

# Beowulf

**A Screenplay by  
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**Adapted from the Anonymous  
10<sup>th</sup> Century Old English poem**



**FINAL DRAFT  
August 2003**

"BEOWULF"

FADE IN:

INT. HEOROT - NIGHT

Flames rise into darkness, illuminating the grim face of a VIKING WARRIOR. SOUNDS OF BATTLE echo around him: the clang of metal, the sizzle of burning flesh, cries of victory and defeat.

TITLE: DENMARK, 503 A.D.

With ravenous brutality the warrior grimaces -- and bites into a leg of roast pig. He rises to tower above a stone fire pit, over which a boar sizzles on its iron spit.

A FIGURE flies past and we hear the CRASH of splintered wood.

ECGTHEOW (Edge-thay-o), our grim warrior -- a hardened war veteran at 28 -- bellows with laughter, spewing gobbets of meat.

ECGTHEOW

Ha! Nice move, Æschere. My mother  
could do better!

ÆSCHERE, a rugged 20-year-old, lies sprawled amongst the shattered remains of a wooden table, eyeing Ecgtheow coldly.

ÆSCHERE

Your mother beat you, didn't she?

Ecgtheow roars and lunges at Æschere. Wolves lap up spilt food.

Heorot is a massive timber mead-hall, newly built and designed to impress, glowing golden in the flickering firelight. The hall is packed to overflowing with drunken revelers.

Ecgtheow gets Æschere in a headlock.

ÆSCHERE

Gods, Ecgtheow, you fight like my  
wife.

ECGTHEOW

Ah, your wife gave me no trouble  
at all, I can assure you!

Æschere slams his elbow into Ecgtheow's ribs and they battle on.

## AT A NEARBY TABLE

UNFERTH, 16, and YRMENLAF, 18, arm-wrestle between sharp daggers held point-upwards. Beads of sweat drip onto clenched fists.

Æschere and Ecgtheow tumble into Unferth, who howls in pain, a dagger protruding from the back of his hand. The crowd bellows with laughter, but quickly falls silent as--

Unferth plucks the blade out and turns on them, scowling. He is a dark man with dark features, all angles and hard lines.

## FROM THE HIGH TABLE

KING HROTHGAR watches with amusement.

HROTHGAR

Easy now, Unferth. You'll spoil  
the fun of our first night in the  
new hall!

A powerful warlord at the height of his reign, Hrothgar wears his captured wealth for all to see. Above his chiseled features looms a crown of golden antlers. His 30 years have been kind.

On his left sits QUEEN WEALTHEOW, 24, hair flaming red. She is regal and elegant, an island of civility in a sea of brutality. At her side 6-year-old FREAWARU emulates her every move. On the King's right two sons, ages 7 and 8, wrestle and roughhouse.

And in the final seat, isolated on the outside next to Freawaru, sulks HROTHULF, the King's 10-year-old nephew, a troubled youth.

NOTE: Danish hair is dark, Celts & Geats red, the Swedes blonde. Ecgtheow is a Geat, Wealtheow a Celt. All others here are Danes.

Reluctantly, Unferth sits down, nursing his hand. A wolf licks at the wound, but Unferth slaps it away. The wolf growls.

HROTHGAR

A drink to Heorot, the Hall of the  
Hart, mightiest of mead-halls in  
all the Northern realm!

Cheers go up as mead goes down. The warriors call for "A song!"

HROTHGAR

Aye! Tell us a tale, good Song-  
Smith, to wear the night away!

An OLD BARD moves to the center of the hall and plucks a few NOTES from a small golden harp. The Danes settle back to enjoy.

BARD

Listen now friends! To the glory  
of the Danes in days gone by, of  
the kings of our clan, leaders of  
men! Hear now of heroes and the  
clash of steel, the feats of  
courage of kith and kin, our noble  
ancestors gone before! Though they  
have fallen their deeds remain,  
recorded in song, remembered by  
all!

The Danes cry out their approval of the Bard's beginning.

BARD

Hear now of Hrothgar, bold son of  
Healfdene, mightiest of men,  
fearsome in war. He grew great in  
honor, rich in reward, far spread  
his name through the lands of the  
North. Great are his gifts, the  
giver of rings; he terrifies the  
foe, that is a good King!

The warriors pound the tables, voicing pride in clan and king.

THE DANES

Hrothgar! Hrothgar! Hrothgar!

With a sudden THUNDEROUS CRASH the entryway doors burst inward, their timbers shattered, the iron hinges wrenched askew.

Looming in the doorway is the giant ogre GRENDEL. Eyes burn fiery red beneath stringy hair. Sharp teeth protrude at angles from a slavering mouth.

HROTHGAR

Defend the hall!

The men leap to their feet, reaching for weapons. A barrage of spears hit Grendel, only to bounce back ineffectually.

ÆSCHERE

Odin protect us.

Hrothgar leaps over the table, sword drawn. Hrothulf joins him.

HROTHGAR

Swords, men! Arm yourselves!

A dozen warriors close in on the ogre, swords drawn.

Unferth backs away, standing guard near the Queen and children. The Bard stands frozen with terror in the center of the hall.

HRETHRIC, the 8-year-old, reaches for a battle-axe hanging on the wall. The weapon CRASHES LOUDLY to the table. Hrothgar turns to see the boy dragging the too-heavy weapon across the floor.

HROTHGAR

Unferth, get them out of here!

Unferth pulls the defiantly kicking child away as--

Grendel slashes the nearest man with a clawed hand, splashing the walls of Heorot red. A second man is gutted, a third crushed in one great paw. Men are torn limb from limb. The beast devours the parts whole, blood oozing from its gaping maw.

Hrothulf suddenly finds himself face-to-face with the demon. Grendel towers over the boy, grinning. Hrothulf goes pale.

HROTHGAR

Hrothulf! No!!!

Ecgtheow steps into view between them, sword raised.

Grendel ROARS defiance as Ecgtheow swings with all he's got. The blade WHISTLES as it cuts air, arcing downward--

--and CLANGS as it hits home, notching the blade.

The Danes stare in disbelief as Grendel knocks the blade from Ecgtheow's hands and grips him by the throat, squeezing until TEARS OF BLOOD seep from Ecgtheow's eyes.

Weapons CLATTER to the floor as the Danes flee in terror.

Æschere drags the wide-eyed Hrothgar toward the rear door, leaving the Bard frozen where he stands. The harp falls with an unmelodious TWANG to lie broken on the blood-spattered floor.

Grendel throws back his head and HOWLS with glee.

EXT. OPEN SEA - DAY

A VIKING LONGSHIP cuts through crashing waves, its wooden stem carved with the head of a screaming dragon.

TITLE: Twelve Years Later...

BEOWULF stands alone at the prow. At 24, he is a towering hulk, stern and grim. Hardened muscles glisten with sea-spray.

FOURTEEN WARRIORS man the ship. All are young men like their leader, most of them untried warriors in search of adventure. Each has his reasons for coming. Some already regret it.

HONDSCIO (Hond-show), the Boatswain, approaches Beowulf.

BEOWULF

How much longer, Hondscio? Two days now have we sailed, and yet another is nearly gone.

HONDSCIO

Not far now, my lord. We should see the cliffs of Dane-Mark within the hour.

As Beowulf scans the horizon, Hondscio scrutinizes him covertly.

HONDSCIO

Be not impatient, my friend. Fate will find us soon enough.

BEOWULF

This incessant waiting is not for me. Always have I disliked the silence before a battle.

HONDSCIO

Aye, it is then that a man's fears most betray him.

Beowulf flashes a frown at Hondscio.

HONDSCIO

I mean nothing by it, my Lord.

Hondscio hesitates, searching for the fine line between friendship and duty.

HONDSCIO

Personally, I have always feared  
the moments before going home to  
my wife. The wrath of an impatient  
woman is far more fearsome than  
any battle, I can tell you!

Beowulf does not share his humor. Hondscio's smile fades.

BEOWULF

My heart is weary, Hondscio.

HONDSCIO

Forget her, Beowulf. She is not  
for you. Find another.

Hondscio glances back at the crew, who are furtively watching  
them. The men turn quickly back to their business.

AT THE STERN

EOFOR, 19, mans the tiller while 20-year-old brother HROLF tends  
to the rigging. Hrolf is quietly pessimistic, Eofor less quiet.

OTTAR, a gruff bear of a man with full plaited beard at 25,  
carves a piece of wood, a skin-drum sitting idle between crossed  
legs. The wood slowly takes on the shape of an ogre.

WIGLAF (Wee-laugh), the youngest at 17, gathers the shavings  
into a bag for tinder. A strawberry-blonde half-Swede, he's  
something of a scullery boy, spending his time cleaning up after  
the others and finding clever uses for the gathered materials.

WIGLAF

What do you think they're saying,  
Ottar?

OTTAR

I don't know, lad, but it don't  
look encouraging.

EOFOR

What's to be encouraged about? We  
go to battle a beast no blade can  
slay.

Nearby, SVEIN the Iron-Smith sharpens a familiar broadsword. At  
27, he is the eldest among them, already a hardened war veteran.

SVEIN

This blade was forged in the fires  
of Wayland's smithy, boy. She'll  
rend the very roots of Yggdrasil,  
the Eternal Tree.

WIGLAF

I've heard it told that Beowulf  
slew a Frost-Giant with that  
sword. Is that true, Svein?

SVEIN

Aye lad, that is so, for I was  
with him even then. 'Tis said the  
Valkyrie themselves fear this  
weapon, for it is truly a hero's  
blade.

OTTAR

It was his father's sword.

The men admire the finely-crafted, jewel-encrusted weapon,  
marred only by a single notch in the blade.

HROLF

Let us hope it serves us well once  
more.

AT THE BOW

The dragon prow screams its silent defiance, no less frightening  
than Beowulf's grim scowl. Hondscio steels himself to continue.

HONDSCIO

You are the King's nephew,  
Beowulf, and like it or not,  
Hæreth is now your Queen. Our  
place is in Geat-Land beside the  
throne we have sworn to protect,  
not under a barrow tomb on some  
foreign shore.

Beowulf turns on him.

BEOWULF

Do you fear death, Hondscio? Is  
that it? Are you afraid of what  
awaits us?

HONDSCIO

Yes, I am afraid! We are all of us  
afraid, as well we should be!

The crew can't help but look. Hondscio calms himself.

HONDSCIO

All men fear death who face it  
every day, Beowulf. You yourself  
taught me that without fear there  
is no need of courage.

BEOWULF

Then I no longer have need of it.

Hondscio sighs with resignation.

BEOWULF

There is nothing now left for me  
upon this Earth but to die with  
honor, and savor what glory there  
might be in that.

HONDSCIO

Death will find us each in our own  
time, do not doubt that. We may  
face it bravely, but we need not  
seek it out willingly.

Beowulf turns away, realizing he has exposed too much.

BEOWULF

The land of my fathers is behind  
me now. I will not look upon those  
shores again.

HONDSCIO

Women are not that crucial, my  
friend. Do not fool yourself into  
thinking them so.

BEOWULF

Do not mock me, Hondscio! You have  
a fine wife, and soon a strong  
child to bear your name--

Now Hondscio turns away. Beowulf sees his mistake too late.

BEOWULF

Nor is it that I must simply find  
a mate to bear my kin, for that  
would not prove too hard I think!

Hondscio shoots him a skeptical glance.

BEOWULF

There are women who would have me,  
though by your look I see you  
doubt me!

HONDSCIO

No one will have you, Beowulf. But  
by the gods, you will have them!

The two friends share a laugh, breaking the tension.

The crew, relieved, turn back to their duties. Eofor struggles with the growing swells as the ship begins to sway inexplicably. Perplexed, Hrolf checks the sail, but the wind hasn't changed.

Beowulf and Hondscio are too absorbed to notice.

BEOWULF

Ah, Hondscio, what are we to do? I  
know you did not want to come, and  
I am sorry now I have brought you,  
but I can't turn back now.

HONDSCIO

Then we must go on.

They gaze out across the sea, but their eyes are far away.

A flock of snow geese glide gracefully by and Beowulf's hand moves to a silver brooch pinning his cloak, shaped like a swan.

FLASHBACK - GEATLAND HARBOR - DAY

Beowulf's ship sits ready to sail in a protected harbor filled with merchant ships and vessels of war, a thriving seaport.

Beowulf and his men stand on the shore, a crowd gathered around to bid them farewell. For some the parting is sad, but not all.

Hondscio shares a tender moment with his wife HANNAH, placing a hand gently on her swollen belly. Hrolf and Eofor, however, get a stern lecture from their overbearing father, WONRED.

Before Beowulf stands HÆRETH, a young woman of radiant beauty, her wine-red curls crowned by an ornate silver headpiece. In her eyes is a pained yearning that betrays her outward poise. She removes the swan brooch from her cloak, holding it out to Beowulf. Fingers touch. Eyes meet. Just as she starts to speak--

--into view steps HYGELAC, King of the Geats. Easily twice Hæreth's age, he bears the burden of hard years upon a thin, craggy face. An iron crown rests heavy on his balding head.

Hygelac takes Hæreth's hand in his. She smiles weakly and averts her eyes as Beowulf bows before them. Behind Hygelac, his 14-year-old son HEARDRED glowers moodily at Beowulf, while nearby Hæreth's father HALDAR and 15-year-old brother ERIK watch sadly.

A BLACK RAVEN CAWS as it flits by, heading out to sea.

BACK TO PRESENT

Beowulf, alone now at the prow, gazes at the brooch in his hand.

BEOWULF

Farewell, fair Queen.

He starts to toss the brooch overboard, but the SHIP LURCHES, sending him sprawling. The brooch skitters across the deck.

The RAVEN CRIES OUT from atop the mast as a SEA SERPENT rises from the water in front of the ship. Its great curving neck and gaping mouth mirror the dragon's head prow, dwarfing it many times over. The SERPENT SCREAMS.

Panic ensues as the SHIP ROCKS WILDLY, sending men flailing. Eofor clings to the helm, the tiller out of water. Hrolf swings from a rope, feet treading air. Ottar and his drum go overboard.

SVEIN

Man in the water!

Wiglaf leaps to the rail, searching the teeming waters. Hondscio rushes to help Hrolf control the billowing sail.

HONDSCIO

Man the ropes! Furl the sail!

The ship lists dangerously to one side.

EOFOR

She's going over!

HONDSCIO

All hands starboard!

With a mighty swing, Svein sinks the broadsword into the mast, severing the sheet-ropes, bringing the sail down with a CRASH. The ship settles to. Svein hefts the sword with satisfaction.

All eyes turn to Beowulf at the prow as the Serpent looms up before him, fangs bared, spiked fins flaring.

The Serpent bears down on the ship with gaping maw. Beowulf leaps aside as foot-long fangs CHOMP into the bow. The ship rocks violently. The beast rears up, spewing wood chunks.

BEOWULF

Spears, men! Now!

A barrage of spears slam into the Serpent's neck. The Serpent WAILS its agony.

Eofor remains astern as the others rush forward.

BEOWULF

Svein! Sword!

Svein heaves the sword end over end. Beowulf ducks as it sails by mere inches from his head to sink in the Serpent's neck. Beowulf glares at Svein, who grimaces a comic "sorry!"

HROLF

Nice toss, Thor!

Beowulf leaps atop the rail. Grasping for the sword hilt, he draws the blade out as the creature rears up to attack.

The beast SCREAMS with rage, spewing blood and sea-water. Beowulf screams back, brandishing the blood-drenched weapon.

An arrow THUDS into one of the Serpent's eyes. The beast SHRIEKS and turns on Wiglaf, who fumbles frantically for a second arrow.

Beowulf swings with all his might, the blade passing cleanly through the beast's neck, but the screaming head keeps coming.

BEOWULF

Wiglaf!

Wiglaf's eyes go wide as the gaping mouth bears down on him.

The men scatter as the great head crashes to the deck, swallowing Wiglaf. They gape and stare in disbelief.

Wiglaf's saliva-covered head pops out from the severed neck.

WIGLAF

Blech! Eaten by a Serpent!

They laugh and sigh with relief. Svein helps Wiglaf up.

OTTAR (OS)

Help! Help!

IN THE OCEAN

Ottar clings to his drum, flailing. The men gaze over the side to see their sodden companion floating in the sea.

BEOWULF

What's the matter, Ottar? Afraid of a little Water Würm, are you?

OTTAR

Nay! I only thought I might join the wee beastie for a bit of a swim!

More laughter ensues as they haul Ottar in.

BACK ON THE SHIP

Beowulf surveys the damage as Svein cuts two fangs from the Serpent's mouth and holds them up to his conical helm.

HROLF

That's a nice fashion statement, Svein, but it'll never go over with the ladies.

Svein scowls comically, and there is another bout of laughter.

BEOWULF

Okay, men, let's clear this deck! Hrolf, get that sail up! Hondscio, Eofor, get this ship back on course!

EOFOR

Aye, my lord!

Hondscio tosses Beowulf the swan brooch with a meaningful glare before moving off to carry out his orders.

Beowulf silently closes his hand on the brooch.

Svein and Hrolf rig new ropes and draw the sail up. Hondscio sniffs the air and checks the position of the sun.

HONDSCIO

Three marks to port and hold her steady, Eofor. Keep the sun just off the masthead.

EOFOR

Aye, aye, Bos'n!

HROLF

Wind's changing, Cap'n.

Beowulf nods, but gives no orders. They all scan the horizon. Suddenly, the RAVEN CAWS and flits away.

WIGLAF

Landfall! Landfall dead ahead!

Wiglaf points ahead, where far off on the horizon the faint outline of land can be seen, shrouded in a hazy mist.

Hondscio frowns.

EXT. DANISH FJORD - DAY

The ship is rowed up a misty fjord to the STEADY BEAT of Ottar's drum. The MOANING CREAK of the oars is unsettling and the men gaze about uneasily, but nothing moves in the sullen stillness.

EXT. DANISH HARBOR - DAY

The oars are banked as the ship glides into a shallow harbor.

A handful of dilapidated ships lie deserted on a log-strewn shore beneath rocky bluffs shrouded in the thick haze of hot springs and waterfalls.

Beowulf remains in the prow, surveying the land, as the ship is drawn ashore and secured by thick ropes to moss-covered pilings.

FROM ATOP THE BLUFF

We look down as the Geats begin to unload their war-gear.

FROM BELOW

The men see a SHADOW moving slowly down the bluff towards them. They draw weapons and form a shield wall in front of the ship. THE SHADOW looms ever larger, until--

--A MOUNTED GUARD emerges, bearing a bannered spear emblazoned with the crest of the Antlered Stag. He is WULFGAR, a young but rugged warrior, scarred with claw marks upon one cheek.

WULFGAR

Hail! I am Wulfgar, Harbor-Guard  
to Hrothgar, High King of Danes.  
Who are you who come so boldly  
bearing arms of war, treading on  
lands not your own?

Beowulf sees that Wulfgar's knuckles are white upon the staff.

WULFGAR

If you be friend, step forward and  
be accounted welcome. Yet if you  
be not, stand fast to meet your  
Fate, for as I am a man bound to  
honor my King, you shall perish  
here upon this sand. Speak now if  
ever again you would do so in this  
world!

Beowulf leaps overboard to land solidly on the shore. Wulfgar points the tip of his spear at Beowulf's chest.

BEOWULF

Hail and well met, good Sea-Guard!  
I am Beowulf, hearth-companion to  
Hygelac, King across the sea.

WULFGAR

Aye, well do we know of you. And  
of Ecgtheow, your father, who long  
dwelt in our land. His battle-fame  
is often sung among our clan.

BEOWULF

It is in payment for the kindness  
shown my father that I have come.  
And to avenge his death upon the  
creature that haunts your land.

WULFGAR

Grendel we have named the beast,  
for it grinds men's bones in its  
greedy teeth. No man can stand  
against this thing. Return to your  
fair home, friends. There is  
nothing for you here but sorrow.

BEOWULF

I vowed when I set out across the  
sea never to return until I rid  
this land of its evil curse.

WULFGAR

That is a noble oath. Yet a wise  
man must know the difference  
between proud words and bold  
deeds. Many men boast, but few  
here live to tell the tale.

BEOWULF

Only the deed itself will make  
that distinction clear.

WULFGAR

Go then forth to meet your Fate.  
Follow close, and I shall lead you  
to the hall which Grendel haunts.

Wulfgar spurs his steed about.

EXT. INLAND ROAD - DAY

Beowulf and his six key companions march single-file, following  
Wulfgar inland along an overgrown dirt track. They glance about  
warily as EERIE SOUNDS emerge from the encroaching forest.

EXT. HEOROT VALLEY - DAY

Cresting a rise where the path runs between rune-carved menhirs,  
the men stop short as the towering hall of Heorot comes into  
view, rising from the center of a sprawling Norse village. The  
Raven sits atop one of the standing stones, watching them.

WULFGAR

Here is Heorot, the Hall of the  
Hart, home of heroes, once-festive  
feasting place of Hrothgar, joyful  
no more.

The hall is both commanding and ornately wrought. Gold roof tiles cap intricately carved timbers. A pair of golden antlers crown the gable above the double entry doors.

Beyond the hall lies a vast field of barrow-mounds and standing stones, a mute testament to Grendel's reign of terror.

WULFGAR

I will ride ahead and announce  
your coming.

Wulfgar spurs his steed on down the road.

EXT. HEOROT VILLAGE - DAY

As the men draw closer, signs of long neglect are seen. Many of the longhouses are crumbled and decaying. A wagon lies askew, overgrown with vines. A forge stands unused, its anvil rusted.

SVEIN

Seems pleasant enough.

The few occupants to be seen quickly disappear into their huts.

INT. HEOROT - DAY

Dust and cobwebs fill the now derelict hall. Banners hang torn and limp, and only a few sputtering torches light the smoky din.

HROTHGAR slumps wearily on his throne. Deep lines crease his haggard face, and the crown is tarnished upon his grizzled head.

As Wulfgar enters, UNFERTH and ÆSCHERE are arguing heatedly from opposite sides of the throne, while YRMENLAF sits dejectedly by. They are older, sadder, mere shadows of the men they once were.

UNFERTH

We have lost too many, my Lord!  
We can stay no longer in this  
accursed land.

ÆSCHERE

You cower beside the throne like a  
whimpering lap-dog.

UNFERTH

Better beside it than behind it!

Æschere's hand goes to his sword hilt. But at that moment--

Wulfgar enters. He salutes the King as he approaches the throne.

HROTHGAR

What news, Wulfgar?

WULFGAR

Good my Lord, a band of battle  
worthy warriors have arrived in  
our fair land, traveling from afar  
across the sea.

UNFERTH

Who are they, and what is their  
claim upon our throne?

WULFGAR

Geats they call themselves. They  
make request, my shielding King,  
that they might exchange their  
words with yours.

UNFERTH

My Lord, this is yet another  
upstart clan come to prey upon us  
in our need!

Hrothgar slumps under the weight of his burden.

EXT. HEOROT - DAY

As the Geats approach the hall, Grendel's ravages become clear:  
deep gouges mar the 12-foot oaken doors, which are cobbled  
together by reinforcing beams; the stone steps are stained with  
blood; and all about are piles of wreckage overgrown with weeds.

EOFOR

Last chance...

Beowulf glares at him.

EOFOR

Just kidding.

The Door-Wardens at their posts grip their spears tighter.

INT. HEOROT - DAY

Unferth kneels close beside the King.

UNFERTH

Admit them not, my Lord, or we shall find ourselves hard pressed to fend them off when they have gained a foothold in our land.

HROTHGAR

How many are they, Wulfgar?

WULFGAR

They are but some twelve and three, my King. Yet their leader is a man of noble bearing the like of which I have not seen before. He is a mighty man, and much renowned, if he be named aright.

UNFERTH

Who is this craven foe who comes upon us as a raven feeding after warfare?

WULFGAR

Beowulf he names himself, my Lord, and says he knew you once.

At this Hrothgar starts up, roaring with laughter.

HROTHGAR

Beowulf! Ha! Why, I knew him when he was but a boy! He came here with his father long ago. You remember, Æschere...

ÆSCHERE

Aye, good Ecgtheow! Much I miss his laughter in this hall.

HROTHGAR

So now the son has returned at last...

WULFGAR

I have heard seafarers say that he has gained great war-fame there. They say that in his grip is the might of thirty men!

UNFERTH

Ha! Only Odin has such strength.

YRMENLAF

They say he has the might of Odin  
in my arms.

UNFERTH

No mortal man can make that claim!

