

美国科幻小说选

英语注释读物

Selections of
American
Science Fiction



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原 著：艾萨克·阿西莫夫 等

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上海译文出版社

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注 释 者 的 话

以科学的某方面内容为故事的情节或背景的科学幻想小说 (Science Fiction, 简称 SF) 是目前世界上极为流行的文苑新葩。这类作品一般通过想象的科学对未来作大胆的推测和设想, 引导读者走进新的思想和概念的境界, 从而激励人们探索科学和社会所蕴藏的无数可能性, 具有一定的科学启示作用。由于作者把科学和幻想有机地融为一体, 因此科学幻想小说想象丰富, 情节神秘, 人物离奇, 耐人寻味。

本书收故事六则, 均为美国当代著名科学幻想小说家的经典之作, 选自美国艾文图书公司 (Avon) 1971 年出版的《科学幻想小说荣誉宫》(The Science Fiction Hall of Fame)。

本书适合大学英语专业二、三年级学生及具有同等英语水平的读者阅读。文中较难的句子结构、习惯用语和专业词汇等都作了注释, 书末并附词汇表, 供读者学习和欣赏时参考。

注释者水平有限, 谬误在所难免, 欢迎批评指正。

一九八一年五月

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日 暮

(故 事 简 介)

在无边无垠的太空中，雷盖什是颗不夜的星球。在它的上空有 α 、 β 、 γ 等六颗太阳轮流照耀，因此，雷盖什的人们不知道什么是黑夜，什么是星星。

然而，萨罗大学主任安东77却作出了令人震惊的预言：雷盖什上空即将出现黑夜和星星。他告诫人们作好思想上的准备，切莫在黑夜降临、星辰呈现之际，心惊胆战而精神失常。但是人们对他的预见是抱有怀疑的，甚至包括安东77自己的助手在内。新闻记者赛厄蒙762曾在报上嘲讽过安东，但他在这历史性的时刻，还是前来采访安东和他的天文台。安东讨厌记者，他不愿让记者耽在身边目睹日食，可是他的助手们还是劝他把记者留下了。

心理学家谢林501受安东之命，与百余人耽在隐蔽所，以躲过日暮的恐怖，保持人类不致湮灭，保护所有资料免遭浩劫。但是谢林忍受不了隐蔽所里的黑暗，擅自跑回天文台，要同大家一起度过这关键的时刻。于是，他以一位外行的立场把整个情况告诉了记者。

根据安东的预见，他们的星球雷盖什已接近一个2049年周期的尾声，月球将遮住太阳，天空将出现长达半天的日食，六颗太阳都将隐没，黑暗将笼罩大地，星星将在天空闪烁。

这样的周期至少已有九次之多，每次都让火焚毁了人类及其文明。安东为了分析这种周期的必然性，从哥尔特教那儿搞到些资料，因为哥尔特教的“醒世经”里早就指出每隔2500年，雷盖什就要进入天际一个硕大无朋的巨洞，所有的太阳消失了，星星出现了，星星吸去了人们的灵魂，把人变成了失去理智的野兽。安东用科学的方法对“醒世经”的资料予以去伪存真，得出了黑夜将临的重大发现。正因为安东淘汰了“醒世经”内荒诞不经的说法，教会对他也恨之入骨。

记者不明白日暮为什么会带来灾难。谢林对他作了心理上的分析。人的天性害怕黑暗。当他被黑暗所包围，他就会得幽闭恐怖症，最后发疯。因此，在光明消失之际，恐惧的心理会迫使人不顾一切地引火求光，于是火种蔓延，造成的后果就是熊熊烈火毁灭了一切。

当天文台的人们紧张地观察天空中的变化时，哥尔特教派来了拉铁默25进行破坏。由于他笨手笨脚，一进来就碰倒了感光板，被大家发觉，阴谋未能得逞。在他发誓不妨碍天文台的工作之后，他就在谢林和记者的监视下同大家一起等待黑暗的来临。

全日食前夕，萨罗市的哥尔特教妖言惑众，煽动民众来捣毁天文台，以求得神的恩典，拯救他们的灵魂。幸亏谢林和记者及时到底层拴上前门门栓，又用笨重的家具筑成一堵墙顶住后门，才保住了天文台。

黑暗逐渐逼近，谢林紧张得连呼吸也感到困难。当他和记者回到天文台穹顶时，大家正忙着准备拍摄天文镜头，以记录这历史性的资料。

就在最后一线光明消逝之际，拉铁默再也无法忍受内心

的恐惧，他违背自己的誓言，伺机破坏。然而，记者首先发觉了他，向他扑去，用双手紧紧卡住了他的喉咙。拉铁默窒息而口吐白沫，奄奄一息。

同时，随着黑暗笼罩大地，恐惧扣紧了每个人的心弦，他们渐渐地丧失了理智，就连安东也倒在地板上，一边爬着，一边语无伦次地呓语。

窗外地平线上，萨罗市那个方向，红光盈天，城市正被火焰吞没。

长夜再次降临了。

NIGHTFALL

by Isaac Asimov¹

"If the stars should appear one night in a thousand years, how would men believe and adore, and preserve for many generations the remembrance of the city of God!" — Emerson²

Aton 77,³ director of Saro University, thrust out a belligerent lower lip and glared at the young newspaperman in a hot fury⁴.

