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Our Walk Through The World

Six Short Plays

Ross Howard

A SAMUEL FRENCH ACTING EDITION



**SAMUEL
FRENCH**
FOUNDED 1830

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OUR WALK THROUGH THE WORLD was first produced by Ash Angel at The Old Red Lion Theatre on 21st October 2013. The performance was directed by Timothy Trimmingham Lee, designed by Martin Thomas and stage managed by Lucy Cain with sound by Rob Hart and lighting by Matthew Swithinbank. The cast was as follows:

TILLY (AN INTRODUCTION)

TILLY Violet Patton-Ryder

RULES OF ASSORTMENT

MIKE James Hender

HANNAH Shani Erez

ANGELA Joyce Springer

OUR PROSPECTS FOR THE COMING SEASON

THE MANAGER John Atterbury

THE PROSPECT Rob Cavazos

THE AGENT Samuel John

THE PRESS PACK Shani Erez, Violet Patton-Ryder and Billie Vee

RELINQUISH

YOUNG WOMAN Billie Vee

MOTHER Joyce Springer

SON Joe Jameson

THE VIEWING

MOTHER Shani Erez

FATHER James Hender

ESTATE AGENT Rob Cavazos

TOMMY Joe Jameson

FRISKY & THE PANDA MAN

DR OGDEN Samuel John

FRISKY Billie Vee

THE INTERVIEWER Violet Patton-Ryder

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Please see individual plays for character and staging information.

A dash (—) after a word denotes an interruption or an inability to complete the word or sentence. An ellipsis (...) denotes a trailing off.

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For Quinn M. Corbin

Tilly (An Introduction)

CHARACTERS

TILLY – 28.

TILLY (AN INTRODUCTION)

(A light on TILLY who is making a video application to be a surrogate mother.)

TILLY. “Pick me! Pick me!” ...Nah... *(She takes a deep breath and smiles warmly.)* Well, hello about-to-be-Mummy-and-Daddy. My name’s Tilly. I’m 28. I’m single. “Yay me!” *(A beat)* No, I was engaged. To a humanitarian aid worker. But when he went overseas he was captured by a vigilante terrorist group and got beheaded. He didn’t survive. Obviously. War. What an enterprise! *(A beat)* We hadn’t known each other that long but when something like that happens you just need a little “me time”...and nine months sounds just perfect. I don’t drink, I don’t smoke and I’ll never have an accident or fall down the stairs at work because I don’t have a job. I say it’s the economy but my uncle says I’m unemployable. But he’s just got sacked for eating the food from the pet shop he worked at so...people in glass houses... *(A beat)* Well, actually I do feel partly responsible for that. I was sort of seeing his manager and had recently broken things off. You just wonder if I hadn’t have done that, Gary may have gone a little easier on Uncle Jim. The whole thing just seemed to smell of revenge, you know? *(A beat)* He’s something. Gary. He moonlights as a taxidermist. He’s into stuffing all kinds but obviously he draws mainly from what keels over in his shop. The animals that die and he can’t then sell as household pets. Waste not want not, I suppose. *(Pause)* Gary. His sense of humour isn’t tremendous but he’s nice. And kind. More when he wants something, but still. He can be kind. He just isn’t for me. *(Silence)* It was the sex really. If I can say that. If I can be in the business of honesty. *(Thinking*

