雪的一夜

科学老师让我们观察一种自然现象，写连续观察日记。我本来想观察豆芽，结果这个周末，雪替我选了题目。

睡前那会儿，初雪刚开始。我趴在窗台上刷牙，看见对面楼的灯光里飘着几个白点，一开始只有两三片，斜着飘过来，贴在窗玻璃上，化成一个小水印。我数了数，一分钟落下来十一片。我对妈妈说，要下雪了。妈妈说，就那几片，下不成的。我不说话，继续刷牙。我想，雪下不下成，得再等等看。

夜里两点多，我忽然醒了。不是被声音吵醒的，是被光。窗帘没拉严，缝里透进来的光比平时亮，白亮白亮的，照在被子上。我光着脚下床，把窗帘拉开一条缝。外面的雪正下得密，路灯把雪照成金色，一片挨着一片，往下坠，坠得又慢又稳，没有一片是横着飞的。地上已经白了，白得很平整，像有人趁我睡觉的时候，把整条街重新铺了一遍。窗玻璃的下半截结了冰花，一片一片像蕨草，像鹿角，我用手哈了口气，冰花上化出一个圆圆的小窗，透过小窗看出去，雪还在下，一点声音都没有。我看了很久，久到脚都凉了，才回床上。躺下之前我在心里记了一笔：半夜两点，雪下得密，无声，地面积雪约一寸。

早晨我是被鸟叫醒的。拉开窗帘——雪停了。天是干净的浅蓝色，云退到很远很远的地方。楼下的雪地白得晃眼，平整，完整，一个脚印都没有，一辆车的轮印都没有。对面楼的屋顶像盖了一条厚棉被，被沿整整齐齐。单元门口那辆自行车，车筐里积了满满一筐雪，边沿还鼓出来一点。我趴在窗上数，对面楼道的台阶，一级一级全白了，数到第七级才看见铁台阶的颜色。

八点多，楼下终于有了第一个下楼的人。是个穿红棉袄的阿姨，走到雪地里，停了一下，大概舍不得踩。然后她抬起脚，踩下去，咯吱一声——我在五楼都听见了。她身后跟出来一个小男孩，专踩她刚踩出来的脚印，一步一个，踩得认认真真。再后来，电动车、汽车、送奶的车，一条一条把路压出印子。到中午，那条平整的白就再也找不出来了。

我在观察日记上写：初雪在睡前，落得试探；半夜下得密而静；早晨停，留下完整的一夜，然后被人间一点一点踩走。雪下了一夜，我醒着三个时段，全看见了。科学老师说，观察要连续。我这一篇，从睡前两点到早晨八点，一分钟都没断。

One Night of Snow

Our science teacher asked us to observe a natural phenomenon and keep a continuous observation diary. I had planned to observe bean sprouts, but this weekend the snow chose the topic for me.

Just before bed, the first flakes began. I was brushing my teeth at the windowsill when I saw a few white specks drifting in the light of the building opposite. At first there were only two or three, slanting over, sticking to the window glass, melting into little water marks. I counted: eleven flakes fell in one

minute. I told Mom, it's going to snow. Mom said, just those few, it won't make it. I said nothing and kept brushing. Whether it makes it, I thought, we'll have to wait and see.

A little after two in the morning I suddenly woke up. Not from sound - from light. The curtain was not pulled tight, and the light through the gap was brighter than usual, a white brightness lying on the quilt. I got out of bed barefoot and opened a crack in the curtain. Outside, the snow was falling thick, lit gold by the street lamp, flake after flake coming down slowly and steadily, not one of them flying sideways. The ground was already white, white and smooth, as if someone while I slept had relaid the whole street. The lower half of the window glass had grown ice flowers, frond like ferns, branching like antlers. I breathed on them, and a round little window melted in the ice; through it the snow was still falling, without a sound. I watched so long my feet went cold, then I went back to bed. Before lying down I noted in my mind: two a.m., snow falling thick, silent, about an inch accumulated.

