

Foreshadowing Palamon's Triumph and Arcite's Defeat in Their Rivalry for Emily: An Exploration of Geoffrey Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*



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ABSTRACT: This article explores words and actions that foreshadow Palamon's triumph and Arcite's defeat in their rivalry for Emily in Geoffrey Chaucer's 'Knight's Tale'. In fact, in accordance with Gustav Freytag's pyramid about the plot structure, at the second step of the pyramid known as the inciting moment or narrative hook, Chaucer sets in motion the rising action of his story making up suspense. This suspense created by the question the author asks by the end of the first part of the tale in the form of 'demande d'amour', leaves free rein to uncertain predictions about the triumph or defeat of Palamon or Arcite involved in a merciless struggle for Emily, Hippolyta's beautiful younger sister and Theseus's sister-in-law. Thus, this paper purports to demonstrate that for a scrutineer, Palamon is found to be the winner and Arcite the loser from the outset, since there are words and actions that anticipate their triumph and defeat respectively. To detect those hints of triumph and defeat, a formalist approach is used as it emphasizes the form of a literary work to determine its meaning, focusing on literary elements, such as foreshadowing and backshadowing, and how they work to create meaning.

KEYWORDS: foreshadowing, hint, rivalry, triumph, defeat, tale.

INTRODUCTION

Geoffrey Chaucer uses a large number of literary devices in his tales, particularly in 'The Knight's Tale' in which foreshadowing features prominently and implicitly. This technique has, in fact, been bypassed or merely omitted in critical studies on the 'Father of English poetry'. According to an online source of literary devices, foreshadowing is a literary device that writers utilise as a means to indicate or hint to readers something that is to follow or appear later in a story. When done properly, foreshadowing is an excellent device in terms of creating suspense and dramatic tension for readers. It can set up emotional expectations of character behaviours and/or plot outcomes. This can heighten a reader's enjoyment of a literary work, enhance the work's meaning, and help the reader make connections with other literature and literary themes. Quoting Gerald Prince, Higdon (2010, pp.1215-1216) writes that foreshadowing refers to the "technique or device whereby some situation or event is hinted at in advance."

'The Knight's Tale' is about two kinsmen Arcite and Palamon who fall in love with the same girl named Emily whom they first see out of their prison window. She is Duke Theseus's sister-in-law. Arcite gains his freedom but is banished from Athens. He comes back in a disguise since he cannot bear to live away from Emily. In the meanwhile, Palamon breaks out of prison and coincidentally meets Arcite in a forest grove. Here Theseus discovers them fighting a bloody duel. Theseus puts an end to their fight and organises a contest to resolve their quarrel about Emily. Before the contest, Arcite prays to Mars for victory while Palamon prays to Venus for the sole possession of Emily. Emily the targeted lady who is indirectly involved in this romantic rivalry, prays to Diane for singleness. Hence, Stretter (2003, p.234) describes the tale as "a perfect love triangle or a triangular desire: desire mediated through a third party, often a rival." This creates uproar in heaven and finally the wishes are granted. Arcite emerges victorious in the joust but falls from his horse and dies and eventually. Palamon marries Emily.

Since its publication in Middle English, 'The Knight's Tale' has been reviewed and rewritten in different versions for the sake of conveying its message in plain English. In 2003 for instance, Richard Brodie offered a clearer version of the tale that is used in this work in reference to the original version. Almost no review, even the most related to this topic, examined whether this brotherly rivalry would lead to either Palamon's triumph or Arcite's defeat. In fact, Sachi Shimomura's 'The Walking Dead in Chaucer's Knight's Tale' (2013) only focuses on Palamon and Arcite as lovesick heroes of Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*, who live in a stasis that they themselves perceive, which is commonplace. Olivia LeeEtta Blessing's 'Mars and Venus: Symbols of the Chaotic and Conflicted Human Passions and the Reestablishment of Order in "The Knight's Tale"' (2011) portrays Palamon's and Arcite's uncontrolled passions or rivalry as a conflict between reason and the passions through the depicted relationship between Mars and Venus. This multidimensional conflict both human and divine, features prominently the issues debated in this paper, but its outcomes

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though known, have no prior indicators discussed in this review.

