

[中英双语]

蛇 最后的献祭

美国90后美少女魔幻之作

[美] 妮妮·阿什莱 著
陆汉臻 译

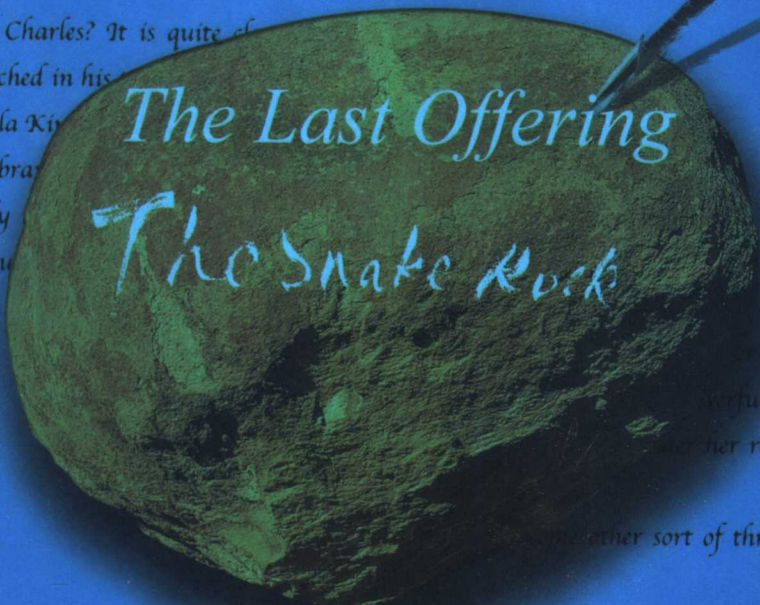
蛇石

II

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The Last Offering

The Snake Rock



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detailed report she sent out?"

浙江文艺出版社

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Prologue

Cut me with Blood,
Burn me with Ice,
Throw me in Fire,
Toy with my Life.

序 言

割我以血，
烧我以冰，
投我入火，
玩我之命。

Chapter One

“THIS IS COMPLETELY OUTRAGEOUS!” Sir Charles snapped. “I can’t believe this! You’ve really got to be joking!”

“No Sir Charles. It is quite clear.” The hunter held the paper clenched in his trembling hands. “There is no mistake. Miss Nicola Kingsley signed this herself. She sent it out to all the Order branches.”

“Absolutely ridiculous,” Sir Charles spat. He took the paper from the hunter and studied it himself for a moment.

“Listen to this Alex! ‘They were in the Order for a brief period of time.’ She had the three most powerful, dangerous, bloodthirsty Vampires in the world under her roof and she didn’t kill them!”

“Apparently there was some other sort of threat, and she needed them to...”

“Some other sort of threat?” Sir Charles asked, scoffing. “I think things have gotten rather out of hand down in America, don’t you? Hand me that detailed report she sent out.”

The hunter quickly retrieved it. Sir Charles flipped through it rapidly. “There, listen to this Alex. There appears to be a sort of halfling in that place.”

“Halfling, sir?”

“Half-Vampire, half-human. Name of Ryan Knight. He has the blood in him of one of the oldest known Vampires in existence. Apparently this Vampire was posing a threat and Nicola had these other three Vampires as allies to clear it up... How convincing does that sound to you Alex? It’s totally absurd.”

第 1 章

“这完全是胡闹！”查尔斯爵士突然急促地说，“我不相信。你真的会开玩笑！”

“不是玩笑，查尔斯爵士。事情很清楚。”猎人紧握着一份文件的双手颤抖不已，“没错，是尼古拉·金士莱小姐亲笔签署的文件。她把文件发给了灭妖会的所有分会。”

“荒谬至极！”查尔斯爵士啐了一口。他从猎人手里拿过文件，仔细研究了一会儿。

“听听这一句，亚力克斯！‘她们曾在灭妖会待过一段短暂时光。’她在家养了三个世界上最有威力、最危险、最嗜血成性的吸血鬼，而且她没有杀她们！”

“显然，另外还有什么威胁，她需要这些吸血鬼去对付……”

