

take some time to digest.

The Dragon had crawled down into the depths of the ocean and gone into a Sleep Coma. Dragons can stay in this suspended state for eternity, half-dead, half-alive, buried under fathom after fathom of icy-cold seawater. Not a muscle of this particular Dragon had moved for six or seven centuries.

But the previous week, a Killer Whale who had chased some seals unexpectedly deep was surprised to notice a slight movement in the upper eyelid of the dragon's right eye. An ancestral memory stirred in the whale's brain and he swam away from there as fast as his fins could carry him. And, a week later, the sea around the Dragon Mountain – which had previously been teeming with crabs and lobsters and shoals and shoals of fish – was a great, underwater desert. Not a mollusc stirred, not a scallop shimmied.

The only sign of life for miles and miles was the rapid jerking of both the Dragon's eyelids, fluttering up and down as if the Dragon had suddenly gone into a lighter sleep and was dreaming, who knows what dark dreams.



7. TOOTHLESS WAKES UP

Toothless woke up about three weeks later. Fishlegs and Hiccup were at Hiccup's house. Everybody else was out, so Hiccup decided to take the opportunity to check on Toothless's basket. He pulled it out from under the bed. A thin plume of bluey-grey smoke was drifting out from under the lid.

Fishlegs whistled. 'He's awake all right,' said Fishlegs. 'Here we go.'

Hiccup opened the basket.

The smoke billowed out and made Hiccup and Fishlegs cough. Hiccup fanned it away. Once his eyes had stopped watering he could make out a very small, ordinary dragon looking up at him with enormous, innocent, grass-green eyes.

'Hello, Toothless¹,' said Hiccup, in what he hoped was a good accent in Dragonese.

'What are you doing?' asked Fishlegs curiously. Dragonese is punctuated by shrill shrieks and popping noises and sounds **MOST** extraordinary when spoken by a human.

¹This should, of course, read 'Howdoodoodeethere, Toothless,' but I have translated it into English for the benefit of those readers whose Dragonese is a bit rusty. Please read Hiccup's book, *Learning to Speak Dragonese*, for a crash course in this fascinating language.

LEARNING TO SPEAK DRAGONEST

Introduction

In order to train your dragon without using the traditional methods of yelling at it, you must first learn to speak Dragonese. Dragons are the only other creatures who speak a language as complicated and sophisticated as humans.

Here are some common dragon phrases to get you started:

Nee-ah crappa inna di hoosus, pishyou.
No poo-ing inside the house, please.

Mi Mama no likeit yum-yum on di bum.
My mother does not like to be bitten on the bottom.

Pishyou keendlee gobba pot mi freendlee?
Please would you be so kind as to spit my friend out?

Doit wummortime.
Let's try that again.

'Just talking to it,' mumbled Hiccup, very embarrassed.

'Just *talking* to it???' gasped Fishlegs, in astonishment. 'What do you *mean*, you're talking to it? You can't talk to it, it's an ANIMAL, for Thor's sake!'

'Oh shut up, Fishlegs,' said Hiccup, impatiently, 'you're frightening it.'

Toothless huffed and puffed and blew out some smoke rings. He inflated his neck to make himself look bigger, which is something dragons do when they are scared or angry.

Eventually he got up the courage to unfurl his wings and flap up on to Hiccup's arm. He walked his way up on to Hiccup's shoulder and Hiccup turned his face towards him.

Toothless pressed his forehead on to Hiccup's forehead and gazed deeply and solemnly into Hiccup's eyes. They stayed there, snout to nose, without moving, for about sixty seconds. Hiccup had to blink a lot because the gaze of a dragon is hypnotic and gives the unnerving feeling that it is sucking your soul away.

Hiccup was just thinking, 'Wow, this is amazing – I'm really making contact here!' when Toothless bent down and bit him on the arm.

Hiccup let out a yelp and threw Toothless off him.

'F-f-fish,' hissed Toothless, hovering in the air in front of Hiccup. 'W-w-w-want fish NOW!'

'I haven't got any fish,' said Hiccup in Dragonese, rubbing his arm. Luckily Toothless didn't have any teeth but dragons have powerful jaws so it was still painful.

Toothless bit him on the other arm. 'F-F-F-FISH!'

said Toothless again.

'Are you OK?' asked Fishlegs. 'I can't believe I'm asking this, but what's he saying?'

