

The Happy Prince



In a faraway land long ago stood a lonely statue. It was the Happy Prince. His eyes were sea-blue jewels. Leaves of gold covered his metal body. In his hand was a sword, and on its handle was a red jewel. It shone gloriously in the sunlight. One day, a swallow saw the beautiful sight below when he was flying to a warmer place. He thought, “That looks like a perfect place to sleep.”

After he landed on the statue, the resting swallow felt a drop of water fall on him. When he looked up, he saw tears falling from the statue’s eyes. “Oh, Happy Prince, why are you crying?” he asked. The Happy Prince looked down and spoke.

“Before, I lived in the palace below. I stayed all day in the garden. At night, I danced and sang in the great hall. I never once left the palace. There was only happiness in my world. After I died, I was put up on this hill. Now I see all the ugliness and misery down in the city.”

“Look! Can you see that poor woman? She is making clothes for the princesses in the palace. Her young son is sick, but she has no money for him to see a doctor. Nobody cares.” Since the Happy Prince was unable to move, he begged the swallow, “Please take the jewel on my sword. Give it to that poor mother.”

After the swallow did what he was told, he thought, “It is strange. I feel quite warm now, although it is cold.” Next, the Happy Prince said, “Give this jewel from my eye to that poor orphan girl on the street. Take the other one to that starving student.”

The swallow did as the Happy Prince ordered, and then, the Happy Prince went blind. The swallow was very touched. He decided not to leave and be the Happy Prince’s eyes. He gave all the gold leaves on the Happy Prince’s body to all the poor people he saw. However, the cold made the swallow very sick. One day, the tired swallow kissed the Happy Prince and said, “Goodbye, dear friend. I must leave now.” Then the swallow fell dead by the Prince’s feet. The Happy Prince’s metal heart broke.

The rulers of the city destroyed the statue because it looked ugly without its gold and jewels. They melted the body, but could not melt the heart. From Heaven above, God asked his angels, “Bring me the two most precious things in the city.” They chose the dead swallow and the Happy Prince’s heart, and raised them up to Heaven.

—By Oscar Wilde. Revised by Ian Fletcher

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