



〔中〕毛荣贵

〔美〕Rosemary

编著

当代美国短文赏读

—— 苦斗人生

上海交通大学出版社



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前言

美国是一个遥远的国度。

现在,美国对国人来说已不再遥远、不再陌生。

各种传媒对美国的报道纷至沓来,让我们能近距离、多角度地观察这个国家;我们身边有许多人访美归来,他们有声有色地向我们谈起美国见闻;美国许多专家学者、旅游观光者来到中国,他们又有意无意地在宣传着美国。

距离的拉近,交往的频繁,相信“西方的月亮比中国圆”的人士越来越少了。相信“美国遍地是黄金”的人士也开始怀疑自己。然而,美国对我们许多人来说又是神秘的、朦胧的、天堂般的。

本书却要向读者真实展示当今美国人亲历的种种人生磨难。他们也有磨难?是的,请勿感到意外!国人用“天灾人祸”四个字来概括人世间的种种不幸。生活在地球另一面的人当然不在幸免之列。不信,请读一读本书 Enjoy the Round (好好打一场高尔夫球)一文主人公的一句话:

The only thing life really promises us is pain. It's up to us to create the joy.

本书 25 篇文章很难说是否囊括了当今美国人的全部磨难。但是,25 篇文章的内容没有一篇是雷同的。天有不测风云,人有旦夕祸福。世界皆然。笔者在编辑本书的时候曾几次潸然泪下。真的, The only thing life really promises us is pain! 如此而已,岂有他哉? 尽管美国是一个发达国家,尽管美国人民享受着高度的物质文明,尽管美国傲视世界群雄。

然而,美国人又似乎是“乐天知命”、豁达洒脱的。他们认定:天灾难防,人祸难避! 本书 When the Telephone Rang(电话铃声响起

的时候)一文说到:

There are seasons of the heart. There are seasons in our lives, just as there are seasons to all of nature. These seasons cannot be forced any more than one can force the coming of spring by pulling at tender blades of grass to make them grow.

虽说字里行间透出几分无奈,但毕竟在天灾人祸面前表现出不凡的理性。

因此,笔者在垂泪之后,更多的是受到一份启迪,得到几许鼓舞。本书的每一篇都可视作是挑战命运的颂歌!

细读全书,你会惊奇地发现自己读不到什么“豪言”。以下这句择自 The White Picket Fence (白色的尖桩篱笆)。好像最能道出书中人物的精神风貌:

Change is part of life and the making of character, hon. When things happen that you don't like, you have two choices: You get bitter or better.

这句话,平平淡淡,远非“壮语”,即使是本书的另一主编,美国西雅图的 Rosemary 教授对此话的 paraphrase,仍然使用了“低调”:

When things happen that you don't like, you have two choices: You get angry and stay that way, or you learn from the changes.

遭遇人生不测之后,本书主人公泪飞如雨者有之,痛不欲生者有之,一度沉沦者有之。然而,却没有一个 get bitter, 或者, get angry and stay that way! 而是 get better, 或者, learn from the changes。而笔者却喜用“苦斗”两字写之,并且将这两个字挪用到本书的标题。

我们不能以偏概全,把书中人物的“苦斗”精神视作一种“美国精神”。然而,当我们能在这样一本书里集中地读到美国人敢与命运抗争的真实故事的时候,我们的心震撼了。我们又想起了毛泽东

的一句话：人是要有一点精神的。

细读本书，在精神上获得的享受是多方面的。

就写作风格言，读者可以欣赏到文风各异的篇章。其中不少文章完全可以作为英语学习的范文精读细览，而令读者爱不释手。

例如，本书中有 *Sure Is Cold* 这样书卷气十足、文采斐然之作，也有 *Finding My Way Back* 那样低吟浅唱而又如泣如诉之文；有 *The Love I'll Never Forget* 这样文笔曲折而情感如瀑的故事，也有 *The White Picket Fence* 那样构思精致盆景式的散文；有 *My Father Gave Me Life Twice* 这样朱自清“背影”式的抒情佳作，也有 *A Mother's Warning* 那样用血泪写成的呐喊短文。

