



萬佛城求學散記（三）

上學途中

Studying at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas—
Part 3 On the Way to School

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住在萬佛城的後山，白白的小屋子，掩映在高大的紅木林間，像極了童話中小紅帽的外婆住的地方，遠遠望過去，好似林間的小磨菇。從住處走到學校，以五歲孩童的步伐來量，大約需要十分鐘左右，一路上林木、翠竹、草坪，映到孩子的眼中，是不盡的驚喜與好奇，每天清晨送她們上學的這十幾分鐘，成了我一天中最大的享受。

先是野鹿。城裏長大的孩子從未見過真正的鹿，猛地被她們撞見，張開兩臂，就想衝過去抱抱牠們，可惜野鹿躲得更快

，她們始終未能如願。一個問：「媽媽，牠們是不是小鹿斑比的兄弟姐妹？」另一個馬上否決：「不是，牠們是幫聖誕老公公駕車的Rain Deer，叫魯道夫才對。」眼看這兩個「小人」又要吵起來了，做媽媽的趕緊打圓場：「都對，都對，斑比也可以幫聖誕老公公駕車，魯道夫的兄弟也可以叫斑比，是不是？」兩個小丫頭認真地想了想，然後點頭，馬上又有了新的結論

：「牠們剛剛幫聖誕老公公送完禮物，好辛苦，就跑到這裏來休息了。」

再接下來就是孔雀、山雉、松鼠、野兔、山鷹，各種各樣五顏六色的鳥兒，每天每天，都帶給這對雙胞胎不同的驚喜，多彩豐富的聯想。她們會站在孔雀身邊，一遍遍地告訴牠：「你好美喲！」希望牠能明白她的話，要是孔雀能點點頭，那多妙啊！她們也一連幾天，熱烈地討論為什麼山雉（野雞）會比家雞漂亮，哪一個飛得更高些？為

A row of little white houses stood in the mountains behind the CTTB, surrounded by tall redwood trees, much like the cottage that the grandmother of Little Red Riding Hood lived in. Seen from a distance the little white houses looked like little mushrooms in the forest. The distance from our place to the school took about ten minutes for a five year old child to cover. Along the way there were trees, meadows and green bamboo. The children's eyes shone with excitement and curiosity every time we walked the ten minutes to school. Their early morning walk became the most fulfilling and enjoyable part of my day.

There were wild deer to see. Having grown up in the city, these children had never seen real deer. Encountering them, the children would open their arms wide and rushed forward to hug them, but alas, the deer would run away very quickly and hide. The children's desire to hug the deer was never fulfilled.

One of the children asked, "Mummy, are they the brothers and sisters of Bambi?" Her twin sister immediately said, "No, they are the ones who helped pull Santa Claus' sleigh, and the reindeer was called Rudolph." Listening to them arguing until they were red in the face I hurriedly pacified them. I told them, "Both of you are right! Bambi can also help Santa Claus pull the sleigh. Rudolph's brother can be called Bambi, right?"

The two children thought seriously for a moment, then nodded their heads, and immediately came up with another idea about the deer. "They have just finished helping Santa Claus deliver presents and are very tired and that is why they are here to rest."

There were peacocks, pheasants, squirrels, jackrabbits, hawks and all kinds of colorful birds. Each day, there were different kinds of surprises and excitement for the twins. The mood of the children changed according to their rich imaginations. They would stand beside the peacocks and tell them, "You are so beautiful," insisting that the birds understood what they were saying. How wonderful if the peacocks would nod their heads in agreement!

For a few days in a row the children enthusiastically discussed why



什麼小松鼠要用牠們的尾巴當被子蓋？牠們的媽媽為什麼不給牠買被子

？野兔子在萬佛城找不到胡蘿蔔吃會不會哭？山鷹每天用什麼來餵牠的小寶貝？啄木鳥把樹敲得這麼響，牠的頭會不會痛？

有時天氣冷，清晨的草地上，是一層白白的霜，陪著她們蹲在草地旁，細細地觀察那些六角形的，天地的傑作。在亞熱帶平原長大的孩子，從未見過霧。頭一次見，一陣歡呼，叫得我莫名其妙，兩對晶晶亮亮的眼睛瞪得溜圓，問我那是什麼？「孩子，那是霧。」「什麼是霧？」兩個小華裔美國人中文程度有限，平日裏對話，全是英文。偏偏我這半吊子英文到用時方很少，一時想它不起。「唉，唉，這個霧嘛，就是……。」

又是一個明媚的清晨，太陽出來了，照在茸茸密密如絲般的細草上，無數綴在其間的露珠兒，在陽光下璀璨生輝，五彩繽紛地閃爍著，吸住了孩子的注意力。「媽咪，那是什麼？」「那是露珠兒。」「什麼是露珠兒？」唉呀呀，又來了，一時間我也想不起英文的露珠怎麼說？！

一邊一個，牽著她們的小小手兒同行，流連在每一個清晨裏，耳邊是一片嘖嘖喳喳的感嘆，對著人間的自然景物大驚小怪。透過她們純真與好奇，我重新發現到這世間美麗的一面。

相比以前的蒼白，那無數個蜷縮在電視機旁、電腦遊戲前的日子，如今的她們，擁有的是無比的豐盛。開闊的視野，充滿生命力的生活。對於她們今後的人生，具有深遠的影響。在大自然的環境中長大的孩子，不知不覺中，會攝受一份天地間的靈氣，會對天地的萬物，自然而然地生出一份珍惜與感恩。而這些，不正是每一個為人父母者，對孩子殷殷的期望嗎？

☞待續

pheasants are prettier than household chickens. They wanted to know which one could fly higher.

They also wondered why the little squirrels used their tails as a blanket to cover themselves. They asked, "Why doesn't the mother squirrel buy them a blanket?"

They wanted to know if the jackrabbits in CTTB cried when they could not find carrots and what the hawks feed their young. The children wondered if the woodpecker would hurt its head if it kept pecking on the tree.

At times, when the weather was cold, the meadows at dawn became covered by a layer of white frost. I accompanied the children and we squatted on the ground scrutinizing the hexagonal snowflakes- a product of heaven and earth.

Growing up in the low-lying countryside of Florida, the children had never seen fog. When they first saw it, their eyes lit up and they called out excitedly wanting to know what it was.

"Children, this is fog."

They said, "What is fog?" I used to communicate mainly in simple English with them every day, yet, for a moment I was unable to think of a reply because of my limited English.

"Umm, Fog is, umm....."

It was yet another clear bright day. The sun rose and shone on the green fields. Dewdrops appeared on the thin blades grass growing densely. The dewdrops reflecting rainbows in the bright sunlight attracted the attention of the children.

"Mummy, what are they?"

"They are dewdrops." Oh dear, not again - how on earth do I know what 'dewdrops' are called in English?

Holding on to the twin's small hands, one on each side of me, we wandered in the clear mornings, the children's noisy chatter lingering in the clear morning air. They seem to be a pair of impish fairies, full of excitement and wonderment - impish fairies who view the very nature of life with awe and wonder. Through their innocent and pure eyes I rediscovered the beauty of the world.

The children's past, of sitting in front of the television and playing computer games, paled into insignificance compared to their present way of living. They are now embracing a fullness of life that is boundless and abundant. They have a broad outlook and a life full of energy. These experiences will have a deep and profound impact on their futures.

Children growing up in an environment surrounded by nature will unknowingly acquire an energy and force that comes from living with nature. They will treasure and appreciate all living creatures in the universe. Isn't this what all parents would hope and wish for their children?

☞to be continued