WULFGAR

They come to fight Grendel.

This silences Unferth.

HROTHGAR

Then I shall greet these men with  
rich reward for the courage of  
their coming! Call them in!

Wulfgar bows and turns to leave, but stops short--

Silhouetted in the doorway, looking not unlike Grendel, is  
Beowulf. He leads his men down the center of the hall to stand  
tall and proud before the King.

BEOWULF

Hail mighty Hrothgar, health ever  
keep you! I am Beowulf, son of  
Ecgtheow. I have come to avenge my  
father's death!

Unferth draws his sword.

BEOWULF

My uncle-king has advised me to  
seek this land, to put my war  
strength to the test, for often  
has he seen me on the battlefield,  
dripping with my enemies' blood. I  
have defeated every foe that has  
ever stood against me.

Unferth's sword arm wavers.

BEOWULF

Now the name of Grendel calls me  
hence, and I have come to pay my  
father's debt!

Hrothgar pushes Unferth's sword aside. He stands slowly, encumbered by age, and grips Beowulf firmly by the shoulders.

HROTHGAR

Welcome Beowulf, son of Ecgtheow  
our friend. Welcome and well met  
once more!

EXT. GEATLAND HARBOR - DAY

An imposing fortress sits atop a bluff overlooking the sea. Banners bearing the crest of the WINGED SERPENT flutter above. Sprawling around its base is a thriving seaport market town, nestled in the protected harbor of the Göta River estuary.

TITLE: GÖTABORG, GEATLAND

A string of watchtowers line the cliff-top. Beyond them, Sorrow Hill rises, crowned with a ring of standing stones.

EXT. FORTRESS RAMPARTS - DAY

HÆRETH stands on the parapet gazing out to sea. HANNAH, pregnant wife of Hondscio, is there beside her, shuffling nervously.

HANNAH

Do you really think they'll be  
back?

Hæreth turns to her friend with a look of compassion.

HÆRETH

I...I don't know, Hannah. But if  
anyone can scare off an ogre it's  
those two louts. What we ever saw  
in them I'll never know!

They share a laugh, but it's unconvincing and soon falters.

HÆRETH

He'll come home.

It's uncertain who she means. Her eyes wander to the village, where FOUR YOUNG TEENAGERS run laughing through the streets--

FLASHBACK - HÆRETH'S CHILDHOOD MEMORIES

--they are young and in love, in the spring of their life, and the pairings are clear: BEOWULF and HÆRETH, HONDSCIO and HANNAH.

The teens emerge from the crowded marketplace into open meadow, shouting and teasing as they climb the slopes of Sorrow Hill.

YOUNG BEOWULF

I am Thor Almighty, God of  
Thunder! Kneel before me Hondscio,  
for none can withstand my wrath!

YOUNG HONDSCIO

You're Freya, Goddess of Love and  
Poetry! Sing me a song, sweet one!

Beowulf lunges at Hondscio and they tumble down the hill. The girls roll their eyes and giggle, trading whispered secrets.

BACK TO PRESENT

Hæreth watches the kids roll around in the grass of Sorrow Hill -- but it's four other children. She smiles weakly up at Hannah.

EXT. UPSALA - DAY

An immense military compound comprised of circular earthworks crowned with heavy timber palisades.

TITLE: UPSALA, SWEDEN

THREE HORSEMEN approach, riding hard. The gates swing open and they thunder through.

INT. UPSALA HALL - DAY

The SWEDISH WAR-COUNCIL surveys a map on which we see the relative positions of our three locations. Between UPSALA and GÖTABORG lie the forest of RAVENSWOOD and the large LAKE VÆNÍR.

Commanding the scene is KING ONGENTHEOW, a hardened war veteran of 45. He sports a wicked scar across one cheek.

OTHERE, his eldest son at 27, is tall, husky, and handsome. ONELA, the younger, is 25 and gangly. A line of three parallel scars run the length of his face, crossing a blind right eye.

ONGENTHEOW

I want it burned to the ground! I  
want them wiped out to the last  
man! I want Hygelac's head hung  
from the battlement -- and I want  
my wife back!

COUNCILMEN

Yes, Lord Ongentheow.

Among the Councilmen is WEOHSTAN, a 35-year-old red-haired Geat, father to Wiglaf. He is torn by conflicting loyalties, having married into a clan who are about to make war on his own people.

ONGENTHEOW

How soon can we be ready, Othere?

OTHERE

The men are ready now, father.

ONGENTHEOW

Good. We will crush the Geats and take their lands. And if your brother Onela does his job among the Danes, we will take their lands too.

ONELA

Yes, father.

ONGENTHEOW

(to Onela)

Take that Danish bitch-wife of yours and pay her kin a visit. Do what you must, and do it soon!

ONELA

Yes, father.

ONGENTHEOW

Beowulf must not return.

The riders enter, led by OSLAF, Commander of the Cavalry.

ONGENTHEOW

Report!

OSLAF

The Geats are encamped near Ravenswood, my Lord.

ONGENTHEOW

We march within the hour.

Weohstan frowns and stares at the floor.

INT. HEOROT - DAY

The hall is again alive with activity as the Danes welcome the Geats in royal fashion. There is a steady influx of revelers.

Ottar eyes a buxom serving wench lustily as she leans in to fill his cup. Hondscio elbows him, spilling ale in his lap. Ottar glances up at the lass with an embarrassed laugh. She smiles.

Beowulf sits beside Hrothgar at the high table.

HROTHGAR

Young I was, and new yet to my throne when your father came to us. We were a force to be reckoned with then, we Danes.

BEOWULF

What happened? To my father, I mean.

Hrothgar glances at Beowulf.

HROTHGAR

I settled his feud with the Wylfing clan, and took their chieftain's daughter for my bride. Your father swore me oaths then, and long he lived with us while you were yet a boy, raised in your royal uncle's hall across the sea. Much your father missed you then.

FLASHBACK - HROTHGAR'S REVERIE

Ecgtheow stands before him with YOUNG BEOWULF at his side, hand on his son's shoulder, pride glowing on his face.

BACK TO PRESENT

HROTHGAR

But Fate fares ever as it must.

Beowulf nods grimly.

BEOWULF

Good it is again to greet you, but sad it is to see this Fate that has befallen you.

HROTHGAR

Aye, many men have fallen here  
that should instead have feasted.  
Only Grendel holds the banquet  
now. Soon, though, the ogre must  
be sated, for little more remains  
to feed him here.

WEALTHEOW enters through a rear door. At 36, she yet retains her regal bearing, but it is now tinged with a deep melancholy.

She is followed by HRETHRIC and HROTHMUND, stern young men of 20 and 19 respectively. HROTHULF, now a bitter and brooding 22-year-old, enters behind.

HROTHGAR

Ah, here is Wealtheow my wife,  
daughter of Helm, bringer of my  
joy. Sadly, I have given her  
naught but sorrow in return.

BEOWULF

Greetings, good Lady.

WEALTHEOW

Greetings, Beowulf, and welcome.  
These are our sons, Hrethric and  
Hrothmund, heirs to the Danish  
throne, such as it is.

Beowulf salutes them. The boys bow in turn.

HRETHRIC

Welcome to Dane-Mark.

HROTHMUND

Welcome to Heorot.

HROTHGAR

And here is Hrothulf, son of Halga  
my brother, now dead, slain by  
Ongentheow the Swede at the Battle  
of Sorrow Hill, in your own land.

HROTHULF

Welcome to Grendel's lair.

Wealthew frowns with distaste.

BEOWULF

Aye, I remember Halga. For I was at that battle, though I was but a boy. The Swedes have been our mortal enemies since that day.

HROTHULF

Likewise mine.

WEALTHÉOW

That feud was settled with the peace-weaving. And Yrsa, your mother--

HROTHGAR

Our only sister.

WEALTHÉOW

--was the bride-price of that oath, given in marriage to Onela to bind the death-wound.

HROTHULF

I know who my mother is.

WEALTHÉOW

There has been peace between us since that day. Let it remain so.

Hrothulf turns away, taking a seat near Unferth in a corner. Wealthéow and the two sons take their places at the high table.

HROTHGAR

But come, let us drink to Beowulf! To your victories, both of the past and yet to come! Great will be Grendel's fall this night!

All but Unferth and Hrothulf drink with rousing cheers.

HROTHGAR

Unbind your thoughts now to your fellow men, great warrior! Tell us a tale of wonder, that our hearts might know such things are yet possible in this dark world!

Beowulf leaps atop a table, kicking platters aside.

BEOWULF

Aye, but there are so many! How  
can I choose but one?

The hall rocks with laughter and groans. A few crusts of bread  
are thrown. Beowulf holds up his hands in mock defense.

BEOWULF

Alright! Alright! Perhaps the Tale  
of the Giant Stone-Eaters then?

A rousing cry of approval. But from a dark corner--

UNFERTH

So you claim to be the mighty  
Beowulf of whom we all have heard.

The hall falls silent as Unferth rises, swaying unsteadily.

UNFERTH

Are you that same boastful fool  
who challenged Breca to a swimming  
bout out on the open sea?

The Geats rise at this affront, but Beowulf motions them to sit.  
They do so reluctantly. Beowulf leaps down in front of Unferth.

BEOWULF

A fool, perhaps, but Beowulf  
indeed!

UNFERTH

Seven nights you swam, I've heard  
it said. To see who could swim the  
furthest out to sea.

Unferth flails his arms wildly as if swimming. Beowulf leans  
casually against the table, amused at his antics.

UNFERTH

But in the end Breca proved he had  
the greater strength, not you. For  
the sea-path bore him to his home  
far away in distant Norway. Yet  
where were you then, mighty  
swimmer? Clinging to a sodden log  
like some reluctant lemming?

Svein, at the nearby table, stretches his legs...

Unferth stumbles, catching himself on the edge of the table. He looks up into Svein's scowling face, then at the dagger in his hand. Sneering, Unferth drains Svein's cup in a single swallow.

Wiping foam from his mustache, Unferth turns back to Beowulf.

UNFERTH

Luck you may had in other battles  
that you've fought, but your luck  
may see a change tonight, I think.

Beowulf laughs and holds up his ale-horn.

BEOWULF

A toast to Unferth, spinner of  
stories, weaver of mighty words!  
(drains his cup)  
Unferth my friend, full of ale,  
truly you have swum more seas than  
I this night!

A murmur of laughter ripples through the hall.

BEOWULF

What a great deal you have said  
about nothing at all. Little do  
you know of the doings of heroes.

Unferth grabs the hilt of his sword, but before he can draw Beowulf grips him by the throat, lifting him off his feet. Stunned silence. Unferth's eyes go wide with fear.

BEOWULF

(quietly)  
You know nothing about me.

Beowulf releases Unferth, who falls to the floor, gasping.

BEOWULF

But you have not told the tale in  
full, my friend, for perhaps you  
do not know it all. It is true  
that Breca swam the furthest, for  
a mighty sea-farer he has always  
been.

Beowulf turns to face the hall.

BEOWULF

But I stayed afloat the longer,  
endured the greater agony, and  
fought a battle in the open sea  
such as few have done before or  
since.

FLASHBACK - THE SWIMMING CONTEST

BRECA and YOUNG BEOWULF swim through churning waters.

BEOWULF (VO)

Five nights we swam together side  
by side, until upon us came a  
raging storm.

Breca is washed out of the scene by crashing waves.

BEOWULF (VO)

Rough were the waves that surged  
around me then, stirring up the  
demons of the deep.

The wave-crests turn into snarling WATER-DEMONS. He thrashes  
about with his dagger, turning the waves red, until--

WRITHING CLAWED TENTACLES rise up all around him, smashing down  
as one and pulling him under.

BEOWULF (VO)

Some fierce Sea-Creature dragged  
me down, held me in its grip at  
the bottom of the sea.

Beowulf is dragged down through bubbles and waving strands of  
seaweed. He struggles to get free, gasping for air. Before him a  
GREAT EYE OPENS, followed by a GAPING MOUTH.

BEOWULF (VO)

But the Fates were with me then,  
guiding my blade when I was blind.

He gets an arm free and draws his sword. A SILVER LIGHT shines  
from the blade. He stabs it into the eye. With a GURGLING WAIL  
the tentacles release their grip and he lunges upward.

Beowulf breaks through the surface, gasping for air. The first  
rays of dawn reflect blood-red upon the now-calm sea.

BEOWULF (VO)

When at last Odin's beacon shone  
again upon the world, I could see  
the wind-swept sea-cliffs of my  
homeland standing out upon the  
furthest edges of the world.

The shore is littered with slain sea-creatures. YOUNG HONDSCIO stands there, shaking his head as Beowulf drags himself out of the sea, sword in hand.

BEOWULF (VO)

So Fate will save a man if his  
courage holds.

BACK TO PRESENT

BEOWULF

What man anywhere has fought such  
a battle by night and sea as I?

The audience applauds his story.

BEOWULF

But never have I heard such a tale  
of bold adventure told of brave  
Unferth. No songs of great deeds  
are sung of Ecglaf's noble son.

The hall falls silent as Beowulf turns to Unferth.

BEOWULF

Yet there is one story I know well  
-- the Tale of Unferth Kin-Slayer,  
killer of his own kinsman.

Unferth draws his sword and lunges at Beowulf. Beowulf catches Unferth's sword hand in his own and squeezes. Unferth screams.

BEOWULF

I tell you truly, Unferth Mar-  
Peace, never would Grendel have  
done such harm against this house,  
nor committed such crimes against  
your King, had your battle-spirit  
been half as sharp as your words.

HROTHGAR

Enough. Let him go.

Beowulf releases Unferth. The sword CLATTERS to the stone floor as Unferth crumples to his knees, cradling a shattered hand.

HROTHGAR

Ulrik's death was accidental.  
Unferth's arrow went astray while  
hunting, no more.

Hrothgar comes forward to stand protectively over Unferth.

HROTHGAR

But his own father could not  
avenge the death of one son upon  
the other as law demands, so I  
took Unferth in. He has been as a  
son to me since that day.

Hrethric and Hrothmund scowl at Unferth, who fawns at Hrothgar's feet, glaring darkly back at them. Beowulf gazes at Unferth.

BEOWULF

It was dark that day. The clouds  
were heavy with the scent of rain,  
the wind was stiff.

Unferth's eyes go wide, and he cowers behind Hrothgar's legs.

BEOWULF

A shot could easily go astray in  
such a breeze. Miss its target.

Comprehension begins to dawn on Hrothgar's face.

HROTHGAR

I called an end to the hunt.

EXT. OPEN MEADOW - DAY - FLASHBACK

Several dozen mounted men are out hunting, bows at the ready. ECGTHEOW is there, with YOUNG BEOWULF on a horse beside him.

HROTHGAR (VO)

We were heading home.

A light rain starts to fall. Hrothgar, in the lead, signals for the men to head home. They turn and start across the meadow.

YOUNG UNFERTH, 15, is poked at playfully by older brother ULRİK as they ride along. Unferth isn't amused.

BEOWULF (VO)

Ulrik had been teasing you. Pushed  
you into trees as you rode, made  
you miss your mark.

Young Beowulf watches from the rear as Young Unferth take aim on a stag. Just as the shot is loosed Ulrik nudges Unferth's horse and the arrow flies wide. Everyone laughs at Unferth, who fumes, protesting. Ulrik plays the innocent, hands wide.

BACK TO PRESENT

Beowulf flicks Unferth's sword up into his hand.

BEOWULF

I was there that day, though you  
may not remember it.

FLASHBACK - AT THE HUNT

Young Beowulf can just see from behind his father as Unferth, at the back of the pack, takes aim on a doe off to one side while the other hunters ride on ahead. Ulrik, just ahead of Unferth, hears the CREAK of Unferth's bow and turns to look.

BEOWULF (VO)

I was there the day you killed  
your own brother when you thought  
no one else could see.

Ulrik reaches out to nudge Unferth's horse. Unferth's eyes go dark, and at the last second he shifts the bow. The arrow hits Ulrik point-blank in the eye. Young Beowulf's eyes go wide.

BACK TO PRESENT

Beowulf towers over the wide-eyed Unferth, sword in hand.

BEOWULF

The next day my father sent me  
home to Geat-Land, for he could  
not risk another feud. I never saw  
my father again. Nor have I spoken  
of that day to anyone, until now.

HROTHGAR

Is this true, Unferth?

Unferth gazes about, frantic, a cornered animal.

UNFERTH

(breaking down)

I... I didn't mean to kill him! I  
only meant to scare him! He was...  
he was my brother.

BEOWULF

This night will Grendel learn of  
valor. For I tell you truly, death  
is better for any man than a  
shameful life. Better it is to die  
with honor, than live without it.

Wealtheow comes forward, bearing a golden chalice.

WEALTHEOW

Brave Beowulf, your words are as  
tidings of peace at the end of  
long wars. They fill my heart with  
hope once more, where hope has not  
dared dwell for long years.

HROTHGAR

Long indeed has been our sorrow.  
How cares of the heart do burden  
men and make us old before our  
time!

WEALTHEOW

Few now are the husbands left to  
sire our future kin. Few the  
fathers, and few the sons.

Beowulf glances at the rag-tag assemblage of women and children.

WEALTHEOW

What remains are not cowardly men,  
Beowulf, but prudent ones. For the  
bravest men among us proved but  
little struggle for the Dark  
Death-Bringer.

HROTHGAR

No shield has proven strong  
enough, no sword sharp enough, and  
ten men's might will not so much  
as slow the coming of the  
Creature.

Wiglaf and Ottar exchange worried glances.

WEALTHEOW

Indeed, in our hour of most need  
you have come, and to whatever end  
your labors bring you, I salute  
you as a Hero among Heroes. May  
you deliver us from our Doom!

Wealtheow raises her chalice in salute and drinks.

BEOWULF

Here in Heorot I shall do such a  
deed as will be worthy of a song,  
else will I have lived my last day  
of life upon this Earth.

HROTHGAR

Let us then rejoice, and have such  
revels as would befit the death of  
Thor himself. Soon night will  
come, and with it come the fall of  
either man or beast, and great  
shall be that fall!

Unferth glowers darkly at Beowulf.

INT. HÆRETH'S BEDCHAMBER - DAY

Hæreth, dressed for bed, absently brushes her long red locks.

BOY'S VOICE (OS)

Go away!

Hæreth is startled out of her reverie as the door bursts open.

HEARDRED, 14, enters, followed close by a GUARD, who quickly  
turns away upon seeing her. Heardred, the son of King Hygelac by  
his first wife, is a spoiled rich kid with abandonment issues.

HEARDRED

Tell this guard to go away! He  
follows me everywhere!

HÆRETH

He does so, because I have told  
him to. It is for your protection.

HEARDRED

I can protect myself!

HÆRETH

Heardred, the King your father has taken nearly all the men of our clan to fight the Swedes. If we are attacked while they are away, you will likely be their target. What will you do then?

HEARDRED

I will fight them, like a great warrior would! Like Beowulf should have done to save my mother.

HÆRETH

That would not be wise. Even Beowulf could not defeat that army alone, they were too many. And he is much bigger than you.

HEARDRED

(indicating guard)

Then how can he protect me?

HÆRETH

He may not be able to. But this man will give his life for you, if he must. And there is great honor in that.

The boy looks up at the grim warrior with new respect.

EXT. UPSALA COURTYARD - DAY

The Swedish cavalry, several hundred strong, prepare to ride. Ongentheow approaches Weohstan, who stands alone nearby.

ONGENTHEOW

I have a special task for you,  
Weohstan.

EXT. UPSALA HARBOR - DAY

Onela sails out of the harbor in a great warship, as the Swedish cavalry storms out through the fortress gates beyond. With him is his Danish wife YRSA, and a full crew complement of thirty.

INT. HEOROT - LATE DAY

A dim sun hangs low in the sky, casting shadows across the room. The tables are a mess of bones, bread crusts, and spilled drink.

Hrolf and Eofor recount the serpent battle, their arms flailing wildly as the crowd listens intently, wide-eyed with wonder. They gasp as Svein suddenly whips out the two serpent fangs.

Ottar does magic tricks for the children, but one girl is not fooled, finding the carved ogre in his sleeve. He shrugs sheepishly and tussles her hair. Hondscio watches wistfully.

Wiglaf throws daggers at a shield with Hrethric and Hrothmund as Beowulf, Wulfgar and Æschere look on.

HRETHRIC

So you're a Swede then?

WIGLAF

Half-Swede, actually. My father Weohstan was Ecgtheow's brother.

ÆSCHERE

Nice throw. Then you're Beowulf's cousin?

BEOWULF

Indeed he is!

WIGLAF

But my mother Sigrid was sister to King Ongentheow the Swede, so I am also cousin to Onela...

HROTHMUND

(about to throw)  
...who is married to Freawaru, our sister! Small world!

HRETHRIC

Welcome to Denmark, cousin!

WULFGAR

But aren't the Geats feuding with the Swedes?

WIGLAF

Unfortunately, yes.

YRMENLAF

That complicates matters.

WIGLAF

You could say that. My father had taken service with Ongentheow before the feud began. He is now bound by oath to follow the Swedish King. But I have sworn allegiance to Beowulf.

Everyone can see this is trouble waiting to happen.

EXT. SWEDISH LOWLANDS - LATE DAY

The Swedes ride hard, skirting a dark forest to the north. A small band breaks off, veering away south, led by Weohstan.

INT. HEOROT - IN A DARKENED CORNER - LATE DAY

Unferth nurses his bound hand. Hrothulf sits down beside him.

HROTHULF

(indicating Beowulf)  
What do we do about him?

UNFERTH

Let Grendel take care of it.

Hrothulf glances in the direction of Hrethric and Hrothmund.

HROTHULF

And when do we take care of them?

UNFERTH

Soon enough.

HROTHULF

Not soon enough for my liking.

As the sun sets, the rosy dusk turns the hall a bloody red.

EXT. DANISH MOORLANDS - DUSK

Out in the fens a DARK FIGURE cowers in the encroaching shadows, cringing at the distant sounds of MUSIC AND MERRIMENT.

RED EYES BURN with hatred. The figure moves off across the twilight mere -- towards the hall.

EXT. RAVEN'S MEADOW - DUSK

The Geat army is encamped in a meadow at the edge of Ravenswood. Hundreds of tents are set up around a large central pavilion guarded by a dozen armed warriors.

Hygelac approaches the pavilion, followed by Haldar and Wonred.

INT. HYGELAC'S PAVILION - DUSK

QUEEN ELAN, wife of King Ongentheow, is tied to the central post of the tent. Her blond hair is disheveled, her clothing torn. Hygelac looks her over lustily as she glares defiantly.

HYGELAC

Were you not the wife of my sworn enemy I might find your company... pleasing.

ELAN

I am sorry I cannot return the compliment.

HYGELAC

As it stands, I regret that I cannot be so accommodating, since I only intend to kill you as soon as Ongentheow arrives, which he will. And do you know why?

ELAN

Why my husband will come for me, or why you intend to kill me when he does?

HYGELAC

Both.

ELAN

Because you're a pathetic weakling with hostility issues and an over-inflated sense of your own importance?

HYGELAC

Wrong answer!

ELAN

Then I give up. Why?

HYGELAC

Because your husband raped and  
killed my wife, and I intend to  
return the favor. And then some.

Elan hesitates at this.

HYGELAC

You did not know of Ongentheow's  
little encounter with my former  
Queen, mother to my only son?

ELAN

I knew Queen Frida had died during  
the recent battle, and for that I  
am sorry. But I did not know--

HYGELAC

Well, he did. Personally, and  
apparently with great pleasure and  
vigor. Or so I am informed by his  
messengers.

Elan looks him straight in the eye.

ELAN

Then you must do as honor demands.

It is Hygelac's turn now to hesitate.

INT. HEOROT - DUSK

As the hall darkens, the fire is stoked and fresh torches lit.  
Heavy wooden shutters are closed and barred. Unferth approaches  
the King, bending close to speak in his ear.

UNFERTH

My Lord, we must leave the hall.  
Death's servant will soon appear.  
Leave the Geats for Grendel's  
feast tonight.

Hrothgar considers this with distaste, eyeing Unferth sidelong.  
As Hrothgar stands, Wulfgar signals for silence.

WULFGAR

The time has come for us to take  
our leave and our night's repose.

HROTHGAR

Guard well this hall, good men of  
Geat-Land. Free us of our curse  
and tomorrow your ship will sail  
burdened but with gold!

BEOWULF

This will I do, if I am able.

WEALTHEOW

For your deeds, our thanks. May  
Odin bless you and be with you  
this night.

