STOP
THE
PRESSES!
or... She’s Not My Type!

Typeset by TIM KELLY

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STOP THE PRESSES!
Or... She’s Not My Type

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Enjoy the power of the press as you gawk at a performance stuffed with historical flimflam and a respect for good grammar!

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Gentlemen, please—no spitting ’til you reach the lobby!
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SYNOPSIS OF SCENES
SCENE ONE
Office of the “Colorado Clarion” in the town of Four Corners. The time is the 1880s.
(An honest newspaper is a citizen’s best friend—except for his mother.)

SCENE TWO
Same place.
Election day.
(Be warned! The power of the press has fallen into the villain’s hands!)

CAST OF CHARACTERS

ASPEN PRINT ..............................Editor of the “Colorado Clarion.”
A combination of beauty and civic responsibility.

JUDY PAIGE ...............................Newspaper girl, none-too-bright.

GRANNY PRINT ...........................Aging typesetter, owns the “Colorado Clarion.”

PANHANDLE ...............................Bop on the head is worth two on the knee.

SLEAZY TAB LLOYD ......................Has a lot in common with the printing press. They’re both oily.
CHIFFON DELURE .................................Lovely to look at, but not to be trusted.

ANNABELLE ........................................Her winsome maid.

JACK NEWSWORTHY .............................Manly sheriff, in love with Aspen.

MRS. GRISLEY .....................................Solid citizen.

MRS. PICKLES .................................Another of the same sort.

EDWARD TORIAL ..............................Running for mayor. No puns, please.

DUSTY .................................................Express rider who’s lost his pony.

OPTIONAL CITIZENS ............................Can be added, if desired.
STOP THE PRESSES!

Scene One

SETTING: UP CENTER is a desk and chair. Atop the desk is an old typewriter. Behind the chair, RIGHT, is a bulletin board on which are tacked newspaper articles, photos, a wanted poster for “Swampwater Sam.” Attached to the front of the desk is a sign proclaiming: “COLORADO CLARION.” Scattered around the typewriter are the usual working items of the times: pencils, pens, ink pot, paper, hand bell. To the RIGHT of the desk, on the floor, is a box of newspapers. A wastebasket is LEFT. DOWN RIGHT is a desk with a sign: “TELEGRAPH OFFICE.” There is a chair behind the desk. On the desk is a telegraph device for sending and receiving messages, a note pad and a pencil. DOWN LEFT is a table with two or three chairs. A tablecloth is optional. The printing press is OFFSTAGE, RIGHT; the entrance from street, OFFSTAGE, LEFT. Other EXITS are DOWN RIGHT and DOWN LEFT. (NOTE: For suggestions on adding to the scene, consult PRODUCTION NOTES.)

LIGHTS UP: ASPEN PRINT, pretty and bright, is typing away, consulting some notes she has written down on a sheet of paper.


GRANNY’S VOICE: (From OFF RIGHT.) Coming, Aspen, dear. (ASPEN steps to wanted poster, reads.)

ASPEN: “Wanted for highway robbery. Swampwater Sam.” Your days are numbered, Swampwater.

JUDY: (A friend and newsgirl, ENTERS from LEFT. She wears a cap sideways and carries some newspapers under her arm. Or she might carry the newspapers in a canvas bag slung over a shoulder. One newspaper she holds high, as if she were hawking it. As she ENTERS from street, she shouts.) Extra! Extra! Get your extra edition! All the news that’s fit to print in Four Corners! All fact, no friction!

ASPEN: No, no, Judy. How many times do I have to tell you? It’s “All fact, no fiction.” Not friction.

JUDY: (Steps “into” newspaper office.) I don’t see what difference it makes. One word is as good as another.

ASPEN: Ah, there you are wrong, sweet Judy Paige. One word is not as good as another. I ought to know. (Hand over heart, to audience.) After all, I am a newspaper editor.
JUDY: I reckon you know what you’re talking about, Aspen.

ASPEN: I trust so, Judy. Being a newspaper editor and a woman of the wild west is not easy.

JUDY: Especially when you’re not wild. You deserve all the credit you can give yourself.

ASPEN: (Moves in front of desk.) Well, I can’t take all of the credit. Journalism is in my blood.

JUDY: How so?

ASPEN: I’m type O. (Beat.) How many papers do you have left?

JUDY: Six.

ASPEN: How many did you start out with?

JUDY: Six.

ASPEN: Not to fret. Some days are better than others. Wait until the next edition comes out. I have composed a ringing endorsement for Edward Torial as Four Corners’ next mayor.

JUDY: Gosh, Aspen. After Mayor Dunthorpe retired and moved back east, and the new election was declared, I heard you say Edward Torial wasn’t much.

ASPEN: He’s all we have, Judy. He may be dull, but he’s honest. Think of the alternative.

JUDY: What’s that mean, alternative?

ASPEN: It means Sleazy Tab Lloyd. Or should I say... (Sweeping gesture to wanted poster.) Swampwater Sam.

JUDY: But Sleazy Tab Lloyd says he ain’t Swampwater Sam.

ASPEN: (Hand up for emphasis.) He lies!

GRANNY: (ENTERS STAGE RIGHT from press room. She is ancient and easily befuddled. She wears spectacles on the tip of her nose and a leather apron. She’s wiping her soiled hands on a dirty rag.) I sure wish we had the money to buy some new equipment, granddaughter. Every time I work the press, it sounds like a pipe organ filled with ducks.

JUDY: Granny Print, maybe it’s not the press that sounds creaky. Maybe you’re “quacking” up.

GRANNY: Hold your tongue. (JUDY grins to audience, sticks out her tongue and holds it between her thumb and finger. GRANNY looks...
and sees JUDY. Aside.) She does that every time I tell her to hold her tongue. It’s a lousy joke and she makes it worse. (To JUDY.) Did you sell any papers today?

JUDY: Nope.

GRANNY: I don’t know what’s going to happen to the “Colorado Clarion.” Sometimes I think I ought to sell it.

JUDY: Sell the “Colorado Clarion!” You don’t mean that, Granny Print!

ASPEN: She’s overtired.

GRANNY: Sales down, one accident after another.

ASPEN: Don’t tell me there’s been another mishap?

GRANNY: Okay, I won’t.

ASPEN: No, Granny! Please, what has transpired?

GRANNY: Someone put Elmer’s glue in the ink.

