

IN DAYS OF OLD, WHEN KNIGHTS WERE BOLD, AND DRAGONS WERE A REAL PROBLEM...

SO, ARTHUR--WHY DID MERLIN HAVE YOU RETURN THE SWORD TO ITS PLACE IN THE STONE, ANYWAY?

HE SAYS THE EARTH HOLDS AN INVISIBLE FORCE, GUINEVERE. IT'S NOT UNLIKE THE LIGHTNING WE SEE IN THE SKY...

AND THE ANCIENT IRON ROCK UPON WHICH CAMELOT WAS BUILT, SOMEHOW FILLS EXCALIBUR WITH THIS POWER!

LOOK! ONE OF THE WIZARD'S FAERIE MESSENGERS! AND HE'S IN A FRIGHT!

AND IT'S A PERFECT FIT, DON'T YOU THINK, DEAR BROTHER?

DIRE TIDINGS! THE SORCERESS, MORGAN LE FAY, HAS TRAPPED GREAT MERLIN IN HIS GARDEN!

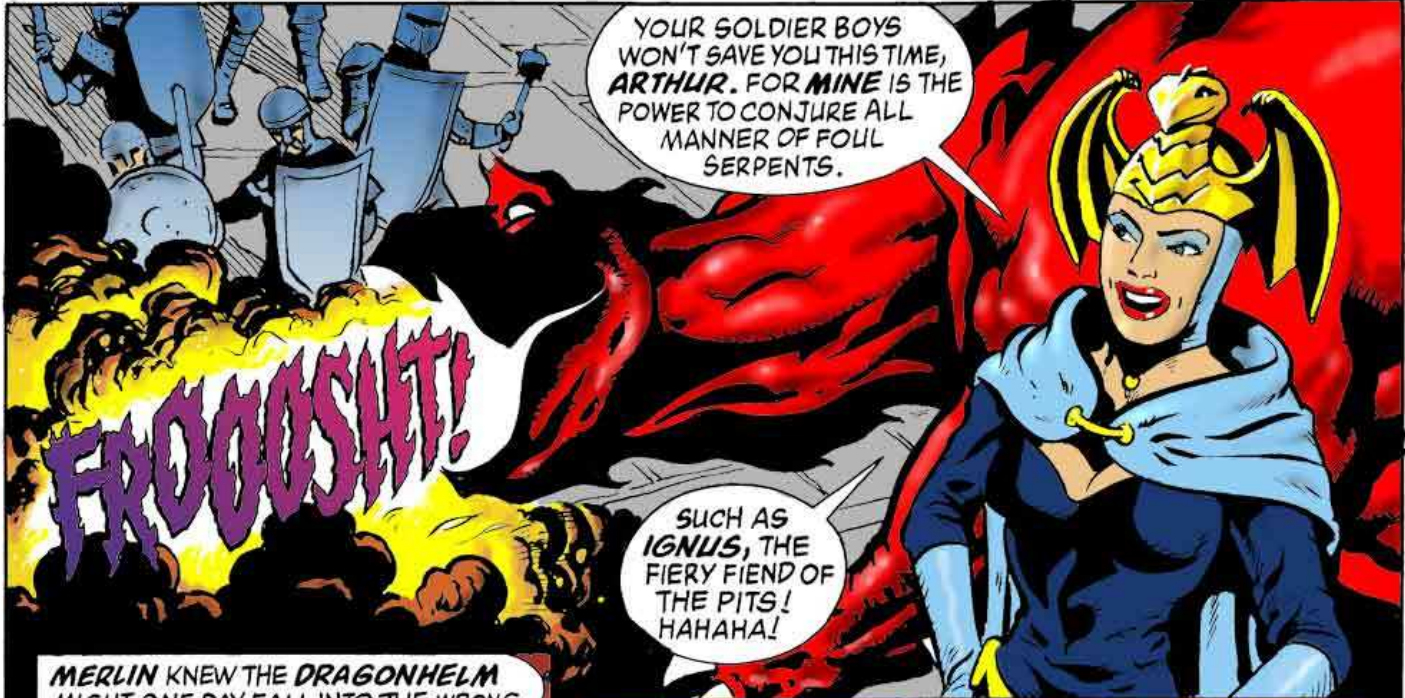
AND WORSE--SHE'S CLAIMED YOUR FATHER'S FABLED DRAGONHELM!

TO WEAR LUTHER'S MYSTIC CROWN IS TO BE MASTER OF ALL DRAGONKIND!

TO ARMS!

Dragonhelm

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YOUR SOLDIER BOYS WON'T SAVE YOU THIS TIME, ARTHUR. FOR MINE IS THE POWER TO CONJURE ALL MANNER OF FOUL SERPENTS.

SUCH AS **IGNUS**, THE FIERY FIEND OF THE PITS! HAAAA!

FROOOSH!

MERLIN KNEW THE **DRAGONHELM** MIGHT ONE DAY FALL INTO THE WRONG HANDS!



WHICH IS WHY HE PREPARED A DEFENSE!

CHOP!



IF YOU THINK A **CHAIN NET** IS GOING TO HOLD **IGNUS** THEN YOU'RE *STILL* THE IDIOT YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN!

