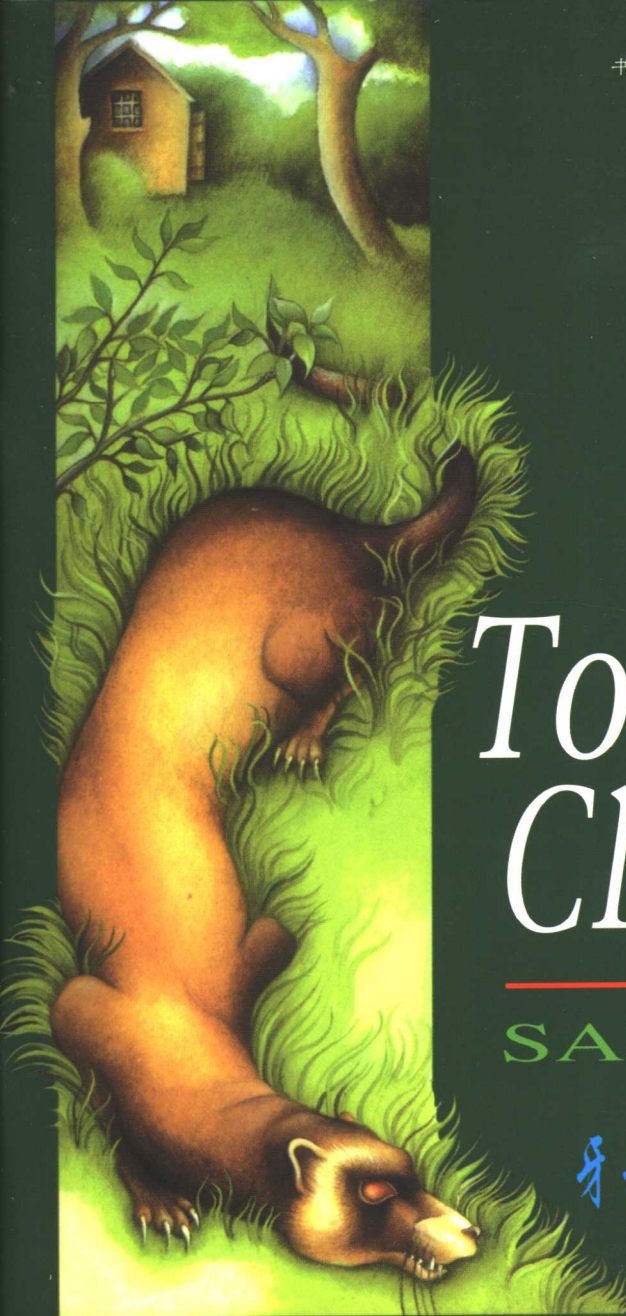


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Tooth *and* Claw

SAKI

牙齿和爪子

外语教学与研究出版社
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Rosemary Border 改写

王凌 魏钧 译

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简 介

下面每一则故事的主角都是一种凶悍的动物。它们伤害或吞噬着人类的情景,透射出动物凶残的兽性。故事虚悬、离奇。但让我们更加惊疑的是:这些动物会突然出现在雅致的房间里、芬芳的花园或幽静的小片林地间——那些被认为是安全、文明的场所。它们为什么会在那儿?为什么 Saki 把这些猛兽带到了我们的家里?

答案是,我们希望它们在那儿。当然,我们并不想让真正的狼总是呆在我们的花园里,那会兴味索然。但有时,当我们遇到了不速之客,或者内心深处很厌恶却又不得不表现出彬彬有礼的时候,——一只真正的狼有时会非常有用。Saki 所描写的动物时而滑稽,时而残忍;但总能撕破我们的伪装,暴露出我们心底的真实情感。

Saki(赫克托·休·芒罗)生于 1870 年。他是一位记者和作家,以写精彩的短篇故事闻名,1916 年他死于第一次世界大战中。

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Sredni Vashtar

Conradin was ten years old and was often ill. 'The boy is not strong,' said the doctor. 'He will not live much longer.' But the doctor did not know about Conradin's imagination. In Conradin's lonely, loveless world, his imagination was the only thing that kept him alive.

