

24. The Cactus

【二十四】仙人掌

"The garments of his soul must have appeared sorry and threadbare. Vanity and conceit? These were the joints in his armor. And how free from either she had always been--But why--"

“他靈魂的衣裳看起來必定可憐兮兮磨破而露綫的。虛榮心與妄自尊大？這些是他盔甲的活動機關。這麼說，她就完全沒有受這些毛病的牽扯－但是，為什麼呢－”

The most notable thing about Time is that it is so purely relative. A large amount of reminiscence is, by common consent, conceded to the drowning man; and it is not past belief that one may review an entire courtship while removing one's gloves.

時光這件事最令人矚目的是它的純相對性。大家都同意一個快要溺死的人會看到許許多多的舊日光景；假如說在脫掉手套的那麼一剎那一個人把追求一個女孩子的歷史從頭到尾復習了一次，也不是什麼值得大驚小怪的事。

That is what Trysdale was doing, standing by a table in his bachelor apartments. On the table stood a singular-looking green plant in a red earthen jar. The plant was one of the species of cacti, and was provided with long, tentacular leaves that perpetually swayed with the slightest breeze with a peculiar beckoning motion.

崔士德就是這樣，站在他單身公寓的一張桌子旁邊一邊默想這件事。桌上的紅水缸裏面養了一株看來獨一無二的綠色盆景小樹。那是屬於仙人掌的一種，有那種長長觸鬚狀的葉子永遠在最細微的風裏也向人打招呼一樣搖搖擺擺著。

Trysdale's friend, the brother of the bride, stood at a sideboard complaining at being allowed to drink alone. Both men were in evening dress. White favors like stars upon their coats shone through the gloom of the apartment.

崔士德的朋友，也就是新娘的弟弟，站在餐具架子那裏一邊抱怨沒人陪他喝酒。兩個人都穿著禮服。他們外套上別著的白色花飾照透過這個公寓黑影似的憂鬱。

As he slowly unbuttoned his gloves, there passed through Trysdale's mind a swift, scarifying retrospect of the last few hours. It seemed that in his nostrils was still the scent of the flowers that had been banked in odorous masses about the church, and in his ears the lowpitched hum of a thousand well-bred voices, the rustle of crisp garments, and, most insistently recurring, the drawling words of the minister irrevocably binding her to another.

他打開手套的扣子的時候，崔士德的腦海裏閃過剛才幾小時裏面所發生破破碎碎的事。似乎他的鼻孔還聞到一堆堆擺滿教堂的花香，耳朵裏成千有教養的人低沉哼唱，清脆的衣服沙沙響聲，而最堅持重複在他耳朵裏的是牧師拉長音調唸頌經文把她不可收回地與另一個人結合了。

From this last hopeless point of view he still strove, as if it had become a habit of his mind, to reach some conjecture as to why and how he had lost her. Shaken rudely by the uncompromising fact, he had suddenly found himself confronted by a thing he had never before faced --his own innermost, unmitigated, arid unbedecked self. He saw all the garbs of pretence and egoism that he had worn now

turn to rags of folly. He shuddered at the thought that to others, before now, the garments of his soul must have appeared sorry and threadbare. Vanity and conceit? These were the joints in his armor. And how free from either she had always been--But why--

從這個最後的絕望觀點他繼續努力，如同在他的心理養成了一個習性，一定要把爲什麼失去了她又如何失去了她做出一個什麼樣的臆測。爲這個不可妥協的事實所震撼，他突然間發現自己面對了一件從來沒有面對的事情－他自己內心最深之處，全然的，未加修飾的自我。他一直在外表擺出的虛偽和妄自尊大一瞬間化爲愚頑的碎布。他想到到目前爲止在別人的眼中他靈魂的外衣必定是可憐兮兮而且磨破而露綫的令他就要發抖。虛榮心與妄自尊大？這些是他盔甲的活動機關。這麼說，她就完全沒有受這些毛病的牽扯－但是，爲什麼呢－

As she had slowly moved up the aisle toward the altar he had felt an unworthy, sullen exultation that had served to support him. He had told himself that her paleness was from thoughts of another than the man to whom she was about to give herself. But even that poor consolation had been wrenched from him. For, when he saw that swift, limpid, upward look that she gave the man when he took her hand, he knew himself to be forgotten. Once that same look had been raised to him, and he had gauged its meaning. Indeed, his conceit had crumbled; its last prop was gone. Why had it ended thus? There had been no quarrel between them, nothing--

當她慢步走在座椅中間的走道朝祭壇走去，他感覺到一股沒價值而鬱悶的興奮情操支持著他。他跟自己說她臉上的蒼白表情是爲了別人，而不是她將結爲連理的人。現在連這個最可憐的慰藉都被剝奪了。那個人拿起她的手的時候，她馬上睜大眼睛擡起頭來看他，他明白自己已經被遺忘九霄雲外。這個眼神曾經是擡起來看他的，他也忖度過它所意味的是什麼。真的，他的自負已經瓦解；支撐完全消失。爲什麼是這麼結果的呢？他們之間從無爭吵，沒任何--

For the thousandth time he remarshalled in his mind the events of those last few days before the tide had so suddenly turned.

