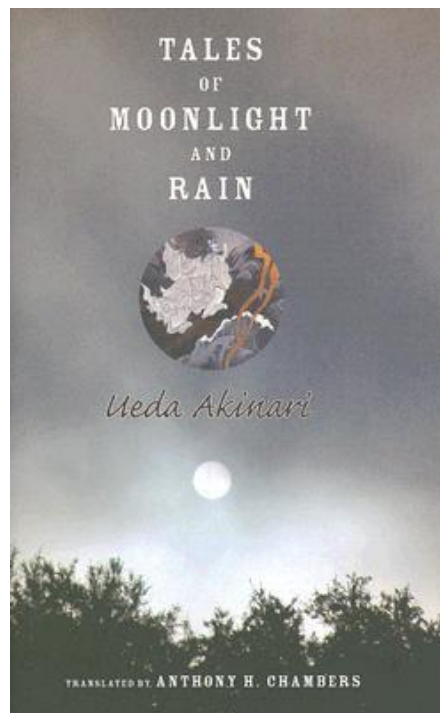




## Tales of Moonlight and Rain

*Ueda Akinari , Anthony H. Chambers (Translator)*

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# Tales of Moonlight and Rain

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First published in 1776, the nine gothic tales in this collection are Japan's finest and most celebrated examples of the literature of the occult. They subtly merge the world of reason with the realm of the uncanny and exemplify the period's fascination with the strange and the grotesque. They were also the inspiration for Mizoguchi Kenji's brilliant 1953 film *Ugetsu*.

The title *Ugetsu monogatari* (literally "rain-moon tales") alludes to the belief that mysterious beings appear on cloudy, rainy nights and in mornings with a lingering moon. In "Shiramine," the vengeful ghost of the former emperor Sutoku reassumes the role of king; in "The Chrysanthemum Vow," a faithful revenant fulfills a promise; "The Kibitsu Cauldron" tells a tale of spirit possession; and in "The Carp of My Dreams," a man straddles the boundaries between human and animal and between the waking world and the world of dreams. The remaining stories feature demons, fiends, goblins, strange dreams, and other manifestations beyond all logic and common sense.

The eerie beauty of this masterpiece owes to Akinari's masterful combination of words and phrases from Japanese classics with creatures from Chinese and Japanese fiction and lore. Along with *The Tale of Genji* and *The Tales of the Heike*, *Tales of Moonlight and Rain* has become a timeless work of great significance. This new translation, by a noted translator and scholar, skillfully maintains the allure and complexity of Akinari's original prose.

## Tales of Moonlight and Rain Details

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## From Reader Review Tales of Moonlight and Rain for online ebook

### Eadweard says

Even though all the stories were good and I really enjoyed the book, my favorite story is the one that Mizoguchi's Ugetsu is based off, how cliché of me.

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### Prakash Waka says

If some writers have an artist mind, others are scholar in the heart and Ueda Akinari is one of them.

The stories of his Tales of Moonlight and Rain seek to avoid the *zoku* - the vulgar - in order to achieve the *ga* - the elegance- which is a success for the tales are thoroughly refined in their prose and in their meaning. Drawing from both Chinese and Japanese classical cultures in a remarkable harmony, the stories are full of Buddhist outlook, of Confucian philosophy - the references to Confucius or Mencius are many -, of parallels with The Tale of Genji, of allusions to The Tales of Ise and to The Tale of the Heike and of mentions of history with even the appearance of some historical characters.

The characters are varied and show almost the full scope of the Japanese society and all of them are without fail confronted with *yokai* - Japanese spirits - with different outcomes.

These yokai, the encounters with them and the following interactions can be quite recognizable to those familiar with modern Japanese media culture; maybe it's even the origin of these tropes.

Chambers, the translator, is knowledgeable and his translation of the text is pleasant and elegant. I however deplore the complete translation of all terms, reading for instance demon-bird instead of tengu is an heresy. The introduction of each tale separately is a nice scholar touch but one can bemoan the spoilers and some unconvincing interpretations. An afterword may have been better.

