

SAMPLE
TRANSLATION

BINA ŠTAMPE ŽMAVC
THE EMPEROR AND THE
ROSE

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Bina Štampe Žmavc: The Emperor And The Rose

Chambermaid Who Wanted To Become A Princess

Once upon a time there lived a chambermaid, whose greatest wish in life was to become a princess. Every time she brushed the princess' hair she said to herself, "I want you, my princess, to brush my hair."

When she helped the princess into her opulent golden dancing outfit, she thought, "I want you, my princess, to help me with my outfit."

When at night she prepared the princess' bed, she said to herself, "The time will come, when you, my princess, will be preparing my bed."

As the days passed the chambermaid became more and more bold in observing the princess. She tried to remember the exact way she walked, her gestures, her smile, the charm with which she sat down and stood up at the table, or mounted her horse, or danced at the royal ball. Then she secretly stepped in front of the mirror and emulated the princess.

"Oh, I am even better than the princess," she exclaimed and clapped her hands in satisfaction. Then she frowned as she was struck by the thought that she was in no way similar to the princess in her appearance. Try as she might, powdering her cheeks with the finest powder, colouring her lips with lipstick and lining her eyes with eyeliner—she did not resemble the princess even a tiny bit more.

"I have to steal her image," decided the chambermaid.

One day, as the princess stood in front of the big crystal mirror, trying on her new dancing gown, the chambermaid hurriedly locked her image into the mirror and stole it. She then put a spell on the princess, turning her into the chambermaid, and nobody at the court suspected what had happened.

Arrogantly the chambermaid took over the princess' role. She enjoyed tremendously the sight of the former princess preparing and making up her bed, spraying her with expensive perfumes during her bath, and combing her hair with a golden comb.

"Now I am the princess," she said to herself contentedly. "And my chambermaid is the former princess." She snickered maliciously and pushed the poor princess to work even harder. Without complaint the princess did the work fit for a chambermaid. Patiently she dealt with the malice of the fake princess and no one at the court noticed anything amiss. Just here and there someone would find it strange that their sweet princess suddenly became so arrogant and even

mean. They really were not used to that coming from her. But they took it all with a grain of salt as they thought it was due to her impending marriage to the prince of the neighbouring country.

When the day came for the prince to ask for her hand in marriage the prince knelt in front of the king and asked him for permission to marry his daughter.

"I am glad to give you her hand in marriage, dear prince," said the old king happily. But the prince was not just some ordinary prince. He wanted to make sure that the princess before him was a real princess.

He bowed to the princess-chambermaid and gave her a gift of a snow-white rose. The princess chambermaid turned up her nose at the gift and without even glancing at the flower, she threw it into her chambermaid's, former princess', lap. At that moment something quite extraordinary occurred. In the hands of the princess the rose that was white as snow blushed and became quite pink.

"Well," said the prince. "I see the white rose is blushing in shame."

He beckoned his page and was handed a sweet smelling branch of myrtle. The prince again bowed and gave the branch to the princess-chambermaid. She made a face and threw it carelessly to her chambermaid, the former princess. When she picked up the branch of myrtle, all the unopened buds immediately burst into blooms, enveloping the hall in a sweet fragrance.

"Well, well," said the prince. "I see the myrtle smells quite charmingly."

Then the prince gave the princess a ring with a shining jewel. Now the princess-chambermaid greedily inquired, "Is it real?" She snatched the ring, closed one eye, and held the jewel against the light of the chandelier.

"It is, indeed," answered the prince with a smile. "But you are not! The real princess is the one in whose hands the rose blushed with shame and the branch of myrtle blossomed."

Then the prince took the fake princess right in front of the big crystal mirror. There she was forced to return the stolen mirror image to the real princess. In her anger she became so ugly, that she did not even resemble her previous self. The old king immediately banished her from the court and the real princess happily thanked the prince.

They were married under the garlands of myrtle and fragrant, white roses. They did not blush with shame any more for it was the real princess who was getting married.

