To Hrothgar was given such glory of war, such honor of combat, that all his kin obeyed him gladly till great grew his band of youthful comrades. It came in his mind to bid his henchmen a hall uprear, a master mead-house, mightier far than ever was seen by the sons of earth, and within it, then, to old and young he would all allot that the Lord had sent him, save only the land and the lives of his men. Wide, I heard, was the work commanded, for many a tribe this mid-earth round, to fashion the folkstead. It fell, as he ordered, in rapid achievement that ready it stood there, of halls the noblest: Heorot he named it whose message had might in many a land. Not reckless of promise, the rings he dealt, treasure at banquet: there towered the hall, high, gabled wide, the hot surge waiting of furious flame.

With envy and anger an evil spirit endured the dole in his dark abode, that he heard each day the din of revel high in the hall: there harps rang out, clear song of the singer. He sang who knew tales of the early time of man, how the Almighty made the earth, fairest fields enfolded by water, set, triumphant, sun and moon for a light to lighten the land-dwellers, and braided bright the breast of earth with limbs and leaves, made life for all of mortal beings that breathe and move. So lived the clansmen in cheer and revel a winsome life, till one began to fashion evils, that fiend of hell. Grendel this monster grim was called, march-riever mighty, in moorland living,
in fen and fastness; sife of the giants
the hapless wight a while had kept
since the Creator his exiles doomed.
On kin of Cain was the killing avenged
by sovran God for slaughtered Abel.
Ill fared his feud, and far was he driven,
for the slaughter’s sake, from sight of men.
Of Cain awoke all that woful breed,
Ettins and elves and evil-spirits,
as well as the giants that warred with God
weary while: but their wage was paid them!

Went he forth to find at fall of night
that haughty house, and heed wherever
the Ring-Danes, outrelved, to rest had gone.
Found within it the atheling band
asleep after feasting and fearless of sorrow,
of human hardship. Unhallowed wight,
grim and greedy, he grasped betimes,
wrathful, reckless, from resting-places,
thyrit of the thanes, and thence he rushed
fain of his fell spoil, faring homeward,
laden with slaughter, his lair to seek.
Then at the dawning, as day was breaking,
the might of Grendel to men was known;
then after wassail was wail uplifted,
loaf moan in the morn. The mighty chief,
atheling excellent, unblithe sat,
labored in woe for the loss of his thanes,
when once had been traced the trail of the fiend
spirit accursed: too cruel that sorrow,
too long, too loathsome. Not late the respite;
with night returning, anew began
ruthless murder; he recked no whit,
firm in his guilt, of the feud and crime.
They were easy to find who elsewhere sought
in room remote their rest at night,
bed in the bowers, when that bale was shown,
was seen in sooth, with surest token,—
the hall-thane's hate. Such held themselves
far and fast who the fiend outran!
Thus ruled unrighteous and raged his fill
one against all; until empty stood
that lordly building, and long it bode so.
Twelve years' tide the trouble he bore,
sovan of Scyldings, sorrows in plenty,
boundless cares. There came unhidden
140 tidings true to the tribes of men,
in sorrowful songs, how ceaselessly Grendel
harassed Hrothgar, what hate he bore him,
what murder and massacre, many a year,
145 feud unfading,—refused consent
to deal with any of Daneland's earls,
make pact of peace, or compound for gold:
still less did the wise men ween to get
great fee for the feud from his fiendish hands.
But the evil one ambushed old and young,
death-shadow dark, and dogged them still,
150 lured, and lurked in the livelong night
of misty moorlands: men may say not
where the haunts of these Hell-Runes be.
Such heaping of horrors the hater of men,
lonely roamer, wrought unceasing,
harassings heavy. O'er Heorot he lorded,
gold-bright hall, in gloomy nights;
160 and ne'er could the prince approach his throne,
—'twas judgment of God,—or have joy in his hall.
Sore was the sorrow to Scyldings'-friend,
heart-rending misery. Many nobles
sat assembled, and searched out counsel
how it were best for bold-hearted men
against harassing terror to try their hand.
170 While they vowed in their heathen fanes
altar-offerings, asked with words
that the slayer-of-souls would succor give them
for the pain of their people. Their practice this, their heathen hope; 'twas Hell they thought of in mood of their mind. Almighty they knew not, 180 Doomsman of Deeds and dreadful Lord, nor Heaven’s-Helmet heeded they ever, Wielder-of-Wonder.—Woe for that man who in harm and hatred hales his soul to fiery embraces;—nor favor nor change 185 awaits he ever. But well for him that after death-day may draw to his Lord, and friendship find in the Father’s arms!

Thus seethed unceasing the son of Healfdene with the woe of these days; not wisest men assuaged his sorrow; too sore anguish, loathly and long, that lay on his folk, most baneful of burdens and bales of the night.

