



## The Gift

*Hafiz, Daniel Ladinsky (Translator)*

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## **The Gift** Hafiz , Daniel Ladinsky (Translator)

More than any other Persian poet, it is perhaps Hafiz who accesses the mystical, healing dimensions of poetry. Because his poems were often ecstatic love songs from God to his beloved world, many have called Hafiz the "Tongue of the Invisible."

With this stunning collection of 250 of Hafiz's most intimate poems, Daniel Ladinsky has succeeded brilliantly in capturing the essence of one of Islam's greatest poetic and religious voices. Each line of THE GIFT imparts the wonderful qualities of the spiritual teacher: an audacious love that empowers lives, profound knowledge, wild generosity, and a sweet, playful genius unparalleled in world literature.

## **The Gift Details**

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Author : Hafiz , Daniel Ladinsky (Translator)

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## From Reader Review The Gift for online ebook

### Nicole Taylor says

I started reading this book a year and a half ago, to bring some sweetness into my mornings after experiencing a great loss. I would read at least one poem out loud to myself as a way to feel like I had stepped into the field of love and was wrapped in the sacred. This almost daily practice served me well, so finishing the book is bittersweet. I noticed whatever poem I read that morning would follow me into the day, inviting me to notice and appreciate beauty in different forms. Some scholars say this book is not an accurate translation of Hafiz's poetry and that the author took great liberties. I say, they are missing the point. Anything that reminds you in your darkest times that the Divine is with you and is everywhere...that is a good thing, and I am grateful.

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### Trish says

How can it be that Ladinsky's translation captures such a feel of contemporaneity? Or perhaps I should say that we Americans are more familiar with Wahhabi Islam so that we don't realize the mystical, playful, spiritual side of Islam may derive from Sufism, or Sufi Islam which this gorgeous book of poems by the Sufi Master Hafiz (c. 1320-1389) captures.

It is difficult to even reproduce my favorite poems here because of their unusual form, sometimes just one word in a line. The poems have a shape as well as a meaning.

Ladinsky has published two other books of Hafiz poetry in translation, The Subject Tonight Is Love: 60 Wild and Sweet Poems of Hafiz, and I Heard God Laughing: Poems of Hope and Joy. Even the titles express the joy of Hafiz in talking about God.

It seems to me we all need Hafiz in our lives. Every preacher certainly does, to revitalize their thinking and refresh their spirit, and the spirit of those to whom they preach. This is what it is all about.

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### Ridhika Khanna says

Picked up this book because of its popularity and because of the fact that I have a keen interest in Persian Poets.

I liked the introduction of this book where I got to know about Hafez and his life. That was the only part worth reading in this book.

As I progressed further, a little after 2 chapters, it came to me that either Hafez was an over-rated poet or the translations are way too lousy. I read further keeping an open mind but I could barely find any poem worth reading. Later while browsing the reviews, it became clear to me that this book is no translation of Hafez's poems but poems by Daniel Ladinsky. Quite a nice way into tricking people to reading your own poems. I still tried reading these poems. I thought, so what if it is by the translator himself, he must have written something worthwhile being inspired from Hafez.

Sadly, the poems were so lousy that you can't even call them a poem.

Most of the poems stop abruptly, change topics and surprisingly conclude something else which was way off

topic in the first place.

In some poems I felt that mysticism and Sufism is being faked or forced!

There is no prose, no clarity and simply no sense in them.

Highly disappointing and a big no to this book!!

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### **Rick says**

Alert! Should be marketed as: BY Daniel Ladinsky ...INSPIRED BY Hafiz

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### **Taymara Jagmohan says**

The Gift isn't one of the best books I have read, but it boils some spiritual words, and meanings.

My favorite "The Earth wouldn't be alive if the Sun stopped kissing it."

"Life, life, life is too sacred to end."

Hafiz has been been a role model in the eyes of many; but Im sure he serves as a replica of all the better spiritual beings such as Rumi, Kabir, Shams, Saadi, Francis of Assisi and Geoffrey Chaucer.

