

(14) THE RAMSOM OF MACK

[十四]贖回老友

Me and old Mack Lonsbury, we got out of that Little Hide-and-Seek gold mine affair with about \$40,000 apiece. I say 'old' Mack; but he wasn't old. Forty-one, I should say; but he always seemed old.

我和老龍美克在小迷藏金礦撈了一筆，大約每個人有四萬左右吧。我說[老]美克；其實他並不老。四十一，我該說；可是他就是那麼老理老氣的。

'Andy,' he says to me, 'I'm tired of hustling. You and me have been working hard together for three years. Say we knock off for a while, and spend some of this idle money we've coaxed our way.'

[安迪，]他跟我說，[我不想再這樣子拼命了。我們倆一起努力工作了三個年頭。讓我們輕鬆一陣子，拿這些賺來的錢享享清福怎麼樣？]

'The proposition hits me just right,' says I. 'Let's be nabobs a while and see how it feels. What'll we do -- take in the Niagara Falls, or buck at faro?'

[這建議正中我心懷，]我說。[讓我們閒散閒散一會兒，看看怎麼樣。我們幹甚麼呢--到尼加拉瀑布旅遊還是賭牌？]

'For a good many years,' says Mack, 'I've thought that if I ever had extravagant money I'd rent a two-room cabin somewhere, hire a Chinaman to cook, and sit in my stocking feet and read Buckle's History of Civilization.'

[好几年了，]美克說，[我一直這麼想，假如我有閒錢，我要租一棟兩房的屋子，請個中國廚子，乾乾淨淨地穿上襪子，看我的八股人類文明史。]

'That sounds self-indulgent and gratifying without vulgar ostentation,' says I; 'and I don't see how money could be better invested. Give me a cuckoo clock and a Sep Winner's Self-Instructor for the Banjo, and I'll join you.'

[這主意聽起來懂得自我享受，令人滿足，又無傷大雅，]我說；[我看不出錢能怎麼投資得更有意思。我嘛，給我來只杜鵑鐘，和韻習譜的自學五弦琴教本，我跟你助陣。]

A week afterward me and Mack hits this small town of Pina, about thirty miles out from Denver, and finds an elegant two-room house that just suits us. We deposited half-a-peck of money in the Pina bank and shook hands with every one of the 340 citizens in the town. We brought along the Chinaman and the cuckoo clock and Buckle and the Instructor with us from Denver; and they made the cabin seem like home at once.

一星期之後，我和美克到了這個叫松林的小鎮，大約在丹佛市郊三十哩左右，在這兒找到了一棟兩房的屋子，正合我們的意思的。我們把兩加侖的鈔票存進銀行，和全鎮340市民握遍了手。我們從丹佛帶了廚子，杜鵑鐘，八股，和自學教本；一瞬間，他們把小木屋變成了溫暖家園一樣。

Never believe it when they tell you riches don't bring happiness. If you could have seen old Mack sitting in his rocking-chair with his blue-yarn sock feet up in the window and absorbing in that Buckle stuff through his specs you'd have seen a picture of content that would have made Rockefeller jealous. And I was learning to pick out 'Old Zip Coon' on the banjo, and the cuckoo was on time with his remarks, and Ah Sing was messing up the atmosphere with the handsomest smell of ham and eggs that ever laid the honeysuckle in the shade. When it got too dark to make out Buckle's nonsense and the notes in the Instructor, me and Mack would light our pipes and talk about science and pearl diving and sciatica and Egypt and spelling and fish and trade-winds and leather and gratitude and eagles, and a lot of subjects that we'd never had time to explain our sentiments about before.

假如有人跟你說財富換不得快樂的話，別管他們。你有機會看到美克坐搖椅，把穿著藍毛線襪子的二郎腿高高翹在窗檯上，眼鏡架在鼻樑上專心地看他的八股啥子，那才是所謂的自得其樂，連洛克斐樂都要忌妒得半死。我學會拿五弦琴彈[老花背灌熊]，杜鵑鐘準確地報時，廚子阿星煮起火腿炒蛋可是香氣四溢，忍冬的花香都自殘形穢。天向晚，八股文字看不清，自學教本的樂譜也認不著，我和美克點起菸斗聊天，甚麼科學啦，潛水取珠啦，坐骨神經痛啦，埃及，拼字，魚，貿易風，皮革，感謝，鷹，甚麼天南地北的話題無所不聊。在以前我們那有工夫談這些。

One evening Mack spoke up and asked me if I was much appraised in the habits and policies of women folks.

