



# Eros Element

*Cecilia Dominic*

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## **Eros Element** Cecilia Dominic

If love is the ivy, secrets are the poison.

After enduring heartbreak at the hands of a dishonest woman, Edward Bailey lives according to scientific principles of structure and predictability. Just the thought of stepping outside his strict routine raises his anxiety.

Adding to his discomfort is Iris McTavish, who appears at his school's faculty meeting in place of her world-famous archeologist father. Worse, the two of them are to pose as Grand Tourists while they search for an element that will help harness the power of aether.

Iris jumps at the opportunity to prove her worth as a scholar—and avoid an unwanted marriage proposal—while hiding the truth of her father's whereabouts. If her secret gets out, the house of McTavish will fall into ruin.

Quite unexpectedly, Edward and Iris discover a growing attraction as their journey takes them to Paris and Rome, where betrayal, blackmail and outright theft threaten to destroy what could be a revolutionary discovery—and break their hearts.

### Product Warnings

Allergen alert! This book was produced in a facility that handles copious amounts of wine, tea and baked goods. May contain one or more of the following: a spirited heroine, a quirky hero, clever banter, interesting facts both made-up and historical, and lots of secrets. It is, however, gluten free.

## **Eros Element Details**

Date : Published August 25th 2015 by Samhain Publishing

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Author : Cecilia Dominic

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# From Reader Review Eros Element for online ebook

## Christina says

3.5 Stars – 1 Flame

I did it! I made it through my first Steampunk novel!!! I can actually say I've read one now, but not entirely sure I'll read another. Although the style is interesting, I'm not sure if "for me".

Let me start with a small disclaimer. Since I've never read a Steampunk before, I'll admit that this took me quite some time to get in to. Like, almost half way through it. I think I was thrown off my game a little when the "paranormal" wasn't futuristic in the sense of the future, but more historically speaking.

Iris McTavish is the daughter of a very famous archeologist who, unknown to anyone else, has recently died; leaving her close to broke with people she's responsible to care for. Although she's studied with her father, she doesn't have the "credentials", especially being a female and all.

Edward Bailey is a professor/scientist at the university with some serious quarks, thanks to an ex who shamed him publically, throws himself into his experiments and "schedules" to stay sane. But I digress. His most prized experiment involves figuring out Aether and how it works.

When the two are thrown together, along with other side characters with just right amount of "huh" (yep, I said it), to embark on a crazy journey paid for by an American, things start getting really interesting. Between crash landings, espionage, and trickery and down right cleverness, the journey becomes quite the adventure.

I'd like to think that some of the things I read that were made up, were actually real. So that's what I'm going with. It was cool and innovative. Did I see that there may be another....? (wink wink)

\*I was given a copy of this book as a gift from The JeepDiva in exchange for an honest review.

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## Terri M. says

I am completely fascinated by the world in the Aether Physics universe. It is completely known yet there are elements of the unknown that have drawn me in.

I recently read Noble Secrets (read my review) which was a great introduction to the smart, intelligent characters and Dominic's writing style. It lead me to binge read the three novels that currently make up the Aether Physics series.

What I love most about Dominic's style is that all of her characters are smart and intelligent. They are not cardboard cutouts of tropes. There are no over dramatic women or hunky dumb men. Each of the characters has their own foibles and hurdles to overcome, but their humanity and intelligence isn't compromised or made less because of their shortcomings. I found myself rooting for the romances and biting my nails at the

end as good confronts evil.

The minor sticking point in Eros Element that had me scratching my head was Iris and her journeys to the past. Overall, I love Iris's skill and it reminds me of the Reincarnationist series by M.J. Rose. The transitions to the past were jarring at times and I was often confused by what was going on. Hopefully this improves a bit as a) Iris becomes more familiar with her skill and b) the series develops.

I would recommend Eros Element to fans who enjoy fantasy mixed with a dash of science. Since the book takes place in the Victorian era with tiny elements of steam punk, the romance is reserved to coy glances and stolen kisses. It was an enjoyable novel and I look forward to reading the other two books in the series.

