

21. AN AFTERNOON MIRACLE

【二十一】一場下午的奇蹟

At the United States end of an international river bridge, four armed rangers sweltered in a little 'dobe hut, keeping a fairly faithful espionage upon the lagging trail of passengers from the Mexican side.

一座跨過國際大河的橋在美國的這邊，四位武裝的巡騎躲在一個小小的墨西哥式泥磚房子裏汗流浹背地監視從墨西哥那邊過來遲緩而稀落的行人。

Bud Dawson, proprietor of the Top Notch Saloon, had, on the evening previous, violently ejected from his premises one Leandro Garcia, for alleged violation of the Top Notch code of behaviour. Garcia had mentioned twenty-four hours as a limit, by which time he would call and collect a painful indemnity for personal satisfaction.

頂尖沙龍的老闆杜巴德前一天晚上動刀動槍地把一個叫賈斯亞的從他的酒店甩出來，因為這個人犯了最高層次的罪行。賈某揚言二十四小時之內要來再度拜訪這個酒店而且要收取造成他心情不爽快的賠償。

This Mexican, although a tremendous braggart, was thoroughly courageous, and each side of the river respected him for one of these attributes. He and a following of similar bravoos were addicted to the pastime of retrieving towns from stagnation.

這個老墨，儘管吹牛吹慣了，卻是渾身是膽，也就是爲了這個，河岸兩邊都爲了各自的原因敬畏他。他和他臭氣相投的黨羽都慣於把這一帶昏昏沉沉寧靜的市鎮掀得鷄飛狗跳。

The day designated by Garcia for retribution was to be further signalled on the American side by a cattlemen's convention, a bull fight, and an old settlers' barbecue and picnic. Knowing the avenger to be a man of his word, and believing it prudent to court peace while three such gently social relaxations were in progress, Captain McNulty, of the ranger company stationed there, detailed his lieutenant and three men for duty at the end of the bridge. Their instructions were to prevent the invasion of Garcia, either alone or attended by his gang.

賈某揚言報復的那天，在美國這邊正巧逢上一場牛人大集會，一場鬥牛表演，還有一場串演老式移民的烤肉和野餐大會。相信這位報復者言出必行，另一方面，也衡量了一下既然有三場這麼斯文的社交集會正要進行，當地巡騎隊隊長麥上尉把他的副隊長和三位執勤隊員佈置在國際大橋這邊。他給他們的指示是要阻止賈某不論是單獨的或者是結黨的進攻過來美國這邊。

Travel was slight that sultry afternoon, and the rangers swore gently, and mopped their brows in their convenient but close quarters. For an hour no one had crossed save an old woman enveloped in a brown wrapper and a black mantilla, driving before her a burro loaded with kindling wood tied in small bundles for peddling. Then three shots were fired down the street, the sound coming clear and snappy through the still air.

那個熱而潮濕的下午，幾位巡騎和著氣地罵著髒話，那個躲藏的地方雖然方便，卻有點密不通風，熱的他們必須從額頭抹掉汗水。一個小時，不見一個行人，唯一的一個是個女人包著棕色的

蓋身毯子，黑色頭紗，趕著一頭滿載一小綁一小綁用來生火的木材的驢子要過來這邊賣。接著，三聲槍響，畫過寧靜的晌午空氣清脆地噼啪作響。

The four rangers quickened from sprawling, symbolic figures of indolence to alert life, but only one rose to his feet. Three turned their eyes beseechingly but hopelessly upon the fourth, who had gotten nimbly up and was buckling his cartridge-belt around him. The three knew that Lieutenant Bob Buckley, in command, would allow no man of them the privilege of investigating a row when he himself might go.

四位巡騎頃刻由臥姿一躍而起，由懶洋洋轉變到警覺的標準動作，但是呢，其中只有一位真正站起來。其他三位以懇求似的又知道沒有用的眼光望著第四位，這第四位呢，動作敏捷地站起身，開始把子彈帶圍扣在自己的腰上。這三個人知道包布帛中尉，也就是他們這小組的小隊長，只要他自己能幹，絕不會准許任何其他隊員來查個水落石出到底吵吵鬧鬧的是什麼回事。

The agile, broad-chested lieutenant, without a change of expression in his smooth, yellow-brown, melancholy face, shot the belt strap through the guard of the buckle, hefted his sixes in their holsters as a belle gives the finishing touches to her toilette, caught up his Winchester, and dived for the door. There he paused long enough to caution his comrades to maintain their watch upon the bridge, and then plunged into the broiling highway.

這位動作敏捷，胸膛寬闊的中尉原來黃棕色的憂鬱面容面不改色，皮帶穿過扣環，把掛著兩把左輪手槍槍套的皮帶連槍一起繫到身上，動作好比一個女士打扮自己完結時候的壓軸好戲，然後提起溫徹斯特來福槍，俯身直奔屋門。他剎那逗留指示他的隨員把橋盯好之後，縱身一躍，進入鼎沸的街道。

The three relapsed into resigned inertia and plaintive comment.

剩下的三位由原來的機警轉為無可奈何，開始這麼講評。

"I've heard of fellows," grumbled Broncho Leathers, "what was wedded to danger, but if Bob Buckley ain't committed bigamy with trouble, I'm a son of a gun."

"我聽說有些家夥，"馬皮子這麼嘮叨，"是危險的拜把兄弟，但是比起他們呢，包布帛不是和麻煩犯重婚罪才有鬼。"

"Peculiarness of Bob is," inserted the Nueces Kid, "he ain't had proper trainin'. He never learned how to git skeered. Now, a man ought to be skeered enough when he tackles a fuss to hanker after readin' his name on the list of survivors, anyway."

"包兄奇怪的一點是，"牛爺小子插嘴，"他沒有正式訓練。他從來學不會怎麼害怕。一個人看到自己的名字被刊登在生存者名單上面的時候，應該在處理一團狗大便來聞狗屎的時候稍微收斂一點。"

"Buckley," commented Ranger No. 3, who was a misguided Eastern man, burdened with an education, "scraps in such a solemn manner that I have been led to doubt its spontaneity. I'm not quite onto his system, but he fights, like Tybalt, by the book of arithmetic."

