"Every nest has its queen." Later chapters from dragon perspective. New chapter: Hiccup Horrendous Haddock III can apparently befriend and train ANY dragon - even Drago Bludvist's Bewilderbeast.
The Dragon Queen of Berk {HTTYD2}

The Dragon Queen of Berk

(rough draft)

A Dreamworks' How to Train Your Dragon fanfic by Raberba girl

Summary: "Every nest has its queen." HTTYD2 one-shot; SPOILERS for that movie.

A/N: Takes place during HTTYD2 even though I haven't seen the movie; it's not even out yet. XD

But I was watching HTTYD2 clips on Dreamworks' YouTube channel and saw something that gave me the idea for this fic. I might revise it once I actually do see the movie.

0.0.0

Almost as soon as Toothless landed in the village square and Hiccup slid down from his back, dragons seemed to appear from all directions. A Nadderhead immediately strolled up and nuzzled Hiccup affectionately, nearly knocking him over; a Gronickle sniffed at his clothes as if hoping he'd brought a snack for it; a whole swarm of Terrible Terrors clustered at his feet in excitement, one flapping up to perch on his shoulders and another on his arm.

"Hey, hey, hey, guys, it's good to see you too," Hiccup chuckled. "You mind giving me a little breathing room? My mom's-- Uh, yeah, well, this is my mom, guys." They went on grunting and cheeping and nipping curiously at his clothes or preening his hair as if he hadn't spoken. "Right, well...glad you guys are acquainted now."

"Pleased to meet you all," Valka chuckled.

A Monstrous Nightmare slithered up in an agitated way and started barking at Toothless, who vocalized sternly in response and then turned to butt his head against Hiccup's arm.

"Ow! What's up, bud?"

Toothless vocalized again and then grunted.
"What, is something wrong?"

Toothless and the Nightmare exchanged a series of growls, and Hiccup, watching them, finally picked up on the Nightmare's *Danger To Flock* signal. Or maybe it was *Someone Is Stealing My Food*; the Nightmare was gesturing strangely and it was difficult to tell.

"Hey, man, what's up?" Hiccup asked, more concerned now. He absently shook the Terrors off onto the Gronckle's back and then mounted Toothless. "Come on, bud, let's go check it out."

An hour later, Hiccup and Toothless had rescued the sheep that had fallen into an abandoned well outside the village and gotten trapped. The duo herded the sheep back to the village and safely into an enclosure, the Monstrous Nightmare cruising along with them and now looking relaxed. Toothless helped himself to a snack as Hiccup fed the sheep and soothed them one last time. Then he turned to his partner and said, "Well, guess we'll call it a day, bud. What do you say we go up to the great hall and get ourselves some supper, huh?"

Toothless regarded him impassively, mouth smeared with a bit of stray fish guts. He burped.

"Nice," Hiccup remarked in mock disgust.

They made their way up to the great hall, where most of the villagers and many dragons seemed to be gathered, listening intently as Stoick spoke, their eyes fixed on Valka with awe and admiration.

"...so come, friends, we have much to celebrate!"

The Nightmare who had alerted Hiccup about the sheep finally parted ways, going to curl up with weary satisfaction near its partner on the other side of the hall. Hiccup tried to inconspicuously grab some food and find a place to sit, but it was impossible to sneak around in the crowded building when he had a Night Fury trailing after him, a Gronckle sleepily rousing itself to plod along after him as well, and another group of Terrible Terrors eagerly sailing over to him like a flock of adoring spiky butterflies. His cheeks flushing slightly pink, Hiccup smiled apologetically and waved a little at all the people glancing over to look at the source of the interruption.

Stoick merely smiled widely at his son and kept speaking. "...are full, my wife has returned, and life is GOOD!"
The end of his speech was met by a roar of approval, and then everyone started digging into their food in earnest. Hiccup relaxed back against Toothless's warm hide and took another bite of meat. He accidentally put more in his mouth than would comfortably fit, and a trickle of juice dribbled down his chin. He yelped in surprise when the Terror on his shoulder darted out a tongue to lick it. "Hey!" Hiccup exclaimed, "Table manners, little guy, come on!" Since his words were muffled by the mouthful of food, it was quite likely that no one, least of all the little dragon, actually understood what he was saying, though it didn't stop Toothless from emitting a gurgling chuckle.

"Haha, very funny. How about I get some little kids to lick your face when you're trying to eat and see how you like it...." 

A Hideous Zippleback snaked one of its heads over to Hiccup and croaked at him.

"You need something?" Hiccup asked.

The Zippleback's other head swerved over to join the first, making a pathetic wheezing sound and then twisting to give Hiccup sad, upside-down puppy eyes.

"You guys - guy? - ran out of dipping sauce, or what?"

Toothless tittered at the Zippleback. Its upside-down head righted itself and both heads chittered back at the Night Fury. Toothless flopped his head down on Hiccup's lap, making him grunt; the Zippleback lay down heavily and rested its heads on Hiccup's leg. Hiccup looked over toward where both sets of eyes were gazing, and saw a young woman laughing at the beefy young man flirting with her, as a scrawnier young man sulked nearby.

Toothless made a dismissive sound.

"Sooo," Hiccup said slowly, "one of your riders is getting friendlier than you'd like with someone who's not your other rider?"

One of the Zippleback's heads snorted angrily, as the other continued to gaze with listless unhappiness at the three humans.
"Aw, come on, guys," Hiccup said soothingly, scratching the nearest head. The other head, without looking away, shifted closer, and he was obliged to set down his mug so he could scratch both heads. Toothless made a jealous noise and shoved his own head under Hiccup's arm. "Ow, Toothless; really?"

Toothless huffed in a possessive way.

"Of course I'm your human, duh. But as for you guys, or guy or whatever, hey. It'll be fine, you know? You're important enough to them that they won't break their dragon partnership, no matter how their little romance drama or whatever that is goes down. Okay?"

The Zippleback closed all four of its eyes and relaxed. Toothless grumbled and shoved closer into Hiccup. Since he was already half on top of him, this wasn't exactly comfortable for the young human.

"Seriously, Toothless!"

As the evening wore on, people continued to eat and talk and laugh, and tell stories and eat and play games and eat and brag and eat some more.

Valka finally managed to extract herself from the latest group of Vikings warmly welcoming her back home. She picked her way over to her son and took a seat beside him. Toothless, drowsing now in Hiccup's lap, twitched a wing and sighed in contentment.

"Hey, Mom," Hiccup said, his voice hesitant but his face shining.

"Hello, Hiccup," she said warmly. "I'm sorry I haven't had a chance to speak to you all evening...."

"Heh, it's fine. I mean, you're back, of course everyone'd want to talk to you."

She set her arm around his shoulders and drew him close, and he relaxed into her embrace.

"This is such an incredible sight to see," she said softly. "The great hall of Berk, filled peacefully with dragons...."
Hiccup chuckled. "Sometimes I can't believe it myself, even after five years. There's still some scorch marks on the foundations of the great hall, from some of the times this place burned down."

"It's all thanks to you," she remarked, "that this sort of gathering happens every day now."

"Ehh, yeah, well..." He fidgeted, still uncomfortable with such praise but not really having anything to refute it with.

Toothless shifted and then half rolled over in an attempt to get comfortable again, accidentally smacking Hiccup with a wing.

"Ow! Come on, man; sometimes I think you forget that you're, like, three times bigger than me."

A couple of Terrible Terrors scuttled over. One of them sniffed inquiringly at Hiccup's boot, the other one started to climb onto his knee. Toothless snapped his eyes open and vocalized warningly at the Terror, which ignored him and skittered up to Hiccup's stomach.

"Ah! Watch it, heh, that tickles, little guy...." Hiccup gently picked the Terror's feet up from his belly and set them down again higher on his abdomen, which was more comfortable. The Terror curled up and nudged him with increasing force until he started petting it.

"Oh, Hiccup," Valka said softly, her voice tinged with amused affection, "they do have a queen."

"Huh?" Hiccup glanced at her in puzzlement, recalling their earlier conversation about how Berk's dragons were apparently the only known queenless flock.

She leaned to pick up the other Terror, which curled up in her hands and purred in contentment. "Think about it. Their queen died, didn't she?"

"Uh...yeah." It seemed a little strange to think of that monster, of the years of war and the fierce battle and the danger to everything Hiccup loved and the loss of his leg, in such simple terms as 'she died.'
"So of course they would have gathered around a new leader. Someone who would have quickly taken charge, preferably someone who understands them and loves them, who wants the best for them and has the strength to rally them and fight for them. After suffering for so long, they would have been naturally drawn to the strongest creature around who treated them like that."

"So they got, like, a replacement queen or something?" Hiccup frowned, running all of Berk's dragons through his mind and trying to think of one who behaved the way his mother was saying, one who seemed to be a leader. None of them stood out except Toothless, and even that was simply because Toothless was the only Night Fury, and of course Hiccup's own partner. "So is Toothless their new leader or something, and I was just too dumb to notice all this time? Or does their queen have to be female?"

There was something odd about his mother's grin, something he wasn't getting. "Well, all the dragon leaders we've known about up until now have been female. Except for the alphas, of course."

"The king," Hiccup confirmed, "Mr. Ice Breath." He smiled, remembering the incredible feeling of looking into that great dragon's vast eyes, of the combined gentleness and power of its breath, of the feel of delicate ice flaking away under his palms as he'd tidied his hair again, the breathless emotion of knowing he was liked by such an awesome, mighty creature.

"Yes. But it seems that only two dragon flocks are known to have male leaders, just as only two flocks are known to have at least one human member."

"What, so...your dragon sanctuary and...Berk?" Hiccup said hesitantly.

"Yes."

"So...I don't get it. So Berk's flock does have a, a male queen, or something? You're saying it's Toothless?"

"No, Hiccup." Why was she still grinning like that? "Your dragons certainly respect Toothless and acknowledge his strength, but they don't follow and adore him the way they do their true leader."

"But who is their true leader? I mean, unless they have some super secret paying-their-respects-to-the-big-shot behavior that I haven't picked up on, I can't think of any dragon who acts anything like a queen or an alpha or whatever."
"That's because he's not a dragon."

"Huh?"

"Hiccup. The one they love and follow. The human they always come to for help, the human they trust the most, the human who speaks to their souls and sees what none of the other humans could."

He was staring at her in disbelief, his mouth hanging open a little.

"Their queen. You, Hiccup."

"Me?!"

She smiled.

"What the-- You're saying I'm some kind of--?! Great Odin's-- Mom, I'm not a dragon queen! That's crazy."

Toothless snorted.

"I mean," Hiccup continued, "if anything, you'd be a dragon queen, it's unbelievable how much you know that I had no clue about, I--"

A Gronckle came up and plopped itself down in front of Hiccup, gazing at him adoringly.

"Mom, I'm not a...."

"My flock already had a leader long before I came to it, Hiccup. Yours, however, was orphaned after the death of their tyrant master. The one who filled that empty place for them was you."

A Monstrous Nightmare was crawling purposefully toward them. Hiccup was startled when a
Zippleback's heads suddenly swung out over him and hissed at the Nightmare; the Nightmare stopped and snarled back. Toothless raised his head and barked at both dragons in irritation; the Zippleback retreated sulkily, and the Nightmare lay down by Hiccup's feet and gave him a soulful look. The Gronckle wriggled like an excited dog and scooted closer.

"...Okay," Hiccup finally said. "But...but then you'd call me a dragon king, right? Because I'm a guy."

"Queen, son," Valka said, affectionate and just a touch mischievous. "Remember, dragon society works differently than ours. It's the roles that are important, and the ones who fill them are the ones who can most successfully perform the job. True, the workings of nature cause most dragon queens to be female dragons, but your flock's unusual circumstances caused them to end up with a male human queen."

"Well...then, yay, I'm a dragon queen~" Hiccup sighed. "So, what, do I have a king, then?"

"Usually, a dragon queen's consort would be her mate, her partner and second-in-command, and her co-parent as the occasion arises."

"So...Astrid...?" Hiccup suggested, very warily.

Valka chuckled. "Astrid makes a very fine Viking warrior, and she is kind to Stormfly. Those two do love and trust each other, as human/dragon partners should. From what I've heard, you and Astrid also seem like you would be very happy together if you do one day choose to marry."

Hiccup smiled a little.

"But as far as her being your 'king' - no, Hiccup. Within the social structure of your flock, your 'consort' is the partner you are most closely bound to. The bond is so deep that you seem to know each other's thoughts; you do not hesitate to trust each other with your lives. You two protect your flock in unison, you maintain order and guard and support and love your flock as two halves of a whole."

"Toothless," Hiccup said softly, his hand stroking over glimmering black scales. Toothless exhaled in a 'Press Harder' huff, and Hiccup smiled a little as he obliged. "So I'm their queen, and he's the king...." He shook his head. "'Co-parent,' huh? I hope they're not expecting little baby 'dragmans' or something, because thaaaaaat's definitely not happening."
Valka laughed. "Of course he's not your procreational mate, but he is your partner, your right-hand man. They come to him when they can't reach you; he translates when either or both of you do not understand each other."

"Translates," Hiccup murmured thoughtfully, now recalling several past incidents in a new light.

"Your father was right, Hiccup. You were born to lead and to protect your people, and you certainly have the strength of character to do so well." Her smile turned slightly sad. "I think he simply doesn't understand yet that your strength and leadership may have taken a different form than what he always hoped and imagined for you."

Hiccup smiled weakly. "Hey, Dad, so here's why I can't be chief after all: it turns out I'm already a dragon queen...yeah, he's really gonna LOVE that."

"He'll come around," Valka said kindly. "He always does."

"You sound so confident..." Hiccup sighed and hugged Toothless, who flicked one of his head spines inquiringly. "I dunno, just...he never-- Mom, he never listens to me. It always takes so much time and some sort of crisis before he finally does, and...."

"He loves you, Hiccup," she said softly.

"I know." Hiccup gripped Toothless's head and playfully snapped his tiny omnivore teeth close to Toothless's tough scaled hide; the dragon responded with a lick to the face that made Hiccup exclaim in a mixture of disgust and amusement. "Uuuuggghhh, Toothless...!" Toothless gave him a smug look and Hiccup hugged him again, then straightened up with his expression more thoughtful. "I'm technically an adult now...but he still treats me like a kid most of the time. I guess I am still a weakling, especially compared to Astrid or Snotlout, but I don't feel like one anymore, and I just wish...."

He was stroking Toothless again, fingernails digging into the sweet spots around the dragon's head so that Toothless gave a happy sigh. "...It's like I turn into a weakling kid again whenever I talk to him," Hiccup said slowly. "Every time we disagree, every time he blocks me out.... Sometimes I hear myself, and it doesn't matter that I'm the first Viking - except you - to ever ride a dragon or that I helped end a war or that I figured out how to train dragons or that my best friend is a Night Fury; I still sound like a whiny little kid. Like I'm so used to it that it doesn't even occur to me to...to talk to him like...like a man."
Valka was silent, watching him. Hiccup blinked and then raised his head. "Dad," he said quietly, "I know who I am now. I'm sorry that I couldn't fulfill your expectations of me, but I'm proud of who I am and what I can do. If you need an heir, Astrid's your woman. She'll be a better chief than I ever could be, and then I can be the leader I was meant to be. You don't have to make a decision now, you don't have to agree with me; but I've made my own decision, and there are people who are depending on me to do what I need to do."

There was a pause. Toothless raised his head and looked at his partner, his nose twitching. Hiccup smiled at him.

"That sounds good, Hiccup," Valka said. "Stoick is right over there, talking to Gobber. There's no reason to wait to tell him what you just said."

Hiccup started to sigh, but then steeled his expression and stood up, his shoulders straight and his head held high. "You're right." As soon as he took a step, Toothless rose to his own feet and pressed close. Hiccup smiled and laid a hand on the dragon's head. "Come on, partner." Together, they began to cross the hall in order to speak to the chief.

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Author's Notes: I used the word "awesome" with its older meaning, "someone/something that inspires awe."

So - *How to Train Your Dragon* is my favorite movie of all time. X3 Although the sequel doesn't look like it'll be as good as the first one, I'm still REALLY looking forward to seeing it, and I've been watching the trailers and clips that Dreamworks has been uploading to YouTube. One of them, the extended "Dragon Sanctuary" clip, has a line in it where Valka says, "Every nest has its queen." That made me think of the dragon nest closest to Berk with the evil queen that they defeated in the first movie, and, like: "If that queen's gone now, who's the new one?" Of course it'd be fantastic if it turned out to be Hiccup and he had no idea. XD XD XD (It would also be an explanation for why, even after the war, he still seems to have the closest bond with dragons than anyone in Berk.) I love playing with gender roles. I have a feeling that the filmmakers are not going to take the concept (if they even use it at all) as far as they could, because of younger kids watching the movie, but I wanted to experiment with it because yay fanfiction. XD

I haven't been able to see more than a few episodes of the HTTYD TV series, either; so sorry if there's anything I got wrong due to not having seen the show. And if I spelled any of the dragons' names wrong, let me know; I didn't double-check them yet. ^^;
This ended up being my very first HTTYD fanfic. XD I've been wanting to write one for a long time, but I never had a solid idea before now.

Lol, Hiccup & Toothless are the only characters with totally different names whom I keep getting mixed up when I type too fast. ^^; Way too often I find myself typing "Toothless" when I meant to type "Hiccup," and vice-versa.
Names {post-HTTYD1}

A Dreamworks' How to Train Your Dragon fanfic by Raberba girl

Summary: Hiccup would probably be surprised at all the names Toothless has had for him.

A/N: This drabble has no direct relation to The Dragon Queen of Berk, I just figured I'd group some HTTYD fics together so I wouldn't have to keep referring to TDQoB whenever I use that "queen" bit of my headcanon. ^^;

This is from Toothless's POV.

o.o.o

He has a lot of names.

The first one was Confusion Fear Anger Terror Grief Shock Glee Excitement Frustration Pain - the things I felt when I first saw Him. It is a very, very strange name now, because I don't feel those things anymore when I think about Him or see Him. He never frightens me at all, ever; now He is Joy Eagerness Peace Love. And Frustration when He doesn't listen to me, but most of the time He's Love. Sometimes I wonder if He now and Him back then are different people, even though they smell the same.

The next time I saw Him, He was so small and quiet, I called Him Little Quiet One. When He didn't threaten or challenge me, I ignored Him, but He stared and stared and stared at me the way no animal ever would, I didn't like it and He became Lurking In The Cliff instead.

The next time He came, when I was so so so hungry.... Fish Bringer; Life Giver. Also Stupid, for not knowing what to do with the fish after I gave Him back His share; and Dangerous Thing. Then when He didn't hurt me but wouldn't go away, Annoying Thing and then Confusing Thing and Interesting Thing.
He kept coming back and coming back, and I got used to Him. I called Him Charcoal Paws for a while because of His scent when He touches me, but then finally He became Friend. That was a special name, because I never had a friend before Him. Other dragons did sometimes, but not me. He was the first one I ever liked enough to be Friend. He was interesting and annoying and almost everything we did together was fun fun fun and new. Not everything, but most of it. And I could tell He loved me, not just liked me or respected me or wanted me, but He loved me. I never felt that before so I didn't know what it was at first, but now I do. He's very special.

The first time we flew - high, like I used to on my own, except we have to fly together now - He was bad at it at first but then something happened, and after that He was Half Of Me.

Nonsense Kind One, when He was nice to the annoying little ones for no reason. And the first time He was attacked and I ran to protect Him, I realized He was Precious Thing. I never had a Precious Thing before, but now I do, even thinking about anyone hurting my Precious Thing makes me angry and want to rip their throat out. Sometimes it hurts to have a Precious Thing and I don't like that, but I'd rather have one that hurts than not have Him.

Then after we were free, when we were happy and weak for a while and we had a new nest but no queen, no master no leader no one except the monster humans who weren't monsters anymore, soon we started feeling better. Getting stronger, having a home, following and listening to our new queen.

He is a much much much much better queen. The old one was a monster like the humans, but we never knew things could be different. With Him, things are very very very different, but they're good. He's stupid a lot and doesn't know anything, sometimes I think He doesn't even know He's queen (He's that stupid sometimes), but it's okay because I'm the consort and I fix things when He breaks them or forgets them. I'm good at it.

He's strong enough and loves us enough to make up for being stupid. The annoying little ones adore Him so much I get jealous, the strongest ones don't listen to anyone else but they listen to Him, all of us protect Him and will do anything for Him, but He is kind and He never makes us hurt like She did. We didn't know it is good to be kind until He showed us. It's confusing because He is male and He is human but He is still our queen, they wouldn't all follow Him like this if He wasn't. And He's not my mate which is very very confusing because I know I'm consort and I love Him as my other half and He loves me, but He's also courting with the human female so it doesn't make sense that I'm still the queen's consort, but I don't care. None of the others care, either. Even though He is a very very strange queen, nothing bad happens and things are good, so we are all happy.

He has one more name.

It took me a long time to understand that the chittering they do all the time is talking. Humans are very stupid and can't smell at all, sometimes I wonder if they are blind, too, because there are so
many things they DON'T SEE, even He doesn't see, sometimes even when I try to tell Him. I
couldn't understand how they could be alive at all when they were so stupid.

But I think they talk different than we do. All the chittering all the time, yap yap yap yap yap, they're
not just strange sounds with no meaning, I think it's how they talk to each other. It means that He is
talking to me all the time. It's annoying because I don't understand what most of the chittering means,
but at the same time I like it because He is talking to me all the time even though He keeps saying
things I don't know. And even when I don't know what the chittering means, the way He sounds
when he makes those noises is like talking, too. Even without smelling, I still know when He's
scared and when He's angry and when He's excited and when He's sad and when He's happy.

I've been learning. When I realized that the chittering is speech, I started connecting it to their smells
and movements. There is a sound that means 'food,' sounds that mean 'go flying' - even sounds for
me. Me.

I have two human names. One is 'Toothless' that all the humans use for me, and the other one is
'Bud' that is special because only He uses that name for me. The day I realized those were names for
me, I was so happy I accidentally hurt Him. (He's okay now.) He doesn't call me anything in real
talk, but in His own talk, He has names for me, and He usually smells happy when He says them, so
I know they're both good names.

He has a human name, too. The sound the humans make when they call Him is 'Hiccup.' I am so
proud of myself for learning that.

"Well...guess we'd better head back home now, huh, bud...."

More chittering I don't know, but I can tell He wants to stay here but will go back to the nest because
He has to. I can chitter, too. "Hiccup," I say. I don't know the human sounds for I love you, so I say
it the way dragons say it to their friends and their other halves. "Hiccup, I love You."

"D...Did you just-- Did you just say 'Hiccup'?!"

Why is He saying 'Hiccup'? That's our name for Him. Silly humans can't even understand something
as easy as that.

"Toothless, did--?! You can talk!"
"I thought we are going to go back home, but You keep staying. You are confusing."

"Hey, can you say something else? Can you say 'Astrid'?"

"If You're not going to leave after all, I'm going back to sunbathing." I put my head back down on the grass and spread my wings so I can feel the warm sun shining on my back again. He's kneeling in front of me now, smelling excited. He often gets very excited about things even when they're boring.

"Come on, bud! Aaaaaastrid. Aaaaaastrid."

"Shut up and sunbathe." I knock my wing against His head so He falls back down next to me.

"Ow! Fine, then, you big baby boo."

He pushes me. Of course I barely feel it. Those noises are easy to say, so I will say them even though I don't know what they mean, because Hiccup will like it and it's funny when I make Him happy for silly things. "Baby boo."

"Aaahhh, you did it again...!"

0.0.0

Author's Notes: It looks like I've gotten eaten by a HTTYD obsession again, and I'm pretty sure I'll be obsessed 'til I'm able to watch the sequel.... I've been getting more ideas for HTTYD fanfics. ^^;

This fic was supposed to be a much longer one, a sort of introspective one-shot on Hiccup from Toothless's POV, but the introductory rambling about names took so long that I decided to just make it its own drabble. Hopefully I'll eventually be able to write the rest, probably as at least two or three more drabbles/one-shots.
Summary: Toothless, the most impressive dragon on Berk, realizes to his dismay that his human partner happens to be the weakest and scrawniest of the Berk Vikings.

A/N: This is the second of my "Toothless's POV on Hiccup" drabbles. (Though it ended up being longer than a 'drabble.' XD) I might re-arrange them into a connected series or something, I dunno; my writing is such a mess....

This is set during the "Thawfest" episode of the Riders of Berk TV show.

O.o.o

He's a weakling!

I don't understand. Was He wounded? No, because I would have known. He can't have always been this way! He's always been the strongest human, just like I'm the strongest dragon.

Except if I remember very, very hard, I can remember a long time ago that maybe He was weak. I woke up with His fear so strong in my nostrils that it was hard to smell anything else. I thought all humans were like boulders with legs, but He is tiny like fishbones with no meat. Only the human hatchlings are smaller than Him. I knew knew knew He was going to kill me and I didn't understand because He was so small, but I couldn't move and I couldn't stop Him and then He didn't kill me and then I was free and He felt like a meatless little squirrel under my claws.

But I forgot about that. Because first He brought back life to me when I was starving, and He kept putting strange things on me that helped me FLY again, and then He became my other half so of course He is strong because I am strong.

...I did have to save Him from the fire-skinned one who's now in my troop, the one the humans call
'Hookfang.' Hiccup called for me and I ran so panicked to help Him and it turned out to only be a fire-skin and I was confused, but it didn't matter because there was danger danger danger all around so I just fought without thinking about it. But if He was strong, He could have beat Hookfang, so I don't understand. He couldn't beat Hookfang who was easy, but He killed _Her_ who I never even thought could be hurt!!! It doesn't make any sense at all.

...We fought Her together, me and Him, but He was alone with Hookfang. Maybe He is only strong when He is with me?

He doesn't have me now. Our troop is in the chain cave like usual (except they took the chains away today), but this time all the other humans are up there watching us and being very loud. From the way they all smell and sound, I think our troop is doing a competition, but it's confusing because the humans in our troop don't smell like they're competing for females or food, and they don't act like they're competing for territory. And our two human females are competing, too. What else is there to compete for??

"Humans are so strange," says Stormfly.

"Bossy Fun Thing is going to win," Hookfang brags, even though he doesn't know what they're trying to win any more than I do.

"HALF OF ME is going to win," I snarl at him, "He's better than all of them combined."

"I hope My Cute One doesn't get hurt," says Meatlug.

"Just because you're consort doesn't mean you'll win!!" Hookfang shrieks at me. "MY human will win, I don't care if yours is queen; you both can EAT OUR BACKDRAFT!!" Meatlug gasps at how shockingly rude (and dangerous???) this is, but I understand. Hookfang hated the old queen even more than most, so he likes being able to insult our new queen without being punished, even though of course he loves Him just as much as the rest of our flock does. If the new queen wasn't my other half who I love too much for it to be fun, I would enjoy the freedom of insulting Him, too, no matter how much I like Him.

"My human is worth a hundred of yours even if He WASN'T queen!!" I growl.

Me and Hookfang argue a little more but not too much, because we both want to keep watching.
As the competition goes on, we start to understand it a little better. It's like a series of tasks; very useless ones because we can't see the point of any of them, but it seems like whoever wins is the one who can do the tasks in a certain way the best.

Stormfly gets mad at Fishlegs for making Astrid lose so much, but she can't do anything about it since we're not competing. The two litter-mates mess each other up as usual, so Barfbelch soon gets bored and goes to take a nap. Only one of our humans seems to be doing well at all - and it's not Hiccup. Why is it not Him?!?!

I'm surprised and I'm not happy and I'm angry when over and over and over again, Snotlout wins and Hiccup loses. I don't understand I don't understand I don't understand!!! He's the best, why is He losing?!

"Ohhhh!" Meatlug finally realizes. "The queen is the smallest one, isn't He?!"

We all stare at our humans. And we see that she's right.

We all knew before that Hiccup is the smallest and has the least meat, it's the sight-picture that helps us tell Him apart from the other humans. But it never occurred to any of us until just now that our queen is small. We can't even make it make sense, we stand for a while remembering how huge She was and looking at how tiny He is. Putting them side by side in our minds, we can barely even see Him.

I don't understand. He seemed so much bigger until now: exactly my size when it's just me and Him; looming over me, kind and comforting, when I need Him to be my queen. Whyyyyy is He so small and weak?!

"...Bossy Thing is definitely going to win," Hookfang says, but he sounds subdued and a little frightened. If a queen is weak, her flock dies. Are we going to die?

I'm worried now as I watch Hiccup, and I expect them to start another stupid task, but the humans smell different now. The humans up above aren't as loud anymore, and our troop humans are coming over to us dragons and starting to wander away. Snotlout smells like "exhilaration triumph glee pride eager," as if he plans to keep winning, but I don't see anything else to win. Hiccup smells like "frustration anger hurt determination," like He's going to try to keep winning but there's nothing else to win. I wish that humans could talk for real so that I can understand them better.
Hiccup and Snotlout talk a little with their human noises, still smelling like competitors (but *what are they fighting over??*), then Snotlout and Hookfang fly away. Astrid talks to Hiccup and I can tell He feels just a tiny bit better. Then we all leave, too. Are we competing some more, or not?

I'm thinking about it the whole time we eat, and when we go to the fire and metal cave where Hiccup works on more of His strange important things. I watch Him, and I see again how small He is, and this time I connect that to other things, too.

Compared to the other humans, He's like one of the annoying little dragons are compared to the rest of us. I can sense the strain of His muscles, how difficult it is for Him to do things that any of the humans could do easily. I remember that whenever our little aerie eats together in our home cave, me and Dad eat a normal amount of food, but I see in my memories that Hiccup barely eats anything at all. No wonder He's so meatless, when He barely eats any meat. But even whenever I try to give Him more from my own share, He never eats my offerings, and He runs around like normal after meals as if those few tiny mouthfuls are all He needs, but how can that be?

There's the way the other humans treat Him, too. No one seems to really mean Him harm when they strike Him, and He almost never gets upset in response. Astrid even likes to follow up those strikes sometimes with a small headbutt that I think is a human courtship thing. I decided it was all normal human behavior and got used to it.

But now I'm thinking about it and thinking about it, and I wonder if it *still* hurts Him even though it's normal.

There's His sire, who has several names but I think of him as 'Dad' because that's what Hiccup calls him. *I think* he might even be the humans' queen, I'm not sure...I didn't know there could be two queens in one nest, but there are a lot of things I didn't know before meeting Hiccup. Our nest is the only one with both dragons and humans in it, so I guess it makes sense to have two queens even though it's strange. And if he is the human queen, it would explain why he's the only one who can make Hiccup do things He doesn't want to do, like stay grounded or send us dragons away from the nest. What kind of queen lets another queen rule Him?

Dad is one of the very biggest humans, and Hiccup is one of the smallest. Dad will touch Hiccup or push Him or squeeze Him in his forelegs just like all the other humans do, and Hiccup doesn't respond as if that behavior is aggressive, but He does grunt and stumble and lose His breath.

Now I wonder if that's where a lot of His bruises come from, too. If most of the humans are so big and strong, and the pushing and shoving is normal but Hiccup is so small and weak, then maybe they really are hurting Him by accident. I didn't know that. I didn't *know*. Is it a bad thing that You get hurt so much, Hiccup? If it is, why do You act like it's not?
"...I mean, of course we're gonna kick everyone's butt tomorrow, there's no way we can lose; but even if we ace every single event, it'll still be a tie, so we're gonna have to have a tie-breaker, aren't we...?"

I can still smell His determination to win, even though we're not competing now. Maybe they're going to compete again soon, and that's why everyone's acting like it's not over?

He's always rambling and worried about the wrong things. Sheep and dead trees don't matter when I go to sniff at Him and find all the places where His flesh is a little damaged. It's mostly on His forelegs and chest and shoulders and back, where humans most like to pat their paws on each other or squeeze each other with their forelegs. Now that I'm paying attention, I can almost feel every small twinge of pain when He moves, but He acts like He doesn't even notice.

I'm about to headbutt Him to comfort Him, but I remember I have to be gentle so I breathe into His head-fur instead so that it ruffles. He bares His teeth in the happy human way and pats me. "Don't worry, Toothless. You're the best dragon on Berk, and everyone knows it."

"I'm not going to let anything happen to You, Precious Thing."

The next day, we all gather together again for more competition, and me and my troop dragons are excited when we realize we'll get to fight alongside our humans this time.

"HAH! This time I get to beat you myself, Consort!" Hookfang crows at me.

"That's what I'm supposed to be saying to you," I tell him.

"My human is obviously the best," Stormfly snaps. "We're unstoppable when we're together." She eyes me. "No offense, Consort, but it's true."

"I don't take offense, because me and Half Of Me are even more unstoppable," I say haughtily. It doesn't matter whether Hiccup is queen or not, it doesn't matter whether He's the weakest one or not; I'M strong, and He's strong when He's with me, so of course we're going to win!!!

