

MYTHICAL CREATURES



They may never have existed...
but you will believe they did!

Format: 60/90 minute TV documentary/fiction (teaser trailer available)

Pitch

Every era has its legends, every time its myths, and every generation its folk tales. From the cave men to the Vikings, from the knights to the pirates – they all believed in Mythical Creatures. Travel with us through the ages.

See what never was – but in the minds of the believers.

Background

Bigfoot, unicorns, dragons, sea monsters – we all *know* that they never existed, don't we? Yet throughout history, in every culture, there was a firm believe in glorious beasts, merciless predators that hunt the lost and weak. Monsters that embody strength and grace, with magic as their life force.

"Mythical Creatures" takes you on a unique journey through time. Five self contained stories in a framework will recreate civilizations long forgotten, and confront us with legends that have prevailed through the centuries; myths of fear and romance.

From a group of cave women and children awaiting the return of their tribe's hunters, to Viking warriors stranded on a remote island, from a princess trapped in a magical forest, to a modern family with car trouble – we will witness how the tall tales have helped to trigger survival instincts, fight fear, or simply pass time.

All the stories will be connected by "the storyteller's stone", a piece of rock with etchings that become more elaborate as time passes. The stone is passed from one generation to the next, as a tool for the woman that preserves the stories for the future. This woman will be played by the same actress in every story, giving us a strong visual thread.

Visualizing the legends using state of the art CGI technology, we will not see what modern day scientists *know* about the Mythical Creatures – we'll see what people *believed* in. An off-screen narrator will balance this by explaining the ins and outs of "myth building".

"Mythical Creatures" is not out to prove the existence of dragons and unicorns, nor is it devised to show the gullibility of ancient cultures. Its purpose is to demonstrate the necessity of legends to survive harsh and uncertain times, to explain the unexplainable.

Mythical Creatures

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Opening monolog by our narrator. It's about the world when it was young, when every life came and went without leaving anything behind. How things changed when early man discovered ways to pass on memories, stories, legends. All the while, our virtual camera swoops from its space view down to earth, down to the continents, into the woods, faster and faster, until it stops just a few inches over the ground, where we can see a fist sized stone lying in front of a cave entrance. It's smooth, with a light grey colour. A hand picks it up. We can't see the person, but a little fur and a lot of dirt indicate a caveman. But the hand is surprisingly delicate. It's a woman. She takes the stone, and heads back into the cave, glancing at the darkening sky with a worried look.

Inside the cave, there are other members of this small tribe. Some are sleeping, others are making crude tools, and the children run around. But there is a palpable anxiety –



the hunters have been gone for too long. Some of the children shriek, when thunder can be heard outside. The woman with the stone sits down near a fire, and calls the children to her side. She pats their heads, strokes their

cheeks, everything to make them more comfortable. One boy looks longingly to the cave exit, but she turns his head towards her. She takes a rough flint stone knife and begins scratching two or three lines into the stones. Then she starts gesturing to the outside, and we can see that she is entralling the kids with a story, even though her language skills are very basic. In the light of the flickering fire, we fade out, and enter her story.

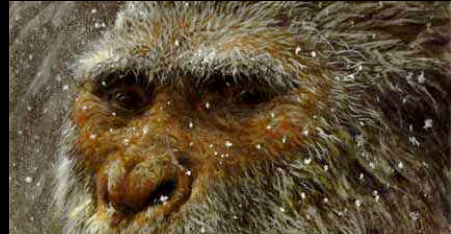
A tribe of cave men hunters is stalking the plains. There is snow, and it's cold. But these guys are tough, and they don't know any other way to live. We can see that it's been a long and unsuccessful hunt – two of them are injured, and they are all exhausted. They need to find a large animal to hunt and kill. The survival of the tribe depends on it...

