

## *It's Baby Business*

I awoke to the sound of screaming dragons. *What is going on?* I wondered. I glanced out the window to see two dragons fighting over a bundle of something. Probably fish. Wait-was the bundle *moving*? I knew I should go investigate, but I was so tired. I checked the time, and my hazel eyes widened. It was 8:00am! I had to be at work by 8:30! I jumped out of bed with a jolt. Most employees are always late, but not me. I was working extremely hard to receive the "Employee of the Year" award, and the grand prize. It may sound cheeky to you, but it's my dream. That's because the grand prize is... a huge hut close to the *Flame Factory*, where I work. If I won, I could have more room, and even walk to work in only five minutes! That means I'd have more time to get ready. I threw on my uniform, brushed down my hair, and grabbed some toast with toad butter. Then I jumped into my carriage.

On the way, I stopped by the quarreling dragons. I pulled two large fish from my stash and threw them far from both the bundle and myself. The dragons lunged for them at once, while I grabbed the bundle, and headed off.

As I traveled the well-worn path in my old carriage I opened the bundle. I wasn't surprised to find a small baby inside. Lots of people abandoned their children. Sad but true. Looks like the orphanage was my first stop after work. With the baby next to me, I popped the toast in my mouth, and urged my winged horses, Julia and Julius, faster.

I pulled in just in time, then grabbed my backpack and the baby. Inside, I dropped the baby off at the nursery and jumped into my assigned room while the tardy bell rang. Our boss stomped out of the office. His hair was disheveled and pointing every which way, which immediately told me that he had a temper. He stormily gave out job assignments. I was told to harness the fire of an adult female Spinezinger. These were one of the hardest dragons. I think I did a good job, considering that the employee beside me got fried so bad he was sent to the hospital. When it was time to go home, I picked the baby from the nursery, checked out some dragon books from the library, and headed to the orphanage. When I arrived, I noticed a sign and suddenly felt sick. The sign read:

"No longer taking children.  
If you find a child,  
take care of it."

No! This couldn't be happening! Reluctantly, I took the baby back to my hut. This hut was too small for both of us. Suddenly, my phone rang. It was my best friend, Liz.

"Hey Calina. How's it going?" she asked. I explained my baby problem. Liz expressed her sympathy, told me about her day, and said goodbye. I turned and stared at the baby. As if on cue, it began crying. *It must be hungry!* I thought. So I grabbed toast with toad utter, and gave it to the baby, whom I think was a boy. He took it, tasted it, and then dropped it. Before I knew it, he threw up all over my uniform. I sighed. This wasn't going to be easy. There was a knock on the door, and I opened it to Liz's smiling face. She held out a small crib with a manual named *Babies for Dummies* inside.

"Thanks." I said sarcastically.

"You're welcome!" Liz replied. "Love you!" she then dropped a huge trunk onto my porch, got into her carriage, and drove away. I put the baby boy in the crib and poured some milk into a bottle which is what it said to do in *Babies for Dummies*.

"I think your name should be, Zarian." I said to the baby. *This wasn't so bad* I thought as I crawled into bed. Not hard at all.

\*\*\*

I spoke too soon. Waking up to the sound of a wailing baby, and then having to change a two-day-old diaper with a paper manual changes your attitude. As I was giving Zarian more milk, I got a call from work. Were they finally going to tell me I had won employee of the year?

"Hello Mr. Zipher. How can I help you?" I said excitedly.

"Hello Calina. I've heard that you are caring for a child. Is this true?" he asked.

"Yes sir." I replied worriedly.

"Well then, you are no longer eligible for the 'Employee of the Year' award, because it is unsafe for children to live close to the flame and smoke, where the prize hut is. I'm sorry. I still expect to see you at 8:30 though. Are we clear?"

"Yes sir." I mumbled sadly.

"Good." He hung up.

Zarian began whimpering. I felt like crawling into the crib and bawling my eyes out. *No!* My mind screamed.

"This is all your fault!" I yelled at Zarian, who started wailing. "If I had just left you to those dragons, none of this would have happened!" Well, yelling didn't do anything. I got ready and grabbed some breakfast. I left Zarian in the crib with three bottles. As I leaned down he put his chubby hand on my cheek. It was warm, and my heart thudded. I told myself to focus, but I could feel

where he had touched me even as I left for work. Julia and Julius carried me farther and farther from Zarian. The spot on my cheek burned with anticipation. My conscience scolded me for yelling at Zarian. And that's when I knew. I didn't need a bigger hut or promotion. I just needed Zarian. I turned my winged horses around and rushed into the hut. I cradled Zarian and looked at him fondly. He smiled at me, and I knew I had made the right decision.