



## The Dragon and the George

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Jim Eckert was a dragon. He hadn't planned it that way, but that's what happened when he set out to rescue his betrothed. Following her through an erratic astral-projection machine, Jim suddenly found himself in a cockeyed world - locked in the body of a talking dragon named Gorbash.

That wouldn't have been so bad if his beloved Angie were also a dragon. But in this magical land, that was not the case. Angie had somehow remained a very female human - or a george, as the dragons called any human. And Jim, no matter what anyone called him, was a dragon.

To make matters worse, Angie had been taken prisoner by an evil dragon and was held captive in the impenetrable Loathly Tower. So in this land where georges were edible and beasts were magical - where spells worked and logic didn't - Jim Eckert had a problem.

And he needed help, by george!

## **The Dragon and the George Details**

Date : Published by Del Rey (first published 1976)

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Author : Gordon R. Dickson

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## From Reader Review The Dragon and the George for online ebook

### Stephanie says

(I only had about 20 pages to finish up for the new year, and it would feel like cheating to have twenty pages count towards a whole new book in 2017)

First off, big shout out to my dad and sister Lisa for taking pictures of pages 252-279/the end, so that I could finish this borrowed library book despite flying back to France! Not to mention my mom for requesting the book from the local library in the first place. You three are awesome!

Now, on to the review portion – this book caught my eye when roaming around Goodreads, and when I saw that my home library system had it, my mom was kind enough to request it for me so it would be waiting for me upon my arrival back in the US. It was one of those things where, as it is a standalone book, it has dragons and knights and magic and fantasy, and it wasn't too long, so *I just had to read it like now*. I was in the mood for some magical escapades, and I got what I wished for!

That is, after the rather slow start, full of details of Jim and Angie's life in the "real world": their struggles to advance in their careers, to make ends meet, to find a new place to live. I wanted *magic*, and *dragons*! And especially considering that most of this information we learn about their life is irrelevant to the bulk of the story – I mean, the Grottwold scenes and information could be kept, as they are important -- but as for the rest, they could have been glossed over in a quick page or two, not the 20 or 30 or so pages I seem to remember it being.

Moving on from that, we find ourselves thrown along with Jim quite suddenly into a world of magic and medieval fantasy elements, with a twist: Jim has found himself transported to this world in the body of a dragon named Gorbash. Worse yet, his fiancé Angie is still very much her human self, and a prisoner of the dragons. Naturally, a Quest must be undertaken, and all quests begin with a visit to an old and wise wizard: S. Carolinus. To undertake a quest and save a lady love, Companions must be found, else wise the Quest is doomed and Jim and Angie along with it. And with a destination with a name like the Loathly Tower, which is surrounded by Dark Powers, yeah, you're going to want some help with that.

#### General Commentary:

Once we got into this magical world, things kept moving along at a nice clip. Admittedly the whole side trip to take back Malvern Castle from Sir Hugh de Bois de Malencontri took a lot of time, but its entertainment and interestingness levels kept it worth the read. Though when we were around two thirds of the book and they were talking about continuing the quest to go after him, I did begin to wonder just when they were going to refocus their energies on finding Angie. I also appreciated how strong Danielle was in her own right in this very patriarchal world, and how she would not let anyone force her to do what she did not want to do – though her neat-and-tidy ending, especially after the very pointed and nuanced conversation she had alone with Jim, was less than pleasing given how vocal she had been about what she did or did not want throughout the book.

I'd almost go to say that the final battle seemed a bit rushed, but when I think about it, it was just right – after all, the battle wasn't really the climax nor point of the story, just a means to the way the rest of it rolled out with the decisions that needed to be made. And despite some rather long explicative paragraphs in the denouement of events (some of those, I feel, could have been reduced – except Gorbash's experiences, those were quite priceless), things ended quite satisfactorily, with neat bows all around, except of course for the little open package for Jim and Angie.

