

Olaf the Oaf
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Olaf, they called him Olaf the Oaf, polished an apple and watched his friends prepare for war. Jorgen and Krüppe worked the grindstone. "Why we fighting this thing with axes and rocks," Jorgen said and Krüppe shrugged. Knut, up at the ramparts, stood next to the catapult and stared into the sky. Björn, at the other catapult, looked grave. Olaf noticed, because Björn was usually very funny. King Thogar stood on top of the front gate and faced the mountains in the distance, both hands on the butt of his axe. A storm was brewing.

From a high-level view, I'm not big on this opening. You dump a LOT of characters on us for a short piece, and we kind of vaguely know something might be happening from the dialogue. Thing is, I don't really know what's unusual about this situation, or what's interesting. You've set the scene (a fantasy Viking fortress) but there's no plot in sight yet.

I want some kind of hook in here - either an interesting plot detail, an interesting character, or a good joke to pull me along.

Olaf himself, he had no axe. They wouldn't let him. Olaf always made things worse when he had a weapon. But Olaf helped. He made sure everything was tidy. He shined weapons. Olaf was good at that. The apple he polished, that was for practice. He would give it to the tiny dragon in the cage. The tiny dragon seemed to love Olaf's polished apples. It ate them, lube and all. Olaf thought that was weird, but Olaf didn't judge.

Character establishment. Starts poor, ends in a decent joke. Clean this up. By the way, end of second paragraph (and a wordy one), and I still don't know what's going on.

Olaf heard a screech in the distance. The men on the ramparts pointed fingers. Jorgen and Krüppe ran up to the battlements. Olaf followed.

A wild Plot appears!

A dragon, like the one in the cage, but four times the size of a man, flew towards them. It roared. "Ødeleggerlegos," King Thogar muttered. Behind Olaf, Björn huffed. A creaking catapult turned towards the flying monster. King Thogar rose his fist. There was a plop and a twang and a rock flew through the air. It missed.

Okay, Plot is a dragon attack. Let's see some cool shit.

The dragon swepted down and Olaf's eyes went wide. King Thogar remained still. As the monster was almost on them, King Thogar took his axe in both hands, jerked it upwards and let out a cry as it slipped from his fingers. The dragon surged past over their heads and the axe

travelled in a wide arc across the fortress yard. Its heft landed on Knut's head. Knut, with a sigh, fell unconscious onto the catapult lever. A plop and a twang and a rock crashed into the gate of the tiny dragon's cage. The tiny dragon took off through the opening.

Are these guys Vikings or Keystone Kops?

King Thogar looked from the tiny dragon to his hands to Olaf. His face turned red. "Olaf, you oaf!" King Thogar yelled. Strong hands, glistening from polish, shook Olaf by his collar. "What have you done? Olaf! You oaf!"

Heh, okay. I can pass this.

Olaf wailed. He had to fix this! In the yard, Björn was now hanging on to the tiny dragon, which pushed its wings with all might. The bigger dragon had landed next to them. It was surrounded by Jorgen and Krüppe. Jorgen swung his axe. It slid out of his hands. Jorgen shouted Olaf's name. Jorgen's face was red too. The weapon landed in the grass right next to--

This is the first time that Olaf has been an actual actor in this story. Acceptable if you were starting something longer, but for a short? I kinda want Olaf to do something earlier that shows him desperate to please/help the King, as that would make this accident a nice escalation for that desire. Hell, tie it into polishing the axe.

King Thogar's axe!

Olaf slipped from King Thogar's grip and ran towards the axe. Olaf didn't take the stairs. He landed on something that was soft and hard. There were scales. The dragon roared. It bucked and threw back its head. Olaf held on.

The others shouted at Olaf to get off, but Olaf enjoyed himself. He cheered as he rode the dragon through the fort. Walls crumbled around Olaf. Olaf knew how long it had taken to build all this, but he still thought it looked pretty cool how the catapult towers collapsed.

Then the dragon stopped. It hovered in the air, beneath Olaf. It panted. Olaf patted the dragon on the back. He took the apple he had polished and flicked it in the air. The dragon caught it, swallowed and roared. It breathed fire. Björn screamed below. Björn was a fireball. What a funny trick! Olaf laughed.

Ah, the turn. This is well-placed for a short's pace. However, I want the turn to come from the main character - he realizes something or takes some action that shows that he's changed somehow. Here, he's making a new friend. Make Olaf initiate the new-friendness. Passive turns are boring at best, infuriating at worst.

"Get down here, Olaf," King Thogar yelled.

King Thogar was still mad at Olaf. But the dragon, the dragon was nice. And more importantly, it was nice to Olaf. Olaf hovered in the air, on the dragon, and thought, long and hard, through the noise of Björn's funny act.

Decision point! Who's his friend now? This is decent, could be better written.

"Up, dragon!" he cried and tugged at the beast's scales. It soared upwards. The tiny dragon followed. Olaf held on. The wind pulled on his hair. The dragon screeched. The tiny dragon screeched. Olaf screeched too.

I'm not huge on the tiny dragon kinda appearing out of nowhere. I get that you kinda hinted that he escaped when Björn got burned, but it's a bit too obscured. I want the tiny dragon to matter more; he's important because he shows us that dragons love apples. Maybe looking at the tiny dragon gives Olaf the idea to give the big dragon an apple?

Beneath him, Jorgen and Krüppe stared at the sky. Björn rolled through the dirt. Knut still slept. None of them said anything, except for King Thogar, who stood on the ramparts and shook his fist. Olaf could faintly hear the words.

"Oooooaaaaaf, you oooooaaaaf!"