

Motherwitch EPK

Logline

Eleni, a scorned painter in Cyprus in 1882, attempts to resurrect her dead children, but instead awakens the Kalikantzari creatures of Cypriot folklore. Now she must find a way to overcome her grief and anger and dispel the curse that has befallen her village.

Contact

International Sales: B-Rated International
arnaud@b-ratedfilms.com / tanguy@b-ratedfilms.com

Producer
dinos@carettafilms.com.cy

Director
minos@cyprianfilmsny.com

Short Synopsis

Cyprus, 1882. Eleni, a French-educated painter, roams the countryside with her three children, gathering flowers to grind into pigments while singing the lullaby of St. Marina, a mother's plea for a child's return. Under uneasy English rule, tragedy strikes when her children wander into the ruins of an ancient chapel and are killed by a collapsing wall.

Branded cursed by the villagers, Eleni withdraws from life, burning her paintings and burying toys. Her isolation is broken by Michalakis, a sensitive boy abused by his violent father, who becomes entranced by her art. Against her better judgment, Eleni draws him into a forbidden ritual rooted in folklore, believing that creation itself can restore her children. As Christmas nears, the ritual darkens: she needs blood for the portrait that will resurrect them. Though she hesitates, Michalakis offers himself. That night, shadows swarm, Michalakis vanishes, and something ancient is unleashed.

The village is soon terrorized by the Kalikantzari—cruel, mischievous spirits. Eleni convinces herself her children have returned, but the truth emerges: she has given form not to life, but to grief. In the ruins, she confronts Lamia, a demon-mother who feeds on loss. Rejecting anger and destruction, Eleni redeems herself as a mentor to Michalakis. In a final act of creation, she offers her own blood so Michalakis can paint truth instead of rage.

Dawn comes. Grief remains, but no longer rules. Through art, life goes on.

Long Synopsis

Cyprus, 1882. Eleni, a French-educated painter, wanders the countryside with her three children, gathering flowers to grind into pigments. She sings them the lullaby of St. Marina—a mother's plea for a child's return from slumber—while the village simmers with unease under new English rule. One evening, while Eleni is lost in her work, the children slip into the ruins of an ancient chapel. A crumbling wall collapses, killing them all.

At the funeral, villagers whisper that it is a curse for a mother to bury her children. Eleni retreats into silence, burning her paintings and burying toys, determined to sever herself from life. But Michalakis, a lonely boy brutalized by his father, wanders into her home and becomes transfixed by her sketches. Though she tries to send him away, Eleni instead draws him into a secret ritual—collecting strange materials rooted in folklore and art. Painting, she tells him, is not indulgence; it is creation itself, and through a portrait of her children, she hopes to bring them back.

As Christmas approaches, the ritual turns darker. Eleni seeks one final ingredient—the life-blood of a child. She draws a knife on Michalakis, but a flash memory of her children stops her in her tracks. And then, Michalakis, hardened by abuse, offers himself and Eleni uses leeches to draw blood from the boy. That night, as Eleni paints, a violent wind tears through the house. Shadows scamper outside. Michalakis vanishes. Something has been summoned.

Soon, the village is plagued by disturbances: livestock attacked, pottery smashed, footprints and ethereal voices. The Kalikantzari—mischievous, cruel spirits of Cypriot folklore—have arrived. Eleni believes her children have come back, but Michalakis warns her these beings are not what she hopes. When she strikes him in fury, he flees, his eyes glowing unnaturally.

Meanwhile, Michalakis' parents spiral. His father, Kaeemis, rules by violence; his mother, Maria, clings to fear and obedience. The Kalikantzari invade their home, forcing Kaeemis to face the terror he has inflicted. Michalakis, empowered by the anarchic spirits, confronts his father—and disappears into the night.

As chaos and death spreads, Eleni finally understands the truth: she has not resurrected her children, but given form to ancient grief. In the village ruins, she encounters Lamia, a gorgon-like mother demon who feeds on loss, promising reunion while devouring the living. Eleni rejects her call. She destroys the painting that bound the spirits and burns her son's broken flute, severing the spell.

