

Daphne Henghes

1919 - 2007



Daphne was born on the 3rd August 1919 at 141 Church Street, Kensington (now Old Church Street), next to the Chelsea Arts Club. Her father Colin Gow was a minerologist, inventor and engineer. He was involved in the development of the graphite pencil and proud of his Scottish origins. Her mother Dorothy Willett was the daughter of a builder William Willett also the originator of British Summer Time. His liking for early morning horse riding had lead him to reflect that people did not make best use of the daylight hours, and rather than persuade everyone to change their working day it would be simpler to change the clocks. William's daughter Dorothy or Dollie was a lively character who distributed suffragette literature (rather to the horror of her family) and joined the Granville Barker theatre company (also to her families dismay) taking roles in Shakespeare and new plays by Bernard Shaw. Dollie and Daphne's father Colin were married in Chelsea in 1917. At the time one of her sisters advised her against the match, pointing out that whilst Colin was a good man he was too serious for her and might not share her interests in the arts and music.

Daphne's earliest memory was of being wheeled whilst sitting up in a pram by Colin with Dollie by his side. Dollie became very agitated and accused him of bumping Daphne down some steps and told him he should take more care. Daphne remembers wondering what on earth all the fuss was about. Soon after her birth the family moved to 42 Drayton Gardens where the household included a cook, a parlour maid and a nanny. Dollie ordered the food, and the parlour maid did the housework but it was the cook who scrubbed the steps every morning and whitened them. Everything always looked very clean and polished. Another memory of Daphne's from her infancy was being dropped on the floor by her nanny. The fall broke her collar bone and she recalled lying on the table immediately after the incident and seeing her nanny getting a milk bottle out of a cupboard, and the strong feeling of relief that something normal was happening. It was uncomfortable for Daphne to get to sleep after this and her nanny would sit with her.

Life between the wars as Daphne was growing up was very different to today. Ponies pulled milk carts. Coal was delivered by big dray

horses. There were muffin men and lamp-lighters for the gas lamps in the streets. Daphne saw a horse slip on ice and was pulled away by her nanny who did not want the little girl to watch as it was being whipped. Her mother Dollie was regarded as an enlightened employer, the servants had their own wireless and a daily paper, but Daphne remembered that Cook would stop work if she went into the kitchen and she knew that she was not really wanted in that area of the house.



Colin, her father, was a man who liked routine. He would say hello at the nursery door to Daphne in the morning before walking to work. He would be home promptly for lunch, have a nap for 10 minutes, and then put on his hat and walk back to the Morgan Crucible Company where he worked. When he came back in the evening Daphne might be playing with her mother and he would say hello and then walk up the road to the newsagents, get a paper and cigarettes and come back to read. Colin built Daphne a nice dolls-house and a toy farm, but Daphne

later commented that he was not a natural with children; he was very kind, but a bit Victorian. Dollie had left the theatre when she married and taken up pottery. She rented a studio at the bottom of their garden in Creswell Place where she had a potters wheel and kiln. In the summer the family would travel with Marjorie, the nanny, to Bandol on the French Mediterranean coast. Daphne had a generally happy childhood, but she did remember when she was young that she once got very angry, though she could not say what about. She recalled, however, that she had disliked the feeling intensely and had resolved never to be angry again! She apparently held to this resolve as in later life it was extremely unusual for her even to become slightly annoyed.

There were many musicians visiting the house and Daphne thought of music as much a part of life 'as eating apples'. Daphne's aunt Dorrie Gow was herself a composer who had studied under Vaughan Williams. Colin had a very good voice and could have been a singer. Regular visitors included Emilio Pujol and Matilde Cuervas, virtuoso Spanish guitarists and teachers who would come and visit when in the country and give lessons in the studio. Both Dollie and Daphne learnt the guitar with them and Daphne became a skilled player of the instrument. She also learnt the piano. At the age of about 6 Daphne had been taken to see the Diaghilev ballet 'The Firebird' and she was swept up in the magic of dance. She wanted to be the firebird dancing on the stage. After that she would spend hours dancing to gramophone records in the studio and took up ballet herself, first learning with Dalcrose and then Rambert. When she was only 14 she left school in order to concentrate on dance with Marie Rambert. This was rather to her fathers' dismay and she did continue with some private schooling for a time. Her mother supported her wish to dance, though she would have rather that her daughter played the piano professionally, but Daphne said that she never felt 'certain' of the music in the way that she was with ballet. She loved music and she wanted to move to it.



