

对照

讀者文摘

集粹

Reader's
Digest

读者文摘集粹

一九八五年

编者的话

学习外语，尤其是初学翻译的人，大多喜欢阅读两种语言的对照读物，从中吸取他人的经验、技巧，以提高自己的翻译水平和文字修养，增长译事知识。为了广泛借鉴国内外的翻译经验，我们特地选编了这部文集，以飨读者。

本文集选自当代美国销路最广的《读者文摘》（英、中文版）杂志。所选作品，大多出自名家手笔，其中有美丽的故事，有真实的历险，有科幻新作，有生动幽默的寓言。这些作品立意新颖，构思奇妙，作品中的人物栩栩如生，故事情节引人入胜，令人读后爱不释手。

本文集英文原作，文笔质朴无华，具有现代英语强烈的时代感，译文清新、流畅，颇具特色。碰到翻译疑难之处，译者提供了可资借鉴的范例，给读者以启迪。

本文集适于具有中等程度的英语爱好者、大专院校的学生、英语教师以及英汉翻译工作者和外国文学爱好者阅读，我们希望这本良好的参考读物，有助于本书的广大读者，有助于繁荣翻译事业。

一九八五年

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Home to Henning

Alex Haley

Pete Gause had been one more among Henning's annual young black men who decided that graduating from grammar school was enough of education, and then he went and hired himself out as a fieldworker. He chopped, plowed and picked cotton until he had saved up \$9.65, with which he went downtown to the train depot where he bought, in advance, a oneway, coach-class ticket to Chicago on the Illinois Central. Then Pete kept right on farming for 5½ days every week, and even took other weekend jobs. Finally he had saved \$50, which some Henning people living in Chicago, who were back home visiting, had assured him was enough to see him eat and sleep long enough to find himself a job that would put him on his feet. And so one Sunday afternoon, Pete Gause, 18, filled with his dreams, caught himself a train, like many another before him, to get Up North and do good.

As was always the case when anyone went Up North, the community expectantly waited to share the first report back to relatives. But quite a number of weeks went by and Pete's mama, good church Sister Fannie Gause, was only able to tell her closest friends that she had heard from her boy nary one word as yet. Her friends relayed this all along The Lane, where most of Henning's black people lived, and added that they could tell that she was worrying about her Pete pretty hard.

Then one day Sister Fannie went happily popping by to visit just about everybody. She let them read for themselves Pete's hand-printed letter saying he'd found a restaurant dishwashing job, and the beaming Sister Fannie also showed the five-dollar bill that Pete

had enclosed for his mama. Up and down The Lane after she'd left, the people commented how nice that was, especially considering how plenty of others, Up North long before Pete, were still writing, begging their homefolks to send money.

Then a long time passed without any particular community mention of Pete Gause. But that wasn't unusual. No one expected a family to report every letter or penny postal card. Years could go by without Henning getting any specific news about certain homefolk Up North — which turned out to be the case with Pete Gause.

The next hearing that Henning finally did get about Pete was a little bit upsetting. Someone returning to visit told different people that, yes, they'd seen Pete, still working in that restaurant but no longer washing dishes; he now wore a black suit and black-leather bow tie and carried a tray, waiting on the customers out front. The upsetting part of the report was that an intent of having just a little friendly homefolks chat with Pete had been met with his acting pretty stuck-up, as if he wanted very little to do anymore with folks he knew from back yonder.

The folks living along The Lane expressed no particularly strong feelings about that report, though. Most agreed that even if it was really so, then Pete would have added only one more to an already mile-long list of those who had gone Up North and gotten afflicted with "the bighead" — airs of sudden importance, and talking so proper, like glancing at somebody's hogs and saying "haags," or dogs and saying "daags."

Some years passed before the Henning people's next Pete Gause news—and it was really important and exciting! Pete had been so lucky as to be signed on as a dining-car waiter on the Illinois Central Railroad's Seminole, which ran round-trip between Chicago and Florida. It was a sister train of the Panama Limited, which twice a day seemed to just fly through Henning, bound north for Chicago, or south for New Orleans.

What really excited the people was their automatic mental pictures of homeboy Pete all dressed up to the nines and walking about seating and serving the rich people eating in another of the I.C. line's finest dining cars — which nearly everyone had quickly glimpsed within the windows of the speeding Panama Limited. The white-uniformed waiters were always stepping about so dignified

amid white-clothed tables with the gleaming china and crystal and silver, and the long-stemmed roses within their heavy silver vases. In fact, a whole lot of the Henning people couldn't resist sending up a secret little prayer that at some time in the future, the Lord in his goodness might even see Pete Gause reassigned onto the Panama Limited. Then Henning people would only need to go and stand anywhere downtown, looking up at the I. C. railroad tracks, and maybe actually catch a glimpse of Pete, and wave, as he'd go, *whooshing* through his own hometown — and, Lord have mercy, wouldn't that be something?

