THE PRINCESS AND THE PEA

Story by Hans Christian Andersen

Once upon a time, there was a young prince who wanted, more than anything in the world, to marry a real princess. Not a "sort-of" princess, and not one who only pretended to be a princess just because she wore a sparkling dress. No, he was looking for a truly genuine princess. So he set off to travel around the world. He visited castles, palaces, and grand parties. He met girls who could sing beautifully, others who could spin and twirl faster than anyone, and even one who could eat three muffins at once without spilling a crumb. But somehow, something was always wrong and deep down the prince knew that none of them were a real princess.

Sadly, he returned home. He flopped down on his sofa with a sigh. "I suppose I'll never find a true princess," he murmured. That night, a terrible storm blew in. The wind howled around the castle, rain lashed the windows, and thunder crashed so loudly that even the royal dogs hid under the table. Suddenly — KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK! — someone was at the great gate. The old king opened it, and there stood a girl, soaked from head to toe. Water dripped from her hair, ran down her face, and her shoes squelched with every step. "I... I'm a princess," she said softly, "and I've lost my way..." Then she sneezed loudly: "Achoo!" The king quickly called for the queen.

The queen, who was very clever, thought to herself, "We'll soon find out if she's a real princess!" Smiling kindly, she said, "Come in, my dear. You can warm up and get some rest." Then she ordered the servants to bring twenty soft mattresses and twenty thick blankets. But before they made the bed, the queen placed one tiny green pea right in the middle of it. When the bed was ready, the pile of mattresses and blankets was so high that the princess almost needed a ladder to climb up. "Goodness, it's like a mountain!" she laughed, and snuggled into the covers, tired from her long journey.

But that night, she could not sleep a wink. She tossed and turned, fluffed her pillow, stretched one leg out, then the other, but nothing helped. The next morning, the queen entered the room with a smile. "Well, my dear, how did you sleep?" she asked. The princess yawned and rubbed her eyes. "Terribly! I hardly slept at all. I think I was lying on something hard. Now I'm covered in bruises, and I'm so tired I could sleep for a week!"

At that moment, the king and queen knew the truth: Only a real princess could feel a tiny pea through so many mattresses and blankets! The prince, who had been secretly listening at the door, burst into the room and cried joyfully, "Hooray! You're a true princess! Will you marry me?" The princess laughed sleepily and said, "Yes, but let me take a little nap first!"

And so a grand celebration was held. The little pea was placed in a glass box and kept in the castle. And if no one has taken it away, you can still see it there today. Shining quietly beneath the glass.

Quelle: Nacherzählt von Kerstin Wehinger, IAI Veranstaltungs GmbH