

BEOWULF

as told by

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Draft Dated:
May 20, 1998

Registered: WGA/w
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Hwæt! We Gar-Dena
peod-cyniga,
hu oð æpelingas

in geår-dagum,
prym gefrunon,
ellen fremedon!

Listen! We have heard
In the old days,
How noble princes

of the Spear-Danes' glory
the kings of tribes--
showed great courage!

"Beowulf"
Lines 1-3
Original Author Unknown

**NORTHERN DENMARK
518 A.D.
THE AGE OF HEROES**

FADE IN:

1 A CAVE

1

A SHADOWY FIGURE, its hands tightly clutching the sides of its head, WHIMPERS with tortured pain. This creature, while humanoid, does not seem entirely human. Its hands quiver and shake as it grasps at its own skullcap, covering its ears...perhaps trying to hold out noise.

But there is no noise, save for the creatures own WHIMPERING.

SLOWLY ZOOM IN onto the back of the silhouetted creatures bald head. Then, ever so distant and increasing in pitch, do we hear what the creature hears...

CUT TO:

2 INT. HEROT - MEAD HALL - NIGHT

2

A ROARING fire of dancing golden-orange flames blazes away in a massive fire pit. Above it, the head of a pig roasts happily away, suspended over the flames by a long sword which runs through its head like an enormous spit.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL: Herot. The greatest mead hall in the land. Everything is golden and burnished. The CROWD is NOISY AND CHEERING and happy. We see golden mead being filled from a large mead tub into jugs and then poured into goblets. One warrior sticks out his helmet, mead is poured into it and soon he is drinking from it. A brace of golden roasted pig is brought out on wooden serving platters.

PULL BACK FURTHER TO REVEAL: A CROWD OF ROWDY THANES dances wildly around a large portable throne, which is being carried by FOUR THANES. It wobbles and bobs its way through the CHANTING crowd as if it were a boat toppling its way through the high seas. Inside of the throne sits Hrothgar, as fat a king as you're ever likely to see. His rotund body is draped in nothing more than a haphazardly wrapped bed linen, as if he just came from fucking. It can barely ward the mead that spills from his large goblet.

NOISE assaults our senses.

The throne is dropped onto a dais with a LOUD THUD, nearly crushing his queen, Wealthow, a pale beauty with iridescent skin and a face like the moon. She is KNOCKED by the large and heavy throne, which has come to rest on her dress. She pulls at it, ripping the cloth.

(CONTINUED)

2 CONTINUED:

2

Hrothgar LAUGHS and grabs Wealthow, pulling her toward him and forcing a long, wet kiss on her lips as she beats at his chest with her fists, demanding to be put down. His WARRIOR THANES cheer him on. Finally she breaks free and spits on him, which doesn't seem to phase his "highness" since he opens his mouth and asks for more with a LAUGH.

His thanes CHEER him on. He turns to them, his face red with drunken excitement.

HROTHGAR

A year ago I, Hrothgar, your King, swore that we would celebrate our victories in a new hall, mighty and beautiful. Have I not kept my oath?!

DRUNKEN CHEERS resonate from the mob of thanes.

HROTHGAR

In this hall we shall feast and tell of victories. In this hall shall the scopas sing their sagas. And in this hall we shall divide the spoils of those conquests, the gold and treasure. This shall be a place of merrymaking and joy and fuck from now until the end of time. I name this hall...Herot!

A ROAR OF CHEERS all around.

HROTHGAR

(turning to Wealthow)

Let's hand out some treasure, shall we my beauty?!

Wealthow is ambivalent. Hrothgar lifts the lid of a chest and dunks his hand into it, pulling some treasure out. Hrothgar is having a great time doing this. He's drunk, but then, everyone's drunk. He lifts up a huge golden torque, THE CROWD CHEERS.

HROTHGAR

For Unferth, my wisest advisor, violator of virgins and boldest of brave brawlers-- where the hell are you, Unferth, you weasel-faced bastard? Unferth--!

At

3 THE PISS PIT

3

(which is a large hole in the ground at one corner of the hall filled with piss and shit) stand UNFERTH and AESHER. Unferth has intense black eyes and long black hair streaming

(CONTINUED)

3 CONTINUED:

3

out from under his winged helm. Aesher is older, perhaps the polar opposite to Unferth. The two of them are Hrothgar's advisers, the first reactionary, the latter more conservative. Unferth and Aesher are urinating, and holding a conversation.

UNFERTH

So if Christ Jesus and Odin got into a fight, who do you think would win?

AESHER

A knife fight?

UNFERTH

Any kind of fight--

HROTHGAR (O.S.)

Unferth!

Unferth cuts his pee short and turns.

UNFERTH

(to himself under his breath)
What now?

4 HROTHGAR

4

shifts to one side in his throne and lets loose a RIP ROARING FART, contorting his face as he does. Relieved, he brightens his expression and holds up the torque. CHEERS from the THANES.

HROTHGAR

(in a genuine loving way)
Where are you, you ungrateful lout!?

5 UNFERTH

5

wanders through the CROWD OF THANES, tieing up his cod and MUMBLING UNDER HIS VOICE. He then shifts his expression to a well practiced smile and holds his hand in the air.

UNFERTH

(in a not-so-genuine loving way)
I'm here, my king!

6 HROTHGAR

6

finds him in the CROWD and perks up. Unferth emerges from the group of thanes and steps up the dais.

HROTHGAR

Here you go--

(CONTINUED)

6 CONTINUED:

6

Hrothgar puts a huge golden torque or a thick gold chain around Unferth's neck. He turns and faces the thanes. CHEERS.

CUT TO:

7 EXT. HEROT - THE MOORS - NIGHT

7

We are a short distance from Herot...beyond the stockade which holds its small village...in the darkness of the moors. But even from this distance the REVELRY in the mead hall is deafening.

Then, the shadowy figure from the cave, whose size we can't be sure, stumbles into view...silhouetted by the light of the moon. It's massive hands clutch and grasp at the sides of its head, vainly attempting to hold out the sounds of the party. It MOANS a GHASTLY WAIL that invokes in us both extreme sadness, and fear.

CUT TO:

8 INT. HEROT - MEAD HALL - NIGHT

8

IN A SERIES OF SHOTS:

The revelry in the hall is reaching a fever pitch. The party is in full Danish sixth century swing...INTERCUT with the inhuman creature approaching through the moors with increasing speed and force.

9 A BAND OF WARRIORS

9

are together in one corner of the hall, singing an obscene and lusty warrior song, more or less together.

10 WULFGAR

10

a tall, dark-haired thane in his mid thirties, is chasing GITTE through the hall. They are both GIGGLING, as they play something close to hide and seek.

11 SEVERAL ELDERLY LADIES

11

sit, almost unaware of the chaos around them, primly sitting and eating goose with their fingers. One of them BELCHES with relish, surprising us.

12 A KNAVE BOY

12

is trying to pull a goose-leg away from a DOG. He succeeds, and begins gnawing on it himself.

(CONTINUED)

12 CONTINUED: 12

We are seeing humanity, rough-cut, having a real festival, feast, celebration. It's NOISY and rude, and everything is burnished with the glitter of gold.

13 WULFGAR AND GITTE 13

are locked in a passionate embrace under the table, possibly fucking.

14 THE BAND OF WARRIORS 14

continue to SING THEIR SONG. Some are passed out, some are partying full bore, all are drunk.

We are in a WASH OF NOISE...

CUT TO:

15 EXT. HEROT - THE MOORS - MOVING - NIGHT 15

We are travelling towards the hall Herot from the creature's POINT OF VIEW. We are about 15 feet above the ground and moving inhumanly fast. The NOISE OF THE PARTY is ominously loud...

CUT TO:

16 INT. HEROT - MEAD HALL - NIGHT 16

HROTHGAR'S JESTER dances about to Hrothgar's delight. He is a little man, a dwarf...naked and shamanistically painted white. He acts out some kind of story as a SCOP, the Bard of the time, is CHANTING and accompanying himself on the HARP. If we can hear the words of his chant, it's about King Hrothgar killing a dragon. The dwarf jester stabs at a pillow, slaying it, with a miniature toy spear.

Hrothgar is flanked by Aesher and Unferth, with Wealthow and her ladies off to the far side of the throne. He turns to Unferth.

HROTHGAR

(half drunk, to Aesher)

Are we not the most powerful men in the world? Are we not the richest? Do we not merrymake with the best of them? Can we not do as we please?

AESHER

We can.

HROTHGAR

Unferth?

(CONTINUED)

16 CONTINUED:

16

Unferth doesn't answer.

HROTHGAR
Unferth?!

UNFERTH
(grudgingly)
We can. We do.

Hrothgar, as content as any man could be, slips into a drunken catnap.

A DOG at the base of the dais begins GROWLING, its fur on end, backing away from the great door.

Unferth notices this, his eyes narrow with suspicion. He looks across the mead hall and the excessive fete at the great door.

UNFERTH
My king...?

HROTHGAR
(slipping in and out of a
drunken sleep)
Not now, Unferth...I'm dreaming of gold.

UNFERTH
But, my king!

HROTHGAR
What?!

Suddenly,

17 THE GREAT DOOR

17

EXPLODES as if something of tremendous force rammed into it, splintering the wooden frame and buckling the great iron hinges...but the door holds.

Hrothgar's eyes go from sleepily closed to wide as saucers.

18 PEOPLE

18

start sitting up, worried. Warriors reach for their swords, knives, and spears.

There is a pause. A BEAT OF SILENCE, which goes on almost longer than we can bear and then...

There is a second EXPLOSIVE RAM to the frame of the massive

- 19 THE GREAT DOOR 19
- breaking it free from its hinges and causing the wood to splinter. For a brief moment, we see the SHADOW OF A MONSTER from behind the broken door.
- Then it enters. Candles snuff out with the cold wind that accompanies it.
- 20 HROTHGAR 20
- rises in his seat, terrified.
- HROTHGAR
My sword! My sword!
- Unferth and Aesher, draw their weapons. The horror on their faces hints to us the nature of the monster which has erupted into the mead hall. They stand, frozen in astonishment, at what has entered the mead hall.
- 21 THE GREAT FIREPIT 21
- suddenly ROARS larger and wilder than before, consuming the spit and pig in its flame. What was once a warm source of heat suddenly becomes dangerous and ominous.
- We see the monster's shadow(s) cast onto the heavy stone wall of the hall by the golden light of the firepit. It isn't just one shadow, it's many shadows, overlapping each other, dancing wildly together to composite a figure of massive size. The interloping shadows/shadow overtake the SHADOW OF A THANE...it lunges forward and lifts him up above it's head...there's a HORRIFIC RIPPING SOUND and the shadow thane is suddenly two shadows, a pair of legs and an upper torso.
- 22 THE UPPER TORSO 22
- of the recently dismembered thane flops onto a long feast table, still somewhat alive, much to the horror of the singing thanes (who have since, obviously, stopped singing). They tear their eyes from their segmented friend to the monster before them...
- We see
- 23 THE SHADOWY MONSTER 23
- in fragments, glimpses. Eyes, sharp-clawed hands, scaled golden skin, teeth. We see him in fragments and glimpses, but we do not see him clearly or as a whole as he seems to bring shadows in with him.

(CONTINUED)

23 CONTINUED:

23

Its hand slash out, and a THANE'S HEAD goes flying, spilling blood as it goes.

ONE OF THE BRAVE THANES rushes the inhuman beast with a large bastard sword. Just a swipe from the monster and

THE THANE

soars across the room, landing onto a rack of spears, impaling him.

24 THE SHADOWY MONSTER

24

rushes forward with startling speed and dexterity, overtaking the thanes.

25 CARNAGE

25

ensues. If it was just the SOUNDS OF DECAPITATIONS and SCREAMS it would be one thing, but the monster is ripping the thanes into parts. Heads tumble. Limbs land on the fire. Sections of bodies tumble like rag dolls across the room. Blood spills onto the floor, mixing in with spilt mead. And the monster isn't limiting itself to them strongest warriors...it's killing the women and children too. It's killing anything it can.

26 HROTHGAR

26

stumbles from his throne...fat and covered with a sheet, his sword in hand.

Unferth stops him.

HROTHGAR

Let me go. Am I not the King?

UNFERTH

You are the King. And that is a monster from Hell. There is no dishonor in fleeing from such a beast.

(to Aesher)

Get the king to safety! Haste!

Unferth rushes forward, SCREAMING like a berserker, the sword of his father held high above his head.

UNFERTH

Aaaaiiii!

- 27 THE SHADOWY MONSTER 27
jerks forward and grabs Unferth by the leg, it lifts him and swings him about until his leg has snapped into multiple fractures. Then it throws him into
- 28 THE GREAT FIREPIT 28
Unferth lands onto the hot coals and his cape bursts into flames. He manages to roll out of the inferno and undo his cape. He beats the remaining flames from his arms and back until he realizes that
- 29 THE SHADOWY MONSTER 29
is approaching quickly. It's shadow(s) on the increase in size as it nears the firepit where
- 30 UNFERTH 30
lays on the ground. He quickly looks for his sword...it must have been thrown from him during the fracas. Thinking the better of valor, Unferth begins to scramble away on his hands and feet, despite the fact that his leg is lacerated and broken. He crawls faster than you've ever seen anyone crawl, and he crawls right into the safest place in the mead hall...
- 31 THE PISS PIT 31
Unferth scampers right in with no hesitation.
- 32 HROTHGAR 32
breaks free from Aesher's hold and, despite the fact that he's wearing no armor, and stumbles toward the monster, his sword in his hand. Wealthow tries to go after him, to stop him, but Aesher grabs her and pulls her away.
But
- 33 THE SHADOWY MONSTER 33
avoids him, with ease.
It pulls a THANE apart at the legs, as if it were splitting a wishbone.
- 34 HROTHGAR 34
rushes closer to the monster, but again it avoids him.

HROTHGAR

Fight me!

35 THE SHADOWY MONSTER 35

suddenly ROARS a painful, angry, and tormented bellow, causing

36 THE GREAT FIREPIT 36

to WHIP and then extinguish as if a great wind had blown it out.

The room goes dark.

We hear PEOPLE SCREAMING AND SOBBING, in the darkness.

Then a torch is lit, and another, and another....

In the silence, we see that

37 THE MEAD HALL 37

is literally awash with blood and body parts. And that many of the men are gone.

38 UNFERTH 38

emerges from the piss pit, covered in shit as if he had crawled into it to hide.

39 WEALTHOW 39

breaks free from Aesher's grip and slowly steps forward down the dais. She approaches Hrothgar, her face pale with shock.

WEALTHOW

What was...that?

WE SPIRAL IN, dizzyingly, into HROTHGAR's blood-spattered face. And he says:

HROTHGAR

Grendel.

CUT TO:

40 INT. THE GREAT CAVE - NIGHT 40

The monster (who we now know is named GRENDEL), silhouetted by the cool light of the full moon, shambles into his lair -- a cave mouth, inside of which is a placid pool of clear water. He is dragging the corpses of TWO DEAD WARRIORS into the cavern.

(CONTINUED)

40 CONTINUED:

Grendel drops the bodies of the dead warriors onto a corner of the cave where the bones of men, both bleached and fleshy litter the floor. It is a strange and unnerving place.

A mask is dropped onto the floor. A mask constructed from the skulls of two baby whales and decorated with bits of human hair and bones...painted with mud. From its size we can imagine that Grendel likes to wear it.

We really only see Grendel in fleeting glimpses and in shadows. But from what we see he is huge, and strangely misshapen. His fingernails are blunt and broken, but strong as steel. His eyes are empty and sanguine, but his corneas are flecked with glittering gold. His teeth are horrible atrocities of nightmarish proportion, overlapping each other in chaotic disorder. He is hairless. But he has charisma, and we feel for him. He is more or less naked.

GRENDEL'S MOTHER is sitting a little way away, in the shadows near the cave pool, and swathed in dark cloth. What we can see of her skin glitters, like gold.

Grendel's mother's VOICE is melodious and young.

GRENDEL'S MOTHER

Grendel? What have you done?

Grendel turns suddenly, surprised by her voice. Like a boy who has been caught masturbating.

GRENDEL

Moth-er? Where are you?

Grendel's Mother stands up, and moves forward. We still can't see her properly.

GRENDEL'S MOTHER

Men? Grendel...we had an agreement. Fish, and wolves, and bear, and sometimes a sheep or two. But not men.

GRENDEL

You like men.

GRENDEL'S MOTHER

These men are too fragile, Grendel. They do me little good. And you must be more crafty. Bring them to me alive, at least. You see, they will hurt us if they can. They have killed so many of us...the Giant-breed, the Dragon-kind...

GRENDEL

Here.

(CONTINUED)

40 CONTINUED: (2)

40

He holds out a body.

GRENDEL'S MOTHER
(tired)
Just put it down, Grendel.

GRENDEL
They were making such noise. So much
noise. It hurt my head and my mind. I
could not think.

Tears begin to run down Grendel's face. He lets go of all
the warriors he is holding, and they float on the surface of
the pool.

GRENDEL'S MOTHER
(sharply)
Was Hrothgar there?

GRENDEL
I did not touch him.

She takes Grendel into her arms.

GRENDEL'S MOTHER
(pacified)
Good boy. My poor sensitive boy.

FADE TO BLACK:

MONTHS LATER

41 EXT. HEROT - STOCKADE - MORNING

41

It's a grey, wet, drizzling morning, wet and dull. Unferth
walks though the village. When he gets to the hall, he sees
the great doors are open, and he goes in.

Then, a few seconds later, he runs out -- we can see that
Unferth limps as he runs -- he sustained some kind of injury
to his leg from Grendel the last time we saw him.

CUT TO:

42 INT. HEROT - HROTHGAR'S QUARTERS - MORNING

42

Hrothgar and Wealthow are asleep in their bed -- a straw
pallet, covered with cloth and deer hides, and, covering
them, more deer hides and furs. They both sleep naked, but
are beneath the fur. The PITTER-PATTER OF RAIN on the roof
can be heard.

Unferth bursts in. He respectfully touches Hrothgar's
shoulder. Hrothgar opens his eyes.

(CONTINUED)

42 CONTINUED:

42

Unferth talks quietly, not wanting to wake Wealthow.

UNFERTH
(whispering)
My lord?

HROTHGAR
(waking)
Hnh? What?

UNFERTH
My lord. It has happened again.

HROTHGAR
Grendel's work?

Unferth nods.

HROTHGAR
How many men this time?

By this time Wealthow has woken. She sits up and looks at them. The furs have slipped off, revealing her breasts. Unferth tries hard not to stare at her. Hrothgar, naked, clambers up from the floor.

UNFERTH
I could not tell. They were not whole.
Five. Ten.

HROTHGAR
(to Wealthow -- boisterously)
Keep the bed warm for me, eh?

WEALTHOW
(drily)
Why?

Obviously all is not well for our King and Queen in the bed department. Hrothgar ignores this insult to his masculinity, and pulls a fur robe over his nakedness.

43 EXT. HEROT - STOCKADE - MORNING

43

It's still raining, and we can see Hrothgar's bare legs and feet beneath his fur robe, as he walks with Unferth across the open space between his sleeping quarters and the hall.

HROTHGAR
How many does this make it?

(CONTINUED)

43 CONTINUED:

43

UNFERTH

This is the second attack this moon. The tenth in half a year. He's coming more frequently.

Unferth, walking behind the king, goes into Herot.

44 INT. HEROT - MEAD HALL - MORNING

44

The carnage left by Grendel is terrible -- body parts, bodies, and, above all, blood everywhere -- on the floor and the walls.

Hrothgar is standing in a puddle of blood, in his bare feet. Aesher, Hrothgar's other counsellor, arrives, and stares at the devastation with them.

AESHER

Not again...

HROTHGAR

(almost sad)

When I was young I killed a dragon, in the Northern Moors. But I'm too old for dragon-slaying now. We need a hero, a Siegfried, to rid us of this curse upon our hall.

UNFERTH

I say we trap the beast. Brute strength fails against such a brute. Let us use cunning.

HROTHGAR

These creatures know cunning, Unferth. They are cunning.

UNFERTH

Our people wait for deliverance, my King. Some of them pray to the Christ Jesus to lift this affliction. Others sacrifice goats or sheep to Odin, or Heimdall.

HROTHGAR

(takes a deep breath)

This place reeks of death.

He turns and leaves, the others follow him. Hrothgar, Aesher, and Unferth walk down the

45 HALLWAY

45

Hrothgar leaves bloody, sticky, red footprints behind him, from his bare feet.

46 EXT. HEROT - STOCKADE - MORNING

46

Hrothgar et al walk out into the village, it has begun to rain harder.

HROTHGAR

Men! Build another pyre! There's dry wood behind the stables. Then clean out the hall. Burn the dead, wash out the blood. Put down new straw and reeds on the floor.

He begins to walk through the rain, ignoring it completely. Unferth and Aesher walk with him.

HROTHGAR

(to Unferth and Aesher)

The scopps are singing the shame of Herot as far south as the middle sea, as far north as the ice-lands. Our cows no longer calf, our fields lie fallow, the very fish flee from our nets, knowing that we are cursed. I have let it be known that I will give half the gold in my kingdom to any man who can rid us of Grendel. That should bring us a hero.

AESHER

I wish you had had a son, my lord.

UNFERTH

The country folk hereabouts have a very amusing saying about that. "You wish into one hand, and shit into the other, see which fills up first."

