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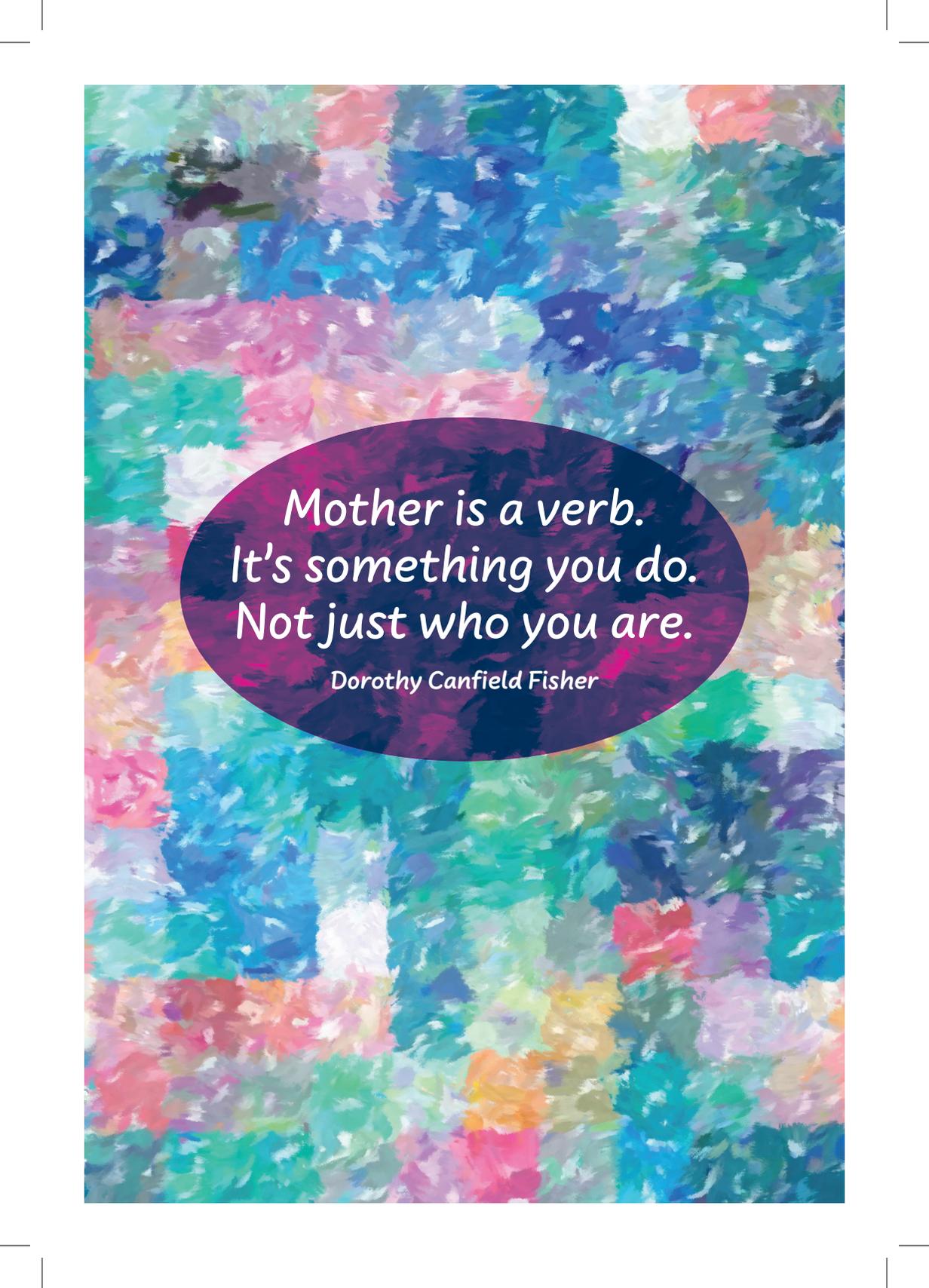


WARCRY

CULTURE & SPIRITUALITY

**Keeping
it real**
Navigating the
journey of
motherhood





*Mother is a verb.
It's something you do.
Not just who you are.*

Dorothy Canfield Fisher



The Salvation Army is about giving hope where it's needed most.

What is The Salvation Army?

The Salvation Army, an international movement, is an evangelical part of the universal Christian Church.

Vision Statement

Wherever there is hardship or injustice, Salvos will live, love and fight alongside others to transform Australia one life at a time with the love of Jesus.