The Prophet, Sand and Foam and other works by KHALIL Gibran were so more imaginative and beautiful. I really did love Khalil, but nevertheless Hafez wasn't that defective in the end.

"Love is the funeral pyre where the heart must lay its body."

Taymara.

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### **Sincerae says**

Because of this book now I'm conflicted about which Sufi poet I love the best, Rumi or Hafiz.

In 2012 I went to Konya, Turkey and saw where Rumi was laid to rest centuries ago. I have yet to go to Shiraz, Iran the city of poets and roses where Hafiz spent most of his life and where he is buried. A few years ago world traveler Rick Steves went to Iran and of the many places he visited one was the tomb of Hafiz, where devotees of his poetry still visit and read his poems beside his tomb. I was told by an Iranian friend I had that in their culture almost every family has verses from Hafiz's poetry on their walls and that in his childhood a cultural and literary requirement was to learn how to recite poems by Hafiz by heart. Hafiz died over 600 years ago, and that he is still very popular in Iranian culture is a testament to the greatness and beauty of his poetry

I wish I could read Hafiz's poems in the original Farsi, but even though I am limited to an English translation the wondrous spirit of these poems still are a burst of sunshine and wisdom. I was captivated by Daniel Ladinsky's translation. However, in about eight or nine poems he does use modern terms that were a little annoying, but these few attempts to modernize the language does not ruin or distract from how wonderful the

collection really is.

Shams-ud-din Muhammad Hafiz (1320-1389) lost both his wife and son to death, but after his loss he wrote very joyous Sufi poems about the love of God (the Beloved), nature, the human heart, and life all intertwined. These poems were somewhat easier for me to understand than what I've read so far of Rumi's and other Sufi poets. Sadness is minimal here with most of the poems joyful and playful. Hafiz has a good time in his relationship to his God, the world, and the universe.

I am starting to think I like Hafiz better than Rumi. I highly recommend this book for poetry lovers. Please read the preface and introduction before diving into this sea of love.

Excerpt from the poem I Got Kin, by Hafiz

Plant  
So that your own heart  
Will grow.

Love  
So God will think  
"Ahhhhh,  
I got kin in that body!

Sing  
Because this is a food  
Our starving world  
Needs.

Laugh  
Because that is the purest  
Sound.

---

### **Andrew Sydlik says**

#### **Spiritual and Poetic Chicanery**

The most important point is that this book is NOT a book of translations of Hafez. Instead, it is a book of original poetry by Daniel Ladinsky, "inspired by" Hafez. Other reviewers have pointed this out, but obviously, this book's high rating and continued commercial success show that this is not well enough known. I purchased this for a poetry book discussion group, and now I feel ripped off. No one else there knew of this when I told them at the meeting (I only found out the day before, unfortunately), and were quite shocked. And these are people who have devoted their whole lives to poetry, including one who has done translation herself, so they're no rank amateurs. The person who suggested the book does not have Internet access, so I guess she didn't have a chance to do the research.

Ladinsky has tried to justify pawning off his own work as that of Hafiz, including his own review here, in a pathetic attempt to use a loose definition of translation and that, if it gets to a lot of people and makes people happy, what's the problem? Well, heroin and cocaine can be loosely reinterpreted as medicine (in fact people used to think it had medicinal properties), and some could say that once they become available, they become

widespread and make people happy. But that don't make shooting up and snorting good things.

Ladinsky, as well Penguin (who, as far as I know, has been silent on the matter), should take responsibility for their deceitful action. And for those who try to say that Ladinsky doesn't claim to actually translate, or that Penguin went against his wishes (as he himself half-heartedly indicates): let's be clear. It says right on the cover "Translated by Daniel Ladinsky," and he has done other books saying the same thing. If it happened once, it shouldn't have happened again. Also, though he hm-haws about wanting to originally call the poems "versions," he doesn't disavow the end result, express regret or vow to work with a publisher who will be more honest in the future. No, he tries to justify his deceit by saying it is for our own good. Just like a cult leader.

