

The Once and Future King

by SharKohen

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Summary: Summary: Jack's a warlock - an unfortunate profession in an anti-magic kingdom, and more so now that his master's the prince himself. But Hiccup is the prophesied Once and Future King, who will unite magic and non-magic worlds, and Jack's destiny is to bring that to pass, among dragons, witches, warlords and their collective idiosyncrasies. BBC's Merlin AU, ROTBTFD, Non-slash.

## 1. Prologue

The Once and Future King

Prologue

This was the Kingdom of Berk.

It was a fairly new kingdom, having been founded only seven generations ago and had only exactly seven monarchs so far. It wasn't a particularly huge kingdom, considering that there were dozens of other nations and tribes littered all around it. A quarter of those kingdoms were allies, a quarter were enemies, and the rest were preferentially ignored.

Besides the dozens of villages and towns that were scattered across its semi-large territory, Berk had a central castle â€“ their capital, which they had named also the Castle of Berk, or just Berk.

The Kingdom of Berk and the Castle of Berk. All Berk, because Berkians were frightfully uncreative people that way.

For all their lack of skill when it came to naming things (as you will soon discover), they were pretty good warriors. It was said the first immigrants that landed on present-day Berk were invaders - Vikings from North, a heritage that Berkians were much proud of. Perhaps it shouldn't be surprising then that quite a number of the

older kingdoms hated Berkians with all their might. After all, Berk's ancestors had stolen a good score of their ancestors' land. And their food. And their gold. You get the drift.

It wasn't a bad place to live in. It had mighty kings that held the country together. It had strong armies who deterred their hotheaded neighbours â€“ most of the time. It had a growing economy and prospering people. The only problem was ...the criminals.

You see, while most kingdoms dealt with robbers, murders, smugglers â€“ not to say that Berk had none of those, but these were considered lesser â€“ Berk dealt with sorcerers.\_

Magic wasn't limited to Berk alone, oh, no, but it was a uniquely huge problem in Berk. Never has there been a kingdom so utterly against sorcery. It had been set as law in the times of the first Kings of Berk, having been written in the grand scrolls locked at the bottom of the royal archives, that magic was prohibited on the pain of death. It had been said that out of the all seven Kings gone by, Stoick the Vast had been first and only to have been opened to magic, even appointing an official court sorcerer. That had been a time when magic had flourished in Berk.

But then suddenly, he had had a change of heart and he had reinstated the laws of his ancestors, beginning the dark years that was only ever referred to again as the Great Purge. Persons born with magic; persons practicing magic; persons making magic items for commercial use, and persons that had magic inflicted on them were all executed without trial. Many of the native born followers of the old religion were wiped off the map completely â€“ high priests, Druids, factions and even whole villages. Never had so many tears been wept or blood spilt.

But that was an age ago. After fifteen years of bloodshed, Berk now settled into a semi-prosperous era. The witches and enchanters, who have all gone into hiding during this time, began to whisper of a new beginning. A prophecy was passed from the seers to the zealots to the nomads.

A great sorcerer would rise amongst the people, bringing who bring with him an even greater ruler; one who would be fair to magical and non-magical alike. It would be an era of peace and justice for all of The Wilderwest.

The sorcerer, as they called him, was \_Jokul Frosti.\_

\*\*A/N:\*\*

\*\*Information:\*\*

\*\*AU: Based on BBC's Merlin (the one with the young Arthur and Merlin, duh), so essentially the period is during like 400-500 AD? Where Berk is pretty much Camelot, and the entire setting is somewhere in a place much like Great Britain, but NOT Great Britain (I'd like to think it's somewhere in Norway, since that makes more cultural sense), and there are a lot of warring tribes. Yep. I'm following Merlin's way of doing this â€“ meaning I will be ignoring actual historical figures, events etc., and there would be heavy injection of ROTG and HTTYD instead. Expect magic, and some Arthurian

lore (Maybe even Holy Grail ¯ or as Merlin has subtly removed the religious context - the Cup of Life. Who knows?)\*\*

\*\*Oh, Jack is Merlin. Hiccup is (currently prince) Arthur.  
\*\*

\*\*Pairings: I'm a heavily canon person, so no slash. Hiccupstrid. Possible slight Jelsa (possible only.) Any other non-canon pairings are highly likely to be temporary, or plot device.\*\*

\*\*Movies involved: Most the focus would be on ROTG, HTTYD and Frozen films, but other Disney/Dreamworks films like Brave, Tangled and Big Hero 6 may possibly make appearances and \*\*\*\*have roles in the story. The main characters are still Jack and Hiccup, so expect them to be here most.\*\*

\*\*Writing Style: Unlike my other fic, The Odds of Five, this story isn't a full-length novel exactly, but rather a bunch of (largely) chronological drabbles. It does follow a storyline (inspired by Merlin's own), but it will be told in 'episodes' ¯ which would be about 5-8 Chapters in length ¯ massive jumps in time would be like 'seasons'. These chapters are likely to be also shorter than the massive ones I write in TOO5. I'll probably brief you guys into each chapter/part that I write (when necessary).\*\*

\*\*Updates: My updates for this will be erratic, because this is my writer's block-killer and sarcasm dump. But review and questions would be much appreciated nonetheless, and the response to this would affect my motivation for it. Hopefully.\*\*

\*\*Review\*\*\*\*. \*\*\*\*Ask Questions.\*\*

\*\*TO THOSE WHO HAD READ THE DRABBLE THAT USED TO BE HERE:\*\*

\*\*I have removed it because I had re-watched the show and found out that what I had written will have problems in the future, and is not the direction that I want to take (I spotted about a total of three errors in it ¯ you won't know what they are, but I would, because ¯ I'm the writer). So¯ yeah. Maybe one day I'll re-upload it as a 'deleted scene'. Maybe. Here's the snitch ¯ WHATEVER HAPPENED IN THAT DRABBLE DIDN'T HAPPEN. \*\*

\*\*Okay. Next Chapter.\*\*

## 2. Part I: Dragon's Call Chapter 1

The Once and Future King

Part I: The Dragon's Call

Chapter 1

\* \* \*

><p><strong>HANG A SEC!<strong>

\*\*If you have read the Prologue before 2\*\*\*\*nd\*\*\*\* May 2015, you might have not read the completely changed version of it, so please go back and read it again to avoid confusion. The A/N right at the

bottom explains everything.\*\*

\* \* \*

><p><em>In a land of myth and a time of magic, the destiny of a great kingdom rested on the shoulders of a young boy. His nameâ€¢'Jack.</em>

"Who?"

"Too-tan-ya." Jack repeated more slowly.

The blonde girl, who he assumed was some kind of maidservant by her dressage and vase of flowers she carried, appeared to be very annoyed when she answered, "There isn't such a person here."

"Really? C'oz it says here that the address is the castle grounds." He pointed at the letter in his hand.

"Hold this." The ceramic vast was shoved in his arms, while the piece of parchment was snatched from his fingers.

He stumbled back slightly at the weight of the decoration â€“ gosh, the girl had to be strong â€“ while looking nervously over her shoulder. "Erm, the letter's kind of confidential."

She harrumphed sourly, before squinting at the sheet again. Not long after that, she thrust it back at him. "It's pronounced as 'Tooth-tia-na', lump head. No wonder I didn't know who you're talking about." Jack was half-way through spluttering out a defense for himself when she gave him a sidelong glance. "Is your hairâ€¢'white?"

"This?" He had a huge urge to run his fingers through his white tufts, which he often did when he was frustrated or embarrassed, but he couldn't until the maid took the vase back. "It's just platinum blonde."

He had gotten a lot of questions about the hair when he was growing up. Some people in his hometown of Burgess had been extremely frightened by the sight of it. They were superstitious folk, claiming the white hair was a sign that he was a changeling, and the real Jack Overland had been stolen away by the fays seventeen years ago. Eventually the town doctor shut them all up by saying that it was just a medical ailment that he suffered from. So conspiratorial gossips turned to pitiful murmurs that explained his white hair as a sign of curse of sickliness that some witch must have placed on him as a babe.

He had just given them withering looks, quite like the one the golden-headed maid was giving him now.

"I know what platinum blonde looks like," she retorted pointedly, flicking a scornful finger at his hair, "and that is definitely not platinum blonde."

Nevertheless, she dropped the topic. Gesturing to the corridor behind her, she told him, "Go straight down the hall, turn right, pass the kitchen and ask the staff there. They'll point it out to you."

"Thank you." He simpered unconsciously, nodding a little in manner that he hoped was humble-looking. He held out his free hand. "Name's Jack, by the way. Jack Overland."

She narrowed her eyes at him, then at his hand. Simply readjusting the vase in her hands, she answered stiffly, "Astrid. And no, I'm not free for dinner. I'll never be free for dinner, unless it's to feast on your dead corpse."

Even long after she had stalked away, he was still completely baffled by what she could possibly mean. Then he shrugged, setting out to follow her instructions. If there was anything he had learnt about his few hours in the castle of Berk, it was the people were pretty stuck up, especially to poor country bumpkins like himself. Snobs.

He signed when he glanced down the letter. He was glad he managed to fold up the low end of the letter in time, if not Astrid might have caught the line near the bottom of the page that said \_"â€|help him learn more about his 'fantastic' abilitiesâ€|" -

\* \* \*

><p>When the door creaked open, Tooth hopped straight up to her feet and bolted to the entrance, bouncing up in enthusiasm. There was a young boy at her door â€“ didn't look older than twenty, and definitely looking lost. He was carrying some kind of carry-on bag â€“ probably travelling from somewhere. She assessed him quickly, her eyes stopping at his white-hair. Just as he opened his mouth to speak, she shushed him. "Don't rush me."</p>

He clamped his mouth shut, flabbergasted.

Humming to herself while rubbing her chin, she circled him, examining him critically, making her victim more and more uncomfortable with each passing second. Finally, she stopped right in front of him, her bright purple eyes having to stretch up to meet his blue ones since he was much taller than herself.

Finally she spoke, snapping her fingers as she did, "Melanin-deficiency. Increased during your growing years, I expect?"

He blinked. "Wha-"

"In that case," she cut in, flitting from the door to her store cupboard. There stood a dozen different brightly-colored bottles, both labelled and unlabelled. She pursed her lips, waving a hand over one of them, then picking out one. "Aha!"

Flying back to the dumbstruck young man, she pressed the vial in his hand. "Take this twice a day before meals. Half a tea spoon should do. If it works out â€“ no promises-" she pointed at a carved wooden sign hanging off the walls that titled \_'Terms & Conditions'\_ "-you should get your natural hair coloration back in about 6 months. Thanks for visiting the Court Physician!" She gleefully gestured at the door and hopped away, fully expecting him to leave.

"Whoa, what!" The boy exclaimed, eyeing the glass vial, then the

strange lady dressed in bright green. Being the speedy little person she was, she was now climbing up a ladder, almost half-way up the ladder leaning against the shelf of scrolls.

"Don't worry. I won't charge you this round. I'm not the type who'd extort money from 'yah!'" The old creaky ladder had shifted, jolting her off its steps and sending her plummeting downwards. A shriek left her lips, but then it died halfway when she found herself no longer falling.

When she opened her eyes, she discovered that she had, for some equivocal reason, managed to defy gravity. She was \_floating \_in air.

She cocked her head up to whom she was certain was the reason she was in this state. The white-haired boy had a hand a stretch out towards her, though he was a considerable distance away from where she was. Under her gaze, he swallowed, then dropped his hand.

At once, she found her tumbling to the ground, landing with an ungraceful 'oomphf!'.

"Are you alright?" she heard him ask. Feet tapping on the cobbled floor told her that he was coming over to help her.

She could feel some new bruises growing on her elbows and kneecaps, but she ignored them in favor grabbing the boy's wrist, saying in low tones, "Close the door."

He stared at her with large eyes, stunned.

She clambered to her feet, adding with greater ferocity, "\_Now.\_

He finally moved, taking his hand from her grasp and shutting the door. Tooth ran over to the windows, closing the shutters and barricading them. She then pulled the boy to the centre of the room, getting straight to the point. "Who are you?" In a softer, more urgent voice, she added, "And don't you know that magic is \_illegal\_?"

"Yeah, but,-" he licked his lips, hesitating, "-I thought I could trust a fellow sorcerer."

"Don't call me that!" He did a double take at her ferocity. Rolling her eyes, Tooth said at normal volume, "I used to dabble in magic, but that was eons ago. I've retired." Those words sounded funny coming from a woman in her mid-thirties, especially when she still acted like a child most of the time.

The boy made a frown, sighing. "That's a real pity, because-" he held a folded piece of parchment to her "-you're the only one who can help me, as far as I know."

She tweezed it from his fingers, skimming through it rapidly. Her frown became a beam. She looked up at him with new interest. "You're Abigail Overland's son?"

He gave nod in confirmation, which set her off on a squeal of happiness.

"Oh, this is just wonderful!" She wrapped him in a sudden tight hug, making him stumble back, then just as suddenly she released him.

"So, -" she folded the letter back up, while the boy â€“ Jack, the letter said that he was called Jack - "-how is she?"

The boy's face fell. He folded up his arms, fingers uneasily fiddling with the cords of his backpack. "She just passed. Sickness in the village, you see."

A pang of maternal sympathy struck her, and Tooth gave what she hoped was comforting pat on the back. "I'm really sorry about that. She was a good woman."

"Yeah." Jack smiled a little, then he nodded at the parchment.

"Before sheâ€™s yeah, she told me to come find you. Said you could help you teach me aboutâ€¢\_you know what\_. "

She stood up straight again, humming to herself as ruminated over this. She hadn't exactly practiced magic for ages â€“ not that she wanted to, but then again, not because she didn't want to either. She decided to step-sidied that problem for now, asking instead, "How did you do it?"

He raised a brow. "Do what?"

"Make things happen with, y'know," she began snapping her fingers as the words churned out. "Enchantments, amulets, spells. Who taught you? Where did your study?" Her face suddenly fell really grave. "You didn't sell your soul to anyone, did you?"

"No. No. No. Who? Study what? No!" The boy completely befuddled.

"To do what you just did, as simple as it looks, require lots and lots of practice and the use of incredibly specific spells," Tooth explained, her expression become even more incredulous every second. "And you're telling me you don't use anything and everything just-" she made a vague gesture, with a whooshing sound effect.

He nodded, unable to stop the smug grin on his lips. "Um, yeah?"

She takes a step back, looking him over with new eyes.  
"Inconceivable."

"I know," he said rather cockily, shrugging, "I know."

"No, I was talking about your teeth."

Jack frowned again. "Teeth?"

"Yes." Without warning, she had dragged his head down, yanked opened his jaws and begun scrutinizing his teeth with amazement. "This is incredible! How do you keep them as white as snow? What do you use to clean it?"

"\_Wa-ah-tha-we-wha-wha?\_" was the garbled words that came out.

"Fluorine? I'm really putting my money on fluorine," the woman went on, still pulling on the poor boy's gums. "Some idiots swear their lives on pig fat, but I tell you-"

There was a knock on the door at that moment. She called out, "Come in!"

A chubby young man entered, carrying a bundle of scrolls under his arm. "Good morning, M'am Toothiana."

"Why, hello, Fishlegs," she finally released her prisoner, who was more than happy to have his mouth back, rubbing his lower jaw in bemusement. Tooth ignore his disgruntled expression, running over to excited to the armored young gentlemen. "Oh, dear, I forgot. Good morning, Sir Fishlegs -you grow up so fast. Jack,-" she nudged the white-haired boy in the ribs sharply to which he gave a yelp, "-greet his lordship."

"Top to the morning to you, milord. I'm Jack." The boy stuck a hand out to the other lad, who was only a year or two older than him, but the three times as noble by blood.

Tooth cringed inwardly. From the last words of Abigail Overland, she had inferred that Jack needed some kind of purpose in his life â€“ a direction, if you will. He would stay with her of course. There was no way she'd let the boy fend for himself all alone â€“ he was too hapless a fellow for that. She had considered finding a job for him somewhere in the Royal Court, since that would be much more convenient for both of them, but considering how carefree the boy with a noblemanâ€| perhaps it wouldn't be appropriate.

Fortunately, Sir Fishlegs was not one too fussed about ceremony. "Please just call me Fishlegs, or Fish," the larger boy said as he took the hand, shaking it firmly. "Becoming a knight was not really by my own choice."

"Really?" Jack's brow shot up, an instant grin across his lips. He really did have sparkling white teeth.

"I'm more concerned on training my intellectual prowess," Fishlegs said with a little pride, patting the scrolls under his arm, before placing them neatly on a nearby table. "I must really thank you for loaning these materials, M'am Tooth. The psychotherapy theory was especially interesting, though I'm not sure it actually works."

"No problem at all, Sir Fishlegs," Tooth answered blithely, grabbing the scrolls and arranging them back on her lower shelf. The face that the white-haired pulled made clear he had no idea what they were talking about.

"So, are you a relation of Toothiana? Her nephew? Cousin?" The chubby had stuck up a conversation with the other teen.

"What? No, no," Jack laughed, then cleared his throat. "I'm here to â€|erm-

Tooth froze even as she slid another scroll in its hole. Don't let him say something stupid like 'learn magic', she thought. From the little that she had seen of him, she felt he wasn't the type to think before he acted.

"-be her apprentice. Yeah! I'm Toothiana's apprentice."

With her back facing the two boys, Tooth allowed herself to wince at the idea. From which hat did he pull that out of?

Actually come think of it, it wasn't that bad. He'll have a legitimate reason to stay with her in the Castle, she'll have a student to teach, they'll live happily ever after.

Why, it's perfect!

"Yes, Jack's training to become a physician."

"Yeah, I'm—" the white-haired boy broke off, stunned at her words, his eyes going as round as saucers.

"In a matter of fact," she continued calmly to the reluctant knight, as if it wasn't all made up on the spot, "I was hoping Jack could go with you to the library to pick some books on basic anatomy and physiology. He's new to the town, so he might get lost."

"That's a marvelous idea!" Fishlegs clearly shared her enthusiasm. Though a knight, Toothiana knew that he invested much time and effort the Berkian library, and sharing that collection obviously appealed to him. "I can totally show you around the town at the same time. It'll be great!"

"Great," Jack echoed with far less excitement, dropping his bag on the floor. The portly boy had already grabbed his arm, and was dragging him to the door.

"Have a good day, M'am Tooth!" Fishlegs called. For a supposedly bookish fellow, he was a muscular lad, and the other boy was practically floating off the floor.

"Help," her unwilling apprentice mouted to her before he was whisked out of the door.

Toothiana merely chuckled, shouting in return, "Stay out of trouble!"

Jack didn't seem to really like the prospect of being a physician's apprentice, but Tooth was confident he would warm up to the idea. The healing sciences were a great for him to learn how to help people, and what better direction in life than that?

\* \* \*

><p><strong>SN (Story Notes. Stuff related to the story):\*\*

\*\*The next bunch of chapters of the Dragon's Call will introduce most of the recurring characters and some stuff about Berk, and how Jack ends up being Hiccup's manservant. \*\*

\*\*I'm going to admit - Berk itself is going to be very much HTTYD based, because the magic stuff is where ROTG comes in (and other movies) as the story moves along.\*\*

\* \* \*

><p><strong>AN (Author's Notes. Administrative details and others.

Skim this if you're just interested in the story):

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\*\*Mailbox:\*\*

\*\*DevilShila: Thank you! My updates will still be sporadic, but I really have lots of ideas for stuff to write. I love Merlin too!\*\*

\*\*gleekyglamour413: Merlin fans! For your request, I'll try to think of a way to do it, because just like you, it annoyed me that Arthur found out so late. Magic? Definitely. Dragons? Yes, though I may bring in other magical creatures from the show.\*\*

\*\*Review. Critique. Ask Questions.\*\*

### 3. Part I: Dragon's Call Chapter 2

The Once and Future King

Part I: The Dragon's Call

Chapter 2

"I think it's barbaric."

