

WHIMSICAL

M A G A Z I N E
TALES OF PORTRAITS

Tiny Hands.
Star Children.

A Pocketful
of Forever

& The Tender Art
of Remembering

With
PIPPILOTTA
By CAROLIN SEMMELROTH

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TALES OF PORTRAITS

“YOUR HEART IS
BEATING OUTSIDE
YOUR BODY
WHEN YOU HAVE
A BABY.”

— KATE BECKINSALE

— @pippilotta_photoart_by_cs —

— @WHIMSICALMAGAZINE —



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Butterflies Beyond the Frame: motherhood, self-love, and stepping back into the frame. A photographer's gentle language of love, loss & belonging

— With PIPPI LOTTA By CAROLIN SEMMELROTH —

“These pictures, the first and last of and with our daughter are among the most precious in our life story.(...) What matters is not how long a life lasted, but what kind of mark it leaves on the hearts of the people who love that child. (...) Emotions don't always have to be cheerful and happy. That's part of it too. Anything goes, but nothing is compulsory. And every emotion is allowed.(...) Nothing in life is ever perfect, What's much more important is reality, the genuine emotions, the true essence of the people, the real connection between them.”

*“To take a photograph is to align the head,
the eye and the heart. It's a way of life.”*

— — Henri Cartier-Bresson — —



...bis zum *Mond* ...
und wieder zurück!



Wildflowers, Warm Hands & Other Miracles: A Red Thread Through Time

**connecting a family's yesterdays & tomorrows
through Carolin's Tender Architecture of Remembering**

There are photographers who arrange the light, and there are photographers who understand why we are afraid of losing it. Carolin belongs to the latter. In her small studio—tucked among hills, woods, and meadows—the world is invited to loosen its collar. Children may tumble across the sofa. Babies may refuse to sleep. Mothers may cry, laugh, glow, or momentarily forget where to put their hands. No one is required to perform happiness. Nothing must be polished into perfection. Here, every emotion is allowed through the door. Carolin's studio is less a stage than a living room with a camera in it: a soft place where families can unfold at their own pace. She does not wind children up like clockwork toys or ask them to manufacture neat little smiles. Instead, she asks about ice-cream flavours and Christmas wishes. She lets shy children bury their faces in familiar shoulders. She waits for eyes to brighten by themselves. Her photographs begin in that waiting.

Perhaps this is because Carolin knows that a photograph can become far more than an image. It can become evidence: We were here. We held one another. This love existed. Her understanding was born through motherhood, but also through profound loss. After six years of hoping for a child, Carolin became pregnant with a daughter whose lungs would not sustain her life outside the womb. The family's first photographs with their baby were also their last. The camera was modest. The light was imperfect. None of that mattered. Those photographs became among the most precious objects in the family's history—not because they were technically flawless, but because they carried something that could never be recreated: the brief, immense reality of their daughter. Grief taught Carolin what time so often teaches us too late. We assume we will remember the exact curve of a cheek, the shape of a hand, the way someone leaned toward us when they laughed. Yet memory is a mischievous archivist. It keeps a ribbon and loses the parcel. It preserves a feeling while quietly misplacing the sound of a voice.





A RED THREAD THROUGH TIME

A photograph cannot return a person to us. But it can leave the door to remembrance slightly open. That knowledge now travels with Carolin whenever she volunteers to photograph stillborn babies. She enters these rooms not as someone seeking a beautiful composition, but as someone who understands the sacred weight of a moment that is both beginning and ending. Sometimes a butterfly appears in the resulting photographs. Sometimes a star or a rainbow. These are not decorations. They are small bridges between the visible family and the child—or parent—held beyond the frame. Carolin understands that a new baby does not replace the one who died. Love does not erase and redraw its family tree. It simply grows another branch. The photograph becomes a place where everyone may belong. This sensitivity reaches beyond bereavement and into the ordinary theatre of family life: a tiny hand curled around a finger, a foot planted triumphantly in birthday cake, a teddy bear that appears smaller each year. Carolin builds stories from such details. Her images become a red thread, running through pregnancy, infancy, childhood, adolescence, and all the rooms through which a family passes.

