

The Battle with the Dragon
In the Words of Beowulf, Wiglaf, the Dragon, and a thane
(by Claire Negus)

Preface:

These are selected passages from those who witnessed and took part in the Great Battle of the Dragon; the final battle of our ring-giver, the transition of power to our current generous lord Wiglaf. All those alive after this battle have given permission so that these passages may be known to the world as we know it, and Beowulf's great and honorable death will give fame and glory to the Geats.

The Dragon

Just woke up from a nap--some weird Geat shouted into my cave, disturbing my sleep and giving me this awful, awful headache. Now that I think about it, that shout sounded an awful like that brat Beowulf, who rules over the lesser ones I take for afternoon snacks. I guess I should probably go eat him or something---then I'll be rid of his roaring and protecting and such. I shall return to write more about how delicious the warrior tasted....should I grill him first or do it after the fact? I guess it depends on how much he puts up a fight.....

Beowulf, Lord of the Geats

I feel death upon me, so I write now in order so that when I am gone, my people might be taken care of. I hope to ride alone, but I know my loyal thanes will not leave my side. Whoever shows courage and survives this bloody battle, I shall name him ruler over my people, because he will have demonstrated loyalty and strength and courage. I hope to slay the dragon--if I fail, all is lost for my people. None are as strong as I, none as cunning or quick, none as fearless and courageous. And yet, now I remember the words of my long dead comrade Hrothgar, when he warned me of weakening power in old age. I feel his words now--my sword feels heavier than it used to, my armor feels as though weights of great bulk are attached to it. I know I will not come out alive, and I thank Almighty God for giving me this premonition, and allowing me to prepare before I return to him. And yet I am not prepared---I believe that not even the most fierce warrior could be prepared. This is a journey to end all my traveling---the final close to the book of my fame. I must go now, so that I might face death before my courage fails me.

Wiglaf

I write this after a time of great mourning and sorrow. I have not yet dried all my tears---my loyalty to Beowulf was great. But it is my responsibility to record what has happened so that our descendents know what has happened and how I came to the throne of the Geat people.

We began by striking out--after the Geat king had agreed to let us come--and we stood at the mouth of the beast's cave for a moment. Suddenly, Beowulf cried out in a loud, angry roar, and

he was met with a spray of rocks, dirt, and fire as the dragon sprang forth out of his den. Beowulf lifted his shield and defended himself, and I felt the urge to run and assist him, but I was stopped, shamefully paralyzed by fear. The dragon took this opportunity to roar and twist around at Beowulf, causing the lord to become startled. Beowulf used his shield well, but his attack on the dragon failed. The Lord God must have decided not to allow his victory in such a simple blow. In retaliation, the dragon again breathed his terrible fire breath, and almost smote Beowulf then and there. With every blow my lord attempted to strike, he failed to pierce the armor of the beast. As I watched this, I turned to the other thanes and saw fear in their eyes. They would not help. This spurred me on to help my lord, and I came out of my fear and rushed toward Beowulf to help him. Even with my lowly help, we could not bring down the great dragon. Soon, we were weary and the dragon attacked fiercely for a third time. Sadly, this is where the fatal blow was dealt upon the most generous master the Almighty has ever given the world. Here I must leave off, for tears overwhelm me once more as I think of this awful day.

The Thane

I too was in the company that approached the mountain of the dreaded beast. I too was (shamefully) one of those that fled Beowulf's side when he needed me most; I was one who ignored Wiglaf's fighting words; I was one who ran like a scared rabbit, as fast as I could, away from the evil place. However, I am not so cowardly as most---I returned a while later to watch what had happened and to help if absolutely needed. I hid behind a rock, which provided me shelter from the dragon's flame, and gave me a good view of the battle. In this way I saw the following (please excuse my poor narration, for though I am a thane, I was brought up with minimal education, and descriptiveness has never been a habit of mine):

The battle was towards the end when I came to my hiding place. Beowulf was wounded in the neck, bleeding profusely, along with globs of green slime that I took to be poison from the dragon's fangs. Wiglaf struck the dragon at this time, dealt the beast a terrible blow. Soon after, Beowulf drew his knife and killed the monster. Then he collapsed, weak from loss of blood and the accumulation of poison, and Wiglaf came to his side. I was about to come out from behind my rock to help, when I stopped, understanding that the two brave men would not be welcome to my presence. After a moment, Wiglaf ran deep into the cavern and returned with arm-fulls of gold and treasure--the spoils of the dragon. At this, I ran back to the village to tell them of the news of the slain beast and the death of our lord.

Epilogue

After the great battle with the dragon, Wiglaf returned to the village to further proclaim the death of the beast and Beowulf. There was great mourning, and then the funeral pyre was constructed. After the customary mourning was concluded, the Geats, once a mighty people with Beowulf at their head, became a saddened and despairing people, who prepared for a war they did not wish

to fight. Already, news had come that other tribes coveted their land and were on their way to battle. It became a dark time after the great battle, and one that would never be forgotten.