

The Happy Prince

Page 1

The first page of this adaptation of Oscar Wilde's classic fairy tale. The first page is a splash page to introduce us to the protagonist.

It shows the Happy Prince on top of his tall column that stands at the centre of an opulent German city. It is autumn.

The Happy Prince looks beautiful and saintly, with an expression that is compassionate and serene. Throughout the whole story, the Happy Prince's expression never changes. He is, after all, a statue.

He is dressed like a prince and has an impressive sword sheathed at his side. His entire body (including the clothes and sword) are covered with thin leaves of gold while his eyes are two bright blue sapphires, and a large ruby is in the pommel of his sword.

This page is a title page, so includes the story's title "The Happy Prince." Below that are the words: "a fairy tale originally told by Oscar Wilde and adapted for comics by Bevan Thomas and Ksenia Kozhevnikova."

Caption: High above the city, on a tall column, stood the statue of the Happy Prince. He was gilded all over with thin leaves of fine gold, for eyes he had two bright sapphires, and a large red ruby glowed on his sword-hilt....

Page 2

Panel 1

The town councillors are going for a walk. They are all pompous, vain, and shallow, dressed in fine clothes and jewels, and many are fat from all their expensive dinners.

A few of the councillors look up at the Happy Prince.

One Town Councillor: He is as beautiful as a weathercock.

Another Town Councillor: Though not as useful.

Panel 2

A middle-class mother looks up at the Happy Prince in exasperation as her little son has a temper tantrum. He cries and tugs at her dress and points to a cake shop that displays numerous delicious cakes that he wants. The boy is enraged that his mother will not buy them.

Mother: Why can't you be like the Happy Prince? He never dreams of crying for anything.

Panel 3

A miserable crippled panhandler in rags, begging on the street, looks up at the Happy Prince with envy.

Panhandler: At least there is one person in the world who is always happy.

Panel 4

A group of orphanage children troop out of church and stare at the Happy Prince in awe. They are chided by a dull math teacher.

An Orphan: He looks just like an angel.

Math Teacher: How do you know? You have never seen one.

Panel 5

Close-up of the Happy Prince's face, with his permanent saintly smile.

Page 3

Panel 1

It is night and a swallow is flying through the Happy Prince's city. The Swallow waited too long in Europe before flying south and now he is eager for warmer climates.

Swallow: It is far to Egypt; I must rest here before continuing my travels to the warm south. Where shall I put up? I hope the town has made preparations.

Panel 2

The Swallow alights at the feet of the Happy Prince.

Swallow: I will put up here. It is a fine position, with plenty of fresh air and a golden bedroom.

Panel 3

The Swallow is curled-up at the Happy Prince's feet, trying to get to sleep, and looking annoyed as drops of water fall on his head.

Actually the water is the Prince's tears, but we cannot see any of the Prince's body above the knees, so both we and the Swallow assume that the tears are in fact rain drops.

Swallow: During the colder months, the climate in the north of Europe is really dreadful. I am so looking forward to the warmth of Africa.

Panel 4

The now wet and annoyed Swallow starts to look-up. We still cannot see above the Prince's knees.

Swallow: What is the use of a statue if it cannot keep the rain off?

Panel 5

From the Swallow's perspective, a worm's eye view, we see the Happy Prince's face staring down at us. It looks so beautiful in the moonlight.

Tears are rolling down the Happy Prince's cheeks. His face still has exactly the same beatific expression as before. He is clearly an immobile statue, though one that is currently crying.

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Panel 1

The Swallow stares at the Happy Prince with pity.

Swallow: Who are you and why do you weep?

Happy Prince: They call me the Happy Prince. When I was alive and had a human heart, I did not know what tears were, for I lived in the Palace of Sans-Souci, where sorrow is not allowed to enter.

Panel 2

The Happy Prince's statue stares out at the city. We see him gazing out across the city towards the poor district. He is staring at a small shack in the distance.

Caption: But now that I am a statue, they have set me up here so high that I can see all the ugliness and all the misery of my city, and though my heart is made of lead yet I cannot choose but to weep.

Panel 3

We are looking through the open window of the shack and see a gaunt woman in rags desperately embroidering passion-flowers on to a beautiful satin gown for a rich client.

She is a seamstress and her hands are coarse and red and pricked by her needles. She is clearly overworked.

Caption: At the edge of the city, there is a poor house. One of the windows is open, and through it, I can see a woman all thin and worn sewing at a table, making a dress for some wealthy client who will pay her little for her labor.

Panel 4

Close-up of her sick son, sobbing and sweating on his bed.

Caption: In a bed in the corner of the room, her little boy is lying ill. He has a fever, and is asking for oranges. His mother has nothing to give him but river water, so he is crying.

Panel 5

The Happy Prince cries while pleading with the swallow.

