

The Greatest Day of Your Life (Not)

An extract from ~~X~~ow to Steal a Dragon's Sword
by Cressida Cowell



The dragons were horribly near now, flying in close formation – most unnatural behaviour for dragons. They were drawing down their legs and stretching out their talons, ready to strike. The Warriors were totally helpless, they'd be killed inside their gaudy cocoons as they slept.

Hiccup leant across to the small ledge in the cliff where he had stowed his rucksack. Hands shaking, he drew out his bow and an arrow from the quiver.

Perhaps it was lucky that Hiccup was so far away. If he could see what the leader of the dragon pack was doing now ... he might have fainted.

For the leader was a Tonguetwister dragon.

Tonguetwister sounds like quite a sweet name for a dragon. But I am afraid that Tonguetwisters remove the limbs from their victims so that they can no longer run away.

I'm sorry, but it's true.

Hovering perfectly still next to one of the hammocks, the Tonguetwister slowly opened its mouth and out flicked its tongue: a tongue thicker than a man's muscly arm. The forked ends of that tongue were flexible and delicate.

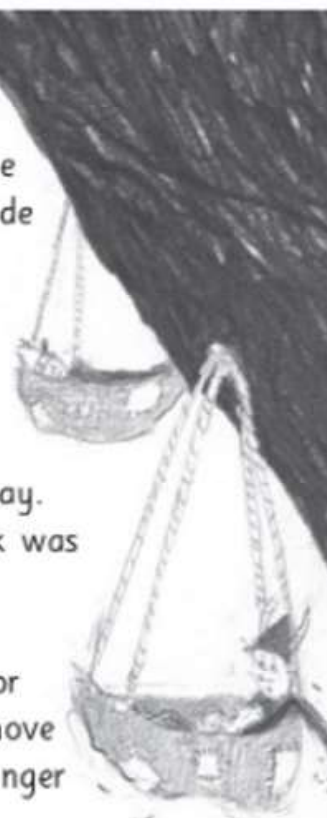
The tongue slid inside one of the hammocks, the one belonging to Hiccup's unpleasant cousin Snotlout, and rummaged around as if looking for something.



Hiccup took careful aim, and fired the arrow.

Of course, he was aiming at the Tonguetwister.

Hiccup wasn't that bad a marksman, actually. Not as good as he was at swordfighting, but not bad.



But to do Hiccup justice, it is difficult to fire an arrow from a wobbling hammock. Particularly when you are using a bow and an arrow both bent out of shape, ironically, by Snotlout himself.

The slightly-crooked arrow left the bow and spiralled upwards, weaving erratically in a drunken fashion. At the last minute it plunged to the right, missed the dragon entirely, and sank into Snotlout's left calf.

It wasn't quite what Hiccup had intended, but it did have the desired effect ... sort of.

Snotlout let out a small, muffled scream, as you would, of course, if you had just been shot in the leg by an arrow, and leapt out of the hammock ... much to the surprise (and annoyance) of the Tonguetwister, who hadn't yet got hold of one of Snotlout's limbs.

Of course, in his half-asleep, arrow-ridden state, Snotlout had completely forgotten he was three-quarters of the way up a cliff. Down he plunged, hurtling down that hysterical drop, past the hammocks of his fellow-Warriors, and past Hiccup himself, who reached out desperately to try and catch him, though Snotlout would have been far too heavy ...

And that would have been the end of Snotlout if there had not been a tree growing out of the cliff-face not far below Hiccup. The tree broke Snotlout's fall, and though he carried on downwards, he ju-u-ust managed to grab hold of one of the lower bendy branches to save himself.

So there was Snotlout, dangling from the tree, a three-thousand-foot drop below him, so surprised, that he, too, could not make a sound, staring up at Hiccup with round, terrified eyes.

'HELP ME, YOU IDIOT,' mouthed Snotlout gracelessly.

