

2. The Nightingale

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This story is Sue Farrington's adaptation of Hans Christian Andersen's 'The Nightingale'.

Long ago in China, there lived a great Emperor who was richer and more powerful than any Emperor who had ever lived. His palace was as big as a city and beautifully decorated with porcelain, silver and gold. Around the palace there was a garden that stretched further than the eye could see. It was full of the loveliest plants and trees. Little streams sparkled in the sun and deep pools reflected the delicate flowers that grew along their banks. Everyone agreed that it was the most beautiful garden in the world.



Among the trees of the Emperor's garden, there lived a little brown bird that was not beautiful at all. It was a nightingale. When the nightingale opened her mouth and sang, the notes came trickling out like pearls from a silken purse. Everyone who heard it forgot their troubles. They even forgot the beautiful garden and the powerful Emperor. A They all said that the nightingale's song was the loveliest thing they had ever heard. trickling moving slowly like a thin stream

One day the Emperor himself was told of the nightingale's song. Why never heard this remarkable bird?" he asked. 'Bring her to me at once! The Emperor's chief minister ran to the garden and explained to the nightingale that the rich and powerful Emperor wished to hear her sing.

"Gladly' said the nightingale. 'Take me to the palace'.

That evening, when the whole court was assembled² in the throne room, the nightingale sang for the Emperor. Everyone who heard her wept at the lovely sound. As for the Emperor, tears ran from his eyes like diamonds. Put the bird in a golden cage, he cried. 1

must hear this heavenly music every day

The poor nightingale hated to be imprisoned in a cage. She grew more and more unhappy. At last she was so sad that she could not sing at all. The Emperor was furious. He ordered his wisest men to make a mechanical nightingale that would sing whenever it was wound up.

The wisest men in the empire worked for a year on the mechanical bird. When they had finished, they brought it before the Emperor. This bird is even better than the real nightingale, Great Emperor, they said.



The mechanical bird was covered with gold. Precious jewels sparkled on its back and wings. When its golden key was turned, a beautiful song came from its beak. Everyone agreed that it was even better than the real nightingale. It was much more beautiful to look at and its song never changed. The real nightingale was allowed to fly out into the garden.

For five years the mechanical bird sang to the Emperor every day. But its mechanisms assembled gathered in one place mechanisms moving parts in Became worn with use and its song was not machine quite as beautiful as it had once been Then one day the Emperor fell ill. For weeks he lay in his state chambers growing weaker and weaker. Everyone believed that the Emperor was going to die. They left the sick man alone while they went to pay court to the Prince who would become the new Emperor.



One evening, the Emperor felt that death was very near. Alone in his room, he longed to hear the notes of the nightingale for one last time. But he was too weak to turn the golden key.

Then, from the open window, a lovely song floated into the room. The real nightingale sat on a branch outside, singing as though her heart would break.

'Sleep, my Emperor, and become strong again', she sang. 'You know now that beauty cannot be caged and gifts must be freely given.'

So the Emperor slept. In the morning, when the courtiers came, expecting to find that he had died in the night, the Emperor was better than he had been for months. Every night, the nightingale sang soothingly to him, telling of things that were valuable and true. Soon the Emperor was completely well but he was a changed man. He ruled for many more years, and the people who had once feared him now loved him for his kindness and wisdom.

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[2. The nightingale By Sue Farrington](#)

[3. How the Camel Got his Hump](#)