

岁月的回响 (Echoes of Time)

Winnie Mo

弟兄姐妹如同溪流，同一源头，流向却各有不同。我们无法想象身边孩子长大后的模样——他们的性格、命运、选择，都会在时光与环境形成不同的模样。中国有句古话：“三岁看八十”，意思是说，幼时的性格会影响她的一生。但现实告诉我们，性格只是种子，真正决定它如何生长的，是土壤与气候，是生活的风雨与阳光。

我家有七个兄弟姐妹，最大的和最小的都是女孩，中间是五个男孩。我是最小的那个，大家都叫我“么妹”。大姐出嫁时，我还在母亲怀里，是个嗷嗷待哺的婴儿。为了照顾这个庞大的家庭，父母付出了难以想象的辛劳。如今回想起来，我们已无法完全体会他们是怎么撑过来的日子。

大姐出嫁的第二年，大哥成了婚，大嫂便成了母亲最得力的帮手。她的能干，几乎可以与《红楼梦》里的王熙凤相比，把家里打理得井井有条。那段时间，母亲忙着操持一家八九口人的生活，大嫂便承担起照顾我起居的责任。

大嫂每天为我梳头，教我做家务，教我读书写字，还亲自送我去学校。年幼的我对学校充满抗拒，常常要父母拿着棍子吓唬，才肯勉强出门。只有在嫂子的陪伴下，我才愿意踏进校门。

在我成长的农村，孩子成家后便要分家另住，自立门户。若无法在外建房，父母便分出一间屋子给他们，让新家庭独立生活，不再与父母兄弟同桌吃饭。这种分家，是一种农村生活的仪式，也是一种责任的交接。我家也是如此，哥嫂与我们同住一年就分家了。

他们分家后，我们虽然不坐在同桌吃饭，但日常活动却没什么大改变。六岁那年，嫂子生下了第一个侄女。我欣喜若狂，仿佛有了新的玩伴。从那时起，我每天都乐意去学校，因为回家后可以和小宝宝玩耍。随着第二个侄儿、第三个侄儿的相继出生，嫂子的注意力自然转移到了她的孩子身上，对我的关爱也逐渐减少，甚至开始对我有些挑剔。我感到自己的位置被挤压，心中隐隐不安。

耳边常听到大人经常讲述嫂子对小姑刻薄的故事，加上自己的感受，我对自己处境充满了担忧与不满。随着父母年岁渐高，大哥大嫂在家中的角色愈发重要。我意识到，除了读书，我别无出路。于是，我拼命努力，终于考上了人人羡慕的师范学校——一个给“铁饭碗”的学校。那时的师范学校，政府包办了所有费用，包括伙食、住宿和学习开支。从此，我自信起来了，哥嫂也无法再干涉我的生活了。

没有利益冲突，人与人之间的关系自然会变得和谐。哥嫂对我态度渐渐缓和，我也尽力回报他们的善意，在侄儿侄女们的学习上，力所能及地给予帮助和支持。

更重要的是，我知道自己必须走出这片大山，离开乡村，去看看外面的世界。父亲常挂在嘴边的一句话：“读万卷书，行万里路”，在我心里悄悄发芽，成了我前行的动力。我明白，只有靠读书、靠远行见世面，才能真正改变我的命运，也能为家里的孩子们树立一个榜样。希望他们能跟着我的脚步，去寻找属于自己的天空。

上天总会眷顾那些心中有坚定信念的人，帮他们一步步走向目标。在全国掀起“下海”热潮的年代，我也毅然决然地走出了自己的舒适圈——放弃了稳定的教师工作，投身商海，来到人人向往的深圳，追寻那个梦寐以求的香港。

在这艰辛的寻梦旅途中，我只顾着向前奔跑，来不及回头看身后的风景。家里的每一个人也都在为生活奔波，各自忙碌，无暇顾及彼此的境遇。我们都知道，在那段岁月里，每个人心中都有一段难言的酸甜苦辣。

如今，我渐渐体会到《金刚经》中‘一切如梦幻泡影’的含义。人生短暂，最重要的是活在当下，珍惜眼前所拥有的一切。在平凡的工作中默默耕耘，在假期里，去体验人情的冷暖，去感受自然的魅力。

这个假期，我决定去莆田看看多年未见的两个侄儿。曾经那个满脸稚气的模样，如今早已被生活的岁月磨练得坚强刚劲。他们的表现让我由衷赞叹：知情达理，尊老爱幼，豪爽热情。他们的言行让我体悟到人生的成熟与通达，不只是从书本中得来，更是在生活的磨砺中一点一滴积累。

