

## 暗处的水位 Water Rising in the Dark

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那段不断加码的日子，像是在暗处缓慢积水的过程。水并不显眼，却一直在缓缓上升。阿碧后来也说不清，那股推动她往前走的力量，究竟从哪里开始。

她并不是一个从小就目标清晰的人，也谈不上有什么长远的规划。来到深圳之后，她更像是被时间裹挟着向前，一天接着一天，很少停下来细想。她只是隐约感觉，一旦停下，就可能被这个城市甩在原地。

最初，她把希望放在英语上。在那个年代，英语像一道门。许多人相信，只要推开这道门，生活就会出现另一种可能。她也愿意相信这一点。为了争取哪怕微弱的机会，她每天抽出几小时学习英语，也尽量寻找开口的机会。但学了一段时间后，她慢慢意识到，英语或许能把人带得更远，却很难让人马上站稳。

深圳的现实简单而直接。找工作时，很少有人问你的理想，只会问现在能做什么。除了有一点绘画基础，她几乎没有其他可以拿出来展示的能力。与此同时，身边的变化已经在发生——原本依赖手工的工作，逐渐转向电脑，而她对此几乎一无所知。

街头的电脑培训广告随处可见，电脑基础、系统安装、办公软件、图形设计，被一块块招牌写得很具体。有一次，她经过一家培训中心，在门口停了一下。透过玻璃窗，她看到一排排亮着的屏幕，年轻人安静地坐在那里，专注地盯着显示器，手指在键盘上移动。那种安静和投入，让人感到，他们仿佛置身于另一个世界。

她站了一会儿，便走了进去，报了名。

课程很快就开始了。老师按照每个人的程度安排内容。她从最基础的部分学起——开机、关机、打字、文件管理。对别人来说再自然不过的步骤，她却需要一点点摸索。有时一个细节记不住，她就重复做几遍，直到熟悉为止。

当时的电脑配置并不理想，机器老旧，软件有限。最初，她只是带着一点新奇，观察别人如何操作，对屏幕后面的结构几乎没有概念。

一次偶然，让这种感觉发生了变化。坐在她旁边的阿芳，不小心把机箱侧板碰开了。原本封闭的内部忽然暴露出来，主板、线路、插槽一一显现。那一刻，电脑不再只是屏幕上的反应，而成为一个可以拆解、可以理解的实体。

阿芳没有声张。她看了一会儿，见没人注意，便动手把板卡一件件拆下来，又按原样装回去，然后回到屏幕前测试。动作还有些生疏，但很专注，更像是在学习一门手艺，而不是简单的操作。

过了一段时间，阿芳竟然学会了自己组装电脑。她约阿碧一起去华强北电子市场，在一排排柜台之间挑选 CPU、主板和硬盘，逐一比较、讨价还价。狭窄的通道、堆叠的零件、嘈杂的人群，共同构成了一种属于那个时期的市场气息。

每当一台电脑成功组装、顺利开机，她们都会有明显的兴奋感。那是一种可以被验证的成果。甚至一度，她们还动过开培训班的念头。

但阿碧始终没有真正投入到硬件中去。她逐渐感觉到，硬件是相对稳定的，一旦掌握，变化空间有限。相较之下，她更愿意接近那些可以表达的东西——图形与图像。于是，她把重心转向绘图软件。

最初接触 AutoCAD 时，她依然有些不适应。线条、坐标、图层在屏幕上不断叠加，一时难以建立整体的理解。老师在前面操作，她跟着做，常常慢一拍，有时甚至跟不上节奏。她没有停下来。每一步都认真记下，再反复练习。一张图往往要重画几遍，只要某个细节偏差，她就重新开始。

Photoshop 又是另一种经验。图像、颜色、效果，每一个步骤都会带来新的变化。起初她只是机械地照做，慢慢地，也开始理解其中的逻辑。当一张普通的图片经过处理发生变化时，她心里会浮现出一种难言的满足感。

来学习这些软件的人，大多有绘画基础。有些出自美术院校，也有人已经在设计公司工作。她在这里结识了一些兴趣相近的人。课后，她们会一起讨论手绘与电脑绘图的差别，也会谈及各自的工作经历。

那些交流，使一些原本模糊的方向逐渐清晰。随着对软硬件的熟悉，她开始重新判断自己的能力。英语、电脑基础、绘图软件——单独看，它们都不系统，也不完整。但当这些经验彼此叠加时，一些变化已经在发生，只是当时还不明显。

后来，她开始寻找与电脑绘图相关的工作。不久，她进入了一家设计公司。生活的节奏再次被调整。那份工作，在当时看不出明确的终点，她只是边做边学。

很多事情，在发生之时，很难判断它的意义。那些零散的努力，看起来彼此无关，更像是在暗处一点点积水。水位缓慢上升，不被察觉。直到有一天，它已经足够托住一只船，人也因此有了离开原地的可能。

## Water Rising in the Dark

Those gradually intensifying days felt like water slowly gathering in the dark. It wasn't visible, yet it kept rising. Even later, Abi couldn't quite explain where the force came from that kept pushing her forward.

