

## 22. CHRISTMAS BY INJUNCTION

### 【二十二】奉鈞旨過聖誕

Cherokee was the civic father of Yellowhammer. Yellowhammer was a new mining town constructed mainly of canvas and undressed pine. Cherokee was a prospector. One day while his burro was eating quartz and pine burrs Cherokee turned up with his pick a nugget, weighing thirty ounces. He staked his claim and then, being a man of breadth and hospitality, sent out invitations to his friends in three States to drop in and share his luck.

賈若其是黃錘鎮的老爹。黃錘是個新的採礦小鎮，這裏的人住的是帆布和沒處理過的松木搭蓋起來的簡單房子。賈某原來是個探礦人。有一天，他的驢子在鋪滿石子和松樹屑的地上吃草的時候，他挖到了一塊三十盎士的金子。於是賈某標記了礦區，穩住礦權。由於他寬宏與好客的天性所趨，邀請了臨近三州的朋友來分享他的好運。

Not one of the invited guests sent regrets. They rolled in from the Gila country, from Salt River, from the Pecos, from Albuquerque and Phoenix and Santa Fe, and from the camps intervening.

沒有一位被邀請者拒絕他。他們從基拉鄉，從鹽河，從坡口，從阿巴克旗，從鳳凰城，從散塔菲，以及所有位居期間的市鎮陸續而到。

When a thousand citizens had arrived and taken up claims they named the town Yellowhammer, appointed a vigilance committee, and presented Cherokee with a watch-chain made of nuggets.

大概有一千位市民到達分享礦權之後，他們把這個市鎮命名為黃錘，指派了一個警覺委員會，打造了一條金塊錶帶，呈獻賈若其。

Three hours after the presentation ceremonies Cherokee's claim played out. He had located a pocket instead of a vein. He abandoned it and staked others one by one. Luck had kissed her hand to him. Never afterward did he turn up enough dust in Yellowhammer to pay his bar bill. But his thousand invited guests were mostly prospering, and Cherokee smiled and congratulated them.

錶帶呈獻儀式結束，過了三小時，他自己的礦脈挖空了。原因是他以為是個礦脈，其實是個小礦坑。放棄這個坑之後，他又一處一處試圖標記其他的礦脈。幸運之女神已經跟他吻手道別。其後他所挖到的金子，還不夠付他的酒吧錢。其他的一千被邀請來的客人則大致上混得很不錯，賈某跟他們微笑，恭喜他們。

Yellowhammer was made up of men who took off their hats to a smiling loser; so they invited Cherokee to say what he wanted.

黃錘是由脫帽向微笑的失敗者打招呼的人構成的地方；所以呢，他們邀請賈某說說他須要什麼。

"Me?" said Cherokee, "oh, grubstakes will be about the thing. I reckon I'll prospect along up in the Mariposas. If I strike it up there I will most certainly let you all know about the facts. I never was any hand to hold out cards on my friends."

“我？”賈某說，“哦，就是合夥採礦的衣食吧。我想我再到馬力婆娑試試運氣。假如我在那裏碰到好運氣，我一定會讓大家知道。我對朋友們一向有牌就出，從不保留。”

In May Cherokee packed his burro and turned its thoughtful, mouse-coloured forehead to the north. Many citizens escorted him to the undefined limits of Yellowhammer and bestowed upon him shouts of commendation and farewells. Five pocket flasks without an air bubble between contents and cork were forced upon him; and he was bidden to consider Yellowhammer in perpetual commission for his bed, bacon and eggs, and hot water for shaving in the event that luck did not see fit to warm her hands by his campfire in the Mariposas.

五月間，賈若其把驢子裝載好，面朝北出發。很多人護送他一直到還沒有界定的黃錘鎮邊界，然後跟他祝福，跟他道別。他們特地準備了五瓶酒硬送給他，那可是裝得酒和軟木塞之間一點空氣都沒有的滿滿的五個扁瓶子的酒；他們特地跟他表明，萬一幸運之神不願意在他的營火暖活她的手的話，他必須考慮黃錘鎮永遠是他歇腳，吃火腿蛋早餐，有熱水刮鬍子的地方。

The name of the father of Yellowhammer was given him by the gold hunters in accordance with their popular system of nomenclature. It was not necessary for a citizen to exhibit his baptismal certificate in order to acquire a cognomen. A man's name was his personal property. For convenience in calling him up to the bar and in designating him among other blue-shirted bipeds, a temporary appellation, title, or epithet was conferred upon him by the public. Personal peculiarities formed the source of the majority of such informal baptisms. Many were easily dubbed geographically from the regions from which they confessed to have hailed. Some announced themselves to be "Thompsons," and "Adamses," and the like, with a brazenness and loudness that cast a cloud upon their titles. A few vaingloriously and shamelessly uncovered their proper and indisputable names. This was held to be unduly arrogant, and did not win popularity. One man who said he was Chesterton L. C. Belmont, and proved it by letters, was given till sundown to leave the town. Such names as "Shorty," "Bow-legs," "Texas," "Lazy Bill," "Thirsty Rogers," "Limping Riley," "The Judge," and "California Ed" were in favour. Cherokee derived his title from the fact that he claimed to have lived for a time with that tribe in the Indian Nation.

