**Journey through the odyssey years**

**奥德赛岁月之旅**

**1 Most of us know about the phases of life which we label to parallel different age groups and life stages: childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and old age. We think of infancy before childhood and middle age before old age, with each unique phase bringing its own peculiar set of challenges. These challenges can be overcome by acquainting ourselves with them, such as the child's need to learn, the adult's need to find the right career and build a family, and the senior's need for support and good health care.**

**我们大多数人都知道，根据不同的年龄和生活阶段，人生可与此平行划分为童年、青春期、成年和老年这四个阶段。我们把这些阶段想象为婴儿在童年之前，中年在老年之前，每个阶段都会面临一系列特有的挑战，如孩子对学习的需要，成人对找到合适的职业生涯和建立一个家庭的需要，以及年长者对得到帮助和良好医疗保健的需要。通过对它们的充分了解，我们就可以战胜这些挑战。**

**2 Interestingly, ideas about the stages of life are changing.**

**有趣的是，关于人生阶段的观念正在发生变化。**

**3 In previous times, people didn't have a solid idea of childhood as being separate from adulthood. A hundred years ago, no one thought of adolescence. Until recently it was understood as a norm that their induction to adulthood was completed as soon as they graduated from college. They would now find a sensible job which would lead to a career. Then during this career they would start a family, ideally before they turned 30.**

**在先前的年代，人们并没有一种固有的把童年和成年分开的想法。一百年前，谁也没有想到过青春期。直到最近，人们还很自然地认为：只要他们一从大学毕业，他们的成人入门阶段就结束了。他们就会找到一份把他们引入职业生涯的合适的工作。然后在此职业生涯期间，他们会成家，三十岁之前成家更为理想。**

**4 Today we have an equivalent need to recognize a new phase of life that comes after high school graduation, continues through college, and then leads to starting a family and having a career, the so-called odyssey years. Recent trends show radical changes as young people are following a different agenda. They take breaks from school, live with friends and often return to living with their parents. Similarly, they fall in and out of love, quit one job and try another or even shift to a new career. So, we need to recognize this new stage, the odyssey years, which many now consider to be an unavoidable stage in reaching adulthood.**

**今天，我们同样需要认识一个新的人生阶段：从高中毕业到上大学，然后到成家立业，即所谓的奥德赛岁月。由于年轻人正按照一种不同的模式生活，最近的趋势出现了根本性的变化。他们从学校休学，与朋友同住，也常回去与父母同住。同样，他们恋爱又失恋，辞掉一份工作又去寻找新的，甚至改行。因此，我们需要认识这个新阶段——奥德赛岁月。现在许多人认为这是步入成年之前的一个难以回避的阶段。**

**5 People who were born prior to the 60s or 70s in the last century tended to frame their concept of adulthood based upon achieving certain accomplishments: moving away from home, becoming financially independent, finding the right spouse and starting a family. But that emphasis on stability did not remain static. Today, young people are unlikely to do the same. During the odyssey years, a high proportion of young people are delaying marriage, child bearing, and even employment.**

**出生于上个世纪60年代或70年代之前的人们往往会将成年的概念基于是否取得了某些成就：从父母家搬走，经济上独立，找到合适的配偶并组织家庭。但是，对稳定的强调并没能保持不变。今天，年轻人不太可能仿效他们的父母。在奥德赛岁月中，相当比例的年轻人都推迟结婚、生子，甚至推迟就业。**

**6 The odyssey years can saddle young people with enormous pressure to move forward quickly. As the sole heir and focus of their parents' expectations, hopes and dreams, some react with rebellious and prideful attitudes and behavior toward their parents. They often resent the pressure they're feeling and keep a distance from their parents or even run away from home. Their confusion comes from the difficulties to make parents understand them and the fluid journey of discovery they need in this phase of their lives. To get away from this confusion and upset, many young people resort to computer games, iPod, iPhone, or iPad to help distract them from their pain and stress.**

