

Writing from the CUNY Language Immersion Program (CLIP)

The Light of a Firefly

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My great-grandmother gave me advice that a firefly generates light in the darkness. If I faced difficulties or sadness I could find the firefly and it would transform me. I didn't understand her advice until I came to New York City and saw fireflies one night. These fireflies changed my life forever.

When I was thirteen years old in China, I dropped out of school. Two years later I came to the United States. I was confused coming to New York City because for a long time I hadn't been in school. I didn't know the English language anymore. I worried about making friends in the United States.

I was nervous to meet the teachers and students on my first day of high school. However, I also thought these uncomfortable feelings would disappear as soon as I entered the class. However, I didn't understand anything my teacher said and I felt despair because nobody helped me. After school, I returned home and told my mother I wanted to drop out of school and begin to work. She told me I would be nothing without the English language or education. I didn't listen to her and ran away.

That night, I came to a park. I saw many children playing. They were smiling and talking with their friends in English. I felt despair again like a needle in my heart.

Suddenly, I saw many tiny, shining bright lights near a bush. I moved closer and saw fireflies. They made enough light to illuminate the park. They were spiraling, flying over my head. As I enjoyed the dancing show of the fireflies, I remembered the advice my great-grandmother gave me. She told me that when I would leave my home to go out into the world I might feel despair and sadness, but I could always find fireflies. This advice turned over in my mind, and I immediately understood the meaning of great-grandmother's advice. A firefly looks like a light that leads people to find their hope again. I was ashamed of my ideas of wanting to drop out of school.

I will never forget my journey to the park. I have become a serious student, and I will never give up again. The Atlantic Ocean will never separate my love from my great-grandmother's wisdom.

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