She hadn't been someone with clear goals since childhood, nor did she have a defined long-term plan. After arriving in Shenzhen, she felt carried along by time itself, moving from one day to the next, rarely pausing to think. She only sensed that if she stopped, the city might leave her behind.

At first, she placed her hopes in learning English. At the time, English felt like a door. Many believed that once you opened it, life would reveal a different possibility. She chose to believe that too. To seize even the smallest chance, she spent hours each day studying and looking for opportunities to speak. But after a while, she began to realize that English might take you farther, yet it rarely helped you stand firm right away.

Shenzhen was straightforward. When it came to jobs, no one asked about your dreams—only what you could do now. Apart from some basic drawing skills, she had little else to offer. Meanwhile, change was already underway around her. Work once done by hand was shifting to computers, and she knew almost nothing about them.

Computer training ads filled the streets—basic skills, system installation, office software, graphic design. One day, she paused outside a training centre. Through the glass, she saw rows of glowing screens and young people sitting quietly, eyes fixed, fingers moving across keyboards. Their focus felt so complete that it seemed they were in another world.

She stood there for a moment, then walked in and signed up.

Classes began quickly. The teacher adjusted lessons to each student's level. She started from the basics—turning a computer on and off, typing, managing files. What was natural to others required trial and error for her. If she couldn't remember a step, she repeated it until it became familiar.

The computers were outdated, the software limited. At first, she approached them with curiosity, watching others work, with little sense of what lay beneath the screen.

That changed by accident. One day, the student next to her, Afang, knocked loose the side panel of a computer case. The sealed interior was suddenly exposed—motherboard, cables, slots, all in view. In that moment, the computer stopped being just a screen. It became something physical, something that could be taken apart and understood.

Afang said nothing. After a brief look around, she began to remove the components one by one, then carefully put them back and tested the machine. Her movements were tentative but focused, more like someone learning a craft than performing a simple task.

Before long, she had taught herself to assemble computers. She invited Abi to Huaqiangbei computer market, where they moved from one narrow counter to another, comparing CPUs, motherboards, and hard drives, bargaining over prices. The crowded aisles, stacked parts, and restless energy formed a scene distinctive to that time.

Each time they successfully assembled a computer and saw it power on, they felt a clear sense of excitement—a result that could be confirmed. At one point, they even considered opening a training class together.

But Abi never fully committed to hardware. Over time, she felt it was relatively fixed—once learned, there wasn't much room to change. She was more drawn to things that allowed expression: images, shapes, visual form.

So, she shifted her focus to graphic software. When she first encountered AutoCAD, she struggled. Lines, coordinates, and layers overlapped on the screen without forming a clear structure. She followed the teacher's steps but was often a bit behind, sometimes losing the pace entirely. Still, she didn't stop. She wrote everything down and practiced again and again. A single drawing might be redone several times—if one detail was off, she would start over.

Photoshop was different. Images, colours, and effects changed with every step. At first, she simply followed instructions. Gradually, she began to understand the logic behind them. When an ordinary image transformed under her hands, she felt a quiet, hard-to-define satisfaction.

Many of the people studying these programs had backgrounds in art. Some came from fine arts colleges, others were already working in design. She met people with similar interests. After class, they talked about hand drawing versus digital tools and shared their work experiences.

Through these conversations, directions that had once been vague began to take shape. As she grew more familiar with both hardware and software, she started to reassess her own abilities.

English, basic computing, design software—none of these, on their own, formed a complete system. They seemed scattered. But as they accumulated, something was slowly changing, even if it wasn't obvious at the time.

Eventually, she started looking for work in digital drawing. Before long, she found a position at a design company. Her life shifted pace once again. There was no clear endpoint to the job—she simply learned as she went.

Many things are hard to understand while they are happening. Those scattered efforts may seem unrelated, like water quietly gathering in the dark. The level rises slowly, unnoticed. And one day, it is enough to carry a boat—enough for a person to move beyond where they once stood.