



# Unraveled

*Lauren Dane*

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**Unraveled** Lauren Dane

*The sharpest ache comes from wanting what you think you can't have...*

Maybe Dolan has lived independent, free-spirited and unattached since leaving home at sixteen. Whiskey Sharp, Seattle's sexy vintage-styled barbershop and whiskey bar, gave her a job and a reason to put down roots. Cutting hair by day, losing herself drumming in a punk rock band by night, she's got it good.

But a longtime crush that turns into a hot, edgy night with brooding and bearded Alexsei Petrov makes it a hell of a lot better.

Maybe's blunt attitude and carnal smile hooked Alexsei from the start. Protecting people is part of his nature and Maybe is meant to be his even if she doesn't know it. Yet. He can't help himself from wanting to protect and care for her.

But Maybe's fiery independent spirit means pushing back when Alexsei goes too far. Still, he's not afraid to do a little pushing of his own to get what he wants her in his life, and his bed, for good. Maybe's more intoxicating than all the liquor on his shelf and he's not afraid to ride the blade's edge to bind her to him.

## Unraveled Details

Date : Published January 30th 2018 by HQN Books

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Author : Lauren Dane

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# From Reader Review Unraveled for online ebook

## Angela James says

Pulled this hot kiss between Alexsei and Maybe while I was editing.

“Being with you is like riding a rollercoaster.”

“Do you like rollercoasters?” she asked.

He nodded.

“All right then.”

He stood, meaning to settle on her bed with her until his phone buzzed in his pocket and he remembered he was only going to take a walk and he’d been there for at least an hour.

And a look at the screen told him he was correct that they’d noticed his absence.

“Is everything all right?” Maybe asked as she stood as well.

He typed that he’d be right back and put the phone away before taking her face in his hands and kissing her.

He didn't want to go back over there. He wanted to stay here, with her scent all around him. So he could watch her face as she spoke, animated and so freaking full of energy.

He really didn’t want to break the kiss he’d started to delay leaving and now felt like the best thing he’d ever experienced. She seemed to melt against him, her body snuggled up against his, her curves called to him so he gave in, sliding his hands down her body to her hips. She gasped and he sucked in the sound.

Need seemed to gather low in his belly as his cock throbbed in time with his thundering pulse.

She was fire. Her skin seemed to sear the palms of his hands as they roamed. This was what he’d needed. What he’d wanted from the first he’d met her. Her taste, her body against his.

He could have fucked women for years and not felt this level of intimacy and connection and that humbled him.

Once he was able to drag his mouth from hers, he touched his forehead to hers a moment before stepping back.

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## Xan West says

3.25 stars

*A copy was provided by the publisher through Netgalley in exchange for an honest review*

I wanted to read this book because Lauren Dane's contemporary romances are basically an insta-read for me, and I have reread most of them multiple times. She generally writes strong unabashedly sexual heroines, wonderful friendship groups/family/chosen family, complex heroes, and has a lovely way with light D/s. Her heroines (and sometimes her heroes) often have trauma histories, which are part of the story but not central in it, and generally woven into the story in ways that feel respectful and complex, without handwaving them away.

This book hits many of those marks, and for the first third of the story, I reveled in the familiarity of Dane's style and worldbuilding and the way she sets up stories and draws character. This book has a couple references to characters from other books, which made me grin. That kind of thing is part of what I enjoy about reading so much of an author's work.

The hero's family is just wonderful and complex and was one of my favorite things about this book. The heroine is very strong and unabashedly sexual and also has these hints of vulnerability that were lovely. I adored her so much. This book also shines in its depiction of the workplace setting for the romance, I loved the way the barber shop was described, the slow burn of their connection at work, and the moment when they decide to really go for each other. I also loved how much of the romance happened at work, the ways we saw their connection grow in that setting.