他在腦海裏這麼反復地想都已經一千次了到底過去幾天發生了什麼事使得命運做了一百八十度的轉變。

She had always insisted upon placing him upon a pedestal, and he had accepted her homage with royal grandeur. It had been a very sweet incense that she had burned before him; so modest (he told himself); so childlike and worshipful, and (he would once have sworn) so sincere. She had invested him with an almost supernatural number of high attributes and excellencies and talents, and he had absorbed the oblation as a desert drinks the rain that can coax from it no promise of blossom or fruit.

她一直把他擺得高高的，他呢，也是順理成章地以皇家的姿態接受她的崇敬。她爲他燒的香十分香甜；這麼謙虛謹慎（他這麼告訴自己）；這麼小孩一樣這麼崇拜，而且（他曾經一度發誓）這麼真誠。她一直往他貼金爲了他有幾乎超自然的高超格調優點和才能，他也來者不拒地接受這些供奉，比如沙漠喝掉雨水卻不能保證能開花結果一樣。

As Trysdale grimly wrenched apart the seam of his last glove, the crowning instance of his fatuous and tardily mourned egoism came vividly back to him. The scene was the night when he had asked her to come up on his pedestal with him and share his greatness. He could not, now, for the pain of it, allow his mind to dwell upon the memory of her convincing beauty that night--the careless wave of her hair, the

tenderness and virginal charm of her looks and words. But they had been enough, and they had brought him to speak. During their conversation she had said:

崔士德扒開第二支手套的套口的時候，他自得意滿後悔已遲的妄自尊大最具代表性的例子栩栩如生呈現眼前。那情景是那天他邀請她上他的高臺來分享他的偉大的時候。現在嘛，他不能容許自己的心思沉迷在她那晚那麼美麗的那一幕，否則會太過痛苦而難挨－頭髮這麼不經意地抖動，臉上的表情和所講的話是那麼溫柔純情而迷人。這些就夠了，這些已經讓他開口說話了。在交談之中她曾說：

"And Captain Carruthers tells me that you speak the Spanish language like a native. Why have you hidden this accomplishment from me? Is there anything you do not know?"

“而且賈儒哲上校跟我說你講起西班牙話就像西班牙人一樣溜。爲什麼你把這個成就隱瞞不讓我不知道？還有任何事情你不通曉的嗎？”

Now, Carruthers was an idiot. No doubt he (Trysdale) had been guilty (he sometimes did such things) of airing at the club some old, canting Castilian proverb dug from the hotchpotch at the back of dictionaries. Carruthers, who was one of his incontinent admirers, was the very man to have magnified this exhibition of doubtful erudition.

這個，賈儒哲是個白癡。無疑地他（崔士德）曾經犯過（他有時候會這麼做）在俱樂部亮出一些從字典後頭找出來雜燴湯一般老朽隱喻的古老西班牙俗語。賈儒哲是他不由自主的仰慕者之一，就是他把這個出風頭的表演用擴音器放大成他是個西班牙文通的。

But, alas! the incense of her admiration had been so sweet and flattering. He allowed the imputation to pass without denial. Without protest, he allowed her to twine about his brow this spurious bay of Spanish scholarship. He let it grace his conquering head, and, among its soft convolutions, he did not feel the prick of the thorn that was to pierce him later.

但是，糟糕！她爲了崇拜他所做的表現甜美而奉承。他就那麼讓這虛名存在而沒有去否認它。一點都不拒絕地，他准許她把偽造的西班牙文學者的虛冠掛在他眉毛上。他容許它來修飾自己凱撒似征服者的頭，而且，桂冠軟綿綿地纏繞腦袋瓜子的時候，他沒感覺到隨後將要刺他的荊棘。

How glad, how shy, how tremulous she was! How she fluttered like a snared bird when he laid his mightiness at her feet! He could have sworn, and he could swear now, that unmistakable consent was in her eyes, but, coyly, she would give him no direct answer. "I will send you my answer to-morrow," she said; and he, the indulgent, confident victor, smilingly granted the delay. The next day he waited, impatient, in his rooms for the word. At noon her groom came to the door and left the strange cactus in the red earthen jar. There was no note, no message, merely a tag upon the plant bearing a barbarous foreign or botanical name. He waited until night, but her answer did not come. His large pride and hurt vanity kept him from seeking her. Two evenings later they met at a dinner. Their greetings were conventional, but she looked at him, breathless, wondering, eager. He was courteous, adamant, waiting her explanation. With womanly swiftness she took her cue from his manner, and turned to snow and ice. Thus, and wider from this on, they had drifted apart. Where was his fault? Who had been to blame? Humbled now, he sought the answer amid the ruins of his self-conceit. If--

