

The Days of Picking Blueberries¹⁾

Growing up with six sisters wasn't easy. We had our share of differences of opinions over the years. My parents never had much money and even food was sometimes scarce²⁾. We were lucky to get our stomachs full. If there was dessert at night it was surely a treat.

I will never forget that summer back in 1969. Funds were very tight because my parents were building a new home. We had outgrown the old house and every penny my father earned was going into the new one. The last few days before payday were the worst. There just wasn't enough food to go around. I can remember how we waited for payday as if it were a holiday. My father would stop at the bank on the way home from work so my mother could go shopping when he got home. We all enjoyed going to the grocery³⁾ store with her. We would walk down the aisles⁴⁾ and dream about bringing the whole store home, much like children would walk through a toy store. When we returned home with the groceries, my sisters and I were like a pack of wolves tearing through the bags. On payday we would eat until we were ready to burst, knowing that as the week progressed food would become less available. Going to school also wasn't very easy. We never had any lunch money. My parents were too proud to sign us up for free lunch. We never had the proper school supplies or nice clothes to wear. This was probably the hardest thing my sisters and I had to go through. The other children were relentless in teasing us.

One day my father came home and told us he knew where there were some wild blueberries growing. We had permission to go pick them and we were so excited. Not very often did we get to go anywhere, and to go pick blueberries was a real treat.

I can remember being out there in the hot sun all day picking blueberries. I think we ate more than we brought home. When we got home, my mother decided to make a blueberry pie. She made the pie from scratch and spent half the day working on it. We couldn't wait. The smell of it baking in the oven was driving us crazy. We were all starting to hover⁵⁾ around in the kitchen and my mother was getting annoyed. She put the pie on the top shelf to cool while we ate our dinner.

Dinner was hard to get down that night, knowing that the pie was in the kitchen waiting for us. We were having stuffed peppers⁶⁾ that night and nobody wanted to eat them. But my mother wouldn't let anyone leave the table until everyone was finished. When my mother told us we had eaten enough, it sounded like a stampede⁷⁾ of cattle as we raced for the kitchen. I was the first in line at the counter top. Before my mother could get there, I had already jumped on the counter top and was up on the top shelf of the cabinet. I reached for the pie and started climbing down. Then it happened. I slipped on the wet counter top and let go of the pie. I can close my eyes today and still see the vivid⁸⁾ image of that pie flipping through the air in slow motion and landing up—side down on the floor, then looking up and seeing the look of disbelief on my sister's faces. All I could think of was all the hard work we had done that day and how fast it had been destroyed.

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This is the night I'll never forget in my whole life. My family always brings it up on the

holidays. Life was tough back then, but it taught us to appreciate what we have today even more.

采摘紫浆果的日子

同六个姐妹一起长大是不容易的。多少年来，我们彼此有着不同的观念。父母手头一直都不宽裕，有时甚至食品都出现匮乏。填饱肚子对我们来讲已算是幸运的了。如果哪天晚上有甜点，那真是了不起的享受了。

1969年的夏天在我的记忆中是永远不会淡忘的。因为父母正在盖新房，所以家中的资金很紧。我们已经长大，家里的老房已不够居住了，于是父亲挣的每一个便士都被投入了新房的建设。发薪前的最后几天是最糟糕的日子，因为家里连起码的口粮都难以保障。我还记得我们等待发薪日就好像是等待一个节日。这一天到来时，父亲会在下班的路上先去趟银行。这样他回家后母亲才好去采购。我们几个姐妹都喜欢陪母亲去杂货店。我们走在货架的通道上，心里梦想着将整个商店都抱回家，就像孩子们穿过一家玩具店时的心情一样。当我们拎着采购的东西回家后，我和姐妹们便如狼般匆忙抢夺食品袋。发薪日这一天，全家人都会将自己塞个贼饱，因为我们每个人都清楚未来的几个星期粮食将变得越来越少。上学也不很容易。我们从没有任何午餐钱，父母又太好面子不为我们报名吃免费午餐。我们从没有享用过好的学习用品，也从没有穿过好衣服。这一点或许是我姐妹们最难以忍受的，因为别的孩子总是无情地为此取笑我们。

有一天，父亲回家后告诉我们他知道有一个地方长着些野生的紫浆果。父亲允许我们去采摘，我们感到兴奋极了。我们没有很多机会外出，所以这次出门摘紫浆果可真是件乐事。

我还记得我们一整天都是顶着炎炎烈日采摘紫浆果的。我想我们吃进肚子中的要远远超过我们带回家的。回家后，母亲决定做一个紫浆果派。她花了整整半天，一点点地将果派做成了。我们几个姐妹真有些等不及了。炉子上烘烤果派的香味让大家垂涎三尺。我们开始在厨房里来回转悠，把母亲都惹恼了。当我们吃晚餐时，母亲将果派放在了柜子上层冷却。

那天的晚餐很难下咽，因为我们知道厨房里有一个果派在等着呢。晚饭是内有填充物的辣椒，没人想吃。但是母亲命令每个人都必须吃完才能离开饭桌。当母亲说我们已经吃够了时，我们便撒腿冲向了厨房，那声响如同出自一群惊慌失措的牲口。我是姐妹们中第一个跑到案台的。在母亲赶到之前，我已跳上了案台，爬到了柜子上层。我伸手抓住了果派，然后开始向下爬。就在这个时候，意想不到的事情发生了。我一下子在湿案台上滑倒了，手中的果派也飞了出去。即使今天闭上眼睛，我的眼前仍然能够浮现出当时的生动景象：果派慢慢地空中翻转，然后面朝下掉在了地上，我仰起头，看到的是姐妹们一张张不可思议的脸。我当时所能想到的就是我们一整天劳作的成果就这样快地在一瞬间被毁掉了。

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那个晚上是我一辈子都刻骨铭心的。现在每逢佳节，我的家人还总提起这件事。过去的日子是艰难的，但它却教育了我们更加珍惜今天所拥有的。

NOTE 注释：

1. blueberry ['blu:bəri] n. 蓝莓，浆果
2. scarce [skæəs] adj. 缺乏的，不足的
3. grocery ['grəʊsəri] n. <美>食品杂货店，食品，杂货
4. aisle [aɪl] n. 走廊，过道
5. hover ['hɒvə] v. 盘旋

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6. pepper ['pepə] n. 胡椒粉
7. stampede [stæm'pi:d] n. (受惊动物的) 惊逃, 逃窜
8. vivid ['vivid] adj. 生动的, 鲜明的