

PARTY

The
Sleepover
Club



Dance-Off!

Harriet Castor

Dance-off!

«HarperCollins»

Castor H.

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The hugely popular Sleepover Club series is back with a gorgeous new look. Meet Frankie, Kenny, Fliss, Rosie and Lyndz – five best friends who just want to have fun! When dancers from the British National Ballet come to Cuddington Primary to teach the pupils a few moves, it's time to get grooving! But the Sleepover Club has a few moves of its own, particularly when their rivals, the M&Ms, start getting snotty! It all boils down to a competition – who will have the best dance routine for the end-of-term party? Will it be the M&Ms with their ballet pointe shoes, or the Sleepover Club with their funky dance routine? Only time will tell... As well as a great story this book has tips on how to have your own brilliant sleepover party for you and your friends. Pack up your sleepover kit and join the fun!

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HarperCollins E-Books

The Sleepover Club

Dance-off!



Harriet Castor



Harriet Castor

HarperCollinsChildren'sBooks

Dedication

Take your partner by the hand...Fling her high and watch her land!

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Hey, can I grab you for this one? I've been looking for you everywhere. It's Rosie – remember me? Course you do! Woah, watch out for Kenny! When she gets on the dance floor, you have to keep out of the way – she's like some crazy firework, shooting off in all directions. And just look at Frankie go! She's strutting her stuff like she's on the telly – she could be one of the Sugababes.

Hang on, maybe we should sit out for a minute, so I can fill you in on all the goss. The last day of term is always a bit crazy, but you won't believe what's happened this time. You'll be on the edge of your seat when I tell you, I guarantee it.

Talking of seats, let's park ourselves on these chairs. We need a quiet corner or Fliss'll hop over and butt in, cos it's such a great story and she reckons she stars in it. I know she's dying to tell you everything, but I found you first!

You remember us all, don't you? The Sleepover Club. There's me, of course, and Fliss – Felicity Sidebotham, if you want to be formal. Poor Fliss – her surname makes the M&Ms snigger, but don't worry, we're always thinking of ways to get back at them for it. The M&Ms – that's Emma Hughes and Emily Berryman (yeuch!) – are our worst enemies at school.

Then there's Frankie. You can never miss her, she's so loud and funny, and dressed up in mad clothes half the time. She'll boss you around too, given the chance! And Kenny – Laura McKenzie to the teachers, but don't call her that or she'll karate-chop you! Kenny's wild. She's football-crazy, for a start, and always coming up with outrageous schemes too. You've got to watch her, especially when the M&Ms are nearby. There's nothing Kenny wouldn't do!

Last but not least there's Lyndz. Look – she's over there, dancing with Frankie. Laughing Lyndz she should be called, cos she's always cheerful and loves giggling. Except with Lyndz, two seconds of giggling turns into hiccups, and that's that!

As the Sleepover Club we have the coolest time staying at each other's houses every week. The Trouble Club, my brother Adam calls us – what a cheek! Except, when you've heard what's just happened to us, I guess you might agree with him...

It all started a few weeks ago, in the middle of a history lesson (yawn!), when Frankie started squealing. Now Frankie's not one to make a fuss about nothing, so when I heard her making that noise –

“Aieee!”

– and saw her leap out of her chair as if she had a party popper up her bottom, I thought something major had happened, like the M&Ms had put slimy slugs in her socks.

“Francesca Thomas, whatever is the matter?” said our teacher, Mrs Weaver.

Frankie had her fingers in the back of her collar, and she was jumping up and down as if she was trying to shake something out of her clothes.

“What did you put down her neck?” Kenny yelled at the M&Ms, who had been sitting right behind Frankie.

“Laura, sit down!” barked Mrs Weaver.

“Nothing, *stoo*-pid,” smirked Emma ‘the Queen’ Hughes. “We always knew she had ants in her smelly pants.”

I could see Kenny seething at that. The M&Ms are so snooty and babyish, it’s just gross. Then I saw it. *Plip!* A big splodge of water landing on Frankie’s chair. I looked up.

“Mrs Weaver!” I said, pointing up to the ceiling. “Something’s dripping!”

