

BEOWULF

A
Screenplay by
R. Scot Johns

Adapted from the Anonymous
10th Century Old English poem



FADE IN:

FLAMES illuminate the grim face of a red-haired VIKING WARRIOR. SOUNDS OF BATTLE echo around him.

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. We are --

INT. HEOROT, A VIKING MEAD-HALL - NIGHT

A FIGURE flies past and we hear the CRASH of splintered wood. EDGTHEOW, our grim warrior, bellows with laughter, spewing gobbets of meat.

EDGTHEOW

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

ÆSCHERE, a dark-haired Dane, lies sprawling amongst the shattered remains of a wooden table, eyeing Edgtheow coldly.

ÆSCHERE

Your mother beat you, didn't she?

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

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

Edgtheow gets Æschere in a headlock.

ÆSCHERE

Gods, Edgtheow, you fight like my wife!

EDGTHEOW

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

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

AT A NEARBY TABLE

Two young warriors -- UNFERTH and YRMENLAF -- arm-wrestle between sharp daggers. Beads of sweat drip onto clenched fists.

Æschere and Edgtheow -- still wrestling -- stumble into Unferth, who howls with pain as a dagger stabs into 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.

KING HROTHGAR watches with amusement from the High Table.

HROTHGAR

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

A powerful warlord, Hrothgar wears his captured wealth for all to see. A crown of golden antlers crown his rugged features.

Beside him, young QUEEN WEALTHEOW tends to rambunctious 7 and 8 year-old sons and a 6-year-old daughter. On the King's right his 10-year-old nephew HROTHULF sulks morosely.

Unferth sits down reluctantly, 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!

THE ENTRY DOORS burst inward with a THUNDEROUS CRASH.

Looming in the doorway is the ogre GRENDEL. Eyes burn fiery red
beneath stringy hair. Sharp teeth protrude from slavering jaws.

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 before the High Table. 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 out with clawed hands, splashing the walls red. Blood oozes from its gaping maw as the beast rips into its prey.

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

HROTHGAR

Hrothulf! No!!!

Edgtheow steps into view between them, sword raised. Grendel ROARS defiance as the blade arcs downward -- and CLANGS as it hits home, notching the blade.

The Danes stare in disbelief as Grendel slaps the blade from Edgtheow's hands and grabs him by the throat. 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 LONG-SHIP 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.

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 Hondscio a frown.

HONDSCIO

I mean nothing by it, my Lord.
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

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 older brother HROLF tends to
the rigging. OTTAR, a gruff bear of a man with full plaited
beard at 25, sits atop a skin-drum carving a piece of wood into
a toy ogre. WIGLAF (wee-laugh), a strawberry-blonde half-Swede,
and the youngest aboard at 17, gathers the shavings into a bag.

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.

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. I was with
him 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

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

You yourself taught me that without fear there is no need of courage.

BEOWULF

Then I no longer have need of it.

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

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

HONDSCIO

Women are not that essential, 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--

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.

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 cannot 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. Beowulf's hand moves
to the silver swan brooch pinning his cloak.

EXT. GEATLAND HARBOR - DAY - FLASHBACK

A crowd has gathered in a thriving seaport to bid Beowulf and
his men farewell. Beowulf's ship sits ready to sail nearby.

Before Beowulf stands HÆRETH, her wine-red curls crowned by an
ornate silver filet. She removes the swan brooch from her cloak,
holding it out to Beowulf. 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.

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 the brooch skittering across the deck.

THE RAVEN CRIES OUT from atop the mast as --

A SEA SERPENT rises from the water in front of the ship, spiked fins flaring. Its long curving neck and gaping mouth mirror the dragon's head prow, dwarfing it many times over.

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, as 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. All eyes turn to the prow as --

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.

BEOWULF

Svein! Sword!

Svein heaves the sword, sending it flying end over end --

-- mere inches past Beowulf's head -- to sink deep in the Serpent's neck. Beowulf shoots a look of surprise at Svein, who grimaces a comic "sorry!"

HROLF

Nice toss, Thor.

Beowulf leaps atop the rail, grasping for the sword hilt, and draws the blade free. The beast screams with rage, spewing blood and sea-water. Beowulf screams back as --

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, severing the beast's neck.

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

SVEIN

Wiglaf!

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

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

WIGLAF

Blech! Eaten by a Serpent.

The men laugh with relief as 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!

Much laughter ensues as they haul Ottar in.

BACK ON THE SHIP

Beowulf surveys the damage.

BEOWULF

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

Hondscio tosses Beowulf the swan brooch with a meaningful glare before turning to check 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 to a faint outline of land on the horizon ahead.
Hondscio frowns.

EXT. DANISH FJORD - DAY

The men gaze about uneasily as the ship is rowed slowly up a misty fjord to the STEADY BEAT of Ottar's drum.

EXT. DANISH HARBOR - DAY

The oars are banked as the ship glides into a dank harbor beneath rocky bluffs shrouded in a thick geothermal haze.

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

FROM ATOP THE BLUFF

We look down on the Geats as they unload their war-gear.

FROM THE HARBOR BELOW

A DARK SHAPE moves slowly down the bluff. The Geats draw weapons and form a shield wall before the ship as --

A MOUNTED HARBOR-GUARD emerges from the mist, bearing a bannered spear emblazoned with the crest of the Antlered Stag. He is young, his face scarred with claw marks upon one cheek.

HARBOR-GUARD

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 notes 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.

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 Edgtheow, 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 scrutinizes the men somberly.

WULFGAR

Grendel we have named the beast,
for it grinds men's bones in its
greedy teeth. 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.

EXT. INLAND ROAD - DAY

The Geats march single-file, following Wulfgar inland along an
overgrown dirt track. EERIE SOUNDS emerge from the forest.

EXT. HEOROT VALLEY - DAY

Cresting a rise, they stop short as the golden hall of Heorot
comes into view, rising amidst a sprawling Norse village.

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. A pair of
golden antlers crown the gable above the double entry doors.

Beyond the village a field of barrow-mounds and standing stones
rise into craggy moorlands.

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, overgrown with vines.

SVEIN

Seems pleasant enough.

