

Goddess Temple News

Samhain 2019

Donations Welcome



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Photo: Ian Longbottom



What does Samhain mean to you? I suspect any dozen people in this community would have a dozen different answers. Thinking back, I wasn't brought up pagan, so the 31st October was All Hallows Eve. Later when my son was small it became Halloween which involved making spookily decorated cakes, carving pumpkins and handing out sweets to children at the door. The 31st as Samhain didn't come until I became a pagan and witch in 2005. That year I tried to connect with my Welsh nan and English great-gran. It didn't go well! My home was un-settled and things kept going wrong for weeks afterwards. I concluded that my nan – a Unitarian, and my great-gran who was C of E were not happy being called on, so I made an apology and things calmed down. After that, the marking of Samhain was limited to carving a Jack O' Lantern and saying private prayers. In those early days on this path I didn't really connect with a particular deity although I did sometimes call on Athena.

After my husband died my paganism intensified. I have contact with him and look forward to how the energy of the Sabbats makes that more tangible. It was still very personable though. It wasn't until the day of the Frost Fair in 2016 that things developed. The Goddess Temple was still decorated for

Samhain in black with Cerridwen centre stage. I was quite shocked when Cerridwen made herself known to me and set me on my current path. I had not contemplated worshipping any of the dark Goddesses as I was going through such a dark time myself and thought that I needed the light. But getting to know Her it became apparent that She who is a light in the darkness was exactly what I needed. She guided me on to Her course and by learning about Her I began to see that

coming through difficult times wasn't about glossing over them but about facing them square on with Her as a guide. A year later, having started the Cerridwen Priestess Training I took part in a Dark Moon Ritual near Samhain. We gave thanks to lost loved ones and this began to show me what a public Samhain Ritual could be. Last year I was lucky enough to take part in a Samhain Ceremony at Goddess Hall, which was an amazing experience bringing together the living and the beloved dead.

So this year looking back, I see the truth of the symbol of life as a spiral. As the wheel turns the same events come round but we see things differently because of our new knowledge and growth. As I walk the land now with autumn fruits giving way to multi-coloured leaves I can see some plants dying back while others retreat into the safety of the Earth. The days grow shorter, the air is cooler; it's the time for withdrawing to the warmth and safety of our homes, to do more inner work perhaps?

Samhain means all those things to me. The fun parties, the time of remembrance and the links with those who have gone before held by the Goddess of Life, Death and Rebirth. And so I will light a candle as a sign of the light in the dark, I will honour those who have gone before, I will feel the touch of a hand on my hair and know that our loved ones await us on the other side of the veil.

Jacqueline Kirwan
– Priestess of Cerridwen

Crone

Autumn Equinox has passed, Samhain approaches, soon to be followed by Yule. With each turn of Her wheel, northern air blows colder winds as the sun moves heat and light further away. This year, climate change has slowed down Her signals of an approaching winter: Canada's usual blaze of red and orange, nature's final gift before stark darkness, is lost among fading green. Frogs still jump underfoot, the crickets sing at night, and the earth beneath our feet has yet to freeze. The stray butterfly searches for her family, late for her migration, as summer-like air warms her wings. Yet the wheel keeps turning. Endings and beginnings may be dressed in different gowns, but they still form the rhythm of our lives.

No matter how the elements play, the wheel of our life-span also spirals: babies, new-born into the spring of their lives, morph into lovers, passionate in summer's dance; Harvest Mother shares her fertility, then winter's Crone wisely gathers all the threads together before moving into Spirit's centre, before giving birth to new life again.

Now, Crone's time is drawing near. Crone within us slows down, dusts off endings from resting places, stokes fires of stories and memories, filling the stillness with wisdom.

We all have endings in our lives – losses to either mourn or embrace. And with them come beginnings – fresh starts to welcome or fear. However young or old we are, that is always so. Younger, our energy and lifestyles encourage new adventures, resiliently filling the spaces left behind. Mothers nurture empty nests with activities they now have time to enjoy. New friends bring new discoveries.

