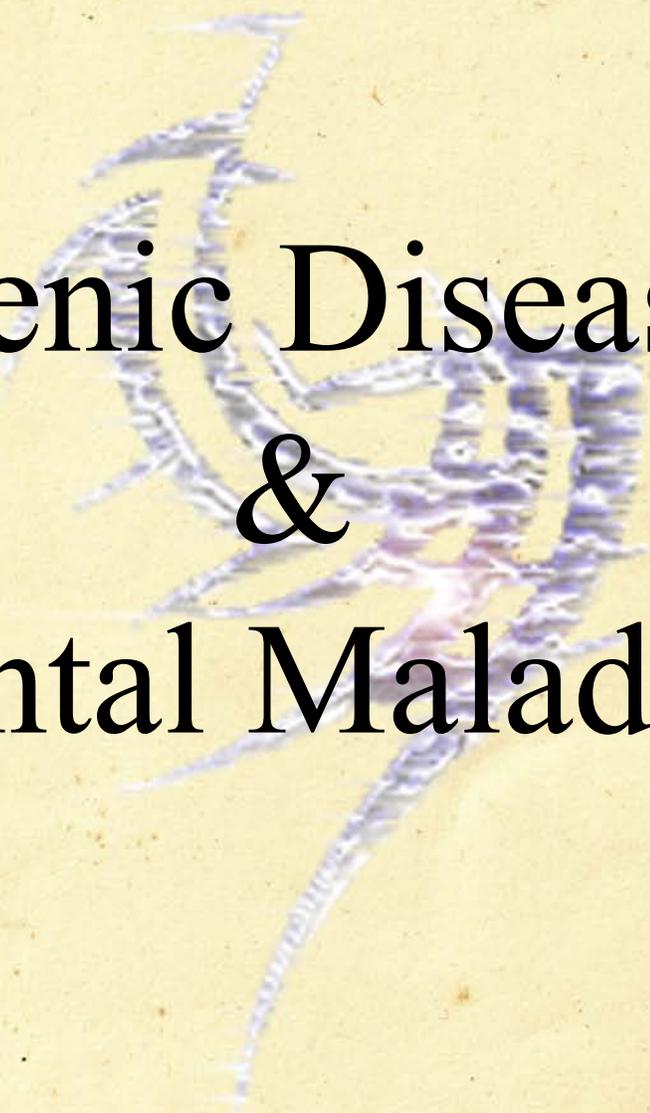


DREAMSCARRED
PRESS

High Psionics



Phrenic Diseases
&
Mental Maladies

Jeremy Smith

High Psionics: Phrenic Diseases & Mental Maladies

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Diseases of the mind are illnesses to be feared, as in the world of psionics, perception can very easily be reality.

Presented herein you will find new afflictions, diseases, and maladies of a psionic nature. Included with each entry is a description of the sickness, its symptoms, effects, and how to cure it, if a cure is even possible.

While most of these afflictions specifically hinder those characters with increased mental abilities such as manifesters, they are not restricted to these characters. Several have identical effects for those with or without psionic abilities.

Unless otherwise noted, these diseases are extraordinary in nature and are not affected by effects such as a *null psionics field*. Additionally, these afflictions can only affect living creatures.

Each entry also has an associated Challenge Rating (CR) to indicate how difficult the item is to overcome and how much experience should be awarded to characters that surmount the situation. This reward should not be given if the disease, affliction, or malady is never actually acquired; exposure but not actually contracting a disease does not qualify as overcoming the challenge.

Many manifesters will already know of these afflictions through their studies of psionics. Treat each affliction as a knowledge (psionics) check with a DC equal to 10 + the affliction's CR. If the individual makes a successful check, they know what the affliction is and are able to recognize it by its symptoms. They are not familiar with the cure unless they exceeded the knowledge check by at least 5.

In addition, seven entries have an example adventure hook on how to introduce the affliction into your current game. It is up to your discretion if you choose to use these adventure ideas or create your own.

Finally, you will find a new psionic power for use with some of these new psionic diseases.

New Psionic Diseases

Cerebral Retrovirus

Particularly dangerous to those with increased mental capacity such as manifesters, the cerebral retrovirus is a tiny organism transmitted from creature to creature that enters an individual's body through blood or inhalation and then makes its way to the target's brain, where it begins to feed on the individual's mental energy.

