Acting Edition

A Raisin in the Sun

by Lorraine Hansberry

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SAMUEL FRENCH

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What happens to a dream deferred?
Does it dry up
Like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore –
And then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over –
Like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags
Like a heavy load.

Or does it explode?

– Langston Hughes

A RAISIN IN THE SUN was first produced by Philip Rose and David J. Cogan at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre in New York City on March 11, 1959. The production was directed by Lloyd Richards, the set and lighting design was by Ralph Alswang, the costume design was by Virginia Volland, and the cast was as follows:

(in order of appearance)

RUTH YOUNGER . . . . . Ruby Dee
TRAVIS YOUNGER . . . . . Glynn Turman
WALTER LEE YOUNGER . . . . . Sidney Poitier
BENEATHA YOUNGER . . . . . Diana Sands
LENA YOUNGER . . . . . Claudia McNeil
JOSEPH ASAGAI . . . . . Ivan Dixon
GEORGE MURCHISON . . . . . Louis Gossett
BOBO . . . . . Lonne Elder 3rd
KARL LINDNER . . . . . John Fiedler
MOVING MEN . . . . . Ed Hall, Douglas Turner Ward

The 25th Anniversary Production of ***A RAISIN IN THE SUN*** was produced by the Roundabout Theatre Company, Inc. (Gene Feist/Todd Haimes) in New York City in 1986, and later by Robert Nemiroff at the Kennedy Center in Washington on November 16, 1986.

The production was directed by Harold Scott, with set design by Tom Cariello, lighting design by Shirley Prendergast, costume design by Judy Dearing, and sound design by Rick Menke and Philip Campanella. The cast was as follows:

(in order of appearance)

RUTH YOUNGER . . . . . Starletta DuPois
TRAVIS YOUNGER . . . . . Kimble Joyner
WALTER LEE YOUNGER . . . . . Delroy Lindo
BENEATHA YOUNGER . . . . . Kim Yancey
LENA YOUNGER . . . . . Esther Rolle
JOSEPH ASAGAI . . . . . Lou Ferguson
GEORGE MURCHISON . . . . . Joseph C. Phillips
BOBO . . . . . Stephen Henderson
KARL LINDNER . . . . . John Fiedler
MOVING MEN . . . . . Ron O.J. Parson, Charles Watts

The Broadway revival of ***A RAISIN IN THE SUN*** was produced by Scott Rudin at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre on April 3, 2014. The production was directed by Kenny Leon, with set design by Mark Thompson, lighting design by Brian MacDevitt, and costume design by Ann Roth. The cast was as follows:

WALTER LEE YOUNGER . . . . . Denzel Washington
LENA YOUNGER . . . . . .LaTanya Richardson Jackson
RUTH YOUNGER . . . . . Sophie Okonedo
BENEATHA YOUNGER . . . . . .Anika Noni Rose
JOSEPH ASAGAI . . . . . Sean Patrick Thomas
GEORGE MURCHISON . . . . . .Jason Dirden
BOBO . . . . . Stephen McKinley Henderson
KARL LINDNER . . . . . David Cromer
TRAVIS YOUNGER . . . . . Bryce Clyde Jenkins
MOVING MEN . . . . . Billy Eugene Jones, Keith Eric Chappelle

CHARACTERS

LENA YOUNGER (MAMA)
WALTER LEE YOUNGER
BENEATHA YOUNGER
RUTH YOUNGER
TRAVIS YOUNGER
JOSEPH ASAGAI
GEORGE MURCHISON
BOBO
KARL LINDNER
MOVING MEN
MRS. JOHNSON*

SETTING

The Younger family's apartment on Chicago's Southside

TIME

Early 1950's

* **MRS. JOHNSON** appears in the additional scene included in the addendum. See page 139.

PRODUCTION NOTES

The Younger living room would be a comfortable and well-ordered room, if it were not for a number of indestructible contradictions to this state of being. It's furnishings are typical and undistinguished and their primary feature now is that they have clearly had to accommodate the living of too many people for too many years – and they are tired. Still, we can see, at some time, a time probably no longer remembered by the family (except perhaps for Mama), the furnishings of this room were actually selected with care and love and even hope — and brought to this apartment and arranged with taste and pride.

