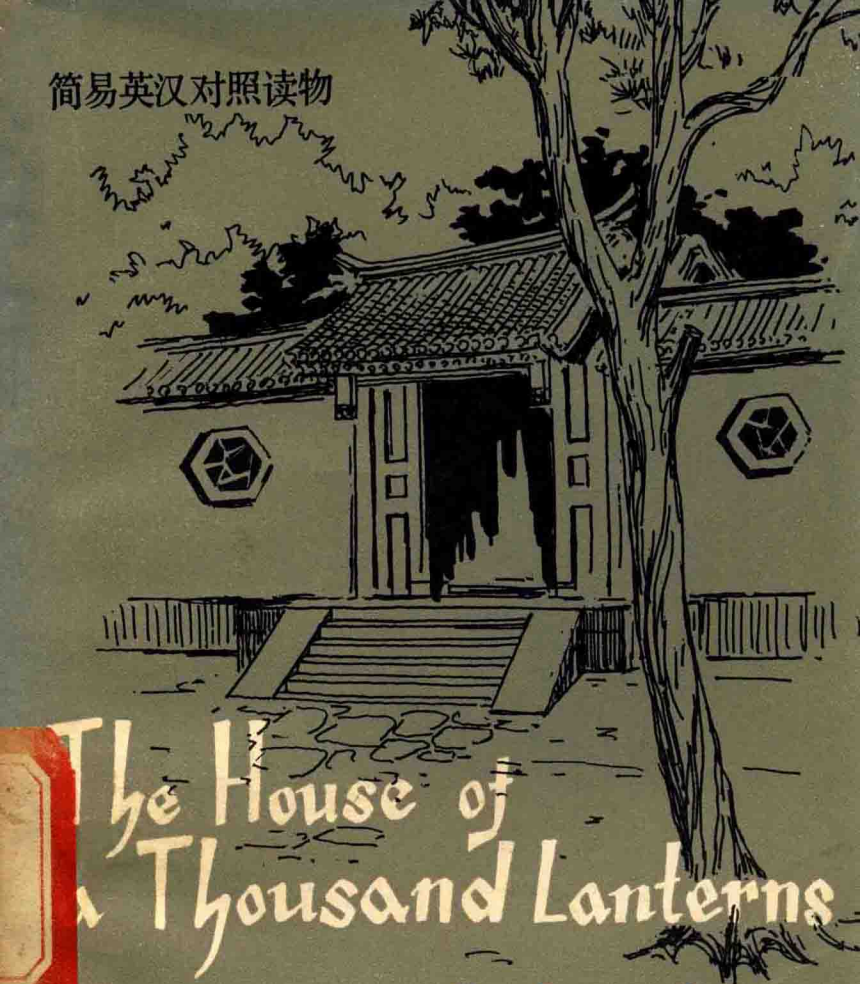


简易英汉对照读物



The House of A Thousand Lanterns

千灯府

外语教学与研究出版社

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Victoria Holt 原文

Charlotte Reid 改

李 师 钊 译

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Abridged and simplified by
Charlotte Reid

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QIAN DENG FU

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本书简介

本书以香港富丽堂皇的“千灯府”为背景，描写一位英国女古董商简·林赛的遭遇。情节曲折，布局新颖，富有传奇色彩。原著于一九七四年出版。这个简写本语言流畅，浅显易懂，常用词和句型重复率较高。书后附有参考译文和词汇表，可供大、中学生及具有中等水平的英语自学者阅读。

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1. Roland's Croft

When I first heard of the House of a Thousand Lanterns I felt an immediate curiosity to know more of a place with such a name. Could there be a thousand lanterns in one house? Who put them there? I did not think, when I first heard of it, that one day I, Jane Lindsay, would be caught up in the mystery and danger surrounding that House.

I was connected with the House really years before I saw it. I was fifteen years old when my mother became house-keeper to that strange man—Sylvester Milner. If it had not been for him, I should never have heard of the House of a Thousand Lanterns. And if my father had not died, my mother would never have had to work for a living.

My father's family were rich, but they refused to recognise him when he married my pretty, gay little mother. We were always poor, the three of us, but we were ideally happy. My father loved mountain climbing, and acted often as a guide. From what he earned, he gave me a good education at a very expensive girls' school.