“布帛，”第三號巡騎這麼下評語，他是個被教育糟蹋了腦袋瓜子的東部人，“這麼一板正經地應碴兒地，我開始懷疑他的直覺反應是不是有問題。我不瞭解他的反應系統，可是，他幹起來好比羅密歐情人的表哥泰伯一樣，依照微積分的原則，一板一眼的。”

“I never heard,” mentioned Broncho, “about any of Dibble’s ways of mixin’ scappin’ and cipherin’.”

“從來沒聽說過這種鬼話，”馬皮子說，“什麼東部人把找碴兒和紅樓夢一類的高檔文學混為一談的。”

“Triggernometry?” suggested the Nueces infant.

“那個叫手槍扳機三角代數文學？”牛爺爺小寶寶這麼猜。

“That’s rather better than I hoped from you,” nodded the Easterner, approvingly. “The other meaning is that Buckley never goes into a fight without giving away weight. He seems to dread taking the slightest advantage. That’s quite close to foolhardiness when you are dealing with horse-thieves and fence-cutters who would ambush you any night, and shoot you in the back if they could. Buckley’s too full of sand. He’ll play Horatius and hold the bridge once too often some day.”

“狗嘴居然吐出象牙來！¹不賴不賴，”東部人點頭稱讚。“言外之意，是說包兄打架前，從來不占便宜。好像他害怕比人家占有任何一點點優勢都不行。對付這些晚上暗算你的馬賊和剪鐵絲網的小偷如此這般，簡直是有勇無謀。包某膽量太大。有一天他會太過自告奮勇，吃不完兜著走，應付不來。”

“I’m on there,” drawled the Kid; “I mind that bridge gang in the reader. Me, I go instructed for the other chap—Spurious Somebody—the one that fought and pulled his freight, to fight ‘em on some other day.”

“我同意，”小夥子拉長他的鼻音講話，“我處理把橋當地盤的那黨混混。我呢，有人指示我去找那個叫酥皮什麼的幫忙，那個家夥打起架有斤有兩的。改天找他們算賬。”

“Anyway,” summed up Broncho, “Bob’s about the gamest man I ever see along the Rio Bravo. Great Sam Houston! If she gets any hotter she’ll sizzle!” Broncho whacked at a scorpion with his four-pound Stetson felt, and the three watchers relapsed into comfortless silence.

“不管怎麼樣，”馬皮這麼說，“包某是我在好大河沿岸看過最有膽子的人。山姆休士頓大爺！好大河再加點熱，都要燒開了！”一面說，馬皮拿起他四磅重的西部帽掃死一隻蠍子，三位望著橋監視的巡騎停止說話，氣氛不安而寧靜。

How well Bob Buckley had kept his secret, since these men, for two years his side comrades in countless border raids and dangers, thus spake of him, not knowing that he was the most arrant physical coward in all that Rio Bravo country! Neither his friends nor his enemies had suspected him of aught else than the finest courage. It was purely a physical cowardice, and only by an extreme, grim effort of will had he forced his craven body to do the bravest deeds. Scourging himself always, as a monk whips his besetting sin, Buckley threw himself with apparent recklessness into every danger, with the hope of some day

¹ 這句話是接著前句裏面那個字 Triggernometry 來的。原來是 Trigonometry 也就是三角學。因為他們在談論槍戰，其中有位老兄把槍戰和莎士比亞的戲劇連接在一起，又提起算數，另一位聽了把三件事情混為一談，發明出“手槍扳機三角代數文學。”那位東部來受過教育的位老兄於是讚許他狗嘴居然吐出象牙來。

ridding himself of the despised affliction. But each successive test brought no relief, and the ranger's face, by nature adapted to cheerfulness and good-humour, became set to the guise of gloomy melancholy. Thus, while the frontier admired his deeds, and his prowess was celebrated in print and by word of mouth in many camp-fires in the valley of the Bravo, his heart was sick within him. Only himself knew of the horrible tightening of the chest, the dry mouth, the weakening of the spine, the agony of the strung nerves—the never-failing symptoms of his shameful malady.

包某保密的功夫真的到家，兩年來，這幾個同夥人跟他一起執勤，出生入死也不計其數了，又這麼批評他，哪裏知道他其實是好大河那一帶最惡名昭彰的懦夫！他的敵人也好，朋友也好，從來沒有懷疑過他除了勇氣十足，一身是膽之外，還有什麼其他東西。中國人有一句話講得好，置之死地而復生，他因為實質上是個懦夫，所以呢，必須百般無情地搬弄，才把他發抖的身體強逼去做大膽的事情。一直鞭答自己，好比和尚為自己糾纏的罪孽懲罰自己一樣，包某看起來沒頭沒腦的就往危險裏鑽，期望有一天他會不這麼害怕。然而，一次接著一次，並沒有帶來任何的緩和，他的臉呢，天生自然屬於快樂而幽默的，由是變得沉重憂鬱。好大河這一帶的開拓地區都欽佩他的勇敢行爲，不論是報上所刊登的，或者營火旁邊的口碑，都津津樂道他的勇力；在他的內心，他其實害怕的要死。如人飲水，冷暖自知，只有他自己明白害怕時胸部的緊縮，口乾舌燥，背脊發軟，和神經拉得太緊的那種痛苦—這一切都保證跟著他的羞恥弊病隨之而來。

One mere boy in his company was wont to enter a fray with a leg perched flippantly about the horn of his saddle, a cigarette hanging from his lips, which emitted smoke and original slogans of clever invention. Buckley would have given a year's pay to attain that devil-may-care method. Once the debonair youth said to him: "Buck, you go into a scrap like it was a funeral. Not," he added, with a complimentary wave of his tin cup, "but what it generally is."

他們巡騎隊以前有一個根本還是小孩子，他跟人吵架的時候，把一隻腳掛在馬鞍頭，吊兒郎當地，口角吊著一支香烟，一邊吐煙，一邊吐出自己發明的俏皮話罵人。包某情願付出一年的薪水，來換取那種兵來將擋，水來土掩，神鬼齊來也不當一回事的閑情逸致。有一次，這位快樂似神仙的小鬼跟他說：“老包，你要吵架的時候，要有好似去參加葬禮的心裏準備。而不是，”他點頭讚許地搖一搖手裏的錫鐵杯子，“一般所謂的吵架。”

Buckley's conscience was of the New England order with Western adjustments, and he continued to get his rebellious body into as many difficulties as possible; wherefore, on that sultry afternoon he chose to drive his own protesting limbs to investigation of that sudden alarm that had startled the peace and dignity of the State.

