

A NIGHT OF TERROR AND TOFU

By Kelly Meadows

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CHARACTERS

4 Males, 6 Females, 4 Either

LARA, a high school-aged girl left to baby-sit her baby brother on Halloween.

MOM, her mother, on her way out to a party

DAD, her father, going with MOM

BRETT, her boyfriend, invited over against her parents' orders

CORINNE, LARA's friend, a bit afraid of everything, especially on Halloween.

LaSHAWN, another friend, who speaks in poetry

CONCHITA, a third friend, who's a bit too interested in BRETT

PROWLER, a neighborhood ghoul checking up on LARA's behavior

WITCH, who loves the sound of her own laughter

NEIGHBOR, A very old lady awoken up by all the partying at LARA's house.

CHILD, a trick-or-treater

GHOST, checking up on the PROWLER and the WITCH

OFFICER #1, very official

OFFICER #2, a laid back cop who likes to eat

The OFFICERS, the GHOST, and the CHILD can be either male or female; some roles may be doubled for a smaller cast.

PROPS

People bring in bags of party food, which can be in paper bags so nothing specific has to be inside; however, some chips and other food should be there already.

MOM gives LARA a bag of groceries.

BRETT brings in paper plates and party food, which can be a place of fruit or vegetables.

LARA brings in a pitcher of juice and paper cups.

CORINNE, LaSHAWN and CONCHITA come to the door with bags of snacks, including a couple peaches.

PROWLER has a small tape recorder.

AQUA brings in a bag of watercress, which can be in a paper bag.

NEIGHBOR has a CD in her purse, and SHANE has one as well, somewhere in his costume.

CHILD holds a trick or treat bag and later gets a chocolate bar from the kitchen.

BRETT offers PROWLER some chips.

OFFICER #2 has something to eat.

MOM and DAD come in carrying their baby, which can be a wrapped bundle.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

It's a party out of bounds! LARA's just trying for some good old disobedience, and havoc breaks loose. The conflict commences early in the play, as we find out immediately that LARA can't go out on Halloween while her parents are going to a party. Apparently LARA flouts MOM and DAD a bit too often, which is why they enjoy inflicting this particular punishment, but we feel a bit sorry for LARA for having to put up with them.

Much of the humor in this play is how LARA refuses to be frightened by the strange goings on while her friends are cowering behind the furniture. All of her friends have a specific personality quirk that allows them to develop a fun character and stand out in a large cast. CORINNE is afraid of everything; CONCHITA is sexy as can be; AQUA is strange; SHANE is sarcastic, etc. BRETT, in particular, can play for physical humor as he gets tripped over and knocked around the room. Also, let the audience make their own conclusions about these characters' love of healthy food – the characters themselves shouldn't feel they're out of the ordinary.

This play provides opportunity for some fun costumes for many of the characters, from spooky to downright silly. Combine this with an interesting design for LARA's living room, and you have quite a colorful show! The set can be minimal, or a full living room. It needs places for characters to sit, as well as some snack tables. You might try for some lighting and sound effects in some of the more magical parts of the show, such as when PROWLER sends people flying across the room, or when the girls are taken over by otherworldly beings.

For a full evening of funny spookiness, combine *Ghost of a Chance* and the playwright's *Kiss Of Death*.

A GHOST OF A CHANCE

by
Kelly Meadows

SETTING: LARA's living room, Halloween night. There are a couch and a couple chairs, also tables to put out party food, and whatever décor her parents might come up with. Note that her parents have a rather off-the-wall and annoying sense of humor, and it might be fun to show that in the home décor. At the back of the stage, or somewhere, a staircase leads to the second floor where LARA's younger brother is asleep. If a staircase isn't possible, it can be offstage. Her parents enter, upbeat, dressed in perfectly awful Halloween costumes, ready to go out to a party. While DAD is something resembling a pastrami sandwich, MOM can be whatever her imagination allows. LARA, already in a bad mood, not in a costume, enters from another part of the stage and sees them, aghast.

LARA: (*almost as if SHE's their parents*) Mom! Dad! You are *not* going out like that.

MOM: (*thinks that's funny*) That's *my* line, LARA! But... we *are* going out like this, and better yet, (*a bit sarcastic, perhaps pinching LARA's cheeks*) you're not going out at all.