This review was originally posted on Second Run Reviews

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## **Charlie says**

### **The Skinny**

Professor Edward Bailey has dedicated his life to science, and after a heartbreaking ordeal he decides to live by the structure and predictability of science. Everything about his life is strictly routine, right down to the half cubes of sugar he puts in tea. He works alone in the aether department at the university.

Johann Bledsoe is Edward's closest friend and works at the university with Edward. He is a talented musician and also a notorious skirt-chaser, but is extremely protective of Edward.

Iris McTavish takes up in her esteemed archaeologist father's stead when called to the university. A rich American has requested Professor Bailey and archaeologist McTavish tour Europe as Grand Tourists in search of an element that will harness the power of the aether, which will in turn save Edward's job and department from being cut.

Iris has studied all of her father's work and wants to follow in his footsteps. They share a special connection with objects that allows them further insight than strictly the historical. Iris snatches this opportunity to save Grange House, make her mark as a scholar and avoid an unwanted marriage proposal. All the while hiding the truth about where her father is and what he is doing.

Despite their magnanimous personality differences, Edward is drawn to Iris's love of learning, the scholar in her as they set out for Paris and Rome. Bledsoe wants nothing but to keep them apart and protect Edward, even at the extent of lording a hurtful piece of blackmail over Iris.

As they make their maiden voyage via airship to Paris, the expedition is met with unexpected betrayal, blackmail and theft.

### **The Players**

Edward Bailey – a neuoritic professor who is obsessed with the world of aether and will do anything to protect his department, which allows him to work alone; he has an interesting friendship with Bledsoe and has an instant animosity to Iris

Edward is like a child in a lot of ways. He seems insensitive but is easily hurt.

Johann Bledsoe – a womanizing, gambling musician who is very loyal to Edward but is also very secretive; uses his wily ways to blackmail Iris

Iris McTavish – an orphaned young woman who wants to pursue work or study at university as a scholar; she possesses an uncanny power of reading objects; she sets out on the expedition under the guise of working with her father from afar to be able to keep her home

Marie St. Jean – a maid supplied to Iris for her journey by Cobb; she seems to have many secrets of her own and knows much more about the expedition from Cobb himself

Parnabay Cobb – a wealthy American contracting and funding the expedition; at odds with the spying Clockwork Guild

Doctor Chadwick Radcliffe – an African American doctor who is very interested in Edward's condition in Paris

Patrick O'Connell – an Irishman who works with Doctor Radcliffe; he becomes very protective of Iris and Marie

#### The Quotes

"Sometimes the universe drops things into your lap that you don't recognize as gifts at first."

From her childhood, her father had told Iris how objects all told stories, and the ancient ones had the best stories of all.

#### The Highs and Lows

+ Edward. I was thoroughly impressed with Edward's character, who is nothing but a pretentious ball of nerves. His character reminds me of Sheldon from The Big Bang Theory, and I couldn't help but giggle at his dialogue.

– Bledsoe. Bledsoe also has the propensity to be an ass. His behavior and mannerisms in the beginning, and even about halfway through to Edward, are horrendous. For a gentleman whose reputation and livelihood are somewhat dependent upon other people, he doesn't act like it. I didn't like Bledsoe's character in the beginning. I hoped something bad would happen to him just so he would be gone.

– Parnabay Cobb. The filthy rich American is some kind of powerful in London and in Paris. His connections are not clear, but he has a definite hold over many. It is like he is a puppet-master and has orchestrated many things in the book, and after the convoy's arrival in Paris he suspiciously disappears. There are such peculiar things that happen you almost have to wonder if everything that happens wasn't orchestrated just right and a set-up from the very beginning. His character is still an enigma to me, especially after the way the book ended. I have a feeling he will suddenly reappear in the second book under less than desirable circumstances.

+ Marie. Marie is an interesting character. Like Parnabay Cobb, she also has a suspicious air, and even up until the end I wasn't quite certain of her loyalties. She acts in such strange ways, but she is very helpful to Iris, so her position was very confusing. Regardless, she is a positive influence and much-needed friend to Iris.