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.

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!

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.

INT. HEOROT - DAY

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 Edgtheow! 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 as he sees a
DARK FIGURE silhouetted in the doorway--

Beowulf enters, looking not unlike Grendel.

BEOWULF

Hail mighty Hrothgar, health ever
keep you. I am Beowulf, son of
Edgtheow. 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.

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.

HROTHGAR

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

EXT. GEATLAND HARBOR - DAY

An imposing fortress sits atop a bluff overlooking the sea.
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 cliffs. Beyond them, Sorrow
Hill rises, crowned with a ring of standing stones.

ON THE FORTRESS RAMPARTS

HÆRETH stands gazing out to sea. HANNAH, pregnant wife of
Hondscio, paces nervously beside her.

HANNAH

Do you think they'll be back?

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.

EXT. UPSALA - DAY

An immense military compound comprised of circular earthworks crowned with heavy timber palisades. Primitive, but powerful.

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 the albino KING ONGENTHEOW, a hardened warrior 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.

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

Take that Danish bitch-wife of yours and pay her kin a visit. Do what you must, and do it soon. Beowulf must not return.

ONELA

Yes, father.

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.

Among the Councilmen is WEOHSTAN, a 35-year-old red-haired Geat, father to Wiglaf. He frowns and stares at the floor.

INT. HEOROT - DAY

The hall is alive with activity as the Danes welcome the Geats.

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.

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? What brought the
ogre?

HROTHGAR

We grew too great, perhaps. In my
pride I built this hall, that it
might stand after I had fallen.
But Fate fares ever as it must.

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.

WEALTHÉOW enters through a rear door. At 36, her regal bearing
is tinged now with a deep melancholy. Following behind are the
three boys, now stern young men.

HROTHGAR

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

WEALTHÉOW

Greetings, Beowulf, and welcome.

BEOWULF

Greetings, good Lady.

WEALTHÉOW

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.

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.

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 drink to Beowulf.

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?

UNFERTH

What about the story of Beowulf's
Swimming Contest?

The hall falls silent as Unferth rises, swaying unsteadily.

UNFERTH

So you claim to be the mighty
Beowulf, of whom we all have
heard. 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
he swam 300 leagues, they say, to
his home in far off Norway. Where
were you then, mighty swimmer?
Clinging to a sodden log like some
reluctant lemming?

SVEIN, at a nearby table, stretches his legs, tripping Unferth,
who stumbles into the table, sending food flying. Unferth looks
up into Svein's scowling face, then at the dagger in Svein's
hand. With a sneer, Unferth drains Svein's cup in a single gulp,
slams the cup down, and 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!
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 Beowulf grips him by
the throat, lifting him off his feet.

BEOWULF

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.

Beowulf turns to address the hall.

BEOWULF

It is true that Breca swam the
furthest, for a mighty sea-farer
he has always been. But I stayed
afloat the longer, and fought a
battle in the open sea such as few
have done before or since.

On the wall behind Beowulf, a TAPESTRY of an ocean scene begins
to swirl and move as we PUSH IN on --

EXT. OPEN SEA - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

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. Beowulf
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. 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 wrenches an arm free and draws his sword, stabbing it into
the eye. With a GURGLING WAIL the tentacles release their grip.

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 first rays of dawn reflect blood-red upon a shore 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.

INT. HEOROT - BACK TO PRESENT

BEOWULF

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

The audience applauds raucously.

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. But Beowulf
simply grips Unferth's sword hand 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.

Unferth's sword CLATTERS to the floor as he crumples to his knees. Hrothgar comes forward to stand protectively over him.

HROTHGAR

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

Unferth cowers behind Hrothgar, glaring. Beowulf holds his gaze.

BEOWULF

It was dark that day. The clouds were heavy with the scent of rain, the wind was stiff. A shot could easily go astray in such a breeze.

Unferth's eyes go wide as comprehension dawns.

HROTHGAR

I called an end to the hunt. We were heading home.

EXT. OPEN MEADOW - DAY - FLASHBACK

A party of hunters ride slowly through light rain. Among them is YOUNG BEOWULF, riding a pony beside EDGTHEOW. YOUNG UNFERTH is prodded by older brother ULRIK as they go. Unferth isn't amused. Hooded cloaks are drawn close as the rain thickens. HROTHGAR, in the lead, signals for the men to head home. The pace quickens.

BEOWULF (VO)

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

Beowulf watches from the rear as Unferth takes aim on a startled stag. Ulrik nudges Unferth just as the shot is loosed, sending the arrow wide. Unferth protests, but Ulrik plays the innocent.

INT. HEOROT - BACK TO PRESENT

Beowulf flicks Unferth's sword up into his hand.

BEOWULF

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

EXT. OPEN MEADOW - FLASHBACK CONTINUED

Young Beowulf can just see Unferth from behind his father as Ulrik 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.

Unferth's eyes go dark as he let the arrow fly.

INT. HEOROT - BACK TO PRESENT

BEOWULF

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

HROTHGAR

Is this true, Unferth?

UNFERTH

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
Unferth, death is better for any
man than a shameful life.

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 many a long year.

HROTHGAR

Long indeed has been our sorrow.
How cares do burden men, and make
us old before our time.

WEALTHÉOW

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

Beowulf glances about at the rag-tag assemblage.

WEALTHÉOW

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.

WEALTHÉOW

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.

Wealthéow raises her chalice in salute and drinks.

BÉOWULF

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 as the crowd cheers our heroes.

INT. HÆRETH'S BEDCHAMBER - DAY

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

BOY'S VOICE (OS)

Go away!

HEARDRED, 14, son of King Hygelac by his first wife, enters, followed by a GUARD, who quickly turns away upon seeing Hæreth.

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

Then how can one guard protect me?

HÆRETH

He may not be able to. But this man will give his life for you if he must.

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.

WIGLAF throws daggers at a shield with HRETHRIC and HROTHMUND as BEOWULF, HONDSCIO, WULFGAR, ÆSCHERE and YRMENLAF look on.

HRETHRIC

So you're a Swede then?

