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GROWING UP BEAUTIFULLY AND THE BEAUTY OF GROWING UP

—HOW I CAME TO WRITE *THE DIARY OF A GIRL*

Yang Hongying

That summer break, after my daughter earned her Tier 10 Amateur Pianist certificate, she went to my familial hometown of Yantai, Shandong. She loves the ocean. That was also the year when my story *Mi'er and Her Magic Suitcase* was published. I dedicated that book to my daughter and all elementary school students. Mi'er, the imaginary character who brought joy to kids, was really popular among my young readers. I wanted to keep writing about Mi'er's story, but my daughter came back from Shandong. She had only been gone a month, but suddenly my daughter, who I had always thought of as a little girl, was as tall as me!

I was surprised to realize that school would start in a few days, and my daughter would be a sixth grader. Her childhood was almost over, and she would be growing from a little girl into a young woman. What an important, beautiful stage of a woman's life! I stopped what I was writing, because I wanted to focus on my daughter, so I could document this beautiful part of her life and record how she grew and matured with each passing day.

Sixth grade students have to deal with graduation and unusually cruel competition during their tests. Of over 200 graduating students, there were only seven spots for students who would get recommended to key middle schools. I didn't ask that my daughter would be one of the seven, I just

wanted her not to have to forfeit her innocence and joy in the last months of her elementary education. Once childhood is gone, it is gone forever.

During winter break, when other parents were looking for extra classes for their children, I took my daughter on a trip to a snowy plain in the mountains, where there was no trace of anyone else. It's hard to imagine all the tribulations we experienced on that trip. She told me later that what she felt most during that trip was the bitter cold of the wind coupled with her hunger. We saw vast swathes of forests burned down, a shocking sight which inspired my daughter to write an essay that night titled *Tears of a Mountain*, which was later published in a newspaper. I'm sure that the difficult experience will become something she treasures.

Then it was time for her elementary education to come to an end. She went through her finals in a natural state, without any sort of stress, and she ended up being one of the seven students guaranteed to be sent to good schools. But she gave up this chance to go to a foreign language boarding school. It was around this time that *The Diary of a Girl* was finished.

I had finished my book, and my daughter was still growing up beautifully. In school, she enjoyed writing and performing her own English skits. At home, she liked playing Bach songs on the piano. For Teacher's Day in September, she drew two paintings and framed them. She gave one to her elementary school Chinese teacher, and the other to her elementary school math teacher. Last weekend, she went out and bought a bunch of different colored ribbons, as she wanted to make a bracelet for me.

Lately, my daughter has invested a lot of energy in growing plants. She has a pot of hyacinth, and when it is windy out, she comes all the way back home to move the hyacinth into her room. She has something to

worry and care about, so she knows love and responsibility, and her eyes fill with a tender light. This sort of girl is adorable, and charming.

My daughter is growing up, and I am sharing the beautiful journey of her growth.

March, 2000 — Chengdu

Jiang Boyan LLC

● 主要人物



冉冬阳

莫欣儿

吴缅

Jiang Boyan LLC

刘杨惠子

晏老师

胡老师



Where Is Mei Xiaoya?

Monday, Sept. 1st - cloudy & sprinkling

Today was the first day of school.

When I put on my uniform, I realize how much I had grown over the summer. My white shirt was too small, and wrapped tight around my body. My blue pleated skirt barely reached past my thighs. It was embarrassing. But I plucked up my courage and walked out the door.

At school, I saw Mo Xin'er, Nan Kemeng, and Liu Yanghuizi, and it felt like a century since we had seen each other. I rushed over to them and we started giggling like crazy. I was relieved to see that their uniforms were in the same shape as mine. The boys at school hadn't changed much. They all looked the same as they had in 5th grade. So it wasn't any surprise when Jing Doudou, who was skinny and short, came over and said we looked like giants in small clothes. Some dumb boys even covered their faces and said we couldn't wear "mini-skirts" in front of them. I was looking around for Mei Xiaoya when Gu Longfei came running into the classroom yelling about some "big news". We all gathered around him.

"What is it? Spit it out!"

Gu Longfei stayed silent. He sat down on his desk, crossed his legs, and closed his eyes. The look on his face told us he was enjoying making us wait.

"I'm going to count to three, and if you don't tell us, we'll leave,"



Nan Kemeng said. She started counting slowly, "One ... two ... "

"I'll tell you! I'll tell you!" Gu Longfei yelled, jumping down from his desk. "Did you know that there's a new math teacher?"

This was big news. What I wanted to know was who our new teacher would be. Gu Longfei said that Mr. Shu would be teaching us.

"Which Mr. Shu?"

"How many Mr. Shus do you know? The Mr. Shu Ang who taught the 6th graders math last year!"

"Him?" Liu Yanghuizi **squealed**. "Is it really him?"

Nan Kemeng rolled her eyes at Liu Yanghuizi. "Why are you so excited?" she asked.

"He's soooo handsome!" Liu Yanghuizi **whispered**.

We all knew that Mr. Shu was good-looking. A lot of the other girls liked him as much as they liked Alec Su from the Taiwan band Xiao Hu Dui, or from his role as Yongqi in *My Fair Princess*. We started hearing about him when we were still in 5th grade. Everyone had **gossiped** about how hot he was, and wondered if he would come to teach us when we were in 6th grade.

When the boys saw the joy on our faces, they started teasing us. Some said we had a crush on him. Some said we just liked new teachers. Jing Doudou acted even crazier. He suddenly jumped in front of us and said, "Tell us! Who do you girls like more? Mr. Shu, or Ms. Luo?"

That was when Ms. Luo stepped into the classroom in a floral dress.