

# What are Friends for?

Think of the list of names in your phone book—those people you see daily, weekly, or even once in a blue moon—people with whom you might exchange texts, have a warm hug, or engage in casual or deep conversations. A phone book contains the names of those who, by accidents of fate, have become part of your life. But ask yourself, who among them are your true friends?

What is friendship? It can mean different things to different people. And while we tend to assume reciprocity in friendship—that those whom I think of as my friends think of me as theirs—recent studies have shown that there is a wide gap between perceived and actual friendships, and only half of the former are truly mutual and reciprocal. Will you feel hurt if you hear people you regard as friends don't really like you? Most of us will, and psychologists and neurologists agree, pointing out that the authenticity of one's relationships has an enormous impact on one's health and well-being. Hardwired for close relationships, humans cannot live a fulfilling life unless they are in healthy connection with others. Friends are powerful agents that can help us fight illness, speed up recovery, slow ageing and prolong life.

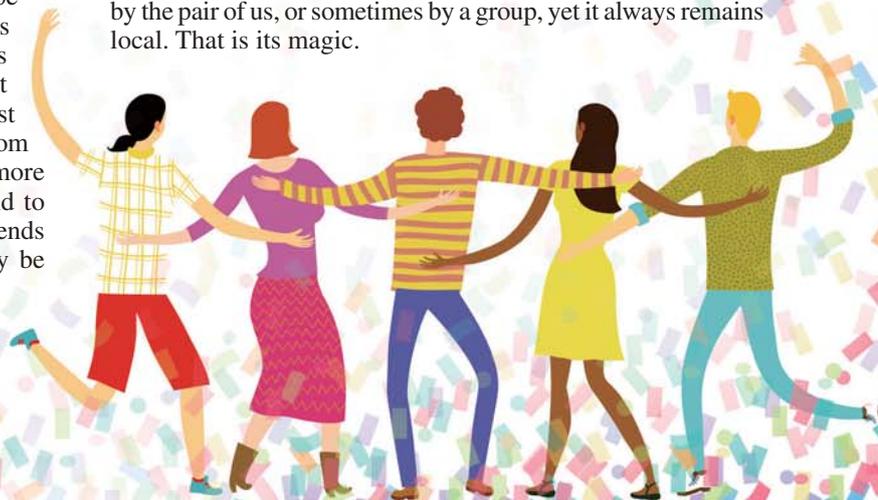
Technology has changed the meaning of friendship. In an age when people are connected by a quick swipe across the smartphone screen, friendship is, surprisingly, becoming shallower. The word "friend", which can now be used as a verb, has an unimaginably broad definition. People we barely know are connected to us through social media networks. For many, the value of friendship is not loyalty or intimacy, but the number of "likes" they receive, including those given by someone whose face they can hardly remember.

Some people boast about having as many as 1,000 friends on Facebook. Impressive indeed. However, British anthropologist Robin Dunbar maintains that we humans, limited by the size of our brains, can only comfortably cope with a social circle not larger than 150 people. Our friends are grouped into tiers, where the topmost layer includes only five people with whom you have the most frequent or intimate connections, usually family members and best friends. The next layer consists of, at best, 15 people to whom you will turn for sympathy. Further down the tiers are more casual friends with whom you spend less time and tend to have tenuous ties. Without regular contact, most such friends fall into the category of mere acquaintances. You may be friendly with them but they are not friends of yours.

In today's world, especially on the internet, the classification of friends is not as distinct as expounded by Dunbar. This is evidenced by the indiscriminate posting of private photos and news on social media or instant messaging apps. In the past or for the older generation, private photos were privy to good and close friends. But now, your "friends", be they on the topmost or lower tiers of friendship, can view such photos anytime, anywhere by a tap on the touchscreen. The bond which is supposed to be built between two or a few more people has turned into a web, linking you to an ocean of unfamiliar faces.

Some people worry that online social ties might replace offline friendship, or users of social media networks might turn into dungeon zombies incapable of face-to-face communication. Although this is probably over-worrying, Dunbar's number does suggest something troubling modern friendship: given our limited time but countless number of friends, our social networks are bound to be not as densely connected as they once were. Researchers such as Dunbar insist that closely connected friends are better friends. Unlike modern friendship which is characterised by posting photos, giving likes and showcasing achievements among a large number of people, traditional friendship, like art, can ignite something deep within us and is appreciated for its own sake. A friend is someone you can turn to when the chips are down, someone with whom we share happiness and sorrows, and someone we confide in.