It turned out that the classroom roof had sprung a leak right over Frankie’s chair, and it had dripped ice-cold water down the back of her neck. Mrs Weaver cheerfully sent Danny McCloud to get a bucket from the cleaners’ cupboard. It was weird. She usually got really narked about stuff like this.

Frankie had to move seats. “What’s got into Weaver?” she whispered to me as she went by.

“P’rhaps she’s won the lottery,” I hissed back.

“She wouldn’t be giving us a history lesson if she had,” muttered Lyndz, who was sitting next to me. “She’d be in Barbados by now.”

Just the mention of Barbados made me go all dreamy – thinking of hot sun, and sandy beaches and palm trees, or whatever they have over there. We used to go on ace holidays abroad when Mum and Dad were still together. Since they split up and Mum started college, though, we can’t afford it, worse luck. So here I was, stuck with my dreams on a wet wintry Wednesday in Cuddington.

But not everyone was feeling grumpy. When the bell was about to go for break Mrs Weaver said, with a big smile on her face, “I have some really exciting news.”

“I knew it!” I heard Kenny mutter. “She’s got engaged to Prince William!”

Lyndz snorted into her pencil case. I thought she was going to get the giggles, but Mrs Weaver gave her a stern look.

Then Mrs Weaver unrolled a glossy poster and pinned it up on the classroom wall.

Fliss gasped. Kenny groaned. The poster said *British National Ballet* on it, and showed a picture of two dancers in sparkly costumes. The woman was standing on her toes and wearing a tiara. No wonder Fliss was excited. Anything princessy is right up her street.

“Are we going on a trip?” asked Alana ‘Banana’ Palmer, one of the M&Ms’ geeky friends.

“Better than that,” said Mrs Weaver. “The British National Ballet is coming to us! The company’s performing in Leicester at the moment, and two of its dancers will be spending the whole day at Cuddington Primary tomorrow, as part of their ‘Theatre in Education’ project. They’ll take each class for a workshop, and then at the end of the afternoon they’ll give a demonstration in the school hall.”

“But isn’t a workshop where you do woodwork and stuff?” asked Danny McCloud.

“Will we have to wear a tutu and pink shoes?” Alana shouted out.

“Yeah, even the boys!” laughed Frankie.

“Now wait a minute,” said Mrs Weaver. “Let me explain. This is a *different* sort of workshop, Danny, and no, Alana, there’ll be no special clothes required. You’ll just need your P.E. kit. It’ll be like those ‘Music and Movement’ lessons we have instead of P.E. on wet days, except that the dancers will be in charge instead of me.”

“Well, this is just *awesome*,” said Kenny sarcastically, when the bell had finally gone and the five of us were clustered round her desk. It was a wet break, so everyone had to stay in the classroom.

Mr Pownall, the other Year 6 teacher, was supervising us. “Just because Weaver likes ballet, why does she have to inflict it on the rest of us? They’ll have us prancing around pretending to be fairies, I bet. I wish we were having a couple of Leicester City players to visit instead.” (Oh – Kenny is a major fan of Leicester City Football Club. Did I forget to tell you?)

“It’ll be excellent!” said Fliss. “I’ve never seen real live dancers close-up before. I wonder if they’ll bring proper costumes with them...” She took the top off Kenny’s new silver pen and started doodling, designing some sort of weird ballet outfit.

“You might get to dance with Ryan Scott, Fliss,” suggested Frankie in a silky, tempting voice. “He’d make such a good prince, don’t you think?” Fliss looked up with a sudden eager expression, and the rest of us cracked up laughing.

“You’re all horrible!” she scowled, turning pink and hunching over her drawing again. She was bent so low, her nose was practically touching it.

“Ohmigosh, forget all that. There’s something much more exciting!” said Kenny suddenly, smacking herself on the forehead. “I can’t believe I haven’t told you yet!”

“What, what?” said Lyndz.

“My folks said we can have a sleepover at my place this Friday!”

“Way to go!” Frankie yelled, and we all did high fives and had a group hug. We hadn’t had a sleepover for a few weeks and we’d been missing them badly.

“Let’s make it a themed one!” I said.

“Yes – ballet!” said Fliss straight away.

“Nooooo!” wailed the rest of us.

“Oh, it’s the babies, squealing about nothing again,” said a drawling voice right by us. It was the Queen and the Goblin – the M&Ms in other words – leering smugly at us like a couple of Hallowe’en masks.

