

(11) THE CALIPH, CUPID AND THE CLOCK

[十一] 幫主，愛神與鐘

Prince Michael, of the Electorate Vallenga, sat on his favorite bench in the park. The coolness of the September night quickened the life in him like a rare, tonic wine. The benches were not filled; for park loungers, with their stagnant blood, are prompt to detect and fly home from the crispness of early autumn. The moon was just clearing the roofs of the range of dwellings that bounded the quadrangle on the east. Children laughed and played about the fine-sprayed fountain. In the shadowed spots fauns and hamadryads wooed, unconscious of the gaze of mortal eyes. A hand-organ -- Philomel by the grace of our stage carpenter, Fancy -- fluted and droned in a side street. Around the enchanted boundaries of the little park street cars spat and mewed and the stilted trains roared like tigers and lions prowling for a place to enter. And above the trees shone the great, round, shining face of an illuminated clock in the tower of an antique public building.

美仁里選民團的王子麥可坐在他公園裏常坐的椅子上。九月天秋夜的涼意像一劑鮮為人知的滋補藥酒一樣，激得他生命的小鹿在心頭亂撞。公園的椅子沒坐滿，這是因為早秋的沁涼，加上不怎麼暢通的血液循環，早把逛公園的人一個個趕回家去。公園的東邊有帶房子，月兒剛從它們脊樑後方升起。小孩們在噴水池邊嬉戲，散發出天真無邪的笑聲。陰影裏，山精樹怪開始談情說愛，不曉得還有人盯著它們看。靠公園邊的路上，有個彈手風琴的--我們的木匠范思上台表演費龍媚女王變成夜鷹的故事--吹奏得音符沿牆頭起落。小公園的四周街車繁忙地助興，排煙管當低音貝士，車笛充小喇吧。高架火車如獅子老虎一般吼著，左來右往地扒著地，直想往欄杆裏鑽。高過樹梢的地方，那座古老公共建築物的鐘塔上照亮著一盞圓圓的大鐘。

Prince Michael's shoes were wrecked far beyond the skill of the carefulest cobbler. The ragman would have declined any negotiations concerning his clothes. The two weeks' stubble on his face was gray and brown and red and greenish yellow -- as if it had been made up from individual contributions from the chorus of a musical comedy. No man existed who had money enough to wear so bad a hat as his.

麥可王子的鞋破爛到最仔細的鞋匠也無技可施。收破爛衣服的也不可能爲了他的衣服討價還價。臉上兩星期長的鬍根，是又灰，又棕，又紅，又綠，又黃--人家說跟野台戲歌仔們化來的也不可能這麼的雜色斑斑。全世界的人還沒有一個有錢到能買這麼糟糕的一頂帽子。

Prince Michael sat on his favorite bench and smiled. It was a diverting thought to him that he was wealthy enough to buy every one of those closed-ranged, bulky, window-lit mansions that faced him, if he chose. He could have matched gold, equipages, jewels, art treasures, estates and acres with any Croesus in this proud city of Manhattan, and scarcely have entered upon the bulk of his holdings. He could have sat at table with reigning sovereigns. The social world, the world of art, the fellowship of elect, adulation, imitation, the homage of the fairest, honors from the highest, praise from the wisest, flattery, esteem, credit, pleasure, fame -- all the honey of life was waiting in the comb in the hive of the world of Prince Michael, of the Electorate of Vallenga, whenever

he might choose to take it. But his choice was to sit in rags and dinginess on a bench in park. For he had tasted of the fruit of the tree of life, and, finding it bitter in his mouth had stepped out of Eden for a time to seek distraction close to the unarmored, beating heart of the world.

