

# A REALLY-TRULY princess

## A Really-Truly Princess, Chapter One

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A REALLY-TRULY PRINCESS



## CHAPTER

# one

ROSELLEN'S GODMOTHER sent her a book for her birthday.

Sometimes when Rosellen got a book as a gift, she said “thank you” very politely, put it away on a high shelf, and then forgot all about it.

But *this* book was not the sort of book to be put away and forgotten. It had a heavy cover with golden corners and a little golden lock, thick pages with golden edges, and the most wonderful pictures on almost every page. The title was written in elegant golden letters: *Tales of True Princesses: Stories for the Entertainment & Instruction of Young Princesses Everywhere.*

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“Do you think,” said Rosellen’s mother, “that Rosellen should have such a very expensive book? She might ruin it—or lose it—or get strange ideas from the stories.”

“Don’t worry,” Rosellen’s father replied. “I suspect that a gift from her Godmother can’t be easily ruined or lost. As for getting ideas—well, her Godmother could have given her many more troublesome gifts. I think, all things considered, we got off rather easily.”

Rosellen loved the book. She thought it was a gift fit for a Princess. And since Rosellen’s father and mother were the King and Queen, and her older

brothers—there were two of them, named Fredrick and Alfred—were Princes, she *was* a Princess.

Even so, Rosellen was only allowed to wear her crown on Birthdays and State Occasions. Between times, it was wrapped up in paper and put away on a high shelf until the next Occasion. Her King-Papa and Queen-Mama always wore their crowns. “That way people know to call us Your Majesty,” her King-Papa explained.

“I wonder,” Rosellen said to herself on her birthday night, “am I only really, *truly* a Princess on Birthdays and State Occasions, when I wear my crown? I wonder how you tell, without a crown, if someone really *is* a Princess or if they are actually *not* a Princess. I shall ask Nurse about it tomorrow.”

Rosellen found Nurse in the laundry room, sorting piles of clothes for the laundry maid. She had just gotten to Fredrick and Alfred’s velvet trousers. The velvety part was all rubbed off the knees, because the Princes had accidentally worn them tree-climbing in the orchard.

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“Nurse,” said Rosellen, “How do you tell when someone is a really-truly Princess?”

Nurse looked up from the ruined trousers. “I don’t know how *some* people tell,” Nurse said, “but how *I* tell is to ask myself, does she *act* like a really-truly Princess? Is she good and polite and clean and neat—” she picked up one of Rosellen’s velvet dresses, with the velvety part all rubbed off the elbows, “—or does she wear her best clothes to climb trees?”

“Oh,” said Rosellen, and hurried outside.



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In the rose garden she came upon the Head Gardener, who was trimming rose bushes with a pair of long clippers.

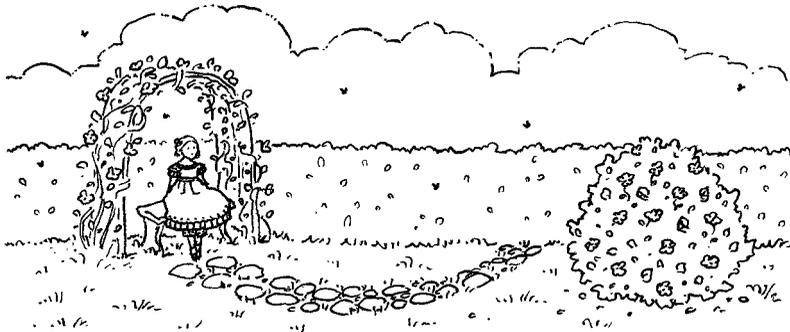
“Gardener,” Rosellen said, “How can you tell when someone is a really-truly Princess?”

“I expect it’s easiest to tell by the parents,” the Head Gardener replied. “If your parents are Kings and Queens, of course you’re a Princess, whether

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you want to be or not.” He paused and trimmed a few more twigs with his clippers. “It’s rather like green beans that way,” he said. “If green beans are what you plant, green beans are what you get, and you’ll never get summer squash, no matter how long you let them grow.”

“I see,” said Rosellen, though she didn’t, exactly. Then, remembering what Nurse had said about politeness, she added, “Thank you, Gardener.”



Rosellen sat beneath her favorite rose arbor, where the shade was filled with the smell of roses and the buzzing of bees visiting the blossoms.

