

IMAGINE DRAGONS

Sally

'I'm flying with Reggie this evening,' Andy told his aunt, 'I hope that I don't disappoint him.'

'You won't, Andy, you're ready and you are going to do great,' Sally said 'call me when you're back at the base and tell me how it went!'

Sally put down the phone, squashing a niggling feeling. She'd felt the same when Aidan spoke to her before his flight. *Nothing is going to happen, Aidan is watching over his nephew* Sally said like a mantra as she got ready for bed and despite her fears, she fell into a deep sleep.

'My love, we've got an evening training exercise but then I'll be home for the whole weekend,' Aidan's voice sounded so clear.

'And I'll be waiting,' she said, *'I am waiting please come back!'*

"Come to me my love, come Aidan," Sally welcomed him with open arms, relishing his weight as he lay on top of her. Leaning on both elbows, he stroked the stray hairs from her face.

"You are so beautiful, Sally, My Sally, I love you so much," he whispered.

"I love you too, Aidan," she kissed him and fell gratefully back into their familiar love ritual.

Suddenly the phone flashed and beeped, Sally's hand grabbed it still half-asleep she read the message – **helicopter crash – casualties**. She phoned her brother-in-law.

'Jim there's a newsflash that a helicopter went down and Andy's involved,'" she told him.

'I'm going to the base,' he sounded wide-awake.

'Let's meet at Hull Infirmary,' she named the nearest hospital to the base.

'That bad?' his voice sounded so old.

'Yes, I believe so.'

She gently knocked on the door of Nadia's room, the light was still on but she knew not to barge in.

'I have to go out something bad has happened,' she told her fourteen-year-old daughter. She didn't believe in cloaking the facts – they were going to come out anyway.

'It's Andy, isn't it?' Nadia looked worried.

Sally knew that her daughter had the same instincts as herself; there was no point in trying to hide the truth.

'Yes, but I don't know the details yet. Granny is coming over to mind you until I get back.'

'Sally? Nadia?' the anxious voice of an older woman called out from the front room.

'I'll phone when I know more,' Sally shut the door and went to explain things to her mother.

Sally lived in her grandparents' old home beside her parents. There was a time when she wasn't happy living on a remote farm in east Yorkshire and especially so close to her parents but that time had long passed. Now she didn't know how she would have managed without them.

'See you later,' Sally called out before leaving the house.

She drove slowly down the dark country roads, speeding up when she hit the highway into the Kingston-Upon-Hull. This can't be happening again she thought to herself, *no one ever said it could be this hard*, Coldplay sang on the radio and she felt her eyes filling up - *pull yourself together. He's not dead yet. I can't go back please Aidan I can't go back. The dead can't help* she thought bitterly as she drove on alone in the car.

Over fourteen years ago she was driven by two young, stern-faced air force officers who had been designated to bring her the news about Aidan. She sat on the backseat with her mother who was clutching her tightly with her right arm - it wasn't comfortable - but Sally felt that she would have died without it. Sally remembered the heavy silence in the car and the firm but strangely consoling position of her mother and herself – and all she could think about *was when did I last make love with Aidan?*

Aidan was thrilled when she told him about the pregnancy but then she'd been so sick – vomiting in the toilet day and night. He didn't want to impose himself on her. He slept on the sofa the night before he went back

to the base because she was exhausted from throwing up and he didn't want to disturb her. Had they made love that week at all? She tortured herself afterwards. Could it be possible that they hadn't made love for two weeks before he left? Why hadn't she insisted that he join her in their bed that night? Why hadn't she made an effort to rise from the lethargy and nausea that overwhelmed her? She hadn't even got up when he said goodbye.

She knew before they came to her door. Earlier in the evening, he had walked into her dreams tall and handsome in his pilot's uniform '*I'm sorry, my love, so sorry, I love you so much,*' he had said to her and then walked away without looking back. Two sharp knocks on the hall door woke her up and her mother's voice called out.

'Sally, open the door, Sally wake up!' her mother was crying.

Aidan was dead. She knew it before she opened the door but she let them in the two RAF officers from his unit – Reggie, Aidan's closest friend, was one of them. They walked into her living room and her mother went and stood beside her.

'His helicopter crashed on a routine mission and he died immediately,' Reggie told her, he looked distraught himself.

'Sit,' Sally told him. She felt sorry for them, 'sit down! Do you want something to drink?' It was easier to worry about others than herself. Afterwards they all drove to Hull Royal Infirmary together.

The same drive she was doing today on her own. *It can't be happening, it's a recurring nightmare but it's not Aidan this time, it's Andy, please god, please, I gave up on you before, I know, but please don't do this to me again, I can't take it, please...* she wiped the tears angrily *no more crying, never again* she steeled herself.

