

The Ohio Novel #1 Is Done! (Or what it's like to disappear into a black box)

By Holly Lisle

I wrapped up my final draft yesterday.

In spite of best efforts, I came in over my 90,000K wordcount by about 12,000 words.

I don't have a title for the novel yet (Matt comes up with my best titles, and I'm really hoping he can pull out something amazing, both for the first book and for the entire series).

I do have my pseudonym. I can't give either until – BARE MINIMUM – the first five books are out and starting to find their audience.

And then I'll only be giving it to the folks on my mailing list who are genuinely interested in the genre.

Since I'm publishing the Ohio series independently, since I'm bringing the series and world (with possible subsequent series) out under a pseudonym, and since I have to plot the next four novels, then have to complete the entire 5-book series – have all five written, revised, edited, bug-hunted, formatted, covered with pro-quality covers, and get them all up into Amazon-exclusive KDP and print formats, and then launch them at the speed of one book a month for five months, I have a long, long way to go.

But... THIS TIME, I'm trying to work with Amazon's algorithms, and see what I can learn from doing that.

It's an investment in manpower. A BIG one – primarily but not exclusively mine. We're talking the time, effort, focus,

dedication, that goes into thinking and then writing 400,000+ MORE connected, related, compelling words of fiction that must be outlined, first-drafted, finished, revised, edited, bug-hunted, typeset, put into Kindle, print, and other formats (the Ohio novels will start Amazon-exclusive, but probably won't stay that way past the completion of the initial five-book launch) have cover copy written and tested and re-written, have title testing – so I'm talking about an all-in commitment of a big chunk of my life, with no feedback (except from Matt, Becky, and my bug hunters) until this whole thing goes live.

It's also an investment in money: All mine. Just the cash outlay for five great, professional covers, is significant. But much, much more expensive than that is opportunity cost – the things I don't get paid for because of the time and effort I'm putting into this project that I *hope* I might get paid for... that isn't a new writing class or a couple of classes I KNOW I could get paid for.

If it goes big for me, THEN my writing students will get my numbers and how I did it, along with this really cool story development process I've come up with and am using for these. Maybe some workshops.

If it doesn't go big for me, they'll get the really cool story development process... but that's not a cool new workshop that might be able to give writers willing to do the work (as outlined above, so we're talking BRAVE writers) a path to building a live-on fiction income. The story development thing is just a few lessons. Probably added into an existing class or two.

And here's the thing that's making me a little nuts.

The entire process has to be done completely in the dark. I have to build EVERYTHING, pay for EVERYTHING, set up EVERYTHING, write EVERYTHING, and publish EVERYTHING... with

nobody but Matt, Becky, and myself seeing what I'm doing. (Well, at the point where I'm ready for bug-hunters, I already have a couple lined up, and will bring in a few more, and this handful of readers will go through all five novels back to back to back. And sign an NDA beforehand that they can't tell anyone who I am, or what my pseudonym is, or where the website is, or anything. Not until the books are doing so well that I can bring in my other genre-related fiction to the new writer under a "written as Holly Lisle" label with the pseudonym as the author name.

I can't share snippets of any of the Ohio stuff – not snippets or scenes or teaser stuff or worldbuilding – on my blog, on the podcast, in the writing community forum. Nothing.

I can't put links to the books when they come out here or in the writing community or on the podcast page.

I can't link my old novels to this new set.

I have to become invisible.

Not my strong suit.

But for this test to mean anything, for this process to mean anything, this is where I am.

At some point in the future, I hope to be able to share some crazy great news. Or at least, "Hey, I'm making enough to pay off the house." That would be really cool.

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Marketing Tuesday: Not so much, because the HTWAN BONUS is still not done...

By Holly Lisle

Marketing Tuesday got pre-empted by my need to finish the HTWAN Student-Voted Bonus, *Interweaving Multiple Story Threads in Big, Complex Novels*.

Which still isn't done. Today's image is a screenshot of one of the pages showing the technique for building and then using the threads in a complex novel.

At the speed this is going, it's going to take me at least another week, and possibly two to finish this bonus.

So everything else I'd planned today got done, but that was small stuff.

