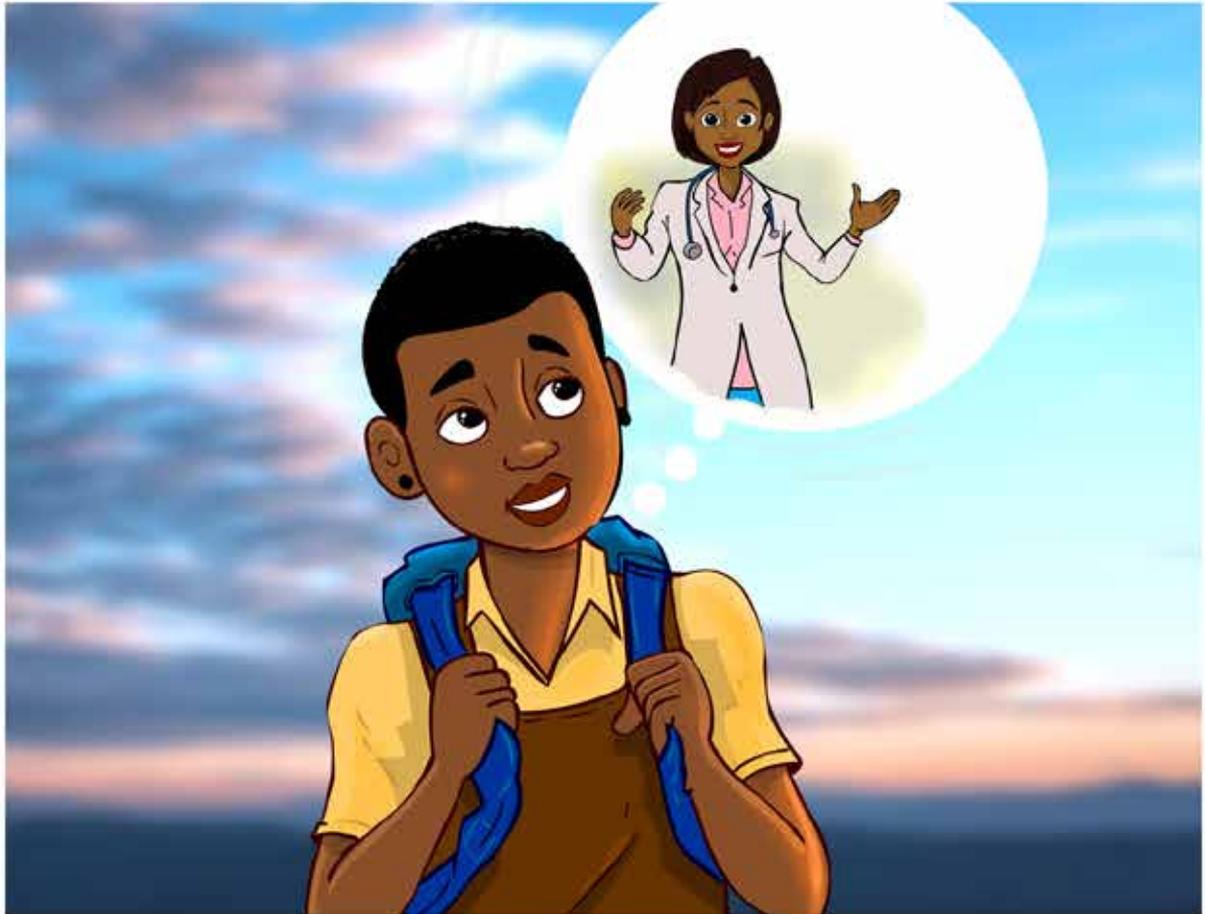


JACKLINE'S RESCUE



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A story of child marriage

Written and Illustrated by:
Jones Abban

It's a bright sunny tuesday morning and the first lesson of the day is underway at the village's primary school...