The lit glass-faced tower block of Hull hospital acted as a signpost and Sally drove determinedly towards it. *It's going to be okay, she willed herself to believe, Andy is going to survive, whole, complete undamaged, please god, he is treasured, please.*

The television crews were already there; their vans were easily identifiable – BBC, Sky News, Channel 4, ITV, MTV, and more – the feeling of déjà vu was so strong she pinched her arm. *I'm dreaming, it's a dream, isn't it Aidan? Please take me back to bed, now, please.*

'Sally Oleander? Is your nephew, your deceased husband's nephew involved in the accident?' a female reporter shoved a large microphone into her face.

'Leave her alone,' Roger an officer from Aidan's original squad saved her.

'I came as soon as I heard. How are you holding up?' he took her arm and they walked the gauntlet of shouting-microphone-camera-smart-phone-armed journalists together.

Nadia

Hi Everyone,

Well today started on a high but ended on a real low.

I'll start with the 'high'. Did anyone out there ever go for an audition to act in something, like an ad or a small part in TV program? Because I did today! And it was awesome. I had to act with a boy a bit older than me and we were supposed to be brother and sister which was fun, as some of you already know I am an only child. We were fighting about which channel to watch on TV. I pretended he was my cousin, Andy – he's my favorite person in the world and he loves to fool around. It felt so natural and afterwards the three judges said they really liked me and they'd be in touch. I was so excited. I waited all day to tell my mother – for those of you who are reading my blog for the first time my father died before I was born, so don't be sad for me as I never knew him. My name is a palindrome of his name – Aidan/ Nadia – so now you know what a palindrome is! I waited nearly all day to tell my mother. She works late and I wanted to tell her face-to-face because I love when her face lights up. She isn't the happiest person in the world, as you can imagine, I often wish she'd find someone – a boyfriend, I mean – and sometimes I tell her and she just says 'you're enough for me.' But how can I tell her that I don't want to be responsible for her happiness.

Now for the 'low' part of my day

I did my homework, and revised for a math's test and then I wrote some more of my blog but it was hard to concentrate. I can't explain but I had this weird feeling in my stomach like something terrible was going to happen. Then my mother came in to my room and I saw it all over her face. Don't ask me why but I knew it was Andy, he recently got his wings to be a

helicopter pilot and I had been thinking of him all day. She just said an accident happened and Andy was involved and I told her to go quickly and find out how he was and to let me know. Now I don't care about the stupid audition and I pray that I don't get the part if it will keep Andy alive and with us. My father was killed in a helicopter accident before I was born and if Andy dies too, I don't think my mother will survive, I don't know if I will survive! Andy is the nearest thing to a big brother that I have. I just spoke to him a few hours earlier and he was so excited because he was going to fly with my father's best friend – Reggie. I like Reggie, him and his wife have had me and my mother over for family meals but Andy and me are like kindred spirits as you probably know from previous blogs. He is the one I call whenever I need to talk out problems not that he gives the best advice, he's actually crap at that, but he's really good at listening. So that is what he did when I told him about the audition. He listened and then he said 'is this really what you want to do?' as if he thought I could do better and I said 'yes' and he just said 'okay' which I took to mean we are all different and as long as it is good for you, I approve.

If I can't talk to Andy anymore, I'm going to die!

Please everyone out there pray for him!

I'll keep you posted,

Nadia (aka.Dragon Girl)

Margaret

Her mobile phone vibrated its way off the desk and fell onto the podium as Margaret was explaining one of the laws of thermodynamics to a large class of goggle-eyed students. One of them, clearly glad of the interruption, said:

‘Excuse me, Professor, but someone is really anxious to get in touch with you!’

It was her use of the word ‘anxious’ that made Margaret bend down and pick up her phone, which was vibrating again. She saw that it was Jim and knew that it must be urgent, he wouldn’t call her otherwise. They rarely spoke since the divorce two years ago. And when the boys sided with their father, she focused on her career. Suddenly, she felt numb and alone - the class no longer existed for her. The phone beeped and a message read

- **Call me! There’s been an accident. Andy is involved** -

‘Are you alright?’ the same concerned student was suddenly beside her and touching her arm.

‘Yes-no-sorry,’ she stammered and then pulled herself together and faced the class, ‘something came up and I have to fly home,’

Margaret was doing her post-doctorate in Physics in MIT, Boston, which required her to teach as well. The opportunity was a godsend; she liked to tell her new friends in America. Her marriage was on the rocks, her two boys wanted nothing to do with her and all she had was her career, which was going really well. She was even dating a very nice American professor of Political Science, called Jeff. She never thought to call him as she rushed out of the lecture theatre and headed back to her campus apartment.