That was a long time ago. Now the once loved pattern of the couch upholstery has to fight to show itself from under acres of crocheted doilies and couch covers which have themselves finally come to be more important than the upholstery. And here a table or a chair has been moved to disguise the worn places in the carpet; but the carpet has fought back by showing its weariness, with depressing uniformity, elsewhere on its surface.

Weariness has, in fact, won in this room. Everything has been polished, washed, sat on, used, scrubbed too often. All pretenses but Living itself have long since vanished from the very atmosphere of this room.

Moreover, a section of this room, for it is not really a room unto itself, though the landlord's lease would make it seem so, slopes backward to provide a small kitchen area where the family prepares the meals which are eaten in the living room proper which must also serve as dining room. The single window which has been provided for these "two" rooms is located in this kitchen area. The sole natural light which the family may enjoy in the course of a day is only that which fights its way through this little window.*

At left, a door leads to a bedroom which is shared by Mama and her daughter, Beneatha. At right opposite, is a second room (which in the beginning of life for this apartment was probably a breakfast room or something) which serves as a bedroom for Brother and his wife, Ruth. This room may be lit through scrim.

Somewhere in the apartment is a photo of Big Walter, whose spirit suffuses the play.

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* Ideally, the set should also suggest, if possible, the outer world of blighted tenements, clotheslines, fire escapes, etc.

To Mama: in gratitude for the dream

ACT I

(Time: the early 1950's.)

(Place: Chicago's Southside.)

(At rise: it is morning dark in the living room. **TRAVIS** *snores, asleep on the makedown bed at center,* **WALTER** *is in his and* **RUTH***'s bedroom at right. An alarm clock sounds in bedroom.* **RUTH** *rises from bed, shuts off alarm; raises the window shade, closes window; shivers; puts on robe, slippers; grabs* **TRAVIS***' shirt, towel, toothbrush, glass and clock. She opens the door to living room, crosses to sofa, shakes* **TRAVIS**, *places his towel and shirt on back of sofa, clock and glass on buffet upstage right. She crosses to kitchen, raises the shade, closes window, washes face. She calls to* **TRAVIS** *in a slightly muffled voice between yawns: Ad-lib: "Wake up,* **TRAVIS***!" "Come on now, boy!" He pulls pillow over his head.)*

*(***RUTH** *is about thirty. We can see that she was a pretty girl, but now it is apparent that life has been little she expected and disappointment has begun to hang in her face. In a few years, before thirty-five even, she will be known among her people as a "settled woman." This does not mean she lacks spirit or strength. She is a woman in the middle, torn between the needs and dreams of others, and she subordinates herself because, caring deeply about theirs, she chooses to; but underneath is a fire that will erupt as needs be. For her this is no ordinary morning and, once or twice in the course of it, we should clearly see – as weakness engulfs her and she catches herself in the effort to hide it – that something is wrong. Yet even*

as she confronts the momentous decision that cannot be put off, she is driven by the necessity to get son and husband up and fed and out within half an hour; the best she can do is to steel herself, plunge ahead and get through it. She crosses to her son and sits him up, still asleep, crosses to center door. He flops back. She gets milk and newspaper from hall, crosses back to give **TRAVIS** *a good, final, rousing shake.)*

RUTH. Come on now, boy, it's seven-thirty! *(hits* **TRAVIS** *on butt, puts milk and paper on buffet)* I say hurry up, Travis! You ain't the only person in the world got to use a bathroom!

(She gets him to his feet, piles his shirt, towel, toothbrush and glass in his arms and crosses away. **TRAVIS**, *asleep on his feet, does not move. She comes back and pushes him out the door to bathroom which is in the outside hall.* **RUTH** *picks up newspaper, notes* **WALTER** *is still asleep, crosses to the bedroom door and calls in to her husband.)*

WALTER LEE – it's after seven-thirty! Lemme see you do some waking up in there now!

(She crosses to kitchen, puts water on to boil, heats coffeepot. She waits.)

You better get up from there, man! It's after seven-thirty, I tell you.

*(***WALTER** *groans and covers his head. She sets table.)*

Alright, you just go ahead and lay there and next thing you know Travis be finished and Mr. Johnson'll be in there and you'll be fussing and cussing round here like a madman! And be late, too – !

