



A FAIRY TALE FOR THE YEAR 2004

A Story by Helen Lucas

Every person on earth had become a flower.

All former identities no longer mattered. Countries no longer existed. The world had become one beautiful flower garden.

Those people who needed to structure their lives set themselves down in formal gardens with wonderfully straight edged borders and geometric beds. The free-spirited became wild flowers growing at random in windswept fields. The romantic chose country gardens.

Many of the intellectuals preferred to lead a cultured life. Those in need of security placed themselves near walls. The frail built trellises. The thirsty went to rain forests, the dry to deserts.

The bold became sunflowers; the gentle, violets; the sentimental, sweet peas; the sophisticated, orchids; the refined, Birds of Paradise.

Everyone had one main ambition, to mature and bloom. They also knew they needed each other if they were to make their world garden as beautiful as possible. The success of each fiscal year was measured in terms of the beauty created.

So they all grew towards the sun, reaching for its life and energy. As they stretched their faces upwards, they kept their feet firmly entrenched in the soil, appreciating always its nourishment and support.

In time, their seed dropped into the same soil or took to the air to find a new place in the garden. If there was drought or famine in any part, the flowers were quickly transplanted elsewhere.

Everyone lived secure in the knowledge that flowers have never, in the history of life on earth, waged a war.

The former American president had become a buttercup and his former Russian adversary had become a tulip. Now, when Tulip and Buttercup got together they talked about ways of cultivating each other. They discussed new strains, new colours, new patterns, ways of developing hardier stocks.

They talked of love. They wished each other a late frost, clean air and non-acid rain. They wished each other's children many blooms. Above all, they wished each other a joyous life, filled with sunshine.

High in the heavens, God looked down upon the garden. "I am well pleased", she said.