

with night growing dark over all the earth,
 and shapes of shadows came gliding along, 650
 dark under clouds. The company all rose up.
 Then Hrothgar addressed himself to Beowulf,
 warrior to warrior, and wished him success,
 power over the wine-hall, speaking formal words:
 "Never before, since I could lift hand and shield, 655
 have I given care of the great hall of the Danes
 to any other man, as I now do to you.
 Now have and hold this best of dwellings,
 mindful of glory, and make known your might,
 guard against fierce foes. Nor will you lack reward 660
 if you survive the great task before you."

— X —

Then Hrothgar went out with his band of heroes,
 the protector of the Danes departed the hall.
 This war-chief wished to seek out Wealhtheow,
 his queen and bed-fellow. As men have heard, 665
 the glorious ruler had set a hall-guard
 against the foe Grendel—serving special duty
 for the king of the Danes, keeping watch against giants.
 Truly, the prince of the Geats firmly trusted
 in the force of his strength and the favor of God. 670

He then shook off his shirt of iron mail
 and helmet from his head. He gave to another
 his burnished sword, the best iron for battle,
 and ordered him to hold this war-gear for now.
 Then the bold man, Beowulf of the Geats, 675
 spoke words of boasting before mounting his bed:
 "I do not suppose myself any less battle-bold,
 or less strong in the struggle than Grendel himself,
 so I will not put him to sleep with a sword,

to rob him of life, though I readily could. 680
 He knows not of weapons—how to strike with sword,
 how to hew my shield—though he is renowned
 for his furious fighting. No, we two in dark of night
 shall forego the sword, if he dares to seek
 war without weapon, and then may wise God, 685
 the holy Lord, judge which side will succeed,
 which one will win glory, as to him seems right."
 Then the battle-brave Geat reclined, lay his face
 on a cushion, and courageous sea-men
 lay on their hall-beds all around him. 690
 Not one of them thought that from that place
 he might ever again return to his homeland,
 come to his kin or the town where he was reared.
 For they had heard that death had destroyed
 far too great a number of the Danish folk 695
 in that wine-hall. Yet God gave to them,
 this band of Weders, good fortune in war,
 strong help and support—so they could defeat
 the fearsome foe through one man's skill,
 his own great might. Thus the truth is made known 700
 that almighty God has always wielded power
 over the nations of men.

Then in the dark of the night
 came the shadow-glider. The warriors were sleeping
 who were appointed to guard the gabled hall—
 all except one. It was known to the men 705
 that the dread demon could not throw them
 down in the darkness when God did not wish it.
 But the one who was watching with spirit enraged
 awaited the outcome of fighting this foe.

— XI —

Then from the moors that were thick with mist, 710
 Grendel emerged, wrapped in the anger of God.
 The hellish ravager sought to surprise
 one of the men at rest in the high hall.
 He crept under clouds toward the wine-hall,
 till he could see clearly the glorious building, 715
 glowing with gold plates. Nor was this
 the first time he sought Hrothgar's home,
 yet never before or after, in all his days,
 did he find a worse fortune among the hall-thanes.
 Then deprived of joy, the creature came 720
 to the famed hall. When touched by his hands,
 the door sprang open, burst from its bands.
 Then bent on destruction, and bulging with rage,
 he forced open the hall's mouth to move quickly in—
 a fiend trespassing on the shining floor, 725
 his spirit filled with fire. His eyes shone forth
 with fearsome lights much like flames.
 He saw in the hall a large group of heroes,
 a company of kinsmen all sleeping together,
 a brave band of warriors. His spirit exulted 730
 as the monster expected, before break of day,
 to tear life from limbs of everyone there,
 wreaking his terror while harvesting hope
 of feasting on flesh. Yet it was not his fate
 that he might again feed on the race of men, 735
 after that night. The heroic kinsman of Hygelac
 closely watched how the wicked man-slayer
 fought with such skill in sudden attacks.
 Nor did the demon think to delay,
 but for his first victim he swiftly seized 740

