



By Kelly Cha



青春近照

中国女孩看美国

查可欣 著

一个中国女孩在美国及其他
西方国家的真实体验
THROUGH
THE EYES OF A
CHINESE GIRL
LOOKING AT AMERICA

天津人民出版社

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序

查可欣同学的这本书，是她同龄人中的一个奇迹。

即使在我们成人，这也是一个了不起的成就。我自己曾在八十年代中期留学美国，正是书中所写的那一段日子。多少昨天故事和情绪记忆，正欲忘去，忽然读到此书，又被一一勾起，好像旧友重逢，让我不时掩卷长思。我与这本书的作者查可欣小友素昧平生，却竟有一种他乡遇故知的惊喜。通过这本书，我仿佛曾与她深交长谈，仿佛进入了她的世界，为她在美国的辛酸喜乐动情不已。因为那也曾是我的辛酸喜乐，而我却没能像查可欣那样，真实准确而又带着孩童情趣把它们写下来。

国内近年来由我们这些“大人”写成的反映留学生生活的作品日见其多，但多数与“小留学生”查可欣的这部作品一比，顿时显得如此苍白幼稚令人汗颜，不是英文没有过关，就是肤浅到观光游记的水平，更有的作品根本就是在瞎编。完全没有进入美国社会，更谈不到了解西方文化。再看看这部书！全书英汉对照，其英语部分文通字畅，口语道地，非“童子功”是达不到的。而汉语部分又绝非单纯直译，看得出重新写过的匠心。最难得的，还是这本书的真实，不加修饰的真实，以孩子的奇特经历、敏锐观察和独到眼光所构成的真实，我们这些成人作者是无论如何模仿不来，比拟不了的。

我的职业要求我是一个“星探”，我的天赋使我对有特殊才能的人有着特殊的嗅觉——即使在他们尚默默无闻的时候。当

然，更有着一份特殊的敬意。

亲爱的读者朋友，请相信我的话：查可欣是这些奇才中的一个。我相信这个女孩的能量和才华不仅于这本小书。我期待在未来更多地看到和听到查可欣这个名字。

英 达

一九九六年五月

于深圳

自序

身边有很多朋友看到我十八岁就在写“回忆录”或“我的前半生”这样的书，都觉得有几分惊讶。事实上我早在十四岁时就已经开始“回忆”了。说回忆是真的。在美国时我并没有写日记的习惯，因此书中的每一个片段、每一个点滴都是我记忆宝库中余存的信息。其中有的更清晰，有的稍模糊，但真实是相同的。

有时我自己也会觉得很奇怪，竟然花了整整四年的时间写出四年的生活经历。几度想放弃出书念头的我终于能够在今天与你分享我童年的每个并不完美但又不失美丽的梦。这些年，我感觉自己在幻想与现实间周旋，在痛苦与快乐间挣扎，逐渐地踏上正螺旋曲线，辗转地向未知的终点趋近。

今天的我做着许多力所能及抑或不能及的事情。在南开大学国经系的学业并不算繁重，经济于我有着一股微妙的吸引。而对外文系二学位的攻读也使我的英语得以脱离我经常说的“美国小学六年级水平”。电台的工作占据了我几近全部的业余时间，偶尔会感到自己已经快要成为一个 full-time DJ 了，一周几次直播也使那里成为我的另一个“家”。主持人是一份很有神秘感的工作，它带给我无限欢愉和满足，虽然并非一帆风顺。

和朋友聊天时常感到充实的辛苦。我会怀念起原先属于自己的那片无拘无束的小小天空，在生命的进行与追寻中，我离它越来越远。而朋友则会突然告诉我，你从去美国的那天起就已经放弃了那片小天地了，现在的你只能在更高更广更蓝中继续疲

