

美丽英文系列丛书

多彩的人生

LIVE A COLORFUL LIFE

本书所选英语短篇小说，皆为经典传世之作。几乎覆盖了世界上每位文学巨匠的代表作品，融学术性、知识性和趣味性为一体。

励志美文 英汉对照

余平姣◎编著

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What Courage Looks Like?

I know what courage looks like. I saw it on a flight I took six years ago, and only now can I speak of it without tears filling eyes at the memory.

When our L1011 left the Orlando airport that Friday morning, we were a chipper, high-energy group. The early-morning flights hosted mainly professional people going to Atlanta for a day or two of business. As I looked around, I saw lots of designer suites, CEO-caliber haircuts, leather briefcases and all the **trimmings** of seasoned business travelers. I settled back for some light reading and the brief flight ahead.

Immediately upon takeoff, it was clear that something was amiss. The aircraft was bumping up and down and jerking left to right. All the experienced travelers, including me, looked around with knowing grins. Our communal looks acknowledged to one another that we had experienced **minor** problems and disturbances before. If you fly much, you see these things and learn to act blase about them.

We did not remain blase for long. Minutes after we were airborne, our plane began dipping wildly and one wing lunged downward. The plane climbed higher but that didn't help. It didn't. The pilot soon made a grave announcement.

"We are having some difficulties," he said. "At this time, it appears we have

no nose-wheel steering. Our indicators show that our hydraulic system has failed. We will be returning to the Orlando airport at this time. Because of the lack of **hydraulics**, we are not sure our landing gear will lock, so the flight attendants will prepare you for a **bumpy** landing. Also, if you look out the windows, you will see that we are dumping fuel from the airplane. We want to have as little on board as possible in the event of a rough touchdown. "In other words, we were about to crash. No sight has ever been so sobering as that fuel, hundreds of gallons of it, streaming past my window out of the plane's tanks. The flight attendants helped people get into position and comforted those who were already hysterical.

As I looked at the faces of my fellow business travelers, I was stunned by the changes I saw in their faces. Many looked visibly frightened now. Even the most stoic looked grim and ashen. Yes, their faces actually looked gray in color, something I'd never seen before. There was not one exception. No one faces death without fear, I thought. Everyone lost composure in one way or another.

I began searching the crowd for one person who felt peace and calm that true courage or great faith gives people in these events. I saw no one. Then a couple of rows to my left, I heard a still calm voice, a woman's voice, speaking in an absolutely normal conversational tone. There was no tremor or tension. It was a lovely, even tone. I had to find the source of this voice.

All around, people cried. Many wailed and screamed. A few of the men hold onto their composure by gripping armrests and clenching teeth, but their fear was written all over them. Although my faith kept me from hysteria, I could not have spoken so calmly, so sweetly at this moment as the assuring voice I heard.

Finally I saw her.

In the midst of all the chaos, a mother was talking, just talking, to her child. The woman, in her mid-30's and unremarkable looking in any other way, was staring full into the face of her daughter, who looked to be four years old. The child listened closely, sensing the importance of her mother's words. The mother's gaze held the child so fixed and intent that she seemed untouched by the sounds of grief and fear around her.

A picture flashed into my mind of another little girl who had recently survived a terrible plane crash. Speculation had it that she had lived because her mother had **strapped** her own body over the little girl's in order to protect her. The mother did not survive. The newspapers had been tracking how the little girl had been treated by **psychologists** for weeks afterward to ward off feelings of guilt and unworthiness that often haunt **survivors**. The child was told over and over again that it had not been her fault that her mommy had gone away. I hoped this situation would not end the same way.

I strained to hear what this mother was telling her child. I was compelled to hear. I need to hear. Finally, I leaned over and by some miracle could hear this soft, sure voice with the tone of reassurance. Over and over again, the mother said, "I love you so much. Do you know for sure that I love you more than anything?"

"Yes, Mommy," the little girl said.

"And remember, no matter what happens, that I love you always. And that you are a good girl. Sometimes things happen that are not your fault. You are still a good girl and my love will always be with you."

Then the mother put her body over her daughter's, strapped the seat belt over both of them and prepared to crash. For no earthly reason, our landing gear held and our touchdown was not the **tragedy** it seemed destined to be. It was over in seconds.