Yet, I didn't find any of the tale to be exceptional, they were good, delicate and interesting, but not, for me, masterpieces.

Maybe it was because of the constant disruption of the text to read the numerous translator notes, I don't know, but it just didn't do it for me.

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### Lindu Pindu says

If you've seen Mizoguchi's Ugetsu then you know not to expect horror stories from this collection. But hey haven't you seen all those Asian horror flicks?, you'll ask. That's scary stuff! Yes, but the way they scare you is they get under your skin and then grow aliens in your brain. These are a bit more subtle. Symbolic, atmospheric and rooted in tradition, the stories won't give you nightmares if you read them before bedtime, just a twinge that there's a world out there beyond the touchable.

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### Meghan Fidler says

Ugetsu Monogatari ??? (Tales of Moonlight and Rain) is a collection of ghostly folktales from Edo Japan. It

was first published in 1776, and was adapted from Chinese ghost stories. It became famous in the West through Kenji Mizoguchi's 1953 film by the same title, which focuses on a single narrative[from Aaji go yado (The House Amid the Thickets)] within the collection of 9 stories.

There are a number of stories which would terrify government officials of the period, and I suggest these for those that are interested in political life of Tokugawa Japan. Shiramine (white peak) are Buppousou (Bird of Paradise) examples of these stories.

Monks also feature a prominent role in the supernatural, and apparently their ascetic dietary practices make food a main theme in these stories. As such, the Buddhist narratives include a monk who was almost dinner for a Vice-governor, Muou no rigyo (The carp that came into my dreams), and a monk who sees a boy so cute he could eat him... with zombie-like consequences, Aozukin (The blue hood).

Being influenced by Chinese writing, of course women are also a focus of potential-evil ghosts. I'll spare you my inflammatory commentary, and just say that Kibitsu no kama (the Caldron of Kibitsu) and Jasei no in (The Lust of the White Serpent) leave me pleased that I am alive now. Sometimes nostalgia is just misplaced.

The most interesting story was the last one, and it is terrifying in its own way: I'm nodding at you, oh self-declared anti-capitalists. Get your hands on Himpuku-ron (Wealth and Poverty).

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## **Tintaglia says**

3.5

Che libro strano: è come se i racconti fantastici fossero una scusa per mostrare la competenza storica dell'autore. O.o

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## **Jenny (Reading Envy) says**

I ended up reading the Hamada translation of these tales, originally published by Columbia in 1972. After adding the introduction and understanding the complete mastery demonstrated in the creation of the original in Japanese, I'm not sure I could ever get the same experience in an English translation.

That said, I enjoyed the blend of folklore, religion, and the supernatural. The demon-snake-woman was the most memorable character, and the frequent use of buildings and people who could transform into practically anything meant nothing was limited. I need to understand more about how the various elements of religion and spirituality worked together in this era in Japan.

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## **Nancy Oakes says**

Anthony Chambers, who is a professor of Japanese literature and literary translation at Arizona State, has brought together these little tales of ghosts, spirits and other things in this slim little volume. The title "alludes to the belief that mysterious beings appear on cloudy, rainy nights and in mornings with the lingering moon;" it's a great book to read on a dark night when all is quiet -- rain is a definite plus -- and for

someone like me who is very deep into history, it goes well beyond just the stories.

There are a couple of different ways a reader might approach this book.

1. Chambers offers information about each story just prior to its beginning, offering information and history on Title, Characters, Places, Time, Background and Affinities. If you are not at all interested in the literary, cultural, political and historical background of the stories, then skip to #2 approach which is to
2. skip directly to the story itself. The downside of that approach is that in footnotes, annotations, etc., there are references to other literary works, so just watch out.

In either case, I would skip the intro and return to it after you've read the entire book, but of course, that's my own preference (I do that in every book I read) -- but it is also very interesting in terms of historical background so do not miss it.