+ Bledsoe. Bledsoe grows as a character and as he and Iris must work together it is like the layers have been peeled back and there is compassion and concern that become evident on his end – and not just for Edward, but for Iris. Although he still has the item to hold over Iris for blackmail, he becomes a more understanding

and sympathetic character. I wasn't sure if Bledsoe had it in him, so each time a little glimmer of his growth happened, it was heartwarming, because if anyone deserves it, it's Iris.

+ Suspicion and Intrigue. As Iris continues on with the expedition, she begins unraveling some oddities from the time period they are researching. It seems the Pythagoreans had a very clear-cut organization and Edward and Iris's research is making a centuries-old underground elitist group come out of the woodwork. Most of the characters have their own issues to deal with (Paranaby Cobb, Bledsoe's "friends," The Clockwork Guild, Jeremy Scott to name a few), so it is unclear which occurrences are one of their opposition or something unknown.

– Lord Jeremy Scott. The man is a pompous waste of body. He clearly has no real brains, and uses his nobility to force Iris into an engagement. He is a filthy snake who won't give up and makes Iris's life miserable.

– Setting. The book begins in 1870 England and as the expedition proceeds, the convoy travels to Paris and then Rome. There were a few times the era and year was referenced in narration, but not as time relative to the expedition. I found the negative commentary about the American "Civil" War unnecessary, especially the reference that it was "a proxy war between England and France."

The Take-Away

I liked the character interaction the most. Each character had their own purposes and motives for accepting their roles in the expedition (or tagging along with it), and they are each focused on different components. Despite the individual's gains, they all begin to work together to achieve the expedition's goal.

Recommendation – Buy, Borrow or Skip?

A book full of life and death, blackmail and betrayal, suspicion and secrets? I recommend buying this one.

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### **Arianna says**

I received this ebook from Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.

It's really nice. I loved the steampunk elements. At the start it's a bit slow paced but then it's ok. The romance isn't so overwhelming and it didn't really clicked for me, but this notwithstanding I liked this book.

My vote: 3.5 stars

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### **Susan Crawford says**

I read and very much enjoyed this book in my critique group. The author has done her research and, although Steampunk is not my usual cup of tea, I really loved this one!

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### **Tracie says**

Cecelia Dominic's 'Eros Element' is a fun steampunk romp. The first in her Aether Psychics series, readers are plunged into a world of eccentric personalities and dangerous perils in search of the fabled Eros element. Dominic creates a fully fleshed out world peopled with dynamic characters. This is a very enjoyable read.

I received a copy of the book for review.

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## Riley says

Question: What do you get if you combine a 19th century setting, forward thinking scientific ideas, and advanced steam and clockwork technology. Answer: Historical Science Fiction. Some people call it Steampunk, which is just one word and therefore easier to say.

I love reading Steampunk and finding a new talent in this genre is always fun. Cecilia Dominic's *Eros Element*, which releases on August 25th, is the first book in her promising Steampunk series *Aether Psychics*.

*Eros Element* is about an eclectic group of people who take the Grand Tour in Europe as cover for their real mission: discover a way to stabilize aether in order to make it a usable source of power.

I made that sound simple, didn't I. Of course it is a little more complicated than that. There are organizations that are in competition with our little group. There are other people that do not want them to succeed. And within the group, there are secrets. Many, many secrets.

There, that sounds more interesting. Especially the secrets part. I'd say more about the secrets, but then they would not be – secret.

So I'll talk about the characters. Physicist Edward Bailey and archeologist Iris McTavish are the main characters. Iris is not an archeologist by schooling. But training at the side of her famous archeologist father Irvin McTavish has given her all the skills she needs to succeed in the mission. And she desperately needs to succeed. Although she has kept it a secret, her father recently passed away and left her with very little money. Edward is a renowned aetherist that has been working to harness the potential energy in aether. With no success so far. But, as Edward says "Science takes time." Edward is not at all keen to leave his safe university lab and teatime schedule to venture out into the world, but the threat of an Aether department budget cut gets him motivated.