carefully) I liked that he was a taxidermist. Well, it was interesting at first. "He stuffs dead animals". It was unique. And different. Apart from my fiancé, I've only ever had a couple of guys from the emergency services and a telemarketer. Vanilla types. But Gary... he, he was like a...a...an artist. But we could only do it upstairs, in his flat above the shop, and it was just those animals he kept up there. They're still there. Well, they just creeped me out. I mean they were everywhere. I know he has to keep them someplace, but it was...it was just...their eyes. These eyes, that I felt burning into me, following me around the room. He didn't care, but there we'd be in bed, two lonely people lying in a wet spot staring up at the ceiling, you glance over to your left or right and there's a team of mounted chinchillas staring right back at you. It's just not what you picture for yourself. When he lit candles it looked like a haunted house. The shadows and all that. (*A beat*) That flat. It's like Noah's Ark. (*A beat*) I'd tell him, about the eyes and all that and he did offer to turn them all round but of course then it'd just be hairy arses, wouldn't it? Hairy arses following you around the room. It's not ideal. (*Pause*) Anyway, I said I didn't want to see him again and I haven't, so all that's to say when I know my own mind I stick to it. I just feel bad for Uncle Jim. (*A beat*) He's in the next room. I'd ask him to come in and say hello but he's busy at the dinner table counting the sachets of sugar he collects from places. (*Silence*) Um, what else... (*She sees something.*) Oh, look. (*She gets out of her seat and picks the item off the floor and sits back down.*) 10p. (*She shows the coin to the camera and continues to hold it tightly. Pause*) I'm a big believer in talking to an unborn child, so I'll read it stories every night. I have an iPod shuffle so I can put the headphones against my belly, so it can listen to music...and I also speak a little Spanish and so I'll teach it that too. Because you know, that's a life skill: bilingual...ism. (*Brief silence*) I'd carry your baby with dignity at all times which I think

is important. Some don't, do they? Not to be bitchy but it's like "Thunk. This happened. I'm doing sod all for the next nine months." No, I'd still remain active. Within reason. It's very exciting. I bet you're excited. I picture you both as lovely. Daddy, I see you as strong and gentle. You like to mountaineer and pitch tents. But just as happy sitting at home watching something on television. Maybe one of those quiet sports with gentle clapping and whispery announcers. Like golf or cricket. Or even some cheeky snooker. Mummy, you always smell beautiful and can do six things at once and are considered among your friends as "the elegant one". You also like to mountaineer. That's how you met in fact. On the face of a mountain and by the time you got to the top you were together. Your noses all runny and wearing funny hats, smiling at each other. There's a photograph above the fireplace that captures the day. Don't worry if this isn't you. This can be metaphorical. You watch Daddy watch television and picture him with a little girl on his lap. Or boy. Or both. And you think "I wonder how Tilly's getting on. Not long now!" *(A beat)* You have a lot to look forward to. My mum loved being a mum and my dad loved being a dad. They're dead. A motorway car crash one Christmas Eve. Eeek. It was bonkers. *(Thoughtfully)* We always had fun summers and we always had warm winter Sundays inside. *(Proudly)* We had a fireplace. *(A beat)* Just think of all the times you'll have together! I'm sure nothing will go wrong for you. *(Silence. She listens for something.)* Uncle Jim?... *(She listens.)* ... UNCLE JIM?! ... *(She hears something and immediately looks relieved.)* He's moving around now. Sorry. It just went a bit quiet in there. Where was I? *(Silence)* It's very exciting. I bet you're exci-oo— *(She pulls out her tongue and appears to pick something off it and looks at her fingers.)* Sorry, I bet you're— *(She pulls out her tongue again and appears to pick something off it and looks at her fingers.)* I bet you're— fuck, I've got like all kinds of hair in my mouth! Hang on. Sorry. *(She pulls out her*

tongue and appears to pick something off it.) There. *(She swirls her tongue and bites to make sure.)* Three strands. Bonkers. *(A beat)* Yeah, I bet you're excited. *(Brief silence)* Imagine that day when you get to hold your baby for the first time. Unconditional love both ways starts now! Boom! *(She laughs and then stops.)* You know, I really didn't give it much thought when I had an abortion. What it'd be like to actually have a baby. It was a long time ago, I was sixteen, it was an accident and I just wasn't ready and was just scared. *(Suddenly, reassuring)* Oh I won't get another. It's not like tattoos! I mean the doctor was very nice about the whole thing really. And honest. He told me right before "This will hurt" and he was right. It did. *(A beat)* After and that. *(Silence. Then, from her very soul)* But now I would really, really, really like to have this baby. *(Silence)* And give it to you. *(A beat)* Pick me. *(A beat)* Thank you.

(She looks down at the 10 pence piece and squeezes it tightly. The light fades on TILLY.)

End of Play

Rules of Assortment

CHARACTERS

HANNAH – manager of a national bank's call and sorting centre.

ANGELA – a team leader.

MIKE – recently hired at the centre.

SCENE

HANNAH's office. On the desk are a laptop computer, the usual office stationery, a phone and a huge bowl of jelly beans.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

To be performed at breakneck speed.