Mission Statement

The Salvation Army is a Christian movement dedicated to sharing the love of Jesus by:

- Caring for people
- Creating faith pathways
- Building healthy communities
- Working for justice

WARCRY

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[04]
Feature

Keeping it real

[8]
Lifestyle

When Mother's Day is difficult

[10]
Faith talk

On a wing and a prayer

From the editor

"Mother is a verb. It's something you do. Not just who you are." This quote on page two of *Warcry* has provoked conflicting thoughts and feelings in me. And our feature article on Vanessa Hunt confirms why I am feeling conflicted.

Yes, 'mother' does describe what is done and in some countries Mother's Day is called Mothering Sunday. However, for many, 'mother' also encompasses who they are and for them that's okay.

Parenting is more than a bunch of actions. There is emotional investment and the giving of wisdom, time and practical care. I believe that best-practice parenting includes loads of love, forgiveness and encouragement.

My experience is that you can't just 'do' emotion, love, forgiveness and fair-dinkum encouragement.

As Vanessa outlines, there is a massive amount of doing and loving when it comes to family life. Her story provides challenge and uplift.

Laurie Robertson, Lieut-Colonel **Editor-in-Chief**

Keeping it real

Vanessa Hunt is navigating the challenging but rewarding journey of motherhood.

BY SIMONE WORTHING



PHOTO: KIAN WORTHING

Captain Vanessa Hunt is a Jesus follower, wife, mother, foster mother, Salvation Army officer (minister), daughter, sister and friend to many. She and her husband, Lieutenant Anthony Hunt, have three biological children under six, and two teenage foster children. Together they run a busy corps (church) in Brisbane's west and are active in the local community. As well as juggling all these responsibilities, joys, challenges, part-time study and trying to squeeze in time for herself, Vanessa also has to deal with the effects of a stroke in September 2016 which has affected how she regulates energy, and her vision.

Vanessa recently shared her story with Warcry, on the condition that she could "keep it real".

"My mothering journey really began before I was married and before I had my first biological child," she shares.

"In some of my ministries I worked with kids and young people and just loved their innocence and joy, having them around and being in the midst of them, especially when adult life was stressful.

"I have a nurturing heart, and was often called the Pied Piper as kids would just follow me around."

This reputation continued when Vanessa attended The Salvation Army School for Officer Training in 2010-11. She was jokingly referred to as Mary Poppins, and was always volunteering to babysit and hang out with the children of the married couples in training with her.

When Vanessa and Anthony were dating, they encouraged and assisted many children and young people together.

"Even before I met Anthony, I knew I wanted to foster children," says Vanessa.

"I have an undergraduate degree in social work and saw terrible things happening to children during my placements. I knew then, at the age of 19, that I would foster; it was just a matter of when.

"One of my first conversations with Anthony was around fostering and what he thought of making a home open to other kids and inclusive. He said he had grown up in a home like that and wanted to continue being open. I knew then that our conversations could continue!"

Vanessa and Anthony were married in October 2013, with their first child, Tobias, arriving 11 months later in August 2014.

"I just didn't realise it was even possible to love a little human being that much," says Vanessa.

"Our children are such a blessing and I don't take them for granted, especially as I have friends who have really struggled to have babies.

"Motherhood is relentless though, and self-sacrificial, and I never fully realised this until I had Tobias. It made me appreciate my mum, who was a single mum, so much more."

The Hunts' daughter, Esther, was born in June 2016, while Anthony was a cadet ▶

in the School for Officer Training. Their second son, Rupert, came along in July 2018, during their appointment as corps officers (ministers) at Forest Lake (Qld).

“It’s a tricky juggle, a real battle actually, to look after everyone else and still find time to look after myself,” Vanessa shares.

When Esther was only three months old, Vanessa had a stroke — extremely rare for such a young woman. She had to learn quickly that she couldn’t do everything herself and had to accept support.

“I had to be okay with some limitations and not be ashamed of that,” she says. “It was really a big journey; I had almost prided myself on being independent and self-sufficient.

“I had to rely on others, learn alternative ways of doing things, and say ‘No’ sometimes. These were lessons I also took into my parenting journey.”

Vanessa’s vision returned, almost in full, and she can again drive a car. She does, though, still suffer bouts of fatigue if she “overdoes it”.

Vanessa and Anthony’s foster children, Abbie and Eli (names have been changed), both teenagers, came to the Hunts in 2017.

“Although we hadn’t planned on having foster children when our biological children were so young, I love that they will grow up from their early years, knowing that we care for everyone and are inclusive,” Vanessa says.

