Received(Date): 31 DEC 2003 15:08:19
From: Besanceney, Brian R. (Brian_R._Besanceney@who.eop.gov [WHO])
Bcc: Grant, Britt (Britt_Grant@who.eop.gov [WHO]),

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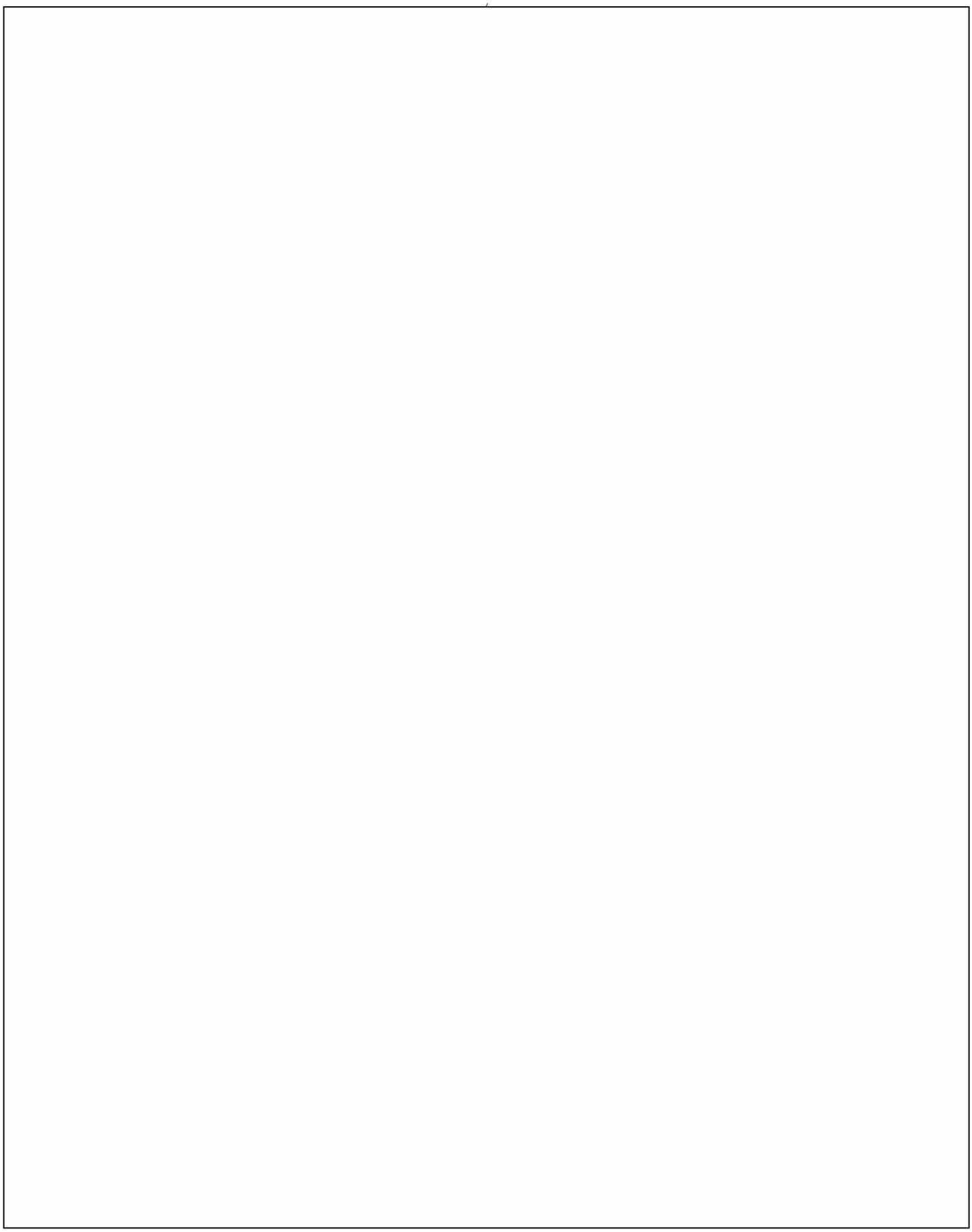

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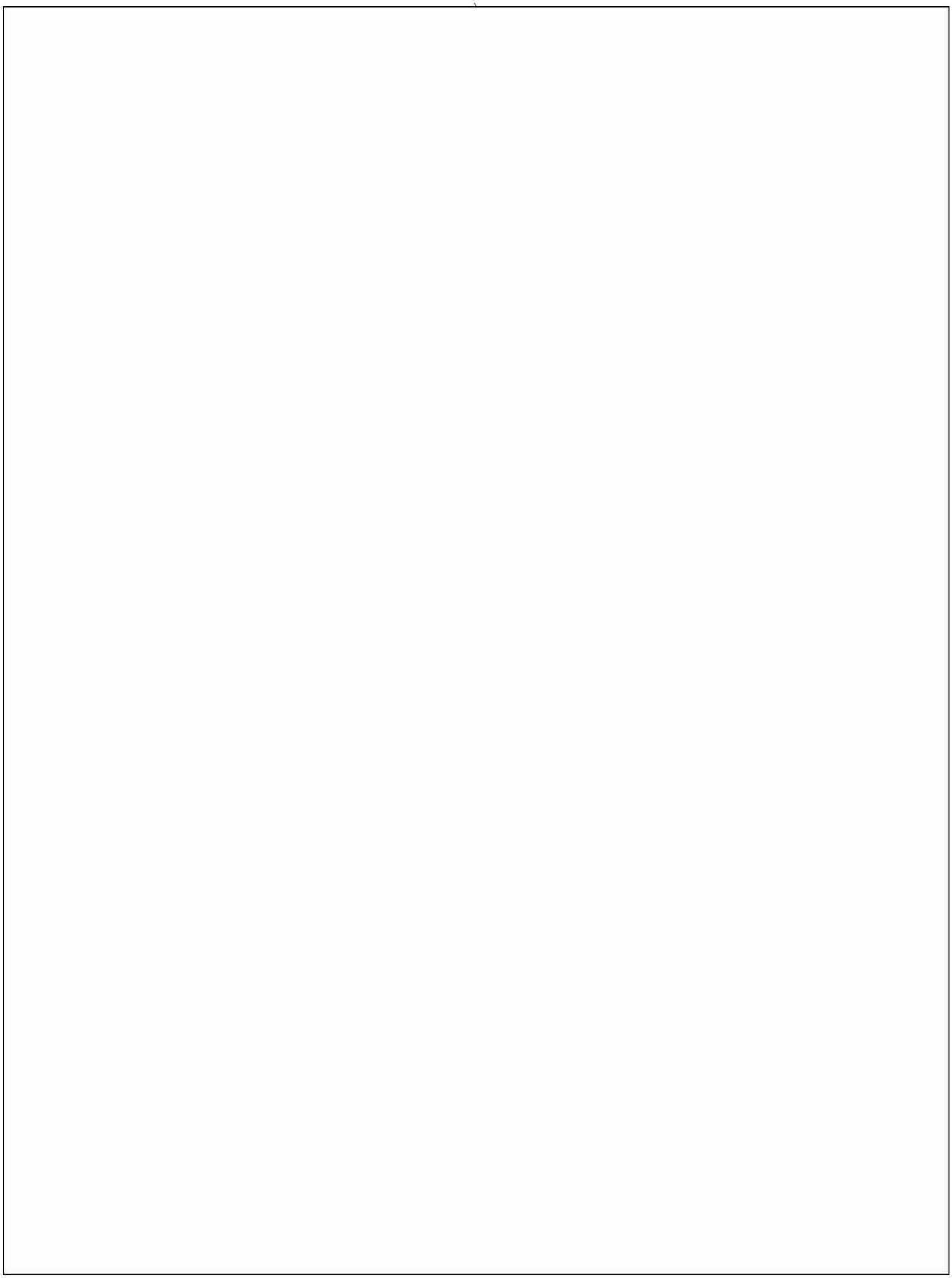

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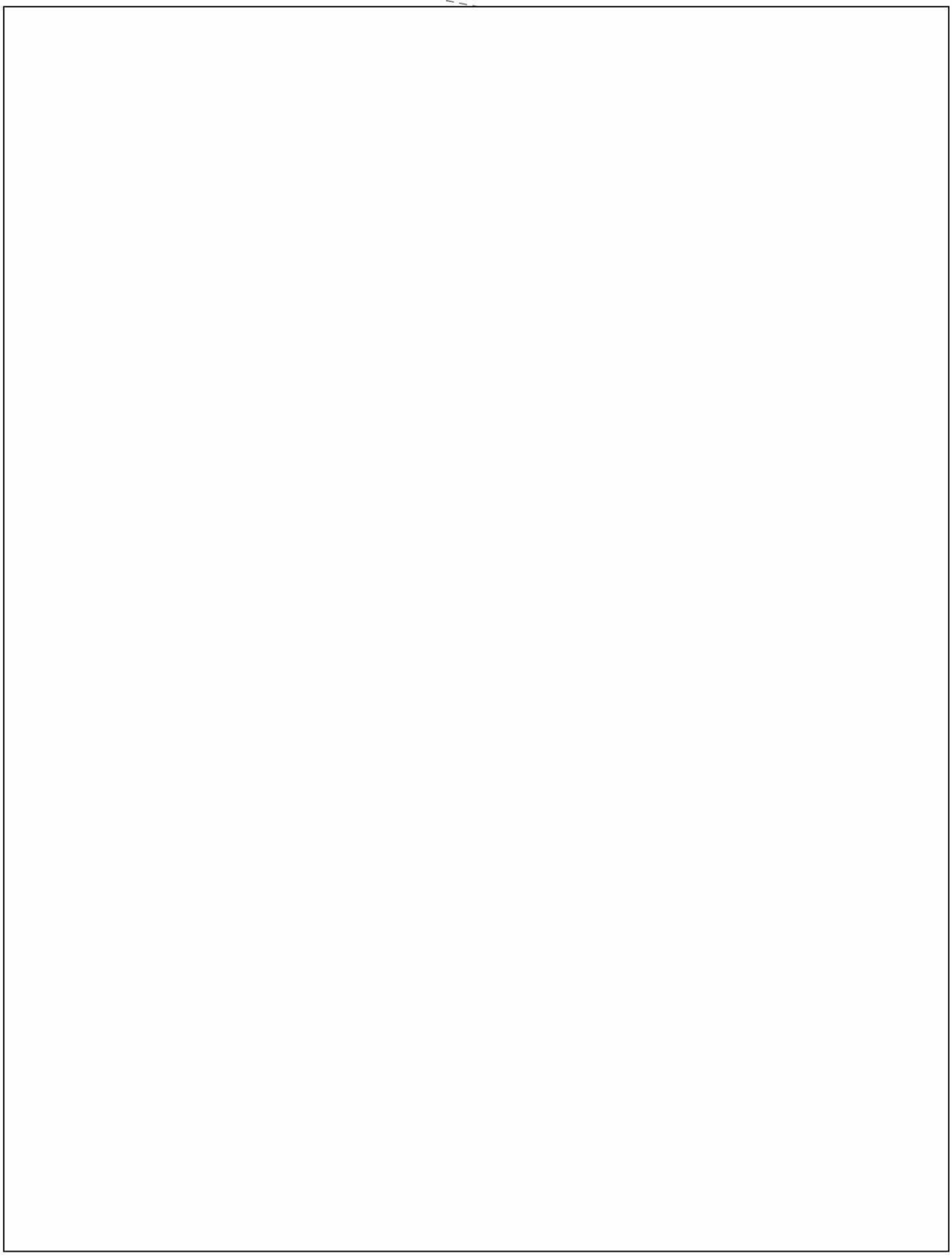

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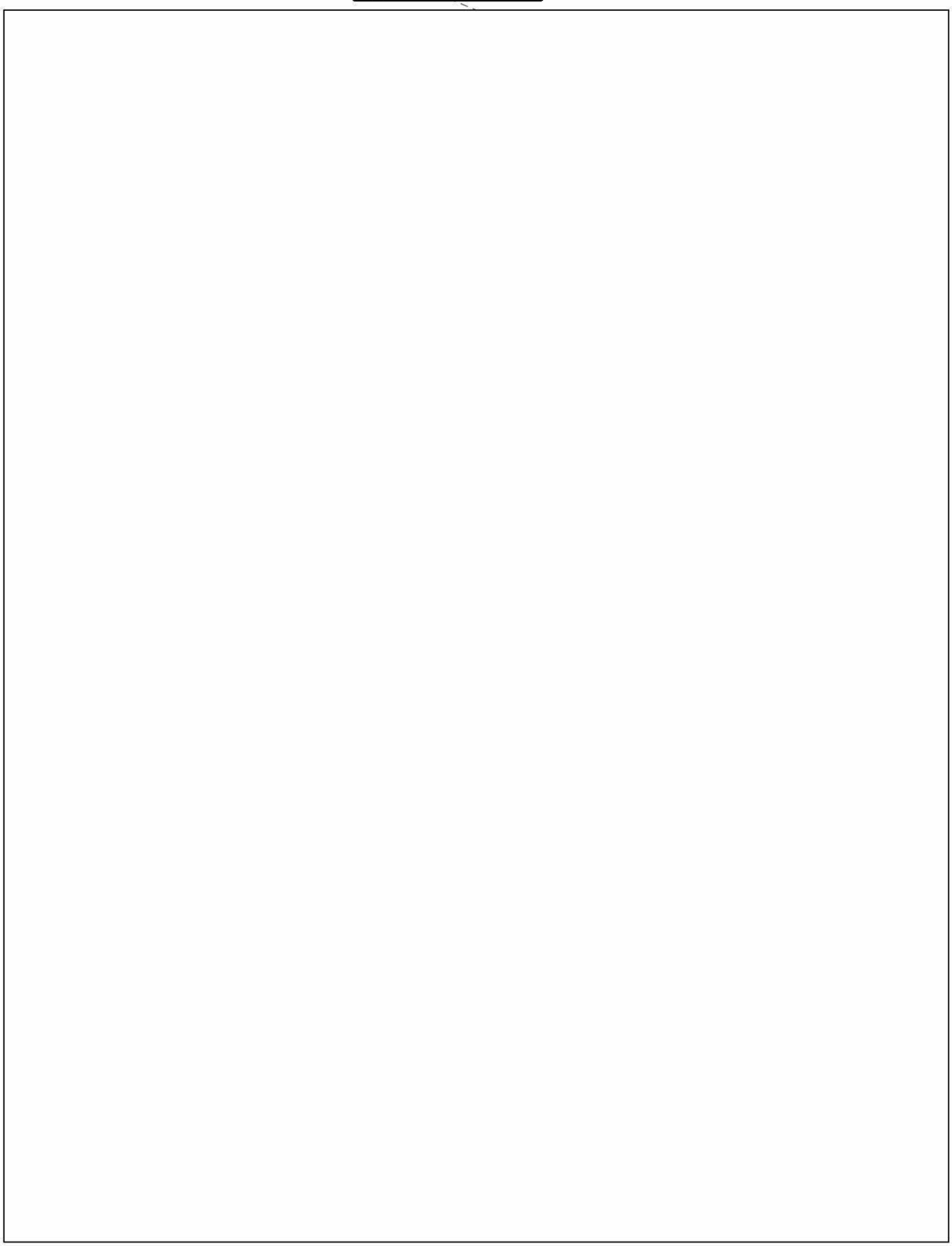