'He wants to eat,' replied Hiccup, grimly rubbing both arms. He tried to make his voice sound firm but pleasant; to dominate the creature by the sheer force of his personality, as Gobber had said. 'But WE HAVE NO FISH.'

'OK then,' said Toothless. 'Eat e-e-cat.'

He made a lunge for Fiddlesticks, who streaked up the nearest wall with a yowl of terror.

Hiccup just managed to grab Toothless by the

tail as he flew off in pursuit. The dragon struggled wildly, shouting 'WANT F-F-FISH NOW! WANT F-F-FOOD NOW! CATS ARE YUMMY WANT FOOD NOW!'

'We don't HAVE any fish,' repeated Hiccup, from between gritted teeth, feeling all his calmness deserting him, 'and you can't eat the cat - I like him.'

Fiddlesticks mewed indignantly from a beam high up in the roof.

They put Toothless in Stoick's bedroom, where there was a mouse problem.

For a while he was happy swooping after the desperately squeaking mice, but then he got bored and started attacking the mattress.

'STOP!' yelled Hiccup, as feathers flew in all directions.

Toothless replied by sicking up the remains of a recently deceased mouse right in the middle of Stoick's pillow.

'Aaaargh!' said Hiccup.

'AAAAAAARGH!' said Stoick the Vast, who entered the room at that very moment.

Toothless launched himself at Stoick the Vast's beard, which he mistook for a chicken.

'Get him off!' said Stoick.

'He doesn't do what I say,' said Hiccup.

'Yell VERY LOUDLY at him,' Stoick shouted, VERY LOUDLY.

Hiccup yelled as loudly as he could. 'Please will you stop eating my father's beard?'

As Hiccup had suspected, Toothless took absolutely no notice whatsoever.

I KNEW I'd be useless at yelling, thought Hiccup gloomily.

'DROPTOTHEFLOORYOUORRRIBLELITTLEREPTILE!' yelled Stoick.

Toothless dropped to the floor.

'You see?' said Stoick. '*That's* how to deal with dragons.'

Newtsbreath and Hookfang, Stoick's hunting dragons, came padding into the room. Toothless stiffened as they paced around him, their yellow eyes glinting evilly. Each was about the size of a leopard, and they were as delighted by his arrival as a couple of giant cats might be by that of a cute little kitten.

'Greetings, fellow firebreather,' hissed

Newtsbreath, as he gave the wriggling newcomer a sniff.

'We must wait,' purred Hookfang menacingly, 'until we are alone and then we can give you a proper welcome.' He gave a vicious swipe at Toothless with one paw. A claw like a kitchen knife just nicked Toothless on the rump and the little dragon howled and jumped into Hiccup's tunic, until only his tail was poking out of the neck.

'HOOKFANG!' bellowed Stoick.

'My claw slipped,' whined Hookfang.

'GEDDOUTOFHEREBEFOREIMAKEYOUINTOHANDBAGS!' yelled Stoick, and Newtsbreath and Hookfang slunk out, muttering obscene dragon curses under their breaths.

'As I was saying,' said Stoick the Vast. 'THAT'S how to deal with dragons.'

Stoick was looking at Toothless with uncharacteristic anxiety.

'Son,' said Stoick, hoping there might be some sort of mistake, 'is this dragon *your* dragon?'

'Yes, father,' Hiccup admitted.

'It's very... well... it's very... SMALL, isn't it?' said Stoick slowly.



Stoick was not an observant person but even *he* could not fail to notice that this dragon really *was* remarkably small.

‘... and it hasn’t got any teeth.’

There was an awkward silence.

Fishlegs came to Hiccup’s rescue.

‘That’s because it’s an unusual breed,’ said Fishlegs. ‘A unique and... er... violent species called the Toothless Daydream, distant relations of the Monstrous Nightmare, but far more ruthless and so rare they are practically extinct.’

‘Really?’ Stoick surveyed the Toothless Daydream doubtfully. ‘It looks just like a Common or Garden to me.’

‘Ahhh, but with respect, Chief,’ said Fishlegs, ‘that’s where you’re **WRONG**. To the amateur eye and, indeed, to its prey, it looks *exactly* like a Common or Garden. But if you look a little closer the characteristic Daydream marking’ – Fishlegs pointed to a wart on the end of Toothless’s nose – ‘marks it out from the more ordinary breed.’

‘By Thor, you’re right!’ said Stoick.

‘And it’s not just your *average* Toothless Daydream either.’ Fishlegs was getting carried away now. ‘This particular dragon is of **ROYAL BLOOD**.’