“We love the opportunities it gives the big kids and what it teaches the little ones,

but fostering is not a walk in the park and we definitely have our good and not-so-good days. We just take each day as it comes, savour the sweet moments and push through the challenging ones.

“When Rupert was born, it was our first big life change that we all navigated together and it’s been a unifying force.”

Vanessa explains that she is learning to be mindful and enjoy life’s beautiful moments and opportunities for attachment, rather than getting stuck in the daily grind of life.

“Of course, I still fall into the trap of getting caught up in things that need to be done, but I am trying to be intentional about looking for moments to connect as well as doing my ‘mummy jobs’.

“I saw a quote once that said ‘Kids don’t say, ‘I’ve had a bad day’; they ask you to play with them’ and that’s what I’m learning to see and respond to.”

Vanessa’s ongoing faith journey and teaching her children about Jesus is paramount.

“We just try to incorporate faith into our everyday life and conversations, rather than force the big kids to come to church or sit around the table each night to read the Bible,” she explains.

“With the little kids I’ve started a tradition where I have a one-on-one moment with them before they head into childcare. Together we say (and do actions): ‘Be brave, be kind-hearted. Have fun! God is with you today.’

“I want my kids growing up knowing that

God is interested in and is with them in their everyday comings and goings and not just on Sundays when we go to church. I'm intentional about sowing those seeds now when they are young.

"The big kids have had some tough experiences in life, but we are teaching them, and ourselves too, that the love of God can sustain and heal you.

"A life with Jesus will not be free from challenges, but you have someone with you through those times, always.

"When challenges come, and they have done and will continue, I know God is with me and that sustains me.

"I couldn't be a parent, particularly a foster parent, without faith in someone bigger and more powerful. I call on Jesus a lot, because he can do things that I can't.

"I want to be real for my kids, to provide a safe and loving family and opportunities for a different life. It's a challenging journey but so incredibly rewarding.

"My big kids didn't choose to be in the position they're in, or the environment they were born into, and they love their biological family, as well as being part of ours.

"We are here to support them in their conflicting journey, help change their circumstances and we find that our own hearts are changing in the process.

"I try to keep it all real and I literally have no energy for anything else."

Anthony says that Vanessa is a mum who is "sacrificial, loving, always putting others first, and always engaged with the kids and their needs".

"She brings to our children a kind heart and grace. She makes sure they know it's not about being perfect but giving it a go and being okay with your shortcomings.

"She models what it means to live out faith. It's not an abstract idea, but it is how you do life following Jesus, because they see this in her."



Vanessa Hunt with her husband, Anthony, and their youngest child, Rupert.

PHOTO: KIAN WORTHING

When Mother's Day is difficult

How to deal with a celebration that may be painful.

BY COLLEEN MORRIS

How do I celebrate Mother's Day if I've lost my mum?

If your bereavement is recent, Mother's Day may feel unbearable because of the overwhelming yet often private pain you are experiencing. It is not easy to hold and contain your sadness when there are reminders everywhere — the supermarket, shopping centre, social media, television and billboards all promote Mother's Day with images designed to evoke powerful feelings of nostalgia and love. Even when significant time has elapsed, these reminders can evoke bittersweet memories that can retrigger the grief and sadness.

How you choose to enter into this day is a personal choice; in fact, it may be too painful to bring any remembrance to the day. It is perfectly alright to feel like that, however it is important to plan how you will spend the day for your own mental well-being. Spoil yourself a little, such as going for a walk in a park, buying yourself some flowers, going for a drive or having lunch at a cafe. Do something for yourself that feels nurturing and relaxing.

If you choose to celebrate your mother, there are many lovely ways to remember her. You might like to light a candle that burns throughout the day, write a letter to your mother to give expression to your grief, visit your mother's favourite places, spend time with your siblings, go to a Mother's Day service at your local church, or honour your mother's memory by inviting someone who will also be alone on Mother's Day to share part of your day.

How do I celebrate with my mum if she is unwell, in hospital or in a nursing home?

This can be a challenging circumstance, especially if your mother is not highly responsive to your care. While it is nice to receive expressions of thanks from our mother when we deliver our gift or do something special for her, 'reframing' the purpose of Mother's Day may be helpful in approaching your mother's vulnerable state.

