

*Chrys Rameo*

*THE WHEEL*



*2012*

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*by Chrys Romeo*

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Zoom. And start. Here it goes. With an exhilarating energy that sets it in motion, the certainty that the next second, and the next too, it will still be moving, still be going, still advancing... on and on, anticipating, like a determined runner, breathing for the next minute of the race.

The Wheel. The magic Wheel. The rain is a part of it, sometimes. As the asphalt flies off under the wheel, the drops of water fill the air like a soft mist. The grey asphalt, still rough and dry, soon begins to seem darker and patches of water mark their random presence, small signs that the road is an unpredictable realm, swept off into the distance. Freedom, completely. It spreads, it unfolds, it awaits.

The rain is an organic presence. It integrates thoughts and metaphysical perception into the view of roaming steamy wet horizon, from the leaves that are timeless, so that suddenly, time is completely mixed up. Rain evokes memories and announces the unknown. It belongs to the Wheel. I think that I do too, sometimes. I wonder though.

I am the Racer. I am the one who sees the rain. I am the one who feels the drops fall even before they do. Because I am flying above the road.

So how does it contain, comprise and extend the bridge to the other side? I don't know. Apparently, it just does.

There it is: the swing. Under the big old oak, the greenish brownish nostalgic oak, so protective and yet so oblivious to whatever goes on around. The swing hangs in chains and whispers softly as the last rays of summer bring a sweetness of autumn over the fields around the wooden house. The swing moves slightly on and off. She sits reading. She sits writing. She is humming. The autumn signs make her frown a little, but she is half absent to the landscape around. She might be twenty by now, twenty or something, it doesn't matter... she's got that permanent charm of the forests beyond the hills, the slender oaks reflect their reddish-brown authentic and natural exuberance in the curls of her hair, as she

sits reading and the swing moves softly while she hums something pensively. As bright and as dramatic as the light fights off its colors into the sunset, to her each minute is new and promising miracles, the depth of life's promise is unknown now. And I am unknown to her too.

Yet I take a step forward. I walk towards the swing where she sits with the notebook in her lap, browsing the scribbled page and humming.

“Hi.”

I am unknown to her now, but this is a changing truth. Will she answer? I might have been well known to a part of her soul, a part that shares authenticity with the autumn woods beyond the hills, long before, or a second before she blinks opening her eyes right to me. She might have been alone until then. Not anymore now. Her eyes remind me of a stray deer cub. Something so vast, so warm and so honestly fragile, craving affection and offering trust, glows in her eyes. Something like a beginning of a smile takes over both of us.

“Well, hello...”

I realize the view is different now and the rain has stopped. There are a few drops left on my sunglasses but the sky, grey and uncertain, is not going to bring more water down, not for a while. I zoom over the road. The only presence in sight is a flying bird over the river.

The swing has disappeared. The rain too, for now.

I look around the restaurant room. The people there are having a good time, each table is very vividly animated, words rise up in the air, the clinking sound of glasses and somewhere, some background music. It's a Chinese restaurant; the tables are round and swinging from one guest to another, with their dishes and their exotic decorations, under the lights of the ceiling. I choose something from the dishes spread around on the turning tables, I'm more interested in conversation now, but from the corner of my eye I glance at the table on the left. I wish we could have sat at the same table, but the guests were officially arranged in specific places. I did not have a say in this. It just happened that way. I glance at her, I want to see if she looks at me, if she noticed my presence. I catch a glimpse of her taking a sip of something and throwing a short veiled and

seemingly inattentive look over the space between our tables. She looks stunning tonight, the lights are reflected in her curly reddish-brown locks, giving away a feeling of freedom and casual calm. She looked at me. I'm sure. I'm so sure of it. She did. I smile and go on with my conversation. After a while, I can't prevent my eyes from taking her direction again. She is talking with the people around her table, but she is not enjoying the evening. I get a feeling she is uninterested in it, there's something bothering her. I wonder what. I catch her eyes checking me out again. And I see her trying to divert another veiled stare behind eyelashes, the next fraction of a second. I wonder if she regrets not being able to come to my table. She seems somehow annoyed. The evening is almost over now. Time goes by. I spin the table; we are playing a game with the Chinese napkins. It's a truth or dare kind of thing. It's a challenge to make up something with words. My turn.

"What was the previous word?" I enquire, the game is amusing, though the spinning table rewarded me with the white napkin that prompts me to continue the story and I am only halfway participating, while I keep my senses alert to the other side of the room.

"Fork. You have to find a rhyme to it."

"Stork!" I reply instantly and without looking, I am aware she is watching intently now, thinking I wouldn't notice it, since I am rolling the game.

So, she is interested to know what I'm doing this evening. I get a sudden feeling of elation, like I could light up the entire room with just a spin of the table. I am happy, for some reason I don't yet understand.

"You have to come up with a connection between fork and stork."

"The stork picked a fork."

The others seem content with my answer and I get to spin the table once again. I do so enthusiastically. Now I can sense her eyes fixed on me; she has become even more interested to watch me display my talents in the Chinese table game. Yet the game is over soon. I get up and I go to the dressing room to pick my coat; I am aware that her eyes follow me with every step and the lights are shining above us. I know that we will soon depart in different directions and

we might never see each other again. I know the hosts wanted to keep us apart by placing us at distant tables. I know they are watching us too. But I cannot go like that, without saying a word to her. I don't give a flying boot what they would think, approve or disapprove. I cannot leave without talking to her. So I go towards her table. I stop in front of her, with my coat hanging on one arm. She lifts her chin and turns her eyes to me. And in that moment, I feel I see her as if for the first time; in that second when our eyes meet, I can sense the bundle of uncertainty, frustration, longing and melancholy that she has built up the whole evening. And yet this is not what strikes me the most. It's the beauty of her eyes. Her soul that I feel breathing so close in front of me. I stand struck by the realization that she needs me and has been waiting for me from the beginning of the evening. She looks at me and then she turns her eyes away, instantly. Now she knows. She has seen, in that fraction of a second, what she was looking for. The unexplained attraction, the knowledge that I do love her madly. She is calm now. She knows for sure. She saw that I remained breathless, right there, the minute I saw her. She knows I consider her astoundingly beautiful. The evening may have gone to both our heads, but that's the truth.

