雪落故乡

城里的冬天一深，我就在电视里看到故乡下雪的消息。我在窗前站了很久，那场雪隔着二十年落过来，落在老屋的青瓦上。

故乡的雪，先是落在屋顶上。老屋的瓦小，一层雪盖下来，屋脊的线条就变圆了，像谁给房子絮了一床棉被。祖父一早就踩着梯子上房扫雪，竹扫帚刮得沙沙响，雪末从檐口溜下去，冻成一排冰凌。冰凌是那时候我们的糖，放学路上掰一根含着，凉水一直滴进衣领，谁也不嫌馋。晌午太阳出来，冰凌滴水，从屋檐落到院里的盆中，滴答滴答，像是房子在数日子。

雪也落在村外的麦地上。清早祖父背着手去地里转一圈，回来蹲在门口吧嗒吧嗒抽烟，说雪被盖得严实，麦苗在底下睡得香。我们不懂，只记得老人常说，雪下得越厚，来年的馒头蒸得越白。那时我们盼雪，一半为着麦地，一半为着雪仗。

村口的小路被雪冻成一条亮玻璃。我们清早走路上学，布鞋踩得小心翼翼，顺手抓住道旁的柳枝。小路两边的地覆得平平的，只有前一天牛车的轮印冻成一排小槽，狗脚印最有意思，一朵朵小梅花印出去，一直通到地的深处，不知道它们去了哪里。路过的老人冲我们喊，娃，慢些走，莫跌。几个孩子的呼吸在冷里冒成一排白柱子，村口的路因为我们才热闹。

最热闹的还要数雪仗。一放学，几十个娃聚在村口的场院里，攥雪球，躲在草垛后头埋伏。我有一次蹲在石磨后头，等同学王来柱路过，起身一扬手却扔偏了，正砸在赶车拐弯的村长身上。所有人愣了一瞬，接着哄堂大笑。笑声把电线杆上的乌鸦惊散了，满街没有人恼。

如今老屋拆了，村口的路铺了水泥，落了雪也没人扫。可我一见雪，屋顶、麦地、小路、笑声就一齐回来，清楚得像昨夜的事。故乡的雪其实没有停，它只是落进了记忆里，一年一次，落在想它的人身上。

Snow Falling on My Hometown

When winter deepens in the city, I hear on television that it has snowed in my hometown. I stand by the window for a long time. That snow crosses twenty years and lands on the blue tiles of the old house.

The snow of my hometown falls first on the roof. The old house was covered with small tiles. When a layer of snow lay over them, the ridge line turned round, as if someone had draped a cotton quilt over the house. Grandfather climbed the ladder early to sweep the snow. The bamboo broom made a soft rustling sound, and the snow slid off the eaves and froze into a row of icicles. The icicles were our candy in those days. On the way home from school we broke one off and held it in our mouths, and the cold water dripped down to our collars, yet nobody minded being greedy. When the noon sun came out, the icicles melted, and drops fell from the eaves into the basin in the yard, drip by drip, as if the house were counting its days.

The snow also fell on the wheat fields outside the village. Early in the morning

Grandfather walked a round in the fields with his hands behind his back, came back, squatted at the gate and puffed at his pipe, saying the quilt of snow lay tight and the wheat seedlings slept well underneath. We did not understand. We only remember the old men often saying: the thicker the snow, the whiter the steamed buns next year. In those days we wished for snow, half for the wheat fields and half for the snowball fights.

The road at the village entrance froze into a strip of bright glass under the snow. We walked to school in the early morning, our cloth shoes stepping carefully, holding on to the willow branches along the way. The fields on both sides lay flat and white, and only the wheel marks of ox carts from the day before were frozen into a line of small grooves. The dog prints were the most interesting, little plum blossoms stamped one after another, leading deep into the field, and nobody knew where they went. The old people passing by called out to us, walk slowly, do not fall. The breath of several children rose in white columns, and the road at the village entrance was lively because of us.

The liveliest memory is still the snowball fight. As soon as school was over, dozens of children gathered in the square by the village entrance, packing snow into balls and hiding behind the haystacks to ambush one another. I once squatted behind a stone mill, waiting for my classmate Wang Laizhu to pass by. When I stood up and threw, I missed and hit the village headman who was driving his cart around the corner. Everyone froze for a moment, then burst out laughing. The laughter scared the crows off the telephone poles, and nobody on the whole street was angry.

Now the old house has been pulled down, and the road at the village entrance has become concrete, and nobody sweeps when it snows. But every time I see snow, the roof, the wheat fields, the road and the laughter all come back at once, as clear as if they happened last night. The snow of my hometown never really stops falling. It only falls into memory, once a year, on the one who misses it.