

易英汉对照读物



THE
GRAND
BABYLON
HOTEL

巴比伦大饭店

外语教学与研究出版社

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Arnold Bennett 原著

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Abridge by
John and Alison Tedman

Longman Group Limited, 1977

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外语教学与研究出版社出版发行
(北京西三环北路 19 号)

华利印刷公司排版、印刷

新华书店总店北京发行所经销

开本 736×965 1/32 7 印张 124 千字

1989 年 6 月第 1 版 1989 年 6 月北京第 1 次印刷

印数 1—31000 册

ISBN 7-5600-0281-1/H·110

定价: 2.15 元

内 容 简 介

美国富豪拉克索尔和他的女儿内拉到伦敦度假时，购买了经常接待各国王公和要人的巴比伦大饭店，不久，他们俩就卷入一场纠纷。这家旅馆的三个雇员被波斯尼亚王国的大臣们收买，参与绑架德国波兹南大公尤金亲王的阴谋。拉克索尔父女和尤金亲王的叔父阿里伯特设法解救了尤金亲王。在这一过程中，内拉和阿里伯特彼此倾心，决定结婚。

这个传奇惊险故事于1901年在周刊上连载，次年出单行本，因情节生动曲折，深受读者欢迎。这个简写本保留了原著的基本内容，文字比较浅易明白。本书附有参考译文，可供大中学生和自学英语者阅读。

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1. The Millionaire and the Waiter

"Yes, sir?"

Jules, the celebrated head waiter of the Grand Babylon, was bending towards the middle-aged man who had just entered the smoking-room and dropped into a chair in a corner. It was 7.45 on a particularly warm June night, and dinner was about to be served at the Grand Babylon. Men of all sizes, ages and nationalities, but every one in evening dress, were scattered about the large dim room. The waiters, commanded by Jules, moved softly across the thick oriental rugs, balancing their trays with great skill, and receiving and carrying out orders with that air of importance of which only really first-class waiters have the secret. The atmosphere was one of calm and repose, characteristic of the Grand Babylon. It seemed impossible that anything could happen to spoil the peaceful aristocratic monotony of life in that perfectly managed establishment. Yet on that night was to happen the mightiest upheaval that the Grand Babylon had ever known.

"Yes, sir?" repeated Jules, and this time there was a touch of disapproval in his voice: it was not usual for him to have to address a client twice.

"Oh!" said the middle-aged man, looking up at length.

Ignorant of the identity of the great Jules, he allowed his grey eyes to twinkle as he caught sight of the expression on the waiter's face.

"Bring me an Angel Kiss."

"Pardon, sir?"

"Bring me an Angel Kiss, and be good enough to lose no time."

"If it's an American drink, I fear we don't keep it, sir."

"I didn't suppose you did keep it, but surely you can mix it, even in this hotel."

"This isn't an American hotel, sir."

The middle-aged man sat up straight and gazed calmly at Jules.

"Get a glass," he said, "pour into it equal quantities of maraschino, cream and creme de menthe. Don't stir it; don't shake it. Bring it to me. And, I say, tell the barman to make a note of the recipe, as I shall probably want an Angel Kiss every evening before dinner so long as this weather lasts."

"I will send the drink to you, sir," said Jules, indicating that he was not as other waiters are and that any person who treated him with disrespect did so at his own risk.

A few minutes later, while the middle-aged man was tasting the Angle Kiss, Jules sat in consultation with Miss Spencer, who had charge of the reception office of the Grand Babylon and who was as well known and as important as Jules himself. Miss Spencer had been reception clerk almost since the Grand Babylon had first raised its mighty chimneys to heaven. Always admirably dressed in plain black silk, with a small diamond brooch and waved yellow hair, she looked now Just as she had looked an indefinite number of years ago. Her age—none knew it

except herself and perhaps one other—and none cared. Her knowledge of the railway time-table, of steamship services and the programmes of theatres and music-halls was unequalled; yet she never travelled, she never went to a theatre or a music-hall. She seemed to spend the whole of her life in her office, giving information to guests, telephoning to the various departments, or engaged in intimate conversation with her special friends on the staff, as at present.