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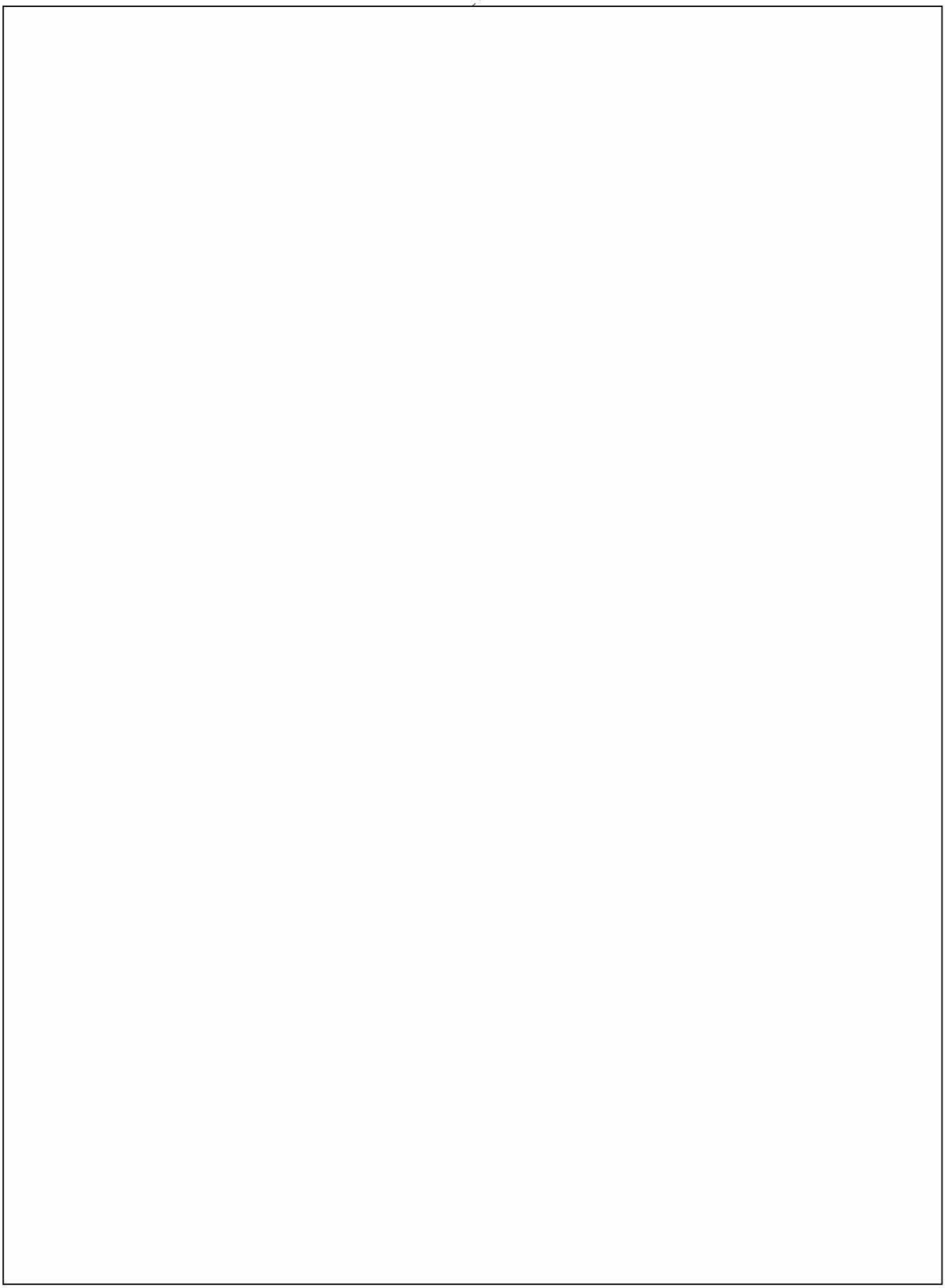

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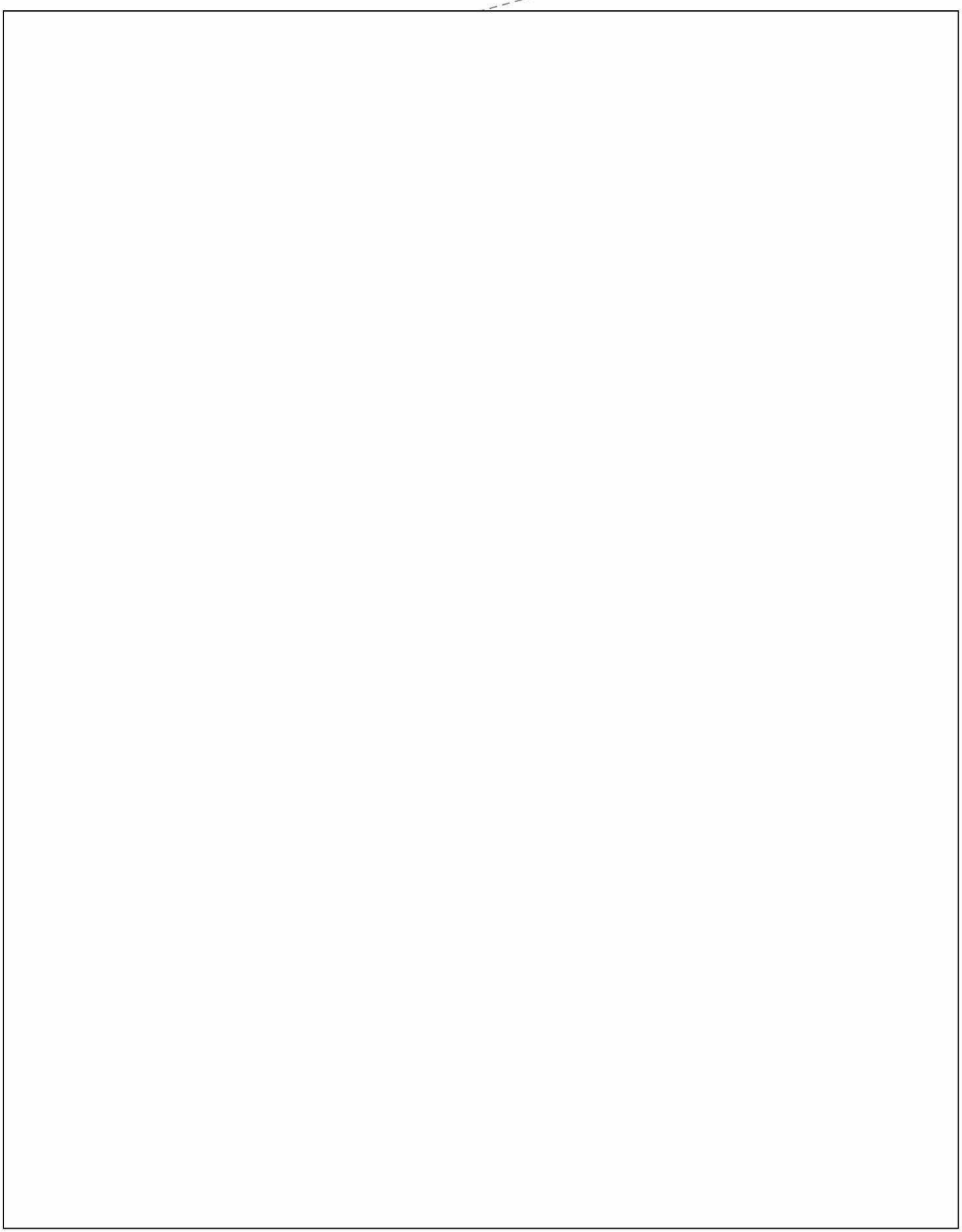

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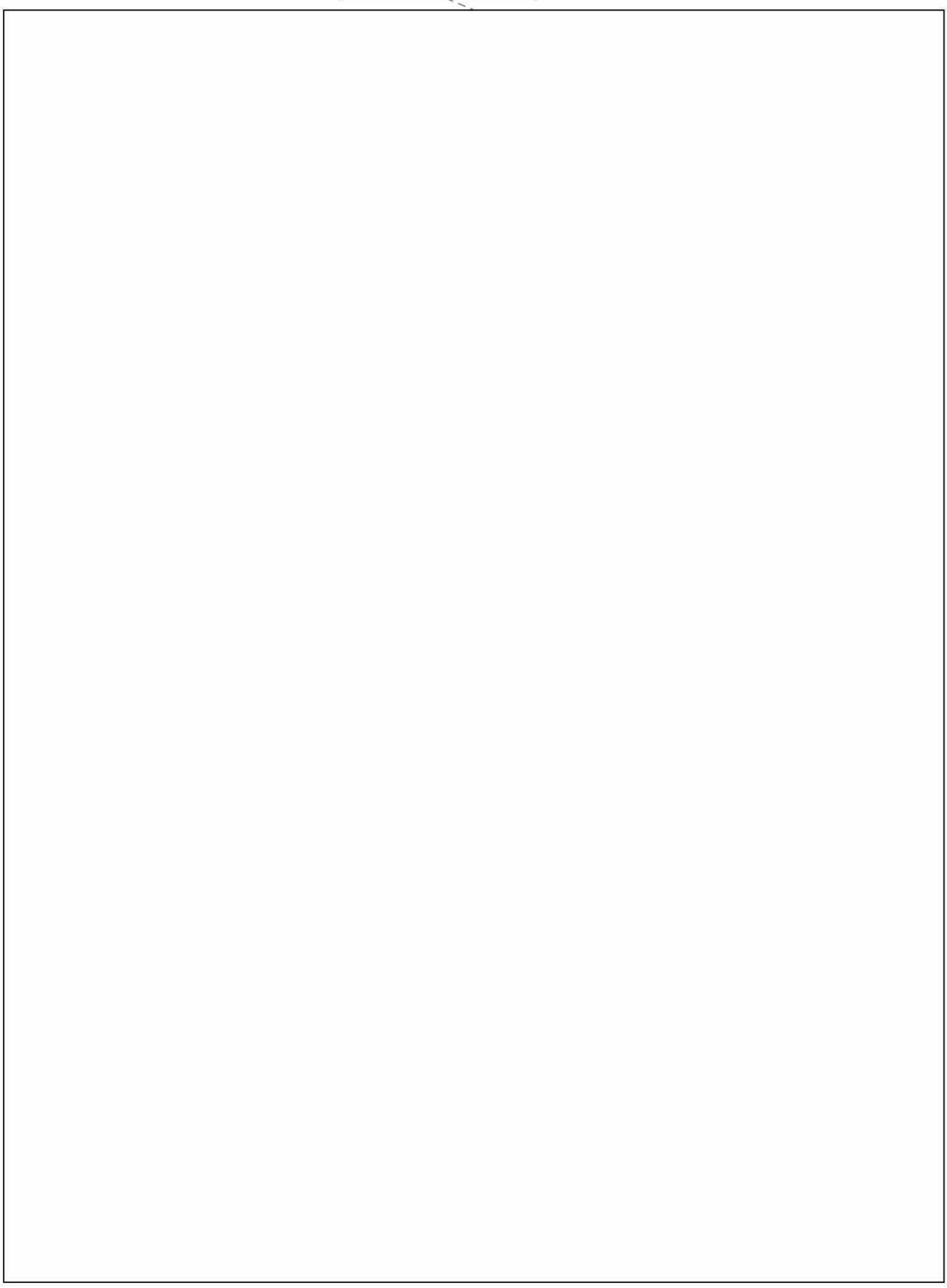

