Library of Shadows

Game Design Document

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Table of Contents

Introduction

Library of Shadows is a free online game designed to help players improve their search skills in library catalogs and other library discovery systems. It blends the characteristics of educational and board games with elements from the strategy and survival genres. The goal is to work as a team to traverse the Library while circumventing the monsters hiding in and impersonating shadows.

Library of Shadows was initially conceptualized as a modified version of the board game Checkers and named Silent Library (Kemp, 2021). The game's name and theme are based on an episode of the BBC sci-fi series Doctor Who titled *Silence in the Library*. I selected this theme because of the episode's setting and the diversity in the show's cast and audience. The diversity of the cast creates a greater possibility that players will be able to identify with the characters. While the theme for the prototype is based on an episode of the Doctor Who series, the game can be adapted to other stories that involve shadows, danger, and escape. For example, scenes from books like The Lord of the Rings, Interview with a Vampire, or series like Star Wars, Star Trek, or The Twilight Zone could also be game settings. Players could also write stories and create images to upload to the game board as an overlay.

The game is designed for mobile access via web browser, Android, and IOS. While aspects of the appearance of Library of Shadows will be familiar to most players, the modified game mechanics combine the elements of chance, cooperation, levels, strategy, rewards, and conflict.

At the end of this game, learners will be able to use keywords, titles, authors, and other metadata to search an online library discovery system and be familiar with basic library cataloging.

Theme – Look and Feel

Description of Characters

In this game design document, I will not attempt to recreate the entire storyline of the Silence in the Library episode. However, players can choose to add characters as they take various turns in the game. Doctor Who is a long and currently-running series that has a large fanbase, therefore the game will have an established community

For the game prototype, we will introduce the main characters:

- The main character is an alien time lord who is nearly 900 years old and believed to be one of only two members of his species. He travels through space and time with human companions and is simply known as The Doctor.

- The Doctor's human traveling companion Donna Noble,

- Archaeologist River Song,

- Strackman Lux, whose grandfather built the Library,

- and the Node.

A list of all the characters in this episode can be found at

https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1208129/. Additionally, players can read a description of all the characters in the Doctor Who series, which can be found at

https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/Dl87bYjhKrF2MHQM7StFXQ/characters.

Original Storyline

The *Silence in the Library* episode is set in the 51st century. In this episode, The Doctor is in his tenth incarnation, and his current human traveling companion is Donna Noble. The Doctor receives a message from archaeologist River Song asking him to investigate a planet-sized library where thousands of visitors vanished without a trace when the library was closed a hundred years earlier.

When the Doctor and Donna arrive on the planet, they detect no signs of human life. Instead, they encounter an information node with a humanoid face that serves as an interface to the Library's computer. The Node explains that the library sealed itself, but it has been breached, and others are coming. The Node confirms that The Doctor and Donna are the only humans present yet claims that there are over "a million million lifeforms" in the Library and warns them to "count the shadows" (Lyn et al., 2008). The Doctor and Donna are joined by River Song, Strackman Lux, and three other members of an expedition team investigating the cause of the Library shutdown.

After an expedition team member is transformed into a skeleton, the Doctor realizes that the Vashta Nerada, creatures who take the form of shadows to hunt, are in the Library. When another member of their party appears to have two shadows, the Doctor and River seal him in his space suit. However, the Vashta Nerada still gets in and consumes everything except the team member's skeleton. Now the team understands the Node's warning to "count the shadows." The Doctor attempts to teleport Donna back to the TARDIS for her safety, but the attempt fails. Donna is transformed into an information node uttering the message "Donna has left the library and been saved." ("Silence in the Library," 2023) (Lyn et al., 2008)

The Library of Shadows Story

The Library of Shadows story begins when The Doctor, Donna, River, and Lux arrive in the Library. Their intent (and the players' goal) is to cross the Library and reach the central computer, which can bring the Library back online. The Node greets the group and explains that they must answer a series of library questions before proceeding to the main computer. If the visitors can answer the questions correctly, the computer will disarm the emergency security system, which has been archiving everything and everyone for over 100 years.