JUDY: Who’s Elmer?

GRANNY: Someone rearranged all the letters in my type box. I reached for an “e” and got an “f.”

JUDY: Oh.

GRANNY: Then I reached for an “a” and took an “l.”

JUDY: My!

GRANNY: I reached for a “k” and took a “u.” If I wouldn’t have noticed, I would have had “flu.” I could have given the flu to the whole town!

ASPEN: Someone wishes bad luck for the “Colorado Clarion,” and I have my suspicions. We must stay on our toes. (JUDY attempts to stand on her toes.)

GRANNY: Someone stole my good pair of spectacles. Must have been a pack rat.

ASPEN: A pack rat who calls himself “Lloyd.”

GRANNY: (Jiggles spectacles.) This is my backup pair, and they’re fifty years old. Everything looks soupy.

JUDY: Like swimming underwater? (She gives up trying to stand on her toes.)

GRANNY: I wouldn’t know. I can’t swim.

ASPEN: At least the old printing press gets the job done. That’s all that matters.
GRANNY: You wouldn’t say that if you had to work the press. Greasy, oily, smelly. I might as well work in a can of sardines.

ASPEN: We mustn’t forget, Granny. We are on a mission.

GRANNY: We are?

ASPEN: To protect Four Corners from charlatans and crooks.

GRANNY: Charlatans and crooks?

JUDY: She means Sleazy Tab Lloyd.

GRANNY: (Irritable.) I know who she means. Where’s the editorial?

ASPEN: (Holds out paper.) Here it is, Granny. Shall I read it to you?

GRANNY: I’ll read it for myself when I’m setting the type. (Takes editorial.) I wish we had more advertisements and less editorials. (She EXITS RIGHT.)

JUDY: Golly, Aspen. Granny would never sell, would she?

ASPEN: Of course not. Give Granny a hand, Judy.

JUDY: I only got two.

ASPEN: Figure of speech. Granny is getting on. She needs all the help we can give her. Nights are difficult. She’s a sleepwalker, you know.

JUDY: Sleepwalker? First I heard. Does she sleepwalk often?

ASPEN: Only when she’s asleep. Run along and make yourself useful.

JUDY: You’re the boss. (She EXITS RIGHT. PANHANDLE, a henchman for SLEAZY TAB LLOYD, ENTERS LEFT. Like JUDY, he’ll win no medals in the smarts department. He is dressed in dusty fashion—battered hat, boots, tattered shirt and suspenders.)

PANHANDLE: (Whips off his battered hat.) Howdy, Miss Print.

ASPEN: (Not pleased to see PANHANDLE. She sweeps DOWNSTAGE. Aside.) It’s Panhandle. Part of the criminal element in Four Corners. Works for Sleazy Tab Lloyd. Not to be trusted. (To PANHANDLE.) Do you want something, Panhandle? (Aside.) Keep an eye on him. He steals things.

PANHANDLE: Boss said I should check and see if you was here.

ASPEN: I’m here.

PANHANDLE: In that case, I reckon you ain’t somewhere else. (Yells LEFT.) She’s here, Lloyd! (To ASPEN.) If you wasn’t here, he didn’t want to waste time coming in.
ASPEN: (Flat.) How practical. (With considerable flair, SLEAZY TAB LLOYD ENTERS STAGE LEFT. He is a classic villain: cape, walking stick, dark suit, gloves. Optional top hat. Moustache. He’s despicable, but charming when it suits his purpose.)

PANHANDLE: (Points to ASPEN.) There she is, Lloyd. (SLEAZY TAB bops him on the head with the walking stick.) Ow!

SLEAZY TAB: It’s Mister Lloyd to you, you mangy coyote.

PANHANDLE: Ah, gee, boss. You didn’t have to hit me on the head.

SLEAZY TAB: It will help you remember next time. (Sees ASPEN.) Ah, there you are, my dear. How delightful you look. How charming. How refreshing. (Sniffs the air.) What is that enchanting perfume you’re wearing?

ASPEN: It’s not perfume. It’s printer’s ink.

SLEAZY TAB: How whimsical. I kiss you in admiration and supplication. (He flirts over to ASPEN and surprisingly pecks her on the cheek. ASPEN is taken aback. SLEAZY TAB is pleased as he stands with lips still puckered.)

ASPEN: How dare you, Sleazy Tab Lloyd! Or should I say... Swampwater Sam! You have insulted me!

SLEAZY TAB: (Through puckered lips.) I keep telling you I am not Swampwater Sam.

ASPEN: Oh, no?

SLEAZY TAB: Oh, no.

ASPEN: What about this? (She grabs the poster from the bulletin board and hands it to SLEAZY TAB. He takes it.)

SLEAZY TAB: My dear young woman...

ASPEN: Please don’t patronize me.

SLEAZY TAB: I admit there’s a faint resemblance. We both have teeth.

PANHANDLE: Teeth.

SLEAZY TAB: But this rogue isn’t nearly as handsome as I am.

PANHANDLE: Isn’t nearly as handsome.

SLEAZY TAB: In fact, he’s common-looking.

PANHANDLE: Common.

SLEAZY TAB: It’s wrong of you to jump to conclusions, Miss Print.
PANHANDLE: Wrong to jump to conclusions.

SLEAZY TAB: (Annoyed with PANHANDLE’S babble, he raises the walking stick.) I’ll fix you, Little Sir Echo.

PANHANDLE: (Worried.) Hey, boss, you’re not going to bop me on the head again?

SLEAZY TAB: No. This time I’m going to bop you on the kneecaps. (Afraid that he will be bopped again, PANHANDLE starts to run in a circle as if SLEAZY TAB were chasing him. He isn’t. SLEAZY TAB and ASPEN stare at PANHANDLE as he continues to circle. SLEAZY TAB returns poster. ASPEN puts it on desk.)

PANHANDLE: Ow! Ow! I didn’t mean no harm, boss! I won’t do it again! I promise! Don’t hit me! Ow! Ouch! Ow! (Finally, he stops in front of SLEAZY TAB.) Thanks for not hitting me, Mister Lloyd.

SLEAZY TAB: Your gratitude is premature.

PANHANDLE: How come?

SLEAZY TAB: Watch! (He bops PANHANDLE on the head again.)

PANHANDLE: Oooooowwwww. You’re always picking on me. It ain’t fair.

