

Brooks Garth

"The Gift"

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A poor orphan girl named Maria
Was walking to market one day.
She stopped for to rest by the roadside
Where a bird with a broken wing lay.
A few moments passed 'til she saw it,
For its feathers were covered with sand.
But soon clean and wrapped it was traveling
In the warmth of Maria's small hand.

She happily gave her last peso
On a cage made of rushes and twine
She fed it loose corn from the market
And watched it grow stronger with time.

Now the Christmas Eve service was coming
And the church shone with tinsel and light
And all of the townsfolk brought presents
To lay by the manger that night
There were diamonds and incense and perfumes
In packages fit for a king.
But for one ragged bird in a small cage,
Maria had nothing to bring.

She waited till just before mid-night
So no one would see her go in
And, crying, she knelt by the manger
For her gift was unworthy of him.

Then a voice spoke to her through the darkness,
"Maria, what brings you to me?
If the bird in the cage is your offering,
Open the door, let me see."
Though she trembled, she did as he asked her
And out of the cage the bird flew
Soaring up into the rafters
On a wing that had healed good as new.

Just then the midnight bells rang out
And the little bird started to sing
A song that no words could recapture
Whose beauty was fit for a king

Now Maria felt blessed just to listen
To that cascade of notes sweet and long
As her offering was lifted to heaven
By the very first nightingale's song.

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