As for the stories themselves, there are nine. I have to say that I've recently discovered Hulu's collection of 900+ Criterion films, and watched one called "Ugetsu." I fell instantly and deeply in love with this movie, so I did a bit of research on it. It turns out that the movie is a combination of two stories in this book -- "The Reed-Choked House" and "A Serpent's Lust", and I was elated to discover that I actually had this collection in my home library. In fact, the title of the film references the Japanese title of this collection -- "*Ugetsu Monogatari*."

The story list is as follows:

"Shiramine"  
"The Chrysanthemum Vow"  
"The Reed-Choked House"  
"The Carp of My Dreams"  
"The Owl of the Three Jewels"  
"The Kibitsu Cauldron"  
"A Serpent's Lust"  
"The Blue Hood"  
"On Poverty and Wealth"

The collection itself dates back to the 18th century; it is a classic in the world of Japanese literature. A number of these tales have been borrowed by Ueda from Chinese literature; he changed them to Japanese settings and adapted them to fit into Japanese culture. Samurai abound, for example; Buddhism and Shinto also play major roles in these tales. All of these little stories are quite good (with the exception of "On Poverty and Wealth," which I did not particularly care for), but my favorites were "The Reed-Choked House" and "A Serpent's Lust," followed by "The Kibitsu Cauldron" "The Chrysanthemum Vow" and "The Carp of My Dreams," the greatness of which is in the author's ability to blur the line between dreams and reality to an uncanny extreme.

While not exactly the mainstream fodder of modern readers of supernatural tales, this collection is beyond outstanding. Anyone who is one-hundred percent serious about literary horror/dark fiction should have this book in his or her library; for me it's a beautiful blending of works from two cultures I love and it perfectly suits my need for reading something different every time I pick up a work of dark fiction. Just so I feel like I'm being honest here, it is not always an easy read -- you have to read, think, and do both slowly.

It is an absolutely stunning collection I can highly, highly recommend. Even if you want to bypass the scholarly approach, the stories themselves are amazing.

## Justin S?m says

Nh?ng câu chuy?n th?n kì ma quái mà ch?ng th?y nó th?n kí và ma quái ? cái ch? nào...

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## E??is ♥ says

Dal libro:

*Non far crescere mai nel tuo giardino i salici che mettono germogli verdi all'arrivo della primavera. Non legarti a una persona dal cuore volubile. I salici crescono subito ma non resistono al primo soffio del vento d'autunno; le persone volubili si legano con facilità ma se ne vanno presto e se i salici rinnovano il loro colore a ogni primavera, una persona infedele non farà più ritorno.*

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## Mariann says

Aasta lõpp läks kiirelt ja tasapidi jõuan blogis tagantjärgi väljakutse raamatute lugemis-maratoni kajastamiseni. Nii otsustasin raamatukogust võtta Akinari Ueda "Vihma ja kuupaiste lood". Tegu on mitu sajandit vanade jaapani õudusjuttudega, mis sobisid veel lugemata žanri alla päris hästi.

Raamatus on mitu juttu, mis on teemadelt väga erinevad, kuid läbivaks jooneks kõigil on vaimude teema. Mõned jutud on positiivsemad, teised süngemad, kuid konkreetset sellist õudust, mis öösel üleval hoiaks ma kahjuks või õnneks ei kohanud. Minu lemmiklugu oli mungast, kes muutus kalaks.

Lugemist raskendasid vaid pidevad viited jaapani mütoloogiale jm, mille kohta seletusi pidi joonealustest märkustest otsima. Need aitasid lugude mõistmisele tublisti kaasa ning mõistan, miks rohkem õudusjutte ei tõlgitud, kui nende mõistmiseks veel rohkem eelteadmisi vaja oli.

Kiidaksin ka suurepära eessõna, mis aitas hästi juttudega ühele lainele jõuda. Sain uue teadmise, et jaapani õudusjuttudele pandi alati külge väga täpne toimumisaeg ja -koht, et neile reaalsemat muljet enda.