Advances in technology have indeed altered the way we make friends or deal with friends. This is a change we all have to accept. But when it comes to authentic friendship, we would like to ask for more: shallow and hollow communication can never replace deep and caring conversations. The "high five" emoji is never a substitute for face-to-face palm slapping. Between friends, we should not feel embarrassed about exposing the underbelly of our psyche. Friendship is shared by the pair of us, or sometimes by a group, yet it always remains local. That is its magic.





# 我們仨

有一晚，作家楊絳夢到與丈夫錢鍾書一同散步，走着走着，丈夫突然不知所終。在蒼茫暮色裏，她站在小路上高呼丈夫的名字。荒野一片孤寂，她感到無限淒涼，暗忖丈夫是否把她拋下回家去了。醒來看到錢鍾書在她身邊睡得正酣，心裏才感到踏實。類似這樣的夢，楊絳做了很多次。在夢裏，她不是走進死胡同找丈夫，便是在昏暗的車站等他回來，可是車子永遠不來。誰也沒料到她後來真的做了一個“長達萬里”的噩夢。

一九三五年七月，二十多歲的楊絳和錢鍾書結婚後負笈英國牛津大學。兩口子租住一間小房子，開始溫馨愜意的留學生活。丈夫報讀埃克塞特學院的文學學士課程，妻子也希望念文學，但因為學額已滿，唯有選擇當旁聽生，聽幾門文學課，閒時到圖書館自修。

在牛津的歲月裏，錢鍾書整天埋頭苦讀，楊絳卻想到處蹣跚，於是丈夫有空時便陪妻子出門“探險”去。他們穿過大街小巷，走進公園、教堂、動物園，也光顧舊書店。一九三六年，夫婦倆遠行。他們代表中國到瑞士出席“世界青年大會”，順道到巴黎與昔日同學聚舊，還四處觀光。那年暑假，楊絳懷了孩子。

錢鍾書知道妻子懷孕，俏皮的跟她說：“我不要兒子，我要女兒——只要一個，像你的。”如錢鍾書所願，楊絳生了一個女孩，取名瑗。錢鍾書看着阿瑗可愛的模樣，看完又看，還得意地說：“這是我的女兒，我喜歡的。”

在楊絳眼裏，錢鍾書笨手笨腳。在她誕下女兒留院期間，丈夫把家裏弄得一團糟，不是打翻墨水瓶把桌布染了，便是把門軸弄壞。楊絳看到丈夫苦着臉不知如何是好，哭笑不得，唯有安慰他說：“不要緊，我會洗，我會修。”錢鍾書其實並非那麼笨拙。楊絳坐月子，他燉了雞湯，還剝了蠶豆瓣給妻子補身，可說是無微不至。

錢鍾書在牛津大學畢業後，帶同妻女前往巴黎繼續留學。後來抗日戰爭爆發，一家三口便乘船回國了。錢鍾書獲清華大學聘用，抵達目的地便隻身前去報到，楊絳則帶同女兒返回上海與父親同住，三口子第一次分離。阿瑗當時還不會說話，只能眼睜睜看着爸爸坐小渡船離開大船，遠她而去。

阿瑗天生乖巧，聰敏過人，過目不忘，才幾歲便認得很多字，深得長輩疼愛。可惜自小多病，一九四七年冬，才十歲的她右手食指骨節腫了起來，確診為骨節結核。這個病當時無藥可醫。不過，經過十個月的休養，她奇蹟般病癒。楊絳滿以為壓着心頭的大石終於可以放下，但噩夢始終纏繞着她，揮之不去。

多年後，她夢到錢鍾書被人帶走了，幾天沒回來，她和女兒在一條古驛道上尋找他。一個煙霧迷濛的晚上，在一條小船上，一家三口重逢了。面容憔悴的錢鍾書看到妻女，眼泛淚光，跟她們說：“我只愁你們找不到我了。”三人依偎在一起，不用說話都覺得快慰。

阿瑗舊病復發，這回轉到腰椎去。楊絳夢到自己變得很輕，飛到醫院看女兒接受治療。阿瑗向她招手，負痛走到母親身旁，靠在她身上。這刻，楊絳心痛欲裂。後來有一晚，楊絳在夢中再去探望丈夫，想把女兒的病況告訴他，但那艘船不見了，他們仨又再失散。她變成一片黃葉，隨風沿着古驛道飄回去，輕輕的敲打走過的每一步，“一路上都是離情”。

