

Peas and Love by Roshni Beeharry

Why me? Shelled and popped from my cosy chamber some time ago, the Queen's cook holds me aloft in her podgy fingers, pinching my sides hard - ouch! She peers approvingly at me, the cataracts glinting in her eyes, as if she means business. I know what is in store as I hear the Queen sweep past summoning the cook to follow, as this is not the first time my hard little body has been put to use.

The Queen insists on placing me under the mattresses herself as usual. "There, this will tell us if she is really a Princess or not," she wheezes, as the dust rises from the first mattress.

I just want to slip from her fingers and roll under the table and be anonymous, not be squashed under a hundred mattresses for some lump of a girl to lie on. The last one snored like a warthog and never felt me so was thrown out as an imposter.

Oh dear, there goes the daylight, wonder if I will ever see it again... thud goes another mattress, then another and another. How on earth can anyone feel me under all that? It's a good thing peas don't have lungs or I'd have suffocated by now.

Surely there are better ways to screen a daughter-in-law? Well I guess I need to wait for the next poor sap to be led to the bedchamber.

Ah here she comes; she's a bit heavy footed, I can hear her coming even under all these mattresses! They put a rather rickety ladder against the bed for her to climb up. One turn in the bed and she'll end up like poor old Humpty Dumpty cracked and broken on the floor. Wouldn't look good for the Family though so I guess they've made sure she won't fall out. If she had any sense she would scarper now.

My word, she wriggles like anything, and she's quite a heavy lass so I'm really feeling it. But I guess her skin is so delicate, her flesh so pure that she can feel me which means she is a real princess. Or else the bed bugs have got to her..

I listen to her toss and curse for a while - she has a foul mouth on her this girl, can she really be royalty? No accounting for upbringing. Well I won't tell - peas don't have mouths only eyes and ears!

What's she up to now? Ooh, she's leapt off the bed so heavily that the floorboards are shaking; she'll wake up the whole household at this rate. I wish I could see what she's up to but it's just smothering blackness in here. Oh how I wish morning would come!

What's that noise? She's snoring; she must have fallen asleep in the armchair... wow, the Prince is really going to be lumbered with this one!

All this thinking is making me sleepy. Guess I will find out in the morning.

Oh where am I, it's all dark? Oh yes, under the mattress, there's a lot of commotion out there but the voices are muffled under here. At last all these awful mattresses are coming off.

"I couldn't sleep a wink, your Highness, I felt as if something was digging into me," the heavy girl says and now I can see that she is indeed, how shall I put it... corpulent. The Queen sweeps me up affectionately and shows me to the Princess: "This is what kept you awake all night my dear; you really are a true Princess!"

The Princess frowns at me rubbing her ample bottom. Wonder if the Prince knows what he's letting himself in for - a rather plain, snoring, fidgety girl with a weight problem, but hey, he made his bed... with several mattresses. Ha-ha, sorry, couldn't resist that little quip.

Well, it's nice to be of some use. What would I be doing otherwise? Boiled up in the kitchen for lunch or gathering dust under a cupboard somewhere. No this is quite a nice life, I have pride of place on the mantelpiece on my own little velvet cushion for the entire Household to see. Maybe the odd ballad or two will be written telling about my discerning nature...