

13. WHEN YELLING DOESN'T WORK

The Dragon slept on as the Council of War argued about what to do next.

'I am going to write a strongly-worded letter to Professor Yobbish,' said Stoick the Vast. 'This book needs a lot more WORDS to tell you what to do if yelling doesn't work.'

Which shows how cross Stoick was – he never wrote a letter if he could help it.

Stoick, in fact, was really rattled, for the first time in his life.

This is what comes of not following the Law, he thought to himself. If I had banished the boys last night like I should have done, they would not be here to die with the rest of us. I should have put my trust in Thor.

Mogadon the Meathead had not yet realised the gravity of the situation. He thought it was a question of constructing some sort of megaphone machine to make the Yell sound bigger.

'A gigantic dragon just needs a gigantic Yell,'

he said.

'We already TRIED that, O Plankton Brain,' said Stoick.

'WHO ARE YOU CALLING PLANKTON BRAIN?' demanded Mogadon and they went whisker to whisker like a couple of furious walruses.

Hiccup sighed and walked out of the village.

He had a feeling the grown-ups weren't going to come up with anything fiendishly clever.

To Hiccup's surprise he was followed, not only by Fishlegs but by all the Novices from both the Hooligan AND the Meathead tribes.

They stood around Hiccup in a semi-circle.

'So, Hiccup,' said Thuggory the Meathead.

'What are we going to do now, then?'

'Whaddyamean by asking HICCUP?' demanded Snotlout crossly. 'You're not going to ask THE USELESS to get us out of this mess, are you? He just single-handedly got us all to fail the Final Initiation Test. We were about to be banished and eaten by cannibals all because of HIM. He can't even control a dragon the size of an earwig!'

'Can YOU talk to dragons then, Snotface?' asked Fishlegs.

'I am pleased to say I cannot,' said Snotlout, with dignity.

'Well, shut up, then,' said Fishlegs.

Snotlout got hold of Fishlegs by the arm and started twisting.

'Nobody, but **NOBODY**, tells **SNOTFACE SNOTLOUT** to shut up,' hissed Snotlout.

'I do,' said Thuggory the Meathead. He grabbed Snotlout by the shirt and lifted him clear off the ground. 'YOUR dragon got us failed just as much as HIS. I didn't notice *anybody's* dragon sitting up and begging like a good boy in the middle of that dragon-fight. YOU shut up or I will tear you limb from limb and feed you to the gulls, you winkle-hearted, seaweed-brained, limpet-eating **PIG**.'

Snotlout looked into Thuggory's stern little eyes.

Snotlout shut up.

Thuggory dropped him and wiped his hands disdainfully on his tunic. 'Anyway,' said Thuggory, 'MY father was on that stupid Council of Elders too. I'm with Hiccup. What kind of father puts his stupid Laws before the life of his son? And what kind of stupid Test was that, anyway? If we save all those stupid people from a **REAL** dragon like this one, maybe



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they'll let us into their stupid Tribe after all.'

WELL, WELL, WELL, thought Hiccup. *This is a turn up for the books. Maybe that Dragon was right and he is going to help me with my It's-Hard-to-Be-a-Hero problem. Before he eats me, of course.*

One solo meeting with the Green Death and here were nineteen young barbarians, most of them much bigger and tougher and rougher than Hiccup, looking at Hiccup expectantly to tell them what to do.

Hiccup stood on tiptoe and tried to look like a Hero.

'OK,' said Hiccup. 'I need some time to think.'

'GIVE THE BOY SOME ROOM HERE!' yelled Thuggory, pushing all the others back.

He swept off a rock for Hiccup to sit on.

'You just do all the thinking you need, boyo,' said Thuggory. 'This is a situation that needs a lot of thought and I have a feeling you're the only one here who can do it. Anybody who can have a twenty minute conversation with a winged shark the size of a planet and come out of it alive is a better thinker than I am.'

Hiccup found himself warming to Thuggory the Meathead.

'QUIET!' yelled Thuggory. 'HICCUP IS THINKING.'

Hiccup thought.

And thought.

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After about half an hour, Thuggory said: 'Whatever you're thinking about to get rid of that monster better work for both of them.'

'There's ANOTHER Dragon?' asked Hiccup.

Thuggory nodded.

'I went up to the Highest Point and spotted him while you were having your chat with the Big Green One.'

'OK,' said Hiccup. 'That's good news, actually. Let's check out the new Horror.'

The trail up to the Highest Point was littered with scallop shells and dolphin's bones thrown up by the gigantic storm. Along the way they even passed the wreck of one of Stoick's favourite ships, *The Pure Adventure*, lost at sea seven years before, and now perched crazily on a rock three quarters of the way up the biggest hill on Berk.

