

## London's Night Stalkers

### Chapter 13 – Hard to Kill

**“The future in the Met is female, we’re always looking for talented women to promote.”  
The lady in human resources had told her. It had been a mistake to go home and repeat the conversation to her mum of course. She was now expected to be running the entire Met by the time she was forty.**

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Laura hadn't dreamt much since killing Mabina, or at least none she remembered. She'd had the dream about being eaten by a serpent God a few times, but even that had left her in peace. Two nights since Daniel had called and he was now living in the house, using the last spare room in the building. Maybe his presence had relaxed her; maybe it was finally being pain free, without injecting herself with local anaesthetic. Whatever the reason, she drifted into her first personal vampire dream.

“I bet you paid a fortune for those.”

She knew she was dreaming, yet hearing his voice so clearly, made her heart pound against her ribs. Clara had asked her about her attacker more than Simon, though they both seemed sceptical about her story. In the end even Clara had ceased asking about him, the man Laura knew as Zak, though that probably wasn't his real name.

“Yes, my boss is always moaning, sixty quid for a complete set.”

Her own voice listening to herself in a dream, hovering over that chance meeting on the train home to Potters Bar. If she hadn't gone into town to buy the printer cartridges, if she'd chosen another carriage to sit in. So many tiny choices, had led to her meeting Zak that evening.

“Sixty quid ! I have a copier repair shop and I can get them for twenty.”

She hadn't fancied him of course, he was middle aged and he was wearing a wedding ring. There must have been something though, to make her notice the ring. Maybe she had been attracted to him, or she'd sensed something about him. Whatever the reason, she carried on the conversation, until he'd suggested getting off the train together at the next stop.

“I'm not sure Zak. Have you a card or something ? When we next need more cartridges, I'll give you a call.”

Stuart had been moaning about the amount they spent on stationery, she was keen on doing at least one thing that might actually please him. Plus Zak was good at being persuasive.

“Look Laura, I'm not a weirdo or anything.”

His laugh as he said it had been so friendly, so honest. Of course there must have been other stupid girls who'd fallen for his easy charm. He was good at what he did, a skill gained from experience.

That was why she'd never told Clara about Zak, she was ashamed, scared of looking like an idiot.

“Is this your shop ? It looks a bit dilapidated.”

“It's alright once the lights are on.”

The dream shifted to them entering his copier repair shop. The sign above the door had been barely legible, the entire row of shops looked ready to be condemned. It had looked better when the lights came on, showing her boxes of printer supplies, neatly stacked on shelves.

“See !” Said Zak. “All still within their use by date, but only twenty quid a set.”

The dream view showed her something her memory had been vague about, the moment when his arm had gone round her neck. Zak had choked her until she'd been unconscious, before carrying her

down to the basement. There had been rape and other sordid sex acts, though she constantly denied that to Clara and herself. Her mind had invented the fiction of Zak being merely a sadist who enjoyed beating her. The dream didn't allow her the luxury of self-deception, showing her every brutal act. So that was to be her personal recurring dream ?! Awful, but hardly surprising, as it was the only truly traumatic experience in her life as a human.

"Look after her Laura, or she'll run away."

Mercifully the dream switched, pulling her back to the day when her mother had given her Snowball, her first pet rabbit. She had no idea what breed Snowball had been, just that she'd been large and covered in thick white fur. A present for her seventh birthday.

"I will mummy and I'll clean her hutch every day."

Laura had lavished so much love on that rabbit, but Snowball had been a complete bitch. So much attitude for something that looked like a beautiful bundle of white fur. The damned thing bit, scratched and tried to run away at every opportunity. Boring though, why had the dream decided to show her getting bitten for about the hundredth time ?

"No, I don't want to see this." She mumbled.

Something her mind had locked away since she'd been about seven and a half, though she remembered it before the dream showed her that particular afternoon, in full vivid colour. Snowball had bitten her quite deeply, making her yell out in pain.

"See how you like it !"

She saw her child self, put her teeth around the rabbit's neck, digging in enough to draw blood. No ! She hadn't meant to kill, just teach the fucker a lesson. The dream was merciless, showing her tighten her grip until Snowball began to squeal. The taste of that blood had been wonderful though and part of her had hated that rabbit. Laura only stopped biting, when she heard the crunch of bone and Snowball stopped struggling.