HROTHGAR

Fare you well!

The King and Queen depart, followed quickly by the other Danes.  
Æschere places a fisted hand to his breast in salute as he goes.

Hrethric and Hrothmund approach Wiglaf. Hrethric holds out a  
silver Thor's Hammer on a strand of braided leather.

HRETHRIC

Take this talisman, that it may  
protect you in battle.

HROTHMUND

The Hammer of Thor is said to  
bestow great strength upon its  
bearer. May it do so for you.

WIGLAF

Many thanks, my good friends.

Wiglaf places it around his neck as they depart.

Wulfgar pauses momentarily in the doorway, eyeing the Geats  
poignantly, then pulls the doors shut with an ECHOING THUD.

Hondscio secures the doors, checking the reinforcements.

BEOWULF

Worry not, Hondscio. Neither bolt  
nor bar will keep our feasting  
friend from Hrothgar's hall this  
night.

He turns to address his men.

BEOWULF

We came to do battle with the  
beast, and battle we shall have!  
For what will it serve us if the  
Shadow-Stalker stays outside while  
we remain in here?

HONDSCIO

It might keep us alive.

BEOWULF

Unbar the door. The Danes need not  
repair it yet again. We will  
welcome the fiend with open arms!

OTTAR

Aye, let him come! We'll teach the  
beastie to dance a merry jig.

The men laugh at this -- all but Hondscio.

BEOWULF

Put yourselves at ease, men! This  
night will we forge our Fame. And  
live or die, never after shall any  
man speak of us with shame!

The Geats give a rousing war-cry, uniting in camaraderie.

INT. HÆRETH'S BEDCHAMBER - DUSK

Hæreth stands at the open window, watching the sunset fade. A  
WOLF HOWLS in the distance as the last light of day refracts  
briefly through the tear on Hæreth's cheek -- and is gone.

INT. HEOROT - NIGHT

Furs are laid on table and bench, the men preparing for the  
night, weapons at their side. This is that moment...

SVEIN lays out an array of weaponry, checking each carefully.

WIGLAF holds Thor's Hammer, eyes closed.

HROLF and EOFOR sprinkle herbs from a small pouch onto the fire,  
letting the smoke wash over them.

OTTAR wriggles around atop a table, but soon discovers a joint  
of meat beneath his blanket. He smiles and munches away happily.

Beowulf gazes out a narrow window at the darkened valley, fingering Hæreth's pendant absently. Hondscio approaches.

HONDSCIO

I will take first watch.

BEOWULF

Nay, Hondscio, I'll not sleep tonight. Go to your rest. You will be awakened soon enough.

Beowulf unclasps his sword-belt and holds it out to Hondscio.

BEOWULF

Hold for me my father's sword. Keep it close till I have need of it again.

HONDSCIO

Aye, no, my Lord! Do not unarm yourself!

BEOWULF

This fight is not for swords and shields, Hondscio. Only Odin can save me now.

The men watch furtively, concerned. But already Ottar is fast asleep, snoring loudly, food in hand. Hondscio lowers his voice.

HONDSCIO

So be it! But I shall wield this weapon if you will not. You may no longer care for life, but I still do.

BEOWULF

Only fame is lasting, Hondscio. Only the honor of your name and the glory of your song will remain when you have gone. All else is fleeting and will fail you in the end.

HONDSCIO

I will not fail you. You are my friend, and I will defend your life with my own if I must.

Beowulf sighs and gazes out the window into the deepening night.

HONDSCIO

I shall sleep nearest the door,  
and you will have this sword  
between yourself and death whether  
you wish it so or no.

As Hondscio walks away, Beowulf's eyes betray his true feelings.  
We follow his gaze out the window, where--

EXT. DANISH MOORS - NIGHT

A blood-red moon rises. Tendrils of mist weave among the rock  
and heather, forming ghostly figures that dance by starlight.  
One of these is a YOUNG HÆRETH, whose wispy silhouette swirls  
around a transparent Beowulf in an intimate embrace.

YOUNG HÆRETH (VO)

I will love you always and  
forever.

A BLACK FIGURE gradually solidifies in the darkness, a shadow  
among shadows, emerging from the mist, rending the figures into  
tattered shreds. RED EYES BURN through the darkness.

EXT. GÖTABORG FORTRESS GATES - NIGHT

The fortress lies still and silent beneath the hovering moon.  
TWO GUARDS stand post at the gates.

GEAT GUARD #1

'Tis deadly quiet out tonight.

GEAT GUARD #2

Not a night owl stirring.

Just then an OWL HOOTS in the distance. The guards flinch and  
glance warily at one another, then laugh at their apprehension.

GEAT GUARD #1

You spoke too soon!

GEAT GUARD #2

'Tis but twilight shadows. What  
have we to fear? Every enemy is  
away at war.

They settle back for a long night's watch.

EXT. HEOROT VALLEY - NIGHT - GRENDEL'S POV

Moonlight shimmers over the golden hall. We move slowly through the silent village, drawing ever closer. GRENDEL'S SHADOW rises up the stone steps, coming to rest at last on the oaken doors.

EXT. GÖTABORG FORTRESS GATES - NIGHT

The two Guards doze at their posts. A HORSE WHINNIES somewhere nearby. A SHADOW FALLS over each of them.

INT. HEOROT - NIGHT

Beowulf sits with eyes closed, Hæreth's brooch held to his lips. The Raven sits on the casement nearby.

INT. BEOWULF'S HOUSE - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

A DOOR CRASHES OPEN and Young Beowulf and Young Hondscio burst through. They come to a dead stop. Before them a large group are gathered. In their midst Beowulf's mother HÆLENA sits crying.

King Hygelac stands beside her, with his first wife QUEEN FRIDA, and a 2-year-old Heardred. Also present are Weohstan with his Swedish wife SIGNY and young son Wiglaf, as well as Haldar and his wife with their two children, Hæreth and Erik.

YOUNG BEOWULF

Uncle! Mother, what's wrong?

His mother looks up at him, but can't manage the words. Beowulf glances around the room, his gaze coming to rest on Hæreth, her eyes welling with compassion.

HYGELAC

Beowulf, sit down.

YOUNG BEOWULF

What? What did I do?

Hygelac hands Beowulf his father's sword.

HYGELAC

Your father is dead.

Beowulf stares blankly at the weapon in his hand.

HYGELAC

He is in Valhalla now. You will see him again...

BACK TO PRESENT

Beowulf opens his eyes slowly and turns to face the doorway.

HYGELAC (VO)  
...if you die well.

The RAVEN CRIES OUT as the doors CRASH OPEN. Grendel HOWLS in the doorway as the Geats start awake, weapons drawn instantly.

SVEIN  
Attack, men! Attack!

EXT. RAVEN'S MEADOW - NIGHT

The Swedish cavalry charges into the Geat encampment, setting tents alight and slaying everything in sight.

HYGELAC  
Swedes! The Swedes are upon us!

All is chaos as the Swedes wreak havoc on the overwhelmed Geats. WOLVES HOWL in the night.

INT. HEOROT - NIGHT

Hondscio rolls aside just as Grendel attacks, smashing the table where he lay. In a single fluid motion Hondscio draws Beowulf's sword and swings with all he's got--

THE BLADE STOPS DEAD, gripped in Grendel's hairy paw. Hondscio stares wide-eyed as the blade is torn from his hand and tossed aside. The OGRE SCREAMS, spewing drool, fangs and claws bared.

Eofor's sword CLATTERS to the floor as he and Hrolf back away.

EXT. RAVEN'S MEADOW - NIGHT

WAR-HORNS BLARE amidst the SCREAMS OF DYING MEN. The Geats fight bravely, but are no match for the mounted Swedish cavalry.

INT. HEOROT - NIGHT

A barrage of arrows bounce off Grendel's leathery hide. The ogre turns to face the new irritant, and sees Beowulf standing there. Grendel lifts Hondscio by the head, claws gripped around his skull. Hondscio's mouth moves, but only blood comes out.

Beowulf screams and lunges, smashing the ogre hard against the wall. CRACKING BONE is heard. Grendel ROARS with pain.

EXT. HEOROT - NIGHT

Grendel's WAIL echoes through the mist-shrouded vale.

INT. HROTHGAR'S BEDCHAMBER - NIGHT

Hrothgar and Wealtheow start awake at the sound. They draw the fur covers closer and shiver, eyeing the barred door nervously.

INT. HEOROT - NIGHT

Beowulf sails through the air, crashing down onto a table where Ottar lies still sleeping soundly, curled up like a baby. Ottar yawns and opens his eyes slowly, seeing Beowulf.

OTTAR

Good morning.

His eyes suddenly go wide as--

The ogre picks up a bench and hammers it down. Beowulf and Ottar roll aside as table and bench shatter into splinters.

INT. HÆRETH'S BEDCHAMBER - NIGHT

The door to Hæreth's chamber CRASHES OPEN and a hoard of Swedish warriors swarm into the room, blades drawn. Heardred's bodyguard lies dead in the hallway. Hæreth gasps as she sees their leader.

HÆRETH

Weohstan!

WEOHSTAN

Greetings, my Lady. Good it is to see you again.

Hæreth backs away, clutching Heardred, but he breaks free and steps forward, wielding a small dagger.

WEOHSTAN

Back away, lad, or you'll get yourself hurt. My business is with the Queen.

HEARDRED

I am heir to the throne. Any business you have here is with me!

WEOHSTAN

Very brave, lad. Now move aside.

HÆRETH

Do as he says, Heardred! You must  
live to become King.

WEOHSTAN

Listen to your mummy, boy!

The Swedes push Heardred roughly aside and drag Hæreth away.

HEARDRED

She's not my mother!

INT. HEOROT - NIGHT

Svein attacks with a flurry of blows, searching for a weakness, but Grendel swats him aside, sending him crashing into a pillar, which CRACKS and buckles under the weight.

Ottar swings a huge axe, hitting Grendel square in the chest, knocking the creature back. The ogre turns on him, spewing fury, and grips him in a single paw, lifting him off his feet. Ottar flails wildly as Grendel's gaping mouth comes ever closer.

Something hits Grendel in the eye. The ogre turns to see Wiglaf just as a second mutton-bone flies, hitting Grendel on the nose. The ogre shakes his head and drops Ottar, advancing on Wiglaf.

Beowulf steps into view, just as his father had years before.

Grendel ROARS and lunges. Beowulf deftly sidesteps, tripping Grendel up and slamming both fists against the ogre's head as it passes. The beast sprawls across the stone floor, rolling into the fire-pit. The ogre HOWLS with rage, engulfed in flames.

EXT. RAVEN'S MEADOW - NIGHT

Tents blaze in a frenzy of fire, illuminating a scene of mass carnage. The Swedish warhorses surround Hygelac's tent.

Hygelac stands before the pavilion entrance, Queen Elan close behind, as Ongentheow emerges from the smoky haze astride his warhorse. He glares down at Hygelac, pointing his sword.

ONGENTHEOW

I will have my Queen!

HYGELAC

You can have her when I see my  
dead wife again.

ONGENTHEOW

It would be my pleasure.

Ongentheow charges. SWORDS CLASH in a shower of sparks, sending them reeling to the ground. They're on their feet in an instant. Elan looks on nervously as the kings circle one another warily.

ONGENTHEOW

So you would exchange my Queen for your own, eh?

HYGELAC

She would come with me of her own free will.

ONGENTHEOW

(glancing at Elan)  
Aye, is that so now?

ELAN

It is, if it is also true that you raped Queen Frida before you killed her.

ONGENTHEOW

She was half dead already when I got to her.

Hygelac attacks in a fury of rage, beating Ongentheow back mercilessly. But the Swede has other plans.

ONGENTHEOW

Kill her!

Ongentheow's men nock arrows and fire at the Queen -- but Wonred intercepts with his shield, taking an arrow in the arm as well.

ONGENTHEOW

Burn it!

The Swedes close in. Hygelac leaps on Ongentheow's charger and rides to Elan's rescue, dragging her up as he passes.

HYGELAC

Retreat! Make for Ravenswood!

BLARING WAR-HORNS sound the retreat as the Geats flee into the surrounding forest, leaving a blazing encampment behind.

INT. HEOROT - NIGHT

Grendel rises in the midst of the fire-pit, engulfed in flames. The beast HOWLS and steps out of the fire, emerging unscathed. Beowulf stands his ground as the others back away.

HROLF

Demon of Hel!

Grendel ROARS and swings a great hairy arm. Beowulf ducks and punches Grendel hard in the face. Grendel swings the other arm. Beowulf ducks again, then leaps onto Grendel's exposed back.

Beowulf wrenches one of Grendel's arms backwards with all his might, wrapping a leg around the ogre's other arm for leverage. The ogre ROARS and lurches about madly, trying to dislodge its assailant, slamming Beowulf into walls and posts.

Exerting every ounce of his strength, Beowulf jerks back hard.

The beast YOWLS with pain as sinews SNAP and flesh rips open at its shoulder. A loud CRACK is heard as Beowulf wrenches the arm from its socket. The manic creature lurches wildly about the hall, spewing BLACK BLOOD and SCREAMING in agony.

EXT. DANISH HARBOR - NIGHT

GRENDDEL'S WAIL ECHOES through the valley and down to the harbor, where the men left to guard Beowulf's ship cringe at the sound.

INT. HEOROT - NIGHT

Spinning around, Grendel comes face to face with Beowulf, wielding the SEVERED LIMB like a club. Beowulf swings with full force, sending the ogre flailing against a stone wall.

The Geats close in as Grendel cowers in a corner, glancing about frantically. Everywhere he turns is the face of a grim warrior, wielding sword or spear. The beast whimpers like a wounded pup.

BEOWULF

Savor well the last moments of  
your wretched life, for this night  
have you drunk your last draught  
of warrior's blood.

In desperation, Grendel rushes straight at the warriors, breaking through their circle. The ogre crashes through the shattered doorway and flees, WAILING, into the night.

EXT. HEOROT MOORLANDS - NIGHT

Grendel's pained WAIL recedes into the moonlit darkness.

INT. HEOROT - NIGHT

Beowulf rushes to Hondscio's side. Hondscio's face is a mass of bloody gashes, and blood oozes from the corners of his eyes. He smiles weakly as Beowulf cradles his head in his arms.

HONDSCIO

You...live.

BEOWULF

Aye, though I had not thought to.

HONDSCIO

I die, though I had not....

Hondscio chokes and coughs up blood.

BEOWULF

I am sorry, Hondscio. I was wrong.

HONDSCIO

Again.

Hondscio grabs Beowulf's cloak with a bloody hand.

HONDSCIO

Go home. She needs you.

BEOWULF

I will go.

Hondscio dies. Tears streak Beowulf's cheeks.

EXT. GEATLAND COUNTRYSIDE - NIGHT

Weohstan's men ride hard back the way they came, bearing a tied and mounted Queen Hæreth with them.

EXT. HEOROT - DAY

The rising sun breaks in shafts through a thick morning fog as Hrothgar and his men approach the hall. The doors hang askew and the steps are splashed with blood.

Unferth sneers with satisfaction as Hrothgar steps slowly over the threshold--

INT. HEOROT - DAY

As the Danes warily enter Heorot, the aftermath of battle is revealed: blood-spattered walls and smashed benches, armor scattered and weapons broken. Bodies lie throughout the room.

Beowulf lies face down on a tabletop in the center of the hall, his bare arms caked with dried blood.

HROTHGAR

Alas! There lies all hope broken.  
In this hour are we truly lost,  
for such a man shall never tread  
this earth again. Farewell, fair  
Beowulf! Farewell, fair Denmark!

Beowulf stirs and stretches sore muscles, groaning painfully. The Danes cry out with joy and surprise, waking the other Geats.

ÆSCHERE

Beyond all hope!

YRMENLAF

Odin be praised!

They rush forward to help Beowulf up, hugging and slapping him on the back with joy. He cringes with pain.

BEOWULF

Oy! Easy now. I've been beat on  
enough for one day!

Beowulf laughs, seeing Unferth scowling from behind.

BEOWULF

Ah, what's wrong, Unferth? Do you  
miss your friend Grendel? Do not  
be sad. Part of him remained  
behind for you to see!

Beowulf points up to where Grendel's arm dangles from a beam.

HROTHGAR

North and south, across and  
between the two seas, no other man  
was ever more worthy of a King's  
high praise! Your name shall echo  
through every land unto the  
world's end.

WULFGAR

All hail Beowulf! Hero of heroes!  
Mightiest of men!

BEOWULF

For this honor much thanks, my  
Lord.

HROTHGAR

The honor is yours alone, and the  
thanks ours to give.

BEOWULF

Alas, I fear the beast may yet  
live, for it fled into the night  
through lands unknown to me. In  
the dark I dared not pursue.

HROTHGAR

Then we must follow the trail now  
that light of day has come.

ÆSCHERE

And I think I know just the man!

All eyes turn to Unferth, who is attempting to slink away.  
Æschere grabs him by the nape of the neck and drags him back.

UNFERTH

My Lord, let Beowulf finish this  
deed he has begun! For Grendel is  
certain now to seek revenge.

BEOWULF

Gladly would I go, but for my  
friend who lies here at his final  
rest.

Hrothgar glances quickly about, tallying men.

HROTHGAR

Nay, not valiant Hondscio! Not he?

BEOWULF

Sadly so, my lord. He gave his  
life that we might keep our own, a  
nobler deed than mine by far.

HROTHGAR

Bring horses and a cart! Prepare a  
tomb on Hero's Hill!

Several men exit. Hrothgar turns to Unferth.

HROTHGAR

Take two men. Follow the ogre's  
trail. Return with news if you  
can, or do not return at all.  
Either way we will know the truth!

UNFERTH

Yes, my Lord.

ÆSCHERE

I will go.

All eyes turn to Æschere.

ÆSCHERE

Blessed by the gods Beowulf may  
be, but he has outshone the Danes  
this day for courage. For this I  
must make amends. I will go.

HROTHULF

And I.

All eyes now turn to Hrothulf standing at the rear.

HROTHGAR

Nay, not you, my brother's son.  
The task is too perilous for you.

HROTHULF

The creature has but one good arm!  
How perilous could it be?

HROTHGAR

I cannot let you go. I have sworn  
an oath to protect you, and to  
this I am bound.

HROTHULF

For how long? How long must I hide  
within walls? How long will you  
shelter me from the world outside?

HROTHGAR

For as long I am able.

Hrothulf stifles a smoldering anger.

HROTHGAR

Let the hall be cleansed! Tonight  
the dead shall sleep in graves of  
gold!

EXT. RAVENSWOOD - DAY

The remnants of Hygelac's bedraggled army are gathered in a  
small clearing in a dark, thick forest.

HYGELAC

How many remain, Haldar?

HALDAR

Half, perhaps. Perhaps not even  
that. Some four hundred are here.  
Fully two thirds bear wounds which  
will hinder their efforts. Many of  
those will not fight again.

HYGELAC

What supplies have we left?

WONRED

Little, my Lord. Two days' rations  
at best. Three if those with fatal  
wounds do not eat.

HYGELAC

We're backed up against the  
Trollhight. The Swedes outnumber  
us three to one at best guess.  
Probably four. Suggestions?

Wonred and Haldar exchange furtive glances.

HALDAR

Give them what they want. Send the  
Queen back.

HYGELAC

No! I will not yield! I will not  
crawl home, cowering like some  
whimpering whelp!

HALDAR

Yes, Lord.

WONRED

Of course, my Lord. Never.

ELAN

Then I will.

All eyes turn to the Queen, disheveled but undaunted.

ELAN

I will return. It is where I belong. I will say I escaped.

HYGELAC

That will solve nothing.

ELAN

My presence here now serves nothing. Ongentheow has come. Does that not please you?

(beat)

No. You have not yet got your vengeance, have you?

HALDAR

Ongentheow will kill you if you return.

ELAN

That I am willing to risk.

WONRED

He will lay the blame on us, and the war will continue either way.

ELAN

Is that not what you wanted?

HYGELAC

I want revenge for Frida's death!

ELAN

Then kill me now and have done with it!

Hygelac's blade flashes from its scabbard.

HYGELAC

He will not have you!

ELAN

Hygelac, one Queen is enough to rule a country.

HYGELAC

Do not tell me how to rule my kingdom! I will decide when and with whom I will share my throne!

ELAN

I will not be a pawn, Hygelac! Neither yours, nor Ongentheow's.

Hygelac shakes his blade at her.

HYGELAC

You will do as I command you to do! You will rule if I command you to rule. You will die if I command you to die! And you will love me if I command you to love me!

She rushes to embrace him with a firm, passionate kiss. A drop of blood slowly trickles from the corner of her mouth.

Wonred and Haldar stand frozen, staring at the bloody blade emerging from Elan's back as she crumples to the ground.

WONRED

Shite.

HALDAR

We're fucked.

EXT. RAVEN'S MEADOW - DAY

Only Hygelac's pavilion remains standing amid the smoldering aftermath of battle. Wolves and crows feast on the fallen Geats. Ongentheow surveys the scene with Othere and Oslaf.

OTHERE

The rugged terrain will slow us down and even the odds somewhat, perhaps even in their favor, as they know better than we the lay of this land.

OSLAF

Our horses will be useless up there.

ONGENTHEOW

Do not count them out yet. They have grown accustomed to hard rides over uneven ground.

OSLAF

We cannot pursue the Geats into the Trollhight!

Weohstan and his men ride in bearing the bound Queen Hæreth.

ONGENTHEOW

That will not be necessary.

EXT. DANISH MOORS - DAY

UNFERTH, ÆSCHERE, and YRMENLAF ride warily through bleak moorlands, following a blood-spattered trail up into an ever more desolate landscape. They glance about nervously as they pass a large boulder smeared with a bloody paw print.

EXT. HERO'S HILL - DAY

On the grassy knoll overlooking Heorot, Hrolf and Eofor direct the construction of Hondscio's tomb. A MENHIR is slowly lifted into place with ropes and wedges and a great deal of manpower.

The Raven watches the proceedings from atop a nearby stone, then suddenly flits from its perch and sweeps down the hill into--

EXT. HEOROT VILLAGE SQUARE - DAY

Travelers arrive from far and wide to witness a legend. A market has been set up around the square, bustling with activity and awash with festive colors. The Raven lands atop the hall, which is undergoing repairs.

Among the new arrivals is 18-year-old FREAWARU, several months into her first pregnancy, and her husband PRINCE INGELD, 20. They draw up before the great hall in an ornately carved wagon.

Ingeld dismounts, leaving a frowning Freawaru stranded in the wagon. Wulfgar, coming forward, sees this and lifts Freawaru down. The two embrace, happily reunited.

WULFGAR

Greetings, Freawaru, welcome home  
once more! And you Lord Ingeld.  
Please forgive this cluttered  
chaos. We are ill prepared for  
your arrival.

Ingeld sees Grendel's arm, now mounted upon the entryway gable.

INGELD

Indeed, it is for this sight that  
we have come. It is miraculous.

FREAWARU

We have heard the tale twice told  
by now, the song fair flies  
throughout the land!

A WORKER emerges from the hall, bearing a jug towards a nearby  
stall where a sign reads: "BLOOD OF GRENDEL, 5 MARKS GOLD."

WULFGAR

I fear the hall is not yet fit to  
receive your Ladyship. I shall  
call your father forth.

FREAWARU

Thank you, Wulfgar. It warms my  
heart to see you again.

Wulfgar smiles sadly and turns away. Freawaru's gaze follows him  
as he enters the hall. Ingeld watches the exchange coldly.

AT THE ENTRYWAY Beowulf and his men help rebuild the doors.

Svein, one arm bound, instructs Wiglaf as he fashions new iron  
hinges on a makeshift forge. Ottar carves new wooden beams as  
Beowulf, shirtless and glistening with sweat, single-handedly  
hefts a finished timber into place.

FREAWARU

Surely this must be him. He is the  
very shape of Thor himself!

Hrothgar and Wealtheow emerge from the hall, ecstatic to see  
their daughter, and she them. They embrace joyously.

HROTHGAR

Dear daughter! Welcome home!

FREAWARU

Glad we were to hear these joyful tidings. Praise the gods and bless this happy day!

WEALTHÉOW

Happy is this day indeed! How long are you away?

FREAWARU

Some five moons more.

HROTHGAR

Much this pleases me. Now might our clan be made strong again!

FREAWARU

Is this the man?

HROTHGAR

Aye, and such a man as I have never seen before.

The implied criticism is not lost on Ingeld.

HROTHGAR

Good Beowulf, attend!