楊絳的噩夢原來都是事實。一九九七年春，阿瑗還未到六十歲便病故。一年多後，錢鍾書亦棄世。丈夫和女兒相繼離去，楊絳獨個兒堅強活下去。二零零三年，九十二歲的她打開塵封的記憶，寫下《我們仨》一書，細說三口子在一起的時光，字裏行間盡是親情與思念，真摯感人，讓人深深體會“世間好物不堅牢，彩雲易散琉璃脆”。

友直，友諒，友多聞，益矣。

《論語·季氏》



# Driving Miss Daisy

Friendship between two people from polarised backgrounds—a cantankerous, rich white woman and a proud, indomitable black chauffeur—is never easy. Their paths are unlikely to cross, but by a quirk of fate, they are brought together, fostering a unique relationship that spans a quarter century. That is the story of *Driving Miss Daisy*, an Oscar-winning film based on the play of the same name by Alfred Uhry.

In 1948, Miss Daisy, a Jewish retired schoolteacher, lives in self-sufficiency in Atlanta, with only a black housemaid to help out. At the age of 72, she still drives around on her own though constantly complaining that her car “misbehaves”. But one morning, while she is inching out of the driveway, her car suddenly hurtles across the flowerbed and crashes into her neighbour’s fence. Her son Boolie then lays down the rule: it is time she should have a chauffeur. Miss Daisy refuses. “What I don’t want... is having some chauffeur sitting in my kitchen, gobbling my food, running up my phone bills,” she whines. Despite his mother’s angry objections, Boolie hires Hoke Colburn, a thoughtful black man in his 60s, to drive for her.

A woman as stubborn as Miss Daisy does not give in easily. For the first few days after Hoke’s arrival, Miss Daisy does not allow him to drive her anywhere. Hoke then tries to do chores around the house to keep occupied. But Miss Daisy finds faults everywhere. With vast reserves of patience, Hoke agrees with whatever she says and does his work with such good grace that she can hardly find anything to grumble about.

Yet the war of will continues. After staying at home for six days, Miss Daisy runs out of coffee, and needs to go to the market. She insists on not being driven but Hoke has his own way of winning over his stubborn employer—he trails Miss Daisy in her brand new red Hudson automobile as she walks to the grocery store. This spectacle attracts the attention of the neighbours. Embarrassed by what Hoke does, Miss Daisy is forced to get into the car. She, however, always gains the upper hand. Inside the car, she is still in control of everything: the speed, the route, and whatever she can think of.

Miss Daisy denies that she is a bigot. But the old lady does occasionally resort to racist behaviour. One morning, she tells Boolie that Hoke has stolen a can of salmon from her pantry. “They all take things, you know... If they want something, they just take it,” she complains. As Boolie is about

to speak with the chauffeur, Hoke arrives, apologising for having eaten the can of salmon the night before and explaining that he has stopped on his way to buy another can for her. Upon hearing this, Miss Daisy, so ashamed of her overly suspicious nature, does not know how to react.

As the old saying goes, friendship always starts with a smile. But for Miss Daisy and Hoke, it is something different—an impromptu phonics class and a copybook. One day, Hoke drives Miss Daisy to the cemetery to tend her husband’s plot. While there, she asks him to place a pot of azalea on a friend’s grave. But Hoke tells Miss Daisy that he is unable to find the gravestone since he cannot read. She does not humiliate him. Instead, she teaches him some basic phonics rules, and Hoke finally finds the name. Later on Christmas Day, before showing up at Boolie’s party, Miss Daisy takes a small package from her purse and gives it to Hoke, uttering, “This isn’t a Christmas present. You know I don’t give Christmas presents.” Hoke opens the package and finds a Zaner Method Writing Book.

Miss Daisy is in her 80s now. In the darkness of one cold, stormy dawn, she reads a magazine beside a candle. Suddenly, someone appears at the door. It is Hoke. He braves the bad weather to bring her coffee. Friendship should be reciprocal. Miss Daisy then asks Hoke to help himself with the food in the ice-box. What a change since he ate that can of salmon a few years before. Then Boolie’s call comes. Much to his surprise, he hears, for the first time, his mother say nice things about her chauffeur. “He’s handy,” Miss Daisy admits.

