

Twenty-Seven Mattresses

A fairytale, reinvented

by Cat Devonshire

Of course I wasn't a virgin. *That* was the first lie I told - that, and the one about my father being king. They should have seen it coming, really. Beauty *and* brains both at once - I mean, most *real* princesses are kinda dumb, and the lack of genetic diversity has managed to breed in many of them a kind of horsey, gormless look, which, though not actually *ugly*, is hardly the stuff of fairytale.

And that's what I'm selling. Fairytale. The one thing everybody wants, from the dumbest of plain-vanilla princes to the most exotic of wicked witches. And though, personally, if given the choice, I'd take an adequate gene pool over royal blood any time, it was no good in a scam like this, where the guy wasn't a freak (so many are) and his parents were both fabulously wealthy *and* borderline psychopathic about good breeding.

I've scammed some people in my time. We scammed them together, Wolfie and I - Wolfie, my bed-mate and partner in crime. He ran the one with the fake glass slipper, though the one with the golden goose was mine. But the best of all our scams was the last, the one with the princess and the pea.

Dammit. I missed Wolfie. I missed his hands, which were larger than most but could play you like an accordion without ever missing a single one of those little buttons; and those eyes that could leave scorch marks on the bedroom wallpaper; and his smile, which was mostly big-bad-wolf with just a trace of little-boy-lost . . . Not to

mention the rest of him, which was little short of spectacular. But given that the last time we'd exchanged words I'd just scammed him out of the proceeds of a rat evacuation in Hamelin and left him doing time while I made off with the earnings, I wasn't expecting a happy reunion any time soon. He'd promised me from his prison cell that if we ever met again he'd take his riding crop to my arse. But talk's cheap, I figured (besides, he knew I'd enjoy it too much). Meanwhile, there was money to be made - most particularly among the sons of rich parents who had made their fortune in commerce and badly needed a princess bride . . .

The deal was this: spend the weekend at their place, and let the family check me out. If his folks were satisfied that I was the real deal and not one of the many fake 'princesses' doing the rounds, then the final decision would go to the son. False modesty aside, I wasn't expecting any resistance there. An hour alone with the guy would do it; it was the parents who would need convincing. Still, I was pretty confident.

I was posing as foreign royalty from a conveniently distant land, with a lively retinue to support my act - footmen, a maid, a trumpeter; not to mention the voice coach, the dresser and the dancing-master; plus fans, shoes, gowns and jewellery for all occasions. You can guess it cost me a fair bit. But it was worth the investment.

The mark was an only son, recently returned from the wars: good-looking, clever by all accounts, and loaded with the good stuff. My plan was simple. I'd done it before. The first step is to seduce the guy, then to win his parents' approval. After that, it's in the bag; I get him to sign a prenup in my favour then, as soon as the wedding's over, I'm off into the sunset with my share of the dough before you can say 'happily ever after'.

Like I said, I'd done it before. I wasn't expecting difficulties. So you can imagine how surprised I was to arrive at my destination to find out that Wolfie had got there before me, running the Prodigal Son scam, no less - long-lost heir returns - and was sitting there between his proud old parents, dressed to the nines, watching me with those blowtorch eyes and fingering

his riding crop. The whole bottom half of me melted like ice cream right there and then.

‘So pleased to meet you, Your Highness,’ he says.

Well, I should have backed out, of course. Packed up my things and just got out. But I was curious, wasn't I? It looked like Wolfie had a new scam going, and I wanted in on it. And I was cocky enough to think that I could make him come round; he'd always been a sucker for me, and from that hungry look on his face I could almost believe he still was.

So I played along. Who wouldn't have done? I'd spent my last cent on setting this up, and I badly needed a return on my investment. So, when Wolfie didn't throw me out, I thought: Hello, let's see what gives, and exerted every inch of my charm to make sure that both he and the would-be parents-in-law were gobsmacked, bedazzled and captivated.

It wasn't difficult. Like I said, bountiful nature has been more than generous. A small waist, a decent rack and a more-than-adequate derrière can take a girl a long way and, properly showcased with a dazzling smile and vivacious manner (helped by an occasional glimpse of silk stocking from beneath an embroidered petticoat), will usually obtain a result.

Oh, he was good – Wolfie, now playing the attentive son, respectful and affectionate. We played them both like violins and, boy, it was good to work with him again. We had that rapport. We always had. Better still, he needed me. He'd managed to pass himself off as their son, but the parents weren't completely stupid, his fortune was tied up in a trust, and he couldn't touch a cent of it until he was safely married. Which was where I came in, of course. He needed me – I needed him. I tell you. It was beautiful.

I found out the next part later that night, when they showed me into the bedroom. A bedroom the size of a ballroom, with a marble floor and silver drapes and a clawfooted bath the size of a ship – all a bit nouveau riche, of course, but pretty impressive nevertheless, with mirrors on the ceiling and angels on the floor and chandeliers all dripping with crystal and a whole

gallery of family portraits staring down with palpable disapproval onto the canopy of the largest four-poster bed you could ever imagine.