OBSERVE HOW MY PET'S DEADLY CLAWS ALREADY SHRED **MERLIN'S** IRON LINKS!



YOU SEE BUT **HALF** THE WIZARD'S STRATEGY, SISTER!

THE REST LIES HIDDEN IN **EXCALIBUR** ITSELF!

SHHINK!



NOW **FULLY GORGED** WITH LIGHTNING FROM THE EARTH!

TLOW TCH!



YOUR SCHEMES COME TO NAUGHT ONCE AGAIN, **MORGAN**. HAND OVER THE CROWN.

AND TELL US WHERE YOU'VE IMPRISONED **MERLIN**!

YOU'LL FIND THE OLD PIGEON RIGHT WHERE HE BELONGS!



THAT'S IF YOU SOMEHOW MIRACULOUSLY SURVIVE THE NEXT FEW MOMENTS!

LET'S SEE NOW-- WHICH HIDEOUS CREATURE FROM THE MALEVOLENT DEPTHS SHOULD I BEDEVIL YOU WITH **THIS** TIME?



WE'LL HOLD HIM OFF, **GUINEVERE**-- YOU FIND **MERLIN**!



HOW ABOUT **ABBADDON THE ODIOUS**? HE'S MUCH TOO BIG TO BE CAUGHT IN ONE OF YOUR TRAPS.

AND DID I MENTION HIS SCALES ARE IMPERVIOUS TO ANY WEAPON?



THE FAERIE SAID HE WAS TRAPPED IN HIS GARDEN!

MERLIN? ARE YOU HERE?

NOT QUITE. **MORGAN'S** SORCERY SEEMS TO HAVE IMPRISONED ME IN THIS **BIRDBATH**.



SHE COMMANDS AN ENDLESS ARMY OF **DRAGONS**! HOW CAN WE STOP HER?

WISE **LUTHER** KNEW THAT SUCCESSFULLY WIELDING THE **DRAGONHELM** REQUIRES INSIGHT INTO THE **TRUE** NATURE OF DRAGONS.

THERE'S A CERTAIN **SCROLL** IN MY LIBRARY...

MERLIN IS YET A PRISONER, ARTHUR! BUT HE SENDS A LIST OF THE WEAKNESSES OF ALL KNOWN DRAGONS!

IT SAYS TO STRIKE AT ABBADDON'S HEEL-- FOR THERE HIS INVINCIBILITY ENDS!



IT WORKED! WITH BUT A SINGLE TAP, THE MONSTER FALLS!



PIWANG!



FLAIL ALL YOU WISH, ARTHUR! THERE ARE DRAGONS WITHOUT NUMBER TO DO MY BIDDING-- EACH MORE WICKED THAN THE LAST!

LET'S SEE HOW YOU LIKE THE SLITHERING, FETID FENWYRM!



EWW! IT STINKS!

THE FENWYRM IS HALF PLANT, ARTHUR! ITS WEAKNESS IS A SINGLE RED ROSE THAT GROWS UPON THE NAPE OF ITS NECK!



TO GRACE OUR COAT OF ARMS WHEN YOU BECOME MY QUEEN, M'LADY.

YOU'RE SWEET!

BUT IF WE DON'T DEFEAT YOUR HALF SISTER WE'LL BE MONARCHS OF A SMOLDERING PILE OF RUBBLE!

IT SHALL BE YOURS, GUINEVERE!



HOW UNCHARACTERISTICALLY PERCEPTIVE OF YOU, DEAR GUINEVERE!

NOT EVEN THESE MIGHTY WALLS CAN STAND BEFORE THE MOST DREADED OF ALL MY DIABOLICAL CREATURES!

LET TYPHON, THE STORM DRAGON, BLOT OUT THE SUN THAT SHINES ON YOUR KINGDOM-- FOREVER!



THE THING RISES FROM THE SEA-- DWARFING CAMELOT ITSELF!

QUICKLY, GUINEVERE-- THE LIST! WHAT WEAKNESS IS THERE IN THIS LEVIATHAN?



TOO LATE, FOOLISH BROTHER! TYPHON'S WINDS SWEEP MERLIN'S PRECIOUS KNOWLEDGE FROM HER GRASP!

JUST AS THE GREAT DRAGON'S COMMAND OF SKYLIGHTNING SNATCHES THE SWORD FROM YOUR HAND!



NOOOO!

EXCALIBUR!



SWORD AND CROWN ARE **BOTH** MINE NOW! THE QUESTION IS ONLY HOW BEST TO EXPLOIT THEIR LIMITLESS POWERS.

MIGHTY **TYPHON** CAN'T PROVIDE THE ANSWER, SO I'LL REPLACE HIM WITH THE CRAFTIEST DRAGON OF ALL--**TIEN-LUNG!**

SO YOU'RE FROM THE ORIENT; SUPPOSEDLY THE MOST CUNNING OF YOUR KIND.

IT IS TRUE; WE **CELESTIAL DRAGONS** ARE KNOWN TO POSSESS DEEP WISDOM.