Kokkuvõtteks oli see tore raamat ja ma ei kahetse, et seda lugesin. Mulle meeldis ta tunduvalt rohkem kui eelmine jaapani raamat, mille samuti alles lõpetasin ehk siis "Sajandi mäng". Sääraseid kummitusjutte loeks hea meelega veel.

Igatahes soovitan lugeda, kui vähegi huvi on teiste rahvaste ja kultuuride, nende mütoloogia ja kirjanduse vastu!

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## Helen McClory says

While some of the stories in this slender collection are interesting, they are buttressed by essays that could have provided cultural context - but instead were dry and unengaging. A list of old place names would have

been better served on a map.

The analysis of each story was pretty shallow - often explaining things that could be readily taken from the text (such as the time of year the stories were set), while ignoring cultural aspects that were harder to get, the most egregious of which was in the story of the Blue Hood: there is a paedophile cannibal monk who has become a demon (yep) but in the analysis, the translator only says that 'homosexual relations between a monk and his servant boy were normal, and the punishment [of becoming a demon] is only because in Buddhism his attachment was too excessive'. Well, that relationship is not what people in modern times would refer to as homosexual - the servant is '12 or 13 years old' - that's paedophilia, not even pederastic 'youth-adult' relationships that were common in say Ancient Greek society. Was this really acceptable? Is the translator missing something? I don't know.

Likewise the translator says nothing on the constant sexism that crops up in the stories. The belittling of the mental and spiritual capacities of women in frequent throwaway lines. Was this common in 18th century Japan? I know it of course from Western literature (though prevailing thought on the capacities of women varied from age to age and person to person). Was it a foible of the original author? The translator doesn't say. Perhaps because it doesn't occur to him to say.

So we have some interesting stories, some painfully dull (the final one with the lengthy chat from the spirit of gold in particular) but potentially interesting as culturally specific stories. Given livelier analysis.

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### **Nicole~ says**

These were light short stories mixed with Japanese and Chinese myth: fundamentals I generally find enjoyable but, in this version, poorly presented in a disconnected flow by prefacing each tale with the origins of the myth, historical background and synopses.

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### **Jason says**

An interesting collection of old Japanese ghost/spirit stories. Each one has a lesson for you to learn, for example do not eat those that you love once they have died or you'll turn into a demon.

The stories are quite mixed, they were pretty gruesome at times, I'm sure when this was written they would have been terrifying but in this day an age they are tame.

The version I read had tonnes and tonnes of extra info about the characters, the setting, the plot and theories on what the story was about, I ended up skipping the last few as it was just too much and took away any of your own thoughts you have about each story, I'd recommend reading the story before the extra info.

Just realised this is the 1000th book I've read according to Goodreads. woooooo

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### **Tijana says**

Lepo kažu ljudi da je teško napisati *stvarno* dobru priču o duhovima, a naročito iznenađujuću, jer nema

mnogo osnovnih varijacija te teme. Ali Pri?e kiše i meseca su kao pravi osvedo?eni klasik uspele da me iznenade; i to pre svega zahvaljuju?i odli?noj kompoziciji cele zbirke koja po?inje nekim blagim, lirskim i pou?nim susretima s duhovima i onda se sasvim malo poja?a da bi pred kraj, u sedmoj i osmoj pri?i, stepen užasa i grozote odjednom samo sunuo u visine (Plava kapulja?a omg). I onda ništa, opet blaga pou?na pri?a za kraj.

Tako?e: ovo izdanje ima 180 strana, od ?ega šezdesetak otpada na predgovor sa objašnjenjima i analizom (malko suvoparnom ali ipak) svake pri?e. Pošteno.

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## Mary says

The introduction rambled and it seemed as if Chambers was trying to say that only his translation was the definitive one. He provided a thorough background to everything, although some might argue a little too much, as his intro was 50 page long.

The stories varied a lot but most held to the key ideas of women shouldn't be allowed to feel jealousy or they could kill their husbands with their spirits, men needing to set the law (or "raise their wives"), and how one must heed all advice and traditions or you will be punished.

