



普通高等教育“十五”国家级规划教材

CONTEMPORARY

Companion Reader

COLLEGE ENGLISH

现代大学英语

● 总主编：杨立民

● 阅读 **4**

● 主 编：侯毅凌

● 编 者：陈亚平

龚 雁

李又文



外 语 教 学 与 研 究 出 版 社
FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND RESEARCH PRESS



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北京市高等教育精品教材立项项目

Contemporary College English

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江苏工业学院图书馆
藏书章

外语教学与研究出版社

FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND RESEARCH PRESS

北京 BEIJING

图书在版编目(CIP)数据

现代大学英语 阅读 4/杨立民总主编;侯毅凌主编. —北京:外语教学与研究出版社,2004.8

ISBN 7-5600-4426-3

I. 现… II. ①杨… ②侯… III. 英语—阅读教学—高等学校—教材 IV. H319.4

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字(2004)第 089047 号

出 版 人: 李朋义

责任编辑: 胡伟春

出版发行: 外语教学与研究出版社

社 址: 北京市西三环北路 19 号 (100089)

网 址: <http://www.fltrp.com>

印 刷: 北京市鑫霸印务有限公司

开 本: 787×1092 1/16

印 张: 28.75

版 次: 2004 年 9 月第 1 版 2005 年 6 月第 2 次印刷

书 号: ISBN 7-5600-4426-3

定 价: 31.90 元

* * *

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编者说明

国内英语专业的学生长久以来一直有一门专业必修课就是泛读。这是相对于精读课而言的一门课程。“泛”之对于“精”，显然前者侧重于量多、面广，求理解而非精细分析；而后者则强调量少而精，求细致透彻的研读，词、句、章节的推敲揣摩。泛读通常被认为是精读的一种补充，是在精读“美文”的基础上泛泛而读各式各样的“杂文”。其实，这种定义上的泛读在人们日常的阅读习惯中所占的比例是极大的。

精读课对学好英语的重要性毋庸赘言。但是精读的量毕竟有限，从精读课本上学到的词语、句型、语法等众多的语言现象都需要在泛读中得到巩固。泛读量大、面广的特色还决定了学生在泛读过程中能吸收大量的语言知识和文化知识，从而为听、说、写、译等各种语言技能的全方面发展奠定基础。由此可见，泛读对学好英语的作用举足轻重。

然而，读什么，怎样读才能达到泛读的目的呢？编者认为：首先，泛读的题材、体裁要尽可能多样，文章的语言地道、漂亮，揭示的主题耐人寻味，更主要的是文章本身要能激发读者的阅读兴趣，令读者爱不释手，每每想起还会反复阅读。以上这种种要求也正是我们选编本书的原则。怎样阅读才能事半功倍涉及到培养良好的阅读习惯的问题。首先阅读需要长期坚持，需要经常读，读够一定量；其次，泛读的方法应有别于精读，阅读过程中尽量避免不必要的中断，不要养成一碰到生词就查字典的习惯，而应逐渐培养根据上下文猜测词义的能力，以求连贯地、快速地、大量地阅读。所以，好的阅读材料应能够在阅读材料的难点部分为读者提供帮助，排除一些最主要的理解障碍，帮助学习者养成良好的阅读习惯。

本书为四册中的第四册，可供大学英语专业三年级和具有相当水平的英语自学者使用。本册书的选篇依然遵循我们一贯的原则，即题材面广、体裁多样、可读性强和内涵丰富。与前三册相比，本册加大了论说性文章的比重，如 *Just like Us?*, *The Faltering Family*, *The Case for Censorship*, *Thinking in Packages* 和 *The Pursuit of Happiness: Then and Now* 等。这些文章涉及并探讨了现代社会种种发人深思的问题，对思想观点进行梳理、分析和评判，富于思辨性，不仅能给读者带来心智上的启迪，同时还能愉悦思想。另外，我们也在选篇中增加了剧作的比重。所选作品都是脍炙人口、堪称经典的名篇。挪威戏剧大师易卜生 (Henrik Ibsen) 的 *An Enemy of the People* 是全文选入，篇幅虽长，但我们相信读者在读完这部作品后一定会有得到充分回报的感受。本册选篇还有一个特点是注重向读者推荐一些风格特别的文艺作品，如爱伦·坡 (Edgar Allan Poe) 的心理小说 *The Tell-Tale Heart*，斯坦贝克 (John Steinbeck) 的荒诞讽刺小说 *The Affair at 7, Rue de M—* 和卡弗 (Raymond Carver) 的简约派小说 *Cathedral* 等。我们的用意是希望读者通过阅读这些作品逐渐培养对英语文字较高的审美能力。

