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(翻译硕士)

机器翻译+译后编辑模式下小说文本

英汉翻译实践报告

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A Thesis Submitted to Southwest University of Science and
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A Report on the E-C Translation of Fiction Text Based
on Machine Translation and Post-editing

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Abstract

Machine translation is widely recognized in the application of professional texts, but there are controversies in the same application of literary texts. Although machine translation has the advantages of quickness and efficiency, it lacks subject cognition and cultural awareness which have obvious defects in emotional expression and semantic perception. Post-editing work by culturally aware human translators is needed to revise and embellish the machine translated texts. The application of "machine translation + post-editing" to literary texts is being increasingly noticed.

This article is a practical report on the English-Chinese translation of a fiction text. The source text is a novel titled "Rebel", which was published in 2013 and written by Pakistani-British author Qaisra Shahraz. The text mainly tells the love story of Laila who is an upper-class woman fighting against the traditional feudal culture while the language of the original text has strong cultural characteristics. The author will select Google Translate as the machine translation engine and perform post-editing work on machine translated texts with the help of YICAT online translation platform in the translation practice to take it as an example.

In the translation practice, the author will adopt the "machine translation + post-editing" approach to evaluate and analyze the machine translated text from lexical, syntactic and textual aspect so as to explore the feasibility of this translation model in fiction. In terms of lexicon, the translation mainly has problems with polysemous words, culture-loaded words, pronouns and omission of vocabulary. There is something wrong with sequence, long and mixed sentences and emotional expression in syntax of the translation. It also has difficulty in following the cohesion and coherence principles at textual aspect. The author will make suggestions for the development of machine translation based on the problems that arise in machine translated text to improve the applicability of machine in literary translation.

KEY WORDS: Machine translation; Post-editing; Fiction; Literary translation

摘 要

机器翻译在专业文本的应用上受到了广泛认可，但是在文学文本的应用上存在争议。机器翻译虽然具有翻译速度快和效率高的优点，但它缺乏主体认知，没有文化意识，在情感表达与语义感受上存在明显缺陷。这就需要充满文化意识的人工译者进行译后编辑工作，对机翻译文进行修改与润色。“机器翻译+译后编辑”的翻译方式在文学文本上的应用正受到越来越多的关注。

本文是一篇小说文本的汉英翻译实践报告。源文本是一篇名为《反叛》的长篇小说，出版于 2013 年，作者是巴基斯坦裔英国作家凯斯拉·沙赫拉兹。该文本主要讲述了上层阶级的莱拉为了爱情与传统封建文化做斗争的故事，原文语言具有浓厚的文化色彩。作者将以翻译实践为例，选取谷歌翻译作为机器翻译引擎，借助 YICAT 在线翻译平台，对机翻译文进行译后编辑。

在本次翻译实践中，作者将采取“机器翻译+译后编辑”的方式从词汇、句法和语篇三个方面对机翻译文进行评估分析，探讨这种翻译模式在小说文本中的可行性。在词汇方面，译文主要在多义词、文化负载词、指代词和漏译上存在问题；在句法方面，主要在语序、长难句和情感表达上存在问题；在语篇方面，译文主要在衔接和连贯性上存在问题。最后作者会根据机翻译文出现的问题，对机器翻译的发展提出建议，以提高机器翻译在文学翻译中的适用性。

关键词：机器翻译；译后编辑；小说；文学翻译

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Chapter One Introduction

1.1 Background of the Project

The machine translation approach is widely accepted and recognized in the field of translation of non-literary texts such as technology, news and finance with the breakthrough development of artificial intelligence technology because it has significant advantages in translating information-based texts with higher accuracy rate that require less modification. However, the translation of literary texts by machine translation has always been controversial. Many scholars believe that machine translation is not capable of translating literary texts. According to Wang Zuoliang (1984), one of the challenges that need to be solved for machine to take over the work of translators is how to make it become culturally aware. Since machine translation lacks cultural awareness, it cannot accurately translate the words with cultural content in the text and express the implied emotional meaning of the text. But Toral and Way (2014) said that these two terms (MT and literature) might seem incompatible at first glance and the applicability of MT to literature has not been studied rigorously from an empirical point of view.

It is true that relatively few studies on machine translation of literary texts have been conducted in China. Weng Yiming and Wang Jinping (2020) once explored the English machine translations of Chinese run-on sentences in literary discourse from the syntactic and textual aspects using a corpus approach and concluded that artificial intelligence-driven literary language translation still falls short of the human ideal. Li Yao (2021) established a corpus with the human and machine-translated versions of Yu Hua's classic work *Chronicle of a Blood Merchant* and compared the texts between them, concluding that the quality of machine translation has improved than before, but its application in literature is still far from being satisfactory.

However, foreign scholars have long started to study the application of machine translation in the field of literature from different aspects. "Besahir and Schwartz attempted to translate literary texts by machine and found a high acceptance of the translations among general readers in their readers' feedback, which indicates that the implementation of machine translation of literary texts among general readers is feasible and machine translation can transfer literary works to more countries."(Toral and Way, 2015) Omar and Gomaa (2020) pointed out that post-translation editing is an important way to improve the errors in machine translated texts by analyzing the errors in lexical, semantic and syntactic

aspects of machine translation.

A trend is now emerging in the translation community: “Traditional human translation has shifted to machine-assisted translation, and the ‘machine translation + post-editing’ model has become the mainstream working mode for current and future professional translators.” (Wang Huashu, 2018) Nowadays, machine translation has been widely used in various fields, and the use of “machine translation + post-editing” for translation work in the literature field is gradually increasing. As machine translation lacks cultural awareness, post-editing work by culturally aware translators is needed to make up for the lower level of quality of their translations. Cui Qiliang (2014) clearly stated that post-editing is being increasingly valued by translation companies while citing translation industry data to prove the development of post-editing. The purpose of this paper is to explore the feasibility of “machine translation + post-editing” in the application of fiction by analyzing the errors of machine translation.

1.2 Source Text Analysis

The source text for this translation practice is *Revolt* by Qaisra Sbabraz. Chapters 4-6 of the novel which are representative in nature were selected for translation study because the section contains a complete storyline, distinctive characterization and specific environmental descriptions as well as employs a variety of rhetorical and artistic techniques, making it an ideal experimental corpus for studying machine translated texts. The source text contains 11,586 words and the revised translation is approximately 19,000 words. The source text is mainly used for study and research within the project team, but not for commercial use.

“Since translating is a re-creative activity, a translation is also a literary work, and it is bound to reflect the unique linguistic style characteristics of the translator.”(Jiang Yue, 2014) As an expressive fiction text, the words appearing in the text are characterized by flexibility, richness and simplicity, which require the translator to have certain discriminatory skills to identify polysemous words, culture-loaded words and pronouns. The strategy of semantic translation should be adopted from the author’s perspective when translating so that the translation can show diversified cultural characteristics on the basis of the original text. The author of the source text is a British writer of Pakistani descent, who grew up in England and was influenced by the collision of Pakistani and Western cultures. The original text has many lexical expressions that reflect multicultural characteristics, which requires the translator to keep the meaning of it as much as possible to make the reader feel the unique writing style and the social background at that time, while avoiding blind direct translation for the correct expression.

Since the text is a literary text, it contains a large number of character dialogues, detailed descriptions of characters and the surrounding environment with generally plain language, which is not as difficult to understand as poetry, prose and other literary texts, making the text a basis for preliminary translation by machine translation. In addition, there is no published translation of this text, making it of some practical value. The author selected part of the text content for translation test before starting the translation practice to compare and analyze the translation of Google Translate with the human translation. The results of the test were evaluated to be in accordance with the expected results. In conclusion, this project is suitable for using machine translation and post-editing model for the practice.

1.3 Significance of the Project

The current translation market space is huge with an increasing demand for translators, but the translator with professional translation quality is lacking and the translation efficiency of them is relatively poor. The problem of productivity is particularly serious for literary texts, as their textual content is informative that requires an immense amount of time and effort to translate. Machine translation, however, can compensate for the inefficiency of translators with its characteristics of fast translation speed and accessibility. The application research of machine translation in the field of literary text is not mature at present, but the level of machine translation is improving with the development of neural network translation technology which makes the language of translation more natural and smooth with improved accuracy. It will contribute to the communication and exchange of cultures by improving the language service ecosystem and promoting the development of translation.

Machine translation needs to identify its own problems to improve and study them if it wants to get a groundbreaking development in the field of literature. This practical report points out the problems of machine translation in the literary field by comparing and analyzing machine translations with human-edited translations. The shortcomings exposed by machine translation can promote the research of translation technology and facilitate the improvement of a high-quality bilingual corpus of literature, which can lead to the improvement of the standardization and accuracy of translations. Many sentences with special semantics and complex structures exist in literary texts. Translators can observe the deficiencies of machine translation in expression and issues that need careful handling through the mistakes of machine translation. In this way, the translator can better understand the erroneous sentences and paragraphs to accurately identify the logical relationships in the sentences, preserve the linguistic features of the source text, and successfully recreate the language style of the original text.

Machine translation will play an even more important role in the future. Despite the fact that machine translation still has many shortcomings, they will eventually be reduced to an acceptable level with the increase of computers' ability to collect information and the development of artificial intelligence technology. Since machine translation cannot achieve the desired quality of literary text translation by itself, post-editing has been of great importance. Machine translation has been widely used in the language service industry of many countries and regions, so post-editing on the basis of machine translation also has a broad development prospect. By combining machine translation and post-editing, the speed and quality of translation can be improved which enhances the applicability of translation technology for literary texts.

1.4 Layout of the Thesis

This report is divided into five parts. In the first chapter, the background of the practice project is firstly introduced to study the role of machine translation as an aid to the translation of literary texts, and then the practice text is analyzed to indicate the research significance of the current translation practice. In the second chapter, the concepts of machine translation and post-translation editing are covered, as well as their current shortcomings and applicable principles. The third chapter focuses on the description of the translation process, which is divided into the discussion of preparation, ongoing work, and proofreading. The fourth chapter analyzes the lexical, syntactic and textual problems of machine translation in literary through specific cases. The fifth chapter summarizes the translation practice, showing that the “machine translation + post-editing” approach is applicable to fiction texts, and proposes suggestions for the development of machine translation based on the problems revealed by machine translation in this translation practice.

Chapter Two Machine Translation and Post-editing

2.1 Machine Translation

Machine translation, commonly known as non-contextual translation, is essentially about using a computer program to translate text from one natural language to another. Machine translation does not require or rely on human intervention when it is performed.

2.1.1 The Development of Machine Translation

The history of machine translation dates back to the 17th century when it was not called machine translation, but mechanical translation. American scientist Warren Weaver proposed the idea of machine translation in 1949, then in 1954 IBM and Georgetown University conducted a joint linguistics-based project to experiment with machine translation. Google released its neural network translation system in 2016 which has led to a substantial improvement in translation quality. Companies such as Baidu, Youdao and Microsoft have also launched their own machine translation systems to constantly inject new vitality into translation technology research. Initially rule-based and corpus-based, machine translation systems have now evolved into neural machine translation systems based on neural network technology, which has gained breakthroughs in continuous innovation. Rule-based machine translation systems can be classified as lexical, semantic, pragmatic and syntactic according to their research focus. However, the complexity and flexibility of natural language and other characteristics make it difficult for rule-based translation techniques to acquire development and perfection. The corpus-based machine translation methods can be divided into instance-based method and statistical-based ones. Neural machine translation system learns translation knowledge in a constantly updated corpus which improves the accuracy and fluency of the translation. Machine translation has ushered in a booming era with various machine translation software emerging, and machine translation based on artificial intelligence learning is going to gain a bright prospect.

“Machine translation is nowadays a reality throughout the industry, which continues to adopting this technology as it results in improved translation productivity, at least for technical domains.”(Plitt, 2010) Since traditional human translation cannot meet the market demand, but free machine translation can quickly translate texts of different disciplines and the amount of translation will not be limited, leading to the increasing admiration of machine translation. “The development of machine translation technology is closely related to the

development of computer technology, information theory, linguistics and other disciplines. With the improvement of computing power and the explosive growth of multilingual information, machine translation technology gradually comes out of the ivory tower to provide real-time and convenient translation services for ordinary users.”(Lan Hui, 2021). The groundbreaking development of artificial neural network in recent years can allow machine translation based on neural network system to learn translation knowledge from the constantly updated corpus by simulating learning human translation ability and mastering the translation methods and techniques to make the translation more accurate and fluent. It can be seen that the key reason for the development of machine translation is the availability of a strong bilingual corpus, which is constantly updated. When translating texts, machine translation analyzes the bilingual corpus, summarizes the conversion rules, and produces translations based on the human translated corpus. Therefore, the accuracy of machine translation in translating texts is also guaranteed. Machine translation brings convenience to our learning and life, and we do not need to spend a lot of time and experience to complete the work, which is a manifestation of the progress of human society. In the contemporary society with deepening economic globalization, machine translation will certainly promote global economic and cultural exchanges with development.

2.1.2 Application in Literary Text

The question of whether machine translation supported by artificial intelligence technology can be competent for literary translation has received attention and concern from the academic community with it being widely used for professional texts such as technological texts and news reports. The conventional view is that machine translation is simply not applicable to literary translation because it lacks the understanding of cultural words and polysemous words to be creative in translation. However, some scholars have also conducted experiments to investigate whether machine translation is applicable to literary translation operations. “Based on a comparison of translations from poetry, prose, and fiction, Zhang Luo argues that machine translation cannot ignore the importance of literature if it seeks to conquer the citadel barrier of literary translation.”(Wang Huashu, 2013). According to Bai Yu (2021), although literary texts such as novels, poems and essays are expressive texts with subjective, emotional and imaginative characteristics, and the semantic expression of words is unstable and ambiguous, machine translation will still give the author forward and reverse hints and other auxiliary functions to help the author avoid mistranslation and improve the efficiency of translation and proofreading. Voigt and Jurafsky (2012) argue that machine translation systems cannot address issues of cohesion and coherence. To disprove

the idea that machine translation is useless for literary translation, Toral and Way (2015) took a fully automated translation of a novel from Spanish to Catalan as a case study, concluding that MT is relatively better for short sentences, but human translation is of higher quality for longer sentences.

Li Changbang (2004) defines a literary text as a creation that uses language as a tool and various literary forms to reflect life figuratively and express the author's understanding and emotions about life and society, so as to evoke a sense of beauty and give people artistic enjoyment. The machine does not have the ability to think and lacks the translator's subjectivity cognition. Unlike human translators, it does not have cultural awareness to feel the emotional expression of the text, which is the fundamental reason limiting the development of the machine. But we cannot deny the role of machine translation for this way, machine translation and human translation are not opposites, they are complementary to each other. Machine translation has been able to do the work of translators to a large extent, and machine translation has made great progress in dealing with lexical, syntactic and textual issues along with the development of translation technology.

2.2 Post-editing

“Post-editing refers to the process of processing and modifying the original output of machine translation according to certain purposes, including changing translation (language) errors and improving the accuracy and readability of MT translations.”(Feng Quangong, 2016). Post-editing is a process in which machine and human translators interact to edit and revise the machine translation, both of which jointly determine the quality level of the translation and make the translation quality meet the demand level through their mutual action.

2.2.1 The Development of Post-editing

Allen (2003) describes post-editing as by far the most relevant task for machine translation. Overseas research on post-editing began in the 1980s, while domestic research on post-editing started relatively late. The results of post-editing studies vary depending on the focus, the machine translation system, and the language, thus different studies have different findings. In 1985, Senez explored the application of post-editing in the European Community, signaling the beginning of post-editing research. And in 2001, Krings' 1994 paper on post-editing research was translated and published, which was the first monograph on post-editing research. Influenced by positivism and phenomenology, Nino (2008) and Kliffer (2008) have already started an empirical study of the post-editing process in 2008. Wang Xiangling (2021) tried to verify the applicability of post-editing in English-Chinese

metaphor translation by taking two translation modes, human translation and post-editing as independent variables. Guided by Newmark's translation theory, Zhu Huifen(2020) investigates the principle of post-translation editing in conjunction with the types of errors of machine translated texts. Since the release of Google's neural machine translation system in 2016, research on post-editing has proliferated abroad, but most of them focus on the research of post-translation editing tools which lacks the training of post-editing talents. Domestic scholars have also begun to review the inadequacies of the post-editing process and have been paying more and more attention to the cultivation of post-editing skills. Human post-editing has gradually become an important object of translation process research, the brain activity as well as neurocognition of translators in the post-editing process will attract more attention in the future.

2.2.2 Classification of Post-editing

Machine translation software, represented by neural machine translation systems, is widely used in the language service industry, thus promoting the development of human post-editing. The combination of machine translation and human post-editing has become an important translation method in the language service industry which has received the recognition and attention of many scholars in the industry. "Depending on the degree of editing, post-editing can be divided into rapid post-editing and full post-editing." (ISO, 2017) Fast post-translation editing focuses on correcting obvious errors in the machine translation, such as errors in vocabulary, syntax and mistranslation; complete post-translation editing is to thoroughly revise the machine translation, emphasizing on revising terminology, reducing cultural differences, improving the articulation of the translation and expressing the author's emotion, so that the translation can reach the standard of professional translators. The author adopts the complete post-translation editing strategy in this translation practice, which is dedicated to improving the readability and literary quality of the translation. Post-translation editing can also be divided into two categories, narrow and broad, depending on the environment of the initial translation output. "Post-editing in a narrow sense is also called post-editing of machine translation, that is, post-editing of the translation obtained directly by machine translation; post-editing in a broader sense is also called 'post-editing of integrated translation', which refers to the process of manual review or partially automated revision of the output initial translation by professional editors according to specific quality objectives in order to maintain translation quality and translation efficiency in an integrated translation environment." (Cui Qiliang, 2014) Since there is still relatively little research on the broad post-translation editing model and a lack of theoretical support and translation

technology, the author adopts the narrow post-editing strategy in the post-editing process.

2.3 Combination of Machine Translation and Post-editing

“The only pathway for machines to achieve high-quality translations is that they must involve humans.” (Hu Kaibao, 2016) Machine translation has the feature of fast translation speed, which can translate a large amount of texts in a short time and save labor cost. In addition, since machine translation focuses on the utterance level in its translation approach, it rarely involves the paragraph level and the textual level, leading it being subject to rather limited contextual constraints. However, machine translation does not accurately reproduce the interpersonal meaning of the original text, and has obvious defects in emotional expression and semantic perception. More importantly, machine translation lacks individuality and creativity in the creation of the target language text. Despite the fact that AI systems have been trying to imitate the ability of human thinking activities, it is still difficult impossible for them to do so. Therefore, it is necessary to integrate machine translation and post-editing to realize the organic combination of technology and humanity.

When translating the practice text, machine translation is first selected to deal with the original text, and then the machine translated text is edited by human translators. The author selects the YICAT platform with co-translation function of human and machine as the translation software, which has the features of corpus management and terminology query. The platform includes the major translation engines commonly found in the market, such as Youdao, Baidu and Google. The author selects Google Translate as the translation engine because its neural machine network translation technology is relatively more developed. Before starting the translation work, the author imported the organized terminology database into the platform, which can automatically recognize and display the terms. In addition, the platform also has the ability to display duplicate statements, which saves unnecessary labor. In the post-editing process, the author adopts complete post-editing and narrow post-editing strategies to revise the machine-translated text. Translators can choose between sentence-by-sentence and paragraph-by-paragraph translations to display the text in comparison. Different editing strategies are needed to improve the quality of the translation during the post-editing process. Checking keywords, splitting and adjusting sentence order, adding translations, omitting, clarifying logical relationships, and unifying contextual expressions are the main strategies adopted in post-editing work. After finishing the translation work, the translations can be exported by merging them to save time effectively. The combination of machine translation + post-translation editing saves translation time and translation cost, and improves the quality of the translated text to meet

the requirements of the target language.

Chapter Three Translation Strategy

3.1 Translation Preparation

Adequate pre-translation preparation is a prerequisite for the successful completion of translation practice. Before the translation work begins, the author conducts preparatory research on the selection of machine translation tools, the reading of references and parallel texts, together with the learning cognition of machine translation and post-translation editing, so as to ensure a smooth translation process.

3.1.1 Collection of Reference and Parallel Texts

This translation practice report selects the novel *Revolt* (chapters 4-6) as a translation project. In order to better complete the translation task, at the beginning of the translation process, the author firstly read the preface and conclusion of the book to have a basic comprehension and understanding of the whole text.

Currently, there are few studies on machine translation of literary works in China, and this research direction has certain research value. After careful consideration, the author decided to conduct a practical study on the quality of machine translation of literary works. Although there are relatively few studies on literary machine translation in China nowadays, all the references the writer has reviewed adopt different research methods to analyze the differences between machine translation and human translation in literary translation from different perspectives in a detailed comparison, which provides great help to the research thoughts and methods of the author's practice program.

The references on machine translation and post-editing are even more numerous, deepening the author's knowledge of the two translation methods. Due to the length of the practice text and the lack of knowledge of the author's writing style, as well as the poor knowledge of the social background of the novel's prototype, the author firstly read two other works published by the author, *The Holy Woman* and *Typhoon*. These two works are similar to the material translated by the author in practice and share the same cultural background. These two works also share the same textual genre as the translations, both of which are in the genre of fiction, making it helpful to read their translations.

3.1.2 Preparation of Translation Tools

With various machine translation software in the market, how to choose a suitable machine translation software is crucial to the completion of the practical research. If the translation software chosen is not representative of other translation software, the results of the practical study will not be accurate enough to produce a correct translation summary.

Google has improved its phrase-based translation system and introduced the Neural Network Translation System in 2016, which combines neural recurrent networks with coding that allows for translation based on the system and contextualized in the process, rather than word translation that relies on broken sentences. “The neural network translation system uses deep neural networks to achieve an end-to-end holistic translation model that makes the translated language more natural and its accuracy and fluency are significantly improved.” (Popovic, 2017) In addition, Google Translate can interpret to and from more than seventy languages while supporting translation of words, sentences and text. Google Translate relies on powerful corpus to find the document with the highest match to the source text among millions of documents, and then provides the best translation. Therefore, the author chooses Google Translate as the main machine translation software.

To ensure the accuracy of terminology and the level of translation quality, the author also used online translation tools such as Wikipedia, Bing, Baidu Translate, and Youdao Dictionary. However, the translation software cannot import terms and corpora, and the finished versions are still quite rigid and formatted. Therefore, the author chose the web-based online translation platform YICAT to import the created thesaurus and corpus to improve translation efficiency by providing previously translated terms, which could save time and avoid repeated definitions of the same word. Google Translate was then selected to complete the translation work, making the quality of the translation better than similar software.

3.2 While-translation

Firstly, the author selected some of the source texts for translation test to investigate whether the “machine translation + post-editing” approach is feasible in this translation practice and whether the quality of the translated texts can be guaranteed. Before starting the translation task, the corpus is pre-processed, the text is converted to TXT format, redundant spaces and comments in the text are removed, and the paragraphs are aligned. Besides, the text contains words from other languages, the translator replaces the corresponding words according to the explanations in the glossary at the back of the fiction. Then the author uploaded each section of the source text to Google Translate separately and exported the translation of the source text. After that, the obtained translation is imported to YICAT together with the source text to create a translation task, on which post-editing is performed to modify the incorrect expressions in the machine translation. At the same time, the author also learned how to translate difficult clauses and long sentences, corrected all the wrong translations by the machine, and mastered the translation methods through continuous

practice, so that the translation can achieve the desired artistic effect. Finally, the author compared and analyzed the manually revised translation with the machine translation, summarized the shortcomings of the machine translation, and made suggestions to the machine translation software to improve the translation level.

The current general machines can only learn the corresponding models in bilingual texts and will be more inclined to produce translations in popular languages rather than in the language style of literary works, for the machines themselves do not understand literature. In the process of post-editing, the author should pay attention to break through the constraints of the original text, adopt the correct translation method to show the language style of the translated text, so that the translation can be more in line with the cultural characteristics of the translated text and accurately convey the author's expression intention and modify the phrases in the non-literary style of the machine translation into a translation with literary charm. Since the translated text belongs to a literary text, many customs and traditions are introduced in the text, and the machine translation basically cannot translate these places accurately. The author needs to edit the translation after understanding the local customs and traditions and explain them in detail in the translation. At the same time, there are a considerable number of difficult long sentences in this practice text, which machine translation cannot accurately translate the meaning of the original text. The author has to break the bondage of the sentence structure of the original text under the premise of mastering the translation skills, so that the translation can convey the meaning of the content of the text and improve the quality of the translation.

3.3 Proofreading

“The complexity of translation dictates that no matter how advanced machine translation is, it cannot completely replace the role of the translator.”(Fu Jingmin, 2015) Fiederer and O'Brien (2009) argue that post-editing is more accurate and fluent than human translation alone. Human translators are slightly better than machine translation not only because of the conscious activity, but also human translators are able to detect their own mistakes and make changes. After completing the translation practice, the author needs to firstly evaluate the translation task to identify potential translation errors and format issues to ensure that the translation is accurate. Translation errors include issues such as coherence of translation, expression of characters' emotions and presentation of cultural connotations. Format problems mainly involve errors in punctuation use, font size and page setup. The translator should compare the original text repeatedly by reading and comparing it constantly to find out the defects of the translation and improve it. After the revision is completed, the

translated text should be submitted to the tutor and peers for quality assessment to identify defects and shortcomings.

Chapter Four Case Studies on Machine Translation and Post-editing

4.1 Lexical Errors and Post-editing

“Words are the smallest units that make up a piece of writing, whereas comprehension is to decode the meaning of words when they are arranged and combined. Words have dictionary meaning, meaning after permutation and combination.”(Kong Qiqi, 2020) The translator should identify the specific meaning of the word in the text based on understanding the dictionary meaning of the word, combining the word location with the meaning of other words and following the principles of comprehensibility, expressiveness and flexibility.

4.1.1 Polysemy

Polysemy is very common in literary texts, and machines are in most cases unable to accurately infer the specific meaning of polysemy in a given context, resulting in lexical mistranslations. Lexical mistranslation can make the information transmission inaccurate and cause improper collocation in the target language text.

Example1:

ST: The stricken potter blinked in disbelief at his son.

MT: 受伤的陶工难以置信地对他的儿子眨了眨眼。

PE: 陶工受到惊吓, 惊愕地看着他的儿子。

Analysis: The word “stricken” appears in this sentence, which can be found in the context that the potter was shocked by his son’s questioning and the scolding of the master, but was not really hurt, so it cannot be translated as “受伤的”, the term here should mean “affected by something overwhelming”, that is, “受到惊吓”. In the text, there is no physical conflict or accident between the main protagonists, so the meaning of injury is nonsense. The most common meaning of the word “blinked” is “shut and open the eyes quickly”, namely “眨眼”, but according to the content of the sentence, it obviously does not have this meaning, it should mean “惊愕地看”. It is obvious from the above context that the father is in such a state of shock and fear that he could not have winked at his own son, so shock is the correct meaning of the word. In this sentence, the machine translation makes two errors, mainly due to its inability to analyze the correct lexical meaning of the words according to the specific context. During the post-editing process, the author consults the keywords for alternative meanings and replaces the incorrect semantics.

Example2:

ST: Had their Jubail totally lost it, challenging the master – the laird of the village?

