

ENGLISH

格短篇小说选

ES FROM ISAAC BASHEVIS SINGER

《英语学习》丛书

北京出版社

英語學習叢書

*Stories from
Isaac Bashevis Singer*

辛格短篇小說選

劉興安注釋

北京出版社

内 容 提 要

本书收入美国当代犹太作家、诺贝尔文学奖获得者艾萨克·巴什维斯·辛格的短篇小说八篇，每篇都附有汉语注释。这些小说反映了在波兰和美国的许意第绪语的犹太人的生活，塑造了形形色色的犹太人形象。故事生动，文笔幽默，语言朴素简洁，非常口语化，有助于读者学习当代英语，提高英语阅读能力，也有助于读者了解辛格这位重要的西方作家及其作品。

《英语学习》丛书

刘世沐主编

辛格短篇小说选

刘兴安注释

*

北京出版社出版

(北京崇文门东兴隆街51号)

新华书店北京发行所发行

北京印刷三厂印刷

*

787 × 1092 毫米 32开 6印张

1981年11月第1版 1981年11月第1次印刷

印数 1—9,400

书号：10071·300 定价：0.60元

编者的话

为了帮助广大学习英语的读者较快地学好英语，我们特编辑《英语学习》丛书，由北京出版社分辑出版。内容包括：学习指导、语音、语法、词汇、口语、翻译、写作练习、注释读物、文学欣赏、戏剧电影选以及课外活动材料等。选材不求系统、全面，主要是向读者提供一些学习英语的辅助材料和基本知识。

本辑编选了美国当代犹太作家、一九七八年诺贝尔文学奖金获得者艾萨克·辛格的八篇短篇小说，并加以汉语注释。除《打赌》、《扫烟囱的孩子》和《卡夫卡的一个朋友》是选自小说集《卡夫卡的一个朋友》外，其余五篇选自作者自选集《艾萨克·巴什维斯·辛格文集》。

我们水平有限，热切希望广大读者提出批评建议，使这套丛书能更好地适合读者的需要，能为我国实现四个现代化服务。

一九八〇年四月

关于艾萨克·辛格

艾萨克·巴什维斯·辛格 (Isaac Bashevis Singer) 是美国当代最有影响的犹太作家。他从十七岁开始用意第绪语进行创作，迄今共发表了三十多部作品，其中有长篇小说、短篇小说集、回忆录和儿童故事集。他的作品由亲友译成英文经他润色后出版。翻译辛格作品的人中有诺贝尔文学奖金获得者索尔·贝娄这样的文学大家。辛格的作品深受美国读者的欢迎，在犹太人读者中，他尤其受到推崇。他的作品曾两次获得美国“全国图书奖”。他还多次获得美国其它文学奖金。

近年来，辛格的作品在国际上受到越来越广泛的注意。一九七八年，瑞典科学院授予辛格诺贝尔文学奖金，表彰他在文学上的成就。奖状中说，授奖给辛格是“因为他的充满激情的叙事艺术，这种艺术既扎根于波兰犹太人的文化传统，又反映了人类的普遍处境”。

艾萨克·辛格一九〇四年出生于当时仍被沙皇俄国占领的波兰城镇拉齐米恩。后来随父母去华沙，住在首都贫民区。辛格的祖父和父亲都曾作过犹太教的拉比，属于教规森严的哈西德教派。辛格从小就受到严格的犹太传统教育，后又在一所神学院学习过。家庭环境和生活经历使他不但熟悉犹太教的一切宗教仪式及犹太法典，也使他熟悉犹太人的各种传统和风俗习惯。这些都为他后来的创作活动奠定了坚实的生活基础。

一九三五年，辛格移居美国。他在为纽约意第绪语报纸《犹太前进日报》写新闻报道的同时，继续他的创作活动。他的第一部长篇小说 *The Family Muskat*（《莫斯凯特家族》）便是首先在这家日报上连载刊出的。后来又陆续出版了六部长篇小说：*The Magician of Lublin*（《卢布林的魔术师》）、*The Slave*（《奴隶》）、*The Manor*（《庄园》）、*The Estate*（《遗产》）、*The Enemies: A Love Story*（《敌人：一个爱情故事》）和 *Shosha*（《肖莎》）。其中 *The Magician of Lublin* 获得美国“全国图书奖”，至今仍被认为是他的代表作。

辛格还为儿童写了许多作品，其中包括：*The Fearful Inn*（《可怕的酒店》）、*The Milk of a Lioness*（《母狮子的奶汁》）、*Zlateh the Goat*（《山羊兹拉特》）等。