“别的威胁？”查尔斯爵士问，带着嘲笑的口吻，“我想在美国很多事都失控了，你说呢？把她发出的那份详细报告递给我。”

猎手很快地拿来报告递给他。查尔斯爵士噤里啪啦地翻阅起来，“亚力克斯，你听这一段。在那里某个地方好像有一种半人半妖。”

“半人半妖？”

“半吸血鬼半人。名叫拉恩·纳伊特。他身上流淌着世界上尚存的最古老的吸血鬼的血液。很明显，这个吸血鬼对尼古拉来说是一个威胁，尼古拉要与那三个吸血鬼联合起来消灭他……这样说你信吗，亚力克斯？真是太荒谬了。”

"I agree, sir."

"And that alliance with Aphroditë to find out who was backing her up sounds ridiculous. Do you really believe that? Aphroditë killed many people a few years ago in London before moving onto America."

"Well what do you propose?" asked Alex.

"I think she's betrayed us," Sir Charles said. "I think that it's quite obvious. It makes my blood boil. She was there the night Alexander died, wasn't she? He was a decent man. He's the only American I ever liked. But he apparently fell in love with her. No wonder he made the mistake of leaving her to lead the Order."

"But what do you think we can do about them? Her and that half-Vampire?"

"Kill them?" Sir Charles suggested lightly.

"Shall I get Thacery?"

Sir Charles's eyes glowed. "Oh yes. Get Thacery."

"VERONICA? DON'T YOU RECOGNIZE me?"

"I recognize you. I just don't care," she answered.

Thacery took a step towards her. "You know I care about you, but you're a Vampire now. I don't really have a choice in this matter. I'm going to put you to peace."

"And if I don't want to be put there?"

"Veronica, you were always the best hunter of us all. Now with your Vampiric strength I'm sure that you'll be a tough kill, but I can still do it. Make it easy for me, Veronica. Just die like a member of the Order."

"I don't want to die."

Thacery looked around him. The voice was afraid, and child-like in its vulnerability. There was a hint of panic in it, and also hopelessness. But he could sense defiance in her tone as well.

He studied the room. His eyes were useless to him here. He closed them and listened. "Veronica, you might not want to die but you are dead. Go to somewhere where you can bathe yourself in light again."

“是荒谬，爵士。”

“另外，与阿芙罗蒂特结盟去调查谁是她的支持者，这也很可笑。你真的相信？阿芙罗蒂特在移居美国以前，早年在伦敦就杀了很多人。”

“那你有什么建议？”亚力克斯问道。

“我想她出卖了我们，”查尔斯爵士说，“我想这是非常显而易见的。一想这事我就气得不行。亚力山大死的那个晚上她在那里，不是吗？亚力山大是个正派人，他是我喜欢的唯一一个美国人。但看得出来他爱上了她。难怪他做出错误的决定，让她当灭妖会的头。”

“那你看我们该怎样对付他们？她和那个半吸血鬼？”

“杀死他们？”查尔斯爵士轻描淡写地建议道。

“要我把萨克雷找来吗？”

查尔斯爵士眼睛一亮，“哦，对呀。把萨克雷找来。”

“维罗妮卡？你认不出我吗？”

“我认得你。我只是不在意罢了。”她答道。

萨克雷朝她走近一步，“你知道我是在乎你的，但你现在成了一个吸血鬼。对此，我真的毫无选择。我要让你安息。”

“要是我不愿意呢？”

“维罗妮卡，你一直是我们当中最好的猎人。你现在吸血鬼魔力加身，杀你并不是件容易事，但对我来说还不是个问题。你不如让我省点事，就像一个灭妖会成员那样死去吧。”

“我不想死。”

萨克雷环视四周。他听出这声音带着恐惧，带着孩子般的虚弱，带着一丝惊慌和无助。但他也听出她话语中的桀骜不驯。

他仔细查看了一下房间。在这里他的眼睛是没有用处的，他就闭上眼睛静静地听着。“维罗妮卡，你也许不想死，但你已经死了。到一个你能重新沐浴阳光的地方去吧。”

深深的吸气声。他朝那个方向走了一步，靴子踩在硬木地板上不

There were sharp intakes of breath. He took a step in that direction, his boots silent on the hard wood floor. "Don't hide."

