It's not home, but it's a start

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Summary: The Vikings with their dragons are now free to pillage and plunder any land they see fit, however when they come across the Dunbroch clan, they find them as fierce as they are and won't give up easily. Merida, intrigued by the legends goes to see if dragons really do exist but by doing so complications arise.
Hiccup/Merida

1. will o the wisps

This is set after HTTYD 1 so Hiccup is in his late teens here, but Merida is nearly 17. The time periods are different but I think it'll work.
* * *

<<p>Her parents were arguing again, Merida could hear it from her apartments. It had been like this for several weeks now, there were tales being told about dragons and strange men raiding up and down the coast. This had happened several years before, the northern men coming in their strange long ships with beasts from hell as their figure heads. They didn't believe in the same religion that the people of Dunbroch did, not that Merida cared much, but they were ruthless and showed no mercy to anyone. Lord Macintosh would tell anyone who would listen; they were tall, as big as giants, with helmets and furs and spoke a different language. Apparently. Merida had never seen any of these northerners, she had seen drawings from the monk's tales of the ships and what the men looked like, but she doubted they were accurate. The monks liked to embellish stories, turning everything into a story about how people needed to repent and pray.<p>

Due to the danger, Fergus had ordered all of the surrounding villagers into the castle or neighbouring forts if they were too far away, along with any valuables they had until they could find out what to do. Resources were starting to be stretched; it just wasn't
practical that the castle keep could hold such a large amount of people for an extended period of time. It was becoming overcrowded; there were reports of stealing food most days, with some slaughtering of animals. Merida chose often not to go outside.

The triplets were with Merida, she had been trying to read them a story to drown out her parents shouting, but they could still be heard. Merida closed the book, setting it on her bedside table. "Stay right there, I'll be back soon." She told the boys, kissing each of them on their heads. She closed the door to her apartments lowly and hurried down the corridor.

"I don't know what we can do!" Fergus' voice came from down the corridor.

"We must wait, gather information, send scouting parties." Elinor's more rational voice said.

"How can we send a scouting party when none of the men want to go? We don't know what we're up against; we could get attacked on the field or anywhere!" Merida waited outside the door, her heart racing. Should she open the door? Shouldn't she? The last raid was only a few weeks ago from a town close to Dingewall's lands. They had killed all of the villagers except for a few and all of them claimed that the northern men had massive beasts of hell with them that rained fire down upon everyone. They were labelled as mad, but still, if Merida's mother could turn into a bear from a spell and magic did exist, it was hard not to believe in hell beasts too. Merida cautiously pushed open the door open, causing it to creak. Her parents fell silent.

"Merida." Her mother began.

"Mum, dad. The boys can here you"

Fergus sighed and sat down in his chair, looking at the maps of the kingdom. Merida sat down next to him.

"Are there more raids?" Merida asked.

"Yes, increasingly." Elinor said.

"Ay don't tell her that." Fergus butted in.

"Why not? She's a grown woman now; she's needs to know Fergus." Elinor turned her attention to Merida. "Yes, there are more raids. We're going to send out a scouting party tomorrow to survey the coast. Yes, Fergus. We are. We need to know what these raiders want, if we can trade with them."

"You mean be diplomatic?"

"Yes. Maybe we could set up a truce with them, they could become powerful allies." Elinor stated.

"You don't want me to marry one of them do you?" Merida joked.

"If the time comes for it." Fergus said gruffly. Elinor hit him playfully on the arm.
Hiccup stared at fire in the great hall. Did they really have to go on more raids? Surely they had enough money in the coiffeurs to sustain them for a while? Did they really have to inflict more pain and suffering to innocent people? Apparently they did as Stoick was already planning their next one. They had stolen a monk several raids ago who had drawn up maps for them to use. The monk, Mark, had proved extremely useful so far, Stoick had made sure to keep the monk close at all times at home or on raids and had led them to some of the more profitable raids on the coast. The first time the monk had seen dragons he had prayed to his god in some strange gibberish, throwing himself onto the floor about "unholy demons from hell." He still called them that, but only in his language, which he had been kind enough to teach Hiccup and several other villagers. The monk had also been teaching Hiccup to write in Latin, though Hiccup was still very bad at it and in return Hiccup had taught the monk his language.

Stoick pointed to something on the map, but the monk shook his head. Hiccup looked over, getting up from his bench to sit next to his father on the high table. Stoick looked at his son.

"I told you, father up north are too dangerous for raiding." The monk said, keeping his eyes cast down to the floor. "The people are too dangerous they have no fear of death."

"Because they haven't met us yet." Stoick proclaimed.

"Sire I don't think it would be wise—" the monk began. But Stoick had pushed himself back from the table. "We shall leave in a weeks' time." He announced to the villagers in the hall. "Make sure to pack lightly and bring your best weapons." He walked out of the hall several people following him.

Hiccup looked at the monk. "Are we really going to attack again?"

"It would seem so."

"I hate these raids. We've got enough wealth, why can't we just leave people alone?"

The monk sat on the bench next to Hiccup. "Your father is filling a void I would say. You once went on raids for dragons. Now you go on raids for humans. It's not so different."

"But we're raiding your home land!" Hiccup yelled. "How can you not feel the slightest bit annoyed by it? Aren't you sickened by us? Don't you want to kill us all in your sleep?"

"No. At first I was afraid of you people, but once I got to know you, you people you aren't so different. I do feel sorry for the people that you raid, but it is an act of God. It's punishing them for their sins." He said solemnly. "When you are chief you can change this." He said quietly, more like a mantra to himself than encouraging words to Hiccup.

"When I am chief." Hiccup said, looking down.
Hiccup clipped Toothless' saddle into place. He didn't know why his father insisted on taking him on these raids, he wasn't very useful, what with his leg and all. Toothless nuzzled Hiccup affectionately. 5 years, it felt like only yesterday.