...It would be nice if I knew what we are supposed to do or what we're trying to win, but I trust
Hiccup. He'll find a way to show me.

More stupid tasks (why are we supposed to fly under such low things when there's nothing attacking us??), but Hiccup knows exactly what He's doing and I relax into His guidance. I also pay attention to the watching noisy excited humans, the way they react to our rivals. If one of the other dragons does something wrong, the humans show it; and when they do something well, the humans show that, too. It gives me a better idea what to expect.

I know I do well because my queen praises me, and that makes me feel like I'm filled with sunbeams. Me and Hiccup are unstoppable when we're together, we're the best, and surely His mastery is clear to all the humans and not just the dragons.

Just like last time, everyone gets quieter after a while and they start wandering away, but still with that same excited hum. We're going to do this again, I know we are, and Hiccup is going to dominate them again. At least, He will as long as He's with me. "Let me stay with you, Queen. Don't try to do this without me again, because I am Your other half and You need me." If I'm not with Him, He will lose, and I can't stand seeing Him lose when He's supposed to be the best.

This time, Snotlout is the one who's upset and Hiccup is the triumphant one.

...But there is something else in Hiccup, too, something else that I don't think I like, something that reminds me just a very very tiny very small bit of the old queen. I can tell that Astrid senses the same thing and she doesn't like it at all.

Hiccup, You're not going to rot like the old queen, are you? Because if You do, our flock will kill You, they will never let themselves be hurt like that again; and I will be killed trying to defend You because You are my Precious Thing even if You do rot, and then the rest of them will die if they can't find another strong queen soon. Please don't rot.

It fades when we leave the chain cave, and I almost can't sense it anymore. We go to our home cave for food, and I try to give some of mine to Him again but He won't eat it. All He eats is His own one fish and a few plants. When Dad comes in smelling very happy and strikes a foreleg against Hiccup's shoulders to share his happiness, Hiccup jerks forward and I sense tiny breakings under His flesh and I know He has new bruises now. But He still smells happy and He puts the fish I tried to give Him back with the rest of my pile. Why won't You let me help You, Hiccup?!

"Don't worry, Dad, I've got some ideas I'm gonna work on tonight. Tomorrow'll be the first time you'll get to put the Thawfest medal around a Haddock's neck instead of a Jorgenson's."
"I'm surely looking forward to it, son!"

Much later, after Hiccup finally goes to sleep, I go over to His bed, quietly so I won't wake Him up, and I watch Him for a while. He smells and looks a little happy as He sleeps, and I lean down to ruffle His head-fur again. I've never loved anyone or anything as much as I love Him, which is why times like this frighten me.

He's so helpless. When I'm not with Him, He can get hurt or killed so very easily. His teeth and claws are useless, He has no wings or tail or weight, He can barely even lift or throw human weapons, He can't smell or taste danger. If I can't protect Him, what defense does He have if an angry foreign dragon wants to claw Him open or bite Him to pieces, or if a rotten human wants to cut Him apart?

*How can a creature so weak be our leader?*

"Friend," I say, even though I know He can't understand me, "*where is it? There is strength in You somewhere or You could never have become queen, but I can't see it or understand it. Reassure me. Show me why You are powerful.*" Of course He is still sleeping. I go back to my bed and lie down, and concentrate on breathing His scent to comfort me until I finally fall asleep.

The next day, everyone is even more excited than before, and I think maybe this is the last of the competition. Whoever wins this will *really* win it.

The rest of our troop is not with us this time - did they lose for good? It's only Hiccup and Snotlout down in the chain cave. They put me and Hookfang up here at the top of this cliff and told us to stay. What does it mean that we are up here and no one cares what our other troop dragons do? Do me and Hookfang get to help our humans this time, or not? Why did they make us be so far away???

Down in the chain cave, Hiccup and Snotlout start running. Hiccup is so slow, I knew it, I knew He couldn't do this without me, if they were being chased by hungry animals they'd kill Hiccup and Snotlout would escape. I don't want You to be weak, Hiccup!!

They are coming to us. Ohhhh, they have to do some of it on their own, but they get to do the rest of it with us. I'm *glad*.

Snotlout reaches Hookfang first and they fly away, but I'm still watching Hiccup and waiting.
waiting for Him to get here because *I can win this for us*, I know I can!

I hear how fast Hiccup's heart is beating when He finally reaches me, and I smell the sweat on Him. Already He's tired from just that easy climb, but He runs to me and jumps on my back and hurry up hurry up let's GO!

Of course I catch up to Hookfang, easy. I'm the best dragon with the best human. We're winning, winning winning, so close and I can sense Hiccup's glee and I don't know how much longer we have to fly but it doesn't matter because we're going to win no matter how far it is but then Hiccup makes me slow down.

HICCUP WHAT ARE YOU DOING????

He forces me to the ground and I watch feeling outraged as Hookfang flies past and insults us on the way.

"*We could have BEAT HIM, Stupid!!!*" I growl at Him. "*What are you doing!!!*"

"I'm sorry, bud."

I calm down and smell as hard as I can, and Hiccup smells like sadness and regret but something else, too. Something good. He's doing this on purpose, and He has a good reason for it, and He smells NOTHING like the old queen anymore at all.

It's not the most important thing to win? "*I trust You, Half Of Me, and I love You.*" Whatever He wants. He is my queen.

And who cares about doing stupid pointless things to win something that doesn't exist, anyway.

Hiccup lets me fly again and we go back to the chain cave and land beside Hookfang, who smells like glee and excitement and some guilt underneath for beating the queen.

"*I WIN I WIN I WIN! I told you me and my human are the best!!*"
"The queen and me could have won very very very easily," I tell him, "but He let you win because He is kind and wanted you and your Bossy Thing to be happy."

"Not true! We won 'cause we're BETTER than you! Hah!"

I feel like arguing, but Hiccup is not arguing. Hiccup lost on purpose even though He could have won so easy; He is letting Snotlout claim victory even though it hurts Him a little. I'm going to do the same, because we should support each other. I even feel a little proud for making that sacrifice. This is how sacrifice \textit{should} feel, not like it used to with the old queen. Hiccup really is the best leader.

"You did your family proud."

"Snotlout! Snotlout! Oy, oy, oy!" Snotlout dances away, and Hookfang keeps gloating.

Hiccup and Dad don't even say anything to each other in human talk at all, but I sense that Dad is proud of his offspring, too, and Hiccup knows it and it makes Him feel better.

Then Astrid comes and she smells happy but she hits Him, \textit{why} would she do that when she \textit{knows} He's a weakling, I can already sense the newest bruise forming! But whatever she says to Hiccup makes Him really happy and not sad anymore at all, so I guess I can't be annoyed at her. Then she does the little courtship headbutt and I'm pretty sure Hiccup doesn't even feel the bruise anymore. Were they competing for females after all? Humans make no sense....

"You had the power to make Your rivals either really happy or really miserable," I realize. "You chose to make them happy even though it hurt You, and now You don't hurt at all, either." I am impressed.

"So, bud, what do you say we go for a \textit{real} flight, huh?"

My human Hiccup is small and slow and He barely eats and He has almost no muscles. He's easy to hurt and He almost never fights. Anyone could kill Him so easy if they really wanted to.

But He knows things that are more than just seeing or hitting. He loves when there is no reason to love. He changes things that we never thought could be changed, and He makes them better than
even the best good we could think of on our own.

That's why He's strong enough to be queen, a so much better queen than our old one who was huge but rotten. My Hiccup's strength isn't in His body and it isn't anything I can touch, but it's still there and I can trust it. He trusts me, too. He knows things that I don't understand, and I know things that He doesn't understand; even though He's strong and I'm strong, it's not enough when we're alone. Without me, He would fall, and without Him, everything else would fall. Me and my human are two halves and we can do anything when we're together, because we can rely on each other's strength.

"YES LET'S GO FLYING!"

"Ha ha! All right, Toothless, here we go!"

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Author's Notes: Ftr, Toothless always "capitalizes Hiccup's pronoun" regardless because their bond is so deep, but the rest of the pronoun capitalization in this fic is solely based on queenship.

The original idea came when I was considering the fact that Toothless is the most impressive dragon on Berk (as far as abilities/intelligence/etc.), yet Hiccup is the most physically unimpressive Viking. XD I wondered what Toothless would make of this contrast. When I started outlining this fic, the plunny melded with the plot of "Thawfest," which I'd recently watched. I figured that the Thawfest competition was a perfect opportunity to make a really clear comparison between Hiccup's physical abilities and those of the other Berk teenagers.
Small New Ally {HTTYD2}

Small New Ally

(rough draft)

A Dreamworks' How to Train Your Dragon fanfic by Raberba girl

Summary: The good alpha's perspective on meeting Hiccup. SPOILERS for HTTYD2.

0.0.0

I was drowsing, but the sweet scent of hatchlings is now too strong in my nostrils, and sure enough, a troop of them has decided to come and play on my face. It would be terrible if any of them caught me off guard and were swallowed or hurt by accident, so I chase them away.

I meant to go back to sleep, because I still sense darkness approaching and I must prepare my strength as much as I can before the battle - but Valka has come to me, and there are foreigners with her.

Their scents speak to me as I raise my head to look at them: they come peacefully, feeling curiosity most strongly at the moment; there is a queen and her consort, a young adult male nightwing, and a young adult male human who is Valka's offspring. Her 'son,' as she would probably think of him. The little human in my flock has taught me much about the strange yet powerful bonds of love between her species, which I find charming and fascinating. Perhaps, now that she has brought ano--

The foreign queen and the young human are the same person. I am surprised.

He gives me no greeting, but his fearless awe and joy as he looks at me are pleasing, and his consort offers up acknowledgment for both of them. "He doesn't know, He's only a human, He would greet you if He knew He was supposed to, He really would...."

"Yes. Be at peace." The little nightwing relaxes. His queen is not a dragon, so I forgive this ignorance just as I have always forgiven Valka's. I can read in the scents of this strange tiny queen that his flock often shows affection and respect to him, which they would not do if he didn't love and take care of them, so it doesn't matter that he is not a dragon.
I greet my brother-queen with approval, trying to be gentle because his body is so much more fragile than a dragon's. The frost surprises him, which Valka his dam - his 'mother' - seems to find amusing. Even she knows more of how a dragon ought to behave than this foreign queen does, so perhaps she will teach him how to understand us the way she herself has come to understand us.

The time for resting is over, now it is time to feed my flock. Before I turn away, the nightwing tells me anxiously, "Foreigners think He can't be a good queen but that's not true because He IS. It's okay that there's a lot of things He can't do or doesn't know because I do those for Him and help Him, and He is strong even though you can't see it and sometimes He's even smarter than us and He has more love love love than even dragons do and He heals and protects us and He has me. He can be a good dragon when I'm with Him because I'm His other half. I--"

"Your human is a good queen, and you are a good consort to him. I trust you both in the midst of my flock."

He is pleased but overwhelmed, so he bounds away to take refuge with Valka's dragon half.

As I submerge and begin to swim toward deeper waters, I think that perhaps this queen's unexpected coming was a gift. The approaching darkness is great, and worries me more than anything has for a very long time. My small new ally has come alone, but if I ask him to call his flock and if he agrees...if the two of us fight alongside each other, perhaps I don't need to worry after all....

0.0.0

Author's Notes: I'm now kicking myself for not just keeping all my canon-based HTTYD fanfiction in one series, since all my headcanons appear to be blending into each other. *sweatdrop* Most of my 'Dragon Queen of Berk' plot bunnies have gotten absorbed into 'Two Worlds, One Family,' and both DQB and TWOF have been leaking into pretty much everything, including unposted stories in my 'His Soul Reflects My Own' modern sci-fi AU. *sweatdrop* Basically, I would REALLY suggest using my fanfiction indexes on WordPress to navigate my fanfiction, rather than trying to track down my stories on FFN and stuff. (I finally did update those indexes! I just haven't changed the dates yet because I haven't finished something I'd wanted to do first.)

I've been working on an important Real Life project that is taking a long time and causing me much more difficulty in trying to do anything on the computer than usual. I'm still writing, though mostly in my notebooks rather than the computer (I've got at least two finished HTTYD one-shots, and a few random chapters of His Soul Reflects My Own). But it's been over two weeks since I posted anything, and I finally got a drabble idea that would be short enough to draft in one sitting, so I temporarily moved my computer to a different room in order to do so. ^^;
Btw, I do know how I'm going to integrate my 'dragon queen' headcanon with actual 'alpha' canon, I just haven't had a chance to actually write it yet. ^^;

I figure that Bewilderbeasts would be more attuned to other people's mental activity than most other creatures are, so maybe it could have been picking up on Drago's intense and focused hatred, and the misery of his captive dragons...maybe...?
A Small Addition To Berk's Flock, chapter 1 {post-HTTYD2}

Summary: Hiccup Horrendous Haddock III can apparently befriend and train ANY dragon - even Drago Bludvist's Bewilderbeast.

A/N: Told from the Bewilderbeast's POV. SPOILERS for HTTYD2.

There's not much reference to my "dragon queen" headcanon in this story, but I'm posting it here because I'm trying really hard to avoid making any new series for canon-based HTTYD fics.

Part 1

I am dying. I think I should maybe be displeased about this, but I'm not. I don't feel anything. I'm just waiting. I sleep whenever I can, and when I can't sleep, I wait.

Master told me to stay here. He was very angry. He is always angry, but He was Very Angry when He left me, because I did something wrong.

I lost our new flock, I think that is why He was so angry. I couldn't...I couldn't hold on to them, they flew out of my control, they were sucked away like things that are sucked into a whirlpool. That nightwing who tore himself out of my flock and then tore all the rest of them away from me was very powerful like a sun; I didn't know anything that small could be so powerful.

I don't know how I could have done it right, I don't know how I can make Master stop being Very Angry at me, and now He has left me to die. I feel like that is not a bad thing. Maybe...maybe it should be. But it isn't. Whenever He is gone, there is no anger and it is peaceful.

My skin is very dry, so dry now that I can feel it breaking. Soon it will be so dry that I will be dead. I think that is what I'm waiting for. Yes. I thought I was waiting for Master to come back, but I am also waiting to die, and I hope that dying comes first. I think dying will be very peaceful, with no
anger and hate pressing pressing pressing into my mind always. If Master comes back after I am
dead, then I think...I think His mind won't be able to reach me then. I like to think that.

Something is shocked and frightened. There are many creatures here in these caves, but most of them
don't know I am alive, and the ones who do know I'm alive can tell that it doesn't matter. This is the
first creature who has been frightened of me here. I can smell that it's a human - yes; humans are
always very different from other animals, and they don't understand things even when they're
obvious.

...I recognize this human. Young adult male, half of a nightwing - *that* nightwing, the one who
defeated me. The human is covered with fresh scents of dragons paying homage to their flock's
consort, but the queen scents are still underneath, fainter but not faded away yet. He was their queen
until only very recently. His flock was stolen from him, too, but...but they didn't reject him, the way
they rejected me. He only shifted aside to give way to the new alpha, and his dragons and the alpha
his other half are still devoted to him like they were before.

I don't like that, it makes me unhappy. Why does this tiny, pathetically weak human have a flock
who wants him, but no one wanted me even when I had a flock? I don't like it at all.

I wonder if I should look at this small human consort who has come to make Master angry again, but
I am too tired to open my eyes. It doesn't matter what he does, nothing will change. I am still waiting.

The human stays still for a long time. His fear fades, and his anger gets stronger. His anger is not as
ugly as Master's, but I still don't like it. But his anger is weaker than Master's, so I'm not afraid of it.

He finally approaches, very cautiously as if he thinks he might be in danger, and he makes little
human noises. His voice is so very much softer than Master's that I almost don't hear it.

"Figures...it *figures* I'd end up trapped in the same cave as you, you horrible murdering ugly
*monster*...."

He is very close now. I can open my eyes just a little and see him. He is standing right near my head
with his foreleg held out. He has a human blade in his paw. It's such a tiny blade that I can barely
even see it, I can smell it more than I can see it. It smells like metal and charcoal and wood. The
human himself has charcoal smell on him too, I like it.

"You...you think you can just...yeah, that's right, I'm talking to you. I should avenge my father right
here and now, it was you calling the shots when you killed him, you were the one using my best friend like he was some, some doll, some tool; I'm gonna walk right up there and gouge out your eyes and then figure out how to...actually kill you...."

We look at each other. His anger is fading too, now it's just grief grief grief pouring from his mind and body so strongly that it's making my heart hurt the way I think his is hurting.

"...Who am I kidding." He sticks the tiny blade to his foreleg and throws himself down on the ground, and covers his head with his paws. "I couldn't kill if you even if I tried, you're too freaking big, you stupid monster...." I smell a little bit of salt water. I am confused. I didn't know that humans could shoot water, too. But it is only a very tiny bit, and it's not frozen. "I hate this...I hate this...I know it wasn't even you, either; the one calling the shots was him...giving those orders, using you like a tool the way you...the way you used Toothless...."

He stands back up and steps close to me and sets his paws on my chin. I can't even feel it, his paws are so tiny and gentle. "Why do you even listen to him, anyway?" He is pleading with me, but I don't know what he wants. Humans can barely talk. "Why? Why? You're a million times bigger than him, you could squash him like a bug and barely even notice; why do you do whatever he tells you? Do you like killing people and enslaving dragons and destroying things and making people miserable?! Are you happy being as evil as your sick little madman?"

I'm tired. I want him to go away and stop being angry at me, but I'm too tired to move. I shut my eyes again and try to sleep.

"...What's wrong with you?" I think I might feel a little, very tiny twinge as he moves his paws over my skin. He must have touched one of the edges of the peeling-away places. "You weren't this ugly when you wrecked Berk...." His little human voice stops for a while. When he starts chittering again, he's somewhere different. "You're...you're drying out, aren't you. You're a tidal class dragon, you.... Hey."

I think I was asleep. It feels and smells and sounds a little different. Time has passed, but the human is still here, chittering on and on without stopping, and I think I can feel him moving around my head. I feel...a little better, too. Not my heart, but my body. Just a little tiny bit.

"...don't even know why I'm wasting time here when I should be trying to find a way out of these caves, you don't even deserve my help. Gah, they're right, I'm way too soft-hearted for my own good. For everyone's good. Maybe I could get away with this kind of stuff before you showed up, but now that I'm chief and everything sucks, I've got re-spon-si-bilities, like needing to prep my tribe for war with your evil crazy boss instead of hanging out lost in a maze with my father's freaking murderer, but I guess I've always been stupid like that. So whoo-hoo, looks like you lucked out, drag--" He glances up at me and suddenly goes quiet, flaring surprise and fear. I don't know why.
We look at each other, and he calms down. He thought I was asleep. I was asleep. He saw my open eyes and was startled. I can tell it has been hours since my eyes were open, but I don't feel like any time has passed at all, I want to go back to sleep.

"...Yeah, so...hmph. Good morning. Or afternoon, or evening, or whatever. I have no idea what time it actually is."

This human is noisy. Chitter chitter chitter, constantly. Master doesn't sound like this at all.

The human moves again, and I can see what he's doing now. He...poured water on my face. He climbs back down and trudges across this cave to where seawater leaks into little pools and streams. He scoops more water into something and then carries it back to me and pours the water on a tiny bit more of my skin.

He is... he is...  

...helping...me?

I don't understand. At all. I thought he was angry at me. I thought we were enemies.

He's so slow and tiny, it's almost useless; only some of my head is not as dry as the rest of me. But...I don't know. I don't understand. I like it anyway. It makes me happy that he's doing this. It's useless because I'm still dying, but...it makes me happy anyway. I don't understand. I don't understand, so I can't think about it, and his chittering makes it harder to think, so I go back to sleep.

I wake up and I look for Strange Confusing Thing - I can't see him, but I can smell him very close. Oh - he is sleeping on my face. I don't know why.

I think about it, and finally I decide that he did something smart. If he still thinks I am a threat but he was too tired to stay awake and wary, then he chose to fall asleep where I can't reach him. I can't shoot him where he is, and the caves are too cramped, I can't reach him with my paws. He is curled up in a hollow where he would be hard to crush even if I tried to press my face against a wall. I can't
hurt him right now even if I wanted to, but...I don't want to. I don't want to.

I hope hope hope that Master doesn't come back and make me hurt Confusing Thing. I am glad this little human made himself safe.

"Mmn...."

He is waking up now.

"Ugh...I'm still tired...." I feel a very tiny impact. "What about you, Squirt, you still sleeping? ...No? Great. Just great."

He climbs down to the ground and looks up at me. I look back at him. ...I think I like him. I don't know if I do or not. But I don't don't don't hate him. He is a very much easier human to be with than Master is.

"...You still look terrible."

We look at each other some more.

"Well, I'm really, really hungry, so I'm going to hazard a wild guess that you're starving." He sighs just like an unhappy dragon would. "Greeeaaat. So not only do I have to go catch breakfast in the middle of a cave maze with almost no supplies, but I somehow have to find enough to feed a billion-ton dragon, too. Fantastic."

I don't even hate his chittering. It's a little bit comforting, like he's saying I'm here I'm here I'm here with the strange warmth of his heart, like he's shining light on me and not abandoning me.

"Whatever. Just hang tight, Squirt, okay? I'll be back as soon as I can."

He walks back toward the water.

But then he doesn't stop.
He keeps going. No! No! No!

"Whoa whoa whoa, what the--?!” He's frightened now and running, I can't see him anymore, where did--?!

"Hey! HEY! SHUT UP!” He's climbing on my face and he has his blade clutched in his paw again and he's still a little frightened but he's angry, too. "SHUT UP! I MEAN IT! DOWN!” He's close to me again, so it's okay now. I lie back down and try to look at him, but he's so close to my eye that I can't focus my vision and it doesn't feel good in my head. "Don't do that again, you hear me?” When I am calm, he calms down, too. He puts his blade away. He climbs back down.

He starts to walk away again.

"Don't leave me!”

"Stop it! STOP IT, dragon, NO! Stay!” He is gesturing violently. He's angry and frightened again. Why? Why, why--?

He is abandoning me, and I must obey. He is leaving forever. I hate it. I want to die. I close my eyes and try to think and feel and be nothing.

O.o.o.o.o

I feel something. It won't stop, and it's making me become awake even though I don't want to be awake.

He's here. My nostrils are full of his scent and I open my eyes and here he is, he came back he came back, he's clinging to my face and kicking my mouth hard enough for me to feel. "Open - your - mouth - stupid - dragon!"

He has fish with him. He's pulling at my mouth like he wants me to open it, so I do, and he unfolds the skin he was holding and dumps fish into my mouth. So few I can barely taste them and I can barely feel them when I swallow, but...but...what? I am confused. He is feeding me? I don't understand. I am very, very confused. It seems wrong and good at the same time. I'm the one who
did something wrong, but I don't know what. He's the one who is good.

Yes. He came back. He doesn't like me but he keeps taking care of me. That does not make sense at all so I won't try to understand it, but I do know that this human...is...a good human. I know now why his other half and his flock are so very devoted to him. I wish I was in his flock too. I would follow him and obey him. But I have to follow and obey Master instead, so I can't.

I hate that. I am sad.

"Yay. Now that that's done...." He siiiighs. "Back to work, huh." He looks out to where the water pools are. "There has got to be an easier way to do this...."

Back and forth, back and forth, nursing my dry broken skin. If he keeps doing this for long enough, I won't die. I think now that is a good thing. Maybe. I think maybe I wish that he would just stay still close to me and let me die with him comforting me. That is what I wish. No one ever comforted me before even though I've always always always wanted it, but now he is and I like it so much I'm happy.

"I like you." Humans are too stupid to understand what other animals say, so I have to tell him in a way he understands, but...he is so small and fragile, I must be very, very gentle so I don't hurt him. I have to think about it before I do it, and then I...I don't draw on my water, I don't try to breathe, I just...it's almost like breathing in, except it's going out instead. Just a tiny bit of frost mist, not even any ice. Surely, surely that won't hurt him?

"Whoa!"

Oh no oh no oh no, I made a mistake, I hurt him when I didn't mean to, I--

"What the...." He scrubs his paws over his fur so that the frost is rubbed away, and he looks at me. He is surprised. "You...?"

His heart is hurting. Why? Why did I cause him pain? I was trying to not hurt him, I don't understand....

"What is that, 'Hello' in Bewilderbeastese? You know, the last guy who did that to me, he died. You're the one who killed him. You killed him and then you...you...."
He leans against me so I can't see him anymore, and I would like the feel of his touch except that he is grieving again and I don't know what to do. I have been making so many mistakes. Humans are so hard to talk to, if I just knew what they wanted then I could give it to them and make them happy so there wouldn't always always always be all this pain...!

"What am I doing?" He is making drops of salt water again. "I've got a freaking war to plan and I'm just, just, playing around down here with this...GAH!"

He's hitting me. I like that I can feel it a little, except I don't like the anger frustration pain grief. If I can't make him happy then I want to sleep again so that I can't hurt his heart anymore and he can't hurt mine. I close my eyes.

I wake up because someone's attacking me-- No? It feels good.... What? I don't understand.

Painful Thing is standing on the ground looking at me again, but he's happy now. Something feels very good. I look over my shoulder and there is water pouring over me, getting sucked up by my dry thirsty skin.

"There we go, perfect."

Water is flowing through the rocks and pouring right on top of me. If I shift around, I can get it to cover all of me. It's slow and difficult, but much much much much faster than the little human dragging tiny splashes of water back and forth.

"Perfect. Perfect." Precious Thing approaches, so I lie very still, and he climbs on me and looks at my skin. "Yeah. Still ugly, but much better than before. Yes, this definitely beats Plan A by a long shot." He stretches out his limbs and makes a louder noise than usual. "Now I am going to take a very hard-earned nap. Hold down the fort, Squirt." He comes to curl up on my face, and he goes to sleep.

"You are very important to me," I say, very carefully so he will stay asleep. He probably doesn't know what I'm telling him, but his tiny body relaxes. I hope he stays here with me forever.

...No. I hope he stays until Master comes back. Then I hope he runs very fast and far and escapes. I'd rather die all alone than my precious thing get hurt.
That nightwing alpha said this human is precious to him, too. And I think some other dragons have things like that. I didn't understand, but now I do. Something is 'precious' when you are very much devoted to it and would do anything anything anything to keep it safe, but because you like it and you want to, not because you're forced to. Yes. I understand now. It makes my heart feel more alive. I feel like I wasn't even a dragon until now, but now I am. I don't know what I was before, but now I am a dragon, and I...

I don't know. My heart feels more alive than I ever thought it could, that's all I know. It's enough.

I think of something. I think the nightwing alpha broke free from me because if he hadn't, his precious human would get hurt. I think he challenged me and stole my flock to keep his human safe, because I did something bad and tried to kill his human. I think he is very, very strong like a sun because he had something precious to protect.

Master protects nothing except Himself. I think that maybe - Master is weak.

If He is weak, why must I follow Him and obey Him even though I don't want to? Why?

I think and think, but there is no answer. I will ask this human when he wakes up, and maybe if I can make him understand my question, then he will know the answer and tell me. I want him to tell me that I was wrong and that he will set me free from Master and let me follow him instead.

New smells. Humans. No--!

Not Master. Thank you thank you thank you, not Master. But who are they?

As they get closer and closer, I learn more and more about them. Five humans, and five dragons. Six males and four females, all young adults. All in the same flock; closely bound together with ties of...it is hard to understand, but they are devoted to each other in confusing complex ways that they're still too far away for me to sense very well. Are they from the nightwing's flock? ...Yes, his. He is one of the dragons. He is furious and anxious with protection-fear/fury, especially now that he's caught the scents of me together with his other half.

...He has come to take my precious thing away from me. No. Nooooo. But I must let him, because this human I treasure already belonged to him and not to me. No, no, no, no, no....
"Don't move!"

The foreign dragons have been agitated and upset the whole time, but now the humans stop moving and flare out shock and fear when they see me. Just like Precious Thing did when he first saw me. They didn't know I was here until they could see me, how amazingly stupid....

"Hide! Quick, before it sees us!"

"Toothless, come here!"

"Give Him back! Give Him BACK! If you hurt Him I will KILL YOU!"

All five dragons are preparing to shoot me, enraged because they think their precious consort is threatened. Precious Thing is very safe from me, but right there on my face, he will get hurt if they shoot me wrong. I must protect him. I lift my head - there is not very much water left in my pouches at all, but there is enough for one shot that can stop them.

...Maybe...maybe if I kill them all...then they can't take Precious Thing away from me, and then I can keep him for myself.

"Mmmn, what--? ! Whoa whoa whoa WHOA, stop, everyone STOP, no, NO, NO!!!"

No, no! Precious Thing woke up and he ran and now he is hanging right in front of my mouth I can't shoot or I will hurt him!!! Stop, climb back up where you'll be safe!

"Toothless, stop! STOP!"

"Why?!?! Why why why do You ALWAYS ALWAYS ALWAYS DO THIS, STUPID STUPID PRECIOUS!"

"Hiccup! Don't look now, but there is a giant Bewilderbeast right behind you."
"Yeah, thanks, Ruff. I kinda figured that out a few days ago."

"Hiccup, what are you doing?!"

"It's all right! Guys, it's all right-- HOOKFANG, down!"

"Hey! Don't order my dragon around!"

"Um, I'm your chief, hello?"

The alpha is pacing and howling frustration protection-terror. He thinks I will hurt this precious human. Stupid.

"Guys, just calm down, no one has to get hurt here, okay? Squirt, down please." There is a tiny bit of pressure on my chin. I look down, trying to see Precious Thing, and he is pleased, so I keep looking down until my head rests on the floor again. "Thank you. Good job, little guy." He looks at his flock and pats his paws on my face. "Guys, this is Squirt. He's a friend."

The alpha has come dashing up and he seizes his consort and starts dragging him away.

"Toothless-- Ah, Toothless, wait, hold on, buddy--! Wait!"

"Go!" the alpha orders, and his other dragons start nudging and tugging at their humans, too, trying to take them away.

My heart is starting to die inside me as my precious thing gets further away. "No...don't leave me."

"YOU don't move or I will kill you!"

"Toothless, stop!" Precious breaks free from his dragon half and takes up a stance between us, one foreleg stretched toward me and the other stretched toward his flock. He can't talk very well, but I know he doesn't want either of us to hurt each other - his body is so frail and tiny, but somehow he is shielding us from each other anyway.
This must be how he was able to be a queen. His body is almost insignificant, but there is somehow enough strength in him somewhere to be able to lead and hold onto and protect a whole dragon flock until he was ready to give them away willingly. "Squirt - is - a - friend. I've been hanging out with him for days and he's been completely docile almost the entire time, okay? This guy is...he is not our enemy."

"...You are confusing/amazing." The alpha steps close and nuzzles his other half, sad and frustrated and resigned, but with something else too; I don't know what it is but it's good. Even though he's upset, he somehow also feels happy as he caresses his other half and licks him. He says a strange word I don't understand. "Love love love, that's all You do, even when it's stupid and dangerous. You even love horrible bad things that You shouldn't, but then it's okay after all and I don't understand how You do it, I love You...."

"Pffft, Squirt?"

"You named a Class 10 Leviathan Squirt?"

"Yeah. Like how he squirts ice at stuff, duh."

"You're such an idiot, Tuffnut...."

"First 'Toothless,' and now 'Squirt.' Hiccup, you are not allowed to name new dragons ever again. At least, none that I care about."

"Hey, it's irony! And he's...less scary when he has a silly name...." Precious Thing comes close and pats his paws on my face again. I wish I could feel it, but he's too gentle. "But he doesn't bother me anymore. Even if his name was Freezing Killer Ice, The Dragon or something."

"Cool, Freezing Killer Ice, The Dragon! Let's call him that instead."

"Um, no."

"Wowww, Hiccup, you really can train any dragon, can't you...."
"Duh. Didn't we tell you? 'Hello, nice dragon. You can be my friend~ My leg fell off! All of the dragons are my friends.'"

"Does that ever get old for you guys?"

"Heh, nope."

"Come on, let's get out of here." Precious Thing looks back up at me. "Hey. You'll be fine now, all right? I got your shower all set up, we can try to cache some fish for you, then when you're ready you can go...do...whatever you...."

The humans are uneasy now.

"So, what, we're just gonna let Drago keep using your new pet to attack Berk whenever he feels like it?"

"...I don't even know...if Drago still wants him or not; he hasn't been here in days...it's like he just left him here to die or something...."

"You're going to trust the safety of Berk to wishful thinking?"

"No!" Precious Thing is looking at me, feeling distress. I want to make him happy again. I want him to give me orders I understand so that I can do whatever he wants me to do. "What am I supposed to do with you, little guy...?"

"You think he'd come with us?"

"Maybe. He's not as dead-looking as he was when I found him, maybe if I can get him to follow us...."