WIGLAF

Half-Swede, actually. My father
Weohstan was Edgtheow'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 Yrsa, our
aunt. 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

My father had taken service with
Ongentheow before the feud began,
so 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 - A DARKENED CORNER - LATE DAY

UNFERTH nurses his bound hand as HROTHULF sits down beside him.

HROTHULF

What do we do about him?

UNFERTH

Let Grendel take care of it.

HROTHULF

(indicating royal family)
And when do we take care of them?

UNFERTH

Soon enough.

HROTHULF

Not soon enough for my liking.

EXT. DANISH MOORLANDS - DUSK

A DARK FIGURE cowers in the encroaching shadows, cringing at the
distant sounds of MUSIC & MERRIMENT. RED EYES BURN with hatred.
The figure moves off across the twilit mere -- towards the hall.

EXT. GEATLAND - RAVEN'S MEADOW - DUSK

A sea of tents surround a central pavilion guarded by a dozen warriors. HYGELAC approaches, followed by HALDAR and WONRED.

INT. HYGELAC'S PAVILION

QUEEN ELAN, wife of King Ongentheow, is tied to the central tent-post. Her blond hair is disheveled, her clothing torn.

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 an over-inflated sense of your own importance?

HYGELAC

Wrong!

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 is clearly surprised by this revelation.

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 with
great pleasure I am told.

Elan looks him straight in the eye.

ELAN

Then you must do as honor demands.

INT. HEOROT - DUSK

UNFERTH approaches HROTHGAR, bending close to speak softly.

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.

HROTHGAR

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

WEALTHÉOW

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

As the hall begins to empty, Hrethric and Hrothmund approach Wiglaf. Hrethric holds out a silver Thor's Hammer pendant 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 reluctantly depart.

Wulfgar pauses momentarily in the doorway, places a fistful hand to his breast, then pulls the doors shut with an ECHOING THUD.

Hondscio secures the doors, checking the reinforcements.

BEOWULF

Unbar the door, Hondscio. The
Danes need not repair it yet
again. Neither bolt nor bar will
keep our feasting friend from
Hrothgar's hall this night. We
came to do battle with the beast,
and battle we shall have.

OTTAR

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

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.

ALL but Hondscio give a rousing war-cry.

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 her cheek -- and is gone.

INT. HEOROT - NIGHT

Furs are laid on table and bench as the men prepare for battle, each in their own way. This is that moment.

SVEIN lays out an array of weaponry, checking each carefully. WIGLAF utters a silent prayer, clutching Thor's Hammer. HROLF and EOFOR huddle against a wall as far from the doorway as possible. OTTAR wriggles around atop a table, finding 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 protect me now.

The men glance furtively their way. 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 do.

BEOWULF

Only fame is lasting, Hondscio.

He gazes at the swan brooch in his hand.

BEOWULF

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. 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, we follow Beowulf's gaze out the window.

EXT. DANISH MOORS - NIGHT

Tendrils of mist weave among the rock and heather, forming
GHOSTLY FIGURES in the moonlight. The wispy silhouette of HÆRETH
swirls around a translucent BEOWULF in an intimate embrace.

YOUNG HÆRETH (VO)

I will love you always and
forever...

A BLACK FIGURE solidifies in the darkness, rending the figures
into tattered shreds. RED EYES BURN through the darkness.

EXT. GÖTABORG FORTRESS GATES - NIGHT

TWO GUARDS stand post at the fortress 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.

EXT. HEOROT VALLEY - NIGHT - GRENDEL'S POV

The Golden Hall shimmers in moonlight. GRENDEL'S SHADOW rises slowly up the stone steps, coming to rest on the oaken doors.

EXT. GÖTABORG FORTRESS GATES - NIGHT

A SHADOW FALLS over the two Guards as they doze at their posts.

INT. HEOROT - NIGHT

BEOWULF sits at the open window, eyes closed. THE RAVEN flits in to land on a nearby casement. It eyes Beowulf quizzically as --

INT. BEOWULF'S HOUSE - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

A DOOR CRASHES OPEN -- YOUNG BEOWULF and YOUNG HONDSCIO burst through. At a central table Beowulf's mother HÆLENA sits crying amidst a small gathering, foremost among whom is KING HROTHGAR.

YOUNG BEOWULF

Uncle! Mother, what's wrong?

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, staring straight at the Raven.

HYGELAC (VO)

-- if you die well.

THE RAVEN SQUAWKS LOUDLY as the entry doors CRASH OPEN to reveal GRENDEL. The Geats start awake, weapons drawn instantly.

SVEIN

Attack, men! Attack!

HONDSCIO rolls aside 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.

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!

WAR-HORNS BLARE amidst the SCREAMS OF DYING MEN. All is chaos as the Swedish cavalry wreaks havoc on the overwhelmed Geats.

INT. HEOROT - NIGHT

A BARRAGE OF ARROWS bounce off Grendel's leathery hide. The Ogre turns to see Beowulf closing in. Grendel lifts Hondscio by the head, claws gripped around his skull. TEARS OF BLOOD seep from Hondscio's eyes. His mouth moves, but no sound emerges.

Beowulf roars and lunges, smashing the Ogre hard against stone. CRACKING BONE is heard. GRENDEL HOWLS with pain.

INT. HROTHGAR'S BEDCHAMBER - NIGHT

HROTHGAR and WEALTHEOW start awake at the sound of GRENDEL'S WAIL. They draw the covers up, eyeing the barred door nervously.

INT. HEOROT - NIGHT

BEOWULF sails through the air, crashing down onto a table where OTTAR lies sleeping soundly. Ottar yawns and stretches.

OTTAR

Good morning.

His eyes 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. GRENDEL swats him aside like a fly, sending him CRASHING into a pillar, which CRACKS and buckles under the weight.

OTTAR swings an axe, hitting Grendel square in the chest. The Ogre turns on him, spewing fury, and lifts him off his feet in a single paw. Ottar flails wildly. Grendel's jaws open wide as --

Something hits Grendel in the head. The Ogre turns as WIGLAF sends a second mutton-bone flying -- CRACK! Right on the nose. The Ogre shakes its head and drops Ottar, turning on Wiglaf.