Of The Prince Who Was Created By Dreams

Once upon a time there lived a princess, who had very unusual dreams. Every night a hawk flew into her dream. It dipped down low above her head and stared at her with a strangely tame look in its eyes, that made the princess' heart tremble in her dreams. At times she felt as if behind the hawk's gaze there looked upon her the eyes of an unknown young man.

"Who are you?" she whispered in her dreams. Throughout the day she would resurrect in her mind the face that she sensed during the night. And she could hardly wait for the night to come. Many nights in her dreams she took a hold of the hawk's wings and flew with it over uninhabited undulating landscapes of her dreams. At such times she wished never to return. As the first light stroke her eyelids, she woke up disappointed that her dreams were gone and she could hardly wait for the night to see the hawk of her dreams again.

One night when again she took a hold of the hawk's wings and flew with it through dreams, the bright landscape of the moon, over which they flew, suddenly darkened under a thick shade and the princess shivered from cold.

In her dreams she saw how a dark evil shadow let fly an arrow that pierced the hawk's heart without mercy. The drops of red blood fell on the hands of the princess. In a terrifying shout of pain the princess let go of the hawk's wings and was falling and falling down into the depths until she woke up in tears. Even awake she could still feel the pain of the hawk's heart wound in her own chest. All shaken up she pressed her hands to her chest trying to lessen the pain squeezing her heart. Then she trembled as she awaited the night to find out what had happened to the hawk of her dreams.

Finally the night came and to her great relief the hawk came into her dreams as always. Again it gazed at her with the heart piercing look of a sorrowful young man, as if trying to tell her something indecipherable, something she could not understand.

"What are you trying to tell me?" whispered the princess in her dreams. But the hawk's gaze remained as secret as her dreams and the morning returned her to the day pensive and unfulfilled.

The princess could not forget the dream in which the dark shadow pierced the hawk's breast. Therefore she ordered all the captured hawks in the whole kingdom released and she forbade under harsh penalty any hunting of them.

Now the days seemed long, too long and she could hardly wait for the night and the hawk of her dreams. Soon she only lived for the night and her days became an eternal, uninhabited antechamber of the longed for night, when she could again fly with the hawk of her dreams over unfathomable magical dream-landscapes and feel the unknown young man gaze upon her with deep sorrow in his eyes.

"Who are you?" she kept whispering in her dreams. But the hawk only persisted in pointing its gaze at her and she never heard its voice in reply. Not knowing how and when, the

princess fell in love so deeply with the hawk of her dreams that her soul would have withered from longing if she were never to lay her eyes upon him again.

The hawk faithfully returned into her dreams every night as if he knew her secret.

One night they were flying over a landscape of dark dreamy forests, bathed in silver from the moonlight emanating from the bright full moon. The hawk alighted upon the glade shimmering with dew, in which the moonlight was reflected. It rounded the glade a few times so low that the princess could suddenly notice the drops of blood hovering in the grass like tiny bright red blossoms. The hawk noiselessly followed the traces in the grass and the princess was overtaken by an unusual grief that squeezed her heart like a dark ring.

"What are you trying to tell me?" she asked the hawk. At that moment the hawk sighed a heart wrenching sigh and climbed sharply, flying back over the deep forests of dreams. The morning separated them, the princess unable to decipher the secret of the glen with the drops of red blood in her dreams.

Far away in the land of dreams, the Lord of Souls and Dreams watched over the dreamers and the souls that sailed with their dreams as though they were boats, sailing through mysterious overreaches of Timelessness. Every now and then an angel flew to him, an angel that guarded the souls on their long voyage through the expanses of Eternity. The angel told the Lord about the dreamers and the souls that sailed with their dreams.

"Tell me, angel, who of the dreamers is the one that most frequently lends his dreams as a boat for the travelling souls?"

