泡汤的足球赛

十二月九号，星期三，大雪。

今天早上五点我就醒了，眼睛一睁就再也睡不着。今天本来有大事：区小学足球联赛的决赛，我们校队要对实验一小。我摸黑把球衣套在身上，短裤、球袜、护腿板，一样一样码进书包，码完坐在床边听窗外的雪。雪还在下，沙沙的，像有人在窗外撒盐。我心想，下吧下吧，球场边线埋了也没关系，裁判会重新画的。

六点半，妈妈在厨房喊我吃早饭。我咬着包子刷班级群，想看看集合时间改了没有。群里班主任的消息刚跳出来：因暴雪橙色预警，今日全校停课，联赛延期，具体时间等通知。

我把那行字读了三遍。包子不香了，球衣在身上突然变得很别扭，像穿错了衣服。实验一小的前锋有多厉害我都知道，我练了半个月的边路传中，就等着今天用。完了，全完了。我把自己摔进沙发，球袜从书包里滚出来，滚到雪堆一样的鞋边。一整个上午我都在生气，生雪的气，生通知的气，也生裁判的气——延期算什么，改到明天也行啊，为什么是等通知。

中午妈妈敲我房门：生气归生气，今天的自学任务还在。班级群早发了清单：数学卷子一张，英语单词两个单元，语文读《冬》那篇散文写批注。我本来想耍赖，可看着清单上数学卷子最后一道大题——上次月考就是这种题扣的分——忽然动了别的心思：要是今天把它啃下来，下次考试就不怕了。足球赛延期我说了算不算，卷子我可说了算。

于是我把球衣挂回衣柜，坐到书桌前。卷子做了两小时，最后一道大题真让我啃出来一半，步骤写得密密麻麻。英语单词背到第二个单元时，奶奶送进来一碗姜汤，说外面雪下得更欢了。我一边喝一边背，snow，snowstorm，blizzard，这三个词今天算是用身体记住了。

傍晚我趴在窗上看雪。小区的空地上雪堆得厚厚的，有几个小孩在楼下打雪仗，笑声隔着玻璃都听得见。我有点羡慕，又有点想笑——他们不用等通知，他们的比赛说打就打。

晚上群里通知：联赛改到下周六。我一下子从椅子上蹦起来，把球袜塞回书包，又检查了一遍护腿板。今天这场大雪打乱了我的计划，可它没把我的计划毁掉，只是往后挪了七天。这七天，我要把边路传中再练熟一点，把数学卷子剩下的一半啃完。

雪还在下。我听着窗外的沙沙声，第一次觉得它也没那么讨厌。它不过是把我的决赛，先存起来了。

The Football Match That Got Away

December 9th, Wednesday, heavy snow.

This morning I woke up at five. The moment my eyes opened, sleep was gone. Today was supposed to be a big day: the final of the district primary school football league, our school team against Experimental No. 1 Primary. I dressed in the dark, pulling the jersey over my body, then packing shorts, socks, and shin guards into my bag one by one. After packing I sat on the bed and listened to the snow outside. It

was still falling, a soft rustle, like someone scattering salt beyond the window. Let it fall, I thought. Even if the sideline gets buried, the referee will redraw it.

At half past six, Mother called me to breakfast from the kitchen. Bite after bite of my steamed bun, I checked the class group chat, wondering whether the meeting time had changed. The message from our homeroom teacher popped out: because of the orange blizzard warning, school is canceled today, the league match is postponed, and the new time will be announced later.

I read that line three times. The bun lost its flavor, and the jersey on my body suddenly felt awkward, as if I had put on the wrong clothes. I knew well how strong the striker of Experimental No. 1 was. I had practiced crossing from the wing for half a month, waiting to use it today. It was all over, all gone. I threw myself onto the sofa. A football sock rolled out of my bag and stopped beside my shoe, next to the pile of snow on the mat. All morning I stayed angry: angry at the snow, angry at the notice, even angry at the referee. What good is a postponement? Move it to tomorrow, fine, but why must we wait for an announcement.

At noon Mother knocked on my door: be angry if you want, but the self-study tasks for today are still there. The class group had received the list early: one math test paper, two units of English words, and reading the essay called Winter with notes written in the margins. I wanted to throw a tantrum, but then I looked at the last big problem on the math paper. That is exactly the kind of problem that cost me points in the last monthly exam. A different thought moved in: if I chew through it today, I will not fear it in the next exam. Whether the match is postponed is not my call, but the test paper is.

So I hung the jersey back in the wardrobe and sat down at the desk. The paper took two hours. I did solve half of that last problem, my steps written row after row, packed tight. When I reached the second unit of English words, Grandma brought in a bowl of ginger soup and said the snow outside was falling even harder. I drank and recited at the same time: snow, snowstorm, blizzard. Today I memorized those three words with my whole body.

At dusk I lay on the windowsill watching the snow. In the open ground of our compound the pile had grown thick, and several children below were throwing snowballs at each other; their laughter came through the glass. I felt a little envious and a little amused. They do not wait for any announcement. Their match begins the moment they decide.

In the evening the group chat announced the new time: next Saturday. I jumped up from my chair and stuffed the socks back into my bag, checking the shin guards once more. Today the heavy snow scrambled my plan, yet it did not destroy it, only moved it seven days back. In these seven days I will practice the wing crosses until they

are sharper, and finish the other half of that math problem.

The snow is still falling. Listening to the rustle outside, I thought for the first time that it is not so hateful after all. It has simply put my final match into storage for a while.