清晨的第一场雪

我是被亮醒的。天还没到点，屋里却白得反常。我披着棉袄爬起来，手刚碰到插销，窗玻璃上的凉就顺着指尖爬上来。

窗一推开，雪就站在眼前。窗棂上积了一道齐整整的白边，像谁拿尺子量着抹上去的，最底下那一横的白最厚，指头抹一道，露出底下的木头色。窗台上落了一层，还没人动过，我把手印按上去，一个，两个，算是这场雪里我留下的头一样东西。

院子里的树枝全挂了白。最妙的是那棵枣树，枝子细，叉又多，雪一挂，每一根细枝都描出来了，整棵树像一笔一笔白描出来的。梧桐的叶子早落光了，雪落在杈上，一坨一坨，杈子压得往下弯，风一过，雪团掉下来，砸在雪地上腾起一小蓬烟。墙头的雪最平，平得像新发的面，我看了半天，不忍心看它塌。

麻雀来得比人还早。雪地上已经有一行行小脚印，前头两个爪印，后头一个，排得歪歪扭扭。它们这会儿还在，落在院当中一跳一跳，爪子扒开一层雪，又扒开一层，脑袋一伸一缩。找不着吃的，就歪着头往屋里看，看的就是我。我抓了一把小米，隔着窗撒在窗台上。头一只麻雀犹豫，跳近又跳远，到底落下来啄了两口，扑棱飞上电线，像是招呼同伴，眨眼落下来三四只。

母亲起来扫出一条路，回头看见我趴在窗台上不动，催我穿衣裳。我说再看一会儿。雪还在落，落在我的呼吸里化成白气。第一场雪把院子变成新的，把日子也变成新的，连那群麻雀，看上去都比昨天新。

上学出门，我特意绕着没踩过的雪走，踩出我自己的头一行脚印。身后母亲在门口喊，书包带子紧了。我回头应一声，脚印一路歪歪扭扭，像麻雀的。

The First Snow of Early Morning

I was woken by the brightness. It was not yet time, but the room was white in a way that felt strange. I got up with my padded coat over my shoulders, and the moment my hand touched the window latch, the cold of the glass crawled up my fingertips.

The instant the window opened, the snow stood before me. The window lattice had gathered a neat edge of white, as if someone had spread it on with a ruler, and the white was thickest along the bottom bar. I wiped a line through it with my finger and the wood color showed underneath. The windowsill had an untouched layer on it. I pressed my handprints into it, one, two, the first things I left in this snow.

Every branch in the yard had put on white. The best was the jujube tree: its branches thin, its forks many, and with snow on them every twig was drawn out, the whole tree like a line-by-line white sketch. The wutong tree had long since dropped its leaves; snow sat in its forks in clumps, bending the forks down, and when wind

passed, the clumps fell and puffed a small cloud on the ground. The snow on the top of the wall was the flattest, flat as freshly risen dough, and I looked at it a long time, unwilling to watch it collapse.

The sparrows came earlier than people. The snow already had rows of little footprints, two claw marks in front, one behind, running crooked. They were still there, hopping in the middle of the yard, scratching away one layer of snow and then another, heads poking in and out. Finding nothing to eat, they tilted their heads toward the house - toward me. I grabbed a handful of millet and scattered it on the windowsill through the window. The first sparrow hesitated, hopped closer and then away, and finally landed and pecked twice, then fluttered up to the wire as if calling the others, and in a blink three or four came down.

Mother got up and swept a path, turned, and saw me lying on the windowsill motionless, and urged me to get dressed. I said, let me look a little longer. The snow was still falling, melting into white breath in my breathing. The first snow made the yard new, made the day new, and even the sparrows looked newer than yesterday.

Leaving for school, I deliberately walked around the untouched snow, stamping my own first line of footprints. Behind me Mother called from the door that my schoolbag strap was loose. I called back, and my footprints ran crooked all the way, like sparrows'.

麻雀眼里的清晨

麻雀头一睁眼，就知道不对。窝里漏白，天亮得太早，也太冷。它钻出来，站上的那根电线也粗了一圈——电线上裹了雪。

它认不出这个院子了。墙头平得像新发的面，平得叫它不敢落脚，怕一踩陷进去。柴垛矮了一截，顶上圆滚滚的。最离奇的是枣树：它认得每一根枝，夜里还光秃秃的，这会儿每一根细枝都描了白，整棵树像谁重新长了一遍，长在白纸上。它落在老位置，爪子一挨枝，雪簌簌落下来，抖它一身，它扑棱飞低一点，雪又落它一身。它恼了，落在墙根，墙根的雪最软，一脚一个坑。

