“Hey, Lily! I’m going to cook lunch now! Get ready to eat in a while!” I hollered to my sister, Lily, as I made my way to the kitchen.

Lily was slouched on the sofa in the living room, watching her favourite cartoon. My parents were on an errand today and they had entrusted me with the responsibility to cook lunch since I had cooked by myself before. In the kitchen, I started boiling a pot of water on the stove and then I put instant noodles into the pot.

Just then, the telephone rang. Without a second thought, I rushed instinctively to pick up the phone. It was my bosom buddy, James! Immediately, we started chatting animatedly about the latest computer games. As I became increasingly distracted, the pot of noodles was pushed to a deep corner in my mind.

Suddenly, an acrid burning smell entered my nostrils. What could that be? At that moment, it hit me. I had left the noodles in the pot over the stove when I was answering the telephone! Hastily ending the call, I dashed to the kitchen. The noodles in the pot were a black, misshapen mess and the burning smell was starting to choke me. In my haste to turn off the stove, I accidentally pushed roll of a newspaper towards the pot and it caught fire! The fire spread to the table cloth and then the wooden cabinets. It soon engulfed the whole kitchen. My heart leapt into my throat as my face paled. The fire devoured everything in its path and steadily grew into a blazing inferno.

Sprinting into the living room, I grabbed a startled Lily and made a mad dash away from the uncontrollable fire towards the door. The fire was encroaching on the only safe spots left in the house.
Just as I thought that the fire was going to block the entire doorway, I caught a glimpse of a pail of water being splashed into the house, dousing a little of the flames. And then another. And yet another. When I ran out of my house and into the corridor, I realised that my neighbour, Uncle Ben, was running back and forth between his house and mine, fetching water to douse some of the flames.

Minutes later, firefighters burst into the corridor and whipped out water hoses. Uncle Ben must have called the fire department too! Heaving a sigh of relief that the situation was in the hands of trained specialists, I approached Uncle Ben and thanked him profusely. If he had not stepped in and risked his life to help, Lily and I might not even be standing here at this moment! I was so shaken, grateful and touched at the same time that tears began streaming down my cheeks like rivers.

Within moments, the firefighters had put out the fire, but they could not save the house from the black soot that covered everything. Just then, the lift doors opened. My parents were back from their errand. Shocked at the sight of the black charred house, my parents froze to the spot. They only regained their composure when I had recounted the entire incident to them with cheeks aflame. They gave me a stern tongue-lashing about the importance of Lily’s and my safety even though they were hugely relieved that Lily and I had escaped from the fire unscathed.

Reflecting on the incident, I was hugely grateful to Uncle Ben for risking his own life to save Lily and me from the hands of death. This close shave had taught me not to be distracted while cooking or handling fire and to be on constant vigilance so that there will not be any more such incidents in the future. Everyone has only one life and it is the most precious thing ever. If we ever lose it, we will never get it back again.

Peng Ruijia, P6