

Beowulf & Grendel

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FADE IN:

1 EXT. OCEAN BEACH / NORTHERN EUROPE [500 A.D.] -- DUSK 1

CAMERA swoops along a shimmering black sand beach, mountains rising in the further distance...

FINDING: in the middle distance: EIGHT WARRIORS galloping on HORSEBACK, armed with spears, swords, shields, netting, torches. *

DOGS race along at their sides.

At the head of the troop rides a grizzled mid-aged WARRIOR, grimly determined, his face obscured by his battle mask.

The warriors race on, riding to beat the devil home.

2 EXT. MEADOW -- DUSK 2

With the sun gone below a ridge of barren hills, the darkness is quickly retaking the ground, bleeding out from the crevices of rock, the moss, a stream twisting through the emerald meadow...

...in the middle distance of which GOATS and SHEEP amble about.

Beyond them, rocky outcrops give way to a dark and shifting sea... and the low RUMBLE of surf...

Into the foreground there slowly shifts: a huge, stooped FIGURE. Erect, he'd be nearly seven feet tall, and is twice the mass of an average man, covered in hair - much of it greying. Immense arms lead to massive hands, the tough nails tools for a brutal existence.

His face - or what can be made of it in the falling light - has a leatherish quality. It also betrays age, as does a noticeable limp: this is a gigantic nocturnal primate - a troll who has seen better days.

He scans the meadow, puzzled. He CLUCKS his tongue a couple of times... GRUNTS out a name of some sort...

FATHER
Grrruhnellll....

He twists his head to one side, raises his nose and sniffs the wind... wary for a moment... then the moment passes...

(CONTINUED)

He shuffles forward a few more steps, still searching, worry now edging in. He CLUCKS his tongue again --

...and he's slammed from behind by something --

...or, as it turns out, someone: his small child - GRENDEL - who promptly tumbles past his father, CACKLING at the prank.

From the distance comes the sound of a DOG BARKING.

The father snatches at Grendel. He misses, tries again, and it becomes a little chase.

Finally the father scoops up Grendel and berates him in with several low guttural words - a primitive tongue with echoes of Old Norse.

Grendel responds by grabbing his father's nose and twisting it, laughing. The father then laughs too.

But once again the father grows wary. Holding Grendel close, he sniffs the air. More BARKING DOGS....

...then the far-off SHOUTS of HUMANS.

The father urgently swings Grendel up onto his shoulder, and - fear overcoming his infirmity - with great strides he crosses back out of the meadow toward the rock outcrops.

The troop of warriors race along...

...till the lead warrior pulls up, eyeing the rocks to either side. He sniffs the breeze, considers...

...the others waiting on his judgement...

...then he abruptly jerks his horse toward a break in the rocks, leading up into a meadow...

...the other warriors following.

Grendel's father is moving as best he can... but one hip is giving him trouble, and his wind is quickly going on him...

Grendel stares back over his shoulder, his face now betraying the same fear his father feels.

They scramble over rock, twist along moss paths, then down into a stream... then up the bank, up past massive boulders... the sound of the DOGS and HORSES edging ever closer.

The two trolls emerge into view of the sea. Grendel's father rushes up to the cliff edge, and verbally/gesturally directs Grendel to descend.

Grendel starts down a few feet before turning and meeting his father's fierce gaze. He gestures to Grendel to continue down. Grendel does, but steals a glance back up to find...

...his father turning to meet their pursuers. Grendel climbs back up to the cliffs' edge to see...

...the warriors charging in on horseback. Several dismount and take positions on the periphery.

The lead warrior continues forward. Now we see he's significantly older than the rest; there are years of these sort of battles in him. And yet the fire is still in his eye - even as it meets the troll's.

The other warriors hold back, waiting on their leader's move.

The troll scowls back, a snarl escaping.

The lead warrior, unfazed, even spurred on by the challenge, charges forward and flings a leather bag at Grendel's father.

The bag - hitting - bursts apart, throwing liquid pitch over him. As other warriors rush forward with torches...

...Grendel twists back down into the rocks, terrified.

There come the SOUNDS of a vicious FIGHT above... the ROARS of his father... the warriors' SHOUTS and the BARKING/WAILING of dogs... the NEIGHING, HUFFING and STOMPING of the horses...

A dog flies past, over the cliff to the rocks below...

Then a sudden WHOOSH... a terrifying SCREECH...

...and Grendel's father staggers off the cliff, stuck with spears, wrapped in netting, and engulfed in FLAMES.

His body twists down, and SLAPS onto the rocks below, where it lies motionless, burning... until the first wave washes in, extinguishing the flames.

Grendel gasps as...

...TORCHES drop through the air on either side, continuing down to the rocks below - the warriors seeking confirmation of the kill.

Their CHEERS of celebration wash down over Grendel, and he looks up to see...

...the lead warrior peering down into the dark, a spear raised ready to throw, his figure silhouetted against the torch-lights.

What Grendel does not see...

...is the warrior nudge up his battle-mask...

REVEALING: the wild battle-eyes of the Danish king - HROTHGAR [50]. His ferocious gaze softens, turns to puzzlement. Hrothgar, squinting, makes out...

...the tiny troll figure of Grendel nestled in the rocks.

Hrothgar is clearly torn. He gulps in a breath. His hand tightens in grip on his spear, his mind racing.

Grendel buries his face in his arms.

Finally, Hrothgar's puzzlement shifts to decision. He wipes the troll-blood from his eyes. Pity overtakes him. His spear-arm drops... and he turns away.

Grendel, burrowed into the rocks, steals a glance up to find...

...the warrior gone from the cliffside, the sounds of the hunt-party diminishing.

But the sound is replaced by Grendel's own sobs.

Grendel comes warily down the stony beach, gaze sweeping about in search, hands dragging an old sword.

Finally his gaze falls on what he's been searching for...

...the CORPSE of his father washed up in the rocks. He fights back sobs, and struggles to dislodge it... but the corpse is too heavy.

He resolves himself, then raises the sword, and swings it down repeatedly onto the corpse's neck.

Exhausted and crying, he takes up the severed head - a great weight for him - and cradles it in his small arms.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. GRENDEL'S CAVE [15 YEARS LATER] -- EVENING

ON: the desiccated HEAD of Grendel's father, positioned in a crude alcove-shrine, on either side of which small smudges burn...

The fires have somewhat preserved the head: the eye sockets are empty, and the flesh is gone from the face, but the skin has dried and tightened, the long wild hair remains, matted over and beyond the great brow, the yellow teeth clenched in eternal grin/grimace...

Sea-shells, stones, and dried flowers are placed around the head.

REVEAL: Grendel, now an adult, squatting down near a larger fire-bed of embers, gaze fixed on his father's head... his own thoughts clearly melancholic...

A breath rolls through him like a shudder. He rises...

...revealing his stature: he's huge, with powerful limbs, the scale of his father but with none of the infirmity. He starts up a rocky path toward the faint light of the cave entrance...

EXT. GRENDEL'S CAVE / SHORE CLIFFS -- EVENING

Grendel emerges out onto the cliff edge, and stares down at the crashing water on the rocks below...

...menace rising in his glassy-gaze, he squats down...

...snatches up a fist-sized rock and smashes himself once in the forehead...

Blood streams down from his brow and across his face. He licks the blood as it reaches his lip. Grunts a bitter SIGH/LAUGH at his wretched state. Blinks through the blood at...

(CONTINUED)

...the sun edging down into the sea.

He wipes the blood over his cheeks, chin, brow - a battle-mask in the making.

9 EXT. ABOVE THE DANISH VILLAGE / PERIMETER -- EVENING 9

With the light fading from the sky...

...the sounds of a CELEBRATION... LAUGHTER, MUSIC... drift up from the village... *

A CROWD of VILLAGERS circle about... *

...SNORRI [60s] who lifts a blood-stained pine-branch from the opened chest of a slaughtered ram lying on a rock. *

Hrothgar [60s now] goes down on one knee before him. Though greying, he wears his added years as well as any warrior-king could.

Snorri touches Hrothgar's forehead with the blood. *

SNORRI *

Hrothgar, much-loved King of the
Danes, under Odin's eye I blood you
lucky on all paths that leave this
hall.

A CHEER from the crowd.

Hrothgar rises, smiling, and turns to his grand hall.

His radiant wife - WEALHTHEOW [40s] - hands him a clay jug.

Hrothgar pulls the cap from it with his teeth and pours wine out across the steps. As it splashes down...

HROTHGAR

May all those who cross these steps
find a happy heart!

More CHEERS rise up from the villagers...

Hrothgar draws his sword and smashes the jug, sealing the blessing...

...and as the villagers line up to be - in turn - "blooded" by Snorri, Snorri bursting out in resonant SONG... *

(CONTINUED)

REVEAL THE LS POV: as that of Grendel, rising over a rock in the foreground. His expression is solemn. He sniffs the air deeply.

A shudder runs through him at the sound of the song... the rising of a mission in his gaze and in his blood. *

With some RAUCOUS drunken ROARS and HOWLS echoing through the village... and - at some distance - REVELLERS making their swerving way back to the longhouse...

...a lone torch-lit GUARD moves along a boulder ridge, spear in hand, grinning at the drunks. But then an ANIMAL HOWL rises from the darkness beyond, to which he turns...

GUARD

Come near here, y'shitbrain wolves,
you'll get a mouth of spear.

There's movement in the stones below, just beyond the boulders, just out of sight. The guard peers over.

Nothing for several beats... but then a strange BREATH-LIKE sound on the wind...

GRENDEL

Speee-arrrr...

The guard takes the torch from the holder in the stone, holds it out into the darkness, trying to figure what's below.

Several small stones hit him in the face, and he jerks back in surprise.

GUARD

(wary mutter)
What the...

The guard throws the torch down into the darkness.

Something large deftly shifts out of sight to one side.

There's a scratching of nail on stone as something climbs up the boulder.

GUARD

Olaf?! Pal?!

The guard swings his spear toward the sound, but without his torch he can't see much. Then, again, there's silence.

The guard moves to the edge, his spear high, ready to stab...

... but from the side a large dark LIMB swings out, the hand slapping the guard in the face. The thin CRACK of bone snapping.

The guard drops, shudders briefly, then his body goes still.

OMITTED

*

*

INT. MEAD HALL -- MORNING

LIGHT bleeds in with the CREAKY opening of the huge door, REVEALING:

...the night's carnage: broken benches, the BODIES of several slain warriors... blood splashed about...

ANGLE BACK ON: Hrothgar standing, stunned, in the doorway, with UNFERTH [30], a sturdy and well-scarred Danish warrior, to one side and AESCHERE [late 60s], Hrothgar's peer, to the other. Hrothgar, with Aeschere at this side, determinedly edges forward over the slippery wood...

*

*

...Unferth - hungover and bloodstained - an awkward step behind.

HROTHGAR

Where were you when all this --

UNFERTH

(awkward)

Asleep. I'd... I'd... had some beers.

AESCHERE

No others saw what happened?

UNFERTH

None who can speak.

HROTHGAR

(through his teeth)

What fucking thing would dare --

But his words end, and his steps slow.

Hrothgar, stunned, crosses the floor past the dead fire-pits to a slumped FIGURE on the throne at the far end of the room.

It's the guard from the wall, one hand clutching his spear as in readiness... his hood hanging over his face.

Hrothgar edges up, takes up a spear and, with its point, lifts the guard's hood - gasps - and jerks back.

Rolling off the shoulders - where his head should be - is a bloody head-sized stone. It hits the floor with a great THUMP, and rolls across it, coming to a stop at Hrothgar's feet.

ON: Hrothgar's face, his horror giving way to a grim realization.

FADE TO BLACK

FADE IN:

CAMERA slowly sweeps over sea-water... coming to rest...

ON: BEOWULF [30]... or at least his head, seeming to eerily bob on a plank of wood on the surface of the water.

The odd wave splashes over him... his eyes closed, face betraying no life... then suddenly a long SIGH of exhaustion - and relief...

His eyes flicker open, he blinks, and slowly edges in toward land, his neck, shoulders, torso inch-by-inch revealed...

...watched by a lone FISHERMAN on the beach mending his nets.

Beowulf, delirious, pushes aside the wooden plank, limps up onto the sand, trailing seaweed, his shins and thighs burdened by lamprey EELS attached to his flesh...

He wears a battle-weathered leather tunic, shredded tweed pants, a baldric-strap tying his sheathed sword to his back...

His body, though battered and scarred, is obviously one of great power. His wobbly-kneed stagger still manages the grace of the warrior/athlete returning from a struggle which nearly killed him.

FISHERMAN

G'day.

BEOWULF

G'day. I'd owe much to know my whereabouts.

FISHERMAN

Fish Beach... but likely I'm the only one who names it that.
(off Beowulf's look / wry)
Where I get fish.

The fisherman goes to his fire-pit and takes from it a smoking stick.

BEOWULF

I mean who's your king?

The fisherman looks back across the land, considers it...

FISHERMAN

Well... y'know how these things go.

As he talks, he indicates various directions and movements with his stick...

FISHERMAN (CONT'D)

Late as a couple years ago I think it was a Hathobard. Swedes rolled in, pushed them out... Hathobards came back, pushed them out - then they got pushed out by Geats. Wulfings showed up...

(beat / sighs)

Sig Skullsplitter of the Hathobards was spilling blood this way last spring. But then he got sick from sleeping with the sheep. Swedes came back...

BEOWULF

(hint of worry)

It's Swedish land then?

FISHERMAN

I wouldn't bet a fish on that. Hygelac the Geat then lay a beating on the Swedes...

(beat)

I had a boatload of Wulfings wash up. But they were just corpses. Stunk to Valhalla.

(MORE)

*

(CONTINUED)

FISHERMAN (CONT'D)

Had to let'm dry out a week then I
put the whole little crowd to flame
- not knowin what they died of, eh.
(beat / shrugs)
Yeah, I'll be guessing this is Geat
land for now.

Beowulf's relief is apparent.

FISHERMAN (CONT'D)

Sleep with that, canya? *

BEOWULF

Being a Geat...
(nods)
I'm Beowulf. *

By Beowulf's look, it's clear he expects his name to
register, but - just as clearly - it doesn't. *

FISHERMAN

Beowulf... what, the Eel Meal? *

The fisherman nods to Beowulf's eel-infested shins. Beowulf
looks down, gets dizzy and drops to the sand where he sits.

BEOWULF

You've not had another wash up...?
Like myself... name of Breca? *

The fisherman shakes his head. As Beowulf talks, the
fisherman methodically starts poking and singeing the eels
with the stick: they unclasp from Beowulf's bloodied flesh
and drop to the sand, where they squirm till the fisherman
whacks them dead.

BEOWULF (CONT'D)

We were out hunting whale the other
day. Storm came up and ate our
boat. Breca bet he could beat me
to shore. I lost sight of him in
the swells. *

The fisherman tries to fathom this.

FISHERMAN

So this is just you coming in now?

Beowulf nods. The fisherman gives a dubious look.

BEOWULF

Y'ever swum in the open sea?

FISHERMAN

Leave that to my boat.

Beowulf stares a beat at the fisherman.

BEOWULF

Am I right to think you mock me?

The fisherman considers Beowulf's grim manner, and his sword.
He starts to gather the eels and throw them in a pot.

FISHERMAN

Can't see much life in that.

(beat)

You do this a lot?

BEOWULF

I take what comes.

FISHERMAN

Good. Then you'll have no qualms
if supper tastes like you.

Beowulf stares. The fisherman gives a battered-tooth grin.

The fisherman pokes at his fire while Beowulf nibbles at a
plate of the cooked eels.

FISHERMAN

So... what's it like being a hero?
Quelling things with axes and that
sword of yours... in - what - a
kinda bloody madness?

Beowulf chafes slightly.

BEOWULF

In truth I don't get all that mad.

FISHERMAN

That's all I've heard of your sort.

BEOWULF

You should hear what they say about
fishermen.

They trade a wry grin. The fisherman stirs the fire..

FISHERMAN

So... a hero, eh? A hero for
supper. Don't my shit shine!

The fisherman notices Beowulf's squeamishness with the eels.

FISHERMAN

(eyeing Beowulf's plate)
Eat up. Be yourself!

And the fisherman cackles at his joke.

Beowulf and the fisherman stand before a rack of dried fish.
The fisherman is packing some in a small pouch, which he then
hands to Beowulf. Beowulf claps him on the shoulder.

BEOWULF

I'm in your debt.

FISHERMAN

(shrugs)
I'm in the fishes'.
(grim / to the water)
One o' these days they'll come for
theirs.

BEOWULF

Good luck. May Aegir keep you from
hunger.

FISHERMAN

Good luck with your killing things.
I guess you thank - who - Thor?

BEOWULF

That's uh... not all I do --

FISHERMAN

No, I'm sure y'piss and shit just
like the rest of us. Gotta say
there's not much use for that here.
(off his look)
Hitting things with axes. Y'oughta
try Daneland.

BEOWULF

Daneland.

FISHERMAN

Oh yeah, word from the whale-road
they got one unhappy troll on the
loose there.

BEOWULF

(dismissive)

I'd think the Danes could handle a
troll.

FISHERMAN

Guess the first eighty thought so
too.

BEOWULF

(jolted)

Eighty?!

FISHERMAN

Well... y'know how these things go.
Some say twenty, some say two
hundred.

BEOWULF

Two hundred?!