The angel sat down on the right side of the Lord of Souls and Dreams and hung his head in thought. Then he said, "As far as I know, Lord of Dreams, it is the princess who gave up all her daily life for her dreams and lives only for the night and the hawk of her dreams. And she herself is not aware how much she is in love with his soul."

"And who is this soul, hidden in the hawk, so faithfully visiting her in her dreams?" asked the Lord of Souls.

"It is a soul of a prince, imprisoned in the body of the hawk. The prince had long ago been enchanted into a hawk by an evil sorcerer, then a hunter killed him by piercing his heart with an arrow. Now his soul is travelling through space as a grey hawk. The soul of the prince, trapped in the hawk, fell in love with the princess. They love each other beyond life and death, even though the princess knows nothing of the prince's soul trapped in the hawk."

"Tonight I shall fly with you, angel," said the Lord of Dreams, moved and pensive. "I want to see the princess and the hawk of her dreams."

That night the Lord of Souls and Dreams flew with the angel through endless plains of Timelessness. The souls on their long voyage of quest and salvation sailed by as if on sailing boats with the dreams of their dreamers. They shimmered mysteriously in a myriad of reflexions

of dreamy landscapes. Some had been on a journey for a very long time and some had just started their voyage, but all shone in the vastness of the night sky like thousands and thousands of multi-coloured fireflies. The Lord of the Dreams and the angel saw among them the princess flying in her dreams with the hawk of her dreams. The soul of the hawk pulsed with a bright glow and the princess' soul shone as a firefly. And the Lord of the Dreams and the angel saw the heart wrenching sight of the two souls, pulsing in the same rhythm of the light as if they were one. The Lord of the Dreams quietly stared for a very long time into the hawk's living soul. He felt pity for the soul, just as he felt pity for the soul of his dreamer.

"You were right, angel, they do love each other beyond life and death," said the Lord of Dreams. "I will return his body to the young man, so he will be able to return to the time of living."

And the Lord of the Souls and the Dreams did as he said he would and the soul of the hawk returned to the body of the prince. When the princess saw him, she immediately recognised the hawk of her dreams.

Because the prince returned to the time of living, and to remember the long hawk voyages of his soul, he kept the gaze of the hawk forever.

Ivy Of Fairy Tales

Once upon a time a fairy Emperor and a fairy Empress lived in a fairy-land. The most precious thing in their empire were fairy tales, hidden in a golden room under lock and key.

The room was right at the top of a high tower with a cupola of gold and precious stones, and it was so high that it was touching the sky and that even the most nimble thief or acrobat could not reach it.

The Emperor and the Empress could not even imagine what would happen if anyone managed to steal a ray of the fairy-tale dust, shining brighter than the precious stones in the treasury, illuminating even the total darkness, more magic and brighter than sunshine or moonshine itself. But their biggest concern of all was, what would happen should the fairy tales by mistake find their way amongst the people.

"Indeed, what would be the worth of an Emperor and an Empress if the fairy-tale dust rays shone in the houses of ordinary people," exclaimed the Emperor.

"Or even worse, should they shine in the wooden clogs of some stupid goose herder," shuddered the Empress, wiggling her toes in her dainty silk shoes.

Therefore, the fairy tales stayed lonesome high up in their well guarded room. They were bored, so they told their own stories to each other and here and there to the Emperor and the Empress.

"What a strange charmed life for fairy tales to have to tell each other our own stories day in and day out," they sighed disappointedly. They were so bored they resorted to playing hop scotch.

"Even on the best of days we are only listened to by the Emperor and the Empress," they complained and covered their yawns with their fairy-tale hands.

Boredom made the fairy-tale dust rays in the tower dimmer and they shone three whole shades less. Oh, how worried it made the Emperor and the Empress when they stepped into the tower and noticed what had happened.

"Perhaps someone did manage to peek through the garret window and steal a ray or two," said the Empress.

"Impossible," replied the Emperor, "when the tower is so high and the walls so sleek from the gold dust that even the lightest foot would slip."

