



Surviving Home: A Novel (The Survivalist Series)

By A. American

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Book 2 of The Survivalist Series

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In A. American's first novel, *Going Home*, readers were introduced to Morgan Carter, the resourceful, tough-as-nails survivalist who embarks on a treacherous 250-mile journey across Florida following the collapse of the nation's power grid. Now reunited with his loving wife and daughters in this follow-up to *Going Home*, Morgan knows that their happiness is fleeting, as the worst is yet to come. Though for years Morgan has been diligently preparing for emergency situations, many of his neighbors are completely unready for life in this strange new world—and they're starting to get restless.

With the help of his closest companions, Morgan fights to keep his home secure—only to discover shocking information about the state of the nation in the process.

Fans of James Wesley Rawles, William R. Forstchen's *One Second After*, and *The End* by G. Michael Hopf will revel in A. American's apocalyptic tale.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

A. American has been involved in prepping and survival communities since the early 1990s. An avid outdoorsman, he has spent considerable time learning edible and medicinal plants and their uses as well as primitive survival skills. He currently resides in Florida with his wife of more than twenty years and his three daughters. He is the author of *Going Home*, *Surviving Home*, *Escaping Home*, *Forsaking Home*, and *Resurrecting Home*. angeryamerican.net

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Prologue

When it all went wrong, I was two hundred miles from home. I traveled a lot for my job, and I always had my get-home bag in my car. It wasn't that I expected things to fall apart, by nature I'm an optimist. But it always seemed to be the worst kind of irresponsibility to not be prepared. And it was that Boy Scout philosophy that saved my life.

The car quit, my phone was dead, and pretty soon I knew it wasn't just me. Everyone on the road was stuck and looking for a way home. I had known for a long time that if things ever went to shit, the average person was screwed: no power, no water, no food, no way to communicate with the government that was supposed to be running the show. And I knew that in that situation, my fellow citizens would quickly become the biggest danger. What wouldn't you do if you couldn't feed your family?

But what I wasn't prepared for was how quickly things would get bad. And in the weeks it took me to hoof it home, things got very bad indeed. The average person without food or water or hope would rob you for a meal. The average person in the same situation, but with kids to feed, might kill you.

I had thought about it a lot before the event, and I had tried to prepare. I didn't worry too much about my wife and three girls. My house was off the grid; we had food stored, solar power, and an independent water system. More important, I had good friends and neighbors. I knew people like my buddy Danny would look out for Mel and the girls. All I had to do was get home to them and everything would be fine. That's what I thought, at least.

Getting there wasn't easy. I got real lucky: I hooked up with Thad and Jess, and we looked out for each other. When I got shot, they saved my life and we were luckier still: we met Linus Mitchell—Sarge—a retired soldier, and some of his army buddies. They got me back on my feet and made it possible for Jess, Thad and I to make it home to our families.

Coming home was the single best moment of my life. Things in my neighborhood were under control, and despite that the world had gone to hell, for a little while, it seemed like it was all going to be okay. We had a cookout the night I came home, and it wasn't very different from other gatherings like that we had had a hundred times before: family, friends and hope.

I know myself pretty well, and sometimes I can be kind of harsh about how people are adjusting to the world we live in now. It's a new world with new rules, and everybody has to make do for themselves. You have to make sure your family gets fed and make sure they're safe. There are too many people waiting for Uncle Sugar to fix things, people who thought at the beginning that if they just waited, things would go back to

normal. But if I'm honest, the first night I got home, I wasn't too different. I thought the hard part was behind me, and I had no idea how bad things were going to get. I figured if I took care of my own, the rest would sort itself out. But I was wrong.

Chapter 1

We went to bed early after the cookout. It was nice to sleep in my own bed with my wife beside me. Ashley—mostly we called her Little Bit—wanted to sleep with us and really put up a fight, but we wanted some time to ourselves; it had been a while since we'd been together, and we were going to make up for it. Afterward, Mel was asleep and I was lying there, staring at the ceiling. In the past I would have gotten up and gone online, but those days were over. No more Internet, no more laptop, no more of a lot of things. I got up and walked out to the living room and sat down in my chair. The room was dark and silent. There was no AC running, no fan, no nothing.

