# 伞是斜的

放学铃响的时候，雪正下得紧。我背着书包走到教学楼口就停住了：雪片又大又密，斜着横过来，路灯还没亮，天黑沉沉地压着操场，雪地里白茫茫一片，几步外的篮球架只剩一个模糊的影子。同学们一个一个被接走，伞在雪幕里晃一晃就不见了。我退到门房的屋檐下，把书包带子紧了紧，跺着脚看校门口。

屋檐下的雪化成水，一滴一滴砸在地上。卖烤红薯的老爷爷收摊，炉子盖得严严实实，热气从缝里冒出来，白烟和雪搅在一起。我摸出手机想打电话，又塞回去——妈妈今天上午刚发了烧，早上出门时嗓子还是哑的。雪越下越大，我的眉毛上、肩膀上落了薄薄一层，我干脆把校服帽子扣上，继续等。校门口的人越来越少，最后只剩门房里的灯和雪落下来的沙沙声。

雪幕里忽然走来一个人，伞压得很低，伞面上的雪厚得发亮。走到近前，是妈妈。她的围巾上、头发上全是雪，棉袄的右肩那一片已经白了，伞却完完整整罩在我头顶。她说，等急了吧，路上滑，走得慢。她把一个保温杯塞进我手里，说红薯粥还热的。我攥着杯子，烫得倒了一下手，心里却跟着烫了一下。

我们共撑一把伞往家走。雪打在伞面上，噗噗地响，像有人在头顶撒一把一把的米。路口的雪被踩成了稀泥，妈妈走在外侧，一步一步踩得很稳。我走着走着发现伞是斜的，斜在我这边，她那边伞沿上挂着一线雪帘，她的右肩一直在雪里。我把伞往她那边推，她马上又推回来，手很用力，说我不冷，你书包都湿了。我抬头看她，她的睫毛上挂着细小的雪粒，一眨眼就化成水。我不再推了，改成整个人往她那边靠，肩膀挨着她的肩膀走。她胳膊僵了一下，后来就松下来，由我靠着。

到家楼下的时候，我半边身子干的，她右肩的雪化成了一片深色。她上楼开门，我站在楼道里看她拍肩膀上的雪，拍不掉的，就用手一抹，抹成一小片水。那把伞立在门边，伞骨上还挂着没化的雪。我忽然想起小时候也是这把伞，也是这样的斜法，原来这么多年，伞一直是斜的。

# The Umbrella Tilted Sideways

When the dismissal bell rang, the snow was falling hard. I walked to the doorway of the teaching building with my schoolbag and stopped. The flakes were big and dense, slanting sideways. The street lamps had not come on yet; the sky pressed down black over the playground, everything white and blurred, and the basketball hoop a few meters away was only a fuzzy shadow. One by one my classmates were picked up, their umbrellas swaying once in the curtain of snow and vanishing. I retreated under the eave of the gatehouse, tightened my bag straps, and stood stamping my feet, watching the school gate.

Under the eave the snow melted and dripped onto the ground, drop by drop. The old man who sold roasted sweet potatoes was closing his stall, covering the stove

tightly, its heat escaping through the cracks as white smoke that tangled with the snow. I took out my phone, thought about calling, then put it back. Mum had run a fever just that morning, and her voice was still hoarse when she left home. The snow fell harder. A thin layer gathered on my eyebrows and shoulders, so I pulled my uniform hood on and kept waiting. Fewer and fewer people remained at the gate, until only the light in the gatehouse and the hush of falling snow were left.

Suddenly a figure appeared through the snow curtain, umbrella pulled low, its top bright with a thick layer of snow. As it came closer, it was Mum. Her scarf and hair were covered with snow, the right shoulder of her padded jacket already white, yet the umbrella hung completely over my head. She said, you must have been waiting long. The road is slippery, so I walked slowly. She pressed a thermos cup into my hand and said the sweet potato porridge is still hot. I gripped the cup, so hot that I switched hands, and something inside me turned hot too.