"So", she asks me casually looking to the window where the night has unfolded in blind blackness; she's avoiding my eyes now as the others in the room have noticed us and are staring helplessly, "when is your plane leaving?"

"Tomorrow morning", I reply smiling without really knowing what to say exactly.

She's a bit melancholic.

The others have realized by now they can't keep us apart. They are still watching, astonished and curious.

"And you? When is your plane leaving?" I ask her, returning the question.

"Tomorrow evening."

"So, you'll fly by night?"

"Yes."

"That's odd", I say instinctively.

"Why?" she asks, looking in my eyes again, inquiringly.

I shrug simply.

“I don’t know why.”

She laughs now; my honestly absurd answer has amused her for a while, dissipating her hidden sadness. I am glad I made her smile. I stand there, happy and ready to say more. Just to keep her smiling. But I must go instead.

“I hope we’ll see each other again someday”, I tell her.

The others are waving for me to hurry. She says nothing. She just looks at me, with that expression again, that sinks me into an ocean. I know she doesn’t want to say goodbye. I don’t want it either. So I just turn around and go.

Yes, the rain can do that to you. The rain can bring anything from whenever. And then take it away fast. So how do you deal with it? How do you deal with loss, with sorrow, with the knowledge you have to let go? The Wheel does that to you from time to time. The rain. Pouring on her umbrella, while I hold mine not minding the sprinkling water. The park is wet and empty - people would not go out in such a weather. Nevertheless, there’s a sense of peace, as we walk stepping near and in and beyond the puddles reflecting the uncertain sky and the fresh green leaves.

“Let’s go for coffee”, I say and she smiles.

“Where would you go for a good coffee? Besides, I can’t leave the kids by themselves.”

“OK, I understand.”

I agree with her as I agree with most of her thoughts that I’ve known for years. I agree and I know. I know about her joy and her sorrow, I know about her happiness, her achievements and her struggle to keep the wheel going with so much to do: kids to raise, work to accomplish, cars to park, time to find and organize, meaning to uncover, loyalty to maintain, worries to ease, a father to miss, people to watch disappearing, troubles and joys to share... and me to keep as a friend, beyond such a storm of things to take care of. I know I’m not the one she shares it with the most; she’s not alone. But I witness it and I know it well. And I know for sure she cares. She finds there is reason enough to fit me somewhere among that storm of life to deal with. I look in her eyes and the

warmth of her soul flows into the cold wet park, like the steam from hot chocolate under the rain. I smile; she sees something and averts her look, unsure of my thoughts. If she wonders whether I am wishing or whether I find myself tempted to cross the border into a new realm, from the past of sharing so much to the present that she has managed miraculously to accept as it is, if she believes I could try to take friendship towards where we know it might drift, she shouldn't. I will not take anything anywhere. She's the one that's doing the taking. Taking me with her in that ride of her life. Willing to care about me and answer messages with kindness. Willing to let me know what's up with her and allowing me to meet her children, to watch traces of her personality reflected in the new life that's one of the best miracles of the Wheel here on earth. Is that friendship? I don't know what that is, but it's certainly more than most people are willing to offer. These days, people have no power to share too much with others. They don't even acknowledge your existence. They don't have enough strength to deal with their own life, much less share something with you. Even more when you are inadequate, as I feel most of the time except for when I ride with the wheel. Being inadequate is one of the most difficult things here on earth. But you wouldn't think there are adequate people and inadequate ones. Nobody is adequate because the notion itself is inadequately inappropriate. And yet, to most people I seem to represent that and be disregarded for it. Except for the time when I ride with the Wheel, I am an unsolved mystery for the others. Life is a puzzle for them and I am one of its most inadequately bewildering pieces. But she is different. She makes me feel comfortable as myself with her, as different as I might seem, I get adequately acceptable and understood... She is precious. She is rare. And I wish I could do something to comfort her sorrow, when I know that she meets the unexpected ups and downs that the Wheel brings to her way. She might find that comfort elsewhere. I may not be the one to ease her troubles and provide a shelter for her caring soul, as much as I wish to hold her and tell her everything will be fine. Yet I feel she knows that. We both know it. I would be there if she wants me to, and only if she wants indeed. The truth remains that we share this awareness. Would that be a part of what



friendship is? Would that be much more? I know the answer to that. With just a gesture, her presence would become irresistibly magical, but I try to guard myself from those unpredictable glimpses of magnetism. I look at her as we walk through the park and I smile, but when she turns her eyes to me, I look away because I don't want to make her uneasy by staring too directly and revealing how I feel - I don't want to add another worry to her life. She shouldn't worry about me. I would walk beside her, but never stand in her way. And she must know that.

I ride along the river most of the time. The river is a living presence. It's sharing the sunrise when it's sunrise, not just reflecting but contributing with thousands of colors, hues and magic; it's slowly dozing off in the afternoon when the sun and the heat melt the blades of grass on the river banks, it's freezing like a moving silver mirror in winter when even the deepest thoughts are cemented in frost and it's playfully reassuring that it goes along perpetually in spring, reminding me of thousands of instants of time when I find something more about life.

Rain and water, water and the river, water and feelings, water ... rolling with the wheel isn't always a very easy ride. Water doesn't make it easy just like that. Once the rain gets heavy, it gets stubborn, it gets worse, it becomes an avalanche. Just like the time when she told me she had to go. She didn't have time or plans for me anymore. I knew from the tone of her voice that she meant forever. She had no intention to include me in her life - she wanted to cut away free. And I just said "okay, bye". Then it got dark outside. And I went to ride away to the end of the earth. To just go, run, though I could not run from what I was feeling. I pedaled and went on, speeded up, passed by the places I knew, passed by the places I didn't know, while the sky accompanied me in my rage to get away from the fact that she was leaving and I didn't understand why, to get away from myself feeling the rough pain; the sky was keeping me in sight like a rhyme, a perfectly parallel rhyme, as I rode along the empty roads, swallowing my anger in the speed of the wheels, to go faster, to go, just go - because there was no why, because there was no why whatsoever. Then thunder came and

more thunder and the sky crowded with darkening clouds and it started pouring down. I was the only one on the road, but there was so much rain suddenly that I could hardly see half a meter ahead. Water filled everything, pouring on my head, pouring from my elbows and down my knees, filling my shoes, covering the road like an impossible curtain, surrounding everything in a cold embrace, reaching the skin, slipping down on my neck, while the thunders continued towering above, like a voice that agreed with me, as if it said “yes you’re right, it’s a terrible thing, just go ahead with it” and I felt somehow compensated for the rage of not understanding why she was leaving without me. I was soaking wet in the rain and the random cars passing by seemed to slow down bewildered that I kept going on; I was determined to keep advancing, moving through the thick water, despite the tornadoes of rain drops that were slamming my face, despite the threatening black clouds that had no end. That’s the bitter side of the wheel, but for its bitterness, it will provide you with its best answer: a storm to chill the pain, the sharp pain of not understanding why. After that ride, I was more able to let go of her, because the sky gave me enough water to drown my rage within.