I shall never forget the day my father died. I was home for the Christmas holidays. The sky was as heavy as lead, and a snowstorm was threatening, but my father had gone climbing. We sat in the warm kitchen, my mother and I, baking bread and waiting for his return. Then we began to listen to the soft tick-tick of the clock. After some hours we knew that he would never return. It was two days before they found his body and brought it back to us.

I went back to school. I knew that without my father's small earnings we would be very poor indeed. When I came home again, my mother said to me, "I have to earn some money, Jane. I'm going to find a job as a housekeeper. I'm a good cook, and I can manage a house. The only condition I shall make is that you must be allowed to live with me."

During my next term, she wrote to tell me that she was going to the south of England, to a place called Roland's Croft, in the New Forest. There a gentleman, by the name of Mr Sylvester Milner, needed a housekeeper. He had asked her to come and see him.

I thought of her, ready to fight for a place in life for herself, and for me. She was a very small, and a very brave woman. I was going to be tall, because I was like my father. She had rosy cheeks and black hair. I had the same kind of hair, but my skin was pale, like my father's. And I had my father's large, deep-set grey eyes.

We were alike in our determination to get what we wanted. So I was not surprised to hear that she had got the job at Roland's Croft. At the end of the term, I travelled down to join her there.

She had told me nothing about her employer, Mr Sylvester Milner, so I imagined a great deal.

When I arrived, my mother ran down the stairs to the hall, and kissed me. "My dear child, I'm so glad you're here. I've been counting the days. Come up to my room — there's so much to tell you."

Her room, beautifully furnished, was on the second floor. There was a kettle on the fire, and in a minute she had made tea for us. "It's turned out very well," she said happily, "very well indeed. We'll have the house to ourselves. Mr

Sylvester Milner is away."

"I wanted to see him. But tell me, are you really happy here?"

"It couldn't be better," said my mother, laughing. And she told me about the other servants, especially Mrs Couch, the cook, who ruled in the kitchen. But all I said was, "Tell me about Mr Sylvester Milner."

"He's . . . he's a gentleman," she said. My mother was not usually unable to find words like this. "But he's often away on business. He travels round the world to many places . . . such as China."

"Tell me what he looks like."

"Well, he's not easy to describe. He's different from other people."

"What sort of things does he deal with?"

"Very valuable things." These short answers made me think again that there was something strange about Mr Sylvester Milner.

"There's one thing," said my mother. "You might see a Chinese man about sometimes. He's called Ling Fu. He looks after the Treasure Room."

"Treasure Room? What's hidden in the Treasure Room?"

My mother laughed. "Now, don't begin one of your stories about it. Mr Milner collects beautiful things, and he keeps some of them until he finds a buyer for them. Ling Fu looks after these things, and no one else. I haven't been into the Room myself."

I looked into the fire, and seemed to see a face there. One moment it was kind, the next moment it was evil. Mr Sylvester Milner, I thought.

My mother showed me my room. "Look across there — there are the two windows of the Treasure Room."

Although my room was a pleasant one, my first night in it was uneasy. I seemed to hear the wind repeating one name — Sylvester Milner — again and again.

That was a good Christmas, though it was the first for us since my father's death. I got on well with the servants. And I was soon at home in Mrs Couch's warm kitchen, with its wonderful smells of baking and cooking. Mrs Couch did not really approve of Mr Sylvester Milner. He crept about the place, she said. And he talked that foreign talk with Ling Fu.

It was clear that Mr Sylvester Milner did not say much, but everyone did what he wanted. I felt for this mysterious man both curiosity and some fear.

When I got the lucky ring from the Christmas pudding, and three wishes with it, I wished first to see Mr Sylvester Milner. Secondly, I wished to see the Treasure Room. And thirdly, I wished that my mother and I might continue to live at Roland's Croft.

The end of my holiday was now approaching and within five days I must go back to school. Then we got news that Ling Fu was coming, but that Mr Sylvester Milner himself would not arrive for another two weeks.

Ling Fu was a small man with a yellowish face. In the house he wore shiny black trousers and a loose kind of high-buttoned shirt. He interested me, though he rarely looked my way. And then, two days before I was to go, I noticed that the curtains of the Treasure Room were drawn back. Ling Fu must be inside.