After a while, though, even such big news as that receded. Only now and then would some new item be heard about Pete, for instance that he had married some lady born and raised right up there in Chicago. Sister Fannie confided among her closest friends that she really felt sort of pitiful about it that she hadn't even seen her new daughter-in-law.

Sister Fannie Gause would still share with close friends the occasional picture postal card from Pete, or sometimes his one-page letter in a Seminole envelope that also would contain another five or even ten-dollar bill. Generally, the very next day, Sister Fannie would sit down in her living room and spend four or five hours making her answer to Pete. She would spell out the words for herself, one by one, until each one sounded right, before she'd then print a word on her lined writing tablet, such as "Dere son, I jes hope I liv to see fin grone man you mus got to be." Sister Fannie told her friends that every reply she got from Pete only told her once again how his running on the railroad kept him so busy he just never seemed off long enough for coming back to Henning.

Then one July Monday washday morning, Sister Fannie hurried all aflutter among different people's houses on The Lane, showing everyone she could the letter just received from Pete. He was coming home to visit "befor this sumer over," although he didn't say exactly when.

Down The Shining Tracks stretching alongside Henning's small, brown-and-tan I.C. lines depot, the daily local from Memphis steamed in and stopped at the usual 11:18 on that hot August Friday morning. The few people of both races who happened to be any-

where downtown within eyeshot saw a tall, solidly built, dark-suited, black-homburged, brownskinned man starting down that coach's steps, and the black people watching instantly knew that was Pete Gause. But none of them rushed to the depot waving to him and calling out his name, as they would have normally greeted any other such recognized surprise arrivals, because they had all heard that he no longer cared to mix with homepeople.

As he walked toward the depot, he was plainly dignified just from the way he carried his black-leather suitcase. He turned onto the graveled pathway leading to the wooden depot steps. He wasn't halfway down when Brother Mose's sort of "teched-in-the-head" boy of 12, "Juniebug," took off toward The Lane like a cottontail rabbit with the hot news he had for Sister Fannie.

By then, all of the storekeepers had ambled outside. They stood talking whatever came to mind with the few other white folks downtown. From the corners of their eyes all of them were watching Pete Gause, at the same time trying their best to seem as if they were paying him no attention at all. But the black people had been moving about, seeking positions along his most likely route, all of them in hopes to inspect him at a closer range.

But Pete didn't slacken his pace. Looking neither to right, nor to left, nor behind him, he didn't see some of the black folk trailing him, so that in later discussions they could declare he never got out of their sight. He passed right through town and finally stepped onto the wide dirt Lane. Making a right turn, he saw Sister Fannie just as she also saw him — and came running with her arms stretched wide, her apron flapping, and she was crying. Everybody else whom Juniebug had found at home along that part of The Lane was watching them hug each other, before they went on into Sister Fannie's little old gray-planked, rundown, four-roomed house.

Sister Fannie later on told her close friends what happened inside, and they told everybody else. She said that from the second the door shut, for them both it felt so awkward. She was beyond being happy to see her boy again, of course, but she just didn't know what to say, or do. There was such a difference between the Pete she'd last seen and the man she stood looking at, holding his homburg in one hand as his other set down his fine black-leather bag against a worn-

through in her linoleum floor. She reached and took the hat and said, "Let me rest your coat."

She stepped into the bedroom and put the coat on a wire hanger and hung it on the nail behind the door. Coming back out of the bedroom, she told Pete that would be his room. And then she said she couldn't believe her ears, hearing him tell her he really was sorry, but he was going to have to catch that afternoon's five-o'clock local to get back to Chicago in time for his regular Seminole job the next morning.

Sister Fannie said her knees and legs, both, suddenly felt weak. She could accept how busy he was and all, but it was just not having seen him for all *that* long, plus all of her friends whom she'd faithfully promised at least a chance to say hello to him. She said she collected her wits somehow and gestured him to a chair, and they both sat down. Pete asked how was she, and everybody? "All right," she said she told him, so confused and heartsick about him leaving *that same day*, that then in sudden embarrassment she realized she *hadn't even* asked about his wife. Then she did, and all he said was "Fine."

There had to be *something* they could talk about, Sister Fannie said she thought. And she just started making her head give her some names of people there in Henning whom Pete couldn't help but remember, and telling him such things as that they'd married, and how many children they had by now, and especially among the older people, how some had suffered sicknesses and most had gotten well, but a few had died. And Pete, sitting there, listened.

Sister Fannie said then she talked some about how hard the Depression had hit both black and white, had hit just everybody, and how the money Pete had sent had helped her out a lot, every time.