DAD: (*sweetly condescending*) Can't your parents have a *little* fun? Just once?

MOM: (*joking, slightly*) We haven't since you started high school.

LARA: (*thinks this whole setup is unfair*) I'm the one who's supposed to have fun on Halloween. You're supposed to stay home and give away candied dog treats.

DAD: Remember the deal?

LARA: How can I forget when you repeat it every five minutes?

DAD: (*DAD checks his watch*) Speaking of which: (*LARA has heard this and starts to mouth along where they can't see*) If you pass the Home Economics test, *you* go out. If you fail, (*arm around MOM*) we go out.

MOM: (*shaming LARA*) Burning a pancake and trying to serve it to the head cheerleader.

LARA: It won the science fair.

DAD: (*not impressed*) It had mushrooms growing out of it.

LARA: So did the head cheerleader. (*looking at his costume, appalled*) What are you supposed to be? Other than an embarrassing parent...

DAD: (*a little upset SHE can't figure it out*) I was trying for a pastrami sandwich.

MOM: (*looking at the costume*) Your mayonnaise is leaking.

DAD: (*embarrassed*) Oh, sorry. (*MOM gets out a napkin from her purse and dabs him, then DAD addresses LARA*) Now, you take good care of your baby brother while we're gone. We've posted the emergency numbers on the fridge.

- MOM: **(to DAD, egging him on)** Don't forget the rules. Lara loves to be reminded!
- DAD: **(more official, LARA's heard this all too often too)** No music, no TV, no girlfriends, no boyfriends, and **(bigger)** especially no Brett.
- LARA: Brett *is* my boyfriend!
- DAD: And that's why he can't come over.
- LARA: I won't have anything to do.
- MOM: Just one minute young lady. **(exits into the kitchen, comes back in and hands LARA a bag)** Here's some flour, eggs, and milk. You need to practice. **(to DAD)** Now hurry up, Benjamin. **(looks at his costume again)** Your lettuce is wilting. Have fun, LARA!
- DAD: **(a bit too off-putting)** Warm up that griddle! **(they exit)**
- LARA: **(bitter, shouting after them)** Fine! I'll stay home and be a party pooper if that's what you want.
- MOM: **(peeks back in)** It is, dear. **(exit)**
- LARA: Great! I'll just be miserable! **(waits)** I said, great! I'll just be miserable! **(pause; opens the door and shouts outside.)** I said, great! I'll just be miserable!
- MOM: **(from offstage)** Good! **(sound effect of car door slamming)**
- LARA: **(sound of a baby crying; each time this happens, it should be the same sound)** Quiet! **(it stops; LARA smiles)** That was easy! **(short pause, then SHE gets a devious look, as if SHE's planned this all out beforehand)** Well... if *they're* having a party, so am I. **(picks up the phone and dials)** Brett? Brett, they're gone! **(a knock at the door)** Now who? **(SHE answers, it's BRETT)**
- BRETT: **(closing up a cell phone)** I was hiding under the bush. **(HE goes to hug her; SHE resists)**
- LARA: Not the one where the dog poops!
- BRETT: **(figures it out)** Oh, that's what that was!
- LARA: If my Dad saw you, he'd explode! Last Friday you were here till 4 a.m.
- BRETT: But I was helping you with your homework.
- LARA: I was baking pancakes and you were eating them.
- BRETT: **(defending himself)** I was helping you hide the evidence. **(thinks for a second)** How could you burn a pancake?
- LARA: Overconfidence.
- BRETT: **(overconfident himself, approaching her romantically)** Well, it gives us a chance to spend the night alone, my pretty pancake!
- LARA: Not so fast, doggy-poo. **(lets him in on her plans)** I told some of my girlfriends I was grounded and alone, and they're going to come over and **(they way SHE says it, SHE means party!)** share my punishment.
- BRETT: **(sits down, deflated)** But I wanted to be recklessly and wildly romantic.
- LARA: **(counting them off)** Corinne, LaShawn and Conchita.
- BRETT: **(doesn't like her)** Corinne, **(mocking)** LaShawn, and **(gets up, really likes this one!)** Conchita! I asked her out a dozen times before I settled on you.
- LARA: **(pushing him down, annoyed)** Well thirteen would be very unlucky for you. **(tries to ignore this and get things moving)** Come on! You

know where the snacks are. Let's break out the sprouts and the tofu!
Oh, and there's some herbal tea my parents keep trying to hide.

