

GENTLE.NEWS

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"Growing apart doesn't change the fact that for a long time we grew side by side; our roots will always be tangled. I'm glad for that."

— Ally Condie

The Amazing Story of the Teton Mountains

The Teton Mountains tell a wonderful story about our Earth. These beautiful peaks stand just south of Yellowstone Park. They are the youngest mountains in the Rocky Mountain chain.

Long ago, more than 2 billion years before today, an ocean covered this area. Sea animals and plants settled on the ocean floor for millions of years. The Earth slowly pushed these materials deep underground.

Deep below the surface, amazing things happened. The heat became very hot, like a giant oven. The pressure squeezed everything tightly. This changed the old sea materials into completely new types of rock.

Hot melted rock called magma also pushed up through cracks. When it cooled down, it became granite. This granite now forms the tall peaks we see today. Grand Teton and Mount Moran are made of this ancient granite.

Scientists can visit these mountains and read the Earth's history. The rocks tell stories of ancient oceans and volcanic activity. Nature has been writing this story for billions of years.

Technology & Innovation

New App Helps People Explore Nature Safely

The Forest Service has created a helpful new phone app. It helps people plan safe trips to forests and parks.

The app is called National Forests and Grasslands. People can download it for free on their phones. It works like a pocket guide for nature lovers.

The app shows over 30,000 places to visit outdoors. People can find hiking trails, camping spots, and fishing areas. They can also discover places for canoeing and bike riding.

The best part is that the app works even without phone service. People can download maps before their trip. This helps them stay safe in remote areas where phones don't work well.

The app also shows weather alerts and safety information. People can check if trails are open before they travel. This new tool replaces 30 older apps that didn't work as well.

Scientists and Fishermen Team Up to Study Mackerel

Scientists are working with fishing boat crews to learn more about Atlantic mackerel. This exciting project will get \$2.3 million to help with the research.

More than 50 fishing boats will help collect information about these fish. The fishermen know the ocean well and can help scientists understand mackerel better.

The teams will use special underwater sound equipment to find and count mackerel. They will also collect fish samples and put tiny tags on some mackerel to see where they swim.

Scientists want to learn when and where mackerel lay their eggs. This helps them understand how many fish live in the ocean.

This teamwork between fishermen and scientists has worked well for 20 years. When fishermen and scientists share what they know, everyone learns more about ocean life.

Animals & Wildlife

Fish Can Swim Home Again After 50 Years

Good news for fish in California! After 50 years, salmon and steelhead can swim freely in Alameda Creek again.

Workers removed the last thing blocking the fish from swimming upstream. It was an old gas pipeline that crossed the creek. The pipeline created a big drop that fish could not swim over.

The project took almost 30 years to complete. Many groups worked together to help the fish. They removed 18 different barriers along the creek.

Alameda Creek used to be home to many salmon and steelhead fish. Now these special fish can swim to their old homes again. They can lay their eggs in the upper parts of the creek.

One man named Jeff Miller started this work in 1997. He flew over the creek in a small plane. He saw how beautiful and wild the upper creek was. He wanted to bring the fish back home. It took much longer than he thought, but his dream came true!

The daughters who were raised to be everything under China's one-child policy

China's only daughters and the inheritance of family expectations Originally published on Global Voices A Chinese 'Honorary Certificate for Parents of an Only Child,' issued under the One-Child Policy. The certificate symbolized state recognition of families who chose to have only one child. Ziyu, born in 2002, still remembers the first time her mother asked whether she wanted a younger sibling. It was sometime in middle school, shortly after China loosened its birth restrictions. "I was already buried under academic pressure, emotionally dependent on my mother in the way many anxious only children are. My mother brought it up casually, half-joking: "What if we had another baby?" She answered with shocking seriousness. "You can only choose one," she told her. "Either them or me." Ziyu does not think she literally meant that she would rather die than accept a sibling. What stayed with her was the fear behind it. At that age, her mother's attention felt inseparable from survival. The idea of sharing it felt catastrophic. When China ended the One-Child Policy in 2015, the shift was often described in demographic terms: declining birth rates, an aging population, and a policy adjustment to encourage more births. For women born under the policy, its impact was far more intimate. It shaped how families distributed love and resources, and how young women came to understand their place within the family. But the fear of

