Little Miracles
by KatieMarie999
Summary
Growing Up Haddock Story 2: Hiccup and Astrid love their new roles as parents to two adorable toddlers. In fact, they've never been happier. But things take a turn for the worse when one of their children is snatched away in the middle of the night and it's up to them to get her back before time runs out.

Only HTTYD and Riders/Defenders of Berk are canon.

Notes
Growing Up Haddock continues with this story, the first in what will be a lot of stories featuring the Haddock twins and Hiccup and Astrid's attempts to parent them properly! This story was co-written by EmmerzK. Enjoy!
This is Berk.

It's home to dragon racing, snowball fights, and it has a charming view of the ocean. The best parts of it all are the kids. You see while most parents only have one at a time, Astrid and I have twins.

Toddlers: in a word? Adorable. Once Astrid and I survived the terrible twos, I thought my troubles were over. Nothing could have prepared me for what was to come. But then again, aren't surprises what parenthood is all about?

Hiccup Horrendous Haddock III was concentrating on his stitching. His saddle had a tendency to wear a bit after each use and it was only a matter of time before a few stitches snapped open. He'd had less time for flying over the past three years but he didn't mind in the slightest. Even Toothless had grown fond of the tiny people running around his human's house.

And speaking of tiny people…

"Gotcha!" came a voice just below Hiccup's chair.

Hiccup looked down and was greeted by two bright blue eyes and a mop of vivid red hair. Tiny little arms wound around his prosthetic and came dangerously close to the mechanism that would pop it off and keep him from chasing his little boy.

"Yes you did!" Hiccup exclaimed, grinning down at his son. "And now I'm going to get you!"

Fearless Finn Haddock shrieked with glee and began running away from his father as fast as his little feet would take him. The saddle lay forgotten on the desk as Hiccup pursued the child, his laughter joining his son's as they ran through the village. People jumped out of the tiny boy's way as he ran, occasionally looking back and giggling at the sight of his father slowly gaining on him. At long last, Hiccup reached out and grabbed the child around the middle, lifting him off the ground.

"Told you I'd get you!" he laughed as he held the squirming boy aloft. "Now prepare for a heck of a tickling!"

Finn screamed with laughter as his father tickled his sides. Hiccup was careful to lower his son so that if he did manage to slip away from him, at least he wouldn't face a two foot drop.

"Daddy!" shouted another voice.

Hiccup looked up and immediately spotted Adrianna Miracle Haddock racing toward him, her green eyes sparkling and her wispy blonde hair flowing out behind her. Astrid followed, watching their daughter bolt toward her father and wrap her arms around his leg.

"Addie!" Hiccup exclaimed and, holding his struggling son with one arm, reached down and scooped up his daughter with the other.

The twins shrieked with delight as their father spun them around several times. When he placed them down, they were a little disoriented at first but then, exchanging mischievous glances, they began to push their father over. He fell backward dramatically and the toddlers wasted no time in
jumping on him and pinning him down.

"Ahh! Help!" Hiccup shouted, grinning the whole time. "I'm trapped! Help me, mommy!"

But Astrid shook her head, laughing as she watched the spectacle right in the middle of the village square. Several people stopped to watch Hiccup roughhousing with his children, including Stoick and Gobber.

"You know, if there's one man who loves his kids more than anything, it's Hiccup." Gobber said, causing Stoick to smile.

Hiccup, beginning to feel exhausted, finally shouted out, "okay, it's Poppy's turn now!"

The twins gleefully hurried toward their grandfather, who was now walking away in the opposite direction. Panting heavily, Hiccup got up, dusted himself off, and sauntered over to Astrid, who was watching him with a smile.

"I love them so much. I'd be happy playing with them all day." He said cheerfully, kissing his wife on the cheek.

"Good, they're all yours. I'll take the night off." Astrid quipped, nudging him with her elbow.

Hiccup and Astrid watched as the toddlers finally caught up to Stoick and began yanking on his cape. The larger man looked down and picked up Finn, who was giggling so loudly, they could hear it from that distance. Adrianna was still tugging on his cape but she wasn't as strong as her brother and it seemed that Stoick hadn't noticed her at all. Fortunately, she was still smiling and didn't seem to mind that she'd been ignored. Hiccup took a deep sigh and jogged up to his father.

"That's it." he said when he was in earshot. "You're watching Addie today."

Stoick turned to him, his eyebrows raised. "What?"

Hiccup pointed behind his father's shoulder. Stoick looked behind him, finally noticing his granddaughter tugging at his cape, her bright eyes alight with laughter.

"Oh. Didn't even see her there…"

"My point exactly!" Hiccup growled crossing his arms. "So you're going to spend some quality time with her."

Stoick sighed, looking at his struggling grandson who was already growing quite a bit of muscle for a small boy. "Hiccup, are you sure about-"

Hiccup nodded with a smirk. "Yep. Come on, Finn. Let's go home. See you this evening, dad!" he took the little boy out of Stoick's hands. "If you can give her up!" he added with a knowing smile.

"What? But…"

But Hiccup had already walked away with Finn struggling in his arms. Stoick looked down at Adrianna sitting in the dirt, trying to pull her shoe off.

"Ah no, no, dear, keep that on." Stoick bent down and shoved it back on.

She smiled at him with wide eyes. He gulped. How does one spend time with a three year old girl? He'd never done it before.
Adrianna seemed to sense his uncertainty. She stood up and grinned at him, pointing to the sky. "See da cwouds?" she asked in an almost melodic voice.

Stoick looked up at the clouds and furrowed his brow. Of course he could see them. Why was she asking him that?

"Dere's daddy's foot!" Adrianna shrieked suddenly, hopping up and down and pointing skyward.

Stoick looked up, wondering what on earth she was talking about, and then he spotted it. One of the clouds did look a bit like Hiccup's prosthetic foot. He would never have noticed if it hadn't been pointed out to him. He smiled down at his granddaughter.

"Well so it is." He said, finally glad he knew what she was talking about. "Don't you think that one looks a little like a fish?"

He pointed to the cloud to which he was referring and was pleased to see his little granddaughter brighten up at the sight.

"Uh huh. And dat's a dwagon eating it up!" she pointed to a cloud that looked a bit like a Terrible Terror which was passing over the fish cloud. "It doesn't fit in his mouf!" Adrianna giggled.

Stoick chuckled. "No it doesn't."

Apparently the little girl decided that they had done enough cloud watching because she fixed her gaze on the ground and immediately bolted toward a patch of flowers.

"Dat one's lellow!" she shrieked, pointing to a yellow flower.

Had Hiccup pointed out the obvious when he was this age? Stoick couldn't remember. But the sight of his granddaughter, excited over such tiny things, was beginning to make him feel warm inside.

"Dat one's red!" she pointed to a blue flower that time.

"No, dear, that one is blue." Stoick corrected. He gently took her hand and led it to a red flower. "That one is red."

"Oh." said Adrianna. She suddenly turned to look at her grandfather, her eyebrows furrowed together in intense concentration. She suddenly brightened up and pointed at him. "You're red!"

For a moment Stoick was completely confused but then he realized that his beard was red and that it wasn't a random outburst at all.

He let out a booming laugh. "Yes, I guess I am."

"Finn is red too. Mommy's lellow and daddy is brown." Adrianna informed him, looking quite serious.

"Of course. What color is Toothless?" Stoick asked, getting on his knees next to the child.

Adrianna thought very hard for a moment. "Purple?"

"No. Toothless is black." Stoick corrected, trying to keep his laughter minimal.

Adrianna giggled. "Oh yeah. And Stormfly is blue!"
"That's right!" Stoick exclaimed, quickly grabbing her around the middle and lifting her off the ground.

She giggled harder as he carried her over his shoulder, her head dangling down his back. Several villagers laughed at the sight but Stoick suddenly realized that he didn't care if the entire village saw him carrying his granddaughter on his back like a sack of flour. He hadn't spent nearly as much time with Hiccup when he was small. And if Finn and Adrianna were the gods' way of giving him a second chance, he was going to make sure he did it right this time.

"I knew they'd be late." Hiccup said to Astrid as the sun finally disappeared over the horizon.

"You think something happened?" Astrid asked, turning to face her husband.

"Nah, someone would have told us. She's fine." He replied. "But I should probably go looking for them. Who knows how long he'll keep her."

"Ca-I tome, daddy?" Finn piped up through a mouthful of chicken.

"Not this time, sweetheart." Astrid said, gently ruffling his hair. "You need your bath."

"No I don't!" the little boy protested, scrunching up his face and crossing his arms defiantly.

"Yes you do, little man. You've got dirt all over you." she said patiently.

"I can yick it off yike Toofwess!"

"Absolutely not!" Hiccup chortled. "Listen to your mother. I'll have Addie home in a bit."

It was a nice day for a stroll through the village. A bit nippy perhaps but then again, it was always cold on Berk. This weather was almost warm. A light breeze tousled Hiccup's hair and he took a deep breath, taking in the sights, sounds, and smells of his home. When he got to his father's house, he was a little surprised to find it empty. So where was his little girl?

The answer came a moment later when he saw a light on in the Great Hall. It was a bit early for the older Vikings to congregate around a wine barrel so Hiccup thought that perhaps Stoick had taken Adrianna into the Hall to stay warm. He walked up to it and heard voices coming from inside. He pushed open the doors.

And then he stopped and stared.

There was a large table set up in the middle. Seated at the table were Stoick, Gobber, Mulch, Bucket, Lotus, Spitelout, Snotlout, and Heather. It took him a moment to locate his tiny daughter sitting between Snotlout and Gobber. She looked dwarfed by the two men's size, however she had absolute command of their attention. In fact, the word picture she was painting for them was so vivid that he could almost see the entire story taking place above her little blonde head. As soon as their eyes met, she dropped the cup she was holding with a clatter.

"Daddy!" she shrieked, getting up and running into his arms. "We had a tea party!"

"I'm Mrs. Nesbitt!" Bucket shouted, causing some of the Vikings to laugh and others to groan in embarrassment.

"She… she got hungry." Stoick said in a slightly sheepish voice.

"Ach, admit it! It was your idea!" Gobber piped up.
Stoick smiled, admitting defeat, as several of the Vikings chuckled at him.

"I wanned a biiiiig tea party!" Adrianna squealed, holding her hands far apart. "And Unca Dobbew helped me i-vite ewewyone."

"I just came for the food." Snotlout said sharply.

"Sure you did." Hiccup chortled, trying not to burst out laughing and startle his daughter. "Gods, I hope your baby is a girl" he added, looking over at Heather, who was sitting next to Snotlout. The two had married the previous year and were now expecting a child.

"He's a Jorgenson. It's a boy!" Spitelout exclaimed, smacking his son on the back.

"Well you never know. For what it's worth, I think it's a girl." Hiccup shrugged.

"You always think it's a girl." Snotlout chortled.

"That's not true. I told Ruff and Fish that Gunnar would be a boy and he was. I'm just that good." Hiccup turned to his father. "How was she today?"

"She was all right. You've got a very special girl there, son." Stoick said, finally taking his head out of his hands.

"Yeah." Hiccup smiled at his little girl and kissed her on the cheek. "I know."

"You don't have to take her right away." Lotus beckoned to her son-in-law and granddaughter. "Come join us."

"It's almost her bedtime, mom." Adrianna scrunched up her face in disgust. "But I would love to have a tea party with you, Addie. How about this weekend?"

"Can Finn and mommy come too?" asked the child, her eyes bright with excitement.

"It wouldn't be a good tea party without mommy and Finn, now would it?" Hiccup asked, tapping Adrianna on the nose.

"Ugh, too much cute." Snotlout stuck his tongue out in disgust. "Why do you have to get all cutesy in front of everyone?"

"You just wait until your daughter is born." Hiccup said, not bothering to turn and look at Snotlout.

"It's a boy!"

"You keep believing that, sweetie." Heather said, patting her husband on the back.

"And I believe it's time to go. Say goodbye to everyone, Addie!" Hiccup enthusiastically waved to the group and Adrianna followed suit.

Astrid collapsed onto the couch, completely worn out. The entire front of her body was soaking wet but she was simply too tired to change. Finn had made his displeasure at being given a bath astoundingly clear. And now that he was finally tucked into his bed upstairs, she had a few minutes to relax. A few minutes of solitude.

Well, she might have gotten them had Hiccup not showed up. Her husband tiptoed downstairs, having successfully put Adrianna to bed. He spotted Astrid on the couch, looking completely
exhausted, and smiled fondly.

"You look like you've had a full day." He said, sitting down next to her and slipping his arm around her shoulders.

"Gobber was watching the kids this morning for a bit so I could do some drills with Stormfly." Astrid sighed, leaning on her husband. "And then I caught him trying to show Finn how to use a dagger. A real dagger. Thank the gods I spotted them before anyone got hurt."

Hiccup laughed and Astrid gave him a quizzical expression. "I'm sorry, it's not funny but what did you expect, leaving them with the blacksmith?"

"I was expecting a few minutes with my dragon. And you were busy with that meeting and then Toothless' saddle so I couldn't ask you." Astrid took a deep breath. "They're so much work!"

"I know. But worth it." Hiccup gently nudged his wife.

"Completely worth it." she agreed. "Even when I want to strangle them."

"Especially when you want to strangle them. You learn patience that way."

"I'll have you know that I am extremely patient!" Astrid said, elbowing her husband in the ribs.

Hiccup leaned forward, noting the fact that the front of her clothes were soaking wet. "Yeah. I guess you are."

The house seemed to be ringing with silence. With the children sleeping peacefully, Hiccup and Astrid sighed in relief, enjoying the lack of noise. There wasn't enough silence in their lives now. Most nights, they collapsed in bed after the children were asleep. But not this night. Hiccup gently lowered his head and placed a kiss on his wife's golden locks, taking a moment to thank the gods that he was lucky enough to find someone this amazing to with whom to share his life. Unbeknownst to him, Astrid was thanking the gods for the same thing.
Hiccup and Astrid had taken the liberty of putting out rocks all over the village, giving their children strict instructions that they were to stay within the rocks and only go out to play when there were people around. Otherwise, they had to be watched by an adult. Finn and Adrianna understood these rules very well and knew the consequences would be dire if they disobeyed. Finn had gone over the rocks once and had been kept inside and by himself for two whole hours as a result. He had watched Adrianna and Helga Ingerman playing together from his window with a scowl. No, he wasn't eager to repeat that incident.

Like all little boys, Finn had a bit of a stubborn streak. And with parents like Hiccup and Astrid, this may have been magnified just a touch. And like all little boys, he had a lot to learn about impulse control.

Then again, leaving a bucket of fresh, sweet berries out in the open was just asking for trouble. But Lotus had no idea that setting it down while she went into Gobber's workshop to ask him a question would result in such mayhem. Finn immediately spotted the ripe, purple berries and made a beeline to them. Grinning widely, he stuck his grubby little hands into the bucket and raised the berries, dripping dark purple juice, to his face. Soon he was covered in juice and his smile kept on widening until his whole face shone with it.

"Ohhh Finn!"

Finn looked up and found himself face to face with his grandmother. She stared down at him with a look of, oddly enough, disgust. Why was she looking at him like that? She should be happy that he had found something so tasty!

"Yook, nana!" he held up a fistful of berries. "Want some?"

He pitched the fistful of berries into her dress and grinned when she jumped back, scowling at the splatter marks he had left.

"Let's get you home. You need a bath." said Lotus, sighing deeply.

"No!" Finn squealed, his eyes widening in horror and the grin melting off his face.

He tried to get up and run away but his grandmother was too quick for him. She reached forward and gripped his upper arm. Finn began to scream very loudly in protest but she didn't let him go. Suddenly, he made his entire body go limp so that the only way to get him home would be to drag him.

"Gobber!" she called, trying to keep the boy at arm's length. "Can you help me for a moment?"

Gobber immediately came out of his shop, took one look at Finn, and began laughing uproariously. Lotus glared at him but he seemed to find this even funnier.

"Ahhh he takes after his mother, doesn't he?" he guffawed. "Had a good time, didn't you, squirt?"

Finn nodded. "Uh-huh."

"Gobber, could you help me take him home? I would rather not pick him up." Lotus sighed, narrowing her eyes at the boy.
"Arrr come here, Finn. Listen to your grandma!" Gobber exclaimed, swiftly picking up the child and clearly not caring that he now had purple splotches on his outfit now.

"Noooo!" Finn wailed. "Pumme down, Unca Gobbew!"

"Nope." Gobber responded calmly.

As muscled as the little boy was for his age, Finn simply couldn't struggle his way out from under Gobber's arm. Finally he went limp again. It didn't take long to take the toddler to his at least one of his parents. Hiccup was home with Adrianna and the two of them were unabashedly playing with stuffed toys. As soon as Hiccup caught sight of his son, he bit back a laugh.

"What did you do to him, Gobber?" he asked as Gobber deposited the boy at the front door.

"He did this to himself." Gobber replied, gripping Finn's upper arms so he couldn't escape.

"And what did you do, little guy?" Hiccup asked, scooting himself over to his son.

"There was bewwies!" Finn said matter-of-factly, trying to struggle out of Gobber's grip. "Yummy bewwies! And they had juice! See, daddy?" Finn held out his sticky purple fingers for Hiccup to inspect.

"Fresh berries that I'd just finished picking and had set down for only a minute so I could talk to Gobber." Lotus shook her head at her grandson. "I'd forgotten how fast little ones can be when they're determined."

"Very fast." Hiccup agreed with a smile. "All right, buddy, looks like it's bath time."

"Na-uh." Finn said, scrunching up his face and shaking his head profusely.

"Ya-huh." his father said patiently. "Come on. If you come now, I'll have Toothless make the water nice and warm and you can play with your boats."

"Do I need a baf, daddy?" Adrianna asked, looking slightly worried.

"Not right now. Want to help me fill the tub?"

The girl brightened at this prospect and rushed into the house. Finn looked less than pleased but having warm water and boats to play with was a tempting offer, even if it did mean having to be clean. He finally stopped struggling.

"You are so good with them, Hiccup." Lotus said with a fond smile. "I could never convince Astrid to do anything she didn't want to do when she was that age."

"Well that's Astrid. What did you expect?" Hiccup chuckled, taking off his son's shirt. "Come on, buddy." He took the boy by the hand and patiently walked with him into the house.

Adrianna was struggling to carry the buckets of water in the cupboard out to the tub. She looked delighted at the prospect of someone other than her being given a bath.

"Thanks, sweetie." Hiccup said, smiling and taking the bucket from her grip.

She looked relieved to let it go and watched her father pour the water into the tub. Once the tub was full, Toothless heated the water with a plasma blast and it was ready for Finn. Once all of his clothes were off (and would be thrown away now they were covered in stains), he settled into the tub and was surprised to find the water quite comfortable. Hiccup got out the little boats he'd made
out of wood a few months after the twins were born and placed them in the tub.

"Yook… I'm going to Dwagon Iwand!" Finn squealed, directing the biggest boat to the edge of the tub.

"You are? What kind of dragon are you looking for?" Hiccup asked with great interest as he began washing the purple juice off of his son's chest.

Finn thought very hard for a moment. "A Deadwy Naddew. Yike Stormfwy!" he paused for a moment, his face scrunched in concentration. "Ca-I have a Naddew for Snoggwetog?"

"I'll let Odin know." Hiccup chuckled. "What about you, Addie? What do you want Odin to bring you for Snoggletog?"

The little girl furrowed her brow, thinking very hard for a moment. "A Night Fury like Toofwess!" she said, pointing to the snoozing dragon behind them.

Toothless raised his head at the mention of his name and grinned back at Adrianna. She ran over and gave him a big hug. The Night Fury made a happy sounding coo and Hiccup couldn't stop smiling.

"Well you still have a month to go. Have you been good this year?" Hiccup asked Finn, his eyes narrowing but a smile still on his face.

"Oh yeah." Finn nodded.

"Really?" Hiccup stared the boy in the eyes.

"I been good!" Adrianna squealed, tugging on her father's shirt.

"Can you be good this month?" Hiccup asked them.

"Uh-huh." chorused the twins.

"Then I think Odin will definitely have a Deadly Nadder for Finn and a Night Fury for Addie." Hiccup touched both toddlers on the nose with each mention.

If Hiccup had thought the consequences of his son's indulgence was over now that he was clean, he was sorely mistaken. Soon after his bath, Finn began to act very strange. When Astrid had returned from her errand, he bolted to her and threw his arms around her.

"Mommy!" he squealed. "You home!"

"I sure am!" Astrid got on her knees so she was eye to eye with her son. A glimmer in his bright blue eyes made her slightly suspicious. "What did you do today?"

"Mommy, I pwayed outside today and I followed Poppy and, and, and... annnnnnnd…" Hiccup looked over and tried to hide his laugh as Astrid's eyes widened and she nodded profusely, waiting for their son to continue speaking. "AND," Finn continued, his eyes widened. "Tornado, he, he went like whoosh and woawed vewy youd... and it was AWESOME, mommy!"

"That's great, Finn." Astrid said with a genuine smile. "But what did you do after that?"

"I had bewwies fwom gramma!" Finn continued. "Then I got a bath." He wrinkled his nose in displeasure.
"Did you, now?" Astrid looked up at her husband, who was smiling down at them.

"He was purple!" Adrianna piped up, skipping over to welcome her mother home.

Astrid was beginning to catch on to where this story was going. "Did grandma say you could have berries, Finn?"

Finn looked down sheepishly. "Noooooo." He said with slightly puckered lips. "They were in a bucket."

"Ahh I see. Finn, you know you have to ask first." Astrid said, her eyes boring into his forehead. "Look at me." She placed her fingers on his chin and slowly raised his head so their eyes met. "What did I just say?"

"Ask fiwst." Finn muttered.

"That's right. I don't want you to eat any food that's out without asking first. Okay? Do you understand me?" she asked patiently.

Finn nodded his head, looking a little bit guilty. His mother gave him a warm smile that he returned. Once she took her fingers off his chin, he scampered up to his room.

"Addie, that goes for you too." Hiccup added, looking at his daughter, who was watching the scene with some amount of fascination. "If you see food lying out, what do you do first?"

"Ask." Adrianna said, nodding her head.

"Good girl. Would you go tell Finn that dinner is really soon?" Astrid asked, pointing up the stairs.

The little girl nodded and immediately headed toward her brother's room. Hiccup and Astrid watched her as she disappeared into the second level of the house.

"She's so… obedient." Astrid said, crossing her arms and staring at the staircase. "Where does she get it?"

Hiccup laughed. "Not from me, that's for sure."

"Me neither." She smiled. "They're so cute. They get that from me."

"Oh really?" Hiccup asked, his eyes narrowing but the edges of his mouth twitching upward. He watched as Adrianna emerged, grabbing the railing of the staircase and walking down the stairs. "So they didn't get anything from me?"

"Of course they did." Astrid replied, raising an eyebrow at Hiccup. "They got plenty of things from you."

The little girl tripped on the last step and fell forward, landing on her face.

"Whassferdinnew?" he asked in one breath, jumping off of the last three steps and stumbling
slightly as he landed.

"Fish and peas." Hiccup replied, stoking the fire.

"Oh lovely." Astrid said, winking at her husband. "We all know how good that'll taste."

Finn ran around the fire pit making Toothless flight noises as he did, making his parents smile while working on dinner or the fire. Finn ran over to Adrianna and grabbed her arm, bouncing up and down.

"ANNAANNAANNAANNAANNACOMEWUNNINGWITHMEANNAANNAANNA…"

Adrianna squealed and yanked her arm away. "Finn, let gooofooooooo.

Hiccup faced his children. "Finn, let…"

"OTAY DADDY!" Finn ran past Hiccup again, his little foot smacking Hiccup's prosthetic.

His daddy flailed, leaning heavily onto the stone fire pit so he wouldn't trip backwards into the fire. Adrianna snorted and covered her mouth with her hands.

Finn was now running around the pit again but laughing and screaming hysterically, "I WUNNING I WUNNING I WUUUUUNNING!"

His parents and sister stared at him in shock, unsure what was happening.

Astrid stepped out from the kitchen area. "Finn, I think it's time to sit down…"

"NOMOMMY I WUNNING AND I'S FUUUUU! AH HAA NOOO MOMMY!" Finn ran up the stairs in order to avoid his mother's reaching arms.

"Finn!" Astrid jumped up the stairs two at a time after him.

Hiccup and Adrianna shared a look when they heard the running and tussle upstairs. Astrid finally clomped down the stairs with an upside down Finn in her arms, his flailing legs barely missing her face and his shirt nearly falling over his head.

Astrid stopped at the bottom panting and staring at their madly laughing son. "What's wrong with him?"

"Erm..." Hiccup stuttered, shock at the volume of his son's laughter. "Berries?"

Astrid huffed. "All right you, settle down."

She raised up her struggling son, gathered air in her mouth and blew hard onto his stomach, making him laugh uproariously from the tickling sensation. "NOOO 'TOP, MOMMY!"

"Well I have to give you something to laugh at instead of nothing!" She grinned and repeated the process.

Now Hiccup was laughing at the spectacle, and looked over at his daughter. "Addie?" She looked up at him with wide green eyes. "Your turn?"

She fiercely shook her head but her smile was unmistakable. She held her hands up to her mouth as she backed away, and her daddy stood stock still, waiting for the opportune moment to spring forward.
"I'm gonna get you!" He called, just as Astrid let go of their son.

Finn and Hiccup both ran forward at the same time.

"Hic-!" Astrid called just as they collided.

"WHOA!" Hiccup managed to grab his crazy son and pull him out of the way as he fell.

The young man wiped out, his son on his stomach and flailing and kicking furiously while still laughing. And now Adrianna was laughing at the spectacle.

Hiccup blew his bangs out of his eyes. "So much for dinner time."

Hiccup and Astrid knew they had a hyperactive son. They just didn't know how hyperactive until a few hours later after some intense roughhousing. Adrianna started to get crabby as the sky grew darker. She couldn't go to sleep with all the racket going on and Finn wouldn't stop giggling. The boy had barely eaten any dinner (though they did manage to get a few peas into his system).

Adrianna finally went up to her room, her eyes drooping. Hiccup told her that he would be up in a minute to tuck her in but he suspected that she would be fast asleep by the time he got Finn to go to bed. Once the little boy was tucked in, he and Astrid collapsed in their room, taking deep breaths.

"Never again." said Astrid, her voice sounding slightly hoarse from shouting at her son. "He will never touch sweets again."

"Agreed." Hiccup breathed, his heart still racing from chasing Finn in circles.

They took deep breaths, enjoying the silence for a bit. Their little boy would probably have trouble falling asleep but as long as he stayed in his room and didn't make any…

Pitter patter, pitter patter…

"Great." Hiccup sighed. "Which one of us is going to get up and deal with this? I vote you." He nudged his wife.

"I don't think so." Astrid nudged him back. "I cleaned out the outhouse this afternoon so it's your turn."

Hiccup slowly sat up, groaning as his back made a funny cracking noise. With two newly outhouse trained children, the outhouse had to be cleaned more often. It was a highly unpleasant job of which he and Astrid were not particularly fond so it was his turn to deal with the next crisis.

Finn was sitting on the floor and playing with a small wooden Gronckle. He was roaring as quietly as he could (which wasn't all that quiet).

"Fearless Finn Haddock, what are you doing up?" Hiccup asked, giving his son a stern gaze.

Finn yelped in surprise and they heard a muffled, frustrated sob come from above them. Hiccup sighed, gritting his teeth so that he wasn't too hard on the boy.

"Do you hear that? Your sister is very, very tired and you're keeping her awake." He said in an unusually sharp voice. "Now you go upstairs and get into bed."

"But daddyyyy…"

"No buts, Finn!" he snapped. "If you don't go up the stairs right now, I will put you over my knee"
and spank you."

Finn froze. His father had spanked him only twice. Once when he had thrown a rock at Adrianna and again when he had kicked his mother in the shin during a tantrum. If Hiccup was talking about spanking him, he was already in big trouble.

"I'm going to count to three. Onnnnnne…" Hiccup began.

The little boy immediately jumped to his feet and pounded up the stairs. Hiccup didn't even need to continue counting. But, knowing his son, he sat down on the bottom step just to make sure that Finn really would stay in his room. As he heard Adrianna's cries finally cease, he thought that perhaps a restless night would be good for the boy, Hiccup thought. He would certainly think twice about putting things in his mouth that didn't belong.

Hiccup was pleased to see a much quieter Finn the next morning. The boy was almost too tired to eat breakfast and when he finally went outside, he didn't run as fast as usual. Adrianna was usually the night owl but even she seemed to have more energy that morning. After checking to make sure that his children were surrounded by villagers, Hiccup went to a boring town meeting that lasted until mid afternoon.

At long last, when the meeting was over, Hiccup emerged into the sunlight and immediately looked for the twins. He wanted to make sure they were still okay so that he could have an hour or so with Toothless. Finding time for his dragon was becoming a challenge. Astrid was throwing Heather a party to prepare for the new baby so he hoped there weren't any more crises because it would be up to him to deal with them.

In a few seconds, he spotted his son's bright red hair in the crowd. He ambled over to the boy and tapped him on the shoulder.

"Hey, buddy. What are you doing?" he asked amiably.

Finn faced his father and smiled; or at least it would have been a smile. His lips pressed together tightly and they stretched across his face, but it was obvious what was happening.

"Finn, what's in your mouth?" Hiccup stood and bent low to his son's level. The little boy tried to scamper away, but Hiccup grabbed him by his shirt. "Nu-uh, come here. What's in your mouth?"

By now a few people had stopped to watch the exchange, Hiccup trying to squeeze his son's stubborn mouth open. Finn's eyes were alight with mischief and a giggle erupted in his throat, but he struggled to keep his mouth closed.


Finn legitimately shrugged his shoulders, looked his father in the eye, opened his jaw… and out jumped a frog.

"Gah!" Hiccup yelped as it landed on his arm and continued hopping away. He stared at his son incredulously. "Why would you do that?"

"He's swimy." Finn stated matter-of-factly.

Hiccup swallowed thickly, trying not to gag. "No kidd… You know what? Nope. Let's go home. I'm washing your mouth out. A lot."

As he picked up the struggling boy, he could hear several villagers laughing. He sighed deeply. It
seemed Finn hadn't learned his lesson about eating things he shouldn't eat. Then again, he didn't know what he expected. Like all little boys, Finn had a tendency to forget things he'd been taught. And it was Hiccup's job to make sure he remembered.

The young man wouldn't have said it as he carried the child home, trying not to puke his guts out at what he had just seen, but he wouldn't have it any other way.
It was rare for Hiccup and Astrid to have moments together without distractions. Either they were needed by their children or their dragons. And on the rare occasions both were happy and taken care of, they were usually needed by someone else. But today was an exceptionally good day. They'd dropped the twins off with Heather, had a race on their dragons (Hiccup won by the tiniest bit though Astrid was slowly catching up), and had some time alone in the house. They had put their time alone to good use and were now on the couch next to each other, staring into the fire pit as its orange glow waned.

Astrid breathed a contented sigh, leaning on her husband. As much as she loved being a mother, more than she ever thought she would, she lived for these moments. The little ones with only Hiccup and no one else constantly trying to get her attention. She turned her face so her nose was against his chest. She breathed his scent deeply, the smell of leather, warmth and summer. She hummed as she exhaled, trailing her fingertips down his chest.

She heard and felt a light vibration of a laugh in his chest, his voice rumbling in her ear. "You all right there?"

Astrid smiled and leaned into him even closer, snuggling her face into his chest. "I couldn't be better."

Hiccup ran his fingers down her waist, catching the hem of her shirt. He slowly lifted it until his fingers touched her skin, soft and lean. He closed his eyes, resting his head on hers and gently trailing his hand up to her stomach, reveling in the softness of her skin as if it were the first time feeling it.

Astrid slowly raised her head up at him and kissed the hollow of his neck. "I love you."

Hiccup opened his eyes and kissed her right in between those gorgeous blue orbs. "I love you more."

"Impossible."

Astrid then twisted out of his grasp, his hand meeting air. She sat up a few inches above him, making him look up at her with a small smirk. Starting at his temples, she ran her fingers through his thick hair, making him lean back and sigh with a content smile. She smiled, knowing how much he loved that. And it had been a while since she did it. She towered over him and kissed his forehead, his nose. He smiled, waiting for her next target. She held his face in her hands for a moment before locking her lips onto his in a slow, passionate kiss that sent him reeling. How in the world did she learn to kiss so well? He wondered if that was his doing or if she had a natural talent for it. But he certainly picked a very good kisser to be his wife. Hiccup ran a few fingers up her shirt again, making her giggle through the kiss. He began to pull her down closer to him when a couple of high-pitched squealing voices were heard outside the house.

Astrid pulled away with a sudden pop. "They're coming."

Hiccup moaned. "Mmmm... whyyyy?"

"Oh stop being a baby." She sat beside him again but pecked his lips one final time.

"Fine. But we're finishing this later." He winked at her with a seductive smirk that sent a torrent of butterflies through her system.
The door flew open and in tottered their twins, both breathing heavily and excitedly. Finn was pointing back out the door, his blue eyes alight with excitement. "Aunt Heathew's tummy huwts."

Hiccup and Astrid exchanged very confused looks. Why had they apparently run across the entire village to tell them that?

"What do you mean her tummy hurts? Is she sick?" Astrid asked, raising an eyebrow.

Adrianna shook her head. "She said the baby makes her tummy hurt."

Hiccup's eyes widened. "Oh! We have to go get her right now!"

The parents struggled to climb off of each other. Their children watched them, completely bewildered as to why they were acting this way. And why their Aunt Heather had cried out and put both hands on her big tummy. Was the baby making her sick? Was she going to throw up?

"Okay, I'll go help Heather get to the healer, you go get Snotlout!" Astrid commanded as they bolted to the door.

"Right!" Hiccup exclaimed, opening the door and allowing his wife to exit the house before him.

The twins stood there, staring at the closed door in surprise. What were they supposed to do now? Suddenly, the door flew open and their parents emerged, panting slightly.

"I'm sorry, sweetie!" Astrid breathed, picking up Adrianna. "We need to go get to Aunt Heather really fast."

"It's okay, mommy." Adrianna replied, putting her arms around her mother's neck.

"We're going to go get Uncle Snotlout." Hiccup explained as he picked up his son. "Let's go, buddy!"

"Otay!" Finn squealed in delight. This was turning into a very exciting adventure.

Astrid carried Adrianna across the village in record time. She would have been faster but the child's weight slowed her down and the girl would never have been able to keep up on foot. When they got to the Jorgenson house, they found Heather lying against the wall, panting heavily.

"Oh thank Thor." she said as Astrid and Adrianna entered the house. "This is a lot more intense than I thought it was going to be."

"You'll be just fine." Astrid said, helping her friend stand up.

"Why is the baby making your tummy hurt?" Adrianna asked, her eyes wide with concern.

"Because it's time for the baby to come out." Heather replied, shooting the little girl a small smile.

Adrianna furrowed her brow, obviously in deep thought, and followed her mother and aunt to the healer's. Heather would bend over every few minutes, breathing heavily and moaning. That baby was giving her a very bad tummyache. When they finally got to the healers, Hiccup and Snotlout had arrived. Snotlout immediately rushed forward and put his arm around his wife. His face was paling by the second.

Heather suddenly glared at him. "Don't you dare pass out like you did with Astrid." she said in a low voice. "You did this to me and you're going to be here for it."
"Right." said Snotlout, taking several deep breaths. "Well come on then, let's do this."

He led her into the healer's house. Hiccup and Astrid sat outside, staring at the door. Not only were they feeling slightly awkward at being outsiders but they also weren't able to finish what they'd started at home.

"Daddy?" Adrianna said, pulling on her father's shirt. He crouched down next to her. "Did I make mommy's tummy hurt?"

"Well…" Hiccup thought for a second. "Yeah you did."

"Oh." The little girl looked close to tears. She suddenly ran over to her mother and threw her arms around her legs. "I sorry I made your tummy hurt, mommy!"

Astrid chuckled and got on her knees so she was facing her daughter. "It's okay, sweetie. I'm happy it happened because then I got to meet you."

"Was daddy happy too?" Adrianna asked, still looking visibly shaken by this news.

"I sure was." said Hiccup, scooting forward. "Addie, it's okay. That's what happens when babies are born. It's not your fault."

"Yeah. As soon as I was holding you and Finn, I forgot all about the…" Astrid suddenly trailed off, looking around. "Where's Finn?" she asked, her eyes widening.

Hiccup looked around and noticed, with a jolt, that the boy was gone. He faced his wife again. "He was just here!"

"You had him last, Hiccup!" Astrid snapped, now getting to her feet.

Hiccup rolled his eyes. "All right, well let's just look for him. He couldn't have gone far."

Finn had obviously gone outside the rock barrier. He wasn't anywhere in the village square and no one had seen him. It was as if he had gone invisible. Astrid's heart began to pound in her ears. Where was her little boy?

"Did you find him?" she asked Hiccup breathlessly as he ran into the village square.

Hiccup shook his head. "No, he's probably wandered into the woods. We need to…"

"Hiccup!" Stoick called, running over as fast as he could. "Astrid, good. You're here. I found Finn."

"Oh thank the gods, do you have him?" Astrid asked, not sure whether or not to sigh in relief.

