第一次吃芒果的日记

十月十二日 星期六 晴

今天妈妈买菜，带回两个芒果。它们躺在塑料袋里，一个胖一个瘦，皮是青里泛黄的，肚子上有一块块淡青色的小斑点。妈妈把它们放在果盘边上，说放两天再吃，硬的芒果咬不动，还涩。

我围着果盘看它们。芒果的形状像一个大逗号，一头圆一头尖，弯着腰，皮上有细细的纹路，像老人手背上的筋。奶奶说这叫腰芒，我们老家屋后就有一棵芒果树，果子比这两个小，可是更香。我把胖芒果拿在手里掂了掂，比一个鸡蛋重得多，比一个苹果轻一点。它躺在手心，扁扁的一面贴着掌纹，我觉得它像一只睡着的小船。

下午我忍不住捏了一个。表皮滑滑的，摸上去凉，指头按下去有点软，不像苹果那样硬邦邦。我把芒果举到鼻子底下闻，一股又甜又香的气味从蒂头那里钻出来，像蜂蜜混着花。我对妈妈说，这个肯定能吃了。妈妈说，蒂头香了才算熟透，你再按按两边。

晚饭后爸爸决定切芒果。他先把芒果竖着立稳，刀贴着核下去，把两边的大肉片下来，中间剩一个扁扁的核。然后他拿起一半，刀尖在果肉上横竖划格子，划到皮就停，不划破。划完他把皮往外一顶，果肉一块块翻出来，黄澄澄的，像一只张开花瓣的花，又像刺猬背上的刺。我拍手，管这叫切花刀。

我捧着那一半芒果，对着翻出来的果肉咬。果肉是软的，进到嘴里不用怎么嚼就化了，甜，甜里有一点点酸。就是纤维多，吃完满嘴的丝，牙缝里也藏了丝，我用舌头清理了半天。汁水顺着手腕淌，我舔了一口手腕，还是甜的。

妈妈把另一半切成小块，装在玻璃碗里，让我们用牙签扎着吃。弟弟抢第一块，扎歪了，果肉滑到桌上，他捡起来吹吹又吃，逗得全家笑。我慢慢扎，把每一块都转着看一遍再送进嘴里。碗底剩着汁，妈妈兑了点凉开水递给我，说芒果汁最好喝。我仰头喝完，碗底一圈淡黄的印子，像一小片云留在碗底。

瘦的那个芒果我留到明天。我在日记本上写：芒果要按一按，软了才甜；切花刀的芒果好看，也好吃。写完我想了想，又补一句：核上的肉最难啃，可是最甜，爸爸让我啃了。

Diary of My First Mango

October 12, Saturday, sunny

Mom brought home two mangoes with her groceries today. They lay in a plastic bag, one plump and one skinny, their skins green touched with yellow, patches of pale green freckles on their bellies. Mom set them at the edge of the fruit plate and said to wait two days, that a hard mango cannot be bitten and tastes bitter besides.

I circled the fruit plate and studied them. A mango is shaped like a big comma,

round at one end, pointed at the other, bending at the waist, with fine lines on its skin like the tendons on an old person's hand. Grandma said this kind is called waist mango, and behind her old house stood a mango tree whose fruit was smaller than these two but more fragrant. I weighed the plump mango in my hand: much heavier than an egg, a little lighter than an apple. It lay in my palm, its flat side pressed against my palm lines, and I thought it looked like a little boat asleep.

In the afternoon I could not resist and squeezed one. The skin was smooth and cool, and my finger sank in a little, not hard like an apple. I lifted the mango to my nose, and a sweet rich scent came out of the stem end, like honey mixed with flowers. I told Mom this one was surely ready. She said a mango is truly ripe only when its stem end smells sweet, and told me to press both sides as well.

After dinner Dad decided to cut the mango. He stood it upright first, then ran the knife down along the flat stone to take off the two big cheeks of flesh, leaving the flat stone in the middle. Then he took one half and scored the flesh with the knife tip in a grid of crosswise and lengthwise cuts, stopping at the skin so it stayed whole. When he finished he pushed the skin outward, and the flesh flipped up piece by piece, bright yellow, like a flower opening its petals, or like the spines on a hedgehog's back. I clapped and called it the flower cut.

I held that half mango up and bit into the flipped flesh. It was soft, melting in my mouth almost without chewing, sweet with a thread of sour. Only the fibers were many; after eating, my whole mouth was full of strings, and strings hid between my teeth, and my tongue spent a long while cleaning them out. Juice ran down my wrist, and I licked my wrist, and it was still sweet.

Mom cut the other half into small cubes and served them in a glass bowl for us to spear with toothpicks. My little brother grabbed for the first piece, missed, and the flesh slid onto the table; he picked it up, blew on it, and ate it anyway, making the whole family laugh. I speared mine slowly, turning each cube around to look at it before sending it into my mouth. Juice pooled at the bottom of the bowl; Mom topped it with a little cooled boiled water and handed it to me, saying mango juice is the best drink. I tilted my head back and drank it all, and the ring of pale yellow left at the bottom of the bowl looked like a small cloud stranded there.

