

PROLOGUE

Early History of the Danes

Listen:

You have heard of the Danish Kings
in the old days and how
they were great warriors.
Shield, the son of Sheaf,
took many an enemy's chair,
terrified many a warrior,
after he was found an orphan.
He prospered under the sky
until people everywhere
listened when he spoke.
He was a good king!

Shield had a son,
child for his yard,
sent by God
to comfort the people,
to keep them from fear--
Grain was his name;
he was famous
throughout the North.
Young princes should do as he did--
give out treasures
while they're still young
so that when they're old
people will support them
in time of war.
A man prospers
by good deeds
in any nation:

Shield died at his fated hour,
went to God still strong.
His people carried him to the
sea,
which was his last request.
In the harbor stood
a well-built ship,
icy but ready for the sea.
They laid Shield there,
propped him against the mast
surrounded by gold
and treasure from distant lands.
I've never heard
of a more beautiful ship,
filled with shields, swords,
and coats of mail, gifts
to him for his long trip.
No doubt he had a little more
than he did as a child
when he was sent out,
a naked orphan in an empty
boat.
Now he had a golden banner
high over his head, was,

sadly by a rich people,
given to the sea.
The wisest alive can't tell
where a death ship goes.

Grain ruled the Danes
a long time after his father's
death,
and to him was born
the great Healfdene, fierce in
battle,
who ruled until he was old.
Healfdene had four children--
Heorogar, Hrothgar, Halga the
Good,
and a daughter who married
Onela, King of the Swedes.

Hrothgar Becomes King of the Danes

After Hrothgar became king
he won many battles:
his friends and family
willingly obeyed him;
his childhood friends
became famous soldiers.

So Hrothgar decided
he would build a mead-hall,
the greatest the world had
ever seen, or even imagined.
There he would share out
to young and old alike
all that God gave him
(except for public lands and
men's lives).

I have heard that orders
went out far and wide;
tribes throughout the world
set to work on that building.
And it was built, the world's
greatest mead-hall.
And that great man
called the building
"Herot," the hart.

After it was built,
Hrothgar did what he said
he would: handed out gold
and treasure at huge feasts.
That hall was high-towered,
tall and wide-gabled
(though destruction awaited,
fire and swords of family trouble;
and outside in the night waited
a tortured spirit of hell).

The words of the poet,
the sounds of the harp,
the joy of people echoed.
The poet told how the world
came to be, how God made the
earth
and the water surrounding,
how He set the sun and the
moon
as lights for people
and adorned the earth
with limbs and leaves for
everyone.
Hrothgar's people lived in joy,
happy until that wanderer of the
wasteland,
Grendel the demon, possessor
of the moors,
began his crimes.

He was of a race of monsters
exiled from mankind by God--
He was of the race of Cain,
that man punished for
murdering his brother.
From that family comes
all evil beings--
monsters, elves, zombies.
Also the giants who
fought with God and got
repaid with the flood.