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'.