How much blood in a rabbit ? It couldn't be more than a cup full and Laura had licked it up, every last drop. She wasn't a vampire then, but Daniel was right about her, she had never been completely human. Laura woke from the dream, sitting up in bed.

"It's always been there," she muttered, "the feeling of being different."

Poor Snowball had been put down to a hungry urban fox and her father had come home a few days later with Ben. He'd been a wonderful rabbit with a good temperament, who'd been buried under the climbing roses, after a decent innings for a rabbit. Other incidents were filling her head though and the horrified face of her father.

"No ! No ! I didn't do that !"

Laura screamed, shaking her head, as if trying to throw off the memory of blood and the look on her father's face.

"Laura, are you alright ?"

Daniel at her bedroom door, unable to open it. She wanted him there, but she didn't quite trust him. He was too obsessed with getting samples from her, perhaps while she slept. She'd taken to locking her door, at least until the others were back.

"I'm fine Daniel, just a bad dream."

"Are you sure ?"

"Yes, I'll be fine now."

"I'm just going downstairs, if you fancy coffee ?"

She did, yet the instant she put her head back on the pillows, she fell into a deep and untroubled sleep.

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Daniel had left to have his morning walk, by the time she'd dressed and arrived in the kitchen. He'd used the back of a junk mail envelope to tell her the coffee was fresh and he'd gone to buy a newspaper. Laura decided that one positive thing about not working, was the time to have a leisurely breakfast. She put a frying pan on the hob and found a half-eaten pack of bacon in the fridge. It didn't hurt that much when she stretched to reach the bacon, her body was healing. A routine was building, Daniel going to the nearby corner shop for a newspaper, Anthony calling her at around eleven. Patsy would call her just after the BBC evening news. All for selfish reasons of course, even Patsy's motives were far from pure. Anthony was worried about his business falling apart, while Patsy was worried about Simon dying. Not really her man of course, which tainted the emotions. Laura now saw all human love as selfish, though she realised vampires were worse. "Everything we do is driven by feeding and fucking." She muttered.

A sound at the door, Daniel choosing the wrong key again. After the noise of him trying another two identical looking keys, she heard the front door open.

"I'm in the kitchen." She yelled.

"Damn locksmith, all the keys are the same."

"Yep, we've all been having fun with that."

He was looking at her half eaten bacon sandwich, before looking at her face.

"You look better today." He said.

"I feel much better. Are you hungry ? I can make you something."

"I'll make do with cereal. Is there milk ?"

"A bit, I need to do some shopping."

"I'll come with you to carry stuff."

All so domesticated, like two ordinary people enjoying breakfast. A girl vampire and her..... Whatever Daniel was, enjoying a quiet moment.

"The police have definitely gone." Said Daniel. "Though I'd still be careful using the phone."

"I'll use the Zafira until my SUV has been checked by Tom." She replied.

She still hadn't been to get Mabina's journal out of the Zafira. Partly because she hadn't felt up to it, but also to punish him a little. Laura decided he'd suffered enough.

"We can get Mabina's journal when we go shopping." She said.

His face lit up, like a child promised ice cream, if he's good.

"Can I take it home with me ?" He asked. "I should leave soon, my Ebay business needs a lot of attention."

She nodded at him, he'd understand the journal a lot better than her. They were on about the third pot of coffee and expecting Anthony's call, when they heard someone else having trouble with the front door. Laura was up on her feet in an instant.

"It's us."

Clara's voice, saying us ! She ran into the hallways, grabbing Simon to help hold him up. Vampires it seemed could cry out of joy, her cheeks were saturated with her tears.

"Simon, you're alive !" She said.

"I told you we're hard to kill."

She was trying to kiss and hug him, while also helping Clara to hold him up. She wasn't really helping that much, so she concentrated on holding up some of his weight. He winced as she put her arm around him.

"Sorry, where does it hurt ?"

"Everywhere Laura, everywhere."

"We'll get him upstairs and into bed." Said Clara.

"No bed !" Said Simon. "Prop me up in a chair somewhere."

"We're in the kitchen." Said Laura. "Daniel's here."

