周六的果盘是我和妈妈一起做的

十一月八日，星期六，晴。早上八点多，妈妈提着布袋子问我：今天中午的水果沙拉，你自己做行不行？我嘴上说行，心里其实没底——沙拉酱我会挤，水果可从没挑过。妈妈把果篮递给我，说挑水果的事也归我。我们去了菜场。水果摊上苹果堆成小山，我专挑红得好看的，妈妈拿过去闻了闻，又放回堆里，挑了几个颜色淡些的，说闻着有香气的才面，红得发亮的不少是打了蜡的。挑橙子要捏，紧实但按下去有一点点弹的才好，太硬的干，太软的过了头。香蕉要挑皮上带芝麻点的，妈妈问我知不知道那是什么，我说不知道，她说那是熟透的记号，甜。我捏着那把带点的香蕉，觉得自己像学会了什么暗语。

回到家开始切。妈妈先把苹果皮削掉，示范怎么切块：刀要稳，手指蜷起来抵住刀身，别伸食指。我第一刀就切歪了，块大一块小一块。她不重切，说摆盘能补救。她切梨的时候刀刃在砧板上嗒嗒响，像小马蹄子；切圣女果最利索，刀尖一点，两半落在砧板上，汁水不外溅。苹果切好要泡进淡盐水，不然一会儿就锈成褐色，这个也是妈妈教的。香蕉最后才切，她说香蕉先切会被沙拉酱沤软。

摆盘我把玻璃碗搬到桌上，按颜色一层层码：苹果垫底，橙子瓣围着边，香蕉片搭在上面，圣女果对半点缀。沙拉酱绕着圈淋下去，白线像丝带。妈妈站在旁边说，好看也是味道的一半。奶奶从屋里出来，先递给她第一勺，她眯着眼说甜。爸爸凑过来抢了一大叉，说明天还吃，我嫌他贪，心里已经在排明天的搭配了。

洗完刀和砧板，右手腕还有点酸。我把果盘收进冰箱，酸酸的感觉留在手上，像自己真的会做一样东西了。

The Fruit Bowl on Saturday: A Fruit Salad Made With Mom

November 8th, Saturday, sunny. A little past eight in the morning, Mom carried her cloth bag and asked me: can you make the fruit salad yourself today? I said yes, though inside I was not sure. I knew how to squeeze the dressing, but I had never picked fruit. Mom handed me the fruit basket and said the picking was mine too. We went to the market. Apples were piled into little hills at the stall, and I chose the reddest ones. Mom took them, sniffed, and put them back, picking paler ones instead, saying apples smell right before they taste soft, and the shiny red ones often wear a coat of wax. Oranges must be squeezed: firm with the smallest give, because hard ones are dry and soft ones are past their best. For bananas, look for the sesame speckles on the skin. Mom asked if I knew what they were. I did not. She said they are the marks of full ripeness, and they mean sweetness. I carried that bunch of speckled bananas feeling like I had learned a secret code.

Back home we started cutting. Mom peeled the apples first and showed me how to dice them: keep the knife steady, curl the fingers against the blade, never point the

index finger. My first cut went crooked, the pieces big and small. She did not recut them, saying plating can make it up. When she cut the pear, the blade went clip-clop on the board like a small horse's hooves; her cherry tomato cuts were the quickest, a tap of the knife tip, halves landing on the board without spilling juice. Apple pieces go into light salt water or they rust brown, another thing Mom taught me. Bananas are cut last, she said, or the dressing makes them mushy.

For plating I carried the glass bowl to the table and layered by color: apples on the bottom, orange segments around the rim, banana slices on top, tomato halves for dots. The dressing went round and round, a white ribbon. Mom, standing nearby, said that looking good is half of tasting good. Grandma came out of her room and got the first spoonful; she narrowed her eyes and said it was sweet. Dad grabbed a big forkful and said he wanted it again tomorrow. I called him greedy, but inside I was already planning tomorrow's mix.

After washing the knife and the board, my right wrist still ached a little. I put the fruit basket away in the fridge, the sore feeling still on my hands, as if I had truly learned to make one thing.

