一只泡泡的一生

我的一生有十一秒。这个数字是我猜的，不过对一只泡泡来说，十一秒和一辈子是同一个词。

我的出生地是一根弯头吸管的口。一个初中生把嘴唇贴上去，吹得很轻很稳——后来我猜，他是故意的，他想让我活得久一点。我吸足了那层水膜，慢慢胀大，脱离吸管口的时候，我听见底下有人喊：这个大！我确实大，我有拳头大，我全身是一层比头发丝薄几十倍的水和肥皂，中间裹着一团空气，那就是我的身体。

我往上升。操场上的太阳从侧面打过来，打在我身上。这是我最骄傲的时刻：我的肚子上开始转颜色。粉、绿、蓝，一圈一圈流动。那不是我自己有的颜色，是光替我排的队。光钻进我前边的膜，又钻进后边的膜，两股光碰头，有的颜色叠在一起更亮，有的颜色互相抵消，剩下的就挂在我身上转。他们管这个叫薄膜干涉，在物理课本的某一页。我不懂这个词，我只负责好看。

底下那群孩子开始追我。一个扎羊角辫的女孩边跑边惊呼：彩虹！彩虹飞起来了！其他孩子跟着仰起脸。他们伸出手，我躲得开——不是我会躲，是风替我拐了个弯。我看见那个女孩的手在我身下合拢，扑了个空，泡泡水溅了她一袖子，她笑得比抓到还高兴。

第十一秒，我落向草坪。我知道我要碎了。我这一身膜太薄，撑不住自己。落地前最后半个身子还朝着太阳，我把我全部的粉、绿、蓝都转到朝上的那一面。然后我碎了，水点落在草叶上，我的十一秒结束。

如果你那天在操场上，你见过我。你大概不记得了，没关系。第二天下午，那个学生会再吹出一只我，彩虹照旧。美这个东西就是这样，它不靠一只泡泡活着，它靠一层膜和一缕光，谁凑齐了，它就再来一遍。

The Life of a Single Bubble

My life lasted eleven seconds. That number is my guess, but for a bubble, eleven seconds and a lifetime are the same word.

My birthplace was the mouth of a bent straw. A middle school student pressed his lips to it and blew very gently, very steadily; later I guessed he did it on purpose, wanting me to live a little longer. I filled out with that film of water, swelled slowly, and as I left the straw I heard someone below shout: this one is big! I was big, fist-sized. My whole body was a film of water and soap tens of times thinner than a hair, wrapping a pocket of air inside. That was me.

I rose. The sun on the playground struck me from the side. That was my proudest moment: colors began turning on my belly, pink, green, blue, ring after ring, flowing. The colors were not mine; light lined them up for me. Light entered my front film and my back film, the two beams met, some colors stacked brighter, some canceled out, and what remained hung on me, turning. They call it thin-film interference, on a certain page of the physics textbook. I do not know the word. I am only in charge of

looking good.

The children below started chasing me. A girl with two pigtails ran and shouted: A rainbow! The rainbow is flying! The others tilted their faces up. They reached out their hands, and I got away; not because I dodge, but because the wind turned a corner for me. I saw the girl's hands close beneath me on empty air, soap water splashing onto her sleeve, and she laughed harder than if she had caught me.

In the eleventh second I fell toward the grass. I knew I was going to break. My film is too thin to hold myself up. In my last half-second I still faced the sun, and I turned all my pink, green, and blue to the upward side. Then I burst, droplets landing on the grass blades, and my eleven seconds ended.

If you were on that playground, you saw me. You probably do not remember. That is fine. Tomorrow afternoon the same student will blow another me, and the rainbow will come as usual. Beauty works this way: it does not live in one bubble. It lives in a film and a ray of light, and whoever assembles both gets it again.