黃錘鎮之父原來的綽號是怎麼來的？幹探金淘金這一行的人有他們獨特的一套命名方式。一個人用不着展示他的受洗證書來獲得一個名稱。一個人自己的名字是這個人的私人財產。爲了把這個人叫來酒吧喝酒，或者爲了把一個人和另一個藍衣雙足動物容易區分起見，這群人會自然而然地依循最順其自然，最理所當然的共識，給他取一個天衣無縫的絕妙名字，這個比找一百個相命先生來取的名字還好。代表一個人的特色的名字最爲大宗。有許多是由他們來自什麼地方，就得到什麼綽號。有些囂張地自稱“湯瑪森”啦，以及“亞當斯”啦，什麼的，反而令人懷疑他們是假惺惺的。又有些人愛慕虛榮，沒廉沒恥的，硬要把他們的真名有憑有據地亮出來。這個嘛，在做淘金這行的眼裏是大膽無禮的行爲，不時尚。有一位老兄自稱全名為“查斯特頓累死貝門”的，還拿出幾支信封來證明給大家看的，名字還沒拼完就被警告太陽下山之前必須走路，否則會有好看的。比較受歡迎的是“短腳腿”啦，“弓弧拐”啦，“德州老”啦，“懶鬼皮”啦，“羅口渴”啦，“芮擰皮”啦，“加州矮”啦，這一類的譯名。賈某得到他的譯名，是因爲他自稱曾經和賈若其印第安人住過一段日子。

On the twentieth day of December Baldy, the mail rider, brought Yellowhammer a piece of news.

十二月十二日那天，郵差光頭給黃錘鎮帶來一個消息。

“What do I see in Albuquerque,” said Baldy, to the patrons of the bar, “but Cherokee all embellished and festooned up like the Czar of Turkey, and lavishin’ money in bulk. Him and me seen the elephant and the owl, and we had specimens of this seidlitz powder wine; and Cherokee he audits all the bills, C.O.D. His pockets looked like a pool table’s after a fifteen-ball run.

“猜我在阿巴克旗看到什麼，”光頭跟酒吧裏面的客人說，“就是賈若其打扮成土耳其皇帝騷模騷樣的，花錢像流水一樣。什麼上帝的神蹟我們沒經過過？老弟，有沒有聽說過波西米亞粉泡酒，我們就是吃那個；賈若其付所有賬單，貨到錢來。他的口袋鼓鼓的，就像打彈子，把十五顆彈子都打到一個袋子裏面的時候那樣鼓鼓的。

“Cherokee must have struck pay ore,” remarked California Ed. “Well, he’s white. I’m much obliged to him for his success.”

“賈若其一定又挖到中獎坑了，”加州矮這麼說。“是的，他正典。為他成功我真高興。”

“Seems like Cherokee would ramble down to Yellowhammer and see his friends,” said another, slightly aggrieved. “But that’s the way. Prosperity is the finest cure there is for lost forgetfulness.”

“看起來賈若其要來黃錘鎮看他的朋友，”另一位帶了一絲傷感說。“可是呢，世間的事情就是這麼。成功是醫治失去的遺忘最好的藥劑。”

“You wait,” said Baldy; “I’m comin’ to that. Cherokee strikes a three-foot vein up in the Mariposas that assays a trip to Europe to the ton, and he closes it out to a syndicate outfit for a hundred thousand hasty dollars in cash. Then he buys himself a baby sealskin overcoat and a red sleigh, and what do you think he takes it in his head to do next?”

“請稍待，”光頭說；“我會說到這裏。賈若其在馬力婆娑挖到一個三呎寬的礦脈，金礦純到只要抓一把就足夠到歐洲旅行一趟。他把礦坑收起來把礦權十萬塊嘩啦啦的快來鈔票賣給一個聯合企業。然後給自己買了一件小海狗皮外套，一床紅雪橇，你看他老人家腦袋瓜子裏面是在打什麼算盤？”

“Chuck-a-luck,” said Texas, whose ideas of recreation were the gamester’s.

“豪賭一頓，”德州老這麼說，他自己的腦袋瓜子裏面所謂的娛樂就只有賭博這一件。

“Come and Kiss Me, Ma Honey,” sang Shorty, who carried tintypes in his pocket and wore a red necktie while working on his claim.

“甜心媽媽，來給我一個吻，”小矮個這麼說，這個人口袋裏永遠放一張女人照片，挖礦的時候戴著紅色領帶。

“Bought a saloon?” suggested Thirsty Rogers.

“買下一間酒吧？”羅口渴這麼猜。

“Cherokee took me to a room,” continued Baldy, “and showed me. He’s got that room full of drums and dolls and skates and bags of candy and jumping-jacks and toy lambs and whistles and such infantile truck. And what do you think he’s goin’ to do with them inefficacious knick-knacks? Don’t surmise none—Cherokee told me. He’s goin’ to lead ‘em up in his red sleigh and—wait a minute, don’t order no

drinks yet— he’s goin’ to drive down here to Yellowhammer and give the kids—the kids of this here town—the biggest Christmas tree and the biggest cryin’ doll and Little Giant Boys’ Tool Chest blowout that was ever seen west of the Cape Hatteras.”

“賈若其把我領到一個房間，”光頭繼續說下去，“給我看看那裏。他那個房間滿滿的，鼓啦，娃娃啦，溜冰鞋啦，一小袋一小袋的糖果啦，小箱子跳出來的小丑啦，玩具小綿羊啦，哨子啦，以及其他種種嬰孩的玩意兒。你想他要怎麼處理這些完全不切實際的廢物？不要猜—賈若其跟我說。他要把這些東西放到紅雪橇裏拖到—且慢，還不要叫酒—他要駕這個雪橇到黃錘鎮這裏送給小孩—這個鎮裏的小孩—哈特啦角往西最大的聖誕樹，最大的哭娃娃，小巨人男孩可以一翻翻開的工具箱。”

Two minutes of absolute silence ticked away in the wake of Baldy’s words. It was broken by the House, who, happily conceiving the moment to be ripe for extending hospitality, sent a dozen whisky glasses spinning down the bar, with the slower travelling bottle bringing up the rear.

