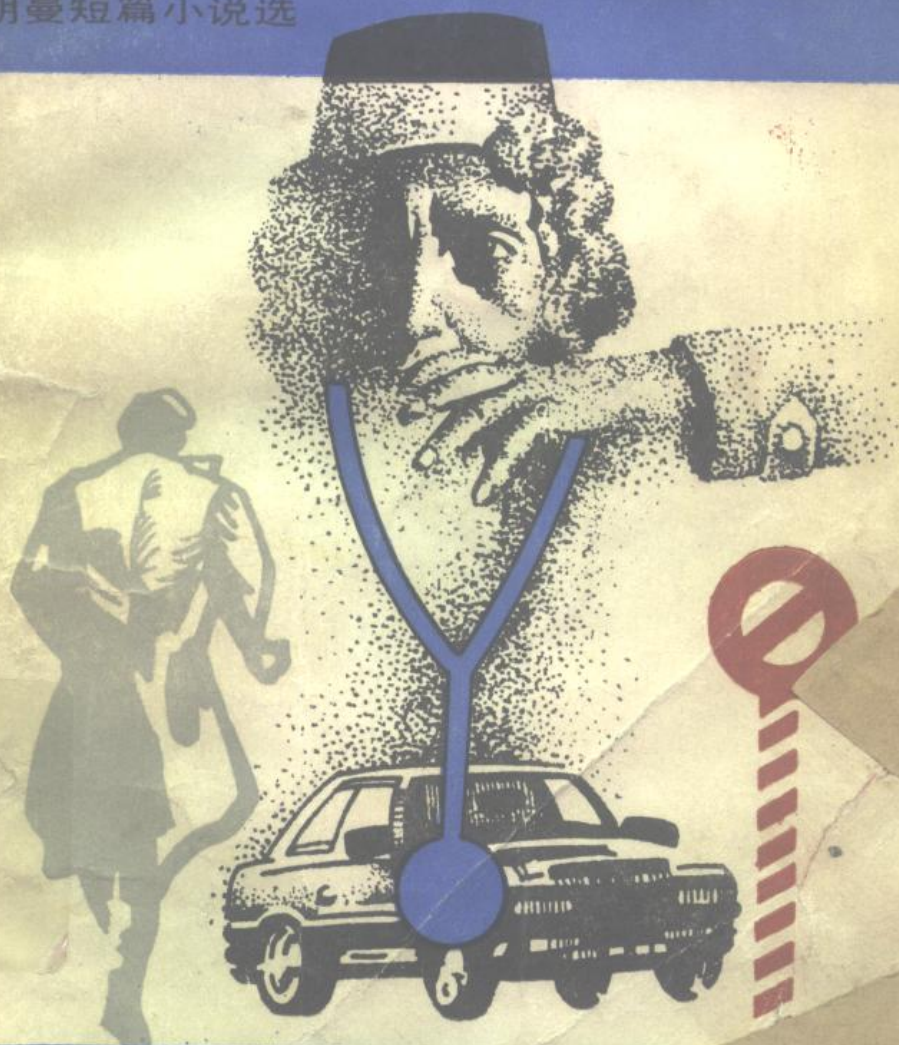


沉默的巴特勒

美国犯罪小说

朗曼短篇小说选



上海外语

英汉对照读物

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译者的话

我们从小学习语文,课堂听课只是打基础,起一个入门的作用。以后真正的提高,都在于自己勤奋学习,并且在日常生活和工作环境中继续实践和锻炼。然而学习英语的情况就不同了,绝大多数的人不具备理想的条件,不能处在经常说和听英语的环境之中,而语言本身恰恰植根于生活,并且是反映生活的人类交流思想的工具,只有处身于某种环境,才能比较容易,比较熟练地掌握和运用某种语言。在不具备外语环境的条件下,存在其他弥补的方法。当今广播、电视、录音等传播媒介相当普及,方法上多种多样的。可是阅读外文书籍,仍然是十分重要的方法。

我觉得,朗曼简写本可以说是一套很好的初学英语的读本。它选材精当,每一篇都包含丰富的生活内容,使读者仿佛置身于那种语言环境之中;而且具有引人入胜的趣味性,使读者不致于觉得学习英语是枯燥无味的苦事。此外,词汇量大致限定在很实用的2,000字左右,对于初学者打下基础很有好处,而不致在厚厚的几百万字的英汉词典面前感到无所适从。