FISHERMAN

Yeah it bent my brain too...
thinking that many Danes could even
hold a sword.

BEOWULF

(sharp)

I know the Danes. They've bloodied
seas.

The fisherman reads the ferocity of Beowulf's emotion.

FISHERMAN

Eh, I'm just a fisherman.

Beowulf looks out over the water, torn.

Beowulf strides along a sheep trail, crosses over a ridge to
find...

...a smoldering ruin of a HUT, a few SHEEP about. FIVE rough-
looking MEN are eating at a fire-pit.

He edges forward, eyeing the smoke. They eye him warily.

(CONTINUED)

FIRST MAN

Dragon came in the night.

BEOWULF

(playing surprise)

Dragon.

FIRST MAN

Never heard of dragons?

BEOWULF

Oh, I've heard. Just always
thought they were tales.

(glancing around)

And it left without the sheep.

(off their looks)

Just seems odd... from what I've
heard of dragons... to leave a
sheep.

They offer shrugs.

BEOWULF (CONT'D)

So who are your people?

(off their looks)

I know most Geats. And this being
Geat land --

FIRST MAN

What's it to you?

Beowulf then spots some movement further back behind a
woodpile.

His hand slides to the hilt of his sword.

The first man fixes on the magnificent hilt - a sword of some
renown. He eyes Beowulf with more concern. *

FIRST MAN (CONT'D) *

That's some sword. You have a
name? *

BEOWULF *

I don't know yours, you likely
won't know mine. Beowulf. *

The others react - looks shooting amongst them - a name they
know and fear. *

Furtively they reach for their own weapons. *

(CONTINUED)

BEOWULF (CONT'D)

Maybe your dragon came back.

*

And Beowulf edges up the slope toward the shed...

...till he spots a MAN on the ground humping something.

As Beowulf nears, he makes out...

...the limp arm of a woman, extended over the rock and only jerking with the thrust of the man.

The scenario becomes immediately clear to him: the burned hut, the dead woman.

He draws his sword, and directly advances on the bandit group...

...all of whom now brandish weapons - though defensively.
The first man stumbles back, his movement putting the lie to his words.

*
*
*

FIRST MAN

Go now, you can go with your life.

BEOWULF

This is my life.
(ironic mutter)
A bloody madness.

And he charges forward, swinging his blade... immediately slashing the first man to the ground.

A second man comes and, after a couple of traded sword-strokes, Beowulf grabs the other's sword-arm, and then cuts him down too.

A third man comes at Beowulf, who blocks his sword-swing, grabs the wretch by the throat, and crushes it in his hand.

The last two from the fire-pit group now have clearly panicked expressions. Nonetheless, they come at him with their swords.

Beowulf routinely meets their strokes, then snatches hold of one, throws him into the other, then decapitates both in a stroke.

The headless clutching corpses then shudder to the ground.

Beowulf turns and marches up the slope.

(CONTINUED)

The necrophile, having just secured his pants, starts scrambling up the slope, WHINING fear.

Beowulf follows for a few beats - and gaining ground - then heaves his sword into the air.

It sails some distance before descending and catching the necrophile in his leg. He tumbles to the ground, SCREAMING.

Beowulf strides up to him, pulls his sword from the leg...

NECROPHILE

(a plea)

She was dead!

BEOWULF

Yeah. She was.

And Beowulf swings his blade down upon the wretch.

Beowulf places the dead woman - wrapped, with care, in a wool blanket - into a shallow grave.

Blood is splattered over his face and clothes, but the wildness has left his eyes: now he looks only weary.

The CRACK of a branch behind him, and Beowulf twists about, ready to fight...

...but finds a CHILD [6-7], face tear-streaked, fear in his eyes.

CHILD

Are you a dragon queller?

Beowulf considers, shrugs...

CHILD (CONT'D)

You quell children?

Beowulf shakes his head. The child eyes his mother.

CHILD (CONT'D)

She might be scared here with these men.

BEOWULF

Don't worry. Crows'll come for them.

*
*
*
*
*
*
*

CHILD

Then she'll be alone.

*
*

BEOWULF

The gods'll watch over.

*
*

CHILD

They didn't before.

*
*

Beowulf can't argue. He continues gently covering the body, the child approaching and helping to pat down the earth on the grave.

*

EXT. HEIGHT OF LAND -- DAY

Beowulf comes up over a ridge on foot, leading a HORSE, on which the child sleeps. Beowulf smiles, his gaze finding...

EXT. GEAT MEADOW / SHORELINE -- DAY

...a group of tents and SEVERAL DOZEN GEATS, cooking fires sending smoke to the skies, MUSIC and LAUGHTER drifting up to the hills.

It's an annual gathering place - large standing stones set in a great circle, and...

...across a black beach to the water, A COUPLE of LONGSHIPS lie at anchor.

EXT. GEAT MEADOW / FIREPIT -- DUSK

*

With a LONGSHIP silhouetted in the background...

...Beowulf sits almost central at a firepit - opposite his king - HYGELAC [50s] - surrounded by a cluster of Geat warriors...

...the great standing stones looming over them like guardians, the firelight already throwing wild shadows...

Among the Geat warriors is BRECA [30], almost as sturdy as Beowulf...and, beside him, HONDSCIOH [late 20s], Beowulf's best friend, and sitting to Beowulf's right.

In Beowulf's lap, the exhausted child is curled asleep in spite - or because - of the raucous warrior band.

All of them have been - and are still - drinking, and eating.

A short distance away, a group of Geat WOMEN are LAUGHING and TALKING among themselves.

THORKEL [30], the Geat poet, stands before the men with his harp, playing a powerful melody. His manner is serious, self-absorbed, ignoring the questionable attention of some of the others. His voice rises, resonant, hypnotic...

THORKEL

In a game to gut boredom Great
Beowulf and Breca...

Hondscioh rolls his eyes, snorts derision. Beowulf smiles at him.

THORKEL (CONT'D)

...hoisted their hopes on the
seething sea...

HONDSCIOH

Only cause they lost their sail.

Breca casually smacks Hondscioh hard in the arm. Hondscioh mockingly plays great pain. Grins from some, but Thorkel is undeterred.

THORKEL

The whale-road white as the tongues
of trolls...

BRECA

(at Hondscioh /
appreciative)

Hear that? The tongues of trolls!

HONDSCIOH

Arses, more like.

This time both Beowulf and Breca raise their hands to strike Hondscioh, who winces, duly preparing for the hits which -
this time - do not come.

*

THORKEL

The two fire-hearted friends fought
on / Steel-shirts a goad to
gruesome things / That crept up
from their water-worlds --

HONDSCIOH

Hold it there.

(to Beowulf and Breca)

You're in the boat?

(off their looks)

Things are going at you while
you're still in the boat?

(CONTINUED)

Beowulf shrugs, eyes Breca. Hondscioh follows his look.

HONDSCIOH (CONT'D)
Breca? You tell Thorkel that?

BRECA
Hondscioh, next time you're alone
on open water, just remember not to
drink it --

BEOWULF
...again.

The roars of LAUGHTER stir the child. Beowulf rises and carries the child to a bed of furs nearby.

HONDSCIOH
Any fish with any smell would sniff
you two and heave.

LAUGHTER.

HONDSCIOH (CONT'D)
Next time you tell a tale, Thorkel,
try to sift the sheepshit out.

THORKEL
I sing what I'm told!

HYGELAC
The song might well be stronger
than the bones it's built upon.

Nods from the cluster. Thorkel is clearly miffed.

THORKEL
They bring me giants, I'll sing of
giants. I can only work with the
bones I'm given!

Breca fires a look at Beowulf - who furtively indicates - no, nothing more happened, no thugs were killed. *

HONDSCIOH
You want bones, we'll bring you
bones. Troll-bones!

A hint of seriousness slips over the group. Hygelac eyes Beowulf.

BEOWULF

Hrothgar would cross the water for
us.

Looks shift about, drifting generally back to Hygelac who
broods.

HYGELAC

I know he would. I've had no
better neighbour-king. It's just
that... by the sounds of this thing
--

BEOWULF

...it's never met a Geat.

There is fierce pride in Beowulf's gaze, and proud nods from
the others. Hygelac looks at Beowulf, torn.

HYGELAC

I won't keep you home to frighten
fish. And, if you can...
(indicates Hondscioh)
...find Hondscioh a wife. Our
sheep can't take much more.

LAUGHS all round - mostly from Breca. Hondscioh gamely
shrugs.

EXT. GEAT HARBOUR -- DAY

A LONGSHIP is being loaded, Beowulf watching over the
process. He glances across the dock and sees...

...a row of human HEADS, appearing to be sitting on a
board... amongst them Hondscioh, Breca and Thorkel. One of
the heads moves, starts speaking.

Beowulf recoils a step, then relaxes, seeing the illusion...

...the cluster of MEN standing by the boat, their bodies
blocked by the dock.

Beowulf strolls over to the group. Hondscioh is holding a
harp in one hand, holding off a reaching Thorkel with the
other.

THORKEL

Give it.

HONDSCIOH

What - you plan to sing the thing
to death?

Breca snatches the harp from Hondscioh, hands it to Thorkel.
Hondscioh fires a dirty look at Breca, who smirks.

THORKEL

(to Beowulf re Hondscioh /
warning)
He puts one hand on my harp...

HONDSCIOH

Beowulf, we're gonna need some
extra shields.
(off Beowulf's look / re
Thorkel)
For our ears.

THORKEL

(to Hondscioh)
...I warn you - you're a dead man.

Hondscioh gives a mock-shudder. Breca and Beowulf trade a
grin. Thorkel does not, placing his precious harp in a
rabbit-skin bag.

And the loading continues.

Beowulf is slumped at the side of his LONGSHIP as it cuts
through the water. TWELVE GEATS are with him [including
Breca, Hondscioh and Thorkel], the sail doing all the work. *

One man is feeding the hearth fire on which meat is cooking.

THORKEL

Say this thing makes meat of any
man it finds.

BRECA

Danes say. Danes who ran. I've
also known Danes who'll say they
fought off Attila when he wandered
North.

HONDSCIOH

(wry)
Breca's right. Danes can't even
swim after fish.

BRECA

Walrus, Hondscioh, and next one I
catch, its tusk goes up your arse.

HONDSCIOH

(shrugs)
Worse things.

Laughter from the group.

And they sail on.

*

DISSOLVE TO:

A glass-still channel of water, in which dozens of ICEBERGS
stand... seeming to exude a blue-white light.

PUSH IN / FIND: a small boat - an Irish CORACLE - drifting...

...in the aft of which a man in ragged monk's cloak - BRENDAN
[40s] - is sprawled, his ratty sail catching the bit of
breeze, his hand draped over the rudder. He appears weak and
sick, his eyes those of a madman, fixed with suspicion on the
looming ice figures...

BRENDAN

(slurred Irish mutter)
...woe betide you beasts of ice...
ogre, troll - I don't wary much...

He raises one skinny arm like a weapon.

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

For I bring the burning sword of
Christ! To cleave you thus... and
thus... and thus!

And he strikes out his arm in the symbol of the cross...
before his energy leaves him and his arm drops.

BRENDAN

Fine then. Hold your tongues...
but dunna think I dunna know your
methods and your manner! They say
you lie more below than above and
on a whim will swing your ice-blue
asses up at God. Yesssss, well, do
as you must...

He rises, clutching the mast, pointing accusingly at the icebergs.

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

...but hear this vow: I will melt
you and drink you down and piss you
out upon these shores... and -yes -
you may freeze up and walk again...
but only as a Christian thing!

And he LAUGHS like a maniac, then loses his balance, falls, hits his head on the edge of the coracle - in the process knocking himself out. And the coracle drifts, as before, but now in quiet peace.

CLOSE ON: Brendan's weather-beaten - and unconscious - face, complete with a scabbed-over gouge in his forehead.

A stone hits his cheek, he winces, his eyes fluttering but staying closed.

Brendan mutters incomprehensibly, twists sideways, resuming a fitful sleep.

REVEAL: SELMA [30] standing on a pebble beach several feet from the run-aground coracle. Though her battered and simple clothes suggest poverty, there's strength and intelligence apparent in her. Also wildness and a fierce beauty.

She looks over Brendan... and his simple possessions.

She sees a small sack, opens it, and brings out a handful of silver crosses on chains. She considers them a moment, is putting them back, when...

UNFERTH

Selma!

Selma turns to see...

...Unferth - on the shoreline ridge, on HORSEBACK.

UNFERTH (CONT'D)

Y'leave him as he lies!

As Selma steps back from the coracle...

...Unferth gallops down beside them.

SELMA

Whatever else, I'm no thief.

UNFERTH

I didn't say y'were. He might
carry sickness. Y'bring it to
land, we all could die.

Selma studies Unferth a beat with vague contempt.

SELMA

By sickness, eh? Wouldn't that be
welcome?

(off his look)

Already looking out for our people.
You're not king yet, much as you
dream it.

*
*

Unferth lets it go. Looks over Brendan's garments.

UNFERTH

What sort of man...

SELMA

Celt. A priest.

UNFERTH

How can you tell?

SELMA

(sardonic)

By knowing. Y'ever leave this
land, you might know things too.
(looks over Brendan)
Needs mostly water... maybe fruit.

UNFERTH

Fruit?

Selma considers the water, and her eyes faintly glaze.

SELMA

But there's others coming... a
boatload of spears.

Unferth glances up and down the shore with evident concern.

UNFERTH

Slavs? No. We killed those
yesterday.

Selma shakes her head.

(CONTINUED)

SELMA

(cryptic)

These ones swim in blood.

25 EXT. ICEBERG PASSAGE -- DAY 25

WIDE ON: the iceberg passage through which the longship glides. *

There is no conversation now, all the warriors moved instead by the eerieness of the light... *

...some trying to draw warmth from the hearth fire. *

C/S: of Beowulf's hand dangling over the edge of the boat. *

ON: his face as he closes his eyes. *

A small wave washes up across his arm... *

...and from the water a creature-like HAND reaches up, and fiercely snatches hold of his wrist. *

Beowulf twists around, rips his hand free... *

...only to find it's been tangled in a rope from the ship... *

...but, in the inky water below, a play of light... something seeming to descend back down to the dark depths. *

Beowulf repositions his hand on the hilt of his sword. *

26 OMITTED 26 *

27 INT. HROTHGAR'S CHAMBERS -- NIGHT 27

Hrothgar is creakily putting on his mailshirt. Though only months have passed since the troll's first attack, these months weigh on Hrothgar like many years. Too much grief-driven drink, too many sleepless nights, have brought him the dull and watery gaze of a lost man.

Wealththeow, his wife, enters and looks troubled by Hrothgar's action.

HROTHGAR

Who ever heard of a kingdom laid to waste by a stinking troll!

(off her look)

I can't game more men against this thing.

(CONTINUED)

WEALHTHEOW

Then don't. It's only in the
night...

HROTHGAR

So then - I'm king - but only by
day?

Hrothgar sneers, spits on the floor.

HROTHGAR (CONT'D)

Fuck that.

Wealhtheow, without missing a beat, snatches up a shirt and
throws it to him. Hrothgar catches it, turns it in his hand.

WEALHTHEOW

One troll outside is plenty.

She nods to the spit: clean it up.

Hrothgar throws the shirt down on his spit, rubs it with a
foot.

HROTHGAR

Maybe it needs the blood of a king.

Hrothgar takes up a cup of beer, has a gulp, then Wealhtheow
comes to him and gently takes the cup away. He looks back at
her with mixed emotions.

WEALHTHEOW

Don't let beer blur your wits.

HROTHGAR

You called it "he."

WEALHTHEOW

Women seek a death for a loss.
They get their blood-worth and
settle. This has the blood-lust of
a man.

HROTHGAR

Which I have to quell... or I'm
already dead.

(off her look)

If Odin sent this thing to bring my
end... so be it. If not, then
he'll steer my sword.

(beat)

My dear, I miss the stars.

*

(CONTINUED)

Wealhtheow gently strokes his cheek. Her eyes glaze with tears, but her hands move down and help tie the straps of his battle-gear.

Hrothgar, meanwhile, takes up his battle-mask helmet - and stares into the hollow eye-sockets as if at a ghost.

Hrothgar moves out from the torch-lit rock perimeter... a massive two-handed sword turning in his adrenalined grip. His eyes fight the darkness, and his fear.

HROTHGAR

(shouts)

Troll! I call you out!

Nothing. Hrothgar takes several steps further.

HROTHGAR (CONT'D)

Troll!

A sudden rise of WIND, and Hrothgar twists about - as though Grendel had taken wind-form, but the gust passes... silence resuming.

WITH: A GUARD on the boulders watching Hrothgar in the middle distance facing out into the darkness.

WITH: Hrothgar staring out, catching Grendel's scent on the air. Hrothgar's intensity returns, eyes scanning the periphery.

HROTHGAR (CONT'D)

(shouting)

Meet me in the light if you have the guts. Or fight me now! You hairy creep!

The guard shakes his head at Hrothgar's pathetic state

GRENDEL

(throaty mutter / Troll accent)

Creep creep...

The guard swings about, spear in hand, his gaze rising up and fixing in terror...

...on Grendel, several yards along the boulder from him, also watching Hrothgar's performance. Grendel grins, shakes his head...

The guard's mouth drops open, but his voice utterly fails him.

Grendel's grin shifts to grimace... as an arm swings up.