Violence peaks when Kaeemis is mistakenly executed by English soldiers, his death born of fear and misunderstanding. Traumatized, the feverish Michalakis wanders into the ruins where Lamia prepares to claim him. Eleni's lullaby cuts through the darkness, pulling him back from the brink. In the final confrontation, Eleni nurturingly calls upon Michalakis to choose creation over destruction. Lamia intervenes—taking control of Eleni's body to kill Michalakis. As Eleni cries the same bilious black tears of Lamia, Michalakis attempts to temper her grief reminding her she told

him the dead live on through art and creation. And with that he breaks Lamia's control over Eleni. She in turn offers her own blood—the last pigment—so that Michalakis can paint his own truth. As he paints a portrait of his father, his grief is dispelled, and Lamia crumples.

Dawn breaks. It is time for Eleni to say goodbye to her children. She recites the ancient rhyme of the epiphany, and throws food scraps onto the roof of the ruined church. She releases a final sob, and returns to her new ward and protégé: the boy Michalakis.

Eleni and Michalakis begin again, he paints landscapes under her mentorship, with colors made from flowers, not blood. Grief remains—but it no longer rules. Through art, life goes on.

Director Bio

Minos Papas is a director and cinematographer whose films move between myth and memory, realism and the uncanny. Working between Los Angeles and Cyprus, he crafts atmospheric, character-driven stories that explore grief, trauma, and how we use mythology to map the inexplicable. His work has screened at Tribeca, SXSW and Sundance, and draws on folklore, psychology, and lived experience to create intimate, haunting, and emotionally resonant stories.

His first feature film, *Shutterbug* (2009), received outstanding reviews from international media, including *Variety* and *The New York Times*. His second feature film, *Behind the Mirror* (2015), was honored with the Best Thriller Award at both the Manhattan Film Festival and the Mexico International Film Festival.

In 2013, his documentary *A Short Film About Guns* won the Best Online Short Award at the Tribeca Film Festival. In 2016, his film *Tango on the Balcony*, which explores PTSD among war veterans, won the Best Director Award at the Cyprus International Short Film Festival and screened at more than thirty international festivals.

In 2021, he explored his other passion, painting and visual art with the television series *Flowstate / North Brooklyn Artists*, which aired on PBS in the United States and received a New York Emmy Award for Best Documentary Series. Minos served as Producer on Liz Sargent's feature film debut *Take Me Home*, which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival 2026.

In 2025, he completed his third feature film, *Motherwitch*, a dark folklore gothic shot in Cyprus, which was presented in 2025 at the Frontières Buyers Showcase at the Cannes Film Festival and world premiered at the International Film Festival of Rotterdam 2026.

Minos Papas has been honored with two New York Emmy Awards (2020 and 2022) and continues to develop his next projects. He is into Tarkovsky, Kubrick, football (soccer), death metal and kittens.

www.minospapas.com

www.cyprianfilmsny.com

minos@cyprianfilmsny.com

Director Headshot

LINK

https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/dehghkijv9zrkzs24ppen/Minos-Papas-Headshot-EmilySandifer-PROOF_cropped_tall.jpg?rlkey=zywzxsx962b1oox0zqnm7wlei3&dl=0



Director Statement

Motherwitch was born from years spent listening to those who carry unspeakable grief—bereaved parents, healers, artists, veterans whose memories echo long after war. In the shadow of loss, I found voices brave enough to speak, and others who turned pain into art for survival.

My journey led me through the work of the Cameron Kravitt Foundation, where I witnessed how doctors learn to stand beside parents in their darkest hour, and to face their own sorrow with grace. It brought me to the poems and paintings of my friend Mandy Kelso, who honoured her son Wyatt through creation. It carried me deeper into the wounds of trauma while working with veterans in the Patton Veterans Project “I Was There”, helping them shape their stories through film, and shaping my own film *Tango on the Balcony* in return.

Motherwitch is also my love-letter to Cyprus—to its captivating beauty, its cloudswept mountains and red earth, its lullabies, superstitions, and stories whispered from grandmother to child. The film reaches back into the island’s early colonial years, when old beliefs and foreign rule lived uneasily side by side, and the landscape itself seemed to absorb both suffering and resilience. Through myth and memory, I hope to honour the Cyprus that shaped me: fierce, wounded, magical.

Motherwitch is a continuation of that path—a tale wrapped in folklore but rooted in real human ache. Through myth, mystery, and the bond between parent and child, I hope to open a space for conversation, reflection, and healing.

This film seeks to travel far—across festivals, communities, and hearts—gathering those who know loss, and those willing to understand the inner creative child within us all.