They are leaving. The foreign flock is going away and they are leaving me behind, no, no, no, my heart is empty, he should have just left me to die but now I will have to stay alive being alone and
feeling all this misery misery misery....

"Ssshh, ssshh, Squirt, it's okay! Hey! I'm not leaving you behind again, okay? Come on, come with us, follow us out where we can get to the sky and the sea, okay?"

"Again?"

"Yeah, he...kind of freaked out like this the other day, when I left him to find food."

"Heh. He really does like you, doesn't he."

"I hope so...makes things sooooo much easier in a crisis...."

Precious Thing is waving his forelegs at me. I don't understand and I don't care. My heart is dying.

"Come, Stupid," the alpha tells me angrily. "Half Of Me is telling you to follow us."

"...What?"

"That's how humans say 'follow me,'" the blue two-legged dragon explains.

"I think he wants you to come home with us to our nest and join our flock, because he likes when foreign dragons are not foreign anymore," says the rock-eater. "Alpha won't refuse him because Alpha always does whatever Consort wants."

"Stupid loves-too-much plays-with-danger Half Of Me...."

...They want me...to leave this place...and follow them. But...Master told me to stay here. If I do what the foreigners want, I will disobey my master. I can't...disobey Him. If I do...He...He....

...I don't care if Master gets Very Angry, as long as Precious Thing is safe. As long as he is...happy.
If I follow him...he will be happy.

Two forces are pulling at my heart. It hurts.

Master...Master...so powerful and so dark, I must...I feel like I must...obey Him. But my precious human...I want to obey him, but I can't without disobeying Master...but...but I...want....

Something must break. Either my devotion or my heart. Both of them will hurt, I will certainly be hurt. But I....

"Come on, Squirt." He's so close, but so gentle I can't feel him and almost can't see him; it's his scent and his gentle mind that are reaching for me, calming me, asking me. Asking me so sweetly. Not even ordering. Just asking. Please order me, force me, tear me away from the darkness.... "Come on, little guy, it's okay. Can you get up?"

"I don't think this is working, Hiccup."

"Come on, Squirt. Just a little way to go and you'll be back in the ocean where you belong, right?"

Lost, alone, frightened. I...if I break away from Master, I will be...I don't know what I will be, I will be adrift, and it's frightening. ...But I think it is better to be frightened and adrift trying to follow this precious human, instead of staying secure in the familiar darkness.

It is hard to stand up on my paws. My legs hurt and are so weak, and these caves are small, it is hard to move. But Precious Thing will leave, and if I am to follow, I must stand up and walk, no matter how hard it is.

"That's it, that's right, excellent! Come on, Squirt, this way."
I am...following. I am...leaving the darkness...leaving my master...behind.

...Not Master. Not anymore. I...break...every strand that binds me to Him, every.... My heart hurts, it 
hurts, but I keep going. I am so light, fragile, I will float away and become nothing if these foreigners 
can't hold onto me, but it's okay. It is better to be nothing than to be Master's-- than to be...than to 
belong to that human who has rotted on the inside, that human bound by darkness so much more 
tightly than I was, that raging, terrified, despairing, hurting, grieving, weak human. He can stay in the 
darkness if He-- if he wants to. I won't stay. I am leaving. I am going to where...there is light.
And...and what the alpha called 'love.' And this thing that I think is called 'kindness.'

I must ask the foreign dragons who soon might not be foreign anymore. "How do I bind myself to 
this human, your consort? How do I make Him my master?" That rotted human was always always 
always my master. Now that he's not anymore, I don't know how to make a new master.

"No 'master,' Stupid! Ugly rotten thing you learned from your horrible rotten human!"

"What? What?"

"Consort is Consort. Alpha is Alpha. Pledge to Alpha, easy."

"Duh."

I don't understand.

"Alpha Consort Friend Companion Partner Beloved Queen Leader Flock-mate. Like that."

Too many new concepts these dragons are trying to explain to me, too many things I don't 
understand, it is overwhelming and frustrating.

"Maybe this sea-king is crazy, he doesn't even know how to be a dragon...."

To be continued....
**Author's Notes:** I do have plans for a second half of this story, but I have no idea when I'll have a chance to write it. Hopefully soon. (...But that's what I'd thought about *He's Not Dangerous*, too. *sweatdrop* Still, this story is way easier to work on than Slyfoot's version of HND is.)

Had to move my computer into a different room again in order to write this. ^^; (Most of it. Had to move it back after a while and finish up while crouching with no chair again.) I've been writing sooo much lately, one story in my home notebook and another story in my work notebook and nursing a bunch of other plot bunnies I haven't had time to write yet, and then this one wrote itself in my head while I was at work, so I wanted to capture it while it was still fresh and the timing happened to be good (Friday night, with the whole weekend stretching out in front of me). I'm still stuck cleaning my nightmare room, though.... Ugh; it's such a mess I can barely turn around in it.

According to the official HTTYD Web site, Drago found his Bewilderbeast as a hatchling and raised him, which is probably why he's able to control him so much. (Am I going to eventually be writing a fic about that? Most likely yes. XD)

I chose the name Squirt both for the definition ("cause a liquid to be ejected in a thin, fast stream or jet") and for the irony of how it's used as a nickname (sometimes derogatory but occasionally affectionate) for someone smaller than you. :p

I could have sworn I read somewhere that Bewilderbeasts keep water in internal pouches or sacs, which they then freeze as they shoot so that the water turns to ice on impact - but now I can't find the Web site. *sweatdrop* Whatever.

There are several references to the "Free Scauldy" episode of the TV show. ^^;

The English word "master" is more nuanced and can have both positive and negative connotations; but the made-up dragon word Squirt is using that I've translated as "master" is completely negative. I mentally wrote, but have not yet had time to actually write, a story where that was explained a bit better; sorry that I wasn't able to write/post that fic before I wrote/posted this one. ^^;:

Half the dragons whose perspectives I write don't sound like I expected them to! XD XD After how human-sounding the Good Alpha turned out, I was expecting his dark counterpart to be the same, but poor Squirt had such an atypical upbringing that he ended up sounding similar to the other dragons I've written. ^^;
The seawater feels so good bathing my flesh, I almost forget I am supposed to be following. I swim and roll, and I swallow food that is close to my mouth and it's so good to fill my stomach. I didn't know how hungry I was until how.

Then I remember - foreigners, a little human I have given my heart to, I forgot about them, they have left me behind, I must surface again and look for them--!

They are still here. They are circling in the sky above me, and the humans are relieved to see me.

"There, see? I told you he hadn't run off."

"Did you see his mouth? It's huuuuuge! Heheh, I bet he could eat, like, a million Ruffnuts at once."

"Or a billion Tuffnuts."
"Yeah, a billion!"

"No one is eating anybody. Let's just stay focused and get home...."

We travel south into warmer waters. I don’t like the heat, but I do like the gentleness of the sunlight. Most of the creatures we pass try to stay far away from me, but then as I sense the dragons' moods brightening, hear them singing to each other *home home home is close*, three young bellowers swim close and circle around me curiously.

"It's a big thing!"

"A very big thing!"

"Hey Very Big Interesting Thing, what are you doing here?"

"I am following my human," I tell them.

They are excited and amused and very interested. "A dragon with a human! A dragon with a human! This is the only only only island where dragons love humans, and now the dragonlove humans have caught a very big interesting thing for their flock~!" They are laughing and happy.

"You know these humans?" I can tell these bellowers are not in the alpha nightwing's flock, so I don't understand.

"Very fun interesting humans~"

"Their queen is a little human, it's very funny and cute!"

"Except he's not queen anymore, now he's consort and his nightwing half is alpha. We found out when we went to visit our friend-flock."

"Isn't that funny? Isn't that very funny and interesting, that a dragon has a half who's a human?"
Is it supposed to be a strange thing? "I am glad that I follow a human who loves a dragon enough to be half of Himself."

"Everyone is~"

"That’s why we love to visit our friend-flock, to watch the fun not-monster humans and then tell other flocks and surprise them."

These bellowers are so happy, I like talking to them. But they are very energetic too, and soon they swim away again.

"Ooh! Oooh ooh ooh, I see them, I see them!"

"See who?"

"Bing and Bam and Lloyd, loooook!"

"Oh, wow, it really is them."

"HI LLOYD! YOU’LL ALWAYS BE MY FAVORITE~!"

"Heh, they must have just come from visiting Berk again. Hope they didn't give Skullcrusher too hard a time...."

I have been to this island before. Last time, I came because the human who was my master told me to crush it with ice and take its dragons to be our own, but I know right away that my new human does not want me to do this. This is their nest, their home that makes them so happy as most of them rush ahead to greet the fireskin guardian who approaches us.

The fireskin recognizes me and is alarmed. "That sea-king! That monster sea-king is coming back?!"
"It's okay, it's okay! He's not a monster anymore, he gave his heart to Consort, it's okay."

"Amazing crazy Half Of Me can even capture a monster sea-king's love," the alpha pouts.

"Odin's flaming undies, HICCUP--!"

"It's okay, Gustav, it's okay, don't shoot! I trained him, it's fine!"

"What?!"

"He really did train him."

"Yeah, it was awesome."

"Cooool!"

The guardian is still wary, but the young male human on his back is excited, and the fireskin trusts his alpha's troop and his partner.

When we get closer to the nest, it's my old master's former flocklings who recognize me first. They shriek in terror and fury, and many of them dive at me to drive me away. I shouldn't hurt them, because they belong to Precious Thing’s other half now. I sink down underwater so they can't reach me and hurt me.

To be continued....

Author's Notes: One of the problems I was having with writing the next chapter of A Small Addition To Berk's Flock is that the scenes that take place on Berk apparently need to be written in third person POV. Unfortunately, I didn't realize that 'til I was 700 words in and had procrastinated for five-and-a-half months. ^^; If/when I ever get around to editing this fic, "Part 1.5" is going to get merged into Part 1, so that all of Squirt's perspective can stay together; but for now, I'm tacking 1.5 onto the beginning of Part 2 so that you guys won't miss the new material.
Hiccup was at first startled to find that none of the dragons were listening to him. Then he looked more closely and realized that nearly all the frantic dragons trying to attack Squirt were rescues from Drago or holdovers from the fallen king's flock. They had barely known Hiccup for a week and had less reason to trust him than the dragons he had inherited from the Red Death, or the dragons he had personally befriended in the past five years.

It took more than one roared order from Toothless, their alpha, to bring them to heel. They settled thickly over the shoreline, still upset and growling as they fixed their attention on the water. "It's okay, guys," Hiccup murmured.

Vikings were crowding around the docks and cliffsides as well, calling to Hiccup in a mixture of relieved greeting at his return and worried confusion. Berk's more established dragon residents weren't as agitated as the newcomers were by the Bewilderbeast's underwater presence, but they were still milling uneasily and exhibiting protective behavior toward their humans.

"All right, all right, everyone, listen up." Hiccup landed on the dragon racing dais because it was a good place to make an announcement. He tried hard to ignore the slight sickness he felt every time he stood in this place that was supposed to belong to his father. "There's something you all need to know."

His people crowded closer, some of them urging their dragons to give them lifts up to the stands. He saw his mother and Cloudjumper settling on a roof, somewhat removed from the other humans, and he sensed Astrid and Stormfly stepping up close behind him. He was grateful for their support, and kept a hand resting on his own dragon. Toothless, sensing his apprehension, pressed closer.

"So. Um." You're a chieftain now; sound like one," he lectured himself bitterly. He tried to pump more self-assurance and authority into his tone as he continued. "I apologize for my absence, I never intended to be gone for so long. As you can see, all of us are back in one piece, and there's not really any news as far as the war goes. Of course I'll let you know as soon as plans for our next move are finalized."

"When are you gonna tell 'em about the Bewilderbeast?" Ruffnut called from the stands.

Hiccup closed his eyes and resisted the urge to facepalm as a ripple of alarm went through the
Vikings. "Okay, SO," he snapped, glaring at the grinning blonde, "what I called you all over to tell you is that it looks like we have...er, a small addition to our flock." He tried not to sigh as the inevitable reaction started swelling.

"Small addi--?"

"He can't mean the Bewilderbeast?!!"

"It's Hiccup, of course it's always Hiccup, I told you he'd destroy the village one of these days!"

"He can't be serious!"

"Isn't that the thing that killed--?!"

There was a heavy thump to announce Cloudjumper's arrival on the dais. Valka stormed over to Hiccup, who drew himself up as tall as he could and steeled his expression to meet her.

He barely processed the mix of emotion that briefly rushed through him: automatic bracing for a fight with a stubborn parent, a jolt of grief and unease remembering that it was a different parent, uncertainty because Stoick had been a very old and familiar opponent but Valka was new and frighteningly unknown, anger and frustration that she was challenging him, dismay and sadness at having to oppose someone he wanted so badly to love, irrational panic that maybe somehow he was in the wrong, more frustration and anger from so often being doubted and resisted....

Their dragons reflected them. Cloudjumper, incited by his other half's horrified anger, initially approached growling with bared fangs as if ready to back up his human in a fight. Toothless, growling close-mouthed, held both his ground and his composure, flaring his wings behind Hiccup and standing tall to assert his authority. He remained for the moment in an unaggressive warning stance, as if confident that his rank alone was enough to intimidate his flockling.

After a moment, Cloudjumper whined and ceded, altering his stance to indicate that he withdrew his challenge and would act only to physically defend his other half. Toothless relaxed marginally in response and concentrated more of his attention on Valka and Hiccup.

The two humans had been engaged in their own standoff. "You brought him here?" Valka said tightly.
"I found him alone, and I've been working with him. He's not--"

"The dragons won't tolerate his presence after what they've suffered!"

"I know what I'm doing." Hiccup's voice was very quiet as he struggled to stay calm.

"This from someone who thought Drago Bludvist could be reasoned with--!

Hiccup's hand on Toothless gripped hard in a sudden reflex. Sensing his pain, the Night Fury flung out his wings wide and bellowed at Valka.

She automatically dropped into a submissive stance, coming a little to her senses as she did so. She was angry at herself for forgetting, for letting these past days of upheaval and distress and proximity to humans almost make her forget how to be a good dragon.

Toothless and Hiccup ruled this flock together. Their word was law, their judgment to be trusted. Of course she loved her offspring, some corners of her heart would always be human; but she had long ago given up her right to direct him, and she was subordinate to him now.

Her palm slid up over Cloudjumper's scales for comfort and reassurance as she rose back to her feet. She felt calmer and steadier now, remembering her dragon heart and her human legacy and her role in this frightening beautiful hybrid flock.

She remembered at the last minute to call her alpha by his human name when she addressed him. "Forgive me, Hiccup." She realized with a pang how much she must have hurt him. "...Why did you bring him here?" she asked more respectfully. 'You can't have forgotten what he's done. So much pain and destruction he caused, yet you brought him here to this nest you are sworn to protect!"

Hiccup drew in a breath. "Good dragons under the control of--" Valka abruptly looked away, and Hiccup knew he didn't need to finish. His point was already made. He turned back to the rest of the village, half of whom were preoccupied with arguments amongst themselves. "Any other interruptions before I get back to my explanation?" he called out sardonically. "Let's get it over with. Anyone? Snotlout?"
"Me?" The burly young man blinked in surprise at being called on, then his face lit up in excitement. "Oh, oh, hey! So, yeah, since you suck at naming dragons, and I'm the only one who calls the Screaming Death by her real name, I say we change the Bewilderwhatsit's name to Snotbeast!" He proudly crossed his arms.

'Screaming Death?' Valka mouthed incredulously.

'Snotbeast?' Eret mouthed incredulously.

Hiccup's tone, from long practice with this sort of thing, was firm and even. "We are not calling him Snotbeast."

"Well, fine, if you like 'Bewilderlout' better, but obviously--"

Astrid gave Snotlout a withering look. "Even Snowflake prefers 'Snowflake' to 'Snotscream.'"

"We tested it once," Fishlegs added helpfully. "She only answers to 'Snowflake' now."

"What?! ...Well, that's just because she's a girl," Snotlout pouted. "She's got horrible taste."

Toothless cocked his head when Hiccup stopped clutching him. The chief propped his chin on his hand in a patiently bored pose instead.

"We took a vote and decided," Tuffnut announced, "and be 'we,' I mean me and Ruffnut. The Bewilderbeast's new not-lame name is: Jared The Freezing Killer Ice Dragon!"

"You moron," Ruffnut objected, "it was Spike The Freezing Killer Ice Dragon." The twins nearly fell off the stands during their subsequent fistfight, rescued at the last minute by their longsuffering dragon.

"You Berkians are crazy," Eret muttered under his breath.

"Anyone else?" Hiccup went on, more relaxed now that it was just the usual nonsense he was
dealing with. "How about you, Mildew?"

"I'm done complaining," the old man huffed. "If you haven't managed to destroy the village after five years, I've got better things to do than keep holding my breath for it."

Hiccup stared, pleasantly at a loss for a minute. "Uh...um, okay. Uh...thanks." He ran a hand through his hair. "So, um - yes. I brought home the Bewilderbeast." There was a scattered renewal of protest. "He's not Drago's anymore, and he won't hurt--" The rest of it was drowned out.

"Seriously?" Astrid spoke up, her tone cutting much more easily through the raised human voices. "Has there ever been a dragon that Hiccup couldn't train?"

There was an uncertain hush as most of the villagers reluctantly acknowledged that she was right.

"I assume you're talking about a mutated Whispering Death," Valka murmured. "You trained one, Hiccup?"

Eret's eyes widened, and he was only half-successful at hiding his admiration.

Hiccup smiled distractedly at Valka. "I'll introduce you the next time she stops by."

People were still babbling about the Bewilderbeast, a lot of them upset but some of them starting to wonder where it was.

Astrid frowned. "Where is Squirt, anyway? He didn't swim off during all this, did he?"

"I'm pretty sure he's still there," Fishlegs said, pointing. Most of the agitated dragons were still focused on the water where clusters of large bubbles were slowly rising.

"Come on out, Jared!" Tuffnut yelled.

"It's Spike!"
"Obviously it's Snotbeast."

"Okay, okay, dragon race! Winner gets the name!"

Ignoring the twins taking off on their Zizzleback and Snotlout yelling at his Nightmare when Hookfang refused to move, Hiccup swung into the saddle and headed for cliff that was closest to where Squirt presumably was. "Squirt," he called. "Squirt!"

There was no response, since Squirt had fallen into a doze and couldn't hear him.

"Squirt! Come on out, little guy."

The dragons standing guard shifted uneasily, picking up on the fact that their flock consort was summoning a dreaded enemy closer.

"Half Of Me knows what He's doing," Toothless told them, not that it helped their anxiety much.

"SQUIRT!"

"Maybe," Fishlegs suggested cautiously, "he's been trained to respond to...you know. A different kind of call."

Hiccup paused, figuring out what this meant. Then he shook his head violently. "No. No. Absolutely not."

Astrid pressed a hand to her mouth to hide her amusement. Drago, with his heavyset build and deep voice, had been able to pull off waving his weapon and screaming like a madman. Hiccup would look ridiculous if he tried the same thing.

"Squiiiiiiirt!" Hiccup begged, wincing at the same mental image of himself that the others were picturing.
Toothless tried to help by bellowing out a command. Squirt was half-roused from his sleep, but he did not belong to this nightwing and did not want to surface amidst a flock of angry dragons who hated him, so he stayed right where he was and tuned out the noise.

Some of the Vikings had actually gotten bored and started to wander away by the time Hiccup ran out of ideas for getting Squirt out of the water. He groaned, pulled out Inferno, ignited it, then started waving it in the air while making noises that were as close to forceful bellowing as he could get.

People almost had time to laugh. They all forgot to when the Bewilderbeast's gigantic form came rising out of the sea, water cascading down his dark hide and massive spikes.

To be continued....

Author's Notes: I know this chapter wasn't as good as the previous one. Probably none of them will be; sorry.

Snowflake the Screaming Death is in my story When Loved Ones Are Near. If you're on AO3 or FFN, you can find it in the "Proper Appreciation (and other stories)" series.

Part 3 is already written, but I can't make any promises about quick updates after that. There are so many things I need to do, both in real life and fandom. (Tali & Medli, I definitely need to review your stuff, aaaahhhh, I'll make it a goal for this weekend...! 8D)
Squirt awakened in a panic when he heard the familiar summoning cries. 'Must get up, must follow, must obey, must--!' It was as he was rising out of the water that he remembered. 'Master is not my master anymore. I do not belong to him anymore; now I belong to Him instead, to that much smaller wonderful kind precious human. I am very very so much glad.' Squirt anxiously climbed up the side of the island until he found his human and was reassured that Precious Thing wasn't angry. Squirt waited for orders.

Vikings and dragons alike stared up at the massive creature in fear. Toothless bristled and growled an obligatory warning, but was otherwise calm as he allowed his consort to handle the situation.

Hiccup, forgetting everything else, approached Squirt and reached out toward him as the great sea dragon lowered his head. "Hey," Hiccup said softly, happy to see Squirt but still feeling sick. The embarrassment was nothing compared to the awful memories from the last time this Bewilderbeast had been summoned in such a way. "...Yeah, I am never calling you like that again."

The young Viking was now very, very glad that he had befriended Snowflake and become familiar with her mannerisms. Massive dragons like her and Squirt sometimes had a difficult time distinguishing the subtler and fainter scents of creatures as small as humans, so taste was more helpful to them for that purpose instead.

Hiccup hesitated on Squirt's lip, then took a deep breath and slipped into the giant dragon's mouth. 'Don't eat me. Please, please don't eat me,' he couldn't help thinking.

Squirt was just as gentle and careful 'reading' him as Snowflake always was. The Bewilderbeast held Hiccup on his tongue long enough to sort through all the scent-information Hiccup was offering, emotions and environment and history and whatever else dragons were able to pick up from scent and taste. Then, before the digestive fluids could start causing damage, Squirt opened his mouth and rumbled, exhaling a gust of heavy, humid air.
Hiccup winced good-naturedly at the stench and then floundered toward Squirt's ridge of teeth so he could crawl back out. "Squirt," he called, "down." He kicked the dragon's lower lip and pointed downward in hopes that Squirt would understand.

Squirt lowered his head. When Hiccup was close enough to the water to be able to safely fall into it, he paused to prepare himself for the icy shock, then let go and dove down into the sea. He soon surfaced, gasping and shivering, and scrubbed at his hair. "Cold cold cold cold cold cold cold...." He'd definitely need a proper bath later, but rinsing off in the ocean was better than having to walk around for a while covered with a thick layer of dragon saliva and an overpowering smell of dragonsbreath.

Hiccup grinned when he saw Toothless swimming toward him. "H-Hey, y-you," he greeted through chattering teeth.

"Come here come here come HERE, bad gross mine not his, MINE...!" Toothless seized Hiccup in his mouth and towed him to shore, where he ignored all of his human's protests and refused to let him go until he'd given Hiccup a thorough washing of his own. It was standard practice every time his human decided to play the horrible 'Let's see if this giant dragon will accidentally swallow me or will spit me out in time' game and consequently needed some of his most important scents restored.

"Nooooo, the whole point is to not smell like dragon spit, argh, Toothless, stop, ew ew ew...!"

While the chief was otherwise occupied, some of the braver Vikings were oohing and aahing over Squirt. Squirt's own attention was distracted away from his precious thing when he sensed Valka's intensity as she approached him.

"I am Alpha-Human's mother, this fourwing is my other half," she introduced herself, using a made-up compound word for 'mother' to convey the meaning of a concept that was more human than dragon. "You killed my alpha-who-was that I love, you destroyed my nest-that-was and captured my flockmates. You killed my mate that I love. You attacked my new nest and my 'son' that I love."

"You are grieving and angry and frightened," Squirt acknowledged meekly.

"...Son trusts you."

"I adore Him. I belong to Him now. He is my new not-master."
Valka stared. The way he had referred to Hiccup indicated that the Viking was Squirt's most treasured person; it was very similar to the way Toothless referred to Hiccup. This Bewilderbeast's devotion to the young chief was profound. In the face of such overwhelming realization that Squirt had given himself to this flock's alpha human and would do no harm to anything Hiccup cared about, Valka could no longer bring herself to be hostile toward him. "...Oh."

She had already known deep down that Drago was more responsible than Squirt was for the suffering of her beloved flock and her human family, and she could no longer deny that knowledge. This dragon was not her enemy.

"You're soothed now?" Cloudjumper asked anxiously.

"Yes," she purred, rubbing her face against his. "Yes, yes, yes. There is still grief, but anger is gone."

Cloudjumper purred back, relieved.

Valka looked back up at Squirt. "Son is not a 'master.' He doesn't value your fear."

"What do I call Him...? What do I call Him, this one who owns me but loves me...?"

Valka was surprised that it wasn't obvious. "Pledge yourself to his other half the alpha. Then Son will be your flock consort."

She was surprised again when Squirt growled, a sound so ominous that most of the humans, who of course couldn't follow the conversation, withdrew in alarm. "No!"

"No?! No?! Why no?!?" Valka wondered in astonishment.

"I belong to Precious Thing only, Him ONLY!"

On the shore below, Hiccup was completely soaked with seawater and Night Fury saliva. He kicked free of Toothless's relaxed grip and pouted when the dragon chortled at him.
Eret was grinning as he leaned down to grasp Hiccup's arm and haul him to his feet. "It's crazy how much you remind me of Drago sometimes," he said, handing over some dry clothes.

"Excuse me?"

The ex-trapper lifted his hands in self-defense. "I mean that extreme, hands-on approach you both have. Granted, he'd be stepping on the necks of beasts many times his size, whereas you go climbing right into their jaws, but you both...dare to try the impossible, and somehow you always get away with it."

"...I'm gonna...try to take that as a compliment," Hiccup said grudgingly.

"It was meant as one."

Hiccup slipped into his downstairs 'office' in the forge long enough to strip off his wet clothes and put on the dry ones. When he came back out again, he found Eret watching Squirt, who was talking to Valka and absently cringing away from the few Vikings and dragons brave enough to investigate him.

"He even looks different under your command," Eret said softly. "Back then, it never occurred to me to see that thing as anything other than a monster, but now that you've tamed him...how do you do it? I don't even-- How?"

That was when Squirt growled, and Eret flinched in response.

Hiccup made his way over to the Bewilderbeast, with Toothless close beside him. "Are you making him mad, Mom?" Hiccup asked, his tone teasing even though it was a real question.

"It's almost like he...doesn't understand how dragon society works," she said in bewilderment. "He wants to pledge to you, but only you."

Hiccup tried to process this through the very surprising knowledge that he had only very recently learned, thanks to Valka's translations. "He... So if I'm the dragon...'consort,' or whatever...." He gave up. "I don't understand, either."
"Toothless is alpha of our dragons, you are alpha of our humans, and you are each other's consorts. Squirt is a dragon who has given his heart to you. His political allegiance belongs first to Toothless, and his loyalty belongs first to you that he loves." She said it all impatiently, as if it was common knowledge she was trying to rush through in order to get to the real problem. "His bond with you has already attached him to this flock - but he refuses to submit to Toothless, your brother-alpha! It...it simply can't be done."

"Why not?" Valka gave him an exasperated look, so Hiccup tried to clarify. "We've got plenty of, I don't know what to call them, 'guest dragons' who aren't part of our flock, but come by to visit a lot. Snowflake and her family, Torch, the Thunderdrum triplets, Scauldy.... Why can't Squirt be the same?"

"Because he loves you so deeply that he will not part from you, and would do anything for you."

"Uhh--"

"He would do anything for you. Only Toothless loves you more. Don't you understand, Hiccup? Toothless is half of yourself. Squirt can't pledge himself to only half of an alpha!" Then, seeing Hiccup's conflicted expression, "Stop thinking like a human!!"

Meanwhile, Squirt was looking warily at Eret, who had crouched equally warily on the cliffside to stare at him. After a while, the man slowly reached out a hand. After another while, Squirt leaned closer and opened his mouth.

Eret let out a whimper, but was able to make himself hold still. He experienced a mix of disgust and relief when Squirt massively licked him rather than 'eating' him as he had Hiccup.

"Hello," Eret muttered.

Squirt vaguely recognized the man as one of his former master's human flocklings, but wasn't sure why the little creature seemed so desperately determined to greet him.

"So...Squirt, is it?"

"...."
"...Right. Um...." Eret gave a shaky smile and gestured. "Fellow refugees and all.... That Hiccup is really something. ...Except when it comes to naming dragons."

Squir...
"flock."

"I don't care about this flock. Only Precious Thing."

"Half Of Me is CONSORT/BROTHER-ALPHA to this flock, Stupid!!!"

"Then I will pledge to Precious Thing. Not you."

Toothless roared and started to pace, his frustration echoing Valka's. Valka herself had turned away from Hiccup in order to follow the dragons' conversation. "If you belong to HIM, then you also belong to ME!"

"Him only," Squirt growled, his mane of spikes starting to rise in anger. "Not you."

"Mom, what are they saying?" Hiccup asked urgently.

"The exact same thing we were just talking about. You'll see. Toothless cannot permit such an anomaly, especially when it involves a Bewilderbeast. It's not safe for his flock."

Toothless snarled at the Bewilderbeast again and mock-charged in warning. Squirt lowered his head stubbornly, on the defensive but fully prepared to fight.

Of course Hiccup hurried between them. "Guys, stop--!"

Toothless gave a wail of utter exasperation and flopped to the ground in a rather un-dragonlike way. “Always, always, always, always...!”

Hiccup, who'd initially taken a sideways stance with his arms outstretched between the dragons, now stepped closer to the edge, bringing all his focus to the Bewilderbeast. "Hey, Squirt," he said soothingly, "calm down, little guy, okay?"

Squirt's mane lowered and his pupils dilated slightly. He made a happy rumbling noise, leaning forward to touch his flat nose to Hiccup.
"Whoa." Hiccup grinned as he grabbed one of the smaller spikes to steady himself. "There, see? Nothing to get all worked up about."

"Fix this with Your Half Of Me craziness," Toothless pouted, shifting from a sprawl to an offended, catlike crouch as he watched Hiccup and Squirt with narrowed eyes.


"Is that a purr? Haha, you are purring, you gigantic softie." Hiccup climbed up the sea dragon's face and experimentally scratched Inferno's unignited blade along the backs of Squirt's eye ridges. Squirt apparently loved it as much as Snowflake did; he purred harder and sank down in contentment to relish the sensation. "Yeah, I figured you'd like that, Mr. Titan Class. Leviathan Class, whatever."

To be continued....

Author's Notes: I like the 'massive dragons can read humans better through taste than smell' idea, but it might contradict some bits of A Small Addition To Berk's Flock Part 1. *sweatdrop* Not sure what to do about that yet.

*deletes lengthy headcanon ramble* What I really just wanted to say is that Fishlegs & Meatlug are 'companions' in dragon society. Dragons typically name their Important People with the relationship type (Tooth's most common name for Hiccup is "Half Of Me," Stormfly's most common name for Astrid is "Companion," etc.), but there are occasional exceptions. In this case, Meatlug thinks that her companion is so freaking adorable that her most common name for him is "Adorable." XD

I got Part 4 finished, so, again, the next update will be no later than a week from now. (After that, though, I might try to return to other stories such as His Soul Reflects My Own: Freedom. ...Even though I was re-reading Freedom the other day, trying to get back in gear to draft more of it, and I was dismayed to realize how much it sucks. DX DX DX Definitely, definitely needs a ton of editing.... ;)

This fic might be longer than I expected; the entire next chapter only took up one bullet point of my outline. XD

I added a second kiriban offer on FFN, because you guys are amazing and made "The Dragon Queen of Berk" my most-Faved fic on that site. :) (And "He's Not Dangerous" second. X3 I have literally been waiting years for that particular stats goal, and none of my
Kingdom Hearts fics were popular enough to make it, so I'm really happy that you guys like my HTTYD stories so much~) If you have a FanfictionDotNet account and would like to claim one of the kiriban, let me know what you'd like me to write for you! (...I'm lame and there's some stuff I can't write [for example, I'm terrible at romance...], but just ask for what you want and we'll figure something out.)
As far as Hiccup was concerned, the most urgent matter to attend to was teaching Squirt to come when Hiccup called him like a normal person, and not a crazy bloodthirsty murderer.

However, he needed his dragon's help for this, and Toothless was refusing to cooperate.

Hiccup had automatically headed for Toothless so he could fly over to a distant ridge, and was surprised when the Night Fury growled at him and bunched his wings over the saddle. "Toothless, come on, we need to--"

Toothless danced out of reach.

"Toothless!" Hiccup tried to close the distance between them. Toothless dropped to the ground again and sprawled on his back, giving his human a defiant look.

Hiccup frowned and put his hands on his hips. "How am I supposed to ride when you won't let me on the saddle?" he asked mock-sternly.

Toothless taunted him, wriggling on his back like a cat scratching an itch.