Years pass. Miss Daisy descends into dementia. One morning, with dishevelled hair and clothes, she runs around her house madly in search of her students’ books. When Hoke comforts her, she takes his hand, saying warmly, “You’re my best friend.” Some years later, Hoke visits her in an old folks’ home on Thanksgiving Day. Miss Daisy, 97, very weak and feeble, is happy to have a reunion with her best friend. Hoke gently feeds her a slice of pumpkin pie, with memories flashing back to the day he first drove Miss Daisy in her red Hudson automobile.

One of the most beautiful qualities of true friendship is to understand and to be understood.

Lucius Annaeus Seneca



# Dare and Daren't

When you **dare** to do something, you are brave enough to do something you are afraid of, or rude enough to do something that offends people. When you put a verb after **dare**, you can put **to** in front of the other verb: *Only he dares to insult me.* Or you can drop the infinitive: *Peter dare not go anywhere alone.* In the first example, **dare** acts like an ordinary verb. But in the second example, it is a semi-modal verb, and you don't add **-s** to it in the third person singular form: *he dare not, she dare not.* You can only use it in negative sentences or in questions: *She daren't tell her father about this. Dare he admit this?*

As we all know, the plural of **foot** is **feet**: *Hobbits have large feet.* But when **foot** is used as a unit for measuring length, its plural can either be **foot** or **feet**. How to use them? Use **foot** when it follows a number and a hyphen and it comes in front of a noun: *a three-foot walking stick.* When it comes in front of a number denoting inches, use **foot**: *She is five foot nine.* But when the word "inch" or "inches" appears, use **feet**: *She is five feet nine inches.* Otherwise you can use either **foot** or **feet**: *This mountain is 1,000 foot/feet high.*

The use of **between** and **among** is often confusing. It is taught that **between** is used for two items and **among** for three or more. But this is not completely accurate. When we are talking about only two people or things, yes, we must use **between**: *I have to choose between Harvard and Oxford.* However, after words such as "relationship" or "difference", use **between**, even when there are more than two people or things: *The relationship between Fred, Jane and Daisy.* Also, when we are talking about more than two distinct, individual items, we can use either **between** or **among**: *Divide the cake between/among Peter, Paul and Mary.*

What preposition should we use after **different**? **From**, of course. But **than** and **to** are often used as well. In writing, it is best to use **from**: *Your plan is different from mine.* This usage is equally acceptable in British and American English. **Than** is commonly used in American English: *Your plan is different than mine.* But this is still considered non-standard in British English. **To** is perfectly acceptable in British English: *This is completely different to any other champagne I've ever tasted.* Americans rarely use it, though.

## 文化廣場



斜陽晚照，獨個兒在土耳其小鎮的街道彳亍而行。漫步之際，陣陣咖啡濃香撲鼻。環顧四周，原來兩旁咖啡店林立。隨意走進一家，看到客人三五成羣，好不熱鬧。

坐下點過咖啡後，看着咖啡師把幼細的咖啡粉和冷水倒入小銅壺內，開始烹煮。咖啡表面慢慢浮起一層泡沫，他俐落地移開銅壺，用長勺子把泡沫舀於咖啡杯中，重複數遍，最後把煮好的咖啡倒出，一杯熱呼呼的香濃土耳其咖啡便上桌了。

身旁幾名頭髮斑白的老先生一面聊天，一面細意品嚐咖啡，臉上露出絲絲笑意。咖啡師特意走過去熱情地打招呼，看來他們是這裏的常客。不遠處，一羣婦女凝神聚精地盯着剩下的咖啡渣，原來她們拿咖啡渣來占卜。土耳其人煮咖啡多不過濾，杯中剩下厚厚的咖啡渣，喝完咖啡後把渣子倒在碟上，觀察咖啡渣所呈現的圖案，據說可預測運程。那些婦女你一言，我一語，有的眉開眼笑，有的顯得憂心忡忡。相約喝咖啡不單可以

聚首聊聊天，原來還可以用咖啡渣來卜算吉凶，滿足大家的好奇心之餘，更有助談興。

窗邊的客人不斷高聲說話，有點吵耳。雖不諳土耳其語，但從他的神情和動作來看，可見滿腹牢騷，幸好他身旁的友人默默坐在那兒，耐心聆聽，讓他消消心中怨氣。店內突然傳來一陣笑聲，原來鄰桌來了幾個年輕人，才坐下便滔滔不絕，似在暢談各自的近況和最新的電腦玩兒，談得興起時，手舞足蹈，放聲大笑。我身旁幾位老先生眯起眼睛看着他們，若有所思，莫非想起自己年輕時的美好時光？