MT: 难道他们的朱拜尔完全失去了它，挑战了主人一村庄的领主？

PE: 朱拜尔疯了吗，他竟在质疑村里的大老爷？

Analysis: The phrase “lost it” in this sentence is translated as “失去” in this sentence, but according to the context of the sentence, it is obviously illogical. According to the machine translation, it will make a huge change in the meaning of the whole sentence, which is completely not the idea the author wants to express. The phrase also means “失去理智” which can be obtained by combining the context. The father thought that his son was crazy because of the son’s accusation against the master. Challenging the upper class seems crazy in the eyes of Jubair’s parents, but it is clear from his lordship’s dialogue above that he currently has no intention of punishing Jubair. In this sentence, the reason for machine translation error is still polysemy. The reader can misunderstand entire sentences or even entire paragraphs and chapters simply because of a mistranslation of a single vocabulary. In the post-editing process, it is necessary to read through the whole sentence as well as the context to identify whether the meaning of the key words matches the meaning of the original. If the translation of the key words is wrong, consulting a dictionary in time for correction is required.

4.1.2 Omission

Machine translation sometimes misses part of the original semantics, resulting in omission. Omission can result in the absence of information content in the original language and the loss of part of the semantic meaning in the target language text, so it is necessary to check carefully for any omission during the post-editing process.

Example 3:

ST: Any minute now her young mistress’s head should have popped in behind the kitchen door, winked at her and then disappeared.

MT: 现在她年轻的女主人的头应该在厨房门后突然出现，对她眨眼，然后消失了。

PE: 莱拉本应立刻出现在厨房门后，对她使眼色，然后溜回家。

Analysis: By analyzing the machine translation, it can be found that it missed an important phrase “any minute”, which caused a huge change in the meaning of the fixed phrase “any minute now”. The original phrase should mean “立刻”, but the machine translation translated it being “现在” that makes the whole translation lengthy and confusing. Begum had been waiting for Laila for a long time, and she was even more afraid that things would fall through after the sudden cross-examination of her mistress. She hoped that Laila could appear here immediately when the appointed time had arrived. The current translation

machines are, after all, limited in intelligence and cannot possess the same basic judgment as humans, nor are they ignorant of the fundamental errors caused by missing translations. Therefore, post-editing should compensate for this deficiency of machine with human judgment. When editing after translation, it is also necessary to read the original text and the machine translated text carefully, compare the original text with the machine translated text in detail, and add the missing information immediately for the parts missed in the machine translated text.

Example 4:

ST: Begum would bitterly remember the next few moments for eternity, as her beautiful young mistress inched her way around and straight into her big, soft, melting heart.

MT: 贝古姆会永远痛苦地记住接下来的几分钟, 因为她美丽的年轻情妇慢慢地绕过她, 直接进入她大而柔软, 融化的心。

PE: 贝古姆会痛苦地铭记接下来的时间, 因为美丽的小姐正慢慢靠近她, 走近她慷慨的内心, 让她心软, 让她的心融化。

Analysis: The machine translation of “straight into her big, soft, melting heart” is obviously not smooth, and the translation of “直接进入她大而柔软, 融化的心” does not match. It is necessary to add the missing information by adding the verb, so it is translated as “径直投入她宽广的胸怀, 让她心软, 让她的心融化”. From Laila's favorable behavior towards Begum, Laila knows at this time that Begum will certainly help her, from which it can be seen that Begum has a generous heart. The translation of the machine not only fails to translate the information of the original text, but also has a problem of collocation. Machine translation is currently not able to distinguish whether the translation needs to be intelligible by means of amplification, so it is required to be added during the post-editing process.

4.1.3 Pronouns

On the condition of ensuring semantic integrity and coherence, for the sake of avoiding repetition, many referring words are used in English to indicate people, things and concepts that have appeared or will appear. And the frequency of referring words will be higher in literary text than other texts. In the post-editing process, the translator needs to accurately locate where the referent words appear and express the referent object in context, so that the meaning of the translated words is precise and clear.

Example 5:

ST: Moments later, hot rage ripping through him, he aggressively rounded on his parents.

MT: 片刻之后, 炽热的怒火席卷了他的全身, 他咄咄逼人地攻击他的父母。

PE: 片刻之后, 怒火席卷了朱拜尔的全身, 他猛烈地抨击自己的父母。

Analysis: The words “him, he, his” in the original text all refer to the potter’s son Jubair, but all of them are translated as “他” in the machine translation, which makes the object of reference unclear and easy to produce ambiguity, increasing the reader’s reading burden and causing confusion to them. With the purpose of making the translation clear, the author translates the first “him” as “朱拜尔” and the third “his” as “自己的” to make the object of reference more explicit and make the semantics of the translation clearer, helping the reader to understand the message accurately in the process of reading. Machine translation cannot identify the object represented by each referent word and can only translate the meaning of the word itself, so it cannot produce an accurate translation. In the process of post-editing, attention should be paid to identifying the translation of pronouns by machine software, and for the recurring pronouns, the most suitable word should be given in the context as well as in the background to avoid a long and complicated translation.

Example 6:

ST: He recalled that in Shakespeare’s play Romeo and Juliet there was the nurse, Juliet’s confidante, who helped the lovers. He had mentally assigned Begum a similar role.

MT: 他回忆起莎士比亚的戏剧《罗密欧与朱丽叶》中有一位护士, 朱丽叶的红颜知己, 帮助这对恋人。他在心里给贝古姆分配了一个类似的角色。

PE: 他回想在起莎士比亚的戏剧《罗密欧与朱丽叶》中, 有一位朱丽叶的知己护士, 帮了这对恋人很大忙。他在心里已经给贝古姆安排了护士的角色。

Analysis: The word “a similar role” refers to the nurse who helps Romeo and Juliet in the above text. If the machine translates it as “一个类似的角色”, it does not highlight the important role of Begum in helping the hero and heroine meet, and it seems very bland. Therefore, the author translated it as “护士的角色” in the post-editing process, which echoes the previous text and makes the translation clear. The machine translation only gives the most superficial explanation, which does not explain the deep expectations given by Jubair to Begum and his love for Laila. While translating this phrase as nurse, it likewise hints at the beautiful love story of the two main characters. For the indicator pronouns that have appeared or are about to appear, machine translation could not identify the corresponding referent objects in context. For words that have already appeared in the previous text, the translation should be consistent with it as much as possible.

4.1.4 Culture-loaded Words

“Culture-loaded words are words, phrases and idioms that signify something specific to a culture. These words reflect the unique ways of activity of a particular ethnic group that

have been gradually accumulated during the long historical progress.” (Liao Qiyi, 2000) Nida (1993) divides culture into five categories, on the basis of which the author divides culture-loaded words into five major categories: ecological culture-loaded words, linguistic culture-loaded words, religious culture-loaded words, material culture-loaded words, and social culture-loaded words. The translation of the social culture-loaded words and the linguistic culture-loaded words are mainly covered in this report. Chinese and English belong to different language systems and there are many linguistic and cultural differences between them. In this translation practice, the culture-loaded words in the source text are difficult to find their language counterparts in Chinese. In the post-editing process, the author adopts various methods such as substitution, literal translation, free translation and addition of notes on the basis of naturalization strategy, striving to accurately convey the cultural meanings in the culture-loaded words and make the translated language conform to the reading habits of Chinese readers.

Example 7:

ST: Please, Allah Pak, return our Laila safely to us and with her izzat intact!

MT: 拜托，神圣的主啊，将我们的莱拉安全归还给我们，和她的荣誉与名节完好无损！

PE: 拜托了，老天爷啊，请保佑莱拉小姐平安归来，不要让她名节不保！

Analysis: Before translating the phrase by machine, the words “Pak” and “izza” are first pre-edited and replaced according to the explanation in the glossary of the source text. “Allah” means “阿拉，真主”，which is the god that Muslims believe in. In Chinese, the words “菩萨”，“佛祖” and “老天爷” are used to seek blessings. As this is a novel, the language style is more colloquial, so the author chooses to use “老天爷” instead of “真主”. It accurately reproduces the expression of the original text and makes it more interesting to read. The translator employs free translation in the post-editing process, which preserves the connotation and style of the original text while clearing the reading barriers of the target audience. While editing the translation, consideration should be given to the expression habits and traditional culture of the readers of the target language, and a wide range of relevant materials should be consulted to provide a translation that best fits the local cultural characteristics.

Example 8:

ST: The potter visibly shrank, as if willing himself to melt away into nothingness, his bent back even more stooped.

MT: 陶工明显缩了缩，仿佛要自己化作虚无一般，弯下的腰更弯了。

PE: 陶工缩成一团, 仿佛要找地缝儿钻进去, 背比之前更驼了。

Analysis: Idioms have always been representative words in Chinese culture, conveying cultural information in condensed and concise language with rich cultural connotations. The machine translated “visibly shrank” as “明显缩了缩”, although the meaning did not appear wrong, it does not show the state of extreme fear of the potter at this time, nor does it explain the seriousness of the matter. The translator applies the idiom of “缩成一团”, which not only strengthens the tone and enhances the literary color of the translation, emphasizing how outrageous the son’s practice is, but also conveys the meaning of the original text in its entirety, which is faithful to the original text and shows the author’s language style in its entirety. Also, the machine translation translates “melt away into nothingness” as “化作虚无”, merely translating according to the literal meaning, which does not convey the cultural connotation of the original text, and also does not match with the translation before and after, easily causing disputes. So the author translates it as “找个地缝儿钻进去” in the post-editing process, which is consistent with the language style of the original and accurately reflects the connotation of the words, achieving the effect of cultural exchange. The linguistic style of the translation should be determined according to the type of text and the linguistic style of the original text when editing the translation, and for colloquial expressions, slang and other expressions should be used as much as possible to show the charm of the culture.

4.2 Syntactic Errors and Post-editing

4.2.1 Limitations on Sentence Restructuring

The language expressions of English and Chinese are significantly different, and machine translation sometimes does not notice the linguistic differences between them, the generated translation frequently carries the sentence structure of English, which makes readers have reading difficulties. English sentences are tightly hierarchical tree structures, with a clear separation of levels between main and subordinate sentences and an emphasis on unity of form, the sequential approach sometimes does not apply. Therefore, translators need to accurately delineate the sentence structure during the post-editing process and revise the machine-translated text according to the correct order of words.

Example 9:

ST: What did Master mean when he said that you have hurt us where it wounds the most?

fMT: 老爷说你把我们伤到最痛的地方是什么意思?

PE: 老爷说你在我们内心深处扎了一刀是什么意思?

Analysis: This type of definite structure sentence is very common in English, and the machine translation only interprets the statements word by word according to the original order. The translated sentences do not conform to the Chinese expression habits, and the readers cannot distinguish the important components when they read them, nor can they understand what the sentences are trying to say. The core word of this sentence is “hurt”, and the clause after it is a modifier, but the machine mistakenly regards “hurt us” as a modifier of “wounds the most”, and the structure is wrongly divided, which leads to a significant change in the meaning of the translation. During the post-editing process, the translator re-divides the sentence structure to highlight the important components that express the original text, keeping the translation consistent with the author’s expressive intent.

Example 10:

ST: A stiff figure of misery, Begum stood in the middle of the courtyard, leaning on the cool marble basin of the fountain.

MT: 一个僵硬的痛苦身影，贝古姆站在院子中央，靠在喷泉凉爽的大理石盆上。

PE: 贝古姆站在院子中央，靠在喷泉池冰凉的大理石上一动不动，显得十分凄凉。

Analysis: Machine translation adopts a sequential translation method in processing the original text, and the translation also has the characteristics of English sentence structure, which conveys a very confusing textual information. English statements usually put the important content at the beginning of the sentence, while Chinese statements normally put it at the end of the sentence. Through analyzing the content of the text, we can learn that “凄凉的身影” is the central component of the sentence, and the machine translation puts it at the beginning of the sentence, which is not in line with the expression habits of the translated language. Hence, in the post-editing process, the translator places it at the end of the sentence to make it conform to the reading habits of Chinese readers. It is important to avoid the situation that the translation is entirely based on the structure of the original text without considering the logical relationships and the expression habits of the readers. When editing the text, the sentence structure should be redefined and the logical relationships should be clarified.

4.2.2 Long and Mixed Sentences

The word-by-word translation approach may be able to convey the textual information when facing short sentences in literary texts; when facing long and mixed sentences with complex sentences, the quality level of machine translation will be significantly reduced and it is difficult to show the cultural connotation of the sentences. Difficult long sentences in literary texts are usually manifested as connections, prepositions, inversions and omissions

between subordinate clauses. In dealing with difficult long sentences, machine translation has trouble to sort out the sentence structure clearly, and the translation obtained is confusing in structure and meaning, which has no readability at all. In the process of post-editing, translators can use translation strategies such as reverse-order method and split-translation method to reorganize the structure of the original subordinate clauses and realize the conversion from tree-like structure to bamboo-like structure, bringing the translation in line with the expression habits of Chinese.

Example 11:

ST: He recalled that in Shakespeare's play *Romeo and Juliet* there was the nurse, Juliet's confidante, who helped the lovers.

MT: 他回忆起莎士比亚的戏剧《罗密欧与朱丽叶》中，有一位护士，朱丽叶的红颜知己，帮助这对恋人。

PE: 他回想起在莎士比亚的戏剧《罗密欧与朱丽叶》中，有一位朱丽叶的知己护士，帮了这对恋人很大忙。

Analysis: In this sentence, the machine translation does not accurately delineate the sentence structure, and the inter-sentence relationship of the translation is confusing, which prevents the reader from distinguishing the focus of the sentence when reading it. The words "Juliet" and "confidante" are used to complement "the nurse", which are not parallel to each other. The machine chose to parallel both of them here, making the translation read not particularly smoothly, as if it had not been professionally thought through and processed. This shows that the translation machine does not accurately classify the structural components, resulting in a lower level of quality of the translated text and errors in the transmitted textual information. In the process of post-editing, phrases that are juxtaposed in the center should be combined according to the expression habits of Chinese readers instead of translating them separately.

Example 12:

ST: Ali's bitter laugh frightened the two crows pecking the pomegranate fruit sewn inside little cotton bags in one corner of the courtyard.

MT: 阿里苦涩的笑声把院子一角缝在小棉袋里的石榴果给啄了起来，两只乌鸦都被吓到了。

PE: 阿里苦涩的笑声把院子一角正在啄缝在小棉袋里的石榴果的两只乌鸦吓到了。

Analysis: The prepositional phrase "in one corner of the courtyard" is used as a postposition to modify the word "crows". The machine translation not only delineates the

wrong subordinate clause structure, but also has the problem of incorrect lexical collocation and confusing logical relationships, completely lacking in readability. The machine's ability to delineate complex sentence structures needs further strengthening. The translation of this sentence has very obvious semantic errors and is not a problem that should occur in a mature machine translation software. In editing the machine text, the translator adopted a strategy of sub-translation, re-dividing the sentence structure so that the translation gradually unfolds under the guidance of the topic.

4.2.3 Loss of Emotion

Literary translation not only pursues the accuracy of language forms, but also attaches more importance to the expression of inner beauty between the sentiments in the words. Emotional expression is an important factor in literary translation, because literary work impresses people with emotions. The machine cannot experience the charm of language and feel the unique linguistic style of the work as humans do, that is why it cannot convey the author's emotions. While editing the translation, the editor should give full play to the translator's subjectivity, accurately seize the emotional tone of the work, and accurately convey the emotions of the original text.

Example 13:

ST: Her son's answer was his lowered gaze.

MT: 她儿子的回答是他垂下的目光。

PE: 朱拜尔只是眼神向下看，什么都没说。

Analysis: In the above context, the parents ask their son what he has done to hurt them. The machine translation only shows the content of the sentence as it is, but it does not express the author's implied words. It can be inferred from Jubail's behavior that he was very disappointed in his parents at this time and was not willing to give any more superfluous responses or explanations. And at this point he should be in a state of internal collapse and not willing to speak. In the post-translation editing process, the author expresses the implied emotions by means of amplification. The additional sentence of the translation allows the reader to fully understand the inner activities of the characters at this time, to feel the emotions the author of the original text wanted to express, to gain a more profound understanding of the translated work.

Example 14:

ST: It had dawned on her lately that her friend had a tendency to talk in glowing terms about her sons.

MT: 最近她突然意识到，她的朋友倾向于用热情洋溢的语言谈论她的儿子。

PE: 最近她突然意识到, 这个虚伪的朋友试图把自己的儿子吹得天花乱坠。

Analysis: From reading the text, we can conclude that Rukhsar and the laundress are not really friends, they do not look up to each other, but are only happy to gossip and chat with others. And it is clear from this sentence and the following that the laundress also wanted to introduce her worthless son to Rukhsar's daughter. The translator's addition of “虚伪” expresses Rukhsar's disgust for the woman worker, which not only expresses the full emotion contained in the original text, but also conveys the original author's emotion and enhances the literary style of the translation. Since the machine is not as conscious as a human being, it is not able to feel the emotional expression of the text, which is the most important problem limiting the application of machine turning software in literary texts. Therefore, the human translator needs to fully feel the emotions and thoughts that the author of the original text wants to express, and add them to the translation when editing the text later, so that the reader can feel the real expression of emotions.

4.3 Textual Errors and Post-editing

4.3.1 Lack of Cohesion

Cohesion is the way in which sentences and parts of sentences are linked together in a discourse to enable coherent development of propositions. Halliday (1976) first introduced the concept of “textual cohesion”, pointing out that textual cohesion is an important means and component of “textuality”. The original text of this project contains sentences lacking in textual cohesion. In order to enhance the reading experience of readers, the translator should strengthen the cohesion between units when editing after translation.

Example 15:

ST: I've been out horse riding with Mistress Laila at night. That's all!

MT: 我晚上和莱拉小姐出去骑马了。就是这样!

PE: 我晚上和莱拉小姐出去骑马了。事情就是这样!

Analysis: The two sentences are closely related to each other, and the word “all” refers to the whole sentence in front of it. The machine translation does not reflect the connection between the two sentences, and the translation lacks connection. Therefore, in the post-editing process, the translator summarizes all the textual content of the previous sentence as “事情”, which not only enhances the articulation of the discourse and makes the translation more coherent and compact, but also deepens the reader's comprehension of the translated text. The articulation between statements is an important way to link the text together as a whole, so human translators need to strengthen the articulation between translated statements to enhance the logical relationship of the translation and give readers a

better reading experience.

Example 16:

ST: He ran to Begum's quarters – probably their only ally.

MT: 他跑到贝古姆的住处——可能是他们唯一的盟友。

PE: 他跑到贝古姆的住处，因为她可能是唯一的盟友了。

Analysis: In this example, the original text adopts the cohesion of omission, and “she is” is omitted after “probably”, which makes the original text concise, but the translation brings trouble to the readers. The author has added elements that have been omitted to make the semantics of the translation clearer and easier for the reader to understand. The word “their” in the sentence is a reference to the previous content, referring to “Jubil” and “Laila”. The translation would be lengthy and not in accordance with Chinese expression habits since their names have already appeared in the above text, so the translator has treated it with implication. Problems of cohesion can occur not only between sentences, but also within a sentence. When revising the translation, the human translator should add appropriate articulation words to link the components in a sentence to make it become a complete sentence.

4.3.2 Lack of Coherence

Van Dijk (1977) defined coherence as a semantic concept, stating that discourse coherence refers to the linear and hierarchical semantic links between components. Showing the unity of the discourse through intangible means is a characteristic of coherence. The translator has to figure out the logical relationship between sentences in the post-editing process to improve the coherence of the translated discourse.

Example 17:

ST: No, Begum, we did not! But do this – just once, Begum!

MT: 不，贝古姆，我们没有！但这样做——就一次，贝古姆！

PE: 不，我们没让你出丑！让我们见一面，求你了！

Analysis: In the above text, Begum mentioned that they made a fool of her, so the translator added “让你出丑” to the translation. The word “this” is a reference to Jubil's desire to meet with Laila, so the translator translates it as “让我们见一面”. The context shows that Jubil has been begging Begum, thus the translator has added “求你了” to sentence. The word “Begum” at the end of the sentence is used as a corresponding articulation word, so it would be more in line with the reading habits of Chinese readers if it is not translated. The changes made to these two sentences strengthen the coherence of the discourse, making the translation more compact and deepening the reader's understanding of

the translation. Coherence is an important factor in verifying the quality of a translation. Throughout the post-editing process, human translators need to accurately grasp the connections between the translations and enhance the coherence of the text by echoing each other back and forth.

Example 18:

ST: Gulbahar happily entered her daughter's room to show her a silver-plated tea set for her trousseau. Imagining Laila to be on the rooftop gallery she went down to see if breakfast was ready.

MT: 古尔巴哈高兴地走进女儿的房间，想向她展示一套镀银的嫁妆茶具。想象着莱拉在屋顶画廊，她下楼看看早餐是否准备好

PE: 古尔巴哈高兴地走进女儿的房间，想向她展示一套镀银的嫁妆茶具。她猜莱拉可能在屋顶走廊，因为屋里没有人，就下楼去看早餐是否准备好了。

Analysis: This sentence does not add “因为屋里没有人” for the sake of coherence of the article. In the previous section it was told that Laila had eloped with Jubair, so she would not be in the bedroom of the house or on the roof corridor. It was mentioned In the previous sentence that Lila's mother wanted to go to her room to show her the new tea set. The machine translation in this sentence tends to translate word by word which accurately conveys the content of the original text, but does not convey the implied content. And it may also create a comprehension barrier for the reader, since Laila has long since eloped. So the author fills in the missing content with amplification, which not only conveys the author's intention, but also enhances the coherence of the text and makes it read more smoothly and reasonably. If the translation lacks coherence, the reader may lose interest in reading and consider the text to be illogical and unreadable. The human translator also needs to introduce the contents that are not conveyed in the original text during the post-editing process, so as to enhance the coherence of the text, facilitate the readers' enjoyment and strengthen their reading experience.

Chapter Five Conclusion

5.1 Major Findings

Chapters 4-6 of the source fiction text *Revolt* were translated in the mode of “machine translation + post-editing” during the translation practice. Google Translate was chosen as the translation tool for the practice text, and the author revised the translation from it in post-editing. This report explains why the project decided to apply the “machine translation + post-editing” model for translating practice text and indicates the circumstances in which such a translation model is appropriate. This paper provides a detailed introduction to the basic concepts of machine translation and post-editing which particularly highlights the shortcomings of current machine translation in the application of literary texts. With the application of the “machine translation + post-editing” method to the practical process, this report investigates and analyzes the problems that arise in the machine translation of fiction texts to explore the feasibility of such method in fiction texts.

After classifying the practice text, it was found that the original text contained a total of 835 sentences, and 192 sentences were directly used or slightly changed in the post-editing process for the machine translated text, accounting for about 23% of all translations; 440 sentences with general changes made to the machine-translated text, accounting for about 53% of all translations; 203 sentences were substantially revised for the machine translated text, accounting for about 24% of all translations.

From the above information, it can be learned that the available sentences account for 76% of the total translated text, which indicates that most of the machine-translated text is relatively accurate, since the practice text contains a large number of character dialogues and sentences with short stems in which machine translation has no great difficulty in coping with these utterances. Therefore, it is possible for neural network system machine translation to play a supporting role in the translation of fiction texts which can improve the translation efficiency, reduce the work intensity of translators and save much time compared with pure human translation. Machine translation also helps to improve the quality of translation, as errors in machine translation can lead to higher quality texts produced by the translators. The translation quality of the post-editing is consequently better than mere human translation.

In the 24% of machine-translated texts that required full revision, the main reason for the unavailability of the translations is that sentences are syntactically complex or culturally specific. Although the non-editable translation of 24% is not high, these sentences are the central sentences in the fiction, which can best convey the thoughts of the work and its

author as well as express the literary characteristics of the work. Without accurate translation, it will affect the reader's perception of the whole storyline and prevent them from making a deep understanding of the work. The machine is not capable of thinking like the human brain, it does not have the ability to divide long and complex sentences clearly but only to produce translations through a word-by-word method. At the same time, machine translation lacks cultural awareness which makes it difficult to perceive the emotions conveyed by the work and the author, so that the textual content of the original text cannot be fully presented. It requires the translator to take the initiative in the post-editing process to revise the original translation and improve the literary appreciation of the text. The above analysis shows that the application of "machine translation + post-editing" in this kind of text is feasible, which is also the main development direction of the current language service industry. However, this does not mean that the practical results are applicable to other fiction texts, and it only shows that the "machine translation + post-translation" approach is feasible for some fiction texts, because there are significant differences between the texts, and the texts should be analyzed in detail before translation work is carried out.

5.2 Limitations and Suggestions

In the actual translation process, the author finds that machine translation of fiction mainly suffers from mistranslation, omission, incorrect translation of referent words and false translation of culture-loaded words at the lexical aspect, which requires translators to select the correctly expressed words according to the context, supplement the omitted text content and use culturally appropriate words in the translation process. At the syntactic level, there are mainly problems of redundant structural order, incorrect translation of long and mixed sentences, and loss of emotional expression, which require translators to pay attention to adjusting the order and sorting out the sentence structure in the translation process and to completely convey the emotion of the original text and the author. The main problems in the discourse are poor sentence cohesion and contextual coherence, requiring translators to adjust the translated words, strengthen the connection of the discourse, and sort out the logical relationships to make the translation more compact and coherent.

In response to the problems of machine translation in lacking cultural awareness and difficulty of organizing sentence structure, the translator summarized personal insights based on this translation practice task. A strong corpus is the foundation of machine translation, so the machine translation platform should establish and improve the cultural corpus by filling the corpus with abundant high-quality literary translations. Different types of texts are very different and it is not possible to use one standard to measure

machine translated texts, so their translations should have specific standard according to the content of the original text. Machine translation software can set specific translation standards for literary texts to enhance the literary level of expression of the translated texts. Since there is a specific translation standard, a translation checking mechanism can be established according to the translation standard. The establishment of a translation checking mechanism could improve the quality standard of translations by correcting the found errors and alleviate the work of manual post-editing at later stage. At present, machines still have great problems in dealing with complex long sentences, and it will take much time if manual pre-translation editing is required, so the machine translation software needs to focus on solving the problem of translating complex long sentences. Human translators should give full play to literary creativity on the basis of understanding and expression to modify and embellish the translation, and to recreate the style of the original text through their own linguistic ability and literary cultivation.

There are still some shortcomings in the translation practice. The type of text chosen for practice determines that the result of the study only apply to the translation of fiction text, but not to the translation of more complex literary texts such as poetry and prose. The perspective chosen for the analysis in the case study of the shortcomings in the machine translation of fictional texts is less comprehensive, the author should evaluate and analyze machine translated texts in detail from more extensive and comprehensive aspects.

