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SF PERUSALS

Fever/Dream

an adaptation of Calderón's *Life is a Dream*

by Sheila Callaghan

A Samuel French Acting Edition



SAMUEL FRENCH
FOUNDED 1830
NEW YORK HOLLYWOOD LONDON TORONTO
SAMUELFRENCH.COM

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ISBN 978-0-573-69924-5 Printed in U.S.A. #29868

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Originally produced June 2009 by
Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company, Washington, DC,
Howard Shalwitz, Artistic Director;
Jeffrey Herrmann, Managing Director.

FEVER/DREAM was commissioned by the Occidental College Theater Department, where it received a workshop production in the fall of 2007 in collaboration with Jessica Kubzansky. The production was directed by Jessica Kubzansky, with set design by Susan Gratch, costume design by Tom Slotten, lighting by Rachel Levy, composition/sound by Bruno Louchouarn, choreography by John Pennington, and projections by Kari Swanson. The cast was as follows:

CLAIRE . . . . . Lizzie Adelman
ROSE . . . . . Reba Buhr
SEGIS . . . . . Grayson DeJesus
ASTON MARTIN . . . . . Lucky Gretzinger
STELLA STRONG . . . . . Anna Gibson
FRED CLOTALDO . . . . . Alex Marshall
BILL BASIL . . . . . Dan Selon
CHORUS (ACCOUNTANTS, ASSOCIATES, & SECURITY GUARDS) . . . . . Richie DeMaria, Maura FitzGerald, Eli Isaacs, Doug Locke, Daniele Manzin, Kaja Martin, Jonny Rodgers, Joanna Schubert, Jonathan Stoner, Dana Vigran

FEVER/DREAM was originally produced in June 2009 by Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company, Washington, DC (Howard Shalwitz, Artistic Director; Jeffrey Herrmann, Managing Director). The production was directed by Howard Shalwitz, with set design by Misha Kachman, costume design by Franklin Labovitz, lighting by Colin K. Bills, sound by Veronika Vorel, choreography by Meisha Bosma, video design by Evan Martella, and properties by Jennifer Sheetz. The cast was as follows:

CLAIRE . . . . . Jessica Frances Dukes
SEGIS . . . . . Daniel Eichner
BILL BASIL . . . . . Drew Eshelman
ROSE . . . . . Kimberly Gilbert
STELLA STRONG . . . . . Kate Eastwood Norris
ASTON MARTIN . . . . . Kenyatta Rogers
FRED CLOTALDO . . . . . Michael Willis
CHORUS (ACCOUNTANTS, ASSOCIATES, & SECURITY GUARDS) . . . . . Andrew Blau, Lauren Ciandella, Michael Davis, Alice Gibson, Mark Halpern, Shannon Listol, Amanda Miller, Katie Rooney, Matt Sparacino, Anastasia Stewart, Scott Whalen

CHARACTERS

SEGIS

ROSE

CLAIRE

FRED CLOTALDO

SECURITY GUARDS

STELLA STRONG

ASTON MARTIN

BILL BASIL

ACCOUNTANTS

4 ASSOCIATES

AUTHOR'S NOTES

A stroke (/) marks the point of interruption in overlapping dialogue. When the stroke is not immediately followed by text, the next line should occur on the last syllable of the word before the slash – not an overlap but a concise interruption.

Special thanks to Jill Soloway, Leah Hamos, Bryan Joseph Lee, Miriam Weisfeld, Alana Dietz, Elissa Goetschius, the Occidental College Theatre Department, the staff of New Dramatists, Sally Ollove, Quincy Long, Dana Eskelson, Gus Schulenburg, and Flux Theatre.

ACT ONE

(The basement. Darkness.)

(Sounds: dripping water. Rumbling boiler. A fluorescent light struggling to buzz on, no light. An ancient fax machine. Maybe the room is lit [very vaguely] by the little green "ON" switches on all the old machines.)

(We're here for quite a while, taking in the sounds.)

(Then:)

(The sound of an old-fashioned office phone ring.)

(Once.)

(Twice.)

(A voice in the darkness, the voice of **SEGIS***:)*

SEGIS. CustomerservicehowmayIhelpyou.

(The light flickers on for a tiny moment. We see the hunched figure of a man over a desk piled with papers.)

(Darkness again. Silence. Then:)

I'msosorrytohearyou'vebeenhavingtroubles.

(The light buzzes on again, this time for longer.)

(We see: puddles of water on the floor near tangled electrical equipment. Exposed pipes. Piles and piles of papers. A drain in the center of the floor. An ancient fax machine. Grey concrete. Beat-up metal filing cabinets. Towering messy piles of papers. An enormous sign that reads "NO TRESPASSING.")

(Also, stacks and stacks of books. Text books, reference books, literature, etc.)

(It's a graveyard for outdated equipment.)

(Yellowing newspaper clippings are pasted to the wall and the floor, along with several yellowing newspaper photos of **BILL BASIL**. *The articles are highlighted and circled here and there.)*

(Centrally: A rusted freight elevator door from the 40's, with old numbers up to 77 and a wand.)

(A chute off to the side.)

(We can smell the asbestos.)

*(***SEGIS** *wears a T-shirt, stained and foul, and a pair of horrendous jeans. He is unshaven, unwashed, and grips the phone receiver as though it's part of his hand. His beard is down to his chest and his hair hangs in greasy ropes down his back.)*

SEGIS. *(cont.)* Thismustbeveryfrustratingforyou.

(A pile of papers drops from the chute. Seconds later, an apple. Then, a handful of loose cooked macaroni and some lettuce leaves.)

(The fluorescent light buzzes off again. Darkness.)

I'llconnectyouwithbillingimmediately,thankyouforcal ling.

(Silence, save the ubiquitous ambient noise.)

(More silence.)

(The phone rings again.)

CustomerservicehowmayIhelpyou.

(a beat)

I'llconnectyouwithbillingimmediately,thankyouforcal ling.

(Suddenly, a sound we haven't heard before…a screeching of metallic, then a booming sonorous 'waaannnnnng," then the sound of un-oiled gears turning.)

(The entire room shakes.)

(In the darkness, a dirty yellow light flickers behind the panel of the freight elevator. The wand moves very very slowly from the letter L to the letter B.)

(The noise stops.)

(Then, the miserable creak of a stuck metal door trying to slide open.)

