1 In the fall of our final year, our mood changed. the relaxed atmosphere of

the preceding summer semester, the impromptu ball games, the boating on the

Charles River, the late-night parties had disappeared, and we all started to

get our heads down, studying late, and attendance at classes rose steeply

again. We all sensed we were coming to the end of our stay here, that we would

never get a chance like this again, and we became determined not to waste it.

Most important of course were the final exams in April and May in the

following year. No one wanted the humiliation of finishing last in class, so

the peer group pressure to work hard was strong. Libraries which were once

empty after five o' clock in the afternoon were standing room only until the

early hours of the morning, and guys wore the bags under their eyes and their

pale, sleepy faces with pride, like medals proving their diligence.

2 But there was something else. At the back of everyone' s mind was what we

would do next, when we left university in a few months' time. It wasn' t always

the high flyers with the top grades who knew what they were going to do. Quite

often it was the quieter, less impressive students who had the next stages of

their life mapped out. One had landed a job in his brother' s advertising firm

in Madison Avenue, another had got a script under provisional acceptance in

Hollywood. The most ambitious student among us was going to work as a party

activist at a local level. We all saw him ending up in the Senate or in

Congress one day. But most people were either looking to continue their

studies, or to make a living with a white-collar job in a bank, local

government, or anything which would pay them enough to have a comfortable time

in their early twenties, and then settle down with a family, a mortgage and

some hope of promotion.

3 I went home at Thanksgiving, and inevitably, mybrothers and sisters kept

asking me what I was planning to do. I didn' t know what to say. Actually, I

did know what to say, but I thought they' d probably criticize me, so I told

them what everyone else was thinking of doing.

4 My father was watching me but saying nothing. Late in the evening, he

invited me to his study. We sat down and he poured us a drink.

5 "So?" he said

6 "Er … so what?"

7 "So what do you really want to do?" he asked. “

8 My father was a lawyer, and I had always assumed he wanted me to go to law

school, and follow his path through life. So I hesitated.

9 Then I replied, “I want to travel, and I want to be a writer. ”

10 This was not the answer I thought he would expect. Travel? Where? A

writer? About what? I braced myself for some resistance to the idea.

11 There was a long silence.

12 "Interesting idea, " he said finally

13 There was another long silence.

14 "I kind of wish I' d done that when I was your age. "

15 I waited.

16 "You have plenty of time. You don' t need to go into a career which pays

well just at the moment. You need to find out what you really enjoy now,

because if you don' t, you won' t be successful later. "

17 "So how do I do this?”

18 He thought for a moment. Then he said, "Look, it' s late. Let' s take the

boat out tomorrow morning, just you and me. Maybe we can catch some crabs for

dinner, and we can talk more. "

19 It was a small motor boat, moored ten minutes away, and my father had

owned it for years. Early next morning we set off along the estuary. We didn' t

talk much, but enjoyed the sound of the 2Unit one text and ite translation

seagulls and the sight of the estuary coastline and the sea beyond.

20 There was no surf on the coastal waters at that time of day, so it was a

smooth half-hour ride until my father switched off the motor. "Let' s see if we

get lucky, " he said, picked up a rusty, mesh basket with a rope attached and

threw it into the sea.

21 We waited a while, then my father stood up and said, "Give me a hand with

this, " and we hauled up the crab cage onto the deck.

22 Crabs fascinated me. They were so easy to catch. It wasn' t just that

they crawled into such an obvious trap, through a small hole in the lid of the

basket, but it seemed as if they couldn' t be bothered to crawl out again even

when you took the lid off. They just sat there, waving their claws at you.

23 The cage was brimming with dozens of soft shell crabs, piled high on top

of each other. "Why don' t they try to escape?" I wondered aloud to my father.

24 "Just watch them for a moment. Look at that one, there! He' s trying to

climb out, but every time the other crabs pull him back in, " said my father

25 And we watched. The crab climbed up the mesh towards the lid, and sure

enough, just as it reached the top, one of its fellow crabs reached out,

clamped its claw onto any available leg, and pulled it back. Several times the

crab tried to defy his fellow captives, without luck.

26 "Now watch!" said my father. "He' s starting to get bored with this game. "

27 Not only did the crab give up its lengthy struggle to escape, but it

actually began to help stop other crabs trying to escape. He' d finally chosen

an easy way of life.

28 Suddenly I understood why my father had suggested catching crabs that

morning. He looked at me. "Don' t get pulled back by the others, " he said.

"Spend some time figuring out who you are and what you want in life. Look back

at the classes you' re taking, and think aboutwhich ones were most productive

for you personally. Then think about what' s really important to you, what

really interests you, what skills you have. Try to figure out where you want

to live, where you want to go, what you want to earn, how you want to work.

And if you can' t answer these questions now, then 3Unit one text and ite

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take some time to find out. Because if you don' t, you' ll never be happy. "

29 He paused.

30 "So you want to travel?" he asked.

31 "Yes, " I replied.

32 "Better get you a passport. And you want to be a writer?"

33 "I think so. "

34 "Interesting choice. We' ve never had a writer in the family, " he said.

35 My father started the motor and we set off back home.