Smilesmith

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SMILESITH/ Gayann Slye

Sir...uh, Sir...

Yes, yes little girl, what is it?

Well sir, uh, well it's about this smile that I bought from you yesterday.

Yes, what about it?

You see, sir, I don't like to complain, but it just doesn't work right anymore.

Well, we don't often have complaints; that is the sweetest smile on the market you know. What seems to be the trouble?

That's why I came back to you. You see, it worked fine that morning, and I was so pleased with it that I wore it out in front of my door... and... and there HE was... the little boy, I mean... and HE must have been very rich because, do you know what?

No, what?

HIS smile was gold with rainbows all around it, oh, it was just beautiful!

I know the one... a special order... go on!

Then...

Yes, yes...?

Then HE gave it to me... HIS own, just came up and handed it to me. I couldn't believe it, it was like a dream!

Ah, I see. And then...?

I did an unforgivably bold thing... I offered HIM mine! Imagine, my poor little one... to HIM! Of course HE refused it... what would HE have done with a feeble little one like mine?

(hollow laugh)

Tch! Poor bruised butterfly.

I held it close to me, and it felt so warm... but I was just being silly.
SMILESMITH

You see, I didn't know THE GAME.

THE GAME?

Oh, yes, you know, it was all just pretend... why... soon, a little tinkly silver smile came past and then it was her turn to be IT.

Ah!

So, though it's just coincidence, I'm sure, this smile you made me hasn't worked right since. It's really no earthly good to me at all!

Exactly how does it act?

Oh, it's very strange. The corners turn down and the color has faded. Worst of all, it's become so heavy it won't stay in place properly but keeps slipping off!

Now, now... I'm sure I can repair it and...

No, I've made up my mind that I don't want a soft pink one any more, they're too unpredictable and easily damaged... no... I want you to make me a different one!

But, dear child, what kind?

Well... a... a strong serviceable one. Make it of something hard and durable which can't be scratched or dented... that will also keep the corners correctly turned up at all times.

But... but...

Now be sure you make it tight, and you can hammer it into place. That'll keep it from ever slipping off no matter what happens. Oh! ... and you can give it a bright shiny surface so that each one can see whatever he chooses to, in it. Hmmmmmm... I guess that about covers it. Oh, yes... you can have my old one back, for someone else to use until she learns the rules. I... I guess I'd better be going now... You can make it for me, can't you?

Why... yes... uh... certainly, certainly! (harrumph)

Oh, thank you sir, and... goodbye!

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(sigh) Goodbye!
One more velvet one to gather dust on the shelf.
The beautiful discarded for the practical! Too
bad the trade-in value on dreams, toward reality,
is so low this year.
Well... that's THE GAME!
Guess I'd better get back to work.

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GRANDMA AND GRANDPA: REAL PEOPLE/ Karen Gernant

They were real:

He, with his "Jiminy cricket" when told
of our escapades; with his shiny,
bald head--still demanding
haircuts; with his cane and
slow, sure walk; with his
quiet understanding.

She, with her every-ready cookies
and candy; with silvery hair
touched with brown; with her
tender care of plants and
flowers... and kids; with her
sweet, friendly smiles, her easy laughs.

Oh, they were real; they were good...
and when they left,
my fourteen years cried: Why?

No answer came... not then,

but time has told me--
told me that they led full lives;
that they had done their jobs, and,
having done them well,
deserved a peace and rest.

Time has told me. They were real.