SLEAZY TAB: Ain’t! Ain’t! I’ll show you ain’t. (He chases PANHANDLE OFF, LEFT.)

ASPEN: (To audience.) I wish Sheriff Jack Newsworthy was here. This type of rude behavior puts me in such discomfort. He is my hero. (She puts one hand over her heart, then the other. Sighs deeply in romantic fashion. SLEAZY TAB RE-ENTERS.)

SLEAZY TAB: I apologize for Panhandle. Not only is he stupid, he isn’t smart. Such a bumpkin. He irritates me. So hard to get good help these days.

ASPEN: Where is he now?

SLEAZY TAB: Tied to my horse. Now, what were we discussing?

ASPEN: We weren’t discussing anything.

SLEAZY TAB: Really? How odd.

ASPEN: You’ll have to excuse me, Mister Lloyd, or should I say... Swampwater Sam. I’m quite busy.

SLEAZY TAB: There you go again. Your strange obsession with this Swampwater person. You ought to see a doctor. I can recommend one. A medicine man on the Navajo reservation. Reasonable rates.

ASPEN: You’re not to be trusted. Highway robbery.
SLEAZY TAB: I never robbed a highway in my life. That ridiculous poster is years old.

ASPEN: So are you.

SLEAZY TAB: You abuse me. Where did you find that old poster?

ASPEN: In the files under “c.” “C” for crook.

SLEAZY TAB: You should have looked under “r.” “R” for rubbish.

ASPEN: (Goes behind her desk, sits.) If you don’t want anything, I must return to my work.

SLEAZY TAB: No doubt another blistering attack on me and another editorial praising that windbag Edward Torial. Take care! I can be a merciless enemy.

ASPEN: I don’t praise Edward Torial. I only suggest he’d make a better mayor than you.

SLEAZY TAB: I don’t know why I’m treated so shabbily. After all, I advertise heavily in the “Colorado Clarion.”

ASPEN: So does the undertaker.

SLEAZY TAB: Here. (Takes paper from inside his coat.) I wish to place this advertisement. (Reads.) “Vote for honesty. Vote for progress. Vote for no potholes. For mayor of Four Corners, vote for Tab Lloyd.” Don’t you think that’s original?

ASPEN: Though I can refuse an advertisement, I feel that I must give you the same opportunities as Edward Torial for a fair election. (Aside.) And I must sadly admit the Clarion needs this scoundrel’s dollars to survive.

SLEAZY TAB: Splendid.

ASPEN: (Stands, takes the paper from SLEAZY TAB and rings hand bell.) Granny!

GRANNY’S VOICE: (From OFF RIGHT.) Coming, Aspen, dear.

SLEAZY TAB: Considering all the money I spend on advertising, I should get a little cooperation from this newspaper.

ASPEN: You’re already getting as little as possible.

GRANNY: (ENTERS STAGE RIGHT.) Someone put wads of chewing gum all over the floor. This is a sticky business.

ASPEN: (Glaring at SLEAZY TAB.) There’s only one man in this town despicable enough to do that.
SLEAZY TAB: What are you incinerating? Gad! Is a promising politician entitled to no respect?

GRANNY: (Points to paper in ASPEN’S hand.) Is that an advertisement, I hope?

SLEAZY TAB: For the coming election. I do so enjoy politics.

GRANNY: Politics? In that case, Aspen, get the money in advance.

ASPEN: Here, Granny. (Holds out the paper.)

GRANNY: (Takes it, squints.) “Vote for Tab Pothole.” Who’s he?

ASPEN: Granny’s eyes aren’t what they used to be.

SLEAZY TAB: Have her eyes ever been checked?

ASPEN: Yes. Have yours?

SLEAZY TAB: Mine have always been brown.

GRANNY: I’ll set this right away. (Starts to move LEFT. ASPEN moves to her and guides her RIGHT.)

ASPEN: No, no, Granny. This way.

GRANNY: Sure would like to find my old glasses.

SLEAZY TAB: (Aside.) Old glasses for an old face. What could be more appropriate? Hee, hee, hee. (As GRANNY and ASPEN EXIT, SLEAZY TAB takes a newspaper from the box RIGHT of desk. Speaks to himself.) I didn’t read yesterday’s paper. I suppose I’ll find another rude editorial. (He moves to table, sits. Opens newspaper.) Ah, the editorial page. (As he reads, he becomes more and more agitated. His hands grip the pages tensely, and he shakes with rage.) “If you want to vote for a no-good, low-down, unscrupulous, cheap, conniving, untrustworthy varmint, by all means vote for Sleazy Tab Lloyd, also known as Swampwater Sam.” (To audience.) She’s gone too far. I’ll show her. (He crumples the newspaper and tosses it to the floor. He stands and jumps up and down on the offending journal.) Take that. And that. And that.

PANHANDLE: (Sticks his head IN from DOWN LEFT, checks to see that ASPEN isn’t about.) Psssst. Psssst. Mister Lloyd.

SLEAZY TAB: What do you want? Can’t you see I’m busy? (Stomps the newspaper.) Take that. And that. And that. I guess I showed her. I’m exhausted. I’d better decompose myself. (Takes several deep breaths.)

PANHANDLE: What did you think about my latest trick? Chewing gum on the floor?
SLEAZY TAB: I told you I wanted to put that printing press out of business, and all you can come up with is Elmer’s glue and chewing gum. (Crooks his finger.) Come here. (PANHANDLE looks over his shoulder, hoping there’s someone behind him.) I said come here.

PANHANDLE: (Points to himself, apprehensive.) Me?

SLEAZY TAB: (Softly.) Uh-huh.

PANHANDLE: (Slow walk toward SLEAZY TAB.) You’re not going to hit me again, are you?

SLEAZY TAB: No, I’m not going to hit you again. I’m going to hit you again and again and again. (Bop, bop, bop.)

PANHANDLE: Ow! Ouch! Ow!

CHIFFON’S VOICE: (From OFF LEFT.) Don’t drop my jewel case, Annabelle. It’s not insured.

ANNABELLE’S VOICE: (From OFF LEFT.) No, Miss Chiffon.

SLEAZY TAB: Someone’s coming. Make yourself scarce.

PANHANDLE: How do I do that?

SLEAZY TAB: Get out of here! (PANHANDLE zooms DOWN RIGHT and OUT.)

CHIFFON’S VOICE: (From OFF LEFT.) Not much of a town.

