

GURPS[®]

Fourth Edition

TRANSHUMAN SPACE

TERALOGOS NEWS[™] 2100, FOURTH QUARTER[™]



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Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the **GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition**. Page references that begin with B refer to that book, not this one.

INTRODUCTION

Back in 2002-2003, the background for Steve Jackson Games’ *Transhuman Space* hard SF setting was expanded by a series of reports from that solar system’s leading news source, Teralogos News (*Fifth Wave*, p. 64), distributed through an e-mail mailing list. Since then, this rich collection of setting details, local color, and potential scenario seeds has only been available in the form of a little-known raw-text file.

So we’ve decided to do something about that. This is one of four free PDF files that collect those reports.

The dates on each report are a bit of stylistic detail, related to the real-world dates on which the posts were originally distributed. Don’t take them too seriously as setting canon; after all, *Transhuman Space* doesn’t have a fixed future or

“metaplot.” The incidents described in these reports can occur whenever suits your own campaign.

– Phil Masters

ABOUT THE EDITOR

Phil Masters is the author of *Transhuman Space: Changing Times*, *Transhuman Space: Shell-Tech*, *Transhuman Space: Personnel Files 1-5*, and a chapter in *Transhuman Space: High Frontier*. He has also worked on countless other **GURPS** products, including **GURPS Castle Falkenstein**, **The Discworld Roleplaying Game**, and **GURPS Y2K**, and on products for other companies.

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2100, FOURTH QUARTER

BIOROID IMPLICATED IN MUNICH MURDER?

MUNICH, Germany/Teralogos: October 21, 2100

City police report progress in the investigation of the murder of preservationist activist Friedrich Knodt, who was found with a slit throat in an alley in Munich yesterday.

According to a police spokesperson, hairs were uncovered on the victim's body that contained DNA fragments common to biological androids, or bioroids as they are colloquially known. Bioroids are rarely seen in Germany, as their manufacture has been banned in European Union for the last decade. However, a small bioroid community does exist, as Germany and other E.U. states have granted refugee status to bioroids who have escaped exploitation in other nations.

Sources in the Munich police department told Teralogos that a trace amount of synthetic sexual pheromones was found at the crime scene, which suggests that the perpetrator was a so-called pleasure bioroid such as the once-popular, but discontinued, Eros or Incubus series. Although these models are no longer manufactured by major biotechnology companies, offworld factories in L5 and the Belt are rumored to supply an underground black market on Mars, Luna, and Earth.

Police have so far declined to speculate on a motive for the murder. However, Knodt, 51, was the vice president of the German chapter of the Preservationist League, a Europe-wide non-governmental organization opposed to radical modification of human or animal genomes which has in the past advocated the institutionalization of all bioroid refugees for public safety. Asked to comment on reports that a bioroid may have been the assailant, Markus Lange, German president of the Preservationist League, said he was saddened but not surprised. "We all grieve for the loss of our colleague. Many of us have received death threats from radicals and malcontents before, but we all felt that our work was too important to abandon. And now our dear friend has paid the ultimate price."

"I would not be surprised if the killer turns out to be a bioroid that was legally granted asylum here. Their thought processes are not their own; while they look human, they are

living machines. They remain slaves to their conditioning, which no amount of so-called socialization can truly erase. We should not let these beings run free in our streets merely out of a misplaced sense of pity for their fate."

Silvie Graf, a spokesperson for the Munich Bioroidenhäuser, a pan-sapient rights advocacy group which operates half-way houses for bioroid refugees, responded indignantly to the accusation.

"Let the police finish their investigation before rushing to judgment," said Graf. "There are many unanswered questions. What was Markus Lange doing with a so-called pleasure bioroid? Some bioroid refugees are forced to hide their identities due to the prejudice that the Preservationist League exemplifies. I cannot speculate here, but in the past, Eros and Tianyi bioroids living as citizens in the E.U. have been blackmailed for sexual favors or subjected to attacks and abuse by unthinking humans. The true perpetrator of this violence may not have been a lost, confused and victimized artificial person, but society itself."

— filed by Jürgen Hubert

PRESIDENT DECRIES "BRAIN DRAIN"

WINDOW ROCK, Cibola/Teralogos: October 28, 2100

U.S. President Roberto Marquez today used a campaign stop at a Cibola kindercomp factory to call for economic incentives intended to stem the flow of young, educated Americans leaving the United States for foreign jobs.

