

## ***DAMOCLES, RULER OF HIGH ANXIETY?***

**By Zane B Stein**



“The Sword of Damocles is hanging over my head  
And I've got the feeling someone's gonna be cutting the thread  
Oh, woe is me, my life is a mystery  
Oh, can't you see that I'm at the start of a pretty big downer?”  
From “The Rocky Horror Picture Show”

In varying degrees, we all have known the feeling. You just know that something ‘bad’ is going to happen. Sometimes, you get one piece of bad news, and you wait for the rest....you wait for ‘the other shoe to drop.’ Other times, you have no overt signs, but you simply know that there’s going to be a letter, or a phone call....and the Sword is going to drop.

For the past few centuries, astrologers would often point to Uranus as being the bearer of the earthshaking news. If something unexpected happened (good or bad), this planet was usually the point that was ‘blamed’. But if you look a little closer, this far away body is sometimes actually visible to the naked eye...if you have 20-20 vision, a clear night, and you know where to look. And this is a metaphor for Uranus’ astrology....its events are not always unexpected...if you can see clearly, and are looking in the right direction.

In 1991, however, an astronomer discovered a very unusual, totally new type of body which may very well be the missing link for such ‘unexpected’ events.. On February 18, while searching photographic plates, Rob McNaught found a small body that no one had noticed previously. It was Minor Planet #5335, and Rob named it Damocles.

Damocles was an unusual name to give an astronomical body back then. The tradition was to choose a mythological being, and Damocles had been a real person. The naming foreshadowed the astrological meanings, for Damocles focuses on things that are very real to us.

### **WHO WAS DAMOCLES?**

Damocles, the person, lived in Syracuse, Sicily in the 4th Century BC, and was a member of the court of Dionysius II.

In many ways, Damocles was a decent sort, but he had a very bad habit: he was an excessive flatterer. He would constantly talk about how wonderful Dionysius was, how

great and marvelous it was to be such a powerful ruler, and how much he (Damocles) would love to have such great wealth as his ruler. Eventually, Dionysius grew tired of this, and decided to teach Damocles a lesson.

So the ruler invited Damocles to the palace for a feast. When he arrived, everywhere he looked he saw wondrous food, and great wealth. He must have thought he was being rewarded for his loyalty. All went well, until he was seated, and had occasion to look up. For there, hanging directly over his head, was a very large, sharp sword. And it was tied, not with a rope, but with a single hair.

This, the tyrant explained to Damocles, was what life as ruler was really like, with an omnipresent danger that accompanied the wealth and material pleasures of being the ruler. Damocles, alarmed and quickly revising his idea of what made up a good life, asked to be excused. He then eagerly returned to his poorer, but safer life.

Since then, the phrase, "Sword of Damocles" has come to represent any threat of danger, or an impending threat of personal disaster.

#### MINOR PLANET DAMOCLES HANGING OVER OUR HEADS

This little body appears to be aptly named. One of the things it seems to represent, astrologically, is the threat, or fear, of a disaster about to happen, or of something about to simply self-destruct.

It is an accepted astrological aphorism that, once a new body is discovered, we can learn much about its nature by events around the world that occur around the same time. (Although it was an influence prior to the discovery, humanity was aware of its type of energies.) The nature of Damocles, then, should be reflected in events of 1991.

Think back to a country that the world knew, then, as the U.S.S.R. The Communist leaders made it up of many countries 'grafted' together, and its influence also included many 'satellite' nations.

There were rumblings of discontent around the Soviet Bloc prior to 1991, but look what happened that year. In January, Lithuania tried to declare its independence, and the Soviets sent troops in to stop it. But the momentum has begun, and in February, voters there voted for independence anyway. On April 9, shortly after Damocles was announced to the world, Georgia shocked the world by declaring its independence from the USSR. Next, Croatia and Slovenia declared their independence from the Soviet bloc country Yugoslavia. The Warsaw Pack was officially dissolved. Then, came Estonia, Latvia, Moldova, Kyrgyzstan, Macedonia, and more. By the end of the year, on December 26, the USSR disbanded, which forever changed the world's political scenery. 1991 will always be remembered as the year the Soviet Union fell apart.

So Damocles' influence brought about a surge of freedom....a powerful desire for each nation to chart its own course.

