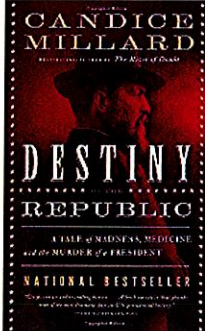


## Destiny of the Republic (Millard)

Summary	Author Bio	Book Reviews	Discussion Questions	Full Version	Print
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### ***Destiny of the Republic: A Tale of Madness, Medicine and the Murder of a President***

Candice Millard, 2011

Knopf Doubleday

432 pp.

ISBN-13: 9780767929714

#### Summary

James A. Garfield was one of the most extraordinary men ever elected president. Born into abject poverty, he rose to become a wunderkind scholar, a Civil War hero, and a renowned and admired reformist congressman.

Nominated for president against his will, he engaged in a fierce battle with the corrupt political establishment. But four months after his inauguration, a deranged office seeker tracked Garfield down and shot him in the back.

But the shot didn't kill Garfield. The drama of what happened subsequently is a powerful story of a nation in turmoil. The unhinged assassin's half-delivered strike shattered the fragile national mood of a country so recently fractured by civil war, and left the wounded president as the object of a bitter behind-the-scenes struggle for power—over his administration, over the nation's future, and, hauntingly, over his medical care.

A team of physicians administered shockingly archaic treatments, to disastrous effect. As his condition worsened, Garfield received help: Alexander Graham Bell, the inventor of the telephone, worked around the clock to invent a new device capable of finding the bullet.

Meticulously researched, epic in scope, and pulsating with an intimate human focus

and high-velocity narrative drive, *The Destiny of the Republic* will stand alongside *The Devil in the White City* and *The Professor and the Madman* as a classic of narrative history. (From the publisher.)

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#### Author Bio

- Birth—ca. 1968
- Where—N/A
- Education—Baker University; M.A., Baylor University.
- Currently—lives in Kansas City, Missouri, USA

Candice Sue Millard is an American writer and journalist. She is a former writer and editor for National Geographic and the author of *The River of Doubt: Theodore Roosevelt's Darkest Journey*, a history of the Roosevelt–Rondon Scientific Expedition, Theodore Roosevelt's exploration of the Amazon Rainforest in 1913 and 1914. The book was published in 2005. Millard's second book, *Destiny of the Republic: A Tale of Madness, Medicine & the Murder of a President*, was released in 2011. Both books have been best sellers.

Millard is a graduate of Baker University, Baldwin City, Kansas, and earned a master's degree in literature from Baylor University. She lives in Kansas City with her husband and three children. (From Wikipedia.)

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#### Book Reviews

Fascinating.....Gripping.....Stunning....has a much bigger scope than the events surrounding Garfield's slow, lingering death. It is the haunting tale of how a man who never meant to seek the presidency found himself swept into the White House. . . Ms. Millard shows the Garfield legacy to be much more important than most of her readers knew it to be.

**Janet Maslin - New York Times**

One of the many pleasures of Candice Millard's new book, *Destiny of the Republic*, [is] that she brings poor Garfield to life—and a remarkable life it was.....Fascinating... Outstanding....Millard has written us a penetrating human tragedy.

**Kevin Baker - New York Times Book Review**

A spirited tale that intertwines murder, politics and medical mystery, Candice Millard leaves us feeling that Garfield's assassination deprived the nation not only of a remarkably humble and intellectually gifted man but one who perhaps bore the seeds of greatness.... splendidly drawn portraits.... Alexander Graham Bell makes a bravura appearance.

**Wall Street Journal**

Brings the era and people involved to vivid life..... Millard takes the reader on a compelling fly on-the-wall journey with these two men until that fateful day in a train station when Guiteau shot Garfield..... Millard takes all of these elements in a forgotten period of history and turns them into living and breathing things. The writing immerses readers into the period, making them feel as though they are living at that time. Comparisons to Erik Larson's *The Devil in the White City: Murder, Magic, and Madness at the Fair That Changed America* are justified, but *Destiny of the Republic* is better.