"Toothlessss!" Hiccup pounced, jumping on the dragon as if trying to pin him.

Toothless simply rolled over, trapping him under a foreleg. For good measure, the dragon leaned down with his teeth retracted and bit Hiccup on the nice chunk of flesh between neck and shoulder. He held Hiccup down like that for a while in an attempt to subdue him. Hiccup didn't bother to struggle, but there was still a challenge in his eyes and his small smile as he lay quietly, his head twisted so he could hold Toothless's gaze. "I can do this aaaaallll day," he murmured. "Wake me when you're done." He closed his eyes.
Toothless grumbled in frustration at his other half's un-dragonlike refusal to either submit or resist. It was unsettling enough that Toothless couldn't keep it up for too long, and he finally let go so he could nose at Hiccup and make sure his human really was just pretending to nap.

Hiccup squirmed partway out of the dragon's hold and set his hands on either side of Toothless's face, holding it close and staring earnestly into his eyes. "Behave~" Hiccup sing-songed. "We need to fly. Let me in the saddle, okay, bud?"

Toothless chuffed and poked his nose sharply into Hiccup's chest.

"Ow!"

"Submit to me~ Submit to me~" Toothless replied in the dragon equivalent of sing-song, knowing already that he was going to be disobeyed. He kept pushing at Hiccup with his nose, hard enough to indicate that he wanted the human on the ground, but gently enough to allow Hiccup to fight back. Hiccup pushed the dragon's head first one way and then the other, as if trying to shove him off.

Valka watched the exchange with a little frown. She wasn't used to seeing such a friendly, half-playful, yet still genuine struggle for dominance.

Hiccup pounced again, grabbing Toothless around the neck so that he could haul himself upright and attempt to pin the dragon down in the process. Toothless rolled his eyes back to look at him and gave a dragon chuckle.

"Oh yeah? Oh yeah?" Hiccup shifted his grip, trying to force Toothless down. Then he yelped when Toothless raised his head instead, lifting Hiccup's feet clear off the ground. "Hey!"

He swung to the side and awkwardly slid down the dragon's shoulder. Toothless snapped at him in good-natured warning, then gave a bark of surprise when Hiccup dove down under him. Toothless lifted a forepaw and ducked his head to look for his human. Hiccup reached out to do the finger-wave he'd asked Valka to teach him, and Toothless immediately collapsed sideways in response. "Heh. I win."

Hiccup lay half on top the dragon and tucked his head under Toothless's chin, idly stroking the black scaly neck as he waited for Toothless to wake up. In this particular position, his beating heart was resting right against his dragon's. He never had the heart to really take advantage of his friend whenever Toothless turned into a helpless pile of jelly like this, and he vaguely wanted to see his
dragon awake and alert again.

Even after Toothless regained full consciousness, he didn't move for a while. He looked at his other half lying on him and felt their shared heartbeat. Regardless of Hiccup's actual intentions, Toothless felt as if he understood what his beloved really meant. "Look how gently I treat You even when You're at my mercy," Hiccup seemed to be saying. "I treasure You even when You're weak, I would never hurt You. Don't You know by now that You can trust me and not be afraid?"

"...You win," Toothless grumbled. He licked Hiccup's cheek, earning a squeal of protest. Then he rolled Hiccup off of him, stood up, shook himself, and barked at Hiccup as he assumed his "Let's fly!" stance.

"Oh, so now you're totally up for it." Hiccup grinned and gave Toothless a good scratch behind the head plates before climbing into the saddle. "Ready?"

"Do Your crazy Half Of Me thing."

Hiccup was finally able to fly over to the ridge, where he dismounted and looked back at Squirt. The Bewilderbeast was staring at him, starting to pick his way down the side of the island.

"SQUIRT!" Hiccup shouted, motioning with his arms, "Come HERE!" He waited until Squirt had swum away from the village and climbed up again to meet him. "Good boy!" Hiccup said enthusiastically, going to scratch the dragon's eye ridges again. Squirt shuddered in pleasure, though his eyes stayed open in an uncertain expression and he kept craning his head as if trying to look at Hiccup. "Good boy! Good boy, you came when I called you!"

"Confused confused confused...!" Squirt was not at all used to being praised or rewarded.

Hiccup tried to make his way down again. "Whoa-- Okay, no, hold still-- Squirt, still." Clutching at a facial spike to help him keep his balance, he stamped at the tough hide and then stayed very still himself. When Squirt settled down, Hiccup smiled and chirped, "Good boy!" again. He returned to Toothless, got back into the saddle, and flew to a short sea stack.

Unfortunately, Squirt had started to follow him without being called, which kind of negated the whole point of the lesson. "Um...okay, let's try this again. Squirt, stay." Hiccup gestured emphatically at the spot where Squirt stood with his gigantic forepaws braced up against the stack. "Stay. Squirt, stay. Come on, Toothless."
He looked over his shoulder as they flew away again. When he saw Squirt's head move to watch them, one forepaw and then the other dropping back into the sea, Hiccup brought Toothless around to hover. It became obvious that Squirt was following uncalled again instead of simply shifting, so Hiccup flew back over to the Bewilderbeast and called harshly, "No! Squirt, stay." He gestured again. "Stay. Stay right there."

Squirt stared up at him, wide-eyed. "What is happening, what is happening, He is not angry but He looks and sounds angry, I am wrong, I am bad, I will be punished...?"

"He's saying STAY THERE," Toothless translated. "That sound," he made as close an approximation to it as he could, "means 'stay where you already are.' I think the other sound," he made a hissing, gurgling, clacking warble which sounded so close to 'Squirt' that Hiccup looked down at him in surprise, "might be your human name."

"What...what...what...?!"

"Just stay there and wait for Him to tell you what to do next!!"

Squirt hunched down in the water like a scolded dog.

"Um...okay," Hiccup said. "Stay there for a minute, Squirt, okay? Wait for me to call you." He flew to the cliffside he had been heading for earlier, then slid off Toothless's back again and gestured. "SQUIRT, come HERE!!"

"He is summoning me?! He is summoning me?!!"

"Yes! Why are you so frightened and upset?!!"

"If I disobey, He will be so so so angry, but they don't speak right and I don't understand what they want, all I want is to obey them and not be punished, but they don't give orders I can understand, so I am confused and they punish me and it hurts...!!!" Squirt was wailing now in the dragon equivalent of weeping. Hiccup and Toothless both stared at him in astonishment as he dragged himself out of the water and climbed up to them and rested his head at Hiccup's feet, gazing up at him in despair.
"Squirt..." Hiccup was too shaken by the dragon's distress to sound chirpy and happy. "Hey, little guy. Good job, okay? Good job. Thank you for coming when I called you. Good job, Squirt, okay?" He had to remember, as he rewarded Squirt with more ridge-scratching, that massive dragons often couldn't even perceive gentle touches. He put more force into the scratching and kept his voice gentle instead. "You're such a good boy~"

Squirt slowly relaxed. "He is pleased with me...? He is not angry...?"

"Of course not!" Toothless cried, still a bit disturbed. "You did what He wanted, so He's happy! But why are you so afraid of His anger?! Even angry Half Of Me isn't scary; look!!" He bounded forward, snatched Hiccup off of Squirt's face, dragged him back to the clifftop, and threw him on the ground.

"Toothless, what are you doing?!!"

Toothless growled and snapped at him, batting him carefully but not gently.

"Toothless, stop!"

"Stop, stop, stop, what are you doing?!?!" Squirt cried in a panic.

Toothless knew his human's limits by now and was very careful not to truly injure him, but there was nothing friendly about the provocation and harassment. When he had Hiccup angry and frightened and pinned down, Toothless shouted at Squirt, "You think THIS is scary?! They're HUMAN! They're FRAGILE! You can CRUSH them! They can only win our hearts with LOVE, only only only way they can own us is with love, if there's no love then they CAN'T HAVE OUR HEARTS, they're not allowed!!"

Squirt was whining in distress. Toothless looked down at Hiccup shaking and helpless under his paw and wanted to cry, too. He set his paw aside and licked Hiccup, broken-hearted and desperate to make amends, then he remembered that humans didn't like being licked. He whimpered and nudged at Hiccup, and his heart broke all over again when his beloved scrambled away from him and stared at him with horrible betrayed eyes.

Toothless hunched down and whimpered again, his head lowered and his eyes wide. It was a weak apology by dragon standards, but for some reason it seemed to have an extraordinary effect on humans. The only time it hadn't worked was...last time...when Hiccup had been angry at him, had
driven him away and broken his heart....

It wasn't working this time, either.

Horrified, Toothless humbled himself fully, inviting Hiccup to attack him where he was weakest. "Forgive me forgive me forgive me!!"

"What's wrong with you?" Hiccup whispered. He recognized the dragon's repentance, but who was to say Toothless wouldn't jump back up and attack him again as soon as he got close? How could anyone ever assume they knew how a dragon's mind worked, anyway? ...But what was he supposed to do, walk away and leave his best friend behind?

Hiccup crept back to Toothless, who anxiously lay still with his eyes fixed on him. "Why did you do that?" Hiccup curled up against Toothless's chest, feeling like a scolded child. "Hey you...unholy offspring of lightning and death itself...I forgot you're a dragon...you pretend to be so cute and cuddly and harmless, but you really do have teeth in here, don't you...."

He slowly set his right hand on the Night Fury's toothless gums, and cringed when Toothless's mouth gently closed over his offered hand. "They're strong teeth...not very sharp, but enough to cripple me even more...my own fault, stupid enough to think I'm a dragon whisperer, as if anyone can make you guys do anything you don't want to do...."

Toothless gnawed very, very gently at his arm ("Look how careful I am with this beautiful precious trust You are offering me, see???"), and Hiccup tried to huddle closer against his friend's black scales to comfort himself. Toothless let go and couldn't help licking away the tears on Hiccup's face, distressed at his other half's distress.

"What did I do wrong...?"

"I'm sorry sorry sorry stupid horrible dragon if I could be hurt instead so You would be happy again I would be hurt hurt hurt, please don't grieve anymore...!"

They curled closer together as their anxiety slowly eased, and Squirt was comforted to watch them comforting each other. After a while, he retreated into the sea to refresh his drying hide and to contemplate.
It felt like a long time before Hiccup finally emerged from beneath the Night Fury's wing. He was startled to find his mother watching them, with Cloudjumper dozing in the sun nearby. "Mom...."

"You need to learn how to understand them, Hiccup." She approached, and he stood up to meet her. "Squirt was frightened by memories of his old training. It upset Toothless because Squirt's upbringing and his feelings toward his ruler are so unnatural. Toothless was trying to use you for a demonstration to explain to Squirt, but you were hurt because you didn't understand what they were saying. Toothless adores you, Hiccup, and your pain causes him pain. It's selfish of you to force him to shoulder an unnecessary burden."

Hiccup stared at her, at a loss for words. Toothless chirred anxiously as he looked back and forth between the two humans.

Valka reached for Hiccup's throat and squeezed gently, then tapped her fist against his stomach. "The throat and the belly are the most vulnerable places on your body, and that goes for most dragons as well." She blinked, stifling the sudden memory of her beloved alpha's death. "...Dragons will instinctively protect their own weaknesses and attack those of their enemies. To deliberately expose your weaknesses is a sign of submission or trust."

"I...never thought about articulating it like that...but, yeah, it makes a lot of sense."

"They do use sounds, but their language is not like ours where almost everything can be communicated through sound or text alone. Sounds are merely a part of it. Every gesture and movement, even scents and markings are parts of their main language; it's all communication."

She took hold of Hiccup's head, shifting it around to match her descriptions. "This, depending on what you're feeling and where you're looking, can be defensiveness, uncertainty, stubbornness, or a coy invitation. The specifics depend on context. This is confusion or displeasure if your eyes are narrowed, curiosity if your eyebrows are raised. This is wary attentiveness...."

The moment her grip loosened, Hiccup ducked free and stumbled away. Valka studied him for a minute, then smiled.

She pointed at Hiccup where he now stood behind Toothless, wide-eyed, shoulders hunched, one hand clutching at his dragon. "Even now, you are communicating. You're saying to Toothless, I am uncertain and uneasy; please make me feel safe, Half Of Me." She gestured at Toothless, who stood in a relaxed stance with a curious expression, wings raised in front of his human and his body angled slightly toward Hiccup. "He's saying in response, There is nothing to be afraid of, but I will shield You anyway so that You'll feel safe."
Hiccup made some incoherent amazed noises.

"Are you teaching Half Of Me how to talk for real?" Toothless asked.

"Yes."

Toothless chortled.

Valka smiled and gestured again. "Obviously that was amusement, but it's not a real dragon 'word.' At some point, Toothless realized that you interpret that sound as amusement, so he now makes that sound when he wants to tell you that he's amused. You can think of it as a sort of 'human slang.' Your flockmates who are accustomed to humans will understand it, but it would sound like nonsense to foreign dragons."

"Wow...."

"You must learn to communicate with them on their own level, Hiccup. You are their flock consort. I'm not sure how you lasted five years as queen to creatures whose language you never learned...." She smiled. "Your dragons love you so much, Hiccup. In all that time, you never even knew they had a queen, much less that it was you, yet they willingly accepted you and obeyed you as their ruler, anyway."

Hiccup looked at his friend. "Well...looks like I'm gonna learn how to speak Dragonese," he murmured, sounding like he needed time to get used to the idea. Toothless purred and nuzzled him.

Valka and Cloudjumper headed back to the village first. Hiccup was about to mount, but then remembered why he was all the way out here in the first place. He went back to the edge of the cliff, took a deep breath, then called for his Bewilderbeast. "SQUIRT! Come HERE!"

There was an upheaval in the water and Squirt lifted his face out, staring at Hiccup.

"Good! Good! Fantastic! Now come here!" Hiccup gestured hugely.
Squirt rose completely out of the sea and climbed up to him again.

"Good boy~ Good boy~ Oooh, I'm so freaking glad you're not gonna make me pull a Drago again...." Squirt's hide was too rough for Hiccup to nuzzle safely, so he went and got his helmet to put on before rubbing his comparatively tiny head against Squirt's massive one.

"He is happy...? I did the right thing...?"

"YES. DON'T EVER MAKE ME HURT HALF OF ME AGAIN, DON'T EVER MAKE ME HURT HALF OF ME AGAIN OR I'LL SHOOT YOU."

"Be happy," Squirt begged Hiccup, "Please please please be happy." He gave Hiccup a careful lick. His not-master wasn't exactly happy, but he was incredibly relieved for some reason, and there was a mix of darker emotions underneath but none of those was anger.

"Okay. Great. Good work today, guys; really, really awesome. Now you can go...do...whatever you wanna do, Squirt." Hiccup made big shooing motions. "Squirt, go. Go, okay? Go."

"He says go away. He's tired and I want to take Him away from you."

"Go away?? Go away??"

"Go swim and eat fish or something! Leave Half Of Me alone, He's tired!"

"Precious Thing, will You be angry if I leave??"

"Squirt, go!" Hiccup tried again. "Out there! Water! Swim! Okay?"

Squirt slowly turned away and submerged again.

"Whew." Hiccup climbed into the saddle. "I think it's definitely time for a bath now. Let's go, bud."
To be continued....

Author's Notes: This fic is supposed to take place before He's Not Dangerous...so if Toothless was rough with Hiccup here in this chapter, it probably shouldn't have been as shocking in HND...that might be an unfixable mistake, sorry. :/ Then again, Toothless didn't shoot at Hiccup in this chapter the way he did in HND; I dunno. But then there's also a similar problem with Valka starting to teach Hiccup dragon language in this fic, even though he still doesn't know it at all in HND. X''''D WHATEVER; those of you who've read my Stepsiblings stories know that I can be a hopelessly messy writer. orzzzzzz.

In my stories, it's a very long time before Toothless finally finds out that he's the one who shot Stoick. He finds out quickly in HSRMO because he and Hiccup speak the same language in that AU, but it takes a lot longer in my canonverse stories.

I try to reserve the term "Dragonese" for the language that's spoken in the books, since it's a lot different than the dragon language I write about in my fanfiction, but I feel like Hiccup would use the term "Dragonese" in his dialogue even though it doesn't mean exactly the same thing.

I have a real life project I'm supposed to be concentrating on this weekend, so I haven't had much time to write. Last night I ended up working on the Toothless/Empress HSRMO fic that is nowhere near high priority, but wasn't able to make much progress on it. Also hand-wrote a bit more of a long outtake from the HSRMO version of He's Not Dangerous. (It's long enough to be its own one-shot even though it technically never actually happens. *sweatdrop*)
Smelly {post-HTTYD1}

Smelly

(rough draft)

A DreamWorks' How to Train Your Dragon fanfic by Raberba girl

Summary: When dragons come to live on Berk, bathing becomes an unexpectedly challenging issue, particularly for the new flock queen and consort.

A/N: THIS IS NOT THE NEXT CHAPTER OF A SMALL ADDITION TO BERK'S FLOCK!! Sorry! (I'll explain in the author's notes at the end....)

This fic starts on the same day as the last scene of HTTYD1.

Since Berk's village setup doesn't seem to be typical, I'm going to go with there being one or two community bathhouses that the villagers use, and they might sometimes opt to bathe in tubs in their own homes.

o.o.o

If young Hiccup Horrendous Haddock III had been told that dragons would someday come to live peacefully together with Vikings on Berk, and if he was asked to predict some problems that would arise from such an arrangement, he could have easily listed many.

However, he would have never added 'bathing' to the list, because it would have never occurred to him that such a thing could be problematic.

Hiccup was now fifteen years old, fully conscious for the first time in weeks, and heading home with his beloved dragon at his side after what had felt like a very long day. Hiccup decided that he was long overdue for a bath. "I'm pretty smelly, huh," he remarked to Toothless, who perked up happily at being addressed despite not understanding the actual words. "Technically it's not Bath Day yet, but I missed the last few of them and I feel gross, so...."
It took a little thought. He had stopped regularly using the public bathhouses years ago, because he'd grown tired of all the criticism of his scrawny, un-Vikinglike body. On the occasions when he felt too lazy to draw his own bath privately, he always made sure to visit the bathhouse outside of peak hours, when he'd either be alone or at least less of a target.

On the other hand, the bathhouse setup made it much easier to keep the water fresh and heated, which was so much more convenient than bathing at home, and Hiccup was tired. He was a hero now, too, so maybe he wouldn't have to endure so many gibes about his body if he bathed in public. Still, he found himself cringing away from the idea of anyone being able to gawk at his unclothed stump - but then just thinking about hauling the tub around at home, and all the time and effort it would take to fill it with hot water, was making him more tired....

Shame eventually won out. Hiccup knew that, logically, there was nothing to be ashamed of: he had lost his leg in a hero's battle, saving his people from doom. If anything, he should be proud of his sacrifice, and most of the villagers would probably see it that way as well, the same way they respected others who had lost limbs in Berk's defense. Yet logic did nothing to ease the gut-twisting apprehension he felt at the thought of exposing the ugly, crippled remnant of his leg for anyone to see, so he drew in a resolute breath and went to drag the tub out from where it was usually stored.

Having a dragon was very convenient. Toothless was happy to help, pushing the tub from the other side as Hiccup pulled. Then the dragon watched curiously as Hiccup started filling buckets with water and setting them to heat over the fire. There was a lot of waiting and fetching and pouring and more waiting, and finally, after the sun had gone down, the bath was ready. Hiccup took off his clothes and his prosthetic, and carefully maneuvered himself into the steamy water.

O.o.o

Toothless knew that humans' outer dead skins were removable, but it was still strange and alarming to watch his own precious human stripping off His coverings and not being hurt by it at all. Toothless sniffed at the discarded skins for a while, trying to convince himself that his human had not split into two people. This was just like a snake shedding the skin it had outgrown, right? But would Hiccup grow new dead skins, or were these skins here still part of Himself??

Toothless was vaguely aware of alive Hiccup splashing around in the little pool nearby, but here was dead Hiccup saying much more strongly. "I was sick for a long time but I'm getting better now, my flocklings who love me made me queen today, this nightwing who adores me is my consort, Sire and Elder Human have been tending to me, me and Wanted want to mate with each other, I have been sleeping on dead oak wood and covered with dead sheep woo--"

A horrible stench interrupted, and Toothless jerked up his head to look. He'd been aware of that stinging smell in the background all this time, but now something about it was different, it was wet
now and--

Toothless couldn't believe his eyes. Hiccup - alive Hiccup, his real precious Hiccup, not dead skin Hiccup here on the ground who'd been talking to him - was *stripping His smells away*. Toothless bounded over to the pool in a panic.

"Whoa! Watch it, Toothless."

"*Half Of Me?! Half Of Me?! What are You doing?! Get rid of that very bad horrible thing!*" Toothless retracted his teeth so that he wouldn't hurt his human when he snatched the bad thing away. The thing tasted so horrible that he thought he might vomit.

"Toothless! Hey, give me the soap back!"

Toothless, barely even registering his other half's plaintive cries, went outside and dug a hole to *bury* that horrible bad thing. He covered it up with dirt and then peed on the pile of dirt so he couldn't smell the bad thing underneath anymore. But his mouth was still full of that disgusting horrible *taste*, so he shot fireballs at the ground until that awful stinging feeling on his tongue had been burned away. Yuck. Very so much yucky.

o.o.o

Hiccup sat in the tub for a while, at a loss. Toothless finally came back in, marched straight up to him, and slopped his big dragon tongue across Hiccup's collarbone.

"*Toothless! What are you doing, you crazy dragon?!*" Hiccup dipped low in the water and scrubbed away the saliva with his hands. Toothless stared at him with a dismayed expression. "Toothless, bring the soap back!" The dragon didn't move. "The soap, Toothless. Bring the soap *back*. We're not playing hide-and-seek, I'm trying to take a bath here!"

Toothless licked his hair. Annoyed, Hiccup splashed water at him, and chuckled when the dragon leaped in shock and then stared at him. "What's your *problem*, goofy?"

The front door opened. Hiccup shivered in the gust of cold air and ducked down into the warm water again.
Stoick shut the door and hung up his helmet as he surveyed the room. "It's a bit early for a bath," he remarked.

"I haven't had one in, like, two weeks," Hiccup reminded him.

"Yes, you did. I gave you one."

"Well, whatever; I feel like I haven't. Is it a problem or something?"

"No, I just...." Father and son fell into one of their usual awkward silences. "What's wrong with Toothless?" Stoick finally asked. The dragon was staring at Hiccup and fidgeting.

"I don't know. He stole the soap."

"He stole the soap?"

"Yeah."

"Oh."

Another long pause.

"I mean, maybe he's playing or something, but he's acting weird, I dunno."

"Do you...want me to get another one?" Stoick said uncertainly.

Hiccup sighed. "No, I just...I guess I'm done." He submerged long enough to scrub vigorously at his hair with his fingers, then surfaced again and gripped the side of the tub, preparing to haul himself out. Stoick and Toothless both readied themselves without noticing each other: the man picking up a towel to unfold, and the dragon rising into a watchful crouch.
Hiccup managed to get out of the tub without losing his balance. Before his father could hand him the towel, Toothless pounced, knocking Hiccup to the floor and frantically licking him. "Toothless!" Hiccup yelled, "Stop it! Get off!"

"Get out of here, dragon," Stoick snapped, trying to shoo the Night Fury away. When that didn't work, he grabbed Toothless and physically hauled him away from his son. Toothless shrieked in outrage and twisted his head to bite.

Stoick roared and hit him. Then it turned into a raging free-for-all that only stopped when they both heard Hiccup scream. One of the fallen pieces of furniture had landed in the fire, sending burning wood flying, one of them so close to Hiccup that he had felt the heat of it and nearly gotten burned. Toothless ran to him in concern.

"Get away from me!" Hiccup shouted. "Stop!" The genuine anger in his voice stopped the dragon cold.

Hiccup stood there for a minute propped against a pillar, still naked except for the towel he was clutching, panting from stress and frustration. Toothless trembled, and Stoick slowly started cleaning up the fireplace.

"Okay, just...everyone stop," Hiccup said. "Toothless, calm down. Dad, can you--? Never mind." Seeing that his father was busy trying to make sure their house didn't burn down, Hiccup abandoned his last shred of dignity and crawled over to his false leg. "I'm still mad at you," he grumbled when Toothless anxiously came to lick him again as he was putting his prosthetic on. "Stop licking me, okay? Stop."

"Do you want me to put him outside?" Stoick growled as he came over.

"No, just...." Hiccup braced his back against the pillar and propped his one foot against the dragon's chest, straining to hold him off. Toothless didn't force himself beyond Hiccup's strength, but he still stared anxiously at the boy with his face a handbreadth away from Hiccup's. "Let - me - get - dressed," Hiccup ordered, enunciating each word sharply. "Back off. It's cold and I'm naked, so let me put some clothes on before I get sick." Toothless crept back a few steps, huddled down like a scolded puppy.

Stoick, still glaring at the dragon, brought over the pile of clean clothes to Hiccup and helped dress him as if he was still a little kid. Hiccup made some obligatory mumbled protests but didn't resist,
since he was tired and secretly grateful.

Once Hiccup felt like a proper human being again, he sighed, looked at his miserable dragon for a while, then finally gave a wan smile and held out his arms. "Come here, you."

Toothless was on him in an instant, making sharp whimpers that sounded like crying as he nuzzled Hiccup forcefully enough to knock him to the floor again. "Aaaarrggghhh...."

"Toothless!" Stoick snapped.

"It's fine, Dad," Hiccup sighed. Lying on his back, he lifted his hands to scratch behind the dragon's head plates, watching Toothless close his eyes and make an almost relieved-sounding groan. "What's gotten into you?" Hiccup murmured. "What's the matter with you, you big lug? You don't like me being clean or something? Huh? You like me better when I'm all gross and sweaty and smelly~?"

Toothless purred back at him.

"Yucky," Hiccup chirped playfully. "Yucky~"

o.o.o

Toothless was not happy. For some unfathomable reason, his crazy human had insisted on erasing over a week's worth of scents, including most of the obeisance His new flocklings had paid Him. Toothless could only still smell the lingering bits and pieces of those lost scents when he pushed his nose right against his other half and concentrated.

Hiccup barely smelled like anything now, mostly just the new "NIGHTWING'S OTHER HALF; UPSET; mine mine mine; queen; stay away from this beloved human; threat guardian protection" marks that he'd managed to lick and rub onto Him afterward. And dead sheep wool smell from the new outer skins. And some other not-important things. That was it. And people would have to get dangerously close to read Him, much closer than Toothless wanted.

'What's wrong with You?' Toothless wondered in distress as he watched Hiccup sleep. His human's insanity mostly manifested in benign quirks, but this deliberate stripping away of His most important scents was much more alarming. Why would You do that??? Why why why why??? It's not safe! Your flocklings will be confused! Foreigners won't know where You come from or what Your rank
is! They won't know how many guardians will avenge You if they try to hurt You! If You get lost, I'm scared I can't find You! How will You court Your female now?! What if Elder Human can't--?"

Hiccup started awake. "--Oh geez! Toothless?!"

Toothless had no idea why his human was so frightened, but maybe it was okay because Hiccup was calmer now.

"Hey, bud, what's wrong?"

Toothless felt better when those small, familiar forepaws caressed him, rubbing more "This nightwing is loved by this human" scent onto him.

"Hey, go back to bed, okay? Sshhh. Go to sleep. You want me to sing you a lullaby or something, silly?"

Toothless didn't go back to his bed. As Hiccup crooned soothingly to him, he lay down right next to his other half's bed so that he could keep Hiccup's smell in his nose until he was lulled to sleep.

O.o.o.o.o

After a day or two, Hiccup had accumulated a full collection of scents, so now he smelled like a real person again. Any animal could easily discern that He was queen of this island flock of fireskins and spinetails and rock-eaters and one-who-is-twos and little venomfangs; that He was two halves with His nightwing consort; that He often held charcoal in His forepaws and was courting a female and shared an aerie with His other half and His sire. He was Hiccup. For a few days, everything was good.

Then Hiccup went over to the metal pool-holder's niche, and took hold of it and started to drag it out, and a surge of horrified realization made Toothless feel cold.

"Hey, bud, can you give me a hand here?"

"NO!" Toothless screeched. "NO, BAD POOL-HOLDER, STUPID HALF OF ME, BAD! YOU
REALLY ARE CRAZY!!"

o.o.o

Stoick, drawn by the commotion, burst inside to find his son cowering in a corner as the Night Fury tore apart the house. "Dragon!" Stoick bellowed, reaching for the closest weapon.

"Dad!" Hiccup shouted, "Dad, wait, don't--!

Stoick and Toothless fought again. They would have seriously hurt each other if Hiccup hadn't thrown himself between them - Stoick's sword accidentally sliced across the boy's upper arm, sending blood splashing across Toothless's nose. The dragon screamed, and Stoick exclaimed in horror as his weapon clattered to the floor.

"Hiccup!"

"Both of you STOP IT!" Hiccup roared, grabbing a chair with his good arm and hurling it between them.

Toothless, clearly distressed, started making those sob-like whimpers again, and Stoick, ashen-faced, stretched out his hand toward Hiccup as if trying to calm a wild dragon. "Hiccup, you're bleeding--"

"I KNOW I AM!" He stabbed his finger at Toothless. "You need to get over this bath thing of yours. You," he pointed at Stoick, "need to stop provoking him, it just makes it worse."

"All right," Stoick said, trying hard to hold onto his temper, "all right, son, but you need to come here and let me tend to that arm."

"...No more fighting."

"All right, all right, I promise."

Toothless seemed to be just as desperate as Stoick was to treat their boy's injury, but the two
apparently had vastly different ideas of how best to do so. Stoick was still pulling down bandages
and salve from the medical shelf when he heard Hiccup making surprised, yelping protests. Stoick
whirled around to find his son being pinned down by a Night Fury who was determinedly using his
teeth to rip at the torn sleeve of Hiccup's tunic. "DRAGON!"

"IT'S OKAY, DAD!" Hiccup screamed back. "It's just the sleeve; Toothless get off me, stop it--!"
Then, as he caught sight of Stoick storming over, "What did I JUST SAY?! No fighting, Dad!"

"I'M NOT GOING TO LET A NIGHT FURY MAUL MY SON!"

"HE'S MAULING MY CLOTHES, NOT ME!!"

Toothless flung away the now-detached sleeve and thoroughly licked the entire length of Hiccup's
wound.

"What is with you and licking??" Hiccup wailed.

"GET OFF MY SON, DRAGON."

"DON'T YOU DARE HIT HIM WITH THAT THING, OR I SWEAR I WILL LEAVE AND GO LIVE IN THE WOODS."

When things had finally settled down, all three of them sat in slumped, sullen silence. Toothless had
his head in Hiccup's lap as Stoick bandaged Hiccup's arm. When he finished, no one spoke for a
while.

At last, Hiccup muttered, "I don't know what to do."

Stoick opened his mouth, but he had a feeling that anything he could think of to say would just make
Hiccup mad at him, so he closed his mouth again without speaking.

"Why are you doing this to me, huh?" Hiccup said to Toothless, nearly in tears as he kept gently
stroking the dragon's head. Toothless gazed up at him with wide, grieving eyes. "Why is this such a
big deal? What's wrong?"
Stoick finally thought of something to say that might be safe. "What happened, Hiccup? What was it exactly that set him off?"

"I don't know! I was just pulling out the tub and he went crazy--" Hiccup paused. "It was when I started pulling the tub out. Like he knew that meant I was going to take a bath, and he was mostly going for the tub like he was trying to destroy it."

"Maybe you should try the bathhouse instead."

"Tomorrow," Hiccup said wearily. If things went wrong again, he'd rather handle it on a good night's sleep. "Come on, Toothless, we're going to bed. Unless you decide you hate my bed and want to destroy that, too."

Toothless did nothing of the sort, though he did opt to sleep close to Hiccup again rather than on his own stone slab.

0.0.0

Toothless followed Hiccup the next day with his plates and tail drooping. He'd managed to stop his human from erasing His scents this time, but maybe the price wasn't worth it, because now Hiccup was low-spirited and much less receptive to His other half's affection.

"Half Of Me?" Toothless said tentatively, after having tried everything else, "I will give You some very good tasty fish, and You will feel better."

"Urgh...no, Toothless, um, I'm good, I just ate so I'm all full now, you can go ahead and keep that, bud...ew...."

Hiccup put some things inside a bigger thing, including a new Very Bad Thing that smelled horrible, and went to one of the dead wood caves. Inside, it was humid and smelled even more like Very Bad Things. Toothless didn't like it at all. Hiccup shed His outer skins, and Toothless sniffed at them to reassure himself, but then he turned around and--

*Hiccup was in the water, with no dead coverings.*
"He was holding a Very Bad Thing."

"Hiccup was in the water and had no dead coverings and was holding a Very Bad Thing; Toothless knew what that meant."