In addition to answering the Node's questions, the group must avoid being consumed by the Vashti Nerada. It is unlikely that all the visitors will reach the other side of the Library. Some will need to make a difficult choice. However, if a character cannot make it across, it is better for them to be "saved" than consumed. A "saved" character will be restored once the computer is back online, but a character lost to the shadows is gone forever.

If the team has answered at least five questions correctly and at least one character reaches the other side, that character can restart the main computer.

Custom Avatar Options

Players can select an image of a character while playing a game, but that image is not permanently associated with their personal profile. However, they can upload an avatar to use for their profile. Other players will see their avatar when they enter a can

Characters interacting with learner:

The Vashta Nerada are hiding in the shadows of the dark squares on the game board.

Environment

The online game environment allows friends to play in teams even if they are not in the same physical space.

Description of Gameplay

As mentioned in the introduction, to win this game, players must work as a team to move their characters across the Library to reboot the main computer and bring the Library, which is the entire planet, back online.

The core dynamics are:

- **Rescue and Escape** – players must get out of a dangerous situation and rescue the individuals who the Library's computer has archived
- **Outwit** – players must outwit the Vashti Nerada, and
- **Solution** – players must answer the Node's questions

The game elements include:

- **Aesthetics** – the game combines the look of a Checker or Chess board with the images depicting the theme of a library or museum-like setting. The game also uses sound to advance the storyline https://youtu.be/bYXMmxMzmeI,
- **Chance** – players roll a die to control how they move across the board,

- **Conflict** – the players know that the Vashti Nerada are in the shadows, and landing on a dark square will eliminate them from the game.

- **Cooperation** – players work together to answer questions. While players take turns rolling the die, they can make choices that help the team achieve the goal.

- **Levels** – three virtual game boards increase the difficulty of achieving the goal. Players learn the game while using the first game board and develop strategies that they can use to adapt to the more challenging boards.

- **Story** – a story establishes why the game is being played and explains the game mechanics

- **Strategy** – players can determine how to navigate the board and whether to take or forego a turn.

- **Theme** – the players must escape danger in order to rescue the inhabitants of the Library planet and restore the Library.

The game requires at least two players but is designed for five or more. During each round, one player will be The Node while the other players take on the roles of The Doctor and the other three visitors. The Node holds the deck of cards that contain the name of a literary character and clues to finding that character in a Library catalog. The other players work together to identify the literary figure and the library resource (book, film, etc.). If the players answer correctly, they earn 10 points and an opportunity to roll the die a move across the Library. If the players answer incorrectly, they lose 10 points and are asked another question. To win the game, the team must earn at least 50 points, and one player must reach the other side of the board. If one or more players reach the

other side of the game board, but the team has less than fifty points, they must continue to answer questions until they've earned enough points to free any of their "saved" team members.

Example:

The Node pulls a card that reads; The companions must locate the character Aziraphale in the large print book edition of "Good Omens: The Nice and Accurate Prophecies of Agnes Nutter, Witch" and tell you the branch call number. Then, the Node will begin by giving the other players the character's name and two other clues.
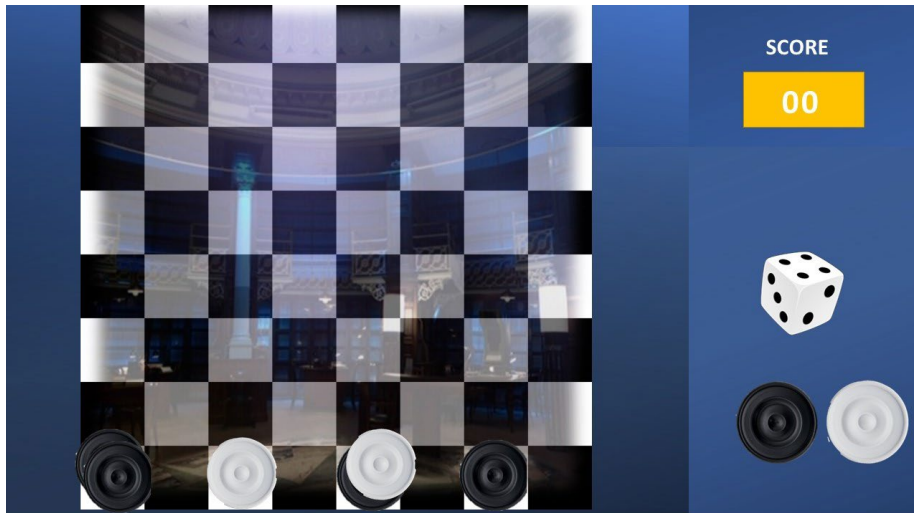
Select from the following:

