

# CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE AS SEEN IN PERFECT MATCH BY JODI PICOULT: A PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH

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## ABSTRACT

This research entitled Child Sexual Abuse As Seen in *Perfect Match* by Jodi Picoult used psychological approach by Kagan & Havemann. The researcher is motivated to choose this thesis because of some reasons. The novel is written by Jodi Picoult who is the famous author in America, the researcher intends to describe child sexual abuse experiences in the novel *Perfect Match*, to find kind of the effect child sexual abuse. This novel also teaches many norms of life. The objectives of this research are to describe child sexual abuse experiences in the novel *Perfect Match*, to describe the effect of child sexual abuse in the novel *Perfect Match*, and to describe the moral values in the novel *Perfect Match*. This research employs library research to collect the data. The researcher uses two data sources: primary and secondary data source. The primary data source is about the novel itself. Then the secondary data are taken from other sources which are related to the primary data such as books, journal, magazine article, encyclopedias, dictionaries, handbooks, periodical indexes, and reviews. The data are analyze using theory (Hollenberg & Ragan, 1991), Beninga (1991: 131). The findings of the research are describing child sexual abuse experiences in the novel *Perfect Match*, namely statutory rape, molestation, and Incest. The effect of child sexual abuse in the novel *Perfect Match* consist with physical aspect such as wound, and psychological aspect include depression and stress. The moral values in *Perfect Match* are divided into two part, namely positive and negative moral values.

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**Keywords:** Child Sexual Abuse Experiences, Effect, Moral Value, *Perfect Match*.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Child abuse often occurs not only in families, but child abuse is also often done by others. Child abuse can occur at school, in which the perpetrators are a teacher and the victim is a student. According to Retno Listyarti, a KPAI Commissioner in the field of education said that from 445 cases in education, there are 51.20 percent or 228 cases consisted of physical abuse and sexual abuse which were often carried out by educators, principals or students.

On the other hand, researcher analyze the effect of child sexual abuse. Child sexual abuse has cognitive distortion and perceives themselves as different from other children. They suffer from feelings of shame and even guilt as they often blame themselves in some way for sexual abuse. Child sexual abuse exhibit symptoms of posttraumatic, stress disorder, such as difficulty sleeping, difficulty concentrating, anxiety, aggression, and depression. Child sexual abuse has difficulty making friends due to their compromised trust in another person. The burden of carrying friends the secret of the abuse, and feeling different from their peers. (Fierin (Fiering, Finkel, 2000, Finkelhor., & Kress, 2005)

The researcher interested to analyze a novel entitled *Perfect Match* was written by Jodi Picoult because of some reasons. First, the novel is written by Jodi Picoult who is the famous author in America and has written 23 novels, eight of that novel baing thae best seller list in New York times. Secondly, the researcher concern with the topic about child sexual abuse. Thirdly, this novel teaches many norms of life to live. In analyzing this research, the researcher used the psychological approach focus on child sexual abuse experiences, the

effect of child sexual abuse, the researcher focus on moral values as the content of the literary work itself related in the novel *Perfect match*.

Novel *Perfect Match*, which was written by Jodi Picoult, is a novel that is going to be discussed in this research. *Perfect Match* tells about the effects of child sexual abuse, and tells how a mother struggles to reveal a sexual abuse case happened to her child. Nina Frost, a lawyer for persecuted children working hard to ensure a legal system that has many holes can hold criminals behind bars, but when her five-year-old son, Nathaniel, was traumatized by sexual abuse, Nina and her husband, Caleb, a quiet and practical stone craftsman were destroyed, torn apart in anger and despair before a ridiculous court system, something Nina knows well. With ease, Nina's honesty and absolute defense are overturned, and blindly she seeks justice for herself - whatever the consequences, whatever the sacrifice. The effects of sexual abuse that occur in children very much, this is where the role of parents to support the child so as not to feel inferior.

The researcher chooses the novel as an subject of the research because the novel is an interesting fictional type of literature with an entertaining and imaginative nature, making the reader seem to be part of the story so that the message of the novel can be conveyed without the reader feeling patronized by the author. This novel can also provide information about the effect of sexual abuse to children, and the effects that might happen to children. The novel also encourages parents who must be more careful in guarding children. This novel can also be concluded that sexual education must be taught to children as early as possible with words that are easily understood by children.

