



MANY CENTURIES AGO THERE LIVED IN THE COUNTY OF DURHAM, ON THE RIVER WEAR, A YOUNG MAN NAMED JOHN.

JOHN WAS HEIR TO THE LORDSHIP OF LAMBTON AND, ACCORDING TO ANCIENT LEGEND, THE LAMBTON FAMILY "WAS SO BRAVE THEY FEARED NEITHER MAN NOR GOD."



Young John was brash, unbridled, and righteous. He held little regard for the devoted and hard-working subjects of his father, Lord Edward.

Expressing disrespect and mockery were all part of his daily dawdles.



THIS LOOKS TO BE A FINE DAY FOR FISHING IF THERE EVER WAS ONE CREATED.

Many times he cast his line--coming up with nothing but river plants and a hungry hook.

This enraged the proud hunter to no end as he shook, shook, shook his fist in the air.



I SHOULD HAVE DISTRUSTED THIS FINE MORNING. I CURSE THIS RIVER FOR PLAYING ME A FOOL! I WILL NOT BE DEFEATED IN THIS SIMPLE TASK OF CATCHING A FISH!



The next words--too ghastly to repeat--from the young heir's mouth would have made the Devil himself cringe in disgust. Villagers and servants, walking by on their way to the chapel, did not differ in their reaction to his disgraceful outburst.



Filled with frustration, John cast the rod toward the river in one grand gesture of will and might. The river appeared to move faster, almost churning at the entrance of the hook and line.



A tug! Yes, a tug that nearly wrenched him from the banks of the river.



John coaxed his strong prey to the surface. Only, he did not find a fish on his line, but instead a wriggling worm of unsightly appearance.



UGGH!
LEAVE MY SIGHT
YOU SLIMY RIVER
DROPPING.

Young John gave it not a second thought, tore it from the barbed hook and cast the creature into a well just nearby.



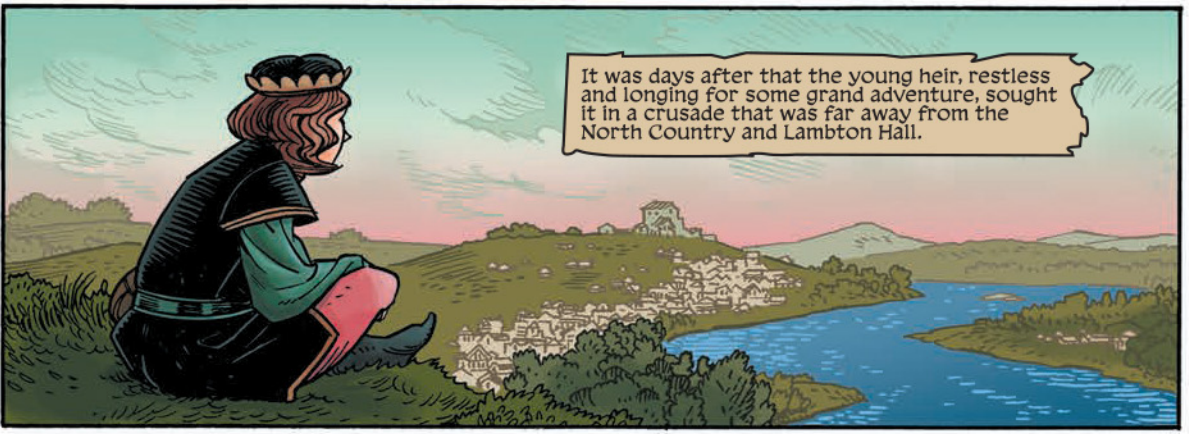
HO! WHAT
HAVE YOU CAUGHT
THIS DAY, YOUNG
MASTER!



I MAY HAVE LIFTED
UP THE FILTHY DEVIL
HIMSELF! LOOK WITHIN
THE WELL AND JUDGE
FOR YOURSELF.



AYE! =WHUFF=
THAT IS GHASTLY! THIS,
ON THE SABBATH, DOES
NOT BODE WELL,
MASTER.



It was days after that the young heir, restless and longing for some grand adventure, sought it in a crusade that was far away from the North Country and Lambton Hall.



FAREWELL, FATHER! I'LL HAVE MORE USE IN BATTLE THAN WITH MY MEAGER DUTIES WITHIN LAMBTON. PREPARE A DINNER SEAT FOR ME EACH TWILIGHT, AS I SHALL RETURN ONE DAY. A BETTER MAN I SUSPECT, WORTHY OF YOUR GREAT ACCOMPLISHMENTS, MY LORD.

LIFE HAS BEEN TRYING FOR BOTH OF US SINCE YOUR MOTHER'S DEATH. YOUR ARROGANCE AND BEHAVIOR AS A YOUNG MAN HAS NOT WON YOU ANY FAVOR WITH OUR PEOPLE. NOR WILL IT BENEFIT YOU IN THE FUTURE WHEN YOU BECOME LORD OF LAMBTON.