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Appendix

原文	译后编辑译文	机器翻译译文
<p>Jubail</p> <p>‘He has no right to tell us what to do! Who the hell does he think he is? Does he own everyone in this village?’ Jubail fumed, snarling at his father. The stricken potter blinked in disbelief at his son. Had their Jubail totally lost it, challenging the master – the laird of the village?</p> <p>‘Yes, in truth ... he does own the village – more than half of its land belongs to him! Half the villagers are his tenants,’ his mother bitterly reminded him, taken aback by her son’s revolt and arrogance. Mouth dry and round eyes eagerly scanning her son’s face for any telltale signs, she asked, ‘What did Master mean when he said that you have hurt us where it wounds the most?’</p> <p>Her son’s answer was his lowered gaze.</p> <p>‘Jubail!’ she screeched, wiping her sweat-beaded cheeks with her chador. ‘I’ve been out horse riding with Mistress Laila at night. That’s all!’ he defiantly threw back at her.</p> <p>‘What!’ they both shouted.</p> <p>‘So what!’ he taunted, body aggressively poised, angered by their gaping mouths.</p> <p>Brazen-faced, he announced, grinning, ‘I want to marry Laila!’ shrivelling his parents on the spot.</p> <p>‘My God!’ His mother cried shrilly, the first to clear her head and find her tongue. ‘Marry Mistress Laila? What heaven are you floating in? Are you</p>	<p>朱拜尔</p> <p>“他凭什么对我们指手画脚！他很了不起吗？村里每个人都是他的奴隶吗？”朱拜尔怒气冲冲地吼向他父亲。陶工受到惊吓，惊愕地看着他的儿子。难道他们的儿子疯了吗，他居然在质疑村庄的地主老爷？</p> <p>“是的，事实上……这个村子就是他的——村里一半以上的土地都属于他！一半的村民都是他的佃户，”他的母亲苦涩地提醒道，儿子的反抗和傲慢吓了她一跳。她张着嘴巴瞪大眼睛，急切地察看儿子的脸上有没有什么讯号，问道：“老爷说你在我们内心最深处扎了一刀是什么意思？”</p> <p>朱拜尔低垂目光，什么都没说。</p> <p>“朱拜尔！”她尖叫道，并用披肩擦拭满头大汗。</p> <p>“我晚上和莱拉小姐出去骑马了。事情就是这样！”朱拜尔冲他的母亲顶嘴。</p> <p>“什么！”他们都大喊道。</p> <p>“那又怎样！”他奚落道，努力让自己镇定下来，父母张大的嘴激怒了他。</p> <p>他死皮赖脸地咧着牙说，“我要娶莱拉！”他的父母当场吓瘫了。</p> <p>“天啊！”他的母亲尖声叫道，头脑清醒后开口说的第一句话是：“娶莱拉小姐？你在做梦吗？你疯了吗，傻儿</p>	<p>朱拜尔</p> <p>“他无权告诉我们该怎么做！他到底以为自己是誰？他拥有这个村子里的每个人吗？”受灾的陶匠不可置信地看着他的儿子眨了眨眼。难道他们的朱拜尔完全失去了它，挑战了主人——村里的领主？</p> <p>“是的，事实上……他确实拥有这个村庄——超过一半的土地属于他！半数村民都是他的佃户，”他的母亲痛苦地提醒他，被儿子的反抗和傲慢吓了一跳。口干圆圆的眼睛急切地扫视着儿子的脸是否有任何迹象，她问道：“老爷说你伤到我们最痛的地方是什么意思？”</p> <p>她儿子的回答是他低垂的目光。</p> <p>“朱拜尔！”她尖叫着，用披肩擦拭着汗珠般的脸颊。</p> <p>“我晚上和莱拉小姐出去骑马了。就是这样！”他反抗她。</p> <p>“什么！”他们都喊道。</p> <p>“那又怎样！”他奚落道，身体积极地蓄势待发，被他们张开的嘴激怒了。</p> <p>他面无表情地笑着宣布，“我要嫁给莱拉！”当场让他的父母干瘪。</p> <p>“我的上帝！”他的母亲尖叫着，第一个清醒过来，找到了自己的舌头。“嫁给莱拉太太？你漂浮在哪个天</p>

insane, my lad!’ she shook her clay-coated fist at him, matching her husband’s incredulous stare.

Jubail’s artificial smile slipped away. Spirit dipping, he leaned heavily against the flaking plaster wall. If his parents reacted like this, then how would the master ever condone this marriage?

Moments later, hot rage ripping through him, he aggressively rounded on his parents.

‘Who says? And why can’t I marry Laila, Mother?’ A rebellious and rhetorical question, which his mother answered with her eloquent, piteous eyes.

‘Because, my arrogant son, look around you!’ his father stated simply, pointing to his potter’s wheel. ‘This is our humble world and Mistress Laila ... Well, she belongs to another dunya – another planet!’

Hating them, their words and preconceptions, Jubail stormed out. Why did his humble roots threaten to stand between him and his personal happiness? Laila loved him. He was capable of offering her a better world than a potter’s wheel now that he had completed his university education. Did he as a human being not have a right to marry the person he wanted?

He ran to Begum’s quarters – probably their only ally. He recalled that in Shakespeare’s play *Romeo and Juliet* there was the nurse, Juliet’s confidante, who helped the lovers. He had mentally assigned Begum a similar role. Surely, loving Laila as she did, she would help them.

子!”她挥舞着涂有粘土的拳头,与她丈夫难以置信的凝视相呼应。

朱拜尔脸上的假笑消失了。情绪低沉的他重重地靠在剥落的石膏墙上。如果他的父母是这样的反应,那地主老爷怎么会容忍这桩婚事?

片刻之后,朱拜尔怒火上身,他咄咄逼人地反驳自己的父母。

“谁说的?为什么我不能娶莱拉,妈妈?”他的妈妈用传神而哀怨的眼神回答了这个问题。反叛且荒谬的问题。

“我的傻儿子,看看你周围的环境!”他父亲指着陶轮耿直地说到。“这是我们卑微的世界,莱拉小姐……嗯,她属于另一个世界!”

由于憎恨他们的言辞和成见,朱拜尔冲了出去。为什么他卑微的出身会成为他和幸福之间的阻碍?莱拉很爱他。既然他已经大学毕业了,他就有能力为她提供一个比自己家庭更好的世界。作为一个活生生的人,他难道没有权利娶他爱的人吗?

他跑到贝古姆的住处——她可能是唯一的盟友了。他回想在起莎士比亚的戏剧《罗密欧与朱丽叶》中,有一位朱丽叶的知己护士,帮了这对恋人很大忙。他已经在心里给贝古姆安排了护士的角色。当然,她确实很爱莱拉,她会帮助他们。

堂?你疯了吗,我的小伙子!”她朝他挥舞着涂着泥土的拳头,与她丈夫难以置信的目光相吻合。

朱拜尔假装的笑容消失了。精神一振,他重重地靠在剥落的石膏墙上。如果他的父母是这样的反应,那主人怎么会纵容这桩婚事?

片刻之后,炽热的怒火席卷了他,他咄咄逼人地围着他的父母。

“谁说?妈妈,为什么我不能嫁给莱拉?”这是一个反叛的修辞问题,他的母亲用她雄辩的、可怜的眼睛回答了这个问题。

“因为,我傲慢的儿子,环顾四周!”他的父亲指着他的陶轮简单地说。“这是我们卑微的世界,莱拉女主人……嗯,她属于另一个世界——另一个星球!”

恨他们,他们的言辞和成见,朱拜尔冲了出去。为什么他卑微的根会威胁到他和他的个人幸福之间?莱拉爱他。既然他已经完成了大学教育,他就有能力为她提供一个比陶轮更美好的世界。难道他作为一个人没有权利嫁给他想要的人吗?

他跑到贝古姆的住处——可能是他们唯一的盟友。他回忆起莎士比亚的戏剧《罗密欧与朱丽叶》中有一位护士,朱丽叶的红颜知己,帮助这对恋人。他在心里给贝古姆分配了一个类似的角色。当然,像她一样爱莱拉,她会帮助他们。

*

Begum was hosing down a thick layer of stubborn dust and dried leaves from her brick-lined courtyard when she caught sight of the potter's 'brat'. Resentment flaring through her body, Begum shot to her feet.

'Don't you think you've done enough damage already... Now you have the gall to show your face to us, you scoundrel?'

Face tightening, Jubail held his ground. 'I want to see Laila, please!' he pleaded with a determined look in his eyes.

'Are you mad?' Begum shrieked, throwing aside the gushing water hose and nearly wetting him with it. Striding up to him, she gave him a good telling-off. 'Listen to me, you lovesick brat! Mistress Laila is getting married to Master Zohaib, not to you – a potter's son! Master Zohaib is a landlord and from the same class. Can you not see that you've caused enough damage already! Leave my master's family alone – you scoundrel!'

'Don't abuse me, Begum – please pass on this message.' Hating her, Jubail persisted. 'Just this once, please? The master has forbidden me from seeing her.'

'Good, and so he should! You both made fools of me, and it's all my fault!'

'No, Begum, we did not! But do this – just once, Begum!' Jubail beseeched, wooing her with his liquid, coal-dark eyes. Begum snatched her gaze away, knowing she was a glutton for people's eyes, especially for her young mistress's

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贝古姆看到陶工家“没有规矩的臭小子”时，她正从她砖砌的院子里扫下一层厚厚的顽固灰尘和干枯的树叶。怨恨涌上心头，她猛地站了起来。

“你造成的伤害还不够大吗……现在还敢来见我们，你这个无赖？”

朱拜尔脸色紧绷，意志坚决。“我想见莱拉，拜托了！”他眼神坚定的恳求贝古姆。

“你疯了吗？”贝古姆尖叫着扔掉喷涌而出的水管，差点把朱拜尔弄湿。她大步走向他，狠狠的责骂。“听着，得了相思病的坏小子！莱拉女主人要嫁给朱海比少爷，而不是你——一个陶工的儿子！朱海比少爷才是和莱拉小姐在同一阶级的人。难道你看不到你已经造成了很大的伤害了吗！放过我主人的家人——你这个无赖！”

“不要侮辱我，贝古姆——请帮我递个话。”虽然恨她，但朱拜尔依旧忍着。“就这一次，好吗？老爷不让我见她。”

“很好，他就该这样做！你们两个耍我，都是我的错！”

“不，贝古姆，我们没有！帮我传个话——就一次，求你了！”朱拜尔用他那双黑黝黝的湿润的眼睛恳求着。贝古姆收回视线，知道自己是个心软的人，尤其是招架不住莱拉小姐那双像有魔法的蓝宝石眼

*

贝古姆看到了陶工的“小子”，她正从她砖砌的院子里冲洗掉一层厚厚的顽固灰尘和干枯的树叶。怨恨在她的身体里燃烧，贝古姆站了起来。

“你不认为你已经造成了足够的伤害……现在你还敢向我们露面，你这个恶棍？”

朱拜尔脸色紧绷，坚守阵地。“我想见莱拉，拜托！”他恳求道，眼神坚定。

“你疯了吗？”贝古姆尖叫着扔掉喷涌而出的水管，差点把他弄湿。她大步走向他，给了他一个很好的告白。

“听我说，你这个相思病的小子！莱拉女主人要嫁给朱海比少爷，而不是你——一个陶工的儿子！朱海比少爷是地主，来自同一班。难道你看不到你已经造成了足够的伤害！放开我主人的家人——你这个恶棍！”

“不要虐待我，贝古姆——请把这条信息传递出去。”恨她的朱拜尔坚持说。“就这一次，好吗？主人禁止我见她。”

“很好，他应该这样做！你们都把我弄傻了，都是我的错！”

“不，贝古姆，我们没有！但这样做——就一次，贝古姆！”朱拜尔恳求着，用他那双水汪汪的、煤黑色的眼睛向她求爱。贝古姆收回视线，知道自己是个贪吃的人，尤其是小情妇的魔法蓝宝

magical sapphires.

‘You are mad!’

Jubail turned to leave. ‘I know you’ll tell her. Six o’clock ... behind the jamuni tree, please,’ he boldly instructed, leaving an outraged Begum standing with her mouth open, but convinced nevertheless.

*

Later in the afternoon, Begum tried to comfort her young mistress, as Laila wailed her heart out on her shoulder. ‘Begum, I can’t marry Master Zohaib; it’s Jubail I love!’

‘Oh, Mistress Laila! Shush!’ Begum paled. ‘What a terrible thing to say!’

‘But, Begum!’

‘Do you know how much you’ve hurt your parents already? If they hear you talking like this, what will they think?’ she hastened to advise her young mistress.

Begum would bitterly remember the next few moments for eternity, as her beautiful young mistress inched her way around and straight into her big, soft, melting heart. For Laila was Begum’s Achilles heel. And she invariably won and Begum invariably lost. This was no different from any other occasion.

That evening, Laila went to meet Jubail, smuggled out of the hevali by a loyal and loving Begum.

*

Begum was petrified; the courtyard clock had already struck ten and the night sky was forbiddingly dark, but no young mistress.

‘Are you still here, Begum?’ enquired a surprised Gulbahar coming down to

睛。

‘你疯了!’

朱拜尔转身离开。“我知道你会告诉她的。六点钟……紫树后面见,”他大胆地告知贝古姆,只留下她自己张着嘴站在那里,不过他的乞求却说服了她。

*

下午晚些时候,当莱拉靠在她的肩膀上哭泣时,贝古姆试图安慰她的小女主人。

“贝古姆,我不能嫁给朱海比少爷;我爱的是朱拜尔!

“嘘!莱拉小姐!”贝古姆吓得脸色苍白。“你在说什么疯话!”

“但是,贝古姆!”

“你知道你已经伤害了你的父母吗?如果他们听到你这样说,他们会怎么想?’她赶紧劝告她的小姐。

贝古姆会永远痛苦地铭记接下来的时间,因为她美丽的小姐慢慢靠近她,走近她慷慨的内心,让她心软,让她的心融化。因为莱拉是贝古姆的致命弱点。和其他情况一样,莱拉总是能让贝古姆心软。

那天晚上,莱拉去见了朱拜尔,贝古姆偷偷带她溜出了大楼。

*

贝古姆吓呆了;院子里的钟响了,晚上十点了,天色漆黑,但小姐还没回来。

“你还在这里吗,贝古姆?”古尔巴哈意外的询问道,并走

石。

’你生气了!’

朱拜尔转身离开。“我知道你会告诉她的。六点钟……请在紫树后面,”他大胆地指示,留下一个愤怒的贝古姆张着嘴站着,但仍然相信。

*

下午晚些时候,当莱拉靠在她的肩膀上哭泣时,贝古姆试图安慰她的年轻女主人。

“贝古姆,我不能嫁给朱海比少爷;我爱的是朱拜尔!

“哦,莱拉太太!嘘!”贝古姆脸色苍白。“说什么可怕的话!”

“但是,贝古姆!”

“你知道你已经伤害了你的父母吗?如果他们听到你这样说,他们会怎么想?’她赶紧劝告她的年轻女主人。

贝古姆会永远痛苦地记住接下来的几分钟,因为她美丽的年轻情妇慢慢地绕着她的身子走去,直接进入了她那柔软、柔软、融化的大心脏。对莱拉来说,是贝古姆的致命弱点。她总是赢,贝古姆总是输。这与任何其他场合没有什么不同。

那天晚上,莱拉去见了朱拜尔,朱拜尔是被一位忠诚而充满爱心的贝古姆偷偷带出大楼的。

*

贝古姆被吓呆了;院子里的钟已经敲了十点,夜空黑得可怕,却没有少奶奶。

“你还在这里吗,贝古姆?”一个惊讶的古尔巴哈问道,

the kitchen to check if the yoghurt mixture had set in the clay basin. Arslan loved his mother's homemade yoghurt with its thick, pinkish, creamy skin on top. 'Go home, my dear, your Ali will be waiting! You can finish cleaning the dal tomorrow,' she kindly advised her housekeeper, blissfully unaware of the typhoon sweeping through Begum's head.

Begum peered out of the courtyard. Any minute now her young mistress's head should have popped in behind the kitchen door, winked at her and then disappeared.

And Mistress Gulbahar imagined her daughter fast asleep in her room.

Rage suffocated Begum. How could her young mistress betray her like this? Did she have no shame or sense? Staying out all night with a strange man and especially after what had happened. For the first time in her life anger and resentment clawed. Above all, she hated herself, the gullible old Begum who was exploited by her spoilt young mistress!

By midnight the hevali was in total silence. Mistress Gulbahar and Haider Sahib were in bed. Arslan had gone to stay at his Aunt Rani's home to spend time with his cousin Saher. A stiff figure of misery, Begum stood in the middle of the courtyard, leaning on the cool marble basin of the fountain.

Gently, she let herself out of the side door, but made sure that it was left slightly ajar so that her young mistress could sneak in without waking her parents.

到厨房检查做的酸奶是否已经在粘土盆里凝固了。阿尔斯兰喜欢他妈妈自制的酸奶，上面有厚厚的、粉红色的、奶油般的酥皮。‘回家吧，亲爱的，你的阿里在等着你呢！明天来再把扁豆清理干净，’她好心地劝告她的管家，充满喜悦，却不知道贝古姆此时胆战心惊。

贝古姆从院子里四处张望。她的小姐本应立刻出现在厨房门后，对她使眼色，然后溜回家。

古尔巴哈夫人以为她的女儿已经在房间里睡着了。

愤怒让贝古姆窒息。她的小姐怎么会这样背叛她？她没有羞耻感或理智吗？和一个陌生男人一起过夜，尤其是在发生了一些事之后。这是她有生以来第一次感到愤怒和怨恨。最重要的是，她恨自己，自己宠坏的小姐利用了她！

午夜时分，大楼里一片寂静。古尔巴哈夫人和海德·萨希卜都睡了。阿尔斯兰去了他的拉妮姨妈家，和他的表弟萨赫一起玩。贝古姆站在院子中央，靠在喷泉池冰凉的大理石上一动不动，显得十分凄凉。

她轻轻地走出了侧门，但确保门稍微半开着，这样她的小姐就可以在不吵醒父母的情况下偷偷溜进去。

他走到厨房检查酸奶混合物是否已经在粘土盆里凝固了。阿尔斯兰喜欢他妈妈自制的酸奶，上面有厚厚的、粉红色的、奶油般的皮肤。

‘回家吧，亲爱的，你的阿里会等你的！你明天就可以打扫完木屋了，’她和蔼地建议她的管家，幸福地没有意识到台风席卷了贝古姆的脑袋。

贝古姆从院子里向外张望。任何时候，她年轻女主人的脑袋都应该从厨房门后钻出来，冲她使了个眼色，然后就消失了。

古尔巴哈女主人想象她的女儿在她的房间里睡着了。

愤怒让贝古姆窒息。她的少奶奶怎么会这样背叛她？她没有羞耻感或理智吗？和一个陌生男人一起过夜，尤其是在发生了什么事之后。这是她有生以来第一次愤怒和怨恨。最重要的是，她恨自己，那个被她宠坏的小情妇利用的轻信老贝古姆！

午夜时分，大楼里一片寂静。古尔巴哈女主人和海德尔·萨希布都在床上。阿尔斯兰去了他的拉妮阿姨家，与他的表弟萨赫共度时光。一个僵硬的痛苦身影，贝古姆站在院子中央，靠在喷泉凉爽的大理石盆上。

她轻轻地让自己走出了侧门，但确保门稍微半开着，这样她的小姐就可以在不吵醒父母的情况下偷偷溜进去。

Away from the hevali and under the moonlit sky, Begum's desperate eyes sought two figures. But the landscape remained dismally flat. Listlessly waiting under the shadow of the large jamuni tree, Begum tucked her night shawl around her head, protecting herself against the cool breeze.

'Please, Allah Pak, return our Laila safely to us and with her izzat intact!' Begum begged of her almighty Allah Pak.

Finally, afraid of the dark shadows and the scuttling movement of a rattlesnake in the undergrowth around the tangles of brushwood, Begum gave up her vigil and hurried home.

As soon as she bolted the door, her husband leapt off his portable bed on the veranda, rushing across the courtyard, hand raised to strike her. Begum fearfully crouched against the wall as he gripped her arm.

'I've been worried sick, Begum! I was about to go to the hevali to look for you! What time do you call this?' He shook her hard, her shawl falling off.

'Ali, please! Don't shout,' Begum cried, in tears. 'Please, just go to the potter's house and find out if his devil is at home? These children will kill us!'

'What are you saying?' Ali stiffened, eyes fearful.

'Mistress Laila is not at home!' she whimpered, looking up at the starry sky. Surely those stars were privy to the couple's whereabouts, Begum wondered.

'Where is she, then?' he thundered, voice threaded with steel. Begum's

贝古姆离开大宅，在月光下用绝望的目光寻找着他们。但情形仍然很糟糕。贝古姆无精打采地在紫树的树荫下等着，将她的披巾裹在头上，让自己免受凉风的侵袭。

“拜托了，老天爷，请保佑莱拉小姐平安归来，不要名节不保！”贝古姆恳求她万能的阿拉真主。

最后，因为害怕阴森的黑夜和响尾蛇在周围的灌木丛中突然出现，贝古姆放弃了她的守夜祈祷，匆匆赶回家了。

她一锁门，丈夫就从阳台上的轻便床上一跃而下，冲过院子，举手要打她。贝古姆抓着她的手臂，恐惧地靠在墙上蹲下。

“我一直很担心你，贝古姆！我正要去大宅找你！现在什么时候了？”他用力摇晃她，她的披肩掉了下来。

“阿里，求你了！不要大喊大叫，”贝古姆哭着喊道。“拜托，去陶工家看看他的恶魔儿子是否在家？这两个孩子会害死我们！”

“你在说什么？”阿里浑身一僵，眼中充满恐惧。

“莱拉小姐不在家！”她仰头望着星空，呜咽着说。贝古姆觉着天上的星星肯定知道这对夫妇的下落。

“那么，她在哪儿？”阿里用钢铁般的声音愤怒地吼道。贝

远离大宅，月光下，贝古姆绝望的目光寻找着两道身影。但景观仍然令人沮丧地平坦。贝古姆无精打采地等在紫树的阴影下，将她的夜披巾裹在头上，保护自己免受凉风的侵袭。

“拜托，神圣的主啊，将我们的莱拉安全归还给我们，和她的荣誉与名节完好无损！”贝古姆恳求她全能的真主。

最后，害怕黑暗的阴影和响尾蛇在灌木丛从周围的灌木丛中快速移动，贝古姆放弃了她的守夜，匆匆回家。

她一锁门，丈夫就从阳台上的轻便床上一跃而下，冲过院子，举手要打她。贝古姆抓着她的手臂，恐惧地靠在墙上蹲下。

“我一直很担心，贝古姆！我正要去大宅找你！你叫这个什么时候？”他用力摇晃她，她的披肩掉了下来。

“阿里，求你了！不要大喊大叫，”贝古姆哭着喊道。“拜托，去陶工家看看他的恶魔是否在家？这些孩子会杀了我们！”

“你在说什么？”阿里浑身一僵，眼中充满恐惧。

“莱拉大人不在家！”她仰头望着星空，呜咽着说。贝古姆想知道，这些明星肯定知道这对夫妇的下落。

“那么，她在哪里？”他雷声大叫，声音里透着钢铁。

heart plummeted.

‘With Jubail ... somewhere! I don’t know where!’

‘What?’ The look on his face would stay with her for life.

‘And do you know who’s to blame for this?’

Hysteria gripped Begum. ‘Yes, blame me. Ali, I am a stupid, gullible woman, who falls into Laila’s trap every time. I gave her the message from Jubail! I sneaked her out! Ali, if I am not stupid, I don’t know who is ...?’ Begum wailed, recoiling from the horror smeared across her husband’s face.

‘What have you done, Begum?’ he whispered, feeling faint and reaching his hand to his sweat-beaded forehead.

‘I’m stupid!’ she repeated, groaning aloud, wallowing in her misery. But her husband had gone!

Ali sprinted through the dark village lanes, stumbling over small rocks, pebbles and avoiding dry cow-dung cakes. Panting, his low hurried knocks on the wooden door prompted the potter to come running with his wife in tow. On seeing Ali, their gaunt faces became pictures of fear; it meant only one thing – Jubail.

‘Where’s your son?’ Ali hissed into their faces. The potter visibly shrank, as if willing himself to melt away into nothingness, his bent back even more stooped.

‘Come inside!’ he croaked.

Ali gingerly stepped down into the narrow, dark hallway, afraid of stumbling against a stack of pots lined against the wall, or the open

格姆的心猛地一沉。

“和朱拜尔……在某个地方！我不知道在哪里！”

“什么？”他脸上的表情会让她铭记一生。

“你知道这应该怪谁吗？”

阿里歇斯底里的情绪让贝古姆心惊肉跳。‘是的，怪我。阿里，我是个愚蠢和容易受骗的女人，每次都落入莱拉的圈套。我给了她朱拜尔的消息！我偷偷带她出去了！阿里，如果我不傻的话，我不知道是谁……？’贝古姆哀号着，她丈夫脸上弥散的恐怖情绪让她退缩了。

“你做了什么，贝古姆？”他低声说，感到头晕目眩，把手伸到了满头大汗的额头上。

“我很愚蠢！”她重复道，大声呻吟着，沉浸在她的痛苦中。但她的丈夫已经出去了！阿里冲过黑暗的村庄小巷，在布满小石块和鹅卵石的路上跌跌撞撞，尽量避开干牛粪。他喘着粗气急促的轻敲木门的声音促使陶工托着他的妻子跑了过来。看到阿里，他们憔悴的脸变成了恐惧的画面；这只意味着一件事——朱拜尔惹麻烦了。

“你的儿子呢？”阿里冲着他们的脸发出愤怒的嘶嘶声。陶工缩成一团，仿佛要找个地缝钻进去，背比之前更驼了。

“进来吧！”他嘶哑地说。阿里小心翼翼地走进狭窄黑暗的走廊，生怕撞到一排排在墙边的花盆，或者掉进陶工门外敞开的排水沟。

贝格姆的心猛地一沉。

“与朱拜尔……某处！我不知道在哪里！”

“什么？”他脸上的表情会伴随她一生。

“你知道这应该怪谁吗？”

歇斯底里的情绪抓住了贝古姆。‘是的，怪我。阿里，我是个愚蠢易受骗的女人，每次都落入莱拉的圈套。我给了她朱拜尔的消息！我偷偷带她出去了！阿里，如果我不傻的话，我不知道是谁……？’贝古姆哀号着，从她丈夫脸上的恐惧中退缩了。

“你做了什么，贝古姆？”他低声说，感到头晕目眩，把手伸到了汗珠状的额头上。

“我很愚蠢！”她重复道，大声呻吟着，沉浸在她的痛苦中。但她的丈夫已经走了！

阿里冲过黑暗的村庄小巷，在小石块、鹅卵石上跌跌撞撞，避开干牛粪饼。喘着粗气，他急促的轻敲木门促使陶工带着他的妻子跑了过来。看到阿里，他们憔悴的脸变成了恐惧的画面；它只意味着一件事——朱拜尔。

“你的儿子呢？”阿里冲着他们的脸发出嘶嘶声。陶工明显缩了缩，仿佛要自己化作虚无一般，弯下的腰更弯了。

“进来！”他嘶哑地说。阿里小心翼翼地走进狭窄黑暗的走廊，生怕撞到一排排在墙上的花盆，或者陶工门外敞开的排水沟。

gutter outside the potter's door.

'We don't know where he is!'

Jubail's mother rushed to explain, not easily cowed by Haider-ji's overbearing munshi. 'He's a commoner like us and so I'll not be intimidated by him!' she defiantly reminded herself. 'And our son has just become a graduate.'

'Well, you had better find out!' Ali thundered in her direction, irked by women like her who spoke up first these days and who, unlike his Begum, had their wits about them. His Begum had truly lost hers!

'Our young mistress is not at home, fools!' he jeered, unable to disguise his contempt for them.

The potter and his wife shrank against the wall, eyes standing large in their gaunt faces, mouths fallen open. Hearing their shallow breathing, Ali took pity on them, fearing that either of them might have a heart seizure. He even felt sorry for the potter's rude 'outspoken' wife. Nevertheless, he brutally had to spell out their predicament to them.