And what is it with this wheel that keeps bringing this and that?

Why is the world so fascinated by wheels, and yet not able to realize that everything is spreading on a big invisible wheel, rolling on and on within the world and rolling the world within it? Clocks made up of tiny wheels with metal teeth, vehicles on wheels, even the sun is a burning sphere of light, surrounded by planets that make circles around it... whatever advances and moves relies on a wheel. Round and round. That’s life. On and on. Endlessly, infinitely. Our galaxy is a spinning wheel too, by the way...

“You don’t think you’ve just invented the wheel, do you.”

Yes, why is the wheel so important? Just notice how present it is: what goes around comes around. In whatever shapes and sizes, there you have it. The wheel rules. The wheel rolls. The wheel breathes in your life.

As there are summer nights too. The Wheel has got so much power when it rolls by its summer tricks: foliage everywhere, brightly sharp moon above, the

dusk unfolding with the blossomed trees that fill the night sky, the whispers of the leaves and the fantastic alluring certainty that something extraordinary awaits and will happen, will appear soon... the best of life's mystery, yet to become better. The road is covered by the shades of trees and pedaling along seems like such an adventure, as the night gets deeper. It's worth having flashlights on your bike. Blinking blue and red, just like a patrol car's signal. Blue-red-blue-red-blue-red-blue rays blinking endlessly in the dark, reassuring, as the swishing tires on the asphalt are throwing now and then stranded pebbles across the sidewalk.

Of course, you have to change the batteries from time to time, if you want to keep the lights blinking and the wheels rolling. You must renew them. The Wheel is about renewal too. In its very best definition.

Renewal will bring the summer charm. When it comes, it seems a lifetime ago you've felt it in the same way, awakening your senses of being alive. The presence of the abounding miracles, unspoken, untamed. The Wheel will throw them at your feet, overwhelmingly: in just a random summer evening, as the light is purple enigmatic, getting ready to become a story, timelessly reappearing, there goes your revelation, your most awaited motivation and meaningful gift of life. As the road and the minutes roll on and keep rolling by, somewhere, on the way, you get to find it.

And what is it? Yes, what is it exactly?...

For each one it might be something different.

The ocean, the waves... She walks on the beach; the rain is gone, but the beach is deserted. I am there behind the dunes; I've just started my bike on the sand and when I notice her, I stand there leaning on the metal handle bar. I watch her silently. The grey sky above and the splashing waves of foam increase the feeling of chill. She wraps the jacket around her, she steps bare feet in the cold sand - and there it is again, that look of a lost and lonely deer. I see her from a distance, she wraps the jacket tightly around her and gets in the telephone booth. The telephone doesn't work; I don't know who she wants to call, but she lets it hang down by its wire; the phone seems useless. She turns

around suddenly, as if she felt my presence, and the next moment she looks at me through the glass. I am once again blown away. My mind and my heart stop at the same time, sinking my soul right under her glance. The immensity of the ocean appears. And I know that this is one of summer's magical moments that goes on and on and remains out of time. See? It takes just a second. And the grandeur of life, the wonder of the universe, the meaning of meanings, the answer of eternity, the call of love is revealed and offered to you, just like that. Just a moment, and you have it within your grasp. No telephone is needed. Just watch the Wheel turning, and you'll see it.

I know, because I've seen it along my way...

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And who am I? I am nobody exactly. That's right, you heard it well. I am not although I am, I don't exist, though I am here and I am a part of everything. I can relate, but I cannot identify with. I am as immaterial as the Wheel itself. I can be seen, but sometimes I go unseen and denied. I am alive, though I don't exactly live as most people do and many people do not admit my existence, nor are they happy to acknowledge it. Others are happy to meet me, if they recognize the Wheel in my eyes. Yet even though most people talk about me, they don't speak to me directly.

I am mostly unknown, though I am known well enough and sometimes much more. I am known in this world and in other worlds too, as there are invisible energies above us, and they recognize me from time to time. The universe is much more generous and has no fears admitting I exist, since I belong to it... I am the Unknown that rides with the Wheel.

I am the Racer.

And now you know it too - if you were wondering about me.

But enough about me; let's discuss something else now.

Let me tell you about the glass walls. You haven't noticed them yet?... No? You will.

Remember the phone booth on the beach and the instant when she turned to look at me? She looked at me through a window. It was made of glass. Her hands touched it, they might as well have touched my soul beyond it, but nevertheless, the glass is there. I've visited that moment many times in my mind, and I realized it is unique in its truth.

How many times have I seen the city of glass appearing in the air, with its walls of transparent bliss and deceiving flashes of light?... You wouldn't think light can be deceiving, in its rainbow of colors, but it can create as many illusions as the strands of dust that float invisibly astray in the sunshine. As I speed up above the heated asphalt, the river beside me sends sharp beams like pointed swords that hurt the eyes; the glimmering water is unbelievably cruel when intense light meets its surface. Good thing I've got my sunglasses on. The sun is in the middle of the sky now, in its full power, heating up and melting everything in sight. I keep my speed, I keep my thoughts, and then I start to get a glimpse of the glass city. First, its uncertain contours, rising up in the air, in the sharp heat of the day, transparent lines that are forming walls, bright towers and windows... and thousands of colors that appear in the horizon, sprinkled like fireworks over the smooth surface of glass. I see the city in the distance and I know that she is there. She has always been there, like a prisoner of the glass, a prisoner of her own choice.