(Inside the lit elevator, two figures. One is dressed as a bike messenger, complete with helmet and shoulder bag. The other is a nerdy little thing.)

(They are both frozen in terror.)

ROSE. Where the heck are we?

CLAIRE. Um.

ROSE. What button did you push?

CLAIRE. I didn't. Your bag must have –

ROSE. WOW WOW WOW. WHAT IS THAT SMELL.

CLAIRE. Rosie –

ROSE. Don't call me that.

CLAIRE. Something died here…something large….

ROSE. Where's the light?

*(***ROSE** *fumbles around for a light switch.)*

CLAIRE. …when a thing decomposes the particles are released into the air so the smell is actually tiny little pieces of dead-thing….

ROSE. Claire, I wanna – okay this might not be the time for this conversation…

CLAIRE. I know what you're / going to say

ROSE. But you promised you would hold / it together

CLAIRE. Right, right…

ROSE. You have a Very Important Role in all this

CLAIRE. I know, / I know

ROSE. And I REALLY like, need you to…Oh, wait, huh…

CLAIRE. What?

ROSE. Feels like a, a breaker, or…

*(***ROSE** *flips a switch. Worklight floods the room.* **SEGIS** *stares at them in terror. They stare back. No one moves.)*

CLAIRE. *(horrified whisper)* WHAT IS THAT?

ROSE. *(quietly)* Don't…

CLAIRE. WHAT IS THAT?

ROSE. …move…

*(***SEGIS** *moves slightly. The girls yelp and run to the other side of the room.)*

SEGIS. CustomerservicehowmayIhelpyou.

ROSE. Oh hi. We're looking for the 77th floor…

SEGIS. I'msosorrytohearyou'vebeenhavingtroubles.

CLAIRE. He's nice! He's nice!

ROSE. Thanks. I think we're okay now. Looks like you were just about to have lunch…sorry to bother you….

SEGIS. Thismustbeveryfrustratingforyou!!

ROSE. Um, yeah…

*(***SEGIS** *lunges at the two. The girls scream.)*

(We see his ankle is chained to his desk. The chair upon which he sits is stuck to his body, as is the phone receiver.)

SEGIS. I'llconnectyouwithbillingimmediately,thankyouforcalling!!!

(He lunges again. The girls are less fearful.)

THANK YOU FOR CALLING HAVE A NICE DAY!!!!

ROSE. You're hurting yourself.

SEGIS. THANK YOU FOR THANK YOU FOR HAVE A NICE CONNECT YOU WITH SORRY FOR YOUR INCONVENIENCE INCONVENIENCE PISSING INTO A DRAIN ON THE FLOOR MACARONI'S ARE ALREADY COLD STAPLER STOPPED WORKING THREE HUNDRED AND THIRTEEN MONTHS AGO WHAT IS THAT SOUND?

(He stops a minute. Listens.)

What is that sound?

(Again.)

It's me. Talking. To someone else. This is what I sound like talking to someone else. I have language again. I'm looking at you. You're brighter. You are brighter and you have two eyes. I'm looking at them, they are looking back. Say something.

ROSE. I wish I wasn't here.

SEGIS. Ha! Trailing from your lips, the words in little spirals, "wish"…"wasn't"…wip wip wip…Do it again…

ROSE. I wish you weren't here.

SEGIS. Wip wip wip…

(He unpries his fingers from the phone receiver, one by one, screaming in pain. Then he flexes his hand with much difficulty.)

ROSE. How long have you been here?

SEGIS. Long time.

ROSE. Who put you down here?

SEGIS. I'm not a prisoner.

ROSE. So this is a choice?

SEGIS. It's a JOB.

ROSE. Do I look like a moron Claire?

CLAIRE. Normally no, but in that outfit –

ROSE. People don't get stuck in the basements of corporate buildings for nothing. And I'm guessing you didn't chain yourself to that desk…

SEGIS. Things could be worse. Things could break. My machines, for example. I didn't always have to push staples through stacks of paper with my thumb.

*(***ROSE** *begins cracking up.)*

ROSE. What kind of idiot is chained to a desk pissing into a drain and thinks it's part of his JOB?

(Abruptly, **SEGIS** *hurls his broken stapler across the room. It smashes against the wall, leaving a dent.)*

(The women jump a little.)

SEGIS. Every moment you remain unharmed in my presence is a moment I am giving you. *That's* a choice.

ROSE. Wow. You are INTIMIDATING.

CLAIRE. Rose.

ROSE. No really. I am INTIMIDATED right now. Aren't you INTIMIDATED, Claire?

CLAIRE. Yes! Fire exit! Where?

*(***CLAIRE** *searches desperately for a fire exit.)*

(Suddenly, **SEGIS** *grabs a pair of dull scissors from his desk and slams them into the lock on his chain. The lock breaks.)*

(He then pries his body from his chair with a roar. As he stands, slowly and painfully, every vertebra in his back cracks one by one.)

(Standing at full height, he is menacing. He drags his chain closer to the women, gripping his dull scissors.)

*(***CLAIRE** *cringes.* **ROSE** *steels herself.)*

(Much to the women's surprise, **SEGIS** *lays back on his desk, motionless for several moments.)*

*(***CLAIRE** *ferrets out their escape, while* **ROSE** *studies* **SEGIS** *carefully.)*

(After a long pause…)

SEGIS. Do you have a cigarette?

ROSE. *(a lie)* I haven't smoked since I was seventeen…

*(***SEGIS** *snifs the air near* **ROSE***'s bag.)*

SEGIS. Check your bag.

*(***ROSE** *checks her bag. She pulls out a pack of Lucky Strikes as* **CLAIRE** *inspects the room.)*

ROSE. Hey! Look at that. Claire?

CLAIRE. *(waving it away)* I'm getting my share of pollution from the asbestos, thanks. Ho, a dot matrix!

*(***ROSE** *hands a cigarette to* **SEGIS**. *He sits up [with difficulty, he's still cramped] and places the cigarette between the fingers of his claw hand. She lights it. He inhales it reverently. He coughs.)*

SEGIS. *(re: the cigarette)* I've only ever read about these… What's on your head?

ROSE. I'm a bike messenger.

SEGIS. What's that?

ROSE. I ride around on a bike delivering packages.

SEGIS. I thought MY job sucked.

CLAIRE. A mimeograph…mama…

SEGIS. What are you delivering today?