**Associated Press**

This rendering of an oft-told tale brings to life a moment in the nation's history when access to the president was easy, politics bitter, and medical knowledge slight. James A. Garfield, little recalled today, gained the Republican nomination for president in 1880 as a dark-horse candidate and won. Then, breaking free of the sulfurous factional politics of his party, he governed honorably, if briefly, until shot by an aggrieved office seeker. Under Millard's (*The River of Doubt*) pen, Garfield's deranged assassin, his incompetent doctors (who, for example, ignored antisepsis, leading to a blood infection), and the bitter politics of the Republican Party come sparkingly alive through deft characterizations. Even Alexander Graham Bell, who hoped that one of his inventions might save the president's life, plays a role. Millard also lays the groundwork for a case that, had Garfield lived, he would have proved an effective and respected chief executive. Today, he would surely have survived, probably little harmed by the bullet that lodged in him, but unimpeded infection took his life. His death didn't greatly harm the nation, and Millard's story doesn't add much to previous understanding, but it's hard to imagine its being better told. Illus.

**Publishers Weekly**

Millard (*The River of Doubt: Theodore Roosevelt's Darkest Journey*) presents a dual biography of the 20th U.S. President and his assassin. James A. Garfield and Charles Guiteau were both born into hardscrabble Midwestern circumstances. While Garfield made himself into a teacher, Union army general, congressman, and President, Guiteau, who was most likely insane, remained at the margins of life, convinced he was intended for greatness. When he failed to receive a position in Garfield's administration, he became convinced that God meant him to kill the President. At a railway station in the capital, Guiteau shot Garfield barely four months into his term. Garfield lingered through the summer of 1881, with the country hanging on the news of his condition. In September he died of infection, apparently due to inadequate medical care. Millard gives readers a sense of the political and social life of those times and provides more detail on Guiteau's life than is given in Ira Rutkow's *James A. Garfield*. The format is similar to that in *The President and the Assassin*, Scott Miller's book on President McKinley and Leon Czolgosz. *Verdict*: Recommended for

presidential history buffs and students of Gilded Age America. —*Stephen L. Hupp, West Virginia Univ. Lib., Parkersburg*

**Library Journal**

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**Discussion Questions**

Use our LitLovers Book Club Resources; they can help with discussions for any book:

- **How to Discuss a Book** (helpful discussion tips)
- **Generic Discussion Questions—Fiction and Nonfiction**
- **Read-Think-Talk** (a guided reading chart)

Also consider these LitLovers talking points to help get a discussion started for *Destiny of the Republic*:

1. Before you started this book, how much did you know of James A. Garfield? Do you agree with Millard that Garfield would have been considered one of the country's great presidents? Is Millard's case for Garfield potential greatness convincing?
2. How would you describe James Garfield? Discuss his numerous accomplishments outside the field of politics. What do you find most impressive about him?
3. To what degree did Garfield's early years shape the man he later became? How do you account for his spectacular rise? In fact, trace his steps as he rose from his work on the Erie and Ohio Canal to become President of the United States.
4. Talk about the convention madness that catapulted Garfield into the candidacy for the U.S. presidency. Compare the political environment of the time: would you describe it as more polarized than today's...or similar?
5. What were Garfield's political views?
6. Charles Giteau was no stranger to Garfield or to members of his family and administration. He also made his intentions to murder the president quite clear. What could/should have been done, within legal bounds, to prevent him from carrying out his assassination of Garfield? Talk about Guiteau. How would you characterize the madness that led to his carrying out the assassination?
7. Perhaps the most shocking revelations in *Destiny of the Republic* are those concerning the maltreatment at the hand of the Garfield's doctors, who seemed almost willfully ignorant of sound medical practices. How do you explain their mistreatment? What was the medical establishment's attitude toward Joseph Lister's theory on antiseptis? How did Dr. Bliss gain so much power of the president's medical care?
8. Discuss the patronage system and the way in which Americans felt entitled to government appointments regardless of competency. Would you say that today's system, based on merit, is an improvement, even though it can be difficult to remove underperforming employees?

