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FABRIC

by Abi Zakarian

|| SAMUEL FRENCH ||

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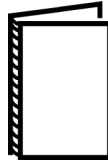


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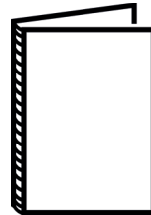
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Abi's plays include: *FABRIC*, produced by TREMers Theatre, played at the Underbelly as part of the Edinburgh Fringe Festival 2016 for which she was awarded a Fringe First Award; *The Best Pies in London*, produced by Rift Theatre for their immersive Shakespeare in Shoreditch festival; *This is not an Exit*, produced by the RSC for The Other Place and transferred to the Royal Court; *LULU7*, produced by So & So Arts at the Drayton Arms Theatre; *Swifter, Higher, Stronger*, produced by Roundpeg Theatre at the Roundhouse; *A Thousand years*, which was produced by Feast Theatre at Southwark Playhouse. She has also written a short play, *RIP Her To Shreds*, for Undeb Theatre. Abi's most recent play *I Have and I Will Scream* ran at VAULT Festival 2018 and won the festival's People's Choice Award.

Abi is currently developing *FABRIC* for television and working on several new commissions for theatre.

She is represented by Alan Brodie Representation.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The rape scene and any other parts of the play related to it must always be portrayed sensitively and with absolutely no recourse to sensationalism, overt brutality or anything that could be construed as placing more emphasis on the visual or physical rather than the words. Topical references to politicians etc can be altered to reflect current times.

FABRIC was first produced by Robin Rayner in association
with The Marlowe Theatre. A TREMErs production,
with the following cast:

CAST

Leah – Nancy Sullivan

CREATIVE TEAM

Director – Tom O'Brien

Set and Costume Designer – Alyson Cummins

Sound Designer – Max Pappenheim

Lighting Designer – Zia Bergin-Holly

Movement Director – Lee Crowley

Associate Sound Designer – Daniel Balfour

Producer – Robin Rayner

Associate Producer – The Marlowe Theatre

Company Stage Manager – Amy Clarke

Technical Stage Manager – Gareth Weaver

Production Manager – Suzy Somerville

Press Manager – Laura Horton

FABRIC was revived in 2018

Produced by Damsel Productions at Soho Theatre, London from
11th-22nd September 2018.

CAST

Leah – Nancy Sullivan

CREATIVE TEAM

Director – Hannah Hauer-King

Designer – Anna Reid

Lighting Designer – Jess Bernberg

Sound Designer – Anna Clock

Production Manager – Sarah Peters

Stage Manager – Katie Bachtler

Producers – Kitty Wordsworth and Matt Maltby

The production was staged in support of Solace Women's Aid,
and followed by a tour of community spaces in London.

CAST

NANCY SULLIVAN - LEAH

Theatre Credits: Margery in *The Country Wife* (Southwark Playhouse); Eliza in *My Fair Lady* (Naples Opera House, Teatro San Carlo); Lucy Lockit in *The Beggar's Opera* (Storyhouse); Delores in *Gutted* (Marlowe Theatre); Leah in *FABRIC* (Underbelly Edinburgh) a one woman play for which she won two awards The Fringe First & The Stage Edinburgh Award 2016; LV in *The Rise & Fall Of Little Voice* (Birmingham REP & West Yorkshire Playhouse); Sherbet in *The Fastest Clock In The Universe* (Old Red Lion); Niece in *The Good Person Of Sichuan* (Colchester Mercury Theatre); U/S & played Leah and Sandra in *Beautiful Thing* (West End); Eponine in *Les Miserables* (West End); Anthea in *Judy The Righteous* (Trafalgar Studios); Chloe in *Never Forget* original cast (UK No. 1 Tour), Dorothy in RSC's *Wizard of Oz* (West Yorkshire Playhouse); Jenny in *The Likes of Us* (Andrew Lloyd Webber's Sydmonton Festival).

Film & TV Credits: *Call The Midwife* (BBC); *Afterlife* (Ricky Gervais' new Netflix Series), Sally in *Harry Price Ghost Hunter* ITV and *Les Miserables* movie (Dir Tom Hooper). Nancy is also cofounder and runs W1WORKSHOPS making acting accessible and affordable for all, www.w1workshops.com.

