

SAVASANA AT SEA



Ava Dunne

A Nautical Namaste Mystery



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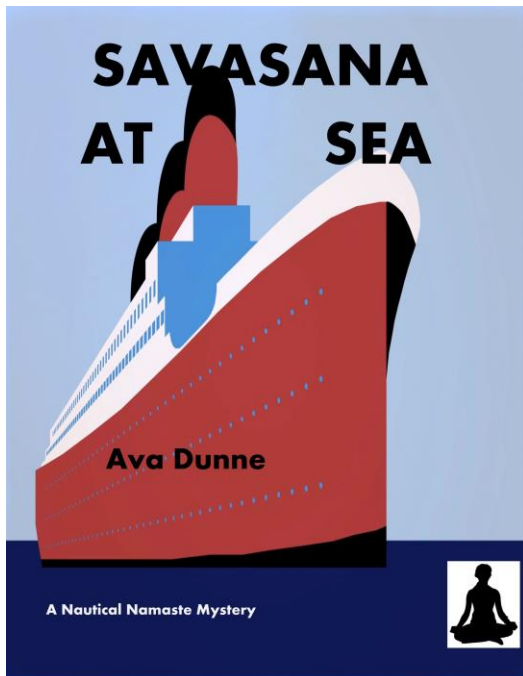
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About the Book & Buy Links

Smart. Intelligent. Sexy. Yoga Instructor Sophie Batchelder's wonderful life gets turned upside down when she's fired from her job and dumped by her fiancé in the same day. Grabbing the opportunity to assist the yoga instructor on a cruise ship headed for the Bahamas for ten days, she discovers her predecessor's body, and the rumors that she's taking over in that predecessor's blackmail operation put her own life in danger. She must use intelligence, humor, and intuition to clear her name and save her own life.

Along the way, she's swept up in the frenetic, stressful, life that happens beyond the "employees only" door of a cruise ship, and finds romantic possibilities and disappointments. Can she live a yogic path and survive cruise ship life? Which of the sexy new men in her life should she trust -- Sebastian Anger, the engineer, who has secrets, but who makes her heart flutter with either pleasure or rage? Andrew, the nurse who goes out of his way to be friendly to her, no matter what the rumors? Or Detective Duncan Cooke, with the limp, the bedroom eyes, and the five o'clock shadow? Or Dhruv, the head of the *Charisma's* security, who might have his own agenda to protect the ship at all costs?

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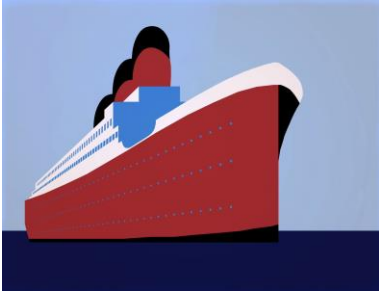
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Visit the Nautical Namaste Website here:

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Visit the Nautical Namaste Facebook page here:

<https://www.facebook.com/Nautical-Namaste-Mysteries>



About the Series



Smart. Intelligent. Sexy. Funny. Compassionate. Ex-event planner/current yoga instructor Sophie Batchelder is all these things and doesn't realize it, especially after her studio abruptly fires her and her fiancé dumps her for her nemesis. Accepting a job on a cruise ship when their yoga instructor dies during the cruise, Sophie embarks on a new chapter of self-discovery in every way, encompassing comedy, romance, and mystery. Discovering that her predecessor's death was murder and not an accident sets her off to find out why.

The series of contemporary mysteries salutes the cozy while breaking ever-tightening formula, and takes Sophie around the world on the Diamond *Charisma*, a luxury cruise ship. Her relationship with ex-cop Sebastian Anger, now one of the ship's engineers after his own life crisis, grows, along with friendships and rivalries among the different factions. Names, eyes, and living the path of yoga are important to Sophie, and, therefore, constantly challenged. Plot-wise, each book stands alone, while the emotional arcs of their relationship and character growth evolves from book-to-book.