Here was a puzzle! she thought. If Nurse was right, she was only a really-truly Princess when she

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behaved. If the Head Gardener was right, she was always and forever a really-truly Princess no matter what. She thought and *thought* until her head began to ache from so much thinking, but still she did not know if Nurse was right or if the Head Gardener was right. She decided to go inside and read the new book from her Godmother instead.

The first tale in the book was

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*ONCE UPON A TIME, there was a Princess who stood all alone at the gate of a strange castle. How she became separated from her companions we do not know, but this is why a Princess must always remember to stick close to others when she is traveling.*

*It was a wet, stormy evening. As the Princess stood at the gate, knocking and knocking, she got quite thoroughly soaked.*

*At last the gate opened, and the Princess said to the gatekeeper, "Oh, kind sir, please let me in out of the rain—I am a poor lost Princess, and so cold and wet and miserable!"*

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*The Queen of the castle was delighted to hear that a Princess had arrived, and ordered the second-best guest room to be prepared. Not only that, but the Queen herself went to make sure the maid had properly aired all twenty-seven of the guest room's feather mattresses.*

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Now, this *Queen* had decided that her son—who was a *Prince*, of course—must marry a true *Princess*. As everyone knows, a true *Princess* is very sensitive and notices things that other people might not. The *Queen* slipped one tiny pea beneath the bottom mattress.

“If this *Princess* is a true *Princess*,” the *Queen* said, “I know she will be good at noticing everything—even something as small as a single pea!”



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*The Queen spent a sleepless night, tossing and turning and wondering if the Princess had noticed the pea beneath the twenty-seven feather mattresses. As soon as the Princess came downstairs next morning the Queen asked, “How did you sleep?”*



*“Alas!” cried the poor Princess in great misery and distress, “I slept very, very badly—not even a wink!” And the Queen, looking at her, was quite sure she was telling the truth.*

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*“I hope you weren’t kept awake worrying about your lost companions,” the Queen said. “They will most likely turn up in a month or two.”*

*“I wasn’t worried about that,” the Princess replied.*

*“Then whatever could have kept you awake?” asked the Queen. “Was it headache?—sore feet?—that shocking cold you’ve caught from standing outside in the rain?”*

*“Oh, no,” the Princess sniffled—for in fact she had caught a shocking cold. “None of that troubled me at all. What kept me awake was the horrible lumpy-bumpiness of the mattress! I could have slept as well in a field full of stones—I am sure I am black-and-blue all over!”*

*“Excellent!” exclaimed the Queen, which would have seemed unfeeling in a hostess, if she had not explained right away about the pea and the test to find out if the Princess was a true Princess or not.*

*“Now that I know you are a true Princess, my dear, will you marry my son?” the Queen asked.*

*“Most certainly, if I like him and he likes me,” the Princess replied.*

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*Which, fortunately, they did.*

*So the Prince and Princess were married, and the Queen never tired of telling how she discovered a true Princess with the help of a tiny pea—though some people say it is more likely that the maid forgot to air the top mattress and the feathers were lumpy.*

*Whatever the case, they all lived happily ever after.*

*THE END*

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Rosellen closed the book. She was not sure if she was good at noticing things—when she tidied her bedroom Nurse always noticed a great many more things to tidy than Rosellen did—so this test seemed like an excellent way to discover if she was really and truly a Princess or not.

Rosellen ran out to the vegetable garden and searched the entire pea patch for the plumpest, greenest pea pod she could see. Then she ran back to her bedroom and put a single pea under the mattress, right in the exact center of the bed where she would be certain to feel it. She carefully noticed how many peas were left in the pod—five—and



then popped them all into her mouth at once.

As she ate supper, Rosellen practiced noticing things. First she noticed how one candle had burnt down so it was much shorter than all the others. Then she noticed that there were many, many crumbs scattered on the table around Alfred's plate. Finally, she noticed that her jammy knife left a smudge on the white tablecloth that was exactly the color of ripe strawberries.

As soon as supper was over, Rosellen said, "Nurse, may I go to bed?"

"Already?" Nurse asked. She put her hand on Rosellen's forehead. "Are you feeling quite well?"

"Yes," said Rosellen, "only I noticed that I yawned three times during supper, so I should like to go to bed early."

"Well, come along, then," Nurse said. "*I won't stop you!*"

When Rosellen got into bed she was very disappointed at first because she could not feel the pea under her mattress—not even the tiniest bump! But, she thought, maybe the Princess in the story

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couldn't tell it was there right away, either. By morning I'm sure I will feel it.



