

MISSION: POSSIBLE

by Shelly Sellepack



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Mission: Possible

A dinner theatre comedy
on stewardship

by Shelly Sellepack

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

Welcome, introduction, and blessing

Hors d'oeuvres and punch

Welcome sonnet by Phyl the Philosopher

Scene 1 – Council in Crisis

Salad is served

Scene 2 – An MT Makeover

Main Course is served

Scene 3 – How's That Working for You?

Scene 4 – Something Different Is Cooking
Seconds are served, plates are cleared

Scene 5 – Bigger Than Big

Scene 6 – The Cliff Notes Version by Phyl the Philosopher

Dessert buffet in foyer

Scene 7 – Mission Possible

Pastor's benediction and dismissal

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CAST OF CHARACTERS
(*With costumes*)

Pastor Evan Keal (PASTOR): The resident minister, Pastor Keal is humble, nervous, and nerdy. He is easily excited, and he doesn't have the tools for reacting in a crisis. He doesn't like the spotlight and dreads speaking in front of others. Pastor Keal speaks slowly, deliberately, and with a pronounced nasal quality. When in doubt, PASTOR should stand in front of folks and look worried or bored, or flip through his Bible for an appropriate passage. Hair should be parted down the middle; geek glasses are a must. Everyone pronounces his name like "even."

Mrs. Molly Devaro Keal (MRS. KEAL): The Pastor's wife speaks with a Southern accent. She is bold and flamboyant, and she secretly doesn't like being a Pastor's wife and has always dreamed of being an actress in New York City. She doesn't listen well, but talks incessantly. During times when she is not speaking, MRS. KEAL should fan herself, check her nails, or pat her hair.

Philosopher (PHYL or PHIL): The resident truth-seeker, PHYL dresses all in black and carries a battered book or two. Possibly speaks in a proper English accent, PHYL acts bored and unexcited and stares intensely at others or into the distance.

Tess T. Honcho (TESS): The matron of the church, TESS is the one who is the head of every event. She organizes everything, but she takes her power too seriously. She likes things done one way, *hers*, and she makes a loud ruckus when things aren't going according to her schedule. TESS tends to overreact. When she is not speaking, TESS should stand with arms crossed looking vexed. TESS speaks loudly and obnoxiously, in a shrill voice.

M. T. Socket (MT): Head trustee, MT is a specialist in electronics and computers. He is a computer geek, complete with pocket protector and some kind of tool

belt with small electronic tools. He is amiable, friendly, and always smiling, and MT has the stance and swagger of a cowboy. He has a loud, unusual, laugh that is too high-pitched for his size and swagger. MT later changes his costume to resemble the famous character from the *Extreme Makeover Home Edition* TV show. He changes into jeans, a T-shirt, and a button-down shirt left unbuttoned. He has a surfer necklace, a clean-shaven face with a small sprout of beard just under his lower lip (This may be drawn on with makeup), and gel in his hair. He carries a bullhorn.

Professor Erbs (PROF): He is a typical professor, complete with tweed jacket and briefcase. They call him Prof for short, and he quotes Scripture at every opportunity with a dry, disdainful air. He acts very serious, and even when what he's saying goes over people's heads, he nods as if they've just shared the mysteries of life together. He is bored with most everything. Note: The Scripture references for PROF are placed within the text for reference only. He may use any, all, or none of these as he speaks. (For example, "As the writer of the book of Proverbs states, ..."; or "In Matthew, chapter...")

Stuart Ship: A PR consultant, STUART SHIP is flamboyant and a bit full of himself. He comes to this church to work with the Council, getting everyone on the same page regarding the church's mission by redirecting their energies. He has a big head and the air of a superstar, but this fast-talking salesman has suggestions that are sound and teachings that are grounded. He sometimes speaks like a 1950s radio DJ. STUART SHIP should kiss babies, point at people in recognition, and check his hair in his mirrored sunglasses.

Tipper Toes: Personal Assistant to STUART SHIP, TIPPER TOES has bustling energy and a tidy appearance. She serves as gopher, bodyguard, and publicist, often declining autographs and requesting no flash photography. TIPPER TOES walks on her tiptoes. She carries a pad of paper and pen.

Dr. Phyllis: DR. PHYLLIS is a famous TV talk show personality whose guests are in need of personal advice. She is put together and well-dressed, and her questions are pointed. She does not mince words.

Ann Ouncer: Announcer and assistant for the DR. PHYLLIS show, ANN OUNCER also announces and assists for the green marshmallow salad infomercial. ANN OUNCER wears a gaudy suit, always flashes a wide smile, and speaks in her best game show voice.

Musician: The MUSICIAN for this play will choose an appropriate theme song for each character ("Pomp and Circumstance" for PROF ERBS, for example), and can play dinner music between scenes. Depending on experience, the MUSICIAN may interject musical phrases within the play as desired. It helps to have a musician with an extensive music library and/or one skilled in improvising.

Assistant: Drums up audience participation during the infomercial using cue cards. Consider using a few younger children as helpers.

SUPPORT PERSONNEL

The following persons, though not part of the drama, are vital to the overall success of the evening.

KITCHEN HELPERS: Organizers and cooks to plan the menu and prepare the meal.

WAITERS/WAITRESSES: To serve the meal in courses and attend to the guests' needs. For added fun, they may dress alike — e.g., white shirts, black pants, black bow ties.

HOST/HOSTESS: To greet the guests and give the welcome. May also assist the kitchen staff.

PRODUCTION NOTES

PROPS and SET

(By scene)

Scene 1:

Two crepe paper flowers under two random audience chairs
Council meeting set, table with five chairs, plus any extra decorations

Pitcher of water and cups

Laptop computer

Tape recorder

Box of toilet paper

Publicity photos of STUART SHIP

Five missions (folders or envelopes in different colors)

Gavel (if desired)

In addition, each member of Council has a bag or satchel, notebook, pen, timepiece(s), and a budget proposal (these items should be tailored to their characters). For example, MRS. KEAL should have a flashy bag in lamé or another gaudy fabric, a pink or purple glittery notebook, a feather pen, a large clock decked out with sparkles or feathers, and a purple folder with glitter polka-dots (budget). Other items specifically mentioned are a dark purple budget with gold trim for PASTOR, two green budgets — one decorated with a bowl of green marshmallow salad for TESS, and a budget folder decorated with strips of toilet paper and an elaborate timekeeper plus two other watches are needed for MT.