In the morning birds woke me. I pulled the curtain - the snow had stopped. The sky was a clean pale blue, the clouds retreated very, very far away. The snow below was dazzling white, smooth, whole, without a single footprint, without a single tire track. The roof of the building opposite lay under a thick quilt, its hem neat. The bicycle by the building entrance had a basket brimful of snow, mounded slightly above the rim. I lay on the window and counted the steps of the opposite stairway: white, every one, until the seventh where I finally saw the iron's color.

After eight, at last the first person came downstairs. It was an auntie in a red padded coat. She walked to the edge of the snow, paused, reluctant to step, it seemed. Then she lifted her foot and pressed down - crunch. I heard it on the fifth floor. Behind her came a little boy stepping exactly into her fresh footprints, one by one, very earnest. After that electric bikes, cars, the milk truck laid their tracks one by one. By noon that smooth white could no longer be found.

In my diary I wrote: the first snow came before bed, falling tentatively; at midnight it fell thick and silent; it stopped in the morning, leaving one whole night intact, which the human world then trod away bit by bit. The snow fell one night, and I was awake in three time slots and saw it all. Our teacher says observation must be continuous. My entry, from two o'clock before bed to eight in the morning, did not miss a minute.

雪三天：十一、十二、十三

十一日，星期四，初雪转大雪。

睡前我在窗台背英语单词，背到一半看见外面飘雪了。起初只有零星几片，在楼下的灯光里打转，我盯着看了五分钟，数到十九片。有几片落在窗台上没化，我凑近看，是薄薄的、有六个角的小东西。我赶紧喊爸爸来看，爸爸拿着杯子过来，说别喊了，全家都听见了。可他还是凑在窗上看了半天。

半夜十一点半我起来上厕所，路过客厅顺手往窗外看了一眼，就这一眼，我站在窗前挪不动了。雪下大了。路灯的光柱里全是雪，密得看不清路灯后面是什么。整个小区安静极了，雪落在空调外机上、落在车顶上、落在楼下健身器材上，一层一层地盖，谁也不出声。我在客厅站到十二点二十，妈妈来揪我，说明天不上学吗。我上床的时候想，明天早上必须第一个看窗外。

早晨六点半，闹钟还没响我就醒了。雪停了。窗外白得我不敢多看，眯着眼睛看：小区的空地变成一整块白蛋糕，平得没有一点褶。路灯杆直挺挺地站在白里，杆子底下有一圈深一点的印子，是它自己的影子让雪映出来的。天蒙蒙亮，远处楼群的轮廓让雪气糊得软软的。我趴在窗上数楼下的车，车顶上的雪把每辆车都垫厚了一寸。

十二日，星期五，雪后转晴。

今天不下了，可雪还在动。太阳一出来，屋檐开始滴水，嗒、嗒、嗒，屋檐口挂着一排冰凌，长短不齐，最粗的那根像爸爸的手电筒。水滴在冰凌尖上聚成圆鼓鼓的一滴，坠下去，落在下面的雪坑里。楼下那排车，车顶的雪让太阳晒得塌下去一半。花坛边的雪开始显出底下的东西：先露出铁栏杆的黑，再露出枯叶的黄。世界正在把藏了一夜的东西一件一件交回来。

十三日，星期六，雪化尽。

傍晚我下楼倒垃圾，专门没走水泥路，走花坛边还剩雪的那一条。鞋底踩上去咯吱，声音跟昨天一样，可雪已经松了、脏了，里面夹着细小的黑沙。走到单元门口，最后一摊雪在背阴的墙角，巴掌大，我蹲下去看它，它也在化，边上已经是一圈清水。我把垃圾扔了，绕回去，那摊雪还在，比刚才小了一圈。

三天，从窗台上第一片没化的雪，到墙角最后一摊化开的雪。我在观察日记本上画了一张表，十一、十二、十三，三个格子，分别画了雪片、冰凌、一摊水。科学老师说，下一轮观察作业看春天的第一朵花。我把表格夹进本子，我想，雪和花，我都接着记。

Three Snow Days: the 11th, 12th, 13th

The 11th, Thursday, first snow turning heavy.