Oh, boy. That bed. I'd never seen anything like it before. Draped with muslin and silken brocade; sheets of the finest, whitest linen; all garlands and gilding and burnished wood and scented with hyacinth and patchouli. And the mattresses. Twenty-seven mattresses, reaching halfway up to the ceiling – goose-down and silk and dandelion fluff, all piled up on that fabulous bed . . .

'I trust you'll be comfortable, Your Highness.' That was Wolfie, the look in his eyes warning me not to comment. As if I would. I knew the score. I knew he was planning to visit me later – that bed was irresistible and I'd been thinking how nice it would be if Wolfie and I got together to celebrate our reunion in style.

'I'm sure I'll sleep like an angel,' I said, looking straight into his eyes. I ordered an ice bucket of champagne, then dismissed the maid (making sure he heard), kissed the dear old parents, gave Wolfie one of my sweetest smiles and said goodnight to one and all.

They left me to bathe and disrobe. Then I climbed into bed (using the stepladder thoughtfully provided), slipped naked between the scented sheets and waited for my partner in crime.

He turned up half an hour later, still dressed for riding. I greeted him from my downy perch, sheets drawn demurely up to my chin.

'So what's with the twenty-seven mattresses?'

'To check you're a real princess.' He grinned as he said it and my heart did a little double-flip (I never could resist that grin). 'Turns out you all have such sensitive skin that even a dried pea under the mattress can bring you out all black and blue.'

I stared at him. '*That* old wives' tale!'

He shrugged. 'My folks are traditionalists.'

Well, that made it almost too easy, I thought. A couple of comments at breakfast time – a sigh, a complaint at the lumpy bed – and it was happy ever

after for both of us. And it felt so good to be with him again that for a moment I almost forgot the promise he'd made me last time we met.

'Of course I may give it a little *help*.' And he started to climb up the stepladder, coat, boots and spurs and all. Under the sheet, I shivered a little and my heart did that double-flip again, and something between my legs tugged and responded, and I realised then that we were alone, that the maids had all gone home for the night and if he were minded to settle old scores, no one would be there to hear the sound of a riding crop being vigorously applied to a lady's behind, or the sound of that lady squealing for mercy.

'Is that a riding crop in your hand . . .?'

'Oh, but I've missed you, sweetheart,' he said, pulling away the coverlet. I was beginning to think I'd made a mistake – that carnivorous look was in his eyes and wolves have *very* long memories – but it was far too late to back out now.

I put my arms around his neck and kissed him softly on the mouth. I know it isn't usual for a wolf to taste of wild strawberries, but this one did, and it made me tingle all the way down to my toes. Then his hands were on me, and for a minute I gave myself up, rubbing against him like a cat, feeling the roughness of his clothes against my belly and my breasts, feeling shivery and hot at the same time, his teeth – not rough, but not quite gentle – tweaking insistently at my nipples, one hand moving between my legs, the other finding the sweet spot at the base of my spine, crowned with a double dimple.

I'd forgotten how well we fit, he and I. We fit like two pieces of a broken heart; his hands a perfect D-cup, my body and his a perfect match. I snaked towards his groin at last, reaching for the buttons on his fly.

'Not so fast, my love,' he growled, and then he moved with lethal speed, turning me over onto his knee, lifting my buttocks invitingly into the air. 'You and I have unfinished business.'

Now Wolfie is definitely a bottom man. Mine is plump and sensitive and he gives it plenty of attention in bed. But this time I was getting slightly

concerned that the attention might take a less welcome form and I wriggled and ventured to suggest that maybe he would be more comfortable if he put aside the riding crop.

‘You know, I think I’ll hang on to it.’

He and I have played these games before. But I never thought he quite *got* them, somehow, and although he understands that it’s easy to turn me on with a couple of brisk smacks to the *derrière*, he doesn’t really know about punishment.

Or so I thought, for about half a second, until the crop came down resoundingly across my unprotected backside. This isn’t a turn-on at all, I thought.

‘Ow!’ I screamed, and grabbed my behind. Next time the crop came down on my hands. I uttered an expletive and struggled to escape.

‘Now, now. That’s hardly ladylike,’ said Wolfie and, though I couldn’t see his face, I thought I could hear the smile in his voice. ‘A delicately bred young thing like you.’

And now he began in earnest. I squealed and swore to no avail – I’d sent the maid away myself. The crop felt nothing like his hands, which, though strong, would at least have diffused the pain evenly across my spread buttocks. This instrument, however, with its flexible shaft, seemed to focus all its energy into a searing line. He used it most efficiently, making sure the blows were spread out so that maximum coverage was ensured. My anguish was exquisitely keen; I felt as if my arse were being branded with hot irons, and the thinness and manoeuvrability of the crop meant that the tenderest parts of my intimate anatomy were by no means neglected. I wailed and pleaded and threatened in vain.

