Inspired by the Netflix series, Dragons: Race to the Edge. Right from season 3, episode 8: "Stryke Out".

Toothless and Hiccup are accidentally caught in a Dragon Hunter Trap and find themselves in a gladiator-style arena.

#DFHTTYD26

Notes

This comes from my own 'what if' question of: What if the Dragon Hunters are actually competent? What happens if Hiccup and Toothless aren't saved right away? What will the hunters do to them? It gets really dark. I already have a draft written, so I know where this is going to go. Rated Explicit for future chapters.

Also, while I was watching this series, I thought that the riders were underage, maybe 16, but when they interact with Gustav, who is 16, they distance themselves and claim they are older. So, in my mind, all the riders are at least 18, so I have not included the underage tag because of that. Tags may be added as the story goes on, but this is all I can think of. The rape tag is
also for a later chapter.

EDIT: I uploaded an edited version of ch. 1, cause I know I can do better.

See the end of the work for more notes.
Hiccup started a tally three days after he realized that the other riders weren’t saving him right away. The tally is up to 15 now. He expected the other riders to find him the same day Toothless and him were taken. After all, he was with Snotlout and he went for help right away. And Heather’s with them now. She knows so much more about the inner workings of the Dragon Hunters that she should be able to track them down. Hiccup is exhausted now. He didn’t bother saving his energy and spent the first week here antagonizing the guards and setting up elaborate escapes that (looking back) never had a chance in hell at working. It doesn’t help that they are only fed every few days and get one bucket of fresh water a day to share. The dragons don’t understand the concept of rationing, so any food or water is consumed before Hiccup can find a safe place to keep it. He always manages to get some for himself, but it’s not enough.

Toothless has been thrown into more fights. His protective instincts are working in overdrive at the sight of another dragon, even the ones locked up with them. They don’t challenge Toothless, content to stay in their corners when Toothless gets tossed back into their cell. Otherwise, they worry over Hiccup, since he’s helped ease some of their suffering. It’s not enough, but the small show of humanity has earned their trust. Hiccup hates how he can’t help Toothless. He comes back from his fights with more cuts and that inhuman muzzle on his head. The muzzle is poorly maintained; it’s dry and cracked and chafing against Toothless’ scales. Hiccup hates the sores that he can see peeking out underneath the leather. Toothless doesn’t seem to notice them, more focused on the manacle around Hiccup’s leg. The heavy manacle has chafed the skin under Hiccup’s boot, and it’s too tight for the rider to look it over. He doesn’t walk much, so it’s not as bad at the sores that Toothless has, he’s sure.

The hunters haven’t made Toothless fight every day, but he’s fought more than the other dragons in their cell. The hunters are ruthless and careless with the dragons. And it shows beyond the open hatred they show the Vikings. The dragons’ scales are dull from malnutrition, they’re agitated from being caged, and they all have scars. Hiccup tries not to think about the Gronckle that didn’t come back on day nine, and that the Nadder got a deep gouge across her left eye on day twelve. Now, the wound has somewhat healed, but the dragon’s eye is pale and Hiccup suspects that she’s blind in that eye. It hasn’t gotten infected, luckily. Toothless hasn’t come back with any deep cuts, but he has come back bleeding before.

Toothless hasn’t killed another dragon though, despite how unhappy the crowd is. He’s either knocked his opponent out, or he’s forced the other dragon into submission. Without death ending his fights, the novelty of having a Night Fury has faded. The hunters are desperate to get as much gold as they can for Toothless before he’s killed. They agitate him, hoping that any anger the dragon feels will be transferred to his opponent. Hiccup knows that Toothless is more likely to take a bite out of one of the hunters than another dragon. Toothless is just a dragon, but he’s smarter than what the hunters are giving him credit for. Hiccup can only watch Toothless’ fights now. The dragons are savage and desperate, and the fights are too horrific to stomach. Hiccup can’t believe that people pay for this, and that they bring their children here.

The sun is starting to set and the dragons are getting antsy. The dragons, save for Toothless, are pacing around the cell and watching the door. Toothless has his head in Hiccup’s lap. His eyes closed, but his ears are moving. Hiccup is scratching the Night Fury’s head, mindful of the sores. Hiccup can hear people muttering outside. That’s a sure sign there’ll be a fight, but there’s no way to know who will be dragged into the ring. Toothless’ head snaps up and he’s staring at the door when it swings open. The other dragons flinch and bare their teeth. Toothless growls. The hunter that comes in has an ugly smile on his face. The one that follows him, axe in hand, watches the dragons
warily. “What do you want?” Hiccup spits, hating that the hunter is looking right at him with that stupid smile.

Toothless stands up and puts himself between Hiccup and the hunter. Hiccup stands up as well, ankle twinging under his weight. There’s definitely a sore there. “Sit down, runt. It’s the Night Fury’s turn tonight,” the hunter sneers, coming towards Toothless without any fear. He grabs onto the muzzle and starts dragging Toothless out of the cell. Toothless starts to dig in his heels, but the muzzle cuts into the sores and he moves along.

“Stop it! You’re hurting him!” Hiccup yells, lunging at the hunter. He pushes at him and the hunter stumbles, probably because he didn’t expect Hiccup to have any strength. Toothless growls, but is grabbed by the other hunter and dragged out before he can do anything else. Hiccup tries to go after the other hunter, but the first hunter backhands the rider hard across the face. Hiccup goes to the floor, vision swimming. The hunter grabs the front of his shirt and pulls him off the ground, holding Hiccup inches from his face. Hiccup can’t focus on his face, but he can smell his breath and feel it across his face.

“Hope you said goodbye to your pet. He’s dying tonight.” Hiccup’s vision focuses enough to see the cruel smile on the hunter’s face. He tosses Hiccup to the ground, kicking him for good measure. He doesn’t get good contact, but Hiccup is too exhausted to do anything more than take it. “Maybe we’ll bring him back, even if he loses.”

Tears prickle in the corners of Hiccup’s eyes, but he doesn’t cry. He stares at the ground, listening to the hunter laugh himself out and the door slam behind him. The lock clicks and Hiccup curls in on himself. He needs a moment to collect himself. He doesn’t want to lose his best friend like this. The Nadder rushes to his side and starts nuzzling him. She’s trilling to comfort him, and it works. At least a little bit. “Don’t worry, girl. I’m ok,” he tries to assure her, despite how shaky his voice is. He gets his feet underneath him and uses the Nadder for balance. She roosts next to him, allowing him to lean on her and purring. He scratches her neck and smiles at her. She nuzzles him, relaxing under his touch.

Hiccup relaxes as well, until he hears the roar of the crowd. He scrambles to the grate in time to see a hunter lumber into the center of the arena. The crowd cheers when the hunter throws his hands into the air. He looks too happy. “Good evening, Viking lads and ladies! Our fight tonight is the Night Fury—“ The crowd applauds politely and some lean into the dome, trying to see the elusive dragon. Toothless is already in the ring, muzzle off and tied down. He looks so tired. “—Versus the Triple Stryke!” The applause is loud. Hiccup can’t see the dragon, but he can hear it growling and snarling nearby. “The Triple Stryke has won his last four fights and is thirsty for more!” The crowd roars, excited. The hunter unties Toothless and rushes out of the ring before Toothless can react.

He’s looking at the door the hunter disappeared behind when the door to the Triple Stryke’s cage is opened. The dragon stumbles out, finding its feet after snarling at the ground. Hiccup’s stomach sinks. The Triple Stryke is in frenzy. It’s attracted to the noise of the crowd first, jumping towards the cage of the dome and snapping at the Vikings. The crowd cheers and screams, agitating the dragon further. Toothless isn’t moving. He looks shocked to see the Triple Stryke. The Night Fury is not prepared to fight at all.

Once the Triple Stryke realizes that it can’t get to the Vikings, it turns its attention back to the arena. He spots Toothless and rushes at him, teeth bared. Toothless dodges, barely jumping into action. He’s not moving fast at all, his exhaustion clear. At the start of their imprisonment, Hiccup wouldn’t be worried about Toothless being able to win. He is now. Toothless’ moves are lethargic and he is too slow to attack. The only move he has is backing away from the Triple Stryke’s attacks.
Toothless backs himself against a wall. The Triple Stryke lunges and Toothless manages to jump out of the way. The Triple Stryke runs face first into the wall, right where Toothless was. It appears to anger the Triple Stryke and its attacks become more vicious. Toothless has less time to dodge the attacks. Then, Hiccup sees it happening in slow motion; the Triple Stryke attacks with its claws, forcing Toothless to dodge one way, and the Triple Stryke’s tail comes in from the other direction, a straight shot for 'Toothless' face. Toothless sees the attack too late and takes the hit right to his chin. He gets knocked onto his back. “No!” Hiccup yells, hands tightening on the grate in front of him. He pulls at the metal, like he could get into the ring himself and do something.

Toothless is dazed by the hit and doesn’t move to cover his belly. The Triple Stryke snaps its tail together, the click sounding so final in Hiccup’s ears. The tail goes up, the pointed end aimed towards Toothless' exposed underbelly. The crowd cheers loudly, standing up from their seats and clamoring for the best view. “TOOTHLESS!” Hiccup screams, his voice cracking from the volume. That gets Toothless’ attention and the Night Fury looks towards Hiccup. He looks tired and resigned. “TOOTHLESS!” Hiccup screams again. He can't think of anything else to say, he can’t look away. The Nadder screeches beside him, loud enough that Hiccup’s ears start ringing. He doesn’t know when she joined him at the grate, but Hiccup doesn’t care right now. The screech causes a wave of groans to ripple through the crowd and jerks the attention of the Triple Stryke. The end of the Triple Stryke’s tail collides with the ground with a loud thump.

Hiccup collapses to his knees, sobbing in relief, each sob torn from his throat and leaving him breathless. The Triple Stryke hasn’t moved, but it shakes its head. The only sound is coming from Hiccup, the crowd waiting with baited breath for the dragon to move again. They only start making noise when the Triple Stryke steps back and studies Toothless. It doesn’t look aggressive anymore. Hiccup grips the front of his shirt, over his heart. It’s racing under his hand and he can't breathe. The Triple Stryke growls inquisitively at Toothless, who responds with his own rumble, and then it nuzzles Toothless, as if in apology. Toothless relaxes and the crowd starts booing. They throw their garbage into the arena, aiming for the dragons.

The Triple Stryke turns its back on Toothless and stands over the Night Fury, snapping and growling at the crowd. Toothless doesn’t get off the ground. Hiccup watches Toothless. The dragon blinks slowly at Hiccup then closes his eyes. It’s too much like the first time they met.

Something creaks and the arena starts to fill with purple gas. Hiccup continues to cry at the grate, not bothering to move when the bitter gas starts to seep into the cell. The Nadder screeches and runs from the purple cloud. He continues to watch Toothless until he starts choking on the gas. He fights against the sleepiness he feels to watch the dragons. The Triple Stryke fights the drugs too, but eventually stumbles and collapses onto the ground. Toothless doesn’t move off the ground, a dark lump through the gas. It’s all Hiccup sees until he finally falls asleep.
DAY SIXTEEN AND TWENTY-FOUR

Chapter Summary

Hiccup wakes up and he doesn't know where they are.

Chapter Notes

So i posted an edited version of ch.1. hopefully it's a little better written and more enjoyable. Check it out if you want! It has all the same information, just better presented!

I am also going to keep you informed of how much time has passed with the titles of the chapters, but Hiccup will not know how long it's been. It's just so you can get an idea of how much time has actually passed.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hiccup wakes up with the swaying motion of a ship. His head hurts and his mouth is dry. He sits up and looks around, trying to get his eyes to focus. It’s hard to see anything. He’s beneath the deck of a ship, the only light coming in from the cracks in the ceiling. He can hear people tromping around above him and water lapping at the sides of the ship. Their voices are deep, but Hiccup can’t make out what they’re saying. Under that noise, Hiccup can hear heavy breathing that rumbles like thunder.

Hiccup crawls blindly towards the sound. He runs into a lump in the darkness. It’s radiating heat and expanding like it’s breathing. Hiccup tries to focus all his attention to it. The lump is darker than the shadows. Hiccup runs his hands over it, feeling familiar scales, and relaxes. “Hey, bud,” he whispers, voice cracking. The scales are drier than they should be. Hiccup puts his ear against the lump, listening to its breathing and heartbeat. It moves under his head and Hiccup can feel tears falling out of the corners of his eyes.

The breathing is almost even and the heartbeat is strong. Hiccup knows it’s Toothless. He relaxes further against the dragon, his ear against Toothless’ side. They aren’t safe yet, but they’re together, and that’s all that matters. He drifts off, matching his breathing with Toothless’ and dreams about flying.

Hiccup is weak by the time they dock. He doesn’t know how long they’ve been at sea, but the hunters have been giving them fresh water a couple of times. It’s so dark that Hiccup has no idea what time it is, or how many days have passed. He just knows that they haven’t had food since they were in that cell. Toothless isn’t any better. He’s barely moved the entire time, only moving to nuzzle close to Hiccup and do his business in a corner. The smell isn’t great, but they don’t have another choice.

So, when they dock, Hiccup falls over from the sudden movement. Instead of the sound of water
lapping at the ship, he can hear people talking and the call of sea birds. Relief rushes through Hiccup, they’re not in the middle of the sea anymore. Light floods into the cage and Hiccup squints, not used to the brightness. Toothless growls beside him. Shadows are cut into the light and manifest into two Dragon Hunters. Hiccup can’t see their faces, but he knows they look smug. He can feel it. “Are ya gonna behave, or we gonna have to knock ya out?” one of them asks.

Hiccup grits his teeth. He doesn’t want to be knocked out again, but he doesn’t want to go quietly either. Toothless is next to him, growling at the hunters, but Hiccup can only see his wounds. The sores on Toothless’ face, where the muzzle had been, looks to be getting infected. There are scratches over the dragon’s body and he looks shaky on his feet. Hiccup knows that if he decided to, Toothless would fight alongside him until the bitter end. He wants nothing more than to kick up a fuss, but Toothless is shaking from standing. Toothless is also missing his tailfin and saddle, so there’s no way that they could escape whatever island they’re on even if they manage to fight their way past the hunters. “We’ll go quietly,” Hiccup choke out, hating himself for giving in, but he needs time to form a plan. Toothless stops growling and looks at Hiccup, whining in confusion. Hiccup rubs Toothless’ nose and whispers, “Just for now, bud. We can’t get away yet.”

“Good,” the hunter opens the cage, stepping forwards with a length of rope in his hands, “Get up.” Hiccup stands slowly, leaning heavily on Toothless for balance. His legs shake underneath him and his ankle hurts. He stumbles when the hunter pulls him forwards and ties his hands together. Toothless growls warningly, but the hunter isn’t fazed. He tugs Hiccup along, not caring that the rider has trouble finding his feet. “Come on. We don’t have all day.”

They don’t tie Toothless up. He follows Hiccup, offering some balance when it looks like Hiccup might fall flat on his face. The other hunter follows behind them without a word. Hiccup tries not show his limp; he doesn’t want to give these guys anything that they can use against him. Going up the stairs is a challenge in itself, but the hunter will not be slowed down.

The sunlight blinds Hiccup once they reach the deck. The dock that they’re docked to isn’t too busy. It looks like just hunters come in and out of this port. Some pause whatever they’re doing to watch their tiny procession. Hiccup hates every single one of them for watching this happen. He tries to focus on something else, so he doesn’t try to do something stupid, like escaping when he can’t even walk without stumbling every few feet.

He looks into the sky and sees the sun in the middle of it. How long have they been out on the water? How far away are they from the Dragons Edge? How far are they away from Berk? Does Stoick know that Hiccup’s missing? Knowing his team, they’d try to find him on their own. It makes sense, since Berk is a day’s ride away and Hiccup’s sure that they went the other way. He wonders how long it took for them to tell Stoick? If they told him. After a few days, they were probably scared of Stoick’s reaction at not being notified immediately about his son being taken. Can anyone even track him this far? Maybe Skullcrusher can.

The space they move through looks like a market of some kind, and there are people who don’t look like hunters that work the booths. What is this place? Do regular Vikings live here? Is this a settlement? He doesn’t have much time to ponder that before he’s lead into an underground tunnel. It’s large, big enough for a full grown Nightmare, even a Titan wing, to move through with ease. The lighting is minimal, coming from the lanterns that line the walls. When Hiccup focuses, he can see that those aren’t flames in the lanterns, but Fireworms. Their glow is alarmingly dim and Hiccup wonders if they’re being cared for. His stomach turns when he realizes that no, they aren’t. Hunters aren’t known for taking care of dragons that they don’t plan to sell.

Hiccup is led into another cell and untied. Toothless follows, putting himself between Hiccup and the hunters while the hunter leaves them in their cell. They are alone in this cell. The cell door slams shut
with a final *thud*. Toothless stays on his feet, watching the door until the hunters’ footsteps fade away. He pushes Hiccup to the far wall, keeping himself between his rider and the door, and collapses at Hiccup’s feet. Hiccup sits down, rubbing over Toothless’ head. The dragon’s breathing is uneven and heavy, like the trek was too much. Hiccup settles down so there’s no pressure on his injured ankle, and takes Toothless’ head in his lap. Toothless trills and nuzzles Hiccup. “I know, bud.” He scratches Toothless under his jaw and the dragon goes boneless in his lap. “We’ll figure this out. Just rest. I’ll take care of you.” Toothless is already snoring.

Hiccup blinks hard to soothe the stinging in his eyes. There’s no reason to be upset. They’ll get out. They always get out.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry this took so long! Thanks for sticking with me with this! I decided to start posting another story alongside this one (not same fandom) so I'm trying to juggle between posting the two, but I'm hoping to have more of this posted soon! Things are going to pick up and it's not going to be pretty ^_^;;;
DAY TWENTY-NINE

Chapter Summary

Their new cell means a new fight

Chapter Notes

Okay... so this has been done for a while... but my internet got knocked out... so yeah... and the new season should be coming out tomorrow! Yay! anyways... Hiccup has lost track of time now. He's not off by much, but he's been gone longer than he thinks he has... It's also been a while since I've read through this... but I know it's been edited and ready to be published.

This chapter is where the rape tag starts to come into effect. It is also where the unwanted touching comes in. Really heed the tags from here on out.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It's hard to tell how time passes in their new cell. The sunlight doesn't reach them. The only light they get is the dimness from the trapped Fireworms. Hiccup's been trying to mark days by listening to the guards. The morning patrols yawn and complain about being up so early. Usually. Using that method, Hiccup has counted four days. He's not too sure about that though, since he's not always awake when the guard changes. Toothless is doing much better, too, almost back to his old self. The hunters left some medicines for Hiccup to apply to Toothless' sores. They want to keep their prize healthy. Hiccup doesn't know why they'd want Toothless healed. Perhaps they plan to sell him. But, the medicine is good and the sores are almost completely healed over. Hiccup has used some of it on his ankle as well, and he feels much better. There are still cuts and scars all over Toothless, but his color looks better. He's also getting antsy from being locked up. The cell isn't small, but it's too small to keep a dragon Toothless' size in for more than a day, without exercising him.

Toothless is pacing the room, his meal already eaten. Hiccup is only halfway through his. He's tempted to call it lunch, since there is a new patrol, but he doesn't know what time it is. The food is another thing that's weird about this place. The Hunters have kept them well-fed and watered. Hiccup feels more energized too. Toothless hasn't been taken away yet, so Hiccup has no idea what they're here for. He's worried about what the Hunters will do with Toothless, now that he's healed. It's time to plan an escape. With their energy back up, they can probably fight their way out. All they have to do is get to a boat and they can sail away. The Dragon Riders have to be close. They'll find him. If they're not, Hiccup is capable of surviving on an island until he finds someone.

Hiccup's attention snaps away from an escape plan as Toothless stumbles over his own feet. Hiccup's worried that Toothless hasn't been sleeping much, since he's been healing. It's hard for the dragon to burn that energy with Hiccup in the same cell. He could be exhausted and that won't be much help if they try to escape. Toothless stumbles some more, feet dragging against the stone floor. He's still on his feet, but he's shaking his head. Hiccup watches Toothless take another step and collapse. He rushes over to him. "Toothless!"
He’s snoring.

He's relaxed, more relaxed than when they try to sleep. Hiccup looks to his half-finished meal and curses. There’s something in the food. He should’ve known better than to trust the Hunters. Sleep starts pulling at him, his eyelids becoming heavy. Hiccup manages to fight it for a few minutes, but he collapses over Toothless. His last thought is a curse to the Dragon Hunters, for doing this to them.

Hiccup is tired of waking up in strange places. It’s happened too many times already. He feels groggy and it takes him a moment to realize that he’s tied down. It takes him another moment to realize that he’s tied down naked. They’ve left his prosthetic on, but he is stark naked. Hiccup jerks, but doesn’t move an inch. He’s tied face-down on some contraption that has his head down and hips up. There’s rope cutting into the back of his neck, wrists, arms, hips, knees, and ankles. He won’t be moving any time soon. Then he hears the boot steps. They’re heavy and coming towards him. He tries to move, but only succeeds in cutting the ropes deeper into his skin.

A dragon hunter stops near Hiccup’s head. He can see him in the corner of his eye. The man doesn’t move any closer, but Hiccup doesn’t relax. “Good evening!” His voice is booming and Hiccup can hear the response of a crowd. His face burns at being displayed like this. “Welcome to the Breeding Fights!” Hiccup’s blood runs cold. Where the Hel have they brought him? “As you know, dragons fight for the right to mate! Tonight, we have a special competitor: a Night Fury!” Hiccup starts squirming again, ignoring how his skin burns under the rope. He needs to get out. The crowd roars in excitement. They’re white noise to Hiccup now, pushed to the back of his mind. The crowd is the least of his worries if he's strapped down like this.

He’s shocked when a large, calloused hand rubs over his backside. The hunter isn’t in his peripheral anymore. Hiccup tries to flinch from the contact. The ropes keep him in place. The hand doesn’t leave his skin. Instead, it rubs over his cheek. “Bring out the stuff,” the man orders. It’s not an announcement for the crowd, but it isn’t whispered either. The crowd murmurs in excitement. Hiccup hears another set of footsteps come near him. The hand leaves, but something slick is poured over his ass, spreading over his cheeks and down his crack. Hiccup bites his tongue. He won’t give them the satisfaction of him crying out.

Then, he smells something. It’s sweet and musky, familiar, yet foreign. The hand comes back, moving through the slick poured over his skin and settles to the hole between Hiccup’s cheeks. Hiccup tenses. The hunter isn’t deterred though. He massages the tensed muscle and pushes in when he gets a little give. Hiccup screeches, unable to hold in the noise. He’s never been touched like this. The crowd laughs at him. Tears pool in the corners of his eyes, but he can’t cry. He can’t.

The fingers massage and scissor his opening, the liquid heating and numbing the rim. Hiccup doesn't know if he's clenching anymore. He can feel the pressure of the fingers inside him, but not the fingers himself. Something firmer is pushed inside his rim and liquid is poured inside him. It’s cold and slimy, and Hiccup thinks he may throw up. The thing pressed inside him is taken out, and some fingers come back to massage his hole. The liquid inside him settles into his gut and starts warming up. His cheeks flush and he’s horrified to realize that he’s becoming aroused. Everyone is watching him, and he’s getting an erection. He tries to close his legs, but the ropes stop him. What's wrong with him?

Everything starts to fade from his notice. The crowd's noise goes from a buzz to a hum. The heat from the liquid is pulsing through his body with every heartbeat. He starts panting, so warm. His surroundings dim. There’s a metallic clank. Hiccup can see something in the corner of his eye, but he can't focus on it. He pants and squirms, all his focus going to the heat in his gut.
Toothless hates this. He hates himself. The food. He knew it tasted funny, but he was too wound up to care. Now, he’s separated from Hiccup. He’s supposed to watch out for Hiccup, protect him, but he’s failing. He should have thought of something, should have gotten them out of here before it came to this. If he weren’t so injured when they got here, they could’ve escaped. This is his fault. It’s his fault that they’re separated again and he’s stuffed into a cage that is barely big enough to fit him. He’s pushed up against a wooden door, a metal grate pushed into his back. It’s dark, but he can hear the noise on the other side of the wooden door.

It doesn’t make sense to him. Breeding Fights? The Hunters sent them to another fighting arena? Why do they think this arena is going to be different than the last one?

The sweet, musky scent of a receptive Nightmare seeps into his cage. It’s coming from the arena, through the small gap between the floor and the door. The scent tickles Toothless’ nose, making him sneeze. He doesn’t have much time to think about the scent before the cage door opens. He stumbles out, but stays in the shadows to observe. There’s no use rushing into a fight, especially when there’s a receptive female nearby. Across the ring, another door opens and a dragon lurches out. It’s a male Nightmare, just old enough to mate. Toothless freezes, not wanting to attract the Nightmare’s attention.

The Nightmare is already in frenzy. It’s unsurprising if this is first cycle. Most young dragons are unable to control themselves around receptive females. He rushes towards a small, dome cage in the middle of the arena. Toothless doesn’t understand. That’s the source of the scent, but it’s too small for a mature Nightmare. He creeps out of the shadows, ignoring the Vikings’ excited chatter, and tries to see what’s in the cage. The Nightmare’s focus is completely on getting inside of the cage. Toothless freezes when he sees who’s in it. Hiccup. He’s tied down, flushed and gulping down lungfuls of air like he’s forgotten how to breathe. He’s the source of the Nightmare’s scent. Hiccup doesn’t seem to notice the male Nightmare trying his hardest to claw his way inside the cage. This doesn’t make sense. What’s happening here? What should he do? It doesn’t make sense.

Toothless is still long enough for the Nightmare to notice him. The energy that was going into getting into that cage redirects towards Toothless. The Nightmare snaps at him, and Toothless manages to dodge the teeth before they catch him. “Mine! This female is mine!” he snarls, putting his bulk between Hiccup and Toothless. He straightens himself out, trying to appear taller.

“There’s no female. He’s human,” Toothless responds, backing away and shaking his head. He doesn’t want to fight this dragon. Toothless hates it, but he tries to make himself appear smaller. Normally, he’d want to dominate the other dragon, but it wouldn’t diffuse the situation at all. The Nightmare would attack without a second thought. Toothless needs the Nightmare to think for a second.

The Nightmare growls and charges at Toothless. Toothless jumps back and the Nightmare stops. That attack meaning to be a warning. “My female!” The Nightmare puffs out his chest and spreads his claws out. Toothless is not intimidated. The display reflects how young the Nightmare is. There is no way this Nightmare has been through another cycle. His snarling and attacks are too similar of hatchlings wrestling. Toothless has also faced much larger and much scarier. This hatchling is nothing.

“I don’t want to fight you,” Toothless warns, crouching down, preparing himself to fight. He doesn't want to, but he will. Hiccup needs his help.