The heroine is a trauma survivor, and is currently being harmed by her abusive parents. This isn't only abuse in the past, its also very present tense, and that shifts how the story feels. It doesn't feel like a hopeful narrative about a survivor reclaiming her life and finding love and support, it feels like a character who is abused all throughout the story and barely chooses to take steps to protect herself til the very end. The support of the hero, her workplace, the family that adopted her as a kid and that adopted her as an adult, none of that feels nearly as hopeful, because its part of a life where she is still being harmed. It makes this a very different kind of narrative than the others I've read by this author. A darker, less hopeful narrative, one that feels very weighed down by the abuse.

I wanted to root for them as a couple, as I do think they are good for each other and I did enjoy some of those moments in the story. I had a hard time because with how dark the story felt, because of the continuing abuse, and how it was a shadow over the story for almost all of it. It made it more a painful read than an enjoyable one. I did really like the ways that the heroine is shown grappling with whether certain aspects of the hero were signs that he might be like her abuser. That felt like such a real and important aspect of romance for a survivor, one that resonated a lot for me.

This was exacerbated by the ending. In other work by this author, whatever present day threat that existed related to the trauma gets resolved to a place where as a reader it feels like the heroine is safe. This book does not do that. It ends with (view spoiler) This ending, and how fast the story resolves after a confrontation with the abuser, left me feeling very unsettled as a reader, moreso than with a usual cliffhanger. I am supposed to be happy for the couple together, but instead am just worried about the heroine & her sister.

The sex scenes felt less joyous and held less heat for me than some of Dane's other work, though the chemistry between the MCs was really glorious. I think they may have been overshadowed by the darkness in the story. I was still reeling from the big conflict near the end, and the last sex scene felt off for me as I was reeling.

I was troubled by the way the sister was represented. She is a survivor of intense trauma, one that changed the direction of her life, and she clearly has PTSD and there are vague references to mobility issues as a result. She is frequently framed as disabled and needing support, and often as someone who needs protection

and cannot make independent choices. This is challenged somewhat, but even though the heroine recognizes the importance of her independence, she also struggles to support it and often wants to make choices for her and act as a shield for her, and put her needs first. This kind of dynamic is loaded because she's disabled, in a way that it might not be otherwise, and it made me uncomfortable to read, as a disabled person with PTSD. This book is a lot about protection, and recognizing the need to step back and let people make their own choices, even if you want to shield them, but this theme feels a bit underdeveloped in this particular relationship. (It is better developed in the romance arc.) I am glad to know that the sister gets her own book (Jagged), and from the blurb on the author's website, that book is a lot about her insisting on independence.

This is a bit of a departure from what I've come to expect in Dane's contemporary work, particularly in the level of darkness of the story, and the ending, and for me as a reader, the book suffered some for it. It may partly be due to my knowing her contemporary backlist so well; for a reader coming in prepared or without expectations, it may work quite well.

Trigger Warnings: (view spoiler)

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## Beth says

Maybe was a hair dresser at a local barbershop/whiskey bar. After years of watching women circle Alexsei, they hook up because they are both unattached at the same time.

Maybe challenges Alexsei to see the world through her eyes, while Maybe needs the security Alexsei can offer. They truly are friends before they become more.

Maybe goes through some very difficult times with her parents and in the end, I pretty much hated them...

The flip side to that is Alexsei's family. They are loud, lots of food and adopted both Maybe and her sister, Rachel, even before Alexsei knew what was happening.

I liked **Unraveled**. Hot Russian, rocker/hair dresser drums and family.

I received this ARC copy of **Unraveled** from Harlequin -HQN. This is my honest and voluntary review. **Unraveled** is set for publication Jan. 30, 2018

My Rating: 3.5 stars

Written by: Lauren Dane

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Itunes: <https://itunes.apple.com/us/book/whis...>

## ? BookAddict La Crimson Femme says

Read this book now! Ms. Dane starts another emotionally packed series that hits me hard in the heart. I devoured this erotic romance in one sitting. It is a page turning and a must read. Be forewarned, it is angsty and will most likely cause a book hangover.