Within a few hours she was sitting on a plane at Logan International, watching the rain drip down the window. All her energy had gone into getting on this plane and it was only then she could absorb all the information. Her son, Andy was lying seriously injured in Hull hospital. The helicopter he was on with Aidan's close friend, Reggie, had crashed. Reggie was dead. It was unbelievable. She felt herself giggling and put a hand guiltily to her mouth to hide the smile that was creeping over her face. Aidan was killed in a helicopter crash fourteen years ago and it destroyed four families, his parents', his pregnant wife's, his sister Ann's (she was now a single mother, her husband got sick of her crying all the time) and theirs – hers and Jim's. She had one child Andy and was pregnant, like Sally, with another when it happened and from that moment Jim changed. At first she was patient and kept saying to herself *'give it time, give him time, he is in there somewhere, and soon he will return'* but he didn't. The old, cheerful, jokey, sexy Jim became a sullen, serious, cold man who criticized her for everything and anything. Ironically her career soared as his floundered which didn't help things much. When their second son, Tony, was diagnosed with PDD – Pervasive Development Disorder – that was the final nail in the coffin of their marriage. Andy's amazing achievements – straight A's, superb athlete, charming, wonderful personality could not stop the inevitable break up of what was once a perfectly good marriage and god knows, he tried. But they became toxic, her and Jim, and the final straw was when in an effort to get his attention she began a relationship with a fellow colleague, not even someone that she particularly liked, and Jim caught them in the act so to speak and that was the end. There was no

point in trying to explain, he was looking for an excuse to leave her and she conveniently gave it to him. Overcome by guilt she didn't put up a fight when he turned the boys against her. And now this, she giggled uncontrollably, it was unbelievable, giggle, giggle, what was wrong with her, the woman beside her was looking at her strangely.

'You're a nervous passenger, aren't you?' she put her hand on Margaret's arm.

'No, giggle, giggle,' Margaret tried to suppress the laugh that was about to burst forth, 'no, it's just my son has been seriously injured in a helicopter crash and may be dead by the time I get to him...' and then to her horror she began to cry.

Mary

'Do you want some hot chocolate before bed?' Mary asked her granddaughter.

'Okay, Gran, but I won't go to sleep until Mum calls,' Nadia said.

'You're right, Luvvy, let's drink together and wait to hear from her,' Mary forced herself to smile but inside she wanted to scream and tear her hair out. *It wasn't possible that one family could be so cursed. It wasn't possible and wasn't fair.* She thought about the other grandmother, Ruth, Aidan's mother and her chest ached. She knew that this would be the final straw. The poor woman had never recovered from losing a son. *How could you?* She thought about Sally's two brothers, *how could one go on after losing a child?*

'Gran? Are you okay? The milk is boiling over?' Nadia sounded alarmed.

'Sorry, Luvvy, I'm just tired!'

Then both their phones vibrated at the same time.

'It's Mum!'

- **He's alive. I'll keep you posted** -

Mary and Nadia hugged each other.

'He's going to be okay, I just know he is,' Nadia told her grandmother.

'And you're always right, bless you,' her grandmother said but in her heart she prayed.

After Nadia fell asleep, Mary sat in the living room facing the dark television screen. She stared at the photo of Sally on the wall behind the TV and she thought for the umpteenth time how alike daughter and granddaughter were and of course, Nadia was now the same age as her mother in the photo. *Oh god, please don't let her suffer the same fate*, she prayed to a god she no longer believed in. She had given up begging the worthless higher being for a man to make her child happy again because that clearly was a pointless exercise. *'I AM happy,'* Sally always said when Mary asked her but her sad eyes told a different story. How could she ever move on or build a life for herself when she was forced every year on Memorial Day to stand in the RAF military cemetery beside the grave of her young husband (a man she had known for less than three years) the father of her daughter and express undying love for him. *How could she ever move on?*

Her phone blinked and vibrated at the same time and she fumbled with the screen to wake up her WhatsApp – oh to be young and technically capable!

- They are operating on Andy and I'm waiting here with the family. Will keep you posted. Thanks Ma for being there for me and Nadia. SX -

Bane the dragon

Currently, a grey dragon is sitting on the metal head frame of a hospital bed in the Hull Royal Infirmary. His webbed wings are spread out like a tent, exposing the pink underside of his wings and belly. He breathes in deeply, and then releases a slow, soft blanket of warm air which fills the makeshift pink cocoon. Blowing hot air without fire is not as easy as you think. One wrong move and everything, including the young, broken man lying there, will be burned to a cinder. But he knows the word 'heal' as opposed to 'destroy' and he focuses on the task at hand. Like all natural healers, the dragon quickly bonds with his patient - every once in a while leaning forward to rest his large head against the battered, swollen face, he whispers in his ear *'don't worry, young man, don't worry, you are protected and all will be well with you.'* The attending medical team is astounded by their patient's progress.

