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the opening sequence, an aerial camera zooms in on a solitary Komodo dragon from afar. This, states Attenborough, is the last place on Earth still ruled by reptiles. Though they may seem primitive, reptiles and amphibians still thrive thanks to diverse survival strategies.

Reptiles and amphibians look like hang-overs from the past. But they overcome their shortcomings through amazing innovation. The pebble toad turns into a rubber ball to roll and bounce from its enemies. Extreme slow-motion shows how a Jesus Christ lizard runs on water, and how a chameleon fires an extendible tongue at its prey with unfailing accuracy. The camera dives with a Niuean sea snake, which must breed on land but avoids predators by swimming to an air bubble at the end of an underwater tunnel. In a TV first, komodo dragons hunt a huge water-buffalo, biting it to inject venom, then waiting for weeks until it dies. Ten dragons strip the carcass to the bone in four hours.

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