

# Holly's Happy Paint



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ISBN 978-0-9951221-7-8

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### **What this story is about**

Ten year old Holly lives in a gloomy world, full of gloomy people. But then she wins a prize at the local fair. It's a tin of something called Happy Paint, but some of the instructions are missing.

Holly thinks it's some kind of joke, but when she sets out to find a happier place to live, she takes the Happy Paint with her. And when she starts using it, her life changes.

In a very surprising way.

## Chapter One

All Holly wanted was to be happy. Really happy. But she felt she had nothing to be happy about.

Ten year old Holly lived in a gloomy house full of gloomy people. They said she was the gloomiest of them all, but Holly didn't believe them.

Cycling home in the rain that day didn't help her feel any better. Nor did the prize she'd just won at the local fair.

She'd aimed for the gold watch, but won the battered wooden box. A funny looking little box now tucked away in her pocket.

The house was empty as Holly arrived and ran up to her room.

She liked it when the others were out. That way she wouldn't get into any arguments.

Holly threw the box on the bed and studied it as she dried her hair with a towel.

She couldn't see any way to open it. It didn't have a hinge. Or a lock. And it didn't come with a key.

She decided her prize was a dud. It had to be. The first thing she'd won in ages and it was useless.

Holly was so disgusted, she picked it up and threw it on the floor.

The wooden box shattered into bits, but something inside popped out and rolled towards her.

## Chapter Two

A tin. A small tin. With a little brush attached to the lid.

She picked up the tin. The label looked old and wrinkly. Holly held the tin close to her face and read the two biggest words. HAPPY PAINT.

Happy Paint? She'd heard of regular paint. Green paint, and red paint, and all kinds of coloured paint. But she'd never heard of *Happy* Paint.

She held the tin even closer and read the rest of the crinkly label.

HAPPY PAINT IS SAFE AND FREE  
PAINT ON EVERY THING YOU SEE  
WHEN YOU PAINT BE SURE TO SMILE  
LIKE A FRIENDLY CROCODILE  
HAPPY PAINTING'S GOOD FOR YOU  
HAPPY PAINTERS KNOW IT'S TRUE  
WHEN IT'S EMPTY, DON'T COMPLAIN  
LEAVE THE TIN...

Leave it where? It looked like the tin had got wet at some stage and the bottom of the label had peeled off.

And what was this Happy Paint anyway?

Holly forced open the lid with her fingernail and examined the liquid inside. It was thin and watery and had no colour. And no smell.

And what did it mean about smiling like a friendly crocodile while using it? That sounded like a really big smile. And Holly didn't have anything to smile about.

But maybe using the paint would make her feel happy. It was worth a try.

Holly took the little brush and painted some of the watery Happy Paint on her hand. Then looked in the bedroom mirror.

She didn't *look* any happier. She didn't *feel* any happier.

Happy Paint was just someone's idea of a joke. Had to be.

She suddenly had a better idea. To be really happy, maybe she should move away. Leave home and go and live somewhere else.

The more Holly thought about it, the more she liked that idea.

It would have to be somewhere far away from all the gloomy people around her.

Moving to a happy place might solve *all* of her problems.

But she would need money to get there. Wherever this happy place was.

She checked the cookie jar where she kept her money. Two cookies. No money.

So she couldn't afford to fly in a plane. She didn't even have enough for a bus ticket.

And she didn't have a car. But she did have a bike.

Holly quickly gathered up some clothes and threw them in her backpack.

She also threw in the tin of Happy Paint. She'd try it again sometime. It might work better in this happy place she was going to find.

It was getting late. Too dark to leave now. She'd wait until morning.

Holly jumped into bed to try and get a good night's sleep. Tomorrow she'd be up very early.

Ready for the biggest adventure of her life.

### Chapter Three

Holly *did* wake up early, but she could hardly open her eyes. She felt so tired. She'd spent all night worrying about her big adventure.

She finally forced her eyes open and got dressed before anyone else in the house was up.

She pulled on a jacket, threw her backpack over her shoulder, and left the house without making a noise.

Holly climbed on her bike and started to pedal.

She didn't care how far she had to cycle. She'd just keep riding and riding till she found the happy place she was looking for.

Holly was so busy making plans in her head, she didn't watch where she was going.

As she hurtled around the first corner, a little boy stepped out into the road without looking.

Holly yelled and hit the brakes.

Too late!

Holly went one way. The little boy went another. The bike flew in a different direction and landed with a crash.

She jumped up, unhurt. But the boy sat by the side of the road holding his knee while tears ran down his face.

Holly had caused the accident and now she had to do something to help.

She reached into her pocket for some tissues. She didn't have any. She quickly checked her backpack.

She didn't find any tissues. But she did find the tin of Happy Paint.

Her eyes flashed over the instructions.

HAPPY PAINT IS SAFE AND FREE  
PAINT ON EVERY THING YOU SEE

Should she paint some on the little boy? It was worth a try.

Holly used the brush to paint some Happy Paint on the boy's knee.

The boy kept crying. Now she was sure the paint was a joke.

But then she read the instructions again.

WHEN YOU PAINT BE SURE TO SMILE

Holly hadn't smiled in a long time. But the boy kept crying. And it was all her fault.