Scene 2:

Rhyming dictionary. Set may be left as is.

Scene 3:

Table cleared and moved back, two chairs set for the talk show

Backdrop and decorations as desired

Old books with paper covers entitled:

It's Foolishness to Blame the Fool: For Folly Is Her

Only Rule, two copies

Listen, Both with Eyes and Ears, Folly Lurks and Folly

Rears, two copies

Erase Those Tapes of Your Internal Dialog and

Rewrite Your Future!

Life Is Managed, Not Cured, So Teach People How to Treat You

You've Found Your Passion, Now Be Flexible, Live the Truth and Make a Strategy

Several other old books, new covers not necessary

A few sheets of paper

Scene 3b:

Bullhorn

Scene 4:

Table front and center, no chairs, with the following:

One box instant pistachio-flavored pudding mix

One small carton frozen whipped topping, thawed

Two tablespoons salad dressing or mayonnaise

One small can fruit cocktail, drained

One small can crushed pineapple, drained

Large bowl and several spoons for scooping and stirring

Small table or cart behind table, with the following:

One box orange-flavored gelatin

One cup chopped walnuts

Two cups grapes, washed

Two cups green mini marshmallows (dye with four drops green food coloring in a plastic zipper bag, shake until coated, then spread on wax paper to dry)

Small trash can behind table

Cue cards printed with the following:

Let's

Get

Cookin'

Applause

Yea!

Sure

Yes

Oooo

Ahhh

Ohhh

No

Decorations behind table as desired (screen, plants, etc.)

Scene 5:

Table cleared and moved back

One director's chair, front and to the side
Video camera

Scene 6:

Knife and cake server. Set may be left as is.

Scene 7:

Council meeting set, table with five chairs, plus any extra decorations

Publicity photos of STUART SHIP and brochures

Gavel (if desired)

(Use the following recipe to make the marshmallow salad to place on the tables and also for Scene 4.)

Green Marshmallow Salad

- 1 package (3.4 ounces) instant pistachio-flavored pudding mix
- 1 carton (8 ounces) frozen whipped topping, thawed
- 2 tablespoons salad dressing or mayonnaise
- 1 can (16 ounces) fruit cocktail, undrained
- 1 can (8 ounces) crushed pineapple, undrained
- 2 cups miniature marshmallows

In a large bowl, combine pudding mix, whipped topping, and salad dressing; mix well. Fold in remaining ingredients. Leave in bowl or spoon into individual serving dishes. Serve chilled. Yields 6-8 servings.

Arrival and Prologue

(NOTE: Guests will arrive at scattered times and be seated at tables. Hors d'oeuvres are on the tables for immediate enjoyment, and punch is served in the corner. Ten minutes before the play begins, all characters [except for STUART SHIP] will mingle and talk with the guests [in character, of course]. TESS grumbles that the hors d'oeuvres are on the wrong tables and rearranges them. TESS also brings out a small bowl of marshmallow salad for each table, grumbling that there isn't nearly enough for everyone, but they'll have to share. Moments before the play begins, the director should signal all the characters to leave, except for TESS, who will continue to bustle around the tables. The director or other leader will at this time offer a few words of introduction and a blessing for the meal. Following the blessing, PHYLL enters, slowly walking down the aisle, staring down the audience. The MUSICIAN plays PHYLL's theme song, something mournful and slow. At front center, PHYLL turns, pausing to stare a moment before she speaks. Music fades out.)

**PHYLL: Welcome, friends. Your presence here means you
have chosen well.**

**An evening ripe with food and friends, and we have a
tale to tell.**

**A tale of a church and the trials they face when trying
to balance the budget.**

**The church lacks a focus, they can't find their place,
lesser men would try to fudge it.**

**But our struggling friends will gather again, and argue
and bicker and quip.**

**But all that they're missin' is a possible mission. In
short, they need Stuart Ship.**

**So, what to expect, what do we hope to share with our
little ballad?**

No murder tonight, some mayhem, no fright ...

TESS: But there's got to be marshmallow salad! (*PHYL's theme song resumes as she walks slowly back down the aisle, staring at the audience.*)

Scene 1

Council in Crisis

(The scene is a meeting of the church council, during which budget issues will be discussed. A long table is in front, and five chairs are placed around the sides and rear, so no one's back faces the audience. Cups and a pitcher of water are on the table. Decorate the backdrop with a screen, plants, banner, etc. A large box of toilet paper sits on the floor off to one side of the table.)

All CHARACTERS in this scene will enter one at a time from the rear while MUSICIAN plays each one's theme song. This gives the audience a chance to really see each CHARACTER, get a feel for who they are, and check the program for their name and description. Slowly meandering through the crowd, each CHARACTER will speak to people as they pass by, then move to the front and enter the Council meeting room, taking a seat at the table.

Each CHARACTER arrives with his or her budget proposal hidden in a bag or satchel, whatever suits his personality, along with a pad of paper and some sort of pen, again tailored to suit the characterization. CHARACTERS should settle themselves at the table and pour a drink of water, but leave all notebooks and budget materials hidden. The exception is TESS, who should get her notebook out and ready as soon as she sits.

TESS arrives first, asking people for the time. She makes a show of saying she's always first for council meetings, how everyone is always late. She is, surprise, surprise, not happy. At the front, TESS makes a big deal of checking her watch and sighing, irritated.

PASTOR arrives next. He sheepishly looks around for his wife, worrying that they are going to be late. As MRS. KEAL arrives, she should fuss with his clothes, asking people if they think what he has on matches. PASTOR should roll his eyes, urging her on since they are late for the meeting.

PROF is next to arrive. He is disdainful, nodding hello to the crowd, then quoting random Scripture at people.

MT is last to arrive. He polls people at the tables as to whether they've used the bathroom facilities this particular evening or not. He pretends to make a mental tally, not including any yes votes.

Once every CHARACTER is seated, they begin to talk among themselves. TESS tries to begin, but people are chatting and ignoring her. She makes a big show of rolling her eyes, hands on hips, and shooting furious looks toward the audience, as if for help or sympathy. Finally she shouts, banging her notebook on the table with each word for emphasis, or uses a gavel.)