Theremon 762⁵ took that fury in his stride⁶. In his earlier days, when his now widely syndicated column⁷ was only a mad idea in a cub reporter's mind⁸, he had specialized in "impossible" interviews. It had cost him bruises, black eyes,⁹ and broken bones; but it had given him an ample supply of coolness and self-confidence.

So he lowered the outthrust hand¹⁰ that had been so pointedly ignored and calmly waited for the aged dire-

1. Isaac Asimov ['aizək ,æsi'mɒv] (1920—) 艾萨克·阿西莫夫, 美国当代著名科学幻想小说家。

2. Emerson ['eməsn] 埃默森(人名)。全名为 Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803—1882), 美国超越主义的奠基人。 3. Aton 77 ['ætən] 安东77(人名)。 4. glared at the young newspaperman in a hot fury 对年青的新闻记者怒目横眉。 in a hot fury 表示非常恼火。 5. Theremon 762 ['ðeəməŋ] 赛厄蒙762(人名)。 6. took that fury in his stride 从容应付安东的脾气。 to take something in one's stride 从容处理、对付某事; 轻快地解决某事。 7. widely syndicated column 通过报业辛迪加在许多报上发表的专栏消息。 8. in a cub reporter's mind 在初出茅庐的新闻记者的头脑里。 9. black eyes (被打得)鼻青眼肿。 10. the outthrust hand 伸出的手(准备与安东77握手的)。

ctor to get over the worst¹¹. Astronomers were queer ducks¹², anyway, and if Aton's actions of the last two months meant anything, this same Aton was the queer-duckiest of the lot¹³.

Aton 77 found his voice, and though it trembled with restrained emotion, the careful, somewhat pedantic, phraseology, for which the famous astronomer was noted,¹⁴ did not abandon him.

"Sir," he said, "you display an infernal gall in coming to me¹⁵ with that impudent proposition of yours."

The husky telephotographer of the Observatory, Beenay 25,¹⁶ thrust a tongue's tip across dry lips and interposed nervously, "Now, sir, after all —"

The director turned to him and lifted a white eyebrow. "Do not interfere, Beenay. I will credit you with good intentions¹⁷ in bringing this man here; but I will tolerate no insubordination now."

Theremon decided it was time to take a part¹⁸. "Director Aton, if you'll let me finish what I started saying I think —"

"I don't believe, young man," retorted Aton, "that anything you could say now would count much as compared with your daily columns of these last two months. You have led a vast newspaper campaign against the efforts of myself and my colleagues to organize the world against the menace which it is now too late to avert¹⁹.

11. to get over the worst 火气消退。 12. queer ducks 脾气古怪的人。
13. the queer-duckiest of the lot 脾气古怪的人中最古怪的一个。
14. noted 出名。 15. display an infernal gall in coming to me (你)还有脸皮来见我。 16. Beenay 25 ['bi:nei] 比内25(人名)。 17. with good intentions 好心好意地。
18. to take a part 介入。 19. too late to avert 来不及避免。 too ... to ... 太……以致不……。

You have done your best with your highly personal attacks on me to make the staff of this Observatory objects of ridicule.”

The director lifted the copy of the *Saro City Chronicle* on the table and shook it at Theremon furiously. “Even a person of your well-known impudence should have hesitated before coming to me with a request that he be allowed to cover today’s events for his paper²⁰. Of all newsmen, you !²¹”

Aton dashed the newspaper to the floor, strode to the window and clasped his arms behind his back.

“You may leave,” he snapped over his shoulder²². He stared moodily out at the skyline where Gamma²³, the brightest of the planet’s six suns,²⁴ was setting. It had already faded and yellowed into the horizon mists, and Aton knew he would never see it again as a sane man.

He whirled. “No, wait, come here !” He gestured peremptorily. “I’ll give you your story.”

The newsman had made no motion to leave, and now he approached the old man slowly. Aton gestured outward, “Of the six suns, only Beta²⁵ is left in the sky. Do you see it ?”