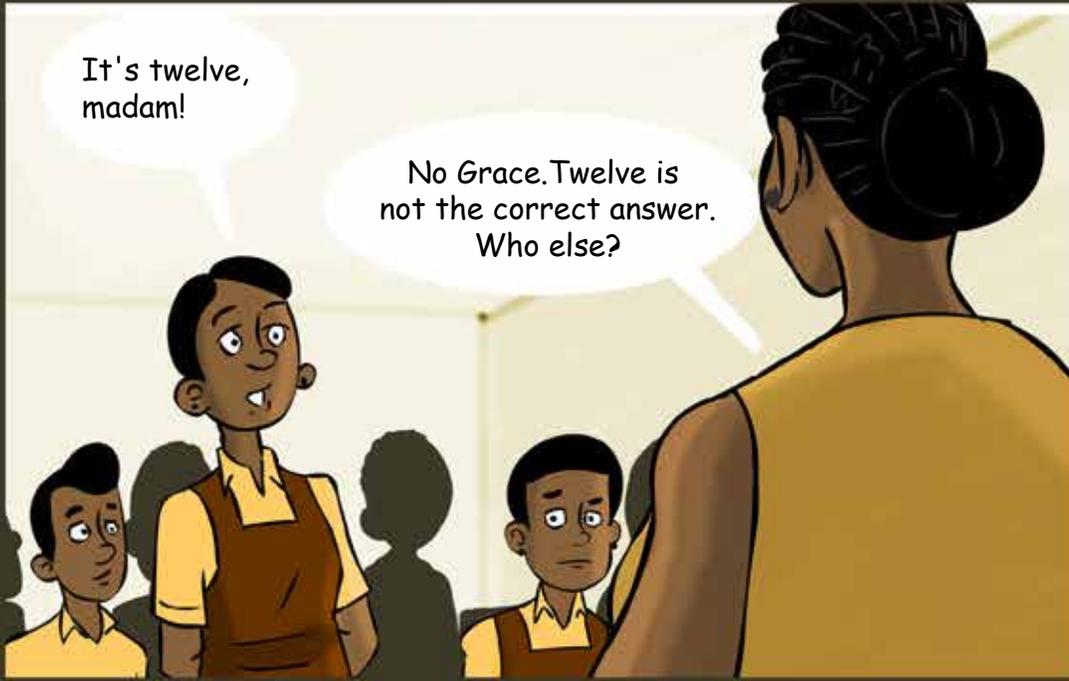
The teacher, Mrs. Aisha is testing her student's understanding of a topic they treated a day before...

Who can tell me the square root of eighty one multiplied by seven?
Anyone?

Me, Madam!

Yes? Grace





It's twelve, madam!

No Grace. Twelve is not the correct answer. Who else?



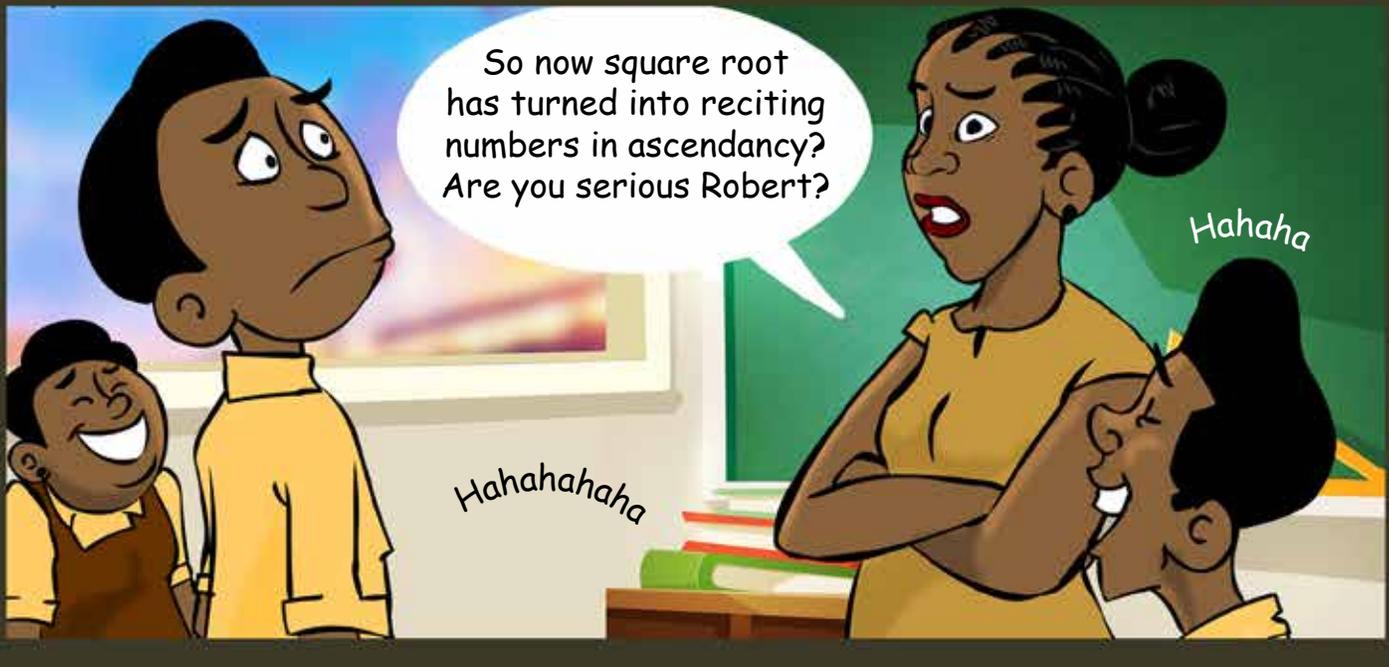
I Know! It's thirteen!