Beowulf strides towards them, sun glinting off bulging muscles.

WEALTHÉOW

Give greeting, good Beowulf, to this our youngest child, Freawaru, four month married to Ingeld, Lord of Heathobards.

BÉOWULF

Well met and welcome, Lady.

FREAWARU

Glad am I to come now that I may. For this deed we are ever in your debt.

INGELD

Indeed, it is quite a tale that we have heard. Truly a marvel to be wondered at.

Beowulf catches the veiled cynicism.

BEOWULF

And you, Lord Ingeld, welcome. A Gothic clan, aren't you?

INGELD

Ostro-Goths, actually, from just south across the sea.

BEOWULF

Fierce fighters they say, and greatly feared.

WULFGAR

More arrivals, My Lord!

They all turn. Beowulf stops dead as he sees--

INTERCUT - THE BATTLE OF SORROW HILL

A succession of fleeting images: YOUNG ONELA SCREAMS into camera. A SWORD slashes down. BLOOD SPLATTERS everywhere. ONGENTHEOW LAUGHS maniacally. ARROWS slam into flesh and steel. SWORDS CLASH like thunder as LIGHTNING FLASHES in a stormy sky.

EXT. GÖTABORG HARBOR BLUFF - DUSK - FLASHBACK

YOUNG BEOWULF and YOUNG HÆRETH sit on the bluff overlooking the sea, watching the sun set beneath a stormy sky. The harbor is bustling with activity as ships load and unload their cargo.

Hæreth is coy and shy, a burgeoning beauty. She gazes at Beowulf with compassion and yearning, struggling for something to say. The Raven watches from atop a menhir on Sorrow Hill behind them.

YOUNG HÆRETH

I am sorry about your father, Beowulf.

YOUNG BEOWULF

He died well. I will see him again one day...if I die well.

DOWN IN THE HARBOR

A fleet of newly-arrived Swedish merchant ships suddenly let loose a volley of FLAMING ARROWS, setting the Geat ships ablaze.

## UP IN THE WATCHTOWERS

The Harbor-Guards WAIL on their war-horns. Haldar cries out from his post in the watchtower.

HALDAR

To arms! The enemy is upon us!

SIGNAL FIRES leap up atop the watch-towers as the WAR CRY is raised. Armed Geat warriors appear from everywhere at once.

## DOWN IN THE HARBOR

Hundreds of Swedes leap ashore as their ships ram the beach, swords flashing reflected fire. The attack is fast, furious, and brutal. The unprepared Geats fall like sheaves of wheat.

## UP ON THE BLUFF

THE RAVEN CAWS and flits from its perch. Beowulf turns to see a hoard of Swedes swarming over Sorrow Hill, emerging from the forest beyond. At the fore is 40-year-old ONGENTHEOW, flanked by ONELA and OTHERE, now 25 and 27. No scars yet mar their faces.

YOUNG BEOWULF

Swedes.

Hæreth flees, but turns to see Beowulf still standing there.

YOUNG HÆRETH

Run, Beowulf! Run!

But he doesn't move. She rushes back to him as all around Geat warriors rush out to fight off the invading Swedes.

YOUNG HÆRETH

Damn it, Beowulf, come on! We've got to get out of here!

Ongentheow closes in, his sons close behind. Beowulf fumbles with his father's sword, unfamiliar with the new weapon. The Swedes laugh at the bumbling boy before them. Beowulf swings wildly, but Ongentheow easily blocks the blow. Then another.

ONGENTHEOW

Is that the best you've got to offer? Go on, Geat. Do your worst!

He swings and Ongentheow locks blades with him, eye to eye.

YOUNG BEOWULF

Why? Why attack us!?

ONGENTHEOW

Did your father teach you nothing?  
The strong survive, boy. The weak  
perish. That is what your father  
said to me when he killed my  
father. At least he knew how to  
use a sword.

Beowulf bristles at the insult. Ongentheow sees Hæreth behind him for the first time. He steps back, releasing Beowulf.

ONGENTHEOW

So this is your girlfriend, eh?  
You could do better. Show him how  
to use a sword, boys!

Othere and Onela close in on Beowulf, swords drawn, as Ongentheow moves menacingly towards a retreating Hæreth. She whips out a dagger and slices his cheek. He backhands her.

ONGENTHEOW

You'll pay for that, wench.

But her eyes are on Beowulf as Onela and Othere force him back with a fierce onslaught. It is all he can do to stay alive. YOUNG SVEIN steps in to help fight off Othere.

ONGENTHEOW

What do you see in that big oaf  
anyway? Look at him! He'll never  
be anything but a pig farmer.

HÆRETH

He's a better man than you'll ever  
be.

ONGENTHEOW

In what possible way?

HÆRETH

In every way that matters.

ONGENTHEOW

Not for long.

Beowulf's eyes go wide as he reaches the cliff's edge.

ONELA

Nowhere to go from here but down.

Onela swings, flicking Beowulf's sword from his hand. The blade plummets over the edge--

DOWN IN THE HARBOR

The shore is awash in the scarlet glow of fire, blood, and a burning sunset as a pitched battle rages across the strand.

YOUNG OTTAR, fighting a Swede, looks up in surprise as Beowulf's sword stabs into the sand at his feet. The Swede looks up too.

UP ON THE BLUFF

Onela's blade rises, reflecting RED FIRE, as--

The Raven sweeps in, attacking. Onela screams as PARALLEL LINES OF RED explode on his face. The Raven's claws take an eye with them as it soars away, CAWING.

BACK TO PRESENT

Onela's scarred face glares at Beowulf. YRSA stands by his side, eyes wide. Beowulf's sword is at Onela's throat. Swords flash all around as the Geats draw their weapons.

ONELA

I see you've finally learned to use that thing.

HROTHGAR

(intervening)

Let all anger here be set aside, for this night we celebrate the passing of long winter and the coming of spring once more into this land. Let there be no more hatred in this hall.

Beowulf slowly lowers his sword. His men follow suit.

ONELA

Far have you come in this world since last we met.

BEOWULF

Far yet have I to go.

ONELA

Then it is a good thing I didn't  
kill you when I had the chance!

HROTHULF (OS)

Mother!

Yrsa smiles sadly as Hrothulf rushes up to embrace her.

HROTHULF

Have you come to stay awhile?

YRSA

As long as I may.

Hrothgar kisses her on the cheek.

HROTHGAR

Welcome sister.

(to Geats)

May I present Yrsa, my only  
sister, mother to Hrothulf.

Beowulf bows as his men try to work out the lineage.

HROTHGAR

But come! Surely you are hungry,  
and it is time we took our supper.

INT. ONGENTHEOW'S TENT (HYGELAC'S PAVILION) - DAY

Hæreth is now the bound captive, as Elan was before.

ONGENTHEOW

Well, well, well. Isn't this a  
pretty sight? How the mighty have  
fallen, eh, my Queen?

She grits her teeth and faces him bravely as he leans in close.

ONGENTHEOW

Oh yes, my Queen, for my queen you  
shall be. You see, I have recently  
lost my former consort. And as you  
are soon to lose yours, it seems  
somehow...fitting. After all, your  
kingdom will now be a part of my  
kingdom, so in truth it's quite a  
generous offer, wouldn't you say?

HÆRETH

I will never be yours! Not in a thousand years. Not if you offered me all the world to rule.

ONGENTHEOW

Perhaps not willingly, at first. But you shall come around. Women always do.

HÆRETH

You may have me, but you will never have my heart.

ONGENTHEOW

I'm afraid your husband's days are numbered, my dear. But surely you don't love that old doting lecher?

Hæreth looks away, unable to meet his gaze.

ONGENTHEOW

Ah yes, of course. There's someone else. It isn't still that bumbling farm boy, is it? Beerwolf, was it?

Hæreth's glare says it all. Ongentheow rubs his scar.

ONGENTHEOW

And where is your true love now? Oh, that's right, he's gone off looking for adventure. Well, some boys never do grow up, do they?

HÆRETH

Beowulf will kill you one day. And the more harm you do me the more horrid will be your death!

ONGENTHEOW

If he ever comes back, that is.

Hæreth cannot hide her own doubts.

ONGENTHEOW

Yes, poor pig boy has gone off and left you, now, hasn't he?

HÆRETH

He'll come back.

ONGENTHEOW

And why should he?

HÆRETH

Because he made an oath.

ONGENTHEOW

What, like your oath to him?

HÆRETH

(less convincing)

He'll come back.

ONGENTHEOW

It matters not. After this night,  
all these lands shall be known as  
Swede-Land. No crippled warhorse  
can stop me, and certainly no  
lovelorn sheepherder's son will!

Ongentheow storms out as a tear rolls down Hæreth's cheek.

EXT. HERO'S HILL - HONDSCIO'S TOMB - DUSK

A stone archway stands open in the side of a fresh barrow mound. Before it, Hondscio lies in state, decked out in golden armor, sword and shield upon his breast. A large crowd has gathered.

Beowulf stands alone beside the bier. All eyes are on him. The sun hangs low, shifting through deepening hues of gold and red.

BEOWULF

Every man must come to the end of  
his days. Let him who may do great  
deeds before that time. For that  
is our best memorial when we must  
depart forever from this world.

Beowulf catches a fleeting glimpse of Ecgtheow among the crowd.

BEOWULF

These words my father said to me.  
No man can escape his Fate, let  
him try who will. For at the last  
death comes to us all, and wanting  
to stay, yet we must go.

Beowulf gazes down at his fallen friend.

BEOWULF

Farewell, fair friend. We shall  
meet again.

Hondscio's body is lifted and borne into the barrow. The Raven now sits atop the tomb, looking down on them.

EXT. HEOROT VALLEY - DUSK

A torch-lit procession of mourners file slowly down the hill towards the hall.

EXT. TROLL MERE - DUSK

The bloody track ends at the edge of a swampy mere stretching between towering cliffs. Across the mere FIRELIGHT FLICKERS.

YRMENLAF

That must be the ogre's lair.

ÆSCHERE

Then that is where we must go.

Æschere nudges his steed forward, but it rears back as a slithering shape glides by, emitting an EERIE ELECTRIC GLOW. Æschere turns to see Unferth aiming an arrow at him.

THE ARROW FLIES -- WHIZZING past Æschere's head and sinking into the neck of a fanged SEA-SNAKE rearing up out of the water behind him. Æschere lops off its head with a single blow.

ÆSCHERE

My thanks, Unferth.

UNFERTH

Don't mention it.

The men dismount and trudge into the fen on foot.

EXT. TROLL CAVE - NIGHT

At the far end of the fen an ARCHWAY OF HUMAN BONES frames a cavern opening. FIRELIGHT FLICKERS from within. The men hold their breath against the foul stench as they pass through.

Unferth, hesitant, enters last.

INT. TROLL CAVE - NIGHT

Entering a high torch-lit cavern, the three men are met with a ghastly sight: a mocking likeness of Heorot, where a host of SLAIN WARRIORS sit around a rough-hewn stone table.

Before a blazing fire pit stands a THRONE constructed of rusted armor and shields. Crouching at its base is a hideous TROLL-HAG, cradling Grendel's lifeless body in her shaggy arms. She MOANS piteously, stroking Grendel's face as she rocks to and fro.

YRMENLAF

Odin protect us!

The Troll-Hag turns cold eyes on them, WAILING hideously.

EXT. HEOROT - NIGHT

A circle of warriors stand atop the stones of a fire pit as the flames are stoked higher and higher.

One by one they back away until only Svein and Ingeld remain facing the blazing inferno. Beads of sweat trickle down their reddened faces, but neither man will flinch.

Wiglaf watches the Fire Challenge with Hrothgar's sons as Ottar returns to his seat beside them, sweating profusely.

OTTAR

Always been a cold weather man  
myself.

WIGLAF

Svein's an Iron-Smith, the heat  
will never bother him.

HRETHRIC

Ingeld's as stubborn as an ox;  
he'll never yield.

A lock of Ingeld's hair bursts into flame and he leaps back, brushing it out. Svein raises his arms, victorious.

The onlookers burst into laughter as Svein realizes his sleeve is on fire and frantically tries to put it out.

BEOWULF

Well done, Svein! You've proven  
yourself most worthy once more.

OTTAR

The one whose cold blood is most  
in need of warming, you mean!

Svein glares at him comically.

INT. TROLL CAVE - NIGHT

The TROLL-HAG leaps at Æschere, SHRIEKING hideously, smashing him into a pile of armor. The Hag snarls and hisses, clutching Æschere with piercing claws as they wrestle across the floor.

Æschere reaches for a dagger protruding from the eye-socket of a nearby skull. The Troll-Hag bites into his shoulder and he screams with pain. He rams the dagger into the Hag's side.

The Troll-Hag WAILS in agony and rolls aside. Looking up, her eyes go wide and she leaps out of the way just as Yrmenlaf's spear slams down, piercing an empty rib-cage.

EXT. HEOROT - NIGHT

Beowulf is entertaining the children by recounting the Grendel fight. He grimaces, baring his "claws" and the children gasp.

BEOWULF

Ten feet tall the black beast  
towered over me--

OTTAR

Oy! What about the rest of us?

WIGLAF

What, you? You slept through the  
whole thing!

Ottar feigns innocence.

BEOWULF

15 men surrounded Grendel then!

The Geats put on their best "we bad" attitudes. All but Eofor, who has grown distant and morose since his episode of cowardice.

INT. TROLL CAVE - NIGHT

The Troll-Hag leaps to and fro, dodging blows, but Æschere and Yrmenlaf press her ever backwards, cutting off escape. Unferth manages always to stay just out of harm's way.

EXT. HEOROT - NIGHT

Beowulf lunges at Ottar, who plays along by doing his best Grendel impression as Beowulf chases him around the fire pit.

BEOWULF

Terror seized the creature then!  
It tried to flee, but I gripped  
Grendel fast!

Beowulf leaps on Ottar's back. Ottar lurches about wildly.

OTTAR

Ow! Oy, easy now! Grendel's dead  
already! OW!!!

Ottar breaks away and backs off, holding his shoulder.

BEOWULF

But let the bards sing the song in  
after days, for I am famished and  
could eat a man myself!

SVEIN

And you could do so I'd wager!

BEOWULF

Aye! Bring me a slice of roast  
Grendel now!

WIGLAF

And make it a shoulder-bone, if  
you please!

BEOWULF

I should have grabbed a leg then  
as well, if that's all the food  
I'm to find in Hrothgar's hall!

INT. TROLL CAVE - NIGHT

The Troll-Hag is backed up against the throne, Æschere to one side, Yrmenlaf on the other. Unferth steps into view between them, plucking up Yrmenlaf's spear.

ÆSCHERE

Seek for your son in the eternal  
darkness, foul wretch, for there I  
shall now send you.

The Troll-Hag MOANS pitifully. As she glances down at Grendel, a tear rolls down her furry cheek, and Æschere hesitates.

Unferth swings the butt of the spear, sending Yrmenlaf sprawling within reach of the Troll-Hag. Yrmenlaf screams as the Hag tears at his flesh. Æschere turns on Unferth, stunned.

ÆSCHERE

Traitor! Coward and traitor!

Unferth rams the point of his spear into Æschere's chest.

UNFERTH

At least I'm still alive.

Unferth flings Æschere to the ground at the Troll-Hag's feet. The Hag glances up at him quizzically, mouth oozing blood.

INT. HEOROT - NIGHT

Hrolf and Eofor sit in a corner apart from the crowd, who have now moved indoors.

EOFOR

I did nothing to help him, Hrolf.  
I fled like a coward.

HROLF

What could you have done that  
Hondscio could not? Can you slay  
an ogre, Eofor? Even Beowulf  
barely managed that.

EOFOR

I could have tried.

HROLF

You would only have ended up like  
him.

AT THE HIGH TABLE

Hrothgar signals for silence. He points to Grendel's arm.

HROTHGAR

For this fine sight, good men of  
Geat-Land, our eternal thanks. And  
with our thanks, take these golden  
treasures.

Hrothgar claps his hands and TWO SERVANTS enter carrying banners woven with Beowulf's crest in golden thread. They part, and a line of TREASURE-BEARERS pass through, presenting each of the Geats with chests of gold and jewels, and golden war-helms.

BEOWULF

Our humble thanks, lord, but you  
bestow too great a gift.

Ottar shakes his head, disagreeing.

HROTHGAR

Men deserving less than this have  
received as much, though they  
fought no foe like yours.

Hrothgar clasps Beowulf by the shoulders.

HROTHGAR

You have done what no man else  
could do. From this day forth you  
shall be to me as my own son, and  
my house your second home.

BEOWULF

And you to me as my own father.

As they embrace, Hrothulf scowls, seeing his place usurped.  
Wealtheow, too, shows some concern.

Hrothgar claps his hands and two wooden chests are brought in.  
One is filled with gold coins, the other with gems and jewelry.

HROTHGAR

Let this be payment for Hondscio's  
death, though no price can repay  
the loss.

BEOWULF

I thank you. This gift will make  
the burden less, though hard will  
this fall on Hondscio's wife.

HROTHGAR

Hondscio died a hero's death.  
Proud of him his wife should be.

Beowulf's gaze is distant as he thinks of the news he must bear home. Eofor hangs his head in shame.

INT. HONDSCIO'S HOME - NIGHT

Hannah lies in bed alone, one hand on her swollen belly, the other on the empty space beside her.

EXT. RAVENSWOOD - NIGHT

The Geats are camped within the shelter of the dense forest. Through the trees to the east hundreds of fires flicker.

ONGENTHEOW (OS)

Hygelac! We are coming for you!  
You and your men shall die with  
the rising sun!

WONRED

How much longer, Haldar?

Haldar gazes up, taking in as much of the night sky as he can.

HALDAR

Four hours, maybe five. The archer  
is yet at the hunt.

HYGELAC

Dawn will come soon enough.

EXT. RAVEN'S MEADOW - NIGHT

Ongentheow shouts taunts and jibes from the edge of the forest.

ONGENTHEOW

Prepare to die, you pig-dogs!

Othere and Weohstan stand beside him.

OTHERE

We should burn them out.

ONGENTHEOW

No. Make them wait. They're dead  
men either way.

He moves off towards the pavilion where Hæreth is being held. Weohstan watches him go, then turns away, conflicted.

INT. HEOROT - NIGHT

Wealtheow stands before Hrothgar bearing a silver chalice.

WEALTHÉOW

Accept this cup, my lord. Rejoice  
in your good fortune, and give  
while you may these gifts of gold.

Hrothgar takes the cup, but she does not yet let go. She holds his gaze firmly as he waits for her to come to the point.

WEALTHÉOW

Yet forget not your own sons.  
Leave to your kinsmen that which  
is justly theirs.

HROTHGAR

This high seat, these lands and  
hall shall go to Hrethric, and  
after him Hrothmund, our true  
sons, by right of blood.

She releases the chalice and Hrothgar drinks deeply.

HROTHGAR

Yet should they perish by some  
ill-chance, what then?

Hrothulf snaps to attention. Onela, across the hall, notes this.

HROTHGAR

It is an evil world where demons  
prowl the peaceful night, and no  
man knows what Fate awaits him.

Hrothgar draws a dagger across his hand and lets the blood drip into the chalice. He turns to Beowulf.

HROTHGAR

Therefore, Beowulf, drink with us,  
and take into your heart the blood  
of Danes.

Beowulf takes the cup and drains it. Hrothulf stabs his dagger into the goose carcass on a platter in front of him.

INT. ONGENTHEOW'S TENT - NIGHT

Ongentheow enters the torch-lit tent, stopping in the entrance to stare lustily at Hæreth, who is bound tightly to the central support pole. Hæreth's eyes go wide as she realizes his intent.

INT. HEOROT - NIGHT

Beowulf refills the chalice and turns to Hrothgar's sons, sitting with Wiglaf.

BEOWULF

Drink with me brothers!

HRETHRIC & HROTHMUND

Aye! Gladly!

BEOWULF

But tell me first, Hrothmund, of all that's in this world, what most would you have for your own?

HROTHMUND

That's easy! I would have all the farmland in the kingdom on which to grow my grain.

BEOWULF

That, indeed, would be a rich harvest. Hail then, Hrothmund!

Beowulf drinks, then hands the cup to Hrothmund, who drinks.

INT. ONGENTHEOW'S TENT - NIGHT

Hæreth stares wide-eyed at the approaching Ongentheow, trying frantically to loosen the ropes binding her hands. Ongentheow grabs her and kisses her hard. She spits in his face. He grins.

INT. HEOROT - NIGHT

BEOWULF

And what would you, Hrethric, if all the world were yours?

HRETHRIC

Miles and miles of cows, enough to eat up all of Hrothmund's grain!

BEOWULF

Well answered, brother. Surely that would be a kingdom of cows!

Again Beowulf drinks, then hands the cup to Hrethric.

INT. ONGENTHEOW'S TENT - NIGHT

Ongentheow is all over Hæreth. She screams and he puts a hand over her mouth. With the other he fumbles to undo his trousers.

Hæreth kicks Ongentheow hard with a knee to the crotch, dropping him. A second blow connects with his nose. Blood explodes with a loud CRACK. Ongentheow turns slowly, glaring up at her.

ONGENTHEOW

You'll pay for that, wench.

HÆRETH

That's what you said last time.

Hæreth wrenches the tent pole loose and the tent collapses.

INT. HEOROT - NIGHT

Hrothulf stands, raising his own cup.

HROTHULF

And what of me? Will you not drink with me as well, brother?

BEOWULF

Indeed I will. But tell me first, what would you have if all in this world was at your command?

HROTHULF

I would have enough warriors in my hall to eat all of Hrethric's cows at a single meal.

HROTHGAR

Then, Hrothulf, would you truly rule a kingdom!

Beowulf hands the chalice to Hrothulf, who drains it dry.

HROTHULF

Then, uncle, I would rule the world!

BEOWULF

Indeed, I think you would.

EXT. ONGENTHEOW'S TENT - NIGHT

Flames leap up as the tent catches fire from fallen torches. Hæreth rolls out from under the edge, struggling to free her bound hands, and runs right into Othere, who grabs her roughly. Ongentheow breaks free of the burning tent, sooty and singed.

ONGENTHEOW

Tie her up. Tightly! Put her on a horse. I want her to witness the downfall of her people.

OTHERE

Yes, father.

ONGENTHEOW

(to Weohstan)

Loose the arrows.

Hæreth glares at Weohstan with burning gaze.

WEOHSTAN

But we can't see, my Lord.

ONGENTHEOW

Then light the arrows!

WEOHSTAN

(with some hesitation)

Aye, my Lord.

ONGENTHEOW

(to Oslaf)

Change of plans.

INT. HEOROT - NIGHT

Hrothgar claps his hands.

HROTHGAR

Now let there be story and song in Heorot once more, such as we have not heard in many a year! Widsith! Tell us a tale of glory, of days when gods and men fought side by side and conquered all!

WIDSITH, a young bard, comes forward and bows nervously.

HROTHGAR

Play on Harper! Fear not Grendel's  
wrath this night, for darkness  
dwells no more in Dane-Mark.

He nods hesitantly, clearly unaccustomed to the task.

WIDSITH

Here is a song of the Danish hero  
Hnæf, who fell with the sons of  
Finn when the Frisians came upon  
them at Finnsburg!

Widsith starts to play, but his harp is out of tune. The crowd bursts into laughter as he smiles and bobs nervously. He tries quickly to tune up, but only makes it worse.

AT THE GEATS' TABLE

Svein and Ottar speak quietly with Wulfgar and Freawaru.

SVEIN

So Hrothulf's mother Yrsa was the  
sister of Halga, his own father?

WULFGAR

Aye. But even stranger than that,  
Halga was Yrsa's brother and her  
father, too.

OTTAR

Go on! You're pulling me leg now!

WULFGAR

No, truly. You see, Halga never  
knew his mother, as she was taken  
in a raid when he was but a boy.  
Inga was her name.

The crowd begins to taunt the poor minstrel, who fumbles about, growing more flustered, making them laugh even louder.

WULFGAR

Years later, Halga was pillaging  
up the Northern coast in the usual  
manner, when he sees the most  
beautiful wench he ever laid eyes  
on. Dark-haired she was and he was  
drawn to her like never before.

FREAWARU

He'd have taken her away with him  
that night, they say, but that her  
men-folk put up a fair mean fight.

WULFGAR

Nine moons later she gives birth  
to a daughter with Halga's eyes.  
And she named the child Yrsa.

OTTAR

Oy! That's a cruel Fate!

WULFGAR

That's not the half of it.

