

THE 11TH

By David J. LeMaster

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CHARACTERS

Heather (f)
David (m)
Heather's Father (or mother, either)
Math Teacher (either)
Kristen (f)
Lisa (f)
Ahmed (m)
Josh (m)
Principal (either)
Vice Principal (either)
Secretary (f)
Radio Announcer (either)
Joe (m)
Sue (f)
Gabriel (m)
Michelle (f)
TV Announcer (either)
History Teacher (either)
PFC Barnes (m)
Office Aid (either)
Katie (f)
Ticket Seller (f)
Woman (f)
Woman II (f)
Person I (either)
Person II (either)
Ahmed's Mother (f)
Singer (either)

All characters break the fourth wall and address the audience as well as each other.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

The play is continuous from action to action and there should be no pause or blackout between scenes. If possible, the production should use sounds of a television broadcast, school bell and the special music or effect during the soldier scene.

Dedicated to Heather

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by

David J. LeMaster

The play may be performed either on a bare stage with minimal props, as a reader's theatre, or on an elaborate stage with multiple props. The only requirement is several playing spaces so that the actors may be grouped together for the various scenes. All characters may be double or triple cast at the discretion of the director. The production may be as elaborate or as minimal as the director chooses. Depending on the needs of the company, speeches/characters may be combined.

There are five basic groups, each of which require a playing space. Group A, HEATHER, DAVID, etc., begin in the airport and then go to HEATHER and DAVID's home. Group B is the high school math class. Group C is the high school office. Group D is a pair of parents in two locations. Group E includes the high school history class. When the classes "change," the student characters move back and forth through an imaginary "hall" on their way to the next class. For the purposes of this script, the locations and groups will be referred to by the letters above. TV and RADIO ANNOUNCERS are separate from the groups and may be heard by all.

Group A: Begins in the airport. HEATHER and DAVID narrate to audience and interact with each other.

DAVID: *(to audience)* We were at the airport.

HEATHER: *(to audience)* I had a flight to LA.

DAVID: A routine trip.

HEATHER: I'm an actress.

DAVID: She goes back and forth.

HEATHER: I had a workshop

DAVID: And we ran late that day

HEATHER: You missed the exit.

DAVID: It was early.

HEATHER: Only 8:30.

DAVID: That's early.

HEATHER: You teach at 7:30 now.

DAVID: That's now. Back then I taught night classes at the college. I didn't get up until 10:00.

HEATHER: Anyway, we ran late.

DAVID: Ten o'clock. Ah, the good ol' days.

HEATHER: It was his fault.

DAVID: Right.

HEATHER: So he let me off at curbside.

DAVID: I parked the car in short-term parking.

HEATHER: I raced through the screeners.

DAVID: They were bored.

HEATHER: **(like a screener)** Just put the keys in the box.

DAVID: This guy took a cup of coffee right through the metal detector.

HEATHER: Someone in front of me beeped.

DAVID: The guards searched him for coffee cream as a joke.

HEATHER: So I rushed to reach the gate in time.

DAVID: I thought they'd board the plane before I got there.

HEATHER: The attendant called for first class passengers and those who needed assistance.

DAVID: I got there out of breath, just in time to say goodbye.

HEATHER: But I'd seen it on TV.

DAVID: The sound was turned down.

HEATHER: But people gathered in front of the news, pointing.

DAVID: They replayed the tape.

HEATHER: I think we saw the second one live.

DAVID: It couldn't have been. A guy told us it was a second plane—like it was no big deal.

HEATHER: **(to audience)** But we knew a plane had hit.

DAVID: I said, "That's a coincidence."

HEATHER: You made it a history lesson.

DAVID: A plane hit the Empire State Building in 1945.

HEATHER: See?

DAVID: A big plane... A B-24, I think... Lost in a fog.

HEATHER: So we didn't know what to do.

DAVID: I mean - it had happened before.

HEATHER: There were two planes.

DAVID: But we were rushed. We didn't understand -

HEATHER: I know.

DAVID: The significance.

HEATHER: I called my father.

(Lights up on FATHER who stays with Group A.)

FATHER: **(answers his phone)** Hello?

DAVID: I wanted her to stay home.

HEATHER: **(on cell)** A plane hit the World Trade Center.