"But I don't want to," Veronica said. There was pain in her voice, an agony and fear. "I want to live. Please Thacery. We always Hunted together. We were friends."

"We are friends," Thacery's voice was smooth and silky. It was comforting, but Veronica heard the menace in it.

"Come on Veronica. Friends don't hide from friends."

"Will it hurt?" she asked.

"I won't let it. I'll put you to rest gently."

"I'm scared."

"Don't be. You've fought well in life. Go towards eternal day. Come here." Thacery removed a stake from his pocket.

"God, I'm so afraid Thacery. I'm alone."

"I'm your friend, and I'm right in front of you."

Veronica shuddered, then made up her mind. She leapt forward and threw herself into Thacery's arms. He enveloped her and she felt safe. She remembered how strong and ruthless he had always been, but with her he had been gentle.

He wouldn't hurt her. They would...

Her thoughts ended in a flash of pain. She screamed as he brutally stabbed her. The pain was as real as it would have been if she was Mortal, and he had missed the heart.

She fell down screaming. She felt him lean over her and raise his arm to finish her off.

"Thacery!" she screamed. "No!" She sobbed wildly. "It's me! Your Veronica!"

He stopped for a moment and looked her in the eye. She could see him through the darkness. "Veronica was murdered two nights ago by Vampires. You are only a thing wearing her face, masking the creature you really are."

"NO!" she screamed, but he plunged the stake deep into her chest. He felt her blood on his hands and then the stake fell forward as the body it had been pushed into turned to dust.

发出一丝声响，“别躲开。”

“但我不想死，”维罗妮卡道，语气中带有痛苦和恐惧，“我想活下去，求求你，萨克雷，过去我们总是一道去打猎，我们过去是朋友呀。”

“我们现在也是朋友。”萨克雷的声音柔滑流畅，非常让人宽慰，但维罗妮卡听出了其中的敌意。

“来吧，维罗妮卡，朋友之间是不相互躲藏的。”

“死的时候疼吗？”她问道。

“我不会让你疼的，我会轻轻地让你安息。”

“我害怕。”

“不用害怕，你活着的时候战斗得很勇敢。走向永恒吧。到这儿来。”萨克雷从口袋里拿出一根木桩。

“天哪，我害怕极了，萨克雷，我太孤单了。”

“我是你的朋友，就在你面前。”

维罗妮卡浑身颤抖了一下，接着就下了决心。她向前一跳，投入了萨克雷的怀抱。他完全抱住了她的身体，她感到安全了。她想起了他一直是那么的强大，那么的残忍无情，但对待她，他一直是很温文尔雅的。

他不会伤害她，他们才会……

一瞬间剧痛袭来，结束了她的思绪。他残忍地用木桩刺她的身体，她大声尖叫起来。这痛是真切感受到的，正如她还是一个凡人时，能感受到的那样。他没有刺中心脏。

她尖叫着倒地了。她感到他正俯身下来，抬起手臂来最终结果她。

“萨克雷！”她尖叫着，“不！”她猛烈地呜咽着，“是我！我是你的维罗妮卡！”

他停了一下，眼睛直愣愣地盯着她的双眼。透过黑暗她看得见他。“维罗妮卡在两晚之前就被吸血鬼谋杀了，你只不过戴着她的面具，掩盖着自己真实面目而已。”

“不！”她大叫起来，他把木桩深深地插入她的胸膛。他感到手

He stood up, and replaced the stake and quite calmly went to the door.

He returned to his Order headquarters, deep in the back streets of London.

"THACERY!"ALEX CALLED OUT. "There you are. Sir Charles wants you. Where've you been?"

"Taking care of Veronica," Thacery answered.

"What?" Alex asked. There was fear in his eyes. "Veronica? But..." His eyes clouded with tears, something not usually seen in a hunter's face. "She died two nights ago."

"They created her. I finished her off."

He had turned to stride away.