## II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWO

### A. Theory of Psychology

The word psychology comes from the Greek words *psyche*, meaning *life*, and *logos*, meaning *explanation*. psychology can be described as “the science that systematically studies and attempts to explain observable behavior and its relationship to the unseen mental processes that go on inside the organism and to external events in the environment” (Kagan & Havemann, 1968: 13)

### B. Theory of Abuse

Abuse means infraction that includes physical or psychological violence which causes suffering or hurts other people. According to “WHO in (Bagong & Hariadi, 2002: 27-28), defense uses physical strength and defense, defense or against oneself, individuals or groups of people or communities that need or increase bruising / trauma, death, psychological loss, abnormalities development or seizure rights”.

### C. Theory oc Child Sexual Abuse

The Children’s Bureau of the U.S Department of Health and Human Service, in their 2003 report on child maltreatment, defines” sexual abuse as the involvement the child in sexual activity to provide sexual gratification or financial benefit to the perpetrator, including contact for sexual purposes, molestation, statutory rape, prostitution, pornography, exposure, incest, or other sexual ally exploitative activities (Hollenberg & Ragan, 1991, 107)

### D. The Effect of Child Sexual Abuse

Hollenberg and Ragen believe that it is difficult to generalize the effects of sexual abuse on children:

“Just as no single profile of child sexual abuse exists, there is no definitive description of the impact of sexual abuse on child victims. The effects of child sexual abuse are characterized by great variation and range from short- term effects to those that endure throughout adulthood. Many of the symptoms associated with child sexual abuse victimization-such as low self-esteem, anxiety hostility, depression, hyperactivity, and psychosomatic disturbances-are common to a range of other problems as well. (Hollenberg & Ragan, 1991, p. 179)

### E. Moral value

In the analysis of the novel, the researcher does the analysis moral value which important for the readers to apply it in their lives. The novel commonly contains some moral lessons which are important for the readers to be applied in real life. “Based Webster

New World Dictionary of American Language, "Moral is a thing that related with skill to decide right and wrong of behavior that accepted by citizen. The terms values may suggest that judgements of right and wrong, lofty and base, just an unjust, and more personal preferences, that thing are useful as individuals happen to value them (Beninga:1991:131).

### III. RESEARCH METHOD

This research is belong to library research. Library research is Library Research is a technique of collecting data by conducting studies of books, literature, notes, and existing reports with problems solved ( M.Nazir), type of this research consists of two kinds, namely the primary and secondary sources.

The primary source of this study is the novel written by Jodi Picoult entitled *Perfect Match*. The researcher reads and observes the novel carefully and critically. The secondary data is data that gathered to support the primary data, of secondary sources are books, journal and magazine articles, encyclopedias, dictionaries, handbooks, periodical indexes, and reviews(Elmer E Rasmuson Library. The subject of the research is the novel Perfect Match by Jodi Picoult. The object of this research is Child sexual abuse rperiences, the effect of child sexual abuse and the moral value in the novel Perfect Match use psychological approach .

The data sources of this research is collected by reading some books or journals in library that have relation to the theme of the research. After the data are collected, the researcher analyze a deep analysis that used qualitative. The reason of using qualitative because qualitative is a technique that uses statement, quotation, or depiction about the condition of the characters, was used to collect and analyze the data

### IV. DISCUSSION

This part will explain about the child sexual abuse experiences, the effect of child sexual abuse, adn the moral value. In this novel there are 2 children that has experiences about sexual abuse, namely Nathaniel and Rachel. Nathaniel is a young boy, and he is has experiences about sexual abuse are molestation and statutory rape. While Rachel is a young girl that has experiences about sexual abuse is incest

#### 1. Satutory Rape

The crime of having sex with a person younger than the age at which she or he can legally have sex (Cambridge Dictionary). Nathaniel is a 5-year-old boy who has been abused by a much more mature person. The sexual abuse perpetrator of Nathaniel was a priest. Child sexual abuse occurs when Nathaniel is traveling in the church basement and sees a picture of a cat in Father Glen's office. Nathaniel likes cats, he once told his parents to buy these animals. While looking at the cat's painting, a father came carrying a cat seen in the painting and invited Nataniel to play with the cat. When playing, the father tells Nathaniel if the cat misses him and tells to be closer to the cat by telling Nataniel to sit on the father's lap.

