妈妈买回菠萝的那天

10月5日 星期一 晴

今天妈妈买回一个菠萝，头顶长着一圈绿冠，像戴了一顶扎手的王冠。它往桌上一放，整个厨房都是香的，香得有点霸道，把酱油味都挤到一边去了。

爸爸负责削。他把菠萝按在案板上，刀顺着往下走，皮一片一片卷起来，露出黄澄澄的肉。可是肉上有一个一个黑褐色的小眼，斜着排成行，像菠萝身上藏了一排小秘密。爸爸说这些眼必须挖掉，不然扎嘴。他刀尖斜着插下去，一挑，一个眼就出来了，沿着斜线一路挖过去，挖完在菠萝身上留下一条一条的沟，像给菠萝梳了辫子头。

妈妈把切好的块装进盆，舀了三大勺盐，倒进凉开水。她说菠萝脾气倔，得用盐水劝一劝，泡二十分钟，酸的地方就会服软。我蹲在盆边看，一块块菠萝泡在水里，气泡从果肉里冒出来，啵的一声浮上来破掉。盐水慢慢变得有点浑，菠萝块的尖角看上去也比刚切下来时软了些。我问盐水在干什么，妈妈说在帮菠萝把心里的酸放出来一点。

二十分钟还没到，我就伸手去捞。妈妈拍我的手：时间没到，酸还没跑完。我数着秒针熬到点，捞起一块塞进嘴里。第一口，舌头一下子缩起来，酸得我左眼眯了一下——盐水根本没把它劝住嘛！我又不服气地咬了第二口，等舌头站稳了再尝，咦，甜味从酸后面钻出来了，凉凉的，甜甜的，跟第一口不是同一块菠萝似的。

我在日记本上写：菠萝跟橡皮筋一样，得先泡一泡、拉一拉，甜味才肯出来。妈妈看了我的日记，笑说这个比喻她服气。那个菠萝我们吃了两顿，剩下的冠我舍不得扔，插在水杯里，摆在窗台最亮的位置，盼它明年结一个小小的菠萝给我。奶奶说冠还能炒肉，我说这个不行，这个是留着结果子的。

The Day Mom Brought Home a Pineapple

October 5th, Monday, sunny.

Today Mom brought home a pineapple with a green crown on its head, like a spiky tiara. The moment it landed on the table, the whole kitchen smelled of it, a bossy smell that pushed the soy sauce aside.

Dad took charge of peeling. He pressed the pineapple on the cutting board and the knife traveled downward, skin curling off in ribbons to reveal golden flesh. But the flesh was dotted with little brown eyes, set in slanting rows, as if the pineapple hid a line of secrets under its skin. Dad said every eye must be dug out or it would prick the mouth. He angled the knife tip, flicked, and one eye popped out. Working along the diagonal lines, he left grooves all over the pineapple, like a head of hair combed into braids.

Mom put the cut pieces into a bowl, added three big spoonfuls of salt, and poured in cooled boiled water. She said pineapple is stubborn and must be persuaded with salt water: soak it twenty minutes and the sour parts will soften. I squatted by the bowl watching bubbles rise from the flesh and pop. I asked what the salt water was doing. Mom said it was helping the pineapple let a little of its sourness out.

Before the twenty minutes were up, I reached in to fish out a piece. Mom swatted my hand: time not up, the sourness has not finished leaving. I counted the second hand until the bell and popped a piece into my mouth. First bite: my tongue flinched and my left eye squeezed shut. The salt water had not persuaded it at all! Too stubborn to admit defeat, I took a second bite, waited for my tongue to stand its ground, and lo, sweetness crept out from behind the sourness, cool and sweet, as if it were a different pineapple from the first bite.

I wrote in my diary: a pineapple is like a rubber band. Soak it and stretch it first, and only then will the sweetness agree to come out. Mom read the diary and said she admired the comparison. We finished the pineapple in two sittings. I could not bear to throw the crown away, so I stood it in a glass of water, hoping it will grow me a tiny pineapple next year.