But what of the USSR itself? If Damocles was directly connected with this breakup, we should also find a direct connection with the chart for the U.S.S.R., right? Well, I won't disappoint you. The discovery position of Damocles, marking the point where it entered humanity's consciousness, was exactly conjunct the Sun in the chart for the U.S.S.R. ! The Sword had been hanging over the Soviet Union, and 1991 was the year they looked up and saw it about to come crashing on their heads.

Another example of Damocles' pushing the desire to chart one's own path can be seen with Germany. Only weeks after Damocles was discovered, Germany officially became completely independent for the first time since the end of World War II's occupation by the Allied Forces. Germany was once again completely responsible for its own destiny.

What else is 1991 known for? On March 4, the most primitive form of the World Wide Web went online, and by August 6, the Web debuted as a publicly available service on the Internet. Millions of people are freed of the restraints of time and space, and can travel the world, search for information on anything they desire, without leaving the confines of their own house. But the WWW opened up a whole new world, with unplanned consequences that are still shaking the foundation of life, and society.

#### ASTRONOMICAL DAMOCLES

So what about the body Damocles is so unique? Let's start with its makeup. Damocles is made of dark material, one of the darkest objects known in the solar system. Its color is a dark red. (There are other bodies that are redder, including many of the Centaurs, but not darker.)

Astronomers have come to believe that Damocles is the nucleus of a Halley-type comet that lost all of its volatile materials over time. One could call it a burnt-out comet, or a comet core.

And its orbit bears a close resemblance to that of a periodic comet, like Halley's. When it is furthest from the Sun (aphelion), it reaches 22 AU, which is beyond the orbit of Uranus (19.75 AU at its aphelion.) (At the time of its discovery, no asteroid-like body had ever been found out that far.) And when it is closest to the Sun (perihelion), it is only 1.6 AU, which means it crosses the orbit of Mars (1.41 AU at its perihelion.) Even the shape of its orbit is comet-like. Astronomers use a term 'eccentricity'. A perfect circle has an eccentricity of 0, and a straight line an eccentricity of 1. Venus has an almost circular orbit of 0.06774, while fairly eccentric Chiron is 0.3847424. But Damocles has an eccentricity of 0.866902, which is like that of a comet. (Halley's Comet has an eccentricity of 0.967.)

This eccentricity makes its orbit very unique for a minor planet. As you know, Uranus takes almost 84 years to orbit the Sun, and Damocles goes out even further than Uranus....but it makes a full orbit in 41.01 years. And what a strange orbit it is.

With a regular planet, you can say without debate that it takes approximately ‘X’ number of years to go through each sign. With Saturn, for example, you can count on about 2-1/2 years of journeying through Aries, 2-1/2 through Taurus, etc. With a more eccentric body like Pluto, you can expect it to stay in one sign longer than another, so it was not a surprise that it went through Scorpio in about 12 years, but took over 30 to go through the opposite sign Taurus. But Damocles takes this to the extreme.

Damocles spends most of each cycle....an average of 30 years....in the sign Aquarius. It spends another 2 to 3 years in Capricorn, and perhaps 4-5 years in Pisces. Then, it breezes through the other nine signs, sometimes taking as little as a month to go through one of them!

### ASTROLOGICAL DAMOCLES

What does this mean astrologically? The mind boggles.

For starters, about three-quarters of the earth’s population, at any given time, have Damocles in Aquarius. Damocles in Capricorn and Pisces, while not as plentiful, still make up a large percent of the remaining population.

Thus, the majority of humanity have Damocles in one of the Winter Signs, which represent the protecting and sustaining of the life force to keep it alive through the cold, inhospitable months. If it were not for the strength of these signs, there would be no bursting forth of life come Springtime. These are the signs that recognize, on one level or another, the importance of survival to all humanity, and the importance of protecting the unique spark that lies within us.

But what if you have Damocles in one of the other signs? Then you are a part of a very small minority, and your perceptions of life, and survival, and dealing with threats that may hang over your head, are much different than those of most of the people around you.

Interestingly, Damocles was not discovered in Aquarius, where it spends most of its time, but at 11 Scorpio 05. However, the Sun *was* in Aquarius at the discovery.