WITH: Hrothgar as he takes one or two more hesitant strides out into the darkness, sniffing the air, sensing something, his intensity returning.

PEBBLES skid to one side of him. Hrothgar wheels, ready to strike... but another silence follows.

A shadow crosses Hrothgar. He wheels...

...to meet a large shape descending through the air, which tumbles in a limp heap, ending at Hrothgar's feet: the CORPSE of the dead guard, his neck neatly snapped.

WITH: Grendel, watching with grim amusement, from twenty feet away, one with the boulder he stands beside, as...

...Hrothgar charges forward into the darkness, SCREAMING, swinging wildly and blindly with his sword...

After several seconds of striking nothing, he stops - catches his breath - scanning around... but nothing suggests any shape.

Finally there comes a CLICKING NOISE... and then - almost a LAUGH.

WITH: Hrothgar wheeling on the sound, making out the massive shape, which he charges toward... only to find, on arrival, that the shape is the boulder...

...and Grendel is nowhere to be seen.

CLOSE ON: Hrothgar staring helplessly out and then up to the brilliant stars. A sad smile comes and tears fill his eyes.

Wealththeow urgently comes along the path... passing VILLAGERS who are subdued, all looking toward...

...Hrothgar who sits, hunched over, on a small rise, facing the wilds, the dead guard lying beside him.

Wealththeow hurries up to Hrothgar, looks him over with concern.

WEALHTHEOW

Are you wounded?

HROTHGAR

The thing wouldn't fight. It spared me... to witness this.

A shudder rolls through him and he lets out a gasp, eyeing the corpse. Another jerking shudder...

Wealhtheow glances back, sees the villagers watching, and whispering.

WEALHTHEOW

(under her breath)

Then get up off your arse... with your thanes in sight. This is no ground for a king.

HROTHGAR

(caustic / dazed)

Oh... you're wrong. For a king who's had his balls hauled up his guts... it's the ground. For all the broken-bone wretches I've flung to death --

WEALHTHEOW

And Valhalla.

Hrothgar considers the terror in the face of the dead guard.

HROTHGAR

I don't know. Is that the look of a man going happily up to the feast... or down to the worms?

WEALHTHEOW

You talk like a madman.

HROTHGAR

No - just the Danish king of daylight!

WEALHTHEOW

Get up now... or do we bury you here?

HROTHGAR

Is that your wish?

Wealththeow slaps him hard across the face - surprising herself.

HROTHGAR (CONT'D)
(ironic)
With your thanes in sight.

WEALHTHEOW
Whose wife would you have me be?

Wealththeow stares evenly at him. He sighs, shrugs.
Wealththeow turns and strides back up into the enclosure.

EXT. FIELD BEYOND THE DANISH VILLAGE -- DAY

Selma is picking berries. The sound of a HORSE approaching.
She turns to find...

...Wealththeow there. Wealththeow dismounts, approaches.

SELMA
(nodding to a spot)
Watch yourself.

WEALHTHEOW
You think I've lost feel for the ground.

SELMA
There's brambles there... bog there. Last thing I need's a dead queen on my hands.

WEALHTHEOW
You've had worse and I've been far far less - dead or otherwise.

Wealththeow sits down on a rock, while Selma keeps picking. A long silence.

WEALHTHEOW (CONT'D)
Selma, should I fear for my husband?

SELMA
If you've got nothing better to do.

WEALHTHEOW
Sweet, don't play the bitch with me. I don't ask much and I don't ask often. No one dares dirty your name around me.

SELMA
(ironic)
Nor yours around me.

*

They trade the hint of a smile.

SELMA (CONT'D)
(beat)
Hrothgar dies happy... in his
sleep.

WEALHTHEOW
That's a lift.

SELMA
Take them where we can, eh.

Wealththeow smiles, nods. A silence.

WEALHTHEOW
I could find a place for you
inside.

SELMA
We chose our beds a long time back.

The women share a look. Wealththeow nods. Selma continues
with her berries.

31 EXT. DANISH VILLAGE -- DAY

31

A funeral pyre burns with the corpse of the guard.

*

ON: Hrothgar sitting on a rock a short distance off,
polishing his sword with a cloth...

*

*

BRENDAN
That's one shiny sword.

Hrothgar turns to find...

...Brendan shuffling toward him. He's a bit of a sight: in
his dark and ratty monk's wool cassock, hollowed eye sockets
and fierce - almost unblinking - gaze, plus a wonky and
unpredictable gait.

BRENDAN (CONT'D)
I'm told you're the Danes' king.
(off Hrothgar's stare)
Northumbria wishes you well.

(CONTINUED)

HROTHGAR

Celt. You're a ways away.

BRENDAN

I am... but safe with the sword of
Christ. Father Brendan.

Brendan bows slightly, his large crucifix swinging forward.

HROTHGAR

I see a man, I see a staff...
(re the crucifix)
I see a weapon for killing toads.
(off Brendan's shrug)
Christ, eh? I've heard of him. He
ever have much luck with trolls?

BRENDAN

I'm under the thought they never
crossed paths.
(off Hrothgar's dismissive
look)
But if you're willing to bow before
Christ, you shall feel the blessing
of his great strength.

HROTHGAR

My gods don't ask me to bow.

BRENDAN

Nor should they dare... if they
won't protect you.

This stings Hrothgar. His hand squeezes the hilt of his
sword, but he resists striking Brendan. Brendan remains
unperturbed.

He eyes the pyre... as the guard is lifted upon it. A guard
begins to blow on a horn - calling the villagers to the
burning.

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

To face God's foes is an honour.
I've come to drive this evil out.

HROTHGAR

With your stick?

BRENDAN

With the fire of Heaven!

HROTHGAR

If your heaven's on fire, y'better
look to that.

Brendan gets a furious look, and starts to pace before Hrothgar. Hrothgar, in spite of himself, is a bit impressed by Brendan's intensity.

BRENDAN

Leave me on a dish for the troll,
then! Leave me and, if I don't see
man's dawn, I shall see God's! I
shall see God's!

Brendan gazes fiercely at Hrothgar a moment, his eyes blink repeatedly, then he collapses on the ground.

Unferth strides up, checks Brendan, his breathing, his eyes.

UNFERTH

He's asleep.

All Hrothgar can manage is a sigh, a shake of the head at the grim farce his life has become.

Beowulf's longship edges into the shallows of a black beach... stone promontories rising high on either side.

He and half his men jump down into the water, and - guide-ropes in hand - haul the boat up upon the stones.

As the men in the boat begin passing over their battle-gear to those in the water...

...they turn to the sound of a NEIGHING HORSE...

...and see ERIK [a coast-guard] come galloping down through a break in the rock, and pull up in the stones... just out of spear distance.

ERIK

Hold there!

BEOWULF

As you wish. Is this land Dane?

ERIK

It is... and you're not. So
unless, you're ripe for a shower of
arrows, you'll tell who you are.

Hondscioh gives a great amused laugh at Erik's threat. Erik, unamused, lifts from his hip a horn.

ERIK (CONT'D)

Two blows of this and fifty men
will be on these cliffs before
you've strapped your ring-shirts.

HONDSCIOH

Fifty birds maybe.

ERIK

(a threat)

Is that then your word?

BEOWULF

I'm Beowulf --

The name registers sharply with Erik.

ERIK

Beowulf the Geat.

BEOWULF

(nods)

We come as friends to Hrothgar.

Erik looks over their equipment, and over Beowulf - trying to mask his awe.

ERIK

We welcome friends. Bring what you
need. I'll have men look to your
ship.

Erik blows ONCE on his HORN... the powerful and eerie sound echoing off the cliffs.

HONDSCIOH

One blow is good news?

ERIK

One blow is good.

Hondscioh winks good-naturedly. Erik glances at Beowulf who shrugs.

Beowulf's troop, loaded with their weaponry - shields, swords, axes, spears - walk across the even ground, led by Erik with his horse.

Moss-ridden rock rises on either side, boulders and irregular ridges suggesting menacing shapes... frozen for now.

As Erik and the Geats come up over a rise, and into sight of...

*
*

...the Danish village. Erik rides up ahead to...

*

...a GUARD at the break in the rocks who, after a moment with Erik, waves them in.

*
*

The Geats continue forward, scanning...

...VILLAGERS clustered around a couple funeral pyres. The villagers stare back - listless, forlorn, dead-eyed - at the Geats.

HONDSCIOH

(low to the other Geats)

By Thor... they've got the spark of cows.

BRECA

How bout that one.

Beowulf and Hondscioh follow Breca's gaze...

...to Selma, coming from the opposite direction, carrying her baskets. She's a jolt of vigor and beauty, especially set against the dregs through which she moves.

Beowulf finds her studying him with interest; he edges up to Erik.

BEOWULF

Who's the one with the baskets?

ERIK

Selma. A witch. The happy would keep a boat-length from her.

HONDSCIOH

(lascivious)

Happiness isn't everything.

ERIK

She sees people's deaths.

HONDSCIOH
(wry disappointment)
Wouldn't you know.

And they continue on.

The Geats come up to the great hall - a magnificent wood and stone structure, three stories high. Below the eaves is hung the great pair of buck's antlers, and around these are ornate wood carvings.

The Geats are obviously impressed.

BRECA
That's one beer-hall, eh Hondscioh?

Before Hondscioh can respond...

ERIK
If you like to drink with ghosts.

As the Geats consider this, a commotion rises behind them. They turn to see...

...a cluster of men striding toward them, the commotion coming from the older man at the center who is GROWLING impatience, Unferth at his side, muttering explanations.

As they near, Beowulf recognizes the old man as...

...Hrothgar, who is half-drunk and just roused from sleep. Hrothgar, seeing Beowulf, strides clear of his own retinue.

Beowulf struggles to mask his surprise at the king's wretched appearance.

HROTHGAR
By the gods! My little Beowulf!
(derisive nod to his
retinue)
No one tells me anything.

He comes up to Beowulf and gives him a great hug... then holds him at a short distance, looking him over, grinning.

HROTHGAR (CONT'D)
I somehow think of you as smaller.

BEOWULF
I was eight when I left.

HROTHGAR

You've grown!

Smiles all around.

BEOWULF

I'm sorry. We didn't mean to wake
you.

HROTHGAR

Wake me?! I'm a grief-crippled
king half-drunk in the middle of
the afternoon! What's to wake?
(beat / eyes welling)
By the gods it's good to see you!
(beat)
Perhaps Odin too has woken from his
slumber.

WIDE ON: the group... Hrothgar's guards to one side... the
impressive band of Geats opposite... all joining in SMILES.

As Hrothgar leads them into the hall, the Geats pass...

...Brendan who stands to one side, beatific smile on his
face, apple in hand. He locks gazes with Hondscioh as they
pass, and blesses the group with the sign of the cross.

Hondscioh forces an awkward smile, nods, continues past.

EXT. GRENDEL'S CAVE / SHORELINE CLIFFS -- EVENING

CLOSE ON: a human's dried-out HEAD on a cliff-edge facing
inland. Several similar-size rocks sit in close proximity.
The head is almost down to bone, with some skin and a ratty
scalp of hair...

Another rock rolls up toward the head, but comes to rest
before it reaches it.

Silence... then another rock tumbles up toward the head, gets
that much closer, but stops as well.

A snarling EXPLETIVE in Troll-tongue:

GRENDEL

Yahhhg!

REVEAL: Grendel, the rock-thrower, as he takes his stance
once more... MUTTERS reassurance to himself... then heaves a
third rock toward the head.

This rock crashes into the head, knocking it over the cliff.

GRENDEL (CONT'D)
(high-pitched giddy yelp)
Heeeee!

He struts about, chest swelling... then settles his gaze -
and sigh - on the sunset.

The mead hall glows with a profusion of TORCHES - both inside
and out - stunning against the twilight, the great warm haven
it was meant to be.

LAUGHTER and MUSIC from within...

The benches are full of warriors and earls, one side the Geat
troop, on the other the Danes...

On the Danes' side, there are considerably more women than
men, the women talking between themselves, flirtatiously
eying the revved-up Geats.

ON: Breca scanning several women, his mouth falling open with
nerve-stunned lust. Hondscioh, beside him, reaches over and
nudges his mouth closed.

Between the two groups the fire-pits burn.

LAUGHTER and talk compete with a MUSICIAN playing a HARP, a
SECOND with a bone FLUTE, a THIRD playing a BODHRAN.

Hrothgar sits at one end of the room, Beowulf nearest him.

There's abundant food and jugs of beer being delivered to the
warriors by teenaged ATTENDANTS.

Wealhtheow, passing behind Beowulf, leans in to him,
indicates the numerous women.

WEALHTHEOW
If a Geat were seeking a wife, this
room would hold better hope than
most.

BEOWULF
So many --

WEALHTHEOW

Widows.
(off Beowulf's look)
Widows far too early.

Beowulf nods, glances across the group and his gaze meets...
...Unferth, who is fixed on him, with an ugly look. Unferth
takes a long draught from his drink, clearly well on the way
to drunk.

Wealhtheow reluctantly pours beer from a jug into the drunk
Hrothgar's cup. With some effort he stands.

AESCHERE

Ho!

And the room goes silent.

Hrothgar looks about, eyes watering. He smiles, but as
quickly gets overwhelmed with emotion. Catches a huge
breath. The grief and fear and hopelessness wash over his
face. He clears his throat, but nothing follows.

He scans the group, shrugs apologetically, LAUGHS - but it's
nothing the others can join in on.

Wealhtheow gently puts a hand on his shoulder, whispers
something in his ear. He nods and lowers himself back to his
seat.

Wealhtheow turns to the assembly.

WEALHTHEOW

With my king I welcome you all.
Too many days we've drunk to forget
the night, and what it brings. But
today we drink to what the day's
brought - thirteen swords against
our curse. Thirteen men to swell
our weary...
(soft, suggestive)
...walls.

*
*

Wealhtheow turns to Beowulf and fills his cup.

WEALHTHEOW (CONT'D)

We'll never forget this gift.

And she moves along the row of Geats pouring into each cup.

(CONTINUED)

Beowulf rises, and he too finds himself a bit emotional. His gaze drifts over the group as he speaks.

BEOWULF

I'll say this once: this is no gift, coming here is the least I can do. Danes, you sheltered me as a child. Some of you here are old enough to remember. To the rest I say only I come as a brother.

(beat)

These others with me made their own minds. We mean to bring an end to this fiend --

UNFERTH

(loud mutter)

As others vowed...

WEALHTHEOW

Unferth!

BEOWULF

By your will, dear queen... we're wiser in knowing the hearts of those who've tangled with the thing.

A brief silence through which Unferth and Beowulf lock gazes.

AESCHERE

(sharp / eyeing Unferth)

Those are dead.

UNFERTH

I don't brag of wrestling with it, nor of being able to kill it.

(beat)

The troll broke down these doors with twenty Danish warriors sleeping inside. What gives thirteen Geats better hope?

*

HONDSCIOH

We won't be sleeping.

UNFERTH

No - more likely bragging of your fights with cod-fish.

A coldness sweeps through the room, the Geats on edge. Aeschere rises, livid, glaring at Unferth.

*

*

(CONTINUED)

AESCHERE

If you don't know what this man has
done, you'll shut your hole or have
it shut for you. If you *do* know,
then so much the worse!

*
*
*
*
*

Hrothgar glances over, blinking up out of his fog.

BEOWULF

(to Unferth)

So, friend - unscathed amidst all
this death - should we guess you've
steered your way clear of bragging?

Unferth gets a wild look, rises from his seat, hand to his
sword-hilt. But just as suddenly Hrothgar has risen, this
time with fury.

HROTHGAR

Unferth! Sit or see your guts in a
dish.

*
*

Unferth looks suddenly puzzled, the beer fogging his head.
Finally he sits.

Hrothgar eyes the Geats, struggling for focus.

HROTHGAR (CONT'D)

Forgive us forgetting the ways of
kin. Beowulf, if you do as you
vow, there's nothing you can wish
for that won't be yours - if I have
any weight in it.

(beat)

Now, before the dark must sharpen
us again, songs and beer!

As an attendant reaches to pour into Hrothgar's cup, he
covers it with his hand, shakes his head.

The musicians begin again, and the attendants bring more
beer... conversations rising up all around.

The far-off sound of LAUGHTER from the hall drifts over the
field.

And a dark silhouette rises in the foreground: Grendel,
slowing at the sound. He listens with puzzlement - which
shifts to irritation.

He shakes his head categorically...

GRENDEL
(firm mutter)
Na-na-na-na... na-na-na-na...

...and he lopes off toward the distant lights, his stride lengthening, arms swinging, landscape streaming under his feet.

40 EXT. MEAD HALL / BALCONY -- EVENING 40

As the Geat warriors below and inside set up their equipment, preparing for an attack - with a drunken Unferth watching them suspiciously...

...Beowulf and Hrothgar stand on the open balcony, looking out on the falling dark. Hrothgar's mood is grim... in spite of the RAUCOUS men below... but he's more clear-headed.

HROTHGAR
Since it began we've had Saxons,
Swedes... even Slavs... coming to
see how weak we were.

Beowulf studies Hrothgar a long beat.

HROTHGAR (CONT'D)
I know. I look like walrus shit.
Comes of fighting things you can't.

Hrothgar manages a weak smile. Beowulf clasps Hrothgar's shoulder.

BEOWULF
All bad dreams end. We'll see you
in the morning for herring and egg.

HROTHGAR
Herring and egg.