My favorite story was A Serpent's Lust, where a young man named Toyoo marries a snake demon. He's from a fishing family but is hopeless at everything except for literature so his father's like you belong to your elder bro cuz I ain't got time for you. He gets into a lot of trouble that isn't his fault and the underlying message was that because he wasn't an abusive asshole and was so gorgeous this demon lady wanted him and wreaked havoc to claim him.

Despite the blatant sexism and etc, this story was the most progressive and was very entertaining.

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## Asmaa says

The introduction makes note that a different translator might arrange the nine stories in a different order. In Chambers's translation, "Shiramine"=White Peak comes first, set in autumn 1168 with the character Saigy? a Buddhist monk and Sutoku the ghost of New Retired Emperor. Reading the story, one comes across Buddhist beliefs and Confucian virtues as well as the Chinese zodiac.

"The Chrysanthemum Vow" involves the friendship between the Confucian scholar Samon and the samurai S?emon. Evident is the Confucian love of learning.

"The Reed-Choked House" adapts two Japanese classics, The Tale of Genji and Essays in Idleness: The Tsurezuregusa of Kenko. Notable in the story is the historical background and the peasants' association with court poetry.

"The Carp of My Dreams" is delightful when the reader imagines a man's making an underwater journey around Lake Biwa as a golden carp. A character's journey/"going on the road"/travel (=michiyuki) is in several of these nine stories.

Known by a completely different title in another translation, "The Owl of the Three Jewels" means something not obvious explained in the notes. The characters are the merchant Muzen, the ghost poet J?ha, and the other ghostly spirits of historical people. In the summer of 1616, Muzen climbs the steep mountain to



Japan's holiest place, Mount K?ya's temple complex. There he is witness to a strange event, from which he'd rather be unobserved.

"The Kibitsu Cauldron" involves how a rice-cauldron's oracle plays out in the marriage of Sh?taro and Isora.

In "A Serpent Lust", the characters are Toyoo a studious son of a fisherman and Manago a serpent demon disguised as a beautiful woman, who brings trouble on Toyoo. The imagery of Manago as a gigantic snake with poisonous vapors and with a girth as wide as a doorway is memorable.

"The Blue Hood" takes place in the monastery Daich?ji and in the neighboring village between 1471-1472. The abbot turns cannibalistic after a young companion dies. At the end the monastery undergoes a change from the Shingon school of Buddhism of K?bo Daishi to the S?to school. Quote,

...there are countless examples, from the past down to the present, of those who, led astray by the karmic obstacles of lust and wrong thoughts, reveal their original forms and give vent to their resentments, or turn into demons or serpents to take retribution.

Interesting, too, are two Buddhist characteristics, i.e., the appreciation of nature's beauty in mountains and streams and the buddha-nature (=the potential for enlightenment) in every person.

"On Poverty and Wealth" is a conversation between a samurai and a spirit of gold on an autumn night between 1593 and 1595. The spirit believes that people have misunderstood the virtue of gold as they have misunderstood the art of wealth, which is not based upon karma or heaven. Rather wealth is obtained by frugality, constrained spending, and hard work.

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## Aimen says

A very creepy set of stories that have a weird cultural insight to them. If you like strange tales that give a sense of Japanese background, then hey, maybe this is for you. I'll add more to this review once I have time, but I would recommend to anyone who likes a creepy tale.

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## Darcy Conroy says

I enjoyed Akinari's Tales of Moonlight and Rain - eventually. Unfortunately, the translator's introduction is long and gives the impression that one simply will not possibly be able to understand or enjoy the tales unless one is a scholar of Japanese history and literature - if that's not bad enough, the intro also contains spoilers! This is a great shame because, while of course one will get more out of them if one has read the same texts as the author and has in mind the same history as readers of the day, they are perfectly accessible stories which can be enjoyed for their own sake.