I loved watching both of these characters adapt to circumstances wildly different from the life they had previously known. Edward's adaptation was rather awkward while Iris faced it head on. Both had eschewed involvement with the opposite sex for personal reasons. But when they find they have something in common, a lovely friendship emerges with the potential for more. A favorite scene in the book: Edward grabs Iris' hand and races with her to the dirigible they will be taking to France. Both were so swept up in the excitement of flying that they temporarily forgot that what they did was terribly out of character.

There are several other great secondary characters in *Eros Element*. Johann Bledsoe, musician and Edward's best friend. He has secrets. Marie, who takes on the role of maid to Iris, although she is much more than a maid. She has secrets. American Doctor Chadwick Radcliffe and Irishman Patrick O'Connell who joined the group when an accident resulted in the need for a doctor. You've probably guessed it. They have secrets too. Along with Iris and Edward, these four characters are all instrumental to the story of *Eros Element*. I did like that there was such a variety of characters to root for. Even if, at times, I wasn't sure if I should be rooting for them.

Bad guys – every good book has them. One or more. In *Eros Element*, the most obvious bad guy is the cheating, sniveling, conniving Lord Jeremy Scott who wants to get his hands on everything that belongs to

Irvin McTavish. Research, papers and his daughter. Scott's badguyness emerges early in the story and is not subtle so I don't think I am giving much away here. Someone needs to run him over with a steam coach – or something.

Parnaby Cobb is the American who financed the expedition. His motives do not appear to be black and white. So it is hard to tell how good or bad he is. And that makes him a little more interesting. There are others. The Clockmaker's guild and the Pthagorians. Again, these group's motives are unclear but they do tend to get in the way of our main group of heroines and heroes. Complications from the non-protagonist crowd added plenty of obstacles and adventures for our intrepid travelers.

There are so many things I liked about *Eros Element* both in the overall feel and in the small details. Here are a few details:

1. Edward Bailey prefers his cream warmed, then put into the teacup, followed by the tea and a half cube of sugar.
2. Johann Bledsoe saved Iris from a bad hair day because he just happened to have women's hairpins in his pocket from the night before.
3. Tuning forks.
4. Clockwork spies.
5. Steam coach and its name: Prancer 457.
6. A young girl's journal about earthworms.
7. The unusual friendship between Iris and Marie.

If you read the book, you will find many more small and large details that add interest and structure to the overall story. The attention to detail gives *Eros Element* a sense of richness.

There is one problem with *Eros Element*. That is, although it does not end in a cliffhanger, I know there is more to the story. But I am going to have to wait to get it. If you can't tell by now, I will put it plainly. *Eros Element* is highly recommended!

I received a copy from the author in exchange for my review. This recommendation was originally posted on Smart Girls Love Sci Fi Romance

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## Maureen says

The thing that immediately grabs your eye about the Aether Psychics series, is the awesome looking blue covers. If I would have seen this book lying in the bookstore, I definitely would have grabbed a copy. So when I saw the sign up for the Review Tour of the Aether Psychics series I signed up as fast as I could.

'Eros Element' was from the very first page a really nice read. I didn't realize when I read the book description that this book would take place in 1870, so that was definitely a nice surprise since I love reading historical novels. The author has a very interesting way of writing that definitely hooked me to the pages of this book. The scenery and the travel devices are really well described, which makes you feel like you're a part of the story instead of a reader.

The main characters are especially very interesting. There's the main female character Iris McTavish, who definitely is a fun female character. Iris wants more than what she is supposed to have as a female in the



1800's, and I really loved her for that. She also has this interesting gift that makes you want to read more about her.

The main male character Edward Bailey is definitely not your average male character. He is a little weird, definitely a little insecure and has this huge passion for his job. I really loved Edward.

The romance is very light in this book. But that definitely wasn't a bad thing, since it fitted the characters personality perfectly. It was really sweet.