The ship's international ensemble of entertainers, restaurant personnel, hostesses, dancers, crew, staff, ship's officers, a tarot reader, an illusionist, and recurring characters of a pair of top-of-the-line, fun-loving jewel thieves Stella and Bartholomew, will also evolve over the books, along with a changing cast of passengers. The short time frames and intense proximity provided by the ship provide a perfect platform for conflict and intrigue. The mix of personnel on a typical cruise ship, the hierarchy, the politics, and the bizarre passenger demands provide endless opportunities for both conflict and comedy.

The ship's route will change from book to book (similar to a luxury cruise line using two ships on a multitude of international routes). There's potential to take Sophie off the ships at some point (since workers are required to take breaks every ten months), and have her adventures continue in locales such as a ski lodge, a spa, a yoga retreat, her grandmother's Florida retirement community, a film set, or even an extended port stay. Historical and other interesting trivia and sensory details pertinent to exotic locales meld to plot and stories, adding local flavors to delight travelers both seasoned and armchair. Back matter includes travel tips, site suggestions, and fun facts/local legends when real locations are used in the book.

The supporting ensemble evolves during the series, and there is room for spin-offs or stand-alones with one or more of them as protagonists (such as Stella and Bartholomew, or Harmonia the tarot reader and Xerses the illusionist).

The setting, characters, situations, and immediacy of the story to the passengers' experience make this an entirely unique concept.

Visit the Nautical Namaste website:

<https://nauticalnamaste.devonellingtonwork.com>

On Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/Nautical-Namaste-Mysteries>

For Immediate Release
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SAVASANA AT SEA: A Fresh, Fun, Not-Quite-Cozy Mystery
The First Nautical Namaste Mystery blends yoga & cruise ship
life

(November 2017)(Cape Cod, MA) The dark days of November approach, so why not indulge in a sun-soaked, fun, luxurious armchair trip to the Bahamas that just so happens to include both murder and romance?

Smart. Intelligent. Sexy. Yoga Instructor Sophie Batchelder's wonderful life gets turned upside down when she's fired from her job and dumped by her fiancé in the same day. Grabbing the opportunity to assist the yoga instructor on a cruise ship headed for the Bahamas for ten days, she discovers her predecessor's body, and the rumors that she's taking over in that predecessor's blackmail operation put her own life in danger. She must use intelligence, humor, and intuition to clear her name and save her own life.

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and survive cruise ship life? Which of the sexy new men in her life should she trust -- Sebastian Anger, the engineer, who has secrets, but who makes her heart flutter with either pleasure or rage? Andrew, the nurse who goes out of his way to be friendly to her, no matter what the rumors? Or Detective Duncan Cooke, with the limp, the bedroom eyes, and the five o'clock shadow? Or Dhruv, the head of the *Charisma's* security, who might have his own agenda to protect the ship at all costs?

Author Ava Dunne worked in the office of a cruise ship in San Francisco in the 1980s and she interviewed over 160 ex-cruise-ship employees in the course of her research. A mystery lover, she was unhappy with the flaky, unflattering portraits of yoga practitioners in the fiction she read.

"The yoga instructors I know are grounded, smart, funny, compassionate people," she says. "Not flaky. Not weird. Not unreliable. And people who practice yoga come from all walks of life. Yoga has exploded over the past years, participation increasing over 30%, with over 20 million people involved in regular practice. In spite of recent scandals on major cruise lines, the cruise industry rakes in over \$37 BILLION in the US economy alone, offering over 314,000

jobs. A cruise ship has an element of locked room mystery to it, so many people on a floating resort, yet modern amenities and port calls keep it fresh."

"I wanted more flexibility than a hard-and-fast cozy formula gave me," Dunne continues. "Which is why it's not *quite* a cozy. There are cozy elements in the book, but there are times when I choose to break that formula to serve story and characters."

Each book in the series will feature a different route taken by the fictional Diamond Line's *Charisma*. *Savasana at Sea* travels from New York through the Bahamas and Florida over ten days. The second book in the series, *Davy Jones Dharma* (releasing November 2018), takes a route through Bermuda. Future books will travel through Alaska, the Mediterranean, and Scandinavia, among other locations.

"Cruise ships are floating resorts, populated by interesting people from all over the world. It's a mix and sometimes a clash of cultures and beliefs, all confined on this space in the middle of the ocean. The possibilities are endless!" Dunne enthuses. The book features a large, international, ensemble cast supporting Sophie's adventures, comprised of both passengers and the ship's crew.