I saved the skinny mango for tomorrow. In my diary I wrote: press a mango, and only the soft one is sweet; a mango cut with the flower knife looks good and tastes good. Then I thought a moment and added one more line: the meat on the stone is the hardest to gnaw, but it is the sweetest, and Dad let me gnaw it.

窗台上的芒果

五月三日 星期日 阴转晴

今天姑姑从海南寄来一箱芒果，箱子里垫着报纸，每个芒果单独裹着一层白泡沫网。拆开一个，青皮，硬得像石头。姑姑在电话里说，别急着吃，先在屋里放几天。

我把芒果放在窗台上，每天看它。头两天它一点变化也没有，皮还是青的。第三天，青色从蒂头开始退，黄从那边慢慢漫过来，像一滴黄颜料在水里化开。第四天我伸手摸，表皮还是滑的，可是指头按下去有了印子，软软的，回弹很慢。凑近闻，有一股浓郁的甜香，比橘子香得多，有点像花蜜，又有点像熟透的香蕉。我知道，它熟了。

吃之前我还做了一件事。我把箱子里没熟的青芒果一个一个检查，有伤的挑出来先吃，完好的垫上报纸放回纸箱，纸箱搬到柜子顶上，怕妹妹拿去当球踢。数了数，一共八个，加上窗台这个，正好够全家吃几天。我在纸箱外贴了张纸条，写：芒果，别踢。字是倒着贴的，妹妹看不懂，还是踢了一脚，被妈妈发现了。

晚上我学着大人的样子切芒果。先把芒果立在案板上，它站不稳，滚了一下，我按住它，刀从离核两指的地方切下去，切下两片厚厚的果肉，中间剩下带肉的核。然后我拿刀尖在果肉上划格子，横五刀，竖五刀，手抖，有一刀划破了皮，露出一点红。妈妈说划破了也能吃，只是不好看。我把皮往上一顶，格子翻出一个个小方块，黄得发亮，可惜破的那一角塌了。

我低头咬翻出来的果肉。第一口汁就爆出来，甜得齁，舌头上像抹了糖。果肉细，几乎不用嚼，就是纤维挂在牙上，一根一根的。核上剩的那层肉我舍不得扔，对着核啃，啃得满脸汁，妹妹在旁边笑我像小花猫。我们俩一人一半，她吃方块，我啃核，吃到最后手指黏得合不拢，去洗了三回手。

我在日记里画了一个芒果，旁边写：摸过、闻过、切过、咬过，它才真正是甜的。姑姑说明年还寄，我要留一个放到最熟，最软的那天再吃。

The Mango on the Windowsill

May 3, Sunday, cloudy then sunny

Today my aunt mailed a box of mangoes all the way from Hainan. The box was padded with newspaper, and each mango wore its own sleeve of white foam netting. I unwrapped one: green skin, hard as a stone. Over the phone Aunt said, do not hurry, leave them in the room for a few days first.

I set the mango on the windowsill and watched it daily. For the first two days it showed no change at all, still green. On the third day the green began to retreat from the stem end, and yellow crept in from that side, slow as a drop of yellow dye spreading in water. On the fourth day I reached out and touched it: the skin was

still smooth, but my finger left a dent when I pressed, soft, springing back very slowly. Brought close to the nose it gave off a rich sweet fragrance, far stronger than an orange, something like flower nectar and something like an overripe banana. I knew it was ready.

Before eating I did one more thing. I checked the unripe green mangoes still in the box one by one, set the bruised ones aside to eat first, and laid the perfect ones back on newspaper in the carton, which I moved to the top of the cupboard for fear my sister would use them as a ball. Counting them: eight in all, and with this one on the windowsill, exactly enough for the family for several days. I stuck a note on the carton that read, mangoes, do not kick. I pasted it on upside down; my sister could not read it and kicked the carton anyway, and Mom caught her.

At night I tried cutting the mango the way grown-ups do. I stood it on the cutting board, but it could not keep its balance and rolled once; I held it down and ran the knife in two fingers' width from the stone, taking off two thick slabs of flesh and leaving the meat-clad stone in the middle. Then I scored the flesh with the knife tip, five cuts one way, five the other. My hand trembled and one cut broke through the skin, showing a little red. Mom said a broken cut is still fine to eat, only not pretty. I pushed the skin upward and the grid flipped into little cubes shining yellow, though the broken corner had collapsed.

I bent my head and bit into the flipped flesh. The first bite burst with juice, sweet enough to catch in the throat, as if sugar had been painted onto my tongue. The flesh was fine-grained and needed almost no chewing, only fibers hung on the teeth strand by strand. I could not bear to waste the layer of meat left on the stone, so I gnawed against it and ended up with juice all over my face, and my little sister laughed at me for looking like a small spotted cat. We split the mango between us, one each: she ate the cubes and I gnawed the stone, until our fingers were too sticky to close and we washed them three times.