As Beowulf turns toward the battlement... a desperate look crosses Hrothgar's face, struggling with the things he can't say.

BEOWULF
If there's anything you need to
tell me about it... now would be
the time.

Hrothgar fights a shudder. Beowulf again takes hold of his shoulder, steadies him. Hrothgar clenches Beowulf's hand.

(CONTINUED)

HROTHGAR
I'll stay here amongst you.

Beowulf shakes his head.

BEOWULF
We'll bring you the head. Throw it
in with the herring and egg.

They trade smiles. Hrothgar studies Beowulf, sees his steely resolve. For the first time in ages Hrothgar risks hope.

40A INT. MEAD HALL -- NIGHT 40A

PAN OVER: the thirteen Geats, some lying on mats on the floor, some on benches, one or two slumped back in sitting position against the walls, all with weapons at the ready. All alert and waiting... *

...all except Unferth, who lies back, snoring loudly.

Beowulf sits at the foot of the empty throne, staring into the embers of the fire-pit, his great sword in his hand.

41 EXT. DANISH VILLAGE / MEAD HALL -- NIGHT 41

Brendan is kneeling at the bottom of a slope leading up to the mead hall. He is facing the wilds, and quietly PRAYING in LATIN.

The huge shape of Grendel edges into the light, headed on a line from the rocks - through Brendan - to the hall.

Brendan, sniffing the air, visibly tenses but continues in prayer, eyes closed.

Grendel - still yards away - slows to a stop, and takes his own long sniff of Brendan. Clearly it puzzles him: a man-smell he's not met before.

As Brendan's prayer increases in breathiness...

...Grendel curves off and around him, then onward up to the hall.

42 INT. MEAD HALL -- CONTINUOUS 42

An ember POPS... and it's followed immediately by the CREAK of straining timber...

Beowulf's gaze swings to the doors...

43 EXT. MEAD HALL -- CONTINUOUS 43

Grendel leans toward the doors, sniffing - and even more puzzled by the smells from inside.

44 INT. MEAD HALL -- CONTINUOUS 44

From outside the sound of Grendel's SNIFFING...

The warriors swing up from their beds, adrenaline of battle rushing in - but they're cautious to not betray their readiness - all eyes are open, all mouths closed.

Some men remain squatting; others stand, weapons drawn in preparation...

45 EXT. MEAD HALL -- CONTINUOUS 45

CLOSE ON: Grendel holding his forearm horizontally against the door... seeming to test its strength.

Grendel's head then slumps forward, forehead resting against the arm. Grendel closes his eyes.

46 INT. MEAD HALL -- CONTINUOUS 46

There then comes a longer CREAK and a gentle - yet enormous - pressure on the bolted doors from outside... a great SIGH...

Beowulf, sword at the ready, edges to the door... Hondscioh and Breca at his side...

There's a silence... the warriors' apprehension building...

...then a prolonged TRICKLE sound...

Beowulf looks down, and immediately jerks back a step, avoiding...

CLOSE ON: a liquid - Grendel's urine - pooling under the door.

Beowulf gives his men a look; they all move forward as Beowulf angrily throws off the locking timber, and swings open the door, swings back his blade...

...to find only darkness, and the staggering stench of the troll's piss-mark.

47 EXT. MEAD HALL -- NIGHT 47

ON: Brendan, eyes closed, still praying... as a huge SHADOW -
thrown by the mead hall torches - passes over him...

...a THROATY SNICKER from the passerby, and then he is gone.

Brendan lets out a sigh, but does not open his eyes.

48 EXT. DANISH VILLAGE / MEAD HALL -- DAY 48

ON: BLACKSMITHS turning glowing pokers against the stained
wood of the great doors... burning off Grendel's urine.

Beowulf, Hondscioh and Hrothgar, amongst others, watch from
one side. Hrothgar is puzzled but relieved.

HROTHGAR

Worse things than a bloodless dawn.

BEOWULF

He let us rest... the worse for
him.

HONDSCIOH

He ever leave men alive in the
hall?

HROTHGAR

Since it began...

Hrothgar shakes his head.

The three men trade a look. Beowulf's drifting gaze finds...

...Brendan, a short distance off, sitting on a rock - almost
indiscernible among the boulders surrounding him. He's
chewing on an apple, studying the others.

Beowulf strides down to him, Hondscioh and Hrothgar
following.

BEOWULF

Priest, where did you spend the
night?

Brendan considers him a moment, then nods to the spot where
he'd been praying.

BEOWULF (CONT'D)

You didn't move at all through the
night?

(CONTINUED)

BRENDAN
(considers, shrugs)
Up once to piss, but...

Beowulf gives a dubious look.

BRENDAN (CONT'D)
(wry, rhetorical)
Why was such a daft wretch spared?
(beat / fervent)
Demon's wise enough to know a
messenger of God! To touch my
cloak's to bring God's very fire
and storm upon its head.

HONDSCIOH
That's not what he asked.

Brendan stares back at Hondscioh a beat, then - ignoring him -
turns to Hrothgar.

BRENDAN
Wise king, you must know the name
of Clovis.

HONDSCIOH
The Frank.

BRENDAN
(faintly condescending)
The Frank, yes. Yes, the Frank.
(beat / intense)
The Christian sword over land ten
times what the Danes hold dear!

BEOWULF
He's dead.

BRENDAN
Did I say he was a god?
(beat)
He's dead, yes, ten years now --
but not before he saw God's grace:
the Visigoths of Aquitaine, the
Romans under Syagrius, Burgundians,
Alamans all fell before him! And
all because he had God's ear!

HROTHGAR

If I recall, he also had a thousand
swords, neighbours gone soft on
wine and pig, no ice on his rivers -
-

HONDSCIOH

And no fucking trolls.

HROTHGAR

And no trolls.

BRENDAN

My skinny hand can only bless. But
trust me - this thing shall meet
its end in striking me... or those
of mine.

Brendan shuffles off. The three share a look.

BEOWULF

Madness has its wonders.

UNFERTH

(throaty)
The Celt sat straight in the path
of the thing... and was not
touched.

The three turn to see a haggard, hungover Unferth approach.

HONDSCIOH

(mutter)
The dead do walk.

BEOWULF

(to Hrothgar)
The Celt held no sword. Perhaps
the thing hates weapons.

HROTHGAR

But your men were armed.

Hondscioh fixes on Unferth and his sword.

HONDSCIOH

Others here in arms have been
spared.

Unferth gives him a threatening look.

(CONTINUED)

UNFERTH

I've waited for Odin to bring me my
death. He hasn't.

HONDSCIOH

(wry)
In his wisdom?

Unferth trembles with indignation, sensing insult, but
there's little to take hold of. He turns and strides away.

HROTHGAR

There walks one of my toughest
fighters. He still is with men...
but the troll stole his spine.

*

Beowulf broods a beat.

BEOWULF

Do you know where the thing makes
its home?

HROTHGAR

We followed a blood-trail once,
took us to the foot of cliffs...

*

49

EXT. FLOODPLAIN LEADING TO CLIFFS -- DAY

49

*

With the steam/mist burning off the water...

... Erik leads Beowulf and the Geats - on horseback - down
the black sand beach, DOGS running ahead...

...to a wall of daunting cliff, at the bottom of which the
dogs sniff and howl.

Beowulf, Hondscioh and Breca consider the challenging climb.

ERIK

This is where the blood trails led.

HONDSCIOH

Not much known to daylight climbs
up that.

*

BEOWULF

Which is why he gets his rest.

Beowulf starts up through the rocks...

*

(CONTINUED)

HONDSCIOH

I tell you, this troll must be one
tough prick...

(off Breca's look / wry)

Do this climb every night after
supper?

And the others proceed to follow Beowulf.

*

EXT. CLIFFS -- LATER

The Geat troop is edging up the rocky bluff, but warily, the
warriors struggling to gauge the shadows which shift with the
shifting mist.

THORFINN [20s], wiry and vigorous, leads the way now...

...with Beowulf and Hondscioh just a bit back of him.

Hondscioh eyes Erik.

*

HONDSCIOH

You want to blow your horn now, I
wouldn't mind those fifty bows you
bragged of.

ERIK

I could bring the bows. But the
men are gone.

Beowulf gives Hondscioh a look... but his gaze then fixes
on...

...Thorfinn who, stepping up, takes hold of a jutting hunk of
driftwood for support...

BEOWULF

This is too high up for driftwood.

(warning)

Thorfinn!

As Thorfinn stops and turns, Beowulf urgently scans around...

There comes the SOUND of shifting rock just above Thorfinn.

The piece of wood comes free in his hand, he loses his
footing, and tumbles back...

From a ridge just above him there swings down a great rack of
curved white spikes...

*

Thorfinn scrambles to the side, just missing impalement...

*

(CONTINUED)

...before the rack lodges in the rocks on either side. *

Beowulf and Hondscioh - swords drawn - edge up to the
whalebone barrier. *

They scan through the steadily increasing FOG.

HONDSCIOH

(wry)

Little high up for a whale's ribs?

They each take hold of a side of the contraption, but it does
not budge.

BEOWULF

This is sharpened bone...

HONDSCIOH

...and rigged to swing. *

(to Erik)

What are we fighting here?

ERIK

A thing beyond our ken.

51 OMITTED 51 *

52 EXT. ROCKY PASSAGE -- DAY 52

The Geats stride along a cleft between a sea of glacial
boulders. They are moving quickly - though warily - but
there is more ferocity than fear in their eyes.

The rocky outcrops suggest figures looming, between the moss
and mist and stone.

53 OMITTED 53 *

54 OMITTED 54 *

55 EXT. BOULDERS / GLACIER -- MOMENTS LATER 55

ON: brawny hands seeking grip in the top of a boulder. They
do - and with a GRUNT of effort.. *

...Beowulf pulls himself up into view. *

His expression - that of the hunter on the scent of prey -
loses its fierceness, shifting abruptly to that of a man lost
at sea... *

As Hondscioh and Breca come up on either side of him... *

(CONTINUED)

...the three gaze out over...

*

...a massive glacial plain rising up for several miles.

*

BEOWULF

We're out of our world.

The three consider the magnificent - if eerie - rippled ice, on either side of which rise only boulders.

*

ON: GRIMUR, a misfit Dane, standing in the river down from the waterfall, being baptized by Brendan HOWLING out indecipherable Latin.

*

*

*

ON: Hrothgar sitting on a rock overlooking a waterfall, and facing down to the pool below the falls, his eyes watery, face wet. Some yards back of him stands his HORSE.

*

*

*

The Geat troop appear on the ridge, Beowulf at the head.

*

Beowulf nears and...

...Hrothgar - startled by the approach - wheels about, sword in hand. Orients himself. Wipes the mist/tears from his face. Forces an awkward smile...

HROTHGAR

I was off in a dream.

BEOWULF

Wish I could bring a better one.

Hrothgar scans their ranks, sees all intact.

*

BEOWULF (CONT'D)

This thing's smart as a man.

*

*

HROTHGAR

Were it less, it'd hang on my wall.

BEOWULF

Have you ever tried to trap it?

HROTHGAR

Ten men waited one night. Ready. With nets, swords, spears. It went through them like salmon.

BEOWULF

Yet it didn't try us.

HROTHGAR
(weary smile)
Perhaps you smell off.

Beowulf's gaze drifts to the water below the falls.

ANGLE DOWN ON: curious VILLAGERS scattered along the riverbank, also watching...

...Brendan, in his cloak, standing with Unferth now who is naked to the waist, in the middle of the swirling stream. *

Brendan, SCREAMING his LATIN against the roar of the falls, takes up a handful of water, and splashes Unferth in the sign of the cross. *

Hrothgar and Beowulf consider the ritual.

HROTHGAR (CONT'D)
Baptism they call it. Unferth feels he's fallen from the gaze of our gods.

BEOWULF
Did Unferth's king give him this freedom?
(off Hrothgar's shrug)
You don't fear he has an eye on your throne?

HROTHGAR
I know he does. My sons are dead.

BEOWULF
From the troll?

HROTHGAR
(shakes his head)
One to fever, one to Wulfings, one to an iceberg turning.
(beat)
To sit in blood isn't every man's wish. If this Christ can stiffen Unferth's heart, what's the harm?

As Unferth wades back toward the shore... *

...Beowulf sees Hrothgar's despondency. *

BEOWULF
They swim only out of fear.

(CONTINUED)

HROTHGAR
Still... they swim.

The two consider the dilemma.

57 EXT. FIELD BEYOND THE DANISH VILLAGE -- DAY 57

Selma is alone in the field, picking herbs.

BEOWULF
Dusk soon, eh.

Selma turns, sees Beowulf some yards off. She fights her intrigue.

SELMA
You a herd dog?

Beowulf, momentarily thrown, struggles up a grin.

BEOWULF
Been called worse. I'm --

SELMA
Yes. The much-told hero from
Geatland.

In their glances there's obvious attraction, but both are cautious in the manner, reluctant to appear drawn. Selma turns back to her work. Beowulf edges closer.

BEOWULF
I don't remember you.
(off her look)
From when I was young here.

SELMA
No. I came here in my teens.
(pointed)
A whore to Unferth's uncle, Alvis
Three-Legs.
(beat)
Maybe I'm wrong. Maybe it was One.
(off his look)
Leg.

Beowulf lets her grim quip have its moment.

BEOWULF
You're not then Dane?

SELMA

Oh I am. But my parents were
killed by Wulfing raiders.

BEOWULF

(bright)
My father too...
(corrects himself)
...not killed, I mean, but a feud
with the Wulfings brought us here.

SELMA

(flat)
It happens. I guess you weren't
made a whore.

A silence. He gets her point. Selma continues with picking
plants.

BEOWULF

I'm told you know of things to
come.

SELMA

That's a wide sea.

BEOWULF

Of the deaths of things.

SELMA

Seeing that everything living dies,
you still give me the sight of
gods.

(beat)
Speak clean. You wonder of
yourself.

BEOWULF

More of the troll.

SELMA

(dubious smile)
Not of yourself?

BEOWULF

In some things I'd rather be blind.

SELMA

You're worse than Loki with your
sheepshit twining. We heard the
hero of the Geats was blessed in
flesh, but also thought.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SELMA (CONT'D)

(off his look)

I say he dies, you likely live. I
say he lives...

She throws him a look. A silence. She relents.

SELMA

By Grid, you're the lamest blood-
mighty I've met!

(off his look / beat)

The death of the troll will cost
dear both the Geats and Danes... as
it bloody well should.

BEOWULF

Why as it should?

SELMA

The Danes have done their doom on
him. And you come here to kill.

BEOWULF

We game our lives coming here. To
help the Danes. You said you're
Dane?

SELMA

I'm not a killer.

Beowulf grabs hold of her arm, his anger rising. But she
stares back at him, gives no physical resistance, only her
eye.

BEOWULF

(a warning)

Many men wouldn't hold themselves.

SELMA

Oh so you're a soft-heart too.

Beowulf catches himself, releases her arm, and steps back.

SELMA

Some men end up torn to bits. And
eaten. Their heads used for
bowling.

Beowulf scowls, thrown by the weirdness of her warning.

BEOWULF

Bowling?

SELMA

Rolling a ball against standing
cups... or - I dunno - skulls? The
Saxons play it. But you're just a
worm-eaten northern shit... so I
guess you wouldn't know.

Beowulf stares hard at her, but her gaze is more than a
match.

They're interrupted by Hondscioh and Breca riding up on
horseback. Beowulf breaks eye contact with Selma, glances at
Hondscioh.

HONDSCIOH

The day's going down. If we want
to be ready...

Beowulf nods, and starts back toward the village.

SELMA

Careful with what you don't
understand.

Beowulf turns, eyes her a beat, then continues on with his
boys.

Once out of Selma's earshot, Hondscioh catches Breca's eye,
grins.

HONDSCIOH

That's one spooky Danish girl.

BEOWULF

Y'ever heard of bowling?
(off their looks)
Something the Saxons do.

BRECA

Wouldn't trust a Saxon as far as I
could throw him.

HONDSCIOH

Y'ever met a Saxon?

BRECA

Knew someone who did.

Hondscioh gives a SNORT of doubt. And the men continue on.

58

EXT. DANISH VILLAGE -- DUSK

58

Beowulf, Hondscioh and Breca walk back through the village...

...and find the villagers in an improved mood. There are CONVERSATIONS in the pathways, mild LAUGHTER...

They pass the blacksmith's forge.

The SMITH grins, waves a red-hot axe-head held in tongs. He gives a forearm/fist of solidarity, and rams the axe-head down into the water bucket - bursting STEAM.

*

*

The three Geats continue on...

...coming upon...

...Grimur who is whimpering, cornered into a section of the barricade, holding up his arms to protect his bleeding head from stones thrown by a cluster of KIDS.

HONDSCIOH

Ho!

The kids wheel, stones in hand. Seeing who it is, they have a quick MUTTERING conference but back off a bit. One kid steps up.

KID

Grimur's got a troll-heart! He brought Grannel here!

BEOWULF

Grannel?

KID

The troll!

GRIMUR

(through bloody mouth)
I'm a Dane and a Christian!

KID

Your mother screwed trolls!

GRIMUR

You little prick!

Wild-eyed, Grimur staggers at the kid, who drills him in the head with a stone.

(CONTINUED)

Grimur screeches, falls to the ground, groaning and holding his head.