And how did you arrive at that?



Erm...I'm not sure madam, but Grace said twelve and you said it was wrong. So I wanted to try thirteen.



So now square root has turned into reciting numbers in ascendancy? Are you serious Robert?

Hahahahaha

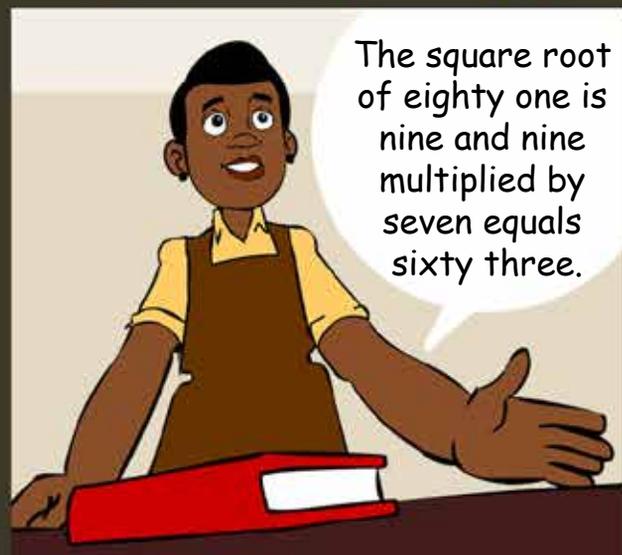
Hahaha

As the class continues to laugh, a hand gently goes up in the back of the classroom...



Yes Jackline. Are you about to make any meaningful contribution or would you be telling me the answer is fourteen?

No madam.



Wonderful!! That is amazing Jackline! Give her a round of applause!

clap!
clap!
clap!



This is what happens when you take your studies seriously both at school and at home.

Keep it up.



Jackline is all smiles. If she is honest to herself, she will admit she was loving the attention and totally feeling proud of herself.

Thanks, Jackline. You just saved the class.
Hahahaha.

This is a pride Jackline, a brilliant, highly self-motivated fifteen year old school girl carries with her almost every day of her life.

Yeah. We are proud of you.

That's Ok.



Jackline's usual walking path back home seemed more interesting today...



For the first time as she walks past the village's community hospital...



She notices the hard working, smartly dressed medical staff going about their work.



The ones attending to the mothers and children queued at the centre got most of her attention.

She couldn't help but notice the passion with which the nurses carried out their duties, seeing to needs of the malnourished looking children.



In a brief moment, Jackline pictures herself in the future, smartly dressed up in a doctor's uniform and happily attending to mothers and children in a big hospital.





At a young age, Jackline fully understands that this kind of dream can be achieved only through hard work. She has also grasped the harsh economic and financial realities of her family.



Early the next morning, just before setting out to school, Jackline's distressed looking father called her to sit to have a very important talk with her...

Jackline. Come over here and have a seat. We need to talk.

We have been trying hard to see you through your education but I can no longer afford to do so. I have run out of money.

Most of your school fees I have been paying has been borrowed money. Now I must pay back.



OK father, but why are you telling me this? What would you have me do about it?

Nothing! At this point, your mother and I have no choice but marry you to Papa Sadik.