**奥德赛岁月使年轻人承受了巨大的压力，迫使他们快速往前冲。作为他们父母唯一的继承人和所有期望、希望和梦想的聚焦，有些年轻人以叛逆和桀骜不驯的行为和态度对待父母。他们往往憎恨他们所感到的压力，并同他们的父母保持距离，甚至离家出走。他们的困惑源于很难让家长了解他们，也源于这段需要进行自我探索的、不确定的人生之旅。为了逃避困惑和不安，许多年轻人诉诸电脑游戏，iPod，iPhone 或iPad，以帮助分散他们的痛苦和压力。**

**7 Likewise, their parents are feeling more anxious. They may make allowances for a transition phase from student life to adult life, but they get upset when they see the transition of their grown children's lives moving away from their expectations and stretching five years to seven years, and beyond. The parents don't even detect a clear sense of direction in their children's lives. They look at them and see the things that are being delayed.**

**同样，他们的父母更是着急。虽然他们理解从学生到成年需要一个过渡阶段，但看到他们已成年子女的过渡阶段的生活与他们的期望渐行渐远，过渡阶段延至五年，七年，甚至更长时，他们感到生气。父母甚至不能清楚地觉察到他们孩子未来生活的方向，只能看着他们，看着要做的事被拖延着。**

**8 It's hard to predict what's next. New guidelines haven't been established yet, and everything seems to give way to a less permanent version of itself. There's been a shift in the status and balance of power between the genders, too. More women are getting degrees than men. Male wages have remained stable over the past decades, while female wages have boomed.**

**接下来会如何发展很难预测。新的准则还没有建立，一切似乎都被一个不确定的版本所取代。两性之间地位和权力的平衡也有了转变。取得学位的女性比男性更多。男性的工资在过去的几十年里一直停滞不前，而女性的工资却出现激增。**

**9 Apart from anything else, this has had an implicit effect on courtship. Educated women can get many of the things they want, such as security, accomplishment, and identity without marriage. However, both genders are having a harder time finding suitable mates to build their lives with. Considering all of this, it's beneficial to know that even though graduates are delaying many things after college, surveys show they still hold highly traditional aspirations. For example, this contemporary generation rates parenthood even more highly than previous generations did!**

**别的不说，这对择偶产生了不言而喻的影响。即使未婚，受过教育的妇女仍可以得到很多她们想要的东西，如安全感，成就感，和认同感。不过，不论男女都更难找到合适的伴侣来一同建立他们的生活。在讨论这一切时，有助于让大家知道，即使毕业生离开大学后推迟了做很多事，调查结果显示，他们仍持有很传统的愿望。例如，当今的一代比以前的几代对如何扮演好父母的角色有着更高的要求。**

**10 This new phase will likely grow more pronounced in the coming years. Nations around the world have witnessed similar trends toward delaying marriage and spending more years than ever shifting between higher education and settling down with a career and family.**

**这一新阶段在未来几年可能更明显。世界各国都目睹了相似的趋势，人们推迟结婚，花更多年的时间徘徊在接受高等教育和建立职业生涯及家庭之间。**

**11 Nevertheless, graduates shouldn't be deceived into thinking they can back off simply because things have become more difficult. A large number of people chasing relatively fewer opportunities can create strong competitive pressure. So, from the outset, keep your résumé professional and up-to-date.**

**然而，毕业生不应误认为因情况已变得更困难，他们就可以放弃。大批的人努力角逐相对较少的机会，这会导致强大的竞争压力。所以，从一开始你就要将个人简历写得很专业，并做到随时更新。**

**12 To reinforce this essential message, success moving through the odyssey years will come to those who don't expect to achieve their goals right away but know that they must have the strength, capacity and confidence to endure over the long term. If you're a little late with your goals, don't feel like a failure! Stay strong, be positive, and keep focused! Someday you will look back and wonder at the vast changes as you passed through the odyssey years.**

**要强化这一重要信息：顺利度过奥德赛岁月的将是那些不急于即刻实现目标的人——但这些人知道他们必须保持实力、能力、信心去度过这段较长的岁月。如果你的目标起步稍晚了点，不要认为自己是个失败者！意志坚定，态度积极，并集中精力！有一天，你会回头审视，并对奥德赛岁月给你带来的巨大改变感到惊叹。**