HROTHGAR

There is nothing wrong with hope, Unferth. It is all that keeps us from being animals. The gods will do nothing for us that we will not do for ourselves. No, we need a hero.

CUT TO:

47 EXT. THE STORMY SEA - DAY

47

Great gray sheets of rain sweep a stormy Northern sea. The clouds which bear the rain are so full of water they've swollen to a blackness deep as pitch.

The sun itself has vanished beyond the dark torrent. It seems it will never return, as sometimes it seems daylight will never return after a nightmare. But LIGHTNING is here

(CONTINUED)

instead...flashing with its sporadic brilliance, occasionally illuminating the wave caps.

The ocean is furious. Commander of the tempest above. The weight of it swells like an angry orchestra...CRASHING with bombastic fervor...rising with every crescendo. Rhythm to the melody of rain and lightning.

A man is watching nature's symphony play before him. His curious eye takes in the chaos and out of the randomness patterns form. Nature's music is heard by him. His name is BEOWULF.

He wears leather armor studded with hand pounded iron. At his hip is a heavy, hand forged ancestry sword that at one time belonged to his father's father. His cape, a tapestry of heavy black weaves and animal skins, blows in the wind.

Beowulf is standing on the deck of a Nordic craft whose ample span was never meant for voyages as rabid as this. The poor vessel slams into each wave with thunderous booms that send cascading shivers up its wooden ribs.

The red sail has been tattered by the wind -- it has been ripped to unusable shreds. As it snaps in the gale we can see the image of a golden dragon emblazoned on it.

At the oars sit FOURTEEN THANES. Their hands, bloodied and pierced with slivers, tug at the wooden oars rhythmically... pulling the craft along on its perilous journey through the waves.

Like a toy carved from a branch the boat is momentarily lost under the waves' event horizon.

Beowulf, his left hand holding the mast for balance, remains undaunted by the howling winds and the walls of water surrounding him. He continues to hold his stare at where the horizon must be. Somewhere, beyond the dark veil of the storm, there is a fire to guide him. Somewhere, beyond the darkness, there will be light and placid waters.

Beowulf's Second in command, a strong Thane with wild red hair and beard looks up to Beowulf. He is WIGLAF. He ships his oar, and clambers up to where Beowulf is, shouting --

WIGLAF

(above the wind and rain)

Can you see the coast? Do you see the Dane's guide-fire?

BEOWULF

I see nothing but the wind and the rain.

(CONTINUED)

47 CONTINUED: (2)

WIGLAF

No fire? No stars by which to navigate?
We're lost! Given to the sea!

Beowulf looks at him and starts LAUGHING...a laugh of challenge.

BEOWULF

The sea is my mother, Wiglaf! She will
never take me into her murky womb!

WIGLAF

That's fine for you. But my mother's a
fishwife in Uppland. And I was rather
hoping to die in battle, as a warrior
should.

(he becomes more serious)

The men are worried the storm has no end,
Beowulf...

Beowulf rests his hand on Wiglaf's shoulder.

BEOWULF

(looking up to the sheets of
falling rain)

It's no earthly storm! That much we can
be sure. It's Hrothgar's sin which
shrouds his land in this torrent. This
demon's tempest won't hold us out.

(then to Wiglaf with a grin)

Not if we really want in.

Wiglaf looks at Beowulf with wide, questioning eyes. Is Beowulf mad? Well, even if he was, Wiglaf would follow him into the mouth of death herself. Wiglaf turns to the other thanes, whose morale needs charging as well.

WIGLAF

Who wants to live!?

All of the thanes HEAVE A MUTUAL RESPONSE...they do.

WIGLAF

Then pull your oars! Let's see you do
it! For Beowulf! For gold! For fucking
glory! Let's have it! Heave!

Good ol' Wiglaf. He's managed to get the men GRUNTING ENTHUSIASTICALLY with every stroke. He looks at Beowulf, who is briefly illuminated by a FLASH OF LIGHTNING...who wouldn't follow him?

CUT TO:

48 EXT. THE DANISH CLIFFTOPS - DAY

48

Five spears stand together, their blades pointing to the vertex of the Cimmerian storm above.

The spears belong to the SCYLDINGS' WATCH, a Dane whose duty it is to watch the coast for invaders. He sits at a camp he's set up next to some cliff side ruins. He has built a fire in an ancient pit of unknown origin. Perhaps at one time this place was an eternal fire to aid ships in storms such as this. On this day it is being used to cook a kebab of skewered field mice.

Rain surrounds on the horizons. But here, in this encampment, there seems to be a proscenium of eerie stillness. A bubble of barometric pressure keeping the storm at bay.

The Scyldings' Watch stands up, his rough leather armor, chapped and weathered, is covered by an animal skin to keep him dry. He squints his eyes to look at the horizon. There is nothing but the blackness of the storm clouding it.

This Dane spends his days staring at the line separating the sea from the sky. It has become his only focus. He's sure something is there...

And sure enough something is there. A tiny craft with bright shields hanging from its sides.

His mouth drops open.

There is indeed a ship approaching -- a Geat ship, which might be a raider.

He drops his mouse kebab and hastily climbs onto his HORSE.

After grabbing his greatest long spear from the makeshift rack he takes one last look at the approaching craft and rides his horse down a...

49 STEEP TRAIL

49

of bramble thicket, still misty from the afternoon showers. Its trail to the beach below is a near vertical drop of loose foot stones and crumbly shale.

The Scyldings' coastal guard descends the cliff side at a fearless speed, confident to the end of his horse's footing.

Soon, he finds himself on a...

50 RECESSED BEACH

50

Nothing more than a glassy sand bar. Once this area was a tidal plane that met the cliffs. Now it's a field of shallow pools. A living mirage of sea birds, and the crabs they eat. It is a scape of neither ocean nor shore, a limbo of glistening earth, reflecting the gray light of the storm above.

The Dane's mare, trotting sidelong in grave apprehension, spies the Geats landing their ship on the bar's edge. It NEIGHS an abrupt exhalation as it clenches at its bit.

A DWARF HORSE is being guided off the craft, and from this vantage point it seems to walk on water.

Scyldings' watch pushes his horse toward a

51 MOORING

51

which the foreign ship has tied on to. A number of Beowulf's Thanes are unloading weapons from the ship.

Beowulf, standing on the bow of the ship, has been watching the coast guard's approach.

WIGLAF

He has a horse. What kind of man is he?
Should we fight?

BEOWULF

That'll be the Scyldings' coastal watch.
We'll greet him with friendly words.

There is a stir of motion...the armed rider -- the Scyldings' Watch -- is GALLOPING his horse toward them, over the wet sands. He has a long spear which he lowers and points before him, as if to impale the first man he reaches. It's a moment of fear for Beowulf's men...but not for Beowulf.

Then he reins his horse, a few feet from our ship, in a splash of water, and points his spear at Wiglaf's neck.

SCYLDINGS' WATCH

Who are you? By your dress, you are warriors.

WIGLAF

Yes. We--

SCYLDINGS' WATCH

(not yet prepared to stop
talking and start listening)
For more years than you would believe I
(more)

(CONTINUED)

SCYLDINGS' WATCH

have been on guard here. I have guarded Denmark's shore from pirates and raiders, after our gold and our women.

WIGLAF

We aren't after your--

SCYLDINGS' WATCH

You have no permission from Hrothgar to land. No safe conduct. No passport. Hrothgar sent no messengers to tell me you were coming. Why should I not run you through right now? Speak. Who are you? Where are you from?

BEOWULF

Leave him be. We are Geats. I am Beowulf, son of Edgethow. We have come seeking your prince in friendship. We have no secrets from Hrothgar. They say you have a monster here. They say your land is cursed.

SCYLDINGS' WATCH

Is that what they say?

WIGLAF

Bards sing of Hrothgar's shame from the frozen north to the shores of Vinland.

SCYLDINGS' WATCH

It is no shame to be accursed by demons.

BEOWULF

It is no shame to accept aid that is freely given. I am Beowulf, and I have come to kill your monster.

The Watch lifts his glance to Beowulf, looks over him with questioning eyes.

DISSOLVE TO:

The Scyldings' Watch is riding upon his horse. Some rain drops begin to fall from the colorless ether above. The Watch is struck underneath the eye by a particularly large drop. He flinches and then looks to the clouds, more drops speckle his face.

SCYLDINGS' WATCH

Rain.

(CONTINUED)

52 CONTINUED:

52

Beowulf comes trotting ahead, past his men, upon his dwarf horse, no larger than a Great Dane dog.

BEOWULF

Just the ocean falling from the sky.
Finding its way to its home the sea.

The Scylding's Watch looks down at Beowulf on the tiny horse.

SCYLDINGS' WATCH

(slightly cynical)

A small horse...for a Thane as "great" as you, Beowulf.

BEOWULF

She is strong enough to bear me, or to bear supplies. She does not eat much, and takes up little space on our ship. It is not size of a sword, but the fury of an attack that wins a battle. It's not might...but spirit that conquers evil.

(he pats his horse on the neck,
stroking her)

She will get me to my destination.

The Scylding nods and then looks ahead, down the

53 KING'S ROAD

53

which is not much more than a rocky road of shale stones, perhaps tombstones, set into the mud. It leads into a forest and is lined by large stone monoliths.

Beowulf's men are marching along, following the Scyldings' Watch. The Scylding's Watch reins his horse.

SCYLDINGS' WATCH

This stone path is the kings road.

(with a smile)

It was built in better times. Follow it to great Herot, the hall where my King waits. This is as far as I go. I must return to the cliffs. The sea must not be left unguarded.

BEOWULF

I thank you for your aid.

The watch kicks his horse, and heads back the way they came. And then he reins in his horse and calls--

SCYLDINGS' WATCH

Beowulf?

(CONTINUED)

53 CONTINUED:

53

Beowulf turns, and looks back at him.

SCYLDINGS' WATCH

The creature took my brother. Kill the
bastard for me.

Beowulf nods and they move on, down the king's road and into
the forest.

CUT TO:

54 EXT. HEROT - STOCKADE - DAY

54

There is a stir inside the village stockade, as the VILLAGERS
see Beowulf and his 14 marching followers coming up the road
toward them.

The villagers are terrified -- are these armed raiders, come
to carry off the young women (who are either going off to
hide, or making themselves look more desirable, depending on
their temperament) or to burn the town?

They stop marching in front of Hrothgar's mead-hall.
Hrothgar's herald, Wulfgar, is standing at the great front
doors to the hall

CUT TO:

55 INT. HEROT - THRONE ROOM - DAY

55

We follow Wulfgar through the hall, as he makes his way to
Hrothgar's throne. Hrothgar looks even older and grayer than
he did when last we saw him. He's staring off into nowhere.

WULFGAR

My lord? My lord?

HROTHGAR

Hnh?

WULFGAR

My lord. There are warriors outside,
Geats. They came over the sea-road,
bringing messages for your ears alone.
They are no beggars -- and their leader,
Beowulf, is a--

HROTHGAR

Beowulf? Edgethew's little boy? Not a
boy any longer...but I knew him when he
was a boy. Strong as a grown man he was,
back then. Yes! Beowulf is here! Send
him in! Send him to me! Bring him in!

(CONTINUED)

55 CONTINUED:

55

Wulfgar the herald hurries out.

Hrothgar begins to walk around the throne room, looking younger and happier as he walks. He's placing all his hopes on Beowulf.

Unferth steps backwards into the shadow at the mention of Beowulf's name.

HROTHGAR

Wealthow! Unferth! Everybody! Help is at hand! Beowulf is here! Treasure -- we must give him fine gifts. And food, and drink, they will have been long at sea -- bestir yourselves, you ungrateful louts!

CUT TO:

56 EXT. HEROT - STOCKADE - DAY

56

Beowulf and his men are standing around. Beowulf stands like a statue.

His men, behind him, are staring at a pretty girl, YRSA, who is eating a large, slightly over-ripe plum with gusto and relish. Juice runs down her chin and onto her cleavage.

HONDSHEW, one of Beowulf's more ornery Thanes, stares at her and licks his lips, but whether it's food or companionship he's after we do not know.

YRSA

That's a fine spear, outlander.

Hondshew swallows with an almost audible GULP.

Wulfgar, the King's herald, comes out.

WULFGAR

Hrothgar, Master of Battles, Lord of the North Danes, bids me say that he knows you, Beowulf son of Edgethow, knows your ancestry, and bids you welcome. You, and your men, shall go in to him.

(pause)

Your weapons shall wait out here for your return.

Wiglaf, Aesher, Hondshew and the others look at Beowulf for guidance. None of the Geats is going to put down his weapon until and unless Beowulf tells them so.

(CONTINUED)

56 CONTINUED:

56

There is a CLATTERING, as Beowulf's sword and spear hit the ground. He pulls a dagger from his belt and throws it so the blade sticks in the ground.

His men copy him. The weapons fall to the floor. They follow Beowulf into the Hall. Wulfgar waits for the last man to go in. Then he glares at the plum girl, Yrsa.

WULFGAR

Woman! Have you nothing better to be doing?

She makes no reply, but with her little finger, wipes the drip of plum-juice from her breast, and licks it from her finger.

CUT TO:

57 INT. HEROT - THRONE ROOM - DAY

57

The WHOLE COURT is assembled here now. Queen Wealthow and THE QUEEN'S WOMEN, GUARDS and COURTIERS. Unferth is there, but he is standing in the shadows to the right of the throne, and is not visible.

Hrothgar hugs Beowulf to him, proudly.

HROTHGAR

Beowulf! How is your father?

BEOWULF

He died in battle with sea-raiders, two winters' back.

HROTHGAR

He was a brave man. Need I ask why have you come to us?

BEOWULF

They say that there is a monster who comes to this hall at night.

WEALTHOW

And there have been many brave men who have come here, and have drunk too much of my Lord's mead, and have sworn to rid his hall of our nightmare. And the next morning, there was nothing left of any of them but blood to be cleaned from the floor and the benches and the walls.

BEOWULF

I have drunk nothing. Yet. But I will kill your monster.

(CONTINUED)

HROTHGAR

(overly enthusiastic)
He will kill the monster! Did you hear
that? Grendel will die!

BEOWULF

Grendel?

HROTHGAR

The monster is called Grendel.

BEOWULF

Then I shall kill your Grendel. I,
Beowulf, killed a tribe of giants in the
Orkneys. I have crushed the skulls of
sea-serpents. And this...this troll of
yours shall trouble you no longer.

The Queen is about to say something doubtful about all this,
but Hrothgar, who takes Beowulf at face value, announces to
the hall...

HROTHGAR

A hero! I knew that the sea would bring
us a hero! Will you go up to the moors,
then, to the cave by the dark pool, and
fight the monster in its den?

The Queen, Wealthow, looks doubtful.

Unferth glares from the shadows.

Hrothgar raises his eyebrow, wanting to hear Beowulf tell of
how he'll kill Grendel.

Beowulf steps forward and waves his hand.

BEOWULF

I have fourteen brave Thanes with me. We
have been long at sea. I think it is
high time, mighty Hrothgar, to break open
your golden mead, famed across the world;
to let the scop chant, and to feast and
boast and to make merry, in this great
hall of yours.

Hrothgar squints.

HROTHGAR

But...that will bring the beast here.

57 CONTINUED: (2)

57

Beowulf says nothing, but a huge Cheshire smile spreads across his face. A smile that's much too huge.

CUT TO:

58 INT. THE GREAT CAVE - GRENDEL'S LAIR - EVENING

58

Grendel is SINGING to itself, a slow, sad, tuneless sort of noise. It is taking a soldier apart, bit by bit, and throwing the bits of body into the water. EELS seize the fragments of flesh and disappear back under the water with them. Grendel LAUGHS delightedly at the eels.

GRENDEL

No more. You get fat! Fat fish! More tomorrow.

Then Grendel walks over to the side of the cave, and puts the warrior's head on a spike. He hangs the rest of the body from a hook. He moves awkwardly. While Grendel is not human, if he were human, he would be retarded, perhaps brain-damaged. He is honestly a sweet and gentle person, except in the matter of eating people, and then only when driven mad with noise.

Grendel begins to play with the spear (and the head on it) as if it were a puppet.

GRENDEL

(pretending he's the voice of
the Thane's head)

Da-dee-da! Da-dee-da! Who's laughing now?!

There is a RUSTLE behind him. Grendel is alarmed; he drops the head on the spear and his fingernails shoot out and become sharp claws. His eyes narrow.

EXTREME CLOSE ON: Grendel's mother's lips. She has full lips, tinged with gold -- almost like fish-scales. Her lips are not the lips of an old woman. We do not know, yet, whether or not they are the lips of a monster.

GRENDEL'S MOTHER

(a bodiless whisper)

Grendel.

Grendel soothes a little, his nails recess back into his fingers.

GRENDEL

Mother? You should not be here. You do not come here. We are too close to the worlds of man.

(CONTINUED)

GRENDEL'S MOTHER

I had an evil dream, my son. I dreamed that you were hurt, and killed. I dreamed that you were calling out for me, and I could not come to you. And then they butchered you.

GRENDEL

I am not dead. I am happy. Look, happy Grendel.

He does an awkward, shuffling dance around the cave, SINGING as he does.

GRENDEL

(singing, tunelessly)
Happy happy, happy happy, happy happy,
happy happy...

GRENDEL'S MOTHER

You must not go to the hall tonight. You have killed too many of them.

GRENDEL

Grendel is stronger. Grendel is bigger. Grendel will eat their flesh and drink their blood and break their bones.

GRENDEL'S MOTHER

Please, my son. Do not go to them.

GRENDEL

(makes a whining sound)
Oh...

GRENDEL'S MOTHER

Please. Promise me this.

He sulks, defeated.

GRENDEL

I swear. I shall not go to them.

GRENDEL'S MOTHER

Even if they make the noises?

Grendel hesitates, then nods, reluctantly, as if it's being jerked out of him, an awkward little boy promising his mother something.

GRENDEL'S MOTHER

Good boy.

CUT TO:

59 EXT. HEROT - STOCKADE - DAY

59

The sun hangs in the west of the sky, but is still an hour away from setting.

We are looking at the hall from outside. Smoke is coming from the chimneys (or from the holes in the roof that let smoke out). We can hear, MUFFLED HARP MUSIC, the sound of MEN TALKING, and the CLINKING OF GOBLETS.

60 INT. HEROT - MEAD HALL - DAY

60

Inside the hall, the party is just beginning. It's not the same party as before, however. For a start there are much fewer males, even counting Beowulf's 14 Thanes. For second, everyone seems more subdued and miserable than they did at the previous party -- like a party at a funeral. Still, a HARP IS PLAYING, and people are sitting at long tables, and maidens are pouring golden mead into cups.

Hrothgar is sitting at his throne, which has been carried into the hall by FOUR BRAWNY THANES.

Wealthow is sitting on the side of the throne, and Hrothgar's hands are, absentmindedly, stroking her hair.

Unferth is behind and to the right of the throne.

Beowulf is walking about the hall, deep in thought, in another world entirely.

Hondshew is staring at Yrsa, the plum girl, who is pouring mead somewhere across the hall.

Wiglaf is talking to the other 13 thanes.

WIGLAF

Look, all I'm saying is we don't want any trouble with the locals. So, just for tonight, no fighting, and no fucking. Okay?

OLAF

I wasn't planning on doing any fucking.

WIGLAF

Well, I obviously wasn't talking to you then Olaf, was I?

Yrsa sticks her tongue out at Hondshew. He smiles a yellow-toothed smile at her.

(CONTINUED)

60 CONTINUED:

60

WIGLAF

Hondshew. Make me feel like you're pretending to listen to me. It's only been five days since you waved your wife goodbye.

This maybe so, but Hondshew is still driven by his loins.

CUT TO:

61 EXT. HEROT - DAY

61

The sun continues to move West. Now the shadows are long, and the light has taken on a late afternoon glow. We hear, muffled, the PARTY NOISE. A little louder than before.

CUT TO:

62 INT. HEROT - MEAD HALL - DAY

62

Beowulf walks behind Wiglaf, to Hrothgar's throne. Wealthow's face, unearthly in its beauty, stares at him.

WEALTHOW

I hope that God is kind to you, Sir Beowulf. It would be a great shame on this house, if one so brave and noble were to die in it.

BEOWULF

There is no shame to die in battle with evil.

Hrothgar, perhaps getting a little drunk, does not realize that this is a private conversation, and announces, to everyone listening, including Unferth, standing in the shadows...

HROTHGAR

Hear that? I said that before I fought the great dragon of the Northern moors! Killed him, too. There's a soft spot under the chin...

(he points to it)

...you go in with a knife or a dagger -- it's the only way you can kill a dragon.

Wealthow mouths "it's the only way you can kill a dragon" along with this -- she's heard it before, a thousand times.

Wealthow ignores her husband. She says, directly to Beowulf, eye to eye contact.

(CONTINUED)

WEALTHOW

And if you die?

BEOWULF

There will be no corpse to weep over, no funeral to prepare, and none to mourn me. Grendel will dispose of my body in a bloody animal feast, taking my bones and sucking off my flesh, swallowing me down.

Wealthow is obviously sexually turned on by the thought of sucking and swallowing on Beowulf. She swallows, moistens her lips, slightly upset by her reaction.

She looks up at him. It's a moment of romance, or of naked lust, but all she says is:

WEALTHOW

I would mourn you, my lord.

BEOWULF

It is up to fate, and fate will go as it must.

Hrothgar has completely missed the moment of strange romance between his wife and the young warrior. Or perhaps he hasn't...either way, he begins to talk, getting up from his chair.