As I get closer to the gate, the invisible frame of the gate that's trembling in the heat of the sun, I can feel the tires of the bike starting to melt on the asphalt; a second more and they could break into pieces; the only thing that prevents them from turning into a liquid like black pitch is the speed and the air. She is there, somewhere, lost inside the city of glass, and I will not stop until I find her. Now the river has disappeared from sight, along with the horizon and the only remaining view is the glass, the walls surrounding a square and a fountain with pure water, sprinkling in shiny drops and filling the air with soft surreal music. I notice her sitting next to the fountain, like an immaterial angel of light and

assorted colors; she has become like that since she's been living in that city of illusion. There's something so perfectly appealing and alluring about her appearance, the blinking jewels, the sophisticated dazzling gown, her flawless smile and make up, turning her into a fairy tale vision. Now, who wouldn't be charmed and completely stunned by such a sight?... Yet somehow, I find myself wondering about that girl walking barefoot on the beach, or the disarmingly honest and natural memory of her in the swing by the woods, the authentic, unarranged passion and overwhelming energy of life, I wonder why, when and how it happened, if she went from behind the glass of the phone booth to the castle of walls and glamour where she is now. She has changed for sure, maybe for the better, maybe for the inevitable, yet for one moment I seem to find it hard to recognize her. She smiles at me so peacefully, from that unreal perfection of appearance, and looking into her eyes I feel there's something like a surrendering velvet veil, like a hidden lake in the amber of sunset. There it is, it's still there, a hint of a trace of that heart of immeasurable warmth, the mystery of the woods and the lost deer, still glancing at me. She sits by the fountain and the light throws golden reflexes in her hair, but now I know it's still her, a part of her hidden somewhere, of her true self; it hasn't been washed away completely by the singing fountain. I cling to the brakes on the bike, my fingers slow down on the metal bars and I stop near her. I haven't taken off my sunglasses, because the view is almost blinding.

“Hi”, I say and it feels similar yet slightly different from the first time I ever saw her.

In the meantime, I'm not the same anymore either. I've changed too, in my own way, becoming more of myself over the years. I've been on the road so long, that I've enhanced my power, my determination and my definition of belonging to truth and freedom. But she recognizes me. She knows it's me, by some miraculous, unexplained knowledge that we both share, as a gift from above, reminiscence from where we don't know we met a long time ago, recognizing each other undoubtedly before we even knew we could or we would ever encounter one another in this life.

“Hello”, she replies and smiles, leaning on the edge of the fountain, extending a hand to play with the water in the well.

I watch the ripples wave around the clear water, dancing slowly in the sun and returning to touch her hand lazily. The sparks of reflected light hit my sunglasses, yet I stand still.

“So how are you?” I ask her.

“I’m happy”, she answers. “Living each day as it comes and thankful for it...”

At least she’s sincere, I say to myself. She is aware that somewhere inside her there’s still a struggle to keep some natural authenticity from the girl that used to be and integrate it in her everyday life, as an excuse for the fact that she has become more of a sparkling appearance than an exuberance of truth. Maybe she is a combination of both, or maybe she is trying to justify to herself her presence in the city of glass; she can’t possibly be unaware of what it really is.

“Come with me”, I say.

“You know I can’t”, she answers in that same playful manner, not looking at me now, but at the clear water of the fountain, where her hand is still slowly making waves.

And it’s true. I know she can’t. Not because she couldn’t, but because most of her doesn’t really want to leave the city. And where would she come with me anyway? With me and my bike, what would she do on the road? I come from another world, a completely different scenery where raw freedom would never replace the glistening shiny walls that surround her. How many times have I asked her to come with me? In my mind, I have asked her time and time again. And I have given up time after time. And I have returned to find her again and again.

“Let’s go. Let’s just get away from it all. Let’s leave it all behind.”

I say that just for myself, only to pronounce the words and hear them becoming alive, because otherwise I know it’s useless to attempt to ask. She doesn’t want to leave it all behind. And I cannot stay there either. One of us must break the spell. But the spell will always draw me to her, like a string that

doesn't erode through time, like an irresistible mystery of destiny. In spite of the fact that I know for certain we have different ways, different destinies - if there is such a thing as a destiny, or a mission.

“ I am surprised but happy to see you again”, she says. “I enjoy your presence.”

I don't completely believe her words, because she is more attentive to the golden fountain than to me and my bike. And then I notice people coming to the square and I wonder if she meant me or the people, hundreds, then thousands, millions coming in crowds to fill the peaceful square with noises, with shouts and mixed feelings. I wonder if she meant she enjoyed their presence or mine. I wonder if she makes any difference at all between us. And I start believing it doesn't matter anymore either way. We are surrounded by the crowds. I realize they are elbowing each other; they want to get ahead of one another, they are becoming a storm of chaos, grunting and yelling. The fountain seems to bring out the worst in them, the worst of human nature: greed, envy, deceit, vanity, hostility, selfishness, cowardice, dissimulation, dark intentions and horrible outcomes. Evoking moments of history when the worst of human nature has turned the world into a nightmare is pointless. I look at her angelic figure and I understand that she likes to be in front of that crowd: it gives her a sense of purpose and a feeling of being perfect. She doesn't notice the mud and the curses, or maybe she doesn't want to. She smiles blissfully unaware and happy, while they turn the square into a puddle of mud, ambition and frenzy. And who would refuse the illusion of admiration? Or the temptation of becoming an icon with a purpose? And who would refuse them that hungry greed for something better, an excuse to escape the nightmare, a detour from their own inability to be more meaningful, the hope of finding a piece of heaven in a life of challenge and effort, who could tame the insatiable lust of thousands of souls that are looking for a greater meaning in their confounding lives? Suffering and worries, struggles and disappointments, that is what they are getting away from when they come to that square in thousands and millions, that is what the city of glass offers them: an illusion of a moment, a time off. And she is a vision of



something that can dumb their senses and make them forget life is unfair. Of course each of them wants her for their own. The fountain blinds their eyes. Like a prize. Like a blessing. And they seem so willing to adore her unconditionally. Yet I stand in another place, from where I can see the worst that can't be seen from there up high, where she is happily gifting them with smiles and they reply with mad applause. From where I stand, I see the uselessness of the golden fountain, the mud of the crowd, like ugly monsters mocking each other and filling the square with venom and hate. The crowd is erratic, unreliable and mindless, to the point of becoming hysterical. As the golden light of the fountain pours above them, as they fight to get ahead of one another, there seems to be some justification for that show eventually, as absurd and contradicting as it seems. But I've had enough of that by now, I am beyond any resources of patience to witness that any longer. There's no meaning in being there anymore. Now I turn around and leave the square, because the people have gotten between me and her and I can't see her clearly anymore. The girl in the swing is long gone. Only the fairy in the gown stands in the glass city. I don't distinguish her features too well now; she is lost in the crowd, the only thing that remains is the shiny aura of the glass walls that are disappearing swiftly, very fast. I start my wheels in the opposite direction, because I don't want the glass city to swallow me, I might disappear too if I remain there. The glass city is angry at me for being there, it's angry at me for being different, for bringing my truth, for revealing and defying its illusion to my thoughts; it envies me for my wheels and my freedom, it's angry at me and it wants to erase me completely, it's very bothered by my existence; it becomes a storm of hate roaring around me, as I pedal on faster, I can feel the walls following me, ready to eat me out, to devour me and my bike, so I don't look over my shoulder, I just clench my teeth and keep going ahead.