The book's back matter also contains travel tips and links to further information on real locations within the books. The series website can be found at

<https://nauticalnamaste.devonellingtonwork.com>.

Dunne's other work includes short fiction, including "Just Jump in and Fly", a comic fantasy romance set around the winter holidays, and the short Twinkle Tavern mysteries set in fictional Twinkle, Vermont, which debuted with "Plot Bunnies" set at Easter, and the upcoming "Labor Intensive" set around Labor Day.

Savasana at Sea releases digitally on November 15, 2017.

Buy links are available at the Nautical Namaste website.

Excerpt #1:

I headed back down to the laundry, tripping on the top step down to Zero deck from the deck above it. I'd traveled up and down the miles of crew stairs enough where I should have expected that weird step, but every time, I snagged my foot and had to catch myself on the rail. I steadied myself without dropping anything, and made it back to the laundry room, where I dumped the next load of blankets, handed Merhati another twenty, and picked up the ones I'd left earlier. At least they were perfectly folded, although the stack was so high, I couldn't see where I was going.

I turned and bumped into someone entering with bulging bags of laundry. "Oof! Sorry!"

"No, my fault, I couldn't see where I was going," said Sebastian. "Merhati, can you fit me in this evening?"

"Thirty-five dolla."

"Thirty-five?" Sebastian teased. "Last week, it was eighteen."

"Last week, you brought me chocolate from port." Merhati's eyes gleamed with laughter.

"Thirty-five it is, and I'll buy you something special in Nassau," Sebastian promised.

"Then, maybe next time, only ten dolla." Merhati grinned.

I left them to it, and headed back to the stairs that led from zero deck up through the decks and back to the studios. I thought I'd walked a lot living in New York City, but one day on the ship was equivalent to about a week in the concrete canyons.

The corridor smelled bad, like open garbage. The cleaners didn't wash the crew halls multiple times a day like they did those on the passenger side of the ship. The garbage room was on this level, but it smelled fine when I came through a few minutes ago. Maybe someone dropped their dinner and hadn't yet had a chance to clean it up? Or left it for someone else to clean up?

My foot hit something soft and unyielding at the bottom of the stairs. I couldn't see what it was, and couldn't see how to get around it. I turned, glancing at the obstacle, in hopes of moving it with my foot.

It was Geri, lying at the bottom of the stairs, her eyes open, her head at an unnatural angle.

I stared at her in shock. For a split second, I wondered if I was hallucinating. Why would Geri be down here? I remembered that tricky step. Had she tripped? Why didn't she call for help? Part of me knew, even in that first moment, the answer, but I didn't want to believe it.

I dropped the blankets and fell to my knees. "Geri? Geri!" I felt for a pulse, although I knew there wasn't one. She was just starting to cool, an odd, clammy sensation after life, but not the full dead cold yet.

I screamed.

Excerpt #2:

"I wonder how many guests tried to hide in their cabins this time."
Roz McIntyre snickered as she joined us. She was a dancer on the entertainment staff, a tall, slender, dark-skinned woman with exquisite posture, who reminded me of a cross between a Daddy Long-Legs and a giraffe. From the moment I set foot aboard the *Charisma*, she decided we would be friends. Considering Geri's hostility, I was grateful. "Hello, Sebastian. Hello, Sophie. How's it going?"

"I'm sure we'll hear in CB later, when the bets are paid off," Sebastian replied. "Crew bar," he added, for my benefit.

"I can put the damn life vest on in my sleep," I grumbled.

"Let's hope you never need to," Sebastian dropped the joking tone.

"Bet Geri's making you teach the two o'clock Pilates," said Roz. "While she's off assignating with Gary or Viktor. She hates Pilates."

"She told some guy named Gary she didn't have time for him right now," I said. "Is 'assignating' even a word?"

"I'll submit it to the OED when I get a minute." Roz nodded.

"Then it's Viktor. Thanks for the tip. It'll give me an ace up my sleeve against her when I need it."

"Geri's not supposed to mess with the ship's second officer." Sebastian frowned.

