



ABC CLARION

High school students are welcome to send articles or comics to clarionabc@gmail.com

Mr. Scrooge

by Oscar Chen

The man gazed upon the distant lights of the decadent shopping center. He had been named "Mr. Scrooge", a product of his mother's sense of humor. As he waited, the man thought back upon the chain of events that had led him here. He had never been a fan of consumerism, which he believed was an evil that permeated the holidays. The bustle to buy Christmas gifts was unworthy of taking the spotlight away from the celebrations.

The truth was that Mr. Scrooge was not the stingy misanthrope everyone, including his mother, thought he was. His refusal to participate in the festivities' glorious shopping spree had labeled him as an outsider to society's traditions. Of course, he thought, gift giving is always an act of charity, but the raging demand for consumer goods every December drives me mad! Mr. Scrooge saw how the big businesses capitalized on the holiday season and had been determined to put an end to it.

So with the suspicion of the malls' ulterior motives, Mr. Scrooge carefully crafted a solution to sabotage the dangerous identity Christmas had assumed. Unlike the original Ebenezer, Mr. Scrooge actually enjoyed the holiday spirit, but he wanted to protect the values of Christmas from the unbridled materialism that swept over every household. There were no "Bah humbugs" from him. He was only intent in dismantling the system that had brainwashed every child to cherish gift-opening over spending time with family at home.

His nephew Fred had also noticed this unsavory trend and decided to help his uncle out.

"Hey, Uncle Scrooge," Fred said. "What's the plan for our operation? I mean, are we doing this in broad daylight or..." He paced around, looking at the snow falling outside.

"Fred, remember what I told you. Our goal isn't to make others' lives miserable. It's only that society's fate will not change if

it continues the patterns of greed and selfishness."

"Ok, uncle, I got it. But let's try to do something positive." Fred wondered aloud, "The economic inequality is always stressed this time of year. The poor are still in want of basic necessities, and they are shunned by the community's ignorance. I say we redistribute the wealth." Mr. Scrooge listened for a moment, and then grabbed his wallet.

Mr. Scrooge shouted, "It's time for consumerism to take a back seat!"

They had rushed to the fortress of material goods: the local shop-

ping center. Advertisements plastered all across the windows urging people to buy more during the "sale". The sight of consumers shoving past each other to fight for "Limited Time Offer!" deals disgusted both Mr. Scrooge and Fred. They looked at each other and nodded simultaneously.

Unfortunately, the shoppers' attitudes wouldn't improve unless a long-term reform occurred, but that was out of Mr. Scrooge's control. Scrooge and Fred asked others to participate in the operation, and help society by reaching out, one person at a time. Eventually, the group of altruis-

tic shoppers gathered food, clothing, and other goods from the variety of stores within the mall. It was a family of strangers, united by a common goal to make someone else's Christmas a happy one by giving not only presents but also their caring.

The owner of the decadent shopping center, overwhelmed by the influx of customers, learned of Mr. Scrooge's plan and decided to donate toys to the children in need. Even the owner understood that Christmas' values had been somewhat compromised, and promised that she would work for a better future for not only her mall, but for the community as a whole.

"I commend you," the store

owner exclaimed. "Mr. Scrooge, for your efforts-- I'm sure Mr. Claus would be a much more fitting name based on what you've done."

"Thank you, but it's fine. Merry Christmas, everyone! Let's start giving this season!"

So with the social responsibility of the holidays fulfilled, the man looked back at the mall, where many of the shoppers still rushed to buy their Christmas gifts. The shopping center lights pierced through the dark night, and Mr. Scrooge thought to himself: Perhaps the consumer spirit of Christmas isn't so bad. It just has to be channeled with the power of generosity.

Strive to be Perfect

by Siyu Cao

I have suffered from perfectionism since middle school. Although I knew that a perfect life was impossible, I stubbornly strove to achieve my desired utopia.