Catherine Rock's 'Forsworn and Fordone: Arcite as Oath-Breaker in the "Knight's Tale"' (2006) touches this topic implicitly portraying Arcite as a possible loser in this rivalry. That is why indirect foreshadowing seems to prevail on direct foreshadowing. This paper holds Arcite to be guilty of a number of transgressions that account, the author argues, for his ultimate fate of death after winning the battle for the maiden. As for him, Paull Baum's review discusses 'Characterization in the " Knight's Tale "' (1931). He clearly shows Chaucer's characterisation of Arcite as earthly and Palamon's as heavenly love. In addition, Arcite is characterised as the passionate lover, suffering from the Malady of Hereos, and eager to win Emily by force since she is really indifferent to him, but who forgives, and joins the hands of his lady and his rival while dying.

Chaucer's 'Knight's Tale' is divided into four parts, with a primordial question he asks by the end of the first part, a question which has always left suspense in readers' minds. It is: You lovers ask I now this question: / Who has the worse, Arcite or Palamon? (lines 1347-1348)

With lament on both sides, in this question, there is an unasked one, which would have been, "Which of Palamon and Arcite has a chance to marry Emily?" I have personally witnessed this suspense during my lectures with students. Yet, if one tries to examine this question closely and minutely, that suspense will have no rationale. Hence, "it compels us to scrutinize the words" (Lentricchia & Dubois, 2003, p.115) for a better understanding of this topic under scrutiny. Using foreshadowing to explore Chaucer's tale with a view to answering his pending question, is what this work aims at.

The question that retains attention in this paper is, however: what are the narrator's or characters' words and actions that foreshadow Palamon's triumph and Arcite's defeat in their rivalry for Emily in 'The Knight's Tale'? With regard to what is said and done either by the narrator or characters in this tale, a supposition could be made that the chronology of occurrences, to mention only this, reveals possible outcomes in the story development. As such, formalistically, this issue can be addressed since the text under discussion is considered primarily as a structure of words. That is, the main focus is on this order of words and occurrences, rather than on the biographical and historical relevance of the work in question. In this arrangement of events in the order of their occurrence in Chaucer's 'Knight's Tale', such topics like oath-breaking and punishment, proximity of lovers, their attachments and prayers to gods will constitute the framework of this paper.

1. Order of Words and Chronology of Occurrences

One of the first aspects to consider in searching for the prior indicators of Palamon's triumph and Arcite's defeat in their love for Emily is the order of words, phrases, and the chronology of occurrences in Chaucer's storyline. In fact, this chronology gives pre-eminence to Palamon in the second title of the tale: 'Palamon and Arcite'. A number of versions of Chaucer's Knight's Tale, like John Dryden's 'Palamon and Arcite', W.H. Williams's 'Palamon and Arcite and the Knight's Tale', Frank Jewett Mather's 'Palamon and Arcite', to mention only these, that have been in circulation since the publication of Chaucer's tale, can prove it.

Additionally, in Emily's prayer to Diana, goddess of chastity and virginity, Palamon's name is mentioned first. Is this done for a mere rhythmic effect in the utterance of the collocation Palamon and Arcite or simply because this girl has Palamon on her brain? This is not the gist of the matter. What matters is that in the recurrence of this collocation all along the tale, Palamon often enjoys the first place, as evidenced in the girl's prayer to Diana through this couplet, "For Palamon, whose love for me is true, / And Arcite, who's enamored of me too" (lines 2314-2315). Noteworthy is also the fact that Emily's prayer follows that of Palamon and precedes that of Arcite who was directly involved in this struggle. Her immediate placement after Palamon's prayer seals by the very fact the couple that they will make. For Jensen (1990, p.322), "Emelye's prayer to Diana is placed in between, more to intensify their conflict, than to suggest that she has any say in this matter."

When Palamon and Arcite agree to a duel and when Palamon reveals their identities to Theseus, there is pre-eminence of Palamon's name although on an overall number of 146 occurrences of their names through the whole tale, there are only 66 occurrences of Palamon's name against 80 of Arcite's. Consequently, this pre-eminence foreshadows Palamon's triumph and Arcite's defeat when it comes to know who will rightfully get Emily's hand.

