

## 19. HICCUP THE USEFUL

The four hundred Vikings that were now gathered on the cliff tops broke into wild cheering for Hiccup and Toothless.

They were a strange, barbaric sight, all covered in disgusting green Dragon Snot and Slime, but beaming and shouting with the wild delight of those that have just been saved from Certain Death.

All around them, the terrible fight that had just taken place devastated the landscape. A choking green-grey smoke was hanging around making it difficult to see, but great chunks of Death's Head Headland appeared to have been torn out by the fight. Avalanches of rock were piled up on the beach. The terrible mountainous corpse of the Purple Death lay in the deeper water. Bits of the Green Death's insides and bones were scattered all over the place, while large sections of the heather and ferns were still in flames.

However, by some extraordinary miracle, nearly all the Vikings and their dragons had survived the dreadful battle.

I say 'nearly all' because, when Toothless crept



forward to lick the face of his Master with a flickering, forked tongue, Stoick noticed a ghastly wound on the little dragon's chest, which was pouring with bright green blood. The talon of the Green Death had pierced the very heart of the supposedly heartless little dragon.

Toothless followed Stoick's gaze and looked down for the first time. He let out a squeal of terror and fainted dead away.



Two days later, Hiccup woke up, aching all over, and very, very hungry. It was late at night. He was lying in Stoick's own great bed. The room seemed to be crowded with a great deal of people. Stoick was there, and Valhallarama, and Old Wrinkly, and Fishlegs and most of the Elders of the Tribe.

There were dragons there too: Newtsbreath and Hookfang snapping and biting around Stoick's legs, and Horrocow perched on the end of Hiccup's bed. (The dragons had flown back as soon as they heard the explosion and realised the Masters of Berk were Masters once more. Being dragons, they had given no explanation for their disappearance, but they did have the grace to look a little sheepish.)

'He's alive!' shouted out Stoick in triumph, and everybody began to cheer. Valhallarama gave Hiccup a rousing punch on the shoulder, which is the Viking mother's equivalent of a really big hug.

'We're all here,' said Valhallarama, 'willing you to wake up.'

Hiccup sat straight up in bed, suddenly very awake indeed. 'But you're *not* all here,' he said.

'Where's Toothless?'

Everybody looked shifty, and nobody would look

at Hiccup. Stoick cleared his throat awkwardly.

'I'm sorry, son,' said Stoick. 'But he didn't make it. He died just a few hours ago. The rest of the Tribe are giving him a Hero's Funeral at this very moment. It's a great honour,' Stoick continued hurriedly. 'He'll be the first dragon ever to be given a proper Viking burial—'

'How did you know he was dead?' Hiccup demanded.

Stoick looked surprised. 'Well, you know, the usual: no pulse, no breath, stone cold to the touch. He was quite clearly dead, I'm afraid.'

'Oh, HONESTLY, Father,' said Hiccup, in a frenzy of exasperation, 'don't you know ANYTHING about dragons? That could have been a SLEEP COMA, it's a GOOD SIGN, probably means he's healing himself.'

'Oh, Thor's whiskers,' said Fishlegs. 'They started that funeral half an hour ago...'

'We've got to stop them!' yelled Hiccup. 'Dragons are only fairly fireproof. They'll burn him alive!'

Hiccup leapt out of bed with amazing energy, under the circumstances. He ran out of the room and

out of the house, followed closely by Fishlegs and Horrorcow.

♦♦♦

Down at Hooligan Harbour, the awesome ceremony of the Viking Military Funeral was nearly coming to an end.

It was an incredible sight, if Hiccup had been in the mood for it.

The sky was crammed with stars. The sea was glass-flat. The entire tribes of Hooligan and Meathead were gathered motionless on the rocks, and every single person was carrying a lighted torch in one hand.

Even Snotlout was there, trying to look solemn, with his helmet off his head out of respect, and his hair neatly brushed.

'Good riddance to the newt with wings,' he was whispering slyly to Dogsbreath the Duhbrain, and Dogsbreath sniggered.

'Serve him right for breaking the Law,' sneered Fireworm to Seaslug, who was picking his nose on Dogsbreath's shoulder.