The minute that word passed her lips, Hiccup found the liquid from his cup going down his windpipe instead of his throat. He spluttered, dropping the silver goblet and coughing violently. He noted from the corner of his eye that his father had seen it and given a sigh, which made himself also want to sigh at himself, if he wasn't too busy choking.

"Napkin, sire?" The servant waiting on him proffered the cloth magically — er, no, not magically, quite normally — out of nowhere. He nodded, quickly taking the towel and coughing into it, with the sound of his involuntary spasms muffled by the fabric. The stares upon him weighed like an anvil around his neck, even though there were only two more diners sitting around the long table besides himself.

He was only too grateful that his father had decided to comment on the royal ward's choice of language, rather than his son's lack of decorum. "Please elaborate."

The blonde seated at the farthest end of the table delicately dabbed her own napkin on her lips, before replying, "Well, my lord, the entire point of the ceremony is to be a 'final exam' of sorts — to prove that the knight in question is truly skilled in combat, as well as courageous enough to face a fearsome beast. However—" her maid-servant had stepped forward to refill her cup, so she paused to thank her first.

"However," Elsa continued, "I do not believe that slaying a chained beast in a cage is a proof of valour, nor is it test of skill. It is simply mindless gore for public entertainment. That makes it barbaric."

It was incredible how completely collected she remained just after

uttering those words. His father didn't take any negative criticism very well, no matter how constructive. He had often observed how Sir Spitelout would carefully twist the words in his propositions to make it sound more pleasing to his father's ears, or Gobber would make off-hand remarks in a flippant manner to soften the blow. That was one of the reasons why he terribly guarded about how he spoke to the King â€“ whenever his father bothered to listen, anyway.

Unfortunately, Lady Elsa didn't always exercise the necessary tact while speaking to his father, especially when she felt very strongly about something â€“ and somehow she felt very strongly about many disagreeable things.

"The cullings are not entertainment." His father's voice was low, but Hiccup could identify the millions of danger signals embedded in it. "They are demonstrations â€“ demonstrations on the terror that magic would wreck upon this kingdom if let to roam free. When a knight kills one of those monsters before the people, not only does he prove that he is strong and brave enough to face trial, he also shows loyalty to Berk by his willingness to do what is necessary to protect it."

Hiccup made an inward groan, feeling almost like face-planting himself into the beef stew sitting right in front of him. His foster sister was going to swallow the bait â€“ he could see it just by observing how she tightened her jaw. He sighed deeply before taking a few more large gulps of liquid.

"When did loyalty becoming equivalent to magic-hating?"

He could almost predict his father's answer â€“ he mouthed it silently before the King said, "Ever since magic sought to destroy to Berk years ago. To destroy magic is to protect the Kingdom."

"Well, my lord, forgive if this seems rude, that was eons ago."  
\_Haha, it was rude.\_"Have you considered that many people who use magic in this Kingdom also see themselves as Berkians? Given the chance, I believe that they would use it for Berk, rather than against it."

"That would never happen," Stoick disagreed sternly. "Magic corrupts those who use it, even those whose intentions meant well at first. I cannot take that risk."

If he earned a penny for every time these conversations occurred, Hiccup would have more coffers than those of the Royal treasury. In his head, he was just begging and begging for Elsa to let it go.

His wishing didn't work, because the blonde woman retorted, "I thought that Berk was built on the principles of justice and compassion, but condemning people simply for earning their keep, or to protecting themselves, can hardly be justified."

"It is the law."

"Well, you can change the law, can't you? You're the King."

\_Annnnddd \_this was where the personal attacks would start. His father would defend the law, and then Elsa would list a bunch of critiques

against it. Then his father would probably bring up something about Elsa not honoring her father by her behavior, then Elsa would say compare her father to him, and then his father would pull the 'I-am-King-you-better-do-as-I-say', then Elsa would purse her lips together and drink her soup sullenly, and then his father would ask him â€"

"So, what did you learn in training today, Hiccup?"

The scrawny heir-apparent's head jerked up so quickly that he hit the back of his head against the chair. While rubbing the bruise forming on his skull, he quickly ran over his entire list of predicted events and realized that he had failed to leave the table before the question was raised. That meant he had to face the consequences.

"Um." He stared intently down at his food as he tried to piece together a suitably placating answer. "I â€""

"Hiccup, look at me when I'm talking to you."

"Yes, sir." He lifted his head obediently, and wished he didn't, because now he could both feel and see his father's dark green eyes boring into him, waiting for an answer that wasn't completely stupid.

He threw a glance at his foster-sister, but she was too busy seething to herself to offer him any assistance.

"Um," he repeated awkwardly, clearing his throat, "I learned how to throw a bolaâ€|"

"Really?" His father sounded pleasantly surprised for a moment.

"â€|as in I learned it by observing how other people threw it. Um, I can't-" his voice fell into a decrescendo, his words falling over each other, "- I can't actually do it myself."

"Oh."

"Such a shame, Hiccup," Elsa's voice was deceptively neutral, her blue eyes darting to the russet-haired ruler at the other end of the table. "Since the only way you can prove your worth in Berk is to throw one of those ugly, grappling things and kill a magical flying beast."

The King didn't miss the sardonic undertones. "Elsa,-" he gave her a hard glare, "-you will stay in your room until you learn to hold your tongue."

The girl merely returned with a cool gaze, folding her napkin and placing it by her half-eaten meal. Rising from her seat, she gave a brief nod to both gentlemen. "My lord. Hiccup."

She waved to her maidservant as she turned to leave. "Come, Astrid."

Only after the blonde noblewoman had departed did his father speak again, "Why couldn't you be more like her?"

Hiccup blinked. "You want me to be likeâ€|\_Elsa\_."

His father nodded while taking a sip from his own goblet.

The boy was aghast. "But-but—" he cast a hasty glance to the door from which the lady in question had left, "-she argues with you all the time."

"She's stubborn," his father said â€" Hiccup noted the irony of the speaker, but wisely mentioned nothing â€" "but at least she knows her beliefs, and is willing to speak for them. Those are signs of a good leader."

\_Oh, great. Another leadership talk. Add that to the pile of inadequacies. \_"Well, why don't you make her King-um, Queen then?"

His father's face turned thunder-cloud grey.

Hiccup chuckled nervously. "That was a joke?"

His father's disapproving expression didn't fade, because he was horribly serious man that way, and because he never quite understood his strange son's sense of humor.

"Hiccup, one day you would rule Berk-"

Hiccup resisted the urge to hide his face in his palms, or cover his ears and scream, because he had heard it so many times that he could almost sing and do a dance number based on the words his father was going to say.

"-and when you do, you are going to need to be strong leader. People will challenge you, and enemies seek to destroy the kingdom. At times like those, you would need to know what you believe in, and you will need to make decisions accordingly, some of which will come at great costs. Do you understand?"

He nodded, because he did understand â€" in theory. Doing it in actual life was a lot harder, especially when his 'princely decisions' usually ended in fire, collasping buildings, or both. Usually both.

"Good." His father reclined into his chair, starting himself on a drumstick on his plate. "So, what do you actually believe in?"

Hiccup had to blink really, really hard at this one, because... did his father just ask him that? \_"Um, as inâ€|"

"About the law, about magic, anything." That was quite a generous offer. His father rarely â€" okay, never â€" inquired after his own opinion, or gave him such free reign on the topics.

Hiccup licked his lips, nervous yet slightly excited. After a careful pondering, he began, "Well-"

"Your majesty!" A knight clad in full steel burst into the Royal dining hall without warning. There was a clatter and clinking of

chainmail when the said knight gave a quick bow, before explaining the reason for his interruption. "One of our scouts has returned. He thinks that he may have tracked down the sorcerer."

"Really?" The King was on his feet in seconds, drumstick and stew all forgotten. To his son, he merely said, "I'll back." As he walked away hurriedly, Hiccup heard a faint mutter, "Probably."

"And I'll be here," he called out just as before the large wooden doors slammed shut. Adding dejectedly "maybe."

The dining hall was now truly empty, save the remaining servants standing around, waiting for an order. Hiccup stuck a spoon in the stew, then let go of it when he realized that he wasn't hungry. He was never a big eater, which may or may not be related to his bony form.

He pushed away the meal, still staring listlessly into space, tapping his fingers against the oaken table. Whenever it came to magic, his father always gave his fullest attention. He didn't expect the King to return.

"Shall I clear this, sire?" A servant had inquired of him.

He only gave the dish and the table it sat on a fleeting glance before nodding. "Yeah. Just clear everything."

The servants one by one stepped forward to lift the many steel plates and cutlery away; fruit, meat, stew, all were quite unfinished, because the sole prince of Berk didn't really have much of a healthy appetite. Silence still prevailed, however, even against the clinking metal, and Hiccup soon excused himself from the table "not that the lifeless object was that interested in hearing whatever he silly reason he had concocted.

Elsa had meant as a jibe against his father, of course, but she was right. Berk had no confidence in their future king whatsoever. Everyone had taken him up against the portraits of the old kings at some point or another and remarked at how bony and tiny he was compared to them. Size and height apart, his father's council too often would remark about how awkward and weird he was "though never quite in front of his face" and that such uncertainty in his behavior could never be that of a fine king. The common folk were a lot more frank; they thought their prince was a nuisance "the old smith had never failed to inform him so, though more affectionately than otherwise.

He had tried to prove he was worthy of his father's mantle "he had been doing that ever since he was eight, but seven years had passed since then and things weren't looking up. In the corridors, servants were always muttering doomsday quotes about his rule, while the gentry were always discussing about how to cushion the blood when the time comes. Sometimes, he wished that Elsa was really his blood sister, so that the gilded crown could be dropped on her head instead. She was two years older than him, and four times as respected.

The sun had longed dipped in the horizon, and the moon was creeping out with the stars, but Hiccup was in no mood to go to his quarters to fiddle with his pencil and stare at empty patches in the

parchment. Maybe he should go down to forge tonight; Gobber wouldn't really mind if he used it without asking, as he had done on several occasions. The servants would think nothing of this; it was routinely behavior. The guards in patrol might be annoyed that he was working at such late hours, but he'll just throw the royalty card in their face. There had to be some benefit of being born to the house of Haddock, especially when there were this many downsides.

Destiny was an evasive thing, but he wasn't one to give in. By the sweat of his brow, he would prove to the kingdom that he wasn't the useless prince everyone thought he was. The key to changing his life, he believed, lay in the stack of notes he kept at the forge.

\* \* \*

><p>His first day in Berk had taught Jack many things. One; there was apparently a difference between guards and knights. Guards were common-born, and usually took on simpler jobs as the footmen, patrollers and so forth. Knights were the noble-born, usually involved in the leadership roles or battle strategy, and sometimes were even members of the King's castle. Knights were identifiable by their flowing red capes and were often mounted, and guards were just the guys who always looked bored.</p>

In his tour around the city by Sir Fishlegs, he had also managed to be the dubiously fortunate spectator of a 'culling ceremony'. It had excited him at first, because he had never been to a fight ring before, nor had he ever seen a dragon. He had stared in awe at how magnificent how large its wings were, and how colorful its scales were. How he had grasped onto the chains around the kill ring, watching it in complete and utter fascination.

And then he had watched it die by the brutal hand of a stocky young fellow, who would be knighted three days hence for his 'courage and prowess'. Sir Fishlegs revealed these 'cullings' were something that every knight had to undergo as a test of loyalty and strength.

Somehow, the whole notion of it just didn't sit well with him. Upon returning to Tooth's home — a place which she insisted he call his own - she had explained to him the rationale.

About a century ago back when the kingdom was under its second king, priests of the old religion had placed a curse on Berk; that it be razed to the ground by beasts of the air. Soon after, dragons had descended onto the kingdom, with fury in their wings and fire in their jaws. Berkians, being a people of great stubbornness issues, had refused to leave, fighting the creatures instead. During the time of the Great Purge, King Stoick had hunted down the dragons' nests and had their inhabitants destroyed. Every single dragon king and queen had been slaughtered save one. That one was kept as a prize and as an example to all; that magic, no matter how strong, would never conquer Berk.

That being said, not all dragons were extinct, and many other types of magical beasts still roamed the land, so Stoick still gave out handsome rewards to any who could capture such beasts. But the honor of killing them went to those who had earned it.

What irked Jack was that the King did much the same for magical

persons.

The night was cold, and Berk was mostly asleep. Tooth had gone to bed shortly after dinner, but Jack couldn't. He had sat up for hours, staring at the ceiling, unable to drift off at all. Perhaps it had been the sickening amount of gore that he had witness that morning, or maybe the newly-prescribed 'hair medicine' his master had so graciously provided him with.

Or that eerie voice that seemed to constantly ringing in his head.

"\_Jaaaaaccckkkk.\_"

He had dismissed it as a figment of his imagination at first, after he had discovered that Tooth couldn't hear it . However, dismissing something in one's head whilst it was still in there was largely a useless venture, as he soon discovered.

"\_Jaaaaaccckkkk.\_"

He had crawled all over his room, trying to locate its source. As far as he could tell, it's seemed to be seeping through the floorboards, but there were no cellars below Toothiana's quarters. Unable to sleep, he had opted to take midnight stroll out around the citadel.

Berk looked different under moonlight. Without the bustle and hustle, the empty streets felt distinctly unfriendly - well, unfriendly, since Berkians were already a largely hostile and suspicious people. The stone walls and watch towers seemed to resonate a strained form of wariness and distrust. Guards bearing torches and halberds were constantly marching up and down the muddy streets, and he always had to hide himself when they passed him by. There was nothing especially wrong about hanging out at unholy hours, but the white-haired teen wasn't too keen on being interrogated about his itchy feet.

He was passing by the baker's when he heard it again.

"\_Jaaaaaccckkk.\_"

He made a silent groan, covering his ears, hoping to drive it away.

It didn't work. "\_Jaaaccck.\_"

"\_Who's that and what do you want?"\_ he shouted mentally, as he trudged down the damp cobbled stones, trying not to slip.

There was no answer at first, then the voice came back quite annoyingly as - "\_Jaaacck.\_"

He clenched his teeth together, yanking the ends of his white locks while muttering complaints to himself.

Suddenly, the same voice burst into his head, but the mode felt different. "\_Jack\_!"

He jumped, his head swinging around automatically for a moment, before realizing he was all alone on the street.

The strange hiss only got louder. "\_JACK!"\_

This was insane. He was insane. There was no one there!

Infuriated, he flung his hands over his head, demanding from the heavens an explanation for this ridiculous phenomenon.

His upturned head at that moment was the only reason why he then caught sight of the billowing fumes rising over the smithy at the east end of the town.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>SN:\*\*

\*\*Oh, if it wasn't clear enough, the Dragon's Call is literally based on the episode 'Dragon's Call', with huge deviations. I never do copy-n-paste.\*\*

\*\*This chapter was mostly to introduce the royal family, where Elsa is no doubt the odd one out in the picture. If you don't know yet, Elsa's Morgana. Expect some heavy Frozen injection in the far-far future.\*\*

\*\*It has struck me that personality-wise, Hiccup's is more in line with Merlin (scrawny, sarcastic, self-deprecating), while Jack bears more cockiness like Arthur. Positionally however, Jack, as the winter spirit, is more likely to be associated with magic, while Hiccup is the one with a strained relationship with his father.\*\*

\* \* \*

><p><strong>AN:\*\*

\*\*For someone who claims that updates are erratic, I've been posting this regularly. Still, I won't change my stance. Officially, at least.\*\*

\*\*Mailbox:\*\*

\*\*Theawesomet5: Thanks for understanding and for your encouragement.\*\*

\*\*Tied-Dyed Broadway: And I hope that I can deliver. \*\*

\*\*Bye folks.\*\*

\*\*Review. Critique. Ask Questions.\*\*

#### 4. Part I: Dragon's Call Chapter 3

The Once and Future King

Part I: The Dragon's Call

Chapter 3

"\_Jaaaaacccckkkk."\_

His eyes shoot open. They darted around frantically, trying to find the damnable source of that annoying voice when he realized that he was sprawled across on a floor of hay.

Bemused, he straightened himself out before sitting upright. The narrow that he was in had three walls of stone, and one of metal bars. Of the three stone walls, one had a small little window â€“ more like a peephole really â€“ that gave him a glimpse of the activities happening around the castle courtyard. The 'wall' of metal bars had a single door, bolted fast and true. He was sure he could it undone with a single thought, but that wouldn't be a very wise move.

His second day in the city, and he had already managed to wind up in jail. A dry chuckle escaped his throat. Well, he was somewhat a trouble magnet.

"\_JAAAACCCKKK! "\_

Was it just him or was that echoey voice thing in his head getting louder?

"\_JAAAACCCKKKK! "\_

He knelt back down on the hay-strewn floor, pressing an ear against it.

"\_JAAAAACCCCKKKK! "\_

It did sound louder! He punched a fist in victory â€“ this was a clue! He was so elated at his discovery that it could've danced a jig right there and then if the atmosphere wasn't stifling the mood.

The clinking of iron against iron earned his attention just then, and the hinges groaned as the door open.

"Jack?"

He was delighted to find that it was his petite master as she flew into the cell â€“ heh, his jail cell.

"What are you doing here?" He asked her, a grin already on his lips. However, seeing her displeased expression, the beam faded. Before she could begin any form of ranting, he was quick to cut in, "I didn't set the place on fire. I swear."

"Oh, that's cleared up already," Tooth said, with a shrug. "I've already convinced of them that-"

"Oh, good." His eyes brightened. "So I can go?"

"-because an arsonist out for royal blood wouldn't have slapped the prince right in front of the Royal guard."

Ah. So that's why he was in jail.

"Wait, wait, hold on a moment," Jack held out a palm to stop her from continuing. He pointed a thumb at himself, saying slowly, "I was the one who saved his life." Seeing her disbelieving face and her

folded arms, he elaborated, "I literally dashed into the fire and dragged the kid out. And what do they do?" He huffed, gesturing at the cell around him. In mocking tones "You're welcome, your majesty\_!"

"'Your highness', or 'sire', " Tooth corrected without really thinking. "The address of 'majesty' is reserved for the king."

Jack gave her a long stare, then shrugged. "Okay. Highness. Got it."

"I understand your point of view, Jack, but—" she was almost pleading, "was the slap \_necessary\_?"

"The crazy nut- um, 'his highness'—" he altered his words when Tooth had given him a sidelong glance, "-wastotally flipped. He was unconscious when I carried him out, but the minute he came to, he started babbling about 'plans' and 'what-not', and was going to jump back into the flaming building. The whole thing was going down in cinders, but he was like—" the boy cleared his throat and made his voice nasal and squeaky, with additional wild gesticulations, "-'No! My entire life is in that place!'—" reverting to normal voice "-I tried to hold him back, but he struggled too hard. So I just did the thing my mum used to do hysterical ladies. And sometimes to me."

Toothiana deadpanned, "A slap across the face."

"It's really effective," he informed her enthusiastically, chuckling once more. "Have you ever considered adding it to your textbooks?"

"Jack." His master grabbed him by the shoulder, pulling him down so that his eyes looked directly into hers. She cast a quick glance behind, before continuing, "You are supposed to be trying to stay inconspicuous, remember? And that means not jumping straight into the first explosion your see!"

"Well, sorry that I did Berk a civic duty," he retorted wryly, crossing his arms and looking away.

"This is serious, Jack," her voice heightened in anxiety and plummeted in volume, "if you give them any reason to notice you too deeply, you'll find yourself in worse places. So for goodness' sake, be careful!" Letting him go, she went to the door, beckoning him.

He was surprised. "Um, aren't I a prisoner?"

"Oh, that." Tooth clapped her hands together, forcing back any signs of a smile. "I pulled a few strings to get you out."

