

A Fair For Smiles

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“Hurry, hurry, gather around, the judging is about to begin!” barked the coyote as he hurried to the stage. The Minnesota State Fair was in full swing, and the famous ‘State Smile’ judging was about to begin. This year Mayor Cashew, an athletic built moose, was emceeding the event. The honor of judging went to a dentist voted by the people of Minnesota. Mayor Cashew continued, “Folks we had quite the caliber of smiles this year, but we narrowed it down to the final three!” He flashed his own teeth as he smiled at the crowd. “I present to you, our judge, Ms. Darla Deerborn,” the elegant white-tail stood, her perfectly straight teeth showing as she waved.

She spoke in a slightly high-pitched voice, “Let’s not wait any longer! Each contestant step forward one at a time, please state your name, and give us your biggest smile!”

Contestant one, a bobcat, stepped forward, “My name is Beatrice. It’s just such a pleasure to be here.” She giggled sashaying around the stage before curling her lips into a full toothy smile. With her paw on her jut hip she ran her tongue over her teeth winking at her admirers. The crowd reacted with gasps and awe as they applauded Beatrice. She blew kisses, causing howls and roars from some of the onlookers, giving a little curtsy she stepped back.

Contestant two waddled forward, “My name is Seymour Beaver, and it’s great to be here!” He smacked his tail against the stage, and the crowd started clapping in rhythm with his tail. He flashed his smile for all to see, his giant front teeth on full display. Long and bright, his teeth were flawless porcelain beauties. He took a moment, basking in the applause, before stepping back to his spot in line.

“My, oh my, this competition is fierce!” The mayor encouraged the audience, clapping along with them. “Alright, you know him from last year, can he do it again?!”

The last contestant bounced forward with joyful enthusiasm, “I’m Fairchild the Gopher, you all having a good time out there?!” He gripped the lapels of his green striped jacket and promenaded the length of the stage waving at the crowd with gusto.

The crowd erupted, and the stands started to shake as fair-goers stomped their paws in joy. Whistles and clapping flooded the outdoor arena area; one might think the home team just scored the winning points of a playoff game! The hometown hero and reigning champ bowed his head, sweeping off his hat in grand fashion; he straightened and flashed his smile to the crowd. The ladies fawning in the

front row with dreamy eyes confessing their adoration of him. The sun hit his front teeth caused a shine that seemed to brighten the whole vicinity. The gleam seen from the front of the stage, to the furthest seat in the topmost of the bleachers! Fairchild stepped back into the line with the others, still grinning ear to ear.

“Oh dear, this is going to be tough, I’m going to have to take a closer look.” Ms. Deerborn ambled along the stage with grace; she pulled a small pair of gold, wired rimmed glasses from her pocket. She examined each contestant one at a time. The crowd whispered and spoke in hushed voices as they listened to Ms. Deerborn’s assessment. She smiled wide and presented theatrically with her delicate arm, “Your twenty seventeen, State Smile Best in Show goes to…” She held her breath for a moment, “Fairchild the Gopher!”

The crowd erupted in joyous celebration as Fairchild stepped to the center of the stage. Mayor Cashew clapped him on the back and presented the gopher with the large Best in Show Trophy, the topper a golden grin. “Let’s hear it for Fairchild!” the moose bellowed. Fairchild stepped forward flashing his smile.

Just then a bright red tomato came hurling through the air and hit Fairchild, right in the face. The red tomato-y mess streaked down his large buck teeth. A hush fell across the crowd, and people backed up to reveal a small loon with another tomato. The mayor’s voice boomed from the speakers, “What is the meaning of this?! Why did you throw that tomato at Fairchild?”

The loon walked up to the stage slowly, tears threatening his eyes. “Every year it’s the same.” He stammered along, “All these smiles are celebrated for their great toothiness, but what about me and the other birds? We don’t get a best beak contest. We spend all this time making the great migration year in and year out, and what do we get?” He huffed and crossed his wings proudly across his chest.

“What is your name Sir?” Mayor Cashew calmly asked. The crowd so quiet, one could hear a pin drop.

“It’s Lapis, Mr. Mayor, my name is Lapis.” He stood at the front of the stage now; the onlookers from the event formed a large semi-circle around him.

The mayor cleared his throat, “Lapis, you’re right. We do not have a best beak contest, nor do you have teeth to enter this contest. An over site in a long-standing tradition, but I have a compromise Lapis, if you’ll hear me out?” the small loon unfolded his wings from his chest and gave a small nod. The mayor looked out to the crowd and back to Lapis, “In honor of birds, who travel from near and far, I proclaim September the 10th a day of celebration! We will celebrate the Great Migration, and all of our

feathered friends involved.”

The crowd cheered and roars once again filled the air as all of fairgoers celebrated this joyous news. Lapis was hoisted onto the stage. Lapis turned to Fairchild, whose face was now rid of the tomato, and apologized with a hug. The crowd continued to celebrate. As the fair came to a close; there was no one without a smile on their face.