This heard in his home Hygelac’s thane, great among Geats, of Grendel’s doings. 190 He was the mightiest man of valor in that same day of this our life, stalwart and stately. A stout wave-walker he bade make ready. Yon battle-king, said he, far o’er the swan-road he fain would seek, the noble monarch who needed men! The prince’s journey by prudent folk was little blamed, though they loved him dear; they whetted the hero, and hailed good omens. And now the bold one from bands of Geats comrades chose, the keenest of warriors e’er he could find; with fourteen men the sea-wood he sought, and, sailor proved, led them on to the land’s confines.

Time had now flown; afloat was the ship, 210
boat under bluff. On board they climbed, warriors ready; waves were churning sea with sand; the sailors bore on the breast of the bark their bright array, their mail and weapons: the men pushed off, on its willing way, the well-braced craft. Then moved o'er the waters by might of the wind that bark like a bird with breast of foam, till in season due, on the second day, the curved prow such course had run that sailors now could see the land, sea-cliffs shining, steep high hills, headlands broad. Their haven was found, their journey ended. Up then quickly the Weders clansmen climbed ashore, anchored their sea-wood, with armor clashing and gear of battle: God they thanked for passing in peace o'er the paths of the sea. Now saw from the cliff a Scylding clansman, a warden that watched the water-side, how they bore o'er the gangway glittering shields, war-gear in readiness; wonder seized him to know what manner of men they were. Straight to the strand his steed he rode, Hrotghar's henchman; with hand of might he shook his spear and spake in parley. "Who are ye, then, ye armed men, mailed folk, that yon mighty vessel have urged thus over the ocean ways, here o'er the waters? A warden I, sentinel set o'er the sea-march here, lest any foe to the folk of Danes with harrying fleet should harm the land. No aliens ever at ease thus bore them, linden-wielders: yet word-of-leave clearly ye lack from clansmen here, my folk's agreement.—A greater ne'er saw I of warriors in world than is one of you,— yon hero in harness! No henchman he worthied by weapons, if witness his features,
his peerless presence! I pray you, though, tell your folk and home, lest hence ye fare
suspect to wander your way as spies
in Danish land. Now, dwellers afar,
obean-travellers, take from me
simple advice: the sooner the better
I hear of the country whence ye came."

* * *

To him the stateliest spake in answer;
the warriors' leader his word-hoard unlocked:—
"We are by kin of the clan of Geats,
and Hygelac's own heart-fellows we.
To folk afar was my father known,
noble atheling, Ecgtheo named.
Full of winters, he fared away
aged from earth; he is honored still
through width of the world by wise men all.
To thy lord and liege in loyal mood
we hasten hither, to Healfdene's son,
people-protector: be pleased to advise us!
To that mighty-one come we on mickle errand,
to the lord of the Danes: nor deem I right
that aught be hidden. We hear—thou knowest
if sooth it is—the saying of men,
that amid the Scyldings a scathing monster,
dark ill-doer, in dusky nights
shows terrific his rage unmatched,
hatred and murder. To Hrothgar I
in greatness of soul would succor bring,
so the Wise-and-Brave may worst his foes,—
if ever the end of ills is fated.
of cruel contest, if cure shall follow,
and the boiling care-waves cooler grow;
else ever afterward anguish-days
he shall suffer in sorrow while stands in place
high on its hill that house unpeered!"
Astride his steed, the strand-ward answered,
clansman unquailing: "The keen-souled thane
must be skilled to sever and sunder duly
words and works, if he well intends.
I gather, this band is graciously bent
to the Scyldings' master. March, then, bearing
weapons and weeds the way I show you.
I will bid my men your boat meanwhile
to guard for fear lest foemen come,—
your new-tarred ship by shore of ocean
faithfully watching till once again
it waft o'er the waters those well-loved thanes,
—winding-neck'd wood,—to Wedes' bounds,
heroes such as the host of fate
shall succor and save from the shock of war."
They bent them to march,—the boat lay still,
 tethered by cable and fast at anchor,
broad-bosomed ship.—Then shone the boars
over the cheek-guard; chased with gold,
keen and gleaming, guard it kept
o'er the man of war, as marched along
heroes in haste, till the hall they saw,
broad of gable and bright with gold:
that was the fairest, 'mid folk of earth,
of houses 'neath heaven, where Hrothgar lived,
and the gleam of it lightened o'er lands afar.

Stone-bright the street: it showed the way
to the crowd of clansmen. Corselets glistened
hand-forged, hard; on their harness bright
the steel ring sang, as they strode along
in mail of battle, and marched to the hall.
There, weary of ocean, the wall along
they set their bucklers, their broad shields, down,
and bowed them to bench: the breastplates clanged,
war-gear of men; their weapons stacked,
spears of the seafarers stood together,
gray-tipped ash: that iron band
was worthily weaponed!—A warrior proud
asked of the heroes their home and kin.