“LEAVE!” he roars, right in Toothless’ face. It's another threat, meant to intimidate Toothless into submission.
It only annoys Toothless, and he bats at the Nightmare’s snout. It’s something that would happen to an unruly hatchling and it angers the Nightmare. The attack isn’t meant to hurt, just stun and remind the youngling who’s in charge. Toothless didn’t even have his claws out. An older Nightmare wouldn’t have been so merciful. An older Nightmare would have clawed half this Nightmare’s face off. The Nightmare surges at Toothless, teeth first. Toothless snarls and smacks him again, claws out this time. It leaves a mark and pisses off the Nightmare more.

Toothless slips around the Nightmare, knowing that he should try to get out of range. All he has to do is force the Nightmare to submit. Toothless doesn’t take into account that the frenzy might increase the Nightmare’s reaction time. The Nightmare catches Toothless on the shoulder with a claw and it stings. Toothless backs up, feigning submission. He needs a moment to think. The Nightmare is only going to attack, aiming for Toothless’ soft spots without reason. Toothless needs to think of a way to force the Nightmare into submission.

He continues to lunge at Toothless, teeth first, and the Night Fury keeps on hitting him in the face, when he gets too close. It’s not cowing the Nightmare, and he’s able to get a couple more hits in when Toothless tries to reposition himself. The Nightmare doesn’t seem to be losing any energy and Toothless is getting annoyed. The scratches on the Nightmare’s snout is the only evidence that Toothless has done anything. The scratches on Toothless are bleeding sluggishly. It’s aggravating that the Nightmare hasn't slowed down at all. Toothless isn't paying attention and backs himself into the wall. He tries to go around the Nightmare again.

This time, when the Nightmare snaps at him as he moves, he almost catches what’s left of Toothless’ tailfin. That’s enough for the Night Fury. Toothless’ vision goes red and he roars. It’s loud enough that it rattles the dome above them. The Nightmare hesitates at the nose, cowed, but Toothless doesn’t care. This youngling needs to be taught a lesson. He had his chance to back down, and now he’s released the fury. Toothless attacks first, rushing at the Nightmare, claws out. The Nightmare is immediately on the defensive, back away as fast as he can manage. Toothless attacks without mercy; clawing and biting and roaring until he tastes blood on his tongue.

At the warm, coppery taste coating his tongue, Toothless’ vision clears. The Nightmare's neck is clamped between his teeth. He releases the dragon at once, backing away from him, horrified. The Nightmare is still alive. He twitches and whines, and he tries to crawl away from Toothless. There’s no way he’ll survive those injuries. Toothless watches him until he stops breathing. The blood drains languidly from the wounds in his neck, even though he has stopped breathing. The clamor from the crowd breaks through whatever was keeping him focused on the dead dragon. The crowd is ecstatic. He looks at the crowd with wide eyes. He wants to be angry with them, to hate them, but he only feels shame. What’s Hiccup going to think?

Toothless whines and backs away from the carnage. He wants to disappear. A man yells over the crowd, “AND TO THE VICTOR GOES THE SPOILS!” There’s a loud click. Toothless looks around, expecting another dragon, or that purple gas, but the dome cage around Hiccup starts lifting. Hiccup looks a little more cognizant. He’s tense, so Toothless rushes to him.

He goes to Hiccup’s face and starts nuzzling him. Hiccup relaxes and slurs, “Hey, bud.” Toothless whimpers, happy that Hiccup seems to be okay. He sees how the ropes have burned into Hiccup’s skin and starts gnawing at the one around Hiccup’s neck, mindful of his teeth. Toothless’ stomach turns at the thought of him hurting Hiccup like he did the Nightmare. The rope breaks away with an audible snap. Hiccup raising his head. His eyes are glazed, and the ropes have left burns on his neck, but he looks okay. Toothless moves to free one of Hiccup’s arms next.

He’s not watching, but he knows the moment Hiccup sees the Nightmare. Hiccup’s breath catches and every muscle tenses. Toothless doesn’t have time to dwell on Hiccup's reaction because the rope
around Hiccup’s arm snaps free. Hiccup slips his wrist out of the rope holding it. All the squirming has loosened the furthest ropes. Toothless moves to the legs next, ankle first. The female Nightmare scent is more noticeable here. It falls off easily. The knee is a little trickier, but Toothless won’t stop.

The smell gets even stronger when Toothless starts working on the rope around his knee. The scent coats his nostrils and sticks there, making it harder to ignore. It worms its way into Toothless’ brain. With the taste of blood still on his tongue, it starts to ignite his instincts, clouding his judgment. He stops working on the rope on Hiccup’s knee and starts sniffing for the source of the scent. “T-Toothless?” Hiccup asks, body tensing. Toothless doesn’t react to Hiccup, his focus honing in on the scent. It’s not the right female scent, but it’s still a female and she’s ready to be mounted. Toothless won. He won this right. He deserves this.

Toothless crawls over Hiccup’s body, using the contraption for balance so he can get into a proper position to mount. “Toothless! What are you—“ Hiccup asks, then feels Toothless cock heavy against his back. It slides over the skin, leaving slick against his back. “No! Toothless, stop!” Hiccup yells, struggling more to free his other arm. Toothless can hear Hiccup’s voice, but it doesn’t matter. His instincts to breed and mate are overtaking every thought in his head. He braces his front legs on the bar near Hiccup's head.

Now that he’s in a better position, he thrusts his hips, trying to find the source of that scent and sink into it. Toothless’ cock rubs over Hiccup’s backside, right in the crease of his ass. Whatever slick they poured over him eases the way, and the slick leaking from Toothless is helps. Hiccup starts to panic under Toothless, thrashing and crying out. Toothless doesn’t care now. He backs up a bit and thrusts again, this time the top of his cock brushing something warm. Toothless huffs. He’s so close. It’s been too long since he’s done this.

There’s a snap of rope and then pressure around his cock. He purrs and starts to rut. It’s a little weird, but feels so good. After a few inches, his cock is exposed to open air. The pressure is good though. And he’s never mated with a Nightmare, so he doesn’t know what it should feel like. He can’t remember the last time he’s had release. He’s forgotten how good it can feel. His pace increases, his hips pistoning as fast as he can.

It doesn’t take long for him to reach climax. He roars and the crowd echoes him. The scent of his release is pungent and overpowers the female scent. That’s odd. It’s like he didn’t spill in a female at all. He has a moment to lament the waste.

Then, he remembers who he’s mounted. Hiccup is underneath him, still as stone. Toothless throws himself off Hiccup and he retreats to a far wall. His release covers the ground underneath Hiccup and coats the inside of his thighs. He whines, ears flat against his head. There’s a moment of horrified relief that he didn’t mount Hiccup properly before he’s knocked out.

Chapter End Notes

So it's a little intense... and it doesn't get much better...
Hiccup hears something heavy hit the ground. It has to be Toothless. He waits for the hunters to do the same for him, but they don’t. Instead, their hands are all over him, untying him and touching him. Hiccup struggles weakly against their hold. He wants to get away, but his muscles feel detached from him. Strong fingers pull his chin up and he sees a hunter. Hiccup doesn’t know who he is, but he’s too close. He pushes against the hold, but he doesn’t move. “…doesn’t look like he did it right,” the hunter says over his shoulder.

Another hunter answers him, “That’s good. We’ll be able to put the Night Fury into another fight.”

They pull Hiccup to his feet, but his legs aren’t holding him up. The crowd has dissipated, but some stragglers have stayed behind to yell at Hiccup. He can’t make out what they’re saying exactly, because of the blood rushing in his ears, but he knows it isn’t flattering. “Stand up,” someone orders. Hiccup can’t remember how to use his legs. “Stand up!” the person orders again, this time louder. His eyes are focused on the dead Nightmare. The dragon’s head is almost severed and there’s so much blood. Hiccup might throw up. All he can think is Toothless did this. “Jarl, grab him. He’s not walking anywhere.”

Hiccup doesn’t know what that means, but there are hands on him. “No, stop touching me,” Hiccup gasps out, struggling against their hold. They don’t seem to care. They lift Hiccup like they would a dead sheep. One grabs his arms, the other his legs. They walk him back to his cell, not caring that they don’t lift him high enough off the ground. Hiccup’s lower back scratches against the ground, and it doesn’t help that he’s fighting the hunters the entire way. He’s not fighting very hard, but it’s enough to force the hunters to adjust their grips on him. Hiccup wants them to stop touching him.

They toss him into his cell like a sack of flour. Hiccup hits the ground with a pained cry, but doesn’t move from the heap he’s landed in. His arms are folded awkwardly underneath him and his legs are splayed. He can see that his half-finished meal is still in the corner. The door closes and locks. “I thought Viggo said this kid was dangerous. Can’t even walk himself,” one of the hunters sneers as they walk away.
Tears sting in the corners of his eyes. He shouldn’t be so weak. He’s the son of the chief of Berk. This is no way for him to act. Slowly, he gets to his knees and crawls into the far corner, putting his back to the wall. The small distance leaves Hiccup exhausted. It’s only when he smells Toothless’ release does he realize that the hunters left him naked. It smells musky and wet, with the burning scent of ozone, like the air during a lightning storm. Hiccup wants to curl up, but that’ll only make the scent stronger. It’s stuck to the insides of his thighs. Tears fall down his cheeks. He wishes that he could wash himself off.

He startles when the cell opens again. He rubs the tears off his face, not needing to show the hunters any more weakness. The hunters stay long enough to deposit Toothless in the middle of the room. Hiccup doesn’t know if the hunters say anything else, all his focus is on the Night Fury. His blood is pounding in his ears and his muscles are all tense. There’s a part of him that wants to go to Toothless, to make sure that he’s okay. After all, Toothless is his best friend and he doesn’t want him to be hurting. But there's a larger, louder part of him wants to stay as far away from the dragon as he can manage. Hiccup is scared of his best friend. He's never seen that side of Toothless before, never even considered that side existing. The phantom weight of Toothless’ cock is still between his thighs. It felt so heavy, wet, and too large.

The image of the mangled Nightmare flashes in Hiccup’s mind. Toothless killed another dragon. He fought like a wild animal and it makes Hiccup wonder if he ever knew Toothless in the first place. Hiccup curls into a ball, ignoring the smell in favor of the comfort of holding himself together. He can’t stop the tears this time, but he tries to stifle his sobs. The smell makes Hiccup's stomach turn and he's hurting. The spots where the rope burned into his skin is still raw and aching. With another broken sob, Hiccup wonders if they’ll ever get out of this. He wonders if they’ll get out of this alive.

Hiccup holds his breath when he hears Toothless starting to stir. He doesn’t know how long it’s been since they left them alone. Hiccup has managed to stop crying, but he’s been staring at the wall since his tears stopped. Toothless rolls over, getting his feet underneath him and he growls. The sound sends a lance of fear through Hiccup. He has no idea what to expect. Will Toothless still be that mindless animal? Will he even realize the harm that he’s done? The fear pushes Hiccup back, even though his back is already against the wall. The movement only scratches his prosthetic on the ground and catches Toothless’ attention.

They lock eyes and Hiccup holds his breath. There is nothing stopping Toothless from doing that again. Hiccup can’t remember feeling so scared in his life. Toothless jumps to his feet, like he’s been electrocuted, and every muscle in Hiccup’s body tenses. He hopes that Toothless will kill him instead. Tears prickle at his eyes again, and there’s a lump in his throat. Please Thor. Just let it be quick Hiccup prays, breath stuttering out of his chest.

But, Toothless doesn’t come towards Hiccup. The dragon whines and rushes to the furthest corner away from Hiccup. He pushes himself against the wall, like he could move the stone by sheer will alone. When that doesn’t work, Toothless curls in on himself and hides his face. It looks like Toothless is crying, and it breaks Hiccup’s heart. This Toothless is not the same one from the ring. He’s as scared and distraught as Hiccup is. Something eases in his chest at the realization. “T-Toothless,” Hiccup says, voice cracking. He’s going to cry again, but it’s not so bad in front of his best friend.

Toothless peeks at him, still whining, but doesn’t move. Hiccup hates seeing him so distressed. “Come here, bud,” he encourages, holding out his hand. Toothless shakes his head. “Please,” he pleads, voice watery. Toothless sits up a little higher and shakes his head. He looks like he wants to come over, but also like he’s scared. Tears start to fall from Hiccup’s eyes. “Please, Toothless…”
Hiccup hides his face in his hands. His shoulders shake with his cries, but he’s silent. Toothless rushes over, but stays just out of Hiccup’s space. He making inquisitive noises, but not moving closer.

Hiccup leans forwards, catching Toothless around the neck and pulls the dragon closer. He buries his face in the warm scales of Toothless’ neck and cries. Toothless nuzzles and purrs at Hiccup, trying to comfort the human. “I’m sorry,” Hiccup sobs, something breaking inside his chest. His cries come harder now, his sobs shaking him from his core.

Toothless makes a disagreeing noise and shakes his head. He moves as close as he can manage, offering comfort. Hiccup squeezes Toothless tighter. “It’s not your fault,” Hiccup continues. Toothless cracks and starts wailing. “It’s not your fault, Toothless,” Hiccup insists. He needs to convince Toothless (and himself) that Toothless isn’t a monster. “It’s not your fault.” It isn’t. It can’t be.

They cry together, clinging to one another until Hiccup starts to fall asleep. Toothless curls himself around Hiccup, putting himself between Hiccup and the door. Hiccup tucks himself into Toothless’ side, naked skin greedily taking in the heat from the dragon. He whispers until he can’t stay awake, promising Toothless that they’ll get out, that he’s not angry with him.

Toothless fights sleep, needing to keep watch. Humans are so fragile, and Toothless needs to do better. He doesn’t want to hurt Hiccup any more.

Chapter End Notes

Poor Hiccup... Just... give him some clothes...

So i did add what was supposed to be the fifth chapter into this... it would have been too short... again... sorry... i was expecting it to be much longer
DAY THIRTY-SEVEN

Chapter Summary

Another week has passed

Chapter Notes

It's pretty graphic from here... added the graphic depictions of violence tag... should have added that earlier... I'll add some more tags that I think need to be added, but please let me know if I missed anything you think should be added... I've had the draft written for two days for this chapter and I just finished editing it

So, please, please heed the tags and my warning.

any unfamiliar Norse words mean bitch (female dog) (essentially, hopefully)... better descriptions and links in end notes... and I'm using them similarly to how they are used in contemporary society... if that makes sense....

See the end of the chapter for more notes

There are three more fights after the first one that Toothless is forced into. Four, if the one with the Gronkcle counts. The hunters have been pitting Toothless against different dragons, to see how he would react. The first one was the Gronckle. The poor dragon didn’t try. He saw Toothless and tried to crawl back into his cage. In that fight, they wrestled Toothless back into his cell and put different liquid on Hiccup. Then they brought in a Nadder. The Nadder fought to the death. So did the other Nightmare. And the Changewing. The hunters still strap Hiccup to the contraption, but use more ropes each time. It's like they don't want Toothless to use Hiccup's thighs. The liquid still effects Toothless in each fight, though. Toothless always manages to free at least one of Hiccup's legs before he succumbs to his lust. The hunters grumble and complain about cleaning up the dragon's release. It's harder to clean than blood, according to their whining. They have to knock Toothless out after each fight, otherwise the dragon will attack them. They don't knock Hiccup out. It's one of the cruelest things that Hiccup could imagine, after everything that's already been done. He hates listening to the people watching him.

Although Toothless doesn't seem to be doing what the hunters expect, the crowd doesn’t seem to mind. In fact, there seems to be more people showing up with every fight. Their excitement is palpable and they never fail to cheer the outcomes of the fights. They also never fail to shout obscenities at Hiccup. It's humiliating to be used in such a way, and for entertainment. What kind of monsters are these people?

Hiccup has to comfort Toothless between the fights, while he still smells of the dragon’s release. The hunters wash him down before each new fight, but they don’t bother after the fight. Hiccup tries not to think about the blood-stained arena, or the blood still in Toothless’ teeth. Or how Toothless' release hardens and pulls at his skin once it dries. After everything though, he’s not scared of Toothless. At least when they’re back in their cage. In the cage, Toothless is his best friend and just
as scared as he is. In the arena, Toothless is a ruthless animal that fights for dominance.

The hunters never give Hiccup clothes. They make crude comments about Hiccup’s nudity and hollering at him like he’s a prostitute. Hiccup has grown to ignore them, focusing his attention on helping Toothless. Then they start calling him a “dragon bride” and it gets harder to ignore them. Their voices start to sound like everything that’s going on inside his head. Hiccup wishes that they’d kill him already. Doing this, forcing what happens in the arena, is cruel and inhumane.

Hiccup fears waking up in a different place than he’s fallen asleep in. He forces himself to stay awake, and collapses for minutes at a time. It’s weakened him, made it harder for him to think straight. His mind loops through disgust, disbelief, fear and helplessness, with small moments of planning an escape. He also stops eating the food provided to him, scared that he’ll be drugged again. Toothless forces himself to eat everything, even if it tastes funny. He needs to keep his strength, and he’s never asleep for long. Hiccup's precautions don't work though.

The hunters take him in the moments where he falls asleep, and use his weakened state to drag him out. Hiccup forces himself into the back of his mind whenever he's taken somewhere. Their hands are rough as they scrub the old release off him, the water too cold. They aren’t gentle in handling him at all. He's pulled into the arena then and tied onto the contraption. The ropes bite at his skin, and he focuses on that while a hunter pushes some liquid inside his backside. The only consistency Hiccup has noticed is that the hunters wait for Toothless to be asleep before they take him away.

So, it’s a shock when the hunters rush into the cell with both of them awake. Toothless hasn't even eaten all his food yet. They’re lying together, in the corner. A hunter lassos a rope around Toothless’ neck and pulls him away. Another hunter looping another around his head in a makeshift muzzle. Other hunters help pull Toothless away. The dragon is fighting their hold, dragging them across the floor sometimes. He snarls and growls, trying to stay between the hunters and Hiccup, but there are too many of them.

Rough hands grab Hiccup and drag him out of the cell, which slams shut behind them. “Don’t touch me!” Hiccup screams, thrashing against the two hunters that are touching him. They have him by the arms and he's dragged out. Hiccup fights, but he's weak. Toothless roars after him. It’s muffled, thanks to the muzzle. “Let me go! Stop!” Hiccup cries, tears stinging his eyes. The noise from Toothless cuts off. Hiccup cries out, scared for his friend. They wouldn't have killed Toothless. They wouldn’t. He's too valuable to them.

Hiccup fights against the hunters, digging in his heels and trying to get his fist free so he can hit them. The hunters aren't fazed by his resistance. Hiccup is weak from not eating. They drag him, for what feels like forever, into a room, where there are another two hunters waiting for him. “NO!” Hiccup screams, voice cracking in fear. One more hunter grabs him while the other closes and locks the door. Tears are streaming down Hiccup’s face. He doesn’t want to be locked in a room with these men.

They wrestle him onto a table that’s about waist-high. Hiccup fights harder, finding strength somewhere inside him. Maybe if he escapes, he can get Toothless and they can finally leave this place. His strength doesn't last long though, draining after a few seconds of fight. “Hold him still!” a hunter orders.

“We’re trying!” another grunts.

“Stop moving!” one yells and hits Hiccup across the face. It’s a hard enough hit to daze Hiccup. The hunters move around him, with purpose. One moves to his shoulders, pinning them to table, while another two take a side. They each take an arm and a leg, holding him down so his knees are by his shoulders and his arms are flat against the table. He’s completely exposed like this. Hiccup hiccup
out a cry, too tired to fight out of their hold now. The fourth hunter takes some rope and ties Hiccup’s legs so he can’t straighten them. Hiccup wants to fight, but he feels powerless. Tears stream down his cheeks. "Stop. Stop," Hiccup gasps, still wiggling but not moving far.

Once the ropes are tied, Hiccup looks down his body. Fear washes through him. Four sets of eyes are on his lower body, and they are all smiling. The worst one is the hunter standing between his legs. He's not touching Hiccup at all, but his hands are free to do so. Everyone else has him pinned. Hiccup starts thrashing again, but he doesn't move. They have him restrained completely. “Hold him still,” the hunter between his legs orders, “We gotta get this just right.”

The hunters on his sides push Hiccup’s legs into his chest, making it hard for him to breathe. Hiccup’s head falls back, hoping that the position will help him breathe. His head thumping against the table catches the attention of the hunters. The hunter on his right smiles and laughs, “Look, lads. He’s crying.” This is awful. They’ve never had him face up while they got him ready for a fight.

“Aw. The poor babe,” another croons and they all snicker.

“Stop… please… stop,” Hiccup begs. He has nothing else. He’s at these Vikings’ mercies. They could do anything to him and he wouldn’t be able to stop them. And it kills Hiccup to ask them for mercy.

“Now he’s begging,” one laughs, “What a bikkja.” The rest laugh too and Hiccup’s cheeks burn. A warm hand settles on his inner thigh and Hiccup flinches. The skin is rough from handling ropes and dragons, and too hot to Hiccup's skin.

“What are you—“ Hiccup asks, panic running through him. He cuts off his question when that hand runs over his pubic hair and over his flaccid penis. Hiccup stops breathing. The hunter grazes over Hiccup’s penis, his fingers caressing over Hiccup’s balls. He rolls them in a rough grip and Hiccup stays as still as he can. One sharp tug and he’ll be in a lot of pain.

“Good tik,” the hunter coos, like Hiccup's a pet. He continues to fondle Hiccup’s balls, too rough to be pleasurable. But this isn’t about pleasure either. They want him to break. Hiccup doesn’t know what else they can do. There's nothing else that they could do, right? He’s already crying. He’s already scared. He’s already begged. What else can they do? Hiccup tries to stop his tears and grits his teeth, staring at the ceiling.

“I hope you appreciate how much trouble it was to get this.” Hiccup won’t look at what they’re doing. He doesn’t know who said that, and he’s stopped caring. They aren't listening to him, so he won't track who says what. He tries to force himself into the back of his mind, away from their touch. Then, warm liquid is poured over his penis. It runs down his stomach. They pour further back so the liquid runs between his cheeks instead. It’s viscous and thick, smelling like lightning and wet earth. The skin under the liquid is already starting to heat up. Rough fingers trail through the liquid and start pushing it into his asshole.

“What--?! Stop!” Hiccup screams, tensing at the intrusion.

“Stop. Fucking. Moving,” the hunter growls, “Hold him down.” The hunters pinning him get heavier and Hiccup really can’t move anymore. He can't even wiggle. “Pull his legs up a bit.”

They pull Hiccup’s legs so he’s almost on his shoulders, ass straight in the air. The position makes it harder for him to breathe and Hiccup has nowhere to look but between his legs. He watches the hunter study him, while he gasps for air. The man pulls up a jar with a spout on it, wagging it for Hiccup to see. He's looking right into Hiccup's eyes, looking away to put the spout at his asshole. He makes sure he's looking Hiccup straight in the eye. His smile is deranged. Hiccup's still gasping
because of his position, but he's also starting to panic. They've never kept him face up. Objectively, he knows that they did something like this before each fight. But seeing it is so much worse than only knowing. Hiccup shakes his head, unable to stop himself from asking one last time for mercy. The hunter's smile widens, full of teeth, and he tips the jar over.

The effect of the liquid is instantaneous on his insides. Heat rushes through him, leaving Hiccup flushed and panting from the heat. He watches the hunter push two fingers into his ass and start pumping them in and out. His hole is starting to go numb under the stimulation. “Too bad we can’t use him,” the hunter pants, his heated gaze focused on where his fingers are disappearing, “He feels like he’d feel so good.”

Hiccup tenses in fear and the man groans, the fingers twitching inside Hiccup. It's a feeling that makes Hiccup want to throw up. “Don’t you remember what happened to Lars?” another hunter asks. “If you want to get caught up in a dominance fight with two dragons, go for it.”

“Maybe not these two dragons,” he mutters, pushing another finger inside. Hiccup can’t feel the fingers stretching his rim any more, the muscle numb. All he can feel is the pressure of something opening him up and the fingers wiggling inside him. They drag along his inner walls, pushing and stretching him. Hiccup is startled when those fingers brush over something inside him that has him moaning and his cock twitching. Hiccup tenses again. When did that happen? He looks at his groin and is horrified to see that he’s aroused.

“He’s liking this,” the hunter at his head says, incredulous.

“He really is a bikkja,” another chuckles. Hiccup’s throat is tight. He wants to cry. What’s wrong with him? He doesn’t want this, but he’s aroused? It doesn’t make any sense.

“Are you going to use it all?” another asks, drawing Hiccup from his spiralling thoughts.

“Probably.” There’s a rustle of clothes, like someone shrugged. “Might as well make sure that people are getting what they paid for. We charged double for tonight.” Another dollop of heat is poured inside him and Hiccup moans. It sounds so needy. All the hunters laugh. Hiccup would feel embarrassed, but everything if starting to get hazy. His muscles even start to relax. “Okay, I think he’s ready. He’s loosened right up.”

They lift him, carrying him by his arms and legs. The arena isn’t far, or it doesn’t feel far to Hiccup. Hiccup is having trouble focusing. They put him on the ground gently and remove the ropes. They leave him in a boneless heap on the ground. The cage settles around him and Hiccup frowns at it. Why is tonight so different? They haven’t tied him down, or anything. They haven’t even washed him. Toothless’ old release still pulls at some skin between his thighs.

Hiccup wants to sit up, but his muscles feel like jelly. People start to file in, filling the viewing area with excited chatter. Once they notice he's already in the ring, they start yelling at him. Hiccup can't make out much of what they're saying, his mind is floating away from him. It's not flattering, whatever they're yelling, because hateful laughter is quick to follow. Hiccup tries to cover his front, to preserve any dignity he has left. They left him on his back and he’s completely exposed.

The crowd quiets at once, and Hiccup knows that they are starting. The hunters give their spiel, introducing Hiccup, but he’s vague about who’s fighting. Hiccup winces when he’s introduced as the “dragon’s wife.” The crowd gives an excited hum at the name. It’s horrible that he’s already built up that reputation from the few fights he’s been the prize for. There’s a click and a dragon rushes the cage, throwing himself against the metal with a snarl. Hiccup rolls his head to see what type of dragon is fighting Toothless today, but he can't believe his eyes. Whatever they gave him has to be making him hallucinate.
It’s Toothless. Toothless is snarling and growling and attacking the cage to get inside. His pupils are slits and his teeth are out. Hiccup’s attention is torn from his dragon when he hears the other dragon crash into the cage. Hiccup’s eyes go wide at Toothless’ opponent. There’s no way he’s not hallucinating. The hunters caught a Woolly Howler. How the Hel did they manage that. Did they catch the Howler to watch him die? The Howler’s attention jerks from Hiccup to Toothless, who has launched himself over the dome to attack the Howler. The dragons clash together, claws and teeth flashing.