'If the master finds out that your son has dared to speak to his daughter again, specifically after his instructions yesterday, he'll have your hide. The audacity of you foolish "little" people amazes me! The landlord of the village and a mere potter!' Ali sneered. Which cuckoo land were these people living in?

'You don't have to insult us!' The potter's wife bitterly snapped back at the munshi, recoiling from his harsh words. 'We know ... We told him ...

“我们不知道他在哪里！”朱拜尔的母亲急忙解释到，海德老爷霸道的管家没有轻易吓唬到她。“他和我们一样是平民，所以我不怕他！”她大胆地提醒着自己。“而且我们的儿子是一名毕业的大学生。”

“是么，你最好把他找回来！”阿里冲她怒吼，这些天像她这样辩护的妇女激怒了他，而且他们头脑冷静，这一点贝古姆和他们不同。他的贝古姆真的失去了理智！

“我们的小姐不在家，蠢货！”他奚落道，无法掩饰自己对他们的蔑视。

陶工和他的妻子靠在墙上缩了缩，他们憔悴的脸上睁着大大的眼睛，张嘴结舌。听到他们浅浅的呼吸声，阿里很是同情他们，生怕他们中的任何一个人心脏病发作。他甚至对陶工粗鲁的“直言不讳”的妻子感到抱歉。尽管如此，他还是要残忍地说明他们的困境。

“如果老爷发现你儿子敢再和他的女儿说话，特别是在昨天做出警告之后，他会扒了你的皮。你们这些愚蠢“小”人的胆量让我吃惊！”村里的地主和区区一个陶匠！”阿里冷笑道。这些人活在梦里吗？

“你不用侮辱我们！”陶工的妻子怒气冲冲地向管家反驳了一句。但又因为他刺耳的话而退缩了，“我们知道……

“我们不知道他在哪里！”朱拜尔的母亲急忙解释，被海德尔吉的霸道蒙氏吓倒了。“他和我们一样是平民，我不会被他吓倒的！”她挑衅地提醒自己。“而我们的儿子刚刚毕业。”

“好吧，你最好找出来！”阿里向她的方向咆哮着，被像她这样的女人激怒了，这些女人这些天最先说话，而且不像他的贝古姆，她们对她们很聪明。他的贝古姆真的失去了她的！

“我们的小主人不在家，傻瓜！”他嘲笑道，无法掩饰他对他们的蔑视。

陶工和他的妻子靠在墙上缩了缩，他们憔悴的脸上睁着大大的眼睛，张着嘴。听到他们浅浅的呼吸声，阿里很是同情他们，生怕他们中的任何一个人心脏病发作。他甚至为陶工粗鲁的“直言不讳”的妻子感到难过。尽管如此，他还是不得不粗暴地向他们说明了他们的困境。

“如果主人发现你儿子敢再和他的女儿说话，特别是昨天他的指示，他会得到你的皮。你们这些愚蠢的“小”人的胆量让我吃惊！”村里的地主，区区一个陶艺家！”阿里冷笑道。这些人住在哪个杜鹃地？

“你不用侮辱我们！”陶工的妻子狠狠地回了一句，因为他的严厉话而退缩了。

“我们知道……我们告诉

Stupid boy! But what about her – that madam of yours? Who's keeping an eye on her? She left her home. Our son did not drag her out of the hevali!' Resentment had flared. Ali had no right to insult them. Who was he anyway? Just a peg or two above them!

Ali blushed. The arrow had struck home and he immediately went on the defensive. His master and his izzat couldn't be sullied by anyone. 'My mistress is a naive young woman, I admit. But your son is a conniving snake, bent on raising himself up on the social ladder by pursuing our mistress – you know just as well as I do, you foolish folk, that both our class and caste system has firm boundaries. Even if you could jump from one to the other, it would still be unthinkable for your clan to even glance at the daughter of the most powerful man in this village, let alone contemplate anything else between them.'

'Munshi-ji, we know what our son has done.' The potter meekly intervened, scowling heavily at his wife. Trust her to make it more difficult for them.

Ali mellowed. 'Please find your son and send him packing back to the city. Otherwise there'll be hell to pay! Goodnight!' Then he melted into the night.

The potter, shuffling behind his wife, returned to his portable bed, sick at heart. Sleep forgotten, they huddled inside their cotton flattened quilts, keeping a vigil for their son, ears alert to the smallest of sounds.

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我们告诉过他……傻孩子！但是她呢——你的那个小姐呢？谁在关注她？她自己离开了家。我们的儿子没有把她拖出大宅！”怨恨已经爆发了。阿里无权侮辱他们。而且他是谁？只不过是老爷一家的狗腿子！

阿里脸红了。这句话直击他的要害，他立即开始维护自己的尊严。任何人不能玷污他和他主人的名誉。

“我承认，我的小姐是个天真的小女孩。但你的儿子居心叵测，一心追求我们的小姐来提升自己的社会阶级地位——你和我都知道，蠢货，我们的阶级和种姓制度都有严格的界限。即使你们可以提升自己的社会阶层，你家仍然不配覬觐村子里最有权势的人的女儿，更不用说考虑他们之间的其他任何事情了。

“管家，我们知道我们儿子做了什么。”陶工温顺地插话，同时对他的妻子重重地皱着眉头。相信她只会让他们的处境变得更加艰难。

阿里平静了下来。“请找到你的儿子，立刻把他赶回城里。不然你们就惨了！晚安！”然后他就没影了。

陶工在他妻子身后拖着脚步，回到他的便携式床上，心里很不舒服。因为睡不着觉，他们蜷缩在平整的棉被里，等着朱拜尔回来，任何细小的声音都不放过。

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他……愚蠢的孩子！但是她呢——你的那个夫人呢？谁在关注她？她离开了家。我们的儿子没有把她拖出地狱！”怨恨已经爆发了。阿里无权侮辱他们。他到底是谁？就在他们上面一两个钉子！

阿里脸红了。箭射中了，他立即开始防守。他和他主人的名誉，不能被任何人玷污。

“我承认，我的小姐是个天真的年轻女人。但你的儿子是一条纵容的蛇，一心追求我们的小姐，在社会阶梯上提升自己——你和我一样知道，愚蠢的人，我们的阶级和种姓制度都有严格的界限。”

“管家，我们知道我们儿子做了什么。”陶工温顺地插话，对他的妻子重重地皱着眉头。相信她会让他们变得更加困难。

阿里软了下来。“请找到你的儿子，把他打包带回城里。不然就惨了！晚安！”然后他就融入了夜色中。

陶工在他妻子身后拖着脚步，回到他的便携式床上，心里很不舒服。忘记了睡眠，他们蜷缩在棉被压平的被子里，为他们的儿子守夜，耳朵对最小的声音保持警惕。

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Ali returned home, screaming in his head, 'Where are they?'

His wife eagerly ran to open the door. He shook his head. Begum stood still, a crushing weakness sweeping through her body.

'Go to bed!' He sank heavily down on his portable charpoy. 'You can be sure that a long day awaits us!'

Instead of sleeping, she raised her two hands in du'a to Allah Pak, fervently beseeching: 'Please protect my Mistress Gulbahar's household! Let nothing destroy or tarnish the honour of our master and mistress — they are good people, and don't deserve to suffer. Please keep evil away from my master's door!'

'But evil is already at our door!' an inner demon sneered. 'In the shape of a foolish infatuation between the young mistress and the potter's son.' Were they both blind to the social situation, the incompatibility of it all?

'I'm just a humble servant!' Begum beseeched. 'I do what my superiors ask of me. In obeying Mistress Laila, I have betrayed her parents. Allah Pak, let the divas of their home be forever lit!'

Still praying, with hands raised, Begum stared up at the stars above her, chewing her lower lip and tasting blood. She had pulled her portable bed out into the courtyard, feeling suffocated in the small shaded space of the veranda. Her mistress and master slept peacefully in their comfortable king-sized beds, little guessing at the evil fast knocking on their door! Begum nearly fainted into

阿里回到家后,脑海中呼啸翻滚,“他们在哪里?”

他的妻子急切地跑去开门。他摇摇头。贝古姆站着不动,她的身体变得很疲软。

“去睡觉吧!”他重重地倒在他的便携床上。“明天会是很难熬的一天!”

她没有睡觉,而是举起双手向老天爷祈祷,热切地恳求道:“请保护古尔巴哈夫人的家人!不要让任何事情破坏或玷污我们主人和小姐的名誉——他们是好人,不应该受苦。请让邪恶远离我的主人!

“可是邪恶已经在我们家门口了!”一个心魔冷笑道。“邪恶在年轻的小姐和陶工的儿子之间以一种愚蠢的痴情形式出现。”他们都对社会阶级和其中一切的不相容性视而不见吗?

“我只是个卑微的仆人!”贝古姆恳求道。“我做的是上级要求我做的事情。在服从莱拉小姐的同时,我背叛了她的父母。老天啊,保佑他们吧!

贝古姆还在祈祷,举着双手,抬头凝视着头顶的星星,把嘴唇咬出了血。她把手提床拉到院子里,因为凉台的小阴凉处让她感到窒息。她的夫人和主人睡在舒适的特大床里,丝毫没有猜到邪魔的到来!贝古姆差点昏倒在枕头里。

阿里回到家,在他的脑海中尖叫,“他们在哪里?”

他的妻子急切地跑去开门。他摇摇头。贝古姆站着不动,一种压倒性的弱点席卷了她的身体。

“去睡觉吧!”他重重地倒在他的便携垫上。“你可以肯定,漫长的一天等着我们!”

她没有睡觉,而是向真主举起两只手,热切地恳求道:“请保护我的古尔巴哈夫人的家人!不要让任何事情破坏或玷污我们主人和小姐的荣誉——他们是好人,不应该受苦。请让邪恶远离我主人的门!

“可是邪恶已经在我们家门口了!”一个心魔冷笑道。“在年轻的情妇和陶工的儿子之间以一种愚蠢的迷恋的形式出现。”他们都对社会局势视而不见,对这一切的不相容性视而不见吗?

“我只是个卑微的仆人!”贝古姆恳求道。“我做我的上级要求我做的事情。在服从莱拉女主人的同时,我背叛了她的父母。主啊,让他们家的女主角永远点亮!

贝古姆还在祈祷,双手举起,抬头凝视着头顶的星星,咬着下唇,品尝着鲜血。她把手提床拉到院子里,在凉台的小阴凉处感到窒息。女主人和主人睡在舒适的特大床里,丝毫没有猜到邪魔的快速敲门声!贝古姆差点昏倒在枕头里。

her pillow.

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Gulbahar happily entered her daughter's room to show her a silver-plated tea set for her trousseau. Imagining Laila to be on the rooftop gallery she went down to see if breakfast was ready, and saw her housekeeper just coming in through the back door.

'Begum?' Frowning, Gulbahar softly called, but the housekeeper had crossed the courtyard, ignoring Mithu's morning 'salaam' calls from the cage, and was already on the stairs. Confused, Gulbahar followed her housekeeper into her daughter's room.

She found Begum sitting on Laila's bed.

'Is Mistress Laila upstairs having breakfast?' Begum enquired, her guilty face lowered.

'Not seen her yet ...'

To her alarm, Gulbahar saw Begum's body double over; with her face buried in her lap, she sobbed loudly into her chador.

'Begum! What's wrong?' Gulbahar's heart had taken flight.

'You won't want to know!' Begum wailed aloud.

'Is it to do with our Laila?' Gulbahar commanded, her face level with Begum's.

Begum raised her tear-stricken face and nodded miserably. Her mistress's look of horror would remain etched in her mind for years to come.

'Where is she?' Gulbahar stuttered, barely able to breathe, fear gripping her.

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古尔巴哈高兴地走进女儿的房间，想向她展示一套镀银的嫁妆茶具。因为房间里没人，她猜想莱拉可能在屋顶走廊，就下楼去看早餐是否准备好了，然后看到她的管家刚刚从后门进来。

“贝古姆？”古尔巴哈皱着眉头，轻声叫道，但管家已经穿过院子在楼梯上了，无视了主人的招呼。古尔巴哈迷惑不解，跟着管家进了女儿的房间。

她发现贝古姆正坐在莱拉的床上。

“莱拉小姐在楼上吃早饭吗？”贝古姆低着头羞愧的问道。

“不知道她去哪儿了……”

令古尔巴哈惊恐的是，她看到贝古姆的身体向下弯曲。她把脸埋在腿上，在披肩里大声抽泣。

“贝古姆！怎么了？”古尔巴哈心慌极了。

“你不会想知道的！”贝古姆大声哀号。

“和我们的莱拉有关吗？”古尔巴哈询问道，她的脸正对着贝古姆的脸。

贝古姆抬起泪流满面的脸，痛苦地点了点头。在接下来的几年里，女主人震惊的表情会一直铭刻在贝古姆的脑海中。

“她在哪里？”古尔巴哈结结巴巴，几乎无法呼吸，恐惧笼罩着她。

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古尔巴哈高兴地走进女儿的房间，向她展示了一套镀银的嫁妆茶具。想象着莱拉在屋顶画廊，她下楼看看早餐是否准备好，看到她的管家刚刚从后门进来。

“贝古姆？”古尔巴哈皱着眉头，轻声叫道，但管家已经穿过院子，无视了笼子里米图早上发出的‘招呼’召唤，已经在楼梯上。古尔巴哈迷惑不解，跟着管家进了女儿的房间。

她发现贝古姆正坐在莱拉的床上。

“莱拉太太在楼上吃早饭吗？”贝古姆低着头问道。

“还没见过她……”

令她惊恐的是，古尔巴哈看到贝古姆的身体倒了过来。她把脸埋在腿上，对着披肩大声抽泣。

“贝古姆！怎么了？”古尔巴哈的心已经飞了起来。

“你不会想知道的！”贝古姆大声哀号。

“和我们的莱拉有关吗？”古尔巴哈命令道，她的脸与贝古姆的脸平。

贝古姆抬起泪流满面的脸，痛苦地点了点头。在接下来的几年里，她的女主人的恐怖表情会一直铭刻在她的脑海中。

“她在哪里？”古尔巴哈结结巴巴，几乎无法呼吸，恐惧笼罩着她。

‘I don’t know!’ Begum replied dully, her vacant eyes on the picture of her young mistress on the wall. ‘She’s gone!’ she whispered, watching her mistress’s eyes squeeze shut.

Gulbahar slid down on the bed next to Begum.

‘Gone, Begum! It can’t be true!’ The broken words were threaded with fear and disbelief.

Gulbahar tried to claw her way back to reality. Her daughter’s reputation couldn’t be compromised, even in the eyes of a faithful housekeeper.

‘She’ll be around the hevali somewhere,’ Gulbahar brusquely replied. ‘Please, no word of this to your master or anyone else,’ she added softly, head lowered, before leaving the room.

Begum wanted to shout out: ‘Laila has gone! She’s been out all night with her lover!’ But love and respect for her mistress prevented her from uttering the terrible words aloud. Instead, she picked up a large framed photograph of Laila taken under the moonlight. ‘Little Mistress, we never knew that you would become so self-destructive and do this to your parents!’

Begum wearily stood up. Breakfast still had to be prepared; there was the shopping for fresh vegetables to organise for the afternoon dinner. Laila’s new in-laws were coming this evening to discuss dates and practicalities relating to the forthcoming wedding. The new maid assigned with responsibility for the upper-floor rooms had to be supervised, especially to ensure that she had dusted behind the bed posts

“我不知道！”贝古姆呆呆地回答，目光空洞地盯着墙上小姐的照片。“她走了！”她低声说，看着她的小姐，紧紧的闭上双眼。古尔巴哈在贝古姆旁边的床上滑了下来。

“走了，贝古姆！这不可能是真的！”断断续续的话语中充满了恐惧和怀疑。

古尔巴哈试着让自己清醒。她女儿的名誉不能损坏，即使在一个忠实的管家眼中也不可以。

“她会在大宅附近的某个地方的，”古尔巴哈直率地说：“求你了，不要对你的主人或其他人说这件事，”她在离开房间之前低着头轻声补充道。

贝古姆想喊：‘莱拉已经走了！她和她的爱人整晚都在外面！但她对小姐的爱和尊重使她无法大声说出这些可怕的话。相反，她拿起一张莱拉在月光下拍摄的大框照片。’“小主人，我们从来不知道你会这样糟蹋自己，你居然对自己的父母做出这样的事！”

贝古姆疲倦地站了起来。早餐还是要准备的；下午的晚餐需要准备新鲜蔬菜。莱拉的公婆今晚要来讨论与即将举行的婚礼有关的日期和实际情况。负责上层房间的新女佣必须受到监督，尤其是要确保她在床柱和其他家具后面擦除灰尘。

“我不知道！”贝古姆呆呆地回答，目光空洞地盯着墙上她年轻情妇的照片。“她走了！”她低声说，看着她的情妇紧闭的眼睛。古尔巴哈在贝古姆旁边的床上滑了下来。

“走了，贝古姆！这不可能是真的！”破碎的话语中充满了恐惧和怀疑。

古尔巴哈试图回到现实。女儿的名誉，即使在一个忠实的管家眼中，也不能妥协。

“她会在大宅附近的某个地方，”古尔巴哈粗暴地回答。“求你了，不要对你的主人或其他人说这件事，”她在离开房间之前低着头轻声补充道。

贝古姆想喊：‘莱拉走了！她和她的爱人整晚都在外面！但对她的情妇的爱和尊重使她无法大声说出这些可怕的话。相反，她拿起一张莱拉在月光下拍摄的大框照片。’“小主人，我们从来不知道你会变得如此自毁，对你的父母做出这样的事！”

贝古姆疲倦地站了起来。早餐还是要准备的；下午的晚餐需要购买新鲜蔬菜。莱拉的新公婆今晚要来讨论与即将举行的婚礼有关的日期和实际情况。负责上层房间的新女佣必须受到监督，尤其是要确保她在床柱和其他家具后面除尘。

and other items of furniture.

Downstairs in the large courtyard, a nightly breeze always meant a thicker layer of dust to sweep away the following morning. Everything had to be ritually polished, scrubbed or hosed down before the guests arrived. Women guests often had a tendency to wander and look around the beautiful hevali out of curiosity.

‘I haven’t slept a wink all night. How will I be able to do anything today?’ Begum groaned to herself, going downstairs to inspect the work of the new maid, and scowled. The silly chit was still watering the plants around the colonnades; the hanging baskets of geraniums were leaking water everywhere onto the marble surface. Begum could not be bothered to remind her of the safety hazard.

Her thoughts were elsewhere. ‘I must keep out of Mistress Gulbahar’s path today!’

CHAPTER 5

The Elopement

Begum was sitting at the kitchen table dicing aubergines into quarters for the afternoon dinner when Ali appeared in front of her under the ceiling fan, wiping his tanned forehead with his fingertips. The look in his eyes made Begum stagger to her feet; eyes automatically darting to the door, fearful of someone entering.

‘Ali?’ She felt faint. ‘Please say it’s not bad news?’

‘No, Begum, it’s very bad news,’ he contradicted. ‘Our spoilt Mistress Laila has eloped with the potter’s brat!’

Mouth fallen open, Begum swayed. Ali reached to catch her. The knife

楼下的大院子里，每晚的微风总是意味着第二天早上要扫去一层厚厚的灰尘。在客人到达之前，所有东西都必须按照仪式进行抛光、擦洗或冲洗。女性客人经常出于好奇而倾向于在美丽的大宅周围徘徊和环顾。

“我一整夜都没合眼。今天要怎么干活？”贝古姆自言自语，皱着眉头下楼检查新女仆的工作。傻傻的小家伙还在给柱廊周围的植物浇水；挂着天竺葵的篮子在大理石表面上到处漏水。贝古姆懒得提醒她存在的安全隐患。

她心里在想别的事。“今天我必须远离古尔巴哈夫人！”

第 5 章 私奔

贝古姆正坐在厨房的桌子旁，将茄子切成四等份，准备下午的晚餐，这时阿里出现在她面前的吊扇下，用指尖擦拭着晒黑的额头。他的眼神让贝古姆踉跄着站了起来。眼睛不自觉地瞥向门口，生怕有人进来。

“阿里？”她感到头晕目眩。“这不是坏消息吗？”

“不，贝古姆，这是个非常坏的消息，”他反驳道。“我们宠坏的莱拉小姐和陶工的小子私奔了！”

贝古姆张嘴结舌，身体也站不稳了。阿里伸手接住她。那把

楼下的大院子里，每晚的微风总是意味着第二天早上会刮去一层厚厚的灰尘。在客人到达之前，所有东西都必须按照仪式进行抛光、擦洗或冲洗。女性客人经常出于好奇而倾向于在美丽的大宅周围徘徊和环顾。

“我一整夜都没合眼。我今天怎么可能有事？”贝古姆自言自语，下楼检查新女仆的工作，皱着眉头。傻傻的小家伙还在给柱廊周围的植物浇水；挂着天竺葵的篮子在大理石表面上到处漏水。贝古姆懒得提醒她安全隐患。

她的思绪在别处。“今天我必须远离古尔巴哈大人！”

第 5 章 私奔

贝古姆正坐在厨房的桌子旁，将茄子切成四等份，准备下午的晚餐，这时阿里出现在她面前的吊扇下，用指尖擦拭着晒黑的额头。他的眼神让贝古姆踉跄着站了起来。眼睛不自觉地飞向门口，生怕有人进来。

“阿里？”她感到头晕目眩。“请说这不是坏消息？”

“不，贝古姆，这是个非常坏的消息，”他反驳道。“我们被宠坏的莱拉小姐和陶工的小子私奔了！”

嘴巴张开，贝古姆动了动。阿里伸手接住她。那把刀和

and the piece of aubergine were on the tiled kitchen floor.

‘Run off with the potter’s son!’

Begum cried, voice faint.

‘Manzoor, our taxi man ... said that he had dropped Jubail and a veiled woman at the bus station. He thought that it was a female relative of his, but it was our Laila. He saw her face – saw them get on the Islamabad bus. I’ve told him not to utter a word about this to anyone.’

Begum sank into a heap on the footstool. ‘All my fault ... I gave her the message ... Allah Pak help us!’

‘Yes, Begum, beg Allah Pak to help us all!’ he corrected. ‘That selfish pair has thrown us into the middle of the flour-grinding machine, a chaki,’ he taunted.

‘What are we going to do, Ali?’

‘The potters are already frightened out of their wits – poor souls. I must get to them before the master finds out.’

Then he was gone. Putting her head in her lap, Begum wept bitterly, unaware of time and space until she heard footsteps.

‘Begum, are you all right?’

Begum raised fearful eyes at her mistress, unable to contain the bad news inside her any longer. ‘Laila has gone, Mistress!’ she wailed aloud.

‘Left the village last night with Jubail!’

Gulbahar froze, eyes now orbs of horror. Begum stumbled up from the footstool to reach her mistress, but Gulbahar blindly turned and left the room – the dinner forgotten.

刀和那块茄子掉在了铺着瓷砖的厨房地板上。

“和陶匠的儿子一起跑了！”

贝古姆声音微弱的喊道。

“曼苏尔，我们的出租车司机……说他把朱拜尔和一个蒙着面纱的女人载到了公交车站。他以为是朱拜尔的女性亲戚，其实是我们的莱拉。他看到了她的脸——看到他们上了去伊斯兰堡的公共汽车。我告诉他不要对任何人说这件事。

贝古姆倒在脚凳上，瘫成一堆。“都是我的错……我给她传了话……老天帮帮我们吧！”

“是的，贝古姆，恳求老天爷帮助我们所有人！”他纠正道。

“那对自私的人把我们扔进了磨粉机的中间，”他奚落道。

“我们要做什么，阿里？”

“陶工夫妇已经吓得手足无措了——真是一对可怜虫。我必须在主人知道之前找到他们。

然后他就走了。贝古姆把头埋在腿上，痛哭起来，直到听到脚步声，她才停了下来。

“贝古姆，你没事吧？”

贝古姆惊恐地望着女主人，再也抑制不住心中的坏消息。

“莱拉走了，女主人！”她大声喊道。“她昨晚和朱拜尔离开了村子！”

古尔巴哈僵住了，眼中充满了恐惧。贝古姆从脚凳上跌跌撞撞地站起来去扶她的女主人，但古尔巴哈盲目地转身离开了房间——连晚餐都忘记

那块茄子放在铺着瓷砖的厨房地板上。

“和陶匠的儿子一起跑！”

贝古姆喊道，声音微弱。

“曼祖尔，我们的出租车司机……说他把朱拜尔和一个蒙着面纱的女人丢在了公交车站。他以为是他的女性亲戚，其实是我们的莱拉。他看到了她的脸——看到他们上了伊斯兰堡的公共汽车。我告诉他不要对任何人说这件事。

贝古姆倒在脚凳上。“都是我的错……我给了她信息……真主帮助我们！”

“是的，贝古姆，求真主帮助我们所有人！”他纠正道。

“那对自私的人把我们扔进了磨粉机的中间，一个磨粉机，”他嘲弄道。

“我们要做什么，阿里？”

“陶工们已经被吓坏了——可怜的灵魂。我必须在主人发现之前找到他们。

然后他就走了。贝古姆把头埋在腿上，痛哭起来，直到听到脚步声，她才意识到时间和空间。

“贝古姆，你没事吧？”

贝古姆惊恐地望着女主人，再也抑制不住心中的坏消息。“莱拉走了，女主人！”她大声喊道。“昨晚和朱拜尔离开了村子！”

古尔巴哈僵住了，眼中充满了恐惧。贝古姆从脚凳上跌跌撞撞地站起来去找她的情妇，但古尔巴哈盲目地转身离开了房间——晚餐忘记

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Ali sprinted through the village lanes to reach the potter's home. Once there, he pressed his face to the door, knocking hard and not caring who heard. It was immediately opened by the potter, his wife hovering behind him. The sight of both their faces clearly told him that neither had slept.

Ali shot them a bitter look. 'You'd better pack your bags and leave immediately! Your devil of a son, shaitan, has eloped with our Master Haider's daughter. His pure impudence is unimaginable!' He ignored their shocked, indrawn breaths. 'As to where he gets it from – I really can't fathom? Not from you simple folks. You can imagine what will happen once Master Haider finds out. You'd better reach him!'

His eyes swept over their stricken faces; he could almost hear the flutter of their timid heartbeats, and he relented, feeling sorry for them, but then reminded himself that it was their responsibility to guide their wayward son. They had let everyone down.

The potter's hands were shaking as he bolted the front door. His wife was rubbing her two calloused palms together in a traditional gesture to demonstrate outrage.

'What has our son done?' she croaked in disbelief.

'Education, Rahmat Bibi – giving people foolish illusions! Making them fly high in fairy lands. Spend more money on him, you said,' the potter jeered. 'Well, this is the result! Now deal with it.'