麥可王子坐在他常坐的位子上面，一邊微笑。對他來講真的很有意思，因為他有錢到假如他要的話，他可以把所有對面那些密集，龐大，而窗子發出亮光的房子都買起來。他的金子，馬車，珠寶，藝術珍品，房產，地產，比美任何一個曼哈坦的富亨，對他真正的財富來講，這還是些零頭呢！他能和各國統治者同起同坐。社交世界，藝術世界，出類拔粹的圈子，仰慕，摩仿，美女的倩睇，至高的榮譽，至慧的嘉獎，恭維，尊重，信用，喜悅，名譽--生命之一切精華都儲備在美仁里選民團麥可王子的蜂室之中，任憑他來取用。可是呢，他選擇的是穿著破破爛爛地坐在公園椅子上。這是因為他已經嚐過生命之樹的果實，發覺它味苦不堪，寧可暫時步出伊甸園來到世間忙忙碌碌，未加防護，而血脈交集的左近，來尋些消遣。

These thoughts strayed dreamily through the mind of Prince Michael, as he smiled under the stubble of his polychromatic beard. Lounging thus, clad as the poorest of mendicants in the parks, he loved to study humanity. He found in altruism more pleasure than his riches, his station and all the grosser sweets of life had given him. It was his chief solace and satisfaction to alleviate individual distress, to confer favors upon worthy ones who had need of succor, to dazzle unfortunates by unexpected and bewildering gifts of truly royal magnificence, bestowed, however, with wisdom and judiciousness.

這些想頭夢影一般飄過麥可王子的腦海，他一面抿著嘴微笑，嘴上長著又硬又色彩斑斑的短鬚。他這麼地閑坐，身上穿的是乞討國度最破最窮的衣裳，卻喜歡研究人性。對他人絕對的關心對他來講，比他的財富，他的地位和生命的甜蜜種種所帶給他的還有意思。緩和別人的慾望，給須要幫助的人予以救援，給那些不幸的人意想不到好似皇家所賜予的驚人禮物，加得雋智而公允而恰到好處，這是他的首要慰藉和滿足。

And as Prince Michael's eye rested upon the glowing face of the great clock in the tower, his smile, altruistic as it was, became slightly tinged with contempt. Big thoughts were the Prince's; and it was always with a shake of his head that he considered the subjugation of the world to the arbitrary measures of Time. The comings and goings of people in hurry and dread, controlled by the little metal moving hands of a clock, always made him sad.

麥可王子的眼睛停在鐘塔上發亮的鐘面的時候，他的微笑，雖然還是那麼忘我無私，卻夾雜了一絲瞧不起的眼神。王子的思想是那麼浩大，他每想起這世界為時間所支配，都不禁要搖搖頭。匆匆忙忙，來來往往，驚驚恐恐的人們，為一只時鐘小小的指針所控制，最令他沮喪。

By and by came a young man in evening clothes and sat upon the third bench from the Prince. For half an hour he smoked cigars with nervous haste, and then he fell to watching the face of the illuminated clock above the trees. His perturbation was evident, and the Prince noted, in sorrow, that its cause was connected, in some manner, with the slowly moving hands of the timepiece.

過了不久，一個穿著晚裝的年輕人走過來，坐在王子所坐的椅子算過去第三張椅子上。一直有半小時，他緊張地緊抽雪茄，接著，他轉過頭去，望著那張高過樹梢頂上的鐘面。他這麼地坐立不安，王子傷心地觀察到，顯然和那座鐘緩慢移動的指針有關。

His Highness arose and went to the young man's bench.

王子陛下起身走到年輕人的椅子那裏。

'I beg your pardon for addressing you,' he said, 'but I perceive that you are disturbed in mind. If it may serve to mitigate the liberty I have taken I will add that I am Prince Michael, heir to the throne of the Electorate of Valleduna. I appear incognito, of course, as you may gather from my appearance. It is a fancy of mine to render aid to others whom I think worthy of it. Perhaps the matter that seems to distress you is one that would more readily yield to our mutual efforts.'