As the kid moves to give Grimur a kick, Beowulf steps between them. He eyes the kids harshly... but the kid is as wild-eyed as Grimur.

KID
(tremulous)
Grannel killed my brothers!

And Beowulf sees the rage in the child. He places his huge hand on the kid's trembling shoulder. Indicates Grimur.

BEOWULF
This wretch didn't. But we'll get
the one that did.

The kid meets Beowulf's eye. He calms, turns, leads his group away.

As the Geat warriors prepare their troll-watch in the hall below...

...Beowulf approaches Hrothgar on the balcony.

BEOWULF
I didn't know this thing had a
name.
(off Hrothgar's look)
Even the children know him -
Grannel?

Hrothgar gives a disinterested shrug.

BEOWULF
Has this thing - this Grannel -
killed any children?

Hrothgar thinks a moment, shakes his head.

BEOWULF
Women?
(off Hrothgar's headshake)
Old men... or men without war-gear?

HROTHGAR
What - you're thinking he fights
with a clean heart?

BEOWULF

I just --

HROTHGAR

(flaring)

He kills the strongest first! He shows us he can kill the strongest! And who cares if he spares the children - they'll die anyhow without their fathers!

A silence.

BEOWULF

My wits still war with how this all began.

HROTHGAR

(shrugs)

Hate for the hall, I can only guess. The night we finished building it, the foul creep came. We hadn't seen a troll in fifteen... maybe twenty years.

BEOWULF

So nothing was done to this troll itself.

HROTHGAR

(faintly irked)

Beowulf! It's a fucking troll! Maybe someone looked at it the wrong way!

BEOWULF

(beat / soft)

Some Dane?

Hrothgar studies Beowulf with faint suspicion.

HROTHGAR

Who hands you this? Selma?

(off Beowulf's look)

She's been alone in the wilds too long. Her head's full of spiders, lap's full of moss.

BEOWULF

It's said she sees things.

(CONTINUED)

HROTHGAR

The crazy do.

(beat)

Listen, I never begged anyone to
come here and take on our fight. I
don't hold you here --

BEOWULF

We came to help.

HROTHGAR

Then I beg you, don't saddle my
heart with talk of why a troll does
what it does.

Hrothgar eyes the dimming horizon. Turns, squeezes Beowulf's
shoulder, and starts down the steps back into the hall.

Beowulf scans the ground, the darkness creeping from the
rocks, but his heart remains unsettled.

60 INT. MEAD HALL -- NIGHT

60

PAN ACROSS: the Geat warriors sprawled across the room,
weapons at the ready. Breca, Hondscioh, Thorkel, Thorfinn -
eyes open - listen to the night.

Several others are fighting drowsiness...

...while Beowulf appears fully asleep.

61 OMITTED

61

*

62 INT. MEAD HALL -- CONTINUOUS

62

ON: Beowulf as his eyes spring open. Otherwise, only his
hand moves - taking grip of his sword.

The CLATTER of something bouncing off the door.

*

63 OMITTED

63

*

64 INT. MEAD HALL -- CONTINUOUS

64

*

Beowulf rises, sword drawn... his warriors also furtively
reaching for weapons. Beowulf edges toward the door.

*

*

Another CLATTER but this one to the side of the building.

*

He tenses, puzzled, looks around at his band...

*

A brief SILENCE...

*

(CONTINUED)

...then another TAP/CLATTER - this one from the other side. *

As the men spread themselves about the space... *

...there comes a FLURRY of things HITTING and BOUNCING off the ROOF. *

Beowulf takes up a torch, indicates for Hondscioh to open the door.

As Beowulf cocks back his torch-hand, ready to throw it...

Hondscioh and Breca throw open the doors... *

...to find nothing there but the dark.

The band, led by Beowulf, nonetheless charges forward...

...onto the porch.

BEOWULF

Watch the sides!

As the men cautiously edge out... *

...Beowulf looks down to find... *

...numerous scattered stones and pebbles on the porch. *

The men move out several yards from the porch, then hold near the ceremonial firepit, the darkness impenetrable any further... *

Hondscioh edges up beside Breca. *

HONDSCIOH

Can we smell that bad?

ON: Beowulf - the furthest out - a short distance from the rest of his crew. He stares into the dark. *

BEOWULF

Come on, crab slime, show me these teeth.

Silence but for the wind in the hills... the darkness offering nothing else back... *

...the torch-lights flickering against the scare-hides, *
against the standing stones and boulders... *

EDGING IN ON: one of the boulders on which, gradually a face *
be made out - the faintly grinning face of Grendel - *
"playing" stone... *

...no Geat even aware of the game. *

67 OMITTED 67 *

68 OMITTED 68

69 EXT. SHED / FIREPIT -- DAY 69 *

With FOG hanging over the village...

Beowulf wanders along, brooding on the "peacefulness" of the *
morning... *

...Danes seeming to be going about their business. *

He comes up to a firepit where Thorkel - harp in hand - is *
facing a small group of fascinated CHILDREN. *

THORKEL

O'er the night, the warriors
waited, / Sword and shield in ring-
wrapped grip. / Then the fiend of
bog and brine / Crept to those
doors of ten men's weight, / Bade
it creak with breath alone / But
then smelt God amongst the men. /
Hardly had they hoisted steel /
Than the thing's rank guts gave
out. / Great Beowulf, God's awful
arm --

BEOWULF

(irked)
Enough!

Thorkel stops, turns, sees Beowulf...

BEOWULF (CONT'D)

(to the children)
Go off now!

And the children scurry off. Thorkel eyes Beowulf harshly.

THORKEL

You scare them doing that.

BEOWULF

O fuck, Thorkel! They've only had months of waking to the scattered parts of kin! Don't feed them lies. That was piss the other night - piss on us. If any gods were there, they were sleeping.

THORKEL

(hesitant)

The Celt says Jesus Christ never sleeps, that he walks amongst us even now.

BEOWULF

Oh yeah, that's all we need. A god gone mad from lack of sleep.

Thorkel shrugs, strums his harp.

69A INT. MEAD HALL -- DAY [FORMERLY 68]

69A

ON: Hrothgar slumped on his throne, staring grimly into the otherwise empty space of the hall.

WITH: Beowulf edging through the door, seeing Hrothgar. Beowulf crosses the hall toward him...

...Hrothgar breaking from his stupor.

HROTHGAR

I built this hall to be my home. Not the stinking grave of my people. Maybe it should just burn down.

A silence. Beowulf considers the handsome hall.

BEOWULF

I don't know what else we can do. He comes here, throws his stones, pisses, goes. If I knew what steers his mind --

HROTHGAR

Beowulf! What steers the mind of a Slav? What steers the mind of a Wulfing? They want what's yours so you have to cut their heads in half or else they take it! We're not talking great thinkers here.

(CONTINUED)

Hrothgar studies Beowulf - seeing his ambivalence. *

HROTHGAR (CONT'D) *
Something has you turning. *

BEOWULF *
I fear the troll just waits for us *
to go. *

HROTHGAR *
Same thought gnaws on me. *

EXT. EDGE OF VILLAGE -- DAY

Beowulf walks along the edge of the village, looking over... *

...some Geats making adjustments to their weapons... *

...one mending his jerkin... *

...another whittling a fish from wood. *

He passes an old shed, only to find... *

...Thorkel on the other side having sex with a young Danish *
WIDOW. *

Beowulf watches a moment more than he otherwise might... *
briefly transfixed... before Thorfinn turns and sees him. *

Beowulf turns away... *

...continues on over to a field... *

...where Breca and Hondscioh are practicing sword-play. *

But the two of them are in very different worlds: Breca is *
fighting with spectacularly flashy great swings of his great *
blade... whereas Hondscioh seems lost in thought - matter-of- *
factly blocking Breca's strokes, but making no advances on *
his own. *

Breca stops, indicates Hondscioh to Beowulf.

BRECA *
He's already fighting like a Dane. *

HONDSCIOH *
You want to waste your strokes on *
me and the air - go ahead. *

Beowulf steps up, unsheathes his sword. Breca takes sparring position... and they begin trading loose strokes. *

BRECA *
(mocking) *
Hondscioh had a bad dream. *

Beowulf glances at Hondscioh, giving this more respect than Breca is willing to. Hondscioh shakes his head, dismissive. *

BEOWULF *
(to Breca) *
And yours were good? *

A trading of swordstrokes. Breca shrugs. *

BEOWULF (CONT'D) *
Here with the smoke of the dead? *

Breca gets the shot. Takes a heavy swing at Beowulf which Beowulf blocks. *

BRECA *
I don't see fear helping us. *

HONDSCIOH *
Don't you fucking start -- *

BEOWULF *
Fear, eh... *

And Beowulf takes a couple fierce swings at Breca, under which Breca staggers back. *

The two stare at each other a beat - fire in their eyes. *

And Breca strides forward swinging his blade as to cut through trees. Beowulf - seeing the power - keeps back, till Breca has spent some of his emotion. *

Then Beowulf counters, knocking Breca back till he tumbles over some uneven ground. *

Beowulf stands over him, his blade raised. *

BRECA *
Careful you don't drop it. *

BEOWULF *
(soft) *
Fear has its place. *

He lowers his blade, calms, offers Breca a hand up. Breca, *
after a beat, accepts. *

70 EXT. WILDS -- DAY 70 *

Beowulf edges along on horseback, eyeing the rocky outcrops
with suspicion.

71 EXT. SELMA'S HUT -- EARLY EVENING 71

Selma is cooking at her fire-pit.

Beowulf rides up, surprising her, but she quickly masks it.

SELMA
How did you find me?

BEOWULF
Most Danes seem to know the way.

SELMA
Most don't have the guts these
days.

She studies his face, sees a wildness in his eye, resigns
herself.

She puts down the utensils, turns her back to him, spreads
her legs slightly, hikes up her skirt, and bends over against
a railing, offering herself.

Beowulf struggles with his urge.

SELMA (CONT'D)
There's butter in the bowl, if you
need it.

Beowulf averts his eyes.

BEOWULF
I wondered if you threw the stones.

Selma straightens up, drops her skirt.

SELMA
Rune-stones.
(off his nod / sardonic)
Oh no, you don't fear your fate.

BEOWULF
My weird is my own, that's not what
I ask. I need the right path.

SELMA

There is the one that leads back to
Geatland.

BEOWULF

If the stones say so.

SELMA

And what if I lie?

BEOWULF

Then the gods will bring me back.

It's both a warning and a promise.

SELMA

So. No thoughts at all for my
cunt.

Beowulf looks off: it's not the word he needs to hear right
now.

SELMA (CONT'D)

Warrior-monk, not many of those.

She studies him a beat, then turns and she goes into her hut.

72 INT. SELMA'S HUT -- DUSK

72

Selma sits on the floor, leaning over the rune-stones as she
shakes them, throws them, and then considers.

Beowulf sits opposite, transfixed by what the V in her
neckline reveals of her chest.

SELMA

The answer's in the stones, not my
breasts.

She looks up at him. He awkwardly shrugs - caught.

There comes agitation from the HORSES outside, STOMPING the
dirt, NEIGHING. An eerie WHISTLING. Beowulf stands, and
draws his sword.

He eyes her a beat. She looks back down to her stones.

And he strides out...

73 EXT. SELMA'S HUT -- CONTINUOUS

73

...into the yard, where he scans the now-misty periphery.

(CONTINUED)

Glimpsing a huge dark FIGURE running into the mist.

Beowulf watches a moment - in obvious awe - then rushes to his horse, and mounts it. But, in turning to mount the horse, he finds...

...the figure already lost from view.

Nonetheless, he edges off in pursuit.

74 EXT. WILDS / ROCKFACE -- CONTINUOUS 74

Beowulf rides along, though cautiously, due to the mist.

Shapes can be vaguely made out... suggestions of movement, but they're unresolved, indefinite - keeping Beowulf on his guard.

There comes a weird unsettling LAUGH... then the sound of FALLING SCREE to one side...

...and Beowulf veers off the trail...

...coming to a slope which leads up to a more sheer rock-face. At his feet, dust from the stone-fall is only starting to settle.

Selma rides up beside him. Beowulf gives her a wary look.

BEOWULF

Was this in the rune-stones?

Selma shakes her head - but in exasperation, not confirmation.

Beowulf dismounts and starts up the scree-ridden slope.

SELMA

That's less than wise.

BEOWULF

(hint of suspicion)

So your stones say?

SELMA

They don't need to. Most could see... to climb shifting scree at dusk... in mist... unless of course you're a hero...

Beowulf stares up into the mist.

(CONTINUED)

WITH: Grendel, perched in a seemingly inaccessible crag, a berry-bush in hand from which he plucks berries and eats them.

BEOWULF
(shouts)
Grannel! Leave here... or stay and
meet your doom!

GRENDEL
(weary mutter)
...doom doom doom doom...

WITH: Beowulf trying to make out the sound.

SELMA
It's Grendel. Not Grannel.

BEOWULF
(re Grendel's noises)
Is that talk?

SELMA
Well it isn't barking.

A low rumble of a garbled MUTTER [in Old Norse/Icelandic]
from above. Selma smirks.

BEOWULF
What?

SELMA
He offers you the same.
(off his look)
You can leave or meet your doom.
(beat)
You're not Dane. That's why you
still breathe.

WITH: Grendel...

BEOWULF
I'm blood-bound to Hrothgar!

GRENDEL
(to himself / mocking)
...blood blood blood...

Grendel gathers up some stones from between his feet. He
GROWLS out a terse phrase to Beowulf.

WITH: Beowulf looking to Selma for translation.

SELMA

Says that's your burden.

Beowulf's temper frays, he raises his sword at the rock-face.

BEOWULF

My burden is your stinking life!

A silence... then the handful of stones come down upon Beowulf's helmet, infuriating him more.

BEOWULF

Come down here, I swear I'll hammer these stones right up your hairy arse!

A long MUTTER, and Selma tries her hardest not to laugh. Beowulf stares at her, impatient for the translation.

SELMA

He says that might help. He's had a hard time shitting since the last Dane he ate.

The sound of shifting scree... and Beowulf raises his sword... eyeing the mist for a discernible shape. But nothing comes. A silence.

SELMA

He's gone.

BEOWULF

Why won't he fight me?

SELMA

Why should he? You've done nothing to him.

Selma turns her horse and starts back down the path. Beowulf looks - from her - back up into the darkening rock-face, perplexed.

Beowulf rides into the camp to find...

*

...Selma stirring up the embers of her firepit.

*

Beowulf dismounts, edges over to her.

*

BEOWULF

What was he doing at your hut?

Selma gives a faintly contemptuous look, but it's met by Beowulf's own look - one carrying a scary volatility.

SELMA

I forgot. You're the great Geat - welcome to women wherever you go. Swimmer of oceans... able to kill five Swedes in a stroke of his great blade...

BEOWULF

I only came to help the Danes find peace.

SELMA

I'm Dane. I'm at peace. Not that I always was.

(beat)

When Alvis Three-Legs died in my bed, some - like Unferth - claimed I killed him with a drink. They burned my hut, drove me to the wilds. Then they'd only come around to maybe spill some seed.

*

BEOWULF

Unferth too?

*

*

SELMA

Unferth leading.

*

*

BEOWULF

They still come?

*

SELMA

Not since Grendel.

BEOWULF

Grendel. What sort of name --

*

SELMA

Means "grinder."

*

BEOWULF

Of bones?

SELMA

Of teeth. He was born with bad dreams.

Beowulf gives a skeptical look. Selma shrugs: believe it or not.

*

(CONTINUED)

SELMA (CONT'D)

Nothing I say will *help* you kill
him. *

Beowulf studies her - sees the challenge - and her witchy
beauty in the falling light.

SELMA (CONT'D)

Keep to the path. Try not to fight
with the moss.

Selma crosses the threshold into the hut, lights a lamp, then
takes off her cloak. She turns in the doorway and her
breasts shift noticeably beneath the worn-thin cloth of her
blouse. She stares back at Beowulf a beat, then closes the
door.

The sound of a WOODEN LATCH falling into place.

Beowulf, both stunned and aroused, turns and mounts his
horse, eyes the falling dark.

76 EXT. PATH APPROACHING VILLAGE -- EVENING 76 *

Beowulf rides along, warily...

...while above, in the boulders, Grendel scrambles, smiling,
keeping pace.

77 INT. MEAD HALL -- NIGHT 77

ON: Beowulf sitting before the fire-pit, staring into the
embers.

Around him, all the Geat warriors sleep. For the first time,
seeming peace.

Beowulf's gaze is fixed on the great doors on which shadows
gently shift, suggesting figures, ghosts...

78 INT. MEAD HALL -- DAY 78

The warriors jerk awake, scan around - no damage, sunlight
streaming through the door...

...and, in a corner, Beowulf soundly sleeping.

79 INT. HROTHGAR'S CHAMBERS -- DAY 79

With sunlight streaming in through the smoke-hole... *

(CONTINUED)

...Hrothgar leans forward against the wall, pissing into a bucket. *

He winces, eyes closed, sweat on his forehead. Finished, he looks down, and - as quickly - jerks his gaze away.

HROTHGAR
(tremulous whisper)
Fuck me...

He takes up the bucket, starts out of the room, when...

...Wealhtheow comes in with a pitcher and cups. She immediately sees his state. She looks to the bucket, but he pushes past her. Panic rises in her.

WEALHTHEOW
Hrothgar?

HROTHGAR
It's age. Nothing more.

