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Instructor's Name

ENGL 1013

Date

### The Chance of a Lifetime

I had competed in the Perry County Fair Pageant numerous times before but had only placed. Although many people had told me "There couldn't be a better person to represent Perry County in the State Fair Pageant in October," I knew that I had to win in order to advance to the State Fair. Therefore, when Ms. Casey Meyers, the Perry County pageant director, literally begged me to do the Senior Fair Queen pageant on Saturday, September 9, 2006, I decided to enter one more time. I'm glad that I did because that Saturday evening became one of the most memorable times of my life.

For two days I filled out my information sheet for the pageant. I wanted to make sure my grammar and spelling were perfect. By the time I submitted my information sheet to the fair board, I was extremely excited.

All of the contestants competed in four different categories. These categories included interview, swimsuit, casual wear, and evening gown. Each contestant was responsible for all of her own clothes, so I needed to go shopping. I found a cute green dress at J C Penney that I could use for the casual wear portion of the competition. I already had an interview suit and a pageant swimsuit from the previous years of competing. When I managed to find a gorgeous dark-blue dress with silver sequins that I knew would be perfect for the evening gown competition, I was set.

The days before the pageant flew by quickly. Before I knew it, Friday night was upon

me. I stayed up late that evening to make sure I had every little detail covered. My jewelry, make-up, shoes, and hairstyle pictures were laid out across my floor in the bedroom waiting for Saturday. I decided the best thing for me now was my beauty rest, so I finally slowed down enough to get in bed. However, I lay there awake for what seemed like hours. I couldn't sleep! My mind was going ninety to nothing. I was afraid I had forgotten some little detail that was going to make a big difference. Finally, fatigue took over, and I fell asleep.

The next thing that I knew, my mom and Aunt Regina were standing beside my bed trying to wake me up. When I rolled over, I saw that it was 5:30. I had forgotten to set my alarm clock, and my family was ready to work on me. The first thing was a facial, and then came my hair. I was due at pageant practice before nine, so we still had time.

I loved pageant practice. It gave me an opportunity to get to know the rest of the contestants personally. We spent an hour and a half going over three walks, but most of that time was spent goofing off. We also got a chance to informally go over what would be happening later that day. Then Ms. Casey provided us with donuts and chocolate milk to make sure we all ate breakfast.

As we were leaving, we all had to draw numbers for the evening's events. As everyone was drawing, I prayed I wouldn't get number one. Thankfully, I drew number seven. The last words I heard from Ms. Casey whenever I was leaving were "Don't be late! You'll be disqualified."

Feeling confident, I left practice and went straight home to rest and begin getting ready for my strenuous interview with a panel of four judges. I decided a nap would be nice, so I went to my room to lie down for a while.

Later my phone rang and woke me up. I didn't even answer it because when I rolled

over, I looked at the time. I had only forty-five minutes to get ready and get down to the county fair building. My mom and Aunt Regina were nowhere to be found, so with a curling iron in each hand and a toothbrush hanging from my mouth, I began to get myself ready. As I was smearing on my make-up in a frenzy, I was trying not to cry. There was no way I was going to be there on time.

I drove ninety miles per hour to the fair building. With my mangled hair unfinished and my interview suit on crooked, I walked into our dressing room, thanking God that I had drawn number seven earlier that day. I had to wait for six other girls to finish their interview before I could do mine; therefore, I was ready when my time came.

My interview was flawless up until the last question. I didn't feel as if I had answered that question well, so I was afraid I had really screwed up.

The next task was our swimsuit competition. I had no problem showing the judges my high level of confidence. However, I was worried about my hair. With my hair still ratty, I threw it up in a sporty ponytail, hoping it would look good with my swimsuit.

After the interview and swimsuit competition were over, I knew I couldn't change anything that had already happened. Therefore, I decided not to worry and to begin getting ready for the rest of the competition. At home, Mom and Aunt Regina were waiting for me. They had forgotten about the interview and had gone shopping while I was sleeping. While they painfully fixed my hair mess-ups, I began to reapply my makeup a little more tastefully. It wasn't long until they had me looking like a Barbie.

This time when I arrived at the fair building, I was early. However, the place was already packed. There were no chairs left, and many people were crammed along the back wall to see the final part of the competition.

As I placed my bags in our dressing room, I heard the music begin. That was our cue to line up for our casual wear competition. As I walked onto the stage, bright lights shone in my eyes, and I couldn't see anything. It was almost like being in the building alone with no one watching. I knew the judges' table was front and center, so I looked in that direction. Modeling my green dress added to my confidence level. I needed this because the evening gown competition was next.

With clothes flying everywhere, there was no time to be goofing off. Hair, make-up, and shoe changes had to be made. While I began to wiggle into my evening gown, once again it felt as if my hair was being ripped out in chunks as Mom and Aunt Regina helped me get ready. Eye shadow shades were changed from green to blue, and gloss was smeared across my lips. In just a short period of time, I was ready for the evening gown competition.

It seemed like hours before it was my turn on the stage. When the time finally came, I spent what seemed like forever out there amazing the crowd and judges. However, I wasn't sure what to think when I finally finished my walk and answered my on-stage question.

It wasn't until everything was finished that I became nervous. The judges spent fifteen minutes looking over their scorecards and making a decision of who would represent our county at the state level of competition.

Finally, the time came when all contestants walked on stage again for the awards to be presented. I just stood there with my "beauty queen" smile glued to my face. They gave out the Miss Congeniality Award, Photogenic Award, Swimsuit Award, and Evening Gown Award. As the background music went off, the fourth runner-up was announced, along with the third and second runners-up. I was afraid I hadn't received an award and almost felt devastated. It would have been embarrassing to stand up there in front of the whole county and not receive anything.

Then I realized there were only two girls left, one other contestant and myself. As the Master of Ceremonies asked her and me to step forward, the other girl grasped my hand with a death grip. We waited and waited for the announcement. The whole building was quiet as the other contestant was announced as the first runner-up. In a daze, I finally realized that I was the Senior Fair Queen for 2006.

After a few seconds, my name was announced over the PA system. People started handing me trophies to hold, trying to pin sashes on me, and sticking pins in my hair to attach my shining crown. With cameras flashing around me and the crowd being very loud, I couldn't think. I didn't know which way to look. With everyone wanting to talk to me, I felt disoriented. However, I was happy. My "beauty queen" smile left my face, and a real smile took over, a smile that could not be wiped off.

I will never forget that hectic Saturday. It will remain one of the most memorable events of my life.