RULES OF ASSORTMENT

(HANNAH sits behind her desk. MIKE enters.)

MIKE. Ms Dawson.

HANNAH. Hannah, please. You're the new...

MIKE. Mike.

HANNAH. Mr Mike. Fantastic.

MIKE. No, Mike. That's my first name.

HANNAH. Oh. Okay. How unusual. Hannah. Mike.

MIKE. Yes.

HANNAH. Well, now that we're best friends, please, take a seat.

MIKE. Thank you.

HANNAH. So how are things going for you so far? Here at the bank?

MIKE. I like it.

HANNAH. And Angela is your team leader, yes?

MIKE. That's right.

HANNAH. So what is it about the centre that you love so much?

MIKE. Oh...ahm...well. It's a good place to work. I get on well with my colleagues...I...

HANNAH. Team mates.

MIKE. What?

HANNAH. You get on well with your team mates.

MIKE. Oh right. Yes. My team mates. I think they like me and I like them. It's all been very smooth so far.

HANNAH. Good.

MIKE. Anyway, what I've come in for...what I'm concerned about is how—

HANNAH. (*gestures to the bowl of jelly beans*) Jelly bean?

MIKE. No thank you. So what I was wanting to know was,
I'm a bit concerned—

HANNAH. (*as before*) Jelly bean?

(*Silence*)

MIKE. May I?

HANNAH. (*enthusiastically*) Go right ahead!

(*Feeling forced, MIKE takes a jelly bean from the bowl and pops it into his mouth. HANNAH picks up her telephone and hits speed dial.*)

HANNAH. (*gushing*) Angela? We've got a keeper here. He went straight for the bowl! Come in and join us... (*To MIKE*) What colour did you get?

MIKE. Ahm, I think it was a red one.

HANNAH. (*into the phone*) He's got a red one. He's chewing on it now.

(*HANNAH, elated, puts the phone down.*)

HANNAH. That's just fantastic!

MIKE. I must say, one doesn't know whether to help yourself or wait to be offered.

HANNAH. General rule is if they're closer to you, they're yours to take at any time. If they're closer to the person whose desk it is, they're not.

MIKE. Your secretary has them very close.

HANNAH. Gillian? My PA? That's her lunch. (*A beat*) No you can say it. She's hideous. Good worker though. Reliable.

MIKE. Anyway, job security is very important to me and...

(*ANGELA enters cheerfully.*)

ANGELA. So you got a red one? I wondered where you'd got to.

HANNAH. Angela, was this the chap you were telling me about? I really wouldn't have guessed. He seems fine.

MIKE. *(to ANGELA)* I'll be back there in a sec. I just wanted to find out when it is that I actually get—

ANGELA. I always tell Hannah, I say, "Watch out for the red ones. They're the chewiest." She never believes me.

HANNAH. She says it's the beeswax.

ANGELA. Now, don't go making me look stupid, Hannah.
(To MIKE) I say it's the carnauba wax. They put more carnauba wax in the red ones.

HANNAH. That's for the shell! They would be harder not chewier!

ANGELA. *(playfully)* Oh stop it! *(To MIKE)* What do you think?

MIKE. Well, ha! I don't know. I was just trying to find out about my tax code and more importantly, when I'll get paid. You know, single parent—

HANNAH. Try an orange one.

MIKE. Really, I'm fine. It's the start of the new year. School uniforms, PE and games kits, what have you... I'm just a little worried...

(Silence. HANNAH frowns. She looks over at ANGELA.

MIKE notices this.)

MIKE. Okay. Let me see.

(MIKE takes an orange jelly bean from the bowl and pops it into his mouth. Both HANNAH and ANGELA lean in.)

HANNAH. Same texture?

ANGELA. Or less chewy?

MIKE. Well, I... *(laughs nervously)* who's responsible for paying me?

ANGELA. Mike.

HANNAH. Be serious.

MIKE. Well, I can't tell.

ANGELA. Oh you will.

MIKE. They all taste the same to me.

HANNAH. You really think they taste the same?

MIKE. Well... *(turns around to look at ANGELA who is staring hard right back at him)* ...I think they are...similar?

HANNAH. *(exhales, relieved)* Never “the same”. Never say they’re “the same”. People take their jelly beans very seriously around here.