包某的良心有新英格蘭傳統，加上美國西部的調整，而且呢，他一再地迫使向他反抗的身體盡可能去經歷一次又一次的艱難；也就是爲了這個，那個濕熱的下午，他自願驅使給他提出抗議的兩條腿去偵察那響把德州的和平和尊嚴驚嚇了的突發警報，

Two squares down the street stood the Top Notch Saloon. Here Buckley came upon signs of recent upheaval. A few curious spectators pressed about its front entrance, grinding beneath their heels the fragments of a plate-glass window. Inside, Buckley found Bud Dawson utterly ignoring a bullet wound in his shoulder, while he feelingly wept at having to explain why he failed to drop the "blamed masquerooter," who shot him. At the entrance of the ranger Bud turned appealingly to him for confirmation of the devastation he might have dealt.

再往下兩條街就是頂尖沙龍。包某看到了這次騷動的蹟象。幾位好奇的圍觀者擠在入口，腳底下踩過一扇玻璃窗的碎片。到了裏面，包某看到杜巴德全然不顧肩膀的一處傷口，一面多愁善感地哭著，因為他必須跟大家解釋他為什麼沒有打倒那個打傷他的“該死的畜生。”巡騎進來的時候，巴德面轉向他，好像在祈求這位新來者證實他處理過的這個災禍的嚴重性。

“You know, Buck, I’d ‘a’ plum got him, first rattle, if I’d thought a minute. Come in a-masque-rootin’, playin’ female till he got the drop, and turned loose. I never reached for a gun, thinkin’ it was sure Chihuahua Betty, or Mrs. Atwater, or anyhow one of the Mayfield girls comin’ a-gunnin’, which they might, liable as not. I never thought of that blamed Garcia until—”

“你知道，布帛，我本該一槍打中他，假如我動了腦袋瓜子的話。他進來的時候打扮成戴面具亂搞亂跳的女人，然後一脫，搖身一變。我沒有去拿槍，一直以爲是奇瓦瓦的貝蒂，或者安瓦特太太，或者任何一個來這裏亂搞一通的。我一直沒想到是賈斯亞—”

“Garcia!” snapped Buckley. “How did he get over here?”

“賈斯亞？”包某不屑一聲說。“他怎麼過來這裏的？”

Bud’s bartender took the ranger by the arm and led him to the side door. There stood a patient grey burro cropping the grass along the gutter, with a load of kindling wood tied across its back. On the ground lay a black shawl and a voluminous brown dress.

巴德的侍酒員把巡騎的膀臂一抓，帶他到一個旁門。在門外，一頭耐心好脾氣的灰驢沿著水溝吃草，背上載著材薪。地上落著一張女人的黑頭巾和一襲寬大的棕色衣服。

“Masquerootin’ in them things,” called Bud, still resisting attempted ministrations to his wounds. “Thought he was a lady till he gave a yell and winged me.”

“穿著那些玩化妝舞會，”巴德大聲說，仍然拒絕讓人家整理他的傷口。“以爲是個女的，一直到他大叫一聲賞了我一個子彈。”

“He went down this side street,” said the bartender. “He was alone, and he’ll hide out till night when his gang comes over. You ought to find him in that Mexican lay-out below the depot. He’s got a girl down there—Pancha Sales.”

“他沿這條旁街走下去了，”侍酒員說。“他一個人，他要躲起來等他的黨羽過來。你該去車站下面的老墨區去找他。他有個姑娘在那裏—莎瓣紮。”

“How was he armed?” asked Buckley.

“他怎麼裝備？”包某問。

“Two pearl-handled sixes, and a knife.”

“兩把珍珠柄左輪，和一把刀。”

“Keep this for me, Billy,” said the ranger, handing over his Winchester. Quixotic, perhaps, but it was Bob Buckley’s way. Another man—and a braver one—might have raised a posse to accompany him. It was Buckley’s rule to discard all preliminary advantage.

“幫我把這個看好，比利，”巡騎說，把溫徹斯特來福槍拿給他。唐吉柯德再世，然而，這就是包布帛的作風。任何一個人—比他更勇敢的人—很可能招來一團義勇兵一起來執行任務。包某的宇宙萬有引力第一定律是：捐棄所有起始優勢。

The Mexican had left behind him a wake of closed doors and an empty street, but now people were beginning to emerge from their places of refuge with assumed unconsciousness of anything having happened. Many citizens who knew the ranger pointed out to him with alacrity the course of Garcia's retreat.

那位老墨走過的地方，家門緊閉，街上行人絕蹟，現在嘛，人頭又開始鑽出來，即使有事也假裝沒察覺任何事發生一樣。

As Buckley swung along upon the trail he felt the beginning of the suffocating constriction about his throat, the cold sweat under the brim of his hat, the old, shameful, dreaded sinking of his heart as it went down, down, down in his bosom.

包某一開始搖擺地走在追逐的路綫，馬上感覺喉嚨開始窒息的緊縮，沿著帽簷流下寒冷的汗滴，心在肚子裏老伴似地，羞恥地，恐怖地，往下沉，沉，沉。

The morning train of the Mexican Central had that day been three hours late, thus failing to connect with the I. & G.N. on the other side of the river. Passengers for Los Estados Unidos grumblingly sought entertainment in the little swaggering mongrel town of two nations, for, until the morrow, no other train would come to rescue them. Grumblingly, because two days later would begin the great fair and races in San Antone. Consider that at that time San Antone was the hub of the wheel of Fortune, and the names of its spokes were Cattle, Wool, Faro, Running Horses, and Ozone. In those times cattlemen played at crack-loo on the sidewalks with double-eagles, and gentlemen backed their conception of the fortuitous card with stacks limited in height only by the interference of gravity. Wherefore, thither journeyed the sowers and the reapers—they who stampeded the dollars, and they who rounded them up. Especially did the caterers to the amusement of the people haste to San Antone. Two greatest shows on earth were already there, and dozens of smallest ones were on the way.