光頭說完，接著兩分鐘百分之百絕對的沉寂。酒店主人也沒開口只做了一個動作，顯然很高興這是展示好客千載難逢的機會，把一打高腳杯賽車似的滑送到每一個在場的面前，緊接著稍微殿後，跟著屁股後頭的是一瓶酒也跟著送來。

“Didn’t you tell him?” asked the miner called Trinidad.

“你沒告訴他媽？”那個叫千里達的挖礦人這麼問。

“Well, no,” answered Baldy, pensively; “I never exactly seen my way to.

“這個，沒有，”光頭回答，若有所思地；“我不確定能夠這麼做。

“You see, Cherokee had this Christmas mess already bought and paid for; and he was all flattered up with self-esteem over his idea; and we had in a way flew the flume with that fizzy wine I speak of; so I never let on.”

“你看，賈若其已經買好這些聖誕節東西，都付了錢；自信滿滿，跟自己恭喜，雀躍地了不得。我們也讓那酒頭子就照我所說的那麼在我們的血液裏流了流；所以我沒跟他講。”

“I cannot refrain from a certain amount of surprise,” said the Judge, as he hung his ivory-handled cane on the bar, “that our friend Cherokee should possess such an erroneous conception of—ah—his, as it were, own town.”

“也難怪我覺得有點意外，”法官說，一邊把一支象牙柄拐杖掛在吧檯邊上，“我們的朋友賈若其把這個鎮當成自己的—呃—鎮卻下了這麼錯誤的判斷。”

“Oh, it ain’t the eighth wonder of the terrestrial world,” said Baldy. “Cherokee’s been gone from Yellowhammer over seven months. Lots of things could happen in that time. How’s he to know that there ain’t a single kid in this town, and so far as emigration is concerned, none expected?”

“哦，這並不是什麼地球的第八個奇觀，”光頭說。“賈某離開黃錘鎮已經超過七個月。很多事情都可能在這段時間發生。他怎麼知道這裏一個小孩都沒有，而且根據移民的趨向，也沒有一個會來？”

“Come to think of it,” remarked California Ed, “it’s funny some ain’t drifted in. Town ain’t settled enough yet for to bring in the rubber-ring brigade, I reckon.”

“你看，”加州矮這麼道，“很奇怪怎麼沒有一個飄來。鎮還沒有被移民到把橡皮筋黨也帶來的地步，我猜。”

“To top off this Christmas-tree splurge of Cherokee’s,” went on Baldy, “he’s goin’ to give an imitation of Santa Claus. He’s got a white wig and whiskers that disfigure him up exactly like the pictures of this William Cullen Longfellow in the books, and a red suit of fur-trimmed outside underwear, and eight-ounce gloves, and a stand-up, lay-down croshayed red cap. Ain’t it a shame that a outfit like that can’t get a chance to connect with a Annie and Willie’s prayer layout?”

“賈若其不只是買了禮物而已，他還，”光頭繼續說，“他還要扮裝成聖誕老人的模樣。他準備好了白假髮，白鬍鬚，要把自己打扮成書裏面那個威廉庫倫龍法羅的樣子，毛邊紅色的穿在外邊的睡衣，半磅重的手套，那頂紅帽子，站到一半又倒下來，毛球蓋到眼睛的。這樣子的裝扮沒有一點機會和一個安妮或者威力的禱告銜接起來的話不是太可惜了嗎？”

“When does Cherokee allow to come over with his truck?” inquired Trinidad.

“賈若其什麼時候要來？”千里達問。

“Mornin’ before Christmas,” said Baldy. “And he wants you folks to have a room fixed up and a tree hauled and ready. And such ladies to assist as can stop breathin’ long enough to let it be a surprise for the kids.”

“聖誕節前一天早上，”光頭回答。“他還要你們準備好一個房間，裏面擺好一棵樹。還要幾位忍得住呼吸的女士，免得走漏風聲給那些小孩子們。”

The unblest condition of Yellowhammer had been truly described. The voice of childhood had never gladdened its flimsy structures; the patter of restless little feet had never consecrated the one rugged highway between the two rows of tents and rough buildings. Later they would come. But now Yellowhammer was but a mountain camp, and nowhere in it were the roguish, expectant eyes, opening wide at dawn of the enchanting day; the eager, small hands to reach for Santa’s bewildering hoard; the elated, childish voicings of the season’s joy, such as the coming good things of the warm-hearted Cherokee deserved.

黃錘鎮不幸的條件已經這麼表明。這些臨時搭起來的單薄住屋從來就沒有為小孩子歡笑的声音歡欣鼓舞過；兩排帳篷和粗糙的屋子之間那條崎嶇不平的走道，也從來沒有過小孩子迫不及待的小腳臨幸過。他們以後會來。但是，以目前來講，黃錘鎮是個山裏的營區，每天早上當神秘的一天來到的時候，並沒有那種期待著的有點調皮搗蛋的眼睛張開大大的在那裏等待；好奇的小手伸出來要看看到底聖誕老人揹的袋子裏面到底藏的是什麼寶貝；季節一到的時候，小孩子興高采烈的聲音，這一切心地仁慈的賈若其所應該得到回報的東西。

Of women there were five in Yellowhammer. The assayer’s wife, the proprietress of the Lucky Strike Hotel, and a laundress whose washtub panned out an ounce of dust a day. These were the permanent feminines; the remaining two were the Spangler Sisters, Misses Fanchon and Erma, of the Transcontinental Comedy Company, then playing in repertoire at the (improvised) Empire Theatre. But of

children there were none. Sometimes Miss Fanchon enacted with spirit and address the part of robustious childhood; but between her delineation and the visions of adolescence that the fancy offered as eligible recipients of Cherokee's holiday stores there seemed to be fixed a gulf.