Particular things I enjoyed:

Jim adjusting to his new dragon body:

*Like anyone else who has suddenly overexerted a body out of shape for such activity, he was stiff as a board in that portion of his body he had most need of at the moment.*

*The irony of it did not escape him. For twenty-six years he had gotten along quite nicely without wings. Now, after one day's use of them, he was decidedly miffed to have to proceed on foot. His amusement gone, he turned his head toward the ocean and set about following a land route. (page 69)*

Between flying, and trying to figure out what and how much to eat, his becoming familiar with and learning to deal with the dragon rage, even learning more about dragon culture and society such as the connections between regular dragons and mere-dragons – it made for quite an interesting read, and some solid building blocks for the dragon society and the world-building in general.

S. Carolinus and the Magic:

*[... Carolinus said, “] Now that really is going over the line, Dark Powers or not! Auditing Department, are you copying all this—” (page 267)*

Despite the very medieval setting of all this, I simply *loved* that the regulation of magic paid, due, and owed, was maintained by an “Auditing Department”. But most often when Carolinus was complaining to the Auditing Department that they needed to pay up or dispense credit where it was (past) due. Not to mention, it feels like a very modern term in a very medieval setting, plus all the references to Nature and Science and all the other types of factors inherent in the magic of this world. I wanted to know more about it, because it was interesting, not because it was too lacking.

Jim's Analysis and Understanding of this new world:

*It was bitter for Jim to face the fact that he was helpless to strike back against a cruel wrong. Intolerable. He had reached his present age never having cause to doubt that injustice must eventually be brought to book, and that any unfairness of life must, in the end, be balanced. [...] It was hard to let go of cherished illusions; but he had no choice. Gradually, as he faced that fact, his convulsive grip on the belief that life must be fair, or else it could not be endured, relaxed; and he saw one more shackle upon the strength of his individual spirit fall away and sink into the waters of oblivion. (page 227-228)*

What happens when you take someone with a specialization in medieval history and plopping into a fantastic/magical medieval world? You get Jim, running headlong into things he doesn't understand completely in their new context, making use of the cultural differences between what he knows and what he encounters in this new world to his benefit (hullo, Social Security Number!), and not to mention some decent reflections on how he can understand in a practical manner this new world, and accustom himself to it. Not only did I enjoy when he made cultural comparisons to his modern world (B-movies, anyone?), but also scientific ones like the different types of clouds as he flies through them. Then there was when he was suffering a bit of a slump, flying off on his own, and reflecting on how isolation can be a nice thing, while the inhabitants of this world were not much more than animals compared to the people of his own world (page 187-188) – okay, so that is not very nice of him, but considering just how much had changed, he's allowed some negative thoughts about his position and the world he's in. I think I could have used a few more comparisons between Jim's real world experiences and those in this. What it definitely could have used were more insertions of Jim's knowledge of medieval times scattered about to really flesh out that he knows his stuff and make direct connections to what he is experiencing, like when he reflects on eating the innkeeper out of his stock.

### **Completely subjective best short quotes:**

[...Jim] now realized how far he was from understanding his strange new friends. All of them, even the humans, thought and acted according to standards entirely different from his. It was a sobering example of how one could speak the same language as someone else without being on the same mental wavelength at all. – page 199

Life and death were next-door neighbors; similarly, love and hate were as close as two doorways at the end of a corridor, and if you did not learn to hate someone within a short space of time, you learned to love. – page 201

“As for ‘impossible,’ there is no such thing as an impossible, but only a thing the doing of which has not been learned.” – page 215

### **More quotes with selected commentary:**

[Jim] had always been a skeptic by nature; and although this strange world was clearly full of all sorts of variances with the normal pattern of things as he knew them, his mind instinctively revolted against too much credit in the supernatural—particularly, he thought, the old B-movie horror type of supernatural. – page 67 – A sample of some of the language here, plus the way that despite being in such a strange world, Jim continues to make comparisons to his own world and life experiences in a way that is relevant and usually amusing, too. It’s like little nods to popular culture of the 70s which are still relatable today even. (It also makes for an interesting take on views of popular culture and how it manifests itself in contemporary books across the decades.)