Unfortunately, I became so obsessed with that perfect image that I started suffering physically and mentally. Initially, I acted as if I had obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) by constantly organizing my belongings in a certain order. Soon, my obsession with organizing inanimate objects developed into an obsession with beautifying myself. I wanted to quickly change my outward appearance, so I worked to lose weight and live a healthy lifestyle. I started exercising and eating more greens, but I was never satisfied with the progress that I was making. In just three months I developed another "OCD"—obsessive calorie-counting disorder*. During that traumatizing period, I was almost neurotic but persisted in losing weight because I told myself that it was an essential step toward achieving a perfect life. To me, everything was about image—my surroundings, along with myself, needed to be aesthetically pleasing. Although my doctor informed me of my unhealthy physical and mental state, I ig-

nored his warnings and attempted to maintain my weight loss. Fortunately, after few more months, I realized the dire condition that I was in and promised to improve. I was satisfied after becoming weight restored, but I refused to give up on perfection.

I was scared to start my first year in high school because I knew how important my high school grades were. Even though I had been repeatedly told that grades do not matter, I obsessed over the numbers and put an inordinate amount of effort and energy into each assignment, assessment, and project. Each of them had to be perfect and not only receive a good grade but also meet my own criteria. Whenever I made a small mistake in a process, I forced myself to start all over, refusing to work with the minor imperfection. With this bad habit, I was unable to deal with difficult situations and adapt to change, and so I constantly struggled to keep up with others who were able to overlook their mistakes. The stress started to pile on, and after countless sleepless night, my preoccupation with weight loss also slowly came back. I started putting more energy into exercising, always making sure to workout before starting homework. By following this

daily routine, I only allowed myself around four to five hours of sleep each night. I wanted both good grades and a healthy lifestyle, and it was definitely possible to have both. But, because I focused so much on perfection, I failed to achieve any balance.

My fear of rejection also played a pivotal role in my perfectionism. Since I was young, I believed that I would never have to face rejection; I expected myself to get accepted into any program that I would apply to and to study at an Ivy League. It was only until my sophomore year of high school that I realized how wrong I was.

When I applied for a science program for school, I expected to be chosen, but when I was rejected, I was heartbroken. The day when I received the rejection letter, I felt like I was having a mental breakdown. After coming home, I sat at my desk and simply stared at my laptop for a couple of hours. Yet, I still refused to believe the results, convincing myself that the program had made a mistake. I was delusional in that I could not digest the truth that had finally forced me to face rejection. During my sophomore year, I was rejected by multiple programs, but over time,

I slowly learned to accept the truth.

Overcoming my fear of rejection helped me confront both my fear of public speaking and my perfectionism. I realized that I had been so ignorant of my surroundings: I had spent so much time wrapping myself in some fantasy world and beautifying everything that I ignored real world issues including ongoing violence, racism, environmental issues, etc. Thus, I became more passionate about writing articles on current events and working for my school newspaper. I gradually immersed myself in the real world, not in the perfect world that I had been customizing for so long.

My perfectionism had been forcing me to cut off pieces of myself to fit into the mold of my utopian society, changing even the tiniest of imperfections. For so many years, I believed that my enemy lied in my surroundings, but I have only recently understood that the real enemy, my perfectionism, lies within me. Although I have not completely triumphed over it, I am proud to say that I am no longer diagnosed with perfectionism.

***This is not an actual mental disorder, but rather a symptom of eating disorders**

Managing Editor: Siyu Cao
Executive Editor: Lawrence Huang

Members: Adam Liu, Aileen Wu, Alina Peng, Angelina Li, Audrey Zhou, Daniel Zheng, Jeffrey Ho, Lawrence Huang, Olivia Nguyen, Sanford Ren, Sydney Peng, Siyu Cao, Siyu Hou, Sophia Hu, Tanya Wang, Tiger Li, Victoria Tian • **Website:** www.GCTimes.net/abc.php