TESS: *(Standing)* **Let us now begin!** *(The CHARACTERS quiet and settle, eyes on TESS.)* **Thank you. Now, first of all, when we advertise we're going to begin a meeting on the hour, we need to begin the meeting on the hour. My watch says you are all ten minutes late!** *(All CHARACTERS make a big show of getting out their timepieces. PASTOR looks at his watch, hitting it and holding it to his ear, acting confused. MRS. KEAL removes a large clock from her bag, decked out with sparkles or feathers. She shrugs. MT flips open an elaborate timekeeper and begins pushing buttons, double-checking the time with the two other watches he is wearing and making slight adjustments. PROF shakes his head.)*

PASTOR: *(Looking at his watch and hitting it several times)* **My watch seems to have stopped. It says it's only five o'clock.**

MRS. KEAL: Well, honey, you know the saying. It's gotta be

1 five o'clock somewhere.

2 **MT:** Hey, you all know it's three a.m. in Zurich?

3 **PROF:** "There is an appointed time for everything. And
4 there is a time for every event under heaven"
5 (Ecclesiastes 3:1, NASB). *(The CHARACTERS look at PROF*
6 *while he is speaking, then look up to an appointed point above*
7 *and to the center of the audience. Allow for a pause.)*

8 **TESS:** Thank you, Prof. Erbs, for bringing us back. This is
9 the appointed time for our meeting, so let's get this
10 cake in the oven! The purpose of tonight's meeting is to
11 nail down a budget for next year. Everyone, get out
12 your notes and let's get this show on the road so we
13 can get out of here. _____ *(Insert name of*
14 *current hit TV show.)* **is on tonight.** *(The CHARACTERS*
15 *make a show of getting out their respective notebooks and*
16 *pens, looking studious and ready. MT sets up a tape recorder,*
17 *hooking it into his laptop.)*

18 **MT:** *(Murmuring into the microphone of his tape recorder and*
19 *fiddling with the buttons)* **Testing, one, two, testing.**
20 **Annual budget meeting, _____.** *(Fill in tonight's*
21 *date.)* **OK, chief, we're ready to rock and roll.**

22 **TESS:** Now, I've taken the liberty of preparing a budget
23 with all the suggestions we've received. I'd like to
24 present to you all, the green budget. *(TESS removes a*
25 *green-colored budget folder from her bag.)* **And I'm here to**
26 **tell you folks, this budget will only work** *(TESS's voice*
27 *becomes shrill)* **when pigs fly!** *(TESS flops the budget on*
28 *the table.)* **It's just impossible. It's not going to happen.**
29 **We're a small church, and we've just never done things**
30 **in such a big way before. Impossible!** *(TESS settles down*
31 *a bit.)* **Now, I've also prepared a second budget, what I**
32 **like to call the Green Marshmallow Salad Budget.**
33 *(TESS removes the budget folder from her bag, decorated*
34 *accordingly.)* **In this budget, we each take turns making**
35 **green marshmallow salad for the different functions.**

1 (*TESS ticks them off on her hands.*) Fellowship hour,
 2 Sunday school picnic, Spring Fling. Spaghetti dinner?
 3 Forget the spaghetti, just serve green marshmallow
 4 salad, one big vat of it, and everyone can share.
 5 Christmas cookie sale? Forget it! We'll jar this up and
 6 slap on a red ribbon and you've got a red and green
 7 theme going there for Christmas. We could save all
 8 kinds of money. (*TESS sits, gets out her pen.*) Now, do I
 9 hear a second?

10 **MT:** (*Standing*) Now, whoa, whoa, whoa! Hold yer horses
 11 there, Miss Tess T! I've taken it upon myself to devise
 12 a budget that cuts some corners, but not where the
 13 grub is concerned! Do not mess with a man's Christmas
 14 cookies, you hear? (*Laughs.*)

15 **PROF:** "Is not life more than food?" (Matthew 6:25, NASB).
 16 (*The CHARACTERS look at PROF while he is speaking, then*
 17 *look up to an appointed point above and to the center of the*
 18 *audience. Allow for a pause.*)

19 **MT:** Well, my friend, food may not be everything, but it's a
 20 pretty big piece of the crossword puzzle. I think we
 21 oughta think two times about puttin' a muzzle on the
 22 makin' and sharin' of food, you know what I mean?

23 **TESS:** I know what I'd like to put a muzzle on.

24 **PASTOR:** Oh, dear.

25 **MT:** Now, as I was sayin', I, too, have devised a budgetary
 26 suggestion. I like to call it the Toilet Paper Budget. (*MT*
 27 *takes his budget, decorated accordingly, out of his bag and*
 28 *passes it to MRS. KEAL, who holds it delicately with a*
 29 *pinched expression.*) Now this here budget is something
 30 of a (*Holds hands horizontally, parallel*) two-ply plan.
 31 First, I have taken an extensive and exhausting poll,
 32 and I have concluded that our restroom facilities are an
 33 unnecessary expense.

34 **MRS. KEAL:** (*Swoons and makes to faint, uttering dramatically*)
 35 No!

- 1 MT: Ply-One: We close up the restrooms, lock 'em up tight.
 2 What we'll save on Softsoap alone is astronomical! Then
 3 comes Ply-B of the two-ply plan. (*MT moves over to the*
 4 *box he brought, opens it up, and removes a roll of toilet*
 5 *paper.*) Just two years ago, I myself purchased this toilet
 6 paper at a discount barn. It seems since then, we've
 7 only actually used one case of it, which supports my
 8 theory of unneeded restroom facilities. Ply-B: We use
 9 the six cases of toilet paper we've got stored up there
 10 in the shed for all of our paper needs. Bulletins,
 11 newsletters — we can print less of 'em, and everyone
 12 can share. (*MT picks up his budget and flips through it.*)
 13 This budget is a numero uno example of how this here
 14 toilet paper can be used creatively.
- 15 MRS. KEAL: All the ink is smudged and running together.
 16 You can't read a thing on these pages.
- 17 MT: Now just never you mind. We have to cut costs, and this
 18 budget is the way to go.
- 19 PASTOR: (*Uncharacteristically getting upset and aggressive*)
 20 Impossible! No! I cannot support the closing of the
 21 restrooms and the toilet paper bulletins! No, no, no!
- 22 MRS. KEAL: Well, my stars, sugar pie! Are you feeling all
 23 right?
- 24 PASTOR: No, I am not feeling all right. If you remember
 25 correctly, I suffered a major accident, a near-death
 26 experience, just a few years ago from faulty (*Stresses*
 27 *and draws out "electrical," mimicking a minor electrocution*)
 28 electrical wiring, so I am very adamant about not
 29 cutting necessary services. Now, I'd like to share my
 30 budget proposal with you. Uh, if that's OK, uh, please?
- 31 TESS: Well, get on with it!
- 32 PASTOR: (*Jumping*) Oh, of course. Let's see, (*Digging in his*
 33 *bag now*) the budget was right in here somewhere ...
- 34 MRS. KEAL: Oh, my stars, let me share what I've got while you
 35 look. That man couldn't find his way out of a donut bag.