BRETT: Great! I'll go put on some decaf! (*goes into the kitchen, says from off stage*) Oooh! Grapefruit juice!

LARA: Yeah, they hide that too. (*shouting into the kitchen*) If it's pink, we're not supposed to touch it. (*a knock at the door.*) Oh, this must be them now. (*SHE goes to answer the door as BRETT comes in with some party food – a few pieces of fruit will do, particularly a peach or two – and some paper plates and puts them on a table*) Well it's about time you- (*SHE stops cold as SHE sees it's her parents*) uhhhh... Mayonnaise go bad?

MOM & DAD: (*smiling and annoying*) Trick or treat!

LARA: Pardon me, but... (*loudly, hoping BRETT gets the message*) What are you doing here?

DAD: (*with a knowing laugh*) We know our daughter!

MOM: (*loving, motherly*) And we trust our daughter!

LARA: (*happy to finally get a compliment*) You do?

MOM: (*agrees with him*) Not really, no.

DAD: So we just wanted to make sure there weren't any (*loudly*) BOYS here! (*BRETT drops down to the floor, trying to hide behind a table*)

MOM: Especially... (*BRETT looks up slowly*) Brett! (*BRETT drops back down*)

LARA: Me? Are you kidding? I'm just about to heat up the griddle!

DAD: Mind if we check around?

LARA: (*more to herself*) Go ahead. It's your house. (*as they look around, SHE says to herself*)

MOM: (*looks around, picks up a piece of fruit*) Food for an army.

LARA: I'm depressed. I'm eating to cope.

MOM: What did we teach you?

LARA: Nothing useful.

MOM: (*like it's a rhyme*) Don't eat! Meditate!

DAD: (*Looking around, trips over BRETT, who shows the audience a silent scream*) Darn that table! No boys in here!

MOM: (*looking and trips over BRETT as well; HE does that same scream*) He's a tricky one though. He could be right underfoot.

DAD: Well, good. I'm glad to know we can trust our daughter! (*smells BRETT*) Did you let the dog out?

MOM: Don't forget to check on your brother. (*the baby cries*) Quiet! (*stops*) And don't touch the pink stuff!

DAD: (*still cheerful, all the more so because it annoys LARA*) Now you've got some pancakes to bake, young lady. Happy Halloween. (*HE laughs, and it echoes,;DAD and MOM exit*)

LARA: I'm glad they're not my parents.

BRETT: But-

LARA: They think they are, but it's just impossible.

BRETT: (*getting up slowly*) Your mom packs a mean kick.

LARA: She's a soccer mom. (*to the door where her mother left*) Well, sorry, soccer mom, it's pink grapefruit juice for me! (*SHE goes into the kitchen and comes back with a pitcher of juice and some paper*

cups... there's another knock on the door, SHE puts the juice down on the table with the fruit) Go away already!

CONCHITA: (**outside**) Lara, it's us!

LaSHAWN: (**SHE talks in rhyme all the time**) Come on, Lara, unbolt this door. Don't keep us in suspense no more!

CORINNE: (**LARA opens the door and they pile in, with bags of food; CORINNE barrels in quickly**) Let me in! I hate being outside on Halloween.

BRETT: (**from behind the table**) Uh... hi.

CORINNE: (**jumps back, frightened**) Stop it!

BRETT: It's just me.

CORINNE: How do I know it's not someone else *dressed like you* – who smells like dog poop?

LaSHAWN: (**goes over to him to verify**) It's really Brett, but here's the scoop. His shirt just smells like doooooog-

BRETT: (**annoyed**) Can't you ever stop doing that? You've been doing that since third grade.

LaSHAWN: I bear the curse of a rare psychosis. To always speak with this neurosis.

CONCHITA: I brought peaches, grapes and low fat dip.

CORINNE: I brought potato chips.

CONCHITA: Potato chips? (**they're horrified**) But the fat content!

CORINNE: Baked, not fried! (**everyone relaxes**) Fooled ya!

CONCHITA: (**SHE didn't think it was funny**) Don't do that again!

BRETT: No costumes?

CONCHITA: Costumes are out! (**flirting with BRETT**) They hide my natural beauty.