本册书的注释也是一个特色。除了帮助读者扫除字面障碍，我们的注释还在提供相关背景知识上做了较多努力。我们认为这些背景知识是具备较高阅读水平的读者深化文章理解的垫脚石。有些注释实际上是对结构复杂、意思微妙的难句所做的翻译，其中的努力读者自可体会。

因本册书中所选文章篇幅不一，学习者可根据自己的程度决定阅读速度。在阅读欣赏之余，学习者可以对其中的经典之作或自己喜爱的篇章仔细揣摩，学习遣词造句的方法，提高写作水平。本册书也可根据不同需要选做泛读课的教材，教师可以配合阅读技巧的讲解，设计一些练习和问题，帮助学生提高阅读理解能力。也可就篇章中学生感兴趣的话题展开课堂讨论，引导学生进行更进一步的阅读。

编者

2004年3月

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Fard^①

by Aldous Huxley^②

They had been quarrelling now for nearly three-quarters of an hour. Muted and inarticulate, the voices floated down the corridor, from the other end of the flat. Stooping over her sewing, Sophie wondered, without much curiosity, what it was all about this time. It was Madame's voice that she heard most often. Shrill with anger and indignant with tears, it burst out in gusts, in gushes. Monsieur was more self-controlled, and his deeper voice was too softly pitched to penetrate easily the closed doors and to carry along the passage^③. To Sophie, in her cold little room, the quarrel sounded, most of the time, like a series of monologues by Madame, interrupted by strange and ominous silences. But every now and then Monsieur seemed to lose his temper outright, and then there was no silence between the gusts, but a harsh, deep, angry shout. Madame kept up her loud shrillness continuously and without flagging^④; her voice had, even in anger, a curious, level monotony^⑤. But Monsieur spoke now loudly, now softly, with emphases and modulations and sudden outbursts, so that his contributions to the squabble^⑥, when they were audible, sounded like a series of separate explosions. Wow, wow, wow-wow-wow, wow—a dog barking rather slowly.

After a time Sophie paid no more heed to the noise of quarrelling. She was mending one of Madame's camisoles^⑦, and the work required all her attention. She felt very tired; her body ached all over. It had been a hard day; so had yesterday, so had the day before. Every day was a hard day, and she wasn't so young as she had been. Two years more and she'd be fifty. Every day had been a hard day ever since she could remember. She thought of the sacks of potatoes she used to carry when she was a little girl in the country. Slowly, slowly she was walking along the dusty road with the sack over her shoulder. Ten steps more; she could manage that. Only it never was the end; one always

① fard: n. 脂粉。

② Aldous Huxley: 奥尔德斯·赫胥黎(1894—1963), 英国作家, 其最为著名的作品是发表于1932年的 *Brave New World* (《勇敢的新世界》), 描绘了以科学方式组织的理想社会的恐怖情景。

③ 他本来就低沉的噪音再一压调门就很难透过关着的房门传到走廊这边来。pitch: v. 定音调。

④ flag: v. 减弱。

⑤ 她的声音即使是在发怒时也带有一种奇怪的平板单调。

⑥ his contributions to the squabble: 他在争吵中的声音; squabble: n. 争吵。

⑦ camisole: n. 女式贴身背心。

① snap; v. 闪光。

② 但有这黄色的虫子在眼前晃动使得看手上的针线活儿很吃力。round; prep. 绕过。

③ 法语,意思是:要是你认为我是你的奴隶的话,我的朋友,那你就大错特错了。我做我自己想做的事。

④ 法语,意思是:我也是。

⑤ 这里是指召唤仆人的响铃。

⑥ 你总算出现了, Sophie, 我还以为你不过来了呢。

⑦ 法语,意思是:一个鲁本斯式的美人。Rubens; Peter Paul Rubens (1577—1640), 佛兰德画家, 巴洛克艺术的代表人物之一, 其人体肖像画中的女性丰腴肥美。

⑧ 那种体态窈窕柔韧的细腿女郎可绝不合他的口味。drain-pipes; n. 瘦腿裤。(这里指代细腿女人。)

had to begin again.