That way we will get money from your dowry to look after ourselves and your little brother.

Marriage? Father what is that?



Mother! What is he talking about? I don't understand. Please explain.

Sorry my daughter. You will understand when you get in there.



Believe me my daughter. It is for the good of us all.

But I still don't get it. I'm just a child...



That would be all. Prepare for your marriage next week.

Please, Father. What's going to happen to me now?...



Afraid to ask further questions, Jackline runs out of the house and carried on in tears as far as her young legs could carry her.



She runs to Mrs. Aisha, her class teacher. Maybe she could help her understand what her father had just told her.

What is it Jackline?

Mrs. Aisha was preparing to leave for school as Jackline bursts into her compound with tears flooding down her innocent cheeks.

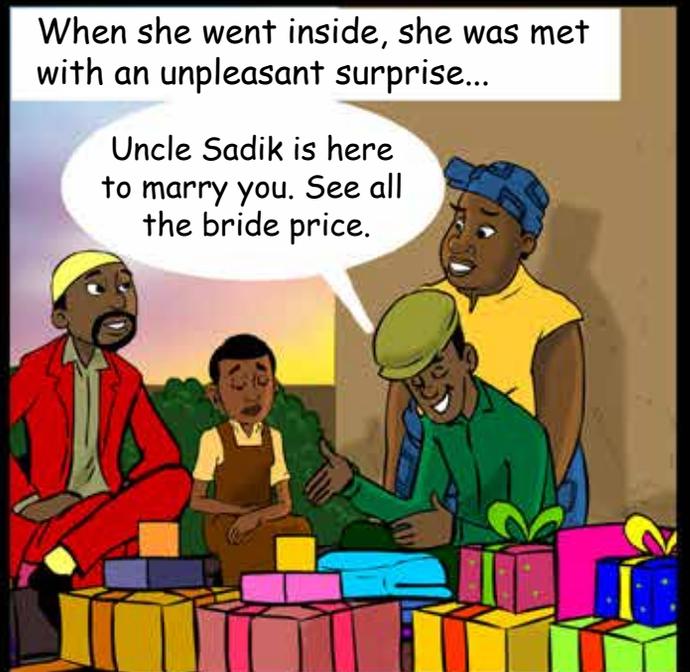


My father said he cannot pay my school fees anymore so he is going to marry me off.

Marry...what? This is not right! Marriage is not for children. I will have to speak to your father against this plan.



Mrs. Aisha sends Jackline back home with a promise to visit right after sorting out her students for the morning lesson.



I can't wait to start my new life with my beautiful bride.



Cheer up my sweetheart. You will be fine.



Mrs. Aisha. How I wish you were here.

It was time to set off...



Bye.

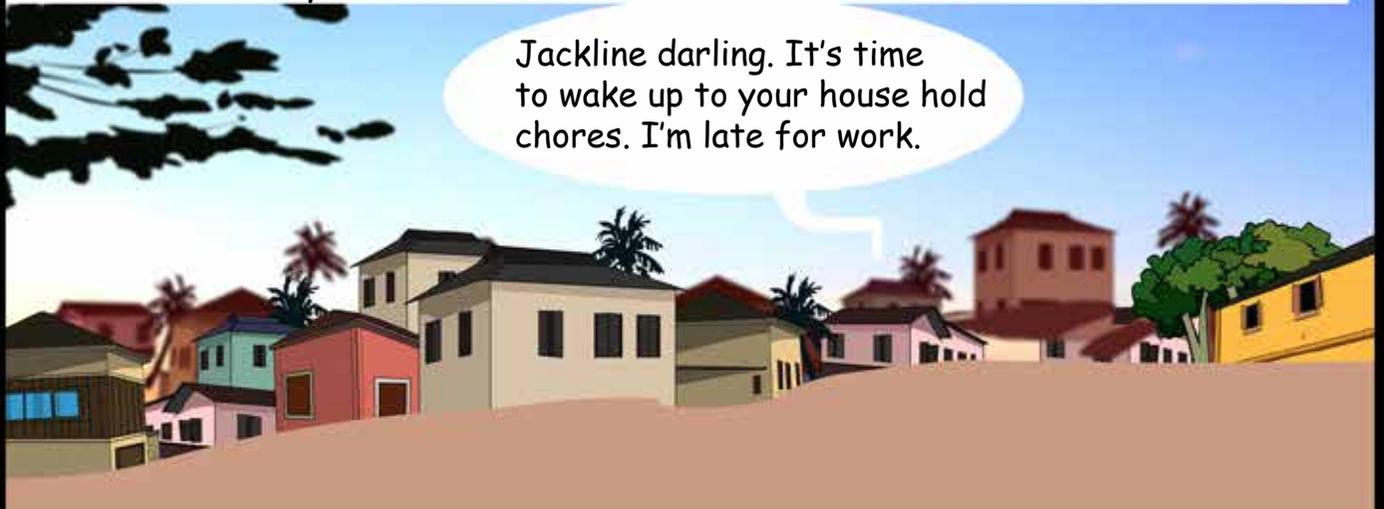
We wish you both well.