Conradin's parents were dead and he lived with his aunt. The aunt did not like Conradin and was often unkind to him. Conradin hated her with all his heart, but he obeyed her quietly and took his medicine without arguing. Mostly he kept out of her way. She had no place in his world. His real, everyday life in his aunt's colourless, comfortless house was narrow and uninteresting. But inside his small, dark head exciting and violent thoughts ran wild. In the bright world of his imagination Conradin was strong and brave. It was a wonderful world, and the aunt was locked out of it.

The garden was no fun. There was nothing interesting to do. He was forbidden to pick the flowers. He was forbidden to eat the fruit. He was forbidden to play on the grass. But behind some trees, in a forgotten corner of the garden, there was an old shed.

Nobody used the shed, and Conradin took it for his own. To him it became something between a playroom and a church. He filled it with ghosts and animals from his imagination. But there were also two living things in the shed. In one

斯莱德尼·瓦什塔

康拉丁 10 岁,经常生病。

“这孩子不结实,”医生说,“他活不了太久。”但是医生不了解康拉丁的想像力。在康拉丁孤独无爱的世界里,他的想像力是唯一支撑他活着的東西。

康拉丁的父母已亡故,他和姑妈住在一起。姑妈不喜欢康拉丁,经常对他不好。康拉丁从心底里恨她,但是平静地服从她,而且毫无怨言地服药。多数时间他远离她。她在他的世界里没有一席之地。在姑妈单调不舒服的家里,他真正的日常生活狭窄无趣。但是在他又小又黑的脑袋里,活跃、思想在狂奔。在想像中的明快世界里,康拉丁健壮勇敢。这是一个美好的世界,姑妈被锁在了这个世界之外。

花园里不好玩,没有有趣的事情做。他被禁止摘花,被禁止吃果子,被禁止在草坪上玩耍。但是在一些树后,在花园一个被遗忘的角落有一个陈旧的小屋。

没人用这个小屋,康拉丁便把它据为己有。对他而言小屋成了一个介于游戏室和教堂的地方。他在其中装满了想像中的鬼怪和动物。但是里面也有两个活物。在一



imagination *n.* act of forming (a picture or idea) in mind or the ability to form (a picture or idea) in mind. 想像,想像力。
aunt *n.* sister of one's father or mother, wife of one's uncle, or woman whose brother or sister has a child. 姑母;姨母;舅母;婶母。
forbidden *adj.* not allowed or permitted. 被禁止的,不许的。
shed *n.* small wooden building in a garden. 花园里的一间小木屋。

corner lived an old, untidy-looking chicken. Conradin had no people to love, and this chicken was the boy's dearest friend. And in a dark, secret place at the back of the shed was a large wooden box with bars across the front. This was the home of a very large ferret with long, dangerous teeth and claws. Conradin had bought the ferret and its box from a friendly boy, who lived in the village. It had cost him all his money, but Conradin did not mind. He was most terribly afraid of the ferret, but he loved it with all his heart. It was his wonderful, terrible secret. He gave the ferret a strange and beautiful name and it became his god.

The aunt went to church every Sunday. She took Conradin with her, but to Conradin her church and her god were without meaning. They seemed grey and uninteresting. The true god lived in the shed, and his name was Sredni Vashtar.

Every Thursday, in the cool, silent darkness of the shed, Conradin took presents to his god. He took flowers in summer and fruits in autumn, and he made strange and wonderful songs for his god. Sometimes, on days when something important happened, Conradin took special presents. He stole salt from the kitchen and placed it carefully and lovingly in front of the ferret's box.