Here is where "Mythical Creatures" differs from the rest of the "fictionalized documentary" bunch: We will not see what really happened to the hunters. This is the story the woman is telling the kids – it's what *she* thinks is happening. And it's what she *wants* the kids to believe. Thus, we don't get an account of the hardships and dangers of stone age hunting – we get an exciting tale of how the hunters encountered ferocious furry beasts.

When we enter this fictitious tale, two of the leaders of the tribe are fighting. One points to the forest, wants to hunt there. The other one, slightly older, points to the mountain. But before they come to an agreement, another one of the cave men, standing in the background, is suddenly and violently sucked into the underbrush, as if a rope had harshly pulled him backward (which is pretty much how we are going to achieve that

effect). His scream is heard, and the unearthly roar of a creature yet unknown. There can be no doubt that he has been devoured. The hunters are stunned and scared, but they have little choice – this is obviously a mortal enemy, and they will have to face it. Slowly, they proceed into the woods...

What follows is a cat and mouse game, with a mouse that's about ten feet tall, has four inch fangs, and the strength of five men (and we are talking cave men here – not modern day windbags). Maybe a Yeti, or Bigfoot. It has no name yet. Our band of cave



brothers outnumber the creature, but is still no match for it. Like a prehistoric "Predator", it picks off the hunters in the jungle like surroundings, always staying out of sight so we never really get a good look at it. All we get to see is the bodies of those it killed. Finally, with their numbers reduced to four, the hunters decide to use a strategy, to build a trap (necessity is the mother of invention, after all). They use vines and sticks to form a crude grid of spikes. The old man we saw at the beginning oversees the work, while the younger one agrees to play bait. With the beast hot on his trail, he dashed through the forest, jumping over the grid that is hiding under some foliage. His friends hoist up, hoping that the spikes will impale the creature. But the sheer force of the monster is too strong: it smashes right through the grid - and collapses 20 feet later, with pieces of broken wood sticking out of its body everywhere. The hunters carefully approach the panting and gnarling behemoth. Then they start to beat it with stones and clubs until it is dead. Only one of them bothers to look into the strangely familiar face of the enemy before they take its flesh. Walking away, they fail to see that more Bigfoot eyes are watching them from the foliage...

The fantastic story drawing to a close, we go back to the "real world" in the cave – where the ending is just as promised: the hunters return, with food for all. The kids enthusiastically greet the "monster slayers".

See where this is going? The frightened kids *needed* the tall tale to keep their faith, to keep believing in the authority of the older men. It served a social purpose, and in the end – does it really matter whether the cave men fought a Yeti or another ferocious beast? Our narrator will explain that it is much more likely that the men encountered hunters from another tribe, or a bear, or that they were just out of luck for a while. But the myth is much stronger than the truth.

Our first storyteller is satisfied with the outcome, and exits the cave again. When a male puts a hand on her shoulder (inviting her back in to celebrate), she puts the stone on the ground. It has some crude markings now.

Next, we see the stone in close up, and its surroundings rapidly changing, indicating the passage of time. After a few seconds, the stone is overgrown with a little moss, and we



realize that thousands of years must have passed. Another female hand picks up the stone, and when the camera pulls back, we are astonished to find that it's the same actress, but in a different costume. This time, she is a peasant, wearing a simple outfit (ca. 500 years a.d.). She's cleaned up nicely, and wears her long hair in a pony tail. She looks at the stone, as if it

reminded her of something, when she is called away by her brutish father. We follow them to their village, which is small and unimpressive. Life is still hard, and with the fading of the Roman Empire (split in two by then), the virtues of education and culture have been eroding, too.

Some of the houses have been burned, and some are mere piles of ash. It's dead silent, and a few men are waiting for the storyteller's father to join them. This time, we can understand what is being talked about – an unknown enemy has been invading the countryside, with weapons of unheard power. Some of the people (Christianity is in its infancy around here) suspect its demons, or monsters from Utgard (the Norse version of hell). But still – the men are determined to fight for their little part of the world. It's all they got. And the women and children have to watch them go. We stick with our storyteller, who starts to help the other women rebuild the village. The children, bored and hungry, tug on her skirt – "tell us a story!". We realize that she is considered a gifted "weaver of tales". Without stopping what she is doing, the storyteller begins: "Well, those demons your fathers are hunting today – they are winged creatures, with big teeth, and a breath of FIRE!" She makes a "boo!" sound, and the kids shriek in pleasure. We fade into the story of the men fighting the dragons in a forest nearby...