我第一次给菠萝削皮

10月12日 星期六 阴转晴

今天我家来了一个菠萝，个头不大，屁股圆圆的，站都站不稳，往台面上一放就歪倒，像个喝醉的小胖墩。我自告奋勇要削它，妈妈把水果刀递给我，自己退到一边当观众。

第一刀我就切歪了。刀顺着菠萝转，皮削下来厚一道薄一道，掉在案板上像一条断了色的彩带。削完一看，菠萝身上还留着一块块没去净的黄皮，活像没洗干净的脸。这还不算糟，最难的是挖眼。那些黑眼斜着排，我照着妈妈的样子用刀尖去挑，挑出来的洞一个深一个浅，菠萝身上顿时全是麻子。我有点灰心，把刀放下，说它这辈子毁了。

妈妈走过来，没笑话我，只把菠萝转了个方向，说：眼睛不能一个个挖，要顺着它们排的斜线，两刀斜着夹出一个三角口，整条眼沟就出来了。我试了试，果然，刀尖斜插下去再斜挑上来，一条眼连着一条眼，整整齐齐地揭下来，菠萝身上留下一道螺旋的沟，比妈妈平时削的还好看。原来菠萝的眼不是乱长的，是排好队等着被请走的。

切好的块我主动泡了盐水。我记住了上次的教训，掐着表泡满二十分钟，一分钟都没少。等待的时候我在盆边转了三圈，想伸手又缩回来，怕自己前功尽弃。捞起来请妈妈先尝，她咬了一口说甜。我再尝，确实甜，甜里还带一点我自己劳动的味道，说不上来，就是比平时买的罐头菠萝多一层东西。

晚上我在日记里写：今天我把一个麻子脸菠萝救成了螺旋纹菠萝。削菠萝跟写作业差不多，蛮干不行，得找到它排队的规律。妈妈听见我这么说，从厨房探出头来，说这比喻用得她无话可说。

The First Time I Peeled a Pineapple

October 12th, Saturday, cloudy then sunny.

A pineapple came to our house today. Not big, with a round bottom, unable to stand straight: set on the counter it tipped over like a tipsy little chubby thing. I volunteered to peel it. Mom handed me the fruit knife and stepped back to be the audience.

My first cut went crooked. The knife traveled around the fruit, skin coming off thick in places, thin in others, falling onto the board like a ribbon with its color broken. When I finished, patches of yellow skin still clung to the fruit, like a face that had not been washed properly. That was not the worst part. The hardest job was digging out the eyes. They sat in slanting rows. I copied Mom, prying at them with the knife tip, and the holes came out one deep one shallow, turning the pineapple into a pockmarked face. My heart sank. I put the knife down and announced that its life was ruined.

Mom walked over without laughing. She just turned the pineapple a quarter turn and said: do not dig the eyes one by one. Follow the slanting lines they form, two cuts making a V, and the whole eye-groove lifts out in one strip. I tried it. Sure enough: knife tip angled in, angled out, one eye joining the next, coming off in neat strips, leaving a spiral groove on the fruit, prettier than Mom’s usual cutting. It turned out pineapple eyes do not grow in disorder. They stand in queues, waiting to be escorted away.

I soaked the pieces in salt water on my own, remembering last time’s lesson, and kept them in for a full twenty minutes, not one second short. I fished one out and asked Mom to taste first. She bit and said sweet. I tasted too. It was sweet, and the sweetness carried something else, the taste of my own labor, hard to name, just one layer more than canned pineapple.

At night I wrote in my diary: today I rescued a pockmarked pineapple and turned it into a spiral-patterned one. Peeling a pineapple is a lot like doing homework. Brute force does not work. You have to find the pattern in which it stands in line. Mom heard this from the kitchen and poked her head out to say the comparison left her speechless.