The question was rather unnecessary. Beta was almost at zenith²⁶; its ruddy light flooding the landscape

20. to cover today’s events for his paper 为报社采访今天的事件。

21. Of all newsmen, you ! 别的记者都可以, 就是不准你! 22. he snapped over his shoulder 他回过头来说。 23. Gamma [ˈgæmə] (伽马) γ 星(星座中第三颗最亮的星)。

24. the brightest of the planet’s six suns 行星上空六颗恒星中最明亮的。这是作者的臆想。 25. Beta [ˈbi:tə] (比塔) β 星(星座中第二颗最亮的星)。

26. at zenith 在天顶。

to an unusual orange as the brilliant rays of setting Gamma died. Beta was at aphelion²⁷. It was small; smaller than Theremon had ever seen it before, and for the moment it was undisputed ruler of Lagash's²⁸ sky.

Lagash's own sun, Alpha,²⁹ the one about which it revolved, was at the antipodes³⁰; as were the two distant companion pairs. The red dwarf Beta — Alpha's immediate companion — was alone, grimly alone.

Aton's upturned face flushed redly in the sunlight. "In just under four hours," he said, "civilization, as we know it, comes to an end. It will do so because, as you see, Beta is the only sun in the sky." He smiled grimly. "Print that! There'll be no one to read it."

"But if it turns out that four hours pass — and another four — and nothing happens?" asked Theremon softly.

"Don't let that worry you. Enough will happen."

"Granted!³¹ And *still* — if nothing happens?"

For a second time, Beenay 25 spoke, "Sir, I think you ought to listen to him."

Theremon said, "Put it to a vote, Director Aton."

There was a stir among the remaining five members of the Observatory staff, who till now had maintained an attitude of wary neutrality.

"That," stated Aton flatly, "is not necessary." He drew out his pocket watch. "Since your good friend, Beenay, insists so urgently, I will give you five minutes.

27. at aphelion 在远日点。 28. Lagash ['læɡəʃ] 雷盖什。星球名称，系作者的臆想，故事就发生在这个星球上。 29. Alpha ['ælfə] (阿耳法) α 星(星座中最亮的星)。 30. at the antipodes 在(β星的)对极。
31. Granted! 就算这样。

Talk away.³²”

“Good! Now, just what difference would it make if you allowed me to take down an eyewitness account of what’s to come³³? If your prediction comes true, my presence won’t hurt; for in that case my column would never be written. On the other hand, if nothing comes of it, you will just have to expect ridicule or worse. It would be wise to leave that ridicule to friendly hands³⁴.”

Aton snorted. “Do you mean yours when you speak of friendly hands?”

“Certainly!” Theremon sat down and crossed his legs. “My columns may have been a little rough³⁵ at times, but I gave you people the benefit of the doubt every time. After all, this is not the century to preach ‘the end of the world is at hand’³⁶ to Lagash. You have to understand that people don’t believe the ‘Book of Revelations’³⁷ any more, and it annoys them to have scientists turn about face and tell us the Cultists³⁸ are right after all —”

“No such thing, young man,” interrupted Aton. “While a great deal of our data has been supplied us by the Cult³⁹, our results contain none of the Cult’s mysticism. Facts are facts, and the Cult’s so-called ‘mythology’ has certain facts behind it. We’ve exposed them and ripped away their mystery. I assure you that the Cult hates us now worse than you do.”

32. Talk away. 说吧。 33. to take down an eyewitness account of what’s to come 以目睹者身份记录将要发生的事情。 34. to leave that ridicule to friendly hands 让友好的人来讥笑。 35. a little rough 有点鲁莽。 36. at hand 即将到来。 37. “Book of Revelations” 《醒世经》，作者的臆想。 38. Cultists 哥尔特教教徒。 39. the Cult 哥尔特教。

“I don’t hate you. I’m just trying to tell you that the public is in an ugly humor⁴⁰. They’re angry.”

Aton twisted his mouth in derision. “Let them be angry.”

“Yes, but what about tomorrow?”

“There’ll be no tomorrow!”

“But if there is. Say that there is — just to see what happens. That anger might take shape into something serious. After all, you know, business has taken a nose dive⁴¹ these last two months. Investors don’t really believe the world is coming to an end, but just the same they’re being cagey with their money until it’s all over. Johnny Public⁴² doesn’t believe you, either, but the new spring furniture might as well wait a few months — just to make sure.

“You see the point. Just as soon as this is all over, the business interests will be after your hide⁴³. They’ll say that if crackpots — begging your pardon — can upset the country’s prosperity any time they want simply by making some cockeyed prediction — it’s up to the planet to prevent them. The sparks will fly,⁴⁴ sir.”

The director regarded the columnist sternly. “And just what were you proposing to do to help the situation?”