CREATIVE TEAM

HANNAH HAUER-KING - DIRECTOR

Hannah Hauer-King is artistic director and co-founder of all-female theatre company Damsel Productions. Hannah started her London directing career acting as Resident AD at Soho Theatre in 2014. She now works as a freelance theatre director alongside Damsel Productions, and a theatre, comedy and cabaret programmer for Fane Productions.

Recent directing work includes: *The Swell* (Hightide Festival); *Breathe* (Bunker Theatre); *Witt 'n Camp* (Edinburgh Fringe); *Grotty* (Bunker Theatre); *Revolt She Said Revolt Again* (RCSSD); *Fury* (Soho Theatre); *Lilith* (Bunker Theatre); *Brute* (Soho Theatre); *Clay* (Pleasance Theatre); *Dry Land* (Jermyn Street Theatre); *Hypernormal* (Vaults Festival). Associate/Assistant work: *Romeo & Juliet* (Shakespeare's Globe), *Radiant Vermin* (Soho Theatre) and *Daytona* (Theatre Royal Haymarket).

ANNA REID - DESIGNER

Anna Reid is a theatre designer based in London and a graduate with distinction from Wimbledon College of Art. She is the Associate Designer for Damsel Productions.

For Damsel: *Grotty* (Bunker Theatre); *Fury Brute* (Soho Theatre); *Dry Land* (Jermyn Street Theatre).

Design credits include: *Schism* (Park Theatre); *Rasheeda Speaking* (Trafalgar Studios); *Collective Rage, Dear Brutus, The Cardinal, School Play* (Southwark Playhouse); *Dust* (Soho Theatre); *Tiny Dynamite* (Old Red Lion); *Rattle Snake* (Live Theatre Newcastle); *I'm Gonna Pray For You So Hard* (Finborough Theatre); *The Kitchen Sink, Jumpers for Goalposts* (The Oldham Coliseum); *For Those Who Cry When They Hear The Foxes Scream* (Tristan Bates Theatre); *Dottir* (The Courtyard); *Bruises* (The Tabard); *Arthur's World* (The Bush Theatre); *Hippolytos* (Victoria and Albert Museum); *Hamlet* (The Riverside Studios).

JESS BERNBERG - LIGHTING DESIGNER

Jess Bernberg is a graduate of Guildhall School of Music and Drama and the 2018 Laboratory Associate Lighting Designer at Nuffield Southampton Theatres. She received the Association of Lighting Designer's Francis Reid Award in 2017.

Designs include: *Drip Feed* (Soho Theatre); *Homos, or Everyone in America* (Finborough Theatre); *SongLines* (HighTide); *A New and Better You, Buggy Baby* (The Yard); *The Marbleous Route Home* (Young Vic); *Reactor* (Arts Ed); *Dungeness, Love and Information* (Nuffield Southampton Theatres); *Devil with the Blue Dress, FCUK'D* (Off West End Award nomination) (The Bunker); *Split, WAYWARD* (Vaults); *Ajax* (The Space); *The Blue Hour of Natalie Barney, The Dowager's Oyster, Youkali: The Pursuit of Happiness, The Selfish Giant* (Arcola Theatre); *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* (Merton Arts Space); *And the Rest of Me Floats* (Birmingham Rep); *And Here I Am* (UK Tour. Co-Design with Andy Purves); *The Poetry We Make* (Vaults Festival/RADA/Rosemary Branch/Old Red Lion); *This is Matty, and He is Fucked* (Winemaker's Club); *Flux: Shadowlines* (King's Place); *SQUIRM* (King's Head/Theatre503/Bread & Roses Theatre/C Venues); *Glitter & Tears* (Bread & Roses Theatre/theSpace UK); *Balm in Gilead, The Same Deep Water As Me, August* (Guildhall).

As Assistant Lighting Designer: *A Streetcar Named Desire* (Nuffield Southampton Theatres); *A Tale of Two Cities* (Regent's Park Open Air Theatre); *A Fox on the Fairway* (Queen's Theatre Hornchurch).