SLEAZY TAB: That voice? Is it possible? Chiffon Delure here in Four Corners? (He slinks onto a chair, picks up what’s left of the newspaper and pretends to read, his face obscured. ENTER CHIFFON DELURE STAGE LEFT, a ravishing femme fatale. Clever, but a crook. Large picture hat and a feather boa. She is followed by her maid, ANNABELLE, a pretty girl dressed in a maid’s uniform, apron and cap. She carries a jewel case [box]. CHIFFON strolls CENTER and sizes up the office.)

CHIFFON: It’s obviously not the New York Tribune.

ANNABELLE: It’s not the [supply the name of a local town or school newspaper], either.

CHIFFON: (Points to telegraph office.) There’s the telegraph office. But where’s the telegraph operator?

SLEAZY TAB: (Drops the newspaper. Aside.) No doubt about it... Chiffon Delure! (He stands, chest out. To CHIFFON.) Remember me, Chiffon?

CHIFFON: (Reacts, amazed to see the villain.) Lloyd! Why, you despicable rat! You’re here!
ANNABELLE: (Screams, lifts the hem of her skirt and nervously looks at the floor.) Rat?! Where? Where? I’m afraid of rodents.

CHIFFON: This rodent stands on two feet and talks. Do I remember you? How could I forget?

SLEAZY TAB: We will exchange words. Dismiss your servant.

CHIFFON: Wait for me outside, Annabelle. If you hear a scream, don’t panic. It won’t be me. (Points to SLEAZY TAB.) It will be him.

SLEAZY TAB: (Cowers.) No violence. I abhor violence.

CHIFFON: You heard me, Annabelle.

ANNABELLE: (Curtsies.) Yes, Miss Delure.

SLEAZY TAB: That jewel case looks heavy. (Indicates table.) Why don’t you leave it here? I’ll keep an eye on it. (Aside.) And both my hands!

CHIFFON: Fat chance. Beat it, Annabelle. (Another curtsy and ANNABELLE EXITS LEFT. Slyly, CHIFFON takes a small pistol from her handbag. SLEAZY TAB sees this.)

SLEAZY TAB: Hear, hear, none of that. (He struggles with CHIFFON and manages to take away the small pistol. He puts it into some pocket or on the table, as CHIFFON produces a knife and attempts to ventilate the villain. They struggle with much “Oooohing” and “Aaaaahing.” SLEAZY TAB takes away the knife, pockets it. CHIFFON produces a blackjack and tries to hit him. More struggling. SLEAZY TAB takes away the blackjack, pockets it.) You haven’t changed.

CHIFFON: A woman has to protect herself.

SLEAZY TAB: You have nothing to fear from me, Chiffon.

CHIFFON: Ha! I knew we’d meet again one day. I intend to have my revenge.

SLEAZY TAB: Revenge?

CHIFFON: Don’t play coy. All the money we made in that phony stock deal back in Topeka. You took it and ran.

SLEAZY TAB: You misunderstand. I planned to invest in the gold market, but unfortunately I got waylaid by a poker game. I was too embarrassed to face you.

CHIFFON: I want my share of the money.

SLEAZY TAB: You’ll get it. And more. Only it will take a little time. You’re a clever woman...
CHIFFON: You better believe it.

SLEAZY TAB: I’m on to something good in Four Corners. I’m running for mayor.

CHIFFON: Who’d vote for you?

SLEAZY TAB: I would. The only thing that stands between me and the mayor’s hat is this miserable newspaper. It’s owned by a blind old bat, and the editor is her granddaughter. They don’t like me.

CHIFFON: Who does?

SLEAZY TAB: Pay attention. I’ll make it worth your while.

CHIFFON: I’m listening.

SLEAZY TAB: I happen to know something the townspeople don’t. The railway plans to use Four Corners for a trunk line. Tracks extending into the mountains and choo-choos coming back heavy with silver, iron, gold, zinc and (Struggling with the pronunciation.) molybdenum.

CHIFFON: I’m beginning to get the picture.

SLEAZY TAB: I thought you would.

CHIFFON: As mayor, you’d have your hand in the cookie jar.

SLEAZY TAB: Exactly. The railway will have to deal with me. I can drive a hard bargain. But, first, I must be elected mayor.

CHIFFON: Simple. Buy the newspaper.

SLEAZY TAB: Granny Print won’t sell. Her granddaughter won’t let her.

CHIFFON: Get rid of the granddaughter.

SLEAZY TAB: Too dangerous. She’s well-liked in this town. And the sheriff’s her boyfriend.

CHIFFON: Burn it down.

SLEAZY TAB: Too obvious.

CHIFFON: Get rid of the grandmother.

SLEAZY TAB: She has too many friends. Questions would be asked.

CHIFFON: I’ll think of something.

SLEAZY TAB: Splendid. By the way, what are you doing in Four Corners?

CHIFFON: Passing through. On my way to Salt Lake City. I’m on the stage now.
SLEAZY TAB: I didn’t know.

CHIFFON: A little singing and dancing.

SLEAZY TAB: A bouncing bundle of talent.

CHIFFON: I’ve done quite well for myself. I’ll show you. (Calls LEFT.) Annabelle!

ANNABELLE’S VOICE: (From OFF LEFT.) Coming, Miss Chiffon.

CHIFFON: Would you like to see my jewelry?

SLEAZY TAB: Jewelry? Oh, I’d like that. Yes, I would, Chiffon.

CHIFFON: Nothing fake. No paste. (ANNABELLE ENTERS STAGE LEFT.) Annabelle, put my jewel case on the table.

ANNABELLE: Yes, Miss Chiffon. (She puts the jewel case on the table and steps back. CHIFFON sashays over to the table and opens the case.)

CHIFFON: Have a look. No charge. It’s on the house.

SLEAZY TAB: (Aside.) No doubt the ice is hot. (He can barely contain himself at the thought of all that glitter so close. His fingers begin to wiggle. He crosses to the table and looks into the jewel case. His eyes widen. His fingers are twitching, positively itchy.) Oh, so pretty. Oh, so lovely. Lovely, lovely jewelry. (He dips one hand to pick up a piece of jewelry and CHIFFON slaps the case shut on SLEAZY TAB’S hand. He screams in pain and pulls back his hand, which he holds like a wounded claw. He hops about the stage, waving his hand to cool it.) Ow! Ouch! Ow! What a dirty trick! You’re wicked! Oh, that smarts. (He puts the hand under his armpit. He takes it out and blows on it.)

