

# The Pea Blossom

by Hans Andersen

There were once five peas in one shell; they were green, and the shell was green, and so they believed that the whole world must be green also, which was a very natural conclusion.

The shell grew, and the peas grew; and as they grew they arranged themselves all in a row. The sun shone without and warmed the shell, and the rain made it clear and transparent; it looked mild and agreeable in broad daylight and dark at night, just as it should. And the peas, as they sat there, grew bigger and bigger, and more thoughtful as they mused, for they felt there must be something for them to do.

"Are we to sit here forever?" asked one. "Shall we not become hard, waiting here so long? It seems to me there must be something outside; I feel sure of it."

Weeks passed by; the peas became yellow, and the shell became yellow.

"All the world is turning yellow, I suppose," said they—and perhaps they were right.

Suddenly they felt a pull at the shell. It was torn off and held in human hands; then it was slipped into the pocket of a jacket, together with other full pods.

"Now we shall soon be let out," said one, and that was just what they all wanted.

"I should like to know which of us will travel farthest," said the smallest of the five; "and we shall soon see."

"What is to happen will happen," said the largest pea.

"Crack!" went the shell, and the five peas rolled out into the bright sunshine. There they lay in a child's hand. A little boy was holding them tightly. He said they were fine peas for his pea-shooter, and immediately he put one in and shot it out.

"Now I am flying out into the wide world," said the pea. "Catch me if you can." And he was gone in a moment.

"I intend to fly straight to the sun," said the second. "That is a shell that will suit me exactly, for it lets itself be seen." And away he went.

"We will go to sleep wherever we find ourselves," said the next two; "we shall still be rolling onwards." And they did fall to the floor and roll about, but they got into the pea-shooter for all that. "We will go farthest of any," said they.

"What is to happen will happen," exclaimed the last one, as he was shot out of the pea-shooter. Up he flew against an old board under a garret window and fell into a little crevice which was almost filled with moss and soft earth. The moss closed itself about him, and there he lay—a captive indeed, but not unnoticed by God.

"What is to happen will happen," said he to himself.

Within the little garret lived a poor woman, who went out to clean stoves, chop wood into small pieces, and do other hard work, for she was both strong and industrious. Yet she remained always poor, and at home in the garret lay her only daughter, not quite grown up and very delicate and weak. For a whole year she had kept her bed, and it seemed as if she could neither die nor get well.

"She is going to her little sister," said the woman. "I had only the two children, and it was not an easy thing to support them; but the good God provided for one of them by taking her home to himself. The other was left to me, but I suppose they are not to be separated, and my sick girl will soon go to her sister in heaven."

All day long the sick girl lay quietly and patiently, while her mother went out to earn money.

Spring came, and early one morning the sun shone through the little window and threw his rays mildly and pleasantly over the floor of the room. Just as the mother was going to her work, the sick girl fixed her gaze on the lowest pane of the window. "Mother," she exclaimed, "what can that little green thing be that peeps in at the window? It is moving in the wind."

The mother stepped to the window and half opened it. "Oh!" she said, "there is actually a little pea that has taken root and is putting out its green leaves. How could it have got into this crack? Well, now, here is a little garden for you to amuse yourself with." So the bed of the sick girl was drawn nearer to the window, that she might see the budding plant; and the mother went forth to her work.

"Mother, I believe I shall get well," said the sick child in the evening. "The sun has shone in here so bright and warm to-day, and the little pea is growing so fast, that I feel better, too, and think I shall get up and go out into the warm sunshine again."

"God grant it!" said the mother, but she did not believe it would be so. She took a little stick and propped up the green plant which had given her daughter such pleasure, so that it might not be broken by the winds. She tied the piece of string to the window-sill and to the upper part of the frame, so that the pea tendrils might have something to twine round. And the plant shot up so fast that one could almost see it grow from day to day.

"A flower is really coming," said the mother one morning. At last she was beginning to let herself hope that her little sick daughter might indeed recover. She remembered that for some time the child had spoken more cheerfully, and that during the last few days she had raised herself in bed in the morning to look with sparkling eyes at her little garden which contained but a single pea plant.

A week later the invalid sat up by the open window a whole hour, feeling quite happy in the warm sunshine, while outside grew the little plant, and on it a pink pea blossom in full bloom. The little maiden bent down and gently kissed the delicate leaves. This day was like a festival to her.

"Our heavenly Father himself has planted that pea and made it grow and flourish, to bring joy to you and hope to me, my blessed child," said the happy mother, and she smiled at the flower as if it had been an angel from God.

But what became of the other peas? Why, the one who flew out into the wide world and said, "Catch me if you can," fell into a gutter on the roof of a house and ended his travels in the crop of a pigeon.

The two lazy ones were carried quite as far and were of some use, for they also were eaten by pigeons; but the fourth, who wanted to reach the sun, fell into a sink and lay there in the dirty water for days and weeks, till he had swelled to a great size.

"I am getting beautifully fat," said the pea; "I expect I shall burst at last; no pea could do more than that, I think. I am the most remarkable of all the five that were in the shell." And the sink agreed with the pea.

But the young girl, with sparkling eyes and the rosy hue of health upon her cheeks, stood at the open garret window and, folding her thin hands over the pea blossom, thanked God for what He had done.

# The Real Princess

by Hans Andersen

There was once a prince who wanted to marry a princess. But she must be a real princess, mind you. So he traveled all round the world, seeking such a one, but everywhere something was in the way. Not that there was any lack of princesses, but he could not seem to make out whether they were real princesses; there was always something not quite satisfactory. Therefore, home he came again, quite out of spirits, for he wished so much to marry a real princess.

One evening a terrible storm came on. It thundered and lightened, and the rain poured down; indeed, it was quite fearful. In the midst of it there came a knock at the town gate, and the old king went out to open it.

It was a princess who stood outside. But O dear, what a state she was in from the rain and[334] bad weather! The water dropped from her hair and clothes, it ran in at the tips of her shoes and out at the heels; yet she insisted she was a real princess.

"Very well," thought the old queen; "that we shall presently see." She said nothing, but went into the bedchamber and took off all the bedding, then laid a pea on the sacking of the bedstead. Having done this, she took twenty mattresses and laid them upon the pea and placed twenty eider-down beds on top of the mattresses.

The princess lay upon this bed all the night. In the morning she was asked how she had slept.

"Oh, most miserably!" she said. "I scarcely closed my eyes the whole night through. I cannot think what there could have been in the bed. I lay upon something so hard that I am quite black and blue all over. It is dreadful!"

It was now quite evident that she was a real princess, since through twenty mattresses and twenty eider-down beds she had felt the pea. None but a real princess could have such delicate feeling.[335]

So the prince took her for his wife, for he knew that in her he had found a true princess. And the pea was preserved in the cabinet of curiosities, where it is still to be seen unless some one has stolen it.

And this, mind you, is a real story.

Source:

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