停电那晚的芒果沙拉

十一月十四日，星期六，傍晚忽然停了电。冰箱不能开，妈妈提议把快放不住的芒果和苹果赶紧做成果盘，就当晚饭后的点心。说干就干，她拿手机照明，我拎布袋下楼去超市补两样。货架前我捏了捏芒果，硬的像石头，软的又塌了手指，挑了两个不软不硬、凑近果蒂能闻到甜味的。收银员说今晚这一片都停了，超市里反而热闹，好多人围着买蜡烛和雪糕。回家路上我想，停电也没那么糟。

妈妈把果盘端到窗边，趁最后一点天光开工。她削苹果皮，刀贴着果皮转，果皮连成一长条不断，像削苹果比赛里的动作。她教芒果切法：顺着核在皮里划一个井字，刀别划穿皮，然后两手一顶，皮里的果肉就翻成一朵花开着，拿勺一刮就下来。我学着划，井字歪歪扭扭，顶出来的花也缺了瓣，妈妈笑说缺瓣的花也甜。切到一半，天彻底黑了，我们点起两根蜡烛，把碗盘往烛光边挪。烛光里切橙子，刀影在碗壁上晃，香蕉片切得比平时厚。

摆盘是爸爸打着手机手电完成的：苹果和芒果垫底，橙子片围一圈，香蕉片压在外圈，圣女果当纽扣。沙拉酱在黑暗里挤歪了，顺着碗沿淌下来一点，像给果盘描了道白边。烛光下整碗水果亮亮的，谁的手影伸过来都会变成一大片。

品尝在客厅进行。爸爸第一勺就舀到芒果，说甜；妈妈说那是芒果本身甜，酱只是陪衬。我给自己多添了两片芒果，边吃边想，原来挑芒果要按软硬，原来妈妈削皮的手艺是练出来的。灯还没来，我们围着蜡烛把果盘吃得见底。我在日记本上写：希望明天再停电一次，好让我练熟芒果的切法，下次停电，换我主刀。

The Mango Salad on the Night the Power Went Out

November 14th, Saturday. The power went out suddenly in the evening. The fridge could not be opened, so Mom suggested turning the mangoes and apples that were close to turning into a fruit platter, dessert after dinner. Down the stairs we went to the supermarket for two more things, my mother holding her phone as a lamp, me carrying the cloth bag. In front of the shelf I squeezed the mangoes: hard ones felt like stones, soft ones gave way under my finger. I chose two that were neither, and held the stem end to my nose for the sweet smell. The cashier said the whole block was out tonight. The store was busier because of it, full of people gathering candles and popsicles. Walking home I thought an outage was not so bad.

Mom carried the platter to the window and started while the last daylight lasted. She peeled an apple with the blade hugging the skin, the peel coming off in one long unbroken ribbon, like the moves in a peeling contest. She taught me the mango trick: score a hash mark in the skin along the pit without cutting through, then push from both hands and the flesh blooms into an open flower inside the skin, scraped off easily with a spoon. My hash mark came out crooked and the flower lost a few petals. Mom laughed and said a flower with missing petals is still sweet. Halfway through cutting, the sky went fully dark. We lit two candles and moved the bowls closer to the flame. Cutting oranges by candlelight, the knife shadow swam on the bowl wall, and my banana slices came out thicker than usual.

Dad finished the plating with his phone flashlight: apples and mango on the bottom, orange slices in a ring, banana slices pressed around them, tomato halves as buttons. In the dark the dressing squirted crooked and a little ran down the bowl rim, drawing a white edge around the platter. Under candlelight the whole bowl of fruit glowed, and any hand reaching over threw a huge shadow.

Tasting happened in the living room. The first spoonful my father took landed on mango, and he said it was sweet. Mom said the mango itself was sweet and the dressing only kept it company. I slipped two extra mango slices onto my own plate, thinking as I ate: so mangoes are chosen by their give, and so the peeling hands of my mother were trained, not born. The lights never came back, and we finished the platter around the candles. I wrote in my diary: I hope the power goes out again tomorrow, so I can practice the mango trick, and next outage I will be the head knife.

