

The great hall was very quiet while everyone waited for the nightingale to arrive.

Suddenly, it flew in through the window and sat on its golden perch.

'You may sing for us, little bird,' said the Emperor. And the nightingale sang its finest song for the Emperor and his guests.

Its voice was as sweet as sugar though its song was a strange song because it was both happy and sad, both gentle and powerful.

The Emperor's guests were delighted. They had never heard such a beautiful song. The Emperor was so happy that he had tears in his eyes.

When the nightingale finished, there was silence. Then the Emperor spoke.

'Oh, thank you,' he said, 'that was the most beautiful song I've ever heard. I'd like to give you something in return. What would you like?' he asked the nightingale, 'you may have anything you wish.'

'Your Majesty,' replied the nightingale, 'I am so glad that my song made you happy. Please do not give me anything. To bring smiles to everyone's faces is enough.'

'Then, please,' said the Emperor, 'let me give you a home. Come and live with me in the palace. You can have this golden cage and you can sing all day.'

