

# THE WEDDING

Anton Chekhov

1889

Translated by Julius West

## CHARACTERS

*EVDOKIM ZAHAROVITCH ZHIGALOV, a retired Civil Servant.*

*NASTASYA TIMOFEYEVNA, his wife*

*DASHENKA, their daughter*

*EPAMINOND MAXIMOVITCH APLOMBOV, Dashenka's bridegroom*

*FYODOR YAKOVLEVITCH REVUNOV-KARAULOV, a retired captain*

*ANDREY ANDREYEVITCH NUNIN, an insurance agent*

*ANNA MARTINOVNA ZMEYUKINA, a midwife, aged 30, in a brilliantly red dress*

*IVAN MIHAILOVITCH YATS, a telegraphist*

*HARLAMPI SPIRIDONOVITCH DIMBA, a Greek confectioner*

*DMITRI STEPANOVITCH MOZGOVOY, a sailor of the Imperial Navy  
(Volunteer  
Fleet)*

*GROOMSMEN, GENTLEMEN, WAITERS, ETC.*

The scene is laid in one of the rooms of Andronov's Restaurant

[A brilliantly illuminated room. A large table, laid for supper. Waiters in dress-jackets are fussing round the table. An orchestra behind the scene is playing the music of the last figure of a quadrille.]

[ANNA MARTINOVNA ZMEYUKINA, YATS, and a GROOMSMAN cross the stage.]

ZMEYUKINA. No, no, no!

YATS. [Following her] Have pity on us! Have pity!

ZMEYUKINA. No, no, no!

GROOMSMAN. [Chasing them] You can't go on like this! Where are you off to? What about the *grand ronde*? *Grand ronde, s'il vous plait!* [They all go off.]

[Enter NASTASYA TIMOFEYEVNA and APLOMBOV.]

NASTASYA TIMOFEYEVNA. You had much better be dancing than upsetting me with your speeches.

APLOMBOV. I'm not a Spinoso or anybody of that sort, to go making figures-of-eight with my legs. I am a serious man, and I have a character, and I see no amusement in empty pleasures. But it isn't just a matter of dances. You must excuse me, *maman*, but there is a good deal in your behaviour which I am unable to understand. For instance, in addition to objects of domestic importance, you promised also to give me, with your daughter, two lottery tickets. Where are they?

NASTASYA TIMOFEYEVNA. My head's aching a little... I expect it's on account of the weather... If only it thawed!

APLOMBOV. You won't get out of it like that. I only found out to-day that those tickets are in pawn. You must excuse me, *maman*, but it's only swindlers who behave like that. I'm not doing this out of egoisticism [Note: So in the original]— I don't want your tickets—but on principle; and I don't allow myself to be done by anybody. I have made your daughter happy, and if you don't give me the tickets to-day I'll make short work of her. I'm an honourable man!

NASTASYA TIMOFEYEVNA. [Looks round the table and counts up the covers] One, two, three, four, five...

A WAITER. The cook asks if you would like the ices served with rum, madeira, or by themselves?

APLOMBOV. With rum. And tell the manager that there's not enough wine. Tell him to prepare some more Haut Sauterne. [To NASTASYA TIMOFEYEVNA] You also promised and agreed that a general was to be here to supper. And where is he?

NASTASYA TIMOFEYEVNA. That isn't my fault, my dear.

APLOMBOV. Whose fault, then?

NASTASYA TIMOFEYEVNA. It's Andrey Andreyevitch's fault.... Yesterday he came to see us and promised to bring a perfectly real general. [Sighs] I suppose he couldn't find one anywhere, or he'd have brought him.... You think we don't mind? We'd begrudge our child nothing. A general, of course...

APLOMBOV. But there's more.... Everybody, including yourself, *maman*, is aware of the fact that Yats, that telegraphist, was after Dashenka before I proposed to her. Why did you invite him? Surely you knew it would be unpleasant for me?

NASTASYA TIMOFEYEVNA. Oh, how can you? Epaminond Maximovitch was married himself only the other day, and you've already tired me and Dashenka out with your talk. What will you be like in a year's time? You are horrid, really horrid.

APLOMBOV. Then you don't like to hear the truth? Aha! Oh, oh! Then behave honourably. I only want you to do one thing, be honourable!