CHIFFON: Now we’re even for Topeka. Annabelle.

ANNABELLE: Yes, Miss Chiffon?

CHIFFON: Take the jewel case.

ANNABELLE: Yes, Miss Chiffon. (She closes the jewel case, stands LEFT of table. SHERIFF JACK NEWSWORTHY ENTERS STAGE LEFT. Young, handsome, manly. Big tin star on his vest. Holster and weapon. He strides CENTER as he sings.)

JACK: “I went to the Salton Sea
   And what did I see?
   I saw the Salton Sea.”

CHIFFON: (To audience.) What is this? Amateur night?

SLEAZY TAB: Good day, Sheriff.
JACK: Good day, Mister Sneezy.

SLEAZY TAB: Sleazy, Sleazy. The name is Sleazy. Sleazy Tab Lloyd. May I introduce an old friend who’s young. (Indicates.) Miss Chiffon Delure. (He continues to nurse his wounded hand.)

JACK: (Takes his hat off.) Howdy, Miss Delure.

CHIFFON: (Likes what she sees.) Hello, Sheriff.

JACK: Passing through?

CHIFFON: I’m due in Salt Lake City tomorrow. Unhappily, my one-horse buggy had wheel trouble.

JACK: Real trouble?

ANNABELLE: No, wheel trouble.

JACK: That’s “wheely” unfortunate.

SLEAZY TAB: Miss Delure is an entertainer. Singing and dancing.

JACK: We don’t get much of that in Four Corners.

CHIFFON: You seem to have a cozy little town here, Sheriff. Why is it called Four Corners?

JACK: I thought everybody knew.

ANNABELLE: Miss Delure is not everybody.

JACK: This newspaper office stands over the very spot where four territories and states meet. There’s not another spot like it in the whole United States. Watch. Right now I’m standing in Colorado. (Jumps RIGHT.) Now I’m standing in Utah. (Jumps DOWNSTAGE a bit.) Now I’m standing in Arizona. (Jumps LEFT.) Now I’m standing in New Mexico. I’ll do it again. (He repeats business.) Colorado. Utah. Arizona. New Mexico.

ANNABELLE: Just like hopscotch.

CHIFFON: (Flirting.) You’re very light on your feet, Sheriff.

JACK: I reckon I am when it comes to explaining Four Corners. It’s my pride and joy. Our community is also known for being a model of law and justice.

SLEAZY TAB: Well, Sheriff. Then I wish you’d say something to Aspen. She tells everyone I am this desperado known as Swampwater Sam. It makes things awkward for me. Especially around election time.

JACK: Aw, shucks. I’m sure she don’t mean no harm, Mr. Queazy.
SLEAZY TAB: The name is Sleazy. Sleazy Tab Lloyd.

ASPEN: *(ENTERS STAGE RIGHT. JUDY is with her.)* I thought I heard voices.

SLEAZY TAB: Chiffon, this is the editor of the “Colorado Clarion.” The girl I was telling you about. Miss Aspen Print. She’s also the telegrapher.

CHIFFON: The very person I’m looking for. *(Produce some paper.)* I must get news to Salt Lake City that I’ve been delayed. It’s urgent.

ASPEN: No problem. *(She sits behind telegraph desk, RIGHT. From some drawer she produces a hat with a small sign stuck on it that reads: “TELEGRAPHER.”)* May I have the message?

CHIFFON: Of course. *(She crosses over and hands the paper to ASPEN.)*

ASPEN: *(Gives it a quick scan and begins to send the message via Morse code, hitting the keyboard.)* Dot dot dot. Dot dash. Dot dash dot dash. Dash. Dot dash dot dot... *(ALL stare fascinated at ASPEN, as she continues to “dot” and “dash” the message to Salt Lake City.)*

JACK: *(Aside.)* Ain’t she a marvel?

ASPEN: *(On and on.)* Dot dash. Dash dot dash. Dot... *(As she continues to “send,” PANHANDLE runs IN from the street.)*

PANHANDLE: Hey, everybody! Edward Torial is leading a big parade coming down the street. Come and see! *(ALL except ASPEN and JACK begin to EXIT LEFT.)*

JUDY: We don’t want to miss this! *(As they EXIT, JACK stares romantically at ASPEN.)*


JACK: I reckon I could watch you dot and dash all day long, Aspen. When it comes to dotting and dashing, you’re the best.

ASPEN: *(Finished with the message. Stands.)* Why, Jack, that’s the nicest compliment I’ve ever had.

JACK: Shucks. *(Hand over his heart.)* It was my heart speaking.

ASPEN: *(Aside.)* Did you hear that? It was his heart speaking. I feel certain in a moment or two he will propose. Oh, happy day. *(She takes off the telegrapher’s hat and puts it on the desk. Produces a small mirror. Fusses with her hair. Puts mirror aside. Steps to JACK.)* Jack.
JACK: Aspen.

ASPEN: Isn’t there something you want to say to me?

JACK: Yes. There is.

ASPEN: I’m all ears. *(She puts a finger behind each ear and wiggles it.)*

JACK: It’s about this Swampwater Sam business. *(ASPEN frowns.)* You know I checked it out. Swampwater Sam has been behind bars in Texas for the last five years. You calling Lloyd Swampwater ain’t logical.

ASPEN: A woman doesn’t need logic when she has intuition.

JACK: There you go, using those big journalistic words again.

ASPEN: I’m a newspaper editor. Big words come with the territory. In fact, big words come with all four of the states, too. I have good reason to suspect Lloyd of being a slimy culprit. For one thing, his henchman is a pickpocket.

JACK: I know Panhandle’s a petty thief, but I have to catch him in the act before I can arrest him.

ASPEN: Lloyd has money, but no one knows where it came from.

JACK: That ain’t against the law.

ASPEN: *(Correcting.)* It “isn’t” against the law.

JACK: That too.

ASPEN: *(Modestly.)* But there’s also something else. Prepare yourself for a shock, Jack. *(Moves away from JACK.)* Today he stole a kiss.

JACK: *(Horrified.)* Stole a kiss? That’s against the law of this here sheriff!

ASPEN: Uh-huh. *(Taps side of her face.)* He kissed me right there when I wasn’t looking.