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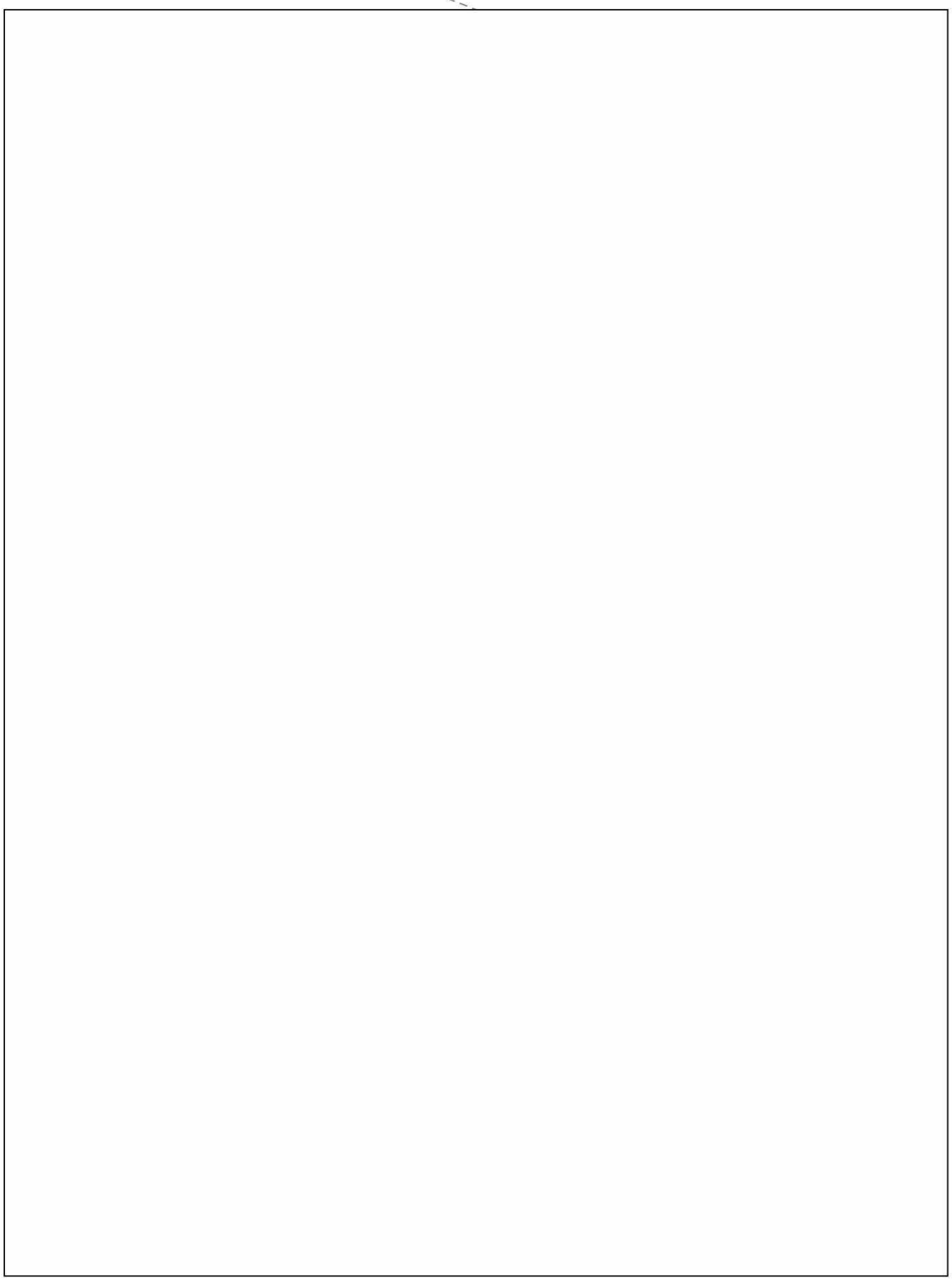

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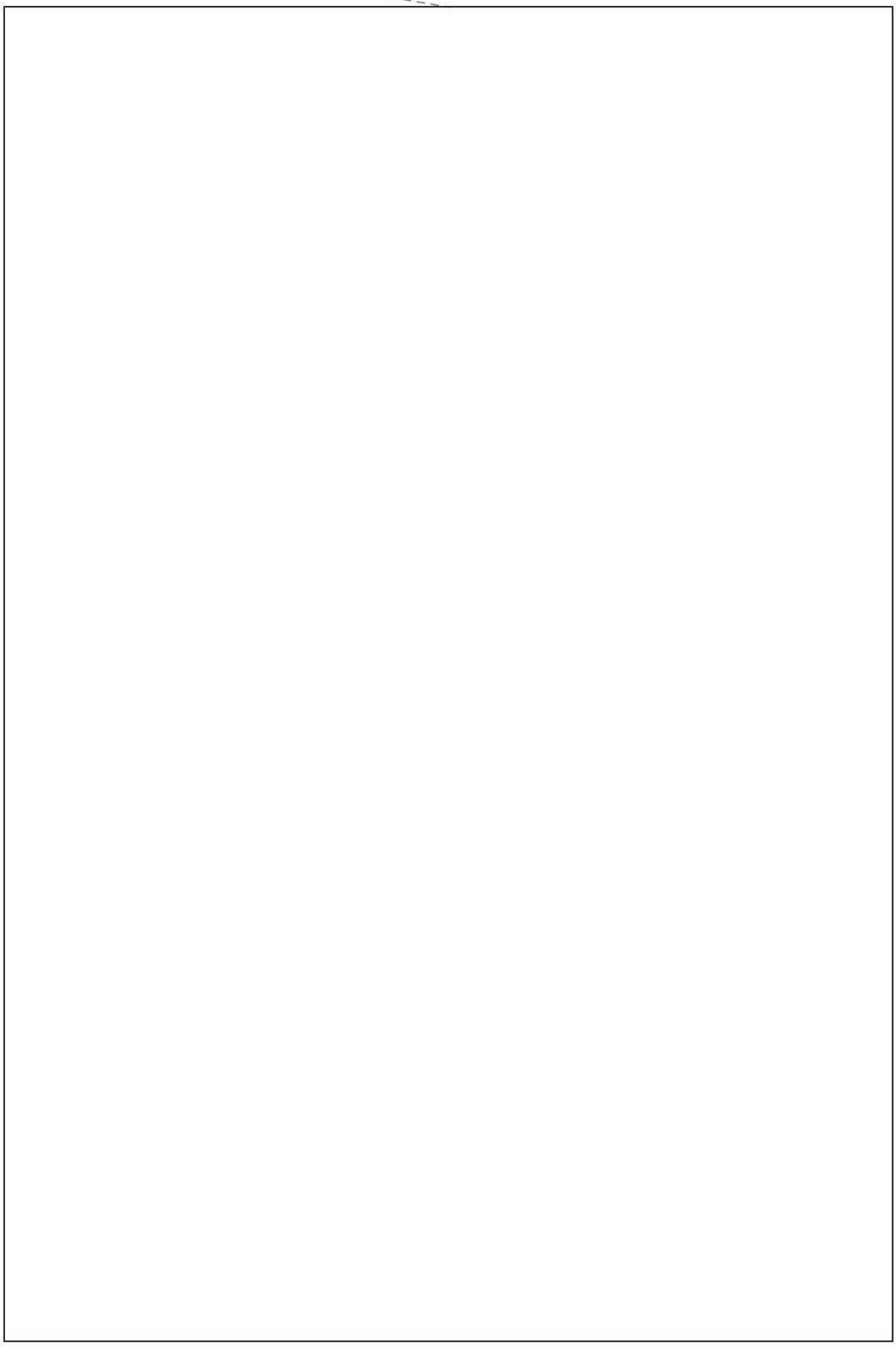

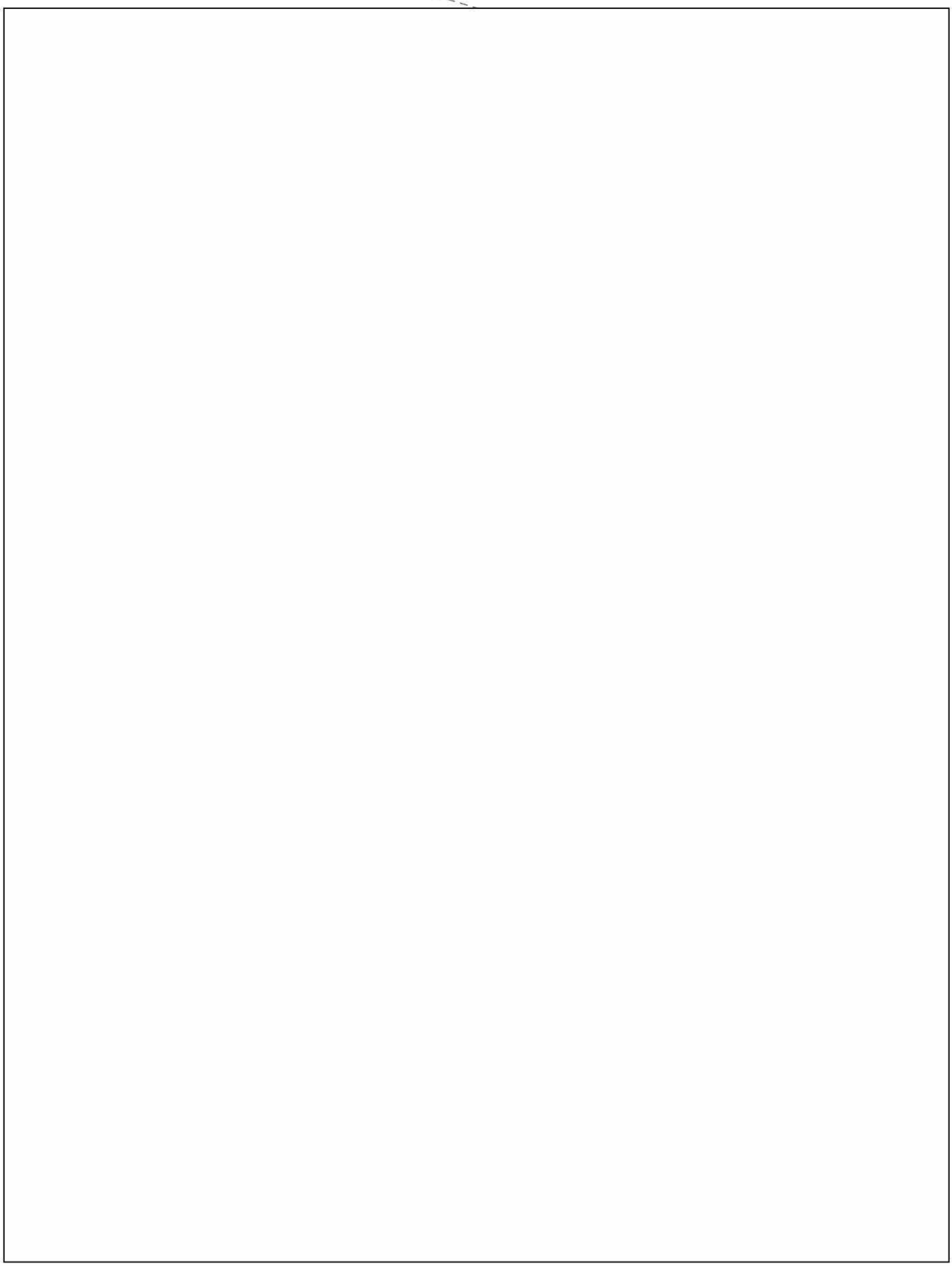
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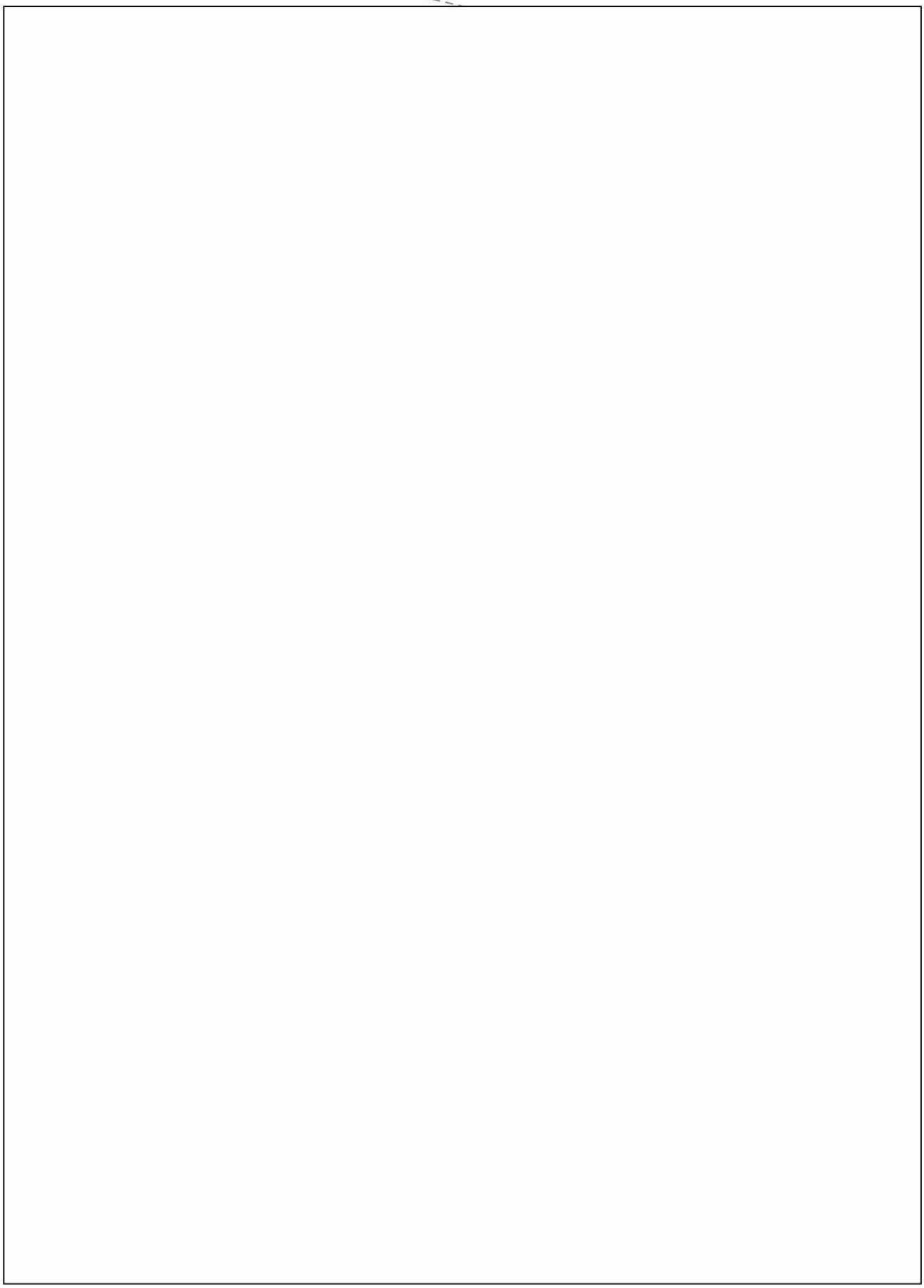