女人呢，黃錘鎮有五位。試金專家的太太，幸運中獎礦坑旅館的女主人，還有一個洗衣的女人，這位洗衣女人的洗衣盆每天都洗出一盎士的金砂。他們算是永久居民；另外兩位是洲際戲劇團的司潘哥姐妹，範瓊和爾瑪小姐，目前在（臨時搭起來的）帝國戲院演出。小孩子則一個都沒有。偶爾範瓊小姐盡心地客串活潑小孩的角色；可是嗎，把她的曲綫和想象中夠資格得到賈若其的禮物者身材相比較，似乎又有天壤之別。

Christmas would come on Thursday. On Tuesday morning Trinidad, instead of going to work, sought the Judge at the Lucky Strike Hotel.

聖誕節是星期四。星期二早晨千里達沒去上工，走去幸運中獎礦坑旅館去找法官。

"It'll be a disgrace to Yellowhammer," said Trinidad, "if it throws Cherokee down on his Christmas tree blowout. You might say that that man made this town. For one, I'm goin' to see what can be done to give Santa Claus a square deal."

“對黃錘鎮而言將是一件恥辱的事情，”千里達說，“假如這個鎮把賈若其聖誕樹這樁事情搞砸了。還不如說賈若其造了這個鎮。我嘛，我要去試試看能替聖誕老人做些什麼，也讓他公平一點。”

"My co-operation," said the Judge, "would be gladly forthcoming. I am indebted to Cherokee for past favours. But, I do not see—I have heretofore regarded the absence of children rather as a luxury—but in this instance—still, I do not see—"

“我將盡我一臂之力，”法官說，“高興這麼跟著做。我過去欠賈若其很多。可是呢，我看不出—我以前一直認為沒有小孩是這裏一件奢侈的事—可是呢，以目前的情況來說—仍然，我還是看不出來—”

"Look at me," said Trinidad, "and you'll see old Ways and Means with the fur on. I'm goin' to hitch up a team and rustle a load of kids for Cherokee's Santa Claus act, if I have to rob an orphan asylum."

“看我的，”千里達說，“你要看到老馬和識途這兩匹驢子穿上毛衣。我要套好一輛驢車，為賈若其聖誕老人的勾當趕一群小孩子來，即使要去孤兒院搶奪我也要如此做。”

"Eureka!" cried the Judge, enthusiastically.

“狀元及第！”法官叫道，充滿了熱心。

"No, you didn't," said Trinidad, decidedly. "I found it myself. I learned about that Latin word at school."

“不，你不，”千里達道貌岸然地說。“是我自己在學校學到那個拉丁字的。”

"I will accompany you," declared the Judge, waving his cane. "Perhaps such eloquence and gift of language as I possess will be of benefit in persuading our young friends to lend themselves to our project."

“我跟你一同，”法官說，一邊揮他的手杖。“或者我的口若懸河的語言天才能夠說服小孩子們來參加我們，共襄盛舉。”

Within an hour Yellowhammer was acquainted with the scheme of Trinidad and the Judge, and approved it. Citizens who knew of families with offspring within a forty-mile radius of Yellowhammer came forward and contributed their information. Trinidad made careful notes of all such, and then hastened to secure a vehicle and team.

一小時之內，整個黃錘鎮都知道了千里達和法官的點子，大家都贊同他們。鎮民裏面所有知道方圓四十哩之內有小孩的都來提供他們的線索。千里達把這些資訊小心地記錄下來，然後馬上去準備好驢車和一隊拉車的驢子。

The first stop scheduled was at a double log-house fifteen miles out from Yellowhammer. A man opened the door at Trinidad's hail, and then came down and leaned upon the rickety gate. The doorway was filled with a close mass of youngsters, some ragged, all full of curiosity and health.

他們第一個停留的地方離黃錘鎮十五哩，那是肩並肩建築在一起的兩棟小木屋。千里達一呼，一個人把門打開，走出來之後，靠在彎彎曲曲的籬笆門那裏。門裏面可以看到一群小孩擠在那裏，有些衣服破破爛爛的，但是都很好奇而健康。

“It's this way,” explained Trinidad. “We're from Yellowhammer, and we come kidnappin' in a gentle kind of a way. One of our leading citizens is stung with the Santa Claus affliction, and he's due in town tomorrow with half the folderols that's painted red and made in Germany. The youngest kid we got in Yellowhammer packs a forty-five and a safety razor. Consequently we're mighty shy on anybody to say 'Oh' and 'Ah' when we light the candles on the Christmas tree. Now, partner, if you'll loan us a few kids we guarantee to return 'em safe and sound on Christmas Day. And they'll come back loaded down with a good time and Swiss Family Robinsons and cornucopias and red drums and similar testimonials. What do you say?”

“是這樣的，”千里達解釋。“我們是黃錘鎮來的，我們呢，是來以一種文雅的方式來綁架小孩子的。我們的市民領袖之一得了聖誕節狂熱病，明天他就要來，要把全世界所有紅色，德國製造的東西的一半帶來。我們黃錘鎮最小的小孩現在揹一把左輪槍，而且用安全剃刀。於是乎這麼一來，把聖誕樹上的蠟燭點亮的時候，我們沒有那些叫‘哦’和‘啊’的小孩子。現在，夥伴，假如你借給我們幾個小孩，我們保證聖誕節那天安全無恙地把他們奉還。他們回來的時候，會滿載高興地回來，還有海角一樂園，還有豐豐富富的禮物，紅鼓啦，以及其他的他們很快樂的證據。你說怎麼樣？”

“In other words,” said the Judge, “we have discovered for the first time in our embryonic but progressive little city the inconveniences of the absence of adolescence. The season of the year having approximately arrived during which it is a custom to bestow frivolous but often appreciated gifts upon the young and tender—”

“換句話說，”法官補充說，“這是首次我們剛剛起始發達的小鎮覺得沒有小孩有什麼不便之處。這個依照禮俗把微不足道卻會被大大感謝的禮物加給小孩的季節就要到了—”

"I understand," said the parent, packing his pipe with a forefinger. "I guess I needn't detain you gentlemen. Me and the old woman have got seven kids, so to speak; and, runnin' my mind over the bunch, I don't appear to hit upon none that we could spare for you to take over to your doin's. The old woman has got some popcorn candy and rag dolls hid in the clothes chest, and we allow to give Christmas a little whirl of our own in a insignificant sort of style. No, I couldn't, with any degree of avidity, seem to fall in with the idea of lettin' none of 'em go. Thank you kindly, gentlemen."