The voice I heard that day never wavered, never acknowledged doubt, and maintained an evenness that seemed emotionally and physically impossible. Not one of us hardened business people could have spoken without a tremoring voice.

Only the greatest courage, undergirded by even greater love, could have borne that mother up and lifted her above the chaos around her. That mom showed me what a real hero looks like. And for those few minutes, I heard the voice of courage.



热词空间

trimming n.整理、修剪、装饰、点缀物、装饰物、修剪下来的东西

西、诈骗、击败、殴打

minor n.未成年人、副修科目

a.较小的、二流的、未成年的

hydraulics n.水力学

bumpy a.颠簸的、崎岖不平的

strapped a.用皮绳捆住的、用皮带装饰的、身无分文的

psychologist n.心理学家

survivor n.生还者、幸存者

tragedy n.悲剧、惨案、悲剧作品



真正的勇气

我知道真正的勇气是什么样子了，是6年前在一架航班上见识的。仅仅到了现在，凭记忆述说这件事的时候，我才不致热泪盈眶。

那个星期五的早上，当L1011航班飞离奥兰多机场的时候，我们这群人是穿着入时、精神抖擞的。清晨航班搭载的主要是前往亚特兰大出差一两天的职业人士。向四周打量一下，看到的多是品牌西装、标准经理人式发型、皮质公文包以及老练的商务旅行者用的各种装束。我身子往后一靠，准备轻轻松松读点什么，度过时下这短暂的飞行。

刚起飞，就分明让人感到出了什么差错。飞机上下颠簸，左右摇晃。有出门经验的人，连我在内，都四下环顾着，会心地笑了。大伙儿的表情在告诉彼此，像这样的小麻烦和混乱我们以前都遇到过。如果你飞机坐多了，这类事情见多了，也就学会对此无动于衷了。

但是，我们这次可没无动于衷多久。在空中飞行才几分钟，飞机就一只机翼朝下，开始疯了似地下坠。尽管飞机爬高了些，但无济于事，一点用都没有。飞行员很快就严肃地向乘客作了通报。

“我们现在遇到了麻烦，”他说。“目前看来前轮转向装置已经坏了。指示器显示，液压系统失灵。我们得返回奥兰多机场。因为没有液压装置，所以不能肯定起落架能不能固定得住。乘务人员将帮助你们做好着陆时防冲击的准备。还

有,你们看一下窗外,就会看见我们正在把飞机上的燃油倒掉。我们想尽量减轻飞机的负荷,以应对着陆时的颠簸。”也就是说,我们就要坠机了。从飞机油箱里倒出的几百加仑燃油在我眼前的舷窗外飞流直下,没有比这种景象更能让人清醒的了。乘务人员帮助大家做好防冲击姿势,还尽力安慰那些已经歇斯底里的人们。

我看了一下这些出公差的旅伴们,大吃一惊地发现他们已经神情突变。此时许多人显然吓坏了。甚至那些最泰然自若的人也显得表情严肃、面如土色。没错,他们的脸色实际上看起来发灰,这种脸色我可从来没见过。在场的没有一个例外。面对死神谁都会害怕的,我暗自思忖。每个人都这般或那般地失态。

我的目光在人群中扫过,看看有没有人,在这种形势下,仰赖其真正的勇气和伟大的信仰,依然能保持沉着冷静,但是没发现一个。后来,在左边几排远的地方,我听到了一个从容依旧的声音,一位女性的声音。语调绝对正常,就像普通聊天一样,既没有颤抖也没有紧张,而是一种悦耳、平静的语调。我想弄清这声音是谁发出的。

四周都有人在哭。许多人号啕着,尖叫着。几个男人死死抓住座位扶手,咬紧牙关,竭力保持镇静,但是浑身上下却透出了惶恐。尽管我的信仰使自己没有失控,但是此刻却怎么也做不到像听到的那个暖人的声音那样,那么镇定,那么温柔。

最后,我看到了她。

在一片混乱中,一位母亲正在说话,一个劲儿地对着自己的孩子说话。这位妇女 35 岁左右的样子,无论怎么看都貌不出众。她正目不转睛地注视着女儿的脸,女儿看起来有 4 岁了。孩子察觉到了母亲话的分量,正在全神贯注地听。母亲凝视的目光让孩子听得聚精会神,似乎一点也不为周围人们哀伤和惊恐的声音所动。

