

Begonia {part six}

by Emily Sparkles

Mezereon and Isabella had finished their morning meal and strolled easily toward the sparkling stream to quench their thirst and enjoy the lovely day. Neither said much, but surprisingly the silence was companionable. Mezereon was reveling in having a friend, for truly he had loved the princess from first sight as loyally as any creature could. Isabella was deep in thought and prayer, pleading for guidance and wisdom. She quieted her fast-paced thoughts to allow an answer to come, and as the two drank deeply from the stream's clear waters, she felt a peace as to what she should do. Even as she was reaching her conclusion, she spoke her feelings aloud to the dragon.

"I believe that God has brought you and I together, Mezereon..." she began. The dragon was intrigued by her spontaneous speaking and lifted his massive head, jaws dripping with water, to watch her beautiful face as she talked. "My parents are sick, and at first I could not imagine why the Lord would allow me to be separated from them. Also, I am about to be married, but not to the man that I love. My situation at home was really quite desperate! I was faithfully praying for help, but I know now that I was fighting for control of a situation that I have no authority over...I believe I needed to see how powerless I, a mere princess, am in some cases."

Mezereon's giant dragon heart marveled at the girl's revelations. First, he was heartsick for her and the sad state of things back where she had come to him from. Secondly, he was aghast to learn she was a princess; for even dragons know and respect royalty. Through it all he was yet again confused about this God that she kept referring to, yet something undeniably stirred deep within whenever she mentioned His name. He wanted to know more about this young woman, but mostly he felt he should remind her that she was very special, "You also have come to help me!" he

gently said. Isabella smiled gently in return and lifted her chained hand to rest on the tip of his nose.

"There is not much help I can offer on my own, but perhaps God will use me to help find a way to answer your questions," she said.

At this same time, brave Coriander was trekking faithfully through the forest. He was not sure where to go to find Isabella, but another need was also persisting in his mind; he was parched and needed some water. He, too, knew of the stream—the very stream Isabella and the dragon were resting beside. He was a matter of minutes away from the clearing when he came upon a beautiful family of deer. The startled mother quickly urged her spotted twin fawns into a jump-and-run to get away from the potentially dangerous human.

"Oh, mother deer, I would not dream of harming you or yours," he said aloud quietly. The chipmunk, still perched on his shoulder, nuzzled into his neck as if to agree.

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Out by the stream, Mezereon and the princess's warm moment was interrupted by the abrupt flight of the deer and her young into the area. Mezereon's large nostrils flared, and just as Isabella was laughing at her momentary fright from the harmless disruption, the dragon's entire body tensed. Quickly he scooped the girl into his claw-tipped hands and leapt over the stream, half gliding, and half diving into the cover of the woods on the other side. He moved amazingly swiftly and silently through the trees.

"Mezereon Starwort! What—is—going—on?" Isabella managed to ask as they traveled.

"One of your kind was nearby," he matter-of-factly answered. Hope and despair simultaneously filled the princess as she wondered just who had been so close to finding her. The dragon himself was much more confused than his face would show. It was not often he caught the smell of human, and not until he met Isabella had he fully realized what that fragrance belonged to. He was torn between a longing to meet another wonderful person and

fear of losing his dear friend, and in an instant decided to keep Isabella for just a while longer.

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Coriander followed the startled deer into the clearing by the stream, realizing the sweet nature of the woodland creatures had brought some much-needed sunshine into his troubled mind.

"Thank you, Father," he murmured his gratitude to the Creator. He had been sure that the Lord would guide his steps towards Isabella, but his mind was still understandably anxious. As he stepped out of the golden green light of the tree cover and into the area by the stream, a strange movement across the clearing caught his eye. The trees were moving as if by a wind, but the breeze was far too slight for this. As if to affirm his suspicion, the family of deer had disappeared from view, without even taking time to quench their thirst. The empty stillness of the area caused the hair on the back of Coriander's neck to stand on end. With his honed hunter's instincts, he sprang into action, scouring the creek bank for clues to the situation. Something within him whispered that he was close to his beloved; or at least close to learning about where she was!