The chronology of occurrences is, furthermore, a significant aspect in foreshadowing this triumph and defeat. It is no accident that Palamon is the first to see Emily walking in the Spring Garden. It has often been argued that Palamon falls in love with Emily on seeing her from his prison, and his kinsman Arcite is also stricken by sight of Emily. Each of them is consumed with love for "Fair Emily, much fairer to behold / Than lilies, daisies, or the marigold, / Or any flow'r that in the springtime grows" (lines 1035-1036). One can realise how such a portrayal of Emily could not leave any of the two knights immovable. However, placing Palamon in the first stage of Emily's contemplation is a remarkable clue that Chaucer gives to help us predict what will happen later in this love story and foresee Emily's husband. Chaucer's storytelling goes to a point that it becomes obvious enough to justify the right of either of them to have Emily for wife. In this context, Bergan (1991, p. 6) states:

We don't even know what Palamon and Arcite look like. Their reactions are simultaneous and parallel. Palamon sees Emelye and falls in love; Arcite sees Emelye and falls in love. Palamon says he loves her first; Arcite counters that he loved her first, "for paramour". It takes Palamon no time at all to go from "Cosynmyn" to "false Arcite" and Arcite responds with equal factitiousness. They are like children fighting over a toy.

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Being the first to see Emily does not matter for Arcite for whom Palamon cannot make up his mind if Emily is a goddess or of womankind arguing that Palamon's love is platonic, his is for real. For Arcite, there is an old saying pointing up a flaw in Palamon's love for Emily. It is, "Who shall give a lover any law?" (line 1165). There is, in fact, law in everything, and love is not an out-of-law feeling. Love's law can, to some extent, be seen as common sense. Therefore, such a saying looks like an affront towards law. Does this mean that Arcite relies on the saying in order to break the law and go unpunished?

2. Arcite's breaking of the oath or Law and Punishment

In accordance with the principle that no one can trample on the law whatsoever it may be, if love's law is enforced, Arcite is responsible for breaking this law. His disrespect of love rules, which gets him to break the oath he mutually swore with his cousin Palamon, is a hint Chaucer gives so that an inquisitive reader may be aware of future developments in the story. Palamon soon reminds Arcite of this mutual oath as soon as the quarrel starts:

"It would be no honour unto thee
To be a traitor, or be false to me,
That am your cousin, your blood brother too.
We're sworn each to the other to be true,
That although death by torture we must die,
Till death shall nothing come twixt you and I.
In love we'll not get in each other's way,
Nor shall we interfere, dear brother; nay,
But rather you should help me as a friend
In every case, as I shall thee defend.
This was the oath, most surely, that was thine;
Do not deny it; it was also mine.
Thus you my true advisor ought to be,
And now would you my lady falsely see
And fall in love with, whom I love and serve?
I tell you, you sure have a lot of nerve!
Nay, false Arcite, you'd better back off now,
Else, mark my word, right in your kisser, pow!
You are my confidant and brother, bound
To help me, and if not I shall thee pound.
For as a knight you obligated are
To help me, not my happiness to mar,
Or else you are a phony, I surmise." (lines 1130-1151)

In this reminder, emphasis is laid on the respect of the oath, which is questioned by Arcite. What is noteworthy is that Arcite lacks many things, degree of spirituality and maturity between others. His praying Mars is a kind of coercion for the duel already scheduled. He is rather carnal and acts like a beast. It is said that the high degree of spirituality kills sexuality. If Arcite had been a bit spiritual, he might have dominated his sexual impulse. In this struggle for Emily's hand, Arcite does not present himself as the law-and-order candidate. But instead of respecting the oath or love's law, he has this to say:

Love's law, my intuition tells me, trumps
All earthly laws, and lovers take their lumps
In spite of claims they stake, in every way,
As all such laws are broken every day.
A man must go where e'er his heart may lead,
Though that may mean he makes another's bleed,
Although she may be widow, maid, or wife. (lines 1165-1171)

This point of Arcite as law or oath-breaker has been laboured by Rock (2006, pp.417-418) for whom: Palamon reproaches him [Arcite] for breaking their oath of brotherhood, in which they pledged (...) Such oaths did, in fact, concern more than simply a knight's promise to help another in battle; they also included, in the words of Maurice Keen, "all that affected his honour, his fortune and his emotional entanglements." Palamon thus reminds Arcite of his duty as a knight, accusing him of false swearing (...) False swearing and breaking one's oath were serious offenses.

