Begonia {part one}

by Emily Sparkles

Once there was a land called Begonia. In this land there lived a good king and a good queen, who were much beloved by their people. This king and queen were very old, but they had a daughter, the princess, named Isabella, who was young and beautiful, and, most importantly, pure of heart.

Begonia was a peaceful land, nestled between the mountains and the sea. The grass was as bright and green as any grass could ever hope to be, and the flowers shone in their brightest colors - in order to compliment the grass. The sky was always the most brilliant of blues, and the sea colors changed from deep indigo to light turquoise, depending on the time of day and year. The mountains were the friendliest lavender, with a dusting of white on top, which of course was snow. Then, too, was the town where all the people lived. The outside of town was home to the farmers, who grew the most delicious food in their fields; enough food to feed the whole land. Next in town lived the trades-people, the ones who made the clothes, carved the wood, and did all the other sorts of jobs that must be done. After that lived the nobility, but in Begonia the nobility were indeed noble and kind. Their houses weren't so very much larger than anybody else's, and their large and beautiful gardens were open to any who wished to rest or explore. In the very middle of the town was the castle of the King and Queen and Princess Isabella. The castle was very pretty to see, made of the violet stones of the mountains. Each corner had a round, peaked tower, with a very large one in the middle. The roof was tiled in magenta, and from every window grew flowers of every color you can imagine, and maybe even some more!

Now, as the King and the Queen were such generous rulers, they often had feasts to which the whole town was invited. There, all the people talked to each other, and hardly ever considered themselves better than any one else. It was at such a feast that Princess Isabella first met a young shoe-maker named

Available online at *«http://fictionaut.com/stories/emily-sparkles/begonia-part-one»*
Copyright © 2010 Emily Sparkles. All rights reserved.

Coriander, who worked in his father's cobbling shop. He was an honest young man, with brown hair that always appeared tousled, no matter how carefully he combed it. His eyes were dark brown and twinkling, and his smile was bright and true. Surely he was a handsome young lad, and Princess Isabella couldn't help but notice. Coriander noticed Isabella, too, for she was the most beautiful girl in the land. She had hair past her waist, thick and abundant golden curls. Her eyes were large with long lashes, and the color seemed to change from purple to blue to green as the light reflected in them. The moment the two young persons saw each other, their hearts' skipped a beat, and they knew they could find love together. They talked at each feast as often as they could, and each day their fondness grew stronger. But Princess Isabella did not share her new love with her parents, for though they were good, the law said that the Princess, of course, had to marry a prince. Sometimes Isabella wished Coriander was a prince, but then she thought better and knew she would not have him any other way. Sometimes Coriander wished Isabella wasn't a princess, but then he thought better and knew that one day she would be the greatest queen a country could ask for. And so the two continued to live, unsure of their future, but sure of their love.

❊ ❊ ❊

Now one morning, as the sun came over the mountains to warm and waken the village, it noticed that something was different. The grass was still as green as ever, and the houses and streets were as tidy as could be, but the castle; yes, the castle, seemed *off*. The sun shone brightly onto the castle, for this was his way of looking intently, and saw that the flowers in the window boxes were withering. Not all of the flowers, only the ones that were planted in the box of the biggest garret window. This was a very bad omen, indeed, for this was the window to the King and Queen's Royal bedchamber. Surely the wilting flowers meant something was wrong with the beloved rulers. The sun was so upset that immediately he pulled his blanket over his face and cried out of worry. His blanket, of course was made of clouds and his tears made up the rain. The

sun was very right to be frightened, as were the flowers to wither, for the King and Queen were both very ill. Inside of the castle, everything was moving quickly but very quietly. Princess Isabella went down to the dining room, looking forward to breakfasting with her parents, yet when she arrived she found waiting there a nervous little kitchen-maid, wringing her hands.

“Whatever is the matter, dear girl?” asked Isabella, as she rushed forward to comfort the little creature.

“Oh, Princess! It's your mother and father, our very own King and Queen! They have fallen ill over night and everyone is extremely worried! You must come, quickly!” answered the maid. Without saying a word, the two girls joined hands and raced to the royal bedchamber. In a matter of moments they arrived, and the dear kitchen maid stayed behind with the other concerned servants as Isabella entered the royal bedroom alone. There she saw her dear, sweet parents lying in bed, sleeping but pale as sea-foam. Next to the bed stood the royal physician and to her the princess approached.