I did not get to start the HTWAN Surprise Bonus, *How to Turn a Stand-Alone Novel Into a Series*. That's still pending.

Why did I decide to throw in this bonus as an unasked for, unpromised extra?

- Because it fits the class.
- Because it's one of the most important skills you'll need to have if you go commercial.
- Because it's even more important if you go indie.
- And because it is ridiculously fun.

This will not teach you how to write the series. That's a BIG class, and it already exists.

But it will teach you how to find the series you DID NOT know was there found inside most novels – and will also show you

how to know when a novel should NOT be made into a series.

OH... Yesterday I got nine chapters of Read-Through Assessment done on my novel *Dead Man's Party*. So yesterday was a pretty good day. Long. But good.

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The Ohio Series: Taking the measure of a novel

By Holly Lisle

Yesterday was Marketing Day, and I got the first half of the 4th edition of *Create a Plot Clinic* finished. Next week if all goes well I'll finish and do a new cover, and take that class live and wide.

Today, I worked for several hours, and got 1010 words of the 2000 I'd planned. I'm working on Chapter Two, finding my way through the story, and building Smits Corner, a town based on one of my two favorite towns in Ohio. While I was writing, I was crawling through images from Google, and remembering places I knew as a kid (places that look even better today – go figure).

And having my MC, a cop currently named Tori Gage, looking around her long-abandoned hometown and having a sudden bad feeling – what she describe as...

All of a sudden I was pulling off into a parking space,

trying to catch my breath. This wasn't nostalgia.

This was pure unadulterated fear, cold and dark and running into my gut like ice water, the five-second warning a good cop feels responding to a domestic when all of a sudden you know it's going to go bad. And it's going to do it in your direction.

Ladies and gentlemen, the magic just showed up.

I have no clue yet what it is, and she knows even less than I do... but she can feel it.

And it just identified her.

This is where, when you're writing, you take the measure of your novel. Where you start understanding what you're writing isn't what you thought you were writing. Might be less cozy, meaner, bigger.

Don't get me wrong. This is small-town urban fantasy where the protagonist is a displaced big-city cop finding her way back home after too long away.

But this bugger just growled at me and showed its teeth. And when I look under the desk, the eyes blinking up at me are red, and they glow in the dark.

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Why I shut down my Patreon

fundraiser

By Holly Lisle

I'd intended to send a *Questions & Answers* email to my *How to Write a Novel* launch list, but that's going to have to wait. Instead, I did THIS.

Closed my "Move out of Florida while writing fiction" fundraiser.

Here's why – it's this clause in the Patreon Legal Agreement

<https://www.patreon.com/legal>

By posting content to Patreon you grant us a royalty-free, perpetual, irrevocable, non-exclusive, sublicensable, worldwide license to use, reproduce, distribute, perform, publicly display or prepare derivative works of your content.

Understand that I read that clause and all the rest of them before signing up.

BUT... I'm not a lawyer, and I understood that clause to mean that Patreon was claiming the right to use my Patreon-created content (in other words, my POSTS) to promote the site.

I DID NOT think that they were claiming the right to use and abuse the content I was giving my patrons. In this case, three monthly chapters of the raw first draft of one of my current novels in progress, *Dead Man's Party*.

A friend emailed me with a link to this post, however:

<https://www.thepassivevoice.com/the-beginning-of-the-end-for-patreon/>

Turns out, I was wrong. Patreon is claiming rights to my

novel.

So I'm out. I sent the first copy of this email to my patrons using a private Patreon post, and then I shut down my Patreon fundraiser, and am now trying to figure out how to actually close my account.

I'm not letting this kill my dream of moving us out of Florida...

...(hopefully before the next hurricane, if not the start of the hurricane season).

How you can help, if you want to –

IF YOU'RE HERE AS A WRITER:

I have created original classes ranging from under ten dollars to way over a hundred. If one of the classes I offer could help you, then you buying it would help me.