being replaced coexisted with another truth: for much of her childhood, Ziyu had never felt lonely. “I grew up alongside my cousin, who was more like a younger brother.” Adults constantly reminded her that she was “the older sister,” someone responsible, caring, dependable. She valued the companionship. What unsettled her was the possibility of being replaced. That tension — between emotional abundance and emotional scarcity — sits at the center of many only daughters’ experiences. Center of a household We were raised as the center of the household. Then, suddenly, we were told we might not be anymore. China’s One-Child Policy, introduced nationally in 1979, reshaped family life beyond the three decades during which it was implemented. Its most visible effects — population aging, a skewed sex ratio , and the emergence of the so-called “4-2-1’ family structure in which one child may eventually support two parents and four grandparents — have been extensively documented . Its quieter consequences are embedded in everyday relationships: it changed how families imagined responsibility. It shaped expectations about attention, sacrifice, and continuity. For many urban girls, the policy created a generation that received levels of investment once reserved for sons : education, property, and sustained parental attention. Many of us grew up simultaneously privileged and burdened. “I was treated almost like a son,” said C. Her parents invested heavily in her education and expected her to succeed academically. “You had self-esteem. Your family believed you deserved good schools, a good career, even property.” That attention shaped opportunity. It also shaped expectations. For some women, being

an only daughter meant becoming the emotional center of an extended family. X described herself as growing up “under a spotlight.” Her grandparents rotated childcare around her; relatives treated her as uniquely precious. That attention carried a weight of its own. “I didn’t want to share the love,” she said. “Maybe that reflects a flaw in how we were educated — the idea that love has a limited quantity.” Attention could feel like protection. It could also feel like surveillance. For myself, some of the most persistent forms of control appeared in small, ordinary moments. My mother paid close attention to how I dressed, whether I kept my bangs tidy, and the condition of my skin. A new pimple could become a topic of concern. At the time, it did not register as control. It felt like care — the kind that presents itself as worry, responsibility, and wanting the best. But over time, those small interventions accumulated into something else. The weight of ‘one’ There was a constant sense of being watched, of being adjusted. Decisions that might have felt inconsequential — how I looked, what I studied, what kind of future I should pursue — were often framed as matters that involved the whole family. The boundaries between what belonged to me and what belonged to them were never clearly defined. This intensity is difficult to separate from the structure of being an only child. When all attention converges on one person, there is no space for it to disperse. Concern becomes focus. Focus becomes pressure. We are told we are valued, that we are worth investing in, and that we should become someone significant. At the same time, we are continuously shaped, corrected, and pulled back into alignment. It is a form of closeness that

can feel both protective and suffocating. We were raised inside a paradox. Many of us absorbed adult anxieties long before we fully understood them. “I already knew that resources were finite at a very young age,” X told me. “Another sibling would not simply mean another relationship. It would reshape how attention, money, and expectations were distributed.” Caregiving hovered in the background of these realizations. Earlier this year, Ziyu’s grandfather was hospitalized. Her father and uncle alternated nights at the hospital. “Watching them, I suddenly understood something I had resisted for years,” she said. “Siblings can distribute burden.” The insight was unsettling. It introduced a possibility she had long rejected: that having another sibling could ease future eldercare responsibility. At the same time, she felt resistance to the idea that children exist partly to absorb family labor. Even when not explicitly stated, that expectation remains present in many families. Only daughters grow up aware of this tension. They are encouraged to succeed and become independent. They are also positioned as the person who will eventually step in when needed. In many families, the only daughter becomes the default plan for the future. That expectation becomes more visible as parents age. Yuning described how her parents supported her move to Beijing for better career opportunities, while also expressing a quiet hope that she would eventually return home. “They say they don’t expect me to support them upon their retirement (),” she said, “but emotionally they still hope you’ll come back and stay close.” The contradiction intensifies over time. Ziyu’s mother has recently begun experiencing health issues. Watching her