这又是一本中美学者通过 Email 携手合作而成的读物。Rosemary Adang 执教于美国西雅图的 Highline Community College。现代通讯的杰作使我们频频联络，反复磋商，愉快合作，在较短的时间里完成了本书的选材、编写等工作，使本书既是一扇了解美国的窗口，又是学习英语的一本理想读物；本书既融入词汇、句型、语法的学习，又初涉英汉双语的比较和翻译。此外，上海译文出版社词典编辑室主任张福基先生为本书的若干疑难词汇提供了汉译；张韧弦同学为本书超出大学英语四级词汇的生词作了注释，同时还以高度负责的精神对全书的初稿作了反复校改。没有他们的参与，本书就难以以现在的面目问世！在此特向他们表示诚挚的谢意。

限于编者的水平，书中欠当之处在所难免。恳望广大读者不吝赐教。

毛荣贵

1997 年盛夏

于上海交大东川花苑

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飞来横祸

When the Telephone Rang

By Melody Beattie

催

人泪下，母亲痛说人生不测；令人感奋，母女重扬生活风帆。

本文的内容似可以上面两句加以概括。人生的不测往往突如其来！14岁的女儿 Nichole 带 12 岁的儿子 Shane 去滑雪，本来是为了庆祝弟弟 12 岁的生日，孰料，在滑雪场上出现了这样悲惨的一幕：

When the two reached the top, Shane shouted, "Let's face it!" He dug his poles into the snow and pushed off. While going over a mogul (滑雪道上隆起的地方), he fell, then stood up. Struggling to regain his balance, he was hit from behind by another skier and fell again. This time he didn't move.

三天之后，抢救宣布无效。作为一个离异的母亲，她这样描写自己的心情：

Walking out of that room and out of the hospital was the hardest thing I have ever done in my life.

然而，祸不单行。女儿的精神受此打击，不再是一个天真无虑的少女。她认定弟弟的死与自己有关而应负责！她曾这样呼喊，道出了心声：

I feel so guilty, so bad. I tried to drink it away. I tried to drug it away.

drug it away，这里的 drug 原系名词“毒品”（即文章里提到的 cocaine and marijuana / 可卡因和大麻），而在上文却用作动词，含义自明。但是，Nichole 不仅没有能 drug it away，反而，发出了“I need help!”的呐喊。她如此描写她吸毒的感觉：

... Sometimes I go blank, and the next day I can't remember anything. I'm scared. I need help.

次日,“我”即将女儿送入了“青少年戒毒中心”(inpatient chemical-dependency treatment center)(注:请注意此名称委婉的措辞,尤其是 chemical-dependency 一词)

看来,“我”在痛失爱子之后,又将失去爱女。这时,我们读到了以下的文字:

It was a strange time when Nichole was in treatment. I wandered around our house all alone but didn't feel lost as I had before. I found something I thought I'd never find again — calmness, a sense of peace.

此话也许和“物极必反”一说相通,然而,读之反倍感心境黯然!

可是,真正的解脱就在此后不久。在戒毒中心和女儿见面时,女儿终于一吐心中久积的痛苦:

This whole nightmare is all my fault! You told me to be home by six that night. That's the last thing you said before we walked out that door. And if I had listened, if I had come home when you said, Shane wouldn't be dead now. I'm so, so sorry, Mom.

“我”离开中心之前,给女儿写了这样一张条子:

Dear Nichole, I love you very much. I always have. I always will. And if you had called me that night to ask if you could ski later than 6 p. m., I would have said yes. You didn't cause this, baby. And don't ever again think you did. Love, Mom.

此信字字是泪,句句是真情。然而,母女之间的这一交流间接告诉我们,自 Shane 离开人世后,母亲和姐姐心头弥漫着悲哀、失落、遗憾、悔恨,历久不散!死者长眠已矣,而生者还要生活下去。

When I got home, the telephone rang. “Thank you so much. That note means a lot, more than anything.”

母女间的沟通竟然令两人顿有所悟,从此走出痛失儿子/弟弟的巨大心理阴影。以下的文字,不要说对经历了人生不幸的人,即使是对命途平坦的人来说,也会肃然深思:

There are seasons of the heart. There are seasons in our lives, just as there are seasons to all of nature. These seasons cannot be forced any more than one can force the coming of spring by pulling at tender blades of grass to make them grow. It took me awhile to understand. (此句译文见后)

我们在读此句时,就自然联想起本书的另一篇文章 The White Picket Fence(白色的尖桩篱笆),那篇文章里有这样一句:

Change is part of life and the making of character, hon. When things happen that you don't like, you have two choices: You get bitter or better. (变化是生活的一部分,而且也构成了人的意志品德,亲爱的。当你不喜欢的事情发生了,你有两种选择:要么痛苦不堪;要么痛快依旧。)

读者朋友,当你读到作者向你描绘 Nichole 从戒毒中心归来母女同庆的镜头时,你会发出欣慰的笑容吗?

