我的第一次榨汁任务

那个周六早上，妈妈把十块钱拍在桌上，说今天的水果归我买，要六个橙子，挑最甜的。我攥着钱出门，感觉这任务比期末考试还重。

水果店的橙子堆成小山。我想起姥爷挑橙子的手艺，看皮要挑细的，肚脐要挑小的，拿两只比重量。我照方抓药，拿起一个，指甲在皮上掐出一个小圈，凑近闻，一股清亮的香钻进鼻子里，就是它了。连着闻了七八个，卖货阿姨看着我笑，说闻得比她挑得还细。我挑满六个，钱还剩两块五，路上买了根冰棍奖励自己。

回家我宣布橙子由我洗、我切、我榨。妈妈把刀让给我，我两半切开，切的时候汁水顺着手腕流。榨汁机嗡嗡响，汁子进壶，白沫浮上来，我舀一口尝，酸得整张脸皱起来。翻出蜂蜜加了一勺，再尝，正好。爸爸下班回来喝了一大口，说这汁有水平，我表面上淡定，心里乐开了花。

下午我把壶搬去阳台，给姥爷留了一杯。姥爷尝了，问是不是掐皮闻着挑的，我说是。他点头，说他那套手艺传下来了，比传家传得还顺。

后来每个周末我都去挑橙子，从六个挑到一兜。那十块钱的任务我早忘了金额，忘不掉的是掐开橙皮那一瞬间的香，和那壶酸得眯眼、加了蜂蜜才完美的汁。原来长大就是，从妈妈拍在桌上的十块钱，变成自己攥着钱去挑一兜甜。

班里开班会，老师让每人带一样水果。别人带苹果香蕉，我抱了一兜橙子去，当场掏皮给同学闻。有个同学说超市的橙子也这样，我摇头，说超市的橙子没人替你闻，自己闻过的才作数。老师尝了一瓣，问我怎么挑的，我把看皮、比重量、掏圈闻香说了一遍，说得比课文还熟。那兜橙子当天就分光了。

My First Juicing Mission

That Saturday morning my mother slapped ten yuan on the table and said the fruit was mine to buy today, six oranges, the sweetest ones. I gripped the money and went out feeling the mission was heavier than a final exam.

The oranges at the fruit shop were piled into a small hill. I remembered a trick of my grandpa: choose thin skin, choose a small navel, compare two for weight. I followed the recipe exactly. I picked one up, pressed a small ring into the peel with my nail, brought it close, and a bright fragrance drilled into my nose. That was it. I smelled seven or eight in a row, and the saleswoman watched me laughing, saying I smelled more carefully than she picked. I filled six oranges with two yuan fifty left, and bought myself a popsicle on the way home as a reward.

At home I announced that I would wash, cut, and juice the oranges. My mother handed me the knife. I cut them in half, juice running down my wrist as I worked. The juicer buzzed, juice poured into the pitcher, white foam rising. I scooped a taste and my whole face puckered from the sourness. I found the honey, added a spoon,

tasted again, perfect. My father came home from work, took a big swallow, and said this juice had class. Outwardly I stayed calm; inside I was blooming.

In the afternoon I carried the pitcher to the balcony and saved a cup for grandpa. He tasted it and asked if I had picked them by pinching the peel and smelling. I said yes. He nodded and said his craft had been passed down, more smoothly than family heirlooms travel.

Every weekend after that I went to pick oranges, from six to a whole bag. I have long forgotten the amount of that ten-yuan mission. What I cannot forget is the fragrance the instant an orange peel was pinched open, and that pitcher of juice so sour it made me squint, perfect only after the honey. Growing up, it turns out, is going from ten yuan slapped on the table by your mother to gripping your own money and going out to pick a bag of sweetness.

At our class meeting each student had to bring one kind of fruit. Others brought apples or bananas; I hugged a bag of oranges to school and pinched the peel for my classmates to smell on the spot. One classmate said supermarket oranges are the same. I shook my head and said nobody smells the oranges for you at the supermarket; only the ones you smelled yourself count. Our teacher tasted a segment and asked how I picked them. I recited the looking at the skin, the weighing in two hands, the pinching of a ring and the smelling, more fluently than any textbook passage. That bag of oranges was shared out completely that same day.