

The Gift of Subira

Forty miles north of Los Angeles, there is a wildlife preserve called Shambala. With a raw beauty reminiscent¹⁾ of Africa, gigantic²⁾ brown—rock outcroppings lay randomly dispersed throughout the sprawling land of the preserve. Shambala—Sanskrit for “a meeting place of peace and harmony for all beings, animal and human”—is a sanctuary³⁾ for lions and other big cats. Nestled in the awesome grandeur of California's Soledad Canyon, it is, quite simply, breathtaking.

One day a small group of young people were at Shambala on a field trip from a local rehabilitation⁴⁾ center. A lovely woman, the actress Tippi Hedren, who is the founder of Shambala, stood in front of the cheetah⁵⁾ enclosure. “Her name is Subira,” Tippi said, beaming. “She's a three—year—old cheetah, not even at the height of her game. Magnificent, isn't she?”

As though it were a well—rehearsed script, Subira turned her head to the audience and gazed into the crowd. The black lines running from her eyes to her mouth were so distinctive that they appeared to have been freshly painted on for the day's exhibition. And the closely set black spots on a tawny—colored backdrop of thick fur were so dazzling that everyone felt compelled to comment. “Ooooooh, look at her, she's so beautiful.” they said in unison. I thought so, too.

Tippi, a friend of mine, had invited me to visit her that day; I was sitting in the front row of chairs assembled for the visiting group. All of us continued to stare in awe—except for a teenage boy in the back row. He groaned in what seemed boredom and discontent. When several members of the group turned in his direction, he brushed the front of his T—shirt as though to remove dust particles, and, in a macho⁶⁾ gesture calculated to impress us, rolled up the right sleeve of his shirt, further exposing his well—developed muscles.

Seventeen—year—old Cory had dreamed of playing major league baseball someday. That was his one and only goal. He lived and breathed baseball and dreamed of the day when he would have a following, fans who knew he was “the man.” No one doubted Cory's ability, certainly not the lead university scout for baseball talent in the state. The scout had recruited Cory, confirming a promising future. That was before the car accident. Now, it seemed nothing could replace the joy that was dashed when the boy lost his leg.

Cory lost more than a leg in the tragic accident; he also lost his hope. And his spirit. It left him not only physically disabled but emotionally crippled. Unable to dream of a goal other than being a major league baseball player, he was bitter and jaded, and felt just plain useless. Hopeless. Now he sat in a wheelchair, a chip on his shoulder, angry at the world. He was here today on yet another “boring field trip” from the rehab program.

Cory was one of the rehabilitation center's most difficult patients: Unable to summon the courage to dream new plans for the future, he gave up on not only himself but others. “Get off my back,” he had told the rehab director. “You can't help me. No one can.”

Tippi and I continued to stand close by as the group's guide continued, “Cheetahs never feed on carrion: they eat fresh meat—though in captivity⁷⁾, they do like people

food. ”

Carrion? The word somehow interested the boy — or perhaps it just sounded perverse. The unpleasant young man called out, “What’s that mean? ”

“Cadaver⁸), corpse⁹), remains, ”the young assistant responded.

“The cheetah doesn't eat road kill, ”the boy smirked loudly. The boy's harsh sound seemed to please the cheetah and she began purring loudly. The audience, enchanted by Subira's happy noise, oohed and aahed.

Enjoying the positive response — and always willing to flaunt — Subira decided to give the audience a show of her skills. As if to say, “Just see how fast these spots can fly, ”Subira instantly began blazing a trail of speed around the enclosure. “Oh, ”sighed the crowd, “she's so beautiful. ”

“She only has three legs. ”someone gasped.

“No. ”the girl in the front row exclaimed, while the other astonished young people looked on in silence, aghast at what they saw.

No one was more stunned than Cory. Looking bewildered at the sight of this incredible animal running at full speed, he asked the question that was in everyone's mind. “How can she run that fast with three legs? ”Amazed at the cheetah's effortless, seemingly natural movements, the boy whispered, “Incredible. Just incredible. ”He stared at the beautiful animal with the missing leg and he smiled, a spark of hope evident in his eyes.

