雪地侦探社

我爷爷说，下雪天是侦探的好日子，因为雪地不会撒谎，谁走过，它就记下来给谁看。所以大年初一早上，雪一停，我和爷爷就成立了雪地侦探社。社长是爷爷，侦探是我，案子当天就来了。

案发现场在我家院子正中央。雪地上有一串脚印，从院墙根进来，前头四个尖、后头一个圆，一步一个小坑。脚印绕着白菜地走了一圈，在白菜地边上停了一会儿，又往柴堆去了。爷爷蹲下来，用手比了比脚印的宽度：三指宽。他说，嫌疑人个头不大，腿不短，走路一蹦一蹦的——你看这两个坑挨得近，中间那个长坑是拖的，它中途坐下来歇过。

我拿卷尺量了脚印的步子：短的一步二十厘米，长的一步能到半米。我把它记在侦探本上。爷爷说，别急着下结论，跟着嫌疑人走一趟。我们就顺着脚印走。脚印绕过水缸，缸沿上有几根灰色的毛。爷爷把毛捏起来对着太阳看：软的，带绒毛，是兔子毛。我心里已经有答案了，可爷爷说，侦探要讲证据，证据要一条一条排。

脚印到了柴堆后面，出现一个洞。洞口摆着几片啃过的白菜叶，叶子上有牙印。我趴下去数牙印，爷爷数步子。数完我们对一下：牙印四颗门牙，上二下二，是兔子没错；洞里的干草窝里有几根长毛，跟水缸沿上的是同一种灰。爷爷说，证据链闭合了。嫌疑人是一只兔子，冬天饿瘦了，半夜出来找吃的，绕着白菜地转圈是因为雪埋住了菜，它扒不开。

案子破了，按侦探社的规矩，要处理。爷爷说，不能抓，冬天抓兔子，兔子过冬就没了。我的办法是：在柴堆边给它留吃的。我们切了半棵白菜摆在雪地上，又放了一小截胡萝卜，用雪围了个小圈。爷爷还做了个牌子，用硬纸板写的：雪地侦探社口粮发放点。

第二天早上我们去查看。白菜少了两个角，胡萝卜没了，雪圈没塌，脚印从发放点直通柴堆，回去的脚印比来的脚印踩得深——爷爷说，那是吃饱了，走得稳。我在侦探本上写下结案：嫌疑人已查明，是一只灰兔子，作案动机是饿，本侦探社决定用口粮感化它。

后来整个寒假，发放点天天补货，脚印天天都有。开学那天雪还没化完，我把侦探本交给爷爷保管。爷爷说，等明年下雪，案子接着办。我说好。我觉得这个案子是我破过的最好的案子，因为别的案子破了就没了，这个案子破了以后，天天都有新脚印。

The Snowfield Detective Agency

My grandfather says snowy days are a detective's good days, because a snowfield never lies - whoever walks across it, it writes down for anyone to read. So on the first morning of the new year, as soon as the snow stopped, Grandpa and I founded the Snowfield Detective Agency. Grandpa was the chief, I was the detective, and a case arrived the very same day.

The scene of the case was the middle of our yard. A trail of footprints crossed the snow, entering from along the wall: four points in front, one round pad behind, each step a little pit. The trail circled once around the cabbage patch, paused at

its edge, then headed for the woodpile. Grandpa squatted down and measured the width of a footprint with his fingers: three fingers wide. He said: the suspect is small, has long legs, and moves by hopping - see how these two pits sit close together, with a long drag mark between them? It sat down to rest halfway.

I measured the stride with my tape: short steps twenty centimeters, long steps half a meter. I wrote it in my detective notebook. Grandpa said: no rushing to conclusions, let us follow the suspect. So we followed the trail. It curved around the water jar, and on the jar's rim were a few gray hairs. Grandpa held them up to the sun: soft, with downy fluff - rabbit hair. I already had my answer inside, but Grandpa said a detective deals in evidence, and evidence must be lined up one by one.

The trail went behind the woodpile to a hole. At its mouth lay a few nibbled cabbage leaves with tooth marks. I lay down to count the tooth marks while Grandpa counted strides. When we compared: four front teeth, two upper and two lower - a rabbit for sure; in the dry-grass nest inside the hole were several long hairs, the same gray as those on the jar's rim. Grandpa said: the chain of evidence is closed. The suspect is a rabbit, thinned by winter hunger, out at night searching for food; it circled the cabbage patch because the snow had buried the cabbages and it could not dig them open.

The case was solved, and by agency rules we had to take action. Grandpa said: no catching - catch a rabbit in winter and it has no winter left. My plan was to leave food by the woodpile. We set half a cabbage on the snow, added a little piece of carrot, and ringed them with snow. Grandpa even made a sign out of cardboard: Snowfield Detective Agency Food Distribution Point.

Next morning we went to inspect. The cabbage had lost two corners, the carrot was gone, the snow ring stood unbroken, and the footprints ran straight from the distribution point to the woodpile - the returning prints pressed deeper than the arriving ones. Grandpa said that meant a full belly, a steady walk. I wrote the closing note in my detective book: suspect identified, a gray rabbit; motive, hunger; this agency sentences it to reform through rations.

For the rest of the winter vacation we restocked the point every day, and the footprints came every day. On the first day of the new term, with the snow not fully melted, I handed my detective book to Grandpa for safekeeping. He said next year when it snows, the case continues. I said all right. I think this is the best case I have ever solved, because other cases end when they are solved - but after this one was solved, there were new footprints every single day.