But here is what we get to see: The men travel (on foot and by horse) through the country side, arguing all the time. Some think it might be wise to move away – the storyteller's father angrily points out that they have lived here since "before man started counting the turning of the seasons", referring back to maybe even the cave men of the first story. Another villager says that there are rumours that the dragons protect a gigantic treasure of gold and jewellery



(remember, "The Ring of the Nibelungs" was first conceived in this age). The surroundings get visibly swampier, and foggy ("as if the dragon's breath still lingers"). Our first glimpse of the monster is a mere shadow as it swoops over their heads, but soon, the all out attack begins. Two of the villagers are roasted on the spot by something out of our deepest nightmares. Swords and other weaponry of the time are useless, as long as they can't get close enough to use them. But again, the right strategy turns the tables – since fire is extinguished by water, the men lure the dragon into the swamp, where they can hide from the flames in the dirty slush. Furiously, the beast moves in for the kill. Only to be stabbed repeatedly from under water.

Again, it's not a triumphant victory, and again, only a few men have made it out alive. One of them wonders why the dragon was so intent on protecting the area. Another one reminds him of the treasure. "Oh yeah, that must be it." But we can see some huge lizard eggs lying in a cave nearby, providing us with a much more plausible answer..

After we have watched a fight straight out of "Dragonheart" or "Dragon Slayer", our narrator tells us what probably really happened – barbarians from the north or the east invaded the country, using their superior battle tactics to overrun the peaceful counties. Setting fire to villages, using burning arrows, they *felt* like demons from hell, but they were just ruthless, faceless killers (for a good example, check the movie "13th Warrior").

Again, the end of the vignette ties in nicely with the "truth" of the men returning home to the village. Their numbers have been decimated, and even our storyteller's father has been killed. While the others comfort her, she weeps, cradling the stone. Then, in sudden and random defiance, she throws the storyteller's stone away. We stick with it, see it land in the mud. Again, time races, and this time, some new carvings appears out of thin air. We realize that the stone is a catalyst for storyteller's throughout the centuries.



Time for a breather. After all, the "Mythical Creatures" weren't all bad. In fact, some of them were quite enchanting and mystical. Thus, when the next female hand picks up the

storyteller's stone, we find ourselves in the closest approximation to a "magical forest" that we can find. Welcome to the Middle Ages, a time of brave knights in shining armour, of castles adorned with colourful flags and banners, and bards singing of eternal, yet unfulfilled love.

We see a lord (or a comparable member of royalty) enraged, demanding to know where his daughter is. A maid (the actress we've come to know and love) tries to calm him down, promising that the young lady is not doing anything improper. She just left the castle to enjoy the beautiful summer day. The lord is not convinced, especially since the woods are not considered "safe". The maid, stroking the stone, uses the superstition of her master to her advantage, and starts telling him about the unicorns that roam the forest, protecting it from all evil. Their sole purpose is defending innocence, and only a virgin can tame them.

The vignette that follows is slightly tacky, with oversaturated colours, and a gauze filter. The princess (probably the most beautiful and perfect woman ever created) is picking flowers in her white dress, humming a simple yet joyful tune. Suddenly, clouds amass in the sky, the soundtrack is filled with ominous and subtly unnerving foley. The princess looks around, noticing the change in the mood. Three black knights appear on three black horses. Naively, the princess asks: "Are you noble men from far away?" But the strangers don't speak, and approach

