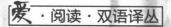


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英语草故事

国外优秀小说精选

刘正◎编译







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前言~

朋友,无论你身处繁华都市还是乡村绿野,无论你是富裕还是暂时未富,无论你在电脑前吃着快餐工作还是背着包在人群间穿梭,也无论你衣装休闲地在海边漫步还是关了电视在院子里或阳台上继续品味这一天的执着……你都会有片刻的孤独感,想找寻一方只属于你自己的心灵空间。此时,文学就像一个能满足你一切欲念又对你不离不弃的情人,温婉地、感性地、无声地来到你身边。你渴了,她为你冲的咖啡不浓不淡;你饿了,她会为你端来一碗热辣适度的过桥米线;她会点燃那根不知何时叼在你嘴里的香烟,像个孤单的音符,划着弧步为你跳一支舞,唇边挂着轻盈、会心的浅笑。朋友,如果你有心情对文学说说话,她会用透过她那如瀑的睫毛的忠实凝睇融化你的苦痛、伤感,分享你的欢喜、激动和紧张。

细致绵密的洋洋巨著,如完整的交响乐,确实撼人心魄;但挥洒自如的中短篇小说和故事也会像个性鲜明、纯洁质朴的器乐独奏小品——狂烈如钢琴、温软似吉他,有萨克斯的抒情,也不乏手风琴的任性。其篇幅的优势更能适应这快节奏的现代生活。放眼世界、展望未来,小可以勤补拙,编译了《英语金故事——英美金奖小说精选》和《英语草故事——国外优秀小说精选》,诚邀广大读者品鉴。

《英语金故事——英美金奖小说精选》全是近年来国际闻名的、荣获一等奖的英语文学精品,个性张扬、笔锋恣肆、意境高远;诙谐、辛辣、凝练、深刻、神秘、浪漫。当代英语世界中的金奖中短篇小说和故事,不可忽视地、及时反映了当今西方社会的艺术前沿。与时俱进的新世纪中国人能否真正以海纳百川的胸襟去高效、务实、近距离地研究一下这些蓝色文明中用精华的英语浇灌的奇葩?英语世界中许多东西还是可以给我们以提醒和借鉴的。

《英语草故事——国外优秀小说精选》并不是命如草芥的伪故事;相反,它们是散发着亲切的草根气息的小故事,如绿叶般陪衬着金故事,是大餐中不可多得的风味小菜,汇萃了一些文学大师们的小品。这本书也像前面的《英语金故事——英美金奖小说精选》那样,多维多姿,篇幅不大,却质朴实在地挥洒着野火烧不尽的激情。

秉着对英语文学的无比敬意和汉文表述的深切尊重,译者在翻译的过程中力求以点代面 地综合凸显英语故事的魅力和汉译的艰辛,使亲爱的读者有一种寓学于乐的感觉。我当然不 敢奢望此书能像阿拉丁的神灯那样回馈你许下的所有愿望,但如果此文集能有幸成为培育思 想种子的一滴溶液,那就是译者我最大的欣喜和安慰。

对于书中有可能存在的问题,请各位同仁不吝指教。

译者

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第一卷

琐事如草,岁月如刀 Grass-Like Trifles & Knife-Like Years



by Barbara Mather

My biggest fault is that I fall in love too easily.

When asked during ragging¹ in my freshman year what turns me on², I had replied innocently "A smile."

"Then you must be getting turned on a lot," a smart alec³ senior had remarked.

"Not everyone has a beautiful smile," I retorted.

But I never understood my own definition of a beautiful smile. Is it a perfect set of pearly white teeth peeping through a pair of lips open just wide enough to create a tiny dimple on the cheek or is it a wide end to end smile that covers the entire face?

Before I could find out, and way⁴ before I saw him smile, I fell in love with him. He was the serious type. Young, ambitious and mature way beyond his years, he carried an aura of self importance that ensured everybody gave him the level of respect he demanded. I was told that he wasn't in the category of what one would term "friendly creatures" and I kept my distance.

