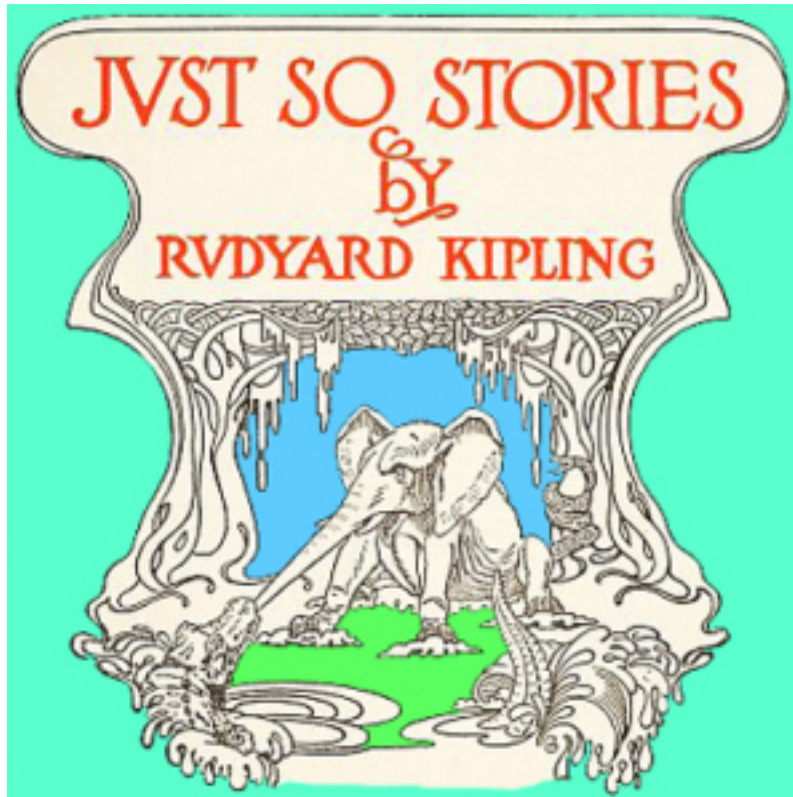


PERUSAL SCRIPT



A Play
Adapted from the Stories of Rudyard Kipling

by
E. Gray Simons III



Newport, Maine

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JUST SO STORIES

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CAST OF CHARACTERS — as few as 5 performers, any gender, can play the 29 characters

Sir
Beetle
African Princess
Witch Doctor
Butler

Giraffe
Zebra
2 Gazelles
Leopard
Jackal
Baboon

Camel
Horse
Dog
Ox
Jinn

Elephant Child
Ostrich
Mother Elephant
Father Elephant
Hippo
KoloKolo Bird
Python
Crocodile

Young Jaguar
Mother Jaguar
Hedgehog
Tortoise

JUST SO STORIES From Rudyard Kipling's Classic by E. Gray Simons III (*Tales from the Fractured Side Series*) • 5 performers, any gender, play 29 characters. **TYA** So, just how do you suppose the leopard got his spots? Why is the elephant's nose so long? Where did the armadillo come from? From the author of *The Jungle Book* comes *Just So Stories*, providing whimsical and witty answers to these questions and more, and offering a new perspective on nature's mysteries. **Order #3180**

Playwright **E. Gray Simons III** has worked for twenty years as an Artist-in-Residence at BTF. In 2000, he became Artistic Director of BTF PLAYS! and has since written and directed more than a dozen original plays, among them *Aesop's Network*, *Nursery Rhyme Café*, *Mystery Sideshow 2: Strange Waves*, and *Mystery Sideshow 3: Way Out West*.

Simons made his BTF directorial debut in 2000 with *The Wind in the Willows* and in 2001 he became director of the *Summer Performance Stories*, *The Odyssey*, *The Magic Flute*, *Arabian Nights*, and *Monkey*. Other directorial credits include *The Wizard of Oz*, *Alice in Wonderland*, *Oliver!* and *Peter Pan*(2009) on BTF's Main Stage, *Where Has Tommy Flowers Gone?* and *Holiday Memories* in the Unicorn Theatre, *Robin Hood* at the Berkshire Museum, *The Who's Tommy* at Brandeis University with co-director Eric Hill, and *Big Love* at Brandeis University. His BTF acting credits include *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, *Peter Pan*, *Moby Dick-Rehearsed*, and *Wilder, Wilder*.