The background may contain blossoming trees or straw-baled fields, but the true landscape is always the space between people. A father learns how to hold his newborn. A mother strokes the curve of her belly and imagines the first meeting. A child dangles upside down between two laughing parents. These are not interruptions to the portrait. They are the portrait. Carolin's philosophy is refreshingly rebellious in an age of manicured lives: emotion may matter more than sharpness. Reality may be more beautiful than control. A family does not need to become perfect before it deserves to be remembered. And the photographer need not disappear behind expertise. Carolin is candid about being self-taught. She learned through videos, workshops, experiments, mistakes, and the stubborn practice of trying again. She knows how to persuade light to serve the feeling she sees in her mind, but intuition remains her favourite instrument. The head may understand the settings; the heart knows when the picture has arrived. That instinct has also turned Carolin's camera back toward women themselves.







Like many mothers, she discovered that she was strangely absent from her own family history. There were photographs of the children, celebrations, and milestones—but few images showing the woman who had held so much of that world together. Behind the camera, she had slowly faded from the visual story. From that realization came Carissima, Carolin's portrait brand devoted to helping women rediscover themselves. Its invitation is tender but quietly radical: step out from behind your roles. Be more than mother, wife, employee, or keeper of everyone else's needs. Allow yourself to be seen. Because beauty, in Carolin's world, is rarely missing. Sometimes it has merely been forgotten. Her work is therefore not really about freezing time. Time refuses to be frozen, it wriggles away like a lively child. Her photographs do something gentler.

They gather what time leaves behind: the gestures, glances, small astonishments, and ordinary affections that might otherwise vanish unnoticed. Years later, when the children have grown and the rooms have changed, a family may open an album and feel that old warmth return. A tiny teddy bear will become large again. A lost voice may flicker at the edge of memory. Someone absent from the table will be present for one quiet moment. And there, inside a rectangle of light, love will leave its mark once more. Carolin does not promise perfection. She offers something rarer:

**proof that a life was held,
a family was becoming,
and for one bright breath of time, everyone belonged.**





Carolin Semmelroth

PLACED THIRD IN THE SPRING ROUND

Her work and style have been recognized as exceptional by the jury.

Models: Jonas - 5 and Linus - 8

Country: Germany









Interviewing Carolin:
An intimate portrait
of Carolin's heartfelt photography....







Carolyn, can you tell us a little about yourself and what led you to photography?

Hello, I'm Caro, now 50 years old, happily married, mum to wonderful children (with special stories), and I've been working as a family photographer for over 10 years. Even as a teenager, I loved taking photos and being creative, and I really wanted to do something involving children or something creative. However, I first trained as a bank clerk and have been working part-time in that role ever since. When we had our second son, I started picking up the camera more often again and realised that my photos weren't turning out the way I'd imagined them in my head. So I began to focus more on my camera settings. I watched lots of videos, attended workshops and, above all, practised and experimented with photography on all sorts of subjects and, later on, on people. That's how my photography business has grown slowly but steadily. Today I have a small photography studio and specialise in maternity, newborn and family photography. And it's exactly what I've always wanted to do and what I love.

Your journey into motherhood has been deeply emotional—how has that shaped your perspective as a photographer?

Yes, the journey to having our children was certainly not easy. It took us six years before I finally became pregnant for the first time – only to find out during a scan that our unborn daughter was seriously ill and might not survive after birth. She was doing well in my womb and we spent the final weeks hoping and fearing. But sadly, her lungs weren't strong enough for life in this world and we had to place her back in God's hands shortly after she was born. A year later, I was full of hope once more, but this time that hope burst like a soap bubble in the eleventh week of pregnancy. After that, we decided on a different path and, as a result, were blessed with two boys from another mothers we love more than anything. And through our experiences, I know only too well how precious it is to have a child. What a great miracle every pregnancy is. And how precious the moments are that you can capture as a family. From the pregnancy, the magic of those early days with a newborn, right through to family life. Every moment is wonderful, and you simply forget so much.

You describe yourself as a mother of “star children.” How has this experience influenced the way you capture memories?

