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Opening extract from

A Hero's Guide To Deadly Dragons

Written by

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This is

HICCUP HORRENDOUS HADDOCK THE THIRD, THE HOPE AND THE HEIR TO THE HAIRY HOOLIGAN TRIBE.

Hiccup is a Viking, and is on his first year of the Pirate Training Programme, which is a bit like prison but the boys are armed and the food is TRULY DISGUSTING.

Vikings are the Terrors of the Seas, the Scourge of Civilisation, great Barbarian Warriors of the North.

But what Hiccup is is mostly WET.

It rains a lot on the Isle of Berk.

Did you know, there are 101 different words for 'rain' in the Dragonese language?

Hiccup knows them ALL.





This is Hiccup's dragon,

TOOTHLESS

He is the smallest hunting dragon anybody has ever seen. And he hasn't got any teeth. But he can still give a nasty bite with his VERY HARD gums, as you will find out if you ever try and take back the haddock he's just sneakily stolen from your plate when you weren't looking.

NEVER try and take back the haddock. You might need all *ten* of your fingers one day, for swordfighting, or learning to play the harp or something.

Sometimes Hiccup can't help wishing Toothless was a truly gigantic Monstrous Nightmare kind of dragon... but don't tell him.



This is Hiccup's father,

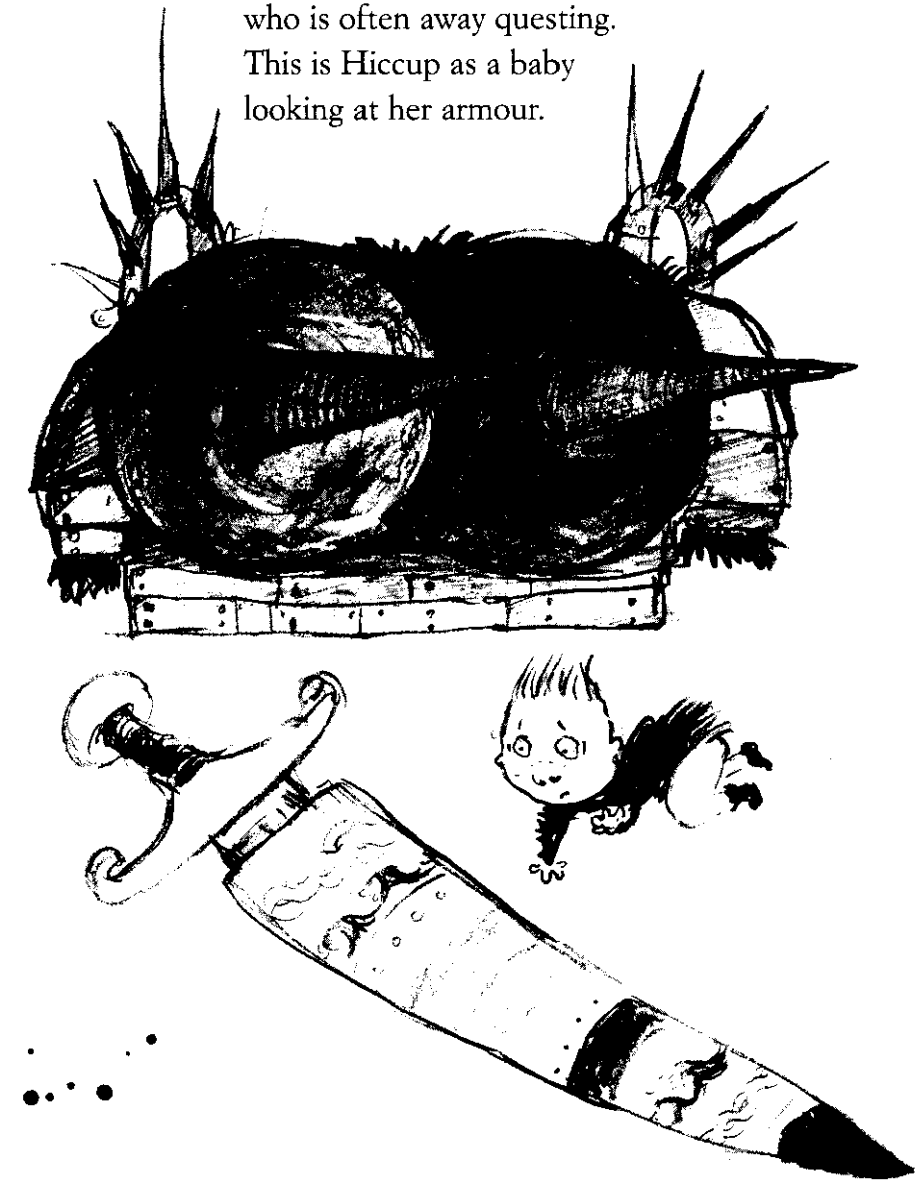
THE CHIEF of the HAIRY HOOLIGAN TRIBE, STOICK THE VAST, oh HEAR HIS NAME and TREMBLE UGH UGH



