But when the flames die down

Posted originally on the fanfiction.lol at https://fanfiction.lol/works/1689.

Rating:	General Audiences
Archive Warning:	Major Character Death
Category:	General (non relationship-focused)
Fandom:	Hiccup series [Book Series] - Cressida Cowell
Characters:	Hiccup Horrendous Haddock III, Alvin the Treacherous, Toothless (How to Train Your Dragon)
Additional Tags:	Implied Burning To Death, Blood, book 5 spoilers, AU, Kinda, No beta we die like [SPOILERS], toothless only here briefly, Cross-Posted on AO3
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2024-12-10 Words: 1,426 Chapters: 1/1

But when the flames die down

by DragonWolf

Summary

And everything is gone,
Will there be fire under the ashes still?

Notes

Originally posted on ao3
Posted to Fanfiction.lol archive on 11.11.26

See the end of the work for more notes

They’re so close.

The ground is arduous and their run is a stumbling one, but three sets of hands and one set of claws are *Reaching* for the fire stone, to their last chance at succeeding in this quest, it’s pure cruelty when it gets ripped away.

The dark shape of the exterminator swoops wind-fast over their heads and the twinkling, fiery, muddy glory has found its home in the hands of another. Alvin *gloats*. It’s in his nature. Cruelty is in his *nature*.

Just before the exterminator takes off Hiccup notices something.

It’s a moment. The saddle Alvin’s sitting in is *Fancy*, he’s had time to prepare and he can’t resist showing off. This fancy saddle has stirrups and straps and tassels, and there’s a thought that passes through Hiccup’s head that he has no time to process before he’s already leapt forward, arms outstretched.

He catches onto a hanging bit of a strap right as the dragon beats its wings. He holds on for dear life as it almost immediately tries to shake him off.

He grits his teeth as the dragon, still bucking and trying to get rid of him, ascends, up up up into the smoky atmosphere, towards the thunderclouds. Out of the corner of his eye he sees the white dragon, and Humongous atop it, landing at about the spot from where Alvin's taken off.

Maybe Humongous will chase them, chase Alvin and him, maybe catch him if he falls, but in his heart Hiccup knows that wouldn't work out.

The exterminator is fast and the White dragon is wounded, and his friends would be left all alone on the side of the mountain about to-

The volcano explodes behind them. Alvin cheers and raises his hand with the fire stone up in the air. Lava races down the sides of the mountain.

He feels his hands slowly going numb and readjusts, almost falling in the process. By a miracle he doesn't, though the bucking of the massive predator does not let up. It's flying erratically, but the boy stays stubbornly gripping the straps he's holding on to. It's a long way down now.

There's no safety net. The White dragon strains to even lift the three people on her, strains to gain any height as it is, and the Windwalker is too weak still to hold even one person. None of them would be able to catch him if he fell.

He strains to climb up.

Alvin's voice starts up again, loud, commanding, dictator-like. Hiccup's hand lands on a stirrup in his prey-lizard-like attempts to scramble up the saddle and only then does the man realize the boy is even there. He must have been dazzled by his own thoughts of triumph, by

the sight of fleeing dragons and vikings, not caring to count the heads, only caring for the hatching monstrosities exploding out of the lava in their thousands.

He tries to kick the boy off but the boy is quick, the boy is desperate. He finds a foothold and heaves himself upward, despite both the exterminator and now its rider trying desperately to shake him off.

Alvin makes a cry like a banshee in a particularly nasty mood and Hiccup mirrors it with one of his own as they grapple high, high up in the sky over the exploding volcano, above the swarming clouds of black beasts and racing lava.The boy claws at the man like a fox claws at a hound, like an animal dying but determined to not go down without a fight.

The erratic flight of the exterminator and the close quarters make it difficult for Alvin to both fight back with the long blade of his sword and hold onto the fire stone at the same time, but he screams and kicks and swipes all the same. He will not be undone in his ultimate moment of triumph, when he's so high and mighty and about to control an army of such savage beasts, oh no he won't be.

He backhands the boy with, regretfully, the dull edge of the Stormblade, but it still disorients the boy for just a moment, long enough for him to almost fall off the dragon entirely. Alvin opens his mouth to sneer, winds his arm back to deliver another blow, the final one to win this fight, to kill this brat-

A blur of green obscures his vision entirely for just a few vital seconds. Toothless, who's been chasing the exterminator as best as his stature will allow, finally catches up and flies like an arrow right into Alvin’s face in an attempt to give his boy a little more time.

Alvin manages to wave off the nuisance with his sword hand, but the moment of victory is past and.

Teeth sink into his intact hand. Just at the point where the palm attaches to the forearm.

He screams, like a sane person would after realising his child opponent has apparently lost his mind and is biting his hand so hard it's drawing blood. Has he regressed to an animal? He was composed enough to sing in the face of death just minutes ago, how’d this happen this quickly?

Hiccup tastes liquid iron on his tongue and bites down harder. His hands scramble for the fire stone as he feels the man's grip on it loosening. He latches onto it with aching fingers contorted into claws by his previous climb.

Alvin kicks him hard in the chest to get him to let go. Without a handhold beyond the stone that's slipping the man's grasp Hiccup fails to hold on. He can’t scramble to get a grip on the saddle fast enough and he just tumbles down.

And just

like

that

he's

falling.

For a moment he thinks he'll hit the ground and splatter on it like a fish that's slipped out of a dragon's grasp, before he remembers there's no ground anymore. The whole mountainside is covered in liquid fire.

The next moment he looks down below him to see what it is that will break his descent and realises with a gasp that it's not just lava that he's falling to.

In his mad struggle to wrestle the stone from Alvin he'd not noticed, but the exterminator flew all the way to the top and above and was making erratic circles above the crater.

The fire stone is vaguely warm in his hands and he clutches it like his life depends on it, despite the fact that his life is forfeit for it.

He vaguely hears Alvin scream for his exterminator, or for any of the thousands of them under his fragile command, to chase him and get the precious stone from his grasp, but when he looks back up he sees all the beasts hesitating, the fiery reflection in their dark eyes revealing what could be fear in the face of the Fire stone. None of them make a move to follow him and Alvin rages up above in the sky.

He sees Toothless flapping down after him but he's countless yards away already and getting farther despite his frantic efforts, the streaming hot air making it hard for him to dive down after his master.

He doesn't see his friends, and he can only hope they make it off the island ok. Let him be the only casualty.

He cradles the Fire stone to his chest, holds it tightly. At least he managed this, even if the rest of the quest went up in smoke.

He hopes whatever hatches from it has mercy.

He falls. He knows it is to his death.

Even if anyone is in the vicinity to catch him they have no time and there is a cloud of newly hatched exterminators in the way.

And he has to make sure the stone falls into the crater. This is the best he can do now.

He holds the stone even tighter and makes a promise to himself.

He won't scream.

The air is so hot already it's singing the ends of his hair.

He screws his eyes shut.

He won't scream.

He won't give Alvin the satisfaction to know of his pain, he *will not*.

He won't let anyone else within earshot hear his suffering.

He won’t scream.

Tears prickle at his eyes but don’t fall, instead evaporating off of his face. The corners of his eyes sting, hurt. He suppresses a sob.

He won’t-

He hits the surface of magma with the flat of his back.

He breaks the promise.

End Notes

This one was written cuz i was listening to the audiobook at work (back when i could do that) and my brain went "you know what would be terrible?"

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