Clara gave her an odd look, but didn't comment, as they took Simon through to the kitchen and sat him in a large wooden chair. It was the chair Clara referred to as her granny chair and it had plenty of cushions to wedge in just the right places. Once Simon was comfortable, Clara gave Daniel all of her attention.

"How long have you been here ?" She asked.

He looked wary, almost as though he expected to be attacked.

"A few days, Laura was on her own....."

"He's been helping me." Said Laura.

"Fine." Said Clara. "But no more nonsense about tests on Laura. You can make yourself useful Daniel, Simon is still very weak. Maybe you can mix up something to help him heal faster ?"

"I should be going home."

"Now ! When you might actually be useful."

Laura kept quiet, letting the two old friends settle their differences.

"I could call Gwen." Said Daniel. "I'm sure that her and the boy can look after things for a few more days."

"Great, it's appreciated."

"So, what's been happening while we were away ?" Asked Simon.

"The police have stopped watching the house." Said Laura.

She told them everything that had happened since she'd driven Patsy home in Mabina's old Zafira.

Simon seemed especially interested in Anthony's regular calls.

"It's not a bad job and Mabina's cash won't last forever."

~ ~

Susan Eversley was feeling a little..... What was that word her mum used a lot ? Conflicted, yes that was it, she was feeling conflicted. Her mum used it about reality TV, but it suited her current attitude towards Mike Marcou, her boss. True she liked him and wanted to keep on his good side, but she didn't want to blight her career.

"The future in the Met is female, we're always looking for talented women to promote."

The lady in human resources had told her. It had been a mistake to go home and repeat the conversation to her mum of course. She was now expected to be running the entire Met by the time she was forty. Still..... They really did seem to be pushing women forward these days.

"Mike, can we talk as just friends ?" She asked.

"Yes, of course."

Susan got up and closed their office door. Their fellow officers were some of the nosiest people she had ever met. She often wondered whether that had been a key factor in their choice of career.

"We've worked together for a long time Mike." She said. "You're losing it over this Laura Selway case."

He started to talk, so she held up her hand, right against his face.

"No Mike, you've asked me to take a few risks in the past, but nothing like this. For a start there is no Laura Selway case. We were investigating a fraud by her boss, who's probably on a beach in the Caribbean by now."

Mike could be a bully, though some of the best cops were. You needed to be more than a little pushy to get anything done. Nice guys got nowhere, it was just how it was. Like all bullies, Mike didn't handle the truth that well. He was looking deflated.

"But there's the link to William Jarrold." He said.

"There is no link Mike. If Laura is guilty of anything, it's having poor taste in men. Let it go and move on, I'm not trudging the streets with you over this nonsense."

Oh dear, that had been a bit strong, she saw his nostrils begin to flare. He held up the monitoring report on Laura Selway's new SUV.

"Her new toy hasn't moved since we put the tracker on it." He said. "Is that the actions of an innocent woman? She should have been using it to go to the supermarket at the very least."

He dropped that report and picked up the last surveillance report.

"When Laura did go out on foot, she was followed." Said Mike. "She lost them both, two young and well trained officers. She lost them on an empty North London street. They have no idea how she did it."

"Fine, it sounds odd Mike, but don't go all X-Files over it."

Mike banged his desk with his fist, several times. It made so much noise that several people looked through the glass walls and into their office. Susan had already made up her mind to go and see the nice lady in human resources, if he did anything even mildly threatening.

"I'm sorry Susan, but this is all so frustrating. We both know she's up to something, don't we?"

Damn, it was a well baited trap, but she had to be honest.

"Ok Mike, as we're now talking as friends, yes Laura is up to something." She said. "It might be anything though, from dealing a few ecstasy tablets to gun running. None of our betters is going to approve the cost of investigating it."

"Fine, I'll do it on my own time." He said. "I'm not asking you to come with me, just be on the phone and access any files I might need. Be my eyes and ears, digging through records and looking up any car numbers I need identifying. Will you do that for me?"

She did like him and he was going to be writing her next annual appraisal. Even a slight hint that she wasn't a team player and it could damage her career until the day she retired.

"Ok Mike, I'll be on the phone when you need me. If you do get into something heavy, promise me you'll call in for backup."