有一晚，美克說了，他問我在女性的習慣和所玩的各種花樣這方面是不是在行。

'Why, yes,' says I, in a tone of voice; 'I know 'em from Alfred to Omaha. The feminine nature and similitude,' says I, 'is as plain to my sight as the Rocky Mountains is to a blue-eyed burro. I'm onto all their little sidesteps and punctual discrepancies.'

[哇，當然，]我說，裝噲作勢的，[我從阿夫雷得到奧馬哈都有相好。女人的天性和傾向，]我說，[在我看來瞭若指掌，好比洛磯山在一頭藍眼驢子的視野裏一樣。她們任何一個小動作，細微的差別，規規矩矩地都讓我觀察得乾淨。]

'I tell you, Andy,' says Mack, with a kind of sigh. 'I never had the least amount of intersection with their predispositions. Maybe I might have had a proneness in respect to their vicinity, but I never took the time. I made my own living since I was fourteen; and I never seemed to get my ratiocinations equipped with the sentiments usually depicted toward the sect. I sometimes wish I had,' says old Mack.

[告訴你，安迪，]美克說，一邊嘆了口氣。[我對她們的脾氣是完全沒有概念。我可能接近過她們，可是從來沒花過工夫。我十四歲起獨立生活；我的邏輯思考從來沒有裝備過用來應付她們的感情。有時候我希望我有過，]美克說。

‘They ‘re an adverse study,’ says I, ‘and adapted to points of view. Although they vary in rationale, I have found ‘em quite often obviously differing from each other in divergences of contrast.’

[她們是自相抵觸的，]我說，[而且各有各的觀點。儘管她們思維的基礎不同，我卻發現她們好比一把花雨傘的骨架子一樣，沒有兩個是指得同一個方向的。]

‘It seems to me,’ goes on Mack, ‘that a man had better take ‘em in and secure his inspirations of the sect when he’s young and so preordained. I let my chance go by; and I guess I’m too old now to go hopping into the curriculum.’

[看起來，]美克繼續說，[一個男人最好在年輕的時候就對她們鍾情，被綁住了才好。我把機會白白放過了；我想現在要來溫習這門功課對我來講太老了。]

‘Oh, I don’t know,’ I tells him. ‘Maybe you better credit yourself with a barrel of money and a lot of emancipation from a quantity of discontent. Still, I don’t regret my knowledge of ‘em, ‘ I says. ‘It takes a man who understands the symptoms and by-plays of women-folks to take care of himself in this world.’

[噢，很難說，]我告訴他。[也許你該慶幸你自己有一大桶鈔票而且用不著去應付滿肚子的牢騷。終歸來說，我並不後悔了解她們，]我說。[一個男人在這世上，必得了解女人的癥兆和點子才得以自保。]

We stayed on in Pina because we liked the place. Some folks might enjoy their money with noise and rapture and locomotion; but me and Mack we had had plenty of turmoils and hotel towels. The people were friendly; Ah Sing got the swing of the grub we liked; Mack and Buckle were as thick as two body-snatchers, and I was hitting out a cordial resemblance to ‘Buffalo Gals, Can’t you Come Out To-night,’ on the banjo.

我們在松林鎮住下，因為我們喜歡。有些人喜歡花錢在熱鬧，狂歡，和旅行；我和美克是讓喧囂和四處流浪給膩煩了。人也善良；阿星越烹調越對我們胃口；美克和八股雙雙出出入入，簡直成了一對盜尸賊；我把五弦琴也學得能彈得出有點樣子的甚麼[水牛女郎，今宵能否赴虹橋，]有板有眼的。

One day I got a telegram from Speight, the man that was working a mine I had an interest in out in New Mexico. I had to go out there; and I was gone two months. I was anxious to get back to Pina and enjoy life once more.

有一天，老史寫來一封電報，他在新墨西哥工作的礦坑我也參了一腳。因為有事，我必須

親自走一趟，一走就是兩個月。我可是巴不得馬上回到松林鎮再來享受享受。

When I struck the cabin I nearly fainted. Mack was standing in the door; and if angels ever wept, I saw no reason why they should be smiling then.

我回到我們的小木屋，几乎沒給昏過去。美克站在門口；假如天使也哭的話，我實在看不出來那時候他們爲甚麼要笑。

That man was a spectacle. Yes; he was worse; he was a spyglass; he was the greatest telescope in the Lick Observatory. He had on a coat and shiny shoes and a white vest and a high silk hat; and a geranium as big as an order of spinach was spiked onto his front. And he was smirking and warping his face like an infernal storekeeper or a kid wit colic.