DAVID: I didn't want her to go at all.

FATHER: What time is it?

HEATHER: Are you still asleep?

FATHER: No. No. **(to audience)** I was still asleep.

HEATHER: Should I get on the plane?

FATHER: Why not?

HEATHER: A plane hit—

FATHER: We can't live our lives in fear.

HEATHER: You're right.

FATHER: Things like this happen all the time.

HEATHER: But it's a—

FATHER: Don't be scared.

HEATHER: **(to audience)** So I got on.

FATHER: **(to audience)** She woke me up.

HEATHER: I thought he was watching the news.

FATHER: I didn't have the TV on.

DAVID: We weren't thinking.

FATHER: It made sense at the time.

(Lights up on Group B, a math class; actors include MATH TEACHER, JOSH, KRISTEN, AHMED and LISA. MATH TEACHER stands in front of the class.)

MATH TEACHER: **(to audience)** I'd just introduced a new mathematical concept.

JOSH: **(to audience)** I was bored.

KRISTEN: I was asleep.

MATH TEACHER: **(turns to her)** You were asleep?

KRISTEN: You're boring.

MATH TEACHER: I'm not boring.

JOSH: Yes, you are.

MATH TEACHER: Math is boring.

AHMED: I think it's fun.

MATH TEACHER: See?

AHMED: But you put me to sleep.

MATH TEACHER: Great. So I'm boring.

AHMED: **(to audience)** He wrote "X is to Y as Y is to Z" on the board...

MATH TEACHER: You remember?

AHMED: I remember all my lessons.

KRISTEN: You must have a photographic memory.

JOSH: I have a *pornographic* memory.

KRISTEN: Shut up.

MATH TEACHER: Anyway. I stood at the board...

AHMED: X is to Y as—

MATH TEACHER: Right. That. And Lisa Stone came in.

LISA: **(to audience)** I'd been in the office.

AMY: They had the TV on there.

MATH TEACHER: It was a school day.

AMY: So?

MATH TEACHER: So I was teaching.

AMY: They hit the World Trade Center.

MATH TEACHER: That's terrible. Class. Attention, please. We're not stopping.

LISA: But people are dying—

MATH TEACHER: People die every day.

JOSH: I can't concentrate!

MATH TEACHER: What's new about that? Now quiet! I mean it.

AMY: It's not fair that we can't watch it on TV.

MATH TEACHER: Life's not fair. Back to work.

AMY: **(starts to cry)** But all those people -

MATH TEACHER: There's time for crying at home.

JOSH: We can't go home.

MATH TEACHER: We can't stop, either. Otherwise, people will panic.

JOSH: But it's not right -

MATH TEACHER: Josh. Back to work.

(Lights up on Group C, at the school's office; characters include PRINCIPAL, VICE PRINCIPAL and SECRETARY.)

PRINCIPAL: So, we've got a situation here.

VICE PRINCIPAL: What should we do?

SECRETARY: I've got panicked parents on the phone.

PRINCIPAL: It's on the east coast, for heaven's sake.

SECRETARY: But we're near a refinery.

PRINCIPAL: They didn't hit a refinery.

VICE PRINCIPAL: Who's to say they won't?

PRINCIPAL: As principal, I've got one job today - keep the kids safe.

VICE PRINCIPAL: And they're safe in the school?

PRINCIPAL: Would they be safe on the street?

VICE PRINCIPAL: But if they hit a refinery -

PRINCIPAL: You're giving in to rumor and panic.

VICE PRINCIPAL: But -

PRINCIPAL: No panics.

(Lights up on Group D; we see parents JOE and SUE. They address the audience.)

JOE: **(to audience)** So my wife calls me at the office.

SUE: Something horrible has just happened.

JOE: This had better be good.

SUE: Joe, turn on the television.

JOE: I'm at the office. I don't have a television.

SUE: Turn on the radio.

JOE: I'm working, Susan.

SUE: Terrorists hit the World Trade Center.

JOE: What are you talking about?

SUE: Just turn on the radio.

JOE: It's on. It's on.

(We hear RADIO ANNOUNCER.)

RADIO ANNOUNCER: Smoke is pouring from the tower.

SUE: Two planes hit.

JOE: Single engine?

SUE: Passenger jets.

JOE: Impossible!