"Perhaps one of the fairy tales managed to slip out and slink into the world," pondered the Empress. "When speaking of fairy tales, anything can happen."

"True, you never can tell with fairy tales," said the Emperor, nodding his head with concern. So the Emperor and the Empress started to count the fairy tales. They counted and counted and counted up exactly the same number as always.

"Strange," said the Emperor. "None are missing."

"Yet the fairy-tale dust rays are shining three shades dimmer," cried the Empress, stomping her feet in silk shoes and getting red faced in anger.

The Emperor immediately ordered all the carpenters and bricklayers to reduce the garret windows and rock slots in the high tower by a few centimetres so as not to inadvertently lose any rays of the fairy-tale dust.

But seven days later, when the Emperor and the Empress visited the tower again, they found that the fairy-tale dust light dimmed by three more shades. "Hmmm," so upset was the Emperor he immediately gave an order to his carpenters and bricklayers to reduce the openings under the high cupola of the fairy-tale tower even further.

"If this doesn't work, we will be even more prudent and heighten the tower by half," he decided. Just to be safe, the Empress turned the key in the door of the fairy-tale tower seven times.

Meanwhile, on the high walls of the tower, an ivy climbed up and upwards until one fine day it reached all the way to the top. It peeked through the garret windows of the golden tower, where the fairy tales were telling each other their own stories from pure boredom. The ivy listened and being used to only shade and cold, it blinked into the fairy-tale dust light, which was shining brighter than the sun and moonlight in the room of the tower.

It was so bright that it made it sneeze loudly, just as a man might sneeze if he looks into the sun. All the fairy tales turned to the window.

"Look, it's ivy," they exclaimed with surprise. "You are telling yourselves so well," it rustled admiringly.

"Really, you think so?" said delighted fairy tales and crowded the window to see the ivy close up.

"How green you are!" They smiled and every one of them wanted to touch at least one of ivy's leaves.

"How did you find us so high up?" they asked curiously.

"I climbed," said ivy modestly.

"Climbed?" asked the surprised fairy tales.

"Where did you get such a high ladder?" They crowded curiously by the window.

"I do not need a ladder," he rustled happily. "All by myself I cling to the walls as I grow.

And I grow for a very long time, for decades, and I climb high, even to the towers, centuries old."

"You must be terribly strong to do something like that," said the fairy tales with admiration. Suddenly one of them had an idea.

"What if you were our ladder, ivy?"

"Yes, indeed," joined in the excited fairy tales. "How wonderful it would be to climb down into the world, among the people. You have no idea, how terribly bored we are, locked up in here!" they lamented.

"Not just bored, we are suffocating! Even the fairy-tale dust rays don't shine as bright as before, they have dimmed from boredom. If it gets dimmer by three more shades, the Emperor will give an order to heighten the tower by half. It will be so high that even you, ivy, won't be able to reach us. We really have to come down, into the world, amongst the people," were the fairy tales adamant.

"Easy as pie," said the ivy. "If my leaves can hold the weight of butterflies and birds, they should be able to withstand the footsteps of fairy tales, barely weighing more than a spider's gossamer web."

"How nice you are, ivy!" The fairy tales thanked him and one after another, lightly as birds, they descended by the dark green ivy leaves all the way to the ground, where they went to tell themselves to the people.

That is precisely how the fairy tales snuck out from the golden tower and travelled all over the world, the Emperor and the Empress none the wiser.

Secretly, however, they continued to return by the ivy ladder to their fairy-tale tower, just so that the Emperor and the Empress would not find out what had happened and in their anger cut down the ivy that lent its deep green leaves to the footsteps of the fairy tales.

In the meantime, people seeing the magic rays of fairy-tale dust, began to make up new fairy tales or add something new to the old ones. Therefore, more and more new fairy tales climbed up the ivy ladder to the tower.

There were more and more of them, so the golden room brimmed with fairy-tale dust light and shone more and more fairy-tale bright.

