

Five Peas from a Pod

Hans Christian Andersen

There were five peas in one pod; the peas were green and the pod was green, and so they believed that the whole world was green-and that was absolutely right! The pod grew and the peas grew; they adjusted themselves to their surroundings, sitting straight in a row. The sun shone outside and warmed the pod; the rain made it clear and clean. It was nice and cozy inside, bright in the daytime and dark at night, just as it should be; and the peas became larger, and more and more thoughtful, as they sat there, for surely there was something they must do.

"Shall I always remain sitting here?" said one. "If only I don't become hard from sitting so long. It seems to me there must be something outside; I have a feeling about it."

And weeks went by; the peas became yellow, and the pod became yellow. "The whole world's becoming yellow," they said, and that they had a right to say.

Then they felt a jerk at the pod. It was torn off, came into human hands, and then was put down into the pocket of a jacket, along with other full pods.

"Now it will soon be opened up!" they said, and they waited for that.

"Now I'd like to know which of us will get the farthest," said the smallest pea. "Yes, now we'll soon find that out."

"Let happen what may!" said the biggest.

"Crack!" the pod burst open, and all five peas rolled out into the bright sunshine. They were lying in a child's hand; a little boy held them, and said that they were suitable peas for his peashooter, and immediately one was put in and shot out.

"Now I'm flying out into the wide world! Catch me if you can!" And then it was gone.

"I'm going to fly right into the sun!" said the second. "That's a perfect pod, and very well suited to me!" Away it went.

"We'll go to sleep wherever we come to," said two of the others, "but we'll roll on, anyway." And they rolled about on the ground before being put into the shooter, but they went into it all the same.

"We'll go the farthest!"

"Let happen what may!" said the last one as it was shot into the air. And it flew up against the old board under the garret window, right into a crack, where there was moss and soft soil; and the moss closed around the pea. There it lay hidden, but not forgotten by our Lord.

"Let happen what may!" it said.

Inside the little garret lived a poor woman who went out by the day to polish stoves; yes, even chop up wood and do other hard work, for she had strength and she was industrious; but still she remained poor. And at home in the little room lay her half-grown, only daughter, who was so very frail and thin. For a whole year the girl had been bed-ridden, and it seemed as if she could neither neither neither neither neither live nor die.

"She will go to her little sister," the woman said. "I had the two children, and it was hard for me to care for both, but then our Lord divided with me and took the one home to Himself. I want to keep the one I have left, but probably He doesn't want them to be separated, and she will go up to her little sister."

But the sick girl stayed; she lay patient and quiet the day long, while her mother went out to earn money.

It was springtime, and early one morning, just as the mother was about to go to work; the sun shone beautifully through the little window, across the floor. The sick girl looked over at the lowest windowpane.

"What is that green thing that's peeping in the window? It's moving in the wind."

And the mother went over to the window and opened it a little. "Why," she said, "it is a little pea that has sprouted out here with green leaves! How did it ever get here in the crack? You now have a little garden to look at!"

And the sick girl's bed was moved closer to the window, where she could see the growing pea vine, and the mother went to her work.

"Mother, I think I am going to get well!" said the little girl in the evening.

"The sun today shone so warmly in on me. The little pea is prospering so well, and I will also prosper and get up and out into the sunshine!"

"Oh, I hope so!" said the mother, but she didn't believe it would happen; yet she was careful to strengthen with a little stick the green plant that had given her daughter such happy thoughts about life, so that it wouldn't be broken by the wind. She tied a piece of string to the window sill and to the upper part of the frame, so that the vine could have something to wind around as it shot up. And this it did. You could see every day that it was growing.

"Look, it has a blossom!" said the woman one morning; and now she had not only the hope, but also the belief, that the little sick girl would get well. She recalled that lately the child had talked more cheerfully and that the last few mornings she had risen up in bed by herself and had sat there and looked with sparkling eyes at the little pea garden with its one single plant. The following week the sick child for the first time sat up for over an hour. Joyous, she sat there in the warm sunshine; the window was opened, and outside stood a fully blown pink pea blossom. The little girl bent her head down and gently kissed the delicate leaves. This was just like a festival day.

"Our Lord Himself planted the pea, and made it thrive, to bring hope and joy to you, my blessed child, and to me, too!" said the happy mother, and smiled at the flower, as if to a good angel from God.

But now the other peas! Well, the one that flew out into the wide world crying, "Catch me if you can!" fell into the gutter of the roof and landed in a pigeon's crop, where it lay like Jonah in the whale. The two lazy ones got just that far, for they also were eaten by pigeons, and that's being of real use. But the fourth pea, who wanted to shoot up to the sun, fell into a gutter and lay for days and weeks in the dirty water, where it swelled up amazingly.

"I'm becoming so beautifully fat!" said the pea. "I'm going to burst, and I don't think any pea can, or ever did, go farther than that. I am the most remarkable of the five from that pod!"

And the gutter agreed with it.

But at the garret window stood the young girl with sparkling eyes and the rosy hue of health on her cheeks, and she folded her delicate hands over the pea blossom and thanked our Lord for it.

"I still stand up for my pea!" said the gutter.