Acquired: Cerebral retrovirus is spread through the air from one infected individual to another. The virus cannot live long without a host, but if two individuals are within 5 ft. of each other and one is infected, there is a 5% chance that the virus is passed from the infected individual to anyone within 5 ft. If the virus is spread, the target host's body can attempt to fight off the virus with a successful DC 15 Fort save.

Symptoms: Those infected by a cerebral retrovirus find that their mental capacity is hindered, although the effect is slow to develop. Initially, they may simply feel mentally drained, as if they can't concentrate. Later, as the virus grows and propagates, the infected party may feel as if they cannot concentrate.

Effect: In the first week of illness, the infected individual has a slightly smaller power point reserve, resulting in a net loss of 5% of the total power points per day available (rounded up) and a -1 penalty to concentration checks. Each week, the individual suffers the same effect (10% of total power points and -2 to concentration checks on week 2, etc.), until on the 20th week the individual's power point pool is perpetually mentally exhausted by the virus and unable to manifest powers or concentrate.

Cure: Cerebral retrovirus can be temporarily cured through the targeted use of psionic healing effects, which restore the power points for one day, but heal no actual damage. A permanent cure requires the use of *restoration*.

Adventure Hook: A powerful manifester, busy with important endeavors, asks the

players to retrieve an item from a ruin and deliver it to the local psionic organization as a gift. Before leaving, he gives the party an amulet designed to protect them from any problems recovering the item.

Getting the item is suspiciously easy and once delivered, the members of the psionic organization are all quickly struck by cerebral retrovirus. Knowing what the disease is and the timing, the guild suspects the party of intentionally afflicting them with this disease. The requester of this gift has mysteriously vanished from his now abandoned home and cannot be found for questioning. Interestingly, none of the party members seemed to have acquired the cerebral retrovirus, although, in fact, the amulet is suppressing the effects of the virus and, once removed, all members of the party suffer the effects.

CR: 6

Cascading Obsessive Compulsion

Obsessive-compulsive disorder is a condition where an individual feels an overwhelming need to perform specific actions, often times performing the same action multiple times in rapid succession. A psionic version of this disorder results in individuals literally passing this compulsion to each other.

Acquired: Cascading obsessive compulsion is inflicted by proximity to an affected creature. Anytime an affected creature repeats an action as a result of cascading obsessive compulsion, any creature within 30 ft. must make a successful DC 14 Will save or become infected by cascading obsessive compulsion. Those within 30 ft. need not have line of sight to the infected individual. This is a mind-affecting effect, so those immune to such effects cannot be afflicted by cascading obsessive compulsion.

Symptoms: Evidence of cascading obsessive compulsion is easily detected, as the afflicted individual will perform the same activities repetitively, seemingly without any control. They may actually be frustrated with having the urge to constantly repeat what they just did or feel that they didn't do it "just right."

Effect: An individual suffering from

cascading obsessive compulsion must make a successful DC 16 Will save every time they take a standard or full-round action or suffer from the *déjà vu* power for one round. This sequence repeats on each subsequent standard or full-round action, including any action that is a result of cascading obsessive compulsion.

This affliction is supernatural in nature and is suppressed in areas where psionics are negated.

Cure: Cascading obsessive compulsion can be cured through the use *aura alteration* or more powerful effects that repair mental damage.

Adventure Hook: An entire city is afflicted with this horrendous disease. Despite their best efforts, citizens continue to spread the disease faster than it can be cured. The players must find a way to either transmit a cure to the entire city/town or somehow stop the cascade. The local psionic guild has been working on such a cure, but, having all become infected, they have been unable to progress in the research. If the party can successfully cure the guild without allowing them to get infected again, they may be able to manifest an appropriate cure.

CR: 7

Hallucinations

Overuse of or overexposure to powers that augment or modify the senses can sometimes disrupt the way the individual's mind processes stimuli around him or her. This can result in perceiving things that are not actually there, also known as hallucinations.

Acquired: An individual can be affected by hallucinations if they fail a saving throw against an effect that alters perceptions. Typically, they will not be affected by hallucinations unless they fail their save against these perception-altering effects a number of times equal to twice their character level, after which they must succeed on a DC 14 Will save.