But fate had other plans. Our paths crossed often and not all meetings were God created.

My roommates and I had invited him and some other close friends to dinner one night. I wasn't much of a cook, but my contribution — rajma (kidney beans⁵) were at the center of the table that night. He seemed to enjoy them and mentioned it once briefly.

He was the quietest of the group preferring to just watch us and let his friends carry on the conversation. Somewhere in the middle of dinner, he got a call from a friend and spoke to them at length about a cute waitress he'd met at this Indian restaurant he'd been to. It seemed to cheer him up considerably and when he returned to the living room, he launched into a verbose explanation of the events that had let up to his receiving that call. We all listened carefully at his delight and embarrassment at being teased about liking the waitress.

As dinner drew to an end I realized that I was still evaluating the kind of person he was and wasn't quite sure what to think. As he was the only one who lived across the road to us, the others got into their cars and left. My roomies⁸ and I decided to walk him to his house. He was embarrassed and asked us not to do so.

"Come on it hardly matters — we were going to go out on a stroll anyway." I stated. My friends fell two steps behind and he and I walked silently down the road.

一个美丽的微笑

「美国] 芭芭拉•马瑟

我最大的毛病就是太易堕入爱河。

大一的时候,有一次恶作剧式地侃大山,别人问我什么能引起我春心漾溢,我曾天真地答道 "莞尔一笑"。

- "那么小姐您定是快感连连喽,"一位潇洒浮浪的大四生说。
- "也并非人人都有美丽的微笑,"我驳了一句。

可我从不理解自己对美丽的微笑有个什么定义。是把双唇咧到刚好在腮上形成个小酒窝儿,唇间隐现出一副完美的、珍珠般亮白的牙齿的那种微笑?还是那种嘴张到两面耳根子都连了起来,盖住了整张脸的微笑?

我还没搞清楚,全然没看过他微笑之前,就爱上了他。他属于不苟言笑类的。他的风华正茂、壮志凌云以及老成劲儿可谓远远超出了他的年龄,总带着一副自觉重要的派头儿,好叫人人都给他他所需要的那种尊重。别人跟我说过,他不属于所谓"友善生物"那种类型,于是对他我总是敬而远之。

但真是造化弄人,命不由人。我俩的路线每每相交,而且也并非每次邂逅都是天意。

一天晚上,我和室友们请他还有另外几位要好的朋友来共进晚餐。我不太擅长烹饪,可那天晚上我献上的那盘拉支马菜豆被放在了餐桌的正中间。他倒像是挺喜欢吃这口儿似的,还简单地 夸了一句。

这帮人中,他最是沉默寡言了。老是喜欢注视着我们,却让他的朋友们高谈阔论。正吃着饭,他接到了位朋友的电话,接着他终于跟这帮朋友们谈起了他以前来这家印度餐馆时遇见的一位漂亮的女服务员。说起这事似乎让他很兴奋,他一回到起居室就絮絮叨叨地解释起了是怎样的一件件事致使他接到那个电话的。对他的快乐和有人取笑他喜欢那个女服务员而让他感到不好意思,我们都仔细地聆听着。

晚餐结束的时候,我意识到自己还在一直评价着他是哪种人,也不太能拿得准该去想些什么。由于他是唯一一位住在我们街对过儿的,所以除他以外别人都上车走了。于是我和室友们就决定步行送他回家。他有点不好意思了,叫我们别送。

"行啦,什么大不了的事——反正我们也要出去溜达溜达。"我声明。我的朋友们被落在后面两步,而我和他就默默地沿街步行。



All of a sudden he turned to me and said, "Can I ask you something?"

Though I said "Sure" with a high degree of confidence, I realized that my heart rate had increased drastically.

"What perfume do you use?" he asked out of the blue9.

"Poison," I replied amazed at when he had possibly gotten close enough to smell me and worried whether he had liked it or not. "Why?" I continued not sure if it was a good sign or a bad one.

"No reason," he replied flatly.

