

JOHN BUCKSTONE

MARRIED LIFE

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Married Life

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Married Life / A Comedy, in Three Acts:*

Содержание

ADVERTISEMENT	4
SQ.TO WILLIAM FARREN, E	5
DRAMATIS PERSONÆ	7
ACT I	8
SCENE I	8
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	27

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Married Life / A Comedy, in Three Acts

ADVERTISEMENT

The Comedy of “MARRIED LIFE” is *entirely* original – if the being unassisted by either anecdote, tale, ballad, biography, or any other resource constitutes *entire originality*. – Yet, as some of the couples, especially MR. and MRS. CODDLE, and MR. and MRS. DOVE, have been “*sketched from the life*,” the important question of originality is still open to much disquisition.

SQ.TO WILLIAM FARREN, E

MY DEAR SIR,

Allow me to dedicate this Comedy to you, as some little token of my very great admiration of your talents. It is a very common cant to allow of no existing excellence, and refer only to the past for instances of genius! In Dramatic matters, this cant has been particularly cherished; but, with reference to yourself, it may be presumed that were a playgoer of Cibber's time now in existence, he would be puzzled, with all his fond recollections, to name few, if any, by-gone *artistes* who could have borne away one feather from your well-filled cap of fame. And truly the actor of the UNCLES FOOZLE and JOHN – of the Lawyers GROTIUS and FLAM – of the wily STEWARD – of the cold and crafty Diplomatist, COUNT BERTRAND – of the physically cold SAMUEL CODDLE – the excellent and kind-hearted MICHEL PERRIN – of the warlike CHARLES THE TWELFTH – of SIR PETER and OGLEBY – and fifty other triumphant assumptions, must possess a feathered coronet of no ordinary dimensions. With a hundred thanks for your great attention to every humble effort of mine, in which you have been concerned, and for the anxiety that you have always shewn for my success, permit me to wish you many years of health and strength, that the stage may long be enabled to name you with pride and pleasure as one of its greatest ornaments.

Yours very truly,

JOHN BALDWIN BUCKSTONE.

August 25, 1834.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

<i>Mr. Samuel Coddle</i>	Mr. W. FARREN.
<i>Mrs. Samuel Coddle</i>	Mrs. GLOVER.
<i>Mr. Lionel Lynx</i>	Mr. VINING.
<i>Mrs. Lionel Lynx</i>	Mrs. FAUCIT.
<i>Mr. Henry Dove</i>	Mr. BUCKSTONE.
<i>Mrs. Henry Dove</i>	Mrs. W. CLIFFORD.
<i>Mr. Frederick Younghusband</i>	Mr. BRINDAL.
<i>Mrs. Frederick Younghusband</i>	Mrs. HUMBY.
<i>Mr. George Dismal</i>	Mr. STRICKLAND.
<i>Mrs. George Dismal</i>	Mrs. TAYLEURE.

This comedy was first produced on the 20th of August, 1834.

ACT I

SCENE I

An apartment at the house of MR. LYNX; A fire place on the L. H. S. E. before which LYNX is discovered in his morning gown, reading a newspaper. A table near him, with breakfast service on it; MRS. LYNX at a small table on R. H., in the sulks; a practicable window to throw up R. H.

Lynx. (Reading.) — “BOW STREET. —*Matrimonial Squabble*— The chief magistrate was occupied all the morning, investigating a case of assault, arising out of a matrimonial squabble. It appears that the wife of the complainant is a woman of violent passions, and so excessively jealous, that her husband’s life is endangered.” Do you hear that, my dear? you are not singular in your temper, you see.

Mrs. Ly. Indeed!

Lynx. There are other women in the world, excessively jealous, beside yourself.

Mrs. Ly. You think so, do you?

Lynx. Shall I read the whole of the police report?

Mrs. Ly. You may do just as you please.

Lynx. Don’t you feel interested in the case? Have you no

sympathy with the poor woman?

Mrs. Ly. You have taken good care to destroy all my sympathies; indeed, almost every feeling and quality that I once possessed.

Lynx. Save one, my dear.

Mrs. Ly. Well, sir, what is that one?

Lynx. The quality of making yourself extremely disagreeable – why don't you take breakfast?

Mrs. Ly. I don't want any.