“Hey, Thomas, I always thought you were a real drip,” sneered Emily ‘the Goblin’ Berryman, nodding at the bucket on Frankie’s chair, “but you really proved it today.”

A couple of their cronies laughed at this, and it made Frankie fume. “No one could be drippier than you two lamebrains,” she said. But the M&Ms had already turned their backs and stalked off across the classroom.

“The M&Ms are asking for it,” announced Kenny darkly. “Distract them for me – quick!”

Kenny’s always doing this, and it teaches you to think on your feet, I can tell you! I was the one with the inspiration this time. While the others just looked a bit stunned – and Fliss looked nervous too (she worries about Kenny’s mad revenge schemes) – I marched over to the bucket on Frankie’s chair and, gasping, yelled out, “Emma! Emily! Isn’t this your drawing?”

We’d spotted them in other wet breaks working on an awful picture of Westlife they’d copied out of some sappy magazine. So as soon as they saw me pointing to the bucket, they scrambled across the room like their knickers were on fire.

When they got to me, and saw that I was pointing at nothing but the dirty rainwater collecting in the bottom of the bucket, they snapped, “Oh ha ha,” really sarkily, and “Can’t you come up with anything better than that, Rosie *Po-sie*?”

I wasn’t worried at all. I sauntered back to Kenny’s desk, where Kenny winked at me and said, “Nice one.”

“What did you do?” I asked her, but Kenny just grinned.

Frankie and Fliss shrugged at me, and Lyndz shook her head. It was a mystery to all of us. For the next few minutes we tried to look normal, like we were thinking about other things. But all the time we were holding our breaths with nervous excitement and keeping our attention superglued to the M&Ms. I got eye-ache from squinting sideways at them. The last thing I wanted to do was put them on the alert with outright staring.

“But nothing’s happening,” whispered Fliss after a while.

“Did you do *anything*, McKenzie?” hissed Frankie. By way of reply, Kenny jabbed her in the ribs with her elbow, and nodded over at Emily Berryman.

The Goblin was reaching down into her bag and fiddling with something inside it. She kept glancing up at Mr Pownall, as if to check he wasn’t looking.

The next thing we knew there was a tiny click, and then suddenly – SKWOOSH! Bright pink liquid started spurting from the Goblin’s bag like a freaked-out fountain.

“Eeeeeiii! Aaaaah!” the Goblin shrieked. She made a dash for the bin, still holding the mad fountain.

“Never knew the Goblin’s voice went that high!” said Frankie, who was laughing fit to burst, along with the rest of the class.

“What *is* it?” Fliss spluttered.

“Can... of pink soda...” Kenny managed to say, laughing so hard she could barely speak. “I shook it up!”

Emily’s dash for the bin ensured that about six desks and twice as many people got covered in sticky soda. Everyone was squealing – everyone, that is, except for Emma Hughes, who was holding up a sopping wet exercise book. She looked like she was about to cry.

Suddenly we heard a chair scrape back. Mr Pownall stood up, a look of major doom on his face. “Well done, Emily!” he thundered, in a voice that didn’t mean ‘well done’ at all. “What an irresponsible girl you are!”

In a nanosecond, the room went deathly quiet (apart from the odd hiccup from Lyndz). Emily was standing by the bin looking like a damp dishrag.

“Do you know there is a rule against having cans of fizzy drink in the classroom?” said Mr Pownall.

“Yes, Mr Pownall,” said Emily softly.

“And *why* do you suppose that is?”

“To stop...” She winced “...*that* happening.”

“Exactly,” said Mr Pownall. “Which proves just how irresponsible you are. You *knew* the rule and you *deliberately* broke it. Go and fetch a mop and some cloths. And after that you can take yourself to Mrs Poole’s office and explain exactly why I have sent you.”

As Emily slunk off to get the cleaning stuff, I turned to Kenny and gave her my hundred-watt grin. I would’ve given her a high five too, but that would’ve been too obvious. Emma Hughes, dripping with sticky wet soda, was looking daggers at her right that moment. Kenny stared innocently back like butter wouldn’t melt in her mouth! The others were desperately trying not to look smug and give the game away. I bet, like me, they were all dying to say “Who’s a drip now?” It was cool.