HROTHGAR

Your father came here fleeing the Wylflings. He'd killed one of them--

BEOWULF

Heatholaf.

HROTHGAR

(nodding vigorously and then continuing)
--that was him! I paid the blood debt for your father, and he swore his oath to me. No good deed goes unrewarded, though. I saved his skin, now you're here to save ours, eh?

He SLAPS Beowulf on the back.

We hear A LOW, BITTER, LAUGH from the shadows behind the throne. Unferth steps out of the shadows into the light, CLAPPING his hands.

UNFERTH

All hail the great Beowulf!
(softer, to Beowulf)
(more)

(CONTINUED)

62 CONTINUED: (2)

UNFERTH (CONT'D)

Here to save our pathetic Danish skins,
eh?

(bitter irony & plenty of it)

And we are so damned grateful, mighty
Beowulf. But can I ask a question -- as
a huge admirer of yours?

Beowulf simply stares at him, with the sort of unblinking
stare that Clint Eastwood made famous.

UNFERTH

You see, there was another Beowulf I
heard tell of, who challenged Brecca the
mighty to a swimming race, out on the
open sea. Was that you?

Beowulf wonders if he's being set up. But he nods.

BEOWULF

I swam against Brecca.

UNFERTH

Hmm. I thought that it had to be a
different Beowulf. Someone else of the
same name. You see--

(he has raised his voice here,
to try and make sure that
everyone in the mead hall can
hear him)

--the Beowulf I heard of swam against
Brecca, and lost. He risked his life,
and Brecca's, in the deep ocean to serve
his own vanity and pride. A boastful
fool. And he lost. So I thought it had
to be someone else...

Beowulf stands, and slowly walks toward Unferth. You could
hear a pin drop. All the Thanes, both Hrothgar's and
Beowulf's, are preparing themselves for a brawl to break out
between the two men.

BEOWULF

I swam against Brecca.

UNFERTH

(loudly)

But victory was his, not yours. A mighty
warrior who cannot even win a swimming
match. Speaking only for myself here, I
not only doubt that you will be able to
stand for a moment against Grendel, but I
doubt you will even have the belly to
stay in the hall all night.

(CONTINUED)

62 CONTINUED: (3)

62

He grins up at Beowulf. This is a drama, being enacted for everyone else, and we should get REACTION SHOTS from some of the people around -- Wealthow and Hrothgar, but also the commoners. Beowulf's Thanes, however, are not interested in any of this -- they've heard this a thousand times.

BEOWULF

I find it difficult to argue with a drunk. And it is true that I did not win the race...

DISSOLVE TO:

63 THE MEMORY OF THE RACE WITH BRECCA

63

Beowulf is swimming in a race with BRECCA. Bony, strange, nightmare creatures, rise up from beneath Beowulf, and drag him down beneath the sea.

BEOWULF (V.O.)

(continuing)

We swam for five days, neck and neck. And I was the more powerful swimmer. I was conserving my strength, for the final stretch. Then a storm blew up, and with the storm, came sea monsters.

We HEAR the Thanes in the hall MURMURING with approval.

We watch Beowulf killing the monsters, one by one.

BEOWULF (V.O.)

One of them seized me in its jaws, and dragged me to the bottom. I hacked at it with my sword, and killed the huge beast with my own blade. Again and again the monsters attacked, dark things from the sea's dark depths. When morning came they were lying on the shore, their guts spilling crimson into the salt-water. Luck was with me, perhaps, but still, I killed nine of them. I did not win the race, but I braved their hot jaws, making those lanes safe for seamen, and survived the nightmare.

DISSOLVE TO:

64 INT. HEROT - MEAD HALL - DAY

64

EXTREME CLOSE ON: Beowulf's face. We see something in his eyes that reveals that what we have just been told may not be the truth.

(CONTINUED)

64 CONTINUED:

64

He shuts his eyes, remembering something else...something forbidden.

DISSOLVE TO:

65 THE MEMORY OF THE RACE WITH BRECCA

65

AN EEL has Beowulf by the leg, it is dragging him beneath the sea. But then, something GOLDEN and glittering grabs into the eel's flesh. It appears from the glimpses we get of it, to be a beautiful golden woman, underwater. She is not a mermaid, but there is something inhuman about her. However, we only glimpse her in tiny fragmentary moments, never getting a good look.

DISSOLVE TO:

66 INT. HEROT - MEAD HALL - DAY

66

Beowulf shakes himself out of the memory, forcing it somewhere deep back into his subconscious. He begins to walk, continuing.

BEOWULF

They sing of my battle with the sea
monsters to this day, my friend. And
they sing no such songs about Brecca.

UNFERTH

(magnificently unimpressed)
Of course. The sea monsters. And you
killed, what, twenty was it?

BEOWULF

Nine. But...will you do me the honor of
telling me your name?

UNFERTH

I am Unferth, son of Ecglaf.

BEOWULF

(turning like a seasoned
politician and addressing the
thanes)
Unferth? Son of Ecglaf? Your fame has
crossed the ocean ahead of you. I know
who you are...

Unferth does not know if Beowulf is telling the truth. But he starts to preen a little...

BEOWULF

Let's see....they say you are clever.
Not wise, but sharp. And they say that
(more)

(CONTINUED)

BEOWULF

you killed both of your brothers when you caught them having knowledge of your mother, "Unferth Kinslayer".

(laughs)

A crime for which you will roast in agony forever.

After a protracted moment of hate, Unferth throws himself at Beowulf, growling. Beowulf steps aside and Unferth, bad leg and all, trips and falls to the floor of the hall. Beowulf crouches beside him. And, with a captive audience, he continues.

BEOWULF

I'll tell you another true thing, Unferth Kinslayer. If your strength and heart had been as strong and fierce as your words, then Grendel would never have crippled you. But he murders and gorges on you people, with no fear of retaliation. Tonight he will find Geats waiting for him: not crippled sheep, like you.

Suddenly the other Danes in the hall, on the side of Unferth, pull their weapons and take an angry step forward Beowulf and his men, who were on alert the minute Beowulf started orating. They know him well enough to know he was picking a fight. And it looks as though there will be one, until--

Hrothgar starts CLAPPING. Is he senile, or sensibly breaking up the fight? He steps out between them.

HROTHGAR

Well done! That's the spirit, young Beowulf! That's the spirit we need! You'll kill my Grendel for me. Let's we all drink, and make celebration for the kill to come! Eh?!

Beowulf smiles and places his hand on Hrothgar's shoulder, which defuses the wind from the angry men's sails. Everyone relaxes.

CUT TO:

A bloody sky in the west, and the sun hangs like a huge ball of orange fire. We hear the sound, MUFFLED, OF PARTYING. It sounds like they're starting to have fun in the hall...

CUT TO:

68 INT. HEROT - MEAD HALL - SUNSET

68

The party is in full swing, and, following the fracas between Beowulf and Unferth, everything seems to have loosened up. The Danes know that Grendel will not be attacking until dark, and are beginning to party.

We see the glitter of gold everywhere, rings on fingers, light flashing from mugs and goblets (each person has his or her own mug or goblet). Beowulf's thanes are eating, with their fingers and with knives, from a huge cut of beef on the table.

Hondshew cuts a slice of beef, with his knife, and puts it into the mouth of Yrsa, who is walking past with a jug of mead.

Wealthow has brought a huge, silver and golden jug of gold mead out.

HROTHGAR

The High King's mead! The finest mead!

WEALTHOW

For our brave Geats.

Wealthow moves from Thane to thane, pouring each of them a cup of mead, while Hrothgar says things like:

HROTHGAR

I know it doesn't look like much, but it's the most powerful stuff we have. Three cups of that and they'll be carrying you out of here.

The mead runs out just as it gets to Beowulf. Wealthow walks off, looking back at Beowulf.

UNFERTH

(to Beowulf)

The mead is gone...before Lord Beowulf, mighty fighter of sea monsters, had his cup of inspiration.

BEOWULF

At least I do not get my *courage* from the mead-cup.

But at this moment Wealthow returns, bearing high a huge golden cup crusted with jewels, the treasure cup -- the Royal Goblet -- filled with mead. She smiles at Lord Beowulf and holds out the cup. Beowulf's eyes widen at the sight of the exquisite chalice glistening in the firelight.

(CONTINUED)

The hall rings with loud CHEERS.

Wealthow gives the cup to Beowulf. The party is loud enough that they are able to speak quietly to each other, unheard by everyone else. Beowulf swigs the mead from the goblet.

WEALTHOW

The Royal Goblet. Drink up.

Beowulf drains the goblet with a long gulp, then holds it up, and looks at it. It is worth a King's ransom, perhaps a country's: a solid gold goblet, decorated with precious stones and carvings.

BEOWULF

It is beautiful.

HROTHGAR

Isn't she magnificent? The prize of my treasury.

BEOWULF

Oh yes. Such a precious thing...

He runs his fingertips over it.

HROTHGAR

I claimed it after my battle with the dragon of the Northern moors. A battle that nearly lost me my life. I wonder how many men have died for love of this beauty?

The light glints off the cup alluringly.

WEALTHOW

Can you blame them?

Hrothgar takes the goblet, holds it up in front of Beowulf.

HROTHGAR

If you can take care of Grendel, she's yours forever.

BEOWULF

You do me great honour.

WEALTHOW

It is we who are honoured.

The press of the crowd pulls Hrothgar away. He gives Beowulf the goblet.

(CONTINUED)

WEALTHOW

(she hesitates, and then...)

Grendel.

(she shakes her head)

He is my husband's shame.

BEOWULF

Not a shame, but a curse.

WEALTHOW

Shame. Hrothgar has no...other sons.

And he will have no more, for all his talk.

And with these enigmatic words, she returns to the King's throne, Beowulf following her progress back with his eyes.

Someone SHOUTS "Speech!" and the CRY is taken up by the whole room, slamming mugs and feet against the floor and the bench.

ALL

(rhythmic chant)

Speech! Speech! Speech! Speech!

Beowulf clambers onto a table. He gets Yrsa to fill the royal goblet once more, then raises the goblet high--

BEOWULF

When we crossed the rolling sea to come
to you, we knew, my men and I, that we
would either triumph over evil, or we
should perish in Grendel's grasp.
Tonight, here in this very hall, we shall
live forever in greatness and courage,
or, forgotten and despised, we shall die!

CUT TO:

69 EXT. THE SEA - SUNSET

69

Through the clouds, a red ball of the sun falls in the Western sea, and goes out, with an almost imperceptibly green flash. It is now night, and the storm is beginning to move in from the sea. Over this scene of calm we hear the JUBILATION OF THE PARTY.

CUT TO:

70 INT. HEROT - MEAD HALL - NIGHT

70

And now, Hrothgar leans back in his throne. He yawns, ostentatiously.

(CONTINUED)

HROTHGAR

Well, this old man needs his sleep.
Beowulf?

Hrothgar mimes drinking. Beowulf hands him back the Royal goblet -- with regret.

HROTHGAR

Where's my bed-mate? Wealthow my dear?
Shall we pound the pillow?

He CLAPS his hand, and the FOUR THANES lift his throne and carry it, and him, out of the room. Wealthow follows, and looks back at Beowulf - a long, lingering look that carries romance and longing with it.

UNFERTH

Good night, Beowulf. Watch out for sea
monsters. I'm sure your imagination must
be teeming with them.

Beowulf eyes him and then pushes him aside, and walks past.

CUT TO:

71 EXT. HEROT - NIGHT

71

The sun set half an hour ago. Hondshew and the plum girl are arguing outside the mead hall, in the shadows. While the conversation is going on, DANES are SLIPPING OUT OF THE HALL and going to their homes, looking about nervously...

HONDSHEW

Oh, go on.

YRSA

I said no

HONDSHEW

Oh go on, please...

YRSA

I said no and I meant no

HONDSHEW

Why not?

YRSA

Because it's too late. Sorry.

HONDSHEW

I could transport you to paradise, Take
you to ecstasy and back with my magic
(more)

(CONTINUED)

71 CONTINUED:

71

HONDSHEW (CONT'D)
spear. No other man will be able to
satisfy you again.

YRSA
I don't think so.

HONDSHEW
Well, then...how about a quick gobble?

CUT TO:

72 INT. HEROT - MEAD HALL - NIGHT

72

Beowulf and his men are sitting around a table, drinking,
SINGING and generally having a party.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL: No one else there.

It's just Beowulf and his men. Hondshew comes back in. He
has a handprint --Yrsa's -- burning on the side of his face.
The thanes HOOT AND JEER him:

THANES
Oy, Hondshew. Did you get any? How was
she?

HONDSHEW
Nah. Not my type.

The rest of the thanes laugh at him.

OLAF
Yeah? What's your type? A sheep that
runs slow enough for you to catch her?
Baaa!

Hondshew throws himself at Olaf, and they roll around on the
floor, fighting -- or mock fighting, anyway. The other
thanes are LAUGHING, CHEERING for Olaf or for Hondshew,
CHANTING.

THANES
(chanting in unison, two teams)
Hondshew! Hondshew! Hondshew! Olaf!
Olaf! Olaf!

Beowulf stands up and walks across the hall, to the fire.
Then, almost like a strip-tease, with the firelight behind
him, he begins to take off his armor, starting with his wolf-
bear fur cloak, and then his mail.

WIGLAF
My lord Beowulf...What are you doing?

(CONTINUED)

BEOWULF

(continuing to undress, taking
off his armor)

When Grendel comes, we will fight as equals. The creature has no sword, no armor, no boots. And I have no weapon capable of hurting a monster. But I have teeth, and sinews of my own. Armor forged of man will only slow me. We will fight as equals. Fate shall decide.

Wiglaf LAUGHS and shakes his head.

WIGLAF

You're mad, you know that?

Beowulf lies down on the floor, his head pillowed by his rolled-up clothes.

BEOULF

(his eyes closed, to himself)

Yes.

CUT TO:

73 EXT. HEROT - MEAD HALL - NIGHT

73

The moon is almost full, and is high in the sky. Night surrounds the hall of Hrothgar like a black velvet cloak. We can hear RAUCOUS SINGING inside.

CUT TO:

74 INT. HEROT - MEAD HALL - NIGHT

74

Beowulf is sleeping, naked, in front of the fire.

A COUPLE OF THE THANES are having a knife fight with their hands tied together, and they have a small audience.

MORE OF THE THANES are standing around in a semicircle, arms linked, SINGING. The tune is rough-and-ready, rugby song type thing:

THANES

(singing in verse)

There were a dozen virgins,
All Friesians and Franks!
We took 'em for a boat-ride,
and all we got were wanks!

(chorus)

*OOohh, We are Beowulf's army, we are
mighty thanes, we'll steal your cattle,
and take your girls, then we'll do it all*

(more)

(CONTINUED)

74 CONTINUED:

74

THANES (CONT'D)

over again!

(verse)

The prettiest of the virgins,
 she was the fairest swede!
 I told her I'd an urgin',
 for where to spend my seed!

(chorus)

Singing we are Beowulf's army, we are
 mighty thanes, we'll steal your cattle,
 and take your girls, then we'll do it all
 over again!

(verse)

The oldest of the virgins,
 she was a Vandal lass!
 I showed my mighty weapon,
 and she showed me her ass!

(chorus)

Singing we are Beowulf's army, we are
 mighty thanes, we'll steal your cattle,
 and take your girls, then we'll do it all
 over again...

They SING happily and obscenely, taking it in turns to alternate verses, all joining in on the choruses. They are all sweating -- the fire's heat has turned the hall into a sauna, and anyway, they are drunk.

CUT TO:

75 EXT. HEROT - NIGHT

75

SLOW ZOOM OUT OF Herot, its heavy stones can't hold the JUBILANT LAUGHTER of the rowdy Thanes. A monument to mankind's resilience, it may hold out warring hordes but it can't hold the BOISTEROUS SINGING inside.

CUT TO:

76 EXT. THE MOORS - NIGHT

76

The SONG INSIDE THE MEAD HALL seems to echo through the moors as if it were some great parabolic transmitter amplifying the fete du soir.

CUT TO:

77 EXT. DARK FOREST - NIGHT

77

WE SLOWLY MOVE through a dark forest of primordial origin. The THANE'S SONG still resounding through the night, stillness carrying it beyond the realm of man.

CUT TO:

78 EXT. THE GREAT CAVE - NIGHT

78

SLOW ZOOM INTO the mouth of a great cave into which feeds a mighty torrent of water. The SINGING, now louder than ever, seems to be coming from inside the murky burrow.

The CHANTS have reached a fever pitch. Swollen to an amplitude of unprecedented intensity. Never before has a song of happiness seemed to warp into a TORTUROUS REQUIEM. An aria of joy and light, underscored by darkness and self doubt...

79 INT. THE GREAT CAVE - GRENDEL'S LAIR - NIGHT

79

To hear it all there is Grendel, who we now see in his full form and shape...a deformed man of gargantuan size. His skin like stretched leather over ancient muscles, interwoven into his flesh are strands of golden tattoo, as if someone had valiantly tried to beautify this ogre. His hands clutched tightly over the sides of his oblong skullcap. His golden eyes pinched tightly shut, tears of blood drip from them. This is a monster born of pain. Once a man, now twisted into a caricature of insanity and depravity.

He writhes in pain at the song inside his head. His naked body scarring the sodden floor of the cave around him.

The dank walls, lichen covered and scared with roots, seem to close in on Grendel as if the monster were inside an immense trash compactor. A claustrophobic nightmare has manifested itself into Grendel's twisted reality.

Indeed, the cave is growing smaller. Or is it that Grendel is growing bigger?!

The behemoth has grown so large he can barely fit into the room. The tiny bones of many Thanes litter the sarcophagus chamber, some bleached with age, others still ripe with their fruity flesh. Their armor, now dwarfed by the monster's size, seem like small cans of ripped open tomato paste.

The monster can no longer take the haunting song of happiness inside his twisted brain. He scrambles for the exit to this tomb of song.

There is only one thing that can stop the noise inside his head. Murder. Murder of all things living and good. Murder of all things beautiful and proud.

CUT TO:

80 INT. HEROT - MEAD HALL - NIGHT 80

Beowulf, naked and laying on the floor, opens his eyes from his slumber. Almost as if he knows what's coming.

THANES

(still singing their song in verse)

The fattest of the Virgins,
I knew her for a whore!
I gave her all my codpiece,
And still she wanted more!

(chorus)

*Singing we are Beowulf's army, we are
mighty thanes, we'll steal your cattle,
and take your girls, then we'll do it all
over again...*

CUT TO:

81 INT. THE GREAT CAVE - GRENDEL'S LAIR - CRAWLSPACE - NIGHT 81

Grendel squirms through the tight crawlspace, big enough for the shoulders of twenty men. The Thane's song has Grendel in a shrieking frenzy. Anything to escape from the cave, where the warrior's hymn echoes against the hard stone walls.

CUT TO:

82 INT. HEROT - MEAD HALL - NIGHT 82

From his eyes we can tell that Beowulf knows what's coming.

THANES

(continuing their song in verse)

A virgin was from Norway,
She cost me twenty groats!
She showed me there was more ways,
Than one to sow my oats!

(chorus)

*Singing we are Beowulf's army, we are
mighty thanes, we'll steal your cattle,
and take your girls, then we'll do it all
over again...*

CUT TO:

83 EXT. DARK FOREST - NIGHT 83

Grendel, in a frenzy of anger and hate is charging through the forest, knocking trees down in his tortured frenzy.

CUT TO:

84 INT. HEROT - MEAD HALL - NIGHT

84

CLOSE ON: Beowulf's open eyes.

THANES (O.S.)
 (singing in verse)
 There was a girl from Iceland,
 And she was mighty hot!
 She'd take a whole damn iceberg,
 To cool her burning tw--

The Thanes' song is suddenly interrupted by a BANGING on the heavy wooden door.

OLAF
 That'll be Grendel now! Ooh! It's
 fucking Grendel!

The Thanes LAUGH raucously at Olaf's witticism.

Hondshew jumps from the table and turns to the other Thanes as he walks backwards toward the hallway that leads to the door.

HONDSHEW
 It's Yrsa, my sweet plum! She's changed
 her mind and is ready to allow me to
 taste her ripe and juicy fruit!

The Thanes LAUGH LOUDLY. Hondshew, drunk as a particularly drunk drunkard, stumbles down

THE HALLWAY

to the large main double doors to open them up.

HROTHGAR
 Patience, my lovely! Give a Thane a
 chance to open the door and invite you...

He swings the door open only to find Grendel, looking quite large and hideous.

HONDSHEW
 (continuing, but a tad more
 sober)
 ...in.

Grendel SNARLS a sort of hideous laugh.

85 INT. HEROT - MEAD HALL - NIGHT

85

The other Thanes are waiting for Hondshew to come in carrying the fair woman.

(CONTINUED)

THANE

Save some for us, Hondshew! We've got
pricks that need a waxin', as well!

Suddenly Hondshew's bloodied and ripped up corpse is thrown from the hallway and into the great hall. It flops on top of a long table like a rag doll whose joints allow his limbs to move in any direction.

THANE

Hondshew?

But Hondshew is clearly dead as a doorknob.

And at that moment, in the flickering golden light of the fireplace, Grendel comes from out of the hallway, his SNARL is preceded by a horrific gaping grin that shows off his yellow canines. His sick skin glistens a wet shade of greenish gold, but appears to be scarred and nicked from scratching at himself nervously. His talons are simply broken nails as hard as marble, sharpened by scraping at the earthen soil of his cavernous lair. Simply put, Grendel is one scary motherfucker.