"How prudent of us to guard our fairy tales so well," said the Emperor and the Empress, happily nodding their heads.

"Not only have we not lost even a tiny piece, even a tiny ray of one single fairy tale, they have multiplied, so we have more and more in our tower," said the pleased Emperor and the Empress and they continued to guard their fairy-tale tower with outmost care.

And if one is to believe fairy tales, they guard it to this day.

Of Frog And Prince

Once upon a time there lived a King, who had only one daughter. She was beautiful and smart and the King was very proud of her. When the time came for her to find a husband, the old King summoned her and said, "Daughter, the time has come for you to choose a prince and get married. Listen to your heart and you will make me happy, too."

"Thank you, father," said the princess and gave the King a kiss. "I will do as you say."

Soon after many suitors started arriving at the court. Princes from close and afar tried to win the princess' hand and they were generous with gifts and promises. The princess kept choosing and comparing, rejecting one and another, delaying with her decision.

"Not one is the one," she told her father, the King.

"He will come, he will come, dear daughter," said the King, consoling her.

One evening, when she was really exhausted from choosing the suitor, the princess decided to take a walk in the royal park. She walked among the luxuriant blooming flower beds, ranking her rejected suitors. Suddenly she was addressed by a frog on the path, "Where are you off to, princess?" The Princess paused and answered the frog nicely, that she was going for an evening stroll.

"Princess, may I accompany you?" asked the frog. The Princess pondered for a moment and then replied, "Why not, dear frog, if you only feel like walking."

So they continued on their way. The frog was jumping lively next to the princess, telling her stories of its frog life. At the end of the stroll the frog asked the princess whether she would return the next evening. But the princess only smiled and disappeared through the castle gate.

Next evening, when the princess stepped in the royal park, she was again met by the frog along the path.

"Greetings, princess," said the frog. "May I accompany you?"

"You may, dear frog, if you only feel like walking!" answered the princess. And so they walked together. The frog told the princess even more interesting stories from its frog life than the first time. At the end of the stroll the frog asked the princess whether she would come for a walk again the next evening. "Perhaps," shrugged the princess, waving goodbye.

The third evening the frog again waited for the princess taking her evening stroll.

"Greetings, princess," said the frog. "Would you marry me?"

The princess was dumbfounded. But then she remembered the old fairy tale of the frog prince.

She blushed from excitement and thought, "Maybe it is not such a bad idea to choose a frog. Surely it will turn into a wonderful prince. On the other hand, if I choose one of the princes, it can happen that one fine day he will turn into a frog."

So the princess decided to accept the frog's proposal.

The old King gave his approval and soon there was a wedding. It was simply spectacular. Once in a while the content frog said 'Rabbit!', while the princess could hardly wait for the wedding night to see, what would transpire. If she were lucky, in the morning she would wake next to a handsome prince.

In the evening she took care to brush her hair but when she tried to lie down into her golden bed, the frog croaked annoyed, "Put me into the terrarium on top of your dresser, your sheets rub me the wrong way." And so the princess lovingly took the frog to a small terrarium as the frog demanded and wished it good night.

In the morning the princess could not wait to open her eyes. She quickly looked around and could not hide her disappointment to find the bed next to her empty. In vain she searched for a handsome prince. There was only a frog, jumping out of the terrarium demanding frog breakfast.

The following night the frog wanted a more comfortable terrarium that the princess had to put next to her bed. The princess again followed the frog's wishes.

When she woke up in the morning, she did not find a prince next to her. Just the frog in the terrarium, loudly demanding a bigger breakfast and a bath in the pond.

The third night the frog wanted the princess to bring the terrarium into her bed. The princess obeyed the wish, even though the terrarium took up more than half her bed. "Never mind," thought the princess, "as long as I wake up in the morning next to a handsome prince."

As soon as the sun was up, the excited princess opened her eyes. She looked around but there was no trace of a handsome prince. There was only a frog, stretching widely in its terrarium in the middle of her bed, splashing around water from a small well.