‘No!’ said Stoick, very impressed. Stoick was a terrific snob.

‘Yes,’ said Fishlegs solemnly. ‘Your son has only gone and burgled the offspring of King Daggerfangs himself, the reptilian ruler of Wild Dragon Cliff. The Royal Daydreams tend to start out small but they grow into creatures of **IMPRESSIVE** – even **GARGANTUAN** – size.’

‘Just like you, eh, Hiccup,’ said Stoick, giving a great laugh and ruffling his son’s hair.

Stoick's tummy gave out a plaintive rumble like a distant underground explosion. 'Time for a little supper, I think. Clear up this mess, will you, boys?'

Stoick strode off, relieved to have had his faith in his son restored.

'Thanks, Fishlegs,' said Hiccup. 'You were inspired.'

'Not at all,' said Fishlegs. 'I owed you one after setting you up for that fight with Snotlout.'

'Father's going to find out at some point anyway though,' said Hiccup gloomily.

'Not necessarily,' said Fishlegs. 'Look at all that talking you were doing with the Toothless Daydream here. That was **INCREDIBLE. UNBELIEVABLE.** I've never seen anything like it. You'll be training him in next to no time.'

'I was talking to him, all right,' said Hiccup, 'but he didn't listen to a word I said.'

♦ ♦ ♦

When he was going to bed that night, Hiccup didn't want to leave Toothless in front of the fire with Newtsbreath and Hookfang.

'Can I take him to bed with me?' he asked Stoick.

'A dragon is a working animal,' said Stoick the Vast. 'Too much hugging and kissing will make him lose his vicious streak.'

'But Newtsbreath will kill him if I leave him alone with them.'

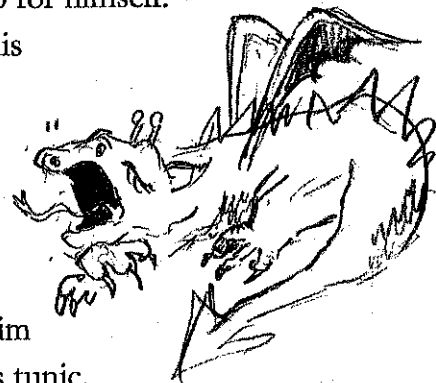
Newtsbreath gave an appreciative growl. 'It would be my pleasure,' he hissed.

'Nonsense,' boomed Stoick, unaware of Newtsbreath's last remark, as he didn't speak Dragonese. He gave Newtsbreath a friendly cuff round the horns. 'Newtsbreath just wants to play. That sort of rough and tumble is good for a young dragon. Makes him learn to stick up for himself.'

Hookfang extended his claws like flick-knives and drummed them on the hearth.

Hiccup pretended to say goodnight to Toothless by the fire, but smuggled him into the bedroom under his tunic.

'You must be absolutely quiet,' he told Toothless sternly as they climbed into bed, and the dragon nodded eagerly. In fact, he snored loudly the entire



night, but Hiccup didn't care. Hiccup spent the whole of the winter on Berk in various states of 'very cold', ranging from 'fairly chilly' to 'absolutely freezing'.

At night, too many layers were considered sissy, so Hiccup generally lay awake for a couple of hours until he had shivered himself into a light sleep.

Now though, as Hiccup stretched his feet out against Toothless's back, he felt waves of heat coming off the little dragon, gradually creeping up his legs and warming his freezing cold stomach and heart, even travelling right up to his head, which hadn't been *truly* warm for almost six months. Even his ears burned contentedly. It would have taken the snoring of six strong dragons to have woken Hiccup, so deeply did he sleep that night.



8. TRAINING YOUR DRAGON THE HARD WAY

Hiccup was still pretty certain, knowing dragons as he did, that yelling was the easiest method of training them. So, over the next couple of weeks, he tried yelling at Toothless to see if he could make it work. He tried yelling loudly, firmly, strictly. He looked as cross as he could. But Toothless wouldn't take him seriously.

Hiccup finally gave up on the yelling when Toothless stole a kipper off his plate one morning at breakfast. Hiccup let out his most fierce and frightening yell and Toothless just gave him a wicked look and knocked everything else on to the floor with one swipe of his tail.

That was it with the yelling, as far as Hiccup was concerned.

'OK, then,' said Hiccup, 'I'll try going to the other extreme.'

So he was as nice to Toothless as he possibly could be. He gave Toothless the comfiest bit of the bed and then lay dangerously balanced on the