One day the aunt had the most terrible toothache. It continued for three days. Morning and evening Conradin put salt in front of his god. In the end he almost believed that Sredni

个角落有一只蓬头垢面的老母鸡。康拉丁没有什么人去爱,于是这只鸡成了他最好的朋友。在小屋靠后的一个黑暗秘密的地方有一只大木箱,它的前面横竖着一些铁条。在这木箱里有一只长着又长又危险的牙齿和爪子的大雪貂。康拉丁从住在村里的一个很友好的男孩那里买下了这只雪貂和箱子。这花掉了他所有的钱,但是康拉丁不在乎。他非常害怕这只雪貂,可又全心全意地爱它。它是他精彩可怕的秘密。他给雪貂起了一个又古怪又好听的名字,它成了他的上帝。

姑妈每个星期天都去教堂。她带康拉丁一起去,但对康拉丁来说她的教堂和上帝毫无意义,而且似乎灰暗枯燥。真正的上帝住在小屋里,它的名字叫斯莱德尼·瓦什塔。

每个星期四,在小屋阴凉沉寂的黑暗中,康拉丁都给他的上帝带些礼物。他带来夏季的鲜花和秋天的果实,他给他的上帝编唱些古怪奇妙的歌曲。有时,在有某件重要的事情发生的日子,康拉丁会带来特殊的礼物。他从厨房偷来盐并小心疼爱地放在雪貂箱子的前面。

有一天姑妈的牙疼得特别厉害。疼痛持续了三天。早上和晚上康拉丁都在他的上帝面前放点盐。最后他几乎相信是斯莱德尼·瓦什塔带来的牙疼。

bar *n.* long piece of something hard (bars fixed to a box or cage in order to stop animals from getting out). 一长条硬东西(安在箱子或笼子上的长条阻止动物从里面跑出来)。
ferret *n.* small, but dangerous animal, used for catching rabbits. 雪貂,用来抓兔子的小而危险的动物。
claws *n.* sharp nails on some animals' feet. 爪子。
secret *n.* something kept hidden or known only to a few. 秘密,机密。
god *n.* being (one of many) which is worshipped, as one who made or rule over (a part of) the life of the world. 神,上帝。

Vashtar himself had sent the toothache.

After a time the aunt noticed Conradin's visits to the shed.

'It's not good for him to play out there in the cold,' she said. She could always find a reason to stop Conradin enjoying himself. The next morning at breakfast she told Conradin that she had sold the chicken. She looked at Conradin's white face, and waited for him to cry or to be angry. But Conradin said nothing; there was nothing to say.

Perhaps the aunt felt sorry. That afternoon there was hot buttered toast for tea. Toast was usually forbidden. Conradin loved it, but the aunt said that it was bad for him. Also, it made extra work for the cook. Conradin looked at the toast and quietly took a piece of bread and butter.

'I thought you liked toast,' the aunt said crossly.

'Sometimes,' said Conradin.

In the shed that evening Conradin looked sadly at the empty corner where his chicken had lived. And, for the first time, he asked his ferret-god to do something for him.

'Do one thing for me, Sredni Vashtar,' he said softly.

He did not say what he wanted. Sredni Vashtar was a god, after all. There is no need to explain things to gods. Then, with a last look at the empty corner, Conradin returned to the world that he hated.

And every night, in the shed and in his bedroom, Conradin repeated again and again.

过了一段时间,姑妈注意到康拉丁总是去小屋。

“在外面冷风里玩对他不好,”她说。她总是能找到一个理由不让康拉丁玩得开心。第二天早上吃早餐时,她告诉康拉丁她已经卖掉了那只鸡。她看着康拉丁苍白的脸,等着他哭或者生气。但是康拉丁一句话没说;没什么可说的。

可能姑妈觉得内疚了。那天下午喝茶时上了热黄油面包。烤面包平时是不让吃的。康拉丁喜欢吃,但是姑妈说吃烤面包对他不好。而且,烤面包对厨子来说太费事。康拉丁看着烤面包,平静地拿了一片面包和黄油。

“我想你喜欢烤面包,”姑妈生气地说。

“有时候是,”康拉丁说。

那天晚上在小屋里,康拉丁伤心地看着母鸡曾住过的那个空空的角落。于是,第一次,他让他的雪貂上帝为他做一件事。

“为我做一件事,斯莱德尼·瓦什塔,”他轻声地说。

他没有说出他的想法。斯莱德尼·瓦什塔终究是上帝,没有必要向上帝把什么事都说的一清二楚。然后,在看了那个空角落最后一眼之后,康拉丁回到了他憎恨的世界。

每天晚上在小屋和卧室里,康拉丁反复重复着那句话。

“为我做一件事,斯莱德尼·瓦什塔。”

toast n. bread that is cooked until it is hot and brown. 烤面包。crossly adv. angrily. 生气地。

‘Do one thing for me, Sredni Vashtar.’