- 1 MT: *(Has been preoccupied, looks up with immediate interest)* Did
2 someone say donuts? Where are the donuts?
- 3 PROF: "They have ears, but they do not hear" (Psalm 135:17,
4 NASB).
- 5 MT: That's what I'm talking about, exactly.
- 6 TESS: Moving right along ...
- 7 MRS. KEAL: Well, I've come up with this. *(Digs her budget,*
8 *appropriately decorated, out of her bag.)* I call it the Purple
9 Polka-Dotted Glitter Budget! Isn't it pretty? I think
10 we've gotta make things more exciting around here to
11 bring people in. I was thinking about a short time of
12 karaoke, right before the offering is taken. Everyone
13 can take a turn. We'll share the spotlight, led by yours
14 truly, of course. Then, directly after the last hymn,
15 instead of Pastor walking back down the aisle, we'll
16 open the secret trap door, and he can disappear in a
17 cloud of smoke!
- 18 MT: Uh, just a little hangup in the getalong here, but we
19 don't have a trap door.
- 20 MRS. KEAL: Not a problem. We'll just cut one! Think of the
21 revenue we'll bring in!
- 22 MT: Uh, Ms. Keal, there's nothing under that floor.
- 23 MRS. KEAL: *(Patronizingly now)* I know. That's why there's
24 plenty of room for Evan to disappear down there. We'll
25 make all the papers, and we'll triple the attendance.
- 26 TESS: Molly, it's a cement slab ...
- 27 MT: Let it go, Tess.
- 28 PROF: "Words from the mouth of a wise man are gracious,
29 while the lips of a fool consume him" (Ecclesiastes 10:12,
30 NASB). *(The characters look at PROF while he is speaking,*
31 *then look up to an appointed point above and to the center of*
32 *the audience. Allow for a pause.)*
- 33 MRS. KEAL: Well, I never.
- 34 TESS: Pastor, did you find your budget?
- 35 PASTOR: Uh, yes, I call this the Black Budget. *(He reveals*

1 *his budget.)*

2 **MRS. KEAL:** Well, honey, that's really more of an eggplant
3 with gold trim.

4 **PASTOR:** All right, dear. This ... Eggplant Budget would
5 cut costs on the side of safety. All church services and
6 events would be canceled in inclement weather,
7 including snow, hail, rain, drizzle, and direct sunlight,
8 which is known to be harmful to one's health. When the
9 weather conditions are one hundred percent safe for us
10 all to gather, when we are one hundred percent certain
11 that there will be no accidents, injuries, or near-death
12 experiences, we'll worship under the watchful eyes of a
13 safety officer.

14 **MRS. KEAL:** Safety officer?

15 **PASTOR:** Yes. We'll share the load, you know, each take a
16 turn serving as protector of our safety. The safety
17 officer will wander around, looking for rugs that might
18 be tripped over, spoiled creamer in the refrigerator,
19 frayed (*Stresses and draws out "electrical," mimicking a*
20 *minor electrocution*) electrical cords, that sort of thing.

21 **MT:** Oh, I give up the ghost. How can we agree on a budget
22 when we all have different ideas of what's important?
23 This is impossible! (*All characters murmur their agreement,*
24 *saying such things as, "This will never work" and "I knew*
25 *we'd never get this budget ironed out."* The characters grow
26 louder, building tension.)

27 **MRS. KEAL:** This is hopeless!

28 **PASTOR:** Oh, dear. This isn't going very well.

29 **MT:** Not gonna happen. Won't work.

30 **PROF:** "Through presumption comes nothing but strife"
31 (*Proverbs 13:10, NASB*).

32 **TESS:** (*Loudly*) This is impossible! (*MUSICIAN plays the theme*
33 *from the TV show Mission Impossible. Suddenly the rear*
34 *doors fling open with a bang and TIPPER TOES enters,*
35 *followed regally by STUART SHIP. They work the crowd;*

1 *TIPPER TOES passes out signed photographs of STUART*
 2 *SHIP, and STUART SHIP shakes hands and kisses babies,*
 3 *waving like a superstar and pointing to people in the*
 4 *audience. Several members of Council stand and gape,*
 5 *muttering, pointing, and acting surprised. After several*
 6 *moments, TIPPER TOES and STUART SHIP make their*
 7 *way to the front. STUART SHIP takes a moment to check*
 8 *his hair in the small mirror TIPPER TOES holds up for*
 9 *him. Music fades.)*

10 **TESS:** Excuse me, we're in the middle of a meeting!

11 **STUART SHIP:** You are definitely in the middle of
 12 something, and I am here to get you out of the middle
 13 and into the end zone, to show you the light at the end
 14 of the tunnel, the rainbow after the storm. Allow me to
 15 introduce myself: Stuart Ship is my name, and
 16 consultation is my game. My particular (*"Specialty" is*
 17 *broken into five syllables, each one accented*) specialty is
 18 with institutions of a religious and spiritual nature.
 19 And my forte is in making the impossible, possible.

20 **PASTOR:** End zone?

21 **TESS:** Tunnel?

22 **MRS. KEAL:** Forte? Does he mean fort? Are we gonna build
 23 a fort?

24 **STUART SHIP:** (*Swoops his pointed finger over the council, then*
 25 *points directly at MRS. KEAL.*)

26 What you can't see is clear to me,
 27 But you hold the key to this calamity.

28 **MRS. KEAL:** (*Incredulous*) Me?

29 **STUART SHIP:** (*Points to various Council members, with MRS.*
 30 *KEAL first.*)

31 Yes, you and you and you do, too.

32 Now here's a clue: Let's stick like glue,
 33 And I'll get you through.

34 **TESS:** What is he saying?

35 **MT:** His mouth is movin', I'm hearin' sounds, but I don't

1 know what the heck he's sayin'.