MIKE. I can see you like your jelly beans, that’s for sure. *(A beat)* Okay. So I can get back to work. About getting paid.

HANNAH. *(nods like she’s listening)* Hmmh. Hmmh.

MIKE. It’s been a month.

HANNAH. *(nods like she’s listening)* Hmmh. Hmmh.

MIKE. How does it work around here?

HANNAH. Well Mike, it’s a very exciting time for all departments here. In Mortgages, they got what, Angela? Berry blue?

ANGELA. Berry blue.

MIKE. Berry blue?

HANNAH. Jelly beans. When I arrive in the morning and I walk past their desks, you can’t see the paperwork for the smiles on people’s faces.

ANGELA. In Credit Cards they’ve got strawberry daiquiri.

HANNAH. Kiwi on reception, satsuma on Estates. Just wait until you see what we’re doing in Savings and Investments. Apricot isn’t it, Angela?

ANGELA. Apricot.

(HANNAH gestures towards the bowl and takes a jelly bean for herself which she pops into her mouth.)

HANNAH. Grab an apricot. They’re really juicy.

MIKE. No, thank you.

HANNAH. I said grab an apricot they’re really juicy.

MIKE. *(standing his ground)* No. I’m fine. Thank you.

(HANNAH takes a jelly bean from the bowl and places it in front of MIKE on the desk. They both look down at the jelly bean. They both look at each other. HANNAH gestures for MIKE to take it.)

MIKE. (*pushing the jelly bean towards HANNAH*) Thank you.
I'm fine.

(*Pause*)

MIKE. Please. All I want to know—

HANNAH. Is this what you meant, Angela?

MIKE. Meant?

ANGELA. Yes, though I have to admit I didn't think he'd do it in here as well. Not in front of you.

MIKE. What? Do what?

(*Silence*)

What? What am I—

HANNAH. You don't like our jelly beans?

MIKE. It's not that. I just don't want them now. (*Laughs nervously*) I've had two already.

HANNAH. (*scoffs*) Two?

ANGELA. (*amused*) Two?

MIKE. Yes. Two.

ANGELA. I thought when you called me about the red one he was up to something. He has never shown an interest in the team.

HANNAH. So it was all a game was it, Mike?

MIKE. What?

ANGELA. And he was reluctant to take the second one.

HANNAH. I offer you an apricot and you just refuse?

MIKE. Listen, all I came in here for, all I want to know is—

ANGELA. This is what's been happening ever since he got here.

MIKE. What's been happ—

ANGELA. And here he goes again. He does this a lot as well.

MIKE. What? What do I do?

ANGELA. He can be very argumentative.

MIKE. I'm not.

ANGELA. You see? It's like a red rag to a bull.

HANNAH. And this is what he's like from nine to five every single day?

ANGELA. Sometimes worse.

HANNAH. I thought you had a family, Mike.

MIKE. I do.

HANNAH. Well are you like this at home?

ANGELA. He must be.

HANNAH. At the beach, when your children are building sandcastles, do you just kick them down?

MIKE. No.

ANGELA. I don't think he's ever given up a window seat.

MIKE. I have!

ANGELA. Now he's aggressive!

HANNAH. Let me tell you something. When I first got here it was just macadamia nuts and cashews. This place was a mess. A nightmare. And productivity was low. And I mean "low".

ANGELA. Morale was terrible.

HANNAH. Morale was awful. People were weeping at the photocopier, electrocuting themselves, charging head first into the filing cabinets. Angela's partner in Mortgages even set himself on fire!

ANGELA. That's how we met. I put him out.

HANNAH. I brought in the jelly beans and not only did it brighten the place up, it got the staff going again. Rekindled the flame of enthusiasm for work. We're now the third best performing regional office for the bank in the country.

MIKE. Well yes, I've seen the annual reports.

HANNAH. You've seen them and yet you still try to undermine what we have here?

MIKE. I'm not trying to undermine anything.

HANNAH. Under my management here things have never looked so good. Beans mean growth.

ANGELA. We're thriving.

HANNAH. So what is it you're trying to do? Bring us down from the inside?

MIKE. No.

ANGELA. He denies things frequently.