Before bed I was reciting English words at the window, and halfway through I saw snow drifting outside. At first only scattered flakes, spinning in the light

downstairs; I stared for five minutes and counted nineteen. A few landed on the windowsill without melting, and I leaned close: tiny six-cornered things, thin as paper. I rushed to call Dad, who came with his mug and said, stop shouting, the whole family heard - yet he still pressed his face to the glass and stared for ages.

At half past eleven at night I got up for the bathroom, glanced out the living room window on my way past, and with that one glance I was stuck standing at the window. The snow had grown heavy. The lamp's cone of light was full of snow, so thick I could not see what was behind the lamp. The whole compound was utterly quiet; snow settled on the air-conditioner units, on the car roofs, on the exercise equipment downstairs, covering layer after layer without a sound. I stood in the living room until twelve twenty, and Mom came to drag me away: don't you have school tomorrow? Getting into bed I thought, tomorrow morning I must be the first to look out the window.

At six thirty in the morning I woke before the alarm. The snow had stopped. Outside was so white I could not look straight; I squinted: the open ground of the compound had become one whole white cake, smooth with not a wrinkle. The lamp post stood stiff in the white, with a darker ring at its base thrown by its own shadow in the snow. The sky was faintly light, the distant buildings blurred soft by the snow-haze. I lay on the window counting the cars downstairs; the snow on their roofs had padded every car an inch thicker.

The 12th, Friday, clearing after snow.

It is not falling today, but the snow is still moving. When the sun came out the eaves began to drip, tap, tap, tap, and a row of icicles hung along the eaves edge, uneven in length, the thickest one as big as Dad's flashlight. Drops gathered into a bulging bead at the icicle's tip, fell, and plopped into the snow pit below. The row of cars downstairs had their roof snow sag to half its depth under the sun. Along the flower bed the snow began to give back what was under it: first the black of the iron railing, then the yellow of dead leaves. The world was handing back, one by one, everything it had hidden for a night.

The 13th, Saturday, snow all melted.

In the evening I went downstairs to dump the trash and deliberately avoided the concrete path, taking the strip by the flower bed where snow still remained. My shoes went crunch, the same sound as yesterday, but the snow was loose and dirty now, mixed with fine black grit. At the building entrance the last patch of snow lay in the shady corner, palm-sized. I squatted to look at it; it was melting too, a ring of clear water at its edge. I dumped the trash, walked back around, and the patch was still there, a ring smaller than before.

Three days: from the first flake on the windowsill that did not melt, to the last palm of water in the corner. In my observation notebook I drew a chart - the 11th, 12th, 13th, three boxes, with a snowflake, an icicle, and a puddle drawn in them. Our science teacher says the next observation assignment is the first flower of spring. I tucked the chart into my notebook. Snow or flowers, I thought, I will keep recording them all.

写给小南：外婆家的这一场雪

小南：

你总说没见过大雪，让我一定替你看一眼。好，我现在就替你看，你看仔细了，这是我在外婆家窗台上给你写的，我们这儿刚停。

先说睡前。外婆家睡前要封灶，外公往灶膛里塞最后一把柴，火苗噼啪响，灶口的红光映到院子里。我就是在那个时候看见初雪的——灶膛的光把院子照出一块橘黄，雪片飘进那块橘黄里，一片，又一片，慢悠悠的，落在院子里的石磨上，落在腌菜缸的木盖上。我蹲在灶口边烤火，一边数。你猜一晚上前落了几片？我数到三十几就不数了，因为越落越密，数不过来了。外婆说，这雪是夜里的雪，下整宿。外公立在门口看天，说了句瑞雪，就把门闩上了。