““you know,” he said in the office, “Esme missed you”

“she did?”

“oh, absolutely, she has been saying your name for days now”. Nathaniel laughed. “She has not”

“Listen.” He cupped his ear, leaned into the cat on the couch. “there you go.”

Nathaniel listened, but only heard a faint mew.

“Maybe you have to get closer,” the father said. “Climb up here.” (Picoult, 2006, 205)

While sitting in the father's lap, Nathaniel felt that the shirt he was using was opened and felt the father's fingers, fingering his spine. Nathaniel did not know how to stop the father, he only mentioned the word "Father" but the father said that Nathaniel would be blessed.

The man shifted his legs, the way Nathaniel’s father sometimes did when he was sitting on his knee and his foot fell asleep. “I could move,” Nathaniel suggsted.

“no, no.” The priest’s hand slipped down Nathaniel’s back, back over his bottom, to rest in his own lap. “This is fine.”

But then Nathaniel felt his shirt being untucked. Felt the long fingers of the priest, hot and damp, against his spine. Nathaniel did not know how to tell him no. His head was filled with a memory: a fly caught in the car one day when they were driving, which kept slamming itself into the windows in desperate effort to get out

“Father?” Nathaniel whispered.

“I’m just blessing you,” he replied.

“A special helper deserves that. I want God to know that every time He sees you.” His finger stilled.

“You do want that, don’t you?” (Picoult, 2006, 206)

## 2. Molestation

Molestation is the crime of sexual acts with children up to the age of 18, including touching of private parts, exposure of genitalia, taking pornographic pictures, rape, inducement of sexual acts with the molester or with other children, and variations of these acts by pedophiles (law.com). The sexual abuse that happened to Nathaniel was sexual fingering in which the perpetrators put their fingers into the buttocks of Nathaniel.

“There are parts of it Nathaniel can not remember like what he said when Nathaniel first shook his head no; or which one of them unbuttoned his jeans. What he can still think of, sometimes even when he is trying his hardest not to, is how the air felt cold when his pants came off, and how hot his hand was after that. How it hurt, it hurt so bad, even though he said it would not. How Nathaniel had held Esme so tight she cried; how in the mirror of her gold eyes he saw a little boy who no longer was him.”(Picoult, 2006: 231)

Molestation can also be interpreted as persecution, in which the persecution has an element in which one of them have wounds on the body. In this case, Nathaniel can be classified to have experienced persecution because there are injuries to the sensitive part of Nathaniel’s body.

“There did seem to be evidence consistent with an assault,” the doctor says gently. “Some rectal abrasions that are healing. It is hard to say when they were incurred, but they are certainly not fresh. Maybe a week or so’s gone by.”

“Is the evidence in consistent with penetration?” Nina Frost demands  
Martin nods (Picoult, 2006, 46)

Wounds found on the sensitive part of Nathaniel are not wounds caused by falling from a bicycle or something, but the wounds in the sensitive area of Nathaniel are injuries that occur when the offender inserts something into Nathaniel’s genitals. In the quotation above, it is explained that penetration occurred

## 3. Incest

Incest is the crime of members of the same family having sexual intercourse, for example a father and daughter, or brother and sister (Collins dictionary). This happened to Rachel, where her own father did sexually abuse to her. It started when her father and mother decided to get divorced, then Rachel told her mother if the father had done sexually abused against her.

“When Rachel was five, her parents got divorce- the kind that involved bitter mudslinging, gidden bank accounts, and cans of paint splashed on the driveway at midnight. A week later, Rachel told her mother that her daddy used to stick his finger inside her vagina.” (Picoult, 2006: 18)

Rachel is in the abused by her own father, the abuse that is made against Rachel as well as what is in the nature of Nathaniel, fingering sexual, which a perpetrator put a finger into sensitive area of the victims. Rachel also confessed that the father had twice put fingers into her vagina.