In a few moments, I can see the perpetual river again, I can feel the air cooling off and the atmosphere becoming silent; the tornado of the glass city has disappeared from sight in the blink of an eye, in a whirl of colors, broken glass and bitter dust. Life has returned to its truth once again. I breathe deeply the

freedom of the endless horizon ahead of me. I pedal on while I listen to the wheels rolling, zooming reassuringly along the road and I get a sense of calm. I ignore the traces of regret and loss that the thought of her is still stirring in my soul like an afterglow; giving her up is never easy, so I plunge them down into the night of my mind, to leave them to rest. But by now I know better; I know that even though we are separated permanently, I am sure just as much that we will meet again. I am used to being on this road. The glass walls have dissipated like a ghost.

And what is the glass city anyway? It's the immeasurable, inevitable presence of walls of glass, stubborn windows, holding up invisible and yet substantial barriers between people. They build the glass space, or maybe it's there by a collective unconscious will, by whatever means, the walls are there undeniably, multiplying with each day... and they build and build, glass windows after glass windows, then more glass walls and some more of them, until there are just transparent limits surrounding us in a planetary city of glass. The illusion of closeness is sometimes not just an illusion, but many times it is exactly that. Nothing more. And if, for example, I see beyond the glass walls something that triggers my attention, hands gesturing in the air, eyes glistening, fingernails that go through strands of hair in casual flights of a second, extended smiles, arms that could reach out as easily and cross the distance, words like hot fireflies, things that make me believe I could take a step forward - I know I'm just going to hit the wall, I'm aware I'm only standing and watching as the glass is there.

Sometimes, the other person struggles to get across, beyond the glass screen, and sometimes they even do succeed. Yet sometimes I wonder what she thinks of me. I don't know what goes on behind those sharp glances that turn to steel, to glass, to stone... I might mean nothing to her. She might not see me - as long as she only sees the glass. As she stands in front of me, sometimes I wonder what it would mean to take off that glass that is between us. Would she look at me with different eyes? Would she let me get past the screen?... Could we get a better understanding of each other, a better knowledge of what makes us alive, if

we were to find each other in the absence of walls? Would I be able to reach her in just one second of the glass slipping off? It might be enough to simply extend my hand to her. However, I avoid making that gesture; I sense it would be to no avail. I am bewildered by what attracts me, yet I keep being drawn away from it. The city of glass appears and disappears like an elusive oasis in a desert, a dry fountain that comes up in lights and colors to turn into millions of grains of sand too soon, crashing in its ignorance and indifference, like forgotten shadows of palm trees.

Sometimes, I get a message from the other side of it. I get a sign of life from the city of glass across the desert, from the splendidly, superbly glamorous city of cold empty glass of illusion. What does it take to get a bridge across? I'm not convinced it's just a mixture of courage and concern, it's not just the will and the determination. You see the windows everywhere, you get used to finding one in front of you anytime you try to get to someone... windows, screens, television, computers, social snobbery, prejudice, unconscious fear, personal options, distance of space and mind, distance of the soul at the same time... Everything becomes a simple wall of glass. Glass like granite most of the time. Glass like ironic ice. Like a labyrinth of strings that are hanging up high and you have to step carefully not to hit one invisible wall or another...

So, what makes the difference between total isolation of the individual and a true connection, jumping from a postcard of glass flowers to an endless meadow of a profusely meaningful season that could blossom more than conventional conversation? Something that reaches out to your energy, to your essential existence, an intense flash light, a life sailing boat that gets to the other side, what would make that happen? Thoughts, feelings, anticipated visions, our telepathic power to be free of the invisible screens and get to the person that can find the same frequency of being alive? How do you get beyond the glass of the city walls? How do you make the glass walls become a growing tree with roots springing from our souls?

I'll tell you what gets beyond the city walls of glass. It's the Wheel.

The Wheel will get beyond any wall.

Sometimes the Wheel takes the shape of a bow.

It takes two bows to make a wheel, as one bow is just half of a wheel.

Usually you'll see one arrow going that way, one arrow coming this way. Communication is never a one way road. When two arrows fly from each half, the wheel starts moving ahead because it gets direction. It starts rolling and the glass walls miraculously dissipate.

I don't see the glass walls when I ride with the Wheel. The wheel has that absolute power of freedom; there are no walls, no windows, no glass illusions when I'm riding along the river. I almost believe I'm flying through and right on to infinity, forever because there are no walls. That is why the Glass City resents my presence. That is why we hate each other.

I've got the Wheel. And that's more than enough.

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When I meet a wall, I ride by the wall. There is a tall wall that goes up to the sky; it's not glass, it's made of cold speechless stone, covered with time and ivy growing from beneath the bricks, stranded weeds and forlorn musk, and I can't see behind it. It hides the view astray from me. Sometimes you reach those type of walls. Those walls that don't say anything, don't explain, just stand there, in your way, disappearing and reappearing like ghosts. And you don't understand why or what's behind them. The future can be like that: you don't get a glimpse of what's waiting behind it. The view is blocked, apart from the river... Unless you get a sense of the road ahead and you start guessing, dreaming or believing you could actually see beyond. But you must keep the wheels rolling until you get beyond the walls.