I noticed that Fliss was looking particularly relieved. She always worries that Kenny on the warpath is going to mean serious trouble for us. Little did she know that before long she’d be landed with a double helping – no, *quadruple* helping – of spectacular Kenny-trouble. Poor Fliss. If only one of us could have warned her...



Oops! I'm getting ahead of myself. I shouldn't be talking about Fliss's disaster yet. I must tell you the story in the right order, or the others will be on my back! So, where was I?

Ah, yes. The week of Kenny's sleepover. Well, I was looking forward to that sleepover, big time – and I knew I wouldn't be the only one. But when I met up with the others at school the next morning, Fliss seemed to be in an odd mood. She looked about as happy as a wet weekend.

"Ready for our prancing class, then?" asked Kenny, slapping her on the back.

"Huh? Oh, yeah..." said Fliss uncertainly.

"What's up, Fliss?" said Lyndz, getting all concerned. "Has something happened at home?"

"No," said Fliss. "Well – kind of..." She fiddled with one of her plaits. Then she blurted out, "Mum says we're going skiing in the holidays!"

There was a split second of silence. Then Frankie and Kenny screamed together: "*Skiing??*" And Lyndz said, "But that's a *brilliant* thing!"

"I know it is," said Fliss. "And I'll get a gorgeous tan, Mum says. And we'll have to go shopping for the special clothes and everything..."

Kenny was rolling her eyes by this point. "What's eating you, then?"

"Well, being away for the whole of the time we're off school," said Fliss. "It'll be weird, not seeing you lot. And..." She hesitated. "I've not skied before, and I'm kind of nervous."

"You're right to be," said Kenny, nodding, and putting on her really serious BBC2 documentary voice. "Skiing is very dangerous. If you don't keep exactly to the right path, you might fall down some hidden ravine. And you'll lie at the bottom with both your legs broken, and no one will be able to hear your cries for help..."

"Kenny, cut it out!" squeaked Lyndz. Fliss looked terrified. Kenny cracked a grin. She wants to be a doctor and loves scaring us with tales of horrific *ER*-type injuries – the gorier the better.

"I'm so jealous!" said Frankie. "Fliss, it'll be brilliant! Are you all going? Callum too?"

Fliss nodded. "There are some little kids' lessons that Callum can go to," she said.

Just then the bell rang, so there was no more time to discuss the hardships of Fliss's luxury holiday – or tomorrow's sleepover, which it struck me we'd hardly planned at all yet.

It turned out that it was going to be our turn for the dance workshop after morning break. When the time came and we'd all got changed, we trooped into the school hall. Some of the class were looking excited, some (the boys and Kenny, mainly) looked like they were about to go to the dentist's.

The dancers – a man and a woman – were already there waiting for us. They were both lean and fit-looking, and were standing up really straight, as if they had broom-handles instead of spines. Their smiles were friendly, though. Still, everyone immediately went shy and started shuffling around the edges of the room.

"I thought they'd be a bit more glamorous," Fliss whispered to me. She had a point. The dancers were dressed in faded, frayed old T-shirts and leggings that my mum would've put in the bin if they'd been mine.

"I'd like to welcome our visitors to Cuddington Primary," Mrs Weaver said, looking a bit flushed. "Children, this is Miss Lorna Baker, and Mr Sean Goldman. I'm sure we'd all like to thank them for giving up their valuable time to be with us."

The bloke, Sean, was pretty good-looking, with very dark curly hair. "D'you reckon Fliss'll fall for the tall dark stranger?" Kenny whispered, nudging me in the ribs. Despite her disappointment about the clothes, Fliss looked bright-eyed and excited.

We tease Fliss quite a lot about boys. She's definitely soppiet than the rest of us, mainly about Ryan Scott, this boy in our class she wants to marry when she's older. I mean – Ryan Scott? Yeuch! But that's Fliss for you. I guess she's into romance and hearts and flowers and all that stuff. The rest of us are more into girl power, thank you very much.

I was convinced that Lorna and Sean were going to have us pointing our toes and skipping about, just like Kenny had said. But what we actually did came as a big surprise.

First off, there were a few warm-up stretches. Nothing fancy, just reaching to the ceiling and touching your toes-type stuff. Then we played a game.