in a threatening manner. Without actually seeing anything, we realize this is an obvious prelude to a rape. The princess tries to run – it's as desperate as it is in vain. Dirt stains her perfect dress, her hair gets messed up, her already Bambi sized eyes go wide. Just when we think this might get truly ugly, we hear a triumphant roar. It sounds vaguely like a horse, but much more epic and echo-y. The knights are distracted, and draw their swords. A beautiful unicorn appears, rises on its hind legs, like preparing to fight the enemy. What follows is a dream like chase scene, wherein the princess watches as the unicorn drives the evildoers out of the forest. The young lady wants to thank the magical creature, but it stays just out of reach. She follows it, and under a magnificent waterfall, she witnesses the white animal joining its brethren, dozens of other unicorns. The soundtrack is filled with strings and a tacky choir...



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We cut back to the castle, where the Lord is mesmerized by the fantastic tale. He enthusiastically embraces his daughter when she returns to the castle. To us, it's quite obvious that she's been out with some handsome farm boy (she hastily picks some straw from the dress and hair) – and that she is in no position to tame a unicorn...

As our narrator explains: "Using a symbol of innocence, and associating oneself with it, was a perfect way to claim purity – even if the truth was a little less angelic and wholesome."

Time flies – literally, in this case. And it's back to the dark and dreary. To make matters worse, the weather isn't that good either. Truth be told, it's horrible. There is a severe storm raging, throwing a little Viking battle ship from the crest of one wave to the next.



Neither the sail nor the rudder put up much of a fight. The oars have been pulled in – the sheer force of the water would rip them out of the arms of the warriors, breaking their bones with ease. One of the Vikings finally spots a tiny island, and with great difficulty, the ship hits the shore. The Vikings scramble to find a place to wait out the storm, finally discovering a cave (it's not unlikely that we are back where we started out in the first vignette). Their fur and leather clothes are soaking wet, and they are tired. They manage to get a fire started, and huddle around it. There are a few women present – they were taken on the journey to serve the men. One of them (played by guess who?) finds the storyteller's stone near the entrance of the cave (déjà vu again). The warriors start talking about the Gods not being on their side, about a bad omen. The storyteller interrupts them (unheard of – it looks like the stone gives her courage). She mentions that maybe it's not that storm that took so many brave men's lives. Maybe it's something in the ocean, something hiding just under the surface...

In this vignette, we see a Viking ship being attacked by a giant sea serpent. It's a no-brainer, really – the wooden boat doesn't stand a chance against a creature that is visibly pissed. Its massive head can smash through the planks, and its snake like body picks up the warriors and squeezes the life out of them (we'll make sure that it looks



in no way too similar to the dragon of the second vignette). The Vikings put up a good fight, but it's pretty much hopeless. Finally, one of them has a desperate idea – he uses his sword to shove some hot coal from a fireplace below deck into a sack of leather (ships back then actually had fireplaces). He then sacrifices himself to the beast, throwing the sack into its jaws. Badly burned, the sea serpent roars in pain, letting go of the ship. Its cries attract another, slightly different coloured serpent that immediately attacks the wounded one. We (and the Vikings) watch a monster fight par excellence, and finally, the injured serpent is dragged underwater by the new arrival. The Vikings make sure to get away as fast as they can...

While we are watching the no holds barred match, our narrator explains the shortcomings of the ships that people like the Vikings used. Not only did the boats have design flaws – a lack of navigational skills (based on a belief system where the Earth is a disc) ensured that a lot of ships were never seen again after they left port. Since the

Vikings were considered good sailors, "beasts" seemed like a logical explanation for their failure.

In the end, the Viking ship also hits the shore of the island. The two Vikings groups are reunited, and the warriors even thank the storyteller for telling them about the bravery of their countrymen.