When we lost our daughter 21 years ago, shortly after she was born, taking photographs of deceased children was still something quite special. We had, of course, hoped that she would live. As I had to spend the final weeks in a hospital far from home, I had taken a camera with me so that I would at least have a few photos of her in case she had to go to the intensive care unit or the paediatric ward after the birth. Immediately after her birth, attempts were made to stabilise her, but the doctors' efforts were not enough. So we were only able to hold her in our arms once she had already passed away. But for us, there was no question: we wanted to capture these brief moments as a family, including in photographs. My camera wasn't particularly good back then, and the lighting conditions weren't exactly perfect. But these pictures – the first and last of and with our daughter – are among the most precious in our life story. And that is also why, as a volunteer Star Child photographer for 'DEIN-STERNEKIND.EU', I give today these precious memories to other families in this situation.

What does the concept of “memory” mean to you in the context of your work?

No one knows how long their life will last. How long a family can spend time together. The most important thing is that every life leaves its mark on the hearts of loved ones. And to ensure these memories don't fade away completely over time, photographs are simply indispensable. You forget so much when you don't have pictures. We learn this through our daughter, and it became very clear again through my beloved father-in-law when he passed away suddenly and far too soon. It's only when someone is missing that you look for pictures. My little son was only 10 years old, and after just a few months he told me he couldn't really remember what Grandpa sounded like or what he smelled like. But at least he knows what he looked like, and the things they did together are brought back to life in his memory through pictures. That's why it's always important to me to remind my clients that we don't just take pictures for parents and grandparents, but also with them. For you, for your children, for the future...









You work with families, expecting mothers, and children—what draws you to these stages of life in particular?

What could be more beautiful in the world than the miracle of life? What a truly wonderful experience it is when something as marvellous as a baby comes into being from a tiny egg and a sperm, from the love between two people? What kind of magic is it that every pregnant woman's body performs? And how incredible is it that such a tiny being emerges from it all? Every little person is simply unique, and every detail is complete and perfect. And every mum-to-be glows from within, even if she often can't really see it herself. For me, there's nothing better than capturing these moments. Even as a child and teenager, I loved visiting my mum at work. She worked in a nursery and looked after very young children. As I got to grips with my camera, I started by photographing bees and flowers; later, I moved on to adults and then children. It became clear to me quite quickly that this is where my heart lies. Simply because the time of pregnancy is something very special to me, the first days with a baby are so incredibly precious, and it's just wonderful to be able to accompany a family and, through my photos, help shape their family history time and time again. I feel very appreciated because so many families place their trust in me time and time again. It often feels as though friends are coming to visit. And when I sometimes see how the photo wall at home keeps growing, or a collage is posted on social media, and their story as a family is told through my pictures – that is a unique gift and the most beautiful reward for my work.

How do you create an atmosphere where your clients feel comfortable enough to be truly themselves?

I try to create an atmosphere where clients feel comfortable letting their guard down. They don't need to be able to do anything, they don't need to put on a show, and they shouldn't have to pretend to be someone else. They can simply be themselves. Just as they are. You shouldn't force children to do anything; instead, you should meet them where they are and respond to their needs. I always say, they aren't clockwork mechanisms that you can wind up. I don't want to take photos where everyone is smiling stiffly at the camera. I want to create genuine memories that show people's true nature, the deep love and bond between them. I only have a small photo studio, which is more like a living room. Come in, make yourselves comfortable, interact with one another, spend time as a family. That's when the best moments and genuine memories emerge. Then, together, we'll tell your story as a family. I have a wardrobe for my clients from which they can choose something. And alongside plenty of clothing, there are also accessories and props for every kind of shoot. Before every session, I ask what the family would like, and prepare the sets accordingly. After all, the memories shouldn't end up suiting me later on, but should find the perfect place in their home. Because for me, pictures don't belong on a hard drive, but on the wall or in a photo album.

Your studio is described as a peaceful space in nature. How important is environment in your creative process?

My little photography studio is just a few minutes' walk from my home. It's situated in the heart of a tiny village, a long way from the nearest town and surrounded by hills, woods and meadows. I grew up here and have spent my whole life here, so I simply feel at home here. That's probably why my studio feels like my second living room. I also love going out into nature with my client families, especially when there are older children in the family. Then we have plenty of space, not just for cuddling, but also for running about and playing.