"Or he with her," Roz shot back. "I don't like Geri, but let's not blame the woman for everything, shall we?" She tugged my arm.

"Let's grab something to eat. If you don't eat when you can, you'll pass out at the most inconvenient times."

"Watch out for that one." Sebastian nodded in Roz's direction.

"She likes bad men and good champagne."

Excerpt #3:

"My name is Duncan Cooke," he said. "Detective Duncan Cooke, NYPD. Homicide."

"Why are you on the ship?"

He laughed, and its warmth made me relax a bit. "Even detectives get a vacation, every now and again. And, as you might have noticed," he indicated the cane, "I've got some rehab to complete before I'm ready to go back on the job. Now that you know my story, I need to ask you a few questions. Are you up for it?"

I nodded, although part of me wanted to scream, *No, no no!* "I think so."

"If you'd excuse us," Detective Cooke said to Amy and Sebastian.

"I think I need to stay and represent—" Amy began.

"Get out," Detective Cooke said in a flat, hard voice.

She got out.

Sebastian folded his arms over his chest. "I think I should stay."

"I'm not going to harass your girlfriend, *Mister Anger*."

"She's not my girlfriend, she's my colleague. *Detective Cooke*."

I was out of it, but the undercurrent in those words managed to penetrate my shocked haze, and I wondered what the heck was going on between the two of them.

"Are you going to hunt down a lawyer on board? Out of a thousand passengers, I'm sure at least one's a lawyer."

"Guests," Sebastian corrected, as all staff did on reflex.

"Aren't you one with the lingo?" Cooke taunted.

"Sophie's had a shock. I doubt she's used to stumbling—literally—across dead bodies." He frowned down at me. "Are you?"

I shook my head. "I've only seen dead people at wakes. In their caskets, not walking around. And that one homeless guy who committed suicide by jumping in front of the N train one morning."

"See? She's in shock," said Sebastian.

"I'm not going to eat her, I'm not going to hurt her, I'm not going to frame her," Detective Cooke sounded weary. "Why don't you wait outside? I'll need to talk to you as soon as I've talked to her. You were the second person on the scene, weren't you?"

Sebastian nodded. "I heard her scream and ran out of the laundry. I saw her on her knees next to the body."

Yeah, that would help prove my innocence. Not.



About the Author:

Ava Dunne believes that love is both fun and funny. She believes in love, laughter, mystery, and magic. She mixes romance with comedy, mystery, fantasy, myth, and more. She also publishes under half a dozen names in fiction and non-fiction, and is best known for her work under the Devon Ellington name.

Her comic romantic Twinkle Tavern short mysteries are available on Smashwords and will be more widely distributed during 2018, as is her holiday romantic fantasy "Just Jump in and Fly".

Visit <http://www.devonellingtonwork.com/delectable-digital-delights/> for details.

Visit her webpage:

<http://www.devonellingtonwork.com/noms-de-plume/ava-dunne/>

You can also visit the Nautical Namaste website:

<https://nauticalnamaste.devonellingtonwork.com>

Visit Ink in My Coffee, Ava/Devon's blog on the writing life:

<http://devonellington.wordpress.com>

Q & A with Ava Dunne:

Question: What was the genesis of the book and the series?

Ava Dunne: I thought it was when I wanted to see if I could write a cozy mystery, but of course, it started much earlier than that, and it's not exactly a cozy mystery.

Q: I think we need more detail.

AD: Many years ago, when I lived in San Francisco and was working my way up in the theatre world by doing regional theatre, I took temp jobs either during the day or between show gigs. One of them was for a cruise line. I was an administrative assistant to one of the VPs, but the only desk they had for me was with three ladies in customer relations. Well, we had a blast, and I wound up staying for eight months. We had all kinds of ups and downs. My boss was great -- he was the unfortunate victim of a corporate shake-up at the end of eight months; I was asked to stay, but I disagreed with new policies they wanted to implement that I felt were unfair to workers both on the ship and on shore, so I left. But I knew, even then, that I wanted to someday set something on a cruise ship.

Q: So we've got the cruise ship. Where does the yoga come in?