[Couples dancing the *grand ronde* come in at one door and out at the other end. The first couple are DASHENKA with one of the GROOMSMEN. The last are YATS and ZMEYUKINA. These two remain behind. ZHIGALOV and DIMBA enter and go up to the table.]

GROOMSMAN. [Shouting] Promenade! Messieurs, promenade! [Behind] Promenade!

[The dancers have all left the scene.]

YATS. [To ZMEYUKINA] Have pity! Have pity, adorable Anna Martinovna.

ZMEYUKINA. Oh, what a man!... I've already told you that I've no voice to-day.

YATS. I implore you to sing! Just one note! Have pity! Just one note!

ZMEYUKINA. I'm tired of you.... [Sits and fans herself.]

YATS. No, you're simply heartless! To be so cruel—if I may express myself—and to have such a beautiful, beautiful voice! With such a voice, if you will forgive my using the word, you shouldn't be a midwife, but sing at concerts, at public gatherings! For example, how divinely you do that *fioritura*... that... [Sings] "I loved you; love was vain then...." Exquisite!

ZMEYUKINA. [Sings] "I loved you, and may love again." Is that it?

YATS. That's it! Beautiful!

ZMEYUKINA. No, I've no voice to-day.... There, wave this fan for me... it's hot! [To APLOMBOV] Epaminond Maximovitch, why are you so melancholy? A bridegroom shouldn't be! Aren't you ashamed of yourself, you wretch? Well, what are you so thoughtful about?

APLOMBOV. Marriage is a serious step! Everything must be considered from all sides, thoroughly.

ZMEYUKINA. What beastly sceptics you all are! I feel quite suffocated with you all around.... Give me atmosphere! Do you hear? Give me atmosphere! [Sings a few notes.]

YATS. Beautiful! Beautiful!

ZMEYUKINA. Fan me, fan me, or I feel I shall have a heart attack in a minute. Tell me, please, why do I feel so suffocated?

YATS. It's because you're sweating....

ZMEYUKINA. Foo, how vulgar you are! Don't dare to use such words!

YATS. Beg pardon! Of course, you're used, if I may say so, to aristocratic society and....

ZMEYUKINA. Oh, leave me alone! Give me poetry, delight! Fan me, fan me!

ZHIGALOV. [To DIMBA] Let's have another, what? [Pours out] One can always drink. So long only, Harlampi Spiridonovitch, as one doesn't forget one's business. Drink and be merry.... And if you can drink at somebody else's expense, then why not drink? You can drink.... Your health! [They drink] And do you have tigers in Greece?

DIMBA. Yes.

ZHIGALOV. And lions?

DIMBA. And lions too. In Russia zere's nussing, and in Greece zere's everyising—my fazer and uncle and brozeres—and here zere's nussing.

ZHIGALOV. H'm.... And are there whales in Greece?

DIMBA. Yes, everyising.

NASTASYA TIMOFEYEVNA. [To her husband] What are they all eating and drinking like that for? It's time for everybody to sit down to supper. Don't keep on shoving your fork into the lobsters.... They're for the general. He may come yet....

ZHIGALOV. And are there lobsters in Greece?

DIMBA. Yes... zere is everyising.

ZHIGALOV. Hm.... And Civil Servants.

ZMEYUKINA. I can imagine what the atmosphere is like in Greece!

ZHIGALOV. There must be a lot of swindling. The Greeks are just like the Armenians or gipsies. They sell you a sponge or a goldfish and all the time they are looking out for a chance of getting something extra out of you. Let's have another, what?

NASTASYA TIMOFEYEVNA. What do you want to go on having another for? It's time everybody sat down to supper. It's past eleven.

ZHIGALOV. If it's time, then it's time. Ladies and gentlemen, please! [Shouts] Supper! Young people!

NASTASYA TIMOFEYEVNA. Dear visitors, please be seated!

ZMEYUKINA. [Sitting down at the table] Give me poetry.

*“And he, the rebel, seeks the storm,  
As if the storm can give him peace.”*

Give me the storm!

YATS. [Aside] Wonderful woman! I'm in love! Up to my ears!

[Enter DASHENKA, MOZGOVOY, GROOMSMEN, various ladies and gentlemen, etc. They all noisily seat themselves at the table. There is a minute's pause, while the band plays a march.]