墨西哥中部鐵路綫的火車那天遲了三小時，沒接上大河這邊的 I.&G.N. 的火車。前往美利堅合眾國的旅客們於是一邊發牢騷一邊勉強在這個裝腔作勢的美墨邊際雜種小鎮尋點開心，因為要等到明天才有火車來營救他們。令他們發牢騷的原因是兩天之後，聖安東尼將有牛人大集會，以及各項比賽。我們必須明白，聖安東尼當時是命運大轉輪的中心軸，這個軸又涵蓋了牛隻，羊毛，賭博，賽馬，和臭氧，等各項名目。想當年，牛人在人行道賭丟金幣的遊戲，看誰丟金幣丟的最接近那一道木條的縫隙誰就最贏；到底要輸要贏根本無從捉摸起，那些人卻把賭注下得嚇死人的高，唯有地心引力才能決定那麼高的高度是不是要塌下來。於是乎，金錢的種植者和收成者都迫不及待地要去那裏—散漫花錢的，以及仔細拾穗的。尤其是那些提供娛樂者更是急急地必須趕去湊熱鬧，這原因是兩家大牌的已經在那裏了，還有十來個比較小規模的，也不甘示弱地躡躍前往。

On a side track near the mean little 'dobe depot stood a private car, left there by the Mexican train that morning and doomed by an ineffectual schedule to ignobly await, amid squalid surroundings, connection with the next day's regular.

小小的老墨屋子形的車站旁邊有一條鐵路分支，上面有節私人的車廂停在那裏。那是跟著早上墨西哥那邊來的火車過來的，因為火車誤點，必須在這貧民區癡癡地等，等到明天的火車來把它拖走。

The car had been once a common day-coach, but those who had sat in it and gringed to the conductor's hat-band slips would never have recognised it in its transformation. Paint and gilding and certain domestic touches had liberated it from any suspicion of public servitude. The whitest of lace curtains judiciously screened its windows. From its fore end drooped in the torrid air the flag of Mexico. From its rear projected the Stars and Stripes and a busy stovepipe, the latter reinforcing in its suggestion of culinary comforts the general suggestion of privacy and ease. The beholder's eye, regarding its gorgeous sides, found interest to culminate in a single name in gold and blue letters extending almost its entire length—a single name, the audacious privilege of royalty and genius. Doubly, then, was this arrogant nomenclature here justified; for the name was that of "Alvarita, Queen of the Serpent Tribe." This, her car, was back from a triumphant tour of the principal Mexican cities, and now headed for San Antonio, where, according to promissory advertisement, she would exhibit her "Marvellous Dominion and Fearless Control over Deadly and Venomous Serpents, Handling them with Ease as they Coil and Hiss to the Terror of Thousands of Tongue-tied Tremblers!"

這節車廂原來是一節普通火車車廂，曾經坐過這節車廂而且為車長插在帽簷的罰單不安的旅客絕對不可能看出來它原來是一節普通火車車廂。重新粉刷過油漆，車廂內家庭式的擺飾，使得它看起來完完全全沒有為大眾使用過。灑脫地掛在窗子的緞帶是全世界最白淨的。車箱前端掛著墨西哥國旗懶懶散散地在熱空氣裏飄著。車廂後端有兩件東西：星條旗和一支忙著冒烟的烟囪，從烟囪裏颯出來的煙霧聞起來不但令人垂涎三尺，而且自然而然地令人欣羨車廂裏面的舒適和不用擔憂隱私會受到任何地干擾。看到這節車廂的人，在注意它美麗的外表的同時，發現自己的注意力會轉移到那個幾乎涵蓋整個車廂長度的藍金色漆成的名字—單一的名字，除了皇家和天才之外，沒有人這麼地大膽只用一個單一名字的。這個單名被大膽使用是有它雙重的順理成章的道理；很簡單，那個名字是“阿瓦莉塔，蛇族女王。”這節車廂在墨西哥幾個大城打了幾場勝仗之後，現在凱旋，準備前往聖安東尼。她到那裏，根據預做的廣告，她將展示她“在毒蛇的國度不可思議的統治和毫無畏懼的掌握，這些毒蛇張口吐舌，生氣地△△作響，成千旁觀者都咬緊牙根，身體發抖的時候，她輕輕鬆鬆地玩弄牠們，擺佈牠們！”

One hundred in the shade kept the vicinity somewhat depeopled. This quarter of the town was a ragged edge; its denizens the bubbling froth of five nations; its architecture tent, jacal, and 'dobe; its distractions the hurdy-gurdy and the informal contribution to the sudden stranger's store of experience. Beyond this dishonourable fringe upon the old town's jowl rose a dense mass of trees, surmounting and filling a little hollow. Through this bickered a small stream that perished down the sheer and disconcerting side of the great cañon of the Rio Bravo del Norte.

熱度是這麼熱，連陰地裏都超過華氏 100 度，於是這附近沒什麼人。鎮的這一角算是比較窮苦的地區；有五個國家的人在這裏滾沸起泡；住的是帳篷，茅屋，和墨西哥泥屋；假如說有什麼消遣的話，那就是那種小風琴，以及驟然由天而降的外來人小心翼翼地在那裏溜達的時候，自然而然地會得到的那種反應。假如我們把鎮的這一角比喻成一個不怎麼乾淨的臉的話，那麼他的臉頰上長著密密的樹叢，圍繞著嘴一般的一個空洞。由這個洞一條小溪潺潺流出，然後往下消失在北大河的驚險的懸崖峭壁。

In this sordid spot was condemned to remain for certain hours the impotent transport of the Queen of the Serpent Tribe.

蛇族女王的車廂現在也無可奈何，只好由命運安排，在這個骯髒的地方等候數小時。

The front door of the car was open. Its forward end was curtained off into a small reception-room. Here the admiring and propitiatory reporters were wont to sit and transpose the music of Señorita Alvarita's talk into the more florid key of the press. A picture of Abraham Lincoln hung against a wall; one of a cluster of school-girls grouped upon stone steps was in another place; a third was Easter lilies in a blood-red frame. A neat carpet was under foot. A pitcher, sweating cold drops, and a glass stood on a fragile stand. In a willow rocker, reading a newspaper, sat Alvarita.