2 **PROF:** "Therefore its name was called Babel, because there
3 the Lord confused the language of the whole earth"
4 (Genesis 11:9, NASB). *(The characters look at PROF while he*
5 *is speaking, then look up to an appointed point above and to*
6 *the center of the audience. Allow for a pause.)*

7 **STUART SHIP:** OK, here it is, plain and simple. The name
8 of the game is the same. *(Picking up TESS's, MRS.*
9 *KEAL's, and MT's proposed budgets in turn)*
10 You've got ambrosia and this song and dance caper,
11 And who can forget crazy toilet paper?
12 But come back to the beginning, back to the starting point.

13 **TESS:** How? We don't agree on anything!

14 **STUART SHIP:** Oh, I think you do,
15 And hidden in there you'll find out where.
16 And if you care, and if you dare,
17 You'll find the one thing you need hidden in there.

18 **MT:** *(Pauses)* Uh, is this multiple choice?

19 **TIPPER TOES:** *(Leaning down, trying to give hints to the*
20 *COUNCIL)* Air? Bare? Fair? Pare? Head of hair? Lion's
21 lair? Works of Voltaire?

22 **PROF:** Allow me ... "Instruct them to do good, to be rich in
23 good works, to be generous and ready to ... *share*" (1
24 Timothy 6:18, pause and emphasis added, NASB).

25 **STUART SHIP:** Bingo! Share. The common thread in this
26 crazy budget crisis is the word share. God has filled
27 this place with good gifts, and the answer to your
28 current mess is not to focus on what isn't there, but
29 focus on new ways to share. Now, huddle up! *(COUNCIL*
30 *huddles. STUART SHIP reaches into his briefcase, pulls out*
31 *different colored file folders or envelopes, and passes one to*
32 *each COUNCIL member.)* Your mission, should you
33 choose to accept it ... *(MUSICIAN plays the theme from*
34 *the TV show Mission Impossible. Each COUNCIL member*
35 *exits slowly, reading the mission given to him or her.*

STUART SHIP watches smugly, front and center, until all COUNCIL members have exited. STUART SHIP then slides on his sunglasses and exits, working the crowd and followed by TIPPER TOES.)

Scene 2 An MT Makeover

(Scene 2 takes place toward the end of the salad course. The setting is after the Council meeting. MT enters from the rear, holding his mission and stopping at every table or two, asking, "Have you seen Stuart Ship?" "I wonder where Stuart Ship is? He's supposed to meet me," etc. MT makes his way to the front and stands, looking around with hands on hips. Doors burst open and MUSICIAN plays the theme from the TV show Mission Impossible. STUART SHIP rushes in, followed by TIPPER TOES.)

STUART SHIP: *(Stopping and turning around, almost bumping into TIPPER TOES)* **No, no, not now!**

TIPPER TOES: **Excuse me, Mr. Ship. I'm sorry.** *(Loud and harsh now)* **Can the music!** *(Music stops abruptly and STUART SHIP and TIPPER TOES continue to the front. TIPPER TOES stops at every table or two, telling the guests things like, "No flash photos at this time, please," "We'll have an autograph signing later," etc.)*

MT: **There you are! Thanks for takin' time out of your busy "PR" schedule.** *(Laughs.)*

STUART SHIP: **Hey, MT, how do you be?**

MT: **How do I be? Hey, Stuart, you gotta work on your material.**

STUART SHIP: *(To TIPPER TOES, in a more natural tone)* **Hey, go get that rhyming dictionary for me, will you?**

TIPPER TOES: *(Scampering off)* **Right!**

STUART SHIP: *(Turning back to MT, still speaking in a more natural tone)* **What can I do for you?**

- 1 MT: Well, I'm as mixed up as a litter of puppies let loose on
2 the tilt-o-whirl.
- 3 SUART SHIP: *(Pauses.)* How uncomfortable for you.
- 4 MT: It's this mission. I thought my idea of closing down the
5 bathrooms was cracker jack. According to the
6 cost/benefit analysis I performed on my computer, it's
7 the best way to maximize budget cuts.
- 8 STUART SHIP: Listen, MT. You're thinking backward. How
9 can you maximize a cut? You're living in a world of
10 scarcity when you should be living out of a spirit of
11 *(Emphasizing each syllable)* a-bun-dance.
- 12 MT: What kind of dance? Do I look like the kind of man
13 who likes to dance?
- 14 STUART SHIP: No, abundance. The idea that everything we
15 need, God has provided. Listen, you're the head trustee.
16 What kinds of projects need to be done? *(The following*
17 *list of jobs may be tailored to match your own church's*
18 *situation.)*
- 19 MT: *(Slowly, not sure)* Well, the Sunday school rooms could
20 use a coat of paint, and so could the fellowship hall. We
21 need a cleanup crew in here, and the gardens could use
22 shaping up.
- 23 STUART SHIP: You don't need to close down the bathrooms
24 to get that work done. This space is where your
25 community comes to meet God. This place belongs to
26 everyone, and in an abundant life, everyone shares in
27 keeping it up. Now are you clearer about your mission?
- 28 MT: *(Begins by nodding his head, starting to say, "Oh, yes," but*
29 *cuts that off with a distinct "no" shake of the head.)* No, not
30 even close.
- 31 STUART SHIP: Still on the tilt-o-whirl, eh?
- 32 MT: Yeah, lemme off! *(Laughs.)*
- 33 STUART SHIP: *(Leaning in conspiratorially)* OK, your mission,
34 should you choose to accept it, is to do a makeover.
- 35 MT: *(Jumping back)* A makeover? Do I look like the kind of

1 man who needs a makeover?

2 **STUART SHIP:** Not just any makeover. The kind where a

3 community joins together in creating something that's

4 for the common good. The kind where you take limited

5 resources and let them multiply, like the loaves and

6 fishes by the sea. (*STUART SHIP begins to wind up into*

7 *his DJ mode once again.*)

8 And so it would seem

9 The makeover I mean

10 Could be titled *extreme*.

11 **MT:** An extreme makeover? Right, right, I hear you. (*Pauses.*)

12 Keep going. I'm almost there ...

13 **STUART SHIP:** I'll give you a lift ...

14 Your thinking should shift,

15 So you follow your gift.

16 **MT:** Right ... my giiiift. (*Starts nodding, serious frown on his*

17 *face, then abruptly shakes his head.*) No, I got nothin'. I've

18 moved from the tilt-o-whirl straight into the funhouse.