I thought about it all night long. Was he being nice¹⁰ and inquisitive¹¹ or was he making a pass at me? I hadn't the foggiest idea. I just knew that I was considerably shaken by the question.

Over the next month, we spent a good amount of time together. We'd become part of this huge gang and went out together a lot — movies, pubs, dinner, even games of Uno. Life became predictable.

Until I saw the smile. As expected, it was most unexpected.

"Can I ask you something?" I asked him one day as we sat in his car waiting for our friends to join us.

"Sure," he replied oblivious 12 at what was about to hit him.

"Are you attracted to me?"

His first reaction was a muffled laugh that showed his shock as well as his amusement. Luckily he didn't snicker too long. Instead he looked at me and the slightest little smile appeared on his face. It was almost like an I'm not sure I should smile but I feel like it smile. I was flirting and he liked it. I was watching him closely and he liked that too.

"What do you think?" he asked back unnerved 13.

"That's not an answer," I said impatiently as I turned away embarrassed.

He seemed to think for a moment, the tiny smile still remained on his face and I began to get irritated.

"Either tell me or say you won't," I said rather rudely not enjoying the heavy silence.

Then the smile began to broaden. Naughty, seductive ¹⁴, amused and definitely pleased. I could see so many feelings in it that I was amazed at how revealing a smile could be. Unfortunately I couldn't find it in me to smile back because I was so anxious to hear what he'd say next.

"Why? Are you?" he asked me, grinning now, an eyebrow arched rather high, curiosity taking over his usually poised 15 exterior.

"I asked you," I said, harassed now and agitation beginning to set in 16 as I saw our friends walking towards the car. The conversation was over.

I spent another restless night, thinking. I was convinced it was a bad sign and I lost count of the number of times I derided myself for doing something so foolish.

突然,他转向了我问,"能问你点儿事吗?"

尽管我凭着高度的信心应了句"问吧",可我还是觉得心率急剧加速。

"你用什么牌子的香水?" 他冷不丁地问道。

"毒药牌,"我回答时震惊于他何时竟能凑得那样近,都闻出了我的味道,而且我还担心他是否喜欢这味道。"为什么问这个?"我接着说,说的时候还叫不准他到底是好意还是恶意。

"不为什么。"他淡淡地回答。

这事儿我寻思了整整一夜。他究竟是放肆、喜欢追根究底呢?还是向我传达什么意思?我稀 里糊涂地一点儿也猜不透。我只知道自己被这句问话吓倒了。

接下来的一个月,我们这伙人一起度过了很多时光。我和他都成了这一大帮人中的成员,经常一道出去玩——看电影、泡酒吧、聚餐、甚至玩 Uno 牌。一切都在掌握之中。

直到我看到了那个微笑。正如所料,这个微笑是最没料到的。

"能问你点儿事吗?"一天我和他两人坐在他的车里等朋友们跟我们一起走的时候,我这样问他。

"问吧。"他回答,对会是什么整他一下的问题,他毫无察觉。

"你喜欢我吗?"

他的第一反应是捂嘴出声一笑,既显出觉得逗乐又露出震惊。还好,他没有窃笑太久,却看着我,脸上露出最轻微的一丝笑意。那表情几乎就像是在说"我说不准该不该笑,可我想笑"。 我在调情,他喜欢;我亲近地凝望着他,他也喜欢。

"你觉得呢?"他胆怯地回问道。

"这不是回答,"我一边不耐烦地说,一边不好意思地转过头去。

他似乎思考了一会儿,那丝微微的笑意依旧还留在他的脸上,我开始觉得恼怒。

"要么直说你喜欢,要么直说你不愿意。"我不喜欢这沉闷的不语,于是把话说得很冲。

他的笑意则变得越来越明显了。笑中透着调皮、诱惑、开心,肯定也有点沾沾自喜。我能看懂这微笑中含着太多太多种情感,一个微笑竟能有这么丰富的表现力,真让我叹为观止。遗憾的 是我无法让自己有心情对他回以微笑,因为我特急于听到他接着会说些什么。

"噢?你呢?"他问我,此刻的他用的是那种露齿的微笑,一边的眉毛挑得好高,好奇取代了他平素镇定自若的外表。

"是我来问你。"我说,当时的我忧心忡忡,看到朋友们正往车这边走来时,更变得焦虑不安。对话就这样结束了。

我思来想去又度过了一个辗转反侧的夜晚,我确信那不是个好兆头,我已数不清为做了如此 蠢的事而自嘲多少回了。



I reached office at 10 the next morning to find an email that I'd received at 6 am. There were only three words in it.