MY COMPREHENSIVE CAREER-LEVEL CLASSES (in recommended order)

***** How to Write a Novel *****

<http://hollyswritingclasses.com/class/how-to-write-a-novel.html>

(IN LAUNCH: On sale ONLY through Tuesday APRIL 8 – Final Discount Launch)

How to Revise Your Novel:

<https://hollyswritingclasses.com/go/how-to-revise-your-novel.html>

How to Write a Series:

<https://hollyswritingclasses.com/go/how-to-write-a-series.html>

How to Think Sideways: Career Survival School for Writers:

<https://hollyswritingclasses.com/go/how-to-think-sideways.html>

WRITING CRAFT SERIES (Each class is under \$10)

Create a Character Clinic:

<https://hollyswritingclasses.com/go/characterclinic.html>

Create A Plot Clinic:

<https://hollyswritingclasses.com/go/plotclinic.html>

How to Write Page-Turning Scenes:

<https://hollyswritingclasses.com/go/pageturningscenes.html>

WORLDBUILDING SERIES (Each class is under \$10)

Create A Language Clinic:

<https://hollyswritingclasses.com/go/languageclinic.html>

Create a Culture Clinic:

<https://hollyswritingclasses.com/go/cultureclinic.html>

Create a World Clinic:

<https://hollyswritingclasses.com/go/worldclinic.html>

WORKSHOPS & MID-SIZED CLASSES (PRICES VARY)

How to Write Short Stories:

<http://hollyswritingclasses.com/go/how-to-write-short-stories-class.html>

How to Write Villains:

<http://hollyswritingclasses.com/go/how-to-write-villains.html>

How to Write Dialogue with Subtext:

<https://hollyswritingclasses.com/go/dialogue-subtext.html>

Title Cover Copy Marketing Basics:

<https://hollyswritingclasses.com/go/titlecovercopy.html>

How to Find Your Writing Discipline:

<https://hollyswritingclasses.com/go/writingdiscipline.html>

How to Find Your Writing Voice:

<https://hollyswritingclasses.com/go/writing-voice.html>

How to Motivate Yourself:

<http://hollyswritingclasses.com/go/motivate-yourself.html>

Beat Writer's Block:

<https://hollyswritingclasses.com/go/beatwritersblock.html>

FREE, INCLUDED WITH (also Free) SITE MEMBERSHIP

How to Write Flash Fiction That Doesn't Suck

<https://hollyswritingclasses.com/go/free-flash-fiction-class.html>

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IF YOU'RE HERE AS A READER:

You can help out by buying some of my indie-published fiction.

SHORT STUFF, CURRENTLY AMAZON ONLY:

Light Through Fog:

<https://www.amazon.com/Light-Through-Holly-Lisle-Singles-ebook/dp/B0096F4HY0/>

Rewind:

<https://www.amazon.com/Rewind-Holly-Lisle-Singles-Book-ebook/dp/B00AY10HAE/>

Strange Arrivals:

<https://www.amazon.com/Strange-Arrivals-Twisty-Fantasy-Tales-ebook/dp/B00E0WYRW/>

FANTASY – ARHEL TRILOGY

Fire in the Mist:

<https://books2read.com/FireInTheMist>

Bones of the Past:

<https://books2read.com/BonesOfThePast>

Mind of the Magic:

<https://books2read.com/MindOfTheMagic>

DARK SCIENCE FICTION-ISH

SETTLED SPACE

Both of the Cadence Drake novels – *Hunting the Corrigan's Blood* and *Warpaint*, are off sale while I come up with new titles and new cover art for them, and new key words, descriptions, and other marketing that allows me to correctly put them in front of the audience that likes a few vampires and a bit of horror with its spaceships.

The Longview Chronicles (complete Series) is in the same universe – still dark, but without the vampires:

<https://books2read.com/longview-chronicles>

Or you can get the individual stories:

Born from Fire:

<https://books2read.com/born-from-fire>

Suzee Delight:

<https://books2read.com/the-selling-of-suzee-delight>

Philosopher Gambit:

<https://books2read.com/the-philosopher-gambit>

Gunslinger Moon:

<https://books2read.com/gunslinger-moon>

Vipers' Nest:

<https://books2read.com/vipers-nest>

The Owner's Tale:

<https://books2read.com/the-owners-tale>

STANDALONE URBAN FANTASY

Minerva Wakes:

<https://books2read.com/minerva-wakes>

PARANORMAL SUSPENSE

Author Page:

<https://books2read.com/ap/xbzgyx/Kate-Aeon>

Midnight Rain:

<https://books2read.com/midnight-rain>

Last Girl Dancing:

<https://books2read.com/last-girl-dancing>

I See You:

<https://books2read.com/i-see-you>

I have much more fiction that's commercially published, or which is out of print and has reverted to me, but which I have not yet republished.