We walked home under one umbrella. The snow drummed on the canopy, puff, puff, like someone scattering handfuls of rice overhead. At the crossing the snow had been trodden into slush. Mum walked on the outer side, each step steady. Walking along, I noticed the umbrella was tilted, tilted toward my side. On her side its rim hung with a thin curtain of snow, and her right shoulder stayed out in the open. I pushed the umbrella toward her; she pushed it right back, her hand firm, saying she was not cold and my schoolbag was already wet. I looked up at her. Tiny grains of snow clung to her eyelashes and melted into water the moment she blinked. I stopped pushing and instead leaned my whole body toward her, shoulder against shoulder. Her arm stiffened for a moment, then relaxed and let me lean.

By the time we reached our building, half of me was dry and the snow on her right shoulder had melted into a dark patch. She went upstairs to open the door, and I stood in the stairway watching her pat the snow off her shoulder. What she could not pat off she wiped away with her hand, wiping it into a small wet patch. The umbrella stood by the door, its ribs still holding unmelted snow. It suddenly came back to me that when I was little it was the same umbrella, tilted the same way. All these years, the umbrella had always been tilted.

# 妈妈的布鞋湿透了

舟舟是先看见那双布鞋的。雪下得那样大，校门口来的人不是棉靴就是雪地鞋，只有那个人脚上是一双黑布鞋，鞋帮已经洇成深黑色，踩进雪泥里，拔出来，鞋印在雪地上留下一个湿窟窿。他愣了愣，才认出那是妈妈。

事情要从半小时前说起。放学时雪正下得欢，教室窗外的梧桐枝子上压着雪，一根一根压弯了腰。舟舟站在校门房的雨棚下，手插在袖筒里。他早上看过天气预报，知道有雪，却忘了带伞。同学赵磊的爸爸开车来接，车窗上的雪片化了，一道一道往下淌，赵磊临走冲他挥手，喊他等伞。雨棚边的雪堆上落了一层新雪，平得没人踩，舟舟用脚尖在上面画了一个歪歪扭扭的伞，画完又觉得傻，把脚印蹭掉。

妈妈快步走过来，伞举在他头顶，笑着说来得不算晚。舟舟抬头，看见妈妈耳边的碎发叫雪打湿了，贴在脸侧，鼻尖冻得发红。他的目光落回那双布鞋，鞋尖还在往外渗水，白袜子透出一团深色。舟舟的喉咙动了一下，什么也没说，伸手把围巾从自己脖子上解下来，绕到妈妈脖子上，绕了两圈，打了个死结，手法笨得很。妈妈说他围巾上有雪，凉。他抓住围巾的角往紧里掖，说，你穿布鞋来接我，我围上就不凉了。妈妈低头看那个死结，笑出了声，没拆。

两个人挤在一把伞下往家走。伞不大，一个人撑刚好，两个人撑就挤，肩膀必须挨着肩膀。雪片斜着飞，打在伞上噼啪响，伞沿滴下来的水在雪地上砸出一排小坑。妈妈走路的步子比平时小，每一步都躲着雪泥最深的地方走，布鞋踩在干净雪上，咯吱一声。舟舟把伞柄接过来，举高，往妈妈那边偏。妈妈的手覆在他手背上，帮他把伞扶稳。路灯亮了，光柱里全是旋转的雪，两个人的影子在雪地上连成一片。路过包子铺，玻璃门一开一合，白汽涌出来，妈妈买了两个豆角包子，塞进他手里，说路上吃，别冻着。

到家，妈妈进门先脱了布鞋，鞋印在门口的地垫上，一圈深色的水。她穿着袜子踩在地板上，先去摸他书包上有没有淋湿。舟舟站在门口，手里还捏着一个没吃完的包子，看妈妈的背影，布鞋湿的，围巾上是他那个死结。他把包子最后一口塞进嘴里，豆角馅儿的，热的，从嗓子一路暖到胃里。

# Mum's Cloth Shoes Were Soaked Through

Zhouzhou spotted the cloth shoes first. In a snowstorm that heavy, everyone at the school gate wore padded boots or snow boots, except one person in a pair of black cloth shoes, their uppers already darkened with water, pressing into the slush and pulling out, leaving wet holes in the snow. He stared for a moment before he recognized it was his mum.