19 **STUART SHIP:** (*In his natural instead of DJ tone of voice*

20 *again*) MT, what are you good at?

21 **MT:** Easy. Makin' spreadsheets.

22 **STUART SHIP:** OK, then. Look at your mission with that in

23 mind. (*Reverts back to DJ voice.*)

24 You can't do it all —

25 That's not your call.

26 You just plant the seed.

27 What we need is your lead!

28 **MT:** Extreme makeover ... spreadsheets ... oh, yeah. Now

29 I'm cookin' with cotton candy. (*MT rushes out, muttering*

30 *about spreadsheets, bullhorns, and buses. TIPPER TOES*

31 *runs back in at the same time, holding the rhyming*

32 *dictionary. She looks at MT as he passes. Backstage, he*

33 *changes for Scene 3b.*)

34 **TIPPER TOES:** (*Rushing up to STUART SHIP*) Is this mission

35 going to work?

STUART SHIP: (*Nodding*) **Oh, yeah.** (*Puts his sunglasses on, looking off into the distance.*) **My work here is almost done.** (*MUSICIAN plays the theme from the TV show Mission Impossible as STUART SHIP exits, striding purposefully.*)

TIPPER TOES: (*Rushing after STUART SHIP, flipping pages in her planner*) **OK, then, let's schedule an autograph signing.**

Scene 3

How's That Working for You?

(*Scene 3 takes place during the serving and eating of the main course. If some guests have finished eating, that's fine too. Servers should make every effort to clear away dishes and refill drinks during this time. The setting is a talk show. Stage is set with two chairs, conversationally grouped. Potted plants and end tables decorate the area. There is a stack of books placed next to DR. PHYLLIS's chair. MUSICIAN plays a talk-show-type theme to capture audience's attention. ANN OUNCER enters from rear with microphone. Music quiets a bit as ANN OUNCER reaches the front.*)

ANN OUNCER: Thanks for being here, ladies and gentlemen; we've got a great show for you today. All the way from Topeka, Kansas, we have Nancy Beetle, who gives unusual gifts. True to her name, Nancy gives rare beetles as birthday and Christmas presents to her friends and family. Also, we have a young man from Houston, Texas, who has an unusual gift — Bernie Tucker can blink out the national anthem in Morse code. And all the way from _____ (*Insert your city and state*), we have Mrs. Molly Devaro Keal, a minister's wife who's not really sure what gifts she has. Now here's your host, Dr. Phyllis! (*DR. PHYLLIS enters from the rear, waving and saying hello to everyone. The music*

1 *swells a bit as DR. PHYLLIS makes her way to the front and*
 2 *sits down. Music fades and stops.)*

3 **DR. PHYLLIS:** Today's show is about gifts — who's got 'em,
 4 who's givin' 'em, and when it's OK to return 'em. But
 5 before we get started, I'd like to dedicate this show to
 6 my mother, also named Phyllis, who passed on to me
 7 the gift of wisdom. Mom is actually here today, too.
 8 Mom, stand up! How 'bout a hand for my mom? (*PHYL*
 9 *stands and audience claps.*) She taught me everything I
 10 know. My mom wrote this great book, and y'all gotta
 11 pick up a copy. (*DR. PHYLLIS reaches behind her and*
 12 *grabs a book.*) It's called *It's Foolishness to Blame the Fool:*
 13 *For Folly Is Her Only Rule*. In fact, two lucky members
 14 of the audience today will receive a copy of my
 15 mother's book, as well as this helpful companion
 16 pamphlet, *Listen, Both with Eyes and Ears, Folly Lurks*
 17 *and Folly Rears*. Y'all reach under your chairs, now.
 18 Two of you have a little flower taped under your chair.
 19 (*Audience should check under their chairs. The two with*
 20 *crepe paper flowers taped under their chairs will be*
 21 *identified, and ANN OUNCER will deliver a book and*
 22 *pamphlet to each one.*) All right! Y'all enjoy those books,
 23 now. Lots of good stuff in there. I thought it
 24 appropriate to mention my mother and the gift of wise
 25 wisdom that she passed on to me, because today's show
 26 is all about gifts. Now, my first guest has been a
 27 minister's wife for over twenty years, but she hasn't yet
 28 tapped into her own giftedness. Please welcome Mrs.
 29 Molly Devaro Keal. (*MRS. KEAL flamboyantly enters,*
 30 *blowing kisses, curtsying, and waving her boa, while*
 31 *MUSICIAN plays her theme song.*)

32 **MRS. KEAL:** Hi there, thank you! Thank you! (*DR. PHYLLIS*
 33 *stands to meet MRS. KEAL at the front. They shake hands*
 34 *and DR. PHYLLIS motions MRS. KEAL to sit down. Music*
 35 *fades.*)

1 DR. PHYLLIS: Molly, you wrote in to tell us that you feel
 2 out of place in the church where your husband serves,
 3 that you feel you were made for bigger and better
 4 things.

5 MRS. KEAL: Well, my stars, you just jump right into it, don't
 6 you?

7 DR. PHYLLIS: No point in beatin' around the bush with
 8 this. I just call 'em as I see 'em.

9 MRS. KEAL: Well, it's true. I've always felt my destiny was
 10 to act on Broadway. I'm always daydreaming about
 11 being a star of the stage and screen.

12 DR. PHYLLIS: And how's that workin' for ya?

13 MRS. KEAL: Well, I ... you see, it's like this ... well ...

14 DR. PHYLLIS: Molly, come on, now — there's no point to
 15 this if you can't be honest. Now, how's that workin' for
 16 ya?

17 MRS. KEAL: Well, it's not.

18 DR. PHYLLIS: It's time to get real, Molly. What you need to
 19 do is examine your internal dialogue. Erase those
 20 mental tapes that tell you who you thought you'd be,
 21 and instead rewrite your future. You cannot change
 22 what you do not acknowledge, so you gotta do what
 23 works. Are you with me?

24 MRS. KEAL: (*Confused*) Well, I ...

25 DR. PHYLLIS: (*Reaches around behind her chair and picks up*
 26 *a book.*) Listen, I wrote a book about this very thing. It's
 27 called *Erase Those Tapes of Your Internal Dialogue and*
 28 *Rewrite Your Future!* You oughta pick up a copy.

