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opening extract from

The Barefoot Book of Princesses

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The Barefoot Book of PRINCESSES



retold by Caitlín Matthews
illustrated by Olwyn Whelan

Barefoot Books
Celebrating Art and Story



The Princess and the Pea

DANISH

Once upon a time, there was a prince who wanted to marry a princess. Not just *any* princess, but a *real* princess. His parents, the kind King and Queen, looked far and wide for one. They invited princess after princess to come and visit them.

Some were too thin,
some were too fat,
some did not speak the same language,
some had too many dogs,
some liked horses better than people,
some wore very silly clothes,
some giggled too much,
and some princesses were altogether too beautiful.

Although they each had a king and queen for a father and mother, not one princess was quite to his taste, not one of them was a *real* princess.

One dark night, while a storm crashed and clattered over the kingdom, there was a knock at the castle door. The King himself went down to see who it was.



It was a very wet princess. She was so wet that it was difficult to see where her hair stopped and the rain began.

'Who are you?' shouted the King, over the thunderclaps.

'I am a real princess,' shouted the wet princess as the lightning ripped the dark clouds apart.

The prince was asleep upstairs, but he woke up when he heard the Princess's voice in the hall below.

The Queen peered around the door, thinking to herself, 'Ah ha! A *real* princess, eh? We'll soon see about that!'





Then out loud the queen said, 'Come in! Whoever you are, you can't stay outside in this weather. You shall sleep here tonight.'

The wet princess curtsied to the King and Queen and came inside, dripping puddles on the hall floor. The Prince looked over the stair-rail at the Princess.

She wasn't too thin,
she wasn't too fat,
she seemed to speak his
language,
she had no dogs or horses,
she didn't wear silly
clothes or giggle,
and she was not too
beautiful.

He hoped in his secret heart that she was a real princess.



The Queen went upstairs to make up the guest bedroom herself. She took all the bedclothes off the bed and, on the bare wooden slats, she placed a single pea.

Then she went to the cupboard and brought out twenty mattresses filled with the softest, downiest feathers in the whole kingdom. On top of the mattresses she put twenty embroidered silk quilts.

'Come in, my dear,' said the Queen to the wet princess. 'I'll send up some supper and some dry clothes and you can sleep here tonight.'

The wet princess dried herself in front of the great fireplace and put on a sweetly scented nightdress and ate her supper. She had come a very long way in the rain and she was very sleepy.