AD: I'm a long time yoga practitioner, although I didn't implement a daily practice until about ten years ago. There have been mysteries set against yoga backdrops, but I was annoyed because I felt the protagonists were often represented as flaky or unreliable or weird because they were trying to live a path of peace and kindness. I felt some of the publishers -- not the author, but the publishers -- encouraged the readers to laugh AT the practitioners instead of with them. I wanted a protagonist who struggled to live her path, but wasn't a joke.

Q: What made you put them together?

AD: Setting it on a cruise ship is kind of like a locked-room mystery. Unless someone takes a helicopter off or steals a lifeboat, you're pretty much stuck on the ship until it pulls into port. Cruise ships are also similar to floating cities, because of all the options, and because there are a lot of people on them. I scaled it down a bit for the book so it wouldn't be overwhelming.

Q: Why do you call it "not-quite-cozy"?

AD: Because there are places where I choose to bend the rules of the cozy genre. Which is different from not knowing what they are in the first place. Ten, fifteen, twenty years ago, the cozies were the place where the unusual, the weird, social issues, and concepts like tolerance were celebrated. The formula has tightened the past half a dozen years or so, and, more and more of the books coming out are about how a unique, spirited individual winds up conforming in order to fit in, instead of being accepted for being wonderful and singular. Think the musical *Grease*, but with murder. I wanted to go back to a style that was more in line with the earlier books in the genre I liked best.

I wanted my heroine to have romantic options. Again, the formula is tightening, and while the protagonist often has more than one option, she only explores one option at a time. I wanted one of Sophie's challenges to be a serial monogamist who is now faced with a smorgasbord. I don't want her to be limited by a single romantic relationship, nor do I feel she (or any other woman) should be slut-shamed because she has a healthy sexual appetite. At the same time, the books aren't erotica. It was wrong for the tone, the pace, the story, and the characters to write graphic sex scenes.

One of the things that's wonderful about cruise ships is the international composition of staff and crew. I wanted to celebrate an international, multi-cultured group of people stuck on this finite space and throw a little murder into the mix.

So there are times when the book fits the formula and times when it breaks the formula, and all of those instances are very specific choices.

Q: How did you research the book?

AD: I had some knowledge of how cruise lines worked back in my day, at least from the office side of it, and from the stories staff and crew told when they came to hang out in the office. Also, as I worked my way up to Broadway, many of the theatre people I worked with had done stints on cruise ships. I heard decades' worth of anecdotes. Then, I interviewed people who used to work on ships. A lot of them. Over 160.

None of the stories or characters is verbatim, but they're rooted in research and anecdotes, and then I added the "what if?" factor.

Q: How did the book evolve over various drafts?

AD: The early drafts had a more chick-lit, comic feel. More a descendant of Stephanie Plum, without being covered in food or blowing up cars. But as I worked on the plot, characters, and story, Sophie moved away from that. Time I spent at Kripalu informed her character a great deal, conversations with people there about living one's path, and the struggle to do that in the modern world. There's less physical comedy, at least in *Savasana*, than there was in the early drafts.

There were particular industry people interested in it, but they wanted changes, to make it fit formula more. I tried to do that, but every draft that followed those notes was unsatisfactory to all of us, because forcing it into formula took the air out of it.

At the same time, those comments were enormously helpful, because they helped me clarify and articulate my vision for the series. It's not quite a cozy; but it's not a flat-out contemporary thriller, either. I'm so grateful for all the comments.

It was also interesting, because what the industry people felt was risky were exactly the elements that Trusted Readers liked best about the book. The places where it broke formula and cracked open the world in terms of behind-the-scenes, visiting new locations, a large international ensemble, and dealing with that frenetic pace and all those individuals.

If a book is set in an environment that's heavily populated, say New York or London or wherever, and there's not a sense of a lot of people and a lot of motion, it doesn't work for me. Six or ten characters? In a major city? What? Did the apocalypse happen and I didn't get the memo? I need that sense of teeming with life, constant motion.

Q: Let's talk about locations.

AD: Yes, let's, since emotional geography is so important in books I read and write. That feeds into the above comment about needing to feel the life of the place.

When I write about a character who lives someplace, I need to know that "place" very well. I can usually tell when a writer sets a piece somewhere they've visited just once or only knows about through guidebooks and a street map. They don't capture the emotional geography of a place, and it feels off -- especially if it's a place I know well.