A touch of annoyance tweaked at [Jim]; and on the heels of this came an idea a which he nearly smiled visibly. Ignorance of other people’s customs could work both ways.

“Of course, if only I’d known your Social Security number right from the start,” he said. “It would have been different.” – page 79

... a detestation of someone named Sir Hugh de Bois de Malencontri. – page 103 – Heads up, my linguistic nerd is about to come out: Sir Hugh – Sir Hugh (Hyoo, almost “who”); de Bois – of the woods (French); de Malencontri – with a French pronunciation, we get “malen” sounding like “malin” (bad, conniving), and “contri” sounding like the English “country”... making his name something like Who of the woods of bad country. And with a name like that and given his role in the story, I don’t think it is entirely a coincidence!

(view spoiler)

...glistening dome of hairless gray skin. [...] two perfectly round blue eyes, below which was exposed no proper nose but, instead, two air slits side by side [...] showed its [...] mouth, entirely lipless and with two jagged but matching rows of pointed teeth. – page 248 – Not going to sugarcoat it, my first image in reading this was of Voldemort – I mean, that head! That nose! Need we go further?

Here, there were only a bunch of strange characters they had met only the week before last [...] – page 270 – Though it really seemed to me like more than two weeks have passed, especially when you consider the time Jim spent laid up healing (view spoiler)

### **Typos:**

He leaned over to rear in the ear of the dragon next to him. – page 23 – Should be “roar” not “rear”

If that was ordinary dragon fare, he'd just have to go hungry. Perhaps the magician could help him out in the foot department ... -- page 41 – “foot” should be “food”

“[...] Honored to make your acquaintance, Sir Brian.” – page 75 – Except, Sir Brian never got around to saying his Christian name, just explaining his family name and coat of arms (Neville-Smythe)

“Speak for yourself, Sir James.” [said Sir Brian]

“Well, there's no one I'd rather have with me, besides Sir James here,” said Jim. – page 96 – Um, Jim shouldn't be referring to himself in the third person like that... I think that he is supposed to have said “Sir Brian” not “Sir James”

That much, Jim thought, was true. Sir James was clad in tight leather breeches with belt... -- page 167 – Again, “Sir James” should be “Sir Brian” – makes me wonder if originally Sir Brian's name *was* Sir James...

These threads go over your head under your own hair to fasten in on... -- page 168 – “in” should be “it”

...and the harpy screamed hideously, yerking aside into Brian... -- page 219 – “yerking” should be “jerking”

...the serest gray of winter light... -- page 221 – I'm not entirely certain what that's supposed to mean, “serest” – closest I find at dictionary.com is that it could be a form of sear, and means “dry, withered”

...as Dafydd came up. And mistress Danielle! Good morning!” – page 235 – missing opening quotes “And mistress Danielle! Good morning!”

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### **Algernon says**

*For a moment he felt a sort of desperate hunger for the kind of life that had existed in the European Middle Ages of his medievalist studies. A time in which problems took the shapes of flesh-and-blood opponents, instead of impalpable situations arising out of academic cloak-and-dagger politics.*

Jim is young and bright university graduate, planning to get married to his girlfriend Angie, but they struggle with poor paid jobs and backstabbing from the entrenched older teachers. He gets his wish as an experiment with "astral projection: setting the spirit free to wonder outside the body" goes wrong and Angie is transported to a different dimension. Angered, Jim forces the reckless research professor responsible for the experiment to send him in pursuit of his loved one, but a slight mishap waits for him on arrival: he wakes up in the body of a dragon named Gorbash. Part of the attraction of novel resides in looking at a brand new world through the eyes of a powerful dragon, learning to fly, making friends, having adventures. But there's more to it than escapist good time.

Portal fantasy has been a popular flavour of the genre for a long time. Gordon R Dickson merit is to use it both ironically / subversively, poking fun at some of the stereotypes of heroic quests, and seriously / philosophically - examining the nature of evil, personal responsibility and tolerance towards different people,

opinions or cultures. What starts as a vacation from his Earth troubles for Jim, ends up with him taking a stand in the unending struggle between light and darkness - an overused cliché in fantasy, but reflective of our need for a moral compass and for a cause to fight for in life.