BEOWULF steps into view between them. GRENDEL ROARS and lunges.

Beowulf deftly sidesteps, slamming both fists against the Ogre's head as it passes. The beast sprawls across the stone floor 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. 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.

SWORDS CLASH in a SHOWER OF SPARKS, sending both men reeling to the ground. They're on their feet again in an instant, circling.

ONGENTHEOW

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

HYGELAC

She would come with me of her own free will.

ONGENTHEOW

Aye, is that so now?

ELAN

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

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, dragging Elan up behind him 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 center of the fire-pit, ENGULFED IN FLAMES. BEOWULF stands his ground as the Ogre comes forward, unscathed.

EOFOR'S sword CLATTERS to the floor as he and HROLF back away.

HROLF

Demon of Hel!

GRENDEL ROARS and swings an arm. Beowulf ducks and punches the beast hard in the face. Grendel swings the other arm. Beowulf ducks, then leaps onto Grendel's exposed back.

Beowulf locks his arms under Grendel's, wrenching them back with all his might. GRENDEL HOWLS, lurching about madly, 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 the shoulder. A LOUD CRACK is heard as Beowulf wrenches an arm free. The manic creature lurches about, SPEWING BLACK BLOOD.

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 into a blood-spattered wall.

Grendel cowers in a corner. Everywhere he turns is the face of a grim warrior, closing in. 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, the Ogre crashes through the window behind, shattering wood and stone, and flees into the night.

EXT. DANISH MOORLANDS - NIGHT

GRENDEL'S WAIL ECHOES through the mist-shrouded vale. Amidst the shadows TWO GREEN EYES spin suddenly into view.

INT. HEOROT - NIGHT

Beowulf rushes to Hondscio's side. Hondscio's face is a mass of bloody gashes. He smiles weakly as Beowulf cradles his head.

HONDSCIO

You... live.

BEOWULF

Aye, though I had not thought to.

HONDSCIO

I die, though I had not--

Hondscio coughs 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 and his men ride hard back the way they came, bearing a tied and mounted QUEEN HÆRETH with them.

EXT. HEOROT - DAY

HROTHGAR and his men approach the hall cautiously. UNFERTH sneers with satisfaction as they see the doors hanging askew.

INT. HEOROT - DAY

As the Danes warily enter, the aftermath of battle is revealed.

Beowulf lies face down on a tabletop in the center of the ravaged 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!

WULFGAR

Your name shall echo through every
land unto the world's end.

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 as he slinks 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!

(to Unferth)

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.

HROTHGAR

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

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.

YRMENLAF

I will go, my Lord.

HROTHGAR

Yrmenlaf. Good. 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?

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, my Lord.

WONRED

Of course, my Lord. Never.

ELAN

Then I will.

(all eyes turn to her)

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, my Lady.

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

You will do as I command you to do. 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 stare at the blade protruding 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.

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, following a blood-spattered trail upward into an ever more desolate landscape.

EXT. HERO'S HILL - DAY

HROLF and EOFOR direct the construction of Hondscio's tomb as the RAVEN watches from atop a nearby stone. The bird flits from its perch, sweeping down the grassy knoll into --

EXT. HEOROT VILLAGE SQUARE - DAY

THE RAVEN lands atop the hall, watching the bustling activity below as TRAVELERS arrive from far and wide to witness a legend.

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 Freawaru stranded in the wagon. WULFGAR comes forward, lifting Freawaru down. They embrace.

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 repair the damaged 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 Beowulf. 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.

WEALTHEOW

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. Good Beowulf,
attend!

The implied criticism is not lost on Ingeld.

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, my 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.

BÉOWULF

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

INGELD

Ostro-Goths, actually. From south
across the sea.

BÉOWULF

Fierce fighters I have heard, and
greatly feared.

WULFGAR

New arrivals, my Lord!

Beowulf stops dead as he turns to see --

INTERCUT - THE BATTLE OF SORROW HILL - SEQUENCE OF IMAGES

YOUNG ONELA SCREAMS into camera. SWORDS CLASH like thunder.
ARROWS slam into flesh. BLOOD SPLATTERS as steel hits skull.
LIGHTNING FLASHES in a stormy sky --

EXT. GÖTABORG HARBOR BLUFF - DUSK - FLASHBACK

YOUNG BEOWULF and YOUNG HÆRETH sit atop a bluff watching a red sun sink beneath roiling storm clouds. The harbor below is bustling with activity as ships load and unload their cargo.

YOUNG HÆRETH

I am sorry about your father.

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

WAR-HORNS WAIL. HALDAR cries out from the nearest tower.

HALDAR

To arms! The enemy is upon us!

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.

UP ON THE BLUFF

A RAVEN CAWS from atop Sorrow Hill. Beowulf and Hæreth turn to see a hoard of Swedes emerging from the forest behind, led by ONGENTHEOW, ONELA and OTHERE. No scars yet mar their faces.

YOUNG BEOWULF

Swedes.

YOUNG HÆRETH

Run, Beowulf! Run!

Hæreth starts to flee, but stops as she glances back. 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!

Beowulf draws his father's sword, fumbling with the unfamiliar weapon as Ongentheow closes in. 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, boy?

OTHERE

The strong survive.

ONELA

The weak perish.

ONGENTHEOW

That is what your father said to me when he killed my father. At least he knew how to use a sword.

Ongentheow sees Hæreth for the first time. He releases Beowulf.

ONGENTHEOW

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

Othere and Onela close in on Beowulf as Ongentheow moves menacingly towards Hæreth. She whips out a dagger, gashing his cheek. He backhands her, sending her reeling.

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 Beowulf can do to stay alive.

SVEIN rushes in, taking on Othere, evening the odds.

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. Beowulf's sword plummets over the edge --

DOWN IN THE HARBOR

OTTAR, fighting a Swede, looks up in surprise as Beowulf's sword stabs into the Swede's chest. The Swede looks surprised 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.

EXT. HEOROT VILLAGE SQUARE - 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.

ONELA

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

HROTHGAR

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.

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 did not
kill you when I had the chance.

HROTHULF (OS)

Mother!

