我写的那段雪，擦了四遍

写雪的指导课上，老师带我们在走廊上看完雪，回来布置的活儿出乎意料地小：只写一段，写刚才看见的雪，不许超过一百字。我们平时都写四百字起步，一听只写一段，全班都笑了。我觉得这有什么难的，提笔就写：雪纷纷扬扬地落下来，美丽极了。

写完这一句我就没词了。看看同桌，他写雪像鹅毛，跟去年作文里一模一样。我本来想照着他的改一改，笔停在半空，想起老师在小黑板上写的三行：落的样子、堆的地方、发出的声音。鹅毛是别人看过的雪，我在走廊上看见的是我自己的雪。

我把那行擦了，重写。我写晒衣绳：操场边拉着的那条旧晒衣绳，雪落在上头，绳子上挂出一排小小的雪疙瘩，一个挨一个，像给绳子镶了一边花边。写完数了数字数，八十九个字，刚好。可我觉得那个花边的比喻还是顺嘴说出来的，没想过是不是真的像。我又擦掉重想。

第三遍我写：雪落在晒衣绳上，先落的一层粘住了后落的，绳子朝北那一面越积越厚，朝南那一面还是光的。写完自己读，句子不顺，又改第四遍：先落在绳子上的雪化了又冻住，后来的雪就粘在那层冰上，只粘朝北的一面。这一遍我读得慢，因为每一样都是我看过的，绳子、朝北、粘住，没有一个是编的。

交换批改时，王果果在我那段底下画了两条线，画在雪疙瘩那句底下，批了四个字：我看见了。她说这四个字的意思是，她读的时候眼前真的有了那个东西。我觉得这比一个优字都好。

老师念范文的时候念了我第四遍那段。她说：一段八十九个字，改过四遍，比四百字不改的值钱。我数过，我那一页纸上四个橡皮擦的印子，最深的一个是第一遍那句美丽极了，擦得纸都起了毛。

后来我的文具盒里一直放着一块用得只剩一角的橡皮。同学笑它小，我说它不小，它擦掉过一句美丽极了。

The Paragraph About Snow I Erased Four Times

In the writing lesson about snow, our teacher took us to the corridor to watch the snow, came back, and the assignment was surprisingly small: write only one paragraph about the snow we had just seen, no more than one hundred characters. We usually started at four hundred characters, so when we heard it was only one paragraph the whole class laughed. I thought, what is hard about that, picked up my pen and wrote: the snow fell thickly and beautifully.

After that one sentence my words ran out. I glanced at my deskmate: he wrote that snow was like goose feathers, exactly the same as in last year essay. I was about to borrow from him when my pen stopped in mid-air, because I remembered the three lines the teacher had written on the small blackboard: the way it falls, where it piles, the sound it makes. Goose feathers were snow somebody else had seen; the snow I had seen from the corridor was my own.

I erased that line and wrote again. I wrote about the clothesline: the old clothesline stretched by the playground, with snow landing on it and little lumps of snow hanging along it, one against the next, like a fringe sewn on one side of the rope. I counted when I finished: eighty-nine characters, just right. But I felt the fringe comparison had still come out of my mouth on habit, without my checking whether it truly looked like that. So I erased it again and thought.

For the third version I wrote: snow landed on the clothesline, the first layer stuck the layers after it, and the north-facing side grew thicker and thicker while the south-facing side stayed bare. Reading it myself, the sentence did not run smoothly, so I made a fourth version: the snow that landed first melted and froze again, and the later snow stuck onto that layer of ice, only on the north side. I read this version slowly, because every part of it was something I had seen: the rope, the north side, the sticking. Not one word was invented.

During the exchange for peer correction, Wang Guoguo drew two lines under my paragraph, right under the sentence about the lumps of snow, and wrote four characters: I saw it. She said those four characters meant that when she read it, the thing really appeared before her eyes. I thought that was better than any grade mark.

When the teacher read model paragraphs aloud, she read my fourth version. She said: one paragraph of eighty-nine characters, revised four times, is worth more than four hundred characters never revised. I counted the marks of the eraser on that page, four of them, and the deepest one was over the first sentence about beauty, rubbed until the paper itself grew rough.

In my pencil case I still keep a piece of eraser worn down to one corner. Classmates laugh at how small it is. I say it is not small at all, because once it erased a sentence about beautiful snow.