Rosellen woke at sunrise. First she bent her arms to see if they ached, but they didn't. Next she kicked her legs to see if they were sore, but they weren't. Then she stretched her back to see if it hurt, but it didn't—in fact, she felt very well-rested and not sore anywhere!

The Princess in the story had a look of great misery and distress on her face when she woke up. Rosellen ran to the mirror to look at her reflection, but she looked just the same as she always did first thing

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in the morning. She stood in front of the mirror and practiced making faces of misery and distress until Nurse came in behind her and said, "Gracious, child, do you have a toothache?"

"No," Rosellen answered hastily, because having a toothache meant

drinking a mug of ginger root tea with no honey in it.

After breakfast Rosellen went into the garden. Perhaps I really am *not* a Princess, after all! she thought. But then, it could be that Princesses get more sensitive as they get older, and I am just not old enough yet to notice something so small as a pea. I shall have find something larger.

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Rosellen thought about all the different kinds of vegetables growing in the garden. A potato, she decided at last, is definitely larger than a pea.

Rosellen knew where the potato plants were, because the week before she and Fredrick and Alfred had spent an afternoon with Thomas, the youngest under-gardener, and helped him pick striped beetles off the potato leaves.

She scratched her hands in the dirt under a potato plant until she found a smooth, round potato. She put it in her pinafore pocket and brushed off the front of her pinafore skirt, which she noticed had gotten rather dirty from scuffling about on her knees. Then she skipped back to the palace.



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On the way to her bedroom, Rosellen noticed the interesting way that her damp footprints got lighter and lighter as she went up the stairs. Nurse was waiting for her at the top.

“Don’t you see you’re leaving mud behind you on all the stairs?” Nurse said.

“Of course I do!” Rosellen said indignantly. “A Princess notices *everything!*”

“Well, then, I expect you can notice the broom closet and sweep it up,” Nurse said.

Rosellen swept all the stairs and put the potato under her mattress. Then she wandered through the kitchen, noticing things, until Cook sent her away.

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When Rosellen got into bed that night, she said to herself, “*Now* I certainly feel a lump under my mattress!” She wriggled her feet beneath the covers. “I think it will keep me awake...at least...it *might* keep me awake...for a little while...”

But when morning arrived, Rosellen hadn’t even opened an eyelid until Nurse came in to wake her. It was terribly disappointing.

After breakfast Rosellen went out to the vegetable garden once more to search for something larger than a pea and larger than a potato. It began to rain, so she ran to the glass greenhouse standing in the middle of the vegetable garden.

Inside the greenhouse it was warm and smelled of damp earth and blooming flowers and all sorts of growing things. And there, on the path almost at her feet, lay a large, round, green-skinned melon. It was perfect! Rosellen broke the melon off its vine and rolled it up in her pinafore skirt to carry it to her bedroom when the rain stopped.

The melon made quite a large lump under her mattress. Rosellen knew that Nurse always wanted

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the bed to be smooth and neat, and would almost certainly notice if there was a large lumpy-bumpy spot in the middle of the bed. Rosellen decided to keep the melon under the bed until evening.

She had just finished rolling the melon under the bed and smoothing the covers straight again as Nurse came into the room.

“What are you doing in here?” Nurse asked.

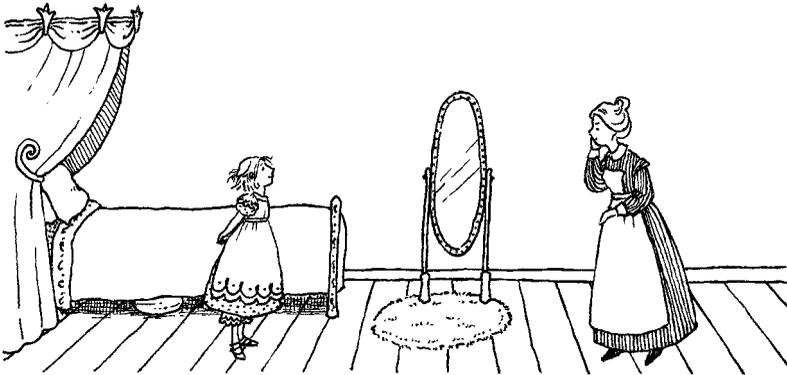
## THE PRINCESS AND THE PEA

“Just noticing how smooth my bed is,” Rosellen replied. She looked at Nurse carefully. “Did you know that your hair is more fluffed up on one side than the other?”

