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The Princess In The Teflon Slipper

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the fresh-baked loaf, and offered the bread and wine to my Lord Suzerain. A thousand years were behind me, and the life of more than a sempstress ahead, but I could not rest in past nor future till the Task of the moment was done.

The King's hands reached forth and grasped the wine and bread, and we held them together for an instant before I released them that he might bring them to his mouth. Within that instant, within the rose-gold light's last benediction before retreating into night, I who would be Queen spoke my first words to my King.

"Your supper, my Lord," I said, and smiled.

SONNET IN DEFENSE OF THERSITES

by Joe R. Christopher

You old defender of the common man--
You trusted not the nobles or the king,
And were no puppet pulled upon a string,
But spoke, proclaiming the way your judgement ran.
Odysseus and Achilles felt your tongue,
And thus had cause to hate you, as you knew;
But still in fray a goodly speech and true,
Keeping not back yours@lf--that speech you flung.

What mattered it, if at the king it struck?
What mattered, though nobles hated democracy?
You spoke the truth, however came your luck,
And sounded the call unto eternity:
Your cause shall rise, though beat into the sod--
Rise again, though scourged by Odysseus' rod.

THE PRINCESS IN THE TEFLON SLIPPER

retold by
Stefan Bilandic

CINDER, ELLA (1537-1603). Wife of King Louis XXXVIII of France. Born to her stepmother, she decapitated her father at an early age. Of her life between that time and her marriage to King Louis (then Prince No Name), only that is known which is preserved in the myth Ellacinder...

-- Encyclopedia Stupida

Her name was Ella Cinder, and she had never been to an imperial ball, or seen the world-famous Prince Without a Name. And that is why she did not care when her step-sisters, Snow Red and Rose White, were planning to go. All she did was keep house for them, anyway. The last time they went to a ball, Ella smiled as she remembered, Snow Red (or was it Rose White?) got lost and spent three years in the forest with seven dirty little old men. At least she had taught them to wash themselves properly.

One day after lunch, while Ella was cleaning up, her fairy grandmother appeared. Ella was glad that her grandmother was a fairy, because that meant that she would never be involved in any of those drastic horrors called fairy tales. Fairy tales, of course, never have any fairies in them. Little did Ella know that there were exceptions to that rule.

"Ella," said her grand fairymother, "how would you like to go to the ball tonight?"

"Bawl," said Ella, "is what I do when my Russian steppe mother hits me."

"No, no, no, no, Ella! A ball is what you'll have if you go! Very amusing for me, very profitable for you -- if you know when to leave."

Ella saw nothing wrong with pleasing her grandmother, and so it was decided -- she would go to the ball, even though her step-mother had prohibited it. The fairy arranged everything. Ella rode in a golden pumpkin -- a gift to the fairy from a fellow named Peter. It was pulled by seven rats from the dregs of Paris, turned into white horses for the occasion. Ella's English cousin Rapunzel Godiva rode on the lead horse (but that's another story). Ella wore a white dress, four hundred and twenty-eight petticoats, and glass slippers (covered with Teflon).

When this caravan pulled up at the palace, Ella slipped quietly into the ballroom, while the Royal Morality Bureau made a fuss over Rapunzel.

Once inside, Ella treaded carefully down a side corridor to avoid being seen by her sisters, who had already arrived. While looking in the other direction, she bumped into a young man wearing a coronet, which fell off. As he retrieved it, she asked him, "Are you

the Prince?"

"I don't know," he replied. "You see, I have no name. But just between you and me, my father has promised to name me Louis when I become king." It was the Prince. Ella was astonished. "By the way," he asked, "who are you?"

"My name is Ella Cinder."

"Oh! I sure admire your playing. But I thought you were taller, and... Oh my. I must be thinking of someone else. Yes, Lew Alcindor." *

Ella was mad by now (and angry, too), so she shouted "CINDER! ELLA!" This was a mistake. Ella simply could not stop the Prince from calling her Cinderella.

But the Prince was a fine dancer (if nothing else) and Ella found herself carried away. They could have danced all night, and nearly did, too; but one of Ella's Teflon-covered glass slippers fell off and broke into ten million little pieces. Shortly afterwards, a blood-curdling shriek was heard. Ella's bare foot had stumbled into what was left of her slipper. Heads turned. Fearing that she would be recognized by her sisters, Ella ran out the front door and onto the dark road heading for home.

Soon she was passed by a strange dark figure. It grinned at her. "I am the gingerbread man. Catch me if you can!" it said, and bolted off cross-country. Then a group of angry men came up. "Have you seen a gingerbread man?" they asked. Ella said, "He went that-a-way," and pointed off cross-country -- in the other direction. The men lumbered off.

Next morning found Ella at home reading the want ads. She was looking for a job to raise money as bail for Rapunzel. She opened the door at a knock from outside. It was the Prince! Ella was astonished. "Oh Cinderella," he cried, "you danced so beautifully -- will you marry me?" Here was an offer Ella could not refuse -- so she didn't.

They did not live happily ever after -- only moderately happy, and only until death (or, in some versions, divorce) did them part.

"But how did you ever find me?" Ella asked one day. "Very simple," replied her Prince. "I looked you up in the phone book!"

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* Nobody had told the Prince that the basketball player had changed his name to Kareem Abdul-Jabaar. It would only have confused him.