"Don't you dare walk away from me!" Alex spat. "Veronica worked with us. She was our friend. How could you do that to her?"

"She was a Vampire," Thacery answered emotionlessly. He faced around and stared at Alex, hard. His gaze was intimidating and cruel.

Alex could swear that the man wasn't human. There were only two beings in this world that could intimidate him, Sir Charles and Thacery. Otherwise he could handle it.

"THERE YOU ARE. SIT down Thacery. I need to go over something delicate with you," Sir Charles said.

Thacery took a seat in one of Sir Charles's leather armchairs. He had to admit that the Vampire Hunting didn't stop Sir Charles from being stylish. The Order organization was incalculably rich. Sir Charles took advantage of it.

A mere hunter, seeker, or keeper had never seen Sir Charles's bedroom. Only his outer chambers were accessible to most. The room he would hold meetings in was quite large. In one corner there were expensive leather armchairs facing each other. There was a plush carpet on the floor, colored a deep wine-red. He had

上沾上了她的血，随着被木桩刺中的身体化成了尘土，那木桩向前甩了出去。

他站起身，把木桩放回口袋，十分平静地向门口走去。

他回到了位于伦敦小街深处的灭妖会总部。

“萨克雷！”亚力克斯喊着，“终于找到你了，查尔斯爵士在找你，你到哪儿去了？”

“去处理维罗妮卡了。”萨克雷答道。

“什么？”亚力克斯问道。他两眼闪着恐惧。“维罗妮卡？但是……”他的双眼已满是泪水，在猎人的脸上这是不多见的，“她两个晚上以前就死了呀。”

“它们把她变成了吸血鬼，我把她杀了。”

他转过身，大步走开了。

“你敢从我这里走开！”亚力克斯愤怒地说，“维罗妮卡一直与我们合作，是我们的朋友，你怎么能这样对待她？”

“她是一个吸血鬼。”萨克雷不动声色地说。他转过脸，眼睛狠狠地瞪着亚力克斯。这带着威胁的眼神非常残忍。

亚力克斯可以发誓说，这个人没有人性。这个世界上只有两个人可以威迫他，查尔斯爵士和萨克雷。其他人他都可以对付。

“是你啊。坐下，萨克雷，我想与你讨论一些微妙的事情。”查尔斯爵士说。

萨克雷在查尔斯爵士的皮扶手椅上坐下。他得承认，猎杀吸血鬼的行当并没有使查尔斯爵士失去品位和格调。灭妖会这个组织是很富有的，查尔斯爵士正是利用了这一点。

一个小小的猎手、搜查员或管理员是从没有见过查尔斯爵士的卧室的。大多数人只见过他的外室。这是他举行会议的房间，非常宽敞。在一个角落里，面对面摆放着一对昂贵的皮扶手椅。地板上铺着豪华

a few decorative pieces around the room, like an old grandfather clock in a corner, slowly ticking away. In the center of the room was a dark, coffee-colored table that gleamed in the low light. The lights in Sir Charles's rooms were permanently dim. There were ten chairs surrounding the table, where Sir Charles would talk with his most trusted hunters and seekers.

Once a plan was formulated Sir Charles would dismiss his special 'board' to carry out and lead the Order. Sir Charles never personally dealt with Vampires or fought anymore. He was long past keeper retirement age. He just made the plans and gave the orders.

Sir Charles was well groomed with a thin moustache and silver/gray hair. His eyes were light blue and piercing. When he was younger it was said he was the most notorious hunter the Order had ever had. He was famous for playing with Vampires before the kill. He tortured them with hideous instruments of his own design. But those days were long gone.

Now he stood by his fireplace, the flames crackling. It was the only sound in the stillness of the room. "Thacery," he said, "you are the man for the job. What would you think of a Head betraying her branch of the Order and selling her own hunters to Vampires?"

"I would think that I'd like to crush her with my own hands."

"Right answer," Sir Charles remarked and stared at Thacery. "Exactly what I wanted to hear, Thacery."

"Always one to please."

"Well, Thacery," Sir Charles said, "Read this report that Miss Nicola Kingsley sent to all the branches. Tell me what you think of it."