At last I began to see how the pea-under-the-mattress trick would work. He must have planned it that way from the start; a good scam and a neat little vengeance to boot. After tonight my backside would surely display

dramatic enough results to convince even the most cynical of my royally sensitive complexion.

Finally, he released me, grinning, and I scooted up the bed out of reach, settling – with the utmost delicacy – onto one of the giant pillows. ‘I *always* keep my promises,’ he said, with an appraising glance at my flushed face and dishevelled ringlets. ‘Besides, you deserved it, didn’t you?’

My hands crept sullenly to the afflicted areas. It’s amazing how quickly the initial pain fades; my bottom was still sore, of course, but the blistering heat was dying away and there was a new feeling between my legs – an urgent, stinging, *nipping* sensation that was not at all unpleasant. I tried not to give that too much thought. Revenge, not sex, was first on my list.

Discreetly, I reached under the pillow for the object I’d concealed there earlier, too far away to use until now. I slid my hand around its comforting bulge. The life of an adventuress being filled with perils and uncertainties, I’ve always found it useful to carry a loaded pistol at all times and, if I hadn’t been so foolishly preoccupied with memories of happier days, my double-dealing, vulpine associate would have got it in the balls the minute he reached the top of that ladder.

Well, better late than never, I thought, un-holstering my phallic friend.

Three minutes later, the balance was redressed and Wolfie had been relieved of his shirt and breeches and was spreadeagled, face-down on the bed, hands and feet tied to the posts with the green silk ribbons from my discarded corset. I took a minute to appreciate the view while I stood over him, crop in hand, contemplating where to begin. Of course, it was easy. A few well-placed strokes along the crack of his arse soon got him howling for release, but silk ribbon is astonishingly strong and, try as he might, he couldn’t get free, only pull it cruelly tighter, chafing his wrists and ankles raw.

I took my time – I deserved it – kneeling beside him to touch the nape of his neck with my lips, moving around him on all fours to investigate every part of his captive body, pausing, sometimes to lavish attention on his hands, his feet, his shoulders, his balls, the backs of his knees, at others using the crop on him, making him flinch and yelp like a pup.

He had feigned indifference as best he could. But now there was no mistaking his arousal. I poured myself a glass of champagne, then I took a cube of ice from the bucket and ran it down the curve of his spine, rubbing it across the bud of his anus, making him shiver and cry out.

'Please,' he said.

'Swear you won't cause trouble.' In fact I was almost as ready as he, and the tingling between my legs had intensified to a waspish buzz.

'OK.' He nodded. *'I promise.'*

So I freed him from his silken restraints and lifted both his hands to my mouth, kissing and tonguing the marks on his wrists, mouth awry with the sour taste of his sweat and of his broken skin. I allowed myself a moment to note that his cock was just as spectacular as I'd remembered it, and then I was on him, straddling him, pushing him down, knees locked around his waist, hands clasped around the nape of his neck.

'At last, a part of you that doesn't lie,' I said, guiding him swiftly between my legs, allowing him to thrust into me with a low growl of pleasure. He pulled me closer, moaning as he did, his hands reaching urgently for my breasts. I could feel him trying to speed up, but kept him beneath me all the time, controlling his movements, easing back as his hips jerked convulsively towards me so that he all but whimpered with frustration.

'I swear on my life,' he gasped between clenched teeth. *'When I get hold of you again, you're going to wish you'd never been born.'*

I laughed. *'Admit it, Wolfie,'* I said. *'You liked it.'*

He closed his eyes and moaned gently, arching his back against the mattress. I tightened my knees around his ribs.

'Please,' he said in a hoarse voice.

'I'm sorry. I didn't quite catch that,' I said.

But who can resist a man who can beg? Both of us came almost at once – at least, we did for the first time, as something like a rocket went off between us and, for a moment, we were a single point of exquisite sensation, all senses numbed in the face of the orgasm that racked us both, leaving us shaken and breathless and trembling and raw.

After which, still keeping him at pistol point, I forced him down the ladder again, flinging his clothes and his riding crop after him from the topmost mattress.

It wasn't just that I mistrusted him; he'd sworn an oath – on his life, no less – and I wasn't going to be caught napping again.

'No hard feelings, sweetheart,' I said, 'but I think I'd feel safer sleeping alone.'

He gave me a hurt look that had all the authenticity of a lead sovereign (I should know, I've peddled a few), and spread his hands in a *Who? Me?* shrug.

'Don't give me that,' I warned him. 'Now get some sleep. We both have a long day ahead of us. Oh, and next time, Wolfie, if you don't mind . . .'

'What?'

'Take your fucking boots off.'

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