9. Why was the courtship between Lucretia and James Garfield so difficult? Talk about the fault lines in their marriage and later their deep attachment to one another.
10. Talk about how Garfield's participation in the Civil War affected him. He made the comment later that "something went out of him...that never came back; the sense of sacredness of life and the impossibility of destroying it." What did he mean? Is his disillusionment common for soldiers of any war? Or was the Civil War particularly savage?
11. Talk about Roscoe Conkling and his relationship with President Chester Arthur. How would you describe Chester's subsequent administration after Garfield's assassination?

*(Questions by LitLovers. Please feel free to use them, online or off, with attribution. Thanks.)*

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## Candice Millard

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SEARCH for books by this Author

Entry Updated : 07/12/2012

### Full text biography:

Candice Millard

Birth Date : 1967

Known As : Millard, Candice Sue

Place of Birth: United States,Ohio

Nationality : American

Occupation : Writer

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### Personal Information:

Born 1967; married Mark Uhlig, May, 2001; children: three. **Education:** Baker University, B.A.; Baylor University, M.A. **Addresses:** Home: Leawood, KS.

### Career Information:

Writer and journalist. Former writer and editor at *National Geographic* magazine.

### Writings:

- *The River of Doubt: Theodore Roosevelt's Darkest Journey*, Doubleday (New York, NY), 2005.
- *Destiny of the Republic: A Tale of Madness, Medicine and the Murder of a President*, Doubleday (New York, NY), 2011.

Contributor to periodicals, including *National Geographic*, *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *Time*.

### Media Adaptions:

*The River of Doubt* and *Destiny of the Republic* have been made into audiobooks, Random House Audio, 2006 and 2011.

### Sidelights:

Candice Millard's first book, *The River of Doubt: Theodore Roosevelt's Darkest Journey*, recounts an expedition into the Amazon jungle taken by the U.S. president, his son Kermit Roosevelt, and various scientists. Also along was Brazilian Colonel Candido Rondon, who had discovered the source of the River of Doubt in 1909. After losing the presidential race to Woodrow Wilson in 1912, Roosevelt looked to adventure through the Roosevelt expedition in 1914 to help get over his political defeat. He and his companions encountered more problems than they anticipated, coming upon piranha and anaconda, enduring disease, near-starvation, Indian attack, and losing one man to drowning and another to murder.

In an interview with Josephine Anna Kaszuba Locke on the *BookLoons* Web site, Millard noted: "For me, what was most interesting about this expedition was the opportunity to get a very intimate picture of Roosevelt, to see him simply as a man--a leader not on the scale of nations and armies but among this small group of men who are fighting for their lives." Writing in *Library Journal*, William D. Pederson observed that the author "turns this incredible story into one that easily matches an Indiana Jones screen adventure." In a review for *Booklist*, Brad Hooper suggested that those who like "American history and travel narratives will take delight in living through these exciting pages."

In Millard's second book, *Destiny of the Republic: A Tale of Madness, Medicine and the Murder of a President*, she presents a combined biography of President James A. Garfield as well as his killer, Charles Guiteau. Guiteau was a delusional and possibly even insane man who became convinced that God wanted him to kill Garfield after Garfield refused to grant him a position in his administration. Millard provides a detailed picture of the tragedy and its effects, which allows readers a glimpse of the social, political, and cultural climate of the time.

Reviewing the work in the *New York Times Book Review*, contributor Kevin Baker assessed that Millard "makes, at times, the common biographer's mistake of inflating her subject's importance and virtues. Contrary to what she implies, neither Garfield's administration nor his death brought about advances in civil rights, nor a grand reconciliation with the South, then busy creating the Jim Crow state. ... Though Garfield's death had little historical significance, Millard has written us a penetrating human tragedy." *Booklist* contributor Brad Hooper claimed that this book "stands securely at the crossroads of popular and professional history." A *Publishers Weekly* contributor said: "Millard's story doesn't add much to previous understanding, but it's hard to imagine its being better told." A *Kirkus Reviews* contributor assessed: "Millard follows up her impressive debut ... by ... demonstrating the power of expert storytelling to wonderfully animate even the simplest facts." Stephen L. Hupp, a contributor to *Library Journal*, observed that the work is "recommended for presidential history buffs and students of Gilded Age America."