急的翱翔。

美国的生活使我得到也失去了许多。在这本书中想带给你的不过是一些真实的体验。那个国家对于成人与幼子，对于来自世界各地的“老外”绝不是某些同胞眼中的天堂。物质和精神上的双重享受是难以同时拥有的。然而人们关注的往往只是留学生生活中的酸甜苦辣，“小留学生”生活中的绚烂色彩却鲜为人知。希望我的这些经历能够填补朋友们心中的一些空白。

孩子眼里的世界应该是缺乏任何修饰的，在这里我想做的只是发自内心的倾诉。

最后我要特别感谢为我写序的英达先生，感谢我亲爱的母亲，感谢每一位给我帮助和关心的朋友，感谢每一位为这本书付出努力的人——当然包括我自己，thank you Kelly.

也要真心真意地谢谢你。Merci beaucoup.

查可欣

一九九六年五月

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BOO!!! —TRICK-OR-TREAT!!!

1

Ten days after my arrival in the United States was Halloween. But I didn't know that then. As you can see, I spent my first Halloween in a very strange and funny way.

It all started when my mom told me that I was going to a party at our landlady's granddaughter, JH's school. I didn't know much English then, so I didn't really want to go. I was afraid that I'd make a big fool of myself. Which I did. But that's an afterword. I went there anyway, despite my awful feeling, since my parents urged me, and said it'd be a good chance for me to learn more English. JH's mother, JG, had been taking Chinese lessons for quite a while, and she was going with us, which made me feel better. I guess my parents were nervous about my going without them, so before I left, they taught me two very important words: water and bathroom. On our way to the school, I kept on repeating the words silently so I wouldn't forget them and get myself into serious trouble.

JH's school was big. The party was held in the cafeteria. I recall that it more or less resembled a European coffee shop, with

little round tables and wooden chairs. There was a banner saying "Happy Halloween" with a big exclamation mark at the end. The room was decorated with balloons and streamers. It looked fabulous, almost too pretty for words. Yet, it all seemed so foreign to me, and I felt a bit uneasy. The atmosphere was peaceful at first. But as kids started filing in, the room became a bustling place, a feeling of joy and excitement filled the air. And no wonder everyone was so excited, there were games everywhere. There was a ring-tossing contest, a horseback riding contest (outside), even a haunted house and much more. Never having seen anything like it in China, I was fascinated. There seemed to be a lot going on inside the small strange-looking house. Being a kid then, I thought it looked like a lot of fun, so though I had absolutely no idea what on earth was in there, I let JH take me into the haunted house.

The room was nearly pitch dark. As I squinted my eyes to adjust to the dim light, I made out a figure standing close by, hovering over us. Oh, my goodness, it was Count Dracula. And those teeth. Then a blood-curdling scream ripped through the air as a headless woman stumbled towards us. We showed our good manners and moved aside to let her pass. After that, we were both pretty careful at avoiding trolls, ghosts and goblins. But the Frankenstein really scared us. That big thing jumped out of nowhere and threw a handful of candy at us. JH and I bent down to pick them up and saw a lot of these little black creatures on the floor with eight legs that could only be spiders. As we rushed toward the exit, the candy we'd left behind was about the

farthest thing on our minds. Then I stepped on something. It was kind of soft, but hard too, if that makes any sense. I made the great mistake of looking down. A bloody lifeless body sprawled at my feet. I had stepped on his hand. That did it. I scrambled out the door with JH at my heels. When we finally got out of that horrible place, we both fell into chairs nearby to catch our breaths.

I was just beginning to regain my composure when I felt a need for the lavatory. Suddenly, I realized I couldn't remember the word for "bathroom". A wave of panic swept past me, but then I gleefully remembered that JG had learned Chinese. She should know, I assured myself. I tried my luck. This couldn't be happening: JG looked every bit as puzzled as anyone else. I was a little angry. That was a very important word! Since she'd learned Chinese, well, I was sure that she must have learned it before. (I kind of forgot that I had also learned the word, but forgot it just because I had gone through the haunted house.) The point was, you don't go around forgetting words of such importance!!! JG, seeing that I was trying to tell her something really important (she could probably sense it), looked at me questioningly. I told her again. I swear her ears stood up as I said the word. Staring at her expectantly, I started a small daydream of despair, thinking maybe the next minute she'd suddenly realize what I meant, jump up, drag me there, blaming herself for forgetting such an important part of her vocabulary. The blank face that she greeted me with dragged me back to reality. I felt desperate. What should I do?