了。

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阿里冲过村庄的小巷，到达陶匠的家。一到那里，他就将脸贴在门上，用力敲门，不在乎谁会听到。陶匠立刻打开了门，他的妻子在他身后徘徊。从两人憔悴的脸庞可以得知，他们都没有睡觉。

阿里苦涩地看了他们一眼。

‘你最好收拾包裹，马上离开！你那该死的儿子就是一个恶魔，他已经和我们海德老爷的女儿私奔了。想不到他这么厚颜无耻！阿里对陶匠夫妇震惊到吸气的样子置之不理。

“他怎么拐跑小姐的——我真的无法理解？你们这些普通人配不上小姐。一旦海德老爷发现，你可以想想会发生什么。你最好去找他！

他的目光扫过他们饱受折磨的脸庞；他几乎可以听到他们胆怯的心跳声，他心软了，为他们感到难过，但又提醒自己，找到他们任性的儿子是他们的责任。他们让所有人都失望了。

陶工用螺栓锁上前门时，手都在颤抖。他的妻子用传统的手势摩擦她两个长满老茧的手掌，以示愤怒。

“我们的儿子做了什么？”她不敢相信地低声说道。

“拉赫马特·比比，教育——给人愚蠢的幻想！让他们在变得异想天开。你说的要在他身上多花点钱”陶工嘲笑道。

‘嗯，这就是结果！现在该收拾烂摊子了。

了。

*

阿里冲过村庄的小巷，到达陶工的家。一到那里，他就将脸贴在门上，用力敲门，不在乎谁听到了。陶工立刻打开了它，他的妻子在他身后徘徊。两人的脸庞清楚地告诉他，他们都没有睡觉。

阿里苦涩地看了他们一眼。

‘你最好收拾行囊，马上离开！你的恶魔，恶魔，已经和我们海德尔大师的女儿私奔了。他的纯粹无礼是难以想象的！他忽略了他们震惊、内敛的呼吸。“至于他从哪里得到的——我真的无法理解？不是来自你们这些简单的人。一旦海德尔大师发现，你可以想象会发生什么。你最好去找他！

他的目光扫过他们饱受折磨的脸庞；他几乎可以听到他们胆怯的心跳声，他心软了，为他们感到难过，但又提醒自己，引导他们任性的儿子是他们的责任。他们让所有人都失望了。

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“我们的儿子做了什么？”她不敢相信地低声说。

“教育，Rahmat Bibi——给人愚蠢的幻想！让他们在仙境高飞。多花点钱在他身上，你说，”陶工嘲笑道。‘嗯，这就是结果！现在处理它。

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Ali was fixing the broken leg of the veranda charpoy when the shrill ringing tone of his mobile phone made him drop his hammer. It was Mistress Laila.

‘Where are you, Mistress? We’re worried sick ...’ Ali stammered, maintaining his code of respect in addressing her, although he wanted to deliver spades full of anger over the phone. She abruptly vanquished him with her brazen announcement.

‘I’ve married Jubail! Please inform my parents – ask them to forgive me.’

‘Mistress Laila ...’ he croaked but the line was already dead. Laila was in no mood for angry lectures from a mere servant.

Ali slid onto the nearby chair, brushing his moist palm over his flushed face. His Adam’s apple was energetically bobbing up and down.

‘Mad Laila! What have you done?’ he mourned aloud, frightening the two black crows hopping on Begum’s linen kurtha on her washing line.

He remained slumped for a long time on his old chair, under the shade of the veranda, not knowing what to do. How could he keep this bombshell buried inside him?

‘Allah Pak, please help them!’ He fervently prayed that the potter’s lot had fled. For there would be no corner for them to hide in the village from the master’s wrath!

Shame scorched his face. No child did this sort of thing! To disobey was one thing; to marry in secret was another, and to such an unsuitable

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阿里正在修理阳台床的断腿时，手机刺耳的铃声让他放下了锤子。是莱拉小姐。

“你在哪里，小姐？我们担心得要命……”阿里结结巴巴地说道，尽管他想通过电话狠狠给她一铁锹，但仍保持着他对她的尊重。她突然用她厚颜无耻的声明打败了他。

“我嫁给朱拜尔了！请通知我的父母——请他们原谅我。

“莱拉小姐……”他嘶哑地叫道，但电话已经挂断了。莱拉没有心情听一个仆人的愤怒的训斥。

阿里滑到旁边的椅子上，湿漉漉的手掌抚过他通红的脸。他的喉结不断跳动。

他哀伤地大声吼道：“莱拉你这个疯子！你看看你做了些什么？”，吓得两只黑乌鸦跳到晾衣绳上的贝古姆的亚麻布衬衫上。

他在阳台树荫下的旧椅子上躺了很久，不知道该怎么办。他怎么能把这个重磅炸弹埋在心里？

“老天啊，帮帮他们吧！”他热切地祈祷陶工已经逃走了。因为他们在村子里没有任何角落可以躲避主人的怒火！

他觉得脸都丢没了。没有孩子做过这种事！不服从是一回事；秘密结婚是另一回事，和这样一个不合适的男人结婚

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阿里正在修理阳台木工的断腿时，手机刺耳的铃声让他放下了锤子。是莱拉太太。

“你在哪里，女主人？我们担心得要命……”阿里结结巴巴地说道，尽管他想通过电话表达充满愤怒的铁锹，但仍保持着他对她的尊重。她突然用她厚颜无耻的声明征服了他。

“我嫁给了朱拜尔！请通知我的父母——请他们原谅我。

“莱拉大人……”他嘶哑着嗓子，但电话已经挂断了。莱拉没有心情听一个单纯的仆人愤怒的训斥。

阿里滑到旁边的椅子上，湿漉漉的手掌抚过他通红的脸。他的喉结充满活力地上下摆动。

“疯狂的莱拉！你做了什么？”他大声哀悼，吓坏了在她的洗衣线上跳上贝古姆亚麻衬衫的两只黑乌鸦。

他在阳台的树荫下，在他的旧椅子上躺了很久，不知道该怎么办。他怎么能把这个重磅炸弹埋在他心里？

“老天啊，帮帮他们吧！”他热切地祈祷陶工的命运已经逃离。因为他们在村子里没有任何角落可以躲避主人的愤怒！

羞愧烧焦了他的脸。没有孩子做过这种事！不服从是一回事。秘密结婚是另一回事，对这样一个不合适的男人来

man simply unthinkable!

His heart bled for his Master Sahib. A proud man and admired by all; used to holding his head high up in his village community. How would he ever recover from this catastrophe?

‘Oh, God! No!’ Ali cried. Laila’s prospective in-laws were due to arrive that very night. ‘Shameless girl! Laila, if you were my daughter, I’d have strangled you by now!’

‘But she’s not the only one to blame!’ the inner voice mocked. His idiotic Begum had played a pivotal role in this family’s destruction. It looked as if they, too, would be fleeing with the potter’s family; two faithful servants had turned into traitors.

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Ali peeped from behind the minar tree in the open ground. When the Jeep had disappeared over the horizon, he dashed into the hevali. Face flushed, he wandered around the building looking for Begum. To his dismay, he eventually found her in Mistress Gulbahar’s room where two keen pairs of eyes assessed his face. Their intuition immediately alerted them that he had some terrible news to impart about Laila.

Hovering awkwardly near the door, Ali shuffled his feet, studiously avoiding eye contact with them. Begum leaned back against the bed post, afraid of falling in a heap on the floor from her panting heart if her husband didn’t speak up soon.

‘Begum, can I see you for a moment?’ he ventured to ask.

‘Ali, whatever you have come to say to Begum, please say it in front of me

简直是不可思议!

他的心为他的萨希卜老爷而流血。一个骄傲的受到所有人钦佩的人;习惯在村里昂首挺胸的人。他将如何从这场灾难中恢复过来?

‘天啊!不!’阿里喊道。莱拉的准公婆今晚来。‘不要脸的丫头!莱拉,如果你是我的女儿,我早就掐死你了!’

“但她不是唯一的罪魁祸首!”内心的声音嘲笑道。他的白痴贝古姆在这个家庭的毁灭中发挥了关键作用。看起来他们俩个也会和陶工的家人一起逃跑。两个忠实的仆人变成了叛徒。

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阿里从开阔地的高塔树后面窥视。当吉普车消失在地平线上时,他冲进了大宅。他满脸通红,在大楼里转来转去寻找贝古姆。令他沮丧的是,他最终在古尔巴哈女主人的房间里找到了她,两只敏锐的眼睛打量着他的脸。他们的直觉立即提醒他们,他有一些关于莱拉的可怕消息要告诉他们。

阿里尴尬地徘徊在门口,拖着脚,刻意避免与他们的目光接触。贝古姆靠在床柱上,生怕丈夫不快点开口,她气喘吁吁的心会让她在地上摔成一团。

“贝古姆,能出来一下吗?”他冒昧地问。

“阿里,不论你来对贝古姆说什么,请在我面前说出来——

说简直是不可想象的!

他的心为他的老爷大人而流血。一个骄傲的人,受到所有人的钦佩;习惯在村里昂首挺胸。他将如何从这场灾难中恢复过来?

‘天啊!不!’阿里喊道。莱拉的准姻亲将在当天晚上到达。‘不要脸的丫头!莱拉,如果你是我的女儿,我早就掐死你了!’

“但她不是唯一的罪魁祸首!”内心的声音嘲笑。他的白痴贝古姆在这个家庭的毁灭中发挥了关键作用。看起来他们也会和陶工的家人一起逃跑。两个忠实的仆人变成了叛徒。

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“贝古姆,我能见你一会儿吗?”他冒昧地问。

“阿里,你来对贝古姆说什么,请在我面前说出来——

– that is if it’s to do with my daughter?’ Gulbahar coolly chided.

Ali desperately sought escape. ‘It’s our portable bed ... I want to show it to Begum for one minute, if you could excuse her, Mistress?’

‘Ali, you’ve never lied before!’ Gulbahar stiffly mocked.

Ali turned and bowed his head against the wooden doorframe. The two women nervously waited. ‘Mistress Laila has married the potter’s son!’

Reaching her mistress’s side, Begum gently held her in her arms and guided her to the armchair. She crouched on the floor, clutching her mistress’s legs, fearing they would give way beneath her. Ali’s forehead was still pressed against the door-frame. Begum stared at the clock as if her whole life depended on it. The master was due back in half an hour.

Hearing his mistress’s steps, Ali sidled away from the door, head lowered.

‘Ali, I’ll tell your master myself ... Please phone Laila’s in-laws to cancel their visit ... say that we have left for the city because of a family bereavement or something,’ Gulbahar instructed, before leaving. Begum sobbed loudly into her muslin shawl, unable to meet her husband’s accusing eyes.

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Gulbahar leaned against the cold marble surface of the veranda colonnade, her eyes shut tight. ‘Sahiba-ji!’ Begum timidly asked.

如果这些话是关于我女儿的？”古尔巴哈冷冷地责备道。

阿里拼命地想要逃跑。“是我们的便携床……我想给贝古姆看一下，一分钟就可以，可以吗，夫人？”

“阿里，你从来没有撒过谎！”古尔巴哈生硬地嘲笑道。

阿里转身，低头靠在木门框上。两个女人紧张地等待着。

“莱拉小姐嫁给了陶匠的儿子！”

贝古姆走到夫人身边，轻轻将她抱在怀里，将她带到扶手椅上。她蹲在地板上，抓着夫人的腿，生怕她从椅子上掉下来。阿里的额头依旧抵在门框上。贝古姆一直盯着表看，仿佛没有表就活不了。那是因为老爷半个小时后就回来了。

听到夫人的脚步声，阿里低着头侧身离开了门。

“阿里，我会亲自告诉你的老爷……请打电话给莱拉的公婆取消他们的拜访……说我们因为失去亲人之故或其他原因离开了这座城市，”古尔巴哈在离开前指示道。

贝古姆在她的薄纱披肩里大声抽泣，因为她无法面对她丈夫责备的眼神。

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古尔巴哈靠在阳台柱廊冰冷的大理石上，闭上了眼睛。

“夫人！”贝古姆怯生生地问

如果是和我女儿有关的话？”古尔巴哈冷冷地责备道。

阿里拼命地寻求逃跑。“这是我们的便携式床……我想给贝古姆看一分钟，您能原谅她吗，女主人？”

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阿里转身，低头靠在木门框上。两个女人紧张地等待着。

“莱拉太太娶了陶匠的儿子！”

走到女主人身边，贝古姆轻轻将她抱在怀里，将她带到扶手椅上。她蹲在地板上，抓着情妇的腿，生怕它们会在她身下让位。阿里的额头依旧抵在门框上。贝古姆盯着时钟，仿佛她的一生都依赖于它。主人半个小时后就回来了。

听到女主人的脚步声，阿里侧身离开了门，低着头。

“阿里，我会亲自告诉你的主人……请打电话给莱拉的公婆取消他们的访问……说我们因为失去亲人之故或其他原因离开了这座城市，”古尔巴哈在离开前指示道。

贝古姆对着她的薄纱披肩大声抽泣，无法面对她丈夫责备的眼睛。

*

古尔巴哈靠在凉廊柱廊冰冷的大理石表面上，闭上了眼睛。

“师父！”贝古姆怯生生地

‘Are you all right?’

Gulbahar ignored her question and the chattering call of the parakeet swinging in his cage and returned to her bedroom. Husband and wife exchanged nervous glances.

‘What are we going to do, Ali?’ Begum beseeched.

‘Run!’

Begum nodded, fear etched across her face.

Ali’s bitter laugh frightened the two crows pecking the pomegranate fruit sewn inside little cotton bags in one corner of the courtyard. ‘Sometimes I wonder what your head is stuffed with – sawdust?’

‘You are cruel, Ali. I never expected our Laila would do this!’

‘She always had you wound round her pretty little finger, didn’t she? And you always became her puppet, her phutley that she manipulated to her heart’s content.’

‘You indulged and loved her too, Ali!’

‘Yes ... but not in the reckless way you doted on her. She used you, Begum. For God’s sake, wake up woman!’ His words were her undoing.

Begum wept in self-pity. It was true; she had been thoroughly manipulated by her selfish young mistress.

‘Where’s my sister?’ young Arslan demanded from the rooftop, peering down over the railing. The question was innocent enough, but Ali and his wife, down below in the courtyard, stared up wide-eyed at the young master-ji flying a green kite.

‘She’s about somewhere!’ Ali lightly quipped, recovering first.

道。‘您没事儿吧?’

古尔巴哈没有理会她的问题和在笼子里乱动的长尾小鹦鹉的喋喋不休的叫声，回到了她的卧室。他们两个面面相觑。

“我们该怎么办，阿里？”贝古姆恳求道。

‘跑!’

贝古姆点点头，脸上流露出恐惧的神情。

阿里苦涩的笑声把院子一角正在啄缝在小棉袋里的石榴果的两只乌鸦吓到了。“有时我想知道你脑袋里装的是什么——浆糊？”

“你太残忍了，阿里。我没想到我们的莱拉会这样做！”

“你总是对她言听计从，不是吗？而你总是成为她随心所欲操纵的傀儡。”

“你也纵容和溺爱她，阿里！”

“是的……但不是用你溺爱她的鲁莽方式。她利用了你，贝古姆。天啊，让她醒过来吧！朱拜尔的话是她毁灭的原因。”

贝古姆自怜地哭了。这是真的；她自私的小姐彻底操纵了她。

“我姐姐呢？”小阿尔斯兰在屋顶上问道，同时从栏杆上往下看。这个问题已经够天真了，但下方院子里的阿里夫妇却瞪大了眼睛看向放着绿色风筝的少爷。

“她就在某个地方！”阿里淡淡地打趣道，率先恢复了过

问道。‘你没事儿吧?’

古尔巴哈没有理会她的问题和在笼子里摆动的长尾小鹦鹉的喋喋不休的叫声，回到了她的卧室。丈夫和妻子交换了紧张的眼神。

“我们该怎么办，阿里？”贝古姆恳求道。

‘跑步!’

贝古姆点点头，恐惧在她的脸上留下了痕迹。

阿里苦涩的笑声把院子一角缝在小棉袋里的石榴果给啄了起来，两只乌鸦都被吓到了。“有时我想知道你脑袋里塞的是什么——锯末？”

“你太残忍了，阿里。我没想到我们的莱拉会这样做！”

“她总是让你缠在她漂亮的小手指上，不是吗？而你总是成为她的傀儡，她随心所欲地操纵她。”

“你也纵容和爱她，阿里！”

“是的……但不是以你溺爱她的鲁莽方式。她利用了你，贝古姆。看在上帝的份上，唤醒女人！他的话是她的毁灭。”

贝古姆自怜地哭了。这是真的；她被她自私的年轻女主人彻底操纵了。

“我姐姐呢？”年轻的阿尔斯兰在屋顶上问道，从栏杆上往下看。这个问题已经够天真了，但下方院子里的阿里夫妇却是瞪大了眼睛看着放着绿色风筝的季少爷。

“她就在某个地方！”阿里淡淡地打趣道，先恢复过来。

‘I want to fly my other kite with her. Tell her to come up when you see her!’

‘OK, Master Arslan.’ Begum whispered to her husband, ‘There will be more things flying tonight!’ Her heart bled for young Arslan, wondering how he would cope with Laila’s elopement.

Begum shuffled back to the kitchen. The dinner preparation and the household chores had to be got on with. Above all, the hevali had to be emptied of all eavesdropping servants, and soon.

‘Farida, wash everything quickly! I don’t need you this evening! I’ll manage – the visitors are not coming,’ Begum explained to the young maid, ignoring her confused look.

‘Yes, Mistress Begum!’ came a meek reply.

With exasperation, Begum eyed her leisurely scrubbing strokes. Why couldn’t the chit swing her arms out properly and give the pots a really good shine. What was wrong with the hands of the youth these days – weaklings!

‘Oh, God!’ Begum dropped the ladle in the curry sauce. She had to stop the guests from coming. And who would be the one to tell Master Haider? Begum agonised.

She needn’t have worried.

*

Haider had personally decided to call on Jennat Bibi, the local sweetmaker’s wife, to order the sweetmeats for his daughter’s wedding. Jennat Bibi loved taking

来。

“我想和她一起放另一只风筝。当你看到她时让她上来！”

“好的，阿尔斯兰少爷。”贝古姆低声对丈夫说，“今晚天空上会有更多飞着的东西！”她为小阿尔斯兰感到悲伤，不知道他将如何面对莱拉的私奔。

贝古姆拖着脚步回到厨房。晚餐准备工作和家务活都得继续。最重要的是，她必须尽快赶走大宅中所有窃听的仆人。

‘法里达，快把所有东西有洗干净！今晚我不需要你！我自己会处理的——访客不会来，’贝古姆对年轻女仆解释道，对她困惑的表情置之不理。

“好的，贝古姆夫人！”一句温顺的回答传来。

贝古姆恼怒地看着她悠闲的擦洗动作。为什么这个毛头姑娘不能正确地摆动她的手臂，把盆擦洗干净。这些天年轻人的手出了什么问题——真是没用！

“哦，天哪！”贝古姆把勺子丢进咖喱酱里。她不得不阻止客人进来。谁会告诉海德老爷？贝古姆焦虑不已。

她不必担心。

*

海德私自决定请当地甜食师的妻子詹纳特·比比为女儿的婚礼送甜食。詹纳特·比比喜欢接受海德家里的订单，因为送花篮糖果让她有机会参

“我想和她一起放我的另一只风筝。告诉她当你看到她时上来！”

“好的，阿尔斯兰大师。”贝古姆低声对丈夫说，“今晚会有更多的东西飞来飞去！”她为年轻的阿尔斯兰心流血，不知道他将如何应对莱拉的私奔。

贝古姆拖着脚步回到厨房。晚餐准备和家务活都得继续。最重要的是，必须很快清空大宅中所有窃听的仆人。

‘法里达，快洗干净！今晚我不需要你！我会处理的——访客不会来，’贝古姆对年轻女仆解释道，无视她困惑的表情。

“是的，女主人！”一个温顺的回答传来。

贝古姆恼怒地看着她悠闲的擦洗动作。为什么小鸡不能正确地摆动她的手臂，给花盆一个很好的光泽。这些天年轻人的手出了什么问题——弱者！

“哦，天哪！”贝古姆把勺子丢进咖喱酱里。她不得不阻止客人进来。谁会告诉海德大师？贝古姆痛苦地。

她不必担心。

*

海德亲自决定请当地甜食师的妻子詹纳特·比比为女儿的婚礼订购甜食。Jennat Bibi 喜欢接受 Haider 家里的订单，因为一篮子糖果

orders from Haider's household, as the delivery of baskets of sweets gave her an opportunity to visit 'that wonderful magical palace' as she boasted to her family and friends.

The sweetmaker's front door was open and Haider overheard two female voices from within, locked in a hushed conversation; one speaker was Jennat Bibi.

'Have you heard that Master Haider's daughter, Laila, has eloped with the potter's son? And the poor potters have all fled! See for yourself! A huge padlock is dangling from their door!'

Transfixed, Haider leaned heavily against the wall for support. He heard the peal of bells from the milk buffaloes trundling past him and the mumbled greeting, 'Salaam, Master-ji' of the cowherd, shepherding them down the lane.

A dog barking brought Haider back to reality and he hastened away down the lane – to the potter's door. A rusty old aluminium padlock hung heavily in the middle of the bolted wooden door. Haider stood lost in thought, wondering how to verify the truth of what he had overheard.

'Just gossip by bitching women!'

Not wanting to meet anyone, Haider slid quietly through the hevali side door and went straight up to his daughter's room – it was empty.

With a thudding heart, he padded through all the rooms. In the kitchen, Begum was stirring the ladle in the cooking pot; he quietly closed the door.

His last destination was the rooftop, where he found Arslan flying his kite

观“那座神奇的魔法宫殿”，她好向家人和朋友吹嘘。

甜品师店面的前门是开着的，海德尔无意听到里面传来两个女声，两人正在悄悄地交谈。其中一个说话的是詹纳特·比比。

“你听说海德老爷的女儿莱拉和陶匠的儿子私奔了吗？可怜的陶工都逃走了！你自己看！他们的门上挂着一个巨大的挂锁！”

海德惊呆了，重重地靠在墙上寻求支撑。他听到奶牛从他身边缓缓经过的铃铛声和牧牛人低声的问候，“你好，老爷”，铃铛声引导牛群沿着小路走。

一阵狗叫声把海德拉回了现实，他赶紧沿着小路往前走——到了陶工的门口。一把生锈的旧铝挂锁沉重地挂在栓着的木门中间。海德陷入了沉思，不知道如何验证他偷听到的真相。

“只是一群三八的八卦而已！”

海德不想见任何人，悄悄溜进了大楼的侧门，直奔女儿的房间——里面空无一人。

他带着一颗砰砰跳的心，穿过所有房间。厨房里，贝古姆正在做饭的锅里搅动勺子；他悄悄地关上了门。

他的最后一个目的地是屋顶，在那里他发现阿尔斯兰一个

的送货让她有机会参观“那座神奇的魔法宫殿”，她向家人和朋友吹嘘。

甜品师的前门是开着的，海德尔无意中听到里面传来两个女声，两人正在悄悄地交谈。一位演讲者是詹纳特·比比。

“你听说海德尔大师的女儿莱拉和陶匠的儿子私奔了吗？可怜的陶工都逃走了！你自己看！他们的门上挂着一个巨大的挂锁！”

海德尔惊呆了，重重地靠在墙上寻求支撑。他听到奶牛从他身边滚过的铃铛声和牧牛人低声的问候，“您好，大师”，牧羊人沿着小路走。

一阵狗叫声把海德尔拉回了现实，他赶紧沿着小路往前走——到了陶工的门口。一把生锈的旧铝挂锁沉重地挂在栓着的木门中间。海德尔陷入了沉思，不知道如何验证他偷听的真相。

“只是通过贱女人八卦！”

海德尔不想见任何人，悄悄溜进了大楼的侧门，直奔女儿的房间——空无一人。

他带着一颗砰砰跳的心，穿过所有房间。厨房里，贝古姆正在搅拌锅里的勺子；他悄悄地关上了门。

他的最后一个目的地是屋顶，在那里他发现阿尔斯兰

alone.

‘Arslan, have you seen your sister today?’

His son was squinting in the hot afternoon sunshine, tugging at the kite string. His kite was swaying in the sky, and about to crash straight into his friend Saleem’s large, blue, striped one.

‘No.’

‘When was the last time you saw her?’

‘Don’t know,’ he mumbled, annoyed at being pestered about his sister.

‘Did you see her at breakfast time?’

‘No!’ was the quick surly answer.

Arslan did not like his father’s harsh tone of voice.

‘Did you see her last night?’

Frowning, Arslan tried to remember.

‘Leave the damn thing alone and answer me, boy!’ Haider demanded. Arslan lost his grip on the string and watched in horror as his kite floated away. For the first time he felt the stirring of hatred for his father.

‘Yes!’

‘What time?’

‘Don’t know!’ Arslan’s eyes fell before his father’s. He remembered seeing his sister leave through the back door at nine o’clock, with Begum standing behind her. ‘Begum knows,’ he volunteered, wanting to get rid of his father. Haider was already sprinting down the marble stairs.

Arslan gazed up at his beautiful kite drifting away, wondering which lucky boy would pull it down.

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人在放风筝。

“阿尔斯兰，你今天见到你姐姐了吗？”

他的儿子在炎热的午后阳光下眯着眼睛，拉着风筝线。他的风筝在天空中摇曳，正要撞上他朋友萨利姆的蓝色条纹大风筝。

‘没有。’

‘你上次见到她是什么时候？’

“不知道，”他咕哝道，对纠缠他姐姐的问题感到厌烦。

“你吃早餐时候看到她了吗？”

“没有！”这是快速粗暴的回答。阿尔斯兰不喜欢父亲严厉的语气。

“你昨晚看到她了吗？”阿尔斯兰皱着眉头努力回忆。

“别管这该死的风筝了，回答我，孩子！”海德要求道。阿尔斯兰失去了对绳子的控制，惊恐地看着他的风筝飘走了。他第一次对父亲有了仇恨的感觉。

‘看到了！’

‘什么时候？’

“不知道！”阿尔斯兰的目光落在父亲面前。他记得九点钟看到姐姐从后门离开，贝古姆站在她身后。“贝古姆知道，”他主动提供线索，想要摆脱他的父亲。海德已经冲下了大理石楼梯。

阿尔斯兰抬头看着自己飘走的美丽风筝，不知道哪个幸运的男孩会把它拉下来。

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一个人在放风筝。

“阿尔斯兰，你今天见到你姐姐了吗？”

他的儿子在炎热的午后阳光下眯着眼睛，拉着风筝线。他的风筝在天空中摇曳，正要撞上他朋友萨利姆的蓝色条纹大风筝。

‘不。’

‘你上次见到她是什么时候？’

“不知道，”他咕哝道，对被妹妹纠缠不休感到恼火。

“你在早餐时间看到她了吗？”

“不！”是快速粗暴的回答。阿尔斯兰不喜欢父亲严厉的语气。

“你昨晚看到她了吗？”阿尔斯兰皱着眉头努力回忆。

“别管这该死的东西，回答我，孩子！”海德要求道。阿尔斯兰失去了对绳子的抓握，惊恐地看着他的风筝飘走了。他第一次感受到了对父亲的仇恨。

‘是的！’

‘什么时候？’

“不知道！”阿尔斯兰的目光落在父亲面前。他记得九点钟看到妹妹从后门离开，贝古姆站在她身后。“贝古姆知道，”他自告奋勇，想要摆脱他的父亲。海德已经冲下大理石楼梯。

阿尔斯兰抬头看着自己飘走的美丽风筝，不知道哪个幸运的男孩会把它拉下来。

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When the door slammed shut, Begum knew that this was the moment she had been dreading. Heart pounding, she failed to greet her master.

‘Begum, just answer one question!’ the dignified voice commanded. ‘Were you the last person to see our Laila?’

Begum trembled. ‘Yes.’ The wooden spoon fell with a loud plop into the large pot of milk and carrots for the gajar halva pudding.

The door was slammed shut.