#### Related Information:

#### PERIODICALS

- *Booklist*, August, 2005, Brad Hooper, review of *The River of Doubt: Theodore Roosevelt's Darkest Journey*, p. 1987; August 1, 2011, Brad Hooper, review of *Destiny of the Republic: A Tale of Madness, Medicine and the Murder of a President*, p. 16.
- *Entertainment Weekly*, October 21, 2005, Gilbert Cruz, review of *The River of Doubt*, p. 80.
- *Houston Chronicle*, January 20, 2006, Chris Patsilelis, review of *The River of Doubt*
- *Kirkus Reviews*, August 1, 2005, review of *The River of Doubt*, p. 832; December 1, 2011, review of *Destiny of the Republic*.
- *Library Journal*, September 1, 2005, William D. Pederson, review of *The River of Doubt*, p. 160; October 1, 2011, Stephen L. Hupp, review of *Destiny of the Republic*, p. 86.
- *New York Times Book Review*, October 16, 2005, Bruce Barcott, review of *The River of Doubt*, p. 14; October 2, 2011, Kevin Baker, review of *Destiny of the Republic*.
- *Publishers Weekly*, July 11, 2011, review of *Destiny of the Republic*, p. 48.
- *Time*, February 13, 2006, Lev Grossman and Richard Lacayo, review of *The River of Doubt*, p. 74.
- *USA Today*, November 3, 2005, Deirdre Donahue, review of *The River of Doubt*, p. 7D.
- *Washington Post Book World*, September 16, 2011, Candice Millard, "Candice Millard on the writing life."

#### ONLINE

- *BookLoons*, <http://www.bookloons.com/> (April 24, 2006), Josephine Anna Kaszuba Locke, interview with the author.
- *Candice Millard Home Page*, <http://www.candicemillard.com> (January 18, 2012).

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# James Abram Garfield

 *Encyclopedia of World Biography*, December 12, 1998

**Born:** November 19, 1831 in Cleveland, Ohio, United States

**Died:** September 19, 1881 in Alberon, New Jersey, United States

**Other Names:** Garfield, James Abram; Garfield, James

**Nationality:** American

**Occupation:** President (Government)

James Abram Garfield (1831-1881) was an American Civil War general before becoming the twentieth president of the United States. He was assassinated after 6 months in office.

James A. Garfield was born in the log cabin of American myth on Nov. 19, 1831, near Cleveland, Ohio. Although his family dated back to the Massachusetts Bay Colony, his immediate ancestors had not prospered, and Garfield's upbringing was plagued by dire poverty. His father died when James was 2 years old, and he was early put out to labor to help keep the family intact.

Garfield matriculated at the Western Reserve Eclectic Institute, later called Hiram College. He graduated from Williams College and, before he was 30, became a lay preacher for the Disciples of Christ. He taught school briefly and returned to Hiram as a professor and head of the college, but he did not enjoy the life. "You and I know," he wrote a friend, "that teaching is not the work in which a man can live and grow." Still, Garfield remained bookish throughout his life, and while by no means brilliant or original, he emerges as truly distinctive in his occasional writings, letters, and diary. These reveal a perspicacious mind, shrewd insight into his contemporaries' personalities, and a rare comprehension among politicians of the day of the vast changes through which the United States was going.

## War and Politics

In 1859 Garfield was elected to the Ohio Senate and became a leading Union supporter in the Civil War. He accepted a commission as colonel and, typically, set about studying military strategy and organization. His readings must have been well selected because his rise in rank was rapid even for the Civil War era. An active role in the Battle of Middle Creek on Jan. 10, 1862, made him a brigadier general, and, in April, he fought during the bloody second day at Shiloh. After that he left the lines to become chief of staff through the Chickamauga campaign, organizing a division of military information and being promoted to major general.