那個人真是一翻景象。是的，他實在比這還糟；他簡直是望遠鏡；圓山天文臺的超大天文望遠鏡。他穿了一襲外套，閃亮的鞋子，白背心，和高高的絲帽；一朵天竺竹大得好比一盤水煮菠菜，拿別針別在胸口。這還不算，一邊還嘶牙裂嘴地，活像給地獄掌櫃的，要不然就像是那個得了疝氣的。

‘Hello, Andy’ says Mack, out of his face. ‘Glad to see you back. Things have happened since you went away.’

[哈囉，安迪，]美克跟我打招呼說。[高興你回來。你走之後事情改變了。]

‘I know it,’ says I, ‘and a sacrilegious sight it is. God never made you that way, Mack Lonsbury. Why do you scarify His works with this presumptuous kind of ribaldry?’

[我知道，]我說，[你這身打扮真真是給神侮辱。老天不曾把你打造成這副模樣，龍美克。你幹嘛要自作聰明，好好的把祂的傑作硬弄成這個俗氣不堪的鬼樣子？]

‘Why, Andy,’ said he, ‘they’ve elected me justice of the peace since you left.’

[這個，安迪，]他說，[你離開之後，我被選任這裏的治安推事。]

I looked at Mack close. He was restless and inspired. A justice of the peace ought to be disconsolate and assuaged.

我好好打量美克。他是既坐立不安又精神興奮。治安推事照理說要道貌黯然而，沉沉著著的才是。

Just then a young woman passed on the sidewalk; and I saw Mack kind of half snicker and blush, and then he raised up his hat and smiled and bowed, and she smiled and bowed, and went on by.

就在那時候，一個年輕女子從人行道走過；我看到美克偷笑不像偷笑，漲紅臉，然後舉起

帽子向她含笑行禮，那女子也含笑行禮，然後走開。

‘No hope for you,’ says I, ‘if you’ve got the Mary-Jane infirmity at your age. I thought it wasn’t going to take on you. And patent leather shoes! All this in two little short months!’

[你是沒有希望的，]我說，[假如你在這個老不修的年紀得到神魂顛倒症。我還以為你是個柳下惠之流的人物呢。你看看！還巴巴兒訂做皮鞋呢！短短兩個月就學了個騷的要死！]

‘I’m going to marry the young lady who just passed to-night,’ says Mack, in a kind of a flutter.

[我今天晚上要給剛才那年輕女士結婚，]美克說，有點得意地說。

‘I forgot something at the post-office,’ says I, and walked away quick.

[我有東西忘了放在郵局，]我說，然後快步走開。

I overtook that young woman a hundred yards away. I raised my hat and told her my name. She was about nineteen; and young for her age. She blushed, and then looked at me cook, like I was the snow scene from the ‘Two Orphans.’

我在一百碼遠趕上那女子。我舉起帽子，告訴她我的名子。她看來十九歲；而且比實際年齡年輕。她紅了一下臉，然後冷眼看了我一回，好比我是[雙孤兒]一齣戲裏的雪景。

‘I understand you are to be married to-night,’ I said.

[我知道妳今天晚上要結婚，]我說。

‘Correct,’ says she. ‘You got any objections?’

[對，]她說。[你反對嗎？]

‘Listen, siss,’ I begins.

[聽我說，姑娘，]我說。

‘My name is Miss Rebosa Reed,’ says she in a pained way.

[我的名子叫芮黎芬小姐，]她委屈地說。

‘I know it,’ says I. ‘Now, Rebosa, I’m old enough to have owed money to your father. And that old specious, dressed-up, garbled, seasick ptomaine prancing around avidiously like an irremediable turkey gobbler with patent leather shoes on is my best friend. Why did you go and

get him invested in this marriage business?'

[我就知道，]我說。[這個，黎芬，我老到能欠你父親的錢。那個擺樣子，打扮起來，弄成個四不像的，看起來患暈船的殭屍鬼，蹦蹦跳跳地好像一隻呱啦呱啦叫穿訂做皮鞋的火雞，是我最好的朋友。你是怎麼跟他搞起結婚玩意的？]

'Why, he was the only chance there was,' answered Miss Rebosa.

[哇，他是唯一的機會，]黎芬小姐回答。

'Nay,' says I, giving a sickening look of admiration at her complexion and style of features; 'with your beauty you might pick any kind of a man. Listen, Rebosa. Old Mack ain't the man you want. He was twenty-when you was nee Reed, as the papers say. This bursting into bloom won't last with him. He's all ventilated with oldness and rectitude and decay. Old Mack's down with a case of Indian summer. He overlooked his bet when he was young; and now he's suing Nature for the interest on the promissory note he took from Cupid instead of the cash. Rebosa, are you bent on having this marriage occur?'

