

# How I Was Saved by Strangers Brandishing Ice Picks

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By Are We There Yet



*My car, locked in ice.*

Somewhere, under that giant block of ice, was my car.

I thought I'd had the whole cold-weather thing figured out. I had two shovels, a large one for getting *through* the snow to reach the car, and a smaller one for digging under the wheels and bumpers. I carry a squirt bottle of lock de-icer in my bag at all times, have a giant snow brush and ice scraper, and a smaller ice scraper for inside the car, when the cold gets so bad frost goes right through the windows and icicles hang from the rear-view mirror.

**Was I ever wrong. I did not have it figured out.**

It was the first day back to school after the Christmas holidays, and we had spent the weekend cozied up at home in our pyjamas, watching the snow-storm, watching movies, and revelling in the fact that we did not have to go outside. The snow soon stopped, the temperature warmed

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up, and we watched the snow melt with glee. Even knee-deep slush puddles were better than freezing weather. And then we went to bed. While we slept, temperatures plummeted and an ice-storm raged.

The next morning, we raced out the door, got to the front gate, and pulled. Nothing. I pulled harder. Frozen shut. I lifted the kids over the gate, then I climbed over, and we slid all the way down the sidewalk to the car. And there, like a toy in a giant ice cube, sat my car.

Slush had turned to ice, enveloping everything in its path. It was too late to walk and there were no buses in sight, so I paid a mini fortune and we hopped a cab to school. It took over an hour to walk back home through the storm. When I got there, I picked up my shovel, went back to the car, and swung it into what looked like a snow drift.

My plastic shovel rebounded and almost knocked me over. It was not a snowdrift. It was pure ice. I tried again. Same thing. Not wanting to risk a concussion, I thought maybe I could kick through the ice bank. No, although I did almost break a toe.

As I stood there, with my shovel rebounding and my toe throbbing, an elderly man stopped and stared. "Oh." He said. "That's bad." Then he left. I started thinking some things I'm not allowed to say, but before I could finish thinking, he came back. "You got it wrong, you need this."

**He was brandishing something I had never seen before, but instantly liked. It was an ice pick shovel.**

A long wooden pole with a pointed metal shovel at the end, it ate through ice like acid. It was marvellous. The man must have been at least eighty, but he swung that thing like a lumberjack on speed. He threw me another shovel, a regular-shaped one but made out of metal, and in his broken English told me to haul away the ice and snow that he was cracking through. It was

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twenty below, he wasn't wearing gloves, and looked at me like I was crazy when I offered him mine. We continued like that for awhile, without speaking, when another guy showed up.

I didn't know him either, but he did the same thing as the old man. Stopped, stared and shook his head. "Wait", he said in French. Then he reached into his backpack and pulled out an ice pick shovel. This was incredible. Little did I know that kind strangers roamed the streets with ice picks. And then he started working. Not five minutes later, another man joined in, with yet another of these magic shovels. Before I knew it, I had a team of people helping me. I didn't know any of them. Some spoke Polish, some English, some French and some Chinese. None of them cared, they all laughed, waved their hands and their ice picks, and made me feel wonderful.

The magic wasn't in the ice picks. It was in the people. It went beyond language, beyond anything except a basic desire to help. And the foresight to always carry an ice pick in your backpack.

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