## 4. The effect of child sexual abuse

All children are born to grow up, to develop, to live and to articulate their needs and feelings for their self protections. Children receive love from many people so they

can be happy children. Children also desperately need protection from adults, but some children are hurt and abused by other people who do not care about the damaging effect in children if they are always abused in physical and psychological aspect. It should be noted that the effects of sexual abuse on children carry negative impacts either physically and psychologically. In the novel *Perfect Match* by Jodi Picoult which talks about child sexual abuse against Nathaniel, it explains that the effects that happened to Nathaniel consist of physical and psychological aspects.

#### 1. Physical Aspect

Child sexual abuse that happened to Nathaniel has a physical effect, as there is a presence of injuries that are made by the doctor when conducting a visum on Nathaniel, leading the doctor to assure that the wound that was being pinned by Nathaniel due to penetration

“Martin walks through the procedure, speaking aloud as he works so that his findings can be recorded. “That glans penis appears normal. Tanner 0.” He repositions the child. “Looking at the anal verge, there are multiple obvious healing abrasions, about one to one and a half centimeters up, that are approximately one centimeter in diameter, on average. (Picoult, 2006, 45)

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“Is the evidence consistent with penetration?” Nina Frost demands Martin nods (Picoult, 2006, 46)

The doctor tells that the wounds were found on the sensitive part of Nathaniel. The wounds in the sensitive area of Nathaniel are injuries that occur when the offender inserts something into Nathaniel’s genitals

#### 2. Psychological aspect

##### a. Depression

Depression is a common mental disorder that is shown by depressed mood, loss of interest or pleasure, decreased energy, feelings of guilt or low self-worth, disturbed sleep or appetite, and poor concentration (WHO, 2012) Moreover, depression often comes with symptoms of anxiety. Some symptoms of depression according to the Pharma Innovation Journal that happen in Nathaniel in the novel *Perfect Match* are decreased energy and lost of interest on something used to be became his favorite.

“How is his fever?” celeb asks, washing his hands in the sink

“He is fine,” I answer, although I have not checked on my son, have not even seen his yet this morning

I am hoping that if I wish hard enough, this will be true. Nathaniel was not really sick last night, and he was not running a temperature above 99 degrees. (Picoult, 2006, 8)

Nathaniel was declared to not have a fever but looked lethargic. The effect of the sexual abuse experienced by Nathaniel is the loss of energy, making him look lethargic. The effects of depression that occur on Nathaniel can also be seen when he loses interest in what he likes.

“My son tends to be unusually sunny. He finds music in the stifled sounds of traffic, speaks the language of toads. He never walks when he scramble, he sees the world with the reverence of a poet. So this boy, the one eyeing me warily over the lip of the tub, is not one I recognize.” (Picoult, 2006:11)

“I slide in Nathaniel’s favorite cassette-the Beatles ‘White Album’ all of things- but not even ‘Rocky Raccoon’ can snap him out of this mood”(Picoult.2006: 10)

Nathaniel lost interest in what he likes. Nathaniel is very cheerful kid, and he really likes music. However, after the sexual abuse he experienced, he was not even interested in the things that usually made him happy. Nina as a mother feels confused, as even something that has always been able to arouse Nathaniel's mood cannot make her child cheer up again

b. Stress

There are symptoms that result from depression, one of it is stress (blackdog institute), in which the case happens for Nathaniel is followed by signs like the emergence of negative behavior, changes in appetite, and bedwetting.

There is a negative behavior that occurs in Nathaniel, such as making his mother upset, as well as aggressive behavior carried out by Nathaniel to his peers at school. Negative behavior can be seen in the quotation below:

I see that moment of fear when he thinks he is going to be punished. "Nathaniel", I sigh, "these things happen." I help him off the bed and start to peel his damp pejasmas from his skin, only to hav him fight me in earnest. One wild punch lands on my temple, driving me back. "for God's sake, Nathaniel!" I snap. (Picoult, 2006: 10)

From the quotation above it can be seen that the negative behavior happened to Nathaniel because he had rebelled when his mother wanted to take off his clothes and his fist accidentally hit his mother.