Always a fan of Ms. Dane, her most powerful romances come from ones where broken families create their own families. This formula works well for Ms. Dane and she does it so exquisitely. In this one, Maybe Dolan's life has been tumultuous as the hated younger child. The cuts Maybe suffers from her parents are so sharp, she bleeds out with no one noticing.

I loved Maybe. She is a character who is strong and a survivor. What she experienced in her family is a disgrace. How her parents could have treated her the way she was treated is unfathomable to me. It is only due to the love of her aunt and uncle she survives her childhood somewhat intact. The scenes between Maybe and her father are infuriating and disturbing. I realize Ms. Dane does not go down the path of sexual abuse from Maybe's father, but I have to say my piece. From an outsider's perspective, Maybe's father is not only one of the worst kind of fathers, but disgusting. My personal take is that he is so terrible to Maybe mostly because he can't handle how sexy his daughter is and that he has sexual desires he can not act upon. So he projects his disgusting filth upon Maybe and completely tries to destroy her. Please note, in this story, there is no incest abuse implied or uncovered. It is my own reading into it.

Despite Maybe's harsh childhood, she is a pretty balanced adult who is doing everything she can to support her sister's huge life change. Learning what happened to Rachel, Maybe's sister, is heartbreaking. I can't wait to learn about Rachel's story. I am sure Ms. Dane will cause me to grab some tissue paper. Maybe is a creative soul who has a great job and does what she loves. Why her parents can not accept this is beyond me. She is easily relate-able and represents a good portion of Americans. The fact that her parents want to crush her under their heel is unacceptable.

Fortunately, Alexsei Petrov feels the same. Alexsei has his own baggage with his family. He too was raised by his aunt and uncle instead of his mother. A different variation than Maybe, but similar enough that they bond over it. Alexsei and Maybe's relationship is complicated and crosses several lines. None of it is insurmountable, yet Alexsei is hesitant. This is what I love about Maybe. Tired of waiting she asks him out and that is all she wrote.

The sexual chemistry between these two is clearly visible. With the support of the family members who matter, they become a couple. I loved the give and take in the relationship. The sex is stellar as Ms. Dane excels with her steamy erotic scenes. There is no kink in this story even if Maybe jokes about not being Vanilla. It is "spiced" Vanilla in my book. Quite tame yet still blazing hawt! The ending of this book is sweet, even if it leaves it a bit of a cliffhanger. Basically, Rachel and Maybe's parents pull a crazy stunt which may be resolved in the next book. I'm eagerly anticipating the next book in this new series already. This erotic romance is highly recommended to all romance readers.

*\*provided by NetGalley*

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## Wit & Wonder Books says

\*\*\*ARC provided by the author for a honest review\*\*\*

Lauren Dane begins her new series *Whiskey Sharp* will having you laughing, crying, feeling awe and wanting to kick some behind. In the first book, *Unraveled* you will feel for Maybe, you will love Maybe and you will fall in love with Alexsei. In a word, you will be hooked.

Maybe is independent, outspoken and protective. Maybe has no issues telling you what is on her mind, yet to protect her sister, she lets some people speak to her in any which way. Why? For love, of course.

Alexsei is a gentleman, family oriented, protective and a softy. Alexsei will do anything in his power to protect Maybe.

When they give in, will Maybe be able to push her independence aside and let Alexsei in? Will Alexsei be able to protect Maybe from her past? Will Maybe stand up to those who treat her badly?

Lauren Dane has a new forever fan in me. Her writing is spectacular, she really knows how to keep you hooked. Alexsei and Maybe have such great chemistry, it's amazing. These two cannot keep their hands to themselves it seems. Although, there were a few questions that were not answered, but it ends in a good place. Five stars.

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## Lyndi W. says

I am seriously considering creating a "are-you-fucking-kidding-me" shelf. This book would be the first to grace that shelf. \*sigh\* What the hell are you doing here, Lauren Dane?

First of all, reading a story about a character named "Maybe" is really difficult. Every single sentence that began with her name was a sentence I had to reread. Fuck that annoying shit.