Berkshire Theatre Festival's year-round education program, BTF PLAYS! serves area students from kindergarten through high school. At the heart of BTF PLAYS! is a passionate commitment to bring live theatre and all its inherent excitement and creativity to children in our region. Each year, more than 10,000 students in underserved rural and inner city schools throughout Berkshire Country are reached through in-school residency programs, vacation camps, and our touring production. Over the course of the summer, BTF PLAYS! hosts vacation camps for students from grades K-6, providing opportunities to learn about acting, improvisation, storytelling, and working behind the scenes in the theatre.

JUST SO STORIES

SCENE 1

SETTING: ON THE VELDT, SOME YEARS AGO — Sir and Beetle can be seen peering out of an animal blind. A giraffe, a zebra, two gazelles enter. The animals wander around the stage grazing and scanning their surroundings. The leopard enters stealthily and, after observing the prey animals for some time, attacks. The leopard chases the animals offstage as two people enter, Sir and Beetle. Sir carries binoculars and Beetle carries a camera.

SIR: You see, Beetle! The spotted Leopard conceals itself in the shadows and just before the other animals of the Veldt realize they're being hunted, the leopard springs out of the surrounding forest and finds his prey.

BEETLE: Yes, Sir. The Leopard is very stealthy. It's really amazing how it blends so thoroughly with its surroundings. You say it hunts mainly on the Veldt?

SIR: Yes, the Veldt is the immense plain of the Great Rift Valley in Africa and the Leopard comes out of the dark forest to stalk the animals that live there. In my younger days I guided many people across that wilderness. Once I had to escort a Tanzanian witch doctor to Nairobi.

(A Tanzanian witch doctor enters.)

BEETLE: A Tanzanian witch doctor to Nairobi, Sir? Why?

SIR: Let's just say it was a medical emergency of great diplomatic significance.

BEETLE: I see.

SIR: The witch doctor and I had just begun to traverse the Veldt, when I advised him to remove his elaborate headdress. It looked like a cross between the horns of a Gazelle and the bright feathers of the Kolokolo bird, two animals that the Leopard chiefly preys upon.

BEETLE: Did he take it off?

WITCH DOCTOR: Ha, ha, ha! No, no, no.

SIR: No, he insisted it was the source of his healing powers and that no harm would befall him.

BEETLE: And?

SIR: On the other side of the valley, just as we got to the forest, a leopard attacked.

(The Witch doctor shrieks and runs off stage.)

I had to continue on to Nairobi and perform the operation myself.

BEETLE: How did it turn out?

SIR: The tribal chief's youngest son who was ill made a swift recovery. The Chief was so overjoyed that he

offered me one of his seventy-five beautiful daughters as a gift of thanks.

(An African Princess enters.)

AFRICAN PRINCESS: Oh, pick me! Pick me!

BEETLE: Did you accept?

SIR: Beetle, I make it a habit never to accept another human as a gift.

(Princess exits, disappointed)

The chief gave a feast in my honor instead. I still don't know what was in the salad they gave me, probably some kind of insect.

BEETLE: And you ate it?

SIR: Beetle, I make it a habit always to accept a dinner offer while traveling, and if I don't like what I'm given, I'm very discreet about throwing it away.

BEETLE: Ah.

SIR: The next day I returned to Tanzania to explain what had happened to the Witch doctor.

BEETLE: Did they believe you, Sir?

SIR: Of course, anyone crossing the Veldt is liable to be taken by a Leopard. It's so difficult to see it coming.

BEETLE: Sir, this might sound like a silly question, but how did the Leopard become so good at blending in to its surroundings?

SIR: Beetle, I make it a habit never to respond to silly questions. As your question is not silly, I will answer it.

(Butler enters.)

BUTLER: Pardon the interruption, Sir, but your tea is ready.

SIR: Thank you, we'll be along briefly.

BUTLER: Yes, sir.

(He exits.)

SIR: Come on, Beetle. Let's have a cup of tea in the study and I'll tell you How the Leopard Got Its Spots...

(Sir and Beetle exit.)