She was thinking about what to say next when, Sister Fannie said, somehow it popped into her mind to ask, "Son, maybe you'd care for a cup of coffee or tea?" And Pete even smiled a little when he nodded and said, "Yes ma'ma, I'd love some tea."

Sister Fannie practically jumped up, having something she could do with herself, and she stepped through her doorway's bleached flour-sack curtains hanging from a wire tacked across the door frame between her living room and her kitchen. Pushing a few fatty pine

kindling sticks over the old embers from her breakfast-cooking fire, she reached up after her dried green tea leaves in her cupboard. Then, she said, she kind of half-turned about, sensing that her Pete must have entered through the curtains.

She said that she hadn't realized what a really big man Pete was, that he filled the door frame entirely. And right then she noticed how strangely Pete was looking down upon her old cast-iron black cook-stove. She first hoped that maybe he was remembering that stove's thousands of breakfasts, dinners and suppers eaten by him and his brothers. And then she felt embarrassed that her stove looked so bad, its slightly parted oven door hanging by one hinge, its missing right front leg substituted by some thickish hickory firewood sticks, and the baling wire she had nailed onto the ceiling looped down and around the rusting stovepipes to stop them from sagging further.

Sister Fannie said she saw such a frightening expression suddenly come over Pete's face that her own mouth just popped open to ask, "Is something the matter?"

Pete took one step and there he was half-crouched before that stove; suddenly his long-sleeved arms and thick hands were gripping the stove's underside.

Sister Fannie said she just jumped backward, her hands flying to her mouth, her eyes popping, as Pete with a great grunt wrenched up that whole heavy cast-iron stove from that floor, the kindling crackling inside, and her water kettle, breakfast-eggs skillet and tin biscuit pan all tumbling and clattering against the floor. With another two wrenchings, to the left, then to the right, like he used to wrestle cotton bales, Pete tore that cookstove's top loose from the overhead stovepipes.

She said with the stove held waist-high and a little stream of ashes sifting down from the firebox, Pete turned toward her kitchen's back door. Then, maneuvering that iron stove through that doorway, with another mighty grunt Pete just heaved it forward and outward, and it smashed down against her little grassy-patched dirt back yard, the sounds of the crash and the iron cracking open sending her little spotted feist dog and her few any-breed chickens all yelping and squawking and flying.

Pete's face was dripping sweat, said Sister Fannie, as he said

between loud, hard breaths, "Be right back." And with long, dignified steps, he headed back downtown.

There in the Henning Hardware and Supply Company, which was owned by Mr. Jim Alston, the combined janitor-deliveryman was Spunk Johnson. How Spunk later told it along The Lane was that he was back in the store's rear, sort of shoving around some empty wooden boxes, for even without any business going on, Mr. Alston would get unhappy unless he could hear some noises sounding like Spunk was doing some kind of work. Spunk said that he liked being back in there because he could also hear everything that went on up front.

Spunk said that suddenly Mr. Alston's voice was strangely high-pitched, asking somebody, "What can I do for you?" Spunk said he quit shoving boxes, listening sharply to find out who it was that made Mr. Alston sound so uncertain. Then hearing, "I'm interested in a cookstove," Spunk said he nearly fell over, recognizing that the black man speaking so dignified could be nobody else but Pete Gause.

Spunk said he quickly moved between some tall cardboard cartons to where he could peep around them safely, and there sure enough stood Pete Gause.

Spunk said Mr. Jim Alston, pointing to a display model, spoke next in the same strained tone. "Your people buy that one. Fifteen dollars and ninety-five cents."

Then Spunk heard Pete Gause. "Which is the best stove you've got?"

Mr. Alston hesitated. "Well, this one. See, this side tank here keeps five gallons of water hot. And that thermometer right there measures what heat's in that oven. And this warming oven, up top here."

"How much? Cash." Spunk heard Pete Gause ask it, and he saw Mr. Alston react as if he didn't believe it. Even the richest of Henning's white folks wanting anything real big like that would very seldom pay full cash on the spot.

"Sixty dollars. Fifty-eight cash," Mr. Alston said.

Spunk Johnson said it was the first time his eyes ever beheld any black man just sliding his right hand into his pocket and draw-

ing out his wallet and counting six green ten-dollar bills into Mr. Jim Alston's hand.

Spunk said Mr. Alston's face had begun turning that excited white folks' bright-pinkish color. And then Pete Gause said, "Can it be delivered to my mother's home, up on The Lane, right away?"

"Sure can, right away!" And Mr. Alston hollered, "Spunk!"

Spunk said he acted like he had no idea what was going on.

Mr. Alston pointed. "I want this man's stove delivered to his house, right now!"

"Yessir," said Spunk, and then he said he realized he was looking right at the Pete Gause he grew up with. So Spunk said, "Glad to see you back. Hear tell you workin' with the railroad up yonder roun' Chicago."

Pete Gause said, "Yes, I am, and I appreciate you taking this stove up to my mama."