For Crone, there are more endings, fewer beginnings. Aging, we down-size our space, end fitness activities because of waning energy or ability, like the sun in the winter. Friends and siblings ail or die, bringing more loneliness and maybe solitude, like the butterfly left behind by her tribe. Now Crone goes within – to search for her real self underneath all the cloaks and masks she dressed up in since arriving naked, breathing her first breath on the turning wheel. The child, lover, and mother needed to play those roles to survive, to achieve success, gain strength to go on, to compassionately be there for others. But, now it is Crone's time, to listen to her body as it asks for nourishment and creativity, to practise love for herself as well as serving others, to learn to accept as well as receive. She sheds the masks she no longer needs to truly live her own truth, know her true self, before transforming into Spirit.

Editorial

Welcome to the Samhain edition of the Goddess Temple News. This is, unsurprisingly for a Priestess of Cerridwen, my favourite time of year. But at the moment things are a bit difficult for me as my husband is having trouble with his health and that is quite worrying. For all those who are struggling with health issues I hope that things improve for you as quickly as possible. And for all those who look after those with serious health issues I know what a source of frustration and stress this can be. I hear you. Cerridwen constantly reminds me that I cannot look after my husband properly if I don't take proper care of myself. She reminds me if I have been pushing myself too much; usually by making me too tired to do very much! And she constantly reminds me that anxiety and worry don't help anyone; least of all myself. This is the time of year when, if possible, we tend to retreat a little, because if we push ourselves too much we tend to come down with a stinking cold! So cut yourself some slack and remind yourself that you're only human and you can't fix all the world's problems right now all by yourself. Have a great Samhain.

*Janet Parfitt – Editor,
Priestess of the Goddess and Priestess of Cerridwen*

I imagine her poking her fire of masks and gowns, eating a bowl of green, maybe humming a song of peace, maybe smoothing oils into her limbs. We need to love the aging crone within us. She absorbs our losses, comforts our wounds. She eventually will form the new ground of being that births new life.

Sometimes we discover the reasons for the endings that punctuate our lives – we tie off threads and wonder no longer, treasure the learning that eventually accompanies each experience. But sometimes we never know, so we give our endings to Her fire, to She who is always with us, and within us – as the wheel keeps turning. Blessed Be.

*Roz Bound, priestess, poet,
gate-keeper, lover of all that there is.*



New Priestesses on the Goddess Temple Stairs

Transformation of the shadow queen, with the Crone Goddess.

Samhain, the Goddess Temple dressed in black, womb-tomb of the Goddess. Her warm embrace of deep rest and transformation the welcome that awaits all Goddess loving people who seek Her presence here. For all who come this season, the Temple offers a beautiful invitation to enter a gateway to the hidden places within.

Come and sit, pray, release, be received. Come and be here for a while, journey, rest in Her deep dark love, free from fear, for the Lady is Crone in Avalon.

I see Her as Queen of the Underworld, as a powerful, wise way-shower and gentle grandmother holding the medicine of transformation. At Samhain time it is a gift to melissa or visit in the Temple and journey into the realm of the Queen of the Underworld, to gaze into Her dark mirror of inner reflection.

This Crone Goddess season particularly facilitates the opportunity to really look at the parts of ourselves that show up in this mirror of the Queen of the Underworld.

Parts that are controlling, manipulating, competitive, undermining, enraged, jealous, isolated. Forms of our distorted and unintegrated shadow queen self.

Here we can see and offer these parts gently up to the Crone Goddess of Avalon.

Not to get rid of, or even to be healed from these immature places in ourselves, but to gain greater understanding. To be able to really see them means we become more aware of how they act out in us.

For often these aspects of our shadow queen originated as self defensive mechanisms or survival behaviour our circumstances taught us. To see them is not about shaming or confronting our badness. No the medicine of transformation the Crone Goddess offers, is compassionately loving these parts we all carry, into wholeness.

It takes courage to journey into the deep within, and is not easy to face these shadow parts of self. It takes the fierce compassion of the Queen of the underworld to guide us, and the all accepting love of the Wise Crone Goddess to hold us in our process. And She is here for you.

Through truly owning and seeing what is within, let Her gentle guidance bring us transformation through integration. Her gift will initiate the healthy queen in us.

There is great freedom in no longer being held captive by the unconscious ruling of our shadow queen self. Freedom that liberates the choices we have as people of the Goddess, in how we want to behave, meet our challenges, manifest, live, give our gifts and receive the blessings of Her world.

May She offer Her mirror for you to reflect on your shadow and shine.