辛格的回忆录 *In My Father's Court*（《在我父亲的庭堂上》）出版后颇受读者的欢迎，后来收入作者自选集 *Isaac Bashevis Singer Reader* 中。

然而，辛格最擅长的还是短篇小说。他的深厚的生活基础和丰富的想象力，使他在小说中为我们描绘出一幅广阔的社会生活画卷。他的小说大多取材于东欧犹太人的生活，反映他们遭受沙皇俄国、德国法西斯及各种官吏的迫害和压迫。对美籍犹太人的生活面貌，在他的作品中也有反映。

辛格的短篇小说，分别收入集子的有以下几部：*Gimpel the Fool*（《傻瓜吉姆佩尔》）、*The Spinoza of the Market Street*（《市场街的斯宾诺莎》）、*Short Friday*（《短暂的星期五》）、*The Séance*（《集会》）、*A Friend of Kafka*（《卡夫卡的一个朋友》）、*Passions*（《激情》）、*A Crown of Feathers*（《羽毛王冠》）、*Satan in Goray*（《戈来的

撒旦》)。

辛格在他的作品中，塑造了形形色色的典型人物：农民、手工业者、商贩、面包师、屠夫、扫烟囱的；演员、作家、画家、教师、医生；大小官吏；各种神职人员等。他用诙谐的笔调，通过善意的讽刺，对劳动者和普通人流露出深切的同情，但对资本主义社会的腐朽和黑暗，则给予无情的揭露和鞭挞。

辛格的语言也是别具一格的，其最大的特点是明白流畅、言简意赅。这种短小精悍、生动活泼的文风，是值得学习借鉴的。

当然，辛格小说所反映的社会和我国的情况是很不相同的，小说中的人物无论政治观点、道德观念，还是生活习惯都是我国读者所不熟悉的，有的甚至是颇不足取的。

刘兴安

一九八〇年四月

CONTENTS

目 录

Gimpel the Fool	
傻瓜吉姆佩尔·····	1
The Spinoza of Market Street	
市场街的斯宾诺莎·····	29
The Chimney Sweep	
扫烟囱的孩子·····	62
The Wager	
打赌·····	72
The Man Who Came Back	
死而复生的人·····	93
The Lecture	
一次演讲·····	112
Getzel the Monkey	
猴子盖策尔·····	140
A Friend of Kafka	
卡夫卡的一个朋友·····	157

Gimpel the Fool

1

I am Gimpel the Fool.¹ I don't think myself a fool. On the contrary. But that's what folks call me. They gave me the name while I was still in school. I had seven names in all: imbecile, donkey, flax-head, dope, glump, ninny, and fool. The last name stuck.² What did my foolishness consist of? I was easy to take in.³ They said, "Gimpel, you know the rabbi's⁴ wife has been brought to childbed?" So I skipped school.⁵ Well, it turned out to be a lie.⁶ How was I supposed to know? She hadn't had a big belly. But I never looked at her belly. Was that really so foolish? The gang laughed and hee-hawed,⁷ stomped and danced and chanted a good-night prayer. And instead of the raisins they give when a woman's lying in,⁸ they stuffed my hand full of goat turds. I was no weakling. If I slapped someone he'd see all the way to Cracow.⁹ But I'm really not a slugger by nature. I think to myself: Let it pass. So they take advantage of me.

I was coming home from school and heard a dog barking. I'm not afraid of dogs, but of course I never want to start up with them.¹⁰ One of them may be mad, and if he bites there's not a Tartar¹¹ in the world who can help you.

So I made tracks.¹² Then I looked around and saw the whole market place wild with laughter. It was no dog at all but Wolf-Leib the Thief.¹³ How was I supposed to know it was he? It sounded like a howling bitch.

When the pranksters and leg-pullers found that I was easy to fool, every one of them tried his luck with me.¹⁴ "Gimpel, the Czar¹⁵ is coming to Frampol; Gimpel, the moon fell down in Turbeen; Gimpel, little Hodel Fur-piece found a treasure behind the bathhouse." And I like a golem¹⁶ believed everyone. In the first place, everything is possible, as it is written in the Wisdom of the Fathers,¹⁷ I've forgotten just how. Second, I had to believe when the whole town came down on me!¹⁸ If I ever dared to say, "Ah, you're kidding!" there was trouble. People got angry. "What do you mean! You want to call everyone a liar?" What was I to do? I believed them, and I hope at least that did them some good.

