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The Princess and the Pea

Hans Christian Andersen

Once upon a time there was a prince who desperately wanted to get married. But he would only settle for a real princess. He travelled all over the world looking for a good princess, but unfortunately, he couldn't find one anywhere. Of course, it was very difficult to know whether they were real princesses...

After another long search, he returned home alone. He was very sad, because he wanted a real princess so badly.

One evening, when it was raining and storming and there even was thunder and lightning, someone knocked at the city gate. The old king quickly went to open it. A girl stood before the gate. But my goodness, look at her! Rain was dripping from her hair, her clothes were dirty and soaking wet, and her shoes were filled with water. Yet she said she was a real princess.



"We'll find out soon enough, I'm sure," thought the old queen as they let the girl in. She said nothing more and went to put the bedroom in order. At the very bottom of the bed she put a pea. Then she put twenty mattresses on top of the pea and twenty more down blankets. And in that delightfully soft bed the Princess had to sleep.

The next morning the queen asked curiously whether the Princess had had a good night's sleep.



But the Princess said: it was terrible, I have scarcely closed my eyes all night. Heaven knows what was in my bed. I was lying on something hard and now I have bruises everywhere. It's awful.

But this is how the King and Queen knew for sure that she was a real Princess! Only a real Princess can feel a pea through twenty mattresses and twenty down blankets. No one else could do such a thing, nobody but a real Princess.



The Prince was very happy and married her immediately. After all, he now knew for certain that he had found a real Princess!

And the pea? It ended up in the Royal Museum and you can still see it there today. That's the truth. That is, if nobody has stolen it...



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