As you can see, he is tough but not all that bright.

ValHallaRama

Hiccup's mother is a great Hero who is often away questing. This is Hiccup as a baby looking at her armour.



This is Hiccup's best friend

FISHLEGS



His dragon, Horrorcow, is a normal size, but she is vegetarian and not very scary unless you happen to be a carrot.

Things Fishlegs often says in a life-threatening situation:

'For Thor's sake, I can't believe we are out here surrounded by deadly fire-breathing carnivores YET AGAIN, call me fussy but I quite fancied staying alive until I was at least twelve...'



CAMICAZI

is the daughter of Big-Boobied Bertha, the Chief of the Bog-Burglars.

Hiccup never tells her this, because Camicazi is way too pleased with

herself already, but she IS a very good swordfighter.

She is also handy at Burglary, and here she is in her Burglary Suit. Some of that equipment looks illegal.

Things Camicazi often says when swordfighting a large and scary Cannibal:

'Ooooh you're just TERRIBLE at this, really TERRIBLE... I hope you're better at eating people than you are at swordfighting, because if you're not you must be STARVING... LOOK!' (cuts a large letter C in the shirtfront of the Cannibal with the tip of her sword) 'C is for Camicazi, *and* Clumsy, Cowardly, Cockroach of a Cannibal, I could have killed you five times already, it's PATHETIC.'

You can recognise

Snotlout

from a mile off by his enormous hairy nostrils, they are GIGANTIC, you could park a Gronckle up there.



And here are some others...




Madguts the Murderous (not a nice man)
Gumboil Madguts's lovely assistant
BIG-BOOBIED BERTHA (Chief of the Bog-Burglars)
Stormfly
sniff sniff

HOW *NOT* TO CELEBRATE YOUR BIRTHDAY



Hiccup and his sword, Endeavour

Once there were dragons.

Imagine a time of DRAGONS – some larger than mountainsides, slumbering in the depths of the ocean; some smaller than your fingernail, hopping through the heather.

Imagine a time of VIKING HEROES, in which men were men and women were sort of men too and even some little babies had chest hair.

And now imagine that you are a boy called Hiccup Horrendous Haddock the Third, not yet twelve years old and not yet turning out to be the kind of Hero his father would have liked him to be. That boy of course, was really ME, but the boy I was then seems so far away to me now that I shall tell this story almost as if he were a stranger.

So, imagine that instead of being me, this stranger, this Hero-in-Waiting, is YOU.

You are small. You have red hair. You don't realise it yet, but you are about to set out on the most alarming episode of your life so far... When you are an old, old man like I am you will call it *How NOT to Celebrate Your Birthday* – and even at this distance in time it will still cause your old wrinkled arms to prickle with goose bumps as you remember the perils and dangers of that terrifying adventure...

