

## 18. THE EXTRAORDINARY BRAVERY OF TOOTHLESS

And that would have been the end of Hiccup, if it had not been for the extraordinary bravery of a certain Toothless Daydream.

Toothless, if you remember, had refused to join in the battle at Death's Head Headland. He was intending to fly off somewhere down the coast a bit and lie low till all was safe again, but he stayed at the Highest Point for a while, terrorising birds and rabbits.

He must have been having a lovely time doing this, for he did not hear the approach of Stoick and the entire Tribes of Hooligan and Meathead until Stoick grabbed him around the neck.

'WHERE IS MY SON?' asked Stoick.

Toothless shrugged his shoulders rudely.

'WHERE IS MY SON???' bawled Stoick with an awe-inspiring yell so loud that Toothless's ears trembled.

Toothless pointed to Death's Head Headland.  
'SHOW ME,' said Stoick grimly.

Under Stoick's fierce eye, Toothless reluctantly flapped off towards Death's Head Headland, followed by the two Tribes.

They arrived just in time to see the Terrible Monster throw Hiccup high in the air and catch him in his mouth like a whelk.

So much for the Fiendishly Clever Plan, thought Toothless.

He was about to use the opportunity of Stoick's obvious distraction to sneak off to a place of safety when something stopped him.

Nobody knows what that something was.

It was a moment which changed the whole worldview of the Hooligan Tribe. For centuries we had believed it was impossible for dragons to consider a selfless thought or a generous action. But what Toothless did next is impossible to explain as being in his own best interests at the time.

All his fellow domestic dragons were now flying somewhere over the Inner Ocean. As soon as they heard Fireworm's cry of 'Desert!', those who were hiding in caves or between crevices or crouched in the ferns rose up in a great swarm and abandoned their former Masters as fast as their wings could carry them.



The wild dragons from Wild Dragon Cliff had left hours before.

But something kept Toothless from flying after them – maybe it was Stoick’s heartrendingly powerless cry of ‘N-N-NOOOOO!!!’ that caused him to pause. Or maybe somewhere in that self-centred green dragon heart of his, he really was fond of Hiccup and grateful for the hours that he had spent looking after him, not shouting at him, telling him jokes and giving him the biggest and juiciest lobsters.

‘Dragons are S-S-SELFISH,’ argued Toothless to himself. ‘Dragons are heartless and have no m-m-mercy. That’s what m-m-makes us s-s-survivors.’

Nonetheless SOMETHING made him turn right

around and SOMETHING made him fold his wings back and fly like a dragon blur to the Great Monster on the cliff tops. Which *really* was *not* in Toothless’s best interests, as I said before.

Toothless flew right up the Monster’s left nostril and started flying up and down the inside of his nose, tickling it with his wings.

The Sea Dragon lunged up and down, wrinkling his nose like crazy and bellowing.

‘A-A-A-AAAAAAAAAH...’

The Creature stuck his great talon up his nose in a disgusting fashion and tried to wrinkle out the tickling flea that was irritating him.

Toothless didn’t quite get out of the way of the talon in time and it scratched him on the chest. He hardly felt it though, he was so excited, and carried on tickling regardless, dodging the probing dragon claw.

‘A-A-A-A-A-A-A-A-A-AAAAAAAAAH...’

bellowed the Sea Dragon.

Meanwhile Hiccup was being thrown this way and that inside the Dragon’s throat as it shook its head from side to side. He was trying desperately to hang on to the spear which was in danger of becoming dislodged any second.



‘... CH000000000000!’

The Dragon finally sneezed and Hiccup, the spear, Toothless, and a great deal of perfectly revolting Snot were scattered over the surrounding countryside.

Toothless remembered, as he was shooting through the air, that boys can’t fly.

He folded his wings and dived after Hiccup, who was rapidly heading towards the ground.

Toothless grabbed hold of Hiccup by the arm and tried to take his weight. Dragons’ talons are extraordinarily strong and he was able to break Hiccup’s fall, not entirely, but enough so that when Hiccup crashed into the heather he was travelling reasonably slowly.

Stoick came plunging frantically through the grass.

He picked up his son and faced the Monster, holding his shield over Hiccup’s unconscious body.

Toothless hid behind Stoick.

The Green Death had recovered from his sneezing fit. He shuffled forwards, bleeding horribly from fatal wounds to his chest and throat. He lowered his terrible head till it was on a level with the cliff top,

and his evil, yellow eyes looked straight at Stoick.

'Time to die for *all* of us,' purred the Green Death. 'You can't save his life now, you know. You are quite, quite helpless. My FIRE will melt that shield like butter...'

The Green Death opened his mouth. He slowly sucked in a breath. Stoick tried to grab on to chunks of heather to hold them fast, but Stoick, Hiccup and Toothless were being dragged slowly but surely towards the gigantic black tunnel that was the Monster's open jaws.

The Green Death paused for a moment before he blew out again, enjoying their terror.

'This is what h-h-happens if you don't listen to the Dragon Law...' shrieked Toothless to himself in horror, as he peered round the side of Stoick's cloak.

The Monster puffed out his cheeks and Stoick and Toothless waited for flames to consume them.

But no fire came out.

The Green Death looked very surprised. He puffed out his cheeks and blew a little harder.

And again, no fire.

He tried once more, and now his head seemed to be turning a strange purplish colour with the effort

of blowing, and it seemed to be swelling, bigger and bigger, as if he was being pumped up with air from the inside.

The Monster had no idea what was happening. He thrashed around wildly and his eyes bulged larger and larger until with a bang that could be heard for hundreds of miles in every direction...

... the Green Death blew up, right in front of their eyes.

This may seem like some sort of miracle, or an intervention on the part of the gods. But in fact there is a logical explanation. When Hiccup was hanging in the Sea Dragon's throat, desperately repeating 'I need to live, I need to live' to himself, he had taken off his helmet and had plugged the horns as hard as he could into the fireholes.

It was a perfect fit.

So, when the Dragon tried to use his fire, the blockage caused a build-up of pressure that eventually grew so great that the Green Death simply exploded.

Now there were pieces of Dragon flying in all directions. Stoick and Toothless were incredibly lucky not to get hit by anything, standing as close to the

explosion as they were.

But a single, burning Dragon Tooth, eight foot long (one of the Monster's smaller ones), exploded straight towards Hiccup. The boy had been dragged out from under the shelter of Stoick's shield by the intake of the Monster's breath, and was now lying on the ground a couple of feet in front of Stoick and Toothless, completely exposed.

Stoick caught the movement of the Tooth out of the corner of his eye and flung himself and his shield forward. Only a Viking could have got there in time. Shooting woodcock with a bow and arrow develops very quick reflexes.

So Stoick's shield *did* save Hiccup's life after all. If it had not been there, the Tooth would have impaled Hiccup like a prawn on a stick. As it was, it buried itself deep, deep, deep into the bronze centre of the shield, and quivered there, blazing with green-edged Dragon flames.

Stoick lifted the shield, terrified that the Tooth might have pierced through to his son. But Hiccup was unharmed. His eyes were open and he was listening for something. He was listening for a strange sound that seemed to be coming from the flaming

tooth itself. It was the sound of wheezy, echoing singing, like the wind blowing through coral caves, and it went something like this:

*I tell the mighty Big Blue Whale,  
his life is over soon,  
With one swish of this armoured tail  
I put out the sun and moon...  
The winds and gales are quivering,  
when I begin to roar,  
The waves themselves are shivering  
and trembling back to shore...'*

'Listen,' said Hiccup, happily, just before he passed out. 'The supper is singing.'