ROSE. Nothing. My honor. Whatever. It's none of your business.

*(***CLAIRE** *begins reading the newspaper clippings on the walls and floor.)*

SEGIS. Careful with those…

CLAIRE. "April 22, 1984…After Fierce Dispute, Erratic Corporate Tycoon Bill Basil Clinches Five Billion Dollar Takeover"…"June 5, 1998…

SEGIS. "Basil Bulldozes Competition Once Again"…

*(***CLAIRE** *holds up another clipping.* **SEGIS** *recites it from memory.)*

"January 7, 2002…What Makes Bill Basil Tick?"

CLAIRE. You're good.

ROSE. What are those?

SEGIS. Blueprints.

ROSE. For what?

SEGIS. For becoming the most powerful man in the world.

ROSE. A goal of yours?

SEGIS. A dream, one might say.

ROSE. I don't see much opportunity for growth in your department…

SEGIS. Isn't that the point of dreaming? To visualize the fantastic, the implausible?

(Abruptly and viciously, **SEGIS** *sits up and begins to beat the ancient fax machine with the arm of a broken swivel chair. He works into quite a frenzy.)*

*(***ROSE** *and* **CLAIRE** *are startled.)*

(Finally, he stops. He's in a lot of pain from the exertion.)

SEGIS. *(cont.)* They have detectors for the smoke. They're coming.

ROSE. Who?

CLAIRE. Rose…

*(***CLAIRE** *points to the freight elevator. The wand is slowly climbing down from the 77th floor.)*

*(***SEGIS** *moves to a stack of papers and begins chewing holes into the corners.)*

ROSE. Who? Who is coming??

CLAIRE. *(panicked)* Is there another way out? Trapped, are we trapped?

SEGIS. Ms. Nicotine, Ms. Asbestos, thankyousomuchforyourcall, weappreciateyourbusiness.

ROSE. Stop that!

SEGIS. Weappreciateyourbusiness, pleasecallagain.

CLAIRE. No windows! Can't breathe!

ROSE. Tell us what's going on.

SEGIS. Pleasecallagain haveaniceday.

(Shriek of gears, etc. The freight elevator door opens. **FRED CLOTALDO** *emerges with two* **SECURITY GUARDS**. **FRED** *immediately gags from the smell.)*

FRED CLOTALDO. A wall of stench…No smoking, okay. Is that so diffic –

(He spots **ROSE** *and* **CLAIRE**.*)*

Who…

ROSE. I'm a messenger. Look.

(She shows him her bag.)

FRED CLOTALDO. This is not a public, the lobby is the –

ROSE. I hit the wrong button.

CLAIRE. She hit the wrong button.

ROSE. I was trying to get to the 77th floor. I have a package.

FRED CLOTALDO. Who's it for?

*(***ROSE** *digs into her bag and pulls out a padded mailer. She reads the name.)*

ROSE. A mister "Aston Martin."

(He holds out his hand to take the package. **ROSE** *doesn't move.)*

It says "deliver in person."

FRED CLOTALDO. Give it to me.

ROSE. *(re:* **SEGIS***)* What's he doing down here? Why was he chained to the desk?

*(***FRED CLOTALDO** *turns to his* **SECURITY GUARDS***.)*

FRED CLOTALDO. What happens when you go out for a moccachino? Hm? Exhibit A. So, thank you. Thank you for this headache. Arrest them.

(The **SECURITY GUARDS** *arrest* **ROSE** *and* **CLAIRE***.)*

ROSE. This is SO illegal, okay.

*(***FRED CLOTALDO** *casually gestures to the NO TRESPASSING sign.)*

FRED CLOTALDO. I'm assuming you can read.

ROSE. It was an ACCIDENT.

SEGIS. Let them go, Fred.

FRED CLOTALDO. Oh look, you have language again. First time you've said something real to me in months. Anything more to add?

*(***SEGIS** *says nothing.)*

Well that's fine. Month after month I come down to this stinkhole with books, magazines, articles…I GAVE you that language, mister.

(He finds **SEGIS***'s cigarette.)*

A WHOLE CIGARETTE? You are just SOPPING in treasures right now, aren't you? I don't suppose you'll need that new Swingline any more…

*(***SEGIS** *looks desperate.)*

SEGIS. I –

FRED CLOTALDO. Hm?

SEGIS. Thankyousomuchforyour business, we'llbehappytoa cceptanymajorcreditcards.

FRED CLOTALDO. Thought so.

*(***FRED CLOTALDO** *kicks at the lock to* **SEGIS***'s chain.)*

Put that back on.

(Obediently, **SEGIS** *returns the lock to his ankle.)*

Thank you.

*(***SEGIS** *nods and continues biting holes in the corners of papers.* **FRED** *hands him some books.)*

Brought you some more reading. *Plato's Republic. Identity and Rhetoric. The Times, the Post, the Weekly*, and a 'zine. Enjoy.

(beat)

You're a good kid. Sorry I yelled, son.

SEGIS. I'm not your son. I don't have a father.

*(***FRED CLOTALDO** *freezes a moment, hurt, but decides to say nothing. He hits a button to call the freight elevator.)*

(to the guards) Take them to central booking. I have a meeting.

CLAIRE. That's the clink. Is that the clink?

ROSE. But my package….

CLAIRE. I've never been to the clink before.

ROSE. It's urgent. He…Mr. Martin…

FRED CLOTALDO. I'll see that he gets it.

CLAIRE. CLINK! The sound the door makes when you lock it.

*(***FRED CLOTALDO** *holds out his hand for the package.* **ROSE** *digs into her bag again.)*

ROSE. …need to write a note…

FRED CLOTALDO. Quickly.

*(***ROSE** *produces a velvet case, from which she conspicuously and cautiously unsheathes an astonishingly ornate pen.)*

*(**FRED CLOTALDO** is instantly captivated.)*

FRED CLOTALDO. That implement…

ROSE. What about it?

FRED CLOTALDO. It's…very special…

*(**FRED** holds his hand out for the pen. Skeptically, **ROSE** hands it to him. He brandishes it with great flair.)*

ROSE. You hold it like you've held it before.

FRED CLOTALDO. Not possible.

ROSE. Why not?

FRED CLOTALDO. There's only one.

*(Beat. **ROSE** grows suspicious.)*

Sorry, where did you say you –

ROSE. A gift. From a woman. My mom.

