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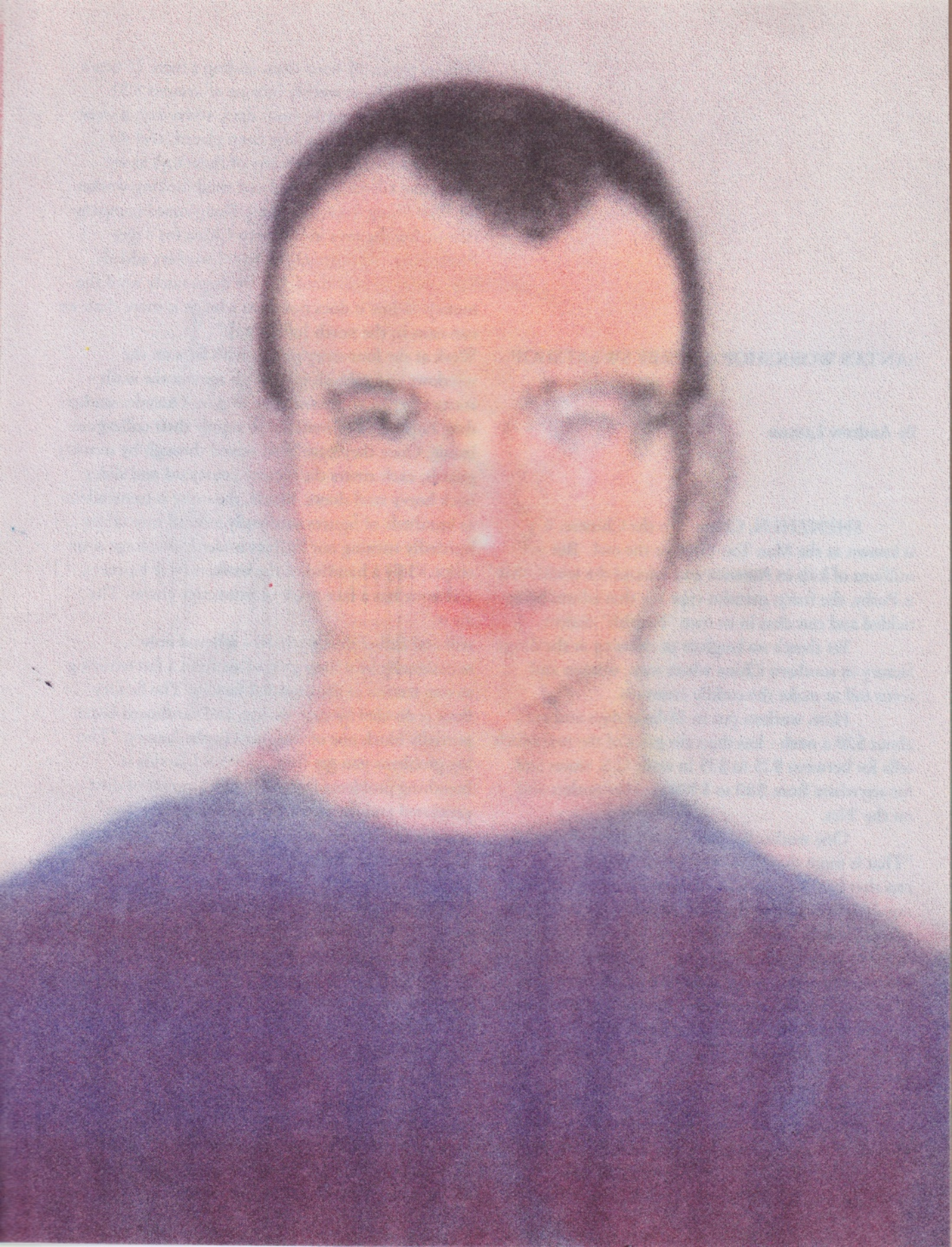
Bernard Leroy

(déstallation)

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Bernard Leroy était assis devant le corps
sans vie du furby dissectioné, son regard fixé sur
ses mains couvertes de sang pourpre et de miel...
Furb-killer!



SANTA'S WORKSHOP A FURBY SWEATSHOP

By Andrew Laxton

SHENZHEN, China - To the Chinese, it is known as the Mao Tou Ying, or the owl. But to millions of kids in America and around the world, this is Furby, the furry, gremlin-type toy that adores being tickled and can chat in its own "Furbish" dialect.

Yet there's no laughter or chatting at the dingy factory in southern China where men, women and teens toil to make the cuddly creatures.

Here, workers put in 14-hour days and earn about \$20 a week - less than the price of the toy, which sells for between \$25 to \$35 in some U.S. stores and for anywhere from \$80 to \$300 at other outlets and on the 'Net.