再说半夜。半夜狗叫了两声，我醒了。外婆家的窗户是木头框的，糊的塑料布，我掀开一角往外看——你不许笑，我看得浑身发麻。外面不用点灯就看得见东西，雪地自己在发光。院子里的石磨白了，柴堆白了，篱笆一根一根都白了。远处的田野平平整整，像铺了一层没熨过的白布，亮得能照见影子。狗不叫了，雪落在塑料布上，沙沙的，比狗叫还响。我把被角拉到下巴，舍不得闭眼，又实在困，迷迷糊糊睡过去，梦里还在下。

早晨我是被鸡叫醒的。雪停了。我连鞋都顾不上穿好就跑到门口，一开门，冷气扑了满脸。田野白得望不到边，东边的天刚红，雪面上干干净净，一个脚印都没有，只有风扫出来的一道一道波纹。走近了看，雪底下压着麦苗，雪化开一小块，麦苗是绿的，绿得发黑，冻得贴在土上。屋檐下的冰凌挂了一排，尖上滴水，滴答，滴答，比屋里的钟还准。外公拿扫帚扫出一条路，回头说，雪化的时候比下的时候冷，你穿厚实些。我在雪地里踩了自己的第一串脚印，从门口一直踩到柴堆，又原样踩回来。

临走那天，外婆给我们煮鸡蛋。我跟外公拉了钩：等明年开春化雪，他还给我留一块麦苗地看；我回去攒一瓶干净的雪水带来浇他的菜。外公笑，说雪水哪有带来的道理。我说有的，落在我窗前的那一场，和我在这儿看见的是同一场雪，它认得路。小南，等你放假，我把这一页抄给你。你不用回信，回信就写你那儿下雪没有。

表姐 小满

十二月十九日，于外婆家

A Letter to Xiaonan: This Snow at Grandma's House

Xiao Nan: I am writing this diary-letter to you by the stove at Grandma's house, because last night it snowed here, and you always say my stories about snow are the closest you get to seeing it yourself.

First, the evening. Grandma was cooking supper, and the fire in the stove lit the yard in a patch of orange. That is where I saw the first flakes — drifting into the orange light, one, then another, slow, landing on the stone mill and on the wooden lid of the pickle jar. I squatted by the stove mouth warming my hands, counting. Guess how many fell before I gave up? I stopped at thirty-something, because they came faster than counting. Grandma said this is night snow, it will fall all night. Grandpa looked at the sky from the door, said one word about a good snow, and bolted the door.

Now the middle of the night. The dog barked twice and I woke up. The window here has a wooden frame covered with plastic sheeting. I lifted a corner and looked out — don't laugh, my whole body went numb with wonder. Outside you could see everything without a lamp; the snowy ground glowed by itself. The stone mill was white, the woodpile was white, every rail of the fence was white. The field far away lay flat like unironed white cloth, bright enough to cast a shadow. The dog stopped barking. Snow falling on the plastic was rustling, louder than the dog. I pulled the quilt to my chin, unwilling to close my eyes, yet terribly sleepy; I fell asleep and kept snowing inside the dream.

In the morning the chickens woke me. The snow had stopped. I ran to the door without getting my shoes on properly, and the cold hit my whole face. The field was white beyond the end of sight; the sky in the east had just turned red; the snow surface was clean, not a single footprint, only ridges combed by the wind. Up close, wheat seedlings lay under the snow — where a little had melted, they were green, green almost to black, pressed flat against the earth by the frost. A row of icicles hung under the eaves, dripping from their tips, tick, tick, more punctual than the clock inside. Grandpa swept a path and said over his shoulder: melting is colder than falling, wear something thick. I stamped my first string of footprints in the snow, from the door to the woodpile and back along the same marks.

The day we left, Grandma boiled eggs for us. I made a pinky promise with Grandpa: next spring when the snow melts, he will keep a patch of wheat seedlings for me to see; I will bring back a bottle of clean snow water to water his vegetables. Grandpa laughed and said snow water has no logic for being carried around. I said it does — the snow that fell by my window and the snow I saw here are the same snow, and it knows the way home. Xiao Nan, when you are on holiday, I will copy this page for you. You don't have to write back; if you do, just write whether it snowed where you are.

Your cousin, Xiao Man

December 19, at Grandma's house