I was an orphan. My grandfather who brought me up was already bent toward the grave.¹⁹ So they turned me over to a baker, and what a time they gave me there!²⁰ Every woman or girl who came to bake a batch of noodles had to fool me at least once. "Gimpel, there's a fair in heaven; Gimpel, the rabbi gave birth to a calf in the seventh month; Gimpel, a cow flew over the roof and laid brass eggs." A student from the yeshiva²¹ came once to buy a roll, and he said, "You, Gimpel, while you stand here scraping with your baker's shovel the Messiah²² has

come. The dead have arisen.” “What do you mean?” I said. “I heard no one blowing the ram’s horn!”²³ He said, “Are you deaf?” And all began to cry, “We heard it, we heard!” Then in came Rietze the Candle-dipper and called out in her hoarse voice, “Gimpel, your father and mother have stood up from the grave. They’re looking for you.”

To tell the truth, I knew very well that nothing of the sort had happened, but all the same, as folks were talking, I threw on my wool vest²⁴ and went out. Maybe something had happened. What did I stand to lose by looking?²⁵ Well, what a cat music²⁶ went up! And then I took a vow to believe nothing more. But that was no go either.²⁷ They confused me so that I didn’t know the big end from the small.

I went to the rabbi to get some advice. He said, “It is written, better to be a fool all your days than for one hour to be evil.²⁸ You are not a fool. They are the fools. For he who causes his neighbor to feel shame loses Paradise himself.” Nevertheless the rabbi’s daughter took me in. As I left the rabbinical court she said, “Have you kissed the wall yet?” I said, “No; what for?” She answered, “It’s the law; you’ve got to do it after every visit.” Well, there didn’t seem to be any harm in it. And she burst out laughing. It was a fine trick. She put one over on me, all right.²⁹

I wanted to go off to another town, but then everyone

got busy matchmaking,³⁰ and they were after me so they nearly tore my coat tails off. They talked at me and talked until I got water on the ear.³¹ She was no chaste maiden, but they told me she was virgin pure.³² She had a limp, and they said it was deliberate, from coyness. She had a bastard, and they told me the child was her little brother. I cried, "You're wasting your time. I'll never marry that whore." But they said indignantly, "What a way to talk!³³ Aren't you ashamed of yourself? We can take you to the rabbi and have you fined for giving her a bad name."³⁴ I saw then that I wouldn't escape them so easily and I thought: They're set on making me their butt.³⁵ But when you're married the husband's the master, and if that's all right with her it's agreeable to me too. Besides, you can't pass through life unscathed, nor expect to.³⁶

I went to her clay house, which was built on the sand, and the whole gang, hollering and chorusing, came after me. They acted like bear-baiters.³⁷ When we came to the well they stopped all the same. They were afraid to start anything with Elka. Her mouth would open as if it were on a hinge,³⁸ and she had a fierce tongue. I entered the house. Lines were strung from wall to wall and clothes were drying. Barefoot she stood by the tub, doing the wash. She was dressed in a worn hand-me-down gown of plush. She had her hair put up in braids and pinned across her head. It took my **breath away, almost,**

the reek of it all.³⁹

Evidently she knew who I was. She took a look at me and said, "Look who's here! He's come, the drip. Grab a seat."

I told her all; I denied nothing. "Tell me the truth," I said, "are you really a virgin, and is that mischievous Yechiel actually your little brother? Don't be deceitful with me, for I'm an orphan."

"I'm an orphan myself," she answered, "and whoever tries to twist you up, may the end of his nose take a twist.⁴⁰ But don't let them think they can take advantage of me. I want a dowry of fifty guilders, and let them take up a collection⁴¹ besides. Otherwise they can kiss my you-know-what."⁴² She was very plainspoken. I said, "It's the bride and not the groom who gives a dowry." Then she said, "Don't bargain with me. Either a flat 'yes' or a flat 'no'⁴³—Go back where you came from."

I thought: No bread will ever be baked from *this* dough.⁴⁴ But ours is not a poor town. They consented to everything and proceeded with the wedding. It so happened that there was a dysentery epidemic at the time. The ceremony was held at the cemetery gates, near the little corpse-washing hut. The fellows got drunk. While the marriage contract was being drawn up⁴⁵ I heard the most pious high rabbi ask, "Is the bride a widow or a divorced woman?" And the sexton's wife answered for her, "Both a widow and divorced." It was a black mo-

ment for me. But what was I to do, run away from under the marriage canopy?