Begum turned the stove off. It didn’t matter if the carrot halva got burned, for the master would not be eating anything from her hand today. Her days at the hevali had come to a piteous end. After ensuring all the servants had left, she let herself out by the side door – the family needed privacy.

Arms tightly folded against her chest under her cotton chador, Begum shuffled back to her home, stepping twice on the sun-baked cow pats on the footpath. Where would they find employment like this one, Begum mourned? For years they had enjoyed privileges that not even other family members could anticipate. Their house furnishings were specially ordered for them. They had three well-balanced meals each day at the hevali with plenty of meat. Moreover Mistress Gulbahar had generously given the order to the Gujjar boy to deliver a large jug of milk to Begum’s home first thing every morning. She had even got them a fridge to store their milk and meat. Begum did not wear Mistress Gulbahar’s cast-offs, but velvets in

当门砰地关上时，贝古姆知道这是她一直害怕的时刻。她的心怦怦直跳，没能跟主人打招呼。

“贝古姆，只需要回答一个问题！”威严的声音命令道。“你是最后一个见到莱拉的人吗？”

贝古姆颤抖着。“是的。”木勺砰的一声掉进了用来做布丁的大罐牛奶和胡萝卜中。

门被砰的一声关上了。

贝古姆关掉了炉子。胡萝卜酥烧焦了也没关系，因为今天主人不会吃她的手做出来的东西的。她在大楼的日子悲惨地结束了。确保所有仆人都离开后，她从侧门出去了——这家人需要隐私。

贝古姆的双臂在棉质罩袍下紧紧地抱在胸前，拖着脚步走回了家，两次都踩到了人行道上晒干的牛粪。他们在哪里能找到这样的工作，贝古姆很痛心？多年来，他们享有的特权是其他普通的家庭都无法预料的。他们家的家具都是夫人专门订购的。他们每天在大宅吃三顿均衡的饭菜，还有很多肉。此外，古尔巴哈夫人还慷慨地命令古杰尔，早上第一件事就是将一大罐牛奶送到贝古姆的家中。她甚至给他们买了一个冰箱来储存牛奶和肉。

贝古姆没有穿古尔巴哈夫人丢弃的衣服，而是在冬天穿天

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“贝古姆，只回答一个问题！”威严的声音命令道。

“你是最后一个见到我们莱拉的人吗？”

贝古姆颤抖着。“是的。”木勺砰的一声掉进了大罐牛奶和胡萝卜，用来做加杰哈尔瓦布丁。

门被砰的一声关上了。

贝古姆关掉了炉子。胡萝卜酥烧了也没关系，今天主人不会从她手里吃东西的。她在大楼的日子悲惨地结束了。确保所有仆人都离开后，她从侧门出去了——这家人需要隐私。

贝古姆的双臂在棉质罩袍下紧紧地抱在胸前，拖着脚步走回了家，踩了两下人行道上晒太阳的牛蹄。他们在哪里能找到这样的工作，贝古姆哀悼？多年来，他们享有的特权是其他家庭成员都无法预料的。他们家的家具都是专门为他们订的。他们每天在大宅吃三顿均衡的饭菜，还有很多肉。此外，古尔巴哈夫人还慷慨地命令古杰尔男孩每天早上第一件事就是将一大罐牛奶送到贝古姆的家中。她甚至给他们买了一个冰箱来储存他们的牛奶和肉。

贝古姆没有穿古尔巴哈女主人的下装，而是在冬天穿天

the winter, and in summer her body was caressed by the softest of lawns and silks that felt like malai cream, even between her chapped fingertips. 'Mistress Laila, you have robbed us of our livelihood,' Begum groaned aloud, gaze fixed longingly on the beautiful homestead. 'I'm saying goodbye to the hevali!'

At home, her faint whisper barely reached Ali's ears, 'He knows!'

'It's all your fault, you stupid woman!' Leaping off his seat, Ali vented his wretchedness on her. Colour drained from Begum's cheeks, shocked at her husband's hostility and a fearful thought crossing her mind. Would he actually beat her? Her elder sister's bruise-ridden body had scarred her youth. And she had vowed that she would never let any man touch her! 'Ali! You don't have to tell me what I already know!' she coldly reminded him, her body rigid with hurt and indignation.

'Can you imagine what will happen to Chaudharani Gulbahar when she faces her husband?' Ali taunted, continuing his sexist tirade. 'You women are all the same – weak, with your hearts ruling your heads!'

'Ali, you are cruel! You loved Mistress Laila, too!' Begum retaliated.

'Just go and shove yourself in a big hole, Begum!' Ali jeered, hating her sullen tone.

That was the turning point – the moment in Begum's humble life – that provided her with the answer to

鹅绒, 在夏天她的身体被最柔软的草坪和丝绸抚摸着, 感觉就像马来奶油, 甚至她干裂的指尖都可以感受到。

“莱拉小姐, 你夺走了我们的生计,” 贝古姆大声呻吟着, 渴望地凝视着美丽的大楼。

“我要和大楼说再见了!”

在家里, 她的嘀咕声几乎没有传到阿里的耳朵里, “但他知道贝古姆在想什么!”

“都是你的错, 你这个笨女人!” 阿里从座位上一跃而起, 向她发泄委屈。

贝古姆脸颊上的血色消失了, 她对丈夫的敌意感到震惊, 一个可怕的想法涌上心头。他真的会打她吗? 姐姐遍体鳞伤的身体, 给她的青春留下了阴影。而且她发过誓, 绝对不会让任何男人打她!

“阿里! 你不用告诉我已经知道的事情!” 她冷漠地提醒他, 她的身体因受伤和愤怒而僵硬。

“你能想象老爷会对夫人做什么吗?” 阿里嘲弄道, 继续他性别歧视的长篇大论。“你们女人都是一样的——软弱无能, 做事不经过大脑!”

“阿里, 你太残忍了! 你也爱莱拉小姐!” 贝古姆反击道。

“滚一边去吧吧, 贝古姆!” 阿里嘲笑道, 他讨厌她闷闷不乐的语气。

贝古姆卑微生活中的转折点来了, 她找到了解决困境的解决办法。

鹅绒, 而在夏天, 她的身体被最柔软的草坪和丝绸抚摸着, 感觉就像马来奶油, 甚至在她干裂的指尖之间。

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在家里, 她微弱的耳语几乎没有传到阿里的耳朵里, “他知道!”

“都是你的错, 你这个笨女人!” 阿里从座位上一跃而起, 向她发泄了自己的委屈。

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“阿里! 你不用告诉我我已经知道的事情!” 她冷冷地提醒他, 她的身体因受伤和愤怒而僵硬。

“你能想象当乔达拉尼·古尔巴哈面对丈夫时会发生什么吗?” 阿里嘲弄道, 继续他的性别歧视长篇大论。

“你们女人都是一样的——软弱的, 你的心支配着你的头脑!”

“阿里, 你太残忍了! 你也爱莱拉太太!” 贝古姆报复了。

“去把自己塞进一个大洞里吧, 贝古姆!” 阿里嘲笑着她闷闷不乐的语气。

那是贝古姆卑微生活中的转折点, 为她提供了解决困境的答案。

their predicament.

‘I don’t need to shove myself in any hole!’ she mocked, standing up tall.

‘I’m a faithful servant and I’ll not run away! I’m going back to the hevali.

Even if they throw me out, Ali! I’ll station myself outside their front door until they forgive me. And I’ll go on begging for their forgiveness until they do!’

‘Good for you! But don’t come wailing to me later if they send you packing!’ he jeered.

‘Ali, stop being so childish!’ Loftily dismissing her husband, Begum retraced her steps back to the hevali.

She had learned something new today; that when it came to a crisis, her husband completely lost his head. And that women were not weak, but men were cowards.

Smiling, Begum cried, ‘On the contrary, we are strong, my silly Ali,’ sidling back into the hevali through the servants’ door. It was like a silent mausoleum.

Where were her master and mistress?
*

Gulbahar’s dull eyes lifted from her husband’s feet and slowly journeyed to his face. His expression signalled everything. He knew. As she opened her mouth, it crossed her mind that she was going to dash years off him.

‘Haider Sahib, your beloved daughter has married the potter’s son.’ They were quiet words, but had a vicious sting. Her husband’s hand clutched the air, fingers reaching for support. Gulbahar steeled herself for the punishment: the thunder that would pelt her body; the abusive rainfall of

“我不滚！”她嘲弄道，站起身来。“我是忠实的仆人，我不会逃跑的！我要回大楼。即使他们把我赶出去，阿里！我会站在他们的前门外，直到他们原谅我。在他们原谅我之前我会一直乞求！”

‘真了不起！但是，如果他们把你炒鱿鱼了，以后不要来找我哭！’他嘲笑道。

“阿里，别这么幼稚了！”贝古姆高傲地驳回了她的丈夫，转身回到了大楼。

她今天有了新的领悟。当遇到危机时，她的丈夫完全失去了理智。而且女人并不软弱，男人才是懦夫。

贝古姆微笑着喊道：“相反，我们很强大，傻阿里，”她从仆人的门溜回了大楼。它就像一座寂静的陵墓。

她的老爷和夫人在哪里？
*

古尔巴哈呆滞的目光从丈夫的脚边抬起，缓缓移到他的脸上。他的表情表明了一切。他已经知道一切了。当她张开嘴时，她的脑海中闪过一个念头，她会使他多年的希望破灭的。

“海德·萨希卜，你心爱的女儿嫁给了陶工的儿子。”这些话很平静，但杀伤力很大。她丈夫的手抓着空气，手指寻求支撑。古尔巴哈准备好迎接愤怒地吼叫和刻薄的辱骂了。但空气里只有令人厌烦、窒息的沉默。

“我不需要把自己塞进任何洞里！”她嘲弄道，站起身来。“我是忠实的仆人，我不会逃跑的！我要回大楼。即使他们把我赶出去，阿里！我会站在他们的前门外，直到他们原谅我。我会继续乞求他们的原谅，直到他们这样做！”

‘对你有益！但是，如果他们让你打包，以后不要来找我哭！’他嘲笑道。

“阿里，别这么幼稚了！”贝古姆高傲地打消了她的丈夫，转身回到了大楼。

她今天学到了一些新东西。当遇到危机时，她的丈夫完全失去了理智。而且女人并不软弱，但男人是懦夫。

贝古姆微笑着喊道：“相反，我们很强大，我的傻阿里，”从仆人的门溜回大楼。它就像一座寂静的陵墓。

她的主人和情妇在哪里？
*

古尔巴哈呆滞的目光从丈夫的脚边抬起，缓缓移到他的脸上。他的表情表明了一切。他知道。当她张开嘴时，她的脑海中闪过她要从他身上冲过去很多年的念头。

“海德大人，你心爱的女儿嫁给了陶工的儿子。”这些话很平静，却带着恶毒的刺痛。她丈夫的手抓着空气，手指伸向支撑。古尔巴哈为惩罚做好了准备：雷声将击中她的身体；尖刻言语的辱骂。但只有令人厌烦

sharp words. But there was only a cloying, crushing silence.

Her mighty stony-faced husband did nothing; he simply walked away.

‘Laila!’ An anguished scream rent though Gulbahar’s body. As if in a surreal dream, she dashed after her husband, panting up the stairs to their bedroom door but the handle wouldn’t move.

‘Haider-ji,’ she whimpered, panicking, ‘Please open the door!’

No sound. Gulbahar slid down on the marble floor and resting her head against the walnut-lacquered door she wept. She felt his pain, but hers was sharper. ‘We’ve all betrayed him.’ Gulbahar sobbed into her silk dupatta with the hand-embroidered lacework, given to her by the wife of the governor of Punjab as a present when they hosted them in Lahore.

‘Mother!’ Arslan exclaimed.

Gulbahar blinked, a large tear trembling on her lower eyelash.

‘What’s the matter, Mama?’

‘Your sister has swept the world from beneath our feet, my son!’ Gulbahar opted for honesty with her young son, but failed to use the word ‘eloped’.

‘What has she done?’ he asked eagerly, unable to make sense of his mother’s words.

Gulbahar debated with herself. He was only young. ‘Your sister has married the potter’s son.’ Gulbahar assessed his face for his reaction. No surprise. No condemnation. ‘He doesn’t understand – he never will,’ she thought, envying her son’s innocence. ‘Arslan, please go and study in your room, my son!’ she

她那坚强的面无表情的丈夫什么也没做，只是走开了。

“莱拉！”一声痛苦的尖叫撕裂了古尔巴哈的身体。她仿佛在一个离奇的梦中，追着她的丈夫，气喘吁吁地走上楼梯到他们卧室的门，但门把手却一动不动。

“海德，”她悲伤地哭道，“请打开门！”

没有回应。古尔巴哈在大理石地板上滑了下来，把头靠在胡桃漆的门上，留下来泪水。她感觉到了他的痛苦，但她更痛苦。“我们都背叛了他。”古尔巴哈在她绣着花边的丝绸围巾上抽泣着，这是旁遮普省省长的妻子在拉合尔招待他们时送给她的礼物。

“妈妈！”阿尔斯兰叫道。古尔巴哈眨了眨眼，大颗的泪珠拍打在她的下睫毛上。“怎么了，妈妈？”

“你的姐姐离开了我们了，我的儿子！”古尔巴哈选择向她年幼的儿子坦白，但没有使用“私奔”这个词。

“她做了什么？”他急切地问道，无法理解母亲的话。

古尔巴哈自言自语。他还小。“你姐姐嫁给了陶工的儿子。”古尔巴哈看着他的表情和反应。没有惊喜。没有谴责。“他不明白——他永远不会明白，”她是这样想的，她很羡慕儿子的天真。“阿尔斯兰，我的好儿子，去你的房间学习吧！”她在进入女儿的房间之前说

的、令人窒息的沉默。

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“海德尔姬，”她惊恐地呜咽道，“请开门！”

没有声音。古尔巴哈在大理石地板上滑了下来，把头靠在胡桃漆的门上，她哭了。她感觉到了他的痛苦，但她的更加尖锐。“我们都背叛了他。”古尔巴哈在她的丝绸杜帕塔上抽泣着，手绣花边是旁遮普省州长的妻子在拉合尔招待他们时送给她的礼物。

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“你的妹妹从我们脚下席卷了世界，我的儿子！”古尔巴哈选择对她年幼的儿子诚实，但没有使用“私奔”这个词。

“她做了什么？”他急切地问道，无法理解母亲的话。

古尔巴哈自言自语。他只是年轻。“你姐姐嫁给了陶工的儿子。”古尔巴哈评估着他的表情，看看他的反应。没有惊喜。没有谴责。“他不明白——他永远不会，”她想，羡慕她儿子的天真。“阿尔斯兰，我的儿子，请去你的房间学习！”她在进

advised, before entering her daughter's room.

There, her eyes fell on her daughter's picture frame. 'Laila, how could you do this to your father?' Gulbahar sat on her daughter's bed and wept again.

Haider had locked himself in and her out of their bedroom. Gulbahar made dozens of journeys to their door that day and the next day. He had not eaten. Only drunk the tap water from the en-suite bathroom.

'Please, Haider-ji!' Begum, too, pleaded outside the bedroom.

'It's all my fault, if only I had told you!' Begum wept on her mistress's shoulder.

'You didn't tell her to elope or get married, did you, Begum? So please don't blame yourself, my dear. If anyone is to blame, it's me, her mother. How ignorant I am.'

'Please, Mistress, don't blame yourself – we are all at fault.' The housekeeper offered generously, touched by her beloved mistress's kindness.

Even Ali's appeals were ignored.

*

It was the new kitchen maid in Haider's household who became the village loudspeaker, clearly letting everyone know about Laila's elopement with the potter's son. All waited with bated breath for the volcanic explosion at the hevali, wondering what the landlord would do to the potter's family? Would he track them down? Speculations, speculations, but nobody knew for sure. They all agreed on one thing –

道。

走到房间后，她的目光落在了女儿的相框上。“莱拉，你怎么能这样对你父亲？”古尔巴哈坐在女儿的床上，又哭了起来。

海德把自己锁在里面，把她锁在卧室外面。那天和第二天，古尔巴哈去他们的卧室门前看了几十趟。他没有吃东西。只喝了套房浴室里的自来水。

“拜托了，海德！”贝古姆也在卧室外恳求道。

“这都是我的错，要是我告诉你就好了！”贝古姆靠在夫人的肩膀上哭泣。

“你没有让她私奔或结婚，是吗，贝古姆？所以请不要责怪自己，亲爱的。如果要怪谁，也是怪我，我是她的母亲。我好蠢啊。

“夫人，请不要自责，我们都有错。”管家慷慨地说，心爱的女主人的好意感动了她。

她甚至忘了阿里的冒犯。

*

是海德家新来的厨娘，这个大嘴巴分明想让所有人都知道莱拉和陶工儿子私奔的事情。所有人都屏住呼吸大楼里等待火山爆发，不知道老爷会对陶工一家做什么？他会追回他们吗？猜测，全都是猜测，因为没人确切知道老爷会怎么做。他们都期待一些事的发生；村子里爆发的重大事件会让所有人沸腾。

入女儿的房间之前建议道。

在那里，她的目光落在了女儿的相框上。“莱拉，你怎么能这样对你父亲？”古尔巴哈坐在女儿的床上，又哭了起来。

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“请女主人不要自责，我们都有错。”管家慷慨地提出，被她心爱的女主人的好意所感动。

甚至阿里的上诉也被忽略了。

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that they expected something to happen; some momentous event to erupt in the village that would scorch everything and everyone in its path. They were in for a mighty big disappointment; the volcano didn't erupt and there was no village scorching. No chasing after the potter's family. Begum and Ali were not dismissed or thrown out of their living quarters.

Master Haider had simply withdrawn – from everyone and everything. Even from his family. For it was rumoured that no one had seen him for three days. And of course the rumour of Laila's elopement soon reached the ears of Laila's prospective in-laws. The jilted landlord, humiliated though he was, counted himself lucky to escape from such an unsuitable match. No matter how gorgeous Laila was, she had become a besharm woman. And all for a potter's son! Was she deranged?

*

'Can you believe it – locking yourself in?' Massi Fiza teased her best friend, Rukhsar, peering longingly at the new gold necklace set that she was working on.

'Apparently there'll be no jewellery for Mistress Laila now! Would any parent give a dowry to a daughter who has disgraced them in this manner?' The rhetorical question had the goldsmith's wife's head shooting up from the rows of rubies she was nimbly stringing.

'Disgraceful, Massi Fiza!' she loftily agreed.

'Be careful, Mistress Rukhsar, you

他们将大失所望。火山没有喷发，村庄也没有沸腾。海德没有追捕陶工的家人。贝古姆和阿里没有被解雇或被赶出他们的住处。

海德老爷只是从所有人和所有事中干脆淡出了。他甚至连家里的事都不管了。因为据说已经三天没有人见到他了。当然，莱拉私奔的谣言很快就传到了莱拉准公婆的耳中。作为失去婚约的地主，虽然很丢脸，但他还是庆幸自己能从这种不合适的婚约中逃脱。莱拉再怎么美丽动人，也变成了一个不知羞耻的女人。一切都是为了一个陶工的儿子！她精神错乱了吗？

*

“你敢相信吗？他把自己锁在里面？”马西·菲扎向她最好的朋友鲁克萨打趣道，并渴望地凝视着她正在制作的新金项链套装。

“看来莱拉小姐现在没有首饰了！任何父母都会给一个以这种方式让他们丢脸的女儿嫁妆吧？”这个反问让金匠的妻子从她灵活地串起的一排排红宝石中抬起头来。

“真可耻，马西·菲扎！”她高傲地附和道。

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他们将大失所望。火山没有喷发，也没有村庄灼热。不追捕陶工的家人。贝古姆和阿里没有被解雇或被赶出他们的住处。

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“你能相信吗？把自己锁在里面吗？”马西·菲扎

(Massi Fiza) 取笑她最好的朋友鲁克萨 (Rukhsar)，渴望地凝视着她正在制作的新金项链套装。

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“可耻，马西·菲扎！”她高傲地同意道。

“小心点，鲁克萨大人，你

have three daughters yourself. You'll need to watch them all!' Massi Fiza slyly reminded her.

'Oh, I do! I don't know what our almighty Chaudharani Gulbahar was up to with her daughter. Fancy not even having an inkling of what was going on? These "big" people are so smart in so many things but apparently blind to a daughter's izzat! It's not as if she has half a dozen children – only two!'

'Well, whether two or a dozen, children are very conniving these days. Thank goodness I don't have any daughters to disgrace me,' Massi Fiza preened.

'Well, see that your boys don't "disgrace" you by chasing after girls above their caste and station in life!' Rukhsar returned equally cattily, bristling at her friend's aspersion that she had only produced females.

'My boys are quite sensible – you know what they are like.' The feeble words did not quite ring true even to Massi Fiza's own ears. Rukhsar dropped her gaze to her beads. It had dawned on her lately that her friend had a tendency to talk in glowing terms about her sons. As if everyone did not know what good-for-nothing sons they were. The realisation jolted through Rukhsar that Massi Fiza was after her daughter's rishta!

The goldmistress's body trembled with indignation, nausea spiralling inside her, pricking her finger with the sharp tool as she poked the hole in the tiny pearl bead. A goldsmith's daughter was no match for a laundrywoman's son! The situation was almost the same as the

己也有三个女儿。她们三个你都需要好好看着！”马西·菲扎不怀好意地提醒她。

“哦，我会的！我不知道我们全能的乔达拉尼·古尔巴哈对她的女儿做了什么。甚至都不知道发生了什么？这些“大”人物在很多事情上都很聪明，但显然对女儿的名节失算了！不是说她有一堆孩子——她只有两个孩子！

“嗯，不管是两个还是一堆，这些天孩子们都很纵容。谢天谢地，我没有让我丢脸的女儿，”马西·菲扎装腔作势地说道。

“好吧，请注意，你的儿子不会因为追逐高于他们的种姓和地位的女孩而让你“丢脸”！”鲁克萨也同样狡猾地反驳道，她对朋友嘲讽自己只能生女儿的诽谤感到愤怒。

“我的儿子们都很懂事——你知道他们是什么样的人。”这些无效的话语甚至在马西·菲扎自己的耳朵里也不太真实。鲁克萨将目光落到她的珠子上。最近她突然意识到，这个虚伪的朋友试图把自己的儿子吹的天花乱坠。仿佛所有人都不知道他们是废物似的。鲁克萨突然意识到，马西·菲扎盯上她的女儿们了！

金匠妻子气得身子颤抖，恶心想吐，在给小珍珠戳洞时，锋利的工具戳破了她的手指。金匠的女儿比不上洗衣女儿子！这种情况几乎和海德老爷的女儿和陶工的儿子不对等的地位一样。不！她亲爱的女儿们注定要进入更“高尚”

自己也有三个女儿。你需要把它们都看完！”马西·菲扎狡猾地提醒她。

“哦，我愿意！我不知道我们全能的 Chaudharani 古尔巴哈对她的女儿做了什么。甚至不知道发生了什么？这些“大”人在很多事情上都很聪明，但显然对女儿的 izzat 视而不见！不是说她有六个孩子——只有两个！

“嗯，不管是两个还是十几个，这些天孩子们都很纵容。谢天谢地，我没有让我丢脸的女儿，”马西·菲扎（Massi Fiza）装腔作势。

“好吧，请注意，你的男孩不会因为追逐高于他们的种姓和地位的女孩而“丢脸”你！”鲁克萨也同样狡猾地返回，对她朋友的诽谤她只生过女性感到愤怒。

“我的孩子们都很懂事——你知道他们是什么样的人。”这些微弱的话语甚至在马西·菲扎自己的耳朵里也不太真实。鲁克萨将目光落到她的珠子上。最近她突然意识到，她的朋友倾向于用热情洋溢的语言谈论她的儿子。仿佛所有人都不知道自己是个什么废物似的。鲁克萨突然意识到，马西·菲扎是在追求她女儿！

金主气得身子颤抖，恶心在她体内盘旋，用锋利的工具戳破了她的手指，在小珍珠珠上戳了个洞。金匠的女儿比不上洗衣女儿子！这种情况几乎和海德尔大师的女儿和陶工的儿子不协调的比赛一样。不！她的女儿们注

incongruous match of Master Haider's daughter with the potter's son. No! Her ladli daughters were destined for more 'elevated' households, where gold flowed in abundance in the form of gold bracelets, not a home that overflowed with every Nethu Pethu's dirty laundry.

CHAPTER 6

The Return

Four months later, heavily veiled up to her eyes, Laila returned with her husband to the village in the middle of the night. Like bandits, they stole into Jubail's family home, stealthily breaking open the ugly aluminium padlock.

Inside the potter's home, Laila saw her new home for the first time – a hovel. Everything was caked with dust and cobwebs – the two pillars, the rusty grilled windows, the veranda floor with patches of cement missing, even the washing line. In disgust, Laila withdrew from the kitchen washing area with its moss-encrusted water pump and went to inspect the rest of the house. That was it – just two rooms! No proper kitchen or bathroom. She hadn't quite expected a replica of her parents' palatial hevali, but this humble dwelling, devoid of any modern facilities, a few pieces of shabby furniture and stacks of ugly pots of all sizes littering the place was too much for poor Laila. At one stage, panicking, she was about to run out; and out of Jubail's life. But to where and to what? Luckily, their Islamabad apartment was far better, rented with the money from the eight gold

的家庭，她们可以嫁入戴金手镯的富裕家庭，而不是嫁到一个满是脏衣服的家。

第 6 章

归来

四个月后，莱拉蒙着面纱，半夜和丈夫回到村里。他们像土匪一样，偷偷进入朱拜尔的家，偷偷打开丑陋的铝制挂锁。

在陶工家中，莱拉第一次看到了她的新家——一间简陋的小屋。到处都布满了灰尘和蜘蛛网——两根柱子，生锈的格子窗，阳台地板上的水泥块不见了，甚至连晾衣绳也没有。莱拉厌恶的带着长满苔藓的水泵从厨房洗涤区退出，然后去检查房子的其余部分。就是这样——只有两个房间！没有合适的厨房或浴室。她没期待房子会像她父母的大楼那样，但这个简陋的住宅，没有任何现代设施，几件破旧的家具和一堆堆大小不一的丑陋花盆，对可怜的莱拉来说太过分了。有一次，她惊慌失措，快要跑出去了；就要远离朱拜尔的生活了。但是去哪里，去干什么呢？幸运的是，他们在伊斯兰堡的公寓要好得多，那是用她私奔当晚碰巧戴的八个金手镯的钱租下来的。

定要进入更“高尚”的家庭，那里的黄金以金手镯的形式盛放，而不是一个满是 Nethu Pethu 脏衣服的家。

第 6 章

回报

四个月后，莱拉蒙着面纱，半夜带着丈夫回到村里。像土匪一样，他们偷偷进入朱拜尔的家，偷偷打开丑陋的铝制挂锁。

在陶工家中，莱拉第一次看到了她的新家——一间小屋。一切都沾满了灰尘和蜘蛛网——两根柱子，生锈的烤窗，阳台地板上的水泥块不见了，甚至是晾衣绳。厌恶地，莱拉带着长满苔藓的水泵从厨房洗涤区退出，然后去检查房子的其余部分。就是这样——只有两个房间！没有合适的厨房或浴室。她没想到会有她父母宫殿的复制品，但这个简陋的住宅，没有任何现代设施，几件破旧的家具和一堆堆大小不一的丑陋花盆，对可怜的莱拉来说太过分了。有一次，她惊慌失措，快要跑出去了；并且脱离了朱拜尔的生活。但是去哪里，去什么？幸运的是，他们在伊斯兰堡的公寓要好得多，用她私奔当晚碰巧戴的八个金手镯的钱租了下来。

bangles she happened to be wearing the night of her elopement.