"HALF OF ME YOU'RE DOING IT AGAIN WHY ARE YOU WHY WHY WHY WHY STOP THAT VERY BAD HORRIBLE THING THAT MAKES YOU LESS YOU...!"

o.o.o

"It's driving me crazy!"

The teenage dragon riders were all gathered at the Dragon Academy. Technically, Hiccup was supposed to be giving a lecture about dragon claw care, but somehow it had degenerated into a rant about bathing. "I was just joking at first, but now I'm starting to think that he really does hate me being clean!!" He absently scratched an itch under the bandage on his arm. His injury seemed to be healing surprisingly well for some reason.

"Told you that washing too much is bad for you," Tuffnut remarked righteously, earning an eyeroll from some of the others. "You need a healthy layer of grime to ward off disease and stuff."

"It's weird that he makes such a big deal about it, though," Astrid said, ignoring Tuffnut. "I mean, Stormfly would act kind of weird whenever she saw me after a bath, too, but I just started training her to stay calmer, and now she's fine."

"Wait, so Stormfly didn't like it, either?"

"Yeah, but she mostly just got agitated and tried to preen my hair. She wouldn't steal my soap or lick me or try to shoot the bathhouse or anything."

"Maybe it's a general dragon trait," Fishlegs mused. "Meatlug always got upset when I tried to take baths, too."
"Wait, what?!" Hiccup exclaimed. "How come this is the first I've heard of this?! How'd you get Meatlug to stop??"

Fishlegs smiled a little sheepishly. "Uh...well I just, you know...kinda started slacking off on the whole bathing thing...." Hiccup and Astrid gave him slightly disgusted looks. "I mean, not, you know; like, I still do, just...not...as...thoroughly? Meatlug's happy, that's all that matters!" he finished in a rush.

"What about you guys?" Hiccup asked, turning to the others. "What do your dragons do when you bathe?"

"Nothing," the twins chorused.

"Pfft, Hookfang's too cool to freak out over something so stupid," Snotlout asserted.

They spent the rest of the day experimenting.

None of the dragons showed much reaction to a bathtub being filled with water except for Toothless, who flew into a rage and blasted it with a plasma bolt (much to the twins' delight). The dragons, even Toothless this time, also didn't care when their riders waded into the ocean - until a cake of soap was brought out. Toothless roared angrily when he saw it, and the other dragons eyed it warily. They had the same reactions when the experiment was tried in freshwater bodies of water rather than seawater.

This gave Hiccup and Fishlegs the idea that perhaps it was soap the dragons were averse to, rather than bathing itself.

After more experimentation, they found that, while the dragons apparently hated soap slightly less than they hated eels, soap seemed to be second on the list. Stormfly and the Zippleback shied away from the cake of soap when it was brandished at them, Meatlug growled and planted herself in front of Fishlegs as if she was protecting him from it, Hookfang 'ate' Snotlout when the boy shoved it in his face, and Toothless knocked it out of Hiccup's hand and turned it into a scorch mark on the ground.

"So you just hate soap, then, huh," Hiccup said, "not bathing."

"I know what the next test is~" Snotlout sing-songed gleefully as he leered at Astrid. She punched
him in the face.

"We're just going to wash our arms or something," Hiccup sighed. "We're not bathing for real."

He noted privately that the relationship level seemed to be a factor. He could honestly say that of all the riders and their dragon partners, he and Toothless were closest to each other, and Toothless was also the one who was most bothered by the soap thing.

Fishlegs and Meatlug were very close as well, and Fishlegs was only able to cope with her reactions by giving in to what she wanted. Astrid and Stormfly were a much more disciplined pair, but when Hiccup paid attention, he could still discern the stress in Stormfly's body language despite Astrid having successfully trained away the Nadder's problematic behavior.

As for the others, who had more...'complicated' relationships...those dragons didn't seem happy about their humans bathing, either. It was just that Hookfang settled for disgusted glares without making an actual nuisance of himself, and then looked satisfied as soon as Snotlout used the Nightmare's body saliva as cologne. Barf and Belch crouched and glared, hissing a little, when the twins washed their arms, but returned to normal as soon as Barf exhaled a cloud of gas over Ruffnut and Belch tried to light Tuffnut on fire by sparking into his hair.

It was probably just that Snotlout was too unobservant to have noticed the nuances of his dragon's behavior, and the Thorstons had such weird tastes that their dragon's behavior didn't seem abnormal to them.

"Maybe it's the smell," Hiccup mused slowly. "I mean...animals, like dogs and sheep and stuff, they don't think they smell bad, and they'll happily dive into garbage as if it smells good to them."

Astrid raised an eyebrow. "So you think maybe things that stink to us actually smell good to dragons, and vice versa?"

"The animal sense of smell is more developed than our own," Fishlegs agreed, catching on quickly as usual. "They can probably pick up a lot more than we can just from smell alone. When you wash with soap and those smells go away...."

"Is that what bothers you, bud?" Hiccup said sympathetically, petting Toothless. "Do you get confused when I clean off all those icky smells, huh~?" Toothless warbled at him. "All right, guys, I think we should call it a day. Thanks for your help."
"What I think would be more helpful," Snotlout said, leering again, "is if Astrid-- OW!!"

This time, Hiccup tried to warn his friend. "Toothless, I'm going to take a bath now," he said, looking directly into the dragon's eyes. "I'm going to take a bath. I won't use soap this time, okay? But I'm yucky and smelly and I need to rinse off, at least. I have to take a bath, Toothless; I'm sorry, but I'm not an animal, I'm sorry sorry sorry, okay?" He went to get the tub.

As soon as he heard Toothless start to react behind him, he whirled around and pointed sternly. "NO." Toothless growled at him. "No. Stop that. I am going to take a bath, and you need to CALM DOWN and LET ME DO what I need to do."

Toothless fidgeted, still growling uncertainly.

Hiccup went and forced the dragon down to the ground (well...obviously Toothless let Hiccup force him to the ground...), glaring into his eyes. "Stop that. I'm going to bring out the tub, and you are not going to go nuts and start shooting or knocking things over."

When the dragon's growl finally changed to a whimper, Hiccup let him up and went back to the tub. He had to drag it over to the fire all by himself this time, with his agitated Night Fury pacing and growling and getting in his way instead of helping him. He set the first batch of water to heat and then turned back to Toothless, crossing his arms and fixing the dragon with a challenging stare. Toothless glared back at him. There was an angry, ugly, unbroken whine sounding deep in the dragon's throat.

"...Do you know what a compromise is, Toothless?"

"*whiiiiiiine*"

"It's when I give up something that I want, and you give up something that you want, so that we can do a little bit of what I want, and a little bit of what you want."

"*whiiiiiiiiine*"
"Seriously, Toothless, stop that!"

"*groooowl*"

"Argh."

A little later, as Hiccup was pouring a bucketful of water into the tub, Toothless came up and knocked it out of his hands.

"TOOTHLESS."

Toothless hissed.

"NO. STOP THAT."

Toothless went silent, but maintained his glare.

"I can't not take a bath, Toothless. That's gross. Do you know there's people in other lands who only bathe, like, a few times a year?! They're DISGUSTING. I'm a VIKING, and-- Okay, well, that doesn't mean I kill dragons, but it does mean I stay clean, and I'm not gonna lick myself clean like you do, so that means a bath, Toothless! I'M TAKING A BATH, so stop freaking out and accept that already!!"

Maybe his rambling worked, or maybe it was just that Hiccup had been standing there for a while neglecting the tub, because Toothless seemed a little more relaxed now. He was sitting, looking unimpressed, but was no longer tense or agitated.

"Okay. So." Hiccup went back to filling the tub. Toothless made an outraged screech and started pacing again. "Oh, come on!"

When the bath was finally ready and Hiccup got undressed, Toothless practically buried his face in the pile of dirty clothes. Taking advantage of the dragon's distraction, Hiccup climbed into the tub as
quickly and quietly as he could, keeping an eye on Toothless as he started scrubbing the grime from his body.

Toothless kept picking up the clothes in his mouth and dropping them again, nudging them all around the floor, then lay down and started to gather them close in a sort of hug, when he suddenly seemed to realize where Hiccup was. Toothless leaped back to his feet and bounded over to the tub, where he closed his gums over Hiccup's shoulder as if intending to drag him out.

"NO." Hiccup heaved an armful of water at him, which startled Toothless into letting go and leaping back. The dragon stared at him in shock for a minute - then snarled at him. "GROOOOWL!" Hiccup yelled, gripping the edge of the tub to pull himself up so he would be taller.

Toothless looked surprised for a second at being growled at by his human. Then he flattened his head plates and growled back, looking very dangerous.

It was kind of scary, but Hiccup kept snarling anyway, trying to assert dominance. Toothless fidgeted uneasily, gradually lowering his body, but continued growling up at him in a higher-pitched tone.

"STOP growling at me! I don't like that, you're scaring me, leave me alone, Toothless!!"

Toothless whimpered and backed away further.

"Just leave me alone for five minutes!" Hiccup shouted, hearing tears in his voice.

He didn't know what was worse, the scary growling from earlier, or the crying now. Toothless paced back and forth in distress, and Hiccup gritted his teeth against the heartbreaking sound of those horrible sobbing whimpers. "Stop it, stop it, stop it, stop it, stop it...."

He finished up as quickly as possible, but before he could dry himself off, Toothless knocked him over and practically coated him with a layer of dragon spit. Hiccup sat there, clenching his fists in frustration, feeling as gross as if he hadn't just bathed at all, and wondering why on earth this, of all things, had to be such a difficult issue. "Why can't we have a nice, normal dragon problem, like you eating all our food or trying to burn the house down or something...?"

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They tried more experiments at the Academy, but didn't really learn anything except that licking seemed to be more of a breed-specific thing.

There weren't any other Night Furies to test, but at least with the others, they found that along with Toothless, Gronckles tended to do the most licking, whereas the other breeds were more prone to different behaviors. Nadders were the only ones who would preen, for example; the Zipplebacks would spray gas even when they seemed to have no intention of igniting it, and Nightmares would bite or claw things they wanted to mark, which perhaps explained why Hookfang liked to snatch up Snotlout in his jaws so often.

"You're just a big dog, aren't you," Hiccup told Toothless. "A big flying cat-dog, that's what you are. Lick, lick, lick." Toothless uncertainly touched his tongue to Hiccup's cheek. "There, see?! You don't have to do that, you know!"

Trying to simply lock Toothless out of the house during Hiccup's baths didn't work - Toothless responded by deliberately setting things on fire until he was allowed inside again. Distracting him didn't work, either, since he almost completely ignored the piles of his favorite fish until the bathing ordeal was over.

One time he knocked over the entire tub, tipping both Hiccup and all the bathwater out onto the floor. Hiccup raged at him so much that he never did that again, but it was clear that he very much wanted to.

After several weeks, Toothless did, at least, seem to calm down a bit when he saw that Hiccup was only using the bare minimum of soap - yet he persisted in expressing his displeasure the entire time Hiccup was bathing. When he wasn't pacing around and around and around the tub in rapid circles with a constant whine in his throat like a frustrated cat, then he was sitting right next to the tub, fixing the bathing human with an unwavering, point-blank glare of outrage. It was extremely disconcerting.

Still, Hiccup would have tolerated it if it weren't for the licking.

Because the entire point of a bath was to get CLEAN, but when Toothless would immediately cover him with smelly slime as soon as he finished bathing...!
"Why are you doing this to me?!" Hiccup shouted, tears of frustration starting to slip down his face. He leaned into Toothless, and both of them cried.

0.0.0.0

Hiccup enlisted his father's help for his newest attempt at training.

At first it went as normal: Toothless started throwing a tantrum as soon as Hiccup said the word 'bath,' and Hiccup undressed and washed himself while being continuously glared at.

When he was ready to get out, Stoick came over with a towel, a fish, and a shield. Hiccup took the first two items and rubbed the fish on his forearms, which were the body parts he least minded being licked. "There," he said, holding out his arms to Toothless. The word was barely out of his mouth before Toothless was determinedly slopping spit all over his skin. "You can lick me where I taste like fish," Hiccup continued, "that's it. Only there, Toothless, that is your area, nowhere else."

When Toothless tried to work his way up past the elbows, Hiccup surged back, and Stoick scooped him out of the tub. "Arms only, Toothless!" Hiccup tried not to think about how ridiculous he felt, naked except for the towel half-wrapped around him, cradled in one of his father's arms as Stoick stood up on a table and tried to ward off the frustrated Night Fury with the shield on his other arm.

"Look, Toothless, fish!" Hiccup tossed it. Toothless gave the attempted bribe a very brief glance, then went back to jumping at him. "Okay...okay, Dad, here, put me down for a second."

"I'm not letting a crazed dragon get to you!"

"Please just do what I'm asking you to do!!"

It was almost an accident. Hiccup had a vague idea of putting his arms out first to make them the easiest target as he was lowered down, and maybe edging back toward the fish before Toothless could get to the rest of him. As Toothless shoved his head close, Hiccup happened to swipe his hand over the dragon's black scales and scratch - Toothless paused and closed his eyes.

Not wanting to miss the opportunity, Hiccup quickly went on scratching and petting and stroking, and was both surprised and relieved to see that Toothless let it distract him in a way the food hadn't. "You just want some love, huh?" Hiccup wondered, continuing to caress him. Toothless pressed into
him and whimpered. Though the dragon obviously enjoyed the attention, he seemed more desperate and relieved about it now, as opposed to his usual happy basking.

"Do you want to smell like *me*, too?" Hiccup suddenly realized. "Huh? Is that it, huh? Well, I'm not gonna lick you, bud; ew, definitely not, but if you want some scratching, here you go~ ...Okay, so, can I get dressed now...? Are you happy now...? Can I please, please put my clothes on now...?"

They eventually did muddle their way to compromise both could tolerate. Every week, Toothless would help his human pull the tub over to the fire pit, then would wait unhappily but patiently as Hiccup washed himself. Hiccup used as little soap as possible, allowed his forearms to be licked, and rewarded his dragon with cuddles and fish. Toothless was always eager to nuzzle Hiccup's face and rub his clothes, reluctantly refraining from using his tongue.

It wasn't until years later that someone was finally able to explain to them why the compromises were so necessary.

---

Valka loved watching her son and his other half speak to each other. They communicated so well despite the language barrier, as if they had cobbled together a personal language of their own.

"Heeeey, Toothless! Guess what day it is!"

Toothless lowered his plates and frowned suspiciously. Although he would not have understood the human concept of 'sarcasm' if anyone had tried to explain it to him, he could still tell when his other half said one thing but meant the opposite.

"It's Bath Day, Toothless!" Hiccup chirped enthusiastically. "Your favorite day~!" He laughed when Toothless recognized the word 'bath' and growled at him. "It's okay, bud, it'll be over soon," Hiccup crooned, dropping the sarcasm as he caressed his dragon comfortingly. Toothless leaned on him and huffed.

"How does bathing work for you?" Valka asked curiously.

Hiccup, blushing a little to realize he was being observed, stammered, "Uh, well, you know...the usual way?"
She raised an eyebrow. "You have a dragon other half, yet you still bathe as usual?"

Hiccup realized that his mother, with all the time she had spent among dragons, must have run into
the same issues. "Oh! Oh, hey, so did Cloudjumper completely flip out on you whenever you tried to
take a bath, too?"

Valka laughed, remembering.

Toothless was realizing the same thing his human had. "Why does my crazy human hate His important smells so much?!?!" he asked Valka.

She explained to them both, switching between Norse and Dragonese. Toothless learned how highly
developed the human sense of cleanliness was, and that humans found most rich smells to be both
offensive and almost completely lacking in information. Hiccup learned how highly developed the
dragon sense of smell was, and how much it factored into their language.

"Soap is so damaging to many important scents that bathing thoroughly is like...it's as if you...if you
were to be lost far away and rescued by foreigners, you wouldn't be able to tell them where you
come from, or anything about the people in your village, or even your own name. You would be
mute and stranded." Then, to Toothless, "Our sounds are like your smells. Everything, almost
everything is in our sounds. That means that for us, smell is so not-important, we can chitter chitter
chitter to each other without making any smells, but still be able to explain everything."

"Humans are very so much crazy!!!!"

"Hiccup, it's especially important for you and Toothless, because you are the flock leaders and two
halves. You carry the most vital scent-information for both your flock and yourselves. Your home,
your rank, your personal identifiers, your relationships, your most frequent and most recent
activities...all of it is there for anyone to read, until you scrub it all away every week and have to start
over. It frightens your other half and makes him feel insecure."

She turned back to the Night Fury. "Human saliva is only for eating, not marking. It feels strange
and unpleasant on the skin; too much dirt and sweat and salt and oil feels itchy and uncomfortable
and very so much useless. We think strong rich smells are useless and gross. Too much of all of it
together is 'dirty,' and makes us feel bad. Weak smells and fresh skin is 'clean' and makes us feel
better."
By the end of it, the young chief and the Night Fury were huddled close together, dismayed on each other's behalf. "I didn't know it was so important, bud," Hiccup murmured, stroking the dragon's shoulder soothingly. "I'm sorry for scaring you and making you worry."

Toothless curled a wing around him. "This 'clean' is very so much important to You, I don't know why. I hurt You? I want to fix You but I make You feel bad instead?" he wondered unhappily.

"How have you been dealing with it for the past five years?" Valka asked curiously.

Hiccup gave a hollow laugh. "It took us months to work out a compromise...." He described it to her.

"That's good," she said encouragingly. "At least there's a little bit of you he can lick, and it happens to be the part you stretch out closest to dragons who want to read you."

"Oh - right," Hiccup said. That hadn't even occurred to him - he had just chosen his forearms because they were the most convenient. (And since Astrid, quite understandably, hated whenever she kissed Hiccup and could taste that Toothless had beaten her to it, it was good that the dragon's 'designated licking area' was somewhere other than what Astrid preferred for herself.)

Valka made a couple of suggestions, including one about charcoal.

"Charcoal?"

She grinned. "Do you remember when I told you what your most common dragon name is?"

"Charcoal Paws," Hiccup laughed, remembering.

"They consider it to be an important personal identifier for you. Your flock will feel better the sooner they can smell it on you again, and it's helpful for foreign dragons when they first meet you."

Hiccup looked at his hands thoughtfully. "Guess I'll start juggling charcoal after every bath, then."
Toothless made a trilling sound as if to give his approval.

Author's Notes: *re-reading this fic right before posting; feeling self-conscious* This fic is so ridiculous and weird...does it ruin the "Dragon Queen" series, do you think I should have posted it separately...?

*ahem* Anyway, I'm supposed to be working on some other stories, but I randomly decided to try to write the next chapter of *A Small Addition To Berk's Flock* instead. But what was just supposed to be a paragraph or two of headcanon/backstory ended up getting so long, and was completely re-written three or four times, that I finally realized I needed to just pull the whole thing out and re-write it yet again as a standalone one-shot. XD (The same thing happened with *Names*, btw.) Soooo, yeah, that's how I ended up with this weird 6,800-word one-shot about Hiccup <strike>being naked a lot</strike> having a power struggle with Toothless over the dragon version of his ID card, rather than the next chapter of *Small Addition*. I don't know what's wrong with me. *facepalm*

I think a lot of HTTYD fanfic writers already know this, but for the people who don't: historical Vikings would comb their hair and wash their heads and hands every day, take a full bath once a week, and change their clothes 'frequently.' For that time period and region, this was considered extraordinarily excessive, contrasted with people in some other cultures at the time who would only bathe a few times a year. XD (I got distracted for a while looking up other cultures' bathing customs; also the history of bathing customs in a single culture, which had a surprisingly wide range of variation; it was fascinating.)

My relevant research sources (FFN will destroy the links, but they should be fine on AO3 and DevArt):

http://www.vikinganswerlady.com/hairstyl.shtml

http://www.hurstwic.org/history/articles/daily_living/text/health_and_medicine.htm

I might have to adjust some things after I've finished the "Hiccup's coma after he defeated the Red Death" fic I'm writing for bulbul. I'm 3,700 words into it and they've only just barely returned to Berk, so I haven't yet written the parts that would affect what happens in this fic.

At least I had my bossy muse to blame for *Early Reunion* (that what-if scenario I binge-wrote where Valka comes back to Berk when Hiccup's 16 instead of 20), but I don't have any excuse for writing this story when I was supposed to work on HSRMO or a prize/kiriban/etc. instead. I knew my writing focus plan wouldn't work. X''''D I'll still try it for a while longer, but so far I've been mostly failing at it. :( 
Conveyance (post-HTTYD2)

Conveyance

(rough draft)

A DreamWorks' How to Train Your Dragon fanfic by Raberba girl

Summary: The concept of humans having their own true language is difficult for dragons to understand.

A/N: STILL NOT THE NEXT SMALL ADDITION CHAPTER. X"D Sorry again...!

This takes place during the first day or two of Valka being on Berk, probably shortly after the "explaining dragon smells and human bathing to HiccTooth" scene at the end of Smelly.

O.O.O

"No, it's impossible! There aren't enough sounds to say everything everything everything!"

"There are," Valka insisted to the crowd of incredulous dragons who surrounded her. "I will explain. Smell my coverings; what are they telling you?"

The dragons indicated all the information they were able to read from her clothes alone. "You are two halves with your fourwing that you love, you were in the sea-king alpha's flock but now you are in our nightwing alpha's flock with us, you like to be close to your young adult male offspring our consort, you played with a two-head hatchling a little while ago, the last thing you ate was roasted sheep...." They kept going until Valka finally stopped them.

"Okay. That's what my coverings are telling you. Do you know what they're telling me?"

They waited expectantly.

Valka sniffed the sleeve of her tunic, then said, "My coverings tell me that I have been close to
dragons for a while."

They kept waiting.

"No more!" she laughed. "That is the only only only thing my coverings can say to me!"

The dragons were incredulous. "You really can't smell?! Humans really can't smell AT ALL?!?!"

"We can barely smell anything, but we can hear. All that information my clothes told you? Now I will say it with human words." She switched to Norse. "This Stormcutter, Cloudjumper, is my dearest companion, the other half of my heart. For twenty years I was the flockling of my good and wise Bewilderbeast alpha, but now I am here in Berk's flock--"

"You're not saying anything! Only chittering!"

"Chittering is human talking," Toothless corrected uncertainly. "But you can't say all that with just chittering!"

"Yes, I can. Order me to say something in human talk, Alpha-Dragon."

"Give me obeisance."

Valka raised her voice and said loudly, "Hail, Alpha! I am proud to love and serve You."

They stared.

She laughed again. "It was obeisance! Those sounds acknowledge You as alpha and tell You that I love You and I like being Your flockling."

They couldn't believe her.
"'Hail' means acknowledge with enthusiasm. 'Alpha' means alpha. 'Love' means love, 'you' means the person I'm talking to, and the other sounds connect them so the meaning is deeper and better and clearer."

"How?!" the dragons howled, astonished and confused. "How?! How?! Crazy!"

"Use human talk to say that Half Of Me is the very much best human," Toothless demanded.

"Toothless's most favorite human is Hiccup," Valka said obediently.

Toothless considered this for a while, watched intently by his flocklings. "You said my human name and His human name," he mused. "Maybe...maybe maybe...."

"I can tell any of my human flockmates anything, without using real talk at all."

"She will do it to Consort, it will be very funny!" someone suggested, and everyone gleefully agreed.

"What do I say to him?" Valka asked.

"Tell him he must hurry and finish that long long long courtship and mate with his female and make babies! Why won't he make babies?!?!" Toothless and the other legacy dragons heartily agreed, and no one could understand why Valka thought this was so funny.

She finally managed to stop laughing and say, "No. Human mating can be very complicated; if I tell him that, he won't do it. I will tell him something very much easier instead."

"Tell him we will go fishing [---]." Animals' sense of and communication about location and measurement data was too complex and alien. It had never been something Valka was able to understand or convey; she'd always had to rely on Cloudjumper for that.

"I should tell him to do something that he can do right away, to show you that he understood what I said," Valka suggested. "Maybe we can offer him different kinds of food and tell him which one to choose."
After quite a lot of discussion and planning (and a fair bit of laughter), they all flew off in search of their flock consort.

Hiccup, who was standing near the Great Hall with Astrid, Gobber, Eret, and an armful of paperwork, looked all too happy to be interrupted by a horde of dragons descending around him.

Eret gulped and nervously edged closer to the other humans. Skullcrusher sniffed at him, wondering why he was so uneasy. "O-Okay then, well, guess I'd better get right on that, uh, so, see you later, Chief!" Eret tucked his own set of papers into his satchel, swung himself into the saddle, and looked relieved when Skullcrusher carried him away from the crowd of dragons willingly enough.

"You mind if we pick this back up again later, Gobber?" Hiccup asked.

"Ah, go on and play," Gobber chuckled. "I can start on my share in the meantime."

"Sorry...." Hiccup handed him a sheaf of papers, waved as the man ambled away, then set down the rest of the pile and turned to his mother. "What's up, Mom?"

Valka stood very still, moving only her lips. "Hello, Hiccup. Don't question me yet, I'll explain later. Please just follow my instructions."

"Uh, okay. Why are you standing like that, is something wrong?"

"I think that counts as a question, babe," Astrid stage-whispered, grinning.

Hiccup rolled his eyes and grinned back, then looked around in confusion at the dragons. Some of them were dumping assorted objects into a pile, and all of them seemed to have their attention fixed on Hiccup eagerly. "O-kaaay...."

"Hiccup," Valka said, still without moving. "Look through the pile, find your tunic, and give it to Toothless."
"My tunic?" Hiccup looked, saw that one of his tunics was indeed sitting in the pile, half covered by a shield. Shaking his head in good-natured confusion, he dug out the garment, walked over to his dragon, and held it out. "Happy now, bud?"

Toothless made an excited sound. Since he wasn't making a move to take it, Hiccup playfully dropped it on his head, and Toothless immediately shook the tunic to the ground.

"Now," Valka instructed, "take that piece of granite and feed it to Riv-- I mean, to the purple Gronckle."

"O-kay." Hiccup obeyed, noting that more and more dragons kept eagerly joining the crowd.

"Now go kiss Astrid."

"Huh. Don't mind if I do," Hiccup said, exchanging grins with his fiancée as he headed over to her.

"Ideally, you'd have sex right now so they can all watch you make her pregnant--"

"WHAT?!" the couple exclaimed.

"--but I keep telling them that won't happen, so we'll settle for a kiss instead."

"Ooooookay."

After a pause, Valka called, "Hiccup. Hiccup! We're not quite done."

"Mmmm, but I like this one," Hiccup murmured into Astrid's lips.

"I like this one too--" Astrid agreed breathily.

"...You really need to get married soon, Hiccup," Valka remarked.
Hiccup sobered, lowering his head until it rested on Astrid's shoulder. "Yeah...we really do..." he agreed quietly, suddenly feeling his father's death and the weight of responsibility pressing heavily on him. Astrid stroked his cheek in a comforting gesture.

"Hiccup," Valka said, trying to stay patient, "it's crucial that I don't move."

He took a deep breath and raised his head, though he kept his arms around Astrid's waist. "What's the next one?"

"Tell Toothless you love him."

"Aw. I love you, bud." Hiccup said, trying to get back into a playful mood.

"Oh-- No, I meant, say it the way a dragon would, not in human words. Go nuzzle him."

"Heh. Okay." Hiccup went to rub his face against the Night Fury's. "This means 'I - love - you,' huh?" he chirped.

"You really do talk," Toothless marveled, "maybe it is real talk, but it's human real talk that is different than real real talk, but both of them are still real...?!"

"Now," Valka said, "pretend to be very frightened of me."

Hiccup made a show of cowering. "Nooo, Mommy, don't be mad at meee!"

"Pretend to be angry and authoritative."

Hiccup threw back his shoulders and made a sharp gesture. "Know your place, woman!" he asserted in the older generation's accent, trying to keep a straight face when Astrid made an amused "Pfft" noise behind him.
"Pretend you love me."

"Awww, Mom, I don't have to pretend that," Hiccup crooned, going over to hug her.

"Last one. You are the flock consort. Declare this in human words, but also in a way they can understand: stand next to Toothless and flare your wings."

"My wi--?" Hiccup looked down at himself, at the flight suit he still wore under the chieftain's bearskin cloak.

He went over to Toothless, crouched briefly to slide his arms through the loops of the suit, and unfurled his wings as he stood back up. The cloak caught on his arms and spread out, nicely accentuating the gesture. "I'm the flock consort, whatever that's supposed to mean!" he yelled, a little startled when Toothless flung out his wings and crowed at the same time.

The by now enormous crowd of dragons exploded into a deafening roar of response, quickly followed by excited jumping and wing-flapping and crowing that seemed almost like applause.

"Humans really can talk!"

"I can't believe it!"

"All that chitter chitter chitter actually MEANS THINGS, real things, they can talk to each other even when they don't say anything at all...!"

When the din finally faded enough for the humans to hear each other again, Hiccup asked his mother, "What was all that about?"

"Hiccup," she laughed, clapping him on the back, "you just proved to them that we humans really do have our own language."

"Well, of course we have our own language!"
Author's Note that I forgot to include with *Smelly*: I'm pretty sure that this piece of headcanon was indirectly inspired by Robin McKinley's book *Dragonhaven*, which is about a teenage boy who adopts an orphaned dragon hatchling. There's one part about how they use his dirty clothes and sheets to nest the hatchling in and calm her down when they're trying to deal with her separation anxiety. I combined that with my general knowledge and observations of animals and their sense of smell.

Author's Notes for this fic, *Conveyance*: Once again, I tried to write more of chapter 5 of *Small Addition*, but once again, some of the material informed me that it was a one-shot-thank-you-very-much, instead of part of the chapter. *sweatdrop*

Valka is not the sort of character I would have expected this behavior from, but ever since I wrote chapter 4, she suddenly started throwing all these plot bunnies at me and trying to steal *A Small Addition To Berk's Flock* away from Squirt. Hiccup, Toothless, and Astrid are all kind of sneakily going along with it, and Squirt's not bothering to protest, because he hates being in the spotlight and is secretly relieved that they're redirecting attention away from him.

So I'm thinking, maybe I'll just corral the irrelevant Valka/HiccTooth/HiccStrid plunnies (which include most of the "Hiccup learning Dragonese" scenes) into individual ficlets, and force the focus of *Small Addition* back onto Squirt where it's supposed to be. Because sorry, Squirt honey, but you are the whole point of me starting that fic in the first place, and everyone loves you and wants you back onscreen, and I need to get your fic over and done with so I can move on to other stories, so deal with it.

Everything's all going to continue being posted together in the same series on AO3 and FFN anyway, so it probably won't affect your reading experience too badly. (Unless the erratic chronology bothers you.) I just wanted to explain why *A Small Addition To Berk's Flock* keeps being interrupted by standalone ficlets that aren't necessarily in chronological order, and also why there keeps being delays with chapter 5.

Ftr, I'm now up to 5,000 words with bulbul's fic.
Induction {post-HTTYD1}

Induction

(rough draft)

A DreamWorks' How to Train Your Dragon fanfic by Raberba girl

"FFN Stats Goal" kiriban for Le'letha

Summary: Flock leaders have a duty to perform for their newborn flock members.

A/N: Still not Small Addition. No excuses this time; I'm just a fail. :( 

"Risk" is Toothless's name when he's still in the Red Death's flock and not the only Night Fury. I'm dissatisfied with the name, and might later change it to something else that better expresses his identifying trait, but I can't think of anything better at the moment.

POSSIBLE TRIGGER WARNING: The reference to miscarriage is very brief and involves dragons rather than humans, but I wanted to mention it here just to be safe.

o.o.o

Risk was the one who usually came up with crazy, rebellious ideas, but this one was Rainbow Chaser's. Probably because she could think of nothing but babies at the time, and that intense, wild frustration gave a particular edge to her heart-pain as she and the rest of the flock watched hatchlings get devoured by the queen.

It was the beginning of winter. Wanderer and Risk were already beaten into uselessness, too old and young (respectively) to handle a thwarted parent, and even Feather Snatcher was worn out from holding Rainbow Chaser in check. The female nightwing paced back and forth, screaming for one of the non-nightwing males to come fight her, because the females were all pregnant and couldn't risk being injured in a thwart-fight.

"It's good you can't find your mate and get pregnant," a fireskin hissed as he approached. "If you
After that fight, Rainbow Chaser's head cleared enough for her to be able to think about what the fireskin had said. She looked around at the mothers-to-be who were grieving when they should have been happy. She looked at her fellow nightwings: Wanderer, whose mate had been killed, and the two younger males, who had never had a mate at all. They were all trapped here with her, where none of them could make a new generation of nightwings.

Now that the thwarted mating haze was beaten back to a tolerable level, Rainbow Chaser had room to be angry, and crafty. "We must not let this new generation be born here," she said.

Everyone stared at her in astonishment. Let their babies hatch somewhere that wasn't their nest?! Impossible!