There was singing and dancing. An old granny danced opposite me, hugging a braided white *chalah*.⁴⁶ The master of revels made a "God'a mercy"⁴⁷ in memory of the bride's parents. The schoolboys threw burrs, as on Tishe b'Av fast day.⁴⁸ There were a lot of gifts after the sermon: a noodle board, a kneading trough, a bucket, brooms, ladles, household articles galore. Then I took a look and saw two strapping young men carrying a crib. "What do we need this for?" I asked. So they said, "Don't rack your brains about it. It's all right, it'll come in handy." I realized I was going to be rooked.⁴⁹ Take it another way though,⁵⁰ what did I stand to lose? I reflected: I'll see what comes of it. A whole town can't go altogether crazy.

2

At night I came where my wife lay, but she wouldn't let me in. "Say, look here, is this what they married us for?" I said. And she said, "My monthly⁵¹ has come." "But yesterday they took you to the ritual bath, and that's afterward, isn't it supposed to be?" "Today isn't yesterday," said she, "and yesterday's not today. You can beat it if you don't like it."⁵² In short, I waited.

Not four months later she was in childbed.⁵³ The townsfolk hid their laughter with their knuckles. But

what could I do? She suffered intolerable pains and clawed at the walls. "Gimpel," she cried, "I'm going.⁵⁴ Forgive me!" The house filled with women. They were boiling pans of water. The screams rose to the welkin.

The thing to do was to go to the House of Prayer to repeat Psalms, and that was what I did.

The townsfolk liked that, all right. I stood in a corner saying Psalms and prayers, and they shook their heads at me. "Pray, pray!" they told me. "Prayer never made any woman pregnant." One of the congregation put a straw to my mouth and said, "Hay for the cows."⁵⁵ There was something to that too,⁵⁶ by God!

She gave birth to a boy. Friday at the synagogue the sexton stood up before the Ark,⁵⁷ pounded on the reading table, and announced, "The wealthy Reb Gimpel⁵⁸ invites the congregation to a feast in honor of the birth of a son." The whole House of Prayer rang with laughter. My face was flaming. But there was nothing I could do. After all, I *was* the one responsible for the circumcision⁵⁹ honors and rituals.

Half the town came running.⁶⁰ You couldn't wedge another soul in.⁶¹ Women brought peppered chick-peas, and there was a keg of beer from the tavern. I ate and drank as much as anyone, and they all congratulated me. Then there was a circumcision, and I named the boy after my father, may he rest in peace.⁶² When all were gone and I was left with my wife alone, she thrust her head through

the bed-curtain and called me to her.

"Gimpel," said she, "why are you silent? Has your ship gone and sunk?"⁶³

"What shall I say?" I answered. "A fine thing you've done to me! If my mother had known of it she'd have died a second time."

She said, "Are you crazy, or what?"

"How can you make such a fool," I said, "of one who should be the lord and master?"

"What's the matter with you?" she said. "What have you taken it into your head to imagine?"⁶⁴

I saw that I must speak bluntly and openly. "Do you think this is the way to use an orphan?" I said. "You have borne a bastard."

She answered, "Drive this foolishness out of your head. The child is yours."

"How can he be mine?" I argued. "He was born seventeen weeks after the wedding."

She told me then that he was premature. I said, "Isn't he a little too premature?" She said, she had had a grandmother who carried just as short a time and she resembled this grandmother of hers as one drop of water does another.⁶⁵ She swore to it with such oaths that you would have believed a peasant at the fair if he had used them. To tell the plain truth, I didn't believe her; but when I talked it over next day with the schoolmaster he told me that the very same thing had happened to Adam

and Eve.⁶⁶ Two they went up to bed, and four they descended.

“There isn’t a woman in the world who is not the granddaughter of Eve,” he said.

That was how it was; they argued me dumb.⁶⁷ But then, who really knows how such things are?

I began to forget my sorrow. I loved the child madly, and he loved me too. As soon as he saw me he’d wave his little hands and want me to pick him up, and when he was colicky I was the only one who could pacify him. I bought him a little bone teething ring⁶⁸ and a little gilded cap. He was forever catching the evil eye from someone, and then I had to run to get one of those abracadabras for him that would get him out of it. I worked like an ox. You know how expenses go up when there’s an infant in the house. I don’t want to lie about it; I didn’t dislike Elka either, for that matter. She swore at me and cursed, and I couldn’t get enough of her. What strength she had! One of her looks could rob you of the power of speech. And her orations! Pitch and sulphur,⁶⁹ that’s what they were full of, and yet somehow also full of charm. I adored her every word. She gave me bloody wounds though.

In the evening I brought her a white loaf as well as a dark one, and also poppyseed rolls I baked myself. I thieved because of her and swiped everything I could lay hands on: macaroons, raisins, almonds, cakes. I hope I may be forgiven for stealing from the Saturday