我还觉得,朗曼简写本不但对于自学者有用,而且对于在校的学生也有用。学校中,往往是教师教,学生学,一学期一册教科书,造成学生心理错觉,认为教材就是外语本身和全部。这当然是不对的:要使外语水平得到巩固和提高,就必须

通过多种途径,而阅读各种课外读物,锻炼语言,了解西方生活情况来扩大视野和知识面,是十分必要的。

简写本一般可分为两类。一是缩略,二是改写。朗曼简写本是后一类。改写者都是高手,改写字浅显,文笔流畅;去繁杂而保存原著精华;避免拗句,长句;英语味道十足。凡能初步掌握接近 2,000 字汇而又具有基础句型结构概念的初学者,都可以从中学得语法、文字和表达习惯的知识。

侦探小说,原是种种社会问题的具体反映,是受到读者欢迎的一种通俗文学,只要不是故意渲染凶杀暴行和贩卖低级趣味的东西,是无可厚非的。本书包括的四篇是当代美国著名案件作家所写。其中揭露了西方社会的一些黑暗面,反映了一些尔虞我诈的生活面貌,情节生动,通俗易懂。写作形式具有一定的代表性,对学习英语写作方法也大有裨益。

每篇小说附有译文,是因为学习外语有三个方面,除主学语言国情况外,还应强调学员的本国语言水平。学外语当然不是当外国人,而是消除语言隔阂,起沟通作用。因此从初学开始,亟宜重视互译的正确性。至于本书译文的种种疏漏不当,权以抛砖引玉自释,恳请读者斧正。

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The False Burton Combs

Carrol John Daly

I had a cabin on the top deck of the Fall River boat and ten minutes after I left my bag there I knew that I was being watched. The boat had already left the harbour and was slowly making its way towards the open sea.

I was being watched but I didn't take it too seriously. There was nothing to be nervous about—my little trip was purely for pleasure this time. But being watched is never very pleasant. And I was sure that I had come onto the boat unobserved.

This fellow was new to me, and I thought he must have just picked me up on suspicion, in the hope of getting something. I thought about my past offences and there was really nothing they could hold me for.

I'm not a criminal, just a gentleman adventurer. I make my living by working against people who break the law. Not that I work with the police—no, not me. But I realised that criminals are the simplest people in the world. They're thinking so hard about their own plans to trick other people that they never realise they can easily get tricked themselves. Do

you understand the game? There are a lot of little secrets I could tell you, but the game's too good to broadcast. It's enough to say that I've been in card games with four card-cheats, and I fooled the four of them. And I don't know a thing about cards.

As I said, I'm an adventurer. But I'm not the kind that sits around waiting for a fool in trouble, or spends their time helping governments out of nasty situations. Not that I wouldn't be willing to help governments, at a certain price, but none has asked me. That kind of fellow is only found between the pages of a book. I guess.

I've done a lot of business in blackmail cases. I find out about a fellow who's being blackmailed and then I visit him. He pays me for my services, and we get the blackmailers almost every time. You see, I'm a kind of a fellow in the middle—not a criminal and not a policeman. Both of them are suspicious of me, although the criminals don't often know that I'm after them. And the police—well, they're rather close behind me sometimes, but I've got to take the chances.

But it isn't a nice feeling to be followed when you're out for pleasure, so I walked up and down the deck a few times, whistling, just to be sure there wasn't any mistake. And that fellow came up and down after me, as innocently as if it were his first job. Then I had dinner, and he sat at the next table. He watched me with a sad look, as if he hadn't arrested anybody for a long time and really wanted to lock someone up. But I was watching him, too, and he struck me

as strange. He didn't look like a detective. He acted like a fellow with lots of money because he ordered dinner without even looking at the prices. It struck me that I might have made a mistake, and maybe he was one of those fellows that wanted to sell me oil shares. I always like the oil shares game. It passes the time and you can eat well without paying the bill.

About nine o'clock I was leaning over the rail, looking at the sea. I was thinking about how far it was to the shore, if someone had to swim. Not that I had any thought of doing that—no, not me—but I always like to work out the chances. You never know.

Well, the fellow with the sad eyes came up and leant over the rail beside me.

"It's a nice night," he said.

"A nice night for a swim," I said, and I looked at him carefully out of the corner of my eye.

He looked out towards the lights on the shore. "It is a long swim," he said, just as if he had the idea in mind.

Then, after a pause, he said, "I wonder if you would do me a favour?"

This was just about what I expected. "Hmmm", was all I said,

"I came onto the boat rather late," he went on. "I couldn't get a cabin. I wonder, would you let me take the other bed in your cabin? I've been watching you and I saw that you were alone."