車廂前門開著。前半部用一條簾子隔開，當成一個小小的接待室。在此，仰慕芳名態度和善的記者們往往把阿瓦莉塔小姐銀笛似的說話聲由啪啪作響的打字機轉換成刊登在報上的粉色新聞。一面牆上掛著亞伯拉罕林肯的畫像；另一面牆上是一群女學生在一個石頭階梯上的合照；第三張是一幅雪白的百合花框在血紅色的畫框裏。腳下地毯乾淨清爽。有一支尖嘴的水壺，壺身凝結著水滴，和一支玻璃杯一同放在一支文弱的架子上。房間裏有一張籐擺椅，阿瓦莉塔坐在上面，一邊看報紙。

Spanish, you would say; Andalusian, or, better still, Basque; that compound, like the diamond, of darkness and fire. Hair, the shade of purple grapes viewed at midnight. Eyes, long, dusky, and disquieting with their untroubled directness of gaze. Face, haughty and bold, touched with a pretty insolence that gave it life. To hasten conviction of her charm, but glance at the stacks of handbills in the corner, green, and yellow, and white. Upon them you see an incompetent presentment of the señorita in her professional garb and pose. Irresistible, in black lace and yellow ribbons, she faces you; a blue racer is spiralled upon each bare arm; coiled twice about her waist and once about her neck, his horrid head close to hers, you perceive Kuku, the great eleven-foot Asian python.

西班牙風格，你會說；安塔魯西亞，或者，說得更確切，巴斯克；那種結合，好比鑽石一樣，暗與火的結合。她的頭髮呢，子夜時分的紫葡萄色。眼睛呢，長而憂鬱，直視而且灼灼逼人。臉龐呢，高傲而大膽，帶點漂亮女孩的傲氣，也就是如此充滿了活躍的生氣。假如你還不信，就看角落裏那堆綠，藍，白色傳單好了。印刷廠怎麼努力也沒辦法把這位小姐穿著她職業性表演的裝束，連同姿態與神情表達得淋漓盡致。黑色絲帶，黃色絲結，她面向著你凝視，簡直令人無法抗拒；那雙裸露的臂膀上，纏繞著一條藍黑色的蛇；把她的腰饞了兩次，然後脖子又饞了一次，這條蛇恐怖的頭臉靠著她的臉，這就是庫庫，十一呎長的亞洲蟒。

A hand drew aside the curtain that partitioned the car, and a middle-aged, faded woman holding a knife and a half-peeled potato looked in and said:

有隻手把分隔車廂的簾子拉開，有個青春美貌猶留痕跡的中年婦人一手拿著一把菜刀，另一隻手拿著一粒皮削了一半的馬鈴薯，她說：

“Alviry, are you right busy?”

“阿麗，妳很忙嗎？”

"I'm reading the home paper, ma. What do you think! that pale, tow-headed Matilda Price got the most votes in the News for the prettiest girl in Gallipo—lees."

“媽，我在看家鄉報紙。你看！那個臉色蒼白，麻色頭髮的畢蒂雅根據報紙上說的在噶裏坡漂亮女孩競賽獲得最多選票。”

"Shush! She wouldn't of done it if you'd been home, Alviry. Lord knows, I hope we'll be there before fall's over. I'm tired gallopin' round the world playin' we are dagoes, and givin' snake shows. But that ain't what I wanted to say. That there biggest snake's gone again. I've looked all over the car and can't find him. He must have been gone an hour. I remember hearin' somethin' rustlin' along the floor, but I thought it was you."

“咻！假如妳在家她不可能這樣的，阿麗。老天，但願秋天結束前我們能回到家。我爲了這個假裝西班牙人全球亂闖表演蛇戲都厭煩了。可是，我不是要說這個。那條最大的蛇又不見了。我找遍了車都沒找到。牠一定走了一小時。我記得沿著地板沙沙作響，以爲是妳。”

"Oh, blame that old rascal!" exclaimed the Queen, throwing down her paper. "This is the third time he's got away. George never will fasten down the lid to his box properly. I do believe he's afraid of Kuku. Now I've got to go hunt him."

“噢，這老流氓真可惡！”女王罵道，一面丟下報紙。“這是牠第三次跑掉。喬治永遠不會好好關牠籠子的門。我想他怕庫庫。我現在不得不去找牠。”

"Better hurry; somebody might hurt him."

“最好快去；可能有人會傷害牠。”

The Queen's teeth showed in a gleaming, contemptuous smile. "No danger. When they see Kuku outside they simply scoot away and buy bromides. There's a crick over between here and the river. That old scamp'd swap his skin any time for a drink of running water. I guess I'll find him there, all right."

女王微露雪白的牙齒，不屑地一笑。“沒有危險。他們在外面看到庫庫，跑都來不及拉尿。這裏到河之間有條小溪。這老惡棍寧可拿牠的皮去換取喝一口溪裏流的水。我想會在那裏找到他，沒問題。”

A few minutes later Alvarita stopped upon the forward platform, ready for her quest. Her handsome black skirt was shaped to the most recent proclamation of fashion. Her spotless shirt-waist gladdened the eye in that desert of sunshine, a swelling oasis, cool and fresh. A man's split-straw hat sat firmly on her coiled, abundant hair. Beneath her serene, round, impudent chin a man's four-in-hand tie was jauntily knotted about a man's high, stiff collar. A parasol she carried, of white silk, and its fringe was lace, yellowly genuine.

幾分鐘之後，阿瓦莉塔走出車廂前段，站在進門的平臺上，準備出發找她的蛇。她氣派的黑裙子是根據最新的流行式樣剪裁出來的。緊包著她纖細腰肢的雪白襯衫看起來好像太陽照射的沙漠裏的一股甘泉。成捲濃密的頭髮上緊緊戴著一頂男人的細緻草帽。她沉著，豐滿，傲氣的臉頰下方俏皮地打著一支男人的四方領結，再往下是男人的高而硬邦邦的領子。她拿著一支白色絲織陽傘，傘邊縫的是黃色真絲緞。

I will grant Gallipolis as to her costume, but firmly to Seville or Valladolid I am held by her eyes; castanets, balconies, mantillas, serenades, ambuscades, escapades—all these their dark depths guaranteed.

