

Challenge

第一章/生活故事



1. My Mother's Beauty

对于一个孩子来说 母亲的美并不体现在通常意义上的外表美 而是为了她的孩子和家庭而不辞辛苦的劳作甚至衰老而体现出来的 美丽 * 这种美 在她的孩子眼中是无价的同时又无疑是感人的 ……

According to her height and weight she should be a guard for the rich. She has ironwilled blood, one shoulder is lower than the other, and she bites her fingernails. But she is the most beautiful woman I have ever seen. She should be. She has worked on that body and face for more than sixty years. The course for that kind of beauty can't be rushed.

The lines in her face have been earned one at a time. The thick one around the lips became deeper with every pain and hurt. The thin ones on the forehead appeared when the first child was born.

The eyes are protected by glasses now, but still full of life. These are eyes that have shone with pride, filled with tears of bitterness, stared in anger and burned from lack of sleep. They are now direct and sharp and look at you when you speak.

The double chin took years to grow. Sometimes you can only see it from the side but it is there. Modern women don't have a double chin. They beat it away or pat the fat until it becomes firm. But her chin is always there. It supports a nodding head that has slept in a chair all night or bent over pressing clothes.

The bent back developed slowly. She had carried home her babies who were too sleepy to walk, heavy bags from the car, rubbish out of the house while her

husband was at war^①.

The legs are still in shape^②, but the step is slow. They ran too often for the bus. They stood a little too long when she worked in the department store. They got beat up^③ while teaching her daughter to ride a tow - wheeler. They are dark red at the back of the knees.

The hands? They are small but able. They are rough, because they did washing, cooking, and sewing for the family and cleaning for the department stores all the year round.

I looked at mother long and hard the other day and said, "Mom, I have never seen you so beautiful." "I worked at it," she replied.

【注释】

fingernail [ˈfɪŋɡəneɪl] *n.* 手指甲

pressing [ˈpresɪŋ] *adj.* 紧迫的 迫切的 熨平的

【难点解析】

①at war 处于交战状态

eg. *The country has been at war with its neighbour for two years.*

这个国家与邻国已打了两年仗了。

in shape 健康

eg. *You'll never be in shape until you eat less and take more exercise*

只有少吃多锻炼才能健美。

③beat sb. up 狠打、踢或揍某人

eg. *He was hardly beaten up by a gang of thugs.*

他被一帮暴徒打得死去活来。

2. At a Railway Station

当‘马克吐温’来到火车站的时候 发现去纽约的车票早已卖完 他和他的朋友正在踌躇之际 他忽然想到或许告诉他们‘我’是个作家就能有个铺位 结果却是毫无所获 而此时，一位搬运工人却认出了他，并劝说列车员为他们找了铺位
.....

Once, a long time ago, I went to a railway station. I planned to take the night train to New York and go on a journey with a friend. Many people were on the platform and they were all pushing onto the long passenger train. It was already full. I asked the man at the booking office if I could have two tickets. He answered sharply, "No!" I felt hurt. It was important for me to have the tickets.

I found a railway official and asked him if I could get a place somewhere in a sleeping-car, but he said sharply, "No! You can't. The train is full. Don't trouble me any more."

I felt very hurt indeed. I said to my friend: "They talk to me like this because they don't know who I am. If they knew..." But my friend said:

"Don't be foolish. Do you think it would help you to get a seat on the train? There are no empty seats."

I went up to^① the same official and said very politely that my name was Mark Twain. But he only replied:

"I told you not to trouble me any more."

I said to my friend: "He may not have heard my name." But my friend said that the official had heard my name quite clearly, but that he didn't care, that was all.

Just then I noticed that a young porter in a sleeping-car was looking at me. He breathed something in the train conductor's ear, and the conductor came over^② to me, removed his cap and said very politely.

"Can I help you, sir? Do you want a place in a sleeping-car?"

"Yes, I certainly do." I said.

The porter took out cases and we got into the sleeping-car. The porter saw that we were comfortably settled in our places. Then he said, "Now, is there anything you want, sir?"

When the porter left I smiled at my friend and said: "Well, what do you say now?"

My friend looked ashamed:

"Well," he said, "you were right. I'm sorry I said all those things to you on the platform. I was foolish, not you. I'm glad I came here with you."