FREAKED-OUT THANE

Fucking fuck! It's the monster! Get
yourselves awake!

The freaked-out Thane kicks one of his sleeping drunken mates to wake him, but the sad warrior has drunken himself into oblivion. Even another, harder kick doesn't help. In fact, most of the Thanes in the hall have drank so much mead that they're dead to the world...passed out.

The singing Thanes (who are now the freaked-out Thanes) draw their broadswords...but it's too late, for Grendel is upon them.

With one mighty swing Grendel hurls the table of Thanes aside, sending some of them into the massive firepit, and others tumbling across the floor.

It then grabs Hrothgar's dwarf jester with both hands and punts him across the room. The dwarf strikes the wall with such force that all his bones surely shatter into tiny fragments.

Wiglaf is awoken by the CLAMOR.

Grendel LAUGHS as he stomps on TWO SLEEPING THANES, crushing life out of their slumbering bodies.

A few of the THANES WHO WERE THROWN INTO THE FIRE roll out and try to beat the flames from their bodies. Some of them,

(CONTINUED)

unable to continue despite being roasted alive, fall to their knees and slump too the ground in burning heaps.

The hideous creature picks one man up, who is too drunk to know what's happening to him, and throws him down onto his bent leg, SNAPPING his back with a LOUD CRUNCH.

Grendel starts LAUGHING to himself with every dead Thane he stomps on.

Then, Grendel comes to Beowulf...naked and laying on the floor. Beowulf is like a nice, soft, shell-less morsel by comparison to the greasy, armor-wearing thugs he's been killing. He raises his foot to crush Beowulf.

Then, from behind Grendel...

WIGLAF

Die demon!

Wiglaf strikes at Grendel's back with his sword, but the blade BREAKS against the creatures tough skin.

Grendel spins around and strikes at Wiglaf, who manages to hold up his small shield just before the massive arm swats him aside like a defenseless kitten.

Wiglaf slides backwards and into a rack of spears which CRASH down around him.

Grendel turns around and faces Beowulf again, but Beowulf isn't there.

Grendel SNARLS.

Beowulf, naked as the day he was born, leaps onto Grendel's back and locks his arm around Grendel's neck in a chokehold.

The monster jerks forward, causing Beowulf to topple head over heels over Grendel's head. He lands on his back with a HARD THUD, knocking the wind out of his lungs.

Grendel then grabs a keg of mead and raises it above his head, with the intention of slamming it down onto the already stunned Beowulf's head.

But before Grendel can gore Beowulf, Wiglaf is upon him, attempting to run the monster through with a spear.

Beowulf grabs a length of golden chain -- part of Hrothgar's treasure...

ONE OF HROTHGAR'S THANES wakes up and comes to help, or die.

(CONTINUED)

85 CONTINUED: (3)

85

Beowulf lashes the chain around Grendel's hand and pulls it tight. The monster lets out a HORRIFIC SHRIEK and rips the chain free from Beowulf.

Then, angry Grendel lashes the chain like a whip, causing it to wrap multiple times around the neck ONE OF HROTHGAR'S DRUNKEN THANES. While it can be argued that the Thane died then and there, no one would argue that he lived after Grendel yanked on the chain, causing the head to SNAP free from the body and rapidly tumble across the floor toward

86 BEOWULF

86

who kicks it aside like a soccer ball.

Beowulf is PICKED UP by Grendel, like a child holding a large doll. Grendel obviously plans to bite Beowulf's head off, but in a maneuver made famous by Scottish soccer hooligans, but originally invented by Swedish heroes, Beowulf HEADBUTTS Grendel -- a head to forehead crash that leaves blood spilling from Grendel's face.

Grendel is dazed and hurt, for the first time on one of its nocturnal expeditions. It begins to WHIMPER.

Beowulf takes advantage of this by biting Grendel's cheek, at the same time that his hands fasten around Grendel's throat.

Grendel shakes Beowulf as if trying to free himself from something that's bad and hurting him, shaking himself desperately -- and Beowulf FLIES OFF, crashing into some dead bodies, which cushion his fall.

Beowulf then runs toward Grendel, who is trying to flee towards the open door at the end of the hallway that leads out of the mead hall, still dragging the chain along behind him.

Beowulf, fearing that Grendel might escape, dives for the chain and grabs it, causing him to be dragged along with it into the

87 HALLWAY

87

which leads to the large main doors to Herot, and ultimately to the outside.

In mid-slide Beowulf manages to hook the chain onto a large nail half sticking out of a massive support beam, jolting Grendel to a stop just in the threshold of the door, with an unsettling POP OF DISLOCATION in his shoulder.

The chain, hooked onto the nail, has yanked at the beam so hard that it has ripped it partially from the wall. Support

(CONTINUED)

87 CONTINUED:

87

stones, wood planks, and mud-fill begin to shower down from above as the hallway begins to partially collapse.

Grendel ROARS in agony and pain as he tugs at the chain and claws at his wrist's shackle.

CUT TO:

88 INT. HEROT - HROTHGAR'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

88

We can hear, slightly muffled, the THUDS and CRASHES of the battle between Grendel and Beowulf going on. Hrothgar lies in bed, covered with furs, beside Wealthow, listening to the noise.

Then the NOISE STOPS.

Wealthow begins, very softly, to cry.

WEALTHOW

He is dead. Beowulf is dead.

HROTHGAR

I had hoped it would be otherwise.

Hrothgar shakes his head. Then he moves closer to Wealthow, and reaches out a hand to paw at her breast. Wealthow hits at it.

WEALTHOW

Monsters come out of your cock. How can I let you inside me, knowing you were in her?

HROTHGAR

I should never have told you.

Hrothgar looks uncomfortable.

CUT TO:

89 INT. HEROT - HALLWAY - NIGHT

89

Beowulf, who is by now cut, bruised, and bloodied sees that Grendel is captured and unraveling the chain from his wrist. Beowulf scrambles to action and runs toward Grendel.

Grendel, who sees that Beowulf is running toward him, quickens his efforts to free himself.

But it's too late...

Beowulf slides like he was coming in to home base and kicks the door closed with his foot, SLAMMING the heavy wooden

(CONTINUED)

portal onto Grendel's arm. He has Grendel caught by the arm, and while Grendel can flail wildly he can't seem to get loose. The demon lets out the SCREAM OF A CAGED HOWLER MONKEY.

BEOWULF

(holding the door shut on the
flailing arm)
Your days of blood-letting are finished,
demon!

GRENDEL

Let...Grendel...free!

Beowulf is a little shocked. He didn't expect to be able to hold a conversation with this nemesis.

BEOWULF

It speaks!

GRENDEL

I am not the monster here! No man born
of woman can kill Grendel! What kind of
thing are you!?

BEOWULF

(almost whispering it so that
only Grendel will hear)
I am ripper and tearer and slasher and
gouger. I am the teeth in the darkness
and the talons in the night. I am all
the things you believed yourself to be.
Mine is strength and lust and power. I
am Beowulf.

Grendel's eyes suddenly seem racked with fear.

With fury Beowulf begins pressing the door shut with the wedge, causing the sinewy tendons to begin to SNAP and Grendel's bones to POP free from the socket. Grendel SHRIEKS.

BEOWULF

Think you now of the Thanes whose lives
you've stolen! Think you of them as you
die your demon's death!

And with one powerful lunge with the wedge Beowulf causes the door to SLAM shut. The arm, with a SQUISHY RIPPING SOUND, falls free from its socket and lands on the floor with a satisfying MEATY THUD.

(CONTINUED)

89 CONTINUED: (2)

89

Beowulf stands there, staring at the arm for a moment...when suddenly it grabs his foot. He kicks wildly at it, finally shaking it loose.

The arm flops around on the stone floor for a few moments like a beached fish and then suddenly seizes into a contorted position of agony.

Beowulf, for the first time, is freaked. He stands there, leaning against the door, breathing heavily in great gasping WHEEZES.

Several Thanes, swords drawn and bodies bleeding, appear at the

90 OPPOSITE END OF THE HALLWAY

90

looking at Beowulf. Wiglaf pushes himself to the front of them.

WIGLAF

Grendel's arm! You've done it! You've killed him!

(turning to the other men)

He's done it! He's torn the limbs from the beast!

They all begin CHEERING.

91 BEOWULF

91

on the other hand, doesn't seem so confident. He quickly turns and pulls the door open, revealing

92 THE OUTSIDE OF HEROT

92

As if a nightmare is over -- it's placid and quiet and there is a marked absence of Grendel around.

MATCH CUT TO:

93 THE OUTSIDE OF HEROT

93

The nightmare is over. But it is now morning, and all is well. We hear HAMMER BLOWS, rhythmic as sex.

94 INT. HEROT - MEAD HALL - DAY

94

CLOSE ON: Grendel's arm is being NAILED into a massive wooden beam in the mead hall.

(CONTINUED)

94 CONTINUED:

94

It is Beowulf who wields the massive blacksmith's hammer. Beowulf laughs as he nails Grendel's arm to the wall, and we wonder, which one is the monster?

CUT TO:

95 INT. THE GREAT CAVE - DAY

95

From the inside of the great cave, the outside world is a bright and hot place. Grendel comes stumbling in from this world of light and heat into the safety of the cave. He is in silhouette and we can see that he is missing his arm.

Grendel shambles awkwardly, dripping crimson blood as he goes, toward the placid clear waters of the cavern's pool.

Grendel is making A DREADFUL SOUND as it goes, one arm missing, into the pool, with little or no sense of balance, stumbling and half-falling. It should take us a few moments to realize that the noise Grendel is making is SOBBING.

Grendel falls through the dark water of the pool, blood from his shoulder, from the missing arm, pumping out into the water, until everything is red and we

CUT TO:

96 INT. THE GREAT CAVE - GRENDEL'S MOTHER'S LAIR - DAY

96

Grendel comes up from the pool in her cave. Tears are running down his face. He is dying -- nearly dead.

GRENDEL

Mama...mama...he hurt me...mama...

There is no answer. Grendel collapses to the floor, and then he bellows, sobbing.

GRENDEL

Mama!

There is A RUSTLING NOISE and the SOUND OF A RUSHING WIND.

Grendel's mother sits beside him. She wears a black cowl and cloak, that covers her from head to toe, and she has her back to us.

GRENDEL'S MOTHER

Oh Grendel, my son. My poor son. I warned you. You must not go to them--

GRENDEL

He killed me, mother.

(CONTINUED)

GRENDEL'S MOTHER

Who killed you, Grendel my son?

GRENDEL

He tore my arm away, and my life's blood
has spilled onto the ground, and it hurts
so...Grendel hurts so bad...

Grendel's Mother's golden hand strokes his forehead. She has
a beautiful hand, with slightly-too-long golden fingernails.

GRENDEL'S MOTHER

I know. Sleep now, my sweet son. Sleep
forever. Mother is here.

GRENDEL

Mama? He was the one you used to tell me
of. So strong. So strong. He hurt me.

GRENDEL'S MOTHER

In the fullness of time he shall pay, my
darling. Now...who was this man?

GRENDEL

He was...so strong...so...strong...he
told Grendel his name...Beowulf--

Her hand suddenly stops stroking Grendel's head. The life
has gone from Grendel's eyes: they have misted over, like
the dead eyes of a rotten fish. There is silence in the hall
beneath the earth.

EXTREME CLOSE ON: Grendel's mother's lips.

GRENDEL'S MOTHER

(with vengeance)

Beowulf.

CUT TO:

Wealthow is talking to Yrsa and Gitte in the muddy grass.

GITTE

He's dead?

YRSA

The creature's arm is nailed to the wall
of the hall. They say Beowulf ripped it
off with his bare hands.

(CONTINUED)

GITTE

He is so big. So strong. I wonder if all his strength is in his arms, or if there is more strength...down below.

They all start GIGGLING like schoolgirls.

WEALTHOW

Well, after the feast tonight, you can always find out, Gitte.

GITTE

Me? Anyone can see that it's you that he wants my queen.

Wealthow looks from one to the other. Yrsa agrees with her eyes. Wealthow says nothing.

CUT TO:

A Pyre is being assembled. Thanes are picking up the dead bodies -- and bits of bodies -- from the night before, and throwing them onto the pyre. Standing beside it are a handful of WOMEN sobbing, and a few CHILDREN. And Wiglaf.

We however SWING AROUND from the pyre and ENTER THE HALL, where Hrothgar is standing in front of GRENDEL'S ARM and is making a speech to Beowulf and everyone else.

HROTHGAR

This hall has been a place of sadness and misery and blood. From today the monster's reign has ended. And we owe thanks to one man and one man alone: Beowulf. Come here, lad.

He puts his arm around Beowulf's shoulders. Beowulf grins out at the crowd. It's hard to believe that this grinning, friendly guy is the same naked lunatic who ripped Grendel's arm off the night before.

HROTHGAR

Beowulf, I love you like a son. With Grendel dead, you are a son to me. And a son deserves his reward.

(to thanes)

Come on -- bring it out!

A couple of thanes haul out a closed chest.

HROTHGAR

Well, go on, open it.

(CONTINUED)

98 CONTINUED:

98

Beowulf opens the chest. It's filled with gold and silver stuff -- goblets, rings, torques and so forth. He takes out a golden chain, and puts it around his neck. Then he picks up the Royal Goblet.

Beowulf turns to the crowd, grinning -- then, suddenly serious, like a politician or a statesman.

BEOWULF

I find it hard to find in my heart the words I should say to thank you, great king. And all of you, I wish you could have been there last night, when I killed the monster. And I wish his whole body were nailed to this wall, not just his arm. I was asleep when he arrived, growling like a wild beast...

And as Beowulf tells them the story of his genius and ability we TRACK BACKWARDS down the hallway of Herot and

99 OUTSIDE IN THE STOCKADE

99

BEOWULF'S VOICE gets quieter and the sound of the CRACKLING OF THE BURNING PYRE gets louder, and the WOMEN QUIETLY SOBBING, and we end on Wiglaf...watching his friends' bodies burning up.

CUT TO:

100 INT. THE GREAT CAVE - GRENDEL'S MOTHER'S LAIR - NIGHT

100

CLOSE ON: Grendel's very dead body.

We can hear Grendel's mother, SINGING WORDLESSLY, a song of mourning, very gently and quietly.

Then she breaks off her song and she says to Grendel's dead body...

GRENDEL'S MOTHER (O.S.)

He will come to me. I will see to it my son. He will come and I will turn his own strength against him. He will pay.

And with that she turns and walks into the pool, descending into its black depths...

CUT TO:

101 INT. HEROT - BEOWULF'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

101

Beowulf is looking at the treasure that he has been given. In the background we can hear a small amount of CELEBRATING

(CONTINUED)

from the hall. Beowulf is in his small room, though, examining his gold. He has hung the Royal Goblet from a leather thong on his belt.

Queen Wealthow comes in. She stands in the open doorway, to avoid any appearance of impropriety, and says:

WEALTHOW

You are not celebrating?

BEOWULF

I am celebrating in my own way. Look. The Royal Goblet. I'll never let it go. I'll die with this cup of yours at my side.

WEALTHOW

You will take our gold back to your own land. So? It does not matter. Nothing that is gold ever stays long. Is that all you wanted?

Beowulf grins at her -- looks at her with the eyes of a man who is sure that he can have whatever he wants in the world.

BEOWULF

Steal away from your husband in the night. Come to me.

WEALTHOW

First driven by greed...now by lust. You may be beautiful, Lord Beowulf, but you've the heart of a monster.

Beowulf is taken aback by her statement. She smiles politely and gives the stunned Beowulf a kiss on the cheek. Then, after a seductive glance she turns and leaves Beowulf standing there alone.

CUT TO:

Hrothgar is lying on the bed. The door opens, and Wealthow comes in. She begins to undress. Hrothgar stares at her, grinning...and in that moment he looks like a monster.

WEALTHOW

If you touch me tonight, I will kill you.

Her tone of voice tells us that she means it.

CUT TO:

103 INT. HEROT - BEOWULF'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

103

Beowulf is lying on his bed. With one hand he is picking up handfuls of golden rings and chains and letting them fall, clinking, into the chest: they glitter in the candle-light.

With the other hand he is holding the Goblet, which hangs from his belt, roughly above his crotch, so for a moment it looks as if he holds a huge golden erection.

Then, from the door, Wealthow enters. She rushes to Beowulf with a lustful determination that indicates she's acting against her best judgement...and perhaps hates what she's doing.

BEOWULF

My lady--

She is on him, and lustfully peeling his clothes from his body.

WEALTHOW

(whispering)

Give me a child. Enter me and give me a child.

Beowulf was a little unprepared for this, but he's not complaining. She straddles the seated Beowulf without even taking her night dress off, and GASPS as he enters her. Soon they are vigorously and urgently pulling at each other, increasing the pace of their thrusts...and then it's over.

Beowulf and Wealthow stay embraced, their breath still heavy. She shuts her eyes, nearly falling asleep from exhaustion.

WEALTHOW

(with a whisper)

Stay in me.

In the shadows of the room, near the door stands Hrothgar. He shuts his eyes, disturbed but willing to live with it, and slips out unnoticed.

DISSOLVE TO:

104 INT. HEROT - HROTHGAR'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

104

Wealthow sneaks back into the darkened room and begins to crawl into bed, only to find that Hrothgar isn't there. She stops, knowing that she's been caught.

HROTHGAR

Are you holding his seed inside of you,
my pretty?

(CONTINUED)

Wealthow is startled, and quickly turns to scan the room...looking for Hrothgar in the darkness. He steps out of the shadows and into the moonlight. Hrothgar is angry, but controlled...more manipulative than anything.

HROTHGAR

His would make a fine son. A strong son.

He walks up to her and caresses her hair.

WEALTHOW

(with angry firmness)

Don't touch me.

His caress turns into a slap. He grabs her by the hair.

HROTHGAR

(furious)

I should kill you.

(then controlled)

But I love you. And want an heir as much as you want a child.

Angry he climbs into bed.

HROTHGAR

Give me a boy...and I'll let you keep your life.

FADE TO BLACK:

The long hall that runs down the center of Herot is empty, as it is still very early in the morning. Then, there is a PIERCING SCREAM.

It is Yrsa, running down the hall, SCREAMING. The bottom of her morning dress is stained red. THANES, hung over from the festivities of the night before stumble out...Beowulf too peers out from his room, wrapped in a fur.

Hrothgar stops her by grabbing hold of her shoulders, the girl is in near hysterics.

HROTHGAR

What is it woman?!

YRSA

Ag--aga--again--it has happe--again---
again--it has happened--again--

Hrothgar pushes her aside and gives Beowulf a piercing stare...a stare that could be read any number of ways.

(CONTINUED)

105 CONTINUED:

105

The two of them, followed by Wiglaf and the other Thanes, make their way to the mead hall.

106 INT. HEROT - MEAD HALL - MORNING

106

Beowulf throws open a heavy carved door. His eyes open wide like saucers at the horror of what has become of the Geats and Danes who slept in the hall.

Behind him, other Thanes push their way into the room. Their eyes, like Beowulf's, betray the terror in their hearts.

The hall, once white wash over stone, has been stained with the blood of Thanes. Great crimson splashes paint the ceiling. Golden tapestries have been speckled by the milk of slaughter.

TWENTY DEAD THANES in all, their bodies ripped into pieces, are hanging by their feet from the rafters.

Thanes continue to push their way into the hall, trying to get a good look at the carnage. But as each man enters he becomes frozen, unable to move into the room filled with death.

It has become a feast for the flies. Their buzz adds a horrific edge to the already surreal bloodshed before them.

Beowulf steps slowly through the hall assessing the dead. Not a single man lays living. Beowulf draws his sword from his back and holds it in front of him, as if it might defend him from the invisible air of death in the hall.

WE TRACK BACKWARDS AND OUT of a huge hole which has been knocked through the far corner of the south hall. Great stones lay in rubble heaps outside the massive keep.

Beowulf jumps out of the keep onto the green glade beyond the rubble heap. He runs into an EXTREME CLOSE UP as he scans the horizon where

107 THE MOORS

107

leads beyond Herot and into a dark forest. Close to the rim of the tangled grove, at least a kilometer away, a SHADOWY FIGURE runs. After an instant the figure vanishes into the deep forest. For a moment, it seems as though it may have never been there at all.

108 BEOWULF

108

squints his eyes in the hope of getting another glimpse at the dark apparition.

(CONTINUED)

BEOWULF

I heard no battle. I heard no slaughter
in the night. I heard no screams of
death. What monster is this!?

Behind him, the Thanes are coming out of the huge hole in the
keep. No one can seem to answer him.

WIGLAF

Is Grendel not dead? Has he grown his
arm anew?

Beowulf looks at him, afraid to answer.

Hrothgar pushes his way through the crowd of Thanes.

HROTHGAR

It's not Grendel.

WIGLAF

Not Grendel? Then who?

CUT TO:

109 INT. HEROT - THRONE ROOM - DAY

109

CLOSE ON: Hrothgar is sitting in his mighty (and portable)
throne. He is in his full compliment of battle gear.

HROTHGAR

Grendel's mother. I had hoped that she
had left the land long since. True you
killed the son. Rid us of a terror like
we have never known. But there is
another, a demon mother.

Beowulf doesn't seem to happy about this.

BEOWULF

Another, then another, then another. How
many monsters am I to slay? Grendel's
father? Grendel's uncle? If there are
more please tell me now, friend Hrothgar.
For I would like to know if I will have
to burn down an entire family tree of
these demons.