*(Flabbergasted, **FRED CLOTALDO** turns to **ROSE**.)*

FRED CLOTALDO. Your mother.

ROSE. Yeah. It belonged to my deadbeat dickhead asshole deserting dad.

(They eye each other, examining one another's features, looking at one another's hands, posture, hairline, etc. They are both panicked at their findings.)

(Finally. The screech of the freight elevator. All look at it expectantly.)

(The door opens. It is empty. Inside, it glows, beckoning.)

SEGIS. Have a nice day.

(Lights out on the basement.)

*(**STELLA** and **ASTON** appear in different elevators [squares of light?]. They are both ascending to the 77th floor. They both wear good suits.)*

*(**ASTON** is texting on his phone. Projected [not spoken]:)*

"U R SOOO F-ING HOT
CAN'T STOP THINKING ABOUT U
THE SHEEN OF YOUR HAIR MOCKS THE DAYLIGHT

YR GLIMRING EYES SHAME THE STARS
YR BREASTS ARE TWO RIPE.…"

(He thinks a moment, contemplating the size of her chest.)

"…FIGS
WHICH MORTIFY ALL LESSER TREE FRUIT
I LONG TO STRIKE YR DEWEY SKIN…"

(He corrects the word "STRIKE" to "STROKE.")

"WHEN WILL U OPEN YR PETALS TO ME AGAIN?
**HEART*, ASTON"*

(He sends the message. **STELLA***'s phone beeps. She reads* **ASTON***'s text, then thumb-types a reply. She is much more deft than he is.)*

"WHEN HELL FRZS OVR."

(She sends the message. **ASTON***'s phone beeps. He reads, then replies.)*

"R U STILL ANGRY?"

(He sends. Beep. She reads and replies.)

"WHAT DO U THINK??"

(She sends. He replies.)

"HOW MNY TIMES DO I HAVE 2 APOLOGIZE?"
(It takes him a while to spell "apologize" correctly.)

(He sends. She replies.)

"ONCE WD BE FINE."

(She sends. He replies.)

"I'M SRRY."

(He sends. She replies.)

"NOT THRU YR PHONE, MYBE???"

(She sends. He replies.)

"U WON'T TALK 2 ME IN PRISON."
(He corrects "prison" to "person.")

(He sends. She replies.)

"NOT UNTIL U DELETE HER PIC."

(She sends. He looks sheepish. He waits a moment, then replies.)

"DONE."

(He sends. She replies.)

"BLLSHT."

(Both their elevator doors ding at the same time and open. They exit their respective spaces and see each other. They glare.)

STELLA. Coward.

ASTON. Cougar.

(In spite of themselves, they attack each other hungrily, groping and kissing and the like.)

(After a moment, they straighten themselves out.)

STELLA. Did you study the documents I gave you?

ASTON. Yes.

STELLA. Are you prepared for this / meeting, because if not

ASTON. Yes Stella, I am prepared for this meeting.

STELLA. Good. The usual. You shmooze I bruise.

*(***ASTON** *smiles. They both move toward* **BILL BASIL***'s office.* **ASTON** *knocks.)*

BILL BASIL. Come in.

(They enter.)

(The office is an enormous, gorgeous, sleekly designed space with enormous floor to ceiling windows and a tremendous view. The furniture is sexy and hyper-modern, but absurd and non-realistic.)

(One huge abstract painting hangs on the wall; it is of **BILL BASIL***, but barely.)*

*(***BILL BASIL** *stands with his back to* **ASTON** *and* **STELLA***. He wears an incredibly expensive, well-tailored suit.)*

(Various **ACCOUNTANTS** *also stand by, also wearing suits. They are busy and austere. They hold accounting devices, and make constant calculations, conferring silently with one another.)*

*(***BILL BASIL** *does not turn around immediately.)*

ASTON. *(charming)* Good morning Bill how are you doing, is that a new shirt? Hey listen. Our stocks are still on the decline.

STELLA. We're thinking about dropping our Con-tel and Inter-core shares. Con-tel fell 5.3 percent last month. Inter-core fell 5 percent.

ASTON. No need to panic but it's getting a leeetle bit sticky / with the recent

STELLA. We have a net loss of a dollar thirty-one per share.

BILL BASIL. *(to accountants)* Kill them. Now.

(The **ACCOUNTANTS** *react to this, speaking quietly into their cellphones and text-messaging folks.)*

In their place?

ASTON. Well we have our eye on a bold little outfit called e-Village.

STELLA. It's hot.

ASTON. Scorching, really.

STELLA. But quiet.

ASTON. I got a tip from an old pal of mine from State U. Swell fella. Heck of a dancer. And boy can he barbecue –

STELLA. We need to act quickly.

*(***BILL BASIL** *picks up his phone.)*

BILL BASIL. Denise. Send Jerry Saks at e-Village a gift basket immediately. Sopressata, rosemary crackers, the works. And a note: " Let's talk. Bill Basil."

(He hands up.)

BILL BASIL. *(cont.)* Anything else?

STELLA. That's all for now, I believe…

ASTON. As always it's a total joy to see you. Oh, hey! Thanks so much for those bonuses. Completely unnecessary but so very much appreciated.

(A beat. **BILL BASIL** *turns and again faces the window.* **STELLA** *and* **ASTON** *look at each other quizzingly. They stand to leave.)*

(Finally, **BILL BASIL** *speaks.)*

BILL BASIL. Question:
What is the use of building an empire if there is no blood legacy to receive it?

(a beat)

ASTON. Um…

BILL BASIL. Sit down.

(They do. The **ACCOUNTANTS** *also sit, awkwardly and absurdly, as there are not enough chairs. They continue accounting.)*

Would either of you like a coffee? Tea? Seltzer with a squeeze of lime?

ASTON. Hey thanks, I'll have / a

STELLA. We're fine, thank you. What is this about?

BILL BASIL. My intentions.

STELLA. Regarding?

BILL BASIL. The future of this business.

STELLA. You're splitting the office into two heads. Aston as C.O.O and myself as C.E.O.

BILL BASIL. That *was* indeed the plan.
I understand you are both to be wed.

ASTON. Yes, we're looking at / places near

STELLA. *(coldly)* Plans are up in the air.

BILL BASIL. Then you well understand how intentions may be thwarted.

