

After the Ball



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For Review Only

CHAPTER ONE



12:01 a.m.
(Once Upon a Time)

“Well, that’s that,” Ella sighed, looking up the road at the hilltop castle, still lit up like New Year’s Eve for the king’s ball. She rested her chin in the heel of her hand, her elbow on her knee. “It was beautiful though, wasn’t

it, Henry?” Ella cast a sideways look at the muddled goose flapping its wings along the edge of the road.

“Honk,” Henry replied.

“You’re right,” Ella answered in a hushed tone, “I could never have imagined it.” She glanced at the small party snuggled by her bare feet in the roadside dirt—some field mice and one sturdy, round pumpkin—and sighed again.

“We knew it couldn’t last, eh, friends?” she chuckled. “I suppose we’d better start walking! I’ll carry you in my pocket, little ones,” she offered the small, brown mice, stooping to pick them up. She stopped short though, when a glimmer in the moonlight caught her eye.

“What’s this?” Ella asked Henry, reaching for the shimmering object in the dirt. “My shoe!” she cried, delighted. “That’s impossible! I mean, slippers made of glass are impossible enough, but how in the world did

this slipper last when everything else disappeared at the stroke of midnight? It's wonderful, don't you think, Henry?"

Ella shook her head in disbelief, putting the shoe in her left pocket and the field mice in her right. She was immediately grateful she'd added such roomy pockets when she'd made her skirt.

"Clever girl," Ella said, giving herself a well-earned pat on the back. "Oh, what a night!" she squealed. "Field mice, a goose, a pumpkin, a ball, and a fairy godmother. I'd pinch myself awake, but this slipper seems to prove I'm not dreaming."

Ella spun once and clapped her hands. "Truly, never could I have imagined anything like this! And who would believe me? I can hardly believe myself." With that, she straightened her skirt, picked up the hefty pumpkin with a grunt, and stepped onto the moonlit road to begin her long walk home, Henry strutting by her side.



CHAPTER TWO



9:00 p.m.
(Earlier That Night)

Ella stepped her glass-slipped foot through the open coach door. She looked up the flight of marble stairs to the doorway above. There, two guards in red coats and white gloves

announced the king's guests as they entered the ball.

Henry—featherless and looking every inch the dashing coachman—helped her step down.

“Thank you, Henry,” Ella said. Then she whispered in his ear, “You are as handsome a coachman as you are a goose.” Henry honked a chuckle in reply.

Ella was still in awe from the past hour, in which a woman with wings and a wand had appeared in her garden. The woman called herself a fairy godmother. She waved her wand and—poof!—Henry was a coachman, a pumpkin was a coach, four field mice were horses, and Ella's everyday work clothes became the gown she now wore. And on her feet shimmered two slippers made of glass. Impossible!

“It's off to the ball with you, Ella dear,” the fairy said, “But don't delay. The magic lasts until the stroke of midnight and not a moment longer.”

Book Club Questions

1. Why does the fairy godmother help Cinderella?
2. What kind of person is Cinderella? How do you know?
3. Why do you think the glass slipper was the only souvenir of the night?
4. What similarities and differences can you find between this version of Cinderella and another version that you've seen or read?
5. How could Cinderella have changed her life without magic?
6. Does Cinderella live happily ever after?