ANNA CLOCK - SOUND AND MUSIC

Anna Clock is a sound designer and composer based in London via Dublin, working across theatre, film and installation. In her work she aims to create engaging live experiences that challenge audience/performer roles, encourage curiosity and imagination and inspire audiences to listen to their world in new ways. She studied Music and English at Trinity College Dublin and MA Advanced Theatre Practice at Royal Central School of Speech & Drama.

Website: www.annaclock.com.

Recent projects include *Songlines* (DugOut/ HighTide); *Finding Fassbender* (Lydia Larsson dir. Blythe Stewart); *Forgotten Women* podcast series (Peer Productions); *This is a Blizzard* (Flock Ensemble dir. Ana Brothers); *Spun* by Rabiah Hussain dir. Richard Speir (Arcola Theatre); *REACTOR* by Brad Birch dir. Hannah Bannister (Artsed); *The Moor* by Catherine Lucie dir. Blythe Stewart (Old Red Lion); *The Show* by Rowland Hill (Slade School of Fine Art); *[BLANK]* by Alice Birch for NT Connections (Orange Tree Theatre & Lyric Hammersmith); *CONSTELLATIONS* (Vault Festival 2018); *For The Fallen* dir. John Young (Ballakerneen Studio Isle of Man); *Sonic Fluidities* (UC San Diego, March 2018); *Devil in the Blue Dress* (The Bunker); *Maria* (Omnibus Theatre); *Hilda & Virginia* by Maureen Duffy (Jermyn Street); *Me & My Whale* (Royal Exchange Theatre Manchester, Live Art Bistro Leeds); *Continuity* (Finborough Theatre); *Water Bodies* (LADA, Whitstable Biennale). She was resident artist at Harrow Libraries in association with SPINE Festival 2018.

MATT MALTBY - PRODUCER

Matt Maltby is the co-founder of Pint-Sized, "two of the most exciting producers of new writing I've met in the last ten years" (Simon Stephens). Pint-Sized have supported three thousand writers over four years, and are resident at Bunker Theatre, where Matt also works as New Work Co-Ordinator. Other work includes Earlsfield Stories for Tara Arts, and producing for artists including Roy Alexander Weise, Eve Leigh, Rachel Bagshawe, and Chris York.

KITTY WORDSWORTH - PRODUCER

Kitty Wordsworth is Executive Producer and co-founder of Damsel Productions.

For Damsel: *Grotty* (Bunker Theatre); *Damsel Develops* (Bunker Theatre); *Fury* (Soho Theatre); *Pint-Sized Goes Damsel* (Bunker Theatre); *Brute* (Soho Theatre); *Dry Land* (Jermyn Street Theatre); *TABS* (workshop, Tristan Bates Theatre). Other producer credits include: *Uncensored* (Theatre Royal Haymarket); *The Naivety, Dick Whit, The Snow Queen, Peter Panto* (Tabernacle); *Siblings* (Live @ Zédel) and *Juliet Cowan: Eat, Pray, Call the Police* (Live @ Zédel). Film producer credits include: *Once Upon a Time's Up* (dr. Denna Cartamkhoob); *Little Hard* (dr. Bel Powley and Alice Felgate); *The Last Birthday* (dr. Jaclyn Bethany); *Sunday* (dr. Daisy Stenham).

DAMSEL PRODUCTIONS

Hannah Hauer-King and Kitty Wordsworth co-founded Damsel Productions in 2015 to place women's voices centre stage. Damsel Productions hope to be one cog in a larger and crucial movement addressing both the misrepresentation and under-representation of women in theatre. The idea is simple: to bring together women directors, producers, designers and all other creatives to breathe life into scripts exclusively written by women. Damsel Productions aim to provoke, inspire and entertain with true and honest representations of the female experience. Critically successful productions include the UK première of Ruby Rae Spiegel's *Dry Land* at Jermyn Street Theatre, Izzy Tennyson's *Brute* at Soho Theatre and a co-production with Soho Theatre of Phoebe Eclair-Powell's *Fury*. Damsel most recently produced London's first ever all women directing festival Damsel Develops, and Izzy Tennyson's *Grotty*, both at the Bunker Theatre, where Damsel Productions is a resident company.

*With heartfelt thanks to Tom O'Brien and Nancy Sullivan
for the journey we took to make Fabric.
Their collaboration on this play is woven into every line.*

CHARACTERS

LEAH – woman, 34

SETTING

A room in a house/flat, now.