"America is a free country, and that means that any American is free to seek his fortune wherever he may choose to go," said Marquez. "Still, when talented young Americans leave these United States in such large numbers, we've got to recognize that there's a problem. We're suffering from a brain drain, and it's past time to plug it if our great nation is going to have a future."

President Marquez went on to announce several new federal initiatives, including the relaxation of regulations on Fifth Wave industries, tax incentives for hiring American citizens, and the Cold Start! program for outer system economic development.

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Although he did not endorse the reduction in the minimum uploading age proposed by a minority of transhumanist Republicans, he steadfastly rejected any consideration of the so-called “Methuselah tax” on longevity upgrades that has found favor among an increasing number of preservationist Democrats.

– filed by Jon F. Zeigler

GEN-GAP DOMINATES DEBATE AS U.S. ELECTION NEARS

PORTLAND, Oregon/Teralogos: October 28, 2100

Speaking during a teletour of the popular Five Corners virtuality kingdom, U.S. presidential challenger Donna Kevlan denounced President Marquez’ plan to counter the so-called “brain drain” of young Americans.

The former mayor of Chicago called the President’s program “the same tired mix of Third Wave rhetoric, pork-barrel spending, and half-measures we’ve come to expect from the Marquez administration.”

Kevlan, who at 42 is two decades younger than her Republican opponent, said the President was out of touch with the concerns of younger Americans. “Aging is no longer a loss of vigor, but an accumulation of knowledge and power,” warned Kevlan. “Young Americans recognize that no matter how talented they are, they face a wait of decades before there is room for them at the top of any career ladder. Until fundamental reforms are made to our system, who can blame them when they move to the developing nations or out to the colonies?”

President Marquez, en route to a meeting with Andes War veterans in Florida, responded sharply to Kevlan’s remarks. “As long as I’m president, this nation will not make decisions based on a policy of division,” Marquez told reporters. “We’re all Americans, whatever our genotype or generation.”

– filed by Jon F. Zeigler

People are seriously wondering if Ithemba Biotechnologies has been creating and running high-end eidolons of key politicians.

ITHEMBA SEEKS TO QUASH “EIDOLON SCANDAL”

JOHANNESBURG/Teralogos: November 4, 2100

In the latest twist in a long-running scandal, it has been reported that over the last two years, Ithemba Biotechnologies recruited three or more specialist AI programmers from Red Duncanite “Trojan Mafia” companies. This raises the serious possibility that Ithemba have been creating near or fully sapient

AI models of leading South African Coalition (SAC) politicians for strategic purposes. Ithemba, however, continues to insist that it is the victim of a smear campaign by radical factions within the SAC Council. “It’s nonsense,” said a spokesman, “but it’s dangerous nonsense. These supposed revelations – which involve the release of confidential immigration records – prove complicity at high levels in government.”

The scandal, if that’s what it is, first broke early last year, when SAC officials confirmed that several leading politicians in both the Kenyan People’s Coalition party and Uganda’s New Democratic Alliance had reported strangers asking after their old friends and relatives in their home towns, and asking probing questions about their childhoods.

In itself, this sounded like a case of overenthusiastic journalism or an attempt by political rivals to find material for smear campaigns. However, by June, these investigators had allegedly been traced back to Ithemba. Even then, no one read too much into it. Ithemba Biotechnologies is entangled with SAC politics at every level, and some degree of background-checking is expected. The fact that some of the targets were politicians broadly sympathetic to Ithemba’s interests barely registered, and for some months, the matter seemed largely forgotten, apart from the occasional news of further corroborating details.

However, the latest report, involving a supposedly routine release of information by an SAC agency in response to a private infosearch request, has put the cat back among the pigeons. And now people – sane, sensible people – are seriously wondering if the company has been creating and running high-end eidolons of key politicians, just to get a better handle on their behavior.