I couldn't resist it. I went up to the third floor. And

there was the door of the Treasure Room — open. I looked in. There was no one there. I took a step in. There were beautiful things everywhere — vases and paintings and figures of Buddha.

Then I heard footsteps — someone was coming along the passage! I went hastily into a little sideroom to wait. To my horror, I heard the sound of the other door being closed. A key turned in the lock.

I was horrified. I went to the windows, but they had bars across them. I went to knock on the door — but the only person that I wanted to let me out was my mother. I had been wrong to come in here, and I was being punished for my curiosity. I tried to be calm, but I did not like the thought of being here until dark. Some of the figures seemed to be looking at me with cold eyes.

I picked up a container with some ivory sticks in it. To calm myself, I counted them. There were forty-nine. Then I called out at the top of my voice. No one heard.

I wondered if I would really have to spend the night in this place. I didn't like that idea at all. The shadows darkened, and again I counted the ivory sticks. At that moment I heard the door being slowly opened. A man was standing there.

The light of his candle fell on his face. It was a strange, pale, expressionless face. On his head was a small round cap, the same pink colour as his jacket. He was staring straight at me.

"Who are you?" he asked, "and why are you holding these sticks?"

"I am Jane Lindsay," I answered in a high, nervous voice. "I was locked in."



I knew now that two of my wishes were granted. I was face to face with Mr Sylvester Milnér.

He took the sticks from me and laid them down on a small table. He seemed to be more interested in them than in me.

I said, "I'm sorry. The door was open, and I looked in . . . then someone came and locked it."

"And you appreciate objects of art, like these?"

I hesitated. I felt I could not tell him an untruth. "I am sure I would if I knew about them."

"You want to know? But you must not come in here without permission. Go now."

I ran past him to my room. My cheeks were red, my hair more untidy than usual. My eyes were like stars.

My mother came in, and I felt I had to tell her.

"I think, Mother," I said, "that I've met Mr Sylvester Milnér now. In the Treasure Room . . ."

As I told her what had happened, she grew pale.

"Oh, Jane," she said, "this will be the end. I shall be asked to leave."

"I didn't mean anything wrong. I thought there was something mysterious there..." But my mother was not listening. She was thinking of all the difficulties of finding another job.

I felt very guilty when I went off back to school. I was always expecting to get a letter from her telling me she had to leave. But she wrote instead, "Mr Milner never mentioned finding you in the Treasure Room. So, if I hear nothing, you will be coming here for your summer holidays."

We heard nothing. I went back to Roland's Croft for that, and for the next summer holiday too. My three wishes had all come true.

2. My Future is Decided

When I came back to Roland's Croft for the holidays during which I should have my seventeenth birthday, my mother had something to tell me.

"Mr Sylvester Milner wants you to have tea with him tomorrow. He asked me what you are going to do. I told him I would keep you at school until you were eighteen. And then you must earn your own living. Jane — he's interested in you."

So the next day I put on my best dress for tea with Mr Sylvester Milner. Ling Fu brought the tea in. Mr Milner said, "You are wondering why I have a Chinese servant to

wait on me, Miss Lindsay? Ling Fu comes from Hong Kong, where I have a house. I have been going back and forward to China since I was fifteen years old. One can learn a lot in thirty years. Now, I know that you also like to learn. You and I, I believe, could be very useful to each other."

"How, Mr Milner?" I asked.

"I am a merchant. My business is to buy and sell rare and valuable objects of Chinese art. Some I sell at a good profit, and some I cannot bear to sell. Now, I need a secretary, someone who will be prepared to help me in this business . . . do you understand?"

I could not hide my excitement.

"I could really learn about them? I could really be of use to you?"

He nodded. Then he said, "Do you remember when I found you in my Treasure Room? Those sticks you were holding in your hands tell the future. They told me that in some way your life is linked to mine."

"So when shall I start?" I asked nervously.

"When you have finished your education. That will be in a year or so. Meanwhile I want you to study the books I shall give you. They will teach you how to recognise great works of Chinese art. You will have a key to my storeroom, and you will learn how to help me. What do you say to this?"