JACK: Why didn’t you call me immediately?

ASPEN: Because he’s our best advertiser... and you know how much the “Colorado Clarion” needs the money.

JACK: He took advantage. The fella’s a skunk. That’s what he is. A skunk. *(Fists up.)* He’ll answer to me.

ASPEN: *(Steps back to JACK.)* Never mind about that now. Jack, aren’t you ever going to propose?

JACK: Wish I could, Aspen. But you’re so far above me. You’re intelligent and clever and perky, and I’m only a lowly lawman. I’m not worthy.
ASPEN: I don’t mind unworthy. I can live with unworthy.

JACK: But some day I want my name to be worthy of the front page of the “Colorado Clarion.” One day I’ll make you real proud, and on that day I’ll propose.

ASPEN: But when is that day going to be?

JACK: Hard to say. But until then, sweet Aspen, you know I’ll always keep my prescription to the “Colorado Clarion.” (Babble of excited VOICES OFFSTAGE, LEFT.)

ASPEN: (Correcting.) Subscription.

JACK: That too.

VOICES: (OFFSTAGE LEFT.) Vote for Edward Torial! Torial! Torial! Vote for Torial! Edward! Edward! Edward Torial! (MRS. GRISLEY and MRS. PICKLES, upstanding citizens, ENTER LEFT. MRS. GRISLEY carries a sign on a heavy stick reading “VOTE FOR TORIAL.” MRS. PICKLES is beating a drum. [NOTE: OPTIONAL EXTRAS as CITIZENS can be added, if desired.])

MRS. GRISLEY: Vote for Edward Torial!

MRS. PICKLES: Edward! Edward! Edward Torial!

JACK: Howdy, Miss Grisley. Howdy, Miss Pickles.

BOTH: Sheriff.

GRANNY: (ENTERS STAGE RIGHT from press room.) What’s all the commotion?

EDWARD’S VOICE: (From OFF LEFT.) Make way, please. Don’t crowd.

JUDY: (Runs IN FROM STAGE LEFT. She has some leaflets.) Vote for Torial. Have a leaflet, Sheriff. (Gives him one.)

JACK: Now be careful with litterin’ leaflets, Judy. There are fines for such.

JUDY: Really? What are the fines?

JACK: (Steps to each state.) Five dollars in Colorado. Ten dollars in Utah. Fifteen dollars in Arizona. Twenty dollars in New Mexico.

JUDY: (To JACK.) Gosh, I better not drop anything in New Mexico! (Back to task.) Have a leaflet, Aspen. (Gives her one.) Have a leaflet, Granny.

GRANNY: What do I need one of them things for? I printed them. In fact, I accidentally printed half the leaflet on my apron. See?
EDWARD’S VOICE: (As he ENTERS STAGE LEFT.) I stand on my record! And it’s not a slippery place. (He is ONSTAGE. OTHERS applaud. As EDWARD speaks, SLEAZY TAB, CHIFFON, PANHANDLE, ANNABELLE ENTER DOWN LEFT and stand by the table. EDWARD takes CENTER. ASPEN and JACK step aside. EDWARD motions for silence. As SLEAZY TAB has already observed, EDWARD TORIAL is a windbag. If he were a stage actor, he would definitely be considered “a ham.”) Thank you, thank you, friends and voters. Others. You all know me. I’m an honest man. Honest Edward Torial. I once heard Sleazy Tab Lloyd say I didn’t have enough sense to be a good crook. I took his remark as a compliment. (Applause.)

SLEAZY TAB: Joke, joke. I meant it as a joke.

EDWARD: Fortunately, I have the backing of the “Colorado Clarion”, an honest publication if ever there was one. (Applause.)

ASPEN: Thank you, Mr. Torial.

EDWARD: Now, are there any questions?

MRS. GRISLEY: What are you going to do about the potholes, Edward?

EDWARD: The problem is easily solved. I’m going to ignore them. That’s the only thing to do with potholes.

MRS. PICKLES: What are you going to do about the buffalos that roam free in the street?

SLEAZY TAB: (Aside.) Next thing you know, we’ll have deer and antelope playing.

EDWARD: Sheriff Jack Newsworthy and I have discussed this dilemma. I would like to turn the question over to Sheriff Newsworthy.

JACK: Thank you, Mr. Torial. We are in the midst of designing a program to fine flagrant jay-walking buffalos. We are also planning parking spaces for law-abiding animals, as well.

SLEAZY TAB: Parking spaces for animals? Charging a jay-walking buffalo?

GRANNY: Well, they have been known to charge us.

EDWARD: Though collecting the fines may be quite difficult, ignorance of the law is no excuse. (Applause.)

SLEAZY TAB: (To CROWD.) How can you even think of voting for this buffoon?

JACK: Mr. Lloyd. Please note that Mr. Torial has the right to run for office.
ASPEN: *(Inspired.)* Oh, Jack. What would our community do without you?

JACK: *(Modest.)* I’m just doing the job Four Corners pays me to do.

EDWARD: Dearest friends and voters, ignore my eccentric opponent. Sleazy Tab Lloyd is losing the race and he knows it. Remember, I came up the hard way. Like Abe Lincoln. I was so poor...

OTHERS: How poor were you?

EDWARD: I was so poor my parents had to buy me shoelaces one at a time. *(Optional OFFSTAGE RIM SHOT. MRS. GRISLEY and MRS. PICKLES sob.)*

MRS. GRISLEY: That’s the saddest thing I ever heard.

MRS. PICKLES: How poignant. One shoelace at a time.

SLEAZY TAB: Don’t listen to him. He’s full of drivel. Edward Torial is nothing but a windbag. And a coward.

EDWARD: Coward, did you say? I resent that remark. Why, once I took hot lead in a bank robbery.

MRS. GRISLEY: Where were you shot?

EDWARD: If I recall correctly, between the desk and the wastebasket.

SLEAZY TAB: He probably shot himself in the foot with his own gun.

Vote for Lloyd! Vote for Lloyd!

PANHANDLE: Lloyd! Lloyd! Vote for Lloyd!

OTHERS: Torial! Torial! Vote for Torial!

SLEAZY TAB: I say bah on Torial.

JACK: We shall let the voters have the final say, Mister Lloyd. It’s up to them. I have no doubt they will vote for common sense.

SLEAZY TAB: That lets you out.