短短几天的相处，他们默契配合，为了让我吃好、住好、玩好，一切都安排得妥妥帖帖，毫无怨言。这次莆田之行，因为他们的陪伴而格外温馨。他们的互助互信、体贴周到，不仅让我感受到亲情的温暖，也让我重新思考家庭的意义——原来，那些年少时的误解与不安，终究会在岁月的沉淀中，悄然化作岁月的回响。

Echoes of Time by Winnie Mo

Siblings are like little streams—starting from the same spring, but each flowing in its own direction. We never really know what kind of people the kids around us will grow up to be—their personalities, their paths, their choices all get shaped by time and the world around them. There's an old Chinese saying: "*At three, you see eighty*," meaning a child's early traits can shape their whole life. But life has taught me that personality is just a seed. What really matters is the soil and the weather—the ups and downs, the sunshine and storms that life brings.

There were seven kids in my family. The oldest and youngest were girls, and the five in between were boys. I was the youngest, and everyone called me "Yaomei," the little sister. When my oldest sister got married, I was a little kid. My parents worked incredibly hard to raise such a big family. Looking back now, it's hard to imagine how they managed to get through those tough years.

My sister the first to married, my oldest brother wed soon after. His wife—my sister-in-law—quickly became my mom's right-hand woman. She was incredibly

capable, almost like Wang Xifeng from *Dream of the Red Chamber*—managing the household with skill and confidence. At that time, my mom was overwhelmed with taking care of the whole family, so my sister-in-law stepped in and took charge of looking after me.

She combed my hair, taught me how to do simple housework, show me how to read and write, and even walked me to school. I hated going to school back then—my parents had to scare me with a stick just to get me out the door and when my sister-in-law came with me, I felt safe enough to get into the school.

In the village where I grew up, once a child got married, they'd move out and start their own household. If they couldn't build a house, their parents would give them a room, and they'd manage their own food and daily work. It was a kind of tradition—a way of passing on responsibility. My brother and sister-in-law lived with us for a year before they moved out.

Even after they moved, not much changed in our daily lives. When I was six, my sister-in-law had her first baby girl. I was thrilled—it felt like I had a new playmate. From then on, I was happy to go to school, because I knew I'd get to play with the baby when I got home. Then came two baby boys, and naturally, my sister-in-law's attention shifted to her own kids. She started caring less about me, and even got a bit critical. I felt like I was being pushed aside, and it made me uneasy.

I often heard grown-ups talk about how sister-in-laws could be mean to their younger sisters-in-law, and with my own experiences, I started feeling anxious and unhappy. As my parents got older, my brother and sister-in-law took on more responsibility at home. I realized that if I wanted a way out, I had to focus on school. So, I worked hard and got into a teacher's college—a place everyone admired because it guaranteed a stable job. Back then, the government paid for everything—food, housing, tuition. That was when I started feeling confident. My life was finally my own.

Once there were no more conflicts over money or control, our relationship naturally got better. My sister-in-law became kinder, and I did my best to help her kids with their studies whenever I could.

More than anything, I knew I had to leave the mountains and see the world. My dad always said, “*Read ten thousand books, travel ten thousand miles,*” and that saying quietly grew in my heart. I knew that only by learning and exploring could I change my life—and maybe inspire the younger ones in our family to do the same.

Life has a way of helping those who hold on to their dreams. When China was swept up in the wave of *xia hai*—a movement where people left their hometowns to seek opportunities in coastal cities. I made a bold decision and stepped out of my comfort zone, leaving behind a secure teaching job to dive into the unpredictable world of business. I headed to Shenzhen, chasing the dream of reaching Hong Kong.

During that journey, I was so focused on moving forward that I didn’t have time to look back. Everyone in the family was busy with their own lives, working hard, dealing with their own struggles. We all knew that those years were filled with bittersweet memories that we didn’t always talk about.

Now, I’ve come to understand a line from the *Diamond Sutra*: “*All things are like a dream, an illusion, a bubble, a shadow.*” Life is short. What matters most is living in the moment and cherishing what we have. In the quiet rhythm of everyday work, and during holidays, I get to feel the warmth of family and friends’ connection and enjoy the beauty of nature.

This holiday, I decided to visit my two nephews in Putian- I hadn’t seen in years. The childish faces I remembered had grown into strong, confident men. I was so impressed by how thoughtful, respectful, and warm they were. Their maturity showed me that real wisdom doesn’t come from books—it’s built slowly through life’s ups and downs.

In just a few days, they worked together to make sure I was well-fed, comfortable, and happy, without a single complaint. Their care made this trip feel extra special. Their trust and kindness reminded me of the warmth of family and made me reflect on what family really means. In the end, all those misunderstandings and worries from my younger days quietly faded away—becoming gentle echoes of time.