多麼高興多麼害羞，她是高興害羞得都顫抖起來了！當他把他偉大的力量纏住她的雙腳的時候，她是怎麼像一隻小鳥一樣，撲著翅膀卻飛不得。他可以發誓，甚至於現在都還可以發誓，她的眼光顯示的絕對是同意，但是呢，卻因為膽怯羞羞的，沒有直接回答他。“我明天會送答案給你，”她說；在他呢，一個被慣壞了的，自信滿滿的優勝者，微笑答應了她延遲到明天沒關係。第二天，他窮等，不怎麼耐煩地，在自己房間裏等她的話。中午的時候，她的僕人到了門那裏，把插在紅陶瓶的一棵奇怪的仙人掌放在門那裏。沒有解釋，也沒有信條，只是那棵仙人掌上面掛了一個牌子，牌子上寫的是一些外國文或者是這植物的學名吧。他一直等到夜晚，還是沒有答案來。他的大大自尊心和被損的尊嚴阻礙著他去找她。過了兩天，那是晚飯的時候，他們相遇了。他們照舊習慣性地打招呼，她摒住氣望著他看，不知道他到底什麼意思，又含情脈脈地，熱衷地等他什麼似的。他有禮貌地，鐵石一般，等她的解釋。女性快速的直覺使得她馬上從他的舉止瞭解了到底是怎麼一回事，於是馬上表情變成冰雪一般。就是打這時候開始，他們越離越遠。他到底犯了什麼錯？是誰不是的呢？現在可謙虛下來了，現在他在自己的自以為是的荒墟之中尋找這個問題的答案。到底 --

The voice of the other man in the room, querulously intruding upon his thoughts, aroused him.

房間裏面另一個人的聲音在他沉思冥想之間像吵架一般把他叫醒過來。

"I say, Trysdale, what the deuce is the matter with you? You look unhappy as if you yourself had been married instead of having acted merely as an accomplice. Look at me, another accessory, come two thousand miles on a garlicky, cockroachy banana steamer all the way from South America to connive at the sacrifice--please to observe how lightly my guilt rests upon my shoulders. Only little sister I had, too, and now she's gone. Come now! take something to ease your conscience."

“怎麼樣，崔士德，到底是甚麼倒霉的一回事？你看起來臉臭臭的，好像是你自己結婚一樣，而不是來這裏做個伴郎充個共犯的名義而已。看看我，巴巴的從兩千哩之外的南美洲，乘那條大蒜味，蟑螂爬來爬去的香蕉船來這裏裝模作樣地默許這個犧牲祭典 – 能不能請你衡量一下看看我的罪行在我的肩膀上肩負起來是多麼的輕鬆。還是我唯一的姐妹呢，現在走掉了。來！喝點什麼來靜下你的良心來。”

"I don't drink just now, thanks," said Trysdale.

“我現在不喝，謝了，”崔士德說。

"Your brandy," resumed the other, coming over and joining him, "is abominable. Run down to see me some time at Punta Redonda, and try some of our stuff that old Garcia smuggles in. It's worth the trip. Hallo! here's an old acquaintance. Wherever did you rake up this cactus, Trysdale?"

“你們的白蘭地，”這另一個人說，一面走來他這裏，“真的是糟糕。哪天來瑞通達角看我，嚕嚕老賈西亞走私進來的。值得跑這麼一趟。哈羅！這兒有個舊相識。你是從哪裏耙到這棵仙人掌的，崔士德？”

"A present," said Trysdale, "from a friend. Know the species?"

“是人家送我的，”崔士德說，“一個朋友送的。你知道是什麼品種嗎？”

"Very well. It's a tropical concern. See hundreds of 'em around Punta every day. Here's the name on this tag tied to it. Know any Spanish, Trysdale?"

“我很熟悉。是熱帶的。在瑞通達角每天都要看幾百遍。這個掛簽上有它的名字。懂西班牙文嗎，崔士德？”

"No," said Trysdale, with the bitter wraith of a smile--"Is it Spanish?"

“不懂，”崔士德含著怒氣的苦笑說道－“那是西班牙文？”

"Yes. The natives imagine the leaves are reaching out and beckoning to you. They call it by this name-- Ventomarme. Name means in English, 'Come and take me.'"

“是的。當地人假想它的葉子伸出來跟你打招呼。他們用這個名字 -- 溫投馬迷 -- 稱呼它。這個名字翻成英文是，‘來取我。’”