Just then the porter came to the door again and said:

"Oh, sir, I recognized you at once when I saw you. And I told the conductor so."

"Really," I said, and I gave him twice as much as I usually gave to a porter. "Who am I then?"

"You're Mr. McLellan, of course, the Mayor of New York," he said and disappeared.

【注释】

porter [pɔ:tə] n. 搬运工 挑夫

sleeping-car (火车 卧车

【难点解析】

① go up to 从一处到另一处

eg. We're going up to London next weekend.

下周末我们上伦敦去 ,

2) come over 从稍远的地方过来

eg. *Come over here and give me a hand.*

请过来帮我一把

3. My Miserable, Merry Christmas

在圣诞节到来的时候 , 每个孩子都渴望能够得到自己最心爱的礼物 甚至 是一匹“ 小马 ”这个特别的礼物。在父母的反复提问之下 , 他 还是只想要一匹小马 但圣诞节夜来临的时候 他的“ 卡统袜 ”里却空空如也 最后 他能得到他最想要的小马吗 ?

Christmas was coming. I wanted a pony. To make sure that my parents understood, I declared that I wanted nothing else.

“Nothing but a pony?” My father asked.

“Nothing,” I said.

“Not even a pair of high boots?”

That was hard. I did want boots. but I stuck to the pony. “No, not even boots.”

“Nor candy? There ought to be something to fill your stocking with, and Santa Claus can’t put a pony into a stocking.”

That was true, and he couldn’t lead a pony down the chimney either. But no. “All I want is a pony.” I said. “If I can’t have a pony, give me nothing, nothing.”

On Christmas Eve I hung up my stocking along with my sisters.

The next morning my sisters and I woke up at six. Then we raced downstairs

to the fireplace. And there they were, the gifts, all sorts of wonderful things, mixed – up piles of presents. Only my stocking was empty; it hung limp; not a thing in it; and under and around it—nothing. My sisters had knelt down^①, each by her pile of gifts; they were crying with delight, till they looked up and saw me standing there looking so miserable. They came over to me and felt my stocking: nothing.

I don't remember whether I cried at that moment, but my sisters did. They ran with me back to my bed, and there we all cried till I became indignant. That helped some. I got up, dressed, and driving my sisters away, I went out alone into the stable, and there, all by myself, I wept. My mother came out to me and she tried to comfort me. But I wanted no comfort. She left me and went on into the house with sharp words for my father.

My sisters came to me, and I was rude. I ran away from them. I went around to the front of the house, sat down on the steps, and, the crying over, I ached. I was wronged, I was hurt. And my father must have been hurt, too, a little. I saw him looking out of the window. He was watching me or something for an hour or two, drawing back the curtain so little lest I catch him, but I saw his face, and I think I can see now the anxiety upon it, the worried impatience.

After an hour or two, I caught sight of^② a man riding a pony down the street, a pony and a brand – new saddle; the most beautiful saddle I ever saw, and it was a boy's saddle. And the pony! As he drew near, I saw that the pony was really a small horse, with a black mane and tail, and one white foot and a white star on his forehead. For such a horse as that I would have given anything.

But the man came along, reading the numbers on the houses, and, as my hopes—my impossible hopes—rose, he looked at our door and passed by, he and the pony, and the saddle. Too much, I fell upon the steps and broke into^③ tears. Suddenly I heard a voice.

“Say, kid,” it said, “do you know a boy named Lennie Steffens?”

I looked up. It was the man on the pony, back again.

“Yes,” I spluttered through my tears. “That’s me.”

“Well,” he said, “then this is your horse. I’ve been looking all over for you and your house. Why don’t you put your number where it can be seen?”

“Get down,” I said, running out to him. I wanted to ride.

He went on saying something about “ought to have got here at seven o’clock, but—”

I hardly heard, I could scarcely wait. I was so happy, so thrilled I rode off^① up the street. Such a beautiful pony. And mine! After a while I turned and trotted back to the stable. There was the family, father, mother, sisters, all working for me, all happy. They had been putting in place the tools of my new business: currycomb, brush, pitchfork—everything, and there was hay in the loft.