Where would she cook? On that

small portable oil burner stove, squatting on a rickety footstool?

When she looked around for a rolling pin, her husband cheekily reminded her: 'What wretched village woman uses a rolling pin to make chappatis? Only for puris! The first village task young women master on reaching their teens is often the art of making perfect round chappatis by hand!

There are no Begums in the neighbouring households to help with the cooking.'

How Laila wished she had learned the skill of making soft, round chappatis from Begum. This wasn't Islamabad where they could fetch ready-made meals from cafes.

Everything had to be prepared by her hands. And she was in no position to hire servants to scurry around doing her bidding. Shrugging her shoulders, Laila reminded herself that they were here on a special errand – to ask for her parent's forgiveness and to return home to the hevali, where there were plenty of servants to take care of her needs. Jubail had strongly advised her against coming, saying it was too soon. Laila, however, wouldn't rest until she had seen her parents and asked for their forgiveness. Each passing day had been agony.

'They can't do anything to me now. I'm legally married,' she emphatically told herself. 'And parents always forgave.'

What Laila hadn't bargained on was that in her absence her beloved parents had swapped hearts for

她会在哪里做饭？在那个小型便携式燃油炉上，蹲在摇摇晃晃的脚凳上？当她四处寻找擀面杖时，她的丈夫厚颜无耻地提醒她：“哪个该死的村妇用擀面杖做薄煎饼？做普利小麦饼才用擀面杖！村里十几岁的年轻女主人需要掌握的第一个技能通常是手工制作完美的圆形薄煎饼！附近的家庭没有贝古姆可以帮忙做饭。

莱拉多么希望她从贝古姆那里学会了制作柔软、圆润的薄煎饼的技巧。这里不是伊斯兰堡，在那里他们可以从咖啡馆拿现成的饭菜。在这里一切都必须由她亲手准备。而且她没有资格雇佣仆人四处奔波听命于她。莱拉耸了耸肩，提醒自己他们来这里是为了一个特殊的差事——请求她父母的原谅，然后回到大楼，那里有很多仆人可以满足她的需求。朱拜尔强烈建议她不要来，说现在还过早。然而，莱拉在见到她的父母并请求他们的原谅之前不会罢休。过去的每一天都是痛苦的。

“他们现在奈何不了我。我已经合法结婚了，”她强调地告诉自己。“并且父母总是会原谅。”

莱拉没有想到的情况是，在她不在的时候，她心爱的父母心灰意冷。她在黄麻编织的硬质

她会在哪里做饭？在那个小型便携式燃油炉上，蹲在摇摇晃晃的脚凳上？当她四处寻找擀面杖时，她的丈夫厚颜无耻地提醒她：“哪个村妇用擀面杖做薄煎饼？只为纯粹！年轻女性到十几岁时掌握的第一个乡村任务通常是手工制作完美的圆形薄煎饼的艺术！附近的家庭没有贝古姆帮忙做饭。

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“他们现在不能对我做任何事情。我已经合法结婚了，”她强调地告诉自己。“父母总是原谅。”

莱拉没有讨价还价的是，在她不在的时候，她心爱的父母用心换了石头。她在黄麻

stones. Tossing and turning on the hard, jute-woven portable bed, she longed for the soft, wide breadth of her queen-sized bed in her family home and wondered how poor people slept on these narrow uncomfortable things. Even with two thick towels tucked under the bedsheet, she knew her back would be sore and lined with the jute-woven pattern marks.

‘I miss you so much, my darling Arslan. I can’t wait to see you,’ she wept, wetting another corner of the pillow. Unable to wait until the morning, Laila crept past Jubail, fast asleep on the other portable bed.

Out in the open courtyard, she stared around in bemusement. ‘This is my new home ...’

Her own bedroom in the hevali was the size of the potter’s courtyard.

Laila crushed the thought; the potter’s wheel was no match for her father’s acres of land and dozens of pedigree racehorses.

Guided by the light of the moon, she located the staircase to the rooftop, semi-hidden behind a tall stack of round-bellied milk churning pots. Her father’s hevali, including the rooftop terrace, was elegantly dressed in marble from top to bottom. Half of the potter’s rooftop terrace, used for stacking pots and portable beds, was brick-lined. The other half had a small heap of coal and a pile of chopped wood to use for the rooftop chappati tandoor. No plants, or flowering bushes, or marble floor. Just three old rickety portable beds, one with a missing leg.

Laila had very rarely viewed her home from any of the villager’s

便携式床上辗转反侧，渴望家中柔软、宽阔的大床，想不通穷人是怎么睡在这些狭窄不舒服的东西上的。即使在床单下面塞了两条厚毛巾，她也知道她的背部会酸痛，并且会印上黄麻编织的图案痕迹。

“我非常想念你，我亲爱的阿尔斯兰。我迫不及待地想见你，”她的眼泪弄湿了枕头的另一角。等不及到天亮，莱拉就爬过朱拜尔身旁，在另一张便携式床上睡着了。

外面空旷的院子里，她茫然地四处张望。“这是我的新家……”

她自己在大楼的卧室有陶匠的院子那么大。莱拉很快打消了这个念头；毕竟陶匠的器具无法与她父亲的大量土地和许多纯种赛马相提并论。

在月光的指引下，她找到了通往屋顶的楼梯，楼梯的一部分隐藏在一堆高高的圆腹牛奶搅拌罐后面。她父亲的大楼，包括屋顶露台，从上到下都铺着精美的大理石。陶匠家屋顶露台的一半是砖砌的，用于堆放花盆和便携式床。另一半有一小堆煤和一堆用来在屋顶生火做饭的劈好的木头。没有植物，没有开花的灌木，也没有大理石地板。只有三张摇摇晃晃的旧便携式床，其中一张还缺了一条腿。

莱拉几乎没有从村民的屋顶上看过她的家。事实上，她不

编织的硬质便携式床上辗转反侧，渴望家中柔软、宽阔的大床，不知道穷人是怎么睡在这些狭窄不舒服的东西上的。即使在床单下面塞了两条厚毛巾，她也知道她的背部会酸痛，并且衬有黄麻编织的图案痕迹。

“我非常想念你，我亲爱的阿尔斯兰。我迫不及待地想见你，”她哭着弄湿了枕头的另一个角落。无法等到早上，莱拉爬过朱拜勒，在另一张便携式床上睡着了。

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她自己在大楼的卧室有陶艺家的院子那么大。莱拉打消了这个念头；陶轮无法与她父亲的数英亩土地和数十匹纯种赛马匹敌。

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莱拉很少从村民的屋顶上看过她的家。事实上，她不记

rooftops. In fact, she could not recall ever crossing to the other side of the village. The hevali was the first building in sight when one entered the village, and she had always travelled by car. Her everyday life had little to do with the local village people. As the daughter of the wealthy landlord it never occurred to her or her parents to befriend the village children. Similarly the villagers shied away; Laila was beyond their reach as a playmate or sphere of influence, even for the 'fashionable and very modern' goldsmith's daughters.

Her reputed friends were daughters of politicians, media celebrities and other landowning families from the boarding school and city college. Her knowledge of the village extended to Massi Fiza, their laundrywoman, who was now practically a neighbour – her front door literally opposite theirs.

'I have returned home, Mother!' Laila whispered up to the shining stars.

*

Gulbahar was standing on her prayer mat, about to start her afternoon prayers, when Begum whispered in Gulbahar's ear.

'She's here, Sahiba-ji!' Her mistress heard but betrayed no visible sign that she had.

'She's here!' Begum croaked louder.

'Who's here, Begum?' Gulbahar's harsh voice challenged, turning to confront her housekeeper.

Begum shrivelled, the light of hope snuffed in her eyes, her heart

记得曾经到过村子的另一边。进村第一眼看到的建筑物就是大楼，而她一直都是开车出行的。她的日常生活与当地村民没什么交集。作为富有地主的女儿，她或她的父母从来没有想过要和村里的孩子交朋友。同样，村民们也避而远之；莱拉无论作为玩伴或有地位的上层阶级对他们来说都可望而不可及，即使对于“时尚又潮流”的金匠女儿来说也是如此。

她的朋友都是寄宿学校和城市学院的政治家、媒体名人和其他地主家庭的女儿。她对村庄的了解延伸到了洗衣女工马西·菲扎身上，目前实际的邻居——她们两家的前门是对着的。

“我已经回家了，妈妈！”莱拉对着闪亮的星星低声地说。

*

贝古姆在古尔巴哈耳边低语，古尔巴哈正站在她的跪垫上，准备进行下午祷告。

“她来了，夫人！”她的女主人听到了，但没有任何反应。

“她来了！”贝古姆更大声地呱呱叫道。

“谁来了，贝古姆？”古尔巴哈用刺耳的声音质疑道，转身面向她的管家。

贝古姆皱了皱眉，她的期望破灭了，她的心不再怦怦乱跳。

得曾经穿越到村子的另一边。进村第一眼看到的就是大楼，而她一直都是开车出行的。她的日常生活与当地村民没什么关系。作为富有地主的女儿，她或她的父母从来没有想过要和村里的孩子做朋友。同样，村民们也避而远之；莱拉作为玩伴或影响范围超出了他们的能力范围，即使对于“时尚且非常现代”的金匠女儿来说也是如此。

她的知名朋友是来自寄宿学校和城市学院的政治家、媒体名人和其他地主家庭的女儿。她对村庄的了解延伸到了他们的洗衣女工马西·菲扎（Massi Fiza），她现在几乎是邻居——她的前门就在他们的对面。

“我回家了，妈妈！”莱拉对着闪亮的星星低声说。

*

古尔巴哈正站在她的祈祷垫上，正要开始她的下午祈祷，这时贝古姆在古尔巴哈耳边低语。

“她来了，Shiba-ji！”她的情妇听到了，但没有看出她有任何明显的迹象。

“她来了！”贝古姆更大声地呱呱叫。

“谁在这里，贝古姆？”古尔巴哈刺耳的声音挑衅，转身面对她的管家。

贝古姆皱了皱眉，她眼中的希望之光熄灭了，她的心退

retreating to a low, dull beat. Her mistress had indeed killed not only her daughter in her thoughts, but had also slain her own heart.

‘No one!’ Begum mumbled in confusion, turning away, wondering what was going to happen. For Massi Fiza had excitedly whispered that Mistress Laila had arrived during the night and was now living in the potter’s home, whilst her rascal of a husband had gone to work in the neighbouring town.

‘She’s here!’ Gulbahar softly repeated Begum’s words to her husband’s back, feeling duty-bound to alert him. Haider was standing ready to say his maghrib prayers; he neither replied nor showed any indication that he had heard but merely started his prayer sequence, raising his hands over his shoulders. Gulbahar let the moment pass – at least he was prepared. She had not expected a discussion, as Laila’s name had become a taboo.

*

The small footstool, with its one uneven leg, on which Laila crouched to make breakfast, kept toppling to one side, giving her a painful stitch at the side of her leg. Her eyes remained on the outside door, expecting her father to storm in at any moment followed by a tearful mother with open arms. Breakfast and dinner was cooked. She had specially made her father’s favourite dish, semolina halwa, syrupy the way he liked it. In the end, nobody came. No storming father, no weeping mother crossed the potter’s threshold. The second day also passed. Laila’s

果然，她的夫人不仅在心中杀了自己的女儿，还杀了自己的心。

“没有人！”贝古姆困惑地喃喃自语，转过身去，不知道会发生什么。因为马西·菲扎兴奋地嘟囔莱拉太太是夜里来的，现在住在陶工家，而她的流氓丈夫去邻镇工作了。

“她来了！”古尔巴哈在她丈夫的背后轻声重复着贝古姆的话，她觉得有责任提醒他。海德站在那里准备进行礼拜；他既没有回答，也没有表现出任何听到的迹象，只是开始了他的祷告程序，将双手举过肩膀。古尔巴哈不再提了——至少他做好了准备。她只是没想到对莱拉名字的提及已经成为禁忌了。

*

莱拉蹲在小脚凳上面做早饭，那只小脚凳一条腿不平，一直向一侧倾倒，让她的大腿一侧受伤了。她的眼睛一直盯着外面的门，期待着她的父亲随时会冲进来，紧随其后的是她张开双臂泪流满面的母亲。早餐和晚餐都做好了。她特地做了她父亲最喜欢的用粗粒小麦粉做成的布丁，里面放了他喜欢的糖浆。

最后，谁也没有来。暴躁的父亲和哭泣的母亲都没有越过陶匠家的门槛。第二天也过去了。莱拉穿梭在时钟

回到低沉而沉闷的跳动。果然，她的主母，不仅在她的心目中杀了自己的女儿，还杀了自己的心。

“没有人！”贝古姆困惑地喃喃自语，转过身去，不知道会发生什么。因为马西·菲扎兴奋地低声说莱拉太太是夜里来的，现在住在陶工家，而她的无赖丈夫则去邻镇工作。

“她来了！”古尔巴哈在她丈夫的背上轻声重复着贝古姆的话，觉得有责任提醒他。海德站在那里准备念他的马格里布祈祷；他既没有回答，也没有表现出他听到的任何迹象，只是开始了他的祈祷程序，将双手举过肩膀。古尔巴哈让这一刻过去了一——至少他做好了准备。她没想到会有讨论，因为莱拉的名字已经成为禁忌。

*

莱拉蹲在上面做早饭的那只小脚凳，一条腿不平，一直向一侧倾倒，在她的腿一侧缝了一个痛处。她的眼睛一直盯着外面的门，期待着她的父亲随时会冲进来，紧随其后的是一位张开双臂泪流满面的母亲。早餐和晚餐都做好了。她特地做了她父亲最喜欢的菜，哈尔瓦粗面粉，按照他喜欢的方式做成糖浆。

最后，没有人来。没有暴躁的父亲，没有哭泣的母亲越过陶艺家的门槛。第二天也过去了。莱拉的生

life swung on the face of the clock and the outside door – waiting. She knew that the dhoban had passed the message. ‘Why has no one come?’ she mourned in bewilderment.

On the third day, after her husband had left for shopping in town, Laila determinedly stepped out of her home, an ugly fortress of her own making, daring to walk out into the village lane and show her face.

‘I’m Haider Ali’s daughter and will not hide myself!’ The pelting storm had to be borne. And she was ready both to face the wrath of her family and the sniggers of the villagers.

Her body discreetly cloaked in a large grey muslin chador and her face partially hidden behind its folds, Laila stepped warily out onto the cobbled lane. Once upon a time, the elegant Miss Laila would never let a chador come anywhere near her body. Now, she sought refuge in its ample width and length.

Her destination was her father’s hevali.

As she entered the lane, her heart thudding, she felt faint; her beloved father was walking towards her.

‘He has come!’

Her heart singing, she let the fold of the chador fall from her face as he came nearer. His eyes dutifully looked down in a modest fashion adopted by the village men whilst passing women. He therefore didn’t notice or recognise her and was about to pass her; Laila panicked.

‘Father!’ Her urgent voice sliced across the small space between them. A mere flicker of an eye was his only response; the gaze had barely lifted

和外面的门之间——她一直都在等。她知道为他家洗衣服的女人已经传递了消息。“为什么没有人来？”她不解地哀怨道。

第三天，在丈夫去镇上买东西后，莱拉毅然走出了自家丑陋的堡垒，勇敢的走到村庄的小巷里露面。

“我是海德·阿里的女儿，我不会隐瞒！”她必须要忍受猛烈地暴风雨。她准备好面对家人的愤恨和村民的讥笑了。

她小心翼翼地在身上披着一件肥大的灰色粗纱长袍，她的脸部分隐藏在交叠的披巾下，莱拉小心翼翼地走到鹅卵石铺成的小路上。曾几何时，优雅的莱拉小姐绝不会戴披巾。如今，她却在肥大的披巾下寻求庇护。

她的目的地是她父亲的大楼。

当她走进小巷时，她的心怦怦直跳，她感到头晕目眩；她心爱的父亲正朝她走来。

“他来了！”

她的内心欢喜雀跃，当他靠近时，戴好的披巾从她脸上滑落。他的眼睛尽职尽责地向下看，这是村里男人在有女人路过时所采用的保守方法。因此，他没有注意到她，也没有认出她，当父亲正要从她身边经过时；莱拉变得惊慌失措。

“父亲！”她急切的声音划破了两人之间的狭小空间。眨眼是他唯一的反应；他的视线才刚刚离开地面。在看到她的脸

活在时钟和外门的表面上摇摆不定——等待。她知道 dhoban 已经传递了信息。

“为什么没有人来？”她不解地哀悼。

第三天，丈夫去城里逛街后，莱拉毅然走出了自家丑陋的堡垒，敢于走到村里的小巷里露脸。

“我是海德尔阿里的女儿，不会隐瞒！”暴风雨不得承受。她准备好面对家人的愤怒和村民的窃笑。

她的身体小心翼翼地披着一件灰色的粗纱长袍，她的脸部分隐藏在褶皱后面，莱拉小心翼翼地走到鹅卵石铺成的小路上。曾几何时，优雅的莱拉小姐绝不会让披巾靠近她的身体。现在，她在它宽阔的宽度和长度中寻求庇护。

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当她走进小巷时，她的心怦怦直跳，她感到头晕目眩；她心爱的父亲正朝她走来。

“他来了！”

她的心在歌唱，当他靠近时，她让披风的褶皱从她脸上滑落。他的眼睛尽职尽责地低头，以一种村里男人在路过女人时所采用的谦虚方式。因此，他没有注意到她，也没有认出她，正要从她身边经过；莱拉惊慌失措。

“父亲！”她急切的声音划破了两人之间的狭小空间。眨眼是他唯一的反应。视线才刚刚离开地面。然后在他

from the ground. Then the head dropped down before his eyes reached her face.

And he walked on, passing her still figure in the lane, staring after him. 'Father!' Stunned, Laila shouted after him, past caring who heard her, born out of a need to be recognised and heard. Her father's feet didn't stall. The head didn't turn. She watched his tall stiff figure disappear down the side street.

Mouth dry, Laila leaned against the gate of the bricklayer's villa, wiping her wet cheeks clean. The bricklayer's two chattering teenage granddaughters coming out of the house made her briskly walk off. She had lost the father but still had a mother.

Pushing open the hevali gates of her parents' home, Laila experienced an awkwardness, as if she was entering it as a stranger. Her hungry eyes devoured the spacious beauty of the courtyard, its central marble fountain overflowing with a steady spray of clear water, rows of marble colonnades garlanded with the lush growth of plants and flowers and the two trees now swollen with fruit; oranges and guava. The small pomegranate tree bushes with pomegranates hanging from them were protected from the pecking crows behind the small cotton bags sewn by Begum's skilful fingers. Begum herself was hard at work in the courtyard. On her toes, she was reaching up to brush down a tiny row of spiralling cobwebs hanging from one of the veranda colonnades when Laila called.

之前, 他就把头低下了。

莱拉盯着他继续往前走, 在小巷里穿过她静止的身影。

“父亲!” 莱拉惊呆了, 在他身后喊道, 她不再关心谁会听到她的声音, 只是想要得到认可和倾听。她父亲的脚步没有停下。头没有转过来。她看着他高大僵硬的身影消失在小巷上。

莱拉口干舌燥地靠在瓦工别墅的大门上, 将浸满泪水的脸颊擦干净。瓦工的两个叽叽喳喳的十几岁的孙女从屋里走出来时, 她就快步走开了。

她没有得到父亲的原谅, 但还有母亲。

推开父母家大楼的大门, 莱拉感到一阵尴尬, 就好像她是一个陌生人一样。她渴望的眼神吞噬了庭院宽敞的美景, 中央的大理石喷泉里流淌着源源不断的清水, 茂盛的植物和花朵点缀在一排排大理石柱廊上, 橘子和番石榴树现在都结满了果实。小石榴树丛上挂着的石榴绑着贝古姆亲自缝制的精巧的小棉袋, 使它们免受乌鸦啄食。

贝古姆正在院子里辛勤劳作。当莱拉叫她时, 她正准备伸手去扫一排悬挂在阳台柱廊上的螺旋状蜘蛛网。

的视线到达她的脸之前, 头就低了下来。

他继续往前走, 在巷子里经过她静止的身影, 盯着他。

“父亲!” 惊呆了, 莱拉在他身后喊道, 不再关心听到她的声音, 而是出于被认可和倾听的需要。她父亲的脚步没有停下。头没有转。她看着他高大僵硬的身影消失在小街上。

口干舌燥, 莱拉靠在瓦工别墅的大门上, 将湿漉漉的脸颊擦干净。瓦工的两个叽叽喳喳的十几岁的孙女从屋里走出来, 让她快步走开了。

她失去了父亲, 但仍然有母亲。

推开父母家大楼大门, 莱拉感到一阵尴尬, 就好像她是一个陌生人一样。她饥肠辘辘的眼睛吞噬了庭院宽敞的美景, 中央的大理石喷泉里流淌着源源不断的清水, 一排排大理石柱廊点缀着茂盛的植物和花朵, 两棵树现在都结满了果实。橘子和番石榴。小石榴树丛上挂着石榴, 它们被贝古姆熟练的手指缝制的小棉袋后面的啄食乌鸦保护着。

贝古姆自己也在院子里辛勤劳作。当莱拉打来电话时, 她正伸手去扫一排悬挂在阳台柱廊上的螺旋状蜘蛛网。

Electrified, Begum swung round. The bundle of boker sticks with sticky cobwebs slipped from Begum's hand as she clamped her hand to her mouth, gasping. 'Laila-ji,' she whispered, automatically adding the respectful term of 'ji' to address her young mistress. Joy flared, fear raged. What would happen now?

'Begum, where is my mother?' Laila demanded, hovering nervously on the threshold. Begum's eyes swept angrily over her irresponsible mistress; the imperious voice didn't match the pathetic appearance. This wasn't the fashion-loving, elegant Laila with her fine stitching, tight-zipped dresses, tiny three-inch sleeves showing off her slender, youthful arms, the one bred in the lap of luxury in her parental home, but a weighed-down specimen of womanhood and symbol of humility.

'Any other village woman, for that matter,' Begum mentally scoffed, eyes widening. Did she see lines on Mistress Laila's forehead?

Obviously, the expensive Western pots of face creams and body lotions that Ali purchased for her from the city's top shopping plazas no longer featured in her life. Her Mistress Gulbahar still had porcelain skin and she was twenty years older!

Seething, Begum climbed up to her Mistress Gulbahar's room, followed by Laila.

*

Gulbahar was in the middle of her zuhr nafl prayer sequence, her forehead touching the soft surface of the velvet prayer rug, ready to rise to

贝古姆转过身来，惊呆了。

贝古姆用手捂住嘴，喘着粗气，粘着黏黏的蜘蛛网的笄帚从她手中滑落。

“莱拉小姐，”她轻声说，自动加上尊敬的“小姐”这个词来称呼她的小主人。喜出言外的同时怒火横烧。现在会发生什么？

“贝古姆，我妈妈呢？”莱拉徘徊在门槛上紧张地问道。贝古姆的目光愤怒地扫过她不负责任的小姐。傲慢的声音与可怜的外表并不相称。莱拉小姐在父母家奢华环境中长大，举止优雅、热爱时尚，她会穿缝制精美的拉链紧身连衣裙，在三英寸的袖子露出纤细年轻手臂，眼前的不是莱拉小姐，而是女性身份和谦逊特征的负面代表。

“其他村妇都这样认为，”贝古姆瞪大了眼睛，在心里嗤之以鼻。她看到莱拉小姐额头上的皱纹了吗？显然，阿里从城市顶级购物广场为她购买昂贵的西式面霜和身体乳液已经消失在她的生活中了。她的夫人古尔巴哈就算比莱拉大了二十岁，还是拥有光滑的瓷器般的皮肤！

贝古姆沸腾了，爬上了她的女主人古尔巴哈的房间，莱拉跟在后面。

*

古尔巴哈正在礼拜仪式的中间程序，她的前额贴着天鹅绒制成的祷告地毯的柔软表面，准备起身开始新的祷告。微弱

贝古姆着了电了，转过身来。

贝古姆用手捂住嘴，喘着粗气，一捆粘着蜘蛛网的博克棒从她手中滑落。

“来拉姬，”她轻声说，自动加上尊敬的“姬”这个词来称呼她的小情妇。喜悦爆发，恐惧肆虐。现在会发生什么？

“贝古姆，我妈妈呢？”莱拉在门槛上紧张地徘徊着问道。贝古姆的目光愤怒地扫过她不负责任的情妇。傲慢的声音与可怜的外表不相称。这不是喜欢时尚、优雅的莱拉，她缝制精美，拉链紧身连衣裙，三英寸的袖子露出纤细、年轻的手臂，在她父母家的奢华环境中长大，而是一个体重过重的人。女性身份和谦逊的象征。

“任何其他村妇，就此而言，”贝古姆瞪大了眼睛，在心里嗤之以鼻。她看到莱拉大人额头上的纹路了吗？显然，阿里从城市顶级购物广场为她购买的昂贵的西式面霜和身体乳液已不再出现在她的生活中。她的主母古尔巴哈还是瓷器的皮肤，比她大了二十岁！

贝古姆沸腾了，爬上了她的女主人古尔巴哈的房间，跟在后面的是莱拉。

*

古尔巴哈正在她的祈祷序列中，她的前额接触着天鹅绒祈祷地毯的柔软表面，准备起身开始新的祈祷。浅浅而

start a new rakah. The shallow, hesitant breathing, the light tread of her daughter's feet on the floor tightened Gulbahar's chest. When two feet stood beside her, the Arabic words of prayers deserted her, her mouth only forming the words Ibrahim, Ibrahim. Bemused, she turned her head first to the right and then to the left to signal her exit from her prayers.

Her eyes fleetingly swept over her daughter's cloaked figure but avoided the face.

'Mother!' Laila beseeched, now squatting, touching her mother's feet. 'Please forgive me, Mother,' she begged.

Alarmed, Gulbahar pulled her foot away. Only two thoughts banged with clarity in her head: betrayal and shame.

'Begum, have I not warned you about letting beggars into the house.' The voice sounded chillingly aggrieved. 'You've disobeyed me yet again, Begum!'

'Mother!' Laila cried, lying in a heap on the cold marble floor. Gulbahar turned her back to the two women. 'Begum, please show this beggar the door! And guard it well!' Gulbahar cruelly instructed, mouth quivering. Begum's distressed gaze swung from the daughter's face to the mother's back. Gulbahar, unable to pray, walked out of the room, heading for the open air and privacy of the rooftop terrace.

Tears streaked down Laila's face. Begum helplessly watched, before turning to follow her mistress, the words 'you have disobeyed me yet

而颤动的呼吸声,以及她女儿在地板上轻轻踩踏的脚步声,让古尔巴哈的胸口绷得紧紧的。当两只脚站在她身边时,阿拉伯语的祈祷词说完了,她的嘴里只重复着易卜拉希玛,易卜拉希玛。她困惑地先把头转向右边,然后转向左边,示意莱拉退出祷告。

她的目光在女儿披着斗篷的身影上一闪而过,却避开了那张脸。

“妈妈!”莱拉恳求着,立马蹲下,抚摸着她妈妈的脚。“请原谅我,妈妈,”她恳求道。

惊慌失措的古尔巴哈挪开她的脚。她的脑海里只有两个清晰的念头:背叛和羞耻。

“贝古姆,我不是警告过你不要让乞丐进屋吗?”话听起来令人寒心委屈。“你又不听我的话了,贝古姆!”