"Really? Yes!" His grin was back on.

"Um," Tooth wrung her hands together rather dubiously, "it comes at a price."

He gave her a questioning look.

\* \* \*

><p>She found him slapped in the stocks, his hands and head sticking out of the wooden board, and his body hunched over. His 'platinum blonde' hair was strewn in assortment of fruit and vegetable pieces. His cheerful assailants had retreated for a while, having run out of ammo, which gave her space to approach the stocks.</p>

"Good morning," she greeted, as if they were simply passersbys so on the street.

He jerked up his head as much as he could, peering into the sunlight to meet her eyes. "Oh, hello. Astrid, right?"

She nodded, adjusting the basket on her arm as she did. "So, I heard what you did."

He raised a brow at her, a tomato fragment sliding down his chin as he did. "Which part?"

"Well, the more interesting part," she answered, bending herself a little lower so that he didn't need to strain his neck so much.

A beatific smile appeared on his face. "Oh, the slap?" Then it slipped into a suspicious expression. "Wait. How do you know?"

"The entire castle knows. Soon the whole city will." A rare smirk tugged the side of her mouth. "It's not every day you hear of a strange commoner slapping the heir-apparent."

"He's really the prince?" Jack made a low whistle. "Still can't wrap that around my head. He's just so—"

"Small? Wimpy? Weak?" Astrid supplied without hesitation.

"—underwhelming."

"Underwhelming." She snorted, making a dry laugh. "That's a nice way of putting it."

He gave her a quizzical look, leaning himself closer to her, his voice dipping a decibels. "Won't you get in trouble?"

Her entire body tensed up, glancing around herself before asking, "For what?"

"Openly insulting royalty."

"Oh," she relaxed again, exhaling as she did. "Well, if I was talking about King Stoick, then yes. But if it's just Hiccup, then it doesn't matter."

"Ah." He nodded, or tried to, as much as he could with the wooden boards around his neck limiting his movement. The city of Berk still puzzled him to no end. "So, violence against royalty is against the law, but slander isn't?"

"Only for Hiccup." Astrid clarified in a rather sardonic manner. "Even then, 'violence' is only allowed in training. Any time else results in—" she gestured at the wooden beams that the boy was trapped in.

"I see." Jack sounded tickled, though his position was surely uncomfortable. Then he repeated, "Training?"

"He's the prince. He has to learn how to fight." There was a mocking note in her voice, almost envious. "Of course, he's terrible at it. As far as I know, he's bad at everything." She tapped her chin thoughtfully. "Okay, maybe he's pretty good at getting in trouble."

"Sounds like me then," Jack remarked wryly, as he observed bits of onions came raining down on his face when he shook his head. While feeling gross and tired, he still bubbled with curiosity. "What he was doing in the smithy at wee hours in the night anyway?"

"Oh, he works at the forge a lot. The smith's good friend's with the king, so the prince was latched there as a mini-apprentice when he was a kid to make him stay out of trouble. Didn't work, obviously."

"Huh. So he still works there? Doing what?"

Astrid shrugged. "Don't ask me. I'm the commoner." Raising her head, she noted with much amusement that the mischievous children had returned with freshly-filled baskets of rotting goods — she even spotted a bucket of pig slop. "Well, I'll leave you to your own entertainers then."

"Entertainers?" He was bewildered when she had taken up the laundry basket and hustled away. Of course, that was cleared up after he found cabbage, celery and garlic raining from above again.

\* \* \*

><p>Lady Elsa was pilfering through her own clothes with much boredom. Sometimes she wondered what was so great about having so many different dresses, especially when half of them weren't even her type.</p>

She eyed the burgundy, then passed it over - too gaudy. She then examined the leaf-green one, sniffed and passed it over too. She didn't like the sleeve length. Pastel Pink? Not quite her coloration.

She was on the verge of tearing all the dresses from their hangers and tossing them out of the window, when she heard a knock on the door. She was about to give permission for entrance when the door swung open on its own. She was slightly peeved by that, since such behavior was quite improper, but seeing that it was a fresh face, she decided to be a little more magnanimous. Besides, it wasn't as if she was in her shaft or anything.

"Yes?" she asked the boy. She had assumed that he was a servant at first — they had been running low on staff, so she had heard from the grumbling Astrid — but his slapdash attire suggested that he wasn't. Perhaps an errand boy from another part the castle? She noticed that he had pearly white teeth — quite remarkable, for someone who obviously wasn't wealthy — and he had a headful of equally white-locks on his head, yet he was certainly young. Seventeen, eighteen at best. Lanky and skinny, like Hiccup, but much

taller.

The boy hadn't answered. Instead, he stood stark still at the doorway, frozen and flushing. His eyes were fixed on him, bright and amazed, like someone who had just gotten seen a vision from the gods.

"Yes?" she repeated. The white-haired boy must have heard her the second time, because she noted that he swallowed before babbling something inaudible and incoherent. Elsa arched a brow at him, wondering if she should be amused or irritated.

Clearing his throat, he began again, "Sorry, but a-are you L-lady Elsa?"

"Yes, I am," she answered, being kind enough to pretend she didn't notice the stutter.

"Great, um, right." He started digging into his pockets, creating a vacuum of conversation until he finally retrieved whatever he was looking for. "Aha!"

Striding forward to the lady, he presented the small vial to her. "Tooth told me to, um, pass you this. It's for the sleeping problems. Yep."

She accepted it, her brows still raised questioningly, but a smile still danced on her lips. "Thank you." Going over to vanity table, she placed the vial with the rest of her belongings. As she did, she inquired, "So you're the new apprentice I've been hearing about? Are you Jack?"

"I'm the what? Oh, right, the apprentice thing." She heard him mutter something under his breath before continuing, "Yep, I'm Jack. Tooth kinda took me as her apprentice yesterday."

"So you're also the one who slapped Hiccup?"

Elsa hadn't turned around when she said that, instead choosing watch the boy's facial expressions through the glass on her table top. He was stunned at first, then flabbergasted, then sheepish. Rubbing his neck, he finally replied, "Um, yeah."

"Ah, I see." She spun back towards him, and his crimson color increased threefold. "Astrid told me she saw you at the stocks earlier this morning."

"Oh, yeah, I was," he admitted ruefully, running his hand through his hair with a grimace. Elsa did her best to suppress her smile — he was pretty but sweet at the same time. Then he scrunched up his face. "Wait. You know Astrid?"

"She's my maid-servant."

"Oh."

"Don't worry. She has only said the worst things about you." When she saw how his face fell, she decided to repent — just a little, because Astrid had really said terrible things. Of course, Elsa knew the other blonde well enough to take everything she said with a pinch

of salt. "I'm kidding."

He was all sunshine and moonbeams the next moment, which reminded her a little of her foster brother. Well, when he was much more caught up in wonder and fascination rather than teenage angst.

There were brisk steps coming down the hallway and turning into the room. The blonde maid-servant, dressed in a dainty, frilly gown that didn't at all reflect her personality, came marching in quickly, ever efficient. "Afternoon, milady. I have the—" she broke off when she caught sight of Jack "-what are you doing here?"

"Oh, they let me out of the stocks earlier by the two hours," the boy answered, oblivious to how the shorter girl was narrowing his eyes at him. "Tooth managed to negotiate for a shorter sentence. I mean, I saved the prince's life, but—" he dropped his voice, annoyed "-everyone seems to forget that part."

"No." Having had Astrid in her service for ages, Elsa was able to immediately detect the edge in the blonde's voice when she spoke again. "I mean, what are you doing here, in the Lady Elsa's chambers, alone with her ladyship?"

Jack seemed to have noticed the acrimony now, but he was confused as of what brought it about. "Um, I was giving her ladyship her ton—"

"Get out." Astrid cut in, pointing at that door.

Shooting a bemused look at Elsa, then an annoyed one the blonde, Jack strode out of the chambers.

The minute he was out of ear shot, the lady commented, "He seemed nice."

"They all do at first," the servant answered ominously. "They're just after the pretty faces and body curves." Making a disgusted noise, Astrid carried the stack of linens to the closet when she noted the disarray that the gowns were in.

She turned to Elsa, raising a brow.

"They all don't suit me," she defended herself.

Astrid simply rolled her eyes, before dumping the linens on the drawer top, proceeding toneaten up the dresses first. "Well, you'll have to pick something eventually, milady. The Knighting feast is in two days."

"Don't remind me." Elsa sunk down on her mattress, letting out a heavy sigh. "Sir Spitelout's son has asked me to accompany him to the feast. He's going to be inducted into with the knights."

"Oh, Snotlout? Urgh." Astrid made a face, clenching up one empty palm while the other slapped the hanger on the rack. "I've yet to make him pay for the lewd remarks he made at me last time."

Elsa frowned disapprovingly. "Astrid, you socked his jaw and broke his ribs that day."

"Exactly! I missed the pelvis." The girl strung up the silk dress on the hanger rather roughly, her lips pursing up in her ire.

Her mistress shook her head, partly because of the unladylike language, partly because of the sentiment behind it. "You would have been arrested if I didn't step in. You can't go around hitting nobility."

"Pity. A lot of nobles need to be hit," the girl murmured darkly. As she slid the next dress back into the closet, she paused. Turning to Elsa, she said, "You know, if there was someone there to pommel Prince Hiccup every now and then, he'd get fixed up better."

If this had been the hearing of any other, Astrid's vehemence might have sounded as if it were bordering on treasonous. But Elsa simply understood that her young blonde servant just took things — especially things in the court — very seriously.

"Well, I think Hiccup gets enough injuries from his training sessions," she replied contritely. "He doesn't need any more violence in his life."

Astrid scoffed while shoving in the last dress in its place. "It isn't violence. It's communication." Now with everything all neatened up, she began to browse through the clothes, before pulling out one of them. "What about this one?"

Elsa's eyes went huge. "No!"

"Why not?"

"Astrid, look at it. It—" she gestured vaguely at it.

The other girl was still unmoved. "It what? It's pretty? Gorgeous? Extremely expensive?"

Elsa gritted her teeth, feeling slightly embarrassed about her reasons, because it was a rather foolish thing. But if she didn't say it, Astrid would just force her in it anyway. "It's sleeveless!"

The servant peered at the dress, picked up the two silk sleeves, then gazed at her mistress once again. "No, it isn't."

"It reveals the shoulders!" Elsa protested.

"Yes, it does," Astrid agreed quite calmly, obviously enjoying the whole thing.

"That's immodest!"

"Well, I suppose that's why it's fashionable."

"Astrid, would you wear it?"

"Goodness, no, milady. I would never try on your dresses. What kind of person do you take me for?"

Elsa was all out of argument points, so she decided to just put her foot down on the whole thing. "I refuse to wear it."

The blonde servant then made an overtly dramatic sigh. "Oh, well," she said with an air of tragedy, while slipping the gown back into the closet, "I guess you'll have to go in your undergarments then."

"I'll wear it!"

\* \* \*

><p><strong>SN: Basically, this was just to establish a bit more of Astrid and Elsa's placings. There should be another character introduced in the next chappie, and a grouchy Hiccup too.\*\*

\* \* \*

><p><strong>AN: Hey guys, long time no see. It'll be ages before I ever update this again, but I will get around it. Eventually. Updates erratic as ever.\*\*

\*\*Mailbox:\*\*

\*\*geekyglamour413: The left-hand idea is very, very interesting. I think I may end up using (and I have a very special sword in mindâ€|)\*\*

\*\*sondrex76: Thanks for the comment. Glad you enjoyed.\*\*

\*\*dragonridr55: At this point, I'm not really sure how I want the story to end, so I can't say. It may happen in many ways.\*\*

\*\*Persnickety2018: This story takes the lower priority of my two current stories, but I'll update as and when I can. I don't think Elsa will turn evil per se in this story, but she may become an antagonist at some point. That's still in the far future from here though. We're still in Season one.\*\*

\*\*waveringshadow: Hey there! Your observations on how different this is from the original Merlin are very astute, which is why I may run into some major storyline changes later, but hey, that's the fun part about AUs â€“ keeping characters in character as much as possible, while throwing in all the AU features and storylines.\*\*

## 5. Part I: Dragon's Call Chapter 4

The Once and Future King

Part I: The Dragon's Call

Chapter 4

He dipped the stylus into the ink well, and tried again.

But the hand was much too shaky, too unused to wielding the slender quill, and the words he attempted to write out came out as a splotches and stains. Sighing defeatedly, he dropped the quill, letting the ink trapped in its core continue to run free onto the damaged parchment.

Hiccup gazed down at the sling on his left arm, and huffed in annoyance. His 'fiery misadventures' at the forge two nights ago had somehow resulted not burns, or scorched skin, but a broken arm. Up to now, though he scratched his head and racked his brains, he could not for the life of him figure out how the fire in the forge started. Well, the furnace fire was always on, of course, but it shouldn't have exploded into such massive proportions.

All that aside, it was obvious enough that he was back to square one .

On the bright side, his broken arm had earned him a day off from training, for which he was grateful. It wasn't that he didn't enjoy getting knocked off horses, or being pummeled into the mud by fellow students, or earning another laceration for missing a parry. Oh, no, he just wasn't in the mood for putting up with the sneers and jibes that all the other knights in training would give each other as they discussed his latest screw-up.

He heard a knock on the door and was about give permission for entrance when the door swung open. He groaned without even looking up. That probably meant that it was his father.

"Dad, if this about the body guard thing, it's still no. No Haddock in the last seven generations had body guards, and I don't need anymore things to display how obviously wimpy!"

He broke off when he raised his head, because he discovered the person at the door was not his father.

"I didn't give you permission to come in," Hiccup told the intruder.

The boy standing at the doorway seemed momentarily taken aback by that, and voiced it quite emphatically with - "Ooooooops."

Peering more closely at the young man dressed sloppily in a blue coat and brown leggings, Hiccup noted the tuft of white on the boy's head before recognition hit him.

"What the hell are you doing? The thing's going timber!"

"You don't understand." He struggled to pull himself from the other boy's grip. His knees felt wobbly and he could barely stand as it was, but he needed to get back in the smiths. His plans, his drawings "My entire life is in that place!"

For such a skinny person, the older boy had enough muscle to yank him back. "This is not the time for suicide, idiot!"

He wrestled with the other boy, trying to push him away. His eyes were fixed on the crumbling old building, as the fires licked up the walls and the floors, and his lifeline!

At the same time, Hiccup noted that the Berkian guard was running down the street, some of them carrying buckets. But he knew that by the time the flames were snuffed, his efforts for the last three weeks would have gone up in smoke. Literally.

\_A stroke of luck allowed him to twist himself free from his supposed saviour's clutches. He then sped towards the burning smithy, almost managing to step into the blazing doorway when he felt someone yanking him backwards before a tight slap struck his cheek and jaw.

—

His eyes narrowed at the strange boy with snowy hair. "You."

The intruder blinked.

"You're the one who slapped me."

"Oh, yeah." The boy nodded quite calmly. "That was me." Seeing the frown on the prince's face, he added hastily, "Don't worry. They've sent me to jail and put me in the stocks. Justice's been served — \_etcetera, etcetera\_."

The creases in Hiccup's forehead only increased. Here, his humiliator was coolly, almost proudly, admitting his deed. Didn't he have any idea of what he had done?

Probably not. He didn't look very bright.

"Why are you looking at me like that?" The white-haired boy cocked his head to a side.

"Nothing." Hiccup intended for his response to be short and snappy. He didn't want this cocky, dense adolescence to dwell in his company any longer. But the snarky, sarcastic part of him couldn't help throwing in, "Just wanted to thank you for ruining my life further. Now,—" He waved at the door, before turning himself back to his desk"—get out."

"Wait, what?" The boy seemed to have not heard the order. "Backtrack, backtrack, I \_ruined\_ your life?" There was a disbelieving scoff. "I saved your royal butt, excuse me!"

Hiccup heard steps on the wooden floor and knew that the boy was approaching him. He rolled his eyes, facing to the taller boy briefly. "Well, with what you've done, you should have just let me die. Now go."

He dropped his eyes back to the splotched parchment, before he took it up in his right hand and crushed it. He then tossed it behind himself aimlessly, letting it clatter to the floor.

"Litter." Again, the boy disobeyed the order, choosing to fold his arms, staying rooted by the desk. "And your penmanship is terrible, by the way."

"I usually write with my left," Hiccup defended, his dislike towards the taller boy growing every second. "Now would you please \_go\_?"

"Not till this is cleared up." This fellow was as stubborn as an ox. Hiccup knew that if such a character stood in his father's presence, he would have been slapped in irons and tossed in the dungeons for the insolence. As the prince of Berk, he technically possessed similar powers to do so. But if he gave the order himself, no one would take him seriously. No one ever took him seriously, in a matter

of fact. And if people didn't listen to him when he was a prince, then why would they listen to him when he was king?

"Now, if you don't mind, could you please stop being such a sulking prat and explain?"

He usually shrugged this kind of thing off, but being in the presence of this tremendously irritating and obnoxious young man who appeared to be only a few years older than himself snapped Hiccup's usual restraints.

Gazing levelly at the white-haired boy, the way he had often seen Elsa do to his father, he told thisâ€|this \_lowly peasant, \_ "You can't talk to me like that."

The boy didn't seem to affected by the 'steel gaze' at all, merely raising his brow in response, "Like what?"

"I'm a prince. You're a commoner." He sounded rather stiff, obviously, since he wasn't used to doing this. No, this was more up his father's alley, or even knights'. But if he didn't straighten this out now, this boy was going to go back to his people and perpetuate the sentiments of the wimpy future king. "You can't talk to me like that."

The boy with white hair went quiet, and for a moment Hiccup had dared to hope that he made to get through to him.

And then â€“ "Alright. Could you please stop being such a sulking prat and explain, \_my liege\_?"

Squeezing respect from this guy was about as effective as asking for snow in a desert, apparently.

Hiccup sighed, defeated. He muttered a few complaints under his breath, before saying, "You want to know why this is such a big deal? Fine."

He drew himself upright, staring directly into the fierce blue eyes of his offender. "I've been hit by a lot of people before, but it's usually in training, and only by other noble-borns. Never a commoner." He noted that the boy gave him a skeptical look. "I'm serious? There's a difference. Another thing â€“ the guys that you slapped me in front of weren't just Royal Guards. Some of them were Knights."

"And I fail to see the point of mentioning that," the boy put in dryly.

"I'm the prince of Berk."

The boy still didn't get it. "So?"

"When I become crown prince, they'd be put under my charge. Essentially, I've been shamed in front of my future military subordinates, and I've a feeling this incident that will be tied to me forevermore. So, thank you for your gracious contribution to my failure in future leadership positions!"

He wasn't usually the type to raise his voice. His squeaky, nasally

tone didn't have the commanding effect of his father's boom. In the fallout of his outburst, he noted, upon reflection, that his rant came off as whiny and even puerile. He made an inward groan. Yep, whiny and puerile - so definitely in the top ten wanted features for the king of Berk.

The boy seemed somewhat startled, at least, and now he ran a hand through his white locks â€“ a sign that he was thinking over the words, Hiccup realized. "You know, maybe you should treat the whole—" he made a vague gesture "-thing as a motivator for you to do something about that."

And now the guy was telling him what he already knew. "Thank you for not helping. Please get out."

"I'm serious. Has it occurred to you that the reason why you have your problems it's because of you, and not the things around you?"

It was very tempting to slap the boy â€“ sweet vengeance, if nothing else. Without meaning to, Hiccup's teeth clenched together while he growled his answer, "Just for every second of my conscious existence, yes!"

The white-haired boy gave him a worried look and took a step back.