MOZGOVOY. [Rising] Ladies and gentlemen! I must tell you this.... We are going to have a great many toasts and speeches. Don't let's wait, but begin at once. Ladies and gentlemen, the newly married!

[The band plays a flourish. Cheers. Glasses are touched. APLOMBOV and DASHENKA kiss each other.]

YATS. Beautiful! Beautiful! I must say, ladies and gentlemen, giving honour where it is due, that this room and the accommodation generally are splendid! Excellent, wonderful! Only you know, there's one thing we haven't got—electric light, if I may say so! Into every country electric light has already been introduced, only Russia lags behind.

ZHIGALOV. [Meditatively] Electricity... h'm.... In my opinion electric lighting is just a swindle.... They put a live coal in and think you don't see them! No, if you want a light, then you don't take a coal, but something real, something special, that you can get hold of! You must have a fire, you understand, which is natural, not just an invention!

YATS. If you'd ever seen an electric battery, and how it's made up, you'd think differently.

ZHIGALOV. Don't want to see one. It's a swindle, a fraud on the public.... They want to squeeze our last breath out of us.... We know then, these... And, young man, instead of defending a swindle, you would be much better occupied if you had another yourself and poured out some for other people—yes!

APLOMBOV. I entirely agree with you, papa. Why start a learned discussion? I myself have no objection to talking about every possible scientific discovery, but this isn't the time for all that! [To DASHENKA] What do you think, *ma chère*?

DASHENKA. They want to show how educated they are, and so they always talk about things we can't understand.

NASTASYA TIMOFEYEVNA. Thank God, we've lived our time without being educated, and here we are marrying off our third daughter to an honest man. And if you think we're uneducated, then what do you want to come here for? Go to your educated friends!

YATS. I, Nastasya Timofeyevna, have always held your family in respect, and if I did start talking about electric lighting it doesn't mean that I'm proud. I'll drink, to show you. I have always sincerely wished Daria Evdokimovna a good husband. In these days, Nastasya Timofeyevna, it is difficult to find a good

husband. Nowadays everybody is on the look-out for a marriage where there is profit, money....

APLOMBOV. That's a hint!

YATS. [His courage failing] I wasn't hinting at anything.... Present company is always excepted.... I was only in general.... Please! Everybody knows that you're marrying for love... the dowry is quite trifling.

NASTASYA TIMOFEYEVNA. No, it isn't trifling! You be careful what you say. Besides a thousand roubles of good money, we're giving three dresses, the bed, and all the furniture. You won't find another dowry like that in a hurry!

YATS. I didn't mean... The furniture's splendid, of course, and... and the dresses, but I never hinted at what they are getting offended at.

NASTASYA TIMOFEYEVNA. Don't you go making hints. We respect you on account of your parents, and we've invited you to the wedding, and here you go talking. If you knew that Epaminond Maximovitch was marrying for profit, why didn't you say so before? [Tearfully] I brought her up, I fed her, I nursed her.... I cared for her more than if she was an emerald jewel, my little girl....

APLOMBOV. And you go and believe him? Thank you so much! I'm very grateful to you! [To YATS] And as for you, Mr. Yats, although you are acquainted with me, I shan't allow you to behave like this in another's house. Please get out of this!

YATS. What do you mean?

APLOMBOV. I want you to be as straightforward as I am! In short, please get out! [Band plays a flourish]

THE GENTLEMEN. Leave him alone! Sit down! Is it worth it! Let him be! Stop it now!

YATS. I never... I... I don't understand.... Please, I'll go.... Only you first give me the five roubles which you borrowed from me last year on the strength of a *piqué* waistcoat, if I may say so. Then I'll just have another drink and... go, only give me the money first.

VARIOUS GENTLEMEN. Sit down! That's enough! Is it worth it, just for such trifles?

A GROOMSMAN. [Shouts] The health of the bride's parents, Evdokim Zaharitch and Nastasya Timofeyevna! [Band plays a flourish. Cheers.]

ZHIGALOV. [Bows in all directions, in great emotion] I thank you! Dear guests! I am very grateful to you for not having forgotten and for having conferred this honour upon us without being standoffish And you must not think that I'm a rascal, or that I'm trying to swindle anybody. I'm speaking from my heart— from the purity of my soul! I wouldn't deny anything to good people! We thank you very humbly! [Kisses.]