Nichole came home in January. We vowed to have the best year a mother and daughter ever had. To celebrate her homecoming, we had a party with her friends. It was a grand day.

ON JANUARY 30, 1991, my son Shane's 12th birthday, I took my two children to a restaurant to celebrate. My daughter, Nichole, apologized to Shane because she didn't have a gift. "Want to come skiing with Joey and me this Saturday?" she asked.

Shane's eyes lit up. Offers like that from his 14-year-old sister didn't come very often.

At home that evening Shane sidled up to me^① while I sat at my dressing table, brushing my hair. He opened my jewelry drawer and took out a small gold cross, one his father had given me at the time of our divorce^②. “Can I have this?” he asked.

“Sure, honey,” I said. “You can have that.”

That Friday, before the birthday ski trip, Shane stopped me in the kitchen, pulled down the neck of his sweater and pointed to the cross hanging around his neck. “God is with me now,” he said quietly.

I had a hard time falling asleep that night. It wasn’t, as the song says, that I thought we’d get to see forever. But I thought we’d have more time than we did. I didn’t know the end would come so soon — that I would face a mother’s worst nightmare, involving not just one but both of my children.

One Last Time. “Be home by six o’clock!” I yelled as the kids left that Saturday morning for Afton Alps, a ski area south of our home in Stillwater, Minn. Nichole promised they would be back on time.

It was a strange day. I felt as if I was waiting for something, but I didn’t know what. At 8 p. m. I wondered why the children weren’t home yet. I was putting around the house^③ after 9 p. m. when the telephone rang.

“Mrs. Beattie?” a man asked. “I’m with the Afton Alps Ski Patrol. Your son has been injured. He’s unconscious, but I’m sure he’ll be fine. Stay where you are. We’ll call you back.”

The phone rang again in 15 minutes. “Your son’s still not conscious,” the man said. “We’re taking him to the hospital.”

Be calm, I thought. Drive to the hospital and see your son. Be by his side. Everything will be fine.

① 羞羞答答地走向我 ② 离婚 ③ 绕着房子转来转去

A nurse met me in the *emergency room^④. She looked at me differently from anyone who had ever looked at me before. She took my arm and led me to a small room. “Do you have someone you can call?” she said.

Those words broke my heart. I knew what they meant.

Soon I learned what had happened. After skiing the beginner hills all day, Shane decided to finish up by trying an *expert slope^⑤ called Trudy’s Schuss. He talked one of Nichole’s friends into going with him.

When the two reached the top, Shane shouted, “Let’s face it!” He dug his poles into the snow and pushed off. While going over a mogul^⑥, he fell, then stood up. Struggling to regain his balance, he was hit from behind by another skier and fell again. This time he didn’t move.

In minutes the *first-aid sled^⑦ arrived. When *artificial respiration^⑧ didn’t work, someone called an ambulance.

“Help him! That’s my brother!” Nichole shouted at the paramedics^⑨. As one medic *hooked up^⑩ an I. V.^⑪, another started to cut off the chain with the cross that hung around Shane’s neck. “Leave that on him,” Nichole said. They closed the doors and sped toward the emergency room.

No More Options. At the hospital I talked to a doctor. He said something about brain injury. Swelling^⑫. More tests. All weekend I prayed for a miracle. Sometimes I couldn’t bear to be in Shane’s room. I felt as if I were going to explode^⑬ or *go insane^⑭. The ventilator^⑮ whooshed^⑯ as it pushed air into his lungs. I held his hand, gently squeezing his fingers. He didn’t squeeze back.

I remembered when we were sledding together a few weeks

④ 急诊室 ⑤ 高手级的斜坡 ⑥ 滑道上的隆起点 ⑦ 急救雪橇,其中 sled 还可作动词 ⑧ 人工呼吸 ⑨ 医护人员,后文又称 medic ⑩ 插接 ⑪ intravenous(静脉输液)的缩写 ⑫ 肿块,据上下文可能指头部肿块 ⑬ 爆炸 ⑭ 急疯了 ⑮ 呼吸器 ⑯ 发出“嗖”的一声

before. Shane slammed into a tree and rolled off the sled. He lay there on his back in the snow. “Shane, are you all right?” I yelled, running to him.

He sat up quickly, smiled and said, “Psych!”^⑦

“Don’t tease like that,” I said. “If anything happened to you, I don’t think I could go on. Do you understand that?”