**﻿**

**Finding my way back home**

**找寻我的回家之路**

**1 "Dear Dad," I wrote, "I want to come home from my exile." After many hours of thinking as I sat by the side of a busy highway, I tore the page in half and crushed it into a small ball. I'd started this letter many times but would always fall into despair. I wanted to go home — home to my parents and sisters, but I would always hesitate … I didn't know if it was feasible.**

**“亲爱的爸爸，”我写道，“我想结束我的流放，回家！”我坐在一条繁忙的高速公路旁想了很久，还是把纸撕成了两半，并捏成了一个小球。这封信我已写了好多次开头，但每次都以绝望而告终。我想回家——回到有我父母和姐妹的家，但我总是犹豫不决……不知回家之路是否行得通。**

**2 I had run away from home after finishing high school. My parents had insisted I go to college; our family code demanded it but I was tired of school. I hated it. I was determined not to go. And, besides, my father was too strict with me. The allowance he gave me was pitiful. I had multiple jobs to do around the farm. I hated the work, finding it hollow and dull! I was miserable.**

**高中毕业后我离家出走了。因为父母坚持要我去上大学，我家的家规要求我这么做，但我厌倦了学校。我憎恨学校，坚决不肯上大学。再说，父亲对我太严厉，给我的零花钱少得可怜。在农场我还得干各种各样的活。我讨厌这样的工作，发现它既没意思又单调乏味！我很痛苦。**

**3 There had been a fight between my father and me. Like a volcano erupting, I snapped. I threw some things into a bag and left angrily. My father shouted after me, "If you leave, don't come back!" My mother cried and I have seen her grief and tears a hundred times during sleepless nights.**

**我和父亲之间曾有过一次激烈的争吵。我突然发怒，犹如火山爆发。我把一些东西塞入一个袋子后，愤然离开了。我父亲在我背后高喊：“要走，就不要回来！” 母亲哭了，多少次不眠之夜，我都看到了她的悲痛和泪水。**

**4 The letter had to be written.**

**但这封信还得写。**

**5 Dear Dad,**

**亲爱的爸爸：**

**6 It's been more than a year now. I've traveled east to west. I've had a series of jobs, mostly manual labor, as a waiter in a banquet hall, as a maintenance man in a dairy plant, and once as a deck hand on a commercial fishing boat. None of them amounted to very much. Always the same question: "How much education have you got?" They always want college graduates for the good jobs.**

**离家出走一年多了。我从东到西，干过一连串的活儿，主要是体力活儿。我在宴会厅当过服务生，在乳制品厂做过维修，在商业捕鱼船上打过杂。没有一件工作是有价值的。他们总是问同样的问题：“你的学历是什么？”他们总是想要大学毕业生来干体面一点儿的工作。**

**7 Dad, I want to affirm this: You and Mother were right about everything. I know now that the work on the farm didn't hurt me. I've met many people since I've been away; some were refined and others very coarse. I didn't know what home meant until I'd been away for a few months. My awareness has changed. I'm convinced I can't be away from my family any more.**

**爸爸，我要明确地说，您和妈妈过去所做的一切都是对的。我现在知道在农场打工对我没有害处。离家出走后，我碰到过很多人，有的有教养，有的很粗俗。离家几个月后我才知道什么是家。我的想法变了，我确信我再也不能离开家了。**

**8 I want to come home and bond with my family again. I'd like to go to college and learn how to be an organic farmer, and then, if you'll let me, maybe I could farm with you.**

**我想回家，想和家人聚在一起。我要上大学，学做一个种植有机作物的农民。然后，如果您同意，也许我可以留在农场跟着您干。**

**9 I'm on the road now, so you can't answer me by letter. But in a few days, I'll be passing by the farm at night. And, Dad, I'm asking you to allow me to come home to demonstrate that you've forgiven me by leaving the porch light on. If there is no light on, I'll resign myself to your decision and just keep on going. I'll understand.**