*Imagine a teeter-totter, Chance sitting on one end, History on the other, swinging back and forth - Chance up one moment, then Chance down and History up. The Dark Powers love that. They throw their weight at the right moment on a side that's already headed down, and either Chance or History ends permanently up. One way we get Chaos. The other we get Predictability and an end to Romance, Art, Magic and everything else interesting.*

So says Carolinus, the Archmage of the story, a riff on the standard wizard figure set by Tolkien with Gandalf, with a bit of Christopher Lloyd from Back to the Future thrown in. Carolinus is both a joke and the greatest hope of Jim for recovering his girlfriend, cranky as cranky can get and distracted by a whole world acting wacky:

*Dragons galumphing hither and yon - knights galumphing yon and hither - naturals, giants, ogres, sandmirks and other sports and freaks each doing their billy-be-exorcised best to terrorize his own little part of the landscape. Every jackanapes and teaching assistant in his blindness setting himself up to be equal of a Master of the Arts. It's not endurable!*

As any fan of fantasy epics has come to expect, Jim will be sent to gather a fellowship to help in the ultimate battle against the Dark Forces. His gathering of companions offers Dickson ample opportunity to have a great time playing with staple characters:

- Brian Neville-Smith, a knight of the lesser branch of the Neville family, lantern jawed, blue eyed and with long yellow tresses, riding on his faithful white steed in search of fame and fortune;
- Aragh, the fierce and faithful sidekick for Jim / Gorbash, a talking English wolf, which everybody knows are the proudest, most courageous wolves of the world
- Danielle - a maid who instead of being in distress can take care of herself quite well with bow and arrows and induces distress in Jim with her designs on marrying him.
- Dafydd, a boastful Welsh longbowman who could give Robin Hood a run for his money in any contest.
- speaking of which, we also get to meet Giles-of-the-Wold and his merry band of outlaws, father of Danielle and a useful man to have beside you in case you need to assault a fortified castle or set a trap in the middle of a marsh.

The fellowship is completed with a couple of talking dragons: Smrgol, the elderly uncle of Gorbash, always reminiscing of his glory days fighting ogres, and Secoh, a small sized, cowardly and self effacing chance encounter.

I will not say much about the plot or the finale, other than that it is much better structured than I expected from a comedy fare, and that it leaves the door open for the next volumes in the series:

*It's a complex situation, derivative from a great many factors, unobvious as well as obvious. Just as in any concatenation of events, no matter how immediate, the apparent is not always the real.*

I hope I wet your appetite enough if you are in the mood for a fun adventure in a fantasy themed park. I know I will put the rest of the Dragon books by Gordon R. Dickson on my wishlist.

## Randy says

I read this book almost 40 years ago. It was one of my first fantasy reads, and I loved it! I recently ran across it and 5 or 6 more that Dickson had written in the series. I had not read any but the first and decided to refresh my memory and re-read it. Like many memories from our youth, it wasn't quite as good as I remembered, however, I did enjoy it enough to want to read more in the series and see what happened to the characters. The writing is a bit dated and the story is simpler than most of the fantasy written today. You don't have to learn a new language to follow the action, and there are not so many characters that you need a listing at the front of the book to keep track of them (these are both appealing traits to me, as I don't like to work that hard when I am reading for enjoyment). It is a good story and fun to read. If it was written today, it would probably fall into the "youth fantasy" genre. I won't get into the details of the story, but suffice to say there are dragons, and ogres, and knights, and magicians; enjoy!

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## Doris says

I enjoyed this book, as, even though it was written almost 40 years ago, many of the issues are still relevant. We have rampant unemployment, price gouging by landlords, employers who take advantage of desperate workers, and an economy which enables all those injustices to thrive.

I enjoyed watching as the character "Jim" grew and learned something about himself, and finding that he did not like all that he saw. He used that knowledge to begin changing his actions, and even though the effect was not immediate, there were places where we saw a positive impact.

