



Once upon a time, in a land far, far away, there was a beautiful young girl who had become lost while traveling. As the sun set and the moon rose, she happened upon a splendid castle. After knocking on the massive doors and being brought inside, she found out that this was the castle of the king of the country she had been passing through. The king came to see the visitor. After exchanging greetings, the girl claimed to be a princess of a neighboring country and asked for royal treatment. The king sought the advice of his trusted counselors, who suggested putting her to a test. As it was very late at night and the girl was tired, they prepared a bedroom for the girl that would reveal the validity of her claim to

royalty. Unbeknownst to the girl, they placed a pea under a mattress and then put 9 more mattresses on top. The young girl was then helped to the top of the mattresses and wished pleasant dreams. When the sun came up, the counselors came to the room and asked her how she slept. The girl said that she hadn't slept at all and that she had felt an annoying irritation that kept her awake all through the night. This was the proof the counselors had been looking for, because only a royal being could be sensitive enough to be aware of a pea under ten mattresses. The king was elated and offered the princess his son's hand in marriage and thus the kingdom. The princess found the prince the most wonderful, handsome, wise man in the world and quickly accepted. They married and lived happily ever after.

This story can probably be told much more eloquently, but now is the time for understanding, not merely for storytelling. There is a great amount of spiritual knowledge that we can learn from this story. In fact, it has the potential to change our lives for the better so that we too will live happily ever after...

The princess represents anyone who is lost and out of touch with their spiritual nature. Her journey is her quest for *enlightenment*. The castle and the country are the kingdom of heaven within. It is necessary to stay awake to pass the test that will cause you to gain the King's approval, marry into the royal family and share in control of the infinite, eternal kingdom. The night represents the time of ignorance of knowing our true royal identity. There are many more analogies to be drawn from the tale but the one to now focus in on is the one that will help us stay awake. It was a minor annoyance that kept the princess awake all through the night, until the sun, representing the truth, came up. For us, it is right now even if the physical sun is out. We are in darkness, unaware of our true nature and must find a way to stay awake. The clue is the pea. It wasn't necessary to use a bed of nails, or any other severe austerity to make the princess stay awake. So all we must do is find a pea to put under our mattress.