SCENE 2

SETTING: THE STUDY, MOMENTS LATER — The animal blind is turned around to reveal a small study. Two chairs sit on either side of a small table. Next to one chair stands a globe. A Butler enters with a teapot and two cups on a tray. He sets the tray on the small table and exits. Sir and Beetle enter.

BEETLE: So, you were going to tell me how the leopard got its spots, Sir.

SIR: Yes. In the High and Far Off Times, all the animals of the Great Rift Valley of Africa lived on the Veldt. It was bare, hot and shiny on the Veldt, and there was nothing but sand and sandy, gray rock and tufts of sandy, yellowish-brown grass.

SCENE 3

SETTING: ON THE VELDT, IN THE HIGH AND FAR OFF TIMES — The Giraffe, the Zebra, and two Gazelles enter, followed slowly by the Leopard.

SIR: The Giraffe, the Zebra, the Gazelles and the Leopard all lived there. Long ago, these animals were all sandy, yellowish gray-brown from head to foot, and the fearsome Leopard, with his claws and teeth, was the most sandy yellowish gray-brown of them all. He was a cat-shaped beast and he matched the color of the Veldt to a hair.

(The prey animals, eye the leopard nervously and exit. Shortly after, the Leopard exits.)

This was very bad for the Giraffe, the Zebra and the Gazelles because they never knew where the Leopard was and so they often gathered nervously to discuss their difficulties.

(Sir and Beetle move up to the study/blind as the Giraffe enters and grazes. The zebra enters nervously and after looking around, bumps into the giraffe and they scare each other)

GIRAFFE: Will you watch where you're going, Zebra. You almost knocked me over, and you know it's not easy for me to get up once I've fallen.

ZEBRA: Sorry, Giraffe. It's just that the Leopard was hunting me this morning and I've been on edge all afternoon.

GIRAFFE: Well, relax. The Leopard is hunting the Gazelles.

ZEBRA: How do you know?

GIRAFFE: The Baboon told me.

ZEBRA: The Baboon...He doesn't care about anyone but himself.

GIRAFFE: Who do you care about beside yourself? Survival of the fittest, Zebra; that's the world we live

in.

ZEBRA: Whatever... Here come the Gazelles!

(The Gazelles bound on stage, frightened and out of breathe)

GIRAFFE: Hey, we heard the Leopard was after you. Have you seen it?

GAZELLE 1: You know about the Leopard?

GAZELLE 2: Why didn't you warn us?

ZEBRA: You haven't been followed, have you?

GAZELLE 1: We think the Leopard was after us.

GAZELLE 2: But you can never be sure.

GAZELLE 1: Sometimes the herd just starts running.

GAZELLE 2: And jumping.

GAZELLE 1: And pretty soon the whole herd is jumping.

GAZELLE 2: And running.

ZEBRA: So what you're saying is... you have no idea where the Leopard might be.

GAZELLE 1: That's right.

GAZELLE 2: No idea.

ZEBRA: I can't live like this.

GIRAFFE: Hey, calm down. I have an idea. I know a place that we can go where the Leopard won't find us.

ZEBRA: What place?

GAZELLE 1: All of us?

GAZELLE 2: Where?

GIRAFFE: The Great Forest.

ZEBRA: Forest? What's that?

GIRAFFE: The Forest is a place full of trees and bushes and stripy, speckly, patchy-blatchy shadows where we can hide.

GAZELLE 1: The Leopard won't find us?

GAZELLE 2: We'll be safe?

ZEBRA: Wait. How do you know about this?

GIRAFFE: The Baboon told me.

ZEBRA: Why did he tell you?

GIRAFFE: Because I asked him. So, what do you say? Should we go?

(The animals look at each other and nod in agreement.)

ZEBRA: Goodbye, cruel Veldt!

(Prey animals exit as Sir moves down stage.)

SIR: So the Giraffe and the Zebra and the Gazelles left the Veldt and traveled for days and days until they found the Great Forest, and there they hid themselves. Meanwhile, the Leopard was hunting...

(Leopard enters and prowls around the stage.)

But all he found were bugs and worms. All of his favorite foods had mysteriously disappeared, so he called his friend, the Jackal, who was always hanging around waiting for the Leopard's leftovers.

LEOPARD: Jackal!