LARA: (**pulling her away from him**) Your *looks* do that! Now let's put this food out. We are going to make this a Halloween to remember! And my brother can just sleeeeeeep all night long.

LaSHAWN: Your baby brother stays upstairs while we're down here. He sleeps – who cares? (**loud knock on the door**) Oh, that knock don't sound too good. Who keeps pounding on the wood?

BRETT: (**to whoever will listen**) Funny, she lost the poetry slam.

LaSHAWN: I do couplets when it pleases me. (**knock again**) Now get the door, and find out who it be.

CONCHITA: I invited Shane and Aqua.

LARA: (**scandalized**) Aqua? To my house?

CONCHITA: You said party! (**shaking LARA with excitement, and as if this excuses it**) She's bringing watercress.

LARA: (**giving in**) Oh, all right. Come on in, Shane-- (**opens door, but SHE finds PROWLER, a spooky looking man dressed in black, wearing a hood that covers much of his head; CORINNE screams, and the baby cries**) Stop it!

CORINNE: (**hushes up quickly**) Sorry. It's a gut thing.

LARA: Not you! (**CORINNE starts to scream again**) Well, you too. (**SHE stops**)

CONCHITA: She was no better during *Bambi*.

- LARA: **(to PROWLER, testy)** What do you want? I'm grounded and I can't have people over.
- PROWLER: **(spooky and slow)** Lara...
- LARA: **(not intimidated, curt)** What?
- PROWLER: Lara... **(SHE's getting impatient)** Have you checked the child?
- LARA: I hear him cry every five minutes. As long as he keeps that up, I don't have to... **(sarcastic, imitating him)** Check the child.
- BRETT: **(comes up and starts to pull at PROWLER's clothes)** Cool costume, Shane!
- PROWLER: **(big)** I'm not Shane! **(a thunderclap sends BRETT careening across the room. He runs backwards, and falls to the floor. CORINNE screams)** Stop it!
- CORINNE: I'm not finished yet. **(one more scream; everyone holds their ears)** There.
- LARA: Not Shane? **(pulls off his hood, and PROWLER looks ghoulish)**
Ew. Even for Shane, ew.
- CONCHITA: **(a bit scared, trying to mollify the PROWLER, holding out a peach from the table)** Peach?
- PROWLER: **(HE takes it)** Call me Prowler. **(HE takes a noisy bite out of it)** I travel the dark and gloomy skies to find young ladies who disobey their parents.
- CONCHITA: That would be most of us. **(they all look up a bit; LARA tries to rub off PROWLER's "ghoulish" face)**
- PROWLER: It doesn't come off. Now, **(HE points upstairs)** check the child... or there will be consequences.
- BRETT: **(having trouble getting up)** Check it, Lara. I have enough consequences already.
- LARA: My feelings exactly. Just get out, Prowler. We're trying to have a party. **(snooty, as if it's of no importance)** So your consequences will just have to wait.
- PROWLER: **(HE shuts the door.)** You don't understand, Lara. Forces are at work.
- LARA: Forces, consequences. I'm going to force you right out the door. **(SHE tries to push him out, but HE won't budge; eventually HE gets up, there's another a thunderous sound effect and SHE goes careening across the room landing next to BRETT)**
- BRETT: **(scared)** Uh... hi?
- PROWLER: I'll force you into submission.
- LARA: **(gets up, still not afraid)** I'm already grounded. That baby keeps crying, but he might shut up if you'd can that thunder.
- PROWLER: Are you sure? **(HE takes out a small tape recorder, presses play, and we hear the baby cry)** Quiet! **(HE shuts off the tape.)** Now be a good girl and check that child!
- CORINNE: **(scared, still)** You heard him. Be a good girl and check the baby!
- LARA: I won't be blackmailed into babysitting – not on Halloween.
- LaSHAWN: **(snooty, to PROWLER)** She'll do it only if she wants to, Not because you say she's got to. **(PROWLER points at her, threatening)**

Let me try a new approach. Upon this night I must encroach. I know you think he's way too wild, but, Lara, (*desperate, shaking sense LARA*) go and check that child!