Of course, I also ask about the family's preferences, and if they're from the area, we're happy to choose a spot that holds special meaning for them as a family. Otherwise, we select the location together, depending on the weather and season – blossoming trees, wide meadows, by a tranquil lake, across a mown field dotted with straw bales... To be honest, though, the surroundings aren't as important to me when it comes to creating wonderful the people. what connects – between them. A beautiful backdrop is lovely, but interaction









You mention capturing not just images, but feelings. How do you translate emotions into photographs?

We start off very relaxed during a photo shoot. I always say that the first few shots are just to adjust the lighting and warm up. Of course, it's perfect when the mum-to-be, the children or the family are simply themselves and interact with each other, or with her bump or a toy. But many clients aren't quite sure what to do or what to do with their hands. Depending on the type of shoot, I try to guide them discreetly. For example, during a maternity shoot, I might suggest the mum strokes her bump, advise her on the best way to stand and where to place her hands, and then I try to help her connect with this miracle – encouraging her to become aware of what's happening inside her bump and to imagine what it will be like when she holds her baby in her arms for the first time. This often shifts her whole mindset, and you can then see those emotions in the photos. Even if the children are very lively, there are simply photos of them jumping around on my sofa or dangling headfirst between their parents' legs. Or if they're shy or crying, they're allowed to snuggle up to Mummy or Daddy and be comfortable. Emotions don't always have to be cheerful and happy. That's part of it too. Anything goes, but nothing is compulsory. And every emotion is allowed.

What role does patience play in your photography sessions?

Parents usually have little patience because they want everything to go smoothly and for the children to cooperate. But this often achieves the opposite effect, whether with babies or older children. That's why I usually take on the role of calming them down. With newborns in particular, it's absolutely vital to radiate calm and patience. Mums usually smell of hunger, especially if they're breastfeeding. The dad is often still inexperienced and cautious. That's why I take the baby and we slowly get to know each other. First, the baby is allowed to stretch and wiggle on the beanbag, get to know the unfamiliar smell and my voice, and get used to me fiddling about with them a bit. I often swaddle the babies, as it makes them feel as though they're back in Mum's tummy, just like a few days ago. The new world is so unfamiliar and vast that it makes many babies restless. Many babies then not only calm down but fall into a deep, sound sleep, so that I can then position them in the chosen sets. And if they don't want to sleep – so what? Then I choose an outfit and set where they can lie safely even when awake and active, or they can cuddle up with Mum and Dad. After more than 10 years, however, I've picked up a few tricks and notice how much the parents appreciate them and then become more relaxed too. And with older children, I sometimes need more patience with the parents than with the children. *laughs They often put pressure on the children with threats or big promises to get them to cooperate. Or they tell them to 'smile nicely' – so they bare their teeth and try their best, but no emotion comes through. That's why we prefer to have a bit of fun or do some facial exercises to help them relax. Younger children are given something that interests and fascinates them, depending on their age – something to look at so they'll look at the camera, or something to hold so they'll stay seated. And with older children, I ask, for example, what their favourite ice-cream flavour is and what it tastes like, or what they'd like for Christmas and exactly what they'd like it to look like. Then their eyes light up all by themselves and their smiles are natural. And to loosen things up a bit, they're welcome to stick their tongues out at me, or I can ask if they can touch their nose with the tip of their tongue.









How do you approach photographing sensitive or emotional moments, especially for families with similar experiences to yours?

I also do volunteer photography of stillborn babies. Then I'm with the families during a very special moment. But it's not a normal photo shoot; it's different. This also means I have many clients who want to include their deceased children in a subsequent pregnancy or in a newborn photoshoot. Often, we do this symbolically with a butterfly, a small star, or a rainbow. We handle this very sensitively. The baby now doesn't replace the lost child. Both are valid. Both are siblings. Both are deeply connected in our hearts. Many parents feel misunderstood by others. I understand this, and the parents sense it. Sometimes, even those around them are unaware of the loss. But that doesn't mean that every child with a butterfly, star, or rainbow also has a sibling in their heart. Sometimes the symbol represents another important person who is no longer there. For example, I also have a family where the father of the unborn child died in an accident. We then took photos where we included him symbolically and visually in the pictures – during the pregnancy, at the newborn shoot, and also in later family photos. He remained a part of the family, even beyond his death. The same applies to siblings who often never got to know each other. They are part of the family history and belong to the parents and siblings. As I said, what matters is not how long a life lasted, but what kind of mark it leaves on the hearts of the people who love that child. And for some families, it's simply important to capture this in pictures. Just as there are families who prefer to keep the memory deep in their hearts and private. Here, too, everything is allowed, nothing is obligatory. Everyone should respect that.