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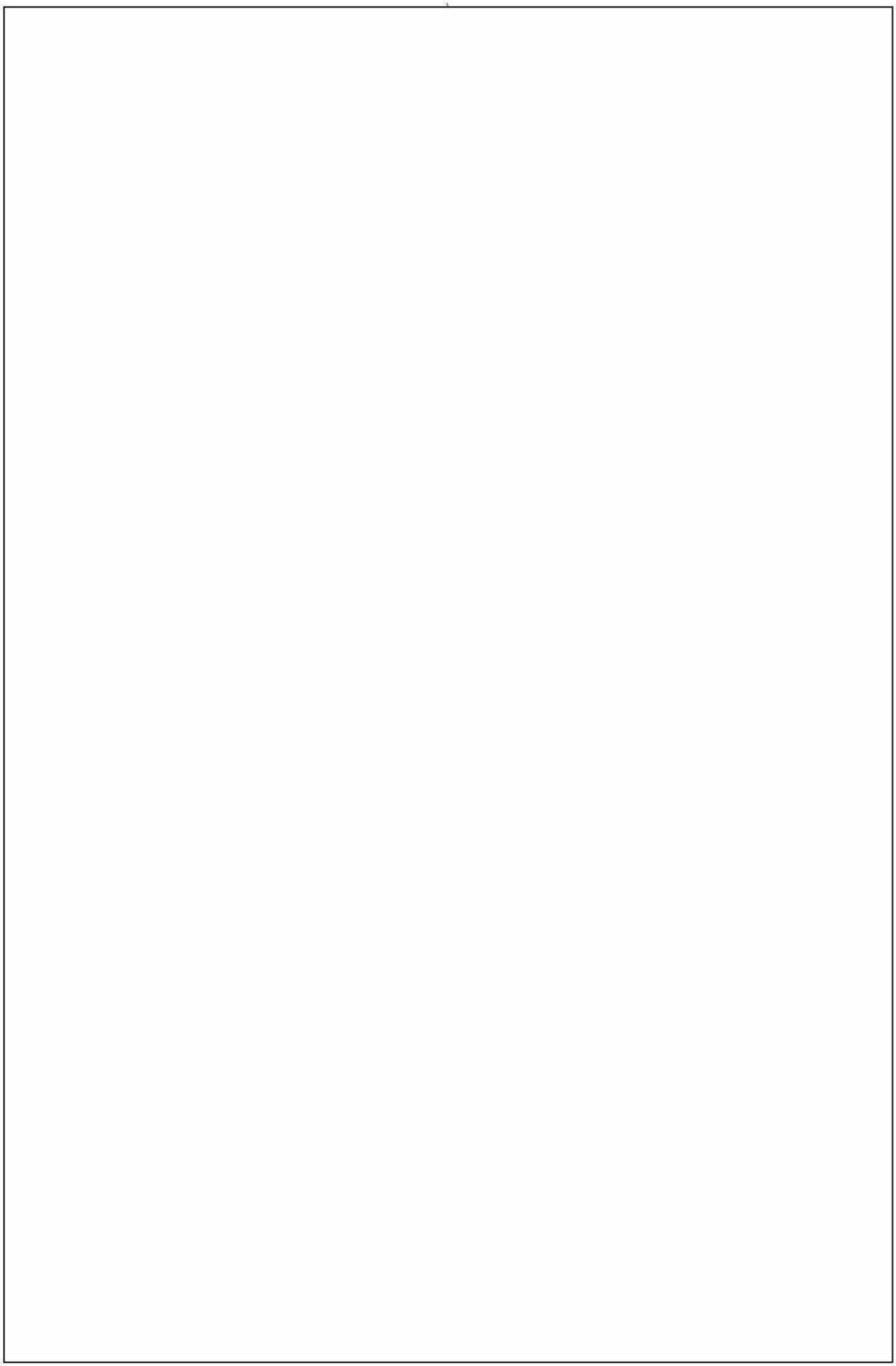

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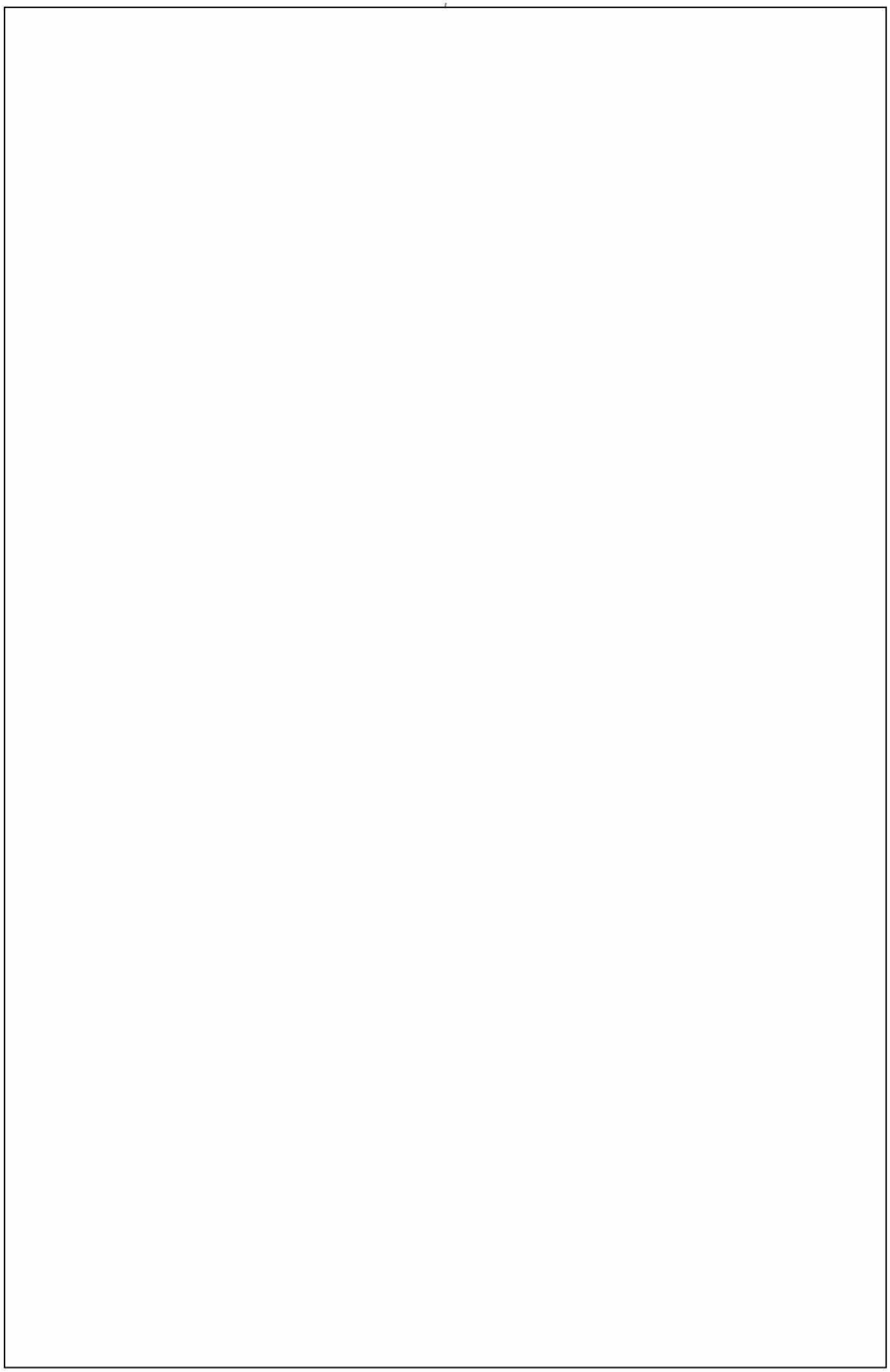

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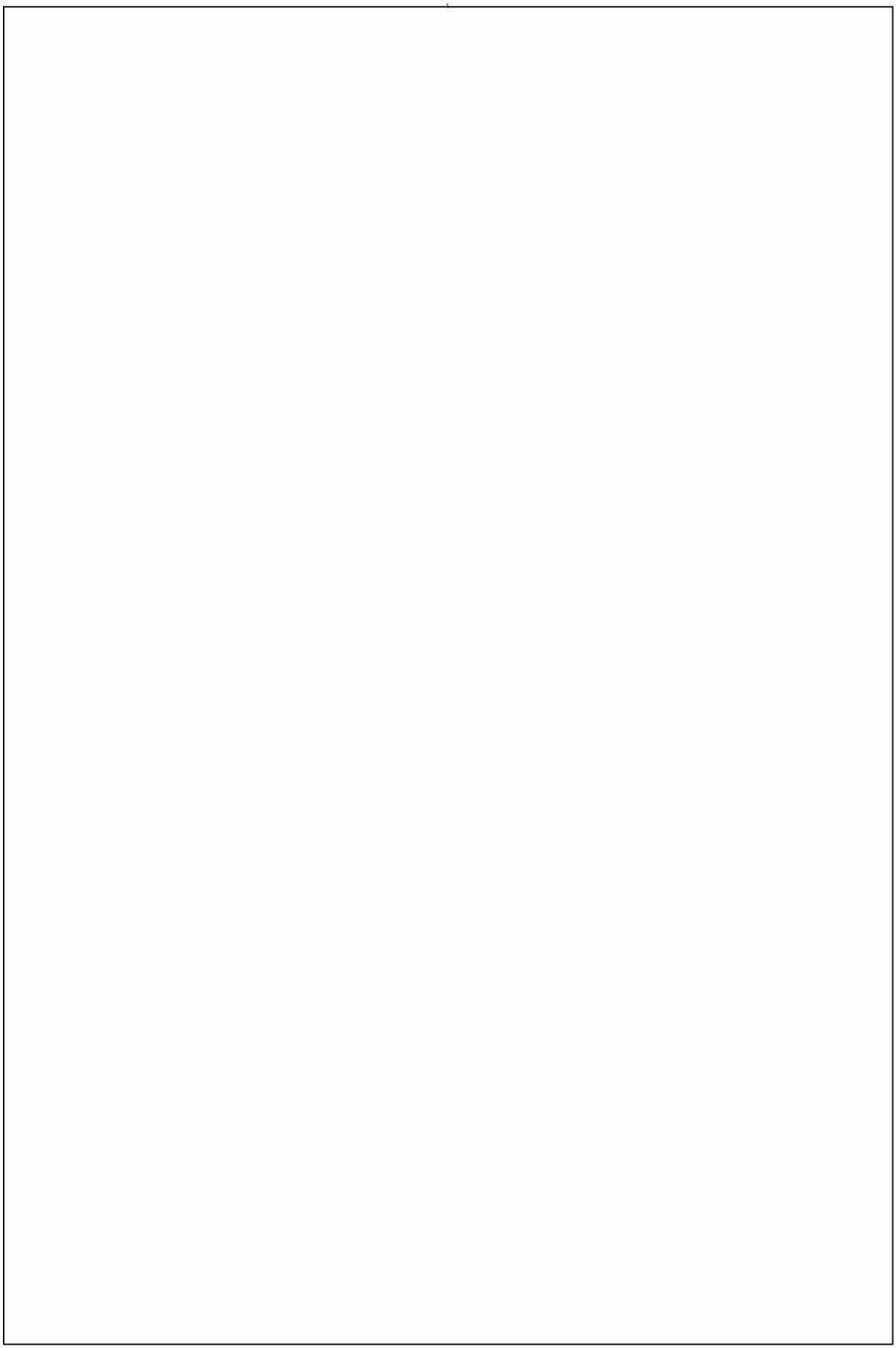

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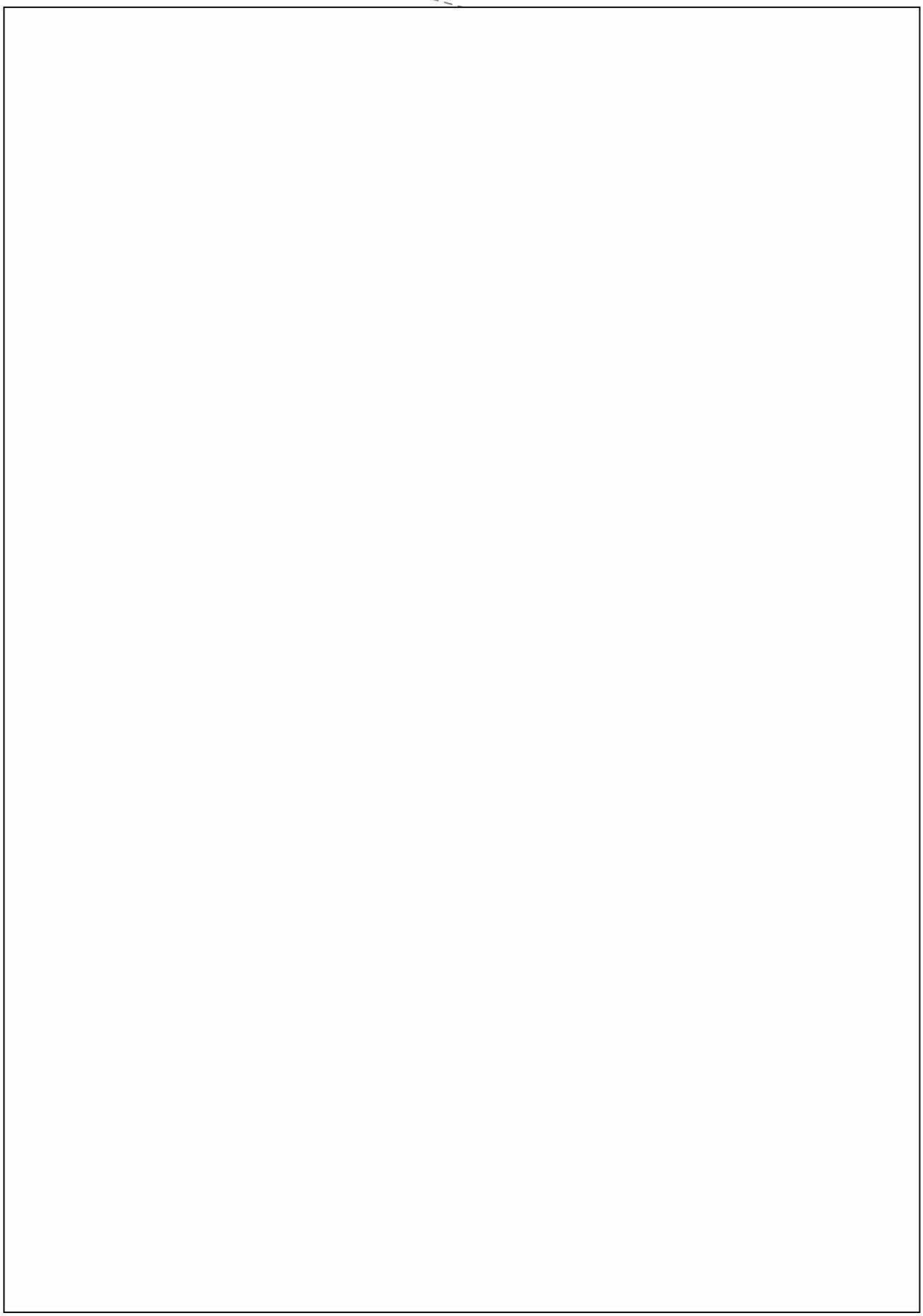