But that Christmas, which my father had planned so carefully, was it the best or the worst I ever knew? He often asked me that; I never could answer as a boy. I think now that it was both. It covered the whole distance from broken-hearted misery to bursting happiness—too fast. A grown-up could hardly have stood it.

【注释】

limp [limp] *adj.* 松驰的 无生气的

indignant [in'dignənt] *adj.* 愤怒的

lest [lest] *conj.* 以免 恐怕

impatience [im'peɪjəns] *n.* 性急

saddle ['sædl] *n.* 马鞍

mane [meɪn] *n.* 鬃毛

splutter ['splʌtə] *vi.* 急促地乱说

thrill [θril] *vt.* 使兴奋 使激动

trot [trɒt] *vi.* (指马或骑马者) 小跑

currycomb ['kʌrɪkəʊm] *n.* 马梳

pitchfork ['pɪtʃfɔ:k] *n.* 干草叉

hay [hei] *n.* 干草

loft [lɒft] *n.* 草料棚

【难点解析】

① kneel down 单膝或双膝跪下 屈膝

eg. *She knelt down on the grass to examine a flower.*

她在草地上跪下细看一朵花。

② catch sight of 一眼瞥见

eg. *She caught sight of a car in the distance.*

她一眼瞥见远处的汽车。

③ break into :

(a) 强行进入

eg. *His house was broken into last week.*

上星期有人闯入他的屋里。

(b) 突然开始 大笑、唱歌、欢呼等)

eg. *As the President's car arrived the crowd broke into loud applause.*

总统的汽车到达时，群众中爆发出热烈的掌声。

(c) 突然改变 由慢到快)

eg. *The man broke into a run when he saw the police.*

那人一见到警察，拔腿就跑。

(d) 指活动 用去 应做其他事情的时间)

eg. *All this extra work I'm doing is breaking into my leisure time.*

我目前的这一切额外工作用去了我的闲暇时间。

(e) 使用 (大面值的钞票或硬币) 购买低于该面值的某事物

eg. *I can't pay the 50p I owe you without breaking into a £5 note.*

我得把一张 5 英镑的钞票破开，才能把欠你的 50 便士付给你。

(f) 动用 (应急储备物资)

eg. *Break into emergency supplies of food.*

动用应急储备的食物

④ride off:骑马等

eg. *He rode off into the distance.*

他骑马奔向了远方。

4. A Small Boy

一位女作家带着她的爱犬来到一片宁静的土地上，浓雾笼罩着山中的这所房子，为她的房子中的壁炉劈柴的是一个从福利院请来的小男孩，一个正直而且心地善良的孩子。他告诉她，他有一个妈妈，这着实令她感到好奇和气愤。在临行前，她去探望这个孩子，却被告知他并没有妈妈……

I was living in the Smoky Mountains in Carolina. It was autumn. I needed quiet—to be away from people. My mind was troubled and the mountain air helped me write better. I also wanted to see the red autumn leaves, the pumpkins and to feel the excitement of living free and alone. I found them all in a small house which belonged to the Children's Home. The house is cut off from the village below and from the world by deep mountain snows. The heavy fog that surrounds the smoky Mountains hides the house from the eyes of the people.

When I moved into the house, I asked the lady at the Children's Home to send a boy to cut wood for the fireplace. About a week later, I looked up from my writing, a little surprised. There in front of me was a small boy. My dog, Pat, had not barked to warn me. The boy wore old torn pants and a shirt worn thin from too many washings. He wore no shoes on his feet.

"I can cut some wood today," he said.

"But I have a boy coming from the Children's Home."

"I'm the boy."

"You? But you're so small."

"I can carry milk to the babies' house, ma'am. Some days I carry it two times."

"In this bitter wind?"

"Yes. Stiff fingers don't feel bad once you get used to them. We get our faces bitten by the cold wind because we can't put our hands over them. But I have gloves. Some of the boys don't have any gloves."

"But cutting wood is a man's job."

He smiled at me.

"I know all kinds of wood ma'am. I've been cutting wood at the Children's Home for a long time."

"Very well. There's the axe. Go ahead and try cutting and see what you can do."

I began to work again. The first sounds of the axe cutting through the wood interfered with my thoughts^①. But soon the steady "chop, chop" stopped troubling me. I settled down and wrote for the rest of the afternoon.

