

The rich man and the poor man

There once was a very rich man. He was so rich, he could have owned many cars, but instead he chose to drive a Ford. He could have owned many computers, but instead he chose an Apple. He could have owned many homes, but instead he chose to live in East LA. Because this man was rich, many people in his neighborhood knew him. And also because the man was rich, many people from outside of his neighborhood knew him too. Often, his doorbell would ring, and there on his threshold would stand someone who had come to ask for a donation¹⁾. Sometimes when the bell rang, it was a neighbor who had fallen into misfortune. The man would smile, embrace his neighbor, and place a generous sum into their hand. Sometimes when the bell rang, it was a charity²⁾ representing the starving children of Africa. The man would again smile, embrace the charity worker, and write a generous check.

One evening, when his doorbell was particularly quiet, this man decided to take a stroll. He headed off, idling along wherever the road wound. Every once in a while, a car passed, thumping out the latest rage in rap hit, and he soon found himself whistling one of these catchy³⁾ tunes to himself. Lost in the tune, he came suddenly upon a homeless bum lying in the midst of the side-walk. The bum wore a tattered sweater and ripped pants. He had shoes, but they didn't even match. And oh. The smell. I can't even describe that to you here because it would ruin your Thanksgiving dinner. Well, this unfortunate soul lying on the street saw the man and knew him. Certainly, the bum said to himself. This is the rich man who lives on the lane. Surely he can help me, for he has money at his disposal. But instead of reaching out his hand, the bum was overcome by a sudden bout of shame and hid his face. The man stood over this tattered figure. He reached down and touched the bum's cheek, but the bum shrank away from him even further. The man's eyes clouded slightly and he cracked a weak smile. Forgetting the tune he once whistled, the man slowly turned and walked back to his home.

Upon hearing the man retreat beyond the corner, the bum opened his eyes and sat up. There at his feet lay a crisp⁴⁾ \$ 100.00 dollar bill. The bum grabbed the money and made a beeline for the nearest 7/11. Like all bums, this one's first thought was to go blow the money on vodka⁵⁾. What a bum.

But, before he entered the store, he remembered the compassion of the man's touch. This inspired him, and the bum decided then and there to turn his life around. The bum promptly bummed two dimes off an old lady. "Well." the lady replied. "You ain't gonna spend this on alcohol?" The bum shook his head and stuck the money into the slot⁶⁾ of the nearest telephone. His broker answered and the bum said, "Hundred dollars. Invest it all in that company with the name Microsoft." Since this was, as it turns out, the late-1980s, it took only a short while before the stock skyrocketed, and the bum found himself very well off indeed.

Back in East LA the years passed slowly. The generous man kept to life much as usual — taking evening strolls, whistling rap tunes, answering his door.

One day in particular, his doorbell rang, and there stood a finely dressed gentleman in

a three piece suit. Uh oh, the man thought. Donation. But before he could do anything, his guest spoke.

“You’re the rich man, aren’t you?” his guest asked.

“What can I do for you?” the man responded automatically, so accustomed to being asked for things.

“It is not what you can do for me,” answered his guest. “But what you have already done.”

“What have I done for you?” the man asked in surprise.

“You’ve given me a second chance at life. Why, with your generous gift, I was able to invest the money and pull myself out of my poverty. I no longer wallow⁷⁾ in the grime and gutters⁸⁾, but I walk along crowded sidewalks with my head held high. I have you to thank for that.” Suddenly, the man recognized his guest. It was the old bum who’d been lying in the street. The man replied, “What I gave you, you did not ask for. I gave it simply because I saw you there and loved you. I would have given it to anyone in your position.”

“All the more reason to come and thank you,” his guest said.

“But I am rich,” replied the man. “I have many gifts to give. I don’t expect anything in return.”

“Good,” his guest said with a nod. “Because I don’t have anything to offer in return—whatever I have, you gave to me. All I wanted to do was come and thank you.”

The man stared as his guest reached out and took him into an embrace. It was the same gesture the man had so often offered to those at his door, yet this was the first time someone had offered it back. Tears filled the man’s eyes as his guest, a lowly bum off the street, held him in the most satisfying embrace he had ever received.