She looked up from her sewing, moved her head from side to side, blinked. She had begun to see lights and spots of colour dancing before her eyes; it often happened to her now. A sort of yellowish bright worm was wriggling up towards the right-hand corner of her field of vision; and though it was always moving upwards, upwards, it was always there in the same place. And there were stars of red and green that snapped^① and brightened and faded all around the worm. They moved between her and her sewing; they were there when she shut her eyes. After a moment she went on with her work; Madame wanted her camisole most particularly tomorrow morning. But it was difficult to see round the worm.^②

There was suddenly a great increase of noise from the other end of the corridor. A door had opened; words articulated themselves.

“... bien tort, mon ami, si tu crois que je suis ton esclave. Je ferai ce que je voudrai.^③”

“Moi aussi.^④” Monsieur uttered a harsh, dangerous laugh. There was the sound of heavy footsteps in the passage, a rattling in the umbrella stand; then the front door banged.

Sophie looked down again at her work. Oh, the worm, the coloured stars, the aching fatigue in all her limbs! If one could only spend a whole day in bed—in a huge bed, feathery, warm, and soft, all the day long...

The ringing of the bell^⑤ startled her. It always made her jump, that furious wasp-like buzzer. She got up, put her work down on the table, smoothed her apron, set straight her cap, and stepped out into the corridor. Once more the bell buzzed furiously. Madame was impatient.

“At last, Sophie. I thought you were never coming.^⑥”

Sophie said nothing; there was nothing to say. Madame was standing in front of the open wardrobe. A bundle of dresses hung over her arm, and there were more of them lying in a heap on the bed.

“Une beauté à la Rubens,^⑦” her husband used to call her when he was in an amorous mood. He liked these massive, splendid, great women. None of your flexible drain-pipes for him.^⑧

“Helene Fourmont^①” was his pet name for her.

“Some day,” Madame used to tell her friends, “some day I really must go to the Louvre and see my portrait^②. By Rubens, you know. It’s extraordinary that one should have lived all one’s life in Paris and never have seen the Louvre. Don’t you think so?”

She was superb tonight.^③ Her cheeks were flushed; her blue eyes shone with an unusual brilliance between their long lashes; her short, red-brown hair had broken wildly loose.

“Tomorrow, Sophie,” she said dramatically, “we start for Rome. Tomorrow morning.” She unhooked another dress from the wardrobe as she spoke, and threw it on to the bed. With the movement her dressing-gown flew open^④, and there was a vision of ornate underclothing and white exuberant flesh. “We must pack at once.”

“For how long, Madame?”

“A fortnight, three months—how should I know?”

“It makes a difference, Madame.”

“The important thing is to get away. I shall not return to this house, after what has been said to me tonight, till I am humbly asked to.^⑤”

“We had better take the large trunk, then, Madame; I will go and fetch it.”

The air in the box-room^⑥ was sickly with the smell of dust and leather. The big trunk was jammed in a far corner. She had to bend and strain at it in order to pull it out. The worm and the coloured stars flickered before her eyes; she felt dizzy when she straightened herself up. “I’ll help you to pack, Sophie,” said Madame, when the servant returned, dragging the heavy trunk after her. What a death’s-head^⑦ the old woman looked nowadays! She hated having old, ugly people near her. But Sophie was so efficient; it would be madness to get rid of her.

“Madame need not trouble.” There would be no end to it, Sophie knew, if Madame started opening drawers and throwing things about. “Madame had much better go to bed. It’s late.”

No, no. She wouldn’t be able to sleep. She was to such a degree enervated.^⑧ “These men... what an embeastment^⑨! One was not their slave. One would not be treated in this way.

① Helene Fourmont 是画家鲁本斯的妻子名。

② 哪天我真得去卢浮宫看看我的画像。(卢浮宫里藏有鲁本斯的画。)

③ 今天晚上她状态好极了。

④ 随着她的动作她的睡袍飘了开来。

⑤ 在他今晚对我说过这样的话之后,我是决不会再回到这座房子里来了,除非他低声下气地来求我。

⑥ box-room: n. 存放箱子等的储藏间。

⑦ death’s-head: n. 骷髅。

⑧ 她已经被折腾得虚弱不堪了。enervate: v. 使衰弱无力。

⑨ 简直是不把人当人看!

