操场中间的雪人

那天早读课还没上完，雪就停了。窗外的操场白得像一张新纸。林老师抬起头看了看，说：走，去堆雪人。全班一下子站起来了。

大家分头滚雪球。个子高的男生滚身子，滚了一个比课桌还大的雪球。女生们滚脑袋，滚了一个大西瓜那么圆的。胆小的同学怕雪球砸到，抱着雪球跑，一路掉雪。有人负责找东西：两颗煤球当眼睛，一根胡萝卜当鼻子，几根树枝当手。雪人站在操场中间的时候，全班又跳又叫。

可是雪人没有围巾，脖子那里光秃秃的。林老师站了一会儿，把自己的灰围巾解下来，踮起脚给雪人围上。她说：今天老师不冷。围巾绕上去的时候，有个男生把一段铁丝弯成弯弯的弧度，按在雪人脸上当嘴巴。谁也没教他，他就是觉得，雪人应该笑。

从那天起，雪人成了全班的朋友。下课铃一响，孩子们就往操场跑，绕着雪人转圈。有人给他扑雪，有人跟他说悄悄话。有个女孩每天带一把小扫帚，扫掉围巾上的雪。有个男孩跟雪人比赛谁站得久，他自己站了三分钟就跑了，雪人一整天都在。

雪人当然不会说话，也不会动。可每个孩子都觉得他在微笑。那截弯弯的铁丝嘴角，看谁都一样。

天气转暖的那几天，雪人一天比一天矮。没有人组织，课间去看雪人的孩子反而越来越多。最后一天，雪人只剩下一堆雪，围巾摊在上面，煤球眼睛滚落在一边。大家围站着，有点安静。林老师说：明年冬天，我们再堆一个。那个弯嘴角的男生说：那还是他。大家都点头。

放学的时候，操场空了。那堆雪在慢慢变小，可是它站过的地方，雪地上留下一圈被孩子们踩出来的脚印，一圈一圈，像雪人笑出来的皱纹。

The Snowman in the Middle of the Playground

The morning reading class had not ended when the snow stopped. The playground outside the window was as white as a fresh sheet of paper. Teacher Lin looked up, looked out, and said: let us go build a snowman. The whole class stood up at once.

Everyone rolled snowballs by themselves. The tall boys rolled the body, bigger than a desk. The girls rolled the head, round as a big watermelon. The timid ones were afraid of being hit and ran while hugging their snowballs, dropping snow all the way. Others went looking for parts: two pieces of coal for eyes, a carrot for a nose, some branches for hands. When the snowman stood in the middle of the playground, the whole class jumped and shouted.

But the snowman had no scarf, and his neck was bare. Teacher Lin stood for a moment, unwound her own gray scarf, rose on her toes and wrapped it around the snowman. She said: your teacher is not cold today. As the scarf went on, one boy bent a piece of wire into a curve and pressed it onto the snowman face as a mouth. Nobody

taught him. He simply felt that a snowman should smile.

From that day the snowman became the friend of the whole class. When the bell rang for the break, children ran to the playground and circled around him. Some patted snow onto him, some whispered to him. A girl brought a small broom every day to sweep the snow off the scarf. A boy had a contest with the snowman to see who could stand still longer. He gave up after three minutes, while the snowman stood there the whole day.

Of course the snowman could not talk or move. Yet every child felt that he was smiling. That curved wire mouth looked the same at everyone.

On the warming days, the snowman grew shorter day by day. Nobody organized it, yet more and more children went to see him during the breaks. On the last day, only a pile of snow was left, the scarf spread over it, the coal eyes rolled off to one side. Everyone stood around, a little quiet. Teacher Lin said: next winter we will build another one. The boy who made the curved mouth said: it will still be him. Everyone nodded.

At the end of school the playground was empty. The pile of snow was shrinking, but where it had stood, the ground kept rings of footprints pressed by the children, ring after ring, like the laugh lines of a smile.