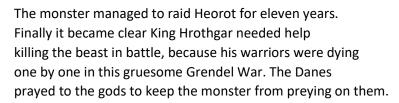## The Tale Of Mighty Beowulf

Here, let me tell you of the time Hrothgar,
king of Denmark, built a hall in his castle.
When it was complete, he named it Heorot.
Heorot was a hall where the people in the palace
ate supper and then slept when it was time for bed.

Nearby there lived a beast who lurked in the dark.
He was called Grendel, and was grand and gruesome.
Grendel abhorred Heorot (no one knows why);
one night he went to the hall, broke through a wall,
and found many men to feast on. Grendel growled
ferocious and loud, and his red eyes glared in the dark.
The noise awoke all who slept in the hall
and the knights were poised for battle. But the beast
Grendel showed his horrible teeth and grabbed
the first knight he found and consumed him
with one big bite. The monster roared
and everyone ran, leaving Grendel loudly laughing
as he went back to his lair where he soundly slept.

The monster managed to raid Heorot for eleven years.
Finally it became clear King Hrothgar needed help
killing the beast in battle, because his warriors were dying
one by one in this gruesome Grendel War. The Danes
prayed to the gods to keep the monster from preying on them.

Their prayers were answered when a ship sailed to their shores.
Beowulf was aboard the boat, and he came from across the sea
to help Hrothgar from the terror of Grendel's teeth. Beowulf
announced himself to Hrothgar, and the King welcomed him
with open arms. Hrothgar fed his guest a feast in his hall,
and Beowulf announced he planned to fight Grendel with his fists.
Unferth, Hrothgar's bravest knight, questioned Beowulf's skill.

Unferth asked, "Are you the legendary Beowulf, who took part
in a swimming contest with a friend in the ocean? As I have heard
the story, you both challenged each other and the sea for seven nights,
swimming as far out as you could, beating the cold and angry waves,
but in the end your friend won the race, you fell behind humiliated."

Beowulf barked. "You're right brave Unferth, I am that Beowulf.
But you have heard wrong. For five days and nights
we swam shoulder to shoulder against those cold and angry waves.

I was pulled under by a sea-monster. Armed with a sword,
I killed the sea-monster and eight others after it. It was a hard fight
under water with those terrible beasts, and I was weakened

but I swam to the surface and made it to the other shore.
Not since my fight with the sea-monsters have my people perished
at the mouths of them. I lost, but I was honoured, not humiliated."

When the feast was over, it was bedtime for the brave
Beowulf. He laid in bed awake, waiting for Grendel to strike.
Grendel stormed through the stone wall, grabbed
a startled soldier with his cruel claws and bit him to the bone.
The monster moved toward Beowulf, and lifted him
out of bed.

But before the beast could open its mouth,
Beowulf put Grendel in an arm lock no man or beast
had ever witnessed, and the monster let out a horrible howl.
The two tumbled about the hall until the sound of the scream
from the loser lifted everyone out of their beds. The monster
had been manacled from a man stronger than him,
and the beast ran recklessly back to his den to die.
Grendel's arm was torn off by Beowulf's grasp and
he could not live much longer. Beowulf picked the arm off
the floor, evidence of the fight, and stood among his men victorious.

The next day word got around that the beast had been beaten
by Beowulf. The damaged wall in the hall was repaired,
and Hrothgar gave Beowulf gifts for his courage.
A victory feast was served for supper, and everyone
was the happiest they'd been since Grendel started
running his raids. That night as they settled in for sleep,
it felt great to not worry about Grendel again.
Beowulf went to bed elsewhere. But as soon as
everyone was asleep and silence swept the night,
a second terror lurked in the moonlight.