Although love is an uncontrollable feeling as Arcite explicitly claims, the oath he swore with his cousin Palamon not to intrude on each other's love time, does not exclude this feeling. So, it is crystal clear in this case of disrespect of love rules, that the punishment that falls on Arcite is seen in retrospect or flashback of his oath breaking. Chaucer also foreshadows this triumph and

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defeat in the kinds of punishment imposed to each of these lovers, which boils down to proximity and distance from Emily, their common target.

3. Proximity and Distance of Lovers

Proximity and distance play a big part in matters of love in that they can warm and dampen this feeling in the persons involved, or vice-versa. On the premise that out of sight, out of mind, proximity in love often prevails. The verdict that falls on each of the two lovers following their quarrel that shatters Duke Theseus's peace, foreshadows their later triumph and defeat in their love for Emily.

It is true that Palamon looks like someone who was dying of thirst besides a fountain in that he could see Emily wandering in the same Spring Garden, but could not touch her because of his imprisonment. He could at least feed his looks, and consequently his soul. If anybody ventured to criticise Palamon's condition and deem it worse than Arcite's, Palamon could reply like Julia to Lucette in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, "O, know'st thou not [her] looks are my soul's food? (Shakespeare, Act 2, Scene 7). Palamon's doom to remain in Athens's prison is therefore pronounced on purpose, that of his closeness to Emily, and of their future union.

Arcite's expulsion from Athens can formally be interpreted as a bad omen. It parallels, to some extent, Romeo's banishment from Verona in Shakespeare's play, as Romeo returns not for a comic but a tragic end. Like Romeo, he has to fight his rival, and dies in his triumph. His is an ephemeral triumph, not to mistake for Palamon's, which is everlasting. Chaucer purposely brings Arcite close to Emily back from Thebes to Athens to enhance conflict which is necessary to the plot of any story. Otherwise, Gustav Freytag's pyramid of plot could not have been built up. By the time Arcite, inspired by a vision of Mercury, goes to Athens masquerading as Philostrate, Palamon breaks loose from prison.

4. Palamon's Unbelievable and 'Perfect' Escape

The other thing to highlight in foreshadowing Palamon's triumph is thus his unbelievable and 'perfect' escape from prison. In fact, of the two fates, Palamon's imprisonment is ostensibly worse than Arcite's release, and gives the former no chance of gaining Emily. Hence, in wallowing for self-pity, Palamon, addresses his cousin Arcite:

"My cousin, Arcite, I'm the one who cries;
For all our fighting, you now take the prize.
In Thebes you are free now, around to go;
And you don't care one whit about my woe.
Now with your reputation you could raise,
Within a matter of a few short days,
An army that could come, and Athens raze,
With exploits that would Emily amaze,
And so impress, she'd want to be your wife;
Then I might just as well forfeit my life. (lines 1281-1290)

In this address, he recognises the preferential treatment given to Arcite, who, in spite of Theseus's warnings, could take advantage of his freedom, to raise in a few short days, an army that could come and raze Athens hereby taking Emily for wife. Palamon has no good Samaritan like Arcite, freed thanks to Duke Perotheus, who was fond of him for many years at Thebes. However, against all odds, he escaped from prison, as evidenced in these lines:

It happened in the seventh year, in May,
That on the third night (as the old books say,
Which more attention unto detail pay),
Whether it was by chance or destiny –
As something happens, if it's meant to be –
Soon after midnight from captivity,
With friends to help him, Palamon breaks free, (lines 1462-1468)

In this excerpt above about Palamon's prison break, Chaucer is in a dilemma about whether to choose the word 'chance' or 'destiny'. Considering the fact that the poet's work is imbued with deities, chance as absence of design and intentions, does not exist with gods. Besides, by extension, chance means destiny. Therefore, with gods like Saturn and Venus, his escape appears not incredible, but unbelievable and perfect. These two rivals are not attached to Roman mythology gods at random, but on purpose.