HROTHGAR

There are no more...no more of her kind
in this world. And without another she
can not procreate. With her gone
demonkind will slip into legend.

(CONTINUED)

WIGLAF
(shaking his head aghast)
Where they belong.

BEOWULF
And what of her mate? Where is Grendel's
father?

Wealthow looks at Hrothgar with an expression that says "yes,
Hrothgar, where is Grendel's father?"

HROTHGAR
Grendel's father is dead, gone with a
bygone age. Grendel's father can do no
harm to man.

Beowulf nods, perhaps a little suspicious.

BEOWULF
Then let us destroy her.

UNFERTH
Beowulf.

Beowulf turns and looks at Unferth.

BEOWULF
Unferth. What is it?

UNFERTH
I was vain to doubt you before. And I
shall not again. Yours is the blood of
courage. I beg your forgiveness.

BEOWULF
(perhaps a little too abruptly,
Beowulf is uncomfortable with
Unferth's humility)
Forgiven.

He turns to leave.

UNFERTH
Take my father's sword.

Beowulf turns around and looks at him.

UNFERTH
It's called "Hrunting". It belonged to
my father's father.

BEOWULF
A sword is no match against demon magic.

(CONTINUED)

Unferth looks at his father's sword which he's holding in his hands. He looks a little sad. Unferth begins sheathing it.

BEOWULF

But--

Unferth stops short of sliding his sword into its casing.

BEOWULF

One never knows.

Unferth smiles and holds the sword out for Beowulf. Beowulf takes it and feels it's weight.

UNFERTH

Thank you, Beowulf. I'm sorry I ever doubted you.

BEOWULF

And I'm sorry I mentioned that you murdered your brothers. They were... hasty words.

UNFERTH

I bid you well in killing the demon's mother.

Beowulf nods and turns to leave. He pauses and looks back at Unferth.

BEOWULF

You know, Unferth...I may not return. Your ancestral sword may be lost with me.

UNFERTH

As long as it is with you, it will never be lost.

Beowulf nods and turns to leave.

CUT TO:

Beowulf comes out of the Hall to find Wiglaf, SEVEN OF HIS THANES, and their little horse, loaded high with provisions, waiting for him.

A funeral pyre is burning in the distance.

BEOWULF

(puzzled)

Where are the rest of the men?

(CONTINUED)

110 CONTINUED:

WIGLAF

Dead.

(he points to the pyre)

That's the last of them, over there.

Beowulf seem concerned, he leans in to Wiglaf.

BEOWULF

Are they with us?

WIGLAF

I'm with you. And as long as one follows, they'll all follow.

Beowulf pats Wiglaf on the shoulder.

BEOWULF

How far would you follow me Wiglaf?

WIGLAF

I've come this far, I'll not stop now.
If I did, who knows what I'd miss out on.

The two men look at each other like brothers.

CUT TO:

111 EXT. DARK FOREST - DAY

111

It's a wild woodland. Flies and mosquitoes BUZZ around, and BEOWULF'S THANES, leading their little horse, are in an appalling mood, sweating and swatting at flies the whole time.

OLAF

Damn this forest. We're not in Geatland anymore, that much I'll tell you for nothing.

THANE

Aye. How many monsters do these bloody Danes have anyway? Where do they get them from?

OLAF

Same place they get these damned flies from. Isn't this glorious? Fight in Beowulf's army -- he gets the gold and the glory and the girls, we get the flies...

(CONTINUED)

111 CONTINUED:

111

WIGLAF
Quiet back there!

CUT TO

112 EXT. THE GREAT CAVE - DAY

112

The great dense weald opens into the rocky mouth of a gigantic cave made of quartz. Into the cave mouth a river runs, fed by hundreds of thousands of dewy drops fallen from the many ferns and leaves that make up the viridian tapestry surrounding it. Indeed, while not raining the air is thick with water.

It is a bizarre space, birds soaring about like fish in the sky. Their SCREECHES echo in spirals upward like whale song.

Beowulf almost seems to be underwater already, yet he stands on a gray slate boulder under which glassy waters feed the cave.

In them, tangled in the rocks, is the HEADLESS CORPSE OF AESHER which Grendel's mother must have killed. The man's blood stains the crystal waters red.

Beowulf draws Unferth's sword, "Hrunting", and looks to his men who stand not a hundred meters away in the foliage.

BEOWULF
Bring me some fire!

Wiglaf climbs down into the gorge with a fiery torch in his hand. He passes it to Beowulf.

BEOWULF
Thank you.

WIGLAF
She's a water demon. Don't meet her in her element.

BEOWULF
I know.

WIGLAF
Do you want me to go in with you?

BEOWULF
No.

WIGLAF
Good. I'll wait up there.

Wiglaf nods and heads back up the hill to the others.

(CONTINUED)

112 CONTINUED:

112

Beowulf turns and walks along the current and into the cave, the torch blazing in his right hand. The royal goblet hangs at his side.

113 INT. THE GREAT CAVE - DAY

113

The inside of the cave is like some great cathedral of gray slate, stalagmites, and stalactites. Pools of minerals, millions of years in silent creation, become dazzling color shows in the light of Beowulf's torch.

Gauging each step, he slowly enters into the great chamber that hides an underground lake. It's waters are dark and placid.

Across the body of water, where the cave wall should meet the surface, a tunnel continues into darkness.

Beowulf, holding the blazing torch in his right hand and the sword Hrunting in the left, begins to wade into the still water.

Soon he is up to his waist in the black liquid, scaling each step with caution, he moves closer and closer to the narrowing end of the chamber.

The further Beowulf goes the deeper he gets, and the closer the cave ceiling comes to the placid surface of the water.

Soon Beowulf is up to his neck in the reservoir and the cave ceiling is no more than 25 centimeters from the surface of the water.

He has left the main chamber behind and now finds himself chin deep in a...

CHANNEL

of water with no more than 13 centimeters of air between it and the cave ceiling.

He still holds the torch in his right hand, it's flame so close to the water it could extinguish any second.

In his other hand he holds Hrunting out of the water. Occasionally the sword dips into the water, causing it to sing.

The light from the blaze of the torch illuminates the causeway several meters in front of him. There seems to be no end in sight.

Then the torch begins to go out as it touches the water.

(CONTINUED)

113 CONTINUED:

113

There can't be more than 7 centimeters between the surface of the water and the mountain of rock above it. Soon, the entire channel will be submerged.

Beowulf begins to breathe rapidly...in gulps. His face is now kissing the ceiling of the dank cave.

The torch, now completely immersed, extinguishes itself.

Beowulf is now...

114 UNDERWATER

114

It is dark and blue. Beowulf, still holding Hrunting, begins to swim down the channel of stone.

Through the murky water Beowulf sees the bones of many a Thane dragged into this liquid crypt and left to be picked by the eels living here.

His feet kick and push at the floor and ceiling of the channel, aiding his desperate swim.

But no end is near.

In fact, the further Beowulf swims the closer the floor seems to be coming to the ceiling.

Beowulf scrambles through the narrow causeway, scratching at the crevices in the stone for a finger or foot hold.

His armor has become an encumbrance in the tight crawlspace. Beowulf claws at the straps which hold it on, desperately trying to undo the yoke. Finally, he manages to rip his armor from his body. He lets it fall behind him as he advances.

Beowulf is underwater spelunking. The chamber has become a slate coffin with no sides. A watery crypt.

He is squeezing his way through. Birthing through stone. Scraping for air on the other side.

And he finds it.

115 INT. THE GREAT CAVE - GRENDEL'S MOTHER'S LAIR - DAY

115

The lair of Grendel's Mother once belonged to the Nibelungen, a race of Dwarfen craftsmen. They and their treasure long gone, all that remains here is their one time kingdom. A great underground temple on it's side, half submerged by the icy waters which flow into the great cave.

(CONTINUED)

Beowulf emerges into this tabernacle underneath the mountain from between two steps on an immense busted up stairway. The steps lead to a huge statue of Odin, the gems once inlaid into it long stolen by thieves.

Beowulf coughs as he gulps in the dank, stale air of the great Dwarfen hall. In his hand he still holds Hrunting, the sword Unferth gave to him.

Beowulf, standing to his waist in the water, takes in his surroundings.

It is a bizarre chamber. A sideways world of mythic origin. The air of magic still haunts this hall. Great fallen pillars lay in busted up heaps. Runic writing of some ancient long dead language are inscribed about the cracked walls.

There are also the BODIES OF DEAD THANES scattered pell mell about the room. Their armor ripped open like sardine cans. Their insides spilt in hungry haste by the monster that could be lurking in the dark shadows. On the ground lies GRENDEL'S BODY, one arm missing. It is quite dead.

Beowulf slowly climbs out of the water and onto the collapsed stairs. His armor was left behind in the crawlspace, and now he only wears his soaked tunic. His teeth chatter in the cold air, giving him away to anyone who might be listening.

From the shadows a giant lizard crawls up one of the walls of the ruin.

Beowulf hears the scratching of it's talons against the heavy stone walls. He spins to face the sounds, holding Hrunting before him.

Then, it crawls into the shaft of light crossing the ceiling. In the firelight he sees glimpses of it. Her golden skin...shark-like, its glistening surface reflecting a deep flaxen spectrum. Gills run the length of her shimmering back. Her hands and feet are only parodies of human form, they more resemble a birds.

She lifts her head to gaze more fully on Beowulf beneath her.

GRENDEL'S MOTHER

Are you the one they call Beowulf?

She lets loose her hold on the ceiling and drops to the floor with a THUD. This startles Beowulf a bit, he steps back and grips his sword tighter.

(CONTINUED)

GRENDEL'S MOTHER

The Bear-Wolf? Such a strong man you are. You've the strength of a king. The king you will one day become.

BEOWULF

(obviously intimidated)
What do you know of me, demon?

GRENDEL'S MOTHER

I know you know not who was your mother. I know that underneath your glamour you're as much a monster as my son Grendel. Perhaps more.

BEOWULF

My glamour?

GRENDEL'S MOTHER

One needs glamour to become a king.

BEOWULF

I am to be king?

GRENDEL'S MOTHER

Under my spell a man like yourself could become king. A man like yourself could be the greatest tale ever sung. Your story could exist after I have turned to the dust from whence I came. You could have all the gold and glory your heart desires.

Beowulf is intrigued...seduced.

BEOWULF

You could do this this?

GRENDEL'S MOTHER

This and more. How things are and how things could be are two sides of the same coin. Like a dream...

She steps closer into the light, revealing her hideous form. Beowulf steps back, his sword is aimed directly at the sea witch.

BEOWULF

More like a nightmare! You try to blind me with your demon promises...I won't have it!

(CONTINUED)

GRENDEL'S MOTHER

It has been a long time since a man has come to visit me.

BEOWULF

Stand back, witch!

GRENDEL'S MOTHER

As you can see, my suitors are all brave men like yourself...but they were brought to me by my son...Grendel. If you've come to finish him, you're too late for his wound was mortal.

BEOWULF

I've come to finish you.

GRENDEL'S MOTHER

And finish me you shall. But first a *little death*. You shall give me your seed of life. You shall give me back the son you stole from me.

BEOWULF

Nothing will bring your demon child back.

Beowulf lifts his sword to strike the monster.

In an instant she has TRANSFORMED HERSELF into a beautiful woman. Her long hair is now silken, her skin like golden milk. She seems to radiate from within, like the moon. She has transformed from a hideous lizard demon into beautiful goddess of shimmering golden flesh. It is perhaps more terrifying to Beowulf that she isn't a gruesome monster, but a beautifully sexy siren with firm breasts, long legs, and full lips.

BEOWULF

Demon!

He raises his sword to strike her, but cannot.

GRENDEL'S MOTHER

Not a demon, but a woman of many names. Lorelei to some. Calypso to others. My song brings death to men driven by their loins...sea-men...like yourself.

She approaches Beowulf like a cat descending on its prey. Her long fingers, webbed like a fish, caress the sides of Beowulf's face.

He drops the sword. It SHATTERS like glass into a million shards.

(CONTINUED)

Fear has paralyzed the great warrior. All he can do is stare into the eyes of his enemy. Eyes that reflect a thousand starry nights, eyes as full as the night sky. Mesmerized, Beowulf's eyes dilate. She has hold of him.

BEOWULF

I...I should...I should kill you...

GRENDEL'S MOTHER

But you don't want to, do you, my love?
If you wish to kill me, though, you may try.

She walks over to the wall, and pulls down a huge sword -- a giant's sword, -- that is hanging on the wall.

GRENDEL'S MOTHER

This blade is old, and not of this world.
It was forged by the giants from a lump
of iron that fell from the sky. It will
even end the life of such a thing as me.

She passes it to Beowulf, he marvels at its size and sheen.

GRENDEL'S MOTHER

I'll even show you where to plunge it...

She begins to unfasten her top, displaying her chest. Beowulf swallows, holds the huge sword, breathing heavily, and then, suddenly, turns and crashes the blade down on Grendel's dead neck. The blade severs Grendel's huge head from its body, but the blood of Grendel turns much of the sword blade to liquid mercury, which dribbles and rolls away. We are left with only a couple of inches of blade and the huge hilt.

BEOWULF

Why can't I do it!? Why can't I kill you?

GRENDEL'S MOTHER

We don't kill what we love. You took a son from me. Give me a son, brave thane. Allow destiny to root itself in the present. Stay with me. Love me.

This really seems to send horror into Beowulf's heart. Beowulf shakes his head, but is still walking towards her.

GRENDEL'S MOTHER

Love me...love me an I shall weave you riches beyond imagination. I shall make you the greatest king that ever lived.

(CONTINUED)

She leans forward and after a moment's hesitation gently kisses him with her full, golden lips. Beowulf closes his eyes...lost...

BEOWULF

(whispers)

How do I know that you will not hurt me while I sleep, or while we make love?

GRENDEL'S MOTHER

Silly Beowulf. Would you have me give you my oath?

She reaches out to him.

GRENDEL'S MOTHER

Give me your goblet.

Beowulf GRUNTS at the thought of this.

GRENDEL'S MOTHER

Give it to me.

He hands her the goblet. She holds it up, and then runs her wrist along what's left of the blade of the giant's sword. Huge, slow, wine-coloured drops of blood fall slowly into the goblet.

GRENDEL'S MOTHER

Now, drink, my lover. And then I will drink. And I swear, that as long as this goblet is mine, or my children's, we shall never harm the tiniest hair on your beautiful head. This pact I swear.

BEOWULF

But it's my goblet.

GRENDEL'S MOTHER

And I am now your woman. Which of us would you rather enjoy?

A pause. A beat. Then he cautiously sips from the goblet. Her blood runs down his lips. She drinks...and then smiles.

Beowulf's lips are drawn to hers...and then locked in a kiss.

DISSOLVE TO:

seems to last an eternity.

FADE TO BLACK:

117 EXT. THE GREAT CAVE - MORNING

117

Beowulf's remaining Thanes have set up camp and look to be living off the land fairly well.

WIGLAF

It's been eight days.

(pause, as he's coming to a decision.)

I think we should go in after him.

Consensual groans come from the group of Thanes. The men start to stand up and strap on their weapons.

CUT TO:

118 INT. THE GREAT CAVE - UNDERWATER - DAY

118

Beowulf is swimming through the murky causeway, in his hand he holds a sack.

CUT TO:

119 EXT. THE GREAT CAVE - DAY

119

Beowulf's men are now fully dressed and ready for battle. They all have lit torches in their hands and are preparing to enter the cave. One particularly NERVOUS THANE looks at Wiglaf, who is heading them in.

NERVOUS THANE

Creatures like this eat men whole. The hands and feet as well. I don't like it at all.

WIGLAF

Neither did Beowulf.

NERVOUS THANE

Ha! He couldn't wait to get in.

Just as they approach the cavern's lake, something starts to emerge. The Thanes all prepare to hack whatever it is to bits.

Beowulf emerges from the water, soggy and wet. No armor, no weapons, no goblet...just the sack.

BEOWULF

I hope you're not planning on hacking off my head?

They all lower their swords, joyous to see Beowulf.

(CONTINUED)

119 CONTINUED:

WIGLAF
 You're alive!
 (to the other men)
 Beowulf lives victorious!

They CHEER and help him out of the water.

WIGLAF
 Eight days, to slay one monster. What
 took you so long, Beowulf?

They all start LAUGHING. But Beowulf seems a different
 person. No sense of humor at all.

CUT TO:

120 INT. HEROT - THRONE ROOM - DAY

120

Everyone is assembled in the throne room of Herot. Hrothgar
 sits on the throne. Wealthow stands beside him. Everybody
 seems on tenterhooks. Then Beowulf enters, carrying his
 sack.

HROTHGAR
 Well?

In reply, Beowulf grins, and opens the sack he is carrying
 over his shoulder. Grendel's huge head (and the hilt of the
 giant sword, which has about a foot of blade projecting from
 it) tumbles out onto the floor.

An excitable woman SCREAMS.

BEOWULF
 (calming the lady down, and
 talking about the head)
 He's dead, my lady. Nothing to worry
 about. I cut the brute's head off, after
 I finished off his monstrous mother.

HROTHGAR
 Then our curse has been lifted!

Hrothgar looks the happiest we have seen him since Grendel's
 first attack.

Everyone CHEERS.

HROTHGAR
 So tell us the tale Beowulf! Tell us so
 my scop can weave a song of your battle.
 I want to be able to hear it every night
 of every day for the rest of my years.
 Tell us the tale.

(CONTINUED)

Beowulf looks around the hall. Everyone is silent, waiting for him to begin.

BEOWULF

Well...I dived into the pool, and immediately found myself surrounded by loathsome water-beasts. Each time one would get close to me, I would crush its skull with my hands. After 24 hours of swimming, I found myself deep in the underground cavern in which Grendel's mother made her monstrous home...

As Beowulf continues to lie -- or tell the version of the truth that he thinks will go down best in history -- his lips move but we no longer hear a word he says. Instead, the SOUNDTRACK gives us the movements of the people we are looking at, enormously magnified: Unferth is absorbed, Hrothgar nods in approval at the story, but a squint reveals that perhaps he knows the truth; Wealthow sees something in Beowulf that now reminds her of Hrothgar. The DETAILS reveal suspicion.

BEOWULF

...and with that, the hell-spawned creature lay dead on the body of her monstrous son, and I alone remained to tell the tale.

CUT TO:

121 INT. HEROT - MEAD HALL - NIGHT

121

We are in the final festivities at the mead hall (our fourth by my count) and it has the atmosphere of a real party. People are enjoying themselves, secure in the knowledge that no monsters will be coming.

Beowulf holds his golden goblet (the one he was given) out for mead, and Yrsa pours him some mead, with a grin. He walks

122 OUTSIDE IN THE STOCKADE

122

The night is clear and warm. Beowulf stands on his own, just listening -- as Grendel once did -- to the sound of the revelry. Unferth comes out of the door, looks around -- he's looking for Beowulf -- and heads over to him.

UNFERTH

My lord Beowulf. There is something I must ask. Did Hrunting, my father's sword, did it help you destroy the witch?

(CONTINUED)

BEOWULF

It...it did. The demon would not be dead without your father's sword. High on the wall was a giant's sword, forged by magic and sharpened by dwarfen whet stones...but with the strength of your father's sword I had no need of such sorcerous weaponry. I plunged Hrunting into the chest of Grendel's Mother. When I pulled it free, the witch sprang back to life...so I planted it in her. And there I left it, to keep her dead until the sun falls into the sea.

Unferth nods, it is a noble enough image for him to relay to his children's children. He takes Beowulf's hand and kisses it.

UNFERTH

Our people shall be grateful until the end of time.

He goes. Beowulf downs some mead...strangely guilty.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL Wealthow standing beside him. She holds a jug of mead.

WEALTHOW

I thought you might need some more to drink.

BEOWULF

Aye.

She pours for him.

WEALTHOW

Your seed won't take hold in me...will it Beowulf?

Beowulf looks at her for what seems like a very long and protracted moment, and then parts his lips to speak.

BEOWULF

No.

WEALTHOW

I thought it had, at first. But now, I can feel that it hasn't.

BEOWULF

I'm sorry.

(CONTINUED)

WEALTHOW

Sorry? You're hardly sorry. You've gotten everything you wanted...I've gotten nothing.

Beowulf averts his eyes enough to reveal his shame, but he continues to face her. She shakes her head piteously.

She walks away.

Beowulf begins to walk along, on his own, while the PARTY SOUNDS happen in the background. He sees Hrothgar, standing beside a wall, waiting for him.

Hrothgar takes Beowulf aside and holds him by the arm. They walk together.

HROTHGAR

(with double meaning)
Have you seen my wife?

Beowulf catches the meaning.

BEOWULF

Aye. She went back into the hall. She told me we would never meet again.

HROTHGAR

That's women for you, so sensible.
(he takes Beowulf by the arm)
Tell me...You brought back the head of Grendel. But what about the head of the mother?

BEOWULF

With her body, sunken into the mire. Is it not enough to return with one monster's head.

HROTHGAR

You did kill her?

BEOWULF

Why do you ask?

HROTHGAR

I was once a young man too, Beowulf. Answer my question straight -- it's important for me to know: You did kill her, did you not?

Beowulf stops walking and looks Hrothgar dead in the eye. There is a long moment between them.

(CONTINUED)

BEOWULF
 (in a way that could be
 construed as an accusation)
 Would I have been allowed to escape her
 had I not?