1) Change appatite

In the article "psychology student" Change of appetite refers to any major change in eating behavior, whether it is either an increase or decrease in appetite. Nathaniel refused to be fed by his mother. His mother has done several acres to persuade Nathaniel to eat, but her efforts were in vain, Nathaniel refused to eat, as shown below:

"Nathaniel sits like a stone gargoye o his stool, his lips pressed together, resisting my attemps to get some food into him. He has not eaten since breakfast the previous day. I have held up everything from maraschino cherries to a gingerroot, the whole contents of the refrigerator from A to Z and back again. " Nathaniel." I let lemon rool off the counter. " do you want spaghetti? Chicken fingers? I'll make you whatever you want. Just pick."(Picoult, 2006: 53)

Nathaniel refused the food given by his mother, and even ignored his mother when the mother offered some food to eat. Her mother also did various ways to get Nathaniel to eat.

2) Bedwetting

Bed-wetting is the unintentional (involuntary) discharge of urine during the night (medical dictionary). Bedwetting is one sign that occurs when children are experiencing stress. In the novel *Perfect Match*, such a sign occurs to Nathaniel after the sexual abuse has occurred. Nathaniel is a 5-year-old child who was able to urinate on his own, but when the sexual abuse child had occurred, Nathaniel wet his bed several times while sleeping at night.

"Hey," I whisper into his ear. "we need to get moving." When he does not stir, I pull the covers down and the thick ammonia scent of urine rises from the mattress.

"not today, but I smile, just like the doctor said when accidents happen for Nathaniel, my five tears old who's been toilet trained for three years.(Picoult, 2006: 10)

In the quotation above, it was explained that Nathaniel, a child who had been taught to urinate in a toilet from the age of 3, turned out to wet his bed at night.

## 5. Moral value

### 1. Postive moral value

#### a. It is good to be struggle in every condition

Nina struggles to reveal the perpetrators who hurt her son, when Nathaniel lost his verbal ability as a result of the sexual abuse. Nina as a mother wanted to uncover the perpetrator who had hurt her son. Nathaniel was unable to speak when he was brought to the psychologist, so Nina wanted the psychiatrist to teach him another alternative such as communicating with his hands so that Nathaniel could reveal the abusers.

“How many words do you think you have to teach him before you can start using this language to ask him who did it?” Celeb says.

Bright spots of color rise to my cheeks. Have I been that transparant? “ all I want, all Dr. Robinchaud wants, is to give Nathaniel a chance to comminicate. Because being like this is frustrating him. Today I thought him to say “I want the dog.” Maybe you’d like to explain to me how that’s going to lead to conviction. Maybe you’d like to explain to your son why you’re so dead set on taking away the only method he has to express himself.” (Picoult, 2006: 63)

Nina as a mother teaches Nathaniel sign language so that Nathaniel can communicate again. Nina did not give up even though the idea to teach the American Sign Language was not approved by her own husband

#### b. Being sacrifice are signifies love

Nina deeply loves Nathaniel, she will do anything just for her son including killing people who have hurt Nathaniel. Nina as a lawyer is very aware of the punishment of what she will get when killing a person, but she does not care. For Nina there is no proper punishment for the perpetrators of sexual harassment that happened to her child other than death.

“when you found out, when Nathaniel said his name, what was the first thought that ran through your mind?”

Celeb looks into his lap.”Iwanted to kill him.”

He shakes his head.:Szyszynki was headed to a trial. He would have been punished for what he did.”

“Not enough, there is no sentence a judge could pass down that would make up for this and you know it. I did what any parents would want to do. I just have to look crazy to get away with it” (Picoult, 2006: 170)

Nina killing the priest is the right action to protect her son even though she will be in prison. The most important is that she did not want her child to get a prolonged trauma

### 2. Negative moral value

#### a. It is not good be quick to take decisions

Nina is a person who is very quick to make decisions without thinking about whether it is true or false. Nina once made a decision if Celeb, Nathaniel's father was the perpetrator of sexual abuse. Nina accuses Celeb that when Nathaniel is studying the American Sign Language and learns how to mention the words father and mother by hand, Nathaniel says that who has hurt him is "father", Nina immediately believes him and immediately encountered Celeb and reported Nathaniel's father to the police.

“you bastard. How could you, Celeb? How could you?”

He pushes me away, rubbing his fingers against his cheek. My hand rises on it, a bright print. Good. “ I don’t know what you’re talking anout,” Celeb says. “slow down.”

“slow down?” I spit out. “ I’ll make it really simple : Nathaniel told us. He told us what you did to him.”