SVEIN

Somehow I didn't think it was.

The crowd is growing unruly, throwing food at Widsith.

WULFGAR

Well, of course, Halga never knew  
Yrsa, as she was raised by Inga  
far away north.

FREAWARU

One day he meets this lass out  
wandering. A young girl with dark  
raven hair and eyes like his own.

WULFGAR

You see, he'd never got over the  
beauty of that wench from the  
north. Never did he think to see  
her like again.

FREAWARU

Till the day he met young Yrsa.

OTTAR

That's messed up.

They glance to where Hrothulf sits with Yrsa at the high table.  
She holds him protectively, stroking his hair like a child.

WULFGAR

When Halga discovered the truth of  
it he went away, never to return.

## FREAWARU

They say he was only looking for a way to die.

## SVEIN

Aye. He was with us at Sorrow Hill when the Swedes came, and he fought like a screaming banshee.

## FLASHBACK - BATTLE OF SORROW HILL

HALGA, bloody head to toe and pierced by arrows, stands in front of Beowulf, Hæreth and Svein, fighting in a berserker frenzy. Halga takes down a half-dozen attacking Swedes as Ongentheow sounds the retreat and flees with his sons.

## BACK TO PRESENT

Beowulf has been listening quietly.

## BEOWULF

He fell there defending us, and there he lies still. Were it not for him we'd be lying there now too.

Widsith finally gets the tuning right and gives a sigh of relief. The crowd cheers as Widsith sets into a melancholy lay.

## WIDSITH

Hnæf of the Scyldings, hero of the Half-Danes, was doomed to die in Frisian feud...

The Danes nod and grin knowingly to one another.

## EXT. RAVENSWOOD - NIGHT

The Geat encampment is in an uproar as a raging forest fire rushes towards them. Smoke glows red as a rain of arrows hails down upon them.

## HYGELAC

Make for the Trollhight! Take cover in the cliffs!

The wounded are dragged and carried away as well as possible, but many are left behind to be engulfed in flame, screaming.

INT. HEOROT - NIGHT

Across the hall Onela speaks quietly with Ingeld.

ONELA

Do you see, Lord Ingeld, the neck-  
ring that Beowulf now wears? Is  
that not finely crafted?

Ingeld gazes darkly across the room.

INGELD

That is the golden torque of the  
Brosingas. It was once an heirloom  
of my clan.

ONELA

It is a lovely piece. I like as  
much the boar-crested war-helm  
worn by that Danish door-guard. It  
looks well with his ring-mail.

INGELD

That was Withergyld's war-shirt.  
And his boar-helm.

ONELA

Do you then know, my Lord, that  
scabbard which Hrothgar wears?

Ingeld's eyes grow cold as he sees what Onela indicates.

ONELA

There swings your father's sword  
at the side of his once-enemy,  
taken from him on the battlefield  
when he fought his final fight.

INGELD

These are cold words, Onela. They  
chill me to the core.

ONELA

Where cold words flow, hot steel  
soon should follow.

INGELD

I have sworn an oath to uphold the  
peace. It is my solemn duty.

ONELA

Little faith have I in purchased  
peace. Such vows cannot last.

Ingeld glances coldly at his wife, sitting with Wulfgar.

ONELA

Ties of blood cannot be severed by  
a sword's sharp edge.

INGELD

Aye, my Lord, that is true.

Widsith wraps up his story-song to loud applause.

WIDSITH

For Hildeburh his sister the grief  
was too great, brother and son she  
lost there that day, slain by the  
oath-breakers, betrayed by Fate!

There is a commotion at the entryway as a DOOR-GUARD enters.

DOOR-GUARD

Unferth comes!

Unferth rides into the hall on horseback. The heads of Grendel  
and the Troll-Hag hang by their hair from the spear shaft  
resting on his shoulders, one on either side.

UNFERTH

My Lord! Grendel is dead!

He tosses the severed heads to the floor as everyone gathers  
around to gape at the sight. Unferth dismounts and bows low.

HROTHGAR

How now, Unferth? How comes this?

UNFERTH

Grendel yet lived when we reached  
his lair, my lord, but no more.  
There was another, as you can see.  
I have slain them both.

Unferth holds out his sword, sticky with black blood.

BEOWULF

Where are Æschere and Yrmenlaf?

UNFERTH

Dead. Slain by the Troll-Hag.

HROTHGAR

Æschere? Dead?

UNFERTH

He saved my life, my Lord. He is truly a hero among heroes.

HROTHGAR

Alas! Sorrow returns swiftly to us. Will Odin never grant a change of Fortune?

UNFERTH

Did I not say Grendel would seek revenge, my Lord? Did I not say to send Beowulf instead?

Beowulf lifts Grendel's head, oozing BLACK BLOOD. He lifts the Troll-Hag's head. GREEN BLOOD drips to the floor. He then runs a finger through the RED BLOOD on Unferth's spear tip.

BEOWULF

And whose blood would this be?

Unferth glances around frantically, caught in his own web. All eyes are on him, every face turned against him. Unferth's eyes go dark as he nods to Hrothulf--

Hrothulf draws his sword and runs Hrethric through. Wealthew screams as Hrethric crumples to his knees, eyes wide.

HROTHGAR

Treachery and treason!

Seeing his chance, Unferth rams the spear into Beowulf's chest--

--but Beowulf is wearing his chain-mail shirt, and Unferth's spear tip stops dead, lodged in one of the links. Beowulf swings Grendel's head, sending Unferth flailing across the floor.

ONELA

Now, Ingeld! Now is your time!

Ingeld and Onela draw their swords and leap over the tables, followed by their men. The Danes, already in confusion, are utterly surprised. Onela and Ingeld are on them in an instant.

Battle erupts throughout the hall. Blades crash together. Swords tear through flesh. Blood splatters the walls. The RAVEN CAWS.

HROTHGAR

Defend the hall, men!

Beowulf snatches up Unferth's spear just in time to fend off Onela's attack. But Onela hacks the spear in half. Beowulf tosses the shafts aside. He sees Unferth's sword lying nearby.

ONELA

Now I will finish what I started.

BEOWULF

You should have finished it the first time.

ONELA

A mistake I won't make again.

Beowulf rolls aside as Onela swings, coming up with the sword in hand. Their blades crash together like raging thunder.

Hrothgar draws his sword and rushes toward the high table, where Hrothmund is doing his best to fend off a frenzied Hrothulf. Several men lie dead at their feet.

But Ingeld intercepts Hrothgar before he gets there.

HROTHGAR

Step aside, Ingeld.

INGELD

You killed my father. Now I will kill you.

Ingeld swings, but Hrothgar ducks the blow and Ingeld's blade knocks a torch from its sconce, setting a tapestry alight.

HROTHGAR

And your father killed my father.  
Shall my son slay your son?

INGELD

Look around, old man. Your kingdom  
is crumbling about you. Your reign  
is at its end.

Ingeld swings and their blades clash in a shower of sparks.

HROTHGAR

Well that may be. Yet I swear to  
you now Ingeld, never again shall  
you set forth from these shores.  
This hall shall be your tomb!

Hrothgar attacks, fighting like a man possessed, forcing Ingeld  
back towards the throne, where Wulfgar has leapt to a wounded  
Hrothmund's defense.

Hrothulf stabs Wulfgar in the leg and he crumbles to his knees.  
Freawaru screams and runs to Wulfgar's side as Hrothulf turns on  
Hrothmund, only to find Yrsa standing there.

HROTHULF

Hello, sister-mother! Isn't this a  
splendid reunion? Look, there is  
my uncle-father...  
(indicates Onela)  
And here...my cousin-nephew!

YRSA

Don't do this, Hrothulf. There is  
no honor to be gained this way.

HROTHULF

Honor? What has honor ever gotten  
me? What good did honor for my  
father?

YRSA

I cannot let you do this.

HROTHULF

Story of my life, sister. Stand  
aside!

YRSA

It is not for you to rule this  
hall.

HROTHULF

Then this is farewell, mother.

Hrothulf raises his sword -- just as the full length of a blade  
erupts from his own back. He gazes down at Hrothmund, lying  
wounded at his feet, hands on the sword hilt in his stomach.  
Hrothulf sinks back onto the throne as Hrothmund rises.

HROTHMUND

Enjoy this moment, cousin, for it  
is as close to the throne as you  
will ever come.

Blood stains the golden throne as Hrothulf dies.

WEALTHEOW

Thus is treachery repaid.

YRSA

Farewell, my son.

Hrothgar and Ingeld crash into the high table, blood flowing on  
both sides. Ingeld is younger, stronger, and more agile, and the  
king is wounded again and again, but will not yield.

Nearby, Beowulf and Onela fight with a manic rage, pummeling one  
another with blows. But Beowulf is distracted, keeping one eye  
on the king. Every time he tries to break away, Onela is there.

The hall is quickly filling with smoke as the fire spreads.  
Wealtheow pulls Yrsa toward the rear exit--

WEALTHEOW

Come! We must go! We can do  
nothing here...

--and runs straight into a glowering Unferth, who grabs her  
tightly, drawing her close.

UNFERTH

Ah, my Lady. So you have come to  
me at last!

WEALTHEOW

Unferth! You will pay for this  
treachery!

UNFERTH

Oh, I think not, your highness.  
But I will be paid, and richly  
too, for all my years of service.

FREAWARU (OS)

Think again.

Unferth turns just as Freawaru shoves a burning torch into his  
face. Unferth screams, clutching charred flesh, and flees.

Wealtheow pushes Yrsa through a rear door, helps Freawaru drag Wulfgar out, then turns back to the hall, eyes reflecting fire.

WEALTHÉOW

Hrothmund.

Across the hall, Hrothmund defends the fallen Hrothgar, but is no match for Ingeld. Hrothmund trips and falls. His sword clatters across the floor. Ingeld raises his blade for the kill.

INGELD

So ends the illustrious kingdom of  
the Danes.

Wealtheow steps between them, sword in hand.

WEALTHÉOW

You have angered the gods this  
day, Ingeld. Not lightly do they  
look on oath-breakers.

INGELD

Step aside, wench, or you shall  
feel the bite of my blade as well!

WEALTHÉOW

So may it be. But Norse women do  
not sit idly by. Nor do we easily  
fall!

Wealtheow swings, unleashing a pent-up fury, reigning down a series of savage blows which utterly surprise Ingeld.

The hall is now all smoke and raging fire. The combatants dodge falling timbers and burning benches as the individual battles become ever more isolated.

Wealtheow wounds Ingeld several times, but he is a skilled fighter and soon regains the upper hand, disarming Wealtheow.

Beowulf sees them, but is tied up fighting Onela. As Ingeld raises his sword for the death blow, Beowulf lunges into a burning pillar. The pillar topples, crashing down onto Ingeld. Ingeld screams through searing flesh, his clothes aflame.

Burning beams crash down in a rain of debris, separating Beowulf and Onela. Beowulf and Wealtheow rush to Hrothgar's side, where Hrothmund kneels, weeping.

HROTHMUND

I'm sorry, father. I failed you.

HROTHGAR

No, my son. You stood strong. I'm proud of you. Thus am I avenged.

WEALTHEOW

We've got to get out of here.

HROTHGAR

Leave me. I'm done for--

Beowulf lifts Hrothgar in his arms, searching for a way out. Scattered battles rage amidst the fiery inferno.

BEOWULF

Retreat, men! Flee from the hall!

Beowulf makes for the rear exit, dodging debris and kicking assailants out of the way. He head-butts one to the ground.

Svein, Wiglaf and Ottar converge, clearing a path before them.

Ottar loses an arm in the battle, but goes berserk and beheads his opponent with a single-handed blow of his axe.

EXT. HEOROT - NIGHT

The battle has spilled out through the front doors into the square as warriors escape the burning hall, coughing and bleeding.

Onela and a faction of his men fight their way out through a weakened defense and escape into the night.

INT. HEOROT - NIGHT

Ottar roars with pain as Wiglaf staunches the wound using his cloak as a makeshift tourniquet. Svein lifts Ottar by his other arm, supporting him as they press on.

SVEIN

Now shall we call you Grendel, for like enough do you look!

OTTAR

Arghh! Like enough do I feel!

They reach the rear door, but it is closed. Hrolf and Eofor are there trying to open it, but several dozen sword and axe blades protrude inward from under the door.

EOFOR

It's been wedged from outside.

Beowulf kicks the door open with a mighty crash, splintering it into pieces, but the storeroom beyond is a raging inferno.

The men gaze around frantically. They are now cut off from all exits by the fire. Wiglaf points out a stack of shields nearby.

BEOWULF

Follow me.

EXT. HEOROT - NIGHT

The hall is fully ablaze, surrounded by scattered battles and a mass of villagers carting buckets of water from the well. Heorot begins to collapse as the fire takes its toll.

Freawaru and Yrsa tend the wounded lying all around the square, but glance continually towards the hall with worried eyes.

Wulfgar, his leg wound now bandaged, climbs to his feet.

FREAWARU

Where are you going?

WULFGAR

I have to help them.

FREAWARU

No you don't!

She grabs him tight and pulls him close. They lock eyes.

FREAWARU

I'm not losing you again.

But just then Beowulf emerges from the entryway, blackened with soot, carrying Hrothgar in his shielded arms. The others follow as one, covered entirely by interlocking shields.

All eyes turn to them.

Beowulf's expression says it all as he gently lays Hrothgar down. Red blood stains the green grass.

Wealtheow kneels at Hrothgar's side, weeping. She cradles his head in her lap and he smiles warmly up at her.

HROTHGAR

My wife, my Queen. Ever at my side. More a king could not want.

EXT. EDGE OF THE FOREST - NIGHT

Unferth, his face badly burned, cries as he watches from afar.

EXT. TROLLHIGHT - NIGHT

Hygelac and a few of his surviving men stand atop a rocky outcrop, gazing at the blaze stretching out across their homeland below. Wonred glances at the towering rocks behind.

WONRED

Well, at least the Swedes won't follow us any further.

HYGELAC

Don't count on it.

Wonred and Haldar exchange worried glances.

EXT. HEOROT - NIGHT

Hrothgar gazes at Heorot, watching his legacy go up in flames.

HROTHGAR

Much love and much hate must he endure who thinks to live long in this world. Happy we live from feast to feast, with no thought for tomorrow. Yet too brief are our days upon this earth, and all will pass in time.

Hrothgar clutches Beowulf with a bloody hand.

HROTHGAR

Beware then, Beowulf! For when the watchman slumbers the archer shoots with deadly aim!

SHADOWY FORMS loom up around him, the shades of fallen warriors awaiting him in Valhalla: Æschere, Hrethric, Hondscio, Ecgtheow. In the distance several VALKYRIE ride in on their SPIRIT STEEDS.

HROTHGAR

Soon enough come sickness, war,  
and age that will break your  
strength. The lights will darken  
that were your eyes, and cold  
night will overcome you. In the  
end death awaits us all. Thus are  
we all slain. As am I. Farewell.

The Shades surround him, merging into DARKNESS.

BEOWULF (VO)

Farewell, fair King.

A BARELY AUDIBLE WIND swirls around us, rising into nothing.

EXT. HEOROT - DAWN

Shafts of sunlight break the horizon, revealing the charred and smoldering remains of Heorot. On the hill beyond, several fresh burial mounds can now be seen. The town is deserted.

The Raven sits atop the golden antlers, now lying askew amidst the blackened rubble. Rising up, the bird flits by, making for the sea-path.

EXT. INLAND ROAD - DAY

The Raven follows the forest path towards the sea.

EXT. DANISH HARBOR - DAY

The Raven soars out over the cliff's edge, swooping down to light on the beam of Beowulf ship's, now loaded with treasure.

A large crowd has gathered to bid the Geats goodbye. Hrothmund, wearing the antlered crown of Denmark, sits astride a charger. Beside him, Wealtheow sits on a white palfrey. Freawaru sits close by, Wulfgar at her side.

Beowulf's men make ready to sail, checking ropes and stowing gear. Beowulf stands in the prow of the ship, now repaired.

BEOWULF

Now must we travelers from afar  
return again to our own homes and  
kin. Well have we been housed in  
Heorot. For this, and these fine  
gifts, we give our thanks.

HROTHMUND

Ever are you welcome in our home.  
But sad are we to see you go.

BEOWULF

If ever you have need of us again,  
we will come at once and do what  
good we may.

HROTHMUND

Strong are your hands, Beowulf,  
and your heart more wise. Should  
ever your own lord fall in battle,  
the Geats could find no better man  
to rule their land than you.

WEALTHÉOW

Be at peace, my son, and remember  
always that courage comes from the  
heart, but strength is to be found  
in wisdom.

BEOWULF

Farewell, fair Queen. May your  
people flourish in this fertile  
land.

HROTHMUND

Fare you well, wherever you may  
fare, brother of Dane-Mark. Safe  
be your journey, and speedy your  
return!

BEOWULF

So may it be. Live long, and reign  
well, King of Danes!

Beowulf salutes them. The Danes as one salute him back as the  
ship is launched into the harbor.

WEALTHÉOW

(to herself)

Farewell, fair friend. 'Tis like  
we shall not meet again upon this  
Earth.

Far out to sea a familiar ship can dimly be seen, sailing away.

INT. HÆRETH'S BEDCHAMBER - NIGHT

Candlelight casts its golden glow over a bed piled high with furs, in the midst of which a naked Hæreth lies beside Beowulf. With a finger he traces the curve of her body.

HÆRETH

I'm so glad you've come home,  
Beowulf. Back home to me. I  
thought never to see you again.

BEOWULF

I could never stay away from you,  
Hæreth. You draw me ever back  
again, as a moth is drawn to flame.

HÆRETH

You did promise to return to me.

BEOWULF

Aye, that I did. As you promised  
always to be mine. The two of us,  
together forever, through all  
eternity.

The door bursts open, and Hygelac storms in, sword poised.

HYGELAC

Faithless wench! So this is how a  
lowly peasant girl repays the king  
who made of her a queen!

HÆRETH

I never wanted to marry you, you  
fat pig! You made me do it out of  
spite for Beowulf, because you're  
jealous of him!

Beowulf rolls aside as Hygelac's sword sinks into the bed where he had just been. Hæreth's eyes go wide as Hygelac draws the sword out and glares down at her.

HYGELAC

Savor well the last moments of  
your wretched life, foul demon of  
darkness!

Blood spills across the bed as he runs her through.

Beowulf rages, smashing Hygelac against a wall. He wrenches the sword from Hygelac's grip and swings, screaming insanely. The blade passes cleanly through Hygelac's neck. The mouth opens--

WIGLAF (VO)

Beowulf.

--as Hygelac's head topples slowly to the floor.

WIGLAF (VO)

Beowulf, wake up!

EXT. BEOWULF'S WARSHIP - NIGHT

Beowulf starts awake. He is huddled in the prow of the ship, wrapped in thick furs. Wiglaf stands over him as he gazes around, trying to regain his bearings. Most of the crew are huddled around the mast, asleep. Widsith, who has come with them, plucks a gentle melody on his harp as waves lap softly by.

WIGLAF

It's your watch. You said you'd take... Hondscio's shift.

Beowulf glances up at the sky. The faint tracery of the Norse constellations can vaguely be made out: a roaring dragon, a Viking warship, a warrior wielding a broadsword.

BEOWULF

Aye, that I did. Get some sleep, lad. A hero's welcome awaits you tomorrow.

Beowulf heads towards the rear of the ship. Wiglaf follows.

WIGLAF

Me, sir? Do you really think so? About me being a hero and all? I mean, I did little more than stand by and watch, really.

They reach the stern and Beowulf unties the secured rudder bar. He checks the ship's heading against the stars.

BEOWULF

Well now, I did kill Grendel sure. And no easy task, I'll grant you that! And it was Hondscio died for it, not either of us.

He fixes his gaze on Wiglaf.

BEOWULF

But that's not what makes a man a hero, Wiglaf. Better than a thousand fighting men live in our valley, and not but one in a hundred came forward for this venture. Many might have done as well as we. Some likely would have done better!

Nearby, Eofor lies as if asleep. But he is awake and listening.

BEOWULF

We few are the ones who dared to go. And that alone is the measure of valor, the strength of will to face your fears. You stood by my side in the heat of battle and did not turn away. Stronger I may be than you, but you are every bit the man I am. Never forget that.

WIGLAF

Aye, my Lord.

Beowulf claps him on the back. Wiglaf smiles humbly and moves away, leaving Beowulf to ponder the weight of his own words.

EXT. HONDSCIO'S FARM - DAY - FLASHBACK

Young Beowulf and Young Hondscio play-fight with wooden swords. Hondscio is a runt by comparison to Beowulf's already husky bulk, but he is quick-witted and agile, easily outmaneuvering Beowulf's brute-force approach. Young Hæreth watches nearby.

YOUNG BEOWULF

Arrgh! Quit moving so much!

YOUNG HONDSCIO

What? So you can hit me more? No thank you!

Beowulf grows impatient, and in his frustration he swings wider, over-extending himself. Hondscio gets in a good shot to the ribs and Beowulf cringes, but presses on, pounding harder, raining down blows with increased brutality. Hondscio backs off.

YOUNG BEOWULF

Gods, Hondscio, fight like a man!

YOUNG HONDSCIO

Take it easy, Beowulf, it's just a game!

YOUNG BEOWULF

War is not a game, Hondscio! A sword is the difference between life and death. Never forget that!

Beowulf throws down his stick and walks away, leaving Hondscio and Hæreth gazing at one another, perplexed.

BACK TO PRESENT

Beowulf runs his fingers absently along the edge of his sword as he gazes out across the starlit sea. They stop at the notch.

EXT. RAVEN'S MEADOW - NIGHT

Hæreth is now lashed securely in the back of a wagon. Flanking her are two Swedish guards, OSMUND and OTTO.

OSMUND

(covertly)

She's a pretty lass. What say we have a go, eh Otto?

OTTO

Nay, she's for the king, Oz. He'll have his way with her afore he's through, though. Likely kill her in the end.

OSMUND

Aye, then what's stoppin' us?

OTTO

I'm just doin' me job here, Osmund. Orders is orders, and I don't want no trouble. I got two more years, then I can settle down with me wife and mind the farm.

OSMUND

Oy, always the farm! Leave off with the pigs and cows already.

OTTO

What? What's wrong with pigs and cows? You eat enough of them!

OSMUND

Bloody Hel, Otto, we're warriors! We may not live two more years, you imbecile!

OTTO

Well, it don't hurt none to plan for the future.

Hæreth follows the conversation with her eyes.

OTTO

See, me and the missus, we got a little place all staked out up in the valley. Nice thatched hut, two rooms, ocean view. It's got an indoor well! Get us some sheep, couple o' cows, a few pigs--

OSMUND

Oy! With the pigs again!!!

Hæreth can't help but smile.

EXT. BEOWULF'S FARM - DAY - FLASHBACK

Young Beowulf works the fields of his farm, pulling the plow himself. He struggles against the cold, hard earth, a personal battle between himself and the world.

Young Hæreth appears, carrying a pitcher of water. Beowulf smiles appreciatively.

YOUNG HÆRETH

Thirsty work?

YOUNG BEOWULF

I feel as if I've eaten an acre.

YOUNG HÆRETH

You're supposed to eat the crops after they grow!

Beowulf laughs and takes a long, deep draught. Hæreth looks around at the progress he's made.

YOUNG HÆRETH

You've done well, Beowulf. Your mother would be proud.

YOUNG BEOWULF

I have much to learn.

YOUNG HÆRETH

You'll do okay.

YOUNG BEOWULF

The ox died.

YOUNG HÆRETH

Maybe your uncle will let you have one of his.

YOUNG BEOWULF

I thought I'd see if he might trade for some of father's things. His sword. Maybe the anvil.

She looks at him meaningfully.

YOUNG HÆRETH

Don't you think you should keep that? You might need it later.

YOUNG BEOWULF

What good is an anvil to me? I never learned the craft. Father tried to teach me, but I didn't want to be a farmer.

YOUNG HÆRETH

I meant the sword.

YOUNG BEOWULF

Oh.

YOUNG HÆRETH

But you should keep the anvil as well. Maybe Svein can teach you. He's pretty good with a hammer, I hear, and you two seem to get on well.

YOUNG BEOWULF

We've become pretty good friends.

YOUNG HÆRETH

But what do you need with a farm animal? You're stubborn as an ox yourself!

YOUNG BEOWULF

Well, I've got the job, if that means anything!

Hæreth laughs and dumps the pitcher of water over his head. Beowulf gasps and sputters, then grabs her and draws her close, getting her wet as well. They lock eyes.

