

## PART ONE: GRENDEL

### Grendel Attacks

One night, after a beer party,  
the Danes settled in the hall  
for sleep; they knew no  
sorrows.

The evil creature, grim and  
hungry,  
grabbed thirty warriors  
and went home laughing.

At dawn, when the Danes  
learned  
of Grendel's strength,  
there was great weeping.  
The old king sat sadly,  
crying for his men. Bloody  
footprints were found.

That was bad enough,  
but the following night  
Grendel killed more--  
blinded by sin,  
he felt no remorse.  
(You can bet the survivors  
started sleeping elsewhere.)  
So Grendel ruled,  
fighting right,  
one against many,  
and the greatest hall  
in all the earth  
stood empty at night.

Twelve years this went on,  
Hrothgar suffering  
the greatest of sorrows.

Poets sang sad songs  
throughout the world,  
how Grendel tormented  
Hrothgar;  
how no warrior,  
no matter how brave,  
could kill Grendel.  
How Grendel wasn't  
about to stop,  
or pay damages.  
Grendel kept ambushing  
from his lair,  
the moors which lay in  
perpetual darkness.

Then, the cruelest of all  
injuries,  
he moved into the hall--  
stayed there every night  
(though God would never

allow  
such an evil thing  
to actually touch the throne).

Hrothgar was broken;  
council after council  
proposed  
what to do against the  
attacks.  
They even went to heathen  
temples,  
worshipped idols, and called  
to the Devil for help.  
The Danes forgot God.  
(Woe be to those who go  
to the fire's embrace,  
even in great distress--  
There is no consolation  
there.)

No counselor, no warrior  
could destroy the evil.  
They wept and seethed.

### Beowulf Hears of Grendel

But a warrior of Hygelac's  
heard of Grendel's doings;  
he was the strongest of men  
alive in that day,  
mighty and noble.  
That man called for a ship,  
said he would cross the  
ocean  
and help the king who  
needed help.  
Wise men urged him  
to that adventure  
though he was dear to them.  
They examined omens  
and whetted him on.

So the good Geat chose  
the bravest warriors,  
fourteen of them,  
and that crafty sailor  
led them to the land's brim,  
to the ship.  
They readied the ship  
on the waves under the cliffs  
and the warriors stood at the  
prow  
as the water wound against  
the sand.  
The warriors bore  
into the ship's bosom  
bright weapons,  
fitted armor.

The men shoved  
the well-braced ship  
out on the journey  
they'd dreamed of.  
The foamy-necked ship  
went out like a bird  
so that the next day  
its curved prow  
had gone so far  
that the seafarers saw land,  
shining shore cliffs  
and steep mountains.  
Their journey was already  
over  
and the Geat warriors  
pulled their ship to the shore  
and stood on land  
in their rattling shirts,  
their war-clothes. They  
thanked God for an easy  
trip.

From his wall the sea-guard  
of the Danes,  
protector of the cliffs,  
saw bright shields  
and ready war dress  
coming over the gang plank  
and he wondered  
who those men were.  
Hrothgar's warrior rode  
to shore on his horse.

Shaking a mighty spear, he  
spoke:  
"Who are you, in armor,  
who come over the sea-road  
in that steep keel?  
Listen: I guard here  
so that no forces  
hostile to the Danes  
may raid. Never has  
one so openly brought  
a ship's army, warriors,  
without the permission of my  
kinsmen.  
And never have I seen  
a greater man on earth,  
any man in armor,  
than is one among you.  
Unless I'm wrong,  
that is no hall-man,  
just wearing armor--  
his stature is peerless.  
I wish to know your lineage  
now  
so I know you are not spies  
going into the land of the  
Danes.  
You far-dwellers, seafarers,  
hear my simple thought:

you had best hurry to tell me  
where you come from."

Beowulf, leader of the host  
unlatched his word-hoard:  
"As to kin, we are of the  
Geat nation,  
Hygelac's hearth-  
companions.  
My father was a leader well  
known  
among the people:  
Edgtheow.  
He stayed many winters  
before he went away,  
aged, from the court.  
Every wise man readily  
remembers  
him throughout the earth.  
We have come with friendly  
hearts  
to see your lord, Healfdene's  
son,  
protector of the people.  
Be good counsel to us:  
we have come on a great  
errand  
to the king of the Danes.  
I think it foolish  
to keep secrets. You know  
if it is true what we have  
heard,  
that a dark enemy in the  
nights  
works violence and  
slaughter  
on the Danes. . . . Perhaps  
in kindness I may advise  
Hrothgar  
how he, wise and famous,  
may overcome this enemy--  
if change will ever come,  
relief from this evil--  
and how this seething  
sorrow  
might become cool.  
Otherwise, he will suffer  
tribulation  
as long as he lives in that  
high place,  
the best of houses."

The protector of the coast,  
still on his horse, spoke  
(a wise shield warrior,  
one who thinks well,  
must judge two things:  
works and words):  
"I see that you are a band  
friendly to the lord of the  
Danes.

Go forth, bearing arms and  
equipment.  
I will guide you. Also,  
I will order my men  
to protect your ship,  
that new-tarred boat on the  
sand,  
until it bears you again  
back over the water streams  
with its curved wooden neck,  
back to the land of the  
Geats--  
if it be granted that you  
endure the battle."

They left then the well-made  
ship  
pulling at its rope.  
On the gold-adorned  
helmets  
figures of boars shone,  
those guards over war-like  
minds.

The men excitedly marched  
until  
they saw that ornamented  
hall,  
the finest building on earth,  
that glittered light over many  
lands,  
where the mighty one  
waited.

The one brave in battle  
pointed  
toward the resplendent hall;  
the guard of the coast turned  
his horse and said after  
them:  
"It is time for me to go.  
May the Father Omnipotent  
hold you  
safe and sound in kindness!  
I will go back to the sea  
to hold against hostile  
bands."