What is your philosophy when it comes to imperfection in photography?

I'm certainly far from being a perfect photographer. I'm self-taught, but I can't explain my camera to you. I know how to adjust the settings so that the pictures come out of my camera looking the way I envision them after editing. I understand now that I can do almost anything I want with light. Sometimes, though, I have to experiment a bit until it works. I know about the "golden ratio," but I don't place too much importance on it; I really more on my gut feeling when I look at a picture. Not every photo I take is razor-sharp because sometimes emotion is more important. And I've realized that you don't have to be a trained photographer to be a good one. Not every technically perfect photographer, for example, can handle children. I think I have a pretty good eye for a picture that tells a story. And I think I have a knack for working with children, so I can capture the special qualities of even the youngest ones. And I also have the right feel for the people who place their trust in me. That's why so many of them keep coming back to me again and again. They're clients who have become friends. They wish I would never stop taking photos. I'm not perfect, but I always give it my best shot. And I think I'm pretty good now.

Can you share a moment during a shoot that deeply moved you?

Yes, there's one family that touched me deeply. We met after the loss of our children. Their son passed away at the age of three, and we met through an event organized by a group that supports families like ours. When they were expecting their second son, I had the privilege of documenting their story from the pregnancy through the newborn shoot, and they came to see me almost every year. In my work as a photographer for stillborn babies, I was always apprehensive about taking on assignments where I might already know the family. And this family was the first of those. Not only that, but I even had to take these important photos for them twice. They thought they wouldn't be able to have another child at home. When they were pregnant again and everything turned out well, I was moved to tears. Being able to give them pictures of their son with a sibling was truly wonderful, and I'm so happy for them. But every family story is special. And every one is worth capturing in photographs. Everyone has their own burdens to bear, and most families grow dear to me over time.









What details do you pay attention to that others might overlook?

I don't know if others don't notice this. But I try to create a mix of different images for each family. From small details like holding a tiny hand, to a portrait with sparkling eyes, to the family cuddling and playing together. I like to photograph with my 24–70mm zoom lens because it allows me to get really close and then zoom out again for the whole scene. Sometimes just the hands on the belly, then the expectant parents snuggled close together. Sometimes a foot in the birthday cake, then the whole scene. The little hand on the wooden block while playing, and then the smiling feene tuind peying, ind the picture. So that the individual images together tell a whole story, yet each one has something very special about it on its own.

How has your personal story shaped your artistic vision over time?

In the beginning, I photographed everything—weddings, portraits, events, babies, families... When I decided to focus on family photography, newborns were my first priority. Because many families kept coming back, I also began to focus more on pregnancy and family life. I only have pictures of my daughter right after she was born. I have practically no pictures from my pregnancy with her, just a few bad ones. My older son was already three years old when he came to us, and we hardly have any baby photos of him. Our younger son bridged the gap between birth and toddlerhood, but my pictures from that time aren't really good yet. My grandfather loved his grandchildren more than anything, but he didn't like being photographed, and he passed away far too soon. Every period in life has something special about it, but I often regret that there are simply no pictures, or far too few, of sometimes in our family history. Perhaps, or even certainly, that's why it's so important to me not just to take a few photos for my clients. I want to give them something, honest memories, a whole story. Simply something so precious.

Often, they don't yet understand what these pictures will mean to them someday. My older son has already moved out and is forging his own path. My younger son is in the throes of puberty and is increasingly establishing himself as an independent individual. How wonderful it is, then, when I look through old photos and the memories of earlier times come flooding back. And time and again, I realize that some things I had simply forgotten.

And now that my own children are older and more independent and no longer really want to be in front of my camera, I've realized how often I'm missing from the pictures as their mom. For special family celebrations, I usually book a photographer, but otherwise, there are hardly any pictures of me, except for the occasional selfie on my phone. And I, too, have somehow lost myself as a woman in recent years. I'm noticing this more and more in my own families now. Many are moms, wives, employees, homemakers, and often lose themselves and their self-love more and more.