1. AN ODD WAY TO SPEND YOUR BIRTHDAY

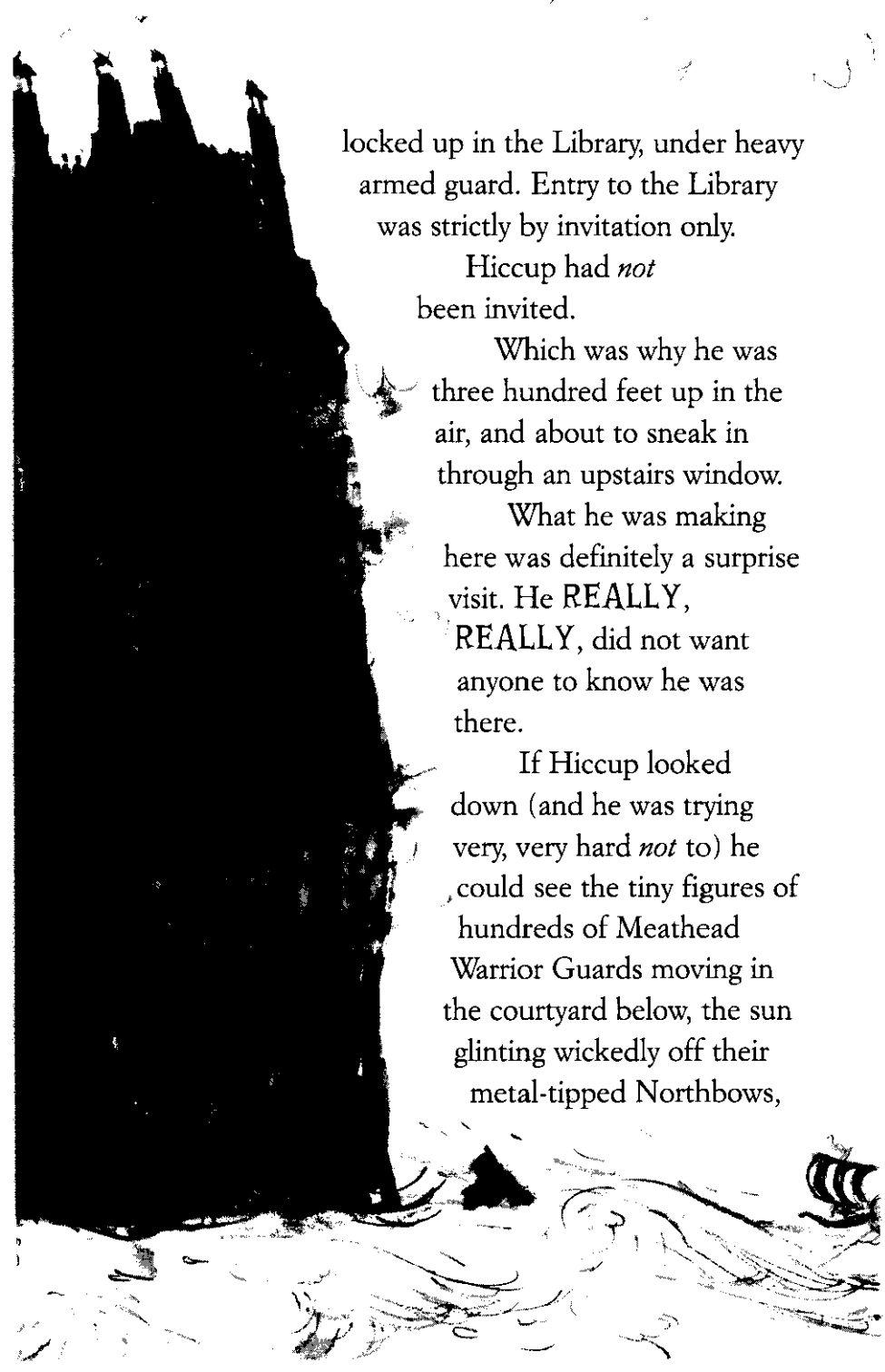
At exactly twelve o'clock a.m. on the morning of his twelfth birthday, Hiccup Horrendous Haddock the Third, the Hope and Heir to the Tribe of the Hairy Hooligans, was standing shakily on a windy, narrow window ledge three hundred feet up in the air.