[很對不起我跟你講話，]他說，[不過嘛，我可以看出來你的心思有困擾。也許我可以把□大膽地跟你講話的無禮減緩一些，容我自己介紹一下，我是麥可王子，美仁里選民團的王儲。當然，我正微服而出，這個你由我的這身打扮就看得出來。我嘛，總是喜歡救援別人。也許呢，你心裏面的困擾，我們一同來解決的話比較容易克服。]

The young man looked up brightly at the Prince. Brightly, but the perpendicular line of perplexity between his brows was not smoothed away. He laughed, and even then it did not. But he accepted the momentary diversion.

年輕人拿明亮的眼光看著王子。眼光明亮是明亮，兩眉之間的垂直皺紋還是困擾著他，沒有消失。他笑了笑，然而，似笑不笑地。心想暫時有以忘忘憂也罷。

'Glad to meet you, Prince,' he said, good humoredly. 'Yes, I'd say you were incog, all right. Thanks for your offer of assistance -- but I don't see where your butting-in would help things any. It's a kind of private affair, you know -- but thanks all the same.'

[很高興見到你，王子，]他和氣地說。[是的，我得說你是微服而出。謝謝你提出幫忙--可是我看不出你來參進一腳能幫甚麼忙。這是一件那種私事，你知道--不過，謝謝你就是了。]

Prince Michael sat at the young man's side. He was often rebuffed but never offensively. His courteous manner and words forbade that.

麥可王子坐在年輕人身邊。他常被拒絕，但是從未被無禮地拒絕。這是因為他殷勤有禮的言行所致。

'Clocks,' said the Prince, 'are shackles on the feet of mankind. I have observed you looking persistently at that clock. Its face is that of a tyrant, its numbers are false as those on a lottery ticket; its hands are those of a bunco steerer, who makes an appointment with you to your ruin.'

Let me entreat you to throw off its humiliating bonds and cease to order your affairs by that insensate monitor of brass and steel.'

[鐘，]王子說，[是掛在人類腳上的腳擦。我觀察到你一直在看那鐘。鐘面是張暴君的臉，鐘面上的數目字，和彩券上的數目字一樣虛偽；它的指針呢，就好比賭場裏的拐子一樣，明明是要把你帶向死亡。我能不能求求你把那侮辱人的束縛丟掉，不要再讓那只鐵膽銅身的無情理東西來支配你的事情。]

'I don't usually,' said the young man. 'I carry a watch except when I've got my radiant rags on.'

[我通常不這樣子的，]年輕人說。[我通常帶錶，除非是我穿這身光彩奪目的破布的時候。]

'I know human nature as I do trees and grass,' said the Prince, with earnest dignity. 'I am a master of philosophy, a graduate in art, and I hold the purse of a Fortunatus. There are few mortal misfortunes that I cannot alleviate or overcome. I have read your countenance, and found in it honesty and nobility as well as distress. I beg of you to accept my advice or aid. Do not belie the intelligence I see in your face by judging from my appearance of my ability to defeat your troubles.'

[我了解人性，一如我了解草木一樣，]王子虔誠而莊重地說。我是個哲學碩士，藝術學士，而且為財神爺爺掌荷包。幾乎沒有任何人世間的疾苦是我無法緩和或者克服的。我相了你的面，可以從其中看到真誠，高雅，以及苦惱。我懇求你接受我的告戒或幫助。你的面相蠻聰明的，千萬別為了我這身打扮，把我看低了，以為我沒辦法擊潰你的麻煩。]

The young man glanced at the clock again and frowned darkly. When his gaze strayed from the glowing horologue of time it rested intently upon a four-story red brick house in the row of dwellings opposite to where he sat. The shades were drawn, and the lights in many rooms shone dimly through them.

年輕人又看了一下鐘，灰著臉皺眉頭。當他的視線由這架計時的儀器轉移開來的時候，他把眼光停留在對面一帶住宅的一座四層樓紅磚房上。窗簾閤著，房裏的燈暗暗地發散出來。

'Ten minutes to nine!' exclaimed the young man, with an impatient gesture of despair. He turned his back upon the house and took a rapid step or two in a contrary direction.