The Howler is too big to fight in such close proximity, and Toothless takes advantage of that. He’s not giving the Howler a chance to back down. They are both vicious in their attacks, slashing at exposed necks and bellies without hesitation. Both are fast, and able to dodge, but Hiccup can see the moment that the Howler stops attacking and tries to submit. Toothless isn’t having it though, or he’s too frenzied to notice. His claw catches the Howler’s throat and cuts deep. Rich, red blood spurts from the Howler, covering Toothless. It’s the fastest fight Hiccup has ever seen. The crowd is losing their minds.

Toothless, covered in blood, watches the Howler die. The Howler chokes and gurgles, pawing at his throat in panic. His eyes are wide as he takes his last breath. Hiccup watches, horrified. Horror fills him at the brutality of that dragon’s last moments, and horror fills him at Toothless’ reaction to it. Toothless stands sentinel over the dragon until he stops moving. After the last breath has rattled out of the Howler, Toothless turns his attention back to Hiccup. The ferocity of the fight has helped Hiccup push the haziness away, but it’s not entirely gone. Hiccup has himself up on his elbows, watching Toothless watch him.

Standing jostles the liquid inside him and it slides down the inside of his thighs. Hiccup collapses to his knees, thrown off by the feeling, a choking gasp escaping from his throat. The liquid leaves a burning trail down his thigh. Hiccup balks when he sees that he’s still half-hard. His cock bobs between his legs, twitching from the heat. Hiccup only has a moment to be shocked by his body before Toothless is on his back.

Hiccup collapses to his elbows, unable to stay on his hands under Toothless' weight. Toothless uses his front leg to hold Hiccup’s hips up. “Toothless, no!” Hiccup yells, trying to break through the frenzy to his friend. He pushes at the dragon’s leg and tries to crawl away. Toothless is not in the right state of mind at all. Hiccup also tries to maneuver himself so the dragon’s cock can slide between his thighs. Toothless won’t be moved. He won’t lift his weight off Hiccup’s back, forcing the Viking to keep his knees apart for balance. Hiccup cries. Toothless has never been this far gone that he doesn’t listen to Hiccup.

Toothless’ cock drags heavily down Hiccup’s back. It’s too high for Hiccup to reach back and reposition the dragon anyways. He can’t move his arms either, otherwise he’d be crushed under the dragon. He’s pinned underneath the dragon. Toothless humps against Hiccup’s back, growling in pleasure. He pulls on Hiccup’s hips and thrusts down harder, getting more contact along his cock. Hiccup has a moment of relief, where he thinks this might be enough for the dragon. It’ll be messy, but that’s okay. They can deal with that later.
It’s okay, until Toothless pulls his hips back to aim his cock lower. “Toothless… Toothless… please don’t,” he pleads, tears falling to the ground beneath him. It’s the only thing he can do. Beg. The pointed head of Toothless’ cock stabs at Hiccup’s backside, smearing slick across his skin. Toothless aims lower, finding the crease between Hiccup’s cheeks and thrusting between them. Hiccup is sobbing, clawing at the ground, trying to get away. Toothless holds him firm. There’s no way Hiccup can fight his way out of Toothless’ hold. Toothless’ cock catches Hiccup’s rim and he thrusts inside. The head pops inside, followed by the rest of his cock after he adjusts his footing. Hiccup screams, the sound tearing from the center of his chest. Toothless’ roar drowns out his rider’s scream and the cheer from the crowd.

He ruts into Hiccup mercilessly. Hiccup can’t feel his rim, but he can feel the pressure of the dragon’s cock forced inside him, over and over again. It feels like his stomach is being pushed out of his throat, as the cock forces space inside him. Toothless is thrusting with purpose, snarling in satisfaction. Hiccup’s back twinges from the angle he’s held in. His fingernails are chipped and bleeding from where he’s clawed at the ground. Toothless roars again, drowning out the cheers of the crowd. Hiccup feels like he’s being torn apart. Tears are streaming down his face and his throat is raw from screaming. He can’t stop the screaming either. Each noise is pushed out of him with every thrust.

Underneath all that pain, though, there is buzz of arousal. Hiccup doesn't understand. This is pain that he could never have imagined, never would have imagined, but he’s still turned on. His cock is fully hard and throbbing with every forward thrust. Tension coils in Hiccup’s gut. He’s close, but it’s not enough. Humiliation rolls through him. Not only does he seem to like what’s happening to him, but he needs more. He chokes out another sob when Toothless’ other paw comes to Hiccup’s hip and pulls the Viking back harder. Toothless balances on his wings, focusing all his effort into getting as deep as he can. The thrusts get harder, but they still feel so good. Hiccup wants to die. He wonders why Toothless is pushing harder; then he starts to feel it.

It is a knot of flesh. It’s pushing at his rim, trying to get inside, even though there’s no more room. “T-Toothless… d-don’t,” Hiccup stutters out around sobs. He doesn’t get to say anything else. The knot pops inside him and all he can do is scream. His pinky nail tears off as he claws at the ground. Toothless roars and flexes his hips, coming inside Hiccup. He comes in torrents, the release scorching and burning through Hiccup’s insides. The pain of taking the knot mixes with the arousal pulsing through Hiccup’s body, and it has Hiccup coming. Another scream tears from his throat as his muscles clench around Toothless’ knot. His arms give out underneath him and he falls face-first into the ground, his hips help up by Toothless’ legs and knot. The dirt sticks to the tear tracks on Hiccup’s face. The crowd is a buzz in the back of Hiccup’s mind. He’s trying to remember how to breathe.

Toothless is panting next to his ear, his hot breath rustling Hiccup’s hair. He’s locked inside Hiccup, and he’s still coming. Hiccup’s body is a different entity right now, a being of pain and humiliation. He’s feeling everything distantly. Toothless’ mouth moves over Hiccup’s shoulder, pulling Hiccup’s face from the ground. His head hangs between his shoulders. He is unable to hold the weight of it. Toothless’ teeth are retracted, his gums soft against the flesh of his shoulder. There’s a moment of stillness, where no one moves. Then there’s white-hot pain that shoots through his body, starting from his shoulder. He screams, again, the pain snapping him back into his body. He feels everything at once. His throat radiates pain. His hips and back are tense from being held in position. His knees are raw and sore, from rubbing against the stone floor. The pressure in his stomach has Hiccup speechless. How much is Toothless going to come? He sucks in a shaky breath and the air is torture in his throat.

Hiccup can smell blood and feel it oozing from his body. It takes him a moment to register that Toothless bit him; that Toothless has claimed him; that Toothless is inside him. He cries again, silent
this time, his shoulders shaking. They don’t move much, Toothless still has his teeth sunk into the meat of his shoulder. How did it come to this? How does he get out?

The haze over Toothless’ mind recedes one detail at a time. It’s the noise of the crowd that punctures through first. They are shouting and cheering. He can’t make out what they’re so excited about through the noise. Then, he realizes his shoulders are aching from where he’s holding himself up by his wings. He puts his weight back onto his front legs and stretches out his wings. They get tucked to the side of his body once the ache in his joints ease. Then, he notices the taste of blood on his tongue. His first thought is that it’s the blood of another dragon. Every fight he’s been in has ended with bloodshed. Blood is not new. His second thought is that the blood is too sweet and is too thin to belong to a dragon. Toothless releases his jaw and whatever was in his mouth falls to the ground. It sobs, and Toothless recognizes that he had Hiccup between his teeth. Guilt tears through him.

Hiccup’s left shoulder is bleeding sluggishly, the impression of his teeth clear in the pale skin. Toothless licks at it, trying to convey how sorry he is. Hiccup flinches under the attention and the movement tugs on where they're connected. Toothless' eyes go wide. He can feel his knot is inflated and locked inside warm muscle. “No, no, no,” Toothless whimpers, ears going flat against his head. There’s still a tingle of pleasure that shoots through him with every muscle spasm around his knot. Each spasm pulls another shot of come from Toothless, without his consent. Toothless can’t help but rock into that pleasure. Toothless can’t remember the last time he's felt this good, even under the weight of his guilt. As much as he wants to, he can’t pull away. If he pulls away too soon, it’ll hurt him, and Hiccup.

A loud whistle from the crowd catches Toothless’ attention and he remembers that there are people watching them. Anger rolls through him. Mating is private, and these humans have turned it into entertainment. He pushes his anger aside, for now, knowing that Hiccup wouldn’t want to be exposed any more. He spreads his wings out and he curls around Hiccup, hiding him as much as he can. Toothless ducks his head down, to cover himself as well. It's dark under his wings, with only small streams of sunlight coming in. The crowd boos and starts throwing things at them. Toothless doesn’t know what they’re throwing at him, he doesn’t care, he just uses his body to take the assault. He has to protect Hiccup with everything he has. He can’t hear the crowd under his wings; all he can hear is Hiccup crying. Toothless doesn’t know what he can do to make this better. He wants to kill every Viking watching them, to kill every Viking that put them in this position.

Minutes pass and Toothless’ knot starts to deflate, his erection shrinking. Pleasure still sparks Toothless as his cock slips out of Hiccup. It falls out with a wet noise and recedes back into its sheath. Without anything holding him up, Hiccup falls to the ground. He curls into a ball on his side and wails. The noise stabs straight through Toothless’ heart. Toothless knows that Hiccup won’t want to be near him, but he can’t let the hunters get close. He can’t step away. The hunters will only hurt him more and he won’t, no, can’t, let that happen.

His attention snaps from Hiccup when he hears boots shuffling across the ground. He snarls at the hunter, flashing his teeth. Hiccup always tries to keep people alive, but Toothless will kill them if they get too close. He’s past caring. These humans don't deserve to live. The hunter pauses, but he doesn’t seem scared. He looks calm, with a heavy chain in his hand. Toothless hisses, trying to warn him to stay away. The hunter continues forward, slower this time, holding eye contact with the Night Fury. Toothless shoots a plasma blast at the hunter’s feet, closer than he would on Hiccup’s order. It blackens the toes of the hunter’s boots and he jumps back. Toothless won’t move from his spot. They’ll have to kill him.

Something bites at the back of his neck and he shakes his head, thinking it’s a bug. The shaking
makes him dizzy. Toothless sways, trying to stay over Hiccup, protecting him, but his vision starts to swim. It’s too familiar; they’ve drugged him again. He needs to stay over Hiccup, to keep him safe. But he can't fight against the drugs. With great effort, Toothless collapses next to Hiccup, landing on his side. His wing stays over the man’s naked body. He can’t stay awake, but he can’t let them hurt his mate either. His wing flexes over Hiccup once before he passes out.

Chapter End Notes

Thor, what have I done?

I hope you won't need it, but please ask for any clarification that you need. I hope I portrayed where I wanted to go with this fic well.

*tik*: a female dog  
*bikkja*: bitch, dog
DAY THIRTY-SEVEN

Chapter Summary

Aftermath

Chapter Notes

HELLO! SORRY!

School has been kicking my ASS! so I apologize for that, but I also hope to have another chapter up by the end of the week (if my schoolwork allows me!)

Anyways, special thanks to sarahenany for helping me clean up some parts and for encouraging me! (she also writes some pretty amazing one-shots!)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hiccup stays awake, despite every part of him that wishes he wasn’t.

The hunters leave him in the arena while the crowd files out. Hiccup can’t see them; his focus on the wall across the arena in front of him. But he can hear them. Hiccup closes his eyes, trying to push out the cruel laughter and the loud comments praising ‘the show.’ Some Vikings throw garbage into the ring and some of it hits him, but he can’t bring himself to move, or even flinch. Toothless’ wing is still covering him, protecting him from some of the garbage and some of his modesty. The Night Fury is behind him, breathing heavy and deep, heat radiating from his body. Hiccup can’t focus on Toothless though. He doesn't want to think about every part of him that hurts either. So, he tries to focus on the scent surrounding him.

The smell of dirt, musk and old blood is strong. It’s an awful combination that brings tears to Hiccup’s eyes. He’s not crying because he’s in pain, or scared of the wing that’s thrown over him, but because the scent is horrifying. Hiccup wants to die, but the rise and fall of his chest is a cruel reminder that his death remains only that: a wish.

He doesn’t know how long it is before some hunters lumber into the arena. Their footsteps are heavy, and are accompanied by two, booming voices. They talk like they are the only ones around. “Such a shame about this one, huh?” one muses, sounding upset.

“I’ve never seen a dragon fight like that before,” the other responds, awed, “Do you think we’ll have to kill him?” Hope flares through Hiccup, hope that they’re talking about him. Death would be a welcome reprieve from this never-ending nightmare.

The first one lets out a heavy breath, “Yeah. I wanted to see him fight some more.” Hiccup frowns, confused. Then it hits him.

They’re talking about Toothless.
The first thing that runs through his mind is that he doesn’t want his best friend to die. Especially at the hand of some lowly hunters. Confusion is quick to follow. A Night Fury is worth more alive than dead. Why would the hunters kill something worth so much? The last, awful, thing to rush through him is an insidious ball of hope that they will kill Toothless. There’s a part of Hiccup that’s terrified of the dragon sleeping behind him, the dragon that’s still touching him. He mounted Hiccup, despite Hiccup begging him not to. The rider’s desperation never even registered to the dragon, who was only focused on his pleasure. He was an animal, devoid of any of the care Hiccup has come to know.

Hiccup hates that thought. And he feels guilty for even hoping for Toothless' death. He pushes it aside and circles back to confusion. It doesn’t make sense to kill a Night Fury, especially if Toothless is the last living Night Fury. “I don’t think the fights would be as good, with his bride gone. And you know how the dragons get after something like that.” That sounds like the first guy still. He has something in his voice that turns Hiccup's stomach.

There’s the rattle of a chain, so they have to be standing over Toothless, ready to shackle the dragon again. “I know,” the second one snaps, “I asked because it’d be easier to kill him here than move him to his cell. The blood is easier to clean out here.”

Hiccup’s stomach clenches in fear. Any hope at being free from Toothless is extinguished in an instant, and is replaced by dread. Despite everything that has happened, Toothless is still his closest friend. He doesn’t want to go back to a life before Toothless; where he was Hiccup the Useless; where he had no value; where his only companion was the crushing loneliness brought on by the village rejecting him. It’s too heartbreaking to imagine. The first hunter scoffs, and there’s a sound like someone was hit. It isn’t a loud sound, like maybe someone was slapped upside the head. “You know how valuable Night Furies are. We can’t just kill him. We gotta wait, see if he’s different.” There’s a grunt and the wing over Hiccup moves. The wing isn’t lifted from Hiccup, but the movement is jarring enough that he has to bite his lip from crying out. “Imagine he doesn’t go feral. He could do more fights. Think of the gold.”

The wing is pulled off and it drags Hiccup onto his back. The movement forces a choked sob to break free from his chest. “What the--?” Two faces loom over him. One face is filled with shock, while the other looks horrified. They all breathe for a while, staring at one another. Hiccup’s rising and falling chest feels mocking, because now he’s having trouble getting a lungful of air. He doesn’t want the last thing he sees to be these hunters.

The shocked one moves first. He kneels down and places his hand on Hiccup’s chest, feeling the rise and fall of it under his palm. Hiccup wishes he had the strength to push him away. Why do they have to touch him? “He’s alive,” the hunter gasps, a smile breaking across his face, transforming his shock to delight.

“How are you alive?” the other asks, voice soft and face green. Hiccup can’t answer that; he doesn’t know how. The gods must hate him.

“Help me turn him over,” the first hunter orders. His hands go to Hiccup’s hips, while the other hunter’s hands go to his shoulders. Hiccup’s eyes close against the feeling of their palms against his skin. They’re rough and feel so dirty. The hunters push him over until he’s on his knees, his shoulders on the ground. Tears fall from his eyes. This is the position he was in when Toothless mounted him. His face mashes into the stone of the ground, and his mouth moves, but no sound comes out. Hiccup wants to tell them to stop, to beg them to stop touching him, but it seems like he can’t remember how to.

The skin on his knees sting against the stone floor. Toothless’ release starts leaking from his hole,
sliding down his thighs and pooling by his knees. It’s still so hot, burning a line down the insides of his thighs. Harsh fingers push into his hole without warning. Hiccup cries out, unable to keep the noise inside. The fingers twist and explore, uncaring that Hiccup is sore. His rim burns under the ministrations and more release leaks from him.

Hiccup doesn’t know how long those fingers are inside him, but he sobs in relief when they finally leave him. “He’s not bleeding!” the hunter says, excited, “Well, not a lot. He’s going to be fine.” There’s the sound of movement, like someone has stood up. “This changes everything!” Again, Hiccup wishes for death.

A few seconds pass in silence. Then, the other hunter finally speaks, “No one’s survived before.” He sounds like he might be sick. Hiccup cries, fat tears falling down his face and his sobs muffled in the floor. How many people have come before him? If they wanted to kill him, couldn’t they have done something more humane? Like burn him alive? Or beat his skull in? Why like this?

There’s a boot to his hip and he falls onto his side, his body radiating with pain at the sudden movement. The boot goes to his hip again, pushing him until he rolls onto his back. Hiccup groans in pain. A hunter looms over Hiccup, a delighted smile on his face. Hiccup looks around the hunter, at his forehead, ears, everywhere, trying to avoid his eyes. He doesn’t want to see what the hunter's eyes say, but the hunter seems to be waiting for him to make eye contact. Reluctantly, Hiccup does, and the hunter's smile goes wider, cruelty curling the corners. Hiccup can’t look away. “You really are a dragon’s wife, aren’t ya?” Hiccup sobs, using every ounce of strength he has to cover his face with his hands. They smell like dirt and blood, and his pinky finger stings, but he can’t look. He needs to hide from the hunters.

Toothless groans next to him, moving around in his sleep. His breathing is still deep and even. And if Toothless was awake, he wouldn’t lie there. One of the hunter curses and it sounds like they scramble away. They leave, and for a few moments, Hiccup thinks that they are going to leave him alone, but he should know better. It sounds like more hunters come back. Hiccup won’t look at them. He can’t look at them. His hands stay over his face, even when three sets of hands start touching him. Tears pool behind his hands, but he won’t move them. They carry Hiccup away from the arena. Part of Hiccup wants to struggle, wants to fight, but he doesn’t have the strength. Maybe they’re finally going to kill him. He hates the longing that blooms in his chest at the thought of death.

The hunters set him down on more stone, leaving him alone. They aren’t rough with him, which has Hiccup confused. No one has been gentle before. Hiccup peeks out between his fingers and his heart drops when he recognizes he’s in the cell he’s been sharing with Toothless. He’s locked up in a cage. Again. He’s supposed to be the next great chief of Berk, but he can’t escape a simple cage. And he’s been humiliated and shamed in the worst way imaginable. There’s no way that he can face his people, his village, his friends. Not with this shame staining him.

More hunters lumber in. Hiccup watches them set Toothless down. He’s trussed up in ropes and chains, but the hunters take every restraint with them. They don’t offer Hiccup a second glance, which Hiccup is grateful for. He stares at the naked dragon, fear pooling in his stomach the longer he looks. What’s Toothless going to be like when he wakes up? Is he going to attack Hiccup? Lay another claim over him? Hiccup’s shoulder aches at the thought. Will Toothless kill him? Will it be fast? Painful? Hiccup closes his eyes, every thought of death in his mind. He ignores the survival instinct that tells him not to take his eyes off the dragon. He falls asleep, ignoring every voice inside telling him not to. It doesn’t matter if he sleeps or not; there’s nothing else that can be done to him.

Waking up, Hiccup has a few blissful moments where he doesn’t remember what happened. Bur it's
only a few moments. Once those moments pass, every ache and pain makes itself known. Everywhere hurts; his bones aches, especially in his knees and hips; his back muscles twinge from laying on the cold, stone floor; and his finger aches in the open air. Now that Hiccup doesn't feel like hiding, he glances at his hand, trying to see what has his pinky hurting so much. His fingernail is gone. The nail bed is caked in old and new blood. He closes his eyes, not wanting to see the rest of his body. A flash of anxiety and surprise shoots through him. It’s gone as fast as it came, and fills Hiccup with confusion. Those feelings didn’t feel like they came from him. If they aren’t his, where did they come from?

Hiccup hears something move and his attention snaps to it; his survival instinct stronger now. Pain shoots through Hiccup’s head at the sudden movement. Toothless is awake. He’s as far away from Hiccup as he can manage. His eyes are wide and he’s watching Hiccup’s every move. Fear trickles into his chest, but Hiccup knows that the fear isn’t his. He knows that he should be scared of Toothless, but he’s not. Hiccup’s biggest fear was Toothless turning feral, but Toothless isn’t. He’s keeping his distance. He’s not acting like the monster in the arena. Right now, Toothless is Hiccup’s best friend, and he’s scared of hurting Hiccup. Hiccup can deal with a scared dragon.

Although, how can Hiccup feel what Toothless is feeling? He knows, deep down, that the foreign feelings invading his chest belong to the Night Fury. It doesn’t make any sense, but Hiccup knows it to be the truth, like he knows that dragons are not mindless killers. It's a surety borne from his bones.

“Are you scared, bud?” Hiccup asks, voice cracking. He’s so thirsty and his throat is raw.

Toothless whines, his ears pressing into his head. Distress shooting through Hiccup. It’s muted, but Hiccup follows that feeling, trying to find where it’s coming from. His brow furrows in confusion when he finds a source for the emotions. It’s a… ball? It’s small, and warm, and feels like Toothless, or how Hiccup feels whenever he’s with Toothless. Somehow, it’s like a conduit for Toothless’ feelings. “Why are you upset?” Hiccup wonders, trying to ignore the worry building in his gut.

Sadness bursts from the ball, strong enough that Hiccup’s eyes prick in sympathy. Toothless looks like he might cry, too. “What’s going on?” he demands, voice weak, so scared of any answer that he’ll get.

“Sorry,” Hiccup hears. Inside his head. It’s not his inner voice, it’s too deep and growling to belong to him. Hiccup’s stomach flips. “So sorry.”

Hiccup rolls onto his side and throws up, his back to Toothless. That voice. It’s Toothless’ voice. He knows it with a certainty that feels like it might kill him. Before these fights, Hiccup would have been ecstatic to be able to communicate with Toothless without a language barrier. Now, it’s sign of how what happened to them was wrong. “Oh gods, please let me be dead,” Hiccup prays, crying over his vomit. It’s acidic and watery, since Hiccup hasn’t eaten anything for days.

“Sorry,” Toothless repeats, desperate. It matches the desperation radiating through Hiccup’s chest.

“Oh gods,” Hiccup says, and passes out.

Hiccup only sleeps for a few moments before waking up again. He doesn't try to talk. Instead, he stays immobile on the floor. Toothless waits for Hiccup to do anything, but nothing happens. Toothless is scared seeing his best friend like this. Hiccup has never been one to shut down. He always has a plan, or something up his sleeve, or talks to himself until he has an idea. But Toothless can’t feel anything from his mate. There’s a spot in his chest, where Hiccup is, but it’s empty, radiating nothingness. There’s no anger, no fear, no sadness, no nothing. Toothless isn’t sure if he should leave Hiccup alone or not, but he decides that Hiccup needs to be kept warm at least.
Toothless approaches Hiccup carefully, watching his rider for any signs of distress. Hiccup doesn’t make any signal that he hears Toothless coming near. There’s still nothing from that ball in his chest. Swallowing his own panic, Toothless gathers Hiccup in his wings. He doesn’t even flinch at the contact, his body flopping around like he's lost his bones. Hiccup is cold to the touch, but he’s not shivering.

Toothless knows that Hiccup would like he space, but he can't let him freeze. He settles his mate to his chest, using his warm underbelly to heat him up. It’s the warmest place on him, right next to his inner-fire. He hates how he has to force Hiccup to be close, but there isn't another option. Toothless pushes out the anger that threatens to course through him. The hunters can’t even leave Hiccup some clothes. It’s too cold in here for humans. It’s an unnecessary cruelty to leave Hiccup like this. To Toothless, there is nothing these men could do to redeem themselves. Even death would not be enough retribution for the pain they’ve caused.

Toothless allows one, satisfying, thought of burning the hunters alive. Vindication rolls through him, then he shakes his head. No. Hiccup can feel everything, and he has to know that Toothless has not changed. As satisfying as it would be to turn the hunters into a pyre, he can’t let his anger rule him. He tries to push soothing emotions through their bond, trying not to panic when he feels a block there. Hiccup can’t know what he’s doing, but the block tears at Toothless’ heart. It doesn’t stop Toothless from trying, hoping that something can get through. Even a muted feeling would help. He remembers their first flight, where they crashed into the pond in the cove. Then their first successful flight over the ocean. That Snoggletog celebration. Good things. Happy memories, full of love and accomplishment.

Hiccup starts to shiver as he warms up, and, with every movement, his scent becomes more noticeable. Hiccup smells like a lot of things, fear, blood, dirt, musk, and Toothless. Toothless pushes aside the feelings he gets when he smells himself on Hiccup. Those feelings won't help them. Instead he forces himself to focus on the blood scent coating his mate. Then he notices the mating bite is bleeding sluggishly, so he starts cleaning it with his tongue. Another wave of anger rolls through him. Most of his ire is aimed at the hunters, but he hates himself too. He should have been able to clean the mating bite before. It's shameful to leave a fresh bite uncared for. Hiccup probably feels unloved by his mate. Toothless uses his tongue to clean the mark, careful with how much pressure he uses.

Tending to the mark fills Toothless with an aching sadness, past the shame of neglecting it. He knows what this mark means, and he knows that it won’t mean the same to Hiccup. Hiccup twitches when he uses too much pressure, but otherwise remains unresponsive. Toothless uses less pressure, cooing to soothe him.

Understanding a mating mark is mostly instinctual to a dragon. To create a mating mark is a reaction to a biological imperative, but there are some aspects that are taught. The subtle complexities of mating bonds are taught to a hatchling by their parents, after the hatchling has reached their first cycle. Hatchlings lack the social understanding to instinctively know the implications of a mating bond.

Toothless aches, remembering his mother. She had the fire-warmth, and her voice had a deep, soothing timbre that eased Toothless when he was restless. There was something different about the warmth between his mother and father. It was deeper, permeating. Safe. Toothless was too young to understand what that meant. He lost his mother and his father before his first cycle. His mother died years before his father, killed by a Viking. Toothless watched his father grieve his mother until the weight of it stopped his heart from beating. It was almost too much to bear, watching his father slowly choke without his mate. After his father's death, Toothless left his homeland, vowing that he'd never find a mate. Toothless never wanted to feel that way, never wanted to take the risk that he'd
feel that loss. Then, he was lured into the Red Death's nest, and the rest is history.