(Jackal enters.)

JACKAL: Leopard, what do you need? Got a carcass you're done with? I'll take care of it. Bones, fur, badly matching accessories? I love it all. I'm a scavenger!

LEOPARD: No, I don't have anything for you, because there is nothing for me. I can't find any of the animals I like to eat for dinner.

JACKAL: What do you mean?

LEOPARD: They're gone, and if you don't help me find them, I'm going to eat you for my dinner.

JACKAL: I don't know where...

(The Leopard glares at him)

Have you asked the Baboon?

LEOPARD: The Baboon?

JACKAL: He's the wisest animal in Africa. I bet he'll be able to tell us where your dinner went.

LEOPARD: Yes, I've heard he's smart. Where does he live?

(Baboon enters, unnoticed.)

JACKAL: I don't know, he just kind of wanders around.

LEOPARD: Unlike the Baboon, you are very far from being the wisest animal in Africa, aren't you?

JACKAL: Well, I'm sneaky sometimes.

LEOPARD: Find the Baboon.

JACKAL: Okay.

(The Jackal starts to exit quickly and almost runs into the Baboon.)

Ah! Oh, here he is! The Baboon...

LEOPARD: *(To Baboon)* I'm the Leopard.

BABOON: Yes, I know who you are.

LEOPARD: Well, do you know where all the prey animals have gone?

BABOON: The prey animals have migrated to the Great Forest.

LEOPARD: What do you mean?

BABOON: They have gone into other spots and my advice to you, Leopard, is to go into other spots as soon as you can.

LEOPARD: Why have they migrated to the Great Forest?

BABOON: The aboriginal fauna has joined the aboriginal flora because it was high time for a change.

(Baboon exits.)

SIR: The Leopard and the Jackal were puzzled by the Baboons advice; however, they set out across the Veldt in search of the Great Forest.

(The Leopard and Jackal exit.)

All the time the Leopard and the Jackal spent looking for their dinner, the Giraffe, the Zebra and the Gazelles were having a lovely time in the speckly-spickly shadows of the forest. In fact, so much time had passed with the animals standing half-in and half-out of the shadows, that they started to change.

(The set shifts from the Veldt to the Forest.)

SCENE 4

SETTING: THE FOREST, MANY DAYS LATER — Giraffe, Zebra, Gazelles enter with their coats changed to traditional coloring. They enter cautiously at first and after briefly examining each other they move forward one at a time as if they are runway models on a catwalk as Sir describes their new coloring and Beetle snaps pictures.

SIR: The Giraffe grew blotchy. The Zebra grew stripy. And the Gazelles became darker with little wavy gray lines on their backs, like the bark of a tree.

(After "modeling" their new coats, the prey animals move to hiding positions around the stage)

The animals came to match their surroundings so well, that one could seldom see them, and then only when you knew precisely where to look. Finally, the Leopard and the Jackal found the forest and they were befuddled by what they saw.

LEOPARD: What is this that is at once dark and at the same time, so full of little pieces of light?

JACKAL: Everywhere is speckled and sprottled, dotted and splashed with crossway shadows. Could this be the Great Forest?

LEOPARD: Wait!

(Sniffs the air)

I smell the Giraffe, but I cannot see the Giraffe.

(Zebra giggles)

JACKAL: And I can hear the Zebra, but I cannot see the Zebra.

LEOPARD: Why can't we see them?

JACKAL: It's been a long time since we caught one. Maybe we've forgotten what they look like.

LEOPARD: I remember exactly what they look like. They are the same color as the Veldt.

JACKAL: Then they should show up like we do in this shadowy place.

LEOPARD: Let me think... The Baboon said we should change.

JACKAL: And go into other spots. Well, now we're in another spot, but we're no better off than before.

LEOPARD: The Baboon didn't mean other spots in Africa. He meant we should put spots on our fur, so we'd match the speckly shadows of the Forest.

JACKAL: Oh. How do we do that?

LEOPARD: We hide in here with the other animals, and if we stay half in the shadows and half in the light, our coats will change.

JACKAL: What if I don't want spots?

LEOPARD: Then you will still match the Veldt.

JACKAL: Hey, if I don't change, I could hide out on the Veldt. And after you change, you can chase the animals out where we can see them again. You can have your dinner, and I'll have whatever is left.

