第八滴到第十滴之间

10月25日，星期六。今天我做了一件小事：用柠檬汁把豆浆点成了豆腐脑。为了这件小事，我前后折腾了三个钟头，中间有一次真的想收摊。

早上我在书里看到一句话，酸能让豆浆里的蛋白质抱成团。我就想，家里的醋太抢味，柠檬清一些，能不能点出嫩豆腐脑？我把问题写在日记本第一页，先榨了小半碗柠檬汁，又热了一杯豆浆，然后一滴一滴地点。点到第八滴，豆浆纹丝不动；点到第十二滴，还是清的。我以为豆浆放凉了，倒回锅里热开，重新点，加了半碗柠檬汁，豆浆依旧是一杯豆浆。

第二次失败。我把勺子放进水池，心里打鼓，要不就这样，反正也没人要求我非做成。但我又想起一句话，实验哪有一次成的。再说，问题还挂在我的日记本第一页上，没解决，我不甘心。我把杯子端回桌上，决定再查一遍资料。这回我查到了关键：温度要八十度上下，太滚不行，太凉不行；点下去要静置，不能一直搅。我这才明白，前两次我又是煮沸又是搅拌，忙得越欢，离成越远。

我重新做。新豆浆热到锅边冒小泡就关火，晾两分钟，滴进十滴柠檬汁，用勺背轻轻推了一下，就不管它了。盖上盖子，坐在灶台边等。十五分钟，我看了三次表，忍住没揭盖。

揭开盖子的那一刻，豆浆表面结了一层嫩嫩的凝花，像街上卖的豆花。我舀了一勺，颤巍巍的，加了一点糖。味道其实一般，还有点酸。可我站在灶台边笑了好一会儿。妈妈从房间出来，问我笑什么。我说，我点出来了。

晚上我在日记本上给今天起了个标题：第八滴到第十滴之间。失败不是方法错了，是方法里的细节我还没找全。第二次失败之后多查的那一遍资料，比那杯成功的豆花值钱。

Between the Eighth Drop and the Tenth

October 25, Saturday. Today I did a small thing: I turned soy milk into tofu pudding with lemon juice. The small thing took three hours in total, and at one point I genuinely wanted to quit.

In the morning I read a line in a book: acid makes the protein in soy milk clump together. Vinegar at home is too sharp, I thought, lemon is cleaner. Could it curd tofu pudding? I wrote the question on the first page of my diary, squeezed half a bowl of lemon juice, heated a cup of soy milk, and started dropping. By the eighth drop, nothing; by the twelfth, still clear liquid. Thinking it had cooled, I poured it back into the pot, boiled it, and started again with another half bowl of juice. It stayed soy milk.

Attempt two, failed. I dropped the spoon in the sink and wavered, maybe just stop, nobody required this of me. Then I remembered: no experiment works on the first try. Besides, the question was still sitting on the first page of my diary, unanswered, and I was not ready to leave it. I carried the cup back to the table and

decided to read the references one more time. This time I found the key: the temperature should be around eighty degrees, too boiling or too cool both fail; after adding the acid, let it rest, stop stirring. Only then did I see that in my first two tries, boiling and stirring as hard as I could, the busier I was, the further away success got.

I started fresh. I heated new soy milk until tiny bubbles edged the pot, turned off the flame, waited two minutes, dropped in ten drops of lemon juice, gave it one gentle push with the back of the spoon, and left it alone. Lid on. I sat by the stove and checked my watch three times without lifting the lid.

Fifteen minutes later, the surface had set into a tender layer of curds, like the tofu pudding sold on the street. I scooped a spoonful, trembling, and added a little sugar. It tasted only average, a bit sour. But I stood by the stove grinning for a long while. My mother came out and asked what I was laughing at. I said, I curdled it.

At night I gave the day a title in my diary: between the eighth drop and the tenth. Failure did not mean the method was wrong; it meant I had not found all its details yet. The extra round of reading after the second failure was worth more than the cup of pudding.

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