Happy Prince: Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow, will you not bring her the ruby out of my sword-hilt? My feet are fastened to this pedestal and I cannot move.

Page 5

Panel 1

The Swallow is nervous. He wants to help, but also wants to be on his way.

Swallow: But I am waited for in Egypt! My friends are flying up and down the Nile, and talking to the large lotus-flowers. Soon they will go to sleep in the grand tomb of the great King....

Panel 2

The Happy Prince continues to cry.

Happy Prince: Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow – please stay with me for one night and be my messenger. The boy is so thirsty, and the mother so sad.

Panel 3

The Swallow hangs his head; ashamed of his selfishness.

Swallow: It is very cold here, but I will stay with you — for one night.

Happy Prince: Thank you, little Swallow.

Panel 4

The Swallow uses his beak and claws to pry the great ruby from the Prince's sword.

Panel 5

The Swallow flies through the city with the ruby in his claws.

Panel 6

The Swallow places the ruby on the table beside the sleeping mother.

She is collapsed asleep, her hands still wrapped around her needles and the gown. She was so tired that she had fallen asleep while still sewing.

The boy is sleeping in his bed, tossing feverishly as he is still beset with fever.

Page 6

Panel 1

The Swallow washes himself in the river.

A professor of ornithology stands on the bridge and looks at the Swallow in curiosity.

Swallow: Tonight I go to Egypt!

Professor: What a remarkable phenomenon! A swallow so close to winter!

Panel 2

The Swallow flies back to the Happy Prince to say his goodbyes.

Swallow: Have you any commissions for Egypt? I am just starting.

Panel 3

The Swallow stares out across the city in the general direction of Egypt.

Happy Prince: Will you not stay with me one night longer?

Swallow: But I have plans. Tomorrow my friends and I am to fly up to the Second Cataract where, on a great granite throne, sits the statue of the god Memnon; when the morning star shines, he utters one cry of joy, and then is silent.

Panel 4

We see a young, poor, gaunt playwright, shivering at his desk as he tries to write his masterpiece. In front of him is a candle that was his only source of heat and light; now the flame has gone out and he has nothing.

His desk is covered with papers, many of them splashed with ink, and there is also a tumbler of withered violets.

He is surrounded by numerous pages that have been crumpled-up and discarded, attempts at writing that he was not satisfied with.

Caption: Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow – far away across the city, I see a young and starving playwright trying to produce his masterpiece, but he is too cold to write any more and hunger has made him faint.

Panel 5

The Swallow shrugs his shoulders, accepting the Prince's wishes.

Swallow: I will wait with you one night longer. Shall I take him another ruby?

Happy Prince: Alas, I have no more rubies. My eyes are all that I have left.

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Panel 1

Close-up of one of the Happy Prince's gleaming eyes.

Happy Prince: They are made of rare sapphires, brought out of India a thousand years ago. Pluck out one of them and take it to him.

Panel 2

The Swallow starts to cry.

Swallow: Dear Prince, I cannot take your eye.

Happy Prince: Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow, please do as I ask.

Panel 3

The Swallow cries as he uses his beak and claws to pry out one of the Prince's eyes.

Panel 4

The Swallow is in the playwright's dingy apartment. He drops the sapphires into the tumbler filled with withered violets.

The playwright is asleep at his desk, his face pressed against a half-finished page.

Page 8

Panel 1

The Swallow flies to the Happy Prince.

Swallow: Now at last I am come to bid you good-bye.

Happy Prince: Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow, will you not stay with me one night longer?

Panel 2

The Swallow shivers from the cold. Autumn is becoming winter.

Swallow: But the chill snow will soon be here. In Egypt, where my companions wait for me, the sun is warm on the green palm-trees.

Panel 3

The Swallow strokes the Prince's foot with his wing.

Swallow: Dear Prince, I will never forget you, and next spring I will bring you back two grand jewels to replace those you gave away; the ruby redder than a red rose, and the sapphire bluer than the great sea.

Panel 4

The Happy Prince stares down at the little barefoot match-girl dressed in tatters far below him.

She is reaching for her spoiled matches, which are in the gutter. Various people are passing her by; no one cares about her.

Happy Prince: In the square below, there stands a little match-girl who has dropped her matches in the gutter, and they are all spoiled.

Panel 5

Close-up of the match-girl as she holds the spoiled matches in her hands and cries.

Caption: Her father will beat her if she does not bring home some money, and she is crying. She has no shoes or stockings, and her little head is bare.

Panel 6

The Happy Prince focuses his gaze on the Swallow.

The Swallow is terrified by what the Happy Prince is asking him to do.

Happy Prince: Pluck out my other eye, and give it to her, and her father will not beat her.

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Panel 1

The Swallow holds-up his wings as if to ward-off what the Happy Prince is asking that he does.

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

Happy Prince: Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow, please do as I ask.

