

A Little Hiccup

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Summary: A little story of how Hiccup got his name.

A Little Hiccup

Valhallarama let her breath even in sync with her baby. He was quite small, considering how cow-like she'd gotten in the last month of her pregnancy. Just five or so pounds, she'd wager, and her mother told her she ought be glad he was. "Yer brother was nigh on nine pounds and he made me bleed for a week straight."

Val flinched. "Ew, Mother."

Her mother laughed. "Yeh best be grateful, is all I'm sayin'."

He had a fine appetite, though, and she wasn't worried. "Yeh're just a little babe, aren't ya?" she cooed to him. His downy hair was nearly as red as his father's.

The midwife entered. She was what Valhallarama would be in twenty years: mildly gray, weathered, and wise. She was here to help the overeager mothers not thump their children's heads or any other rookie mistake. The midwife gestured for Val to relinquish him. "I wanna check his reflexes," she explained.

Val's maternal protection flared. "Are yeh suggested a child born of Stoick the Vast and myself is in any way lacking jest because he's a leetle mite? I might remind you your cousin Thug was rumored to be small in more ways than one!"

"Ay, Val, clam down, it's routine," the midwife interrupted. She held out her arms and waited. Reluctantly, Val let her take him. He blinked very quickly, looking even more confused than your typical newborn. He opened his mouth to wail, and when the midwife tapped his knee, he did. Even his cry was quiet, almost mild. Suddenly, she felt a pang of panic; maybe he was sick. Poor baby, she'd tried to avoid

danger with him, but she was a Viking; it was an occupational hazard. The midwife ignored his cries and continued to pull and prod at him. Finally, she handed him off like a doll into Val's awaiting arms. Val pulled him to her soft belly. He caught sight of her ring and his dark eyes focused on it. He quieted. She'd bet her best fur that boy's eyes would turn green, jade green.

The midwife watched them. She put her hand on his little head. Val looked up at her, intending to say something about her little miracle. But the midwife's face stopped her.

"Poor little hiccup," she said.

If Val wasn't cradling her little boy, she'd get up right now and show her what her sword looks like (a very fine one, actually, a present from Gobber). How dare she say something like that about her future chief!

A hiccup is name for the runt of a litter. A weakling. Usually the pig that is killed first and made into tasty ham.

It's an insult to any Viking.

And then the baby hiccupped.

His little noise shocks her into a grin.

"Hiccup," Val repeated. She smiled. "What a lovely name."

"Eh?" the midwife asked.

"Hiccup. He's little, but he'll be the greatest of any of 'em. An' it'll scare off any gnomes and trolls! It's perfect!"

She smiled at Hiccup. The name suited him perfectly. "An' ye know," she added, "Stoick's got two other Hiccups in the family; named ironically, ye know. Stoick'll just _love _it." Stoick balked, but Val could always get him to take her side. Hiccup had a certain propensity to hiccup, and that helped. Any neighborhood hellion who laughed at his name risked Val boxing his ears or smacking at his legs with her sword hilt.

Hey, she wasn't just a mother; she was a Viking. She knew a thing or two about protecting her young.

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