[差十分九點！]年輕人嘆道，一面擺出沮喪的無奈手勢。他轉過背去，疾疾往另一個方相走了一兩步。

'Remain!' commanded Prince Michael, in so potent a voice that the disturbed one wheeled around with a somewhat chagrined laugh.

[留步!]麥可王子下令，他的聲音這麼雄健，使得那個沮喪的人轉了一百八十度，一面搖著頭苦笑。

‘I’ll give her ten minutes and then I’m off,’ he muttered, and then aloud to the Prince: ‘I’ll join you in confounding all clocks, my friend, and throw in women, too.’

[我再給她十分鐘，然後我就走了，]他喃喃自語地說，之後，他轉向王子：[我贊同你打倒所有的鐘，朋友，再加上所有的女人。]

‘Sit down,’ said the Prince, calmly. ‘I do not accept your addition. Women are the natural enemies of clocks, and, therefore, the allies of those who would seek liberation from these monsters that measure our follies and limit our pleasures. If you will so far confide in me I would ask you to relate to me your story.’

[坐下，]王子心平氣和地說。[我不接受你加上的。女人是鐘的天敵，所以嘛，是那些由鐘怪錶精求解脫者的同志，鐘錶只會量測我們的短，限制我們的歡樂。假如你願意跟我講的話，能不能請你告訴我你的故事。]

The young man threw himself upon the bench with a reckless laugh.

年輕人一屁股坐下，反正也顧不得那麼多地笑了。

‘Your Royal Highness, I will,’ he said, in tones of mock deference. ‘Do you see yonder house -- the one with the three upper windows lighted? Well, at 6 o’clock I stood in that house with the young lady I am -- that is, I was -- engaged to. I had been doing wrong, my dear Prince -- I had been a naughty boy, and she heard of it. I wanted to be forgiven of course -- we are always wanting women to forgive us, aren’t we, Price?’

[王子陛下，我會的，]年輕人裝出尊重的口吻。[你看到那棟房子--那棟上層亮著三個窗子的？反正是這樣，六點的時候，我站在那房子裏頭，和我的未婚妻--我是說，那時候是我的未婚妻--。我以前犯過錯，王子--我曾經是個頑皮的男孩，她聽人家說了。當然，我希望她能原諒我--我們一直要女人原諒，不是嗎，王子？]

“I want time to think it over,” said she. “There is one thing certain; I will either fully forgive you, or I will never see your face again. There will be no half-way business. At half-pass eight,” she said, “at exactly half-past eight you may be watching the middle upper window of the top floor. If I decide to forgive I will hang out of that window a white silk scarf. You will know by that that all is as was before, and you may come to me. If you see no scarf you may consider that everything between us is ended forever.” That,’ concluded the young man, bitterly, ‘is why I have been watching that clock. The time for the signal to appear has passed twenty-three minutes ago. Do you wonder that I am a little disturbed, my Prince of Rags and Whiskers?’

[<我要花點時間好好想一想，>她說。<有件事是確定的；我或者完全原諒你，或者不再見

你的面。不會有不乾不脆的玩意兒。八點半的時候，>她說，<準八點半的時候，你可以觀察樓上中間的窗子。假如我決定原諒你，我會把一條白絲巾掛到窗外。你可以知道一切和好如舊，可以來找我。假如沒有絲巾的話，你可以把我們的一切都當成結束了。>這個，]年輕人恨恨地說，[是我望著那張窗子的原因。信號旗出現的時間早過了二十三分鐘。你能怪我有點那麼坐立不安嗎，我的破布和鬍鬚王子？]

‘Let me repeat to you,’ said Prince Michael, in his even, well-modulated tones, ‘that women are the natural enemies of clocks. Clocks are an evil, women a blessing. The signal may yet appear.’