- ① game; *n.* 花招。
② 他说我不能再买任何衣服了。
③ 太荒唐可笑了。
④ 我倒要问了,他这当老爹的是干吗的?
⑤ fire; *n.* 激情。
⑥ 一想到这老头子,她就开始做鬼脸,晃脑袋,摇手指,还颤抖着两条腿。
⑦ beastly; *a.* (口)糟透的。

Sophie was packing. A whole day in bed, in a huge, soft bed, like Madame's. One would doze, one would wake up for a moment, one would doze again.

"His latest game^①," Madame was saying indignantly, "is to tell me he hasn't got any money. I'm not to buy any clothes, he says.^② Too grotesque.^③ I can't go about naked, can I?" She threw out her hands. "And as for saying he can't afford, that's simply nonsense. He can, perfectly well. Only he's mean, mean, horribly mean. And if he'd only do a little honest work, for a change, instead of writing silly verses and publishing them at his own expense, he'd have plenty and to spare." She walked up and down the room. "Besides," she went on, "there's his old father. What's he for, I should like to know?^④ 'You must be proud of having a poet for a husband,' he says." She made her voice quaver like an old man's. "It's all I can do not to laugh in his face. 'And what beautiful verses Hegesippe writes about you! What passion, what fire^⑤!'" Thinking of the old man, she grimaced, wobbled her head, shook her finger, doddered on her legs.^⑥ "And when one reflects that poor Hegesippe is bald, and dyes the few hairs he has left." She laughed. "As for the passion he talks so much about in his beastly^⑦ verses," she laughed—"that's all pure invention. But, my good Sophie, what are you thinking of? Why are you packing that hideous old green dress?"



Sophie pulled out the dress without saying anything. Why did the woman choose this night to look so terribly ill? She had a yellow face and blue teeth. Madame shuddered; it was too horrible. She ought to send her to bed. But, after all, the work had to

be done. What could one do about it? She felt more than ever aggrieved.^①

"Life is terrible." Sighing, she sat down heavily on the edge of the bed. The buoyant springs rocked her gently once or twice before they settled to rest. "To be married to a man like this. I shall soon be getting old and fat. And never once unfaithful. But look how he treats me." She got up again and began to wander aimlessly about the room. "I won't stand it, though," she burst out. She had halted in front of the long mirror, and was admiring her own splendid tragic figure. No one would believe, to look at her, that she was over thirty. Behind the beautiful tragedian she could see in the glass a thin, miserable, old creature, with a yellow face and blue teeth, crouching over the trunk. Really, it was too disagreeable. Sophie looked like one of those beggar women one sees on a cold morning, standing in the gutter^②. Does one hurry past, trying not to look at them? Or does one stop, open one's purse, and give them one's copper and nickel—even as much as a two-franc note, if one has no change? But whatever one did, one always felt uncomfortable, one always felt apologetic for one's furs^③. That was what came of walking.^④ If one had a car—but that was another of Hegesippe's meannesses—one wouldn't, rolling along behind closed windows, have to be conscious of them at all^⑤. She turned away from the glass.

"I won't stand it," she said, trying not to think of the beggar women, of blue teeth in a yellow face; "I won't stand it." She dropped into a chair.

But think of a lover with a yellow face and blue, uneven teeth! She closed her eyes, shuddered at the thought. It would be enough to make one sick. She felt impelled to take another look: Sophie's eyes were the colour of greenish lead, quite without life. What was one to do about it? The woman's face was a reproach, an accusation. And besides, the sight of it was making her feel positively ill. She had never been so profoundly enervated.

Sophie rose slowly and with difficulty from her knees; an expression of pain crossed her face. Slowly she walked to the chest of drawers, slowly counted out six pairs of silk stockings. She turned back towards the trunk. The woman was a walking corpse!