«Whence, now, bear ye burnished shields,
harness gray and helmets grim,
spears in multitude? Messenger, I,
Hrothgar's herald! Heroes so many
ne'er met I as strangers of mood so strong.
'Tis plain that for prowess, not plunged into exile,
for high-hearted-valor, Hrothgar ye seek!»
Him the sturdy-in-war bespake with words,
proud earl of the Weders answer made,
hardy 'neath helmet:—«Hygelac's, we,
fellows at board; I am Beowulf named.
I am seeking to say to the son of Healidene
this mission of mine, to thy master-lord,
the doughty prince, if he deign at all
grace that we greet him, the good one, now.»
Wulfstan spake, the Wendles' chieftain,
whose might of mind to many was known,
his courage and counsel: «The king of Danes,
the Scyldings' friend, I fain will tell,
the Breaker-of-Kings, as the boon thou askest,
the faméd prince, of thy faring hither,
and, swiftly after, such answer bring
as the doughty monarch may deign to give.»

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Uprose the mighty one, ringed with his men,
brave band of thanes, some bode without,
battle-gear guarding, as bade the chief.
Then hied that troop where the herald led them,
under Heorot's roof: (the hero strode.)
hardy 'neath helm, till the hearth he neared.
Beowulf spake,—his breastplate gleamed,
war-net woven by wit of the smith:— 405
"Thou Hrothgar, hail! Hygelac's kinsman and follower.
Fame a plenty have I gained in youth! These Grendel-deeds
I heard in my home-land heralded clear.
Seafarers say how stands this hall,
of buildings best, for your band of thanes
empty and idle, when evening sun
in the harbor of heaven is hidden away.
So my vassals advised me well,— 415
brave and wise, the best of men,—
O sovrn Hrothgar, to seek thee here,
for my nerve and my might they knew full well.
Themselves had seen me from slaughter come
blood-flecked from foes, where five I bound,
and that wild brood worsted. I 't he waves I slew
nicors by night, in need and peril
avenging the Weders, whose woe they sought,—
crushing the grim ones. Grendel now,
monster cruel, be mine to quell
in single battle! So, from thee,
thou sovrn of the Shining-Danes,
Scyldings'-bulwark, a boon I seek,— 420
and, Friend-of-the-folk, refuse it not,
O Warriors'-shield, now I've wandered far,—
that I alone with my liegemen here,
this hardy band, may Heorot purge!
More I hear, that the monster dire,
in his wanton mood, of weapons recks not;
hence shall I scorn—so Hygelac stay,
king of my kindred, kind to me!—
brand or buckler to bear in the fight,
gold-colored targe: but with gripe alone
must I front the fiend and fight for life,
foe against foe. Then faith be his 440
in the doom of the Lord whom death shall take.  
Fain, I ween, if the fight he win, 
in this hall of gold my Geatish band 
will he fearless eat,—as oft before,—
my noblest thanes. Nor need'st thou then 
to hide my head; for his shall I be, 
dyed in gore, if death must take me; 
and my blood-covered body he'll bear as prey, 
ruthless devour it, the roamer-lonely, 
with my life-blood redden his lair in the fen: 
no further for me need'st food prepare! 
To Hygelac send, if Hild should take me, 
best of war-weeds, warding my breast, 
armor excellent, heirloom of Herethel 
and work of Wayland. Fares Wyrd as she must."