"Yes I am."

"So what are you going to do about it?" I typed back and pressed send.

"Nothing," it came back.

"Why?" I pressed send again.

"There is no reason," he replied.

He smiled a lot more after that. He smiled when I told him he should buy the book *Tuesday's with Morrie*, he smiled when I joked about my cooking and he smiled when we went bowling. Each smile was different. Some showed affection, some showed amusement, but none was as sensual as that one had been.

The movies, dinners and outings continued. The questions didn't. We parted several months later and continued to be close friends.

I received a call from him a year later, full of excitement at having just gotten engaged. He'd called to invite me to his wedding, which was in a couple of months. After several minutes of Congratulations and questions about his fiancé, followed by stock taking ¹⁷ of all of our friends and what each one was upto now, there was suddenly a moment of silence.

"Can I ask you something?" I broke the awkwardness of the moment.

"Sure," he replied.

"How come you never initiated ¹⁸ anything with me? What was wrong with me?" I asked, the question still nagging ¹⁹ my soul.

"You don't make good rajma," he joked.

"Come on, tell me seriously," I pestered²⁰. He was quiet for a moment.

"Well to be honest," he said finally, "remember that day when we were chatting in the car?"

"Yes," I remembered only too well.

"It was going so well, but I was surprised that you just didn't smile. And you know," he continued, "nothing is as beautiful as a smile."

第二天早晨 10 点,我来到办公室,看到了一封早晨 6 点发送的电子邮件。里面有 3 个字。 "喜欢你。"

- "那你想怎么办?"我键入了回复,然后点按了发送。
- "不怎么办。"信息如此反馈。
- "为什么?"我又按了发送。
- "不为什么,"他答。

打那以后他更是频现莞尔了。我告诉他该买一本叫〈周二跟莫莉〉的书时,他浅笑盈盈;我 打趣自己的厨艺时, 他笑意翩翩: 我们去打保龄球时, 他笑容可掬。每次微笑都各不相同。有的 显出爱恋,有的透出开心,却没有一种能像那一次微笑那样煽情。

看电影、聚餐和户外散步还继续着,可那些问题不再问了。几个月后我们分开了,可一直还 是亲密的朋友。

- 一年后,我接到他的电话,他刚订婚,听得出他很兴奋。他打电话来请我参加将于两三个月 后举行的婚礼。先说些祝贺之词,问些有关他未婚妻的一些事,再就是把我们的那些朋友一一盘 点一番,谈谈他们每个人都正忙乎些啥,这样过了几分钟后,突然出现一段沉默。
 - "能问你点儿事吗?"我打破了此刻的尴尬。
 - "问吧,"他答。
- "你怎么就从来没跟我开始点什么?我的毛病在哪儿?"我问他,因为这问题依旧不停地折磨 着我的灵魂。
 - "你做的拉支马菜豆不好吃,"他开玩笑说。
 - "行啦,说正经的,告诉我,"我纠缠地问。他静了一会儿。
 - "那好吧,说实话,"他终于开了口,"记得我们在车里聊的那天吗?"
 - "记得,"我记得不能再清楚了。
- "一切进行得很好,但我奇怪你怎么就不笑笑。而且你知道,"他接着说,"没有什么能像微 笑一样美。"