"Of course I will, I'm not cut out to be a hero."

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For Simon, the next few days were a constant battle with pain and weakness. The others just wanted to help, but they stopped everything to watch his regular walks to the bathroom. It felt strange, as though he was an exhibit at the fairground.

'Come and see the miracle boy, who should really be dead.'

Clara helped him climb the stairs up to bed at night and down again in the morning. She even helped him get into the shower, though he refused to be put on the toilet like an old man with dementia.

Once he'd seen himself naked in the full length mirror on the wardrobe door. He could see why they were so concerned about him. It wasn't just the greyness of his skin, his muscles seemed to be shrinking, all his muscles. He'd fed, his body should have been able to repair itself without sacrificing muscle tissue, or at least that was what Daniel had told him.

"Do you feel better from the last medicine I gave you?" Daniel had asked him.

Medicine wasn't how Simon viewed the oddly coloured and strange smelling potions that Daniel was constantly trying out on him. Potions, witches brews, was how he thought of them.

"The purple one tasted quite nice."

"Did it make you feel better?"

Simon just shrugged, nothing seemed to be alleviating the constant feeling of fatigue and weakness. Daniel had become very active, well active for Daniel. He talked to people on his phone and boxes would be delivered, often containing just a few dried up leaves. He'd claimed a corner of the kitchen to mix up his 'medicines,' which Clara obviously hated. There had been no complaints from her though, even when the whole house began to stink like an apothecary shop from the middle ages.

"Of course, your thyroid might need a little help."

Had been Daniel's comment that had led to what seemed a miracle cure. A box had arrived from a supplier of online drugs. Simon had never heard of levothyroxine, but it enabled him to get downstairs without help. True he still felt weak, but it was a start, a very good start.

"All the stinks and weird herbs and proper medicine worked."

Laura had remarked, perhaps a little unkindly. Daniel always seemed confident, certain that his next brew would do the trick. Eventually he'd presented Simon with something that looked like, smelled of and tasted like a warm cowpat. It worked, making him feel better quite quickly.

"That is the one! What's in it?" He'd asked.

Daniel and Clara had exchanged meaningful looks.

"Best if you don't know, until you don't need to eat any more of it." She'd told him.

He honestly didn't care if it actually was ninety percent cow dung; it was making him feel so much better. Simon had used his new found strength, to lock himself away in the room under the stairs. He needed to call Anthony and didn't want the others to hear, in case he had to beg for his old job back.

"What happened to you then?" Anthony had asked.

No telling Anthony a small lie about an accident or a mysterious flu like illness, that wasn't how their relationship worked. Anthony would expect prevarication and only partial honesty. Then he'd go away and ponder on it, thinking up his own real reason for Simon being injured. Simon had to chuckle, at the thought that no matter how good an imagination Anthony might have, he'd never come up with anything a tenth as dark and strange as the truth.

"I had a little fall Anthony."

"Yeah right, how's the other guy doing?"

"Not too well from what I hear."

That was it, the total extent of his explanation for not going into work for days. For Anthony it was perfect though, reinforcing Simon's reputation for being a shady character. Of course, Anthony had ruined the moment by being practical.

"So, when can you get back here?"

There was the question of two grand in cash waiting in Anthony's desk drawer and telesales wasn't a job that required a lot of physical strength.

"I'll be there Monday morning, without fail."

Everything had gone so well, even the call to Patsy, which had gone really well. She'd cried of course, he was expecting that. Then she'd given him a headache by asking for something quite reasonable, but very difficult to deliver. Simon had come out of the cupboard under the stairs, leaving Patsy with a promise to call her back. He walked into their kitchen, which still smelt of aroma therapy candles and cow dung. They were there, all three of the people who'd been looking after him so well.

"Patsy wants to come over here tonight." He said.

Daniel reacted first, making an odd gasping noise.

“So you’re bringing a human female into your coterie ! Now I really have seen it all.”

“I think she’s nice.” Added Laura. “Really cool when you get to know her.”

Clara didn’t seem impressed, all gentleness forgotten.

“Back into your den, we need to have a word.” She hissed.

She pushed him inside the room under the stairs, flipping the catch on the inside of the door. Clara, the great love of his life, hissed in his ear like an angry viper.