Reclined then the chieftain, and cheek-pillows held 
the head of the earl, while all about him 
seamen hardy on hall-beds sank.  
None of them thought that thence their steps 
to the folk and fastness that fostered them, 
to the land they loved, would lead them back! 
Full well they wist that on warriors many 
battle-death seized, in the banquet-hall, 
of Danish clan. But comfort and help, 
war-weal weaving, to Weder folk 
the Master gave, that, by might of one, 
over their enemy all prevailed, 
by single strength. In sooth 'tis told 
that highest God o'er human kind 
hath wielded ever!—Thro' wan night striding, 
came the walker-in-shadow. Warriors slept 
whose hest was to guard the gabled hall,—
all save one. ’Twas widely known
that against God’s will the ghostly ravager
him could not hurl to haunts of darkness;
wakeful, ready, with warrior’s wrath,
bold he bided the battle’s issue.
Then from the moorland by misty crags,
with God’s wrath laden, Grendel came.
The monster was minded of mankind now
sundry to seize in the stately house.
Under welkin he walked, till the wine-palace there,
gold-hall of men, he gladly discerned,
flashing with fretwork. Not first time, this,
that he the home of Hrothgar sought,—
yet ne’er in his life-day, late or early,
such hardy heroes, such hall-thanes, found!
To the house the warrior walked apace,
parted from peace; the portal opened,
though with forged bolts fast, when his fists had struck it,
and baleful he burst in his blatant rage,
the house’s mouth. All hastily, then,
o’er fair-paved floor the fiend trod on,
ireful he strode; there streamed from his eyes
fearful flashes, like flame to see.
He spied in hall the hero-band,
kin and clansmen clustered asleep,
hardy liegemen. Then laughed his heart;
for the monster was minded, ere morn should dawn,
savage, to sever the soul of each,
life from body, since lusty banquet
waited his will! Bud Wyrd forbade him
to seize any more of men on earth
after that evening. Eagerly watched
Hygelac’s kinsman his cursed foe,
how he would fare in fell attack.
Not that the monster was minded to pause!
Straightway he seized a sleeping warrior
for the first, and tore him fiercely assunder,
the bone-frame bit, drank blood in streams,
swallowed him piecemeal: swiftly thus
the lifeless corse was clear devoured,
e'en feet and hands. Then farther he hied; for the hardy hero with hand de grasped, felt for the foe with fiendish claw, for the hero reclining,—who clutched it boldly, prompt to answer, propped on his arm. Soon then saw that shepherd-of-evils that never he met in this middle-world, in the ways of earth, another wight with heavier hand-gripe; at heart he feared, sorrowed in soul,—none the sooner escaped! Fain would he flee, his fastness seek, the den of devils: no doings now such as oft he had done in days of old! Then bethought him the hardy Hygelac-thane of his boast at evening: up he bounded, grasped firm his foe, whose fingerz cracked. The fiend made off, but the earl close followed. The monster meant—if he might at all—to fling himself free, and far away fly to the fens,—knew his fingers' power in the gripe of the grim one. Gruesome march to Heorot this monster of harm had made! Din filled the room; the Danes were bereft, castle-dwellers and clansmen all, earls, of their ale. Angry were both those savage hall-guards: the house resounded. Wonder it was the wine-hall firm in the strain of their struggle stood, to earth the fair house fell not; too fast it was within and without by its iron bands craftily clamped; though there crashed from sill many a mead-bench—men have told me—gay with gold, where the grim foes wrestled. So well had weened the wisest Scyldings that not ever at all might any man that bone-decked, brave house break assander, crush by craft,—unless clasp of fire in smoke engulfed it.—Again uprose din redoubled. Danes of the North with fear and frenzy were filled, each one,
who from the wall that wailing heard.  
God's foe sounding his grisly song,  
cry of the conquered, clamorous pain  
from captive of hell. Too closely held him  
he who of men in might was strongest  
in that same day of this our life.  

* * *

Not in any wise would the earls'-defence  
suffer that slaughterous stranger to live,  
useless deeming his days and years  
to men on earth. Now many an earl  
of Beowulf brandished blade ancestral,  
fain the life of their lord to shield,  
their praised prince, if power were theirs;  
ever they knew,—as they neared the foe,  
hardy-hearted heroes of war,  
aiming their swords on every side  
the accursed to kill,—no keenest blade,  
no fairest of falchions fashioned on earth,  
could harm or hurt that hideous fiend!  
He was safe, by his spells, from sword of battle,  
from edge of iron. Yet his end and parting  
on that same day of this our life  
woeful should be, and his wandering soul  
far off flit to the fiends' domain.  
Soon he found, who in former days,  
harmful in heart and hated of God,  
on many a man such murder wrought,  
that the frame of his body failed him now.  
For him the keen-souled kinsman of Hygelac  
held in hand; hateful alive  
was each to other. The outlaw dire  
took mortal hurt, a mighty wound  
showed on his shoulder, and sinews cracked,  
and the bone-frame burst. To Beowulf now
the glory was given, and Grendel thence
death-sick his den in the dark moor sought,
noisome abode: he knew too well
that here was the last of life, an end
of his days on earth.—To all the Danes
by that bloody battle the boon had come.
From ravage had rescued the roving stranger
Hrothgar's hall; the hardy and wise one
had purged it anew. His night-work pleased him,
his deed and its honor. To eastern Danes
had the valiant Geat his vaunt made good,
all their sorrow and ills assuaged,
their bale of battle borne so long,
and all the dole they erst endured,
pain a-plenty.—'Twas proof of this,
when the hardy-in-light a hand laid down,
arm and shoulder,—all, indeed,
of Grendel's gripe,—'neath the gabled roof.
Many at morning, as men have told me,
warriors gathered the gift-hall round,
folk-leaders faring from far and near,
o'er wide-stretched ways, the wonder to view,
trace of the traitor. * * * * *