那个酸掉牙的菠萝

10月19日 星期六 小雨

今天妈妈从菜场拎回一个菠萝，外皮黄得发亮，按一按还软，卖菠萝的摊主拍着胸脯说甜。结果这个菠萝从头到尾都在撒谎，它是我吃过最酸的菠萝，没有之一。

先说削皮。刀刚划开一道口子，香味就冲出来了，浓得黏鼻子，闻起来是百分之百的甜。爸爸一边削一边宣布，今晚这个菠萝管够。他削得飞快，皮削下来，肉黄得像小太阳，眼也挖得干干净净。谁也没想到，外表和香味全是假话。

切好装盆，盐照放，水照倒，二十分钟一分没少。盐水是请过菠萝了，可它根本不听。第一块是妈妈试的，她咬下去脸色一变，把那块举给大家看，说你们谁也别想逃。我凑上去舔了一小口，舌头立刻像被电了一下，整颗牙都酸倒了，赶紧灌了半杯温水。爸爸不信邪，咬了一大口，接下来三秒钟他一言不发，然后猛地跳起来去找糖罐，那样子像被烫了脚。

全家对着盆里的菠萝发愁。倒掉可惜，吃又吃不下去。弟弟还不服气，又去舔了一口，结果整张脸皱成一团，像被捏住的橡皮鸭子，逗得大家本来愁着也笑出了声。最后还是奶奶有办法。她把菠萝全倒进小锅，加半碗水和好几勺白糖，小火慢慢熬，边熬边搅。二十分钟后揭开锅盖，酸甜味变成了果酱香，酸脾气全被糖收走了。果酱抹在馒头上，我一次吃了两片，谁还敢说这个菠萝不行。

晚上我在日记里写：今天明白了一个道理，闻着甜的未必吃着甜，看着酸的也未必没用。一个酸掉牙的菠萝，让奶奶一锅熬成了果酱。它不是不好，只是还没遇到对的锅。妈妈在旁边补了一句：也不只是菠萝，还有挑菠萝的妈妈。我们都笑了。

The Pineapple That Set My Teeth on Edge

October 19th, Saturday, light rain.

Today Mom carried home a pineapple from the market. Its skin shone yellow, it gave softly to the thumb, and the stall owner thumped his chest swearing it was sweet. As it turned out, that pineapple lied from start to finish. It is the sourest pineapple I have ever eaten, bar none.

Start with peeling. The moment the knife opened a slit, the fragrance rushed out, thick enough to stick to the nose, smelling one hundred percent sweet. Dad announced while peeling that tonight there would be more than enough pineapple. He worked fast. The skin came off, the flesh was yellow as a little sun, every eye cleanly removed. No one guessed that both the looks and the fragrance were lies.

The pieces went into a bowl. Salt added, water poured, a full twenty minutes, not one missing. The salt water had indeed invited the pineapple to behave, but it

refused to listen. Mom tasted the first piece. Her face changed, and she held the piece up for everyone: none of you can escape this one. I leaned in and licked a tiny corner. My tongue got an electric shock at once, my whole jaw went sour, and I had to chase it with half a glass of warm water. Dad would not believe it and bit off a big piece. For three seconds he said nothing, then sprang up and went hunting for the sugar jar, looking as if his feet had been scalded.

The whole family stared at the bowl in despair. Throwing it away was a pity; eating it was impossible. Grandma found the answer in the end. She tipped all the pineapple into a small pot, added half a bowl of water and several spoonfuls of sugar, and simmered it slowly, stirring as it went. Twenty minutes later, lifting the lid, the sour-sweet smell had become jam fragrance, the sour temper entirely collected by the sugar. Spread on steamed buns, I ate two slices in one sitting. Who now says this pineapple is no good.

At night I wrote in my diary: today I understood that what smells sweet is not always what tastes sweet, and what looks useless is not always useless. A pineapple sour enough to set teeth on edge became jam in Grandma’s one pot. It was not bad. It simply had not met the right pot yet. Mom chimed in from beside me: not only pineapples, but also the mother who picks them. We all laughed.