Motherwitch Festivals

World Premiere: International Film Festival of Rotterdam, 2026

Director's Previous Festival List

Tribeca Film Festival
Sundance Film Festival (as producer/DP)
SXSW Film Festival (as producer/DP)
PROOF Film Festival - American Cinematheque
Athens International Film Festival
San Diego International Film Festival
SoHo International Film Festival
LA Greek Film Festival
New York Hellenic Film Expo
International Short Film Festival of Cyprus
Florida Film Festival (as producer/DP)
Mexico International Film Festival
Manhattan Film Festival
Hudson Valley International Film Festival
NY Shorts Fest
Festival for Peace, Inspiration and Equality, Jakarta
LA Indie Fest
Honolulu Int'l Film Festival
Seattle Transmedia & Independent Film Festival
Copa Shorts Film Fest
Big Apple Film Festival
Austin Music Video Festival
Panther City Film Festival
Biennale Danza
Thessaloniki Cinedance
Cannes World Film Festival
Delhi Shorts International Film Festival
Forth Worth Independent Film Showcase
North Carolina Film Festival
Erie Int'l Film Festival
GI Film Festival
Interfilm Detmold Germany
Brighton Final Cut Film Festival
1st Annual Gotham Film Festival
5th Annual Black Bear Film Festival
8th Annual LA Int'l Short Film Festival
Director's Guild of Cyprus Film Festival
Take One Action Film Festival, Edinburgh
Northside Film Festival, Brooklyn Arts Council

Production info

Motherwitch is a Cyprus-N. Macedonia-USA co-production.

A Caretta Films Production

<https://www.carettafilms.com.cy/>

A co-production with Cyprian Films, New York

<https://cyprianfilmsny.com/>

And Focus Pocus Films

<https://focuspocus.mk/>

The film was made in co-production with The Deputy Ministry of Culture of Cyprus / Department of Contemporary Culture, and made possible by the support of financial incentives granted by the Government of the Republic of Cyprus (Invest in Cyprus), as well as the support of the Film Agency of North Macedonia.

Minos Papas participated in the Torino Film Lab (extended) 2019 to develop the script.

Motherwitch was shot entirely on location in Cyprus, in a remote, uninhabited 15th Century village. Post production services were completed by Outpost MTL in Montreal, Canada.

<https://www.outpostmtl.com/>

The film was selected by the Fantasia Frontières Buyers Showcase at the Cannes Marché du Film 2025.

Film Stills

HI RES:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/i1zj5jncsei5xwilqcjv/ANEGx6wsqvjYR4Uus0ihbjQ?rlkey=gelqedr1tqo0il60fuiq2xsxr&dl=0>







Trailer & Poster

Coming Soon - please contact us

Press

ARTICLES

VARIETY, April 9 - 2025 - Cannes' Frontières Platform Reveals 2025 Selection, Ranging From Epic Fantasy to Indigenous Folklore and Drag Queen Horror (EXCLUSIVE)

<https://variety.com/2025/film/global/cannes-frontieres-platform-2025-lineup-1236363314/>

GREEK NATIONAL HERALD, Oct 29, 2024 - Minos Papas on His New Film 'Motherwitch (Dodecameron: The Twelve Days of Christmas)'

<https://www.thenationalherald.com/minos-papas-on-his-new-film-motherwitch-dodecameron-the-twelve-days-of-christmas/>

GREEK NATIONAL HERALD, Sep 26, 2024 - Minos Papas Announces 'Motherwitch' Teaser Set to Premiere at Cyprus Comic Con

<https://www.thenationalherald.com/minos-papas-announces-motherwitch-teaser-set-to-premiere-at-cyprus-comic-con/>

PODCASTS

Oct 23, 2025 - The Dale Hurst Writing Show | 52. Cypriot Gothic

<https://thebournemouthjournal.com/the-dale-hurst-writing-show-52-cypriot-gothic/>

Oct 17, 2024 - Cyprus History Podcast - An interview with Minos Papas

[Spotify link](#)

Links

Instagram

https://www.instagram.com/motherwitch_movie

Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61565719532529>

Tech Specs

Shot on Kinefinity Cameras

4K Digital Cinema

1:1.55 aspect ratio (flat)