Toothless is not surprised when the bond starts filtering in Hiccup’s memories. The bond is too new, so the memories are hazy, more so emotions than pictures. Their first meeting blurs into Toothless’ mind, and he can feel everything Hiccup felt. He can feel the fear, the pride, then the shame. Then, the heart-stopping adrenaline when he cut Toothless from the bola and he retaliated, roaring his displeasure at the insolent human boy. Hysteria flows through the rest of that memory, before it goes dark. Toothless doesn’t know what that means, but he pushes them aside anyways. Dwelling on memories won’t help them escape. And they’re going to escape. Toothless won’t let any more harm come to his mate. These hunters are going to pay; Toothless will make sure of it.

Chapter End Notes

Toothless is **angry** I would not want to be a hunter at this moment. Lol. Again, sorry for leaving you guys hanging for so long! Just know that I am still working on this and I will finish it!

Comments are always welcome!
So hello! Thank sarahenany for helping me with this and pushing me to get this chapter out! Also, happy late bday! This is not your gift btw, just a nice little thing!

everyone else! I hope that you enjoy this... objectively... gets a little sort of dark

if you're here because you're waiting for Lost & Found (which i don't think you would be, but jic) I am still working on it! :)

And I know i said this was going to be posted at the end of the week, but i ended up scrapping the draft that i wrote and rewriting the whole thing! I hope this is better!

Specified warnings in end notes!

The weight of everything that’s happened between them is too much for Hiccup to handle. He’s warm, but he doesn’t know why. There’s rumbling and... growling? Hiccup can’t make it out. He can't feel his own body. It’s numb and hurts; somewhere in his mind, he knows this, but he’s not sure where his body actually is. He can’t focus on the physical, so he’s swarmed with memories and fears without reprieve; trapped in his mind. What would the village think? What would his father say? How can he face everyone again? How can he just lie here and worry? He should be thinking of some way to escape. But he can’t muster the energy to even contemplate a plan, let alone execute one. Is he stuck here? Is he going to be here forever? Is he finally going to die here?

Hiccup’s eyes hurt. They are stinging with unshed tears. He focuses on his eyes, since it’s so different from the numb pain radiating through his mind. And everything snaps into focus, starting with his body. Every part of him aches, right down to his bones, and he starts to cry. He can't bring himself to move. Toothless' wings are wrapped around him, cocooning him in black. He’s pressed into Toothless’ underbelly, and the Night Fury is purring and cooing. Toothless nuzzles his head. Then Hiccup can feel it, that ball in his chest. He's been trying to push that ball away, rejecting the wrong that accompanies why that ball is there. But it flickers with love and a promise of safe leaks through, and that depth of love can't be bad. It can't be wrong. He opens up to it, allowing that emotion to flow from his chest throughout his body. The heat of that love and promise is so overwhelming that Hiccup starts to sob. Relief is also pouring through, but muted in comparison to the other two emotions.

With those emotions, Hiccup can only think about one thing: Toothless. Every other issue and worry fades from Hiccup’s mind. Is he scared of Toothless? His instinctual response is no. And that surprises him, but only for a moment. All he wants to do is curl into Toothless’ chest and absorb that warmth and being safe. So, he does. It's familiar, and, he knows, safe. He turns into 'Toothless’ chest and his cries turn to sobs. They are bone-shattering, coming from deep in his chest, like his very soul is weeping. Toothless whines and nuzzles the top of Hiccup’s head, licking his temple in comfort.

Hiccup knows, he knows, that Toothless would never hurt him; that he would never mean to. What happened between them... the blame doesn’t fall to Toothless; it falls on the hunters. It’s their fault they were put in this position in the first place. They are the ones who profited off Hiccup’s violation.
This... relief that he knows that Toothless would not hurt him isn't fueled by only what he knows. It's also the fact that, underneath all the comforting warmth pulsing through Hiccup's chest, Hiccup can feel how shattered Toothless is. His Night Fury, his best friend, is hurting too, and Hiccup blames the hunters.

This realization, this resolution, leaves Hiccup feeling lighter with every sob that breaks from his chest; like he’s shedding armor that is too heavy. He can breathe now, even if it is ragged. Or that it's being torn from his chest. “Oh, look at that,” someone chuckles, and Hiccup freezes. Anger radiates from Toothless and he starts rumbling, just below a growl. That soothing comfort is gone in an instant, but Hiccup is not scared. “They’re all wrapped up in each other, all cute like.” Toothless growls over Toothless’ wings and sees two hunters outside their cage. They have ropes and chains in their hands. The one speaking turns to his friend and nudges him, laughter in his voice. “Like a couple of newlyweds, huh?”

His comrade's laugh is weak and he nods. When he speaks, his words shake a bit, “He must have liked it, to be so close to his husband right now.” He laughs again, while his friend's laugh turns obnoxious.

Toothless does not like that. He hisses at the hunters, muscles tensing underneath Hiccup. The nervous one flinches, but the other one only laughs louder. “Look at him, protecting his bride’s honor!” He sounds almost hysterical with mirth. The hunters step into the cell together, the one still chuckling, and Toothless growls. Toothless pulls Hiccup in closer to his chest, for which Hiccup is grateful. He does not want to be close to these men at all. “A little too late there, dragon. Your bride has no honor left.” He laughs again, like he has told the best joke of all time.

He nudes his partner, who nods uncomfortably and tries to snicker. “Yeah,” he chimes in, uneasy, “Putting himself on display for the crowd like that. Shameful.”

Hiccup curls into Toothless’ chest, and forces himself to watch the hunters. He has to watch them, even if it feels like he’s a child hiding in his mother’s skirts. The familiar snick of Toothless' teeth cuts through the air. Hiccup can picture Toothless baring his teeth at the hunters. Toothless' chest is vibrating against Hiccup's back. Hiccup doesn't understand why the men aren't more scared. The molten rage leaking through Hiccup feels like it could start him on fire. They must see that on Toothless' face. The cruel one smirks, looking at his partner, “Little bikja liked it, too.” He nudges his friend again, and they both laugh. The other unable to get much of a chuckle out. “I was the one who had to clean up the mess you and your husband left,” the hunter continues, turning his attention to Hiccup, his smile sharp, “I saw it.” His expression is so cruel. Hiccup holds his breath. “Saw your juice, mixed with your husband’s.” Hiccup’s stomach drops. “I’m surprised you aren’t hanging from his cock, now that we’ve left you alone. Must be gagging for it.”

He’s not done either. “Heard from the other men that you felt good. The inside. Surprised your husband isn’t demanding an encore.” Tears form in Hiccup’s eyes. “Maybe when your husband tires of you, we can keep you around here for the men. It gets mighty lonely here. Could use a good cock sleeve.”

The anger that Toothless is feeling is a hot as lightning now, and Hiccup should be scared of that. But he knows that Toothless won’t hurt him. That any anger he has isn't towards Hiccup. Toothless may sound like the Toothless from the arena, but he’s Hiccup’s Toothless right now. He’ll protect Hiccup from the hunters, with everything he has. Toothless’ wings tighten around Hiccup and Hiccup curls closer in response. Although there isn’t a hairsbreadth of space between them. They can't possibly get any closer to one another. “We’re not gonna hurt your bride, dragon. Relax,” the hunter with the cruel smile says. Hiccup doesn’t trust him. Not that he trusts the other one, but there is an instinctual fear of that man.
“Just here for you… got another fight scheduled,” the other hunter wheedles. His voice will not stop shaking. The two move forwards together at the same time, the chains and ropes held out in front of them.

They only take one step when Toothless shoots off two plasma blasts. They hit the hunters’ feet. Warning shots, but they were close enough that the toes of the hunters’ boots are blackened. The nervous hunter jumps back, flinching hard, while the other one laughs. Like this is some sort of game. Toothless is furious. Hiccup can’t remember a time Toothless has ever been like this. “Oh? So you got a little fight in ya?” the hunter laughs. Toothless snarls at the man. He ignores Toothless and turns to his comrade. “Try to get around him. He can only focus on one of us at a time.”

“O-Okay.” Hiccup suspects that the other hunter doesn’t think it’s a very good idea. He does as he’s told though, splitting away from his partner. Hiccup is shaking from the force of Toothless’ growls, and he seems to be radiating more heat. It’s like his inner fire is blazing. Hiccup swears he can feel that heat within his own chest. He tries to watch the men, but it’s too much movement for how sore he is. He doesn’t know how Toothless is watching them. Hiccup’s focus volleys between the men, and stays on one when they stop across the room from each other.

The hunter Hiccup is watching takes a cautious step forwards. Toothless’ wings tighten, again, and there is a promise of safety that goes through their bond, underneath the anger. Hiccup wants to believe Toothless, but he’s so scared. He’s not sure if he's shaking from Toothless' growls or from fear. The hunters are too close. And they’re going to put him back in that arena. And Toothless is going to have to kill another dragon. And… Hiccup can't even think it. Toothless’ rumble deepens, sounding like an incoming storm. The kind of storm that is going to cause damage, no matter how many precautions are taken. Hiccup’s eyes are locked on the hunter and he nods. Then he rushes towards them. “Don’t let them touch me!” Hiccup yells, hiding his face in Toothless’ chest. He can’t watch them get close. He can’t.

Two more plasma shots go off. There’s a scream and a thump. Hiccup is still shaking. He tries to remember how to breathe, hiding his face, waiting for them to touch him again. When that doesn’t happen, and the screaming continues, Hiccup looks up. He spots the screaming hunter first. He’s pale and has dropped to his knees; he’s screaming at the blackened stump where his hand used to be. Pieces of skin are flaking off the stump and fluttering to the ground. He stumbles to his feet and rushes out of the cell, leaving behind the ropes and chains he brought with him. Hiccup looks around the rest of the cell slowly, scared of what he’ll find. Scared that the hunter will be too close. But that’s a little dumb, Toothless is a good shot. Toothless wouldn’t have missed. Hiccup is terrified to think of what shape the other hunter is in if his partner would abandon him. Or that he’s not making a noise either.

The other hunter is a few feet back from where Hiccup saw him last, a heap on the floor. He's flat on his back, with a smoking hole in his chest. Hiccup wants to throw up. He's never seen 'Toothless' plasma blasts used to kill before. Toothless is still tense behind him. The anger is gone, replaced with soothing comfort and a little bit of guilt. “Sorry,” Toothless apologizes, “Wanted arm.”

Hiccup can’t respond. He curls into Toothless’ chest, blocking the dead man from his sight. This way, he can pretend that he’s not there. Even if he can smell cooked meat. That display of violence was, is scary, but it doesn’t change how Hiccup feels about Toothless. Toothless protected him. Protected him like any dragon would protect their… someone. It was instinctual, and Hiccup can’t blame a dragon for following his instincts.

His thoughts are interrupted by the arrival of more hunters. He doesn’t see them first. His only clue they are there is the deep growl that rumbles through Toothless and the careful anger pulsing through them again. Hiccup peeks out from behind Toothless’ wing. Toothless hisses when they enter, but
they appear to be there to collect their fallen friend. And the ropes and chains that the hunter abandoned in his panic. They don’t take their eyes off Toothless, not even turning their backs on the hissing Night Fury. Hiccup watches them, but they don’t seem to notice him.

Once they leave, Toothless relaxes, cooing and nuzzling Hiccup again. Hiccup knows that he should feel upset or angry about the dead hunter, but he only feels relief. They couldn’t touch him. And Toothless made sure of it. Toothless warned them, too. Gave them plenty of chances to leave them alone, but they wouldn’t listen. That isn’t his fault, or Toothless’. He repeats that to himself over and over again, hoping that if he repeats it over and over again, he’ll believe it.

Chapter End Notes

Toothless kills a hunter. In defense of another person, but still. Very much horror.

So.... Hope you enjoyed this! Comment and kudos are always welcome!
Hiccup gets a visitor

The hunters don’t come back into the cell. Hiccup can hear them loitering in the hall sometimes, and Toothless growls at them, but they don’t come too close. Toothless’ growls seem to be enough to deter them from getting closer. The cell still smells like burnt meat. Hiccup tries to push it out of his mind, pressing his nose into Toothless’ chest. But that doesn’t help much either. All Hiccup can smell is his sweat and the stale release that is still sticking to his skin. But he feels warm, and warm is safe.

Hiccup is curled under Toothless’ wing, using the appendage as a blanket over his shoulders. Toothless is growling, and sometimes the noise chokes off. Toothless tries to restart when he breaks off. But it takes a moment for the sound to come again. It’s a little ragged, but Hiccup finds it soothing. It means that Toothless is awake and alert. He will protect Hiccup. Nothing else will happen. No one else will come in here. No one will touch him.

Then, Toothless’ rumbling gets deeper, angry, and he sits up. Hiccup watches Toothless in confusion. “My dear Hiccup.” Everything inside Hiccup freezes. Toothless snarls, his teeth snapping out. Hiccup doesn’t want to look, but he has to. He turns his head slowly, praying that he’s just hearing things. No. No. He has never been that lucky. Hiccup’s stomach drops when he makes eye contact with their visitor. “I never expected to see you here.”

“Viggo,” Hiccup whispers in horror. This can’t be real. This has to be a nightmare.

Viggo smiles, smug. Hiccup reaches around himself with numb fingers, trying to grab onto Toothless’ wing. He pulls the wing over his shoulders, trying to cover himself up. Viggo’s eyes flick to Hiccup’s shoulder. Hiccup hates that he’s naked. “How on earth did you end up here?” he asks, looking far too pleased at Hiccup’s shoulder. Toothless is vibrating next to him, all coiled anger. Hiccup can feel how hot Toothless’ rage is inside his chest. “What have you gotten yourself into?”

He has the audacity to chuckle.

“What do you want?” Hiccup asks, hating that he sounds so weak.

“I had to check on my new merchandise,” he responds nonchalantly, shrugging. He takes a step closer to the grate of the door. “It’s a shame I wasn’t informed of your… predicament earlier.” His
fingers curl around the grate, smile on his face widening. “I could have stopped it.”

A rush of emotions pulse through Hiccup. There’s anger, fury, white-hot and blinding, followed by disappointment and sadness. He’s disappointed and sad that Viggo couldn’t save him. Then a traitorous yearning fills him. Why couldn’t Viggo have saved him? Gods, he wishes that Viggo would have saved him. But he can’t let himself think that. Viggo wouldn’t have saved him, despite what he’s saying. He would only do it for his own gain. Hiccup knows that... but he still has that ache that Viggo should have saved him. “You should be happy, Hiccup.”

“Happy?!” Hiccup screeches, unable to control the volume of his voice. “What in Thor’s name should I be happy about?!” Toothless flinches next to him, but Hiccup forces himself to ignore that. And he has to ignore the stab of pain that goes through his chest.

“Well,” Viggo chuckles, “thanks to those buffoons—“He sounds so bitter—"I can’t kill you anymore.” Hiccup’s eyes go wide, and he risks a glance at Toothless. “Not if I want to keep your Night Fury alive.” Hiccup’s stomach clenches. The first thing that pops into his mind is Toothless... dead. It’s so hard to imagine, because Toothless is always moving, even when he’s asleep. To think of him motionless is almost too much to handle. Toothless is glaring at Viggo, but his growling has subsided. He looks like he may attack at any second. He’s silent, eerily so, but his ears are still twitching. What happened between them?

Viggo huffs, drawing Hiccup’s attention back to him. “You’re not as much fun as you used to be,” he pouts, looking upset, but still far too smug. “Come on, Hiccup. Where’s the witty banter?”

“What happened to me?” Hiccup hates that he asks Viggo, of all people, for answers. He also hates that he sounds so scared. He can’t show Viggo that he’s scared. Viggo will use that against him. He can’t be weak.

“You’ve crossed a boundary with your dragon.” He pauses, and Hiccup can tell it’s for dramatic effect. The bastard. “And you can’t un-cross that boundary.” Toothless growls.

“What boundary?” Hiccup grounds out, some of Toothless’ anger fueling his tone.

“Oh, you know the boundary between man and animal.”

Hiccup swallows. He already knows that. And Viggo knows that he knows that. Viggo still knows something that he isn’t telling Hiccup. Hiccup’s face is bright red, but he can’t back down. Not now. “What else, Viggo?”

Viggo checks his fingernails and takes a few deep breaths. Why is he stalling? “Animals mate, Hiccup. Did you know that?” He smirks.

“What are you saying?”

Viggo’s smile turns ugly. He looks like he knows something that will devastate Hiccup, and he’s more than excited to share that information. “You’ve been mated.”

Hiccup sucks in a loud breath of air. The irritation inside of him is more of his own than Toothless’. “What does that mean?!” he yells. He doesn’t want to be jerked around by Viggo. And Viggo will talk around the topic all day if Hiccup doesn’t demand a straight answer.

Toothless whines and Hiccup’s attention snaps to him. “Don’t ask him,” Toothless begs, his ears pressed against his head. Part of Hiccup wants to listen, but the surrealness of hearing Toothless’ voice has him pushing that request to the back of his mind.
“It means,” Viggo says, insistent. He waits until Hiccup looks back at him before speaking. “It means that you are your dragon’s bride...” Hiccup can’t breathe. Viggo’s smile widens, cruel. “... in every sense of the word.” Hiccup tries to breathe, but he doesn’t know if he really wants to again. His hand goes over his chest and the words *bride, bride, bride, bride* are ringing through his head. Does that mean what he thinks it means? “Although—”Viggo’s speaking. It pulls Hiccup from spiralling, even if he can’t breathe.

Viggo is looking at his fingernails again, casual. It makes Hiccup sick to his stomach. “I should be thanking those buffoons.” He looks at Hiccup again, the corner of his mouth curved up “Someone will pay good money for a Night Fury,” He pauses. "But they’ll pay even more for a Night Fury and his mate.” A lump lodges in Hiccup’s throat. “From what I hear, it’s a good show,” his smile morphs and it is everything wrong with the world, “watching a Night Fury mount his mate.”

Hiccup’s eyes sting and he blinks quickly, not wanting to cry in front of Viggo. It’s so hard not to break down though. The fear of being exposed again cuts through him. He doesn’t want to be put on display for someone’s amusement. How could he let himself be put into this situation? Why couldn’t he have thought of some way to escape sooner? How could he let it get this far? The tears start to fall, a mixture of despair and anger. Why is he so weak?

Viggo laughs and tightens his grip on the grate, knuckles going white. “*Enough!*” Toothless’ voice startles Hiccup, not the vicious roar that echoes through their cell. He shoots a plasma blast without warning, and Viggo barely releases the grate in time before the plasma hits him. The verdigris metal turns orange for a second before cooling. Viggo takes a step back, eyes wide and focused on Toothless. Toothless hisses and blocks Hiccup behind his wing. Hiccup curls up, happy that he can’t see Viggo, and tries not to think about how this feels like hiding.

“Don’t be like that, dragon,” Viggo says, like he’s speaking to a rowdy child. “I can’t separate you two, no need to be so protective.”


“I’ve told you; I’m checking on my new merchandise. I have an auction coming up, and I have to make sure that my main attraction is in good condition.”

Auction!? Did Viggo say auction? Main attraction? “You can’t sell me!!” he yells.

Viggo chuckles, “Of course I can. You’re nothing more than a dragon’s bride. You’re only worth the money you’ll make now.”

Toothless snarls, but Hiccup can barely hear it over the blood rushing in his ears. Viggo’s words hit him right in the gut, and everything he was trying *not* to think about rushes into his mind. What will people say? What will they think? What will his father think? Tears pool in his eyes and a choked sob cracks out his chest. He covers his mouth, trying to stifle his cries. Viggo can’t know that he’s crying. Hiccup’s good reputation is still so new. He’s been a disappointment to Berk longer than he’s been an asset. A cry breaks from him, loud, and, gods, Viggo can probably hear it.

A roar echoes through the air and Toothless rushes the gate. Hiccup watches, confused. Why is Toothless leaving him? Viggo takes three hasty steps back, fear in his eyes, his one hand reaching over his head for his weapon. Then Toothless’ body blocks the doorway. He’s standing on his back legs, wings spread, and he hasn’t stopped roaring. There’s anger in Hiccup’s chest, radiating from that ball, white-hot and choking. Hiccup can see it in the tense lines of Toothless’ back and in the way he flaps his wings.
Toothless stays like that for a while. Hiccup watches, shivering. Is their cell really so cold? He wraps his arms around himself and his teeth start to click together. There’s no way that the cell is so cold. Then the tension drains from Toothless and he turns around. He sits, keeping his wings open to block the doorway. His pupils are wide and he looks unsure. Is he scared to approach Hiccup? Hiccup doesn’t understand why Toothless would be scared. He’s already sorted through his feelings towards Toothless. But… Toothless doesn’t know that. He needs to tell Toothless.

“I’m not mad at you,” he states. It so simple, but the way that Toothless relaxes has guilt flooding through Hiccup. He should have known Toothless was waiting for Hiccup to do something. Toothless can be as bad as him sometimes, waiting for someone to snap instead of asking outright. Hiccup knows he should have said something as soon as he figured it out.

“Still sorry,” Toothless says, his wings drooping. Hiccup glances over the wing, and is relieved to see that Viggo is not there anymore.

Hiccup shakes his head and licks his lips. “This isn’t your fault,” he says firmly. “What… what’s happened…” He swallows past the lump in his throat. “That’s the hunters’ fault, for putting us there. You… you couldn’t control yourself.” And he means that. He means every word. He isn’t saying this to ease Toothless’ guilt. Any blame falls to the hunters. This isn’t his fault either.

“Still stronger,” he argues, shaking his head.

Hiccup wants to argue, but he’s so cold. He can hardly think. “Come here,” Hiccup says through his chattering teeth. Toothless is at Hiccup’s side in the next second, wings wrapped around him. Toothless is so warm. Hiccup sighs and nuzzles the Night Fury’s chest. “That’s better… thanks, bud.”

“Sorry… so sorry,” Toothless murmurs, nuzzling the top of Hiccup’s head.

“What for?”

“Should not have… mate,” he whines.

Hiccup tenses. There’s an emphasis on ‘mate’ that makes him uneasy. It sounds… heavy, heavier than Hiccup thinks he’s ready to deal with. But Viggo said he’s mated; Hiccup needs to know what it means. “Mate?” he prompts, unable to bring himself to ask any more.

Toothless starts to purr, but it stalls, waning into a low hum. “Bonded. Mates…. Bond.” Warmth fills Hiccup’s chest at the word ‘bond.’ It means something important, but he doesn’t understand. He doesn’t know why it’s significant. His head tilts and Toothless huffs out a breath. “Humans call… marriage?”

Hiccup freezes. Toothless sounds unsure, like it might not be the right word. He could mean something different. Hiccup forces himself not to panic, although it’s very close to the surface. “Married? We’re married?”

Toothless nods and that panic moves a little bit closer to the surface. “To human: marriage. To dragon: bond.” That warmth fills Hiccup’s chest again, but he can hardly feel it through the cold panic rushing through his veins.

Hiccup’s breathing is picking up. “Married, married?? Like, ‘until Valhalla do we part?’” Hiccup asks, slightly hysterical.

No, no, no, no, no, no. Married to a dragon?? He can’t breathe. The ground falls out from under him, and the only thing that keeps him from falling anywhere is that he’s already leaning against Toothless’ chest. Toothless makes a distressed noise, but Hiccup can’t focus.

His vision is spotting in front of him, and his chest is aching like someone has torn into him. The mantra of married to a dragon repeats in his mind over and over again, the voice sounding like Stoick. And he sounds so disappointed. Gods, he can’t disappoint his father again. He gasps again, unable to pull in a full breath of air. His vision finally goes black, and the last thing he hears is Toothless panicking inside his mind.

Chapter End Notes

Again, can't thank you enough for sticking around!

Comments and Kudos are always welcome!

I swear Hiccup will get clothes soon! I promise! His suffering is almost over... mostly
DAY FORTY

Chapter Summary

what's going on at the Edge? Does Stoick even know what's happening?

Chapter Notes

so... hello.... and sorry for taking so long ....

I hope you guys like this... and don't hate me too much

this is one of the longest chapters I've written for this story yet, so i really, truly hope it was worth the wait

warnings in the endnotes? idk if there are any but i will put them there just in case, but they will spoil it for you

See the end of the chapter for more notes

They messed up; they messed up bad. They all know it. Hiccup has been missing for more than a cycle and they haven’t told Stoick yet. They messed up. They messed up.

But... that's not accurate, is it? The riders aren’t the ones who messed up. The riders have been doing everything to try and find Hiccup. They've been searching every day, further and further from their base, putting themselves in danger with every new island they find. They've been doing their jobs, following orders. Astrid is the one who messed up.

Astrid messed up. She knows it, feels it, deep in her bones. It’s her job to lead when Hiccup is not around, her job to run things, and she messed up. Snotlout has been insisting they inform Stoick for weeks, and Astrid has been the one that decided to try and solve this without help.

The day Hiccup was captured stands out in her mind like it happened yesterday. Snotlout came back that day such a distraught mess that it scared everyone else. Hiccup and Toothless’ disappearance rocked the riders to their core, and they fell into line behind Astrid without question. That hasn't changed, either. The only one who offers some sort of challenge to her orders is Snotlout. But she can't give in. She has to be strong for the others. They can't know how shaken she is too.

She hasn’t allowed them to see how scared she is with every passing night that she has no idea where Hiccup is. She hasn't let anyone see her break down in the middle of the night, the weight of Hiccup's absence too much to handle. Well, Stormfly has seen her, has helped her through each breakdown. That’s the only time that Stormfly shows anything other than rigid stoicism, ready to follow an order as soon as it is given to her. Astrid wishes that she could be like Stormfly, waiting for orders instead of giving them. Each decision she’s made feels like a mistake, and each mistake weighs more than a Gronckle.

She can see how her decisions have broken the group, fractured them. Everyone is falling apart and
she can’t do anything to make it right other than bring back their leader. And she’s not even sure that she can do that. She can’t promise it, that’s for sure.

That hasn’t stopped the riders from doing anything they can. Fishlegs and Heather work hard every day, with dark bags under their eyes as they pore over every piece of Heather’s Dragon Hunter knowledge and searching out any lead they come across, no matter how small. Astrid can see how each time they come back empty-handed takes some of the shine out of their eyes, but they haven’t given up. They somehow fuel that spark of hope inside them, pull together the shattered pieces of their hope, and do something every day to try and bring Hiccup home. Astrid admires them for their persistence. They haven’t been able to find Hiccup, but they have managed to dismantle a bunch of Dragon Hunter bases in their search. Astrid hates that those successes aren’t enough.

Ruffnut and Tuffnut have slowly shut down. Not in the sense that they can’t do anything, because they listen to Astrid’s orders and they are ruthless in their actions. No, they’ve stopped talking. It was slow going, but Astrid knows they haven’t said one word in days. She didn’t get much sleep the night that she realized that. They don’t talk to anyone, at least out loud. They still communicate with each other, in that weird way that they’ve always managed to do with a few tilts of their heads and a wave of their hands. It’s unsettled everyone and Astrid has no idea what she can do to help them. She wishes that Hiccup was here. He would know exactly how to handle this. Well, maybe. They wouldn’t be like this if Hiccup was here in the first place.