WEALHTHEOW
Stay.

Hrothgar puts the bucket out of the room, turns back to her.

WEALHTHEOW
(persuading herself)
You don't go in pain. You go in peace. Happy...

HROTHGAR
Happy.
(forced laugh)
Well, then... I'm not going anywhere today.
(beat)
Who says this? Selma.
(off Wealhtheow's silence)
Odin wishes me no peace.
(long beat)
She said I die happy.

Wealhtheow nods. Hrothgar shakes his head, trying to fathom the thought.

80

EXT. DANISH VILLAGE -- DAY

80

CLOSE ON: a hnaftafl board [Norse chess-like game] with Breca and Hondscioh sitting on opposite sides: there are about a dozen light players surrounded by a besieging force of twenty dark players, a light king-figure in the center of the board.

WIDE/REVEAL: Beowulf and a few Geats standing nearby watching.

HROTHGAR

So long as the king wins the day.

The Geats turn to see Hrothgar shuffle up, with an amiable grin.

HONDSCIOH

Always, my Lord.

Hrothgar pats Beowulf's shoulder, leads him away from the others.

HROTHGAR

So... another bloodless night.

(off Beowulf's nod)

Well, for you... at any rate.

Beowulf ponders the cryptic comment. Hrothgar makes sure none of the others are close enough to hear.

HROTHGAR

I'm pissing it.

BEOWULF

(after a puzzled beat)

Blood?

HROTHGAR

(nods/shrugs)

It's come and gone over the months.

(forced grin)

I'm turning to a woman. Or a dying man.

Beowulf gathers his words.

BEOWULF

Last night I talked with him.

Hrothgar looks at him, not getting the sense.

(CONTINUED)

BEOWULF (CONT'D)

Grendel...

*

HROTHGAR

(stunned)

You talked?

*

BEOWULF

If you can trust what Selma says.

Hrothgar considers this a long beat.

*

BEOWULF (CONT'D)

He stayed above me in the rocks.
But it was a voice... speaking
words. He only wants Danes. He
blames you for something.

*

Hrothgar almost chokes on this.

HROTHGAR

He blames me! Of all the shit!

(fierce mutter)

What the fuck they think --

Hrothgar stops himself. A silence.

HROTHGAR (CONT'D)

There are coves north of here no
Dane even dares to go! How much
land does one mouth need? What's
he think - he's a fucking troll
Caesar - with rights to everything
he looks upon?!

(indicating the mountains)

We roamed the seas, I will say
that. But up there, that rock and
ice, we never found the need to go.
I didn't go knocking down his door!

The two men brood on this a beat. Hrothgar sighs to
calmness.

HROTHGAR (CONT'D)

Word on the waves is I die happy.

(off Beowulf's look)

No gods I know have offered me
that. No. Mine just offer beer, a
fish here and there... and friends
to burn.

(beat/overwhelmed)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

80

CONTINUED: (2)

80

HROTHGAR (CONT'D)

It's hard to hold you talked with
that fucker.

BEOWULF

He talked... from well beyond my
sword.

But it's clear in Hrothgar's look that he senses Beowulf
knows more.

81

EXT. RIVER -- DAY

81

ON: Hrothgar, solemn, to his waist in the river...

WIDE/REVEAL: Brendan raising a handful of water and touching
Hrothgar's in the sign of the cross... MUTTERING LATIN as he
does...

As Brendan turns back to the shore...

...Hrothgar remains, and turns to the deeper water.

HROTHGAR

(a mutter)

Bless me... or be done... and drown
me in blood.

WIDE ON: many DANES on the shore watching the ritual.

CLOSE ON: Beowulf and Hondscioh, watching with clearly mixed
emotions.

HONDSCIOH

Great. Now we get a pissed-off
Odin.

BEOWULF

Or maybe no one up there at all.

HONDSCIOH

(fierce, superstitious)

Don't say that! What's in your
head?!

(off Beowulf's look)

I don't game my blood for last
night's beer.

The two eye each other. Beowulf shrugs retraction.

82

EXT. DANISH SHORELINE / HARBOUR -- DAY

82

As Beowulf and his men work on their boat... stitching the
sail, adding pitch to the seams...

(CONTINUED)

...Grimur approaches, healed, but still showing the scabs from his wounds, and edges up to Beowulf.

GRIMUR

I owe you for sparing me from those stones. I can lead you to the Dane-killer's cave.

Beowulf is stunned by the offer.

BEOWULF

Grendel?
(off his nod / wary)
Why didn't you before?

GRIMUR

I feared all things... its wrath...
my death.

He holds up a cross on a chain around his neck.

GRIMUR (CONT'D)

No more.

Grimur gives a happy smile. Beowulf masks his ambivalence.

EXT. ISOLATED SHORELINE / BEOWULF'S LONGSHIP MOVING -- DAY 83

Beowulf's ship moves along the shore, Grimur scanning the rocks.

As Beowulf looks out over the open water...

*

GRIMUR

There.

Beowulf turns to see...

...Grimur pointing to a break in the rocks. The helmsman leans against the rudder and the boat turns toward it.

EXT. GRENDEL'S CAVE -- DAY

Grimur leads the crew up over treacherous rocks towards...

...an entrance in the cliffside. They light up torches, go in.

INT. GRENDEL'S CAVE -- CONTINUOUS

As they edge into the darkness...

...their torches flicker and HISS in the oozy damp.
Hondscioh takes several steps forward...
...and the ground goes out below him. As Hondscioh falls...
...Beowulf lunges forward and grabs his cloak... the others
behind Beowulf grabbing hold of him to keep him secure.
They pull Hondscioh back up from the fathomless dark below.

HONDSCIOH
(to Grimur)
I guess you didn't know that was
there.

GRIMUR
I swear - by Christ --

HONDSCIOH
Let's leave Christ out of this.

Hondscioh takes a torch and throws it down into the dark.
After only a few seconds it hits rock, and skitters onto damp
ground which it briefly illuminates before CRACKLING out.

BRECA
(to Beowulf)
Not far... but we'll need ropes,
hooks, more torches...

86 EXT. GRENDEL'S CAVE -- MOMENTS LATER 86

As the troop exits the cave...
...Breca turns back, undoes his pants, and pisses across the
rocks at the entrance.
LAUGHTER from almost all the Geats.
Beowulf manages a smile, until his gaze meets...
...Grimur, whose face betrays worry at this act. Grimur
turns and hurries down the rocks towards the beach.

87 EXT. BEACH -- MOMENTS LATER 87

As the men near their waiting ship...
...Beowulf, sensing something, hangs back, but does not turn.

(CONTINUED)

He kneels down, appears to adjust a leather thong on his shoe. Abruptly he wheels around to see...

...a small FERAL child - dark and hairy - staring back as though frozen by being seen. Their gazes hold several beats, before the child slips from sight behind boulders.

Beowulf glances back towards his company... all of whom were oblivious to the sighting. Beowulf turns back to the rocks...

...catches his breath, gaze scanning over the forbidding scape.

88 EXT. DANISH SHORELINE / BEOWULF'S LONGSHIP MOVING -- DAY 88

The men are buoyant - again, all but Beowulf and Grimur at the rear of the boat, who scan the shore.

THORKEL

...so they came to the cave of the
killer / But found it fled, their
weapons's work / Undone by dark and
the slime of slope. / Hondscioh
nearly fell to Valhalla --

HONDSCIOH

Let's uh... let this sad tale
sleep.

BRECA

Hondscioh shows up - great Odin and
the others ask how he died, and
Hondscioh goes - I uh... fell?

ROARS of LAUGHTER from the group. Hondscioh eyes Thorkel.

HONDSCIOH

You better find a better line.

As Breca, at the boat's bow, leans back, pulling hard on his oar...

...a huge creature HAND rises out of the water, bronze arm-
ring flashing in the light, grabs Breca by the hair, and
starts yanking him over.

His oar slams into the other in front of him, alerting the men.

Thorfinn, beside him, snatches hold of his legs.

(CONTINUED)

The tug is strong, and Breca's head dips below the surface.

As Beowulf rushes the length of the boat...

...Hondscioh, nearer Breca, grabs an oar, and rams it repeatedly down into the water below Breca.

The creature - hit - loosens its grip, and shifts under the boat, a mass of long, tangled head-hair trailing... till it disappears below.

The men haul the unconscious Breca back onto the ship...

...to find bleeding gouges in his shoulder and a tear in his scalp.

Beowulf, spear in hand, stares down into the water, ready to strike...

...but there's nothing more to be seen.

As the Geats are bedding down...

...Breca - bandaged and grinning - sits before the fire.

BRECA

Even the trolls want my beautiful hair.

THORFINN

I think he wanted you for more than that.

LAUGHTER.

HONDSCIOH

Great Breca, the Troll-house Pisser! I'd be more careful where I wave my spear.

BRECA

I'd piss in his mouth if he dared to show it.

BEOWULF

Best be ready to do more than that.

The mood shifts, all eyes turning to Beowulf.

90 EXT. DANISH VILLAGE / MEAD HALL PORCH -- NIGHT 90

Beowulf sits just outside the door, waiting, listening to the SOUNDS of the night -- wind, old songs, the sea, laughter... His eyelids grow heavy. He drifts off...

...into a vision: of the feral boy standing before him. The child hands him a huge sword, which Beowulf takes.

The boy then opens his shirt, exposing his tiny chest. He looks from the sword to Beowulf and nods: go on.

Beowulf - heavy-eyed - watches him a beat, blinks, jolts awake to...

91 EXT. DANISH VILLAGE / MEAD HALL PORCH -- DAY 91

...the glare of daylight.

Silent villagers surround him, puzzling over the tableau:

Further down the steps lies the CORPSE of Grimur, his head still on, but twisted backwards.

ON: Beowulf, as the shock settles in.

92 EXT. DANISH SHORELINE / HARBOUR -- DAY 92

Beowulf and his warriors are loading their weapons, as well as ropes, poles and iron hooks, onto the ship.

Unferth rides up on a horse. Beowulf considers him coolly.

BEOWULF

Seems Grendel doesn't mind killing
Christians... so long as they're
Dane.

UNFERTH

Can another sword help?

Beowulf studies him a beat. Walks up to his side.

BEOWULF

Hrothgar's told me about you and
trolls.

(off Unferth's
embarrassment)

You back me up, you back me up.
Fall away on me, I'll kill you
myself.

(CONTINUED)

92 CONTINUED: 92

Unferth stares steady at Beowulf, then nods. Beowulf nods back. *

93 OMITTED 93 *

94 INT. GRENDEL'S CAVE -- DAY 94

With thrown-down torches lighting them from below...

...the warriors descend by ropes into the cavern...

95 INT. GRENDEL'S CAVE -- MOMENTS LATER 95

The apprehensive warriors, armed with swords, shields, spears, edge through the damp, stinking place...

Animal and fish carcasses are scattered about.

Each DRIP of water makes someone turn...

Some simple tools... a pile of wood and a fire-pit... but, as the torches reach the corners of the cave... no Grendel.

Beowulf slumps back against a wall, sighs - relief and frustration tangled in a mess in his head.

Hondscioh comes upon a small alcove, and discovers within it...

CLOSE ON: the desiccated HEAD of Grendel's father.

Hondscioh stares in a mix of horror and wonder, then takes it up by the long braided hair, holds it out before the others to see...

HONDSCIOH

Look! Our friend Grendel doesn't
come from mist and shit alone.

As the warriors all watch, fascinated...

...Hondscioh throws the huge head into the air, then - as it falls - he smashes it through with one great swing of his axe.

Eyes wild, he then smashes the sections into even smaller pieces.

He stops, catches his breath.

(CONTINUED)

HONDSCIOH (CONT'D)

(soft)

I curse you and all your kin.

He looks up and finds Beowulf's troubled gaze. There's something terrible in what he's done - and they are both terribly aware.

96 EXT. GRENDEL'S CAVE -- DAY 96

The men finish piling dry grass and sticks around a great hunk of driftwood in the cave entrance.

Unferth moves forward torch in hand.

UNFERTH

(fanatical)

For all who've died by the demon's hand!

Beowulf trades a glance with Breca: who is this madman?...

...after which Unferth throws the torch upon the pile.

The men watch the fire rise quickly up around the wood... the smoke twisting down into the cave.

97 EXT. DANISH SHORELINE / BEOWULF'S LONGSHIP MOVING -- DAY 97

The ship moves along... half the men rowing... the others scanning the water, spears in hand ready to strike at anything.

98 EXT. SELMA'S HUT -- DAY 98

Selma is chopping firewood as...

...Beowulf rides up and dismounts. His aspect is grim.

Selma struggles to mask her apprehension.

SELMA

So... is it done?

BEOWULF

He wasn't in his cave.

(beat / a demand)

How does he die?

Selma gives an ambiguous shrug, keeps chopping wood.

(CONTINUED)

Beowulf moves toward her, and she wheels, the axe raised and ready to throw. Beowulf stops.

SELMA

Unless your teeth can catch an
axe...

Beowulf softens his manner.

BEOWULF

I led my men into this... not
knowing. If I'd known, I'd've come
alone. I see doom hanging over
some of them now. Doom I brought.

Selma considers his concern, lowers the axe.

SELMA

You found the cave.
(beat / hesitant)
That's where I see him... dying.

BEOWULF

And he wasn't there.

SELMA

Would you sit in your cave and wait
for killers who knew the path to
your door?

A silence. Beowulf slumps back against a fish-drying rack.

BEOWULF

What do you know of Christians?

The question catches her off-guard. She considers a moment.

SELMA

They're looking for a father.

BEOWULF

What's wrong with Odin?

SELMA

Odin gets drunk. Wrecks the house.

Beowulf nods. As she puts down the axe, and reaches for wood...

...Beowulf lunges forward and grabs her by the arm.

BEOWULF
Take me to Grendel.

SELMA
What? - y'think I can sniff him
down?

BEOWULF
Maybe not, but he can sniff you.

Beowulf steers her over to his horse, grabs a rope and binds her arms to her sides. Selma gives minimal resistance, seeming more bored than anything with the exercise.

Beowulf lifts her onto her own horse, grabs its reins, mounts his horse, and leads them off down the trail.

EXT. ROCKFACE -- DAY

Beowulf and Selma arrive at the rockface up which Grendel previously lurked. Beowulf dismounts, turns to the rockface.

BEOWULF
What's the way up from here?

SELMA
Straight... but you'd need claws.

Beowulf looks at her darkly, circles.

Selma gives him an ever-so-faintly-contemptuous look.

SELMA
Then again, heroes --

He turns on her, volatile, barely in control. She almost snarls:

SELMA
You hit me, I'll be the one --

She stops herself, but Beowulf's heard enough to wonder.

BEOWULF
One to what?

Selma looks away.

Beowulf takes out his knife. He looks like he could do anything with it. For the first time she looks unsure.

But he pulls her around and cuts the lash from her wrists.

SELMA

I can't stop his death from
coming... nor can I hurry it.

BEOWULF

He needs to know... I know he was
wronged. But if he comes to us
again, there's nothing I --

SELMA

(ironic)
You're warning him.

Beowulf studies her a beat, then remounts his horse.

BEOWULF

Careful which side you end up on.
You're a long way from the village.

SELMA

You're a longer way from home.

Beowulf eyes her a beat, then turns and rides off.

100

INT. GRENDEL'S CAVE -- DAY

100

Through the smoky cave, Grendel comes staggering, coughing,
squinting through the stinging haze...

He drops to his knees, continues along...

Finally his extended hand comes upon the now-empty alcove.
He twists about, hands then desperately searching the nearby
ground.

One hand clutches something, brings it up into his sight...

CLOSE ON: one half of the facial portion of his father's
skull.

Grendel gasps, brings the piece to his face, sniffs it, and
his eyes go hard.

He emits a long HOWL - an eerie mix of sorrow and rage.

101

EXT. SHORELINE / GRENDEL'S CAVE -- DUSK

101

Grendel, eyes wet, sits and KEENS, banging two rocks against
each other in a hypnotic rhythm... his hands bloodied in the
process.

(CONTINUED)

101 CONTINUED: 101

He comes to the end of his song, and his hands drop wearily to his sides. He heaves the bloody rocks into the sea...

...wipes the blood from his hands across his face - in warrior-mask...

...then turns and fixes for a last time on the setting sun.

102 INT. MEAD HALL -- NIGHT 102

With Hondscioh asleep on the next bench over...

...Beowulf lies on his, tired eyes on the rafters, edging to sleep.

103 EXT. DANISH VILLAGE / PERIMETER -- NIGHT 103

The silence of the night.

PAN DOWN: the outer stone perimeter... to a GUARD impaled on a wooden spike.

And Grendel continues through the boulders,, the blood caked heavy on his face, his eyes wide, almost trance-like.

104 INT. MEAD HALL -- CONTINUOUS 104

A long silence... then the very faint sound of BREATHING on the other side of the doors.

The oak doors begin to creak... with an awesome and steady pressure. As the doors bend in...

...Beowulf twists toward them. There's resignation on his face: his fate shall now come. He takes his battle breath. *

BEOWULF *

Wake up, men, or never again! *

There's the sudden CRACK of splitting wood, and the doors' securing beam snaps apart. *

The warriors leap up, taking hold of weapons. *

The doors fly open and Grendel - silhouetted - charges in.

Beowulf, no weapon in hand, rushes toward him... *

...but Grendel, as quickly, shifts into the darkness.