Symptoms: Sufferers of hallucinations see, hear, or feel things that aren't really there. They may think someone is talking to them, or something is attacking them, or feel as if someone is touching them when no such

activity is taking place. In a realm where invisible creatures and telepathic communications are real, this can make it extremely difficult for an afflicted individual and even those nearby to know what is real and what is not.

Effect: Individuals suffering from hallucinations are constantly subjected to a penalty on all attack rolls as if their intended target had concealment; the target may or may not be real. In addition, all spot and listen checks suffer a -10 penalty, as the individual cannot determine if what they hear is real or false. In cases where the appropriate check results in a negative value, the individual believes they heard or saw something not really there.

Cure: A simple *aura alteration* can repair the psyche of someone afflicted by hallucinations.

Adventure Hook: A highly-respected local city official has started to act as if he has lost his mind: talking to people not in the room, shrieking at every touch, and weeping uncontrollably. While there are other officials to help handle the extra workload, the city is starting to suffer and the citizens want to help their official. The city does not have a local psionic organization to realize what is affecting the official, but have sent out a call for help from those who better understand the matters of the mind. When cured, the official will inform the party that he was accosted by a telepath who sought to use the official's influence to perform a smuggling operation.

CR: 8

Intellectual Regression

Very rarely, an incredibly intelligent individual can have their mind regress, reverting to a more primal or child-like state. In some instances, this results in individuals who become incredibly aggressive, while others see their friends and acquaintances as parental figures.

Acquired: The onset of intellectual regression is a deterioration of the brain. The most common source of this deterioration is a tiny type of parasite that is attracted to those individuals that give off a strong psionic aura. This parasite enters through an individual's skin and enters the bloodstream until it is carried to the brain, where it begins to feed and reproduce. The affected individual's immune system can sometimes fight off the parasite if the individual makes a successful DC 16 Fort save. Creatures with no Intelligence score cannot be affected by intellectual regression.

Symptoms: An individual afflicted with intellectual regression becomes less logical and more emotional as time passes. This typically means they act more primal or childlike, putting their own emotions before any logical reason or any sense of friendship or familial ties. As the parasite spreads and more damage is done, the individual begins to act more animalistic, perceiving virtually no form of communication.

Effect: Initially, the subject suffers one point of ability drain to Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma. Each week the parasite is left unchecked, the subject suffers another cumulative point of ability drain and the

Spellcasters & Psionic Diseases

Diseases of the mind are not restricted to manifesters. Those diseases that impact a manifester's ability to use their psionic talent have similar effects to those who cast spells, assuming the use of the psionic / magic transparency rules as presented in the Expanded Psionics Handbook. Presented below are the effects of the diseases that have special effects for spellcasters when contracted.

In addition, all of the psionic maladies presented within this product count as magical diseases.

Cerebral Retrovirus: For a spellcaster, this effect translates to losing access to the half of the lowest level spell slots available per week, starting with half the 0th level spell slots on the first week, all 0th level spell slots on the second week, half the 1st level spell slots on the 3rd week, etc.

Psionic Hemorrhage: Spellcasters under the effect of a psionic hemorrhage lose a random spell slot equal to one half the level of spell being cast. If the spellcaster has no remaining slots of the appropriate level, they lose a random spell slot of the next highest level.

previous point of ability drain turns into permanent ability damage. This ability drain does not heal from normal rest. If any of the subject's ability scores are reduced to 0 from this affliction, they die from the massive damage to their brain.

Cure: Intellectual regression may be cured through a round of treatments using *aura alteration*, which must be manifested on the individual one time per class level. After the *aura alteration* treatment, the parasite must be removed through an effect such as *cure disease*. If the subject is not treated sufficiently, after a number of days equal to the number of times *aura alteration* was manifested, they revert to their regressed state. The cure does not cure the ability damage, which is healed through normal rest or may be cured through other means such as *restoration*.

Adventure Hook: The head of the local psionic guild has gone insane, badgering her colleagues, belittling students, and even attacking a visiting nomad. The elder members of the guild have tried to cure her from this effect using every measure at their disposal, but nothing has worked. The party members must find a restorative cure for the deterioration of the guild leader or she will perish in another two weeks. The elders believe there is an herb in the swamp several miles away that could be used to create a cure, but all attempts into the swamp have failed.