One worker laughed bitterly at the disparity. "That is more than half my monthly salary - how can that be?" he said when told of Furby's retail price tag. "We are making thousands of these toys a day, so where is all the profit going?"

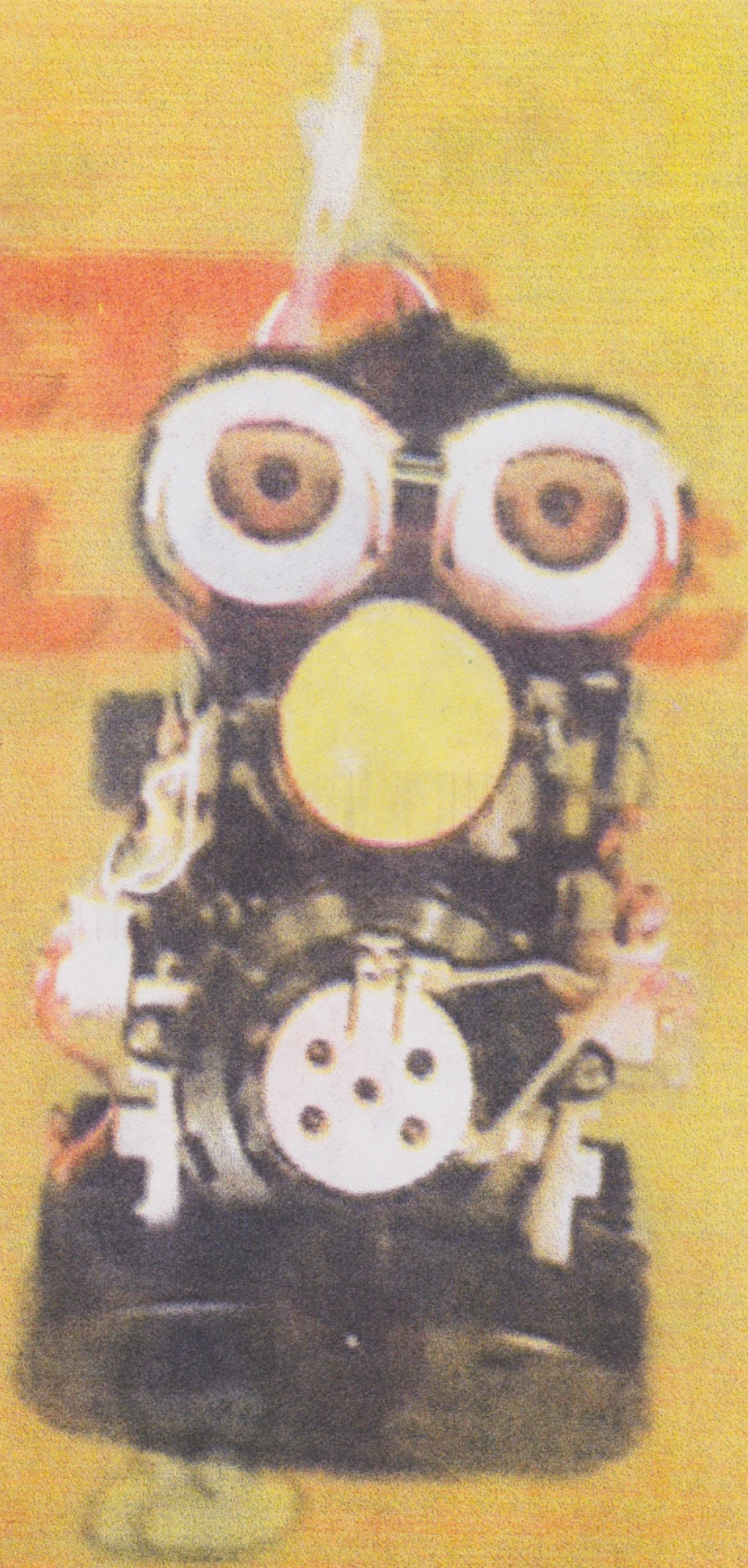
Vernon, Ill.-based Tiger Electronics said it has manufactured about 2 million Furbies since late August and early September. That compares with an estimated 900,000 Tickle-Me-Elmo dolls sold in roughly the same pre-Christmas time frame two years ago.