He leant down and picked up a sheaf of clean white paper. He straightened out the pile then handed it to Thacery. Thacery took the smooth, expensive paper between his fingers and held it out in front of him. He squinted in the dim light.

He read the document, taking his time as Sir Charles poured himself a glass of brandy and sipped it slowly.

地毯，深酒红色。室内有一些装饰品。比如一个角落里摆放着一座老爷钟，慢悠悠地滴答滴答走着。卧室正中央是一张深咖啡色的桌子，在微暗的光线中闪着光。查尔斯爵士的房间永远是昏暗的。桌子四周是十把椅子。在这里，查尔斯爵士常常与他最贴心的猎手和搜索员密谈。

计划一旦制订，他就会让他的特别“董事会”去执行，并领导这个灭妖会。查尔斯不再亲自与吸血鬼打交道或与它们交战了，他早已过了管理员退休的年纪了，他只是制订计划，发号施令。

查尔斯爵士留着淡淡的胡须，头发银灰，很是精神。他的眼睛呈浅蓝色，目光十分锐利。据说，他年轻时是灭妖会历史上最有名的猎手。他的名声在于杀死吸血鬼之前，他总要玩弄一下吸血鬼。他会用自己发明的那一套恐怖的工具来折磨吸血鬼，但这是很久以前的事了。

这会儿他站在炉火边，蹿动的火苗噼啪作响。这是寂静的房间里唯一的声响。“萨克雷，”他说道，“你是能胜任这个工作的。一个灭妖分会会长出卖自己的组织并把她手下的猎手出卖给吸血鬼。对此，你如何看呢？”

“我真想亲手灭了她。”

“说得好，”查尔斯爵士说，眼睛盯着萨克雷，“这是我想听的，萨克雷。”

“乐意为您效力。”

“这样吧，萨克雷，”查尔斯爵士说，“这是尼古拉·金士莱小姐向所有的灭妖分会发出的报告，好好看看，告诉我你的想法。”

他俯下身去，拾起一叠干净的白纸。他把纸理整齐，递给萨克雷。萨克雷接过这光滑、昂贵的纸，放到自己的面前。在昏暗的光线中，他眯着眼看起来。

他慢悠悠地读着这个文件，而查尔斯爵士则给自己倒了一杯白兰地，慢慢品尝着。

他放下文件，记着里面的细节和名字：尼古拉·金士莱，美国灭妖分会的头；拉恩·纳伊特，臭名昭著的吸血鬼猎手；凯瑟琳·克里

He put the papers down, memorizing the details and the names: Nicola Kingsley, the Head of the American branch, Ryan Knight, the infamous Vampire hunter, Catherine Christensen, she seemed deeply involved in the incident, Irmentis, Ashtearthy, Illena, the Three, Persephone, the Immortal Whore, and Ishtar, the Mortal that had been such a threat.

Two were not important. Persephone was dead and Ishtar was apparently no longer an issue. He would keep their names in mind, but there were more significant people to think about.

“Well, what do you think of this **report**?” Sir Charles said the word with venom in his voice, making his own thoughts quite clear.

“Seems a little dodgy.”

“And do you know what I want you to do about it?” Sir Charles asked.

“Take care of it.” Thacery studied his hands for a moment, realizing Veronica’s blood was still on them. “How exactly? And who?”

“Well, obviously the three Vampires. If America can’t deal with them, England will have to, for the sake of us all.”

“And Miss Kingsley? Mr. Knight? Miss Christensen?”

“Well, they’re humans, but if they’ve given themselves to Vampires, they should be dealt with. I don’t see Miss Christensen as a problem. She hasn’t had a close interaction with the Three. She is just a hunter following orders. The Head should be eliminated, and this halfling.” Sir Charles said ‘halfling’ with disgust in his voice.

“I see,” Thacery said. “But have you talked to the other branches? Or are we acting alone?”

Sir Charles scoffed. “Everyone’s afraid of the Americans,” he said. “No, we’re going to do this, and they’ll thank us later.”

“Who should be the new Head? We’ll need someone in power right away or things will get out of hand.”

“You temporarily hold the reins of power and decide who