

PALO ALTO ODYSSEY

Sometimes being 'perfect' is irritating

MIRANDA ordered her skinny green tea latte in the trendy coffee shop on Ramona Street. She was there meeting with her niece Christi, who was planning to marry a 20-something start-up tech billionaire, whom she didn't



CHRISTI

love, feeling that she could not pass up the opportunity for great wealth.

As Miranda placed her tea order, the young cashier said, "Perfect."

Why is this perfect, the cynical part of Miranda wondered?

The clerk was a young blonde woman, nicely dressed, with a big smile, who looked and sounded like a robot. Her badge said "Taylor." She

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was so thin and buff that Miranda thought she had an eating disorder.

Then Miranda realized that she was going into her judgmental mode. She had learned in her 12-step group, Adult Children of Alcoholics, that when she judged others, that she was actually, on a deeper level, channeling the negative parental attitudes from her childhood that had been directed toward herself. She was trying to deflect these attitudes outward.

She took another look at the young clerk who was now saying "perfect"

to the next customer. The girl was obviously obsessed with her appearance, and trying to look "perfect."

Miranda wondered if the girl was from Palo Alto, a teen with an afterschool job in a coffee shop. Or did teens from Palo Alto no longer work afternoon jobs in the local stores, the way she and many of her friends had done when she was growing up?



MIRANDA

Miranda thought of her own jobs after school selling tickets at the Varsity Theater, and later at Keystone Palo Alto.

She looked around the coffee shop. Most of the customers were focused on the screens of their phones, and

small laptops. She believed that the epidemic of autism that had swept the country in recent decades was rooted in children growing up in front of television sets, and now computer screens.

"They learn language and other social behaviors from electronic devices," she thought, "and not from real human beings."

Miranda walked to the table where her niece Christi was sitting. Christi had decided to marry a slightly autistic young tech man with billions of dollars, whom she did not love, because it was too good an opportunity to pass up.

The two women hugged again, and began their discussion of Christi's love life.

The story continues Monday.