OTHERS: Boo! Boo! *(SLEAZY TAB shakes in a fury. He’s about to explode. CHIFFON puts her hand on his arm to restrain him.)*

EDWARD: No matter how heated this campaign gets, I’m ready for battle. As Spartacus, the Roman gladiola, once said “The teakettle sings best when it’s up to its neck in hot water.” *(Sweeping gesture LEFT.)*

On to the steps of the City Hall. Across the street. I lead. You follow! *(Crowd follows after EDWARD, who sweeps OUT LEFT. MRS. PICKLES beats the drum. Shouts of “Torial! Torial! Vote for Torial!” GRANNY EXITS STAGE RIGHT to press room.)*
ASPEN: (To JACK.) I certainly must go. There should be quite a story in this.

JACK: (To ASPEN.) And I’m sure I’ll be needed for crowd control. May I escort you?

ASPEN: (To JACK.) It would be an honor. (She and JACK EXIT, leaving SLEAZY TAB, CHIFFON, PANHANDLE and ANNABELLE.)

SLEAZY TAB: (Moves CENTER.) You can see what I’m up against. It’s all because of this miserable newspaper.

CHIFFON: When’s the election?

PANHANDLE: Soon.

SLEAZY TAB: Too soon.

CHIFFON: I’ll have to work fast. Annabelle.

ANNABELLE: Yes, Miss Chiffon?

CHIFFON: Fetch me the file marked “Top Secret.”

ANNABELLE: Yes, Miss Chiffon. (She curtsies, runs OUT LEFT.)

SLEAZY TAB: Can this Annabelle be trusted?

CHIFFON: No one can be trusted. You ought to know that. As far as Annabelle is concerned, I’m only an entertainer. Do you have the old lady’s signature on anything?

SLEAZY TAB: As a matter of fact, I do. (Aside.) I knew she was going to ask. (Produces a receipt.) I always get a receipt when I place an ad. (CHIFFON pulls it away, looks.)

CHIFFON: Kind of shaky.

PANHANDLE: So is Granny Print.

SLEAZY TAB: What are you up to?

CHIFFON: Patience. How much money do you have on you?

SLEAZY TAB: Nothing but two gold coins. A hundred apiece.

CHIFFON: That’ll do. Put them on the floor over there. (Points RIGHT.)

SLEAZY TAB: I hope you know what you’re doing.

CHIFFON: I do. (SLEAZY TAB finds the coins and puts them on the floor.)

CHIFFON: (To PANHANDLE.) Pen and ink.

PANHANDLE: Sure thing. (He moves to the editor’s desk and takes the ink pot and a pen. Returns to table and puts them down. CHIFFON sits. ANNABELLE RE-ENTERS with the file. “Top Secret” is clearly marked.)
CHIFFON: I’ll take that. (ANNABELLE hands it over.) Go along with the others. I want to know what Edward Torial is saying.

ANNABELLE: He doesn’t say anything. He’s a windbag.

CHIFFON: You heard me. Beat it.

ANNABELLE: (Curtsies.) Yes, Miss Chiffon. (She EXITS.)

CHIFFON: (Opens the file and rummages through the contents.) Let’s see—“Birth Certificate”—“Death Certificate”—“Dog License”—“Hunting License”—“Immigration Permit”—(Finds what she wants.) Aha. This is what I’m looking for. “Real Estate Transaction.” (Fast, she dips the pen into the ink pot, takes a quick look at the receipt, and then scratches in GRANNY’S name.) You come over here, Tab, and sign on the line below Granny’s signature.

SLEAZY TAB: I hope this works.

CHIFFON: It will. I know what I’m good at. (He crosses, takes the pen, scribbles his name.) What’s the date?

SLEAZY TAB: The fifth. (CHIFFON scribbles it in. Makes a few more notations.)

PANHANDLE: Granny don’t see so smart on account of I took her good glasses and hid them.

CHIFFON: That works to our advantage. Get her out here.

PANHANDLE: (Moves for press room, EXITS STAGE RIGHT.) Hey, Granny!

SLEAZY TAB: Once I own this boring newspaper, I can influence the vote.

CHIFFON: I gather you’re not the most popular man in town.

SLEAZY TAB: I will be. I promise you that.

CHIFFON: (Puts the file on the floor.) Remember, half of everything you steal belongs to me.

SLEAZY TAB: Do you think I’d try to cheat you?

CHIFFON: Yes.

SLEAZY TAB: Gad. How I’m misunderstood.

GRANNY: (ENTERS STAGE RIGHT.) I hope it’s not another editorial. (PANHANDLE follows her IN.)

CHIFFON: (Stands.) Mister Lloyd has pointed out two coins to me. (Indicates.) There on the floor. (GRANNY moves to coins, squints down.) They don’t belong to me and they don’t belong to Mister Lloyd.
PANHANDLE: Maybe they belong to me. *(SLEAZY TAB lifts his walking stick as if to strike down PANHANDLE.)*

SLEAZY TAB: Not on your life!

PANHANDLE: *(Cowers.)* Sorry, boss.

GRANNY: *(Squinting.)* They look like two large pennies.

CHIFFON: That’s right. Two large pennies.

SLEAZY TAB: You’re in luck, Granny Print. Finders keepers.

CHIFFON: Losers weepers.

GRANNY: I reckon. *(She picks up the gold pieces, pockets them. CHIFFON folds the document and hands it to SLEAZY TAB. They shake hands.)*

SLEAZY TAB: Panhandle, tell everyone to get back in here. I have an important announcement to make.

PANHANDLE: Good as done. *(He starts OUT LEFT, trips.)* Oops.

SLEAZY TAB: Watch where you’re tripping.

PANHANDLE: You can count on me, boss. *(He starts OUT again, trips. Makes it to the EXIT, trips again.)*

CHIFFON: *(Unimpressed.)* Where did you find him?

SLEAZY TAB: In a deli trying to order chop suey. He’s dumb, but useful. He’s an excellent pickpocket, and he works for very little.

GRANNY: Who are you talking about?

SLEAZY TAB: A mutual acquaintance. You wouldn’t be interested.

GRANNY: I wouldn’t?

SLEAZY TAB: *(Admiring the document.)* Chiffon, you’re a magician.

CHIFFON: So are you. Only you disappear with other people’s money.

SLEAZY TAB: Back to that, are we? I tell you, I lost the Topeka money in a card game. Can I help it if I have a gambler’s blood?