She screwed up her cheeks and forced them into a smile. Not a big smile. But a smile.

Before her cheeks could fall down again, Holly splashed more Happy Paint on the boy's knee. He kept crying.

WHEN YOU PAINT BE SURE TO SMILE  
LIKE A *FRIENDLY CROCODILE*

Holly tried to imagine what a friendly crocodile would look like and made her own smile even bigger as she brushed on more Happy Paint.

The boy stopped crying.

'What's that?' asked the boy.

'Happy Paint,' said Holly.

'I mean, what's that on your face?'

'A smile,' said Holly. 'I think.'

'You look like a friendly crocodile,' said the boy and laughed as he got up and ran off.

Holly let her face fall back into a frown and stared at the tin. This Happy Paint stuff might be useful after all.

But she'd have to be careful. She couldn't splash it around too freely or she'd soon run out.

And she didn't know how to refill the tin because the instructions on where to find more Happy Paint had peeled off.

## Chapter Four

Holly's brain spun as fast as the wheels on her bike as she started pedaling again.

What was the thin, watery stuff in the tin? How did Happy Paint work?

Before she'd gone much further, she felt tired and stopped to rest under a tree.

An old man hobbled by on a walking stick. He didn't look very happy.

Should she try the Happy Paint again?

The old man got a fright as Holly jumped up, pushed her face into the biggest smile she could manage, and painted him with some Happy Paint.

The old man smiled back and thanked her for being so kind and friendly.

Then Holly watched as he marched off like he had springs in his shoes.

Now she was really curious. Maybe Happy Paint had some kind of magic mixed in.

Nothing else made sense.

She looked at her watch. No time for more rest.

Not if she was going to reach her happy place before it got dark.

## Chapter Five

The more Holly thought about her Happy Paint, the more she wanted to know how it worked.

She decided to experiment some more. She wouldn't use it all. Just enough to see what it could do. And she'd be sure to keep enough for when she got to her happy place.

Holly found two boys punching each other as they rolled around in the dirt. She smiled and splashed them with Happy Paint. They looked surprised, but stopped fighting and smiled back.

Two motorists who'd locked bumpers stopped yelling at each other after Holly smiled and dabbed them with a splash of Happy Paint.

She also found a group of girls who were arguing loudly over who should get the last chocolate in a box. When Holly smiled and splashed them with Happy Paint, the girls gave Holly the last chocolate.

Happy Paint gave a woman struggling to dig her garden a new burst of energy. A girl who'd lost a school book felt a lot better.

A baby in a pram who wouldn't stop crying started chuckling. The baby's mother returned Holly's smile and said, 'Thank you.'

An old woman who'd just broken her glasses looked very sad. Holly had to get right up close for the woman to see her smile. But the Happy Paint worked again and the woman was soon smiling back.

Everywhere Holly went, the Happy Paint worked.

Everyone was happier after she'd applied the paint with the biggest smiles she'd ever smiled.

And the more Holly splashed it around, the more she wanted to keep doing it, even though she was running low on Happy Paint, and her face hurt from smiling like a friendly crocodile.

Paint and smile. Paint and smile.

Till she suddenly realised she'd run out of Happy Paint.

The tin was empty!

## Chapter Six

It started to rain as Holly took shelter in a barn.

She felt miserable again. She'd been so happy while she was splashing the Happy Paint around. Now it was all gone. And she had no idea where to get any more.

Holly sat on a bale of hay and read the wrinkly label again.

WHEN IT'S EMPTY, DON'T COMPLAIN  
LEAVE THE TIN...

Leave it where? That part of the label was missing so she'd *never* solve the mystery.

Holly's face ached from all the smiling and her arms were sore from the painting. She was so tired, she curled up on the hay and was soon asleep.

The tin lay open beside her as the rain got heavier and leaked through a hole in the roof.

Holly woke to the sound of water dripping into the tin.

She stared in amazement as the water reached the top of the tin and overflowed. It looked *exactly* like the Happy Paint she'd been using all day!

Holly jumped up with excitement. She now knew what the missing words were.

WHEN IT'S EMPTY, DON'T COMPLAIN  
LEAVE THE TIN... *OUT IN THE RAIN*

That's why she would never run out of Happy Paint. She'd just leave the tin out in the rain whenever she needed a refill.

But there had to be more to it than that. What turned rain water into Happy Paint?

WHEN YOU PAINT BE SURE TO SMILE  
LIKE A FRIENDLY CROCODILE

Holly started to laugh and, although her face still hurt from a day of smiling, she couldn't stop laughing.

Happy Paint only worked if you smiled. That was the real magic. She'd proved it again and again. It was the smiling she did that made other people happy.

HAPPY PAINTING'S GOOD FOR YOU  
HAPPY PAINTERS KNOW IT'S TRUE

It *was* true. She did feel a lot better. Being a happy painter had cheered her up so much, she decided to change her plans.

Holly shoved the tin in her backpack, jumped on her bike and started pedalling.

Where she was going wasn't a happy place. Not yet. But it *would* be when she splashed around some Happy Paint and smiled some big friendly crocodile smiles.

If she hurried, she could be there before dark and in time for supper.

Holly crouched low over the handlebars and pedalled for home.

The End