Forcing himself to count to ten â€“ an exercise he had never done before, because he had never been so infuriated â€“ Hiccup elucidated with an edge, "The key to changing my life was inside my study in the forge. Since my attempts to retrieve it were rudely interrupted –" his glare at the boy darkened "–those sheets had been burnt to crisp." He tore his eyes from the boy, back to blank parchment. As it was, he could barely remember the angles and measurements he had calculated, and the images of the contraptions were getting fuzzier and fuzzier as seconds ticked by. So he told the boy, in a weary voice, "Can you please go now?"

It took about a full minute before he heard the boy shuffling away towards the door. Just as he was about to heave a sigh of relief, he heard the shuffling stop and the boy had returned to the table.

"What?" The prince snapped.

"No need to bite my head off," retorted the commoner, pulling a face himself. His hands dug into his pockets, before pulling out a small bottle containing a semi-translucent liquid. "Tooth sent this for the arm. Take a spoonful when there's pain."

Finally, he spun on his heel and marched away, slamming the door shut.

With him gone, Hiccup allowed himself a few second of emitting strangled noises of frustration, before he turned back to the crooked lines he had drawn across the parchment.

Okay, so the rope go there or thereâ€|

\* \* \*

><p>"I'm telling you, laddie, it's arson! Grubby, grimy, gross arson!"</p>

'Laddie' was not a title that Sir Bunnymund of Asterlund accustomed to. He was an accomplished and decorated knight of eight and thirty years, having spent twenty of them in the service of His majesty; that meant that he indeed was one of the few remaining Knights that had lived through both the times where magic had flourished and magic had been culled. By the peasantry, he was addressed as 'Milord' or 'Sir Knight'. By the squires and Knights he was addressed as 'sir'. By his superiors and equals, he was simply referred to as 'Bunnymund'.

So, indeed, he had issues with the title of 'laddie', but then again, it would be foolish to nitpick over trivial matters. And the old smith was ten years his senior, so the use of the term was not inaccurate.

"What makes you think so, Master Gobber?" he answered, as he followed the stocky old man into the blackened hovel that had been the castle smithy. It might seem strange that those of noble birth would take such care addressing an artless old artisan, but only idiot would underestimate the true rank of Gobber the Belch.

Having lived through the years of the Purge, Bunnymund had borne witness to the courage and loyalty the ex-soldier had for the King — two of his appendages, a leg and a hand, had been lost to that cause. It was that even before the war began, the two had been inseparable, and even though class and tradition deemed it inappropriate for such fraternity, the smith stayed, albeit unofficially, in the King's counsel and took a great many roles that man of his standing would not be able to undertake, should it have been in other Kingdoms. One of these roles was to be the head Knight trainer — a remarkable feat, considering the smith wasn't a knight himself. Another was that he was the master to the prince, and Bunnymund did not doubt that the smith's loyalty to the father extended to the son. As a knight willingly sworn to service of Berk and the House of Haddock, such a trait earned his heartiest approval.

Of course, sometimes Sir Bunnymund wondered if Gobber was, well, occasionally going around the bend.

"I've been having this funny twitch in my foot,-" he tapped his metal hook against the wooden prosthetic that stood in place of his original leg "-and it's been tellin' me that there's something fishy about this whole blow up."

As great as his respect for the smith was, Bunnymund had to pause several moments to craft a suitable reply that would adequately convey how unhelpful that input was.

"And these burns on the sides the smith walls! Poof! You'd never see coal and tinder flare up like this."

The knight decided to then to spare the smith of the snide remarks.

His eyes followed the charring and scorch marks around the central

furnace as pointed out by the smith, then turned to the ground when Gobber stomped his peg leg on it. "This here is solid stone, but it still caught blackin'. This ain't natural, I'd say."

"Could the furnace fire lost control? The prince might have been careless." It left a bitter taste in Bunnymund's mouth to even insinuate at the prince's faults. It wasn't that he wasn't aware of them and aye, they were abundant, but he didn't like anyone, be he of the gentry or the working class, criticizing royalty. He was a firm believer in hierarchical order, and respect had to be afforded to that order, regardless of personal feelings or opinions. If every man was allowed to voice his thoughts on the monarchy the ruling class, well, there'd be chaos, wouldn't there? And there was nothing that Bunnymund hated than chaos.

"Well, Hiccup has a knack for all kinds of trouble, I know,-" the knight made an internal groan at the smith's overt familiarity. He understood that Master Gobber was in a unique position, but there were rules! "-but when it comes to the smith work, he's usually conscientious. Well, usually." The hook-handed man waved at a charred door to Bunnymund's right. "That's his own study, right there. He'd spend hours cooked up in there doin' who knows what. I give him his privacy, 'cos I know that what he really wants. The castle's sometimes too much of a headache for him."

Yes, the castle was the centre of the prince's stresses, Bunnymund understood. The watchful eyes of the gentry, the rigor of knight training, the weight of the future throne upon him, undoubtedly the scrawny young heir apparent felt more at home in the isolation of the smithy.

"Any ideas on who might have set the fire then, Master Gobber?" The knight asked, moving towards the sooty furnace, his chain mail clinking against his leg guards when he stooped down to examine its interior.

"Aye, I do. It was the Boneknapper."

It took everything in Bunnymund not to beat his own skull on the ledge of the furnace in exasperation. His voice strained "Master Gobber, there is no such thing as a Boneknapper dragon."

"There is so!" The smith insisted, sounding rather offended. "I've seen it with my own eyes!" His voice went low and dramatic. "Disgusting foul-beast, wearing a coat of stolen bones like armour, and it will stop up nothing to find the perfect bones to make it! I- he tapped his own chest emphatically, "- have been running from the creature my whole life. It started when I was a young lad, on summer vacation with my family-"

The knight decided for his own sanity that he would tune the old smith out, and continue the investigation. Removing his gauntlet and scraping his fingers hesitantly through the soot, he was startled when he found a beige-colored object buried. He reached for it at once, pulling it out, feeling a surge of triumph and excitement at the possibly solution of the mystery.

Well, 'the solution' was far less enlightening and far more unhygienic than the knight had anticipated.

"Master Gobber," Bunnymund interrupted the old smith while he was elaborating on his encounters with a frozen viking that punched him repeatedly in the face. The knight felt his eyebrow twitching, and there was an odd sensation rising in his chest that threatened to either send him tearing his hair out in rage, or beating his chest in laughter.

"Aye, laddie, what is it?"

The knight handed the filthy piece of linen to the old smith, taking care to dust the dirt off his hand before replacing his gauntlet.

Gobber's eyes brightened up. "My favorite set of skivvies! Where'd ye find it?"

"By the furnace." The knight's voice was purposely emotionless, only a slight waver at the end note. "Undoubtedly, it must have been what caused the fire."

"Pshaw!" Gobber sneered, as he went to one of the cupboards to dispose the ash-covered underwear. "Somehow that dragon found me again. I'm tellin' ye, that creature is pure evil."

\_Creeeaaaakkkkkk.\_

Both men almost stopped breathing, exchanging silent looks to check if the other had heard it too. The ground beneath them was all stone, and the only wood that hadn't collapsed during the flame was the door that led to the prince's study.

Wordlessly, Gobber removed a half-finished mace from one of the few standing shelves, while Bunnymund unsheathed his own blade. Both of them slowly advanced towards the door, wary to keep their steps as soft as possible. The knight was standing closer to the door, so as he stretched an arm towards it, he gave a nod to the blacksmith, who raised the mace in preparation. Then Bunnymund shoved the door open and charged in.

His blade found the intruder immediately, poised to strike. Gobber himself had clambered into the crumbling study, likewise brandishing his mace.

The boy seated on the floor was shell-shocked to say the least. Bunnymund gave him a quick lookover. His ragged clothing screamed peasantry, possibly even a street urchin. He was covered in soot â€“ so he had been sneaking around the smithy for some time, no doubt. He had a pile of singed fragments of parchment before him, and it seemed as if he was trying to piece them together. Both his hands were raised in surrender, and his bright blue eyes flickered from the ex-soldier to the knight.

"You're intruding on private property, and a possible crime scene," Bunnymund got straight to the point, before sliding the blade closer to the adolescent. Light reflected off the metal, shining on the boy's face, and it was then that the knight realized that the boy's hair was very white, only dirtied by the soot to look darker, and his countenance was a familiar one.

"You're that boy! The one I put in jail."

"Yeahâ€|" The surprise melted off the boy's face, and now he looked slightly scornful as he gazed up at the knight. "And you're the guy...who put me in jail. What's your name?" The boy feigned to thinking it over. "Bunny man?"

"Bunny man?" The blacksmith threw his head back and guffawed, dropping his mace and slapping the knight in the shoulder as he did. "Bunny man! Ha ha ha!"

"Amusing," deadpanned Bunnymund, gazed at the smith with much annoyance. He turned back to the boy, who now sported a small smile that threatened to bloom into a full grin. "Do you actually have a reason to be here? Or shall I drop you back into the cell for attempted robbery? Or perhaps the stocks?"

The boy shuddered at the mention of the latter punishment. "Er, thanks, Bunny, but no thanks."

The impudence was doing wonders to the Knight's temper. "Boy," he spoke slowly as to let his contempt seep into every syllable. "You would address me as Sir Bunnymund, or Sir. Know your place." All the same, he decided to sheathe the sword. This boy was no threat.

But he was very annoying. "Whatever," the teenager rolled his eyes, "Sir Bunny."

Gobber was cackling away behind him, which made the knight sigh, shooting the blacksmith a betrayed look, before turning to the boy again. "So what is your fabulous explanation for your presence here?"

The boy pursed his lips, appearing uncertain for the first time since the conversation began, which gave Bunnymund a tinge of pleasure. He had been amongst the knights that had come running down to the blazing smithy two nights ago, and had witness the brazenly subversive behavior of the cocky young lad. He had no qualms about locking the boy up, and was definitely sorry that the court physician vouched for his innocence for the fire. He shook his head. Tooth had to be crazy if she wanted to take this arrogant youth under her wing. "Well?"

The boy exhaled heavily, before saying, "Alright. I just wanted to help Hic-, I mean, Prince Hiccup find if any of his belongings survived the flames. Make peace with him or something." The last portion was muttered.

Bunnymund was all skepticism. "Oh. And have you?"

"Everything's all in cinders, so what do you think?" The boy must have detected the sarcasm in his tone, because his own answer was heavy in defiance. All the same, he continued to gather the broken bits of parchments together. "I'm going to bring these to Tooth. She might have some chemicals that can fix it." He looked at the smith, then at the knight, a challenge in his eyes. "Any objections?"

A retort was on the tip of his tongue, but Gobber answered first, "Sure, laddie. Do the best you can."

Scooping up the blackened bit into his coat, he folded the fabric toward himself, before pushing himself off the ground. He gave a nod the smith, then the knight. "Master Smith. Sir \_Bunny.\_"

He pushed pass them, his head still kept high as he headed towards the charred wooden door. Just as he was about to step out, he turned his head to glance back at Gobber. "By the way, the Boneknapper story is really interesting. The frozen Viking punched you, you said?"

"Twice!" The smith answered with much enthusiasm. Bunnymund scowled at the boy. No doubt the boy just mentioned that to get on the smith's good side.

"Well, I'll love to hear the full story someday," the boy said. His gaze fell on Bunnymund, and instead of anger, his expression was one of smugness.

As the boy's disappeared beyond the door, Bunnymund wondered to himself if it was against the knight's code to sock irritating teenage boy's in the jaw.

Soon after, the knight bade the smith farewell, still seething as he marched out of the ash littered building. If he hadn't been so caught up in gnashing his teeth, he might have noted that the ash beneath his feet was not the usual soft, grey powder, but hard, grainy black sand.

\* \* \*

><p>"<em>Jaaaaccckkkk . "<em>

His eye popped open, darting back and forth.

"\_Jaaaaccckkkk.\_"

"Go away," he mumbled, grabbing his pillow and stuffing it over his ears.

It had been a day full of running Tooth's errand, as well as one of running his own. After his rather depressing conversation with the bony little prince, he couldn't help feeling slightly sorry for him "only slightly, because the kid was really a stuck-up little prat. So he did try to put the singe pieces of parchment together, and maybe give it as an apology gift for shaming him.

'\_But it was kind of exhilarating to hit someone\_', he mused silently. Well, for all his efforts and reading from Tooth's scrolls, he had found nothing that could solve it. That had been when he had asked Tooth "

"Do you know any spells that can fix this?"

The physician had chastised him thoroughly for his words again, reminding him over and over again of the penalties.

"You've seen the dragon culling, haven't you, Jack? Do you want to be the one in the killing ring? Or would you rather the stake? Trust me, the block's only when they're merciful."

He hadn't responded very well to that, and the night had ended with him ranting at his new master, and slamming his bedroom door. He had spent about good half-hour pacing up and down, clenching his teeth in frustration.

He had left Burgess, with the blessings of his late mother, in hopes of finding how to develop his abilities, not to shove them under a blanket! It was unfair, he felt, that people like him who were born with such gifts had to shunned and punished by those who could not, and would not understand.

He wondered if that was the puny young prince felt, albeit to a smaller extent. Or maybe not. The kid was going to carry the weight of a kingdom on his shoulders, provided the shoulders don't snap first.

"\_Jaaacccck.\_"

The more he thought about it, the more felt that perhaps he and the snarky, ungrateful prat had more in common than expected. Take the 'highness' out of his 'highness', then, what else was Hiccup? Then take the magic of himself, then, what else was he?

"\_Jaaaaccckkk.\_"

"\_Don't you have some other troubled teenager to bother?" \_he thought, clenching his fist under his pillow.

"\_Jaaacccckkk.\_"

"\_Really, don't you?\_"

"\_Jaaaccckkkk.\_"

"\_Now I think you're just doing this to annoy me.\_"

There was a pause, and Jack was almost startled at the idea that someone might actually be listening.

Then â€“ "\_Jaaaccckk.\_"

Okay! Enough was enough!

He sat upright, dumping his pillow back on the mattress. Grabbing his boots, he roughly shoved them over his feet. He pulled his blue overcoat over his torso, before heading to the door.

Tooth hardly stirred from her own bed, which allowed him to exit the physician quarters quite easily. Before he knew it, he was strolling aimless in the castle's square again, under the pale blue moon. The whispers in his ears were more persistent this time, and he found himself walking briskly, almost with purpose.

He didn't know how he ended up there, but he found himself descending down the steps leading towards the dungeons. From the top of the steps, he noted at the entrance of the prisons sat two guards seated down, playing dice. He still wasn't sure why he was here, but he knew that he needed to get into the undergrounds, and they were in the

way.

No, he wasn't going to murder them. Goodness, no!

Jack found himself peering at the set of dice that the men took turns to roll with. Without him really being conscious of it, his blue eyes lit up, and suddenly the dice flew out of the guard's hand, clattering to floor and tumbling away, down one of the corridors.

"What the—" one of the guards spoke, while exchanging looks with the other. They both stood up, going down that corridor to chase after the fleeing dice.

Jack got to action immediately, springing down steps. Instead of turning into the walkway that he knew led to prisons, he decided to take different one instead. Something told him that it was going to be pretty dark, so he grabbed a torch on the way in.

The path that he had chosen to take apparently led to some abandoned catacombs and to even more gloomy old cavern. It was spooky and unpleasant, and as he brushed out yet another cobweb that got stuck to the hair he'd just cleaned, he wondered why he was here.

"\_Jaaacckk.\_"

Then it dawned upon him that he had remembered that the mysterious voice had sounded clearer and louder whilst he was locked in the prison, and most of all, it had come from below. And that was where he was going — down, down, to the world below the streets of Berk.

The path leading downwards came to an end. When he arrived at a huge open cave. Stalagmites and stalactites protruding all over the place, lining the roofs and the ground, and boy, the roof was tall! The cave looked large enough to fit the whole castle in it.

Treading carefully forward, he noticed how bright the inside of the cave was, and discovered it was actually because of the moonlight filtering in through a large hole at the top of the cave. A cool breeze swept past him, and he heard the crash of water. His brows rose in surprise. \_Could it be?\_

Sure enough, the lower half of the cavern was filled with water — seawater, he realized, when he caught the scent of salt. He had known that Berk was built by the sea, and that the fishing industry was pretty big here, but he hadn't really seen the seaside itself, since he had been traveling from inland.

As pleasant and serene as it was, Jack's antsy mind plagued him to get to business. So he lifted his torch, calling out, "Anyone there?"

There was no answer, only the echoes of his own voice.

"Creepy person who has been whispering my name? Are you here?" He tried again, but once more, there was no reply.

Walking up the small platform within the cavern impatiently, he began

to ponder on his own sanity. This was ridiculous " chasing after disembodied voices.

His pacing paused when he caught sight of the round white disc reflecting on the water surface. Glancing up the moon, he asked with a tinge of disbelief, " Don't tell me all this time I've been talking to the moon."

"\_Greetings, Jack.\_"

Now that really caught his attention.

He stared up at the glowing sphere, stunned and rooted to the ground. His throat was starting to dry up when he choked out, "Moon?"

He heard a hearty laugh, one that was raspy and rough, yet rich and resonant. Then he heard something else, something in that water that apparently sounded like bubbles.

A whole lot of large, heavy, bubbles, rising all at once.

Without warning, he heard surface of the water break open with ear-splitting \_CRAAAAASSSSHHHHH!. Water splashed everywhere, and he had to step back several times to keep himself from getting drenched, the way his snuffed torch did. When he had dared to open his eyes again, he witnessed giant form rising from the water, filling up the previously empty space in the cave, just managing not to block out the moonlight. A shadow fell upon Jack's own body, while his eyes travelled upwards, watching as rivulets cascaded down the black and white spikes lining the towering figure. What he couldn't miss were a pair of large tusks attached the form. Jack could swear that each one could span the length of small galleon.

The creature " for indeed the form was alive " snorted as the seawater spilled from it nostrils, rolling back down to the cavern base, and it was then that Jack found the beast's eyes. The fear he had felt at first had faded, and all that filled his heart was awe and wonder.

He here stood gaping; a tiny mortal human in before the beasts of gods. Here he stood before, who he had no doubt was, the \_king \_of dragons.

The creature gazed back on him coolly, snorting once more, its expression impassive and imperial. There was a silent, yet tangible aura that surrounded the beast, and Jack could feel grief, anger, hatred, and hope radiating off him.

"\_I have been waiting for this day for centuries.\_"

Jack blinked. The beast's lips did not move, and the only outward sounds he heard were low grunts and harrumphs, but the word's were loud and clear all the same.

"\_You're talking to me," \_he found himself replying through the cerebral rather than the oral. \_"But how?"\_

"\_We are kin," \_the beast explained, the warm voice resounding his skull. \_"We need no words to convey meaning."\_

Jack was taken aback. \_"Kin? But I'm human, and, no offense, but you're-\_

"\_I speak not of the physical, young warlock," \_the beast cut in as smoothly as only the skilled could. \_"You and I are children of the old world.\_"

A shiver ran down Jack's spine, and it wasn't because eye was wet. '\_The old world' \_â€| that was â€"

"\_Magic?" \_ The boy looked eagerly towards the creature. \_"You and I have magic?"\_

The beast seemed to nod. \_"And not without purpose either. Your destiny and my own are intwined, for the coming of a united Wilderwest is nigh, and the prophecy begins to unfold.\_"

Euphoria was bubbling up his system. So there was a purpose! His gift, his coming to Berk, all this made sense â€" and he was talking to a dragon telepathically! How cool was that!

"\_What exactly am I supposed to do?" \_He inquired, unable to hide his excitement. This was it! This was really it!

"\_You, my young warlock, are to be the protector of the Once and Future King â€" he who will bring peace and prosperity, justice and equality to all of The Wilderwest. He will right the wrongs of this decrepit land, and let magic reign again.\_"

Magic reign again? Jack's ear pricked up at those words.