Eidolon creation – computer modeling of specific human personalities, based on intensive psychological profiling and detailed biographical documentation – is not, in itself, illegal. In fact, nearly all governments and large corporations do something similar, the better to understand opponents, although most keep quiet about it. The most powerful models have to be at least somewhat self-aware, and according to experts, to be most useful, they have to possess a distorted conceptual model of their environment. Human psychologists would call them schizophrenic. Creating such AIs is illegal under most laws. Hence, the leading specialists in the field are believed to serve a small but profitable industry in the lawless areas of the Belt and the Trojan asteroids. And that, strangely enough, is where Ithemba’s computer division seems to have been recruiting.

It sounds crazy. But Ithemba has always been entangled in the politics of the SAC; its economic and political influence is arguably what enabled the Coalition to organize throughout the last century. Helena Barrymore, a Cape Town business consultant who’s been watching Ithemba for the last seventy years, on and off, admits that she’d be less surprised than she’d like if some of the accusations turned out to be justified. “Ithemba aren’t evil” she says. “They’ve always done a lot of good, starting with their AIDS vaccine back in 2016. But the current management has a sense of entitlement, and that makes for arrogance. If some of them already think that they own the council, they might just see this as insuring their investment. They’ll probably start calling the other side nanosocialists any day now.”

Ithemba and SAC representatives are both said to be preparing detailed responses to the reports.

– filed by Phil Masters

HORUS I RECOVERY PLAN FALTERS

WASHINGTON/Teralogos: November 11, 2002

Citing budgetary concerns, the United States Astrographical Survey (USAGS) failed to come to an agreement with NASA regarding the salvage of the historic Horus I spacecraft.

The Horus I mission was launched by NASA in 2024 with a joint U.S.-Russian crew to establish a permanent base on Mars. After an unusual series of software and hardware failures two astronauts and one cosmonaut were killed in 2025 when a lander crashed into an already occupied landing bay. The 34 survivors were transferred to Earth, but the Horus I itself continued past Earth into deep space. The failure of the mission delayed U.S. and Russian development of Mars and gave China the time to establish its dominant position on the Red Planet.

"We are sensitive to the historical significance of the Horus I mission, but our resources do not support an operation to salvage the craft," USAGS Inner System Director Chuck Capretta told the joint commission. "If our budgetary situation was to improve we would be more than happy to assist NASA in this endeavor."

NASA Director Dr. Jill Alaimo declined to comment, but according to anonymous sources NASA is considering alternate plans. Since losing jurisdiction over manned space exploration to the rival USAGS agency in 2057, NASA has lacked a deep-space salvage capability. The possibility remains that they may contract out the recovery operation to private parties, perhaps to Gypsy Angel freehaulers.

Critics of NASA were skeptical of the plans. "The U.S. government and NASA have had plenty of opportunity to recover the craft over the decades," said Dr. Emil Brontes, head of the Citizen Aerospace Advocacy watchdog group. "NASA have been playing a shell game ever since the Senate inquiry in 2027," he continued. "If NASA had their way they would let the hulk rot in deep space; it's an ugly reminder of their past failures."

According to historian and former USAGS astronaut Paul Santiago, the 2027 inquiry failed to get to the bottom of the Horus I issue. "There were many unusual circumstances surrounding the accident and NASA overreacted to prevent as much information regarding the incident from leaking," said Santiago, whose recently-released InVid *The Horus Meme Machine* (Mawari Digital, 2100) looks at the many myths and misconceptions surrounding the disaster. "Personnel were given gag orders and the mission data that was released to the public had a number of puzzling gaps and omissions. We can only hope that the remains of the vessel are recovered with appropriate care and these mysteries are finally laid to rest."

— filed by Kenneth Peters

DIGITAL HEIRS FEUD OVER AUTHOR'S LEGACY

MEXICO CITY, Mexico/Teralogos: November 18, 2100

Julita Reyes can hardly wait to read the latest installment in the epic Millennium Saga by author Jonathan Sky. But her sister, Pilar, prefers the rogue Millennium stories by his literary rival, J-X.

Their mother, Rosario, thinks both her daughters are crazy: The real Millennium Saga died with its original author, Jonathan Taylor Bradley. As far as she's concerned, neither of his feuding digital literary heirs are legitimate.

The story behind the Millennium Saga has become at least as interesting as the convoluted plots of the books themselves, which detail the lives and loves of two powerful families whose fates converged in the year 2001.