BE WELL AND VALIANT IN YOUR TRAVELS, MY LOVELY SON. MAY YOU DISCOVER THAT WHICH YOU SEEK IN THE WORLD OUTSIDE LAMBTON.



In two cycles of the moon the Worm had grown enough in length and girth to find egress from its stone confinement.



It moved swiftly to a group of broad rocks, where it lay sunning itself, immobile amid the fast moving River Wear.



By night it had found a nearby hill studded with jeweled heather and soft grasses to slumber upon.

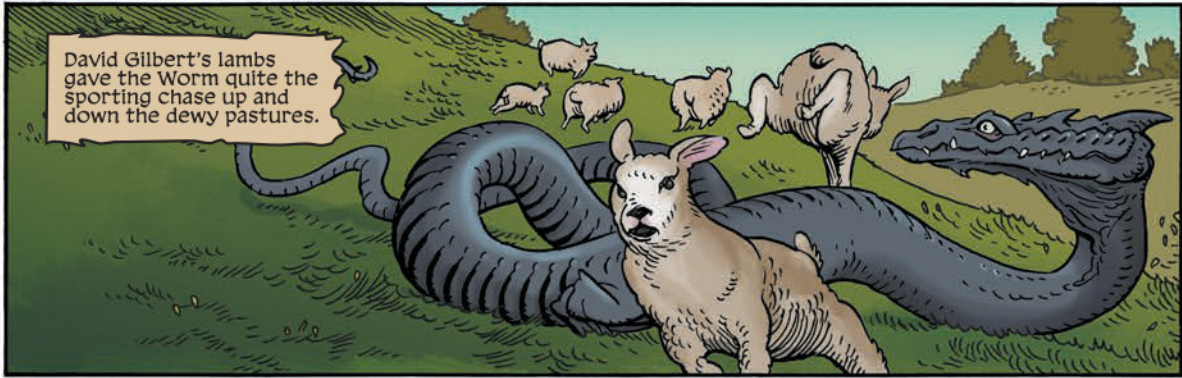
Over time, the Worm continued to grow, and grow, and grow.





The Worm would not want for food in the lands around the North Country.

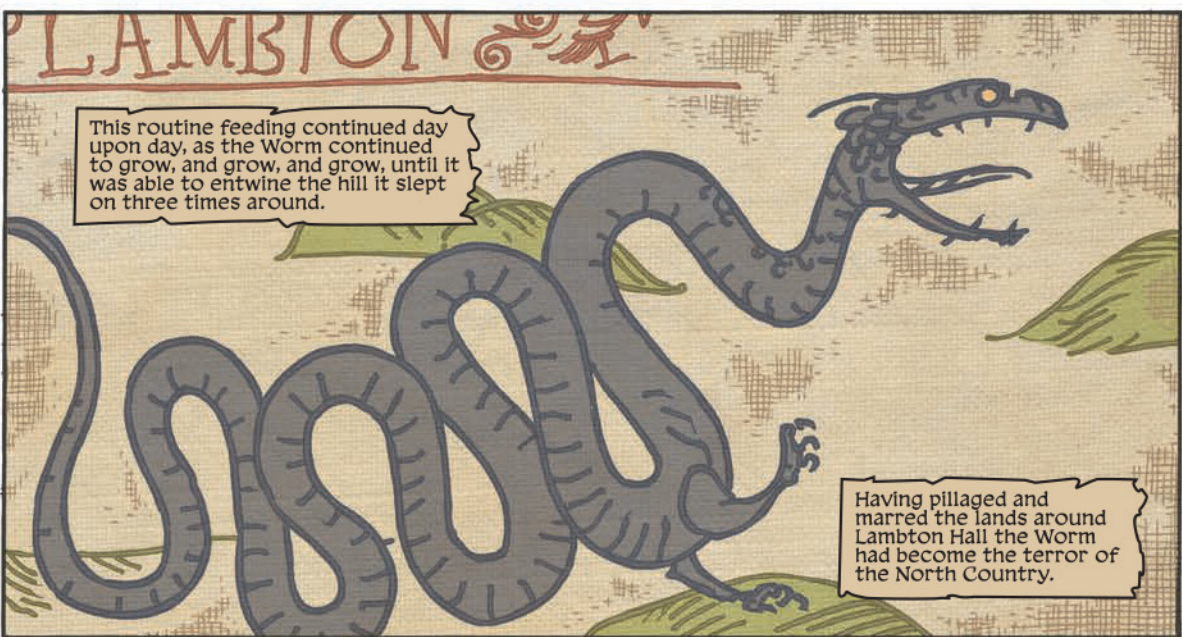
There were Geoffrey Turner's pigs--plump and full of vigor.



David Gilbert's lambs gave the Worm quite the sporting chase up and down the dewy pastures.



Although the finest meal was found in the sweet milk from Loren Pearce's cows.



This routine feeding continued day upon day, as the Worm continued to grow, and grow, and grow, until it was able to entwine the hill it slept on three times around.

Having pillaged and marred the lands around Lambton Hall the Worm had become the terror of the North Country.