CONCHITA: (*SHE sidles up to BRETT*) While she's off in babysitting land, we can have some fun. (*BRETT is more interested than LARA appreciates*)

LARA: (*sees the two of them*) That's it! I'm staying here and- (*another knock on the door, everyone shrieks and hides*) Oh, how much worse can it be? (*SHE opens the door on AQUA and SHANE*) Oh, never mind.

AQUA: (*really excited, holding up a bag*) Freeeeesh watercress! (*everyone comes out of hiding and cheers; CORINNE and LaSHAWN take it happily and put it out on a table; AQUA and SHANE are both wearing Halloween costumes; hers should be really bizarre, so no one can figure it out*)

CONCHITA: Oh, Aqua... (*looking her over*) What are you supposed to be?

AQUA: (*as if!*) I always do this.

CONCHITA: I know. And I've always wondered what you were supposed to be

CORINNE: I haven't seen you in school for awhile.

AQUA: They won't let me in like this. They say it distracts the boys.

CORINNE: Did you run into anything creepy out there?

SHANE: Oh, you mean the gross-out guy with the tape recorder? (*PROWLER turns on the crying*) Quiet! (*HE turns it off*) Yeah. (*up to PROWLER, trying to get stuff off his face as well*) You're a sick dude.

PROWLER: (*grabs SHANE*) I'm not a dude, dude. (*HE's got SHANE in a sort of death grip; SHANE struggles but can't get out, so AQUA comes up from behind and kicks PROWLER*) Ow! That's my soft spot. (*PROWLER lets SHANE go, then HE sends SHANE and AQUA flying over to BRETT, while another clap of thunder is heard*)

SHANE: (*to BRETT, afraid*) Uh... Hi.

AQUA: (*as they get up*) There is something icky about tonight. (*thinks*) It's dog poop!

BRETT: It is not!

AQUA: Well, I brought plain yogurt. (*sniffs*) And it is!

SHANE: I brought some educational videos!

AQUA: On babysitting.

LARA: I don't care. Because (*frustrated!*) I'm not babysitting.

AQUA: Oh everybody knows... you're stuck *babysitting* brother while your parents are... (*does a short dance move*) partying it up as pastrami!

SHANE: Now, did you (*making fun of it*) check the child?

LARA: (*walking away from them all*) What? Does the whole neighborhood know about this?

SHANE: (*points to PROWLER*) Well him. The creature. He kinda spilled it.

AQUA: (*scared*) He wants you to check the child. He was pretty insistent.

We were sort of afraid to come in unless you'd actually done it.

LARA: I'm not checking the child!

- LaSHAWN: Babysitting had ne'er a teacher... Like that wicked hooded creature!
- LARA: Can you just talk like normal people?
- LaSHAWN: Like you? You think that's normal? I think the way you talk is horrible.
- BRETT: LaShawn... please? Try.
- LaSHAWN: I started this when I was eight. I can't stop. (**BRETT turns away in disgust, but SHE grabs him and turns him around to finish**) Cursed! I perpetrate. (**more to everyone**) By the time I reached the age of ten... I couldn't speak in prose again.
- SHANE: Can it, LaShawn.
- LaSHAWN: I can do Haiku. If you don't like constant rhyme, it's less annoying.
- SHANE: Why don't you just talk in free verse? It's still poetry and we'll never know the difference.
- LaSHAWN: Not a bad idea Shane! This rhyming stuff is... (**tries to stop herself**) such a pain. (**shakes her head like SHE can't stop**)
- AQUA: Well, Lara? Are you going to check the child? (**this is exciting for her**) I wanna see the baby!
- LARA: (**noticing her wild getup**) No! You'll scare him to death! (**tries to get them over to the table**) Now dig in! Mom'll freak when she realizes her precious pink grapefruit juice was squeezed out by a bunch of squirrely teens!
- AQUA: (**can't fathom this, trying to drag LARA upstairs**) What is your problem, Lara? What do you have against checking that poor baby? (**LARA breaks loose and runs off, unwittingly into the hands of PROWLER**)
- PROWLER: A very good question. And so much rides on the answer. (**HE lets her go and starts to take a plate**)
- LARA: (**slaps his hand**) You were not invited. So you can have your forces and consequences, but no snacks! Aqua, I'm grounded. I'm mad at my parents. I'm supposed to spend a quiet night making pancakes and checking my brother. I have no plans to do either.
- AQUA: So... you'll punish the child to spite your parents? Just open the door and see if it's still in there.
- CORINNE: Please, Lara. If it's gone, you'll feel guilty for the rest of your life.
- LARA: If it's gone, there won't be a rest of my life once my dad finds out. Look, just... you go check it if you're so paranoid.
- PROWLER: (**AQUA starts to go upstairs, but PROWLER holds her back, and they have a short struggle**) Sit! (**SHE does, pouting**) This is Lara's responsibility.
- CONCHITA: (**to BRETT, helping him out of his corner**) Come help me find the carrot juice! Lara says there's a secret stash and she can't ever find it.
- LARA: (**barring the way to the kitchen**) I can't believe I even invited you, Conchita. My mother will kill you if you touch that carrot juice, and I'll kill you if you touch Brett. This being Halloween, I'll chalk it up to forces and consequences.