Ruff and Tuff didn’t even say a word last night, when they all met in the clubhouse to discuss what they should do next. Astrid can remember screaming at everyone, angry and scared and unsure, terrified under everyone’s expectant gazes, like she ought to have all the answers. Like she could solve everyone's problems just because they asked her to. She doesn’t even remember what she yelled at them. Fishlegs yelled back, so did Heather. They were obviously at the end of their rope, tired of coming home empty-handed. Astrid didn’t like them yelling at her, she knew that she deserved it, but she didn’t think she should give in without a fight. The twins said nothing, watching the heated exchange with dull eyes. Maybe it was Astrid who was at the end of her rope. She had no idea where they should be going next, what the Hel they should be doing next. Then Snotlout spoke up. His voice was loud, but Astrid couldn’t call it yelling. He didn’t sound angry enough. He sounded desperate and scared, on the verge of tears.

“Stop acting like Hiccup is still here!”

It was the simple truth, but it stunned everyone into silence.

Astrid’s mind reeled, going over everything she had done over the past few weeks. At the start of this debacle, she did what any leader should have done. She organized search and rescue, took up the mantle of leadership as second in-command, everything she was expected to do. Then, as time passed, she kept on asking herself “What would Hiccup do?” It’s not unusual, thinking about what past leaders have done in similar situations, but there are two problems with that: 1) Hiccup has never had to deal with a situation like this before, and 2) she stopped acting like her speculative answers were guidelines, and instead followed them like orders, like Hiccup was still here telling her what to do. And everything seemed to click into place, and the weight of every mistake she made suddenly descended on her. She doesn't know how she was able to stay on her feet under that weight.

Then…everyone's actions makes sense. Fishlegs and Heather weren’t yelling because they were tired; they were yelling because they were scared. Even now she can see it in the corners of their mouths and in the way that they clench their fists. The twins haven’t shut down, they’ve cut themselves off. They have purposely walled themselves in, so as to hold onto any sort of control. And it’s like she was seeing Snotlout for the first time since the day she took over leading the riders. These past weeks, she’s hardly looked at him beyond the first time he came back and the couple of
times she’s barked orders at him. Snotlout… Snotlout looks like he’s barely holding it together. She dismissed every one of his protests, his suggestions, as an act of defiance, like he never trusted her as a leader, but she sees now that she was wrong. She was so wrong. Snotlout wasn’t so insistent that they go to Stoick because he didn’t trust her; he did it because he knew it was the right thing to do. And Astrid didn’t listen.

And just like that, the group came to the consensus that they needed to inform Stoick.

Assignments were given out and everyone went to bed. Astrid didn’t sleep a wink. She doesn’t think she’ll sleep again, not with the stone in her chest. Since sleep wasn’t an option, she went off to the stables to prepare for the trip back to Berk. The sky was starting to brighten, but the sun was nowhere near the horizon. The air was brisk and raised gooseflesh on her arms. She couldn’t feel it, though.

She and Snotlout will be going back to Berk. Astrid decided this partly because Snotlout was the one who was insisting for weeks to involve Stoick, and partly because she thinks that Snotlout needs to see Gothi. She needs to go as their leader, and to face the consequences of her actions... the consequences for her incompetence. The rest of the team shouldn’t be punished for her mistakes.

Stoick… she takes a shaky breath… Stoick is going to be furious. Astrid’s hands tremble a bit as she fiddles with the buckle on Stormfly’s saddle again. Stormfly doesn’t react at all. She wouldn’t do anything, even if the saddle was too tight. Astrid knows this. So Astrid runs her hands over the straps of the saddle, wiggling her fingers between Stormfly’s scales and the leather, making sure there’s enough space to be comfortable. Her throat closes as she thinks about the trek she has to make. Three days of travel to get to Berk. Three more days that Hiccup may not be recovered.

Heather and Fishlegs are going off again today, following another lead. Astrid hopes the lead pans out, even if her three-day voyage to Berk turns out to be unnecessary after all. The twins are staying on the Edge, to patrol and keep it safe, and to be there in case Hiccup returns for some reason. It wouldn’t be the first time that Hiccup got himself out of a mess. She hopes that’ll happen when she’s gone. She hopes she’ll tell Stoick about this disaster and she’ll face her punishment with Hiccup safe and sound where he belongs. It’s the best case scenario in her mind.

Stoick won’t kill her; she isn’t scared of that. She knows that Stoick is going to be upset, which is probably worse than if he killed her. She can’t think of anything worse than letting down the chief she looks up to so much, the chief she holds in such high regard. All her skills – as a warrior, as a leader – are going to be questioned: every aspect of her planning, her competence, her strategy… no one is going to trust her in the field ever again.

And she can’t blame them.

One by one, the other riders filter into the stables as the sky continues to lighten. Snotlout’s knees are trembling as he walks, but no one draws attention to it. They can all see it anyway. They each go to their dragons, silent. Astrid can feel their eyes on her every now and then. They burn.

The only one Astrid looks at is her human companion for the next few days. Snotlout is leaning heavily against Hookfang. His clothes are hanging a bit off his frame and his cheeks are hollow, like he hasn’t eaten anything for a while. Hookfang is visibly concerned, which is concerning in itself. In fact, now she thinks about it, all the dragons have been acting weird. She already knows about Stormfly, who stands stiff and straight like she’s expecting orders every minute of every day, except for the quiet moments after midnight when Astrid needs to lean on her, when the weight of her failure becomes too much to bear. Her partner has never been much for frivolity, but seeing her this cold, this closed off to anything but following orders? It breaks Astrid’s heart.

The others?
Barf and Belch are not themselves. They were always tricky and fun and, to be honest, mildly annoying. She hasn’t seen a spark of that in weeks. They are quiet. They obey orders. They don’t get into trouble. And they’re despondent. They look like they aren’t there when they are. More often than not, Astrid finds them sleeping around the Edge. She wonders if they only sleep during the day, or if they can’t find the energy to do anything but sleep. And sleep never looks peaceful for them. They barely look alive.

Meatlug is anxious. All day, every day. She’s always shaking, so much that Astrid is half convinced that she’ll vibrate apart. Meatlug frets over every Viking and every dragon, never still. Astrid has to wonder if she’s sleeping at all. It’s hard to tell with dragons; it’s only visible in their eyes, since their skin doesn’t discolor like humans’. Meatlug looks frantic most days, but Astrid can’t bring herself to ask Fishlegs how she’s doing. She trusts that Fishlegs is taking care of Meatlug. He always has. And it’s all she can do.

Windshear doesn’t look affected, at least not physically; she isn’t tired or shaking. But she is angry. Her rage is so close to the surface that it takes almost nothing to make her lash out. Heather’s been on the receiving end of most of her anger, which she takes with her head held high and a level of patience that Astrid never thought possible. They work well together still, but Heather has more than a few new scars from Windshear’s anger.

Snotlout is the most concerning, though. He’s lost weight, Astrid can tell. It’s not right to see him, usually too bull-headed to let anything bring him down, reduced to such a state. Who knew it would be the absence of Hiccup that would cause it?

“Are you almost ready to go?” Astrid asks, voice cracking. She hasn’t spoken since the night before. Everyone turns to look at her when she speaks, but she half-turns away, only looking at Snotlout. She doesn’t like their eyes on her, but she won’t say anything. She deserves the contempt and resentment that must be in their gaze.

“Yeah,” Snotlout responds, opening and closing a saddle bag, too quickly to have seen what was inside, but giving the illusion of checking his supplies. His hands shake pretty badly for a moment, but he clenches them into fists, taking a deep breath. “I’m ready.” His hands are still shaking. Hookfang looks at him narrowly, but keeps his expression carefully neutral.

Astrid swallows and nods. “Should he really be going?” Fishlegs asks, concerned, but it rubs Astrid the wrong way. She knows what she’s doing now. Where was this defiance when she needed it? Where was this defiance twenty days ago?

Snotlout tenses up at the question. Astrid turns her attention to Fishlegs, trying not to let her annoyance show. “Yes. This has been his idea for weeks. And he needs to see a healer,” she tells him, voice even.

Fishlegs frowns, something sharp swimming in his eyes. “Travelling isn’t going to do him any good. If anything, it’s going to make him worse.”

Astrid can feel her jaw tensing up, and she can’t help the words that come out of her mouth. “He needs to see a real healer.”

It’s like the oxygen gets sucked out of the air around them. Fishlegs’ eyes go wide and he straightens up. Astrid kind of feels bad, but at the same time she doesn’t. Fishlegs is their pseudo-healer here, and he does a great job, but he’s still not trained. Not fully. And he’s too busy to take proper care of Snotlout. She needs Fishlegs to be out searching for Hiccup, not tending to Snotlout’s bedside.

Heather stands up and is between them in the next moment. “Guys, please--” she starts, but doesn’t finish.
They hear the sound of wingbeats and it’s like nothing else matters.

They all rush outside, faces turned to the sky, hoping to see the silhouette of a Night Fury in the early morning light. Astrid knows that she isn’t the only one who’s disappointed at seeing the Rumblehorn coming in for a landing. Although that disappointment is replaced with terror in the next moment. At least for her. There’s only one person she knows that rides a Rumblehorn. The confrontation she was planning on having in three days gets to happen now. She tears her eyes from the dragon and looks at the other riders. Snotlout is whiter than snow, swaying in place. Fishlegs and Heather look like they might cry, but like the tension of their jaws are the only things keeping the tears from falling. The twins look disappointed, walls going up again. It’s the most Astrid has seen from them in weeks.

She looks back at their visitors when she hears them land. It’s only then that she notices it’s two dragons. Stoick and Gobber look at her from dragon back. There’s no postponing this anymore. Astrid pulls her shoulders back and steps away from the group, ready to face whatever Stoick will throw at her. She stops halfway between him and the riders, tempted to cross her arms over her chest, but fighting the urge. They both look exhausted, but not tired. “Mornin ’riders,” Stoick greets, dismounting, voice carefully even. Astrid has to remind herself that Stoick would never kill her, but his disappointment may just do it.

Stoick has not been able to properly rest since they’ve left Berk. Sure, it’s hard to get comfortable on the hard ground on whatever island they rest on their way to the Edge, but it’s not about sleeping on the cold, hard ground. There’s lingering panic inside him. Panic that keeps his mind awake when he should be sleeping. His mind goes over scenario after scenario, fear fueling his imagination. He doesn’t know how Gobber has slept at all.

Three nights ago, Gothi rushed into his house, babbling nonsense. Her babbling was her fingers moving in patterns too fast on Stoick’s skin for him to even understand. If it weren’t for her vow of silence, Stoick wagers that she would have blurted everything out in a voice that hasn’t been used in decades. Gothi was in quite a state when she came in. It took Stoick too long to get her to use some of the special tablets he keeps stashed around his house to try get her to convey her thoughts. Even then it was hard to translate her scribbles, not that he was ever that good at translating in the first place, but he has a basic understanding. All he could recognize was “Hiccup” and “Toothless.” Those scribbles have fueled more than a couple of sleepless hours.

Seeing those names panicked him, so he took the tablets and the still babbling healer to Gobber’s, hoping he could make more sense of what Gothi was trying to tell him. Gobber was grumpy and muttering things under his breath that he was only able to get away with because Stoick is his best friend and Gothi didn’t have her staff on hand. Then Gobber read the tablets, mouth moving silently, his face growing darker. The longer Gobber read them, the more awake he got. He started barking questions at Gothi and she would scribble down something and Gobber couldn’t translate. After a certain point, after listening to them argue for too damn long, Gobber looked at Stoick and said, “Hiccup and Toothless are in trouble.”

The next moment, Stoick was making preparations to go out to the Edge as soon as humanly possible. He rescheduled meetings, designated tasks, and packed, all within the few short hours it took the sun to rise. Gobber refused to be left behind, hobbling along as fast as he could manage, and settling his own affairs before jumping on Grump’s back and taking off alongside Stoick and Skullcrusher.

Most of the voyage was spent in stifled silence. Stoick couldn’t think of anything to say, the panic in Gothi’s face haunting him, even while awake. Gobber tried to talk, but nothing he said could ease
the fear in Stoick’s heart. There were times that Stoick questioned his haste in coming out to the Edge. Even in his indecision, he had asked Gobber if they should turn back, the strength of his fear making him question his actions. Gobber had laughed at the question, saying they were already halfway there. It would make no sense to turn around. A Terror Mail might have been enough, but he’s already out here. He trusts his council, even if a few of them are stuck in their old ways. If it turns out to be nothing, then Stoick has only spent a week making sure his son is okay. He would never classify that as a waste.

He expected something to ease inside him at the familiar sight of the Edge, but it never comes. Something is hanging over the island like a cloud, even without one in the sky. Everything feels so gloomy, even if it doesn't look it. Even with this foreboding, Stoick half-expects to be greeted by Hiccup on Toothless’ back, confused, but a welcoming grin on his face. When that doesn’t happen, Stoick pushes down his panic. He notices the riders all rushing onto the landing strip of the stables, which is odd. The sun is starting to peek over the edge of the horizon, casting long shadows over the ground. It’s not unusual if the riders are all up at this hour, if they have a mission, but it unsettles Stoick.

Skullcrusher lands at the end of the platform with a heavy sound. He’s exhausted. Stoick had pushed the larger dragon to get here faster. Grump isn’t far behind. The riders look upset and panicked. Astrid steps between them, stopping at the halfway point. Stoick tries not to panic when he realizes that Hiccup is absent from the ensemble. Beyond the riders, Stoick can see Stormfly and Hookfang, saddled up and ready for a trip. Toothless isn’t there. “Mornin’ riders,” he greets, dismounting, voice carefully even. He can’t let them see how he’s already starting to panic.

He doesn’t miss how the riders flinch at his greeting, except for Astrid, who tenses more. He tries not to dwell on it. The riders look awful, if he’s being honest. The twins are tenser than Astrid, keeping their eyes anywhere but Stoick. Fishlegs and Heather are looking at him, but they look terrified. Although, that fear is nothing compared to the look on Snotlout’s face. Snotlout is pale, and he looks like he hasn’t eaten for a while. His knees shake under him and he looks seconds away from crying. Hookfang rushes out of the stable and supports Snotlout. Gothi’s panicked face flashes in his mind, but he pushes that aside. He refuses to dwell on the worst case scenario here. “Where’s Hiccup?” he asks, needing to address his biggest fear.

The entire group seems to pale, even Snotlout, who pales further and is starting to look a little ashen. Stoick can’t jump to conclusions, but he’s thinking the worst now. Astrid swallows, the sound unbelievably loud in the silence. “Hiccup’s missing,” she states, voice firm. Her arms are at her sides, fists clenched and shaking, like she’s doing everything in her power to keep her arms where they are.

Panic bubbles in Stoick’s chest. Hiccup is missing. His son. His only son. Is missing. He can’t think past that. Gobber’s hand is heavy on his shoulder and it pulls him out of that spiral, but he can’t speak. Stoick is beyond grateful that Gobber refused to allow him to come alone. He can’t bring himself to voice the questions that need to be asked. Not yet at least. “Missin’?” Gobber asks. “For how long?”

Astrid’s jaw trembles, but her voice doesn’t waver, “Forty days.”

Another wave of panic. It chokes him and he has to force himself to breathe. He can’t assume the worst. He can’t. No matter how panicked Gothi looked, or how scared the riders look, or how much fear he feels inside his chest. Gobber’s hand tightens on his shoulder and he inhales sharply, the only signs that the news has affected Gobber in any way. Stoick inhales and exhales. Forty days isn’t long. Only over a month, a cycle. There has to be a reason for them to take so long to notify him. “Okay,” Stoick says, and it’s much calmer than he feels. It doesn’t stop the riders from jumping though. “What was Hiccup’s mission? How long was he planning on being gone?” It’s the only
reasonable explanation. Stoick *has* to believe that Hiccup is on a mission. He has no idea how Hiccup runs the Edge. Maybe he goes on long term missions often…

Why does it feel like he’s lying to himself?

Astrid looks scared and guilty. Snotlout is as pale as a corpse and leaning heavily on Hookfang. The twins aren’t even looking at him, maybe past him, but not at him. Fishlegs has his eyes fixed on the ground, shoulders hunched by his ears. Heather looks confused. “No one told him?” she asks.

_That_ has Stoick’s attention. “Tell me what?”

Silence.

“Told me *what*?” Stoick repeats.

Heather levels a glare on the back of Astrid’s head. “I thought you were too proud to ask for his help! You never even *told him*?!” she yells and Astrid flinches, but doesn’t look away from Stoick.

Stoick is really starting to lose his patience now. And that is no easy feat, he raised Hiccup after all. His heart pangs at the thought. “Tell. Me. *What*?” he repeats, voice dangerous. If he has to ask again…

“Hiccup was taken by Dragon Hunters,” Astrid says in one breath, then adds, “along with Toothless.”

Stoick’s eyes go wide. “When?”

Silence.

Snotlout is panting.

“When?” Stoick asks again, voice rising.

Snotlout’s legs start to shake underneath him. The twins’ hands curl into fists at their sides. Now it looks like they are purposely looking past Stoick.

“When did they take my son?!” he demands, control snapping. Heather takes a step back, probably out of fear. Fishlegs curls into himself more. Snotlout collapses, bouncing off Hookfang onto the ground. Astrid’s legs are starting to shake, but she doesn’t waver.

“Forty days ago,” she tells him, voice finally breaking.

Stoick can’t look away from her. He doesn’t know what he’s feeling; he only knows that it’s choking him. His mouth falls open, but nothing comes out. “Hiccup has been in enemy hands for more than a cycle,” Gobber says, voice even. Stoick looks to him and has to take a step back. The last time Gobber looked like that, he took out an entire Berserker crew single-handedly. Stoick turns back to the riders and they’ve all shrunk back, even the twins. None of them have seen this side of Gobber. “The Hope and Heir of Berk is taken by one of her enemies,” Gobber continues, losing control of his voice the longer he talks, “and you diDN’T TELL THE CHIEF?!”

Gobber takes a step towards the riders and Stoick puts a hand on his chest, stopping him in his tracks. He wouldn’t hurt them, but they look half scared to death. Gobber’s face is bright red and his fist is curled at his side. He’s freaking out, even if the riders won’t be able to see it under the veneer of anger that he’s donned. Stoick wants to be doing the exact same thing that Gobber is doing, but how would that help anyone? How would scaring the riders help them find Hiccup? If they knew
where Hiccup was, he’d already be home. “Stand down, Gobber,” he orders, and it hurts to say.

Gobber spins on Stoick, levelling him with a glare that would make most men run. Stoick can see past the glare, though. He can see the anguish and worry underneath this anger, and his heart breaks. “You’re going to let them get away with—”

“They’re not getting away with anything,” Stoick cuts him off and Gobber’s mouth snaps shut, “but we have other priorities right now.” He takes a calming breath, forcing himself to relax in hopes that Gobber will mimic him. It works a little bit. Stoick steps in close, lowering his voice. “They’re already scared. They know that they messed up. Let’s focus on getting Hiccup back and we can yell later.”

Gobber takes a couple of deep breaths through his nose, relaxing further, and nods. “You’re right… you’re right.”

Stoick has to take a couple deep breaths of his own before he can look at the riders again. He schools his features as much as he can. It doesn’t matter what he’s feeling. He has to stay calm now.

“Astrid,” she pales, “come with us.” He looks to the others. “The rest of you, take care of Snotlout.” They all nod in understanding and move without a word. Stoick can’t stand the quiet obedience. He turns and jumps onto Skullcrusher’s back. “I’ll meet you in the clubhouse,” he states, on the verge of losing his calm. He pushes Skullcrusher to leave and he does. They’re in the air before anyone can respond.

Stoick gets a moment of solitude before the others can catch up and when he lands at the clubhouse. He needs the moment to allow the fear and worry in his heart to consume him. It’s just a moment, but his chest tightens and his eyes sting and his breaths start to sound shaky. He can’t push back the fear forever, so he has to let it out a little at a time until he can be alone. He wants to wail, to scream, to curse at anything, if it would make Hiccup come back, but he can’t.

No. Skullcrusher lands and Stoick has to compose himself. He pushes all his fear down and wipes his face, shaking the moisture he collects on his cheeks off his hands. He clears his throat and dismounts, Gobber and Astrid landing a moment later. Grump splays out, getting comfortable and letting out a heavy breath, finally getting a well-deserved break. Skullcrusher joins him, exhausted. Really, he did push those two beyond reason. But they did it. And now they deserve rest. Stormfly looks uncomfortable the moment that her rider dismounts. She starts shifting from foot to foot, uneasy. Astrid is still pale and leads them into the clubhouse. Stoick takes a moment behind her, watching how Stormfly takes a step to follow Astrid, but seems to catch herself. She looks like she wants nothing more than to be near Astrid, but she doesn’t know if she’ll be wanted. Instead, the Nadder turns to the other dragons and stands next to them. She’s too tense to sit.

Stoick enters the clubhouse, Astrid and Gobber are already standing around a table that has a large map spread over it. They look like they’re waiting for him. Stoick takes a breath and walks towards them. The map hangs over the edges of the table, but those parts are blank. What’s important is in the middle. In the middle, there’s a hole carved into the map, the table gouged underneath where the parchment has been already sliced. Astrid takes a breath and points to the hole in the map. “This is where Hiccup was taken.” Stoick scans the map and finds the Edge marked a little south of the hole. Hiccup was taken so close to home?

He looks over the rest of the map and there are a bunch of red X’s crossed over small islands around the hole and further north. He spots a larger island that has many X’s over it, like they went back day after day to search the whole island. There’s a small island next to it, circled and slashed out. The slash is deep over the smaller island. “What did you find here?” he asks, pointing to the circled island.
Astrid looks at him with fear in her eyes, mouth opening and closing, but no sound coming out. Her eyes dart to the corner and fix back on him, fear doubled. Stoick looks to the corner and his breath catches at the sight. Gobber inhales sharply as well. “Is that…” Gobber asks, unable to finish.

“Yes,” Astrid chokes out.

Stoick’s eyes burn with unshed tears. In that corner of the clubhouse, in a neat little pile, is Toothless’ saddle and fin. Wherever Hiccup and Toothless are… they’re grounded. Stoick has to believe that. He has to. Because the alternative is so much worse. Why else would Hiccup and Toothless not need their saddle anymore? Stoick can’t… he can’t…

Before he can spiral any further, Snotlout bursts into the room. “It isn’t Astrid’s fault!” he yells, panting and out of breath, like he ran all the way to the clubhouse. “She didn’t mess up!” he continues in that breathless, desperate tone. “I’m the one who messed up! Don’t punish her!”

“What are you talking about?” Astrid asks before Stoick or Gobber can respond.

“Hiccup was with me when he was taken!” Snotlout is still yelling. “It’s my fault he’s gone! Don’t…” he takes a deep breath and his head falls, not yelling anymore, “don’t punish her for my mistakes.”

Astrid is shaking her head before Snotlout finishes talking. “No! What are you talking about? I’m the one who chose not to tell Stoick! I’m in charge,” she turns to face Stoick, face hard, “and this mess is my responsibility.”

“No! It’s not Astrid’s fault!” Snotlout yells.

“No! Snolout—!”

“Enough!” Stoick bellows, cutting them off. They both snap their mouths shut. Stoick sighs and pinches the bridge of his nose. “At this point, I don’t care whose fault it is. The reality is that Hiccup is missing and we need a plan to deal with that.”

“We can blame someone when we get Hiccup back,” Gobber adds, glaring at the two of them. Stoick can’t bring himself to glare at the two as well; all he can think about is coming up with a plan and bringing Hiccup home.

“What else did you find on that island?” Stoick asks, bringing them back to why they are here in the first place.

Astrid swallows, her shoulders shifting back. “It was a dragon-fighting ring. We dismantled it, interrogated any of the Hunters we captured, and released all the dragons there. They… didn’t seem to like humans very much, but were happy to be gone…”

“Where are the hunters?” Stoick feels a swell of anger. He could knock some heads together right now. Maybe it would help him feel better.

Astrid shrinks away from him, uncomfortable. “They escaped.”

Stoick stares for a moment, not sure if he heard her right. When she doesn’t clarify, he has to ask, “Escaped?”

Astrid nods, her shoulders pushing back and clears her throat. “We brought them back here and had them locked up for a few days, but they were just… gone one morning. Our sentinel dragons were taken down with dragon root arrows. We split up and searched. My team saw a boat heading south,
so we followed, hoping it would take us to Hiccup.” She takes a levelling breath and averts her eyes for a moment. It looks like she might start to cry. Her eyes meet his again after a couple of deep breaths. “It was a decoy ship. When we finally caught up, the ship was empty. There were dummies all over it, and one person who was already dead. No one had any more luck.”

“Why didn’t you have anyone standing guard?” Gobber asks, sharp.

Astrid squeezes her eyes shut. “We did, but we had all been looking day and night and going back to that island to try and find any more clues and... our guard fell asleep.”

“Who?”

“Did you learn anything from them?” Stoick cuts in. It doesn’t matter who fell asleep and who didn’t, what matters is what they learned.

Astrid looks a little shocked at the question, but focuses on him instead of Gobber. “Yes, we learned that they had moved Hiccup and Toothless, and they were alive when they were moved.”

“How long ago was this?” Gobber cuts in, voice still in the same tone as his other questions.

“Twenty days after Hiccup was taken,” she states, bracing herself.

“And you couldn’t think to send your chief a Terror Mail by this time?” he growls.

“Stand down, Gobber,” he orders, putting a heavy hand on Gobber’s shoulder, trying to calm him down. Getting upset won’t help anyone. He’s starting to get tired. He looks back to Astrid. “What did you do next?”

“We went north again, spread out from the dragon fighting island. Or... we tried to. Some of us had to stay on the Edge. Whoever wasn’t searching was trying to come up with a plan,” she assures him, although he doesn’t feel very assured.

“What did you find?” Stoick can’t believe how small his voice sounds.

“Nothing!” Snotlout snaps and everyone turns to him. He looks like he’s at the end of his rope. Stoick forgot that he was here. “Nothing important! Empty Islands! The Northern Market! A lot of fucking ocean!” He’s panting by the end of his tirade and flinches when he notices everyone staring at him.

“Okay,” Stoick exhales, drawing everyone’s attention back to him. “What can we do next?”