- character: Aziraphale

- Format: large print

- Authors: Gaiman, Neil

- Title: Good Omens: the nice and accurate prophecies of Agnes Nutter, witch

- Publisher: New York, NY: HarperLuxe

- Publication year: 2006

- Edition: First HarperLuxe edition

- Summary: The world will end next Saturday, but there are a few problems--the Antichrist has been misplaced, the Four Horseman of the Apocalypse ride motorcycles, and the representatives from heaven and hell decide that.
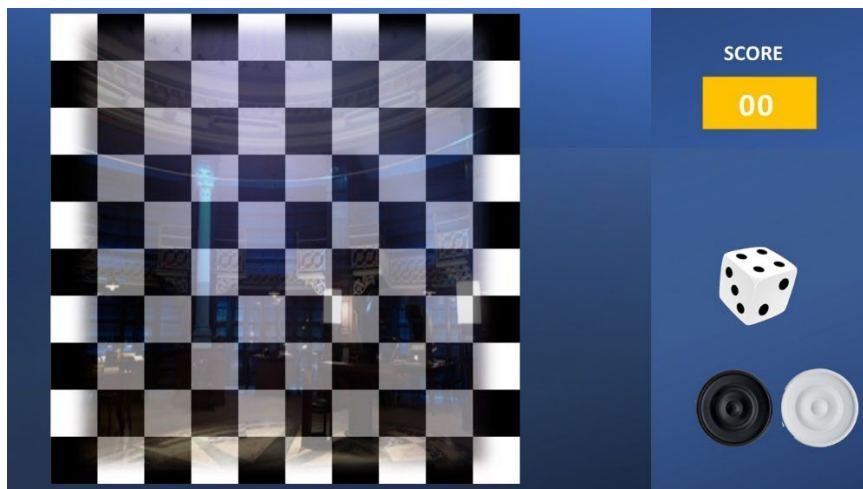
Levels

Once players win a game using the 8 x 8 game board, they can move on to the 10 x 10 square board and then the 16 x 10 square board.
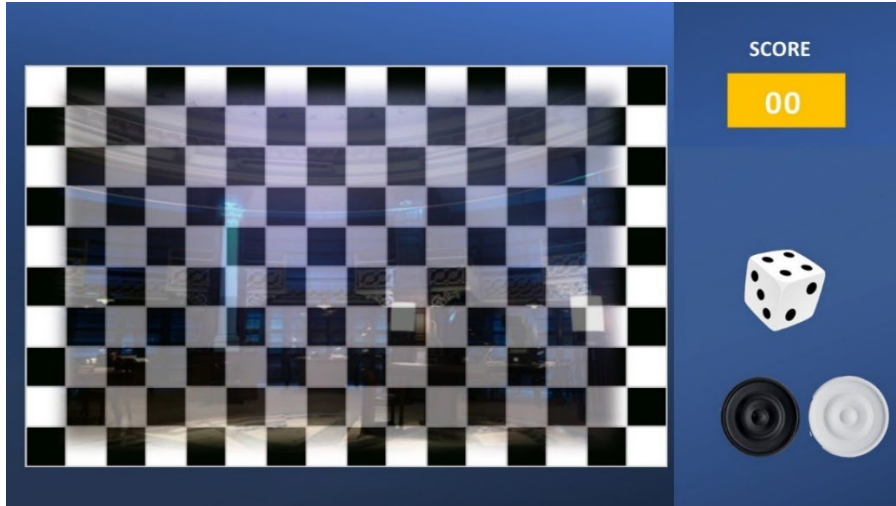
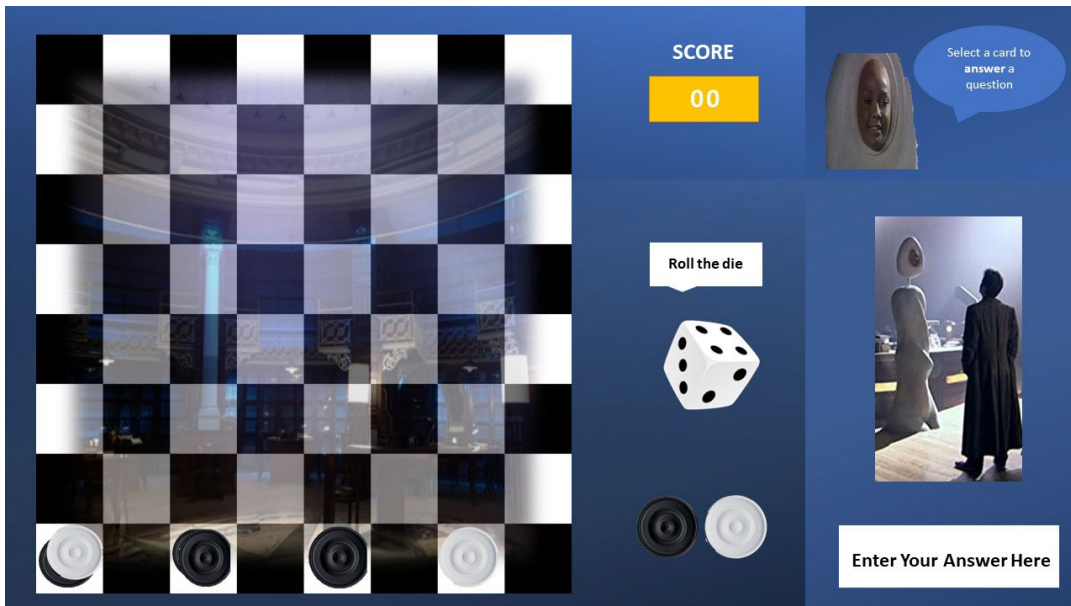**8x8 Square Game Board**

