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Reflections: 1

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Busan and Hongbeopsa are both gorgeous, and I feel extremely lucky and grateful to be here. I feel very comfortable and at peace here--I really enjoy the atmosphere and can't wait to experience anything and everything that's in store for us.

Hongbeopsa itself is easily one of the nicest places I've ever visited. It's nice to a degree that would normally make me feel very, very uncomfortable (I come from a poor family and don't feel comfortable around wealth and luxury), yet here that is not the case. I think the difference lies in the people themselves and the atmosphere that they create-- I have not yet met a single person who acts as arrogantly as I would imagine a Westerner would when associated with such an incredible facility. Hongbeopsa is spatially MASSIVE (which I know is an even bigger deal here in urban Korea than it would be in America), architecturally astounding, and immaculately maintained, but the people here don't use that to separate themselves from us; they downplay it, ignore it, politely dismiss it. Everyone associated with Hongbeopsa has so much to be prideful and arrogant about, yet none of them are, regardless of their position in the institution. I find that individually and culturally impressive.

Our opportunity to spend time with the Baby Monks is a privilege of incomprehensible magnitude. I have thoroughly enjoyed every second with my Monk despite his reserved, quiet shyness. I can't get him to talk to me or really interact with me much, but we had some beautiful

linguistically transcendent experiences on the soccer field-- I'm not sure what the significance of our interactions was, but as we chased each other and laughed, the meaningfulness of our time together was instantly both self-evident and irrelevant. We were two youths having a good time regardless of age, culture, and language. I found that beautiful.