I liked the dragon Smorgl, and the mere-dragon Secoh, but most of the others were peripheral to the story, even Borgash, so it was difficult to know if they would have been likable.

The best part of the story though was it ended on a positive note, with an eye to a permanent sociological change.

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## Stuart says

Dickson's "modern man goes medieval" fantasy novel is enjoyable and easy to read, if a little silly in places and very much of the fantasy literature of its time, i.e. Dungeons and Dragons by way of Mark Twain goofiness and Conan The Barbarian world-building. The characters are fun and the premise is charming, but the story often veers away from what's really interesting and loses focus both when it attempts to explain its own messy internal logic and when it tries to humanize its medieval entourage through rather cliché modern juxtapositions (though there is a bit with Sir Brian, the native knight, learning about Social Security codes from James, the time traveling hero, that is genuinely laugh out loud funny). Emotions are not exactly given much stage time either, though all the female characters exist to be objects of desire (to Dickson's credit, he gives all of them brains, if not very much to actually do), and so the content never rises much beyond basic entertainment, but all said and done it's still better than the average Piers Anthony novel, so if you're looking for a snack in armor- this book's got your name on it.

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### **David says**

An absolutely perfect Fantasy novel. A timeless classic. Light-hearted and very fast paced. It belongs on every Fantasy fan's reading list.

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### **Chani says**

2,5 parce que le côté un peu kitsch a séduit mon âme nostalgique lol

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### **Jeremy Thomas says**

The Dragon Knight series starts with this novel and is and will be one of my most favorite series until the day I die. It's about a young man who is transported into the body of a dragon in a medieval fantasy world in search of the woman he loves. Check it out, read this book and the second in the series, if you aren't hooked by then you have permission to punch me square in the face.

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### **Antonio Simon Jr. says**

In most fantasy novels, the hero (typically a knight) slays the villain (typically a dragon) and saves someone (again, typically, a princess). This novel turns those conventions on their ear. When a science experiment runs afoul of the laws of physics, the main character, Jim, and his love interest, Angie, are sucked into a fantasy realm. Angie is quickly taken hostage by the realm's inhabitants. Jim's fate isn't much better -- it comes as no mild shock to him that he inexplicably finds himself in the body of a dragon.

Jim finds that being a dragon isn't all it's cracked up to be, what with such things as knights, rival dragons, and the evil "Dark Powers" running amok. Ironically, while on his quest to save his damsel in distress, he partners up with a knight and ferocious talking wolf, among other memorable characters.

The Dragon and the George is a fun, funny read, an ironic fresh twist on hackneyed fantasy plots.

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### **Mike (the Paladin) says**

Pure fun...rather unorthodox and original when it showed up. I read this and several of the sequels. Not the regular hero slays dragon story as the hero IS the dragon. Humorous/adventure.

Jim Eckert finds himself in one of the most spectacularly frustrating and weird situations that has been imagined in the worlds of fantasy. In a quest to rescue his girl friend who's been "aporated" to another world (apparently "aporated" there by a crazy professor who can't get her back, but offers to send Jim after her) Jim finds himself in the body of a dragon. In a world of powerful wizards, jousting knights in armor Jim is a dragon and "of course" Angie his girl is still human. AND they can't get home... from there, things go down hill.

Good book, enjoy.

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### **Laura says**

A Dragon/George fierce and big as a house who will jump up on a tree to avoid fighting with a knight in shining armour. (I kid you not my friends - he jumps and stays perched up on a tree!!!)

A huge and fearsome English wolf who will purr like a kitten when a beautiful maiden scratches him between his ears.

A powerful wizard with a bad case of stomach ulcer, mere dragons and outlaws and let us not forget not one but two ladies in bad need of rescue.

Add in a few harpies and other evil creatures as well as a fight to right the cosmic balance and there you go: The perfect recipe for a funny light read to help you wind down at the end of a long day.