Although I did feel like this book could have been a little more fast-paced in the beginning, the writing style, the fun and interesting characters really made up for that. The Aether talk was a little difficult at times, but I just kept on reading and I really enjoyed this book.

Not only does this book have some great main characters, the secondary characters were also really fun to read about. Especially Marie. I loved that character.

This book was a really great read and I loved it. If you love fantasy and adventures reads, this book is perfect for you.

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## **Frank Tuttle says**

Yes. Steampunk, baby. Set in an 1870 that never was but should have been.

I loved this book (I was lucky, and had access to an ARC). I swear I could hear steam hissing and gears clacking the whole time I read it. The 'aether' of the title was my favorite of Dominic's inventions. She obviously knows her discredited Victorian physics, and she brought them to life brilliantly in a laboratory demonstration early in the book.

PROTIP: Show Frank a copper sphere and then cool it to draw down a vacuum, and you've won him over instantly.

In fact, her handling of the more fantastic elements of the book is a great strength. Without giving too much away, there's the aether, which is being sought as a power source. There are also some subtle and well-handled psychic talents, which I won't name, that also add flavor to the tale. But nothing is overdone, and there is a refreshing lack of *deus ex machina*s throughout.

Her version of 1870 is perfectly executed. She did one thing I haven't seen a lot of lately, in that she showed the downside to steam-powered society. Early in the book, the party's train makes a stop on the outskirts of London, and though brief, the scene is particularly illuminating -- the sickly poor, the railroad workers passing mirrors on poles beneath the train to detect the presence of Victorian spy-bots that might be crawling on the undercarriage, waiting to creep inside and spy on businessmen. It's deft touches like that which really transport the reader into the world of the book.

But I've read plenty of books with stunning technical settings that fell flat because I just didn't care about any of the characters.

Not so here. Edward Bailey and Iris McTavish step right out of the book from Page One, big as life and lots of fun.

This isn't a love-at-first-sight book. Oh no. Not at first sight or second or even well up into the twenties. I loved the way she handled the romantic aspects of the book, because -- well, you read it, I can't say too much, save to say I was well entertained.

There are a lot of characters to love here. Again, no spoilers, but Iris's female traveling companion is also thoroughly entertaining.

I think there's something for everyone here. You've got intrigue, suspense, and a globe-trotting party of adventurers. You've got aether and airships, romance and derring-do.

Best of all, Miss Dominic can turn a phrase.

If you enjoy steampunk, you'll love this. Even if you've never read a steampunk adventure in your life, you'll love this.

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### **Deborah says**

Iris McTavish is a woman in a pickle: she's intelligent and independent in an era where neither is considered a desirable trait in a woman. She's also in the embarrassing and stressful position of being nearly destitute after receiving the news that her famous father, archaeologist Professor McTavish, has died abroad and hence no more income will arrive to keep the household running.

So what should a girl do? Well, as no one else knows of the professor's demise, and there is a well paid job awaiting his return, Iris makes the bold move of accepting the position, masquerading as his assistant. This also allows her to flee abroad to escape the unwanted advances of the odious Lord Jeremy Scott, who is intent of marrying her as a means of getting at her father's as-yet unpublished work.

And then there is Edward. Professor of Aetherics, Edward Bailey is a martyr to his routines. Nothing upsets his stomach more than a meal at the wrong time, or thought of anything that might drag him away from his precise daily schedule of experimentation. Naturally, when he receives the summons to take part in this insane foreign adventure, he abhors the very notion. Unfortunately for him, the only way he can keep his University department afloat is to join the expedition.

This first novel in the Aether Psychics series is a rollicking good read, with twists and turns, blackmail and espionage, murder and romance, with a set of fully developed characters with surprises up almost everyone's sleeves. There is advanced steam and clockwork technology, psychic abilities, and the mysterious element of Aether, which has the potential to become a source of clean energy – if only they can isolate and stabilise it. Ms Dominic employs perfect language choices throughout, both in terms of sentence construction and vocabulary, to evoke the Victorianaesque setting of this exceptional steampunk tale. My only small hiccup with the novel was in the viewpoint shifts which, although fairly clear from the writing, would have benefitted from some sort of physical separation within the text – a blank line or an asterisk would be sufficient.