“我瞭解，”這位家長說，一面用食指把烟斗的烟草壓緊。“我想不用強留你們了，紳士們。我和老伴有七個小孩，這麼說；而且，把這群小孩一個一個衡量一下，並沒有一個我覺得適合借給你們來應你們的急的。老伴做了一些爆玉米花糖和布娃娃，藏在衣服櫃子裏面，我們也可以容許自己很不怎麼起眼的方式自己興奮一下。不行，不管我怎麼貪圖什麼好東西，也不可能把任何一個讓給你們。很由衷謝謝你們，紳士們。”

Down the slope they drove and up another foothill to the ranch-house of Wiley Wilson. Trinidad recited his appeal and the Judge boomed out his ponderous antiphony. Mrs. Wiley gathered her two rosy-cheeked youngsters close to her skirts and did not smile until she had seen Wiley laugh and shake his head. Again a refusal.

他們下了山坡，又爬上另一個山坡，到達魏威力的場房。千里達把他的請求重複了一次，法官也把他輪唱的歌詞大聲演唱一次。魏太太把她兩位紅臉頰的小孩緊緊抱著，一直到威力笑出聲來，搖搖頭。又一次被拒絕。

Trinidad and the Judge vainly exhausted more than half their list before twilight set in among the hills. They spent the night at a stage road hostelry, and set out again early the next morning. The wagon had not acquired a single passenger.

千里達和法官照著單子上的名字拜訪了一半以上的人家，都沒有找到一個願意的，那時候天已經開始黑了。他們晚上在驛馬車的驛站休息，隔天大早又再度出發上路。馬車還是空空如也，沒有找到一個小孩。

"It's creepin' upon my faculties," remarked Trinidad, "that borrowin' kids at Christmas is somethin' like tryin' to steal butter from a man that's got hot pancakes a-comin'."

“我的感覺真的是有點怪怪的，”千里達說，“聖誕節借小孩就像一個人在等待熱鍋餅來，要偷他的奶油那麼的困難。”

"It is undoubtedly an indisputable fact," said the Judge, "that the— ah—family ties seem to be more coherent and assertive at that period of the year."

“這是不可否認的事實，”法官說，“這——啊——維繫家庭的力量似乎在這個季節特別地和諧而強勁有力。”

On the day before Christmas they drove thirty miles, making four fruitless halts and appeals. Everywhere they found "kids" at a premium.

聖誕節前一天他們趕了三十哩路，停了四次來說服人家，也都失敗了。不管到哪裏，他們發現“小孩”被視為最尊貴而且比起平常身價百倍。

The sun was low when the wife of a section boss on a lonely railroad huddled her unavailable progeny behind her and said:

太陽都快下山了，有一段荒涼的鐵路段段長的太太把不願借出的小孩藏在身後，跟他們說：

“There’s a woman that’s just took charge of the railroad eatin’ house down at Granite Junction. I hear she’s got a little boy. Maybe she might let him go.”

“有個女人剛剛接管花崗岩鐵路接點的小吃部。聽說她有個小男孩。她有可能讓他去。”

Trinidad pulled up his mules at Granite Junction at five o’clock in the afternoon. The train had just departed with its load of fed and appeased passengers.

千里達下午五點把驢子拉停在花崗岩鐵路接點。火車載滿了吃飽滿足的旅客剛剛離開。

On the steps of the eating house they found a thin and glowering boy of ten smoking a cigarette. The dining-room had been left in chaos by the peripatetic appetites. A youngish woman reclined, exhausted, in a chair. Her face wore sharp lines of worry. She had once possessed a certain style of beauty that would never wholly leave her and would never wholly return. Trinidad set forth his mission.

在這小吃部的階梯上，他們看到一個瘦而怒目而視的小男孩坐在那裏抽煙。旅客們逍遙自在的胃口把餐廳鬧得亂七八糟。有個看來年輕的婦人精疲力竭地斜躺在一張椅子上。由臉部的皺紋可以看出她極度的憂愁。由她的臉可以看出屬於往日永遠不會失去，也永遠不會回來的美貌。千里達開始表明他的任務。

“I’d count it a mercy if you’d take Bobby for a while,” she said, wearily. “I’m on the go from morning till night, and I don’t have time to ’tend to him. He’s learning bad habits from the men. It’ll be the only chance he’ll have to get any Christmas.”

“你們願意把巴伯帶去一會兒，真是我的運氣，”她筋疲力竭地說。“我一大早開始忙，一直到晚上，沒時間照看他。他從男人那裏學會壞習慣。這是他唯一能夠過一點點聖誕節的機會。”

The men went outside and conferred with Bobby. Trinidad pictured the glories of the Christmas tree and presents in lively colours.

兩個男人到外面和巴伯商量。千里達把他們的聖誕樹和禮物有多好看多彩多姿地描繪出來。

“And, moreover, my young friend,” added the Judge, “Santa Claus himself will personally distribute the offerings that will typify the gifts conveyed by the shepherds of Bethlehem to—”

“而且，年輕朋友，”法官接下去說，“聖誕老人要親自把代表伯利恆的牧羊人送來的禮物的後代送給—”

“Aw, come off,” said the boy, squinting his small eyes. “I ain’t no kid. There ain’t any Santa Claus. It’s your folks that buys toys and sneaks ’em in when you’re asleep. And they make marks in the soot in the chimney with the tongs to look like Santa’s sleigh tracks.”