LEOPARD: Deal.

(The Leopard and the Jackal shake on it and the Jackal exits)

SIR: So the Leopard waited patiently, half-in and half-out of the speckly shadows until his fur changed

(The butler enters and places a spotted coat on the Leopard.)

And he looked like nothing more than a heap of pebbles on the ground. And when he climbed a tree, he looked like nothing more than the sunshine sifting through the leaves. This made him purr happily, and he set about chasing the animals back onto the Veldt.

(As the prey animals come out of hiding, the Leopard moves stealthily up stage. The prey animals now cannot see the Leopard who has positioned himself in the midst of them.)

LEOPARD: How you like me now?

(The prey animals shriek and scatter and the Leopard chases them offstage.)

SCENE 5

SETTING: IN THE STUDY, MOMENTS LATER — Sir and Beetle move back to the study/blind.

SIR: And to this day the leopard hides and hunts at the edge of the forest chasing the animals out onto the Veldt where the Jackal waits to get for his share.

BEETLE: Sir, why did the Baboon tell the Leopard where the other animals went?

SIR: Beetle, the Baboon's wisdom is in his understanding that all things must change, so the Baboon did not resist.

BEETLE: Do you ever resist change, Sir?

SIR: Beetle, I make it a habit always to fight habitual behavior.

BEETLE: Well, that's a marvelous tale about the Leopard, Sir. Wherever did you hear it?

SIR: I was born in Bombay, India, and as my parents were both teachers, I was often in the care of my Ayah.

BEETLE: Ayah, Sir?

SIR: My nanny. She told me wonderful stories of how animals came to be all over the world. I remember the very first story told to me was about How the Camel Got Its Hump...

BEETLE: Sounds fascinating.

SIR: It is.

(The set shifts to the desert)

SCENE 5

SETTING: THE EDGE OF THE DESERT, BEFORE THE HIGH AND FAR OFF TIMES — Dog, Horse, and Ox enter and begin to work.

SIR: In the beginning years, even before the High and Far Off Times, some animals like the Dog, and the Horse and the Ox were chosen to work for people. The Camel was also chosen,

(Camel enters)

But he was excruciatingly lazy and did not wish to work. So, he lived in the middle of the howling desert, and ate sticks and milkweed, and when anyone spoke to him of doing work, he simply replied...

CAMEL: Humph.

SIR: This was a great distress to all the other hardworking animals, and one Monday morning, with a saddle on his back, the Horse approached the Camel.

HORSE: Camel, I can't carry all the people. Why don't you do your share?

CAMEL: Me? Carry people? Humph.

SIR: Then, on Tuesday morning, with a stick in his mouth, the Dog approached the Camel.

DOG: Camel, I can't fetch for all the people. Why don't you take your turn?

CAMEL: Me? Fetch for people? Humph.

SIR: And on Wednesday morning, with a harness on his shoulders, the Ox approached the Camel.

OX: Camel, I can't plow for all the people. Why don't you pull your weight?

CAMEL: Me? Plow for people? Humph.

(Exits)

HORSE: *(Enters)* That's what he said to me, Ox. Humph.

OX: "Humph" him! Do you know how much plowing I have to do?

HORSE: Hey, I've been carrying people all day.

DOG: *(Enters)* Hey Horse. Hey Ox.

HORSE and OX: What's up, Dog?

DOG: Bad news. I just heard from our master. He said he tried to make the Camel work, and all he got was humph, which means our jobs will never get any easier.

OX: This is not fair.

DOG: I know.

HORSE: How do we make him work? He just roams idly about the desert.

DOG: I think we're going to have to call on the Jinn of All Deserts. He's an all-knowing spirit.

OX: And he knows magic.

HORSE: Yeah, I bet he would talk to the Camel.

SIR: So, on Thursday morning, they called on the Jinn of All Deserts and he rolled in on a cloud of dust.

(Several actors enter waving pieces of fabric that represents the cloud of dust. Jinn enters through the cloud)

JINN: I am the Jinn of All Deserts! Why have you summoned me?

DOG: Jinn of All Deserts, we have an important question to ask you. Is it right for any creature to be idle when others work so hard?

JINN: Certainly not.

