

Once upon a time there was a Prince, and he wanted to get himself a Princess; but she must be a proper Princess. So he travelled all the world over to find one, but everywhere there was some obstacle. There were Princesses enough, but whether they were real proper princesses he could not be quite certain; there was always something not perfectly correct. So he came back home and was very much cast down, for he did so want to get a real princess.

One evening there was a terrible storm; it lightened and thundered and the rain poured down; it was quite fearful. There came a knock at the town gate and the old King went off to open it.

It was a Princess that was standing outside but gracious! what a figure she was with the rain and bad weather! The water ran all down her hair and her clothes and in at the toes of her shoes and out at the heels; and she said she was a real Princess.

"Ah, we'll find that out right enough," thought the old Queen to herself, but she didn't say anything; she went into the bedroom, took all the clothes off the bed and laid one dried pea on the bottom of the bed. Then she took twenty mattresses and laid them on top of the pea, and then twenty eiderdowns on top of the mattresses, and there the Princess was to sleep that night.

In the morning they asked her how she had slept, "Oh, dreadfully badly," said the Princess; "I hardly closed my eyes the whole night! Goodness knows what there was in the bed! There was something hard I lay on that has made me black and blue all over! It's quite dreadful."

Then they could see that this was a proper Princess, since she had felt the pea through the twenty mattresses and the twenty eiderdowns. Nobody could possibly have such a tender skin but a real Princess.

So the Prince took her to wife, for now he knew that he had got a proper Princess; and the pea was put in the treasure chamber, where it is still to be seen, unless somebody has taken it away.

Now there is a proper story for you.

[End of *The Princess on the Pea* by Hans Christian Andersen, from *Hans Andersen Forty-Two Stories*, translated by M. R. James]