“妈妈!”莱拉叫道,趴在冰冷的大理石地板上。古尔巴哈转身背对这两个女人。

“贝古姆,请给这个乞丐开门!好好看着门!”古尔巴哈颤抖着嘴巴冷酷地吩咐道。

贝古姆痛苦的目光从女儿的脸上移到了母亲的后背上。无法继续祷告的古尔巴哈走出房间,走向露天却私密的屋顶露台。

泪水从莱拉的脸上划过。贝古姆无奈地看着,转身跟在小姐身后之前,“你又不听我的话”这句话钻进了她的耳朵里。是

犹豫的呼吸,她女儿在地板上轻轻踩踏的脚步,让古尔巴哈的胸口绷得紧紧的。当两只脚站在她身边时,阿拉伯语的祈祷词就离开了她,她的嘴里只形成了易卜拉希玛,易卜拉希玛三个字。迷惑不解,她先把头转向右边,然后转向左边,示意她退出祈祷。

她的目光在女儿披着斗篷的身影上一闪而过,却避开了那张脸。

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“贝古姆,我不是警告过你不要让乞丐进屋吗?”声音听起来带着令人毛骨悚然的委屈。“你又不听我的话了,贝古姆!”

“妈妈!”莱拉叫道,趴在冰冷的大理石地板上。古尔巴哈转身背对那两个女人。

“老大,请给这个乞丐开门!好好保护它!”古尔巴哈冷酷地吩咐道,嘴巴颤抖着。

贝古姆痛苦的目光从女儿的脸上移到了母亲的背上。无法祈祷的古尔巴哈走出房间,走向露天和私密的屋顶露台。

泪水从莱拉的脸上划过。贝古姆无奈地看着耳边响起的“你又不听我话”这三个字,转身跟在情妇身后。是的,

again' throbbing in her ears. Yes, she had brought Laila up to her mistress's room. What had she expected – a reconciliation, a pat on the back? Did she not know that Laila was dead to her parents? How could she allow Laila's shadow to cross their paths?

As if in a dream, Laila followed the faithful housekeeper down the stairs. Begum's body language neither signalled her love nor her anger. Her loyalty was to Mistress Gulbahar and Master Haider; her mission now was to quickly usher Mistress Laila out before her father returned home.

Striding across the courtyard and opening the door wide, Begum kept her face averted from the accusing glare of Laila's eyes.

'Don't look at me like that!' Begum taunted. 'You burned all your boats, Mistress Laila, on that night when you eloped with your lover,' she angrily continued, with throbbing red cheeks. 'You killed your parents with your cruelty! Stamped on their joy of life! Snuffed the light out of this house. Did you know that this is the house of the dead, Laila? I never knew that the young mistress I so lovingly cared for could be so selfish and cruel to the very people she loved. Your parents do not mourn for you! Don't flatter yourself! But I mourn for my master and mistress and for the empty vessels that they have become! What does the potter's son have that the landlord didn't – that led you to lose your female modesty? What did you see in his father's clay pots that made you turn your back on the casket of gold jewellery and acres of land offered by

的，她把莱拉带到了她女主人的房间。她在期待什么——和解，拥抱？难道她不知道莱拉在她父母心里已经死了吗？她怎么会允许莱拉的影子再和他们有交集？

就像在做梦一样，莱拉跟着忠实的管家走下楼梯。贝古姆的肢体语言既没有表达她的爱，也没有表达她的愤怒。她效忠于古尔巴哈夫人和海德老爷；她现在的任务是在老爷回家之前迅速把莱拉小姐带出去。贝古姆大步穿过院子，把门敞开，刻意避开莱拉责备的目光。

“别那样看我！”贝古姆奚落道。“莱拉小姐，那天晚上你和你的爱人私奔时，就断掉了所有后路，”她生气地继续说道，脸颊通红。“你残忍地杀死了你的父母！压住了他们生活的喜悦！熄了这间屋子的灯。你知道这座房子有多死气沉沉吗，莱拉？我从来不知道，我如此深情呵护的小姐，竟然对她所爱的人如此自私和残忍。你的父母不为你难过！别自作多情了！但我为我的主人夫妇以及他们空空的躯壳而难过！陶工的儿子有什么是地主少爷没有的——竟让你失去了女性的谦逊原则？你在他父亲的陶罐里看到了什么，让你背弃了另一个男人提供的金首饰棺材和很多土地？”

她把莱拉带到了她女主人的房间。她期待什么——和解，拍拍背？难道她不知道莱拉对她的父母已经死了吗？她怎么会允许莱拉的影子穿过他们的道路？

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the other man?

‘Your father hasn’t spoken to anyone for months – neither friends nor relatives! Do you know he has lost two inches in height because his head is forever stooped in shame? He barely lifts his gaze or looks anyone in the eye! Do not mislead yourself, selfish Laila, that anybody will come running to bring you home! The night you married him, you slammed shut the door of the hevali behind you and said goodbye to all of this! Your mother has just made that perfectly clear.’

‘No! No!’ Laila wept. ‘Don’t say that, Begum, please listen – I’m pregnant!’ she whimpered.

Begum struggled with her thoughts and breath. At last, dry-mouthed, she coldly uttered, ‘I wish you joy of your future newborn. I pray that as a parent you will never taste the pain you’ve caused your parents.’

‘Please, Begum, don’t lecture me! I, too, have died a “thousand” times.’

‘You are the guilty one!’ Begum snapped bitterly. ‘What wrong did your parents do to deserve the punishment you meted out to them? You used me, Mistress Laila, as you’ve always done. No more! Do you hear me?’

‘I hear, Begum, but what can I say! My crime was to fall in love and to want to be with him!’ Laila’s tone was equally cutting. This was not the Begum she adored and who always played to her tune.

‘I wish you joy with your “love” and your lover then. Please go now! You are lucky – some fathers have killed their daughters for less than what

“你父亲已经好几个月没有和任何人说话了——无论是朋友还是亲戚！你知道他因为羞愧永远低着头而矮了两英寸吗？他几乎没有抬眼看过任何人！自私的莱拉，不要误以为会有人跑过来带你回家！嫁给他的那天晚上，你就砰的一声关上了身后的大楼门，和这一切说再见了！你妈妈刚刚说得很清楚。

‘不！不！’莱拉哭了。“别这么说，贝古姆，请听我说——我怀孕了！”她呜咽道。

贝古姆在她的思绪和呼吸中挣扎。最后，她口干舌燥，冷冷地说：“祝愿你为将来的孩子感到快乐。我希望作为父母你永远不会经受你给自己父母带来的痛苦。

“拜托，贝古姆，不要教训我！我也死了很多次了。

“你才是罪魁祸首！”贝古姆苦涩地骂道。“你父母到底做错了什么，才配得上你对他们的惩罚？你利用了我，莱拉小姐，就像你一直以来所做的那样。别再说了！听见了吗？

“我听到了，贝古姆，但我能说什么呢！我的罪过是爱上朱拜尔并想和他在一起！”莱拉的语气同样尖锐。眼前的人不是她所崇拜的、什么都按照她说的去做的贝古姆了。

‘祝你好好享受你的“爱”和你的爱人。请马上走！你很幸运——有些父亲会杀死他们的女儿，但她们犯的错要比你

“你父亲已经好几个月没有和任何人说话了——无论是朋友还是亲戚！你知道他因为羞愧永远低着头而瘦了两英寸吗？他几乎没有抬眼或看任何人的眼睛！不要误导自己，自私的莱拉，任何人都跑过来带你回家！嫁给他的那天晚上，你砰的一声关上了身后的大楼门，和这一切说再见！你妈妈刚刚说得很清楚。

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“拜托，贝古姆，不要教训我！我也死了“一千”次。

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“我听到了，贝古姆，但我能说什么呢！我的罪过是坠入爱河并想和他在一起！”莱拉的语气同样尖锐。这不是她所崇拜的、总是按照她的曲调演奏的贝古姆。

‘我希望你与你的“爱”和你的爱人一起快乐。请马上去！你很幸运——有些父亲杀死他们的女儿的代价比你所做

you've done!' Begum almost wanted to push her out. 'Master will be back soon! I don't know what he'll do when he sees you!'

'I have met him already!' Laila's voice tapered away.

'You've met him?' Begum panicked.

'Don't worry. It appears I've indeed killed everyone in this household with my action – even you! Forgive me, Begum.' Laila pulled the chador lower over her forehead.

Begum's heart leapt in pain as she fought the urge to hug Laila tightly, her expression now softer. 'I pray that perhaps your child may bring back to life the dead in this home,' she whispered. 'And I'll pray for your health, my little princess,' she finished, her eyes now swollen and leaking with tears.

Flushed with gratitude and sobbing quietly in the fold of her chador, Laila nodded. 'Thank you and goodbye, Begum. I will return to Islamabad, for there is nothing for me here: no home, no parents – not even Begum! Where is Arslan, Begum? I would like to see him so much. In all my little life you've arranged things for me, from climbing up the tall jamuni trees, to arranging late night horse riding, to letting me escape from an unhappy engagement ... Please do this for me – for a sister longing to see her brother,' she ended, noting the look of incredulity on the housekeeper's face.

'Begum, this "beggar" has not come to beg for food but only for a glimpse of her baby brother! Is that too much to ask from your well of humanity?'

轻很多!" 贝古姆几乎想把她赶推出去。 '老爷很快就回来了! 我不知道他看到你会做什么!'

"我已经见过他了!" 莱拉的声音越来越小。

"你见过他了?" 贝古姆慌了。

'别担心。看来,我的所作所为确实杀死了这个家的每一个人——甚至包括你自己! 原谅我, 贝古姆。" 莱拉把披肩拉低, 遮住了她的额头。

贝格姆的心猛地一跳, 强忍着想要紧紧拥抱莱拉的冲动, 她的表情变得柔和了许多。 "我想也许你的孩子能让这个家里恢复生机," 她低声说。 "我会为你的健康祈祷, 我的公主," 话说完, 她的眼睛就肿了, 泪流满面。

莱拉满脸感激, 在披巾下悄悄抽泣着, 点了点头。 "谢谢你, 再见, 贝古姆。我会回到伊斯兰堡, 因为在这里我什么都没有了: 没有家, 没有父母——甚至是你, 贝古姆! 贝古姆, 阿尔斯兰在哪里? 我非常想见他。在我的生命中, 你为我做了很多事情, 从爬上高大的贾木尼树, 到安排深夜骑马, 再到让我摆脱不愉快的订婚……请帮我做件事——我只是一个渴望见到弟弟的姐姐," 她说完后, 注意到了管家脸上的怀疑神色。

'贝古姆, 这个“乞丐”不是来讨饭的, 只是来看她弟弟的! 你的仁慈满足不了这样的请求么?" 莱拉乞求道, 在她

的还少!" 贝古姆几乎想把她赶出去。 '老爷很快就回来了! 我不知道他看到你会做什么!'

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'别担心。看来,我的行动确实杀了这个家的每一个人——甚至包括你! 原谅我, 贝古姆。" 莱拉把披肩拉低, 遮住了她的额头。

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莱拉满脸感激, 在披风的褶皱里悄悄抽泣着, 点点头。

"谢谢你, 再见, 贝古姆。我会回到伊斯兰堡, 因为这里没有我的东西: 没有家, 没有父母——甚至是贝古姆! 贝古姆, 阿尔斯兰在哪里? 我非常想见他。在我的小生命里, 你为我安排了很多事情, 从爬上高大的贾木尼树, 到安排深夜骑马, 再到让我摆脱不愉快的订婚……请为我做这件事——一个渴望见到她的姐姐兄弟," 她说完, 注意到管家脸上的怀疑神色。

'贝古姆, 这个“乞丐”不是来讨饭的, 只是来看她弟弟的! 向你的人类之井要求这么多是不是太过分了?"

Laila begged, opening out the fold of her shawl in front of her body – in a manner reminiscent of a street beggar. ‘I was cruel, you say, but have mercy, Begum; Allah Pak says forgive and offer forgiveness!’

‘OK! I’ll see what I can do. Now, please go,’ Begum urged, unable to cope any more with Laila’s emotional blackmail, her knack of weaving her magic around her heart with her sapphires for eyes.

Laila stepped out of the hevali she loved, closing the gates behind her. Through the small window, Begum watched the shadowy veiled figure walk away. ‘Oh, Laila, what have you done?’ Begum kept muttering all evening as she went about her chores, imagining her young mistress trying to cook in the potter’s hovel of a home.

Nobody mentioned Laila’s name. Her husband had quietly informed her the following morning that the dhoban saw Laila leaving the village with her husband. The potter’s house was once again padlocked. Begum sighed in relief. Laila had entered and departed like a shadow. The storm had brewed but not burst. The sky was clear again, but the shadowy greyness lingered, casting its mantle of doom over the hevali and the lives of those within its walls.

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‘My sister was here and you didn’t tell me?’ Arslan accused his mother, soaking up the early morning sunshine on the rooftop gallery. Gulbahar blinked, taken aback by her son’s outburst.

‘You have no sister!’ Gulbahar

面前打开披巾——这让人想起了街头的乞丐。“你说我很残忍，但贝古姆你却很仁慈：老天说要宽宏大量并给予宽恕！”

‘好的！我想想看怎么做。现在，请走吧，’贝古姆催促道，她再也招架不住莱拉的情感勒索，莱拉的本领是用蓝宝石般的眼睛向她施展魅力，扰乱她的心弦。

莱拉走出她爱的大楼后，贝古姆随后关上了大门。透过小窗户，贝古姆看着那个蒙着面纱的影子走远了。“莱拉，你都做了些什么？”贝古姆在做家务时整个晚上都在喃喃自语，想象着她的小姐试图在陶匠的小屋里做饭。

没有人提起莱拉的名字。第二天早上，贝古姆的丈夫悄悄地告诉她，洗衣服的女人看到莱拉和她的丈夫离开了村庄。陶工的房子又锁上了。贝古姆松了口气。莱拉像影子一样进进出出。风暴已经来临，但并未爆发。天空再次恢复了晴朗，但阴暗的灰色始终挥散不去，将沮丧的氛围笼罩在大楼和生活在楼里的人们身上。

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“我姐姐在这儿，你却没有告诉我？”阿尔斯兰指责了他的母亲，在屋顶画廊沐浴着清晨的阳光。古尔巴哈眨了眨眼，她儿子突然的爆发吓了她一跳。

“你没有姐姐！”古尔巴哈严

莱拉乞求道，将披肩的褶皱张开在她的身前——这让人想起街头乞丐。“你说我很残忍，但请怜悯，贝古姆；真主说宽恕并提供宽恕！”

‘好的！我会看看我能做什么。现在，请走吧，’贝古姆催促道，再也无法应对莱拉的情感勒索，她以蓝宝石为眼睛将魔法编织在她的心脏周围的诀窍。

莱拉走出她所爱的大楼，关上了她身后的大门。透过小窗户，贝古姆看着那个蒙着面纱的影子走远了。“哦，莱拉，你做了什么？”贝古姆在做家务时整个晚上都在喃喃自语，想象着她年轻的情妇试图在家里的陶工小屋里做饭。

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“你没有妹妹！”古尔巴哈

harshly reminded her son, knowing full well that he was very fond of his sister. For more than two weeks, he had sulked and refused to eat when Laila had left.

‘Yes, I have!’ came Arslan’s belligerent answer, tugging at his mother’s arm. ‘She was here! Our Laila is alive. I want to see her!’ ‘Khabardor!’ Haider Ali thundered, coming from behind. ‘Don’t talk to your mother like this again! You have no sister! Grow up, my son!’

Arslan beamed an angry gaze at his father, his rebellious mouth opening, but the look in his father’s eyes dammed the angry words. He marched down the marble stairs in pursuit of Begum, running to her house, not bothered that he had ruined his newly polished shoes with a thick layer of dust. Without knocking, he burst through the door, startling husband and wife, eating bananas. Two peels on the plate and two in their hands. The sight – their preoccupation with fruit – galled him. He lashed straight out at Begum.

‘You knew she was here, Begum!’ The words pelted like pointed darts into Begum’s body. The small half-peeled banana went back on the plate as Begum turned to her husband, desperately seeking some direction.

‘You knew, Begum!’ Arslan accused, very much the landlord’s son, his body aggressively poised over the housekeeper’s figure in the bamboo and raffia chair.

‘Yes, I knew!’ Begum steadily held her young master’s gaze.

‘And you never told me?’ Aggrieved,

严厉地提醒儿子，他很清楚他很喜欢他的姐姐。从莱拉离开的两个多星期以来，他一直闷闷不乐，拒绝吃饭。

“不，我有姐姐！”阿尔斯拉着他母亲的胳膊给出了敌对的回答。‘她来过！莱拉还活着。我想见她！’

“你敢！”海德·阿里从身后雷声大吼道。‘不要再这样和你妈说话了！你没有姐姐！成熟点，儿子！’

阿尔斯兰怒视着父亲，张着叛逆的嘴巴，但父亲的眼神抑制住了他愤怒的话语。他走下大理石楼梯去找贝古姆，跑到她家，丝毫不在意自己新擦亮的鞋子沾上了一层厚厚的灰尘。没有敲门，他就破门而入了，惊动了这对正吃着香蕉的夫妻。盘子上有两个果皮，他们手里又拿着两个。眼前的景象——他们对水果的执着——让他愤怒不已。他直接猛烈地抨击贝古姆。

“你知道她在这儿，贝古姆！”这句话像尖头飞镖一样射入贝古姆的身体。贝古姆转向她的丈夫寻求帮助的时候，把那只剥了一半的小香蕉又放回了盘子里。

“你知道的，贝古姆！”阿尔斯兰指责道，很有地主儿子的气势，他霸道地坐在竹子和拉菲亚树做成的椅子上，冲着管家摆好审问的姿势。

“是的，我知道！”贝古姆坚定地盯着少爷的目光。

“你从来没有告诉过我？”

严厉地提醒儿子，他很清楚他很喜欢他的妹妹。两个多星期以来，莱拉离开时，他一直闷闷不乐，拒绝吃饭。

“是的，我有！”阿尔斯兰好战的回答，拉着他母亲的胳膊。‘她来过！我们的莱拉还活着。我想见她！’

“哈巴多尔！”海德尔阿里雷声从身后传来。‘不要再这样和你妈说话了！你没有妹妹！长大，我的儿子！’

阿尔斯兰怒视着父亲，张着叛逆的嘴巴，但父亲的眼神挡住了愤怒的话语。他走下大理石楼梯追赶贝古姆，跑到她家，丝毫不在意自己新擦亮的鞋子沾上了一层厚厚的灰尘。没有敲门，他就破门而入，惊动了夫妻，吃着香蕉。盘子上有两个果皮，手里有两个。眼前的景象——他们对水果的执着——让他心烦意乱。他直接猛烈抨击贝古姆。

“你知道她在这里，贝古姆！”这句话像尖头飞镖一样射入贝古姆的身体。贝古姆转向她的丈夫，拼命寻找方向，那只剥了一半的小香蕉又放回了盘子里。

“你知道的，贝古姆！”阿尔斯兰指责道，非常像房东的儿子，他的身体霸道地压在管家坐在竹拉菲草椅子上的身影上。

“是的，我知道！”贝古姆坚定地盯着少爷的目光。

“你从来没有告诉过我？”

Arslan squeezed his eyes to prevent the tears from shaming him.

‘Beloved little master ...’ Begum’s heart melted in pain. ‘I couldn’t, Arslan. You know how it is,’ she appealed, hoping for his understanding.

‘No, I don’t know,’ he lashed out.

‘Everybody has gone mad! My baji is not dead!’ he sobbed aloud. ‘I want to see her!’

Ali decided that it was time to take a firm hand with Arslan. His wife, as usual, in her soft-hearted way, was getting nowhere.

‘You’ve no sister, Master Arslan! For us she’s dead, because she abandoned all of us. Did she give a thought to you, Arslan? No, she just ran away!’ Ali’s taunting remark struck home, making Arslan want to retaliate.

Begum quickly stepped in, pulling Arslan’s stiff body into her arms as she had always done since he was a toddler.

‘I know it hurts, Master Arslan. I know you love her very much, as I do,’ she said, ignoring her husband’s look of strong disapproval. ‘But your sister did something terrible.’

‘She only got married, Begum!’

Arslan scoffed. ‘What’s wrong with that? Don’t people usually get married when they are grown up?’

‘Yes, people do get married, Master Arslan,’ Begum stuttered to explain.

‘It was the way in which it was done! She only thought of herself and killed us all!’

‘Don’t be silly, Begum? She hasn’t “killed” anyone. Now you are talking rubbish.’ He angrily pulled himself out of Begum’s arms.

阿尔斯兰委屈地挤了挤眼睛，防止眼泪掉出来让他蒙羞。

“亲爱的小少爷……”贝古姆心疼死了。“我做不到，阿尔斯兰。你知道是怎么回事，”她申诉道，希望得到他的理解。

“不，我不知道，”他猛烈抨击道。‘大家都疯了！我的姐姐没有死！’他大声抽泣。‘我想见她！’

阿里决定是时候对阿尔斯兰采取坚决的手段了。他的妻子，像往常一样心软，一事无成。

“你没有姐姐，阿尔斯兰少爷！对我们来说，她已经死了，因为她抛弃了我们所有人。她有考虑过你吗，阿尔斯兰？没有，她就那么逃跑了！”阿里嘲讽的话语击中要害，让阿尔斯兰想要报复。贝古姆迅速介入，将阿尔斯兰僵硬的身体抱进怀里，从他还是学走路的小孩时候就这样抱着他。

“我知道这很痛苦，阿尔斯兰少爷。我知道你非常爱她，我也很爱她，”她无视丈夫强烈反对的表情说道。“但你姐姐做了一件可怕的事。”

“她只是结婚了，贝古姆！”阿尔斯兰嘲弄道。‘那有什么问题？人们通常不都是在长大后结婚吗？’

“是的，人们确实会结婚，阿尔斯兰少爷，”贝古姆结结巴巴地解释道。“是她做事的方法有问题！她只想着自己，把我们都杀了！”

“别傻了，贝古姆？她没有“杀死”任何人。你在胡说八道。”他愤怒地从贝古姆的怀里挣脱出来。

阿尔斯兰委屈地挤了挤眼睛，不让眼泪让他蒙羞。

“亲爱的小少爷……”贝古姆的心疼得要死了。“我做不到，阿尔斯兰。你知道是怎么回事，”她呼吁，希望得到他的理解。

“不，我不知道，”他猛烈抨击道。‘大家都疯了！我的巴吉没有死！’他大声抽泣。‘我想见她！’

阿里决定是时候与阿尔斯兰坚定地合作了。他的妻子，像往常一样，以她心软的方式，一事无成。

“你没有妹妹，阿尔斯兰大人！对我们来说，她已经死了，因为她抛弃了我们所有人。她有考虑过你吗，阿尔斯兰？不，她只是逃跑了！”阿里嘲讽的话语打动了人心，让阿尔斯兰想要报复。贝古姆迅速介入，将阿尔斯兰僵硬的身体抱进怀里，就像她从小就一直做的那样。

“我知道这很痛，阿尔斯兰大师。我知道你非常爱她，就像我一样，”她说，无视丈夫强烈反对的表情。“但你姐姐做了一件可怕的事。”

“她才结婚，贝古姆！”阿尔斯兰嗤之以鼻。‘那有什么问题？人们通常不会在长大后结婚吗？’

“是的，人们确实会结婚，阿尔斯兰大师，”贝古姆结结巴巴地解释道。“这就是它的完成方式！她只想着自己，把我们都杀了！”

“别傻了，贝古姆？她没有“杀死”任何人。现在你在胡说八道。”他愤怒地从贝古姆的怀里挣脱出来。

‘You are right, Arslan, she didn’t kill anyone, but there are different sorts of deaths and killings. She “killed” your parents in spirit. Can you understand what I’m trying to say? They live, Arslan, but as shadows. They are not the same people; their lives are empty. How long is it since you heard any laughter in the hevali, Arslan? Have you ever noticed your father looking you directly in the eye? Your mother has just become a tomb of silence. Remember one thing, when you grow up, never hurt your parents, my darling!’

‘But Allah Pak is merciful and forgives,’ beseeched the boy. ‘Will my parents never forgive her?’ he asked, his eyes now openly overflowing.

‘I don’t know, my pet. But I promise you one thing – when she comes next time, I will take you to see her.’

‘Can you find out where she lives, so that I can phone her?’ He eagerly asked.

Begum sobered, eyes evasive. ‘I’ll just arrange for you to meet her.’

‘What if she never returns?’ Arslan petulantly offered, his spirits sinking, angrily brushing away the tears from his cheeks. ‘I miss her so much, Begum.’

‘I know, Master Arslan, but believe me, she’ll return, my son. I know she will.’ She pulled him into her arms and let him sob on her shoulders.

“你说得对，阿尔斯兰，她没有杀死任何人，但有不同意义的死亡和杀戮。她在精神上

“杀死”了你的父母。你能明白我想说什么吗？阿尔斯兰，他们活着，但生活得像影子一样。他们和以前不是一个人了；他们的生活是空虚的。阿尔斯兰，你有多久没有在大楼里听到笑声了？你看你父亲直视过你的眼睛吗？你的母亲已经变成了行尸走肉。记住，当你长大后，永远不要伤害你的父母，我的宝贝！

“但老天是仁慈善良的，”男孩恳求道。“我的父母永远都不会原谅她吗？”他问道，现在他的眼睛里满溢着泪水。

“我不知道，我的宝贝。但我向你保证一件事——下次她来的时候，我会带你去看她。

“你能查出她住在哪里，以便我给她打电话吗？”他急切地问道。

贝古姆清醒过来，目光闪躲。“我只是安排你见她。”

“如果她再也回不来怎么办？”阿尔斯兰暴躁地提问到，他的精神一沉，愤怒地擦去脸颊上的泪水。“我非常想念她，贝古姆。”

“我知道，阿尔斯兰少爷，但相信我，她会回来的，我的孩子。我知道她会回来的。”她把他拉进怀里，让他靠在肩膀上哭泣。

“你说得对，阿尔斯兰，她没有杀死任何人，但有不同的死亡和杀戮。她在精神上

“杀死”了你的父母。你能明白我想说什么吗？他们活着，阿尔斯兰，但就像影子一样。他们不是同一个人；他们的生活是空的。阿尔斯兰，你有多久没有在希瓦里听到笑声了？你有没有注意到你父亲直视你的眼睛？你的母亲刚刚变成了一座寂静的坟墓。记住一件事，当你长大后，永远不要伤害你的父母，我的宝贝！

“但真主是仁慈和宽恕的，”男孩恳求道。“我的父母永远不会原谅她吗？”他问道，现在他的眼睛里满溢着泪水。

“我不知道，我的宠物。但我向你保证一件事——下次她来的时候，我会带你去看她。

“你能找出她住在哪里，以便我给她打电话吗？”他急切地问道。

贝古姆清醒过来，目光闪躲。“我只是安排你见她。”

“如果她再也回不来怎么办？”阿尔斯兰不耐烦地提议，他的精神一沉，愤怒地擦去脸颊上的泪水。“我非常想念她，贝古姆。”

“我知道，阿尔斯兰大师，但相信我，她会回来的，我的儿子。我知道她会的。”她把他拉进怀里，让他靠在她的肩膀上哭泣。