

The Dragon of Orr

By Greg Downs

Hey, it's me. What? You don't know who I am? I'm the dragon of Orr, obviously. An absolutely charming representation of my species, if I do say so myself.

Ah, where to start. You see, we dragons have a long and glorious heritage that stretches far back into human history, when the first daring warriors of Greece began to seek out honor and fame by getting themselves thrashed by the biggest monster they could find.

Us, of course.

We dragons have an ancient and distinct reputation for murder, looting and burning- the more chaos, the more fun. What could be more entertaining (or profitable) than swooping down on some poor medieval village, swiping some food, toasting a few villagers, and grabbing the king's daughter for an after-hours snack? How about becoming head dragon of all Orr, like me? Hey- watch it, I see you doubting me, and that's not nice. To convince you, I could give you a demonstration of my superior abilities... but that might kill you. I suppose an account of my most recent exploit will have to suffice.

It all started about a few years ago, when I was sunning myself on the stony summit of a wooded mountain in Western Germany. I'd returned to my mountain cave from a successful week of maiden-devouring, when I heard a strange, nasally noise coming from the woods down below. Out came this big, strong, I'm-tougher-than-Achilles-himself sort of guy, complete with blond hair, blue eyes, and lots of shiny armor on. He might have caught the local female population off guard, but not me. I just snorted and did one of those growly puff-of-smoke deals to scare him off. I mean, you gotta be stupid to mess with a reptile like me, right?

This amateur didn't get the idea though. He yelled "I would do battle with thee, foul demon!" or something to that effect, and charged up the mountainside, shiny spear and shield in hand. Before you

could say “Beowulf!” this insulting excuse for a warrior threw his spear right at my face! See, I'm rather good-tempered as far as dragons go, but this had been an exhausting week, so my patience was perhaps a bit worn...

...Okay, lots worn. But seriously, the guy couldn't take a hint!

I went for a full-blown spectacle, wings outstretched, front legs in the air, flames pouring from the mouth, you get the idea. The man finally got it, and dropped his shield in a mad dash to get away. I chased him politely down the hill and out of my space, suntan forgotten for the moment. As we entered the forest, I could hear him screaming something. It sounded like “Fire! Fire! Fire!” I sent another fireball at the screaming knight's head, but he threw himself to the ground just in time. That's right, little puny man: I'm going to roast you.

Wait... *Fire?!?*

All of a sudden, more knights popped up all over the place! They were wielding loaded crossbows, too, and soon they were *firing* them with gusto. Ouch! Ouch! Ouch! That fireball had set some of the bolts ablaze, and it felt like I'd been stung by a Spartan Hydra! OWW!

By then I was ANGRY. I could tell that Mr. Beowulf, as I'd decided to call him, had fought dragons before. He had those archers all ready for an ambush, and never really intended to fight me. In my righteous anger at this trickery, I struck out slightly (well, maybe MUCH) harder than my humble self intended, blowing away twenty or so of the malicious imps with my tail, and roasting the rest of them with a sweeping, burning firestorm from my lovely mouth. Ahhhhh... a meal fit for a king.

Soon the would-be dragon slayer realized he was in a real pickle, and clumsily unsheathed some sort of glorified broadsword. Now, I normally don't bother with such small weapons, but this one glowed brightly in a special part of the color spectrum that only dragons can see. I didn't like it.

“What have we got here?” I hissed in my most menacing voice. Little known fact: Dragons

can talk, sing, and even yodel. Apparently this guy didn't know that, and after jumping about ten feet in the air (right out of his armored pants, would you believe it?) he picked the sword back up again- fast- and squeaked with pride (and terror): “This, doomed beast, is the Blessed Brand of Brand, an enchanted weapon from the forges of the elves!” Ah, I should have known that glow anywhere. Elves are called the Fair Folk by the knights and their ilk, but we dragons call them the Children of Cheese, since they all look so young and act so cheesy (even the grandmas!) and taste like... well, cheese. Unfortunately for all that, they make some nasty weapons for dragon-slaying, and even won a war with the Nordic Fire-Worms a while ago. Nasty stuff, but fortunately I'd heard of this particular *Brand* before.

“Why have you disturbed me?” Questions, questions. Of course I already guessed the answer from his infernal sword. If it was really elf-made...

“Because, vile monster, I have come to rescue my true true (true!) love, the elf-princess Electra!” I knew it. See, one of the snacks I'd saved from my earlier expedition was a particularly delicious-looking elf girl I'd grabbed from a swanky (but soon demolished) medieval mansion in the South. I'd wondered why she was there...

“S...s...so where is she?” The poor guy, elf sword and all, was a bit intimidated after all. Good, because I'd suddenly come up with an idea.

“Safe. But I think it's time we ended this once and for all.” The knight gulped.

“Bloody combat then! For Elec-”

“No, you dunce, a DEAL. Your sword... for my dinner.”

“You... you mean you'd let Electra go if I hand over my Blessed Brand of Brand? No- dragons are liars! You'd roast me just the same!” Smart guy, but I was legit... *this* time.

“On my word as a horrid and despicable fiend, I swear to give you the girl

unharmed.” The hero bit his lip, obviously swaying. These heroes all have a weak spot for honor and chivalry and the like. Finally he agreed. Now, I bet you're expecting me to pull off some daring maneuver and slay this upstart, but I am both too peaceful and too intelligent for that. When I went back to the cave and fetched his beloved elf, the man gladly gave me the Brand in return for her life. Fool.

I brought the Blessed Brand of Brand to my fellow dragons, and after hearing my story of how I defeated an army of elves led by a knight holding this mighty weapon, I was voted head of Germany's entire dragon population.

But you can just call me Merk, the Dragon of Orr.