

The Emperor and the Nightingale

Once upon a time there lived an Emperor of China, who was very rich and lived in a palace filled with treasures. In a tree in the palace gardens lived a little brown bird called a nightingale. The Emperor's gardener loved to listen to the nightingale sing.

One day the Emperor was reading a book about his magnificent palace. It described a sweet sound in the garden – the song made by the nightingale.

“Why do I not know about this bird?” the Emperor demanded. The servants didn't know about the nightingale either so they asked the gardener where to find it.

They found the nightingale sitting in a tree. The servants asked it to go with them. “The Emperor would like you to sing in his palace,” they said.

“My song sounds better out here in the trees,” said the bird but nonetheless she agreed to go with them.

The Emperor loved the sound of the nightingale and kept her in the palace, ordering her to sing to him.

One day the Emperor was given a gift – a golden nightingale covered with jewels. When you turned a key it sang a song, which sounded a little bit like the real nightingale but not as beautiful.

The Emperor was delighted. “It is like the little brown bird, only much more beautiful to look at.” He forgot all about the real nightingale and she flew away unnoticed.

Every morning the Emperor listened to the golden nightingale until one day, when he turned the key, it broke. No one knew how to fix it.

With no birdsong in the palace, the Emperor began to miss the little brown bird. He told his servants to bring her back, but no one could find her.

The Emperor became ill. He stayed in his bed looking sadly at the broken bird. His palace was silent.

Then one day his room was filled with birdsong. The nightingale had come back when she heard he was ill. Her sweet song made the Emperor smile and he began to feel better.

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"I will buy you a golden cage," said the Emperor, "if you stay in my palace and sing to me."

But the nightingale refused. "I am happier living outside in the trees," she replied.

The Emperor was sad and asked the gardener to plant a tree under his window. "It will remind me of the real nightingale," he explained.

The tree grew and grew until one day the Emperor heard a bird singing. He looked out of the window and to his delight saw two nightingales who had built a nest in the tree.

Everyone in the palace enjoyed hearing the nightingales sing, but the Emperor loved it most of all.

