雪夜里的那串脚印

站在自己房间窗前的时候，外面的雪已经下了两个钟头。玻璃上蒙着一层哈气，他用袖子擦出一块清楚的地方，往下看那条刚刚走过的路。脚印还在，从楼门口一直排到远处街角，脚印边上，新落的雪已经开始往里填。他想起半个钟头以前，他还觉得这条路陌生。

这是他转到这座城市来的第一周。学校是新的，同学是新的，连回家的路也是新的。在原来的城市，他闭着眼半闭着眼都能走回家；这条新路，他每个路口都要看一眼牌子。那天晚自习出来，看见下雪，他心里竟然松快了一点——下雪嘛，所有的路都变新了，所有人都走得小心翼翼，谁也不会注意到他是新来的。

第一盏路灯在前头。他走进光锥里，落雪忽然变得看得清：一片一片，打着旋往下坠，边缘在光里发亮，离开光就看不见了。他搬过两次家，在两个城市都见过雪夜，可这盏灯下的雪好像不一样，它落得慢，像也对这条街不熟，正在慢慢摸路。他在灯底下站了几秒，然后往前走。

脚下的雪是新铺的，一脚下去一声咯吱。他一个人走，踩雪声一路陪着他。在原来的城市，他总跟同学结伴走，一路说话，倒没留意过脚下的声音；独自走，他头一回发现自己的脚步有这样的响声，一会儿轻，一会儿重。他停住，声音也停住，整条街静下来，像雪在等他迈下一步。他想，一个人走夜路这件事，好像没有那么可怕，起码有这个声音陪着。

到街角他抬头。远处居民楼的灯火亮着，一格一格，黄的白的，有的窗里有人影走动。他找自家那栋楼，第九栋，五层，那扇窗亮着妈妈留的灯。原来的城市也有过这样一扇窗，新的城市也有。窗里的灯是一样的，窗下的路不一样。他在雪夜里第一次走完这条新路，脚印会被雪填平，可路灯的位置他记住了：到路口是三盏，再到药店两盏，然后就该看见家了。

现在他站在窗前，看窗外那串脚印一点点被雪填平。明天出门，路又是全新的，他还得踩上去，咯吱咯吱走一遍。他把额头贴在玻璃上，凉的，很舒服。这条路，他对自己说，认下了。

The Trail of Footprints in the Snowy Night

When he stood at his bedroom window, the snow outside had been falling for two hours. The glass was fogged with his breath. He wiped a clear patch with his sleeve and looked down at the road he had just walked. The footprints were still there, running from the building entrance all the way to the far street corner, and fresh snow was already filling their edges. He remembered that half an hour earlier he had still found this road strange.

It was his first week after transferring to this city. The school was new, the classmates were new, even the road home was new. In the old city he could walk home with half-closed eyes; on this new road he had to read the signs at every crossing. That evening, leaving the school gate after evening study and seeing the snow, he actually felt a little relieved. With snow falling, every road looked new, and everyone walked carefully, so nobody would notice that he was new.

The first street lamp rose ahead. He walked into its cone of light, and the falling snow became visible: flake by flake, turning as they came down, their edges bright inside the light, vanishing once they left it. He had moved twice and seen snowy nights in two cities, yet the snow under this lamp felt different. It fell slowly, as if it too were unfamiliar with this street and was taking its time finding its way. He stood under the lamp a few seconds, then walked on.

The snow underfoot was new, and every step made a crunch. He walked alone, and the crunching went with him all the way. In the old city he used to walk home with a classmate, talking as they went, and the sound underfoot was drowned out. Walking alone, he noticed for the first time that his own steps had this sound, now light, now heavy. When he stopped, the sound stopped, and the whole street went quiet, as if the snow were waiting for his next step. Being alone on a night road, he thought, is not so frightening after all - at least this sound keeps him company.

At the street corner he raised his head. In the distance the lights of apartment buildings were on, square after square, yellow and white, some with a moving shadow inside. He picked out his building, the ninth one, fifth floor, the window lit by the light his mother left on. The old city had had such a window, and the new city had one too. The window light was the same; the road under the window was different. He had crossed this new road for the first time on a snowy night. The footprints would be filled in by snow, but he had memorized the lamps: three to the crossing, two more to the pharmacy, and then home in sight.

Now he stands at the window, watching the footprints outside smooth away under the snow. Tomorrow, stepping out, the road will be new again, and he will walk it again, crunch by crunch. He pressed his forehead to the glass. It was cold, and comfortable. This road, he told himself, he can walk now.

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