“啊，滾蛋，”小男孩瞪著眼說。“我不是個小孩。根本沒有聖誕老人。那是你們買玩具，在人家睡覺的時候偷放進來的。在烟囱裏面用火鉗刮出記號，騙人家是聖誕老人的雪橇走過的痕蹟。”

“That might be so,” argued Trinidad, “but Christmas trees ain’t no fairy tale. This one’s goin’ to look like the ten-cent store in Albuquerque, all strung up in a redwood. There’s tops and drums and Noah’s arks and—”

“可能是這麼，”千里達跟他辯論，“可是聖誕樹不是神話故事。我們這個將會看起來像阿巴克旗的雜貨店，掛在一顆紅木樹上。有陀螺啦，鼓啦，諾亞方舟啦，和—”

“Oh, rats!” said Bobby, wearily. “I cut them out long ago. I’d like to have a rifle—not a target one—a real one, to shoot wildcats with; but I guess you won’t have any of them on your old tree.”

“哦，狗屁！”巴伯不耐煩地說。“早就不玩這些東西了。我要一支來福槍—不是用來打靶的—一支真的，來打野貓；但是嘛，我猜想你們的那棵老樹上沒有這個。”

“Well, I can’t say for sure,” said Trinidad diplomatically; “it might be. You go along with us and see.”

“哇，我不能確定這麼說，”千里達很有外交技巧地說；“有可能。你跟我們一起就能看到。”

The hope thus held out, though faint, won the boy’s hesitating consent to go. With this solitary beneficiary for Cherokee’s holiday bounty, the canvassers spun along the homeward road.

於是有了—一綫希望，雖然只是微弱的希望，男孩猶豫了一陣，同意一起去。賈若其假日的豐盛禮物有了這麼一個孤獨的受惠者，驢車的車篷轉了一百八十度，開始踏上回程。

In Yellowhammer the empty storeroom had been transformed into what might have passed as the bower of an Arizona fairy. The ladies had done their work well. A tall Christmas tree, covered to the topmost branch with candles, spangles, and toys sufficient for more than a score of children, stood in the centre of the floor. Near sunset anxious eyes had begun to scan the street for the returning team of the child-providers. At noon that day Cherokee had dashed into town with his new sleigh piled high with bundles and boxes and bales of all sizes and shapes. So intent was he upon the arrangements for his altruistic plans that the dearth of children did not receive his notice. No one gave away the humiliating state of Yellowhammer, for the efforts of Trinidad and the Judge were expected to supply the deficiency.

在黃錘鎮，那間空儲藏室簡直變成了亞馬遜仙女的閨房。女士們做得很好。房間裏面一株高高的聖誕樹直立地板中央，一直到最高的樹枝都掛了蠟燭，彩條，和足夠十幾個小孩玩的玩具。黃昏時分，期待的眼睛開始掃描那條街，看看小孩的供給者回來沒有。那天中午，賈若其駕著新挺挺的雪橇進鎮來，堆滿了捆包的，盒裝的，大大小小，各種形狀的東西。他這麼的熱心忘我，爲了這裏的小孩安排這一檔事，卻完全沒有去注意這裏根本沒有小孩。也沒有一個人把黃錘鎮這個羞恥的現況跟他走漏任何的風聲，他們知道千里達和法官正在努力工作，照理要來彌補這項缺失才是。

When the sun went down Cherokee, with many wings and arch grins on his seasoned face, went into retirement with the bundle containing the Santa Claus raiment and a pack containing special and undisclosed gifts.

太陽下山的時候，賈若其臉上掛了許多翅膀似的鬚鬚，笑得合不攏嘴，拿著那袋聖誕老人的衣裳和一袋神秘的禮物，要去躲起來。

“When the kids are rounded up,” he instructed the volunteer arrangement committee, “light up the candles on the tree and set ‘em to playin’ ‘Pussy Wants a Corner’ and ‘King William.’ When they get good and at it, why—old Santa’ll slide in the door. I reckon there’ll be plenty of gifts to go ‘round.”

“小孩一到，”他指示那隊自願安排委員會的成員，“把樹上的蠟燭都點上，讓他們演奏‘貓兒要一個角落’和‘威廉國王交響曲。’他們熱衷的時候，這個—老聖誕老會從門那裏溜進來。我估計有足夠的禮物給大家。”

The ladies were flitting about the tree, giving it final touches that were never final. The Spangled Sisters were there in costume as Lady Violet de Vere and Marie, the maid, in their new drama, “The Miner’s Bride.” The theatre did not open until nine, and they were welcome assistants of the Christmas tree committee. Every minute heads would pop out the door to look and listen for the approach of Trinidad’s team. And now this became an anxious function, for night had fallen and it would soon be necessary to light the candles on the tree, and Cherokee was apt to make an irruption at any time in his Kriss Kringle garb.

女士們圍著樹忙著打點，永遠忙不完的樣子。司潘哥姐妹，一個打扮成紫羅蘭女士，一個打扮成她的女僕瑪麗，這是為了表演她們的新劇，“礦工的新娘。”劇要到九點才上演，所以他們被歡送去幫忙聖誕樹的準備工作。每一分鐘都有人探出頭去聽看千里達的車回來沒有。越來越緊張了，因為天黑了，馬上就必須點樹上的蠟燭了，賈若其隨時就要穿著它克里斯群哥的裝束火山爆發似地爆進來了。

At length the wagon of the child “rustlers” rattled down the street to the door. The ladies, with little screams of excitement, flew to the lighting of the candles. The men of Yellowhammer passed in and out restlessly or stood about the room in embarrassed groups.