Garfield's military career reflected the dexterity with which he would later escape political crises unscathed, for although he was closely associated with several disasters that ruined associates, he himself escaped blame. Indeed, in December 1863 Garfield was elected to the House of Representatives in recognition of his military service and, until his death, was never again out of Federal office. His Ohio district was safe for Republicans, so Garfield could concentrate on the affairs of office, and he was the leader of his party in the House during the presidency of Rutherford B. Hayes.

Garfield was capable of neatly straddling a volatile issue. He was never so strong on the high-tariff issue as were most of his Republican colleagues and, as late as his presidential campaign of 1880, he remained publicly equivocal on the issue of Federal patronage. The Federal jobs at the disposal of the party in power were the life-blood of politics during the "gilded age." One wing of the Republican party--the "stalwarts"--called for no dalliance on the question, claiming the jobs as the just due of those who worked to put the party in power. Another wing of reformers, the "doctrinaires," felt that the quality of government would be improved if Federal jobs were assigned on the basis of merit. Garfield attempted to placate both sides.

On the money question Garfield was firm, standing unalterably for "hard" currency when many of his former constituents called for inflation. But he was less steadfast on the Southern question, alternating between "waving the bloody shirt"--exploiting Northern bitterness toward the South over the war--and supporting a more compromising attitude.

## Monetary Scandal

Scandal nearly wrecked Garfield's career when he was accused of accepting money in return for supporting a congressional subsidy of the transcontinental railroad's construction company. But he managed to sidestep and survive the accusation, and he also weathered the revelation that he had accepted a legal fee from a company involved in government-contracted improvement of Washington streets. These lapses in ethics were more the result of carelessness than personal corruption, and Garfield in his last years was extremely careful to avoid any possible conflicts of interest. On the whole, he had a good record in the graft-sullied political world of the day, and reformers who could not support James G. Blaine were willing to accept Garfield.

In 1880 Garfield was elected to the U.S. Senate from Ohio, but before he took his seat, he agreed to manage John Sherman's campaign to win the Republican presidential nomination. The chief Republican candidates that year were former U.S. president Ulysses S. Grant and Senator James G. Blaine. Sherman's hopes were based on an anticipated deadlock between the two front-runners, which would force the convention to turn to him as a compromise candidate. The convention did, indeed, deadlock and settle on a third person, but that person was Garfield rather than Sherman. Toward the end of his life Sherman became convinced that his manager had actively betrayed him, but close examination of the records by several historians indicates that this was not so. Garfield knew before the convention that certain parties were working for him as a compromise candidate, but he neither encouraged nor effectively discouraged the talk. He certainly had presidential ambitions, but like a good party regular, he recognized Sherman's seniority among Ohio politicians and was willing to wait his turn. When the opportunity beckoned in 1880, he was more than ready.

## Election to the Presidency

The immediate problem was the party's "stalwarts." Garfield had selected one of their number, Chester A. Arthur, as his vice-presidential candidate, but the leader of the "stalwarts," New York politician Roscoe Conkling, refused to work to get the important New York vote without specific promises from Garfield on patronage. Conkling believed that he received such promises and did help elect Garfield, but soon after the election, the two fell out. Garfield named Conkling's archenemy, James G. Blaine, to be his secretary of state and increasingly relied on Blaine's counsel. In a battle over the appointment of

the collector of customs for the Port of New York (one of the richest plums in the Federal patronage), Conkling resigned his Senate seat and asked the New York Legislature, in effect, to rebuke the President by reelecting him. What might have happened under normal circumstances is impossible to tell, for on July 2, 1881, Garfield was shot in the back in a Washington railroad station by a deranged man named Charles Guiteau, who claimed he had killed the President in order to put Chester A. Arthur into office.

Garfield did not die immediately. But doctors could not locate one of the bullets, and infection eventually sapped his strength. Conkling was not reelected in the shocked aftermath of the shooting, and a civil service reform bill aimed at Conkling-style politics eventually passed Congress. But Garfield never left his bed; he died at Alberon, N.J., on Sept. 19, 1881.

A well-featured, heavily bearded man whose piercing eyes are the most striking feature of his photographs, Garfield was a significant figure in the development of congressional power during the 1860s and 1870s. His premature death precludes knowledge of how his perceptions of the changes America was undergoing might have impacted the successfulness of his presidency.