"You ready Hiccup?" Astrid said, already riding on the back of Stormfly.

"Almost." Hiccup replied. They had been courting for a while when they were younger, but after long enough they both realized that what they felt wasn't true love. They had called it off about 2 years ago, but Hiccup still felt awkward around Astrid. She was perhaps sometimes too competitive for Hiccup, she was firmly rooted in the here and now whereas Hiccup liked being able to dream about far off lands and myths and legends. They remained friends all the same. It was impossible not to bump into each other on the small island of Berk, even though Hiccup still sometimes tried.

Hiccup climbed onto Toothless' back. "Ready boy?" He said, Toothless growled in response. Hiccup looked around; all of the other riders were ready and armed to the teeth. Stoick would lead, the monk would be second, chained obviously, to Gobber and then chained to the dragon so he wouldn't be tempted to throw himself off, if he did then he would be left hanging mid-air. They would fly for a few hours, make camp and then rest for a while, and lay low so as not to attract attention. They would send out a scouting party to survey the land and see if it was worth pillaging. It was most during night they would then attack, when people least expected it, and then in the morning they would go. It was quick, effective and deadly.

They took off, Hiccup in the front alongside his father. They could stay in the open for now, but once land came into sight they had to stick to the clouds lest they be detected. Hiccup normally enjoyed the feeling of cold air on his face, but recently it had been spoiled for him by what lay at the end of the journey. The first raid the Vikings had gone on, Hiccup didn't go. It wasn't until 2 years ago that Stoick has allowed him to join them. He remembered the first time he saw someone die. It was awful, and gruesome. The man, a farmer, had been pleading for death, blood spilling from his mouth and stab wound from his stomach, but the men taunted him, made his wife watch. The man eventually died, without honour and in pain, a slow torturous death. Hiccup swore he would never kill a man and he had lived up to that promise. Even when people who had been left, he couldn't bring himself to end it for them. He patted Toothless' head absentmindedly. Toothless gave a soft growl in response, one of his eyes moving up to look at Hiccup.

They landed a few hours afterwards in a place that looked much the same like home. It was brisk, not too cold but not too warm either with lavender strung across the landscape and High Mountains. Toothless lent down to drink some of the water from a stream nearby. Hiccup jumped off of his dragon's back and knelt down next to him, cupping water from the stream in his hands and washing his face.

Stoick turned to the monk. "Should we stay here monk? Or should we move on?"
"Stay." The monk said, looking at his feet again. "There is a castle nearby and slightly south there are other settlements."

There were excited murmurs at the word castle. Not many of the Vikings new about castles, the best that they had were extravagant longhouses. Thankfully, the monk had a degree of knowledge on castles and had explained to them as plainly as he could what they were.

"It will be well defended." The monk continued. "I would expect hot tar to be thrown over the walls and catapults."

"We are not taking the castle by foot. And we shall not take it until we have enough jewels to secure that this journey was not a failure." Stoick said darkly. Hiccup hated this, his father was obsessive, once it was hunting dragons and now it was raids. Hiccup wished his mother was here, she could perhaps persuade him otherwise. "We will send out a scouting party." Stoick announced.

There was a moment of silence. "I would like to go." Hiccup offered.

"Are you sure?" Stoick asked. "We don't know these lands well."

Hiccup shrugged and rubbed the back of his neck. "You know me dad, I'll be fine." Stoick sighed then nodded.

"Very well. Gobber, Astrid, I would like you to go with Hiccup. Take the monk with you." Stoick added.

* * *

Merida had snuck out of the castle again. Anything to be out of there with the crying people and her parents bickering was a blessing. She had taken Angus out in the early hours of the morning when most people would still be asleep and had left a note for Elinor. Merida had taken several of the castle guards with her, just so that her mother wouldn't worry.

Merida rode ahead of her guards, feeling more alive than she had in weeks, the cool morning air wiping around her face. Angus snorted happily, stomping at the ground. They stopped near the henge where they had killed Mordu. She jumped down from Angus lightly, leading him into the circle. The men caught up with her, slightly out of breath.

"Your highness." One of the chief guards said to her, bowing his head slightly and passing her a wine skin. She drank a bit of the wine before passing it back to the guard. It was too sweet for her taste. Besides she didn't like wine much anyway. She sat next to Angus, leaning against him. They would have to go back to the castle soon, but not yet. She wanted to forget being a princess at least for a little while.

Merida was preoccupying herself making a chain of flowers when she saw it. A wisp! Merida got up slowly, looking around. The guards were half asleep on the outside of the henge. Merida walked towards it quietly, not wanting the guards to scare the wisps off. Merida knew she probably shouldn't follow the wisps, the last time they had they had led her to a witch and gave her that spell, but it couldn't hurt
just to see where they would lead would it? Angus whickered softly, trying to get her to come back.

"Oh come on Angus!" Merida said softly. She continued to walk through the forest stepping over the branches.

* * *

Hiccup and Toothless had separated themselves from the group. They were making far too much noise to be sneaky and kept talking about all the potential riches they would get. Hiccup had said he felt slightly sick, he had gone off to be "sick" but really he had just wanted to get away from them. Hiccup and Toothless were just about to go and find the rest of the group when he saw something out of the corner of his eye. He stopped, turning back. Down a small path leading into a forest was a blue flickering light. He rubbed his eyes. It was still there. Hiccup turned to Toothless, the dragon lowered himself to the ground, his eyes fixed on the light too.<p>

"Toothless no," Hiccup began to say. Toothless pounced on the light; it disappeared only to reappear further along the path. Toothless swiped at it, it disappeared again. Hiccup followed Toothless down the path, trying to grab hold of him to make him stop but failing. The lights led them further into the forest, Hiccup tried to avoid the branches snagging at his clothing and the brambles.

