# THE CAGE BIRD'S ESCAPE

Once upon a time, there was a bird in a cage who sang for her merchant owner. He took delight in her song day and night, and was so fond of her that he served her water in a golden dish. Before he left for a business trip, he asked the bird if she had a wish: “I will go through the forest where you were born, past the birds of your old neighborhood. What message should I take for them?”

The bird said, “Tell them I sit full of sorrow in a cage singing my captive song. Day and night, my heart is full of grief. I hope it will not be long before I see my friends again and fly freely through the trees. Bring me a message from the lovely forest, which will set my heart at ease. Oh, I yearn for my Beloved, to fly with him, and spread my wings. Until then there is no joy for me, and I am cut off from all of life’s sweet things.”

The merchant traveled on his donkey through the dense forest. He listened to the melodies of many birds. When the merchant reached the forest where his bird came from, he stopped, pushed his hood back, and said, “O you birds! Greetings to you all from my pretty bird locked in her cage. She sends tidings of her love to you and wants to tell of her plight. She asks for a reply that will ease her heart. My love for her keeps her captive with bars all around her. She wants to join her Beloved and sing her songs through the air with a free heart, but I would miss her beautiful songs and cannot let her go.”

All the birds listened to the merchant’s words. Suddenly one bird shrieked and fell from a tree brunch to the ground. The merchant froze to the spot where he stood. Nothing could astound him more than this did. One bird had fallen down dead!

The merchant continued on to the city and traded his goods. At last he returned to his home.

He did not know what to tell his bird when she asked what message he had brought. He stood before her cage and said, “Oh, nothing to speak of no, no.” The bird cried, “I must know at once.”

I do not know what happened, said the merchant. “I told them your message. Then, one of them fell down dead.” Suddenly the merchant’s bird let out a terrible shriek and fell on her head to the bottom of the cage. The merchant was horrified. He wept in despair, “Oh, what have I done?”

He cried, “What Have I done? Now my life means nothing. My moon has gone and so has my sun. Now my own bird is dead.”

He opened the cage door, reached in, and took her into his hands gently and carefully. “I will have to bury her now,” he said; “poor thing is dead.”

Suddenly, the moment he had lifted the bird out of the cage, she swooped up, flew out of the window and landed on the nearest roof slope. She turned to him and said, gratefully, “Thank you, merchant master, for delivering my message. That bird’s reply instructed me how to win my freedom. All I had to do was to be dead. I gained my freedom when I chose to die.”

“So now I fly to my Beloved who waits for me. Good-bye, good-bye, my master no longer.” “My bird was wise; she taught me secret,” the merchant reflected.

**If you want to be with the ones you love, you must be ready to give up everything, even life itself. And then, by Allah, you will win your heart’s desire.**