

## Words in Two Hearts

The first thing I fell in love with was a sentence.

Not a story, not an object, not a character. It was a line of words silently lying on a piece of paper — tiny, gentle, yet able to bring a faint melody to my breath.

At my home in Shanghai, I always sat beside my desk, reading a sentence again and again, surprised by how a pause could change the emotion, how the void between each word contained a breath. Chinese was my mother language — my first work of art, my first lyric. I learned not only “understanding,” but “feeling” — feeling the words by their weight, rhythm, and brightness.

When I moved to the States in ninth grade, I thought my love for language would easily follow me across half the Earth. I thought English would be another door to beauty — different characters, different rhythm, but still a language I could love. But in fact, it was quite different. My passion crossed the sea, but my fluency did not. Suddenly, my affection for language became a gap I couldn't cross. In class, English was a wave I could see with my eyes but couldn't catch with my hands. I could clearly hear every single syllable, imagine every single shape of them, yet I couldn't grasp their meaning. It felt like walking into a room where music was playing, but being unable to remember how to dance in tune with the melody. It was the first time I realized that “love” cannot be translated into “understanding.”

Quietly reflecting in my room in Texas at the end of the day, tears would fall. I could hear the laughter of others — its prosody, but not its meaning. When teachers read aloud, I could feel the rhythm, fluctuations, and emotions in their voices. Yet when it was my turn to read, everything was covered in a layer of mist. I always had so many thoughts I wanted to express — bright, eager, and vibrant — but when I tried to write them down in English, they scattered like startled birds. It felt as if there were a string stretched taut inside me, growing thinner and thinner, tighter and tighter.

What hurt more was that my passion for literature never disappeared. When reading English fiction, I always felt a strange kind of “double sigh”: a vague glimpse of a clear vision. I could sense the softness of a sentence, the light of a metaphor, the vivid

voice of a character expressing emotion — yet they were always covered by an indivisible layer I couldn't touch. It felt like listening to music from another room: catchy enough, yet far away. Blurred and formless, it made me keep reaching out but never quite grasping it.

For a long time, I blamed myself for all of this. I told myself that if I truly loved literature, I should have mastered English more quickly and easily. I saw my struggle as a failure, and the distance between languages as proof of being “not good enough.” But slowly, almost silently, everything began to change.

One day in English class, students were discussing a poem I didn't understand, even after reading it three times. I quietly sat beside them, listening as they analyzed every single word. At that moment, I suddenly realized: even though I didn't know some of the words, I could still feel the rhythm, pauses, and sadness within the poem. Those sensitivities were not emptiness — they were the echoes of my years studying Chinese literature. It wasn't that “I don't understand,” but rather that I was “translating between two kinds of beauty.”

And translating, I realized, was also a form of creation.

As these thoughts took root in my heart, my way of writing began to change. I started writing my most honest, direct feelings — the light that caught me in an instant, the sensations, images, and meanings. Then I translated them into English, word by word, like sculpting an artwork — carefully selecting the stone, polishing, adjusting, and refining. Chinese gives me intuition, soul, and warmth; English gives me structure, shape, rhythm, and new modes of expression. English flows in fluency, while Chinese breathes in pause. And I, standing between them, became the bridge — the one who reshapes them into two different forms of beauty. Time may pass silently, but I polish light and shadow between the lines, waiting for that special moment — the moment when language beats with its own heart.

Since then, English has no longer felt like a wall blocking my way. It has become a long bridge of learning — one I am building, step by step. I began to read English as I read Chinese — patiently, gently, letting each sentence unfold on its own. I learned to listen to its different voices: consonants crisp as ice, vowels unfolding like fabric. I

learned the different ways of breathing in English and Chinese, and how to balance them.

My progress has not been steady. Sometimes I understand everything; sometimes I fall back into the confusion I felt when I first came to the States. But those ups and downs are not proof of being “not good enough.” Instead, I see myself as someone who has grown up twice: once in the land I know, and once in an unfamiliar light that guided me to a new adventure.

I wouldn't say that I can fully master English – certainly not, not at all – but I'm no longer afraid of the distance between the two languages. Because that distance is what makes me unique. I use one language to feel and another to express, thinking between them, blending them together, and finding meaning in a place where no language exists.

And in that “Middle Zone” where rhythm meets meaning, where confusion meets understanding, I found, and fell in love with, a new kind of beauty.

A beauty I am still learning.

A beauty that slowly, secretly becomes mine.

A beauty that stands on the bridge I walk on — a bridge connecting two hearts — past and future, belonging and adventure.

## **My Sources**

Were you inspired by another writer?:**No**

Did you quote or paraphrase another writer?:**No**

Did you use AI technology in the creation of your work?:**No**