10x10 Square Game Board

16x10 Square Game Board

Gameplay Experience:

The following pictures illustrate the game experience.

Find Aziraphale:

Select from the following:

Authors: Gaiman, Neil
Title: **Good omens - the nice and accurate prophecies of Agnes Nutter, witch**
Publisher: New York : Harpercollins, 2007
Edition: First Harper paperback edition
Audience: 830L
Additional Contributors: Pratchett, Terry
ISBN:9780060853976
Branch Call Number: SCI-FIC GAIMAN 2007
Subject Headings: Witches Fiction End of the world Fiction Prophecies Fiction
Genre/Form: Humorous fiction
Fantasy fiction
Topical Term: Witches
End of the world
Prophecies

To begin, the Node draws a card from the deck of clue cards.

For example:

The Node pulls the card to the left, reads the instructions and says, "You must locate Aziraphale in order to take the next step. Remember "Count the Shadows".

The Node gives the team two clues from those listed on the card.

The team must respond with the Library branch call number.
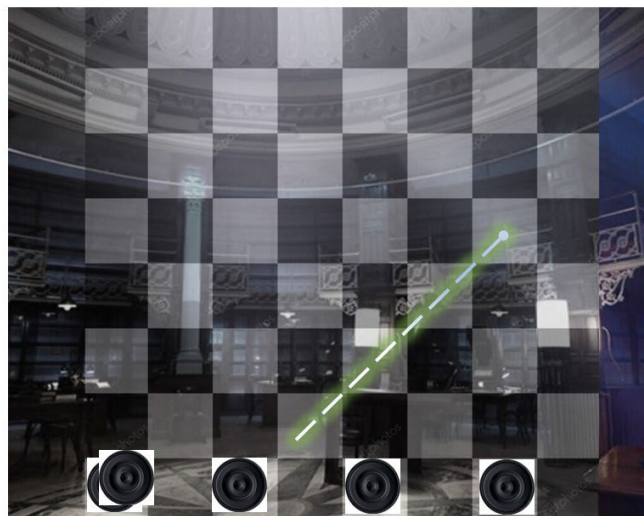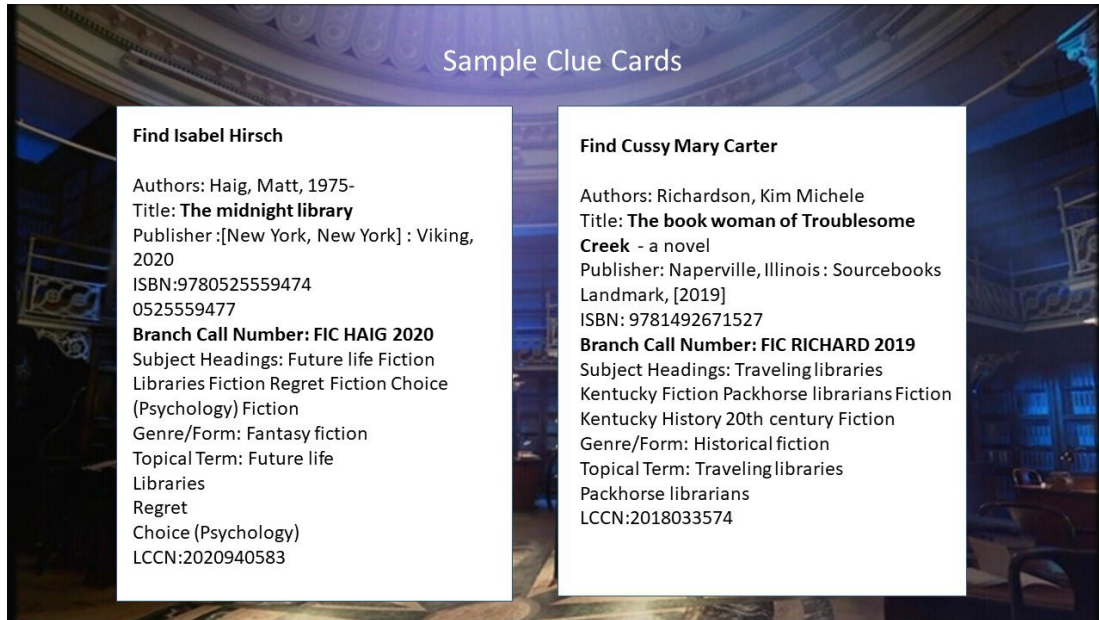
Find Aziraphale:

Select from the following:

Authors: Gaiman, Neil
Title: **Good omens - the nice and accurate prophecies of Agnes Nutter, witch**
Publisher: New York : Harpercollins, 2007
Edition: First Harper paperback edition
Audience: 830L
Additional Contributors: Pratchett, Terry
ISBN:9780060853976
Branch Call Number: SCI-FIC GAIMAN 2007