May Her wise Crone love be the medicine of transformation on this inner journey.

May She bless the hearts of all who seek Her sweet dark mystery this season.

*Katinka Soetens
Priestess of Rhiannon
Priestess of Avalon*

CRONE BRIGHID

I follow You to the liminal places,
between space and time,
following the footprints
of Your wise white wolf
into the unknown.
Here You teach me to howl,
to keen for all that I've lost,
offering You my sadness and despair.
In return You offer me a key
which opens the gateway,
into Your Smithy.
Here your Forge Fires
burn strong and bright,
shining your light deep inside
touching the darkest places within me;
melting away all the dross,
all that is not real or not mine to carry.
With every echoing beat of my heart,
the lead turns to gold,
pain transformed to peace
anger transformed to love
fear transformed in trust.
I emerge from Your waters,
the source of my own
ancient knowledge,
to be met by you,
Crone Brighid,
to be welcomed
home.

Samhain 2019
Marion Brigantia

Tutor of the Priest/ess
of Brighde-Brigantia training
www.marionbrigantia.com

Standing at the shores of Annwfn



The mist lies heavily across the shoreline of Her sacred lake. All sound is suspended, even the lapping of the waves has been silenced through its presence. The quiet is restful; a lone figure stands beside the lake, the conduit between the worlds. The eyes of the Watcher appear unseeing, unfocused; yet searching for shapes with the inner eye, feeling them moving in the impenetrable wall of white that obscures the dark womb entrance of Cerridwen's realm.

Seeing the souls of those who came before, ancestors of blood and bone, of soul constellation, of star connection: a gift from Goddess. These souls wish to bring their wisdom, their message of peace between all existences on this planet and beyond, if only humanity would awaken to it. Some possess the sensitivity to pick up these messages, born into bloodlines of Seers, guardians who can see the glow and hear those soft whispers, who can pass them on to all who are open to them, wholehearted enough to receive them.

I stand alone at the edge of the lake in the gathering dawn of Samhain day, seeing into the Otherworld, into Annwfn. It is Lunar Samhain, when the moon determines the mystery of the other realms, and I am listening for these messages. The moon signals the thinning of the veils betwixt and between the world of the living and the non incarnate web of souls, who remember every incarnation they have been. Taliesin, the great Bard tells us that we don't just return in the form of human beings. We can also choose to become conscious and evolved by living any number of existences in whatever forms they take on this planet. Our soul knows no value judgement, all are equal, everything in the universe has its unique soul song, they join together to create the harmonies of the celestial symphony. There is no separation.

Cerridwen, as Goddess of this season, takes us into the realm of Death and Rebirth, though not just the death at the end of this life. We die to our old self each night and we rise in our new self each morning. Our soul calls to us to achieve our highest vibration, to be in sync with all existences, to live in peace and harmony with everything on a daily basis. Thinking only good thoughts is not the panacea to the challenges present in the world today, it is a band aid. Facing the emo-

tions and thoughts that keep us from being the best possible version of ourselves is the key to our soul development. Thus, as we open ourselves to receive divine guidance, we become able to project positive healing vibrations into the world when called to do so, creating a constant stream of energy to help the earth and modelling the change we wish to see. A good life and a good death depend on how integrated our soul is in the present; the soul's evolution depends on every action that is taken each day.

Each night the incarnate souls return to the web of souls where they share all that they have learnt through their experiences that day, to be placed into the greater universal wisdom cauldron that informs all human development. Everything that you learn in life changes you, each positive reaction to these life lessons heightens your vibration, makes your soul stronger. Soul strength is the basis on which we build our inner strength in this life.

In the web the souls of the departed once again meet those they loved in this life, the constellation of families, lovers, friends assure each other of continued devotion and commitment to growth. The souls connect, and if fully tuned in, those in this realm can feel the love and connection in their sleep. Lucid dreams of beloveds bring messages of comfort and care.

Soulful connections are possible for all, as all souls are energy and all energy in this world is capable of connection. The ability to join our soul to another is Goddess given, it only asks for perfect love and perfect trust in Her grace. Your soul's mission is to be Love, all it asks is that you place your trust into its keeping and become the soul's messenger into the world. Blessed be.

Bee Helygen, Priestess and Temple Teacher

Priestess of Cerridwen Training begins in November, visit www.goddess temple teachings.co.uk for more information. NEW – also as correspondence course!