我脑子里闪现出另一个小姑娘的形象,她是最近一场空难的幸存者。据推测,她之所以能活下来,全亏了母亲用安全带把她们捆在一起,把她压在身下保护了她。母亲却没能活下来。报纸用几个星期的时间追踪报道了事后心理医

生对她的治疗。治疗的目的是驱除常常困扰幸存者的负罪感和自卑感。医生一遍又一遍地告诉小女孩,母亲丧命并非她的过错。但愿眼前这事不要出现这种结局。

我竭力想听清眼前这位母亲在告诉孩子些什么。我身不由己,也需要听一听。终于,侧过身去,奇妙得很,我居然听清了这温柔而自信的声音,那语调是那么让人宽心。母亲一遍遍地说:“我十分爱你。你相信我爱你胜过一切吗?”

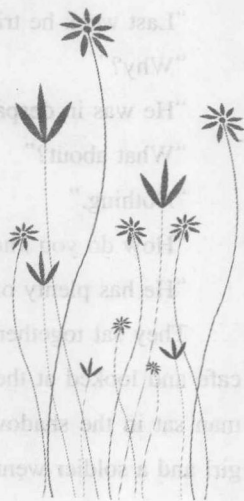
“是的,妈妈,”小姑娘答道。

“记住,不管发生什么事情,我永远爱你。你是个好孩子。有时出事不是你的过错,你还是好孩子。我的爱将永远与你伴随。”

接着,母亲便伏身遮住女儿,把座位上的安全带系在两个人身上,等待空难的降临。如有神助一般,我们的起落架居然挺住了。原本似乎注定的着陆惨剧却没有发生。一切都在几秒钟内结束了。

那天我听的那个声音没有丝毫的动摇,没有流露出半点犹豫。它拥有一份无论从感情上还是从身体上来讲都令人难以置信的平和。我们这些饱经世事的买卖人当时没有一个说话声音不打颤的。

只有最伟大的勇气,再加上更博大的爱心的支撑,才使这位母亲挺住了,超然于周围的混乱之上。这位母亲让我见识了什么是真正的英雄本色。在那几分钟内,我听到的是勇敢发出的声音。



A Clean, Well-Lighted Place

It was very late and everyone had left the cafe except an old man who sat in the shadow the leaves of the tree made against the **electric** light. In the day time the street was dusty, but at night the dew settled the dust and the old man liked to sit late because he was deaf and now at night it was quiet and he felt the difference. The two waiters inside the cafe knew that the old man was a little drunk, and while he was a good client they knew that if he became too drunk he would leave without paying, so they kept watch on him.

“Last week he tried to commit suicide.” one waiter said.

“Why?”

“He was in **despair**.”

“What about?”

“Nothing.”

“How do you know it was nothing?”

“He has plenty of money.”

They sat together at a table that was close against the wall near the door of the cafe and looked at the terrace where the tables were all empty except where the old man sat in the shadow of the leaves of the tree that moved slightly in the wind. A girl and a soldier went by in the street. The street light shone on the brass number on

his collar. The girl wore no head covering and hurried beside him.

"The guard will pick him up," one waiter said.

"What does it matter if he gets what he's after?"

"He had better get off the street now. The guard will get him. They went by five minutes ago."

The old man **sitting** in the shadow rapped on his saucer with his glass. The younger waiter went over to him.

"What do you want?"

The old man looked at him. "Another brandy," he said.

"You'll be drunk," the waiter said. The old man looked at him. The waiter went away.

"He'll stay all night," he said to his colleague, "I'm sleepy now. I never get into bed before three o'clock. He should have killed himself last week."

The waiter took the brandy bottle and another saucer from the counter inside the cafe and marched out to the old man's table. He put down the saucer and poured the glass full of brandy.

"You should have killed yourself last week," he said to the deaf man. The old man **motioned** with his finger, "A little more," he said. The waiter poured on into the glass so that the brandy slopped over and ran down the stem into the top saucer of the pile. "Thank you," the old man said. The waiter took the bottle back inside the cafe. He sat down at the table with his colleague again.

"He's drunk now," he said.

"He's drunk every night."

"What did he want to kill himself for?"

"How should I know."

"How did he do it?"

"He hung himself with a rope."

"Who cut him down?"

"His niece."