Then, suddenly, JG did jump up, but she ran out the door, leaving everyone bewildered, especially me. All that came to my mind was that even if she didn't understand me, she shouldn't abandon me. JH and I exchanged troubled looks. Though we couldn't communicate through words, I knew we were wondering the same thing: Where did JG go? As we were just about to run out and search for her about two minutes after her "disappearance", JG came running over, carrying a big book. A dictionary!!! How come I never thought about the dictionaries that she kept in her car all the time? I didn't need to be told, just grabbed the dictionary and looked the word up. What happened after that was almost exactly the way I had imagined. She practically dragged me to the ladies' room. A look of relief swept across her face. I suddenly felt hot in the face. Not only was JH and some of her friends looking on, but a lot of other perfect strangers also saw my embarrassing experience. I truly succeeded in making a big fool of myself. Splendid.

Well, now as I look back on it, it seemed kind of ridiculous of me to think that the others would laugh their heads off over the incident. Sure, it was funny, even I thought so, but they all knew that I didn't know much English, so I'm sure that none of them would sell it as an idea for some comedy. It was unnecessary for me to worry. But I did learn my own lesson, and that was: no matter how scared you are, you should never forget the most important words in your vocabulary.

That was my very first Halloween.

Compared with my first Halloween, my second was a fairly sad one with some painful memories. It was also embarrassing, but in quite a different way.

I was in School B at the time. There was going to be a parade on Halloween afternoon and everyone was expected to participate. In their costumes, of course. It was a short notice and Mom barely made it by whipping something up for me the night before the parade. To tell you the truth, I didn't like it all that much, it was hardly what you'd call a real costume. I was to wear my fancy party dress as a princess's gown. Mom made a crown and a wand out of red construction paper to wrap it up. The wand wouldn't stay straight, so she stuck a chopstick inside. That was pretty clever and it wasn't all that bad looking, but somehow, at that age, I just didn't like its contents. So the next day, when one of my closest friends complimented my wand, I told her in a complaining voice what was inside. To my horror, one rich, and not-so-nice girl, overheard (I'm not sure if she was eavesdropping or what) and laughed out loud. By the end of the day, practically every single person in the school knew that my wand was made with a chopstick. Some of them made a perfectly normal thing humiliating. It bothered me so much that I skipped trick-or-treating that night and also the next entire Halloween.

I thought that I would never again have the chance to enjoy that special holiday like all the other children.

Time flew by fast. Three years passed in a flash. I became a big girl (at least that's what I'd thought then) who knew her English well. If someone reminded me that it was only three years before when I didn't even know the most important word used in everyday American English, I would probably say he was putting me on (I guess the story didn't get out after all).

My fourth Halloween in America arrived. School D was holding a costume contest, and as always, I didn't even think about entering. It seemed none of my business. I guess the experience of two years before still left a sore spot. But for some reason, I mentioned it ever so casually at dinner one night. Our housemate, JM, enthusiastically asked me what I was going to be. What was I going to be? Just what I'd always been. Nothing. I told her so.

"Nothing?" JM inquired, her green eyes open wide. "Honey, you can't be nothing. You're only, what, eleven?" I nodded. I had just had my birthday ten days before. "Well, DM's going to be a little monster. Kelly, I'll help you make a costume. Even if you don't win a prize, you'll have fun going trick-or-treating with him." (DM is her son. A cute little boy about five, a little monster at times.) It was the first I'd heard of having to take DM trick-or-treating. In America, sixth graders who took little kids out with them were considered dorky. I didn't need to add that to my reputation among the girls at school. Who knew