If you have any doubt about this, compare Ladinsky's work with other translations of Hafez into English. You will quickly see the difference. The translations vary quite a bit stylistically--eg, Gertrude Bell's biblical-sounding 18th-century translation, Elizabeth T. Gray's more formal translation, and Thomas Rain Crowe's more colloquial translation. But the most loose translation is still very different from this.

Hafez is most known for his mastery of the ghazal, a poetic form which consists of five or more couplets, with a word or phrase from the second line of the first stanza repeated in the second line of each successive stanza. While some translators have forgone the formal structure of this form in order to attempt a more organic rhythm (such as Robert Bly and Leonard Lewisohn), the vestiges remain, creating the sense of an unfolding pattern, of insights unraveled. Not so with Ladinsky's verse, whose formal arrangement is quite abysmal, making frequent use of one or two word lines (which feels arbitrary rather than powerful), and line breaks that seem to have little rhyme or reason. The language is also usually simplistic, the use of metaphor awkward and often not interesting, so that from an aesthetic point of view, these could not be considered very good poems.

If there is any value here, it would have to be from a spiritual point of view. People claim, even after knowing that Ladinsky didn't actually translate these poems, that they still find the poems uplifting. Although couched in New Age style ideas, which seem rather "precious" and saccharine at times, I can see this; there is something joyous in reading poem after poem that encourages love and happiness so forcefully, and some of the verses do have a rather surprising and playful sense of humor (eg, "A Hard Decree," in which God posts a warning that those who can't find joy in life will feel the jaws of the world bite their sweet a--). The value of all this becomes problematic, pretty much ruined actually, by the knowledge that Ladinsky pretty much used Hafiz as a selling point. If these had been sold under his own name, or if it was marketed as "Inspired by" rather than "Translations of" that would be different.

It's not as though I imagine Ladinsky is completely unfamiliar with Hafez--some of the imagery and techniques in the book imply otherwise. But it is only a vague similarity; the celebration of drunkenness, the use of erotic or earthly love as a longing for God, being self-referential--these all appear in Hafez, but not quite in the ways Ladinsky renders them. Ladinsky is a bit over-the-top in his irreverence to the point of his tone actually seeming like a parody of Hafez, rather than a respectful tribute. Others have noted that the spirituality in here bears more resemblance to Zen Buddhism than Sufism, which I think has some relevance--the use of absurdity (like in "Two Giant Fat People"), the celebration of silence, seeing God in everything ("Courteous to the Ant"). Ladinsky mentions Allah (once, I think), and Muhammad a few times, but even those don't really say anything particularly interesting about Islam or Sufism, and as far as I know there aren't any references to the Quran--very different from the playful allusion to the Quran and Islamic and Zoroastrian (not referred to at all by Ladinsky) culture in the actual Hafez. So if you are looking to gleam something of Sufism from the "Sufi Master," you won't find it here.

Ladinsky talks about spending time with Meher Baba. If you look up info about Meher Baba, you will perhaps get a better idea of Ladinsky's background and influences. Meher Baba had more of a Hindu-type spirituality. I'm sorry, but the guy claimed to be an incarnation of God, and that makes me very suspicious. I only know a little of Sufism, but it seems to me even the most radical Sufi, if coming from a proper tradition, would find that to be utter blasphemy.

In conclusion, Ladinsky and Penguin should be ashamed of themselves for using the name of a greatly respected poet to sell books fraudulently. If Ladinsky were to take responsibility and try to work for a more honest output in the future, maybe he could be respected by some as a spiritual writer. But as it is, he does a disservice to himself as well as Hafez. And I am sad to think that people will not look for actual translations of Hafez, relying solely on Ladinsky's inventions, which are more accessible but not the same at all. Hafez' work deserves attention, and even the worst translation is better than no access at all--or worse yet, a fraud.

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### **Jane says**

Hafiz, whose given name was Shams-ud-din Muhammad, is the most beloved poet of Persia. He spent nearly all his life in Shiraz, where he became a famous Sufi master. When he died he was thought to have written an estimated 5,000 poems, of which 500 to 700 have survived. ( Daniel)

It Felt Love

How  
Did the rose  
Ever open it's heart

And give this world  
All its  
Beauty?