I get off the bike and walk along; the wall is parallel with the river. It's made of stone or of something more, a material that could reveal much more if I knew the code to it. For how long will it be there? Usually, the walls end from time to time, giving way to freedom and to the horizon. I don't know how big this wall is, but I walk along, running my hand on it, as if to decipher its meaning or what

it keeps me from. I know there's more to it than it seems. The evening is close, overflowing in half darkness; the sunset is over and the night has started throwing long shadows around. The moon is so clearly shiny; there are visible shapes on it like a map, glowing brightly. I reach the end of the wall - there's a corner where I stop. I lean my bike in the grass and I sit down, with my back to the rough surface of the stone. I know there's a presence behind the wall of the night. I can feel her rhythm of breathing, as if she stands with her back against the wall too, on the other side. I am so sure of it, as if I knew she would be waiting there. As if there's no such thing as a wall with nothing behind. I watch the night sky and I think. Then she talks.

"There are lots of stars on the sky this evening", she says, from the other side of the corner.

"That's the way it usually is", I reply dreamingly, not in the least surprised by her presence, and I keep looking to the endless dark sky, where the galaxies unfold, unknown, just like a view around a corner, just like we sit next to each other, separated by a piece of wall. "We just don't look at it too often and we are impressed when we eventually notice it. But it's there night after night..."

"You wouldn't think they are spinning with us", she thinks to herself.

I listen to her voice, calmly rising in the dark blue night and the shadows scattered randomly on the ground seem to move unknowingly in mysterious whispers.

"Maybe the Earth is spinning with the galaxies", I say, still staring up.

"That's for sure", she answers briefly and I can feel her smile beyond the wall, getting through it, as we both seem to watch the night sky dreamingly, witnessing our thoughts and wishes getting lost together in the distance up above where our glance would only guess the immense expansion of galaxies and endlessly unexplored space.

As we sit together by that wall, it feels as if the wall becomes so insignificant, so irrelevant and so small; it's just a random corner, more like a ruin of a barrier, an opaque decoration with no purpose, compared to the greatness of the universe where we are finding each other in that moment, rising to the depth of

the night and the road going upwards, paved with galaxies and unknown truth. It feels as if the wall is no longer there now. We are free.

“Why don’t you come over here?” she asks me, becoming for a second more attentive to the present. “Get to this side where I am.”

“Do you think I should?”

“Of course. What’s the point sitting behind the corner? “

I get up and make a few steps, walking past the corner of the wall, to the other side. There she is: standing by the shadow of the stone, holding her jacket with the night spreading around her, she’s like a creature of the galaxies now, belonging to the moonlight and shining with its mysterious power. She is still looking at me; I walk on and she advances one more step too. I feel as if I’ve known her forever, as she breathes right in front of me, the warmth of her whisper is closely enticing.

“ Would you believe it’s that easy to get beyond a wall?” she says softly and I blink, wondering if she might disappear into the night.

“ Will you stay for a while?” I dare to ask and she nods, taking my hands and guiding them up slowly, to rest on the shoulders of her black jacket.

The jacket shines in the dark with steel pins, like a galaxy in itself, wrapped around her. I would have expected it to be cold to the touch, but it’s warm and calm, breathing with her, as if it’s a part of the deep night.

“Can you feel it?” she whispers to me as my palms sense the rhythm of the galaxies spinning under the jacket, the immensity of the unknown universe pulsing like magic.

“What are you?” I ask, not finding the words anymore, my mind is melting and my fever is rising, racing wildly into the night, or my heart might have burned entirely and I forgot where I am.

“I am what you need to see. The truth. Or the unknown night... “

I understand now that she is a vision, but I don’t mind. It’s enough we are there, as unreal as we both might be, or the night with us, or the wall beyond which we met, and I know she will disappear with the first light of day, but for now I just want to be there with her. Just be.

“Where will I find you if you go?” I whisper, not daring to break that magic between us, as we stand there melting as one with the night.

“You can find me by the tree in the horizon”, she replies smiling indistinctly in the dark, and her eyes are so close, glancing into my thoughts, that their sparks have conquered my mind and got beyond it.

“What tree?...”

“The tree that has meaning. When you find it, you will know.”

Another riddle I don't want to understand. Why must it always be a quest? Why can't she just stay there with me, for more than a moment, forever?...

As she disappears indeed the next second, I wonder if a shadow of me will remain forever in that corner, after I leave. I wonder if every wall might be like that, while I know very well it isn't. I wonder if I will find other walls on my way. But when I go to take my bike and ride with the sunrise, to the endless horizon where she might be now, I feel as if I got past any barrier that might exist, real or unreal, and I will never be left behind it, never again.

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I can find the tree. I can find the meaning.

The bow is made of the tree. The tree of life. And two bows make a wheel. Maybe that's why I've been trying to find her: because I am aware that together we can make the wheel roll. We can be more of ourselves when we are together. We can become like the wheel: endlessly moving ahead until we become a comet, a burning light and who knows the answer to what infinity is?... We might find that out if we become a wheel. Anyway, without it, life seems incomplete somehow. The wheel is life at its best. It's more than life.

I just need to find a bridge and I'll be one step closer to the other side.

Like a trace of something that can change everything. As, for example, the speed of the wheels rolling down a slope can bring the flavor of the sea. If I go fast enough, the speed will bring to me the view of the sea, even though there are just green trees by the side of the road, freshly expanding their foliage, and

there are just green hills around, in an endless horizon, rising higher, joyfully one after the other, as if decorating the view, anyhow, I can envision the sea; I can sense the breeze with the scent of algae, I can hear the stray echoes of random seagulls, speaking of freedom and the immensity of the water, I am certain I get a glance of that in the soft sunlight... And it's because time and space are so relatively set up in motion, the speed might bring to me something from somewhere a little out of sight, I'm getting there, just not completely synchronized, but I'm sure the sea is real and I'm getting there. I breathe deeply and take delight in the certainty that the sea is around me, somewhere, ahead of me, or maybe I've already submerged under the water with my bike, rolling now in a double reality, where space and time are overlapped in delay or in advance... it's a surreal yet very close to the truth kind of certainty. See? This is what an invisible bridge can achieve, can provide and can reach: whatever is conceivable can happen. A bridge like that is a true bridge: the one that makes things happen. That goes above and beyond. That is a real bridge. A bridge that can bring the sea to you, as simple as that, in plain daylight...