Spunk said it sounded so weird considering how he and Pete went to Henning's Colored Grammar School together, so he tried again, being homefolksy. "Why, shore. Sister Fannie maybe's tol' you, ain't many weeks pass either Lucy Mae or me, or both us don't jes' drop by an' say hi'dy — you know, jes' see how she doin'."

"I appreciate that, and know mama does, too," said Pete Gause. "If you set up her stove for her, I'd be glad to pay whatever you'd charge."

"Oh, ain't nothin', be glad to," said Spunk.

Then Spunk said he went on out to hitch up the store's big bay mare to pull the open-bed delivery wagon. Within only a little over an hour, he had set up Sister Fannie's brand-new, fine cook-stove, all ready for starting a fire in it and cooking somebody a good supper.

But, instead, about when Sister Fannie would have been cooking a supper, as she would so much have loved to be doing for Pete on the stove he'd bought that she felt was too beautiful and wonderful to describe, she was down at the Henning I.C. railroad depot, keeping up her best efforts to hide her crying from Pete, as she had been trying to hide ever since he had told her he was leaving so soon.

Since Pete's arrival that morning, enough word had circulated that although by far most people were out working in the fields, still

a good number, especially older people, had gathered in front of the stores across the highway from the depot. They wanted at least a peep, if nothing else, just to be able later to say they had really seen Pete Gause who, after 15 years, came home and then left the same day. The black people stood out in the open along the sidewalk, while the white people mostly looked out from behind different stores' windowpanes or closed screened doors, so nobody could say that they had showed enough concern to go outside.

At about 4:45 p.m., the I. C. local's first whistling was heard, and the people watching from downtown across the highway saw Pete Gause turn quickly and tightly hug Sister Fannie, who they could tell clear across the highway was now out-and-out crying. Lifting his real-leather bag, Pete walked onto the coach for black passengers. Everyone watching now strained their eyes, scanning the windows of the coach. That was because practically all black people, once on board, would rush to the nearest of the windows facing town, leaning over passengers already seated, if necessary, and just wave and wave through the window's double-paned plate glass at the homefolks they were leaving. But Pete Gause never showed up at all. He must have just taken a seat on the opposite side and stayed there.

The big locomotive whistled two little toots, its deep *chuff-chuff-chuffing* began moving the train ahead, and gradually it gathered speed, heading out of town.

Around that Friday's sundown, the news spread so fast among the arriving fieldworkers that by night the whole town's talk was of nothing but Pete Gause. By breakfast-time on Saturday morning, members of the Ladies' Aid Society who were living closest went to offer a morning prayer with Sister Fannie for the Lord's goodness just to have let her raise such a child. Of course afterward she showed them her new cookstove, which later some folk said had been their real purpose in the first place.

Then, as usual for a Saturday morning, downtown Henning began growing busier and busier as more and more wagons and buggies kept entering the town square. They were all filled with outlying country folk, who looked forward all through every week to spending Saturdays among the big crowds in town. And

it was a peculiar thing that most people, town or country alike, after they had heard what had happened, showed no interest at all in Sister Fannie's new stove. Instead, starting around that Saturday's noontime, then increasing steadily during the afternoon, usually by twos and threes, both town and country people quietly began walking away from the crowded, busy downtown. They would keep on going until they'd reach and turn right into The Lane.

The people would sort of catercorner in an angling toward Sister Fannie's small, partly grassed front yard decorated with big cantaloupe-size, white-painted rocks arranged in a circle around her two worn-out tin washtubs of dirt folding her flowering plants. And then passing her small, oblong house, the people would reach her back yard and see the broken old stove there, as they had heard.

The people generally wouldn't walk very close to the old cookstove — they'd stand a few yards back, as if to get a fuller look. It lay all crunched down on one side, even seeming to be dug-in a little into the disturbed hard surface of the yard. A gaping split about four or five inches wide had nearly left the stove in two halves.

After a while, some of the people would abruptly say something, almost to themselves, as one man marveled softly, "He sho' throwed it!" and the people close to him nodded. Other people seemed unable to believe buying anything so costly without a saved-up down payment, then fifty cents a month forever, which made another man kind of breathe, "He come at 'leven, he lef' at five — Lord have mercy!"

Somewhere between 200 and 300 people must have come and looked at Sister Fannie's old cookstove within the next few weeks. Different Henning people, in discussions, agreed what a beautiful thing it was that a hometown man had come back and done that for his mama. And it was the first time, it was further agreed, that anybody off The Lane ever was able to go downtown and order the very best of something costing really big money, and then peel off green bills until the white storeman didn't even know how to act.

For years to come, in fact, black people kept on walking up to see Sister Fannie's broken old stove. And the reason was that just looking at it gave the black people of Henning a mighty big feeling of pride.