The wisps stopped, Toothless turned to look at Hiccup, growling as if to say "now what?" There was an audible gasp, Hiccup looked up. A young woman stood there, hands over her mouth, wild red hair flying everywhere. Toothless growled, baring his teeth.

"It's real!" She yelled.

"Toothless don't!" Hiccup said, trying to grab hold of his dragon, but Toothless leapt for the woman. She screamed, falling to the ground.

* * *

2. someone's coming for tea

"Toothless!" Hiccup yelled, the dragon jumped on top of Merida, he growled at her, sniffing her hair and face before stalking back to Hiccup, his eyes narrowed. "I am so sorry." Hiccup said slowly, unused to speaking the monk's language.

The girl looked up at him, her eyes wide with fear. "You have a dragon! They were right!"

"Wait, who was right?" Hiccup asked her. Merida began scrambling away, stumbling to her feet. "Please don't leave. He didn't mean to do that!" Hiccup said, walking quickly after her.

"Your dragon attacked me!"
"No! No he didn't, he didn't mean to startle you!" Hiccup grabbed her by the wrist; she struggled but was unable to slip out of his grip.

"Let go of me!" Merida yelled head-butting Hiccup and stamping on his foot. He let go of her wrist and she ran through the trees.

Merida jumped onto Angus' back, riding hard back to the henge where the guards were. "To the castle! The raiders are here!" She yelled, waking up a few. She glanced up at the sky, half dreading that the dragon would follow them, but so far it hadn't. It had been huge, black and scaly. She had never seen anything like it, there certainly weren't any dragons in Dunbroch or the Highlands, the last one had been killed hundreds of years ago in the south of England by a king and had become legend. The guards jumped on their horses, following Merida's lead. They rode hard, the horses snorting and stamping, sensing their riders fear. Merida rode through the outer gate to the castle first, the captain of the guards yelled to shut the gate and arm the walls. Merida leapt off Angus, handing the reins to a stable boy. She managed to walk quickly to the reception hall, calming herself down so she wouldn't scream.

Her mother and father were sitting on the throne, listening to a complaint from a farmer. Or rather, her mother was, her father was staring off into space. Elinor looked quickly from Merida to the farmer, noting the look on her daughter's face. "We shall deal with your problem shortly," Elinor said. "You shall have your compensation for your sheep shortly." The farmer looked rather disgruntled at Elinor's shortness with him, but couldn't say much as the guards led him away. The captain of the guards stood behind Merida. Merida stopped in front of the throne. Taking a deep breath, she looked at both of her parents.

"Father, mother." She said.

"What is it dear?" Fergus asked.

"The raiders are here, I've seen them. They have dragons." Her parents exchanged looks.

"Darling are you sure you saw a dragon?" Elinor asked. "Did you hit your head on a branch?"

"No mother, I swear I saw a dragon, it was huge and black and there was a man too. The thing jumped on me but the man called it off. The thing had a bloody saddle on it. They're here!"

"Did you see this?" Fergus addressed the captain.

"No your highness, but if you would allow it I would take my men back to search the forest. Even if there are no dragons, there are northmen." He said, half bowing before Fergus. Fergus nodded, "Ay, I'll allow it." The guard nodded curtly, turning and walking out of the hall, his men following him.

* * *

They arrived back late at night to the camp site. Several of the Vikings were drunk again; others were eating agaric mushrooms they had brought with them from the island. Stoick was in the chief's tent
as Hiccup could see from the small fire lit inside the tent along with the monk and the most important men from his <em>hird</em> including Gobber and Spitelout. Hiccup petted Toothless on the head, walking towards the tent alone; Toothless had re-joined the other dragons feasting on several cows. Hiccup opened the tent, standing there awkwardly. Spitelout handed Hiccup some mead and pushed him into a chair.

"Where were you?" Stoick asked.

"Exploring the land." Hiccup responded innocently.

"The others were back hours ago. Where were you?" Stoick asked again, his eyes boring into Hiccup; this was as close to worried fathermode as Stoick got.

"I uh, ran into a local woman. Toothless jumped on her and she ran away." Hiccup said quickly. "But don't worry, we found a castle and some villages that are close by," He added, noting the look of anger on Stoick's face. "She ran away, she couldn't have found our site. She looked important, she was wearing rich clothing. Maybe we could a ransom for her."

Stoick turned to his men. "We shall have to move quickly. Change our location so they don't find us. After that we'll go on a raid and leave. What was the castle like Hiccup?"

"Defended. Strategically located so that it would be hard for land based armies to attack it and on a cliff so it can't be taken by sea, but it'll be easy, it's large but there's also an open field and they've holed up their villagers there. That means they'll have all their valuables there. Plenty of food and gold." Hiccup said feeling slightly disgusted at himself for telling his father this information. The girl hadn't seen Hiccup and Toothless follow her, but they had; too see if she had raised an alarm for the kingdom. Hiccup hated the raids but he had to tell the Vikings to safe guard them from a potential surprise attack, they were his family.

Stoick looked at him. "Thank you Hiccup. You are excused, we need to look over this information, and we'll tell the Vikings the plan in the morning." Hiccup nodded and put the cup down, unfinished onto one of the tables and backed out of the tent straight into Astrid.

"Hiccup!" Astrid said, smiling.

"Astrid." She threw her arms around him, squeezing him tight; this was very uncharacteristic of Astrid. Hiccup hugged her back briefly before dropping his hands. She let go, her smile wide and her pupils dilated. She had eaten some mushrooms.

"Astrid, did you eat the mushrooms?"

"Yes. Tuffnut told me to. Oh, it's amazing Hiccup. The gods are talking to me." She wrapped her arms around him again; her head nestled on his shoulder. Hiccup could feel his heart speed up. "I think we should get you to bed Astrid." He said.