I'm not linking to ANY of that fiction, because your purchase of used books or books where publishers haven't paid royalties in years will not help me.

So there we are.

I want to thank all my patrons again, and I am so sorry that I had to do this, but there is no way I can permit this:

Excerpted from Patreon Legal Terms

You keep full ownership of all content that you post on Patreon, but to operate we need licenses from you.

By posting content to Patreon you grant us a royalty-free, perpetual, irrevocable, non-exclusive, sublicensable, worldwide license to use, reproduce, distribute, perform, publicly display or prepare derivative works of your content.

No. Just NO.

Holly

P.S. I have had one of my Patreon patrons already ask me how she could continue to support me on a monthly basis.

Here's the answer I gave her:

“I’ll look into what’s available. Right now, I’m crushed to discover the rights Patreon actually claimed, and worried about getting involved with any other site. So I’m in limbo. You’ll find my blog at HollyLisle.com. I’ll be keeping my folks there up to date on how I deal with this. It sucks.

Hugs, and thank you for asking.”

Why is EVERYBODY on my blog, my mailing list, and in my forums getting this?

Because if you know me, you’re probably either a reader or a writer. If you’re a writer, you may be considering using Patreon, and you need to know. If you’re a reader considering funding someone on Patreon, THEY need to know.

And this is the ugliest, broadest rights-grab I have personally ever seen. Or sadly, been caught up in.

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The Wishbone Conspiracy: A Fine Friday

By Holly Lisle

Spiffy, spiffy day today, though kind of horrifying, too. I followed Cady’s situation to its logical conclusion, and she’s **literally** up to her neck in one of those moments I would have previously identified as “bad,” but which some of my readers have told me counts as horror.

Well, folks who have read and liked *Hunting the Corrigan’s*

Blood and Warpaint and are still will me for *The Wishbone Conspiracy* (working title) are made of stern stuff, and will get through this.

And having read through Ilona Andrews, I can state categorically that my “going dark” is not any grimmer than what she writes. (I know “she’s” a husband/wife team, but the name is female and following a singular proper noun with a plural pronoun bugs the fuck out of me.)

On that working title...

Matt just finished re-reading *Hunting the Corrigan’s Blood* for the sole purpose of brainstorming titles, and came up with a better title that fits the series. And did it by using Badger’s poem at the end of the book.

My eyes still filled with unshed tears,
I face the path where darkness crept
 Before me, taking everything
I once held dear and stripping from
 Me joy’s frail wings.

 Death stalks after.
 Stillness follows
All of Life’s unceasing chatter;
 If I win still I shall lose.
Life’s failures are but little deaths
 That slink before.

Where once I flew now I must walk
And stumble over stones and roots;
Taste dust and ashes on my tongue
 And bleed as failure’s weight
 Drives me to ground.

Wait. Knowing that I too must die
And fall at last beyond the reach
Of light and love and laughter I

Become unburdened: I become
Life's renegade.

I who have nothing left to lose
Must now have everything to gain
And driven down must now burst free,
And take from Life what Life won't give:
I own my soul.

Life's a miser; death's a thief that
Steals Life's bread when darkness falls.
I'll shame the thief; I will not weep
But, head high, stand and fight and bleed.
I will not call death friend; I will
Not ask for softness; I will not
Embrace the empty, silent night –
And when I lose, as I must lose –

With neck unbowed and back unbent,
I'll run the path where darkness creeps
And scream and shout and pound the walls
And death will cringe to hear me come –
And Life, well-lived,
Will weep.

The story behind that poem is here.

Using the same poem, I came up with a better title
for *Warpaint*, and a better title for *Wishbone* as well.

Going to keep them secret for now.

