Spencer Guo

When I was little, my mother used to say that I could have claimed a Guinness World Record for worst eyesight in my age group, if there had been such a thing. I suppose there was some truth to that. I have been nearsighted for as long as I can remember.

Before I even entered grade school, I sported a pair of spectacles. The first time that I went to visit the eye doctor, he was surprised that I, at a full four years old, was already myopic. He seemed to think that reading in the dark was to blame for my early myopia. In preschool, while my fellow preschoolers were sleeping on their cots during naptime, I slid Dr. Seuss from the shelf and read his picture books in the dark. By the time I entered grade school my eyesight had worsened considerably.

Some parents constantly complain that their children don't read enough. My mother, on the other hand, has always complained that I read too much. I would read the nutritional labels on my box of Cheerios and the Kikkoman soy sauce bottle at the dining table, registering monosodium glutamate before I knew what it was and devouring information with my meals. Perhaps my love of chemistry might stem from having pored over the various substances and chemicals on the ingredients list of my shampoo bottle as a child. Once, on a golf trip, my family stopped for lunch at a restaurant and when everyone else piled into the car to leave, my brother, Sebastian, realized that I was missing. He ran back inside to find me fixated by the descriptions of bacon hamburgers and the grilled salmon on the menu.

What started as an insatiable appetite for pure information led to a fascination with diverse sources of knowledge – science, math, and foreign language. Nowadays, I spend as much time reading *Popular Science* and exploring the world of technology as I do reading nutritional labels (I still can't stop myself). My interest in monosodium glutamate continues, but now I am intrigued by its chemical structure and stimulating effect on the brain. My obsession with absorbing knowledge has directed my focus on biology, as I explore the intricate nature of the

human body, especially the elaborate interplay of cells and molecules, and music, which delights me with its various forms and stimulates my emotions. The pursuit of knowledge drives me to read and learn constantly.

Foreign languages, which I have studied for much of my life, especially captivate me with their capacity for connections. It is not only the grammatical inflections and subtleties of vocabulary that interest me, but the human connection that takes place when I communicate with people from other languages and backgrounds. When I converse in Spanish with my Spanish-speaking friends, I feel an immediate and powerful connection lacking in my English conversations. Speaking Spanish, Chinese, and French allows me to transcend barriers and gives me a perspective on the world that no myopia can diminish.

My near-sightedness is not going to go away. I still read the nutritional labels on every package from the grocery store, but I also learn much more through the Internet. I find myself spending more and more time on Wikipedia, trying to know everything, from Riemann's hypothesis to the political party system of the United States to the structure of disodium inosinate, an ingredient I found on a box of Cheez-Its. Even though I'm legally blind now without my glasses or contact lens, I have the gift of knowledge and a boundless vision of the world which more than makes up for my visual deficits. Who knows? Perhaps if I read and research enough, I may even discover a cure for my poor vision.