她的裝束嘛，是屬於加里波利風格，她的眼睛呢，我堅信是屬於瑟維爾或者瓦拉多莉風情；它們深沉而暗色，保證比美卡斯塔內，巴爾康妮，漫提雅思，澀仁納德，安部斯卡德，鄂布斯卡等等，美目盼兮的風韻。

“Ain’t you afraid to go out alone, Alviry?” queried the Queen-mother anxiously. “There’s so many rough people about. Mebbe you’d better—”

“一個人就這麼出去你不害怕嗎，阿麗？”母后這麼耽心地問她。“外面有那麼多魯莽的人。也許你應該——”

“I never saw anything I was afraid of yet, ma. ‘Specially people. And men in particular. Don’t you fret. I’ll trot along back as soon as I find that runaway scamp.”

“我這輩子還沒有看過我害怕的東西，媽。尤其是人。更尤其是男人。不要氣惱。我找到那個跑掉的惡棍馬上快快回來。”

The dust lay thick upon the bare ground near the tracks. Alvarita’s eye soon discovered the serrated trail of the escaped python. It led across the depot grounds and away down a smaller street in the direction of the little cañon, as predicted by her. A stillness and lack of excitement in the neighbourhood encouraged the hope that, as yet, the inhabitants were unaware that so formidable a guest traversed their highways. The heat had driven them indoors, whence outdrifted occasional shrill laughs, or the depressing whine of a maltreated concertina. In the shade a few Mexican children, like vivified stolid idols in clay, stared from their play, vision-struck and silent, as Alvarita came and went. Here and there a woman peeped from a door and stood dumb, reduced to silence by the aspect of the white silk parasol.

鐵道附近塵土高高地積在空地上。阿瓦莉塔的眼睛馬上就看到偷跑出來的蟒蛇在地上刮出來的痕蹟。痕蹟跨過車站的地面，然後往外出到那條走向小溪谷的巷子，就跟她預料的一樣。這附近寧靜靜的，也沒有什麼特別令人興奮的事，於是乎令她懷著左近人家還不知道有這麼個恐怖的訪客通過他們這裏的交通大道的希望。炙熱的天氣把人家都趕到戶內去了，於是乎偶爾會傳出來老墨式的高揚笑聲，或者墨西哥手風琴令人抑制不住的低鳴。陰影裏幾個墨西哥小孩一邊玩，看到阿瓦莉塔從這裏走過，馬上變成呆若木鷄的泥像，眼睛鼓得吐吐的，嘴巴張的大大的，靜悄悄的。偶爾，有女人從窗子往外看，一看到那支白色絲傘，也是不可思議地站著發呆，啞口無言。

A hundred yards and the limits of the town were passed, scattered chaparral succeeding, and then a noble grove, overflowing the bijou cañon. Through this a small bright stream meandered. Park-like it was, with a kind of cockney ruralness further endorsed by the waste papers and rifled tins of picnickers. Up this stream, and down it, among its pseudo-sylvan glades and depressions, wandered the bright and unruffled Alvarita. Once she saw evidence of the recreant reptile’s progress in his distinctive trail across a spread of fine sand in the arroyo. The living water was bound to lure him; he could not be far away.

再往下走一百碼，出了小鎮邊境，莢芭樂樹開始茂盛，然後一小叢茂盛的林子，坐視小溪的山谷。一條光亮的流水蜿蜒其中。好像公園一樣，鄉下不像鄉下，城市不像城市，果然，來這裏野

餐者留下來的紙屑和被當成槍靶射擊的錫鐵罐子更進一步肯定了它的文化水平。沿著小溪，上上下下，穿梭在這個半森林似的林間空地和低窪地段，阿瓦莉塔漫遊其中，她看起來鮮亮而自信。一旦看到了這隻調皮搗蛋的逃學爬蟲在山谷裏一帶細沙上留下的明顯足跡，這裏的潺潺流水一定會勾引住牠，牠不會走遠的。

So sure was she of his immediate proximity that she perched herself to idle for a time in the curve of a great creeper that looped down from a giant water-elm. To reach this she climbed from the pathway a little distance up the side of a steep and rugged incline. Around her chaparral grew thick and high. A late-blooming ratama tree dispensed from its yellow petals a sweet and persistent odour. Adown the ravine rustled a seductive wind, melancholy with the taste of sodden, fallen leaves.

她這麼確定這條逃走的蛇就在附近，於是乎就挨著一叢沿著一棵大榆樹爬下來的寄生蘭花草，坐在那裏休閒片刻。從走道到這個栖息之地，她必須爬上一段小小的斜坡。四周圍莢芭樂樹茂密。一株晚開的苜塔瑪樹所結的黃色花瓣送出香甜濃密的香氣。一陣令人陶醉的風往下徐徐輕撫山谷，加上土裏浸濕的葉子氣味，又給添上了憂鬱的氣氛。

Alvarita removed her hat, and undoing the oppressive convolutions of her hair, began to slowly arrange it in two long, dusky plaits.

阿瓦莉塔把帽子拿掉，把濃密有點壓迫人的波浪般頭髮打開，慢慢地把它打成兩條長長的暗色辮子。

From the obscure depths of a thick clump of evergreen shrubs five feet away, two small jewel-bright eyes were steadfastly regarding her. Coiled there lay Kuku, the great python; Kuku, the magnificent, he of the plated muzzle, the grooved lips, the eleven-foot stretch of elegantly and brilliantly mottled skin. The great python was viewing his mistress without a sound or motion to disclose his presence. Perhaps the splendid truant forefelt his capture, but, screened by the foliage, thought to prolong the delight of his escapade. What pleasure it was, after the hot and dusty car, to lie thus, smelling the running water, and feeling the agreeable roughness of the earth and stones against his body! Soon, very soon the Queen would find him, and he, powerless as a worm in her audacious hands, would be returned to the dark chest in the narrow house that ran on wheels.

五呎開外，隱藏在濃密的長青灌木林深處，兩隻寶石般明亮的眼睛牢牢盯著她。庫庫這條大蟒蛇捲臥在那裏；在牠們裝甲的嘴臉，分叉的舌頭的國度裏，十一呎長高雅發亮的花紋皮膚，也可以說是國王一般。這條大蟒蛇完全靜悄悄地偷看牠的女主人，絲毫不動彈以免走漏任何一點風聲。這條亮晶晶的逃學者可能知道遲早要被捕捉，現在嘛，反正有枝葉隱蔽著牠，還不如來玩一下捉迷藏，看看能延長多久逃跑的時間。多麼愜意呀，你看！在熱和風塵撲撲地坐火車之後，能趴在這地上，聞著潺潺流水的氣味，讓肚子下面粗糙的地面和石頭來撫摸牠！任何一秒鐘，牠的女王就要找到牠，用無情的雙手把牠像一條無助的小蟲一樣拿著，回歸那輛四個輪子跑的狹窄屋子的一支暗暗的箱子裏面。

Alvarita heard a sudden crunching of the gravel below her. Turning her head she saw a big, swarthy Mexican, with a daring and evil expression, contemplating her with an ominous, dull eye.