Yrsa smiles sadly as Hrothulf rushes up to her.

HROTHULF

Have you come to stay awhile?

YRSA

As long as I may.

HROTHGAR

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

Beowulf bows as his men try to work out this quirk of 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 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

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 shepherd's son will.

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.

BEOWULF

No man can escape his Fate, let him try who will. For at the last we all must come to the end of our days, and wanting to stay, yet we must go.

Beowulf catches a FLEETING GLIMPSE OF EDGTHEOW among the crowd. Seconds later, the RAVEN flits by.

BEOWULF

These words my father said to me.
Let him who may do great deeds
before the end. For that is our
best memorial when we must depart
forever from this world. The
greatest of deeds has Hondscio
done. Forever will he live in the
lives of those he leaves behind.

Beowulf gazes down at his fallen friend.

BEOWULF

Farewell, fair friend. We shall
meet again.

The Raven watches as Hondscio's body is borne into the barrow.

EXT. HEOROT VALLEY - DUSK

A TORCH-LIT PROCESSION of mourners file slowly down the hill.

EXT. TROLL MERE - DUSK

The bloody track ends at the edge of a SWAMPY MERE stretching
between towering cliffs. Across the mere dim 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 from the
mere. Æschere turns to see UNFERTH aiming an arrow at him --

THE ARROW WHIZZES past Æschere's head to sink in the neck of a
fanged SEA-SNAKE rearing up out of the water behind.

ÆSCHERE

My thanks, Unferth.

The men dismount and trudge into the fen on foot.

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.

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 crowd bursts into laughter as Svein realizes his sleeve is on fire.

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 them comically.

EXT. TROLL CAVE - NIGHT

At the far end of the fen a cavern opening is framed by an ARCHWAY OF HUMAN BONES. FIRELIGHT FLICKERS from within.

INT. TROLL CAVE

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

A THRONE OF SHIELDS AND RUSTY ARMOR rises before a blazing fire. Crouching before it 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 GREEN EYES on them.

EXT. HEOROT - NIGHT

BEOWULF bares his "claws" as he recounts the Grendel fight.

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 at ÆSCHERE, biting into his shoulder as they crash to the floor. Æschere reaches for a dagger protruding from the eye-socket of a skull, and rams it into the Hag's side.

The Troll-Hag rolls aside just as YRMENLAF'S spear slams down, piercing an empty rib-cage. With inhuman agility the Hag leaps to and fro, dodging blows, but ÆSCHERE and YRMENLAF press her back, cutting off escape. GREEN BLOOD oozes from her side.

EXT. HEOROT - NIGHT

BEOWULF lunges at OTTAR, who does his best Grendel impression as he is chased 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! OWWW!!!

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 gazes 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 Hag, who SHRIEKS and WAILS, tearing flesh.

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. The Troll-Hag glances up.

INT. HEOROT - NIGHT

HROLF and EOFOR sit in a corner apart from the crowd.

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'd only have ended up like him.

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 SERVANTS enter, presenting each of
the Geats with golden war-helms and chests of gold and jewels.

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. 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
was.

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 grows distant. 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 forest. Through the trees to the east hundreds of CAMPFIRES 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

Four hours, maybe five.

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

We should burn them out.

ONGENTHEOW

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

He moves off towards the pavilion. WEOHSTAN watches him go.

INT. HEOROT - NIGHT

WEALTHEOW stands before HROTHGAR, bearing a silver chalice.

WEALTHEOW

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

Hrothgar takes the cup, but Wealtheow does not let go.

WEALTHEOW

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.

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.
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 a goose carcass on a platter in front of him. Onela grins.

INT. ONGENTHEOW'S TENT - NIGHT

ONGENTHEOW enters with a flourish, staring lustily at the captive HÆRETH. Her eyes go wide as she realizes his intent. He kisses her. She spits in his face. He slaps her. She screams. He puts a hand over her mouth and fumbles with his trousers.

Hæreth knees Ongentheow in the crotch, dropping him. A second blow connects with his nose. Ongentheow glares up at her.

ONGENTHEOW

You'll pay for that, wench.

HÆRETH

That's what you said last time.

Hæreth wrenches hard on the pole and the tent collapses.

EXT. ONGENTHEOW'S TENT - NIGHT

The tent goes up in flames, set alight by fallen torches. The Swedes frantically try to douse them as HÆRETH rolls out from under the edge, only to be captured by OTHERE. ONGENTHEOW cuts his way free with his sword, emerging sooty and singed.

ONGENTHEOW

Tie her up. Tightly! I want her to witness the downfall of her clan.

OTHERE

Yes, father.

ONGENTHEOW

Loose the arrows.

WEOHSTAN

But we can't see, my Lord.

ONGENTHEOW

Then light the arrows!

WEOHSTAN

But, my Lord, you said Hæreth was only to be held in exchange for Queen Elan's safe return.

ONGENTHEOW

Change of plans.

INT. HEOROT - NIGHT

HROTHGAR

Now let there be story and song in
Heorot once more. 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,
glancing at the entry doors.

HROTHGAR

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

WIDSITH

Then I shall sing to you 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
laughs as he bobs and smiles nervously, trying quickly to tune.

Meanwhile, WULFGAR and FREAWARU chat quietly with the Geats.

SVEIN

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

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.

FREAWARU

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, hurling food and
insults, making him grow ever more flustered.

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.

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 toward the High Table where Hrothulf sits with Yrsa. 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

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

EXT. GÖTABORG HARBOR BLUFF - BATTLE OF SORROW HILL - FLASHBACK

HALGA, bloody head to toe and pierced by many arrows, stands in front of BEOWULF, HÆRETH and SVEIN, fighting in a berserker frenzy. Halga takes down a half-dozen Swedes as ONGENTHEOW sounds the retreat and flees with his sons.

INT. HEOROT - BACK TO PRESENT

BEOWULF has been listening quietly.

BEOWULF

He fell there defending us. Were it not for him we'd be lying there now too.

WIDSITH finally gets tuned up, setting into a melancholy lay.

WIDSITH

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

EXT. RAVENSWOOD - NIGHT

The Geats flee in panic as BURNING ARROWS rain 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 flames, screaming.