Hrothgar knows the answer, and it chills him to the bone. He begins to step away.

HROTHGAR
 (trying to convince himself)
 Grendel is dead. That's all that matters
 to me. Grendel will bother me no more.

BEOWULF
 And if the mother did still live, would
 you care then?

HROTHGAR
 She is not my curse. Not any more.
 You lost the royal goblet, I hear.

Beowulf looks at Hrothgar for a long, knowing moment. Hrothgar takes from around his neck a large golden necklace, encrusted with precious stones. It is the Brosing necklace...worth a King's ransom.

HROTHGAR
 Catch!

BEOWULF
 (catching it)
 You are too generous.

HROTHGAR
 Aye. Maybe I am at that. The wind
 stands fair to the west. How soon can
 you be gone?

BEOWULF
 Tomorrow morning.

HROTHGAR
 Make sure you are.

He walks away. Beowulf smiles, the gold sure soothes his guilt. He places the Brosing necklace on. He starts to LAUGH...

DISSOLVE TO:

123 EXT. THE QUIET SEA - DAY 123

The ocean is as calm as the deep azure sky above it is clean. A perfect day. Sea-spray is liquid drops of diamonds. It's a great day to be alive -- the first real sunshine we've seen in the film so far.

124 EXT. RECESSED BEACH - DAY 124

FOUR OF BEOWULF'S THANES and Wiglaf push the boat off the sandbar and into the sea, clambering in at the last moment, pulled in by the men in the boat. Strong winds, all blowing toward Geatland, fill the red newly repaired sails of Beowulf's ship, billowing the golden dragon.

125 EXT. THE DANISH CLIFFTOPS - DAY 125

The Scylding's Watch stands on his cliff, with his arms folded, and stares out at Beowulf going away.

126 EXT. THE QUIET SEA - DAY 126

Beowulf and his men are LAUGHING as they scud along in their ship, in the perfect weather and the swift breeze. The oars are shipped and unneeded. The storage hold in the middle of the ship is piled high with glittering golden treasure. Beowulf glances back at the shore.

We realize that Beowulf only has four men plus Wiglaf in the boat. There are lots of empty seats, for the dead men they set out with.

BEOWULF'S POV: Wealthow is standing on the cliffs watching him sail away. He can not see her expression.

WIGLAF

The scop's will sing of Beowulf's brave
deeds from now until the day the sun
grows cold.

BEOWULF

(all too somber)
Perhaps, Wiglaf. Perhaps. But the scop's
words are as fragile as flesh. Time
melts them away. The only thing that
lasts in this world is...gold.

CLOSE ON: The sun glints off the collar necklace he was given by Hrothgar. He caresses it.

(CONTINUED)

126 CONTINUED:

126

EXTREME CLOSE ON: Beowulf is in the prime of his life...but something is amiss. He should be grinning, and happy. But instead he looks concerned...the PICTURE FREEZES.

FADE TO BLACK:

MANY YEARS AFTER

127 EXT. GEAT COASTLINE - DAY

127

EXTREME CLOSE ON: KING BEOWULF, now decades older. He is in very good shape, for his age. His hair is streaked with grey and white, his skin is liver-spotted, and marked with old scars, long healed. He is still tall and proud, though scarcely recognizable as the young man he was fifty years before. He has a golden circlet, denoting kingship, on his head. His beard is tightly trimmed.

TILT DOWN TO REVEAL: The Golden Necklace we last saw around young Beowulf's neck. It is worn, now, and slightly tarnished. As we look at it, a man's old fingers close around it.

The SOUNDS OF BATTLE can be heard. Men HACKING at other men with steel. SCREAMS OF PAIN and GRUNTS OF EXERTION alongside the POUNDING OF WAVES and the CRACKLING OF FIRE. HORSES GALLOP by on what sounds like sand.

KING BEOWULF

Is this all there is? To kill and be king?

Then we see what King Beowulf sees:

128 THE GEAT SHORELINE BATTLE

128

FRISIAN INVADERS have tried to make a landing on the Geat shoreline...Beowulf's shoreline. But KING BEOWULF'S THANES, with swords and axes and horses, have not only held off the invading force, but hacked them into the sand...not even allowing them to advance to the snow speckled moor that abuts the shore. A burning Frisian ship lays in wreckage, its sails tattered and aflame. The sand of the beach is spattered with blood, and FIFTY OR MORE FRISIANS, in various stages of decapitation, are being beaten, bludgeoned, or impaled to death. Beowulf's men, caught in blood lust, stand over them, pulling off their valuables and chopping at them. The DOGS have gotten in on the fun as well, attacking men in packs, and ripping at their skin with sharp teeth.

It is a gruesome scene.

129 KING BEOWULF

129

watching it all from the line of the moor, shudders and closes his eyes in disgust. OLD WIGLAF, years older than the Wiglaf we knew in the earlier part of the film, looks at King Beowulf compassionately...understanding him in ways, perhaps, that no one else can.

KING BEOWULF

There must be more to life than slaughter. I am weary of battle. Surely Wiglaf...there must be more.

OLD WIGLAF

They are Frisian invaders, my king. They landed knowing that this was your reign. Your legend is known from the high seas and the snow barriers to the great island kingdom. Only fools would challenge your might.

KING BEOWULF

That is the problem, old friend. There are no worthy opponents anymore. Just young fools who know nothing of battle but everything of my legend. They all want to challenge my "legend".

OLD WIGLAF

And can you blame them? You are the "monster slayer".

KING BEOWULF

(with longing disdain)

If only there were more monsters. Men wouldn't turn on themselves, as they now do.

Beowulf shakes his head...sad.

KING BEOWULF

The time of heroes is dead, Wiglaf. The Christ God has killed it. We are the monsters now.

At that moment, down on the beach, a VOICE erupts from the LINGERING BATTLE. It is the

130 FRISIAN LEADER

130

the last alive of the invaders.

(CONTINUED)

130 CONTINUED:

130

FRISIAN LEADER

Show me to King Beowulf! Show me to your
king! I would die by his sword and his
alone--!

The Frisian leader is kicked in the head by the LAUGHING mob of thanes who have him surrounded and are humiliating him by not killing him, but slashing at him and cutting him up with non-lethal blows. They all LAUGH with every WHACK.

131 KING BEOWULF

131

is enraged by this, as if something inside of him has snapped. To Wiglaf's surprise, King Beowulf suddenly rides down into the wake of the battle...down to the Frisian leader. Wiglaf tries to keep Beowulf at bay from the fracas.

OLD WIGLAF

My lord!

He rides after him.

Beowulf arrives at the circle of men, breaking it and revealing himself to the bloody Frisian leader. He scowls at his own men, and then begins to chastise them.

KING BEOWULF

What is this?! You think it sport to mock your opponent in this fashion? Kill him and be done with it. Let him die quickly...with some modicum of honor left intact.

He turns, disgusted, and begins to ride away...just as Wiglaf has caught up.

FRISIAN LEADER

Kill me yourself, if you would have me killed. But don't be a coward!

Beowulf stops his horse, but remains with his back to his thanes and the Frisian leader. He just sits there, holding the reigns to his horse, keeping her in place...we can't see his face.

Wiglaf interjects.

OLD WIGLAF

Balls! The king can never engage in direct battle.

(ordering to his thanes)

Kill the invader now. Do it quick and put his head on a spear here in the sand.

(CONTINUED)

131 CONTINUED:

Beowulf's men, feeling a little less boisterous, raise their weapons to comply.

KING BEOWULF

Stop!

Beowulf turns his horse around.

KING BEOWULF

You think me a coward?

FRISIAN LEADER

(sarcastically)

I think you've forgotten how to wield an axe in battle. Come. Let me show you.

Beowulf dismounts his horse, never taking his eyes off of the Frisian leader.

OLD WIGLAF

My lord, the king can never engage in direct battle!

KING BEOWULF

Silence!

(he turns to the Frisian leader)

You wish for your name to reside in the scop's tale? You really think that the last verse of the song of Beowulf would have him killed by a Frisian raider with no name?

FRISIAN LEADER

I am Hildeburh, of the Northern Frisians.

KING BEOWULF

(matter of fact)

Only if you kill me. Otherwise you're nothing.

Beowulf approaches him, but he leaves his sword behind. He stares ahead at the Frisian.

OLD WIGLAF

(pushed into compliance)

Give the king a sword!

THANE IN THE CROWD

Take mine!

ANOTHER THANE

No mine!

(CONTINUED)

YET ANOTHER THANE
Kill him with my sword!

A number of swords are held out, but Beowulf turns down them all. As he approaches he keeps his eyes focused on the Frisian, who has an axe in his hands and a growing smile on his face.

Then, Beowulf does the most unexpected thing...he begins to strip himself of his armor, letting it drop to the sand as he approaches.

The Frisian's smile turns into an expression of confusion.

KING BEOWULF
You think I'm blessed? You believe that
to conquer and always be victorious is a
blessing? Let me tell you something,
Frisian, it's a curse. The gods won't
allow me death by your feeble blade. The
gods won't let me die...taken by the sea.
The gods won't allow me to pass in my
sleep...ripe with age. It's a curse.

Beowulf has removed all of his armor, revealing his white tunic underneath. He rips it open, exposing his chest.

KING BEOWULF
Plant your axe here, Hildeburh, of the
Northern Frisians. Try to take my life
from me.

Beowulf holds open the fabric as he approaches him. The Frisian, holding the axe up, begins to step backwards.

FRISIAN LEADER
Take a sword and fight me like a man.

KING BEOWULF
I don't need a sword. I don't need an
axe. I need no weapon.

FRISIAN LEADER
(starting to really get
intimidated and nervous)
Someone give him a sword...or I'll...
I'll--

KING BEOWULF
You'll what?! Kill me?
(suddenly Beowulf SCREAMS with
rage)
Kill me! Kill me! Do it! Kill me!

(CONTINUED)

Beowulf has pushed the Frisian back to the waterline. The man is standing ankle deep in the ocean. Then there is a long moment of silence, just the SOUND OF GULLS and the WAVES LAPPING against the shore. Beowulf's thanes are all waiting to see what happens, as is Wiglaf, his eyes as wide as saucers.

The Frisian is holding the axe above his shoulders, shaking nervously. He tries to raise it further to strike the death blow...but fear holds him back. He drops it into the sand and then falls to his knees, defeated.

Beowulf closes his tunic and looks at the man, piteously.

KING BOWULF

You know why you can't kill me, friend?
Because I died years ago...when I was a
young man.

Beowulf turns and walks away.

KING BOWULF

(quietly to his men, with a
half-hearted wave of the hand)
Kill him quickly.

Beowulf's men move in on the Frisian and start HACKING him to pieces, dismembering him until the waves are red with his blood.

Beowulf mounts his horse, distant and melancholy. A bewildered Wiglaf rides next to him as they leave the scene of carnage. In the background we can hear (and perhaps see in soft focus) the screams as the Frisian leader is finally killed.

OLD WIGLAF

(still kind of shaking,
nervous)
Promise me you won't do that again. I
damn near shaite in my pants.

KING BOWULF

I was in no danger, old friend.

OLD WIGLAF

But you didn't know that?

KING BOWULF

Oh, yes. I did. I haven't felt the
threat of death since...since I faced
Grendel's mother.

(CONTINUED)

131 CONTINUED: (4)

131

Beowulf rides ahead, leaving a heavily concerned Wiglaf behind. Wiglaf looks back to the shoreline.

CLOSE ON: The Frisian leader's head, on the end of a spear, is raised and planted into the sand. His eyes, glassy, portray the same fearful expression he had when Beowulf was challenging him.

MATCH DISSOLVE TO:

132 EXT. KING BEOWULF'S CASTLE - HOARDING - DAY

132

CLOSE ON: King Beowulf. He is standing at the top of a fortified hoarding of his castle, a stone structure of ancient Swedish design, looking out to sea. The castle is on the snow covered cliffs overlooking a glacier across the bay. He is wearing rough animal furs to keep him warm from the biting cold.

KING BEOWULF'S POV: The winter sea, grey, stormy and fickle, filled with tiny chunks of ice, LAPS against a wall of ice across the bay. There is a loud CRACK as the glacier splinters and a massive section of ice falls into the sea with a crash, sending massive waves back out to sea. Mid-winter in sixth century Sweden was bitter.

URSULA, King Beowulf's young mistress, comes up behind him. He does not register her presence. She is his personal maid, a young woman in her early twenties. Then she speaks and startles him.

URSULA

Your majesty?

KING BEOWULF

Unh? Ursula. I was hundreds of leagues away, in my mind, over the ocean.

URSULA

My lord Beowulf. They are waiting for you, in the throne room.

KING BEOWULF

There is a moment at sunset at sea, when you watch the sun drop into the cold waters of the endless ocean, a red ball, and at the very moment it sinks beneath the horizon, it flames green as an emerald.

While he is talking, Ursula places another fur on him, to keep out the cold.

(CONTINUED)

132 CONTINUED:

132

URSULA

I have never been to sea, your Majesty.

King Beowulf sees her now -- looks outward, rather than inward. He smiles, tenderly, and his hand strokes her face.

KING BEOWULF

Forgive me.

(beat)

Who is waiting?

CUT TO:

133 EXT. KING BEOWULF'S CASTLE - DAY

133

We see that this is an old, stone castle, built overlooking the ocean. Sea-spray in the foreground. Snow on the ground.

CUT TO:

134 INT. KING BEOWULF'S CASTLE - SPIRAL STAIRCASE - DAY

134

Ursula walks down the stairs behind King Beowulf.

KING BEOWULF

Oh, Guthric. Yes. His father was in my warship, long before you were born. Hot-headed young idiot...not like his father. What does he want now?

URSULA

You are to give judgement today, your majesty.

KING BEOWULF

Oh. That. Live long enough, Ursula, and they think you're Solomon. Who cares who owns half-an acre of barren land?

URSULA

Well, obviously, Guthric does.

CUT TO:

135 INT. KING BEOWULF'S CASTLE - THRONE ROOM - DAY

135

CLOSE ON: GUTHRIC is staring at us, his face red with anger. He is a young man, hot-headed and impetuous, and he is really really angry right now.

GUTHRIC

This is an outrage! That land is mine by right of birth!

(CONTINUED)

PULL BACK TO REVEAL: We see that there are a number of other people in the throne room: Old Wiglaf, and a few other THANES who are also elderly. There are also a couple of KING'S GUARDS. And King Beowulf himself.

KING BEOWULF

You have land enough, Guthric. That land was due to your sister as bride-price.

GUTHRIC

This is not justice! This is a travesty!

He advances on the King. The guards raise their spears. King Beowulf does not, however, need guards, for the anger of King Beowulf is a terrible thing to see, and now he's angry.

KING BEOWULF

How dare you talk to me like that? If it's treason you are talking, Guthric Olaf's son, then it's treason I shall punish you for.

GUTHRIC

(chastened)

I was not...I did not mean to--

KING BEOWULF

See that you did not. The land is your sister's.

Guthric sets his jaw. He seems on the verge of exploding with anger, but he somehow keeps a lid on it. What he actually says is --

GUTHRIC

It shall be as your majesty has said.

And Guthric turns on his heels and storms out.

King Beowulf turns to Old Wiglaf, and shakes his head.

KING BEOWULF

I'm not sure what's worse, Wiglaf... invaders or our own countrymen.

OLD WIGLAF

He's a young hot-head. He'll cool down, in time.

CUT TO:

136 EXT. KING BEOWULF'S CASTLE - BAILEY - DAY 136

Guthric leaps onto his horse, and GALLOPS off. He looks furious still.

CUT TO:

137 EXT. THE GEAT MOORS - THE BARROW - DAY 137

We see Guthric on his horse, riding past a huge barrow -- a raised mound -- on the snowy moors.

CUT TO:

138 EXT. GUTHRIC'S HALL - SUNSET 138

Guthric rides up on his horse. His slave -- CAIN -- stands beside the horse, with his hands cupped, to help his master down from his horse. Guthric puts his muddy boots in Cain's hands as he dismounts.

As Guthric gets down, the horse moves, nervously to one side, and Guthric misses his footing. He and Cain go down in the slush and mud together. Guthric gets to his feet as angry as it is possible for any human being to be.

GUTHRIC

You did that on purpose!

CAIN

Sire, it was your mare, she shied--

GUTHRIC

You pitched me into the mud on purpose,
you creeping maggot!

And with that he pulls his horsewhip and commences to WHIP Cain within an inch of his life, while shouting--

GUTHRIC

You stupid--!

(whip!)

miserable--

(whip)

pathetic--!

(whip!)

cankerous--!

(whip)

louse-ridden!

(whip!)

oaf!

(he stops for a moment to catch
his breath)

Now get out of my sight!

(CONTINUED)

138 CONTINUED:

138

Cain gets to his feet, nervously, and Guthric slashes the whip across his face. Cain's thin shirt is in ribbons down the back and he has a bleeding welt across his face. He runs off, and Guthric goes into the Hall.

139 INT. GUTHRIC'S HALL - NIGHT

139

A harpist is playing, and singing a ballad. The ballad he is singing is the "Saga of Beowulf". Guthric is talking to LADY GUTHRIC. Lady Guthric is tending to the LITTLE GUTHRICS, a boy and a girl, who are sat on the rush-covered floor of the Hall, playing with dolls quietly.

GUTHRIC

The senile old fool. He's out of his mind. They say he actually challenged a Frisian to kill him. Disrobed his armor and opened his tunic for him! I wish I'd been there. I'd run my sword through his doddering old head.

LADY GUTHRIC

Well, it's a good thing you weren't there, dear.

GUTHRIC

Why? Why is it a good thing?

LADY GUTHRIC

He is King Beowulf. He killed Grendel. He killed Grendel's mother--

GUTHRIC

Fucking Grendel and fucking Grendel's fucking mother. Do you know how fucking sick I am of fucking hearing about fucking Grendel and fucking Grendel's fucking mother?

LADY GUTHRIC

(points to the kids in a "not in front of the children" sort of way)
I really don't think--

GUTHRIC

It was a hundred years ago! It was in another country! What the hell was Grendel anyway? Some kind of giant dog, or something? And his mother? She doesn't even have a name!

LADY GUTHRIC

That's not the--

(CONTINUED)

GUTHRIC

And who was my Lord Beowulf's mother, if
it comes to that? I tell you, he does
not have long to live, and--

But he is interrupted by WILFERTH, Cain's sister, who runs in
and says:

WILFERTH

My lord Guthric! It's Cain! He's not in
the stables! I think he's run away!

CUT TO:

140 INT. KING BEOWULF'S CASTLE - BEOWULF'S CHAMBERS - NIGHT

140

It's dark outside. The King stands, while, garment by
garment, item by item, Ursula disrobes him, removing the
garments of kingship and the clothes beneath. The room is
lit by candles.

KING BEOWULF

Do you know how long I've been king now,
Ursula? Thirty years. Thirty years of
prosperity. Yet still we battle and
bicker over...dirt. I thought that
things would change when I grew old, when
I became king. Instead...things have
stayed the same. It is I who have
changed.

URSULA

Yes, your majesty.

KING BEOWULF

And I've been a good King, as kings go.
When I was young, I thought being King
would be all any man could ever want.
Battling every morning, counting the
golden loot in the afternoon, and swiving
gorgeous doxies every night...and now I'm
an old man, and none of that seems to
matter.

URSULA

(she kisses him lovingly)
Not even the "swiving a beautiful woman
every night" part, your majesty?

KING BEOWULF

(laughs)
Well...maybe that. I just wish that for
all the blood I've spilt in my life that
(more)

(CONTINUED)

KING BEOWULF

the world would be better for it. I'm
not sure that it is.

She leads him towards the bed, hands him a small silver
goblet of wine. As he drinks, she walks about the room,
snuffing candles.

URSULA

Do you know what I wish, my king?
(a beat)
I wish I could give you a son.

KING BEOWULF

(suddenly rueful and
reflective)
If you could do that...I'd give you your
freedom, my sweet Saxon slave. Give me a
son of my blood, and I will make you my
queen.

URSULA

(eagerly)
Tonight, your majesty?

KING BEOWULF

No. Tonight I feel my age upon me.
Another night. Tomorrow night.

He stops her from snuffing the last candles at the table
where the mead is.

KING BEOWULF

Leave some lit. I prefer not to drink in
total darkness.

Beowulf pours himself some mead and starts to drink it.
Ursula, perhaps sad that the King prefers his bottle to her,
crawls under the covers and snuffs the candle next to the
bed.

CUT TO:

Guthric and some of his friends are riding around on horses,
calling out to Cain. As we hear them call, we also see shots
of the bleak and deserted moor. Night has not yet quite
fallen, and rock shapes twist into shapes that remind us of
monsters and demons.

GUTHRIC

Cain! Cain! Can you hear me! You don't
want to stay out on the moors! There are
things out here that'll eat your heart
(more)

(CONTINUED)

141 CONTINUED:

141

GUTHRIC (CONT'D)
 for breakfast! And you'll starve to
 death out here, you'll freeze! You'll
 die out here! If you don't come back,
 I'll fucking kill you!

Guthric's VOICE travels across the moors to

142 CAIN

142

who is cowering behind a rock, as the SOUNDS OF THE SEARCH
 begins to fade.

Cain is shivering and scared. The SOUNDS OF THE PURSUERS are
 fading away into the distance. And then, close to us, we
 hear the HOWL of a wolf-pack...