Color

TRT 104 minutes

Credits

Μια παραγωγή της Caretta Films | A Caretta Films Production

Συμπααραγωγή με την Cyprian Films, New York
A Co-production with Cyprian Films, New York

Και την Focus Pocus Films | And Focus Pocus Films

σε συμπαραγωγή με το Υφυπουργείο Πολιτισμού της Κύπρου | Made in co-production with the
Cyprus Deputy Ministry of Culture

και με την οικονομική υποστήριξη του Film Agency of North Macedonia | and with the financial
support of the Film Agency of North Macedonia

σε συνεργασία με τους | Produced in Association with
Σάββας Λιάσης | Savvas Liasis
The Bayha Group
Pickpocket Productions

Μια ταινία του Μίνου Παπά | A Film by Minos Papas

Σκηνοθεσία | Directed by
Μίνως Παπάς | Minos Papas

Σενάριο | Written by
Μίνως Παπάς | Minos Papas
Νικόλας Κουρούμτζης | Nikolas Kouroumtzis
Ευριπίδης Δίκαιος | Euripides Dikaios

Παραγωγός | Producer
Κωνσταντίνος Νικηφόρου | Constantinos Nikiforou

Συμπααραγωγοί | Co-Produced by
Μίνως Παπάς | Minos Papas
Ντάρκο Πόποβ | Darko Popov

Μαργαρίτα Ζαχαρίου | MARGARITA ZACHARIOU

Μίλτος Γερολέμου | MILTOS YEROLEMOU

Τζέισον Χιουζ | JASON HUGHES

Δανάη Κατσαμένη | DANAI KATSAMENI

Άθως Αντωνίου | ATHOS ANTONIOU

Μαρίνα Μακρή | MARINA MAKRIS

Δημήτρης Ανδρέα | DIMITRI ANDREA

Τζόρνταν Γουόλτερς | JORDAN WALTERS

Χριστίνα Μαρούχου | CHRISTINA MAROUCHOU

Πρωτοεμφανιζόμενος | And introducing

Σήφης Κατσουλάκης | SIFIS KATSOULAKIS

Executive Producer

Σάββας Λιάσης | Savvas Liasis

Executive Producers

Κωνσταντίνος Νικηφόρου | Constantinos Nikiforou

Λιζ Σάρτζεντ | Liz Sargent

Βάλερι Στάινμπεργκ | Valery Steinberg

Executive Producers

Τζουν Μπέιχα | June Bayha

Χάρλεν Μπέιχα | Harlen Bayha

Μάικλ Μπορέλι | Michael Borrelli

Σάμσον Μεσελέ | Samson Mesele

Άντονι Τίμπερμαν | Anthony Timperman

Τζόζεφ Ρήντερ | Joseph Reader

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Μοντέρ | Editor

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Μουσική | Composer

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ΓΚΟΡΑΝ ΙΓΝΙΑΤΟΦΣΚΙ | GORAN IGNJATOVSKI

Ενδυματολόγος | Wardrobe Designer
ΛΑΚΗΣ ΓΕΝΕΘΛΗΣ | LAKIS GENETHLIS

Ειδικά Πρακτικά Εφέ | Special Practical Effects
ΧΡΙΣΤΟΔΟΥΛΟΣ ΜΑΡΤΑΣ | CHRISTODOULOS MARTAS

Διανομή Ρόλων | Casting by
ΒΕΡΑ ΑΝΔΡΕΟΥ | VERA ANDREOU

Ζωγραφική | Paintings by
ΣΤΕΦΑΝΟΣ ΝΕΑΡΧΟΥ | STEFANOS NEARCHOU

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ΑΑΡΟΝ ΣΟΥΠ | AARON SOUP
ΑΡΛΕΤ ΣΙΤΡΟΝ | ARLETTE CITRON

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Επόπτης Σεναρίου | Script Supervisor
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Άστον Γκρην | Ashton Green

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Ντέγιαν Μπογογιέβσκι | Dean Bogojevski

Δεύτερος Βοηθός Κάμερας | 2nd AC
Αντρέι Νεντέλκοβσκι | Andrej Nedelkovski

Ψηφιακός Τεχνικός Εικόνας | DIT
Ανδρέας Χαραλάμπους | Andreas Charalambous

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Σταύρος Τερλικκάς | Stavros Terlikkas

Μπούμαν | Boom Operators
Παναγιώτης Κριναιός | Panayiotis Krinaios
Μάριος Μηνάς | Marios Minas