Tippi answered from our spot behind the group. “As you have now all noticed, Subira is very special. Since no one told her she shouldn't — or couldn't — run as fast as a cheetah with four legs, she doesn't know otherwise. And so, she can. ”Tippi paused for a moment, and turning to Subira, continued, “We just love her. Subira is a living example, a symbol, of what Shambala is all about: recognizing the value of all living things, even if, for any reason, they are different. ”

The boy was silent and listened with interest as Tippi continued. “We got Subira from a zoo in Oregon. Her umbilical cord was wrapped around her leg in the womb, so it atrophied¹⁰), causing her to lose the leg soon after she was born. With only three legs, her fate seemed hopeless. They were considering putting her to sleep at that point. ”

Surprised, Cory asked, “Why? ”

Tippi looked directly into Cory's face, “Because they thought, ‘What good is a three — legged cheetah? ’They didn't think the public would want to see a deformed cheetah. And since it was felt that she wouldn't be able to run and act like a normal cheetah, she served no purpose. ”

She went on, “That's when we heard about Subira and offered our sanctuary, where she could live as normal a life as possible. ”

“It was soon after she came to us that she demonstrated her own worth — a unique gift of love and spirit. Really, we don't know what we'd do without her. In the past few years, the gift of Subira has touched people around the world, and without words she has become our most persuasive spokesman. Though discarded because she was an imperfect animal, she created her own worth. She truly is a most cherished and priceless gift. ”

Abandoning all wisecracks, Cory asked softly, “Can I touch her? ”

Seeing Subira run had switched on the light in Cory's heart and mind. It completely

changed his demeanor. And his willingness to participate. At the end of the tour, the leader of the visiting group asked for a volunteer to push and hold the large rolling gate open so the van could exit the ranch. To everyone's surprise, Cory raised his hand.

As the rest of the group looked on in amazement, the boy wheeled himself over to the large gate and, struggling to maneuver it open, pulled himself up from his chair. Crippling the high wire fence for support, he pushed it open. The expression on his face as he continued to hold the gate until the van passed through was one of great satisfaction. And determination. It was clear that Cory had received the gift of Subira.

苏比拉的礼物

洛杉矶以北 40 英里处有个叫香巴拉的野生动物保护区。露出地表的褐色巨石漫无规则地分散在保留地宽广起伏的土地上，它那粗犷的美使人想起非洲。香巴拉（梵语，意思是“所有生灵，包括人和动物，和睦相会的地方”）是狮子和其他大型猫科动物的家园。它掩映在加利福尼亚州索尔达德峡谷令人叹为观止的壮丽景色中，令人心驰神往。

一天，当地一家健康恢复中心的一伙年轻人来香巴拉考察旅行。香巴拉的创建人、秀美动人的女演员蒂皮·赫德伦站在猎豹围栏的前面。“它叫苏比拉，”蒂皮笑容满面地介绍说，“是只 3 岁的猎豹，还不到青壮年，就已经很健美了，不是吗？”

像是听到排练过无数次的台词，苏比拉把头转向观众，凝视着他们。从眼睛延伸到嘴角的黑线条那么清晰，就好像是特地为今天亮相而刚刚画上的。浓密的茶色皮毛上，密密麻麻的黑色斑纹那么耀眼，所有的人都禁不住议论。他们异口同声地说：“啊啊……瞧啊，它真美！”我也这么想。

蒂皮是我的朋友，那天她邀请我去看她。我坐在为参观者摆放的前排椅子上。除了后排一个十几岁的男孩，我们都以敬畏的心情，目不转睛地看着猎豹。那男孩像是不耐烦和不满意地嘟囔着。我们中的几个人转身朝他看去时，他用手掸了掸圆领衫的前襟，像是要把尘土掸掉。为了吸引我们注意，他又故意男子汉气地卷起圆领衫的右边袖子，露出很发达的肌肉。

17 岁的科里一直梦想有朝一日做一名职业棒球队球员。这是他惟一的目标。他成天想的是棒球，梦想有一天出现他的追星族，成为球迷心目中的偶像。没有人怀疑科里的能力。州里一位为名校物色棒球人才的人也是如此。他招募了科里，更证实了科里的光明前程。然而这都是车祸以前的事了。现在没有任何东西可以取代随着腿的失去也消失殆尽的喜悦。

科里在悲剧性的车祸中丧失的不仅仅是一条腿，他还失去了希望，失去了精神支柱。车祸不只是造成他身体的伤残，还摧毁了他的意志。除了梦想成为一名职业棒球球员，他再也无法确立其他目标。科里苦恼万分，身心疲惫，感到自己成了废人，万念俱灰。如今他坐在轮椅上，好与人争吵，一味怨天尤人。在他看来，今天不过是康复中心安排的又一次“乏味的旅行考察”而已。

科里是康复中心最难对付的病人之一。他鼓不起勇气为未来制订新的计划，不仅自暴自弃，还拒绝他人的帮助。“别缠着我，”科里曾对康复中心主任说过，“你帮助不了我，没人能帮我。”

我和蒂皮继续站在参观的人附近。导游继续介绍说：“猎豹从来不吃腐肉，而是吃鲜肉。虽然被关在围栏里，猎豹还是喜欢吃人吃的食物。”