'I can't explain it but when I'm in the room with the patient, I feel exhilarated,' a trainee surgeon confesses to the head trauma nurse, who happens to be his girlfriend.

'Me too,' she agrees 'all the nurses are talking about it. He has something magic about him. Maybe it's because we all want him to recover. He's so beautiful, isn't he?'

The slightly jealous doctor has no opinion about the young man's beauty or otherwise, but he can't deny the fact that he feels wonderful after visiting the patient with the swollen face lying in an induced coma.

'How can I feel so good when faced with so much suffering?' he says, a flood of guilt washing over him.

'Don't feel bad,' his nurse girlfriend answers, 'we all feel the same and maybe it's a good sign. Maybe he is trying to thank us for all the care we are giving him.'

Nadia

Hi Everyone,

Well for all you out there who are up-to-date with my blog, Andy is alive and now that I've released my dragon I know that he's going to be okay. *Whoa!* I hear some of you say *is the girl mad?* Maybe, I could be, but those of you who have been following my blog and are still reading know that I'm not. I've spoken in the past about Dragons and how each of us can learn to work with them in our lives. Dragon Energy is awesome and once you begin to work with it your life will never be the same again. I firmly believe there are Dragon Guardians for each and every one of us and they exist in every part of the world, in all different colours, sizes and abilities.

I have sent my dragon Bane to protect and heal Andy. I can actually hear some of you laughing but that's okay believe me I know what I'm doing. Bane has helped me in the past I have no doubts at all about his ability. His name means 'might, powerful, ring' and as I write this I picture him sitting over Andy, his wings spread like a tent and his hot, healing breath filling the room. Don't laugh because it works. It's just a pity I only have one dragon because my mum could really do with one now.

Keep praying for Andy.

Nadia (aka Dragon girl)

Ruth

'We are a cursed family,' Ruth spoke into the reporter's microphone, 'we love the sky but it doesn't love us!'

'Mum, come over here! Stop talking to reporters!' Ann pulled her mother firmly away from the reporter giving him a filthy look. 'Margaret is here.'

Ruth looked across at her ex-daughter-in-law, the mother of her grandchildren. She remembered how Margaret used to speak at the memorial services for Aidan and she couldn't feel cross. Margaret's speeches were the best – poignant and funny – she knew how to capture the essence of Aidan. Ruth had felt for a long time that things weren't good between Margaret and Jim. She tried speaking to her son, tried explaining to him that he was pushing his wife away. No matter what people said, no matter what Margaret 'had done', the fact was (and she knew it) Jim had

shut down when Aidan was killed, closing everyone out, even his beloved wife. Who could blame her for seeking love and solace with someone else?

Margaret walked into the waiting room, pale-faced from jet-lag and shock and Ruth went up to her and touched her arm. Margaret shrugged it off and turned away. Ruth took her firmly in both hands and turned her back and then she wrapped her arms around her and held her. Margaret began sobbing.

'He's alive, Margaret, do you hear? He's alive and god help us, he's going to get better. He has to!' Ruth whispered into Margaret's ear.

Andy and Bane

'Okay, wake up,' Bane nudges Andy gently with its clawed hand, 'It's time to fly.'

Haha...very funny. I can't move or see for that matter, what's the point?

Andy is getting a bit sick of the dragon at this stage, but then he hasn't actually set eyes on him. As far as he's concerned, some large attendant with rough skin and long nails has been assigned to attend to his every need, including maintaining morale. *Fuck morale* is all he keeps thinking, *I want to get up, to jump, to fly, to hear Reggie's voice* but he still can't speak or see, so he can't ask or write and all he wants to know is that Reggie survived.

'We're going to be fine, Andy, don't worry!' were Reggie's last words before everything went black.

But did they both survive? is all he wants to know and no one is telling him anything, instead all this big, smelly, rough skinned attendant wants to do is nudge and tease and he is helpless to stop him.

‘Okay that’s it, stop feeling sorry for yourself, up you get,’ Bane says.

They follow the River Humber all the way as far as the North Sea and beyond. Bane spreads his vast, webbed wings and flies higher and higher, above the clouds, as Andy has done so many times in his training practices. He drinks in the colors, afraid to blink and find himself once again blind and unable to speak in the sterile, antiseptic smelling bed. He knows he must be dreaming...a dragon of all things...but he doesn’t care, anything is better than lying supine, unable to move in an airless hospital room.