(She waits. At the end of her patience she crosses to bedroom.)

WALTER LEE – it's time for you to GET UP!

*(***WALTER** *sits bolt upright. She pulls the door to and crosses back to kitchen. She puts mixing bowl and fork on sink edge, gets eggs from icebox. The bedroom door at right opens and her husband stands in the doorway in his pajamas, which are rumpled and mismatched. He holds his clothes and toilet articles. He is a lean, intense young man in his middle thirties, inclined to quick movements and erratic speech habits–and always in his voice, indictment. As he enters* **RUTH** *runs her fingers through her sleep-disheveled hair in a vain effort and ties an apron around her housecoat.)*

WALTER. *(enters and crosses in to center)* Is he out yet – ?

RUTH. What you mean, out? He ain't hardly got in there good yet.

WALTER. *(still more oriented to sleep than to a new day)* Well, what was you doing all that yelling for if I can't even get in there yet? *(crosses right back of sofa to bedroom door right, stops and thinks)* Check coming today?

RUTH. *(gets eggs from the icebox and breaks them in bowl)* They *said* Saturday and this is just Friday and I hopes to God you ain't going to get up here first thing this morning and start talking to me 'bout no money – 'cause I 'bout don't want to hear it.

WALTER. *(crosses in to center.)* Something the matter with you this morning?

RUTH. No – I'm just sleepy as the devil. What kind of eggs you want?

WALTER. Not scrambled.

*(***RUTH** *beats eggs.* **WALTER** *notes her action, then puts his clothes on left end of sofa.)*

Paper come?

*(***RUTH** *points impatiently to the rolled up* Tribune *on the table, and he gets it and spreads it out and vaguely reads the front page.)*

Set off another A-bomb yesterday.

RUTH. *(maximum indifference)* Did they?

WALTER. *(looking up)* What's the matter with you?

RUTH. Ain't nothing the matter with me. And don't keep asking me.

WALTER. Ain't nobody bothering you. *(reading the news absently again)* Say Colonel McCormick is sick.

RUTH. *(puts egg bowl back in icebox; affecting tea party interest)* Is he now? Po' thing.

WALTER. *(sighing and looking at alarm clock)* Now what is that boy doing in that bathroom all this time? He is just going to have to start getting up earlier. I can't be being late to work on account of him fooling around in there. *(He rises, crosses up to door.)*

RUTH. *(pours and stirs oats in hot water)* Oh, no, he ain't going to be getting up no earlier no such thing! It ain't his fault that he can't get to bed 'cause he got a bunch of crazy good-for-nothing clowns running their mouths in what is supposed to be his bedroom after ten o'clock at night –

WALTER. *(crosses back of kitchen table, gets a cigarette from* **RUTH***'s handbag hanging on the back of the chair left)* That's what you're mad about, ain't it? *(topping her)* The things I want to talk about with my friends just couldn't be important in your mind, could they?

(He crosses to kitchen window and looks out, smoking and enjoying his first one deeply.)

RUTH. *(crosses to table for milk; almost matter-of-factly, a complaint too automatic to deserve emphasis)* Why you always got to smoke before you eat in the morning?

WALTER. *(at the window)* Just look at 'em down there – running and racing to work – *(He turns and faces his wife and watches her a moment at the stove.)*

*(***RUTH** *mixes milk in the eggs.)*

WALTER. *(appreciatively, with sudden softness:)* You look young this morning, Baby. *(He crosses to* **RUTH***.)*

RUTH. *(utter indifference)* Yeah?

WALTER. Just for a second – stirring them eggs. Just for a second it was – you looked real young again. *(He reaches for her; she stiffens, takes milk to table, pours a glass for* **TRAVIS**. *Drily:)* It's *gone* now – you look like yourself again!

RUTH. *(scrapes cereal into bowl)* Man, if you don't shut up and leave me alone.

WALTER. *(looking out to the street again)* First thing a man ought to learn in life is not to make love to no colored woman first thing in the morning. Y'all some eeeevil people at eight o'clock in the morning.

