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The Happy Prince

Oscar Wilde

A little swallow flew over the city. It was autumn and it quickly had to move south, where it's always warm in winter. On its route the swallow saw a golden statue of a prince, with shiny blue eyes of sapphire. On the sword of the prince was a red ruby.



The little swallow settled in at the feet of the statue to rest. Suddenly the bird felt drops on its head. They were coming from the eyes of the prince. Tears were streaming down his face. "Who are you?," asked the swallow. "I am the Happy Prince." "Why are you crying?," asked the swallow.

The prince answered. "Once upon a time I lived in a castle. It was surrounded by high walls. I never wondered what was going on behind these walls. Everything in the castle was so beautiful that I never cared for the outside world. Everybody called me the Happy Prince. Now I am standing as a statue above the town and see, everyday, all the misery of the town. Even though my heart is made of lead now, I can't help but cry."

The prince told the swallow that he had seen a worried mother. Her son had a fever. And even though she worked as hard as she could, she didn't have money to buy healthy food. The prince asked the bird to bring the mother the ruby from his sword. "I can't do that," said the swallow. "I have to move to the warm south, I won't survive the cold winter." "Can't you stay one night?," asked the prince. The swallow agreed. "Thank you so much, little swallow," said the prince. When the swallow saw the sick boy, it was happy it obliged to the prince's wish.



The next morning, the swallow said its goodbyes to the prince. "I have to leave, it's getting colder and colder. I can't stay any longer." "Oh little friend," sighed the prince and told the bird about a young writer, who was working hard on a play in a cold little attic room. The writer was very hungry too. "Can't you stay a little longer?" "Alright, just one more night then," the swallow agreed. "Take one

of my eyes and bring it to the writer. He can sell the sapphire and buy food and wood. Please, do as I ask from you," the prince insisted.

The swallow took an eye and brought it to the little attic room. The young writer did not know what was happening to him, he was so lucky! "Now I really have to say goodbye," said the swallow. Again, the prince asked him to stay. This time to help a girl. She dropped her sulfur sticks in the gutter, she needed those to make money. If she returned empty handed, she would be in big trouble at home. "Take my other eye and bring it to her."

"If I have to take your other eye, you'll be blind," the swallow cried. The prince insisted and the swallow brought the other eye to the girl. The swallow then returned to the prince. "You are now blind," it said, "and that is why I shall stay with you." The next few days the swallow told the prince of all the sorrow he saw in the town. He told the prince of how rich the rich were and how poor the poor were. The prince said, "Swallow, take all the gold leaf of my body and give it to the poor."

The swallow did not want to leave the prince, even though the days grew colder and colder. The bird had grown to love the prince very much. Then the day arrived that the swallow, at the prince's feet, fell into a deep, deep sleep. The prince understood that the bird was dying and it broke his lead heart. The next day, the mayor of the town walked past the statue of the Happy Prince. "That statue looks horrendous! It's time to replace it."



God asked one of his angels to go to the town and take the most precious thing it could find back to heaven. The angel returned with the swallow and the lead heart. "You have chosen well," said God. "The swallow and prince will live happily ever after in my golden town and paradise."



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