CHIFFON: What’s the gambler’s name?

GRANNY: Speak up. I can’t hear you.

SLEAZY TAB: I said you’ve done a wise thing, Granny Print.

GRANNY: I have?

CHIFFON: You’ll never regret it.

GRANNY: I won’t?
CHIFFON: Why don’t you take a nice long vacation?
GRANNY: I could do with a vacation.
CHIFFON: Morocco is nice this time of year.
PANHANDLE: (RE-ENTERS, motioning OFFSTAGE CHARACTERS to follow him IN.) Come on, come on. Mister Lloyd don’t like to be kept waiting. (CITIZENS crowd IN from LEFT. They include MRS. GRISLEY, MRS. PICKLES, JUDY, ANNABELLE, EDWARD, JACK, ASPEN, OPTIONAL EXTRAS. Voices overlap.)

MRS. GRISLEY: What can it be?
MRS. PICKLES: Must be something important.
JUDY: Maybe Aspen will put out an extra.
ASPEN: I will if it’s important.
EDWARD: Lloyd is trying to steal my thunder.
JACK: We’ll know soon enough.
SLEAZY TAB: That didn’t take you long.
PANHANDLE: Edward forgot. We don’t have steps to the City Hall. We don’t even have a City Hall.
SLEAZY TAB: (Steps CENTER, wide smile.) Attention, please. Friends, dear friends, I have an important announcement to make.
JACK: Well, what is it?
ASPEN: Does this contain a story for the “Colorado Clarion”? (Pause for impact.)
SLEAZY TAB: I think so. Ladies and gentlemen, I have just purchased the “Colorado Clarion.”
CITIZENS: What!
ASPEN: (Steps to SLEAZY TAB.) What are you talking about? Granny would never sell. Would you, Granny?
GRANNY: Morocco is nice this time of the year.
JUDY: She’s always talking about selling.
SLEAZY TAB: I have her signature on a bill of sale. Is this her signature or is it not? (He shoves the document under ASPEN’S nose. She looks, reacts.)
ASPEN: I’d know that signature anywhere.
EDWARD: This could affect my campaign!

JACK: (Steps to ASPEN.) Let me see that. (Grabs document, looks.)

CHIFFON: I myself witnessed the transaction.

JACK: Says here the newspaper was sold for two hundred dollars. Where’s the money?

SLEAZY TAB: Best ask Granny Print.

ASPEN: Granny, you don’t have two hundred dollars, do you?

GRANNY: What do I look like? A millionaire? All I’ve got is two cents. (She produces the gold pieces. ASPEN and JACK look, gasp.)

ASPEN: Granny!

JACK: Two cents? Granny, you’ve got two hundred dollars there. In gold.

CITIZENS: Gold!

GRANNY: (Squints.) Looks like two pennies to me.

SLEAZY TAB: (Waves document.) This bill of sale will stand up in any court of law.

MRS. GRISLEY: Sleazy Tab Lloyd now owns the town’s only newspaper.

MRS. PICKLES: Imagine.

SLEAZY TAB: I’m a jackal of all trades.

EDWARD: The sale couldn’t have come at a worse time.

ASPEN: Oh, Granny.

GRANNY: I don’t remember selling anything. I think my mind’s failing. That’s it. I have ambrosia.

ASPEN: Oh, Jack. (She goes into JACK’S arms for comfort.)

JACK: Hush, gal. Maybe things ain’t as bad as they seem.

ASPEN: I don’t see how they could be any worse.

SLEAZY TAB: (Triumphanty.) I know you’re all happy for me. Tomorrow’s editorial will be a ringing endorsement of Sleazy Tab Lloyd for mayor! (CHIFFON and PANHANDLE applaud. OTHERS FREEZE in gestures of horror and alarm. SLEAZY TAB couldn’t be happier.)

End Of Scene One

If you wish an INTERMISSION, it comes at this point. If there is no intermission, use a BLACKOUT to indicate a passage of time.

End of Script Sample
PRODUCTION NOTES


Table with two chairs. Optional tablecloth.

BROUGHT ON, SCENE ONE: Cap, newspapers, optional canvas bag for newspapers, leaflets (JUDY); spectacles, leather apron (GRANNY); walking stick, paper for advertisement, two gold coins (SLEAZY TAB); jewel case, file marked “Top Secret” containing documents (ANNABELLE); pistol, knife, blackjack, piece of paper (CHIFFON); tin star, holster and gun (JACK); hat with sign reading: “Telegrapher,” small mirror (ASPEN); sign on stick “VOTE FOR Torial” (MRS. GRISLEY); drum (MRS. PICKLES).

BROUGHT ON, SCENE TWO: Newspapers, jewel case (PANHANDLE); leather apron, roller (ANNABELLE); newspaper, tag reading “I VOTED” (MRS. GRISLEY, MRS. PICKLES); mailbags, envelope with letter inside (DUSTY); tiny glass or thimble (JUDY); hand mirror, powder puff, shoe-box containing slips of blue paper (CHIFFON); identical looking shoebox (JACK); blackjack (SLEAZY TAB).

COSTUMES

The usual western melodrama wardrobe. Long dresses and/or skirts for the ladies. Jeans and western shirts for the gents. EDWARD should wear a suit with a vest, SLEAZY TAB his villain’s outfit and CHIFFON’S gown should be flashy.

DRESSING UP THE SET

You might add a cuspidor, file cabinet, clothes tree, stuffed animal head or Indian blanket on the wall.

FLEXIBLE CASTING

GRANNY could become “GRAMPS,” MRS. GRISLEY and/or MRS. PICKLES could become “MISTEr.” EDWARD could become “EDNA,” JUDY could become “JUD.” DUSTY could be played as a FEMaLe role. A minor line change here and there is all that it takes.

MISCELLANEOUS

To make it look more realistic when SLEAZY TAB supposedly “bops” PANHANDLE on the head, put a rubber ball over the cane and paint it...
black. The blackjack need be nothing more than a stuffed black sock.

Naturally, CHIFFON doesn’t slam the jewel case on SLEAZY TAB’S hand (unless you can work this). The lid of the jewel case is positioned so the audience can’t see the hand. CHIFFON slams down the lid and SLEAZY TAB reacts. If you can’t locate a printer’s roller, use a cooking roller and paint it black.
We hope you’ve enjoyed this script sample.

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