"It's called the Newspaper Game," explained Lorna. "First of all you need to find a partner."

The Sleepover Club dived for one another, of course. But – major problemo. There are five of us! Because of where we were standing, Kenny and Frankie dived for each other and so did Lyndz and I. That left Fliss, of course, looking a bit miz.

"Grab Ryan!" hissed Kenny teasingly, but Lyndz called out, "Come with us in a three!" and seized Fliss's wrist and dragged her over to our corner.

The rest of the class had dived for their best mates too. The M&Ms were standing together smugly (wouldn't you just know it?), and Ryan and Danny, and the other usual pairings, could be spotted all over the room. It turned out that there was an odd number altogether, so there was no one spare for Fliss to partner up with anyway.

"No threes allowed," said Lorna, shaking her head at us.

A second later, I could hardly believe my eyes. There was Sean, the handsome stranger, striding over to Fliss and saying, "I'll be your partner." Fliss blushed right up to the roots of her blonde hair, and looked so pleased you'd think she'd just been asked out by Zac Efron.

Well, Kenny, Frankie, Lyndz and I were all winking at one another madly, as you can imagine. We were nudging each other about the M&Ms, too, who were looking really jealous. They're such teachers' pets! The next minute, though, Lorna started to explain the rules of the game and we all had to concentrate.

The first thing she did was hand every couple a sheet of newspaper. "I've brought some music," she said, brandishing several CDs. "Basically, we're going to have a disco."

"Excellent!" said Lyndz, grinning at me.

"But every so often," Lorna went on, "I'll turn the music off – just like in Musical Chairs. When the music stops, each couple has to stand on their piece of newspaper. If anyone falls off – if your feet touch the floor – you and your partner are out."

“Easy!” I said, as Lyndz and I practised standing on the paper together. There was plenty of room.

“Hang on!” laughed Lorna. “There’s a twist. Every time the music starts again, you must fold your paper in half.”

Have you ever played this game? It’s such a scream! As your piece of paper gets smaller and smaller, you reach the point where one person has to give the other a piggyback, just so that you can both be ‘on’ the paper without anyone’s feet touching the floor. But it doesn’t stop there...

Soon Lyndz had me on her back *and* was standing on one foot. All that horse-riding she does must’ve made her legs super-strong. Even so, she was wobbling all over the place because we were both laughing so much.

Loads of people had dropped out already, and now it was the M&Ms’ turn. It was hilarious. Emma Hughes had been doing all the piggyback carrying so far, and while we were dancing, Lyndz and I had heard her complaining that Emily was too heavy. So this time she made Emily carry *her*. Only Emily’s much smaller than Emma, of course, so when the music stopped and Emma took a flying leap on to Emily’s back, Emily lost her balance straight away.

“Whoaaa!” she shrieked, her face turning purple and her mouth blowing out little desperate puffs as she tried to keep upright.

“Stand up properly!” Emma demanded, just as Emily’s legs buckled and she keeled over sideways like those slow-motion films you get of buildings collapsing.

The funniest thing was the way they both sat there arguing about it afterwards.

“You didn’t even try!” the Queen was saying.

“I didn’t stand a chance – you landed on me like a big lump!” the Goblin growled back.

Honestly, Lyndz and I were shaking with laughter so badly that we were desperate for Lorna to get the music back on as fast as possible, or we would be going the same way...

The next time round Kenny and Frankie were out (Kenny had been dancing so enthusiastically, she got her feet in a tangle and couldn’t stay on the bit of paper at all). Then I suddenly realised, looking around, that there were only three couples left: Lyndz and me, Ryan and Danny, and Fliss and Sean.

Lorna put the music on again. By now our piece of paper seemed about the size of a postage stamp – *and* it was thick and springy with being folded so often, so it was extra tricky to balance on. We didn’t stand a chance. Never mind the Leaning Tower of Pisa – we were the Collapsing Tower of Cuddington.

Ryan and Danny had managed to stay on their paper, though. And across the other side of the room, Sean was balancing perfectly on the ball of one foot, with Fliss on his back as if she was no more bother than the tiniest, lightest rucksack!

Lorna laughed. “I think we’ve got a winner,” she said, pointing to Ryan and Danny.

“Hey!” complained Sean, holding his hands out to draw attention to his perfect balance.