The ending seemed a little rushed, but the results were eminently satisfying, and I very much look forward to seeing how the remaining mysteries pan out in the second book.

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### **Caroline Mathews says**

Well done!

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### **a\_tiffyfit says**

review to come. loved this!

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### **Lee says**

Iris McTavish, an archaeological expert, stands in for her father on a scientific expedition to find ways to use aether as a power source. She needs the money the project backer promises to retain her independence from an unwanted and unscrupulous suitor. While on the expedition, she finds herself drawn to Edward Bailey, the aether scientist. But nobody on the expedition is what they seem to be. With enemies determined to disrupt the trip at every turn, can Edward and Iris unlock the potential of the Eros Element?

Not everyone would like the hero, Professor Bailey, but he makes me go squee. He's querulous and neurotic and sweet and tenderhearted. The high-maintenance professor type. His admiration for Iris is a complex thing: they share a passion of discovery while constantly challenging each other.

Our heroine, meanwhile, is plenty paranoid. If she touches significant objects with her bare hands, she has uncontrollable visions of the people and places the object has been associated with, and this has made her see ugly things. She chafes at the restrictions her gender and economic consequences have placed upon her. At one point, someone calls her on her detachment, thinking it's unnatural for a woman to be so composed when she's witnessed something so horrible. That's her way to cope, though, she's smart and means well. The secrets she keeps are understandable and she has good reason to not confide in people.

The baddies are convincing. There's a visceral immediate threat, and also a more mysterious far-ranging one.

Despite the title, this book is PG. I don't mind that when I expect it, but I did wonder if there would be more of the sensual in dealings with the Eros Element.

I felt that the cast's traveling around was a whirlwind, and I didn't get the feel of all the cities as differentiated from each other (except the culinary details).

There was also lots of setup done in this book that fleshed out the secondary characters, not because of their importance now, but because they might be the foci of later books in the series. The book raises a lot of questions it doesn't answer.

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### **Debbie Herbert says**

Iris is a woman ahead of her time and must use all her resources to survive at the unexpected death of her father.

I do hope the author will have a spin off novel with Edward's brother and also his former secretary - the Duke and Duchess.

A fun romp through historical Europe with sparkling dialogue, plenty of action and an likeable cast of characters.

I received a review copy of this novel from the author.

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## **Candace says**

Eros Element is a fantastic start to a new series. And while it's the beginning of something bigger it still has a great conclusion and doesn't leave us with a cliffhanger.

Eros Element has a different feel to it. First of all the male character, Edward, is very different. He's a bit OCD and is very much about things being a routine. He doesn't like surprises at all. But this somewhat forced trip truly pushes him outside his comfort zone and he slowly begins to realize the things that were missing in his life.

Iris is actually the bolder, stronger character. Stronger in the sense that she's not afraid (or at least doesn't let fear get the best of her) and will fight for what she wants. She's definitely the more lively of the two.

The romance is actually pretty light in this book because of the nature of the characters. The romance has time to slowly develop as the characters discover they do care about each other. The troubles and trials they encounter draw them together more and more.

The secondary characters, which I believe will be the main characters in the next book, are Marie and Johann. Marie is still a bit of an enigma. We don't know a lot about her but we've had a lot of things dropped into our lap so she's definitely a character I'm very, very curious about. Johann is a bit of a horse's ass. Well, that's the side we see the most of. While it's easy to dislike him, the good things he does do makes us wonder if he's just hiding the good side of him. It makes me wonder what he's really like I'm anxious to learn more about him and hopefully see him grow even more as a character.

The scientific aspects seemed a bit over my head, but I enjoyed the steampunk bits quite a lot. I went with the flow and enjoyed the story, not getting hung up on things. Overall it was a super fast read that I got through in no time at all.

You can find this review, and others like it, on my blog at <http://www.candacesbookblog.com>

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