*(***BILL BASIL** *snaps his fingers. The* **ACCOUNTANTS** *quickly hand him a folded newspaper clipping.* **BILL BASIL** *hands it to* **STELLA**, *and gestures for her to read it aloud.)*

STELLA. *(reading)* "Home and business collide, Sagitarius, as the Sun's transit of your chart's mid-heaven angle forces you to reflect upon a deep grievance you have with yourself. Planetary oppositions suggest that, if you value your professional reputation, you will give this some serious thought and then act. Lucky numbers 4, 7, 16, 25."

I don't understand.

*(***BILL BASIL** *walks over to the painting of himself. He snaps his fingers again. With swiftness and efficiency, the* **ACCOUNTANTS** *exchange the painting for another abstract rendering: it is* **SEGIS**.*)*

(Then they return to their accounting.)

ASTON. Who is that?

BILL BASIL. My son.

*(***ASTON** *and* **STELLA** *are shocked. A knock on the door.)*

Yes?

*(***FRED CLOTALDO** *enters.)*

FRED CLOTALDO. Bill we've, oh, I didn't –

BILL BASIL. Come in, please.

FRED CLOTALDO. We have a situation….

BILL BASIL. One moment. The inevitable is upon us.

ASTON. When did you get a son?

BILL BASIL. Does the date October 19th, 1987 ring a bell?

ASTON. Wasn't that –

STELLA. Black Monday. The largest one day stock market crash in history. The Dow fell 23% in six hours, roughly $500 billion dollars. This company almost went under.

ASTON. You clawed your way back from oblivion. It was damn near miraculous.

*(***BILL BASIL** *gestures to* **FRED CLOTALDO**. **FRED CLOTALDO** *sighs heavily.)*

FRED CLOTALDO. At exactly 9:34am, Mr. Basil's wife went into labor. The market began its descent precisely one minute after. Mrs. Basil pushed for six hours. By the time the little boy emerged, the economy was a shambles. Tragically, Mrs. Basil did not survive the birth. Mr. Basil had not the tools to forgive the child for taking her from him. So he announced it had died as well. It had not.

ASTON. But…where…

FRED CLOTALDO. The child was placed into foster care until he was old enough to work. After that, we employed him in a position through which we could keep careful watch, though he would be rendered powerless.

ASTON. Not…

FRED CLOTALDO. Customer service.

STELLA. Oh Bill.

FRED CLOTALDO. This injustice has pressed most heavily on Mr. Basil's mind. Year after year, like a greedy sloth feeding on his guilt.

*(***BILL BASIL** *removes his nameplate "BILL BASIL, PRESIDENT," and ceremoniously replaces it with "SEGIS BASIL, PRESIDENT.")*

BILL BASIL. One of the lone benefits of old age is the facility to acknowledge the untold pleasures of righting ones wrongs.

ASTON. But, sorry, if he has no experience, how can you expect / him to

BILL BASIL. Fred?

FRED CLOTALDO. The why's and wherefores are unimportant. You need only know that he must prove his competence. Please treat him with respect, and keep this confidential for now, for the sake of our investors. We don't need any unnecessary concern. If he is inept, he will be swiftly removed and you both will endure in his stead. Consider this a *trial* period.

STELLA. Bill…

BILL BASIL. I am placing my – **FRED CLOTALDO.** He is placing his faith –

*(***BILL BASIL** *glares at* **FRED CLOTALDO***, who shuts up.)*

BILL BASIL. I am placing my faith in the heavens.

ASTON. Mr. Basil, with all due respect –

STELLA. This is suicide. Placing someone untrained, underqualified, completely un-vetted, at the head of a multi-billion dollar…It's beyond reason. Especially with the volatile business / climate

ASTON. Whoa whoa whoa. Let's not get ahead of ourselves here. Let me pull some strings. I'll hook him up with my buddies up north, get him into that accelerated business / program over at

BILL BASIL. Thank you for your time. Leave now.

(They do so, stunned. **FRED CLOTALDO** *remains.)*

Now. What is this "situation?"

FRED CLOTALDO. Security breach. Very minor. I'll tend to it.

*(***FRED CLOTALDO** *is about to exit.)*

BILL BASIL. Wait a moment.

*(***BILL BASIL** *glares at the* **ACCOUNTANTS** *and clears his throat.)*

ALL ACCOUNTANTS Oh.

(The **ACCOUNTANTS** *exit.)*

BILL BASIL. Fred, I want you to plan my retirement party in two weeks. On site. We shall make an official announcement then regarding the new regime *(whomever it shall be).* In the meantime, I shall make myself scarce.

FRED CLOTALDO. Very good.

(a beat)

BILL BASIL. Fred?

FRED CLOTALDO. Yes Bill?

BILL BASIL. The tremors in my hand have gotten worse.

FRED CLOTALDO. What do you need me to do?

BILL BASIL. Nothing. I just wanted you to know.

FRED CLOTALDO. All right.

(an awkward beat)

BILL BASIL. You may go now.

FRED CLOTALDO. Very well.

*(***FRED CLOTALDO** *exits.)*

*(***BILL BASIL** *is left alone in his office. He approaches the painting of his son.)*

BILL BASIL. Now perhaps you'll kindly extract yourself from my nightmares?

(Smoke fills the room. The **PAINTING OF SEGIS** *comes alive.* **SEGIS** *is a punk rock star at a concert.)*

PAINTING OF SEGIS. Sucka
Who owns your kingdom now?
My name is Burden
Gonna ride you straight into the grave
How many ways can you be my slave

I am your liver spots
Your wiggling jowls
The steely stubble in your ears
The extra back flesh

I'm the tremors in your hands
I'm the pajamas you fold
I'm the inches you've shrunk
I'm the pillow in your coffin

Lay your head on me, daddy
Lay your head on me, sucka
Here is your thrown foal
He has stapled himself onto your soul
Yeah yeah yeah.

*(***SEGIS** *enters the painting again. The smoke clears, lights back to normal.)*

*(***BILL BASIL** *pours himself some tea. His hand is wracked with tremors.)*

(Meanwhile, in the main office: another sleekly designed space, smaller, crowded, crammed with people, but still with excellent lighting and more modern yet absurd furnishings.)

(A bunch of extraordinarily hip and fantastically bored **ASSOCIATES** *are "working" at their desks, which entails amusing themselves lethargically with paper-clip sculptures, phone cords-untanglings, white-board-drawing / erasings, and etc.)*

*(***ROSE** *and* **CLAIRE** *sit in the reception area.)*

ROSE. It has to be some sort of labor violation…

CLAIRE. What?