parents care for each other has led her to think about what comes next: how she will balance work, geography, and responsibility; whether she will be able to provide care, and whether she will be alone in doing so. These questions do not have clear answers. They remain present, shaping decisions before they are even made. The legacies of the one-child policy Discussions about only daughters in China often focus on practical concerns: inheritance, property, and financial security. Online debates frequently center on fears that family assets will shift to a husband's family through marriage, or that parents without sons will face vulnerability in old age. Beneath these discussions lies a more complex emotional reality. For many only daughters, personal decisions are tied to the continuity of the family. Marriage becomes more than a relationship between two individuals. It carries implications about lineage, caregiving, and belonging. Some women hesitate because they anticipate unequal expectations and distributions of labor within heterosexual marriage. Many queer individuals find it difficult to share their sexual orientation with their families, aware that their choices are interpreted through the lens of family continuity. Yuning, who is bisexual, told me she has never been able to speak openly with her parents about her sexual orientation. Similar concerns surfaced in my conversations with Ziyu, who identifies as straight. "They can accept many things," she said, "but not this." Her mother once described same-sex relationships as something she could not emotionally process; her father avoided the topic altogether. What makes the pressure difficult to articulate is that it rarely appears as a direct

demand. Instead, it is embedded in the structure of the family itself. X, who is also bisexual, told me that her parents expressed tolerance toward LGBTQ+ people in general, but reacted very differently when the possibility involved their own daughter. “For other people, they can understand and respect it,” she said. “For me, absolutely not.” As their only child, she felt that her choices carried implications far beyond herself. Her father often reminded her that she was the only hope for carrying on the family line. The burden is never articulated as an obligation, yet it lingers beneath the surface: if one person is responsible for carrying on a lineage, then every personal decision begins to feel like a family decision. X described a former partner who had a younger brother. “She didn’t feel the same pressure as I did,” she said. “Even if she made choices her parents didn’t like, there was still someone else.” The difference was not simply about acceptance. It was about how much was at stake. “I know I should just live my own life,” she said. “But it’s not that simple when you’re the only one.” To remain single, to leave home, to choose a partner, or to choose none at all — each of these decisions is shaped by an awareness of how it will affect the family. A world of opportunity At the same time, many only daughters recognize the opportunities the policy made possible. Without siblings competing for investment, many gained access to education, international mobility, and financial support. Some inherited property that might otherwise have been distributed differently. These advantages created space for new possibilities. They also introduced a sense of responsibility. “You grow up feeling like you have to justify their

sacrifice,” X told me. That feeling persists into adulthood. Women in their twenties and thirties often describe a sense of being caught between independence and obligation. They are building their own lives while anticipating future responsibilities. They are expected to make decisions about careers, relationships, and location while keeping their families’ needs in mind. This produces a diffuse, ongoing anxiety that is difficult to name. The One-Child Policy reshaped more than population structure. It altered how families organize care, expectation, and emotional connection. It produced a generation of women who are highly educated, closely tied to their families, and deeply aware of the responsibilities placed upon them. Many of them carry a quiet fear of being absorbed by those responsibilities. Today, as China encourages women to marry and have more children, only daughters occupy an uncertain position. They were raised as singular children. They are now navigating a social environment that increasingly emphasizes traditional family roles. Many are still trying to determine how to balance independence with responsibility, distance with closeness, and personal choice with family expectation. When I was younger, I did not think of myself as shaped by a policy. I experienced it through moments that felt personal, even accidental. But now, I often return to the question of what it means to write this story at all. The ability to reflect on these dynamics — to articulate them, to step back from them — is itself a result of the system that shaped us. That concentration of resources shaped my life. It created possibilities, while also marking the paths that never unfolded. There were two times when my mother became

pregnant again after the one-child policy loosened. Both ended in miscarriage. At the time, I understood them only as things that had happened to her. They did not feel connected to me. Only later did I begin to see those moments differently, as points where the structure of our family might have shifted. If there had been another child, especially a son, the distribution of attention, money, and expectation would have changed. The path that eventually brought me to New York — to study, to write in English, and to move across languages and contexts — would likely not have existed in the same form. The One-Child Policy is often remembered through statistics: birth rates, population decline, demographic imbalance. But for many women of my generation, its legacy lives on in quieter questions: who received the family's resources, who inherited its expectations, and who is now expected to carry its future. We were raised as only daughters. We were also raised to be everything. Written by Lina Ma

Activity Time - Word Search

Find the words below in the puzzle. Words go across or down only.

Words to Find:

CAMPING

GRANITE

TRAILS

CREEK

OCEAN

HOME

FISH