富人与穷人

曾经有过这样一个非常富有的男人。他太有钱了，他本可以拥有许多汽车，但实际上却只开一辆福特；他本可以拥有许多计算机，但实际上却只用一台苹果牌计算机；他本可以拥有许多住房，但实际上却选择了住在洛杉矶东部。由于他很阔，左邻右舍都认识他。同样一个原因，远邻外人也知道他。通常，他的门铃响起时，门外总会站着请求募捐的人。有时，敲响门铃的会是某个陷于困境的邻居。他于是面带微笑地拥抱一下来人，并大方地将一大把钞票塞到人家手中。有时门铃响后见到的是代表非洲饥饿儿童的慈善团体。他便含着笑，拥抱一下门外的慈善机构的来人，随之又签上一张数目不小的支票。

一天晚上，门外特别地安静。这个男人便决定出去转转。沿着弯弯曲曲的街道，他悠闲地一直往前漫步。从身边驶过的汽车不时飘出强烈的说唱乐。于是很快地，他也情不自禁地跟着其中一首曲调吹起了口哨。他专心一意地吹着口哨，突然一个躺在人行道上的流浪汉吸引住他的目光。那个流浪汉的运动衫和裤子破旧褴褛。虽然穿着鞋，可是各不相配。还有，啊。那恶臭。我简直无法在这里向你描述，怕因此毁了你感恩节晚餐的胃口。言归正传。那个躺在路上的倒霉蛋同时也看到了他，而且知道他是谁。“那位住在这个街道的富佬。肯定能帮助我，因为他有很多钱。”流浪汉心中自忖。然而就在这瞬间，一种羞愧感忽然油然而生。于是，他的手没有伸出去，而是把自己的脸藏了起来。富人站在这个衣衫褴褛的流浪汉的身旁，俯下身，轻轻地抚摸了一下他的面颊，但是流浪汉却旋即远远地闪开了脸。富人的眼中不禁透出黯淡之神。他苦笑了一下，慢转身，走向了回家的路。刚才吹的旋律也忘得一干二净。

听着富人的脚步声在拐弯处消失后，流浪汉才睁开眼，坐起身来。在他的脚旁是一张新得发脆的百元美钞。他一把攥住钞票，然后起身径直冲向最近的 7 / 1 1 商店。同所有的流浪汉一样，他的第一个念头便是把钱挥霍在伏特加上。瞧这流浪汉。

然而，在双脚就要迈进商店的瞬间，流浪汉猛然又感受到了富人那充满爱心的抚摸。他心中不禁为之振奋。他下定决心要从那一刻、那个地方重新开始人生。他随即向一位老妇人讨了两个10美分的硬币。“哟，”老妇人问道，“你不再买酒了？”流浪汉摇了摇头，然后将钱塞进了最近的电话机投钱口。流浪汉对接电话的捐客说：“一百美元。全部投到那个叫微软的公司。”由于当时正值20世纪80年代末，所以只是经过很短一段时间，股票便飞涨了；这个流浪汉便因此摇身成为万贯缠腰。

让我们回到洛杉矶东部。几年的光阴缓慢流逝。慷慨的富翁生活依旧——傍晚散散步，用口哨吹吹说唱乐的曲调，或是开门迎接他的来客。

有这么一天，门铃又响了。打开门，外面站着一位衣着三件套笔挺西服的绅士。“啊哈，一定又是募捐。”富人寻思着。但是当他刚要说话时，客人先开口了。

“你就是那位富翁，对吧？”客人问道。

“我能为你做些什么呢？”他机械地答道，对被请求给予钱物他已习以为常。

“不是你要为我做什么，”客人说，“而是你已经为我做的。”

“我已经为你做的？”他吃惊地问道。

“你给了我第二次人生的机会。呃，

有了你慷慨的礼物，我得以投资并终于摆脱了贫穷。我再也不必在穷途末路上堕落了。我已能在拥挤的人行道上昂首阔步了。为此我要向你致谢。“富人猛然认出了他的客人。眼前这位就是曾经蜷缩在街头的老流浪汉。于是他说道，“我当时给你的你并没有向我索取。我只是因为看到你在那里，出于爱心才那样做的。换了别的人，我都会照样给他的。”

“正因为如此，我更要来此向你致谢。”客人说道。

“可是我很富有，”富人说。“我有许多礼物要给别人，而从未想到要从别人那里得到回报。”

“很好，”客人点头称道，“因为我没有什么东西来给你——我所有的一切，都是你给我的。我来这里的惟一目的就是向你道声谢谢。”

富人睁大了眼睛看着正向他凑过来的来客，将他拥抱。这拥抱仍然是他在门前经常做的那种拥抱，不同的是这是第一次有人用拥抱来回报他的拥抱。当他的客人，一个曾经流落街头的流浪汉，紧紧地拥抱着他时，富人感到这是他有生以来最令他感到满足的拥抱，他眼中滚出了泪水。

NOTE 注释：

donation [dəu'neiʃən] n. 捐赠品，捐款

charity ['tʃærɪtɪ] n. 慈善，施舍，慈善团体

catchy ['kætʃɪ] adj. 易记住的，熟悉的

crisp [krɪsp] adj. 脆的

vodka ['vɒdkə] n. 伏特加酒

slot [slɒt] n. 硬币投币口

wallow ['wɒləʊ] vi. 堕落

gutter ['gʌtə] n. 贫民区，贫困的生活