"That's the difficult part. Now don't panic…"

"Where is he?" Hiccup and Astrid shouted in unison.

"I said don't panic!" Stoick boomed. "If you panic, you'll make everything worse. Now get your dragons and follow me."

"What about Addie…"

"Lotus!" Stoick shouted. The woman, who was sitting and talking to someone on the other end of the village square, bounded forward. "You watch Adrianna for a bit." It wasn't a question.
"What's wrong with Finn?" Adrianna wailed, looking genuinely terrified now.

"Don't worry about it, sweetie." Hiccup said, giving her a surprisingly gentle gaze. "We'll make sure he's okay."

Moments later, Hiccup and Astrid followed Stoick as they flew over Berk. They scanned the ground and trees as they went by, wondering where Stoick was taking them. Hiccup looked to his father to ask a question as the cliffs came to view, thinking that they must have passed the spot, but he stopped. Stoick's eyes were locked on the cliffs, making Hiccup's insides turn to ice. As they flew over the cliff drop to the ocean, he looked down... and nearly fell off Toothless.

Their little son was lying on a ledge six feet down, still as a statue; he was lying on his back, his head facing toward the ocean with his red hair blowing in the wind. Hiccup and Astrid urged their dragons into a loop after Stoick. The flapped above the still form of Finn for a moment, unsure how to proceed.

"Finn!" Astrid called down. The boy didn't move.

Hiccup felt like screaming; he was supposed to be watching him! But he shoved down his emotions for the moment. The crag didn't look very supportive. If anyone bigger than Finn had fallen on it, it probably would have shattered.

"How do we get him?" Hiccup asked Stoick, who's face was etched in thought.

"It's too steep for you to fly down. Astrid, stay here and watch Finn. Hiccup, you land by the edge. I'll go get some rope and some help, then lower you down." Stoick called.

The couple nodded, following his instructions without question. If the crag was as brittle as it looked, it certainly wouldn't hold for very long.

Toothless landed on the ground near the edge. Hiccup hopped off and jogged to the edge, Toothless on his heels. The duo looked down at the still boy. From up close Hiccup could see the cuts and bruises on his little boy's body. He crouched on the balls of his feet, putting a hand to his mouth. Curse him for not paying attention... if his son wasn't breathing... no. No, he was fine. He had to be. He'd never forgive himself otherwise. A coo and nudge to his right shoulder brought him out of his reverie. Hiccup looked up; Toothless' wide eyes were in front of his, and the dragon cooed again.

"You're right, bud," Hiccup sighed. "He'll be fine."

Stoick soon flew overhead with Fishlegs, Ruffnut and Tuffnut, and Spitelout trailing behind on their dragons. Stoick turned around and tossed one end of a long rope to Hiccup. Hiccup grasped the rope and gave Stoick a thumbs up. He was lifted off the ground a little shakily at first, Toothless shrinking a bit and watching steadily, ready to dive after him should he fall.

"It's okay, Toothless," He called calmly. "I'm fine."

The Night Fury visibly relaxed and sat on the edge, watching his friend's descent. Hiccup was steadily lowered the almost six foot drop. Just above his son now, he could really survey the damage. The cuts and bruises were minor and a little bump had formed at the back of Finn's head, but what made Hiccup smile in relief was the breathy sound coming from his open mouth.

"He's breathing!" He called up for Astrid's sake.

"Good! Now grab him and let's go!" Stoick called down.
Hiccup was lowered to be side-by-side with Finn. He reached out, swaying in the wind a bit so he gripped the rope again. Once he was steady, he reached to his son again.

His hand brushed his son's shoulder, but the boy stirred. "Finn?"

Finn's eyes opened a crack. "Daddy..."

"Hey buddy, it's okay, I'm here." Finn stared at him for a moment before he tried to sit up. "Easy buddy..."

A loud crack under them jolted them both. The rock cracked underneath Finn's body and Hiccup gripped his son's arm. "Finn, come here!"

Finn jumped into Hiccup's arms just as the rock crumbled beneath him. Father and son watched as the rock fell down the rest of the chasm and splashed into the water.

"Whoo, that was cyose." Finn remarked from Hiccup's shoulder.

Hiccup eyed him with a most definite fatherly expression. "Yeah. I'll say."

Stoick had Thornado fly them up to the ground to meet Astrid, who was just landing. Hiccup lightly rolled his eyes at his son's cheers of the wind blowing in his face.

"This so tool!" he shouted.

Hiccup touched on the ground and released the rope, trying hard to stay stern with his son. But he couldn't help but think of the glorious day he could teach his son fly through the sky by dragon.

"Finn!" Astrid nearly yanked her son out of Hiccup's arms.

"Dahh mooooomy I tan't bweave!" Finn choked from Astrid's shoulder.

"Astrid, you're smothering him."

"You zip it. You still lost my baby." Astrid growled.

"And I just saved him! You should be thanking me!" Hiccup frowned.

"Astrid sighed. "All right, fine. But Finn..." She sighed heavily, pulling him up with a stern expression on her face. "You are in big trouble little man."

"Umm..." Finn looked at his hands. "I think I should be a big man with a wittle twouble."

Stoick couldn't help the chuckle from his perch on Thornado. "You will be a big man when you obey your parents' rules, son."

Finn sighed heavily in defeat. "Otay, Poppy."

Hiccup sighed heavily. "All right. Let's go home. Addie's probably in fits."

"And we also have to check to see if your prophecy about Snotlout's kid is right!" Ruffnut shouted as they took off.

"Oh yeah. So we do." Astrid smiled as she hopped onto Stormfly.

"Prophecy?" Hiccup scoffed. "I'm no Elder. I just know."
The group sighed in relief as they flew back to the village. They touched down in the square, Hiccup smiling at his chatty son. He still needed a lecture, but he was so thankful that everything hadn't been too bad. That was about as terrifying as his parenting experience had been up to that point, and he was content to leave it that way.

Sadly, Fate had other plans.

"Owww!" Finn wailed as Astrid attempted to put a salve on one of his cuts. "Stop it, mommy!"

"Hold still." His mother snapped.

"But it huwts!" the boy cried.

"What were you thinking?" continued his mother. "You know you're not supposed to go outside the rocks. We tell you this almost every day." The boy tried to pry his arm loose but she gripped it tighter.

"Owwww, no!" he shrieked, tears beginning to stream out of his eyes.

"Maybe you'll think twice before disobeying us again." Astrid's relief at his safety had long since ebbed and now she was more upset with her child than anything.

"Mommyyyyy!"

"No, I'm not letting go of you, Finn. You did a very stupid thing today. You could have gotten very, very hurt. Or died."

The boy's face suddenly went ashen. He looked up at his father, who had walked behind Astrid and gently placed his hands on her shoulder, still giving his son a very harsh look.

"Astrid, don't bruise him more." He said in a soft voice.

The mother looked down at her hand and realized that she was probably gripping the boy's arm more than necessary. She loosened it slightly. Just then, they heard a very loud sniff from behind them. They turned around to see Adrianna, her hands covering her mouth and tears spilling onto her face.

"Finn was gonna die?" she squeaked, looking horrified.

Astrid raised her eyebrows at her husband, as if nonverbally telling him to deal with this particular crisis since she was already so preoccupied with the errant boy whose arm she was gripping. Hiccup got the hint; he walked across the room and got down on his knees next to his little girl, who looked like she was going to burst into tears.

"Finn was in a lot of danger today, Addie." he said as gently as he could. "But your mommy, Poppy, and I saved him. And look, he's okay now, isn't he?"

Adrianna's lower lip trembled slightly as she nodded. Hiccup put his arms around her and held her to his chest.

"I promise that mommy and I are going to do everything we can to make sure you and Finn are safe. You don't have anything to worry about, sweetie."

He could feel her little heartbeat slowing down a bit as she relaxed and put her arms around his neck. Hiccup smiled as he hugged her, feeling like this was where she belonged. Right there in his
Heather and Snotlout's baby came into the world a few minutes after Hiccup, Astrid, and the twins came to find out how they were doing. As they sat outside in the dark with a group of other Vikings, the twins became antsy. Astrid was clinging to Finn to make sure he didn't run away again. Finding him in the dark would be almost impossible. A high pitched wail came from the inside of the house and everyone brightened up.

"Moment of truth." Astrid said, grinning at her husband as Snotlout pushed open the door.

"Don't say it." Snotlout growled at him.

"I wasn't going to say anything." Hiccup said, trying to act innocent.

Snotlout turned to the rest of the crowd. "It's a girl." he said in an odd voice, not quite disappointed but also not quite happy. "She and Heather are fine."

Several of the onlookers cast Hiccup surprised glances. He shrugged modestly, trying to not to gloat too much.

"Congratulations, daddy." he said to Snotlout.

"Oh shut up, you." Snotlout rolled his eyes.

Suddenly, they heard a loud, delighted sounding gasp come from inside the house.

"It's a baby!" squealed a small, feminine voice who was certainly not Heather.

"Oh Odin above…" Hiccup muttered. "Adrianna, come back out here!"

"But dere's a baby!" she repeated, sounding completely ecstatic.

"It's fine. She can stay." Snotlout said, sounding defeated.

It was a good thing Adrianna had made a beeline to the baby. Had she taken in her surroundings, she might have been terrified out of her mind. The others waited until Heather was cleaned up before coming in to see the newest Jorgenson. Adrianna was sitting on the bed next to Heather, grinning from ear to ear and staring at the baby girl in her arms.

"She's… she's cool, you know?" Snotlout said, sitting on Heather's other side and looking into his daughter's face. "Kind of small… but she won't always be…"

"Are you crying?" Astrid asked as she suddenly noticed tears begin to slip out of his eyes.

"No! I'm not… shut up, Astrid!" Snotlout grumbled but the smile on his face only widened.

Adrianna looked up at Snotlout, the smile melting off her face.

"Don't cry, Unca Snotlout." She said in a very high pitched, shaky voice. "Why you not happy?"
"I… I am happy…"

But it was too late to stop Hiccup and Astrid's little girl once she was determined. She immediately got down off the bed, ran around to the other side, and threw her arms around Snotlout's neck. Snotlout looked up at Hiccup, his eyes wide, and Hiccup grinned. He then slowly put his arms around the little girl, feeling a bit uncomfortable and, embarrassingly enough, even more emotional.

When she finally let him go, she stared into his face. "Be happy." she said, wiping a tear out of his eye.

"Thank you. I will." Snotlout said, awkwardly tapping the child on the head.

Adrianna immediately ran back to get a better look at the baby. She stopped when she noticed that Finn had taken her seat, looking a bit upset at first, but then sighed and walked resolutely over to her mother.

"Can you have another baby, mommy?" she asked.

Astrid chuckled. "No, sorry sweetie. Two babies are enough for me."

Snotlout noticed the tiniest glimpse of sadness in Hiccup's face after she said those words. But he may have been imagining it.

"She's cute." said Finn, grinning down at the baby.

"Thank you." Heather smiled at him. "I think so too."

Finn leaned down and kissed the baby on her forehead.

"Oh no!" Snotlout suddenly shouted, or he would have done if it didn't mean waking up his daughter. "You keep him away from her!"

Hiccup and Astrid exchanged glances, both trying not to crack a smile.
"Roll over!"

"That's right! What's this one?"

"Umm… pwasma bwast?"

"No, Finn, that's stretch out your wings."

"Ohh yeah!"

Hiccup smiled at his eager children who were both leaning forward, completely engrossed in the little quiz he was giving them. They were never too young to learn hand signals for the dragons they would have one day. And they were already becoming very good at remembering them. Oddly enough, it was Adrianna's attention span that tended to be too short for long lessons (it wasn't that she didn't want to learn, she just had a tendency to stare off into space and forget to listen). Finn was more forgetful but he was getting much better at knowing which signal was which.

"Addie, what's this one?" Hiccup asked, making his hand into what he hoped looked enough like a mouth with teeth for Adrianna to recognize.

"Umm… bite?" she asked, looking unsure.

"That's right!" said her father, his smile widening. "And Finn, what's this one?"

Finn stared at him for almost a minute. "I don't wemembew."

"Nah, you wouldn't. I just made it up. It's the tickle Finn sign!" Hiccup exclaimed, reaching out and grabbing his little boy around the middle.

Finn let out a shriek of laughter, flailing his arms and legs around in an attempt to get away from his father's nimble fingers. Adrianna giggled, inching away from the spectacle as if hoping her daddy wouldn't focus his attention on her next. Of course, that was exactly what he did. She let out a squeal and tried to run away but he was too quick for her. He reached over and pulled her in, tickling her as fiercely as he could without hurting her. He loved the sound of his children laughing but Adrianna's giggles were special. He had been delighted to notice that she didn't just hiccup when she cried, she also hiccupped when she laughed hard enough. This was a trait he hoped she would never outgrow and at this rate, it didn't look like she would.

When the toddlers finally calmed down, Hiccup brought them in for a tight hug.

"I love you. Both of you." He said, kissing both children on the cheek as he did this.

He made it a point to remind them that he loved them often. Stoick was a good man and, truthfully, hadn't been too bad a father all things considered but Hiccup had always wished his father had told him he loved him more often. Stoick was the type to show his love for Hiccup rather than tell him. Now that he was a father, Hiccup didn't want his children to ever doubt his love for them and was determined to tell them he loved them as much as he could.

Finn let go first and bounded into another room without saying anything. This was no surprise to Hiccup; he'd joked that his son was a struggler while his daughter was a snuggler. Astrid rolled her
eyes at the pun but he insisted on using it no matter how ridiculous it sounded. Adrianna let go a moment later but only to put her little hands on his shoulder and stare him right in the eye.

"I love you, daddy." she said quite seriously, as if this was the most important thing she had ever said to anyone.

Hiccup smiled in response. "I love you too, Addie. Now I'm sure Finn is off causing mayhem. We'd better go after him!"

The little girl giggled and held out her hand. He took it in his and marveled at how tiny it was compared to his. And then they walked into the other room to make sure Finn truly hadn't gotten into any trouble.

The twins were being watched by Lotus that evening as Hiccup and Astrid attended a tribe meeting. They almost weren't paying attention at all. Hiccup was engrossed in making a perfect, to-scale stuffed Night Fury. He had spent a little extra money to get the softest material so Adrianna could almost use the stuffed dragon as a pillow. He made sure all the threads were black so that they would blend into the body of the dragon without being distracting. He wanted to make a Night Fury that looked just like Toothless. And with the amount of work he was putting into it, it was coming out quite nicely.

Astrid was carefully whittling a perfect Deadly Nadder for Finn. She figured that a little boy probably wouldn't want something stuffed. Finn loved his wooden toys the best and was surprisingly careful so that they didn't break. She'd measured Stormfly and, like Hiccup, she decided to make her dragon to-scale as well. It was taking a long time and she whittled in all of her free moments, especially during meetings. With Snoggletog a week away, she had a few adjustments left to make before she could paint it.

The meeting didn't concern them very much so the couple ignored Stoick's orders and announcements completely. He shot them frustrated glances that they never saw. And so, when it was over, no one bothered to let them know they were allowed to leave. Stoick watched everyone exit the Great Hall while his son and daughter-in-law were still hard at work on their children's Snoggletog gifts. Once everyone was gone, he strode over and placed a hand on Hiccup's shoulder.

Hiccup jumped so violently, he actually toppled off his seat. Astrid stopped to laugh at him and then realized that everyone had left. Stoick took a deep breath and pulled up a chair so he could sit across from them.

"It doesn't have to be perfect, you know." he said once he was sure they were listening. "I'm sure Finn and Adrianna will appreciate your gifts no matter what."

"I know they will." Hiccup replied, not taking his eyes off the Night Fury he was making. "But this Snoggletog is probably going to be the first one they remember."

"I see." Stoick murmured, more to himself than to them.

Hiccup looked at his father and was slightly surprised to see that the man looked the tiniest bit depressed.

"Dad, this isn't a commentary on your parenting." he said, hoping to break the tension that always seemed to linger every time he and his father were in the same room.

"I know that." Stoick replied, shaking his head. "But you are such a good father. Even better than I thought you would be."
"Thanks, dad." Hiccup gave his father a small smile before turning to his project once more.

Stoick turned to Astrid, who seemed to sense his gaze and looked up at him.

"You remind me of Hiccup's mother. So determined, so energetic and yet also very nurturing. I couldn't ask for a better mother for my grandchildren."

Now Hiccup was looking up at his father, an odd expression on his face. "I hate to spoil the moment but why are you being so… nice?"

"It's the holidays. I'm getting in the Snoggletog spirit. Peace on Earth, good will toward men." Stoick let out a low chuckle. "I also haven't had much time to think of gifts this year and so I thought a few kind words would go a long way."

"You've been working so hard on the kids' gifts that you forgot about us." Hiccup said with a very straight face.

"I'm not admitting to anything!" Stoick put up his hands but the small smile on his face told his son all he needed to know.

Stormfly loved the children. She loved herding them when they strayed too far from their parents. She loved the sound of their laughter when she heard them playing. She loved how happy the twins had made her trainer. Both she and Toothless were very fond of their trainers' young ones.

Well… most of the time.

The little boy came skipping over to her pen, his eyebrows furrowed in determination as he muttered to himself. He was waving his hands about in an animated fashion, almost as if trying to swat away a fly.

"That one is woll ovew… no… that one is woll ovew… I tan't wemembew." He said, looking quite frustrated with himself.

Stormfly watched him with interest, taking a few steps out of her pen so that she could herd him home if necessary. As she trotted over, the little boy suddenly did a familiar hand signal. She thought about whether or not she should obey for a second before deciding that, since he was her trainer's young after all, she would oblige. She stretched out her wings and stared at him, unsure if he would try to do another signal.

The little boy's mouth opened into a perfect o-shape. And then his entire face brightened as he gleefully giggled. Stormfly loved the sound of that boy's laugh. There was an element to it that made it sound the tiniest bit like her human's. She was fascinated by this, how her trainer's boy was so much like her trainer in such small ways. She liked the boy a bit better than the girl. He had energy and spunk while the girl was a lot more subdued. He was much more fun.

The boy then looked her straight in the eye and gave her another signal. She immediately complied, sitting down and giving him her full attention. He hopped up and down a few times, his giggling growing louder and echoing around them.

The boy eventually stumbled onto the correct sign for rolling over. Stormfly instantly obliged, making the boy even more excited than before. Out of the corner of her eye, the dragon spotted the little girl sauntering over, staring into space like she often did and looking like she had no idea how she'd gotten there. She smiled at Stormfly and then turned to her brother.
"Anna!" the boy squealed. "The signaws wowk!"

The girl fixed her gaze to the dragon's face. She performed the biting signal (which was an awfully stupid thing to do since that one was for defense against enemies) and Stormfly immediately snapped her jaws, finding nothing to actually bite. The little girl still seemed to be delighted by this display.

And then things got complicated.

Both children decided to try out their hand signals on their mother's dragon at the same time. Bouncing up and down and squeaking with glee like a couple of excitable Terrible Terrors, they did different signals at the same time. Stormfly watched them, becoming very confused. Who was she supposed to obey? She growled irritably and flopped down on the snow, deciding not to obey either one of them.

The twins' faces fell. The Nadder didn't like to disappoint the humans in this way but she also didn't like being this confused. A moment later, she perked up when she spotted her trainer bounding forward, probably having seen the spectacle.

"I see you've figured out why daddy teaches you those hand signals, huh?" said her human. The children nodded.

"Why won't she do it anymore?" the girl asked in a disappointed voice.

"Because you're confusing her. If you take turns, she'll know who to watch and what to do."

"Ohhhh." said the boy, comprehension dawning on him at last. "Ca-I go fiwst, mommy?"

Stormfly's human nodded and crouched down, putting her hands on her son's shoulders. "Can you do the hover signal?"

The boy nodded enthusiastically and did the signal. Stormfly stretched out her wings and hovered over the ground for a few seconds before touching back down.

"All right, Anna, your turn now." Stormfly's human gently pushed the girl forward slightly.

The little girl did a different signal. The dragon immediately roared so loudly, all three humans jumped and then laughed at their own surprise.

The game continued for nearly an hour. Stormfly enjoyed showing off her obedience skills and the children particularly enjoyed giving the orders. She'd herded them so much, it was kind of a switch, come to think of it. When her trainer finally grew tired of the show, she decided to take her young inside. It was getting dark, after all, and with so much snow and ice on the ground, it was probably safest to get the children in before the sun had completely set.

Stormfly took a few steps back and rested in her pen. Toothless gurgled at her as she entered, as if to ask what all the commotion was about. The Nadder sighed and made an exhausting sounded coo. Toothless took the hint and immediately trotted over the other side of the pen.

Yes, Stormfly loved those children most of the time. But once in a while, they were simply too much for her.
Snogging on Snoggletog

The gifts were finally ready. The children left out their helmets in eager anticipation for Odin's arrival on Snoggletog night. But now it was the evening before Snoggletog Eve and Hiccup tiptoed down the stairs, a grin on his face and a hand on his mouth to keep himself from laughing too hard. Astrid was relaxing on the couch and staring into the fire. She turned to look at her husband and immediately knew there was a story.

"Okay who said what?" she asked as her husband sat down next to her.

"It was Adrianna this time." Hiccup replied, resting his head on her shoulder. "I was tucking her into bed and she looked me in the eye and said 'tomorrow is the day we say tomorrow is Snoggletog!' It was so adorable. How do we have such cute kids?"

"I guess we got lucky." Astrid sighed deeply, feeling warm and cozy next to her husband. "It'll be nice to have the day off tomorrow. The kids are going to love the Snoggletog Eve party."

"Think Gobber will have the bells attached to his arm this year?" Hiccup asked with a chuckle.

"Oh gods, the bells. I always forget that he does that. Do you remember how Finn managed to pop them off last year? Took forever to pry them out of his hands."

Hiccup laughed as silently as he could. "I remember that. Adrianna had her hands over her ears because of all the racket. But she brightened up as soon as we all started singing."

"Yes she did. She loves the singing. She'll probably be quite the singer later on." Astrid entwined her fingers with his.

"Probably." Hiccup replied, his mind beginning to travel far away from their conversation.

Right now, everything was perfect. The fire crackled and cast a warm orange glow around the room. Hiccup glanced up to see its effect on Astrid's eyes and felt like something was melting within him. The way her beautiful blue eyes reflected the fire was strangely intoxicating. She was a heavenly being, his Astrid, a gift he did not deserve. And it was Snoggletog that reminded him of all he had to be thankful for over the years. A beautiful wife who still surprised him after over four years of marriage. A little boy who was a handful but always made him laugh. And a little girl whose smile made him forget all of his troubles. He didn't deserve any of them. And yet he was given them anyway.

Yes, he was certainly a lucky man indeed.

The village wide Snoggletog Eve party was a memorable occasion. The colored lights shone around the Great Hall, the roaring fires and body heat kept everything warm, and the Vikings were unusually cheerful. The children ran amok, drawing pictures and singing songs with their friends. The Haddocks arrived a little bit late and were immediately greeted with food and activities that they knew would last them most of the night. Sure enough, Gobber did attach bells to his left arm and was entertaining himself by running around and trying to catch the children in a strange game of what appeared to be jingle bell tag. The children shrieked with laughter and Finn immediately joined them. Adrianna gripped her daddy's hand and remained in the group of older Vikings.

Pretty soon it was like old times again with everyone from their old group sitting at a table with the next generation in their arms. Inga Jorgenson was asleep in the crook of Snotlout's elbow; he sent
them all death glares as they sat down. No one wanted to make a lot of noise lest they disturb the
month old baby and incite the wrath of her father. Fishlegs bounced Gunnar on his knee; the boy
grinned as they sat down. Ruffnut was, as usual, picking on her brother and he was reciprocating
her punches. It was quite a bit more subdued than when they were teenagers, more in good fun than
anything, but it gave the rest of the group a feeling of nostalgia nonetheless.

Adrianna climbed onto Hiccup's lap, put her elbows on the table, and placed her chin on her hands.
She loved to people watch and the Snoggletog Eve party was a good opportunity to do just that.
Her mother slid into the seat next to them and began to rub her father's back. She barely noticed
this because she was much more interested in staring at the one-year-old boy and newborn girl who
were both so tiny. Was she that tiny when she was a baby? Her bright green eyes scanned the room
and fell on a sandy haired boy she hadn't noticed before who didn't look too much older than her.
He was sitting next to his mother and drawing a picture, ignoring most other people around him.
She couldn't understand why he would do that. Parties were for meeting people and having fun!
She had the odd urge to go introduce herself but then she locked eyes with Helga Ingerman, who
was almost exactly a year younger than her. She slid off her daddy's lap and joined the other little
girl in play.

A moment later, Snotlout and Ruffnut began snickering at Hiccup and Astrid. The couple looked
around and saw Gobber holding Finn over their heads. Finn had mistletoe in his hand and was
giggling with excitement.

"Oh is that how it's going to be?" Hiccup asked, staring up at his little son. "You sure you want to
watch this?"

He didn't give the boy any time to respond before he immediately brought Astrid in for a very
passionate kiss. Finn's face scrunched up in disgust.

"Ewwww!" he squealed. "You din' tell me they were gonna do that!"

"Well you wouldn't'a done it if I had told you that!" Gobber chuckled, finally lowering the boy.
"But now you two have to pass it on." he added to Finn's parents.

"So we do." said Astrid, taking the mistletoe from her son.

She stood up and surveyed the table. She was pleased to note that Tuffnut's brand new girlfriend
had sat down beside him but she decided not to be too cruel to the new couple. She held the
mistletoe over Fishlegs and Ruffnut's heads and the two rolled their eyes a bit before kissing, both
looking a bit sheepish at the applause they were getting. Finn stuck out his tongue and ran as far
away from them as he could.

Of course, she hadn't considered that Ruffnut wasn't quite as kind as her. The moment she received
the sprig of mistletoe, she immediately held it over Tuffnut and his girlfriend's heads.

"Uhh…” said the woman, whose name most of them still didn't know.

"Err… is that really necessary?" Tuffnut asked, his cheeks turning slightly pink.

"It's the rule, idiot." Ruffnut said gleefully. "Now shut up and kiss her."

It was extremely apparent that Tuffnut and his girlfriend hadn't kissed yet. But they both smiled
and shrugged, deciding that now was as good a time as any to start. As the new couple kissed,
Hiccup glanced over at Astrid, grinning knowingly, and she shot him a death glare as if telling him
that if he spilled the secret of Tuffnut's first kiss, he would be choking on her fist in seconds. He
winked at her to let her know that the secret was still safe with him.

When Tuffnut placed the mistletoe over Heather and Snotlout's heads, the two of them shared a kiss so passionate that it made the onlookers feel very awkward. This ended their little game.

Finn came running back with a scrap of parchment in his left hand and a piece of charcoal in his right. He grinned as soon as he met his mother's gaze.

"Yook, mommy!" he exclaimed, nearly running into her in his haste. "I dwew you a pictuwe!"

"Really?" Astrid asked, genuinely surprise. "May I see it?"

"Uh huh!" Finn immediately pushed the paper into her face.

Astrid took it and smiled widely. She had to stare at it for a few seconds before she realized what he had drawn. Two people (at least she thought they were people) were riding on the back of a dragon who was spitting fire. To the untrained eye, it would look like scribbles but Astrid was quite familiar with her son's drawing style.

"Is that you and me on Stormfly?" she asked him.

He brightened up, delighted that someone had figured out his artwork.

"Uh huh and we fighting bad peopwe, see?" Finn pointed to the scribbles at the corner of the page. Now that Astrid looked at it more closely, it did resemble people running away in fear.

"That's really good, Finn." she said, gently putting her arms around him.

Finn wound his tiny little arms around her and kissed her on the cheek. "I yove you, mommy."

"Hey, don't I get any of that?" Hiccup asked, pretending to be offended.

Finn stared at him for a few seconds, still smiling but his blue eyes sparkling. "Ummm… no."

"Ohhh I see how it is. Playing favorites, aren't you?" Hiccup narrowed his eyes at his son, who merely laughed instead of cowering in fear at his glare.

"Noooooo, I just yove mommy today." Finn extricated himself from his mother's arms and scampered away once more.

"Oooh, rejected!" Ruffnut quipped, crossing her arms and giving Hiccup an amused smile.

"I'll just go find Anna. She always gives me a hug when I want one. And even when I don't." Hiccup replied with a shrug.

"I wonder if Inga will do that." Heather said, stroking her baby's cheek.

"All right, everyone, settle down!" came a booming voice.

Everyone looked over at Stoick, who was dressed up a bit more than usual in festive clothing. He smiled down at them all from his perch on the far end of the Hall.

"The time has come for anyone who wants to say something or sing something to come forward!" he said, beckoning to them as if he hoped that they all would take him up on the offer.

Hiccup and Astrid exchanged looks. Neither of them could carry a tune to save their lives but they
still looked forward to this moment every year. The more tipsy Vikings usually came up first and sang or said something they would regret by morning. Once in a while, someone would actually sing well and surprise them all. These instances were rare.

What they hadn't been expecting was for their little girl to run forward and stand up next to Stoick. She barely came up to the man's thigh and was almost invisible to the rest of the crowd so her grandfather bent over and picked her up, raising him onto his shoulders so that everyone could see her. She looked slightly awed at the sight of the Great Hall from nearly eight feet in the air but soon composed herself.

"Can I sing something, Poppy?" she asked Stoick, her eyes alight with wonder.

"Go right ahead, Anna." Stoick replied, gently tapping her knee.

The youngest Haddock took a deep breath and began belting out a well known Snoggletog carol. She garbled some of the lyrics and her occasional giggles interrupted some of her song but both Hiccup and Astrid stared in shock at their little girl. For a three year old, she had an extremely good voice and she was almost perfectly on pitch. Stoick swayed slightly in the rhythm of the song and everyone clapped very loudly when she finished. Hiccup, Astrid, and several others who knew her well gave her a standing ovation. Adrianna's face brightened up at the sight of everyone giving her praise for her singing and she was still grinning long after she was deposited on the ground by her grandfather. She immediately bolted to her father and threw her arms around his legs.

"Did you hear my song?" she asked into his knees.

"I sure did, Addie!" Hiccup picked up his little girl, allowing her to put her arms around his neck instead of his legs. "You were really, really good."

"I was?" Adrianna asked, almost as if she was hearing this kind of praise for the first time.

"Yes you were, sweetie." Hiccup kissed her on the cheek. "I'm so proud of you for standing up in front of everyone. Were you nervous?"

The girl shook her head. "Noooo. I like singing!"

"Daddy!" came a very sudden voice from just behind her father's head.

Hiccup turned around and suddenly had a mouthful of cream and a face full of pie. Finn was suspended in the air by Stoick and both were laughing uproariously.

"Oh I see how it is! No love for daddies! Just pies in the face!" Hiccup exclaimed, trying to act like this had been a horrible, traitorous thing to do instead of something he actually found quite funny. He heard a familiar hiccup and turned to look at his daughter, who was giggling behind her hand. "Even you? Really? I can't get sympathy from anyone!" He used his finger to wipe a bit of cream off his face and plop it on her nose.

"Food fight!" Ruffnut called gleefully, grabbing a pie and smacking her brother in the face with it.

It was instant pandemonium as most of the children immediately grabbed the creamiest, messiest pies they could and sought out their parents. This was a yearly thing as well but it was the first time Finn had ever instigated it. He was delighted to see what he had started, at least until Astrid managed to bean him on the top of the head with a berry pie, the dark purple juice now dripping down his face. At first, his mouth opened wide in shock but then the entire situation struck him as extremely funny and he found himself laughing until his sides hurt.
A few minutes later, Ruffnut clocked Tuffnut's girlfriend in the face with the same sort of creamy pie that had started the whole fight. The table went silent, feeling very uncomfortable. How would this relative stranger react? But then a glimmer of mischief appeared in her brown eyes and she immediately grabbed the nearest pie and exacted her revenge. Ruffnut barely blinked when she was coated with even more pie, instead she punched Tuffnut on the shoulder.

"Okay, I like her." she chortled.

"You don't even know her name!" Tuffnut elbowed her in the ribs.

"I don't care! She's awesome. Marry her already!"

What little of the woman's face they could see blushed a brilliant scarlet.

"We'll see." she said, sticking out her hand. "My name is Svala."

"Awesome! I always wanted a sister named Svala!" Ruffnut exclaimed, giving the woman's hand a very hard few shakes.

"You have not!"

"Have too!"

Hiccup turned away from the argument to face his little girl. She had gotten the cream off her face and was watching the craziness around her. She was laughing so hard, her hiccups made her entire body jolt every few seconds but she hardly seemed to notice. He placed her down on the table and she immediately stood up, trying to get a good view of everyone in the room. She noticed that the little boy across the room had finally looked up from his drawing and was also watching the spectacle in front of him. Their eyes met for a second and he gave her an awkward smile before immediately looking away.

It was at least an hour before the pie fight was over. More pies were coating Vikings than actually eaten but those who had been creamed the most had their fill of desserts by the end of the night. Even some of the dragons had gotten plastered with the confections, Toothless being no exception. He immediately bounded forward as things were settling down and licked the remaining pie off of his trainer. Hiccup recoiled slightly but then realized that it was already going to be difficult enough to wash the pie off; what was the harm in a bit of dragon slobber in the grand scheme of things? This seemed to signal the other dragons, who all bounded forward to clean off their respective humans.

Once everything had quieted down and all those who had wanted to sing or speak to the crowd had already done so, Stoick stepped forward and put up his hands to signal that it was time for an announcement.

"This has been one of the best Snoggletog Eve parties Berk has ever seen!" he boomed to cheers of assent. "It's time to wind down the night with a few Snoggletog carols! Adrianna, do you want to lead us in a rendition of Have Yourself a Merry Little Snoggletog?"

"Uh huh!" Adrianna squeaked, running forward as fast as her little feet would carry her.

Her grandfather picked her up and she began to belt out the lyrics to that famous carol.

"Have yourself a merry little Snoggletog! Let your heawt be light! From now on, our troubles will be out of sight!" she sang, grinning the whole time.
The other Vikings joined in the singing and soon, Stoick placed his tiny granddaughter on the ground. She bounded back to the table and sat down, singing as loud as she could along with the others. As they worked their way through Jingle Bells, Odin is Coming to Town, and other holiday classics, Astrid glanced over at her little daughter and smiled. Adrianna’s head was resting on her arms and she was fast asleep. She wasn't used to being awake this late, despite having a tendency toward preferring the night to the morning. Astrid nudged her husband and pointed to their daughter. Hiccup chuckled and gently placed a hand on Adrianna's back.

"All right, Addie, I think it's time for bed." He whispered to her.

She yawned widely and nodded. Finn's eyes were drooping as well and so Astrid picked him up and the Haddocks finally left the Hall, waving to everyone as they went. It wasn't a long walk back but Adrianna nearly fell asleep in her father's arms in those few minutes. As soon as they entered their home, Hiccup immediately went upstairs to tuck his daughter into bed.

"I love you, Addie. Happy Snoggletog." Hiccup whispered, kissing the little girl on the forehead.

"I love you too, daddy." Adrianna mumbled, half asleep.

Hiccup breathed a laugh and went downstairs where Astrid was cleaning Finn up before putting him to bed. He was so tired, he didn't struggle and once the pie was out of his hair Astrid carried him upstairs to put him to bed. Hiccup padded up the stairs and went into his room, lying down on the bed and waiting for his wife to come join him. He looked up and noticed that the hatch on the ceiling was still open. He shrugged as Stormfly lowered herself into the room and warmed the rock bed they had left for her. Snoggletog was a time for family and the dragons were definitely included. He watched Toothless crawl through the hatch a moment later and hang himself upside down on one of the beams on the ceiling. Astrid entered a moment later and smiled fondly at the dragons, apparently coming to the same conclusion as her husband. She snuggled into bed with him.

Hiccup gently put his arms around her as soon as she was within reach. She sighed contentedly, cuddling up a little closer so that they would keep each other warm and cozy. As they drifted off to sleep, full of food and dreaming of the happy memories they had made that night, they couldn't help but think that this was going to be the best Snoggletog they would ever have.

The young couple awoke early the next morning. Astrid began to slide out of Hiccup's arms and he moaned slightly, wanting to keep holding her for a little longer. She patted him on the head as she sat up and put on a robe. Hiccup finally dragged himself out of bed a moment later.

"I guess we should wake up the kids." Astrid said, wiping her eyes and yawning.

"Yeah. I can't wait to see their faces." Hiccup replied. His face then brightened with excitement. "Hey… how about we take their gifts to them when we wake them up?"

Astrid smiled and nodded. The parents crept down the stairs and grabbed their gifts. They went back up the stairs and Astrid immediately opened her son's room. He jolted awake at the noise and yawned.

"Happy Snoggletog, little man." She said, walking over and sitting on the edge of his bed. "Look what Odin brought you while you were sleeping."

She held up the perfectly crafted Nadder and the look on his face made the painstaking effort worth every second she had worked.
"Tool!" he shouted, taking the Nadder from his mother's hand. "It's just want I wanted!"

"Uh huh!" Astrid chuckled and ruffled her son's hair. "Let's go downstairs and see what else Odin brought…"

"No!"

Mother and son looked up, puzzled at the sudden exclamation from Adrianna's room. There was a loud thump and a horrible sounding moan. Astrid took Finn's hand and the two of them crept into the girl's room.