① 她感到比任何时候都烦恼。
aggrieved: *a.* 感到烦恼的。

② gutter: *n.* 路边的阴沟。

③ 你总是要为自己穿了毛皮大衣而感到歉意。

④ 这就是走路招来的。come of: 由……引起的。

⑤ 人坐在关着的车窗后面就不必非得注意她们不可了。

① 你会看到一个胭脂盒,是朵琳 24 号。rouge: *n.* 胭脂; Dorin 为化妆品名。

② a stick of lip salve: 一管唇膏; salve: *n.* 油膏。

③ 关节发出可怕的咔咔声。

④ 前后似乎花了很长时间。
an eternity: 很长时间。

“Life is terrible,” Madame repeated with conviction, “terrible, terrible, terrible.”

She ought to send the woman to bed. But she would never be able to get her packing done by herself. And it was so important to get off tomorrow morning. She had told Hegesippe she would go, and he had simply laughed; he hadn't believed it. She must give him a lesson this time. In Rome she would see Luigino. Such a charming boy, and a marquis, too. Perhaps... But she could think of nothing but Sophie's face; the leaden eyes, the bluish teeth, the yellow, wrinkled skin.

“Sophie,” she said suddenly; it was with difficulty that she prevented herself screaming, “look on my dressing-table. You'll see a box of rouge, the Dorin number twenty-four. ① Put a little on your cheeks. And there's a stick of lip salve ② in the right-hand drawer.”

She kept her eyes resolutely shut while Sophie got up—with what a horrible creaking of the joints ③!—walked over to the dressing-table, and stood there, rustling faintly, through what seemed an eternity ④. What a life, my God, what a life! Slow footsteps trailed back again. She opened her eyes. Oh, that was far better, far better.

“Thank you, Sophie. You look much less tired now.” She got up briskly. “And now we must hurry.” Full of energy, she ran to the wardrobe. “Goodness me,” she exclaimed, throwing up her hands, “you've forgotten to put in my blue evening dress. How could you be so stupid, Sophie?”

Cathedral ^①

by Raymond Carver ^②

This blind man, an old friend of my wife's, he was on his way to spend the night. His wife had died. So he was visiting the dead wife's relatives in Connecticut. He called my wife from his in-laws'. ^③ Arrangements were made. He would come by train, a five-hour trip, and my wife would meet him at the station. She hadn't seen him since she worked for him one summer in Seattle ten years ago. But she and the blind man had kept in touch. They made tapes and mailed them back and forth. I wasn't enthusiastic about his visit. He was no one I knew. And his being blind bothered me. ^④ My idea of blindness came from the movies. In the movies, the blind moved slowly and never laughed. Sometimes they were led by seeing-eye dogs^⑤. A blind man in my house was not something I looked forward to.

That summer in Seattle she had needed a job. She didn't have any money. The man she was going to marry at the end of the summer was in officers' training school. He didn't have any money, either. But she was in love with the guy, and he was in love with her, etc. She'd seen something in the paper: HELP WANTED—*Reading to Blind Man*, and a telephone number. She phoned and went over, was hired on the spot^⑥. She'd worked with this blind man all summer. She read stuff to him, case studies^⑦, reports, that sort of thing. She helped him organize his little office in the county social-service department. They'd become good friends, my wife and the blind man. How do I know those things? She told me. And she told me something else. On her last day in the office, the blind man asked if he could touch her face. She agreed to this. She told me he touched his fingers to every part of her face, her nose—even her neck! She never forgot it. She even tried to write a poem about it. She was always trying to write a poem. She wrote a poem or two every year, usually after something really important had happened to her.

① cathedral; n. (主教管区内的)大教堂。

② Raymond Carver; 雷蒙·卡弗(1938—1988),美国当代著名短篇小说家、诗人。他的作品大多描写美国中下层人的日常生活,以微妙含蓄的手法反映了他们在家庭、爱情及婚姻生活中的失意、痛苦、不安和脆弱。其小说继承了前辈作家舍伍德·安德森(Sherwood Anderson)(《小城畸人》的作者)和海明威(Hemingway)等人的传统,文字不事铺张,极尽简约,叙述上不动声色,但却极具张力,被评论家称为“简约派”(Minimalism)的代表作家。现代派大师 T·S·艾略特说读诗人埃兹拉·庞德(Ezra Pound)的印象是,他“竭力要告诉一个聋子房子着火了”。而读卡弗则是另一种感觉:房间里也许已是烟雾弥漫,火苗在地毯上迅速窜过来,他轻声地问:“这里,嗯,好像太热了点吧?”这是一位评论者对卡弗风格的形象评说。其主要作品有短篇小说集 *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love*, *Where I'm Calling From* 和 *Cathedral*。