阿瓦莉塔突然間聽到下面石子路有人走路的聲音。轉頭一看，她看到一個高大，黑黝黝的墨西哥人，一副大膽又魔鬼的表情，拿著惡意而昏暗的眼色打量著她。

“What do you want?” she asked as sharply as five hairpins between her lips would permit, continuing to plait her hair, and looking him over with placid contempt. The Mexican continued to gaze at her, and showed his teeth in a white, jagged smile.

“你要幹什麼？”她嘴裏咬著五根髮夾，一面脫口而出，一面繼續打她的辮子，不恥而鎮定地看著他。這墨西哥繼續盯住她，一面歪著嘴笑，露出白牙來。

“I no hurt-y you, Señorita,” he said.

“我不，不傷害你，小姐，”他說。

“You bet you won’t,” answered the Queen, shaking back one finished, massive plait. “But don’t you think you’d better move on?”

“你最好不要，”女王回答，把一條打好的大辮子往後甩。“你不是該繼續走你的路嗎？”

“Not hurt-y you—no. But maybeso take one beso—one li’l kees, you call him.”

“不會傷害你—不會。可是，也許親一下--輕輕的吻一下，妳們是不是這麼說的。”

The man smiled again, and set his foot to ascend the slope. Alvarita leaned swiftly and picked up a stone the size of a coconut.

這個人又笑了，而且開始爬那個斜坡。阿瓦莉塔很快地俯身拿起一塊椰子般大的石頭。

“Vamoose, quick,” she ordered peremptorily, “you coon!”

“快，滾蛋，”她斷然警告命令他，“浣熊！”

The red of insult burned through the Mexican’s dark skin.

這墨西哥人受侮辱漲紅的臉通過黝黑的皮膚溢現出來。

“Hidalgo, Yo!” he shot between his fangs. “I am not neg-r-ro! Diabla bonita, for that you shall pay me.”

“我是紳士！”由他的獠牙噴出。“我不是黑鬼！漂亮的女鬼，為這個你要為我付出代價。”

He made two quick upward steps this time, but the stone, hurled by no weak arm, struck him square in the chest. He staggered back to the footway, swerved half around, and met another sight that drove all thoughts of the girl from his head. She turned her eyes to see what had diverted his interest. A man with red-brown, curling hair and a melancholy, sunburned, smooth-shaven face was coming up the path, twenty yards away. Around the Mexican’s waist was buckled a pistol belt with two empty holsters. He had laid aside his sixes—possibly in the jacal of the fair Pancha—and had forgotten them when the passing of the fairer Alvarita had enticed him to her trail. His hands now flew instinctively to the holsters, but finding the weapons gone, he spread his fingers outward with the eloquent, abjuring, deprecating Latin gesture, and stood like a rock. Seeing his plight, the newcomer unbuckled his own belt containing two revolvers, threw it upon the ground, and continued to advance.

他很快往上爬兩步，可是由不弱的手臂甩出的那石頭不偏不倚地打在他胸口。他踉踉蹌蹌地搖擺回到走道，轉了半身，看到一個人可把那個女孩完全由他的腦海裏忘得一乾二淨。她轉過頭看到到底是什麼轉移了他的注意力。有個人在那裏，紅棕色捲髮，憂鬱，太陽曬黑，臉刮得乾淨的面

容，由二十碼之外，朝著這個方向走過來。這個老墨的腰間纏著一條手槍皮帶，兩支槍套空空的。他把兩支左輪擺在一邊 – 可能是在跟他的漂亮瓣紮玩的時候 – 而當更漂亮的阿瓦莉塔走過引起他注意而跟著尾隨到這裏的時候，把手槍完全忘了。他馬上直覺地很快伸手準備拔槍，卻發現槍套空空如也，於是把手心往上一擺，擺出那個最具代表性，完全放棄，輕蔑藐視的拉丁標準手勢，站在那裏，像個石頭一樣。看到這個人的困境，新來的這個人也把自己掛著兩支手槍的腰帶解開，丟到地上，繼續走向前。

“Splendid!” murmured Alvarita, with flashing eyes.

“漂亮！”阿瓦莉塔喃喃自語，雙眼閃亮。

As Bob Buckley, according to the mad code of bravery that his sensitive conscience imposed upon his cowardly nerves, abandoned his guns and closed in upon his enemy, the old, inevitable nausea of abject fear wrung him. His breath whistled through his constricted air passages. His feet seemed like lumps of lead. His mouth was dry as dust. His heart, congested with blood, hurt his ribs as it thumped against them. The hot June day turned to moist November. And still he advanced, spurred by a mandatory pride that strained its uttermost against his weakling flesh.

包布帛根據自己所規定 – 發自他敏感良心給自己的懦弱神經加上的瘋狂義勇行為 – 的規條而行，放棄了槍支，走向敵人，那個老朋友似的令他厭惡的畏懼感弄得他肚子發疼。氣管緊縮，呼吸呼呼作響。兩腳重的像兩袋子鉛塊。口腔發乾，好似塞了一嘴巴的灰。他的心充滿血液，衝著胸膛跳得胸肋骨發疼。炙熱的六月天變成了黏濕的十一月。他以那股強己所難，完全消弱自己的驕傲空殼子仍然繼續推進，

The distance between the two men slowly lessened. The Mexican stood, immovable, waiting. When scarce five yards separated them a little shower of loosened gravel rattled down from above to the ranger's feet. He glanced upward with instinctive caution. A pair of dark eyes, brilliantly soft, and fierily tender, encountered and held his own. The most fearful heart and the boldest one in all the Rio Bravo country exchanged a silent and inscrutable communication. Alvarita, still seated within her vine, leaned forward above the breast-high chaparral. One hand was laid across her bosom. One great dark braid curved forward over her shoulder. Her lips were parted; her face was lit with what seemed but wonder – great and absolute wonder. Her eyes lingered upon Buckley's. Let no one ask or presume to tell through what subtle medium the miracle was performed. As by a lightning flash two clouds will accomplish counterpoise and compensation of electric surcharge, so on that eyeglance the man received his complement of manhood, and the maid conceded what enriched her womanly grace by its loss.