There isn’t much of a plan when they finally disperse, just more aimless searching island from island, from where the dragon fights were held. No one can offer a more concrete plan beyond “let’s continue to search” and they talked in circles for hours (Heather and Fishlegs eventually joined them, the twins trailing after them, but the twins didn’t say anything). The sun was already starting to go down by the time Stoick called it a day and dismissed them all, telling everyone they would start searching at first light. He hates waiting that much longer to look, but everyone needs to rest. They won’t be any use to Hiccup if they collapse from exhaustion when they find him. Also, having them go out to unfamiliar islands without proper rest is tempting fate to take another one of them. Stoick doesn’t want to lose any of them. The riders defer to him without question (Astrid looks relieved to have an order to follow) and head back to their own huts. Gobber hunkers down in the clubhouse, coaxing Grump inside so he can cuddle the overgrown lizard. Snotlout is one of the last ones to leave, watching Stoick with too-wet eyes before disappearing without another word.
Stoick is so angry. With all of them. But he knows that anger comes from the side of him that’s a father, scared for the safety of his child. That side of him is angry that they didn’t tell him immediately when Hiccup was taken. As chief, he can understand why they didn’t. The Edge is an independent functioning arm of Berk. A functioning arm of their warrior class. Any problems that arise out here should be solved internally, more often than not. But with Hiccup being the victim… it layers on a level of politics that these kids have never had to deal with before. From what he can tell, Hiccup runs the Edge loosely (not poorly) but he doesn’t exert absolute control except in (what Stoick guesses) to be extreme circumstances. And from what Stoick understands, the riders have their own responsibilities and are consulted about every issue that occurs on the Edge, each voice having equal sway before one another.

With just Gobber and Grump for company in the clubhouse, he watches the flickering fire that someone lit while they were talking (read: arguing about what to do next). Gobber is lying with his back against Grump, his helmet in his lap, eyes closed and pretending to sleep. Grump is already asleep, snoring. Skullcrusher isn’t as affectionate, and neither is Stoick. The riders gave Skullcrusher a stall in the stables and assured Stoick that he’s gotten plenty of water and rest, so he has nothing to worry about there.

Alone with his thoughts, Stoick is starting to break down. He can break down in front of Gobber, the blacksmith won’t think any less of him for doing so, but Stoick needs to be alone. He stands, heaving a heavy breath out of his chest. “What’cha doing, Stoick?” Gobber asks without opening his eyes.

“Walk,” Stoick grunts out, collecting Toothless’ saddle and fin in his arms.

Gobber stays quiet, but Stoick can feel eyes on him now. Sure enough, when he looks, Gobber is watching him with sad eyes. “You’re not gonna do something crazy are ye?” he asks softly. “Cause you know you’re not allowed to hog it all.”


Gobber’s eyes flicker to the load in his arms. Something cracks in his eyes at the sight. “Are you sure you don’t want some company?”

Stoick shakes his head and blinks quickly. “No.” He looks to the leather and metal in his arms. “I need to be alone.” He inhales once, shaky. “Just for a bit.” He looks back to Gobber, to try and convey he really isn’t about to do anything stupid.

Gobber looks like he wants to argue, but Stoick knows he won’t. He watches Stoick for a couple more moments, then nods. “A’ight. Take care of yourself,” he whispers and closes his eyes again, giving Stoick some privacy. Stoick is grateful. He leaves without another word. Gobber has been his friend for most of his life, he knows that as soon as Gobber saw the saddle, he knew that Stoick wasn’t planning an aimless meander around the Edge. No…

…he’s going to Hiccup’s hut.

The moon is high in the sky by the time Stoick reaches the hut on foot. It’s one of the highest ones, but he doesn’t care. He doesn’t remember the walk over here anyway. The door opens smoothly, like it has been recently oiled. The dark of Hiccup’s hut feels emptier than it is. Colder too. He takes a deep breath, to try and calm himself, but he inhales a deep gulp of how musty the hut is. Like no one has stepped foot in here for a while. His eyes sting as he steps into the hut, closing the door behind him and blocking the small amount of moonlight that allowed him to see.

He stands in the dark for a few moments, feeling the empty space that should not be empty. He nudges open the door a bit, letting in some moonlight so he can navigate without making a mess. He
spots the fireplace first and goes to it. Kneeling next to the hearth, Stoick sets the saddle and fin in his arms next to his knees gently. He gets a small fire going and stands to close the door the rest of the way.

With the door shut, Stoick stands with his back against it, looking around the hut in the dim firelight. No one has been here for a while and it feels so wrong. Stoick’s throat starts to close with emotion, tears pooling in his eyes, but he manages to choke them back. Crying won’t help, he tells himself. Then repeats it, over and over again.

He has to as he scans over Hiccup’s space. His inner mantra stutters when he spots Hiccup’s desk. The top is covered with scattered papers and the skeleton of a new fin. That desk, the half-finished work, it feels like Hiccup will be back any moment to complete what he started. Stoick picks up the unfinished fin with shaking hands, his breath shuddering. It feels wrong to touch it, but he can’t help himself. He wraps the fin in his arms, sits heavily on the stool near the desk, and cries.

There is nothing that can stop his tears now.

He bawls; fear, hope, and despair roiling around his chest. His son. His pride and joy… this is all he has of him now—half finished projects and an empty hut. Another wave of sorrow tears through him. Why do the gods feel the need to rip his family from him? One painful extraction at a time?

He prays and begs the gods’ forgiveness for whatever crime he has committed to deserve such a cruel punishment. He begs them to spare Hiccup, to no snuff out his life when Hiccup is nowhere near done turning the world on its head; when he has so much more to teach; when Stoick still has so much to learn.

He wails, knocking the helmet off his head. Right now, he isn’t a chief. He’s not Stoick the Vast, Chief of the Hooligan Tribe of Berk. No. Now he’s Stoick Haddock, a father pleading with the gods for the safety of his only child.

Hiccup wakes up, feeling like he’s been buried alive. There’s pressure on his chest; he can’t inhale fully. It’s dark, warm, and smells like lightning. He half expects to open his mouth and for it to fill with warm earth. He wonders how deep he’s buried. There’s a voice in his head that isn’t his. It’s deep and rumbling and not his. Tears fall from his eyes again. What has he gotten himself into?

“Calm, Hiccup, calm,” the voice urges. Hiccup does feel calm, but only on the very fringes of his being. His insides are on edge, bracing for another blow. The outside is numb… empty. The empty part is the only part that’s calm.

The dark around him starts to vibrate and snarl. It scares Hiccup. He can feel his heart rate pick up and his breathing stutter. No dirt falls into his mouth. What’s happening? What’s going on? “Stop that, ye filthy beast,” someone says, and it’s not inside Hiccup’s head. Who said that? What’s going on? “We have something for your bride.”

There’s another loud snarl and Hiccup is jostled. Toothless. He’s wrapped in Toothless’ wings. Why is he… oh. Right. Married to a dragon seeps into his brain. Married to a dragon.

Hiccup is jostled again and Toothless’ snarl is like a crack of lightning. “Calm down!” someone yells, sounding like he believes he has some sort of authority. Toothless growls, tense around Hiccup. There’s a heavy sigh. “Get the tranquilizer.”

Hiccup’s insides freeze. “NO!” he yells, pushing against the dark walls around him. Toothless can’t prote—help him if he’s unconscious. Hiccup isn’t too sure he’d be able to fight any of them off if
they decided they wanted to touch him again. And Hiccup can’t risk that. As much as he wants to stay hidden, Toothless cannot get knocked out. Toothless’ wings slowly unfurl, reluctant, and Toothless is grumbling. “Let me out, bud,” Hiccup whispers, urgent.

“Hiccup safe here,” Toothless argues, but doesn’t tighten his hold.

“Just let me out,” Hiccup repeats. He’s too scared to articulate that he’s worried someone is going to hurt Toothless. All he knows is that he has to get out before someone can. All he can communicate is that he needs to get out, now.

The dull light from the dying Fireworms hurts Hiccup’s eyes for a moment. He squints and searches for the person who was talking. He has to pull himself over Toothless, who has put the bulk of his body between Hiccup and the door. Two hunters are standing outside the grate. One has a nasty scar that stretches from his left jaw to his right temple, and a smile that is just as nasty. The other is frowning, short, shorter than Snotlout, but has muscles packed onto his small frame. Hiccup wonders if the Hunter would sink if he fell into the ocean. When both sets of eyes snap to him, Hiccup fears he might throw up. He doesn’t want anyone to look at him.

“I know that you’re enjoying this uninterrupted time with your husband, but we have a schedule to keep,” the short one says, sounding far too happy.

“Yeah, honeymoon’s over,” Scar-face adds, laughing.

Short rolls his eyes, sighing. “Sure, honeymoon’s over.” He holds up something in his hand, but Hiccup can’t make out what it is. “It’s time for you to get dressed, bride.” He snickers. “We got some new clothes for you.”

Hiccup perks up. Clothes? They’re going to give him clothes? Hope blossoms in his chest. Clothes. Clothes.

“Not trust,” Toothless whispers, even though Hiccup is the only one who can hear him.

The hunter with the scar lifts the grate a little and Short tosses whatever was in his hand into the cell, the door slamming closed with a bang. Whatever it is lands in a heap halfway between the door and Toothless. Hiccup doesn’t want to move closer to them, he doesn’t want Toothless to move closer either, but he really wants to see what they gave him. He stares at it, trying to figure out what it is when Scar-face speaks up. “Well?” he growls. “Don’t be ungrateful.”

Hiccup whimpers, barely resisting the urge to hide behind Toothless again. Yes, he wants clothes, but he can’t move. He can’t get closer to them. He doesn’t want Toothless to move closer to them. He doesn’t want the hunters to see him naked.

Toothless shuffles around, and Hiccup is hit with a visceral fear that Toothless is going to move, but only his tail moves. The appendage slides across the floor and drags the heap closer. Hiccup leans over Toothless and snatches it off the ground, out of the embrace of Toothless’ warmth for less than a second. The chill still pierces through him in that small window, and doesn’t leave when he returns to Toothless’ warmth. The cloth is a little rough in Hiccup’s hands and a dirty white. Hiccup shakes it out and makes a noise of distress when he recognizes the shape of it.

A wedding dress.

A disrespectful, dirty, stained wedding dress.

“I can’t wear this,” Hiccup whispers in horror. Anyone who’ll look at him will know. They’ll know
without Hiccup saying a word and Hiccup won’t be able to hide it. He drops the dress like it’s burned him and wraps his arms around himself, shivering, despite the warmth radiating from his mate. Toothless croons and puts a wing over his shoulder, like a blanket. Like a warm, scaly blanket.

“Don’t be rude!” one of the hunters snaps. Hiccup can’t tell which one it is. They sound the same to him and he can’t tear his eyes from the dirty dress. “We paid good money for that! Now put it on!”

*Good money?* Hiccup thinks to himself, eyes fixed on the dress. Toothless makes a confused noise, but Hiccup ignores it. No woman would be seen in such a dress. There are dirt stains, blood stains, and Thor-knows-what stains on the skirt of the dress and along the bodice. The hem looks ripped and torn. The neckline is too low to be respectable. “I can’t wear this,” Hiccup repeats, louder.

One of them scoffs. “Either you put it on yourself, or we knock ya out and put it on for ya.”

Toothless snarls again. “We’ll knock ya out too!” he snaps. Toothless growls.

Hiccup sobs once. He doesn’t want to be touched, whether he’ll be aware or not. Tears stream down his face as he reaches for the dress again with shaking fingers. Toothless nudges him. “*Hiccup not-need to. Toothless protect.*”

Hiccup shakes his head, more tears falling down his face. He wants to trust Toothless, to trust that Toothless will protect him when he says so… but he can’t. He’s too scared. The Hunters have already done so much to them, despite Toothless’ and his own best efforts to stop them. They have fought, they have resisted, but they have still ended up in this place, with a dirty wedding dress and unwashable stains on both their souls. He cries as he shrugs it over his head. He has to pull a little to get it all the way on and he cries.

It doesn’t fit right.

He crosses his arms over his chest and cries.

The arms are too tight, his shoulders a little too broad. The neckline reaches the middle of Hiccup’s chest, almost exposing his nipples. The scar on his shoulder is on display for the world to see. He hasn’t stood yet, the fabric pooled over his lap, but he knows it won’t be long enough to reach the ground. Now that it’s on, Hiccup can smell it. The dress smells like sweat and musk and dirt. Hiccup wishes he could take it off. “That’s a good lass,” one of them coos, mocking.

Hiccup hasn’t turned to face them. He doesn’t know which one has spoken to him. His shoulders hike to his ears and he feels a bolt of anger through his chest. Toothless snarls at the same time, snapping his head around and shooting off a plasma blast that hits the grate. The hunters yell in shock, shouting something derogatory at Toothless for his “insolence.” Hiccup might have found the exchange funny, if he didn’t just willingly put on a dress.

*Chapter End Notes*

again... i apologize...

but... hiccup finally got some clothes?

i dont think that there are any tags that need to be added....

but here are the warnings:
self-loathing
forced feminization
DAY FIFTY-THREE

Chapter Summary

Auction Day

Chapter Notes

This picks up in the episode titled "Last Auction Heroes"

I have only one more chapter... for this part. I intend to weave back into the canon material, exploring what happens between Hiccup and Toothless and how they adjust to their lives post-abduction. Things may be tweaked and moved around, but I am going in order as best as I can. This is still very much a Toothcup fic. I have created the series as well, so you can subscribe to that if you want more.

I apologize for this taking so long, i was getting ahead of myself in my planning and I realized that i have to finish this story before i can move along :) 

Sorry for the wait. No new tags to be added

Ask and ye shall receive

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hiccup wakes slowly, mouth dry and eyes crusted. He can’t remember falling asleep. His last clear memory before black is putting on the wedding dress. And now it’s just black, even though he can feel his eyes are open. Maybe he’s blind. Would it matter?

All of his muscles ache from lying around so much. His joints hurt from lack of movement. His stomach is gnawing at him. He can’t remember the last time he ate something, refusing to eat anything the Hunters provide for him. Well, a few bites, when the hunger got to be too much to bear. Every bite was laced with something to knock him out. He’s not even sure if they did anything to him while he was knocked out. He’s not sure he wants to know.

Hiccup sighs, blinking slowly in the darkness, exhausted to his bones.

...he’s so tired of waking up.

“Hiccup?”

Hiccup feels like he should jump, there’s an echo of a spike of adrenaline, but he’s so tired that he can’t even collect the energy to tense. Even the sound of Toothless’ voice, which is still entirely surreal, can’t bring Hiccup anything more than a passing concern, if that. It’s so odd, too odd to be real. Maybe it isn’t. Maybe the Hunters killed him when they were captured and the gods are punishing him. After all, it feels like he’s been suffering for an eternity, and that he may suffer for another... and another one after that. Then one more, for good measure. What has Hiccup done to
anger the gods? What crime has he committed to warrant such a punishment?

“Where are we?” Hiccup can feel the words leave his mouth, the air over his lips, hear the sound of his voice in the dark, but he can’t remember thinking the words or making the decision to speak. His throat hurts… and he’s so tired.

“Island,” Toothless responds. Hiccup isn’t sure how he should feel about it. Should he be angry? Annoyed? They are on an island, obviously. Why does he have to state the obvious? Should he feel sad because an island means that they are still stuck in this nightmare? They’re always on islands. They’re in a freaking archipelago. “Different island,” Toothless amends, cutting through Hiccup’s thoughts.

Something eases inside him and Hiccup realizes that he was feeling annoyed, but there’s nothing now. Should he be concerned? He can’t remember the trip at all, not even a distant memory of being on a boat. It’s putting on the dress, feeling angry, then black.

“What happened?” It feels like the right thing to ask, like what he’s supposed to do, but he doesn’t care about the answer. Does it matter? It’s so dark. Why is it so dark? And why does it smell like ozone? Then he realizes he’s wrapped in Toothless’ wings. He shouldn’t be surprised to find himself in Toothless’ wings. Toothless has taken to hiding him away, using his body as a barrier between Hiccup and the Hunters.

In the next moment, Hiccup is aware of every inch of his body: his skin, his hair, the way his chest expands and contracts, almost cruel. He didn’t realize all the aches and pains were just echoes of how much he’s hurting. Each breath hurts, pulling muscle that feels like it should have snapped from the movement. He can feel his blood in his veins, the side of his neck pulsing with his still-beating heart. In the back of his mind, he knows he should be grateful that he can feel these things, feel the life moving through him, but he hates it. He hates everything he feels, hates his body for still living, for keeping him alive, for refusing to be broken. The dress is too tight around his arms, pinching in his armpits, tight over his shoulders and chafing his skin with every small movement. The fabric is rough on his skin, irritating it to itchiness, but he can’t find the care to scratch.

“Purple smoke,” Toothless says, cutting through Hiccup’s thoughts again, every sensation pushed to Hiccup’s periphery so he can focus on what Toothless is saying. “Toothless protect Hiccup. Hunters not-allowed touch.”

Hiccup is grateful that Toothless won’t let the Hunters touch him, but his stomach still turns when he registers what Toothless has told him. Hiccup put on the dress. He put it on willingly. Why did the Hunters break their promise? He’s never felt so betrayed or so stupid before. He should know better than to trust the Hunters, but Hiccup took them at their word, like an idiot. He should know better. The Hunters have done nothing but hurt them the moment since their capture.

Tears pool in Hiccup’s eyes, emptiness filling his chest. “We’re going to be sold,” he chokes out, curling towards Toothless as much as he can. Hiccup feels warm, he should feel safe, but not even Toothless can protect him from the Hunters, no matter how warm he keeps Hiccup. They’re both at the Hunters’ mercy, and the Hunters are not merciful.

“No,” Toothless says firmly, shifting around Hiccup, but Hiccup is shaking too much to discern how Toothless moves. “No sell. Escape. Hiccup and Toothless always escape.” Hearing Toothless’ conviction makes Hiccup cry harder. How can Toothless think that, when evidence would suggest that it’s moronic to think that they’re going anywhere other than to the highest bidder? How can Toothless have hope? How can Hiccup have none?

“We can’t,” Hiccup gasps through the tears, somehow, “escape.” He continues to sob, his heart
shattering in his chest. If he were stronger, maybe they could escape, but Hiccup can’t see it. He can’t picture them free from this place. All he can see is cages and Hunters and sky that is just out of reach. Another painful sob. “They’ve won.”

“No!” Toothless sounds desperate. “No Hunter win. Hunter never win!”

“They have!” Hiccup wails, wishing he could feel anything else but the pain in his chest. “They have! I can’t–” he gasps, trying to remember how to breathe, “--I can’t fight anymore!”

“Toothless fight,” Toothless says quickly, firm yet wavering, like he might be crying as well. Like maybe he doesn’t really believe what he’s saying either. “Toothless fight until Hiccup fight again.”

Hiccup shakes his head, desperately trying to get closer, but feeling like he doesn’t deserve Toothless’ warmth. Or his devotion. “Don’t. I’m not--” he gasps again, “--not worth it.”

Toothless makes a distressed noise. “No, Hiccup! No!”

Hiccup sobs. Toothless is too good: too good for Hiccup to even talk to; too good to exist in the same space as someone so broken. If it weren’t for Hiccup, they never would have ended up here. Hiccup was the one who went into that cave without a plan, Snotlout nagging at his back about doing something more thought through. Why couldn’t he have listened? It’s Hiccup’s fault that they were captured. It’s his fault that they ended up in the breeding fights. Hiccup is shaking his head, sobbing, “Don’t... don’t...” over and over again.

There’s a loud clang and Hiccup jumps, his muscles protesting the sudden movement. Toothless tenses around him, starting to growl low in his chest, a sure sign that something he doesn’t like is near, but far enough away that they aren’t much of an issue. “Come out, bride!” That’s Viggo’s voice. It’s muffled through Toothless’ wings, but Hiccup would recognize it anywhere. “I have someone to introduce you to.”

“What does he mean?” Hiccup whispers in horror, sniffling and choking down his sobs. Crying in front of Viggo is not an option. He doesn’t want to see anyone. He never wants to see another person again. He doesn’t think he can look anyone in the eye. What the Hel would Viggo want to talk about with him anyway? Their last conversation was awful. Hiccup has no desire to ever talk to him again.

“Stranger with Viggo. Face hidden,” Toothless says, still growling.

Hiccup’s stomach turns. It’s enough that Viggo has already seen him at his worst, but now Viggo is going to force the indignity of a stranger seeing him in this state? Will the humiliation never end? “I can’t,” Hiccup chokes out, fresh tears falling. He hates that he can’t stop crying. Toothless’ wings tighten around him, like a hug. It doesn’t help much.

“If you don’t do as I say,” Viggo continues, “I’ll have to tranquilize the dragon. And I’ll have to send some men in to get you out properly.” Hiccup sobs. “I can’t sell you separately, but I can store you separately. It’s only fair that people are allowed to see what they’re about to buy, don’t you agree?”

“Don’t,” Hiccup whimpers, fingers curling on Toothless’ chest, “you can’t-- I can’t be alone.”

Hiccup wishes that there was something to hold onto instead of dragon scales.


“I want to go home,” Hiccup sobs, shaking. There’s an aching sorrow blooming in his chest: the terrible ache of wishing to help but being acutely aware of how powerless you are. It’s coming from
Toothless. Hiccup hates that feeling, starting to echo it himself. He doesn’t want Toothless to feel that way at all.

“Hiccup will get home,” Toothless promises, voice thick. There’s some sort of resonance in his voice, like the echo of a roar in a cave, that Hiccup can’t understand, but he doesn’t have time to ponder it.

“Well?” Viggo calls. “Do I have to call the men?”

Hiccup’s heart seizes at the thought of being separated from Toothless. He wipes his face hastily, the fabric on the sleeves pulling over his shoulders, protesting at the quick movement. He pushes at Toothless’ wing. “Let me out, bud,” he says, trying to sound sure, but his voice is still shaking. “We have to stay together.”

Toothless whines but loosens his hold. Hiccup sits up, squinting at the light. With a shock, he realizes they’re outside. There’s so much to take in.

The sun is still high in the air and the sky is a rude shade of blue through the bars of their cage. There’s a horizon in three directions, the last direction blocked with a mountain, each of them horizons he knows he’ll never be able to reach. And they are just one dragon-proof cage in a row of dragon-proof cages. Nadders, Gronckles, Terrors, all sorts of dragons locked up and laying in their cages, completely given up. It’s too much to take in. He lowers his gaze, the air feeling too fresh and too cold on his chest. He crosses his arms, fabric protesting again at the movement. At this point, Hiccup doesn’t care if the dress rips.

He stays sitting beside Toothless, shivering and looking around, eyes adjusting to the light slowly. When was the last time he saw sunlight? Toothless stays in his spot, between Hiccup and the door, lying in the same position he does when Hiccup is in his wings. Hiccup knows it’s so he can hide if he wants, and it allows one wing to be used like a blanket. The wing is covering his lap, warm and smooth, but not much comfort when Hiccup notices that Viggo is standing at the door of the cage, smug as ever. Hiccup hates Viggo more than he’s hated anyone.

His hate-filled thoughts are cut short when he realizes Viggo isn’t alone. His arms tighten around himself and his shoulders hunch. Toothless’ wing rises to offer another small barrier between Hiccup and the strange man. “Who’re you?” Hiccup asks, hoping to sound angry but only hitting scared.

The man smirks. His face is mostly covered in shadow from the hood over his head, but his mouth is still in the sunlight. His hood is attached to a dark cloak that drapes over his body. Hiccup can only make out that the man is broad-shouldered. He has no way of knowing if the man is armed, unlike Viggo, who wears his sword on his back. The stranger’s cloak is held together at the hollow of his throat by a silver pin that looks like a combination of a star and an arrow. “This gentleman,” Viggo says, drawing Hiccup’s attention back to him, “is a very important prospective buyer. He has certain privileges, like seeing the merchandise before the auction.”

Hiccup’s stomach sinks. Is he really about to be sold? Is this the one time that he can’t get out of it? He feels like he’s falling. History shows that they have a habit of escaping sticky situations, but is this really going to be the one time that they don’t? Toothless’ conviction, although wavering, had fostered a little bit of hope somewhere in the back of Hiccup’s mind. Although he could only tell now, when it finally died. “Is the boy necessary for this lot?” the man asks, in an accent that Hiccup doesn’t recognize.

“Unfortunately, yes,” Viggo sighs, leaning against the cage, ignoring how the low-level growl Toothless has been giving spikes at the motion. It’s like he doesn’t notice it. “My men put some... things into motion and permanently separating them would only turn the dragon mad.”
“And you threatened to separate them earlier?”

Viggo chuckles. “Not permanently, just in separate cages so buyers can get a good look at both of them. They still come together.”

“And you’re certain the dragon would go mad?”

“Absolutely certain,” Viggo assures the man.

The man hums. “I thought dragons only went mad when separated from their mates,” he says curiously. Hiccup feels like he might throw up. This stranger knows. He knows.

Hiccup’s breathing starts to pick up, his heart pounding in his chest. Toothless’ concern comes in through the bond, but Hiccup ignores it. This man knows.

Viggo smiles, cruel and smug, directly at Hiccup. “Is that so?” he asks, neither confirming nor denying the man’s implication.

The man scoffs, mouth turning down. “So this is a special lot? Unlike the others?”

“One of a kind.”

“I’ve heard that from you before, Viggo. And it has never been true.”

“My dear friend—” Viggo simpers, hardly fazed by the accusation.

“I am not your friend,” the man snaps.

Viggo continues like he wasn’t interrupted. “—when was the last time you saw a Night Fury in a cage? And a living, breathing Viking locked in there with him? Unheard of, even in my travels. My problem is going to be convincing everyone it’s true.”

“Hmmm,” the man hums, rubbing his chin thoughtfully.

“This lot, when purchased, will come with specific care instructions, unlike the rest of the lots.”

“Specific care instructions?” the man echoes. “You would dictate what a man does with his own property?”

“Never,” Viggo says quickly, holding up his hands. “These care instructions would be to help the buyer ensure that they could keep this piece of property around for a long time. But they would be merely suggestions, since, you’re right, I cannot dictate what a man does with his property after it’s purchased.” Hiccup’s heart squeezes in his chest. This is never going to end.

“So I can assume that ‘one of a kind’ also means exorbitant?” The buyer takes a step closer to the cage and with the movement, Hiccup is able to see his eyes. He’s never seen eyes so cold. It doesn’t look natural. He shrinks under that gaze. Even Toothless hisses at him in warning. Toothless doesn’t need to speak for Hiccup to hear the order to step back in that hiss.

Viggo makes a sound that means he doesn’t necessarily agree with what the man has said, but also can’t disagree with it. “I wouldn’t put it so harshly, my friend. Procuring a product so unique isn’t an easy task, and think of the privilege of owning something so rare. I would say that this lot is priceless.” Hiccup hates that they’re talking about him like he isn’t right here, slowly pulling Toothless’ wing up to cover his chest because he hates the way that the man is looking at him.

“Viggo, you’re starting to sound like a common tradesman, inflating the worth of their wares to line
their own pockets.” There’s another smile on the buyer’s face, but Hiccup only catches the corner of it because he turns to look at Viggo.