"I don't want to." Astrid said and placed a hand on Hiccup's neck. She reached up and kissed him sloppily on the lips, Hiccup pulled
away, thinking for a moment before kissing her, his hands placed on her hips. He felt like he was half taking advantage of her but she had kissed him first, so it was ok wasn't it? Hiccup felt Astrid move her hand down to grab his ass. Hiccup deepened the kiss, opening his mouth, slipping his tongue into Astrid's mouth. He broke the kiss and picked her up in one swift movement. Astrid giggled, "Are you taking me to bed?"

"No. I'm putting you to bed." Hiccup said, trying to keep his voice steady.

"Do you remember the first time we rolled in the hay?" Astrid asked him, she sounded drowsy. Hiccup carried her toward her tent. "Rolling around in the hay" was not actually an innuendo for them, it had actually happened, the first time to be exact. Hiccup laid her down gently onto her sleeping pallet. He stayed with Astrid for the night, talking to her for several hours before she finally feel asleep and stayed with her to make sure nothing bad happened to her. Eventually he nodded off himself, getting several hours of sleep.

* * *

>>p>Hot water poured over Merida's head. Maudie scrubbed at Merida's head mercilessly. "Ow!" Merida said, trying to squirm away.<p>

"Stop moving or you'll be here forever!" Maudie warned.

"I can wash me own hair!" Merida argued, Maudie raised an eyebrow at her and continued to pour water and soap on Merida. Maudie turned to throw in some cloves into the bath and rosemary. Merida sank into the bath, leaving her eyes above the surface before sinking in completely. She rose up again after a moment, pushing her hair back from her face.

"Maudie, you believe I saw a dragon didn't you?"

Maudie made a strange sound; Merida looked over her shoulder at Maudie. "Your highness, I have seen bears in this castle, and the triplets, I've seen things I have never wanted to see, a dragon is one of them. A princess doesn't speak of such things."

"But ladies and princesses were always captured by dragons in stories; they had to be rescued by knights." Merida pointed out.

"Those are just stories."

"But where do stories come from? True events."

"Or an overactive imagination," Maudie countered.

Merida pulled a clean chemise and sat down at her table to brush her hair. Really she shouldn't be bothering; it was a tangled mess, wet or dry and never did what she wanted. Merida wished sometimes she had her mothers' hair, manageable, straight hair. But she had gotten her father's genes and that was curly unmanageable hair. Merida set the brush down, only managing to half brush her hair. She'd leave it; it wasn't like it was actually going to not be curly. She moved to her window, closing it. The villagers were singing another bawdy song that she'd care not to hear. Merida crossed the room to her bed,
blowing out the candle and laying down. Dragons were real. It half scared her but also half excited her. She wanted to get closer and see what dragons were like. What would her mother say? Dragons are not for a princess? Merida smiled to herself. She wanted a dragon, maybe. Going wherever she wanted, flying? And if anyone got in her way then her dragon would sort them straight.

* * *

>>&Hiccup woke up bleary eyed and groggy, he looked over at the bed, Astrid had left already. Rubbing his eyes, Hiccup exited the tent; everyone was about, saddling up the dragons, polishing their weapons. Toothless jumped on him and licked his face.&<

"Easy boy!" Hiccup said, laughing and pushed Toothless off him. Hiccup got up, Astrid walked towards him, she looked worse than Hiccup felt.

"Did we?" She asked, her voice hushed.

"No."

She sighed, "Thank you." She half smiled and opened her mouth to say something else but she shook her head and walked away again. Hiccup felt sort of like he had been punched in the gut. He knew they were over and had been for a while but he still had some kind of feelings for her, she was his first love after all. Hiccup shook it off, they weren't together and besides they had bigger things to think about. Another raid, another merciless slaughter of people all in the pursuit of money and wealth and material possession, the Vikings climbed onto their dragons, a few staying behind to defend the camp just in case someone decided to attack them.

Stoick climbed onto the back of his dragon, turning so they were facing the Vikings. "We are going to attack the castle and we're going to take slaves." He announced. "I will have mercy for these people, but if you can take hostages then you will. Don't kill everyone; if this is a profitable raid then we shall come here again. Am I understood?" He asked, the Vikings roared back, but Hiccup felt like he had lost the use of his vocal chords.

They set off, taking only 10 minutes to get to the castle. Stoick flew ahead on his dragon, Thunder Drum to deliver the first attack on the castle. The dragon bellowed first, a loud and deafening screech, Hiccup was sure the people in the castle would be in for the surprise of their life. Following Stoick's lead, Hiccup and Toothless flew close to the castle, sweeping down low enough to set a bale of hay on fire, just to cause more panic. Hell had definitely opened, the villagers were completely unprepared, most of them were probably still in bed.

Snoutlout's dragon, Hookfang was crawling up one of the towers, breathing fire in through one of the windows. Hiccup looked down, an angry man with vivid red hair and a wooden leg was shouting something incomprehensible and threw a spear at one of the Vikings. They fell off their dragon to the ground with an awful crunch. Hiccup and Toothless flew high above the carnage. Though the castle had formidable archers and were setting up a catapult they were no match for the dragons.
Merida sat bolt upright in bed. She had heard a loud bellow, nothing like she had ever experienced before. She opened her window and peered out of it. It was dragons, they were attacking the castle. Quickly she pulled her dress on, leaving half of the buttons undone and grabbed her bow. She ran down the corridor swerving through the mass of people. Being inside of the castle probably wasn't the best idea. They'd be better outside, running for their lives to the forest, inside there was more of a chance of being killed by a dragon ripping the place apart, or by fire, or simply by being trampled to death. Merida ran down to the entrance hall.

"Elinor, get the children and get out of here!" Fergus yelled, arming himself with a spear and a sword. Elinor had grabbed the triplets and was running down to one of the secret exits under the kitchen. "Merida!" she yelled. The ceiling shook, the dragons were climbing the castle.

"Go!" Fergus yelled at both of them. Merida shook her head. "I'll fight them with you!"