From about the age of 14 and a half Daphne started appearing on stage at the Mercury Theatre in Notting Hill Gate in the corps du ballet of the Rambert troupe as part of their popular 'ballet club'. She was rather a tall girl and younger than the others and after a time wondered if she would ever be given more challenging roles. Daphne thought perhaps she might go on the stage if she was too tall for dance so she went to

see Elsie Fogherthy who taught elocution and drama in a room at the top of the Albert Hall. She was an alarming woman, outspoken and fiercely questioning. She was sitting at a table the other side of a big room as Daphne approached hesitantly only to be told that she had walked very badly, and would she please go back and do it again. It turned out that Miss Fogherthy was friends with Rambert so the fact that Daphne went to see her was soon known. It was following this that Daphne got the role of chief nymph in 'l'Apres Midi d'une Faune'. After this she no longer wanted to leave dancing and Daphne never returned to the idea of working in the theatre.

Marie Rambert was also a forceful character but Daphne was always fond of her. She had a reputation for being very emotional, but if she had shouting fits at people it was because she minded about what they were doing and because she knew best how it should be, so Daphne felt that people should not have been offended or taken her rebukes as personal insults. People sometimes complained that Ramberts dancers were not technically as good as those of Ninette De Valois but artistically she drew out very



strong performances. She kept dancers who really loved dancing but those who just thought it would be nice to be on the stage would leave. To her own daughter Lulu, who was a gifted dancer, Rambert shouted, '*Lulu you are standing like a bag of prunes*'. (By which she meant sagging, without properly pulling in her muscles.) Rambert had a very poor view of smokers. Someone coming in late with a cigarette had shouted at them '*look at you like a savage with a piece of burning*

paper in your mouth'. Daphne was once called a '*humpback hippopotamus*'. This was when she was 16 and had to come along the front of the sage dressed in black wearing high heels in which she must have looked clumsy. When someone did particularly well however, Rambert would rush up after a performance and embrace them.

Gradually Daphne took on more and more roles. She danced The Pavane and Capriole Suite, choreographed by Fredric Ashton and Anthony Tudor. From the age of 15 she went on tour with Rambert. Dollie was rather anxious about this but Daphne was only away for a couple of weeks at a time. Dancing is physically demanding and Daphne worked hard. She hurt a knee when only 13 or 14 and it was discovered that they were both weak. Perhaps exacerbated by her height from then on her knees gave a lot of trouble. At 18 she not only slipped a knee but also tore her thigh muscle so badly that she could not work at ballet for a year. This was fairly devastating for her. It was a while before she was able to run for a bus during which time she discovered a lack of consideration amongst some bus drivers who did not bother to wait for an apparently healthy girl who seemed in no particular hurry.

Daphne lived at 42 Drayton Gardens until she was 17 and her parents divorced. The stress of the separation nearly caused her to have a breakdown. Trouble started when she was about 13 and her mother fell in love with another man. Her parents separated when she was 14, but the man was killed in a car accident whilst Daphne was on tour. Her parents came together again for a time after this but then parted. Dollie talked to Daphne a lot about her emotions during this time. These conversations had a bad effect on Daphne making her feel powerless and as if she was in some way to blame for the situation. Later Daphne came to see this emotional outpouring as very wrong and was careful to avoid such things herself. Dollie and Daphne moved down to Chelsea to a much smaller house at 56 Upper Cheyne Row which her mother loved but where Daphne felt unsettled. There was a double room downstairs, two bedrooms upstairs and a bathroom. No servants

lived in but a housekeeper came and cooked the lunch and did housework. Daphne still did not do real housework but did help with shopping and washing up in the evening. She felt she had been spoiled until then.

In November 1936 the BBC began television broadcasts from Alexandra Palace, and some time after this Daphne appeared on television with others from the Rambert Company, dancing a Frederic Ashton ballet. She was to appear further before the television service was suspended with the outbreak of war, playing the guitar for two Spanish flamenco dancers. The early days of television in her memory were somewhat chaotic with people running around the studios trying to figure out where things plugged in. Everyone appearing on camera had to wear thick yellow make-up so that their faces showed up properly on screen. Without this they would have appeared white and featureless.