DASHENKA. [To her mother] Mama, why are you crying? I'm so happy!

APLOMBOV. *Maman* is disturbed at your coming separation. But I should advise her rather to remember the last talk we had.

YATS. Don't cry, Nastasya Timofeyevna! Just think what are human tears, anyway? Just petty psychiatry, and nothing more!

ZMEYUKINA. And are there any red-haired men in Greece?

DIMBA. Yes, everysing is zere.

ZHIGALOV. But you don't have our kinds of mushroom.

DIMBA. Yes, we've got zem and everysing.

MOZGOVOY. Harlampi Spiridonovitch, it's your turn to speak! Ladies and gentlemen, a speech!

ALL. [To DIMBA] Speech! speech! Your turn!

DIMBA. Why? I don't understand.... What is it!

ZMEYUKINA. No, no! You can't refuse! It's you turn! Get up!

DIMBA. [Gets up, confused] I can't say what... Zere's Russia and zere's Greece. Zere's people in Russia and people in Greece.... And zere's people swimming the sea in karavs, which mean sips, and people on the land in railway trains. I understand. We are Greeks and you are Russians, and I want nussing.... I can tell you... zere's Russia and zere's Greece...

[Enter NUNIN.]

NUNIN. Wait, ladies and gentlemen, don't eat now! Wait! Just one minute, Nastasya Timofeyevna! Just come here, if you don't mind! [Takes NASTASYA TIMOFEYEVNA aside, puffing] Listen... The General's coming... I found one at last.... I'm simply worn out.... A real General, a solid one—old, you know, aged perhaps eighty, or even ninety.

NASTASYA TIMOFEYEVNA. When is he coming?

NUNIN. This minute. You'll be grateful to me all your life. [Note: A few lines have been omitted: they refer to the "General's" rank and its civil equivalent in words for which the English language has no corresponding terms. The "General" is an ex-naval officer, a second-class captain.]

NASTASYA TIMOFEYEVNA. You're not deceiving me, Andrey darling?

NUNIN. Well, now, am I a swindler? You needn't worry!

NASTASYA TIMOFEYEVNA. [Sighs] One doesn't like to spend money for nothing, Andrey darling!

NUNIN. Don't you worry! He's not a general, he's a dream! [Raises his voice] I said to him: "You've quite forgotten us, your Excellency! It isn't kind of your Excellency to forget your old friends! Nastasya Timofeyevna," I said to him, "she's very annoyed with you about it!" [Goes and sits at the table] And he says to me: "But, my friend, how can I go when I don't know the bridegroom?" "Oh, nonsense, your excellency, why stand on ceremony? The bridegroom," I said to him, "he's a fine fellow, very free and easy. He's a valuer," I said, "at the Law courts, and don't you think, your excellency, that he's some rascal, some knave of hearts. Nowadays," I said to him, "even decent women are employed at the Law courts." He slapped me on the shoulder, we smoked a Havana cigar each, and now he's coming.... Wait a little, ladies and gentlemen, don't eat....

APLOMBOV. When's he coming?

NUNIN. This minute. When I left him he was already putting on his goloshes. Wait a little, ladies and gentlemen, don't eat yet.

APLOMBOV. The band should be told to play a march.

NUNIN. [Shouts] Musicians! A march! [The band plays a march for a minute.]

A WAITER. Mr. Revunov-Karaulov!

[ZHIGALOV, NASTASYA TIMOFEYEVNA, and NUNIN run to meet him. Enter REVUNOV-KARAULOV.]

NASTASYA TIMOFEYEVNA. [Bowing] Please come in, your excellency! So glad you've come!

REVUNOV. Awfully!

ZHIGALOV. We, your excellency, aren't celebrities, we aren't important, but quite ordinary, but don't think on that account that there's any fraud. We put good people into the best place, we begrudge nothing. Please!

REVUNOV. Awfully glad!

NUNIN. Let me introduce to you, your excellency, the bridegroom, Epaminond Maximovitch Aplombov, with his newly born... I mean his newly married wife! Ivan Mihailovitch Yats, employed on the telegraph! A foreigner of Greek nationality, a confectioner by trade, Harlampi Spiridonovitch Dimba! Osip Lukitch Babelmandebksky! And so on, and so on.... The rest are just trash. Sit down, your excellency!