Second, Maybe is a freaking dumbass. Total. Dumbass. Okay so, she comes across totally badass in the beginning, but then we learn more about her choices with her sister and parents and the whole time I'm just like "Seriously? That's a terrible choice. Uh huh. That also is a terrible choice. That one, too." The way she chooses to protect her sister is nonsensical and ineffective. It literally makes zero sense and I feel like Lauren Dane (WHO I FUCKING ADORE) absolutely phoned this one in. I don't think she thought this through at all because the logic ain't sound, baby. Not even close. Maybe is a lame af martyr that says she doesn't want to be a martyr, then insists on being one. That's super annoying and stupid.

Third, the bad guy. Sorry, The Bad Guy, is frothing at the mouth insane and everyone is just like "But you need to listen to me. But you're not listening to me. I told you before, but you just aren't listening!" Like if I were in their shoes, I literally would have pulled a gun and forced the situation to end with lights and sirens, perhaps those belonging to an ambulance as well as the police. I would attempt to avoid a visit from the coroner, but I make no promises. What I'm getting at here in a very round about way (I'm so good at reviewing shit) is that the characters make terrible and illogical choices that don't match the situation. Crazy dude threatening to have you involuntarily committed? "Maybe you should go." Bitch, call the cops. Want your sister to have a good relationship with your parents? "It's okay that they psychologically terrorize me as

long as you can have Thanksgiving dinner with them, sis!" I wanted to rip my hair out of my head reading these dumbasses react like ... dumbasses! Lobotomies. Lobotomies for everyone.

Fourth, because yes there is a fourth, the story drags and drags and drags until things ramp up at the end a little bit before THE CLIFFHANGER. Fucking A, why? WHY? And the next book doesn't even focus on the same characters, so you get a "happily for now" and zero resolution to any of the conflict. WHY DID I READ THIS? WHY DID SOMEBODY PUBLISH IT?

\*grinds teeth\* I love this author, y'all. But I dunno what this mess is. This book's saving grace was Alexsei, because of course our H/h both have to have stupid or overly long names because fucking hipsters. Anyway, he was a great character. A little misstep here and there, but I dug him hard. Lauren Dane wrote a poetic and dominant hero, so there is a silver lining here. But is Alexsei worth the read? I say no, unfortunately. If you want to bore yourself to death and get angry at fictional characters and their terrible choices, then please by all means give this book a shot. However... I think it's kinda shit compared to some of the author's other works.

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### **Luv My Books' Reviews says**

I just love Lauren Dane's books! Whiskey Sharp is a GREAT new series and Unraveled is a terrific first book. The couple in Unraveled are very different from each other but so wonderful together! They both jumped off the pages for me and were not only likeable, but very lovable, gritty, and yet warm. Lauren Dane always gives a lot of heart. I love her writing style. I started this book out on audio but decided to read it on Kindle so I could slow it down and absorb the characters a little better. Alexsei Petrov is certainly a character to absorb! I loved how Lauren Dane made his dialogue almost elegant, kind of proper-ish, though he is no prude. His first language is Russian but he didn't seem to struggle with English unless strange concepts arose. I just loved his English. Mostly I loved his heart. And his eyes for Maybe, ahh, made this a beautiful love story.

I struggled a bit with Maybe's name, it was just so different, however, so is this character! Unraveled opens with Maybe seeking a hair salon job in an exclusively male barber shop owned by Alexsei. The description from the book says, "His place tended to be mellow. This creature was not mellow." Over time, Maybe became a valuable part of Whiskey Sharp as the books skips ahead two years later. This is a friends to lovers story but we don't get a lot of the building of that friendship which was fine with me. I certainly caught that built up trust and affection from the start. They needed that connection to cope with past baggage they both were dealing with and that would come up in the book for them. I loved them. They were so fun to read! They were so sexy!

The dedication at the beginning of the book is beautiful and because this book has a theme of parental verbal abuse from Maybe's father, reading about good people and having other good-hearted characters in this book made this real and enjoyable. I loved Aunt Robbie so much. Alexsei's Russian family is robust and has its own baggage but I loved reading their scenes. Maybe's father and confrontations with him, however, were hard to take. But they showed so much of the lives of the characters in this book and really brought strength to Maybe and Alexsei's relationship and strength for Maybe's sister Rachel. I can't wait to read Rachel's story in Jagged next, coming in a couple weeks!