Hiccup was sitting on Adrianna's bed, his face a ghostly white and a slip of parchment in his trembling hand. Astrid scanned the room and realized with a thrill of horror that her daughter was not there. The stuffed Night Fury was on the ground, clearly dropped by its maker as he figured out what had happened. Astrid gasped. This had to be a joke. Where was Adrianna? What was on that parchment.

"Hiccup…" she muttered, her voice strangled.

Her husband looked up at her, an expression of shock on his face. His eyes were wide and with shaking hands, he gave Astrid the parchment. She looked down at it and her heart stopped, her insides froze, and she couldn't seem to draw breath.

HAPPY SNOGGLETODG… OR IS IT?

YOU WANT YOUR LITTLE BRAT BACK? COME AND GET HER! YOU KNOW WHAT I WANT! HURRY UP! OFFER ENDS VERY SOON.

Underneath the note was a crude drawing of a Skrill.
A Berserk Holiday

Stoick awoke a little later than usual the next morning. At first he marveled at the fact that he had actually managed to sleep through the sunrise but then remembered that the day was Snoggletog and that he had all kinds of surprises for his little grandchildren. Not one to keep them waiting, he got out of bed and threw on some festive clothing. He then left his house, his arms full of gifts for his family. Gobber was hobbling toward the Haddock house as well, his arms just as full of toys and treats for the little twins.

"Bit of a late start, don't you think?" Gobber asked by way of a greeting, chuckling to himself.

"Overslept. First time in years too. Guess the gods don't want me to wake the kids before the sunrise. Probably for the best." Stoick shrugged as they arrived at the door to the Haddock house. He rapped his knuckles on it. "Happy Snoggletog! Anybody awake?"

There was no reply. The older men exchanged puzzled glances. Finn and Adrianna usually shrieked with excitement when they showed up no matter what day it was and Snoggletog was even more special. Stoick knocked on the door again but still there was no reply. He slowly pushed it open.

The main room was deserted, Snoggletog decorations still up and the twins' stockings full of untouched goodies. No noise came from upstairs.

"The house is super quiet, Stoick. Maybe we shouldn't go in there. You know they have a rule about the bedroom." Gobber whispered.

Stoick rolled his eyes. "Gobber, you are the sole reason that is an established rule to begin with. Everyone else in the whole of the archipelago has that rule understood."

"Well I practically raised the boy in the forge! I never thought I'd walk in on anything like that…"

"Ah, ah." Stoick held up a hand. "Spare me."

The men crept into the house. It was as if it had been deserted for at least a day. Praying that the family was still sleeping on the second floor, they walked up the stairs, noting that Hiccup and Astrid's bedroom door was open but the room was empty. Finn's bedroom door was wide open as well but no one was there either. And then they spotted Adrianna's room at the end of the hall, her door slightly ajar. The feeling of uneasiness mounting, they pushed open the door and stopped.

Hiccup was sitting down on his daughter's bed, his face ashen and a slip of parchment in his hand. He didn't look up at his father and friend as they walked in; he was staring at his knees, his eyes wide and his breaths coming in short gasps.

"Son?" Stoick strode forward and put a hand on Hiccup's shoulder.

Hiccup looked up at him, an expression the man had seen only once before etched into his features. It was as if he was back in the village square the day Astrid had been taken, the day Hiccup had nearly killed himself to get her back before the twins were born. One look at his son's face told Stoick that what had happened was very bad.

"He took her." Hiccup said in a weak voice, handing his father the parchment. "He has my baby."

"Where's Finn?" asked Stoick, trying to think clearly.
"Astrid took him to her mother's." Hiccup replied, his expression not changing. "She'll be back soon."

Stoick nodded and gently took the paper out of his son's hand. He read it over and handed it to Gobber, trying to keep his hands from visibly trembling. Something about the note seemed a bit off to him but he couldn't put his finger on what it was. For one thing, the pronoun "him" was hastily rubbed out and replaced with "her." For another thing, something didn't look right about the Skrill. Gobber angrily crumpled the note when he had finished reading it but kept it on hand just in case it would be needed later.

"How did he do this without being detected?" Gobber asked, sounding like he was in shock.

"Window." Hiccup said, now staring blankly at his hands. "It's open."

"Sound the alarm." Stoick told Gobber. "Get everyone in the Great Hall. Snoggletog is off until further notice."

Gobber nodded once and immediately walked out of the house as fast as he could. Stoick turned back to his son, who looked like he was trying desperately not to lose it.

"Hiccup, we will get her back." He said, placing a hand on his son's shoulder. "Dagur has pulled this in the past. We know what he's capable of and we will fight until she's home and safe."

"W-why would he do this? On Snoggletog… my baby girl on a day like this… not my Addie, this c-can't be happening…" the young father's voice raised in pitch with each syllable and he sounded dangerously close to tears.

"Hiccup." Stoick got down on his knees, placed his hands on both of Hiccup's shoulders, and looked his son in the eye. "You have got to calm down. Adrianna needs you to think clearly. If you want her safe at home, you need to put your feelings aside."

Hiccup took a deep, shuddering breath and nodded. "Okay, let's go."

Snotlout smiled as he caught sight of his baby girl that morning. She stirred slightly as he picked her up and then stretched her arms out and yawned. He gently placed her in his arms and padded downstairs where his wife was waiting with helmets full of goodies. There were new outfits Heather's parents had made and a few stuffed toys Inga could play with when she was a little older. But they could wait. He snuggled up to Heather on their couch, the fire she had set beginning to warm them on that cold day. She took a deep breath, gently taking their daughter from him so she could feed her. It was turning into a very cozy Snoggletog morning.

At least it would have been.

The couple heard a loud clanging noise and voices shouting outside. At first Snotlout was about to jump up and give the others a piece of his mind for making so much racket no matter what day it was but there was something about them that wasn't at all jolly or excited. In fact, they sounded alarmed. And with a jolt, he realized that the bells being rung were not the Snoggletog bells but the summoning bells. A moment later, he heard the familiar horn being blown on top of the clanging bells. The horn was for life or death emergencies only. Something had happened, something big, and everyone was being called into the Great Hall.

"We have to go." he said to his wife. "Come on, wrap Inga up and get to the Hall. I don't know what's going on but it's obviously urgent."
Heather nodded and in a few minutes, they were ready to leave. People ran around them, some shouting about a missing person. A few minutes later, they distinctly heard someone mention a missing child. Snotlout and Heather exchanged panicked looks, hoping that the missing child wasn't one they knew.

"Snotlout! Heather!" came a loud voice from just behind them.

"Fishlegs!" Snotlout shouted, spinning around on the spot. "What the Hel is going on here?"

Fishlegs stopped for a second to catch his breath before telling them. "Adrianna Haddock…"

"What about her?" Heather asked, her stomach clenching.

"She was… taken last night. They… left a note. We have to… get to the Great Hall!" Fishlegs said between deep breaths.

Snotlout felt slightly weak, though he didn't show it. It wasn't just the fact that Adrianna was one of the most loved children on Berk, it was the fact that she had wormed her way into his and Heather's hearts as well. Now that he was a father, he knew that what he was going to see when he got to the Great Hall wasn't pretty. If someone had taken his little girl… he didn't want to face Hiccup and Astrid. Not now. But if it meant saving that sweet little girl who made everyone's day a little bit better, he was going to do what he could.

When they got to the Great Hall, the moment Snotlout and Heather caught sight of Adrianna's parents, they knew that nothing could have prepared them for this. Hiccup's face was in his hands and even from across the Hall, they could tell he was shaking. Astrid had one arm around his shoulder. Her face was rather unemotional, as if she hadn't gotten over the initial shock, but the knuckles on her other hand, which was gripping Hiccup's wrist, were white. Snotlout never did like Hiccup very much but the sight of his acquaintance looking this distraught was enough to make even him feel sorry for him.

"We have to get her back." Snotlout whispered to Heather.

They took their seats as the Great Hall filled. Never had it been so quiet. The atmosphere of pity and determination among the Vikings was so thick, it was almost visible in the air. Several of them were looking in the very place Adrianna had sung the previous night. The Snoggletog Eve party seemed like a lifetime ago.

"All right everyone, settle down." Stoick boomed, standing up and putting out his arms. What little talking that was going on ceased at once. "For those of you who don't know, Adrianna Haddock was abducted last night by the Berserkers. We don't have much time. We need some of you to stay behind to look after Finn and the other kids. All those who want to volunteer, please let Lotus Hofferson know when the meeting ends. The rest of you are coming with us. If Dagur is determined to start a war, we won't disappoint him."

As Stoick continued talking about the preparations, Snotlout leaned in to have a quiet conversation with Heather.

"I think we should stay behind and look after the kids. Inga's so small; I think she'll be better off with both of her parents nearby." He whispered.

Heather nodded. "I think you're right. We're their friends and I think they would feel better if someone they knew well was looking after their son. Someone other than his grandmother."

With that settled, they quietly got up and sat down at Lotus' table. She was holding a very antsy
Finn who, thankfully, didn't seem to have been paying attention to what was going on. Perhaps it was for the best that he wasn't aware of the dire emergency that was unfolding. A small, sandy haired boy standing nearby between his parents looked horrorstruck and very close to tears. A red haired girl actually was crying into her mother's shoulder. Snotlout and Heather thought that it might have been better not to burden children so young with such frightening news. Heather gently rocked Inga, unaware of the fact that she was holding her little daughter closer than usual.

Everyone got to their feet a few minutes later, Stoick's orders having been given. The sandy haired boy's parents offered to stay behind as well, as did Svala and the mother of the sobbing redhead. Tuffnut kissed his girlfriend on the cheek before bolting out of the Great Hall. Ruffnut and Fishlegs dropped off Helga and Gunnar before following the crowd of Vikings out of the Hall.

"What's taking so long?" Hiccup snapped from atop his dragon. "We need to get to Berserker Island! Who knows how long he's going to let her live?"

His nearly paralyzing fear finally melted into rage. Both he and Astrid were ready to leave, weapons already attached to their dragons. Hiccup was breathing through his teeth; he didn't want to spend one more moment stalling. His little girl was far away and she needed him! He looked around at the Vikings rushing around, mounting their dragons and getting their weapons ready. Were he in a clear state of mind, he would have been touched that so many people were determined to rescue his daughter.

"Calm down, honey. You'll get her back." said an old woman beneath him that he only vaguely recognized. "You just need to be patient. Not everyone can get ready to go as fast as you." She patted his knee in a comforting manner.

"Yes… thank you." he replied, trying to breathe a little easier.

The woman sauntered away and, even though he wasn't necessarily feeling better, he was glad that she had gone out of her way to comfort him. When he looked back a moment later, she was nowhere to be found. It was just as well. She didn't look up to a battle or long hours watching children. Others came by every few minutes to offer their encouragements and he was just beginning to feel better when it was finally time to fly away.

"Remember what I said!" Stoick called to the Hooligans behind him. "Your mission is to find Adrianna and bring her home. Not start a war, not take anything from the Berserkers, simply find her and leave."

The other Vikings nodded and murmured their assent. Many of them were strongly reminded of the rescue mission three and a half years previously. Adrianna had been in peril then too but she wasn't aware of it at the time. Why had Dagur decided to pull this stunt again? To repeat his own failed plans seemed foolhardy. But then again, he wasn't called Dagur the Deranged for nothing.

They finally took off, Hiccup immediately taking the lead on the fastest dragon with Astrid and Stoick close behind. Hiccup felt his heart pounding as he encouraged the Night Fury to go even faster. Toothless did his best to oblige, feeling almost offended that the little female human had been snatched away under his watch. He exchanged looks with Stormfly, who seemed to feel similarly. It was their responsibility to keep their humans' young safe when their humans couldn't and they had failed. Everyone had failed. The anger that fueled them nearly rivaled the little girl's parents.

The rocky spits of land zoomed beneath them, looking more like little blurs than anything. Astrid briefly wondered which one was the birthplace of the twins but she had more important things to
focus on as she encouraged her dragon to go even faster. She didn't know how long her little girl had been gone but she didn't want it to be a minute longer.

At last, Berserker Island came into view. The Snoggletog lights glimmered below them. There were no guards set up, no ships around the island… something was amiss. Even Hiccup noticed for a moment. But he didn't have time to think about it. Not when his baby girl was in danger. No, he was going to fly down there and save her no matter what obstacles he would have to face. No matter what day it was. Even if it killed him, he would get his baby back.
False Accusations

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Hiccup led the descent to Berserker Island, his heart drumming in his ears and his face beet red. He was going to kill Dagur for taking his little girl. All the Hooligans knew it so they tried to fly as close to him as they could to keep him from getting into a fight he couldn't win. Of course, most of them were livid as well. None of them had any reservations about flying all the way out to Berserker Island to rescue the youngest Haddock. Adrianna loved engaging anyone in conversation; so many of them had gotten to know her and thought she was a wonderful little girl. Certainly not one who deserved this kind of treatment (as if any child did).

There was something a bit off about Berserker Island. All of them saw it the moment it came into view but they were of one mindset so it didn't register as much. It was quiet and calm. Snoggletog lights twinkled below them and very few people were outside. But one person in particular was outside and Hiccup recognized him at once. When Toothless was close to the ground, the young father leaped off his back, receiving many surprised shouts from the Hooligans behind him, and tackled the Berserker chief to the ground. Both men tumbled and rolled in the dirt for a few moments from the force of the collision, but Hiccup managed to pin Dagur down with his knees on the man's shoulders.

"WHERE IS SHE?" he demanded, grabbing a knife and putting it to Dagur's throat. "WHERE'S ADRIANNA?"

"What?" Dagur seemed to have been taken completely by surprise. He blinked several times, as if unsure of whether or not he was dreaming this. "Who's Adrianna?"

"Don't play stupid! You took my daughter and so help me, if you don't start talking now, I will kill you!" Hiccup spat, his nose almost touching Dagur's.

"Congratulations, Hiccup, you would be the first in your family line to have a girl. Now get off me!" the larger man bellowed, trying to wiggle out from under him.

"Stop it! Stop playing dumb! My son was your target but I guess you sneaked through the wrong window! Trying to take out the future chief? Well it didn't work! I will kill you with my bare hands and burn your village to ash if you don't tell me where my daughter is!" Hiccup shouted, his face red with rage.

"Okay let me get this straight, you have twins, a boy and a girl, and you think I took your daughter?" Dagur let out a bark of laughter. "How stupid do you think I am? I lost three teeth last time I pulled that."

"They don't call you deranged for nothing!"

"Deranged, yes. Stupid, no!"

By this time, the Hooligans had landed and were standing in a semicircle around the two men.
Stoick quietly stepped forward and placed a hand on Hiccup's shoulder.

"Son, I think he's telling the truth…"

"No, this is exactly what he wants! I am not leaving this sorry spit of land until I have my daughter. And if so much as one of her hairs is singed or cut, I will leave this gods-forsaken rock in a smoke heap." Hiccup hissed, his teeth clenched.

Dagur rolled his eyes. "Yeah, I kind of picked up on that. Good thing I don't have her!"

A spark of fear appeared in Hiccup's eyes for just a second but his expression remained unchanged. "What the Hel did you do to her?"

"Nothing! That's what I've been telling you!"

"Hiccup..." Stoick gently squeezed his shoulder. Hiccup flinched and pushed the blade on Dagur's throat harder, making his friends and family tense. They prayed they wouldn't see Hiccup's first kill in those next few seconds. "Hiccup, he's telling the truth. Don't do this..."

Hiccup ground his teeth and growled, "Back off."

"No, this isn't right. She's not here."

Hiccup forced himself not to look back at his father in disbelief. "Whose side are you ON?"

"Hiccup, be reasonable…"

"Reasonable would be sending people through this village and searching for your granddaughter! NOW!"

"Go ahead! Search to your heart's content! But if you really want to find your precious little girl, you're wasting your time here!"

Stoick bit back a sigh and gently waved his people forward, who cautiously walked past the Berserkian guards, who looked to their incapacitated chief for orders.

Dagur stared into Hiccup's eyes with a scathing glare. "If one of my villagers is injured, this is war."

Hiccup leaned closer, his eyes just as fierce. "For my daughter's safe return, you will get it. Unreservedly."

Stoick patted Hiccup's shoulder. "Get off of him, son."

"No."

"We will make sure he doesn't get away. Now get off of him. Let the man breathe." Stoick ordered.

"Dad..."

"Either you get off of him yourself or I'll pull you off. Is that what you want?"

Breathing heavily through his teeth, Hiccup slowly got off of the Berserker chief, wielding the knife in a threatening manner, as if to say that any attempt to escape would be fatal. Dagur stood up and dusted himself off, looking slightly peeved but unhurt. There was a bright red mark on his
throat from Hiccup's knife but it didn't cut through his flesh.

"Now tell me where the Hel you got this insane idea." he said, massaging his neck.

Gobber smoothed out the note and held it up. Dagur snatched it from his hand and stared at it for a few seconds.

"I didn't write this. I don't even recognize this handwriting!" he exclaimed, raising an eyebrow at the parchment. "And this idiot drew our crest backwards! So I've been framed and insulted in one night!"

Hiccup huffed loudly, "You're not very convincing."

"Look at my crest, fool! It's all over the place! It doesn't face right, it faces left!"

"Let me see that!" Hiccup snatched the paper from Dagur's hands and realized with a jolt that the Berserker chief was correct.

Stoick walked over and looked over his shoulder, narrowing his eyes at the note. No Berserker would have made such a glaring mistake. And there was something else about the note, something that didn't seem quite right… but then it clicked.

"Dagur, are you right handed or left handed?" he asked in a very low voice.

"Right. What does that have to do with anything?" Dagur snapped, pointing to the hilt on his left side.

"He didn't write this note, Hiccup."

"How do you…"

"Look at the smudges! This was written by a left handed person!" Stoick pointed to the note with his left finger, tracing it across the letters.

Hiccup swallowed rebelliously, refusing to see the logic in this statement. "Then he made someone in his party who is left handed write it."

"Dagur, how many of your men are left handed?" Stoick asked him.

"I don't know! A couple hundred! But none of them are dumb enough to draw the Berserker crest backwards!" Dagur was beginning to lose patience.

Hiccup felt a pang that he was being proven wrong, but he refused to let up. "Regardless, she's here. She has to be."

Dagur slapped his arms at his sides. "Would you stop being ridiculous? You obviously don't want to face the facts! Someone lured you here under false pretenses! It's a red herring, Hiccup! A distraction!"

Hiccup shook his head, his expression tight. "No."

Astrid stepped forward. "Hiccup, if he's right, we need to get back to Berk. There aren't many soldiers there, not nearly enough to protect Finn against an army…"

Dagur looked to Stoick suddenly. "You better get your people off my land before I send in a war party. We both know she's not here, whether he wants to accept it or not."
"Hiccup, if this really is a distraction, our son is in danger! Is that what you want? Think about it! We've lost one child already, do you really want to lose the other?" Astrid pleaded, grabbing his arm.

Hiccup whirled around, staring her in the face. "Don't you dare say that like you're giving up on her!"

"Would you stop being illogical!" Dagur shouted, sounding genuinely exasperated. "When I took Astrid from you, I held her in front of your face. Do you really think I'd stand here denying everything if I really did have your kid? Hel, don't you think I'd have guards out? Don't you think I'd have drawn my crest the right way! That I'd write the note myself? Or do you still think this is an elaborate hoax and I'm just playing mind games? Tell me, Hiccup, do I look like the kind of person who would do that?"

Hiccup took a few steps back, grabbing fistfuls of his own hair. Their logic was sound. Even he couldn't deny it anymore. But if she wasn't on Berserker Island, he had no other leads. No other way of finding her.

Finally Stoick whistled loud with his fingers to call back the Hooligans.

Hiccup gaped at him. "What're you…"

"We're leaving."

"WHAT!? No dad, she's here!"

"No, she's not son. Whoever did this is playing us. Now we are leaving." Stoick placed a hand on Hiccup's arm, gently pulling him toward Toothless.

Hiccup shrugged it off. "No! I'm not leaving without my daughter!"

"You're not stupid, Hiccup! You know she's not here! You're just clinging to false hope because it's the only lead we have! But there might have been something we missed back on Berk." Stoick grabbed the man's shoulders and roughly turned him around so they were staring at each other. "If you value your daughter's life, you won't waste any more time." He turned to look at Dagur. "But if we find out you do have her, we will not hesitate to attack."

Dagur stared back at him unblinking. "I swear I do not now nor have I ever had her. At least not since she was born."

The Hooligans had all returned at this point and many were on their dragons. Stoick gave them the signal to fly away without him.

"Dad, what are you…"

"Go, son. I need a word with Dagur." Stoick said, waving him away with one hand.

Trembling violently, Hiccup mounted his dragon and flew away. Stoick strode over to Dagur.

"We had no idea…"

"I get it." Dagur said, turning to face the Hooligan chief. "We were framed. I'm not going to do anything reckless like declare war because of some imbecile. But listen, when you find out who framed me, send him here under armed guard. No one frames me and gets away with it. I'll take care of your little pest for you."
Stoick considered this for a few seconds and then nodded. He swung a leg over Thornado and, without looking back, ascended into the sky.

Hiccup was silent on the long flight home. The sun was high in the sky when they touched down on Berk. Aside from looking deserted, which wasn't at all surprising, nothing had changed. Nothing looked suspicious. Perhaps Dagur had been wrong. Perhaps the person who took Adrianna had made a move at all. But there was only one way to be certain.

"Open up!" Hiccup shouted, pounding on the doors to the Great Hall. "I need to see my son!"

Snotlout opened the door, wincing. "You're lucky Inga was already awake, otherwise I'd have…"

But Hiccup wasn't paying any attention to his friend. He bolted forward and very nearly knocked a few children over in his haste. He scanned the room for a mop of bright red hair and, with a sigh of relief, spotted Finn in the corner, playing with a few other boys his age. The boy spotted his father a moment later and raced forward.

"Daddy!" he shouted, throwing his arms around Hiccup's legs. "What's wrong? Why is there no Snoggwetog?"

Hiccup got on his knees so he was looking his little son in the eye. "Something big happened, buddy." he said, his mind racing a million miles an hour.

Out of the corner of his eye, he saw Astrid rush into the room. The moment she spotted Finn, she nearly cried with relief. She immediately made a beeline to him and got down on her knees so she could hug him. Finn looked thoroughly confused by the whole affair.

"What happened?" he asked his father, his blue eyes wide with concern. "Where's Anna?"

Hiccup felt his heart drop but he shook off the uncomfortable sensation. "We don't know. Everyone is out looking for her. That's why all the kids are here."

Finn nodded solemnly. "Oh. Is she coming back?"

"Yes." cried Astrid, placing her hands on her son's shoulders. "Yes she is. We're going to go find her but to do that, we need you to stay here for a little longer. Can you do that for us?"

Finn's brows furrowed as he thought very hard about this. He looked his mother in the eye, a serious expression on his face.

"Yes, mommy." he said with a nod.

At this point, several other parents had found their children safe and sound in the Hall. It didn't look like anyone was missing. Hiccup stood up and walked over to Lotus, who was rocking a baby he didn't recognize. The baby's eyes were slowly closing as she began to doze off, safe and comfortable in the older woman's arms. Hiccup felt a pang as he watched her for a few seconds. Adrianna used to flutter her eyelids as she fell asleep in his arms as well. Was everything going to remind him of his daughter?

"How was he?" he asked Lotus, pushing down the emotions.

"He was very good, actually. He and a few other boys played quietly the whole time. Everyone was keeping a close eye on him but nothing happened." Lotus sighed deeply. "I can tell you didn't find Adrianna."
Hiccup's eyes burned but he blinked them rapidly. "No. Dagur… Dagur didn't have her. He was framed."

"So you don't know who took her?" Lotus placed a hand on his shoulder as he continually blinked his eyes, praying that he could hold it together a little while longer. "You will get her back."

"Yeah." he choked, suddenly feeling the intense and inescapable need to be alone.

He sprinted as fast as he could to the doors of the Great Hall, pushing past parents as he ran. Once he was outside, he continued to run into the woods a little way, far enough that no one would find him but close enough that he could still hear if something else went wrong. Toothless followed, surprised at his human's speed as he ran through the trees without looking back. The dragon had to sprint to keep up. Once Hiccup stopped, he made a cooing noise and gently placed his head on the man's lap.

"Thanks, bud." Hiccup said, gently stroking the dragon's head. "It's okay… it's okay… it's okay… it's okay…" he repeated over and over, fighting back the waves of misery coming up in his chest. Everything around him was growing blurry but he shut his eyes and took a few deep, shaky breaths. "We are going to find her, bud."

The dragon made a sort of whining noise; Hiccup suspected that it was supposed to be sympathetic. For some reason, his dragon's pity made everything in sight become blurry again. Once more, he shut his eyes. I don't cry over things, he chided himself. I cried a little bit when the twins were born but I don't cry over things! I don't! His heart didn't seem to be listening to his brain; he felt it hammering against his chest, painfully constricting as more tears built up in his eyes. No! She needs me and I'm not going to lose it!

Toothless made a soft sort of warbling noise, lifting his head and gently nudging his human in the chest. He knew that when humans were very, very sad, water came out of their eyes and they made strange noises. He wasn't going to let his human become very, very sad. Not on his watch. Not today. He nudged his human's chin upwards.

"What are you saying, bud?" Hiccup asked, glad for the small distraction.

He lowered his head but Toothless lifted it with his snout once more. For a while, he stared into his dragon's large, catlike eyes. And then it hit him. It was as if he could read his dragon's mind, even if only for a moment. Keep your chin up. We will find her.

For the first time since he had walked into his daughter's room only to find her missing, he smiled. It wasn't a genuine smile. He couldn't possibly manage one of those. But the tiny bit of hope that surged within him lifted his spirits ever so slightly; it let him have just one moment in which he could smile. He rested his head on his dragon's, gently stroking the side of his head as the smile finally melted away.

"Thank you," he whispered.

A few minutes later, he felt better enough to go back into the Hall. Astrid was still on her knees and talking to their son. As Hiccup watched, he realized that she always had a hand on him. She would rub his back or grip his hand or squeeze his shoulder. It seemed that her way of coping with losing her daughter was to make sure her son was safe and loved. Finn was smiling as he was talking to her, probably about his toys or the other children with whom he was playing. Astrid's smile didn't reach her eyes but she was doing her best to be strong for him. Hiccup felt a surge of love and appreciation for his wife. She had to be terrified to death but she was putting her son first. Astrid truly was the best mother he could imagine for his children. And he was going to make sure his
daughter would get the opportunity to experience her love for many more years.

He walked up to her and placed a hand on her shoulder. "I think we should go home. Get some supplies. We'll probably be out searching late."

Astrid nodded and kissed Finn on the forehead. Hiccup got on his knees and pulled his son in for a hug.

"You need to stay here with Uncle Snotlout, Aunt Heather, nana, and everyone else. Do what they say. We'll hopefully be back for you tonight." he said, relishing the feeling of his little boy's heartbeat against his chest.

When he let Finn go, he took Astrid's hand and they left the Hall. It was a short walk to their house, which was a little farther out of town than the other houses. He loved the slight seclusion of it most of the time. Now he hated it for being just out of the way. Maybe if it was in the middle of town, someone would have seen whoever took his little girl.

When they got to the front door, they stopped. There was an old piece of parchment nailed to it with a child's drawing they didn't recognize. It looked like a drawing of a girl made by a four or five year old. A little bit more advanced than the drawings his children made but not by much. On the side of the drawing was a darker message, as if it had been written much more recently than the drawing had been created.

Not a very good likeness. I always thought this picture made me look fat.

Exchanging looks with Astrid, he took the paper off the door. Adrianna hadn't drawn this picture; she drew noses completely differently. Suddenly, his eyes widened as he realized that the message had the same kind of smudges as the Berserker note. Whoever had written that message was left handed.

"Is this supposed to be a clue?" he asked Astrid, who shrugged.

He turned over the page and came across some writing on the back.

Your little girl  
Your entire world  
Is playing with me today  

You must find her fast  
Before the hourglass  
Runs all of its sand away

They came across that section at the same time and immediately looked down. On the ground next to them was a large hourglass with half of its sand still on top. Would this be how much time they had to find her? They turned back to the note.

I won't hurt her yet  
(Why we've only just met)  
But before you try something heroic  

To win back your prize  
Seek out one who is wise  
If not just a little bit...

"Why does the poem trail off?" Astrid asked, feeling a bit breathless. "Is it… is it a puzzle?"
"I don't know." Hiccup replied. "Maybe the next part will give us a clue."

What sort of things can a brave Viking do?
Crush mountains, tame forests, even split things in two
Like a log or a tree or even a boulder
Do you remember that place now that you've gotten older?
You should pray to the gods you remember it fast
Want her in your future? Better look to your past.

"This last bit makes no sense. Who is he talking to?" Hiccup muttered.

"I don't know." said Astrid, turning to her husband with wide eyes. "But something tells me we better crack this fast."

"Yeah." Hiccup's hands began to tremble. "I know why he sent us to Berserker Island. He wanted to… to leave these things out. Make sure we were gone so he could…"

"She." Astrid turned the note over. "A woman took Adrianna. Look at the picture and the caption. If it's a picture of her, it's a woman."

He threw the note to the ground and beat the door with his fist. Not only had Adrianna been the target the whole time but it looked like they were beginning a very dangerous game.

Chapter End Notes

Special thanks to my poet friend, who asked to be credited as Purple Bob.
Hiccup and Astrid stared at each other, identical expressions of abject terror on their faces. Dagur had been right. The Berserkers were framed and the real kidnapper had started her sick little game while they had been distracted. And what was this about their little girl in the note, obviously proving that she had, in fact, been the intended target after all? Was all of it a plan?

Quite suddenly, Hiccup felt a surge of rage build up inside his chest, and it was all he could do to not start throwing things. While he was off trying to convict Dagur of a heinous crime, this psychopath had a complete run of the village. She could have walked his baby right through Berk and no one would have noticed because the only people who stayed on the island were in the Great Hall watching Finn. He was a fool. He had been played. And there was no other way around it.

"She's clever." he muttered, his hand gripping the note more tightly than necessary to keep from shaking. "Very good plan, distracts everyone while she plays a sick and twisted game… she's insane and she's clever."

"Who?"

The young couple turned around to face Fishlegs, Ruffnut, and Tuffnut, who seemed to have walked up while they were distracted.

"Whoever wrote this note. Whoever took Adrianna." Astrid said in monotone, taking the note from Hiccup's hand and giving it to the other couple.

"Well that's a terrible poem. Heroic doesn't rhyme with bit!" Tuffnut exclaimed, smacking the paper with the back of his hand.

"I think the ellipsis means we have to fill the rest of the poem in ourselves." Fishlegs said, his brow furrowed.

"Wait, we have to wait until night? Or did she draw the eclipses on the paper?" Tuffnut asked with an eyebrow raised.

"Not eclipses, ellipsis! It means the… here!" Fishlegs pointed to the incomplete sentence. "See how there are three periods? It trails off! I think we have to fill it in with a rhyme."

Ruffnut's mouth opened a bit as she read the paper. "What rhymes with heroic?"

"Bloic? Toic?" Tuffnut piped up.

"Actually I'm pretty sure it's…"

"Throic?" Ruffnut added, grabbing a rock on the ground and pitching it at her brother. "If that's the answer, I already like this game."

"This is not a game!" Hiccup bellowed, making everyone jump. "Adrianna's life is at stake!"

"Right, right, sorry." Ruffnut looked properly chastised. She then turned to Tuffnut, an expression of inspiration dawning on her face. "Maybe we should ask Stoick. He probably knows more words than we do."

"That's what I was trying to say!" Fishlegs said, sounding quite irritated. "The answer is obviously
Stoick! Seek out one who is wise if not just a little bit stoic! It's a play on words!

It should have been very easy to figure out but in their panic, neither Hiccup nor Astrid had been able to come up with the answer. Now that it was given to them, they wondered how they had managed to miss it.

"Brilliant, Fishlegs!" Hiccup exclaimed, patting his friend on the back. "We've got to find my dad!"

They tried to pick up the hourglass to show the chief but it was stuck to the ground. No amount of pulling could loosen it. Abandoning that task, they sprinted off to find the chief, looking in various places he frequented. They finally found him in Gobber's workshop, several weapons already attached to his belt. He looked up as they approached.

"Did you find her?" he asked, looking very hopeful.

"We found something," Hiccup said, slamming the note down on the table.

Stoick took one look at it and visibly paled. "Ah. Yes, that makes sense…" he muttered as he read the words on the back. "I should have seen this coming…"

Hiccup's patience was very nearly gone. "Should have seen what coming? You know who…"

"I know who took Adrianna, yes." Stoick looked up at them. Something in his eyes told everyone that knowing the identity of the abductor wasn't as comforting as they might have thought. "You think Dagur is deranged… we haven't seen anything yet…"

"Who has her?" Astrid pleaded, her stomach churning.

There was a long pause filled with very oppressive silence. Stoick and Gobber exchanged grim looks, almost as if they were having a silent conversation about whether or not to divulge the information. Stoick gave his friend a small nod before turning back to them.

"Dad… who has my daughter?" Hiccup asked, his green eyes boring into his father's blue ones.

"My sister." Stoick told them, his voice shaking the tiniest bit.

"You don't have a sister." Hiccup said, his brows furrowed in confusion. "You were an only child."

"I told you that to keep you safe."

"Oh really?" Hiccup bellowed very suddenly, startling everyone for the second time that day. "Yeah that worked out real well! Why would you lie about something like that?"

"You don't know what happened!" Stoick shouted back. "She was banished decades ago! Never to come back! I put her on the ship myself. Both times."

"What do you mean both times…"

"There's a time limit, Hiccup! This note mentions an hourglass and I don't know how much sand is left but I do know that we need to act fast!" Stoick interrupted. "Let's decipher the clue. Adrianna might be hidden in the location it mentions. I think this part is meant for me."

Hiccup placed both of his hands in his hair and gripped fistfuls of it, barely registering the discomfort. "No, I'm not playing her sick little game! We need to get a bunch of people together and…"
Stoick looked down at the paper again. "Don't try to fool her, she won't hesitate to…"

"What am I supposed to do?" Hiccup cried, his voice cracking uncomfortably. "I can't just sit here and let her walk all over us!"

Stoick looked up at him patiently. "You have to follow her instructions."

"Her instructions have given us NOTHING so far. How far does she expect us to go?"

"If you want Adrianna back, then Trista knows you'll go as far as it takes." Stoick sighed. "She wants you and Astrid to give up and leave that baby in the cold, alone. She wants to prove that Adrianna will be treated no different than she was. Once you start giving up, she starts winning. Don't you let her win."

"But why? Why would she want that? How could she expect that?" Hiccup punched a wall in frustration and several people flinched, surprised at his strength. Knuckles throbbing, he turned back to his father. "I'd go to hell and back to make sure she's..."

"In case you haven't noticed, she's not exactly mentally stable!" Stoick bellowed, taking them all by surprise.

There was a long pause. "She'll be dragging me down with her if we don't get Addie back." Hiccup breathed, his heart racing in his throat.

Stoick shook his head. "No. You will never be like her."

"I'm not saying that. I'm saying I'm going to go crazy if we just sit here talking!" Hiccup shouted the last word, startling the group yet again.

"ENOUGH!" Astrid roared. "We don't have all day! She's obviously giving us a fighting chance and if we waste our time arguing, what will that accomplish?"

Everyone turned to look at her. She glared at them all and suddenly they realized she was right. Stoick turned back to the note.

"The last part of the clue is meant for me." he said quietly.

"What part? The ending bit? That's just gibberish. What place is she talking about?" Gobber asked, jabbing the note with his finger.

"I'm trying to figure that out, Gobber." Stoick took a deep breath, calming himself so that he didn't take out his frustration on his friend. "I have to remember a place, a place from my past. And the only clue is about what Vikings can do… split things in two… log… rock… boulder…"

He muttered to himself as he read the note. What in the world was it talking about? Gobber read over his shoulder for a few seconds before making an odd humming noise.

"You used to tell this story about when you were a boy." Gobber said quietly. "How your father had you bash your head against a rock and it split in two…"

"Of course…" Stoick exhaled slowly. "That's… that's it. She wants me to go to the place where it happened… but that was decades ago. How in the world could I possibly…"

"Well you better think about it because if that hourglass runs out…"

"Shut up, Hiccup, you're not helping." Stoick snapped, oblivious to the looks of shock he received
for that statement.

Hiccup felt the back of his neck redden at that and thought of a few choice responses, but Astrid's hand on his arm made him bite them down.

Stoick shut his eyes, thinking as hard as he could about that day. He remembered his father giving him the order, how he'd been convinced the man had gone mad but had obeyed. How the rock had split in two and he'd been surprised at his own strength, glad that his father had taught him such a valuable lesson. That was what he remembered about that day. Not where it had happened. The only mental picture he could conjure was that it had happened in a clearing in the woods. The trees had been awfully tall but he wasn't full grown yet either so that might not have been the most accurate mental picture. What else had been there, distinguishing landmarks, anything to tell him where it had happened…

"It was a clearing," he said out loud. "A clearing in the woods. I remember that much."

"Well *that* narrows it down." Hiccup spat sarcastically. "We've only got about a hundred of those."