終於，“套”小孩牛仔的驢車轟隆隆地由街上走來，停在門那裏。女士們興奮地細聲呼叫，快快去點燃蠟燭。黃錘鎮的男人們不安地走進走出，或者害羞地成群站在那裏。

Trinidad and the Judge, bearing the marks of protracted travel, entered, conducting between them a single impish boy, who stared with sullen, pessimistic eyes at the gaudy tree.

千里達和法官飽經風塵地走進來，他們之間有一個頑皮的小孩子，他張著憂鬱不樂的眼睛打量這棵華麗虛飾的樹。

“Where are the other children?” asked the assayer’s wife, the acknowledged leader of all social functions.

“其他的小孩在哪？”試金專家的太太說，她是大家承認的所有社交場合的領袖。

“Ma’am,” said Trinidad with a sigh, “prospectin’ for kids at Christmas time is like huntin’ in a limestone for silver. This parental business is one that I haven’t no chance to comprehend. It seems that fathers and mothers are willin’ for their offsprings to be drowned, stole, fed on poison oak, and et by catamounts 364 days in the year; but on Christmas Day they insists on enjoyin’ the exclusive mortification of their company. This here young biped, ma’am, is all that washes out of our two days’ manoeuvres.”

“女士，”千里達一邊嘆口氣說，“在聖誕節淘小孩子金好比在石灰岩找銀子。當小孩子父母的勾當我一直沒有機會瞭解。看起來父親們和母親們在一年三百六十四天，讓他們的小孩淹死，偷掉，

毒橡樹毒死，大野貓吃掉都沒關係；唯有在聖誕節這麼一天，他們堅持自己獨自來享受小孩子給他們的苦刑。這個年輕的雙腳動物是我們忙了這兩天唯一能從礦坑裏洗出來的。”

“Oh, the sweet little boy!” cooed Miss Erma, trailing her De Vere robes to centre of stage.

“哦，甜蜜可愛的小孩！”爾瑪小姐母鳥護著小鳥一般地說，一邊拖著長長的戲裙走到戲臺中心。

“Aw, shut up,” said Bobby, with a scowl. “Who’s a kid? You ain’t, you bet.”

“啊，閉嘴，”巴伯皺眉頭說。“誰是小孩？你不是，敢說。”

“Fresh brat!” breathed Miss Erma, beneath her enamelled smile.

“臭乳未乾的小孩！”爾瑪小姐露出潔白的牙齒假笑，小聲地這麼罵。

“We done the best we could,” said Trinidad. “It’s tough on Cherokee, but it can’t be helped.”

“我們盡力而爲了，”千里達說。“苦了賈若其，可是沒辦法。”

Then the door opened and Cherokee entered in the conventional dress of Saint Nick. A white rippling beard and flowing hair covered his face almost to his dark and shining eyes. Over his shoulder he carried a pack.

門突然開起來，賈若其穿著聖誕老的裝束進來。白鬚飄飄的鬍子和頭髮幾乎把臉完全蓋著，只露出兩隻黑亮眼睛。肩上背著一個包包。

No one stirred as he came in. Even the Spangler Sisters ceased their coquettish poses and stared curiously at the tall figure. Bobby stood with his hands in his pockets gazing gloomily at the effeminate and childish tree. Cherokee put down his pack and looked wonderingly about the room. Perhaps he fancied that a bevy of eager children were being herded somewhere, to be loosed upon his entrance. He went up to Bobby and extended his red-mittened hand.

他進來的時候沒有一個人動。甚至連司潘哥姐妹都停止賣弄風情，轉向這個高大個子的人目不轉睛地看。巴伯站著，手放口袋，悶悶不樂地看那棵陰陽怪氣，給小孩子看的樹。賈若其放下包袱，四處張望。或者，他假想有一群按耐不住的小孩子被藏在哪裏，他進來的時候，要給他一個大大的驚喜。他走向巴伯，把戴著紅手套的手伸出來跟他握手。

“Merry Christmas, little boy,” said Cherokee. “Anything on the tree you want they’ll get it down for you. Won’t you shake hands with Santa Claus?”

“聖誕快樂，小男孩，”賈若其說。“樹上任何你要的東西，他們都會拿下來給你。要不要跟聖誕老人握握手？”

“There ain’t any Santa Claus,” whined the boy. “You’ve got old false billy goat’s whiskers on your face. I ain’t no kid. What do I want with dolls and tin horses? The driver said you’d have a rifle, and you haven’t. I want to go home.”

“根本沒有聖誕老人，”小男孩鼻子哼著說。“你把老山羊的鬍子戴在臉上。我不是小孩子。我要洋娃娃和錫鐵做的馬幹什麼？那個趕車的人說你有一支來福槍，結果根本沒有。我要回家。”

Trinidad stepped into the breach. He shook Cherokee's hand in warm greeting.

千里達在他們一來一往之間插進來。他跟賈若其握手，跟他熱心地打招呼。

"I'm sorry, Cherokee," he explained. "There never was a kid in Yellowhammer. We tried to rustle a bunch of 'em for your swaree, but this sardine was all we could catch. He's a atheist, and he don't believe in Santa Claus. It's a shame for you to be out all this truck. But me and the Judge was sure we could round up a wagonful of candidates for your gimcracks."

“很抱歉，賈若其，”他試圖解釋。“黃錘鎮連一個小孩都沒有。我們試圖去綁架一群來供你玩你的戲劇，但是呢，這個沙丁魚是我們唯一能上手的。他是個叛神者，不信聖誕老人。你這麼全力以赴真可惜。可是呢，我和法官還以為我們能載滿一車候選人來迎合你的那袋子嘩啦啦的玩具。”

"That's all right," said Cherokee gravely. "The expense don't amount to nothin' worth mentionin'. We can dump the stuff down a shaft or throw it away. I don't know what I was thinkin' about; but it never occurred to my cogitations that there wasn't any kids in Yellowhammer."