"Who's Number 107?" Jules asked.

Miss Spencer examined her ledgers.

"Mr. Theodore Racksole, New York."

"I thought he must be a New Yorker," said Jules, after a brief, significant pause, "but he talks as good English as you or me. Says he wants an 'Angel Kiss'—maraschino and cream, if you please—every night. I'll see he doesn't stop here too long."

Miss Spencer smiled grimly in response. She knew, of course, and she knew that Jules knew, that this Theodore Racksole must be the unique and only Theodore Racksole, the third richest man in the United States and therefore probably in the world. Nevertheless she put herself at once on the side of Jules. Just as there was only one Racksole, so there was only one Jules, and Miss Spencer shared the latter's indignation at the sight of any person, millionaire or Emperor, presuming to demand an "Angel Kiss" in the Grand Babylon. In the world of hotels it was stated that, next to the proprietor, there were three gods at the Grand Babylon—Jules, the head waiter, Miss Spencer and, most powerful of all, Rocco, the celebrated chef, who earned two thousand a year and had a chalet on the Lake of Lucerne.

The Grand Babylon was not the largest hotel in Lon-

don, and there was no gold sign over the roof, not even the name at the entrance. But the plain, brown building in the small side-street off the Strand had a separate entrance for Royalty constantly in use, and the proprietor, Felix Babylon, had set himself to cater specially for Royalty. The hotel was managed with great tact, simplicity and correctness. If you were going to stay there, you, or your secretary, gave your card to Miss Spencer on entering. On no account did you refer to prices. When you left, a brief bill was presented and you paid it without a word. No one had asked you to come; no one expressed the hope that you would come again.

"Anybody with Mr. Theodore Racksole?" asked Jules, continuing his conversation with Miss Spencer. He put a scornful stress on every syllable of the guest's name.

"Miss Racksole—she's in No. 111."

Jules paused.

"She's where?" he asked, with a peculiar emphasis.

"No. 111. I couldn't help it. There was no other room with a bathroom and dressing-room on that floor."

"You'd better see that Miss Racksole changes her room tonight," Jules said after another pause. "Leave it to me: I'll arrange it. *Au revoir!* It's three minutes to eight. I shall take charge of the dining-room myself tonight." And Jules departed, rubbing his fine white hands slowly and thoughtfully. It was a trick of his to rub his hands with a strange roundabout motion and the action showed that some unusual excitement was in the air.

At eight o'clock exactly dinner was served in the immense dining-room. At a small table near one of the windows a young lady sat alone. Her frocks said Paris, but

her face unmistakably said New York. It was a self-possessed and charming face, the face of a woman thoroughly accustomed to doing exactly what she liked, when she liked, how she liked.

The young lady by the window glanced disapprovingly at the menu. Then she gazed through the open window and told herself that, though the Thames by twilight was passable, it was by no means as fine as the Hudson, on whose shores her father had a hundred thousand dollar country cottage. Then she returned to the menu and said disapprovingly that there appeared to be nothing to eat.

"Sorry to keep you waiting, Nella." It was Mr. Racksole, the fearless millionaire who had dared to order an Angel Kiss in the smoking-room of the Grand Babylon. Nella—her proper name was Helen—smiled at her parent.

"You always are late, Father," she said.

"Only on a holiday," he added. "What is there to eat?"

"Nothing."

"Then let's have it. I'm hungry. I'm never so hungry as when I'm being seriously idle."

She began to read out from the menu. "Oh, heavens! Who wants these horrid messes on a night like this?"

"But, Nella, this is the best cooking in Europe," he protested.

"Father," she said, "have you forgotten it's my birthday tomorrow?"