YOUNG HÆRETH

You look the part well enough, at any rate.

BACK TO PRESENT

Hæreth gazes up at the night sky.

HÆRETH

(barely audible)

Beowulf... what have I done?

EXT. OPEN SEA - NIGHT

Beowulf sits at the tiller gazing at the reddish glow which tints the eastern sky. Eofor approaches.

EOFOR

I'll take the steer-board, sir.

BEOWULF

Aye. She's all yours.

Eofor takes command of the tiller, but follows Beowulf's gaze eastward. Puzzled, he checks the position of the stars.

EOFOR

The dawn comes early.

BEOWULF

Fires. The land's aflame.

EOFOR

Then we're home already? It was a speedy crossing.

BEOWULF

Aye, the winds favored us. We'll reach port ere the coming of the sun. I'll wake the men.

EXT. TROLLHIGHT - DAWN

Hygelac and his men stand atop the rocky outcrop, a ragged band, barely a hundred strong. A crimson hue burns on the horizon, foretelling the coming dawn.

HALDAR

They'll be coming soon.

WONRED

If the Trolls don't come upon us first.

HALDAR

We should cross over the Heights and make our way down into the valley as soon as day comes.

HYGELAC

No. We make our stand here. These rocks will work to our advantage.

HALDAR

We can't beat the Swedes, Hygelac! We have barely a hundred healthy men among us.

HYGELAC

Do you think the Swedes will just give up and go home? They'll keep coming until we stop them, Haldar.

WONRED

Aye, but we must regroup. We've lost too many men. If we can make our way home we can refortify there. Make them come to us.

HYGELAC

And hole up like caged dogs? I will not! You run away if you want to, Wonred. I'll fight the Swedes alone if I must!

EXT. GÖTABORG HARBOR - DAWN

The early morning sun burns red as it breaks over the bluff. The harbor and village are all but deserted.

UP ON THE BLUFF

ERIK, a boy barely into his teens, stands guard at the cliff's edge, gazing sternly out to sea, spear in one hand and a shield bearing the crest of a WINGED SERPENT in the other.

On the horizon he sees the billowing sail of a ship. He squints into the distance. Then his eyes go wide with surprise.

ERIK

Beowulf! Beowulf has returned!

He raises a war-horn to his lips and lets loose a mighty blast.

EXT. BEOWULF'S WARSHIP - DAWN

The men are awake now and anxious to return home. A DISTANT HORN BLAST echoes over the sea. Beowulf winds his horn in return.

EXT. GÖTABORG HARBOR - DAY

As the ship draws into shore, Erik and Wiglaf wave to one another eagerly, clearly good friends. Wiglaf tosses the mooring lines out and Erik ties them off. Beowulf leaps over the rail.

ERIK

Praise be to Odin! At long last  
and beyond all hope you have  
returned again to Geat-Land! We  
thought never to see you more!

BEOWULF

Little hope then did you have for  
me, Erik of little faith!

ERIK

So it seems!

Erik stares in astonishment as Beowulf's men begin to unload the treasure hoard, exulting proudly in their glory.

BEOWULF

Payment for a good day's work.

ERIK

I should say so!

Beowulf laughs at Erik's bewilderment and claps him on the back.

ERIK

Ah, but it is good to set eyes upon you once again! It seems an eternity since you went away.

BEOWULF

It seems to me a lifetime. Yet it is but a few short weeks.

ERIK

Aye. And yet much has changed since you went away.

Beowulf looks around the deserted harbor, then east to the fire.

BEOWULF

Where is everyone, Erik? What has happened since we left?

ERIK

The King has gone to war against the Swedes. They are encamped at Ravenswood.

(gazing towards the fire)  
We fear the worst.

BEOWULF

Your father has gone with them?

ERIK

Aye. It is why I stand guard at his post and not he.

BEOWULF

And your sister... she is well?

Erik hesitates before looking Beowulf in the eye.

ERIK

Hæreth has been taken.

BEOWULF

Ai! How? When?

ERIK

A small band of Swedes came in the night, two days after the men rode out to battle.

(glancing at Wiglaf)

They were led by Weohstan.

BEOWULF

This is ill news. And Heardred was not taken?

ERIK

No, my Lord, he was not.

Beowulf gazes up at the fortress on the bluff above.

ERIK

Be wary, Beowulf! He will not be as pleased with your return as I.

BEOWULF

A warrior is always wary, Erik. Only the dead let down their guard.

Erik's eyebrows narrow as he looks about, perplexed.

ERIK

Where is Hondscio?

Beowulf's grim expression says it all.

EXT. GÖTABORG VILLAGE / BASE OF BLUFF - DAY

The Geats haul their hoard through the deserted streets, stopping to catch their breath at the base of the bluff, gazing up at the steep headland leading to the fortress above.

Beowulf shakes his head as he sees his men sprawled on the ground, heaving and panting.

BEOWULF

Now isn't that always the way of it, brought to your knees by gold! Well, up you go. I didn't hire you for your looks!

The men scowl at Beowulf as they pass by. Wiglaf brings up the rear, supporting Ottar, and they climb the hill together.

ERIK

Wiglaf! Am I ever glad to see you!

WIGLAF

Hi Erik! What did you get in trouble for this time?

ERIK

No, not this time! I'm just standing post while my father's away at the war.

Wiglaf glances at him quizzically, but Erik avoids his eyes.

ERIK

Gods Ottar, what happened to you? Messing with the wrong ladies again?

OTTAR

Aye, definitely the wrong ladies.

WIGLAF

What war?

ERIK

So you're all heroes now, I hear!

WIGLAF

What war?

Beowulf stops and looks Wiglaf in the eye.

BEOWULF

Swedes.

Wiglaf's expression says it all: his worst fears come true.

EXT. GÖTABORG GUARDHOUSE - DAY

Atop the bluff a guardhouse opens onto a deserted courtyard enclosed within high walls. Not the hero's welcome they had expected. Ottar is led away by two of Beowulf's hired men.

INT. GÖTABORG HALL - DAY

The Great Hall is a rustic hovel compared to its Danish counterpart, a simple yet sturdy structure designed primarily for defense. Large, powerful, and well-stocked for war.

HEARDRED sits on the throne, drinking with a few friends. As Beowulf enters, Heardred turns to greet them, but does not rise.

HEARDRED

So the great warrior returns.

A tense beat as Beowulf's men glance at one another nervously.

HEARDRED

Welcome once more to your homeland  
fair travelers! Hygelac, High King  
of Geat-Land, greets you.

BEOWULF

Where is the King? And where has  
Queen Hæreth been taken?

HEARDRED

(oozing sarcasm)  
The King has gone away! I am  
afraid the Queen's Protector has  
been negligent in his service of  
late, and the Queen, my "mother,"  
has suffered ill for it yet again.

WIGLAF

Beowulf did not kill Queen Frida!  
Her death was not his fault.

Heardred leaps to his feet, flushed with anger.

HEARDRED

Be still, Swede!

INTERCUT - FRIDA'S DEATH - FLASHBACK

QUEEN FRIDA falls from her horse, an arrow protruding through her neck. Riding just ahead, Beowulf turns too late to prevent the ambush as several dozen Swedes, led by ONGENTHEOW, close in.

BACK TO SCENE

Heardred glares down from the throne with manic intensity.

HEARDRED

Who are you to speak to me of my  
mother's death?

Wiglaf holds his gaze, defiant. A scullery boy no more.

HEARDRED

Had Beowulf performed his duties  
she would still be alive today,  
and my father would not have  
married his precious Hæreth!

Beowulf clenches his teeth and stares at the floor, abashed and racked with guilt. His lip quivers as emotions rage within.

Wiglaf gazes from one to the other.

HEARDRED

But stay! All is well. For perhaps  
I shall have yet a third mother  
ere this war is ended.

BEOWULF

What mean you by this?

HEARDRED

The King my father has captured  
the Swedish Queen Elan, and the  
Swedes have taken Queen Hæreth in  
exchange. A fair trade, I'd say.

WIGLAF

How fares the battle? Have you  
news of it?

HEARDRED

Aye, the rising sun proclaims it.  
Do you not see? For all the world  
is on fire!

BEOWULF

Come, away! We ride to war!

Beowulf and his men sweep out of the hall, followed by Erik.

EXT. GÖTABORG COURTYARD - DAY

Erik rushes up to Beowulf as he marches towards the stables.

ERIK

Let me ride with you!

BEOWULF

We go to war with the Swedes. The  
battlefield is no place for a boy.

INT. STABLES - DAY

They enter a broad building where dozens of steeds are stabled. Erik steps in front of Beowulf, stopping him in his tracks.

ERIK

It is my sister we ride to save!

BEOWULF

You must stay and guard the sea,  
Erik. That is your post. Leave the  
war for warriors.

He starts to walk away.

ERIK

How old were you, Beowulf?

Beowulf stops, but does not turn.

ERIK

How old were you when you fought  
your first battle? How old were  
you when first you fought to  
avenge your kin?

Beowulf's eyes wander far away.

EXT. SORROW HILL - DAY - FLASHBACK

YOUNG BEOWULF stands amidst a pile of dead Swedes, bloody sword in hand. HALGA lies dead at his feet, pierced by a dozen arrows. As the Swedes flee, Young Beowulf sees columns of smoke up in the valley. He drops his sword and runs. YOUNG HÆRETH follows.

EXT. GÖTABORG RIVER VALLEY ROAD - DAY - FLASHBACK CONT'D

Young Beowulf races up the valley road through a scene of savage destruction. On every side, loved-ones sob over fallen bodies.

EXT. BEOWULF'S FARM - DAY - FLASHBACK CONT'D

Beowulf approaches his own longhouse, its thatched roof ablaze. In the yard he finds his mother, HÆLENA, bloody and dying. As Beowulf cradles her in his arms, Hælena caresses his cheek.

HÆLENA

My son...you must learn to stand  
on your own. You are a man...now.

BƆOWULF

No, mother, I'll get the healer!  
She'll mend the wound.

Hælena laughs painfully at this, coughing blood.

HÆLENA

Some wounds...cannot be healed.

He looks down and sees that she is holding her own guts in.

HÆLENA

I will tell your father...you  
said...hello.

BƆOWULF

No, mother, don't go! Please!  
Please don't leave me....

Hæreth can only watch from a distance as Beowulf weeps openly.

BACK TO PRESENT

Beowulf turns to Erik, his expression grim.

ERIK

My heart yearns for vengeance,  
Beowulf. I am old enough for that.

Beowulf turns to the STABLE-KEEPER.

BƆOWULF

We need horses.

EXT. GÖTA RIVER VALLEY - DAY

Beowulf and his men ride hard through a lush river valley of scattered farm settlements bordered by dense forests. Dark clouds of carrion crows circle in the smoke-filled sky ahead. Ottar, for obviously reasons, has not come on this venture.

EXT. RAVENSWOOD - DAY

THE SWEDES ride hard through the smoking remains of Ravenswood. Hæreth, wrists bound, rides in the lead with Ongentheow, seated before him. Othere, Oslaf, and Weohstan follow close behind.

EXT. GÖTA RIVER VALLEY - DAY

THE GEATS pass like raging thunder, eyes blazing.

EXT. RAVENSWOOD - DAY

THE SWEDES race towards the rocky outcrop of the Trollhight. At Ongentheow's signal he breaks left with a contingent while Onela breaks away to the right. The main host holds to its course.

EXT. RAVEN'S MEADOW - DAY

THE GEATS slow as they enter Raven's Meadow. Charred bodies lie everywhere, impaled with spear, sword and arrow. The green grass is stained red, the surrounding forest burnt black.

The BLARE OF WAR-HORNS is heard and they spur their steeds on.

EXT. TROLLHIGHT - DAY

HALDAR BLASTS HIS WAR-HORN from atop the outcrop.

HALDAR

They come!

A hundred swords are drawn as the Swedish cavalry approaches below, WAR-HORNS BLARING in answer.

BASE OF OUTCROP

Led by Oslaf, the main Swedish division draw their swords, a thousand strong, as they begin scaling the rocky Trollhight.

ABOVE

The Geats gape in wonder as the Swedish warhorses leap and clamber upwards through the shale and scattered boulders below.

WONRED

They're insane.

HALDAR

They'll never make it.

The Geats draw their bows, heft their spears, and heave stones, wreaking havoc on the clambering enemy, who just keep climbing.

HYGELAC

Where is Ongentheow?

As if in answer to his question, the flanking Swedish divisions crash in from both sides, hurtling upward along the smoother ridge rock. Ongentheow rides into battle using Hæreth as a shield, slaying all before him. Hæreth is splashed with blood.

BELOW

As their horses falter, the Swedes below begin to dismount and climb the remaining distance, swarming like ants up the anthill.

ABOVE

The Geats do their best to fend off the attack, but they are vastly outnumbered. As more and more Swedes enter the fray, the Geats are pressed back ever closer to the rocky ledge behind.

HYGELAC

Hold your ground, men! Stand  
together! Forget not who you are!

Wonred, defending Hygelac, valiantly fights off two attackers, but is finally cut down by both, leaving Hygelac's back exposed.

Seeing this, Ongentheow lowers his spear and charges. Hæreth screams as Hygelac crumples to his knees with three feet of polished ash protruding from his stomach.

In a fury, Hæreth lunges backwards, smashing Ongentheow in the nose and knocking them both to the ground.

With wrists still bound, Hæreth snatches up a sword lying nearby and points it at Ongentheow, who rises slowly to his feet, blood running from a broken nose. He laughs grimly at the sight.

ONGENTHEOW

Well, well, well. A fighter to the  
end, eh?

HÆRETH

Fate favors the brave, they say.

ONGENTHEOW

Aye, right you are. And that would  
be me!

Ongentheow swings suddenly, but Hæreth rolls aside as he does, his blade barely missing her. She is on her feet again in an instant, sword in hand. Unleashing her rage, she swings with all she's got, pressing him back and nearly disarming him.

ONGENTHEOW

Not bad for a little girl. I see  
Boy-wolf has taught you well.

HÆRETH

I learned from the best.

But then he counters with a furious volley, nicking her on the shoulder. She drops the sword. Ongentheow slips his blade behind the ropes binding her hands and draws her close.

ONGENTHEOW

Ah, but regrettably it wasn't good enough, for either of you, was it?

HÆRETH

What do you mean?

ONGENTHEOW

I'm afraid your boyfriend won't be coming back to you after all. You see, I sent my son to kill him.

HÆRETH

He's... dead?

ONGENTHEOW

Aye, lass, that he is.

A DEEP GROWLING ROAR suddenly emanates from beyond the ridge, echoed by others to either side. Huge boulders fly up from below, CRASHING DOWN and crushing men where they stand.

WARRIORS

Trolls! Trolls are coming! Run!

The battle breaks up in confusion as men flee in all directions.

ONGENTHEOW

Stand your ground, men!

Suddenly the RAVEN flits up, swooping in. Ongentheow ducks, pulling Hæreth closer, as--

Beowulf and his men rise into view, swords and spears in hand. Beowulf hurls an enormous boulder, taking out three Swedes.

HÆRETH

(relieved)

Beowulf!

ONGENTHEOW

(incredulous)

Beowulf!

BEOWULF

Right you are.

Hæreth pulls away from Ongentheow, cutting her bonds on his sword blade as she does.

ONGENTHEOW

So we meet again.

BEOWULF

For the last time.

Beowulf attacks with a manic fury as his men rush into battle, taking the disoriented Swedes by surprise.

Hrolf and Eofor come upon their fallen father. Hrolf goes into a berserker rage, wreaking havoc with a war-hammer in one hand and a battle-axe in the other. Eofor, however, collapses to his knees at his father's side, overcome with grief.

Erik sees Haldar and Hæreth hard pressed by several Swedes. He leaps on a stray steed and rides the Swedes down, swinging his broadsword and trampling several underfoot. He leaps from the horse and rushes to his family's side.

ERIK

Father! Sister! Thank the gods!

HALDAR

My son, come to manhood so soon.  
A child no more!

They embrace quickly and together fight side by side.

Svein and Wiglaf take on Othere's faction. Wiglaf notes Svein's moves and emulates them stroke for stroke. Svein is impressed.

But Wiglaf freezes as he comes face to face with Weohstan, their swords locked together between them.

WEOHSTAN

Hello, son.

Svein keeps one eye on them from nearby as he fights Othere, who also shows a vested interest, being Wiglaf's first cousin.

WIGLAF

I can't fight you, father.

WEOHSTAN

You must. As I must. We have both  
sworn oaths that cannot be broken.

WIGLAF

But what of the bonds of kin and  
clan? Do they mean nothing? How  
can I choose one over the other?

WEOHSTAN

That you must decide for yourself.

Weohstan steps away and points his sword at Wiglaf.

WEOHSTAN

Choose.

Wiglaf stares at him in disbelief.

WEOHSTAN

Choose!

Wiglaf glances from his father to Beowulf and back again, torn.  
But just then Svein and Othere step between them, Svein facing  
Wiglaf while Othere holds Weohstan back.

SVEIN

Go.

Wiglaf hesitates, confused.

OTHERE

(Over shoulder to Wiglaf)

Go! Run, cousin!

Wiglaf backs away, stumbling over the bodies of the slain.

Meanwhile, Beowulf has pressed Ongentheow back to the edge of  
the ridge, just as he had been before. Swinging relentlessly  
again and again, he forces the aging King to his knees--

BEOWULF

The strong survive...

--and knocks the blade from Ongentheow's hands.

BEOWULF

...the weak perish.

Ongentheow watches his sword sail over the edge out of sight.

ONGENTHEOW

Not bad... for a farm boy.

Ongentheow catches sight of Othere standing with Svein and Weohstan, and his eyes go dark. As Othere turns to face him--

Ongentheow draws a dagger and lunges at Beowulf. But as he does, Beowulf swings downward, sinking his sword into Ongentheow's helm. Ongentheow falls dead at his feet.

OTHERE

Fall back! Retreat! Retreat!

The Swedes, disordered and demoralized, flee in all directions.

ERIK

Come back, you cowards!

Hæreth rushes to Beowulf and they lock together in a passionate embrace. Standing amidst the ravages of battle, blood-spattered and bruised, they kiss with the intensity of unleashed emotions.

Beowulf's men turn their eyes away, glancing at one another with raised eyebrows. Erik and Haldar smile at one another knowingly.

Hæreth gazes into Beowulf's eyes with adoration and wonder, as if he had returned from the dead.

HÆRETH

I knew you'd come back for me.

BEOWULF

You know me better than I know myself.

Over Hæreth's shoulder, Beowulf sees the impaled Hygelac lying fetal on the ground nearby, watching them through glassy eyes. He extracts himself from Hæreth's clutch and goes slowly to Hygelac's side.

HYGELAC

So you've returned... after all.

Beowulf stands over the dying king, staring down at him coldly.

HYGELAC

Grendel... is dead, then?

Beowulf nods grimly, muscles tensing.

HYGELAC

It seems I... misjudged you.

The pent-up rage breaks free and Beowulf spits on Hygelac.

BEOWULF

Go to Hel, you bastard! You sent me away to die, just like you sent my father away!

HYGELAC

I did... what I had to do.

BEOWULF

Why?! You're my own blood! My own father's brother! Why did you take him away from me? Why did you have to take everything away from me?

Beowulf crumples to his knees, sobbing.

HYGELAC

To protect my own son.

BEOWULF

From me? But I am not your enemy!

HYGELAC

Everyone is the enemy of a king.

BEOWULF

I have sworn an oath to serve and obey you. And I have. I would give my life for your son if I must.

HYGELAC

Swear. Swear to serve my son, when I am gone... as you have served me... while I lived. Swear!

Hygelac coughs up blood.

BEOWULF

On my honor. This will I do.

HYGELAC

I'm sorry, Beowulf. Sorry for many things. A mighty king... would you have made... my sister-son.

Hygelac falls still. Hæreth lowers her head. It starts to rain. The Raven looks down on the scene from atop a rocky pinnacle.

EXT. GÖTABORG HALL - DAY

The Geats march back to the Great Hall, bearing Hygelac's body on a stretcher of interlocked shields and spears.

EXT. GÖTABORG COURTYARD - DAY

Heardred watches the procession approach from a high window.

INT. GÖTABORG HALL - DAY

The Geats enter the hall, bedraggled and bloody. Ottar is there to greet them, attended by several buxom nursemaids. As Heardred rushes into the hall, Hæreth holds him back.

HEARDRED

Let me loose! Where is my father?

INTERCUT - NEWS OF ECGTHEOW'S DEATH - FLASHBACK

Hygelac hands Young Beowulf his father's sword.

HYGELAC

Your father is dead...

BACK TO PRESENT

Beowulf can only stare numbly at Heardred.

HÆRETH

The King, your father, is dead.

HEARDRED

My father? Fallen?

Heardred gazes at the body, as if to make certain.

HEARDRED

Then... I am King.

Heardred reaches for the crown, but Hæreth stops him.

HÆRETH

No.

Heardred turns, perplexed.

HEARDRED

But I am his son. The crown now passes to me.

Hæreth, the mother, speaks with compassion, as Hæreth, the Queen, speaks with authority.

HÆRETH

You are young yet, Heardred, and we are a nation at war. We must have a strong leader now. Your time will come.

Hæreth takes the crown from Hygelac's head and holds it up.

HÆRETH

Behold the throne of Geat-Land!

All eyes are on the Queen as she turns to Beowulf. Their eyes meet. Behind them, Heardred glowers darkly.

HÆRETH

Beowulf, son of Ecgtheow, I offer you this crown; throne, lands and all. You have saved us in our hour of despair and led us from certain doom. Lead us now once more.

Beowulf scans the crowd: the faces anxious, looking to him for leadership. In this moment he is more lost and alone than ever. He turns back to Hæreth, knowing what this means for them both.

BEOWULF

No.

Hæreth stares, speechless, the crown still held in midair. The space between them becomes an abyss.

BEOWULF

I cannot accept that which is not mine to take, nor yours to give. I swore an oath to serve Heardred. The crown must go to him.

Heardred snatches the crown away.

HEARDRED

Fool! You not worthy to rule. A true ruler takes what he wants, whether it is given him or no.

Beowulf's sword is at Heardred's throat in an instant, thrust through the center of the crown.

BEOWULF

Then I should kill you now? Is  
that how you would have it?

Beowulf flicks the sword up, taking the crown with it.

BEOWULF

And why not? Who would stop me?  
You? Hæreth? Erik? I think not.

Heardred's eyes are wide as Beowulf steps closer, sword in hand  
-- then holds the crown out to him.

BEOWULF

Without law, there is only chaos.  
A true leader takes only what is  
rightfully his, and does for his  
people only what is best for them.

Heardred grabs the crown possessively.

HEARDRED

And what do you know of that, you  
who left your own land and King?

BEOWULF

Very little, it seems.

Heardred places the crown on his head and ascends the throne.

HEARDRED

As I am by blood the rightful king  
of this clan. Each man of you must  
now swear on your life with me to  
stand or fall, else evermore will  
you be an enemy of this crown, and  
nevermore welcome in these lands!

He brandishes his sword with a flourish.

HEARDRED

Swear to me now, or depart hence  
from this hall forevermore!

Beowulf bows on one knee before the throne.

BEOWULF

This do I swear by my life and  
blood to obey.

The others follow suit. Beowulf stands and salutes the new king.

BEOWULF

Hail Heardred, King of Geat-Land!

The cheer is less than enthusiastic, but Heardred is pleased.

HEARDRED

Now let there be feasting! Bring  
food and wine. Tonight we shall  
rival the gods for joy!

Beowulf glances at Hæreth, but she turns and walks away. Erik and Haldar look at one another apprehensively.

EXT. UPSALA - DAY

The defeated Swedish army returns to Upsala, bearing their own fallen king. Onela watches from atop the wall as Othere leads the procession through the gates below.

Beside him, Unferth stands motionless, wearing full-face helmet. Below the faceplate we can see that one cheek is badly burned. Othere glances up at them darkly as he passes by below.

UNFERTH

Beowulf.

ONELA

Kill him.

UNFERTH

Yes, Lord.

It's unclear just who he means.

INT. GÖTABORG HALL - NIGHT

The revelries are in full swing as the Geats celebrate their battle victory and the crowning of a new king with drink and song and boasts of heroic exploits.

ERIK

You should have seen it, Ottar. It  
was a beautiful thing!

WIGLAF

He took a sword right to the head!  
It was brutal.

OTTAR

Ah, I wish I could have been  
there, lads. But these here lasses  
been keeping me good company.