What would it take to meet her right there, to cross the bridge of reality and get beyond from one world to the unknown realm without boundaries where everything is absolutely possible? I wonder, what if I use this bridge, the presence of the sea overlapped on the road, above my head, what if I keep going that very moment and I cross over to the other side? Would she be there? Would she meet me there? Would it be that easy to get to her? Using this immaterial bridge, this moment when time and space are no longer fixed, when things are mixed up and possible in whichever direction? Wouldn't that be an unpredictable turn of the present? Wouldn't that be what I'm really looking for?

I glance ahead, clinging to the metal bars with determination. I am speed itself now, faster and faster, I am the wheel in increasing motion, unstoppable, I am a roll of light, as one with the bike, I'm just flying above, smoothly... The algae whispers are still around me, floating on waves, coming up from within the asphalt... The sea is still there, maybe if I just grab the moment and keep going, I could cross the bridge to where I've never been before. What is on the



other side? Could I really get there right now? I pedal some more, the shadows of the trees by the road are intertwined with the cooling movement of the water; they lean in the currents, and waves seem to ruffle the leaves more distinctly now; I speed up: the steep slope is long ahead of me and the angle is getting deeper; the rough asphalt bewilders me when it gets greenish dark blue shades of liquid, it's becoming more and more present. I can feel the air running by in a sharp whistle, freezing my ears; maybe the bridge is beginning to take shape, maybe I'm beginning to cross over now. I get a feeling of thrill at the realization that reality is no longer rigid, it's changing before my eyes, I'm witnessing a miracle and the exhilaration of this truth is burning my mind. It might be a now or never moment. I can hardly breathe in the speed; I am by the middle of the hill and the view has become a storm of rushing wheels, the road is disappearing behind, I think nothing could go faster than my bike that moment and my thoughts are turned to a pause, as if I have no time to think of anything more than the bridge and the changing reality before my eyes, the wheels that are rolling on the road that's no longer a road, but the edge of a huge wave, the beginning of a forming curl. The asphalt is being replaced unknowingly by ripples of dark, greenish blue deep water, the wheels of the bike are submerged in it splashing a curtain of wet waves, yet rolling faster, more drops of salty water have sprinkled on my sunglasses; the sky is disappearing too now, because the huge wave is moving with me, it's turning upwards and foaming over like a mountain; I'm going right into its embrace without knowing where I might end up. And then, in that moment when my bike has started to sink and water gets to my knees, water splashing on my head unexpectedly, I get a glimpse of her emerging from the wave. Her hair is wet too; I can feel that flavor of the sea overwhelming my mind, while her eyes are burning with the intensity of the ocean wave, something so absolute, so hard to fight, something demanding and powerful like the mystery beyond life itself, she is rising from the water like a goddess, while I am going down; I lose the grip on the metal bars that have been engulfed by the greenish blue, I start to swim and she is now above the water to the waist, rising slowly with the motion of the wave. I glance

at her: she seems so close, I could reach out and touch her, but the speed of the water is dragging me down; I sink under and kick to come up and breathe; the wave has immense power and it's roaring triumphantly on; I can't possibly get out of the tide now, while she is still looking in my eyes distinctly, calmly, water dripping from her hair and hidden stars burning in her eyes with the greatness of galaxies and things unknown, coming from the infinity of life; there is something like a smile forming on the corner of her lips, the wave is shading her face but I can sense the intense glare of something unexplained. She is surfing on a board, while I swim down into the wave; my reflex would be to pedal, but now there's only water around us; the road has disappeared as if forever. She is surfing towards me, extending her arm, as she clings to the board with the other, not yet losing sight of me, and her calm posture is reassuring me that we are on the bridge, we could really get to each other right now.

“ Take my hand!” she shouts at me, because the roaring sound of the wave is covering her voice.

I row ahead, advancing, trying to extend my hand to her; the water is dragging me from deep under, the wave has curled now like a huge mountain above us, it's going to splash us into pieces in a few moments, and yet I won't take my eyes off her and she's waiting for me. I reach out and I struggle with the best of my energy to get to her, she has kneeled on the surf board and her hand waits above the water, she will not leave. One more row of my arms, one splash and I could really get there, I could take her hand and stand with her on the board. My fingers are moments away from her hand; I can feel the warmth of her eyes and the electrifying closeness that is making my head dizzy; my mind is like the huge wave now, ready to roll over in complete determination.

“ Take my hand!” she tells me. ”Take my hand, now!”

I could not reply to that, nor explain how much I want to get there and how difficult it is indeed, if I open my mouth to say something the words will be engulfed by water and the ocean might drown me too, along with them. I still believe I could reach the board. But maybe not this time. Maybe next time when we are on the bridge. Now, the water is rising behind her in a mountain of

implacable power. As I listen to the echo of her voice cutting through the sound of the rising wave, I feel as if I am taken away to another place, to where we are alone and I can only hear her breathing. The sky gets darker as I swim in front of her board; I'm beginning to give up, as the wave is covering the sky, yet I'm taking an unexplained comfort in her words and the next moment I let the water drag me, I don't fight it anymore, I just look in her eyes, lost in that immense ocean, as the boiling foaming crest of the wave rolls over both of us instantly and falls down on my head. Darkness. And light.

I avoid a stone on the road; I'm not moving but the wheels are rolling on; I'm down at the root of the hill now; my bike vaults in the air for a moment; I can still feel the water dripping down on me, drops falling around on the asphalt; I'm surprised I'm breathing freely. I am by myself on the road and the bridge is gone for now. And she is gone with it too, though I am still glancing at her in my mind. There's an unexpected pain that I feel as I'm breathing, as if the water from the bridge got in my lungs and it's still waving there, overflowing invisibly, or maybe it's the loss of her presence that cuts me in two, being so close and yet not getting to her. The moment was so intense that I can't think of anything as I continue rolling on the road, while the trees are watching me silently, by the side of the hill.

The bridge is possible. The bridge is real. The bridge is a miracle. It's the truth. I'll get to her next time.