INT. HEOROT - NIGHT

WIDSITH continues his tale as ONELA speaks quietly with INGELD.

ONELA

Do you see, my 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. But
ties of blood cannot be severed by
a sword's sharp edge.

Ingeld glances coldly to where FREAWARU sits with WULFGAR.

INGELD

Aye, my Lord, that is true.

Widsith wraps up his story-song.

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.

The crowd's applause is interrupted by a commotion at the
entryway. Widsith backs away, eyes wide. A DOOR-GUARD rushes in.

DOOR-GUARD

Unferth comes!

UNFERTH rides into the hall on horseback. The heads of GRENDEL
and the TROLL-HAG dangle by their hair from his spear shaft.

UNFERTH

My Lord, Grendel is dead!

He tosses the SEVERED HEADS to the floor and dismounts.

HROTHGAR

How now, Unferth? How comes this?

UNFERTH

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

Unferth holds up 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 about frantically, all eyes on him.

His gaze falls on ONELA, who nods subtly. Unferth glances toward the High Table. HROTHULF'S hand is on his sword. Unferth smiles darkly as he turns back to Beowulf --

-- and rams the spear into Beowulf's chest.

HROTHULF draws his sword and runs HRETHRIC through. WEALTHEOW screams as Hrethric crumples to his knees.

HROTHGAR

Treachery! Treachery and treason!

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.

The RAVEN CAWS as battle erupts throughout the hall.

HROTHGAR

Defend the hall, men!

BEOWULF looks down at the bloody spear pressed against his chest. He rips his shirt open, revealing his new chain-mail. He swings Grendel's head, sending Unferth flying across the floor.

Beowulf snatches up Unferth's spear as Onela attacks.

ONELA

Now I will finish what I started.

BEOWULF

You should have finished it the first time.

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

HROTHGAR draws his sword and rushes toward the high table, where a wounded HROTHMUND is doing his best to fend off a frenzied HROTHULF. Several men lie dead at their feet. 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 dodges the blow. 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, forcing Ingeld back towards the High Table.

WULFGAR comes to HROTHMUND'S defense, but is stabbed in the leg by HROTHULF and falls. FREAWARU screams and runs to Wulfgar's side. Hrothulf turns to find YRSA standing over Hrothmund.

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 do I care of that? 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 --

The full length of a blade suddenly erupts from his back. He gazes down at HROTHMUND, lying wounded at his feet, hands on the sword hilt stuck 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.

YRSA

Farewell, my son.

HROTHGAR and INGELD crash into the High Table. Hrothgar bleeds from several deep wounds. He sees FREAWARU hunched over WULFGAR.

HROTHGAR

Go! Get out of here!

Freawaru glares at Ingeld as she helps Wulfgar to his feet.

Nearby, BEOWULF and ONELA pummel one another with blows. Beowulf keeps one eye on the wounded king, but every time he tries to break away, Onela is there, a superior swordsman.

ONELA

You're no match for me, boy.

Beowulf punches him hard in the face, knocking him out cold. He moves toward the High Table, but is cut off by several SWEDES.

WEALTHEOW pulls YRSA toward the rear exit --

WEALTHEOW

Come, we must go!

-- and runs straight into a glowering UNFERTH, who grabs her.

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 in his face. Unferth screams, clutching charred flesh, and flees.

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

WEALTHEOW

Hrothmund.

ACROSS THE HALL -- HROTHMUND stands over the fallen HROTHGAR. INGELD sneers and swings, sending Hrothmund's sword clattering across the floor. He raises the blade --

INGELD

So ends the illustrious line of
Danes.

-- and swings. The blade CLANGS to a dead stop as WEALTHEOW steps between them, sword in hand.

WEALTHEOW

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.

WEALTHEOW

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

Wealtheow unleashes a pent-up rage, reigning down a series of savage blows, wounding the surprised Ingeld several times.

Ingeld ducks a blow, coming up with a sword in each hand. He turns the tables, pressing Wealtheow back with sheer strength.

Seeing this, BEOWULF lunges full-force into a BURNING PILLAR, which topples over, CRASHING DOWN onto Ingeld.

Beowulf quickly dispatches the remaining THREE SWEDES and rushes to Hrothgar's side, where Hrothmund kneels, weeping.

HROTHMUND

I'm sorry, father. I failed you.

HROTHGAR

No. You stood strong. That is all
that matters. I am proud of you.

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 assailants. SVEIN and WIGLAF converge, clearing a path before them.

OTTAR, taking up the rear, loses an arm. But his opponent loses his head to a single-handed blow of Ottar's axe. Wealthew binds the wound with her cloak as Svein lifts Ottar by the other arm.

SVEIN

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

OTTAR

Arghh! Like enough do I feel!

ACROSS THE HALL -- ONELA rises slowly, shaking his head. He sees Beowulf dimly through the smoky haze, but is cut off as BURNING BEAMS CRASH DOWN between them. He makes for the front door.

EXT. HEOROT - NIGHT

The battle spills out into the square as men from both factions escape the BURNING HALL, coughing and bleeding. ONELA fights his way out and escapes into the night.

INT. HEOROT - NIGHT

BEOWULF reaches the rear door, which is now closed. HROLF and EOFOR are there trying to open it, but it won't budge.

EOFOR

It's been wedged from outside.

Beowulf kicks the door open, splintering it into pieces, but the storeroom beyond is now a raging inferno. The men gaze around frantically. WIGLAF points out a stack of shields nearby.

WIGLAF

Follow me.

EXT. HEOROT - NIGHT

Heorot begins to collapse as the fire takes its toll. Villagers cart buckets of water from the well, dodging scattered battles.

FREAWARU and YRSA tend the wounded lying all around the square. WULFGAR, his leg wound now bound, climbs to his feet.

FREAWARU
Where are you going?

WULFGAR
I have to help them.

FREAWARU
No you don't!

She grabs him and pulls him close.

FREAWARU
I'm not losing you again.

BEOWULF emerges from the entryway, carrying HROTHGAR. He is surrounded by his men, holding shields above and around them.