Lynx. You did not sup last night?

Mrs. Ly. I did not require it.

Lynx. You eat nothing at dinner yesterday?

Mrs. Ly. I had no appetite.

Lynx. You'll starve yourself, love, and die!

Mrs. Ly. Then you will be happy.

Lynx. I shall certainly lead a quieter life —

Mrs. Ly. And have more opportunities for carrying on your intrigues.

Lynx. What intrigues, dear?

Mrs. Ly. Those are best known to yourself.

Lynx. I thought you were perfectly acquainted with them.

Mrs. Ly. I am acquainted with a sufficiency, believe me.

Lynx. Name them, my dear?

Mrs. Ly. I shall not trouble myself so much.

Lynx. Nay, I insist —

Mrs. Ly. Well, then, sir – my dress-maker could not call

yesterday, but you must make yourself ridiculous.

Lynx. What did I do?

Mrs. Ly. You told her, in my presence, that she was very pretty.

Lynx. Was there any sin in that?

Mrs. Ly. 'Twas not only a very great familiarity on your part, sir – but a want of respect for me.

Lynx. True – 'twas wrong in me to forget that few women can endure to hear another admired.

Mrs. Ly. And few men think their wives to be possessed of any superior charms to the first doll they may meet.

Lynx. Excellent, indeed – my love, we must turn authors; and between us, publish a book of conjugal aphorisms. However, I plead guilty to your first charge, and implore your mercy – proceed to the next.

Mrs. Ly. I think the last time we walked out with Mr. and Mrs. Coddle, that you might have offered me your arm, and not have left me to the care of the husband, while you flirted with the wife.

Lynx. What do you call flirting?

Mrs. Ly. Whispering – laughing – and affecting to have, – or really having, a quantity of interesting secrets. – Don't ask me for a definition of the word, Sir – I am not a dictionary.

Lynx. I think you are, my dear – if I may judge by the hard words that you ever use to me. – Proceed with your charges, I beg —

Mrs. Ly. I heard of your being in a private box at the theatre two evenings since – and with some strange female.

Lynx. Your hearing such a report is no evidence of its truth.

Mrs. Ly. You were not at home on that evening – indeed, I don't know when you *are* at home; always out – always running about – calling on this lady, and meeting that – receiving notes of assignation, and – but I'll not endure it longer, Mr. Lynx – you may provoke me beyond the bounds of endurance, and then beware —

Lynx. Of what, dear?

Mrs. Ly. That is best known to myself.

Lynx. I am grateful for the information (*rising*) and now having discussed a very conjugal breakfast, I shall prepare for my morning walk.

Mrs. Ly. Is it possible that you can have no particular appointment? Have you had neither pink, nor blue note this morning?

Lynx. No, my love — *Me miserable dolorous homine—(a Two-penny Postman's knock heard.)*

Mrs. Ly. There's the postman.

Lynx. So I hear.

Mrs. Ly. A letter for you, no doubt. – I thought it would be strange if a morning passed without the arrival of some mysterious billet for Mr. Lynx – (*LYNX makes a movement towards the L. H. entrance, but resumes his seat*) – Oh, Sir, don't check your impatience – anticipate your servant, and run to the door, I beg.

Lynx. Certainly, my love – if you wish it. – (*LYNX jumps up*

and runs off, L. H.)

Mrs. Ly. Now, Sir, I think I have you in my snare – 'tis my own letter that has arrived – bearing a fictitious signature, and appointing to meet him in the park alone; – he will receive it – read it – then what should he do? What *should* a good and true husband do under such circumstances? Show the letter to his wife. Will he do that? If he does, I will freely forgive – forget – and think all that I have heard and seen to be delusions and falsehoods; – but if he neither gives it me, nor alludes to it in any way, I shall then be convinced of his perfidy, and my course shall be resolved on.

Re-enter LYNX, singing carelessly,

“I have pluck'd the fairest flower,” &c. &c

By Jove, I must dress, – 'tis near eleven (*looking at his watch*) my love, I think I shall dine at my club to-day.

Mrs. Ly. Was the letter that you have just received an invitation to meet some one there?

Lynx. Oh dear, no.

Mrs. Ly. Was it from any one that I am acquainted with?

Lynx. No, 'twas merely a note.