[讓我再重複一次，]麥可王子拿平穩的口氣說，[女人是時鐘的天敵。鐘是邪，女人是福。你要的信號還可能出現。]

‘Never, on your principality!’ exclaimed the young man, hopelessly. ‘You don’t know Marian -- of course. She’s always on time, to the minute. That was the first thing about her that attracted me. I’ve got the mitten instead of the scarf. I ought to have known at 8.31 that my goose was cooked. I’ll go West on the 11.45 to-night with Jack Milburn. The jig’s up. I’ll try Jack’s ranch awhile and top off with the Klondike and whiskey. Good-night -- er -- er -- Prince.’

[不可能的，那怕拿你的王子頭銜做保！]年輕人絕望地驚嘆。[你不了解瑪理安--當然。她一直準時，準到一分鐘之內。這是她引起我注意的第一件事。絲巾沒出現，相反地我得到的是一支閉門的手套。八點三十一分的時候，我就應該覺悟到生米已成熟飯。今晚十一點三刻我將和米傑克搭西行的火車。一切都完了。我在傑克的牧場試個把星期，然後到阿拉斯加去和米酒頭子作伴。再見了--啊--啊--王子。]

Prince Michael smiled his enigmatic, gentle, comprehending smile and caught the coat sleeve of the other. The brilliant light in the Prince’s eyes was softening to a dreamier, cloudy translucence.

麥可王子拿起他註策商標的微笑，親切而懂得甚麼機竅似的，他抓住年輕人的大衣袖子。原來閃亮的眼睛慢慢變得暗淡，有點像龍眼肉一般的睡眠。

‘Wait,’ he said solemnly, ‘till the clock strikes. I have wealth and power and knowledge above most men, but when the clock strikes I am afraid. Stay by me until then. This woman shall be yours. You have the word of the hereditary Prince of Valleluna. On the day of your marriage I will give you \$100,000 and a palace on the Hudson. But there must be no clocks in that palace -- they measure our follies and limit our pleasures. Do you agree to that?’

[且慢，]他嚴肅地說，[請等到鐘聲響。我比凡人富有，有權勢，有知識，可是鐘一響我就害怕。請陪我一下。這個女人將是你的。你有美仁里世代相傳的王子替你作保。你結婚那天，我會給你十萬塊，加上哈德遜河邊的一座宮殿。可是呢，殿裏不能有鐘--鐘量度我們的愚鈍，侷限我們的歡樂。你同意嗎？]

‘Of course,’ said the young man, cheerfully, ‘they’re a nuisance, anyway -- always ticking and striking and getting you late for dinner.’

[當然，]年輕人說，強作歡樂地，[它們很討厭，不管怎麼樣--一直滴滴搭搭，響個不停，弄得你吃飯都要遲到。]

He glanced again at the clock in the tower. The hands stood at three minutes to nine.

他再度拿眼睛望塔上的鐘。鐘面上的針指向九點差三分。

‘I think,’ said Prince Michael, ‘that I will sleep a little. The day has been fatiguing.’

[我想]，麥可王子說，[我要睡一會兒。今天也真累了。]

He stretched himself upon a bench with the manner of one who had slept thus before.

他伸長身子躺在長椅上，顯然這樣子做過。

‘You will find me in this park on any evening when the weather is suitable,’ said the Prince, sleepily. ‘Come to me when your marriage day is set and I will give you a check for the money.’

[只要天氣適合，你都能在這公園找到我，]王子一邊想睡覺地說。[好日子決定之後你來找我，我給你一張換錢的支票。]

‘Thanks, Your Highness,’ said the young man, seriously. ‘It doesn’t look as if I would need that palace on the Hudson, but I appreciate your offer, just the same.’