“沒關係，”賈若其深沉地說。“花費不值得一提。我們可以把它們往礦坑裏倒，或者乾脆丟掉。我不知道自己腦袋瓜子在想什麼；我連想都沒有想到黃錘鎮連一個小孩都沒有。”

Meanwhile the company had relaxed into a hollow but praiseworthy imitation of a pleasure gathering.

在這同時，這些人開始放下心來，雖然心裏若有所失，看起來還蠻像樣的好比聚集來這裏快樂一下的樣子。

Bobby had retreated to a distant chair, and was coldly regarding the scene with ennui plastered thick upon him. Cherokee, lingering with his original idea, went over and sat beside him.

巴伯遠遠地坐在一張椅子上，望著這些人的這場景象，臉色臭臭的。賈若其還懷著一絲原先的希望，走過去坐在他旁邊。

"Where do you live, little boy?" he asked respectfully.

“你住在哪裏，小男孩？”他禮貌地問他。

"Granite Junction," said Bobby without emphasis.

“花崗岩鐵路接點，”巴伯平平淡淡地說。

The room was warm. Cherokee took off his cap, and then removed his beard and wig.

這房子很熱。賈若其把帽子拿掉，然後也把鬍鬚和假髮拿掉。

"Say!" exclaimed Bobby, with a show of interest, "I know your mug, all right."

“嘿！”巴伯叫了一聲，有點興緻起來，“我認識你的臉，真的。”

"Did you ever see me before?" asked Cherokee.

“你曾經看過我嗎？”賈若其問他。

"I don't know; but I've seen your picture lots of times."

“我不知道；但是我看過你的相片很多次。”

“Where?”

“在哪裏？”

The boy hesitated. “On the bureau at home,” he answered.

男孩遲疑了一下。“在家裏抽屜上面，”他這麼回答。

“Let’s have your name, if you please, buddy.”

“請講你的名字，假如你高興的話，夥計。”

“Robert Lumsden. The picture belongs to my mother. She puts it under her pillow of nights. And once I saw her kiss it. I wouldn’t. But women are that way.”

“陸勞勃。那張相片是我媽媽的。她每天晚上把它放在枕頭下面。有一次我看到她親它。我不會這麼做。但是女人們就是這麼樣。”

Cherokee rose and beckoned to Trinidad.

賈若其站起來，招手叫千里達過來。

“Keep this boy by you till I come back,” he said. “I’m goin’ to shed these Christmas duds, and hitch up my sleigh. I’m goin’ to take this kid home.”

“把這個小男孩看好，直到我回來，”他說。“我要把這身聖誕大裝脫掉，把雪橇連頭口準備好。我要送這個小鬼回家。”

“Well, infidel,” said Trinidad, taking Cherokee’s vacant chair, “and so you are too superannuated and effete to yearn for such mockeries as candy and toys, it seems.”

“好，異教徒，”千里達一邊坐在賈若其原來坐的那張椅子上一邊說，“看起來你太老了，也太沒有力氣了，不喜歡這些糖果啦，玩具啦，什麼的玩意兒了。”

“I don’t like you,” said Bobby, with acrimony. “You said there would be a rifle. A fellow can’t even smoke. I wish I was at home.”

“我不喜歡你，”巴伯有點尖刻地說。“你說有來福槍。一個家夥甚至於不能抽烟。但願我在家裏。”

Cherokee drove his sleigh to the door, and they lifted Bobby in beside him. The team of fine horses sprang away prancingly over the hard snow. Cherokee had on his \$500 overcoat of baby sealskin. The laprobe that he drew about them was as warm as velvet.

賈若其把雪橇駕到門那裏，他們把巴伯抬上車坐在賈若其身邊。這隊好馬輕快地踏著乾硬的雪飛馳。賈若其穿著他那件五百塊錢的小海狗皮大衣。用那張蓋膝蓋用袍子把他們蓋好，暖活得像天鵝絨一樣。

Bobby slipped a cigarette from his pocket and was trying to snap a match.

巴伯把一根煙從口袋拿出來放在嘴角，然後開始點火柴。

“Throw that cigarette away,” said Cherokee, in a quiet but new voice.

“把煙丟掉，”賈若其低聲而且拿與以前不同的聲音說。

Bobby hesitated, and then dropped the cylinder overboard.

巴伯猶豫了一下，把煙丟到地上。

“Throw the box, too,” commanded the new voice.

“把整個盒子都丟掉，”這個新的聲音命令他。

More reluctantly the boy obeyed.

又更不情願地，但是這男孩照著做了。

“Say,” said Bobby, presently, “I like you. I don’t know why. Nobody never made me do anything I didn’t want to do before.”

“這個，”巴伯很快地說，“我喜歡你。也不知道爲什麼。從來沒有人要我做我不願意做的事情。”

“Tell me, kid,” said Cherokee, not using his new voice, “are you sure your mother kissed that picture that looks like me?”

“告訴我，小孩，”賈若其說，還是回到他以前的聲調，“你確定你媽媽吻那張看起來像我的照片嗎？”

“Dead sure. I seen her do it.”

“當然確信。我親眼看到的。”

“Didn’t you remark somethin’ a while ago about wanting a rifle?”

“你不是剛才提到要一支來福槍的嗎？”

“You bet I did. Will you get me one?”

“當然我提到。你要給我一支嗎？”

“To-morrow—silver-mounted.”

“明天就給你一銀柄的。”

Cherokee took out his watch.

賈若其拿出手錶看了一下。

“Half-past nine. We’ll hit the Junction plumb on time with Christmas Day. Are you cold? Sit closer, son.”

“九點半。我們將和聖誕節同一瞬間到達花崗岩鐵路接點。你冷嗎？靠近點坐，兒子。”