"I'm doing this for your daughter so don't you talk to me that way." Stoick hissed, his eyes not leaving the note for a second.

Hiccup had the sudden urge to punch his father for that comment. He kept his arms at this sides, fists balled and ready to retaliate if provoked again. Gobber, however, stepped between the two.

"All right, simmer down. Never thought I'd hear myself saying this but let the man think! Hiccup, maybe you should step outside." he said gravely, pointing to the door of his workshop.

Hiccup exhaled very slowly through his teeth before turning around and stomping out of the workshop, waves of rage practically emanating from him.

"Gobber, if we don't solve this soon, I do not want to think about what's going to happen." Stoick admitted in a low tone so the others who remained couldn't hear him. "Hiccup already looks like he's going to snap."

"Hiccup? Nah, he doesn't snap, he's as easygoing as a..."

"He's got a limit. You don't want to push it. Trust me. He's close and if we don't find her soon... you don't want to see him snap. It's not an experience anyone should have." Stoick muttered. "Right... to work then."

Hiccup sat down on a bench outside of Gobber's workshop and took several deep breaths. Astrid followed him and placed a hand on his shoulder.

"You aren't doing anyone any favors by panicking." she said as quietly as she could. "Your dad is probably worried enough as it is."

"And how do you know? He looks like he's doing a puzzle with a couple of people at the Great Hall, not deciphering a riddle that could result in his granddaughters death." he spat back, trembling with rage.

"And is blowing up at anyone going to bring her back?" Astrid countered. "You have got to calm down!"

"Calm down? How the Hel am I supposed to..."
"You don't think I'm scared?" her voice broke on the last syllable and she had to grip his shoulder so she wouldn't suddenly fall over. "I'm scared. Terrified. More than I've ever been in my life." she slowly sat down next to him. "But I am pushing down those emotions so my daughter has a fighting chance."

"You know I've never been as good as you at doing that." he muttered, staring at his hands on his lap.

"That's because you feel **everything** strongly. It's one of the reasons I love you." she placed a hand on his back. "But it's also a weakness. It's too easy to get under your skin. Your aunt probably knows that. Don't let her get to you. It's what she wants."

"I know." Hiccup whispered. "I know it's all just a game to her. I know that being emotional isn't doing any good. I can't help it, Astrid. She's my baby girl. I'm her **hero**. What's it going to look like to her when I don't show up and save her right away?"

"That's another reason this is going be so difficult. Trista knows that Anna's going to be more crushed the longer it takes. She knows it's going to tear you apart. So do something she's not expecting." Astrid stared him dead in the eye when he finally looked up. "Don't be predictable."

"How can I not be predictable? Astrid, we don't what's coming next or how long it's going to take!" Hiccup frowned at her. "You're not making sense."

"I'm making perfect sense, you're just being too blasted stubborn to see it."

Hiccup sighed, wiping a bead of sweat off his eyebrow. "I'm not trying to be."

"Then relax." Hiccup scowled deeply at her, and she met his gaze. "Don't make me use the hair."

Hiccup huffed and lightly rolled his eyes. "You wouldn't at a time like this."

Astrid reached up and tugged one thick strand of hair behind his ear. He raised an eyebrow at her and she gave him a straight face. "Relax." she patted him on the back. "Get off the bench and sit on the ground in front of me."

"What? Why..."

"Just do it!"

Hiccup reluctantly complied, sitting cross-legged on the ground in front of his wife. The moment he settled down, she placed her hands on his shoulders and began to squeeze. He recoiled slightly before realizing that it actually **did** make him feel a bit better. He let a soft moan escape his lips before he could stop himself and the corners of Astrid's mouth raised for a second in triumph.

"Gods, you're tense." Astrid muttered, beginning to need her muscles to dig into his triumph.

Hiccup felt a sarcastic comeback bubble within him but he choked it down. He took a nearby stick and began to occupy himself by tearing off strips of its bark. Too many children were walking home from the Great Hall with their parents. He couldn't stand to watch them hug and fuss over their children, all secretly thanking the gods that it wasn't **their** child who was taken. Astrid caught sight of them as well and felt like her heart was being squeezed in a vice. But to allow these feelings to overwhelm her would be succumbing to weakness, to the trap this Trista person had so expertly crafted.

She reached her hand around her husband's neck and pulled his chin up to look in his eyes. He
relaxed his shoulders, which is probably why she did it; but he was annoyed. This was no time for googly eyes or kissing.

"Not here." he whispered with a light shake of his head. "Not now."

Astrid gently kissed his lips anyway. "It's going to be okay. I promise."

Just behind them, the door to the workshop opened up and the rest of their friends emerged. Stoick was nearly crumpling the note in his hand but otherwise didn't look as emotional as all of them felt.

Hiccup sighed heavily and stood up. "Well what's the plan?"

The group was glad he looked a lot more calm than before. His skin tone had returned to its normal color, he wasn't shaking and he seemed more relaxed.

"We're looking for a clearing on the north side of the island. I remembered the poison berry bushes and there are only two clearings that have them. And the other is almost inaccessible without dragons." Stoick explained, calling Thornado to him.

"So why would we go there?" Hiccup asked. The others turned to him in confusion and he shrugged. "If it was inaccessible without dragons back then, how would you have gotten there without them?"

Stoick almost smiled. This is why he knew they had a chance against Trista. Trista was smart, but Hiccup was smarter.

Hiccup continued, "I mean let's check it for sure. Just thinking, I guess."

"Hiccup's right. We check the accessible one first." Stoick said to the rest of the group, all of whom nodded.

Hiccup's hunch had proven to be correct. The moment they arrived in that clearing, they found a split rock with a sheet of parchment placed on top. There was another hourglass sitting there, its sand running dangerously low.

"We've found it!" Fishlegs cried, racing forward and snatching the note from the ground.

The others crowded around but Fishlegs waved them away, preferring to read the clue aloud.

*Look to the left and you will be right*

*A friendship was formed, almost love at first sight
A kinship, a bond that at first was forbidden
Go to the place where you once kept it hidden*

Hiccup snatched the note from his friend and, after reading it over again, nearly crumpled it in his hand; he gritted his teeth and tried not to let his emotions take over.

"She's not here." he said in a low voice. "And wherever we have to go is probably just another distraction."

"Maybe." Astrid said, placing a hand on his shoulder. It was remarkable how tense it had gotten in such a short time. "But we're one step closer to finding her."

Hiccup turned to look at her, his bright eyes flashing. "We'd better be."
The Hunt

For a moment, all was silent. Everyone was giving the note a great deal of thought and no one wanted to speak up for fear that Hiccup would round on them. He was dangerous when he was this desperate. Finally, Stoick strode forward and took the note out of Hiccup's hand. He read it again, his brow furrowed.

"This one isn't for me," he said, more to himself than to any of them. "I never kept any friendships hidden."

"I did once!" Tuffnut piped up, feeling a bit neglected in the conversation. The others turned to him, several with eyebrows raised as they silently encouraged him to continue the story. "I was ten and I had a pet frog but my mom told me I couldn't have her in the house. So I kept her under Ruff's bed. The next clue must be there!"

"Wait, is that why I kept hearing that weird croaking noise? You told me you were doing that in your sleep!" Ruffnut shouted, punching her brother on the arm.

"Not exactly love at first sight." Astrid wrinkled her nose.

"Says you! Her name was Stella and I was heartbroken when mom found her and made me let her go!" Tuffnut said dramatically.

"The note is not talking about your pet frog!" Hiccup said, his head in his hands.

Oh yeah? Who's it talking about then?" Tuffnut crossed his arms.

"Hiccup." said Astrid, her eyes boring into his. "The note is for Hiccup. Look to your left and you will be right. He's left handed. And we all know he's hidden a friendship."

Hiccup raised his eyes and locked them with Astrid. The entire group was confused at what she meant, but he stared back at her with a sudden spark of understanding in his eyes.

"The cove." he whispered, reaching out a hand to stroke Toothless' head. "The next clue is in the cove."

"Yeah right! What friendship did you hide? You and Astrid? Everyone knew about that!" Tuffnut chortled. "It's obviously meant for me."

"Toothless. I was hiding Toothless. Does no one remember... no, it doesn't matter. We need to go. Now!" Hiccup rambled, immediately mounting Toothless.

Everyone flew off to the cove except Stoick and Gobber. They faced each other for a few seconds.

"Now might be a good time to fill them in, Stoick." Gobber warned his friend.

"Now is the worst time to tell them. Trista is already getting into Hiccup's head. I tell them who she is, what she's done, and he'll never be able to think straight." Stoick swung a leg over Thornado.

"For the record," Gobber said as he got on his dragon, "I think you're making a mistake."

"Yes, you've made that quite clear in the past." Stoick held up a hand to get him to stop talking. "We need to focus on getting Adrianna back. Anything else is secondary."
But Stoick couldn't shake the feeling that Gobber might have been right. If he had been up front with Hiccup and Astrid from the beginning, would this have happened?

It had been one of the best days he'd ever had. Almost better than Hiccup's Welcoming Ceremony. He lost count of how many people had come to him to congratulate him on his new grandchildren. He felt like the gods were smiling down on him, giving him another chance to set everything right. His son looked like he had on the wedding day, sort of surprised that something this wonderful had actually happened. It was an expression he didn't get to see much.

After several hearty congratulations from villagers he didn't know very well, Stoick looked over at Hiccup holding his newborn son and smiled. Something about the way Hiccup held the baby assured him that his son would be a very good father. He gently rocked his body back and forth to make sure the baby slept on despite the confusion and the people pressing in on all sides. Stoick looked over at his daughter-in-law and immediately caught sight of his newborn granddaughter's eyes fluttering closed. She looked completely comfortable in her mother's arms. Stoick couldn't help but think that his grandchildren had the best parents in the world.

But who was that woman talking to Astrid? She looked vaguely familiar, like he'd seen her in a dream or in passing on the street. Or had he? She definitely gave off a distinct negative vibe either way. He watched as she snatched the newborn out of Astrid's arms and then returned her seconds later. Something was wrong.

And then it hit him. A surge of anger raised in his chest.

"Trista!" he called, stomping over and not caring that he was probably going to make a scene. "What the Hel are you doing here?"

Trista looked over at Stoick, a spark of familiar loathing popping up in her gray eyes. In an instant, he knew his hunch had been correct. She smiled and his stomach turned. She'd gotten her filthy hands on Adrianna. His eyes flitted over to his granddaughter and he was relieved to notice that she was sleeping deeply, apparently healthy. He quickly prayed that Trista hadn't gotten the opportunity to poison the baby girl.

"Why I was only congratulating your daughter-in-law." Trista replied, chuckling softly. "I meant no harm."

Stoick hoped that he could hold it together long enough to stop himself from killing his sister right then and there.

"Out. Get out NOW!" he bellowed, pointing to the door and beginning to tremble ever so slightly.

"Can't I say hello to my own grandniece?" Trista wouldn't stop laughing and it was beginning to send chills up and down his spine.

Stoick lost his cool, bolting forward and grabbing the woman's shoulders, trying not to break them in his massive hands. "I said OUT!"

The loud noises finally awoke Adrianna and she began to wail. Stoick didn't even glance over; he shoved Trista toward the door.

"Very well, very well!" Trista grumbled, her lips pursed as if she was holding back a few choice words. She turned to look at Astrid with an unfamiliar sparkle in her eyes, almost like she was enjoying this interaction immensely. "Enjoy her. She really is a lovely little girl."

That was enough. Stoick gave her another shove but this time she obediently walked forward,
almost not needing the prompting at all. Once they had gotten outside, he loosened his hold slightly and turned her to face him.

"If you come near my grandchildren again, I will not hesitate to kill you." he whispered, enunciating every syllable so she wouldn't miss a thing.

"Oh isn't it about time to let go of these silly grudges?" she chortled, a look of abject hatred shining in her eyes.

Stoick very nearly choked on thin air. "Silly grudges? Was Hiccup a silly grudge?"

Trista laughed again and it was all Stoick could do to keep himself from striking her. "Oh I've never laid a hand on..."

"You know damn well who I'm talking about. Unless you've forgotten his namesake," he leaned in, his hold on her shoulders tightening.

Comprehension seemed to dawn on her."Oh... yes that was rather unfortunate."

"UNFORTUNATE?" Stoick shouted, not caring that his voice echoed all over the village, easily audible from the Great Hall. "No... no, get out of here before I kill you. I'm going to make sure you leave Berk and never come back!" he roughly shoved her toward several guards, who immediately grabbed her and began dragging her to the prison.

"I'm going, dear brother. I'm leaving," she said in a calm voice, almost as if she was merely discussing the weather. "You won't be seeing me here again."

"Make sure she doesn't escape. I'll come over at dark and banish her again myself," he told his guards before turning around to go back to his family.

Stoick stomped back into the Great Hall, feeling his body trembling. His face felt hot and he wouldn't have been surprised if it had turned red in his rage. He immediately sat down and put his head in his hands, wanting very much to be alone.

Hiccup never was very good at picking up on subtle social cues like this. "Who was she?" he asked, sounding quite concerned.

Stoick thought about telling his son why he had acted this way. Did Hiccup deserve to know? Or would he be better off not knowing anything? Stoick shook his head slightly.

"Stay away from her," he muttered into his hands.

"But..."

"The subject is closed, Hiccup!" Stoick exclaimed, patience dwindling by the second. "Now someone get me a drink!"

He didn't take his face out of his hands but he heard his son walk away and whisper something to Astrid. When he finally looked up, Hiccup, Astrid, and the twins were long gone. Gobber placed a tankard of mead in front of him and sat down across from him.

"I think you should've told him." He said quite seriously, pushing the drink toward his friend.

"I can't. Do you have any idea what that information would do to him? He already worries enough as it is and with two new children..."
"With two new children, he's going to want to protect them. And how can he when you won't be upfront about your past?" Gobber countered. "Have you considered that... you know, maybe Trista has caused enough trouble..."

"She's my sister!" Stoick slammed his fist against the table. "Do you really expect me to execute my own sister?"

"Is banishing her working?"

"For the last thirty years, it worked well enough!" Stoick took a deep breath and a large swig of the mead. "We send her far enough out, she won't be able to come back."

"I think you're making a mistake." Gobber leaned in. "What if she finds a way back? She's not right in the head. Years of solitude probably addled her brains beyond recognition. And you want to risk that coming after your grandchildren?"

"I will make absolute certain that she won't be able to find her way back. Meanwhile, I'll keep a close eye on them." Stoick took another gulp of mead, draining the tankard entirely. He then leaned back slightly, looking exhausted and, Gobber thought, quite a bit older. "I am serious about protecting my grandchildren, Gobber. They are the gods' second chance. Do you really think I'd let a madwoman like Trista get close to them under my watch?"

"Are they always going to be under your watch?" Gobber asked, leaning forward even more.

"Always." Stoick replied.

And he really did mean what he said. However, it was a few hours before he had made a firm decision regarding Trista and how he would make sure she wouldn't be able to find her way back. As the sun set, he sauntered over to the prison, filled with dread at seeing those cold gray eyes after all those years.

"Stoick the Vast." Trista said as he walked in, leaning against the bars in an unnervingly casual manner. "You know, I never thought I'd see you again."

"The feeling is mutual." Stoick replied, nodding to a guard.

As Trista was removed from the cell, she gave Stoick a smile that made his stomach turn. "Shame I have to be banished again. I was just beginning to remember how to get around. A lot has changed around here. Why, a few of the buildings look old! And dragons everywhere, tut tut, I'm surprised the man who killed a thousand dragons with his bare hands now allows them to be kept as pets. But to each his own I suppose." she let out another humorless chuckle. "I don't think it was you who integrated them, oh no... but your son... he seems the type, doesn't he?"

"Tie her up and put her on a boat. Be sure to blindfold her so she doesn't know where we're going. Then tie it to Thornado." he commanded the guard. "I'll fly her out as far as I can."

The guard nodded and in a few minutes, it was finished. Trista did not struggle against her bonds. Stoick gave her some food and a few supplies and then took off on his dragon. It was several hours before he decided that he was far enough out of the way to allow Trista to go free. He directed the boat to an island and untied her and his dragon.

"I'm doing this because you're my sister." he said to his hands as he untied her feet. "But it's the last favor I'll ever do for you. If I see you again, I will kill you. Do you understand?"

"Oh I understand completely." Trista said, holding her head high and stepping off the boat and
onto the sandy beach of the island.

"Good." Stoick nodded and got back on his dragon. "I guess this is goodbye."

"Yes. I suppose it is. Goodbye, dear brother." Trista gave him a flippant wave with a wide smile on her face.

Thornado took off into the sky. Stoick didn't look back. He didn't think he could trust himself to let her live if he did. But there was no way she would ever make her way back to the island. The thought of this made him smile weakly and he began to think about going to Hiccup's house for some more time with his new grandchildren. The idea made him feel quite warm inside. Sure, Hiccup had softened him but it was at moments like these that he felt particularly grateful for the change of heart.

A few minutes later, Thornado nearly ran into what looked like an albino Deadly Nadder flying in the opposite direction. Stoick directed him to swerve out of its way, thinking that it was odd that a Nadder would be flying so far away from its pack...

All of a sudden, Stoick felt the very strong urge to punch something. Of course. How had he not realized it before? Trista had a dragon. It was how she was able to snatch Adrianna away so fast. And how she'd managed to get back to Berk. An albino Deadly Nadder, how had he never noticed it on the island before? Oh, she was clever. And to think he'd had the opportunity to stop it back then. Hel, he'd had the opportunity to execute her but he had shown her mercy...

Suddenly he had a very strong reason not to tell Hiccup or Astrid about his earlier dealings with Trista. He knew that it was only a matter of time before they needed the whole truth. He was certain they would never forgive him but if it meant saving his little granddaughter, it was worth the risk.

It didn't take long to get to the cove. As the beach came in sight, Hiccup suddenly commanded his dragon to hover over the spot.

"It's written in the sand!" he called to his companions. "Easier to read from here!"

She has a twin brother
But there are two others
Who, back in their day,
Enjoyed their rough play
And a favorite spot
That they went to a lot.

They landed moments later to take a look at the hourglass. It had quite a bit more sand left than the last and was draining very slowly. Apparently they had solved the last riddle faster than expected. Hiccup wasn't sure whether this was good or bad. Would Trista become frustrated with them for their quick minds or would she relish the opportunity to make the game even harder? He had no frame of reference.

"So she's talking about more twins?" Ruffnut asked, her mind clearly at work. "Wow... do you know more twins?"

"Me? No. Other than us, I can't think of any!" Tuffnut exclaimed, an expression of pure confusion on his face.

"Oh Thor, you're impossible!" Astrid snapped. "She's talking about you! Did you have any favorite
"spots when you were kids?"

"Only about a million of them! This could take forever to figure out!" Ruffnut sat down on a nearby rock.

"Yeah. The one clue about us and it turns out to be an impossible riddle..." Tuffnut sat down next to his sister, who shoved him off seconds later.

"What about your dark, soggy alone place?" Fishlegs suggested, shuddering slightly at the name.

"Oh! Wait we went there a lot? I go there a lot..." Ruffnut gave Tuffnut a very suspicious glance.

"You go there a lot? It's my spot!"

"Leave the domestics out of it and let's go!" Hiccup shouted, swinging a leg over Toothless once more.

As the others flew off, Fishlegs began to have some issues with Meatlug's saddle. Astrid waved them off so she could stay behind and help.

"How are you doing?" he asked her once everyone else was out of earshot.

"Doesn't really matter. Hiccup's close to complete meltdown and if I don't keep it together, everything's going to fall apart." she said, untangling a few stitches with an unnervingly calm expression.

"Astrid, she's your daughter too..."

"The last time Hiccup lost control, I was giving birth on an island in the middle of the ocean twelve hours later!" she snapped. "Right now, it's about making sure he doesn't go nuts."

"But who's going to make sure you won't?" Fishlegs gently countered, putting a hand on Astrid's shoulder.

"I can take care of myself." she said, sighing deeply. "I think I fixed the problem. Now come on, we don't have a lot of time."

"They can wait for a second." Fishlegs said in a surprisingly firm voice. "If you aren't going to talk about it, let me do something for you."

"But we're running out of..."

Fishlegs didn't listen Astrid's objections as he raced forward and threw his arms around her, squeezing her tight. Astrid was shocked at this sudden affection but then, as the surprise wore off, she had to work very hard not to shed any tears. She slowly lifted her hands and placed them on Fishlegs' back. For a few seconds, she felt like she could relax a little bit, that she could share the part of the burden that only she carried with her friend. The extra pat on the back she received told her that he had gotten the message and that he was going to be the one to make sure she didn't lose control. In those few seconds, Astrid thanked the gods for sending her such a good friend. He finally let go and gave her a small smile in an attempt to continue to encourage her. It was incredible how such a small gesture of kindness could lift her spirits so much.

Choking back tears, she patted him on the shoulder. "Thank you. I did need that."

"I thought so. And thanks for the help with the saddle." he got on his dragon and waited for her to
mount hers before flying off after the rest of the group.

The twins' favorite spot was pretty far outside the village. They immediately flew into the cave's entrance and spotted the rest of the group crowded around the next clue. Next to the parchment was an hourglass which was only drained halfway. They didn't appear to have been there for a very long time. Stoick handed Astrid a torch so she and Fishlegs could read the note themselves.

There's a place where fish live
   But there's only one fin
   And a once happy family
   Resided within

"They're getting more cryptic." Hiccup muttered.

"That means you're getting close." Stoick gently took the note from Astrid's hand and read it over again.

There was a long silence as everyone mulled over the information in the note. Suddenly, Fishlegs' head shot up, his eyes wide.

"I know where it's leading." he said in a shaky voice. "And you're definitely not going to like it."
There was a pause as everyone turned to look at Fishlegs. He took a step back, fully expecting an enraged Hiccup to attack something when he knew where the next clue was hiding.

"A place where fish live is a metaphor. Your last name is Haddock, which is a kind of fish."
Fishlegs began.

"And she isn't talking about a fin as part of a fish... she's talking about the person! Finn!" Astrid finished.

"Exactly. The next clue is at your house!" Fishlegs exclaimed, looking triumphant.

"But that's impossible. That's where the first clue was, that's... that's..." Hiccup suddenly crumpled the note and threw it at the wall. "She's following us!"

"No... Hiccup, we didn't go into the house!" Astrid said, her face ashen. "She knew we'd see the note on the door... it would distract us..."

"So this whole time..."

"I don't know." Astrid tried to put a hand on her husband's shoulder but he shrugged it off.

"And what the Hel does it mean a once happy family? Is Addie... is she..."

"We need to go." Stoick said in a low voice. "Just keep going and don't think about that."

"Let's go then." All emotion suddenly drained from Hiccup's face, leaving a blank expression.

Stoick leaned in to talk to Gobber in a low voice. "He's going to snap soon."

"You're probably right." Gobber replied, raising his eyes slightly as Hiccup shot out of the cave at top speed.

Stoick got on his dragon and Gobber mounted his. "This has got to end. We have got to make sure Adrianna's back safe."

"That's why we're here." Gobber replied before taking off with the others into the sunset.

Hiccup very nearly kicked down his own front door the moment they landed, bolting into the main room. The moment he saw what lay directly in front of him, his heart stopped. On the table was an hourglass with no sand in the top half. Forcing himself to stay calm, he walked forward and picked it up. Unlike the first, it was portable. And, to his slight relief, he saw a note tucked under it.

"She was here." he muttered, slamming the hourglass back on the table as he unfolded the note. "We wasted our time running around Berk when this whole time, she was just leading us here!"

"What does the note say?" Astrid asked, stepping forward and trying to get close enough to her husband to reassure him in some way.

Hiccup tossed the note on the ground. "I'm not... I can't. Someone else open it."

No one made a move to pick up the note. Truthfully, no one wanted to get close to Hiccup for fear
that he would take out his anger on them. Fishlegs finally decided to risk the repercussions and stepped forward to pick up the clue. He opened it and read out loud in a clear voice.

_Congratulations, you've earned a night's rest_  
_(Yes the sand has run out but this was only a test)_  
_Don't try to find us when the moon's in the sky_  
_Or, before the sun rises, your daughter will die_  
_But when it does rise, you'll continue your work_  
_The next clue will be somewhere public on Berk._  
_So rest with this comfort: your Addie is well_  
_Will that continue? Tomorrow will tell._

"So she... she expects us to _rest_? While Adrianna is somewhere out there with a psychopath probably torturing her?" Hiccup slammed his fist against the table, his breathing ragged. "No... no, if I have to be out all night, I'm going to..."

"You're going to stay here. Trista won't hesitate to kill her if you disobey." Stoick interrupted.

"She's only three years old, dad... she wouldn't kill a..."

"She's killed younger." Stoick strode over to a chair and pulled it in front of the couch, motioning for them to sit down.

"No, we don't have..."

"We have all night. Sit down. I... I need to tell you something I should have told you a long time ago." Stoick motioned for them to sit down again. Hiccup and Astrid slowly walked over to the couch and sat down. Astrid gently reached down and gripped Hiccup's hand, trying to do something, anything, to make him feel better.

"I didn't tell you this because I was selfish. I wanted to pretend it never happened. Pretend Trista didn't exist so that you wouldn't be burdened with that knowledge. But now, I know you will never forgive me. I ask only that you listen and allow me to keep helping you find Adrianna." Stoick explained. Gobber stepped forward and sat down next to him. "When I was born, I was the golden child. My father gave me everything I wanted, held back nothing. My mother was proud that she produced a strong future chief. But Trista... she was overlooked. The mistake. She was born five years before me. I once overheard my father talking to someone about how hard it had been to have another child. How he had feared that he would have to find someone else, a different family, to take over when he passed on. How the day Trista was born was the worst day of his life while the day I was born..." Stoick took a deep breath, trying not to sound emotional as he continued to speak. "I don't blame her. To be given no love, no attention your entire life, to have parents who blatantly favor one child over her... anyone would snap."

"Is that what she expects?" Hiccup asked, staring down at his and Astrid's clasped hands. "For us to just let Adrianna die so she won't... get in the way or something?"

"That's exactly what she expects." Stoick replied.

"So we prove that's not true. We come after her. Once she sees how much is changed, how much we love Anna..."

"If we were dealing with someone sane, I would agree with you. But we're not. She snapped a long time ago and her banishment hasn't done her any favors. And with her hatred for me, I wonder
whether she'll let Adrianna go so willingly." Stoick took a deep breath. "She proved at a young age that she is capable of killing her own flesh and blood."

Hiccup would have paled even more if he wasn't already white as fresh fallen snow. He felt his heart stop beating and briefly wondered if he would keel over and die with all the stress that had been pressing in on him all day.

"She's killed before?" Astrid asked, her hold on Hiccup's hand growing tighter. "Who?"

"Hiccup." The group's collective expression became very confused. "He was my brother. You were small as a baby but he was tiny. They named him Hiccup. And your mother and I named you after him."

"But I know all about the first two Hiccup Horrendous Haddocks... wouldn't that make me the fourth?" Hiccup asked, his heart now pounding in his throat.

"He died before the Welcoming Ceremony. So he never had an official name. But that was the one he would have had." Stoick's voice finally broke and he stared down at his lap.

"Trista was banished because she killed him the night after he was born. I don't know what happened but I saw the crib afterward. Blood everywhere, coating the bottom and on the sides. I know there wasn't much left of him to bury." Gobber continued, allowing Stoick to take a break.

"Trista was banished but the damage was done. Your grandmother was never the same after that. She got sick and died about a month later. And from then on, it was forbidden to speak about Trista or about Hiccup. We were to go on like nothing had ever happened."

There was a long, painful silence. It was as if all the sound had been sucked out of the room, like everyone had gone deaf. Hiccup slowly lowered his face into his free hand, breathing deeply and quietly. Finally, Stoick couldn't handle the silence anymore.

"I know I should have told you..."

"Shut up." Hiccup muttered into his fingers.

"Hiccup..."

"I said SHUT UP!" Hiccup bellowed, hopping to his feet and stomping across the floor. "You don't get to talk to me, not one more word, not after everything you kept from me for all these years!"

"I know. It was wrong." Stoick slowly stood up and tried to walk over to his son. "I am so..."

"DON'T YOU SAY YOU'RE SORRY! You are WAY past that!" Hiccup pushed his father away, trembling with rage. "Don't you think I would have wanted to know this psychopath was on the loose so I could protect my children from her?"

"I wanted to protect you; I banished her twice and did everything I could to make sure she couldn't..."

"WELL YOU DIDN'T TRY HARD ENOUGH!" Hiccup picked up the hourglass, holding it up and aiming it at his father. He froze, his eyes widening in horror. "Is she still alive?"

There was no response. Stoick averted his gaze. He couldn't lie to Hiccup but he couldn't bring himself to say the words.

Hiccup decided to continue. "Are we going to go through all of this only to find out she's been dead
"I don't know." Stoick whispered in a barely audible voice, shutting his eyes tight and expecting the blow he knew he deserved.

Hiccup paused, completely speechless but making odd choking noises with his throat. Astrid's heart pounded and she prayed that he wouldn't actually strike his father. A few seconds later, he turned around and hurled the hourglass at the wall. It shattered, sending sand flying everywhere. He turned back to his father, a fire in his eyes that so few had seen before, that Astrid had prayed she would never see again.

"Because of your... your *mercy*, Adrianna has to spend a night with this psychopath." he exclaimed, not quite shouting but not speaking at normal volume either. "Alone... and who knows what she's thinking or feeling... well I know one thing. She's wondering where we are. Why we haven't come! And I'm stuck here because of this *stupid* note, trying to keep her safe but I can't! She could be killed any second and there's nothing... nothing I can..."

Hiccup slapped a hand to his face, his eyebrows pulling low over his eyes to help pull in the waves of emotion. He constricted his throat to choke it down, but a strangled noise emitted from it with each intake of breath. The room blurred and when he closed his eyes, he felt the tears streaming down his face.

He turned away from the group, resting his other hand on the wall for support. He felt his knees give out and he slipped to the floor, his body heaving with sobs he couldn't hold back. Arms wrapped around his neck and he felt Astrid pull him into her chest. Hiccup hunched over, his hands pulling his hair; Astrid held him on her lap, not trying to console him. He needed to cry.

Stoick had heard his son cry many times. He was a particularly restless baby and had gotten numerous painful injuries as a little boy. But never in his life had he heard his son, or anyone for that matter, cry so painfully, so full of anguish. He had to turn his head away as he gently waved the others out but most of them had already made the move. No one wanted to be there for that. But as they closed the door behind them and walked away, the sounds of a broken father's sobs would forever be etched into their minds as the most horrible sound a person could make.

All the fear and doubt poured into Hiccup's soul so much his chest hurt, making it hard to breathe. He knew that he was a failure as a father; his baby girl was in the wilderness freezing to death at the hand of a murderer and psychopath. And there was nothing he could do to stop it. He was a complete and utter failure. A burst of rage surged within him and he screamed at the top of his lungs, making Astrid grip him tighter.

"Shhh..." Astrid finally whispered when the scream died and he was left panting.

The door clicked behind them and she knew Stoick and the others were finally gone. No matter what Trista said in her note, she had a feeling that none of them would be sleeping well tonight. Not by a long shot.

Hiccup cried onto her lap for what felt like an eternity. Whenever it seemed he was calm, the torturous cries would start up again. But she never stopped holding him, running her fingers gently through his hair, wishing she could do anything to bring her baby and husband back.

Trista was ruining their lives. She kidnapped their baby girl, Finn was forced to stay in the home of another family to be safe, and Hiccup was losing all mental capacity. And she knew deep down that she wasn't far behind him.
Hiccup was finally left with hiccups, his back shaking with each inhale. Astrid brushed her hand on his neck and looked down at him. The expression on his face nearly made her cry; she had never seen her husband, her best friend look so broken.

The only thing that kept her from doing so was the burning anger in her soul for the woman who caused it all.

But she forced it away and tried to look at him. She didn't know what to say, but she felt she had to say something.

"We should get to bed…" she hated those particular words that elected themselves to pop out of her mouth.

Hiccup closed his eyes firmly, picturing Adrianna's face. Two tears streaked down his cheeks, but he made no sound. Astrid lightly wiped them away.

"It's going to be okay…" she whispered.

His breath shook when he opened his lips to reply. He looked down at the floorboards as he whispered, "H-how do you know?"

Astrid looked at him mournfully and put her hands on his chest underneath her to pull him up. He slowly sat up and stared into her eyes. "I don't. But I have to have faith that she'll be okay." Astrid whispered, holding his face close to hers.

Hiccup sniffed loudly and swallowed. "I want Finn."

"Are you sure that's a good..."

"I need to get a grip. Knowing he's safe on my watch will help me do that." he wiped his face with one hand, trying to dry it completely.

Astrid felt like arguing but the look of determination on his face made her pause. She knew that even if he couldn't be strong for her, he was going to be strong for his son. And perhaps Finn's presence would calm him down. True, their little girl was gone but they could still protect their little boy.

The sun was setting as Snotlout and Heather walked the little Haddock boy to their house. It had been arranged beforehand that they would be watching him overnight and then dropping him off at Lotus' in the morning. They had a feeling that Hiccup and Astrid would be along to pick up their son that night. It's what they would have done, after all.

About an hour later, Finn was playing by himself and Heather was feeding Inga when they heard muffled shouting. Snotlout walked into the main room, an expression of confusion on his face. He knelt down next to Heather and spoke in a low voice so Finn wouldn't hear.

"That sounds like Hiccup."

Heather began to listen a bit more closely. The voice was unmistakable. Hiccup was shouting about something. It was amazing how much his voice carried considering how far their house was from his and Astrid's. Finn seemed oblivious to the noise. Snotlout and Heather silently agreed to act like nothing was happening. They were certain that he had never heard his father shout like that and now wasn't a good time to him to experience it for the first time.
After a few seconds, the shouting died down. It was quiet at the Haddock house for a few minutes.

Then came the scream.

"What was that?" Finn asked, his eyes wide with surprise. "Is daddy screaming?"

"I don't know."

Snotlout said very loudly to mask the noise. "Let's go play in the other room. I've got some berries there, we can have a snack."

Finn smiled and bolted after Snotlout. Heather was glad he was so good at distracting the child from the sound of his father's screams. But this meant that she was alone in the quiet room. And that's when she heard it. The most horrible, anguished sobbing she had ever heard coming from the Haddock house. She closed her eyes against the noise, trying to ignore it, to pretend she couldn't hear it. But the truth was, if she could hear it from this far away, Hiccup was probably so heartbroken that he had completely lost control. Without having to ask, she knew that Adrianna hadn't been found. And she prayed that the sobbing she was hearing wasn't because she had been found dead. She thought about that vibrant little girl, the one who had been so excited over Inga, who had hugged her husband the moment she thought he was unhappy... she couldn't be dead. Children so rarely died on Berk. To think that Adrianna would be the first in years... Heather shook her head. No. She wasn't going to jump to any conclusions until she knew anything for sure.

But the one thing she did know for sure was that something had broken Hiccup's heart completely. And whatever it was had caused him to make the most horrible sounds she had ever heard.

The sounds of the sobs finally died down after what felt like a long time. Heather felt like she was going crazy listening to it. Inga was finished with her feeding and had fallen asleep in her arms but she paid the baby no heed other than to gently rock her. She made a silent promise to herself that she would make sure that this would never happen to Inga. The sounds she heard were too terrible... she did not ever want to hear them again. Not from her own throat or Snotlout's... never.

After a long period of silence, she heard a knock at the door. She quickly straightened out her shirt and picked up her daughter, still rocking her so she would stay asleep.

The look on Hiccup's face made her want to cry. His face was redder than usual, he was still making quiet sniffing sounds, and there were obvious tear stains on his cheeks. She took a deep breath and decided not to draw attention to how awful he looked. She ushered them in and called to Snotlout to bring Finn out. The boy brightened up at the sight of his mother but one look at his father made his smile melt off his face.

"Daddy, what's wrong?" he asked, his eyes wide with concern.

"Come on, buddy, we need to get you home."

Hiccup gently picked up his son and it was all he could do to keep himself from crying again.

"He was okay?" Astrid asked Heather, wringing her hands and praying that Hiccup could continue to stay strong.

"He was good. I think he knows something is up."

Heather placed a hand on Astrid's back, trying to communicate just how sorry she was through that simple action. "I don't know what you should say but I think he deserves to know what's going on."

Astrid took a deep breath and nodded. She quickly hugged her friend and, as Hiccup walked out, Snotlout clapped him on the back a few times, attempting to comfort him. Hiccup looked over at him and nodded in thanks.
The moment the door was shut, Snotlout put an arm around his wife and she leaned onto him. "I can't even imagine..."

"I know." Heather kissed her baby on the forehead. "I don't even know what to do anymore."

"I don't think there's anything we can do." Snotlout replied, squeezing her shoulder more tightly than usual. "If they don't find her soon, everything's going to change."

Heather sniffed loudly but choked the tears back. "Everything already has."

As they walked home, the Haddock parents were thinking about just how correct the implication in Trista's poem had been, how their family had been so happy not too long ago... but now those days were over. They could almost hear the sound of Adrianna's voice, her delighted chatting, her giggles, her singing... their house had gone from being a home to being a constant reminder of who they had lost. She haunted every inch of the house from her toys on the floor to the little fingerprints on some of the glass. There was a gaping hole in their family, a hole that could only be filled by their precious little girl.