It felt the encouragement of light  
Against its  
Being,

Otherwise,  
We all remain

Too

Frightened.

....when you open your heart you share your beauty with the world. Love who is the encouragement of light against your being, your duty is to give this world all of your beauty!!

---

## Christópher Abreu Rosario says

I have fallen in love with a man who has been dead for 625 years. Hafiz, where have you been all my life? Or perhaps I am more in love with Daniel Ladinsky who has, loosely, translated the poems of Hafez [a.k.a], known as the Great Sufi Master.

In *The Gift*, we are privileged to a collection of poems that speak on Hafiz's love for God and the knowledge that that love has given him. I have never read such poetry that moved me so, and gave me an understanding I did not have before. I like poetry to tell a story, just how I like my books. With this collection a single line speaks volumes and a whole poem speaks a truth I can not convey in my own words.

I bookmarked at least 35 poems as my all time favorites. In most other poetry books I've read, I might have bookmarked one or two.

The piece that most stood out to me was one of the ones I read early on.

It goes:

I  
Have  
Learned  
So much from God  
That I can no longer  
Call  
Myself

A Christian, a Hindu, a Muslim,  
A Buddhist, a Jew.

The Truth has shared so much of Itself  
With me

That I can no longer call myself  
A man, a woman, an angel,  
Or even pure  
Soul.

Love has  
Befriended Hafiz so completely  
It has turned to ash  
And freed  
Me

Of every concept and image  
My mind has ever known.

Hafiz is renowned in Islamic culture as he speaks a beauty about God that I have rarely heard a Christian utter. I think we have a lot to learn from this man, a devout Muslim, and hope that texts like these find their way into the shelves and hands of all our Abrahamic brethren. Actually they should find their way into the

hands of everyone, no need to curtain such a treasure.

Amen.

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### **Caroline says**

I'm just not the mystical type, I guess. Some of the poems are lovely, but they don't move me. It was interesting to read this at the same time as Jahiz, a very rational writer. In one poem Hafiz writes:

*I am saved  
from all reason  
And surrender understanding*

and in another

*The appearance of this world  
Is a Magi's brilliant trick*

whereas Jafiz says, on being asked how a believer knows to believe the signs of the Prophet:

*The onlooker is convinced by evidence only if he already has experience of the world and is acquainted with its ways and its laws. If he had not enough experience to recognize the limitations of human devices and contrivances, to distinguish the possible from the impossible, and to tell what can happen by accident and what cannot, it would mean nothing to him.*

I am editing this review after reading another review that says these are far from translations, but are loosely 'inspired' by Hafiz. I don't have access to any other translation right now, but it wouldn't surprise me at all, based on how contemporary they sound. So will just transcribe one I enjoyed:

*Now  
That  
All your worry  
Has Proved such an  
Unlucrative  
Business  
Why  
Not  
Find a better  
Job.*

---

### **Carolyn says**

surprisingly brisk, funny, amazing poems you wouldn't believe were written so long ago. they are love poems to God and they are passionate!

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### **Shandana says**

the great sufi poet rumi gets all the accolades but let's not forget the beautiful, mystical work by the equally great sufi poet hafiz. one can learn a lot by reading this collection of 250 poems, one of which reads:

even after all this time,  
the sun never says to the earth:  
"you owe me."

look what happens  
with a love like that  
it lights up the whole sky

---

### **Natacha Pavlov says**

This collection of 136 poems by Persian Sufi master poet Hafiz (c. 1320 – 1389) will delight readers of any faith looking for humor and to explore his view of the world –or more accurately- of his God.

The poems' most recurring themes include love, tolerance, fanaticism, forgiveness and God. Most of the poems speak of love and rather 'unorthodox' metaphors for God abound throughout his verses. The reader, whether spiritual or not, may be delighted by his habit of speaking of, or to, God in a rather intimate way, as if to a lover. This rather 'unconventional' way of speaking about God may thus stimulate a variety of readers looking for new ways of perceiving complex spiritual subjects.