“I didn’t do anything to him.” (Picoult, 2006: 76)

Nina was outraged at Celeb because of the information she had from Nathaniel that the Celeb was committing the sexual harassment to Nathaniel. Nina

forgot how Nathaniel called her father, Nathaniel called Celeb as "Daddy" instead of "father". Nathaniel is amazed that his father is very difficult to find. When he learns American Sign language he finds the fact that the one injuring Nathaniel is not Celeb.

"he grabs the piece of paper so hard it wrinkles in his fist. He runs to the door that leads into Dr. Robichaud's office, where his mother is waiting. He does it just way the black and white man on the page does. Pinching together this thumb and his forefinger, Nathaniel drags them across his neck, as if he is cutting his own throat.

"i look down the paper, at the one sign I do recognize. Like the other grouping in the ASL book, this one has a heading. RELIGIOUS SYMBOLS, and has been tracing an imaginary clerical collar; this is the sign for pries." Priest.Hurt.Me. (Picoult, 2006: 95)

Nathaniel said that the one who hurt him is not his father but the Bapa or pastor. Nina was very quick to make a decision and blamed Celeb about the thing that hurt her son, forgetting the fact that Nathaniel did not call Celeb as father

b. It is not good to blame yourself

Nathaniel is a cheerful child, but with a problem that happened to his mother, Nathaniel feels that all of it is his mistake. Nathaniel felt very guilty when his mother had to be imprisoned; he felt that his mother was doing something bad because of him.

"Nathaniel sits on the cold seat of the toilet to muddle it all out. He let Father Gwyne do all those things-and iyt was bad. He was bad, but he did not get punished. In fact, ever since he was so bad, everyone's been paying extra attention to Nathaniel, and being extra nice.

"his mother did something really bad too, she said, it was the best way to fix what happened"(Picoult, 2006: 337)

In the quotation above, it can be seen that Nathaniel blamed himself in feeling that he was a bad person because he had made father Gwyne do bad things to him, so his mother also did something bad to finish the issues that happened to Nathaniel. He felt so bad that he finally chose to blur.

"he pulls up his pants, cinches the bottom of his jacket, and flushes. Then he close the lid and climbs from the tank to the toilet tissue holder to the little ledge up high. The window there is tiny, only for fancy, because this is a basemabnt floor. But Natahaniel can open it and he's small enough to slip through. He finds himself behind the courthouse." (Picoult. 2006: 337)

Nathaniel tried to escape from the window in the toilet, and managed to escape, making his father and mother panicked because Nathaniel was not found in the toilet. Eventually Celeb and Nina and assisted by their friends who were in the court office searched for Nathaniel and finally found him, even though Nathaniel still took the urge to do the bad thing.

"Don't do that again," I say into Nathaniel's soft neck, holding him close to me. "Ever. Do you hear me?"

He pulls back, puts his palms on my cheeks. "are you mad at me?"

"No. yes. I will be, anyway, when I'm done being so happy." I hug him tighter. "what were you thinking?"

"That I'm bad," he says flatly" (Picoult, 2006: 345)

Nathaniel thinks that he is bad, therefore he chooses to go. He thinks all that is happening is his mistake.

## V. CONCLUSION

Based on discussion on chapter one, chapter two, chapter three and chapter four, the researcher comes to the conclusion as follows:

1. There are two children in the novel *Perfect Match* that have experienced about sexual abuse, they are Nathaniel and Rachel. Sexual abuse that happens towards Nathaniel are statutory rape and molestation, while sexual abuse that happens toward Rachel is Incest.



2. The effects of child sexual abuse
  - a. Physical Aspect
 

there is a presence of injuries that are made by the doctor when conducting a visum on Nathaniel, leading the doctor to assure that the wound that was being pinned by Nathaniel due to penetration
  - b. Psychological Aspect
    - 1) Depression
    - 2) Stress
3. From the story of the novel *Perfect Match*, some moral values can be extracted. The moral values are stated as follow:
  - a. Positive moral value
    - 1) It is good to struggle in every condition
    - 2) Being sacrifice are signifies love
  - b. Negative moral value
    - 1) It is not good be quick to take a decision
    - 2) It is not good to blame themself

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