CONCHITA: You can't kill anyone, Lara. Then your dad will find out you had people over... So, while you're checking the baby, Brett and I will... ew that smell... break into the carrot juice. **(they start to go past LARA into the kitchen, but a WITCH comes out the kitchen door, pushing them out of the way, laughing hysterically, running around the room with a broom, and generally frightening everyone)**

LARA: **(chasing WITCH down)** Stop it! Hold it! Stop! **(the WITCH is still laughing loudly, LARA grabs her and holds her still)** What is so funny already? **(lets the WITCH go)**

WITCH: **(quiets down and thinks it over, then shrugs)** Nothing really. **(starts up again, everyone cowers in fear; even PROWLER)**

LARA: Shut up, old lady!!

CORINNE: **(from the floor, with a peach in her hand)** Peach?

WITCH: **(takes it)** Oh, thank you. When I go out to eat, I order off the children's menu. Get it. **(laughs again)** Speaking of which... get *that*? Oh, I'm just full of jokes today! **(holds LARA)** Look, little girl, you get up there and check that baby!

PROWLER: I haven't been able to convince her.

WITCH: Still defying her parents!

LARA: There's nothing wrong with the baby! **(it cries)** Quiet! **(it stops; SHE says to everyone else)** See, it's fine!

CORINNE: That's how you baby sit?

LARA: He's six months old, and I haven't seen him once.

AQUA: **(looking around the room)** This is cool! You got a real witch and a real... well, whatever he is... scary dude.

SHANE: **(looks PROWLER over again; rubs his head)** Yeah. You're kinda cool.

LARA: I think they're friends of my parents. **(to WITCH and PROWLER)** Now will you leave us alone? Brett and I are trying to throw a party. **(Pulls BRETT away from CONCHITA)**

CONCHITA: Hey!

LARA: Sorry, this one's mine.

CONCHITA: Fine. He smells like-

LARA: It's *my* dog. You grow to like it after awhile.

PROWLER: Excuse me, but weren't you forbidden to have a party?

WITCH: On Halloween! You'd best keep a low profile, or who knows what will happen. **(laughs)**

LARA: How can I keep a low profile with you making all this racket! **(knock)**

LaSHAWN: It's only just the start of the night and... We're all already way too frightened!

NEIGHBOR: **(LARA answers; the NEIGHBOR is a very old lady with odd hair, a long housecoat, and very large animal slippers)** Excuse me, but will you please keep it down?

LARA: What? It's not me!

NEIGHBOR: I thought maybe there was trouble with the baby! **(WITCH starts to laugh; the NEIGHBOR looks at her and shakes her head)** I had a daughter like that once, and we put her in a home! **(WITCH gets very quiet)** We never could figure out what was so funny.

LARA: The baby is fine. **(sound of crying)**

EVERYONE: Quiet! (*it stops*)

LARA: See?

NEIGHBOR: Well, I can't get back to sleep with this "party" going on.

BRETT: It's only nine o'clock.

NEIGHBOR: I go to bed at three p.m.

BRETT: Well then you should be just in time...

CONCHITA: (*grabs BRETT*) To party!

LARA: Let him go!

CONCHITA: Not until you check the baby! And I'll check *this* baby!

SHANE: It's a hostage crisis!

NEIGHBOR: (*with a temper*) You all quiet down or I'll... (*SHE thinks it over*) Oh you're right! I haven't partied in ages. Where's the chips and the soda? (*everyone is quiet and looks to her like SHE's nuts.*)

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