When the camera leaves the scene, moving from the cave in to the forest, and to a lake shore, the rain doesn't stop – it just gets less savage. We hear a man cursing. Welcome to the present! It's the father of an American family, desperately trying to change a flat tire on his rental car in the rain. We are in Scotland, as we'll soon find out – near a lake (make that a "loch") that everybody on this planet has heard of. The wife of the American is sitting in the car with the daughter and the son. When the son has to "go",



his mom accompanies him for a few steps into the woods. But the boy wants some privacy (he *is* almost eleven, after all), and the mother patiently waits for him, cape drawn over her head. It is here that she finds the storyteller's stone (by now we will have recognized the

actress). When she and her son get back to the car, the father snaps his cell phone shut – he has just called roadside assistance, but it will take a while till they get there. To pass the time, the mother starts telling the kids the legend of the very lake they were just visiting - the legend of the Loch Ness monster. In her tale, it's a huge sea monster, not unlike the serpent in the last vignette.

We are now in a small Scottish village. Not a real one – it's one of those Brigadoon type fantasies from American movies (after all, an American mom is telling this story). Hard to pinpoint the time – could be the 30's, could be the 50's, even the 70's. A young fisherman is sitting in a tavern, exchanging longing looks with a cute lass waiting the tables. He is also arguing with some of the town folk. Apparently, the handsome fellow has just recently moved to this area, and is not acquainted with the local legends. He wants to take his boat out on the loch after dark, when some of the fishes come to the surface to feed in the moonlight. Strangely enough, *no one fishes in Loch Ness after dark*, even though it's the best time for it. But the discussion is pretty pointless, since the old curmudgeons refuse to shed a light on the mystery. When our young fisherman announces that he will not adhere to this foolish rule, the waitress warns him outside the tavern. But all her flirting can't stop him.

Later, we see his fishing boat drifting over the surface of the lake. It's eerily quiet, no clouds in the sky, just a full moon. The fisherman throws his net into the water, waiting for it to sink. He chuckles about the legend, obviously not believing a word. Then something tucks on the net. He tries to haul it in, but it seems stuck. "That can't be – stuck to *what?*". At this moment, the net is ripped from his hands, and sucked underwater. Before he can even react, the boat is pushed upwards *from below*, by something *really* big. While courageous, our fisherman is no fool, and he tries to head back to shore. When the boat is hit again, he falls over, hitting his head. In a daze, he raises an oar to defend himself against the gigantic creature that is now looming over the boat (we only see it in flashes, and out of focus – don't want to spoil the mystery). We hear a gentle roar, almost like a very loud purr, and finally, the fisherman loses consciousness.

Later, his boat slowly drifts toward the small harbour, and the people of the village pull it in. When our young hero awakes, he sees the beautiful waitress. "Do you believe the legend now, you fool?". He does, and she promises him that if he never goes fishing at night again, she'll make sure that he has plenty of other things to take care of (you know what I mean – but let's not get too obvious).

Our narrator explains that the descriptions of the monster fit the prehistoric plesiosaur, but that even extensive sonar searches couldn't prove that they live (or have lived) in the lake. But the lake is vast, and has an intricate set of underwater canyons and ridges that can produce strong whirls and currents. If something is lost in the lake, it's unlikely ever to be retrieved. Thus, the legend of the Loch Ness monster is a myth made up for people who still need to believe in "things that go bump in the night".

When the roadside assistance finally arrives, the weather clears up, and we get a beautiful view of the lake. The kids, having just heard the exciting monster story, are desperate to go down to the shore, and look for Nessie. The mother accompanies her, still carrying the stone. They have a good look around, but naturally, no mythical creature pops up. When the camera pulls back and up, we can see two things: the kids returning to the car, and the mother standing at the water's edge, deciding to leave the stone right here. The second she has turned her back, we can see a massive shadow just below the surface of the lake, swimming past with calm strokes. We go in for a closer look, and peer into the water. Can't see too much – the surface is reflecting the sky above. Just then, a face comes into view – it's the mother again, looking into the water once more. And to the left and right (in the reflection), all the other storytellers appear: the cave woman, the peasant girl, the maid, the Viking servant. They smile slightly, and when the water starts to ripple, we fade out...