Ottar is pampered and spoon-fed from either side.

SVEIN

I'm sure they have!

OTTAR

Should have lost me arm earlier.

Nearby, Haldar comforts Hrolf and Eofor.

HALDAR

Your father took down ten men  
before he fell! You should be  
right proud to bear his blood.

Hrolf beams with pride, but Eofor sinks deeper into darkness.

Heardred sits on the throne, decked out in his father's sable  
furs. Hæreth, beside him, is resplendent in crimson and gold.

HEARDRED

A toast to our victory!

Rousing cheers and gulps of ale all around. Heardred has had  
more than his share already.

HEARDRED

And to Beowulf's return. Come,  
tell us of your adventure!

Beowulf comes forward, followed by several of his men bearing a  
good share of their treasure, which they set before the throne.

BEOWULF

All this gold good Hrothgar gave  
as our reward. We give it now to  
you, in honor of your kingship.

HEARDRED

Our thanks for these rich gifts,  
great warriors. But all this gold  
would I give for just one glimpse  
of Grendel's arm! Tell us how you  
rid the Danes of Hrothgar's Bane!

Beowulf reaches beneath his tunic and draws out a necklace strung with Grendel's claws, holding it up for all to see.

BEOWULF

Then behold! For here are the very  
claws that came groping in the  
night at Heorot!

Everyone leans in, gasping in awe.

BEOWULF

Here is all that now remains of  
the fiend which slew my father and  
my good friend Hondscio, whom you  
all knew. Grendel dragged them  
down into the cold earth where now  
they lie. So for glory.

Beowulf tosses the heavy necklace onto the high table, where it lands with a LOUD THUD in front of Heardred and Hæreth, who start back in surprise, gaping at them in amazement.

HEARDRED

But tell us of the ogre battle!

BEOWULF

That song I shall leave for  
Widsith here to sing.

Beowulf bows and turns away. Hæreth watches with sympathetic eyes as he exits the hall. Widsith steps forward, harp in hand.

WIDSITH

Three days did they sail, and far  
did they fare, fourteen men with  
Beowulf, over the whale's wide  
way; until at last at end of day,  
heaven's golden jewel settled into  
slumber, and the world into  
darkness fell...

Beowulf's men beam with pride, reveling in their moment of fame.

EXT. GÖTABORG COURTYARD - NIGHT

Beowulf exits the hall alone. He pauses in the courtyard, as if willing himself to go on, then marches resolutely up into the valley beyond.

EXT. BEOWULF'S FARM - NIGHT

Beowulf slows as he approaches the ghostly shadows of his abandoned homestead. He stops before a small stone marker rising at one end of a grassy mound. On it is carved the name HÆLENA.

A comet flashes across the night sky and Beowulf glances up the road to where a dim light faintly flickers in the window of a distant farmhouse. He takes a deep breath and starts toward it.

HÆRETH (OS)

Would you like me to go with you?

Beowulf turns to find Hæreth standing there. He glances back towards the farmhouse, then turns again to Hæreth.

BEOWULF

Alright.

The two set off up the road, passing wordlessly through a dark, silent land as the Aurora Borealis shimmers on the horizon.

EXT. HONDSCIO'S LONGHOUSE - NIGHT

At the front door Beowulf hesitates, steeling himself to the task, but unable to act. After a moment, Hæreth softly knocks. The door opens slowly to reveal a weeping Hannah. Hæreth rushes in to embrace her.

INT. HONDSCIO'S LONGHOUSE - NIGHT

Hondscio's home is humble and rustic, but warm and homey.

HÆRETH

I'm so sorry, Hannah. I would have come sooner...

HANNAH

I'm just glad you're home safe. I couldn't bear losing you as well.

Over Hæreth's shoulder Hannah sees Beowulf standing outside.

HANNAH

Come in, Beowulf. Come inside.

Beowulf enters hesitantly. He glances around nervously, seeing signs of Hondscio everywhere. His gaze comes to rest at last on Hannah's swollen belly, and a tear rolls slowly down his cheek.

BEOWULF

I'm sorry, Hannah. I'm so sorry!  
It's all my fault. I shouldn't  
have let him to go. I couldn't  
protect him! I couldn't save him!  
I'm sorry. Please forgive me!

Beowulf crumples to his knees, weeping.

HANNAH

It's not your fault, Beowulf. He  
would have gone anyway. He would  
have followed you anywhere.

BEOWULF

No, he didn't want to go, Hannah.  
He wouldn't say it, but I knew it.  
The whole time all he thought  
about was you.

HANNAH

Well, I suppose that's the price  
you pay for falling in love with a  
fighting man.

BEOWULF

My whole life all I wanted was to  
be a warrior, to fight for fame  
and glory. All Hondscio ever  
wanted was a farm and fields to  
tend, and I scoffed at him for it.  
How I envy him now.

Hannah smiles sadly. Beowulf stands and looks her in the eye.

BEOWULF

I'll take care of you now, Hannah.  
I'll take care of you both. I  
promise.

Hæreth shifts uncomfortably, glancing from one to the other with  
a mix of bewilderment and jealousy.

EXT. UPSALA COURTYARD - DAY

Onela's eyes burn with fierce envy as Othere is ceremoniously  
crowned before a large gathering of Swedes. With Othere are his  
wife and two young sons: EANMUND, 10, and EADGILS, 8.

EXT. SORROW HILL - DAY

Several fresh barrow mounds now stand out on the bluff.

INT. BEOWULF'S FARM - SMITHY - DAY

Beowulf hangs up his sword and shield, gazes at them momentarily, then takes up a scythe and begins sharpening it.

EXT. BEOWULF'S FARM / HANNAH'S FARM - DAY - MONTAGE

Beowulf tends both Hannah's farm and his own, plowing fields, harvesting crops, repairing outbuildings and tools, and feeding the pigs. He works at an anvil, beating hot iron into shape. Hannah, cradling her newborn child, brings him water to drink.

INT. HANNAH'S LONGHOUSE - NIGHT - MONTAGE

Old friends share a simple meal. Ottar eats with renewed vigor. Beowulf makes fun of Wiglaf's meager attempt to grow a beard. Svein and Hannah exchange warm glances as he cuddles her child. Hæreth quietly watches them.

EXT. SORROW HILL - WINTER - DAY

The burial mounds are now covered in a thick blanket of snow.

EXT. GÖTABORG RAMPARTS - DAY

Hæreth, wrapped in white furs, gazes out at the frozen harbor, her face a sea of turmoil. She turns as Erik approaches.

ERIK

Heardred will attack the Swedes.

Hæreth frowns and hurriedly departs.

INT. GÖTABORG HALL - DAY

The King's council members are gathered around a map of the Swedish peninsula. Among them are Haldar, Hrolf and Eofor. Heardred has assumed his new role with great eagerness.

HEARDRED

Ongentheow is dead. Othere is now King of the Swedes. But he is weak and their people divided. If we attack now we can catch them off guard, before they have time to unite.

HALDAR

But we have lost many men, my  
Lord. Our army is small.

EOFOR

And winter is hard upon us. We  
must wait for the Spring.

HEARDRED

If we don't strike back now, every  
clan in the region will see us as  
cowards, and we will face not only  
the Swedes, but the Saxons, the  
Goths, the Finns and the Frisians.  
If we defeat them now, we will be  
undisputed rulers of this region.

The word "coward" hits Eofor hard.

HROLF

But, my Lord, we have not the men  
both to attack and defend.

HEARDRED

Then we attack.

HALDAR

If we are defeated we will lose  
the lands we now hold.

HEARDRED

We will not be defeated, so long  
as we have Beowulf on our side.

HALDAR

But will he fight? He is not the  
same since his return.

HEARDRED

He has sworn allegiance. He must  
fight. As must you all.

BEOWULF (OS)

I will not attack the Swedes.

Beowulf stands in the doorway with Wiglaf, Erik and Hæreth.

HEARDRED

I command it!

BEOWULF

I agree, my Lord, that we must prove to the Swedes we are a powerful nation. But if we are to live in peace we must be to them a powerful ally, not an enemy.

HEARDRED

I do not want to live in peace with the Swedes! I want to crush them into oblivion! I want revenge for my mother's death!

HÆRETH

If we attack now, Heardred, they will only retaliate later. We must end the feud here.

HEARDRED

They killed my father! Our king!

BEOWULF

And we have killed theirs. Where does it end? I have seen enough of death and bloodshed in the past months to last me a lifetime. I want no more.

A HORN BLAST from outside disrupts the proceedings.

EXT. GÖTABORG COURTYARD - DAY

A SENTRY calls down from the guard tower as they enter.

SENTRY

Riders! Two riders approaching!

They quickly ascend to the battlements, where several Guards train their bows on two blonde-haired horsemen.

SENTRY

Halt!

As they draw up outside the gates we see it is Othere's sons. They are shivering with cold and breathing in ragged heaves.

SENTRY

Who are you, and what is your errand in this land?

EANMUND

I am Eanmund. This is Eadgils, my  
brother. We are the sons of  
Othere.

HEARDRED

Kill them!

The archers draw their bowstrings taut.

BEOWULF

No! Hold your fire! Do not shoot!

The bowmen hesitate. Heardred turns on Beowulf in a rage.

HEARDRED

How dare you contradict my orders!  
(to the Archers)  
I command you to shoot!

BEOWULF

Lower your weapons! Do not fire!

The archers lower their bows. Heardred grimaces at Beowulf.

HEARDRED

You will pay for this.

Beowulf ignores him, turning back to the riders.

BEOWULF

Why have you come into this land?

EADGILS

We seek refuge.

BEOWULF

Refuge from what?

EANMUND

From Onela. He has slain our  
father and taken the throne.

Only Beowulf is not surprised by this.

EADGILS

Please let us enter! We have  
ridden far and eaten nothing for  
many days.

EANMUND

We are cold and tired and I fear  
my brother is sick with fever.

BEOWULF

Let them in.

The gates are opened and the riders led in and given cloaks.  
Beowulf rushes to meet them, the others following close behind.

BEOWULF

Welcome to Geatland. I am Beowulf.

Eanmund dismounts and bows, but Eadgils slumps on his pony.

EANMUND

Thank you, my Lord.

BEOWULF

(to Wiglaf)

Take Eadgils to the Healer's hut.  
Tell Ægnir to give him food and  
tend him well.

WIGLAF

Aye, my Lord!

Wiglaf takes the pony's reigns and leads Eadgils away.

BEOWULF

(to Eanmund)

Come with me.

Beowulf leads Eanmund into the hall as the others follow.  
Heardred glowers at being relegated to second in command.

INT. GÖTABORG HALL - DAY

Eanmund is seated near the fire and given hot stew and mead,  
which he ravages. Heardred takes his seat on the throne with a  
flourish, attempting to regain some semblance of control.

HEARDRED

Now that we have humored you,  
please enlighten us with the  
details of your plight.

Eanmund glances uncertainly from Heardred to Beowulf.

HEARDRED

I am Heardred, King of Geat-Land!  
Do as I command, for you tread  
uncertain ground.

EANMUND

Yes, my Lord.

Eanmund wipes a dirty hand across a dirty face.

EANMUND

When my father came to the throne,  
he announced his intent to end the  
feud between our clans. This he  
would do by offering one of his  
own sons to a bride of Geatish  
blood, if such was the will of  
your people.

INT. UPSALA HALL - DAY - FLASHBACK

Othere sits on the Swedish throne, surrounded by his council.  
There is clearly a heated debate raging, but we cannot hear it.

EANMUND (VO)

This did not meet with much  
approval from the council. But he  
persisted, and would not give in  
to Onela's demands for vengeance.

EXT. UPSALA COURTYARD - NIGHT - FLASHBACK CONT'D

Puffs of breath emanate from a source hidden in shadow, mingling  
with the falling snow.

EANMUND (VO)

Unable to persuade my father to  
invade Geat-Land, my uncle decided  
to overthrow him instead.

Othere emerges from the hall into the courtyard.

EANMUND (VO)

Five nights ago as my father was  
coming home, he was waylaid by  
Onela and his Danish henchman.

Unferth steps from the shadows and grabs Othere as he passes by,  
covering his mouth tightly and dragging him into darkness.

BACK TO SCENE

Beowulf grimaces, glancing at his men.

BEOWULF

Unferth.

EXT. UPSALA - DAWN - FLASHBACK CONT'D

The pitch black night gives way to a blood-red dawn.

EANMUND (VO)

Next morning we were greeted with  
a grisly sight, for my father had  
been given as an offering to Odin.

The sun breaks over a snow-covered barrow mound outside the walls of Upsala. Atop it, Othere has been staked spread-eagle, his stomach sliced open as a feast for crows, which squawk and flit away as Othere's sons rush out to him, wailing.

The young boys fall to their knees at his side, weeping openly.

OTHERE

Go...to Geats. Seek help. Beowulf.

Othere dies as HORNS BLARE OUT. The boys flee into the forest.

BACK TO SCENE

Eanmund brushes back tears. The Geats are stunned into silence.

BEOWULF

Gather the men.

INT. UPSALA HALL - DAY

Onela, wearing the crown, reclines upon the throne. He kicks his feet up on the table, sending bones and bread crusts flying.

Nearby, Unferth chugs a mug of ale and gives a loud belch, his face now a mass of half-healed scar tissue.

UNFERTH

More ale, wench!

A buxom lass fills his cup, bending low as she does. Aroused by her cleavage, Unferth gropes a breast, causing her to spill ale in his lap. He roars and forces her head down into his crotch.

UNFERTH

Lap it up, she-dog!

Onela, on the other end, likes what he sees as well. He sticks a hand between her legs, causing her to jerk upright, smashing the ale cup into Unferth face.

UNFERTH

Bitch!

Enraged, Unferth buries a dagger into her stomach. As the wide-eyed girl crumples to the ground, Onela bursts out in hysterical laughter. Unferth, his lip bleeding, follows suit.

A SCOUT enters, out of breath.

SCOUT

My Lord, the Geats are crossing  
through the lake country!

Onela is out of his seat and sober in an instant.

ONELA

As expected.

EXT. LAKE VÆNÍR - DAY

A frozen lake lies nestled in a tranquil valley. The Geats stand on the western shore of a broad inlet, surveying the scene. Heardred sits astride his father's charger, dressed in his father's war-gear. Everything is just slightly too big for him.

HEARDRED

Make camp here! I want sentries  
posted every ten feet!

The men make only tentative motions to obey. Beowulf hefts a large boulder and hurls it out onto the ice. It lands with a thud and skids across the surface, but does not break through.

BEOWULF

This will do. Deploy the men.

HROLF & EOFOR

Aye, Captain!

Hrolf & Eofor each lead a team out onto the ice, one bearing left, the other right. They carry small casks of oil, which they pour out as they walk. The others now set about pitching camp.

EXT. LAKE COUNTRY - DAY

The Swedes ride hard through snow-covered highlands, whipping drifts into shimmering crystal rainbows as they pass.

EXT. RIDGE ABOVE LAKE VÆNÍR - DUSK

As the sun sinks low, the Swedes crest a ridge and draw up short. The Geat encampment is lit up with torches and campfires in the valley below. There are far more tents than necessary.

WEOHSTAN

They can't possibly have that many men left.

UNFERTH

They don't.

ONELA

They're expecting us.

Onela spurs his steed forward.

EXT. FOREST EAVES - NORTH SHORE - DUSK

Hrolf and his men crouch under cover of the forest on the north side of the lake. The Geat camp is visible from where they are. They see Beowulf draw his sword.

HROLF

Get ready.

EXT. FOREST EAVES - SOUTH SHORE - DUSK

Eofor and his contingent wait across the lake from Hrolf's men. DISTANT HOOF-BEATS are heard, growing to a THUNDEROUS GALLOP. Eofor shuts his eyes, offering a silent prayer to his gods, trying to summon up the courage to act.

EXT. LAKE VÆNÍR - DUSK

Beowulf and his men move out onto the ice, as across the lake--

The Swedish cavalry burst onto the eastern shore, breaking to left and right. A third contingent, led by Onela, race straight ahead onto the ice. They easily outnumber the Geats ten to one.

OTTAR

Is that all they've got? Pshaw!  
That's nothing.

ERIK

Yeah, ten men for each of us, no  
problem!

Onela's contingent thunder straight towards them. Heardred, watching them come, stands frozen with fear, war-horn in hand. Beowulf walks forward slowly towards them, alone, sword in hand.

HROLF and EOFOR each watch Beowulf from their respective points. The divided Swedish contingents draw closer to them as they race around the shoreline.

Beowulf raises his sword as Onela's men close in. Svein takes the war-horn from Heardred's frozen hand as--

Beowulf slams his sword into the ice, burying the blade. The ice cracks along the sword edge, spreading out in either direction. The Raven flits in, landing on the pommel of Beowulf's sword.

BEOWULF

It ends here, father.

THE RAVEN CAWS as Svein BLASTS A WAILING NOTE on the war-horn.

Hrolf and Eofor leap from their hiding places, SCREAMING WILDLY, heading off the flanking Swedish divisions with surprise attacks, cutting them down with a barrage of spears and arrows.

Onela bears down on Beowulf, who stands firm, staring grimly. Just as Onela reaches him, Beowulf rips his sword from the ice and swings with all he's got. BLADES CRASH TOGETHER as Onela's horse sinks beneath him, breaking through the ice. Onela sails over Beowulf's head, skidding across the ice.

Beowulf's men rush in to battle Onela's dispersed cavalry, half of whom are now flailing in frozen water.

Meanwhile, the Swedish contingents facing Hrolf and Eofor break up in disarray as they are forced out onto the lake, where their steeds collide and lose footing on the ice.

Eofor is grim as he wades through them swinging his broadsword. Seeing this from a distance, Hrolf does a surprised double-take.

Across the lake, Onela is back on his feet, facing Beowulf. Beowulf draws a line in the ice between them with his sword.

BEOWULF

No further.

Onela stares at him as if he were insane.

BEOWULF

You can live in peace on that side  
of the line, if you choose. Cross  
it, and you will die. Your choice.

ONELA

Still daddy's little farm boy,  
aren't you? Dreaming of cows and  
pigs while nations rise and fall  
around you. The thing about lines  
is...

Onela wipes a boot across the line and draws another further in.

ONELA

...they move.

Onela swings, stepping across the invisible line, but Beowulf  
easily blocks his blow. They lock swords and gazes.

BEOWULF

So be it. Now I will finish what  
you started.

Beowulf swings, pummeling Onela again and again, forcing him  
back with each blow until Onela is backed up to the edge of the  
icy water. Beowulf draws a new line where he now stands.

BEOWULF

Nowhere to go from here but down.

Beowulf's sword arcs down passing cleanly through Onela's neck.  
As the head tilts from the body, its mouth seems to cry out--

OSLAF (OS)

Fire!

The TWANG OF BOWSTRINGS jars Beowulf back to reality and he sees  
that the Swedes have regrouped at the center of the lake and are  
firing outward on the surrounding Geats. He also sees that--

-- Weohstan has a taut bow trained on Heardred.

-- Unferth is aiming a bow at him.

BEOWULF

Heardred!

But too late. The arrow sails SLOW-MOTION, hitting Heardred in the chest, while Beowulf takes an arrow to the shoulder. Both fall to the ground. Beowulf scrambles to Heardred's side.

BEOWULF

Heardred!

Heardred gazes down at the arrow protruding from his chest, then up at Beowulf, his eyes glassy.

HEARDRED

I just wanted... to be like...  
you.

Heardred dies, leaving Beowulf alone with his guilt. Beowulf rises, turning a dark gaze on Unferth, who attempts to notch another arrow, but fumbles it as Beowulf advances on him.

Weohstan, however, has his bow already trained on Beowulf. Seeing this, Wiglaf races towards Weohstan, spear in hand.

WIGLAF

NO!!!

Weohstan turns his bow on the charging figure, but seeing his own son, hesitates. Their eyes meet. The arrow is aimed dead on, but Weohstan doesn't shoot as Wiglaf runs him through.

WIGLAF

(weeping)

I'm sorry, father. I had to.

WEOHSTAN

I'm proud of you, my son. You have  
not broken you oath. There is...  
honor in that. Do not forget.

Meanwhile, a half dozen arrows hit Eofor at the fore of his men, but he keeps fighting, slaying everything in his path, until at last he falls. Hrolf screams as he rushes to Eofor's side.

EOFOR

I didn't run.

HROLF

No, you didn't.

EOFOR

I should have.

They share a final laugh as Eofor coughs blood and dies.

HROLF

Yes, you should.

Unferth draws his sword just in time to block Beowulf's blow. The force of it sends Unferth reeling. Beowulf is on him in a second, and Unferth barely manages to block or avoid each blow.

With a mighty swing, Beowulf shears Unferth's sword in two. Unferth stares at the severed hilt in his hand.

BEOWULF

Now will you pay for your sins,  
Unferth Mar-Peace. Too long have  
you plotted your treachery. Too  
many crimes have you committed  
against good men. But no more.

Unferth drops the sword hilt and backs away frantically.

UNFERTH

I'm just a servant! I was only  
doing as I was commanded! Onela  
ordered me to kill you!

Unferth falls and scrambles backwards across the ice as Beowulf advances steadily, swinging with every step, hacking into the ice, barely missing Unferth, sending crystal shards flying.

BEOWULF

Did Hrothgar command you to kill  
Æschere? Did he order you to burn  
his own hall? Were you told to  
slay your own brother?

Unferth stops struggling, slumping to the ice in a sobbing heap.

UNFERTH

I didn't mean to kill him. I  
didn't mean to. I'm sorry, Ulrik.

As Beowulf raises his sword for the final blow, Unferth gazes up and in his eyes is a look of utter regret and resignation. The blade arcs down--

Unferth doesn't flinch as the blade sinks into the ice barely an inch from his head. The two men eye one another intently.

BEOWULF

I'll not give you a hero's death.  
You will die alone and in shame.

A crack in the ice begins to spread from Beowulf's sword, inward towards the center of the lake. He turns back to the battle, seeing his men falling all around.

BEOWULF

Fall back! Fall back! Retreat!

Svein BLARES THE WAR-HORN and the Geats flee back to shore in all directions. The Swedes pursue, but--

As the Geats reach their encampment, the oil-soaked tents are set alight. Flames race outward in either direction, following the path of spilled oil around the lake.

The Swedes race back towards the eastern shore as the flames encircle them from either side, cutting off escape. Many leap through the flames, only to be cut down by the waiting Geats.

A spider-web of fractures race across the ice as it melts. The trapped Swedes break through, floundering in the frigid water, its surface covered in burning oil.

Unferth, trapped on an ice floe, screams as it melts away around him, leaving him flailing in fire and ice.

Beowulf falls to his knees, aghast with horror at the sight. Then all around him the Geats begin to cheer as they realize their incredible victory, praising the man responsible.

GEATS

Beowulf! Beowulf! Beowulf!

INT. GÖTABORG HALL - DAY

The cry carries over to a crowd packed into Götaborg Hall.

GEATS

Beowulf! Beowulf! Beowulf!

Beowulf stands before them, in front of the throne, dressed in sable furs and silver. Hæreth steps forward and holds the crown up for all to see.

HÆRETH

Behold, the crown of Geat-Land!

The crowd falls silent.

HÆRETH

Forged for Swerting in days long  
sped. One man only now remains  
among his heirs, last in lineage,  
yet not least in worth!

Hæreth turns to Beowulf.

HÆRETH

Son of Hælena, Hrethel's heir, I  
name you now King Beowulf, Lord of  
all Geat-Land!

Hæreth places the crown on his head as the crowds cheers.

HÆRETH

Bow before your King!

The people kneel as one, Hæreth included.

BEOWULF

Good my people! Rise, and stand  
united!

They stand. Hæreth bows low and moves off to one side.

BEOWULF

Long have we dwelt upon these  
shores in the shadow of our enemy,  
and little have we known of peace.  
Many have we lost and long has  
been our sorrow. But no more!

The crowd is hushed, expectant, uncertain how this will go.

BEOWULF

No more now shall we bow in fear,  
waiting for the sword to fall!  
From this day forth will we be as  
one with our kindred cousins.

Beowulf indicates Eanmund and Eadgils, standing with Wiglaf.

BEOWULF

May there be lasting peace between  
our peoples forevermore.

EANMUND

On my honor I swear, so shall it  
be, so long as I live and rule.

BEOWULF

If ever again you are in need of  
aid, you need only send us summons  
and we will do what good we may.

EADGILS

For this we thank you. May you  
reign well, and live in peace.