"You can't Merida, you have to go!" Her father protested. Merida ran back up the stairs, wrenching open one of the doors up to the patrol walk. She ducked behind one of the merlons, a more protected and less decorative version of a parapet. She drew an arrow and turned around. One of the dragons was flying close to where she was, she let the arrow go, hitting the dragon in one of the eyes. Quickly she drew another arrow, hitting the dragon's head again. It noticed her, hissing and flew towards her. She loosed another one as it opened its mouth, hitting it in the throat. The guards loosed arrows into the dragon as well, killing it. Merida flicked hair out of her eyes, breathing hard, they would never be able to fend off all of the Vikings, let alone all of the dragons. She drew another arrow and shot one of the Vikings in the back. This was no time for mercy. Her kingdom was under attack and her family were in danger. They were facing a losing battle.

Merida ran down into the courtyard, swinging her bow onto her back and picking up a sword from a fallen warrior. She swung it, hacking into an unsuspecting Viking. Merida felt no remorse for her actions, this was war, there was no time to be a princess, she had to defend herself or else she would be killed, or worse. She grabbed a shield as well, charging through the sea of fighting people, a dragon landed in front of her, preparing to breathe fire, she jumped out of the way behind a cart and ran. The young man she had seen yesterday was fighting with the captain of the guards, but he looked reluctant to fight the man, fear evident on his face. He was fighting more defensive than offensive, rarely swinging at the guard but trying to get away from him. Merida left the guard to kill him.

The fighting had ceased, the Vikings had raided the armory and taken all of the weapons the Scottish had. They had corralled all of the survivors into the entrance hall and were guarding all of the exits. One of the men had tried to run; his body was lying on the floor, still bleeding. Most of the people were bloodied and bruised, one man had his arm chopped off and was holding it, whimpering quietly. Merida and Fergus sat there, looking at their captors.
defiantly; they were both stubborn as each other and refused to be belittled. The leader of the Vikings was talking with the young man who had had the dragon that attacked Merida yesterday; she was surprised he was alive. The leader nodded, standing there with his arms crossed. The stories were right; the Vikings were huge people, fierce warriors and were unafraid to die. However Merida couldn't help notice the similarities in the leader of the Vikings and her father not only in appearance but also in fighting style, as Fergus had taken a swing at the leader, the Viking leaders' face was still bloody. Elinor and the triplets were nowhere to be found, Merida desperately hoped that they had made it to safety, but she couldn't know for sure.<p>

The young Viking walked towards the dais, he walked with a limp and as Merida looked closer, he only had one foot. She dreaded to think how he had lost that. He cleared his throat, wishing for silence from them, though no one had been talking anyway.

"We will not kill anymore of you as long as you cooperate." He said in slightly broken English, his accent was slightly strange. "We want to know where you keep all your gold. If you tell us we will leave quicker. If not then we will take everything apart." None of the people said anything, they only glared at him. He turned to the leader and shrugged. The Viking leader motioned to the other Vikings, they would rip the place apart top to bottom and take everything valuable in it.

Merida watched the Vikings take the gold out of the castle which took a lot less time than she thought it would. They were very thorough, she'd give them that. Some of the women were hauled off at this time by some of the male Vikings despite their being shield maidens there too. The shield maidens only turned a blind eye, letting the men do what they wanted. Merida felt like she was going to be sick, would one of the Vikings haul her aside too? The Viking with the one foot came back, she glared up at him. He walked away, pretending not to see her.

* * *

Stoick motioned for Hiccup to come to him, reluctantly Hiccup walked towards him.<p>

"We're done here." Stoick said. "We've taken most of their gold. It's time to go. Take a girl."

"What?" Hiccup said, taken aback.

"Take a slave, preferably a girl. Odin knows the last time you laid with one."

"Astrid and I-" Hiccup began in protest.

"Are long over, everyone knows that. We're Vikings, we take slaves."

"They're a valuable commodity." Gobber added his usual cheerful self. Several other Vikings nodded in agreement.

"No." Hiccup said. "I don't want one."
Stoick rolled his eyes. "Fine, I'll pick one for you." He walked over towards the women, his eyes moving from one to another before picking up a girl roughly by her hair, the one Hiccup had run into yesterday. The king jumped up shouting something but was restrained by several Vikings. The girl screamed, clawing at Stoick's hand, earning her a hard slap across the face. She stopped her face red. Stoick marched her across the room and stopped in front of Hiccup. "Take this one. Apparently she's a princess judging by their king's response."

"I don't want a slave dad!" Hiccup repeated himself.

"Take her, or I'll kill her." Stoick warned. Reluctantly Hiccup hanged his head in shame, "Fine." He muttered. Stoick let go of the girl's hair, Hiccup grabbed hold of her arm tightly. She looked in fear from Stoick, to her father to Hiccup. Snoutlout passed Hiccup a length of rope, he bound her hands tightly, then bound her to the other slaves they had picked out to take back to Berk with them.

* * *

So Vikings used to eat hallucinogenic mushrooms to communicate with the gods or to fuel berserker rage. I'm not entirely sure what kind they used so I went for the generic red and white caped mushrooms as they're probably more common.

Also I decided that the scotts would speak English because I'm not sure what language they would speak but I think it's set in maybe 1200's to early 1400's so I would think primarily English whilst the northern highlands and Hebrides would speak gaelic.

I'm not trying to hate on astrid either I promise! I do like her and there will be some character development on her later on, but she strikes me as such a collected character that she probably would do something out of the ordinary and eat hallucinogenic mushrooms once in a while possibly just to wind down.

Sorry for the dark bits in it but I'm trying to keep it sort of realistic to what would actually happen in real life during a Viking raid. Obviously Stoick isn't as dark in the movie but in Viking society a earl or whatever he's considered would have to be tough and show no mercy otherwise he would be usurped by someone else and he would be challenged by his men. Also if I've made any mistakes in the technical words for things like Stoick's inner circle, I'm sorry!

