

# Begonia {part three}

by Emily Sparkles

The next morning Princess Isabella woke a bit flustered. Part of her was hopeful, part of her was doubtful, and the rest was concerned for her parents. Her fears about her parents were neither greatly consoled nor worsened, for as she visited them they appeared to be in the same condition as the day before. The princess realized that their minds and hearts needed rest as well as their bodies in order to get well, and so she dared not share her troubles.

As she was leaving the royal bedchamber she asked Sir Bryony if he would gather the royal advisors to meet with her after the village workday was over. He gladly agreed, hoping that she was intending to start planning her royal wedding to the en-voyage Prince Sage, and needed the vizier's assistance. He did not realize that the princess was hopefully in love with the common Coriander, yet equally devoted to the upholding her land's laws; she was truly in difficult situation.

Isabella could not think clearly, which was only to be expected for one in her unique situation. The sun was shining brightly through the window, putting on a brave face for the kingdom. Isabella truly felt encouraged by his efforts, and decided to go out and enjoy the rest of the Lord's beautiful nature in order to soothe her spirits. She gathered her skirts so that her dainty ankles could freely and quickly carry her away, through the castle doors and towards the emerald escape that the woods could offer.

Now, the Kingdom of Begonia was known for its serenity and virtue. But just like any other place, there can sometimes be dark and mysterious inhabitants. Deep in the woods there was just such a creature: a large and healthy young dragon! The people of the land did not know about him, which of course meant that Isabella did not either. The dragon was leaving his cave to get a drink of water from the stream just as the princess was winding through the forest towards that well-known oasis, too. While the

dragon was gulping the sparkling clear water, Isabella was skipping through the forest and singing a song:

“The air is warm and golden,  
The leaves are fair and green,  
Just like in days of olden,  
The trees long to be seen...”

Just as she was entering into the second verse, she came to the small clearing by the stream. The dragon lifted his magnificent head and stared at the beautiful girl, enchanted by her sweet and pure voice. He watched her kneel by the stream and tickle the minnows flitting about within its waters and decided then and there that he must take that human home with him. You see, the dragon was quite lonely. Nobody knew he lived there, except for the woodland creatures. But these animals were afraid of the dragon and stayed as far from him as possible. When the beast saw the princess, he was sure that someone as lovely and peaceful as she would never be afraid, and thus came to his decision.

Isabella, meanwhile, had yet to realize the dragon was there. She was just standing up and shaking the spring water off of her slender hands when she saw the dragon come up beside her.

“Oh, my!” She cried. Although she was indeed a noble and brave young lady, she had never met a dragon before, and was a bit frightened. Who could possibly blame her? “May I help you?” asked the princess, for lack of something else to say.

“Well...” uttered the dragon, unsure of how to convince the princess to come stay with him. Suddenly, he had the idea that it might be easier to just take the girl first and explain his actions later. Surely once she was in his home, she would love it so much that she would have no desire to leave. After all, his house was a large and cool cave, filled with gold and jewels and other things that shone brilliantly when he played with his fire-breath. He could never imagine that these things might not please everybody as much as they pleased him.

And so he stretched out his long, dragon arms and carefully clasped his claw-like hands around the standing princess.

Isabella was caught by surprise, but she did not lose her composure.

“Whatever are you doing?” she asked as the dragon reared onto his powerful hind legs and started waddling back towards his cave. (Yes, dragons do waddle, but it is not in the funny manner of the penguins or geese; they waddle because they have to sway their tails behind them—tails as long and thick as tree trunks.) The dragon was so intent on his idea, and so excited about showing this friend his plentiful treasures, that he did not even hear the melodious voice of the princess.

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