"Have I ever forgotten your birtheay, O most costly daughter?"

"On the whole you've been a most satisfactory dad," she answered sweetly, "and to reward you I'll be content this year with the cheapest birthday treat you ever gave

me. Only I'll have it tonight."

"Well," he said, with the long-suffering patience, the readiness for any surprise, of a parent whom Nella had thoroughly trained, "what is it?"

"It's this. Let's have steak and a bottle of beer for dinner tonight. It will be simply marvellous. I shall love it."

"But my dear Nella," he exclaimed, "steak and beer at Felix's! It's impossible! Moreover, young women still only twenty-three cannot be permitted to drink beer."

"I said steak and beer, and as for being twenty-three, I shall be twenty-four tomorrow."

There was a gentle cough. Jules stood over them. It must have been out of a pure spirit of adventure that he had selected this table for his own services. Usually Jules did not personally wait at dinner. Regular clients of the hotel felt themselves honoured when Jules himself came to their tables.

Theodore Racksole hesitated one second and then gave the order with a fine air of carelessness: "Steak for two, and a bottle of beer." It was the bravest act of Theodore Racksole's life.

"It's not in the menu, sir," said Jules.

"Never mind. Get it. We want it."

"Very good, sir."

Jules walked to the service-door and, merely pretending to look behind, immediately came back again.

"Mr. Rocco's compliments, sir, and he regrets he is unable to serve steak and beer tonight, sir."

"Mr. Rocco?" questioned Racksole lightly.

"Mr. Rocco." repeated Jules with firmness.

"And who is Mr. Rocco?"

"Mr. Rocco is our chef, sir." Jules had the expression of a man who is asked to explain who Shakespeare was.

The two men looked at each other. It seemed incredible that Theodore Racksole, who owned a thousand miles of railway, several towns, and sixty votes in Congress, should be defied by a waiter, or even by a whole hotel. Yet so it was. Jules had the calm expression of a strong man sure of victory. His face said: "You beat me once, but not this time, my New York friend!"

As for Nella, knowing her father, she foresaw interesting events and waited confidently for the steak. She did not feel hungry and she could afford to wait.

"Excuse me a moment, Nella," said Theodore Racksole quietly, "I shall be back in about two seconds," and he strode out of the dining-room. No one in the room recognized the millionaire, for he was unknown to London, this being his first visit to Europe for over twenty years. If anyone had done so and caught the expression on his face, that man might have trembled for an explosion which would have blown the entire Grand Babylon into the Thames.

2. How Mr. Racksole obtained his Dinner

Theodore Racksole went direct to the entrance hall of the hotel and entered Miss Spencer's office.

"I want to see Mr. Babylon immediately," he said.

Miss Spencer slowly raised her head.

"I am afraid—" she began. It was part of her daily duty to discourage guests who desired to see Mr. Babylon.

"No, no," said Racksole quickly, "I don't want any 'I'm afraid's'. This is business. If you had been the ordinary hotel clerk I should have slipped a couple of pounds into your hand, and the thing would have been done. As you are not—as you are obviously above bribes—I merely say to you, I must see Mr. Babylon at once on an affair of the utmost urgency. My name is Racksole—Theodore Racksole."

"Of New York?" questioned a voice at the door with a slight foreign accent.

The millionaire turned sharply and saw rather short French-looking man with a bald head, a grey beard, eye-glasses attached to a silver chain, and innocent blue eyes.

"There is only one," said Theodore Racksole.

"You wish to see me?" the newcomer suggested.

"You are Mr. Felix Babylon?"

The man bowed.

"At this moment I wish to see you more than anyone else in the world," said Racksole. "Mr. Babylon, I only want a few minutes' quiet chat. I fancy I can settle my business in that time."

With a gesture Mr. Babylon invited the millionaire down a corridor, at the end of which was Mr. Babylon's private room, and they sat down opposite each other.