The manufacturing push is generated at four southern Chinese factories, Tiger Electronics officials said. At this one in Shenzhen, conditions are grim. Workers earn about \$3.02 a day for a minimum eight-hour workday. But in the pre-Christmas frenzy,

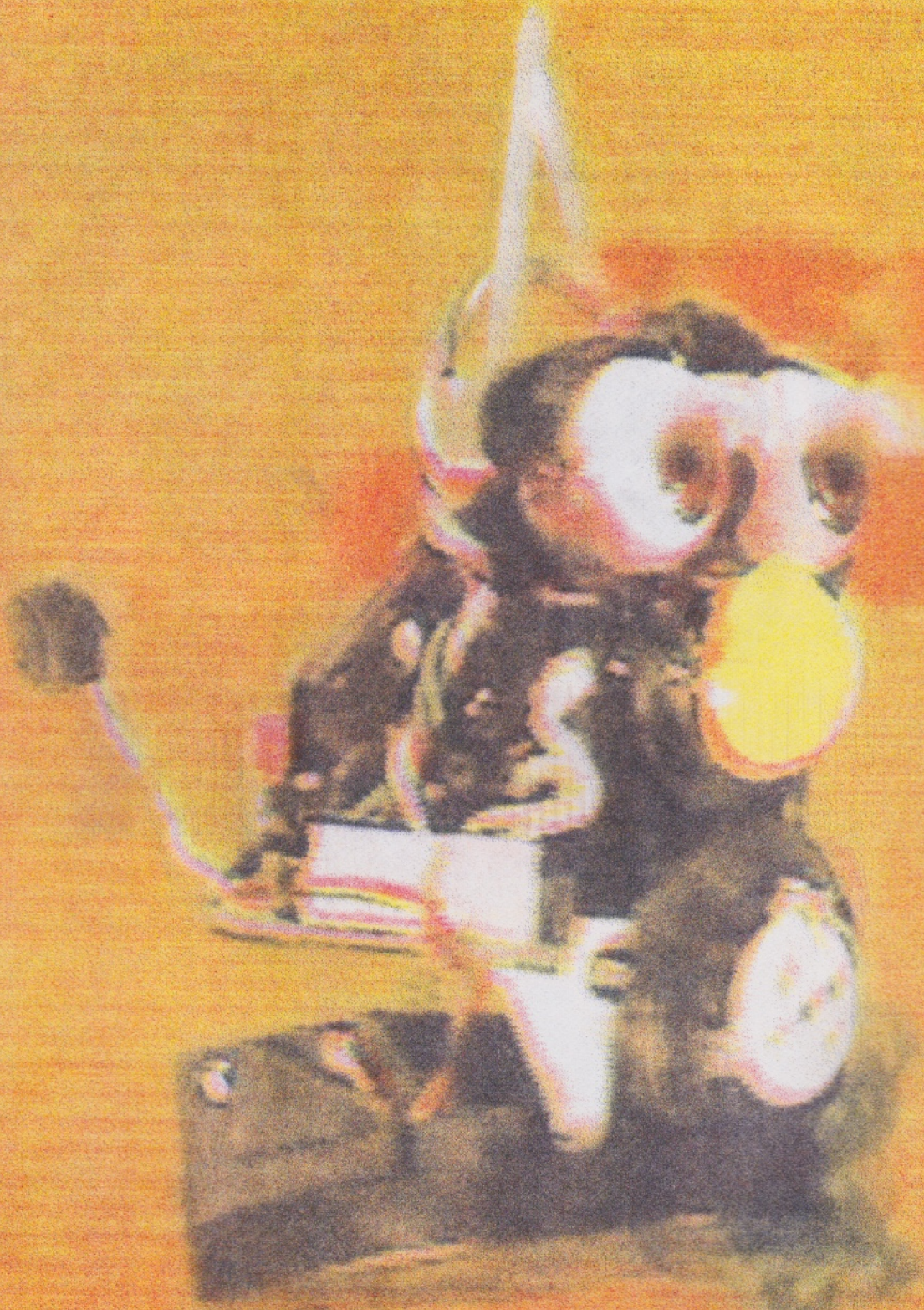
workers put in 14-hour days, adding a mere 25 cents an hour to a basic weekly income of around \$20. "We are all working 14-hour days, seven days a week. Some very large orders have been placed, and we are in a rush to make as many of these toys as we can before Christmas," said one tired-looking worker for Wah Shing Toys, the Hong-Kong-based company that makes the toys in southern China for Tiger Electronics. Another of the 5,000 workers added: "Yes, we're all very tired, but we desperately need the money. While it does not seem a lot, it is more than we can earn in the north [of China]."

