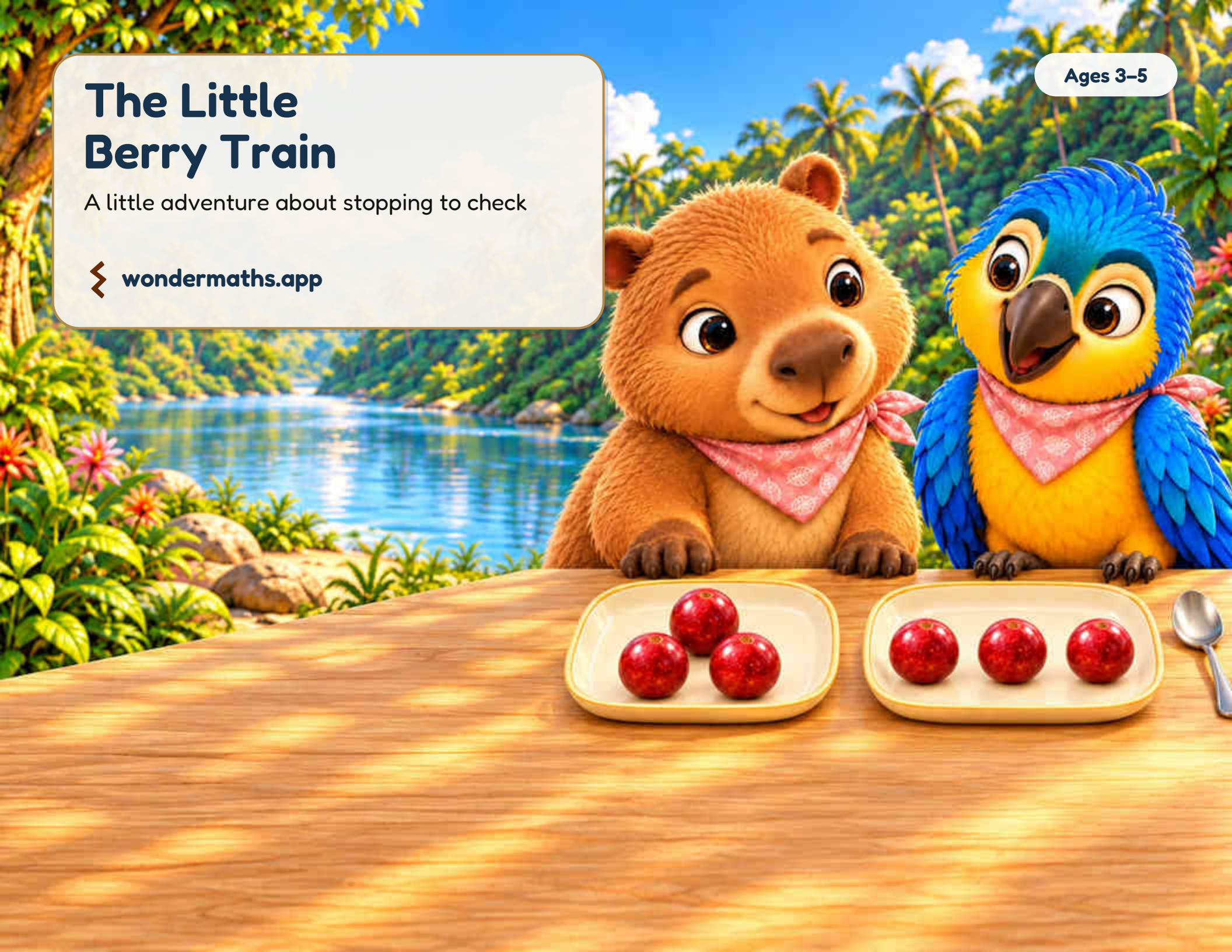
The Little Berry Train

A little adventure about stopping to check

wondermaths.app

Ages 3–5





Clink, clink, clink. The little capybara stopped with a spoon above her plate. That was her picnic bell. She had tried it very softly, so she wouldn't startle Aro. Come sit beside me. I'm Ori, and this is the afternoon a little berry train nearly missed its picnic.



On the table beside the Big River stood two plates. The capybara put three berries on hers. Aro put three on his. They were pretending each berry was a little train car. “Three cars each,” said the capybara. “Then we can start together!”



She wanted to ring the bell for her friend. But first, the trains had to be ready. Aro gently slid his berries into a long row. “Room to roll,” he said. “Toot, toot.” The capybara lowered her spoon. His row stretched much farther than hers. “Your train has more,” she said. “Mine isn't ready.”



So she pushed her own berries farther apart. One went this way. One went that way. The last stopped safely inside the rim. Now her row was long, too. But her paw was still resting on the very same last berry. “No new berry came onto my plate,” she said. “Did a new car hop aboard?” Aro asked. “No,” said the capybara.



She tried a different fix. She gently nudged Aro's berries close together. Now his long train looked like a little huddle. “There. Now yours has fewer.” Aro looked at the berries, then at the empty table around his plate. “Did a car hop off?” he asked. The capybara set down her spoon. “No. They're all still here.” “My bell's still quiet. I keep moving the berries, but I still don't know if we're ready.”



