# 厨房归我管的四十天

爸妈去外地照顾外婆的四十天，家里只剩我和妹妹。走的前一晚，爸爸把米面油搬到灶台边，说这个夏天厨房归你管。我嘴上应得痛快，心里想的是没人管我几点睡觉。

头三天就出了洋相。我往番茄炒蛋里放了盐两勺还多，妹妹咬一口就吐了；煮粥睡着了，锅底糊出一层黑壳。妹妹不哭，我也没骂她，两个人蹲在厨房刮锅底，刮到一半都笑了。那天晚上我对着手机查了半小时怎么做一桌能吃的菜。

慢慢地我摸出了门道。妹妹一碗饭、我一碗半；青菜早上买最水灵，晚市打折但蔫；汤里放几片姜，妹妹才肯喝。我开始记账，十块钱的菜钱要转着花样用，月底一算，居然还剩三十几块。妈妈打电话来，我把账念给她听，电话那头安静了一下，她说她没想到。

最难的不是做饭，是那些没人看见的事。洗衣机里的衣服要晾要收，妹妹的家长会要去，屋顶漏水我拿盆接了一夜。有天夜里我躺在床上算下个月的水电费，忽然想起爸妈这些年每个月都在算这些，算了一整个我。我翻了个身，眼睛有点热。

爸妈回来那天，我把钥匙放到爸爸手心，说了句交接完毕。他愣了一下，妹妹在旁边抢着说我做的红烧肉最好吃。四十天前我以为独立就是自由，四十天后我知道，独立是把一屋子人的日子稳稳接住，接得无声无息才算数。

现在偶尔家里还是我做晚饭。我不再查手机了，姜放几片、糖放多少，手比脑子先知道。那口糊过底的锅我留着没换，锅底的印子提醒我：长大不是离开家，是有一天你成了家里托底的人。

妹妹后来跟人提起那四十天，说的不是糊锅，也不是咸的菜，而是有天夜里打雷，我抱着她的作业本去关窗户，回来给她掖了被角。她说那顿雷雨天她睡得香。我听了没接话，心里比哪天都软。

# Forty Days in Charge of the Kitchen

For the forty days my parents were away caring for my grandma on the side of my mother, only my little sister and I were home. The night before they left, my father moved the rice, flour, and oil beside the stove and said the kitchen was mine to run this summer. I answered quickly, while what I really liked about the idea was that no one would tell me when to sleep.

Embarrassments came in the first three days. I put two heaping spoons of salt into tomato and eggs, and my sister spat out her first bite; I fell asleep while cooking porridge and the pot bottom grew a black crust. My sister did not cry, and I did not scold her. We squatted in the kitchen scraping the pot, and halfway through we both started laughing. That night I spent half an hour on my phone looking up how to cook a table of edible food.

Little by little I found the knack. One bowl for my sister, one and a half for

me; greens are crispest bought in the morning, cheaper at the evening market but wilted; a few slices of ginger in the soup and my sister would drink it. I started keeping accounts, stretching ten yuan of vegetable money into variety, and at the end of the month there were still thirty-some yuan left. When my mother called, I read the accounts to her. There was a short silence on the line, then she said she had not expected that.

The hardest part was not cooking but the things no one sees. The washing machine needed hanging and gathering, the parent meeting of my sister needed attending, and when the roof leaked I caught the drip with a basin all night. One night, lying in bed adding up the water and electric bills for the next month, it struck me that my parents had been doing this arithmetic every month for an entire childhood of mine. I turned over, and my eyes felt warm.

The day my parents came back, I placed the key into the palm of my father and said, handover complete. He froze for a moment, and my sister rushed in to say my braised pork was the best. Forty days ago I thought independence meant freedom. Forty days later I know it means catching the days of a whole household firmly in your hands, and it only counts when the catching is silent.

Now and then I still cook dinner at home. I no longer check my phone; how much ginger, how much sugar, my hands know before my head does. I kept that scorched pot instead of replacing it. The mark on its bottom reminds me: growing up is not leaving home. It is becoming, one day, the one who holds the family up.

My little sister later told others about those forty days, and what she picked was not the scorched pot or the salty dishes. It was one stormy night when I carried her homework over to close the windows and came back to tuck her blanket in. She said she slept soundly through that thunder. I did not answer, but something inside me went softer than on any other day.