Work at the four-story plant - with bars on the windows and rubbish piled high against the walls - starts at dawn and finishes at 10 p.m. Outside, workers drag huge sacks of material to supply their colleagues inside. Once they have been waved through by security guards, each enters the factory courtyard and slides back heavy steel doors. Inside, the noise is tremendous as hundreds of figures sit silently around tiny tables hurriedly turning out Furbies under low-voltage neon strips. Only a handful of the workers wear hairnets, and none has a face mask or protective gloves. The air is still and full of dust particles - relieved only occasionally by a limp gust of air from a fan whirring in one section of the crowded factory. The factory floor is divided by cage wiring, and cardboard boxes partially block one of the doors to the factory. "The big problems you get from factories like this is breathing problems from the large amount of dust generated and the chemicals used in production," said Chan Ka-wai, associate director of the Hong Kong Christian Industrial Committee. The committee is an independent organization monitoring working conditions and factory safety in the region. "Working long hours is dangerous, especially when the job is monotonous because the staff are prone to falling asleep while using machinery. "In terms of the physical safety of the building, production safety and working conditions, I would say there are clear violations. If a fire broke out there would be serious problems."

The scene is duplicated across China, which makes 90 percent of the world's toys. A fire at one toy factory on China's east coast in 1993 killed 87 women and badly injured 40. Even on brief meal breaks or at the end of a day, there is little respite for the workers.







The majority live in dormitories provided by Wah Shing - but the accommodations do not come free. Most pay \$10 a month to share a cramped room that often sleeps up to eight people. There's a hole in the floor for a lavatory and a filthy, stained wash basin. Workers are given a food allowance of 8 cents a meal. But the cheapest - a bowl of rice and a few vegetable tops - costs twice that.

"The food here is appalling," one of the workers said. "All we can afford is rice with vegetable tops." Yet the factory has no problem finding workers. Each day, job-seekers from rural areas, where there is little or no work, line up outside the factory gates. Under the 1994 Chinese National Labor Law, Chinese employees should work no more than eight hours a day, five days a week, with overtime not exceeding 36 hours a month, paid at time-and-a-half and double time. But few workers are aware of their rights. They are just grateful to be employed and earning enough money for their next meal.

The toy industry is powerful in this part of China. It is the biggest employer, with an estimated 2,000 factories churning out the world's best-loved toys. Tiger Electronics, the company behind Furby, is an international subsidiary of Hasbro, the second-largest toy company in the world and the maker of such favorites as Action Man, Sindy and Monopoly.

Hasbro was criticized for "poverty pay and appalling working conditions" in Asia in a 1996 report by the Third World pressure group the World Development Movement. Tiger Electronics executives - like those of many other Western companies - say the use of cheap Chinese labor is merely the harsh reality of a capitalist global economy. Marc Rosenberg, vice-president of corporate communications at Tiger's headquarters in Illinois, disputed The Post's account of conditions, saying American staffers check regularly to ensure the environment meets Hasbro's "code of ethics." "The condition in all of our factories is audited, and U.S. staff are in them regularly, and the conditions are reasonable," he said. "As for the wages and working hours, Hasbro has a strict code of ethics, and every one [of our factories] meets or exceeds those standards." He called the salary "competitive to the economic environment in Asia." This argument gets short shrift from Chan Ka-wai, associate director of the Christian Industrial Council.

"I get sick and tired of international toy companies saying that 'everyone else does it in China, so why can't we?' "There are a lot of thieves in this world, too - but it doesn't make it right for me to go out and steal," he noted.

"It's all very well for Tiger Electronics to disassociate itself from the problems, but it has a moral obligation to ensure that its suppliers are providing a good, safe and healthy workplace for staff. "From what these workers have said, this company is in violation of this law. But, unfortunately, because very few workers are aware of their rights, little is done." What the international toy companies do is little more than exploitation, he said. "These people have enough for bare necessities like clothes and food, but if they earned more with overtime, they would still not be able to afford health care or education," he said. "This is classified as peak season because of the seasonal demand, so they can expect their earning potential to go down in low season."

I hope this opens peoples' eyes. I get a lot of mail about how I am a sick, twisted individual who is contributing to the downfall of society. But who is more evil? Me, for making a website where you can kill Furby in a pretend world, or them, the guys who allow people to work long hours in such poor conditions so they can buy another car?

These people work their asses off to make Furby, and they don't get jack. Now that's a damn shame. Maybe now you will feel justified in killing Furby! Go kill Furby now! You can tell the world how you feel about this on the Global Assassins' Network!


Check it out!





By convention there is a killer,
By convention evergreen,
By convention hitman,
In every of Casandra.

merci à Reg.



By convention there is a killer,
By convention sweetness,
By convention bitterness,
in memory of Cassandra.

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ontwerp - conception -
design:

Martha C.

met de steun van:
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MET DE MEDEWERKING VAN

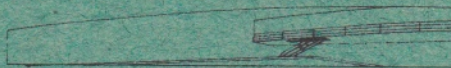


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