“Your parents are old and are tired; they have always worked so hard to make Begonia the peaceful, happy kingdom it is. Sometimes these things just happen,” said the doctor. Brave Isabella knelt beside the bed and took her mothers hand. She pressed it tenderly to her own soft cheek, which was already damp with her tears. The smallest sigh of sorrow escaped from the princess's lips, and gently awakened her parents. As their eyes fluttered open, they saw their precious, miracle daughter and tried to smile. Isabella saw how weak they were.

“Mother; Father; it pains me to see you like this. If there is anything I can do, no matter how small or how large, to ease your suffering, say so and it will be done,” the princess spoke, and because she was so pure and true she meant every word with her heart. The King and Queen knew their daughter, and were glad to hear her words. They told her as much and then added, slowly due to their exhaustion, but meaning every word:

“You are more than we ever could have hoped for. Truly the Lord smiled upon us the day you were born! It is good to know that you are willing to serve, for we must all always serve one another. This is just the proper attitude for the future queen of Begonia to have!”

“Oh, thank you both; it is because you have raised me rightly that I feel so. And one day I will do my best to lead our country, but surely that day is a long ways off, you still remain our leaders!” Isabella spoke hurriedly, as she held both of her parents' hands now and truly longed that they would indeed live for many years to come.

“Of course we don't know when our time will end; maybe it will be from this sickness and maybe not. Regardless of when, this does serve as a reminder that you will be queen some day, and every queen needs a king,” spoke the King as his Queen nodded.

The royal advisor was also in the chamber, and at this utterance he approached. He was also a good man who knew and followed all of the laws of the land and had never been known to give bad advice. Now he spoke, “My Lord and my Lady, you are very wise. If you wish, I will explain to the princess the rules of the marriage so that you two may rest and get well.” The King and the Queen agreed this was best. Isabella tenderly kissed each of her parents on the forehead and then followed the advisor, Bryony, out to the hall.

“As you know, Princess, upon the death of your parents you will be named Queen of Begonia. Of course the thought of this day is bittersweet, for your parents have been just rulers, bringing happiness and prosperity to the land. Yet they have raised you well, and we all have the utmost faith in you and your ability to continue leading Begonia with wisdom and sincerity. However, part of your parents' success as leaders has come from their obedience to the law. A ruler must always follow the law as well as enforce it; if they should fail, the nation, too, will suffer,” said Sir Bryony.

Isabella listened carefully, and took into her heart the importance of what he was saying. The advisor continued, “Now, there is a law

which no doubt you have heard of, but perhaps not often enough. It is the law of the land that the princess must marry before she can be made queen. The same goes for a prince, but since you are the only child that does not matter just now. We must take no chances; only the Lord knows if it is your parents' time. I have spoken with your parents and the other advisors, and all agree that you should be wed as soon as possible."

Princess Isabella was quite overcome. No one could blame her; this was a lot of information to receive in one morning. She took a moment before responding, gazing out of the window next to her, upward, into the cloudy sky. She prayed for guidance, and resolved to do what was required of her. Truly she would make a grand queen, and the land could only wish for a worthy king to join her. "I will do what I must," she said softly, but with strength, to Sir Bryony. Just then the face of young Coriander flashed through her mind. Suddenly she realized that her impending wedding day was more than just duty; it could even be joyous! Their love was so strong and pure, that even with her parents so sickly; the warmth of it could make her smile. Isabella was just on the brink of sending a servant to fetch her young man, when Sir Bryony's voice interrupted her, "I knew we could count on you, Princess! I will send forth the message to bring Prince Sage from the land of Pasque, over-the-sea from us. He is your betrothed from before you were born." Suddenly, Isabella remembered the reason she had never spoken of her love for Coriander; she had to marry a prince. If she was to follow one law, she must follow them all. Her still-moist eyes once again filled with tears, but she trusted her heart to her Lord. She knew that He and her parents only wanted what was best for her, and that somehow she would manage.