I pedal on, feeling hopeful and I start looking in the distance. I'll get another chance. The light that flows around, serene and silent, is like a guarantee that good things are waiting ahead, that the bridge will appear again. I wonder where she went, from that board, where she might be now, as I'm riding toward another hill. Is she watching me from the other invisible side, or is she standing somewhere, at the beginning of another bridge that I don't see? As I start climbing the hill, I pace slowly upwards because the slope is abrupt and long. The heat is drying off the last traces of my soaked clothes and I can feel the sky clearing up above. I sense her presence; she is somewhere, still very close. The slight feeling of happiness that I get is anticipating that she is close. As I get

nearer the top of the hill, I can see that the bridge is still here. The hill ends up in the air and beyond there is a terrace, a roof of something. The light of the sunset is covering the view; I cannot see too clearly, but I'm sure that she is there, on the edge, waiting again, in the line of the horizon that's melting in colors. The evening is close and the light is throwing shades over the hill. She stands there on the marble roof; the sun is blinding me with its colors, as there's a soft, refined violet aura spreading around her. She reaches out her hand to me, once again, as I arrive at the top of the hill, as high as the sunset colors could get. The view around us is amazing, there's so much silence and the bridge is forming under my feet in a path.

"Can you take my hand now?" she smiles.

"I think so."

I pause on the edge. There is an empty space between us; the wheels of the bike could go down any moment. I keep one hand on the brakes and I offer her the other. My fingers touch her shiny black glove, with reflexes of silver, sharp like steel. It's almost unreal, but there it is, nevertheless – her glove touching my hand. In front of my eyes.

"Come on", she says. "Don't drown again."

She takes my hand firmly and I can feel the warmth as the wheels of the bike start rolling slowly toward her. Her hand closes around mine; it's an unexpected certainty and it makes me feel I'm rising imponderably a few feet above the ground, with bike wheels still rolling. My eyes stray to the horizon; I don't trust the bridge underneath that begins to look like marble, like clouds, like white dusty stone and I wonder how long will this illusion last.

Yet it's not an illusion; her hand will not let go of mine and I'm counting the seconds: one, two, three... like heartbeats... I'm holding my breath, afraid she would disappear if I make the wrong move. It's a certainty that she is there, a certainty she might not be there again like that. As she is walking backwards, I am advancing on the terrace, as if in a dance.

"That was a big wave back there", she smiles.

"It was."

“I think this roof is better for us to meet, isn’t it.”

“It surely seems so.”

I can’t do anything but answer instinctively. I can’t take my eyes off her and I wonder, if I were to get off the bike, would the bridge still be there? And the terrace, her presence, the purple sunset?... I don’t know, I don’t want to find out. If the wave has thrown us both up here on the hill, so be it. I don’t want the moment to end, no matter what. Going down, going up... that’s the way of the Wheel. Going up again.

“You like roofs, don’t you? This is a nice one.”

“Yes indeed...”

It seems that whatever I might be able to say will have no relevance compared to the breathtaking nuance of the violet sunset flowing around her, magically astounding. It feels as if we’ve been together before on the edge of a roof, like that. Something is very well known to my thoughts and my memory, either the bridge or her presence on the terrace, sharing the view with me.

“Let’s look at the sky together”, she says.

“Why?”

“What do you mean, why? I must show you something. Look!”

She points down to where I can see the river, swirling in the valley, to the horizon, covered in the colors of the sunset. I don’t see it in the beginning, but then I notice a tree. It’s growing timidly in the sun. It’s a baby tree, soon it might become a big oak. Or an elm. Or one of those strong trees that make forests, a reliable force of nature, including in its story the best of what life has to offer on earth.

“A tree”, I say to myself, charmed by the view of the little branches, stubborn to find their way to light, so eager to grow as much as they can.

“New life”, she smiles. “Nothing makes sense without it. You know? It’s a part of what the wheel brings to us. What we are looking for.”

I turn to her, not believing that she mentioned the Wheel.

“What”, she grins joyfully, “you didn’t think the wheel is a secret that only you know?... “

“Not really, I...”

“You’re gonna have to get used to it. Besides, the new ones, they already know. Look closer in the valley. They’re waiting for you.”

I stare down in bewilderment and disbelief, but I must admit that I can see it now. A new race about to begin. And it’s strangely comforting, justifying, it has a miraculous meaning that seems to answer questions before they appear in my mind. I realize it’s so important and I am so privileged to witness and be a part of that.

“You know they need you. You’re the Racer, aren’t you? Are you going to let them make a race without you telling them anything? Go to them”, she says.

It might be why she has brought me here. To show me a new myself or a part of me renewing into the new life, a miracle which I wouldn’t have dreamed possible. She wanted to make me see the baby tree and the children on bikes, preparing for a race or for a joyful ride. Maybe they saw me on the road and they were encouraged to try it too. But now they might need me to show them the way. To bring to them what I know, from what I am. To tell them what I believe is right. They are a part of the plan that the Wheel has for this universe. And I was chosen to go to them. They ensure the infinity of life.

“Go”, she tells me calmly and her presence has begun to dissipate, just as the terrace around us, and I wonder for a second if what I saw was her or the Wheel itself, again.

As the bridge disappears, I know it’s just for a while. Isn’t it interesting how we don’t realize the Wheel brings us so much, just as it takes away a lot too... but it keeps rolling on. I might meet again the bridge that takes me to her – or to the Wheel. Though I’m not sure of anything, I keep hoping. I stand for a second on the top of the hill, looking down at the children on bikes, as they are circling the meadow by the river with the tree of life in the middle. It’s an unexpected gift from her. An unexpected conclusion of the bridge: actually, the bridge leads us to find new life. In a way, I am grateful to her for pointing out that truth to me, even though the bridge is gone, maybe forever, maybe for a while, but I’m not thinking of it anymore right now. I roll down to the valley. The children

know about the wheel instinctively; it's a part of their life. They know it. They feel its power and are fascinated to discover the next step that will take them to it. They are enthusiastic and their joy for the wheel is endless.

They noticed my presence on the hill, as they turn their heads; their curious innocent eyes are trustfully sending attentive glances up the slope, right to me. The next moment, I can see they are eagerly waving to me, roaming in anticipation with their bikes around the growing tree. I'm not going to tell them how to race against each other, but how to race with themselves, with their own struggles, with time, with reality and its limits, how to become better and how to get the secret of going on and on endlessly, because the Wheel is the most powerful truth that can take them beyond everything, that can give meaning to their way, to their progress and their existence. Of course, right now they're only instinctively feeling the greatness of it; they know there's so much more ahead - they don't know exactly what, they're not even wondering why, but they want to grab it immediately and they're not going to waste another minute. The race of life is an adventure that they are willing to start rolling right away. I understand their fascination for it.

I must be there and do my best. So here I go.

If you want to go too, get your wheels right now.

I'll see you on the road.

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