A replica of a Viking ship had been put out to sea, and was drifting swiftly away from the island of Berk along the path of the moon's reflection, past the

weird shapes of Stoick and Mogadon's burnt-out fleet.

Hiccup could just see the small body of Toothless laid out in the boat. Beside him lay Stoick's shield, the Dragon's Tooth still stuck in it like a gigantic alien sword.

Gobber the Belch sounded a mournful signal on his horn. He was now completely recovered after his unexpected flight.

'P-P-PARP!!!'

Twenty-six of Stoick's finest archers, standing to attention at the right of the Harbour, lifted their bows into the air. Every bow was loaded with an arrow in flame.

'N-N-NOOOO!!!' yelled Hiccup, with the best yell he had ever yelled.

But it was too late.

The flaming arrows soared gracefully through the air. They landed on the ship and set it alight.

Some of the crowd on the shore had turned to look upwards, wondering who dared to disturb this most solemn ritual.

'HICCUP!' shouted Thuggory the Meathead, joyfully recognising the figure on the horizon. There



was a murmur of wonder  
from the crowd, as they whispered  
'Hiccup?' to each other, then shouting and  
cheering and calling out his name louder and louder.

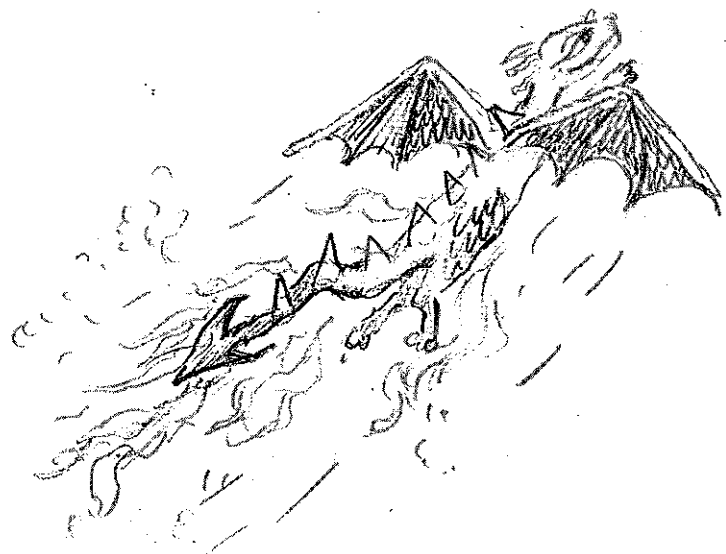
Snotlout's jaw dropped open. He looked  
thoroughly disappointed to see Hiccup very  
much alive and well. Snotlout could just about  
take Hiccup as a dead Hero, but a *living* Hiccup  
the Hero was going to be very much in the way...

Hiccup was watching the burning ship, tears  
pouring down his face.

The boat tipped and Stoick's shield and the Tooth  
fell into the water. Just as the last piece of the boat was  
about to slip beneath the waves, to be  
consumed by fire and water, the flames reared up  
about twenty foot into the sky. And, shooting out of  
those flames, wings spread wide like a Phoenix,  
trailing fire from his tail like a comet, came...  
Toothless.

He soared high, high, high into the stars, leaving  
a path of flame as he flew. He dived down, down,  
down towards the sea, and swooped up at the last  
minute, to cries of wonder from the spectators. Hiccup  
was anxious that he might be in pain, until Toothless





zoomed low enough over his head for Hiccup to hear the little dragon's rooster cry of triumph.

Whatever Toothless's faults may have been, you have to admire his sense of occasion. Common or Garden dragons are not normally known for their spectacular flying skills, but even a Common or Garden dragon on fire is a spectacle in itself.

Toothless burned through the night sky like a live firework, performing screaming fiery somersaults, and flaming loop-the-loops. The crowd, who only a moment before were expecting to mourn the deaths of both Toothless and possibly Hiccup, were now beside themselves, hysterically cheering as Toothless showered them with sparks.