Light washed over the window, and I heard an ATV heading toward the roadblock. I stood and looked out the front window as it passed by, and then the darkness and the silence returned. I sat down again in my leather chair, but soon I was up again and returned to my bed, and Mel.

Morning came and I was up before the sun. Mel was still asleep, as were the girls. I put on a pot of water to boil. I stood there for a moment taking the scene in, looking around at the kitchen, the fluorescent light glowing against the ceiling, and looking forward to coffee. The three-burner Butterfly kerosene stove is a truly wonderful piece of equipment to have. Once the burner is lit and the catalytic converter heats up, it produces no smoke and can be used indoors.

While the water was heating, I went out to the shop to look at the food stores. I was surprised at what I saw. Mel said she hadn't been very careful in the beginning, but that she had soon changed her ways and had started to conserve. It looked like the kids had put a real dent in the canned fruit. The soups and stews were hit rather hard, but there was still a lot there, and if we were careful, we could stretch it out for some time. It felt good standing there in front of those shelves, knowing it wasn't all a waste of time and money.

I grabbed a can of SPAM and headed back inside. The water was boiling and I added it to the press. I let the coffee brew for a minute, set a skillet on the burner and poured myself a cup with sugar and some powdered creamer. While the skillet heated, I added a little olive oil and sliced the SPAM. From the fridge I grabbed a few eggs and set them aside while the meat in the pan heated.

Mel came into the kitchen and said, "I smell coffee and SPAM."

"Morning, Sunshine," I said.

She went to the cabinet and returned with a cup and poured it full of coffee. She doctored her cup while I was flipping the SPAM.

"When do the girls usually get up?" I asked as I took the meat from the pan and cracked an egg into it.

"They usually sleep late, no school and all. They couldn't be happier," she said, taking a sip from the cup.

"Well, can't blame 'em. I would if I could," I said.

We sat down at the table in the kitchen and ate breakfast together. The sun was starting to come up and

looked like it would be a nice day. After another cup of coffee, I got up and headed for the bedroom.

“Really? After last night I can’t believe you have the energy,” she said with a smirk on her face.

I paused at the door, “I have more energy than you can imagine.” I put on my Carhartt pants and my Ariat boots, something other than those damn Belleilles I had walked two hundred miles home in. I pulled my tac vest on and draped the sling of my assault rifle over my shoulders.

Mel looked up from the cup in her hands. “Where are you going?”

“I’m going to walk up to the end of the road and talk to Danny. I just want to see how things are around here.”

After strapping on the XD I headed for the door and walked down the drive toward the gate in the early dawn. The dogs, Meathead and Little Girl, came running up and jumping all over me. I knew I wouldn’t be able to keep them in the yard, so I just let them follow me. We went out onto the road and turned toward the roadblock. It wasn’t long before the dogs went nuts, barking and raising hell. I looked back and saw what they were barking at.

Coming down the road on her bike, like she usually did in the mornings, was Pat. “Shit,” I said as I turned around and kept on toward the roadblock. I could hear her bike closing on me, and it wasn’t long before she came alongside.

“Hi, Morgan, I heard you were back,” she said with a forced smile.

“Yeah, finally.”

“How was it? Was it hard?” she asked.

I looked over at her. “More than you can imagine.”

“I bet. We haven’t been anywhere since all this happened.

Neither of our cars work, so we haven’t gone out,” Pat said as she pedaled her bike.

We were almost to the roadblock. I just wanted her to go the hell away. “How’s your family? Are your girls getting enough to eat?” she asked.

I saw what she was after. Pat was always a busybody, and now she was snooping around to figure out who had food. I just looked over at her and smiled. We reached the roadblock and I waved at Danny, who was walking toward me. He gave me a wave back and we shook hands.

“Hey, man,” Danny said.

Pat rolled off to the side of the road and pretended to fiddle with the chain on her bike, just close enough to get an earful.

Reggie was at the roadblock with Danny this morning. He looked over and gave me a nod, and Pat waved at him too. He waved back without a smile. Our little neighborhood had two basic groups. There was Pat and her group, mostly old biddies and the ones where the woman of the house pretty much ran things, plus a few others that had that holier-than-thou attitude. The second was the rest of us, the ones who minded their own business but were always ready to lend a hand.