Subject Headings: Witches Fiction End of the world Fiction Prophecies Fiction
Genre/Form: Humorous fiction
Fantasy fiction
Topical Term: Witches
End of the world
Prophecies

The Node decides how easy or difficult the clues will be.

For very young players the Node might begin by giving them the name of the author and the book.

For older players, the Node might give the players the name of the author and the year of publication.

For adult players, the Node might provide only the genre and year of publication.

Sample Clue Cards

Find Isabel Hirsch

Authors: Haig, Matt, 1975-
Title: **The midnight library**
Publisher :[New York, New York] : Viking, 2020
ISBN:9780525559474
0525559477
Branch Call Number: FIC HAIG 2020
Subject Headings: Future life Fiction
Libraries Fiction Regret Fiction Choice (Psychology) Fiction
Genre/Form: Fantasy fiction
Topical Term: Future life
Libraries
Regret
Choice (Psychology)
LCCN:2020940583

Find Cussy Mary Carter

Authors: Richardson, Kim Michele
Title: **The book woman of Troublesome Creek** - a novel
Publisher: Naperville, Illinois : Sourcebooks Landmark, [2019]
ISBN: 9781492671527
Branch Call Number: FIC RICHARD 2019
Subject Headings: Traveling libraries
Kentucky Fiction Packhorse librarians Fiction
Kentucky History 20th century Fiction
Genre/Form: Historical fiction
Topical Term: Traveling libraries
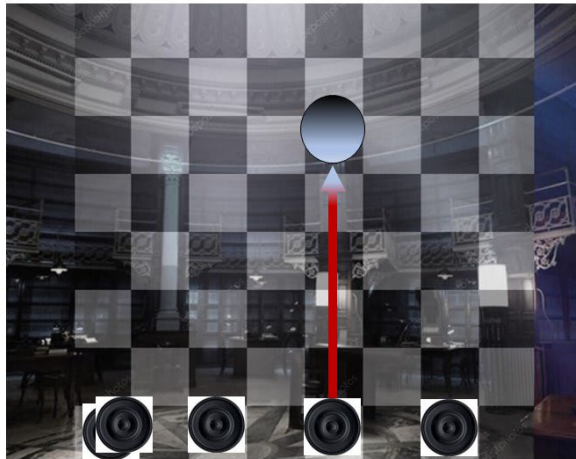Packhorse librarians
LCCN:2018033574