Mrs. Ly. On a matter of business?

Lynx. Yes – yes – mere business.

Mrs. Ly. Which, of course, you will attend to?

Lynx. Business *must* be attended to, my dear.

Mrs. Ly. Especially when the only business of a man is pleasure.

Lynx. Precisely.

Mrs. Ly. Then you *are* going out?

Lynx. I am.

Mrs. Ly. I think on such a very fine morning as this, you might, for once, take me with you.

Lynx. Certainly, my love, if you wish it.

Mrs. Ly. Ah! will he take me? – (*aside.*)

Lynx. Yet, now I think of it, – I have two or three places to call at, where I may be detained.

Mrs. Ly. I can wait for you.

Lynx. That will be so unpleasant: I shall be fidgetty at the thought of your becoming impatient, and then half the little matters that I may have to arrange, may escape my memory. You had better name to-morrow for our walk.

Mrs. Ly. You *won't* take me this morning?

Lynx. Not this morning.

Mrs. Ly. You *will* go out?

Lynx. I must.

Mrs. Ly. Very well, Sir. – (*Aside.*) – Perfidious man, you will bitterly repent this treatment of me. – There is some one in the hall.

Lynx. (*Looking off, L. H.*) – They're your friends, Mr. and Mrs. Coddle; they will amuse you during the ten minutes that I require for dressing. What a strange couple – so oddly assorted; poor Coddle, is the thinnest, chilliest man in the world. You must shut all your windows.

Mrs. Ly. His wife will immediately open them.

Lynx. She, poor thing, is so hot. When he is below freezing point, she is above fever heat.

Mrs. Ly. You must allow that they do endeavour to accommodate themselves to each other's foibles, and not oppose them, and use them as the means of tormenting, as *some* people do?

Lynx. We shall see.

Enter MRS. and MR. CODDLE – CODDLE wrapped up in a great coat, over which is a spencer – a boa round his throat. A cravat covering his chin, and a Welch wig on his head. MRS. CODDLE is dressed in thin white muslin.

Coddle. Ah, Mrs. Lynx!

Mrs. Cod. Good morning, my friends.

Lynx. How d'ye do? How d'ye do?

Coddle. – I'm very cold – ugh (*shuddering.*)

Lynx. Quite well, Mrs. Coddle?

Mrs. Cod. Very well – but so hot. Phew! Pray open your windows and give me some air.

Coddle. No, don't, don't – I shall jump out of one of 'em, if you do. My inhuman wife would drag me from my warm fire-side

this morning, although I told her there was an incipient easterly wind fluttering about. If it should blow in full force before I get home, I shall die.

Mrs. Cod. My dear love – 'tis nothing but a fine refreshing breeze, and one that you ought to be very grateful for.

Coddle. I tell you, it is warmth that I want – warmth.

Mrs. Cod. And it's air that I want – fine, fresh, blowing, whistling air.

Coddle. (*Shuddering.*) – Ugh – don't, dear, you chill me to the bone to hear you.

Lynx. Be seated, I beg. – (*crosses to L. H.*) – Excuse me for a few minutes.

[*Exit LYNX, L. H.*

Mrs. Ly. (*Aside.*) – If he does go out, I'll follow him; watch him, and enjoy his disappointment.

Cod. You have a window open somewhere, Mrs. Lynx – pray shut it. I sat in a draught last week, that so completely fixed my head on my shoulders, that I could'nt have moved it without turning my whole body at the same time, had it been to save my life.

Mrs. Cod. Merely a stiff neck, Mrs. Lynx?

Cod. All my wife's fault. I sat for five days in this attitude – (*Holding his head up stiffly.*) – If I wanted to look at any body on my left, I was obliged to turn my whole body thus. If any one spoke to me on my right, I could only attend to them by pivoting so. If I wished to see what was going on behind me, I was obliged

to whirl round like a weathercock at a sudden change in the wind; – but how dy'e think I did it? How dy'e think I managed my movements?

Mrs. Lynx. I really can't guess.

Cod. 'Twas the only thing I could hit upon. I sat upon my wife's music-stool – for five whole days. I ate, drank, lived and twirled upon a music-stool; – all through sitting in a draught – do shut your windows, there's a dear.