碗见底之后

十一月二十一日，星期六。傍晚六点半，玻璃碗见了底，最后一勺香蕉被爸爸抢走，他咂着嘴说没吃够。我坐在桌边回想整个下午，觉得该把它记下来。

下午三点，妈妈把一袋子水果倒在餐桌上，宣布今天做水果沙拉，她负责切，我负责一切别的。她切苹果的样子我头一回仔细看：刀贴着果核走，两边各下一刀，核整整齐齐留在中间；削皮时刀尖钩着果皮转，果皮连成一整条螺旋，落在砧板上像卷起来的丝带。我帮不上忙，只扶着接果皮的盆。她让我试着削一个梨，我削得坑坑洼洼，果肉一块深一块浅。她把那个丑梨切成块，放进自己碗里，说丑的也好吃，先吃掉。

三点半到五点是切的时间，餐桌变成了工作台。砧板摆中间，三个白盆一字排开，垃圾袋挂在桌角。妈妈切橙子前先把橙子在桌上滚软，说这样汁水不迸；她切西瓜样的大水果时手腕压着刀背走，切小的就只用指尖搭着刀。我在旁边递水果、数块数，苹果块她要求每块都能一口闷，切大了就用刀背再划一刀。中途她接了个电话，回来发现我把泡盐水的苹果捞出来晾着，问为什么，我说书上说盐水泡久了水塌。她点点头，没夸，只是把那盆苹果全摆在我码的那一层。

切好的水果分盆装着：苹果块泡进淡盐水，橙子切成薄片，香蕉斜切成马牙。摆盘归我，妈妈退到一边擦手。我把碗推到桌子正中，按颜色深浅一层层往上码，高的放中间，她只提醒了这一句。淋沙拉酱的时候我屏着气，怕挤多了，结果她接过去手腕一转就匀了，说这个也要练。摆完她想了想，把两颗歪了的圣女果挪正。

品尝是全家一起的，每人第一勺都先递给我。爸爸评价说刀工不行，摆盘有想法。我记了一下午：挑水果时她拿起来捏一捏再闻一闻；切的时候她手腕不动，小臂带动刀；尝咸淡时她只蘸一点点酱，抹在舌尖上。原来妈妈的手就是这样练出来的，一天一天，切了几百个苹果。我低头看自己的手，指腹上还有梨汁黏过的痕迹。妈妈说明天还做，明天让我主事。

After the Bowl Hit Bottom

November 21st, Saturday. At half past six in the evening the glass bowl hit bottom, and the last spoonful of banana was snatched by Dad, who smacked his lips and said not enough. I sat at the table going over the whole afternoon, and decided to write it down.

At three in the afternoon Mom emptied a bag of fruit onto the table and announced fruit salad for today: she would do the cutting, I would do everything else. It was the first time I really watched her hands on an apple. The knife walked along the core, one cut on each side, leaving the core neat in the middle. Peeling, the knife tip hooked the skin and turned, and the peel came off as one whole spiral ribbon, curling onto the board like a wound-up ribbon. I could not help with the knife, so I held the bowl that caught the peels. She let me try one pear. My pear came out pitted

and patchy, the flesh deep here and shallow there. She cut that ugly pear into chunks, dropped them into her own bowl, and said ugly fruit tastes fine, finishing it first.

From three thirty to five was cutting time, and the dining table became a workbench. The board sat in the middle, three white bowls in a row, the trash bag hung on the table corner. Before cutting oranges Mom rolled them soft on the tabletop, saying that keeps the juice from bursting; on big fruits she pressed the spine of the knife with her wrist, on small ones she rested only her fingertips on the blade. I handed fruit over and counted pieces. Her rule for apple chunks was one bite each, and oversized pieces got another slice from the spine of her knife. Midway she took a phone call, and came back to find me scooping the soaked apples out to drain. She asked why. I said a book told me salt water left too long makes fruit soggy. She nodded, did not praise me, and placed that whole bowl of apples on the layer I had stacked.

The cut fruit sat in separate bowls: apple chunks in light salt water, oranges in thin slices, bananas cut on the bias into horse teeth. Plating was mine, and Mom stepped back to dry her hands. I pushed the bowl to the center of the table and stacked the fruit by color, light to dark, the tall pieces in the middle, her only reminder. When it came to the dressing I held my breath, afraid of squeezing too much, so she took the bottle, gave her wrist one turn, and it spread evenly. That too takes practice, she said. When the plating was done she thought a moment, then straightened two tilted tomato halves.

Tasting was a family event, and every person handed me the first spoon. Dad gave his review: the knife work is weak, the plating has ideas. I had been watching all afternoon: how she picks up a fruit, squeezes it, then sniffs; how her wrist stays still while her forearm drives the knife; how she tastes the dressing by dabbing just a little onto the tip of her tongue. So this is how the hands of my mother were trained, day by day, through hundreds of apples. I looked down at my own hands; my fingertips still felt sticky with pear juice. Mom said we would make it again tomorrow, and tomorrow I would be in charge.

www.vv99.net