And after I started treating myself to the occasional photoshoot just for myself, I also started doing photography for women again and launched my own brand, "Carissima." My goal is to strengthen women's self-image and encourage them to simply do something for themselves and rediscover and strengthen their self-love. Whether through expressive portraits, a self-love shoot in beautiful clothes, or a boudoir shoot. Treat yourself to something special and see yourself through my eyes, especially if you've lost sight of your own true beauty. Every woman is beautiful; many have simply forgotten how to see it. It's truly wonderful to witness how my photography boosts women's self-esteem and brings that "wow" moment when I hand them their finished photos. Every woman should treat herself to this experience at least once in her life, or even better, every time she feels a little lost.









What advice would you give to photographers who want to capture more authentic, emotional images?

A crucial aspect for me is the initial consultation. I like to get to know my clients beforehand, either through a brief phone call or in person. This is simply to get a sense of their personality, their wishes, and their expectations. The questionnaire is also an essential part of my preparation for the shoot. Beyond that, I try to adapt to the client. If they are rather quiet and reserved, I try to guide them without pressure. Then a calm atmosphere with lots of cuddling and eye contact is encouraged. If they are more lively and energetic, I like to go outside into nature and let the family interact and have fun together. No one should pretend. And I don't pretend either; I'm simply open, honest, and completely myself. It's also important not to take everything too seriously. Many photographers want everything to be perfect. But nothing in life is ever perfect. What's much more important is REALITY. The genuine emotions, the true essence of the people, the real connection between them. The pictures should express exactly that when you look at them. The nicest compliment is when parents say, "My child always does it just like in this picture." And that's exactly what they should think when they look at their pictures years later. And that's what it's all about for me – memories instead of perfection.

How do you balance technical skill with emotional intuition during a session?

I'm not particularly tech-savvy and, as with everything, rely heavily on my intuition. I've developed a few favorite camera settings and know which sliders to adjust and what source material I need to achieve the final images that look exactly as I envision them. I usually start by figuring out the best settings for the lighting conditions and then only check them occasionally. The initial shot doesn't have to be perfect; I often tweak things later in post-processing using my presets, transforming an ordinary photo into what I consider the perfect result. During the shoot itself, my focus is on the emotion and ensuring the family has a special experience. I want them to feel comfortable and not like it's an obligation, but rather a time they enjoy together. That's when they're happy to come back.

What do you hope your clients feel when they look back at their photos years later?

I hope that my pictures will still bring a smile to my clients' faces years later. That they will never tire of looking at them and will pick them up again and again. That they won't just think they are beautiful pictures, but will remember the moment they were taken and get a warm feeling because it's such a wonderful memory.









In your opinion, what makes a photograph truly timeless?

For me, it's important that the focus of the picture isn't on the set, the decorations, or the background, but on the family or the person in it. I also always advise my families not to choose flashy clothing, but rather natural tones or timeless, coordinated colors. This makes the overall result much more harmonious and, in itself, timeless. Even when I photograph maternity and newborn shoots, I try to coordinate all the sets with the colors of what the parents want to wear. When the pictures are later hung side by side on the wall or preserved in a photo album, it shouldn't be a wild mix of colorful photos, but a harmonious whole. And when clients come back later, I like to incorporate elements from previous shoots into future ones. For example, a small cuddly toy can show how the children grow. And the little teddy bear that once lay large in the baby's arms and sat next to the cake on their first birthday will eventually look tiny in the child's hand a few years later. And because I always take the families' preferences into account through the initial consultation and questionnaire, their photo shoots always come together beautifully. My pictures can be like a red thread in the family history, connecting different times and taking them on a journey into the past, while simultaneously inviting them to continue the story.

Finally, what would you say to someone considering booking a session with you?

What are you waiting for? Feel free to contact me for a preliminary consultation, and we can see if we're a good fit. Not every client is a good match for me and my approach, and my personality and style aren't for everyone. But if you're willing to take the plunge and get in touch, we'll quickly find out. And if it's a good match, perhaps we can soon embark on a very special journey together, exploring your family memories for eternity or embarking on your own personal journey back to yourself...

























2024

NOMINIERT

LUMINAR
AWARD

PLATZ 5

















































WHIMSICAL

M A G A Z I N E

“The camera is an instrument
that teaches people
how to see without a camera.”

— Dorothea Lange

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