3. red haired slave

One of Stoick's men pulled the rope roughly up causing all of the prisoners to stand. The people had been moderately quietly and complainant, only with a whimper here or there, their fighting spirit had left them earlier. Their king sat still, his eyes glazed over as if he didn't want to believe what was happening. Merida looked down at the ground in silence, tears drying on her face. Crying would get her nowhere she knew, and she didn't have any weapons on her that she could use to escape. Even if she did, she wouldn't get very far the Vikings would go after her and kill her or her father. She would accept her fate, whatever that may be.

She got up slowly to her feet, eyes cast down to the floor. The
Viking pulled on the rope again, leading them out of the great hall. Merida cast a look over her shoulder, this very well may be the last time she would ever see her father again, or the castle, or Dunbroch. What would they even do with her? Rape her, kill her? Sell her into slavery in some far away land? He led them down to the docks in silence where two longboats had been pushed onto shore. One was currently being stocked with the castle's stolen goods—everything from livestock, to furniture, to food, to gold. Merida and the others were led onto the boat that was not being stocked with goods. Several Vikings were already standing on board, grinning menacingly down at them. Their captor took the rope and tied it securely to the mast, forcing them to all sit down on the floor of the boat before he tied them up tighter too. He turned to the other Vikings;

"Keep a watch on them. Make sure none of them escape and for god's sake don't kill any of them this time." He instructed before walking back towards the shore.

A dragon roared in the distance, Merida looked back up to Dunbroch castle. The dragons were leaving, flying up in a funnel shape, snapping and snarling at each other, breathing fire and roaring too, blocking out the sun before they all peeled off from the formation to head north. It was an impressive sight and oddly beautiful if not terrifying at the same time. A Viking on the ship blew a horn, signalling that they would go too. The Vikings pushed the boats off from the shore and the sail was unfurled, the ship sank back into the water easily.

* * *

><p>It was a relatively easy journey to wherever they were going Merida thought. They were given water and food, though it was a small amount it was better than nothing. However they had been kept tied up the entire journey after one of the captives had thrown himself overboard after struggling free from his bonds. The Vikings didn't speak English so none of them could ask them anything, and even if they could Merida doubted that they would even answer their questions. At first the Vikings leered at them but in the end they tended to ignore them, instead focusing on their tasks at hand. They spoke often to each other though, laughing easily and joking with each other.</p>

The journey out from Dunbroch had been bumpy, particularly around the highlands. Merida felt sick most of the time and tired, as she hardly slept. The other clan members remained silent, staring off listlessly into the distance their eyes glazed over. Merida remained silent too but in her head she was formulating a plan. She would probably become a slave, otherwise why would they have kept her, or as hostage for more money from king Fergus in the years to come, but she doubted that. She would be a slave be it in the Vikings land or some far off land, but she would and she would accept it and get revenge. She refused to die nameless and forgotten, away from her home and her family. Merida would do her best to protect the people who were taken with her. Merida was enjoying a particularly good day dream (as there was no other way to pass the time) where she was reunited with her family, riding back to Dunbroch on the back of a beautiful dragon, laden with all the gold and goods stolen by the Vikings.

* * *
Wherever they had landed it was a strange land. It was an island from what Merida could guess, a good sized one, with huge pointed stacks dotted around the harbour. Houses were built up straight from the harbour to the beginning of the high mountains and were not completely dissimilar to the houses of the peasants from Merida's kingdom. However the dragons were prowling around, lying on roofs or in the fields, pouncing on the sheep and making Merida feel uneasy, how did these people tame dragons? They were beasts, creatures of lore and legend, not household pets. Merida turned her head, trying to take everything in, the island was so green and lush and there were pine trees everywhere. It was a beautiful place but threatening at the same time, animal skulls were tacked up above the doors and the people gathered on the docks were mumbling to themselves excitedly, pointing at them.

Their leader stood in front of the crowd, his arms crossed, staring down at them. One of the Vikings on the ships cut the rope from the mast then set about undoing Merida's and the others bonds. She stood up first, uneasy on the ship after sitting in the same position for so long. The Vikings were stepping onto the dock, greeting their fellows cheerfully, embracing their children. Merida felt it was odd, that such viscous men who supposedly felt nothing and were the product of the devil had wives and children that they loved very much. It was unfitting.

Carefully she stepped onto the dock herself, trying to set an example for the others. The Viking leader immediately stared at her, Merida refused to break eye contact, walking up to him slowly she stopped in front of him, nodding her head curtly. The leader nodded back. His son emerged from the crowd and they exchanged looks.

He looked at her. "My name is Hiccup. What's yours?"

"Merida." She said, her voice breaking momentarily. She cleared her throat. "Merida." She repeated.

Hiccup nodded. "This is Stoick," pointing to his father, "This is Berk. It is our island and our home, and it will be yours too. Some of you are to remain as slaves with us; the others will be sold on." Merida glanced over her shoulder at the others before returning her gaze to Hiccup.

"Understood." She said.

"You will be my slave." Hiccup continued; a tone of genuine remorse and guilt in his voice. "You will live in my house and answer to me. You will clean, and cook, and do any chore that I require of you. In return I will look after you and ensure that no harm comes of youâ€¦" he trailed off. Merida understood however, he didn't need to explain anymore, this Viking, Hiccup, was still green and wasn't hardened by life or warfare like his father.

Another Viking stepped forward, taking some of Dunbrochs people off to their new owner whilst a small portion of the others stayed on the dock, huddled together. Merida stayed where she was, staring at Hiccup, she nodded stiffly. There wasn't anything she could do to help her people. She had no weapons, she was outmatched and in a strange land. She.hopped that no harm would fall them but it was never certain. The slaves of Dunbroch and the slaves that would be sold on didn't even put up a fight; they simply followed the Vikings
to a large hall on the island where the other Vikings were heading. Merida looked down at the ground as she and Hiccup walked silently up towards the mead hall. From the corner of her eye she could see a dagger at his side, it would be so easy to overpower him and take it. No, she wouldn't it was a stupid idea.

