

Beowulf vs. Grendel (Tolkien version)

Then Hrothgar departed, defender of the **Scylehing** with his company of knights forth from the hall; their warrior lord would follow Wealhtheow his queen as the companion of his couch. The king of Glory, as men now heard, had appointed one to guard the hall against Grendel; now a special office he held in the service of the Danes, having taken on himself a watch against monstrous things. Verily the Geatish knight trusted confidently in his valiant strength, God's grace to him. Then his corslet of iron things he doffed, and the helm from his head, and gave his jeweled sword, best of iron-wrought things, to his esquire, and bade him have care of his gear of battle. Then the brave man spake, Beowulf of the Geats, a speech of proud words, ere he climbed upon his bed: 'No whit do I account myself in my warlike stature a man more despicable in deeds of battle than Grendel doth himself. Therefore I will not with sword give him the sleep of death, although I well could. Nought doth he know of gentle arms that he should wield weapon against me or hew my shield, fierce though he be in savage deeds. Nay, we two shall this night reject the blade, if he dare have recourse to warfare without weapons, and then let the foreseeing God, the Holy Lord, adjudge the glory to whichever side him seemeth meet.'

Then he laid him down, that valiant man, and his face was buried in the pillow at his cheek; and about him many a gallant rover was stretched upon his couch within the hall. None of them believed that he would ever return to the sweetness of his home, to the strong places of the free people where he was nurtured. Nay, they had learned that a bloody death had ere now in that hall of wine swept away all too many of the Danish folk. Yet God granted them a victorious fortune in battle, even to those Geatish warriors, yea succor and aid, that they, through the prowess of one and through his single might, overcame their enemy. Manifest is this truth, that mighty God hath ruled the race of men through all ages.

There came in darkling night passing, a shadow walking. The spearmen slept whose duty was to guard the gabled hall. All except one. Well-known it was to men that, if God willed it not, the robber-fiend no power had to drag them to the shades; but he there wakeful in his foe's despite abode grim-hearted the debate of war.