Sadly, Jackline found herself driven away from home...



I can't believe this is happening to me. I feel so hopeless.

Soon, they were in the big city. 15 year old Jackline begins her strange new life with her 35 year old husband ...



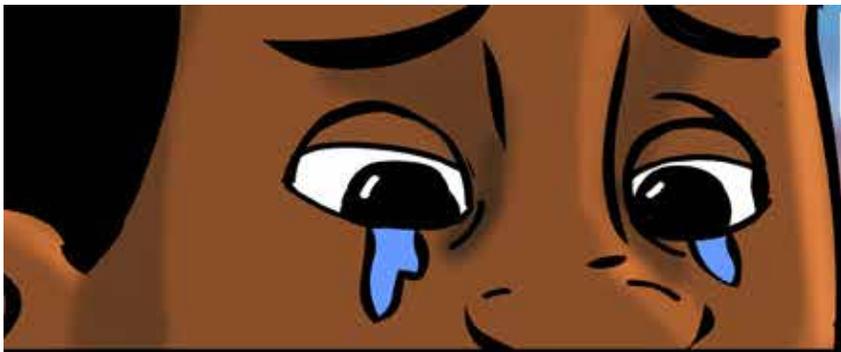
Jackline darling. It's time to wake up to your household chores. I'm late for work.

She is suddenly thrown into an adult world where she has to do things she used to see her mother do for her father...

I cannot believe I'm having to do all this on a daily basis. Cleaning and washing of clothes, ironing, going to the market and cooking for the house.

I was never prepared for this. How do I endure this in addition to his physical abuse? I am so stressed out.





She would often cry all day after her husband leaves for work.

Schooling was out of the question and as the days go by her hopes and dreams of becoming a pediatrician is dashed against the wall.

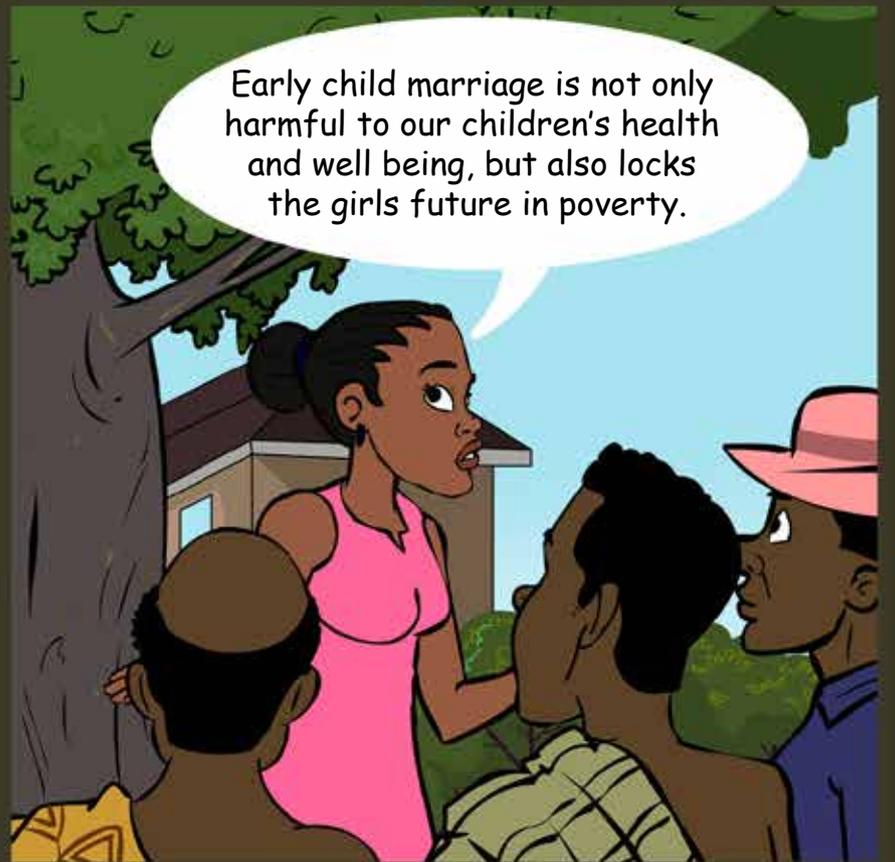
Oh God. Help me. This is not the future I had in mind. I can't go on like this. I feel so abused and tired.