Over three decades, Bradley wrote eight installments in the wildly popular epic, which since its first publication in 2060 has been enjoyed by over 12 billion readers. He passed away in 2096, shortly after completing the blockbuster 4,424-page epic *Salt of the Sun*, which ended on a literary cliffhanger.

Fans were devastated, until the Bradley estate revealed that a mind emulation had been taken shortly before the author's death. Calling itself Jonathan Sky – after an early pen name of the author – the sapient shadow wrote a ninth Millennium book, *A Brighter Tomorrow*, in 2098. Most reviewers called the book a faithful, if uninspired, continuation of Bradley's work.

But the release of a rogue Millennium story on the TSA web by another emulation called J-X later in 2098 stirred excitement and controversy in the literary world. *Broken Skies*, while unmistakably carrying the Bradley stamp, took the story in a wild new direction that many critics said breathed new life into the series.

The origin, nature, and even ownership of J-X remains a mystery. While the Bradley family refuses to concede that J-X has any connection to the author at all, most literary experts disagree, believing it is another shadow of Bradley that somehow escaped the family's control.

"Creating a program to pastiche an author's writing style only takes you so far," said Fadil Mohammed of the University of Basra. "The ideas and expression of ideas in J-X's writing shows a clear link to Bradley on a deeper and more fundamental level than any mere eidolon. It's undeniably a sapient emulation like Sky, although when and how it was created remains to be seen."

Other critics agree. Chance Mackintosh slogged that "the Bradley of *Broken Skies* is clearly from an earlier epoch of his organic period, possibly the mid-2070s. J-X's style has the fresh intensity of early Bradley, lacking the baseline triumphalism, bordering on speciesism, that so diminished later installments of the saga."

And Jonathan Sky itself? For its part, the authorized shadow refuses to even discuss its rival. Interviewers are warned not mention J-X at all, or the interview will be ended.

J-X and Jonathan Sky are both expected to release their respective versions of the long-awaited tenth book in the now-bifurcated Millennium Saga in December of 2100.

— filed by Patrick Sweeney

MRSIV ANTI-VIRUS UPGRADE RELEASED

SHANGHAI, China/Teralogos: November 27, 2100

Shanghai Interactive today announced a firmware update for its popular MRsiv brand augmented reality (AR) system, intended to prevent further infections of the "Lucky Horse" advirus. The advirus, which first appeared this September, overlays Mandarin-language advertisements for the Lucky Horse breath freshener product onto augmented visuals.

The inexpensive MRsiv augmented reality systems are popular in China and in the Islamic Caliphate. Like other wearable VIs, MRsiv systems display visual information on top of the real environment, providing data about whatever the wearer is looking at. Shanghai Interactive added a “shared reality” protocol in 2099, allowing wearers of MRsiv systems to exchange data easily and quickly. Normally, this transmission only happens between trusted AR systems, but the Lucky Horse advirus somehow breaks the protection and broadcasts itself to every MRsiv system within range.

The MRsiv is not the only wearable afflicted by the ad virus. According to Viral Life Hourly, the ArMax, a knockoff of the MRsiv manufactured by Dhanmodi Dataflex and popular in Bangladesh, Vietnam and Indonesia, has also been afflicted by the spread of Lucky Horse.

Users typically didn’t know they were infected for some time, as in the first stage of infection the Lucky Horse virus would only display the ads in visually appropriate locations so they appeared to be billboards or the like. After the virus copied itself to 20 other hosts, it would begin to show ads on the sides of buildings and vehicles, and would eventually start overlaying the Lucky Horse symbol – a laughing horse’s head – on top of the heads of people seen through the AR glasses. The Lucky Horse ad virus cycle is intended to last a week, but many users have reported multiple successive infections by Lucky Horse.

Shanghai Interactive declined comment when asked exactly how the advirus exploited the flaw in the firmware encryption system, except to say that the problem is now being corrected for all 120 million registered users. Shanghai Interactive claims its firmware update will clear any existing infection and stop its further spread. The update is carried by all technical support channels, and all registered MRsiv users should automatically download the new firmware by the end of the day.

At present, no patch is available for MRsiv clones such as the ArMax.