29 MRS. KEAL: Oh, I will.

30 DR. PHYLLIS: (*Putting the book back down beside her*) What
 31 you need to do is apply your gifts to your own personal
 32 situation. Life is managed, it is not cured, and we teach
 33 people how to treat us. (*Reaching down again and picking*
 34 *up a second book*) This kinda reminds me of my newest
 35 book, *Life Is Managed, Not Cured, So Teach People How to*

- 1 *Treat You.* Now, Molly, you have to name it before you
 2 can claim it, so what are your gifts? (*DR. PHYLLIS sets*
 3 *the second book aside.*)
- 4 MRS. KEAL: Well, I like to act. Some say I'm rather dramatic.
- 5 DR. PHYLLIS: Good, good. One step closer to the goal.
 6 You've found your passion, now be flexible and live the
 7 truth. Make a strategy.
- 8 MRS. KEAL: (*Pause*) I'm sorry, was that a question? Did you
 9 ask me a question?
- 10 DR. PHYLLIS: (*Picks up a third book.*) Have you read my
 11 book, *You've Found Your Passion, Now Be Flexible, Live the*
 12 *Truth, and Make a Strategy*?
- 13 MRS. KEAL: Well, I ...
- 14 DR. PHYLLIS: (*Setting the book aside*) Listen, Molly, you've
 15 got to erase those internal tapes and rewrite your
 16 future! Wait a minute, did I say that already? Come on,
 17 now, let's get real. You've gotta let go of what isn't and
 18 seek out what could be. Forget all that stuff about
 19 Broadway and New York City. How can you apply your
 20 gifts to your own church, here and now? (*MRS. KEAL's*
 21 *response could be tailored to fit your church's situation.*)
- 22 MRS. KEAL: Well, our children do a dramatic production
 23 every Christmas. I've always felt that maybe I might be
 24 able to help.
- 25 DR. PHYLLIS: Now you're talkin', Molly! Listen, we have to
 26 break, but before we do, I want to give you some tools
 27 to help you discover your passions and how to follow
 28 them. (*Takes out a few sheets of paper.*) This here is a
 29 spiritual gifts inventory. You take this and fill it out
 30 when you have a few minutes to think about it. In the
 31 meantime, for the plane ride back, I'm going to give you
 32 complimentary copies of all my books. (*DR. PHYLLIS*
 33 *reaches behind her chair and unearths a huge stack of books.*
 34 *She passes them a few at a time to MRS. KEAL, who takes*
 35 *the overwhelming stack of books with cries of "My stars!" and*

1 “Gracious!”) Up next, have you ever gotten a beetle for
2 Christmas? Stay tuned.

3 **ANN OUNCER:** We’re clear.

4 **DR. PHYLLIS:** Thanks for joining us, Molly, and good luck
5 to you.

6 **MRS. KEAL:** (*Exiting down the center aisle, juggling her load of*
7 *books*) Thank you so much! I’m excited to be flexible
8 and manage my life by examining my internal dialog so
9 I can rewrite my future.

10 **DR. PHYLLIS:** You know, that sounds better when I say it.
11 ’Bye now! (*DR. PHYLLIS and ANN OUNCER should exit*
12 *right, discussing the next guest while the MUSICIAN plays*
13 *the theme music. DR. PHYLLIS should say things like,*
14 *“Where’d you find this beetle lady, anyway?” “Bugs for*
15 *Christmas? Unbelievable!” ANN OUNCER will respond with,*
16 *“I know, I know;” and “The green room is a wreck, we need*
17 *to call an exterminator.”*)

18

19

Scene 3b

20

An MT Makeover, Continued

21

22 (*MT has changed his costume to resemble the famous*
23 *character from the Extreme Makeover Home Edition TV*
24 *show. He wears jeans, a T-shirt, a button-down shirt left*
25 *unbuttoned, and a surfer necklace. He has a clean-shaven*
26 *face with a small sprout of beard just under his lower lip*
27 *[This may be drawn on with makeup], and gel in his hair.*
28 *He rushes in with his bullhorn, yelling his lines with*
29 *enthusiasm. When he finishes, he rushes out again. This*
30 *interlude, as well as the other two times this happens, need*
31 *not be mentioned in the program.)*

32 **MT:** Come on, people, we’ve only got a few short days until
33 church on Sunday. Let’s get this show on the road!
34 We’re doing an extreme makeover! Don’t get up out of
35 your seats yet, there’s an infomercial coming right up!

This is an extreme makeover, people!

Scene 4

Something Different Is Cooking

(Scene is an infomercial. A table or counter is set up with mixing bowls, utensils, and packages and dishes of food, as described in prop list. CHARACTERS not in this scene are planted in the rear for assistance with audience participation. ASSISTANT brings cue cards to front, then takes microphone and addresses audience.)

ASSISTANT: Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for agreeing to participate in our studio audience production of *Let's Get Cookin'*. We've got the best little infomercial in twilight television for you tonight, folks, but first, a little instruction. In order to convey to the folks at home just how excited you are to be here, we'll need your full participation. Can you help us out?
(ASSISTANT holds up cue card: Sure.)

AUDIENCE: Sure!

ASSISTANT: Great! Let's try one more. Don't you all think my little helpers are fantastic? *(Holds up cue card: Yes.)*

AUDIENCE: Yes! *(ASSISTANT holds Applause cue card and audience claps. ASSISTANT holds up Yea! cue card.)*

AUDIENCE: Yea!

ASSISTANT: All right, folks! *(Holds up cue cards for Lets Get Cookin'.)*

AUDIENCE: Let's Get Cookin'! *(MUSICIAN plays a piece to announce the infomercial, and ANN OUNCER comes to the front. Music fades as ANN OUNCER reaches the front.)*

ANN OUNCER: Hey folks, it's time once again for ... *(ASSISTANT holds up cue cards: Let's Get Cookin'.)*

AUDIENCE and ANN OUNCER: *(Together)* Let's Get Cookin'!
(ASSISTANT holds up Applause cue card and audience claps. ASSISTANT holds up Yea! cue card.)