After players give a correct answer

One player rolls the die and moves the indicated # of spaces diagonally

This player avoided the shadows and can keep trying to reach safety at the other end of the board

This player has rolled a 5. However, there is no diagonal option. If the player moves vertically 5 places they will land in the shadows and vanished. The player can opt to be "saved" and removed from the board. One of the other players can take that move.

.
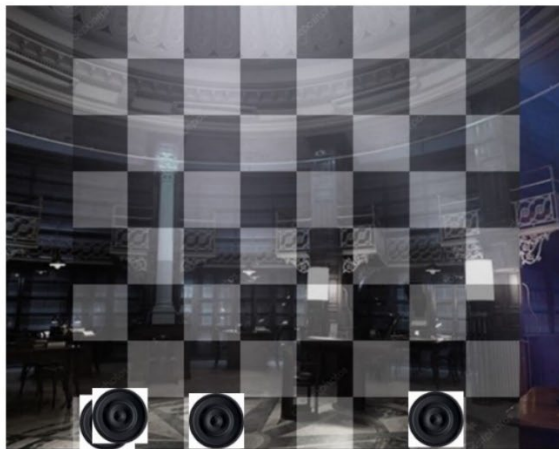
Your teammates will play on without you.

Reward structure

Players are rewarded for answering the Node's questions correctly. In addition, if they complete the mission, teams are rewarded by being allowed to rescue teammates who have been saved.

Points

Teams earn 10 points for each correct answer to a question from the Node. They lose 10 points for incorrect answers. Points are displayed in the box labeled "Score."

Technical Description

Time to Play

There is no time minimum or maximum

Control

Players can interact with the game using a PC or laptop keyboard, mouse, monitor, or touch screen. On an Android or IOS device, players can interact with the game with their touchscreen and keypad.

Interface

See the section for Game Experience for an example of the game interface.

Similar to the website Lidraughts.org and Lichess.org, Library of Shadows will be free to play, free of advertising, and built with open-source code. The interface would also include a menu with options for logging on, creating an account, customization options, community links, technical support links, and a page with the game rules.

Actions

Players can roll the die with a keyboard command CTRL – R, chat with the Node via keyboard entries and move the mouse via drag and drop mouse or touchscreen.

Movement

- ➢ To begin a game, players take a position on one side of the playing board.

- ➢ The players playing the characters of The Doctor and River Song have double checkers (two checkers stacked together). These characters can move horizontally, vertically, diagonally, forward, and back. These players can also sacrifice one of their game pieces and separate if their throw of the die results in a number that places them on a dark square. But, of course, they can only do that once.

- ➢ The other characters have a single Checker piece. They can move forward horizontally or vertically. If a roll of the die results in the player moving to a black square, the player can choose to be "saved" rather than consumed by the shadows. Players who choose this option leave the board and another play moves instead. If there is no safe move for another player, the player who rolled the die must move and be consumed by the Vashti Nerada/

- ➢ If a player rolls a die and another player is already of the square, the player that rolled the die stays in place with no penalty. However, The Doctor can take the move and may jump over an occupied square.

- ➢ Only the checker belonging to The Doctor may jump over an occupied square but cannot skip a square to avoid the shadows. If there is no option to move, all the pieces stay in place. Then, the players must give another answer.

- ➢ The Node continues to draw cards and provide clues until a team member reaches the other side of the board, and the team has at least 50 points.

- ➢ The player that reaches the other side first becomes the new Node/Librarian, and the other players select the new Doctor.

Collecting information and allocating information/resources

The game rules and the story will be explained under a game menu option.

Additional References and Works Cited

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   the Library. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ZGtJyZrhOQ

The background photo used in the gameboard design and this presentation are from Fanpop.

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