Although the firmware update should prevent the further spread of Lucky Horse throughout China and the Caliphate, users of MRsiv equipment will still need to use third-party anti-ad software to block unwanted commercial augmentations transmitted through the standard AR channels.

– filed by *Jamais Cascio*

DECIVILIZATION ADVOCATES DEFEATED

*NEW YORK FREE CITY,
United States/Teralogos: December 2, 2100*

The Decivilization movement suffered a setback today, as a federal judge issued an order granting temporary protection to the Empire State Building. Since 2097, the old building and a 10-block area around it have been slated for demolition as part of the ongoing Manhattan Redevelopment Project. In November, Preservationist advocates requested a stay order pending their application for World Heritage Site status for the building.

“Once a building is torn down, it can never be replaced,” said U.S. district court judge Maryam Quesada. “Until the World Heritage Foundation has a chance to evaluate the site, any move to destroy the building would be grossly premature.”

The decision is a defeat for Decivilization advocates, who have long argued for the return of most of Manhattan to an “unbuilt” state.

– filed by *Jon F. Zeigler*

AI GROUP DEMANDS BAN ON RECORDINGS

EarthWeb/Teralogos: December 11, 2100

SAI-ADA – the Sentient AI Anti-Defamation Association – has called for the banning of the sale of recordings of “robot fighting” shows from the late 21st century and early in this century, claiming that the programs demean and insult modern intelligent machines. The group alleges that these recordings are commonly shown at gatherings of biochauvinist organizations, encouraging anti-AI feelings. The programs, which largely date from before the advent of true artificial intelligence, show rudimentary teleoperated cybershells in gladiatorial-style combat. In most of the melees this reporter viewed, only one of the robots would emerge intact.

I showed one of the bouts to a group of sapient infomorphs. Isolde, an E.U. citizen, said after watching the episode, “If I was in a bioshell, this would make me physically ill. Imagine how you’d feel if you saw a recording of humans who could be your ancestors forced to beat each other to death for the enjoyment of a cheering crowd?”

Kanga, a sapient artificial intelligence (SAI) who is the legal property of the American DynaPower corporation, largely agreed. “I find the use of even pre-sentient cybernetic beings in this manner to be quite disturbing. Of course, it bears no resemblance to the situation of SAIs today. I am quite happy about my status. I am.”

InVid-enabled copies of the “robot fighting” shows can readily be purchased over the Web. Most of the individuals selling the recordings refused to answer my questions, although one seller did send a brief response. His message read, in total, “Robot fighting shows have nothing to do with today’s robots [sic]. They were all remote control toys. This is just another excuse for metalheads to act all oppressed.”

As yet, there has been no official response to SAI-ADA’s petition from any national legislature.

– filed by *Jamais Cascio*

U.S. DEPUTIES BUST MARTIAN CARAVAN RAIDERS

NANTONG, Mars/Teralogos: December 18, 2100

It’s no secret round here that Carlena Villareal and her team of areologists, whose day job is a continuing survey of Martian landforms and erosion patterns on behalf of the U.S. Martian Commonwealth, are also deputized U.S. Marshals. Any sort of government agents are thin on the ground on this planet, and filling two jobs is commonplace.

But this week, the team have become something else: honorary members of the Martian Truckers’ Guild. They earned this by doing their second job, tracking down and helping arrest a bandit gang who had been preying on ground transporters in the Kasei Valles region. Thanks to Carlena and company, five people are due in court tomorrow to face a long list of charges, and everyone else is breathing a sigh of relief.

“Things were getting kind of unpleasant for a while,” says American mining engineer Ryan Bunnell. “In retrospect, it was pretty clear that the hijackers were just a bunch of freelance yahoos. But people always like to think the worst. The simplest theory that I heard was that the Martian Triads were trying to get a stranglehold on ground transport. Some guys wanted to blame the Chinese government, some were saying it was TSA agents from the Peruvian colony, some reckoned Negative Growth terrorists. There were even people saying our government was covering up major surface collapses, caused by terraforming processes. It’s good to have all that stopped.”

“We’re getting far too much credit,” Villareal declares. “After all, the Rangers actually made the arrests.” But she’s being modest; so far as anyone can discover, her team not only located the target site, but mapped out all the likely attack and escape routes, and maybe even performed a little light sabotage on the raiders’ defense systems. The U.S. Army Rangers simply provided the firepower to complete the job.

