西红柿炒鸡蛋

暑假第一周，我在冰箱上贴了一张清单，一、二、三条写得清楚：每天倒垃圾，饭后擦桌子，给阳台的花浇水。孩子看了清单，问有没有钱。我说没有，这是家里的事，你是家里的一份子。他不服气，但第一天还是把垃圾袋拖到了楼下，拖得像拖一条大尾巴。回来时他两手在裤腿上蹭，说垃圾袋比书包还沉。

安排家务不是临时起意。学期里他放学回家往沙发上一瘫，鞋子踢到门口也不摆一摆。我想，暑假整整两个月，不趁这段时间教他做几样事，我陪他过的算什么日子。清单用吸铁石固定在冰箱上，完成一项他自己用笔打勾。头三天我还提醒，第四天起就不用了，他倒完垃圾会在门口喊一声完喽。清单底下他还自己添了一行，摆鞋，谁踢乱谁摆。

第二周学做饭。我挑的第一课是西红柿炒鸡蛋，因为它难不出格。他打鸡蛋，蛋壳掉进去半片，他用筷子去捞，捞得舌头都伸出来。油热了他往后缩，我扶着他的手腕把蛋液倒进锅，刺啦一声他叫唤，蛋鼓起来他又笑。西红柿切得大小不一，大块小块混在一起，出锅倒也像个菜。

那天晚上他自己把菜端上桌，摆在中席。他爸故意说多吃两口，他把盘子往自己这边推了推，说这是他做的，他说了算。从那以后每个周末归他掌一餐，从煮面开始，到学会凉拌黄瓜，刀工还是歪的，人已经不问答什么，改问我想吃什么。

有天他买菜回来，主动交代西红柿涨价了，比上周贵五毛。我忽然明白这堂劳动课教了他什么。他开始记住日子的尺寸，明白一顿饭、一张桌子、一块干净的地，背后都有人费过劲。他自己掌勺以后，不挑食了，菜不合口也只说下次他来做。

暑假的收获不在清单上。清单只要求他做事，日子教给他的却是另一样：一个人再小，也要能自己喂饱自己，能把自己那一角收拾干净。我想，这才是我真正想布置的暑假作业。

Scrambled Eggs with Tomatoes

In the first week of summer vacation I posted a list on the fridge. Item one, item two, item three: take out the trash every day, wipe the table after meals, water the plants on the balcony. The boy looked at the list and asked whether there was pay. I said no, these are affairs of the household, and you are one member of the household. He was not convinced, yet on the first day he still dragged the trash bag downstairs, dragging it like a big tail behind him. When he came back he wiped both hands on his trouser legs, saying the trash bag is heavier than a schoolbag.

The list of housework was not a sudden idea. During the school term he came home and lay down at once, and his kicked-off shoes were never lined up. I thought, summer vacation is two whole months; if this time is not used to teach him a few things, what am I spending the days with him for. The list was fixed to the fridge with a magnet, and each finished item he checked off with his own pen. For the first three days I reminded him; from the fourth day he needed no one, and after taking out the

trash he would call out that it was done from the doorway. Below the list he added one line of his own, lining up the shoes, and whoever kicks them untidy must set them straight.

The second week was learning to cook. I chose scrambled eggs with tomatoes as the first lesson, because it is hard to ruin. He cracked the eggs, and half a shell fell into the bowl; he fished it out with chopsticks, his tongue sticking out. The hot oil made him shrink back; I held his wrist and guided the egg mixture into the pan. It hissed and he cried out, and when the eggs puffed up he laughed. The tomatoes were cut unevenly, big pieces mixed with small, but out of the pan it was a dish of its own.

That evening he carried the dish to the table and set it in the middle. His father made a show of asking for more, and he pushed the plate toward himself, saying he made it and he decides. From then on, one meal each weekend belonged to him. He began with boiled noodles, then learned cold cucumber salad; the knife work was still crooked, yet he stopped asking what to eat and started asking what we would like.

One day he came back from shopping and reported by himself that the price of tomatoes had gone up, five mao dearer than last week. I suddenly saw what this course of labor had taught him. He had begun to remember the measures of daily life, and to understand that a meal, a table, a clean floor each stand on the effort of someone. Since he cooks for himself, he no longer complains about the food, and when a dish does not suit him he only says he will make it himself next time.

The harvest of the summer was not written on the list. The list only asked him to do things; what life taught him was something else, that a person, however small, should be able to feed himself and keep his own corner clean. I think this was the homework I most wanted to give for the summer vacation.