CR: 10

Manifested Daymare

Nightmares can be truly frightening, debilitating conditions, even for adults who can recognize that they are asleep. A daymare, when that nightmare manifests during the daytime, can be even more incapacitating, interrupting an individual's activities with mind-numbing terror. In particular circumstances, such as when the affected individual has psionic talent, the terror can be physically manifested, affecting those in the real world in addition to the individual suffering the nightmare.

Acquired: Psionic creatures subject to nightmares, either mundane or psionic in

nature, have the capacity to project these nightmares on sleeping creatures nearby, creating manifested daymares. If a psionic creature has a nightmare and fails a DC 13 Will save, any creature within 50 ft of the dreamer must succeed a DC 16 Will save or the nightmare becomes a manifested daymare, carrying over into the creature's waking life. This is a mind-affecting fear effect.

Symptoms: Individuals suffering from manifested daymares typically feel as if they're still sleeping or feel as if someone is watching them over their shoulder, as their nightmare literally comes to life. These individuals are typically very tired, as they can not get restful sleep.

Effect: The individual suffering from manifested daymares is treated as fatigued, as the constant state of terror means restful sleep is virtually impossible. The afflicted individual and all within 150 ft. are treated as if under a single *phantasmal killer* effect, although because the effect is physically manifested, no Will save is allowed. Only a single creature at any time, including the afflicted individual, can be the target of the effect. If the individual manifesting the daymare is killed by the *phantasmal killer*, it immediately dissipates.

This affliction is supernatural in nature and is suppressed in areas where psionics are negated.

Cure: A manifested daymare cannot be destroyed physically, as the affected creature's mind will continue to create the nightmare in physical form. To cure a manifested daymare, *suggestion* must be used on the subject to go to sleep and face their nightmare, requiring a successful DC 16 Will save.

Adventure Hook: A killing spree has erupted in town, with one individual claiming to have seen the very stuff of his or her nightmares brought to life, killing those nearby. The individual has not been targeted by the killer, but his or her proximity to each death has led to being labeled the primary suspect in the deaths. In actuality, the individual is afflicted by a manifested daymare, but has an old family heirloom that protects his or her mind, granting immunity from the

daymare, but it has weakened over the centuries. Now the heirloom protects him from the *phantasmal killer*, but not from manifesting the nightmare and the deaths of those nearby. Unfortunately, the heirloom also protects the individual against the *suggestion* power, which could end the killings. The players must find out why this individual is not a target and then either remove the amulet or find some other way to stop the manifested daymare.

CR: 6

Mental Feedback

For manifesters, their psionic ability can mean life or death, resulting in relying on these abilities in critical, even deadly, situations. Some manifesters can come to rely too heavily on their psionic talent, using large amounts of power in a very short span of time. It is possible for this sort of overuse of psionic powers to cause a feedback loop for the manifester, resulting in severe headaches and migraines.

Acquired: A manifester will typically acquire mental feedback by over-exerting psionic ability on a regular basis. If a manifester uses half or more of his or her power point pool in a single encounter, there is a 20% chance of triggering a mental feedback loop. Additionally, if a manifester uses his entire power point pool in a day, there is a 10% cumulative chance per consecutive day of becoming afflicted.

Symptoms: Mental feedbacks manifest as severe migraines and, in some cases, bleeding from the nose. While these effects do not cause any permanent physical pain, they can be distracting.

Effect: A manifester who suffers from mental feedback takes a -2 penalty on all Concentration and Intelligence-based checks. In addition, further use of psionic ability causes physical pain. The manifester suffering from mental feedback suffers one temporary hit point of damage for each power level manifested. The damage fades after the manifester ceases manifesting for one minute.

Cure: Mental feedback can typically be cured by simply allowing the mind to relax, not

partaking in any manifesting for 3-5 days. For those seeking a faster cure, the use of *restoration*, *lesser restoration*, or similar effects can cure the psionic damage caused, although the afflicted individual cannot use these effects on his or her self, as that continues to cause psionic strain.

CR: 3

Psionic Hemorrhage

Trauma to the head can sometimes disrupt a manifester's ability to use their psionic power. The secrets of the mind and how it controls psionic power are things even some of the wisest manifesters do not truly understand. When damage is caused to the mind, that control can be impacted.