咖啡店的另一角煙霧瀰漫，顧客呷一口咖啡，抽一口水煙，怡然自得。旁邊的人正在下棋，雖然只有二人對弈，卻吸引數人前來湊熱鬧。下棋的人沉着應戰，圍觀的人竊竊私語，點評戰況。

咖啡店內人聲鼎沸，氣氛毫不浪漫，但遠角竟然有一對情侶在談心。他們一杯咖啡在手，喁喁細語，旁若無人，讓人想起土耳其一個古老傳統。聽說男士求親時，女方通常會為他煮咖啡，遇到心儀者求婚，女的會在咖啡中多添點糖；如不合眼緣，便會煮一杯黑咖啡給他喝。不知遠角那位男士會喝到的咖啡是甜還是苦？

土耳其人生活上少不了咖啡，每杯的分量雖少，卻把人連繫起來，承載着人與人之間的深情厚誼，怪不得土耳其有一句諺語，說的是單憑一杯咖啡，便可印證四十年的情誼。



# The Browns

I first met the Browns at the AIDS clinic of a children's hospital on a spring day in the late 1990s. Darrel Brown was a tall middle-aged gentleman wearing a bitter grin on a bland face. His six-year-old son Alfonso, looking a bit pale, was a cute, cheerful boy. Alfonso had tested HIV positive after receiving a blood transfusion during surgery. I was their psychotherapist.

That day, Alfonso, dressed in jeans and a blue-hooded cardigan, appeared at the door of my consultation room, holding his father's hand tightly and endearingly. With tearful eyes—probably after a painful shot—and a timid smile, the little boy was a magnet for petting. But he was quite naughty. As I was about to hug him, he slipped off my arms and hid himself behind his father, giving a high-pitched chortle. Darrel then squatted down and said tenderly, "Alfonso, say 'hello' to Mr Fox."

The boy followed his father's instruction, and giggled as he heard the word "fox".

"Mr Brown, how are you and Alfonso doing?" I asked.

"Every day is a battle for me," answered Darrel. "Alfonso has to take many antiretroviral medicines. First is Zerit. It tastes like soda pop and he likes it. Then comes Epivir. The first day he took it, he was nauseated and too sick to take a sip of water. But there's some good news. Alfonso's doctor has just given us a new medicine. He says it's potent." Darrel took a small plastic jar from his bag and his fingers trembled as he ripped the seal off the top lid. "Oooh, it smells good," he said.

"Like strawberry," I replied while stuffing my nose into the jar. We were a comical sight, two adult men sitting in a pristine clinic, sniffing Alfonso's new medicine.

"But in the past few weeks, he always woke up in the middle of the night and couldn't go back to sleep," Darrel said, "and he just sat in bed and played with his Ninja turtles."

"Was it a side effect of the medicines?" I asked.

"No. I'm afraid it was my fault. I was so busy that I almost forgot to pick him up from school once. When I got there, it was pretty late. He didn't complain, but I really felt bad about that." After a moment of silence, Darrel, with great effort, went on in a quivering voice, "He probably thought that I had abandoned him. I'm such a failure."

For some families, there comes a moment when something happens to change the course of their lives forever; from that instant on, everything shifts, just as an earthquake shudders, settles and rearranges the lay of the land. When

Darrel looked back on the days before his wife died and Alfonso got sick, he felt a pang of nostalgia and pain.

Suddenly, Alfonso blurted out, "Mr Fox, will you come to my birthday party this Saturday?"

"Yes, sure," I replied right away.

Saturday came. I arrived much earlier than expected. As I was stepping into their nice apartment, I saw Darrel wrapping a towel around Alfonso and rubbing him dry.

"What's my first word, Daddy?" asked Alfonso.

"'Mommy'," replied Darrel.

"Why not 'Daddy'?" Alfonso continued.

"Daddy was always working when you were a baby. And I was a boring man," said Darrel as he inserted his son into a sweatshirt.

"But you aren't now," Alfonso said.

Darrel smiled.

I later found out that I was the only guest at the party. As told by Darrel, all the parents of Alfonso's classmates had politely declined his invitation.