Beowulf gently lays Hrothgar down. Red blood stains green grass. Wealtheow kneels at Hrothgar's side, weeping.

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, watches from afar. A TWIG SNAPS behind him. He spins, sword drawn, as ONELA steps into view.

ONELA
Come with us.

EXT. TROLLHIGHT - NIGHT

HYGELAC and his remaining men stand atop a rocky outcrop, gazing at the blaze stretching across the land below. WONRED and HALDAR glance up 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
must pass in time.

Hrothgar clutches BEOWULF with a bloody hand.

HROTHGAR

Beware, Beowulf! 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, EDGTHEOW.
In the distance, the 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

The rising sun reveals the smoldering remains of Heorot. The
RAVEN sits atop the golden antlers, now lying askew amidst the
blackened rubble. Rising up, the bird flits by --

EXT. INLAND ROAD - DAY

-- following the forest path towards the sea.

EXT. DANISH HARBOR - DAY

THE RAVEN soars out over the cliff's edge, swooping down to land atop the beam of Beowulf's ship. A crowd has gathered to bid the Geats goodbye, led by HROTHMUND, who now wears the Danish crown.

BEOWULF

Now must we travelers return again
to our own homes. For these fine
gifts we give our thanks.

HROTHMUND

Sad are we to see you go. Always
will you be welcome in our home.

BEOWULF

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

WEALTHÉOW

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

BEOWULF

These words shall I remember. Fare
well, fair Queen. May you flourish
once more 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.

The Danes wave and cheer as the ship is launched.

WEALTHÉOW

(to herself)

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

Far out to sea ONELA'S 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.

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 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.

HYGELAC

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

Blood spills across the bed as Hygelac runs Hæreth through.

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

HYGELAC

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. WIGLAF stands over him. The rest of the crew are asleep, all save WIDSITH, who sits against the mast strumming his harp.

WIGLAF

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

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

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

BEOWULF

Well now I did kill Grendel, sure. No easy task, that. And it was Hondscio that 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. 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 and moves off.

EXT. HONDSCIO'S FARM - DAY - FLASHBACK

YOUNG BEOWULF and YOUNG HONDSCIO play-fight with wooden swords. Beowulf is a strapping youth, but Hondscio is quick-witted and agile, easily outmaneuvering Beowulf's brute-force approach.

YOUNG BEOWULF

Arrgh! Quit moving so much.

YOUNG HONDSCIO

What? So you can hit me more? No, thank you.

Beowulf grows impatient, swinging wider, over-extending himself. Hondscio gets in a good shot to the ribs. Beowulf cringes, but presses on, pounding harder. Hondscio backs off.

YOUNG BEOWULF

Gods, Hondscio, fight like a man.

YOUNG HONDSCIO

Take it easy, 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.

BACK TO PRESENT

BEOULF runs his fingers absently along the edge of his sword. His fingers stop as they reach the notch.

EXT. RAVEN'S MEADOW - NIGHT

HÆRETH is lashed securely in the back of a supply wagon. Two Swedes, OSMUND and OTTO, stand guard. They eye her covertly.

OSMUND

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

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 'em.

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. 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. Her gaze grows distant.

EXT. BEOWULF'S FARM - DAY - FLASHBACK

YOUNG BEOWULF works the fields of his farm, pulling the plow himself. YOUNG HÆRETH appears, carrying a pitcher of water.

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 yet to learn.

YOUNG HÆRETH

You'll do okay.

YOUNG BEOWULF

The ox died.

YOUNG HÆRETH

Maybe your uncle Hygelac 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.

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, that.

YOUNG HÆRETH

But what do you need with a farm animal anyway? You're as 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.

YOUNG HÆRETH

You look the part well enough, at any rate.

EXT. RAVEN'S MEADOW - BACK TO PRESENT

HÆRETH

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

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. I'll wake the men.

EXT. TROLLHIGHT - DAWN

A crimson hue burns on the horizon, foretelling the coming dawn.

HALDAR

It's been two days, my Lord. We must break camp. The Trolls will find us if the Swedes do not.

WONRED

The provisions are nearly spent, and there is no water to be had in these accursed rocks.

HYGELAC

No. We make our stand here.

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.

HALDAR

Aye, but we must regroup. To fight with so few men is madness.

WONRED

If we can make our way home we can refortify there.

HYGELAC

What, and die a coward's death, holed up like a caged dog? I will not! I will face the Swedes alone if I must.

EXT. GÖTABORG HARBOR - WATCHTOWER - DAWN

ERIK, a boy barely into his teens, stands guard at the cliff's edge, gazing sternly out to sea. He squints into the distance, and 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

BEOWULF winds his horn in return.

EXT. GÖTABORG HARBOR - DAY

ERIK and WIGLAF wave to one another eagerly as the ship draws into shore. 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. And yet
it has been but a few short weeks.

ERIK

Aye. And yet much has changed in
that time.

Beowulf looks around the deserted harbor.

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. 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

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. 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. Only the
dead let down their guard.

ERIK

Where is Hondscio?

Beowulf's grim expression says it all.

BEOWULF'S MEN stop to catch their breath, gazing up at the steep
headland leading to the fortress above. BEOWULF shakes his head.

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 as 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.

WIGLAF

War?

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 looks Beowulf in the eye.

BEOWULF

Swedes.

EXT. GÖTABORG GUARDHOUSE - DAY

Atop the bluff a guardhouse opens onto a deserted courtyard.

BEOWULF

Take Ottar to see the healer.

OTTAR is led away by two of Beowulf's men.

INT. GÖTABORG HALL - DAY

The hall is a sturdy structure, designed primarily for defense. HEARDRED sits upon the throne, carousing with a few friends. He turns to greet the men as they enter, but does not rise.

HEARDRED

Ah, so the great warrior returns.
Welcome once more to your
homeland, fair travelers.

BEOWULF

Where is King Hygelac? And where
has Hæreth been taken?

HEARDRED

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

Queen Frida's death was not
Beowulf's fault.

Heardred leaps to his feet, flushed with anger.

HEARDRED

Be still, Swede!