The fourth night the frog demanded company of other frogs so they could play froggy cards together. The princess kindly complied, hoping that in the morning she would wake up next to a handsome prince and his courtiers.

In the morning when the sun touched the princess' eyelids, she looked around in vain. There was no trace of a handsome prince and his court. There were just frogs in the terrarium, snoring loudly after the night of cards.

The princess sighed disappointedly. "Perhaps the time is not yet right for my prince," she tried to console herself.

The fifth and sixth night the cards were repeated. But the seventh the frog wished for a golden ball to play bocce.

"Finally! Finally the golden ball," cried the princess quietly. "I knew something was missing. This night finally the frog might turn into a prince, such as has not been seen in seven kingdoms," was her quiet wish as she lovingly gave the frog a magnificent golden ball.

At sunrise the princess woke up and impatiently looked around. Alas, in vain her eyes searched for a handsome prince. In the terrarium they could only find the snoring frog with its head resting on the golden ball.

Night after night the princess waited in vain for the frog to turn into a prince. Time passed but the frog remained a frog, only more and more demanding and conceited. Now it wanted not just one but seven terrariums, a pond with goldfish, and seven golden balls to play bocce.

The princess became more and more pensive and depressed. Oh, how she wished to wake up one fine morning next to a handsome prince instead of a frog! Gloomy were her recollections of all the handsome princes, asking for her hand, who she spurned, marrying a frog instead. She wept bitterly, regretting her decision.

Instead, one morning the princess woke next to the frog which had turned into the most hideous toad. The toad looked at the princess crudely, its screeching voice demanding, that she scratch the repugnant protuberances covering its skin.

The princess covered her eyes in disgust. Right away she called her servants and ordered them to take the hideous creature to the farthest away pond in the whole kingdom so as never to see it again. Thereupon the princess slept in her golden bed alone. While she waited in vain for the frog to turn into a handsome prince, the years caught up with her. Now she was just an ageing princess, waiting for her prince in vain.

It is said that since then the princess has barely ever left the court. And to this day, to the grandchildren of her servants, she tells the story of the frog that never turned into a prince.

The Emperor's Bloom

Once upon a time there lived an Emperor, who would rather admire his imperial gardens than the treasures in his treasury. He knew every flower in his gardens, every hue of pink and the smell of every bloom.

Every morning, as soon as he woke up, he ran, dressed only in his shirt, out to his greenhouse, to see what had sprouted and blossomed overnight. Whenever his court had to wait for lunch, it was surely because the Emperor took his time among the flowers in the garden.

The Emperor was particularly thrilled if he found a new kind of flower, or if he created a new colour of blooms or a new blossom scent. Should one want to make the Emperor especially happy, one would, instead of a jewel, present him with a flower, not yet growing in his imperial gardens.

Which, truth be told, was not an easy task, since there were already so many flowers of all kinds there that only the Emperor himself and his old imperial gardener knew each one by its name.

Once it happened that the Emperor got a gift of a marigold that absolutely overwhelmed him. It was quite a modest flower, yet beautiful, velvety to the touch and it looked like a small sun. It bloomed for many months, all the way until winter time and it was not very demanding as for the soil in which it grew. In a word, it was nearly perfect, except for one flaw, quite significant for a flower—it had a very unpleasant smell. Every time the Emperor glanced at it, his heart rejoiced, and every time he smelled it, he wrinkled his nose and grimaced.

"Something has to be done," decided the Emperor. Day and night he consulted his gardening books and employed his imperial gardeners to rush all around the world, searching for sweet smelling relatives of his marigold, so dear to his heart. Every day more and more new kinds of marigolds arrived at the court from all different parts of the world. Yet not one had any more of a pleasant smell than the Emperor's own marigolds.

"If only I could find one that would smell sweet or even close to sweet," said the Emperor with a sigh and stubbornly resumed his search.

