Also minorly on the one above, the square vent grill in the control panel was replaced with a darker, denser gold metal mesh.



After the remixing of parts, this second unit had only one good close-up, in "That Which Survives." It was used by the doomer hence the name "geological." For this episode they filled the middle compartment with a blinking light panel and oddly a portion of a metal camshaft, oriented vertically on the left. And there's the gummy blob on the open door, presumably to keep it normally closed. A wire obviously needed to exit the prop to power the blinking bulb, but no one knows if they drilled a hole or just snaked it through an existing gap somewhere.

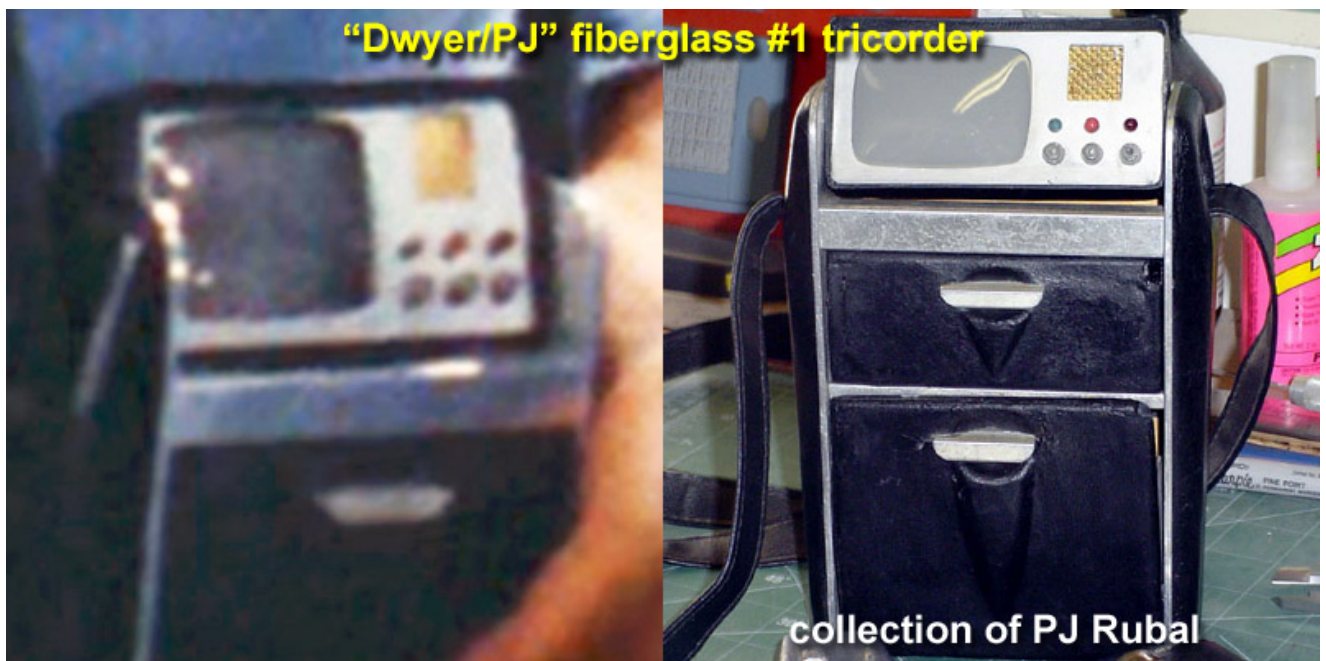
Using their molds of Wah's Kydex parts, the studio shop cast a demonstrable total of three in fiberglass. The control panel had crude knobs, a gold-painted fiberglass fabric in the square vent, and most notably – large hat pins for the three "lights":





It's obvious the Desilu shop guys had no clue at the time what Wah used there for his indicator lights, but what's nice for (similar to Wah) arranged the pins in different color sequences in all three tricorders, making it possible to ID each in screenca

More easy tells vs. the Kydex units: the top hood's side edge angle differs, and the straps are black on both sides instead of b



**"Dwyer/PJ" fiberglass #1 tricorder**

collection of PJ Rubal





The above prop is on display at the [MoPOP museum](https://www.mopopmuseum.org/) in Seattle.



Season 3 saw two more tricorders appear, no doubt also made by the studio shop. Instead of Kydex or fiberglass, though, exterior is a thin leather-ish material stretched over wood panels. At least this time they replicated the indicator lights with jew crowns (again differing in color arrangement) and the control knobs are machined metal to match Wah's original (slot car wheel



A curious note - the pastel-colored watch crowns used in these two units have never been seen available on eBay, unlike the red and green-jeweled crowns in Wah's tricorders, which are often up for sale.







**“Leatherette #2” tricorder**

**Current  
Status  
Unknown**

There was also seen a few times a crude stunt version, likely just a cardboard box or chunk of foam wrapped in black tape v lines. Nobody has any notion it actually survived:



**stunt tricorder**

**Current  
Status  
Unknown**

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