This time, the capybara kept her paws still. She looked at the table. No berries had come in. No berries had gone out. “I keep changing the trains,” she said. “I haven't checked the cars.” She whispered a new plan. “Wait. Count. Check.”



She touched each berry on her plate, once and only once. “One. Two. Three.” Aro waited while she touched his berries. “One. Two. Three.” Then she pointed between the plates, pairing the berries. “This one goes with yours. My second goes with your second. And my third goes with your third.” “Every berry has a partner. None is left without one.”



“Three for me. Three for you,” she said. “We were ready!” Her shoulders dropped. She picked up the spoon again. “I want to try my new way with your long train before I ring the bell.”



“Spread yours out again, Aro.” He slid his berries wide. The long row came back. For a moment, the capybara's spoon paused in the air. Then she rested it beside her plate. “Wait. Count. Check.” She counted both plates, touching each berry once. “One, two, three on mine. One, two, three on yours.” “Nothing needs fixing. The spaces changed. The berries didn't.”



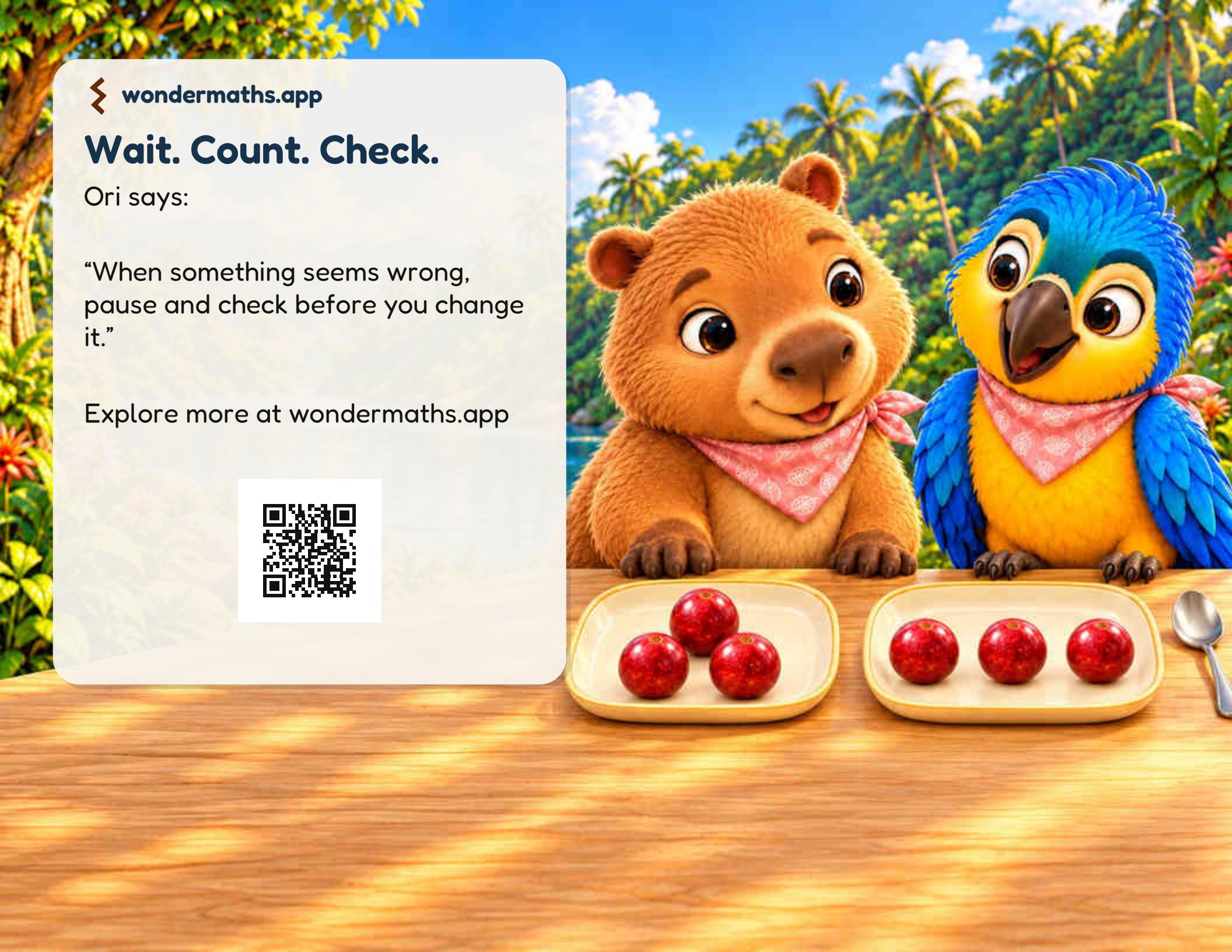
“Same cars. Longer ride!” she said. Aro bent his head toward the little huddle on her plate. “And yours is the cozy car. That's where I'd sit.” The capybara giggled. She had been trying to make their trains look alike. Aro had already found a place beside her.



“Wait. Count. Check,” she said, with a smile this time. She set the spoon against her plate and rang their picnic bell. Clink, clink, clink.



Two little trains were ready. One was close and cozy. One was spread out wide. And both friends could begin together. Little one, when something seems wrong, pause and check before you change it.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Wait. Count. Check.
Ori says:
“When something seems wrong, pause and check before you change it.”
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