Sacred Listening

One of the skills that the Cerridwen Priest/esses offer is that of sacred listening. But what is sacred listening? It is a way of listening to people without judgement or giving advice; the emphasis is completely on the speaker and what they have to say. It might seem that sacred listening is quite a passive thing but this is not the case. It is, in many ways, a practise of mindfulness, because the listener must always be attentive and not drift off or spend time thinking about what they want to say or what they would do in a similar situation. It requires the listener to stay alert and also to be intuitive to the speaker's needs. Sometimes the listener might ask a brief question as in, "How did that make you feel?" or something similar but most of the time it is about giving the speaker space to be heard.

Sacred listening can also be quite harrowing at times because many people have been through very difficult circumstances and may even have done bad things. People can speak about things that are sometimes very hard to hear but it is an exercise in compassion to just listen.

The difference between counselling and sacred listening is that with sacred listening Goddess is also present. She may choose to say nothing but She may give advice. It is important that the Priest/ess makes the speaker aware which words are from Goddess and that the Priest/ess does not go on an ego trip where they start saying things like, "I think you should..." because this is judgement and if you are speaking and giving advice, you are not really hearing what is being said. Sacred listening is the art of creating a safe secure place where everyone gets a chance to be heard.

Confidentiality is also extremely important; nothing that is said in a sacred listening session must ever be repeated to anyone else unless there is a danger to life. What happens in sacred listening stays in sacred listening. In our busy lives we can be overwhelmed by so many busy things going on at once. It can be a rare thing to find a safe space where we can just sit down and talk without being judged; where we can be truly heard.

Janet Parfitt – Priestess of the Goddess and Priestess of Cerridwen

If you are interested in attending a session of sacred listening than contact: janetparfitt@msn.com
All sessions are by donation.



A Festival of Death, how morbid, you might think. For most of us, death is something we dread and avoid talking about. But what if we were to look at it differently? Consider the Mexican Day of the Dead. Every year Mexicans fill their cemeteries with music, food and life to honour their deceased.

Is it time to retire the death taboo and make the Day of the Dead (November 2nd) an opportunity to celebrate the lives of those we loved... and, maybe, even take a look at what lies ahead for all of us?

This is exactly the intention of the Festival of Death and Dying. Piloted last year in Glastonbury, the event had such a positive response it inspired a second 3-day festival planned over the week-end of November 1st - 3rd, now across Glastonbury, Shepton Mallet and Wells. We want to chip away at the death phobia that society holds.

In Wells at the Elim Connect Centre, you can learn how to shroud a body on Saturday morning, that's if you're up in time after the death friendly music night at the Red Brick Buildings in Glastonbury on Friday. Take a peek at St. Cuthbert's emotional and uplifting programme on suicide survival and prevention for young adults (Friday) and all ages (Saturday) in Wells. Ceremonies at Red Brick Building on Sunday will soothe the soul, including community grief tending ritual. Be sure to get to the Art Bank in Shepton where 3 days of dead good music, performance, dancing and dialogue will rock it.

We are very thankful The Goddess House has gifted the Festival of Death and Dying the use of the Banbha and Bridget rooms on Friday and Saturday. Marisa Picardo, Priestess of Rhiannon and soul Midwife will be curating the Goddess House – there will be a full-day workshop on Making your End of life Plan: the steps you need to take towards ensuring you are good to go at any time, a short workshop of Return of the Death Priestess. On Saturday sample Coffee and Coffins and later Reclaiming Halloween: An Honouring of Ancestors.

Death friendly cafes open all day in each venue will provide safe spaces to share experience and be supported.

No tickets required, contributions according to ability. Death touches us all and there's something for everyone.

For the full programme please see: deathfest.co.uk
or www.facebook.com/deathfest2019/

Marisa Picardo



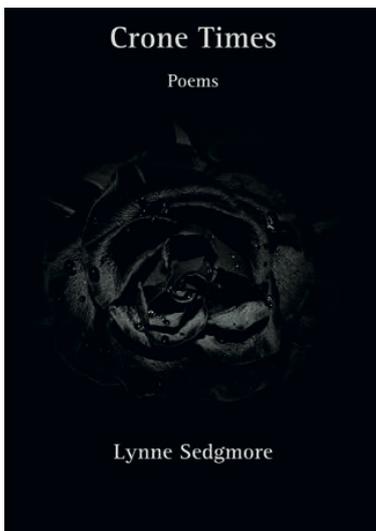
Book Reviews



Avalon Sunrise by Katie Player

This beautiful book came out of a period of ill health when sleep proved elusive. So Katie came up with the idea of taking a picture every morning of the sunrise to remind her in the difficult and traumatic time she was having that seeing the sunrise meant that she had made it through the night and there was another beautiful day ahead.