Mother's Day is as much about us as it is about our mothers. It is likely that your mother has 'gifted' you in innumerable

ways over your lifetime. Your mother's womb kept you safe and warm and her body nourished and grew you; Mum 'patched' you up when you fell over, fed you, tucked you in at night and ensured your well-being in countless ways over your childhood. It's an occasion to show our gratitude. Even when our mother is not able to appreciate our efforts to show she is loved, our act of giving is an expression of gratitude that means something to us, the givers.

How do I cope with Mother's Day if my relationship with my mother has broken down?

Sometimes a relationship breakdown feels much like a death and special days such as Mother's Day can bring these feelings to the surface again. If this is your experience, be kind to yourself and plan to do what feels best for you. (Try some of my previous suggestions.) Where visits with your mother have not been pleasant, it is important to think about how you can look after yourself in the encounter. You might consider

inviting your mother to meet at a local cafe or other neutral location. Keep your visit within a manageable time-frame and plan what you will talk about. If certain conversations trigger conflicts, think about how you can redirect the conversation should they occur.

How do I cope with Mother's Day if my relationship with my child/children is troubled?

Being a mother is a privilege that brings both pleasure and pain. When the relationship is troubled it can cause deep emotional pain, particularly if your children have cut off contact or make little effort to acknowledge you. If this is your experience, plan to do something that brings you pleasure; you might choose to write a caring letter to your child or even send them flowers — if you feel ready to extend the olive branch, this might be your opportunity.

Colleen Morris is a family therapist and counsellor at Watersedge Counselling in Geelong, Vic.



On a wing and a prayer

Having a bird's-eye view of this mother's concern was a reminder of God's love.

BY BELINDA DAVIS



I discovered the cutest little thing in our backyard recently. Perched on a branch of one of our bushes was a baby bird. It was no bigger than a ping-pong ball, had teeny tiny feathers and was completely adorable.

The only problem was that I didn't think it was supposed to be there. I couldn't see any nest nearby, and it didn't seem strong enough to fly very far. I wondered how it had got there, and where it was trying to go. It kept making efforts to fly, but only managed to move a few centimetres at a time.

As I observed this little creature I had to resist the overwhelming urge to scoop

it up and try to find its nest. Surely my intervention was needed here — but I recalled hearing accounts of baby animals being rejected by their parents when they've picked up the scent of well-meaning humans. This tiny bird had made its way to the bush, surely it would be able to return to where it needed to be?

So I decided to merely observe — and it was then that a larger, but similar-looking bird appeared on the scene. It swooped past the bush onto our fence, and then up to a nearby tree and back to the bush.

By this stage I had called other members of my family outside to observe this



little bundle of fluff. We decided that this was our baby bird's mum, keeping an eye on her fledgling and making sure we were not going to harm her little one. Obviously we were no danger to the tiny bird, but neither of them was to know that. So, rather than causing them more anxiety, we reluctantly went inside, hoping they would be able to find their way home.

Later that day there was no sign of the birds, so we assumed they had successfully returned to their nest. I thought about how much I seemed to care for this tiny life and how this spoke to me about God. My mind was naturally

drawn to the verses in Matthew chapter 29 where Jesus teaches that not one tiny sparrow falls to the ground without the knowledge of our Father God. He tells us that we are worth more to God than a sparrow, so imagine how much he cares for us, his children.

I love how an encounter that lasted 15 minutes in my backyard can bring to my mind a spiritual truth I can hold onto in the times when I feel less than significant in this world. I am grateful for this reminder — it's an encouragement for us all.

Belinda Davis is a Salvation Army officer serving in Mildura.

Opening Pandora's box

Josie* recently spoke to a group of Tasmanian schoolchildren as part of the 'Beyond the Classroom' program, which talks about Salvation Army services and builds awareness of issues such as poverty, mental health, homelessness and addiction.



Sharing my story, I used the image of 'Pandora's box' and basically said, "My story has a lot of things that will fly out that are very confronting."

It was difficult to do, but I am very passionate about educating people on the effects of trauma and mental health and also the fact that there is always hope.

Up to the age of 11, my childhood was normal and happy. My world started to change after Dad had a stroke and became speech-impaired.

Dad had his own business and as a result of the stroke, Mum and Dad (and

our family) lost everything. Our school changed from a Catholic school to a district school and that's also when I turned my back on God and faith.

I also started working at a really young age, mainly because I wanted to help provide for my family.

I began to form some toxic relationships and started to drink a fair bit and use other substances. (It took many years for me to understand the impact of that childhood trauma.)

I became a disability support worker, but I was falling apart at home. My partner

and I tried for many years to have a child together, and there were many stresses in the relationship which led to coping with alcohol and drugs. It got pretty violent and we eventually broke up.