腐肉？这个词似乎引起那男孩的兴趣，或者它只是听上去有悖常情。那不讨人喜欢的年轻人高声问道，“腐肉是什么意思？”

“指的是解剖用的尸体，一般的尸体，遗体。”年轻的助手回答说。“猎豹不吃被车撞死的人和动物。”那男孩嘿嘿地笑着说。

他那刺耳的话似乎使猎豹感到愉快，它开始大声呼噜。参观的人被苏比拉表示高兴的声音迷住，发出阵阵赞叹声。

苏比拉喜欢参观者的积极反应，而且总是愿意显示自己，决定展示一下它的本领。它似乎在说，“看看这带斑点的家伙能跑多快”，就绕着围栏飞奔起来。参观的人群惊叫道，“啊，它真是太美了！”

“它只有三条腿！”有人惊讶地叫道。

“真的？”前排的一个姑娘叫喊说。其余的年轻人屏息睁大眼睛看着，被眼前的景象惊呆了。

没有人比科里更震惊。他迷惑不解地看着那令人难以置信的动物全速奔跑，他提了一个所有人都在想的问题：“用三条腿它怎么能跑那么快？”猎豹轻松自然的动作使科里惊异不已，他低声说道：“难以置信，真是难以置信。”他凝视着那少了一条腿的漂亮动物，脸上露出笑容，眼中闪烁着希望之光。

蒂皮站在人群后面解释说：“你们大家全注意到了，苏比拉是头独特的猎豹。没有人告诉过它不应该或者是不能像四条腿的猎豹跑得一样快，它也不认为自己做不到，所以它才跑得这样快。”说到这里，蒂皮停顿了一下，转身朝着苏比拉，继续说道：“我们确实爱它，苏比拉体现了香巴拉野生动物保护区的宗旨，是个活生生的例子，一种象征，那就是承认所有生灵的价值，即使由于某种原因它们与众不同。”

那男孩沉默不语，饶有兴趣地听蒂皮继续往下说，“我们是从俄勒冈州一家动物园得到苏比拉的。它还在娘胎的时候，脐带缠在腿上，腿肌肉萎缩，出生没多久就失去了那条腿。只剩下三条腿，前途看来没有希望。动物园当时正考虑让它安乐死。”

科里惊奇地问道：“为什么？”

蒂皮直视着他说道：“因为他们想‘三条腿的猎豹有什么用处？’他们想公众不会想看一只伤残的猎豹，既然他们认为它不会跑，不能像正常的猎豹那样活动，它也就失去了生存的价值。”

她接着说：“就在这个时候，我们听到苏比拉的事，我们动物保护区愿意收养它，让它过尽可能正常的生活。”

“它来了不久就表现出它的价值——具有爱和意志顽强的特殊天赋。说真的，如果没有苏比拉，我们不知该怎么办。过去的几年里，苏比拉的天赋感动了来自世界各地的参观者，它无需言语，却成了我们最有说服力的发言人。虽然因为不完美而遭抛弃，但是它创造了自身的价值。苏比拉确实是我们最珍贵的无价之宝。”

科里不再说风凉话，温和地问道：“我可以摸摸它吗？”

目睹苏比拉奔跑点燃了科里心灵中的希望之火，完全改变了他的思想举止，激发了他积极参与的愿望。参观旅行结束时，领队要找一名志愿者把滚轮式大活动门打开并顶住，让面包车开出保护区牧场。出乎大家的意料，科里举起了手。

在小组其他人惊异的注视下，科里转着轮椅来到大门跟前。他从轮椅上撑起身子，一手抓住高处的铁丝围栏为支撑，另一只手推开了门。他顶着门，一直到面包车开了出去。从他脸上的表情可以看出，他很满足，也很坚定。显然，科里已经接受了苏比拉的礼物。

NOTE 注释：

reminiscent [remɪ'nɪs(ə)nt] adj. 发人联想的

学英语，练听力，上听力课堂！

- gigantic [dʒaɪ'gæntɪk] adj. 巨人般的, 巨大的
sanctuary ['sæŋktjuəri] n. 鸟兽保护区
rehabilitation ['ri:(h)ə.bili'teɪʃən] n. 复原
cheetah ['tʃi:tə] n. [动]印度豹 (一种似豹的动物, 产于南亚及非洲)
macho ['mɑ:tʃəu] adj. 男子气的
captivity [kæp'tɪvɪtɪ] n. 囚禁, 被关
cadaver [kə'deɪvə, -'dæ-] n. 死尸, 尸体
corpse [kɔ:ps] n. 尸体
atrophied [ə'trɒfɪd] adj. 萎缩的, 衰退的