掉进水里的那只，被同伴拉了上来

《观察蚂蚁》里有一段，我记了很久。蚂蚁队伍抬着食物过一条水沟，有只蚂蚁脚一滑掉进水里。队伍没有停，可它旁边的两只蚂蚁同时伸出腿，两只的腿勾在一起，像一根用两股线拧成的绳子。水里的蚂蚁扒住那根绳，被拉上来，抖抖身子，跑回自己原来抬的位置，接着抬那粒它先前抬着的粮食。

书里还补了一句：拉同伴的那两只，腿被水冲得站不稳，是旁边第三只蚂蚁用颚咬住它们的腰，才没被一起带进水里。也就是说，救一只蚂蚁，实际是三只一起出的力。

作者写：掉进水里的蚂蚁没有被同伴丢下，队伍照样往前走。我读到这里，想起六年级那次接力赛。

校运会四百米接力，我们班前三棒跑完排在第三。棒传到第三棒的张伟手里时，他伸手早了半拍，棒当啷一声掉在地上。等他捡起来，两个班超了过去，最后我们班垫了底。

冲过终点的时候我自己也懵，只记得看台上安静了一瞬，然后广播念名次，念到我们班，声音拖得很长。

回到看台，没人说话。我以为会有人埋怨他，结果跑最后一棒的李想递给张伟一瓶水，说，下次我喊伸手你再伸。张伟一直低着头，接水的时候手指都是红的。

运动会以后，我们班每个课间都去操场练传棒。不是老师安排的，是班长喊了一声预备，大家自己排成了四列。练了两个星期，冬天运动会八乘五十米接力，我们班拿了第三，一次棒都没掉。

书里说小蚂蚁有大力量，大在谁也不丢。我以前觉得团结是黑板报上写的口号，是老师开会时说的话。水里的蚂蚁和李想那瓶水让我明白它到底是什么：有人掉了，旁边有人伸腿；人拉上来，队伍接着跑。就这么简单，也这么难。

下学期我们班要转来一个新同学，听说他跑步不行。我已经想好了，运动会我站他旁边那一棒，他要是掉了棒，第一个去捡的人就是我。

The Ant That Fell Into the Water Was Pulled Back by Its Companions

One passage in Watching Ants has stayed in my mind for a long time. The ant column was carrying food across a ditch when one ant slipped and fell into the water. The column did not halt, but two ants beside it stretched out their legs at the same time, hooking into each other like a rope twisted from two threads. The ant in the water grabbed on and was pulled up, shook itself dry, ran back to the place where it had been carrying, and went on lifting the grain it had carried before.

The author writes: an ant that falls into the water is not abandoned by its

companions, and the column keeps moving. Reading this, I thought of our relay race in sixth grade.

School sports meet, four by one hundred meter relay. Our class was third after the first three legs. When the baton reached Zhang Wei on the third leg, he reached out half a beat too early, and the baton clattered to the ground. By the time he picked it up, two classes had passed him, and our class finished last.

Back in the stands, nobody said a word. I expected someone to blame him. Instead, Li Xiang, who ran the last leg, handed Zhang Wei a bottle of water and said: next time, reach out when I shout. Zhang Wei kept his head down the whole time, and his fingers turned red where he held the bottle.

After the meet, our class went to the playground every break to practice baton passes. The teacher did not arrange it; the class monitor shouted ready, set, and everyone lined up in four rows by themselves. Two weeks later, in the winter meet eight by fifty meter relay, our class placed third, and the baton never fell once.

The book says the great strength of small ants lies in nobody being left behind. I used to think unity was a slogan written on the blackboard newspaper, something the teacher said at assemblies. The ant in the water and the bottle of water from Li Xiang taught me what it really is: when someone falls, someone beside them stretches out a leg; once they are pulled up, the column keeps running. That simple, and that hard.

Next term a new classmate will transfer into our class, and I hear he is not a fast runner. I have already decided: at the sports meet I will run the leg next to his, and if he drops the baton, I will be the first one to pick it up.