Panel 2

The Swallow cries as he uses his beak and claws to remove the Prince's other eye.

Panel 3

The Swallow slips the jewel into the match-girl's palm. The girl is sleeping in a doorway, cradling her ruined matches.

Panel 4

The Swallow alights at the feet of the Happy Prince.

Swallow: You are blind now, so I will stay with you always.

Prince: No, little Swallow. You must go away to Egypt.

Panel 5

The Swallow drifts off to sleep, hugging the Prince's feet with his wings.

Swallow: I will stay with you always.

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Panel 1

The next day, the Swallow is perched on the blind Prince's shoulder, telling him of strange places and sights.

As the Swallow speaks, a tapestry of images form around him, each representing a story that he tells, all of Africa and the Middle East. There are statues of Egyptian gods, regal red ibises fishing in the Nile, pyramids and sphinxes, merchants with their camels, jungles and forgotten kingdoms. All the wonders that the Swallow has witnessed.

Panel 2

The Happy Prince is crying again.

The Swallow looks terrified as the Prince speaks, afraid of what he will sacrifice next.

Prince: Dear little Swallow, you tell me tales of many strange things, but stranger than anything is the suffering of men and of women. My own city is still filled with poverty and misery.

Swallow: But what can you do? What do you have left to give?

Panel 3

The Swallow holds-up his wings again, wanting to refuse to do what the Prince asks him.

Prince: I am covered with fine gold. You must take it off, leaf by leaf, and distribute it to my poor.

Swallow: I took your eyes. How can I take your skin as well?

Happy Prince: Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow, please do as I ask.

Panel 4

The swallow is crying as he starts to pick off leafs of the fine gold. Underneath the Happy Prince looks dull and grey.

Panel 5

The Swallow flies over a group of poor orphan children and drops down a few gold leafs for them.

The children laugh with joy as they hold out their hands to catch the gold.

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Panel 1

Wide shot of the city. The snow has not fallen yet, but it is still very cold.

Panel 2

Same shot of the city, but now it is covered in snow and in the middle of a blizzard.

Panel 3

The Swallow is picking at crumbs in front of the baker's door. It is almost impossible to find food in this snowstorm. The Swallow is very thin. He is almost dead from starvation and cold.

Panel 4

The Swallow knows he is about to die and summons up the last of his energy to fly up towards the Prince.

Panel 5

The Swallow lands on the Prince's shoulder.

Swallow: Good-bye, dear Prince. The frost and the snow are too much for me but may I kiss your hand before I go?

Panel 6

The dying Swallow spreads his wings for his final flight.

Prince: I am glad that you are going to Egypt at last, little Swallow; you have stayed too long here. But you must kiss me on the lips, for I love you.

Swallow: It is not to Egypt that I am going....

Page 12

Panel 1

The Swallow flies up to the Prince's face.

Swallow: ...I am going to the House of Death. Death is the brother of Sleep, is he not?

Panel 2

In his last moment of life, the Swallow kisses the Happy Prince on the lips.

Panel 3

The Swallow's corpse spirals towards the ground.

Panel 4

Close-up of the Happy Prince's face with tears rolling from his empty eye-sockets. He has never been so unhappy.

Page 13

Panel 1

Early next morning, the town councillors on their regular walk stare up at the Happy Prince in shock.

The councillors look as pompous and vain as before. They are totally devoid of compassion.

A Councillor: Dear me! How shabby the Happy Prince now looks with all his finery gone.

Another Councillor: Such a coarse statue might as well be melted down.

Third Councillor: Yes, that metal could be put to better use.

Panel 2

The Happy Prince's statue is pushed into a furnace so that his body can be melted down and the metal used for something more useful.

Panel 3

In the furnace, the Happy Prince's body is melting.

Panel 4

The Happy Prince's body has almost entirely melted. But his lead heart is unharmed. There is a huge crack down the heart's centre, almost splitting it in half. It cracked when the Swallow died.

Panel 5

One of the workmen uses tongs to take the Happy Prince's heart out of the furnace. He shows it to his overseer.

Workman: How strange. This broken heart didn't melt in the furnace.

Overseer: Well, throw it away then!

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Panel 1

The heart is tossed on a snow-covered dust-heap, beside which the dead Swallow already lies.

Panel 2

The heart and the Swallow lie on the dust-heap together. No one cares about them.

Panel 3

An angel's shining ephemeral hands gently lift-up the heart and the Swallow. We cannot see anything of the angel save its hands.

A few of the angel's shining white feathers drift down to the dust-heap.

Caption: Some say that an angel carried the Happy Prince's broken heart and the Swallow up to Paradise, and it must be so...

Panel 4

The dust-heap is shown, though with the heart and the Swallow gone. A couple of feathers from the angel remain, but they are no longer glowing, and so could be regular white bird feathers.

Caption: ... for the next day they both had vanished, and were never seen again.

The End