It began half an hour earlier. At dismissal the snow was falling cheerfully, and the plane tree branches outside the classroom window bowed under the weight of snow. Zhouzhou stood under the awning of the gatehouse, hands tucked into his sleeves. He had checked the forecast that morning, knew there would be snow, yet forgotten his umbrella. Zhao Lei's father came to pick him up by car, snowflakes melting in streaks down the window, and Zhao Lei waved goodbye, shouting that he should wait for an umbrella. On the snow pile beside the awning a fresh layer lay smooth and untouched, and Zhouzhou drew a crooked umbrella on it with his toe, then felt silly and scraped the mark away.

Mum came up at a quick step, holding the umbrella over his head, smiling that she was not too late. Zhouzhou looked up and saw the wisps of hair by her temples wet from the snow, stuck to her face, her nose tip frozen red. His eyes dropped back to those cloth shoes, water still seeping from the toes, a dark patch showing through the white socks. His throat moved, but he said nothing. He reached up, unwound the scarf from his own neck, wound it twice around hers, and tied it in a hard knot, his fingers clumsy. Mum said his scarf was cold with snow on it. He tucked the ends in tightly and said, you came to fetch me in cloth shoes, so if I wrap you up you will not be cold. Mum looked down at the hard knot and laughed out loud, but did not untie it.

The two of them squeezed under one umbrella heading home. The umbrella was small, just right for one person, tight for two, so their shoulders had to touch. Snowflakes flew slantwise, crackling on the canopy, and the water dripping from its rim punched a row of little pits in the snow. Mum's steps were smaller than usual, each one avoiding the deepest slush; when the cloth shoes found clean snow they went crunch. Zhouzhou took the umbrella handle, held it high, and leaned it toward Mum. Her hand covered his on the handle, helping him keep it steady. The street lamps came on, the light columns full of spinning snow, and their two shadows merged into one patch on the ground. Passing the bun shop, its glass doors opened and closed, white steam pouring out. Mum bought two bean-paste buns and pushed them into his hands, saying eat them on the way, keep the cold out.

At home, Mum took off the cloth shoes first, leaving a ring of dark water on the doormat. Stockinged, she stepped onto the floor and went first to feel his schoolbag for any wetness. Zhouzhou stood in the doorway, still holding the half-eaten bun, watching his mother's back: cloth shoes soaked, and on her scarf his clumsy hard knot. He popped the last bite of bun into his mouth. Bean paste filling, warm, traveling all the way from his throat down into his stomach.

# 伞下的对话

我在校门口跺成了一只陀螺，雪片子往领子里钻。远远看见妈妈，她一路小跑过来，羽绒服帽子都没戴，头发上顶着一层雪，像撒了层糖霜。伞在她手里呼扇呼扇，另一只手拢在兜里。我说下这么大您怎么不打伞就来，她说打伞跑不快，你等急了。说着从兜里掏出一个手炉，灌了热水的，布套子还是热的，塞进我手里。又掏出一副干手套，说看你那手套湿的，换上。我换上干手套，攥着手炉，我们俩挤到一把伞底下。

雪砸在伞面上，声音脆，像炒豆子。妈妈问，今天冷不冷，课间出去疯没有。我说冷，但是打雪仗打热了，我们班胖子脑袋上叫雪球砸了个正着，活像撒了把面粉。妈妈笑得伞都歪了，说

你可别欺负人家。我说哪能，我个子矮，只配捏雪球。妈妈说，那你捏的雪球都飞哪儿去了。我说都飞班长那儿去了，他个子高，站那儿像靶子。我们俩说着说着，脚步都慢了。

雪越下越密，伞外白茫茫的，伞底下一小片干地方。妈妈忽然说，她小时候也遇过这样的大雪，路面积雪到小腿，她姥姥不放心，让她踩着前面人的脚印走，她排在一个高个儿叔叔后面，一路踩到镇上中学，鞋里灌了雪水，硬是在教室烤了一节课的火。我说那您没带伞吗。她说那年哪来的伞，全校就教导主任有一把，下雨天全校排队共用。我看看手里这把蓝格子伞，说那您现在这把伞归我了。妈妈说想得美，伞是家里的。