ANNOUNCER: Someone just leapt from a window!

JOE: Let me get this straight. Two -

SUE: Yes, Joseph, for heaven's sake! Two planes.

JOE: That couldn't be an accident.

SUE: No. We're under attack.

JOE: Call the school. Get the kid.

SUE: What about -

JOE: The kid. We've got to be together.

SUE: Don't leave me.

JOE: Call my cell.

SUE: But Joe -

JOE: I'm going to the school, all right? Tell them I'm on my way.

(Cross-fade to Group A. HEATHER and DAVID are joined by GABRIEL and MICHELLE, passengers on the airplane. DAVID is separate from the rest of the group, who are now in "airline seating." HEATHER's FATHER is not involved in the scene.)

HEATHER: **(to audience)** I sat next to an Arab on the plane.

GABRIEL: **(to HEATHER)** I'm not an Arab. I'm Latino.

HEATHER: I didn't know that.

GABRIEL: You could've asked.

HEATHER: I didn't want to be rude.

GABRIEL: So you just sat and stared.

HEATHER: Well...

GABRIEL: It's okay. You're not the only one.

HEATHER: Well, you'd look, too, wouldn't you?

GABRIEL: No, I wouldn't. I'm Latino, not Arab.

HEATHER: You could tell?

GABRIEL: Sure.

HEATHER: How? One is a slightly darker shade of brown?

GABRIEL: You're profiling.

HEATHER: My life might be in danger.

GABRIEL: Still -

HEATHER: Still what? You'd do the same, wouldn't you?

DAVID: **(to audience)** I watched her board the plane and saw it pull away.

HEATHER: So there I was, next to this Arab.

GABRIEL: Not an Arab.

HEATHER: A guy I thought was an Arab.

GABRIEL: And there I was, with a plane full of people looking at me.

MICHELLE: **(to HEATHER)** They say Arabs did it.

GABRIEL: I'm not an Arab.

MICHELLE: **(to GABRIEL)** You're a towel head.

GABRIEL: A what?

HEATHER: **(to MICHELLE)** You're being prejudiced.

MICHELLE: **(to HEATHER)** Well, so are you!

HEATHER: I am not. I just said I sat next to an Arab, and it scared me.

That's all.

MICHELLE: Well, it scared me, too!

GABRIEL: It scared all of us.

MICHELLE: **(to GABRIEL)** How could it scare you? You're one of them!

DAVID: **(to audience)** They turned up the TV monitors in the airport.

TV ANNOUNCER: President Bush just left a grade school where he'd been reading to children.

DAVID: And I realized it was terrorists.

TV ANNOUNCER: And in a brief statement to the press, he's acknowledged a deliberate attack.

DAVID: And the first thing I thought, "I'm glad I'm not president," because I wanted to nuke them - all of them - the whole Arab world.

(Cross-fade to Group B where MATH TEACHER continues trying to teach JOSH, KRISTEN, LISA and AHMED.)

MATH TEACHER: **(teaching)** X plus Y -

JOSH: Aw, come on, Teach. We want to turn on the TV.

MATH TEACHER: No.

KRISTEN: Please, Mr. **(Ms.)** Sharp.

MATH TEACHER: No.

JOSH: How come?

MATH TEACHER: We don't need any more distractions.

LISA: Then I'm going back to the office.

MATH TEACHER: Sit down.

LISA: We're under attack!

MATH TEACHER: We're not under attack. *New York* is under attack.

AMY: You're a communist.

MATH TEACHER: Don't be ridiculous.

AMY: You are... You're too unpatriotic to turn on the TV.

MATH TEACHER: To watch what, Amy?

AMY: The news!

MATH TEACHER: We know the news. We've been attacked. If anything else concerns us, we'll hear about it.

JOSH: How?

MATH TEACHER: An angel will come down from heaven. I don't know, Josh. But we'll hear what we're supposed to hear.

(Cross-fade to Groups C and D. JOE is on a cell phone arguing with SECRETARY. PRINCIPAL and VICE PRINCIPAL are nearby.)

JOE: ***(on cell)*** I want to know about my son.

SECRETARY: ***(on phone)*** Yes, Mr. Smith.

JOE: What class is he in?

SECRETARY: Math.

JOE: I'm coming to get him.