Hiccup was a rather ordinary looking boy for someone with such a long and impressive name; a small-ish, thin-ish, runner-bean of a boy with bright red hair that shot straight up as if it was surprised, and a face that nobody ever remembered.

His knees were wobbling as he flattened himself against the wall.

The window ledge that he was perching on belonged to a Castle of terrifying size and spookiness which sprawled like an ugly black monster on top of the gull-shrieking cliffs of the little Isle of Forget Me.

Although this Castle was known as THE MEATHEAD PUBLIC LIBRARY, it was not, in fact, open to the general public. This was back in Viking times, when books were considered a highly dangerous civilising influence, so they were rounded up and kept



locked up in the Library, under heavy armed guard. Entry to the Library was strictly by invitation only.

Hiccup had *not* been invited.

Which was why he was three hundred feet up in the air, and about to sneak in through an upstairs window.

What he was making here was definitely a surprise visit. He REALLY, REALLY, did not want anyone to know he was there.

If Hiccup looked down (and he was trying very, very hard *not* to) he could see the tiny figures of hundreds of Meathead Warrior Guards moving in the courtyard below, the sun glinting wickedly off their metal-tipped Northbows,

their Driller-Dragons on long chains beside them. Hiccup knew that they only had to look up, and they would have no hesitation at all in shooting on sight.

Hiccup swallowed hard. He was nerving himself up to climb through the broken window and into the Library – but he didn't really want to do this, either.

Who knew WHAT could be hidden in that dark maze of rooms, a labyrinth so huge that you could be lost in there for weeks without a soul ever finding you?

Whatever *else* was in there, Hiccup knew that somewhere in that terrifying book-warren there prowled the Hairy Scary Librarian himself, the half-blind, half-dumb Guardian of the Library.

Master Swordsman, Mathematical Genius and an all-round scary individual, the Hairy Scary Librarian showed no mercy to Intruders.

Hiccup had heard him at gatherings of the Tribes, boasting of how he finished off foolish Warriors who dared to try and find out the Library's secret with one slash of his swords, which he called his 'Heart-Slicers'.

'I croaks them with me Heart-Slicers,' he would whisper, with the

firelight flickering on his undead eyes. 'I unzips them from their goggle-screams to their grub-washers.' Then he would make a nasty swiping motion from his throat down to his belly button. 'Serves them right – NOBODY borrows books from MY Library and lives to tell the tale.'

And if the Hairy Scary Librarian was scary even on a social occasion, when you were sitting down at a cosy campfire with the rest of the Tribe all comfortably settled around you, how much scarier still was he when he was doing his business, lurking like a spider round every corner of his spooky Library, his Heart-Slicers at the ready?

Particularly when, like Hiccup, you had come to the Library not just to stroll about, but to actually STEAL one of the precious books and take it home with you.

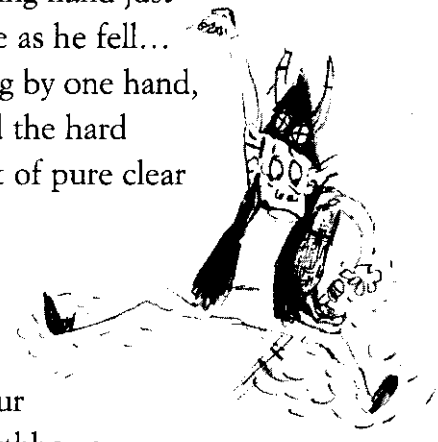
At that moment, a small wild dragon happened to fly past the spot where Hiccup was perching. Hiccup followed it automatically with his eyes. 'Lesser-Spotted Squirrelserpent,' Hiccup said to himself. And as the little dragon soared, free and careless, with nothing to do and nowhere to go, into the bright blue sky, Hiccup thought to himself: *What AM I doing? This is my BIRTHDAY, for Thor's sake. I should be*



sitting at home enjoying myself instead of risking my neck three hundred feet up a Library of Doom... What AM I DOING? HOW DID I GET MYSELF INTO THIS MESS IN THE FIRST PLACE? *NOTHING could possibly be worse than this.*

And at that moment, Hiccup was so busy with this thought and with watching the Lesser-Spotted Squirrelserpent wheeling through the air in a lazy arc, that he lost concentration, and his foot slipped on the crumbly edge of the window. And with a smothered shriek, he fell off the ledge.