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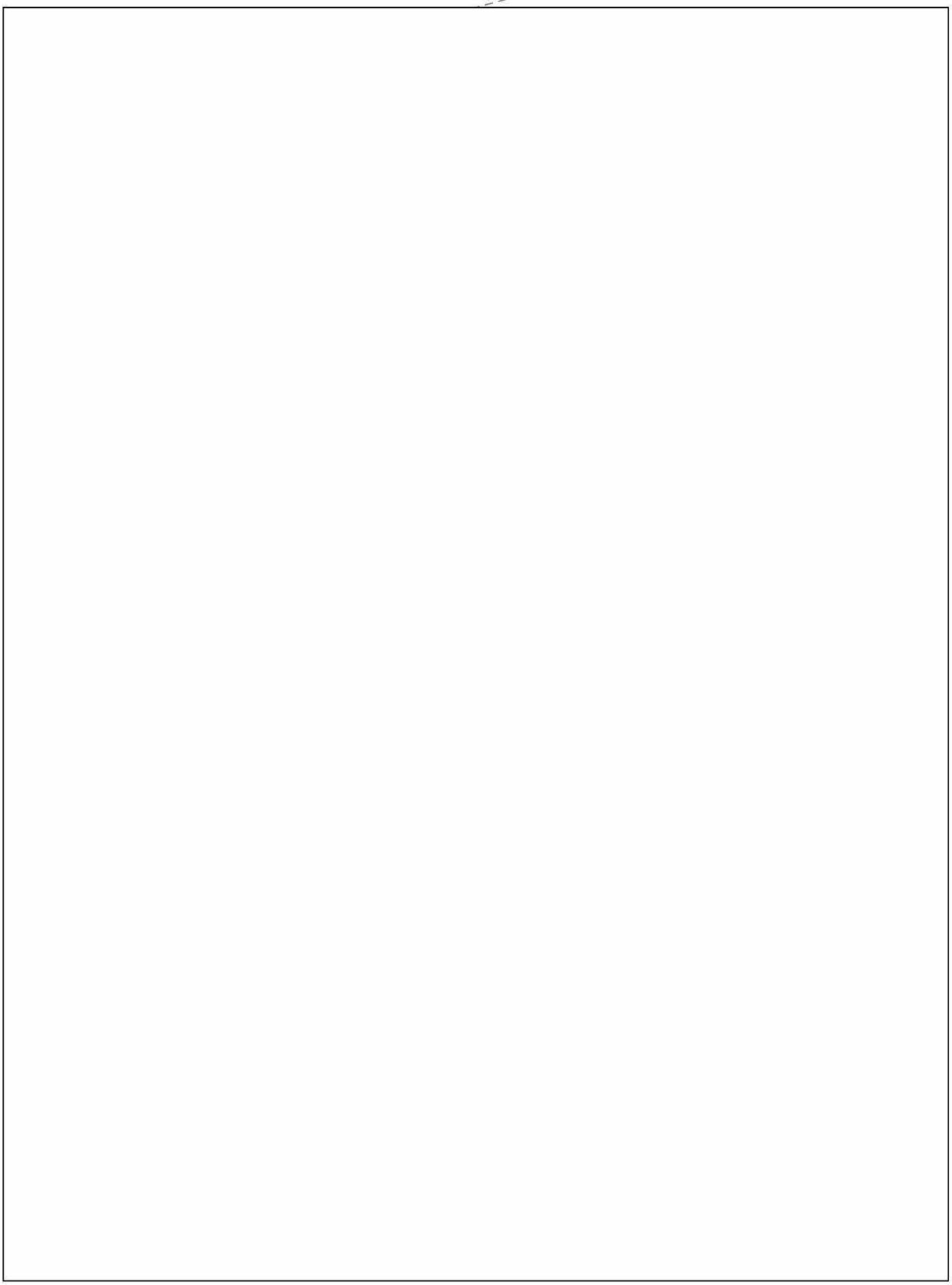

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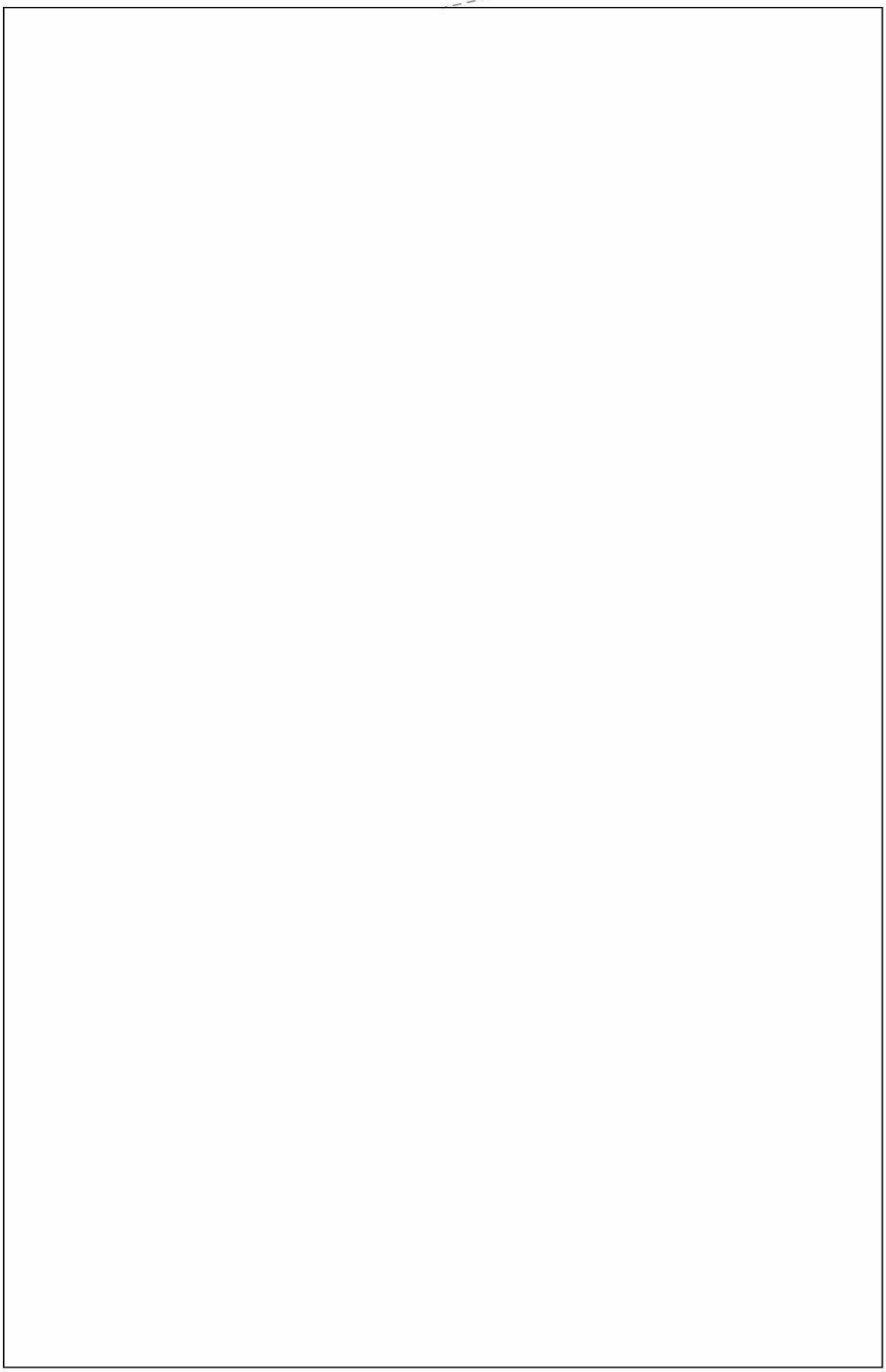

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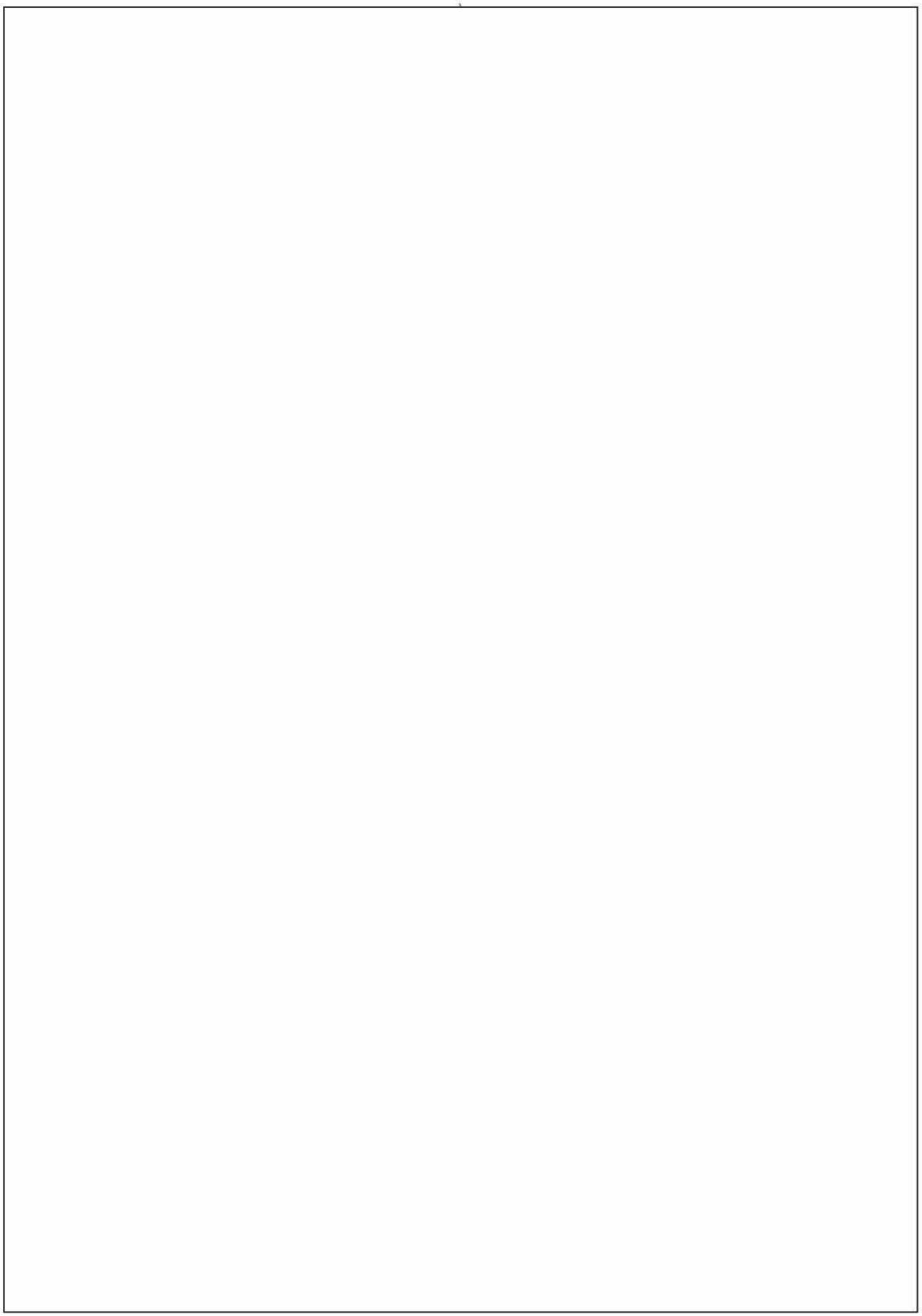