BEOWULF

Now shall we revel and rejoice!

At Beowulf's signal, servants open a chest filled with gold and  
begin hurling it into the crowd. The people go wild with cheers.

GEATS

Beowulf! Beowulf! Beowulf!

Beowulf gazes at the sight before him: his clan, his kin, his  
people, and revels in the glory of the moment. He turns to  
Hæreth with a smile, which she returns wholeheartedly. He holds  
out his hand and she takes it, standing close at his side.

PRIESTESS (VO)

With the blessing of Odin I bind  
you now, together as one for all  
time --

EXT. FOREST TEMPLE - NIGHT

Beowulf and Hæreth stand before a PRIESTESS at a snow-covered  
altar in a starlit circle of rune-carved standing stones.

PRIESTESS

-- never more to part in this  
world.

The Priestess wraps a strip of embroidered cloth around their  
joined hands.

PRIESTESS

In Freya's name, blessed be.

Beowulf and Hæreth kiss passionately.

PRIESTESS

In these bonds be joyous, in your  
union strong, and may your bodies  
bear the fruit of many sons.

SVEIN

Hear, hear!

Svein stands close beside Hannah. The small gathering of friends and relatives laugh and applaud as they kiss again.

EXT. BARROW FIELDS - NIGHT

The barrow mounds lie silent and still under a blanket of snow, a field of undulating blue. A DARK FIGURE appears, its shadow rising and falling over the mounds as it weaves unsteadily among them. The distorted shadow looks very much like Grendel.

It stops, listening to the DISTANT SOUND OF MERRY REVELING from the nearby hall and village, then moves on.

EXT. EAGLE'S CLIFF - NIGHT

Beyond the barrow field a wide shelf of rock breaks up an expanse of cliff that drops to the sea below. Hot springs bubble out of a stone archway in the rising cliffs behind, sealed by a stone door which lies askew and partly obscured by overgrowth.

The DARK FIGURE stumbles to the hot springs, wet and shivering, hovering over it for warmth. Dark hair hangs matted over his face and his clothes are tattered and burnt.

He moves warily toward the dark archway, pushing foliage aside. Glancing furtively behind as he enters, we see it is Unferth.

EXT. GÖTABORG HALL - RAMPARTS - NIGHT

Beowulf and Hæreth stand together gazing at the starry sky, listening to the SOUNDS OF CELEBRATION drifting up from village below. A shooting star flashes across the sky.

BEOWULF

Dragon fire.

HÆRETH

Perhaps it is an omen.

BEOWULF

Perhaps.

They gaze down at the drunken revels in the streets below.

HÆRETH

These are your children now,  
Beowulf. You must protect them  
with your strength, and nurture  
them with your wisdom.

BEOWULF

Strength enough I may have, but of  
wisdom I am not so certain.

HÆRETH

You are a hero to these people.  
They will look to you for  
guidance, and they will follow  
wherever you lead.

BEOWULF

Hæreth, I have seen the fall of  
five kings in as many months, and  
neither my strength nor my wisdom  
were sufficient to prevent it.

HÆRETH

Yet you have succeeded where those  
before you failed. Always you have  
been a leader of men, Beowulf. Why  
now do you doubt yourself?

BEOWULF

Because the price of my success  
has always been another man's  
suffering. Men may have followed  
me, Hæreth, but I have never led  
them.

HÆRETH

Often we must do for others that  
which we would not do for  
ourselves. Sometimes we must  
suffer that others will not.

She lowers her eyes to avoid the sudden scrutiny of his gaze.

HÆRETH

I had a duty to my people Beowulf.  
For me there was no choice.

BEOWULF

What would you have chosen, had  
you been free to do so?

HÆRETH

Do you not know?

BEOWULF

How can I? You promised to love me  
alone for all time.

HÆRETH

I have not broken that vow.

BEOWULF

Yet you wed another.

HÆRETH

Hygelac was my King. I did as I  
was commanded to do. That is all.

She turns her head to hide the tears, but he lifts her chin.

BEOWULF

There is always a choice. But it  
was I who made the wrong one. I  
should never have left your side.  
I told you I wasn't very wise.

HÆRETH

Perhaps we both made the wrong  
choice. Do you still love me then?

BEOWULF

I'd slay a dragon for you.

They embrace, kissing passionately.

INT. TUNNEL ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Unferth moves slowly through a dark tunnel, lit by flickering  
light from up ahead. His eyes grow brighter as he draws closer,  
until he stops, staring in wonder, bathed in a golden glow.

INT. DRAGON'S LAIR - NIGHT

Before Unferth a large cavern opens out, lit by a pool of  
burning water, its flames reflected in the golden coins and  
sparkling jewels of an enormous treasure hoard.

Atop the hoard a RED DRAGON lies sleeping, its spiked tail curling around the pile. Tendrils of smoke rise from its nostrils and slavering drool drips from its fanged jaws.

Unferth creeps cautiously around the edge of the pool, past the decayed remains of others who came before. He stoops to pick up a jewel-encrusted chalice, but as he does the dragon stirs.

Unferth freezes, eyes wide with fear. Sweat trickles down his mangled face, but he doesn't move an inch.

The dragon shifts its great bulk, snuggling deeper into the hoard. Its tail curls around the pile, whipping past Unferth's head. Slowly, the dragon's breath becomes regular again.

Unferth exhales with relief and turns to go, but trips on a skeleton's extended leg, sprawling headlong with a LOUD CRASH.

A GOLDEN EYE SNAPS OPEN. The dragon raises up to tower twenty feet above the cowering Unferth. It ROARS and SLAMS A CLAWED FOOT into the golden pile, shaking the cavern and sending treasure flying. Unferth scrambles to escape, slipping and sliding in panic on the loose surface. The room ERUPTS IN FLAME.

INT. HÆRETH'S BEDCHAMBER - NIGHT

Beowulf and Hæreth are wrapped in a naked embrace, the candlelight casting a golden glow over their bronze skin.

BEOWULF

So we are together at last,  
after all. I thought never to...

She places a finger on his lips.

HÆRETH

The past is gone, Beowulf. What's  
to come is not known. This moment  
is all that matters.

BEOWULF

I'll love you always, Hæreth. For  
all of time.

HÆRETH

Always and forever.

Flames dance around them, washing over their bodies as they make love, growing in intensity until they are entirely consumed.

EXT. EAGLE'S CLIFF - NIGHT

THE DRAGON BURSTS FROM THE BARROW in an EXPLOSION OF FIRE and STONE, soaring into the night sky on outstretched wings.

INT. HÆRETH'S BEDCHAMBER - NIGHT

The lovers are lying together in a warm embrace, when suddenly the DRAGON'S ROAR echoes through the room. Beowulf leaps up and rushes to the window.

EXT. GÖTABORG VILLAGE - NIGHT

The DRAGON SWOOPS DOWN, engulfing the village in a FIERY RAGE.

People flee their burning homes in panic, only to be attacked by the dragon. Several men toss water on the roaring flames, but are consumed in a bout of fire. A man plunges a burning arm into a barrel of water, only to be devoured in the dragon's jaws.

ARCHERS rush to the battlements, firing in rapid succession as the dragon soars by. But the barrage of arrows only bounce off the scaly hide. Two men are wrenched skyward in the dragon's claws, then dropped into the fiery blaze below.

INT. HÆRETH'S BEDCHAMBER - NIGHT

Beowulf leaps aside as the dragon soars straight at the window, BLASTING FIRE.

EXT. GÖTABORG HALL - NIGHT

Rushing out of the burning hall, sword in hand and half naked, Beowulf can only watch helplessly as the dragon soars away in the night. Hæreth is right behind him, wrapped in fur robes.

EXT. GÖTABORG VILLAGE RUINS - DAWN

Glowing embers merge with the crimson light of dawn as shafts of sunlight break through the black skeleton of the great hall, illuminating the charred ruins of the devastated village.

INT. GÖTABORG HALL RUINS - DAWN

Beowulf stands alone at the burnt remains of a window casement, gazing out. The golden crown rests heavy upon his furrowed brow.

He lifts a hand from the blackened sill, gazing at it silently, then turns to face his assembled men, several of whom are bandaged and burned.

BEOWULF

Summon the blacksmith.

The men glance at one another uncertainly.

EXT. SVEIN'S BLACKSMITH SHOP - DAY

Svein and Wiglaf work at a forge and anvil, crafting an enormous iron-covered shield. Flames flare up around glowing shafts of steel as Wiglaf pumps the bellows. Sweat sizzles and steams as it drips onto the molten metal that Svein beats into shape.

Beowulf stands nearby with Hæreth, their expressions grim.

Hannah brings Svein water to drink and there is a sweet, private moment between them as he thanks her. Wiglaf clears his throat.

HANNAH

Oh, sorry.

She smiles, embarrassed, as she hands the pitcher to Wiglaf. Wiglaf rolls his eyes. Beowulf and Hæreth can't help but laugh.

Svein hefts the huge shield, a masterwork of craftsmanship, dipping it in water, then handing it to Beowulf for inspection.

SVEIN

It's surely too heavy still.

BEOWULF

No, it's fine. But I'll need thicker padding on the brace. And a second strap here should the first one fail.

SVEIN

Aye, my Lord.

Svein turns back to his work.

BEOWULF

It's good work, Svein. Best I've ever seen.

Svein simply nods, an unspoken understanding.

INT. ARMORY - DAY

Wiglaf helps Beowulf don chain-mail and scale leather armor.

BEOWULF

Should anything happen to me,  
promise you'll look after Hæreth.

WIGLAF

Yes, my lord.

BEOWULF

For me, Wiglaf.

WIGLAF

I will. I promise. But what are  
you worried about? It would take  
ten dragons to kill you!

BEOWULF

(dead serious)  
I've never fought a dragon before.

WIGLAF

Me either.

Hæreth steps into the room, her slender elegance contrasting disjunctedly with the harsh brutality of the room's contents. Beowulf motions for Wiglaf to leave them. He bows and exits.

HÆRETH

Must you go?

BEOWULF

You know I must. I have no choice.

HÆRETH

You said there is always a choice.

BEOWULF

Yes, I did. But sometimes it's a  
question of what those choices  
are.

HÆRETH

Send someone else, Beowulf. You  
are King now, you could send an  
army in your stead!

BEOWULF

You know I cannot. It is my duty  
as the King to protect my people.  
This battle is for me alone.

HÆRETH

Haven't you fought enough battles?  
How many demons must you slay?

BEOWULF

However many there are. I must  
fight till I can wield neither  
sword nor shield. It is who I am.

HÆRETH

I remember the day your father  
said that.

BEOWULF

I begged him not to go to Denmark.

HÆRETH

So he took you with him.

BEOWULF

You cannot escape Fate, Hæreth.  
This is what the gods have made me  
and in this matter, if no other, I  
have no choice. You of all people  
must understand that.

HÆRETH

I do, Beowulf, but it doesn't make  
it any easier to bear. I'm afraid.

BEOWULF

So am I. But if I am destined to  
die, then all I can do is face my  
fate bravely, and die with honor.

HÆRETH

And how will your honor protect me  
when you are no longer there? Will  
the memory of your great deeds  
warm me in the cold winter night,  
or hold off enemy invaders? Your  
name means nothing to me, Beowulf.  
Only your life matters.

BEOWULF

Look out the window, Hæreth. The  
enemy is upon us! It is now that I  
must protect you.

HÆRETH

And if you fall, who then will  
lead us?

BEOWULF

Wiglaf shares my blood.

HÆRETH

Wiglaf? He's just a boy! What hope  
has he of leading our people?

BEOWULF

He is stronger than you think.

HÆRETH

Then let him fight the dragon!

BEOWULF

I can't argue with you, Hæreth. My  
strength is in my arms, not my  
tongue, and you are wiser than I.  
But I know what I am, and knowing  
that, I know what I must do.

HÆRETH

Then perhaps you are wiser than I  
after all.

BEOWULF

That I doubt.

HÆRETH

I love you, Beowulf.

BEOWULF

Then believe in me.

HÆRETH

I have never believed in anything  
more.

EXT. SORROW HILL - EVENING

Beowulf marches intently, the iron shield slung across his back.  
Wiglaf walks beside him, followed by Beowulf's remaining men.  
Hrolf brings up the rear, following reluctantly.

The villagers have gathered to watch them go. Svein glances back  
at Hannah, who waves sadly. Ottar glances sidelong at Svein.

EXT. EAGLE'S CLIFF - EVENING

The men round a bluff and halt as the cavern entrance comes into view. The hot springs is now a pool of liquid gold, its surface licked by tongues of flame.

CROWS CAW LOUDLY as they flit from their cliff-side roosts. THREE RAVENS remains perched above, silently watching them.

Near the archway the charred remains of a human figure lie sprawled, its hands still clutching a golden chalice.

Beowulf moves toward it, Wiglaf close by his side. The others, however, stay well back, warily eyeing the cavern entrance.

BEOWULF

Unferth.

WIGLAF

I thought he died at the lake.

BEOWULF

I let him go.

WIGLAF

The Fates were less merciful it seems.

As they gaze down at the charred form, a weak MOAN is heard and a single eye opens, bright white against the blackened skin.

UNFERTH

Don't... go in. Dragon. Run.

Beowulf gazes darkly at the cavern entrance. A LOW RUMBLE emanates from within.

BEOWULF

Too late.

Beowulf draws his sword and backs away from the entrance. Unferth turns a pleading gaze on Wiglaf.

UNFERTH

Please... kill me.

But Unferth is already forgotten as Wiglaf sees in Beowulf a look of apprehension hitherto unseen. The warriors glance nervously at one another. Beowulf has never backed away before.

Wiglaf helps Beowulf unsling the iron shield from his back.

WIGLAF

(quietly, to Beowulf)  
Remember who you are, my Lord.  
Fight well, show courage, and let  
Fate fare how she will.

Beowulf turns to Wiglaf, focused and intent once more.

BEOWULF

My thanks, good Wiglaf, for these  
brave words. Wait for me close by,  
my friend, for soon we shall see  
who the Fates will favor.

Beowulf turns to his men.

BEOWULF

Stand back, men, and behold a  
hero's deed! With this sword will  
I earn what's hidden in this  
earthen hall, or die a hero's  
death -- if this dragon will dare  
come out to face me!

Beowulf dons his CROWNED HELM and turns toward the cave. He  
clashes sword and shield together. The men move further away.

BEOWULF

Wake up dragon, for your doom is  
upon you! Come forth and bow  
before your master!

A GOLDEN EYE glares out menacingly from the darkness. The dragon  
thrusts its head out of the opening and ROARS, SPOUTING FIRE.  
Beowulf ducks behind his shield as FLAMES ENGULF HIM.

The dragon emerges from the cavern, spreading its leathery wings  
to their full thirty foot span as its clawed feet pound into the  
ground. It BELLOWS LOUDLY, baring rows of foot-long fangs.

Several men drop shields and swords, eyes wide with terror.

Beowulf sighs and feigns defeat, dropping his arms to his side  
as he turns back to his men.

BEOWULF

Oy now! I cannot fight this beast!

Wiglaf stares at him with grave concern.

BEOWULF

Why, it's just a hatchling,  
Wiglaf! The wee tot's lost it's  
way!

Wiglaf laughs with relief. Beowulf turns back to the dragon,  
which is eyeing him warily, sizing him up.

BEOWULF

Where's your mother whelp? Come  
out here and play! I'll teach you  
a new game!

The DRAGON ROARS and pounds the ground, SMASHING UNFERTH FLAT as  
it comes forward, BILLOWING FIRE.

Beowulf lunges under the beast, slashing a great gap in one of  
its outstretched wings as he does.

The DRAGON HOWLS WITH RAGE, knocking Beowulf aside with a clawed  
wing, sending him sprawling into the rocky cliff.

Beowulf rolls out of the way just as the dragon's head slams  
into the stone mere inches away. He bellows with fury, bringing  
his sword down with all his might on the serpent's snout --

THE BLADE SHATTERS ON IMPACT. Beowulf stares at the hilt.

BEOWULF

Curse Weland's forge!

SVEIN, watching from nearby, is dumbfounded.

SVEIN

He broke it! He broke his father's  
sword.

OTTAR

We're doomed.

A BOUT OF FLAME chars Beowulf's exposed hand and he screams in  
agony. A clawed wing slams him into stone, talons tearing flesh.  
The dragon ENGULFS HIM IN FLAME, but he shields himself in the  
nick of time, his back to the wall, trapped.

WIGLAF draws his sword and turns to face the cowering warriors,  
who have moved further back.

WIGLAF

Now is the time to remember our oaths, men! Remember how we swore to stand by our lord when he had need of us! That time is now at hand, for see, his need is hard upon him!

BEOWULF endures the heat of the fiery onslaught, grimacing with pain as sweat pours down his face. Blood seeps from several wounds, and his sword arm is badly burned.

THE IRON SHIELD begins to soften and melt, dripping molten metal onto his leg and shoulder. Beowulf screams in agony.

THE WARRIORS hedge, torn between duty and certain death.

HROLF

We cannot win this battle! No man can slay a dragon, only the gods can do that!

WIGLAF

Little does that matter, Hrolf. All that matters is that we live well and die with honor.

HROLF

I would rather live in exile than die in vain!

Hrolf turns and flees. Svein and Ottar are conflicted.

SVEIN

I swore to look after Hannah.

OTTAR

I only have one arm!

Wiglaf's eyes go dark as he turns back to the battle.

BEOWULF slams his molten shield into the dragon's face. The DRAGON ROARS as Beowulf leaps atop its head, clinging to the spines protruding from the back of its skull.

THE DRAGON rears its head high above the ground, BELLOWING with rage. FLAMES ERUPT as the dragon shakes its head from side to side, trying to dislodge its assailant. It stamps the ground. Rocks fall all around as the EARTH CRACKS beneath its feet.

With every ounce of strength he has, Beowulf rips one of the horned spines from the dragon's skull. THE BEAST WAILS IN AGONY as Beowulf plunges the spike into one of its eyes.

THE DRAGON FLAILS WILDLY, wings fanning flame. BEOWULF FALLS, but clutches onto the stump protruding from the creature's eye. He swings wildly, feet dangling near the monster's mouth.

A razor-sharp talon pierces through Beowulf's shoulder as a clawed wing engulfs him, tearing him away.

The dragon brings Beowulf level with its good eye, staring at its prey menacingly. The CRUNCH OF BREAKING BONE is heard.

THE DRAGON SUDDENLY HOWLS WITH PAIN, loosening its grip. Beowulf falls to the ground beside Wiglaf. The dragon rises to its full height, WAILING, Wiglaf's sword hilt protruding from its belly.

WIGLAF'S WOODEN SHIELD DISINTEGRATES as he is engulfed in flame. He screams in agony and rolls from the fire, singed, but alive. THE DRAGON FIRE follows close behind as he frantically flees.

Beowulf struggles to his feet. His left arm is shattered and the ends of broken bone protrude from a gaping shoulder wound.

Reaching up with his good arm, he wrenches Wiglaf's sword free, and with his last remaining strength swings the blade, slicing open the dragon's exposed underbelly.

Wiglaf's eyes go wide as the serpent's head bears down on him, ROARING -- and CRASHES to the ground right in front of him.

Beowulf stumbles back against the rock wall and slowly sinks to the ground, leaving a bright red streak of blood.

Wiglaf rushes to Beowulf's side. He fights back tears as he removes Beowulf's helmet. Beowulf gazes sidelong at Wiglaf, grimacing through the pain.

BEOWULF

I was wondering when you'd show  
up.

WIGLAF

Victory is yours, my King! You  
have slain the Wûrm.

THE COWARDLY WARRIORS peer tentatively from their retreat around the corner of the bluff, their eyes filled with guilt and grief.

Wiglaf's lip trembles as he tries to stay brave.

WIGLAF

What a song the Harper shall sing  
this night! We will sing of  
Beowulf, the slayer of dragons!

BEOWULF

I should like to hear that song.

WIGLAF

You shall hear it, my Lord, for it  
shall be sung in the Hall of  
Heroes unto the end of days.

BEOWULF

Hæreth was right. My days of joy  
in this world have ended. I have  
fought my last battle. Death has  
found me at last.

WIGLAF

It was a good battle, my Lord. A  
more fitting end for such a man  
could not be found. You have won  
fame beyond man's skill to tell.

BEOWULF

Long would I have ruled the Geats,  
my friend, and lived in peace. But  
my days have gone as Fate would  
have them.

Beowulf grimaces with pain, grasping for Wiglaf's shoulder.

BEOWULF

Oy! I don't feel so good, Wiglaf!

WIGLAF

I'm right here, my Lord.

BEOWULF

Ah, Wiglaf! A better friend I  
could not want. You alone have  
stood by me where others fled when  
courage failed. In faith, you are  
the true dragon-slayer!

WIGLAF

Nay, Lord, I have only done as any  
good man must: follow where the  
better man leads, and hope to  
share in his good fortunes.

BEOWULF

Aye, and a share of that fortune  
you shall have, my brave friend.

With his last strength Beowulf lifts his crowned helm -- the  
symbol of his power -- and hands it to Wiglaf.

BEOWULF

You're the last of my kin, Wiglaf.  
Take what I leave... lead our  
people. My day is done...

Beowulf gazes up at the sky for the last time. The stars have  
come out, and the moon is just cresting the horizon.

BEOWULF

The hero now must sleep...  
The harp falls silent...  
All hope is lost...

INTERCUT - BEOWULF'S FINAL VISION

Before Beowulf a radiant Hæreth stands, angelic and ethereal.

HÆRETH

Not all hope. Such shall remain so  
long as there are men left to tell  
your tale. The harps yet may sing.

Behind Hæreth, the THREE RAVENS swoop slowly down, TRANSFORMING  
into THE THREE NORNS, the Sisters of Fate: beautiful maidens  
hovering in air, beckoning to him.

BEOWULF

Fate leads me on... and I must  
follow.

BACK TO SCENE

Beowulf stares blindly at nothing. Wiglaf bows his head and  
weeps. Wiglaf, of course, has seen none of this.

THE COWARDLY WARRIORS emerge slowly, gathering around tentatively. Wiglaf glares at them over his shoulder, his eyes cold and stern. He stands to face them.

WIGLAF

Easily now can any man say that he  
who gave you this war gear threw  
it utterly away, for little did it  
avail him when the battle came.

The warriors hang their heads in disgrace.

WIGLAF

But now is the giving of treasures  
over for us. Now is our time of  
war truly at hand, when the death  
of our Protector becomes known.

EXT. SORROW HILL - TWILIGHT

A FUNERAL PROCESSION progresses slowly through the barrow field, bearing Beowulf's body, dressed in golden armor. Hæreth walks behind the bier, her face covered. Wiglaf is at her side. A long line of MOURNERS trails behind, weaving into the distance.

WIGLAF (VO)

In a thousand lands will we be  
scattered. Spears shall be our  
walking sticks; our shields must  
protect us from the rain. Dark  
dawns will greet us, and no harps  
shall sing us to our rest.

EXT. EAGLE'S CLIFF - SUNSET

On the edge of the cliff overlooking the sea BOWULF'S PYRE has been built: a funeral ship to bear him on his final voyage. Its hull is filled with the DRAGON'S TREASURE. The gangplank is drawn out and TORCH-BEARERS stand on either side.

WIGLAF (VO)

Now must we sing the death knell,  
for our nation has fallen with our  
King. The dragon has slain us all.

Wiglaf and Hæreth stop before the ship as Beowulf's body is carried aboard and placed amidships atop a high dais.

The hushed crowd gathers around as Hæreth steps forward, taking a burning torch in hand.

HÆRETH

Hear me, Odin! Hear me, Frigg!  
 Hear me, O Goddess of the Night!  
 Hold now these golden gifts, now  
 that men may not. No one now  
 remains to lift these silver  
 swords, nor burnish bright the  
 battle-mask. The hero sleeps who  
 would wear these shirts of steel.  
 Never more will he look upon this  
 world. Take back to your bosom  
 this treasure of kings. Embrace  
 once more this fragile flesh. For  
 at the last we all return again to  
 you.

Tears streak her cheeks as she thrusts the torch into the kindling. The sun sets on Geatland as flames engulf the ship.

HÆRETH

Sleep well, Beowulf, best of men.  
 Of Kings you were the kindest, of  
 men most courteous, and to your  
 people the proudest and most  
 deserving of fame.

Hæreth slowly climbs the gangplank and walks into the flames. The Raven flits by, following the plume of smoke up into darkness.

FADE OUT

THE END