HORSE: Well, the Camel is living out in the middle of the Howling Desert and he hasn't done a stroke of work since Monday.

OX: He won't plow.

DOG: Or fetch.

HORSE: Or carry.

DOG: All he says is humph.

JINN: Humph, eh? We'll see about this.

SIR: So, the Jinn whirled away in a cloud of dust across the desert.

(The Jinn and the actors with dust cloud fabric exit followed by Dog, Horse and Ox. The set is shifted to an oasis in the desert.)

SCENE 6

SETTING: THE MIDDLE OF THE HOWLING DESERT, A SHORT TIME LATER — Camel enters and lounges by the oasis. The dust clouds enter followed by the Jinn.

SIR: When the Jinn found the lazy beast, the Camel was lounging by an oasis, staring at himself in a pool of water.

JINN: I am the Jinn of all Deserts. Camel, what's this I hear of your doing no work while everyone else is so busy?

CAMEL: Humph.

JINN: You have given the Dog, the Horse, and the Ox extra work since Monday. Do you think that's fair?

CAMEL: Humph.

JINN: Camel, do you realize I know magic?

CAMEL: *(Laughs to himself)* Humph.

JINN: *(Calls offstage)* Magic!

(Magic, a small genie, enters)

Magic, the next time this Camel gives me a "humph", I want you to give him a "humph" of his own.

(Magic bows and exits)

Camel, you are to stop your idle ways this instant and get to work.

CAMEL: *(Very loudly)* Humph!

(Magic enters and places a “humph” on the Camel’s back. The “humph” is actually a backpack that matches the camels sandy colored coat)

What is this on my back?

JINN: That is your very own humph that you brought upon yourself for not working. You better go and join the other animals. They’ll be waiting for you.

CAMEL: But how can I work with this heavy humph on my back?

JINN: Today is Thursday. You spent three days being idle while others worked. Unless you want your humph to grow, I suggest you get busy.

CAMEL: Oh, humph!

(The Camel and the Jinn exit in opposite directions.)

SCENE 7

SETTING: IN THE STUDY, MOMENTS LATER — Sir and Beetle move back to the study/blind.

SIR: And from that day to this, the Camel has always worn a humph. Of course, nowadays, we call it a “hump”.

BEETLE: Is that because it’s shaped like a hump?

SIR: A good question, Beetle, to which I have no answer.

BEETLE: I guess the Camel still hasn’t learned how to behave. They’re fairly ill tempered, aren’t they?

SIR: Beetle, I make it a habit never to judge an animal unless it’s one that bites, kicks and spits at you. The Camel is indeed a grumpy beast.

BEETLE: Sir, the stories that your Ayah told you must have stirred your wonder of the natural world.

SIR: Quite right. They are fabulous stories that drove me to explore the world and all of its wild inhabitants.

BEETLE: Do you have a favorite, Sir?

SIR: I was a curious child, Beetle, and there was a story about another curious child of which I was especially fond. In fact, it first drew me to Africa, where I was a guide on the Limpopo River. Do you

know how the Elephant got its trunk?

BEETLE: No.

SIR: It was because of The Elephant's Child...

(The set is shifted to Africa)

SCENE 8 - 9 – THE ELEPHANT CHILD - 4 PAGES

SCENE 10 - 12 – HIGH AND FAR OFF TIMES - 6 PAGES

THE END

TALES FROM THE FRACTURED SIDE

Plays and a musical or two, written by **E. Gray Simons III**, that tell these familiar tales in a slightly off-center way.

These titles will come online over the next 6 months.

Alice In Wonderland (adapted from the Lewis Carroll classic) ORDER #3183

Arabian Nights (three interwoven stories from the Book of One Thousand and One Nights) ORDER #3178

Cinderella (adapted from the Charles Perrault fairy tale) ORDER #3184

The Emperor's New Clothes (adapted from Hans Christian Andersen) ORDER #3209

Hansel & Gretel's Grimm Tale (Grimm turned around) (written with **Tara Franklin**) ORDER #3179

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The Magic Flute (story adapted from Emanuel Schikaneder's libretto from the Mozart Opera) ORDER #3185

Monkey (based on the Chinese Folktale "Journey to the West")(written in collaboration with Blue Hill Performance Ensemble) ORDER #3186

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