Mrs. Cod. You'll suffocate me some day, Coddle – I know you will. You don't know what a life I lead with him, Mrs. Lynx – five blankets in July – think o'that.

Cod. Highly necessary – we are more liable to take cold in hot weather, than in any other. I always have four colds, one rheumatism, and two stiff necks every July.

Mrs. Cod. What d'ye think he did a week ago, Mrs. Lynx? I had retired early: in the middle of the night I awoke in such a state of alarm – I really thought the room beneath us was on fire – the air of my apartment was so hot, so sultry, that I could not draw my breath. I gasped for air; What can be the matter, I said to myself? Surely I've been suddenly transported to the Indies, and there is a thunder-storm brewing. I rose – I opened the windows —

Cod. And almost killed me on the spot; there was a strong north wind blowing at that moment – enough to wither one. – Imprudent woman.

Mrs. Cod. 'Twas a fine bracing night breeze – but out of

kindness to Coddle, I immediately closed the windows – Phew. Oh, gracious, had you but have felt the heat – I fainted away in the easy chair – Coddle rang the bell – the servants came – and to my horror, we discovered that Coddle had clandestinely introduced a German stove into the bed-room, and there it was, red hot. Think what a person of my temperament must have endured. I've been ill ever since.

Cod. Doctor Heavysides recommended it; he said 'twas the only thing that could save my life, and rescue me from a threatened pulmonary complaint. I've had a wheezing cough ever since its removal – barbarous woman! – (*Coughs.*)

Mrs. Cod. You seem dull, Mrs. Lynx.

Mrs. Ly. I'm not in very good spirits.

Mrs. Cod. Ah! we poor wives all have our little troubles.

Cod. And we poor husbands, too. Mrs. Coddle wont let me wear a hair-skin comforter – did you ever hear of such cruelty?

Mrs. Cod. He thinks of nothing but his own personal ease.

Cod. I'm obliged; there's no one else thinks of it for me.

Mrs. Cod. He's the most apathetic creature living – no life, no passion, no impulse. I *do* like to see a husband subject to some little caprices of temper. If Coddle, now, were inclined to jealousy – and would scold me well – and throw things about – and go into a fury now and then – I should be the happiest woman in the world; but he wont – there he sits, from morning till night, as carefully wrapped up as an Egyptian mummy. I really think he is one; he is – he's King Cheops. Cheops – (*aside to MRS.*

LYNX) – oh, Mrs. Lynx, I'd give the world to make him jealous. But what is the matter with you, have you had words with your husband?

Mrs. Ly. I confess that we have had a trifling disagreement, this morning.

Mrs. Cod. How delightful! – Coddle, why don't you go into a passion and knock me down.

Cod. My dear, if I were to go into a passion, and suddenly cool, as I know I should, the checking of the perspiration would be the death of me – I should die.

Re-enter LYNX, dressed for walking

Lynx. Good morning, my friends; I am going to leave you; don't you hurry away on my account.

Mrs. Ly. There's no necessity for that; I shall be alone the whole day.

Mrs. Cod. (To MRS. LYNX.) – Ah! you are a happy woman in possessing such a husband! Look at him, Coddle; observe his manner – his air. Why don't you dress in that fashion?

Cod. Me! as thinly clad as Mr. Lynx is now – would you see me in my grave? Ugh! I shudder to look at him.

Mrs. Cod. I'm sorry that you are going out. – (To LYNX.) – I thought to have passed a very pleasant morning in your society.

Mrs. Ly. (Aside) – I'm certain there's an understanding between them. – (Watching them with suspicion.)

Mrs. Cod. (To LYNX) – A word with you – (she whispers LYNX, and laughs) – Eh? Ha! Ha! Ha! it would be very droll, now – would it not?

Lynx. Ha! Ha! very, indeed.

Mrs. Cod. I shall endeavour —

Lynx. Do, do – rely upon me. Ha! Ha!

Mrs. Cod. Ha! Ha! Ha!

Lynx. Adieu, my friends, adieu. Good morning, Mrs. L. If I do not return by five, you need not expect me till late. Adieu.

[Exit L. H.]

Mrs. Ly. May I ask, madam, why you whispered my husband?

Mrs. Cod. A mere matter of pleasantry.