REVUNOV. Awfully! Excuse me, ladies and gentlemen, I just want to say two words to Andrey. [Takes NUNIN aside] I say, old man, I'm a little put out.... Why do you call me your excellency? I'm not a general! I don't rank as the equivalent of a colonel, even.

NUNIN. [Whispers] I know, only, Fyodor Yakovlevitch, be a good man and let us call you your excellency! The family here, you see, is patriarchal; it respects the aged, it likes rank.

REVUNOV. Oh, if it's like that, very well.... [Goes to the table] Awfully!

NASTASYA TIMOFEYEVNA. Sit down, your excellency! Be so good as to have some of this, your excellency! Only forgive us for not being used to etiquette; we're plain people!

REVUNOV. [Not hearing] What? Hm... yes. [Pause] Yes.... In the old days everybody used to live simply and was happy. In spite of my rank, I am a man who lives plainly. To-day Andrey comes to me and asks me to come here to the wedding. "How shall I go," I said, "when I don't know them? It's not good manners!" But he says: "They are good, simple, patriarchal people, glad to see anybody." Well, if that's the case... why not? Very glad to come. It's very dull for me at home by myself, and if my presence at a wedding can make anybody happy, then I'm delighted to be here....

ZHIGALOV. Then that's sincere, is it, your excellency? I respect that! I'm a plain man myself, without any deception, and I respect others who are like that. Eat, your excellency!

APLOMBOV. Is it long since you retired, your excellency?

REVUNOV. Eh? Yes, yes.... Quite true.... Yes. But, excuse me, what is this? The fish is sour... and the bread is sour. I can't eat this! [APLOMBOV and DASHENKA kiss each other] He, he, he... Your health! [Pause] Yes.... In the old days everything was simple and everybody was glad.... I love simplicity.... I'm an old man. I retired in 1865. I'm 72. Yes, of course, in my younger days it was different, but—[Sees MOZGOVOY] You there... a sailor, are you?

MOZGOVOY. Yes, just so.

REVUNOV. Aha, so... yes. The navy means hard work. There's a lot to think about and get a headache over. Every insignificant word has, so to speak, its special meaning! For instance, "Hoist her top-sheets and mainsail!" What's it mean? A sailor can tell! He, he!—With almost mathematical precision!

NUNIN. The health of his excellency Fyodor Yakovlevitch Revunov-Karaulov! [Band plays a flourish. Cheers.]

YATS. You, your excellency, have just expressed yourself on the subject of the hard work involved in a naval career. But is telegraphy any easier? Nowadays, your excellency, nobody is appointed to the telegraphs if he cannot read and write French and German. But the transmission of telegrams is the most difficult thing of all. Awfully difficult! Just listen.

[Taps with his fork on the table, like a telegraphic transmitter.]

REVUNOV. What does that mean?

YATS. It means, "I honour you, your excellency, for your virtues." You think it's easy? Listen now. [Taps.]

REVUNOV. Louder; I can't hear....

YATS. That means, "Madam, how happy I am to hold you in my embraces!"

REVUNOV. What madam are you talking about? Yes.... [To MOZGOVOY] Yes, if there's a head-wind you must... let's see... you must hoist your foretop halyards and topsail halyards! The order is: "On the cross-trees to the foretop halyards and topsail halyards" and at the same time, as the sails get loose, you take hold underneath of the foresail and fore-topsail halyards, stays and braces.

A GROOMSMAN. [Rising] Ladies and gentlemen...

REVUNOV. [Cutting him short] Yes... there are a great many orders to give. "Furl the fore-topsail and the foretop-gallant sail!!" Well, what does that mean?

It's very simple! It means that if the top and top-gallant sails are lifting the halyards, they must level the foretop and foretop-gallant halyards on the hoist and at the same time the top-gallants braces, as needed, are loosened according to the direction of the wind...

NUNIN. [To REVUNOV] Fyodor Yakovlevitch, Mme. Zhigalov asks you to talk about something else. It's very dull for the guests, who can't understand....

REVUNOV. What? Who's dull? [To MOZGOVOY] Young man! Now suppose the ship is lying by the wind, on the starboard tack, under full sail, and you've got to bring her before the wind. What's the order? Well, first you whistle up above! He, he!

NUNIN. Fyodor Yakovlevitch, that's enough. Eat something.