They land on the White Cliffs of Dover and eat burned fish that the dragon has scooped up and toasted on his way there. They both eat greedily, the dragon because he is always hungry and Andy because he hasn’t eaten any food since before the accident.

‘We’ve flown past these cliffs many times but it’s my first time sitting on top of them. What a beautiful place!’

The dragon nods in agreement, his mouth still full with the remaining bones and fish of their catch.

Andy walks to the edge of the cliff, opens his arms out wide and leans in against the sea breeze.

'Take care,' Bane stretches out a claw and pulls him back from the precipice, 'you haven't developed any super powers!'

'But you're not real, this can't be real, I'm dreaming it all...aren't I?'

'Time to return to the hospital, we don't want to miss the doctors' round!'

They fly back along the English coastline, low enough to see people and houses, cars and animals. No one pays any attention to them except for a few kids who wave excitedly in their direction as they fly past.

'Can they actually see us?' Andy asks the dragon.

'Well we're here aren't we?' Bane shouts back at him and then zooms up towards the clouds for one last spin before taking Andy back.

Nadia

Hi Everyone,

I want to start my blog today with a BIG thanks to all of you out there who have shown concern for my cousin Andy, even though most of you think my dragon is total fantasy and just my way of dealing with what's going on – I forgive you 😊 - at least you care enough to show concern.

It's been a week since the accident and I'm not able to visit him yet. He is still in the intensive care and only his parents and girlfriend are allowed in. The amazing thing is that – and this is where I give Bane credit (sorry sceptics but I have to give credit where credit is due) – Andy is recovering much faster than anyone expected. At first everyone believed he would be paralyzed especially as they had to go in and fix his back but he is moving

his arms and legs and when you put music on he jiggles his shoulders up and down as if he is dancing so we are all very hopeful. He still can't see or speak but the doctors say that is not unusual with head trauma and they are hopeful. So keep praying everyone.

My mum is exhausted. She goes over to the hospital every day to sit with the rest of the family in the waiting room but so far she isn't allowed to see him. She tried to peek through the open door of his room and Margaret, his mother, was really pissed with her. Mum is also pissed with Margaret because she slept with another man and that is what broke up her marriage with Jim, my uncle. My granny always says it takes two to make and break a marriage, which I think is her way of saying Jim is also to blame. Mum says that they are talking now and there is no anger because they are both focused on Andy. So maybe something good will come out of this horrible accident.

Thanks for all your support, everyone, it really helps,

Nadia (aka Dragon girl)

Sally

'I saw Uncle Aidan,' Andy told his aunt. They were sitting on a bench facing a bed of roses in the garden of the rehabilitation center.

'What did he say?' Sally guessed there must be a message because ever since the accident, two long months ago, he'd stopped visiting her at night. She was mourning him more than she had when he actually died. It was the longest period that she hadn't seen or felt his presence.

'He said it was time to move on. He told me to tell you that he is fine and he will always watch over you but you have to build a life for yourself now,' Andy said.

'I miss him,' Sally confessed to her nephew, 'I miss him so much.'

'I know Sally, but he's right, you have to think about Nadia. She worries a lot about you, so much she has us all believing in dragons!' he laughed.

'You too, eh?' Sally laughed with him.

'Yea, but I'll tell you the honest truth when I was out of it and lying blind and dumb in the hospital bed, I swear there was a dragon watching over me,' he sounded sober now.

'She's quite a girl, your cousin, isn't she?' Sally tapped his arm gently, 'come on let's go for another slow round of the park and then it's back to bed for you, young man!'

Nadia

Hi Everyone,

You've all been so amazing with your support and care and I even have some of you believing in dragons as well – Yeah!

It's hard to believe that six months have passed since the accident and Andy is going home today. He still limps and talks a bit funny and doesn't remember a lot of things but the doctors say that it's just a matter of time, love and care. He'll never fly again but he's alive and he'll be able to do everything else. I talk to him every day and we are having a big family

gathering in his honour at the weekend, where Mum plans to introduce everyone to her boyfriend Roger, he used to fly helicopters with my Dad but he doesn't fly anymore – Mum says she could never date a pilot again. I like Roger and I think he is good for her because she is happy all the time, even girlish, sometimes she behaves more like a big sister than my mother, we laugh and joke a lot more. I'm grateful for so many things – for my family, my mum, my grandparents, Andy and everyone else but most of all I'm grateful for Bane my guardian dragon.

Keep the faith!

Nadia (aka. Dragon girl)