**我现在在回家的路上，所以您不能给我回信。但就在这几天，我会在晚上途经家里的农场。爸爸，我请求您让我回家，请把门廊的灯打开，表明您已经原谅了我。如果我没看到灯亮，我会遵从您的决定，继续上路。我会理解。**

**10 Please give my love to Mother and the girls.**

**请代我问候母亲和姐妹们。**

**11 Love,**

**爱您，**

**12 Your son**

**您的儿子**

**13 Overnight, I tried to sleep on the grass by the road, but sleep did not come. I wondered what my little sisters were doing and what wonderful food my mother was cooking.**

**整整一个晚上，我想要在路边的草地上入睡，但就是睡不着。我想啊想，想小妹妹们在做什么，想我妈妈又在做什么美味佳肴。**

**14 I couldn't bear my restless thoughts any longer. I roused myself and started down the long road home. But was it still my home?**

**我再也不能忍受那些焦虑不安的思念了。我振作起来，踏上了回家的漫漫之路。但它仍然是我的家吗？**

**15 A police car stopped and the deputy offered me a ride. It was good to have someone to talk with. "Where're you going, son?" he asked. Somehow, he reminded me of my own father.**

**一辆警车停了下来，车上的那位巡警让我搭了一程。有人说话的感觉真好。他问：“去哪儿，孩子？”不知为什么，他让我不禁地想起了父亲。**

**16 A long silence. "Home," I said.**

**沉默好一阵之后，我说：“回家。”**

**17 "Where have you been?"**

**“你去哪儿了？”**

**18 He seemed truly interested. There was real integrity in his face.**

**他好像真的很感兴趣，脸上写满了真诚。**

**19 "All over," I said.**

**“四处走了走。”我说。**

**20 "Been away from home long?"**

**“离家很久了吧？”**

**21 "A year, one month and two days." I said.**

**“一年一个月零两天。”我说。**

**22 He didn't look at me, but he smiled, and I knew he understood.**

**他没有看我，但他微笑着，我知道他懂。**

**23 "You're a fine boy," he said.**

**“你是一个好孩子，”他说。**

**24 Then he told me about his own two sons, "My older son ran away from home two years ago – two years and15 days." He looked away and then said, "I hope someday somebody will be nice to him, too."**

**然后他告诉我他自己的两个儿子的情况。“我的大儿子两年前离家出走，已经两年零十五天了。”他扭过头去，然后又说：“我希望有一天也有人会待他好。”**

**25 Two days later, I was on the road within 50 miles of home. A big truck with a cargo trailer slowed and stopped. I ran and got in from the heat. The air-conditioning felt good.**

**两天后，我离家不到五十英里了。一个带有货运拖车的大卡车慢慢地开过来并停了下来。我赶紧跑过去上了车，摆脱酷热，吹着空调的感觉真好。**

**26 Somewhat later rain began to fall, slowly at first, and then hard enough to soak the earth. I drifted off to sleep and woke feeling refreshed.**

**不一会儿，开始下起雨来，起先很小，接着便是瓢泼大雨，足以浇透整个大地。我迷迷糊糊地睡着了，醒来时神清气爽。**

**27 We were nearing my family's farm. I was awake and alert. Would there be a light shining on the porch? It was torture to look and I couldn't bear to do it. Suddenly, we were there. I surrendered myself to my fate!**

**我们正在一点一点地接近我家的农场，我顿时清醒和警觉起来:门廊上会有一盏灯亮着吗？每看一眼就好似一种折磨，我简直受不了了。刹那间，我们到了。我只能听天由命，任凭命运摆布了！**

**28 The truck driver smiled and said, "Look at that, would you! Just like in a fairy tale! That house there, the one just over there! Four bamboo cane chairs are sitting on the porch, with lighted lamps in every one of them, and an old man, as still as a statue, is out there with a flashlight aimed toward the road. AND, the porch light is on, too!"**

**卡车司机微笑着说：“快看那，你还不赶快看！就像活生生的童话一样！看那边的那个房子，就是那边的那个！那门廊上放着四把竹藤椅，每把椅子上面都有亮着的灯。有位老人站在外面，丝毫不动，像一尊雕像一样，他正举着手电朝道路方向照呢！重要的是：门廊的灯也亮着！”**