*(***TRAVIS** *appears in the hall doorway almost fully dressed and quite wide-awake now, his towel and pajamas across his shoulders. He is a sturdy, handsome little boy of ten or eleven. He opens the door and signals for his father to make the bathroom in a hurry.* **WALTER** *starts to sit, springs up as* **TRAVIS** *enters.* **RUTH** *puts cereal bowl on the table, pours milk on the cereal.)*

TRAVIS. *(watching the bathroom)* Daddy, come on!

*(***WALTER** *gets his bathroom utensils and flies out to the bathroom.)*

RUTH. Sit down and have your breakfast, Travis. *(She gets butter from icebox.)*

TRAVIS. *(puts slippers left end of sofa, toothbrush, glass on table. Then he gets his chair from left wall and places it right of table.)* Mama, this is Friday, *(gleefully)* Check coming tomorrow, huh?

RUTH. *(puts butter on his cereal)* You get your mind off money and eat your breakfast, *(takes butter to stove, puts some in frying pan)*

TRAVIS. *(eating)* This is the morning we supposed to bring the fifty cents to school.

RUTH. Well, I ain't got no fifty cents this morning.

TRAVIS. Teacher say we have to.

RUTH. I don't care what teacher say. I ain't got it. Eat your breakfast, Travis.

TRAVIS. I *am* eating.

RUTH. Hush up now and just eat!

TRAVIS. *(He gives her an exasperated look and eats grudgingly.)* You think Grandmama would have it?

RUTH. No! And I want you to stop asking your grandmother for money, you hear me?

TRAVIS. *(outraged)* Gaaaleee! I don't ask her, she just gimme it sometimes!

RUTH. *(under breath almost)* TRAVIS WILLARD YOUNGER – I got too much on me this morning to be –

TRAVIS. Maybe Daddy –

RUTH. TRAVIS!

*(***TRAVIS** *hushes abruptly. They are both quiet and tense for several seconds.* **RUTH** *puts the butter in the icebox.)*

TRAVIS. *(presently)* Could I maybe go carry some groceries in front of the supermarket after school, then?

RUTH. Just hush, I said.

*(***TRAVIS** *jabs his spoon into his cereal bowl viciously and rests his head in anger upon his fists.)*

If you're through eating you can make up your bed.

*(***TRAVIS** *obeys stiffly and rises from the table, crosses the room angrily to the bed and more or less folds the bedclothes in a heap. He gets school books and cap from buffet. He crosses to center door.)*

TRAVIS. (*sulking and standing apart from her unnaturally:)* I'm gone.

RUTH. *(Looking up from the stove to inspect him automatically, she crosses to her handbag on chair left, of table.)* Come here. *(He crosses to her and she studies his head.)* If you don't take this comb and fix this here head you better!

*(***TRAVIS** *puts down his books with a great sigh of oppression and returns downstage right to the mirror. His mother mutters under her breath about his "stubbornness.")*

RUTH. 'Bout to march out of here with that head looking like chickens slept in it! I just don't know where you get your slubborn ways.

TRAVIS. *(With conspicuously brushed hair, he gets his jacket angrily and crosses to center door.)* I'm gone.

RUTH. *(pours eggs into pan, puts egg bowl in the sink)* And get your jacket, too. Looks chilly out this morning. Get your carfare and milk money –

(He finds her handbag and fishes in it. She waves one finger.)

– and not one penny for no caps, you hear me?

TRAVIS. *(with sullen politeness:)* Yes'm.

(He tosses back a coin and we hear the clink; turns in outrage to leave, crosses upstage center again to door. **RUTH** *watches him as he approaches the door almost comically in his frustration. When she speaks to him her voice has become a very gentle tease.)*

RUTH. *(at right end of sink, mocking; as she thinks* **TRAVIS** *would say it)* Oh, Mama makes me so mad sometimes I don't know what to do!

*(*__TRAVIS__ *stands at the door and* __RUTH__ *waits and continues to his back as he stands stock still in front of the door.)*

I wouldn't kiss that woman good-bye this morning not for nothing in this world!

*(*__TRAVIS__ *finally turns around and rolls his eyes at her knowing the mood has changed and he is vindicated; he does not, however, move toward her yet.)*

Not for nothing in this world!