"I knew it was a lucky day when we came here. It's going to be wonderful."

"My father was a great trader," Mr Milner went on. "He left his business to his three sons. I am the eldest. We should have worked together, but we had differences. I don't think that my brother Redmond ever got over his disap-

pointment when my father left the House of a Thousand Lanterns to me."

"The House of a Thousand Lanterns," I said. I felt that my eyes were shining with excitement. I felt that he was opening a door for me, through which I could see into a wonderfully strange world.

"I want to begin learning," I said.

That pleased him. "I like your impatience and your curiosity. Come with me now and see the showroom." So once again I saw those figures which had half frightened me when I was locked in the room.

"Look at this Buddha," he said, touching it gently. "It's so beautiful that I feel I must keep it. And look at this fine figure of Kuan Yin, the goddess of mercy and pity. But this is an art to be learnt about slowly. We shall have tea together very soon, and talk a little more about China."

I went straight to my mother and threw myself into her arms. I told her that I was going to work for Mr Sylvester Milner. I was going to learn all about Chinese art.

During these summer holidays I read greedily all the books that Mr Milner allowed me. And I kept most carefully the key to the Treasure Room which he had given me. I was disappointed that he was not at Roland's Croft when I came for the Christmas holidays. But I kept on with my reading, and with my study of his precious objects.

I did not see so much of my mother that time. One little thing did happen, but I did not pay it much attention at the time. On Christmas morning I had gone to give her present. It was most unusual for her not to be up before me. I woke her, and she smiled at me. Then she put her hand on the pillow as if she were hiding something. I was puzzled, but

nothing more was said about it, and I soon forgot.

The next time I came home to Roland's Croft for the summer, I had left school for ever. I would be eighteen that September. Every day I did some work for Mr Milner and learnt more about his business. I learnt more about his family too.

"I have two nephews, Adam and Joliffe," he said. "They are very different in character. Adam took up the business after his father's death. He is a serious young man, and works very hard at it. In a way he's my rival nowadays, and so is Joliffe." He sighed, and said no more.

Mrs Couch, the cook, told me about Joliffe. "He gets round me, as he gets round all the young ladies he meets." And my mother's face softened when she spoke of him. "He's a very charming young man, but restless. He never stays here long enough. Joliffe, you know, might inherit all Mr Milner's money."

But I had the feeling that Mr Sylvester Milner did not think so highly of Joliffe as they did. "It's a pity that we are not working all three of us together," he said. "But both Joliffe and Adam wanted to be in control. And that is something I couldn't allow."

One day he came back from a journey in some excitement. "I've found a really beautiful Kuan Yin — you remember the goddess of mercy? This may be the one we have been searching for all our lives — the one made by an artist of the Sung period. The legend says that the goddess herself lives in the figure. It will bring good luck to the man who possesses it. I must have some tests made on it at once."

But he found he had to go away the next day, for a week. The Kuan Yin was placed in the showroom, in my care. Ling

Fu went with him, so now I was the only one to have the key to the Treasure Room. I opened my little silver box to make sure that it was still there, again and again.

One day I was out walking in the forest. I was thinking, this time not of Chinese art, but of the beauty of the trees round me, when some thunder sounded overhead. I ran to the shelter of a ruined wall. I had just got there when the storm began to pour down.

A voice said, "What a storm! May I share your shelter?" A man stood in front of me. His jacket was wet through. He took off his hat, and a stream of water fell from it.

I noticed how pleasant he was to look at. As he laughed, I saw strong-looking white teeth. But his most startling feature was his eyes. They were dark-blue, while his eyebrows and eyelashes were as dark as his hair. For the rest, he was tall, and rather lean.

"It seems to me that I've just come in time." I drew back a little under his gaze. I wished I had not been wearing my plainest morning dress.

"May I stand under the wall too?"

"You will get wet if you don't."

He came and stood beside me. I drew as far away from him as I could, for he disturbed me.

"A young lady! And on her own, too! How can you tell what you might meet here!" His blue eyes seemed to be alight with laughter.

"Do you live in this neighbourhood?"

He shook his head. "I'm taking a short holiday here. I was just out walking when the storm came. Do you know what this old wall is?"