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### **Josephine says**

While the writing is, I suppose, a little dated, I am absolutely in love with the story and these characters. I had picked up one of the later books in the series without realizing it *was* a series, and while it probably could have stood alone, I wanted to know what exactly was going on, so I went and found the first one. I guess I can't give this an impartial review because I've read the whole series and know so much more about the world and how magic works there (which is one of the reasons why I love the it so much), but I can say with certainty that it is a fun (and rather short, compared to the others) read. If you're looking for a quick fantasy romp, certainly give this a try, and then please consider reading the others in the series too!

There is a spot of inconsistency from this first book to the next. Perhaps he hadn't been planning to make it a series? I do seem to remember reading somewhere that this was expanded from a short story he had published earlier... Anyway, Aragh, the English wolf, is renamed Aargh in the later books, and it irks me.

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### **Marie says**

I first read perhaps all of these books back in high school, and from that era, they're the only genre series I've actually come back to and still liked.

Not that there aren't issues: there are plenty.

But that's why I've just added a guilty-pleasures shelf, because it's far too late for me to actually come up with reasons why I like them so much. I'll have to come back to it later (maybe after I check out the second book, tomorrow).

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### **Kivrin says**

Fun, old-fashioned fantasy read. The magic is old school (the references to astral projection made me laugh), but the story is funny and light-hearted with a really good battle at the end. Enjoyed the characters and the soul searching done by at least one of them. And I liked that many of the characters do some growing and changing as the story moves along.

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## David says

I first read this book 12 years ago. This summer, my siblings and I decided to read it together. So I did, and reviewed it. Then I rediscovered my first review! They're very similar, which goes a long way toward my classification as a broken record. Here are both:

[2005] I've wanted to read this novel ever since I found out that it was the inspiration for the animated movie *Flight of Dragons*---you know, the one with James Eckert, the contemporary academic who finds himself trapped in a mystical age in the body of a dragon named Gorbash, who teams up with another dragon named Smrgol, a wolf named Aragh, a knight named Sir Brian Neville-Smythe, a wizard named Carolinus, and an Amazon archeress named Danielle to rescue his fiancee Angela from the Dark Powers.

And that's about where the movie departs from the book.

While the movie was co-inspired both by Wayne Anderson's illustrations and Peter Dickinson's meticulously researched non-fiction monograph *The Flight of Dragons*, this novel sports "only" a Boris Vallejo cover and skimps on dragon mechanics. Too bad. I'd have sought the hardcover if Mr. Anderson had illustrated the novel; his curvaceous, shiny-smooth, preposterously proportioned, claw-encrusted, impossibly sinuous dragons, which I first spied as a youth in a review of Dickinson in *Smithsonian* magazine, have inspired a lifetime of drawings of dragons in Anderson's style.

The novel's plot is quite different from what I remember of the movie. There are no other wizards---not even an evil wizard to act as foil for Carolinus. There are only an assortment of beasties and men who align themselves with the formless Dark Powers, including the dragon Bryagh, the insanity-spawning sandmirks, and an Ogre who might have been lifted straight from a Tolkien cave troll. The bulk of the novel is taken up by a side quest to Sir Brian's lady's castle, something completely left out of the movie, but which serves the same vehicle for the prerequisite gathering of "Sir" James' Companions.

Although the novel suffers from some weaknesses, such as a lackluster ending only an SCA member would love, and indistinguishable female characters (Danielle and Angela are so strong-willed and adept at the subtle art of male coercion that I wondered if Angela had actually gotten herself trapped in Danielle's form instead of arriving in her own skin), there are some inspired moments, such as Danielle's delusions of Jim's grandeur and Sir Brian's iconoclastic baseness. Also, Aragh the wolf is truly a joy to read as the only consistently noble character, and Carolinus' frequent conversations with the omniscient Auditing Department had me laughing. Dickson also has an impressive, encyclopedic knowledge of medieval armor!

All in all, it's good solid fantasy with a modern twist, and a piece of my childhood. Three out of five sandmirks.

[2017]For the first time in a while, I had to force myself to finish a book. This novel is definitely not in the class of *The Last Unicorn* [the previous summer's sibling read!]. But still, it's a piece of my childhood, so I saw it through to the end.