Let’s look at this ‘minority’ time over the past century...the times when Damocles was not in Capricorn, Aquarius or Pisces:

DAMOCLES SIGN	ENTRY/EXIT DATES	ENTRY/EXIT DATES
ARIES	4/19/1908-10/4/1908	2/6/1909-4/21/1909
TAURUS	4/21/1909-6/18/1909	
GEMINI	6/18/1909-8/9/1909	
CANCER	8/9/1909-10/2/1909	1/16/1910-5/23/1910
LEO	10/2/1909-1/16/1910	5/23/1910-7/10/1910
VIRGO	7/10/1910-8/17/1910	
LIBRA	8/17/1910-9/23/1910	

SCORPIO	9/23/1910-11/6/1910	
SAGITTARIUS	11/6/1910-1/2/1911	
CAPRICORN	ENTERS 1/2/1911	

DAMOCLES SIGN	ENTRY/EXIT DATES	ENTRY/EXIT DATES
ARIES	5/17/1948-8/27/1948	3/3/1949-5/28/1949
TAURUS	5/28/1949-8/16/1949	11/8/1949-3/15/1950
GEMINI	8/16/1949-11/8/1949	3/15/1950-5/9/1950
CANCER	5/9/1950-7/3/1950	
LEO	7/3/1950-8/23/1950	
VIRGO	8/23/1950-10/6/1950	
LIBRA	10/6/1950-11/13/1950	
SCORPIO	11/13/1950-12/21/1950	
SAGITTARIUS	12/21/1950-2/3/1951	
CAPRICORN	ENTERS 2/3/1951	

DAMOCLES SIGN	ENTRY/EXIT DATES	ENTRY/EXIT DATES
ARIES	3/26/1989-11/18/1989	12/30/1989-3/17/1990
TAURUS	3/17/1990-5/8/1990	
GEMINI	5/8/1990-6/26/1990	
CANCER	6/26/1990-8/16/1990	
LEO	8/16/1990-10/11/1990	
VIRGO	10/11/1990-12/9/1990	5/3/1991-5/17/1991
LIBRA	12/9/1990-1/31/1991	4/14/1991-5/3/1991 & 5/17/1991-7/14/1991
SCORPIO	1/31/1991-4/14/1991	7/14/1991-9/16/1991
SAGITTARIUS	9/16/1991-12/3/1991	
CAPRICORN	ENTERS 12/3/1991	

This unusual orbit plays other tricks on the astrologer, as well. Take, for example, a simple aspect such as the Sun conjunct Damocles. You would expect that, no matter what sign it is in, this aspect will occur every year, right? Wrong. The Sun/Damocles conjunction occurs consistently, year after year, in Aquarius, gradually moving through the sign, and then more quickly through Pisces. But once it leaves that sign, most of the remaining signs never see a conjunction between the Sun and Damocles! And once every cycle, a year will pass where there is no Sun/Damocles conjunction at all.

Here is a table of Sun/Damocles conjunctions:

1900	Feb	15	25	Aquarius	54
1901	Feb	16	27	Aquarius	1
1902	Feb	17	28	Aquarius	18
1903	Feb	19	29	Aquarius	49
1904	Feb	21	1	Pisces	42
1905	Feb	23	4	Pisces	1

1906	Feb	26	7 Pisces	14
1907	Mar	3	12 Pisces	14
1908	Mar	12	21 Pisces	55
1909	Apr	20	29 Aries	23
1910	Dec	13	20 Sagittarius	36
1911	<b>None</b>			
1912	Jan	13	21 Capricorn	27
1913	Jan	19	28 Capricorn	30
1914	Jan	23	2 Aquarius	13
1915	Jan	25	4 Aquarius	43
1916	Jan	27	6 Aquarius	33
1917	Jan	28	8 Aquarius	3
1918	Jan	29	9 Aquarius	17
1919	Jan	31	10 Aquarius	19
1920	Feb	1	11 Aquarius	20
1921	Feb	1	12 Aquarius	12
1922	Feb	2	13 Aquarius	0
1923	Feb	3	13 Aquarius	46
1924	Feb	4	14 Aquarius	29
1925	Feb	4	15 Aquarius	11
1926	Feb	5	15 Aquarius	51
1927	Feb	6	16 Aquarius	31
1928	Feb	7	17 Aquarius	10
1929	Feb	7	17 Aquarius	48
1930	Feb	7	18 Aquarius	27
1931	Feb	8	19 Aquarius	5
1932	Feb	9	19 Aquarius	43
1933	Feb	9	20 Aquarius	22
1934	Feb	10	21 Aquarius	3
1935	Feb	11	21 Aquarius	45
1936	Feb	12	22 Aquarius	29
1937	Feb	12	23 Aquarius	16
1938	Feb	13	24 Aquarius	5
1939	Feb	14	24 Aquarius	59
1940	Feb	15	25 Aquarius	57
1941	Feb	16	27 Aquarius	3
1942	Feb	17	28 Aquarius	15
1943	Feb	19	29 Aquarius	41
1944	Feb	21	1 Pisces	22
1945	Feb	22	3 Pisces	28
1946	Feb	25	6 Pisces	18
1947	Mar	1	10 Pisces	31
1948	Mar	8	17 Pisces	56
1949	Mar	29	8 Aries	19

