苹果皮断了，接上就好

奶奶生病那天，妈妈在厨房跟我说：你长大了，给奶奶削个苹果。我点头，心里却打鼓——我只见过大人削苹果，自己从来没碰过那把弯弯的削皮刀。

我从刀架上取下削皮刀。它轻得很，铁片子弯成一个小拱，中间一道细缝。我学着奶奶的样子把苹果攥在左手里，右手捏刀，刀口贴住苹果顶。可是苹果在我手里滑，刀刃在它身上打滑，吱的一声，只刮掉一层白印子。我换了个姿势，把苹果按在桌沿上，刀一推，咔，一条绿白相间的皮从刀缝里钻出来，卷成一个小筒。我心头一热，原来削皮是这样的。

皮越削越长，像一条小路绕着苹果走。我眼睛盯着那条皮，手一抖，咔哒，断了。断头卷在刀上，苹果上露出一道白茬，像路修到一半塌了。我捏着断掉的半截皮，火气上来，把刀往桌上一放：不削了，你看，全毁了。

奶奶在床上笑，声音还虚：接上呀。她说皮断了不要紧，把断头对准原来的口子，刀压上去，它就接着长了。我将信将疑，捡起那半截皮按回白茬上，刀口抵住接缝，轻轻一推——真的，新皮又从刀缝里钻出来，跟原来那条接上了，只留一个小小的疤。我长长出了口气，像把断掉的风筝线重新系好。

后半圈我削得慢。苹果在我手里转，一圈，又一圈，皮越来越长，盘在桌上像一条睡着的蛇。最后一刀收口，整条皮完整地躺在桌上，我把它摆成一个圆，比了比，正好是苹果原来的大小。原来它这么大，我头一回知道。

我把削好的苹果递给奶奶。她掰了一半给我。我咬下自己削的第一口，果肉白生生的，汁水多，甜里带一点点酸。说不上比平时好吃多少，可我嚼得特别慢。妈妈从厨房探头出来，问我甜不甜。我说甜。这甜不一样——这甜是我自己一刀一刀削出来的。

回屋我把那条完整的皮夹进字典，压平。后来我又削过很多苹果，断皮的时候少了，可我总留着那条断过又接上的皮。它提醒我：皮断了不要紧，接上，接着削，苹果照样是完整的。

The Peel Broke, Just Tie It Back On

The day grandmother fell ill, my mother said to me in the kitchen: You are growing up, go peel an apple for her. I nodded, but my heart was drumming. I had only ever watched grown-ups peel apples; I had never touched that curved peeling knife myself.

I took the peeler from the knife rack. It was very light, a blade bent into a small arch with a narrow slit in the middle. I copied grandmother, gripping the apple in my left hand, pinching the knife in my right, setting the edge against the top of the apple. But the apple slipped in my hand, the blade skidded on its skin, and with a squeak it only scraped off a white mark. I changed my stance, braced the apple against the edge of the table, and pushed the knife. Click. A green-and-white ribbon of peel curled up through the slit into a little tube. My chest warmed. So this is

how peeling works.

The peel grew longer, like a path winding around the apple. My eyes stayed on the path, my hand trembled, and with a snap it broke. The broken end curled on the knife, a raw white scar showed on the apple, like a road collapsed halfway through its building. I held the broken half of the peel, anger rising, and dropped the knife on the table: I quit. Look, it is all ruined.

Grandmother laughed from her bed, her voice still weak: Tie it back on. She said a broken peel does not matter. Line the broken end up with the original cut, press the knife over it, and it keeps growing. Half doubting, I laid the torn half back on the raw scar, set the blade at the seam, and pushed gently. Truly, new peel came through the slit and joined the old ribbon, leaving only a small scar. I breathed out long, like retying a snapped kite string.

I peeled the second half slowly. The apple turned in my hand, one round, another round, the peel longer and longer, coiled on the table like a sleeping snake. The last stroke closed the circle, and the whole ribbon lay on the table. I arranged it into a ring and compared it with the apple. It was exactly the size the apple had been. So it had been this big. I knew that for the first time.

I handed the peeled apple to grandmother. She broke off half for me. I bit my first bite of my own peeling. The flesh was snow-white, full of juice, sweet with a thread of sour in it. It was not much tastier than usual, yet I chewed very slowly. My mother peeked out of the kitchen and asked if it was sweet. I said sweet. This sweetness was different. This sweetness I had peeled out myself, stroke by stroke.

Back in my room I pressed the unbroken peel into my dictionary to flatten it. I have peeled many apples since, and break the peel less often, but I still keep that ribbon that broke and was joined again. It reminds me: a broken peel does not matter. Tie it back on, keep peeling, and the apple is whole all the same.