注 释

- 1 ragging ['rægin] n. 揶揄; 嘲骂; 恶作剧; (学生) 11 inquisitive [in'kwizitiv] adj. 追根究底的 胡闹
- 2 turn sb. on 刺激; 使生快感
- 3 alec [alik] adi. 哈代《苔丝》中的人物,此处指 "浮浪的"
- 4 wav [wei] adv. 老远地; 大大地; 完全地
- 5 kidney beans ['kidni bi:nz] 肾形豆; 菜豆
- 6 launch into 投入
- 7 verbose [var baus] adj. 喋喋不休的; 累赘的; 冗长的
- 8 roomie ['ru:mi] n. 〈口〉同屋 (=roommate)
- 9 out of the blue 蓦然地; 突然地
- 10 nice [nais] adj. 放肆的; 浪荡的

- 12 oblivious [ə'bliviəs] adj. 遗忘的; 不知觉的
- 13 unnerved ['An'nə:vd] adj. 气馁的; 慌张的, 失 去镇定的; 胆怯的
- 14 seductive [si'dʌktiv] adj. 诱惑的; 勾引的
- 15 poised ['poizd] adj. 镇定的; 泰然自若的
- 16 set in 开始; 上涨
- 17 stock taking 存货盘点 (此处比喻一一打听朋友 情况)
- 18 initiate [i'nifieit] v. 开始;发动
- 19 nag [næg] v. 不停地折磨
- 20 pester ['pestə] v. 不断打扰; 纠缠

2 The Rose

by Logan Pearsall Smith

The old lady had always been proud of the great rose-tree in her garden, and was fond of telling how it had grown from a cutting she had brought years before from Italy, when she was first married. She and her husband had been travelling back in their carriage from Rome (it was before the time of railways) and on a bad piece of road south of Sienal they had broken down, and had been forced to pass the night in a little house by the road-side. The accommodation was wretched of course; she had spent a sleepless night, and rising early had stood, wrapped up, at her window, with the cool air blowing on her face, to watch the dawn. She could still, after all these years, remember the blue mountains with the bright moon above them, and how a far-off town on one of the peaks had gradually grown whiter and whiter, till the moon faded, the mountains were touched with the pink of the rising sun, and suddenly the town was lit as by an illumination, one window after another catching and reflecting the sun's beam, till at last the whole little city twinkled and sparkled up in the sky like a nest of stars.

That morning, finding they would have to wait while their carriage was being repaired, they had driven in a local conveyance up to the city on the mountain, where they had been told they would find better quarters; and there they had stayed two or three days. It was one of the miniature Italian cities with a high church, a pretentious piazza², a few narrow streets and little palaces, perched, all compact and complete, on the top of a mountain, within and enclosure of walls hardly larger than an English kitchen garden. But it was full of life and nose, echoing all day and all night with the sounds of feet and voices.

The Cafe of the simple inn where they stayed was the meeting place of the notabilities of the little city; the Sindaco³, the avvocato⁴, the doctor, and a few others; and among them they noticed a beautiful, slim, talkative old man, with bright black eyes and snow-white hair — tall and straight and still with the figure of a youth, although the waiter told them with pride that the Conte⁵ was molto vecchio⁶— would in fact be eighty in the following year. He was the last of his family, the waiter added — they had once been great and rich people — but he had no descendants; in fact the waiter mentioned with complacency, as if it were a story on which the locality prided itself, that the Conte had been unfortunate in love, and had never married.

The old gentleman, however, seemed cheerful enough; and it was plain that he took an

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「英国〕洛根•皮尔萨尔•史密斯

老太太一直为她园中那株薔薇树感到骄傲,经常喜欢对人讲,这树是怎么从一根由意大利带回的枝条上长起来的,那是好多年以前的事了,那时她刚结婚。她和丈夫正从罗马乘坐马车回国(那时还没有火车),一天在辛拿城南一段崎岖的路上,车子出了毛病,不得已只好暂时到路边一所小宅院去过夜。设备当然是简陋极了,她度过了一个不眠之夜。次日很早起身,她披衣凝立窗前,在拂面的习习晨风中,注视着天色破晓。虽然事隔多年,她仍然记得青山上那一轮皓月,记得远山之巅的一座城镇,是如何逐渐泛白,直到月轮淡去,山边被那徐徐升起的朝阳染成了绯红。还记得,那城镇很快就恍如为巨焰所映,陡然大亮,窗扉一扇扇在朝霞的照耀下光晶泛彩。最后整个小城在天宇之间闪烁辉耀起来,宛若一巢星群。

