



# ABC CLARION

High school students are welcome to send articles or comics to [clarionabc@gmail.com](mailto:clarionabc@gmail.com)

## The Overlord Has Cookies

by Sydney Peng

It had been a thousand years since the Baker had baked over the world and reshaped it to his own liking. Apparently, there had been a day when the seas were not milk, but water; a day where the land had been solid rock instead of dried, crumbling cookie. These days, the residents of the Earth were too oppressed to care terribly much. They chewed into the cookie ground, mining and unearthing the creamiest chocolate chips, the most crystalline sugar specks, and the best quality dough for the Baker's castle. If anyone dared complain about cavities or diabetes, they were disposed of by the Baker's Dozen, his thirteen henchmen.

In a small village, a boy by the name of Wheat had been scrabbling about. He readied himself to dig at his special spot, which was marked by a hot cross bun. X marks the spot, and all that. He had read the secret recipe for Grandma's specialty cookies, and he had found the small patch of ground where the ingredients matched. He lifted the bun and produced a spatula, which he used as a shovel. As he dug the smooth stainless steel utensil into the perfectly crumbling sandy "dirt", he began to wonder about what it could be.

He was a youth who believed in exercise—he trained with rolling pin dumbbells, so he made quick progress through the ground. This was a guy who wanted to see the world burn calories, and one of the Dozen, Cinnamon, kept an eye on him in case he became troubling.

Cinnamon had missed the memo of Wheat's excursion, however.

His spatula suddenly struck something solid. Wheat hastily dug up the surrounding area to find a strange apparatus lying in the crumbs: the plastic outline of a mold.

"What in the Baker's name is this?" he mused to himself. It was a large object, as tall and wide as he was, but it seemed light.

The red plastic flickered and suddenly formed a kind of red border not quite touching his form, yet

it molded to his every movement. A little worried, he began to run. However, he slipped on a patch of chocolate and fell onto the ground, then found himself unable to move.

"WHO DARES DISTURB MY HALLOWED GROUND?"

"Wheat, sir..."

"DO YOU KNOW WHAT I AM?"

"A plastic mold..."

"I AM A COOKIE CUTTER HERO. THE EPITOME OF HEROISM! EVERYONE FOLLOWED MY FOOTSTEPS!"

"A cookie cutter?! Then you can end the Baker's tyranny!"

"ALAS, NO. BUT YOU ARE YOUNG AND REASONABLY FIT, THOUGH YOU HAVE UNHEALTHY TEETH. TAKE UP MY MANTLE AND CRUST. I BEQUEATH UPON YOU THE

COOKIE'S CUTTER AND THE TIN PLATE-SHIELD."

"Do I have a choice?"

"NO. FIND THE REMAINING FOUR AND TAKE DOWN THE BAKER."

To his shock, the mold suddenly shifted into a gleaming pizza cutter sword with a crimson hilt and a scarlet, rectangular shield resembling a baking tray.

He set out on his impromptu, forced quest to find the other four—Maize, Rye, Barley, and Cake—and succeeded. They had fought through the gummy armies of worms and fish to the candied weaponry of canes. He had found the four, and now they were ready to take down the Baker for good.

They had arrived at the Baker's castle, and they planned to bring it to the ground. After collaborating

with their powers of friendship, the Cookie Cutter Crew quickly defeated the Baker, and soon he stood morosely in the rubble of his previously grand Cookie Castle. Lying around him in various states of injury were the Dozen, including Cinnamon, Sugar, Raisin, Oatmeal, and Chocolate Chip. Standing around solemnly was the team, having said their piece proclaiming the great justice of their cause and how the Baker was such a bad guy. It was time for the Baker's rejoinder.

"You know, we are alike, you and I," he began before frowning. "Wait a minute; none of you are crazy pastry chefs. So I can't sympathize. Drat. Anyhow, I can tell an interesting story before I'm imprisoned.

"You see, a thousand and forty

two years ago there was a joke phrase going about: come to dark side, we have cookies. I was enraptured by pastries, so I joined the dark side and realized that the dark side did not have cookies. It was made of kookies. They did not have the cookies I desired. So, consumed with rage, I summoned an enormous spell...