Then a thought struck him. \_"Um, who is the Once and Future King?"\_

"\_He who will bring life back to Wilderwest is Hiccup Horrendous Haddock the Third, and you, Jackson Overland, will be his guide and guard till that is fulfilled.\_"

"Whoa, back-track. \_WHAT?"\_

\* \* \*

><p><strong>SN:\*\*

\*\*As you probably can tell, the dragon in this story is the Bewilderbeest â€" more specifically, it is Valka's Bewilderbeest (not some other one). Have no fear â€" Toothless will appear someday. And I'm very specific that Jack and the dragon talk telepathically â€" I refuse for dragons to talk through their mouths, and beside, Bewilderbeest have mental influence anyway.\*\*

\*\*The Boneknapper thing wasn't actually planned for â€" really. Spur of the moment thing, when I realized that the 'legend of the boneknapper' had a bit in the front where Gobber's house caught fire. The short is one of my favorites, especially the hammerhead yak and the hammerhead whale. \*\*

\*\*I decided, after much personal debate, to put Berk by the seaside, but not as an island. A lot of Berk's trade route and stuff will be still connected inland, and many of their enemies lie in that

direction too. This is all because the Bewilderbeest needs a parking lot. \*\*

\*\*Because Hiccup lacks the bully-factor in Arthur's character, Bunnymund's going to be a sort of fill in for that bit. Obviously there is no love lost between him and our fair-headed mage...\*\*

\*\*By the way, I've been beating myself over the head for this, but anyone has any ideas for who should be Lancelot? I'm still debating if I want such a person in the story. I refuse for it to be Snotlout.\*\*

\* \* \*

><p><strong>AN:\*\*

\*\*An update for this? Shock me.\*\*

\*\*Mailbox:\*\*

\*\*Sondrex76: Haha, there won't be any invention for this part, but in the future there might be.\*\*

\*\*Geekyglamour413: Spot on, my friend, spot on.\*\*

\*\*DevilShila: I think I'll really enjoy writing Astrid and Elsa. Both are strong women, but their personalities are really different. LOL his recompense for saving the prince's life is that he didn't get his hand chopped off for slapping him.\*\*

\*\*Waveringshadow: I've always had a bit of problem with Gwen in the Merlin series â€“ she's such a sweet, caring girl. Astrid's gonna be way spunkier. And violent. Don't forget violence.\*\*

\*\*Yuyake no Okami (chap 3): Yes I did. Good spotting.\*\*

## 6. Part I: Dragon's Call Chapter 5

The Once and Future King

Part I: The Dragon's Call

Chapter 5

\_ "He who will bring life back to The Wilderwest is Hiccup Horrendous Haddock the Third, and you, Jackson Overland, will be his guide and guardian till that is fulfilled." \_

He stirred the gruel listlessly, making little mountains of oats in the sea of milk. Despite its distasteful name, Jack didn't really mind gruel. His mother had used to make it often, since it was less costly than most other meals, and because he had liked to complain about it. When Tooth turned his way, he shoved a spoonful in his mouth and swallowed, though he was far too occupied with his thoughts to taste it.

As immature as it was, he felt like throwing a tantrum, shaking his fists the skies and demanding why, oh, why did the universe thrust such a 'great destiny' upon him if Prince Flippin' Hiccup was to be

'the Once and Future King'?

"\_You're talking about the scrawny fishbone that talks with a nasal tone, right?" he had needed to clarify what he had heard. It couldn't be right. It just couldn't.

Unfortunately, it was correct.

"\_There must be some mistake," he had protested vehemently to the grand dragon. "Some other Hiccup Haddock that I'm supposed to help. Not that anyone with that name deserves it." \_

"\_There are no mistakes in destiny, young warlock," the beast had told him.

Well, there must. That could not not be! Yet again the dragon assured him otherwise.

He had left in huff after that. Here he was, at what he had believed was the great epiphany, at the moment where he thought he could finally discover why he was born with these gifts, just dashed down, back into the mud. The old dragon sounded stupendously wise, and it was really cool that they could communicate with their minds, but perhaps spending so many years locked at the bottom of the city had turned the grand creature senile. That scrawny kid who looked like a bean pole? There was no way he was this 'Once and Future King'. It would be infinitely more likely that the reindeers could fly sleighs and rabbits to become giant boomerang-wielding taichi masters.

Jack wasn't too sure how that thought entered his mind, since he wasn't completely sure what a 'boomerang' was. Any more than a 'taichi master'.

"You looked as if you haven't slept much," Tooth remarked, before sliding on the bench across his.

The boy blinked, before absorbing what she said. "Oh, yeah. Um, stayed up late, erm, thinking."

The physician bore a skeptical expression. "And thinking about what, exactly?"

About how completely unfair and stupid the universe was. About how his fate was supposed tied with that a whiny, sniveling kid with a funny voice. He considered telling her about his meeting with the King of Dragons, but deciding that she might forbid him from ever doing such a thing again (not that he was that eager for a repeat), he came up with a more ambiguous answer. "Um, my future?"

"Your future?" she repeated, waiting for a further explanation.

"Yeah, my future."

"And, what of it?"

What was the use, really? What was the point of having magic anyway? If he used it and got caught, he'd die. If he didn't use it, he wouldn't die â€“ physically. On the inside, he'd slowly rot away, working meaningless toil, the way every one normal did. His grand

destiny was just probably just sham, the old dragon just a nut, and Hiccup Horrendous the Third the worse king this kingdom was ever going to have. It was all pointless.

Maybe he should do it the way Tooth did. Bury the magic. Live the mediocrity. For the sake of his skin. At the cost of his heart.

"I guess since I'm going to be here for a while," he found himself saying, "could you teach, for real, how to be a physician?"

Tooth was more than happy to provide her new apprentice with plenty of new reading material and other assorted facts about the human body system, and Jack forced himself to take notes and pay attention. After all, this was going to be his life.

\* \* \*

><p>"These are weapons."</p>

"They're purely for entertainment, sir. I assure you. Y'know, knife-throwing acts, sword-swallowing and so forth."

Knighting ceremonies in Berk (the Castle of Berk, not Berk as in the whole Kingdom. You know what I mean) were usually considered somewhat of a big deal. The Knights, after all, were famed throughout the land to be the fiercest force that had ever been, and even though Berk itself, as a small Kingdom, seemed to be easy conquest, it was the Knights that deterred the threats. Great respect was accorded to these servants of the crown, and respect often had to be demonstrated with feasts and entertainment.

There were however no permanent performers to the castle of Berk, only travelling minstrels who came by at the promise of coin. These wandering folk were often unchecked peoples, and where exactly their loyalties lay was something none could be too sure of. The faces of each performer had to be carefully checked, to see if any traces of Druidic blood could be seen in their eyes. Baggage was searched, and not always in a considerate manner, to the displeasure of the travelling company.

"These cannot be allowed. I'm sorry, but I'm taking them away."

"But—" the performer was clearly distressed, "-but that's the only act I know."

"Well, that's just too bad."

As the minstrel pleaded his case to the unsympathetic guards, another of the patrol found one who stood slightly apart from the others. He was a tall, bony figure, donning a dark cloak. His skin seemed greyed, yet he did not look too old. His eyes were a curious shade, almost gold, and the smile that he bore was frightening mirthless. "And how can I help, good sir?"

"Baggage check," the guard told him brusquely, trying to hide his discomfort in the presence of the performer."

The performer obliged, removing a small box from the wagon and handing it to the guard. The soldier was slightly perplexed. "Is this

all?"

"The only thing I do possess," the performer said, still bearing that oddly menacing smile. "And, well, my lute." He gestured to the instrument sitting on the wagon.

The guard frowned. Surely a person could not live on so little. But this guard could not pretend to understand all the workings of the minstrels. Perhaps they shared things with one another. He opened the box, and the perplexity building in his brain reached its maximum.

The box was full of black sand.

"What is this?" he asked the performer.

Yet again, the musician remained unflappable. "Why, that's for my act, good sir."

The guard's brows furrowed together. "And what would that be?"

The pale man only gave a mysterious smile. "Ah, the value lies in the mystery."

It was no answer, of course, but the guard could not place his discomfort, nor could he fathom how sand could be a danger. So he merely closed the box and thrust back it owner. "Alright, move along."

"Certainly." The musician appeared somewhat amused at the haste at which his belongings were returned.

Once the check were complete, the minstrel were hustled through the gates. With the wagon, the pale-skinned musician went, still hooded. He kept the box in his hand, held just above his chest. No one really noticed how his accommodating smile turned into a sneer, or how his golden eyes lit up, as if a fire burned in them. Definitely nobody noticed how the black sand grains seemed to dance in swirls, hidden by the opaque wooden walls of the box.

\* \* \*

><p>When the sun went down, ceremonies in the castle began. Ceremonies meant that nobles dressed in their best clothes and made their way to the grand hall of the castle. Knights and to-be-knighteds were garbed in full armour, from the gauntlets to cloaks to the embossed tunics bearing the dragon crest of Berk. Ladies donned their finest headdresses and jewelry; their dresses smoothed out to glisten in candlelight. All gathered around the hall, chatting amicably with one another about politics and how eager they were for the dinner later. Knights spoke with the inductees, giving their congratulations through firm handshakes. It was a grand affair.</p>

That was precisely why Hiccup felt incredible nervous about descending the steps towards the Great Hall. He just stood on the steps, grappling nervously at his cast. Oh, he knew, alright. He knew how the nobles would stop and stare the minute he walked in with his stupid cast around his arm. The novelty of his misadventure had worn off a little, but the minute they saw his sling, gossip would be

reignited and he could already imagine the half-pitying, half-spiteful expression he would receive. Every single nod of greeting to him would be marked with disdain, and yet again another would comment in a slighting mutter, "There stumbles the doom of Berk."

He would have preferred to spend his evening buried in his numerous designs, locked in his study at forge where he could pretend away his worries. But the forge was as charred as crusted fireword for now, and his arm made writing impossible. His father had to assign him a scribe after he complained about not being able to write. A scribe! To pen down his innermost thoughts, his precious creations and his experiments? Not likely.

As he stood gazing down the stairwell and watching the gentry strolling through the wooden doors, Hiccup felt a sinking sensation in his stomach. Oh, he had to go down eventually. Everyone knew that that Prince's mishap didn't leave him permanently crippled and his appearance next to his father was expected. It was justâ€|\_urrgggghhhh!\_

"Enjoying the view?"

His eyes lifted to the speaker, slightly startled. "Oh, hi Elsa. Andâ€|whoa."

His foster sister was, as usual, his diametrical opposite. She was wearing one of those new-fangled foreign fashions that some would consider greatly immodest, but she carried herself with such proud regality that none would dare say such a comment aloud. In a matter of fact, she was a statue of ultimate perfection; the turquoise fabric accentuating her feminine attributes and contrasting well with her pale skin. Her golden tresses were bundled elegantly in a tight knot at the back of her head and a silver headdress over her forehead. The only thing that was a tad strange were the white gloves draw over her hands, an odd gesture of modesty that contrasted with the strapless gown.

She must have mistaken his stupefied expression for disapproval, because she was quick to throw blame. "Astrid made me wear it."

"Surprisingly good choice, considering her usual hobbies," was all he answered in returned. Elsa gave a slight chuckle in response. It was well-known between them that the young handmaiden was much better at choosing weaponry than attire. "The gloves though?"

"I'm accompanying Snotlout â€" pardon me, to-be-Sir Snotlout," she rolled her eyes, "for the feast later. I rather minimize exposed skin contact."

"Smart," Hiccup answered, privately feeling better that his foster sister was probably going to have worse evening them him. Brutish, strong, but none too bright and not quite noble, Hiccup marveled that Snotlout was actually going to be a Knight of Berk at all. Some would argue favoritism, since Snotlout's father was part of the Berkian Inner Council. But since the flippin' \_Prince\_ hadn't even been permitted to ride a horse yet (in case he broke his neck), favoritism was obviously untrue.

Well, unless, favoritism meant favoring the brutish, muscularâ€!

"Besides observing the scenery, what are you doing exactly?" Elsa asked.

"Avoid the inevitable," he supplied with a shrug. "Maybe I could sneak in when no one's looking."

"You're standing next to Stoick for the ceremony. I doubt that anyone's going to miss that."

"Well, there goes my plan," he commented dryly. The bells were ringing â€“ not the warning bells, but the ceremonial ones, calling the stragglers to hustle into the halls before the doors closed. Maybe he should pretend he was sick. Nope, his father wouldn't believe him, not for a second. Maybe he should slip down the stairs and break his leg. People would understand a broken leg, right? Oh wait, that white-haired guy was the physician's apprentice right? So that means if he did break any bones, he'd probably run into that fellow again. He really needed to come up with better ideasâ€!

"You know, my father used to tell me something every time I was afraid."

The mention of her father alone was sufficient to garner Hiccup's attention. He had once been a knight himself, and one of the most honored in recent Berkian history. That was quite an extraordinary feat, considering that he was quite an active magic supporter, though by no mean a magician himself. Even after the King outlawed sorcery the way his ancestors did, the late Sir Kai of House Bergstrom still sought reprieve for the harmless 'magiks', like the wandering nomads who had kept their distance and peace from the Kingdom, and his compassion garnered him a mixture of supporters and . No doubts Elsa's own sentiments were derived similarly.

"How did it go?" the noble woman mused. "Oh, '\_conceal, don't feel. Don't let them know.'\_"

"'\_Conceal, don't feel. Don't let them know,'\_" Hiccup echoed. An eerily calculated mantra, it did sound. Is this what she kept in her head to maintain her immaculate perfection? But in the Berkian court, such steeliness would be more of a boon than bane.

"A performance, in a sense," Elsa added. "A parade of confidence."

Confidence. If one could bottle it, Hiccup would take it three times a day and still not have enough.

"C'mon." She took his arm, hook it into hers. "Just hold you head up, go in there and just tell yourself "I'm the prince of Berkian, and I don't have to care about what you think." "

They descended down the steps, arms linked. Hiccup tried to hold his head the way she did, but he lacked the elegance.

Conceal, don't feel. He sucked in a breath and managed somewhat of a smile when his foster and sister through the wooden doors.

\* \* \*

><p>He had been woken with a sharp kick in the ribs. "Wake up, dunce."</p>

Jack rubbed his eyes, then his back. He glanced blearily around him, trying to remember how exactly he had ended up sitting by the steps and why his rear hurt so much. His eye caught hold of a wash of fabric on his left, and his gaze travelled upward to meet fierce blue eyes.

"What-" he groaned, now realizing how much his stomach hurt, "-what's going on?"

"You missed the entire knighting ceremony," the blonde maid servant informed him, a hint of amusement in her tone.

"I didn't miss it," he retorted, grabbing hold of the stair rail and pulling himself to his feet. The momentary fog in his brain cleared and his memory was coming back. "I did attend, but it was so boring â€“ what, with the King droning on and on about the importance of chivalry, responsibility and blah. So-" he pressed his lips together, wondering if he should tell her at all "-I told Tooth I needed to use the wash closet and-"

"-you ended falling asleep on the way there. I'm impressed." Astrid was smirking, her arms akimbo.

"Well, it's better than falling asleep at the wash closet," Jack argued back, slightly defensive in his manner. "You try reading about anatomy for three hours straight."

"Good thing you're not a castle servant then. You'd get flogged for skiving." She noticed that he was trying to straighten out his shirt, so she helped him rearrange his scarf. "C'mon, everyone's gone to the dining hall already. I trust you won't curl up in a ball and fall asleep."

"Yes, yes." The boy followed the girl as she strode quickly down the corridor.

Hardly anyone noticed the entrance of two commoners. There were three long horizontal tables laid out. The farthest was right at the end of the hall, facing the entrance of the hall, and there sat the King, toasting with various other nobles. Jack couldn't hold back the growing detestation he had for Berk's sovereign. Such festivities were probably infrequent, so one could not blame the King for extravagance, but Jack couldn't forget very well that every one of the armored Knights, sitting on along the table perpendicular to the King's own, had at some point of time slaughtered a dragon â€“ a grand magnificent creatures that was caged for sport. The battle-scarred, ever disapproving Sir Bunnymund had done so, increased the dislike that Jack had for the arrogant knight. Even the bookish Fishleg had at some point.

Jack could feel his blood simmering. Were the murdered once the children of the Bewilderbeest? Or had the members of his nest all vanquished? This man, who had spoken the era of prosperity during the Knighting Ceremony, spoke of how it was a knight's duty to eliminate threats, and though not stated explicitly, Jack had been sure that

'threats' equated to 'magic'.

"Is something wrong?" Astrid must have seen his frown.

"Nothing." He tried to shrug it off. He had to. It wasn't as if he could have explained it to her without both of them getting thrown into the kill ring. His eyes shifted instead to the bony figure seated on the King's left. Hiccup Horrendous Haddock the Third was picking at food, and by the visage he bore, Jack could tell that he was uncomfortable being in the centre of the celebration. His oversized chair to emphasis how wimpy and small he was, as if his baggy tunic didn't already.

It was such a strange idea that this weird, awkward kid was whom the Bewilderbeest claimed as the Once and Future King. Maybe it was a double meaning, like the 'Once and Future King' who would probably be the last King ever, because after that Berk would have been razed to the ground.

The young prince seemed to have sensed that someone was staring at him, because his eyes lifted from his food to stare back. A scowl appeared on his face once he made once he made out the white tuft of hair sticking off his scalp.

"I see you boys haven't exactly shaken hands and made up," Astrid remarked, obviously sharp enough to note the acrimonious shooting across the table.

Jack made a face. "He's too stubborn. As am I."

"Well, hopefully Elsa would straighten that out."

"Lady Elsa?" His face brightened at the mention of the noble woman. He quickly searched for her around the room, and found her again. It seemed that she had only become more dazzling since the last time they crossed path, with the gorgeous blue dress clinging elegantly to her figure. The only thing marring her usual beautiful face was the clear annoyance she bore towards the boisterous knight in her company. Then, it struck him that what Astrid had said was odd.  
"Wait, why Lady Elsa?"

"Well, I think she'd be an excellent Queen. Don't you?"

"I didn't know she counted as royalty."

"She doesn't unless she marries in."

"Are you suggesting what I think you're suggesting?"

"It's not that bad an idea," contended Astrid, her turn to become defensive. "Everyone knows she'd be a perfect leader."

He was aghast with the idea. "But with Hiccup? The Hiccup?"

"Everyone needs a good tight slap on occasion," the blonde maidservant supplied nonchalantly. "As Queen, she'd be able to administer that whenever required. I'd do it, but—" she shrugged.

"But with \_Hiccup\_?"

Astrid huffed, before saying, "He's a walking disaster, I know. But he's not all that bad. She could do worse, I imagine." She narrowed her eyes at the Knight seated with her lady.

"But with \_Hiccup\_?"

"You really need to stop repeating things," she commented to the horrorstruck boy. "It makes you look stupid."

"He doesn't deserve her!" Jack ignored her previous comment, still flabbergasted at the notion. "And she's older than him!"

"It's still the best idea we have," Astrid persisted, turning away from the white-haired apprentice to gaze back at her mistress. "Oh, dear."

"What?"

"I think her ladyship requires some rescuing." The blonde's eyes were trained on Elsa, who currently looked as she was deciding between yanking her male companion's eyes out and driving her fork into his throat, but forbidden to do either due to decorum. "You'll have to excuse me, Jack."

With that, the maid servant hastily left his side, only stopping another servant along the way to retrieve a jug of water.

"Jack."

"\_Go away,\_ he said mentally, thinking it was the dragon King reaching out to him.

"Jack!" He felt a rough tug on his shoulder and realized that the call wasn't in his mind, but through his ears. When he spun around, he found himself looking into a pair of highly disapprovingly purple eyes.

Tooth was furious, naturally. "Where have you been?"

"Um,-" he contemplated making up a better sounding excuse, then decided against it "- I fell asleep."

"Really, Jack." The elder woman could only gaze upon him in utter hopelessness. "Good thing you're not a servant or you'd be flogged for skiving."