ROSE. I mean the smell alone is a health hazard…

CLAIRE. Oh.

ROSE. But he COULD leave if he wanted to….

CLAIRE. The clinical term is "learnéd helplessness."

ROSE. There must be something we can do.

CLAIRE. Oh you mean from jail?

ROSE. They can't put us in jail, Claire.

CLAIRE. But they can keep a gross dirty madman in chains answering phones for twenty years. You know when I agreed to come I don't think I anticipated incarceration….

ROSE. "Agreed?" You BEGGED me to come.

CLAIRE. Well it sounded exciting! Infiltration of a massive corporation –

ROSE. SHHHHH!

CLAIRE. *(quietly)* Involving some mysterious package, the contents of which you won't tell me….

ROSE. Not "won't." Can't.

CLAIRE. You don't trust me –

ROSE. CREATE A DISTRACTION. *That* was your job. Not "annoy everyone."

CLAIRE. I'm not sure I fully comprehend the distinction.

ROSE. I need to think.

(They notice the **ASSOCIATES** *vlogging boredly.)*

CLAIRE. What's with all the little cameras?

ROSE. They're vlogging. Don't harass them.

*(***CLAIRE** *approaches the* **ASSOCIATES***.)*

CLAIRE. *(proud, flirty)* We're going to the clink.

(The **ASSOCIATES** *do not cease vlogging.)*

The slammer.

(No response. **CLAIRE** *tries to get their attention.)*

The Big House. The Hoosegow. The jug. The brig. The can. The pen. The lockup. The pokey. The cooler. The haul. The probe. The gumrip. The kiosk. The birdhole. The mysterious T-zone. The cat-trap. The boogie base. The ho-square. The oiler. The valise. The Siberian holiday.

*(***FRED CLOTALDO** *enters.)*

FRED CLOTALDO. Change of plans. You're staying here.

CLAIRE. *(disappointed)* Oh.

ROSE. Why?

FRED CLOTALDO. You've been spared. In exchange for some temping.

*(***FRED CLOTALDO** *hands them some W4 forms.)*

W4 forms. Name address social etc.

(They fill them out, slightly confused, and return them.)

ROSE. And the man in the basement?

FRED CLOTALDO. He's gone.

ROSE. Escaped?

FRED CLOTALDO. Promoted. I'm sure you'll see him around.

*(***FRED CLOTALDO** *hands* **CLAIRE** *some sheets of paper.)*

FRED CLOTALDO. *(cont.)* 600 copies. Stapled and collated. One in every box.

CLAIRE. *(happily)* But of course.

*(***CLAIRE** *disappears.)*

FRED CLOTALDO. Does she follow you everywhere?

ROSE. She tries. She's very loyal.

(A beat. **FRED CLOTALDO** *is eyeing* **ROSE** *intensely.)*

ROSE. So. What should I do? Go fax some shit?

(A beat. **FRED CLOTALDO** *still stares.)*

That makes me uncomfortable.

FRED CLOTALDO. What. I'll stop.

ROSE. Good.

(A beat. He can't stop.)

You can't stop, can you.

FRED CLOTALDO. You look just like her.

ROSE. I look like myself.

*(***FRED CLOTALDO** *keeps staring. He tries not to but he can't.)*

Okay, I don't know who you think you are, but you are wrong.

FRED CLOTALDO. Why are you here, then? For money? I have nothing. I live a modest / existence on my own

ROSE. I told you. I need to see him. Aston. I need to deliver the package myself. This…

(gesturing between them)

…this is just some unbelievably flukey cosmic uh, thing.

FRED CLOTALDO. You show up here with a vintage 1976 Oberon 1000 jewel-encrusted limited edition Flo-right with spring-ball tip and patented supple-grip casing, and expect me to believe it's a coincidence?

ROSE. I'm not acting.

FRED CLOTALDO. *Lying,* then. You're not a bike messenger.

ROSE. I am too!

FRED CLOTALDO. Where's your bike?

*(***ROSE** *is busted.)*

I see you haven't inherited your mother's facility for guile….

ROSE. Which one is Aston's office?

FRED CLOTALDO. Mr. Martin is a high-level executive. He does not take meetings with just anyone.

ROSE. Dude! I gave you the pen!

FRED CLOTALDO. It was my pen!

ROSE. Prove it.

*(***FRED** *points to a tiny place on he back of the pen.)*

FRED CLOTALDO. "F.C." FRED CLOTALDO.

(small beat)

I *made* it.

ROSE. You "made" it? Like, forged it?

FRED CLOTALDO. I was an engineering student at M.I.T… in training for the Special Weapons division of the CIA. Office supplies.

ROSE. So it's a weapon?

FRED CLOTALDO. It's many things.

ROSE. That's kind of awesome. Why the heck aren't you over there building killer post-its or whatever?

FRED CLOTALDO. None of your business. Now excuse me, I have work to do. And so do you.

(He hands her a paper. She reads it.)

Your temporary assignment is to help Ms. Strong. She just fired ANOTHER assistant…

ROSE. *(sickened)* Strong. *Stella* Strong?

FRED CLOTALDO. You know her?

ROSE. No.

FRED CLOTALDO. Good. Find a suit for the love of God.

(He exits.)

(We watch as the **ASSOCIATES** *vlog at their desks)*

(NOTE: These are completely disaffected youths. Even when their language is seemingly invested, their tone and their bodies all convey a studied disinterest and lethargy. All engagement should be dripping with sarcasm and irony. AIR QUOTES.)

ASSOCIATE ONE. Yo yo, it's J-dawg in the hizzy, welcome to my vlog yo…

(He sings a popular hiphop song, replacing the lyrics with various iterations of "my job sucks" or "I hate my job.")

ASSOCIATE TWO. I just watched all of Gossip Girl online. Then I made this necklace out of thumb tacks, sweater lint and an ink pad. I feel like I'm just like, waiting to be fired. WORK FAIL.

ASSOCIATE THREE. So, like, I know a lot of you guys out there are going through stuff like pay cuts and hour reductions and layoffs and whatevs. But like, here, we just hired *two* new people! AND some dude from the basement is getting a promotion. We're performing terribly and Basil's a fossil, so WTF? Any thoughts? Hit up my comments yo.