"We must fight! Your babies want to be born here where you were, but we will tell them NO! We will make them hatch somewhere else instead, where She can't reach them, and then they will grow up and hatch their own babies there instead of this horrible bad here!!"

It was Risk who pointed out, in support of this crazy proposition, "If new babies are born not-here, they won't get eaten. They will be alive and grow up and help us feed Her so maybe there will be more food left over for us."

Rainbow Chaser smiled a dragon smile. Risk might be crazy and tend to get people almost killed (occasionally more than almost...), but at least he was willing to try a desperate plan.

Not that he himself, being male and mateless, had any use to this particular plan.

And some dragons had learned to be leery of anything Risk suggested or supported. "You like this crazy idea, Risk?"

"It's a good idea!" Risk insisted.

"Friend died because he was helping Risk with a crazy plan," a spinetail said accusingly.
A rock-eater, hunching down to hide her belly in a protective way, said, "Our hatchlings will die if we do this, not Rainbow Chaser's. Rainbow Chaser is thwarted, she will have no hatchlings to lose."

As Rainbow Chaser was about to fly into a rage, Wanderer got to his feet, stiffly because of his recent bruises, and spoke up. He was an Elder; everyone quieted down to listen to him. "Hatchlings and mothers will die anyway," he said. "We will die anyway. If we keep doing the same same same thing, we will keep dying. Let's die trying new things until we find a way to stop dying."

o.o.o.o.o

It was difficult. Some dragons couldn't resist their instincts; others experienced miscarriages from the stress.

But some of them managed it. It was Wanderer who found the island, a safe one, still within range of the queen's call but far, far away from the reach of her jaws.

Enough of the hatchlings were born healthy. And when they grew up and it was their turn to give birth, their instincts took them to the island where their own babies could be born safely.

Thus the flock defied their self-destructive master.

o.o.o.o.o

As long as the massive tyrant ruled over them, the hatching grounds were a haven. Now, however, there was a different problem.

The flock had a new queen now, a properly benevolent one who posed no harm to their hatchlings - but when hatching season came, the dragons' instincts pulled them back to the island, away from their new nest and their beloved queen.

As consort, Risk (now called 'Toothless,' whatever that meant...) was quite worried about his queen being unable to claim the new generation. Hiccup refused to follow His flocklings to the hatching grounds, and since Toothless was now crippled and could only go wherever his queen wanted him to go, both flock leaders were stuck alone at the nest as eggs were laid far away from them.
But Toothless had learned to trust Hiccup, so he waited, trying to be patient.

He did have a moment of outraged doubt at one point, when his ridiculous human sent him away by himself, as if he thought the consort was an acceptable substitute for the queen in a matter like this!!

But of course Toothless needn't have worried. Hiccup was Hiccup, after all. He eventually did make his way to the island and did claim the hatchlings before it was too late.

Even if, for some reason, he was rather annoyed that no one would help him carry all the babies into the big dead wood thing. Why in the world would he ask them to help with such a responsibility?? He was the one who had chosen that method for getting his scent onto all the hatchlings and into their noses.

It was crazy (as always), but it worked (as always), and he even led them all home far earlier than if they'd had to wait for the babies get strong enough to fly back on their own.

0.0.0.0.0

Five years later; winter. Hiccup showed no inclination for wanting the hatchlings to be born at the nest, so the mothers didn't have to fight instinct again.

Of course there still was trouble, because EVERYTHING was a struggle when you had even a loving, clever, wonderful, but still stupid crazy human queen who couldn't smell anything or understand half of the things you told him.

"Awwwww, look at the babies~"

"Pick them up, Queen," Toothless instructed.

"Oh, hey, you, now don't get jealous."

"Pick them up! With Your paws! Nuzzle them and lick them!!" Toothless was pretty sure that his crazy lick-hating queen wouldn't actually touch his tongue to the babies, but the touch of his skin was better than nothing. Toothless dumped the hatchlings into Hiccup's lap.
"Whoa! Ow, hot."

Toothless waited impatiently for Hiccup to cuddle the babies. Then he grabbed Hiccup's arm in his toothless mouth and dragged Him over to the next aerie. "Aww, hey, guys. Hey there~ Heheh, here, look, I've got two hands; each head can have one, okay?"

About five aeries later, Hiccup apparently got tired. "Okay, let's say we call it a day now, huh, bud? It'll be dark soon, we should probably head back home."

"No we will not stop, Crazy! We just started!"

They made it through a few more aeries before Hiccup got annoyed and refused to move. "Seriously, Toothless, let's go. We can come back and play with the babies again tomorrow."

Toothless impatiently bounded off, picked up a hatchling from the next clutch, and came back to present it to Hiccup. "Toothless, he's really cute, but it's time to go home now."

"Everyone," Toothless ordered, "you must bring your hatchlings to Queen, He won't go to them anymore."

O.o.o

Hiccup watched, wide-eyed and open-mouthed, as dragons started lining up to drop their hatchlings into his lap. "What...what is happening here?!" And then Toothless would get mad at him when he tried to put a stop to it.

So Hiccup gave up and started cuddling hatchling after hatchling after hatchling in a resigned way. After a while, he found that he didn't specifically have to cuddle them as long as he at least scrubbed his hands all over them. Then, when his hands started getting chapped and cut up, he experimented with rubbing hatchlings on his arm or chest or whatever instead.

Toothless scolded him until he went back to using skin instead of clothing, though the Fury grudgingly subsided when Hiccup started rubbing hatchlings with the inside of his tunic. But Toothless only tolerated that for so long, and Hiccup was starting to get too cold, anyway. There
were still *so many hatchlings left to go.* "Toothleeeess!"

The dragon examined his poor hands, licked them so that they were moisturized again and soothed - then made him keep going.

"...We had better not be doing this next hatching season. I swear, Toothless, I am *not* doing this again; why is this so important to you, anyway??"

When, at long last, the final hatchling was picked up by its mother and carried back to its aerie, Hiccup was too exhausted to fly. He moaned and curled up on the softest patch of rock he could find, tired and aching and cold and miserable.

Toothless tugged his hands back out into the open and nursed them again with his healing saliva, then curled around Hiccup to warm and comfort him. "So tired...seriously, did it have to be *every single* hatchling...?"

0.0.0.0.0

Luckily, by the time the next hatching season came around five years later, Toothless had taken Hiccup's place as the head dragon.

Hiccup, with his mother at his side, watched as the Night Fury alpha moved throughout the hatching grounds, nuzzling and licking the new babies, introducing himself as their leader and marking them as new flock members and placing them under his protection. Valka explained all this as they watched.

"Ohhhhhhh," Hiccup realized.

Valka eyed him. "You were queen long enough to have seen at least one hatching," she said, a questioning note in her voice.

Hiccup laughed a lot. "Oh, man...oh, man, I'm glad you're here, *so much stuff* makes *so much more sense* now...."
Author's Notes: A few small details in this story might not match with my general headcanon. In *When Loved Ones Are Near*, the dragons apparently have babies every year, but in this one, they only have babies every five years, and I think I like that latter idea better for my general headcanon. Whichever version I use in the future will depend on the needs of the story.

By the way, thank you to everyone who reviewed *Conveyance*! I replied to some reviews, but haven't finished replying to all of them yet; I'll get to it soon! I really appreciate everyone who took the time to comment. :)

There was a statistics goal on FFN that I had been waiting for yeeeaaars to be reached. None of my Kingdom Hearts fics were popular enough to manage it, but you HTTYD readers were lovely and made "The Dragon Queen of Berk" my most Faved series/story on FFN. ^^ Thank yooouuu! I offered a kiriban for the occasion, and Le'letha claimed it. ^^ (Ftr, the other kiriban was finally claimed the other day by Summoning Secrets~)

There were actually several plot bunnies on Le'letha's suggestion list that I really liked and might still write eventually, but this "Toothless makes Hiccup attend a hatchling" one was the one that got written first. Even though it's probably nothing like what Letha was imagining. X'''D It only got written so (relatively...) fast because it's so short, and was written by hand in my notebooks when I didn't have computer access. ^^; I've been caught up in some dumb real life stuff lately that really cut down on my computer/writing/e-mail/reviewing time.

There's some headcanon I've been working on for some (still unposted) stories that made its way into this ficlet, so this is the first time readers are seeing it. But I have several stories in the works, both canon-based and my HSRMO AU, that'll go into more detail about Tooth's time in the Red Death's flock, and about dragon mating. *sweatdrop*
**Factions {post-HTTYD2}**

Factions

(rough draft)

A DreamWorks' *How to Train Your Dragon* fanfic by Raberba girl

**Summary:** After the events that resulted in Toothless becoming alpha, Berk’s vastly changed dragon flock now has three distinct factions.

A/N: This happens really close to *Conveyance*, though I'm not sure yet if it should be before or after. ^^;

0.0.0

A child's shrieks exploded through the air. They were not playful screams; there was a recognizable note of pain and fear.

While many humans and even more dragons just stared in confusion, a cluster of Gronckles, Nadders, and a few Zipplebacks immediately took to the air in the direction of the cries.

Hiccup, knowing that *everything* that happened in this village now was his responsibility, flung himself onto Toothless's back and then seconds later was dismounting and striding toward the source of the disturbance.

A Snafflefang with a scarred neck, one of the new dragons, was snarling in a low-to-the-ground, spread-wings aggressive stance. It had a cluster of scarred companions gathering around it in support.

They faced a rapidly growing group of defensively growling dragons, all of whom Hiccup recognized as flock members he’d grown up with for the past five years. They all seemed to be centered around a small point from which muffled sobs were coming. "Oh no...." Hiccup headed straight for that central point. A few dragons detached from the group and sort of drew him in: two Gronckles planted themselves protectively between him and the other group of dragons, and a Zippleback’s hissing heads came snaking past him to add to the barrier.
Only half noticing them, Hiccup crouched down and reached out. Wings were obligingly lifted out of his way, and the Nadder at the very center, curled tightly into herself like a mother protecting her clutch, squawked at Hiccup before slightly loosening her own protective wings. Hiccup finally caught a glimpse of the edge of a tunic and a pair of very small boots. "Hey there," he called softly.

"H-Hiccup?" the little girl's voice sniffled.

"Yeah, it's me, I'm here. Is that Brenna?" he asked, recognizing the most protective Nadder as the child's mother's dragon partner.

"Uh huh."

A Terrible Terror slipped out of the Nadder's cocooning embrace and fluttered around Hiccup, chittering urgently. "I know, little guy, it's okay, I got her," Hiccup said soothingly. "Brenna?" he called, "I'm right here, will you come out?"

"He scratched me," the child said in a shaking voice, then burst into fresh tears. "He scratched meee!!"

"Hey, sweetie, come here, come here, it's all right," Hiccup crooned, reaching out and, with some difficulty, managing to tug the girl into his lap. He looked in dismay at the bleeding scratch on her arm that she was cradling, and bit back a curse.

In the meantime, Toothless was raging at the Snafflefang. "You hurt a BABY, how DARE you, she is FLOCK, she is OURS, we PROTECT our flockmates and our young--!"

"It's not a hatchling!" the Snafflefang shrieked in protest. "It's a human cub, it hurt me, it threatened me!!!"

"She was just trying to play with you, Stupid!" one of the Nadders shrieked back, outraged.

"Flockmate marks all over her," a Zippleback hissed. "Flockmates are not to be harmed, especially young ones!"
"How can it be flock?! It's HUMAN, it's a monster, very many monsters here in this nest--!" The
dragons who had lived in Berk for five years hissed and flared their wings at what they perceived as
an insult, and many of the scarred dragons responded in kind.

Brenna's mother had been pushing and shoving her way through the crowd of dragons. She scooped
her child into her arms, away from the tongue of a Gronckle who had been washing the girl's wound.
"Brenna, Brenna, what happened?!

"The bad dragon hurt me, Mama," Brenna sniffled.

"He's not a bad dragon, Brenna," Hiccup said quickly. "He looks like he was one of Drago's, which
means humans have hurt him in the past. Maybe you did something by accident to scare him--"

"I don't like those dragons on our island, Hiccup," the woman cut in angrily. Hiccup stared at her. "I
know, I know, our dragons are safe, but all these new ones! I don't want them running loose around
our children!"

"The newcomers are 'our' dragons, too," Hiccup said quietly. He felt like he was floundering,
shocked and saddened by an anti-dragon sentiment he thought he'd never have to see again in his
village, struggling to think of a chiefly way to handle this.

That was when all the dragons surrounding them burst into their angry displays. Frightened, the
woman called for her Nadder and whisked her daughter away to safety, followed by a few of the
more maternal dragons who were concerned about the girl.

"Whoa, whoa, what's happening?!" Hiccup hurried to his partner's side. "Guys, calm down!"

"This human is your flock consort," Toothless snarled, indicating Hiccup. "He is not a monster. He
is alpha of OUR humans, and makes them not be monsters. Flockmates are flockmates, it doesn't
matter if they're dragons or humans!!"

"Hey there, fella. Hey." Hiccup was approaching the lead Snafflefang slowly and cautiously, hands
outstretched and eyes slightly averted. "What's got you all upset, huh? Are you the one who
scratched Brenna? Did she scare you?"

"Keep that...person...away from me," the Snafflefang growled, managing to show the bare minimum
of respect for his alpha's consort.

"Consort is gentle!" the other dragons insisted. "He won't won't won't hurt you, he is good!"

The Snafflefang only let Hiccup touch him when Toothless ordered him to, and then he hunched low in a defensive crouch, breathing heavily as Hiccup ran gentle hands over his hide. "Hey, big guy, it's all right," Hiccup murmured. "It's all right, no one's gonna hurt you. I know the kids can be kind of rough, I'm really sorry, but she didn't mean to hurt you, okay?"

It took a lot of petting and scratching and crooning and some dragon nip before the Snafflefang finally huffed and bared his throat, reluctantly and briefly, to Hiccup. Toothless reiterated his 'Don't hurt babies' order and dismissed him, and the Snafflefang slunk away.

Hiccup watched him go, then sighed and absentely patted Toothless's neck. "This is a problem, huh."

Later that day, after Brenna's wound had been treated and she'd had a chance to emotionally recover, Hiccup called the village together for a meeting, making sure the children and teenagers were in the front. "Okay, guys, listen. Obviously there have been a lot of changes around here, and one of them is that we have a lot more dragons now, from different backgrounds than the ones we got from the Red Death."

Hiccup paused a moment, glancing over at Toothless in surprise. His dragon was pacing and growling and rumbling and crooning and gesturing wings, head plates, and tail at a large crowd of newcomer dragons.

"We are FLOCK, all of us together, new flockmates and old flockmates." Toothless gave the exact number, in untranslatable dragon fashion, of all the dragons and all the humans who shared this island nest, as well as all the domesticated animals who existed in a strange, very undragonish limbo at the bottom of the hierarchy. "We are ALL loyal and protect each other!! We are alphas and flocklings, two halves and companions and friends and partners and mates and parents and offspring and flockmates! ALL of us who are marked belong together!"

"Uh...right. So," Hiccup continued, "our, um...Red Death, or, no, uh--" 'Stop stuttering,' he mentally scolded himself, and allowed himself a pause to think. "Legacy. The, uh, the legacy dragons that originally came from Dragon Island...you know, the old war and stuff...obviously we've known them for a long time, and we've learned how to get along really well."
"Humans are people. Some of them are monsters, but some of them are not. Our human flockmates are not monsters."

Hiccup tried not to smile at (or be distracted by) the impression he was getting that he and Toothless were simultaneously making speeches in two different languages to two different audiences. Well, except for his mother perched up there with Cloudjumper, who had a slightly frustrated look on her face as she was apparently getting hit with both at once.

"But things are different now. We have a lot of new dragons from the alpha's-- from Mom's-- Uh...." I am hopeless at this,' he thought in frustration. 'Stupid weedy little voice, stupid stuttering, stupid speeches, gah....' "The Dragon Sanctuary. The ice nest that the white Bewilderbeast king made, not the one who attacked Berk, the other one--" 'It doesn't matter; get on with it.' "Those dragons were used to a good Bewilderbeast looking after them and feeding them and protecting them, and a lot of them were rescued from dragon trappers. Mom was the only human in their nest, and all the other humans they probably knew were always trying to trap them, so you guys will have to be careful around them."

"They don't have scales or fangs or claws or horns or heartfire to protect them, that's why they make their blades and coverings. But they don't use blades on us anymore!! Blades are for enemies, not flockmates! Their flesh is very soft and fragile, you must be VERY CAREFUL or you will hurt them. Humans are very so much weak without their craziness, and their cubs are even weaker!"

"You can't just march up to them and start poking them or pounding them on the back or whatever the way you can with our-- Not our, ALL these dragons are 'ours,' okay? I meant the legacy dragons, the ones who've been here for so long. The legacy dragons are used to us, they can tell we're not a threat. But the newbies? You have to be careful. I know we're Vikings, raaawrgh and all that, but you still have to be gentle. Especially if the dragon's got scars, because that most likely means they've been abused by humans and are afraid of us - and scared animals will hurt whatever they think is threatening them."

"The cubs are rough, sometimes they like to run at you and jump on you and pull on you and hit you. They're playing, and they're stupid. Even if they hurt you, you have to be gentle, because they're babies and they're fragile."

"And it's even worse for the poor rescues. Astrid and the others were there, you can ask them; you can ask Eret, he knows. The dragons who were in Drago's army were tortured. They learned to be scared of humans, and they probably learned to hate us, too; we have to teach them, we have to show them that they're safe now. We have to show them that they can trust us, that we'll keep them safe and take care of them." The human crowd had been reasonably quiet for a while, but the muttering had been growing, and this was the point where Hiccup was forced to pause and start fielding protests.
"Humans are very stupid and crazy, but you have to get used to it, because it's okay that they're stupid and crazy. You have to be patient and watch them and listen to them, because they can't talk for real but they talk their own crazy way that they think means something even though it doesn't mean anything."

"Dragon Training!" Hiccup yelled, trying to get everyone to shut up. "At the Academy, starting tomorrow. Everyone who was born less than eleven years ago is required to attend, and I'm going to make a list of all the older people I want to come, too."

He pointed at the children. "You guys are too young to remember. You were only five or four or three or whatever when we made friends with the dragons--" He was interrupted by many of the children loudly insisting on their exact ages. "Guys, guys, stop, it doesn't matter! The point is that you have to learn how to approach a dragon the right way, not just dive-bombing it and expecting it to put up with you. Usually people don't learn how to approach new dragons 'til they're old enough to join the Academy, but you're going to start learning tomorrow." The kids seemed happy at the prospect of soon getting to try something dangerous.

"If a human flockmate is scaring you or hurting you or confusing you, don't threaten them and DON'T hurt them!! Flee away from them and come ask me or Consort for help. Or Friend," he indicated Stormfly, "or Dragonheart who is a dragon-and-human person. We will comfort you and help you, and then none of our flock will get hurt."

"Guys, we've done this before, and we can do it again. We're Vikings!" The cheer they made in response was unexpected, but it gave Hiccup an idea. "We are Hooligans!" Hiccup yelled, and smiled in relief and pleasure when his people happily roared back at him, proud of their tribe identity.

In the days that followed, Hiccup, Toothless, and Valka did a lot of training. All the humans were taught how to properly approach and interact with a dragon whose trust hadn't been earned yet, as well as the basics of dragon hierarchy and some essential aspects of dragon culture and communication. (Hiccup was exasperated to discover how many Vikings needed to be explicitly told things like, "If a dragon lowers its head and growls at you, don't make any sudden moves or loud noises." He was also exasperated by how many Vikings, after being told, would then argue about it.) All the new dragons were taught how to handle humans without damaging them, and some essential aspects of human culture and communication. ("Bared human teeth means happy, not threatening!!")

Vikings were still Vikings and dragons were still dragons, so of course they weren't able to eliminate all misunderstandings and injuries. For that matter, there'd been plenty mistakes made even before Hiccup had discovered Itchy Armpit and started the chain of events that had changed Berk forever.
However, things did start to improve, and Hiccup hoped that with enough time and guidance, his people and Toothless's people would once more settle into a harmonious and understanding whole.

0.0.0

**Author's Notes:** Again, thank you to everyone who's been reviewing and messaging me! I'll do my best to reply soon, I'm sorry for being so bad at this!

Btw, I have a new poll on my FFN profile. I like to know what my readers want to see even if I'm bad at actually writing what they want. ^^;

The whole factions thing wasn't planned, it just naturally came up as I thought of the flock's reactions to various things while working on *Small Addition*. The legacy dragons (which include any wild dragons who liked Hiccup enough to follow him home and become flock members), the king's dragons, and the rescues sort of act like three 'states,' each with its unique background, general attitude, and preferences, that are part of the same 'country' headed by Toothless. I was considering writing a long author's note to explain all this, but then decided to just make a story out of it. So sorry if this fic is lame; it's really just my headcanon rambling that got turned into an expositional story.

*sweatdrop*

I kind of suck at coming up with cool ward-off-gnomes-and-trolls names, so I just grabbed the name 'Brenna' for the kid in this fic because it's a common one I've seen in HTTYD fanfiction. :/

It's times like these that I feel like a failure...constantly three steps forward, then one or two steps back.... Made plans for this weekend to get important real life stuff done; got the most urgent thing finished, but only by wasting more than half a day with procrastination; got nothing else done.

Meanwhile, on the fandom front, the fic at the top of my list at the moment is bulbul's fic, which is probably why I'm not writing it. D: (Maybe I should make a different fic the highest priority, so that I can work on bulbul's fic as a way of procrastinating on it. ^_^;) And because I did something stupid again, I still haven't replied to a lot of reviews and messages, I'm really sorry about that and will try to reply to them soon!

And instead of trying to clean up and get back on track, a fic about Hiccup's son was writing itself in my head, so like an idiot, I sat down to draft it instead of working on actual important stuff - but I didn't even get that done, because I found myself writing this fic instead. X''''D *headdesk* It was originally meant to be a seven-part one-shot, then when I realized how long the first part was, I thought of making it a seven-part multi-chapter, then realized that only one of the other ideas had any meat to it, so I was like, "Whatever; I'll just post what I wrote as a one-part one-shot." That other idea
might eventually be written as an individual one-shot or worked into Small Addition or something.

The side-effect of my Fail At Life, which is not really a good one for someone in my situation, is that I've been reading a ton of fanfiction. *sweatdrop* It's been YEARS since I've gone actively looking for fanfiction on a regular basis (I was writing it way more than I was reading it), but for some reason I've been craving HTTYD reading material. Binge-reading is really, really bad for me. *sweatdrop*

But ftr, my notable finds of this latest round are Prodigal Son by commandocucumber, my favorite of the 'HiccTooth run away from Berk' fics that I've read so far (I still haven't gotten to Midorikosama's series yet, even though it's been recommended to me several times, but it's on my 'HTTYD Fics To Read' list); Dragonfriend by dataeatr, an OC fic that's actually pretty good (which is a shocker for me since I have a low opinion of Fan Characters in general [even though I've started making a lot of my own, lol]); Sherlock Holmes and The Black Scale by IonitaMircea32, I always love when people are able to get bizarre-sounding crossovers to work; and a fic I will not name that's such a freaking TEXTBOOK Mary Sue that I'm half-convinced it's a parody. XD XD I lost interest after the first chapter, but I kind of loved chapter 1 for pretty much hitting every single point on the How To Write A Mary Sue List. XD I had been idly considering someday writing a HTTYD deliberate Suefic, but now I don't think I will, because this fic I found is exactly the kind of thing I'd wanted to write, so there's no point. ^^;
Favorite Toy {post-HTTYD2}

Favorite Toy

(rough draft)

A DreamWorks' How to Train Your Dragon fanfic by Raberba girl

30,000 FFN profile hits kiriban for Summoning Secrets

Summary: Snowflake the Screaming Death pays Berk a visit for the first time since Valka and Squirt took up residence.

A/N: Takes place at some point during A Small Addition To Berk's Flock, I'm not exactly sure when.

0.0.0

Valka was an early riser, but the bone-rattling roar boomed over Berk before even she was up and about.

The stables rang with the startled squawks and chirring and grumbling from other dragons who had been awakened. Valka took only enough time to shove her feet into her boots before leaping onto Cloudjumper's back.

The two burst from the stables into the predawn darkness. Below, groggy Vikings were starting to stumble out of their houses - but Valka barely noticed them because she was too busy letting her mouth hang open at the sight of a truly ENORMOUS, white Whispering Death swooping over the village. With the exception of the Bewilderbeasts, Valka had never seen a dragon comparable in size.

When the creature let out another ferocious roar, Valka clapped her hands over her ears and wondered in distress how many casualties there would be if the flock had to drive off the invader.

Then she realized that the giant dragon wasn't challenging or threatening - it was calling.
"WHERE IS SCRATCHER COME HERE I WANT YOU HELLO."

As Valka wondered who 'Scratcher' was, there was the sound of a different enormous bellow, accompanied by the roar of a huge amount of displaced water. She and her dragon whirled to find Squirt rising out of the sea, looking angry.

"I DON'T LIKE YOU, GO AWAY," the Bewilderbeast yelled up at the stranger.

"WHO ARE YOU?!" the giant Whispering Death screamed back.

"MINE, MY HUMAN, MINE."

"Are they talking about Hiccup?" Valka gasped. There was only one human Squirt loved enough to be possessive of.

"NO NO NO MINE TOO NIGHTWING'S TOO EVERYONE'S TOO, SHARE SHARE SHARE!!!!!!"

There was a cry from a Night Fury, and Toothless came swooping in to join Cloudjumper. Hiccup, still in his nightclothes, gaped out at the two giants. "Oh no, dang it, Snowflake, some warning would have been nice; Squirt no, don't do that, no, guys, nooooo, agh!"

It was extremely alarming for two behemoths to battle each other so close to the village. The mutant Whispering Death, who apparently had the improbable name of 'Snowflake,' kept screaming at deafening volumes and diving at Squirt. Squirt would dodge and duck into the sea in response, glide to a different position, and then burst out again while spewing ice. Clouds of steam from Snowflake's missed shots were rising from the ocean, and Squirt's own missed shots were drifting among the waves like massive, jagged bathtub toys.

"Whoo, awesome!" one of the Thorston twins yelled.

"Hiccup!" Valka cried, "Do you know that dragon?!"

"Yeah, it's Snowflake, long story; hold on, I gotta--" He was off before she could hear the rest.
Hiccup and Toothless dove between the combatants. The alpha roared, and the chief stretched out his arms as if his tiny body would be able to shield the two titans from each other. "GUYS, STOP IT."

Snowflake whined in frustration, ducking her head back and forth around Hiccup with her eyes still fixed on her opponent. Squirt rumbled in displeasure, returning the glare.

"HALF OF ME SAYS NO FIGHTING," Toothless ordered. "You KNOW this, no fight no violence, soft teeth and claws! SOFT! OUR HUMAN THAT WE LOVE SAYS SO!!"

"Squirt, calm down, she's a friend; Snowflake, back off! BACK OFF! That's right, the two of you need to settle down, there is no reason to be trying to tear each other's heads off!"

Squirt, realizing belatedly that he had displeased his master, wailed and staggered, crooning his misery. Snowflake snarled, confused and unsettled by his behavior.

"Oh man, Squirt, come on, it's okay, I'm not mad...." Hiccup landed on Squirt's head, hopped off of Toothless, and clung to a facial spike for support as he tried to pat Squirt hard enough for him to feel. "Good boy, okay? You stopped fighting, so good boy, good job, okay?"

"Good?? He is pleased with me??"

Seeing her chance, Snowflake flicked out her tongue, snagged Hiccup with it, locked him safely in her mouth, and flew away.

Toothless and Squirt screamed together in absolute outrage. Squirt charged off in pursuit, with the now-flightless Toothless scrambling across his head in helpless frustration.

"What is going on here?" Valka said in bewilderment.

Astrid, who'd slung armor over her nightclothes, swooped nearby on Stormfly and said casually, "Have we mentioned lately that dragons love Hiccup? Like, all dragons really love Hiccup? Their jealousy can get pretty intense, it'd be funny if it wasn't so dangerous...."
Snowflake was pursued and eventually cornered by hundreds and hundreds of dragons, who were furious at the kidnapping of their flock consort. The Screaming Death lay coiled at the base of a cliff, growling through her clenched jaws and glaring at the swarm of smaller dragons. They had her so completely surrounded that Squirt, and Toothless along with him, were croaking their frustration at being unable to get through.

Astrid and Valka came to a landing, the younger woman pushing through the crowd of agitated reptiles and approaching the Screaming Death. "Snowflake," she ordered firmly, "give my fiancé back right now."

Snowflake growled at her, too.

"You have caught our precious thing, but you can't enjoy him like this," Valka reasoned. "Please give him back."

"Mine." But Snowflake reluctantly opened her jaws and let her captive spill onto the ground in a pool of saliva.

"Half Of Me!" Toothless yelled. He leaped and scrambled down Squirt's body, trying to reach the ground.

Hiccup was shuddering with disgust, and with the trauma of having been trapped in such an uncomfortable space during Snowflake's wild flight. Dragon drool drenched him and had gotten into his eyes and ears and mouth. "I need a minute," he said faintly.

He didn't really get one, since of course everyone was anxious about him. Most of the new dragons, seeing him returned safe and decently sound, wandered away, but many of the legacy dragons stayed to fuss over him along with his frantic Night Fury, his worried mother, and his slightly amused fiancée.

After Hiccup had been wiped down a bit, and licked and hugged and petted and teased and soothed and had finally regained most of his composure, he struggled to his feet, clinging to Toothless for support, and limped over to Snowflake. "What did you think you were doing, huh?"

She protested in a tone that reminded Valka of a human teenager's whine.
"No, we've talked about this: I'm the one who decides when I climb into your mouth. You are not in charge of when you get to eat me."

"I missed yoooouuuu, I came to see yoooouuuu, I love yoooouuuu, don't scold me!"

Squirt, still unable to reach Hiccup, showered him a little desperately with frost.

"Urrrggghhhh, Squirt, not helping," Hiccup moaned.

"This 'share,' I don't like it," Squirt growled. He was only just able to tolerate having to share his precious thing with other people who were each about the size of one of his toenails - but having to share him with a sky-king was insufferable. "I want Him, I want Him, I don't want YOU to have Him!"

"Half Of Me belongs to ME FIRST," Toothless snarled before Snowflake could reply, "I have first first FIRST claim on Him!!"

Valka chuckled. "You're very popular," she told Hiccup.

He barely heard her, he was rushing to stop Snowflake and Squirt from attacking each other again. "Guys, NO! Mom-- Hey, Mom? Can you tell them that I'll give them some ridge scratching if they're good, but only if they behave?"

Valka relayed the message. Ten minutes later, Squirt and Snowflake had their heads nuzzled together, so that Hiccup could reach both of them. He had his unignited Dragon Blade in one hand, scratching away at Snowflake, and his detached peg leg in the other, scratching at Squirt. Both of the giant dragons were sprawled comfortably with their eyes half-closed, purring and rumbling and sighing in pleasure. Toothless was cuddled close to Hiccup in a possessive way, resting his head in Hiccup's lap.

Valka just stood there for a while, relishing the sight of her son surrounded by an adoring Night Fury, Bewilderbeast, and Screaming Death. It didn't matter that he was skinny and awkward; it didn't matter that he was missing a limb and couldn't walk without modification or even stand up without support. He was still the most magnificent thing she had ever seen, a true dragon master who could tame kings with his touch.
Oblivious to her admiration, he was rambling in his wry, amused, exasperated way. "...and my arms are getting kind of tired, but *oh well*, it beats having Berk frozen solid or shredded from underground. Both of them are just a couple of big babies. Isn't that right, guys? Couple of babies fighting over your favorite toy? I guess that makes me the toy, huh."

"I love you," Valka told him. "I love you *so much.*"

Hiccup looked slightly surprised, then smiled back. "Love you, too, Mom."

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**Author's Notes:** Summoning Secrets was the one who finally claimed my latest FFN kiriban (sort of...close enough that I gave it to her...not sure why FFN readers never seem interested in kiriban XD). For the retry (I failed the initial attempt), she gave me four story ideas. I told her there were three of them I'd play with, but ended up writing the fourth. XD I might someday write one or two of the other ideas, just for fun, because I liked those suggestions, too.

I totally forgot which fic I read it in or who wrote it, but the author had Valka sleeping in the stables with the dragons rather than either moving in with Hiccup or getting her own house, and I really liked that idea. I wish I could remember who it was to credit them....

...I know they probably didn't have bath toys back then. *headdesk* If I think of something less anachronistic, I'll fix it later.