“Nah, haven’t seen a soul, just like most days,” Reggie said.

“Yeah, early on there were several people heading for the forest. Loaded with packs, some old trucks, some bikes and carts and shit. Then it pretty much dried up, not too many people anymore,” Danny said.

“Then why keep this up?” I asked.

“Because there are still some shifty-ass folks that come through here, plus some other shit,” Reggie said.

“Like what?”

Danny and Reggie shared a glance, then Danny spoke. “There have been a few girls come up missing. They disappear from their homes or when out walking around. No one knows what’s happening to them, they just disappear.”

I looked down. I had forgotten about the bodies—I mean, it was in my head, I just hadn’t said anything about it. What with coming home and seeing everyone and the cookout we had the night before, it had slipped my mind.

“I was going to talk to you about it. I just didn’t want to last night with the girls there. The last thing in the world I can imagine is one of them disappearing,” Danny said.

“It’s not that. I mean, it is definitely that, but on my way back, not far from here, I found the bodies of three women. One of them looked familiar, but I couldn’t place the face, or what was left of it.” I looked up at Danny and Reggie.

“Where?” Reggie asked, an edge to his voice.

“Sorry, Reggie. Morg, Reggie’s niece has been missing for about a week. She lived over in Altoona near the Kangaroo store, and just disappeared,” Danny said.

“Reggie, man, I’m sorry. I didn’t know. I found them out at Baptist Lake. Two of them had been there awhile. There wasn’t much left, and it was hard to tell whether they were male or female,” I said.

Reggie looked me in the eye. “You stay here with Danny. I’m going to get Rick and Mark and some ATVs. Then we’re going to go look for her.”

“Bring someone back to man the barricade, I’m going too. Morg can ride with me,” Danny said.

Reggie nodded at Danny then looked back to me. “What color was the hair, Morgan?”

I looked at Danny and he looked back with no expression. “Blonde, long, past the shoulders,” I said.

Reggie’s jaw tightened and he nodded his head. He went over and climbed on his ATV and took off like his ass was on fire. Pat managed to “fix” her bike a moment after and headed down the road as fast as her pudgy legs would carry her. Danny looked over at me. I shrugged my shoulders. “I didn’t know,” I said.

“I know, but this has had people scared. The thought that with everything else that is going on, some sick fuck is going around snatching girls has really had an effect,” Danny said.

I leaned over the barricade and Danny came up beside me and rested his elbows on it. We just stood there as the sun climbed higher. He asked about my trip home and I gave him some of the details. I told him about

Sarge and the guys, about Thad and Jess and what we had gone through. I told him the story of our ambush in detail, all that I remembered, anyway. I told him about Sarge's place and my trip through the forest. He laughed when I told him about the hippies.

"Man, I wish we were on the Run today, just paddling down without a care in the world," he said, staring off across the road.

"Me too, man, me too," I replied.

It wasn't too long before we heard the ATVs coming up the road. We both looked back and saw two four-wheelers and one Kawasaki Mule coming down the road. Mark was in the Mule. He and Rick, another guy from the neighborhood, had their uniforms on, Mark's sheriff's star clearly visible even at this distance. Behind them, her legs pumping up and down, was Pat. The guys came up and stopped. Reggie asked me to tell Mark and Rick what I had told him. As I relayed the story, Pat rolled up. I stopped talking as everyone turned to look at her.

Breathlessly she climbed off her bike and put the kickstand down. Mark had his son Jeremy in the Mule with him, and Lance was on the back of Rick's ATV. Jeremy and Lance would man the barricade while we were gone. Pat looked at Jeremy and told him to watch her bike while she was gone. We all looked around at one another, wondering where she was going. Without saying a word to anyone, Pat walked over and climbed into the Mule. Mark looked over at her and said, "What are you doing, Pat?"

"I'm going with you. This is serious, and we need to find out what's going on," she said as pulled on a pair of knit gloves.

"You're right, it is, but you aren't going anywhere. Now please get out of there," Mark said.

"I most certainly will not. I have as much right here as any of you do," she said.

"I am still a deputy sheriff, and this is police business. I asked you once to leave. Now I'm telling you," Mark said.

