

At the darkest hour, the door crashed open. A howl echoed through the hall. A giant, monstrous hand reached out and snatched Hrothgar's favourite warrior from the bench. Before the soldiers could draw their swords, the creature was gone.

It wasn't Grendel. Grendel was dead. Even a monster can't live with a wound like Grendel's. Grendel lay dead in a cave at the bottom of a poisoned lake. This monster was Grendel's mother. And she was out for revenge.

At dawn, Beowulf and his men mounted their horses. In silence they followed the trail of monstrous footprints to the poisoned lake. The smell was appalling. Huge snakes lay on the rocks around the green water. They flicked their tongues and hissed.

Beowulf pulled on his mail shirt and helmet. "I must go into the water to fight this monster," said Beowulf. He dived into the filthy water. As Beowulf dived, the snakes slid into the water. They tried to tear his mail shirt with their teeth but they failed. Then, up from the bottom, swam Grendel's mother. In her hand, she clutched a curved dagger. She hacked at Beowulf's mail shirt but the iron rings didn't tear. Then she grabbed Beowulf by the neck and dragged him down. They plunged deeper and deeper into the vile water.

Beowulf was dragged down through a flooded tunnel. He was pulled into a cave, deep below the poisoned pool. The monster threw him onto dry land. All around were jewels and weapons, the treasure she and her terrible son had stolen. And beside the pile of treasure lay Grendel's body.

Grendel's mother snarled and gouged at Beowulf's armour with her claws. Beowulf seized his dagger. He tried to stab but the monster's skin was protected by magic. No wound a human made could hurt her.

Beowulf was thrown to the floor. The demon jumped on him. She tore at his helmet. Beowulf pulled his head away from her claws. He saw an enormous sword lying near Grendel's body. It was so huge it must have been made by giants. With the last of his strength, Beowulf rolled out of the monster's grip. He grabbed the sword and swung it. The old, deep magic didn't work against a giant's sword. Grendel's mother fell dead beside her dreadful son.

That was the end of Grendel and his mother. No more monsters came to Hrothgar's hall. The warriors feasted in peace. The storyteller told his stories. The singer sang his songs. No demons stalked the night. It was time for Beowulf and his men to go home.

They carried their gifts to the boat. Then they pushed the boat into the foaming sea. Their oars cut into the sea's belly like a sword. Once past the rocks the captain set the sails. The dragon's head bit through the waves. They rode the water horses back to the land of the Geats.