

# The Zoltar Machine from *Big Rolls* into Town with Your County Fair

By Anissa Johnson

You get on your tippy toes and glance around like a meerkat, pretending to look for someone on the Midway. Coast's clear. If you learned anything from Josh Baldwin, it's that magic isn't man-made. At the back of the machine, you find the cord. Run it through your shaking hands, through knots of other cords, to a generator in a patch of grass separating the rides and the beef barns. Pull at the plug, watch as electrical power steps aside for the supernatural. Hit songs from decades past blare from the surrounding rides as you walk back to Zoltar. "Crazy Train" from the Gravitron. "Everytime We Touch" from those swings your mom used to swear would fling you into Kingdom Come. Wherever that is.

Zoltar stares straight ahead as you fumble through the contents of your left pocket for a quarter. Smug. Hold on, you mumble. Red tickets for the Ferris wheel. Paper cone from your cotton candy. The Smokey the Bear button you snagged from the DNR booth. Aha! You find the quarter tucked under the metal pin. Zoltar relishes it in neon, "MAKE YOUR WISH."

The wind picks up, wafting the pungent scents of the beef barn towards your sensitive nose. You turn your head to catch your breath and, instead, catch sight of your crush with someone else, seemingly anyone else, boarding the Ferris wheel. The temporary Eiffel Tower, where small town lovers are made. You lower your head and turn back to Zoltar. A Josh Baldwin in your own right.

Your crinkle your forehead as you ponder your wish, fists clenched and a jaw to match.

Recall a story about some guy in the Bible who prayed for wisdom and ended up with love, riches, and power to boot. You do the math. One quarter = One wish. A four-for-one deal. And heck, even if the love thing doesn't pan out, at