a sleeping warrior and slit him wide open,
 biting into the body, drinking blood in streams,
 swallowing huge mouthfuls—till soon
 he had eaten the entire man's corpse,
 even feet and hands. Next he stepped forth 745
 to clutch with his claws strong-hearted Beowulf
 where he lay at rest, the foe reaching for him
 to grab with his hands. The Geat answered quickly,
 propped on one arm, he faced the attack.
 That devourer of men then soon discovered 750
 that he never had met any one in middle-earth,
 even in far-off regions, of the race of men
 with hand-grip more strong. His spirit sank,
 filled with fear that he could not get away.
 He was eager for flight, to escape into darkness, 755
 to find fellowship with devils. Never had he met
 such a dread encounter in his former days.
 The brave kinsman of Hygelac then brought to mind
 his speech last evening and sprang to his feet,
 to hold his foe fast till his fingers broke. 760
 The giant fought to flee, but the Geat still advanced.
 The wicked destroyer wildly thought
 where to make his escape, far away from the hall,
 to find safety in fens, yet knew his fingers trapped
 in his enemy's grasp. This was a grim journey 765
 that the hellish ravager took to Heorot!
 The din filled the mead-hall. All of the Danes,
 the bold warriors, were to drink this time
 the ale of terror. Both fighters raged in their fury,
 as they fought for the hall. The tall house trembled. 770
 It was a great wonder that the wine-hall,
 the fairest of buildings, withstood the war-strife,
 did not fall to the ground. But it was held firm,
 from both within and without, by iron bands

skillfully fastened. Many a mead-bench,
 adorned with gold, flew from the floor,
 as I have heard told, in the struggle of foes.
 No wise warrior among the Scyldings
 would have thought any man could by his own might
 so threaten to destroy the hall decked with horns,
 to break it apart—though it might fall in fire's embrace,
 swallowed in smoke. New sounds rose up
 that were not of this earth. The North-Danes recoiled
 at the horrible terror, as each of their troop
 heard a wail go up from inside the walls,
 the enemy of God screaming songs of despair,
 his cries of defeat—as this captive of hell
 found his wounds fatal. Beowulf won with his death-grip,
 proved the greatest in might of any man,
 in that day and time, during his life on earth.

— XII —

This protector of warriors did not at all wish
 to let loose the death-bringer while still alive,
 nor did he count Grendel's life-days of value
 to anyone at all. There many a man of Beowulf's band
 eagerly brandished their ancient sword-blades,
 wishing to protect the life of their lord,
 the widely famed chief, any way that they could.
 While engaged in the fray, these brave-minded warriors
 sought to strike at the foe from every side,
 but could not figure how to hew Grendel down,
 how to seek out his soul: nor might any war-sword,
 not the strongest of irons in all of the earth,
 even touch to do harm to that evil destroyer—
 for Grendel wove spells round all human weapons,
 on all swords of victory. Yet severed from life,

he was fated to feel misery at the end of his days,
 his time on the earth, and the alien terror must now
 embark on a far journey into the power of fiends.

Then that one found out, who so often before
 had wrought wicked evils, terrified the spirits
 of the race of men—he waged war against God—
 that this time his fearsome strength would fail him,
 for his high-spirited foe, the kinsman of Hygelac,
 held him fast by the hand. Each hated the other,
 while they both lived. The dreaded demon
 suffered terrible torture, as his shoulder tore open,
 a great wound gaping as sinews sprang apart,
 and the bone-locks burst. To Beowulf then
 was glory given in battle. Sick unto death,
 Grendel could only flee to the fen-slopes,
 seek his home without joy. He certainly knew
 that he had reached the length of his life,
 his number of days. But for all of the Danes
 joy was renewed after the onslaught of death.
 The hero from afar, the kinsman of Hygelac,
 shrewd and strong-hearted, cleansed Hrothgar's hall,
 saved it from sorrow. He rejoiced in his night-work,
 a champion's great deeds. The prince of the Geats
 had fulfilled his boast to the folk of the East-Danes,
 had completely relieved them from heaviness of heart,
 from sorrow caused by evils that they long endured,
 from the horrible menace they were forced to suffer,
 from no little affliction. That was a true trophy
 which the battle-brave Beowulf set down before them,
 under the hall-roof—the hand, arm, and shoulder,
 with Grendel's claw, all connected together.