(She finally holds out her arms, he hesitates a long moment, and we see that it is a way between them very old and practiced. __TRAVIS__ *crosses downstage center and allows her to embrace him warmly but keeps his face fixed with masculine rigidity. She holds him back from her presently, and looks at him and runs her fingers over the features of his face.)*

RUTH. *(with utter gentleness:)* Now – whose little old angry man are you?

TRAVIS. *(The masculinity and gruffness start to fade at last.)* Aw Gaalee – Mama –

RUTH. *(mimicking)* Aw – Gaaaalleeeeee, Mama! *(She pushes him with rough playfulness and finality toward the door.)* Get on out of here or you going to be late.

TRAVIS. *(Crosses to center door. In the face of love, new aggressiveness:)* Mama, could I please go carry groceries?

RUTH. *(stirs eggs in pan)* Honey, it's starting to get so cold evenings.

WALTER. *(coming in from the bathroom, crosses right into his bedroom with his pajamas, towel, toothbrush and glass)* What is it he wants to do?

RUTH. Go carry groceries at the supermarket.

WALTER. Well, let him go –

TRAVIS. *(quickly to the ally; crosses right to bedroom door)* I *have* to – she won't gimme the fifty cents –

WALTER. *(re-enters from bedroom; to his wife only:)* Why not – ?

RUTH. *(simply and with flavor)* 'Cause we don't have it.

WALTER. *(to* **RUTH** *only as he crosses to center)* What you tell the boy things like that for?

(reaching down on the line into his pants' pocket with a rather important gesture, turns, crosses down in front of sofa)

Here, son –

(He hands the boy the coin, but his eyes are only on his wife. **TRAVIS** *takes the money happily.)*

TRAVIS. Thanks, Daddy. *(He starts out.)*

*(***RUTH** *watches both of them with murder in her eyes.* **WALTER** *stares back at her with defiance and suddenly reaches out for his son and into his pocket again on an afterthought.)*

WALTER. *(center left of sofa; without even looking at his son, still staring hard at his wife)* In fact, here's another fifty

cents – Buy yourself some fruit today – or take a taxi-cab to school or something!

TRAVIS. Whoopee –

*(***RUTH** *starts serving eggs.* **TRAVIS** *leaps up and clasps his father around the middle with his legs and they face each other in mutual appreciation; slowly* **WALTER** *peeks around the boy to catch the ultra violent rays from his wife's eyes and draws his head back as if shot.)*

WALTER. You better get down now – and get to school, man.

TRAVIS. *(at the door)* O.K. Good-bye. *(He exits.)*

WALTER. *(after him, pointing with pride; crosses downstage right to mirror)* That's *my* boy.

*(***RUTH** *looks at him in disgust and turns back to her work.)*

You know what I was thinking 'bout in the bathroom this morning – ?

RUTH. No.

WALTER. How come you always try to be so pleasant!

RUTH. What is there to be pleasant 'bout! *(She serves eggs at the table.)*

WALTER. You want to know what I was thinking 'bout in the bathroom or not!

RUTH. I know what you was thinking 'bout.

WALTER. *(ignoring her)* 'Bout what me and Willy Harris was talking about last night.

RUTH. *(pours two cups of coffee; immediately – a refrain)* Willy Harris is a good for nothing loud mouth.

WALTER. *(crosses center to front of sofa)* Anybody who talks to me has got to be a good for nothing loud mouth, ain't he? And what you know about who's a good for nothing loud mouth? Charlie Atkins was just a "good for nothing loud mouth" too, wasn't he! When he wanted me to go in the dry-cleaning business with him. And now-he's grossing $100,000 a year. $100,000 a year! You still call *him* a loud mouth?!

RUTH. *(sits left of table, bitterly)* Oh, Walter Lee – *(She folds her head over on her arms).*

WALTER. *(coming to her and massaging her neck sympathetically)* You tired, ain't you? Tired of everything. Me, the boy, the way we live – this beat up hole – everything. Ain't you?

(She doesn't look up, doesn't answer and resentment rises in him again.)

So tired – moaning and groaning all the time but you wouldn't do nothing to help, would you? You couldn't be on my side that long for nothing, could you?

RUTH. Walter, please leave me alone.