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## Further Readings

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- A primary source of information on Garfield is Theodore Clarke Smith, *The Life and Letters of James Garfield* (2 vols., 1925). An excellent biography is Robert Granville Caldwell, *James A. Garfield: Party Chieftain* (1931). Earlier works on Garfield tend to be absurdly laudatory, virtually ignoring problems connected with Garfield's military career and financial dealings. Garfield is discussed in Kenneth W. Wheeler, ed., *For the Union: Ohio Leaders in the Civil War* (1968). The best political survey of the age is H. Wayne Morgan, *From Hayes to McKinley: National Party Politics, 1877-1896* (1969). For the election of 1880 see Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., ed., *History of American Presidential Elections* (4 vols., 1971).

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### Source Citation

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**Gale Document Number:** GALE|K1631002432

# Charles Guiteau

 *World of Criminal Justice, 2002*

**Born:** September 08, 1841 in Freeport, Illinois, United States

**Died:** June 30, 1882 in Washington, District of Columbia, United States

**Other Names:** Guiteau, Charles Julius

**Nationality:** American

**Occupation:** Assassin

On July 2, 1881, Charles Guiteau shot President James A. Garfield. Three months later Garfield died, the second U.S. president to be assassinated. The assassin himself, a forty-year old megalomaniac, con artist, and stalker who had begged for months for a White House job, lived for another year. After a circus-like trial in which he wildly castigated his attorneys and gave bizarre, impromptu speeches, a jury found him guilty in January of 1882. Later that year, he was executed publicly in Washington D.C.

Born in 1841, beaten regularly by his father and often told he wanted too much in life, Guiteau had a difficult childhood. Inheriting the large sum of \$1,000 in 1859, the eighteen year old tried education, but he flunked out of the University of Michigan. He squandered his inheritance with the Oneida Community, a utopian religious commune notorious for its open sexual views, and then was driven out from it as well after the commune's founder, John Humphrey Noyes, decided Guiteau was insane. Guiteau married and became a law clerk in Chicago. Cheating legal clients, skipping hotel bills, and abandoned by his wife, Guiteau took to another kind of fraud in the 1870s, traveling the country pretending to be a religious revivalist speaker.

After the election of Garfield in 1881, Guiteau plunged deeper into delusion. Convinced of his own greatness, he believed the ragged speeches he gave for Garfield would lead to a post in the new administration. Guiteau took to writing the president and his staff, staying around the White House, and beseeching anyone who would listen that he should become the consul general to Vienna. He even sneaked into a presidential reception, getting close to the First Lady. Ignored and humiliated, Guiteau was nearing mental collapse. He wrote a threatening letter to Garfield that summer, warning of dire consequences. On July 2, as the president entered a train station next to Capitol Hill, Guiteau shot Garfield in the back.

Two months of nineteenth-century medical quackery soon finished off the president, who died in unsanitary conditions on September 19, 1881. Guiteau, meanwhile, declared that God had selected him as an assassin. Both the public and the press overwhelmingly clamored for his execution. Some criticism also fell on opponents of Garfield, such as the powerful New York politician Roscoe Conkling, whose heated rhetoric was blamed for motivating Guiteau.

With luminaries gathering to watch, Guiteau's trial began on November 14. His plea was not guilty by reason of insanity, but the egomaniacal defendant did everything possible to undermine his own case. Deriding his attorneys in court, he objected whenever they portrayed him as incompetent or ill. He lectured the courtroom, proclaimed his own rising fortunes, and otherwise raved. The jury, deliberating less than an hour, pronounced him guilty. Reciting a long religious poem before his execution on June

30, 1882, Guiteau was hanged before a cheering crowd.

**Source Citation**

"Charles Guiteau." *World of Criminal Justice*, Gale, 2002. *Biography in Context*, [link.galegroup.com/apps/doc/K2425100150/BIC1?u=lom\\_metronetmnc&xid=37177976](http://link.galegroup.com/apps/doc/K2425100150/BIC1?u=lom_metronetmnc&xid=37177976). Accessed 10 Feb. 2017.

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