“Yes, I can see you,” said Lorna, “but I don’t think I’ve spotted – what’s your name, sweetie?”

“Felicity,” squeaked Fliss.

“I haven’t spotted Felicity giving Sean a piggyback yet,” said Lorna. “So I think you’ve had an unfair advantage.”

“*Right*,” said Sean. He let Fliss slither down from his back. Then, all mock-determination, he put his hands on her shoulders and lifted his leg as if he was going to climb on to her!

Fliss giggled and went bright pink again. Sean grinned and reassured her: “Only joking.”

But then he did something amazing. Standing behind Fliss he got her to raise one leg at the back – “It’s called an arabesque,” he said – and then, with one hand under her thigh and the other at her waist, he lifted her till his arms were straight, way above his head.

“Oh my!” exclaimed Mrs Weaver from her chair in the corner, her eyes shining as if she was at some amazing circus show.

“Don’t try this at home, kids,” said Sean, walking round the room while Fliss emitted little delighted squeaks somewhere near the ceiling.

“Big show off!” laughed Lorna.

Sean grinned, stuck his tongue out at her, and gently lowered Fliss to the floor. By this time Fliss was opening and shutting her mouth like a goldfish. And the M&Ms were positively green, they were so jealous!

After that, the rest of the workshop went like a fab party. The whole class were really into it by now. There were no more games – that had just been to get us in the mood, I think – but we tried making pictures of things with our bodies. Things like anger, or excitement, or sadness. Then, after these still poses (it was a bit like pretending to be statues, I guess) we tried moving to express the same ‘feelings’. It was really interesting. Kenny liked ‘anger’ the best – she stomped around the hall, puffed up like some bizarre, Leicester-City-supporting ogre.

“That was *sooo* wicked!” said Frankie, bouncing about the changing room afterwards.

“We should do the Newspaper Game at our sleepover tomorrow!” said Fliss.

“Hey, yeah!” agreed Lyndz. “But wouldn’t that mean we’d need to invite Sean too, to be your partner?” Fliss went beetroot again, which gave the rest of us such a major attack of the giggles that Lyndz got hiccups.

“That’s – hic – torn it!” she spluttered.

“Don’t worry, we’ll cure you!” yelled Kenny. “Pile on, guys!”

And in a second the Sleepover Club was one big mass of arms and legs. “It’s a dance called Squeezing Out The Hiccups,” said Frankie when Mrs Weaver came in and told us off.

I don’t think Mrs Weaver found it funny. But we did.



“Oh no – look!” Frankie nudged me. “Mrs Poole is making Lorna and Sean eat school dinner. What did they do to deserve *that*?”

I craned my head past the people queuing in front of me, and saw the three of them carrying trays over to one of the tables. “Poor things,” I grimaced. “She obviously hates them and wants them never to come back to Cuddington.”

As people collected their food there was a massive scramble to sit on Lorna and Sean’s table. The seats filled up in about two seconds flat.

“Surprise, surprise,” said Kenny, as we all sat down together at another table nearby (the Sleepover Club was *far* too cool to join in the scrum). “Look who’s sucking up big time.”

I glanced across and saw that the M&Ms had bagged the plum seats right next to the dancers and were beaming sickly smiles at them.

“I’ve never seen the M&Ms move so fast,” said Lyndz.

“Poor Lorna and Sean. Those smiles are enough to put anyone off their dinner,” added Frankie, making sick noises.

“The *food’s* enough to put anyone off their dinner,” said Fliss, wrinkling her nose. She was fiddling her fork about in her chicken pie as if she was expecting to find a dead beetle in it.

“Ha, ha. They’re not even looking at what they’re eating,” I said, watching as the M&Ms shovelled forkfuls of pie into their mouths without tearing their eyes from their heroes. “Just wait – they’ll be spilling it all down their jumpers any minute now.”

“Perfect opportunity! This is too good to miss!” said Kenny. She searched around, looking on the floor, and on the windowsill next to our table.

“What’re you after?” asked Frankie.

“Aha!” Kenny’s hand dived for something on the dusty windowsill. She flashed her open palm under our noses, then strode off towards the M&Ms’ table.

“Eeyeuch!” Fliss cringed. “Did you see – a horrible, curled-up dead spider! How can she even pick it up?”

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