“Well,” grinned Thereumon, “I was proposing to take charge of the publicity⁴⁵. I can handle things so that

40. in an ugly humor 情绪不好。 41. business has taken a nose dive 商业顿时萧条起来。 42. Johnny Public 约翰大众家具店。系作者臆想的店名。 43. after your hide 要剥你的皮；要你的命。 44. the sparks will fly 怒火会被点燃。 45. to take charge of the publicity 控制新闻报道。

only the ridiculous side will show. It would be hard to stand, I admit, because I'd have to make you all out to be a bunch of gibbering idiots, but if I can get people laughing at you, they might forget to be angry. In return for that, all my publisher asks is an exclusive story."

Beenay nodded and burst out, "Sir, the rest of us think he's right. These last two months we've considered everything but the million-to-one chance that there is an error somewhere in our theory or in our calculations. We ought to take care of that, too."

There was a murmur of agreement from the men grouped about the table⁴⁶, and Aton's expression became that of one who found his mouth full of something bitter and couldn't get rid of it.

"You may stay if you wish, then. You will kindly refrain, however, from hampering us⁴⁷ in our duties in any way. You will also remember that I am in charge of all activities here⁴⁸, and in spite of your opinions as expressed in your columns⁴⁹, I will expect full co-operation and full respect —"

His hands were behind his back, and his wrinkled face thrust forward determinedly as he spoke. He might have continued indefinitely but for the intrusion of a new voice.

"Hello, hello, hello!" It came in a high tenor, and the plump cheeks of the newcomer expanded in a pleased

46. grouped about the table 围在桌旁。 47. refrain, however, from hampering us ... 但不要妨碍我们……。动词 refrain 后必须用 from + 动名词短语。 48. in charge of all activities here 负责这里的所有活动。 49. in spite of your opinions as expressed in your columns 不管你在自己的专栏里发表的那些看法。in spite of 不管；不顾。column 报刊专栏。

smile. "What's this morgue-like atmosphere about here? No one's losing his nerve, I hope."

Aton started in consternation and said peevishly, "Now what the devil are you doing here, Sheerin⁵⁰? I thought you were going to stay behind in the Hideout⁵¹."

Sheerin laughed and dropped his tubby figure into a chair. "Hideout be blowed!⁵² The place bored me. I wanted to be here, where things are getting hot⁵³. Don't you suppose I have my share of curiosity? I want to see these Stars the Cultists are forever speaking about." He rubbed his hands and added in a soberer tone, "It's freezing outside. The wind's enough to hang icicles on your nose. Beta doesn't seem to give any heat at all, at the distance it is."

The white-haired director ground his teeth in sudden exasperation, "Why do you go out of your way⁵⁴ to do crazy things, Sheerin? What kind of good are you around here?⁵⁵"

"What kind of good am I around there?" Sheerin spread his palms in comical resignation. "A psychologist isn't worth his salt in the Hideout.⁵⁶ They need men of action and strong, healthy women that can breed children. Me? I'm a hundred pounds too heavy⁵⁰ for a man of action, and I wouldn't be a success at breeding children. So why bother them with an extra mouth to feed? I feel better over here."

50. Sheerin ['jerin] 谢林(人名)。 51. to stay behind in the Hideout 躲在隐蔽所。 52. Hideout be blowed 隐蔽所见鬼去吧。 53. where things are getting hot 大事临近(黑夜将临)。hot 接近。 54. go out of your way 故意。 55. 你耽在这儿有什么用? 56. 心理学家躲在隐蔽处是不称职的。

Theremon spoke briskly, "Just what is the Hideout, sir?"

Sheerin seemed to see the columnist for the first time. He frowned and blew his ample cheeks out. "And just who in Lagash are you, redhead?"

Aton compressed his lips and then muttered sullenly, "That's Theremon 762, the newspaper fellow. I suppose you've heard of him."

The columnist offered his hand. "And, of course, you're Sheerin 501 of Saro University. I've heard of you." Then he repeated, "What is this Hideout, sir?"

"Well," said Sheerin, "we have managed to convince a few people of the validity of our prophecy of — er — doom, to be spectacular about it, and those few have taken proper measures. They consist mainly of the immediate members of the families of the Observatory staff⁵⁷, certain of the faculty of Saro University⁵⁸ and a few outsiders. Altogether, they number about three hundred, but three quarters are women and children."

"I see! They're supposed to hide where the Darkness and the — er — Stars can't get at them, and then hold out⁵⁹ when the rest of the world goes poof⁶⁰."

"If they can. It won't be easy. With all of mankind insane; with the great cities going up in flames — environment will not be conducive to survival. But they have food, water, shelter, and weapons —"

"They've got more," said Aton. "They've got all our records, except for what we will collect today. Those

57. the immediate members of the families of the Observatory staff 天文台工作人员的家属。

58. certain of the faculty of Saro University 部分是萨罗大学教员。

59. hold out 坚持下来。

60. goes poof 发疯。