Many poems also criticize fanaticism and, as a result of his emphasis on belief in a single God, Hafiz blurs the lines between different faiths as well as genders. He also mentions Jesus in some of his poems, not surprising given Sufis' high regards for Jesus' teachings.

The translations done by Daniel Ladinsky offer an effective modern interpretation of this medieval poem collection. The book consists of 25 chapters and totals 333 pages, averaging a single poem per page. Although the poems are rather short, they may be best enjoyed by being read over a few times, in order to truly absorb the beauty of the imagery and metaphors used. The poems may also have a relaxing effect, which could render this an appropriate bedtime read.

Note to readers: side effects may include 'swelling of the heart' and developing the sudden urge to love everything and everyone for no apparent reason.

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### **E. Hope says**

This compilation of wisdom speaks for itself, however, I would like to share one of the poems that particularly moved me, an invitation, if you will, to "The Gift" of Hafiz, The Great Sufi Master.

"With That Moon Language"

Admit something:  
Everyone you see, you say to them,  
"Love me."

Of course you do not do this out loud:  
Otherwise,  
Someone would call the cops.

Still though, think about this,  
This great pull in us  
to connect.

Why not become the one  
Who lives with a full moon in each eye  
That is always saying,

With that sweet moon  
Language,

What every other eye in this world  
Is dying to  
Hear.

---

### **Katie says**

The Gift is a collection of Hafiz poems translated to English by Daniel Ladinsky. In the preface, Daniel describes the hours he has spent studying Hafiz's work, and how, above all else, he attempts to capture the essence of each poem. (Most know that translation of feeling/words is not always perfect.)

Everyone seems a bit upset about this. As for me, I just wanted to read some beautiful poetry.

I've always connected with Hafiz and Rumi's thoughts on love, nature, happiness and connection; the moon and the sky. I've spent years clipping parts of their poems, but never spent much time reading "the whole" of their work. I guess, since it is an interpretation, I still haven't.

Knowing that I had to soon return this book to the library, I felt a little pressured to rush through it. (Not so fun when you're trying to reflect.) Still, his quirky, awe-struck view of love and the world is something I connect deeply with. I connect less with some of his other themes. That's the beauty of poetry, though--it's so personal.

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## **Stefanie says**

For the longest time Rumi was my favoritest Sufi poet. He's funny, daring at times, and never failed to make me feel peaceful when reading his wise words. Well now Hafiz has gone and tied with Rumi for the gold. Hafiz is funny, daring, and makes me feel happy when I read him. What's a girl to do? I must embrace them both.

Hafiz was born about 100 years after Rumi in about 1320. To put him in a little perspective, he was a contemporary of Chaucer. There is no consensus on how many of Hafiz's poems we still have, though the experts estimate it is somewhere between 500 and 700 which is only about 10% of his total output.

Hafiz was born to a poor family and was the youngest of three sons. His father was a coal merchant and died when Hafiz was in his teens. Hafiz went to work as a baker's assistant to help support his family and put himself through the equivalent of night school. He wrote poems even as a child and when in his twenties he received patron support for his work. He was a spiritual student as well and studied many long years before reaching what one might call enlightenment. There is not much more in the way of trusted biography. As one can imagine, a great poet and spiritual teacher is surrounded by lots of mythologizing.

The book of his poems I read is called *The Gift*. The translator, Daniel Ladinsky, notes that he chose to use very modern language, sometimes even slangy, in order to best convey Hafiz's meaning and message. While I sometimes found myself wondering if those were Hafiz's real words, for the most part I think Ladinsky made a good decision.

Because Hafiz was a Sufi master, all of his poems are about God in one way or another. But his God is not an angry God or a God who plays religious favorites. Hafiz's God is one of pure love and our job as humans is to love each other, because God is within everyone, and to let God love us. The ultimate goal I guess you could say, is to be annihilated in God's love. It is because Hafiz's poems are so full of love that I couldn't help but feel happy when reading them. Even if I began reading them when I was in a bad mood, by the fourth or fifth poem I felt so good.