\*\*\*\* Achtung! Below be spoilers! \*\*\*\*

One thing that kept breaking immersion for me was Jim's frequent forgetting to stay on target. Admittedly, Dickson addresses this in the very last chapter, and tries to explain some of Jim's decisions via Angela's being in his head, but at this point, this attempted justification seems a little too little, a little too late. Indeed, the plot gets so lost in side quests that the much-anticipated final assault on Loathly Castle is almost an afterthought. The fearsome Dark Powers are a no-show.

Other quibbles: the story fails the Bechdel test miserably. The female characters rarely stray from talking about men, and they never talk to each other. Even though Angela, Geronde and Danielle are strong-willed and possess the canny ability to bend the thoughts and decisions of the men under their sway, they are more or less undistinguishable. So much more could have been done with Danielle's archery (indeed the movie merges Dafydd into Danielle's character), or Geronde's taste for revenge, or Angela's ABD-smarts. It's a book of its times, being an expanded version of Dickson's novella, published in the September 1957 issue of *S&SF*.

Nevertheless, *The Dragon and the George* has its moments. Following are a few specific thoughts I jotted down for each character.

Jim "But I'm not a dragon!" Eckert has shades of bravery, but most of it is of a foolhardy nature. He is not a very consistent character. On the one hand, he is smart enough to think on his claws ("Of course if I'd known your social security number...") and invent dragon sonar, but he makes several bad decisions (going after Sir Hugh, abandoning the party) for ill-defined reasons. And for being engaged to Angela, he's not all that concerned with rescuing her for most of the book. Dickson spends a lot of time inside Jim's head, but his reasoning is muddy. We're supposed to pity Jim for his huge inferiority complex, revealed during his soul-searching solo trip. But I didn't buy it. I identified more with Smrgol than with Jim, natch.

S. "By the Powers!" Carolinus embodies the constantly hassled wizard archetype with flair. I love how we never find out what the S stands for, how he gnaws on his Gandalfesque beard, how he banter with the Auditing Department. And I love how Carolinus is a mathemagician, for he knows about "aleph tables", which (unlike other wizards?) he doesn't use to cheat the Auditing Department: "Just because a number is transfinite doesn't mean you can use it to get something for nothing!" His explanation for Chance v. History being thrown off-balance by the Dark Powers is a bit forced. The movie takes the easier route (if more tropey) of magic v. science. Favorite quote: "Now where did a dragon acquire the brains to develop the imagination to entertain the illusion that he is not a dragon?"

Sir Brian "Damme if I" Neville-Smythe never introduces himself to Sir James. Dickson has Jim pull the name Brian out of thin air (p.75)! D'oh! Though he has some moments, the crusader knight (his warhorse Blanchard hails from Tours, his religion is Catholic) is mostly cut from medieval chivalrous cloth, save some notable exceptions: his hands are "quite familiar" with his Lady Geronde. (In fact, Jim admits as much with respect to Angela when Carolinus inquires if she is a maiden!) I did like the archaic way he talks, though. Favorite quote: "Perhaps we ought to have a go on behalf of our respective ladies while we have the chance...." Always keeping up appearances, that Sir Brian.

Aragh "I'm an English wolf!" the grumpy talking canine is one of the most original characters, squarely lawful neutral. He functions somewhat as a moral compass for both Jim and Gorbash. Dickson offers no explanation for why wolves like Aragh talk, unlike other creatures such as horses and badgers. It's a recurring joke that he is always present but out of sight, appearing just when you need him, with his trademark growl. Yet with all his gruff nature, Aragh sure melts around Danielle. That is a nice touch. Favorite quote: "Never count an English wolf dead until you see his bones well bleached by the sun."

Danielle "That's what the enchantment makes you think" the archer has so much unexplored potential as a character: Amazonian, deluded, resourceful, single-minded, loyal, tender, fiercely independent and determined. Aside from a handful of scenes with Jim, Dafydd and her father Giles of the Wold, her potential

is wasted. She serves purely as eye candy. And exactly how can she make someone a knight if Giles has lost his title? Favorite quote: "No one makes me stay---or go---or anything else. In this hap, I'm going."