Mrs. Ly. Indeed!

Mrs. Cod. He's the most charming creature living, is that husband of yours. I wish my poor drone was like him.

Mrs. Ly. I should be sorry to make your husband unhappy, madam —

Mrs. Cod. Do, do – make him wretched, there's a love – but for once.

Mrs. Ly. I don't comprehend you, madam – I can only observe, that your conduct to my husband, a moment since, was as ill-mannered as it seemed suspicious.

Mrs. Cod. He's a fine spirited man. – (Looking at CODDLE, who is busy wrapping himself closely up.)

Mrs. Ly. Indeed! pray, madam, what might be the subject of your whispers?

Mrs. Cod. I never betray confidence.

Mrs. Ly. Surely you are not that base woman, who, under the mask of friendship, seeks to ruin my peace. I have watched your behaviour before, madam, and I am now convinced there is some secret correspondence existing between you and my husband, and how Mr. Coddle can sit there, and affect to be blind to your actions, I am at a loss to conceive.

Cod. Blind – me affect to be blind – what is there to see, madam?

Mrs. Cod. (Aside.) – This is delicious; – if Coddle would but listen to her.

Mrs. Ly. To see! – quit my house, and from this moment I trust that neither of you will ever enter it again.

Cod. What have we done?

Mrs. Ly. (To MRS. CODDLE.) – I look upon you, madam, as a dangerous woman.

Cod. So she is – my night-caps are never thoroughly aired.

Mrs. Ly. And if your husband can countenance your conduct, I am not so lost to every sense of self-respect, as to submit to it.

Mrs. Cod. Bless me, Mrs. Lynx, what do you mean?

Cod. (Coming between them.) – Don't, don't, pray don't excite me; if you get to words, I must interfere, and any interference, at this moment, might be fatal.

Mrs. Ly. I shall not attempt to explain my insinuations – I only desire that you will leave me to myself, and that your visits here may be less frequent.

Mrs. Cod. Don't you stir from this house, Coddle, till you are perfectly convinced of the baseness of her inuendoes. Be jealous, and demand an explanation; if you don't, I'll tear the list from all the doors at home.

Mrs. Ly. Will you compel me to ring the bell?

Mrs. Cod. Go into a rage, Mr. Coddle.

Cod. I can't; – (*MRS. LYNX throws open a window, R. H.*) – my love, we are in a thorough draught; that woman wants to destroy me. Let us leave the house, if you wish to see me alive an hour hence. Be satisfied – I'll call on Mr. Lynx, and demand an explanation.

Mrs. Cod. But one word more —

Cod. No, no, not one. Come, my dear – I've the rheumatics in my right shoulder, already – I tremble from head to foot – I've taken cold, and you'll have to nurse me for a month – Come, dear, come.

[Exit L. H. dragging off MRS. CODDLE.]

Mrs. Ly. (*Falling into a chair.*) – Wretched woman that I am – why did I ever give power to any man so to torment me? I'll now follow him, and enjoy his disappointment.

Mrs. Cod. (*Without.*) – Don't send up your name at present – the poor creature is in a rabid state. – (*MRS. YOUNGHUSBAND heard without.*)

Mrs. Y. Mrs. Lynx won't mind us.

Mrs. Ly. (*Looking off, L. H.*) – Who is this? Mr. and Mrs. Younghusband! how provoking – just as I'm going out. – What

can bring them here? they are a couple that I can't endure; though married but three months, they are perpetually contradicting and annoying each other; if, now, they had suffered the five years of matrimony that I have – there might be some excuse for them, but to disagree so early in their career, is sad, indeed.

Enter MR. and MRS. YOUNGHUSBAND, L. H

Mrs. Younghusband. (*Running to MRS. LYNX, and taking both her hands.*) – How d'ye do, dear? don't mind me and Y. coming in so unceremoniously – we have called to give you some information.

Younghusband. How can you talk so absurdly, Louisa? we have not called to give Mrs. Lynx any information.

Mrs. Y. For what, then?

Young. Merely to tell her that a person wishes to see her.

Mrs. Y. Well, *that* is information.

Young. No, it isn't.

Mrs. Y. Yes, it is.

Young. How can that be?