1950	Aug 23	29 Leo	49
1951	<b>None</b>		
1952	Jan 9	17 Capricorn	41
1953	Jan 17	27 Capricorn	14
1954	Jan 22	1 Aquarius	41
1955	Jan 25	4 Aquarius	28
1956	Jan 27	6 Aquarius	28
1957	Jan 28	8 Aquarius	3
1958	Jan 29	9 Aquarius	21
1959	Jan 31	10 Aquarius	29
1960	Feb 1	11 Aquarius	30
1961	Feb 1	12 Aquarius	24
1962	Feb 2	13 Aquarius	15
1963	Feb 3	14 Aquarius	2
1964	Feb 4	14 Aquarius	47
1965	Feb 4	15 Aquarius	29
1966	Feb 5	16 Aquarius	9
1967	Feb 6	16 Aquarius	48
1968	Feb 7	17 Aquarius	27
1969	Feb 7	18 Aquarius	5
1970	Feb 7	18 Aquarius	43
1971	Feb 8	19 Aquarius	20
1972	Feb 9	19 Aquarius	59
1973	Feb 9	20 Aquarius	39
1974	Feb 10	21 Aquarius	19
1975	Feb 11	22 Aquarius	1
1976	Feb 12	22 Aquarius	44
1977	Feb 12	23 Aquarius	29
1978	Feb 13	24 Aquarius	17
1979	Feb 14	25 Aquarius	8
1980	Feb 15	26 Aquarius	2
1981	Feb 15	27 Aquarius	5
1982	Feb 17	28 Aquarius	14
1983	Feb 18	29 Aquarius	34
1984	Feb 20	1 Pisces	8
1985	Feb 21	3 Pisces	6
1986	Feb 24	5 Pisces	38
1987	Feb 28	9 Pisces	14
1988	Mar 5	15 Pisces	7
1989	Mar 18	28 Pisces	5
1990	Jun 12	21 Gemini	34
1991	Dec 31	9 Capricorn	20
1992	<b>None</b>		
1993	Jan 15	25 Capricorn	9

1994	Jan	21	0	Aquarius	44
1995	Jan	24	3	Aquarius	58
1996	Jan	26	6	Aquarius	14
1997	Jan	27	7	Aquarius	57
1998	Jan	29	9	Aquarius	22
1999	Jan	30	10	Aquarius	35
2000	Feb	1	11	Aquarius	37
2001	Feb	1	12	Aquarius	33
2002	Feb	2	13	Aquarius	24
2003	Feb	3	14	Aquarius	11
2004	Feb	4	14	Aquarius	56
2005	Feb	4	15	Aquarius	38
2006	Feb	5	16	Aquarius	19
2007	Feb	6	16	Aquarius	59
2008	Feb	7	17	Aquarius	38
2009	Feb	6	18	Aquarius	16
2010	Feb	7	18	Aquarius	54

Think about the ramifications of all this.

For several years in a row, the world experiences a Sun/Damocles conjunction around the same dates. The world's perception of the sign Aquarius is colored by the conjunction. How much of our ideas of the nature of Aquarius actually come from Damocles being there?

And then, for a few years, Damocles conjuncts the Sun in other signs. These are odd years, that don't fit the expected pattern. Are Aquarians born in these years less unpredictable than when Damocles occupies the sign? Are people born with Damocles conjunct the Sun in one of these other years, people who just don't quite fit the descriptions of their zodiac sign?