"Why did they do it?"

"Fear for his soul."

"How much money has he got?" "He's got plenty."

"He must be eighty years old."

"Anyway I should say he was eighty."

"I wish he would go home. I never get to bed before three o'clock. What kind of hour is that to go to bed?"

"He stays up because he likes it."

"He's lonely. I'm not lonely. I have a wife waiting in bed for me."

"He had a wife once too."

"A wife would be no good to him now."

"You can't tell. He might be better with a wife."

"His niece looks after him. You said she cut him down."

"I know." "I wouldn't want to be that old. An old man is a nasty thing."

"Not always. This old man is clean. He drinks without spilling. Even now, drunk. Look at him."

"I don't want to look at him. I wish he would go home. He has no regard for those who must work."

The old man looked from his glass across the square, then over at the waiters.

"Another brandy," he said, pointing to his glass. The waiter who was in a hurry came over.

"Finished," he said, speaking with that omission of syntax stupid people employ when talking to drunken people or foreigners. "No more tonight. Close now."

"Another," said the old man.

"No. Finished." The waiter wiped the edge of the table with a towel and shook his head.

The old man stood up, slowly counted the saucers, took a leather coin purse from his pocket and paid for the drinks, leaving half a peseta tip. The waiter watched him go down the street, a very old man walking unsteadily but with dignity.

"Why didn't you let him stay and drink?" the unhurried waiter asked. They were putting up the shutters. "It is not half-past two."

“I want to go home to bed.”

“What is an hour?”

“More to me than to him.”

“An hour is the same.”

“You talk like an old man yourself. He can buy a bottle and drink at home.”

“It’s not the same.”

“No, it is not,” agreed the waiter with a wife. He did not wish to be unjust. He was only in a hurry.

“And you? You have no fear of going home before your usual hour?”

“Are you trying to **insult** me?”

“No, hombre, only to make a joke.”

“No,” the waiter who was in a hurry said, rising from pulling down the metal **shutters**. “I have confidence. I am all confidence.”

“You have youth, confidence, and a job,” the older waiter said. “You have everything.”

“And what do you lack?”

“Everything but work.”

“You have everything I have.”

“No. I have never had confidence and I am not young.”

“Come on. Stop talking nonsense and lock up.”

“I am of those who like to stay late at the cafe,” the older waiter said. “With all those who do not want to go to bed. With all those who need a light for the night.”

“I want to go home and into bed.”

“We are of two different kinds,” the older waiter said. He was now dressed to go home. “It is not only a question of youth and confidence although those things are very beautiful. Each night I am reluctant to close up because there may be some one who needs the cafe.”

“Hombre, there are bodegas open all night long.”

“You do not understand. This is a clean and pleasant cafe. It is well lighted. The light is very good and also, now, there are shadows of the leaves.”

“Good night.” said the younger waiter.

“Good night.” the other said. Turning off the electric light he continued the conversation with himself, It was the light of course but it is necessary that the place be clean and pleasant. You do not want music. Certainly you do not want music. Nor can you stand before a bar with dignity although that is all that is provided for these hours. What did he fear? It was not a fear or dread, It was a nothing that he knew too well. It was all a nothing and a man was a nothing too. It was only that and light was all it needed and a certain cleanness and order. Some lived in it and never felt it but he knew it all was nada y pues nada y nada y pues nada. Our nada who art in nada, nada be thy name thy **kingdom** nada thy will be nada in nada as it is in nada. Give us this nada our daily nada and nada us our nada as we nada our nadas and nada us not into nada but deliver us from nada; pues nada. Hail nothing full of nothing, nothing is with thee. He smiled and stood before a bar with a shining steam pressure coffee machine.

“What’s yours?” asked the barman.

“Nada.”

“Otro loco mas,” said the barman and turned away.

“A little cup,” said the waiter.

The barman poured it for him.

“The light is very bright and pleasant but the bar is unpolished,” the waiter said.

The barman looked at him but did not answer. It was too late at night for conversation.

“You want another copita?” the barman asked.

“No, thank you,” said the waiter and went out. He disliked bars and bodegas. A clean, well-lighted cafe was a very different thing. Now, without thinking further, he would go home to his room. He would lie in the bed and finally, with daylight, he would go to sleep. After all, he said to himself, it’s probably only insomnia. Many must have it.