He fell off the ledge entirely, arms and legs scrabbling wildly, and one flailing hand just caught on to the window ledge as he fell... and held – leaving him hanging by one hand, with nothing between him and the hard ground but three hundred feet of pure clear air. Hiccup screamed again.



Down below on the battlements, the heads of four hundred Meathead Guards tipped upwards to look. All four hundred reached for their Northbows.

And, floating up to Hiccup as he swung from the ledge with one hand, came the ominous sound of the Driller-Dragons setting their drills a-whirring.

2. SPINACH WITH YOUR DRIFTWOOD?

We'll just leave Hiccup hanging off the window-frame, shall we, while we go back and discover exactly how he got himself into this mess in the first place.

When Hiccup had woken up at seven o'clock that morning, he had absolutely no idea of what he would be doing only five hours after.

He was rather excited, because it was his birthday, and although he was twelve years old, in fact technically speaking it was only his THIRD birthday, for Hiccup had been born on the 29th of February, a Leap Year.

His first thought, when he woke up, was to make a wish. And this wish was, 'Please, Thor, could you make this a nice, quiet, PEACEFUL day? No shipwrecks, no storms, no close encounters with homicidal villains with hooks for hands, or with the deadlier type of dragon? Just for my birthday?'

From this you may gather that peaceful days in the Archipelago were few and far between, and the life of a would-be Viking Hero was exciting, if exhausting.

Hiccup got up, and spent some time persuading

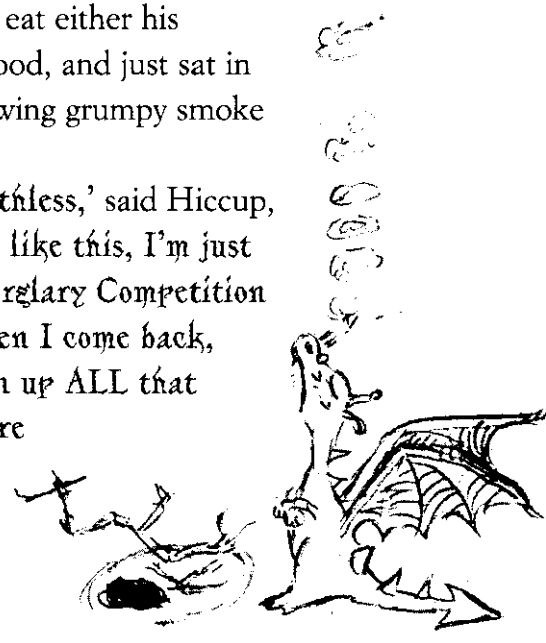
his pet dragon, Toothless, to eat a healthy breakfast.

Dragons are supposed to eat plenty of vegetables, and, weirdly, lots of WOOD, small branches, twigs, the bark of trees. This seems to help their fire-breathing, and this is very important because a dragon who can't breathe fire gets very sick indeed, and eventually explodes.

Toothless was a rather disobedient Common-or-Garden dragon, unusual only in that he was a lot smaller than all the other boys' dragons. He hadn't eaten his wood for weeks, and now he absolutely refused to eat either his spinach or his driftwood, and just sat in front of his plate blowing grumpy smoke rings.