(CONTINUED)

As Beowulf turns frantically about, fearful for his men,
searching out the form through the confusion of them
scrambling for their weapons... *

...Grendel shifts past him, snatches up the still-blinking
Thorkel - sniffs him - not what Grendel is looking for.

Grendel flings him to one side... *

...reaches and snatches up the next one - Hondscioh. *

As Hondscioh struggles to get his sword in play, Grendel
pulls Hondscioh's other hand to his face, sniffs him once to
make sure... *

GRENDEL
(soft / in Old
Norse/Icelandic)
For my father. *

...then deftly snaps his neck. *

ON: Beowulf turning just in time to see... and his horror
gives way to fury. *

As Beowulf charges towards him... *

...Grendel twists around and throws Hondscioh's corpse at
him, knocking him down.

As Beowulf struggles out from the grim embrace of his dead
friend... *

...Grendel reaches for Breca, but a sword swings down and
slashes Grendel across the upper arm. Grendel, seething,
turns to find...

...Unferth there, bringing back his sword for another swing.

UNFERTH
By Christ, demon, you shall die!

But before he can swing his sword...

...Grendel backhands him, sending him flying against the
outer wall.

Grendel reaches again for Breca... but his arm is waylaid...

CLOSE ON: a fierce handgrip upon his wrist.

He turns and sees the wild-eyed gaze of Beowulf... as Beowulf's other hand grabs Grendel by the hair and tugs back his neck.

A spear, thrown by a Geat, slams against Grendel's chest but bounces off. Beowulf, tugging Grendel into the torchlight, only then sees...

...the iron-mail-shirt binding Grendel's torso.

Grendel stares into Beowulf's face. They're frozen for a moment...

...there's almost sadness - wonder - in their looks...

*

...then Grendel throws back his arm - Beowulf still attached - and the two tumble back against the wall.

They wrestle across the floor, tumble over benches, through tables...

...the other Geat warriors circling, weapons raised to strike.

But the target is impossible to fix on... the two figures - Grendel and Beowulf - twisting about as one.

Finally Grendel smashes Beowulf against the wall, and gets free of one of Beowulf's hands.

He turns toward the door, meaning to escape, but finds...

...a massive fishing NET dropped across the exit, and, between it and him, a cluster of strong and determined Geats standing with spears and shields levelled at him...

...but, worse than that, Beowulf is still holding on.

Grendel smacks Beowulf again against the wall, forcing Beowulf's grip to loosen. Grendel tugs free...

...and scrambles up the wall like a monkey to the second floor.

Beowulf, with blood gushing from his face, runs up the stairs after him.

Grendel, finding the upper balcony door bolted, smashes at it till it starts to give way.

But then Beowulf is once again upon him.

With one hand Grendel smashes at the door, the other struggling to throw off Beowulf.

Grendel charges the door with his shoulder, and it gives way, bringing them out into...

...the night.

As Grendel, dragging Beowulf, struggles to the railing...

...Beowulf frees one of his hands long enough to snatch hold of a hanging rope, which he then deftly knots about the wrist of Grendel's already-gouged-and-bleeding arm.

Grendel swings wildly back with his other arm, but Beowulf avoids it... though he lets go his grip.

Grendel snarls, then vaults over the railing...

...but drops only a few feet before the rope snaps taut, his full weight wrenching down on the shoulder joint. A sickening POP as the arm dislocates from the socket. He SCREECHES pain...

ON: Beowulf wincing at the scream...

*

CLOSE ON: the shoulder muscles, already cut, continue to shift and TEAR from the strain...

...and he twists in the air, suspended several feet above the ground.

Beowulf brings up a spear, is trying to line it up for a death-throw...

*

*

...but Grendel continues to twist too wildly.

*

As the Geat warriors spill out through the doorway, they are just as quickly mesmerized...

...by Grendel twisting above them.

Several warriors hurl their spears up at him. One or two ricochet off his mailshirt, one lodges in his hip.

Grendel wrenches the spear out of his flesh, in turning, fixes on...

*

*

...Beowulf, leaning wounded on the balcony, torn gaze fixed on Grendel.

*
*

Grendel manages something most resembling a shrug, then fiercely jams the spear point back in - this time, at the muscle and sinew of his distended shoulder.

*
*

The spear-gouge does its work: the flesh finally shreds, the arm tearing off from the shoulder...

...and Grendel drops in a heap to the ground.

The warriors freeze, staring.

Grendel struggles to his feet, turns on them - SCREECHES - then, with his other hand clasped across the pouring wound, charges through the standing warriors - bowling several over - and continues off into the darkness...

...those left standing too mesmerized to pursue him.

107

EXT. MEAD HALL BALCONY -- MOMENTS LATER

107

Beowulf, also bleeding profusely, undoes the rope...

108

EXT. DANISH VILLAGE / MEAD HALL -- CONTINUOUS

108

...and the gory trophy of the ARM drops to the ground.

The warriors edge up to it, in awe.

109

EXT. WILDS -- NIGHT

109

Grendel stagger/weaves on through the night, weakening with blood-loss, his breaths coming in gasps... the ROAR of the sea rising.

110

EXT. BEACH -- CONTINUOUS

110

Grendel comes through rocks, out onto the pebble beach. He staggers forward, tumbles to his knees, rises... staggers several blind steps more... until his feet reach the water, and only then does he let his legs come to rest.

He's almost falling as he stands, blood draining into the water.

He stares up into the starry sky - knowing it's the last time - blinks, desperately struggling to focus. A kind of wonder sweeps over him, relief, a sad smile...

(CONTINUED)

...he shudders, eyes close, bloody hand drops to his side,
and he falls into the surf...

...his body limp, cradled by the waves.

Something then shifts through the water to one side of him.

Another arm - much like his - breaks the surface, reaches up,
takes hold of Grendel's shoulder, and pulls him down below
the water.

As a couple of warriors carry Hondscioh's body out...

...Beowulf, surrounded by Breca and several other Geats,
watch from their horses.

Hrothgar approaches, eyes Hondscioh's corpse.

HROTHGAR

Now you truly know our loss.

Beowulf edges out of hearing of the others.

BEOWULF

You only gave us half the tale.

HROTHGAR

The other half would dull your
sword.

Beowulf dismounts, eyes Hrothgar evenly.

BEOWULF

That troll didn't give a shit about
us, not until we wronged him. He
killed one. He could've killed
more. He killed the one he held in
blame.

Hrothgar meets Beowulf's look, sighs, lets the door open.

HROTHGAR

Were it so easy... I'd have been
the one.

(off Beowulf's look)

I killed his father.

(beat)

(MORE)

111 CONTINUED: 111

HROTHGAR (CONT'D)

And even that might have been an *
end... had it just been the father *
there...

DISSOLVE TO:

112 EXT. SHORELINE / CLIFFS [FLASHBACK] -- DUSK 112

[The same cliffs from the opening sequence.] *

Hrothgar raises up his battle-mask, holds up his torch, peers *
down into the rocks... and sees... *

CLOSE ON: the face of the tiny troll-child - Grendel - *
shuddering with fear, staring up. *

Hrothgar's breath catches in his throat. He stares a moment
more...

...then he heaves his torch off the cliff, as far out in the *
sea as he can... *

DISSOLVE TO:

113 EXT. MEAD HALL -- DAY 113

Hrothgar's expression echoes that of the memory: one of
puzzlement... but now deepened with guilt and regret.

HROTHGAR

None of the others saw the child.

(beat / shrugs)

I could've quelled it there and
then... but weakness stopped my
spear.

BEOWULF

Or kindness.

HROTHGAR

Then it's the hardest kindness I
know.

Hrothgar reaches under his shirt and brings out a Christian
crucifix and his Thor-hammer pendant - each on its own silver
chain. Considers them both.

HROTHGAR (CONT'D)

And now all gods run from me as
though I were the death itself.

Hrothgar turns and walks toward the mead hall entrance,
Beowulf following.

(CONTINUED)

113

CONTINUED:

113

BEOWULF

So what had the father done? Why
did you kill him?

Hrothgar continues toward the hall, brooding on the question.
He stops in the shadow of the doorway, struggling. *

And then he continues in...

114

OMITTED

114

*

115

INT. MEAD HALL -- CONTINUOUS

115

*

ON: Hrothgar and his weary mind.

HROTHGAR

He crossed our path.

The pathetic pettiness of Hrothgar's answer sweeps over him
before he speaks it:

HROTHGAR (CONT'D)

He took a fish.

Hrothgar looks to Beowulf, then gazes up to the central
rafter...

...onto which several Danes are mounting Grendel's arm:
roping it up then driving spikes through it to hold it to the
beam.

BEOWULF

We'll follow the blood trail. Make
sure it's done.

Hrothgar nods... and Beowulf withdraws.

116

EXT. WILDS -- DAY

116

Beowulf and his warriors follow the blood-trail...

117

EXT. BEACH -- DAY

117

...to the cove in the rocks traversed by Grendel.

CLOSE ON: the twisting blood-trail through the sand and
stones, ending at the hide-tide line.

Beowulf and Breca stand together, Thorfinn just back of them,
others nearby.

(CONTINUED)

BRECA

Without an arm...

THORFINN

Unless it grows back.

(off Beowulf's look)

He's a troll.

Beowulf musters all the patience he can.

BEOWULF

Tell me, Thorfinn. What's a troll?

Thorfinn shrugs.

THORFINN

I've just always liked to put my
foot on a kill. Make sure it isn't
still moving.

(off their looks)

They say there are lizards that
grow back limbs. They say there
are worms that grow back heads.

BEOWULF

This is no more worm than you or I.

THORFINN

(shrugs)

I'd fight with one arm.

ON: Beowulf's ambivalent look.

He gazes down into the water - which offers no certainty of
anything.

CLOSE ON: Grendel's great [and gory] arm nailed to the end
rafters.

ON: Beowulf looking up at the arm, Aeschere beside him

AESCHERE

(discreet)

I don't know if that's the thing.

(off Beowulf's look)

To nail it up.

(beat)

No good comes from gloating.

Beowulf nods, shrugs.

WIDE/REVEAL: the hall full of Danes and Geats, drinking and feasting in celebration...

...and, beside Beowulf, a pile of gifts: a great gold banner, a glimmering mail-shirt, an ornate sword...

It's a raucous party, a vent for the fear that's hung over these people, a loud celebration of the relief they now feel.

WITH: a half-drunk Unferth leaning in to Brendan who - though also tipsy - is tiring of Unferth's confession.

UNFERTH

I've put my thing in other men's wives, other men's daughters...

BRENDAN

It all can be forgiven.

UNFERTH

I slept with a witch - that's gotta be bad...

BRENDAN

(thrown)

You slept with a witch?

UNFERTH

Put my thing in her. That was a while back --

BRENDAN

So long as you vow to change your ways.

UNFERTH

Oh, y'know I'll try, right, but...

Brendan sighs.

WITH: Beowulf standing with a slightly-drunk Hrothgar and a sober Wealhtheow.

HROTHGAR

These gifts won't bring you back your friend, but they might show his family our endless thanks.

BEOWULF

They'd welcome that tales were told of him here. That beers were raised --

*
*
*

(CONTINUED)

WEALHTHEOW

(loaded)

His name will hold fast. This
land's seen a fear far worse than
Huns or Hathobards. We've pissed
our beds, buried our children. Our
boys dreaded growing. Our men are
walking ghosts.

(beat)

We can never thank you enough.

Wealhtheow kisses Beowulf firmly on the mouth. Beowulf
awkwardly accepts the gesture.

Wealhtheow turns and continues away.

Beowulf looks to Hrothgar, who gives a shrug.

HROTHGAR

Most women would've let me sink.

BRENDAN

Odin as well.

Beowulf turns, sees Brendan several feet back. Beowulf eyes
him hard.

BEOWULF

I can't say how things go in the
South, but in the North, creeping
up can earn you your death.

BRENDAN

I took this for a feast of friends.

BEOWULF

Then don't scoff at gods that
welcome yours.

Brendan, perturbed, faintly bows to Hrothgar, withdraws.

HROTHGAR

Go easy, he's harmless.

Hrothgar grabs a jug and fills up both their cups.

HROTHGAR

To the end of gloom!

Beowulf forces a smile, joins Hrothgar in a gulp.

WITH: Breca and Thorfinn staring up at the arm.

(CONTINUED)

BRECA

Where's the arm-ring? I wanted
that arm-ring.

THORFINN

He didn't have an arm-ring.

BRECA

Sure he did. Listen, the fucker
near snapped my neck. Figured the
least thing I'd get would be the
arm-ring.

THORFINN

Smell like him it's all yours.

WITH: Beowulf and Hrothgar, Hrothgar determined to enjoy
himself.

HROTHGAR

I don't think I'm the worst king...

BEOWULF

Not at all --

HROTHGAR

...when I think of the others.
Martin Longsword the Saxon has a
long sword but no brain. Half his
kin ran to Angle-land. Six-tooth
Peter of the Slavs can't keep his
warriors from fighting each other.
(beat / smiles)
Then... yeah... then there's Sig!

BEOWULF

Sig?

HROTHGAR

Sig Skullsplitter of the
Hathobards. You don't know Sig?
You haven't heard of Sig?!

BEOWULF

Something... I don't know... with
sheep?

HROTHGAR

Good God, man! Sheep are just the
tip of it. They say he tried a
dead walrus once... he's tried
horses... he's tried goats.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

HROTHGAR (CONT'D)
(edging hysterical)
They say he tried it once with a
rabbit... and got stuck --

BEOWULF
Stuck?!

HROTHGAR
Yeah! So when he comes to fight,
it's on six legs... and you want to
see fast?!

Hrothgar roars with LAUGHTER, Beowulf laughing as well.
Tears start streaming from Hrothgar's eyes.

HROTHGAR
(between laughs)
I tell you... I tell you... if he
ever comes here again, I'll send
out a batch of squirrels! That'll
slow him...!

More hysterical laughter and tears... and gradually the mask
of humour falls... and Hrothgar is reduced to tearful
gasps... the fear climbing back into his eyes.

Beowulf pats his shoulder.

BEOWULF
It's over now. The troll's dead.

Wealhtheow comes up, sees Hrothgar's state.

WEALHTHEOW
Dear, come on. Lie down a bit.
There'll be many nights now to
drink.

She trades a look with Beowulf, and steers Hrothgar away.

Beowulf looks over the gathering, smiles... but it's wearied
and bittersweet.

Beowulf, with a few drinks in him, emerges from the smoky
hall and sucks in the fresher air.

He looks around, lost... and a little drunk.

Beowulf rides into the clearing.

Selma, at her firepit, takes up a stick and stirs up the embers.

Beowulf dismounts. Approaches the fire. She glances at him - completely neutral - then back to the fire.

BEOWULF

(after a beat)

So... is this more or less as you saw it? With Grendel?

SELMA

(shrugs)

I saw you more bloodied.

BEOWULF

I'm sorry. Luck stood at my side.

SELMA

Luck can be a whore too.

(beat)

So... aren't you missing the meal?

BEOWULF

Guess I'm missing my best friend more.

SELMA

Hondscioh.

(off his nod)

And one Geat life's worth - what? - two Danes...? Three Swedes...?

Ten trolls?

(off Beowulf's stare)

Hondscioh's life had worth to you, since you knew him. Others know others.

A long beat. A realization comes to Beowulf.

BEOWULF

You mourn the troll.

SELMA

I knew him.

As she stirs her fire...

DISSOLVE TO:

121 EXT. WILDS / LAVA FIELD -- DAY 121

PAN ACROSS: a huge lava field, the forms eerily suggesting hundreds of figures frozen in the light...

SELMA

We'd all heard tales when we were kids... later, we learned that most were told to keep us out of streams in the spring... or clear of icebergs when they were calving. The wilds were harsh, you could wander lost for days... so they told us trolls lived there...

(beat)

...but they did.

A shape in the middle distance abruptly turns, rises: it's Grendel.

122 INT. SELMA'S HUT [FLASHBACK] -- NIGHT 122

Selma - half-a-dozen years younger - lies in bed, edging to sleep. Only the sound of the WIND and the SEA...

Then the CREAK of her door edging open. Selma turns, sees...

...Grendel slowly fill the doorway, enter the hut, sniff around, eye her.

SELMA

One night Grendel found my hut.

Grendel crosses the room, huge, hulking... and MUTTERING a low apology.

Selma, petrified, closes her eyes, mutters prayers, curled up beneath her blanket.

Grendel reaches out and pulls back the blanket, pulls Selma up by the hips...

CUT TO:

123 EXT. SELMA'S HUT / FIREPIT -- EVENING [CONTINUOUS] 123

Beowulf stares down into the embers... Selma stirring them with a stick. She throws on more peat, and as the smoke rises...

CUT TO:

124 INT. SELMA'S HUT [FLASHBACK] -- NIGHT 124

Grendel is methodically thrusting into Selma from behind. She is crying quietly, gasping, her eyes wide in confusion...

Grendel climaxes with little apparent emotion - just a few breaths heavier than previously - then he places Selma back on her bed, face-down, and pulls the blanket back up over her.

Selma remains where she is, in shock... but no longer crying, only softly panting from the effort, and the fear as it ebbs away... her eyes wide...

...and, as Grendel's breathing also softens, there comes the CREAKING steps of his exit...

...the door opening... SOUNDS of the wind and sea...