With Damocles spending most of its time in Aquarius, the odds are pretty good that, if you have several bodies in Aquarius, at least one of them is conjunct Damocles. Could some of the 'unexpected' influence we associate with being ruled by Uranus actually stem from Damocles in Aquarius instead? How about the Aquarian love of following their own rules, finding their own path....perhaps Damocles has a hand in this?

To add another Aquarian indicator to Damocles, think about this: Damocles has its North Node in that sign. Thus, the direction Damocles wants to take us is an Aquarian one.

#### **HYPERACTIVE, CONSTANTLY STRESSED**

Observing people with strong conjunctions natally between Damocles and personal planets, one of the things that seem to stand out is that they live at a higher state of stress

than the average person. Damocles transits often bring a feeling that ‘something is going to happen’, along with the accompanying higher stress level.

Let’s look at a whole group of people who live in a constant state of stress. Dr. Gerald P. Koocher worked with young cancer patients who managed to ‘beat’ the cancer, or go into remission. He noted that, for many years after, they carried a stressful fear that the cancer was not gone permanently....a feeling that, one of these days, when they least expected it, they were going to take seriously ill again. He wrote a book on the subject, where he said that it was as if these children spent their lives with a sword hanging over their heads, and they never knew if, or when it would fall. His term, “The Damocles Syndrome”, has become widely accepted in the medical community.

My mother contracted Ovarian Cancer following a Solar Return with Damocles two degrees from her Sun, and went through a spectrum of treatments recommended by her physician. If you know anything about such treatments, they put a very high level of stress on the body. For a while, it seemed as if she were beating the illness. Then, in her solar return of 1999, her Sun was exactly conjunct Damocles, and the following day there was a Lunar Eclipse. Shortly after her birthday, without warning, the cancer returned with a vengeance, and a half-year later, she passed away.

If you study the charts of Cancer patients, don’t be surprised to find Damocles a prominent fixture.

## LIVE FAST, DIE YOUNG

What about people who had cometary careers, but burnt out too young? Perhaps it won’t surprise you to know that James Dean had Damocles conjunct his Sun, and Marilyn Monroe had it conjunct her Moon; Jim Morrison had Damocles rising, closely opposition his Jupiter, and square his MC/IC axis; and Janis Joplin, had rising Damocles closely conjunct her Ascendant and South Lunar Nodes.

## DAMOCLES AND WORLD EVENTS

Even though we may not be aware of a body’s influence prior to its discovery, that doesn’t mean it doesn’t have one. Looking back at events on or near Damocles conjunctions with the outer planets, we can glean more insight into the nature of this little body.

### Damocles conjunct Saturn

May 28, 1908, 7 Aries 43.

At [Masjid-al-Salaman](#) in southwest [Persia](#), the first major commercial [oil strike](#) in the [Middle East](#) was made. This was the beginning of a major change in the way the world viewed the Middle East, and how the Middle Eastern countries viewed their own destiny.

September 6, 1908, 8 Aries 28.

The world's first airplane crash. Orville Wright took a passenger into the air, but there was something wrong with the plane, and it plummeted to the ground, injuring Orville, and making his passenger the first person to die in a plane crash.

March 4, 1909, 9 Aries 23.

William Howard Taft was inaugurated as US President on this date, and so his presidency has a Damocles/Saturn quality throughout, including alienating of both big business, and the opposing antitrust reformers.

September 22, 1950, 19 Virgo 36.

US Congress passed the McCarran Internal Security Act, which stated that all communist-front organizations must register with Attorney-General, all communists were prohibited from working in national defense, no entry into the U.S. of anyone who was a member of a totalitarian organization, and established the Subversive Activities Control Board. A section of this bill even authorized the implementation of procedures, modeled on those used to incarcerate people of Japanese descent during World War II, which would be used against those, assumed to be Communists or Communist sympathizers, who might commit acts of espionage or sabotage in time or war or national emergency.

Damocles conjunct Uranus:

May 22, 1950, 7 Cancer 22.

Simon, which has been called the world's first personal computer, was built for around \$600. It performed basic arithmetic functions, and could be carried in one hand.

Damocles conjunct Neptune:

September 11, 1909, 18 Cancer 51.

Comet Halley is caught on a photographic plate for the first time.