Once you were right at the top it was possible to see most of Berk's coastline and the sea encircling you

on all sides. Right at the other end of the island, a Dragon entirely filled up Unlandable Cove and spilled over the sides.

He was resting his vast, wicked chin on the cliff as a pillow. Great plumes of violet smoke were belching out of his snoring nostrils.

He was another Seadragonus Giganticus Maximus, this time a glorious deep purple in colour and, if anything, slightly larger than the one at Long Beach.

'The Purple Death, I presume,' whispered Hiccup, shakily. 'This is just what we need. Are you sure there aren't any more?'

Thuggory laughed, slightly hysterically. 'I think it's just the two nightmare killing-machines. Two not enough for you?'

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Back at the Highest Point, Hiccup outlined his Plan of Action.

It was Fiendishly Clever – if a bit desperate.

'We aren't big enough to fight these dragons,' said Hiccup, 'but they *can* fight EACH OTHER. We have to get them *really* angry at one another. We Hooligans will concentrate on the Green Death and

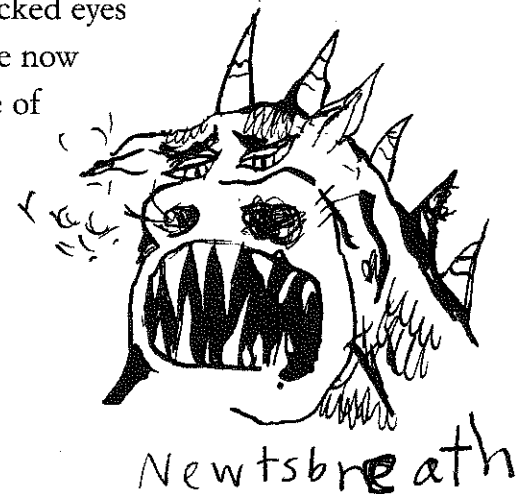
you Meatheads will deal with the Purple Death.

'The one thing we will need is our own dragons, who seem to have disappeared,' said Hiccup, 'so we'd better start calling for them.'

They started calling for their dragons, as loudly as they dared, and then louder still as there was no response.

The twenty dragons that belonged to the Novices were not, in fact, very far away at all. They had made up after the dragon-fight and were now hiding in a piece of boggy bracken about a hundred yards or so away from where the boys were standing on the Highest Point. They were crouching like giant cats in the ferns, wicked eyes

gleaming. They were now so exactly the shade of a clump of bracken that they seemed to have melted entirely into the bog. If you had been a rabbit or a deer you would not have noticed them



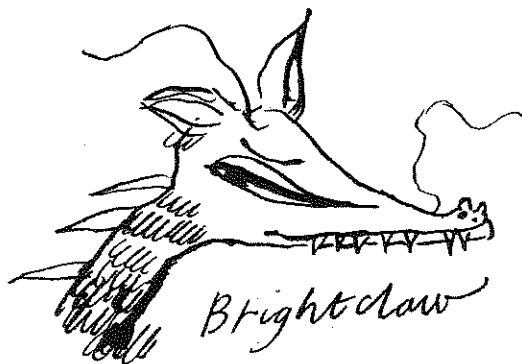
until you felt the talons on your back and the hot fire on your neck.

They had been following the boys for a while.

'So,' whispered Fireworm, her tongue flickering menacingly. 'What do we do now then? The power is shifting on this island. The Masters will not be Masters for much longer. They are trapped, like lobsters in a pot. We are not. We can fly whenever we want. Do we obey or do we desert?'

Dragons are not the sort of creatures to back a loser.

'Whatever we do,' grumbled Brightclaw, 'let's do it QUICKLY, my wings are freezing up.'



'We could kill the boys now and take them as an offering to the New Master,' suggested Seaslug,

with a grunt of greedy pleasure.

'What, that great green Devil on the beach?' said Horrocow placidly. 'I don't like the look of him, myself. He has too big an appetite. We might find ourselves as the next offering.'

'We fly, then,' said Brightclaw, and the others murmured their agreement.

'S-s-silence,' hissed Fireworm. 'These islands are perilous,' she sneered. 'We might fly from one danger straight into the mouth of another. I say we obey, until we are sure that they have lost. When that time comes I will give the signal for us to desert.'

And so, as if from nowhere, Fireworm and Seaslug, Horrocow and Killer, Brightclaw and Alligatiger and all the other dragons flew out of their hiding-place and came circling slowly up to the Highest Point, landing on each boy's outstretched arm.

Last of all came Toothless, complaining horribly. 'Dragons...' said Hiccup.

And he explained the Fiendishly Clever Plan.