



# Milo and the Quest for the Lost Smile

Lewis Hickey



Milo noticed that his baby brother Oakley was unusually quiet today. The bright, toothy grin that usually lit up Oakley's face had vanished, leaving him looking very sad. Milo put on his imaginary explorer's hat and declared he would find that lost smile, no matter where it was hiding.



He began his search in the most likely places, peering under the rumpled blankets and deep inside the overflowing toy box. He found a stray building block and a forgotten marble, but Oakley's smile was nowhere to be seen. Milo knew he would have to look much further than the playroom.



Milo marched out into the garden and reached the Tickle Meadow, where the tall grass swayed like it was laughing. He tried to catch the floating bubbles of light that danced in the air, thinking one might be the missing smile. Though the bubbles were pretty, they didn't make Oakley's face light up.



High up in the ancient oak tree, Milo visited the Wise Old Owl for some expert advice. The owl blinked slowly and told Milo that a true smile isn't something you find on the ground, but something you create. Milo thanked the owl and climbed down, thinking hard about what that could mean.



He ran to the neighborhood park and climbed to the very top of the giant, silver slide. He felt the rush of the wind as he zoomed down, hoping to catch a spark of joy to bring back home. It was fun, but it wasn't the specific, magical smile that belonged to his little brother.



Along the way, a friendly golden puppy bounded up to Milo, wagging its tail with pure excitement. The puppy's energy was infectious, and Milo laughed, but he realized he couldn't just borrow someone else's happiness. He needed to find the key to Oakley's heart.



Feeling a bit tired, Milo sat down on the front porch and looked at their favorite picture book about dinosaurs. He remembered how Oakley always pointed at the T-Rex and made a tiny, squeaky roar. A spark of an idea began to flicker in Milo's mind.



Milo gathered a few special things: a silly red foam nose, a soft fuzzy blanket, and his best dancing shoes. He realized that the lost smile wasn't tucked away in a corner or hidden in a tree. It was waiting for a reason to come back out.



Milo burst back into the living room and began the silliest, clumsiest dance Oakley had ever seen. He made funny faces, wiggled his ears, and pretended to be a giant, ticklish octopus. He poured all his big-brother love into his performance.



Suddenly, a small giggle escaped Oakley's lips, followed by a wide, glowing grin that filled the whole room. Milo hugged his brother tight, realizing that the best way to find a lost smile is to share your own. The mission was a success, and the brothers were happy once again.