"Hey, that's what Astrid sa—" before he could finish it, a holler of dismay was heard. Both mentor and mentee turned their heads in that direction, as did some others in the hall. The newly-knighted noble, whom Jack now recognized as the one who he had seen in the kill ring during his town tour by Sir Fishlegs, was red with fury now that his chain mail cloak was now soaked. As the miscreant in this situation, Astrid had quickly offered a hasty apology for 'accidentally' dumping the water on his head, but the derisive undertone could not be overlooked. It seemed the nobleman wanted to say much more on the matter, but Elsa intervened. Smoothly pointing out that a brave Knight who could face off great dragons should not be fearful of a

little cold, she advised Sir Snotlout, for that was the brutish fellow's name, to change into other garments. Unable to gracefully save himself from the situation, the newly-inducted Knight reluctantly removed himself from the dining table and hall, leaving a trail of water behind him. The Lady Elsa allowed herself a small smile behind her handkerchief, while Astrid didn't even hide her smugness.

"She's frightening," Jack commented, suitably impressed.

"Well, good for her then," Tooth answered. "Now, come along then."

As an apprentice to a courtier rather than a courtier himself, Jack wasn't allowed to sit on the tables at all, so he could only stand behind his master after she took her seat. Technically, he wasn't allowed to eat either, but Tooth was compassionate enough to sneak him some bread, an apple and a little meat. The atmosphere was cheerful, with the gentry chattering happily to themselves, and the lower ranking courtiers with their own class. Most servants stood by the walls, only moving only to serve more food, fill glasses with wine and clear plates.

He spotted Master Gobber of the Forge amongst the courtiers, but since he didn't most of the others, Tooth decided to pointing out the various members of court. "That's Sir Spitelout, and that over there is Sir Ack and Lady Phelgma."

"Why're the names so strange?" he asked her.

"Well, this is Berk."

Things were much more interesting after the King announced the performers in. Jack had seen few minstrels in his small village, and the flush of color, the endless tirade of dancers, jugglers and acrobats streaming in and out was pure delight to his eyes. He got pretty excited when one of the performers performed a magic trick, which involved making butterflies appear out of nowhere, but then Tooth explained that it was not magic at all, but clever trickery.

"So these guys are charlatans and everyone's okay with that?" Jack looked sickened at the idea.

"Well, they would have been executed otherwise," Tooth murmured back.

After the 'magicians' Jack used that word scoffingly took their final bow, a single minstrel took the stage, bearing a lute in his hand. He wasn't dressed in bright colors as the other performers had been, but rather a dark robe that emanated an aura of mystery. His hood remained drawn over his head, which too was odd, but this only served to intrigue the dining guest more than anything. Any conversation that was being had broken off as all fixed their eyes on this strange figure.

"Your majesty,-" the fellow nodded to the King, then turned to the wiry prince, "-your highness," he turned to the gentry, "valiant Knights that we honor today, lords and ladies." He paused, as soaking in the silence that met him, before continuing, "I am but a humble

traveller, standing in the centre of this great Kingdom." This earned a murmurs of approval some of the court, which led to an eerie smile stretching across the musician's face. "The awe to be in the presence of such splendor â€“ why, it hurts my heart that I come bearing no gift. Truly, I ashamed." There were a little tittering from the doleful expression the musician made. "All I have a song, taken from the great epic from the Kalevala. Let me regal with a tale of Lemminkainen and the hosts of Pohjola."

'\_The tale of the what and what?' \_was all Jack could think of, but before he could ask Tooth, there was a round of applause when the minstrel pulled his lute up and began his song.

"\_Lemminkainen full of courage,  
>Full of life, and strength, and magic.<em>

\_Stepped across the ancient threshold,  
>To the centre of the court-room,<br>And the floors of linwood trembled,  
>Walls and ceilings creaked and murmured."<em>

'Magic?' The alarm bells went off in Jack's head. He glanced around the hall, wondering if any would stone the musician for the use of the taboo word. Fortunately it seemed that none cared, too eager to hear more of the tale. Perhaps that how they did it in Berk â€“ revel in tales of magic, but hate it in reality.

"\_Spake the reckless Lemminkainen:  
>"Be ye greeted on my coming,<br>Ye that greet, be likewise greeted!  
  
>Listen, all ye hosts of Pohjola;<br>Is there food about this homestead,  
>Barley for my hungry courser,<br>Beer to give a thirsty stranger?"\_

The musician wasn't a particularly good singer, but there was a hypnotic quality in his raspy voice. The sound of it was like the whisper of the wind on a cold winter's night, yet clear and strong. Jack's eyes darted around, finding to his surprise that everyone seemed to have forgotten to eat, all attention trained on the mournful tune.

"\_Ilpotar, the Northland hostess,  
>Then addressed the words that follow:<br>"Lemminkainen, thou art evil,  
>Thou art here, but not invited.<br>All our beer is in the barley,  
  
>All the malt is in the kernel,<br>All our grain is still ungarnered,  
  
>And our dinner has been eaten."<em>

It wasn't that the song wasn't interesting or anything, or that the tune was unpleasant, but it was so long and slow. Across the table, Jack noted Astrid stifling a yawn. He wouldn't have thought much about it if Lady Elsa didn't do the same the very next second. He wanted to chuckle out loud; it seemed that the lady and her servant were so close that they were practically connected.

"\_Whereupon wild Lemminkainen  
>Pulled his mouth awry in anger,<br>Shook his coal-black locks and

answered:

>"All the tables here are empty,<br>And the feasting-time is over;  
>Even now young Lemminkainen,<br>Though a guest of name and station  
>Has no beer, no food, no welcome."<em>

'\_Yes, there's no food here, so go somewhere else. Seriously!' \_In his mind Jack answered the complaining 'Lemminkainen' (and he thought Berkian names were hard).

As the song went on, so did the story. After the so-called great hero did finished his whining, a mug of beer was presented to him, only that it was full of snakes. Lemminkainen proceeded to remove the snakes from the cup, kill them by beheading them and then drank the beer, which in Jack's opinion was really disgusting. Lemminkainen then asked for more beer, which made the hosts of Pohjola become furious.

At that point, he began to lose interest in the song, deciding to spend his time observing others in the hall. Gleefully, he noticed that a couple of courtiers had fallen asleep, their head resting on each other shoulders' or on the table. He noticed that other members of the gentry were also having trouble keeping awake, yet none more from their seats to be more comfortable, nor did any take a bit to keep themselves awake. The straitlaced Sir Bunnymund looked like he was about to topple into Slumberland any moment, and even Sir Fishleg, whom Jack had presumed would be probably a lover of such epics, was having trouble keeping his eyes opened.

As the musician began describe the duel between the Pohjola's landlord and Lemminkainen, Jack began to find his own eyes closing. His knees buckled, and he found himself falling to the floor. He fought it, trying to get back on his feet. He imagined that any moment someone would call him out for snoozing on the job again. If he got caught this time, it would be some pratty noble. He didn't feel like going to jail again, if such was the punishment.

Straining his eyes open, he attempted to push himself to off the ground, and then he realized something strange.

The candlelights " on the caldebras, to the candlesticks to the chandeliers " were all flickering. It could have mistaken to be a gust if it wasn't that the fact that all the flames were extinguished at exactly the same time. That, and how the shadows surrounding him seemed to spring to life.

A mournful gale accompanied the raspy voice that sang, still with vigor,

"\_Thereupon Pohjola's landlord  
>Raised on high his blade of battle,<br>Struck a heavy blow in anger,  
>Struck a second, then a third time,<br>But he could not touch his  
rival,  
>Could draw a single blood-drop<br>From the veins of Lemminkainen,  
>Skillful Islander and hero."<em>

When Jack spotted the moving black lights on the ground, he couldn't

believe it. The only light that filtered in now was the pale blue moonlight, and there was nothing that was nothing that could shift the moon. Still on his knees, he edged his way to his mentor, shaking her, "Tooth, something's wrong. Why have-"

Then he realized the physician was fast asleep, her head laid on her arms, next to her plate.

And then Jack realized everyone was asleep. The entire Great Hall â€“ every servant, every courtier, every knight, every lady, even the King was fast asleep.

"\_When the skillful Lemminkainen  
>Swings his mighty blade of magic,<br>Fire disports along his weapon,  
>Flashes from his sword of honor."<em>

Then it struck him that the song was literally putting everyone to sleep. He quickly placed his hands over his ears. Cautiously, he raised his head to look at the musician. The lute had been discarded, and the minstrel began to slowly proceed towards the central table. He still continued to sing,

\_ "O thou son of Sariola,  
>See! indeed thy neck is glowing<br>Like the dawning of the morning,  
>Like the rising Sun in ocean!"<em>

\_Quickly turned Pohjola's landlord,  
>Thoughtless host of darksome Northland,<br>To behold the fiery splendor  
>Playing on his neck and shoulders.<em>

Shadows on the ground began swirling around his robes, like a lightless flame at his feet. Jack ducked his head as the musician passed by. The man did not see him, but the boy managed to catch a glimpse of the other's face. His skin was pale gray, a deathly colour that reminded Jack of the pictures of rigor mortis Tooth had showed him. But that wasn't the most remarkable thing.

It was his eyes. They glowed gold, and Jack knew what that meant. His own eyes had a habit of glowing from time to time.

The shadows rose from the ground, and that almost made Jack tumble back. Still covering his ears as much as he could, he crawled down the table, furtively following the minstrel â€“ or rather, the sorcerer as he headed towards the King's table. The shadows spun around the robed man, but he seemed unconcerned. When Jack squinted closely at the twirling black shapes, he realized that they were not shadows as he had expected, but \_sand\_.

"\_Quick as lightning, Lemminkainen,  
>With his father's blade of battle,<br>With a single blow of broadsword,  
>With united skill and power- "<em>

Instead of just surrounding its master now, the sand started to take shape. Engulfing the right arm that the magician held, Jack's eyes nearly popped out of their sockets as he watched the loose grains form a solid, gleaming sword. The sorcerer continued his song, but

now Jack could hear every inch of his contempt loud and clear. This wasn't a song of mystery. It was a song of hate.

"\_As one cleaves the stalks of turnips,  
>As the ear falls from the corn-stalk,<br>As one strikes the fins  
from salmon,-"\_

He was standing right in front of the King's table. The great king was unconscious, slumped back into his throne. But the burning yellow eyes did not rest on the resting sovereign, but to the heir instead. The glittering black sand sword was raised for the strike.

\_Thus the head rolled from the shoulders  
>Of the landlord of Pohjola,<br>Like a ball it rolled and  
circled.\_

\* \* \*

><p><strong>SN: The Kalevala is considered the national epic of Finland. I only copied, trimmed and condensed some lines. This part of the epic here describes the fight between the hero \*\*\*\*Lemminkainen\*\*\*\* and the master of Pohjola after Lemminkainene whines about how he didn't get any food. Basically, all you need to know about it is that a 'hero' enters a dining hall and kills the host.\*\*

\*\*Oh, yeah, the black sand should be a giveaway on the identity of the minstrel/magician.\*\*

\*\*Up Next: If you watched the Merlin pilot, you would probably know what's coming. \*\*

\*\*IMPORTANT: I have been doing some thinking about this story, and I've decided that I might need to make some changes in the story telling format. You see, Merlin has five season, and it'd be impossible for me to write a HTTYDxROTxFrozen version of it episode by episode. Even if I just covered the important episodes, this would never work. I have lots of great plans for the future episodes, but that's in the future and it takes me sooooo long to get there. After this story arch, I think I'm likely to do the rest of the story as drabbles as I had intended before, rather than a full scale novel like these chapters have been. I may post it separately from this story, or just add it on to here. Haven't decided yet. \*\*

\* \* \*

><p><strong>AN: I'm so sorry for disappearing so long! Got caught up in exams.\*\*

\*\*The reviews have been sent so long ago that I think most of you have probably forgotten what you sent, so I won't answer them. In the future, I would just PM answers to those with accounts, and guest reviews I'll answer here. Sorry about that, but I have really enjoyed the reviews. Oh, and thanks for all the suggestions on who could be Lancelot in this universe!\*\*

\*\*So that's all for now. \*\*

\*\*Review. Critique. Ask Questions.\*\*

## 7. Part I: Dragon's Call Chapter 6

The Once and Future King

Part I: The Dragon's Call

Chapter 6

\* \* \*

><p>Well, wasn't this just a dandy spot to be caught in? The sole witness of an assassination attempt by a hooded assassin with magic, who decided to put everyone to sleep by using a magic song and was currently trying to kill the prince of Berk. The reasons as of now remained unknown.</p>

Actually, it wasn't all that remarkable. Who wouldn't want to kill the prince of Berk? The kid was a nuisance, besides being of significant political position and wealth.

Okay, fine. He was annoying, but he didn't deserve death.

Jack crawled nearer the King's table, still ducking his head down to avoid being seen. The sorcerer's eyes were gleaming like the burning hearth of a forge, only getting brighter as he prepared to smite the unconscious prince.

\_Think, Jack! Think, think, think...\_

He rapidly scanned the dining hall for anything he could use. He lit up at the sight of the knights' weaponry, but then frowned. An open confrontation with a sorcerer, especially an experienced one, would be a foolish move, and he didn't know how to use a sword anyway. He needed something sneaky, something rapid...

He wasn't sure when he had turned his head upwards, but he did do so, and then he caught sight of the rusted iron chandelier hanging over dining hall, glittering against the moonlight. Somehow, the iron grates decided to sit themselves right over the musician. It was like a sign.

Was it?

Well, that was of no matter, for Jack's eyes had begun their work before his mind could. Without himself knowing, one of his hands had already stretched itself towards the chandelier, and his oculars, usually a duller blue, began to flash with an extraordinary shade of azure. At a distance, he noted how the chains holding up the metal grate transformed to a pale white substance, before snapping with a definitive '\_crack\_'. The sorcerer's song broke off as he spun towards the source of the sound, his own luminous eyes now glowing with surprise. By then, it was far too late avoid it.

\_CRRRASSSSSHHHHH!\_

If that wasn't a wake-up call, Jack wouldn't know what else could be.

The ornate and heavy decoration plonked right on top of the sorcerer, driving him into the cobbled ground. The black sword fell out of his hand, tumbling onto the ground and disintegrating into black sand once more. Jack heard a pained groan as the black robes shifted, but it was clear that the minstrel could not escape from the iron prison. The boy couldn't help smirking to himself, resisting the temptation of openly patting himself on the back.

With the haunting harmony gone, the diners in the hall woke from their slumber just as slowly as they had fallen asleep. There were surprised expressions and stupefied looks made by the members of the courts. Faces of disgust were pulled by ladies who found their food now tangled with their headdress, and gents lamented the stains on their cloaks. Servants had hastily scrambled back to their feet, fearing punishment, only relaxing when they noted that their masters too had just been roused. Guards, who had toppled over with their halberds and their chainmail, noisily struggled against their stiff armor while pulling themselves back upright. The King himself awoke with a look of incredulity, for the sight before him was a strange one indeed. The entire banquet hall engulfed in darkness, save the blue lights filtered through the glass, and chandelier smashed right in front of him, on top of a hooded fellow.

By the time Jack had risen to his feet, he felt an odd chill run over him. Glancing to his right, he realized that he was standing just a few steps away from the royal table, and the eyes of the heir of Berk were fixed on him. Not knowing what to do, Jack stared back. The silence between them was rather awkward, to the point that Jack was tempted to slap the boy again just to break it, but fortunately he was spared of making such a stupid decision.

It started as a soft croak, what Jack assumed to be a whimper of defeat. But when the young apprentice returned his gaze to the pale man trapped below the chandelier, he realized that the man's lips were moving and his eyes were lit aflame once more.

A spell.

A whirl of black swept around the chandelier, causing the members of the court to gasp. For a split-second, Jack was sure that even the moonbeams had been chased away, as the Great Hall was filled with nothing but the blackest of night.

A cackle was heard â€“ sharp, harsh, malicious. The iron chandelier clattered against the slabs on the ground, having been shifted once its prisoner melted into the darkness. Then as suddenly as it begun, the whorl of black dissipated, sinking back onto the ground and the walls as shadows. Somewhere in the halls, there were shouts and even screams, but the thunderous, maniacal laughter that shook the hall drowned it all out. Some of the guards and knights had unsheathed their blades, searching the darkness for their foes, but flat black figures dancing on the once suddenly shot forwards and yanked the weapons from their hands.

Seemingly out of blackness itself, the pale sorcerer, hooded once more, re-emerged, standing in the center of the hall, appearing unharmed from the incident. Before any could make a move against him, shiny black sand was already flying into his hands, forming a gleaming black crossbow. The trigger was pulled back and the bolt flew.

At that point of time, most on the scene just gawked on in disbelief, blinking and wondering if this could all just be a dream that they had yet to awaken from. None knew who this strange hooded fellow was nor his intention, so all were far too stunned to make a move.

But not Jack.

He didn't know if it was a magic thing, or it was because he had very good reflexes, but Jack felt sometimes as if he could experience time slowing down. No, it wasn't the '\_this-was-so-boring-that-it-felt-like-forever'\_ kind of time slowing down. He could literally watch the black bolt being released from the crossbow and watch it slowly sail across the roomâ€| heading straight to the royal tableâ€| missing the King by several inchesâ€| flying straight towards the prince's head.

Without even thinking, Jack had already lunged himself forward, grabbed hold of the royal oversized tunic and yanked the brunette boy of his seat. Hiccup had let out a shriek in protest, of course, but that was silenced by the sound of the black bolt stabbing itself into the wooden chair.

Jack's eye darted over to the sorcerer, trying to anticipate any further moves. But the pale man in the dark robes merely wore a mystified expression, cocking his head as if considering him. Then suddenly, the sorcerer smiled â€“ chilling and bright, as if he had learned something no one else knew yet. He folded his arms towards himself and just as suddenly as he had appeared, disappeared into the black. There were murmurs of astonishment as the shadows seemed to flee the hall, escaping through the doors and windows, and suddenly all the flames flickered back to life â€“ on candle sticks, torches and even on the fallen chandelier.

Jack let out a sigh of relief. He didn't know why exactly, but he felt as if that horrid smile had been directed at him, as if the false minstrel had recognized him somehow. All the black sand that the hall had once been full of was gone, and even the lute had vanished as well. He heard the King barking some orders to search for the sorcerer, as well as the clamor of steel and feet as guards scuttled to fulfil the request. Then Jack heard someone clearing his throat very pointedly.

Glancing towards the source of this sound, he realized it was from none other than the ingloriously scrawny young prince. "Could you let me go now?"

It was only at that moment that Jack noticed that he had yet to relax his grip on Hiccup's tunic, so hastily he did so, even wiping his hands on his own tunic â€“ just in case of royal dirt, or something. The bony younger boy began brushing his shirt too, and somehow both of them became occupied in the game of who could wipe their hands on their clothes more vigorously when -

"You, lad!"

Both boys halted their odd preoccupations to find the speaker, who was in a matter of fact King Stoick. Of course, it became apparent that he was addressing the gangly one with white hair, so the small prince began to slowly sidle away, leaving Jack the centre of

unwanted attention.

The King was truly a large man, and Jack didn't doubt that at least half his body mass was muscle. Even compared to the other humongous Berkians of Viking descent, Stoick the Vast had an imposing stature. It was said that he was a baby, he popped dragon's head clean off. Did Jack believe it?

Eh, not really.

But even if that tale was just exaggerated for embellishment, in the short three days since his arrival Jack had heard many others that he knew were true. There were tales of how King Stoick had single-handed fought off raiders, with nothing more than a hammer and a torch. There were others that described how he had led a charge against an invading armada though they were seriously outnumbered, and won.

