我和小禾的雪地行军

昨晚睡前我就把明早的闹钟上了两遍。妈妈说，看这架势明天雪小不了。我躺在床上想，要是雪下得大，我就叫上小禾一起走。小禾住在我们巷子口，是我同班同学。我们俩平时什么都比，比谁算得快，比谁跳绳多，上周还比谁能单手转笔，结果两人都把笔甩到了黑板槽里，谁也没赢。

早上七点一出门，雪已经停了，可地上全是雪。我在巷子口学了一声猫叫，这是我们约好的暗号。小禾披着羽绒服出来了，他妈妈在后面喊：路上不许打闹。

我们一开始还走得规规矩矩。人行道上的雪被踩实了，一层冰壳子亮晶晶的，踩上去咯吱咯吱响。小禾说，咱们比踩影子，谁的影子被踩到谁输。我低头去踩他的影子，脚下一滑，整个人往前出溜，好容易站住了，鞋尖正好停在他的影子上。我大喊：我赢啦！小禾不服，说那是滑的，不算，重新来。

重新来不要紧，他退后助跑，冲过来踩我的影子，结果他自己脚下一滑，哧溜一下出溜出去，一屁股坐进了路边的雪堆里。我伸手去拉他，没想到他力气大，一把拽住我，我脚底本来也踩着冰，被他带得也坐了下去。两个人并排坐在雪堆里，雪灌进后脖领，凉得缩脖子。我们你看看我，我看看你，忽然都笑得直不起腰。笑完了，谁也不笑话谁，爬起来拍拍雪，接着走。

到了校门口那段斜坡，谁也不敢比了。斜坡冻成一面亮冰，上面有昨天留下的扫帚印。小禾说，这次搀着走。我们俩一人抓住对方一只胳膊，像抬一桶水那样，横着往坡上挪。坡不长，我们走了好半天。旁边一个家长看见了，说这俩孩子倒会互相照顾。我们嘴上说才没有，是怕摔，耳朵都有点热。

值日老师在校门口数迟到的同学。我们从坡上下来，书包上、帽子上、肩膀上全是雪。进教学楼前，我们互相帮忙抖雪。我给他拍后背，他给我扫帽子，抖下来的雪在门口积了一小堆。路过一年级那边，几个小同学看着我们笑，说我们俩像两个雪人。

坐到座位上，我发现手套湿了一角，头发里还藏着几片没抖干净的雪。小禾隔着过道冲我比了个手势，是早上那个猫叫的手势。我忍住笑，翻开语文书。

早读的声音响起来，特别齐，特别亮。窗外又飘起雪来，一片一片落在操场边上。我想起坐在雪堆里的那一下，后脖领还凉着，心里却热热的。下雪的上学路，滑是真滑，可我跟小禾这一路，比平时哪一天都长，也都好。

My Snow March with Xiaohe

Before bed last night I set my morning alarm twice. My mother said: from the look of it, tomorrow’s snow will not be small. I lay in bed thinking: if the snow falls big, I will call Xiaohe and walk to school together. Xiaohe lives at the mouth of our lane, and he is my classmate. Usually we compete about everything: who calculates faster, who jumps rope more. Last week we competed at spinning a pen with one hand, and both of us flung our pens into the blackboard groove, so neither won.

At seven in the morning, when I went out, the snow had stopped, but the ground was full of snow. At the lane mouth I imitated a cat call, our agreed signal. Xiaohe came out in his down jacket, his mother calling behind him: no roughhousing on the road.

At first we walked properly. The snow on the sidewalk had been trodden firm, a shell of ice glittering, creaking under our feet. Xiaohe said: let us compete at stepping on shadows; whoever's shadow gets stepped on loses. I lowered my head to chase his shadow, my foot slid out, my whole body skidding forward. I barely stayed standing, and my toe stopped right on his shadow. I shouted: I won! Xiaohe refused to accept it, saying that one was a slide and did not count, do it again.

Doing it again was a mistake. He backed up, took a run, charged at my shadow, and his own foot slipped. He skidded and landed seat-first in the snowbank by the road. I reached out to pull him up, but I did not expect him to be so strong: he grabbed me in one pull, and my feet were on ice too, so he dragged me down as well. We sat side by side in the snowbank, snow pouring down our collars, making us shrink our necks with the cold. We looked at each other, and suddenly both laughed so hard we could not straighten up. When the laughing ended, neither one teased the other. We got up, patted off the snow, and kept walking.

At the slope in front of the school gate, neither of us dared compete anymore. The slope had frozen into a sheet of bright ice, marked with yesterday's broom strokes. Xiaohe said: this time we walk arm in arm. Each of us grabbed one of the other's arms, like carrying a bucket of water between two people, and shuffled sideways up the slope. The slope was not long, but it took us a long time. A parent nearby saw us and said: these two boys really know how to look after each other. We said no, we were just afraid of falling, but our ears went a little hot.

The teacher on duty at the school gate was counting late students. Coming down the slope, we were covered with snow on our schoolbags, hats, and shoulders. Before entering the teaching building we helped each other shake off the snow. I patted his back, he swept his hat, and the shaken-off snow piled into a little mound at the door. Passing the first-graders' side, several small students looked at us and laughed, saying we looked like two snowmen.

Sitting down at my desk, I found one corner of my glove was wet, and a few snowflakes still hid in my hair, unshaken. Xiaohe flashed me a gesture across the aisle, the cat-call gesture from this morning. I held back a laugh and opened my Chinese textbook.

The sound of morning reading rose, very even, very bright. Outside the window snow began drifting again, flake after flake landing on the edge of the playground. I thought of that moment sitting in the snowbank. The back of my neck was still cold,

but my heart was warm. The snowy walk to school is truly slippery, but this road Xiaohe and I walked was longer than any ordinary day, and better.