SECRETARY: Please hold. ***(to PRINCIPAL)*** Sir? ***(Ma'am)***

PRINCIPAL: Yes?

SECRETARY: It's a parent.

PRINCIPAL: Tell them everything's fine.

SECRETARY: He's coming for his kid.

PRINCIPAL: No.

VICE PRINCIPAL: He won't be the only one.

PRINCIPAL: Nobody leaves.

VICE PRINCIPAL: We'll make an announcement on the intercom -

PRINCIPAL: We've got half an hour until class changes.

VICE PRINCIPAL: We have no right to keep the kids here -

PRINCIPAL: We'll shelter in place. Nobody leaves. Nobody panics.

(Cross-fade to Group E, HISTORY TEACHER's class. The group includes HISTORY TEACHER, PFC BARNES, KATIE and OFFICE AID)

PFC BARNES: ***(to audience)*** I am Private First Class James Barnes. I was in history class on September 11, 2001 when our nation was attacked by terrorists.

HISTORY TEACHER: ***(to class)*** Everybody just sit still.

PFC BARNES: ***(to audience)*** Coach Stankey wasn't doing anything anyway.

HISTORY TEACHER: **(to audience)** I often use the television as a teaching aid.

PFC BARNES: He told us to do our homework.

HISTORY TEACHER: I've got tests to grade.

KATIE: When the office aid came in and told us.

HISTORY TEACHER: Is it on TV?

OFFICE AID: Yeah. On all the channels.

HISTORY TEACHER: Okay, then. Everybody just sit down and watch this. This is ...well ...this is history.

(Lights up on Group A where MATH TEACHER continues to teach JOSH, KRISTEN, AHMED and LISA. Lights stay up on Group E: HISTORY TEACHER, PFC BARNES, KATIE and OFFICE AID. Cross-cut between the two scenes.)

MATH TEACHER: **(teaching)** The sum of X minus Y -

HISTORY TEACHER: **(to class)** I was little when they shot Kennedy.

OFFICE AID: Who shot Kennedy?

MATH TEACHER: And the sum of X plus Y is -

HISTORY TEACHER: The government says Lee Harvey Oswald.

KATIE: My dad says the communists did it.

HISTORY TEACHER: A lot of people say that.

PFC BARNES: Wait - they're showing it again! ***(They watch TV and react.)*** I can't believe that!

OFFICE AID: It looks like "Diehard."

PFC BARNES: They're gonna pay for this!

KATIE: Who's gonna pay?

PFC BARNES: Them. They are.

KATIE: They killed Kennedy and no one paid.

HISTORY TEACHER: Oswald paid.

KATIE: My dad says he's just a patsy.

PFC BARNES: Well, all of them guys are gonna pay this time. All of them.

MATH TEACHER: And the sum of both integers -

(Cross-fade to Groups B and C. PRINCIPAL is on the phone with JOE; SECRETARY and VICE PRINCIPAL stand nearby.)

PRINCIPAL: ***(on phone)*** We've made an executive decision.

JOE: ***(on cell)*** What's that?

PRINCIPAL: Everyone stays put.

JOE: I want my son *now*.

PRINCIPAL: There's no need to panic, sir.

JOE: Tell that to my wife!

PRINCIPAL : The children are safe here at the school.

JOE: I'll report you to the superintendent.

PRINCIPAL: Don't make the kids panic.

JOE: You mean they don't even know?

PRINCIPAL: We've made no official announcement, no.

JOE: My kid has a right to know!

PRINCIPAL: He'll know in due time, sir.

JOE: He needs to know now!

VICE PRINCIPAL: **(to audience)** And then, just like that, it got worse.

(Lights up on all groups.)

HEATHER: **(to audience)** I was on the plane, completely unnerved.

SUE: **(on cell)** Joe! Joe, answer your cell!

JOE: **(on cell to PRINCIPAL)** I want my kid!

PRINCIPAL: **(on phone to JOE)** There's no cause to further panic the students -

MATH TEACHER: Carry the two...

PFC BARNES: What's going on now?

VICE PRINCIPAL: **(to PRINCIPAL)** Look at the TV.

SECRETARY: **(to audience)** They split the screen.

HISTORY TEACHER: Hey, wait a minute! Everybody be quiet.

AHMED: **(to audience)** We kept doing math.