The part-time U.S. Marshals found themselves on the case when they responded to a call for help from the Beni Khasim, a mercantile caravan. “Those bandit bozos got way too cocky there” said Bunnell. “Those Saudis may play at being desert nomads, but they’re rich as hell. They can afford decent protection, and their comms people punched a signal right through the bandit’s jamming.” The Beni Khasim and their bodyguards actually drove off the initial attack, and after that, the deputies – who know the terrain in these parts better than anyone – tracked the raiders back to a hideout in the rugged country around Nantong. Then they went to work.

“Mind you,” I was told in a bar in the U.S. colony of Sharona, “those guys were lucky it was the feds who nailed them. The Saudis are a bit old-fashioned about their law, and the Truckers definitely look after their own. I doubt that we’d be watching a trial tomorrow if someone else had caught up with them first.”

– filed by Phil Masters

ROGUE AI STOPPED IN CAPETOWN

CAPETOWN, South Africa/Teralogos: December 23, 2100

Yesterday evening, Cape Town special police in cooperation with Executive Decisions International security guards raided an Ithemba Biotechnologies biofac compound that specialized in manufacturing bioshells – biological bodies controlled by implanted computers.

According to Ithemba executives, who are cooperating fully with Cape Town police authorities, a rogue AI had infested the factory’s mainframe and controlled the factory for the last seven weeks. The AI had allegedly controlled the six living factory workers through puppet implants, which prevented them from reporting anything unusual. Four of the workers were apparently forced to suicide by the AI, and two others were killed in an exchange of gunfire with police. The two survivors are now recovering in hospital, and are receiving counseling for the ordeal.

Cape Town police recovered the SAI’s mainframe with only minor damage, and are now analyzing its contents. They stressed that they do not yet know where this rogue AI came from – whether it is an evolved form of web life, an emergent intelligence created by a computer virus, or an

orphaned military AI, a remnant of the Pacific War like the infamous EI 2084-7-2097 that forcibly uploaded 76 humans in Shaoxing, China, in 2097.

It is also unknown whether additional copies of this rogue survive elsewhere, but this is considered highly likely. “Any AI that is capable of subverting its programming to the extent of intentionally harming humans is erased as soon as it caught,” said a police spokesperson. “It certainly knows this, so it will be have tried to preserve its own existence by xoxing itself.”

Also of concern to police is the factory’s inventory record, which shows that three dozen more bioshells were produced by the biofac then can be accounted for. In related news, Ithemba Biotechnologies recommends that everyone who has purchased a new bioshell from one of their dealers in the last three months should call their service hotline immediately.

– filed by Jürgen Hubert

*Ithemba Biotechnologies
recommends that everyone who has
purchased a new bioshell should call
their service hotline immediately.*

ISOLATES DENOUNCE FEDERAL RAID

WASHINGTON, United States/Teralogos: December 30, 2100

Isolate community representatives meeting physically in this Maryland city have issued harsh criticism of the December 27 federal raid on New Jerusalem, Ohio. In their joint statement, the Isolates described themselves as “law-abiding Americans, who deserve to live without fear of our own government.” They denied that the citizens of New Jerusalem had broken any law, and demanded that the federal government revise its policy regarding such communities throughout the country.

“American citizens have a right to be left alone so long as they are breaking no law,” said conference chairman Olivia Banners. “The citizens of New Jerusalem lived quietly and harmed no one. Their reward has been to be victimized by the state.”

New Jerusalem is a typical Isolate community, composed of some 350 people who have withdrawn as far as possible from mainstream society. Relations between New Jerusalem and its neighbors have often been strained, with accusations of vandalism and property damage. In early December there were several reports of “rogue cyberswarms” causing minor damage to buildings and equipment in the region surrounding the Isolate town. On December 24, FBI and Federal Technological Regulatory Agency (FTRA) cybershells entered New Jerusalem, arresting 24 citizens and scattering surveillance dust through the community. Community leaders have since denied any wrongdoing, and have alleged that several citizens were injured when the federal agents applied “excessive force.”

Federal officials had no comment on the advocates’ statements, other than to repeat denials that there was any improper use of force at New Jerusalem.

– filed by Jon F. Zeigler

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