Astrid thought bitterly that it was ironic that she felt like such a huge piece of her life was missing when she had spent so long not wanting to be a mother in the first place. Now she wanted more than anything to continue to be a mother to her baby girl. There was so much left for them both to learn. So much she wanted to teach her. A mother was supposed to teach her daughter how to ride her first dragon, how to throw an axe, all about the birds and the bees... there were some things only she could teach her daughter. Some things only her daughter could teach her.

Even though her anguish, she knew she couldn't begin to understand what Hiccup was going through. There was always something special between him and their daughter. From the moment he saved her from choking to death before she even had a chance to experience life, they were nearly inseparable. Astrid knew that if the situation was reversed, if it had been Finn that had been taken instead of Adrianna, Hiccup would be the one who had to hold it together because she would probably have lost her sanity by now. Not that she wasn't losing it anyway.

They set Finn on the ground when they got back to their house and were dismayed to notice that it was several hours before his bedtime. They didn't want him awake too early so they were going to have to find something to do with him until they could go to sleep. Both parents felt exhausted but their bright little son kept them from wallowing in their misery.

"Did you get Anna back?" Finn asked, sitting down on the floor with his new Deadly Nadder toy.

"No, buddy, we didn't." Hiccup choked, forcing himself to stay calm. "We're still looking for her."

Finn looked down at the Nadder in his hand and a few tears fell down his cheeks. "She hasta tome back. I yove she."

Astrid sat down next to him and began to smooth his hair. "We love her too, little man. She'll... she'll come back." a few tears leaked out of her eyes before she could stop them.

Finn looked up at her in horror. "Why you twying?" he asked, his eyes wide with fear.

"I just miss her." Astrid sniffed and wiped away the tears with the back of her hand.

Finn blinked and said nothing. After a few seconds, he leaned forward and wrapped his arms around Astrid's neck as if knowing that she needed the hug. Astrid nearly burst into tears but she choked them down and held her son close to her chest.
"It otay, mommy. We find she." he said after a short while.

Hiccup's throat constricted at his son's sure voice. Tough, resolute. Just like his grandfather. The young man felt incredibly proud of his son who, at three years of age, was already taking this situation better than either he or Astrid could. He wrapped his arms around them both, shedding a few small tears himself. "You're right buddy. We will."

Finn was finally put to bed after a few hours of quiet playtime with his parents. They elected to try to be lighthearted, or at least fake it, for his sake. It was the single most exhausting thing Hiccup or Astrid had ever done and they were relieved when it was finally time to put him to bed. They locked and boarded up his window so that no one would be able to come through and snatch him away.

"We should board up Anna's as well. So... so this can't happen again. When she's home." Astrid said as they shut their son's door behind them.

Hiccup nodded and swallowed thickly. As he stepped into his little girl's room, he felt like his heart was being repeatedly stabbed with every beat. He had painted butterflies of all colors around her wall as a surprise for her third birthday. She had squealed with excitement and hugged him so hard, she nearly squeezed all the air out of him. Her favorite of them was a purple one on her door, something she had told him very clearly a few minutes later. He had felt immensely proud of himself when he heard it because he had worked a little harder on that butterfly in particular. Purple had always been her favorite color and he wanted to make sure there was one that was especially beautiful. He looked up at the ceiling and remembered lying on his back and staring up at it with her, pointing to the little pictures in the wood. She had found several he never would have noticed, like the mint leaves in the left corner and the Gronckle with a long, puffy skirt right in the middle of the ceiling (they had laughed for what felt like an eternity at the mental picture it had sparked). Every morning he had looked forward to walking into this room to greet his little girl. Those days couldn't be over. He needed more time with her. She had taught him so much, made him laugh on his darkest days, and made him feel like the luckiest man in the world. He knew that if it had been Astrid or Finn who had been taken from him, he would be hurting every bit as much. But there was something about this particular pain that was unique to this situation. A part of his heart that only his Addie had filled that was crying out in anguish every second she was away.

"What was she wearing?"

A distant voice snapped him back to reality and he suddenly became aware of even more tears slipping down his face. When had he started crying? If Astrid hadn't spoken, the tears probably wouldn't have even registered. He hastily wiped them away, frustrated at himself for producing still more tears even after his outburst mere hours before.

Astrid was on her knees, picking up the crumpled articles of clothing she found. Adrianna wasn't a very neat child and her bedroom always had a fair amount of dirty clothes strewn around.

"White shirt, I think. With her vest. White pants too." he looked around and was somewhat relieved to notice that her boots were nowhere to be found. "She was so tired when I got her home, I don't think I took off her boots." he shut his eyes tightly, trying to remember what else she had been wearing. The mental picture of her on that wonderful Snoggletog Eve party swam in front of his eyes. "She was wearing her purple skirt."

Astrid gripped the shirt she was holding particularly hard. Adrianna loved that skirt. Trader Johann brought in copious amounts of colored dyes and, as a surprise, they had purchased some and made different skirts for Adrianna (and shirts for Finn) in the various colors. Both children had clothes in
almost every color of the rainbow (Astrid had insisted that both twins would look terrible in orange and that Finn would never wear pink) but Adrianna wore the purple skirt the most. It didn't do much by way of warming her up but that's what her pants were for. The skirts were for show. And she loved to show them off.

Hiccup got out a few nails and boards and began to attach them to the window. As he pounded in the nails, fully aware he was keeping his son awake, he wanted to smash the hammer against the wall. What good did it do to board up the window now when they might never get the chance to protect their little girl again?

At long last, he was finished. When he turned around, Adrianna's room was spotless. Astrid had used her nervous energy to make it as clean as possible for her daughter's arrival. The stuffed Night Fury rested on her nightstand, almost like it was guarding the bed. Hiccup wished it had been there the night before. That someone had been there to see it happen, to wake them up, to save their baby... but now wasn't the time for regrets. He took Astrid's hand and together, they headed to their bedroom.

Both Hiccup and Astrid managed to doze off several times that night. Neither slept for long periods of time and when they did, they were haunted by Adrianna's face. Every time Hiccup awoke, he got out of bed to make sure Finn was still sleeping in his room. By the next morning, he had checked on his son twelve times.

The sun finally peeked over the horizon and bathed Berk in what appeared to be a tauntingly beautiful morning. The snow glistened in the sunlight, begging to be played in, but no children would be outside that day. Hiccup and Astrid woke their son and carried him, half asleep, to Lotus's house. She placed him on her couch and he fell asleep instantly.

"You will find her." Lotus said, giving her daughter a tight hug. "Don't give up."

"I know, mom." Astrid whispered. "We're doing the best we can."

As the couple walked through the village, some of the early risers on Berk patted them on the back or encouraged them. They didn't act as though they had heard any of them. They didn't want mindless words, they wanted their daughter. Without discussing it, they both agreed that the Great Hall was probably the place mentioned in the note. There were guards at every entrance but they suspected that Trista could get past anyone she wanted, though they didn't know how.

The moment they opened the large, double doors, they knew their hunch had been correct. On the middle of the closest table was a single object. A dark liquid dripped off the edge of the table, making their hearts stop completely. They took a few steps forward and then froze.

They recognized the object as Adrianna's purple skirt. And it was completely soaked in blood.
Last Straw

Hiccup felt like his insides had evaporated completely. There was no way. No way his baby could be dead. This had to be a trick. It couldn't be her skirt. It couldn't... it wasn't supposed to end this way. He vaguely heard a cry come from next to him, saw a figure rushing toward the skirt... picking it up... the blood was on her hands now. The world was beginning to spin. This couldn't be happening... not his baby... not his Addie...

He felt arms grabbing him, holding him up. Leading him to a nearby bench. He didn't care who it was, he could only continue to stare at his daughter's skirt in the hands of his wife. She was emitting a strange noise, her breathing labored; he watched her rock back and forth with the skirt in her hands, blood dripping from between her fingers. Addie's blood.

He could hear his own labored breathing now. His heart pounding in his ears. But he couldn't let the reality wash over him, not for a second. If he accepted it, he wouldn't be able to handle it.

There was a distant voice, a form in front of him. He felt large hands on both of his shoulders but he couldn't focus on anything except the skirt. The only remnant of his baby girl.

"Hiccup..." he heard, feeling the hands shaking his shoulders. "Hiccup, she's not dead!"

His eyes snapped down and he found himself face to face with his father. "H-how do you..."

Stoick pointed to the wall behind them. Out of the corner of his eye, Hiccup could see Fishlegs pointing to it, directing Astrid to look at it too. A message was written in blood, clearly visible from this angle but impossible to see if one was only walking into the Great Hall.

SCARED YOU, DIDN'T I?

Underneath the message was a mangled corpse. If it weren't for the feathers, Hiccup wouldn't have known what it had been in life. The dead chicken lay in a pool of its own blood. The sight nearly made him vomit. It looked like Trista had torn the chicken to shreds with her bare hands. He felt his body shake, his heartbeat obscuring most noises as it continued to race. Even over the noise of his heart, he could hear his wife gasping, see her throw the bloody skirt to the ground and bolt over to the message. He couldn't move. He felt his father shaking him again, trying to bring him back to reality but he couldn't do it. Yes, his Addie appeared to still be alive but a woman who would do something this sick and twisted would never let her live. He felt like he was on a search for his little girl's body. He could almost see it sprawled out in front of him, her bright green eyes staring at nothing, glazed over...

"Hiccup, you have to get a grip. This is what she wanted." came the garbled voice of his father. "She's trying to distract you, to make you lose focus. Do not let her succeed."

Reality was beginning to set in little by little. He looked down at Stoick, who was still shaking his shoulders.

"She's going to kill her." he muttered, his voice trembling with each syllable. "Addie's as good as dead..."

"No she's not." Stoick wrenched Hiccup's body forward, forcing him to stare into his eyes. "Listen to me, Hiccup. Do not give up on her! You didn't give up when she was born, don't you give up now!"
The memory of his quick actions on that tiny island three and a half years ago gave Hiccup the same sort of out-of-body experience that had seized him back then. A part of his brain was wired never to let himself give up on his children. Whether they were suffocating in his arms or dangling off a cliff or being kept by a madwoman, nothing was going to stop him from doing everything in his power to protect them. It was an integral part of him ever since he had found out they existed, a part that kicked in when Astrid had been taken, when Finn had nearly fallen off the tiny ledge into the rocks below... the protection of his family was in his hands. And if his little girl needed him, he was going to do everything he could to make sure he was there for her.

A sudden feeling took over, starting in his chest and working its way out until he was rigid in his seat. He stood up and pointed to the closest fire pit. Toothless shot a plasma blast into it, causing the room to be filled with odd moving shadows. Hiccup then walked over and picked up the bloody skirt. He could feel the blood dripping off of his fingers and onto the ground but he still walked it over to the fire and threw it in. For a moment, he watched it burn, feeling somewhat satisfied.

"This is the last straw," he growled, turning around to face the others. "We are going to end this."

The rest of the group, who had all arrived, nodded, looks of determination on each of their faces. Hiccup stomped over to the message, to the dead chicken, and found a stack of papers nearby with the same smudged handwriting as all the clues. He placed them on the table and opened the first.

Fear not, Addie is not dead. I make no promises about the future but for now, she is very much alive. Whether or not she'll stay that way depends on you.

I've changed the rules. No more rhyming. It was exhausting anyway. I waited until I knew how many of you were on the hunt for little Addie before planning this part of your journey. Why else would I need a whole night? I've created a sort of puzzle out of seven pieces and have hidden them in places special to each one of you. You have exactly twenty-four hours to find them and put them together. I suspected that the uproar would be wonderful with the discovery of that lovely little skirt so I suppose that is when the time starts. I've been keeping an eye on you (but don't try to find me, you'll only waste your time) so I'll know when the time begins.

You know, on that first day, Addie insisted that you would come for her. She was quite adamant. I think it was around dusk of last night that she started to lose faith. She's been awfully quiet as of late. This might be because I've made sure she's learned that bad things happen when she makes too much noise. But I'm sure she's wondering why you've been so late to our little party. I wonder... if she heard her daddy's emotional outburst last night, would she still doubt your devotion? I think I speak for both of us when I say that it isn't polite to keep us waiting.

Everything you need is on the other papers. Have a good time!

"Have a good time..." Hiccup snarled. "She's still awfully flippant about this. Like Addie's life means nothing to her," he threw the note to the ground. "So let's show her who she's messing with."

Every piece of paper had the first letter of the names of each person in the group. Hiccup handed them out, trying not to rip them in his anger. He finally looked at his own paper, one marked with a large, fancy looking H.

Do you remember what was on the very first note? Now do you remember where you left it?

"On the very first note?" he muttered. "What's she talking about? The one with the child's drawing?"

The others were muttering to themselves as they read their clues, each as cryptic as his. Finally
they looked up at each other. No one had any idea where to start.

"Maybe we should read them all out loud." Fishlegs finally suggested. "I'll start. Mine says 
*Remember when you nearly made yourself sick... and emerged stronger than ever?*

Everyone stopped for a moment to think about this. After a short pause, Tuffnut decided to read 
his.

"Mine is weird. *If you let yourself get trapped, be sure to carry a torch.* What's that supposed to 
mean?" Tuffnut looked on the back of the paper but this was the only thing written on it. "Well 
mine's impossible."

"Mine's more impossible!" Ruffnut countered. "*Remember when your fiance threw you to the 
fishes?* Fishlegs has never thrown me to the fishes!"

Tuffnut had a different idea. "Maybe it's saying he threw you at himself! Ooh what if it's the place 
where you two first..."

"Finish that sentence and I will kill you!" Ruffnut threatened, her fist drawn back.

"Enough! This is serious!" Stoick boomed. "*It's so rare for you to show emotion. This place might 
be the only one that breaks your heart.*" he shut his eyes for a few seconds, trying to think of a 
place where he might have had his heart broken...

"At least you aren't left handed. Well. That's helpful." Gobber rolled his eyes. "It's not talking about 
a place, it's stating a fact."

Astrid took a deep breath and read hers in a slightly shaky voice. "*Your daughter sure gave 
Fishlegs and you a good scare! I don't remember that ever happening.*"

Hiccup exhaled loudly, so many thoughts running through his mind. There were just too many 
notes, too many options of where each note could be. "I can't do this. We need to split up." he 
finally growled, trying to keep from tearing up his own message. "I'm sure we'll save time that 
way."

Stoick nodded. "Gobber and I can search for ours. And then split the rest by couples; but Tuffnut. I 
suppose you can come along with us."

Hiccup studied his note as Tuffnut began to whine, not wanting to travel with the older men. "*Do 
you remember what was on the very first note? Now do you remember where you left it?*" he 
mused. He closed his eyes, trying to remember the very first note...

Of course. The very first note was the one Trista had left on his baby's bed... the assumed note 
from Dagur the Deranged.

"What do you mean 'what was on it'?!" Hiccup growled, interrupting the banter around him.

Stoick cautiously stepped toward him, "What?"

Hiccup shook his head. "I'm just trying to figure this out." What was on the note? "Wait." His eyes 
lit up and he turned to Astrid. "On the very first note, Trista signed it with the Berserker seal."

"Hiccup, she's not there." Astrid reached out to him, but he stepped away.

"No, that's not what I'm saying!" he gave her a pointed look, his eyes alert. The others waited with
bated breath to hear what he'd say next. "She signed that first note with the Berserkers' seal."
Hiccup looked through the group. "What is their seal?"

"A Skrill. So?" Gobber crossed his arms. The others looked similarly confused.

"My note says 'Do you remember what was on the very first note? Now do you remember where you left it?'" Hiccup recited. "There was a Skrill on that first note. That second part, do I remember where I left it?" His friends and family looked mostly still confused. "Don't you guys see? She put my piece of… whatever this is, on the glacier where the Skrill was reburied!"

"Oh!" A few of them nodded in understanding.
Hiccup turned back to the note. "Now… where is that?"

"Ten miles west of here." Tuffnut replied without hesitation. The group looked at him in surprise, but he shrugged. "I go there sometimes to chill out. Heh, get it? Chill out? At a glacier?"

"Yes Tuffnut, please spare us your jokes." Hiccup muttered irritably, rolling up his note and placing it in his belt. "Change of plans. Ruff and Tuff, you're with me. We're going to get my piece on the glacier, then we'll find yours. Fishlegs, you help Astrid with hers."

Fishlegs nodded resolutely. Hiccup lightly squeezed Astrid's arm for a second before saying, "Be careful" and walking to the Great Hall doors. Astrid blinked after him, her aching heart wishing that she had gotten more than just a cautious warning from her husband. "Ruff, Tuff! Let's go!" Hiccup's shout from the doorway jerked her out of her stupor.

The twins ran out instantly, not wishing to anger the highly stressed father further. Ruffnut returned for an instant to kiss Fishlegs on the cheek before running back out.

Astrid sighed, turning to Fishlegs. "All right, let's figure these out."

Stoick laid a hand on her shoulder for a moment. "Keep your chin up. We'll find her soon."

Astrid nodded tersely as her father-in-law walked out of the Hall with Gobber. When they were alone, she glanced down at her hands. The chicken's drying blood coated them, even crusting underneath her fingernails. Her hands shook when she realized that she could feel the thick, sticky bodily fluid slowly drying on her flesh, contaminating it... what if it had been her baby's blood?

Fishlegs held her arm gently. "Come on, let's get you cleaned up. Then we'll look at your note."

Astrid nodded, following him outside. She turned to the sentry standing outside the door. "Can you clean up the mess in there?"

The man nodded. "Yes ma'am. Right away."

She nodded her thanks and led Fishlegs down the stairs. He was amazed at how well she was holding up outwardly but one look at her eyes, he could tell she was only hours from breaking, maybe less than that. He just hoped it wouldn't be as explosive as Hiccup's breakdown had been. But he would comfort her no matter what.

The duo walked to the nearest well, where Astrid silently hauled up some water and she washed her hands until they were white again. They sat beside each other in silence for a moment before they couldn't delay the inevitable any longer, and pulled out their notes.

After a few seconds, Fishlegs put his back in his pocket. "Let's focus on yours first. That way we
don't overwhelm each other."

Astrid nodded silently and read hers aloud again. "Your daughter sure gave you and Fishlegs a good scare!" I still have no idea what this is talking about."

Fishlegs turned the paper over in his hand for a moment, deep in thought. Astrid tried to think over the past three years when she, Adrianna and Fishlegs were together. What had the little girl done to scare them out of their wits?

"What if she wasn't technically born yet?" Fishlegs asked suddenly. Astrid furrowed her brow, so he continued. "Where else would it be? That spot where you went into labor!"

"Of course…" Astrid whispered. "She must have been watching us when… when it happened." The thought sent shivers down her spine."

"Well…" Fishlegs stood, carefully lifting her up by the arm. "I suppose we know where to look then."

The two friends walked to their dragons standing nearby and silently mounted them. Within minutes they were landing at Hiccup and Astrid's favorite romantic spot. Astrid stared at what she knew to be an empty plot of dirt underneath the snow and between trees, overlooking the cliff face. Her soul twisted inside her, making her feel thoroughly disgusted. Trista had even corrupted this wonderful spot that held so many memories for her and her husband.

But she didn't linger on the thought, or in her saddle. She leaped down and jogged to the spot where a single note lay in the dirt.

Fishlegs stood beside her as she opened the note, and read: Dig.

A shovel was propped up against the closest tree. Astrid reached for it but Fishlegs gently blocked her with his arm.

"Let me." he said, grabbing the shovel. Astrid opened her mouth but he shook his head. "Your hands are shaking."

Astrid looked down and noticed that her friend was correct. She hadn't even realized she had been trembling. She took a deep, shaky breath and sat down, one foot dangling off the edge and the other tucked under her as she watched Fishlegs dig slightly behind the cliff. They were silent for a while, the only sounds being the ones made by the shovel as Fishlegs dug deep into the dirt.

"I can't believe it's been three years." Astrid said, looking out at the ocean below.

"Yeah. Neither can I." Fishlegs replied, grunting as he reached a rock in the dirt.

"I remember it vividly. Like it happened yesterday. Sometimes when I sit here on a day like that day, I can kind of feel it. That twinge of anger at Hiccup. The sudden pains in my abdomen. That moment of terror when I realized what was happening." Astrid took a deep breath. "That was the most painful thing I've ever done. But if it meant getting Anna back, I'd do it again. I wouldn't even have to think about it."

Fishlegs took a break from shoveling for just a moment, wiping the sweat off his brow. "Right after Finn was born, I looked at you. Just your face, I didn't look anywhere else. And when Ruff held him up, you looked so surprised. Almost like you hadn't known you were going to have a baby at all. And then she handed him to you and your face... you looked terrified. And then after a second or two, it was like something clicked. And I watched you light up as you continued to hold him.
You looked so happy. It was like you became a mom in those few seconds. You haven't really changed since."

He continued to dig and Astrid thought back to that day. The moment Finn was in her arms. That rush of love for her tiny son that she hadn't felt moments before. She had been so convinced she wouldn't love him that she never considered the possibility that she would when he was in her arms. She remembered the moment Adrianna was born, how she had been waiting for her to cry only to hear nothing. She had watched helplessly as Hiccup took their baby daughter into his arms and begged her to live. But the moment she remembered most clearly was the instant she heard Adrianna wail. She had felt her heart open up and envelop both her babies in a love every bit as strong as she had for Hiccup yet completely different, both from him and from each other.

She looked down at her shirt, which had bloodstains on it that she knew would never wash out, and felt her vision become blurry as her eyes stung. She took a deep, shaky breath and tried to force the tears back. Now wasn't a good time to get emotional.

"She drives me nuts sometimes." she said after a few seconds of silence. "All that crying for no apparent reason. And all those outhouse training accidents. So much about raising her makes me want to pull my hair out. And then there are the days when I want to hug her close and not let go because she picked me flowers or told me she loved me. Or just because she's my little girl." she wiped more tears off her face and sniffed loudly.

"I... I found it." Fishlegs said in a low voice, picking up a piece of wood with writing on the back. "I think it's a piece of some kind of puzzle. I guess she meant a literal puzzle in the note."

Astrid silently nodded and stood up to inspect it. Fishlegs appeared to be correct. She wondered if the others would find something similar.

The cemetery was quiet. Not that it was ever loud. But the eerie silence seemed to permeate even the inside of Stoick and Gobber's ears. They had decided to look for Stoick's piece first. Stoick knew that his clue could only be referring to one place but he didn't want to think about digging anything from his wife's grave. He prayed that it wouldn't be necessary.

Sure enough, there was a note on top of Valhallarama's grave. Its instruction to dig pointed to a part to the left of the grave so that he would not disturb her. He wasn't sure whether or not to thank his sister for not forcing him to dig up his wife. He grabbed the shovel and got to work.

"Been a long time since I came to see you, Val." he said, gently patting the grave with his hand before continuing. "I wish you could have met your grandchildren. I told you all about them last time I was here. Finn would have made you laugh and Adrianna..." he sighed deeply but didn't stop digging. "Hiccup's out of his mind with worry. I think all of us are on edge. I'm just sorry I didn't tell him about Trista sooner. You would have known what to do. You would have pushed me to tell him and then all this wouldn't have happened. The irony is that I told you the full story the day we found out Hiccup was on the way. So I could protect him. And yet I couldn't bring myself to do so when I found out he was going to be a father." Stoick gripped the shovel so hard, it nearly snapped in half. "If my granddaughter dies, it will be my fault. I can't let that happen." he finally found the wooden piece deep in the dirt. He picked it up and clutched it in his hand. "I miss you so much." he said, gently patting the grave one last time.

He stood up and walked over to Gobber, who was patiently waiting at the edge of the cemetery. Gobber smiled grimly as he approached; his eyes flitted to the puzzle piece in his hand.

"Well I guess that's that. We should find my piece now." he said in an incredibly fake cheerful
"Right." Stoick's fingers closed around the puzzle piece. "Listen, Gobber..." Gobber turned around. "Thank you for doing this. You didn't have to."

"Family isn't just about blood, you know." Gobber replied quite seriously.

Stoick smiled at his friend. For years he had wondered what it would have been like if his little brother hadn't died. But having Gobber as a friend made him feel like he hadn't missed out on the experience at all. And his best friend was right. Family went much deeper than blood relations.
Puzzle Pieces

Ten miles was a long way to fly and with Ruffnut and Tuffnut bickering with each other on Barf and Belch, every second Hiccup spent on his dragon flying away from Berk frustrated him even more. He knew his little girl was on Berk, he could feel it, and yet here he was flying away from her. It felt wrong. Even though he knew he was doing this for her, he couldn't help feeling like he was wasting time.

What kind of night did his daughter have? Did she sleep? Had she eaten anything over the last day and night? He hoped that she had at least been able to drink something. Even if all she could eat was snow, that would keep her alive a little longer. Long enough for him to come and get her. He found himself thinking about what he would give her when she got back... she loved sweet rolls, especially when he added mint leaves. Wait a minute, was he thinking about actually having her home again? No more pessimism? Well that was a start. He felt a little bit better as the glacier finally came into view.

They landed a minute later and immediately dismounted. They searched the glacier for a moment before Tuffnut finally found something odd frozen into the ice. It looked like a wooden puzzle piece, sort of like the ones the kids put together in the Great Hall during especially bad weather.

"That must be what we're looking for." Hiccup muttered, getting on his knees to inspect it. "If it's made of wood, we can't let the dragons melt the ice. The fire might burn it."

Ruffnut and Tuffnut nodded. For a moment, they stood there, staring at the piece in the ice with no idea how to get to it. They had no tools with which to break the ice. So unless they tried to break it with their fists, that piece would be stuck. Hiccup bit his lip. It had taken a long time to fly there. Okay it had taken twenty minutes but a forty minute wait for supplies seemed excessive. Especially since they still had to figure out Ruffnut and Tuffnut's clues.

"So how do we get it out?" Tuffnut asked.

Hiccup restrained himself from punching his friend. It was a legitimate question but he was already on edge. He put his fingers on the ice, tracing the puzzle's shape. His baby girl depended on him getting it out of the ice. Then, quite suddenly, it hit him. It was a bit crude but if it worked... he pulled a dagger out of his coat and immediately stabbed the ice. It barely made a dent but, he thought, this only meant that he was a millimeter close to the thing that would get his daughter back. He'd pick away at the ice all day for her.

"Cool! We get to break stuff?" Ruffnut exclaimed, getting out her own dagger and stabbing the ice close to the dent Hiccup had made.

"It's going to take forever at this rate." Hiccup growled. "If there was a way to soften the ice, maybe..." he looked over at Toothless. "All right, bud, I need a plasma blast but it has to be slow, not very hot. Melt the ice slowly."

Toothless made a gurgling noise and obliged. Once the ice was sufficiently melted, Hiccup stabbed it again and this time, it cracked. He dropped his dagger and dug in the ice with his bare hands until he had extracted the puzzle piece. It had writing on the back but it was clearly only part of a full message.

"Okay that's mine. Tell me your clues. We need to figure them out." he said, turning back to the twins.
"Yeah well mine is stupid. It makes no sense," Ruffnut grumbled.

"Let me be the judge of that." Hiccup held out a hand and she placed the small piece of parchment into it. "Remember when your fiance threw you to the fishes? You know, that sounds really familiar. Like... I know I've heard that before."

"Oh! So that's why I thought I'd heard it before. Did I say that to you? Oh did you ever throw Astrid into the ocean? Or did I do that? Well... I think I did that once but it was like thirteen years ago." Ruffnut rambled, clearly thinking out loud.

"Yeah, yeah, not what I meant. Wait a minute... you were engaged before Fishlegs." Hiccup snapped his fingers.

"I was? Why don't I remember? Did I block it out? Was it traumatizing?" Ruffnut asked, her eyes widening in horror.

"No, no, you weren't actually engaged, you were just pretending to be engaged to me." Hiccup continued.

"I was engaged to you? What? Is that why I don't remember? Did Astrid hit me really hard or..."

"No, you were pretending for that prank you pulled on me at Snoggletog, remember? You were Ms. Ruffy and you played my fiancee long ago. I don't know, it was weird, but I remember Gobber told me that you were thrown to the fishes!" Hiccup smacked himself upside the head in triumph (and immediately regretted this action). "Your piece is at that bridge! The one where it happened!"

"Ohh... yeah that would make more sense." Ruffnut admitted as she climbed onto Barf's neck.

"Yeah. But that's way back on Berk." Tuffnut said, clumsily mounting Belch. "Kind of a waste of time to fly all the way out here just to go back."

"If it's for Addie, it's worth it." Hiccup countered, quickly mounting Toothless and taking off.

"Remember when you nearly made yourself sick... and emerged stronger than ever?" Fishlegs read as Astrid pocketed her piece. "Okay so making myself sick... I wonder if that's metaphoric? Maybe lovesick?"

"Yeah maybe it's that place you and I had that talk before Finn and Anna were born. When I told you how I was..." Astrid suddenly choked on thin air. "She was listening to that too? That was a private conversation!"

"Emerged stronger than ever though... I don't think that's what she meant. I mean I couldn't find Ruff so I put the flowers on her doorstep. Not very strong." Fishlegs shook his head. "It must be referring to something else. Maybe the bit about being sick is literal."

"So did you ever make yourself sick?" Astrid asked, leaning against a nearby tree.

"A few times, yeah. Various reasons. But I never came out of it stronger than... wait a minute!" Fishlegs read the message over again, a look of triumph on his face. "I didn't emerge stronger than ever. That's the metaphor! The day I discovered Gronckle iron, I was kind of depressed so I might have overindulged in some berries and fed Meatlug too many rocks. Felt really sick when it was over. And then she threw up the stuff that we turned into Gronckle iron. Maybe... maybe that's it. The place where it first happened."
"Couldn't hurt to take a look. But gods, how does she remember all this stuff? How old were we, sixteen? That would have been at least eleven years ago!" Astrid sighed deeply as she mounted Stormfly.

"I'm more interested in how she spied on us all without any of us noticing." Fishlegs said as he got on Meatlug and the two friends flew away.

It was a five minute flight to the beach that had once played host to rocks easily converted into Gronckle iron. A lot of trial and error on the part of other Gronckle owners finally resulted in the formula's replication but the correct rocks were becoming scarce. It took a bit of searching but they finally found the shovel and the instruction to dig underneath the berry bush.

Astrid's heart dropped uncomfortably as she realized that the berries were the same kind that Finn had snacked on mere weeks before. That memory had little to do with Adrianna but their family had been happy back then. Things had been simple. She looked down at the blood on her shirt again. This morning, she had honestly believed that her little girl had been brutally slaughtered by her own great aunt. If there was one thing Astrid knew for sure, it was that things would never be the same again. Fear suddenly gripped her when she realized that losing Adrianna would completely destroy her whole family. It wouldn't be just Adrianna that was missing. If Hiccup broke down that badly when their daughter was alive, how would he react if she was...

She felt a sob escape her throat before she could stop it. She put a hand to her face, trying to wipe away the tears, force them to stop pouring down her cheeks, but it was too late. So this was the breakdown her husband had experienced the previous night, was it? She forced herself to remain calmer than he had. Sobbing and screaming was a waste of time and time was one thing they didn't have. Still, she could not stop the barrage of tears from pouring out of her eyes.

"Astrid?"

"Keep digging." Astrid commanded, trying to wipe the tears out of her eyes. "We don't have time to stop. Just dig."

Fishlegs hesitated at first but one watery glare from Astrid got him moving again. He focused on the digging, the shovel piercing the dirt, nearly uprooting the berry bush. Astrid's sobs were barely audible behind him but he did his best to ignore them. The piece of the puzzle finally came into view and he clutched it in his hand.

"I have it." he said, turning back to his friend.

Astrid nodded and inspected the piece. It certainly looked like part of the same puzzle. She turned around so she could mount Stormfly but Fishlegs grabbed her arm.

"Hiccup has 3 clues to figure out, he'll be late." he said as Astrid turned to face him. "And you need a minute."

"No, I'll feel better if I keep moving." she countered, pushing him away. "Thanks for looking out for me but I need to focus. If I take a break, I'll lose it."

Fishlegs nodded and gently patted her on the shoulder. "If you need someone... I mean I know Hiccup is kind of... you know where to find me. I'm here to make sure you won't go crazy."

"What about Ruffnut? As her husband, aren't you supposed to be doing that for her?" Astrid asked, sniffling loudly and wiping her nose.

"She's already crazy. It's one of the reasons I love her. But her and Tuffnut are enough without you
and Hiccup joining them." Fishlegs said with a small smile. "We can do this, Astrid. Addie's truly blessed to have so many people in her life that love her."

"Anna." Astrid corrected. "Only Hiccup calls her Addie."

"Ah, I didn't realize... sorry." Fishlegs shuffled his feet awkwardly.

Astrid breathed a sigh, glad to have stayed her tears for now. "It's fine, just don't say it in front of him. He might... well who knows, really? Let's just head back."

Gobber stared at his note with an annoyed gaze. "'At least you're not left-handed.' This is a fact, not a place."

"But it has to point to a certain place or else she wouldn't have said that." Stoick reasoned, looking the note over.

Gobber slapped his hook into his left hand. "Well clearly, but she could've made things easier."

"Easier? This is Trista we're talking about."

"I know, I know." Gobber scratched the back of his head with his hook. "I almost wish I could ask Hiccup to help figure this out, but that's out of the question."

Stoick watched his friend wave his hook around as he talked, something nagging in the back of his mind. And suddenly it hit him.

"Your left hand. It's missing."

Gobber slapped Stoick on the arm. "Stoick, you have an immaculate eye for detail..."

"No, that's not..." Stoick sighed heavily in annoyance before restarting. "She wants you to find your piece of the puzzle where your hand was taken."

Gobber's mouth slid open and he slowly nodded. "Ohhh... he closed his eyes, muttering to himself. "I lost my leg... near the forge. But my hand... beard of Thor, it was so long ago..."

Stoick gaped. "What! You don't remember?!"

"It was nearly twenty years ago, Stoick!"

Stoick suddenly reached out and grabbed his friend's shoulders. "Gobber, you have to remember! Adrianna's life as at stake, not to mention Hiccup's sanity!"

"Calm down. Don't let her get to you."

"Then you better start thinking because we don't have a lot of time." Stoick sighed heavily, getting go of Gobber's shoulders and trying to return his heart rate to its normal pace.

He paced around the edge of the cemetery while Gobber thought. He tried to stay calm, but the longer they stood around, the more his impatience seemed to build.

After a few minutes, Gobber finally turned to him. "I think... I remember it was a Monstrous Nightmare. I jumped on his neck and he started to dive towards the docks. I fell onto one of the docks beside it, tried to fight it off with a sword, and it bit my hand right off, sword and all. So... the docks?"
Stoick nodded, hoping that was the right location. "Okay. Let's check the docks."

They were unsure of whether or not Trista had meant to leave Gobber's piece so close to Stoick's but the docks were a five minute walk from the cemetery.

"I should have spent more time with her." Stoick said after a moment of silent walking.

"Time with who?"

"Adrianna. I was so... so distracted with Finn, he's bigger and more like me that I didn't really notice her most of the time." Stoick sighed deeply "I don't care if we have a war on our shores, I will spend time with her every day after we get her back."

"I know you will. You will make it up to her and Hiccup. And don't you ever think differently, not for a second." Gobber said, looking his friend directly in the eye.

Stoick averted his gaze. "Hiccup... he's never been so angry with me before. I made a mistake. I should have listened to you."

"You were doing what you thought was best. People make their own decisions. Chances are if he was in your shoes, he would have done the same exact thing. He's a lot more like you than even he thinks."

That doesn't change anything, Gobber. I still ruined the only relationship with my son that I've ever had."

"Stoick... This is Hiccup." Gobber stopped for a second and waited for Stoick to face him. "Things will turn out all right in the end, and he will come around. He's the most forgiving, compassionate person we know."

Stoick wanted to argue further, his soul squeezing tight in his chest with guilt. But he knew no matter how much he argued, Gobber was right. They would find Adrianna. But Hiccup's forgiveness? No. That was too much to ask.

"That seemed kind of easy." Hiccup said as he stared at Ruffnut's piece in his hand. "She didn't bury it or anything. If we hadn't gotten here, a Terrible Terror could have flown off with it."

"Yeah that would have been weird. You'd wrestle it to the ground and pry it out of its mouth!" Tuffnut chortled.

"It's not funny!" Hiccup snapped. "What does your note say? We need to get these back to the Great Hall as soon as we can."

"But we didn't find my piece yet!" Tuffnut whined.

Why had he decided to travel with the twins? They were making it very difficult to keep calm.

"So let me see it!" Hiccup nearly ripped it out of Tuffnut's hand. "If you let yourself get trapped, be sure to carry a torch."

"But why would I do that? Do they mean in a cave? Woah have I ever gotten trapped in a cave?" Tuffnut turned to Ruffnut, who shrugged.

"Torch... hey, what if that's talking about the time your hair caught on fire! That was hilarious!"
"Ruff, focus." Hiccup frowned, but focused on the word torch like she had. "Wait... Torch! The Typhoomerang we met when we were teens!"

"OH!" Tuffnut shouted in excitement. Then he paused. "I still don't get it."

"Tuffnut, do you remember where you got caught in that dragon trap?" Hiccup asked, turning to him and staring at him intently.