ACT I

Scene One

A woman (LEAH) dances on stage to:

“ONE FINE DAY” – by THE CHIFFONS.*

LEAH I'm revolting.

Pause.

I'm revolting. According to his mum. According to everyone.

Pause.

And disgusting.

Pause.

I mean, we all know that thing about the mother-in-law. The jokes. Take my mother-in-law, please. No, please.

Look, it started out alright: a Sunday lunch and politeness. Didn't help that his dad was dead – although I don't think they were what you'd ever call close when he was alive. But she took it as she was the only woman he needed; saw me as a threat. Classic really, two women one man. He said, just ignore it Leah. She's only being herself. This just after she's sort of insinuated I'm only interested in him because of his salary. He's like: why would she say something like that? As if I'd make it up. But that's how it goes. Any woman understands this; the enemy is her, me. Him, the field we go to battle on.

* A licence to produce FABRIC does not include a performance licence for ONE FINE DAY by THE CHIFFONS. For further information, please see Music Use Note on page v.

Pause.

I wouldn't mind but I tried so hard. I know I look a state now but, honestly, when I do my hair, make-up, a nice dress, well, I can look really nice. I scrub up well.

She grabs a bunch of hair.

This is all mine you know. No extensions or anything.

Pause.

I was blonde when we first met.

Pause.

Natural. But I decided to go brunette. Fancied a change. After the blonde...the blonde isn't really me; isn't...doesn't reflect my personality so much.

One of the first things she said to me – just after we'd arrived and we're stood in the hallway, me in my best Orla Kiely dress, her already weighing me up: oh how pretty she is Ben. Taking me by the upper arms; her fingers pressing in just a touch too tight: Well, aren't you a very pretty girl...you must tell me where you get your hair coloured...it looks so real.

Pause.

Ben smiling at the two of us because we're obviously besties now. She likes my hair. She approves of my looks. He thinks it's job done. But I knew, deep down I knew. And she did too – that this was all the set up for the long game... I stood there, smiling, smiling; wanting so much to be the perfect girl to bring home, the future daughter-in-law every mother dreams of. I smiled so hard my teeth hurt. Love me, they beamed. You must love me, because Ben does and if he does that should be enough for you. And she smiled right back at me, red thumb prints on my arms slowly fading into pale smudges. But we did the dance anyway; for him. Always for Ben, to keep that smile on his face. That smile we both loved and would do anything to keep turned towards us.

Over the roast chicken she ladled eight potatoes onto his plate, I got three. No questions. A slice of breast for me, four and a

leg for Ben. Peas didn't seem to count. I may look small but I love my food. I told her that and Ben laughed, placed his big hand over mine and squeezed it and I think he thought it was all going to be alright then. For a moment. I think he thought it was all marvellous and lovely and his mum and me would become best friends and meet for coffees in town, swap recipes, chat about that new telly series. All those things must have gone through his head as she dribbled the gravy over his food.

Pause.

Still. I held out hope because no-one wants to give up at the first hurdle. This was just a Sunday lunch; a get-to-know-you thing. So I explained myself, my background, my life. She offered me a napkin.

Pause.

Because I'd spilt red wine on my Orla dress. I use my hands a lot when telling a story, always waving them about like a windmill my mum says. It was only a tiny drop, nothing even got on that thick white tablecloth. Just on my dress, the right-hand boob. Looked awful it did; red on cream. I knew then it was never going to come out; that the dress was ruined.

As she went off to look for a Stain Devil I'd already mentally thrown it away.

When she got back, head shaking sadly – sorry, she didn't have anything for it – but handed me a fresh napkin, I wanted to get up and go to the bathroom, to inspect the damage, try and do something to cover it up; I don't know what, how do you cover up a stain on your right boob? But I didn't move. Just sat there, pushing peas around my plate and listening to Ben and his mum talk about holidays in Sicily and Aunt Irene's hysterectomy; letting my food go cold even though I was starving. Longing for one of my mum's lasagnes. It was too dangerous to risk another stain, another blemish, on this, my first meeting with The Mother. I needed a drink so badly, the wine glass still half full in front of me but no. No, no, no. I smiled at the stories, dropped in a suitable comment here and there: "I've never been skiing, no. But Ben's promised to take me", and, "What beautiful cutlery".