HANNAH. I can see. It's the way you're going about it that troubles me. Not once in your weekly self-evaluation reports have you mentioned your disgust for the confectionery we have here. You're sneaky.

ANGELA. Not a team player.

HANNAH. And it's the teamwork that makes the dream work here at the Royal Providential Co-operative Bank.

(Silence)

MIKE. I...I don't know what to...

(MIKE gestures towards the jelly bean on the desk.)

What if I...

ANGELA. And that will make things alright, will it?

HANNAH. I don't believe you want it. I think you're just trying to save your skin.

MIKE. Are you sacking me?

HANNAH. Well, you seem to be paving that path all by yourself.

(Pause)

MIKE. But I'm a single parent. I'm good at my job. Three, four times daily I'm complimented by customers about my excellent telephone manner and my quality customer care. My data entry is accurate and I'm able to multi-task second to none.

(MIKE looks to HANNAH who seems unmoved. MIKE, dejected, looks at ANGELA who appears rather smug.

MIKE looks back at HANNAH.)

MIKE. Can I be honest with you?

HANNAH. As long as it's not another slur on my leadership.

(Pause)

MIKE. It's not that I don't like jelly beans.

ANGELA. Oh, it's not that he doesn't like jelly beans.

HANNAH. Now, now. Let's hear what Mr Mutiny has to say.

MIKE. It's not that I don't like jelly beans. I love them.

It's just...I don't believe they've been allocated as effectively as they could have been.

ANGELA. Oh come on.

HANNAH. No, Angela. Let's hear him out.

(Pause)

MIKE. With all due respect...the auras are wrong.

HANNAH. The auras?

MIKE. Uhm, yes. Well, in Estates you have the satsuma jelly beans, don't you? That's what you said.

HANNAH. That's right.

MIKE. And they're orange.

ANGELA. Sherlock Holmes.

HANNAH. Angela, shush.

MIKE. Orange is an outgoing, joyful colour. What I'd say is that if you're on Estates, dealing with people calling in who have recently lost a loved one, it might not be the best thing to have...ahm...team members...all bubbly and enthusiastic.

HANNAH. *(thoughtfully)* We have had some complaints about the Estates team sounding a little too chirpy at the news of customers' bereavements.

MIKE. There. You see? Now, green is the colour of healing and renewal. May I suggest swapping the satsuma in Estates with the kiwi on reception? Warmth and joy at reception. Understanding and consolation on Estates.

(Silence)

HANNAH. *(impressed)* That's very good.

MIKE. May I continue?

HANNAH. Please do.

ANGELA. But—

HANNAH. Shush.

MIKE. In Voucher Processing, we should have apricot. Yes. Yellow is a mental colour in the aura. Analytical skills will be at their peak. Combing through all those cheques. Well, it's a precise science.

HANNAH. Voucher Processing...apricot.

ANGELA. Hannah.

MIKE. (*on a roll*) Now the reason why Credit Cards is doing so well is because they've got strawberry daiquiri. Red can be impulsive, but it's a target driven colour. We want people to use their credit cards, we want to sell people our credit cards, we want target driven team members. But the infrastructure is already in place with strawberry daiquiri. You obviously knew that before. A woman of your renown.

HANNAH. Well, yes...I...

MIKE. Some people are just in touch with their auras without knowing it. I can see that you're one of them. It shows you have depth.

HANNAH. Thank you.

MIKE. No problem. (*A beat*) Berry blue in Mortgages was a really smart move.

HANNAH. It was?

MIKE. Blue reflects intuition. I would assume berry blue must be one of your favourites.

ANGELA. Hannah.

HANNAH. I do like them I have to admit.

MIKE. (*gestures to the bowl*) What do you have here?

HANNAH. (*almost flirtatiously*) Why, all flavours, silly.

MIKE. That would explain the well-rounded individual you are then.

HANNAH. (*laughs flirtatiously*) Oh, stop it.

MIKE. (*laughs flirtatiously*) Wha-at?

ANGELA. Hannah!

HANNAH. Are you still here?

MIKE. So that was it really. It wasn't that I didn't like your jelly beans, or that I was trying to undermine you or what you've done here or anything like that.

HANNAH. Of course not.

MIKE. I can see you've turned it around. It was just the aura in certain departments that left me uneasy.