MATH TEACHER: And X is to Y...

(Cross-fade to Group A. HEATHER, GABRIEL and MICHELLE are on the plane; DAVID is alone.)

HEATHER: **(to audience)** I touched my throat and suddenly noticed. My cross, the one my mother gave me ...I forgot it.

DAVID: **(to audience)** I was on my way out of the airport.

HEATHER: **(to audience)** And then - *then* I was scared.

GABRIEL: **(to audience)** They stopped the plane on the runway.

HEATHER: **(to audience)** I wore it for luck.

GABRIEL: **(to audience)** And I thought, crap. I'm going to miss my eleven thirty meeting in LA.

HEATHER: **(to audience)** I always wore that cross. I never took it off, except today.

GABRIEL: **(to audience)** So who do I call? I mean, I could get fired for this.

HEATHER: **(to audience)** And suddenly I knew something was terribly, terribly wrong.

MICHELLE: **(to audience)** I wondered if the towel head had a bomb.

DAVID: **(to audience)** Heather called me on my cell.

HEATHER: **(on cell)** They're turning the plane around.

MICHELLE: **(to HEATHER)** I'll bet they'll take *him* off.

HEATHER: **(on cell)** We're coming back.

DAVID: **(on cell)** Are you in the air?

HEATHER: **(on cell)** On the tarmac. We never took off.

GABRIEL: Everyone's staring at me.

MICHELLE: He could try to take a hostage.

GABRIEL: She thinks I'm going to kill her.

MICHELLE: Don't make eye contact with him.

GABRIEL: Look her in the eyes. Try to put her at ease.

MICHELLE: He's looking at me! He wants to take me hostage.

GABRIEL: She's terrified.

MICHELLE: Please. Leave me alone.

GABRIEL: I can't take this any more. **(pause; HE shouts)** Lady!? Do you hear me? I'm Latino! You hear me? Latino!

MICHELLE: Are you talking to me?

GABRIEL: I'm talking to all of you.

MICHELLE: Why are you singling out me?

GABRIEL: Because *you* singled out *me*!

MICHELLE: I didn't.

GABRIEL: Do you hear the accent, lady? I'm from Monterrey, not Mecca! I'm a Mexican!

(Cross-fade to TELEVISION ANNOUNCER.)

TELEVISION ANNOUNCER: Sources are confirming now another development. There's been a third explosion, this time at the Pentagon. Repeat. There's been an explosion at the Pentagon.

(Cross-fade to Groups C and D. PRINCIPAL still talks to JOE; SECRETARY and VICE PRINCIPAL still stand close. SUE, still on her own cell, panics.)

VICE PRINCIPAL: See? I told you they could hit something else.

PRINCIPAL: The Pentagon?

JOE: Hello? Hello?

PRINCIPAL: **(to SECRETARY)** Tell him I can't talk right now.

SECRETARY: **(on phone)** He can't talk right now.

JOE: He'd better talk! Tell him I'm picking up my kid.

SUE: **(on cell)** Joe! Answer your cell!

(Cross-fade to Group A. HEATHER, GABRIEL and MICHELLE exit the plane.)

HEATHER: **(to audience)** I was the first one off the plane.

GABRIEL: As I got off the plane, I grew more angry.

DAVID: I raced through the airport. The security guards at the X-ray machines seemed more cautious this time.

GABRIEL: I wanted to get on the loudspeaker and say, “Hello? Do you hear any trace of an Arab accent?”

HEATHER: I raced off the plane, terrified. But once I got back on the ground I wanted my money back.

GABRIEL: What’s wrong with you people? I’m an American, too!

(Cross-fade to Group D. SUE and JOE are on cells.)

SUE: Pick up, Joe!

JOE: They freaking hung up on me!

SUE: Pick up, Joe!

JOE: **(answers cell)** What?

SUE: I’ve been trying to catch you!

JOE: They’re keeping the kid in class. I’m gonna sue.

(Lights up on Groups A and B. SUE overlaps MATH TEACHER and DAVID.)

MATH TEACHER: **(teaching)** The square root of 474...

SUE: **(to JOE)** They’ve hit the Pentagon.

JOE: Oh, no.

(Cross-fade to Group A. DAVID and HEATHER reunite.)