The sun was slowly dropping behind the cold purple mountains when I heard the boy's footsteps coming toward my door.

"I have to go eat now. I can come again tomorrow afternoon."

"I'll pay you for what you've done."

We went together to see his work. Next to the house was a lot of cleanly-cut wood.

"But you've cut as much as a man. This is a wonderful pile of wood!"

I gave him some money.

"You may come again tomorrow, and thank you very much."

He looked at me and then at the money. He seemed as if he wanted to talk, but he could not. He turned away but over his thin shoulder, he shouted back to

me.

"I'll cut some small pieces tomorrow. You'll need some small thin pieces and some heavier ones."

He came again the next day and worked until it was time to leave. His name was Jerry. He was 12 years old and had been at the Children's Home since he was only four. I thought of ^② him as he must have looked when he was 4 years old. The same strong grey eyes with a small ring of blue around them. The same integrity and courage. Integrity is honesty, but it is more than just being honest. For example, the handle of the axe broke one day. Jerry said the Children's Home would repair it. I handed him some money to pay for it. He wouldn't take the money.

"I'll pay for it, ma'am. I broke it. I didn't hit the wood in the right place."

"But, Jerry, no one hits the wood in the right place all the time. It was a weak handle. I'll speak to the man who sold it to me."

It was only then that he would take the money.

Another thing about Jerry that was special—he would do those little helpful things that are not necessary, but make life so much easier, things only the heart can do, things that cannot be trained or taught for they are done quickly and without thought. He found a hole near the fireplace that I had not seen.

"I'll place some wood in the hole, ma'am. Then when a sudden storm comes up, you can stay warm."

On the day he found a loose stone in the walking place outside.

"Let me place a bigger stone there. I'll dig the hole deeper so it won't come loose again."

The days passed, and Jerry and my dog Pat became close friends. Perhaps it was because a boy and a dog have a common spirit—a wisdom that is closer than a grown person and a dog.

One cold day Jerry sat close by me near the fire. The dog lay close to him.

We watched the fire burn. Jerry suddenly talked of something he had never talked of before.

“You look like my mother, especially next to the fire.”

“But you were only four, Jerry, when you came to live at the Children’s Home. Do you still remember your mother?”

He nodded his head, “Yes. My mother lives near Manville.”

Learning he had a mother surprised me. I also felt anger against her. How could she abandon such a nice boy? Children’s Home was nice, people there were kind and the boys were healthy, but what sort of person was his mother? Jerry must have looked as nice then as he did now—his fine qualities have always been there. Any person could see them. My heart filled with questions I dared not ask. I was afraid I would cause him pain, so I talk to him carefully.

“Have you seen your mother lately?”

“I see her every summer. She sends for me.”

I wanted to cry aloud, “Why are you here? Why aren’t you with her? How can she let you go away^③ again?”

But I said nothing.

Jerry talk with happiness in his heart.

“She comes for me from Manville whenever she can. She isn’t working right now. She wanted to give me a dog, but they say a boy can’t have a dog at the home. She sent me a Sunday suit and last Christmas she sent me a bicycle. I let the other boys play with the bicycle when they promise to be careful with it.”

My mind was busy trying to understand his mother. She had not completely forgotten him, but why? what was the reason other than^④ being poor then?

Jerry still sounding happy talked in a very soft voice.

“I’m going to take the dollar you gave me and buy her a pair of gloves. White gloves. She likes white gloves.”

I could say nothing except, “That will be nice,” for I hated her. There was

other food than bread, food for the soul and for the heart that only a mother can give. He was going to buy gloves for his mother, while she lived in Manville away from him. I decided I would not leave the mountains until I talked with her to learn why she had placed him in a Children's Home.

But the human mind finds many things to think about. Every wind seems to blow new and different thoughts into it. I finished my work, but it did not please me. My thoughts turned to travel. I decided to go to Mexico and then perhaps on to other places. I did not take the time to see Jerry's mother. I was busy preparing to leave, and after that night by the fire, we did not speak about her again. The fact that he had a mother, and sort of a mother, made me feel better about him.

When I was ready to leave, I said to him, "Jerry, you've been my good friend. I still think of you often and miss you very much. Pat will miss you too after we leave tomorrow."