Cain bolts for it, running through the moors, when suddenly
 the ground gives way beneath him and he is seemingly
 swallowed into the Earth.

143 INT. THE BARROW - NIGHT

143

Cain is under the ground. It's dark...but Cain realizes that
 we are somewhere that glimmers....that glimmers golden.

Cain SWEARS to himself as he bumps into something...and then
 slowly his eyes begin to get used to the darkness and he
 sees...

GOLD!

It's a treasure horde, unimaginable to these times: rings and
 bracelets, necklaces torques and plates, coins and statues
 and goblets, piled all around. Helmets and mail-shirts,
 swords, daggers and spears, shields and harps, statues of
 hawks and horses...the world glows in gold.

Cain moves through the gold like a dark shadow....

CAIN
 Such riches...

Then he sees something so wonderful that it takes his eyes
 off of the incredible treasure...

CAIN reaches out, tentatively, for THE GOLDEN GOBLET -- the
 one that Hrothgar gave young Beowulf earlier.

Cain excitedly leaves, knowing that he has a means of
 pleasing his master. But as he leaves the treasure begins to
 shift and move...

(CONTINUED)

143 CONTINUED:

143

Suddenly the treasure hoard transforms into a GOLDEN DRAGON with mighty wings and a long tail. The Dragon's eyes slowly begin to open, and a smile spreads across its face.

CUT TO:

144 EXT. GUTHRIC'S HALL - MORNING

144

Guthric is standing at the door to his hall. Then, almost to his surprise, in comes Cain, edging towards him in a servile, scared sort of way. He is cradling the goblet, so it cannot be seen.

GUTHRIC

Cain!

CAIN

I...I'm sorry I runned away, master. I brought you something -- what I found. Please don't hurt me no more.

CLOSE ON: Guthric's face -- he says nothing, and then he viciously hits Cain.

GUTHRIC

I thought you'd come back when you got hungry.

Cain goes tumbling to the ground, WHIMPERING and MOANING and pleading.

CAIN

Sorry master, sorry, please no master, please no...

Guthric kicks at the fallen Cain, and the Golden cup falls from his grasp, and rolls onto the snow.

CAIN

Brought it for you. Good master. Nice master. Sorry. Sorry.

Guthric looks at Cain, and then reaches down and picks up the goblet.

The weal across Cain's face has started to heal and scab. He looks scared.

CAIN

Please don't kill me.

(CONTINUED)

144 CONTINUED:

GUTHRIC

(taking the goblet)

This is quite exquisite. Where did you find it?

CAIN

(too scared, initially to speak, he says nothing but points to the moors, then, nervously)

Up there. On the moors--

GUTHRIC

You didn't steal it?

CAIN

I swear I didn't master!

Guthric holds the Goblet up to the light...

CUT TO:

145 EXT. KING BEOWULF'S CASTLE - DAY

145

The sea spray lashes the rocks in front of Beowulf's castle.

146 EXT. KING BEOWULF'S CASTLE - BAILEY - DAY

146

There are A COUPLE OF GUARDS guarding the way. Old Wiglaf is standing beside Guthric, who is holding something wrapped in cloth at his side.

OLD WIGLAF

Well, I really do not know, Guthric--

GUTHRIC

It is vitally important that I see the King, Lord Wiglaf. I am certain that Beowulf wants to see what I have brought to him.

OLD WIGLAF

Hmm...I, um, I'll tell you what, Guthric, you leave it with me and I'll make sure his majesty gets to see it. Yes?

GUTHRIC

(keeping his temper but the effort is showing)

No! Look, I have brought something for King Beowulf's eyes. I'm not going to give it to just anyone and watch it vanish into thin air.

(CONTINUED)

OLD WIGLAF

I am not just anyone. I am the King's chamberlain. Now, what is it, Guthric? If you think it will make the king look more favorably upon your property claim...

GUTHRIC

(impatiently looking at the guard and then back to Wiglaf)
Can we go somewhere more private?

147 INT. KING BEOWULF'S CASTLE - ANTEROOM - DAY

147

CLOSE ON: Guthric unwraps the golden goblet from the oilcloth. It glistens in the light.

GUTHRIC

It was found on the moors, a gift fit for a King.

Wiglaf takes the goblet. He looks at it, puzzled, knowing that he knows what it is but unable to remember properly. Or perhaps it is denial that blocks out his recognition of it.

WIGLAF

A fine piece, Guthric. Long it is since I have seen something as fine, and old. You found it, you say?

GUTHRIC

One of my slaves found it. It is a gift for you, my lord.

WIGLAF

It's from the land of the Danes. See the markings? Exquisite. It reminds me of something...something from a long time ago--

GUTHRIC

I thought perhaps he could talk again about my sister's bride-price.

Wiglaf looks to Guthric, serious and honest.

WIGLAF

I'm sure he will.

CUT TO:

148 INT. KING BEOWULF'S CASTLE - MEAD HALL - DAY

148

Beowulf's mead hall is massive in size. On one wall are all of Beowulf's souvenirs: A great bow; The giant's sword that "killed Grendel's mother"; A huge shield; The wolf/bear skin cape that Beowulf wore when he was younger. It's getting dark. A NERVOUS SERVANT is lighting the firebrands. Beowulf storms in, with Ursula just behind him--

KING BEOWULF

You! Bring me some mead!

The servant looks a little stunned.

NERVOUS SERVANT

But sire, the casks have not yet been brought up from the bailey. We weren't expecting you until--

KING BEOWULF

I'm in a mead hall and I can't get mead?! Is that what you're telling me?! Fetch me some mead, boy, and do it now!

NERVOUS SERVANT

Yes, your majesty. Immediately.

The servant rushes out of the room. Beowulf turns and almost bumps into Ursula...she startles him. For a moment she appears to be Grendel's mother...a fleeting moment. But it's just Ursula.

KING BEOWULF

Ursula. Dear girl, must you stand in my shadow? For a moment I thought you were...

URSULA

Yes, my king?

KING BEOWULF

...someone else.

URSULA

Who else?

Beowulf shakes his head "no". He won't talk of it.

URSULA

Is it the woman you speak of when you sleep? The mother?

Beowulf's eyes flare.

(CONTINUED)

KING BEOWULF

I love you as I've loved no other woman of this world, Ursula. But breathe the words I speak in my sleep and I'll feed you to the fish.

URSULA

Never, my lord. I...only wish I could take your pain away. Is it that you do not have a son?

KING BEOWULF

I...I will never have a son, Ursula. If I had known...Hrothgar knew. He knew.

URSULA

My lord?

KING BEOWULF

Do you know what it's like, Ursula? To get everything you want? Everything you dream? There's never been a man could stand against me in battle. Never been an army could stand against mine. I've been smarter, faster, stronger than any other man born of mortal woman.

URSULA

And that is what makes you cry in your sleep at night?

KING BEOWULF

Where the hell is that mead?

Then, from the far side of the hall, Wiglaf walks in.

OLD WIGLAF

I heard you were asking for mead, your majesty?

He's holding a covered tray, walking towards King Beowulf.

OLD WIGLAF

I thought I'd take the liberty of bringing it myself. You, ah, received a fine gift this day--

Wiglaf pulls the cover from the tray...the mead is in the Royal Goblet. Wiglaf has a big smile on his face, he's expecting to cheer Beowulf.

Beowulf picks up the goblet. And his world comes crashing down about his ears. He knows what it is.

(CONTINUED)

OLD WIGLAF

It's beautiful. Isn't it? See the markings? It's from the land of the Da--

Suddenly Beowulf SCREAMS and drops the goblet to the floor, sending a golden shower of mead spilling across the room.

Beowulf stumbles backwards and trips over a bench. He tumbles to the floor and scrambles into a corner...SCREAMING LIKE A CHILD.

KING BEOWULF

Who gave you this?! Where is she?!
Where is she?!

Wiglaf and Ursula are terrified at seeing the king SOBBING and CRYING in the corner like a psychotic.

OLD WIGLAF

Who, my lord?

KING BEOWULF

(terrified)
Where did you get it?!

OLD WIGLAF

Guthric. His slave found it on the moors.

Beowulf gets up slowly, hugging the wall, as if in a trance. He looks down at the Goblet.

KING BEOWULF

(muttering to himself)
I don't know what to feel. Should I rejoice? Should I lay in fear? At least it's done. It's time...and I'm ready.

Beowulf lifts the goblet and then abruptly walks out, slamming the great door behind him. Ursula, terrified, looks at Wiglaf.

URSULA

What did he mean? "Where is she?"

OLD WIGLAF

I should have recognized it when Guthric gave it to me. I thought it looked familiar. I'm stupid. Old and stupid.

CUT TO:

149 EXT. KING BEOWULF'S CASTLE - HOARDING - DAY

149

Beowulf stands on the hoarding looking down at the crashing waves. He holds the goblet.

With an effort, he raises the goblet above his head. He makes as if to throw it into the sea, but then, instead, smashes it down, repeatedly on the stones of the turret, twisting it out of shape. And then he collapses against the stones of the turret, as if exhausted.

Ursula has come up to the hoarding.

URSULA

I can help. Whatever is hurting you.
Whatever it is.

Beowulf says nothing. She approaches him from behind and, nervously, touches his shoulder.

KING BEOWULF

I've lived a lie, Ursula. At first, it gave me everything my heart could desire. The power to be everything I ever wanted. But later, I began to fear that the truth would reveal itself.
(he lowers his head)
I feared the truth.

He looks down at the waves CRASHING against the rocks.

KING BEOWULF

I've lived with that fear for so long that now I know nothing but. In the end, all the power, the promises...it melts away like snow into the sea. The only thing we take with us to our deaths is the truth.

URSULA

You're a great man, and a noble king.
This I know to be true.

KING BEOWULF

Do you? Or are you just part of the dream?

She takes his hand and holds it to her heart.

URSULA

I'm real, my lord. And I speak to you only from my heart. My heart tells me I'm in love a great man.

(CONTINUED)

149 CONTINUED:

149

Beowulf smiles and hugs her.

CUT TO:

150 EXT. GUTHRIC'S HALL - SUNSET

150

Guthric draws his horse up outside his hall. He's in a good mood, and is singing happily to himself...breaks off as he realizes there's no-one there to meet him.

GUTHRIC

(calling out)

Cain! You good-for-nothing! Help me off my horse!

(to himself)

If he's run away again...

There's a pause. No-one comes. The place is in silence. Smoke...or mist...hangs on the air.

GUTHRIC

Hello? Anybody here? Gretchen?
Children? Wilferth?

But there is silence.

Guthric slides off his horse, and walks into his

151 COURTYARD

151

There, in the courtyard, stand, in expressions of UTTER TERROR, as if caught trying to flee, standing and lying, CHARCOAL-BLACKENED, CARBONIZED CORPSES of Lady Guthric, children, slaves...but no Cain.

Guthric stares at them in horror. He reaches out and touches his wife's carbonized arm...

It drops off and CRUMBLES to charcoal.

Guthric looks around in terror and then he grits his teeth, summons what courage he has, draws his sword, and goes into his Hall.

152 INT. GUTHRIC'S HALL - NIGHT

152

The hall is in darkness. The only source of illumination is low firelight, and the dim dusk light coming through the open door. Guthric's sword glitters gold in the firelight. He walks in nervously, looking around, whirling around to stop someone attacking him from behind...and then the large door to the hall swings closed with a loud SLAM.

And the room is dark.

(CONTINUED)

GUTHRIC

Who's there?

SILENCE.

And then, from one corner of the room, there is a glimmer of fire and smoke, illuminating something gold that we can barely see.

GUTHRIC

Come out and face me like a man!

DRAGON

(a low, inhuman, LAUGHING,
then...)

I was asleep when he came to my barrow.
The thief. He took something that didn't
belong to him.

The DRAGON'S VOICE is sly, insinuating, gentle. Guthric cannot see him...perhaps just two golden lights glitter in the darkness -- the dragon's eyes.

GUTHRIC

Oh god. He was a slave, I'm sorry,
they're all thieves. If it's not nailed
down, they're off with it--

The dragon breathes a plume of flame, during which time it is slightly illuminated. Guthric SCREAMS in pain and fright, and drops to his knees...begging forgiveness. It is dark again.

GUTHRIC

Please. I gave it to the King. To
Beowulf! Please, don't hurt me! Please!

DRAGON (O.S.)

Beowulf? King Beowulf?

The dragon starts to LAUGH, a real BELLY LAUGH. Gutheric NERVOUSLY LAUGHS along with him.

DRAGON (O.S.)

Silence!

Gutheric shuts up quickly.

DRAGON (O.S)

Listen to me man-thing. I have something
I want to tell you. Listen with care. I
(more)

(CONTINUED)

152 CONTINUED: (2)

152

DRAGON (O.S)
 have something I want you to tell the
 world...

CUT TO:

153 EXT. KING BEOWULF'S CASTLE - BAILEY - NIGHT

153

Gutheric rides furiously into the bailey of the castle,
 reigning his horse to a sudden stop. He jumps off and starts
 walking toward the main doors. A COUPLE OF GUARDS approach
 him alongside Wiglaf.

OLD WIGLAF
 Gutheric. It's the middle of the night.
 The king's answer to your land claim will
 have to wait until--

GUTHRIC
 I'm not here to see the king. The king
 lays with monsters!

OLD WIGLAF
 What are you say--?

GUTHRIC
 I was just visited by a fucking dragon
 you doddering old coot! My entire family
 was burned alive! I just damn near lost
 my life! And do you know what he just
 told me?!

Wiglaf, who has suddenly become very conscious of people
 hearing Gutheric, takes Gutheric by the arm.

OLD WIGLAF
 Why don't you tell me...in private?

CUT TO:

154 INT. KING BEOWULF'S CASTLE - ANTEROOM - NIGHT

154

Gutheric and Wiglaf are alone in the anteroom to the castle.
 Gutheric is finishing telling him about the dragon.

GUTHRIC
 ...from the dragon's mouth to mine,
 that's the truth! King Beowulf is a
 fraud!

OLD WIGLAF
 Please. Hold your voice down.

(CONTINUED)

GUTHRIC

I will not! My entire family and all my servants were burned alive! It's king Beowulf's fault! I deserve recompense!

Wiglaf looks around to see if anyone has heard the hot-headed Gutheric.

OLD WIGLAF

And you shall get it...if what you say is true. But Gutheric, if it was a dragon...was...how do you know it was telling the truth? How can you believe a demon over your own king?

GUTHRIC

Our king lays with demons. Strikes deals with them. I think it's time the king strike a deal with me...a rich deal.

OLD WIGLAF

You dare extort the king--?!

GUTHRIC

I dare do much more, you pathetic old fuck! Stand out of my way and I'll show you--!

Gutheric turns to leave, and as he does Wiglaf produces a dagger. He takes Gutheric by the forehead and runs the blade across his neck, cutting it wide open.

OLD WIGLAF

You'll show me quiet is what you'll do!

Gutheric GURGLES in his own blood, and after a momentary struggle slumps dead in Wiglaf's arms.

OLD WIGLAF

I'm sorry, Gutheric, but it was you who brought the demon cup to us...not my lord.

Then Wiglaf notices all the blood on his hands. He drops the knife onto Gutheric's body and prepares to dispose of him.

HARD CUT TO:

155 INT. KING BEOWULF'S CASTLE - BEOWULF'S CHAMBERS - NIGHT 155

CLOSE ON: King Beowulf, he stirs in his troubled sleep...GRUNTING a kind of WHIMPER. He is tangled in his sheets, and in his hand he holds the dragon goblet.

MATCH CUT TO:

THE DREAM OF THE DRAGON...

156 INT. THE GREAT CAVE - GRENDEL'S MOTHER'S LAIR - NIGHT 156

EXTREME CLOSE ON: King Beowulf's eye, dancing in a REM pattern. Suddenly, with a GASP from Beowulf, his eye springs open and then looks around...where is he?

King Beowulf stands up. He is in Grendel's mother's lair, which seems bigger and emptier than before. Everything seems further away. We can hear WATER DRIPPING SLOWLY. He looks in his hand and discovers that he's holding the chalice...even in his dream.

King Beowulf walks through the cavern in extreme slow-motion: His feet hit the water and throw up showers of slow droplets...

He SHOUTS something, mouths "Hello? Anybody here?" but NO SOUND COMES OUT. He closes his mouth. And then, delayed we hear...

KING BEOWULF
(echoing)
Hello? Anybody here?

There's no answer.

He looks down. The reflection in the water is that of Young Beowulf. He drops a rock into the water: It ECHOES and BOOMS. When the ripples have stopped, it's his old face staring up at him from the water.

Now he turns around, and sees a number of DEAD THANES -- all people we saw killed earlier in Hrothgar's mead hall by Grendel. They stand there, pale and bloody corpses, some of them missing limbs. They are very dead indeed.

THANE #1
Hail Beowulf, who killed the monster
Grendel.

THANE #2
Hail Beowulf, who slew Grendel's mother.

(CONTINUED)

THANE #3

Hail mighty Beowulf, the wisest king, and
the mightiest.

THANE #4

Hail Beowulf, who left us for dead.

THANE #5

Hail Great King Beowulf, liar and
monster, lecher and fool.

THE THANES TOGETHER

Hail! Hail! Hail! Hail!

King Beowulf stares at them, speechless, as they tell him the things he would rather not think, and then he pushes, roughly, through the middle of the crowd of dead thanes...until he actually bumps into a dead Gutheric, his throat slit. Beowulf pauses for a moment and then frantically pushes past him.

He turns to shout at them, but they've vanished.

Frustrated, he walks into a darkened part of the cave. Something huge and out of shot flaps above him, with an enormous GUST OF WIND, almost knocking him down, and lands in front of him. We cannot see what it is, although it is, of course, the dragon.

DRAGON

So this is what it looks like inside your head. What a sad, sick mean little place it is. But I suppose this was where I was conceived.

KING BEOWULF

What are you?

DRAGON

I'm what you left behind. I am your curse, come to collect my mother's debt.

Torches flame, showing us THE DRAGON in human form: A thin, beautiful, golden man, who looks very much like Young Beowulf. Beowulf recognizes the likeness...and the image makes him shudder, for he knows who's son this is.

Then Beowulf sees Grendel's Mother...as beautiful a siren as she ever was. She drapes her arm around the golden dragon-man, and kisses his strong cheek.

GRENDEL'S MOTHER

Do you not love our son, great Beowulf?
Is he not as beautiful and strong as you
once were?

King Beowulf holds the golden chalice out, as an offering.

KING BEOWULF

I've brought you the cup. Take it back.

GRENDEL'S MOTHER

It's too late for that. It's power has
been spent. It is only a simple goblet
now.

KING BEOWULF

Then weave a new spell.

GRENDEL'S MOTHER

Silly Beowulf. You are no longer needed.
Your seed forged me a son. I've raised
him to avenge his brother's murder. I've
raised him from hate. I've raised him to
kill you.

KING BEOWULF

Why didn't you kill me yourself?

GRENDEL'S MOTHER

You killed my son. I needed another. It
takes a king to procreate with a god. So
I made you king.

She LAUGHS.

GRENDEL'S MOTHER

Just as I made Hrothgar king. You see,
my love, the demon world was dying. I
was the last. Forced to reproduce with
men...birthing abominations. Neither
demon nor man. But your blood was pure.
Pumping with the sins of arrogance, and
lust. With your seed I made our son.
And with our son, I shall repopulate the
world with our kind.

Beowulf ROARS and throws the cup at them...it misses and
falls into the darkness, CLINKING against the stone floor.

KING BEOWULF

You used me!

(CONTINUED)

GRENDEL'S MOTHER

No more than you used me. You're the king. You're the subject of song. You have everything you want--

KING BEOWULF

I have nothing but an empty life...a shadow life...an illusion!

GRENDEL'S MOTHER

And the illusion is ending. As all illusions must end.

Beowulf looks into his hand...the cup is there, held firmly in his grasp.

KING BEOWULF

I won't allow it...I'll...I'll find you and destroy you!

They start LAUGHING.

King Beowulf, enraged, rushes them...but they vanish and he stumbles and falls to the cold stone floor of the cave.

MATCH CUT TO:

157 INT. KING BEOWULF'S CASTLE - BEOWULF'S CHAMBERS - MORNING 157

King Beowulf falls to the floor next to his bed, tangled in his bed linens...waking himself suddenly. He sits upright, alert...realizing where he is. Ursula is not in the room. Then he looks into his hand, in it he holds the dragon goblet in his tight grasp.

CUT TO:

158 INT. KING BEOWULF'S CASTLE - SPIRAL STAIRWAY - NIGHT 158

King Beowulf, still wearing his night clothes and carrying the chalice, hurries along, descending down the narrow winding stairs of his castle. Then, he meets Wiglaf, who was rising the spiral stair. The two men stand there, looking at each other for a protracted moment, and then Wiglaf opens his mouth to speak:

OLD WIGLAF

I was coming up to see you.

KING BEOWULF

I was coming down to see you.
(he inhales with trepidation)
Grendel's mother. When I went into the cave, I did not--

(CONTINUED)

OLD WIGLAF
 (cutting him off)
 I know, my king. You need not speak it.

King Beowulf, after staring at his old friend for a moment, sits down on the steps.

KING BEOWULF
 How did you know, old friend?

OLD WIGLAF
 I have always known. I am your
 chamberlain...as I was your first. It is
 my place to know all your secrets...even
 those you hide from yourself.

Beowulf is both devastated and relieved. He holds his head in his hands and then looks at Wiglaf.