If I may be so bold, I'd like to suggest a different order in which to read this book.

1) skip the book introduction and the introduction to each tale and go straight to the tales themselves (marked by a dark moon and a large, illustrated first letter) and read them for pure enjoyment, first. The footnotes that the translator supplies relate to notes at the end of each tale (not the notes at the bottom of the pages which are essentially language notes) and they provide plenty of information, if not a little too much, for pure enjoyment.

2) AFTER you have read each tale, read the translator's introduction to each one, they will give you historical notes etc... which will shed a little more light on what you've just read but will also make more sense to you

after you've read the tale, and you'll also avoid spoilers.

3)After THAT, if you want to know more about the author and the place of the Tales in Japanese literature, read the introduction and the bibliography and throw yourself into an academic frenzy!

If you do enjoy the tales, then look for the works of Lafcadio Hearn :)

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## Edward says

*Acknowledgments*

*Introduction & Notes*

*Preface & Notes*

### Book One

*Preface*

--Shiramine

--The Chrysanthemum Vow

### Book Two

*Preface*

--The Reed-Choked House

--The Carp of My Dreams

### Book Three

*Preface*

--The Owl of the Three Jewels

--The Kibitsu Cauldron

### Book Four

*Preface*

--A Serpent's Lust

### Book Five

*Preface*

--The Blue Hood

--On Poverty and Wealth

*Bibliography*

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## Bill Kerwin says

Perhaps this has happened to you too: touched by a new enthusiasm—for Iranian cinema, troubadour poetry, a new Olympic sport—you seek out a specialist for a little background. He smiles, and tells you that his specialty is so unique, its aesthetic pleasures so subtle, its cultural assumptions so complex, that its *proper* appreciation will require of you a *life-long* habit of dedication and study. After an hour of his monologue, drained of all enthusiasm, you finally tear yourself away, vowing never to speak of the subject again.

Something similar—although not so severe—happened to me when I read Anthony H. Chambers introduction to his translation of Ueda Akinari's *Tales for a Rainy Moon*. I approached the work with interest, since I love ghost stories, have a particular affection for Japanese supernatural tales (acquired through my reading of Lafcadio Hearn), and revere Kenji Mizoguchi's *Ugetsu Monogatari*—a 1953 movie adapted from two of these stories—as one of the greatest films of all time. Moreover, I knew this was a celebrated traditional work, written in the 18th century, and considered a classic of the Edo period.

I began to read Chambers' introduction (supplemented by eight pages of notes), and soon I was not only swamped with Japanese literary terms—I learned, for example, that Akinari was a *bunjin* inspired by *wen-jen* who sought *ga* and avoided *zoku*—but also confronted by intimidating charts and categories, including the typical elements (ten!) of the Japanese supernatural tale and the relevant aspects (four!) of the Noh play (which it somewhat resembles). Sure, I could have skipped all this, but I'm a good boy, the kind who always eats his spinach, and I thought I might learn something. And I did learn something; in fact, I learned much that was helpful. But Chambers still told me much more than I will ever need to know.

What is worse, though, is that this passion for preserving every cultural nuance and subtlety carries over into Chambers' translation. A good translator must walk a fine line between conveying the cultural uniqueness of the work while also communicating its universality. Chambers errs on the side of uniqueness almost every time.

Still, all nine stories are evocative, and Chambers translation is good enough to display their power and beauty. My favorites are the two that inspired Mizoguchi: “The Reed-Choked House” (the female ghost as faithful peasant wife) and “A Serpent's Lust” (the female ghost as aristocratic snake-demon). I also particularly liked “The Kibutsu Cauldron” (another faithful wife ghost), “The Chrysanthemum Vow” (the passionate love of two men triumphs even over death), “The Blue Hood” (a crazy cannibal monk foiled by a zen master), and “The Carp of My Dreams” (a monk who is a superb painter of fish dreams he is a fish himself). This last is a real reality-bender. I think Philip K. Dick would have liked it, and it is my third favorite story in the collection.

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