Pat shot him a look, then one to me and Danny. "If those two are going, I can. They aren't deputies."

Rick looked over to Danny and me and said, "You two want to be deputies?"

We looked at one another and shrugged. "Sure."

"You're deputized," Rick said.

"You're not the sheriff. You can't deputize anyone," she fired back.

"Pat, I've been nice," Mark said as he and Rick moved toward her.

Sensing what was coming, Pat leaned forward and wrapped her arms around the roll bar of the Mule. Rick and Mark pried her arms off as gracefully as they could. Pat was screaming like she was being eaten by a gator.

"Stop the damn screeching, Pat! You're being fucking ridiculous," Mark said.

They finally got her out of the Mule and walked her over to her bike, and Rick handcuffed her right hand to the handlebar.

“What are you doing?” Pat yelled.

Rick walked over and handed a cuff key to Lance. “When we’re gone, take ’em off her. Take it off the bike first, then her wrist. I want those back.” Lance nodded and pocketed the key. Pat shot him a look.

With Pat finally out of the way, Mark looked at all of us and asked, “You guys ready?”

Everyone nodded and moved toward their machines. I was headed toward Danny’s Polaris when Mark called out to me, “Ride with me, Morgan, I don’t know where we’re going.”

Mark pulled a bag from the bed of the Mule and handed everyone a radio. There were also three body bags lying there. “Where did you get these?” I asked him.

“The sheriff’s office had some stuff that still worked.” After he handed them out, we did a quick radio check. I climbed into the Mule and we pulled through the barricade.

I said, “Head up toward the Pittman Center and take that trail just past it, to the left. Baptist Lake is back there.” He was focused on the road ahead and seemed a little tense. I asked, “Has old Pat been that big a pain in the ass the whole time? I mean, she’s always been a pain, but that seemed a little over-the-top.”

“Yeah, she’s been trying to *coordinate* everyone to work together. She tells everyone what to do. She wants us all to

throw everything in a big pile to share,” he said.

“She must be about out of food, then.”

Mark looked over at me and said, “That’s what I think too.”

I pointed out the trail shortly after we passed the visitor center in Pitman. We all turned off the road onto the trail. It didn’t take long to get back to the lake. Winters were rather dry around there, and there weren’t any real wet places to negotiate. We came at the lake from the north side, and the bodies I had seen were on the south side. I told Mark about where they were and pointed in the general direction. He stopped the Mule and waved the others forward. Reggie, Rick and Danny all came up alongside.

“Rick, you and Danny go around that side. Reggie, you follow us around this side. Keep an eye out, and when you get down there, no one go running off toward the area. Let’s see if we can find anything that might tell us who’s doing this. We don’t have a forensic team, but let’s see if there’s anything that might help us.”

Everyone nodded and we all headed off. Reggie was trailing behind us and Mark wasn’t going very fast. I glanced over my shoulder at Reggie and he just looked pissed. Looking over at Mark, I said, “Good idea having him follow behind you; he looks like he’s ready to kill someone right now.”

“That’s why he’s back there. I wanted him to go slow, otherwise he would have hauled ass down there, and if there was anything that might help he’d probably fuck it up. I sure hope this isn’t his niece,” Mark said.

It didn’t take long to make our way around the little lake. The water was low and a large part of the bottom was exposed. As we neared the area where I’d found the bodies, I told Mark, and he stopped the Mule as Reggie came up beside us. “Why are we stopping?” Reggie asked.

“They were right over there,” I answered him, pointing off toward the near side of the lake where three or four buzzards were taking to the air.

Reggie squinted his eyes and looked out over the dry lake bed. Rick and Danny had come out of the tree line a couple hundred yards to our left and stopped. We all dismounted and walked toward the bottom end of the little lake. There wasn't anything that said *Body over here!* and I couldn't really remember exactly where they were, but it wasn't a large area to search. Just a minute later, Rick found a femur. It was lying in the dirt alone, no other bones around it. Out of habit more than anything else probably, Rick took a business card from his pocket, folded it in half and set the little paper tent on the ground beside the bone.

From where we were standing, two lumps were clearly visible.