③ 他在他的姻亲家里给我妻子打了个电话。in-laws; n. 姻亲。

④ 再说他是个瞎子,这也让我心烦。

⑤ seeing-eye dog, 导盲犬。

⑥ on the spot; 当场。

⑦ case study, 个案研究。

① go out together; 约会。

② 这个最早得到她欢心的人。

③ 嫁给了她青梅竹马的恋人。

④ commissioned officer; 军官
(指少尉以上的军官)。

⑤ 她也不喜欢他在军工联合体供职。military-industrial thing 指 military industrial complex, 是由美国政府中的军事部门和军需品供应部门联合组成的军工联合体, 控制美国的经济和外交政策。(艾森豪威尔总统在1961年1月17日的去职演说中对政府的此种倾向提出过警告。)

⑥ be posted to; 被委派到某地任职。

⑦ AFB; 空军基地 (Air Force Base)。(Moody 和后面的 McGuire、McConnell、Travis 都是空军基地的名称。)

⑧ 她觉得这样的生活再也过不下去了。

When we first started going out together^①, she showed me the poem. In the poem, she recalled his fingers and the way they had moved around over her face. In the poem, she talked about what she had felt at the time, about what went through her mind when the blind man touched her nose and lips. I remember I didn't think much of the poem. Of course, I didn't tell her that. Maybe I just don't understand poetry. I admit it's not the first thing I reach for when I pick up something to read.

Anyway, this man who'd first enjoyed her favors^②, the officer-to-be, he'd been her childhood sweetheart. So okay. I'm saying that at the end of the summer she let the blind man run his hands over her face, said goodbye to him, married her childhood^③, etc., who was now a commissioned officer^④, and she moved away from Seattle. But they'd kept in touch, she and the blind man. She made the first contact after a year or so. She called him up one night from an Air Force base in Alabama. She wanted to talk. They talked. He asked her to send him a tape and tell him about her life. She did this. She sent the tape. On the tape, she told the blind man about her husband and about their life together in the military. She told the blind man that she loved her husband but she didn't like it where they lived and she didn't like it that he was a part of the military-industrial thing^⑤. She told the blind man she'd written a poem and he was in it. She told him that she was writing a poem about what it was like to be an Air Force officer's wife. The poem wasn't finished yet. She was still writing it. The blind man made a tape. He sent her the tape. She made a tape. This went on for years. My wife's officer was posted to^⑥ one base and then another. She sent tapes from Moody AFB^⑦, McGuire, McConnell, and finally Travis, near Sacramento, where one night she got to feeling lonely and cut off from people she kept losing in that moving-around life. She got to feeling she couldn't go it another step.^⑧ She went in and swallowed all the pills and capsules in the medicine chest and washed them down with a bottle of gin. Then she got into a hot bath and passed out.

But instead of dying, she got sick. She threw up. Her officer—why should he have a name? he was the childhood sweetheart, and what more does he want?—came home from

somewhere, found her, and called the ambulance. In time, she put it all on a tape and sent the tape to the blind man. Over the years, she put all kinds of stuff on tapes and sent the tapes off lickety-split^①. Next to writing a poem every year, I think it was her chief means of recreation.^② On one tape, she told the blind man she'd decided to live away from her officer for a time. On another tape, she told him about her divorce. She and I began going out, and of course she told her blind man about it. She told him everything, or so it seemed to me. Once she asked me if I'd like to hear the latest tape from the blind man. This was a year ago. I was on the tape, she said. So I said, okay, I'd listen to it. I got us drinks and we settled down in the living room. We made ready to listen. First she inserted the tape into the player and adjusted a couple of dials. Then she pushed a lever^③. The tape squeaked and someone began to talk in this loud voice. She lowered the volume. After a few minutes of harmless chitchat, I heard my own name in the mouth of this stranger, this blind man I didn't even know! And then this: "From all you've said about him, I can only conclude—" But we were interrupted, a knock at the door, something, and we didn't ever get back to the tape. Maybe it was just as well.^④ I'd heard all I wanted to.