兩人之間的距離逐漸縮短。老墨動都不動等著。距離不到五呎的時候，一陣小石頭雨點般掉到巡騎的腳邊。他直覺地小心往上看。一對暗色眼睛，柔和而明亮，火辣地溫柔，瞧著他自己的眼睛看。好大河最畏懼和最大膽的心彼此默默又莫測高深地相許。阿瓦莉塔仍然坐在那叢寄生蘭花草之中，傾身向前，上身露出有胸這麼高的莢芭拉樹。一隻手由前面抱著胸。一股暗色辮子蓋過肩膀垂在前面。兩唇微張，煥發出驚奇的臉色 – 偉大而絕對的驚奇臉色。她把兩眼含情脈脈地瞪著巴某的眼。到底奇蹟是透過了什麼媒介發生的，我們也不用浪費工夫去胡思亂猜。譬如天上的兩朵雲經由閃電，會完成陰陽調和，相輔相成的超級充電一樣，於是在那驚鴻一瞥，這男人得到了男子漢大丈夫的畢業證書，這個女的，更是心領了失就是得的偉大女性質能不滅定律。

The Mexican, suddenly stirring, ventilated his attitude of apathetic waiting by conjuring swiftly from his bootleg a long knife. Buckley cast aside his hat, and laughed once aloud, like a happy school-boy at a frolic. Then, empty-handed, he sprang nimbly, and Garcia met him without default.

老墨突然一躍而起，原來可憐兮兮地等待，現在搖身一變，從鞋筒裏亮出一支長長的刀。巴某丟下帽子，像快樂的小學生玩遊戲的時候一樣發出一聲大笑。之後，空著手，往前豹子一般騰空一躍，賈斯亞的動作也絲毫沒有舛錯，與之敵對。

So soon was the engagement ended that disappointment imposed upon the ranger's warlike ecstasy. Instead of dealing the traditional downward stroke, the Mexican lunged straight with his knife. Buckley took the precarious chance, and caught his wrist, fair and firm. Then he delivered the good Saxon knock-out blow—always so pathetically disastrous to the fistless Latin races—and Garcia was down and out, with his head under a clump of prickly pears. The ranger looked up again to the Queen of the Serpents.

這場打鬥結束的這麼快，巡騎的戰鼓鼓起來的士氣有點失望，不怎麼過癮。這個老墨沒有像傳統式的一樣由上往下刺擊，他卻直挺挺地向前衝擊。巴某預防好了，把他手腕一抓，牢而結實。然後呢，他賞了那記好老薩克森花開萬朵的拳頭給這個老墨小子—對於沒拳頭的拉丁男生來說，一直是那麼令他們可憐兮兮，悲劇慘慘的—賈某頃刻間倒在地上，不省人事，頭埋在一叢仙人掌下面。巡騎再度擡頭，雙眼看著這位蛇國度的女王。

Alvarita scrambled down to the path.

阿瓦莉塔快快下到走道上。

"I'm mighty glad I happened along when I did," said the ranger.

“真高興我正好來到此地，”巡騎說。

"He—he frightened me so!" cooed Alvarita.

“他—他把我嚇死了！”阿瓦莉塔開始撒嬌。

They did not hear the long, low hiss of the python under the shrubs. Wiliest of the beasts, no doubt he was expressing the humiliation he felt at having so long dwelt in subjection to this trembling and colouring mistress of his whom he had deemed so strong and potent and fearsome.

他們沒有聽到樹叢下面一條蟒蛇低聲地嘶嘶作響。群獸之中最狡獪的，無疑地，牠怎麼會這麼長的一段歲月，臣服在這位現在渾身發抖，臉色害臊的女主人之下，任其擺佈，牠還以為她是什麼鐵膽銅身，巫婆之類的厲害和恐怖的人物呢。真的是羞死人了！

Then came galloping to the spot the civic authorities; and to them the ranger awarded the prostrate disturber of the peace, whom they bore away limply across the saddle of one of their mounts. But Buckley and Alvarita lingered.

市政府派來的人騎馬來到；巡騎把這位直挺挺躺在地上的擾亂治安者賞給他們，隨後他們把他肚子朝下僵直地橫擺在一匹馬的馬鞍上帶走。包某和阿瓦莉塔款步而行。

Slowly, slowly they walked. The ranger regained his belt of weapons. With a fine timidity she begged the indulgence of fingering the great .45's, with little "Ohs" and "Ahs" of new-born, delicious shyness.

真的是款步的款步而行。巡騎重新撿起他的槍帶。她故弄玄虛地要求能不能給她看一下這雙 45 口徑手槍，一邊小聲地發出“哦”和“啊哦”的讚嘆聲，好像她從來沒有這麼初生嬰兒一樣害羞過，這麼小孩子一樣羞答答地甜蜜兮兮過。

The cañoncito was growing dusky. Beyond its terminus in the river bluff they could see the outer world yet suffused with the waning glory of sunset.

小山谷逐漸昏暗下來。小溪兩岸的稍微高翹的土堆再往外，他們可以看到外邊世界還浸泡在落日餘暉之中。

A scream—a piercing scream of fright from Alvarita. Back she cowered, and the ready, protecting arm of Buckley formed her refuge. What terror so dire as to thus beset the close of the reign of the never-before-daunted Queen?

突然一聲驚叫—阿瓦莉塔突然發出一聲刺透人骨的驚呼。她往後退，然後要蹲下的時候，包某隨時備便的手臂毫不猶豫護著她。到底是什麼恐怖的事情這麼嚴重，使得從來不害怕的女王必須把她的統治生涯宣告中斷？

Across the path there crawled a caterpillar—a horrid, fuzzy, two-inch caterpillar! Truly, Kuku, thou went avenged. Thus abdicated the Queen of the Serpent Tribe—viva la reina!

他們前面有一條毛蟲在地上爬—一條毛茸茸，令人毛骨悚然的兩吋長毛蟲！真的，庫庫，人家真的替你報復的便便當當。蛇族女王的統治謹此宣告落幕—女王萬歲！