觅食要紧。它跳进院子当中，昨天这里有一片谷壳，今天没有了，全让雪被捂着。它扒，爪子往前一搂，搂开一层雪，底下还是雪；再搂一层，露出一点土地，可是谷壳早叫雪泡软了，不成样子。它抬头看看窗，窗玻璃白蒙蒙的，看不见屋里。它歪头，再歪头。它记得这家人往常这个时辰会撒一把小米，就在窗台上，铁簸箕磕三下，磕磕磕，那是开饭的铃。

今天铃没响，窗倒推开了。一个小孩趴在窗台上，先把手往雪里按，按出两个坑，它不懂那叫什么。接着小孩的胳膊动了，抓了一把什么扬出来——小米，一颗一颗落在窗台上，落在雪上，

黄澄澄的。它先不落地，跳近，跳远，再看。小孩不动了，趴在窗上看它。它到底落下去，啄一口，米是干的，是好的。它扑棱飞上电线，冲院里叫，叫得又急又响，眨眼间电线上落了一排，院里窗台下落了三只、四只。

小孩的母亲起来扫路，扫帚唰，唰，扫出一条黑土的路。麻雀跳到路上闻了闻，没有米，还是跳回窗台。它吃两口，飞开，再落回来吃两口。窗台上的米少了，它不着急，它知道这家人会再撒。

太阳出来了，枣树上的雪开始往下掉，一坨一坨砸在雪地上。麻雀灌饱了，抖抖毛，从电线上出发了，贴着院子上空飞了一圈。底下的院子白得新的，路黑得新的，脚印一行一行新的。它想，这个院子今天重新发了一遍，跟墙头那层面一样，新得叫它想落脚。

Early Morning Through a Sparrow's Eyes

The sparrow opened its eyes and knew something was wrong at once. White leaked into the nest; dawn came too early and too cold. It squeezed out, and the wire it landed on had grown a size thicker - the wire was wrapped in snow.

It did not recognize this yard. The top of the wall was as flat as freshly risen dough, so flat it dared not land, afraid of sinking in. The woodpile had sunk a notch, round-topped. The strangest thing was the jujube tree: it knew every branch, bare all through the night, and now every thin twig was drawn in white, the whole tree as if someone had regrown it, grown it on white paper. It landed on its old perch; the moment its claws touched the branch, snow rustled down and shook all over it. It fluttered lower, and snow shook all over it again. Annoyed, it landed at the foot of the wall, where the snow was softest, one hole per step.

Finding food came first. It hopped into the middle of the yard. Yesterday there had been a patch of husks here; today there was nothing, all of it covered by the quilt of snow. It scratched, raking forward with its claws, opening one layer of snow - snow underneath; raking another layer, a bit of soil appeared, but the husks had long been softened by the snow, past recognition. It looked up at the window. The glass was hazy white; it could not see inside. It tilted its head, then tilted it again. It remembered that this family usually scattered a handful of millet at this hour, right on the windowsill, and the iron dustpan would knock three times, knock, knock, knock - the dinner bell.

Today the bell did not ring, but the window pushed open. A child lay on the windowsill, first pressing hands into the snow, making two holes - it did not know what that was called. Then the child's arm moved, and a handful of something flew out - millet, grain by grain, landing on the windowsill, on the snow, golden yellow. It did not land at first; it hopped closer, hopped away, looked again. The child stopped

moving and watched it from the window. It finally dropped down, pecked once - the millet was dry, good. It fluttered up to the wire and called into the yard, urgent and loud, and in a blink a row landed on the wire, three, four under the windowsill.

The child's mother got up and swept the path, swish, swish, opening a black line of earth. The sparrow hopped onto the path and sniffed - no millet - and hopped back to the windowsill. It ate two pecks, flew off, came back for two more. The millet on the sill was running low; it was not worried. It knew this family would scatter more.

The sun came out, and the snow on the jujube tree began to drop, clump after clump, thumping onto the ground. The sparrow, full, fluffed its feathers and set off from the wire, skimming low over the yard on one round. Below, the yard was newly white, the path newly black, the footprints new row by row. It thought: this yard has been freshly risen today, like that layer of dough on the wall, new enough to make it want to land.