From her vantage point on Wearyall Hill, Katie has been blessed with a great view and she has taken a series of amazing photographs that have been further enhanced by the addition of some of her beautiful poems. The emotions behind the poems range through hurt and pain through to sweetness and love but all the words have a power and a strength that comes straight from the heart and Katie's connection with Goddess. This is a lovely life-affirming book full of beauty and passion. Thoroughly recommended.



Crone Times – Poems By Lynne Sedgmore

This book was obviously influenced by the author's experience of ageing and bereavement following the death of her mother. Lynne has turned her own process of getting old, with all its highs and lows, aches and pain, into metaphorical gold spinning words of power into wisdom and truth. Some of the best poems come out of the trauma of her mother's death. There is an honesty here, devoid of platitudes, where Lynne confronts death and mortality head on with courage and

grace. As an historian myself, I took slight issue with the poem, "Witch Burning" because actually most witches were hanged, it was heretics that were burned but that is just me nit-picking. Lynne Sedgmore's abilities as a wordsmith are amazing and these poems are more evidence of that.

I Am Crone

I am Crone
My black feathers rustle and soar
I have lived three score years and welcome more
I face my future content and prepared
So many loves, lives, experiences shared
Many more to come – I thrive in my prime
Make no mistake – this is MY time
I am Crone

I am Crone
My voice crackles, keens, calls and caws
Speaking wisdom from depths of ancient years
Let me share the Goddess truth I hold dear
I chant to release your soul from all fear
I call in the power of kith and kin
The peace beyond all suffering
I am Crone

I am Crone
In the chambers of my dark cave
Waiting for women bold, strong, wild and brave
To come, seek my face in my underworld
Allowing my mysteries to unfurl
My dark energies both good and unkind
Releasing all from ties that bind
I am Crone

I am Crone
Blood, bone, black – darkness incarnate
I bring so much to thrall and celebrate
Journey with me beyond all that you know
Trust in my magic and all it can show
My cauldron brews a potion bitter sweet
A drink to heal, make lives complete
I am Crone



Extract from Book 2 of The Old Crone Mysteries, *The Island*

It was a bleak December day when Keridwen arrived with Hannah on her first day as volunteer chaplain at Meadow View, a newly-built private womens' prison. Hannah was about to take up a locum psychologist post in the Psychological Therapies Dept. The idea was that Meadow View didn't look like a prison from the outside, but it was difficult to see how anywhere but a prison would have high walls, with barbed wire and search lights at the top, and sniffer dogs with their handlers wandering around the bottom. The main building was formerly a workhouse, which had been completely refurbished, but some of the original gates remained, and the mortuary had been turned into a pool room.

'Why was it felt that another prison was necessary?' bemoaned Keridwen.

'The idea is that the women are rehabilitated so they turn from a life of crime... and punished of course.' said Hannah as they made their way down to the main gate.

'Does it work?'

'Not if you return the women to the circumstances they came from - poor housing, drugs, abusive relationships.'

'Why hasn't anyone thought of that?'

Hannah shrugged. 'Because building prisons is easier. And of course, criminals need to be punished, it is what society expects.'

Keridwen wrapped her cloak tightly around her as protection against an icy December wind. The prison officer at the gate glared at the two women.

'Visiting hours are from 2 - 4.' He said curtly.

'We are reporting for work,' explained Hannah. I am the new locum psychologist and my friend here has come to start her new job as a volunteer chaplain...'

The officer sniffed and looked Keridwen up and down.

'You don't look like a chaplain,' he said.

'Oh, said Keridwen 'what do chaplains look like?'

'Where's your cross?'

'I am not that kind of chaplain. I'm a Goddess actually.'

Hannah threw Keridwen a warning look.