Acquired: A psionic hemorrhage is typically gained by physical trauma to the top or side of the head, particularly around the cranium. While the target may not suffer any actual internal bleeding as with a normal hemorrhage, their control over their psionic power may be compromised. Any manifester that suffers a physical attack to the head that does not deal non-lethal damage has a 5% chance per point of damage of acquiring a psionic hemorrhage.

Symptoms: Those under the effects of a psionic hemorrhage may feel as if they do not have full control over their mental capacity. In addition, they may feel disoriented or dizzy, especially just after using a psionic power or spell.

Effect: Sufferers of a psionic hemorrhage lose power points anytime they manifest a power, losing a number of power points equal to the level of the power manifested. In addition, after manifesting any power, the individual must succeed a DC 12 Will save or be dazed for one round.

Cure: As a psionic hemorrhage is caused by physical trauma, it can be cured by healing effects specifically targeting the cranium. The individual does not recover any hit points, but no longer suffers from the psionic hemorrhage.

Adventure Hook: A recent psionic duel occurred nearby and the victor has had severe migraines ever since. Although the manifester is well-versed in the psionic arts, he has

apparently not learned of psionic hemorrhage or its effects, instead believing it is his opponent who, from a remote location, is draining away his power points. He hires the party to find his enemy and stop the effect. The enemy, however, has no idea what is wrong with the manifester and is insulted at the implication that he would stoop to such tactics. In actuality, the hiring manifester slipped and fell the day before the duel and did not note the connection between the affliction and the accident.

CR: 4

Psychic Dissociation

The mind's grasp on reality can be a tedious hold for some individuals. Under times of duress, that grip can break, leading to the individual's mind no longer comprehending their surroundings.

Acquired: The exact cause of psychic dissociation is no single source. For some, it can be an extremely stressful situation, for others, it can be a result of damage to the brain. In any situation that causes severe duress or trauma to an individual, there is a chance that their grip on reality will break. If they fail a DC 18 Will save, their grip on reality breaks.

Symptoms: Individuals suffering from psychic dissociation typically do not respond to external stimuli such as sights, sounds, smells, or physical contact. The individual's reflexes are typically still intact, although they do not actually comprehend what is happening. Prisoners within their own mind, those individuals suffering from psychic dissociation that are cured typically recall the time as a dream-like haze, while others do not recall anything.

Effect: Psychic dissociation is an almost completely debilitating affliction, shutting down the creature's higher brain functions. Until cured, the individual is treated as being constantly dazed.

Cure: The only known cures for psychic dissociation are powerful effects such as *psychic surgery* or *reality revision*.

CR: 13

Reverse Empathy

Many with empathic powers or abilities can sense the emotions of those around them, be it intentional or uncontrolled. Some can even empathically heal those near them, literally taking the other's pain into their own bodies. Occasionally, the opposite can occur: projecting the individual's emotions and pain onto those around him.

Acquired: Acquiring a bout of reverse empathy is caused by a bacterial infection that disrupts the individual's control over their emotions. These bacteria are typically found in highly populated areas, although there have been cases in smaller areas. An individual exposed to these bacteria must succeed a DC 13 Fort save or be infected. The effects begin within 1-4 days of infection.

Symptoms: Reverse empathy has very specific symptoms, although they are sometimes difficult to diagnose, as the effects are on those around the infected individual, rather than the actual individual. The affected individual typically has more extreme emotional swings while under the effect of reverse empathy. For example, instead of becoming annoyed, they might become angry, or instead of being amused, they might start laughing uncontrollably.

Effect: Those physically close to an individual infected with reverse empathy finds their emotions matching the emotions of the afflicted creature. Anyone within 20 ft. of the infected individual must succeed on a DC 15 Will save or have their reaction state moved one step up or down, depending on the infected individual's disposition; an unhappy individual afflicted with reverse empathy would make those around him one step negative in reaction level, while a cheerful individual would make those around him one step positive in reaction level.

This affliction is supernatural in nature and is suppressed in areas where psionics is negated.

Cure: Reverse empathy can be cured through the use of *empathic transfer* with a successful DC 16 manifester level check.