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## **April Symes says**

Lauren Dane begins her new series Whiskey Sharp with the Sisters Maybe and Rachel Dolan. This is Maybe's story. And it features her love story with sexy and sensual Alexsei Petrov. Actually this story features him, the sisters and their small group of friends and Alexsei's family in this emotionally packed new series. In the first book, Unraveled you will fall in love with Maybe and you will feel for her. Maybe is independent, outspoken and protective. She protects her sister fiercely and doesn't have a problem speaking her mind. Alexsei is a gentleman, family oriented, protective and a big ole teddy bear. Alexsei will do anything to protect his Maybe. Maybe's life has been so angst ridden as the hated youngest child. Her parents use their words to cut their child so violently and wound her to the point that she bleeds out without no one being the wiser. But Maybe is a survivor – she was able to pick herself back up and make her way due to the love she was given by her aunt and uncle. There are things about her father that make me very uneasy. I do not want to say because it brings spoilers out but I would suggest definitely reading and drawing your own conclusions about the man...he is pure evil in my mind. Thank Goodness for Alexsei. He is such a good man, giving support and love to show how much she is wanted and needed in his and his family's life. Oh and the chemistry and steam between this couple is thru the roof insane hot. There is no added kink in the story but it is super spicy and hot. Also we get a little of the older sister's story which is the next book in the series so I cannot wait to read her story. Maybe then we will learn more about this dysfunctional family. This was a brilliant story and I can't wait for Vic and Rachel's book!!

My Rating: 4.7 stars \*\*\*\*\*

"I received an advanced copy of this book from the author at no cost to me."

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## **Missy's Book World says**

Overall Whiskey sharp was an okay read for me. A lot of the story was the back story of side characters I wished the story was more focused on the main couple Maybe and Alexsei. I did like how the Maybe and Alexsei romance progressed throughout the book it was more realistic. 3/5 stars.

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## **Dali says**

Lauren Dane launches her Whiskey Sharp series with Unraveled, a sweet and sexy tale about dark and brooding Russian Alexsei Petrov and independent and free-spirited Maybe Dolan.

After a year of hiring Maybe to work at his vintage-styled barbershop, Alexsei is ready to take their attraction to fruition, but even though Maybe has crushed on the delicious Russian, her independence and natural inclination to put others before herself makes his desire to protect her and make her his a bit of a challenge. But hot nights make getting to a place where they find a balance a very enjoyable journey.

Both the main characters were equally appealing. Maybe, with all her issues was lively, warm and passionate caring for others, particularly her older sister, with fierce determination. Alexsei doesn't just exude confidence and sexiness, he's a family man whose tendencies to dominate and guard never overwhelm the Maybe's free-spirited nature and finds her generosity absolutely intoxicating. The supporting characters were equally interesting and I can't wait to read more about them, and although at times they threatened to

overcome the main plot, Dane preserved the focus on the main couple.

*Unraveled* is book #1 of the Whiskey Sharp series by Lauren Dane. It is an engaging contemporary romance, told in third person from both points of view with a happy ending.

Amazon -> <http://amzn.to/2nKEwKn>

\* I was given an ARC of this book courtesy of the author via NetGalley. The excerpts are from that copy. I am voluntarily reviewing this title. \*

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### **Ang -PNR Book Lover Reviews says**

I am and always have been a massive fan of Lauren Dane, I love how she can makes us feel apart of her words with the creativeness of her words and setting she creates.

Whiskey Sharp is simply fantastic, I loved Maybe and Alexsei, there relationship was already set in stone with a beautiful friendship they had already created, with them already working together. I just have nothing but good words, just sitting here reminding myself how much I loved the characters, and Alexsei Russian family. Maybe and her sister are beautiful, there parents are douches, but you will get to that when you read this one.

