



The Man in the Glittery Hat


by Dasha Mostovaya



Yesterday, as Daria hurried past the park, she glanced right and left, noticing the emptiness. Suddenly, a man with a dazzling, glittery hat appeared, catching her eye. His age was impossible to guess, adding an immediate touch of the unusual.



The man, his eyes twinkling, presumed to tell Daria she should smile more. A wave of regret washed over her as she realized she'd paused, but she was already drawn in. The encounter had taken an unexpected turn, making her feel uneasy.



**Hly't yoou was
wrintices the wient
to provens?**

He then asked, with an air of complete nonchalance, about the propriety of eating ice cream in winter. The question was so unexpected that Daria was momentarily speechless. The request seemed bizarre, and she pondered what could follow.



He showed no embarrassment at his odd question; on the contrary, he broke into a laugh that seemed straight out of a villain's playbook. His amusement was unsettling, and Daria felt a sense of growing unease at his joviality.



Trying to appease him and bring the odd exchange to a conclusion, Daria forced an awkward smile. She hoped it would be enough to end the bizarre conversation, but she could feel herself sinking into deeper confusion.



The man cleared his throat, winked, and said, "You seem knowledgeable about happiness." Before Daria could respond, she turned and ran, the man and his glittery hat fading behind her as she fled.