"...and the entire Earth became subject to my cookie whims. The ground turned to oatmeal raisin. The mountains became chocolate chips. The sky began pouring milk instead of water. For a thousand years, I made the world my cookie."

"Sorry, Baker, but you must be punished." Wheat said. "Guess you could say—that's the way the cookie crumbles."

## Take One for the Team

by Oscar Chen

Recently, while enjoying the Harry Potter series, I mused about the polarizing concept of sacrifice. The doctrine of society establishes the convention that risking your own life for "the greater good" is noble, as long as society judges the endeavor to be for a worthy cause. Yet I question this idea I'm supposed to conform to. Sacrifice is such a profound topic to address, and I feel it deserves to be explored more rather than accepted for what it is at face value.

The major controversy lies in the debate: What is considered a worthy cause? Let's say in a sports game, a player turns down a game-winning shot and passes to an open teammate. Since he relinquished his chance at glory, isn't it a worthy cause? I'm inclined to say no, because regardless of whether the team won or not, the theme of sacrifice extends far beyond such an inconsequential context. Today the word 'sacrifice' shouldn't be used so lightly.

Even with issues of greater significance, there is always a clash of ideals, and most people can't accept an objective worldly viewpoint. I believe the label of morality can't cover the volume of

movements worth dying for. Our version of self-proclaimed righteousness might be frowned upon by others, the same way our government denounces suicide bombers declaring Islamic jihad. Humanity's complex background shapes sacrifice, so it is not universal in definition. It is a target of subjective belief.

With this in mind, excuse my difficulties in grasping sacrifice. Perhaps the most logical way to understand an abstract yet powerful concept is to pull away from our own world. So onwards to Hogwarts! Harry Potter is not devoid of flaws, but as a global hero from Gryffindor house, he is easier to analyze than a diabolical villain such as Lord Voldemort.

When Harry Potter gives himself up to Voldemort to rescue his friends and his beloved school, there were millions of readers who applauded the act as pure virtue. I agree, Potter's decision took courage and honor to make, and appears to be the epitome of sacrifice. He risked his own life to protect others, just like how his mother died out of love for him when he was a baby.

Yet I want to give this my own

twist: Is sacrifice always the best option? Or was Harry Potter simply blinded by loyalty and naiveté? Sacrifice is praised for the values we have learned to worship. But have you ever thought of it negatively?

The majority opinion is that sacrifice can be good or bad depending on the situation. It is good if it helps others in the end and bad if a life is just being thrown away for nothing. It is unfair for anyone to juggle these consequences around, and that's why sacrifice is so highly valued.

And it goes full circle. We are amazed by sacrifice because it represents selflessness. Humanity is divided into factions driven by vices, and our surprise with sacrifice actually reveals our failure. At the top of the Animal Kingdom, sacrifice is not a given among us.

That's why fresh, bold characters like Harry Potter appeal to us. We have doubt that we would do the same as him. Drop all pretense right now: Would you go willingly by yourself to the most powerful dark wizard of all time?! The answer for most of us is no, thus explaining our connection to our heroes, both in literature and

reality.

So open up your mind. Sacrifice is not to be underestimated. Sacrifice is not to be overestimated. And sacrifice definitely wasn't meant to be dramatic. Scoffing at sacrifice's stupidity or immortalizing its pristine nature is unrealistic, that message is clear.

It's time to end this judgment of sacrifice.

Because sacrifice, true sacrifice, is always overlooked.

I would like to tell society that my definition of sacrifice may be right beside you, and you are stumbling past it without a clue. My life right now is possible because of the acknowledged sacrifice. It is rooted in the efforts others make to increase my opportunities in the future and the efforts I take for granted.

So adore all the heroes who prevented the apocalypse through their sacrifices. Vilify all the adversaries who put everything on the line for an unworthy cause. In the meantime, we should thank the people who make silent sacrifices for us everyday.

We don't need to change the world.

Sacrifice could just mean helping others with their lives. Quietly.

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