'May we pass?' Hannah asked. 'I'm sure at reception they can ring through and verify who we are.'

The officer stood aside, and opened the initial gate, then, clanging the heavy door behind them, turned the key in the lock. Keridwen shivered. She hated being locked in.

After a similar grilling at reception, Hannah was collected by her Head of Department and taken off to the Psychological Therapies building. Keridwen was left waiting in the windowless waiting room for the Head Chaplain. Before long the Rev. Giles Benson appeared, in jeans, a black leather biker's jacket, and a dog collar.

'Miss Keridwen' he held out his hand. 'So glad you could make it. You can be our first Earth Based chaplain in the Department. We have a Buddhist, a Quaker and a Muslim, but not someone like yourself. Fascinating. I have been reading up on shamanism - is that you?'

'Er not exactly,' Keridwen replied as she set off after him, his key chain bouncing on his left leg as he walked. 'I have come to lead a group on Goddess based spirituality - as well as do anything else I can.'

'Fascinating. Fascinating.'

The Chaplaincy Dept was at the outer edge of the prison. Keridwen counted that they had passed through seven gates, it reminded her of the seven gates of Inanna. What a desperate place this is she thought, she could see she was going to have her work cut out here.

'You soon get used to all the keys,' said Giles as he unlocked the final gate. 'You should get your own set soon, but you need to go on a training course on how to use them. Daft I know, but as you can imagine security is a big thing here... but Jessica, one of the chaplains, will take you up onto the wings later, she is on duty this afternoon...'

And so it was that Jessica McBride and Keridwen arrived on B wing later that afternoon, after Keridwen had been shown how to use the prisons' computer system.

She had been rather relieved that Young Tom's informal computer lessons back in their cottage had paid off.

The noise on the wing was deafening, there were women shouting, doors clanging, officers chatting noisily. Jessica went into the officer's room, announcing who they were. The prison officer on duty looked Keridwen up and down.

'Miss Keridwen is part of the chaplaincy team,' explained Jessica.

He nodded, barely disguising his surprise at Keridwen's appearance. Keridwen swept her black cloak around her defiantly.

They had come to see a woman called Lily, who, it seemed, everyone was worried about. Her cell was on the right-hand side of the wing, three doors up from the Association Area.



Lily was sitting on her bed, staring into space, when they entered.

Jessica sat down on the narrow bed, and Keridwen followed suit. As Keridwen sat down she was aware of a malevolent force in the room, coming from the area by the washbasin.

Keridwen closed her eyes. Was it Male? Female? All she could feel was that it really meant Lily harm. And there was something else. She could hear the crashing of waves upon the shore and the gulls sweeping around ruins. A church - or was it an abbey of some sort...

Jessica leaned towards Lily and spoke to her gently.

'What is it you are scared of Lily?'

Lily shrugged. 'It's this cell. I've asked for a transfer, I've got to wait for one of the women in the other block to be released before they will even consider a transfer - It could be weeks. I can't wait that long. Her eyes filled up with tears. Can you help me?'

'I can speak to the Governor, see if that could speed thing up.' Jessica replied.

Keridwen hesitated. She wanted to reassure the girl that she felt the presence too. That it was clearly malevolent. But would it help her to say something if there was nothing that could be done about it?'

Keridwen squeezed Karen's hand as they were leaving. She looked deeply into the girl's eyes, and saw extreme fear, and Keridwen's ancient heart melted.

'Can the Governor speed up a change of cell?' asked Keridwen, as they walked out of the wing. She was so glad to be outdoors even if they were back into the freezing December air, and it had begun to snow.

'I doubt it,' replied Jessica, 'But we can try...'

'I felt it, did you? The presence in her cell?'

'Can't say I did, but I'm not very susceptible to that kind of thing. I'm prepared to keep an open mind of course. This place has been a workhouse, now it's a prison, enough misery will have been absorbed here don't you think?'

Keridwen nodded. She liked Jessica.

Four weeks later Lily was found dead in her cell. Keridwen had little doubt she had been murdered.

Lorraine Pickles, Priestess of Avalon

Book 1 of 'The Old Crone Mysteries - 'The Lake' is for sale on Amazon and in Goddess Temple Gifts. For more details of Book 2 [a work in progress] and all things Old Croney please see FB page 'The Old Crone Mystery Tour.'

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