In my diary I drew a mango and wrote beside it: only after it has been touched, smelled, cut, and bitten does it truly become sweet. Aunt said she will send more next year, and I mean to keep one until it is the ripest and softest of all, and eat it on that day.

三天的芒果日记

六月十日 星期二 晴

放学时校门口有个爷爷卖芒果，两块钱一个。我挑了一个，学着平时看妈妈挑的样子，先看

皮，黄里带红；再摸，表皮光光的，按下去软软的；最后凑近闻，蒂头有香味。爷爷笑了，说你会挑。我拿着芒果走路，香味一路跟着我，到家时书包上好像都沾了芒果味。

六月十一日 星期三 多云

昨天那个芒果我没舍得当天吃，放在书桌上写了一晚上作业。今天放学它更软了，皮上有几道细细的裂纹，像笑开了嘴。我用小刀给它切花刀，这次手稳，格子划得整整齐齐，皮一点没破。往上一顶，果肉全翻出来，金黄的方块一块挨一块。我拍照发给妈妈。晚上妈妈把另一半切了，配着西米和椰奶，做成芒果西米露。我尝第一口，椰奶的滑、西米的弹、芒果的甜混在一起，比单吃还好吃。我把碗底舔得干干净净。

做西米露的时候我在旁边看着。妈妈先把西米倒进开水里煮，煮到中间只剩一点白芯，捞出来过凉水，西米立刻变得透明，像一粒粒小珍珠。芒果肉用刀切成丁，一半下锅和椰奶一起小火煮，一半留着最后撒上去。糖只放了一点点，妈妈说芒果本身够甜。锅里冒出甜丝丝的热气，扑在眼镜片上，白茫茫一片，我擦着眼镜笑。装碗以后我数过，一碗里西米数不清，芒果丁我数了二十一块。

六月十二日 星期四 雨

今天班里周晓带来一盒芒果干，说是她爸爸从四川寄的。芒果干是暗黄色的，边上发黑，摸上去黏手，捏一捏，软而有韧劲，不像鲜芒果那样一按一个印。闻起来是浓缩的甜，像把整个芒果晒干了收进一片里。我咬一小口，嚼很久，甜慢慢出来，最后一点酸尾。周晓说，芒果干是甜，可她还是更喜欢鲜的，鲜的汁多。我想起前天流到手腕上的汁，点点头。放学下雨了，我护着书包跑回家，书包里是妈妈今天买的两颗芒果，青里泛黄，还要再放两天。我想，等它们软了，我还做一回西米露给妈妈吃。

Three Days of Mango Diary

June 10, Tuesday, sunny

At the school gate after class an old grandpa was selling mangoes, two yuan each. I picked one the way I had watched Mom shop: first the skin, yellow touched with red; then a touch, the skin smooth, soft under my finger; last I smelled it close up, and the stem end was fragrant. The grandpa laughed and said I knew how to choose. I walked home holding the mango, its scent following me the whole way, and by the time I got home my schoolbag seemed to smell of mango too.

June 11, Wednesday, cloudy

Yesterday I could not bear to eat that mango the same day; I kept it on my desk while I did homework all evening. Today it was softer, with a few hairline cracks in the skin, like mouths opened in a smile. I gave it the flower cut with a small knife, and this time my hand was steady: the grid came out neat, the skin unbroken. Pushing

it up from below, all the flesh flipped out, golden cubes shoulder to shoulder. I took a photo and sent it to Mom. In the evening she cut the other half and made mango sago with coconut milk. My first mouthful mixed the silkiness of coconut milk, the bounce of the sago, and the sweetness of mango, better than eating the fruit alone. I licked the bowl bottom clean.

I stood beside Mom while she made the sago dessert. First she boiled the sago in hot water until only a white pinhead remained at the center of each bead, then drained them and rinsed them in cold water, and they turned clear at once, like little pearls. She diced the mango flesh: half went into the pot with coconut milk over low heat, half was kept for the top at the end. Only a little sugar went in, since the mango itself was sweet enough. Sweet steam rose from the pot and fogged my glasses, all white and blank, and I wiped my lenses and laughed. After plating, I counted: the sago grains were beyond counting, but the mango cubes came to twenty-one in one bowl.

June 12, Thursday, rain

Today Zhou Xiao in our class brought a box of dried mango, sent by her father from Sichuan. The dried mango was dark yellow with blackened edges, sticky to the touch, and when squeezed it was soft but tough, not denting like a fresh mango. Its smell was sweetness in concentrate, as if a whole mango had been sun-dried and folded into one slice. I bit off a small piece and chewed a long time; the sweetness came out slowly, with a faint sour tail at the end. Zhou Xiao said the dried mango is sweet, but she still prefers the fresh kind, for its juice. I thought of the juice that had run down my wrist the day before, and nodded. It rained after school, and I shielded my schoolbag and ran home. Inside were two mangoes Mom bought that day, green touched with yellow, needing two more days. Once they soften, I thought, I will make sago dessert for Mom one more time.

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