ASSOCIATE FOUR. *(the himbo-geek)* So, I haven't had bacon in a good like, three to four years? And I went down to the cafeteria for lunch? And I got like, a steak wrapped in bacon? It tasted like turd. But I liked it.

(Lights out. The basement. Darkness.)

*(***SEGIS** *stares at nothing for a bit.)*

SEGIS. Rigorous facilitators march through celebrated corridors.

(He stares at nothing for a bit.)

Calamitous fallacies may arouse base cravings in the ignorant fanatic.

(He stares at nothing for a bit.)

SEGIS. *(cont.)* My voice talking to no one.

Here's the sound of language.

Here's the sound of my own lips throwing futile spirals at the wall.

(From the chute falls a handful of loose cooked macaroni and some lettuce leaves.)

(He shoves the macaroni into his mouth, gagging a little.)

Cold.

(He shoves the lettuce into his mouth, gagging a little.)

Warm.

(Then, an apple falls. He takes a huge bite.)

Weird.

(Almost immediately, he grows woozy. The air fills with a low ringing.)

Whoa. Headrush…too much talking…

(A sonorous blow shakes the earth. The lights flicker with it, and the machines move closer to **SEGIS***.)*

(He nearly loses his balance.)

Razorblading my eyes…my throat squeezing…

(Another sonorous blow, louder. The lights flicker, the machines move closer to **SEGIS***. He nearly falls again. He grabs the apple.)*

Fermented, maybe? My tongue is bulky…

*(***SEGIS***'s hands are forks.)*

Forks…

(A final sonorous blow, enormous and vibrant. The lights flicker, the machines are upon **SEGIS***. He drops the apple and falls, passing out.)*

(After a long moment…shriek of gears, etc. The freight elevator door opens. **BILL BASIL** *and* **FRED CLOTALDO** *emerge with two* **SECURITY GUARDS***. One of them checks* **SEGIS***'s pulse.)*

BILL BASIL. Good lord…dreadful…who approved these conditions?

FRED CLOTALDO. You did, Bill.

BILL BASIL. Ah.

*(***BILL BASIL** *examines his son.)*

He appears deceased.

FRED CLOTALDO. It's just the drugs.

BILL BASIL. *(moved)* I've never been this close to him.

(beat)

In review: when he awakens, you shall tell him his life down here is defunct, and his true station is President.

FRED CLOTALDO. Yes.

BILL BASIL. And if he fails, you shall send him back down here and tell him his time above was all a dream.

FRED CLOTALDO. If that is your wish.

BILL BASIL. I want this to work, Fred.

FRED CLOTALDO. It will.

BILL BASIL. He's got the blood of a leader coursing through his veins…

FRED CLOTALDO. He's a good kid.

(A beat. No one moves.)

Shall we?

BILL BASIL. I'm going to linger a bit. If you don't mind.

FRED CLOTALDO. Very good.

(The **SECURITY GUARDS** *drag* **SEGIS** *into the freight elevator and disappear with* **FRED CLOTALDO**.*)*

*(***BILL BASIL** *lingers behind. He walks around, examining things. He touches an old machine and a layer of grime comes off on his finger. He frowns in distaste.)*

(He kicks at the rusted chain.)

(He tastes a little macaroni, then spits it out.)

(Finally, he sees the press clippings hanging on the wall, along with his photos.)

(He examines them. He's in awe. He singles out one clipping.)

BILL BASIL. "Bill Basil keeps his management on a tight leash…" Huh.

(He singles out another.)

"Basil's employees are like drones in his massive anthill – efficient, unsparing, and utterly dedicated." Well I must concur…

(He singles out another.)

"Basil handles his behemoth of a company like a multi-headed hydra; when he lops off one unprofitable asset, two lucrative ones sprout up in its place."

(He looks at others, reading them to himself. Incredulous.)

Are these *all* about me?

Could he have known??…No. But…perhaps, embedded in his bone marrow…we are one blood, after all… he is a Basil.

(He examines the items on **SEGIS***'s desk: a notepad; a highlighter; a newspaper; the phone.)*

*(***BILL BASIL** *notes the phone receiver is a lighter color where* **SEGIS** *had been gripping it for years.)*

(The phone rings. **BILL BASIL** *jumps.)*

(It rings again. **BILL BASIL** *freezes.)*

(It rings again. **BILL BASIL** *answers.)*

CustomerservicehowmanyIhelpyou?

(Lights down.)

Interlude

(A stylized montage of workers doing office things, set to music. Perhaps we see the passed-out **SEGIS** *being shaved and prepared.)*

(Lights up on **BILL BASIL***'s office.* **SEGIS** *is slumped at Bill's desk with his head on the desk and his hand wrapped around a coffee mug. He is shaven, hair clean and short and slicked back, and he wears an expensive suit.)*

*(***FRED CLOTALDO** *stands over him)*

FRED CLOTALDO. …any minute now…

*(***FRED CLOTALDO** *touches the office supplies on* **SEGIS***'s desk, absently, admiringly, starting with the stapler.)*

Stylex Pro 6000 punch-quick platinum with speed release. Beauty.

(He touches a lamp.)

Velva-glow Lumina series with advanced dimming, everlong halo-bulb, and European wattage regulator.

(He lifts a pencil and smells it. He gasps and remembers something.)

(He reaches into his pocket and removes the pen **ROSE** *gave him. He examines it.)*

Mint condition!

(a beat)

I have a daughter.

(He regards **SEGIS***.)*

Lose a child, gain a child….

(to **SEGIS***)*

Well, you got what you dreamed, I suppose. Power, fortune…a real father.

He was a visionary, you know. He had this native dominance, this…air of inevitability.

Haven't seen him that way in years.

Maybe this is exactly what the company needs. A jolt of energy. Something to yank us up from the muck of this putrid economy.

*(***CLAIRE** *knocks and enters.)*

CLAIRE. *(brightly)* Hello, boss! I've separated all the third quarter spreadsheets into weekly folders and I set up a system of color-coding based on the day, for example Mondays are blue, get it, blue Mondays, Tuesdays are tangerine because of the alliteration, Wednesdays are lavender because I was born on a Wednesday and lavender is my favorite color, Thursdays are green because of Mean Green Thursday, which I made up, and Fridays are yellow because they are scared of the weekend.