I need to get some cold, hard split-testing numbers to see
which are more marketable, because no matter what I happen to
like, the title that encourages people to buy the book is the
title that gets to go on the cover. And when I get the split
tests set up, I don't want any hint of which title I might
prefer floating around influencing people and messing up the
voting.

Anyway... Got 2009 words, ended the chapter on an awesome cliffhanger, and am looking forward to getting back to this story next Wednesday.

Meanwhile, however, now I have to get work done on the *How to Write a Novel* launch.

It's getting close and I still have a lot of work to do.

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The Wishbone Conspiracy: 2027 words, and a Change in the 3-Novels Experiment

By Holly Lisle

Got pretty decent words today on *The Wishbone Conspiracy*. 2027 new words, taking me to a total of 23,873 words in the novel.

I mostly like what I got, though I had a bit of a hard start.

And that's what I want to talk about today.

The "Write on three different novels each week" experiment worked very well. Until it didn't.

I was writing first draft of *Dead Man's Party* on Mondays, first draft of **Moon & Sun: The Emerald Sun** on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, and first draft of **Cadence Drake: The Wishbone Conspiracy** on Thursdays and Fridays.

Getting 1515 words or better on Mondays, about 1500 words on

Tuesdays and Wednesdays, and 2000-ish words on Thursdays and Fridays.

BUT...

It required a big mental shift, and rolling through three very different projects back to back to back started taking a toll on me.

I kept going... but then I started research in improving the marketing I've done – or in many cases haven't done – on my work, and current methods of increasing Amazon sales, and experimenting with copywriting and cover design and split testing and...

Along with writing the three novels, and writing a new lesson every week in my new **How to Write a Novel** class, and answering student questions, and working with Dan on getting the final pieces of the HollysWritingClasses.com website out of beta, plus spending time with my family...

Well, the fiction broke down just a little. And I hit what I have come to recognize as the “trying to do too much at once” wall.

Dead Man's Party has to stay. It's my demonstration novel for *How to Write a Novel*.

My writing on *The Wishbone Conspiracy* is still running smoothly.

But the writing on *The Emerald Sun* hit a wall.

This is a book I need to be able to throw myself into exclusively: to NOT be writing other fiction at the same time. It has a specific voice and some specific worldbuilding and a place it's going that is very different from other things I write. It has a deep world that I have not been writing in recently, characters who have become strangers to me, and both

Tuesday and yesterday, my mind simply balked. Refused to work on *Emerald Sun*.

Was real damn happy to offer up copywriting, cover design, threw ideas at me for both *The Wishbone Conspiracy* and *Dead Man's Party*.

But it dug in its heels on what was supposed to have been the work of the day.

Had all my fiction crashed on me, I would be taking a different approach than the one I'm taking starting today, but two of three books – the one with NO previous worldbuilding, and the one with a ton of worldbuilding, but in which I've been writing regularly for the last eight or so years – are still fine.

So now I enter Phase Two of the experiment.

This is pretty simple. Monday will still be *Dead Man's Party*, and still 1515 words or thereabouts each week, followed by working on HTWAN, answering questions in the forum, doing the help desk tickets that require me, working with my moderators, working with Dan on the site, answering emails, and other daily task.

With *Dead Man's Party*, I have to have this amount, and JUST this amount, for my class and to make sure I'm applying the material from the various lessons as I write. So I can't just write ahead and be done with this particular novel. Each chapter has to be written along with each lesson.

Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays, I'm going to be shooting for 2000 words per day on *The Wishbone Conspiracy*.

That will give me six-thousand first-draft words on that book each week.

I currently have 23,873 words total, and with a 90,000-word target for completion of the first draft, need another 66,000 words (rounded) to hit my target.

So some book math. At 6000 words per week, I'll have the first draft finished in about eleven weeks. Figure I'll have it done around May 17th.

This is nobody's fastest pace on a novel ever, and if it were the only thing I was doing, I could get it done a lot faster. But it isn't, and what I'm looking for at this point is...

SUSTAINABLE FICTION CREATION.

A system that I can put into action and stick with, that will allow me to maintain my nonfiction work while creating regular publishable new fiction.

Now...

Those of you who didn't get sidetracked by the book math are going, "WAIT A MINUTE!!! What about Tuesday?"

Very good.