As the Second World War approached Dollie took an interest in the Peace Pledge Union and soon had Daphne helping her to hand out leaflets to a somewhat sceptical public. It was often cold work and Daphne came up with the idea of wrapping hot water bottles in paper that they could keep inside muffs to keep their hands warm. Around this time Daphne also met a German sculptor at a party who worked under the name Henghes and was called Heinz by his friends, though his legal name was Gustav Heinrich Clusmann. They chatted together during the evening and as she was leaving she called out 'goodbye' to him and noticed some other girls exchanging knowing glances. This was enough to make her realise that he was something of a ladies man, yet once outside walking home she surprised herself considerably by thinking *'I'd like to marry that man'*.

Shortly after the outbreak of war Heinz was deported to Australia along with 2,500 other Germans on the 'Dunera'. Concern about 5th columnists ('the enemy within') had caused the government to adopt a hasty and ill-conceived policy of interning all Germans. This policy caught artists, writers, musicians, doctors, lawyers, anyone with the

wrong nationality. It was even applied to Jews who had recently fled the Nazi regime. The policy was soon revised and some allowed to return, Heinz amongst them, and he spent much of the war working for the BBC and as an ARP warden in London.

Daphne meanwhile had moved to the country with her mother and aunt Gertrude (or 'G' as she was known by the family) to a cottage belonging to her parents at Tutts Clump, which was some distance from Reading. Here she worked on the neighbour's farm and did a morning milk round. Daphne loved animals and learned how to milk. She also learned about gardening, in order to grow vegetables in the cottage garden. When she was called up to join the war effort she went before a tribunal as a conscientious objector and said she had nothing against nursing and farm work and explained that she was already working on a farm. The farmer wrote a note to say that if he lost her he would have to have somebody else. She had to fill in a form stating her objections so she cited religious grounds. She objected fundamentally to the taking of life. The tribunal agreed that she should remain on the farm and were polite towards her. She felt that they might not have been so nice if she had been a man.

There were prisoner of war camps on Buckelbury Common about half a mile from the cottage. Italian prisoners lived in tents and made themselves front gardens with pebbles. Some of them were allowed out to work if people applied for their help. They would do gardening and other tasks. They seemed thoroughly civilised. American soldiers also came bringing their *'wilder American problems'* with them. Daphne had two goats and as food was rationed for them as well as for humans. One day she was climbing up smaller trees getting ivy for them on the farmer's land, when she heard voices approaching. Two American soldiers came creeping under the tree, they were going to set a rabbit trap. Daphne stayed absolutely still. They moved on but then one of them came back just as a twig cracked. He looked up and saw Daphne in the branches above. His expression was a picture but he did not say a word and left. She told the farmer and he checked and found a wire trap for rabbits that he removed. Daphne was noticed in rather a

different way by an Italian soldier who was working for locals and would pass her from time to time. One day he said *'you two goats, I two goats, we marry, why not'*? She replied politely in her best Italian *'non è possibile'*.

Daphne would come up to London once a fortnight on her day off (taken instead of half a day once a week). She would meet her father for lunch. London in the war she described as like being in a dream. There was the blackout, and going into Paddington one would see houses half destroyed by bombs, wild flowers growing in the rubble, washing hanging from windows and rags from branches where they might have been blown by bombs. Sirens would whine but only infrequently during the daytime. Colin looked very pale and grey and had to do a lot of fire-watching on the roof at night. It was hard to sleep in London because of the noise of bombing. People slept on underground platforms so there were chalk-marks showing where they should lie. People would sleep down there as a matter of course as the raids were so regular. Daphne remembered seeing all the way from Reading, the sky over London turned red from the fires as it burned.

After the war Daphne moved back to London with her mother who was in poor health. She applied to be demobbed early and went back to Rambert for morning classes. After a time Rambert asked her to take the junior classes and teach others. At around this time Heinz was working just up the road from Daphne and her mother, helping to make ceramic buttons and brooches. After some time they were engaged. Dollie was upset by developments, as she did not see Heinz as a suitable match for her daughter. She did not think them compatible and saw Heinz as too 'flighty'. He was also 13 years Daphne's senior. She tried to actively dissuade her daughter but to no avail. Dollie then had an accident from stooping too quickly and knocking her head on furniture, which gave her concussion. The doctor said that Dollie was more 'nervously concussed' than really so and her convalescence would not be helped by a postponement of the wedding. Years later it turned out that her lifelong poor health was due to Polycythemia (too many red blood cells).