扫雪的人

我是让扫帚声弄醒的。唰，唰，不紧不慢，一下比一下长。我趴在窗上往外看，天刚蒙蒙亮，雪还在落，父亲已经在院里扫了。

他扫雪有他的规矩。先扫出一条从屋门到街门的直路，两脚宽，扫帚一下压一下，扫过的地方露出黑土，黑土上又落雪，他也不管，先开路再说。路开好了，他退回来扫院子两边，扫帚斜着推，雪推成两道矮墙，齐腰的草垛让雪埋了半截，他绕着扫，扫到垛根，把垛上的雪也用扫帚柄敲下来，咚咚咚，雪塌下来一大片，他躲开，也不恼。

扫到枣树底下，他停了。树杈上的雪压得枝子弯着，他仰头看了看，抡起扫帚杆往低处那根枝上一磕，雪簌簌地落，一棵树磕下来，满地的雪坑。他退两步再看，又磕高处那根，枝子弹起来，抖落一层细雪，落他一头。他把帽子上的雪抹掉，接着扫。我在窗上看他，窗棂上的白边映着天光，他的背影在雪光里，蓝汪汪的，比什么都清楚。

他扫完院，又拿铁锹把街门口的雪掀开，掀出一小片黑土，插上一根树枝做记号，怕过路的人看不见道。做完这些，他回屋生火，烟囱冒起来了。我推窗，冷空气涌进来，混着柴烟味。窗棂上积了一道齐整的白边，最底下一横的白厚得能立住一根火柴。

麻雀就是这时候来的。雪地里一行行小脚印，院当中一跳一跳，扒开一层雪，再扒一层，找不着吃的，歪头往屋里看。父亲从灶房出来，抓了一把小米，隔着窗撒在窗台上，磕了三下窗框，磕磕磕，冲我喊，看。头一只麻雀跳近又跳远，到底落下来啄两口，飞上电线叫，眨眼落下来一排。父亲背着手站在廊下看，看得比我还认真。

吃早饭，父亲说，雪要下一晌午，路得再扫一遍。他说这话的时候很平，像说今天有饭吃一样。我忽然明白，这个清晨他一样也没问——没问雪为什么下，没问下多大，他只是把路扫出来，

把树上的雪磕下来，把麻雀喂饱。雪年年下，路年年是他扫的。

上学出门，我踩着父亲扫出的黑路走，两边雪墙齐膝。身后他又在扫第二遍了，唰，唰。我回头，雪光里他的背影蓝汪汪的，和方才窗上看见的一模一样。

The One Who Sweeps the Snow

I was woken by the broom. Swish, swish, unhurried, each stroke longer than the last. I lay on the window and looked out: dawn was barely gray, snow still falling, and Father was already sweeping the yard.

He had his rules for sweeping snow. First he opened a straight path from the house door to the street gate, two feet wide, the broom one stroke pressing the next, black earth showing where he passed. Snow fell on the black earth again, and he ignored it - open the road first. With the road open, he came back to sweep both sides of the yard, pushing the broom at an angle, snow piling into two low walls. The waist-high haystack was half buried, and he swept around it, reaching the base of the stack, then knocked the snow off it with the broom handle, thud thud thud, a whole sheet of snow collapsed, and he stepped aside, not angry.

When he reached the jujube tree he stopped. Snow on the forks bent the branches. He looked up, swung the broom handle, and tapped a low branch; the snow rustled down, and one tree knocked, the ground full of snow pits. He stepped back two paces, looked, then tapped the high branch; the branch sprang up and shook down a fine mist of snow, all over him. He wiped the snow off his cap and went on sweeping. I watched him from the window, the white edge on the lattice shining in the dawn light, his back in the snow-light blue and clearer than anything.

After the yard, he took the iron shovel to the street gate and lifted the snow away, uncovering a patch of black earth, and stuck a branch in it as a marker, afraid passersby would not see the path. When all that was done, he went in to start the fire, and the chimney began to smoke. I pushed the window open, cold air rushed in mixed with the smell of brushwood smoke. The window lattice had gathered a neat edge of white, thick enough on the bottom bar to stand a matchstick.

The sparrows came at just that moment. Rows of little footprints in the snow, sparrows hopping in the middle of the yard, scratching open one layer and then another, finding nothing, tilting their heads toward the house. Father came out of the kitchen, grabbed a handful of millet, scattered it on the windowsill through the window, knocked three times on the window frame, knock knock knock, and called to me, look. The first sparrow hopped closer and away, and finally landed and pecked twice, flew up to the wire and called, and in a blink a row landed. Father stood under the

porch with his hands behind his back, watching more intently than I did.

At breakfast Father said the snow would fall till noon and the road would need another sweeping. He said it plainly, the way one says there is food today. It struck me then that through this whole morning he had asked nothing - not why the snow fell, not how much - he had only opened the road, knocked the snow off the tree, and fed the sparrows. The snow falls every year, and the road is his broom every year.

Leaving for school, I walked the black path Father had swept, snow walls knee-high on both sides. Behind him he was sweeping a second time, swish, swish. I looked back: in the snow-light his back was blue, exactly the one I had seen from the window.