REVUNOV. As soon as the men are on deck you give the order, "To your places!" What a life! You give orders, and at the same time you've got to keep your eyes on the sailors, who run about like flashes of lightning and get the sails and braces right. And at last you can't restrain yourself, and you shout, "Good children!" [He chokes and coughs.]

A GROOMSMAN. [Making haste to use the ensuing pause to advantage] On this occasion, so to speak, on the day on which we have met together to honour our dear...

REVUNOV. [Interrupting] Yes, you've got to remember all that! For instance, "Hoist the topsail halyards. Lower the topsail gallants!"

THE GROOMSMAN. [Annoyed] Why does he keep on interrupting? We shan't get through a single speech like that!

NASTASYA TIMOFEYEVNA. We are dull people, your excellency, and don't understand a word of all that, but if you were to tell us something appropriate...

REVUNOV. [Not hearing] I've already had supper, thank you. Did you say there was goose? Thanks... yes. I've remembered the old days.... It's pleasant, young man! You sail on the sea, you have no worries, and [In an excited tone of voice] do you remember the joy of tacking? Is there a sailor who doesn't glow at the memory of that manoeuvre? As soon as the word is given and the whistle blown and the crew begins to go up—it's as if an electric spark has run through them all. From the captain to the cabin-boy, everybody's excited.

ZMEYUKINA. How dull! How dull! [General murmur.]

REVUNOV. [Who has not heard it properly] Thank you, I've had supper. [With enthusiasm] Everybody's ready, and looks to the senior officer. He gives the command: "Stand by, gallants and topsail braces on the starboard side, main and counter-braces to port!" Everything's done in a twinkling. Top-sheets and jib-sheets are pulled... taken to starboard. [Stands up] The ship takes the wind and at last the sails fill out. The senior officer orders, "To the braces," and himself keeps his eye on the mainsail, and when at last this sail is filling out and the ship begins to turn, he yells at the top of his voice, "Let go the braces! Loose the main halyards!" Everything flies about, there's a general confusion for a moment—and everything is done without an error. The ship has been tacked!

NASTASYA TIMOFEYEVNA. [Exploding] General, your manners.... You ought to be ashamed of yourself, at your age!

REVUNOV. Did you say sausage? No, I haven't had any... thank you.

NASTASYA TIMOFEYEVNA. [Loudly] I say you ought to be ashamed of yourself at your age! General, your manners are awful!

NUNIN. [Confused] Ladies and gentlemen, is it worth it? Really...

REVUNOV. In the first place, I'm not a general, but a second-class naval captain, which, according to the table of precedence, corresponds to a lieutenant-colonel.

NASTASYA TIMOFEYEVNA. If you're not a general, then what did you go and take our money for? We never paid you money to behave like that!

REVUNOV. [Upset] What money?

NASTASYA TIMOFEYEVNA. You know what money. You know that you got 25 roubles from Andrey Andreyevitch.... [To NUNIN] And you look out, Andrey! I never asked you to hire a man like that!

NUNIN. There now... let it drop. Is it worth it?

REVUNOV. Paid... hired.... What is it?

APLOMBOV. Just let me ask you this. Did you receive 25 roubles from Andrey Andreyevitch?

REVUNOV. What 25 roubles? [Suddenly realizing] That's what it is! Now I understand it all.... How mean! How mean!

APLOMBOV. Did you take the money?

REVUNOV. I haven't taken any money! Get away from me! [Leaves the table] How mean! How low! To insult an old man, a sailor, an officer who has served long and faithfully! If you were decent people I could call somebody out, but what can I do now? [Absently] Where's the door? Which way do I go? Waiter, show me the way out! Waiter! [Going] How mean! How low! [Exit.]

NASTASYA TIMOFEYEVNA. Andrey, where are those 25 roubles?

NUNIN. Is it worth while bothering about such trifles? What does it matter! Everybody's happy here, and here you go.... [Shouts] The health of the bride and bridegroom! A march! A march! [The band plays a march] The health of the bride and bridegroom!

ZMEYUKINA. I'm suffocating! Give me atmosphere! I'm suffocating with you all round me!

YATS. [In a transport of delight] My beauty! My beauty! [Uproar.]

A GROOMSMAN. [Trying to shout everybody else down] Ladies and gentlemen! On this occasion, if I may say so...

Curtain.

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