

The Prize

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Tomorrow is the big day. Someone is going to win the prize. Who will it be?

All is quiet now, but soon Pleasant Valley will be filled with activity. In the morning there will be fun and games for all, and at night a fantastic fireworks display. But the main event will be the crowning of Prince and Princess Perfect.

Some months back King Leonard announced an amazing contest. He sought to find the two most perfect subjects in his kingdom. In addition to the Title "Perfect", each winner would receive a jeweled crown and a seat of honor next to the king's throne. One winner would sit on his right and the other would sit on his left.

The kingdom bubbled with excitement as word spread about the contest. Everyone was surprised at how easy it was to enter. All you had to be is perfect.

Soon entries were arriving from throughout the kingdom. The king asked his advisors to review the entries and select the top six. He would then conduct the final interviews and choose the winners.

Mona Groaner was one of the finalists. She was a perfect homemaker, a perfect mother, and a perfect wife. But during the interview the king discovered a problem. In the summer Mona moaned about the heat, and in the winter she groaned about the cold. In the spring Mona groaned it was too wet, and in the fall she moaned it was too dry. And Mona didn't just moan and groan about the weather. She moaned and groaned about other things too.

"It's fine to express one's feelings," said the king. "But one who is perfect simply doesn't moan and groan about everything."

So the king thanked Mona for entering the contest and sent her home.

Harley Hurry-Up was another finalist. He was creative, energetic, and helpful. If you ever needed a helping hand you could count on Harley. But the king discovered another thing you could count on. Harley liked to hurry. Harley hurried while driving, and he hurried while eating. He hurried his kids, and he hurried his wife. He even hurried himself.

Now there are times to hurry and times to go slow. But Harley hurried all the time, and he tried to hurry everyone else too. Harley didn't have patience, and everyone knows you have to have patience to be perfect. So the king thanked Harley for entering the contest and sent him home too.

King Leonard interviewed two more contestants, but each had a flaw that kept them from being perfect. One by one he thanked each for entering the contest and sent them home like the others.

Now only two contestants remained.

Rudy Rhinoceros was a giant character with a huge heart. He would do anything for anyone. And for that reason Rudy was considered perfect.

The king had nearly completed his interview and was about to proclaim Rudy "Perfect" when it happened. In the middle of a sentence Rudy rudely interrupted.

"Tell me about the jeweled crown," blurted Rudy.

The king was taken by surprise. He stopped and showed Rudy the crown, then began his final question. But Rudy interrupted again.

"Will I have the seat of honor on the right or on the left of your throne?"

That did it! Rudy wasn't going to have a seat on either side of the throne. The king thought he had found Prince Perfect, but he was wrong. Rudy was rude, and he wasn't going to get another chance. King Leonard quickly thanked Rudy for entering the contest, then sent him away.

Now only one contestant remained.

Gwendolyn Goose was a sweet young gosling. She was an excellent student and played the violin quite well. She kept her room neat and clean, and she took great care of the family frog.

Gwendolyn's interview was perfect, and the king was excited. "There may be no Prince Perfect," he said. "But at least I've found the Princess."

At the end of the interview the king asked to meet Gwendolyn's family - they were waiting in the palace courtyard. As the family entered the room Gwendolyn's sister tripped on the carpet and tumbled into the king.

"That was really stupid!" snapped Gwendolyn. "Can't you see where you're going?" Then Gwendolyn grabbed her sister and pulled her away. "You're wrinkling the king's uniform!"

The king was shocked. "If Gwendolyn doesn't care about her sister, for whom does she care?" The answer was clear. Only herself.

It was a good thing the accident happened. Otherwise, the king would never have known of Gwendolyn's lack of concern for others. He would have crowned Gwendolyn "Perfect" when she wasn't. King Leonard thanked Gwendolyn for entering the contest and sent the family home.

Now the contest is over, and no one was perfect. What is King Leonard going to do?

The ceremony is tomorrow. King Leonard thought, and thought, and thought. Something had to be done. Then a grin spread 'cross his face. The king had an idea. What was it?

King Leonard took the two jeweled crowns and placed them upon his own. Then he took the two chairs of honor and made them his foot stools. Tomorrow when it came time to crown Prince and Princess Perfect, King Leonard would crown himself King Perfect. That would be spectacular, and the celebration would be a success.

But when tomorrow came, King Leonard overslept, and he missed the ceremony. Alas, King Leonard wasn't perfect either.

A Message for You

No one was perfect in King Leonard's kingdom, and no one is perfect in the world. Some people think they are, some people try to be, and some people would like to be. But no one is perfect. God knows that too, and He said it very clearly. "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

Just like King Leonard, God had a plan. Only God's plan worked. God sent Jesus to show us how to live and to forgive us for our sins. And the plan is still working today. Through Jesus our sins are forgiven and we receive the gift of eternal life. And that's much better than being perfect.

Remember This

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).