But those weren't the ones that Jack remembered the most vividly. On his journey here, he had seen heads mounted on spears along bridges, and bodies strung up by trees, all warning against the use of magic or the harboring of magic users. The King was a mighty warrior, but he was far more fearsome as a tyrant.

This was the King that stood before him now, in all his might and power. The hard green eyes traced the young apprentice out, as if piercing into his very being, seeking to root out his secrets. Jack had to place his hands behind his back so that his trembling would not be noticed.

"Your hi-\_majesty\_," he corrected his address just in time, waiting timidly for the ruler to describe all the terrible ways he would butcher him.

The large man then spoke, his booming voice not quite fierce as much as it was surprised, "You saved my boy's life."

Jack blinked. "Oh. Er, yes, sire."

In his head, what he said was '\_Of course I did, but your knights threw me in jail the last time that happened, so â€œI take it that I should have just let him get stabbed in the forehead?\_'

Across the banquet hall, he spotted Toothiana half-rising from her seat, seemingly caught in a moment of indecision as she debated between speaking up or staying silent. If the King was going to kill him now for touching the royal robes though, Jack doubted that there was anything the court physician could do to prevent it.

"A debt must be repaid."

Jack winced. He was dead. Like a salmon yanked from the water, gutted and salted, then roasted, he was dead.

"Such a deed merits a reward â€œ a rich one in a matter of fact," the King continued on.

Hang a secâ€œwas the King \_praising \_him?

He took a glance at Hiccup. The boy's jaw had pretty dropped to the earth. The King was definitely praising him.

"Oh, er, thanks—" acting modest was never one of Jack's forte — he was a rather cocky young lad after all. So the best that he could manage was grinning sheepishly while scratching his head. He could feel the prince glaring at him.

"This warrants something special," the King seemed to muse to himself. "Something very special indeed." Then his green eyes suddenly seem to light up with mirth and the hardness disappeared. "You shall be awarded a position in the royal household. In a matter of fact,—" he clapped his son on shoulder, making the prince cringe, "you shall be Prince Hiccup's manservant."

This was spoken like a joyous proclamation — like it was actually a good thing. Jack suddenly didn't feel so good in the stomach.

"Dad!" The prince's cry was indignant, but obviously his father wasn't listening, because the King had already turned away from them. The King's word was final, after all.

When the Great Hall erupted in applause, the two boys felt very distinctly like erupting into tears.

\* \* \*

><p>"How's the hero?"</p>

"Leave me alone, Tooth," the boy moaned, slumping himself back down on his mattress. "My life has been ruined. And I'm seventeen." He buried his face in the pillow.

"Oh, come on, it's not that bad," the physician said kindly, as she seated herself at the edge of his bed. "At least you get paid for being a servant, compared to just being an apprentice."

"It's a servant to you-know-who," was the muffled complaint through the pillow.

Tooth couldn't help but let out a snicker. "He's not that awful. And besides,—" her tone took a more serious turn "-I've been thinking." When Jack gave her no response, she went on, "Maybe this is what you're meant to do." She felt him stiffening, and took it to mean that he was listening. "You've been given extraordinary gifts, Jack. Perhaps this is the best place to channel it into."

He lifted his head, turning to face her. "What? Into becoming the best servant ever to the wimpiest guy in the universe?"

"No." Tooth laughed, shaking her head. "To protect Prince Hiccup."

That was met with a face of incredulity, but to his credit, he didn't bury his face back into the fluff.

"Think about it, Jack," she urged him. "Hiccup, like it or not, will be the King in the future. He has a hard road ahead, and he's going to need assistance. Perhaps—" a corner of mouth turned upward into a smile "-magical assistance." That earned a snort from Jack, but she went on before he could interrupt, "Your talent must have a purpose,

Jack, and it could very well be this. And one day - who knows - one day you might even change how he sees magic."

That made the boy thoughtful for a moment, even if he tightened his arms around the pillow. Finally, he said, slowly, "My destiny's to help Hiccup?"

"Your destiny's to help this Kingdom, and that's by helping Hiccup," she answered, squeezing his hand firmly. Seeing that he was considerably cheered, she told him, "Sit up. I have something to show you."

With sulked passed over and him being more reflective rather miserable, the white-haired lad pushed himself off the bed and seated himself next to her. Tooth picked up the package that she had retrieved from under the secret compartment at the bottom of her closet — something that she hadn't touched for close to fifteen years. It had been wrapped hastily in a dull brown cloth, and right now it looked pretty much the same as it had years ago, though a tad dustier.

She handed this to Jack, who glanced at her in astonishment, before carefully removing the cloth and laying it aside. The thick leather cover, patterned with intricate geometric motifs had been well-preserved. The wooden locks were still in good condition, unbuckling itself easily when Jack's finger undid it. The boy gingerly flipped the book open, and he read out the words on the first page.

"'How to be a Sorcerer' or 'The Most Comprehensive Magic Lorebook You'll Find Till We Re-discover The Time-Travel Spell'. Concise title."

"Classical Edition," Tooth added, with a hint of pride. She allowed the boy a moment to flip through the pages, goggling at the pictures and the spells inscribed all over.

"It's yours now," she told him. "I hope it would help you more than it's ever helped me, anyway."

He looked at his mentor, and for the first time since his arrival to her home, he really did seem happy. "Thank you, Tooth."

She beamed in return.

"One question though. Do I actually read this? Like the whole thing? While I'm still alive?"

Tooth frowned.

The boy let out an awkward chuckle. "Eh, never mind about that then."

\* \* \*

><p>Far, far away in the outskirts of Berk, down in deep caverns that few men have walked, was a shrine dedicated to the gods of the old religion. Little bundles of straw and stone had been tied together and placed around it for protection. If you were particularly observant, you would note that there were marks of brown along the

stone steps â€“ blood sacrifices from some much older rituals. There was also black sand strewn all over the place, mixed with the ashes, from which burnt sacrifices were once offered.<p>

This shrine had been out of use for a long time, and even the one who visited it often used the area more as a shelter rather than a site of reflection and meditation. So after the shadows had flooded the cave and he had emerged from them, he barely gave the shrine itself a glance, turning instead to the basin sitting on the opposite pedestal. It wasn't a remarkable basin, though its craft of bronze was quite fine. Of course, the priest himself had no interest in artistry, but rather the visions the water in the basin might provide.

"Well, go on then," he spoke to the shimmering reflection, "tell me - who's that boy?"

As he had commanded, the colors on the water's surface began to change. Image after image was formed, swirling into existence and disappearing later. Occasional words were mouthed, though no sound was heard, yet the priest himself already knew the name that he needed to know. He knew why he knew the boy now. It had been largely from hearsay - rumors spread amongst the few remaining followers of the old religion, and though he had distanced himself from the others long ago, he had still heard of the prophecies and tales. The seers have spoken, and one name had been echoed by all.

The images in basin warped for one final time, showing the gleaming blue moon â€“ pure and whole as it should ideally be.

The priest glared down at this too-perfect picture, a sneer forming on his face.

"Well, old friend," he finally said, every word dripping with contempt, "it seems my attempts to thwart destiny have failed, and I too am prophecy's slave. But know this,-" he leaned closer, his jaw tightening and his brows furrowing, "-there are many fates, and the one that you desire is no more possible than mine. A ruler will return magic to the Wilderwest, and a great sorcerer will mark the advent of this age, but who that ruler and sorcerer are meant to be remains to be seen."

The priest drew himself up straight and proud, gazing almost patronizingly down at the image. "I suppose this is just going to be one long road, old friend, where you and I are just mere pawns in a bigger game. Well, then-" he swept his robes back, sinking almost instantly in the shadows "-may the better side win."

\* \* \*

><p><strong>SN:\*\*

\*\*This chapter is short, but the Dragon's Call Arc is over, so yeah.\*\*

\*\*I almost forgot, but's it's supposed implied that Pitch was the one who set the forge on fire back in Chapter 4, where there is black sand on the ground there instead of ash. But it kinda of slipped my mind and it's not very important soâ€|yeah. I also noticed I've never referred to him as Pitch in the story so far. Ah, well, it's obvious,

isn't it?\*\*

\*\*Note that in the past I used to refer to the prophesized 'better future' as 'Albion' but recently I've been changing it 'the Wilderwest' because that's pretty much the equivalent in HTTYD books. I probably not going to go into all 'the King's Thing' stuff though. If you like the book stuff, well, that's what the books are for. This is just fanfiction. \*\*

\*\*For the next chapter onward, the story would continue in drabble form. It would hopefully still be readable and fun, but when I get too lazy to write, I'll just tell it to you in exposition and just skip to the fun stuff - like witty banter and childish madness. Okay, there will be enough serious stuff too. Geesh. If you have any ideas of what should happen in these drabbles, especially if it's based on Merlin episodes (I am trying to keep in AU), leave it in the reviews. As this would still be plot-driven, no promises that I'll use it, but I'd appreciate to hear from you guys. \*\*

\* \* \*

><p><strong>AN: Hello. My Next Update is likely to next year, so yeah. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year in advanced everybody!\*\*

\*\*Bye!\*\*

\*\*Review. Ask Questions.\*\*

## 8. Vignette Break 1

### The Once and Future King Vignettes 1

\*\*Hi guys! I haven't updated this story in ages, and the next chapter's giving me all kinds of writer's block (not to mention I'm really sick.) So here's some really short drabbles/vignettes I've written some time back. They're non-chronological, so just assume they're sometime after \*\*\_\*\*The Dragon's Call\*\*\_\*\*.\*\*

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Vignette 1: True Love. In Quotation Marks.<strong>

\*\*Inspired by the episode \*\*\_\*\*The Gates of Avalon, \*\*\_\*\*where the prince is struck a love spell. It'd been a hilarious chapter for me to write out in full, but it didn't push the story forward, so I only wrote to this short bit for fun. Enjoy.\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>In all the medical lessons that Toothiana had him sit through, she would have done him well if she taught him more about pubescent hormones.<p>

"I'm in love!"

"For the last time, sire, you are \_not!\_"

It was fortunate Sir Bunnymund was nowhere in sight, because if he had seen what the white-haired boy was doing to the prince, the former would have been immediately slapped in irons. Again.

"You can't stop â€“ hey, put me down!"

"Not until you get a grip of your senses!"

"I am very sensible, thank you very much! Now, put me down."

"What's three-hundred and fifty-two multiplied by thirty-five?"

"Twelve thousand, three hundred and twenty."

There was a pause. "That's too easy. Let's try something harder."

"Put me down!"

"No!" As an afterthought â€“ "Your highness. It would not be advised."

"I order it!"

"You're not yourself, sire!"

"Not my problem!"

It was slightly uncomfortable when a chambermaid and a guard had passed them by along the corridor. Both had gazed upon the sight with great shock - the skinny prince slung over the shoulder of the tall servant boy was surely something to remark about. However, Jack had quickly lied that it was under the King's orders, so they let him go without interference.

In his eyes, he wasn't really fibbing. If King Stoick had known what was going on in the young prince's mind, he would, have ordered for his son to be locked in his rooms, too. Consider this a civic duty of sorts.

Just as they arrived at the door to the prince's quarters, Jack felt a sharp tug against his skull.

"Ow! Did you seriously pull my hair?"

"Put me down!"

"You're so puerile! Gosh! Ow-ow-ow!"

He pushed the wooden door open, struggling to balance the scrawny kid on his shoulder while tearing the clawing hands of his hair.

"Can you not â€“ ow! â€“ stop it!"

"Put me down!"

"Fine!"

Jack tossed the boy onto the bed, letting him land down on it with an

'oomphf'. Spinning on his heel immediately, he sprinted to the door, grabbing the handle and slamming it shut.

"Jack!" He heard steps dashing towards the door, so he tightened his hold on its handles. As he expected, he felt a sharp pull on them from the other side. "Open this at once!"

"No!"

"This is considered insubordination! You can go to jail for this!"

"Been"-\_tug\_- "there!"

"Jack?"

The servant boy almost lost his grip on the door handle at that moment, but he managed to renew his hold, much to the chagrin of the prince inside.

The one who called his name was fortunately someone who could probably understand his predicament.

"My lady," he greeted her warmly, while yanking the handle forcefully.

The blonde maiden was looking on, flabbergasted. Hesitantly, she asked, "What is-"

"Hang a sec," he broke her off over the shouts of the boy inside. Glancing around the corridor, he nodded at a candle stick on a nearby table. "Could you pass me that?"

Bemused, she picked the item, before approaching him, eyeing the door warily.

"Do you mind slotting it between the handles?"

She bore a curious expression at the instruction, but did as he had asked nonetheless, locking the doors together, trapping the prince inside.

Heaving a sigh of relief as he let go, the servant boy slumped himself against the wooden boards, clearly exhausted. He nodded gratefully at the noblewoman. "Thank you."

"So what are you doing?" Lady Elsa asked, her eyes widening when she heard the prince yell something uncharacteristically loud and not very polite.

The boy grinned at her, showing of his pearly-white molars as he did. "You know that girl that Sir Hoark found wandering in woods?"

The blonde stiffened at the name. "The one staying in the castle right now?"

"One and the same." Jack made a face, before jabbing a thumb at behind him. "Hiccup thinks he's in love with her."

"What!" She was aghast - thank goodness someone was sensible enough

to see that! "But he's only known her for two days!"

"Worst of all, she appears to returning affections." Elsa spluttered in a rather unlady-like fashion when he said that. "He was on his way to asking his father for his blessing."

She quirked a brow. "Blessing?"

Jack gave the door a dark look, before mouthing to her, "Marriage."

"Marriage?" Elsa repeated aloud. She turned to the door, calling through it, "Hiccup, you're fifteen!"

"So?" The nasal-voice came filtering through boards.

"You can't marry a girl you've just met!"

"I can if it's true love!" came the infuriated retort. "Besides, my dad's going to arrange some marriage to a foreign girl I've never met eventually!"

"I can't believe we're having this conversation," Elsa told the white-haired boy, who chuckled in response.

"You're playing a dangerous game!" They heard shout through the cracks. "Keeping this muchâ€|\_raw vikingness \_contained!"

"This bordering on insanity," Elsa murmured incredulously, wringing her hands together. "He's never been like this."

"Really?"

The prince screamed through the door, "There will be consequences!"

"I'll take my chances," Jack answered curtly. He faced Elsa. "Just to clarify â€“ he's never had the illusion of being in love before?"

She shook her head. "Hiccup's a frightfully sensible person. He's not one to act this recklessly. Well, about matters of love at least." She furrowed her brows. "Something's not right."

"No kidding." The boy had his ear pressed back on the door again, and his eyes were wide with suspicion. "Do you hear anything?"

They both went quiet, and found that indeed there was only silence from the other side of the door. gingerly, Jack unlatched candlestick from the handle, before pushing one door slowly open.

The prince's quarter was indeed clear of any prince, and the solitary clue of how he disappeared came in the form of along set of bedsheets, torn from their original spot, bundled and knotted into a cord that hung out of the window.

Jack sighed, raising his hands defeatedly. "And I'd just ironed those sheets."

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Vignette 2: O Mighty Haddocks<strong>

\*\*This one's just a conversation between Jack and Hiccup regarding a simple topic that just turns strange. I'm not very sure what was going in my head when I wrote this.\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>"Okay. Spill. What's wrong?"<p>

The white-haired manservant end jumped, startled to find his much shorter master narrowing his eyes impatiently at him. Shooting up straight, he threw his hands behind his back, averting his eyes from where they had once been and began muttering, "Nothing, nothing, nothing--"

Hiccup cocked a brow. "Well, obviously if it had taken up so much of your attention that you have to ceased your work, so I assumed that it is indeed something."

It was sarcastic, of course, since many things that did emerge from the young prince's mouth could not fail to be sarcastic. But strangely enough, Jack didn't notice and, well, took him for real.

"Okay," the white-haired boy's tone became business-like and efficient, while he pointed at the red draperies on the wall, "this is the royal family crest, right?"

Hiccup peered at the golden dragon shape emblazoned on the banner before making a slow nod.

"This here shows a picture of a dragon, but your family hates dragons."

"Not the whole family," Hiccup disagreed. "Just my dad. And his dad. And his dad before. And--"

"Lots of dads, okay." Jack interrupted. "You guys hate dragons, and you guys are also Haddocks. Now, dragons eat fish, like haddocks, so it's understandable that you guys hate them--"

"-wha-\_wait\_, what?" Hiccup was stunned at the curious logic. "That's not--"

"-so I guess that dragons are pretty significant to your clan and stuff," Jack went on, because obviously, he didn't care much about the prince's input. "But significance doesn't necessarily translate into symbolism. So yeah, dragons on the Haddock crest? Nope. Incongruent."

"Look, Jack, I think you're thinking too deeply into t--"

"So if you ask me, it'd make a whole lot more sense if the crest was, you know, a picture of a haddock..." The taller boy paused, rubbing his chin in thought. "Or if you really want something that look more menacing, have a picture of a haddock dressed like a Viking."

"I can't even comment on this," Hiccup told no one in

particular.

"Or, if you really, really want a dragon in it, you could have one of a haddock fighting a dragon," Jack mused, began a wild series of gesticulation as his ideas came pouring out. "Like, maybe this haddock dressed in armor, with one of its fins holding an axe. Then it's like using its tailfins to stand over a fallen dragon. So it's like—" he took a mild breather for emphasis "-the triumphant of Haddocks over dragons. The little guy beatings the big guy! The prey defeating the predator! It'd be an epic battle of proportions!"

There was a silence.

"'Epic battle of proportions'? What does that even mean?"

"Well, 'im-proportions' then."

There was a stricken pause. "You realize that there is no way my father's changing every crest in Berk to a haddock, right?"

Jack shrugged. "Hey, it's a worthy thought."

"Just shut up."

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Vignette 3: Humpty Dumpty<strong>

\*\*Basically a dare. It was funnier in my head...\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>So it happened to one of those days that where the butchers decided that fishmongers were rascals and fishmongers decided that butchers were thieves. So the two lots of them chosen to take their battle onto the cobbled roads of Berk and began a duel of poultry against seafood, literally by thunking each other with the other's produce. People placed bets on who would win, everyone had fun, then the guards came and arrested some. You know, normal life.</p>

Of course, this has nothing to do whatsoever with the main story. Unless you count the part about bets being relevant to the story.

Much stupidity in youth could be attributed to many things, and one of them was foolish pride. Another relevant one perhaps was also greed.

It was because of these two terrible qualities that Jack was sitting on top of the castle walls, his rear on the parapet and his legs dangling freely. His back was facing the forty-feet plunge down into the moat, while his front was facing the little pathway for the guards on look-out. On his lap sat a decent-sized wooden plank that he had procured from the dump and on it had been painted two words in red. He held the plank upright, such that anyone who went by him would see it.

"Good afternoon!" he greeted the pair of guards that passed him by with enthusiasm. They stared at him quizzically, wondering why this

strange boy had purposely placed himself in such precarious position. They concluded accurately that it had something to do with the writings on the plank, but since they could not read, they could not find out what it was. Caught between the hiding their illiteracy and doing their job, they decided to leave the odds youth where he was, asking no questions. This was the case for the various cooks, maids and laborers who happened to pass by this spot.

As the sun began to move itself closer to the western horizon, Jack allowed himself a yawn. When the prince had first proposed a bet, he had been wary. Hiccup was no fool, so if he wanted to create a dangerous 'dare' of sorts, he could easily do so. However, this particular 'dare', if such would be its name, was hardly the worst that could be conceived.

In a matter of fact, most of the passer-bys weren't exactly of the educated class. They couldn't read the instructions scribbled on the plank, which in turn meant that they did nothing to him. Even the lords and ladies that happened to cross the castle walls, who could understand the writings, wouldn't do anything to him. Most of those prissies wouldn't care lay a plumb, callous-free hands on a scuffy servant boy like him. Jack grinned to himself. Nope, Hiccup was going to lose this bet.