You can bet yourself a dollar, that you will be addicted to this story, its addictive, sexy and not only that it'll make you feel.

Arc received for an honest review, I am really looking forward to Rachel story and too pick this series up and add them to my book shelves.

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### **Jess says**

I am not sure if I have ever read a romance with less romantic conflict, and that isn't a complaint. Super glad the awful family stayed awful, because that was too much to come back from.

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### **Laura says**

\*\*\*ARC Provided by the Author/Publisher via NetGalley\*\*\*

I was excited about this title, I thought it would be interesting and different. I liked the idea of hairstylists working in a salon that was also a bar.

There were parts of it that did work for me, and I did enjoy the relationship between Alexsei and Maybe. I liked that there was an attraction there, and that it was not pursued...until it was and then both of the characters were all in to the relationship and that it moved forward with the idea that both of them were invested in the relationship.

Unfortunately, I thought the secondary characters got in the way of the story and there was too much time spent on the development of their story arc. I also thought Alexsie's ex was unnecessary and not a very believable character, and this impacted my ability to engage with the story.

I do think the series has potential and I am interested to see where it goes from here. Hopefully, there will be less focus on the introduction of the secondary characters as the series moves from the first book.

I am not able to recommend this title.

\*\*\*This and other reviews featured on our blog *Booked All Night* <http://bookedallnightblog.com/>\*\*\*

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## **Guilty Pleasures Book Reviews says**

4.5 stars

Sisters Maybe and Rachel Dolan and their small group of friends are very appealing, but it's Alexsei Petrov's family, the Orlovs, a boisterous, nosy, but loving family of Russian immigrants, and next door neighbors of the Dolan sisters, that really sucked me in. The matriarch of the family, Alexsei's Aunt Irena, not only "adopts" the Dolan sisters into her home and family, but she sends Maybe to Whiskey Sharp, Alexsei's upscale barbershop and whiskey bar for a job. Alexsei and Maybe have spent two years working together and building a solid friendship before taking their relationship to a romantic level. Friends to lovers is one of my favorite tropes, so I was totally onboard. I found Maybe impossible to resist. She's friendly, chatty, funny, and fiercely protective of her older sister, Rachel. Rachel, a former FBI agent with a very intriguing and somewhat mysterious backstory, is key to Maybe's story. Maybe's determined cheerfulness is especially admirable considering her difficult childhood. The Dolan sisters' parents add drama and conflict to the story, in the best/worst possible way. As much as I love Maybe, Alexsei is just as appealing. He's quiet, taciturn, kind of grouchy, but loyal, sweet, and protective of those he loves. He packs quite a punch. I kept picturing him dressed for work in his trousers, button down shirt with his sleeves rolled up and held in place with garters. Damn, Ms. Dane paints quite a picture! I want to go to Seattle, visit Whiskey Sharp, and sit drinking whiskey while watching sexy barbers with Russian accents go about their business. I know they're not real and Whiskey Sharp doesn't exist, but Ms. Dane makes me believe otherwise. Alexsei and Maybe are hot, sweet, and very funny. Their story, and their family and friends are very entertaining. I know this is one series I will be re-reading again and again.

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## **Zoe says**

Intense, complex, and full of angst!

Whiskey Sharp Unraveled is an emotional, friends-to-lovers romance that reminds you that your true family is composed of those that love, care, support, and accept you and not necessarily those that are related by blood.

The prose is smooth and fluid. The characters are colourful, dependable, and passionate. And the plot is a sexy and steamy ride about love, life, familial drama, abuse, sexual tension, friendship, and romance.

I have to admit that even though I didn't have a great connection with the characters in Whiskey Sharp Unraveled and I found the heroine's name, Maybe, a little disruptive to the flow at times it is still an entertaining read with intriguing supporting characters that I look forward to reading more about in Whiskey Sharp Jagged, the next novel in the series.

Thank you to Harlequin Books for providing me with a copy in exchange for an honest review.

All my reviews can be found on my blog at <https://whatsbetterthanbooks.com>

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