October 29, 1950, 17 Libra 45.

Sister Mary Teresa begins her charity work in [Calcutta](#) and becomes known as [Mother Teresa](#)

January 27, 1992, 17 Capricorn 10. (With Uranus only 2 degrees away)

[Boris Yeltsin](#) announces that [Russia](#) is going to stop targeting [United States](#) cities with [nuclear weapons](#)

Damocles conjunct Pluto:

August 3, 1909, 26 Gemini 21.

The Rosicrucian Fellowship was launched August 8 by [Max Heindel](#) as herald of the [Aquarian Age](#) and with the aim of promulgating the [Rosicrucian](#) teachings.

March 5, 1991, 20 Scorpio 20. Two days before, the Rodney King is brutally beaten by Los Angeles police. When this event went to trial, three of the officers were acquitted of the charges, and this verdict triggered [massive rioting](#) in Los Angeles, which lasted for 3 days, making it one of the worst civil disturbances in Los Angeles history.

Now, let's go back to the period 1955-1956. During that period of time, Chiron, Pholus, Heracles and Damocles were all very close together, in the first decanate of Aquarius. What did this mean for the world? The tension level was very, very high: During this period, the United States and Mainland China came perilously close to war over Nationalist China. Nikita Krushchev emerged as 'the' power in Russia, and declared his famous "We will bury you." Rosa Parks, in December 1954, refused to be moved, insisted on sitting in the front of a bus, and made history. On the other hand, the governors of Virginia, Georgia, Mississippi and South Carolina united to try to fight the integration of schools. The first atomic submarine was launched..

### AREAS DESERVING STUDY

A Damocles return at age 41 might be significant. There seems to be a change, where there is pressure, and stress of one kind or another, which causes one's life to take an irreversible turn in a new direction. But it's difficult to be sure, because other major planetary passages happen around the same time: Neptune square natal Neptune, and Uranus opposition natal Uranus. Perhaps Damocles is just another major contributor towards this life change.

When talking about Damocles and cancer patients, I mentioned the lunar eclipse in January 1999 where the Sun (11 Aquarius 20) was conjunct Damocles 10 Aquarius 35.) Here are a few more Damoclean eclipses. How did Damocles manifest in each one?

February 10, 1933 Lunar Eclipse. Sun 21 Aquarius 22, Damocles 20 Aquarius 24.  
February 20, 1943 Lunar Eclipse. Sun 0 Pisces 43, Damocles 29 Aquarius 44.  
February 5, 1962 Solar Eclipse. Sun 15 Aquarius 43, Damocles 13 Aquarius 22. This one, however, was a very special Aquarius eclipse, which also had Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn in Aquarius, as well as Centaurs Pholus and Chariklo. And Neptune at 13 Scorpio 28 was closely square Damocles.  
February 10, 1971 Lunar Eclipse. Sun 20 Aquarius 55, Damocles 19 Aquarius 21.  
February 16, 1980 Solar Eclipse. Sun 26 Aquarius 50, Damocles 26 Aquarius 05.

### DAMOCLES HAS COMPANY

Just when some astrologers began to accept Damocles as being a unique, but important, new astrological tool, astronomers found other bodies that were like smaller versions of Damocles. They have now grouped them together as a new class of minor planet, and bodies of this class are called Damocloids. (There are about thirty of them at this writing.) They are all made of this same very dark, reddish material, and are believed to

have originated in the Oort cloud. Some of them even have retrograde orbits! Damocles, though, is the largest, and will always be the most significant.

At this writing, only one of the other Damocloids has been named, a rather large one with a retrograde orbit. The discoverer named it Dioretsa, and I tried and tried to find out what mythological or historical personage it was named after. My face was red when I figured it out: Dioretsa is Asteroid spelled backwards. He named it that way because of its retrograde orbit.

Dioretsa, minor planet #20461, was discovered June 8, 1999, and its orbit is even more eccentric than Damocles, falling at 0.900. It takes 116.59 years for one orbit of the Sun.

It should be the subject of another article, so I won't talk much more about her here, other than to say that its fun looking at an ephemeris for something that moves backwards through the zodiac, like the lunar nodes. But it is definitely worth exploring. (Of course, I'm biased: I have Dioretsa at 10 Aries 53, conjunct my first house Jupiter almost exactly.)

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