He looked at me, got serious and said yes, he knew that.

Now I kept wishing he’d sit up, smile and say, “Psych.” But he didn’t.

On the third day the doctors told me we should turn off the life-support equipment. Shane’s kidneys^⑧ had shut down. His body wasn’t working. He was brain-dead. Medically there were no more options.

I started screaming, “Damn it! This is my baby you’re talking about!” I kicked a door across from me as hard as I could.

After Shane’s friends, Nichole’s friends, and family members said their good-byes, I entered his room. I cut off a lock of his hair and touched his foot. I always loved his little feet. And I held him while they shut off the ventilator.

“I love you,” I said. “I always have. I always will.”

When they turned off the machine, a whiff^⑨ of air escaped from his lungs, and he didn’t move again. I knew then he hadn’t moved again. I knew then he hadn’t been breathing, hadn’t been alive for days. The machines had made it look that way, but it wasn’t so.

Walking out of that room and out of the hospital was the hardest thing I have ever done in my life.

Losing Nichole. We had balloons at Shane’s funeral^⑩. When the children were little, they loved balloons. If they lost one into the air, I would comfort them by saying, “That’s okay. God

⑦ “吓坏了吧!” ⑧ 肾脏 ⑨ 一口 ⑩ 葬礼

catches all your balloons, and when you get to heaven, you get *a big bouquet^② of every balloon you've ever lost. So don't cry. They'll all be there waiting for you. ”

The sky was clear that February day as hundreds of balloons sailed up and up until eventually they passed beyond where we could see.

In the months that followed, I missed Shane terribly. Missed his presence, his voice, the touch of him. Some nights I lay awake until the morning, trying to penetrate the veil that divides this world from the next.¹ But Shane felt far away. Gone forever. All meaning had been drained from my life.

Nichole was also having a bad time. Occasionally we'd cry together, but as time *wore on^③, I realized I was losing Nichole too. We began arguing. She refused to do homework and skipped school. I didn't like the new crowd of friends she started running with. They were surly^④, sometimes downright^⑤ rude. I tried forbidding her to see them anymore, but it didn't work.

We were each adrift in our own cold, dark sea, unable to help each other, unable to do much but swim for our lives. Sometimes we'd bob to the surface, reach out, touch each other's hands and say, "I love you."²

On one such occasion, six months after Shane's death, Nichole said to me, "Mom, some people think things like this get better with time. But in some ways it gets worse. I miss Shane more every day he's gone. ”

Most of the time, however, we each struggled alone.

“I Need Help.” One night Nichole came home late. When I tried talking to her, she started giggling^⑥, then blew me a kiss. She *reeked of alcohol^⑦.

② 一大捧 ③ 慢慢过去 ④ 粗鲁 ⑤ 彻彻底底地 ⑥ 咯咯痴笑 ⑦ 一身酒气

The next day we had a talk. I *set some ground rules^㉗, trying to be clear and reasonable. I insisted she see a counselor^㉘, but she didn't want to go.

I asked her how much she'd been drinking. She named only two other occasions in the past year; the day after the funeral and once last summer. She assured me she was doing all right.

Then one afternoon the following winter, I was in the kitchen when the door flew open. "I need to talk to you," Nichole said. "I don't know how to say this, but I can't control myself when I drink. Sometimes I go blank, and the next day I can't remember anything. I'm scared. I need help."

"Okay," I said, not knowing what else to offer.

"I'm starting to hate myself," she went on. "I've been looking you right in the face and lying to you about where I'm going and what I'm doing, I've also used *cocaine and marijuana^㉙."

The next day I admitted her to an *inpatient chemical-dependency treatment center for young people^㉚. Hugging her goodbye, I held her close. "It'll be all right, baby," I said. "It's a new beginning, the start of the rest of your life."

"I've hurt you," she said. "I feel so bad, I want you to be proud of me someday, Mom."

"I'm proud of you now, honey," I whispered.

It was a strange time when Nichole was in treatment. I wandered around our house all alone but didn't feel lost as I had before. I found something I thought I'd never find again — calmness, a sense of peace.

The Last Balloon. Christmas, the second since Shane's death, was a quiet day. I brought Nichole's presents to her at the treatment center. "Mom, I'm happy I'm here", she said. "I feel like a new person."

㉗ 约法三章 ㉘ (学校)辅导员 ㉙ 可卡因和大麻(都是毒品) ㉚ 青少年住院戒毒中心;chemical-dependency 是 drug addict(毒瘾)的委婉说法