坡上的那双手

雪是夜里下的，早上出来一看，马路两边全白了。可最麻烦的不是雪，是雪底下那层冰。雪被前面的行人踩化，一到冷天又冻上，人行道变成了一面灰白色的大玻璃，亮晃晃的，专等人不注意。

我走在上学的路上，尽量踩别人踩出来的脚印。脚印一个挨一个，像一条歪歪扭扭的路标。我忽然发现，走别人走过的路最稳，因为那些脚印已经替我们试过滑不滑了。

快到校门口的斜坡，我看见前面有个小小的身影忽然坐到了地上。是个一年级的小弟弟，书包甩在一边，两只手撑着冰，想爬起来，脚底下却打滑，越撑越起不来。他周围的大人脚步很快，谁也没停。

我跑过去。其实我也怕滑，跑到他跟前时自己差点也出溜一下，还好我一把抓住了路边的护栏。我把他的手拉起来，帮他捡起书包，拍掉他手套上的雪。他帽子上全是雪，鼻尖红红的，小声说了句谢谢哥哥。

我问他是几班的，他说一（2）班。正好顺路。我对他说，这段坡邪门，你踩着我的脚印走。于是我在前面走，把每一步踩实了，他在后面照着踩。走到坡中间，他脚又晃了一下，我反手拉住他的手腕，拉稳了，继续走。

说实话，我的手也凉，手套是去年买的，有点薄。可是我心里热得很。去年冬天，我也是在这条斜坡上摔的，书包里的卷子撒了一地，是一个六年级的哥哥帮我把卷子一张一张捡起来，还扶我到坡顶。他叫什么我忘了，只记得他袖口上有一块蓝墨水的印子。我一直记得。今年，我四年级了，我也成了扶别人的那个人。

到了教室门口，我们互相帮忙掸雪。我摘了他的帽子，帮他把后背的雪拍掉，他帮我把围巾上的雪一片一片摘下来。他抖雪的时候抖出一头碎冰碴，叮叮咚咚掉在地上，像下了一场小小的冰雹。我们俩都笑了。

早读铃响了。他跑回一（2）班，跑之前回头冲我挥了挥手。我回到自己的座位上，把手贴在嘴边哈了哈气，手是凉的，心是热的。

窗外的雪还在下。我想起去年那个袖口有蓝墨水印子的哥哥，不知道他上几年级了。明年冬天，也许一（2）班这个小弟弟也会四年级，也会去扶下一个坐在冰上的人。这样一想，这条滑溜溜的上学路，好像也没那么难走了。

The Hands on the Slope

The snow fell during the night. Coming out in the morning, both sides of the road were all white. But the real trouble was not the snow, it was the layer of ice under it. People in front had trodden the snow into slush, and the cold froze it again, so the sidewalk became one huge sheet of grayish glass, gleaming, just waiting for someone to be careless.

On my way to school I tried to step in other people's footprints. The footprints followed one another, like a crooked row of road signs. I suddenly realized that walking in the path others had walked was the steadiest way of all, because those footprints had already tested the ice for us.

Near the slope at the school gate, I saw a small figure ahead suddenly sit down on the ground. It was a first-grade little boy, his schoolbag flung aside, both hands propped on the ice, trying to get up, but his feet kept sliding and he could not rise. The grown-ups around him walked fast, and nobody stopped.

I ran over. Honestly I was afraid of slipping too; when I reached him I nearly slid myself, but luckily I grabbed the railing by the road. I pulled him up by the hand, picked up his schoolbag, and brushed the snow off his gloves. His hat was covered with snow, his nose tip red, and he said quietly: thank you, big brother.

I asked him which class he was in. He said Class 2, Grade 1. It was on my way. I told him: this slope is wicked, step in my footprints. So I walked in front, pressing each step firm, and he followed, stepping where I stepped. In the middle of the slope his foot wobbled again, and I reached back and caught his wrist, steadied him, and kept walking.

To tell the truth, my hands were cold too. My gloves were bought last year and a little thin. But my heart was warm. Last winter I also fell on this very slope. The papers in my schoolbag scattered all over the ground, and a sixth-grade big brother picked them up sheet by sheet and walked me to the top of the slope. I forgot his name; I only remember a blue ink stain on his cuff. I have remembered it all along. This year I am in fourth grade, and I have become the one who helps others up.

At the classroom door we brushed the snow off each other. I took off his hat and patted the snow off his back, and he picked the snowflakes off my scarf one by one. When he shook his snow out, a headful of little ice pellets fell tinkling to the floor, like a tiny hailstorm. We both laughed.

The morning reading bell rang. He ran back to Class 2, Grade 1, and before running he turned and waved at me. I returned to my seat and breathed on my hands. My hands were cold; my heart was hot.

Outside the window the snow kept falling. I thought of that big brother last year with the blue ink stain on his cuff. I wonder what grade he is in now. Next winter, maybe this little boy from Class 2 will be in fourth grade too, and will help up the next person sitting on the ice. Thinking of it that way, this slippery walk to school does not seem so hard after all.