Mrs. Y. To tell any body of any matter is to inform them; and to inform people, is, of course, to give them information. How you do contradict me!

Mrs. Ly. What, then, is the information that you bring me?

Mrs. Y. There, you hear, sir; Mrs. Lynx allows it to be information.

Young. It can't be.

Mrs. Y. But it is.

Young. It isn't; you have not informed Mrs. Lynx of anything, yet.

Mrs. Y. I should have done so, if you had not interrupted and contradicted me, as you always do.

Young. Allow me to tell Mrs. Lynx – you must know, madam, that some years ago, my wife was sent to the boarding-school of Mrs. Dove, in Sussex.

Mrs. Y. No, it was in Kent.

Young. In Sussex!

Mrs. Y. In Kent, I tell you.

Young. If you aggravate me in this manner, I'll go home again.

Mrs. Ly. Well – well.

Mrs. Y. Last night, at a friend's house, we accidentally met Mr. and Mrs. Dove – when she informed us that she had given up her school, and was now in London for the purpose of collecting some old debts, and amongst the names of the persons that she had to call on, was that of a Mr. Lynx —

Mrs. Ly. My husband?

Mrs. Y. Your husband.

Young. Louisa, how can you? why will you thus agitate Mrs. Lynx? – you are not sure the Mr. Lynx, that Mrs. Dove is looking for, is the husband of our friend – we merely surmised that it was.

Mrs. Y. I tell you, I'm certain it is the same.

Young. You are not!

Mrs. Y. I am.

Young. It can't be the same.

Mrs. Y. It is.

Young. It isn't.

Mrs. Lynx. Now, pray, don't trifle with me; think of my dreadful suspense – think of my feelings at this moment.

Mrs. Y. Mrs. Dove is now below, with her husband; shall I ask her to walk up? – then she can relate this strange circumstance herself.

Young. You ought first to tell Mrs. Lynx, who and what the people are, before you introduce them to her.

Mrs. Y. There is no necessity for it.

Young. There is.

Mrs. Y. There isn't.

Young. I tell you, there is.

Mrs. Lynx. Yes, yes – pray tell me.

Mrs. Y. Well, then – Mrs. Dove, you must know, was a widow; and formerly the mistress of a large boarding school; but has now retired, after marrying her footman. They are the oddest couple you ever met with. She is perpetually drilling her husband into politeness and correct pronunciation, which the poor man will never comprehend as long as he lives. Oh, had you but seen them last night! whenever a bell rang, poor Mr. Dove could scarcely help starting from his chair, and running to attend to it; and could only be checked by the alarming eyes of Mrs. Dove. Ha! ha! – Oh, those eyes – how they did remind me of my school-days!

just the looks that she used to dart at us, poor refractory girls.

Young. My dear, why don't you keep to that portion of the narrative, most interesting to Mrs. Lynx; she don't want to hear of great eyes and refractory girls.

Mrs. Y. I am sure I have mentioned all that is necessary.

Young. You have not.

Mrs. Y. I have.

Young. You have not.

Mrs. Ly. Ask them to walk up, I shall then be satisfied.

Mrs. Y. (Calling.) – Step up, Mrs. Dove, and bring your husband with you.

Young. There is no necessity for calling up Mr. Dove.

Mrs. Y. There is.

Young. There isn't.

Mrs. Y. There is.

Young. They are here; don't make a noise.

Mrs. Y. 'Twas you that made the noise.

Young. 'Twas not.

Mrs. Y. It was.

Enter MR. and MRS. DOVE

Mrs. Y. Mrs. Lynx – Mr. and Mrs. Dove. – Will you be kind enough to relate to Mrs. Lynx the purport of your enquiry?

Mrs. Dove. The purport of my enquiry is to ascertain, whether the Mr. Lynx, that I am informed is residing here, is the identical

person who, two years ago, placed a young lady under my care?

Mrs. Y. A young lady! My husband place a young lady under your care?

Young. Nay, madam, before you distress yourself, you had better be assured that the Mr. Lynx alluded to, *is* your husband.

Mrs. Dove. The gentleman's Christian cognomen was Lionel.

Dove. Lionel Lynx, Esquire.

Mrs. Dove. Silence, my dear!

Dove. That is what was on a trunk he sent to our house; that's all I know, my precious.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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