He did not answer. I watched him climb the hill in silence. I expected him to come the next day, but he did not come.

I placed all my things in the car, closed the house, then drove to the Children's Home to see him. I told the lady there that I was leaving and asked her to call Jerry so I could say good - bye. She was troubled.

"I do not know where he is. I'm afraid he might be sick. He didn't eat his dinner and one of the boys said he had gone for a walk in the woods."

My heart felt better. I hate good - byes, and I knew I would never see him again. It was better for both of us this way.

"Here's some money," I said, "Will you use it to buy him things for his birthday and for Christmas? I might buy him the same things his mother buys. This way he'll get different things and well, not two bicycles for example."

She looked at me strangely and said, "There isn't much place to ride a bicycle in the mountains."

Her stupidity began to bother me.

“What I mean is, I don't want to buy him things his mother might buy him. I might have bought him a bicycle if I hadn't learned she had bought him one.”

She still looked at me. Then she finally said, “I don't understand. He has no mother. He has no bicycle.”

【注释】

pumpkin [ˈpʌmpkin] *n.* 南瓜

pant [pænt] *n.* 裤子

axe [æks] *n.* 斧

purple [ˈpɜːpl] *adj.* 紫色的

the Children's House 儿童福利院

abandon [əˈbændən] *vt.* 抛弃 遗弃

【难点解析】

①interfere with sth.

(a) 未得允许 摆弄 (尤指) 弄坏

eg. *Who's been interfering with the clock? It's stopped*
是谁摆弄这钟来着？已经不走了。

(b) 阻碍 妨碍 妨害

eg. *Don't allow pleasure to interfere with duty*
不要让娱乐妨碍了职责。

②think of:

(a) 考虑到某事物

eg. *You can't expect me to think of everything!*
你不能指望我把什么事都想到了！

(b) 考虑某事的可能性 (未做出决定亦未采取行动)

eg. *They're thinking of moving to America.*
他们有意移居美国。

(c) 想像某事物

eg. *Just think of the expense !*

想想这笔开销吧！

(d) 对某事物有见解

eg. *I couldn't think of letting you take the blame.*

我没想到过能让你承担责任

(e) 想起或记得某事物

eg. *I can't think of his name at the moment.*

我一时想不起他的名字了

(f) 提出或建议某事

eg. *Who first thought of the idea?*

是谁先出的这个主意？

③ go away :

(a) 走开；离开

eg. *We're going away for a few days.*

我们要外出几天。

(b) 消失 散去 变淡

eg. *The smell hasn't gone away.*

气味尚未消失

④ other than :

(a) 除了（表示所说的不包括在内）

eg. *He never speaks to me other than to ask for something.*

他除了向我要东西，从不跟我说话。

(b) 不同于 而不

eg. *She seldom appears other than happy.*

她很少有不高兴的时候。

⑤ sort of 达到某种程度 有几分 有点

eg. *You sort of twist the ends together.*

你怎么把顶端缠绕在一起了。

5. Elisabeth Came to England

19岁的伊丽莎白住在里约热内卢，她父亲是一名飞行员，她则梦想着能够成为一名空中小姐，在父亲的劝说下，为了说一口纯正的英语，她来到了英国，在那儿，她习惯了喝茶、乘英国的公交车、使用英国的货币，更重要的是她习惯了说英语……

Elisabeth was nineteen and she lived in Rio de Janeiro. Her father was an airline pilot and it was Elisabeth's ambition to become an air hostess. She was a bright girl and with one exception her exam marks were good. The exception was English.

"Look," said her father, "if you want to become an air hostess, you must learn to speak really good English. I'm going to send you to ^① England next in February."

"Oh, you couldn't be so cruel, Dad," said Elisabeth. "It snows in England in February and the people are unfriendly and the houses are draughty and..."

"Hold on ^②," said her father. "You're exaggerating. In the first place, it doesn't always snow in England in February. I'm not sending you to Siberia. Secondly, English people are usually quite kind to foreign visitors, and thirdly, a lot of English houses have central heating these days."

"Why can't I go and stay with my uncle in Los Angeles?" asked Elisabeth.

"Because your uncle and aunt both speak Portuguese," replied Elisabeth's father.

"You learnt your English in the United States," objected Elisabeth.