[錯了，]我說，一面欣賞她漂亮的容貌和風格，弄得肚子發疼，[妳有這麼地漂亮，要那一個男人都不成問題。這樣子，黎芬。老美克不是妳要的人。他二十二歲的時候妳才出現報紙上新生嬰孩榜。這樣子曇花一現不會持久。他已經老得漏風，又朽又硬。他得了霉花運。年輕的時候他放走了機會；他現在正和老天爺打官司，想從丘彼德那裏拿點紅利，放著現金利息不顧。黎芬，妳是非結這個婚不可嗎？]

'Why, sure I am,' says she, oscillating the pansies on her hat, 'and so is somebody else, I reckon.'

[喔，當然，]她說，一轉頭把帽子上的紫蘿藍抖得左右地搖，[某人也是，我想。]

'What time is it to take place?' I asks.

[婚禮几點開始？]我問她。

'At six o'clock,' says she.

[六點，]她說。

I made up my mind right away what to do. I'd save old Mack if I could. To have a good, seasoned, ineligible man like that turn chicken for a girl that hadn't quit eating slate pencils and buttoning in the back was more than I could look on with easiness.

我當下便決定要怎麼做。只要可能，我要救我的朋友。眼看一位善良，年紀不小，而不適合的男人，為一個還在咬鉛筆，穿鈕扣在後頭的衣服的小女孩弄得神魂顛倒，最令我難以忍受。

'Rebosa,' says I, earnest, drawing upon my display of knowledge concerning the feminine intuitions of reason -- 'ain't there a young man in Pina -- a nice young man that you think a heap of?'

[黎芬，]我正經地說，把對女性以直覺論事的全副知識都派上用場--[在松林鎮有沒有一個年輕男人--一個好男人你很喜歡的？]

'Yep,' says Rebosa, nodding her pansies -- 'Sure there is! What d you think! Gracious!'

[有，]黎芬說，一點頭，帽子上的紫蘿藍也跟著點頭--[當然有！你想甚麼！老天！]

'Does he like you?' I asks. 'How does he stand in the matter?'

[他喜歡妳嗎？]我問她。[他在這樁事裏角色如何？]

'Crazy,' says Rebosa. 'Ma has to wet down the front steps to keep him from sitting there all the time. But I guess that'll be all over after to-night,' she winds up with a sigh.

[如癡如狂，]黎芬說。[媽必須把前門的階梯潑水，免得他成天坐在那裏。可是我想今天晚上就結束了，]她說著嘆了口氣。

'Rebosa,' says I, 'you don't really experience any of this adoration called love for old Mack, do you?'

[黎芬，]我說，[妳並沒有真正愛過老美克，對嗎？]

'Lord! no,' says the girl, shaking her head. 'I think he's as dry as a lava bed. The idea!'

[天哪！沒有，]這女孩說，一邊搖頭。[我想他和岩漿凝結的石板一樣沒趣。這念頭！]

'Who is the young man that you like, Rebosa?' I inquires.

[妳喜歡的年輕男子是誰？]我問。

'It's Eddie Bayles,' says she. 'He clerks in Crosby's grocery. But he don't make but thirty-five a month. Ella Noakes was wild about him once.'

[他是貝艾迪，]她說。[他在克羅比雜貨店當店員。可是他一個月才賺三十五塊。諾宜雅曾經對他瘋狂。]

'Old Mach tells me,' says I, 'that he's going to marry you at six o'clock this evening.'

[老美克告訴我，]我說，[他今天晚上六點要給你結婚。]

‘That’s the time,’ says she. ‘It’s going to be at our house.’

[是那時候，]她說。[在我家。]

‘Rebosa,’ says I, ‘listen to me. If Eddy Bayles had a thousand dollars cash -- a thousand dollars, mind you, would buy him a store of his own -- if you and Eddie had that much to excuse matrimony on, would you consent to marry him this evening at five o’clock?’

[黎芬，]我說，[聽我說。假如貝艾迪有一千塊錢現金--一千塊錢，告訴你，能買下他自己的店--假如你和艾迪有那麼多錢去共渡婚姻的話，你同意和他在五點鐘結婚嗎？]

The girl looks at me a minutes; and I can see these inaudible cogitations going on inside of her, as women will.

這女孩望著我看了一分鐘；我可以看到她腦子裏思考的齒輪在裏面滴嗒作響，女人都是這樣。

‘A thousand dollars?’ says she. ‘Of course I would.’

