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# Happily Ever Awhile

## By Ruth Nestvold

20 June 2005

Everyone knows the story of the filthy girl who married the prince by not bleeding into a glass slipper, but not as many know what happened to her after the happy ending. Ellie was happy for a long time, make no mistake about that. She didn't have to do dirty chores anymore, after all, and the palace and the grounds were lovely, the white turrets and the blue tile roofs reaching and reflecting the sky, the colorful banners flying from the turrets flapping merrily in every strong wind. She tended her garden with her own hands, loving to see beautiful things grow at her bidding.

Soon she bore the prince a daughter and then a son, Tabitha and Tobias, and the four of them lived a calm, happy life together. When the king died, they were sad about it for a time, but his time had come, and life and death were occurring in the balance they should, just as the seasons did, as the flowers came and went.

But then the kingdom to the south marched against them, wanting more than the change of the seasons and the contentment it brings. The young king her husband had to go to war, leaving her alone in the beautiful palace for months at a time. Ellie still had her garden and her children, but it was all so empty without deep male laughter, without smiles and looks and the fine things the dark held.

And so she planted flowers and waited. And watched flowers bloom and waited. And pruned roses and waited. And watched flowers wilt and waited.

Finally, in late autumn, when the leaves on the trees were turning from green to all the shades of fire and earth, the young king's army, smaller now than when it set out, returned from the south. Ellie flew down the palace stairs and across the courtyard

## [Before Paphos](#)

by Loretta Casteen

8 January 2007

It starts again. The baby begins to cough and choke.

## [Locked Doors](#)

by Stephanie Burgis

1 January 2007

*You can never let anyone suspect*, his mother told him. That was the first rule she taught him, and the last, before she left him here alone with It.

## [Heroic Measures](#)

by Matthew Johnson

18 December 2006

Pale as he was, it was hard to believe he would never rise from this bed. Even in the darkest times, she had never really feared for him; he had always been strong, so strong.

## [Love Among the Talus](#)

by Elizabeth Bear

11 December 2006

Nilufer raised her eyes to his. It was not what women did to men, but she was a princess, and he was only a bandit. "I want to be a Witch," she said. "A Witch and not a Queen. I wish to be not loved, but wise. Tell your bandit lord, if he can give me that, I might accept his gift."

## [Archived Fiction Dating back to 9/1/00](#)

