

# The Princess and the Pea

by Nathan

Once upon a time, when dogs could talk and do cartwheels, there was a young prince from a respectable family in a German state who wanted to marry a princess. Though he traveled far and wide, from Jersey to the Japans, he could nowhere find exactly what he wanted. There were princesses in abundance, but it was always hard to tell if they were *real* princesses. And so it was that after the prince had returned home sorrowfully and had begun to think that he would never find a princess, there came a sharp knock on the stout, oaken, double doors of the city.

It was a dark and stormy night, and the wind blew up the walls, through the grimy, leaf-clogged gutters, and down the pipes while thunder rumbled like distant mortars. Lightning illuminated the soaked streets. Gas lamps, burning in the windows of houses, cast a glowing reflection on the puddles. The old King blew on his cold palms as he went to open the door, and as he did so, he saw a sight.

Before him stood a girl wearing a torn cloak, with water running in rivulets into the fronts of her boots and pouring out at the torn and tattered heels. The King scoffed at her claims to being a princess, though she insisted stubbornly that she was an authentic princess. The queen, who was very sly, thought to herself, “Well, we shall soon find whether this bundle of rags is a princess or just a plain vagabond.” So the queen stalked up to the guest bedroom (It was a very small castle) and soon had the bed clothes uponed and awayed. Next she placed a dried sweet-pea on the iron bed supports and swiftly donned them with an array of soft linens including 20 mattresses, 20 eider-down pillows, and twelve duck-down bolsters. Then she bustled back down to the hall to inform the ‘princess’ that her room was made up.

In the morning, the supposed princess came down to breakfast, and the queen inquired innocently if she had slept well. “Oh,” groaned the girl, “I am surprised I am alive, for it was as a boulder prodding me under the bolster. I have never had such a tedious night!” So it was from this they concluded such a sensitive lady must be a princess. So, the prince took her for his wife, and they lived happily ever after.