“I don’t mind her coming here, we probably do owe her something.” She whispered.

“Actually I can think of a way to repay her.” He said.

Clara quietened him, by squeezing his throat in her very strong right hand.

“Shut up ! I accept that she is part of our family now, but you will not do anything with her under this roof.”

He wanted to say he understood, but she had his throat clamped tight.

“I mean it Simon, not one solitary kiss in this house. Do anything in my house and I will finish off what Mabina started. Do you understand ?”

He nodded and she released her grip on his windpipe.

“No, never Clara, I totally get it.”

“Good, does she like Pizza ?”

“Yes.”

“Then I’ll order Pizza and Patsy can eat with us tonight.”

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Clara had enjoyed the pizza night with Patsy as part of their group. It surprised her, but she was becoming quite fond of Patsy Smart. Perhaps there was such a thing as good Karma, because the hotel called the next morning. A call on the landline was rare; everyone became alert as she picked it up. It turned out to be the unpleasant woman who ran the personnel department for the entire hotel chain.

“Clara my dear, I heard you’d had a few personal problems.”

“Yes, a close relation passed away, quite suddenly.”

“Oh, that is terrible news”

It wasn’t a complete lie, all vampires were likely to be related in some way and three bullets to the head was definitely a sudden and unexpected way to die. The scourge of HR being nice to her was unexpected though.

“Do you remembering dealing with Williams & Smithson Clara ?”

“Yes, they were very positive about using the hotel for all their hospitality needs.”

Clara remembered one of them being very keen on Laura, his eyes never leaving her. She was beginning to get a suspicion of a job offer, hurtling towards her. The woman from personnel was clearing her throat.

“They have come back with a proposal and they’ve stipulated that you and Miss Selway are the people they expect to see when they use our facilities.”

“So we’re hired again ?”

Laura was listening to it all of course and began to leap about with a silly grin on her face. Clara had her own reasons for wanting the awful low paid job back and one of them was Felipe. The sex had been good and she wanted to enjoy those feelings again.

“You never were really fired Clara, or Laura. A few heated words following a tragic event.....”

“Will I get commission on their account ?”

“Yes, I can even push through a small bonus for Laura.”

A few more details and it had been agreed for them both to return to work the following week. Still paid by the hour as a glorified temp, but it was an ideal job for two vampires. Laura was in such a good mood that she agreed to Daniel taking a few more sample before he flew back to Scotland. Provided Clara was in the room as chaperone of course. They'd let him pack Mabina's journal in his case, he'd make far better use of it than them. No one hugged him too enthusiastically when his car to the airport arrived, but none of them hated him either. Daniel was like the uncle everyone avoids at family gatherings, but he was still family.

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Patsy knew where they were taking her of course, there could be no real surprise, when Simon told her to bring the urn containing her father's ashes. There was no surprise that they weren't taking her mum either, though it did hurt a little.

"There might be trouble mum, it's not exactly legal."

"I understand, it's what he wanted, just don't get arrested."

To her mum they were just Simon's crazy friends doing her a favour. Laura sounded the horn of her newly swept and bug free SUV, as they arrived to pick her up.

"One tracker under the wing was huge." Simon had told her. "I thought Tom's guy was taking a bit of the engine out by mistake."

It appeared there was a market for good quality trackers and Tom was pleased to remove them for free. Patsy was getting to know their network, if that was the right word. Simon was gradually introducing her to all their friends and contacts, pulling her into his world.

"Be careful."

Her mum shouted, as she put on her jacket and picked up the precious urn. The jacket had a hoody, he'd mentioned that to her at least six times. Patsy had no qualms about breaking into the Emirates Stadium to scatter her dad's ashes. It was a stupid rule if it stopped people from having their dying wish.

"I will mum, don't wait up."

No good saying it, her mum would sit in her chair in the lounge with Timmy on her lap, until she returned home. Laura opened a door on the SUV for her, as she climbed inside and automatically sat close to Simon. If that upset Clara, she didn't show it. Everyone was smiling at her, it was a night designed to thank her and say sorry at the same time. Sorry for making her a target for Mabina and thank you for not being a dick head about it.

"You can probably guess where we're going?" Asked Simon.