Dafydd "[blah, blah], look you" ap Hywel is the Companion most made of cardboard. He exists mostly to draw Danielle's attentions away from Sir James, and to shoot arrows in bad guys and harpies with his impossibly large pecs and Welsh longbow. And then to complain about not shooting better afterwards. Favorite quote: "There is no such thing as an impossible, but only a thing the doing of which has not yet been learned."

And the best for last, Smrgol "By my tail and wings!" the elderly dragon. My love for the avuncular drake and his dry humor is only surpassed by his own love and loyalty toward the not-so-brainy Gorbash. (Jim/Gorbash: "Smrgol, I've been thinking---" Smrgol: "Good boy!") I teared up reading his last words to Gorbash before Loathly Tower. My only beef is that mere-drac Secoh is the only one who mourns Smrgol: not Jim, not even Gorbash. The party just leaves Smrgol's jaws clamped around Bryagh's neck, leaves his leathery wings and bones to rot on the causeway! For shame! Fave quote: "Remember that you are a descendant of Ortosh and Agtval, and of Gleingul who slew the sea serpent on the tide banks of the Gray Sands. And be, therefore, valiant."

3 out of 5 flasks of demon-placating milk. Needless to say, I won't be reading the subsequent nine books in the decalogy!

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## **Ty-Orion says**

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## **Richard says**

One of my favourite movies when I was growing up was "The Flight of Dragons". Many years later, I was in a thrift store and saw this book and on discovering that the movie was loosely based on it I decided to buy it.

For those who have watched the movie you should be aware that it is VERY loosely based on the book. The basic concept of a 20th century man being sent back to a historic fantasy world and trapped in a dragons body is there and the characters from the movie are in the book too, but the story itself is completely different.

The story is excellent and the characters are realistic. The people talk and act as they would in a historic way as opposed to a fantasy world. There are also a huge amount of original elements to the book, the way the magic system works is wonderful.

I was only part way through this book before I returned to the same thrift store to buy several more books in the series.

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## **D-day says**

Our Hero gets whisked away to another world, a world with knight, trolls and wizards, where he needs to

fight the forces of darkness to rescue his true love. Sound familiar? But there's a twist, in this new world he is a dragon. Dickson (born in my home town of Edmonton -according to Wikipedia) has taken a familiar set up added the dragon element and created an enjoyable if familiar tale. I would like to have seen more about dragons though- I don't believe this was explored as much as it could have been, leaving the story a little bit cliché and mundane.

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### **Denaë Christine says**

3.5

I started to lose interest when all the companions were together and kept facing 2-page obstacles (fog and darkness and sandmirks) toward the end because they knew where they were going, but it got better. Jim made some stupid mistakes, but he had a couple moments. Also, I liked the end better than I expected. The people of this world were rough, but Jim came to recognize the necessity of that.

The Auditing Department could seem like it was just there to grant Deus Ex Machina moments, but I thought it was an intriguing addition.

I admit I won't be reading more. It was a fun idea, but it just wasn't written brilliantly like Sanderson's books or Aaron's book. It also wasn't funny, which I find almost a requirement. And it was a bit slow.

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### **Lindsey says**

2.5

I had severe issues with the blandness of many characters, the short-changing of the action scenes and the relatively inconsequential plot. I also admit my bias to having adored "Flight of Dragons" as a child, and this book pretty much only shares character names and the idea of a man transported into a dragon's body. I prefer the movie characters, though some of them are more fleshed out in this version. I just don't like how they are fleshed out. I don't find any particularly interesting, with maybe the exception of the wolf. He grew on me, possibly by virtue of being a wolf. But yes, the main character was horribly dull and a shadow of the movie's Peter. I really couldn't sympathize with him and he had few things to really draw you to him. Maybe he improves in the other books, but I won't be reading those. I also found the world relatively sparse. I guess overall I just wasn't fond of the coarseness of most of the characters and the story itself. There was nothing special about this book at all, though I will admit the descriptions were well done but nothing you wouldn't find in any other better-written fantasy.

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