KING BEOWULF
 I did a foolish thing, Wiglaf. I struck
 a deal with a demon.

OLD WIGLAF
 I know, my king. And I believe that
 demon has come for payment.

CUT TO:

159 EXT. KING BEOWULF'S CASTLE - BAILEY - DAY

159

BEOWULF'S POV: The bailey contains REFUGEES. They are MEN, WOMEN and CHILDREN, who are in bad shape -- they are standing, just, although many of the children are being carried. They look at us with hollow, scared, eyes. The nightmare has happened. They are, to a greater or lesser degree, burnt -- they have fled from burning huts and villages. Some of them are carrying treasured possessions they rescued from the flames. They are standing in lines, dumbly.

Beowulf and Wiglaf are standing at the doorway to the bailey where the refugees await him.

A WOMAN WITH A BABY steps forward. Her name is HELGA.

HELGA
 It came from the sky in the night, my
 lord. It burnt our houses and farms. I
 lost my husband in the flames that took
 our hearth-acre.

(CONTINUED)

MAN #1

I saw our whole village burn. I heard my friends screaming as they died.

MAN #2

I saw it, your majesty, flaming like a comet in the night sky, vomiting fire and smoke.

KING BEOWULF

What is this thing you talk of?

HELGA

A dragon.

The OTHER BURNT AND DISENFRANCHISED TOWNSFOLK are nodding, now, and repeating, dully, "a dragon". We see Cain among the people, but he stares at the ground, too scared and brutalized to say anything at all.

King Beowulf knows of what, and who, they speak of.

KING BEOWULF

I cannot give you back your homes or your loved ones. But I can kill your monster for you.

CUT TO:

160 INT. KING BEOWULF'S CASTLE - MEAD HALL - DAY

160

The Dragon's golden cup smashes into the far wall, where there are a number of objects, including some primitive glass. It hits them with a LOUD CRASH.

We look up from the mess to King Beowulf, his face is set hard. Next to him is Wiglaf.

King Beowulf is standing in front of his wall of souvenirs: A great bow; The giant's sword that "killed Grendel's mother"; A huge shield; The wolf/bear skin cape that Beowulf wore when he was younger.

BEOWULF'S THANES are standing around dumbly, staring at him, nervously, not saying anything.

Then Beowulf begins to pull his souvenirs down from the wall. His bow, his shield, his sword, and the bear-wolf fur cloak. They CLATTER down from the wall onto the floor. He begins suiting up...becoming a warrior again.

Then he turns to the thanes.

(CONTINUED)

160 CONTINUED:

KING BEOWULF

I am going to kill a dragon. Who is with me?

None of the thanes says anything.

OLD WIGLAF

What? None of you want glory? None of you want gold?

After a hesitation, they begin to step forward--

THANE #1

I'm with you, majesty.

THANE #2

And I!

And with that the rest of them, shamed, step forward.

CUT TO:

161 INT. KING BEOWULF'S CASTLE - HALLWAY - DAY

161

Beowulf, Wiglaf, and THEIR THANES walk from the mead hall and then down a long hallway that leads to the bailey. Suddenly, Beowulf stops. Ursula is in the way, her LADIES behind her.

URSULA

Shall you return to me, my king?

Beowulf looks at her for a long, knowing moment and then walks past her. She begins to CRY.

CUT TO:

162 EXT. KING BEOWULF'S CASTLE - BAILEY - DAY

162

King Beowulf comes out, with guards and THANES behind him. He looks out at the refugees in the bailey. He speaks loudly, saying:

KING BEOWULF

Does any man or woman among you know anything of this dragon? Where it comes from? What kind of beast it is?

No-one answers. King Beowulf gets angry.

KING BEOWULF

(shouting at them)

Someone must know! Where do we start looking? In the uplands? In the fells? On the moor? If you know anything --

(more)

(CONTINUED)

162 CONTINUED:

162

KING BEOWULF
 ANYTHING -- tell me. The beast will be
 sleeping now. These creatures come at
 night. You don't have to be afraid!

He looks around...disappointed. But then, Cain steps
 forward.

CAIN
 I know.

CUT TO:

163 EXT. THE GEAT MOORS - DAY

163

King Beowulf, Old Wiglaf, Cain, and ELEVEN THANES on
 horseback are riding along. It is snowing. Everyone is cold
 and miserable. On the last horse, tied to the horse to stop
 him falling off, is Cain looking miserable. Beowulf looks to
 Wiglaf.

KING BEOWULF
 You know, Wiglaf. I have no heir. If
 I'm killed by this dragon...you shall be
 king.

OLD WIGLAF
 Don't say such things, lor--

KING BEOWULF
 Grendel's Mother...she was very
 beautiful, Wiglaf. She
 was...irresistible.

Wiglaf looks at Beowulf for a long moment, afraid to
 interpret what has just been said to him.

DISSOLVE TO:

164 EXT. THE GEAT MOORS - THE BARROW - DAY

164

We stand on the clifftop. Cain is pointing.

CAIN
 I fell in through here. But the main
 entrance is down there.

KING BEOWULF
 It will not wake until sunset.

CUT TO:

165 INT. THE BARROW - DAY

165

We see the Dragon's face, now, in the darkness. This is the Dragon in Reptile form -- the nightmare face of an elegant, golden dragon, half-way between a T. Rex and a Komodo Dragon. It flexes its claws. Its eyes are open. It is listening. These things have very sensitive hearing.

KING BEOWULF (O.S.)

When it wakes it will come out of its
cave. And then we shall kill it.

DISSOLVE TO:

166 EXT. THE SEA - SUNSET

166

We see the sea, CRASHING onto the rocks. It is almost night.

CUT TO:

167 EXT. THE GEAT MOORS - THE BARROW - SUNSET

167

Beowulf's men have set up a small camp near the barrow. They have a fire going to keep them warm from the snow and their weapons ready.

Beowulf walks up to the cliffside, watching the sun vanish...knowing that the time is near.

There is a golden glow coming from below them. Suddenly we see, in its serpentine form, THE DRAGON. It rises into the air, a huge, golden creature, wings flapping, long tail curling, and it hovers in the air fifty or a hundred feet above Beowulf and his men. They jump to alert at the sudden sign of the monster.

We are utterly convinced by it: this is where our budget is going. This is the dragon. Smoke drifts from its open mouth, smoke and flame.

Beowulf's men are racked with fear, this is a thing from hell...quite more than they expected.

But to Beowulf it is something far different. What he sees isn't a great serpentine monster, but the GOLDEN MAN-DRAGON from the dream. A beautiful winged devil with a barbed tail, horned head, and a massive golden spear. Only Beowulf sees him this way, to the others the man-dragon is simply a dragon.

THE DRAGON'S POV: Beowulf and his men are below us, being buffeted by the wind from our wings...

(CONTINUED)

DRAGON

Beowulf Grendel-slayer...my father.
Greetings.

KING BEOWULF

(shouting to be heard)
Prepare to die, foul beast!

The man-dragon starts to LAUGH. And with a beat of its enormous wings it rises into the sky.

DRAGON

I shall be right back. Something I have
to do. Don't go anywhere.

King Beowulf stares at the beast, as it flies away.

BEOWULF

No!

The thanes begin to LAUGH and CHEER...but not Old Wiglaf.

THANE #1

You've scared it away! It's scared of
you!

THANE #2

Hurrah! The dragon is gone!

KING BEOWULF

Did you not hear what it said?

THANE #1

(a little baffled)
It said n-nothing, Lord. You shouted
"prepare to die", and it flew away.

Beowulf looks to Wiglaf, who nods in agreement with the young thane.

WIGLAF

He speaks the truth. It said nothing.

KING BEOWULF

(shaking his head "no")
It spoke to me. It said there was
something that it had to do, before we
fought. Something it had to do...but
what?

Beowulf watches the Dragon vanish into the distance.

CUT TO:

168 EXT. KING BEOWULF'S CASTLE - HOARDING - NIGHT

168

CLOSE ON: Ursula is standing at the top walkway that circumnavigates the castle. Her eyes are trained on something in the horizon...something that is approaching. Something golden that glistens in the light of the full moon.

The various COURTIERS and THANES at the castle suddenly CALL TO ARMS. There is a flurry of activity as people flee and prepare themselves to fight.

But not Ursula. She knows that the Dragon is undefeatable by them. She has been perhaps awaiting it, or some other monster, her whole life. She inhales, with no fear, almost accepting the inevitable.

And the inevitable happens.

The Dragon exhales and the castle is enveloped in fire.

CUT TO:

169 EXT. THE GEAT MOORS - THE BARROW - NIGHT

169

King Beowulf and his Thanes are where last left them. A storm of full, dark clouds is RUMBLING above.

OLD WIGLAF

A storm is coming.

ONE OF THE THANES suddenly points to the horizon.

THANE

Look!

There is a golden glow coming from ten miles down the shoreline...the castle is ablaze.

KING BEOWULF

My hall.

And the dragon is coming towards us now through the sky, ROARING and breathing fire. It is the scariest thing we have ever seen. Scarier than anything in "Jurassic Park".

Beowulf's men scatter for whatever cover they can find. Only King Beowulf holds his position.

170 THE DRAGON

170

descends and curls its body, preparing to breathe flame. It exhales a burst of flame, something like a fireball with a tail.

(CONTINUED)

- 170 CONTINUED: 170
- The flame hits his shield and is deflected by it.
- 171 KING BEOWULF 171
- is not burnt, but he is thrown to his knees by the force of the flame.
- 172 SOME OF THE THANES 172
- are burned alive from their hiding spots, OTHERS are shielded well enough to survive...but they're reduced to whimpering children at the scale of this monster.
- 173 WIGLAF 173
- who is unharmed, looks out from behind a large stone.
- Bushes and scrub trees in a rough circle around King Beowulf ignite. Burning, they will illuminate all of the following scenes. The fire melts the snow, turning the ground to mud.
- 174 THE DRAGON 174
- lands in the empty space and faces King Beowulf.
- DRAGON
- I've burned your home, torched your land,
and killed your woman. Now, I come for
you.
- Goaded, King Beowulf springs at the dragon, and swings his sword at it...but the dragon is quick, it leaps backwards and takes to the air. It hovers, beating its mighty wings to keep it aloft.
- DRAGON
- Age has made you slow...and weak, father.
- Beowulf steps forward, aiming his sword at the dragon.
- KING BEOWULF
- If I am your father...then show yourself
as you really are. Don't hide behind
this demon's mask.
- 175 WIGLAF'S 175
- eyes widen at hearing this.
- With one mighty beat of

176 THE DRAGON'S

176

wings it TRANSFORMS ITSELF INTO A GOLDEN MAN, in golden armor, but still with its great, golden Dragon wings and long, spiked Dragon's tail.

177 BEOWULF'S

177

mouth drops open, agape at what he sees, for the face on the golden Dragon-man is familiar to him...it's his face when he was a young man.

The Dragon-man lands like a devil touching down onto Earth, wings extended and his fingers touching the ground for balance.

DRAGON

Behold, the "mighty" Beowulf.

Beowulf is breathing heavily, unbalanced. He approaches the dragon...then lowers his sword.

KING BEOWULF

Behold...my "son".

DRAGON

(amused)

You said the words. You've acknowledged my existence. For so long you've ignored me, hidden me with your shame.

These words strike Beowulf harder than any blow of a sword, he lowers his head for a moment and then looks up.

KING BEOWULF

My only shame, is that I am not the man I've shown myself to be. I've traded the truth for fame, gold, and glory. But no more.

He plants his sword into the ground.

KING BEOWULF

We don't have to kill each other. Lay down your hate, as I lay down mine. Let us embrace. Let us accept our shame. I only want to give you my love.

DRAGON

Your love? Your love?! Keep your love. All I want from you is your death.

(CONTINUED)

KING BEOWULF

Then kill me, and leave my kingdom
forever.

DRAGON

With glee, father. With glee.

The dragon begins to step forward, half-transforming into a
serpent.

And suddenly,

runs from behind the dragon, his axe raised and his helm
covering his head...SCREAMING a berserker's cry.

OLD WIGLAF

Aaaaaiiii!

The dragon spins around and SLASHES Wiglaf with its barbed
tail. Wiglaf, blinded momentarily, slips to the ground. In
an instant, the dragon is upon him...its sword raised. To
Wiglaf this is a full sized serpentine dragon...it's
horrific.

Beowulf, who can not allow the dragon to kill his friend,
seizes the moment and pulls his giant-sword from the ground
and drives it in the soft spot underneath the chin...just as
Hrothgar told him.

A SHRIEK like you can't imagine comes from the gaping mouth
of the dragon...a shriek from the very bowels of Hell. It
pulls the sword from its chin, revealing a mortal wound.

The dragon-man spins around, his eyes aflame, seething at
Beowulf. Beowulf, knowing what's coming, shuts his eyes as
his dragon-son rams his sword through Beowulf, impaling him.

OLD WIGLAF

Nooo!

The dragon-man pushes the sword deep, until the hilt is up
against Beowulf's chest. Beowulf grabs the dragon by the
shoulders, embracing him.

The Dragon grabs Beowulf by the neck with both hands and
suddenly lifts him high into the air. With each strong BEAT
of the Dragon's wings they lift higher into the sky.

Beowulf grasps at the Dragon's strong grasp, choking and
turning blue. Blood spills from the dragon's mouth. Soon,
they have risen into the air,

179 ABOVE THE CLOUDS

179

into the clear above the storm. And with the storm behind, and the life escaping both the dragon-man and Beowulf, a strange calm takes over.

KING BEOWULF

You shall soon have your wish...I am dying.

DRAGON

I shall live to see it. I shall live to--

The dragon-man suddenly GASPS and chokes up more blood...it WINCES in pain, faltering its rise into the sky. They hover for a moment, on weakened wings.

KING BEOWULF

(the life escaping him)

I'm sorry...my son...but I fear...you and I...have been made to be...your mother's...puppets...

The dragon, unable to cope, begins to fall...slowing their descent, but not stopping it, with LOUD BEATS of its weakened wings.

They are near to free falling.

During the fall they look deep into each other's eyes, seeing themselves in the reflection of the other. It is a hypnotic moment...one that seems to last forever.

DRAGON

(its life slipping away)

Father--?

Then, spiraling, they vanish into the low clouds.

180 EXT. THE GEAT MOORS - THE BARROW - NIGHT

180

Old Wiglaf, his face bleeding, is looking to the low storm clouds.

Then, Beowulf and the dragon, now in its full dragon form, plummet out of the clouds.

The hiding thanes, terrified, drop their weapons and run. Wiglaf takes a few steps back...but does not run.

181 THE DRAGON

181

slams to the ground with the force of a bus falling from the sky. The ground RUMBLES with the explosive force.

(CONTINUED)

181 CONTINUED:

181

The Dragon slumps to the side, dead. Its eyes glass over, and in the milky emptiness of them, Beowulf can still see himself reflected back.

182 OLD WIGLAF

182

gets to his feet in the light of the burning bushes.

OLD WIGLAF

The king is wounded! We have to go to him!

But the other thanes, perhaps afraid of the dragon, won't come out from behind the rocks.

Frustrated, Wiglaf runs to

183 BEOWULF AND THE DRAGON

183

He finds Beowulf on top of the golden dragon, cushioned by its body during the fall...but still impaled by the sword. Seeing this sends chill down his spine. Wiglaf then sees that Beowulf has been mortally wounded by the Dragon. He is a bloodied mess.

Then, Beowulf does something Wiglaf would not have expected. Despite his pain, he cradles the Dragon's head, and strokes it, and cries.

KING BEOWULF

My...son--

And then he leans down and kisses the dragon on the forehead, as a man kisses his son.

Wiglaf hears this and cautiously steps forward, not wanting to disturb this grotesquely intimate moment.

OLD WIGLAF

My lord, you're wounded.

KING BEOWULF

Yes...

OLD WIGLAF

We must get you to a healer.

He struggles over to Beowulf and tries to help him, but Beowulf resists.

KING BEOWULF

No.

(CONTINUED)

OLD WIGLAF

My lord, I must insist--

KING BEOWULF

No!

(he winces in horrific pain)

They are old wounds, Wiglaf. Leave me to my death, dear friend. It will relieve my pain.

(then, he seems to be hallucinating)

Do you hear her?

Wiglaf may not hear it...but we do. It's a far off VOICE SINGING. A haunting song that seems to resonate throughout the land.

OLD WIGLAF

What, lord?

KING BEOWULF

The song. Can you hear her? It's Grendel's Mother -- my son's mother -- my...

He trails off, leaving the word "mother" unspoken.

OLD WIGLAF

(crying as he watches his lord slip into death)

No, lord. Don't say such things. You killed Grendel's mother. She exists no more. You are a great hero...a killer of monsters--

KING BEOWULF

Too late for lies, Wiglaf. To late--

And Beowulf is dead.

Wiglaf begins to SOB.

FADE TO BLACK:

We see, from the inside, the THANES pulling open the barrow from outside, to allow them in. The grey-purple pre-dawn light shines in on them. Some of them hold torches. Wiglaf enters, holding a burning torch.

OLD WIGLAF

All of it.

(CONTINUED)

184 CONTINUED:

184

Warriors begin to seize shields, statues and gold, and to haul it out of the barrow.

CUT TO:

185 EXT. THE GEAT MOORS - THE BARROW - DAWN

185

It's getting light, although the sun will not rise for an hour or so yet. We see a creaking wagon, being pulled by huge Shire horses, moving through the moors, away from the barrow. The WARRIORS, THANES, Old Wiglaf, all walk along beside it, for it moves at a walking pace. It is piled high with gold. We move in closer, and see that on the top of the wagon lie King Beowulf's body, and beside it, the Dragon's body.

CUT TO:

186 EXT. THE GEAT CLIFFTOP - DAWN

186

They reach the clifftop. It's a fall straight into the sea from the clifftop. The CREAKING wagon stops.

TWO THANES, on top of the wagon, toss the Dragon's body down, roughly, to the ground from the wagon, shouting first

THANE

Watch out below!

The dragon's body falls to the ground like so much meat. Then, the thanes roll the Dragon along to the cliff-edge.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL: The Dragon falls from the cliff into the waves, it's body pounded by, and then lost into, the surf.

From somewhere Wiglaf hear what sounds like a WOMAN WAIL, briefly, then no more.

CUT TO:

187 EXT. THE GEAT CLIFFTOP - DAWN

187

A long line of Geats -- MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN, are lined up on the path up to the clifftop, watching a DOZEN MEN and a couple of shire horses dragging a longship up the path towards the clifftop.

We see a number of women and men from the front, but we stop behind A WOMAN IN A WHITE COWL, without seeing her face.

CUT TO:

188 EXT. THE GEAT CLIFFTOP - DAWN

188

It is the grey time before dawn.

The thanes have hauled a ship up to the cliff-top, just like the ship Beowulf went to Denmark in, at the start of the story.

And then, slowly, in a long procession, the Geats walk past the ship. Each of them throws a piece of wood into the body of the boat.

SLOW DISSOLVE TO:

189 EXT. THE GEAT CLIFFTOP - LATER - DAWN

189

The boat is filled with pieces of driftwood.

But the Geats are still walking past -- throwing golden things into the boat -- pulling off arm-rings, finger-rings, necklaces -- it seems like everyone has some piece of Gold.

The ship is hung with shields and armor, and all the treasure that was brought from the dragon's horde.

When the woman in the white cowl throws gold and wood, we only see her from the back.

Last of all we see Old Wiglaf. He holds the Dragon's Cup, and tosses it through the air.

It spins through the air until it lands on the firewood.

Only then do SEVEN THANES approach carrying a stretcher, on which Beowulf's dead body has been placed, arms folded across his chest. THE PEOPLE part to let it by, reaching out and CALLING and SOBBING as they see King Beowulf's body.

The Thanes tie Beowulf's dead body to the mast of the ship, facing out to sea. Then

A BURNING BRAND

being carried by Old Wiglaf.

OLD WIGLAF

I...he was the bravest of us. The prince
of all warriors. His name will live
forever. He--

Wiglaf breaks down.

Wiglaf takes the burning brand and touches it to the side of the boat, which begins to burn.

(CONTINUED)

Soon, the boat begins to pour smoke out from its hull, and then it BURSTS INTO FLAME.

And we look at the faces of the Geats, Some of them are weeping, some staring, stone-faced. The sun is rising and the sky brightens.

One of the OTHER THANES takes King Beowulf's crown and places it onto Wiglaf's head. He then places the necklace over his head. It surprises him...the weight of it brings the tears out.

He's now king.

The flames reach Beowulf's body, and the woman in the white cowl begins to SING. It's a SONG OF MOURNING AND MAGIC, a sad, wordless wail, tuneful and dark. The song of a woman mourning her sons...mourning her lover. But it's a song no one can hear...

No one, but Wiglaf.

Wiglaf looks around, confused that no one can hear the singing. Then he spots the woman in the white cowl...her back to him. She is walking away from the funeral, still singing.

He begins to follow her.

EXTREME CLOSE ON: Beowulf's body burning.

Wiglaf has followed her down to the sand of the beach. She is walking toward the ocean. Then, she stops and turns around to look at Wiglaf.

He squints his eyes, for under the cowl is a woman of gold...a woman who could only be Grendel's Mother. Wiglaf grabs the hilt of his blade...but there's something about her, something about her song, that causes him to release his blade.

She smiles at Wiglaf, a wicked smile. Wiglaf can only look back at her, powerless.

The two stand there in the sand...looking at each other.

THE END