A few moments later we were standing over what was left of the two bodies I had found just a couple days back. The one that had looked the worse for wear that day was now nothing more than bones held together by connective tissue. The one that had appeared to be freshly dumped was in pretty bad shape now; the various critters that feed on carrion had been hard at work. We stood in a semicircle around the bodies. Mark and Rick looked at the ground and the surrounding area for any sort of clue as to who had dumped them.

Reggie just stood there staring at the body with the matted blonde hair. Finally he looked over at Mark and said, "I want to check her and see if it's Christine."

Mark looked over at him and frowned. "From the condition of the body, how are you going to tell?"

"Looks like most of the back side is still there. She has a tattoo on her lower back, kind of a tribal thing with a butterfly in the middle. I want to know, now," Reggie said it with a finality that Mark couldn't argue with.

Mark and Rick pulled black nitrile gloves from their pockets and put them on. Kneeling down, they turned the body over. While the animals hadn't been able to get at the back side of the body, the insects certainly had, but there was still enough of a tattoo visible to make it out. Reggie reached into his shirt pocket and pulled out a photo. It was of a blonde girl, probably eighteen or nineteen, with her shirt pulled up over her fresh tattoo. She was looking back over her shoulder at whoever took the picture with a huge smile on her face, her perfectly white teeth shining in the flash of the camera.

Reggie looked at the picture, then at the body, then at the photo. He handed the picture to Mark. "It's her. I have to take her home to her momma."

Mark took the photo and looked at it. He shook his head, looking at the once-beautiful young girl in the picture. Standing up, he handed it back to Reggie and walked over to the Mule and grabbed the body bags. "I don't see much here that would help us. We'll take the bindings and I'll make a sketch of these tire tracks; maybe they'll be handy later."

We spent about an hour collecting all the bodies. One of them was pretty scattered, and we tried to make sure we found all the bones, though I know we didn't. When we were done we loaded two bags into the Mule. Reggie insisted on taking the one with Christine in it on his four-wheeler. He laid the bag across the rear rack and strapped it with a couple of bungee cords. With the bodies loaded, we all climbed back on the various machines and headed back toward home.

When we came to our road, the four of us pulled off but Reggie kept going toward Altoona. He didn't say anything as he passed. We pulled up to the barricade, where Lance and Jeremy were sitting. Rick went up to Lance and put his hand out. Lance dropped the cuffs into it. Rick put them on his belt then looked back at Lance. "The key too." Lance gave a sly little smile and reached into his pocket and pulled out the key,

handing it over as well.

“Did she give you any trouble?” Mark asked

“She was pissed. She cussed you for all you’re worth, but no, she didn’t give me any trouble. She told me I would regret it and that you had no right to lock her up like a dog,” Lance said.

I stepped out of the Mule and went over to Danny’s Polaris and climbed on. “Drop me off at the house,” I said as my ass landed on the seat.

Danny pulled up to the front of the house. After I climbed off, he asked if I could come down to his place later and see if I could come up with some ideas to get some power going. We shook and I went up to the porch where Mel was sitting with a cup of coffee. She waved at Danny as he pulled off.

“Where’d you go? I saw all the four-wheelers go by— what’s up?” she asked.

I told her about the bodies. It upset her, the thought of some sick bastard running around doing something like that, at a time like this. She also worried for our girls, and I assured her that they weren’t going anywhere without us, except down to Danny and Bobbie’s house. There was only one way onto our street and we had decent security, so I wasn’t worried about them walking down the road.

Mel asked if I wanted a cup of coffee, and I said I would love one. She went inside and came back with another cup and hers refilled. We sat on the bench drinking our coffee when the door opened and Little Bit came out. She was dragging a giant tawny-colored teddy bear, Peanut Butter. She looked so cute in her little footie PJs. Rubbing her eyes, she came over and climbed up in my lap and laid her head on the bear. It was wonderful beyond words to have that little girl in my lap, just to be sitting here with Mel and knowing all my girls were safe. After a moment she raised her little head and looked over the edge of my cup. “Can I have some coffee, Daddy? Can you move this?”

She was pointing at the AR lying in my lap. I pulled the sling over my head and set the rifle aside. “Sure, baby,” I said as she took the cup with her little hands.

She took a sip and hummed with pleasure. She looked up with a big smile. “It’s good. Can I have the rest of it?”