I know New York City well. I've lived and worked there for decades. The brownstone Sophie lives in with Fawn and Bianca in Brooklyn is based on my friend's brownstone in that borough, where I've often stayed. Sophie's reality is very much grounded in the real places, along with some fictional places -- like Jelena Hahn's Union Square yoga studio. I call that "stretching geography", where you stuff a fictional place into a real setting. You keep enough detail of the real setting so people recognize the neighborhood (especially if they live there), but then stretch the block to stick in your building between actual ones, so you can design the building to support the story. Of course, it has to make sense. I once read a book where a woman rented a single-story garage on Central Park West. Um, no, look at the buildings, even a billionaire would have problems doing that. Or someone who turns a corner in Harlem and is in Greenwich Village without teleporting. Makes no sense. It throws me out of the story so badly I stop trusting the author.

I had more wiggle room when I designed the *Charisma*. Yes, I have bad drawings of each level of the ship in my series bible! I studied

floor plans of cruise ships from different lines, I learned how cruise ships are built (which is really cool, by the way), and then I designed the ship that would support the story best.

Sophie is a tourist when she goes to port, in many cases. That meant that we can all experience the locations through her eyes, which is that of a visitor, not someone who lives there. She can get lost, she can think something a local finds tacky is fun, she can explore. We get to visit these places with her.

Some of the locations I know better than others, of course. And that's when I have to figure out what a visitor would want to visit and how a visitor would respond, versus someone more familiar with the place. Sometimes she goes with someone who's familiar with the location, and that's a different perspective. She wants to see the world; she's eager to see and do things. She's naturally curious, which is why she keeps working to solve the mysteries. She's a great conduit for armchair travelers.

Q: How will the series progress?

AD: Each book will inform the next, at least as far as character growth, so there will be some shifts. I've done thumbnails of the first six books, and I've done a more detailed outline of the second book in the series, *Davy Jones Dharma*, because I've started writing it. Hey, it comes out next November! ;)

Each book takes a different route. I'm having the ships change routes more frequently than they would in reality, in order to give us more backdrops. I may, at some point, move Sophie to one of the other ships on the Diamond line temporarily, say the *Chantal* or the *Heather*. But the first six books will be on the *Charisma*.

If you're asking me the ultimate outcome of Sophie's relationships, that's going to evolve from book to book. People and relationships grow, ebb, flow, change over time. Every book is going to cause growth and changes in the various characters. Will Sophie ultimately have a happily ever after? Yes, that's the plan. With whom? Not sure yet. She's got options. Every adventure is going to inform that web of relationships, both friendships and romantic relationships. I have an

idea of where I want things to go, and how I want several of the relationships to evolve, but the characters keep surprising me in the best possible ways, and it's got to happen organically, or it will deaden the tone of the books.

Davy Jones Dharma takes place off the coast of Bermuda, and is about a wreck diving/salvage operation for a sunken pirate ship. The passengers and crew are infected with treasure fever. It's giving me all kinds of opportunities for both comedy and murder!

The third book is on the NY-Southampton UK route, and features a writers' convention on board. Sophie gets to meet some of her favorite writers, and has to deal with Sebastian's ex-wife. The fourth book is on a Scandinavian route, and has a scientific conference on board, including Sophie's sister, Edwina, with whom she has a difficult relationship. The fifth book finds Jack and Alyssa on board for their honeymoon. Jack is the guy who dumped Sophie at the top of this book for her yoga colleague. It's a chance to open old wounds and also find closure, maybe in ways they didn't want. That route is Monte Carlo around Italy to Venice, which allows for all kinds of wonderful backdrops. The sixth book will resolve the arc of Remembrance Man, who is introduced in this book. That's on the Alaska route.

At that point, we'll assess where we are, in terms of sales and interest in the series, and see what's next. But that should keep me busy for awhile, especially with the Twinkle Tavern shorts continuing, and more shorts featuring Samantha Wright and Kris Teague from "Just Jump in and Fly."

Then, of course, there's the stuff I write under other names! So we're in for a period of busy, but it's good busy!

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