Viggo fumes silently, frowning, but not rising to the bait. He smiles with too much teeth. “Careful what you say there, friend. This is my auction after all.”

“I am well aware.” The man sounds amused. He turns his attention back to Hiccup and Toothless and Hiccup flinches under that gaze again, pulling the wing higher, covering his chest. The man chuckles at the movement. Hiccup’s face flares. “Maybe a personal purchase then.”

Hiccup pulls the wing up to cover half his face, not taking the eyes off the man. “A personal purchase? Even though you think it’s, what did you say? Exorbitant?” Viggo smirks.

The man’s smile turns dangerous. “For once, I believe that this lot is unique and would be, as you said, worth the price of owning, if just to own it.” He steps back from the cage. “And don’t act coy, Grimborn. You know exactly what I’m here for, yet you still showed me this lot.”

“I don’t know what you mean,” Viggo says loftily, waving away the accusation like one bats at a fly. The man chuckles darkly. “I’m just doing what I would do for any important buyer, showing all the lots for purchase.”

“You know I’m not here for myself, Viggo.”

“I’m aware. If you follow me, I can show you some lots that would better suit your needs.”

“Why bother showing me this lot at all then? You’re not one to waste time.”

Viggo smirks at the buyer. “That is correct.”

The man laughs. “And you wonder why I don’t trust you.”

“Follow me,” Viggo repeats, smile still on his face. He turns and the man follows, their conversation continuing, but Hiccup can’t hear it through the blood rushing in his ears. There’s no plan to escape. It didn’t occur to Hiccup until now that having a plan might be a good idea. No, they’re going to be sold and Hiccup couldn’t even think of a way to get out. Not even a long-shot idea.

There’s a gentle nudge at his side and a gentle “Hiccup?” in his head. Hiccup carefully lies down without a word, curling up into Toothless’ side. His wings wrap around Hiccup in the next moment. The wings should comfort him, but they don’t. Instead he breaks down, crying. He’s useless. Absolutely useless.

Hiccup can’t tell how much time has passed. Between his sobbing and the pitch black cocoon of Toothless’ wings, it’s impossible to keep track of the passage of time. Hiccup doesn’t care anymore. He can’t bring himself to care that he doesn’t care either. There’s nothing he can do. Viggo is going to sell him and Hiccup is going to spend the rest of his days known as a dragon’s bride as some sick form of entertainment.

Maybe whoever buys them will kill them. Hiccup doesn’t want Toothless to die, it hurts his heart to even think about that happening, but the thought of his own life ending is appealing. Hiccup hopes his death doesn’t hurt, but with his luck, he’ll probably suffer until the very end.

Toothless has been trying to talk to him, but Hiccup can’t understand what he’s saying. Not that Toothless is speaking another language, it’s that Hiccup can’t be bothered to try and understand. It would take too much energy to try. It doesn’t matter anyway. Their lives are over and it’s all
Hiccup’s fault. If he had been smarter, been better, they wouldn’t be here. They could still be flying. They wouldn’t be dragon-fucking-married. Hiccup wouldn’t be in a dress.

There’s a muffled crashing noise and screaming, both human and dragon. Toothless tenses, tightening his wings around Hiccup, growling as he does so. It’s a preemptive warning growl, so Hiccup knows that there aren’t enemies nearby. Hiccup doesn’t care what’s happening. Maybe one of the dragons escaped and is wreaking havoc. Hiccup squeezes his eyes shut, guilt coursing through him. He can’t even think of an escape plan, and this random dragon has been able to do it. Why can’t he think of a simple escape plan?

Then Toothless’ growl gets more pointed, louder and deeper. Someone is getting closer. Hiccup can feel Toothless steeling himself for something. There’s anger and fear shooting through the bond. The fear kickstarts something in Hiccup, chasing the numbness from him. “What is it, bud?” he whispers, shifting closer to Toothless. Toothless will protect him.

Relief flashes through the bond before being covered with protective rage again. “Intruders,” Toothless responds, continuing to growl.

Who would attack Viggo? Hiccup wonders. He’s not sure if he says that out loud or not.

“Too far away. More than one--” Toothless’ head shoots up, words cutting off suddenly. Hiccup can see it in his mind: Toothless sitting straight, ears up and moving, trying to locate the source of the noise. “Dragons…” he says, sounding unsure or shocked. Hiccup can’t tell with the swell of annoyance that goes through him.

“Of course there are dragons,” Hiccup snaps. “This is a dragon auction.” Gods, Hiccup can’t even save these dragons. Isn’t that what he wanted to do? Isn’t that why he ended up in that cave with Snotlout?

“No--” Toothless doesn’t get to finish. There’s a loud screeching noise, like the tearing of metal, and the cage jerks sharply to the left. Toothless snarls, his chest heating under Hiccup’s hands, getting his fire ready. Fear shoots through Hiccup.

“Where is he?” a new voice asks. A voice Hiccup recognizes, one that he hasn’t heard in what feels like forever, one he thought he would never hear again.

Hiccup pushes out of Toothless’ wings with more strength than he thought that he had. He blinks in the late evening light, the sky red and orange. There’s a large figure standing where the door used to be and it takes forever for his eyes to adjust. Something bright and hopeful struggles to life in his chest. “Dad?” he asks, voice cracking. He doesn’t believe his eyes. He can’t.

Stoick’s eyes go wide and his shoulders fall like he let out a breath he’s been holding for too long. “Hiccup,” he says, voice cracking.

Tears. Hiccup can’t stop them from falling, or the sob that cracks his chest. He stumbles to his feet and falls into his father’s arms, unused to standing and using his legs. Stoick’s arms are warm and strong around him, holding Hiccup tighter than strictly comfortable, but Hiccup can’t stop sobbing. He was sure he would never see his father again. “You’re alive,” Stoick whispers. It sounds like he might be crying, too, but Hiccup can’t pull his face from Stoick’s chest. “Thank Thor. You’re alive.”

Stoick keeps an arm around Hiccup’s back, but moves the other one so his hand is at the back of Hiccup’s neck, holding him close. The rough skin sends cold water down his spine, reminding Hiccup of what’s been done to him.
This can’t be real. It has to be a dream. Hiccup wants to pull away, but the warmth feels so real. The texture of Stoick’s shirt feels real. The arms around him feel real. But it can’t be real. Rough skin rubs against his neck again. Fear bubbles in Hiccup’s gut, but he forces himself to relax. It’s not real, and this is father. Stoick won’t hurt him.

Stoick pushes Hiccup away, holding him at arm’s length, grip firm on Hiccup’s shoulders. There’s so much skin those hands are touching. It can’t be real. He looks down Hiccup’s body. “What are you wearing?” he whispers. There’s horror in his voice.

Hiccup turns away and throws up.

Bent over and shaking, Hiccup can’t bring himself to look Stoick in the eye. He doesn’t want to know what Stoick thinks. This has to be unreal. Hiccup would rather die than have Stoick see him like this. Worry blossoms in his chest and Hiccup knows it belongs to Toothless because he can only feel fear and he’s sick with it. “Don’t,” Hiccup sobs. He doesn’t know who he’s talking to. Does it matter who he’s talking to?

“How can he tell Stoick that people have already seen him like this? How can he tell Stoick that it’s too late to save any dignity that Hiccup might have had? “I have nothing…” Hiccup cries softly. He doesn’t want to take off the dress. Not because he likes the dress, but he doesn’t want to be naked again. The thought of getting out of the dress suddenly feels stupid. What else would he have worn? Would it be better to be naked?

Something fuzzy is shoved into Hiccup’s face. Hiccup grabs it without thinking. He stares at it, trying to figure out what it is. It takes a few moments for Hiccup to recognize that he’s holding Stoick’s fur cloak. He doesn’t want to be naked, but a cloak is better than a dress… right?

Hiccup frowns at the tone and the order. How can he tell Stoick that he wants to be naked? He crosses his arms over his chest and takes a couple of steps back. “There’s… I can’t. I don’t… I don’t have anything else.” Hiccup’s throat hurts.

“Take it off before someone sees you,” Stoick says, harsh.

Hiccup turns his back to Stoick and clumsily strips, tossing the dress into a corner carelessly and wrapping the cloak around his shoulders. He’s never been more grateful to be as skinny as he is. Stoick’s cloak covers his shoulders and back nicely, but on Hiccup, the cloak is able to fully close and it’s so warm. It also covers more skin than the dress did. And it’s shapeless.

He shoots another glance at the dress, but he catches Toothless’ eye instead. Or Toothless catches his. Toothless is staring at him, eyes wide with worry. It strikes Hiccup that this is the first time in a while that he’s looked Toothless in the eye. He’s filled with conflicting emotions: fear, anger, elation, worry, friendship… it’s all a mess right now, but there is one thing that rushes into his mind with startling clarity. “Burn it, please,” Hiccup begs, keeping his mouth shut.

Toothless acts without hesitation, shooting a plasma blast at the heap of fabric. It catches fire and is ashes in moments. Honestly a little anticlimactic visually, but the relief Hiccup feels seeing it burned cannot be described. He sobs, overwhelmed, thinking a grateful “Thank you” to Toothless that feels inadequate for how Toothless’ actions have made him feel. There’s something hopeful in Hiccup’s chest again, but this time it’s coming from Toothless.

“Let’s go,” Stoick says, reminding Hiccup that they aren’t safe yet. There’s still the cry of battle around them, humans yelling, dragons screaming, the crackle of fire. Why does everything always
Stoick leaves the cage quickly. Hiccup tries to follow but stops at the threshold of the cage, just before dragon-proof metal turns to solid ground. Toothless is still behind him, close enough that Hiccup can hear him breathing, but not close enough to feel his heat. The hold he has on the cloak tightens as he stares at the dirt ground. He doesn’t know if he can leave.

It doesn’t make sense. One more step and he’ll be free. He wouldn’t be looking at the sky through bars anymore. He wouldn’t have strangers gawking at him. He shouldn’t be hesitating, but he’s terrified to take the step he needs to.

Hiccup’s heart rate picks up. *One step, Haddock. One step*, he tells himself, trying to psyche himself up.

“Hiccup?” Toothless asks.

“I can’t move,” Hiccup admits, shaking. Apprehension filters through the bond. There are a few tense seconds of silence.

“Toothless go where Hiccup go. If Hiccup stay, Toothless stay,” Toothless says, cutting through the silence, although he sounds uncertain.

“Don’t want to stay.” Hiccup’s heart beats even faster at the thought of staying here. He can’t stay here. Not with freedom one step away. “I can’t move,” he repeats, panicking.

“Toothless push?” he offers.

Hiccup shakes his head at once. “No.” The thought of being forced anywhere makes his skin crawl. He takes a deep breath and lifts his left leg, forcing it out into empty air. “I can… I can do this…”

He stands for a few seconds, balanced on one leg, then forces himself to lean forward. The movement will take him outside. It has to.

His prosthetic hits the ground, the familiar spring squeak loudly in protest under so much weight. He hasn’t been able to tend to it for a long time and he wobbles, unable to keep himself balanced. It doesn’t help that his knees buckle too. He falls to the ground, saving his face from planting into the ground with his elbows. He can’t let go of the cloak. Hiccup starts to cry, frustrated and terrified. Why can’t he leave?

“Hiccup!” Toothless cries in concern, hovering around him, just shy of touching. He’s making all sorts of cooing and whining noises, but Hiccup can’t address those right now. He needs to leave. Why can’t he leave?

“Hiccup! We don’t have time to dawdle!” Stoick says, stomping back and scooping Hiccup into his arms without warning. Ice cold fear pushes through Hiccup at being lifted, Toothless whining in distress, no doubt able to feel how terrified Hiccup is. But Stoick is moving along seemingly without noticing either of their reactions.

They move quickly and with purpose, Toothless following at a respectful distance, but within Hiccup’s eyeline. Hiccup’s heart twists at how far away Toothless is from him. It doesn’t feel right. He isn’t paying attention to anything but Toothless. Not until he realizes that Stoick has loaded him on Skullcrusher’s saddle with him.

Hiccup reaches out of the cloak and grabs onto Stoick’s arm with all his might. He hopes that it caught Stoick’s attention because he doesn’t look away from Toothless, eyes locked with him.
“Don’t leave him behind,” Hiccup says urgently. Sure, a lot of bad stuff has happened, but it happened to both of them, together. Hiccup will be damned before he leaves Toothless behind.

Stoick says something, but Hiccup doesn't register what it is, still staring at Toothless. He continues to stare until he’s certain that Toothless is coming along.

After he’s sure, he shuts off. He’s not sleeping, exactly, but he’s not aware either. He doesn’t have to pay attention anyway.

This is the nicest dream he’s had in a long time.

Chapter End Notes

Hiccup and Toothless are FINALLY rescued!

thank you guys for your patience! Again comments and kudos are always welcome!

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Hiccup doesn’t remember the trip back to the Edge. The last thing he remembers is making sure Stoick didn’t leave Toothless behind. Now he’s standing in his hut. Toothless isn’t with him, so Hiccup is half-scared this is a nightmare. But everything feels so real. He’s wearing his clothes again, a familiar, comfortable weight wrapped around him. If he feels over his torso, the buckles and laces feel real. The clothes smell like his: leather and linen. The arms aren’t too short and nothing is too tight. He can feel the pressure of his prosthetic on his stump. It doesn’t hurt but he hasn’t put weight on it for too long. It feels odd. Another odd thing is the seaweed wrapped around his pinkie on one hand. He doesn’t remember how or why it’s there, but he doesn’t try to remove it. There’s a chance that he’s imagining all this anyway.

He looks around his hut, only using the light coming in from the open door to see. The air is a little stale and there’s the lingering scent of smoke. Hiccup assumes that someone lit a fire not too long ago. Maybe earlier today, if it’s later in the day now, that is. He can’t bring himself to check where the sun is, only that it’s up.

His desk comes into focus, sharp shadows cutting across it from the minimal light. Hiccup can see notes strewn about and some half-finished projects. He feels himself walking over to his desk without knowing why he’s doing it, or even thinking about moving towards the desk. The only sound in the hut comes from the squeaking on his fake leg. Right, he thinks, I need to work on that…

It’s harder to see what’s on his desk with his body creating a large shadow over the worktop. He crosses over to the fireplace, takes the small candle off the mantel and uses it to light the large candle on his desk, the one he uses for work, casting a yellow light over his workspace. He walks back to the fireplace, setting the small candle safely away from any papers, then back to his desk. It feels like second nature, muscle memory, like something he’s done a thousand times before. He sits down on the stool, feeling like his joints are locked up, but smooth at the same time, again, like he’s done this
a thousand times before. Although... thinking about it... he knows he’s done this a thousand times before: coming in from flying with Toothless, Toothless going to a corner to rest, and Hiccup going to his desk, following the exact same steps he just did. Light the lantern and sit down. His hands spread out over the top, fingertips pressing into parchment. He remembers feeling at peace, before, working with the steady sounds of his best friend resting in the same room. Now that peace feels like a dream, or another life.

The wrongness—the lack of peace, despite the silence—has Hiccup standing again, agitation surging through him. He doesn’t move away: the squeak from his prosthetic grates and keeps him in place. His fists clench and relax at his sides and he has to focus on breathing deeply. He tries to listen to it, to mimic the deep timbre of a dragon, but it sounds too human. He breathes in through his nose and tries to focus on the mess on his desk. The images and half-built things look familiar, but Hiccup is hard-pressed to remember the details. Carefully, he runs his fingertips over the things on his desk. The parchment feels real under his touch. It’s almost jarring when he hits a pencil or a jar of ink. Has he always been so messy? He picks up a piece of paper and blinks at it, taking a moment to register what he’s seeing. It looks like an earlier plan for the Dragon Fly 1. Why is this still out? It’s useless now.

Hiccup sighs and drops the paper, uncaring that it flutters to the floor. He steps over it, eyes catching on the half-finished fin on the corner of the desk. He stares at it, trying to remember what compound he wanted to put across its skeleton. Fabric? Iron? Anything else? Maybe he was making a spare? His stomach knots. He’s going to have to make a spare. He has no idea where the saddle and fin got to once they stripped Toothless in that first arena. It’s going to take so much work to rebuild that saddle. He’s not even sure they have enough leather on the island for a saddle. And going anywhere, Berk, Northern Markets, anywhere, scares the crap out of him. Can he do business anymore? Can he even run Dragon’s Edge? He feels like a ghost, like a superimposition of himself in existence. He sighs, shoulders slumping under the weight of being alive. He’s so tired.

Absently, he turns off the lantern and heads for the stairs. He leaves the door to the outside wide open, not caring that anyone can walk in. At least that’ll mean he can leave whenever he wants, too. He crawls into his bed, leaving all his clothes on. He faces the direction the sun is coming in from and that soothes him. He didn’t realize how much he missed the sun.

He keeps his eyes open and focused on the light until the moment he falls asleep, scared to wake up somewhere else, but resigned to being stuck in a nightmare. He may be breathing, his heart may be beating, he might be alive, but he doesn’t feel alive.

Toothless feels wrong being away from Hiccup, but he needs to talk to his nest, needs to tell them what happened. They deserve to know the truth. Seeing them at the auction... they all looked so different than what he remembered before he and Hiccup were taken. They looked tired and gaunt and maybe a little haunted, but ultimately relieved when they spotted him. It’s humbling to know that his nest was so affected by his captivity, but he feels like that care will be gone very soon. Toothless probably won’t be welcome in the nest when the truth comes out.

Toothless knows Hiccup would be mortified about what he’s going to tell them, but he can’t keep this bonding a secret from the others. They’ve been so patient about waiting to speak to their Queen after they’ve been so worried. They deserve to know the truth. And they’ll figure it out on their own soon enough anyway. Pretending that he could keep it a secret from them would be insulting.

Toothless was carried back by Hookfang and Stormfly, in a net stretched between them that they commandeered from the auction. Before, being transported like that, Toothless would have called it
undignified, an insult to his pride. But he didn’t care. All that mattered in that moment was Hiccup, who had gone silent in their bond just before takeoff. Hookfang and Stormfly made sure to keep Hiccup within his line of sight, which he appreciated. It eased some of the fear and anxiety he felt, but it was terrifying having his mate unreachable. When they landed on the island, Berk’s healer was already at the Edge. She and Stoick took Hiccup to his hut, Toothless following closely behind, ignoring his concerned nest. Gobber was behind him. They had put Hiccup in his bed, Stoick sat at his side, two large hands around one of Hiccup’s, holding on tight. Gothi had special… flat things… Hiccup called them “tablets” once, he’s sure. She handed one to Gobber, who read out questions as Gothi carefully prodded over his injuries. Hiccup answered all the questions, voice never wavering or changing. Toothless knew that he wasn’t present. He couldn’t just see that Hiccup’s mind was elsewhere; he could feel Hiccup’s absence in his heart.

With each answered question, Stoick and Gobber kept on getting more and more horrified. Toothless wanted to be closer to Hiccup, to offer his own warmth, but he feared that he would only get in the way. And Hiccup needed a human healer.

Eventually, Gothi shooed Stoick out of the room, forcing Gobber to make a vow of silence for what she had to do next. Stoick hadn’t wanted to leave, but he was deferring to her reluctantly. Gobber didn’t like the idea of keeping information from Stoick, he told her as much, but he eventually promised. By that time, Hiccup was sitting against the headboard of his bed, his father’s fur cape in his lap, shoulders and mating bite exposed to everyone. Stoick even saw the mark, sending a look to Toothless when he spotted it, but Toothless was too distraught at seeing it to make out what Stoick was feeling.

The moment Gobber promised to keep quiet, Gothi got back to work. And Toothless wished that he had left with Stoick.

Gothi removed the cloak, completely exposing Hiccup to the room. Toothless wanted to look away, but couldn’t. Hiccup didn’t even flinch. Gobber looked away, face turning red. Gothi had to tap on the tablet to get him to start asking questions. Gobber never looked up as he read the questions. Hiccup responded, but the longer they asked questions, the quieter he became. And he was entirely silent as Gothi checked between his legs.

When Gothi was done, she covered Hiccup with the cloak and his blanket. He still didn’t move. She allowed Stoick back into the room, and he immediately demanded answers. Gothi spoke through Gobber. It was surprisingly quiet, considering how loud Stoick is known to be. From what Toothless overheard, Gothi couldn’t find anything physically wrong with him, save for the bite mark on his shoulder, although it didn’t look fresh. She couldn’t identify what kind of bite marks they were, dragon or otherwise. Toothless felt a swell of guilt through him at that, as well as fear. It really solidified the knowledge that humans do not view mating bites with any sort of understanding or reverence. It hurts to realize that a human can’t understand the significance of it.

Without anything to treat, Gothi and Gobber took off for Berk, Stoick deciding to stay for a few more days, giving Gobber a thorough list of duties for the village council. Stoick staying wasn’t just for Hiccup’s benefit though, Toothless knows. He said he would only be a few days, but he said he would also take over running the Edge in the interim, hopefully helping everyone back into some sort of normalcy before returning to Berk. Toothless doesn’t think that Stoick will be going back after a few days.

Now, Toothless is in a clearing in the middle of the island, far from prying human eyes. The humans may not understand the dragons, but that doesn’t stop them from trying. Normally Toothless wouldn’t mind, but this situation is delicate. Too delicate. It could easily turn violent, and humans are surprisingly fragile, especially for how foolhardy they are.
He settles right in the center of the clearing, feeling exposed, and sends out a call for his nestmates. The call cuts out prematurely, Toothless unable to hold the note any longer. He squeezes his eyes shut in shame. He doesn’t deserve the title of Queen anymore. He doesn’t deserve the privilege and responsibility of caring for the nest. Not after what he’s done.

At the sound of flapping wings, Toothless opens his eyes. There’s only enough time for his eyes to widen before he’s bowled over by an emotional Meatlug. She’s crooning and licking all over Toothless’ head. Toothless cracks under the attention, whining in response and greedily absorbing the comfort from his friend. She purrs, redoubling her efforts to soothe.

Stormfly lands next, close enough to nuzzle him in greeting, but out of range of Meatlug’s fluttering. She clicks at him in concern, but doesn’t try to remove Meatlug. She’s not overly affectionate, but she stays close and Toothless knows that Stormfly being like that… she might as well be doing exactly what Meatlug is doing.

Hookfang lands next, loud, too casually. He hovers close by, but not close enough to touch. Toothless knows that Hookfang’s pretending he’s not concerned, but he can tell he’s worried. Hookfang looks away every time Toothless looks at him, but it’s too casual, betraying his true emotions. Toothless knows he’s not as unaffected as he’s trying to portray. It both fills and breaks Toothless’ heart.

Barf and Belch land last, on top of Toothless and Meatlug, crooning and clicking too quickly. They don’t have as much trouble showing their affection as Hookfang does. Although everyone is more okay with sharing their emotions than Hookfang, so it’s not a very fair comparison. “Are you hurt?” Meatlug asks Toothless, still licking him.

“I am uninjured,” Toothless responds, allowing himself one more selfish moment of comfort from his nest. He has no idea what they’ll do when they find out. If they don’t kill him. Toothless tries to hold onto his emotions in this moment, the moment before his nest starts to hate him. He gently extricates himself from the pile and steps away.

The four dragons around him make confused, hurt noises, and Hookfang gives him a confused look. Toothless looks at the ground, wrapping his tail around himself. “I have something I have to share with everyone,” he informs them. He wishes he could have looked them in the eye, but he’s a coward. “It’s not something that can stay hidden for long.”

There’s movement and Toothless looks up. The group settles around him more formally. It’s still not as formal as Toothless remembers from the Red Death’s nest, but Toothless isn’t speaking to his nest as a friend right now. “Are you hurt?” Meatlug repeats. It looks like it’s taking everything she has to stay in place.

“No, I am uninjured,” Toothless repeats. “I need to tell you, my closest friends–” Toothless has to try again. This isn’t about talking with friends. These four are high-ranking members of his nest. “–my most trusted nestmates, what I have done, so when I am exiled or executed, you won’t try to stop it happening.”

“You assume we wouldn’t protect our own Queen?” Hookfang snaps, smoking a little bit. Toothless understands the ire. They are all honorable, loyal dragons. It would take a lot to change a dragon’s loyalty, but Toothless knows that his actions will cost him their loyalty.

Toothless’ ears flatten to his head. “Not after you’ve heard what I’ve done.” It’s so hard for him to find the words. How can he begin to explain what happened? How can he when he doesn’t even understand what happened? Beyond the obvious. Beyond the reason for this meeting.
“Don’t keep up in suspense then,” Barf and Belch say.

“Before… before I tell you, I want to tell you all that I am—” he has to take a deep breath “—deeply ashamed and horrified by my actions. I do not deserve pity or compassion. And I don’t want you to feel guilty for being angry at me.” The last comment applies to all of them, but it is mostly directed to Meatlug and her precious heart. They all seem to be holding their breath. Meatlug looks even more scared, as do Barf and Belch. The rest remain neutral. Toothless squeezes his eyes shut, unable to look them in the eye, and speaks before he changes his mind or stalls anymore. “I mated Hiccup.”

The nest was quiet before, silently and patiently (mostly) waiting for Toothless to say his bit, but the silence after Toothless’ confession is different. Heavy. It takes a moment for that silence to be deafening. “You WHAT?!” Stormfly screeches, her outburst cutting through the silence like one of her spines.

The others speak up, equal parts horrified and outraged. “No, you—” Meatlug says.

“A human?!” Hookfang cries, speaking over the Gronckle easily. Toothless knows he deserves whatever hatred or looks they’re giving him and he forces his eyes open, looking at each of his old friends. Meatlug seems to be in denial. Stormfly is on her feet, leaning away from Toothless with her wings outstretched, much as she would look if she was trying to intimidate something scary away from her. Hookfang has his wing-claws dug into the dirt and he’s leaning forward, like he wants to attack Toothless. He doesn’t know why Hookfang hasn’t. Barf and Belch are staring at him in horror.

“Mated to a human!” Hookfang yells.

“How could you?!” Stormfly says, just as loud.

“A HUMAN!” Hookfang repeats.

Stormfly makes a noise like she’s gagging. “Can’t even kill him—”

“STOP!” Meatlug yells over everyone, her voice echoing like thunder. All attention snaps to her. She’s shaking and her eyes are wide, but she’s standing firm and there’s fire in her eyes. “Shame on both of you!” she scolds.

Stormfly and Hookfang screech in indignation. “On us?!” Hookfang asks, much quieter, but with just as much venom. “He’s the one who mated a human!”

“Hiccup is so much smaller than Toothless! So much weaker! And Toothless wouldn’t feel so much shame for a natural mating,” Stormfly says.

“How dare you call yourselves Toothless’ friends,” Meatlug growls. “How dare you claim to know a single thing about Toothless and stand there… berating him for something he already knows is wrong!”