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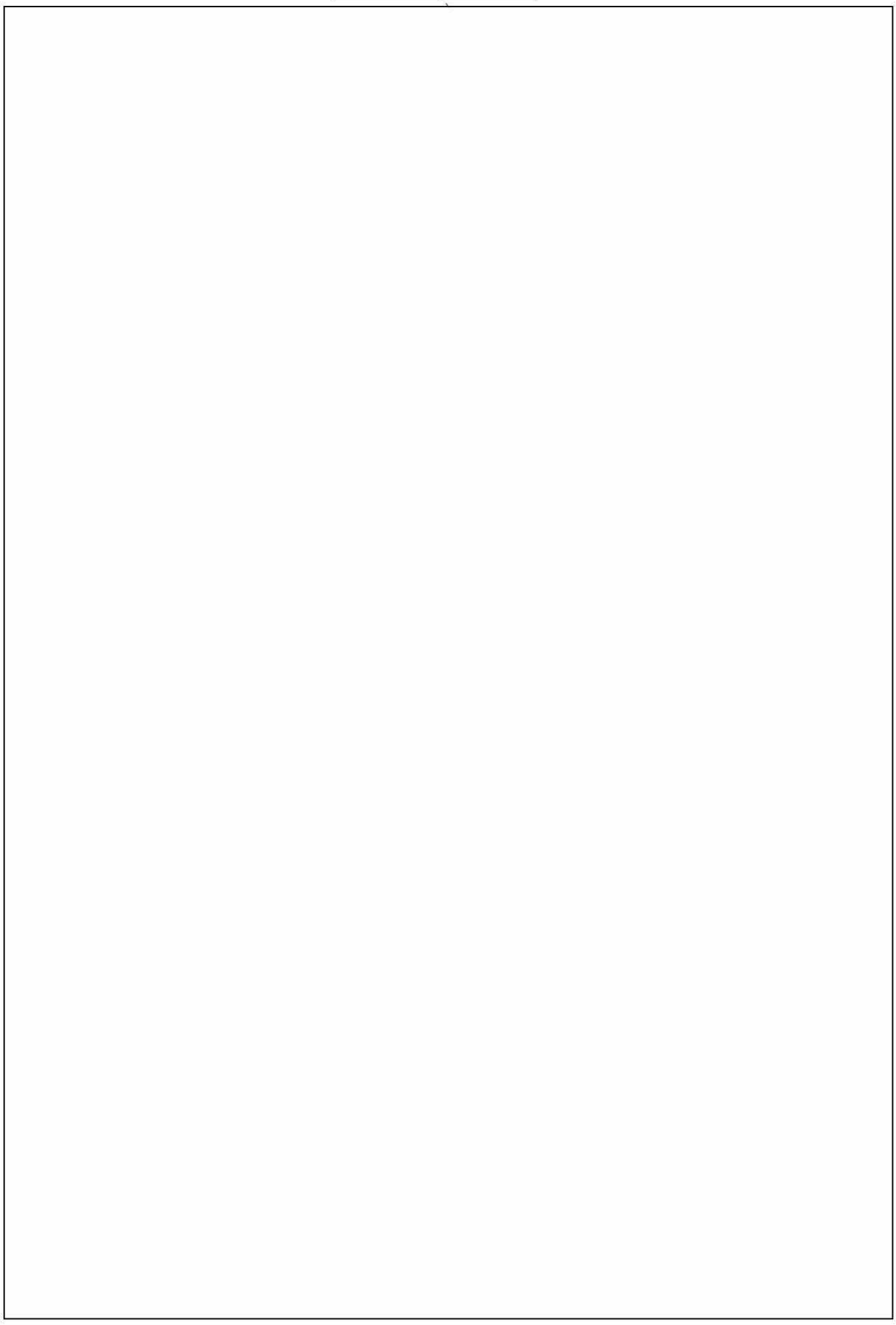

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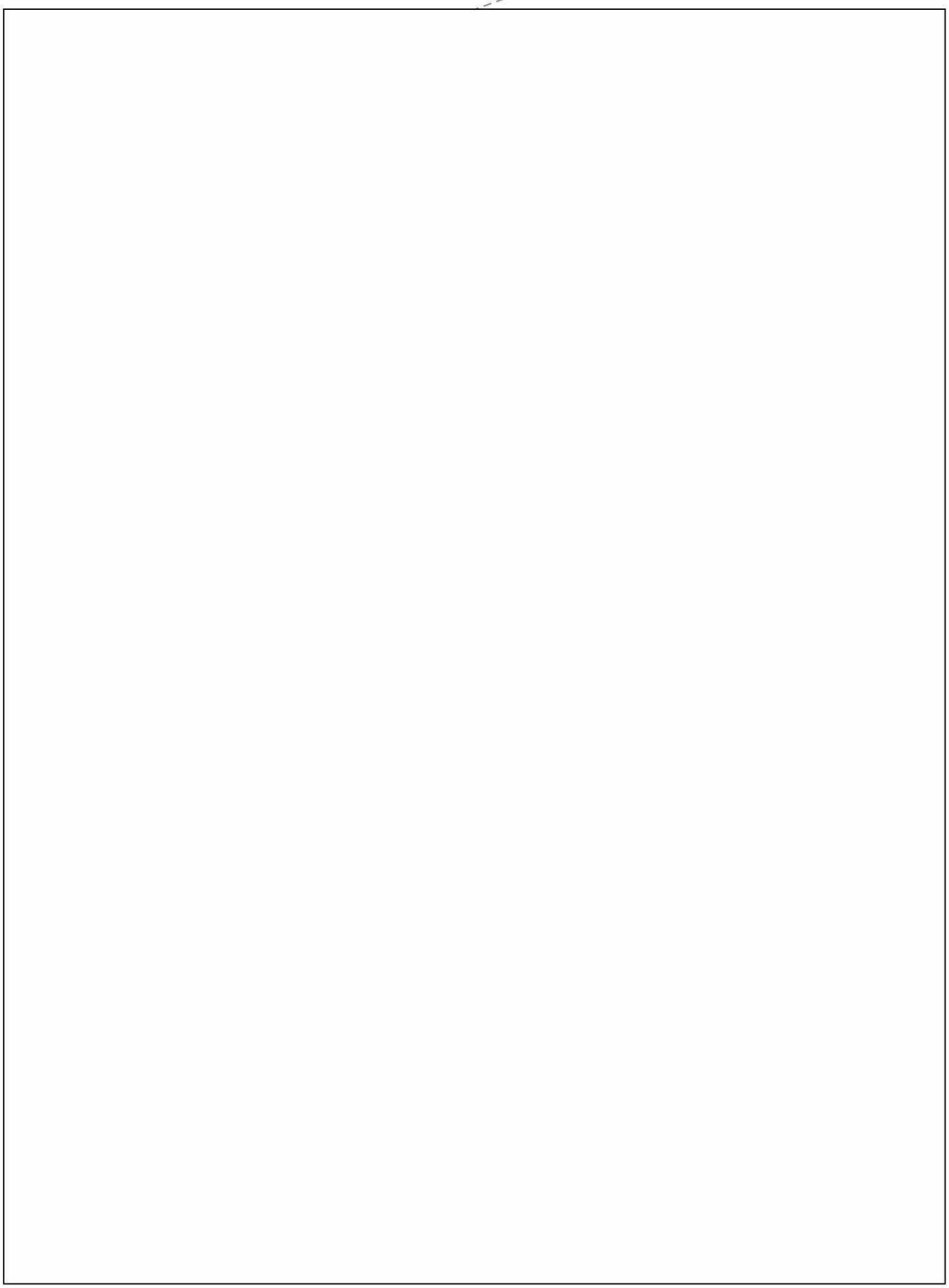

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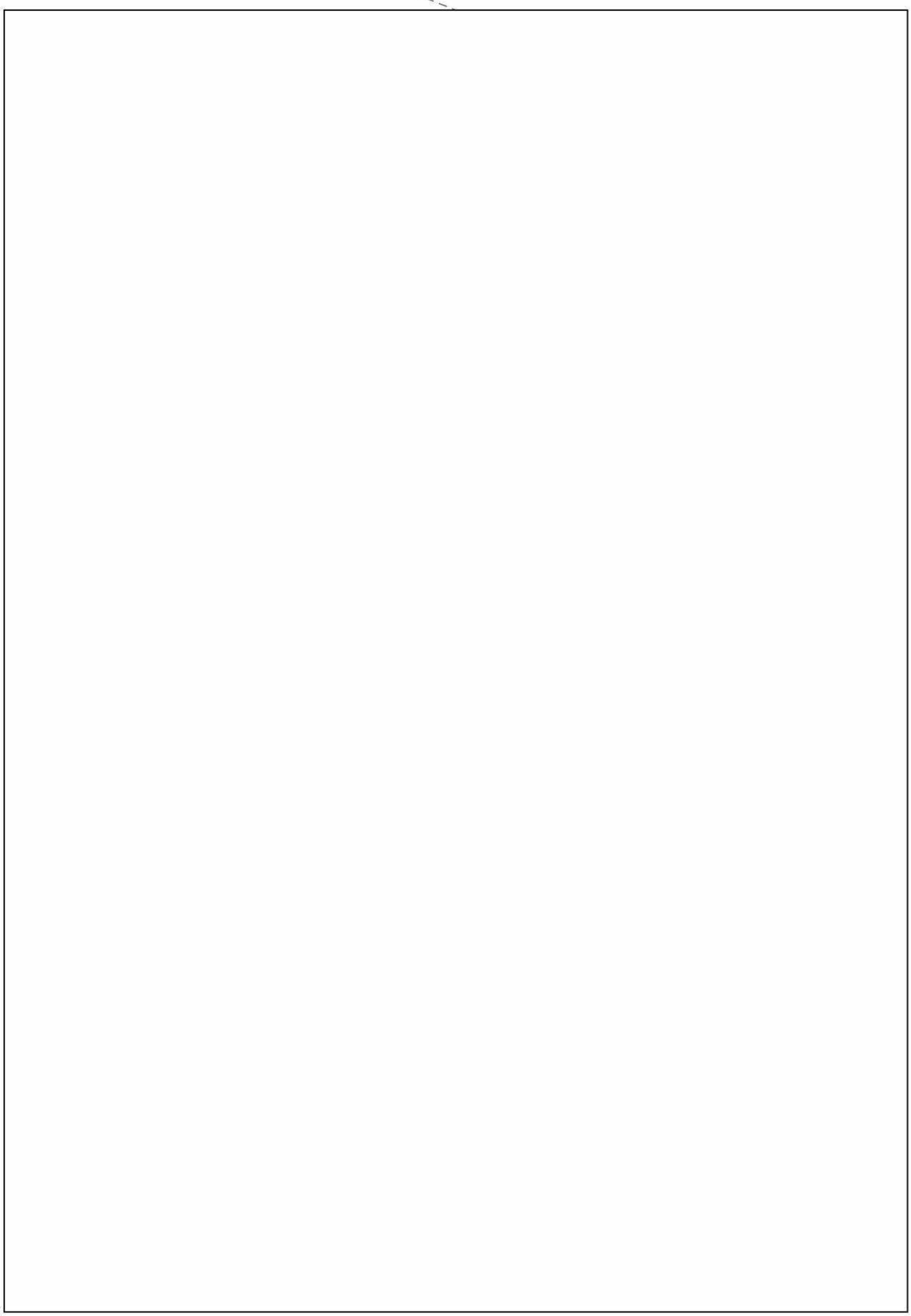

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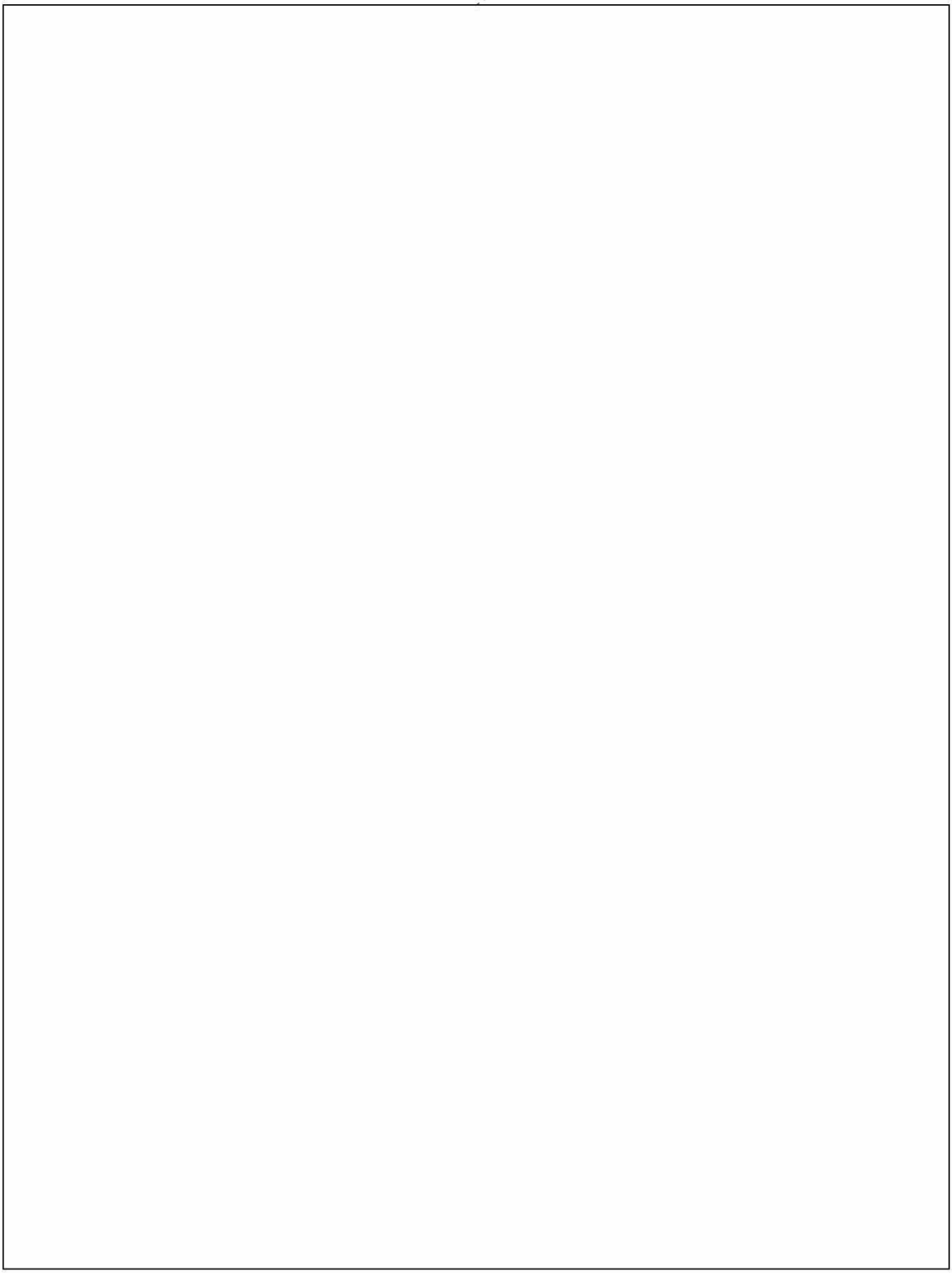