In 1948 Daphne and Heinz were married in Battersea. A reception was held for friends at the Albert Studios where Heinz had been based for some time. Daphne's father Colin had arranged food from Harrods. During the party there was a knock on the door, which Daphne answered, to be greeted by the milkman saying that payment was some weeks overdue. She got him the money and he duly congratulated her on her marriage. The landlady was also pleased at the match observing that maybe now she might be paid on time. After the wedding Daphne cycled over the Albert Bridge to see her mother who greeted her with the words *'my poor darling, you're married!'* The housekeeper was shocked by this but Daphne merely saw the comment as true to type and was amused. Daphne and Heinz lived in the Albert Studios for over five years during which time she continued teaching at the Rambert ballet and Heinz became a lecturer at the Royal College of Art. She was impressed when in order to get the appointment Heinz was able to very rapidly do a number of drawings for his portfolio that showed off his skills.

Daphne always liked animals and the two Siamese cats she and Heinz kept, were joined by six chickens. This was not a planned acquisition but rather a rescue of chickens she had seen on sale locally. Soon they had a run in the tiny garden in front of the studios and were producing eggs. Not long after they married Heinz became a British subject so Daphne, who had briefly become German, also regained her nationality. Some time later Heinz also changed his name by deed poll to Henry Henghes, so Mrs Clusmann was now officially Mrs Henghes. From a letter to a cousin it seems that Dollie was making efforts to reconcile herself with the situation; *'Daffy's marriage seems to be turning out happily strange as it seems – Heinz is much cleaner, calmer and kinder. She has a very interesting life and meeting lots of people of one sort or another – Frank Dobson etc. Of course she works fantastically hard – housework etc. Ballet classes going very well and she has begun pottery and got on wonderfully. I thought he was downright awful to start with – as you did didn't you? And others. But I'm inclined to think now he doesn't mean any harm – just a strange, wild creature – selfish, of course. Goodness Knows!'* Heinz

was by now gaining in profile and exhibiting widely. In 1951 a sculpture of his was exhibited on the south bank site as part of the Festival of Britain. Also in 1951 Heinz and Daphne bought a one room holiday cottage in the Dordogne in France. They had visited the area a number of times and were both taken with the landscape and the prehistoric caves, most especially the paintings of Lascaux.

In the 1952 London smog Heinz came to collect Daphne from Notting Hill where she was teaching ballet to drive her back home in their Jeep. The smog was so thick that they could only drive at a walking pace and at some junctions fires had been lit so that people could see where they were. On the Albert Bridge Daphne got out of the Jeep and walked alongside with her hand outstretched to guide Heinz and stop him from bumping into the kerb.

Heinz was growing restless with life in England and wanted to leave his teaching post to concentrate fully on his own sculpture. They discussed moving out of London but decided instead to move to France. A property on a hillside above the village of Tursac with a striking view of the river Vézère was found. The house was built against the rock and had no running water or sanitation, but it did come with a number of barns including one large enough to make a good studio, as well as surrounding fields and woodland. In the spring of 1953 Heinz and Daphne left England along with their two Siamese cats and a grand piano and set about establishing a new life for themselves. Heinz was quite concerned that Daphne might not like to live abroad in the countryside, but she soon had more chickens and a goat and started a vegetable garden. She always liked fresh air and country life and coped splendidly with the rigours of their life. A friend from this time recalled Daphne as *'beautiful and with a natural elegance regardless of what she wore, and a pure, angelic aura that was striking. She walked with the graceful step of a dancer as her goats followed behind.'* Money was particularly tight and at one point Daphne and Heinz were down to their last £10. Daphne suggested that they turn to her father but Heinz was against this and approached one of his patrons in Italy who sent some money. To economise they

walked wherever possible in order to avoid using the Jeep, and they lived frugally on stews of cheap meat and home-grown vegetables. Writing to James Laughlin in the early autumn Heinz gives a sense of their preoccupations: *'Life has in fact a curious time sense here,- we are growing things, buying preserving jars, walking around the woods and looking at the trees all with eyes which say that will give us firewood, fruit, preserved vegetables for the winter,- and in the winter we shall be sorting over our beans to pick the largest as seed for next year. The hay was cut today and will be stored tomorrow,- for the winter and the airy tiles of my studio which admit all kinds of charming insects fill me with horrors when I think of autumn winds.'*