“Don’t be impertinent!” Nurse said, but she patted down her hair.

“I wasn’t being impertinent,” Rosellen explained, “I just noticed it, because I’m a Princess.”

“Perhaps, Princess, you should go to the mirror and notice your *own* hair,” Nurse said.



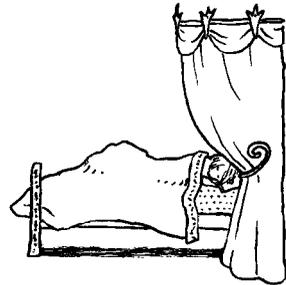
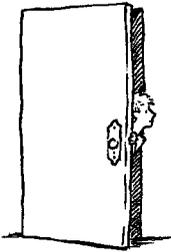
That night after Nurse turned out the lights and closed the door, Rosellen hopped out of bed and rolled the melon from its hiding place. She pushed

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it beneath the mattress and got back under the covers.

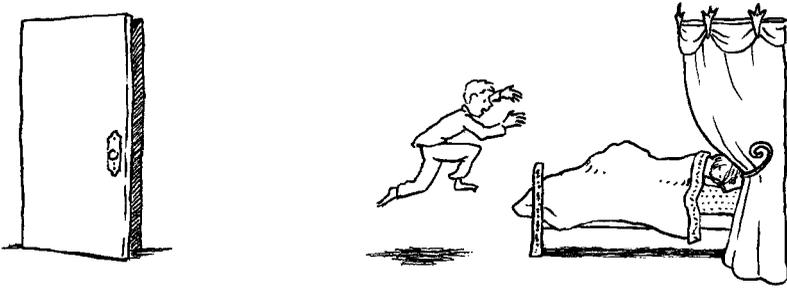
“Oh, yes!” she said, propping her feet up on the mattress-covered, melon-shaped lump. “This will certainly keep me awake!” She yawned, and looked forward to a long, sleepless night, just like the true Princess from the story.

And yet, when the door creaked softly open a half-hour later, Rosellen was already fast asleep.



All week Alfred had practiced a truly ferocious and horrible dragon-yell in the apple orchard, and at last it was perfect. He crept silently through Rosellen’s door and across the bedroom floor, then he leaped a giant leap onto the end of the bed, yelling his ferocious yell.

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Rosellen woke with a start—Alfred had landed on her feet, which didn't feel very nice—and he had also landed on the melon-lump, which was smashed flat! In the moonlight she could see pieces of rind and trickles of juice coming from beneath the mattress.

“Oh!” she shrieked, “You've broken it—you've broken it!”

“What? Broken what?” Alfred asked, jumping off the bed. He stepped on a slippery piece of melon rind and fell to the floor with a slide and a thump just as Nurse and the King and Queen rushed into the room.

“What was that horrible noise?” Nurse demanded.

“Are you hurt, my dears?” cried their Queen-Mama.

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“Why are there melon pieces under the bed?” asked their King-Papa.

Rosellen rubbed her feet where Alfred had jumped on them, and Alfred rubbed his head where it had bumped the floor.

“I wanted to find out if I was a really-truly Princess,” Rosellen wailed, “but the pea was too small to notice and the potato was too small to notice so I thought a melon would work, but he smashed it, and now I’ll never, ever know for sure!”

At exactly the same time Alfred said, “I was just going to show her my dragon-yell, but she yelled at *me* and I slipped on the floor and knocked my head!”

There was a confused pause.

“Speak more slowly,” said their King-Papa, “and only one at a time, please!”

At last everyone had the story straight. Nurse put new sheets on Rosellen’s bed, and Alfred was sent to his room in disgrace.

“Let this be a lesson to you not to frighten your sister,” Nurse called after him.

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“My dear,” her Queen-Mama said, “*why* did you think putting a melon under the mattress would tell you if you are really a Princess?”

“How else can I tell?” Rosellen sniffled.

“I can tell you’re a Princess,” said her King-Papa. “I can tell right away, because you’re *my* Princess.” He gave her a kiss, and her Queen-Mama gave her a kiss, and then they tucked her back into bed.

“How *I* tell if someone is a really-truly Princess,” said Nurse as she shut the door, “is, when morning comes, I look to see if the person who brought a melon inside has noticed the mess on the floor and cleaned it all up so it isn’t even a little bit sticky.”

“Oh,” said Rosellen. This sounded like a test she could pass.

And she did.

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