Also, numerologically, reading these lines suggests that it is a perfect escape since it happens with numbers of perfection and completion, in the 'seventh' year, on the 'third' night, coupled with the month of rebirth and fulfilment. If Chaucer does not purposely do this, this numerological coincidence with Palamon's escape appears so strange that it foreshows better days ahead of

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him.

Figures of speech, especially a figure of comparison like simile, support Chaucer's foreshadowing of Palamon's triumph and Arcite's defeat. In fact, when they agree to a duel and are caught fighting by Theseus before the final combat, Palamon is likened to a lion and Arcite to a tiger, the evidence of which is shown in these lines:

Then after that, with swords drawn, sharp and strong,
They fought each other heatedly and long.
As he was fighting, Palamon did seem
Like some fierce lion, wild in the extreme,
And Arcite like a savage tiger feared;
As wild boars going at it they appeared. (lines 1653-1658)

Lion and tiger are two fierce beasts. But factually, if the two beasts step on the scales, notice is that the tiger is no match for such a formidable opponent as a lion, although French (1949, p.326) mistakenly argues that, "When in the final combat the poet likened one to a lion, the other to a tiger, he [Chaucer] was merely stressing their equality." Palamon and Arcite are, on the contrary, compared to these beasts before the final battle, and this equality has nothing to do with the outcome of their duel. Their analogy with these powerful animals is a piece of evidence of their inequality and difference as also seen in their attachment to gods.

5. Attachment to Gods and Meaning of Requests/Prayers

When, in life, it comes to wage a battle against somebody, one often seeks to pray, whether for fear of defeat and thirst for victory, a god or goddess they may not have prayed before. Such is the case of Palamon, who prays to Venus, goddess of love and asks for love; Emily, who prays to Diane, goddess of virginity and asks for refusal of any form of union with a man; and Arcite, who prays to Mars, god of war and asks for victory. In fact, caught fighting by Duke Theseus, who instantly sentences them to death, Palamon and Arcite have to meet, thanks to Hippolyta's and Emily's interventions, in a tournament ordered by Theseus to decide who shall have Emily.

The attachment of the rivals to these gods and the gist of their prayers is significant in the outcome of their contest. The choice of Venus by Palamon to ask for love, nothing else but love, determines his triumph by the end of the tale. Seeking to hurt his cousin Arcite physically is not his request, as he does not want to win Emily's love by any means necessary, but relies on the power of love. One thereby understands that in his feelings as well as in his deeds, Palamon is not so warlike as Arcite, and his mindset is revealed in the essential of his prayer, "So in a word, my prayer boiled down to this: / Give me my love, thou goddess of love's bliss" (lines 2259-2260). Coupled with his feelings and deeds, his confidence and satisfaction after prayer, foreshow his triumph. Palamon does not care about fame; rather he "defines possession of Emelye as his highest priority" (Elbow, 1972, p.99).

What attracts the attraction in Emily's prayer, she who is not rightfully compelled to make any request to a god or goddess, apart from her mentioning Palamon's name prior to Arcite's, which could explain her mindset fixed on Palamon, is her implicit assessment of the value of their love for her. A close scrutiny of her prayer demonstrates that she values Palamon's love more than she does for Arcite's, as evidenced in some of its lines:

So help me, as I know that you can do.
For Palamon, whose love for me is true,
And Arcite, who's enamored of me too,
I pray this only of thee, then I'm through (lines 2313-2316)

Indeed, the lines above show that both Palamon and Arcite are in love with Emily; but semantically, it clearly reads that Palamon's love is grounded on solid evidence and Emily is seemingly tempted to return him equal love, whereas Arcite's seems not to have the same reciprocity. So, there is a matter of two-way love and one-way love, as well as there is a difference between winning to love and loving to win, the first alternative being Arcite's.