For the next 11 years Heinz and Daphne lived in France. Heinz worked on his sculpture and drawing (or 'dessins coloriees' as he liked to call them), and Daphne kept the house, the animals and the kitchen garden. Heinz had a number of exhibitions overseas and would travel to these, including Paris, London and New York. They also regularly went to Italy and Daphne would travel to England, sometimes without Heinz. Whenever a sculpture was sold the money situation would be better so the house was gradually improved with two small buildings joined to make one, a bathroom and septic tank added, electricity connected, running water piped from a spring on the property and even central heating. Improvements took time, but after six years the house was quite civilised and in 1959 Daphne gave birth to their son, Ian.



For the first five years of his life Ian was surrounded by nature and the various animals of the household, which now included a dog 'Loup' (French for wolf). Loup had been rescued from the river where he had

been left to drown by his previous owner. Daphne and Heinz had taken pity on him despite being warned that he was wild. Though he never lost a difficult habit of chasing his tail when he was fed, requiring some water to be thrown at him so that he would stop and eat, he became a wonderful guard dog and quite devoted to Daphne. The arrival of an infant human unsettled him and though he was never rough or threatening towards Ian (doubtless as he recognised the importance of Ian to his mother) he treated him with suspicion, which in turn led to Ian having a natural suspicion of dogs.

In 1964 Heinz was appointed to run the sculpture school of the Winchester School of Art, where he would also for a time be Head of Fine Art. The family moved back to England and Ian was soon at school in Winchester. The same year Daphne became a member of the Self Realization Fellowship, a meditation centred organization founded by Paramahansa Yogananda. Daphne had long had an interest in spirituality and eastern philosophies, and the 'Autobiography of a Yogi' by Yogananda had drawn her to discover more about SRF and its blend of east and west. As a practicing member she was to draw additional strength from the teachings which helped her to cope with what might otherwise have been a turbulent time for her; not just because of the move and her resumption of teaching ballet at weekends in London but also because of her changing relationship with Heinz.

Heinz was a person of quite extraordinary intensity and very different to Daphne. He was argumentative and fiery. This was in great contrast to Daphne's gentleness, her calmness and infinite patience, and the difference was striking to their friends. It was certainly because of her nature that the partnership survived as long as it did. Heinz had probably been unfaithful to Daphne early in their marriage, but from the early 1960s his relationships grew more frequent. Perhaps as Daphne had an idea from the outset of the kind of man Heinz was this was not as distressing for her as it might have been, and with a child to care for, she drew on her considerable inner strength to build a calm and solid centre to a family that had she been anyone else, would



almost certainly have disintegrated. She and Heinz did grow gradually apart over the years, but there was never any animosity on her side and any he might have had she quickly defused. From the mid sixties, as far as Ian was concerned, going on holiday with his parents and his father's girlfriend was perfectly normal. This was a situation his mother did more than just tolerate on his behalf, in order to preserve the family, but accepted wholly and without

any hint of censure. She was always open and welcoming to all.

Weekend ballet classes for children were taught by Daphne at the Mercury Theatre in Notting Hill Gate. She and Ian would catch the dark green steam locomotive from Winchester that still ran on the Southern Region until it was electrified, and Ian would be left with his Grandfather whilst she went off for a few hours to teach. On one occasion Colin took Ian to Harrods. Whilst they were looking at a display of a dazzlingly futuristic kitchen Colin felt faint and said that he needed some air. Ian was so absorbed in the display that he did not hear his Grandfather's words or notice as he headed for the exit without looking round to see if the boy was following. When Ian next looked, Colin had vanished. He walked slowly round the large room and when it was clear that his Grandfather was more than momentarily invisible, Ian reported himself as lost to a surprised attendant behind a dark mahogany table. There was no information point, crèche or children's room in those days so Ian was taken to the lost property office where he sat on a wicker hamper, having first provided his name and said where his mother was teaching. Colin meanwhile on realising that his Grandson was not with him when he left the store, decided that if it had been him who was left behind, he would catch a taxi

home so that was doubtless what Ian would do too. On that basis he went back to his flat to wait for him. Daphne meanwhile got a message from Harrods at the Rambert school and duly came and collected Ian. She was not keen to delegate child-caring responsibilities to her father after that so Ian had to go with her in future and watch her teach.

