



Beowulf

Long ago there lived a King in Daneland Called Hrothgar. Hrothgar was a great King “god cyning” who had fought many battles and won much treasure. His Land was peaceful and his wealth grew. He looked at the piles of gold about his palace and said “I will build a great Hall adorned with gold and ivory, with carved pillars covered with gems and Deer antlers.” He called his builders and they set about building this great Hall Wide and long. When it was built Hrothgar Named it “Heorot” or Hall of the Stag.

Every night as darkness fell Hrothgar and his wife invited all his greatest warriors to the hall and every night they sang and drank and danced and celebrated and Hrothgar divided up his great wealth among his favourite warriors. The Candles flickered and light glowed in the windows as the sounds of the minstrels lyre filled the air.

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Inside was all gladness but outside beyond the fastness and in the fetid swamps there was one who was not happy. Grendel a hideous ogre with long lank black hair and teeth like knives prowled the darkness looking to do evil. He hated happiness and the sounds of joy from the Hall each night were like a poison to him. Eventually he could bear it no more and he made his way to The Hall of the Stag. The warriors were sleeping after a night of feasting and Grendel crept in and with his claws as hard as steel and as sharp as daggers he quickly killed thirty of Hrothgar's best warriors. He placed them in a great bag and carried them off to eat them.

In the morning there was great sadness and weeping in the Hall which Grendel heard and he was happy to hear their cry. Grendel returned each night and killed more warriors. None dare fight him as his skin was as hard as iron armour and no sword could cut him. So Hrothgar and his warriors abandoned the Hall of the Stag and it stood empty for twelve years. The Tale became famous and minstrels sang songs

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telling of the great king and the hideous monster that warred against them. Eventually a minstrel travelled to Gotland where Beowulf a great warrior of the Goths heard the story and vowed to travel to Daneland and free the people from this vile beast. Beowulf asked his King Hygelac if he may go and, knowing Beowulf had fought many beasts before, Hygelac gave Beowulf leave to cross the sea to Daneland.

Beowulf took fifteen men and sailed to Daneland where he rode to see Hrothgar and offered his assistance. He told them of his great deeds. Killing many enemies of Gotland, Capturing five giants and fighting nine sea monsters beneath the waves. That night they feasted and Beowulf told of his great deeds and minstrels played and Warriors cheered and afterwards the warriors slept. All but one. Beowulf who lay in wait longing for the fight to come.

Grendel having heard the feasting came to the hall and crept in he immediately devoured a warrior by the door. Beowulf watched and waited for Grendel

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to reach out for another warrior and as he did Beowulf sprang up and grasped Grendel's Arm. He wore no armour and carried no sword for he knew that Grendel's skin was hard as iron and he had vowed to best him as an equal, with his bare hands. Grendel cried out! No one had ever gripped him so tight and he was afraid. He pulled as hard as he could but could not break free. Beowulf's men awoke and drew their swords but none of them could pierce his skin so Beowulf and Grendel fought hand to hand. Violently the battle raged on until eventually the sinews in Grendel's shoulder burst, the bones cracked and Beowulf tore Grendel's arm from his body. Mortally wounded Grendel screamed and fled back across the moor to his lair in the deep lake of water dragons.

Much cheering and happiness was there at this. Beowulf nailed Grendel's arm above the front door of the hall as a trophy and the next night there was a great feast to celebrate and Beowulf was given many rewards. Beowulf was given a bedroom at the

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palace and Hrothgars men slept in the hall as there was no longer anything to fear.

But outside there was one who paced and mourned and raged with hate. Grendels Mother. A vile Water Witch. She stood over the dead body of her son. Almost as hideous as her Grendel Himself, she swore revenge on those who had killed him. She swiftly stole across the marsh towards The great Hall of the Stag with fell intentions.

Once inside The Hall She Roared with rage and each warrior sprang to his feet with sword and shield in hand. Finding herself discovered she was afraid and dare not face all the warriors. She turned to Run but as she ran she reached out her terrible clawed hand and grasped one warrior crushing him and carrying him off to her lair. As she ran from the Hall, with her other hand she siezed the Arm of Grendel and disappeared into the mist. Hrothgar and Beowulf came running to the Hall and Hrothgar was distraught as the Warrior taken was his greatest Friend and Ally.

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Horses were brought and a great army of men assembled to track the foul harridan. Hrothgar rode alogside Beowulf and they followed the trail Of Gore to the edge of that black lake overhung by dank trees. The waters were full of strange beasts that fled when they saw the Danes arrive but Beowulf took his bow and shot one and they dragged it from the lake with their spears and marvelled at its hideous form, all tusks and shining scales and sharp fins.

Beowulf Dived into the Lake and Swam down to Find the Water witch but like a spider in a web she sensed a mortal was swimming to her so as he neared her lair she grabbed him and tried to crush him but his fine armour and strength saved him. Serpents attacked from all sides but Beowulf remained unharmed so the Witch dragged him deeper into her lair until they came top a place with no water and a fire burned in a hearth. Beowulf broke free of her grasp and drew his sword but again he could not pierce her skin so the threw down the sword to fight her with his bare hands but

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she was both swift and strong and eventually overpowered him and pinned him to the ground. She drew her dagger and stabbed and stabbed at Beowulf but his armour held firm. Beowulf struggled free from her grip and upon the wall spied a great sword forged by the ancient race of Giants. He wrested the sword from its place and swung at the water witches grisly head. His aim was true and the witches head fell from her shoulders and landed on the floor. Next he took Grendels head and his foul blood was so poisonous that it dissolved the swords blade leaving only the hilt. Beowulf Swam to the surface with the two monstrous heads and the sword hilt.

Finally Hrothgar and his people were free of the beasts and Beowulf was rewarded for his great Feat with much wealth and the great sword Naegling. He returned home with his men to king hyglac and told of his great deeds. He gifted much of his treasure to the king and queen and lived happily. Eventually he became king of the Goths and ruled for fifty years.

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Life was good until a slave stole treasure from the lair of a Dragon. The dragon laid waste to Gotland and Beowulf rode out with his men to face the beast. He told them to wait outside and went into the cave to fight the Dragon alone but he was no longer a young man and the dragon was more than a match for the old king. His Men were afraid and ran away all except for one man named Wiglaf. Together they defeated the Dragon but Beowulf was gravely wounded and died. He was buried in a great burial mound with all the treasure and gold from the dragons lair. The barrow was built facing the sea so travellers may see the great cairn and remember the great warrior King of the Goths, Beowulf.

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BEOWULF

Hwæt. We Gardena in geardagum,
þeodcyninga, þrym gefrunon,
hu ða æþelingas ellen fremedon.

Oft Scyld Scefing sceapena þreatum,
monegum mægþum, meodosetla ofteah,
egsode eorlas.

Syððan ærest wearð feascaft funden, he
þæs frofre gebad,
weox under wolcnum, weorðmyndum
þah, oðþæt him æghwylc þara
ymbsittendra ofer hronrade hyran scolde,
gomban gyldan. þæt wæs god cyning.

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Once there was a great Dane King
A Hall he built, to Feast and sing.

His Wealth he shared with Warrior bold
and gladness shone in Rings of Gold

Outside A ogre heard their joy
and thought to make an evil ploy

He'd prowl the hall while warriors slept
and eat them all right from their beds

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