Then one day, from far away China, one last marigold arrived to the court. The Emperor took a whiff and sneezed in surprise. It had quite a pleasant smell!

"Well, well, you nearly smell sweet," cried out the Emperor happily. "But then your blooms are paltry and without any charm, such as befits a marigold," he added, disappointed. Then he started to think. He racked and racked his brains and finally got an idea. He pollinated his lovely marigold with its paltry relative from far away China. He arrived at the seed and he sowed an enormous field in his gardens with it. Now all he

had to do, was wait to see the results. Oh, how long and difficult the wait was for the Emperor to see the seeds of the new marigold sprout!

"All I need is one, only one good seedling ..." murmured the Emperor as he inspected the weeds in the field of the newly sown marigolds.

Finally the first shoots poked through the earth.

"Whatever will be will be," said the Emperor and day after day he came to observe the exuberant growth of the marigolds in his gardens.

One fine day the marigolds finally bloomed. The Emperor was excited beyond belief. Now the real work could begin. One by one they had to smell through the whole wide plain full of blossoming marigolds to find at least one with pleasant smell, a perfect shape and beauty of the bloom. The Emperor would be the first in the whole wide world to grow a marigolds, whose smell would not lag behind its beauty, humbleness, and tenacity.

The excitement was threatening to explode. The whole court was up in arms. Or more precisely—down on their knees. From morning till night, the Emperor himself, his ministers and his imperial gardeners were all in the fields of marigolds, carefully moving from one bloom to another. They strained their eyes and smelled and smelled until their nostrils prickled. There was no end in sight to the vast field, so the Empress and her ladies in waiting, as well as her cavaliers, menservants and maids, even the musicians from the Emperor's court, lent a hand. And of course untold numbers of subjects from close and afar. On their knees, deeply stooped, their clothes hitched up, they slowly moved from flower to flower.

"I found it, Your Majesty," cried the little gardening apprentice after three weeks of searching on his knees.

"He found it," echoed from mouth to mouth on the endless field of marigolds. The Emperor hitched up his clothes and nearly ran, so excited was he. He bent towards the marigold, as the little apprentice stood proudly by, and anxiously smelled. He grimaced and, disappointed, sighed, "It does not smell right—it stinks!"

In a week's time the Empress thought she found what they were all after.

But the Emperor was disappointed again. "It does not have the right bloom!" So they searched further. After weeks and weeks of relentless pursuit, there was only a small part of the field left. The ladies in waiting complained that their knees hurt, the musicians grumbled about their backs, sore from the constant bending over, and the Empress bemoaned her nose, all red from perpetual sniffing.

Only the Emperor and the old imperial gardener never complained. Steadfastly they waded through thousands of velveteen blooms.

At the end only a tiny piece of the unexplored vast field of flowers was left. Now even the Emperor's courage started to desert him. He sighed a deep sigh, bravely stepped forward and bent over. Then he bent even lower and held his breath from excitement.

Oh, right in front of him bloomed the most perfect marigold ever seen! On top of That, it smelled nearly pleasant. The Emperor's hard work was finally rewarded.

"I finally found you, my nearly-sweet-smelling marigold," he cried and so deeply smelled his beautiful flower that his nose filled with yellow pollen.

The Emperor sneezed and grinned widely at the marvellous marigold.

"Your Majesty is rewarded for his persistence," proclaimed the old imperial gardener and the court sighed in relief, brushing off and straightening their worn out knees.

The very next day the court held a dance in honour of the Emperor's beautiful, sweet-smelling marigold. And believe it or not, despite their crumpled knees the whole court merrily danced till the morning. In the place of honour in the imperial gardens there bloomed a beautiful, dainty and nearly-sweet-smelling marigold, making the Emperor's heart sing with gladness.

In honour of the Emperor they called it the Emperor's Bloom. Because of the Emperor's persistence, indeed worthy of an emperor, admirers of the marigold all over the world could now plant it in their gardens. And that was as it should be and it still is to this day.