"No but Astrid was yelling at me the whole time..."

"Not that time! The other one, when we were sixteen!"

"Oh, you mean the one where we almost got burned to a crisp in the forest fire?"

Hiccup bit back a growl. "YES!"

"Umm... in the forest?"

Hiccup slapped his forehead. "Well that was enlightening. Thank you."

"I dunno, it was some clearing. I don't remember exactly where it was, that was like eleven years ago!" Tuffnut shook his head. "Maybe we can put everything together without my piece."

"No!" Hiccup shouted suddenly, making them both jump. "We are not giving up!"

"But I don't remember where it happened..."

"Welcome to my world." Hiccup gave him a decidedly fake smile. "Yet here we are. The rest of us had to use our brains, so you should probably use yours too."

"Right! I'll use my brain!" Tuffnut put his fingers up to his skull. "Okay... clearing... burned by the fire. The trees would be younger then!"

"Of course! Tuffnut, that's it!" Hiccup exclaimed. "We just look for a place where the trees are smaller, younger."

"But that was a big fire. How are we gonna know which tree to look under?" Ruffnut asked, a look of abject confusion on her face.

"We'll figure that out when we get there. Come on!" Hiccup shouted and mounted Toothless in seconds.

It didn't take long to find the patch of shorter, newer looking trees. Hiccup peered at the ground. This had happened so long ago and all he could remember was that it was in a clearing. How Trista remembered it at all was a mystery.

"There's a clearing. Maybe that's it!" he shouted to the others and immediately dived without checking to see if they had heard him.

But there was nothing in the clearing except snow and shorter trees. Hiccup growled in frustration and took off before the twins had a chance to land. The next clearing had nothing in it either but the third one they checked had the instruction to dig and a shovel propped up against a tree.

"One more piece. I hope the others found theirs because we do not have time to wait." Hiccup said as he grabbed the shovel and immediately began to dig.
It was a slower process this time because ice had frozen over the snow. It took several minutes for
Hiccup to reach the ground and digging underneath the frozen soil was even more difficult. Sweat
began to pour down his face but he hardly noticed it. His muscles screamed in agony but he didn't
stop. He couldn't stop. He felt like he was digging his little girl out of the ground, like if he dug
long enough, she would be in his arms and this nightmare would all be over.

The twins were uncharacteristically quiet. Ruffnut thought about her own daughter.; how would
she react if she was in Hiccup and Astrid's predicament? Certainly not like this. And Fishlegs
would have broken down much earlier. She shook her head, trying to clear her mind, but once the
thoughts began to creep up, they were very difficult to shove down.

"I've got it." came a distant voice.

Ruffnut snapped back to reality, surprised that she had been this distracted to begin with. She
wasn't usually so emotional. But she supposed that anyone would be if they had to think about
what would happen if their precious child disappeared. And, for all her faults, Ruffnut adored her
children.

Hiccup held up the puzzle piece to show them that he had it before pocketing it and mounting his
dragon. The twins silently got on theirs and they flew back to the Great Hall.

Stoick, Gobber, Astrid, and Fishlegs were all sitting at a table waiting for Hiccup and the twins.
They had attempted to assemble their pieces but this had been made very difficult by the fact that
the end result's shape clearly wasn't going to be a square (or any recognizable shape). They had
finally figured out that Stoick's and Fishlegs' pieces fit together when the group was reunited.

"We got them. Weird places too. I don't know how she remembered them when we barely did." Hiccup
gumbled, throwing the three pieces they had acquired on the table.

"Like I said, she's clever." Stoick said, not meeting his son's gaze. "I think the three pieces we were
missing are the ones in the middle. That's why ours didn't fit."

"We should assemble them based on the writing. That would make it easier." Hiccup said, turning
all the pieces over.

Perhaps it was the stress but everyone at the table felt a bit sheepish for not working that out. The
other side of the pieces had details, sort of like some sort of picture, but they couldn't figure out
what it was. It didn't take long to assemble the seven pieces once they were together and the
writing made it quite a bit easier. The final message was spelled out in large capital letters.

**TURN THIS OVER. YOU CAN FIND LITTLE ADDIE AT HICCUP'S LOCATION. DO
NOT FLY HERE. COME ALONE. SEE YOU SOON!**

"My location?" Hiccup asked, reading the message over several times. "What does that mean?"

Stoick turned the puzzle over. Trista seemed to have drawn a map of a nearby mountain. The piece
Hiccup had found was on the top and there was a large black dot, which they now realized was
where she was keeping Adrianna.

"We can't fly. We could be there in twenty minutes but no... we have to hike up the mountain." Hiccup
put his head in his hands, trying not to explode like the last time. "It's going to be another
day. At least."

"We're all upset but you cannot lose it right now. You're going to start a cycle." Astrid said, gently
rubbing his back. "We know where Anna is. Just focus on that. We're going to have her back tomorrow."

"I want her back today. Hel, she shouldn't be gone at all. When is this going to end?" Hiccup muttered into his fingers, his voice trembling.

"Pull it together. We need to go now. Every second we stall is another second she spends with that psychopath. We can do this, Hiccup." Astrid whispered.

Hiccup slowly looked up at her. His cheeks were slightly pink and Astrid could see the agony in his eyes... but he nodded and stood up.

"Get supplies. We meet back here in half an hour." he said to the group in an amazingly calm voice that made even Stoick slightly uneasy.

No one spoke much on the trek up the mountain. They briefly talked about whether Trista had explicitly told them not to bring their dragons and decided that, as long as they didn't fly, the dragons should come along. They might be useful.

The mountain was massive. A journey in the middle of summer would take long enough but with the deep snow, it was definitely slow going. They knew they wouldn't be able to reach Adrianna that day. Even Hiccup realized this but he didn't want to think about it. He couldn't sleep. Not while the only daughter he would ever have was taken from him. Some of the others hung back and tried to figure out how to keep him from hiking all night. He'd probably get himself killed that way. They finally decided to leave the task to Astrid, who was probably the only one he was willing to obey anymore. He refused to look at Stoick. Deep down, he knew it wasn't his father's fault that they were in this situation, not truly, but it didn't matter. He needed someone to blame and his father was the closest scapegoat he had.

Night fell at last and the tired travelers found a decent size cave in which to sleep. Stoick started a fire so that they would stay warm. The cave was heated quite nicely and if everyone wasn't so tense, they might have been very comfortable. Hiccup sat down and stared into it as the others began to go to sleep. Toothless lumbered over to his human and curled up behind him so that Hiccup could lie on his back. Astrid sat down next to her husband, determined to keep him there all night even if he wouldn't sleep.

"I wonder if she's warm." he whispered to her after a few minutes.

"Maybe she is." Astrid replied, placing her head on his shoulder.

"I just want to put my arms around her and never let her go." he muttered. "The second I have her back, I'm not letting her out of my sight."

"I think everyone feels the same way. She'll be smothered." Astrid murmured. "Get some sleep. You're no help when you're tired and I know you didn't sleep last night."

"I can't..."

"You really want to be tired when you're dealing with Trista? You're going to need all your energy." Astrid kissed him on the cheek, gently caressing the side of his face with her hand in an attempt to relax him.

There was a long pause in which Hiccup leaned back on his dragon, surprised at how comfortable he was becoming. He felt his heart constricting; he needed to verbalize what he was thinking
before he went even more insane.

"I almost don't want to go." he whispered.

Astrid looked up at him. "Why not?"

"Because I know she's alive. And I might watch her die tomorrow and..." Hiccup took a deep breath and exhaled slowly. "She's alive now. But I don't know about tomorrow. That's what scares me the most."

"You can't think that way." Astrid gently stroked his hair, an action that usually rendered him incapable of movement but he was far too tense to notice.

"She is the only daughter we're ever going to have." he closed his eyes, trying to enjoy the pleasurable sensation spreading over his scalp. "And even if she weren't, she's still my Addie. She'll always be my first little girl. You can't just... just replace that. Not ever. I can't... I can't lose her, Astrid."

"Shh. Go to sleep. Now isn't the time to worry. There's nothing you can do." Astrid muttered, kissing him on the cheek before snuggling into him and leaning on Toothless.

Hiccup's eyelids fluttered shut.

SNAP!

His eyes flew open and grew wide as he looked around. A Terrible Terror has stepped on a twig outside and was flying away as Hiccup's eyes flitted to the mouth of the cave. He realized with a jolt that he could see daylight. How long had he been asleep?

He felt Astrid stir next to him, apparently awakened by his startled movements. He leaned down and kissed her on the top of the head, thanking her for making him sleep. He felt much better than he had over the last day.

They awakened the others and it was early in the morning when they continued their hike. The dragons hung back a bit, yawning and stretching as they walked. They were used to waking up their humans, not the other way around.

Around midday, they spotted a dragon flying high over their heads. Stoick looked up, his hand over his eyes so that he would not stare directly into the sun.

"We're close." he said, lowering his hand. "I think that's her Nadder."

He had told them of his suspicions regarding her usage of dragons the previous day during the hike. It was the detail that convinced them to bring the dragons along.

As Hiccup heard his father utter those words, he felt his heart pounding in his chest. He was close to his baby. She was within his grasp.

They had only walked for a few more minutes when they spotted a clearing. There was a crudely built hut toward the back but it was what was in front of the hut that caught their attention. Long golden locks, dirty white shirt and pants, looking tiny compared to her surroundings and shivering in the cold... Trista had been telling the truth. Adrianna was alive.

"Addie!" Hiccup cried, racing forward as fast as he could.
The child turned her bright green eyes to face him, her expression never changing. In fact, she looked terrified. Why didn't she run?

Seconds later, he had to stop and very nearly skidded on the icy snow. A very familiar old woman stepped out of the hut and immediately grabbed the girl by the hair, placing a sharp looking dagger to her throat. Hiccup felt his heart jump into his throat, pounding so hard it became difficult to draw breath.

"You..." he choked. "You're the one who... you told me... you sent me to the Berserkers!"

Trista Haddock laughed. It was a cold, frightening sound that made the hair on the back of his neck stand on end.

"I wondered if you would recognize me. Very good." she simpered. "And Stoick, I see you've joined the party! And with mommy dearest and all your little friends. This will be so much fun."

Stoick took a few tentative steps forward, keeping an eye on the dagger to his granddaughter's throat. "All right, you've had your fun. We've played your game. Haven't we won?"

"Won what?" Trista asked, her voice still retaining the sickeningly gleeful quality.

"You called her our prize." Stoick said, his voice trembling ever so slightly as he watched the dagger edge closer to the child's neck. "We've won. Give her back."

Trista laughed again and it was all Hiccup could do not to charge forward. This was the woman who had torn apart his family. He felt hatred burning in his chest, eating away at him until he was consumed with it.

"Oh I just meant that she's a prize to you." Trista chortled. "You lost a long time ago."

"So why are we here?" Stoick asked. "What more do you want?"

Trista gazed at him for a second, the smile frozen to her face. Her eyes narrowed. "I want my prize."

As he gazed at his child, Hiccup felt his voice bubble to the surface. "Why Addie? She means nothing to you?"

"Oh she means more than you think." Trista said, her head turning to face him. "But only as leverage."

Stoick took another step forward, his hands outstretched. "Your problem is with me. Not with Hiccup, not with Adrianna. Leave them out of this."

Trista turned to face her brother once more, her gray eyes narrowed. "Oh I could but it simply wouldn't hurt you enough."

"Why are you doing this?" Stoick sounded desperate, more emotion than usual pouring through his vocal cords. "I'm sorry if you were mistreated but it wasn't my fault..."

"Oh no, it wasn't your fault I was born first and female." Trista rolled her eyes. "If that's all it was, I'd only take issue with our parents. Guess I'd have to kill them. Oh wait. They're dead."

"So what are you doing here? Why are you targeting me? I didn't do anything..."

Trista's eyes flew open and she nearly choked on thin air. "Didn't... didn't do anything? Really?"
"Nothing comes to mind?"

"You're the one who went insane!" Stoick roared, making them all jump. "Trista, you killed our brother!"

"Did I? My, my, we certainly have different memories of that day."

There was a long pause in which Stoick and Trista never broke eye contact. The rest of the group stared between the two, trying to figure out what they were talking about. Suddenly, a look of comprehension dawned on Trista's face and she let out a laugh.

"We really do!" she exclaimed. "You've... you've started to believe your own lie!"

"What lie?" Stoick asked, completely bewildered.

Trista continued to stare at him, searching for anything in his eyes that would tell her that he knew what she was talking about... but it wasn't there.

"Did you feel guilty? Is that why you blocked it out?" she asked in a falsely sweet voice. "You were such a good boy, you couldn't imagine doing something so horrible, even if it was an accident. You needed someone to take the blame."

"Blame?" Stoick's voice sounded constricted. "Blame for what?"

"Think back to that day."

"I am thinking!" Stoick shouted, balling his fists. "What do you want me to remember?"

"Keep thinking."

"I know it's buried in your head. Something like that is too big to completely forget. No matter how much you might want to."

Stoick's mind raced, the memories flashing at him in the form of tiny pictures. "I don't know what you're..." and then it clicked. The memory she had been prodding out of him. The memory he had long since buried. "No..."

Trista grinned in triumph. "There it is. You've been running from that moment your whole life. How does it feel, Stoick?"

Hiccup could no longer contain his curiosity. "Dad, what is she talking about?"

"Tell him."

Trista and Stoick stared at each other, her looking excited and him looking horrified. Hiccup had never seen his father look this frightened. Stoick's eyes flitted to him for a second but he seemed fearful of meeting his gaze. After a few seconds, Trista lost patience. She placed the dagger a little closer to Adrianna's throat.

"Tell him."

For a few seconds, Stoick seemed incapable of speech. He shut his eyes tight, forcing the emotions down. Soon he was able to live up to his name as he turned to Hiccup, finally looking him in the eye. His heart was pounding as his mouth formed the words, as he told his son his deepest, darkest secret.

"Trista didn't kill Hiccup." he said; his voice was steady but Hiccup saw a flicker of horrible guilt in his eyes. "I did."
Confession

The silence that followed Stoick's confession was utterly stunning and completely deafening. Everyone in attendance thought someone should speak... someone should ask why and, more importantly, how... someone should do something to comfort Stoick, even put a hand on his shoulder, but no one could do anything. Even Trista was silent as she stared at Stoick, whose eyes were focused on the ground rather than on anyone specifically.

Then came a tiny sniffle from Adrianna and the spell was broken.

"Why would you..."
"What did you..."
"...you did that..."
"Dad, how..."
"But Trista was..."
"...how you'd forget..."
"...could have happened..."
"But you wouldn't..."

At long last, Stoick held up a hand to silence the group, all of whom were looking a cross between horrified and desperately curious. Even Adrianna had been completely forgotten in the ensuing chaos.

"It's a long story." Stoick said, looking over to Trista. "Do you want me to tell them now?"

"Only if you value little Addie's life." Trista said, pressing the dagger up to the child's windpipe just lightly enough that no skin was broken.

Hiccup felt a surge of anger at the sound of his special nickname for this daughter but his helplessness to the situation and overwhelming curiosity got the better of him. He gritted his teeth and faced his father.

"I think we'd all like to know what happened." he said in a low voice.

"Trista," Stoick said, looking her in the eye. "I don't know if Adrianna should hear this..."

"Oh she already knows the story. She just didn't believe me." Trista chortled.

Stoick looked down at his granddaughter and was dismayed to see her bright green eyes fixed on him, wide in shock. It wasn't enough that he had to disappoint his son but he felt like he was stealing the innocent adoration the child had for him far too early. He took a deep breath, averting her gaze and turning to face another pair of green eyes.

"It was over forty years ago." he said, his voice devoid of all emotion. "I was a child, ten or eleven, and I was... different back then. More rambunctious, more mischievous. I didn't take many things seriously. My parents were constantly telling me to focus, to stop playing around but I didn't listen. If I had... well if I had, none of this would ever have happened."
"Stop swinging that around!" Trista snapped, looking up from her sewing and glaring at her little brother. "You're making a lot of racket!"

"Trista!" Stoick whined, his eyes focused on the club he was holding. "It's boring! Can't I go to the Great Hall? The other guys are there..."

"Dad said to stay put. He'll only be out a minute. I said stop swinging that!" Trista stood up and reached for the club.

"Or what? You'll tell on me?" Stoick's mouth twisted into a wide grin. "We all know who dad's really gonna believe."

Trista pursed her lips and turned back to her sewing. As much as she hated to admit it, Stoick was right. No matter what she said, their father never listened to her. She ignored her brother as he bounded into another room. For a few minutes, everything was quiet.

Then came the crash.

"What the Hel did you do?" Trista shouted, standing up and running into the other room.

Stoick was standing next to a toppled crib, his eyes wide with horror. The club lay in front of it and in an instant, Trista knew what had happened.

"Oh gods, if Hiccup is hurt, you're in for it!" she snapped, bending down to look at the baby.

A few seconds later, her heart stopped. There was a large gash on the back of the baby's head oozing blood. Hiccup wasn't breathing. His body was limp and slowly going cold. Trista looked up at Stoick, her eyes wide and her mouth agape. She quickly composed herself.

"He's dead."

Tears brimmed to the surface of the boy's blue eyes. "B-but I didn't throw it that hard... you were supposed to be watching me!"

"If you hadn't been swinging around that stupid club, none of this would have happened!" Trista put the baby down, her hands now covered in his blood.

"What... what are we gonna do?" Stoick whimpered.

"We're going to be calm. You tell mom and dad what happened."

"I can't!" Stoick wailed. "I can't tell them! Maybe Hiccup isn't dead! Just wake him up!"

"I can't wake him up!" Trista shrieked. "It was an accident; if you're honest, nothing is going to..."

"What have you done?"

A low growl interrupted the bickering children. Trista and Stoick stared at their father, their eyes wide. The man's eyes flitted to the baby and to the blood on Trista's hands.

"You killed my son." he snarled, taking a step forward.

"Stoick was..."

"Don't you dare blame your brother!" their father suddenly backhanded her and she fell to the ground. "You killed him, you filthy little..."
"Daddy, please..."

"You killed him!" the man roared. "YOU KILLED MY SON!"

Stoick took a few steps back, thankful to be ignored for once. He opened his mouth to defend his sister but no sound came out. He watched his father hit her again and again... he shut his eyes and tried to block out her sobbing and the sounds of his father's fists colliding with her skin. He bolted from the room, wiping the tears out of his eyes. His heart thudded against his chest. Yes he was off the hook, he wouldn't have to suffer the consequences... but Trista didn't deserve this. He begged his mind to go blank, to forget what had just happened, what he had just seen...

The next thing he did remember was several hours later. It was the middle of the night and the sound of laughter awakened him. His mind spinning, the events of the previous day forcing themselves into his memory, he got out of bed and walked downstairs.

The putrid smell of blood reached his nostrils before he saw what was happening. He peered in and his heart stopped. Trista stood above the crib, a knife in her hand, and she was destroying the body. Blood was everywhere, coating her and the crib... and she was laughing.

"I won't be forgotten." she muttered, bringing the knife down again. "If everyone is going to think I did this, I'm going to make them remember it."

Stoick turned away from the room and bolted back up to his bed. He huddled in the blankets, shaking very hard until he finally fell back to sleep.

The next morning, he had completely forgotten about his foolishness with the club, about his father's brutality toward his sister. The memory he did retain was one that would haunt him for years to come. The sound of his sister's laughter as she ripped their little brother to pieces.

When Stoick finished speaking, no one could move. Everyone looked between him and Trista, unsure of whether or not to feel sorry for her. She smiled at Stoick, satisfied at last.

"You took my life. My family. Everything." she said in a low voice. "I have nothing left to lose."

"I'm... I'm sorry." Stoick said, gazing into his sister's eyes. "I am so sorry."

"You say that because I have the power. I have something you want." she jerked Adrianna's head up and the little girl emitted a tiny squeak of surprise. "I came back to Berk a long time before you saw me. Your son may have been pathetic but he was certainly strong enough to fight me off. I waited years to find something that was precious to you. Something I could rip away from you and destroy. So you know how it feels."

"But she's ours." Astrid said softly, looking into her daughter's eyes. "Mine. Hiccup's. Take one of us if you want but don't hurt her."

"That's the beauty of it." Trista chuckled. "Your son is the most important person in your life, is he not? To take him would surely hurt. But for him to lose his precious little Addie because of your mistakes... well, forgiveness may be too much to ask."

"But we played your game!" Hiccup shouted, balling his fists by his sides. "We solved your puzzles and we did everything you wanted us to do!"

"How did you know all that stuff about us?" Fishlegs asked, taking a tentative step forward. "It's like you spied on us all for years."
"Oh yes, it was quite simple actually." Trista looked over to her right for a second before turning back to them. Hiccup narrowed his eyes at the spot she had looked. "I watched Hiccup here integrate the dragons and once I figured out how to do it, gathering information on all of you became too easy." she whistled and the albino Deadly Nadder emerged from the trees. "Bless him. He's always been loyal to..."

"You're lying." Hiccup interrupted, still staring at a spot to her right. "Very clever but the Nadder is a decoy. You've also got a Changewing."

Trista gave him a hard stare for a few seconds before laughing out loud. "Oh very good!" she chuckled as she snapped her fingers.

The Changewing came into view, its long tail wrapped around Adrianna's ankle, which explained why she didn't run when she saw them. Rather than pay the color changing dragon any heed, the child stared wide eyed at the Nadder and began to visibly tremble. Hiccup noticed this and wondered why she was reacting this way, praying that there wasn't a specific reason.

"You hid behind the Changewing. You could'a walked through town and if you were at the right angle, no one would'a seen you." Gobber said, shaking his head slightly.

"Yes, now you know my secret." Trista chortled. "My Nadder, Blaze, he's much better for flying. And doling out punishments."

"P-punishments?" Hiccup stammered, looking down at his child who was trying to shrink away from the white dragon towering above her.

Trista nodded to the Nadder and stepped to the side. Before any of them could run forward and take the child, the dragon's long tail hit Adrianna squarely in the back and, with a small squeal of pain, she fell forward onto the snow. Trista immediately stepped forward and yanked the child up by her hair, placing the dagger back on her neck. Hiccup and Astrid lunged forward, enraged at the sight of their child being treated so brutally, but they were held back by the others.

"She made so much noise that first day. Crying and carrying on... didn't take long to get her to stop and now look how quiet she's become!" Trista simpered.

Hiccup watched his little girl breathe deeply, trying as hard as she could not to cry. A single tear escaped her left eye but she blinked a few times and no more followed. Their eyes met and he very nearly began to cry himself but then inspiration seized him. Slowly, he held up a hand and performed a motion, one he knew he had taught her. Adrianna's eyes widened at the sight and he prayed that she would get the message.

"Enough chatter! I brought you all here for a reason. If I had to be banished for a crime I didn't commit, I have nothing to lose if I commit one now!" Trista gleefully pressed the blade up against Adrianna's neck. "Any last words?"

"Trista, please..."

Hiccup stared into his daughter's eyes and performed the motion again. *Come on, baby... you know this one. I know you know this one*, he thought desperately.

"Those are a poor choice of final words for your so called precious daughter," Trista drawled, twisting the knife playfully in front of Adrianna's face. The little girl eyed her wrist and glanced at Hiccup again, who stared back at her. He risked the sign one more time, his eyes pleading. "But oh well, the loss is on you. Not me...AH!"
Adrianna had twisted her head and clamped her teeth down on Trista's wrist. Hiccup was four feet away, about to grab his baby from the Changewing's grasp when the Nadder's tale blasted his left side, knocking him off course. He crashed into Astrid, both painfully tumbling into the dirt and nearly crashing into boulders.

Stoick tackled Trista to the ground, his body mass nearly crushing hers but he didn't care. "That's enough! It's over!"

Trista growled and tried to stab him with her dagger. Stoick jerked his arm out of the way and clamped his hand onto her arm.

"Stop it! You can't and won't win!"

Trista deftly twirled the knife in her fingers and dragged it down the fleshy part of Stoick's arm, making him wince.

"The brat will die, Stoick." Trista sneered, straining her neck to lean into his face. "I guarantee it."

She puckered her lips and whistled high into the air, making the Changewing jerk. The dragon lifted Adrianna into the air by her ankle for all to see before tossing her high into the air, her little arms flailing. Hiccup and Astrid screamed at the top of their lungs when the dragon opened its jaws to catch her. Thornado slammed his body into the Changewing's red hide, crashing into the side of the mountain. The dragons roared, bit, and clawed at each other while Adrianna plummeted back to the ground, her parents scrambling to their feet. They were too far away but ran as fast as they possibly could… and sighed with relief when Fishlegs dove from seemingly nowhere, catching their baby in his burly arms. He stood and ran to the edge of the clearing beside Meatlug to keep her safe.

"It's okay, Anna. You're safe now." Adrianna trembled, her hands tightly holding his tunic, but she made no sound.

Hiccup's gaze snapped to his father when he hauled Trista out of the snow, her hands tied behind her back thanks to Gobber. Rage bubbled in his chest and Astrid stalked toward the woman alongside him, both eager to tear the woman to shreds. Arms clamped over them from behind suddenly, and they both struggled.

"Let go!" Hiccup shouted at Tuffnut, who was using all his muscles to hold him back.

"She needs to pay for this! All of it!" Astrid nearly screamed in her struggles, but Ruffnut dragged her down into the dirt to keep her away from Trista.

The twins looked at Stoick questioningly, but he nodded to keep Hiccup and Astrid away. The parents screamed insults at Trista as Toothless, Barf, Belch, and Stormfly attacked Blaze, who had tried to fly away in the tussle.

"Gobber, get her out of here." Stoick shoved Trista over to his friend. Thornado and Toothless stood close by him when she pushed Trista toward the edge of the clearing opposite Adrianna. Hiccup's muscles tightened when she walked past him, her eyes gleaming in satisfaction at his anger. When she was past however, his eyes landed on his daughter across the clearing in Fishlegs' arms.

His anger melted off his face and he pulled against Tuffnut's arms. "Tuff, let me go."

Tuffnut understood where he was going and dropped his arms. Hiccup ran across the clearing as Ruffnut also released Astrid. Fishlegs gently pulled Adrianna away from his shoulder, making her
eyes widen.

"It's okay, here's your daddy." He gently turned her around and placed her on the ground a few feet in front of him.

Hiccup's running steps made her jerk, her hands curled under her chin, green eyes wide. He slowed to a stop a foot in front of her and controlled himself; she looked terrified. He slowly crouched and held his arms out to her.

"Addie!"

His daughter stared at him, the expression in her eyes as she looked at his hands almost scathing. Astrid stopped just behind her husband, her heart pounding. They finally had their daughter back… she was finally safe. So why wasn't she happy? Hiccup tried to smile and scooted a little closer to his daughter.

"Addie… come here baby, it's me…"

Adrianna scooted away from him, her eyes never leaving his hands. His fingers were mere inches away from her, yet she made no move.

"Addie…" Hiccup whispered.

Finally her feet moved… but his heart stopped when they moved backwards. Step by step she backed away from him, her unblinking eyes never leaving his. Adrianna stopped beside Fishlegs and carefully wrapped her arms around his leg, still staring at her daddy. Her daddy who didn't come soon enough to save her from getting hurt.

Jealousy, anger and grief surged in Hiccup's chest, making his throat constrict. He slowly let his hands drop to his lap, unable to look away from his baby girl who... who wouldn't come to him. He was her hero. From that first moment she was born, her life was a miracle by his own hands, his own breath. He lived every day to keep his miracle safe... and this one time he couldn't, she wouldn't come to him. Words could not express the emotion, the conflict he felt in that day.

Stoick stepped forward and gingerly laid a hand on Fishlegs' shoulder, who was still staring down at the little girl in shock. "Hold her if you can. She needs to know she's safe."

Fishlegs wanted to argue. This wasn't his place. She belonged in the arms of her parents, in the arms of her father who looked about ready to shatter like a broken mirror. He didn't want this. But he steadily nodded. Adrianna chose him as the safest person right now; therefore, he would give her comfort until Hiccup and Astrid could.

Stoick very slowly walked to Hiccup still sitting in the snow so he didn't disturb Adrianna. She watched him carefully, tightening her grip on Fishlegs' leg.

"Hiccup," He laid a hand on his son's shoulder. "We need to get back to the village."

Hiccup barely noticed him. His body felt numb, his heart torn to pieces, his face bare of expression. His baby didn't want him... that witch had destroyed the little girl's faith in her own father, who she loved more than anyone... what was the point in living if one of his greatest gifts in life, his most precious, beloved daughter... didn't want him?

"Hiccup?" Stoick shook Hiccup's shoulder, pulling him out of his stupor.

Astrid slid to her knees and tried to pull her husband's eyes away from their daughter. "Hiccup, look
at me..." she whispered, trying to hold herself together.

"She doesn't want me..." Hiccup murmured, swallowing thickly. "My baby doesn't want me."

Gobber, who was gripping a defeated looking Trista, looked away from the scene, the sound of anguish in Hiccup's voice too much to listen to. He motioned for the twins to follow him, who silently turned away with him back down the trail. They found Adrianna, as per instructions. But they couldn't fix this even if they tried.

Stoick wrapped a thick arm around Hiccup's chest, hugging him from behind. The grief in his son's voice was too much. "She will. You hear me? She's just small and afraid, and doesn't know who to trust. Give her time and I promise you'll be holding her."

Hiccup closed his eyes, Adrianna disappearing from view. He turned his head to the snow, trying to stem the image. But he knew it would haunt him for years to come.

He shakily nodded, exhaling slowly. "Let's go,"

Stoick put a hand under Hiccup's, raising him off the ground. "We need to get back to the village."

Hiccup stood and wrapped his arms around Astrid. She hugged him tightly, saying nothing. She watched as Fishlegs managed to pick her baby up and gently carry her down the trail behind the chief. She squeezed her eyes shut as the fog enveloped the little girl. Two tears soaked through Hiccup's shirt before she sniffed loudly, pulled away and walked down the trail, gripping her husband's hand.
For years to come, Hiccup and Astrid never could remember much about the flight back to their village. They barely paid attention when Trista was hauled off to a prison cell. Adrianna was immediately taken to a healer. She shrank back when they tried to come near her and so they were forced to wait outside the main room, relying only on what they could hear from the hallway. Hiccup sat down on a chair near the door and put his head in his hands. He was supposed to be there with his daughter... he was supposed to be holding her...

"It's not your fault."

A voice snapped him back to reality. He turned to his wife, who placed a hand on his knee.

"I should have come." Hiccup averted her gaze. "She doesn't understand why it took us so long to get to her. I made her a promise and I broke it."

Astrid took his hand. "She'll forgive you. You're her hero."

He shook his head and wrenched his hand out of her grasp. "Some hero..."

"You're still a hero, Hiccup." Astrid countered, taking his hand once more. "You worked tirelessly for two and a half days to get her back. You were incredible."

"It doesn't matter, Astrid!" he snapped. "It doesn't matter if she won't even look at me anymore!"

"Hiccup, listen to me." Astrid gently placed a hand on his cheek and turned his face so that he was looking into her eyes. "If not for you, Trista would still be torturing her. She could be dead by now. So even if she won't talk to you, you saved her life. That means something."

Hiccup furrowed his brow, his soul still burning with guilt at his failure. He shook his head and looked away, working his jaw. "Why us? Why did this have to happen to us? Why Addie?"

Astrid looked at him sadly and tried to look at his face again. "Hiccup, bad things happen to good people all the time. You wouldn't ever wish this on any other family and they wouldn't wish it on ours either. No one in their right mind would ever ask for this."

"She's only three years old! I'm nine times her age and I don't think I could have handled what happened to her any better than she did." Hiccup shouted, making Astrid wince. "Did you see her face? She was too scared to cry, Astrid! That's what that... that witch did to her!"

"Just give her time..."

"Two days! That's how long she was gone, two days! And now she might never trust us again!" Hiccup stood up and began to pace back and forth. "What am I supposed to do? I can't fix this... I can't even talk to her..."

Astrid slowly sat down in his vacated seat, watching him with her eyes for a few seconds. He failed to see the irony in his words; he was being just as stubborn as his daughter, never listening to anything anyone said. It was like he'd gotten an idea in his brain and it had started to fester, to take over and control him. She sighed deeply. Now it it felt like she was raising two Hiccups.

"You don't need to do anything. She'll come around on her own." she said, placing her face into her hands. "Please, just stop..."
"Stop what? Being a father?" Hiccup snapped, turning to face her.

"Stop beating yourself up! You did everything you could! Just let her come to you!" Astrid shouted, her head popping back up out of her hands.

"What if she doesn't..."

"Have you forgotten who we're talking about?" Astrid countered. "If I told you that you'd doubt her love for you three days ago, you'd have told me I was crazy! Because you have given her no reason to doubt you! And she'll see that!"

"How could you possibly..."

"Because she's just like you!" Astrid stood up and took a few steps toward him. "And she's being stubborn and emotional right now. It's something I've seen you do countless times!"

"Oh really?"

"Yes, in fact you're doing it right..."

A high pitched scream pierced the air. Hiccup's head jerked to the door and the anger immediately melted off his face.

"Addie..."

Astrid figured out what he was going to do just in time to step in front of the door. His full weight hit her very hard and she stumbled backward but held onto him as tightly as she could.

"Hiccup, she doesn't want to see you right now!" she grunted, fighting back against his flailing limbs.

"Let me in, Astrid... she needs me!" Hiccup wailed, trying to throw himself over her so he could be with his child.

"This is for your own good." she pushed him back but he barely budged.

He might have won the fight had Stoick not showed up at that exact moment. It only took a second for the grandfather to realize what his son was trying to do before he stepped forward and yanked Hiccup off of his wife. Hiccup let out a shriek of indignation as he was nearly lifted off the ground.

"She needs me!" he repeated, punching every inch of his father that he could reach.

"Hiccup, calm down!" Stoick boomed, shaking the young man's body quite violently. "If you lose it, you're going to make everything worse for yourself."

Hiccup took several deep breaths, his eyes burning and his face slightly pink. He finally went limp and Stoick let him go. He panted through his teeth for a few seconds before turning on his heel and walking in the opposite direction. As soon as he got through the front door of the healer's house, he slammed it behind him, making the whole house jolt and the windows rattle.

"Like father, like daughter." Astrid grumbled, sitting back down on the chair.

"Are you all right?" Stoick asked, still staring at the door as if expecting his son to burst through any minute.

"I'm fine." Astrid replied with a sigh. She leaned against the wall. "I hate this. All of this."
"I don't think anyone is happy about it." Stoick said, leaning on the wall and slowly lowering himself to the ground. "How's Adrianna?"

"The healer said she'll be fine. I think she was screaming because of the medicine. The salve they put on cuts stings like Hel, you know that. And the size of some of the ones she must have..." Astrid trailed off. For a moment, they were completely silent. "How's Trista?"

"Upset... understandably. She stopped shouting once we locked her up. Heard her crying when I walked by on the way here. I don't blame her; both her dragons were killed. I guess seeing what they did to Adrianna must have made our dragons angry enough to... but it doesn't matter." Stoick put his face in his palm.

"Serves her right." Astrid muttered, not making eye contact with her father-in-law.

"Does it?" Stoick looked up. "She has spent her life paying for my mistake. If I hadn't been a coward back then, none of this would have happened."

"She could have risen above it." Astrid said through gritted teeth. "I caused my brother's death and I didn't let it define me."

"That was an accident. Far as the village was concerned, Trista killed Hiccup deliberately."

"Well now she's done something just as horrible!" Astrid shouted, her voice wrought with emotion. "You can't just let her go this time!"

"You think I don't know that?" Stoick muttered, wiping his face with his hand. "This isn't about my obligation to her as my sister anymore. It's about my duty to protect my grandchildren. But how can I choose their lives over hers? I'll just be doing exactly what she expected."

"So you think Anna should have to spend the rest of her life looking over her shoulder?" Astrid countered, leaning forward so that he could see her in his peripheral vision.

"No." Stoick replied. "I will do what I have to do. I just pray that it won't be..."

An odd gurgling noise came from the outside of the house. Both Stoick and Astrid looked up at the door, surprised at the sound. But Hiccup was out flying on Toothless now... it was what he did when he was upset or lost... if he wasn't flying, where did he go?

In an instant, father and daughter-in-law knew exactly where Hiccup had gone.

"Oh no you don't..." Astrid muttered, immediately jumping up and bolting out the door just behind Stoick.

The prison was on the other side of the village but at the rate Hiccup was probably going, he would have to be there by now. Stoick and Astrid ran as fast as they could and brushed past the guards, who looked thoroughly confused.

Hiccup was fumbling with the lock on the cell. Stoick took a brief moment to thank the gods that the lock had a faulty mechanism that required a funny turn of the key to pop open (something he had been planning to tell his son for years but had always forgotten). Trista sat against the wall watching him with mild fascination. She barely seemed to notice her brother and niece-in-law enter.

"You will pay for this..." Hiccup muttered savagely, struggling with the lock. "I'm going to rip you to pieces like you did my uncle."
"Put down the key, son." Stoick commanded in a gentle voice.

"No. I'm not letting her get away. She's going to pay for what she did to my daughter!" Hiccup snapped, his eyes never leaving the lock.

"I said put down the key. Don't make me drag you away, Hiccup."

"No!"