Now this same blind man was coming to sleep in my house.

"Maybe I could take him bowling^⑤," I said to my wife. She was at the draining board doing scalloped potatoes.^⑥ She put down the knife she was using and turned around.

"If you love me," she said, "you can do this for me. If you don't love me, okay. But if you had a friend, any friend, and the friend came to visit, I'd make him feel comfortable." She wiped her hands with the dish towel^⑦.

"I don't have any blind friends," I said.

"You don't have *any* friends," she said. "Period^⑧. Besides," she said, "goddamn it, his wife's just died! Don't you understand that? The man's lost his wife!"

I didn't answer. She'd told me a little about the blind man's wife. Her name was Beulah. Beulah! That's a name for a colored^⑨ woman.

"Was his wife a Negro?" I asked.

"Are you crazy?" my wife said. "Have you just flipped or

① lickety-split: *ad.* (口)极快地。

② 除了每年写一首诗,我想她最主要的消遣就是这个了(指给她的盲人朋友寄磁带)。

③ dial: *n.* 调节旋钮; lever: *n.* 操作键。

④ 也许没听正好。just as well: 不必遗憾,正好,幸好。

⑤ 带他出去玩保龄球。

⑥ 她正在滴水板旁边准备着要做的调味烤土豆。

⑦ dish towel: 用来擦干盘子的布巾。

⑧ period: *int.* (美口)(常用于叙述事实或看法后表示强调)就是这话;就是这么回事。

⑨ colored: *a.* 有色人种的。

① 你是昏了头还是怎么的?
flip: v. (美俚)发疯,(因激动、愤怒等)失去自我控制。

② 于是我妻子就把他老婆的事详细地讲给我听,而我并不想知道那么多。fill sb. in: 向某人提供情况。

③ 故事慢慢地显出了脉络。

④ 先不说别的,有谁会想去参加这样一个婚礼呢?

⑤ 想想看,一个女人从来不知道自己在爱人的眼中是个什么样儿。

⑥ 假如她愿意,她可以在一只眼睛周围涂上绿色的眼影,在鼻孔上戴直别针,穿黄色的裤子和紫色的鞋,反正怎么打扮都无所谓。

⑦ slip off into death: 慢慢死去。

⑧ 她在通向坟墓的快车上(马上就要死了)。

⑨ insurance policy: 保险单。

⑩ box: 这里指棺材。

something?^①” She picked up a potato. I saw it hit the floor, then roll under the stove. “What’s wrong with you?” she said. “Are you drunk?”

“I’m just asking,” I said.

Right then my wife filled me in with more detail than I cared to know.^② I made a drink and sat at the kitchen table to listen. Pieces of the story began to fall into place.^③

Beulah had gone to work for the blind man the summer after my wife had stopped working for him. Pretty soon Beulah and the blind man had themselves a church wedding. It was a little wedding—who’d want to go to such a wedding in the first place?^④—just the two of them, plus the minister and the minister’s wife. But it was a church wedding just the same. It was what Beulah had wanted, he’d said. But even then Beulah must have been carrying the cancer in her glands. After they had been inseparable for eight years—my wife’s word, *inseparable*—Beulah’s health went into a rapid decline. She died in a Seattle hospital room, the blind man sitting beside the bed and holding on to her hand. They’d married, lived and worked together, slept together—had sex, sure—and then the blind man had to bury her. All this without his having ever seen what the god-damned woman looked like. It was beyond my understanding. Hearing this, I felt sorry for the blind man for a little bit. And then I found myself thinking what a pitiful life this woman must have led. Imagine a woman who could never see herself as she was seen in the eyes of her loved one.^⑤ A woman who could go on day after day and never receive the smallest compliment from her beloved. A woman whose husband could never read the expression on her face, be it misery or something better. Someone who could wear makeup or not—what difference to him? She could, if she wanted, wear green eye-shadow around one eye, a straight pin in her nostril, yellow slacks and purple shoes, no matter.^⑥ And then to slip off into death^⑦, the blind man’s hand on her hand, his blind eyes streaming tears—I’m imagining now—her last thought may be this: that he never even knew what she looked like, and she on an express to the grave^⑧. Robert was left with a small insurance policy^⑨ and half of a twenty-peso Mexican coin. The other half of the coin went into the box^⑩ with