

The Happy Prince

by Oscar Wilde

High above the city, on a tall column, stood the statue of the Happy Prince. He was gilded all over and for eyes he had two bright sapphires, and a large ruby glowed on his sword-hilt. He was very much admired indeed.

One night there flew over the city a little Swallow. He saw the statue on the tall column.

He cried; "it is a fine position to sleep." So he alighted just between the feet of the Happy Prince.

"I have a golden bedroom," he said softly, but just as he was putting his head under his wing a large drop of water fell on him. "What a curious thing!" he cried; "there is not a single cloud in the sky and yet it is raining." Then another drop fell.

He looked up, and saw the eyes of the Happy Prince were filled with tears, and tears were running down his golden cheeks.

"Why are you weeping?" asked the Swallow; "you have quite drenched me."

"When I was alive and had a human heart," answered the statue, "I did not know what tears were, for I lived in the Palace, where sorrow is not allowed to enter. So I lived, and so I died. And now that I am dead they have set me up here so high that I can see all the ugliness and all the misery of my city, and I weep."

"Far away," continued the Prince, "there is a poor house. I can see a woman seated at a table. Her face is thin and worn. In a bed in the corner her little boy is lying ill. Swallow, little Swallow, will you not bring her the ruby out of my sword-hilt?"

"It is very cold here," said the Swallow; "but I will stay with you for one night, and be your messenger."

So the Swallow picked out the great ruby from the Prince's sword, and flew away with it in his beak. The mother had fallen asleep. In he hopped, and laid the ruby on the table.

Then the Swallow flew back to the Happy Prince. "I feel quite warm now, although it is so cold."

"That is because you have done a good action," said the Prince.

The next day when the moon rose he flew back to the Happy Prince.

"Swallow, little Swallow," said the Prince, "will you not stay with me one night longer? A young man in a room is leaning over a desk covered with papers. He is trying to

finish a play for the Theatre, but he is too cold. There is no fire for warmth and hunger has made him faint."

"I will wait with you one night longer," said the Swallow, who really had a good heart. "Shall I take him another ruby?"

"My eyes are all that I have left" said the Prince. "They are made of sapphires. Pluck out one of them and take it to him."

So the Swallow plucked out the statue's eye, and flew away to the young man's room. The young man had his head buried in his hands. When he looked up he found the beautiful sapphire.

The next day when the moon rose the Swallow flew back to the Happy Prince. "It is winter and I must leave you, but I will never forget you."

"Swallow, little Swallow," said the Prince, "will you not stay with me one night longer? In the square there stands a little girl. She has no shoes or stockings, and her little head is bare. Pluck out my other eye, and give it to her."

"I will stay with you one night longer," said the Swallow, "but I cannot pluck out your eye. You would be quite blind then."

"Swallow, little Swallow," said the Prince, "do as I command you."

So he plucked out the Prince's other eye. He swooped past the girl, and slipped the jewel into her hand.

Then the Swallow came back to the Prince. "You are blind now," he said, "so I will stay with you always," and he slept at the Prince's feet.



Order of Events

Put the events from the story in the correct order by writing a "1" in front of the first event that happened, a "2" in front of the second event and so on.

- _____ The Swallow takes a sapphire to a little girl.
- _____ The Swallow takes a Prince's ruby to a woman.
- _____ The Prince's tears fall on the Swallow.
- _____ The Swallow decides to stay with the Prince forever.
- _____ The Prince asks the Swallow to take a sapphire to the young man.