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The Nightingale

Hans Christian Andersen

Long ago, there lived an emperor in the great Chinese empire. He was very rich. The whole palace was made of precious porcelain. His palace garden was so huge that you could easily get lost in it. People came from all over the world to marvel at the majestic fountains and the splendour of colours of thousands of plants and flowers. Once they arrived in the forest, they heard the singing of a nightingale. The bird could sing enchantingly beautiful. So beautiful, in fact, that it made people speechless.



Travel books were written about the beauty of the palace and the garden. One day, the Emperor received a book, full of compliments for the palace and garden. The Emperor let out a triumphant laugh, for how well he had done. But then he read:

"The palace and garden are certainly the most beautiful thing I have ever seen, but the golden voice of the nightingale surpasses it all."

The Emperor was shocked and the book fell from his hands. He had no idea that a nightingale lived in his garden, let alone that it was so special. He called his highest servant to him. Find this nightingale for me today! The highest servant hurried off, because once the Emperor was grumpy, that's the best you can do. He asked everyone in the palace about the existence of the nightingale. Nobody knew about it except the kitchen servant. She took the servant to the place where you could hear the bird sing. The nightingale was not an impressive bird to see, but the servant enjoyed its beautiful voice. He asked the nightingale if it would sing for the Emperor in the palace. The nightingale promised to do so.



That evening, the nightingale sang for the Emperor. The Emperor was moved and tears streamed down his cheeks. 'You sing so beautifully,' the Emperor said. 'How can I reward you?' The nightingale did not think it necessary. The sight of the Emperor's tears was the greatest gift to him. The Emperor did not let the nightingale go after that. Every evening the nightingale had to sing for him. Until one day, a parcel arrived for the Emperor.

In the parcel was a golden bird. It was a beautiful piece of art with a music box inside. The music it made sounded, well, like music to the Emperor's ears. The Emperor could not get enough of it and listened continuously. This made it very easy for the nightingale to escape.



Although the Emperor missed the nightingale, the servant managed to convince him that such a golden bird had much more status. Not only the servant, but also the people managed to convince the emperor that such a golden bird was much more prestigious.

The fake bird was allowed to sing constantly to the emperor. But one day it remained silent. The Emperor sent people from all over the world to repair it, but the music box refused every song.

The king was left alone in his bed, inconsolable and deathly ill with grief.

The Emperor was not dead yet, but lay down staring at a man at the foot of his bed. The man introduced himself as Death. 'I have come to fetch you', he said with a serious voice. The Emperor heard voices. He heard all the things he had

done right and wrong in his life. Especially the wrong things he found terrible to hear. He felt so sorry that Death ran off.

On the windowsill the nightingale sang and the Emperor felt himself getting better and better. 'I know this is because of you,' he whispered. The nightingale promised to come and sing to the Emperor every day and tell him about the events in the country. He would be able to use this to be a better ruler. But it will remain our secret,' the bird added. The Emperor promised.



The next morning, the servant entered the emperor's room. To say his goodbyes. He was shocked to see the Emperor sitting there and greeting him kindly with 'Good morning!'

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