Meanwhile, back in the village. Jackline's teacher, Mrs. Aisha has not given up on rescuing and returning her to school. She has managed to gain the support of a few influential members of the community.



Early child marriage is not only harmful to our children's health and well being, but also locks the girls future in poverty.



Without education, our girls potential to get good jobs in the future to support their families is reduced.



At what age is it safe to marry our girls off?

At least from 18 years, when their bodies would be reasonably matured enough to handle the stress of marriage.



Early marriage will force them out of education, increasing their risk of ill health, violence and abuse.

No way. That's not the kind of future I want for my girl child. Never!



Soon it became all clear to the community gathering that the best way to protect the children and break the cycle of family poverty will be to keep the girl child in school.

We have a responsibility to protect our children, especially the girls.



I would not entertain anyone pushing any girl into marriage before 18 years from this day forth.



The rapturous applause that followed the chief's speech put hope and a big smile on Mrs. Aisha's face.



With this new mindset of the people, coupled with the local police involvement, it didn't take long to get Jackline's father to succumb...

I feel so sorry and irresponsible as a parent for having sent our daughter into early marriage.

This can be fixed. The earlier you show us where they live in the city, the safer it might be for Jackline.



Mrs. Aisha together with the police travelled to the city early the next morning.

I think this should be the house. Officer, Let's knock on the door to see if anyone is at home.



Meanwhile, inside the house...

Come here you little useless girl. Is this how your mother taught you to iron a dress?

Oh please. This hurts.

Shut up! I will show you what really hurts...Ha? Who could that be so early in the morning?





Ha! It's the Police!!

Are you Mr. Sadik?



NOOOOO! I am not!

Hey you! Stop!



Mrs. Aisha! You came to my rescue! I am so grateful.

That's alright my dear. You don't deserve this abuse ever.



Come now. Let's go home. The law will deal well with Mr. Sadik.



I am so happy to be free from child marriage. No girl in this country needs to go through this abuse.

It was a glorious celebration of return in the neighborhood...

Hey people!
It's Mrs Aisha
and Jackline!

They are back!

Jackline's classmates and friends
had all gathered at her house to
welcome her back...

Great to see you
Jackline. We missed
you so much.

I missed you all
too. A big thank you
for all your prayers
and support.



After considering the undeserving torment and treatment she had to go through, the school and village Chief had a special package for her...



The school board and myself have decided to offer you full scholarship. Girls like you deserve all the needed support to have a brighter future.

Oh my God. I can't believe this!

Jackline was elated. Finally, she could get to do what she has always wanted to do...



Yes!!! I am back to school! This feels so great!

Some years later, Jackline completes her primary and secondary education with flying colors...

Finally, I made it here. I'm going to equally study hard to graduate with a first class!



and proceeds to higher education...

...where she later graduates as a qualified Pediatrician! Her dream job!

YES!
I made it!



Alongside her profession, Jackline decides to turn her experience and skills in cooking into a real business.

She sets up 'JackiChow,' an NGO back in the village with a special goal of catering for malnourished kids in the neighborhood.

Occasionally, she runs a mobile clinic in the community to offer free health and screening sessions for families. It was her way of saying a big thank you for the rescue and support...

Finish this meal and quickly head to the screening centre. We want to make sure you are all healthy children.

Yes, Aunty Jackline. Thanks so much.

JACKICHOW
Fresh healthy meals for all





JACKLINE'S RESCUE



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