So he wanted to share my cabin. Well, I didn't like that idea, because I wanted to get a good night's sleep. Besides, I knew that his story was all wrong, because the boat wasn't full and I had got my cabin after I came onto the boat. But I didn't tell him that. I wanted to work out his game first.

"I'm a friend of the captain," I said. "I'll get you a cabin." I started to walk away.

"No! Don't do that," he said, taking my arm to stop me. "It's...there's something else."

"What else?" I looked straight into eyes, and there was a look in them that I've seen before. It's a look that you see often in my line of business. As he turned and I saw his eyes in the lights of the deck, I saw fear in his face — real fear, terrible fear.

"Tell me what you want," I said, "and maybe I can help you. But let me tell you first that there are plenty of free cabins on this boat. Now, you don't look like a criminal—you don't look sharp enough. Why do you want to share my cabin?"

He thought for a moment and then started to talk, keeping his eyes on the water.

"I'm in trouble. I don't know if I have been followed onto this boat or not. I don't think so, but I can't take the chance. I haven't slept for two nights, and tonight I'm afraid I might fall asleep even though I don't want to. I don't want to be alone, and—and you struck me as the kind of fellow who might — might —"

“—might like to risk getting killed?” I asked.

He drew away from me when I said that, but I went on. “And you’d like me to sit by you all night and protect you, eh?”

“I didn’t exactly mean that but I—I don’t want to be alone. Now, if you were a person that I could offer money to—” He stopped and waited.

I decided to be direct with him. There might be some future in a job like this.

“I’ll tell you what I’ll do,” I said. “I’ve been all over the world and done a few jobs for different South American governments”—that always sounds good—“and I’ll sit and keep an eye on you for a hundred bucks.”

“And I can sleep?” he asked eagerly, and his eyes lit up.

“Like a baby,” I told him.

Twenty minutes later, he was in bed. We’d turned the ‘No Smoking’ sign to the wall and were smoking some good cigars. He’d paid me the hundred bucks, and we were all content.

He just lay there and smoked, and didn’t talk much. He didn’t seem to be as sleep as I thought he was. Maybe he was too tired to sleep, which is a strange thing but I’ve had it plenty of times myself. And I could see that he was thinking hard about something.

After a long silence, he asked, “What’s your business?”

Well, I already had his hundred bucks and there didn’t

seem to be any reason to avoid the question, so I told him.

"I'm a soldier of fortune," I said.

I think that gave him a bit of a shock. "Do you mean, you take chances for— for money?" he asked.

"Certain kinds of chances," I said.

"Like this, for example?"

"Sometimes; but I don't travel around as a bodyguard, if that's what you're thinking."

He laughed as if he felt more at ease. I've often seen them laugh when they're going to send me into the danger that they fear. It's relief, I guess.

"I think I could use you," he said slowly. "I'll pay you well, and you won't need to see me again."

"Oh, I don't dislike you," I said. "But I like to work alone. Let me hear what you have to offer, and then—well, you can get some sleep tonight, anyway."

"Well, there isn't much to tell. I want you to pretend to be me—just for the summer."

"That's not so easy." I shook my head.

"It's easy enough," he went on eagerly. "I am supposed to go to my father's hotel on Nantucket island..."

Then he leaned forward and talked quickly. He spoke very quietly, and very seriously. The people didn't know him there. He hadn't been to Nantucket since he was ten. His father was abroad, and wouldn't be there.

"How old are you?" he asked me suddenly.

"Thirty," I told him.

"We're about the same age. We are quite alike, about the same size. And you won't meet anyone who knows me. If anything goes wrong, I'll be in touch with you."

"What kind of trouble are you in?" I asked him.

"I've been mixed up with some people whom I'm not proud of. And they're threatening to kill me."

I thought about this for a moment. It looked as if he was hiring me to get killed in his place. This was all right, if I was paid enough. I'd taken such chances before, and nothing had happened.

"Yes, they've threatened to kill me," he went on. "but I don't think they'll do it."

I nodded. I didn't think so, either. That's usually the way.

"And that's why you paid me a hundred bucks to sit with you all night," I said, "Well, I don't mind the risk, but I must be paid in relation to the danger, you understand."

When he realised that it was only a question of money, he opened up a lot. He didn't exactly give me the facts of the case, but he told me enough. I learned that he had never seen the people who were threatening him.