DAVID: **(to HEATHER)** I’ve been listening to the radio.

HEATHER: **(to DAVID)** I can’t believe this.

DAVID: Are you all right?

HEATHER: Yes. I sat next to a Middle Easterner on the plane, though.

DAVID: On the plane?

HEATHER: No, David, in the bathroom. What do you think? Of course on the plane.

DAVID: He could’ve been a terrorist.

HEATHER: Let’s just cancel the trip.

DAVID: But we paid for a ticket.

HEATHER: I don’t care. I’m scared.

DAVID: Me, too. I don’t want you on that plane.

HEATHER: Let’s get my money back.

DAVID: Okay.

HEATHER: Stay here. I’ll tell them I want a refund. I’m not waiting.

(Cross-fade to Group C. PRINCIPAL faces VICE PRINCIPAL and SECRETARY.)

SECRETARY: ***(to PRINCIPAL)*** We have an irate parent on every line.

PRINCIPAL: Hang up on them.

VICE PRINCIPAL: You can't do that!

PRINCIPAL: We can't dismiss school. Not without word from the superintendent.

VICE PRINCIPAL: This is a huge mistake.

PRINCIPAL: It's my call.

VICE PRINCIPAL: All right. But I wash my hands of it.

PRINCIPAL: Everyone hear that? It's my call.

(Cross-cut to Group A. HEATHER and DAVID go to the Customer Service counter and face TICKET SELLER.)

HEATHER: ***(to audience)*** I went to Customer Service.

DAVID: ***(to audience)*** I went to the TV.

TICKET SELLER: ***(to HEATHER)*** How may I help you?

HEATHER: I was on the flight to Los Angeles.

TICKET SELLER: Yes. They've grounded all air traffic.

HEATHER: I beg your pardon?

TICKET SELLER: Grounded. Until further notice.

HEATHER: I want my money back.

TICKET SELLER: Yes. Well. Let me see what I can do.

HEATHER: Don't just see. Refund my money.

TICKET SELLER: But if the plane takes off -

HEATHER: I don't want to be on it.

TICKET SELLER: I don't know if we can refund -

HEATHER: Which words didn't you understand? I'm not traveling today.

DAVID: ***(to audience)*** They split the TV screen. On one side was the World Trade Center. Burning. Fire. Smoke. And on the other side - another fire. Words crawled across the bottom, the way they used to announce weather warnings. One side said New York, the other, Washington. And then, I finally understood the danger. How could I have been so stupid before?

TICKET SELLER: ***(to HEATHER)*** The computers have locked down.

HEATHER: Can't you refund -

DAVID: ***(to HEATHER)*** We're getting out of here.

HEATHER: I want my money -

DAVID: They've hit Washington, too. This is a deliberate act of war!

TICKET SELLER: Oh, my God!

HEATHER: My ticket -

DAVID: Come on!

TICKET SELLER **(to audience)** My baby was in school. I watched the couple rush away. I watched people race through the airport. People got in my line for refunds. The computer went haywire. The boss called, and the boss's boss. They told us to stay right there. People needed us at our posts.

(Two women and two men appear at the counter.)

WOMAN: I need my ticket back -

PERSON I: Are they shutting down the flights?

WOMAN II: When is there another flight?

PERSON II: What's going on?!

TICKET SELLER: **(to audience)** All I could think about was my baby - the only thing in my life - his father left us both. And here I was, standing in an airport in a job I never liked, paying bills because his father never sent child support and kept our lawyer tied up in court, and all I could do was work, work, work. And all I knew was if they hit New York and they hit Washington, then they could hit me next - they could hit me, right here, right now ...Or worse still, they could hit my baby, sitting there in school, and there was nothing I could do about it.

(Cross-fade to Group C where PRINCIPAL, VICE PRINCIPAL and SECRETARY converse.)

PRINCIPAL **(to VP)** I've called the superintendent.

VICE PRINCIPAL: The President's going to make another speech.

SECRETARY: Did they turn out school?

PRINCIPAL: It's my call.

SECRETARY: But what about the parents who want to take their children home?

VICE PRINCIPAL: If they come up and get them...

SECRETARY: We can't turn them away.

PRINCIPAL: We need to keep discipline -

VICE PRINCIPAL: **(discovery)** We have five minutes to the bell.

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