THEN SHOW ME HOW THE **DRAGONHELM** AND **EXCALIBUR** MAY BE WIELDED TO THEIR ULTIMATE POTENTIAL.



THE **WISEST** COURSE OF ACTION WITH ALL MAGIC WEAPONS...

...IS TO **REMOVE** THEM FROM THOSE WHO WOULD MISHSE THEIR POWER.

HEY!



THE DRAGON'S WISDOM RETURNS THEM TO THEIR RIGHTFUL HEIR.

ARTHUR PENDRAGON!



MORGAN'S MISTAKE WAS IN ASSUMING ALL DRAGONS WERE MALICIOUS AND EVIL.

SHE DIDN'T KNOW THAT SOME, LIKE **TIEN-LUNG** HERE, ARE BENEVOLENT!

BAH!

COULD YOU ASK HIM IF HE KNOWS HOW TO GET ME OUT OF HERE?

THE END

REAL LIVE MONSTERS

IN OLDEN DAYS, MAPMAKERS MARKED UNCHARTED AREAS WITH IMAGES OF FEARSOME SEA SERPENTS AND MONSTERS. COULD DRAGONS AND OTHER LEGENDARY CREATURES ACTUALLY HAVE HAD ANY BASIS IN REALITY? HERE ARE A FEW GUESSES ABOUT REAL-LIFE ANIMALS THAT MAY HAVE INSPIRED MYTHOLOGY'S MOST FAMOUS MONSTERS.

NORTH AFRICA



WAS THIS FAMOUS TALE BASED ON THE NILE CROCODILE? MAYBE. IN FOLKLORE, ST. GEORGE IS ASSOCIATED WITH ENGLAND, BUT HE WAS A TURK WHO FOUGHT IN AFRICA.

NILE CROCS HAVE BEEN KNOWN TO GROW MORE THAN TO 20 FEET LONG, WEIGH NEARLY A TON, AND CAN SWIM UP TO 20 MILES PER HOUR!

THESE CROCS KILL MORE THAN 1000 PEOPLE A YEAR, AND MUST HAVE BEEN EVEN MORE DEADLY IN ANCIENT TIMES.

MADAGASCAR



THE ROC WAS A GIANT BIRD DESCRIBED IN THE ARABIAN NIGHTS. MARCO POLO BELIEVED THE MONSTER COULD BE FOUND ON THE ISLAND OF MADAGASCAR, AND CLAIMED THAT IT COULD "SEIZE AN ELEPHANT IN ITS TALONS AND CARRY HIM HIGH INTO THE AIR, AND DROP HIM SO THAT HE IS SMASHED TO PIECES."

IN FACT, THE LARGEST BIRD THAT EVER LIVED, THE EXTINCT TEN-FOOT-TALL AEPYORNIS, ONCE INHABITED MADAGASCAR.

THEIR EGGS WERE 150 TIMES THE SIZE OF A CHICKEN'S.



NORWAY



ACCORDING TO LEGEND, THE KRAKEN WERE ENORMOUS SEA MONSTERS SAID TO ATTACK SHIPS OFF THE COASTS OF NORWAY AND ICELAND. ONE EARLY CHRONICLER DESCRIBED THEM AS BEING "THE SIZE OF A FLOATING ISLAND." MOST NOW BELIEVE THAT THE KRAKEN'S LEGEND BEGAN WITH SIGHTINGS OF SCARCELY LESS ASTONISHING GIANT SQUID, WHICH HAVE BEEN REPORTED AT SIZES UP TO 60 FEET LONG.



SLOVENIA

THE CAVERNS OF SLOVENIA ARE HOME TO TINY, PALE, SNAKE-LIKE ANIMALS THAT MEDIEVAL EUROPEANS BELIEVED TO BE BABY DRAGONS.



WE NOW KNOW THESE CREATURES TO BE OLMS: BLIND AMPHIBIANS WITH HUMAN-LIKE PINK PALE SKIN THAT ONLY GROW UP TO 16". THEY CAN ALSO LIVE FOR UP TO A DECADE WITHOUT EATING!



SUMATRA

MARCO POLO ALSO DESCRIBED "UNICORNS" THAT HE SAW WHILE VISITING SUMATRA: "THEY HAVE THE HAIR OF A BUFFALO AND FEET LIKE AN ELEPHANT'S.... THEY ARE VERY UGLY BRUTES TO LOOK AT. THEY ARE NOT AT ALL SUCH AS WE DESCRIBE THEM WHEN WE RELATE THAT THEY LET THEMSELVES BE CAPTURED BY VIRGINS." IT IS NOW BELIEVED THAT HE WAS ACTUALLY DESCRIBING A RHINOCEROS.



INDONESIA



THE KOMODO DRAGON WASN'T DISCOVERED BY WESTERN SCIENTISTS UNTIL THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY.

IT'S THE EARTH'S LARGEST LIZARD, AND IS THE CLOSEST LIVING THING TO A REAL DRAGON.

THESE CARNIVOROUS PREDATORS DROOL VIRULENTLY TOXIC SALIVA, AND EVEN A SMALL BITE FROM ONE CAN TURN INTO A DEADLY, FESTERING WOUND.