“So you suggest we forgive the forced bond?” Hookfang snarls. “Overlook the perversion of one of our most sacred traditions? All because we thought we knew him?” He scoffs. “I never thought such a soft-hearted dragon would be so dishonorable.”

Toothless’ heart squeezes in his chest. Meatlug should not have this level of loyalty to him. He doesn’t deserve it. But he can’t find the words to speak up. Instead, Meatlug responds to Hookfang, “Have you forgotten the circumstances that we lost our Queen in? That he was in enemy territory? Don’t you think we should at least listen to him? Hasn’t Toothless, after everything he’s done for us,
earned the right to explain himself?”

“Meatlug,” Toothless says, finding his voice. All eyes turn to him. “You do not need to defend me. I deserve all the cruel words you can think.”

Meatlug exhales smoke through her nose, eyes defiant. “With all due respect, no. If you are the dragon that Hookfang and Stormfly are accusing you of being, you would not let yourself be punished. You would try to defend your actions, try to make us believe that you are absolutely in the right, but you are not doing that. So I, for one, would like to hear the whole story instead of just the ending.”

Toothless whines. “I don’t deserve a change to defend myself. My actions are inexcusable. Unforgivable.”

“Make no mistake, Toothless,” Meatlug says calmly, “I am not offering forgiveness, even if it were mine to give. I am asking for the full story, the whole truth, so I can come to my own conclusions.”

Toothless shakes his head. “I don’t deserve–”

“Tell us,” Barf and Belch say. They look somewhere between scared and neutral, but firm.

Hookfang scoffs. “You want to give this… monster–” that stings, but it isn’t uncalled for “–a chance to defend the indefensible?”

“Not a defense,” Barf says.

“But the truth,” Belch adds. “We don’t know what to think because the Toothless we know, the Queen we have sworn our loyalty to–”

“–would never act like this,” Barf finishes. “We want answers. We want to understand.”

“You are hatchlings,” Hookfang growls, “expecting the world to make sense.” He turns his attention to Stormfly. “Please tell me you are not going to stand for this farce. Please tell me that you will see sense!” She shifts uncomfortably, looking to the ground. Hookfang’s jaw drops. “How could you even consider listening to anything he has to say?!”

Stormfly gives Hookfang a look, then sighs. “I don’t want to listen to him,” she admits, “but I would like a chance to know my judgement isn’t so skewed that I couldn’t see this before now.”

“You have already forgiven him,” Hookfang accuses, first to Stormfly then looking around at the rest of them. “You all have. Have all of you no honor? No shame? You do not listen to these types, you kill them!”

Toothless manages to find his voice again. He’s overwhelmed with affection and guilt from their willingness to hear his story. Although he isn’t worthy of that sort of luxury, of that right. Hookfang is right: he should be killed. “Stop,” Toothless says softly. The arguing and growling and shouting cut off. “Hookfang is right. I do not deserve the right to speak. I’ve only continued to stay around because Hiccup needs to be okay. And I’m unsure if my death would kill Hiccup, too. I won’t… I can’t go near him. I will only stay alive to keep Hiccup alive. Otherwise I would have thrown myself from the highest cliff I could find.”

“What happened?” Barf and Belch ask, almost yelling. Toothless knows that their patience is wearing thin.

Toothless winces at their harsh tone. Then he sighs. “If you want to truly know… I should probably
“start from the beginning…” He shuffles in place, wishing he could lie down, but he’s too tense. “We were captured by the Hunters and initially we were taken to something called Dragon Fights. They pitted dragon against dragon, forcing us to fight to the death…”

“We may have disbanded those fights,” Stormfly cuts in.

Toothless blinks at her. Really? “No, we definitely did,” Meatlug says. “Remember? We found Toothless’ saddle and fin there?”

Toothless’ heart twists. By how long did they miss them? Was it a day? Two? A week? Although that’s not what’s really important. “The others?” he asks. “Did they escape?”

“Yes,” Stormfly confirms. “But they were in terrible condition. None would even consider accepting our offer of recovering and recuperating here.”

Toothless shakes his head. “They wouldn’t. What the Hunters… the humans… how they treated us… I don’t blame them for wanting to leave and not wanting to be around humans again.”

“Why weren’t you there? We feared that you were dead!” Meatlug says.

Toothless swallows. “They moved me and Hiccup when it was clear that I wouldn’t kill. I was almost killed myself by a dragon they called the Triple Stryke. The Hunters had worked him into a frenzy and I was so weak. A Nadder saved my life. I don’t know exactly what happened next, when the Triple Stryke started to defend me. They released this purple smoke and the next thing I know, I’m on a boat with Hiccup. He was weak, too. The Hunters barely fed us while we were at the fights, the winners were always given the most food. Or really, any food at all. It was incentive, I guess,” Toothless sighs. “I don’t know how long we were on the ship, barely receiving any food or water for that trip as well. We docked and I could barely stand. I was–we were too weak to fight and there was no way we had a plan of escape, if we could even get off the ship. I didn’t have a plan…”

Toothless has to stop for a moment. His nest is staring at him intently, their eyes weighing heavy on him. “We were taken to another cell. They fed us well and gave us medicine for our injuries. They… healed us. And when we were well enough to really start thinking of a plan to escape… they drugged us. Woke up in a much smaller cage, the smell of a receptive Nightmare in the air.”

Everyone’s attention snaps to Hookfang for a second. He looks horrified. “They released me into an arena much like the one before, but we weren’t outside. I couldn’t tell the time of day. The Hunters also released a young Nightmare, probably only in his first cycle… It was obvious they wanted us to fight, and the Hunters called this… thing… Breeding Fights–”

“Breeding fights?!” Hookfang screams. Meatlug and Barf and Belch make sounds of distress. Stormfly stands rigid, saying nothing.

Toothless feels like he might be sick. “I… I couldn’t get the hatchling to submit. I snapped on him and I… I killed him.”

“For the right to breed?” Hookfang snaps. “Barbaric ritual! How could you?!”

Hookfang is right. Death for breeding rights is a ancient practice mostly done away with. Some nests still practice it, but they are few and far between, isolated from most of Dragonkind. Hookfang’s words cut like a blade. “I know. I know. I am not proud of what I did. The sounds he made, how scared he looked… that will haunt me forever. As long as I breathe, those images will not leave me.”

“Just because you feel sorry does not justify your actions,” Hookfang hisses.

“You would defend him?!” he snaps back.

Stormfly looks uncomfortable. “I do not defend his actions, but I want to know the story. And we’ll never get the whole story if you keep on interrupting.”

Hookfang snarls, but doesn’t speak. Meatlug does so instead. “Go on, Toothless,” she urges.

Toothless takes a deep breath. “So this was a breeding fight. I wasn’t going to participate, but when I saw the receptive Nightmare—” Hookfang inhales sharply and it looks like it’s taking all his energy to bite his tongue—“it was Hiccup.”

No-one speaks after that. Even Hookfang appears to deflate a little bit. This silence feels even heavier than before. “What?” Barf asks.

“How can Hiccup be a receptive Nightmare? He’s a tiny human!” Hookfang yells.

“Hookfang,” Meatlug chides.

“No! No! This is a pack of lies! I absolutely refuse to believe this story! He’s trying to absolve himself and you are buying it!”

“Now wait a minute—” she responds.

“No, your soft heart is blinding you. A human as a receptive companion!” He snaps a glare at Toothless. “It’s a ludicrous idea!”

Toothless tries not to glare back. He doesn’t have a moral stance in this fight, but he won’t stand for being called a liar. “It is a ludicrous idea,” he agrees. That seems to make Hookfang falter. “And I would hope you could realize it was so ludicrous that I could not come up with it myself.” Hookfang blinks. “I am not so creative as to imagine such a thing, despite your claims that I hang around humans too much. And despite how horrified and ashamed of my actions I am, I cannot regret that I saved Hiccup that night. If that Nightmare had won, he would have killed Hiccup.”

“So you saved him for yourself?” Stormfly asks, confused and scared.

Toothless shakes his head. “I did not mate him that night. Or the night after that. Or the one after that. Or the one after that.” The dragons look shocked, especially Hookfang. “It took the Hunters a long time to get it.”

“How did you resist?” Belch asks.

Toothless looks at them. He forgets just how young they are. They are not much older than that Nightmare he killed. Maybe they have a couple more cycles of experience, but they are still prone to frenzy. “It smelled like a receptive partner, but I knew it was Hiccup. I didn’t want to hurt him. I needed to protect him.”

“What changed?” Meatlug asks.

“The Hunters… they manipulated the scents somehow. There was Nightmare, Gronckle, Nadder… Changewing… I have no idea how they accomplished this. I could keep my head, for the most part, but the last fight… they collected a scent that… overwhelmed my senses. I’ve never smelled it before and I don’t remember anything until I tasted Hiccup’s blood on my tongue.” The nest gasps. “Yes, he has a mating bite, too.” Toothless answers their unasked question.
“Toothless,” Stormfly says, horrified.

“I know, I know.” Toothless says quickly, head ducking down. “I am not asking for forgiveness or defending what I’ve done, but I ask you not to kill me... yet.”

“And why would we do that?” asks Hookfang.

“Bonds... to Night Furies, are permanent. The death of one partner causes the death of the other. I do not know if this bond will affect Hiccup in the same way. If I can be sure my death won’t kill Hiccup, I will accept death without hesitation.”

“You’re stalling,” Hookfang accuses. “Bonds do not behave like that.”

Toothless glares this time, offended. “Do not speak of what you do not know. I watched my father die of a broken bond after my mother was killed.” The nest shifts uncomfortably. Even Hookfang looks slightly ashamed. “Despite what I have done, I am not a liar, and I will not stand to be called one.”


Toothless sags. “I wish I could tell you. I wish I could make some sense out of what happened, but I can’t. The only thing I know for sure is Hiccup is my mate now. And I can’t reverse it, no matter how much I wish I could.”

“So will you remain Queen?” Meatlug asks.

Toothless sighs. “I will leave that up to the Nest. I will step down if asked, but I am still willing to have the responsibility of Queen. I know I should step down, but I find it difficult.”

“Why?” Hookfang snarls.

“I’ve been Queen for a while now, and I like knowing everyone is safe. It’s also the best position I could hold to keep my mate safe. But other than that... it’s hard to explain what I inherited from the Red Death.”

“I still want you as Queen,” Meatlug declares.

The nest looks at her in shock. Toothless is speechless. He doesn’t deserve Meatlug’s loyalty. Not now. “H-How?” Hookfang sputters, looking to have trouble getting the sounds out to ask the question. He’s looking at Meatlug like she’s a different dragon.

“What happened to Hiccup and Toothless, happened in abnormal circumstances,” she says, “and I, at least, cannot judge either of them by the rules of normality. Forcing a bond is bad, but remember who we are speaking of. This is Toothless. We’ve fought beside him, lived with him, lived under his rule. Toothless is not one of those who deserve death. He regrets it, he hates what he’s done, and I doubt anything we say or do to him will be worse than the guilt he is forced to live with.”

Toothless ducks his head. That’s probably true. He would even go so far as to say that death would be a mercy in light of how much he hates himself. Hookfang’s hackles are rising. He appears to be regaining his composure and he doesn’t look happy. “How can you–” he growls.

“How can you turn your back on a friend who is hurting so much?” Meatlug cuts him off. She’s glaring at Hookfang, much angrier than her tone is letting on. She continues to glare at Hookfang as she goes to Toothless’ side. Once there, she pointedly leans against him and Toothless is greedy for
the contact, leaning back into her, feeling relief that he has no right to experience. "Remember: a bond goes two ways. And if I know humans at all, Hiccup is rejecting the bond. A rejected bond hurts." She turns her attention from Hookfang to Toothless. Her face and tone soften. "And for someone for whom a broken bond means death... a rejected bond has to be the most painful experience I can think of, short of death itself."

Toothless has to look away from her kind face. He doesn’t deserve it, not her empathy, nor her sympathy. He stares at the ground, "This pain is nothing less than I deserve." That admission comes with a strange feeling of emptiness, like he’s two versions of himself not quite lined up right. Everything feels off: colors are weird, scents are inconsistent... Toothless can’t get his head on straight. He knows exactly what would fix this, but he would never ask Hiccup for anything to ease the pain he so rightly deserves.

Meatlug purrs and nuzzles him, knocking him over a bit. He wasn’t expecting it, and Gronckles, while gentle, can still be unaware of how much strength and weight they possess, especially in regards to other dragons. "What happened to you, Toothless—" he can’t look at her "—happened in the most trying and extreme of circumstances. Circumstances that we never could have foreseen or prepared for. Saying that you deserve death, or the pain that this bond is causing you, is an insult to everything that you’ve ever done. For me. For us. For even Hiccup. Don’t insult your character like that." She sounds so firm in her assertions, Toothless is almost inclined to believe her. There’s even a part of him that warms at the words.

"You forgive too easily," Hookfang growls.

Meatlug makes a sound of annoyance. "My forgiveness means nothing," she snarls. "What has Toothless done to me to warrant my forgiveness? He has been upfront and honest about what has happened, taken responsibility for what he has done, and he has sat through you yelling and berating him for something that he already hates himself for." She takes a deep breath. "If anyone’s forgiveness matters, it is Hiccup’s. Don’t disrespect what Hiccup has experienced by acting like Toothless has wronged you."

Tense silence fills the air. Meatlug has never spoken so firmly before. She sounds so sure of herself, as immovable as a mountain. Hookfang looks taken aback. The others look between them for a moment. Toothless can barely look at them, too embarrassed to watch for their reactions.

Stormfly moves before anyone else, carefully making her way over to Toothless and roosting by his side. Toothless watches her with wide, unbelieving eyes. Of any of them, Stormfly is the most honorable. Surely she would not have stayed by his side because of this. She ducks her head and takes a moment, as if to collect herself. "Meatlug is right," she says. "You do not need my forgiveness. And I know that you are not the monster you think you are." She pauses, looking him straight in the eye. "Knowing that, my decision is easy."

"Dishonorable wretches," Hookfang spits at them, "the lot of you."

Stormfly snarls, offended. "You do not have to agree, but watch what you call me! It'll be the last thing you do!"

"Please," Toothless cuts in before it gets too heated. "Do not fight. You are friends, don’t fight over someone like me."

"We are fighting for our Queen," Meatlug says.

"Don’t," Toothless pleads.
“Have you not been hurt, too?” she counters.

Toothless blinks at her for a moment. “How can he be hurt if he’s the one who mated Hiccup?”
Hookfang snarls.

Meatlug glares at the Nightmare. “Toothless was tortured alongside Hiccup and was forced to bring harm to the human he has almost died for too many times to count. I will not—cannot—believe that Toothless would willingly hurt someone he cares for so deeply. Even now, he is sacrificing his health, his sanity, to try and help Hiccup.”

Hookfang snorts. “You’re a fool, Rock-Eater. I refuse to sit by and listen to your madness.” He turns his back on her. On them. “I will only stay for my Rider, but you are not my Queen anymore.”

Hookfang takes off before anyone can respond. Stormfly shoots to her feet and calls after him. “That’s not how a nest works!”

“Let him go,” Toothless says tiredly. “He can stay, if that’s what you need to hear. I won’t force him to abandon Snotlout. If anything, you should be chasing me off.”

Stormfly and Meatlug lean into him on either side, sandwiching him between them. Toothless sags at the contact, taking the comfort he doesn’t deserve. Meatlug nuzzles him and it’s a little awkward. Her rock-like skin can be grating, even against another dragon’s scales. “Everything will be okay,” she whispers.

Toothless desperately wants to believe her, but he can’t. Nothing will be okay, not ever again. And that is entirely his fault. He opens his mouth to speak again, to deny Meatlug’s optimism, but movement catches his eye. Toothless’ attention snaps to it.

Barf and Belch. They’re still here, but unnaturally quiet, watching him with wide eyes. “Are you okay?” Toothless asks. They almost look stunned.

They shrink away from him. “We don’t know,” they say together.

“Don’t skirt around the issue, speak your mind,” Stormfly barks. The Zippleback flinches at the tone.

“That’s enough, Stormfly,” Toothless sighs. “Barf and Belch are not required to share what they’re thinking.” He focuses on them, trying to convey a non-threatening air. “If you wish to leave the nest, I won’t stop you. If you wish to follow Hookfang’s example, I will not stop you. I understand that this situation is unprecedented, but know that you are not at risk of repercussions from me, or the nest.” Stormfly huffs, but doesn’t argue.

“How did you resist for so long?” Belch asks quickly, like he can’t hold the question back anymore. Barf looks at his sibling with wide eyes.

Toothless shrugs. “I didn’t want to hurt Hiccup, or allow anyone else the chance.”

“But you did hurt him,” Belch points out. Barf’s jaw drops.

“Yes, I did.” Admitting it feels like a stone in his throat. “But I never wanted to.”

“Then how could you do it?” Belch continues to ask.

“What changed so that you could?” Barf cuts in.
Toothless whines. “I wish I knew the answer to both your questions. The Hunters would feed me tampered food to make me fall asleep, but who knows what else they added to it? They… they changed Hiccup’s scent, But I only noticed after the fact. Hiccup was… he was **dragged** from me. The next thing I know, my teeth are in his skin, my knot buried inside him, and the bond complete.” Toothless chokes on his next words. “And I hurt Hiccup…” He looks to the ground, unable, no, unworthy to look any of them in the eye. “I wished they would kill me, but I also had to keep Hiccup safe, but I was the one who hurt him!”

Meatlug purrs and tries to nuzzle him, but Toothless is strong enough to pull away this time. “**I hurt Hiccup,**” he continues. “It was my teeth, my knot. I deserve nothing less than all the pain I’ve caused him and whatever punishments the gods deem fair.”

There’s a couple of moments of silence. Toothless slumps to the ground, unable to find the strength to stay upright anymore. Then he feels a dragon on his back. They don’t seem hostile, but Toothless is too tired to care if they are. A head settles on either side of him. “You’ve been hurt, too,” Belch whispers.

Toothless closes his eyes, not allowing himself to believe it. “**You’re still our Queen,**” Barf adds.

Toothless wails, his heart breaking under the compassion from his Nest. Meatlug cuddles next to him and Stormfly settles on his other side. Here, in this moment, Toothless mourns. He’s not sure what he’s mourning for exactly, but it feels like he’s lost something precious. His nest coos and purrs, giving comfort as much as they can. Their concern warms his outsides, but doesn’t come close to the gaping hole in his chest. Toothless cries, unable to fight it anymore. He cries until he falls asleep under the weight of the nest and their care.

Toothless awakes well into the night. The moon is high and full overhead, heavy in the blanket of stars in the sky. The stars look almost dim in comparison with the brightness of the moon. He’s still buried under what’s left of his nest, all of them still sound asleep. He can feel them breathing against him. If not the Nest, what could have woken him? It seems odd that he would wake on his own; it feels like he could sleep for years.

Then he feels it, the soft, pulsing ache in his chest: sadness, longing, fear. He knows exactly where that feeling is coming from.

Somehow, without waking the others, Toothless frees himself and dashes off, heart locked on his destination. In moments he’s at Hiccup’s hut, rushing through the still open door to the top of the stairs.

When he’s at the top of the stairs, he stops on the last step, cold dread filling him. Hiccup could’ve been dreaming. He might not want Toothless around...

Hiccup shoots up on his bed, eyes wide and finding Toothless before Toothless can try to think of a way to leave quietly. “Toothless?” Hiccup asks, like he can’t believe what he’s seeing.

Toothless swallows and nods. “**Yes, Hiccup… I heard you calling for me.**”

Hiccup shakes his head, shrinking into himself. The movement hurts Toothless’ already battered heart. Hiccup is still dressed in the clothes Toothless saw him in earlier. Those day clothes can’t be comfortable, but Toothless would never suggest removing anything. “I didn’t call for you,” Hiccup says, voice strained, like he’s trying to convince himself.

Toothless knows Hiccup doesn’t know, but the words don’t hurt any less. “**Not with your words,**”
Toothless tells him, hating how much it hurts. “You called through the bond.”

“And you just came running?” Hiccup snaps, crossing his arms over his chest and leaning away. He sounds angry, but he stinks of fear. “What did you think would happen, rushing over here so quickly?”

Toothless whines. “I couldn’t ignore a call from my mate—”

“Don’t call me that!”

Toothless flinches, ducking his head and starting to back away down the stairs. “I’m sorry. I wasn’t… I’ll leave.” He starts to try to turn around. There isn’t a lot of space, but Toothless won’t look up. It feels like his neck is closing in on itself, the muscle tensing painfully like he could willfully suffocate himself. He manages to turn, head and tail lowered.

“Wait,” Hiccup says before Toothless can take off. Toothless pauses, but he doesn’t turn back. “I’m sorry, Toothless—” Hiccup sounds genuinely sorry and the bond is pulsing with regret “–I didn’t—I know,” he takes a deep breath. “I know you were just…” There’s a choking noise. “I’m sorry. Everything feels so… wrong and it’s scaring me.”

Toothless nods, fighting every urge he has to turn around. He’s not sure Hiccup is ready to see his face. “It is scary…and I’m scared, too,” Toothless admits above a whisper. “I don’t want to hurt you, Hiccup, but I fear I do exactly that just by being in your presence. I’d rather die than hurt you again.”

Toothless smells salt in the air before he hears Hiccup crying. The sound of his mate in distress overrides any sort of emotional self-preservation he’s trying to implement. He turns and sees that Hiccup has his face hidden in his hands, his shoulders shaking. “I know, I’m sorry,” comes the muffled response. “I know you were just…” There’s a choking noise. “I’m sorry. Everything feels so… wrong and it’s scaring me.”

Toothless nods, fighting every urge he has to turn around. He’s not sure Hiccup is ready to see his face. “I don’t want to hurt you, Hiccup, but I fear I do exactly that just by being in your presence. I’d rather die than hurt you again.”

Toothless inches towards Hiccup’s bedside, unable to keep so much distance between himself and his hurting his Hiccup. “What can I do to help?”

“I don’t know,” Hiccup says brokenly. Toothless whines, hating that he feels so helpless. Here he is, a mighty Night Fury, a Queen in his own right, but unable to soothe his own mate. What good is he? He startles when he feels Hiccup’s hand on the back of his head. Toothless wasn’t even aware he got so close to Hiccup. “I’m sorry,” Hiccup sniffles.

“Me, too,” Toothless responds, leaning forward without a thought, going so far as to put his head in Hiccup’s lap. Hiccup allows the closeness and it heals something inside Toothless’ chest. Toothless feels his throat closing again. “I wish I could take your pain, suffer for you,” he whispers, knowing that he means every word from the very core of his being. If Xeva would be so kind.

Hiccup shakes his head, fingers digging into the back of Toothless’ head. “No,” he says firmly. “I would never want you to feel this.” A lump forms in Toothless’ throat, because he knows that Hiccup means that with every fiber of his being as well.

Something shifts in the air. “Do you think we can survive this?” asks Hiccup. He sounds scared, uncertain… broken.

Toothless hates that he hesitates. “I don’t know,” he admits, hating even more that he means it. “But,” he adds before they both fall into despair, “I know that when we’re together, we can do impossible things.”
Hiccup sighs. “So you think it’s impossible,” he says, resigned.

“Not for us. Nothing’s ever been impossible for us. Especially when we’re together.”

Hiccup gives a watery laugh. “Do you think we’ll be the same as we were before this?”

“No.” Toothless doesn’t hesitate. He can’t. “But that doesn’t mean we can’t move forward.”

Hiccup inhales shakily and shimmies down his bed so he’s lying down with Toothless’ head is resting on his stomach. He’s tracing a finger over the ridge of soft spines on the top of Toothless’ head. “I was scared you would say something like that.”

Toothless drinks in the contact for another moment, allowing himself a moment of selfishness. “If you wish me to leave, I will.”

Hiccup’s touch abruptly stops. “What would make you say that?!” He sounds horrified.

That confuses Toothless. “Because I hurt you,” he says, like it’s the most obvious thing in the world.

“Yeah,” Hiccup agrees, a panicked edge to his voice, “but it wasn’t you.” He takes a deep breath, sounding more sure when he speaks again. “They made you do it.” Toothless has to look at Hiccup’s face. Hiccup is staring straight at him, fire in his eyes. “The Toothless that I know, the Toothless in this room, would never have hurt me unless someone made him do it. The Toothless I know, that I have fought beside, have lived beside, have trusted with my life time and time again, sometimes to the point of taking him for granted,” there are tears falling down Hiccup’s cheeks, “that Toothless would never hurt me.” He wipes angrily at his face. “And I know that I wasn’t the only one they hurt. I know they hurt you, too. And they used you to hurt me.”

Hiccup swipes at his face again, this time using the end of his shirt-sleeve. Toothless watches, speechless. “You can try to lie to me and tell me that you’re not hurting, but you can’t hide from me anymore.” He taps at a spot in his chest. Toothless’ stomach swoops, eyes locking on it. That’s the spot. That’s where Hiccup feels his bond, close to his heart. “I don’t want you to be hurting, Toothless, and you don’t deserve to be hurt either: we’re both victims here.” Hiccup leans close, pressing his forehead to Toothless’. It’s such an intimate gesture that Toothless shivers, his eyes sliding closed. “Now we have to survive.” Hiccup’s voice cracks on the last word. “Together.” He takes a deep breath. “You said so yourself.”

Hiccup falls back, turning so he’s lying on his side, curled around Toothless’ head, an arm slung over him. His eyes are half open. Toothless watches Hiccup in awe. “And the Toothless I know isn’t a liar.”

Toothless whines, heart and soul moved by Hiccup’s speech. “Whatever you need, Hiccup. Anything. Name it and I’ll do it.”

“Stay,” Hiccup says, so simply that Toothless makes a sound to hear it. “Stay by my side, and I’ll stay next to yours.”

Toothless nuzzles Hiccup’s stomach, trying not to dislodge the arm over his head. “You’re too good, Hiccup…” But Hiccup is already asleep, arm lax on Toothless. Toothless closes his eyes, getting comfortable with only his head on the bed and trying to get as close as he can to Hiccup. There’s a warmth in Toothless’ chest that feels like it’s been gone forever.

And maybe, just maybe, a little bit of hope.
thank you so much for reading this and for sticking it out with me! Remember to leave a comment and a kudos if you have time!

follow me on Twitter for more timely updates about what i’m doing and to communicate a little more directly with me if you want!

PS. I know that this has been marked as part of a series, but hopefully this is complete enough for now! I have other stuff i would like to get out as well as i would like to get more written so i can have a better posting schedule than "maybe next tuesday????? no... wednesday? NO! three fridays from now!" so this series will be on a bit of a hiatus for the time being! I'm hoping to get a lot more stuff out soon!

thank you everyone that has read this, commented on it, and left kudos. It's because of you that this work turned into something so much bigger! Love you all! Hope I will see you around!

End Notes

I debated on moderating comments made, given the nature of this fic, but decided against it. Please comment and kudos.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!