Also, I re-bradded all of the invoice packets from the last four years because apparently SOMEONE had used the wrong size brads and all the pages were loose, see now they don't flap around!

(She demonstrates.)

What's wrong with that person?

FRED CLOTALDO. Too much sake. Have you seen your friend?

CLAIRE. Yes! They made her dress like a dork. She's working for that really pretty lady with the heels and the hair and the frown, like the perpetual frown…

FRED CLOTALDO. What name is she going by?

CLAIRE. Her real name. Rose.

FRED CLOTALDO. Rose. What is she like?

CLAIRE. What do you mean?

FRED CLOTALDO. Just. In general.

CLAIRE. Um. Loud? Twitchy? Fast eater? I don't know her that well. She moved in a few months ago. Found my roommate listing on Craigslist. Oh, she told me to tell you she's still waiting for that big meeting with Mr. Martin.

FRED CLOTALDO. Perhaps you can keep that last bit of information to yourself.

CLAIRE. Is that part of my job? To keep confidences?

FRED CLOTALDO. Yes.

CLAIRE. Then consider it done! La la la la. Okay I need to go systematize the envelopes in the supply closet… WHAT A MESS….

(She exits happily, slamming the door.)

(He tries out the name.)

FRED CLOTALDO. Rose.

(He shakes his head.)

Horrible name.

*(***SEGIS** *pops awake.)*

SEGIS. Son of a whore!

FRED CLOTALDO. Good afternoon, Mr. Basil.

*(***SEGIS** *focuses his eyes. He turns and sees the huge windows with the amazing view. He clutches the desk and screams as though he is falling to his death.)*

SEGIS. AHHHHHHGGGGKKKKAHHHHH!!

FRED CLOTALDO. They're just windows! See? Glass…

*(***FRED CLOTALDO** *taps the glass with his knuckles.)*

SEGIS. WHAT AM I LOOKING AT?

FRED CLOTALDO. It's the outside. It's sky, it's buildings. We're 77 stories up.

SEGIS. WE'RE WHAT???!!!

FRED CLOTALDO. I'm afraid you fell asleep at your desk, Mr. Basil. You must have been having a nightmare.

*(***SEGIS** *frantically feels for his beard.)*

SEGIS. Where is the rest of my face? What the hell's in my hand?

FRED CLOTALDO. Coffee. Probably cold by now. Let me take that from you.

*(***FRED CLOTALDO** *carefully removes the coffee mug from* **SEGIS***'s hand.)*

*(***SEGIS** *finally notices his clothing.)*

SEGIS. How did this get on me? When was I naked?

FRED CLOTALDO. I understand this must be completely disorienting, Mr. Basil…

SEGIS. Why do you keep calling me that? Give me some flipping answers, please.

FRED CLOTALDO. Calm down. You…this is awkward. Um, so your father read this horoscope…

SEGIS. I don't have a father.

FRED CLOTALDO. Yes you do. It's Bill Basil.

SEGIS. *(scoffing)* The President. Right.

FRED CLOTALDO. Former President. I'm sure he will do a MUCH better job explaining everything, but all you need to know is that he's handing the company down to you as his next of kin. Now, I'll be serving as your advisor until / you get on your feet

SEGIS. Whoa whoa whoa. Say that again.

FRED CLOTALDO. I'll be your advisor –

SEGIS. The other part.

FRED CLOTALDO. He's handing the company to you.

SEGIS. The company. To me.

FRED CLOTALDO. Yes.

SEGIS. You're serious.

FRED CLOTALDO. As death.

SEGIS. Why.

FRED CLOTALDO. It's your birthright. You're his son.

SEGIS. Who was I before?

FRED CLOTALDO. His employee.

SEGIS. Who's in customer service?

FRED CLOTALDO. We have a posting on Craigslist.

SEGIS. And whose office is this?

FRED CLOTALDO. Formerly, Mr. Basil's. Currently, yours.

SEGIS. Prove it.

*(***FRED CLOTALDO** *gestures to the name plate on the desk.)*

SEGIS. *(cont.)* This is my name. These are my letters. "President." My name and the word "President."

FRED CLOTALDO. I'll be right back. Make yourself comfortable.

*(***FRED CLOTALDO** *disappears.)*

*(***SEGIS** *takes a moment to register everything.)*

SEGIS. My last name is Basil.

*(***SEGIS** *laughs hysterically.)*

My father is one of the most successful, most feared men in the entire corporate sphere.

Myfatherisbillbasil myfatherisbillbasil myfatherisbillbasil myfatherisbillbasil myfatherisbillbasil myfatherisbillbasil.

My father is Bill Basil, and this is his office.

(He looks around…)

(Everything in the room becomes more vibrant somehow…alive…the sky is a brighter, more psychedelic shade of blue…the furniture is breathing somehow…)

(incredulous) This is MY office.

Mine.

(He looks at the desk.)

My pencils. My lamp. My phone.

(He picks up the phone receiver, uncertainly. He presses a button, Someone on the other end answers.)

Oh, hello. HowcanIhelp –

*(***SEGIS** *halts himself, clears his throat, and puts on his best Presidential voice, still a bit unsure of himself.)*

This is Segis Basil. President. I would like, um…. a gigantic platter of the most sumptuous foodstuffs known to mankind. Now.

(He hangs up the phone. A knock on the door.)

*(***SEGIS** *reaches for the door as though his foot is chained to the desk, not realizing he is free.)*

(A gigantic platter of the most sumptuous foodstuffs known to mankind lays at the doorstep. The food is colorful and weird, barely recognizable.)

*(***SEGIS** *slides the food into the room, slams the door, and hungrily dives into the platter on the floor, smearing food all over his face and hands.)*

(He speaks with his mouth full.)

SEGIS. *(cont.)* Mmmmm…..

My food!
My floor!
My company!
Why did he give this to me?

(He eats more, and contemplates.)

He's been waiting.
Testing me.
The phones
The darkness
The buzzing
The stench
The isolation
The macaroni
Any man who can endure the basement
has the strength to run a corporation.

(He glances down at his foot. It is chain-free. He wiggles it.)

No chain.

(He then climbs the furniture in ecstasy.)

Ha ha! What else can I do?

(He sees the electronic stapler on the desk. It glows, it pulses.)

*(***SEGIS** *grabs a few sheets of paper and slides them into the stapler.)*

(The stapler lights up as it staples the pages.)

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