红领巾折起来放进抽屉那天

升旗是在早上七点半。操场上的旗杆比去年高，或者说，是我比去年矮了。国歌响起来的时候，我站在初一一班的队列里，抬头看那面红旗顺着绳子往上走，风把它抖开，发出啪啪的声音。队伍要求行注目礼，不敬礼了。我下意识想抬手，手抬到一半，咽回去了，喉咙有点紧。旁边后排的男生站得笔直，下巴抬得很高，像是非要把这个注目礼站出个样子来。

升旗结束，退队仪式直接在操场上进行。大队辅导员念完一段话，说请全体同学解下红领巾。几千只手一起动起来，布料摩擦的声音很轻，像下了一场小雨。我把红领巾从领口解下来，它在我手里有点皱，左边角上还有五年级大扫除溅上去的一点油漆。我本想随手塞进口袋，手指摸到那个油漆点，忽然停住了，蹲在队列里，把红领巾摊在膝盖上，一点一点叠起来，叠成规规矩矩的三角形，放进校服上衣口袋。前排女生回头看我，我耳朵热了一下，没理她。

呼号是在退队之后。辅导员领呼：准备着，为共产主义事业而奋斗。几千人的声音撞在一起，我们班的声音从人群里顶出来，比小学任何一次都齐。喊完那一秒，操场安静了半秒，就半秒，然后脚步声、咳嗽声、拉链声一起响起来。回教学楼的路上，没人说话，楼道里安静得反常。到了教室，班主任站在门口，说了句：进班吧，都长大了。就这一句。

晚上我在书桌上铺开一张信纸，学校布置的任务：给三年后的自己写一封信。我写了很久。写我想考的高中，写我数学还不好，写我今天解下红领巾时手抖了一下，写我希望三年后的我别把今天忘了。写到结尾我卡住了，最后只写了一句：如果你还记得今天，就回信给我。把信折三折，装进信封，写上二零二九年六月一日启。抽屉拉开，信压在叠好的红领巾旁边，一个三角形，一个长方形，挨着。

妈问我今天怎么这么早关灯。我说困了。其实我躺在床上，一直在想那半秒的安静。几千个人同时安静半秒，原来这么响。童年不是被谁收走的，它是我自己叠成三角形，放进抽屉的。

The Day I Folded My Red Scarf into a Drawer

The flag-raising was at seven thirty in the morning. The flagpole on the sports field looked taller than last year - or rather, I had shrunk since last year. As the national anthem started, I stood in the line of Grade 7 Class 1, watching the red flag climb the rope while the wind snapped it open with sharp cracks. The formation called for a gaze salute, no hand salute. My hand rose halfway on instinct, then I swallowed it back down; my throat felt tight. A boy two rows behind stood ramrod straight, chin lifted high, as if determined to make this gaze salute count for something.

After the flag came the ceremony of leaving the Young Pioneers, held right there on the field. The youth counselor finished a passage and asked every student to remove their red scarf. Thousands of hands moved at once, the rustle of cloth as soft as light rain. I untied the scarf from my collar; it was a little wrinkled in my hands, with a speck of paint from the fifth-grade spring cleaning still on its left

corner. I meant to stuff it in my pocket, but my fingers found that paint speck and stopped. Right there in the formation I squatted down, spread the scarf on my knee, folded it bit by bit into a proper triangle, and placed it in my uniform's breast pocket. A girl in front turned to look at me; my ears went hot, and I ignored her.

The call-and-response came after. The counselor led: Ready, for the cause of communism! Thousands of voices collided in the air, and our class's voice pushed up out of the crowd, more unified than any time in elementary school. For half a second after we finished, the field went silent - just half a second - then footsteps, coughs, and zipper sounds all started at once. On the way back to the teaching building nobody spoke; the stairwell was quietly abnormal. Our homeroom teacher stood at the classroom door and said one line: come in, you've all grown up. That was all.

At night I spread a sheet of letter paper, the school's assignment: write a letter to yourself three years from now. I wrote for a long time. I wrote about the high school I want to get into, about my math still being weak, about how my hand trembled when I untied the scarf today, and about hoping the me of three years from now won't forget today. I got stuck at the ending and finally wrote one line: if you still remember today, write back to me. I folded the letter in thirds, sealed it in an envelope, and addressed it: to be opened June 1, 2029. I opened the drawer and laid the letter beside the folded scarf, a triangle and a rectangle, side by side.

Mom asked why I turned off the light so early tonight. I said I was sleepy. Really I lay in bed thinking about that half second of silence. Thousands of people going silent together for half a second - it turns out that is so loud. Childhood was not taken away by anyone. I folded it into a triangle myself and put it in the drawer.