Stoick, true to his word, stomped forward and yanked his son backwards. Hiccup let out his second outraged yell of the night as he kicked and punched everything he could reach.

"NO!" he screamed, unaware of several tears slipping down his face. "I WILL KILL YOU! YOU HURT MY DAUGHTER AND I WILL KILL YOU!"

Trista let out a derisive laugh and Hiccup felt his blood boiling within him; he felt hot with a rage, a hatred the likes of which he had never known was possible. He fought as hard as he could against his father but Stoick was too strong for him. Screaming insults and threats until his throat was hoarse, he found himself forced out of the prison and deposited on the ground next to it.

"Double the guard. See that this doesn't happen again." Stoick said to the nearest guard, who nodded.

"Let me in!" Hiccup cried, throwing himself against his father. But Stoick wasn't called vast for nothing. "Let me deal with her! Let me do this!"

"Your job is to be there for Adrianna." Stoick said calmly, grabbing his son's shoulders. "Leave Trista to me."

"She hurt Addie! She hurt her!" Hiccup screamed, not listening to a word his father was saying. "She has to die!"

"Last I checked, I'm still chief and it's my decision. Trista will be dealt with! Now go back to the healer's!" Stoick gave Hiccup a shove in the direction of the healer's house but the young man was having none of it.

"I'm not leaving until she's dead and I don't care how it happens!"

"Yes you are!" Stoick shouted, his patience finally spent. He suddenly slammed his son against the outside wall of the prison. Hiccup's eyes widened in shock. "If you seek out revenge, you will be no better than she is! Your responsibility right now is to be there for your child! If you want her to trust you again, set a good example for her! Do you understand me?"

Hiccup's mouth opened but no sound came out. Finally, he looked defeated and Stoick lowered him to the ground. As they walked back to the healer's house, Stoick saw Astrid put a hand on his son's shoulder but Hiccup shrugged it off. He turned away and took a deep sigh before nodding to the guards, who allowed him back into the prison.

"Well that was quite exciting, wasn't it?" Trista asked in a casual voice as he walked in.

Stoick didn't respond. He pulled out a chair and sat down, facing Trista through the bars. For a moment, all was silent.

"Give me a reason." Stoick muttered, leaning in slightly. "Just one reason to let you go again."
"What do you mean? What kind of reason?" Trista asked, a small smile on her lips.

"A reason to let you live." Stoick finally looked down at his fists balled in his lap. "You're my sister. I don't want to do this."

"Do what? Have me killed?" Trista's chuckle seemed to suck out anything remotely pleasant.

"What you did to Adrianna was inexcusable. If you were anyone else, you'd already have been shipped off to the Berserkers for an immediate execution." Stoick finally met her cold gray gaze. "I want to give you a chance. You didn't kill Hiccup. You didn't do anything to deserve what happened to you. Let me show you mercy."

"I don't want your pity." Trista sneered. "You took everything."

"You kept the drawing!" Stoick exclaimed very suddenly. "The one I made of you when I was scarcely older than Adrianna! All these years and you still kept it!"

Trista slowly nodded. "You're right. I did. At first it was because I still cared about you. And then I thought it would come in handy. It was nothing but a tool."

"Why didn't you tell me? When I saw you in the Great Hall right after the Welcoming Ceremony?" Stoick asked in a low voice. "If you had told me that it was my fault, I would never have..."

"I thought it was a show." Trista interrupted, crossing her arms and leaning back. "As chief, it was your job to take out perceived threats. Everyone else thought I did it. Of course you had to act like you did too." she paused for a moment, not meeting his gaze. "I never imagined that you truly believed your own lie."

"I was frightened. I saw my father beating you within an inch of your life and I was frightened. I was a coward. If I could take back that day..."

"You can't. You brought this on yourself." Trista suddenly leaned forward, a large smile on her face. "You deserved all the heartache, all the anguish, and you know it."

"Yes. I deserved it. Adrianna didn't. She was innocent. You've taken that from her. You've forced her to doubt her own parents. I don't care what happens to me but if Adrianna never recovers from this ordeal..."

"Then your relationship with your son will never be repaired. It'll have to do."

Stoick shut his eyes tight, breathing deeply through his teeth. "She will recover," he said at last. "She's her father's daughter. I have faith in her."

"You favored Finn." Trista placed her head in the palms of her hands. "Didn't even notice her most of the time."

"That was a mistake. I made the same mistake as our father." Stoick stood up and began to pace back and forth. "But Hiccup is a better man than us both."

"Yes he is. He's a hero. You may have slain thousands of dragons, split rocks in two with your skull, and saved Berk from Odin knows how many attacks. But you still had a prejudice. You still allowed the ideas of our father to cloud your judgment. Something Hiccup could never do." Trista finally leaned back once more. "That's why I had to break him. Because that would be the only way to break you."
Stoick stopped pacing for a second to stare at her. "That's why you took Adrianna. I was wondering... I thought it would have been more logical to take Finn, him being the heir but Adrianna... that would break Hiccup the most. And, by extension, me." he blinked a few times and continued to pace. "You've always been clever but this... well, this was brilliant."

"I studied for a long time. Hiccup would do anything for his family. Especially his oh so precious little girl." Trista stood up and leaned in, her face pressing against the bars. "It was worth it. Everything. Even if I couldn't kill her, it was worth it just to see the look on your face when you had to look your son in the eye and tell him you were a killer. To watch little Addie lose her adoration for you. Completely worth it."

"You're not giving me a choice, Trista." Stoick didn't meet her gaze as he continued to pace. "I'm going to have to give the order to have you taken to Berserker Island for your execution."

"No surprises there. You were always willing to toss me aside. This just continues to prove it."

"I'm not doing this because I want to. I'm doing this because I love my granddaughter. And if this is how I can make sure she's never hurt this way again, I will do it." Stoick opened the door of the prison and stalked out without another word.

Adrianna had been silent for an hour. Fishlegs finally walked into the hallway, looking like he was about to lose it himself. His hand was gripping Ruffnut's so hard, both sets of knuckles were white.

"She won't let us touch her anymore." he said to Hiccup as soon as the door was shut behind him. "We had to hold her down to put the salve on her. She won't let anyone near her."

Hiccup slowly stood up and faced his friend. "Thank you." he said in monotone. "I'm going to see if she'll let me come now."

No one had the heart to stop him as he strode forward and pushed the door open. Adrianna was sitting up on a nearby bed, her arms around her knees. The minute she saw Hiccup, she tensed.

"Addie..." Hiccup took a tentative step forward.

Adrianna let out a squeak and nearly toppled out of bed in her haste to run away from her father. Hiccup took several gulps of air; his eyes were burning but he couldn't cry in front of his daughter. Seeing her daddy cry would probably frighten her even more. He was supposed to be strong for her. That was his job. To be strong and to protect her. It was all he had left.

"I'm not going to hurt you, baby. I would never do that..." he stepped forward again and watched as his beautiful little girl backed up against the wall and stared at him with a fear he had never seen before in her wide green eyes.

His third step resulted in his little girl's body beginning to tremble. She looked petrified. Petrified of her own father. His throat began to constrict as he suddenly couldn't restrain his emotion. He turned around so she wouldn't see the tears streaming down his face as he walked back into the hallway. The moment he was out of her sight, he sniffed and wiped his face with the back of his hand. He leaned against the wall and slid down so he was sitting on the floor.

"Hiccup..." Astrid gently placed a hand on his shoulder.

Her husband looked up at her and her heart nearly burst open. There was no hope anymore. No trace of optimism. Just pain etched into his features. It made him look much older.
"She's not Addie." he whimpered. "She's back and she's safe... but she's not my Addie."

His face fell away from her gaze and focused on the floor. All emotion melted off of it, like the life had drained away. He continued to draw breath more as a reflex than anything else. Astrid's hand tightened on his shoulder but he made no move. She began to shake it.

"Hiccup... please don't do this." she whispered, still shaking his shoulder.

Her husband didn't react. He barely even blinked. Her heart racing and her stomach clenching, she got on her knees in front of him and clutched both of his shoulders.

"Don't leave me. Please don't leave me!" she wailed, her shaking becoming rather violent. "I need you!" she let go of his left shoulder to place her hand on his chin and lift it up. His eyes didn't meet hers. "Oh gods, Hiccup, don't do this!" she angrily punched him in the stomach but he still did not react. "Come back!"

Fishlegs stepped forward and put a hand on her shoulder. Astrid suddenly crumpled onto her husband, forcing herself not to cry on him. She couldn't do that. He had already lost his sanity and she couldn't lose hers. She took several ragged breaths as the hand gently massaged her shoulder.

"We're going to get through this." Fishlegs whispered to her. "I promise."

It was the only hope Astrid had. As she looked up at the doorway separating her from her daughter and back at her husband, who seemed to have lost all function, she realized that, in her entire life, she had never felt so alone.
Stoick made certain that Trista was on the ship to the Berserkers at dawn the next morning. She held her head high, a sort of dignity emanating from her. She knew where she was going. She knew she wouldn't be returning. And she had accepted her fate.

If only the same could be said for the Hooligan chief. He had been up most of the night trying to convince his son to snap out of whatever had taken over. But Hiccup remained unresponsive. Even when he moved, usually to use the outhouse, he seemed dizzy. Like everything was instinct. He didn't seem aware of what he was doing. And with his owner in a catatonic state, Toothless had never been so depressed. Like Hiccup, he refused to eat or to sleep, instead deciding to curl up next to his human and try to be of some comfort to him. The young man acted like he didn't even know his own dragon. Stoick briefly thought of bringing in Finn to try to get some reaction out of Hiccup but he immediately quashed this idea. Finn would surely be alarmed at the sight of his father in such a state. With his granddaughter already broken, Stoick didn't want to risk the same thing happening to his grandson.

"Set sail." he said to the closest Hooligan once they had all boarded the boat.

As the coast of Berk slowly disappeared into the horizon, Stoick took a deep breath and wondered if things would ever go back to normal. And then, as the memory of his actions on the day his brother had died brimmed to the surface, he was certain that they never would.

"Is Anna gonna come home?" Finn asked Snotlout, gripping the man's hand very tightly on the way to the Great Hall.

"Of course she will. She's just a little sick." Snotlout explained, his stomach tightening as he prayed that the child would stop asking questions.

"Why can't I see daddy?" the boy continued with slightly furrowed eyebrows. "Did daddy get sick too?"

"Yes. Your daddy needs to feel better and then you can go home." Heather said, giving his other hand a small squeeze.

For a little while, Snotlout and Heather continued to walk the boy to the designated location in silence.

"Is Anna gonna die?" Finn asked quite suddenly.

Both Snotlout and Heather stopped in their tracks and faced the small boy, looking horrified.

"Why would you ask that?" Heather gasped, rocking Inga with one hand so that she wouldn't wake up at the disturbance.

"Because everyone is sad." Finn replied, sniffing loudly. "Why is everyone sad? Don't they want Anna back?"

Snotlout crouched down so that he was staring into Finn's eyes. "Everyone is sad because Anna is
sick. And they want her to get better. But she's home and that's what matters."

"Oh." Finn thought very hard for a second. "Ca-I see her?"

Snotlout and Heather exchanged a split second glance. "I think you should ask your mom." Snotlout said after a second's hesitation.

"Otab." Finn replied.

Snotlout stood up and led the boy to his mother, who was waiting in front of the Great Hall. Upon catching sight of her little red haired son, Astrid rushed forward, dropped to her knees, and embraced him. Finn could feel his mother's heart racing and wondered why it was beating so fast since she hadn't just been running around. After a very long hug, she put her hands on his shoulders and pushed him back so that she could see his face. She brushed his bangs out of his eyes and kissed his forehead.

"Why were you gone so yong, mommy?" Finn asked her quite seriously.

"We went out to go find Anna. Were you good for Uncle Snotlout and Aunt Heather?" Astrid asked, brushing his bangs away from his eyes again.

"Uh huh. They yet me pway with the Naddew and we had snacks and it was fun!" Finn said in a chipper manner, hopping up and down. "They yet me see the baby too and she was cute!"

Astrid exchanged looks with her son's caretakers, who nodded. Finn had been very well behaved, which made things a lot easier. With Adrianna in such a fragile state, the sight of her little son bright and happy made her want to cry again. She quickly prayed that she would see her daughter's smile once more, every bit as wide as the one Finn was giving her.

"Ca-I see Anna?" Finn asked, the smile becoming slightly less wide and his eyes showing a tiny bit of concern.

Astrid hesitated for a moment, her son's hands tightly clasped in hers now. She opened her mouth for a second, unsure of what to say but not wanting to alarm the poor boy by immediately telling him that he wasn't allowed to see his little sister. Finn's blue eyes widened, wordlessly pleading with her. She couldn't say no to those eyes. Not after everything she had gone through.

"Let's go over to the healer's and make sure she's awake, okay?" Astrid told him, gripping his hand in hers and standing up.

This was only partially true since she didn't want her son to see his father in such a frightening state. Perhaps if she could convince Hiccup to leave the house for a moment or to act at least somewhat aware of his surroundings...

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Trista was completely silent. For some reason, Stoick found this slightly unnerving. If he was sailing to his inevitable death, he would have tried to make a bit more conversation, if only to make sure he got out his last words. This suddenly made him wonder if he had left any last words for the people he loved most... had he? No... no he hadn't. Considering the multitudes of occupational hazards that came with being Berk's chief, he was going to have to make sure he could find a way to give his family and friends something to remember him by... just in case.

After nearly an hour out at sea, he finally sat down next to her. She didn't meet his eye but she didn't scoot away. He wasn't sure what to make of this but he wanted to talk to his sister one last time.
"I'm sorry." he said, staring down at his knees.

"Oh I'm sure." she replied, still not looking at him. "I suppose I should have known you'd be willing to kill for that obnoxious little brat."

"She's not... that's not the point." Stoick shook his head. He wasn't going to let Trista distract him. "I don't want to do this."

"You've said that."

"I mean it."

Stoick and Trista finally looked at each other. The chief suddenly noticed that the way his sister's ears curved resembled his granddaughter's... just a tiny bit. It was something no one would notice unless they were looking for it, and he certainly would never tell Adrianna of this fact, but it was a painful reminder of what he had to do. What he had to give up to ensure her safety. He knew he was making the right decision. So why did it feel so wrong?

"How did you train those dragons in secret?" Stoick asked after a long pause.

"Simple. I watched your son. I did what he did. They were just strays, really. Blaze was thrown out his family for his... his deformity. I suppose that's why..." Trista sniffed and shook her head. "You let them die."

"They hurt Adrianna."

Stoick knew exactly what Trista was going to say next but the words were still painful to hear. "Still playing favorites, I see."

"It's different."

"Is it?" Trista's eyes bored into the side of his head. "We're both related to you. Hel, I'm *more* related to you. I don't have any Hofferson blood." There was a long pause in which she didn't break her gaze, much as Stoick wished she would. "Is it because she wouldn't exist if not for you?"

"It's because she's *innocent.*" Stoick mumbled to his hands.

"So was I." Trista said in a low voice. "That didn't stop our father."

"You're not innocent anymore." Stoick's eyes were still fixed on his hands but he could see Trista's face in his peripheral vision, still staring.

"Who's to say Adrianna always will be?"

Stoick finally looked up into his sister's eyes. "I will do everything in my power to keep her from turning out like you. Anything and everything. And not just because she's my flesh and blood. But because I love her. And that's something I should have said more often." he paused for a moment as Trista's eyes widened for a second. "It's something I should have said to you." he turned back to his hands. "I won't make that mistake again."

Astrid led Finn to the healer's house in silence. They only paused for a moment so that the boy could pick a small purple flower for his sister (Astrid didn't bother to tell him off for picking it out of a neighbor's flowerpot). Finn was usually a chatty child but he seemed to have noticed the subdued atmosphere. This was especially obvious when they finally arrived. A small crowd of
people were gathered around. Most of them were fellow parents, who had come to offer their condolences or ask how they could help. There was a small, sandy haired boy clutching a piece of parchment with a determined expression on his face. Something about how he stood out compared to all of the older Vikings caught Astrid's eye and she sauntered over to him and his mother.

"Do we know you?" she asked the woman.

"Not well. I think you're familiar with my son Gustav." she replied. "This is my youngest, Erick."

Astrid eyed the small boy again. At first glance, he looked nothing like Gustav but now that she saw him up close, she could see some subtle resemblances.

The woman continued to speak. "As soon as he heard Adrianna was back, he wanted to give her a picture he drew."

Astrid got down on her knees in front of Erick, who looked no older than five. "Did you know her very well?" she asked him.

"No. I just heard she was sad so I wanted to give her a happy picture." Erick replied very seriously, holding up the parchment.

Astrid was momentarily speechless. She didn't know how the boy had pulled it off, but the drawing was in purple.

"Anna likes purple. I think she'll like your picture." she said after a few seconds.

"I know. I saw her wearing the purple skirt a lot." said Erick with a small smile. "I hope she gets better."

"So do we. Thank you, Erick." Astrid stood back up to face his mother. "Would you mind watching Finn for a moment? I need to talk to Hiccup before I can let him in."

Erick's mother nodded and took Finn's hand. Astrid opened the door to the healer's house and entered the hallway leading to Adrianna's room.

Hiccup was still sitting outside the door, staring blankly at the ground. Toothless was still curled up next to him. Neither human nor dragon even blinked when they heard Astrid enter. She walked over to her husband and got on her knees in front of him.

"You have to pull yourself together, Hiccup." she whispered. "Finn can't see you like this."

Hiccup's head jerked upward, his eyes wide with horror. He began to hyperventilate and try to stand up. It took Astrid a moment to figure out why he had reacted in such a way. She gently placed her hands on his shoulders, trying to calm him down.

"Finn is fine." she said, looking straight into his eyes. "He's just fine. But he wants to see his sister. And I can't let him in when you're like this. You'll scare him!"

Hiccup continued to stare at her. His breathing became less frantic and he relaxed slightly. Finally he nodded. Deciding that it was the best she could do, Astrid stood up and walked over to the door to allow Finn to enter the house.

The small boy made a beeline for his father and immediately threw his arms around him. Astrid tensed slightly but Hiccup gently placed his hands on his son's back. Something about his bright, happy son seemed to cheer him up ever so slightly. He didn't smile but he looked quite a bit more
aware of his surroundings when Finn let him go.

"Ca-I go in?" Finn asked, his hand on the doorknob.

Astrid nodded and allowed the tiny boy to enter his sister's room. Hiccup's face fell back to the blank expression and he focused once more on the ground.

It seemed oddly cruel that the sail to Berserker Island flew by in what felt like only a few minutes. These were the last moments Stoick had with his sister. He knew that, once they got to Berserker soil, his personal conversation with her would be over. But time has a way of moving faster when you want to cling to precious moments and they arrived at Berserker Island far too soon.

Dagur the Deranged was waiting at the dock, a small smile on his face. He had seen the Hooligan ships approaching and figured that it was about time the Berkian criminal would have been apprehended. The Berserker chief loved executions and this was going to be an especially fun one. Permission from Berk to execute one of their own... an opportunity like that didn't present itself very often and Dagur was not going to let it go to waste.

"So which one of you is it?" he asked as soon as the ship docked. "That one, isn't it? He looks shady." he said, pointing to Spitelout.

Before Snotlout's father could retort, Trista chuckled and stepped forward. "I believe you're referring to me."

Dagur stared at her for a few seconds before laughing gleefully. "Should have known someone like that could apprehend a Haddock!"

"Adrianna is three years old, Dagur." Stoick reminded him, his patience waning. "And it won't happen again, even if I have to train her every second of every day."

"Shall we commence? I don't like to keep the executioner waiting." Dagur rubbed his hands together, still smiling widely. "He's a little impatient."

Stoick took a deep breath. "Yes. We should get this over with."

The Hooligans and Berserkers alike crowded around Trista to keep her contained. She smiled serenely, almost like she was on her way to go shopping instead of to her imminent death. They arrived at the executioner's location very soon and a large man waited with a large axe. He smiled as they arrived, looking very excited.

"Not often that I get to execute a woman." he said with a chuckle.

"Allow me to have a word with Dagur." Trista said quite suddenly. "Last request."

"By our laws, she is permitted a last request." the executioner said reluctantly.

"Make it quick." Stoick said, pushing his sister toward his enemy.

Dagur and Trista walked off a little ways so that no one could hear them. Stoick's stomach clenched. He had no idea what his sister was saying to the Berserker chief but, whatever it was, it couldn't be good. Dagur looked positively delighted when he emerged, Trista in tow. And the smile on Trista's face was not in any way reassuring.
"Anna?"

Adrianna looked up, her eyes wide with fear, but she relaxed when her brother strode into her room. He couldn't hurt her. He might do so once in a while by accident but he certainly wouldn't do so now.

She continued to stare at him as he walked up to her bed and deposited the flower on top of it. A tiny smile flickered onto the little girl's face, disappearing as quickly as it had come.

"Get bettew soon, otay?" he said with a small smile before turning around and leaving the room.

He saw his parents waiting outside and briefly wondered why they had not come in to greet his sister with him. But this question melted from his mind the moment it entered and he decided that it was a good time to go outside and play. Astrid took his pudgy little hand and led him outside, leaving her husband to continue to stare blankly at the door.

Erick was brought in a second later (he completely ignored Hiccup, which was definitely a good thing). His mother stayed in the hallway while the young boy entered the room.

"Hi, Anna." he said quite shyly. "I'm Erick. I heard you were sad. So I drew you a picture. In purple 'cause I heard you liked purple." he pointed to the simplistic drawing. "That's you on Toothless, see?"

Anna continued to stare at this friendly stranger... but he wasn't nearly as scary as the grown-ups. She allowed the boy to come forward and hand her his drawing. It was very nice and she did like purple. Another half smile appeared and quickly disappeared.

"Well... that's why I wanted to come over. Let me know if you... umm... wanted someone to play with." said Erick, blushing slightly and staring down at his little boots. "When you're feeling better. Okay. Bye, Anna."

When the door shut behind Erick, Anna briefly thought of taking him up on his offer. It was a really nice picture, after all. And he seemed so very nice...

The time had finally come. Trista was pushed forward into the last position her body would ever take in life. Her bare neck was exposed. Yet she remained quite calm. It was like she had been expecting this moment for a long time. Well, Stoick thought, she probably had. His heart twisting, he stepped forward and knelt in front of his sister.

"Trista..." he said, his voice shaking. "I... I want you to know that I'm sorry. I'm so sorry."

Trista stared into his eyes and, quite suddenly, she believed him. Stoick blinked and turned to the executioner.

"Do it."

He didn't watch. He couldn't. But the moment a horrible chopping noise reverberated around the wood, a single tear rolled down his face.

Chapter End Notes
Keep an eye on little Erick Larson. He's important. ;)}
Stoick sailed back to Berk in complete silence. He did his best to live up to his name on the voyage home but it was exhausting. Hopefully his granddaughter would have healed enough to let him talk to her... to apologize to her. His son would never forgive him but Adrianna was a child. If anyone would be willing to forgive him, it would be her. At least she had the distinct advantage of likely forgetting most of what happened in the years to come. He knew that he never would and neither would Hiccup.

As soon as he arrived on Berk, he noticed the villagers all walking with very specific destinations in mind, all clutching their children. None of them knew the full story of why Adrianna had been taken and Stoick thought it was best that they didn't. The real obstacle he faced was having to assure the village that the children were now safe. Would anyone believe him? Hiccup's anguished sobbing earlier that week had been very audible and it was a sound that no one was likely to forget anytime soon. By the end of the ordeal, all of Berk knew the devastation of a parent who had lost his child and they were going to do everything they could to protect the youngest members of the tribe.

The chief didn't look anyone in the eye as he traipsed home. He didn't want any sympathy, any weak encouragements. He had killed his own sister. He had ripped his family apart. As far as he was concerned, he might as well just pretend he had no family left. Goodness knows they would.

Although one family member didn't seem to hate him as much as he hated himself. Gobber was sitting by his front door with a barrel next to him. At first Stoick stopped and stared, trying to figure out why his best friend was waiting for him. And then he thought it might be a good idea to ask, seeing as this was his house.

"Why are you here? Shouldn't you be... at the forge?" he asked his friend, not quite meeting his eye.

"Yeah, I could be there. But I had a feeling you'd be needin' this," he patted the barrel. "All the mead we can drink. I think we should have a little chat."

"I don't want to talk to anyone."

"Yeah you do. You just don't know it yet." Gobber smiled and rolled the barrel through the chief's front door.

Stoick felt rather irritated but he didn't show it as he followed the blacksmith into his house. Gobber had two full tankards of the rather potent brew on the table within seconds. The chief sat down and took a swig but he didn't start talking. He wanted to pretend his friend wasn't there. Heck, he wanted to pretend he didn't exist.

"You did the best thing for everyone." Gobber said in a low voice.

"I'm not so sure." Stoick replied, closing his eyes and resting his face on his palm. "Trista won't be hurting anyone anymore. And that's good. But she didn't deserve this. If I had just tried harder as a kid, maybe I could have helped her..."

"You did the best you could. Some people can't be helped." Gobber paused for a moment. "If she'd killed Adrianna, you'd be feeling a lot worse."

"I know that." Stoick stared into the amber liquid.
"Do you? Well then stop beating yourself up. You did the right thing."

Stoick looked up, finally meeting his friend's gaze. "Not for her. The right thing would have been to give her mercy. After everything she'd been through, that's what she deserved. She spent her entire life paying for my mistake." Stoick slammed the tankard on the table with surprising force. "If I had just been a better brother to her, none of this would have-"

"But you weren't." Gobber said in unnervingly nonchalant tone. "You weren't a good brother. This happened. The question isn't what you should have done. It's about what you're going to do now. And if I weren't here right now, I'm willing to bet you'd be lying down and feeling sorry for yourself for the foreseeable future."

Stoick wasn't sure how to respond to this. He stared at Gobber for at least a minute before looking back down at his drink. "Not much I can do now. Hiccup doesn't forgive me; even if he did, he's not in any condition to say it. Adrianna won't even let me within ten feet of her. And Astrid is a bit preoccupied with making sure Finn isn't traumatized by the whole ordeal."

"And your job is to make sure the village isn't traumatized by everything that happened. To assure the parents that their children are safe once more. Well, as safe as they've always been." Gobber didn't break his gaze and Stoick was beginning to feel almost childlike at the reprimand he was receiving. "And then you're going to do your best to make sure life goes back to normal. Anna will recover eventually, Hiccup will snap out of whatever's wrong with him, and they'll forgive you. It's what family does. At least what it should do." Gobber paused for a moment to think. "But the first person you should be forgiving is yourself. You've made mistakes. We all do. But you can't let it define you. You need to let it go."

"And how am I supposed to-"

"By moving on. By reminding yourself that you did the best you could do and that learning things the hard way can sometimes be the most effective way to prevent yourself from making mistakes in the future." Gobber stood up. "I should get back to the forge. And you need to be alone for a bit to think about things."

Gobber patted Stoick's shoulder on the way out, leaving the barrel of mead with his friend. Stoick stared at the place his best friend had sat and thought hard about the advice he'd received.

Adrianna hadn't spoken since she had returned. Her screams during the occasionally painful healer's treatments were the only noises she had made. She would not leave her bed except when she needed the outhouse. And even then, she trembled the entire time until she returned to her room and curled up under the blankets. Her bed appeared to be the only place she felt safe. The healer had tried to change the sheets so that she could wash them but Adrianna refused to get up.

Hiccup remained outside of her room every night. Astrid brought in a small cot so that her husband could get some sleep, if it was possible in his present condition. She wasn't sure but it seemed like a good idea. The young father had spent an inordinate amount of time sitting on it and staring at nothing. The healer emerged, dismayed to see him still sitting there, his eyes drooping.

"You need to sleep," she said, crossing her arms in a manner that would have reminded Hiccup of his wife if he were coherent enough to string those thoughts together. "There is nothing you can do for your daughter right now. If you're going to stay here, at least go to sleep. I'll wake you up if anything happens."

Hiccup vaguely heard the word 'daughter' flit through his subconscious and, as a result, managed
to comprehend the rest of the sentence. He nodded once to show that he understood.

"I've decided not to give Anna the herbal tea that helps her fall asleep tonight. I think she needs to learn to sleep on her own as soon as possible." she added. "If she has trouble, she knows where to find me. Did you understand?"

The sound of his daughter's nickname was enough to keep Hiccup from missing the entire speech. He nodded once more. The healer decided that this was the best response she was going to get so she decided to turn in a little early. Dealing with Hiccup was turning into a harder task than dealing with his fearful and incredibly fragile little girl.

Hiccup's mind tried to make sense of the words he had just heard. The healer wanted him to sleep. She would wake him up if anything happened. He was pretty sure that was what she had said. His eyes nearly forced themselves shut. On some level, he realized that he did need sleep. His baby would be sleeping... was there any point in staying up anymore? She didn't want to see him, after all.

The young father slowly lowered himself so that he was lying on his side. The second his head hit the pillow, he fell asleep.

It had been four days. Four days since Adrianna had vanished. Astrid was struck with this sudden realization as she walked her son back to their house. So many things had changed, she honestly felt like it had been much longer. But it hadn't. Every minute had felt like an eternity. Honestly, the last four days had felt like four weeks. A month's worth of emotions all concentrated into a small time frame. It was a wonder she hadn't gone as crazy as her husband. Well, she still had time. But with Finn gripping her hand, now wasn't the most opportune moment for a breakdown of any kind.

The Haddock home looked the way they had left it. The remains of the shattered hourglass were still strewn out all over the floor in the corner of the room. Finn had asked about this but his parents had assured him that it wasn't something with which he needed to concern himself. The tendency of most children to believe that every word their parents uttered was entirely truthful had proven itself most beneficial for the child did not press the issue.

The hour had turned quite late. Finn had spent the day playing with several other boys his age so he was getting very tired. For a bit of extra security (though Astrid knew it wasn't necessary), Lotus had agreed to spend the night with them since Hiccup wouldn't leave the healer's house. Astrid would have preferred to have her husband keep her company on her first night at home since the one they had spent in tears over their daughter's possible fate but he refused to leave. She supposed that she needn't have been surprised. If there was one thing that could weaken Hiccup and turn him into a vulnerable, over-emotional mess, it was the worry he had that a family member, dragons included, might not be okay.

Astrid climbed the stairs in silence, her little boy in tow, and tucked him into his bed. She glanced at the dragons her husband had painted the same day as he had painted Adrianna's butterflies and she felt a pang of fear. Would Hiccup ever return to normal? Would Adrianna ever return to normal? Was she sitting in the room of the one remaining person in her family who hadn't lost his or her sanity?

"Mommy?"

Finn's voice snapped her back to reality. She focused her attention on her son, gently brushing his bangs out of his eyes.
"What's wrong with daddy?"

He had noticed. Well, she supposed, it wasn't like he was completely blind.

"Daddy is very sad that your sister is sick." Astrid explained in a gentle voice.

"Will he get better?" the little boy asked, his eyes shining with concern.

"I hope so.
"the young mother replied before kissing her son on the forehead. "But I think we're going to have to pray for a miracle."

Hiccup jerked awake, the high pitched noise ringing in his ears. What had made such a jarring sound? He rubbed his eyes and slowly sat up as a second noise pierced the air. A scream.

"Addie!"

The young father bolted out of bed and threw open the door. Adrianna was thrashing around in her sleep, screaming so loudly that it was a wonder the healer had managed to stay asleep. Hiccup reached her bed in seconds, his stomach twisting. This was, by far, the worst nightmare he had ever seen her have... and it was almost as terrifying for him as it was for her.

"Addie, it's okay!" he said in a voice just loud enough to awaken his daughter and just soft enough so that the healer could remain asleep.

The little girl's wide green eyes flew open and, for just a second, she looked petrified. She took several deep, shaky breaths. And then the image of her father came into view as her eyes adjusted to the dark. She shrank back, still too tired to jump out of bed to get away from him.

Hiccup's heart plummeted. She still didn't want him. He had failed her. Now she would never love him again. He began to tremble with the effort to reign in his emotions, to remain strong for his child... but the effort was too great. He sank to his knees beside her bed, tears spilling onto his cheeks. His daughter was one of the gods' most precious gifts. She was his whole world... and she didn't love him anymore. He could almost feel his heart being ripped to pieces.

As his tears splashed onto his hands, he didn't see his daughter's eyes widen, her jaw drop, a look of horror on her face.

Adrianna's heart stopped beating for just a second. Time seemed to freeze. Her daddy was the strongest man in the world. Sure there were lots of other big, strong men like her Poppy and Uncle Gobber but her daddy was stronger than any of them. He was stronger because he was always there for her, always loved her, always fought for her even when he couldn't... and he was crying. Her heart nearly stopped once more when she realized that she was making him cry. She had broken the strongest man in the whole world.

She stared at him for a few seconds, watched his shoulders heave, heard the quiet sobs escape his throat. She could feel her heart pounding in her chest, her body began to tremble, but she couldn't let him cry. She had to do something. Her hand reached out almost instinctively and gently touched his shoulder. She didn't know what to say so she said the only word that popped into her mind.

"D-daddy?"

Her daddy looked up at her, his eyes still dripping but wide in shock. He was still shaking. Still sniffling. This was what she had done to the strongest man in the world. She suddenly felt horrible, more horrible than she had ever felt in her life, even when that cruel old woman had hurt her. She
didn't like the pain but at least it was happening to her. She couldn't stand the idea of hurting someone else. And the thought of hurting her daddy, her hero was far too much for her little heart to handle. She could feel her eyes burning but she blinked a few times, trying to keep herself from exploding with the misery she felt at the cruelty she had inflicted on her daddy. She reached out with her other hand and brushed her father's tears away with her thumb.

"D-don't cry, d-daddy." she struggled to say these words without bursting with suppressed emotion. "P-please don't c-cry... please d-don't..."

Her body convulsed as she let out a timid hiccup. Tears began to pour out of her eyes. It was as if a dam had burst behind her eyelids, the water flowing freely down her face, the repressed emotion over everything that had happened erupting from her all at once... she felt strong arms pull her in, holding her close, keeping her warm. She felt her daddy sit down on the side of her bed and suddenly, he was still too far away from her. She climbed into his lap, her sobs growing louder, echoing in the still silence of the room. Her body jolted every so often with her hiccups, her heart continued to pound, she began to quiver with emotion. She vaguely felt her daddy rocking her back and forth, whispering to her and gently stroking her hair. She couldn't hear the words but she knew what they were saying. For the first time in four days, she felt completely safe now that she was ensconced in the arms of the strongest man in the world.

She didn't hate him. Hiccup tightened his hold on his baby girl, unable to stop his own tears from dripping into her hair. She felt them and suddenly repositioned herself so she could put her arms around his neck, burying her face in his shoulder and soaking his shirt through to the skin in seconds. He didn't care if he had to be up all night holding his precious little girl. She was back where she belonged. A day ago, he hadn't been sure if she would ever love him again. Two days ago, he didn't know if he would ever see her again. Yet here she was, his little miracle, clutching his neck and letting him hold her as close as he could. He turned his head and kissed her just behind the ear.

"I'm sorry." he whispered, his voice shaking. "I'm so sorry. I am so sorry." he sniffed loudly but he wasn't finished yet, not by a long shot. He had so much that he wanted to say. "I love you, Addie. I love you so much." he gingerly repositioned his daughter so that she was looking at him. She immediately got to work wiping away his tears and he smiled and tried to wipe away hers as well. "Look at me, baby," he said after a few seconds. Her wide green eyes stared into his, tears still streaming out of them. "I am never going to let that happen again."

"Y-you came for m-me?" she asked in a weak whisper.

"Yes, yes I did. I was so scared I wasn't going to get you back." Hiccup replied, using his thumb to wipe still more tears off of his little girl's face.

Adrianna was shocked. Grown-ups weren't scared of anything. "You were sc-scared?"

"More scared than I've ever been." Hiccup kissed her forehead. "And I'm still a little scared."

"Wh-why?"

"Because I never want to lose you again." Hiccup took her hand in his and squeezed it. "I love you, Addie. I am always going to love you. Forever and ever."

Adrianna stared into her daddy's still leaking eyes. "You p-promise?"

"I promise."
Her arms were around his neck again. His shoulder grew wetter as the tears began to make their way down his back. For a moment, all was silent aside from her hiccups. But suddenly, Hiccup felt his limbs and back muscles relax, and he slowly exhaled. He felt a great weight lift from his shoulders. His burden was gone. His daughter was home and safe, back in his arms where she belonged. She wasn't okay; not by a long shot.

But she would be.

Astrid barely slept. When she closed her eyes, all she could see was her husband's emotionless face. His dead, blank eyes staring at nothing. Every time she managed to drift off to sleep, the image awakened her and her heart pounded uncomfortably.

She couldn't be away from him.

Her mother was asleep in Adrianna's room. If something happened to Finn, she could deal with him. But Astrid needed to go to Hiccup. She needed to hold him. Or just be with him. Even if it meant not sleeping. The sun was just beginning to rise when she padded out of bed and down the stairs as quietly as she could. She threw a coat over her nightie and braved the cold outside.

The first thing she noticed when she opened the door to the healer's house was that the cot was empty. In fact, the whole hallway was empty. Her heartbeat quickened as she began to wonder where on earth her husband had gone. He never left their daughter's side, even if they were separated by a door. Unless...