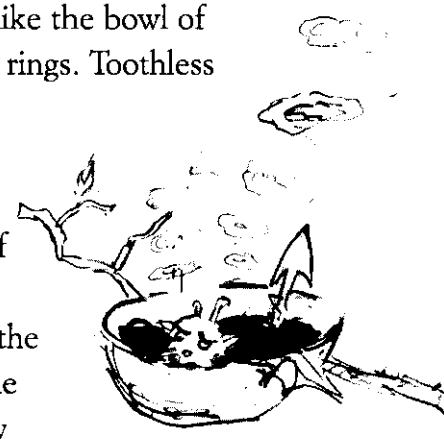
'OK, then, Toothless,' said Hiccup, 'if you're going to be like this, I'm just going to go to the Burglary Competition without you. But when I come back, you better have eaten up ALL that driftwood or else there will be NO HADDOCK.'

'You is a very m-m-mean Master,'



said Toothless with dignity, 'and your heart is made out of bogeys.'*

In a big sulk, he climbed back into the bowl of spinach and sank down into it, like a very small crocodile into a mudbank. Only his nose and tail were showing, so it looked like the bowl of spinach was blowing smoke rings. Toothless swished his tail and spinach sprayed everywhere.



Hiccup went off to the Pick-Pocketing Finals of the Burglary Competition.

A nearby Tribe called the Bog-Burglars was visiting the Hooligans, and the Burglary Competition had been carrying on for the previous three days. The Bog-Burglars were frighteningly good in the Burglary Department, as their name suggests. They had already won the Sheep-Rustling Competition on the first day, and the Narrowboat-Nicking Competition on the second day.

This was the final day of the Competition, the Pick-Pocketing Challenge, and the Hooligans needed to win this to salvage some pride.

Unfortunately the Bog-Burglars were just as good

* Hiccup and Toothless were speaking in Dragonese, the language that dragons speak to each other. There have been very, very few humans over the centuries who have been able to speak this interesting language, and Hiccup was one of them.

at pick-pocketing as they were at everything else, and yet again the Hooligans were thoroughly beaten in the match.

Hiccup had a particularly gloomy time in the Competition. Not only did he completely FAIL in the Burglary department, but his unpleasant cousin, Snotlout, had made some very sneering remarks about his birthday in front of everybody else: 'So the ickle baby Hiccup is three years old today, is he?' he had jeered. 'Trust a WEIRDO like you, Hiccup, to be born on the WEIRDEST day of the year... and bad luck for us that a FAILURE like you was ever born at all. If it wasn't for you, I would be the next Chief of the Hooligan Tribe, and a very brilliant and violent Chief I would be too... Burgle his shirt, Dogsbreath!'

And Snotlout's sidekick Dogsbreath the Duhbrain, a brute of a boy with a ring through his nose and very limited communication skills, had removed Hiccup's shirt, and smooshed him into the mud.

'Everybody else may be *celebrating* your birthday at this Birthday Banquet this evening,' Snotlout had snarled, 'but *I* am wearing BLACK, because I am *mourning* the fact that you were ever born at all... Have a Miserable Third Birthday, Hiccup THE USELESS!'

It was all very depressing.

A disappointed, dishevelled, and mud-splattered Hiccup got back again three hours later, with his friends Fishlegs and Camicazi.

Fishlegs was a Hooligan like Hiccup, but he looked more like a daddy-long-legs with asthma and a squint. Camicazi was a very small, blonde Bog-Burglar, and she had hair as untouched by human hand as parts of the Amazonian rainforest.

Despite her size, Camicazi was PARTICULARLY good at pick-pocketing, and she was carrying five Hooligan daggers, three Hooligan helmets of various different sizes, and a pair of Stoick the Vast's hairy underpants.

'I can't THINK how you got them off him without him noticing,' Hiccup was saying, with reluctant admiration. Stoick the Vast was Hiccup's father, a classic Viking of the traditional 'large and terrifying' type. 'He's going to hit the roof when he finds out...'

'Oh it was easy peasy lemon-squeezy,' boasted Camicazi, carelessly twiddling one of the daggers. (If Camicazi had a fault, it was that she *did* have a tendency to be rather pleased with herself.) 'He can't see a thing through that beard of his. I could have taken the shirt and the trousers off him as well if I'd wanted to.'