由于修车尚待时日,那天早上他们便搭乘当地的车辆去了那座山城,那里据说可以觅到较好的住处,他们在那里逗留了两三天。那座城是典型的意大利式小城,有一座高耸的教堂,一方富丽的广场,几条狭窄的街道,几所矮小的楼房,紧凑齐全,毕集于一座山头之上,周围还有城墙环绕,占地比一个英国的家厨菜园也大不了许多。然而这里却充满着生机,热闹非凡,轮蹄喧哗,彻夜不休。

他们下榻的这家普通旅店中的餐馆为城中名流聚会之地,这里有市长、律师、医生,以及一些其他人物。在这些人中,他们遇见了一位风姿翩翩、消瘦健谈的老人,乌黑的眸子炯炯有神,头发已经雪白——他的体格修长挺立,仍然具有年轻人的身段,可侍者骄傲地对他们讲,这位伯爵已经年纪很大了——实际上翌年即满 80 岁。他是他家族中的最后一人,侍者补充道——他家曾经是富贵望族——但他没有后代。伯爵在爱情上受过挫折,并从此未曾结婚,云云。实际上侍者提及此事时面有得意之色,仿佛这是当地人民引以为荣的一段故事。

这位老先生兴致很高,显然他对这两位陌生人很感兴趣,并愿意结识他们。这事随即由友好



interest in the strangers, and wished to make their acquaintance. This was soon effected by the friendly waiter; and after a little talk the old man invited them to visit his villa and garden which were just outside the walls of the town. So the next afternoon, when the sun began to descend, and they saw in glimpses through door-ways and windows, blue shadows beginning to spread over the brown mountains, they went to pay their visit. It was not much of a place, a small, modernized, stucco villa, with a hot pebbly garden, and in it a stone basin with torpid gold-fish, and a statue of Diana and her hounds against the wall. But what gave a glory to it was a gigantic rose-tree which clambered over the house, almost smothering the windows, and filling the air with the perfume of its sweetness. Yes, it was a fine rose, the Conte said proudly when they praised it, and he would tell the Signora about it. And as they sat there, drinking the wine he offered them, he alluded with the cheerful indifference of old age to his love-affair, as though he took for granted that they had heard of it already.

"The lady lived across the valley there beyond that hill. I was a young man then, for it was many years ago. I used to ride over to see her; it was a long way, but I rode fast, for young men, as no doubt the Signora knows, are impatient. But the lady was not kind, she would keep me waiting, oh, for hours; and one day when I had waited very long I grew very angry, and as I walked up and down in the garden where she had told me she would see me, I broke one of her roses, broke a branch from it; and when I saw what I had done, I hid it inside my coat, so, and when I came home I planted it, and the Signora sees how it has grown. If the Signora admires it, I must give her a cutting to plant also in her garden; I am told the English have beautiful gardens that are green, and not burnt with the sun like ours."

The next day, when their mended carriage had come up to fetch them, and they were just starting to drive away from the inn, the Conte's old servant appeared with the rose-cutting neatly wrapped up, and the compliments and wishes for a buon viaggio⁸ from her master. The town collected to see them depart, and the children heard a rush of feet behind them for a few moments, but soon they were far down towards the valley; the little town with all its noise and life was high above them on its mountain peak.

She had planted the rose at home, where it had grown and flourished in a wonderful manner; and every June the great mass of leaves and shoots still broke out into a passionate splendour of scent and crimson colour, as if in its root and fibres there still burnt the anger and thwarted desire of that Italian lover. Of course the old Conte must have died many years ago; she had forgotten his name, and had even forgotten the name of the mountain city that she had stayed in, after first seeing it twinkling at dawn in the sky, like a nest of stars.