"I read in the New York papers some months ago," Theodore started, "that this hotel of yours, Mr. Babylon, was to be sold to a company, but it appears that the sale was not carried out."

"It was not," answered Mr. Babylon frankly, "and the

reason was that the middlemen between the proposed company and myself wished to make a large secret profit, and I refused to agree to such profit. They were firm; I was firm; and so the affair came to nothing."

"The agreed price was satisfactory?"

"Quite."

"May I ask what the price was?"

"Are you a buyer, Mr. Racksole?"

"Are you a seller, Mr. Babylon?"

"I am," said Babylon, "on terms. The price was four hundred thousand pounds. But I sell only on the condition that the buyer does not transfer the property to a company at a higher figure."

"I will put one question to you, Mr. Babylon," said the millionaire. "What have your profits averaged during the last four years?"

"Thirty-four thousand pounds a year."

"I buy," said Theodore Racksole, smiling contentedly; "and we will, if you please, exchange contract letters on the spot."

"You come quickly to a decision, Mr. Racksole. But perhaps you have been considering this question for a long time?"

"On the contrary," Racksole looked at his watch, "I have been considering it for just six minutes."

Felix Babylon bowed as one thoroughly accustomed to the peculiarities of the wealthy.

"The beauty of being well known," Racksole continued, "is that you needn't trouble about preliminary explanations. You, Mr. Babylon, probably know all about me. I know a good deal about you. We can take each other

for granted without references. Really, it is as simple to buy a hotel or a railway as it is to buy a watch."

"Exactly," agreed Mr. Babylon smiling. "Shall we draw up the little informal contract? There are details to be thought of. But it occurs to me that you cannot have dined yet and might prefer to deal with minor questions after dinner."

"I have not dined," said the millionaire with emphasis, "and in that connection will you do me a favour? Will you send for Mr. Rocco?"

"You wish to see him, naturally."

"I do," said the millionaire, and added, "about my dinner."

"Rocco is a great man," murmured Mr. Babylon as he touched the bell, ignoring the last words. "My compliments to Mr. Rocco," he said to the page-boy who answered his summons, "and if it is quite convenient I should be glad to see him for a moment."

"What do you give Rocco?" Racksole inquired.

"Two thousand a year and the treatment of an ambassador."

"I shall give him the treatment of an ambassador and three thousand."

"You will be wise," said Felix Babylon.

At that moment Rocco came into the room very quietly—a man of forty, slim, with long thin hands and a long, brown, silky moustache.

"Rocco," said Felix Babylon, "let me introduce Mr. Theodore Racksole, of New York."

"Sharmed," said Rocco bowing. "De—de, vat you call it, millionaire?"

"Exactly," Racksole put in and continued quickly, "Mr. Rocco, I wish to tell you before any other person the fact that I have bought the Grand Babylon Hotel. If you allow me to retain your services I will give you a salary of three thousand a year."

"Three, you said?"

"Three."

"Sharmed."

"And now, Mr. Rocco, will you oblige me very much by ordering a plain beefsteak and a bottle of beer to be served by Jules—I particularly desire Jules—at table No.17 in the dining-room in ten minutes from now? And will you do me the honour of lunching with me tomorrow?"

Mr. Rocco gasped, bowed, muttered something in French and departed.

Five minutes later the buyer and seller of the Grand Babylon Hotel had each signed a short document, scribbled out on the hotel notepaper. Felix Babylon asked no questions, and it was this absence of curiosity, of surprise on his part, that more than anything else impressed Theodore Racksole. How many hotel proprietors in the world, Racksole asked himself, would have let that beefsteak and beer go by without a word of comment?

"From what date do you wish the purchase to take effect?" asked Babylon.

"Oh," said Racksole lightly, "it doesn't matter. Shall we say from tonight?"

"As you will. I have long wished to retire. And now

*sharmed=charmed. Rocco always speaks with a marked foreign accent.