栏杆边的雪人

那天早上我到学校早，轮到我值日，就站在操场边的铁栏杆旁边。雪是夜里停的，整个操场铺了一层厚厚的白雪，平平展展，白得让人不敢踩。栏杆顶上积了一道雪棱，我伸手弹了一下，雪末簌簌落下来，亮晶晶的，落在我的袖口上。

第二节课下课，三年级的一群小孩从教学楼里跑出来。他们个子小，棉袄有红的、蓝的、鹅黄的，一脚踩进雪里，雪没到脚脖子，身后留下一串深深浅浅的脚印，像地里种了一排小萝卜。领头的高个生喊：滚大的在这儿，滚小的在那儿！矮一点的孩子推不动大雪球，就两个人一起推，手套湿了也不管，鼻尖冻得通红，哈出的白气一团一团的。

我隔着栏杆看。有个雪球骨碌碌滚到我脚边，一个圆脸的小姑娘跑过来捡，抬头看见我，吐吐舌头说对不起，又补一句：学姐，你不跟我们玩吗？我说我值日呢，你们堆你们的。她哦了一声，转身跑回去，跑起来围巾在脑后飞。

雪人是在太阳底下成形的：肚子圆，脑袋也圆，眼睛是两颗红冬青果，脖子上围着一条蓝围巾，围巾角在风里一飘一飘。不知谁把一根扫帚枝插进它手里，像拿着一把旗。孩子们排成一排跟它合影，喊一二三，声音在雪地里传得很远。正闹着，上课铃响了，叮铃铃。他们一个接一个往楼里跑，鞋底在雪上打滑，笑声一路撒。圆脸姑娘跑到楼梯口又回头，冲雪人用力挥手：放学再来看你啊！

操场一下子静下来。雪人站在操场边上，栏杆顶上的雪被太阳照得亮晶晶，教学楼里传出读书声，一句一句。我值完日回到座位，翻开语文书，忽然想起我上三年级那年，也在这块操场上堆过一个歪脑袋的雪人。等这批三年级的孩子长大了、轮到站在栏杆边值日的时候，他们看见雪，大概也会想起今天这个围着蓝围巾的雪人吧。

The Snowman by the Railing

That morning I got to school early; it was my turn on duty, so I stood by the iron railing at the edge of the playground. The snow had stopped during the night, and the whole playground was covered with a thick layer of white, spread out flat and smooth, too white to dare step on. A ridge of snow had piled along the top of the railing; I flicked it with my finger and the snow sifted down, glittering, onto my sleeve.

After the second period, a crowd of third-graders came running out of the building. They were small, in red, blue and goose-yellow padded jackets; one step sank them to the ankle, leaving a trail of deep and shallow footprints behind, like a row of little radishes planted in the ground. The tall one in front shouted: roll the big one here, the small one over there! The shorter kids couldn't push a big snowball alone, so two of them pushed together, mittens soaked, not caring, noses red with cold, puffs of white breath clustering around their faces.

I watched from beyond the railing. A snowball rolled all the way to my feet; a round-faced little girl came running to pick it up, looked up and saw me, stuck out her tongue and said sorry, then added: Senior, aren't you coming to play with us? I said I'm on duty, you go build yours. She said oh, turned and ran back, her scarf flying behind her.

The snowman took shape under the sun: round belly, round head, two red holly berries for eyes, a blue scarf around its neck with the ends fluttering in the wind. Someone stuck a broom twig into its hand, as if it were holding a flag. The children lined up for a photo with it, shouting one-two-three, their voices carrying far across the snow. In the middle of the noise the class bell rang, ding-ling-ling. One after another they ran back inside, soles slipping on the snow, laughter scattered all along the way. At the stairway the round-faced girl turned back and waved hard at the snowman: we'll come see you after school!

The playground went still all at once. The snowman stood at the edge, the snow on the railing glittering in the sun, and reading voices came out of the building, line by line. When my duty ended I went back to my seat, opened the Chinese textbook, and suddenly remembered that in my own third-grade year I had built a crooked-headed snowman on this same playground. When these third-graders grow up and take their turn standing by the railing on duty, they will probably see snow and remember this snowman in its blue scarf.