She opened the door to Adrianna's room as quietly as she could and peeked in. The light was dim but she could make out a large figure on the bed. Certainly a lot larger than her daughter. She tiptoed in and, once her eyes adjusted to the sparse lights, she took in one of the most beautiful things she had ever seen.

Hiccup was lying down on the bed, fast asleep with an arm over Adrianna. There were tear stains on their faces but they both looked peaceful. Almost happy. Her eyes began to burn slightly as she turned away, intending to go back home and finish sleeping. But a creaky floorboard caused both father and daughter to awaken immediately.

Adrianna was frightened of this dark figure in her room but the strong arm around her waist and the rhythmic breathing from slightly above her head calmed her down immediately. Her eyes soon adjusted to the light just as the figure was opening the door to leave her room.

"Mommy?"

Astrid turned around and saw both her husband and daughter looking at her, both smiling serenely. Adrianna's little arms opened slightly, begging for the sort of affection that only her mother could provide. Astrid hurried forward and lay down next to her little girl, placing an arm above her to stroke her husband's shoulder. He gave her a look, as if to tell her that she was right, that Adrianna had needed more time. She let go of his shoulder to gently brush her daughter's hair out of her face so she could kiss her little forehead. Adrianna snuggled in closer to her mother and both of her parents instantly reached up and placed an arm around her from both sides. Astrid closed her eyes, overjoyed that she was finally holding her baby, and fell asleep instantly. Hiccup fell back to sleep moments later.

Adrianna stayed awake a little longer. She briefly wondered why she had ever doubted her parents' love. She could feel the warmth radiating off of their bodies, the arms holding her... and she felt safe. In fact, she was certain that she was the safest little girl in the whole world.
Healing Process


Adrianna's eyes fluttered open after the best night's sleep she'd ever had. She could feel an arm around her waist, the hand resting on her lower back... but there was no hand on her stomach. She sleepily turned her head to find out why her daddy had stopped hugging her and her heart dropped. The side of the bed upon which he had slept was empty. Her eyes widened.

"Daddy?" she whispered.

Nothing.

"Daddy?"

Complete silence. She sat up and stared around the room, feeling her heart begin to pound in her eardrums when she realized that her daddy really wasn't there. Astrid stirred slightly, awakened by her daughter's frantic voice. The moment her eyes were clear, she saw her little girl shaking, her breathing labored, and her eyes wide with fear.

"Where's daddy?" she asked, tears welling up in her eyes. "Why did daddy leave?"

"He just stepped out for a minute. He'll be back." Astrid assured her.

This didn't seem to reassure her. Her lower lip quivered and several tears began to trickle down her face. Astrid sat up and put her arms around the trembling child, praying that Hiccup would return soon. Adrianna was going to have her very first panic attack if he didn't.

A few seconds later, the girl's father returned, a tray of food in his hands. At the sight of his daughter's distress, he immediately put down the tray and rushed over to the bed, scooping her up in his arms and lifting her off her feet. She immediately hugged his neck. He could feel her heart pounding through her nightshirt.

"Addie, it's okay. Hey, I was only gone for a minute." Hiccup whispered. "I just wanted to make sure you'd get breakfast. Doesn't that sound good?"

"Don't go away!" the girl wailed.

"I will always come back for you. Always." Hiccup promised her, now sitting against the headboard of the bed. "You want some breakfast?"

Adrianna stared at the food for a few seconds before timidly nodding. Hiccup smiled and wiped her tears away with his sleeve before placing her back on the bed and crossing the room to pick up the food. The moment the tray was balanced on his lap, the three of them began to eat in what was probably the most impolite way imaginable. None of them had eaten much over the last few days and they were suddenly ravenous. It was quiet for a few minutes as the food diminished into nothing but a few bones and crumbs.

Just as they were putting the tray aside, the healer bustled in, took one look at the family, and smiled. "Now that's more like it!" she exclaimed. "Feeling better, Anna?"

Adrianna nodded, not smiling but not looking fearful anymore. The healer walked over to the child, who recoiled slightly, her eyes wide.
"I'm not going to put any medicine on your back, honey. I just want to see how it's healing, okay?" the healer knelt next to the bed. "You want to get better, don't you?"

Adrianna slowly nodded but made no move to lift the back of her shirt up. Hiccup took her hand and squeezed it.

"You're okay, Addie." he assured her.

She looked up at him, her eyes wide. He gave her a reassuring smile and patted her back. She winced slightly, making Hiccup feel incredibly guilty for irritating her sensitive skin, but lifted her shirt to reveal her back to the healer.

"Your cuts look much better, Anna. Do you want to go home today?" the healer asked, gently lowering the shirt so that it didn't irritate her back any more.

Adrianna nodded and placed her arms around her father's midsection, burying her head in his chest. In that moment, Hiccup knew exactly what his fragile little girl needed most.

"Do you want me to carry you home?" he asked, turning his head so that he was staring down at her, sure to be visible in her peripheral vision.

He felt her little head bob up and down. He tenderly placed his hands under her armpits and hoisted her up so that her head was resting on his shoulder. Then he turned and stood up. She was lighter than he remembered. Or perhaps he was imagining it. No, she definitely was lighter and thinner. He could feel each individual bone in her ribs. Had Trista fed her at all?

He waited until Astrid had gotten up before taking her hand in his and walking out into the sunny day. Adrianna wrapped her arms around his neck and began to tremble. He tightened his hold on her.

"No one's going to hurt you, baby." he whispered to her.

She sniffled but the distinct lack of hiccups meant that she hadn't started crying. This was definitely progress.

The moment they arrived at home, they spotted Finn at the table sitting across from Lotus, who brightened up at the sight of Adrianna on Hiccup's shoulder.

"Anna! You back!" Finn squealed excitedly.

He wanted to hop up and greet his parents and sister but the look of fear on Adrianna's face made him pause. He exchanged looks with Lotus.

"You want to get down, Addie?" Hiccup asked his daughter.

She paused for a moment before nodding timidly. Once her feet met the soft, earthy floor, she stood next to her daddy's legs, not feeling confident enough to step forward. Lotus rose from her seat and walked over to her. Adrianna watched her with wide eyes but made no move to run away. Her grandmother knelt in front of her.

"Welcome home, Anna." Lotus said in a gentle voice, her arms extended.

Adrianna stared at her grandmother for a few seconds before taking a few shaky steps toward her. She opened her arms and wrapped them around Lotus' neck. Astrid's mother tenderly stroked her granddaughter's back.
Finn stood awkwardly in the corner of the room until his grandmother and sister finished hugging. He then bounded forward, his arms outstretched. Adrianna immediately threw her arms around him. Hiccup put a hand to his face, willing the emotions to stay down a bit longer. He had wondered if he would ever see this again... and now that he did, he felt happier than he had since Snoggletog Eve.

Stoick hadn't emerged from his house all night. It wasn't that he didn't want to take Gobber's advice, he did, but he wasn't quite ready to face the world. The next morning, he awoke quite late. This wasn't surprising considering how little sleep he had gotten. He was nibbling on a bit of bread when Gobber pushed open his door.

"I'll be out in a bit." Stoick said automatically. He didn't feel like being lectured.

"That's not why I came." Gobber hobbled over to the table and sat down. "I saw Hiccup and Astrid walking home with Anna. Seems she's forgiven them for what happened. Was practically attached to Hiccup," he sighed. "She's got a lot of healing left."

"I'm... I'm glad she's getting better." Stoick didn't meet his friend's eye.

"She's forgiven her parents. She'll forgive you too." Gobber said in a patient sounding voice. "All you have to do is ask. Where's the harm in that?"

"Yes... where indeed..." Stoick placed his head on his hand. "Thank you, Gobber. I do need to talk to Hiccup about something. I'll wait until tomorrow. Let Adrianna get accustomed to being home."

"And I'll make sure you actually go." Gobber narrowed his eyes at his best friend.

Stoick smiled. "Oh, I was counting on that."

It was a long day of quiet playtime with the family. Adrianna seemed to relax more with each passing hour. When night finally fell on Berk, Astrid tucked Finn into bed, leaving Hiccup with Adrianna.

"Are you going to be okay tonight?" he asked her, getting on his knees to stare the girl in the eyes.

Adrianna paused for a moment before solemnly nodding. Hiccup gently lifted his daughter off the ground and walked her to her room. He had deposited Adrianna on the bed when the child's eyes wandered to the nightstand.

"What's dis?"

Hiccup had completely forgotten about the stuffed Night Fury he had made for his daughter. Snoggletog seemed like years ago. Yet here she was, eyeing the toy suspiciously. He smiled and picked up the creature, kneeling next to her bed.

"Odin brought this for you on Snoggletog. And we kept it safe because we knew that you could use a friend," he said, giving her the toy with a small smile.

Adrianna stared at it for a few seconds before looking back up at her father. Quite suddenly, her face broke into a gigantic smile and she hugged the stuffed dragon close to her chest.

"It's a Night Fury like I wanned!" she squealed.
"That's right!" Hiccup lovingly brushed her bangs out of her face, feeling like his heart was melting completely. "And now he can keep you safe when you sleep."

"Uh huh!" she lay down, continuing to hold the dragon close.

"You sure you're okay?" her daddy asked, his fingers gently smoothing out her bangs.

"Yes."

"If you get scared, we're right down the hall." he reminded her.

"Okay, daddy." she yawned widely.

Hiccup leaned down and kissed her on the forehead. "I love you, Addie."

The little girl reached over and took his hand. She looked him straight in the eye, a very serious expression on her face, like what she was about to say was the most important thing she had ever said.

"I love you too, daddy."

Hiccup kissed her again and stood up. When he got to the door, he looked at his now placid daughter, her eyes shut and her little face looking very peaceful. He shut the door as quietly as he could and turned to the staircase. He descended each step slowly, hoping neither of his sleeping children would awaken. He paused at the bottom, waiting for Adrianna to cry for him. Staring at his daughter's closed door with a worried expression, he failed to notice his wife stand next to him until she placed a warm hand on his arm.

He flinched and looked at her in surprise.

"It's okay. She's going to be fine." Astrid smiled gently, pulling him away from the stairs and toward their couch.

"I know..." he murmured, sitting down beside her. He sagged against the couch, staring at the ceiling. "We can finally relax... but I still can't help but worry for them. For her."

Astrid leaned into his chest, wrapping her arms around him and nuzzling her cheek at the spot she could hear his heart, alive and beating. "The feeling is mutual."

Hiccup wrapped his arm around her waist, his fingers gently rubbing up and down. Astrid sighed deeply, pressing herself even closer to him. He looked down at her and she had her eyes closed firmly, almost as if she was afraid to let him go.

"Are you okay?"

He felt her neck muscles contract for a moment when she swallowed. "I... I'm okay. I was just so afraid..." she paused.

"Afraid of what?" he gently prodded.

"Just... you weren't there, Hiccup. You were sitting there and no matter how much yelling or hitting I did, you never even blinked..." Astrid replied quickly, the fear she felt playing in her eyes. "I just... I mean you're fine now and I'm not saying I don't blame you for what happened... but I was just so afraid I had lost you... and afraid that I'd never get you back."

Hiccup frowned, wrapping his arm around her. "I'm sorry..." he kissed the top of her head firmly.
"I don't even remember it… I was just so afraid of losing my family."

"I know you were." Astrid rested a hand on his cheek, her fingertips making a small scratching sound against his facial hair coming in.

Hiccup held her hand against his mouth and kissed it firmly. He stared into her eyes for a few moments before whispering, "I won't do that to you ever again. No matter what happens, I promise not to shut you out again."

Astrid's eyes pricked with tears but she ignored them by pressing her lips to her husband's. She caught his lips between hers once, twice before hugging him tighter than she had in a long time. She felt she was squishing him, but he didn't complain so she didn't let go. She couldn't let go for fear that he'd disappear. She prayed fervently that no more bad fortune would befall their family, that they could raise both their children with their sanity intact for the rest of their lives.

"Shh…" Hiccup hushed her suddenly. "I'm right here." Was she… she was crying. When had she allowed that to happen? Had she made any noise? How had he known?

She sat up a little, wiping her cheeks with the back of her hand, her other still wrapped around his neck. She stifled a laugh. "I am so sick of crying."

Hiccup gave her his signature lopsided grin. "I couldn't agree more."

"So let's stop crying." Astrid impulsively pushed her fingers through his hair, making him sigh lightly, his lip catching between his teeth. She breathed a laugh, pressing her lips back to his.

"I love you." Hiccup breathed in the small space between their lips.

"I love you more."

"Impossible."

Astrid breathed a laugh when he kissed her cheek. She was so happy to see a smile on his face, something she feared she'd never see again. He had spent the majority of those four days full of anger and hate, it was frightening to watch. She couldn't thank the gods enough for the blessing her husband's smile provided.

She slid back down to rest her head on his chest, her hands clasped on the opposite side of his waist. Hiccup relaxed against the couch again, his fingers probing teasingly through her loosened braid.

"So what now?" Astrid asked after a few minutes of watching the fire crackle in the pit.

Hiccup raised his leg onto the stone pit and crossed his prosthetic over it, sliding deeper into the couch as he did so. "What do you mean?"

"How do we move on? Do we just… pretend it never happened?"

Hiccup watched a few sparks float above their heads when a log snapped, his expression thoughtful. "No. This is going to shape Addie, our family, forever. It's going to change how a lot of people take care of their kids by way of safety." He sighed after a short pause. "Addie will probably never get away from that woman in her dreams. She'll never be able to completely move on without our help. So acting as if it never happened wouldn't benefit anyone."

"So how are we going to help her move on?"
"Give her love, as much love as we can possibly give her." Hiccup squeezed her shoulder. "That's something I know for sure."

Astrid nodded in agreement. She thought of her two children, the two greatest blessings life could have ever given them. Finn—her little rambunctious rascal who tiraded through the village with a fervor for adventure and a big excited smile; Adrianna—her precious baby girl who was compassionate to everyone she met, who hated to see people cry, who loved making people smile. She smiled, "Can you believe that less than five years ago we didn't have them?"

Hiccup snorted. "A better question: five years ago, would we have ever thought that we'd have twins?"

"Heck no," Astrid laughed. "We were still flying high in the sky with barely any responsibility."

"No worries, no responsibility…” Hiccup sighed. "The good ole days. But I wouldn't trade these days for those if my life depended on it."

Astrid nodded. "Neither would I." Her lips curled in a mischievous smile and she lifted her head to look at him. "For multiple reasons."

Hiccup raised an eyebrow. "What do you mean?"

"Well for one thing we'd be giving back the twins, and neither of us would want that." Astrid smirked, pushing her finger through his hair. A shiver shot down his back at the action. "And we'd also be giving back a few other things…"

Hiccup blinked, unsure as to the meaning of that particular statement. "You mean…"

"Oh I think you know what I mean…” Astrid leaned forward until she could feel his breath on her lips. Hiccup's heart rate sped up and his lips quirked in a partial smile. "Well yeah, now I get it."

Astrid tilted her head to the side, running her nose along the side of his. She twisted her fingers through his hair, making him exhale heavily, his breath mixing with hers. She slid a leg across his waist, his hands resting on her hips. She finally pressed her lips to his in a deep kiss, caressing his lips with hers, her fingers still trailing tortuously through his hair. Hiccup moaned pitifully against her mouth until she unexpectedly pulled away, their lips separating with a loud pop. Hiccup's eyes blinked open and he saw the seductive smile on her face. She backed up off of him and stood up. "Well that was interesting. I think I'm going to bed now." Hiccup blinked when she walked around the couch, but on the other side she whispered into his ear, "You're free to join me of course."

Hiccup smirked, listening to her retreating footsteps. "Oh I don't know. I think I might just stay down here for a while."

Astrid paused halfway up the staircase to reply, "Hey, not my loss."

Hiccup pursed his lips for a moment before standing and quietly trotting up the stairs. He walked into their room, his eyes adjusting to the light in search of his wife. Hands grasped his tunic suddenly from beside the door and his mouth met hers. He sighed, his hands sliding up her waist, his ankle kicking the door mostly closed. Astrid clutched his tunic, pulling him closer, her hands sliding back up into his hair.
His knees weakened and she pushed him against the wall, forcing him to stay standing. She wrapped her left leg around his right for support, making him break the kiss with a short laugh. "You know I'm not that unstable."

"Yes you are." Astrid pressed her lips back to his, effectively silencing anything he might have said in response. All the last week's fear, terror and anger needed to disappear forever. They both were finally sane again, back on the same page where they were supposed to be, where they were meant to be. Nothing could stop this from happening because they both knew they needed it…

Except the soft creak of the door. That could stop it.

Astrid quickly pulled back from Hiccup, accidentally yanking his right leg out from under him. He crashed to the floor, following it with a loud groan.

Adrianna stood in the doorway, the stuffed dragon in her arms. Her eyes were mostly fearful, yet a little confused. "Daddy?"

"Yes sweetheart?" he sat up in front of her.

"I had a bad dream."

"Aw come here." Hiccup held out his arms, letting her walk into them. He looked up at Astrid questioningly, knowing that Adrianna wouldn't want to go back to sleep in her room. Astrid gave him an almost stern look. The answer was obvious. "Do you want to stay in here with us tonight?"

Addie nodded silently, so Hiccup picked her up and carried her to their bed. She crawled under the furs and sheets in the center of the bed without another word. Hiccup noticed Astrid already changing into her night clothes, slightly saddened by the interruption, but the sacrifice was worth it if their daughter slept well tonight. He began to pull off his boot and change into a more comfortable shirt to sleep in when Finn's shadow stretched across the room.

The redhead stood in the doorway with a scowl and his arms crossed. Hiccup nearly laughed at his pose, so much like his mother's when she was upset. "What's wrong with you, little man?"

Astrid looked over from her side of the room, her face brightening at the sight of her son standing there with a face full of attitude and his body clothed in red and white striped pajamas. He was just so cute.

Finn huffed loudly. "Anna gets to sweep with you and I have to sweep alone." He pointed down the hall to his room with a good dose of sass in his tone. "In that room by myself. I can't take it anymowa."

Hiccup burst out laughing, leaning on his dresser for support. Astrid walked over to her son, who resorted to scowling at his father. She had to admit that Finn was funny and hearing Hiccup laugh again was glorious in and of itself, but the poor little guy felt left out! This had to be amended, or Hiccup would be sleeping on the couch tonight. The complete opposite end of the spectrum compared to five minutes ago.

"I'm sorry, buddy," Astrid straightened his shirt. "You want to sleep with us too?"

Finn smiled wide with big eyes and nodded twice. Astrid kissed his forehead and pushed him toward the bed, where he ran forward and climbed atop it, sitting beside his sister.

Astrid faced her husband, who finally sighed. "This night just keeps getting better."
"Yeah, I'd say so." Astrid stood on tiptoes, gently kissing his lips. He caught hers again before she could pull away, but Finn interrupted.

"Ewwwwww, they kissing! I don't wanna see kissing!"

"Aww come on Finn, just one more?" Hiccup asked him playfully, holding Astrid closer to him.

"No!"

"Pleeeeeease?" he imitated his son's whine when being denied something he wanted.

"No, daddy! NO!"

Hiccup laughed, releasing the boy's mother before he began to scream his lungs out. Astrid walked to the other side of the bed and slid under the covers, tossing a section of the furs over her kids. Hiccup did the same beside Adrianna, giving his daughter a kiss on the cheek when they were all comfortable.

Finn flopped down on his back beside Astrid, making her chuckle and kiss his cheek. "Gah mommy..." he wiped his cheek with his sleeve.

Hiccup smiled, resting an arm over his daughter's still form. Astrid did the same over Finn's, her hand resting atop her husband's. Hiccup lifted his hand, intertwining their fingers, their arms resting protectively over their children.

"No monsters tonight?" Adrianna whispered in Hiccup's ear.

"No monsters." he assured her.

And with that, the family drifted off to sleep, together at last.
Stoick's resolve seemed to seep out of him overnight. He stared at the ceiling, not wanting to emerge from bed and face his son or granddaughter. Their disappointed faces were more than he could handle right about then. But he also knew that Gobber would be along any minute and that if he remained in bed, he would almost assuredly be dragged out. This prospect was about as pleasant as the first and so he swung his legs over the side of the bed and sat up.

He had barely gotten himself ready to emerge from his house when Gobber hobbled over, giving him a very stern look. Stoick shook his head.

"You don't have to drag me. I'm coming. I told you I would." He said, pulling open the door and facing the outdoors.

The village was quite empty, in part because of the early hour but mostly because of the events of the previous days. Parents were huddled together with their children, not wanting to let them go for fear that Adrianna's fate would soon befall their little ones.

"You think we're a bit early?" Gobber asked, his eyes falling upon the Haddock house. "They might not be awake."

"I want to get this over with." Stoick said firmly. "Astrid's an early riser. She'll be up."

The two older Vikings sauntered over to the house, breathing deeply and taking in the air. Stoick felt like these might be his last moments with his family so he was beginning to feel like putting off the inevitable might be preferable to facing two pairs of identical cold green eyes.

Gobber raised his fist and knocked on the door, feeling like formalities might be important due to the residents' sensitivity. It was opened a few seconds later by a tired-looking Astrid.

"Stoick… Gobber…" she stifled a yawn. "Hiccup's barely functional."

Feeling like this was more of an improvement, Stoick pushed past his daughter-in-law and looked his son, who was sitting at the table with his head resting on his palm. Hiccup visibly tensed.

"Dad." He said, still sounding groggy.

"You don't have to speak to me again after this." Stoick began, crossing the room and sitting across from his son. "But you have to hear me out. Just today."

"Dad, now isn't really the best…"

"Just listen, Hiccup." Gobber added, striding forward and pulling up a chair. "And you too, Astrid. Just let the man speak."

Stoick wasn't sure whether to thank Gobber or to glare at him. But he refrained from any reaction as Astrid sat down next to her husband, looking about as rigid as he did. The group stared at each other in stony silence for a few seconds.

"Adrianna is okay?" Stoick asked at last, averting Hiccup's gaze.
'Of course not.' Hiccup replied, his stomach twisting slightly. "But she will be."

"Good… good." Stoick said to the table. "Trista has been… dealt with. By the Berserkers."

"You're sure she's actually dead?" Astrid asked in a low tone.

"I made sure they did it. There are at least seven witnesses from Berk alone. She won't be back, that I can promise."

Hiccup stared at his hand, which was clutching a mug so tightly, the knuckles were white. He just wanted Stoick to get out. He wasn't ready to face his father, not yet. He knew his anger was slightly misdirected but he didn't care. His father was partially to blame and with Trista now dead, he was the only one to blame.

"Is that all you wanted to say?" Hiccup asked after a few seconds of increasingly uncomfortable silence.

"No. I… well something happened. Trista had a rather unusual last request." Stoick continued. "She wanted to have a private word with Dagur. I don't know what she told him but whatever it was made him very happy."

Hiccup's head shot up. "Is he going to come after the kids?"

"I don't know." Stoick said. "I don't think so. He doesn't generally recycle failed plans. He knows you'll fight for them. Whatever it is he's planning is a lot more elaborate. More foolproof."

"Well… thank you for letting us know." The hand Hiccup used to grip the mug was shaking the tiniest bit. "Look, I'm not ready to talk to you right now, dad."

"I know. I just wanted you to know what happened." Stoick sighed deeply. "I guess I'll go then."

The chief slowly rose to his feet and sauntered over to the door. Gobber remained behind, fully intending to attempt to talk some sense into Hiccup and Astrid. However, the pitter patter of tiny feet above them was sufficient to interrupt the horribly uncomfortable silences.

"Daddy?"

Adrianna descended the staircase, one arm around her new Night Fury and the other clutching a doll missing one arm and one leg (affectionately named Mr. Gobcup). The moment she locked eyes with Stoick, she paused. Grandfather and granddaughter stared at each other for a few seconds, both unsure of how to react. But, quite suddenly, the girl's face broke into a big smile and she bounded down the stairs as fast as she could, sending her toys flying.

"Poppy!" she squealed, hopping into his now outstretched arms.

Stoick hoisted the child off the ground, allowing her to put her arms around his neck. Her fingers didn't even come close to meeting each other in the back but this did not deter her from hugging him as closely as she could. Had either Stoick or Adrianna been looking at the others in the room, they might have noticed the girl's parents and almost-great-uncle staring at them, mouths agape.

"I'm sorry, Adrianna." Stoick whispered, hugging the girl as tightly as he could without crushing her.

"I know." She whispered back. "Dat's why I forgive-d you." She gently kissed him on the cheek. "I love you, Poppy."
Her Poppy breathed a laugh and looked straight into her eyes. "You know I love you too, right?"

"Uh huh." Adrianna nodded enthusiastically.

Hiccup slowly rose to his feet and made his way over to his father and daughter. He affectionately stroked Adrianna's back but looked his father in the eye.

"It's not often that my three year old daughter is a better man than me." He quipped.

"I'm not a man!" Adrianna said, sounding almost offended.

"I know you're not, sweetie." Her daddy playfully tugged a strand of her hair. "What I mean to say is, I think you're forgiven, dad."

Stoick looked from one pair of green eyes to the next. Hiccup was giving him the tiniest smile and in an instant, he understood.

"You don't have to go right away." He said after a few seconds. "I think Addie wants you to stick around."

"Please, Poppy?" added the child, her eyes widening and her lower lip puckering out the tiniest bit.

"Oh… I think I can spare a few minutes." Stoick kissed his granddaughter on the cheek. His beard tickled, almost making Adrianna giggle.

But she wasn't quite ready for laughter. At least, not yet.

Erick Larson was feeling antsy. He had heard that Adrianna was finally taken home. He was glad for this; he didn't like seeing unhappy people. But he wasn't sure how to proceed. On the one hand, he could simply wait for Adrianna to come play with him. Rather like he'd suggested. On the other hand, he didn't know if his picture had helped to cheer her up! And so, after gathering up the courage to do something outgoing, he shuffled over to the Haddock house in the hopes of making Adrianna smile.

On the way over, he marveled at the fact that he had managed to slip out of his house without being noticed. Admittedly, as the youngest and quietest child in his family, he was often overlooked but he would have thought his mother would be more conscientious. But with two older brothers and two older sisters, all of whom had their own problems, he supposed he shouldn't have been too surprised.

He looked over to the beach and found himself distracted. The icy shore looked rather picturesque. Erick loved scenic views. And so he wandered over, looking out over the frozen sea. He looked down at the sand beneath his boots and spotted several very pretty seashells. His teal green eyes widened with glee and he got to work picking them up, thinking that he could make them into something for Adrianna… Adrianna who he was going to go visit. Feeling a bit sheepish at his short attention span, he hastened over to the girl's house.

"Do we know you?" Hiccup asked, staring down at the boy from his towering height.

"I… umm… I… umm…" Erick seemed to be stuck in a loop. Here he was, looking up at Berk's future chief. The Dragon Conqueror. It was rather intimidating. To his great embarrassment, a strangled squeaking noise emanated from his throat.

Hiccup took pity on the child and kneeled down so he could look him in the eye. This did quite a
bit to instill confidence in the boy.

"Is Anna home?" Erick asked in a higher register than usual.

"She sure is. Why do you have shells?" Hiccup asked, gesturing to the fistfuls of pretty shells in Erick's hands.

"Oh, I made up a game I wanted to play. Does she play games?" Erick realized just how ridiculous this question was the moment it was voiced but Hiccup didn't seem to mind.

"Yes, Erick, she plays games. I'm sure she'd love to play a game with you." The very tall man chuckled and stood back up so that he could let the boy in.

Adrianna was lying on her stomach on the yak skin rug, her chin resting on the palms of both hands and her feet coming dangerously close to kicking the back of her head. She was wearing her green skirt today and it looked very pretty. Finn was building a "forge" out of wooden blocks and Adrianna was fascinated with the shape his creation was taking. It took her a few seconds to notice Erick standing in the doorway, edging closer almost as if he was approaching a dragon for the first time. Though Toothless' eyes did follow this small stranger as he shuffled forward.

"Anna?"

Adrianna's wide eyes turned to look at the little boy now standing over her. She smiled.

"Hi, Erick." She said, now sitting up. "I liked the picture."

Erick smiled and knelt down in front of her, dumping the shells on the ground as he did. She eyed them inquisitively.

"I got these for you. I made up a game I wanted to play. 'Cause your daddy says you play games." Erick got on his knees in front of her. "Do you want to play a game?"

The girl paused for a moment before nodding. She and Erick stood up and made their way to the corner of the room, where they could play on the dirt floor. Erick got out a poker and drew a square with little squares inside of it.

Hiccup glanced over to the boy and was interested to notice that he was left handed. Hiccup didn't see many left handed people around (though there were a few) but he always noticed them when he spotted them. Neither of his children shared this particular trait, a fact that didn't bother him in the slightest, but he still thought it was nice when he spotted someone a little bit different, at least in that way. To be fair, he'd never met anyone else who hiccupped when he or she cried or laughed either.

"I call it checkers. You play with the snail shells and I'll play with the clam shells. Is that okay?"

Erick proceeded to explain the rules of the game. Adrianna seemed to understand them pretty well and so they began to play several minutes later.

Hiccup thought it would be several more years before boys came to visit his daughter but Erick was so small and harmless, he didn't mind as much as he might have were it a boy who was a bit more loud or pushy. In other words, a boy more like his son.

Erick's game of "checkers" kept Adrianna busy for at least half an hour before a large distraction took hold of everyone's attention. Hiccup and Astrid had been so busy glancing over at their daughter and her new friend's game that they had neglected to notice their son chasing something into a corner. He emerged moments later with something clasped inside of his hands. He
immediately decided to show it to his father.

"Yook, daddy!" he squealed, bounding over to his distracted father. "Yook what I caught!"

Thinking he had tracked down a lizard or pretty stone, Hiccup leaned in to look at his son's outstretched hands. The boy opened them and a long, furry leg extended between his fingers. A moment later, eight beady eyes came into view and Hiccup let out an almost girlish scream, toppling backwards in his haste to distance himself from the enormous arachnid in his son's hands. Finn let out a giggle.

"Whassa matter, daddy? You don't yike my spider?" Finn asked, chasing his father, who was attempting to stand up so he could run farther.

"I like your spider, buddy!" Astrid exclaimed, enjoying the little scene unfolding before her.

"Yes, show it to mommy, she likes furry bugs that have too many legs and eyes…" Hiccup recoiled even farther, shuddering slightly.

"Yes, well is it really so surprising considering I married a man with too few legs?" Astrid deadpanned, taking a closer look at her son's prey.

"Ha. Ha. Very funny, Astrid. Just don't let that thing near me." Hiccup was now backing up against the wall.

Finn seemed to take this comment to mean his daddy wanted to spend more time with his new pet. He immediately bounded over to his father and attempted to place it somewhere on his body. The shriek that emanated from his father was the most girly sound he'd ever heard. However, he finally succeeded in sticking the spider onto his father's pant leg. Hiccup did an odd sort of jig to get the spider off of him when a loud hiccup came from the corner. All eyes fell on Adrianna.

The little girl was covering her mouth but her hiccups were quite audible. Everything fell silent except for the sound of her laughter and frequent hiccups. For a moment, her father forgot all about the spider crawling up his pant leg. He was immediately alerted of this fact by the appearance of the arachnid into his sight, now resting on his hip. He brushed it off and sent it flying across the room. Finn chased it, laughing loudly, and found the spider, now quite mercifully dead, lying on the floor next to the opposite wall.

Hiccup and Astrid walked over to their giggling daughter, smiling widely. They thought that it might be the most wonderful noise they had ever heard. The noise they never thought they would hear again. Erick wasn't sure why they were making such a big fuss but he did think that Adrianna's hiccupping laugh might be the cutest thing he had ever heard.

The Hooligans had nearly forgotten about the Snoggletog celebration that had been canceled in the ensuing panic. However, they were reminded when Stoick made the announcement that there would, in fact, be a Snoggletog party that Monday, exactly a week after the one they should have had. Hiccup and Astrid couldn't believe that the entire ordeal had begun and ended in less than a week's time.

Astrid managed to dig up some of the dyes they had bought and she painstakingly dyed a white skirt of Adrianna's so that it would be purple in time for the party. Unfortunately, due to the shortage of dye, this skirt was much lighter than the last. But her little daughter was so excited when she saw it that she actually shed a few tears.

Adrianna still had moments that worried her parents. She couldn't sleep in her own room because
of nightmares that made her scream in her sleep. She was terrified of going outside. She had stopped singing altogether and was much quieter than usual. And, worst of all, sometimes she would crawl into a corner and cry for no apparent reason. Hiccup and Astrid knew that it would be a long time before she was healed, that her moments of happiness were short lived. But, being Haddocks, they were going to remain stubborn and try their hardest to make sure their little girl felt safe and happy once more.

But life on Berk had to return to normal, at least as normal as it could possibly be, so the Haddock family decided to enjoy the Snoggletog party as much as possible. When they entered the Great Hall, Adrianna clutching her father's neck and sucking her thumb, there were several cheers and a few Vikings waked over to greet the thankfully whole family. Hiccup gently placed Adrianna on the floor but she didn't seem keen to be away from him quite yet. She put one arm around his prosthetic and held on tight. The large Vikings around her sensed her trepidation and decided to give her some personal space.

Stoick bounded over a minute later and got down on his knees in front of his tiny granddaughter. She relaxed slightly but didn't let go of her daddy's leg.

"No one is going to hurt you, Anna." Stoick said in a surprisingly gentle voice for a man of his size and appearance. "You know what? I've got an idea."

This Snoggletog went down in history, in part because of its lateness but mostly because it began the tradition of large Viking men sipping tea with the tiniest Viking girls. Stoick was rather adamant about this amendment to the traditional Viking way. After all, his little granddaughter liked very big tea parties. Soon, the tables were pushed together and a large group was sitting in a circle, all focused on one of the smallest children at the table.

Adrianna warmed up to the idea immediately and began to tell a very entertaining story she had made up about something called the "dragon fairy." No one noticed Hiccup's cheeks turn slightly pink in response to this main character and there were several snickers when Adrianna relayed her theory on how dragon eggs were given to dragon mommies and daddies. However, no one set the girl straight. When her surprisingly entertaining and engaging story was complete, there was loud applause.

Erick slid into the bench next to Adrianna. Upon seeing her new friend, she smiled widely.

"Wanna know a secret?" he asked her in a low tone so that none of the grown-ups could hear him.

Adrianna nodded and so he whispered something into her ear. She let out a loud giggle and soon both children were laughing uproariously. Erick then suggested they play a game together and Adrianna hopped off the bench, gripping his hand in hers.

"I think Anna just made her first best friend." Astrid said, watching the children walk hand in hand over to the far side of the room, where Finn was playing in the dirt.

"I'm not sure I approve of this behavior." Hiccup narrowed his eyes at the little boy. "I'm not supposed to worry about boys until she's at least sixteen."

Astrid chuckled and playfully smacked his shoulder, berating him for his obviously unfounded worries. "Oh please, they're little. What could happen?"

"She could marry him and have his babies." Snotlout piped up, butting into the conversation quite abruptly.
Hiccup visibly paled but Astrid laughed harder. "Yeah, only after Finn marries Inga."

"He will not!" Snotlout clutched his baby girl closer. "I'm not letting Jorgensons and Haddocks mix! The results would be more horrible than we could possibly imagine!"

"Are you implying that my son is a bad influence?" Astrid now sounded slightly dangerous.

"That is exactly what I'm implying." Snotlout said quite boldly.

Not one to smack a man holding a baby, Astrid restrained herself and looked over to her husband, who was still watching his daughter and the youngest Larson chasing each other all over the Great Hall, ducking underneath people and tables. He could hear her hiccups echoing all over the room. He sighed deeply, still feeling slightly tense. Astrid nudged him and he turned to look at her.

"Stop worrying." Astrid said, quickly pecking him on the cheek. "She's going to be fine."

"I don't think I'm ever going to stop worrying about her." He said, looking over Astrid's shoulder at his daughter, who was now hiding under a table. "I think that's part of being a dad."

"It is. A little worry is normal. Too much and you're going to smother her. So let her be a kid."

"A week ago, I honestly thought I'd never see her again." Hiccup's heart beat slightly faster at the memory.

"Hey." Astrid pulled his face down slightly so he was staring directly into her eyes. "That was then. This is now. And she's home and safe. She's our miracle."

Hiccup glanced over her shoulder at Finn, who had decided that Adrianna and Erick's game looked fun and decided to play with them. He watched them run around for a few seconds before looking back at his wife, now smiling serenely.

"Both of them." He said, now putting his arms around Astrid's waist. "Our kids are the gods' little miracles. And I love them to death."

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**This is Berk**

*We have one person to perform marriages, two to perform childbirth, and an entire village to perform funerals. Often, there are too many people and dragons and too little food. We have a lot of enemies and even fewer friends. But if this sounds like an awful place to live, the best part of it all are the families.*

*Sure, we have our ups and downs. Our good eggs and our bad. But every child is their parents little miracle. And my wife and I are luckier than most. You see, while most people have only one child at a time, Astrid and I have twins.*

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**THE END**

Chapter End Notes

Hope you enjoyed it and don't forget to leave a comment! Part 3 of Growing Up
Haddock is called Under Pressure and will be coming soon!

~KateMarie999

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