走到小区门口，雪把花坛、长椅都盖圆了，路灯把雪照得发亮，一粒一粒往下落。妈妈把伞换到我这边，说帮我举会儿，她腾出手拍头发上的雪。我举着伞，看她拍完雪又拢了拢羽绒服，忽然发现她左肩洇湿了一片，伞沿刚才一直挂在她那边。我说您肩膀湿了。她说没事，回去一抖就掉了。我把伞又往她那边挪，她也不推了，说这还差不多。我们俩在雪里走，伞歪过来歪过去，谁也没淋着。

上楼时电梯坏了，我们爬六层。妈妈在楼道里喘气，我在她后面数台阶，数到最后一层，她说今天路怎么这么短。我说因为一路都在说话。她回头看我一眼，笑了，从兜里又摸出一个手炉，说第二个也给你，路上捂的。我攥着两个手炉，看雪从窗户缝里飘进来一点，落在楼梯扶手上，一闪就没了。

# Conversation Under the Umbrella

At the school gate I was spinning around like a top, stamping my feet, snowflakes drilling down my collar. I spotted Mum in the distance, jogging over with her down-jacket hood off, a layer of snow on her hair like a dusting of sugar. The umbrella flapped in her hand, and her other hand was tucked in her pocket. I said, it is snowing this hard, why did you come out without an umbrella. She said an umbrella slows you down and you would be waiting anxiously. She pulled out a hand warmer filled with hot water, its cloth cover still warm, and pressed it into my palm. Then she produced a pair of dry gloves, saying look how wet yours are, change them. I changed into the dry gloves, gripped the hand warmer, and the two of us squeezed under one umbrella.

The snow drummed on the canopy, a crisp sound like stir-fried beans. Mum asked whether it was cold today and whether I had gone out to play wild during the break. I said cold, but the snowball fight warmed us up, and the big boy in our class took a snowball square on the head, looking as if someone had thrown a handful of flour at him. Mum laughed so hard the umbrella tilted, and told me not to bully him. I said never, I am short, my job is only making snowballs. She asked where all my snowballs flew. I said every one went to the class monitor, since he is tall and stands there like a target. As we talked, our steps slowed without our noticing.

The snow thickened. Outside the umbrella everything was white; under it lay a small dry patch. Mum said suddenly that she had met a snow this heavy as a child. The snow on the road reached her calves, and her own mother, worried, made her walk in the footprints of the person ahead. She followed a tall uncle all the way to the town middle school, snowmelt soaking into her shoes, and she had to warm herself by the classroom stove for a whole period. I asked whether she had no umbrella. She said where would umbrellas come from in those years, the whole school had only one, owned by the dean of students, shared in a queue on rainy days. I looked at the blue-checked umbrella in my hand and said this one is mine now. Mum said in your dreams, it belongs to the family.

At the compound gate the snow had rounded off the flower beds and benches, the street lamps made the falling snow glitter, flake by flake. Mum passed the umbrella to my side, asking me to hold it a while while she patted the snow out of her hair. I held the umbrella and watched her finish patting and zip up her jacket, and suddenly noticed a wet patch spreading over her left shoulder, where the umbrella rim had hung toward her side all along. I told her shoulder was wet. She said it was nothing, a shake at home would do it. I slid the umbrella over to her side, and this time she did not push it back, saying that was more like it. We walked on through the snow, the umbrella leaning this way and that, and neither of us got wet.

The elevator was broken, so we climbed six floors. Mum panted in the stairwell, and I counted the steps behind her. At the last floor she said, why was the road so short today. I said because we talked the whole way. She glanced back at me and laughed, then fished another hand warmer out of her pocket and said the second one is yours too, to warm your hands on the way. I gripped two hand warmers and watched a few flakes of snow drift in through the window crack, land on the stair railing, and vanish in a blink.