I know there are plenty of wild dragons in the TV show who don't warm up to Hiccup, but I think that's more because the people working on the show wanted more adventurous conflict, so they made some of the dragons overly hostile. The dragons in the movies, particularly HTTYD2, treat Hiccup more like I'd expect them to, like that big guy who came up to nuzzle him when he first arrived in the Sanctuary.
Waiting {post-HTTYD1}

Waiting

(rough draft)

A DreamWorks' How to Train Your Dragon fanfic by Raberba girl

For bulbul523

Summary: After the Red Death's defeat, Toothless, Stoick, and the rest of Berk wait for Hiccup to awaken.

A/N: Told from Tooth's POV.

o.o.o

Wrong wrong wrong. That's what I'm thinking when I'm still asleep and when I stop being asleep and when I'm all awake, wrong and fear and anxiety and worry.

But it's okay, I think, because His smell is comforting me and the DEATH DEATH DEATH smell is from Her and not Him, I think. It's so big and He's so small that it's hard to tell, but yes, yes it's okay, good good good, because I can feel His heart beating against mine. He's alive. Something is still wrong and I'm anxious and worried and unhappy, but it's still okay because I didn't lose Him, I caught Him and shielded Him so that He can stay alive and safe and warm and close to me.

I know what the wrong scary anxious thing is now, I think. Humans, everywhere, a whole big pack of them all around me, and their queen too close and scary, but...maybe it's not a bad thing. There is no anger at all, none. Half Of Me and then that female He is courting were the only humans I ever found who sometimes didn't smell angry and scared even when they look at me. That's why I'm confused to see so many not-Half-Of-Me-or-His-female humans who are all looking at me but are not angry.

These humans aren't angry anymore, but they are saaaaaaad, very so much sad, their queen here is grieving because his heart is broken, I don't know why.
"I'm so...I'm so sorry."

This human queen is Half Of Me's sire. Maybe that's why there is such a strange strong bond between them, not just because they are queen and flockling, but also because Half Of Me's sire is stupid and thinks that my other half is still a cub and belongs to him. Humans are very, very stupid and can't smell anything. And Half Of Me doesn't smell like any emotions right now anyway because He's asleep, and His queen can't feel His heartbeat like I can. Maybe this queen is sad because he thinks his precious cub my other half is dead.

The humans aren't angry. Half Of Me is their packmate, they won't hurt Him, and they're not hurting me or threatening me. They're not even hurting those other dragons who are standing there right next to them. I think maybe my other half will be safe even if I let go of Him.... And I'm worried because Half Of Me is still asleep, I want Him to be awake instead, and smile His strange human smile at me and smell happy because He is with me. Maybe I'm squeezing Him too hard...He's so fragile, I forget a lot to be gentle with Him....

The human queen is shocked when he sees his not-cub, and pounces at Him feeling relief/hope/protection-fear.... He really didn't know at all that our precious thing is still alive. He puts his ear right on Half Of Me's heart to sense if it's still beating, and he is so relieved and happy when he hears it, it's amazing. He makes some croaking sounds, and then the whole human pack roars with happiness. Yes, my precious thing is alive, it's good good good good, everyone should be very so much happy.

The queen gently lays his big paw on my face, and I don't understand his growls, but I know for sure now that he loves Half Of Me very much and is very so much glad that He's alive, and he knows that I am the reason our precious thing is still alive, and that I'm amazing.

"Yes," I tell him, "I am," but I'm very tired and my head hurts, and I wish I knew that I was falling asleep again, but I don't until later when I wake up.

.o.o.o.o.o

Something is wrong and bad and horrible, I don't know what it is?!

Young humans are all around me, tugging on me and chittering at each other, but I don't care because now I know what's wrong, NONE OF THESE YOUNG HUMANS ARE HALF OF ME.
I get up, I try but I'm surprised that it's hard. I struggle and flounder and my legs hurt and feel so weak, but finally I'm standing up and looking around, looking looking looking for Half Of Me. His female is close, startled and wary and confused as she stares at me, and I think I scared the other young humans, but I don't care, because WHERE IS HALF OF ME?!?!

"He's over here, Toothless. Come on."

'Toothless.' That's the sound-name that my other half sometimes calls me. I think His female is talking to me, she called me and she is gesturing at me, she wants me to follow her? I don't care, all I care about is Half Of Me, where is---?!

Maybe His female knows where He is. "WHERE IS HALF OF ME???” I yell at her.

For a second she's frightened, then she's angry, and she's annoyed when she gestures again, bigger than before. "Come on, Toothless."

I follow her, calling as loud as I can for Half Of Me. There are a lot of dragons here now, not just humans; some of the flock came back when they smelled Her death-smell. Dragons and humans are mingling together talking with lots of different scents instead of just blasting fear anger terror fury desperation! at each other like usual, but I don't care because "WHERE IS HALF OF ME?!?!”

A spinetail and four rock-eaters come to tell me where my precious thing is. The spinetail pauses to rub her cheek against the human female's and tell her that she likes her. The young human bares her teeth in that strange human smile and pats the spinetail's chin and coos at her. Usually I would think that's amazing, but right now I only VERY SO MUCH WANT MY PRECIOUS THING.

The humans hid Him. He is nesting behind a boulder and covered with dead fur that smells more like the human queen than the animal it used to be. A big human with two paws that are made of wood and metal instead of flesh is sitting next to Half Of Me, chirring softly.

I don't care. I get as close to Half Of Me as I can so I can make sure He's all right, but it's annoying because the big human and the young female human are pushing hard at me and chittering urgently at me.

"Watch it, dragon--"
"Toothless, _stop_, don't jostle him--!"

"Whoa now, just take it easy--!"

They're pushing me and it's _annoying_, but I can still get my nose close to Half Of Me so I can smell Him.

He's still asleep. He doesn't smell good, I think He's sick. I voice my _dismay_ and lick His cheek, but He doesn't respond at all. My poor fragile tiny Half Of Me, something is wrong with Him, I'm so much worried and sad....

The humans stopped pushing me, and I'm very gentle as I nudge at Half Of Me and pull the big fur off of Him and smell Him all over. He's not awake, and He's a little sick, and one of His hind paws is missing, His leg smells like burned flesh and blood. He is not dead, I think hope hope He'll be all right soon.... But I don't know. I'm worried. He's shivering a little now, He's cold and so weak.

I pull the big fur back over Him, because my poor silly weak Half Of Me doesn't have enough of His own fur and coverings to keep Him warm, and I lie down beside Him. There's not enough room and I'm uncomfortable, but I don't care. I want to be close to my precious thing, and I will watch over Him until He's well again and wakes up and is happy to see me.

"What's that dragon doing here?!

"He came looking for Hiccup as soon as he woke up."

The human queen is worried/unhappy/protection-anxious as he flaps his forepaws at me, too close. I narrow my eyes and flatten my head plates to tell him to stop. "Run along, dragon."

I growl a little bit and stretch my foreleg across Half Of Me's body. I will protect my precious thing, and this is a very stupid queen if he doesn't understand that or if he ignores me.

"Stoick, the Night Fury's not gonna budge."
"Well, it'd better! My son didn't survive a battle with that monster just to get, to get burned or scratched, or...!"

"The beast won't hurt him, Stoick. Look at him! You'd have a better chance of snatching a bear cub out from under its mother's nose."

"I'm not saying it'll hurt him on purpose, Gobber. But it-- Hiccup's-- Gah, even if it just falls asleep and happens to roll over on him--!"

The other two humans are amused, I don't know why. I'm annoyed.

"Even after all this, you're still a pretty pathetic specimen, aren't you," Half Of Me's female says affectionately, poking Him gently with her paw.

I lie beside my human and wait. I wait and wait and wait and wait. Half Of Me still doesn't wake up. I watch more and more of my flockmates come back to see if She really is dead, and I watch them and Half Of Me's flockmates talk to each other.

The humans aren't angry, but most of them are not happy anymore. Most of them are worried or nervous or cautious or frustrated, and I stretch my foreleg over Half Of Me again in case I need to protect Him.

Half Of Me's female talks to the dragons the most. I will name her Wanted, because Half Of Me wants her to be His mate; I don't know why He courts her so slowly and meekly.

Wanted is making some of the humans become partners with dragons. She pushes some of the humans around and yells at them even though they are mature adults and she is young, but they let her boss them around. She's rough with them but she is gentle and quiet with the dragons, throwing her human weapons away and crooning to them and caressing them and leading them over to the humans she wants them to partner with. They listen to her, too, especially when her spinetail partner helps her.

The two human littermates were with her at first, but they provoked a fireskin and then a rock-eater into shooting at them and almost killing them, so Wanted yelled at them a lot and then made them go away with their two-head partner. Now they've found a nest of venomfang eggs and are throwing them between each other like toys, but their two-head comes and picks them up and carries them away before they can break any of the eggs or the venomfang dam can come back and bite them.
I wait and wait and wait. A few times Half Of Me stirs and grumbles in His sleep, but He doesn't wake up, even when I lick Him. The human I named Two Paws comes back sometimes to check on Half Of Me too, and he tries to give Half Of Me water.

The human queen comes much more often and tries to give Half Of Me water, too. He looks at Him for a long time and caresses His head-fur and makes sad rumbling noises at Him. I lift my head and try to nuzzle Human Queen to comfort him, because we're both sad about the same thing, but as soon as my nose touches his cheek, he jerks back and stares at me like he's afraid I'll attack him. "I'm not going to attack you. You love my precious thing, so I don't hate you anymore." Finally he goes away again.

I wait and wait and wait. Dragons with humans on their backs are flying away somewhere and sometimes coming back. I'm hungry and thirsty, but I don't want to leave Precious Thing, so I ignore the hunger and the thirst. The sun goes away and the moon comes, and it gets colder. Human Queen comes and puts another big fur on top of Half Of Me even though He's not cold because I'm keeping Him warm.

The humans are huddled close to each other and to dragons, and to fires that stay burning in the same place. I think the humans are making these strange stay-fires because they can't make fire in their bodies.

Two Paws comes and puts some fish and a metal thing full of water close to my head. I can reach them without leaving Half Of Me, so I eat and drink. I'm still hungry and thirsty, but not as much, so I can ignore it easier. I like Two Paws.

I wait and wait and wait. I have to pee, but I'm not going to leave Half Of Me here, so I ignore it like I ignore the hunger and the thirst.

Two dragon-and-human pairs come back, and the two humans call to their packmates. The human pack is energetic and eager now; a lot of them gather around their queen, and they all argue argue argue for a long time. They look at me and Half Of Me a lot, but they don't approach, so Precious Thing is still safe.

"Everyone, enough. I have more reason than any of you to want that ship here right away, but we are going to have to wait until sunrise. Until then, those of you who are not on watch should get some sleep." Human Queen comes back to his precious thing. He is very upset, but he doesn't like for me to comfort him, so I won't. He caresses and cradles Half Of Me instead.
I very so much need to pee.

...Human Queen is here to guard our precious thing.

...I'll go away very so much quick and then come back.

I hope someone made a new waste spot much closer to here than the closest one in the caves, and they did, here it is, someone made one here because so many of us are here on the beach now instead of the caves. I am quick quick quick, then I run back and good relief glad, Human Queen is still guarding our precious thing. He growls at me when I settle down beside Half Of Me again, but I don't care; Half Of Me is safe and I feel better because I don't need to pee anymore.

I sleep a little bit because I'm bored and sad.

When it's daytime, the human pack starts to cheer. I wonder why, and I then I see a floating dead wood island approaching. The humans are all very glad to see it. Human Queen hurries back to us and picks up Half Of Me in his forelegs.

He is taking Him away. I growl and try to push him down so I can get Half Of Me away from him and bring Him back to His aerie where He can rest and get better.

"Get away, dragon!" Human Queen cradles my human in one arm and waves his blade at me with the other. I screech in outrage; I will kill him if he won't give my most precious thing back to me!!

"Stoick!" Two Paws and Wanted hurry up to us.

"Allies or no, I will kill this beast if he doesn't--"

"Stoick, he thinks you're taking Hiccup away!"

"I AM taking Hiccup away. We've got to get him back to Berk as soon as possible!"

"No, he thinks you're taking Hiccup away from him."

"Stoick, put the sword down."
Wanted croons at me, and Two Paws croons at Human Queen, but I don't care because all of them are in the way. I can't reach my precious thing!!!

"Stoick, put the sword down!"

"Are you blind?! Look at that thing, he'll blast us all!"

"Stoick, please! Here, let me hold Hiccup for a minute."

"Astrid--"

"He thinks you're going to hurt Hiccup!"

"I'd never--!"

"He THINKS you are! Stoick, just please let us--!"

Half Of Me Half Of Me Half Of Me, I nose at him anxious anxious anxious, I think maybe He's okay, but He needs to rest, give Him to me, give Him--!

Wanted cradles Him protectively, protectively, why are they protecting Him from ME?! She touches my face and croons at me again. "Toothless, hey, sshh, ssshhh, it's all right, Toothless. We have to get Hiccup to the ship, okay?" She keeps jabbing her foreleg toward the water. I try to pull Half Of Me away from her, but she holds onto Him. "Toothless, the ship, okay? The ship."

Two Paws lays Half Of Me on my back, finally. But they don't let us go back to our aerie!! They keep pushing us away, toward the water, I don't know why, and then Wanted's spintail partner says to me, "Nightwing, I think they want you to take your other half to that floating dead wood island."

"What?? What??"
"Maybe they want to make it his new aerie," a rock-eater says, the one who partnered with the biggest young human.

"My precious thing, my precious...!"

The spinetail and the rock-eater press close to me to comfort me. The person I love and people I trust are all around me, so I go to the dead wood island even though I don't like it, and I let Wanted make a new bed for my human there because she lets me follow Him and lie down with Him.

"There, see? Now Hiccup can go to Berk where the real healers are, and we're not leaving you behind, Toothless."

I hold Half Of Me close and cover Him with my legs and my wings and my tail. They are not allowed to touch Him and look at Him and hurt Him, He's mine! He smells more sick than He was before, so I try to lick the scary bad smell off His skin, but I know He's not better. I'm afraid.

The dead island starts to move. It feels strange scary not right, but I don't care. I don't care about anything except how scared I am that something is wrong with my human that I love.

.o.o.o.o

I wake up because someone is touching me. I can smell that it's Wanted. I move my wing a little so that I can look at her.

"Hey Toothless," she croons. "Hey there. Hey, Stoick wants to check on Hiccup and see how he's doing, okay?"

Human Queen is pacing back and forth behind her, glaring at me and growling softly and protection-scared/angry. ...He wants to see his precious thing. ...I doooooon't want to show him, but he loves my human so much, I have to show him....

I move my wing away, but I still growl when Human Queen approaches. He loves my human, but he's big and scary and I don't like him close to my thing that I love most.
"Don't you growl at me, dragon! That's my son. He's my son!"

"Maybe you shouldn't antagonize him, Stoick...."

"Why do you both always take the dragon's side, Gobber?!"

"Because he'll spit a fireball at us if we're not careful?"

Human Queen and Wanted and Two Paws are all crouching close to look at and touch Half Of Me, they're too close and I don't like it, but I can't stop them, I don't know what to do. Wanted caresses my head to comfort me, and I feel a very tiny bit better.

"He's not looking too good."

"CAN'T THIS SHIP GO ANY FASTER??!!?"

The dead island is approaching the human nest. Humans are scrambling around the island, and some dragons with humans on their backs are flying overhead. I'm anxious, so scared, I must protect my human but I don't know how to keep Him safe, I hate this, I hate this so much! Just let Him REST somewhere safe and warm and dark and quiet, this is not safe and not warm and not dark and not quiet...!

The horrible dead island finally stops moving. Now I feel sick, too. But then I forget because humans are trying to TAKE MY PRECIOUS THING AWAY AGAIN, I snarl and flare my wings at them!!

"Toothless...please, Toothless--"

STOP CROONING AT ME. YOU CAN'T HAVE HALF OF ME, YOU CAN'T HAVE HIM.

"Why don't we bring Gothi down to the ship, eh?"
Finally they leave me alone, and I can protect my precious thing again.

But then a very small human comes, even smaller than Half Of Me, an elderly female. I want to growl at her, too, but she gazes into my eyes and I know she is wise enough to be an elder, so I'm ashamed. I didn't know that humans can have elders, too.

I'm scared, but I pull my wings back again and let Elder Human examine Half Of Me. Her paws are very gentle touching Him, and I wonder if maybe she knows how to take care of Him better than I do, because she's a human like He is and she's an elder instead of stupid and scary like other humans.

She pats my head, then gestures at the other humans with her stick.

"So, Toothless, you gonna go Night Fury on us if we try to touch Hiccup?"

They want my precious thing. I am grieving. I want so much to keep Him safe but I don't know how.

"Maybe if you walked backwards while you carry him?"

"Backwards? Are you daft, Gobber?"

"Kind of like bait, you know? So the beastie will follow."

"I don't want him following...."

"Chief, the only way you're going to get rid of Toothless is if you kill him, and Hiccup will never forgive you if you do that."

"Gaaaaahhhh...."

They are TAKING MY PRECIOUS THING AWAY, but I can still see Him and smell Him and touch Him, I follow close close because they are taking Him away but I can still reach Him,
oooooohhhhh I don't like this, I don't like it, put Half Of Me down and let Him REST...!

Finally finally finally I know why they're taking Him so far far far away. This dead wood cave is Half Of Me's aerie, and it's dark and quiet. They give my human back to me and I PROTECT HIM, He is here covered up safe under my scales and wings. I am very so much upset.

They are patting me and calling to me, but I ignore them.

o.o.o.o.o

I can't ignore them anymore because Human Queen is getting angry, and maybe he will be violent if I don't let him reassure himself with his precious thing. But I still don't like it, so I growl when I raise my head.

"Toothless," Wanted croons. "Hey, big guy, we need to get Hiccup into bed. He'll just be right over there, see?"

Elder Human is back, and I know she's saying in her human way that I must give Precious Thing back to them. It hurts so much that I cry, but I let them take Half Of Me away from me, hurts hurts--!

Not far, right there is a dead wood thing and dead wool thing they are nesting Him in. I try to rush to Him but Human Queen is angry at me and will fight me, I want to bite him but Wanted brings fish to me and I'm confused. My stomach rumbles, I didn't know how hungry hungry hungry I am, but I'm very hungry and they won't let me see Half Of Me and Wanted is crooning to me and what do I do, what do I do...?!

"It really does sound like crying, doesn't it."

"Dragons don't cry."

"Not with tears, but...."

"Ahhh, don't you worry, beastie. It'll be your turn again in a minute."
"His turn?"

"Well, you do have to share 'im now, Stoick."

"I shouldn't have to share my son with anyone!"

"Chief...Toothless loves Hiccup a lot. Don't you, sweetie...."

Wanted's forepaws feel good stroking me, and she is sad, too. I rest my head on her hind legs and wait. She will give Half Of Me back to me, I must be patient.

FINALLY HUMAN QUEEN GOES AWAY. Half Of Me is sick and there's something sticky they smeared on the hurt parts of His skin, but Elder Human shakes her stick at me so sternly that I stop licking it.

Half Of Me. Half Of Me that I love, why are You still sleeping, why why why won't You wake up and be happy with me that we are together and free from Her...?

o.o.o.o.o

I wait and wait and wait and wait and wait and wait and wait.

Half Of Me's body is alive, but maybe His heart is dead. He won't wake up. The humans who love Him and keep coming to tend to Him and look at Him are all grieving. They chitter at Him a lot, and there's a sound they keep making, "Hiccup." They make that sound so often when they look at Him and call to Him that I wonder if maybe it's a name they are calling Him. It doesn't mean anything, so how can it be a name? But none of their other sounds mean very much, either, so maybe it's a crazy human sound that means nothing but is still a name.

Hiccup. I click my tongue to try to make that sound. "Hiccup. Hiccup." I nose at His head-fur. "Half Of Me Precious Thing Companion Friend Partner Charcoal Paws Hiccup. We are calling You and calling You and calling You, why won't You answer???. If You are dead, why is Your body still alive...?"
Wanted is calling Him now. She's grief-angry as she looks at Him and chitters at Him. She climbs onto Him and calls to Him and bites His mouth. I think she is courting Him. That's a good idea, I never thought of that, but it's not working because He won't come back even to make babies. Salt water is coming out of her eyes, that happens when humans are Very Sad. She lies down and wraps herself around Him, I know she will keep Him safe for a while until I come back.

I go outside and pee in the waste spot I made outside our aerie, and then I just sit on the side of the hill and look out at this nest. I haven't thought about it until now because I was always thinking Half Of Me Half Of Me worry grief worry all the time, but now I'm watching our...this...flock, and I'm confused, and I'm thinking.

Who is my flock? Me and Hiccup, are we solitary now? But then why are we here in a nest with people who love Him so much? If we are in a flock, who is our queen now? Human Queen is very so much NOT MY queen, no no no! But maybe he is Hiccup's queen? It's confusing because humans don't don't don't make the right smells, but I know that human is queen of this human pack, and Hiccup is part of this pack. I am half of Hiccup, but I can't can't can't give obeisance to that angry human who doesn't love us!!!

A rock-eater comes to sit beside me because she is lonely.

"SHE is gone," I say. "Who is our queen now?"

"I don't know," she says sadly.

"What?!"

"Many keep going away and coming back between the old nest and this one. Many of us have human partners, we can't leave them, but we don't know who to follow. The fireskins keeps challenging each other and defeating each other, there keeps being a new one and a new one and a new one, we feel insecure and none of us want to give obeisance. I'm scared."

We can't be solitary if there are so many of us, but....

"Maybe we will die," she says.
“Yes, maybe.”

"Your other half who killed HER, is he still alive?"

"His body is, but I think maybe His heart is dead."

"I wish he was alive. He defeated Her, so he should have won us, but he can't have us if he's dead."

I think about this very much. "He challenged Her and defeated Her. He loves us and will take care of us. He can keep us safe here in this nest, and if He is our queen then we don't have to give obeisance to Human Queen."

She is excited. She jumps up and wiggles her tail. "He loves us?! He really does love all of us, not just you?!"

"He gave His fish to a venomfang because He felt sorry for him!! He tried to make friends with a fireskin who wanted to kill Him, and He took a dragon troop with Him when He came to challenge Her! Yes yes He loves us!" Half Of Me is crazy, but He is good too at the same time, I don't know how he can be crazy but still good.

She is excited excited excited. "He must come back! Your human must come back and be our queen!"

"Yes. Very crazy, but it's okay."

But when I go back into the aerie, Hiccup is still asleep. Maybe He'll never wake up.

Wanted's face still smells like human Very Sad salt water, but she is ignoring her grief and chirping to Hiccup like a mother trying to train her hatchling. She is feeding Half Of Me, using a metal thing to nudge water that smells like meat into His mouth. When she sees me, she gives me a fish, and I remember again that I'm hungry. The fish in my belly is good, but I'm still hungry hungry hungry.

I go to smell the meat-water. It smells yummy, I can't help flicking out my tongue to catch it even though I know it's for Hiccup.
"No, Toothless, bad dragon!" She shoos me away from Hiccup, and I'm glad because the food should go into His stomach instead of mine, but it smells so good I can't not eat it when I'm that close.

"Yuuck, and now you've got dragon spit all over his face, ew...good thing I kissed him before you made him gross...." She rumbles her nonsense-sounds as she rubs at his face with a piece of dead wool, trying to erase my "Hungry" marks, but she's doing it wrong and His face still smells like "This hungry nightwing wants this food." But I don't think she can smell it, she thinks she erased it but she didn't. She's feeding Him again.

O.O.O.O.O

I wait and wait and wait and wait and wait and wait and wait. Maybe I will die soon from being sad and hungry.

Human Queen is sad, too; he is always sad, just like me. A lot of times he is outside being queen to his pack, but at night he comes back to his aerie and takes care of Hiccup.

He brings Hiccup close to the fire and takes away some of His coverings. I'm worried Hiccup will be cold without them, His flesh is so very fragile, and He has so very little fur. But it's warm here by the fire, so maybe He will be all right...?

Human Queen is splashing some things in the pool beside him, and he rubs the things on Hiccup's skin. It smells bad, sharp and scary in a very different way than the sick smell. He is-- He is erasing Hiccup's smells!! He is erasing with a yucky human thing and a dead wool thing instead of with his tongue?! But maybe I will let him, because the sharp bad scary smell is erasing the bad scary sick smell....

Human Queen is making the sick smells go away, but he's erasing the good smells, too; no. Bad. He is doing it because he's stupid and jealous. I let him take away the sick smells, then I lick Hiccup's neck to mark Him again. I will let Human Queen take away the sick smells, but he is not allowed to take away my good "This is my precious half of me" marks!

"Dragon! Get out of here!" Human Queen waves his paws at me to threaten me, I don't like it. I growl at him. "I'm giving him a bath, dragon; don't you go slopping your foulness over him again."
I grab the bad yucky thing out of his paw and throw it away. Human Queen gets angry and we fight, until their packmates rush in and get between us. Two Paws croons at Human Queen and Wanted croons at me, holding us back and soothing us until we're not fighting anymore, but Human Queen is still upset and protesting.

"...can't even clean him up a bit without that monster getting in the way--!"

"Ah, calm down, Stoick, you just make it worse when you start waving swords around."

Wanted smells interesting, like wants-to-mate but also some other human things I don't recognize. She is looking at Hiccup and I know she is hungry for Him, maybe they are Matched. But maybe not, because she doesn't try to mate with Him after all; she pulls a fur over Him to cover up His fragile pale skin. I won't get to see humans mate after all, but I'm glad there is a covering to keep Hiccup warm again.

"Ah...er, maybe you'd better run along now, lass...."

"Um, yes, but - chief, can you please try to get along with Toothless? Hiccup could get hurt if you guys fight in the house like that..."

"Yes, yes, of course. Er."

"Uhm."

Are they still talking about mating?? I can't understand them; I can never understand their sounds, but even their smells and their bodies don't make any sense now, either!!

But I guess it's okay now, because Wanted is going away and the two adults uncover Hiccup again to erase the sick smells, and this time they don't stop me when I mark Him as mine. Human Queen growls at me, but he doesn't attack, so I ignore him.

O.o.o.o.o

Humans are day creatures, just like my maybe-but-maybe-not-still-flockmates. They sleep and are
quiet at night, my dragon maybe-flockmates and these human not-packmates, everyone is quiet and Hiccup is not-dead and Human Queen is awake but he sits staring and staring and staring at Hiccup. He is grieving, just like me. We watch over our precious thing and are grieving because we've lost Him. He is right here with us, but we have lost Him anyway. My love is breaking and hurts.

Human Queen suddenly bellows. He doesn't say real words, but I can still hear "Grief, grief, grief, my love is breaking and I'm helpless and sad sad saaaaaad!" He roars all this and he stomps around and throws things with his big paws.

My grief and his grief connect us together, I howl to echo him. We are the same. We are not enemies; we are the same.

Human Queen staggers to me and collapses beside me and wraps his big strong forelegs around me. I am too sad to defend myself, but it's okay, he's not attacking me. Hiccup used to do this, too, this foreleg-squeezing thing, and He was always happy or wanting comfort when He did it. Human Queen wants comfort. I lick him and nuzzle him, we are both Very Sad together, I'm crying and he's making salt water. He smells good, like smoke and meat and metal and sweat, but also not good because I can smell his sorrow, too.

Two Paws rushes into our aerie. "The lad...?!

"Hiccup...Hiccup...."

Two Paws is protection-frightened, but after he fusses over Hiccup, he looks at us and is just confused instead. "The lad's still alive, Stoick. Did something happen?"

"He's not coming back to me, is he! He might still be breathing now, but it's only a matter of time. When is he going to open his eyes, Gobber?! He's been asleep for so long, he's going to slip away when I'm not looking and I'll never see him again, I'll never hear his voice or see another one of his mad inventions or listen to another one of his ridiculous excuses or...or see him fly again...."

"Ahhh, Stoick." Two Paws comes to comfort us. Human Queen grunts and howls and makes sad water for a long time; maybe that is how humans cry. I cry and howl, too, and Two Paws puts a foreleg over me and the weight feels reassuring, his soft claws feel good caressing my hide. "Who'd have thought a dragon would weep over a Viking...."

Human Queen sets his paws on my face and we look at each other for a long time. I know now that
Hiccup and Wanted are not the only humans who are people - Human Queen is a person, too. So is Two Paws. Maybe all humans are people, just like all dragons are people. They can grieve and love, just like Human Queen and I are grieving and loving now; we have the same treasure. Right now we are sharing our hearts.

"...You love my son just as much as I do, don't you, dragon." The sounds aren't real sounds, but somehow I know he's saying, "I am sad and you are sad together. We both love our precious thing together."

"Yes," I say.

Finally Two Paws leaves. Human Queen doesn't go to his own bed to sleep; he lies down to sleep beside our precious thing. I lie down on the other side of Hiccup. We will keep watch over Him until we die, or until He comes back to us.

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It's daytime, so Human Queen is gone to be queen again, but I'm not a leader so I can stay and guard my precious thing.

Hiccup smells different now. The sick sweat is old; the new smells don't smell bad anymore. His breathing and His heartbeat are a little different, better, and He's moving a little more. I ask Him to please wake up because He's better now, I nudge Him and lick Him and croon at Him and sniff at Him. "Half Of Me, wake up, wake up, wake up!"

Finally He listens to me. Finally He opens His eyes. His eyes are OPEN, His eyes are LOOKING AT ME, He is baring His teeth in that silly human smile and I know He is glad to see me~!

"Hey Toothless."

"HELLO HALF OF ME I LOVE YOU, get up get up get up get up~!"

"I'm happy to see you, too, bud-- Ow!"
I am too excited and my other half is too fragile; I jump away so I can say "I AM SO HAPPY AND EXCITED" without hurting Him.

"Toothless! Oh, come on--"

He was happy and exasperated, but now something is different. I go back to Him, and I can see He's upset now, something is wrong.

I think it's His hind leg, the one with the missing paw, because He's looking at it and being sad. He fastens a metal thing to His leg, I don't know why. He looks at me and says "I'm sad and afraid and sad, I'm glad You're here, Half Of Me," but He is brave and determined, too. He stands up--

OH. It's a not-paw. He only had two legs to walk on and then He only had one so He couldn't walk, but the metal thing is a not-paw so now He can walk again.

Except it's a not-paw, so He can't really walk even though He can walk, He stumbles and I catch Him. He has two hind paws again, but He's too weak from being sick for so long. I nudge Him until He gets on my back. I will carry Him so that we can go wherever we want to go.

We are together and He's awake now, so everything is good. Soon He will stop being sad and will smile at me again, and we will fly again, and nothing is ever wrong when the two of us are together in the sky where we belong.

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Author's Notes: I keep forgetting my headcanon for some of the dragon names of different breeds. X'D Someday I've got to go through and revise/edit my fanfiction to fix all those mistakes....

The only time dragon waste is shown in canon is the first episode of the TV show where they apparently poop indiscriminately like birds (albeit at the exact same time every day). But for my personal headcanon, I'm gonna go with them being more fastidious like cats. They'll make specific areas for their waste so as not to contaminate the rest of the nest, etc.

I had originally intended to switch between Tooth's and Stoick's perspectives, but this fic has taken so long to write that I decided to just give bulbul the all-Toothless version, and wait until I have more time to do Stoick's version (and maybe some scenes from Astrid's POV as well, and the ending scene...
I took so long to write this fic for bulbul that I've forgotten now why I promised it to her. XD I think she helped me with something, and this is a thank-you gift?? In any case, I hope you like it, bulbul!

I apologize about not writing much lately, and for taking so long to reply to messages again.... For those of you who don't read my journals, my apartment is terrible and I've been struggling with real life ever since I moved out. I'm currently job hunting so that I can make enough money to live somewhere better once the lease ends in January. When I'm not working, most of the time I used to spend writing is now spent on job hunting, doing housework, and trying to sort out the mess my life became in the last few years. I still love and need to write, but my productivity has decreased and I don't know when things will settle down enough for me to spend more time on it. I do manage to snatch some writing time occasionally, though; so here's hoping I can work out a good balance between writing and my other work!
Summary: Hiccup starts learning how to understand and communicate with dragons in their own language.

Before Hiccup had quite decided how seriously to take his mother's suggestion/offer/demand about learning the language of dragons, he found himself standing on a hilltop just outside Berk, watching Valka chirping and barking and gesturing strangely and shimmying and waving her staff behind her and crooning at the very interested-looking Toothless.

"I am teaching Son how to talk for real. When I chitter at him, that means I'm explaining to him in human talk. When I show him how to talk for real, you respond to me, okay? Even if it's silly."

"We will do a crazy human-and-dragon thing together," Toothless agreed cheerfully.

"Soooo, that was...Dragonese?" Hiccup ventured. "What did you say to him?"

"I was explaining so that he can help."

"Half Of Me will talk to me for real~" Toothless bared his gums at Hiccup, who smiled back.

"That's as good a place to start as any," Valka said. "For that matter, I'm curious. Hiccup, when did Toothless start that smiling behavior?"