Ηλεκτρολόγος Φωτισμού | Gaffer
Ίβαν Γκιόρσεφ | Ivan Gjorshev

A' Βοηθός Ηλεκτρολόγου | Best Boy Electrician

Γιάγκορ Στοϊκόβικ | Jagor Stojkovikj

Ηλεκτρολόγος | Electrician

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Μακενίστας | Key Grip

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Βοηθός Μακενίστας | Grip

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Φροντιστήριο | Prop Master

Stephanie Mourouzi | Stephanie Mourouzi

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Σεμπάστιαν Κουκκίδης | Sebastian Koukkides

Ζωγράφος Αγιογραφίας Αγίας Μαρίνας | St Marina Icon Painted by

Γιάννης Λίθος | Yiannis Lithos

Ζωγραφική του Μιχαλάκη από | Michalakis' Painting by

Αριάννα Νεάρχου | Ariana Nearchou

Στέφανος Νεάρχου | Stephanos Nearchou

Σκίτσα του Μιχαλάκη από | Michalakis' Sketches by

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Σοφία Φλαούνα | Sophia Flaouna

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Άννα Κίζα | Anna Kiza

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Φίλιπ Πετρόφσκι | Phillip Petrovski

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Σωτήρης Φοινιρής | Sotiris Foiniris

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Ράκης Γεωργίου | Rakis Georgiou

Βοηθός Μακιγιάζ Ειδικών Εφέ | Additional SFX Makeup assistant
Τόνι Σωκράτους | Tony Socratous

Κεραμικά Δόντια από | Dental Ceramist
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Οφθαλμίατρος | Ophthalmologist
Σοφοκλής Σοφοκλέους | Sophocles Sophocleous

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Γιάννης Τρύφων | Yiannis Tryfon

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Αντώνης Κούρρας | Antonis Kourras

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Μπογιάνα Λοίζου | Bojana Loizou

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Υπεύθυνοι Αλόγων | Horse Wranglers

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Έρικα Ευριπίδου | Erica Evripidou

Υπεύθυνοι Γαϊδουριών | Donkey Wranglers

Σερκάν Σεϊζή | Serkan Seyzi

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Παροχή Τρέιλερ Μακιγιάζ από | Make-up Trailers provided by

Γιώργος Βαβάνος | Giorgos Vavanos

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Χρίστος Πέτρου | Chris Petrou
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Βίκτωρας Παπαλοΐζου | Victoras Papaloizou

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Μιξέρ Επαναηχογράφησης | Re-recording Mixer

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Ράστι Νταν | Rusty Dunn

Εγκαταστάσεις Foley | Foley Facility

Alchemy Post Sound

Τεχνικός Foley | Foley Artist

Shaun Brennan

Μιξέρ Foley | Foley Mixer

Κόννορ Νέγκη Connor Nagy

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Στιχουργός | Poetry
Μιχάλης Τερλικκας | Michalis Terlikkas

Πιθκιάβλιν | Cypriot Reed Flute
Λάφτα | Lafta
Ταμπουράς | Saz
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Δάσκαλος Πιθκιαβλιού | Pithkiavlin Coach
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Φωτογραφία Τοποθεσιών | Location Photography
VOLUME FILMS

Καλλιγραφία / Σχεδιασμός Τίτλων | Calligraphy / Title Design
Λένα Σεπτέμβρη | Lena Septemvri

Νομικός Σύμβουλος, Β. Μακεδονία | Legal Counsel, N. Macedonia
Mizrahi Law Office

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Aleks-Niki Accounting Office

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Ρενέ Αλεγκρέτι | Rene Allegretti

Σαλβαδόρ Μονρόϊ | Salvador Monroy

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CG Artists

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Κλαρίσα Μαρτίνεσ | Clarisa Martinez

FX Artist

Ντιέγκο Λοζάνο | Diego Lozano

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Ντομινίκ Μπελετέτ | Dominique Belletête

Βοηθός Online | Online Assistant

Κλόε Λαπλάντ | Chloé Laplante

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ΚΟΥΝΑΠΠΗΣ | KOUNAPPIS

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Αναστασία Γεωργιάδη | Anastasia Georghiadi
Σήφης Κατσουλάκης | Sifis Katsoulakis
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Andreas Charalambous
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Stavros Pamballis
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