

## Meeting Miss Wisconsin at the Grocery Store

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Empty grocery store  
bored checkout workers  
and there  
at Checkout Number One  
is Miss Wisconsin,  
tall and slender,  
in full makeup,  
fluffy hairdo,  
working her summer job.

She competed years ago  
in Junior Miss  
with my daughter  
(She won,  
daughter didn't).  
I sidle in with full grocery cart,  
greet her with smile and "Hi,"

...can't get eye contact.

She whips my products along the scanner  
as if there were 10 old ladies behind me,  
ramming their grocery cart wheels into my ankles.

I admire her efficiency

but

foolishly I keep  
making small talk,  
trying to crack her smile...

No use.

After I pay my bill,  
Miss Wisconsin walks to the store office,  
nose up.

As I leave,  
I say "Bye" to  
the middle aged lady  
working the express counter --  
her hair is frizzy

and she's chubby  
but her face breaks into a beam

and I tell her  
"You have a prettier smile  
than Miss Wisconsin."

She says "Thanks."

I think about my daughter,  
the pageant loser,  
who works frantic late night hours  
in restaurant and bar,  
always trying  
to make patrons' faces  
break like a beam.

Maybe Miss Wisconsin was  
just having a bad day  
but  
still  
I  
wonder  
about

the price of a smile.

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