HANNAH. Angela, I'd like you to exchange positions with Mike. The man is obviously team leader calibre.

ANGELA. But—

HANNAH. Now don't be a sore loser. When a better candidate emerges you have to pass on the baton.

ANGELA. But I thought we were friends.

(No response. ANGELA begins to exit.)

HANNAH. Besides, you bought me a snow globe for Christmas.

ANGELA. You said you liked it.

HANNAH. Well, I didn't want to say anything at the time because you seemed quite happy with yourself. But as a present, it was disappointing.

(ANGELA exits abruptly.)

HANNAH. You're so...I don't know...managerial.

MIKE. And what about my pay?

(Long silence as they stare at each other until finally...)

HANNAH. Yes. Let's talk about that...

(Blackout)

End of Play

Our Prospects For The Coming Season

CHARACTERS

THE MANAGER – male. Wears a suit, possibly Welsh.

THE AGENT – male. Wears a better suit.

THE PROSPECT – male. Wears a tracksuit. From Latin America.

THE PRESS PACK – made of three members. Possibly all female but dressed and behaving as male. Referred to individually as **THE PRESS PACK (1)**, **THE PRESS PACK (2)** and **THE PRESS PACK (3)**. When they speak in chorus they will simply be referred to as **THE PRESS PACK**.

OUR PROSPECTS FOR THE COMING SEASON

(Upstage sits THE PRESS PACK lit. Downstage THE MANAGER stands lit. On the other side of the stage and lit is THE AGENT standing over THE PROSPECT who is seated. The rest of the stage is dark.)

THE MANAGER. Have you seen the boy play?

THE PROSPECT. What are they saying?

THE AGENT. They're asking why they bought you. Just smile.

THE PROSPECT. *(smiling)* Okay.

THE MANAGER. He's a hell of a prospect. The lad's got everything. He's quick, he's as strong as an ox, he's like a human steam train. Two good feet. Right and left. He can open a can of baked beans with that left foot of his. And his right? Like a howitzer. Like he has gunpowder in those boots. He's got good broad shoulders, his thighs are like tree trunks and he has eyes in the back of his head. His vision's fantastic. The boy can pick a pass. He can thread it through the eye of a needle.

THE PRESS PACK (1). And are you looking to play him in the hole linking the midfield with attack?

THE MANAGER. Precisely. Yes. Right from the outset. Behind the lone striker or a front two. Absolutely. Or not necessarily. But that's where he'll end up eventually. I haven't really made a decision. My daughter Susan's been in labour for the last eight hours, she lost the last one the last time at the same stage, so as you can imagine as a family we're all very nervous right now... *(laughs uncomfortably)* ...

(No response. **THE MANAGER** continues.)

THE MANAGER. But boy, can the lad dribble though, like a slalom skier, take a man on, it's a lost art but he has that in his locker no doubt. He has a low centre of gravity, see, when he's down there, but up there, in the air, he's unbelievable too, has a phenomenal spring, he leaps like a lizard, like a salmon almost, and he stays up too, soars through the air like a pterodactyl. They're now extinct, but this boy has years ahead of him at the top level.

THE PROSPECT. What's he saying?

THE AGENT. I don't know.

THE MANAGER. He can play out wide, he can tuck in, he can track back, he can hold the ball up top and play with his back to goal. He can head a ball like nobody I've seen. And he's got an old head on those young, broad shoulders too. He can be an influence in the dressing room and a leader on and off the pitch when he learns our English language.

THE AGENT. You're going to be captain.

THE PROSPECT. Great.

THE PRESS PACK (2). And it's a four-year contract?

THE MANAGER. That's right.

(**THE PROSPECT** looks to **THE AGENT** for translation.)

THE AGENT. Contract. Four years.

THE PRESS PACK (2). And wages?

THE MANAGER. The figures that have been reported are accurate.

THE PRESS PACK. Four thousand a week.

THE MANAGER. Right.

THE AGENT. (to **THE PROSPECT**) Seven hundred a week.

THE MANAGER. We got him for peanuts really. I'm sure when the sad day comes that he moves on to a bigger club, we'll make a massive profit on the boy.

THE PRESS PACK (3). And how tall is he?

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