1 **AUDIENCE: Yea!**

2 **ANN OUNCER:** (*Grins and motions for quiet.*) **Our special**
 3 **guest today, here to make her famous green**
 4 **marshmallow salad, all the way from _____,**
 5 (*Insert your city and state*) **let's welcome ... Tess T.**
 6 **Honcho!** (*ASSISTANT holds Applause cue card and*
 7 *audience claps. ASSISTANT holds up Yea! cue card.*)

8 **AUDIENCE: Yea!** (*ASSISTANT encourages the cheering to*
 9 *continue. TESS enters, arms crossed, looking fierce. No*
 10 *waves, no smiles. TESS merely smirks at the audience*
 11 *members, saying "Yep" and "All right." When she gets to the*
 12 *front, the intensity of applause resurges, to which TESS*
 13 *responds, "All right," "OK then."*)

14 **TESS:** (*Yelling, annoyed with continued clapping*) **You can stop**
 15 **clapping now!** (*ANN OUNCER and ASSISTANT instantly*
 16 *stop and drop their cue cards, causing a sudden silence. ANN*
 17 *OUNCER looks uncomfortable, gulps a few times, and pulls*
 18 *at her collar.*)

19 **ANN OUNCER: OK, then. Let's get right down to it, shall**
 20 **we? Tess, you're here today to show us how you make**
 21 **your famous ... green marshmallow salad!** (*TESS opens*
 22 *her mouth to respond, but before she can, ASSISTANT holds*
 23 *up cue card: Oooo.*)

24 **AUDIENCE: Oooo!**

25 **TESS: Yes, I was asked to come all the way out here to**
 26 **share my famous green marshmallow salad recipe with**
 27 **you. Now —** (*TESS makes a movement to start making the*
 28 *salad, but she is interrupted by ASSISTANT holding up cue*
 29 *card: Ahhh.*)

30 **AUDIENCE: Ahhh!**

31 **TESS:** (*With an unsure half-laugh*) **Right. OK, the first**
 32 **ingredient in my famous green marshmallow salad —**
 33 (*ASSISTANT holds up cue card: Ooooo.*)

34 **AUDIENCE: Oooo!**

35 **TESS:** (*Pauses quite a long time, looking from audience to ANN*

- 1 **OUNCER.**) **Green marshmallow salad** — (**ASSISTANT**
2 *holds up cue card: Ohhhh.*)
- 3 **AUDIENCE:** Ohhhh!
- 4 **TESS:** (*Turning to ANN OUNCER*) **That's not funny.**
- 5 **ANN OUNCER:** (*Very upbeat, ignoring TESS's sour attitude*)
6 **Let's begin, shall we?**
- 7 **TESS:** (*Still unsure*) **Right. The fist ingredient in my gr —**
8 (*Pauses, looks toward audience, then resumes*) **in my**
9 (*Stressing word*) **special ambrosia is, of course, the most**
10 **important.** (*Holds up the package of pudding.*) **One box**
11 **instant pistachio-flavored pudding mix.** (*TESS moves to*
12 *dump the mix into the bowl.*) **Now —**
- 13 **ANN OUNCER:** **Hey, folks, what do you say we mix this up**
14 **a bit? Should we?** (*ASSISTANT holds up Applause cue*
15 *card and audience claps. She then holds up Yea! cue card.*)
- 16 **AUDIENCE:** Yea!
- 17 **TESS:** What?
- 18 **ANN OUNCER:** (*Reaching under counter or behind him and*
19 *bringing out another boxed mix*) **How about we try orange-**
20 **flavored gelatin?** (*ASSISTANT holds up cue card: Sure.*)
- 21 **AUDIENCE:** Sure!
- 22 **TESS:** (*Hovering over her bowl to prevent ANN OUNCER from*
23 *dumping her mix into it*) **What — are you crazy? I've**
24 **always made green marshmallow salad to be, well,**
25 **green! You can't just go mucking things up with your**
26 **orange gelatin!**
- 27 **ANN OUNCER:** (*Turns to audience conspiratorially, wiggling the*
28 *gelatin box.*) **What do you say, folks? Should we?**
29 (*ASSISTANT holds up cue card: Yes.*)
- 30 **AUDIENCE:** Yes! (*ANN OUNCER takes the bowl, dumps in the*
31 *mix with a loud, guttural cry, and brushes off hands,*
32 *smiling the entire time. When ANN OUNCER cries out,*
33 *TESS jumps.*)
- 34 **ANN OUNCER:** Now, Tess, take us through the rest of this
35 **recipe. I bet our guests would love to know the secret**

1 to this deee-lightful salad!

2 **TESS:** (*Brief pause, then rants.*) You just ruined the salad!
 3 How can I make green marshmallow salad that's
 4 orange? It makes no sense! When you make green
 5 marshmallow salad with orange gelatin, it ceases being
 6 green! It becomes something else! I have always made
 7 green marshmallow salad green!

8 **ANN OUNCER:** It's just not easy being green. (*Pause*) Listen,
 9 Tess, every one of the three hundred and six viewers at
 10 home would like to learn how to finish making this
 11 recipe. And I know our unsolicited, unpaid, unreimbursed,
 12 non-bribed, non-coerced, and in no way paid off studio
 13 audience would like to see the results of this wonderful
 14 salad too, eh? (*ASSISTANT holds up cue cards:*
 15 *APPLAUSE and YEA! Audience breaks into loud whoops*
 16 *and applause.*) New things aren't bad, Tess. Sometimes
 17 mixing up the old ideas with the new ones makes for a
 18 dynamite bowl of fruit!

19 **TESS:** You're nuts!

20 **ANN OUNCER:** (*Reaching behind her, bringing out walnuts*)
 21 Now you're thinking! One cup chopped walnuts! (*Dumps*
 22 *nuts into the bowl with a guttural shout, to which TESS*
 23 *gives a startled jump. ASSISTANT holds up cue card: Oooo.*)

24 **AUDIENCE:** Oooo!

25 **TESS:** What a disaster!

26 **ANN OUNCER:** What's next, Tess?

27 **TESS:** (*Dejectedly*) One carton frozen whipped topping,
 28 thawed. (*Scrapes into bowl, with ANN OUNCER trying to*
 29 *help as TESS turns away, shielding the bowl from her.*) Two
 30 tablespoons salad dressing or mayonnaise. (*Again,*
 31 *scrapes into bowl, with ANN OUNCER trying to help and*
 32 *TESS recoiling.*) Then, one can fruit cocktail and one
 33 can crushed pineapple. (*TESS, one eye on ANN OUNCER,*
 34 *who looks innocent and helpful, dumps fruit into bowl.*
 35 *TESS turns her back to throw the empty cans into a trash*



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