"I'm sorry about your people." Hiccup said quietly to her. Merida looked at him for a second, before looking ahead again.

"No you're not."

"It's true I am. I didn't want this raid to happen! It's just something that we do."

"You rape and pillage because it's _just something that you do_?" Merida said incredulously.

Hiccup sighed, "I wish I could explain better but I can't really. Berk is an island and we need money for imports, like food and clothes - and protection for us as well. We aren't the only Vikings out here, and wealth offers protection and buys alliances. Berk is under population pressure. There isn't enough farm land for everyone - we need some source of income."

"So you take from defenceless kingdoms?"

"I wouldn't exactly call your kingdom defenceless." Hiccup said.

"Up against dragons we are." Merida retorted quickly. Hiccup fell silent and lead her through the doors to the mead hall to the hearth in the middle of the room. They stood next to Stoick, who looked dour. The other Vikings filled the hall slowly, some standing, others sitting. Merida tucked a piece of hair behind her ear nervously.

"As you know we have lost some brave Vikings in the raid." Stoick said to the crowd. "They have been given the best Viking burial we could at the time and their families will be compensated. However we also have the matter of slaves and of more domestic matters."

Hiccup tugged at Merida's sleeve. "Come on." He whispered, ducking behind a pillar and walking out of the hall. "We don't need to listen to the rest of that. It's all just political and domestic affairs." He turned around to face her. "I am sorry. It wasn't my choice to make you a slave. I promise that you won't have to do anything horrible! One of the monks we have has told me about the position of women in your kingdom, here women are! well! more respected. Obviously you're a slave-" Hiccup stammered, "But you will be looked after." He reassured her, placing his hand on her shoulder.

* * *

Hiccup had given her a plain white dress with a simple belt, any adornment she had had were taken from her. The house in which Hiccup and Stoick lived was the largest on the island with dragons carved into the woodwork and almost curved down into the ground like a funnel with a door at the back which she had been informed was where she would enter, slaves could not come through the front door. The house had a typical hearth in the middle like most houses even in Dunbroch. On the walls there were various collections of cooking utensils, herbs and weapons. Along the sides of the entrance room
were wooden benches which during the night would be used as beds, primarily by the thralls as the owners had much finer bedding and sleeping quarters. There was one other slave besides Merida, a monk from Northumberland named Mark and even though Merida was inclined not to like him on that principle alone**however she was thankful for the fact that he was there as well and even more that he spoke the same language. He was kind enough however he was perhaps too pious, always warning her about the heathens and that they were there as slaves due to their apparent sins. Though Merida did believe in God, she was not completely devout, not ever since she saw the wisps several years ago.<p>

Thankfully Stoick didn't have any livestock, he didn't need to as he was the chief which made Merida exempt from cleaning animals stalls everyday but she still had to clean the house and weave cloth, one of the lessons Merida hated the most that Elinor had made her endure. There was also cooking, gathering herbs and spinning wool, fixing the roof and fences around the property. By the end of the day Merida was exhausted. She wasn't unused to such hard work but the sheer amount of it was astonishing. Lying in bed, Merida remembered the servants at Dunbroch, she felt extremely guilty about how she treated them sometimes when she had had a fight with her mother or something. She couldn't imagine how she could get through this, Stoick's constant glaring often made her nervous and clumsy in her work and Hiccup was normally out somewhere with his dragon. She hated the looks she got from the other Vikings on the island. The majority of them were from men, one of whom had been brave enough to touch her hair, allowing Merida to demonstrate how mean her right hook was, but earned her an awful reproach from Stoick. The women stared at her like she was a freak, which she guessed she probably was as red hair was an extreme rarity on the island, the Vikings either had blonde hair or brown hair. But the worst were the dragons. She was constantly scared of the black dragon Hiccup had, Toothless. It watched her with its great big eyes, its tail swishing dangerously, threatening to trip her up. The first few days she had been there the roars of dragons in the distance woke her up and made getting back to sleep extremely hard. She didn't like the dragons prowling around with free reign. The Vikings treated them like pets, but they were dangerous beasts that could kill them in an instant.

* * *

Hiccup lay awake in bed, watching Toothless sway upside down slightly in his sleep from one of the beams. He could hear Merida toss and turn in her bed, she had not taken well to a life of servitude, not that he would have expected any different, to go from a princess, a life of luxury, to being a thrall would be no easy change. He knew that she was afraid of Toothless and of Stoick. Hiccup had asked his father to go easy on her, as Merida was his slave after all and not to give her as many tasks to do, but Stoick was unrelenting. Something was obviously wrong with Stoick, but whatever it was, he kept it to himself. Hiccup was concerned for his father; he hadn't seen him this sullen since Hiccup's mother Valhallarama had died. Sighing, Hiccup got out of bed slowly; his leg was killing him again. He pushed open his door, hoping that there would be something in the larder to dull the pain.<p>

* * *

even though the Vikings have dragons I doubt they would be able
to carry everything back with them so they have to use boats to
transport some of their goods back with them, I know I haven't
explained sorry!"}<p>

*I read somewhere that the richer a Scandinavian was in Viking times
the deeper colours they wore, whereas thralls would wear undyed
wool/linen/whatever. Which is why purple was generally considered a
royal colour at least in England at one time because purple dye was
extremely hard to make and procure.

** ah the whole England vs Scotland fighting. It's been going alone
for such a long time, the earliest record I found was in the 500s but
basically merida shouldn't like mark because he's English and England
and Scotland used to hate each other on principle (actually Scotland
wants to split from England again but who knows if that'll ever
happen) so I thought it'd be fun.

Also! Next chapter is gonna be happier I promise!