Before the candle-blowing time, Alfonso had to take medicine. Darrel scooped spoonfuls of a greyish powder into a glass of orange juice. Alfonso put it to his lips and glugged, but soon he was making faces. Darrel flapped like a hen, chasing his son around the sitting room, shouting, "Drink it quickly. Hold your

nose." As Alfonso reached the bottom of the glass, he retched, ran to a litter bin and spat.

But soon after, wearing a birthday party hat, Alfonso was sitting happily at a table in front of a birthday cake with candles on top. He closed his eyes and then blew out the candles.

"What wish did you make?" I asked.

"A magic tasty pill," Alfonso replied.

Darrel and I were speechless.

Sixteen years passed. I am not working in the AIDS clinic anymore. One day when I was having a quiet moment on my own in the office, a new mail alert popped up on my computer screen. As I clicked open the message, a photo showing a handsome young man wearing an academic dress and a man with grey hair came into view. They were Alfonso and Darrel. Next to it was another picture in which Alfonso spread his arms wide on a stadium track, flashing a smile and wiggling his eyebrows mischievously. It was the same old Alfonso, always cheerful and naughty.



Walking with a friend in the dark is better  
than walking alone in the light.

Helen Keller



# 阿榮伯

台灣作家琦君以回憶文學稱著，筆下的童年生活瑣事、人情世故，細膩感人。兒時的琦君溫婉可人，深受家中長輩疼愛，尤得一眾長工愛惜。故鄉家中有一老長工叫阿榮伯。阿榮伯和顏善目，生得一對羅漢眉，嘴巴方方正正，下唇特別厚，說話時好像總是在微笑。琦君童年時常常纏着阿榮伯，嚷着要他說故事。長大後，這位慈祥長輩的音容仍常在她的腦海裏。遇到任何困難，只要想起阿榮伯，她便會得到安慰，彷彿所有問題都迎刃而解。

琦君雖然乖巧，但也有淘氣的時候。每當挨母親打，便逃去找阿榮伯，躲在他懷裏痛哭。阿榮伯看到小妮子涕淚漣漣，便安慰她說：“小春，不要哭，伯伯講故事你聽，講你爸爸挨打的故事給你聽。”琦君的爸爸兒時原來十分頑皮，常常把她的爺爺氣得七竅生煙，但後來爺爺患病，爸爸便變得十分懂事，衣不解帶照顧老父直到他過世。阿榮伯叮囑琦君也要做一個孝順女兒，聽父母的話，琦君連忙點頭答應。

琦君兒時很喜愛找阿榮伯作伴。每逢下雨，長工不用下田，都聚在穀倉後面推牌九。琦君抱着心愛的花貓跑到那裏湊熱鬧。阿榮伯一邊耍樂，一邊把香脆的胡豆剝殼，送到琦君的嘴裏。胡豆吃夠了，便再送上芝麻糖，她口乾了又給她柑子。琦君心想如果天天下雨該多好，不僅有吃有喝，還有阿榮伯疼，那就永遠不愁寂寞。

逢年過節，琦君的故鄉瞿溪鎮都會請戲班來表演，有京班、有崑班。琦君愛看戲，小時候帶她看戲最多的是外公和阿榮伯。外公牽着琦君的手穿過熱鬧大街，阿榮伯揹着長橈大步大步走在前頭。到了戲棚，阿榮伯把橈子放在台前最好的位置，用繩子牢牢的繫在欄杆上給外公和琦君坐，然後獨個兒跑到天井那邊看戲去。閒時在家，他會敲着煙筒給琦君講孟麗君、關公的故事，說得興起還會唱起來，有板有眼，琦君在旁聽得入迷。

後來，琦君的父親接她到杭州與哥哥團聚。她捨不得阿榮伯，緊緊握着他粗糙的手說：“阿榮伯，我要爸爸也接你去杭州，我們一同坐火車，多好玩呀！”阿榮伯看着傻丫頭，嘆口氣說：“我老了，又是個鄉下種田的，哪有福氣坐火車呢？妳將來到了外路，坐火車時，就……寫封信給我，畫張火車的樣子給我看看，就當我也坐過火車啦！”琦君雖然很渴望到大城市裏坐火車，但想到要和阿榮伯分別，心裏好生難過，便放聲大哭起來。