[一千塊錢？]她說。[當然我同意。]

‘Come on,’ says I. ‘We’ll go and see Eddie.’

[走，]我說。[我們去找艾迪。]

We went up to Crosby’s store and called Eddie outside. He looked to be estimable and freckled; and he had chills and fever when I made my proposition.

我們走到克羅比雜貨店，把艾迪叫出來。他看來可圈可點，滿臉雀斑；我告訴他我的條件的時候，他是冷一陣子，熱一陣子，兩隻眼睛睜得大大的。

‘At five o’clock?’ says he, ‘for a thousand dollars? Please don’t wake me up! Well, you are the rich uncle retired from the spice business in India. I’ll buy out old Crosby and run the store myself.’

[在五點鐘？]他說，[一千塊錢？請別把我搖醒！哇，你果然是從印度做香料生意退休回來的叔叔。我要把老克羅比的雜貨店買下來自己經營。]

We went inside and got old man Crosby apart and explained it. I wrote my check for a thousand dollars and handed it to him. If Eddie and Rebosa married each other at five he was to turn the money over to them.

我們進到裏面把老克羅比找來跟他解釋。我寫好一千塊錢的支票交給他。假如艾迪和黎芬



在五點鐘結婚的話，他就把錢給他們。

And then I gave 'em my blessing, and went to wander in the wild-wood for a season. I sat on a log and made cogitations on life and old age and the zodiac and the ways of women and all the disorder that goes with a lifetime. I passed myself congratulations that I had probably saved my old friend Mack from his attack of Indian summer. I knew when he got well of it and shed his infatuation and his patent leather shoes, he would feel grateful. 'To keep old Mack disinvolved,' thinks I, 'from relapses like this, is worth more than a thousand dollars.' And most of all I was glad that I'd made a study of women, and wasn't to be deceived any by their means of conceit and evolution.

然後我祝福他們，隨後便到林子裏溜躑。我坐在一節木頭上，腦海裏思考生命，年老，星宿，女人，生命裏亂七八糟的種種。我跟自己賀喜，因為我很有可能把老友美克的老命從霧花運頭上救了回來。我知道，一旦他難過一陣，把他的胡思亂想和訂製的皮鞋丟開以後，他會感激我的。[讓老美克得救，]我想，[由這樣的迷途歸來，比一千塊還值錢。]更重要的，我慶幸曾經研究過女人，她們由天演進化而來的欺騙手腕是騙不著我的。]

It must have been half-past five when I got back home. I stepped in; and there sat old Mack on the back of his neck in his old clothes with his blue socks on the window and the History of Civilization propped up on his knees.

我回到家的時候，至少也五點半了。進到屋裏；老美克穿著藍襪的二郎腿高高翹在窗檯上，一身舊衣裳，舒舒服服地半躺在椅子上，那本文明史撐開放在膝蓋上。

'This don't look like getting ready for a wedding at six,' I says, to seem innocent.

[看起來不像是準備六點鐘要結婚，]我說，假裝無辜的樣子。

'Oh,' says Mack, reaching for his tobacco, 'that was postponed back to five o'clock. They sent me a note saying the hour had been changed. It's all over now. What made you stay away so long, Andy?'

[喔，]美克說，一面伸手去拿菸草，[婚禮提前到五點鐘。他們送信來告訴我時間變了。已經結束了。你怎麼在外面逗留這麼遲？]

'You heard about the wedding?' I asks.

[你聽說結婚的事？]

'I operated it,' says he. 'I told you I was justice of the peace. The preacher is off East to visit his folks, and I'm the only one in town that can perform the dispensations of marriage. I promised Eddie and Rebosa a month ago I'd marry 'em. He's a busy lad; and he'll have a grocery of his own some day.'

[我主持的，]他說。[我告訴過你我是和平推事。牧師到東部去拜訪親戚去了，我是鎮裏唯一能主持婚事的人。一個月前我答應艾迪和黎芬要給他們結婚。他忙得很；有一天會擁有自己的店。]

‘He will,’ says I.

[他會的，]我說。

‘There was lots of women at the wedding,’ says ack, smoking up. ‘But I didn’t seem to get any ideas from ‘em. I wish I was informed in the structure of their attainments like you said you was.’

[婚禮上女人很多，]美克說，一邊抽起菸。[可是呢，我對她們是一點概念都沒有。假如我跟你自己說的一樣，能了解她們到底安的是甚麼心計就好了。]

‘That was two months ago,’ says I, reaching up for the banjo.

[那是兩個月前的事，]我說。一邊伸手去拿五弦琴。