When it was probably sometime in midafternoon, Jack pushed himself back a little further on the wall so he could cross his legs together. Those who had crossed him earlier still came back to stare at him a little, some whispering with their companions. Others pretended not to notice him, for his smug grin was a little annoying and his presence was definitely disturbing.

Out of the gentry, the only one who stopped his way was the stocky knight Sir Fishlegs. He was able to read the words on the plank, but Jack had no fear of him committing the act. The squeaky voice knight could be irritating at times, but he was never one to participate a cruel joke.

"Hiccup set you up to this?" He was astonished.

"I kind of goaded him into it, so not entirely his fault." Jack shrugged. "It's not that hard. All I need to do is sit here—" he tapped on the giant stone blocks below him "-until sunset and hold up this sign."

"So what if you win?" The knight began another examination of the plank, a worried expression on his countenance.

"Two consecutive days off from work." Feeling rather bored, Jack began rocking himself back and forth, only stopping after he took a glance behind him.

"And if you don't?"

"I have to spend the next two days cleaning the royal stables." The white-haired boy made a shudder.

"Are you sure that's really so bad?" Fishlegs peered over the edge of the wall, calculations immediately sprouting in his head. "There's a fifty percent chance of you breaking your neck while falling, and eighty percent that you'd break a rib at least."

The confidence that Jack possessed previously subsided momentarily as he absorbed. Then, he gave another shrug. "Eh, doubt it."

With a subdued and very concerned farewell, Sir Fishlegs departed. Jack continued his vigil on the wall, holding up the sign dutifully as he had been assigned to. By this time, he was too bored to greet anyone. In a matter of fact, he was feeling thirsty and he was kicking himself for not asking Sir Fishlegs to bring him some water.

The next of his 'visitors' turned out to be the wimpy prince himself, who had come to check on how his manservant had been holding out.

"You should totally rethink how you create your bets, sire," Jack told him with a smirk.

Hiccup merely deadpanned, "We'll see."

With that, he too departed.

Nearing the end of the day, as the horizons began to display a palette of red and gold ribbons instead, the prince returned.

"It's almost sunset," Jack taunted him in a sing-song voice, swing the plank from side to side as he did.

The prince didn't seem perturbed. "Uh-huh."

"I'm going to get my off-days."

"Yep."

The manservant frowned. "You're okay about this?"

Hiccup's expression didn't change. "I'm not evil, you know. I do let you have off-days if you've earned them."

Jack didn't know exactly what to think of that, so he pursed his lips and silenced the remaining insults he had.

Just seconds that moment, steps could be heard beating against that cobbled stones. When they raised heads to see who it was that was passing now. Jack immediately let out a sigh of relief when he realized that it was just Astrid. The maid servant had under her arm a basket of laundry, and an expression of incredulity.

"What's going on?" She peered at the plank that Jack held, then at Hiccup. "What are both of you doing?"

"Oh, nothing in particular," Hiccup said, stepping himself away. There was a curious gleam in his eyes and a hint of a smile.

Jack just went, "Huh?"

And then it hit him.

Unlike the other maid servants, Astrid knew how to read, so the words on the plank. And unlike the other maid servants, Astrid had a love

for violence.

Did he mention that she had a positive evil grin?

"Er, oh, no." The white-haired boy wanted to scramble away, but realized that scrambling off the parapet would tip himself surely off the wall altogether. His eyes darted back and forth, searching for an escape that would not warrant his loss of a bet or his near-certain paralysis. He turned to the blonde girl, who had dropped her laundry basket in favor of punching one fist into the other hand slowly, almost menacingly.

Jack could only gulp in response.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>I'll try to get to continue writing actually stuff with plot the next time, hopefully once I get enough inspiration. That said, I might occasionally slot in more vignettes in between 'episodes', so suggestions are welcome.</strong>

\*\*And if you want to know why the next chapter's killing me, it's the 'Lancelot' arc. It'll be written so-called 'drabble' style, but that doesn't make it easier to write.\*\*

\*\*Mailbox:\*\*

\*\*Guest (Dec18): It's unlikely that I'll bring in Tadashi or Hiro, even though I did say that I might use BH6. The problem is that I can't find a good place to put them in. Your assessment on Pitch is however very interesting...\*\*

\*\*Riverfall: Astrid and Jack aren't going to have a romance, anymore than Merlin and Gwen eventually had (season 1 had a lot of deceiving plot threads that were scrapped in season 2). Any antagonism between Elsa and Hiccup will not be seen yet - as of now, they're pretty okay foster siblings. I've pretty much settled on who Lancelot is, but writing it in is sort of tricky. Yep.\*\*

\*\*And â€| now I need to go and take my meds. Excuse me. \*\*

## 9. Part II: Noble Knight So Fair Chapter 1

The Once and Future King

Part II: The Noble Knight So Fair

Chapter 1

\* \* \*

><p>This is the first so-called Drabble form story. They'll be some summarized parts in bold and others in proper prose. It's still in parts, but there'd be fewer and shorter parts to the condensation.</p>

\* \* \*

><p><strong>So our tale begins roughly three weeks after the first

arc. As a grumpy Jack goes out into the woods to collect herbs, he is attacked by a fearsome beast as black as a shadow. Gruesome creature this be, the light reveals it to be a giant BEAR, snapping and snarling. This, in a matter of fact, is the same giant bear that happened to have been terrorizing the villages in Berk Country, bringing unnecessary and painful deaths. Whilst the council is busy listening to villagers complain of about this, Jack is busy running for his life and eventually gets mauled to death.<strong>

\*\*THE END.\*\*

\*\*Kidding, okay.\*\*

\*\*So, Jack has not yet been mauled to death, but he's still running and is trying furiously to use magic to save him (to little avail) while furious beast is hot in pursuit. Just as it seems that all hope is lost, an arrow appears out of nowhere and smacks straight into the beast's left eye. The creature howls in pain, as another arrow strikes its back, only to fly off without so much as a scratch. Jack turns and he catches sight of a hooded archer, bow drawn out and arrow in hand. Another flies, but the beast snaps that into half. The archer whips out a sword and slashes the beast, before grabbing onto the flabbergasted Jack and yanking him away. They flee and somehow lose the beast. The warrior and Jack shake hands, with the former introducing himself as Hamish of Dunbroch. Jack introduces himself, but Hamish isn't really paying attention because he attained a bad wound during the battle (somehow). And that's where Jack drags him to Court Physician andâ€|\*\*

"Tooth! "

The scolding about to slip off her tongue was abruptly swallowed when she saw what â€“ or perhaps, who - her scrawny apprentice held under his arm. The boy was anxious, helpless even, and she was reminded again that he was still a boy.

"Lay him over here," she instructed, gesturing towards the empty table on the side of the room. Jack helped his companion â€“ whoever he was â€“ hobble towards the examination stand, though the hooded fellow still muttered complaints about 'not needing help'. The brown stain on his tunic however said otherwise. Tooth kept herself busy by gathering the necessary equipment â€“ wine, strips of gauze, cleaning salves and various ointments that might be necessary.

"Really, I don't nee-" The hooded one, who had revealed himself to have quite a mane of brilliant red curls once the hood was drawn back, hissed violently as Jack lowered him onto the wooden surface.

"Look, I really appreciate that you saved my life and everything, but this would be a lot easier if you didn't-"while removing his arm from that of his companion, Jack accidentally jostled him in the ribs, causing the redhead to start cursing in colorful brogue  
"-\_resist\_. "

Tooth nudged her fumbling apprentice aside, arranging all the equipment on the work table.

"So, who's this?" she asked the white-haired lad.

"Oh." The boy cleared his throat, gesturing the redead. "Tooth, may I present his lordship, Hamish of Dunbroch, son of the Duke of Dunbroch. Your 'lordship-piness', my master, Toothiana."

Lord Hamish gave her a weak nod, before dropping back down onto the table, groaning.

Jack just went on casually, "Lord Hamish here just saved from this big monstrous bear in the woods. It was—" he stretched arms straight out to their full length "-this long."

Just as he finished his piece, the redheaded lord demanded, "Where's my bow? And the quiver? My arrows?"

"Oh." Jack jerked his head back, glancing at the weapons Tooth had just realized were strewn on the wooden boards. "I threw it on the floor."

"Ye wh't!" The warrior tried to sit up, only to tumble back and groan. Tooth pinned him down straight before he could rise again, methodically cutting up the slashed tunic with a knife in hand. It wasn't standard practice, but the young lord's clothes were already damaged and he was wearing far too many straps to remove it the normal way. The wound seemed to be on the lower right of his torso, and indeed the brown rips on it seemed to indicate so.

"Please hold still," she told the struggling the redhead, who tried to grapple at her arms. "Jack, pin him."

After about two weeks of having to this with the physician, Jack had somehow managed to stop fainting at the sight of blood and actually to be of some help. With the fiercely controlled action as not to hurt the patient, he wrestled with the young lord as Tooth attempted to find the source of the wound.

"I don't need any—"

"Relax, won't you? We're trying to hel—"

"Should'a—" hiss "—let ye—" sharp inhale "—git eaten."

"Somehow, I'm feeling a tad less grateful now."

Tooth ignored the tussle between the teenagers, methodically removed strip after crimson strip of the cloth. It was only after she hit the last layer that she realized something was amiss.

"Tooth?"

She didn't answer Jack's query at once, peering closing at the bloodied cloth stuck to the skin. She glanced up at the young warrior, who seemed to have turned pale yet certainly not from blood lost. The bright blue eyes met Tooth's violet ones, knowing full well what she knew.

Finally, Tooth spoke, "Just hand me the gauze, Jack, and you're done for today."

The boy was aghast at this new instruction. "But I just got here!" His eyes flickered to his redheaded apparent savior, whose own gaze

still rested on the physician.

Tooth didn't waver from her stance. "While you were gone, Prince Hiccup asked for you. You're his servant first and my apprentice second. Now, go on."

"Didn't choose to be." The boy grumbled.

"The gauze, Jack."

With a heavy sigh, the boy handed her the strips of cloths, giving his new sort found friend one last look. "I'll be back later."

All the redhead returned him was a grunt, but as Jack prepared to leave the room, the wounded fellow called out, "Jack?"

The boy glanced at him in response.

"Thank you."

Jack beamed, before closing the door after him.

Deciding that her apprentice was now out of earshot, Tooth turned back to her patient, eyes focused on the wound itself but thoughts clearly on another matter. "So, young lady, mind telling me why you're dressed up like that?"

\* \* \*

><p>Despite the harrowing events that led to its incineration, it hadn't been long before the royal smithy of Berk was restored to its original shine and structure. In a matter of fact, the new ground plan had permitted it expansion in space, giving way for another furnace and a larger study for the blue-blooded apprentice - despite his supposed involvement in the destruction of the first smithy. The forge was completed in under a week thanks to the community pulling their weight and the one-handed, one-legged royal Blacksmith had been said to have broken out in happy tears and well-meant but monstrous yodelling that was presumed to be song.</p>

Indeed, it was good nature bawling that Jack was greeted with as he stepped towards the smith. Fresh slabs of slate had been plastered over the burnt walls, and the parts that had been collapsed had been refitted with new blocks. The place, with its smell, sight and sounds, had become very familiar to Jack, given how often he had to come here.

"Ah, good Morrow to ye, young Jack!" the smith greeted, interrupting his own 'singing'. The hook-handed man was pounding away on the blade of a battle axe. To the artists eye, it was no beauty, but to a viking, it was gorgeous. Who cared if it looked like a chunk of harden mud slapped on a stick? The Viking-like Berkians were used to ugliness and their primary concern was with utility.

"Good Morrow to you too, Master Gobber." Jack made a flamboyant bow that set the smith cackling, all in accordance to the beat of his hammer.

"His 'ighness has been waitin' in his study about ye for the last 'our,'" the hook-handed man told the lad as he stuck the tasteless

weapon back into the furnace. In a lower tone, he added, "He's not in a good mood."

"When's he ever?" Jack muttered with a roll of his eye. As loyal as the smith was to the House of Haddock, he wasn't a stuck-up like that Asterlundian ass of Sir Bunnymund. Gobber believed that frank criticisms were the best contributions any citizen to his lord, though good-humor always had to injected.

"Now, that's no attitude to take to work, laddie." Gobber clucked his tongue cheerfully. "We must all remember that ultimately we're supposed to slave away our lives till we're feeble and grey." He pondered a moment. "That, or get eaten by dragons."

"One hundred and one lovely thoughts to get through the morning," Jack replied in sardonic amusement as he pushed the wooden study door open. It had only been a week since the rebuilding, but the prince had somehow managed to already clutter his new workspace with parchments, books and diagrams. Many of the scrolls appeared to have stolen straight out of the library â€“ Jack knew that 'stole' was indeed the accurate term, for Sir Fishlegs had been complaining of such. Due to the prince's injury during the fire, writing had been impossible, but thanks to the new manservant that had entered the royal service, dictation had become his highness' primary occupation.

"You're late." The brunette boy was hunched over his newly-fitted desk, flipping idly through a thick volume. Jack had heard that he was usually in the habit of scribbling about this design and that device, but the cast on his arm had forbidden him from doing much else alone.

"Well, sire, I was helping Tooth find herbs," Jack answered, the sourness in his tone hidden behind false grin. "You know, so that you can, well, write your own things againâ€¦" This was said in a lower voice.

"Hey, I don't like this anymore than you do, so quit acting like you're the victim." Hiccup â€“ ahem, Prince Hiccup, son of Stoick the Vast, heir to the sovereign land of Berk and her waters (may they all rest in peace come the time of his reign, huzzah, huzzah) â€“ didn't have the courtesy to pretend that he didn't hear Jack. With a huff, he slammed 'Dangerous Beasts and Other Creatures' shut, pushing it to the left of the table with his right hand. Looking at the white-haired servant, he crooked a brow. "Didn't you bring a chair?"

Jack made an expression of exaggerated incredulity. "Does it look like I can fit a chair in my pocket?"

"That's not what -" Hiccup broke off when he realized Jack wasn't being serious. "Just grab a stool from outside, won't you?"

Deciding not to prod another pressure point, Jack did obtain a stool from the smithy before returning to the study. His seat was stuck next to that of the prince's. Without asking, Jack removed a clean sheet of parchment from the drawer, sharpened the charcoal pencil with a knife and brought out the strange box of flat wooden instruments. These were all laid out on the study table, as they were every day when Jack reported for service.

No comments from the prince meant that preparation were sufficient, so Jack sat himself down on the stool, grabbing the pencil. "So," he asked the prince, "what shall we be doing today, sire?"

And the next word told Jack how miserable the rest of his day would be - "Diagrams."

~~~0~~~

"I'm dying."

"Stop being so dramatic."

"But it hurts."

"It's just a cramp, Jack. Now, stretch it out, then clench it back. Do it over and over."

By the time he could retreat back to the safety of the home, our manservant had been severely humbled the power of the pen - or in this case, the charcoal pencil. Prince Hiccup was not necessarily cruel, but he was capable of holding grudges. Add that with his obsession with his work, Jack had truly suffered. Conceptually, he understood that the prince wanted to pen down whatever he remembered of his 'Grand Plans' â€“ those

'oh-so-important-that-I'm-going-to-dash-into-flames' notes were burnt in the forge. Unfortunately, much of the Grand Plans consisted of pictures â€“ no, diagrams: all drawn to scale, with exact angles and mechanism in each part. Jack was fortunate to have learnt how to read and write despite his lowly background, but in no way was he an artist. Thus, hour after hour passed with Hiccup insisting he redraw this gear or re-angle that rope until the appearance satisfied him, and so the palms and fingers of the newly appointed manservant suffered. The prince didn't even notice that lunch time had come and gone, or that dinner had too, and Jack had no doubt that they'd have stayed in that study for the rest of the night if Gobber hadn't chased them out (or perhaps just chase Hiccup out â€“ Jack ran out screaming like a man possessed.)

Though Tooth perceived the distress of her apprentice, she didn't coddle him. Following her recommendation of hand exercises, she dropped a bowl of gruel in front of him. Needing to fill his stomach, he eventually did seize his complaints, sat down and ate. Eating however did give him time to recall other things of that he should have remembered.

"Where's Lord Hamish?" was asked with his mouth full. Tooth chided him.

It happened that this inquiry was time with his bedroom door creaking open, so the young lad turned his head towards it. Out stepped a young woman, draped in a robe. Her hair was as red as fire and her eyes as blue as sapphires. Taking the steps towards the common room, she let out a hiss as she pressed an arm to her side.

Staring at her as she hobbled towards them, Jack furtively leaned closer to his master, demanding in softer voice, "Why was there a girl in my room?"

"How are you feeling, dear?" Tooth ignored him to ask their guest.

"Terrible." The girl did looked awfully familiar and her voice sounded so too, carefully lowering herself on a chair at the dining table. Her hand didn't leave her ribs. "I feel as if I've been dragged apart by horses." She turned her gaze towards him, an expectant visage scribbled on his face. He frowned back, not quite understanding.

"Well, both of you are certainly well enough to complain," Tooth noted dryly as she rose from her seat. "I'll get you something to eat."

After Tooth left the dining table, Jack found that the redhead girl was staring at him again, as if waiting to say something. Feeling deeply uncomfortable, he scooped up another spoonful of the watery grains and put it in his mouth, eyes fixed on the bowl as if it were talking to him. When he sneaked a glance up at the girl again, he noticed a few things about her. For one, she wasn't that old — heck, she looked younger than him. The robe she wore obviously didn't belong to her, and noting the design, Jack confirmed that the article belonged to Tooth. And now staring had been promoted to glaring.

Unable to take it any longer, he demanded, "Well, what?"

The girl's annoyance was apparent in her tone. "Aren't you going to ask me anything?"

"Like what?"

"Well,—" she made a wild gesture "-you could for ask my name?"

"Fine!" He dropped his spoon, letting it 'plop' defiantly in gruel.  
"What's your name?"

"Merida."

He pulled a face. "That's a weird name."

"Well, at least it isn't common like Jack," she retorted, folding her arms.

"Wait." Jack was puzzled. "I didn't tell you my name."

The girl contradicted him outright. "You told me in the forest."

"What forest?"

"You know,—" this Merida seemed to be a very agitated character. Her voice rose every second "-the one outside Berk? Where we ran away from this big, scary bear?"

"\_We \_did?"

"\_We \_most certainly did."

Jack stared at her for a good long while, before admitting, "I don't get it."

She gave him a quick look over, narrowing her eyes. Finally, she said critically, "You're not very bright, are you?"

\* \* \*

><p><strong>SN:\*\*

\*\*Based on the episode 'Lancelot' from Series One of Merlin.\*\*

\*\*So after screening many possible candidates, it has come to pass that Lancelot isâ€¦Merida. \*\*

\*\*TADA. \*\*

\*\*Why? \*\*

\*\*Coz' I've got the others filling up other spots and she's the easiest to tie in here.\*\*

\*\*I don't do slash. I also don't do not canonical ships â€“ unless it's for plot. \*\*

\*\*Up Next: Another chapter of unpredictable size. \*\*

\* \* \*

><p><strong>AN:\*\*

\*\*So this is the first part of the drabble set. It's short, because unfortunately here's a good place for me to break off. The next one should be longer.\*\*

\*\*So basically, you might be able to tell that I can keep NOTHING in a succinct and self-contained chapter, thus each arc â€“ even in 'drabble' â€“ would be in parts. The difference between novelized writing and 'drabbles' is that in drabbles, I would skip some parts and just explain them in summarized form. Summarized stuff would usually be things that I don't like writing, like action scenes, or filler scenes (like when so and so goes and steals something with no important dialogue). If I think it's important enough though (even an action scene), I'll write it out. \*\*

\*\*I'd like to hear about your thought about this structure â€“ like whether it's still read-eable and whether you mind, or maybe ways to improve it. \*\*

End  
file.