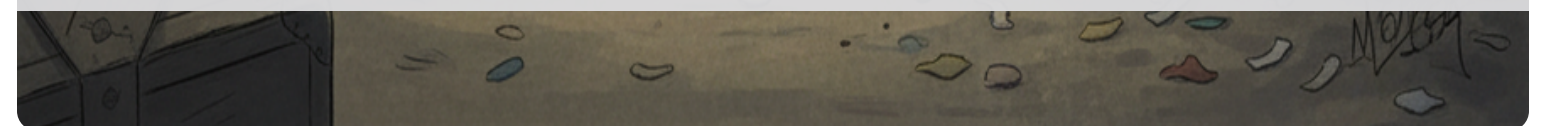




# Charlie's Lost Smile

by lianbo ma





Charlie the clown sat slumped backstage, his usual bright red nose and painted smile now dull. The colorful circus tent felt gloomy, reflecting his own heavy heart. He couldn't remember the last time he truly laughed or felt the spark of joy.



The acrobats, noticing Charlie's sadness, gathered around him. They tumbled and twirled, performing their most daring feats, hoping to lift his spirits. But Charlie's face remained etched with a profound sorrow, and the acrobats were concerned.



Next, the jugglers stepped forward, their hands a blur of colorful balls and pins. They tossed and caught, showcasing their impressive skills, but Charlie barely blinked. The juggling act, usually so amusing, brought no smile to his face.



The animals, Charlie's closest companions, sensed his melancholy. The playful monkeys offered him bananas, the wise old elephant trumpeted a gentle greeting, and the fluffy poodle nudged his hand. He appreciated their affection.



Suddenly, during a performance, a little girl in the audience began to cry because she had lost her balloon. Seeing her sadness, Charlie forgot his own troubles and impulsively rushed to comfort her, making a funny face.



As he made the little girl giggle, Charlie felt a warmth spread through him. He saw the joy he brought to others and realized that making others happy made him happy too. The spark of his lost smile began to return.



Charlie returned to the ring, no longer focusing on his own sadness. He performed with renewed energy, his jokes and antics landing perfectly. The tent filled with laughter and applause. Charlie finally found his smile, his purpose renewed in the joy of the circus and the happiness he brought to others.