Arcite's prayer to Mars is full of rage. He has a fixed mindset on physical, but not sentimental, victory, and gets what he prays for. To this extent, it should be stated that Arcite wins Emily by force, but Palamon wins her by love. Arcite tries to combine strength and feelings, an association which, naturally, does not work. In praying to this god who behaves like him in matters of wooing ladies, the doors that clattered fast, and caused Arcite to be somewhat aghast by the end of his prayer can be said to anticipate his defeat. "He prayed to Mars for victory and assumed that possession of the lady would follow" (French, 1949, p.325). In his prayer, he uses one of the appeals of Aristotle's rhetorical triangle, especially pathos, to establish a personal, emotional and sympathetic connection between him, the addresser, and Mars, the addressee:

For it is that same pain, that same hot fire,
That you did feel; that burning of desire,
When once you had the pleasure to enjoy

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The beauty of young Venus, fresh and coy,
And had her whensoever you desired –
Though things went wrong and suddenly backfired
That time it came near costing you your life,
When Vulcan caught you messing with his wife;
For that same grief that in your heart you felt,
For my heart's pain let pity your heart melt. (lines 2383-2391)

This prayer is, however, revealing of many things as it clearly shows a connection, better an association of two evil-doers: Arcite and Mars. They are birds of a feather that flock together in that they both come late and try to mess with ladies that are already targeted by other men. In fact, Arcite saw Emily shortly after Palamon, and Mars was caught messing with Venus, the wife of Vulcan, god of fire in ancient Roman religion and myth. This shows that there were antecedents between gods. Oftentimes, in such a gods' conflict, their anger is vented on their human worshippers. Despite the variety of criticism, Palamon and Arcite have been viewed each in the same way. French (1949, p.325) portrays Palamon as "the lover who cared less for glory than for his lady's company" and for Cooper (1996, p.77), "Palamon has the higher devotion, thinking of her as a goddess as much as woman; he looks to ends where Arcite looks to means."

6. Saturn s' settling of Gods' Argument in favour of Venus and her knight Palamon

In such antecedents opposing Venus to Mars, the strongest usually sides with the weakest either physically or spiritually. Siding with Venus on behalf of Palamon is what Saturn, father of Venus, does. The relationship, that of fatherhood and filiation between Saturn and Venus is so strong that he settles gods' argument in favour of her and her knight Palamon, as evidenced in these lines:

"Ah, my dear daughter Venus," Saturn said,
(...)
My aspect is the father of the plague.
So, weep no more, for I shall shake a leg,
To make sure Palamon has all he'll need
To win his lady, like you guaranteed.
Though Mars shall help his knight, you two at odds
I hate to see, for peace befits the gods. (lines 2453-2474)

With all these words, Saturn reassures Venus that her knight will triumph. This way of putting Venus's mind at rest about Palamon's triumph does foreshow it. In her thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for graduation Olivia LeeEtta Blessing investigates this conflict between Mars and Venus. Coupled with the divine scorn for him, Arcite's incurable injury caused by his unbelievable and fatal fall off the horseback, interpreted as justice that has been done in favour of Palamon, is the last warning sign of his defeat. That is why Finlayson (1992, p.141) writes, "Arcite's death is, in fact, ample proof of the unpredictability of fate"

CONCLUSION

This paper was an investigation into Chaucer's foreshadowing of Palamon's triumph and Arcite's defeat in their rivalry for Emily in 'Knight's Tale'. It results from this exploration that words and actions are arranged in such a way as they foretell the outcomes of this brotherly struggle. In fact, from the titling of the tale in its various versions to Saturn's settling of gods' argument through lovers' proximity and religions, there is a strong suspicion of Chaucer's or narrator's, and Emily's inclination for Palamon. Their kind of approach to winning Emily's heart, albeit with conditions, is all that distinguishes them, and reveals Palamon as a lamb and Arcite as a wolf.

Foreshadowing Palamon's triumph and Arcite's defeat in their struggle for Emily defeat really requires a painstaking reading as the fire of their love for her is interchangeable. One can see how Chaucer himself is struggling with the words to maintain suspense and prevent his readers from giving a fast prediction of Palamon's triumph and Arcite's defeat. The fact that the question to know which of Palamon and Arcite suffers more, and which has a chance to become Emily's husband, raises discordant voices wherever 'The Knight's Tale' is told, and shows how hard it is to answer these questions. Being aware of the technique of foreshadowing is, however, the key to addressing such issues.

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