Beautiful cutlery.

“Ben tells me you’re a shop assistant”.

Very smooth.

Ben’s straight in there: “No, no, no, not a shop assistant. Remember what I told you last week? About the promotion?”

I smiled some more, not sure whether to speak.

“Really? But I thought that was how you met...when she served you –”

I met him when he came in to buy a suit. I worked in Savile Row; a high-end place. Well, Ben, he wanted a proper suit and one of his friends’d recommended us as the best place for a bespoke. I was just front of house back then – strictly meet and greet – but I’d been waiting to hear if I’d got a position I’d applied for a few months earlier. I’d been shop floor for two years, came there after working in Selfridges. Always wanted to work in fashion. So when this opportunity for sales manager came up I jumped; filled in the forms, spoke to my boss, even wrote to the creative director. Made it clear I was the right woman for the job. Not a huge increase in salary but I’d be the one to help a customer choose his cloth; which style of suit, all of it.

Some travel overseas with the master cutter on his visits to Europe, if I was lucky. A real step up, and I grabbed it with both hands. And when Ben walked in that day I’d just heard I’d got it; literally ten minutes before my manager Richard had given me the good news. I was so happy, I must’ve been beaming. So in he comes and we saw each other: he smiles and heads over to where I was standing by the old display cabinet that doubles for a cash desk...only for small purchases; ties, off-the-peg shirts and that – the big sales, bespoke orders, you take the customer to a little room in the back with leather Chesterfields and a tiny cocktail cabinet full of posh booze, and that’s where you write – *by hand* – their order out. It’s all about making the customer feel valued.

Pause.

It’s amazing what a glass of whiskey can do to make someone feel special.

Pause.

Ben, I'll always remember this, he came straight over to me and said "I need help". "I need help" – how cute is that? I was so happy anyway because of getting the sales manager job, so this was just like getting a cherry on top of a cake – I mean, a six-foot-two, blonde hair, blue-eyed man standing in front of me, asking *me* for help. He was so charming.

Pause.

Lots of people say that don't they? "He was so charming" ...well he was, he didn't know what he was doing or what he needed. A suit, he said. I had to laugh at that. Not rude. Not in his face laughing. No, like a little laugh because it was so sweet. Been buying off-the-peg Reiss all his life hadn't he?

I shouldn't have, but the shop was busy and all the sales managers were dealing with other clients so I took him through the basics: cut, cloth, cost. Soon established he had a bit of money to spend but would appreciate a more conservative style; something that would see him through the big three as we call it: weddings, christenings, funerals. He mentioned something about a Bond film – a suit Daniel Craig'd worn as he fell through the roof of a moving train. I knew exactly which one he was on about; we often get requests for Bond suits. So I took him round the shop and we looked at suits together; showed him the Bunches...

They're these lovely big books, full of small squares of cloth; like a folder really but very classy – leather bound, and new ones done every season with all the fabrics we offer. I love the Bunches; love the feel of the covers, the weight of them. They even smell expensive. And I know every single one of those fabrics by heart. Your worsted wools, your tweeds, your super wools... I can tell a yarn twist just by running my fingers over the fabric.

I showed him the Italian navies because navy goes well with blonde hair – adds a certain gravitas – and when I held the book out our hands brushed and I saw there was no ring on his finger. Which is when Richard came over and introduced himself, shaking Ben's hand and shooing me away to tidy the

dress socks. And the next thing I know, Ben's being led into the ante room...but at the last minute he turns and winks at me!

How about that? He winked. But not a laddish wink, not an alright darling, no, it was sweet. I thought. It was a letting-me-in-on-a-secret wink.

Pause.

He was gorgeous. I knew Richard was giving him the full works but still, I didn't expect him to be gone over an hour in that room. It got close to six; I hung around as long as I could, tidying shelves, fussing over the window display but still he didn't come out. I knew I'd have to leave otherwise I'd miss the six forty-three train. I didn't know what I was hoping for, it was only a wink after all. But just after I'd stepped out of the shop and was no more than ten paces down the road I heard him. Heard him before I saw him. Hey! Hey! He was calling out and as I turned he was right behind me, hand outstretched, so I took it. Yeah, like an idiot. I shook his hand. I don't know why; but how stupid is that? He looked more surprised than anything and we stood there for like ten seconds, hanging onto each others' hands in the middle of the pavement like we were in a rom-com or something – until we both burst out laughing and then he asked me straight out if we could meet for a drink some time.

