

Beowulf Canto 11

Out from the marsh, from the foot of misty
Hills and bogs, bearing God's hatred,
Grendel came, hoping to kill
Anyone he could trap on his trip to high Herot.
He moved quickly through the cloudy night,
Up from his swampland, sliding silently
Toward that gold-shining hall. He had visited
Hrothgar's
Home before, knew the way-
But never, before nor after that night,
Found Herot defended so firmly, his reception
So harsh. He journeyed, forever joyless,
Straight to the door, then snapped it open,
Tore its iron fasteners with a touch
And rushed angrily over the threshold.
He strode quickly across the inlaid
Floor, snarling and fierce: his eyes
Gleamed in the darkness, burned with a gruesome
Light. Then he stopped, seeing the hall
Crowded with sleeping warriors, stuffed
With rows of young soldiers resting together.
And his heart laughed, he relished the sight,
Intended to tear the life from those bodies
By morning; the monster's mind was hot
With the thought of food and the feasting his belly
Would soon know. But fate, that night, intended
Grendel to gnaw the broken bones
Of his last human supper. Human
Eyes were watching his evil steps,
Waiting to see his swift hard claws.
Grendel snatched at the first Geat
He came to, ripped him apart, cut
His body to bits with powerful jaws,

Drank the blood from his veins and bolted
Him down, hands and feet; death
And Grendel's great teeth came together,
Snapping life shut. Then he stepped to another
Still body, clutched at Beowulf with his claws,
Grasped at a strong-hearted wakeful sleeper
-And was instantly seized himself, claws
Bent back as Beowulf leaned up on one arm.

That of shepherd evil, guardian of crime,
Knew at once that nowhere on earth
Had he met a man whose hands were harder;
His mind was flooded with fear- but nothing
Could take his talons and himself from that type
Hard grip. Grendel's one thought was to run
From Beowulf, flee back to his marsh and hide
there:

This was different Herot than the hall he had
emptied.

But Higlac's follower remembered his final
Boast and, standing erect, stopped
The monster's flight, fastened those claws
In his fists till they cracked, clutched Grendel
Closer. The infamous killer fought
For his freedom, wanting no flesh but retreat,
Desiring nothing but escape; his claws
Had been caught, he was trapped. That trip to
Herot

Was a miserable journey for the writhing monster!

The high hall rang, its roof board swayed,
And Danes shook with terror. Down
The aisles the battle swept, angry
And wild. Herot trembled, wonderfully
Built to withstand blows, the struggling
Great bodies beating at its beautiful walls;
Shaped and fastened with iron, inside
And out, artfully worked, the building

Stood firm. Its benches rattled, fell
 To the floor, gold-covered boards grating
 As Grendel and Beowulf battled across them.
 Hrothgar's wise men had fashioned Herot
 To stand forever; only fire,
 They had planned, could shatter what such skill
 had put
 Together, swallow in hot flames such splendor
 Of ivory and iron and wood. Suddenly
 The sounds changed, the Danes started
 In new terror, cowering in their beds as the terrible
 Screams of the Almighty's enemy sang
 In the darkness, the horrible shrieks of pain
 And defeat, the tears torn out of Grendel's
 Taut throat, hell's captive caught in the arms
 Of him who of all the men on earth
 Was the strongest.

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That mighty protector of men a guardian of sorts
 Meant to hold the monster till its life
 leaped out,---- knowing the fiend was no use
 To anyone in Denmark.---- All of Beowulf's
 Band had jumped from their beds, ancestral
 Swords raised and ready, determined
 To protect their prince if they could. Their courage
 Was great but all wasted:---- they could hack at Grendel
 From every side, trying to open
 A path for his evil soul, but their points
 Could not hurt him,---- the sharpest and hardest iron
 Could not scratch at his skin, for that sin-stained
 demon
 Had watched all men's weapons laid spells
 That blunted every mortal man's blade.
 And yet his time has come, his days

*Denmark is in Northern Europe.

Were over, his death near;---- down
 To hell he would go,---- swept groaning and helpless
 To the waiting hands of still worse friend.
 Now he discovered-once the afflictor A terrorist
 Of men, tormentor of their days-what it meant
 Saw that his strength was deserting him, his claws
 Bound fast, Higlac's brave follower tearing at
 His hands. The monster's hatred rose higher,
 But his power had gone.----He twisted in pain,
 And the bleeding sinews deep in his shoulder
 Snapped, muscle and bone split
 And broke. The battle was over, Beowulf
 Had been granted new glory:---- Grendel escaped,
 But wounded as he was could flee to his den,
 His miserable hole at the bottom of the marsh,
 Only to die, to wait for the end
 Of all his days. And after that bloody
 Combat the Danes laughed with delight.
 He who had come to them from across the sea,
 Bold and strong minded, had driven affliction
 Off, purged Herot clean.---- He was happy,
 Now, with that night's fierce work; **The Danes**
Had been served as he'd boasted he'd serve them'
Beowulf,

period to hear a boast made by a given
 A prince of the geats, had killed Grendel,
 confidence
 Ended the grief, the sorrow, the suffering
 Forced on **Hrothgar's** hopeless people
 ruled by kings in that time.
 By a bloodthirsty fiend.---- No Dane doubted
 The victory, for the proof, hanging high
 From the rafters where Beowulf had hung it, was
 the monster's
 Arm, claw and shoulder and all.

* It was common during the Anglo-Saxon

*by a newcomer, proclaiming his

*The king of this particular village, tribes were