So Conradin’s visits to the shed continued. The aunt noticed, and went to look in the shed again.

‘What are you keeping in that locked box?’ she asked. ‘I’m sure you’re keeping an animal there. It’s not good for you.’

Conradin said nothing.

The aunt searched his bedroom until she found the key to the box. She marched down to the shed. It was a cold afternoon, and Conradin was forbidden to go outside. From the window of the dining-room Conradin could just see the door of the shed. He stood and waited.

He saw the aunt open the shed door. She went inside. Now, thought Conradin, she has found the box. She is opening the door, and feeling about inside the box where my god lives.

‘Do one thing for me, Sredni Vashtar,’ said Conradin softly. But he said it without hope. She will win, he thought. She always wins. Soon she will come out of the shed and give her orders. Somebody will come and take my wonderful god away — not a god any more, just a brown ferret in a box. Then there will be nothing important in my life. . . The doctor will be right. I shall sicken and die. She will win. She always wins. . . In his pain and misery, Conradin began to sing the song of his god:

Sredni Vashtar went into battle.

因此康拉丁继续去小屋。姑妈发现后，又去小屋察看。

“你在那个锁着的箱子里养了什么？”她问。“我肯定你在那儿养了一只动物。这对你不好。”

康拉丁一言不发。

姑妈搜他的卧室，最后她终于找到了那个箱子的钥匙。她冲向小屋。这是一个寒冷的下午，康拉丁被禁止到外面去。从餐厅的窗户那儿康拉丁刚好能看见小屋的门。他站着等着。

他看见姑妈打开小屋房门进去了。现在，康拉丁想，她已经找到了箱子。她正在开箱子门，正在我的上帝居住的箱子里面摸索。

“为我做一件事，斯莱德尼·瓦什塔，”康拉丁轻声说。但是他说这话时没有抱什么希望。她会赢，他想，她总是赢。一会儿她就要从小屋出来，对他发号施令。会有人来拿走我的好上帝——再不是上帝了，只是木箱里的一只棕色雪貂。然后我的生活里就失去了重要的东西……医生是对的，我将生病死去。她将赢，她总是赢……在痛苦中，康拉丁开始唱他的上帝之歌：

斯莱德尼·瓦什塔上战场，
他的思想鲜红牙齿雪亮。

keep v. own and take care of (farm animals) in order to use or make money from. 饲养(牲畜自用或赚钱)。**march** v. walk with a regular, esp. forceful, step like a soldier. (像士兵一样)以规则步伐前进。**feel about** v. feel around, searching, or examining something, without being able to see what one is doing. 寻找，摸索。

*His thoughts were red thoughts and his teeth were white.
His enemies called for peace but he brought them death.
Sredni Vashtar the Beautiful.*

Suddenly he stopped singing and went nearer to the window. The door of the shed was still open. Slowly, very slowly the minutes went by. Conradin watched the birds on the grass. He counted them, always with one eye on that open door. The unsmiling housekeeper came in with the tea things. Still Conradin stood and watched and waited. Hope was growing, like a small, sick flower, in his heart. Very softly he sang his song again, and his hope grew and grew. And then he saw a very wonderful thing.

Out of the shed came a long, low, yellow-and-brown animal. There were red, wet stains around its mouth and neck.

‘Sredni Vashtar!’ said Conradin softly. The ferret-god made its way to the bottom of the garden. It stopped for a moment, then went quietly into the long grass and disappeared for ever.

‘Tea is ready,’ said the housekeeper. ‘Where is your aunt?’

‘She went down to the shed,’ said Conradin.

And, while the housekeeper went down to call the aunt, Conradin took the toasting-fork out of the dining-room cupboard. He sat by the fire and toasted a piece of bread for himself. While he was toasting it and putting butter on it, Conradin listened to the noises beyond the dining-room door.