CUT TO:

125 EXT. SELMA'S HUT / FIREPIT -- EVENING [CONTINUOUS] 125

Selma is placing sticks on the fire. She glances up at Beowulf.

SELMA

Thing is, he never took me again.

BEOWULF

Then why did he keep coming?

SELMA

Keep the Danes away. The ones who'd fuck me then cut my throat.

BEOWULF

Show me them.

SELMA

They're mostly gone now.

BEOWULF

(dismissive)

Everywhere there's wretches... no more here than --

SELMA

Yes. Some of Hrothgar's best.

(CONTINUED)

Beowulf sees her now in profile, her eyes wet, her skin shimmering in the flicker of fire-light. Her beauty. He edges up to her.

She turns, studies him, then backhands him hard in the face.

He staggers back a step, more stunned than offended.

BEOWULF

Where did that have its birth?

SELMA

You thinking you can tie me up and drag me like a dog.

(beat)

Don't forget. I know how you die.

Beowulf is jolted. Almost as much as when she rises up to him and kisses him - hard.

They tentatively reach for each other.

She abruptly pulls him to her, driving her face along the sides of his throat, feeling his hair against her cheek.

He kisses her face and she swings her mouth to his - kisses him hungrily.

As their hands explore each other's bodies...

Selma works her way across his chest - the first time she's had this control in years - if ever at all.

BEOWULF

(wry)

Been a while?

SELMA

With men... yeah.

Beowulf gets it like the slap. She laughs.

She steers him back onto a bench, then raises her skirt and straddles his lap.

He kisses back - finally getting the picture - and they tear into each other... fiercely, rather like animals.

All seems quiet but for...

...in the middle distance, a couple of GUARDS, who are slightly drunk, jovial, relieved finally after all this time...

In the foreground, Brendan shuffles along, loose with drink...

BRENDAN

I'm tellnya, Christ, y'thought the Celts were work... But these - it's one hand on their sword, the other on their dick... Which hand they'll use to cross themselves, I almost fear to ask...

He looks up from the ground just as...

...a huge HAND sweeps out from the dark at him...

...and slaps his face... SNAPPING his neck.

He spins a step or so in a deadman's dance - then collapses to the ground.

And a great SHAPE moves over him.

The oak doors edge open, and a [two-armed] troll edges in.

CLOSE ON: the shadowed face as it SNIFFS. Fierce black eyes scan.

As the troll moves into the light from the fire-pit embers, her breasts are discernible beneath her hide-shift, as is her wild and grizzled mane: it's Grendel's mother - the SEA-HAG. She's the same genesis as Grendel, slightly smaller - but with greater vengeance. Bronze snaking arm-rings encircle her powerful forearms.

She edges between the sleeping warriors, more cautious than her son, till her eyes alight on...

...Grendel's arm nailed to the rafters.

Grief is quickly overwhelmed by fury. She tears the arm down off its spike. As she turns...

...the WARRIOR nearest to her stirs and looks up. She grabs him by the throat, SHRIEKS, and throws him into the fire-pit.

A SECOND WARRIOR rises.

She swings her son's arm, clubbing the man to death.

As the warriors now struggle out of sleep, she strides purposely for the door, her son's arm clutched under her own.

As she nears the door, Aeschere steps in front of her, sword drawn, blocking her path.

AESCHERE

Learn from your child, hag!

He swings his sword with all the strength he can muster...

...but she blocks it with her son's arm, the blade lodging in the flesh. She snatches hold of Aeschere, and pulls him to her in a lethal hug... the SOUND of his bones SNAPPING as she does...

LS: of the Sea-Hag lurching out of the hall, one arm carrying Grendel's arm, the other dragging a corpse by the hair.

As she disappears into the dark...

REVEAL THE POV: as that of the feral child, hiding in nearby rocks.

He pulls back and scurries away...

...as wails and commotion rise from the hall.

Selma jerks up to sitting in her bed...

...finding the feral boy standing over her, fear on his face...

...while Beowulf sleeps on, beside Selma.

Selma hurriedly dresses.

*

*

*

*

A wild-eyed Hrothgar, barefoot, in his nightclothes, is moving through the mess of furniture and bodies.

HROTHGAR
Aeschere! Aeschere!

Hrothgar's roaming gaze fixes on...

...an arm protruding from a shadowed corner, the hand clenched to a splendid sword. Hrothgar recognizes it immediately.

He bends, reaches for the arm...

...and that is entirely what he gets: Aeschere's arm torn from its socket... and no body in sight.

Hrothgar gasps horror, drops the arm, and staggers back, his eyes glazing in shock.

| | | | |
|-----|---------------------------|-----|---|
| 133 | OMITTED | 133 | * |
| 134 | OMITTED | 134 | * |
| 135 | EXT. SELMA'S HUT -- NIGHT | 135 | * |

A CLUSTER of Geat horsemen wait while... *

...Beowulf straps on his gear, Breca beside him. *

BEOWULF
(to Breca)
We lose anymore? *

Breca shakes his head, then indicates Unferth. *

BRECA
But they did. *

Unferth strides about the clearing, torch in hand, fiercely staring into the dark. *

He turns to the hut and starts setting it afire. *

As the fire rises, Beowulf and Breca share a weary look, roll their eyes. *

Unferth vigorously swings the torch in the sign of the cross. *

UNFERTH
(incensed)
By the holy word of Christ, never
again shall evil dwell here! By
the holy word of Christ, never
again shall evil dwell here! *

Beowulf mounts his horse.

*

BRECA
(low to Beowulf)
That what we got to look forward
to?

BEOWULF
Maybe he'll go south.

And the two men lead the others away.

*

Across the brutal landscape...

...Beowulf, Unferth, and the band of Geat warriors follow the
blood-trail on horseback...

The warriors come down to the beach on which they previously
found the bloody signs of Grendel's death-throes. This time
they come upon...

...a blood-caked HEAD, propped on a stick. Breca rides up,
looks it over, turns back to Beowulf.

BRECA
It's Aeschere.

Unferth bolts forth on his horse, dismounts hurriedly, draws
his sword and waves it at the beach.

UNFERTH
Aeschere! We will right this
wrong! God will burn this devil-
bitch-fiend!

Breca eyes Beowulf who ever-so-slightly rolls his eyes.

Beowulf's scanning gaze finds...

...the entrance to a cave which opens on the ocean.

The troop move through the damp cave through which a water-
filled crevice runs, searching but finding no evidence of
Grendel or the hag.

BRECA

Nothing lives here.

They're about to leave, when Beowulf fixes on...

...where the crevice meets the sloping ceiling of the cave.

He bends low, peers along the water's edge. He climbs down into the water.

BRECA (CONT'D)

Beowulf?

BEOWULF

Cave doesn't end here. There's outflow...

(indicates the cave-wall)
...from the other side.

BRECA

I'll go.

Beowulf shakes his head.

BEOWULF

You can't swim for shit.

They trade a smile. Beowulf takes a deep breath, and descends into the water.

Beowulf makes his way along the murky channel, the ceiling at most a foot above the water, in many spots entirely submerged...

...the only light filtering up through the water from the cave.

A wash of water smacks him against the rock.

He gulps water - chokes - gasps for air.

Clinging to an outcrop, he regains his breath. Continues on.

The ceiling now descends a foot into the water.

But - through the murk - he can make out some form of BLUISH LIGHT bleeding through the water from beyond the next rock.

He steels himself, takes the deepest breath he can, then dives down into the water, legs furiously kicking...

Beowulf bursts up out of the water...

...into an ice-cave, through one wall of which the outside light faintly glows.

Cautiously he edges out of the water, onto the sand.

Against one wall is a pile of treasure, gilded weapons, shields, and the skeleton heads of humans...

He continues on into the semi-dark of a rock passage and almost stumbles over...

...Grendel's corpse. The arm-socket wound has been sealed with pitch... but too late for Grendel. Blood saturates the sand.

A few feet away lies the great torn-off arm.

Beowulf turns the head by its hair, peers into the face...

...when a SHRIEK comes from behind. He wheels...

...and the Sea-Hag is upon him.

She wildly claws at him with one hand, while trying to stab him with the knife she holds in the other.

Beowulf breaks free of her, swings with his sword, but it hardly cuts through the walrus-hide.

She strikes out and her fingernails tear across his ribs. He falls into the water, and she leaps upon him.

They wrestle, twisting under the surface...

...then rise, Beowulf having slipped behind her and taken hold of her hands...

She lurches backwards, smashing him against the rocks...

As his grip loosens, she swings him partway in front of her, slashes down one arm with her knife... and his blood pours from the wound...

Beowulf stumbles clear of the Sea-Hag, eyes...

...a giant's sword in the treasure pile, of which he takes hold.

The Sea-Hag rushes toward him...

...and he only has time to swing the blade upward...

...slashing across her neck and face.

She SCREECHES pain, twists about, eyes going blind, and collapses into the water...

...blood gushing from her and staining the water...

...as Beowulf collapses in the sand.

Beowulf trudges back to Grendel's corpse, stands over it...

...when he hears a sound - a living GASP - from behind him. He wheels around...

...but the Sea-Hag lies where she was, half her body in the water, the other half in the sand.

Beowulf leaves Grendel, edges past the fire-pit toward the darker recesses of the cave. Edging around a rock, he sees...

...the GLIMMER of a blade, and raises his own, prepared to strike. As he moves another step forward, he's confronted by...

CLOSE ON: the feral boy, hiding in the rocks, holding a dagger out at Beowulf, terror in his tear-ridden eyes...

...but the boy then charges wildly, slashing with his dagger.

Beowulf shifts clear of the charge...

...and the child continues over to the body of Grendel, where he wheels around, squats down, dagger extended, protecting the corpse.

Beowulf studies him a beat, Beowulf's sword still raised.

BEOWULF

Your father.

It's unclear if it's a challenge or only confirmation.

The child, sensing it's the former, swallows, then defiantly nods, preparing to be attacked.

Beowulf, eyes still frenzied, blinks through the blood on his face. Shakes the dizziness from his head.

(CONTINUED)

Wipes the blood from his eyes with his arm... and now clearly sees the child's fear.

He stares dully a long beat... his mind twisting around on itself. Finally he softens, sighs, lets his sword drop to his side.

BEOWULF (CONT'D)

Then you can be proud.

The two study each other a beat...

...then Beowulf turns, starts back toward the water.

A GASP to one side of Beowulf. He twists around to find...

...the Sea-Hag, eyes blood-blinded, trudging slowly toward him. He raises his sword, point held outward.

The Sea-Hag slows to a teetering stop several feet from him. Her bloody hands vaguely explore the air before her.

Beowulf's expression softens...

...and, in that moment, one of her hands snaps out, and grabs hold of the extended blade.

Beowulf, transfixed, holds his ground.

The Sea-Hag then - incrementally - edges forward till the blade-point touches her abdomen. She lets out a painful breath.

And then, teeth clenched, she edges forward again.

She lets out a GASP as the sword penetrates her skin.

Her head falls back, the wild hair shifting off her face, revealing features of fierce beauty. *

Beowulf - overwhelmed and transfixed - lets go of the sword, and shifts out of the way. *

The Sea-Hag continues forward. Finally, the sword-hilt meets the wall of the cave. She feels the resistance...

...drags in a breath...

...then pushes forward, the sword moving through her, and emerging out her back.

She sighs, staggers a couple steps, then falls back dead, into the water.

(CONTINUED)

ON: Beowulf, mesmerized. He looks over...

...to Grendel's corpse and finds the child is gone.

Beowulf drops to a sitting position in the sand, his bloody hands dangling off his bloody knees.

EXT. OCEANSIDE CAVE -- DUSK

Breca is grimly peering down into the water, through which a shadow of blood now runs.

EXT. BEACH -- CONTINUOUS

Unferth is on his horse... but the other Geat warriors have yet to mount theirs.

UNFERTH

What do I do - come back for you tomorrow?

(off their looks)

You'll never find your way in the dark.

But the Geats aren't budging. Unferth shakes his head with derision - but remains.

UNFERTH (CONT'D)

As you wish.

INT. OCEANSIDE CAVE -- CONTINUOUS

Breca has built a small cairn of rocks on the sand. He ceremoniously drives his sword down into the sand before it.

A SPLASH behind him. Breca wheels to find...

...Beowulf's head break the surface of the water.

Beowulf gasps air, blinks his eyes clear, sees Breca - and smiles.

Breca scrambles over and gives him a hand up.

BRECA

Her blood then?

Beowulf nods, then his gaze settles on the cairn of stones.

BEOWULF

(superstitious)

What the fuck's that?

Breca boots over the cairn, pulls his sword free.

BRECA
Just killing time.

And the two shuffle out towards the light.

A subdued procession of torch-lit Geats continues back to Heorot...

...Beowulf holding Aeschere's severed head in his hands...

...another horse carrying the headless corpse.

Everyone is assembled for the pyre-burning of Aeschere.
Surrounding the body are weapons, armour, and other gifts.

Hrothgar comes up beside Beowulf.

HROTHGAR
Valkyries will have their hands
full with that old goat.

Beowulf smiles, nods.

HROTHGAR (CONT'D)
I'm sorry to have brought you to
all this.

BEOWULF
We brought ourselves.

HROTHGAR
At least now it's over.

Beowulf doesn't contradict him.

HROTHGAR (CONT'D)
That Celtic priest said I'd be
forgiven. I just need to hook the
right god.
(wry look / beat)
You ever worry on that? Heaven.

BEOWULF

I'm thinking I'll probably go where
I'm sent.

Hrothgar considers, nods. They share hard-won smiles.

146 EXT. WILDS -- DAY

146

Beowulf rides slowly along on horseback, scanning the rocky
outcrops... and WHISTLING a broken tune.

A WHISTLE comes back from over a ridge...

Beowulf stops, lets the silence settle a beat, whistles
again...

...and, again, the whistle comes back.

Beowulf turns his horse off the trail and starts up the
ridge.

147 EXT. SELMA'S NEW CAMP -- DAY

147

WITH: Beowulf as he climbs up through forbidding rock...

...which opens into a small meadow in which he sees...

...Selma, constructing a new camp.

As he approaches, she pays little attention... a glance, at
best.

BEOWULF

You could've killed me the other
night.

SELMA

I know. I was horny.

Beowulf is once-again blindsided by her. He smiles, shakes
his head. *

SELMA (CONT'D) *

It's not me who does it.

A chill runs through Beowulf. He broods a beat.

SELMA (CONT'D)

Anything else you need to know?

(CONTINUED)

BEOWULF

How you'll get along.
(off her look)
I mean without an eight-foot troll
to keep the dregs away.
(off her shrug)
You know they'll kill your son if
they find him.

Selma savages some wood with her axe.

SELMA

You couldn't.

BEOWULF

I'm not them.

SELMA

No. You just killed his father.
(beat)
Hrothgar taught you nothing I
guess.

Beowulf considers this a bit. He moves towards her, raises a hand to touch her... but she moves out of reach.

She picks up a bucket and strides off across the meadow...

...Beowulf - torn - watching her go.

EXT. BEACH -- DAY

The beach on which Grendel died.

Just above the high-tide line, a bonfire burns.

PULL BACK / REVEAL: Beowulf steadying the last few rocks on a shoulder-high cairn.

He stands back from it, considers it a beat. Through the smoke twisting around him, he "sees" without directly looking up...

...movement in the rocks above him to one side.

He draws his sword, cuts off a braid of hair, and throws it onto the fire.

He then drives his sword down into the sand at the base of the cairn.

Drops to his knees before it.

(CONTINUED)

BEOWULF

Sleep, Grendel.

CLOSE ON: the feral boy, eyes tearing, watching the ceremony for his dead father.

EXT. DANISH HARBOUR / BEOWULF'S LONGSHIP MOVING -- DAY 149

As Beowulf's longship moves out of the harbour...

...Beowulf stands with Breca and Thorfinn at the bow looking out over the water.

Thorkel stands at the stern, facing the rowers, a Christian cross at his throat...

THORKEL

...born of scum and swampy things /
Lurking in his mother's moss / The
mark of Cain came to his brow / Of
evil and a sea-hag born / Grendel,
grinder of lost men's bones / Felt
hate toward the happy Danes...

WITH: Breca watching Thorkel...

THORFINN

Cain... what's that?

BRECA

Man who killed his brother in a
Christian tale.

THORFINN

What's Cain got to do with Grendel?
(off Breca's shrug)
Grendel kill his own brother too?

BRECA

No, I think Thorkel's saying that
Grendel's just like Cain - a
killer.

THORFINN

We all are.

BRECA

Yeah well...

THORFINN

Thorkel's tale is shit.

Beowulf looks across to the shore, and sees through the fog...

...the feral child following along the rocks.

Beowulf watches as...

...the child comes to the end of the rocky spit. The fog clears enough to reveal, on the rocks several feet above him...

...Selma standing, driftwood in hand, also watching them go.

CLOSE ON: her face... and the ghost of a smile.

The fog thickens, mother and child disappearing into the land.

Beowulf blinks, his eyes now watering. He wipes them, looks again...

...but there's nothing visible but rock and water.

Beowulf turns his grim gaze back to the sea.

BEOWULF

By Odin's will...

Unexpectedly to Beowulf, a chorus of voices of the other Geats rise in the prayer:

UNISON

...let us find our way home.

Beowulf looks out over the others, all of whom are fixed on him.

He nods, and turns his gaze...

...back out on the sea.

FADE OUT.

END END END