This was the eternal question from her: can I have more? It didn’t matter what it was, anything she had some of, she wanted the rest of. Maybe it came from having two older sisters, being the smallest: get what you can get, when you can get it. “Of course, drink it up. When you’re done, go get dressed.”

“Okay,” she said and raised the cup again.

We sat on the porch and Little Bit finished her coffee. I tousled her long blonde hair, making her giggle. She finally finished her coffee and climbed off my lap and headed back for the house, the bear trailing behind her. Mel looked over at me and said, “You let her drink that, she’s *your* problem for the rest of the day.”

“No sweat. I have a lot to do today; she can follow along,” I said and stood up. “I’m going to go out to the shop and check out the solar system and go through a few things.”

“All right, I’m going to clean up the kitchen.”

I headed out to the shop and was checking out the batteries, looking for any corrosion on the terminals, when I heard a high-pitched voice call, “Daddy?”

"In here."

Little Bit came through the door. "What'cha doin'?"

"Just checking a few things," I told her.

She helped me as I went over the batteries, cables and inverter. Then I went through the food stored there. It still looked like a lot of food, but when you thought of the fact that there was no way to run to the store, it wasn't. I was standing there looking over the stores when Little Bit asked, "What's wrong, Daddy?"

"Nothing, just looking at all the food we have." I chose the words carefully so as not to let her think I was worried; this wasn't her problem and her little mind didn't need to be troubled with it.

"Yeah, we have a lot, don't we?" she said.

"We have some." I looked down at her, she turned to look up at me. "But don't tell anyone about it, okay?" I said as I patted her head.

She leaned her head against my side, turning her face into me. "I won't. Someone might try and steal it. If anyone tries and steal it, I'll shoot them with my BB gun," she said.

"Don't go trying to shoot anyone. If you see anyone, you tell me," I told her.

"Okay, can I go get my BB gun?" she asked.

"Sure, just be careful with it." She was on her way before I even finished saying it.

After she was gone I pulled the twenty-millimeter ammo cans out from under the shelves and did a quick inventory of the ammo. I had about forty-seven hundred rounds for the AR and 1250 for the .45s. There were also close to a thousand rounds of .22, 110 30-30 rounds and fifty twelve-gauge shells mixed between 00 buck and slugs, both high brass. I felt pretty good about the count. It wasn't an unlimited supply, but it was a substantial stockpile.

About then Little Bit came through the door with her Red Ryder in one hand, a length of 550 cord in the other. She said, "Daddy, can you put this rope on my gun so I can wear it like you do yours?"

I smiled at her and took a moment to fashion a sling for her little rifle. She stood there with a smile on her face, then put the sling over her shoulder when I was done and ran out of the shop. Going back inside, I found Taylor and Lee Ann awake. Lee Ann was standing in the kitchen looking in the fridge. "I'm hungry," she announced. "I want some eggs."

She took the bowl that had the fresh eggs in it from the fridge. "Dad, can you light the stove for me? I can't do it."

"Sure," I replied. I lit the stove and adjusted the knob for a low flame. She took a ten-inch skillet down and set it on the stove. I told her that was too big and I replaced it with an eight-inch. I showed her how to pour a little oil in the pan and keep the eggs moving so they wouldn't stick. Like any teenager, she told me, "I know," so I left her to her breakfast, telling her to clean up after herself and making sure she knew how to shut the stove off.

In short order there was a small argument over what she and her sister thought they should make. I was in the bathroom when I heard the sliding glass door open and close. As I was coming back out of my room, Taylor

came through the door again with a can of Red Feather cheddar cheese in her hand.

“What are you doing with that?” I asked her.

“I’m going to make a cheese omelet,” she replied as she reached for a can opener.

I took the can from the counter. “You do not just go get what you want out of the shop. You have to ask before you get anything. We have to be careful with what we have. We only have twelve cans of this; you can’t just use it for yourself. Do you two understand?”

Taylor looked dejected. “Yes, I just wanted something different.”

Lee Ann was nodding her head. “I didn’t want the cheese anyway,” she said.

I put the can back on a shelf in the kitchen and went to find Mel. We needed to talk about the food situation.

Users Review

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Sandra Hughes:

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