At one stage I hurt my neck and was put on pain medication and also began abusing the medication. I lost my job, then tried to overdose and ended up in hospital. I didn't see any purpose being on the Earth any more.

I also witnessed a violent attack and had post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms, but didn't understand them.

I finally fell pregnant at 30.

Although I was over the moon, things were really out of control when I first brought my baby home. My mental health had deteriorated to the point where I was put in a psychiatric ward. My child was taken out of my care for 12 months and I felt like everything had been stripped away.

There was a time and situation where I was so angry, distressed and crying, and could barely put a sentence together. In the night I remember just getting down on my knees and praying and praying and repenting.

I woke up the next morning and it was like I was cleansed from all the anger.

I also had this feeling — a quiet voice saying: "You don't have to take your life; it will be okay, have faith."

That growing faith in God gave me faith that I would get my son back and we have been reunited for a number of years now.

I did some really hard work within those first 12 months with psychologists and The Salvation Army 'Doorways to Parenting' program.

I met Salvation Army chaplain Suzanne and she helped me as I was rebuilding my life. That meant coming back to my roots, which included understanding the indigenous culture and my Christian faith. While God is my Saviour, my parents are my heroes.

I have now completed a Certificate II in Community Services and have helped in many community fundraisers and volunteered to help others. Through that I have learned a lot about myself.

There is a long way to go, but I believe we (my son and I) are on a good path.

I have been baptised and attend a large, local church. I have spent a lot of time reading the Bible and praying and going to church and fixing my thoughts on Jesus. I am preparing to dedicate my son to God, giving back the precious gift God gave me.

The Salvation Army and Suzanne have stood by me in so many ways — from housing to advocacy, helping me get into training, back into the community, spiritually and emotionally.

I really want people who are hurting to know that you don't have to take the road I took (family violence, substance abuse) because there are people out there who won't judge you, who will love and accept you, support you and help you heal.

As told to Naomi Singlehurst

**Name changed for privacy purposes.*

Strawberry teacups

1 punnet strawberries, 1 cup white chocolate melts, writing icing, silver cachous or other decorations.

Rinse strawberries and dry with paper towel. Set aside. Melt white chocolate in microwave at 20-second intervals, stirring after each time until melted through. Spread baking paper onto a tray or board. Take small spoonfuls of white chocolate and spoon out thick little semicircles for handles. Make as many handles as there are strawberries.

Dip strawberries into white chocolate, covering them up to the leaves, and lay out on baking paper. Place all dipped strawberries and handles into fridge to set.

Once chocolate has hardened, melt about 5–8 white chocolate melts. Dot a small amount of melted chocolate onto the side of a strawberry and secure the handle in place. Repeat with remaining strawberries and handles and return to fridge to set.

Decorate teacups with writing icing and cachous.



Have a laugh

A mother bird and her chick were enjoying a refreshing splash in a bird bath when the mother noticed a cat stalking them behind a bush. She turned around and yelled loudly, “BARK! BARK!”

The startled cat ran off. The mother bird turned to her baby and said, “Now do you see why it’s important to learn a foreign language?”



Tip for the race of life

“Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.”

1 Corinthians chapter 3, verse 7

Wordsearch

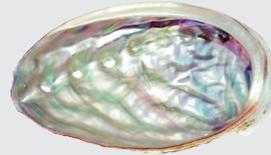
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| MOTHER | DEDICATED |
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| CELEBRATE | NURTURE |
| CARNATION | MUM |
| LUNCH | COOK |
| PRESENTS | STRONG |
| LOVE | BUSY |
| CHILDREN | MATERNAL |
| CARING | DEAR |
| FRIEND | DEVOTED |
| WISE | HEART |

Quick quiz

1. While not technically a mum, who was known as ‘mother’ to thousands through her missionary work in India?

2. Nacre is more commonly known as what?



3. According to the proverb, what is the ‘mother of invention’?

4. Which almond cake is traditionally made for Mothering Sunday?

5. Who was the mother of the prophet Samuel (1 Samuel chapter 1, verse 20)?

Tum-Tum



On which page of this week’s *Warcry* is Tum-Tum hiding?

Answers: 1. Mother Teresa 2. Mother-of-pearl
 3. Necessity 4. Simnel cake 5. Hannah
 Tum-Tum: is on page 4 in the coffee bean holder.

Want to know more?

Visit warcry.org.au/want-to-know-more or return the coupon to Warcry, PO Box 479, Blackburn VIC 3130.

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