In 1970 Daphne and Ian moved to London and then three years later to Letchworth in Hertfordshire where Ian attended St Christopher's School. In 1973 Daphne and Heinz divorced. They had not been living together for many years by then, yet still Daphne first asked Ian before going ahead. In practice the divorce made no obvious difference to life and was more a practical arrangement. Heinz would still come and stay for weekends as before and for the two further years that Heinz was alive holidays to France would still be taken together. Heinz died in December 1975 in France at the age of 69. This was a considerable shock, particularly to Ian, who was 16 at the time and had no idea how ill his father had become just before his death.

At the end of the 1970's and through the 1980's as Ian went to college and was living in London Daphne became increasingly involved in the Self Realization Fellowship. She was Co-Ordinator for a time, taking on the responsibilities of running the U.K. branch of the SRF. Daphne also travelled on a number of occasions to the Headquarters of SRF in Los Angeles and also stayed at retreats near San Diego. She spoke warmly of the beauty and peace she found there, especially at the Lake Shrine on Sunset Boulevard, which Ian was to visit with a friend some years later.

In 1984 Ian became engaged to Tessa Balogh, a childhood friend. They had first met in France in 1964 as her parents had bought a house nearby. Daphne was delighted by this development and indicated her approval by buying a double bed for their visits to Letchworth as a couple. When they married in France in 1988 and later when their children were born Daphne was also always there for them, being quietly supportive in whatever way seemed best. Through the 1990s

Daphne continued her active involvement with SRF and also for a time learnt Hindi. SRF meetings were held in the Unitarian Church in Notting Hill and one evening walking back to the underground her companion mentioned that she used to attend the Ballet Club nearby and remembered seeing a dancer by the name of Gow. Daphne mentioned this in passing to Ian, but when asked what her companion had said when she found out that the Gow in question was Daphne herself, said *'oh that's quite unimportant'* and that she had not told her!

In 2001 Daphne fell ill, and what had started as flu turned into pneumonia. It was only after a few weeks, when Ian saw that she was clearly not recovering, that he was eventually able to persuade her to see a doctor. In order to do this he had first to enlist the help of her homeopathic doctor who came on a home visit in order to assure her that conventional medicine did have a role to play. She had not seen an 'ordinary' doctor for many years at this point. A young doctor came and gently explained that even conventional medicine could only do a limited amount for her unless she agreed to go into hospital and have the constant care they could provide. Overcoming some initial reluctance she agreed, and Ian accompanied her in the ambulance and saw her settled in. Her condition improved almost immediately but it turned out that she also had endocarditis and would have to live with reduced heart function. After six weeks she was able to leave hospital and come to London to live with Ian and Tessa in their house in Highgate. She had reservations about this as she did not want to be a burden. She also said at one point that she would not want her grandchildren to become too attached to her as then they might miss her when she died!

A live-in mother-in-law could involve many couples' relationship being put under considerable strain, but Daphne was always unassuming and uncritical. Her not wanting to be awkward in any way was itself perhaps the biggest issue but merely required strategies to cope with. Rather than asking if she would like a cup of tea, the normal practice became to say that a cup of tea was already being made if she would like one poured out for her! Though she no longer

walked far, she liked Waterlow Park and its cafe, which were just across the road and she also much enjoyed holidays to France every spring and summer, where the house had been enlarged by the conversion of an attic to accommodate the expanded family. In 2006 she was present at the inauguration of the new SRF London Temple, the first time the organisation had its own building in London, and something that she along with its many members had long been working towards. The same year there were also two solo exhibitions of works by Heinz and she attended both.

Remembering Daphne a number of people have described her as 'dignified', also 'gracious', 'selfless', 'serene' and emanating an inner strength. She may be remembered for many things, from her kindness, consideration and hospitality, her culinary skills, (including stinging-nettle soup) to her dancing, her spiritual beliefs (which she never sought to impose on others) and her role in the family, variously as wife, mother, mother-in-law and grandmother. She was certainly an exceptional person and we were blessed to have her amongst us.



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