[謝謝你，陛下，]年輕人說，一本正經的樣子。[看起來我是用不著那座哈德遜河的宮殿了，不過，我謝謝你，心領了就是。]

Prince Michael sank into deep slumber. His battered hat rolled from the bench to the ground. The young man lifted it, placed over the frowsy face and moved one of the grotesquely relaxed limbs into a more comfortable position. ‘Poor devil!’ he said, as he drew the tattered clothes closer about the Prince’s breast.

麥可王子熟熟地進入夢鄉。那頂飽經風霜的帽子從椅子掉到地上。年輕人把它拾起來，蓋住那張未經修整的髒臉，然後把一肢放鬆得怪模怪樣的腿挪到比較舒適的位置。[可憐的東西！]他說，一面替王子把洞滿滿的上衣拉近胸口。

Sonorous and startling came the stroke of 9 from the clock tower. The young man sighed again, turned his face for one last look at the house of his relinquished hopes -- and cried aloud profane words of holy rapture.

九點鐘宏亮的鐘聲響了，把人給嚇了一跳。年輕人又嘆了口氣，最後一次轉過頭去看那棟希望已絕的房子--突然間高興地叫罵起髒話來。

From the middle upper window blossomed in the dusk a waving, snowy, fluttering, wonderful, divine emblem of forgiveness and promised joy.

樓上中間的那個窗子飄舞著一張雪白，美麗，神聖而充滿了歡樂的原諒旗幟。

By came a citizen, rotund, comfortable, home-hurrying, unknowing of the delights of waving silken scarfs on the borders of dimly-lit parks.

一個長得圓嘟嘟的市民走過來，一個舒適，趕著回家的，不知道暗淡公園旁邊一張飄舞的絲巾所蘊涵的喜悅。

‘Will you oblige me with the time, sir?’ asked the young man; and the citizen, shrewdly conjecturing his watch to be safe, dragged it out and announced:

[能不能借問一下時間，先生?]年輕人問，那個人，並沒那麼傻乎乎的，確定手錶不會被搶，把它拿了出來，宣布道：

‘Twenty-nine and a half minutes past eight, sir.’

[八點二十九分半，先生。]

‘By George! that clock’s half an hour fast! First time in ten years I’ve known it to be off. This watch of mine never varies a --’

[我的喬治大王！那個鐘快了半小時！十年來第一次。我的這支錶從來沒錯過半--]

But the citizen was talking to vacancy. He turned and saw his hearer a fast receding black shadow flying in the direction of a house with three lighted upper windows.

可是這市民只是跟空氣講話。他轉過頭，看到剛才跟他講話的，朝著一棟樓上有三個亮窗子的房子快速跑去，只剩得一個黑影。

And in the morning came along two policemen on their way to the beats they owned. The park was deserted save for one dilapidated figure that sprawled, asleep, on a bench. They stopped and gazed upon it.

天亮的時候，兩位警察走過來，準備到他們的地盤巡邏。公園裏沒有一個人影，除了一個落魄的人形趴睡在長椅上。兩位警伯停下來看。

‘It’s Dopy Mike,’ said one. ‘He hits the pipe every night. Park bum for twenty years. On his last legs, I guess.’

[是老丐麥可，]其中一個說。[他每晚露宿。睡公園睡了二十年了。已經晚景不長，我想

◦]

The other policeman stooped and looked at something crumpled and crisp in the hand of the sleeper.

另一位警伯彎下身，細細地看那個在睡覺的人手裏拿著一個皺皺的，捲捲的東西。

‘Gee!’ he remarked. ‘He’s doped out a fifty-dollar bill, anyway. Wish I knew the brand of hop that he smokes.’

[奇了!]他說。[他討到了一張五十大鈔。不知道他抽的是哪牌的香菸。]

And then ‘Rap, rap, rap!’ went the club of realism against the shoe soles of Prince Michael, of the Electorate of Valleluna.

於是[啪，啪，啪]警伯把警棍打麥可王子的鞋跟兒，把這美仁里選民團的幫主由夢中喚醒。