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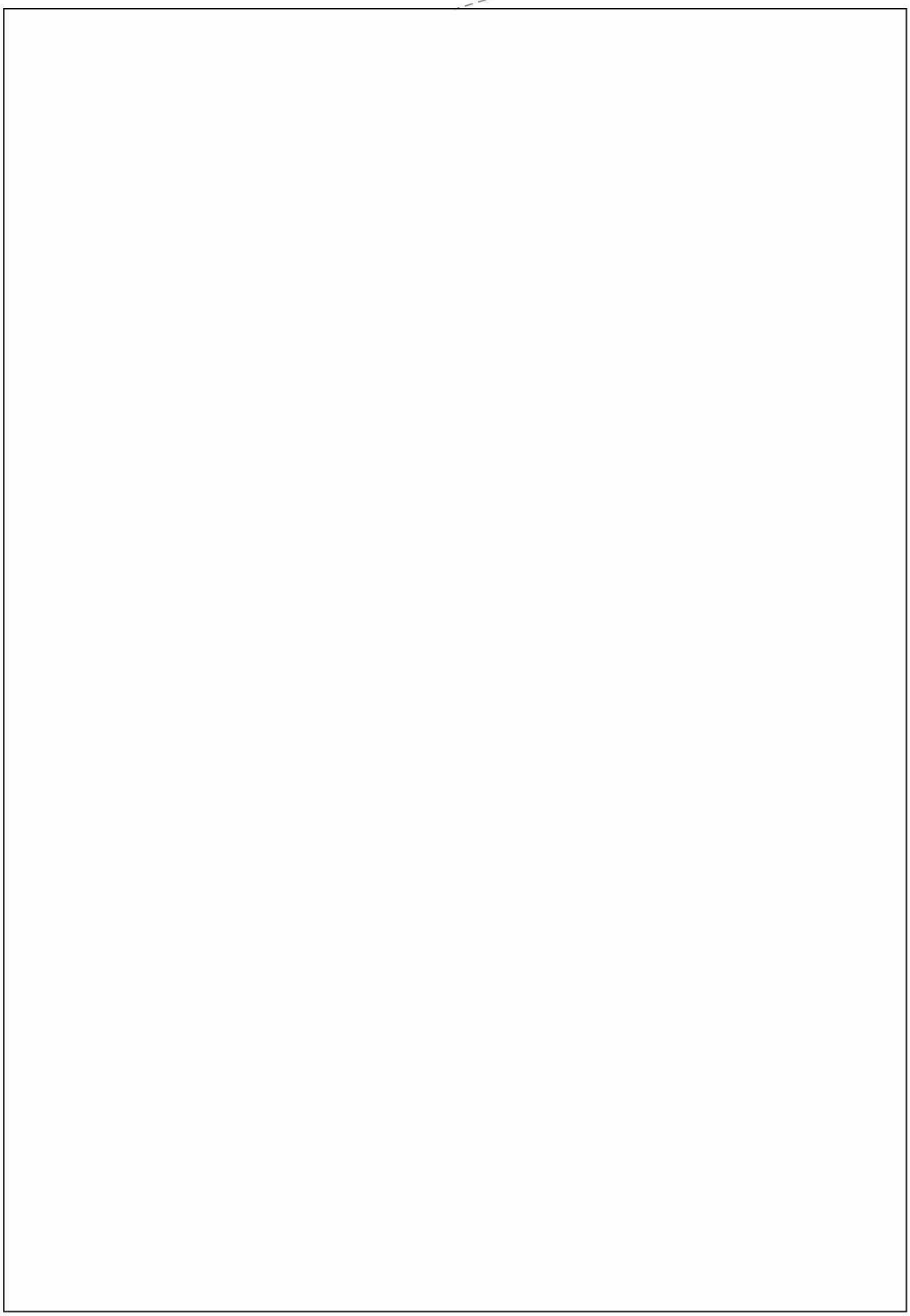

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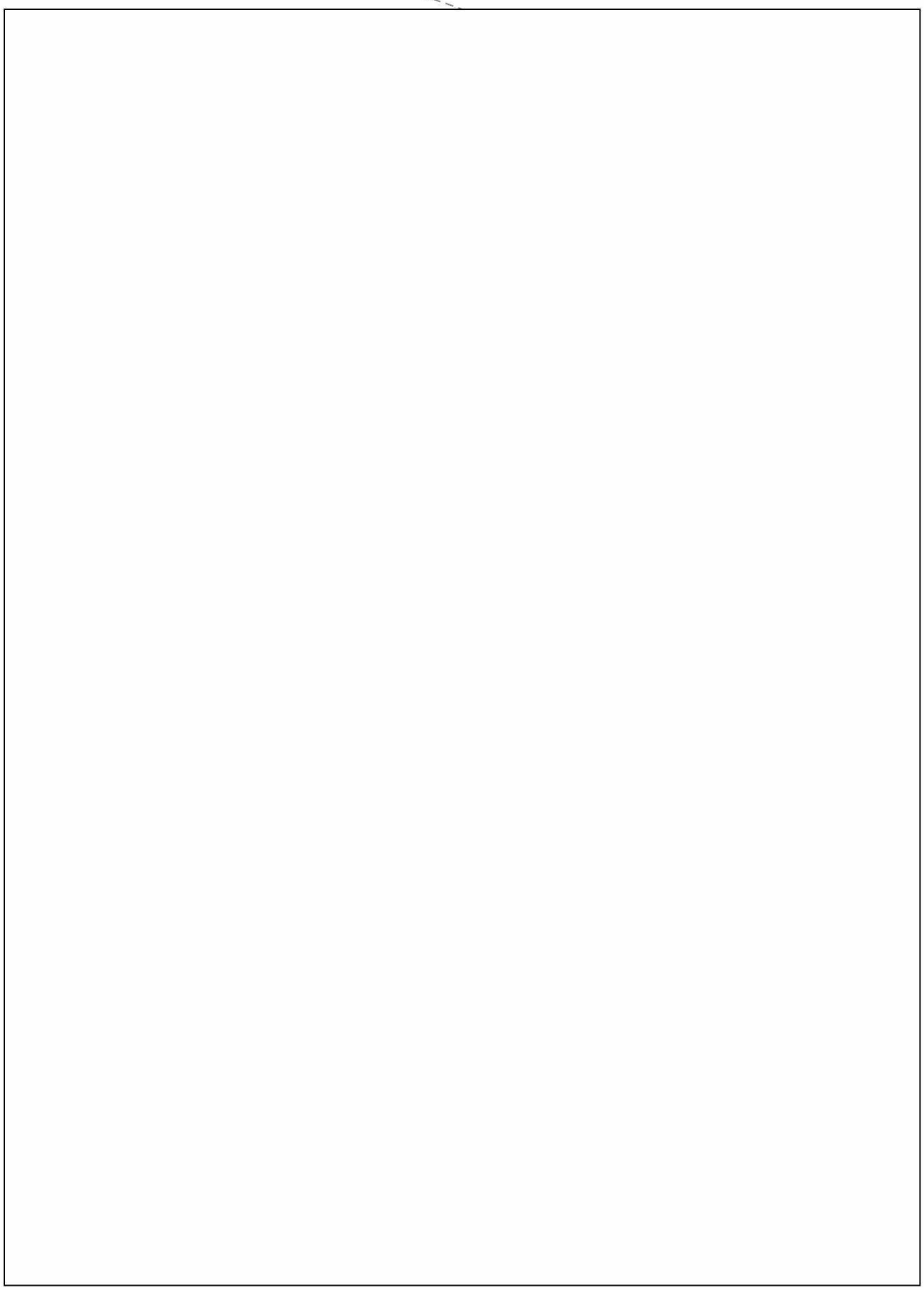

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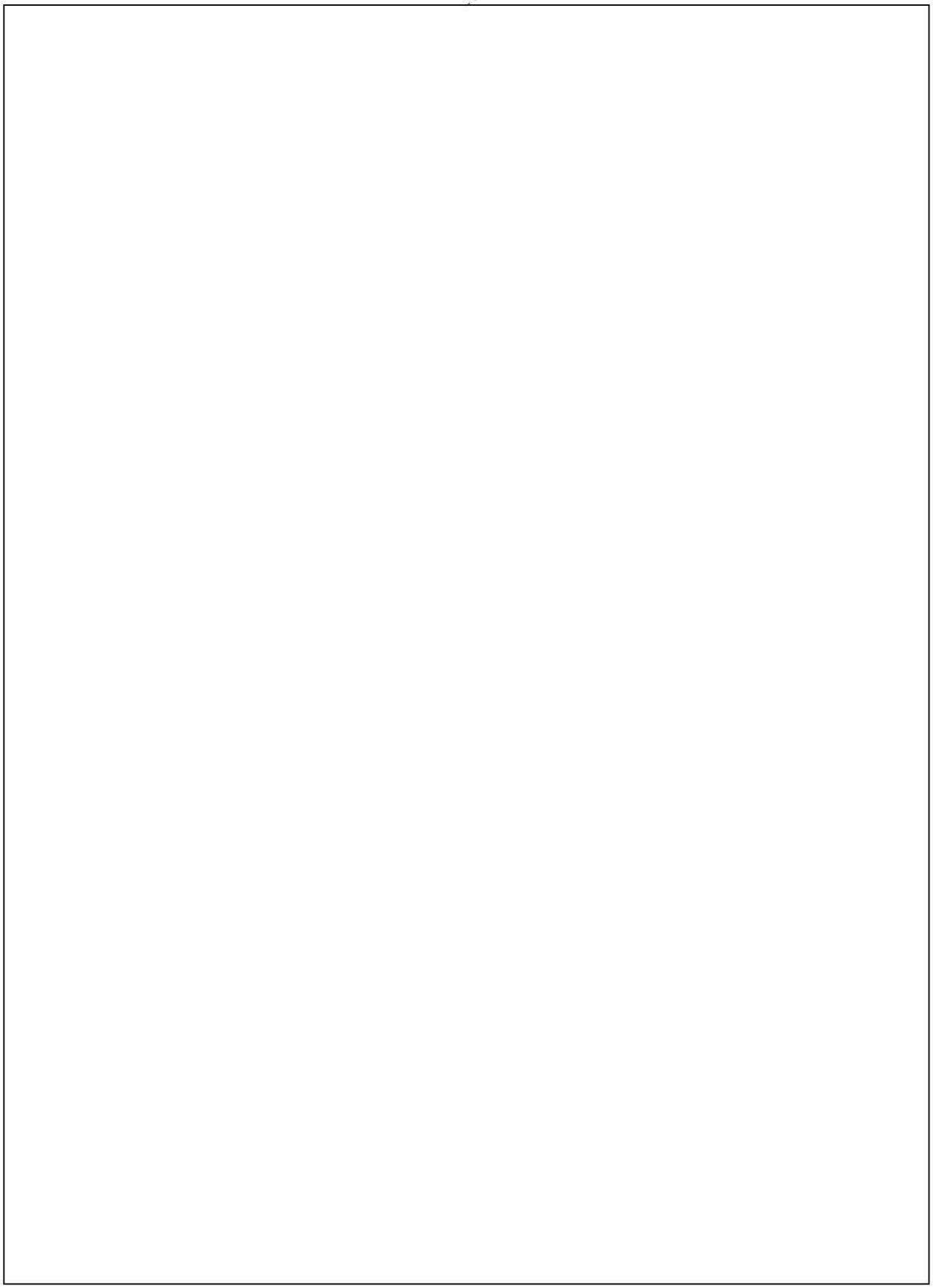

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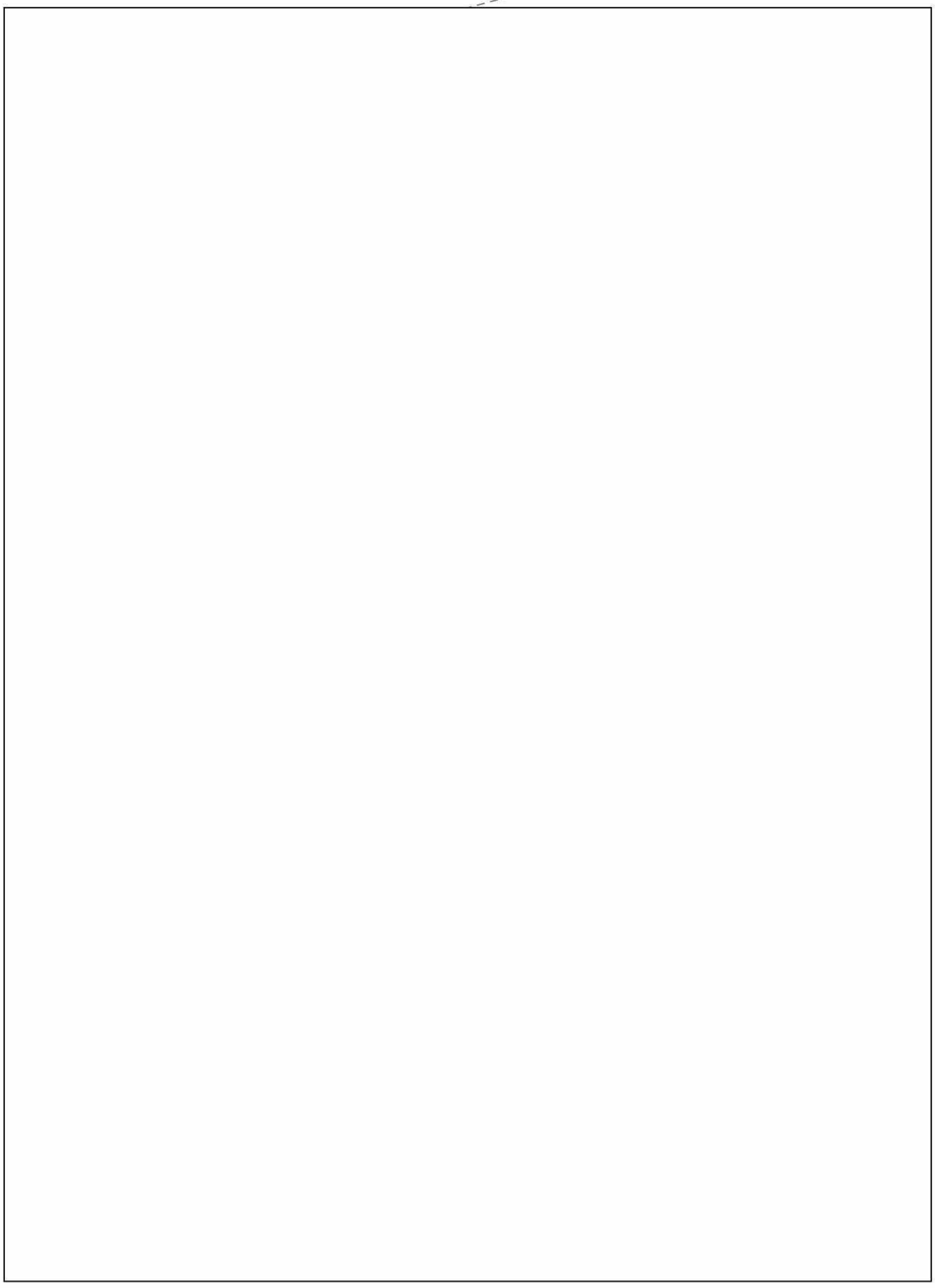