"Huh? Well, I guess...I mean, he's always done it." Valka looked skeptical, and Hiccup thought a moment. "Well, I guess the first time he ever smiled at me was that day in the cove when we met - when we met up close without intending to kill each other, I mean. But come to think of it, it was..."
kind of weird that first time, like he didn't know what a smile was and was just imitating me."

"He was imitating you, Hiccup. Smiling is not natural behavior for dragons."

"I suppose not."

"Why do you think that is?"

"Because...their...teeth are shaped different...? Or something?"

"When you smile, your teeth are bared. What would you think a wolf or a bear is telling you if it bared its teeth at you?"

"Huh. They'd be snarling, right? 'Get off my turf,' or something."

"Among most animals, bared teeth is a sign of aggression. Therefore, the human smile can be easily misunderstood by dragons; it's a small miracle that Toothless imitated you that first time instead of attacking you."

Hiccup stared wide-eyed at Toothless, who cocked his head curiously.

"Over time, Toothless and the other dragons in your flock have come to associate bared human teeth as a uniquely human signal for happiness or pleasure. Baring their own teeth still usually means aggression, so Toothless has compromised by baring his toothless gums to represent pleasure and camaraderie when he speaks to you. But you can't smile at a foreign dragon, Hiccup - it's a threatening gesture. You'll frighten or challenge it, or at the very least, confuse it."

"So...if dragons don't smile when they're happy, what do they do?"

"Surely you can tell when Toothless is pleased."

Hiccup thought of the countless times Toothless would wriggle in excitement or purr with pleasure or happily nuzzle his human. "Yeah."
"A lot of dragon language is based on context; sometimes, there is no one gesture or sound that means exactly the same thing all the time. It's obvious in the moment, but would be difficult to recreate afterward. Dragons have a very limited sense of the past or future, they are usually focused on the present."

"Rrrr," Hiccup growled at Toothless, baring his teeth. "I'm so angry at you~"

Toothless lightly pounced on him, horseplaying for a few seconds before claiming victory.

"Toothless did not take that as a threat," Hiccup announced from where he lay trapped under the snickering dragon's paws.

"It wasn't just your teeth; it was your tone and your body language he could read. Toothless knew quite well that your grimace was only a mock-threat, and that you were really making an invitation to play."

"My dragon is a smart dragon," Hiccup cooed, and Toothless chirred back at him in the same affectionately condescending tone.

"Human teeth are nearly useless for communication, but there are times when you can use your hands instead." Valka called over her own dragon partner, then pounced on him, digging her fingers into his neck. Cloudjumper chuffed tolerantly at her, then laid his head down without resistance for a moment. "This is the equivalent of biting his neck with my 'jaws;' I am asserting dominance."

The Stormcutter suddenly rolled over and pinned Valka beneath his claws, chortling smugly. She smiled, then remembered that she was giving a language lesson. She whimpered and exposed her throat, allowing Cloudjumper to touch his tongue to her skin. "By making a beseeching sound and offering my weak point, I acknowledge that he has won this struggle. He puts a mark on me to affirm that he is the victor."

"Mark...?"

"Saliva. It contains a wealth of scent-information for other animals to read." She wriggled until Cloudjumper released her.
Just as Hiccup was thinking that he should probably start taking notes, Valka nodded at him. "Now it's your turn."

"Huh?!"

"Beautiful One," she instructed Toothless, "Son will learn how to say 'I challenge you' and 'Submit to me' and 'I surrender.'"

"He already knows how to say those things."

"He didn't know what he was saying; now he has to say it on purpose."

Toothless rolled his eyes.

"Uh...okay, so..." Hiccup awkwardly hunched with his knees bent, fingers curved rigidly like claws. "I, like...pounce on him, or something...?"

"What is that?" Toothless suddenly asked Valka.

"What is what?"

"He is feeling that human 'something' that I don't understand; what is it??"

"I am human and can't understand smells very well. Say it with your body."

"It's like 'shame,' but different. He feels it sometimes when His packmates tease Him. He used to feel it a lot when He was younger and talking to His female."

Valka considered this, what a young man might feel when he was being teased, or shyly talking to a girl he was attracted to, or having to pantomime something out of context. "Embarrassment," she realized. "Human word is 'embarrass,' or 'embarrassment,'" she said, enunciating the human words carefully.
"What are you talking about?" Hiccup asked.

"Dragons never get embarrassed, so they can't really understand the concept." She continued to Toothless, "It's a very human thing. Like shame/insecurity/fear/guilt, but sillier, because there's nothing to be ashamed of or scared of or guilty about."

Toothless nuzzled Hiccup encouragingly. "Don't be silly, Half Of Me."

Although it seemed a little ridiculous to wave his limbs and grunt and whine and growl and yelp like an animal, especially when villagers would come by to watch and usually laugh, Hiccup persisted. Reluctantly at first, just because his mother was so adamant for him to learn; but the next morning, as he sat watching a lively but half-unintelligible conversation between his mother and his best friend, Hiccup felt a little left out.

It made him suddenly want to learn for his own sake, and wonder what it would be like to be able to converse with Toothless as easily as he conversed with his fellow humans in Norse. Despite the language barrier, he already felt like he loved and understood Toothless as well as if the Night Fury was a piece of his own heart - yet they could get even closer if Hiccup learned to understand and speak the dragon's language, right?

Hiccup soon stopped feeling silly about having to do things like wave his metal foot or his weapon to approximate the motion of a tail, or flap the wings of his flight suit as if gesturing with real wings. But he got frustrated about the vocalizations, the fact that there were many sounds that he simply could not make with his human throat and mouth.

Valka's staff, in addition to being a weapon, was designed to imitate some useful dragon sounds, but it was only made of wood and bone. Hiccup wondered why she had never in twenty years thought to add metal, because the 'Dragon Voice' tool he was constructing, even though still in its early stages, was already capable of reproducing a broader range of dragon sounds than Valka's staff.

Hiccup finished the adjustment and then tested the tool again, waving it slowly. The new floppy piece of metal did its job, causing the tool to emit an almost perfect dragon warble.

"Half Of Me says 'What are you doing,'" Toothless marveled, "with His metal thing instead of His mouth!!"
"It worked, huh," Hiccup said happily, and made the Dragon Voice warble again.

He would have loved to throw himself into the project, but he had so many more responsibilities now and simply didn't have time to work on it for more than about an hour each day. He recruited his friends to 'collect sounds' for him - Snotlout, the twins, and Fishlegs all seemed to enjoy experimenting with items and/or body parts to create as wide a range of sounds as possible. Hiccup tried to find ways to integrate the most dragon-like ones into his tool.

"Your silliness amuses me," he said in Dragonese. He did this by pushing a button on the Dragon Voice which caused it to emit a sniggering sound, like the one Toothless made when he was both amused and mocking.

"Half Of Me is learning how to talk like a little hatchling," Toothless laughed, making the same sound.

"Oooh, great, do that again, Toothless!" Hiccup listened closely to the sound and made a tiny adjustment to his tool.

The other dragons in the flock seemed fascinated. Whenever Hiccup worked on his project, dragons would come crowding around the forge, crouching in corners or peering over counters to see and hear what he was doing. The more dull-witted ones would get alarmed or confused whenever Hiccup made sounds like "Warning of danger!" or "Leave my territory!" It was fascinating to see the more intelligent dragons explaining to the others why Hiccup seemed to be making random announcements.

Once, Hiccup implemented pieces to recreate a sound that Astrid had collected for him, and twirled a little handle to test it out. The Dragon Voice emitted a near perfect replica of Stormfly's squawk - and the watching dragons burst into surprised screeches and then coughing dragon laughter.

Hiccup stared at them, bemused. "What was *that* about?"

Valka was chuckling, too. "The dragon sounds you are most familiar with are Toothless's," she explained, "so they are the ones you tend to recreate, and your flock are all used to you speaking in the Night Fury 'dialect.' It sounds very strange to hear you suddenly say something the same way a Nadder would."

When it came to names, Hiccup was surprised to find how different dragon naming conventions
were from human ones. Dragon names were fluid, and dragons often named others simply with the type of relationship between them. Thus, Toothless usually called Hiccup 'Half Of Me' or 'Precious Thing;' Stormfly apparently called Astrid 'Companion,' Hookfang often called Snotlout 'Partner,' etc. "I thought my dragon name is 'Charcoal Paws,'" Hiccup said.

"That's the most common name that dragons tend to call you when they first meet you, since many of them find the scent of charcoal on your hands to be a convenient identifier. But your own flock calls you by your title, which used to be 'Queen' and is now 'Consort.' A dragon like Stormfly, who has an additional type of relationship with you through her companion, might sometimes call you other things depending on the circumstances, such as 'Companion's Male' if Astrid is finding you particularly desirable at the moment."

"Wait, what? I'm confused."

What followed was a lengthy but fascinating lecture that went into more detail about dragon names and relationships. "Half Of Me," Hiccup said experimentally, "I love You."

It was the first time he had ever specifically called Toothless 'Half Of Me' in dragon language. The Night Fury was so excited that he leaped and crowed and knocked Hiccup over and licked him crazily.

"Gah, get off me, lizard!"

After Toothless had calmed down, sprawled blissfully with his head in Hiccup's lap as Hiccup caressed him, Valka murmured, "It's good to call him your other half, it reaffirms the bond that's so important to you both. But, Hiccup...you shouldn't use that pronoun for him."

He knew what she was referring to, the purr that was reserved for the most intimate kind of relationship in dragon culture. "What? Why? If we're 'two halves'--"

"You are his most beloved person," Valka said. "He would do anything for you, he would choose you every single time without question. You are [You] to him. But, Hiccup...he is not quite the same to you, and you mustn't break his heart or mislead him, even unintentionally. If you were forced to choose between Toothless and Astrid, or between Toothless and the children you will one day have, how easy would your choice be?"

Hiccup couldn't answer, couldn't really be honest even with himself, because any choice would
betray someone he genuinely loved.

"That's why," Valka said softly. "Even if you chose Toothless in the end, the choice would be an agonizing one. You are neither a dragon nor a recluse - Toothless is not your one-and-only, so don't address him as if he is. Humans spread their love among many; dragons concentrate it on a few. That's why you can easily hurt him with that word if you're not careful."

Hiccup swallowed past the lump in his throat. "Is...is your choice easy?" he asked, immediately regretting the question. If the answer was what he was afraid it was, it would be painful enough that he'd prefer not to know it.

Valka smiled sadly. "For nearly twenty years, Cloudjumper was my one-and-only. But I had to stop calling him [Him] months ago, when you came flying back into my life and I finally laid eyes on your father again."

Hiccup nodded, feeling both relieved and guilty.

That word, the strongest form of address in dragon language, actually had several variations. There was the low, warm version of the purr, used only between two halves; it was the pronoun both Toothless and Squirt used for Hiccup. ("Squirt's usage of that word is an anomaly," Valka remarked at one point. "I've never seen any other dragon insist on declaring and maintaining a one-sided relationship." Even after Hiccup clearly named Squirt 'Friend' in Dragonese, the Bewilderbeast continued to address him with the two-halves purr.)

The slightly higher-pitched form of the same purr was used by dragons for their flock leader. Hiccup recognized it in hindsight as a sound which the legacy dragons had often made at him (and, every once in a while, still did), and which all three factions now made when addressing Toothless.

The other variation, loud and urgent, was what a dragon used to indicate his or her mating target during courtship.

"Astrid."

Hiccup's voice was quiet and slightly mischievous. Astrid glanced over at him curiously, and found
him grinning as he pushed a lever on the Dragon Voice.

"You," he said in Dragonese, via the device. Toothless shortled, recognizing the mating-target variation.

"What's that mean?" Astrid asked gamely.

[*temporarily censored until I can edit this story*]

"Not really," he said amicably, sliding his hands across her torso as her own hands buried themselves in his thick hair. "As long as we make healthy offspring--" Her kiss cut him off, not that he minded.

What he did mind was the audience. After a few seconds, the couple stopped kissing and glanced around at the intensely curious crowd of dragons. "Why do they always do that?!" Astrid exclaimed.

"They don't really have much concept of privacy...and Mom says they're getting more and more confused about why we haven't...er, mated yet, after 'courting' for so long."

"We could have been 'mates' five years ago if you weren't such a procrastinator."

"I wasn't procrastinating, I had commitment issues!"

"Had?"

"Yes, had, past tense," he said firmly. "The only reason we're not married now is because we're still too broke to host a wedding feast."

"Yeah, well, you'd better not keep the dragons waiting much longer," she said, cloaking her own frustration in a half-joke. "They look like they might resort to drastic measures if we don't start procreating soon."

"You look like you'll resort to drastic measures if I don't mate with you soon."
"I will."

"Then I guess I'd better hurry up and solve the dwindling food supplies problem."

"Yes, dear, please do."

When it became evident that no mating between their flock consort and his female was going to happen that night after all, the dragons settled back down in annoyed resignation.

One time, Hiccup accidentally produced a loud noise that sounded as close as he'd ever gotten to the roar Toothless had blasted Squirt with months before, during the first battle to drive Drago away from Berk.

Toothless looked startled for a moment, but he was now used to making sounds out of context in order to help out his other half. He took a strong, firm stance, spread his wings, pretended that a horrible enemy was attacking his nest, and belted out a "GO AWAY OR I WILL ANNIHILATE YOU" roar.

Hiccup made some adjustments. The resulting sound was closer to the Night Fury's, but still not entirely accurate.

"I'M PRETENDING TO SAY GO AWAY GO AWAY GO AWAAAAAY!" Toothless roared.

"I'M PRETENDING TO SAY SORT OF GO AWAY I THINK MAYBE BUT I'M KIND OF SICK!" the Dragon Voice echoed. "Guess that one still needs some work, huh," Hiccup remarked.

Even after Hiccup had learned quite a lot, he privately felt that his knowledge of their language was more useful to him for perception than communication. This became especially evident during some incidents, such as when Hiccup secretly asked Eret and Snotlout to prepare an ambush. He needed to practice giving more complicated instructions in dragon language.

As the chief of Berk and his wife (they had finally gotten married a few weeks before) dangled in net traps, Hiccup struggled to convey a Dragonese message to his frantic Night Fury. "No! Bad, distressed! Mate-that-I-love distressed frustrated save me not me!"
Toothless growled in frustrated confusion at the gibberish and continued his efforts to rescue his other half, looking hurt when Hiccup resisted and Eret tried to drive the dragon away from Hiccup. "NO!" Hiccup finally burst out in Norse. "Go save Astrid first, not me! Toothless, save Astrid. Make sure she's safe first, and then you can come back for me."

Toothless heard the frustration in his human's tone. He understood the Norse words "no" and "Astrid," he saw the human gestures meaning "that thing/place over there," and he saw the way Hiccup curled up in the net as if defending himself from rescue. He also knew his other half. He knew that if Hiccup wanted to be saved, Hiccup would be reaching out to him and calling for him instead of resisting him; he knew that Hiccup loved his mate; he knew that Hiccup was stubborn and crazy and protective. The stilted Dragonese was unfamiliar, but Hiccup's human gestures and voice and intentions were recognizable to one who shared his heart.

Toothless turned and bounded away toward Astrid, ripped at the netting, nudged her onto his back once she was free, then rushed to rescue the now-welcoming Hiccup. "Good job, bud," Hiccup whispered, caressing the dragon as Toothless anxiously nuzzled him. "Mission accomplished, but I still feel like a failure...."

That night, after they had gone to bed, Astrid murmured to him, "You know, you're not a dragon, Hiccup. You connect deeply with dragons, but it's not that you are a dragon the way your mother kind of is. I think Toothless can understand you just fine when you speak to him the way you've always spoken to him from the beginning."

It was true, he realized. Long before he'd ever known that dragons had their own language, he and Toothless had been able to communicate. There was value in understanding more about dragon culture and how their language worked, but ultimately, he didn't have to do things exactly the way his mother did. "Yeah." He kissed her, then smiled and reached for the Voice on the table beside him and said to her in dragon language, "I am attracted to You and will mate with You, my companion that I love."

"Uh...." She frowned in concentration as she translated. "I got 'intention to mate' and the 'mating-target-You' and 'companion' and 'love.'"

"That's enough to go on, right?"

"Yup."
They kissed, no longer self-conscious about dragons witnessing their sexual interaction, though it didn't matter anymore, anyway; the dragons' curiosity about the issue had been sated weeks ago. Toothless, curled up on his bed across the room, drowsily registered the scents and sounds of human lovemaking, then went right back to sleep.

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**Author's Notes:** I have no idea how to write HiccStrid without sex. *facepalm* Like, a lot of their relationship is characterized by their sexuality, but the flip side is that I don't know how to *separate* their relationship characterization from their sexuality _._ I think they could still be good friends even without any sexual element involved, but it's like the sex is the only thing that makes their relationship an intimate one rather than just amiable camaraderie. Without the sex, Astrid is mostly just a useful cheerleader.... It's different than most of the other relationships I write, where I can recognize and write emotional intimacy without any sexuality being involved (HiccTooth being my prime example). So I'd be curious if there's anyone who could show me interpretations or fanfics of HiccStrid that show them having emotionally intimate interaction *WITHOUT* sexuality being a factor.

I keep bursting at the seams with wanting to write various stories - I was like, "I'm gonna write Story A! I'm gonna write Story B! I'm gonna write Story C!" and while I was searching to see if I had any notes or drafted fragments for Story C, I ended up writing Story D. XD

*Learning Languages* is YET ANOTHER "R. girl attempted to progress on *Small Addition* chapter 5, but couldn't because she had to get other story material out of the way first" fic. *sweatdrop* I decided to try to keep the focus of *Small Addition* on Squirt, because otherwise, it would never end, I keep getting ideas. :p *Small Addition* is about Squirt, and the rest of it, like the language lessons, I'll just keep making into separate one-shots.
A Small Addition To Berk's Flock, chapter 5

When Hiccup returned and was swarmed by villagers trying to get his attention for various complaints and reports and problems and more complaints, even the most insistent of them didn't get too close. That was how strongly he smelled.

They reluctantly retreated when he promised to come back and be a proper chief once he was clean, but he knew he would still have to move quickly if he didn't want anyone getting impatient enough to barge in on him with their complaints/reports/problems before he was done. Even though the villagers' improved opinion of him meant that he no longer got harassed about his body, he still didn't like bathing in (human) company.

The woman who ran the bathhouse on this side of town wasn't around, since people usually didn't come in the middle of the day, but it was an easy enough matter for Hiccup himself to stoke up the fire and fill the smaller pool with running water, which was a lot quicker than lugging buckets around at home. Toothless, disgruntled but resigned, lay down to wait as he watched his human unhappily.

Hiccup, trying not to use too much soap because dragons found the smell of it disturbing and offensive, washed the dried saliva and sea salt off his flesh and out of his hair. After he'd dried himself off, he called to Toothless, who immediately hopped up and trotted over to him.

Hiccup hugged and petted the dragon to get some of his human scent onto him, and let Toothless lick his forearms. He rubbed his fresh clothes on the Night Fury before putting them on, and let Toothless nuzzle his clothes and face and hair afterward. As opposed to licking, the quieter scent was barely detectable to humans and therefore non-offensive; though it wasn't as rich as saliva would have been, it was still much more informative than nothing. Hiccup picked up some pieces of charcoal and rubbed them in both hands for a moment, since apparently dragons perceived the scent as one of his strong personal identifiers.

Ready at last, he put his hands on his hips and eyed the dragon challengingly. "We good now?"

"Yourself, Consort, MINE," Toothless huffed, grudgingly satisfied. "This crazy human 'clean,' I don't like it, blech...."
Almost the second Hiccup stepped back outside, he was swarmed. A few people had even been literally waiting outside the bathhouse for him.

"Whoa, okay, people, no, this is-- Come on, guys, we have a system here!" Hiccup reached the forge and hopped up onto a counter to elevate himself above the crowd, and got Toothless to roar in order to shut them up. "Do we need to practice this some more?"

"It's confusing!" someone complained.

"I get the lines mixed up!"

Hiccup nearly facepalmed at the typical Viking resistance to his ideas. "It's not that hard, guys, you won't think twice about it once you get used to it!" He pointed he spoke. "This line is for patrol and mission reports, this line is for dragon stuff, this line is for village stuff, this is for miscellaneous, and if you don't want to wait in line, leave a note in the bucket. Come on, people! War - dragons - village - everything else!"

Much as Hiccup would have loved to throw himself whole-heartedly into dealing with the dragon-related problems, those days were over for him. Sadly, Hiccup handed off the entire dragon group to his mother. Toothless made a squawking sound, looking as reluctant to part with him as Hiccup felt. "Wish I was going with you, bud," Hiccup murmured, caressing the dragon's head. Toothless toothlessly bit his arm in affectionate farewell, then turned away and left with Valka and the others.

"Okay," Hiccup sighed, "Astrid, Snotlout, what've you got for me?" He listened to summaries of their reports and arranged a meeting time for that evening when they could discuss things more thoroughly with the rest of their 'troop,' Gobber, and Valka.

Then, still turning over the information in a corner of his mind, he moved on to the more mundane (and teeth-grindingly boring...) aspects of chiefing. "Mulch, just because he's your best friend doesn't give you the right to cheat him...calm down, Sven; just turn it into a game for the junior riders, they'll round up the missing sheep soon enough...yes, Mildew, you'll be compensated for the cabbage she ate. No, she's not a menace, she's just got a new clutch to feed and is trying to stay healthy so she can keep doing that...."

That last one was a more serious problem, because even the newest flock additions knew to steer clear of Mildew's property. According to Valka, the legacy dragons had marked it as off-limits, so it was worrying that a dragon, even a mother from one of the new factions, had still trespassed there for
food.

Gustav confirmed it when he said solemnly, "Just thought you should know, Hiccup...Fanghook killed and *ate* a boar when we were out in the woods this morning."

"Thanks for telling me, Gustav," Hiccup said, running a hand through his hair. Dragons were known to eat things besides fish, but it wasn't typical and usually signaled a shortage of their usual food source. "Can you take your Nightmare riders out fishing again today?"

"Yeah, but...you know it's not gonna be a long-term solution...."

"I know, Gustav. I'll figure things out, just give me a little more time."

It was *hours* before Hiccup could get away for a break. 'I *shouldn't* let it pile up like this, then it just *gets overwhelming and horrible when I do stop procrastinating*....' He found himself even working during what was supposed to be his break, paging through the written complaints/reports/problems as he lay with his head in Astrid's lap.

After several false starts, Astrid finally said, "I keep wanting to talk about the wedding, but every time I try, I always end up just worrying about the feast."

"We're gonna starve, aren't we," Hiccup said bleakly.

"Hiccup--"

"I was such an *idiot*. Dad should have smacked me in the mouth instead of just sending me out of the way so he could clean up my messes."

"You were just a kid."

"I was fifteen! Legal adult and all, but still blowing up our supplies or sending them gift-wrapped to the Red Death, I'm surprised no one ever threw me over a cliff."
"You'll figure something out. You always do."

"The flock *tripled* in a single day. We can't keep up. They're raiding Mildew’s place and hunting in the forest, how long before we completely--? Owwww! Ow ow ow Astrid, stop!"

"I'm hearing a lot of really unproductive self-blaming instead of brainstorming."

"Okay, okay, I'll stop, please, *ow*...!"

"You're supposed to be taking a *break*, anyway, not continuing to stress out."

After a long pause, "...It still hurts. I think you owe me some kisses."

"Oh, do I~?"

"Mmm hmn. Lots."

They started to make out, but didn't get very far before the sound of approaching wingbeats prompted them to break apart. A few Nadders galloped up to them; Cloudjumper and the rest of the dragons who had flown came to a landing nearby.

Hiccup climbed to his feet and smiled a little at the sight of dragons seeking him out. "What's up, Mom?"

"They insisted," she said apologetically as she dismounted, then stood perfectly still.

Hiccup laughed and Astrid moaned good-naturedly, recognizing her pose. *Make-Consort-Do-Things-Using-Human-Sounds-ONLY* had become one of the dragons' favorite games. It worked on other humans as well, but they preferred to play it with Hiccup because he was the most obedient (other humans tended to lose interest quickly, misunderstand, make mistakes, or otherwise spoil the game).

"The first instruction is to shoot," Valka said, remaining very still and trying to speak in a monotone.
"I'm pretty sure they mean your sword."

Hiccup obligingly ignited Inferno, to the delight of the dragons. They never did seem to get tired of the fact that they could convey messages to their human flockmates using nothing but Valka's meaningless-sounding noises. Once the blade was aflame, Hiccup smiled at Astrid as he used it to draw a heart shape in the air. "My heart is on fire for you," he said, playfully stilted the words a bit.

"You dork," she laughed.

"Now," Valka continued, "pick up the three Terrors whose most recent meal was cod. I know you can't tell by scent, so I'll just tell you that it's the two green ones and that purple one. And Astrid, since you're here, Stormfly is telling me that she has some instructions for you as well."

Hiccup and Astrid played for a few more minutes, but eventually they had to return to work. Hiccup was so busy that by evening, he was too tired to eat, and fell asleep leaning against Toothless before Valka had finished cooking supper.

The woman crouched down and watched her son for a long time, quietly watched in turn by Toothless. Her child was so...so not a child anymore, and she wondered with a pang what he had looked like as a toddler, as a boy, as a teenager....

Finally she reached out to draw his arm around her shoulders. He grumbled and leaned heavily against her, still half-asleep, and slowly trudged up the stairs beside her. He seemed to rouse enough to give her a slightly sheepish grin when she attempted to put him to bed. "Oh...sorry, Mom, I-- Give me a second to change clothes, I'll...I'll try to eat in...a minute, I'm just not...very hungry...." He yawned, after which his head seemed to droop with weariness.

Valka knew that Toothless would do a better job than she could of deciding whether her son could afford to skip a meal or not. Since the dragon showed no inclination to force some fish down Hiccup's throat, she said, "Don't worry about it, Hiccup. I know my cooking isn't...entirely appetizing. Go on to bed, you'll have enough to deal with tomorrow."

"Soooo much to do," Hiccup groaned. "I didn't even get a chance to look at Squirt's shackle, I have to do something about that soon...makes me sick to even look at it...."

The next day, after his usual morning flight with Toothless and dealing with a couple of urgent matters, Hiccup determinedly set aside time for Squirt. He called the Bewilderbeast up out of the
ocean, to the alarm of the rest of the village. "Good morning, Squirt~!"

Squirt rumbled at him, looking a little disoriented.

"Hey, little guy, ready to get that icky shackle off? Ready to get rid of it, huh~?"

The dragons from the king's old flock had retreated to hide on the far side of Berk, or even in the forest. The legacy dragons were calmer, but kept close to their human partners. It was mostly Drago's ex-slaves who started flocking around Squirt, screeching angrily and occasionally feinting at him. Squirt stared up at him, baring his teeth in a long, low growl.

"NO, Squirt," Hiccup ordered. He swung into the saddle (Toothless was also growling) and flew up to the Bewilderbeast's remaining tusk. "SQUIRT!"

The giant dragon slowly redirected his attention to Hiccup.

"NO antagonizing flockmates, little guy. I know they're making a fuss, but you are bigger than them. Just ignore them."

Squirt gazed at him without response.

"Hey!" Hiccup shouted up at the smaller dragons. "Guys, settle down! Settle down, he's not hurting you!" He was a little surprised when they took no notice of him whatsoever. However, when Toothless roared, most of the dragons shrank back and sullenly glided away.

Hiccup was glad that he thought to evacuate the path to the forge first, because as careful as he tried to be in guiding Squirt, the fact still remained that he was dealing with a leviathan dragon, and not a particularly careful one, either. Several buildings (some of them freshly rebuilt from Drago's attack) got crushed. "Yeah, yeah, I know, just add it to the pile," Hiccup sighed at the protesting Vikings. "Squirt, down. Down."

Once Squirt understood that he was supposed to lie down and keep his head on the ground, he obeyed, barely moving. However, his eyes widened and he made distressed noises when he saw the two smiths approaching him with their equipment, so Hiccup had to soothe him for a while before they could start. "It's okay, little guy...it's okay, I'm not gonna hurt you, all right?"
It took Hiccup and Gobber most of the day to remove the enormous shackle, and by then, Hiccup was exhausted. He surveyed their work, his heart aching to see the heavy indentations in the tusk, clearly marking where the shackle had been. The huge scar in the enamel would always be a sign both of past slavery and present freedom. "Good job, Squirt."

Squirt rumbled uncertainly.

"You can get up now, for good this time." Hiccup gestured hugely. "Up, Squirt! Up!"

As before during each rest break, Squirt laboriously rose up and then fixed his wary eyes back on Hiccup.

"Good! You're done! Now, go, Squirt." More gesturing. "Go."

Squirt stared at him.

"Means GO AWAY," Toothless confirmed irritably.

"Lie down again??? Get up, lie down, loud loud loud tug??? Get up, lie down--"

"GO AWAY. FINISHED, GO AWAY GO AWAY GO AWAY," Toothless thundered. "No more rotten human marks on you, gone, finished!!"

Squirt looked at Hiccup for confirmation. Although Hiccup was staring at his Night Fury in surprise at the moment, he had just been making that sound and those motions that Squirt tentatively thought might mean "Go away."

"Go away??? I will go away and eat fish???"

"YES, STUPID!!"
"Go away, Squirt!" Hiccup called, heaving his arms yet again. "Go eat! Go swim and eat; finished!"

"Go away. Finished? Go away." Slowly, Squirt started to turn toward the ocean. He paused. He shook his head in an odd way, a rapid swinging movement, then abruptly paused again. He took a few more steps, halted, and shook his head once more. Then he continued on until he had disappeared beneath the sea.

To be continued....

**Author's Notes:** I am so sorry about the nine month delay in updating this!! In addition to my usual distracted muse shenanigans, it seemed like every time I managed to sit down and work on this chapter, certain paragraphs would get so long and impossible to explain succinctly that I kept having to pull them out and expand them into full-fledged one-shots. This happened with *Smelly*, *Conveyance*, *Factions*, and partially with *Language Lessons* (the stuff in LL was originally supposed to be in *A Small Addition To Berk's Flock*, but they had nothing to do with Squirt, so I decided to group those scenes together outside of "Small Addition").

I have found that doing research for my stories, even fanfiction, can lead to interesting things that I would never have dreamed of learning about or encountering otherwise. For this chapter specifically, I tried to look up how a blacksmith would remove shackles. At first, I found only one even remotely useful site that had a picture of a blacksmith removing a shackle from an ex-slave in 1907. In searching for additional sources, I came across a site that claimed to teach you how to escape from shackles...only to discover that its suggestions included things like switching bodies with a prison guard, gnawing the restrained limb(s) off, and turning into mist. I was literally laughing out loud in amused confusion, going, "What the heck IS this site?!!?" Turns out there's an entire Web site dedicated to "telling you all you need to know to be an evil villain, a nefarious cybernetic juggernaut, or a not-to-be-truly-comprehended interstellar vixen." ^^;;;;;;;

**SOME NOTES ABOUT LANGUAGE LESSONS!!**

First of all, I made a mistake, there are no pronouns in dragon language. (You see pronouns because the Dragonese is being rendered into English so you guys can read my fanfiction, but within dragon language itself, there are no pronouns; dragons always address and refer to people by their names/titles.) The concept of dragon love being more single-minded than human love is still true, but I'm going to have to find a different place for Valka to explain it.

Second of all, receiving feedback on *Language Lessons* made me realize that there's been a problem with the way I've been shipping HiccStrid all this time: when I scrutinized canon more closely, I realized that Astrid actually gets nothing out of the relationship, so apparently I've been subconsciously trying to make it up to her all this time by giving her a strong libido that Hiccup can satisfy and make her happy. I realize now that that is not the best way to balance out their
relationship, so I need to start shipping this pairing differently. I have a few ideas, but haven't settled on one yet, which is why I'm working on experiments to interpret HiccStrid in various ways and see which works best for me.

Thirdly, more people than I expected wanted better descriptions of the Dragon Voice. I apologize for not doing a better job of that! I myself dislike and don't care about detailed descriptions, so sometimes I forget to provide even the bare minimum for people with different preferences. ^^; I'll try to improve that if/when I ever get around to editing *Language Lessons* properly!

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I have *no idea* when I'll be able to update "Small Addition" again, since I haven't started the next chapter yet, but I do have enough ready-to-post installments stockpiled to last us through the end of December (if I update every Wednesday and Saturday)! I've got the next "Tooth's backstory" one-shot/chapter, the next three chapters of *To Put It In Perspective* (which will complete the HTTYD1 arc), and the next six chapters of *Carried Off* (the rest of Part 1 and all of Part 2). I'm also trying to get a really old, completed *His Soul Reflects My Own* one-shot typed, and I need to see what I can do about having at least one holiday fic ready for Christmas (requests are still open for that, btw!).

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!