Pause.

First date. Drinks in town. He's the sales director for a big medical company. Prefers cricket to football. Favourite food is steak, rare. Loves skiing and wants to try a sky dive one day. Bought his flat dirt cheap a few years ago and now it's worth a ton more. Only child. Very close to his mum. Hates those massive eyebrows on women.

Likes Jason Statham films and would never vote Tory but can understand why some people do. When he goes to the toilet I google on my phone to find out why some people do vote Tory. Walks me to the station where we have a kiss and he presses into me as I stumble back against the wall, my bag banging into his groin so he mock staggers away claiming I'm killing him with my hotness.

Second date. Dinner at an amazing seafood place, where he pays. Tells me I look like a blonde Emma Stone. Makes me try oysters which I hate because I read somewhere they're still alive when you do that shucking thing but I don't tell him this and instead swallow, smile and go mmmm. We agree to go skiing together even though I've never been and the idea terrifies me a bit but he talks about a place called Verbier and the name makes me think of fancy candles. We take a taxi together to my place but he doesn't even try to come in. We kiss for three pounds worth on the meter and his hand rests on my thigh, gently, his fingers just touching the edge of my dress.

Third date. Meet him in town after work for drinks with a couple of his friends. We sit in a posh bar and drink gin martinis, which I've never had before; they're so strong but I sip them slowly, not wanting to seem uncool. His friends, Luke and Phil, join us and are really lovely to me; ribbing Ben about how he'd managed to pull such a hottie. He keeps his arm over my shoulder the whole time and I like how he's so protective of me. Afterwards, he puts me in a taxi and I see him hand the driver a couple of twenties. He kisses me through the open window, promises to ring.

Fourth date. He comes over to mine for dinner. I say mine, at the time I was sharing a flat with Kate, my best friend. Every boyfriend I've ever had since I was fifteen, Kate'd be there, giving them the once-over, making sure she approved. Kate's always been the vivacious type – men all over her whenever we went out. She's really glamorous. And some of the fellas she's been out with...city types with so much money...little pictures, swiping left, swiping right.

Still, I could tell she was impressed with Ben; with the bottle of wine he'd brought. She stayed long enough for a glass, firing questions: you'd better not muck my best mate around or you'll have me to answer to, that kind of thing. She's laughing though and he's laughing and I remember her saying the same thing to Mark Reynolds when we were in sixth form.

She got off with him two days after he'd finished with me 'cause I wouldn't give him a blow job.

Pause.

But she left, eventually. Heels clicking down the hall as she pulled on her jacket. Don't do anything I wouldn't do! Ben raising his eyebrows; either in hope or disapproval, that big smile following her as she left. Then we ate and, after finishing the wine, he kissed me as we sat on the sofa, the subtle pressure of his legs against mine, the heat and hardness enveloping me. He whispered that he wanted to make love to me, that he couldn't wait any longer.

Longer pause, she fans out her hair.

Afterwards he told me I was definitely potential wife material. Four dates and I'm potential wife material!

Pause.

I was so happy.

Pause.

The happy girl for weeks and months.

Pause.

My mum loved him. How could she not? When they met he brought flowers, patiently explained what his job entails. By the time we were eating the trifle everyone was smitten, as I knew they would be. Mum, my sister Deenie, even Nan, and she's not easily pleased. But as I've come to realise...

She pauses, slips into contained anger and pain.

...but as I've come to realise, no-one is good enough for a son but anyone is good enough for a daughter.

Pause.

Him. Mum beaming as he handed over the flowers; flashing me a wink and then squeezing his arm and giggling like a teenager as she showed him through to the front room, seating herself opposite him on the sofa, perched on the edge of the chair and straightening her shoulders. Deenie jokingly asking about brothers even though she's married to Useless Mark and got two kids. But he answered all the questions with that big smile of his, having second helpings of everything and wishing I'd

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