CR: 4

Ruptured Schism

The *schism* power offers telepaths and other manifesters the ability to partition their mind into two separate consciousnesses. This allows the manifester the ability to focus on the task at hand while the second mind handles other actions, such as telepathic communication, manifesting powers that enhance the psion or hinder his enemies, and the like. Yet there have been instances where the partitioned mind can truly fragment, creating two permanent minds in one single body.

Acquired: If a manifester uses the *schism* power and is then subject to a mind-affecting effect that deals damage, there is a chance of the partitioned mind becoming a permanent effect. This chance is 5% per point of damage dealt by the mind-affecting effect.

Symptoms: Individuals who suffer from a ruptured schism find their psionic potential and even their ability to perform normal, everyday routines severely impacted, as each mind vies for control. This can manifest as the individual acting in an unusual manner, as while the second mind is a part of the first, it is typically a fragment of the original mind and may have differing views of how to handle any given situation.

Effect: Those subject to this malady have their effective power point reserve cut in half, as each mind seeks to use the power points. In addition, each hour, the second mind vies for physical control over the body, requiring a successful DC 15 Will save. Failure of the Will save results in the individual losing control over the body. The afflicted individual is treated as the second mind of a *schism*, limited to a single standard action per round and only able to take purely mental actions, while the second mind is treated as the primary mind.

Cure: Repairing a ruptured schism can be done via effects such as *psychic surgery*, *bend reality*, or similar effects. *Dispel psionics* has no effect on curing a ruptured schism.

Adventure Hook: An advisor to the head of the city, who may have also helped the party in previous jobs, has started to act out of sorts. While his decisions have not been completely out of line with his personality, they have been

a bit more extreme than normal. The advisor has been affected by a ruptured schism and the secondary mind has taken over the body, behaving similarly to how he would normally behave, but just different enough to draw notice. Suspicion is mounting as the advisor's actions continue to be unusual enough to draw attention and people are starting to believe he is under the control of another manifester. The party is hired to restore the advisor to his normal self.

CR: 11

Unstable Form

Many manifesters have the ability to change their physical shape. Sometimes, this is into the form of an entirely different creature, while other times, they may only change part of their form, such as shaping their hands into claws. Occasionally, the manifester's body will have a negative reaction to these changes in shape, resulting in problems maintaining the manifester's natural form.

Acquired: Frequent use of powers that manipulate an individual's physical structure can cause an onset of unstable form. If an individual uses or is affected by the same psychometabolism powers or effect three times within a 24 hour period, there is a 5% chance per effect of contracting unstable form. A successful DC 15 Fort save can negate the onset of this affliction.

Symptoms: Those afflicted by unstable form typically feel as if they have something crawling under their skin or as if their flesh was made out of rubber. In some, this reaction can be so severe as to cause their actual flesh to lose some of its tone and definition, looking somewhat blurry, as if through a foggy window.

Effect: Individuals suffering from unstable form find that their physical structure is not only unstable, but not as protective, resulting in a -2 penalty to armor class. In addition, the affected creature take a -2 penalty on all Dexterity-based checks as the reaction of their body makes it difficult to perform graceful maneuvers.

This affliction is supernatural in nature and is

suppressed in areas where psionics is negated.

Cure: An unusual condition, unstable form can be cured through the use of powers such as *restore extremity*, which restores the individual's body to normal. Simple healing effects, such as *body adjustment*, do not cure this affliction.

Adventure Hook: A renowned psion, known for her graceful dancing ability, has become clumsy and flat-footed. Unstable form has never been contracted in this region, so neither the party nor the inhabitants are aware of a cure. A seer has discovered that there is a device locked within the crypt of a long-dead egoist that can aid the afflicted dancer, but the only way to enter the crypt is to be affected by unstable form. The party must find a way to contract the disease and recover the treasure to cure the dancer and, ultimately, themselves.

CR: 5

New Psionic Power

Contagion, Psionic

Telepathy [Evil, Mind-Affecting]

Level: Telepath 3

Display: Visual

Manifesting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Touch

Target: Living creature touched

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: Will negates

Power Resistance: Yes

Power Points: 5

The subject contracts a disease selected from the following list: manifested daymare, mental feedback, or reverse empathy.

Augment: By spending an additional 6 power points, the manifester may choose hallucinations, intellectual regression, or psychic dissociation.

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