WALTER. A man needs for a woman to back him up –

RUTH. Walter –

WALTER. Mama would listen to you. You know she listen to you more than she do me and Bennie. She think more of you. All you have to do is just sit down with her when you drinking your coffee and talking 'bout things like you do and – *(He sits and demonstrates graphically what he thinks her methods and tone should be.)* You just sip your coffee, see, and say easy like that you been thinking 'bout that deal Walter Lee is so interested in, 'bout the store and all, and sip some more coffee, like what you saying ain't that important to you. And the next thing you know she listening good and asking you questions and when I come home – I can tell her the details. This ain't no fly-by-night proposition, Baby. I mean we figured it out, me, Willy and Bobo.

RUTH. *(with a frown)* Bobo – ?

WALTER. *(sits at chair above table)* Yeah. You see, this little liquor store cost $75,000 and we figured the initial investment on the place be 'bout $30,000, see. Ten thousand each. Course, there's a couple of hundred you got to pay so's you don't spend your life waiting for them clowns to get your license approved –

RUTH. You mean graft?

WALTER. *(frowning impatiently)* Don't call it that. See there, that just goes to show you what women understand about the world. Baby, don't *nothing* happen for you in this world 'less you pay *somebody* off!

RUTH. Walter, leave me alone! *(She raises her head on the line, and stares at him vigorously – then says more quietly:)* Eat your eggs, they gonna be cold.

WALTER. *(straightening up from her and looking off)* You see that? Man says to his woman: I got me a dream. His woman say: Eat your eggs, *(sadly, but gaining in power)* Man say: I got to take hold of this here world, Baby! And a woman will say: Eat your eggs and go to work. Man say – *(passionately now)* I got to change my life, I'm choking to death, Baby! And his woman say – *(in utter anguish as he brings his fists down on his thighs)* Your eggs is getting cold!

RUTH. *(softly)* Walter, that ain't none of our money.

WALTER. *(not listening at all or even looking at her)* This morning, I was lookin' in the mirror and thinking about it – I'm thirty-five years old; I been married eleven years and I got a boy who sleeps in the living room – and all I got to give him is nothing. Nothing but stories about how rich white people live –

RUTH. Eat your eggs, Walter.

WALTER. *(rises, slamming the table)* DAMN MY EGGS – DAMN ALL THE EGGS THAT EVER WAS!

RUTH. Then go to work.

WALTER. *(looking up at her, crosses left to above table)* See – I'm trying to talk to you 'bout me – *(shaking his head with the repetition)* and all you can say is eat them eggs and go to work.

RUTH. *(wearily)* Honey, you never say nothing new. I listen to you every day – every night and every morning and you never say nothing new. *(shrugging)* So you would rather *be* Mr. Arnold than be his chauffeur. So – I would *rather* be living in Buckingham Palace.

WALTER. That is just what is wrong with the colored woman in this world – don't understand about building their men up and making 'em feel like they somebody. Like they can do something.

RUTH. *(drily, but to hurt)* There *are* colored men who do things.

WALTER. No thanks to the colored woman.

RUTH. *(boiling over)* Well, being a colored woman I guess I can't help myself none!

(She crosses to closet for ironing board sets it up behind the sofa, attacks a huge pile of rough dried clothes, sprinkling them in preparation for ironing and rolling them into balls.)

WALTER. We one group of men tied to a race of women with small minds.

(His sister **BENEATHA** *enters on the line and* **WALTER** *regards her in dismay: in pajamas or red flannel nightgown and with her long thick hair standing up wildly or in hideous curlers, she is a "sight."* **BENEATHA** *is about twenty, as slim and intense as her brother. She is not as pretty as her sister-in-law, but her lean, almost intellectual face has a handsomeness of its own. She passes through the room without looking at either of them to the outside door and looks, a little blindly, out to the bathroom. She sees that it has been lost to the Johnsons and closes the door with a sleepy vengeance.)*

*(***BENEATHA'S** *speech is a mixture of many things; it is different from the rest of the family's insofar as education has permeated her sense of English – and perhaps the midwest rather than the south has finally – at last – won out in her inflection; but not altogether because over all of it is a soft slurring and transformed use of vowels which is the decided influence of the Southside.)*

BENEATHA. I am going to start timing those people. *(sits in armchair)*

WALTER. You should get up earlier.

WAIT, THERE'S MORE!

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