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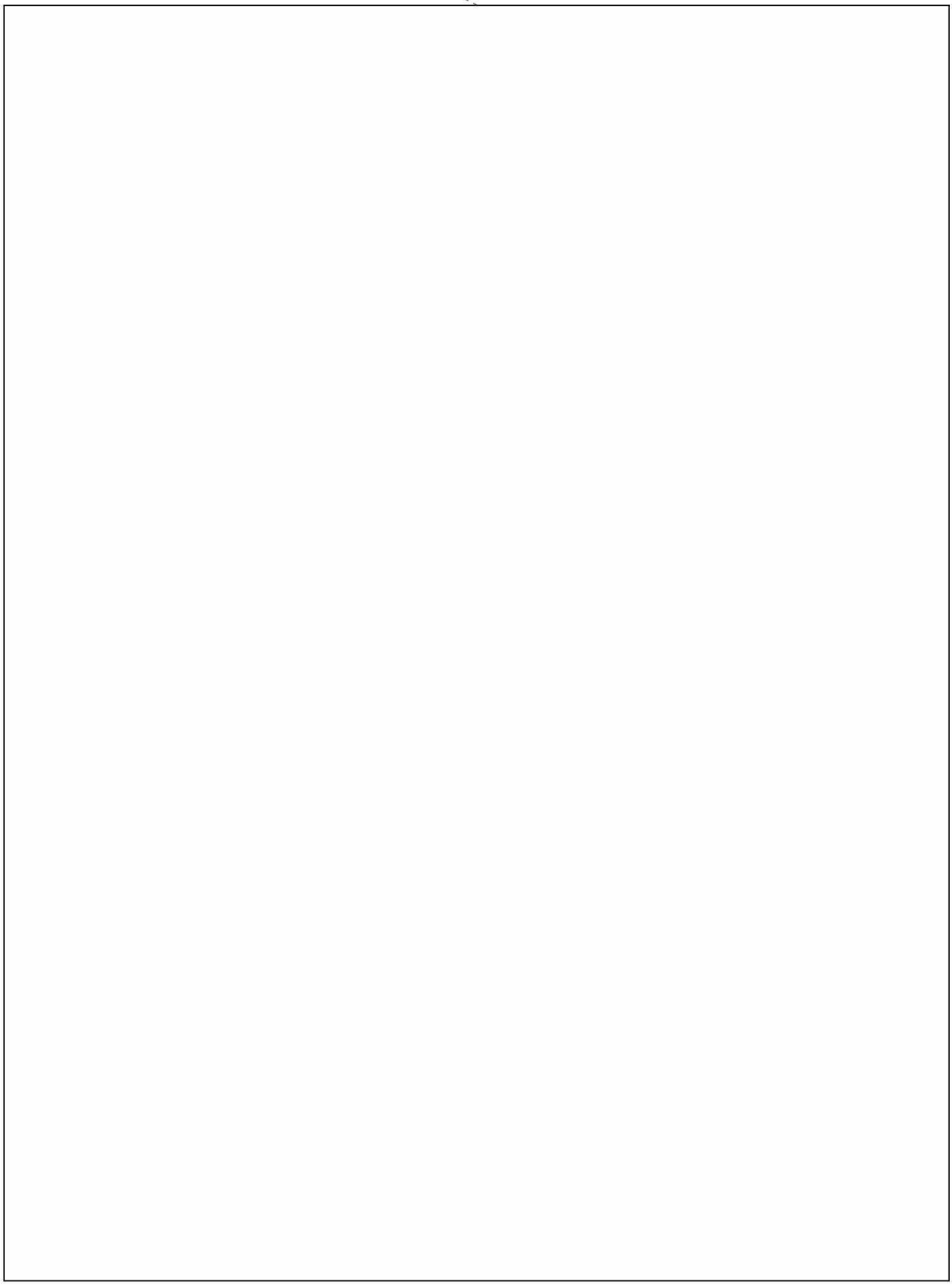

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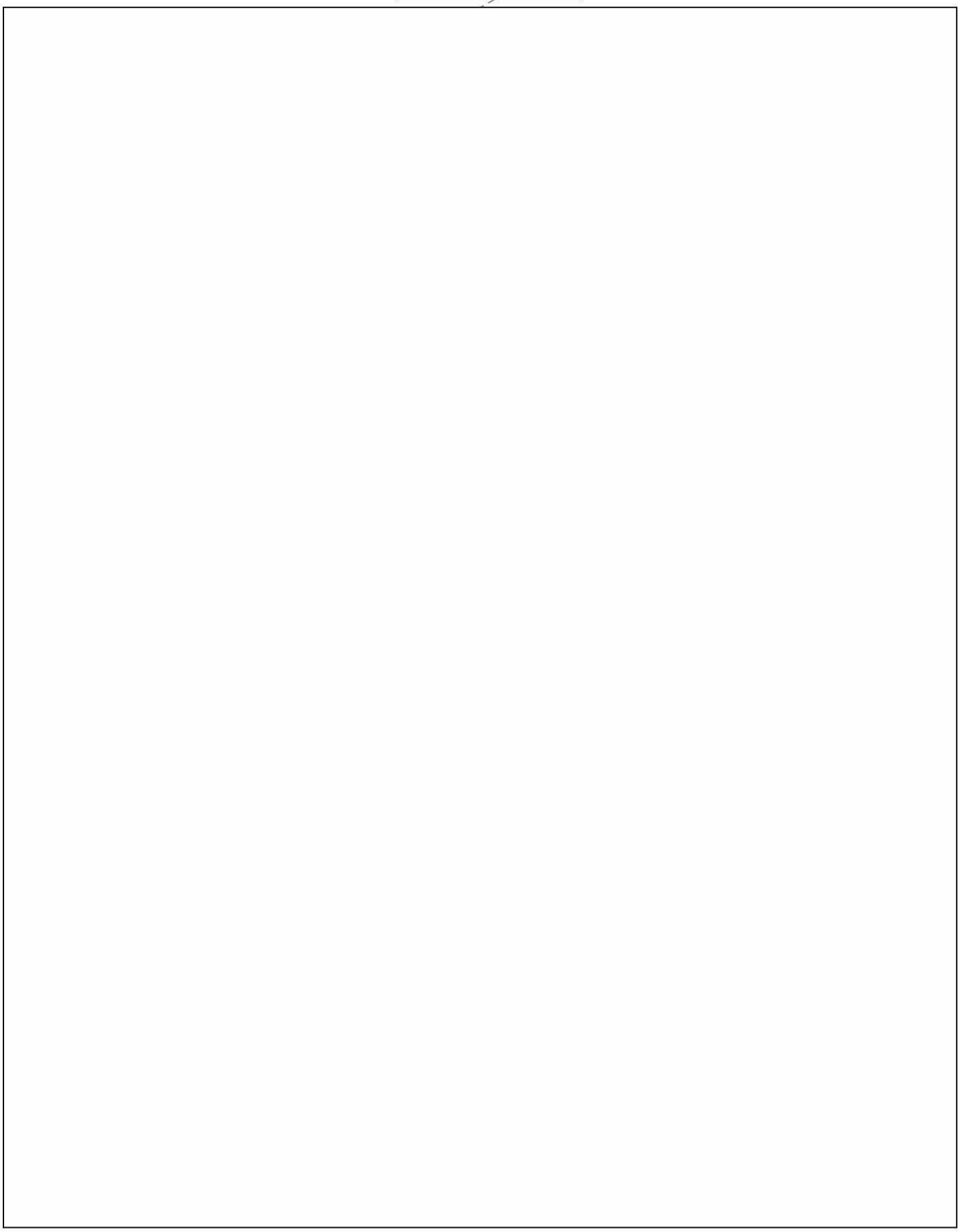

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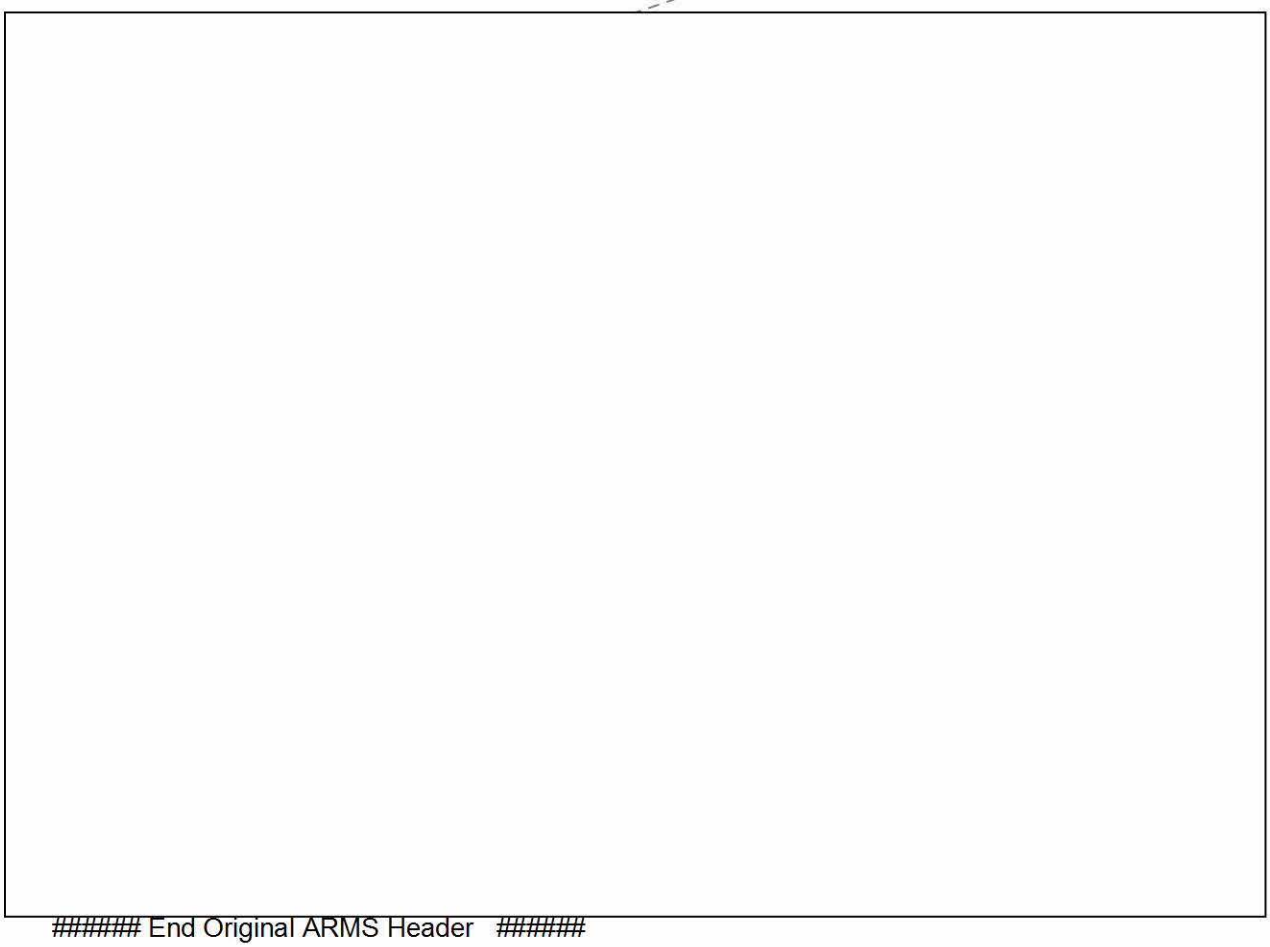

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Talking Points: Protecting America?s Food Supply

* The Administration has taken quick and decisive action to investigate the discovery of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), commonly known as mad cow disease.

o BSE has been detected in a single cow that was slaughtered in the state of Washington.

o A swift investigation revealed that the cow likely originated in Canada, and efforts are underway to trace other cows that belonged to the

infected animal?s original herd.

o The herd that the cow belonged to just prior to slaughter has been isolated and quarantined by local authorities.

* The Administration was actively working to protect American consumers and farmers against the threat of BSE even before the recent discovery. An independent analysis conducted by Harvard University in 2001, and again in 2003, showed that the risk of BSE spreading in the United States is very low and the controls already put in place make it extremely unlikely that BSE would become established. These controls include:

o Aggressively testing and screening animals for BSE, exceeding the recommended international standards for the number of animals tested by 47 times over the last two years.

o Strictly enforced the 1997 regulation on feed, adopted in the wake of the BSE outbreak in Britain, which prohibits the use of ruminant protein in feed intended for other ruminants and eliminates the primary source of BSE transmission. Significantly, the infected cow discovered in Washington was born before these rules were adopted in the U.S. and Canada.

o Developing a verifiable system of national animal identification that is uniform, consistent, and efficient nationwide. USDA began developing this system 18 months ago.

* Secretary of Agriculture Ann Veneman has announced new steps to improve our efforts to detect and prevent BSE and protect America?s consumers and farmers, including:

o Banning meat from ?downer,? or non-ambulatory, animals for human consumption.

o Expanding surveillance, testing, and identification efforts to improve the detection of BSE, and providing for the immediate isolation of suspicious animals or animal products ? including doubling the number of animals tested for BSE in the United States each year, from approximately 20,000 to 40,000. In addition, meat from tested animals will be held until there is confirmation the animal did not have BSE.

o Strengthening meat processing safeguards by expanding process controls for advanced meat recovery systems and prohibiting mechanically separated beef from the food supply to ensure that specified risk materials do not enter the food chain.

o Clearly prohibiting specified risk materials ? such as brain, spinal cord, and lower intestinal tissue ? from being used as food for human consumption.

o Appointing an international panel of experts to monitor and certify the effectiveness of response efforts.

Prepared by the White House Office of Communications

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