4. night time

I'm so sorry for not updating sooner! I've been trying for ages but
it's been really difficult to get back into the swing of writing,
thank you guys for being so patient!

* * *

><p>If there was one thing that Merida did well, it was keep the
larder well stocked. She may not be good at cleaning, cooking beyond
the basics, or more manual tasks Stoick's estate required, but she
was meticulous in keeping herbs, remedies, and ointments stocked and
labelled. He reached for the ground poppy seeds in the semi darkness,
took of the lid carefully. Hiccup poured a small amount on to his
hand, and tossed it back into his mouth, swallowing it* almost
gagging at the taste. He looked at the jar, pondering for a moment
before pouring some more out into his palm and swallowed that as
well.<p>

"You really shouldn't do that you know." A voice came behind him.
Hiccup jumped and nearly dropped the jar.

"What?! Merida, don't sneak up on meâ€¦Iâ€¦I wasn't doing
anything-"

"It's alright, I understand. When my father lost his leg he used to
say that he could still feel it itching sometimes. It used to keep
him awake all night." Merida said sullenly, looking at him straight
in the eye. Hiccup respected her for that, even if Stoick didn't.
Obviously it wouldn't have been an easy transition from princess to
slave and she still retained her manners and stubborn.

Merida glared at him. She may be his slave but that didn't mean she
wouldn't speak her mind. And right now, with the light reflecting his
features, he looked terrible, his hair was dry and limp, his face
creased with worry, making him look so much older than he actually
was. She knew her "master" wasn't sleeping well at night, he hardly
ate, and was incredibly testy. Apparently he had been for several
months, to the point that most people avoided him, yet no one knew
the cause. Merida had often heard him muttering at night but she
could never quite make out what he was saying.

"You should go back to bed." Hiccup said to her, feeling awkward standing there in the semi-darkness with her.

"I could say the same to you, but I know you'll ignore it." She retorted. Hiccup shrugged, and moved past her, opening the back door, walking out of the house and it's constant lingering smell of animals and human.

He took a large gulp of air, savouring its crispness in his lungs. Hiccup loved being outside, he loved the island even if it did stink of sheep and sea air and bird shit, particularly when the wind was in the right direction, it was his island and it was comforting. There was always a faint sound of revelry coming from the hall, the sound of the waves lapping on the beach and the snore of dragons. He had been thinking about Berk a lot recently. They were amassing a large fortune with the help of their dragons, but also more enemies. They were only a small island, and so far the only island with dragons that had in any sense been "trained". But what other islands started to train dragons? There had been word that the other islands were starting to band together to defend themselves against Berk...

It had been bad enough with the summer raiding, but if the other islands _were_ to get their own dragons, _if_ someone told them how to do it (even though the islanders had been sworn to secrecy upon penalty of death) then they could be engaged in all-out war. The dragons were weapons in their own right, and if they had to fight off other dragons, and invaders that were banding together; he couldn't lose Toothless, or Astrid; Berk needed to prepare itself. Tales of Drago Bludvist** were starting to arise, but he couldn't tell Stoick or the villagers, they'd just panic and do something stupid like they always did.

Hiccup rubbed his neck, another sleepless night, another tiring day of trying to find information and trying to map the surrounding islands. Some days the others would try to catch up with him and see what he was doing, but they mostly gave up now, they couldn't keep up with Hiccup and Toothless and they knew it was useless to try to talk to him about much anymore. And what with Stoick trying to pass on being chieftain to Hiccup? No thank you, forget it. Hiccup knew he wasn't ready, and thinking on it, he wasn't even sure if he wanted to be chieftain anyway. No he definitely didn't. Let it pass to Snoutlout or someone else. Just not him.

* * *

><p>Merida cracked the back door slightly, peaking out at him. She half wanted to go back to bed, but half wanted to go and comfort him as best as she could. She twirled her hair nervously between her fingers. Hiccup rubbed his neck and let out a loud sigh.<p>

"Merida." He said. "Come here."

Merida nodded, though he still had his back to her, she walked quickly over to him, not saying anything. She hopped she wasn't in trouble. He stayed silent for what seemed hours, not even looking at her, but staring out towards the village.
"What do you see Merida?" He asked her.

"Um...a village?" She replied slowly. "A lot of sheep?"

Hiccup half smiled. "Well yes, but do you see what's in the village? People. People that I have a duty to help protect and look after. And dragons too, soon they will all be my responsibility." He explained. "Stoick plans to make me chieftain soon. He won't listen to anyone else, once his mind is set on something that is it."

"You don't want to be chieftain?" Merida asked.

"Would you?"

"Well...no. I wouldn't have any freedom." She replied. She would have loved to say that she didn't have any now, but she bit her tongue. "When I was younger, I used to pretend to be queen, ruling over people and doing what I wanted...but when I was older my mother and father told me that Hamish would inherit. I would never be queen and that one day I would need to find a good husband to keep me."

Hiccup chuckled, for a moment some life coming back into him. "I don't think I could imagine you as a good housewife Merida. You gave Tuffnut a black eye just for pretending to touch your um-"

"He deserved it." Merida snapped angrily.

"Well, you understand my point; I don't want to be chief."

"It's not about you. It's about what's best for your kingdom."

"I know it is." Hiccup said sadly, going back to his normal sullen self. He started to walk back towards the house.

"Hiccup," Merida said. He turned to look at her. "If you ever need to talk; well I'm not the best listener, but I am here to listen. And I won't tell anyone. I promise. Hand on heart." She said, smiling faintly.

Hiccup nodded, "thank you Merida."

* * *

>>I lied! This chapter isn't happier! I had several versions of this chapter going through my head, but some of them didn't fit in as well, so yeah it's a bit of a filler chapter but stiiiiilll, trying to get back into writing.<<

*apparently you can ingest poppy seeds to get rid of pain, don't quote me on this though

**nope not dead in this fanfiction

End file.