到了杭州，琦君馬上寫信給阿榮伯，告訴他坐火車的情形。阿榮伯能認的字不多，她於是在信後畫了一列長長的火車。不久，她收到阿榮伯的回信。信紙上畫了一艘大火輪，有汽笛，有門窗，窗子裏伸出她和哥哥的頭，旁邊還寫着“火輪火車一樣好，桔子檸檬一樣香，你們兄妹早點回家鄉。”琦君知道字是他請人代筆的。她拿着那封信，想起阿榮伯在故鄉牽着她穿過田埂小路去看小火輪的情景，又禁不住眼淚汪汪了。

阿榮伯的話，琦君銘記心中。有一次，琦君講了《魯賓遜漂流記》的故事給阿榮伯聽。阿榮伯知道魯賓遜靠自己的本領在荒島上生活，便與琦君說：“小春……要是有一天你也是一個人跑到一處陌生地方，沒有人看顧你，你也要自己看顧自己的，你會嗎？”小小的琦君說不願意獨自生活，只想一生伴着阿榮伯。阿榮伯說他老了，總有一天會離她而去，叮囑她要自己撐下去。琦君聽罷有點茫然，緊緊抱着阿榮伯的膀子。

阿榮伯善良純樸，樂於助人，給琦君不少啓迪。可惜，抗戰勝利後，長大了的琦君回到故鄉再也看不到他了。他在六十歲生辰吃完長壽麵後便一睡不起。往事悠悠，琦君站在阿榮伯墳前，無限唏噓，回想兒時少不更事，彷彿阿榮伯就在眼前跟自己說：“小春，記着我的話，要自己撐天下。”

數重雲外樹，不隔眼中人。

錢起《再得畢侍御書聞巴中卧病》

中學上體育課時擦傷了膝蓋，茵剛好站在後面，老師順手一指，着她領我到醫療室。從此我倆便成為摯友。

換課時，我倆在樓梯上下奔走。午膳時間，我倆捧着飯壺，邊吃邊聊。跳土風舞，我倆總是搭檔。合唱團練習，我倆並肩高歌。旅行日，我倆會伙同其他同學分工、購物，為燒烤派對張羅。

茵是長女，有三妹一弟，若不是升中試獲派學位，她母親本打算叫她輟學到工廠做工，幫補家計。茵升中後，母親不許她參加團契，不許她參加宿營活動；她當選領袖生，母親又迫她推卻。我們跑到學校天台，她不斷飲泣，哀哀訴說母親如何偏心，重男輕女，對她冷漠、忽視。我無言以對。

中四那年，茵的母親安排她和二妹逢周末到工廠兼職。我知道此事後替她乾着急。無計可施之際，幸得老師出手相助，為她找到替小三學生補習的工作，問題才得以解決。

中五最後一課，同學們眼眶通紅，教室內抽泣聲此起彼落，老師唱了一首詩歌安慰我們。大家一直垂着頭，鐘聲一響，又紛紛站起來，離開座位，去找自己的至好同窗。我與茵不禁相擁而哭。

會考放榜，我倆本可以憑成績轉到別校升學，但因捨不得多年同窗之誼而放棄，我們所有要好的同學最終選擇原校升讀預科。

高考放榜，成績有點出乎意料，結果我和茵升讀不同的院校，但那三年我倆仍聯絡不斷，踏足社會工作後見面更頻密。除了吃飯、看電影、逛街購物，在鑼鼓喧天的尖東海旁，我倆觀看龍舟賽；在碧空如洗的秋日，我們上山頂漫步。不論是她轉換工作還是我調職，我們都互訪對方的辦公室。同學的婚宴、移民餞別宴，我們聯袂出席；為同學慶生、接風洗塵，也是我與這位摯友聚舊的好時機。

某天，茵約我晚膳，原來席上還有她在外地結識的意中人。緣來了沒法躲，他們相戀半

年便敲定婚期，我是茵姊妹團的當然成員。平素脂粉不施的我，在姊姊的幫忙下，手忙腳亂的打扮一番，在兩天的婚禮中，陪伴在茵的左右，默默送上祝福。

婚後不久，茵與夫婿上我家，我媽見她面青唇白，弱不禁風的模樣，言談間流露出憐惜之情，勸她要多吃滋補食物，調理身體為要。在茵告辭之際，我媽趕忙跑到廚房，拿出當歸、杞子、紅棗、淮山等中藥材，塞到她手中。許多年之後，我才知道，那天她回家後大哭了一場，因為接過藥材的那刻，她感到我媽對她的關懷，更甚於生母對她的愛。我不禁想，如果母愛能如錢財般賒借或送贈予人，我真的不介意與茵分享，可是世上有誰可以選擇自己的父母家人？

