

(016) The Young Man and the Songbird

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(From an Aesop fable)

A lazy young man won a little money betting on horses. He decided to take the day off work. He strolled into the woods. He sat down and stretched out under a tree. He fell asleep and woke up in the evening.

A nightingale was singing in the branches of the tree. The young man lay there listening to its beautiful song. Being lazy, he did not want to walk to the woods to listen to it. The next night he caught the bird in a trap. “Now you can sing for me at home.” He said.

This bird was not just a good singer. It spoke fluent English too. “Nightingales never sing in a cage,” it told him. The young man jumped in amazement.

“You can talk?” he asked. “Obviously.” said the bird. “Now let me go.”

The young man was also stupid. “Then I’ll eat you.” he declared. “I’ve heard that nightingales taste good, stir fried with soy sauce.”

“Don’t kill me.” said the bird. “That would not be smart. Let me go. I promise to tell you three things more valuable than my little body.” The young man set the bird free. It escaped from him to the top of the tree.

From there, it gave him three pieces of advice. “Never believe a prisoner’s promise. Keep hold of what you have. Do not feel sorry about something that is lost forever.” Then the bird flew away, laughing. It could do that too.