Tuesday, my first two to three hours will be focused on marketing my current backlist and learning how to do a better job of launching my front list.

It will also give me a clean break between Fiction Project One and Fiction Project Two.

And it will carry me to the completion of Fiction Project One AND Fiction Project Two at about the point where I also have the class **How to Write a Novel** completed in the Splinters version.

At that point, I'll have two finished novels in need of revision, editing, covers, marketing, bug hunting, launching,

and publication.

And at that point, I'll figure out what happens next. I'll probably dive all the way into *The Emerald Sun* at that point.

And look at possible new writing classes or workshops I could create.

But as always...

This plan is subject to revision as I experiment and figure out new definitions for what I want to accomplish, and new ways to accomplish my objectives.

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The Pointy Marketing End of Writing Fiction: Old Dog, New Trick

By Holly Lisle

No big secret that I'm working hard on making my fiction a full-time paying gig again – my objective is to earn 50% of my income from fiction, with the other 50% coming from my writing classes.

Fiction has been shoved over in a corner for years, because, well – writing good nonfiction is about a million times easier than writing good fiction, and in general it pays a lot better for significantly less work. And at the point where my writing site broke, it was getting the nonfiction up and running again

that kept us from ending up living under a bridge.

And, honestly, after being taken in by that con artist John Locke, I had any hope of making a living writing fiction crushed out of me for a long time – everything that including both “indie publishing” and “earn a living doing it” looked like a scam.

But writing fiction is the dream job I love – sitting by myself in a room talking to invisible people on a page, watching them do things I don’t expect, finding better conflicts, bigger stories – and writing about what matters to me in THIS world that translates into *my* worlds.

I did it for free every spare minute I got for seven years before I sold anything. Did it as a commercial novelist working fiction as my full-time paying job for seventeen years. Throwing in all the years when I’ve been an indie doing fiction at least part time, I’m now over thirty years in on this – and it is STILL work I love.

When you find **WORK. You. LOVE...** you do not ignore that. It’s rare. It’s astonishing.

I’m writing hard again. Fiction is what bounces me out of bed every morning. Knowing that I’m writing the stories I love, and that they will not be destroyed by bad editors or cancelled by ordering-to-the-net publishing idiocy matters to me.

Knowing that if I can get my work in front of a broader readership, what I’m writing has a chance to matter more – to me because it will help pay the bills, but to MY perfect readers, who can find something in fiction that they love, that matters to them as well – that’s what **MAKES** this the dream job.

I know how to write fiction. I’m good at it, and a good number of my students are making REAL money writing fiction after

taking my classes.

They learned the “write good fiction” part from me.

Learning how to bring in serious money as indies? No.

That’s the part I’m learning from them.

And here are the books and here is the software they have pointed me to that I am fighting with and fighting through in order to make fiction a business, while STILL keeping it MY fiction. Good fiction.

1. Mastering Amazon Descriptions: An Author’s Guide: Copywriting for Authors
2. Mastering Amazon Ads: An Author’s Guide
3. Rapid Release: How to Write & Publish Fast For Profit
4. How to Write a Sizzling Synopsis: A Step-by-Step System for Enticing New Readers, Selling More Fiction, and Making Your Books Sound Good
5. Become a Successful Indie Author: Work Toward Your Writing Dream
6. KDP Rocket

None of these are affiliate links. They’re just links to books I’m reading and software I’m using.

I do NOT yet have numbers to prove any of this will work for me. I can prove (using KDP Rocket) that my folks are earning what they say they are. That the writers of the books above (and the maker of the software), are earning what they say they are.

So this time, I can see that there is a path that leads from where I am to where I’m going. I am going to find my way down that path.

You’re going to be seeing more split tests on this site. NOT just cover art. Sometimes cover copy. Sometimes blurbs.

If you'll help me out by participating in the split testing (just click whatever you like best), I'll be grateful.

The only data I'm gathering is clicks. Nothing personal, nothing identifiable, nothing that will track you across the web and show you damned advertising.

I'm simply learning the split-testing process to figure out how to write better cover copy and blurbs, and how to build better covers.

Whether you're a reader or a writer, thank you for reading this, and thank you for your help in clicking to let me know what you like.

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