In the end he wrote out a paper which asked me to pretend to be him, and said that he would take all the responsibility himself. Of course, the paper wouldn't be much help if I was really in trouble, but it would help if his father suddenly returned from Europe. Anyway, I didn't intend to use

that paper. I play the game fairly, and he'd named a good figure.

When we'd finished talking, I'd got the idea that he had been mixed up in some criminal business, and that two of his friends had gone to jail on his evidence. There were three others who were coming to get him, but he'd never seen them. Anyway, it didn't matter much to me. My job was just to show them that he wasn't afraid, and then when they gave up — or got me — it would all be over. I didn't think it was likely that they'd really kill him, but he did, so that suited me fine. They were probably hard men, yes, but I'm not exactly an angel myself.

After an hour or two, he'd told me all about his family and the hotel, and then Burton Combs fell deeply asleep for the first time in weeks.

The next morning we parted company in his cabin. I took a taxi to New Bedford, and from there took the little boat that makes the trip over to Nantucket.

There were only about ten cabins on the little boat, and I had one of them which was already reserved for Burton Combs. I walked around the boat a little, and didn't see any suspicious characters, so I lay down in the little cabin and fell asleep.

Five hours later I came up on deck, and we were already very close to Nantucket harbour. There were a lot of people waiting but they all looked innocent. I started to feel very good. From the look of the passengers I could see I was

going to a high-class place, and I just hoped that Burton Combs's clothes would fit me.

There was a bus waiting with a sign saying "Sea Breeze Hotel", and I got on it with about five other people. The bus went up one shady street and down another, up a short hill, and we arrived at the hotel. It was a beautiful place, with a wide view of the ocean.

The manager saw me at once, and said that he'd have known me anywhere as a Combs. It was very sweet of him considering that he'd been expecting me, and the others in the bus were an old man, three older women and a young girl about nineteen. He was very glad to see me and wondered why I hadn't been there for so many years. And he wanted to know if I was going to study the business. He said my father had written to him saying he'd like me to learn the hotel trade.

I didn't say much. There was no need. Mr Rowlands, the manager, talked all the time as we went up in the elevator and into the room.

There were about fifty people there on the first of July, but they kept arriving all the time and after two weeks the place was crowded. I didn't make any effort to learn the business, as young Combs didn't look to me like a fellow who would like any kind of work.

There was one girl there — the one that came up in the bus with me — Marion St James. We had some great times together. She was full of life and wanted to be doing things

all the time. We played a lot of golf together.

Then there was another who took an interest in me. She was a widow, very good-looking, and it was her first season there. She didn't seem like most of the women there. She expected me to take her around.

But I didn't have the time, because of Marion. She was young and sweet and talked about moonlight and that sort of rubbish, but she was real and had a big heart and a sensible little head on her shoulders. And she didn't like the widow, and looked on me as her own special property. But the widow, I guess, was thinking of marriage, and the son of John B Combs, the hotel owner, seemed a good catch. So you see my time was certainly full and I had plenty of good laughs. I never took women seriously. My game and women don't go well together.

Yet the widow was very curious and wanted to know where Marion and I went to all the time. She kept on asking me where we drove to in the evenings. Yes, I had a car. Burton Combs had a nice little sports car at the hotel.

Marion was different. She was just a kid, stuck in a place like that, and I wanted to give her a good time. I felt a bit sorry for her. Anyway, she was very pretty and I felt proud to be seen with her.

All the time I kept an eye open for the bad men. I wondered if they would come. If they did, I thought that they would come in the busy season when they wouldn't be noticed much. But I very much doubted that they'd come at

all.

And then they came — the three of them. I knew them the second they came through the door. They were dressed in the the height of fashion, wearing just what the others were wearing. But I knew them. They just didn't belong.

They weren't fooling, either, I have met all kinds of men in my time—bad, very bad, and worse — and these three were the real thing.

One of them was a tall thin fellow and he looked more like a real summer visitor than the others. But his mouth showed what he really was. When he thought he was alone with the others, he talked through the side of his mouth — you only see that in the underworld or at the race — track. One of the others was fat and looked like a barman, and the third looked to me like a common jail — bird who could cut a man's throat with a smile.

The tall thin one was the leader, and his room was reserved under the name of Mr James Farrow. He made friends with me immediately. He didn't overdo it, you know; he just gave me the usual amount of attention that most of the guests showed towards the owner's son.

I didn't know exactly what their game was. I couldn't see the point of wanting to kill me. If they'd wanted money I would have understood, but they seemed to have plenty of money already. So I just watched them. Yes, sir, this Farrow was a tough bird and on mistake. But I'd seen them