At last the fire got too hot for him and Toothless plunged into the sea to extinguish himself, only to burst out again and fly straight to Hiccup's shoulder. There he acknowledged the wild applause with solemn bows to right and left, slightly spoiling his dignity with the odd 'Cock-a-doodle-doo!' of smug self-congratulation.

Stoick signalled to the crowd for silence, but only so he could boom out the following speech at full blast:

'Hooligans and Meatheads! Terrors of the Seas, Sons of Thor and most feared Masters of the Dragon! I feel humbled to present you with the most recent member of the Hooligan Tribe. I give you my son – **HICCUP THE USEFUL!**

And the words 'Hiccup the Useful' came echoing down from the hills behind and were shouted back again by the cheering crowd, and were picked up and carried on the night breeze, until the whole world seemed to be telling Hiccup that maybe he was going to be Useful after all.

And that, my friends, *that*, is the Hard Way to Become a Hero.

The Isle of Berc  
Dark Ages

DEER Professor Yobbish

I am RITing to complane  
most strongly about your book  
'How to Trane Yoor DraggOn'

Har You ever tried yelling  
at one OF those Sea Monster  
Draggons Yoorself?

Come to Berc and I will  
show you wat I mean.

Yours hott very truely,

Stöck the Vast

## Epilogue by Hiccup Horrendous Haddock the Third, the last of the Great Viking Heroes

The story doesn't end there, of course.

The nineteen boys who entered Initiation with me those many years ago were all allowed into the Hooligan and Meathead Tribes as a result of their Heroic Actions in defeating two Seadragonus Giganticus Maximus in one day. The Battle at Death's Head Headland has passed into Viking legend and will be sung about by the bards while there are still bards to sing.

Of course, there are very few bards left nowadays. What is more, few have seen a Seadragonus Giganticus Maximus since, and people are already starting to disbelieve that such a creature could have lived. Learned articles have been written, suggesting that something that large simply could not have sustained its own weight. The dragons that would be my evidence have crawled back into the sea where men

cannot follow and, what with Heroism being so unfashionable nowadays, nobody is going to believe the mere word of a Hero like myself.

But the thing about dragons – and I am a person who *knows* about dragons – is that it could very well be that they are merely *sleeping* down there in the black, black depths. There could be numberless numbers of them, all frozen in a Sleep Coma, with the unknowing fishes swimming in and out of their tentacles and hiding in their talons and laying eggs in their ears.

There may yet come a time when Heroes are needed once more.

There may yet come a time when the dragons will come back.

When that time comes, men will need to know something about how to train them and how to fight them, and I hope that this book will be more helpful to the Heroes of the Future than a certain book of the same name was to ME all those many years ago.

It is easy to forget that there were such things as these Monsters.

I forget myself sometimes, but then I look up, as I am looking up now, and I see in my mind's eye a

shield, strangely changed by a rich encrusting of jewel-like barnacles and cold-water coral, with an eight-foot tooth sticking right out of the middle of it. I reach out and the edge of that tooth is still so bitingly sharp after all these years that just a gentle brush with the fingers might send a rain of blood down on these pages. And I bend my head, not too close, and I am sure I can just hear very, very faintly:

*'Once I set the sea alight  
with a single fiery breath...  
Once I was so mighty that I thought  
my name was Death...  
Sing out loud until you're eaten,  
song of melancholy bliss,  
For the mighty and the middling  
all shall come to THIS...'*

The Supper is still singing.



Hiccup does not know it yet, but this is only the beginning of his adventures.

*There are so many questions left to be answered.*

*How had that Seadragon heard Hiccup's name before?*

*Why is Hiccup called **Hiccup**'?*

*(It doesn't seem a very Viking-ish sort of name.)*

*Why has Stoick banned the speaking of Dragonese?*

*Will Hiccup ever get to be the Chief of the Hooligan*

*Tribe? Does he have anything to do with the*

*Dragon Rebellion, which happened a few years after the story you have just read?*

*You can find out the answers to all these questions by reading the rest of the How to Train Your Dragon books starting with **How to Be a Pirate**, in which*

*Hiccup meets his arch-enemy for the first time, and finds out what happens to the*

*Lost Treasure of **Grimbeard the Ghastly**...*