"Hmmm let me see, late on a Thursday night, everyone in dark clothing with hoods and I'm holding my dad's ashes. We're obviously off to McDonalds."

They laughed and she liked them all, especially Simon of course. Her mind did a little flip when she thought about what he did to feed, but she'd decided to ignore that by simply not thinking about it.

"I found someone who'll let us in, but there'll be no lights." Said Simon. "You'll have to scatter the ashes in the dark, but there will be a moon later."

"If there is trouble, we'll get you out of there fast." Added Clara.

"I'm just so grateful you're doing this for me." She said.

It wasn't far to the Emirates Stadium and Patsy knew most of the area well. Laura drove past Drayton Park Station and parked in a side street. She already knew the plan by heart, Simon had gone over and over it, before Clara had gone through it all again. They walked past the main entrance to the stadium, ending up at a set of doors that had been left slightly ajar.

"Right on time Simon."

Maybe a groundsman or a security guard in need of a few extra pounds. Simon had already mentioned to her that no guarantees came with the payment. Hopefully she'd be able to scatter her dad's ashes in peace. If someone in management unexpectedly decided to come in that night, the plan was for Simon to carry her over his shoulder and run. Not a very dignified escape, but she knew he could outrun any human. Simon gave a bundle of something to the man at doors, obviously cash and they were inside.

"It's really going to happen!" She blurted out.

"We owe you this." Said Laura.

Patsy found herself crying, as they went through an executive car park and into the stadium itself. There seemed to be a lot of corridors and office doors, lit only by emergency lights. Eventually they were out onto the pitch, on a beautiful moonlit night.

"I'm sorry we can't have the floodlights on." Said Simon.

"No, this is perfect." She replied.

It was, the moon lit up everything well enough to see, there was just no colour. The pitch, the seating, the stands, everything was grey. The only lights were above the emergency exits, everything else was a uniform grey, which was perfect for what she needed to do.

"Where shall I do it?" She asked.

"Anywhere you want." Answered Simon.

"Start at the centre spot and work out from there." Said Clara.

A good idea, Patsy walked right up to the centre of the pitch and removed the top of the urn. She spread the ashes slowly over a wide area. If the ashes were too fine to be seen, no one could try and vacuum them up or anything. Her vampire guard followed her, remaining silent. If her dad was watching her from somewhere 'up there,' she was certain he'd be happy now.

"It's almost empty." She said. "The last few bits."

She upended the urn and banged the bottom, creating a tiny mound of grey ash at her feet. For some reason she knelt, the others copying her. She pictured her dad for a minute or so, remembering his fanatical love for the Arsenal.

"You're here dad, where you wanted to rest." She said. "I really hope you were watching me scatter your ashes."

"I'm sure he was." Said Laura.

Patsy knew Simon and Clara were the eldest, both of them hundreds of years old. Surely dying and returning had to give you a direct line to whatever controlled our fates? If it did, they weren't saying, both of them remained silent. Patsy stood and cried for a while, as they took it in turns to hug her. No kiss from Simon, she assumed that was part of the price for Clara accepting her into their family, their coterie.

"It's starting to rain, we should go." Said Simon.

Rain was also perfect, there'd be no raking up her dad's ashes now. They'd be washed into the soil, to become a permanent part of what her dad had considered to be sacred ground. The holy of holies, the grass Arsenal played on. They left the ground without incident, Simon's contact locking the doors behind them. They were nearly back at the car, when she noticed a large rubbish bin at the side of the road. She dropped the empty urn into it.

"I don't want to take it back home with me."

She felt slightly strange on the drive home, her body relaxing totally. It came home to her how important it had been to scatter her dad's ashes where he'd wanted. They all received a hug, before she opened the car door to leave them. She gave Clara a long hug, whispering in her ear.

“Thank you.”

None of it would have happened without the approval of Clara, they both knew that. Clara gave her a surprise, by quickly kissing her on the lips.

“You’re family now Patsy and always will be.” Said Clara.

Again the slight feeling of everything being unreal, as she opened her front door. Her mum would be up of course, waiting to hear about where her dad’s remains had been spread. Then there’d be more crying until the sun came up. She turned and watched Laura’s brake lights, as she slowed down at the end of the street. She waved, certain she’d seen Laura wave back.

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