If you asked me to name one or two favorite poems I wouldn't be able to because I wouldn't be able to decide. Hafiz is one of those poets where you can open to any page and read a poem and like what you have read and even feel like it was speaking directly to you at that particular time. In fact, many people use Hafiz as a sort of *I Ching*, opening up his poems to a random page for an answer to what ails them.

As a joke, my husband did this to me one evening when I was feeling especially stressed and the poem was so completely relevant I thought at first he was just making it all up. Here's the poem:

### **Find a Better Job**

Now

That

All your worry

Has proved such an

Unlucrative

Business,

Why

Not

Find a better

Job.

Hafiz and *I Ching* kinda seems to work.

One more poem before I wrap up.

### **Scratching My Back**

You  
Can think of Hafiz as a divine  
Old dog

Who just keeps scratching his back  
On the Moon.

O, I don't care about your thoughts  
Or what you have ever done,

Just open up this book whenever you are  
Sad

For I love the way you  
Smile!

Go ahead, open the book. Open it anytime, but especially when you are sad. You will never be sorry.

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### **Tony duncan says**

This book changed my life. I started writing poetry after being introduced to Rumi, and then I got 3 of Ladinsky's translations and I was transported into another World. THIS is where I belong. I am unable to find this place except through Hafiz, and I am pretty weary of ever being able to communicate clearly to anyone in real life about how clear his messages are in this book. But at least I have him, dancing in my mind, smiling sadly at me and then going off to play with God. I have written him at least 30 poems. Love God and complete trust and openness. These are trite buzzwords these days by just about everyone I

know. But putting them into practice is something that seems to cloud everyones mind. "how do I listen to others? as if everyone were my master. Speaking to me his cherished last words" no one know really respects anyones divinity. IWhen I have tried I have gotten smacked in the head with a baseball bat from those whose divinity I engage.

Ah well. I recently wrote to a friend that i should sell my love on eBay. that I have way more than anyone can handle and it is mostly rotting in me, and I see almost everyone around me in desperate need. I figure i could get a really good price for it, and if it wasn;t coming from me directly then maybe people could accept it.

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### **Kate says**

As others have pointed out, this book is not Hafiz. It's Ladinsky. Reading it, you'll figure it out pretty quickly. The language is just not in keeping with Hafiz. Nice thoughts in many of the poems, though. Just, not Hafiz. If you want the real Hafiz, I would suggest "Hafiz of Shiraz", which is translated by Avery and Heath-Stubbs. 30 poems of the real thing.

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### **dianne says**

Hafez is the Answer to every question.

As i prepared to, & traveled as much of Iran as i was allowed by the nation system (that, really, is only relevant to Iran and maybe Egypt, as few places have approximated the same borders, language and culture for millennia) i was introduced to the magic of Hafez. Iran is a place that values poets and artists beyond politicians, celebrities, billionaires.

Daily, the grave of Hafez is crowded by mourners, laying perfect roses, lovers sneaking kisses in corners, thinking of encouragements from this immortal poet. Elderly, both men and women, stand silent, reverent, sometimes weeping as though he'd died yesterday instead of 627 years ago.

But my favorite custom is the asking.

Every family has Hafez. When a question comes up - ask Hafez! And it works, across the world, across the acrimony, across the craziness of even maybe someday (ouch) sorry about Mosaddegh ? Ask Hafez - just ask the unanswerable, open any page of this fantastic translation, and be awed.

*Fear is the cheapest room in the house.*

*I would like to see you living in better conditions.*

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### **Joanna says**

The most beautiful gift. The most stunning poetry I have ever read. The voice of a friend, carried across oceans, through centuries. The book I gift to friends in times of challenge, and happiness, simply as a gift, the best gift I can think of. Probably the most life-changing book I've ever read, and I am trying not to exaggerate ;-) Highly recommended.

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