茵懷第二胎時，向我哭訴母親再次拒絕在她坐月子期間幫忙。我也不知那裏來的膽量，竟答允在那段期間替她弄點進補食物。我鑽進菜市場購備食材，再趕去她家，憑着一丁點的烹調經驗，為她下廚，只希望那些牛腱、母雞、大魚頭尚能入口，對她的健康有所裨益。

我媽年事漸高，她後來患病，病情日趨嚴重。茵帶着小兒子來我家，逗長者開心。我媽昏迷前一天，她趕去醫院探望。在靈堂、火葬場，她一直陪伴着我。按鍵的一刻，我淚眼婆娑，凝視着棺木徐徐下降，直至消失於眼底。我呆呆站在那兒，對着茵哭喊：“以後有誰來疼我？”

人生颯起風暴時，茵約我吃飯，百般開解。碰到難題，萬種思量，夜不成寐，我爬起來發短訊給她。我和茵早已不止是傾蓋交心、彼此鼓勵、互相扶持的好友，而是比親姊妹還要親的家人。

今天，茵已較少出席大型的校友聚會，眼下她也經歷人生的磨難。我在發給她的短訊中說：“人生是由悲歡離合、甜酸苦辣組成，或可視目前的艱難險阻為人生的必修課。”她回應我說剛買了兩件印有勵志標語的同款衛衣，一人一件，下次見面時帶給我。



# 情誼處處在

我們一生中總有一些人最為珍惜，一些事難以忘懷，一些話銘記心間。緣起緣滅，與相親相知的人從陌生到熟悉，從相聚到分離，悲喜與共，點滴存心。不少文學作品細膩描寫人間種種情誼，深情之處觸動人心。大家還記得以下作品的感人片段嗎？

1. 在《背影》中，朱自清回北京念書，父親到火車站送別他，硬要給他買點東西。父親拿着買了的東西，狼狽地穿過鐵道又爬上月台，胖胖的身子不斷晃動，他看到父親的背影不禁流下淚來。父親給他買了什麼？  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. 清代詞人納蘭性德《金縷曲》：“青眼高歌俱未老，向樽前、拭盡英雄淚。君不見，月如水。共君此夜須沉醉。”“君”指誰人？  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. 在《目送》一文中，龍應台憶述一生中一次又一次目送家人遠去和死亡，幽幽道出生命的悲歡離合，讓人深深感受到親情的珍貴。她目送的人是誰？  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. “撇開你的憂愁，容我沉醉在你的懷裏，只有你是我靈魂的安頓。”這詩句冰心寫給誰？  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. 汪曾祺在《多年父子成兄弟》中深入刻劃他與父親和子女的關係，情文並茂，風趣溫馨。他的父親是畫家，性格隨和，喜歡在春天帶着孩子到麥田玩一種玩兒。他們玩什麼？  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. 《惜別》是止庵思念亡母的作品。全書滿載溫馨的回憶：與母親一同看電影、賞月，還有她病重時給她吃美味甜點。那種甜點是什麼？  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. “相逢方一笑，相送還成泣”是唐代詩人王維送別好友所寫的詩句。他為誰笑為誰哭？  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. 在《遲到》中，林海音憶述小一時常常賴牀。某下雨天，她又賴牀，心中頓生逃學之念。父親知道後勃然大怒，用雞毛撻子打她，並着令她上學。當天她上課時，父親特地跑到學校，拿了兩件東西給她。那兩件東西是什麼？  
\_\_\_\_\_

請在二零一七年五月十九日前，把答案連同下列個人資料寄回“香港金鐘道66號金鐘道政府合署高座2310室公務員事務局法定語文事務部《文訊》編輯委員會”。答對問題者可獲書券一張，名額五個。答案及得獎者名單將於下期公布（答案以《文訊》公布者為準）。

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 職位：\_\_\_\_\_ 電話：\_\_\_\_\_  
 辦事處地址：\_\_\_\_\_



Not-a-Mindboggler

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Issue No. 69 (September 2017) : Destiny

二零一七年九月第六十九期主題：命運

Contributions from colleagues are welcome. Please refer to Issue No. 42 for details.

歡迎同事投稿，細則請參閱第四十二期。

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