EXT. GEATLAND COUNTRYSIDE - DAY - FLASHBACK

FRIDA falls from her horse, an arrow protruding through her neck. BEOWULF, surrounded by several dozen Swedes, can only watch as ONGENTHEOW approaches Frida with a lustful look.

INT. GÖTABORG HALL - BACK TO SCENE

HEARDRED glares at WIGLAF, who holds his gaze defiantly.

HEARDRED

Who are you to speak to me of my mother's death? Had Beowulf protected her as he was charged she would still be alive today, and my father would not have married his precious Hæreth.

BEOWULF clenches his teeth. 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 do you mean, Heardred? Have you received news?

HEARDRED

Aye, the rising sun proclaims it. Do you not see? For all the world is aflame.

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 turns and 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, Beowulf sees smoke rising from the valley. He drops his sword and runs. YOUNG HÆRETH follows.

EXT. BEOWULF'S FARM - DAY - FLASHBACK CONTINUED

BEOWULF approaches his own longhouse, its thatched roof ablaze. In the yard he finds his mother, HÆLENA, bloody and dying.

HÆLENA

My son, you must learn to stand...
on your own. You are a man... now.

BEOWULF

No, mother, I'll get the healer!
She'll mend the wound.

Hælena laughs painfully, 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.

BEOWULF

No, mother, don't go. Please!
Please don't leave me--

HÆRETH can only watch from a distance as Beowulf weeps openly.

INT. STABLES - 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.

BEOWULF

We need horses.

EXT. GÖTA RIVER VALLEY - DAY

BEOWULF and his MEN ride hard through a lush river valley. Dark clouds of CARRION CROWS circle in the smoke-filled sky ahead.

EXT. RAVENSWOOD - DAY

THE SWEDES ride hard through the smoking remains of Ravenswood, racing towards the rocky outcrop of the Trollhight. HÆRETH, wrists bound, rides in the lead, seated before ONGENTHEOW.

At Ongentheow's signal a contingent breaks left with him, while another turns right with OTHERE. The main host holds 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 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! The Swedes are coming!

A hundred swords are drawn.

BASE OF OUTCROP

The main Swedish division, led by OSLAF, draw their swords, a thousand strong, as they begin scaling the rocky Trollhight.

FROM 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 bows, heft spears, and heave stones, wreaking havoc on the clambering enemy. The Swedes just keep climbing.

HYGELAC

Where is Ongentheow?

As if in answer to his question, the flanking Swedish divisions crash in from both sides, hurtling 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 hill.

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.

ONGENTHEOW lowers his spear and charges. HYGELAC crumples to his knees, gaping at the ashen shaft protruding from his stomach.

In a fury, HÆRETH lunges backwards, smashing into Ongentheow's face and knocking them both to the ground. With wrists still bound, she snatches up a sword lying nearby.

ONGENTHEOW rises slowly to his feet, blood running from a broken nose. He laughs grimly at the sight before him.

ONGENTHEOW

Well, well, well. A fighter to the end, eh?

HÆRETH

Fate favors the brave, they say.

ONGENTHEOW

Right you are. That would be me.

Ongentheow swings suddenly, but Hæreth rolls aside and his blade just misses her. She is up again in an instant, swinging with all she's got, unleashing her rage, pressing him back.

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. He nicks her on the shoulder and 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

Have you not heard the news? I'm afraid your boyfriend won't be coming for you after all, my dear.

HÆRETH

He's ... he's dead, then?

ONGENTHEOW

Aye, lass, that he is.

Hæreth crumples to her knees in utter despair.

A BOOMING GROWL emanates from beyond the ridge as a HUGE BOULDER suddenly sails over the peak, CRASHING DOWN onto the men below.

WARRIORS

Trolls! Trolls are coming. Run!

Men on both sides flee as ANOTHER BOULDER flies their way, accompanied by a HOWLING ROAR from the valley beyond.

ONGENTHEOW

Stand your ground, men!

But Ongentheow freezes, eyes wide, as the RAVEN flits up over the ridge.

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

At your service.

Hæreth pulls away from Ongentheow, cutting her bonds on his sword blade as she does. Beowulf in there in an instant.

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. The Geats regroup as the tide of battle turns.

Finding their fallen father Wonred, EOFOR collapses to his knees, overcome with grief, while HROLF goes into a berserker rage, battle-axe in one hand, war-hammer in the other.

ERIK, seeing HALDAR and HÆRETH hard pressed, leaps on a stray steed and rides a half dozen Swedes down, broadsword whistling. 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 emulating Svein's moves stroke for stroke. Svein is duly impressed. But WIGLAF suddenly freezes as he locks swords with WEOHSTAN.

WEOHSTAN

Hello, son.

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.

OTHERE steps between them, holding Weohstan back, while SVEIN steps in front of Wiglaf.

SVEIN

Go.

Wiglaf hesitates, confused.

OTHERE

(Over shoulder to Wiglaf)

Run, cousin! Go!

Wiglaf backs away, stumbling over the bodies of the slain.

Meanwhile, BEOWULF presses ONGENTHEOW back to the edge of the ridge. 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. Ongentheow draws a dagger and lunges at Beowulf --

Beowulf swings downward, sinking his sword into Ongentheow's skull. Ongentheow falls dead at his feet.

OTHERE

Fall back! Retreat! Retreat!

THE SWEDES, disordered and demoralized, flee in all directions.
THE GEATS, elated beyond belief, cheer and shout.

ERIK

Come back, you cowards!

HÆRETH rushes to BEOWULF, and there, amidst the ravages of battle, blood-spattered and bruised, they kiss at last.

BEOWULF'S MEN turn their eyes away, glancing at one another with raised eyebrows. Erik and Haldar smile.

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.

Beowulf moves slowly, almost reluctantly to Hygelac's side. Hæreth follows close behind.

HYGELAC

So you've returned... after all.

Beowulf stands over the dying king, expression cold.

HYGELAC

The ogre is... dead, then?

Beowulf nods grimly, muscles tensing.

HYGELAC

It seems I... misjudged you.

Beowulf spits on Hygelac.

BEOWULF

Burn in Hel, you bastard. You sent me away to die, just like you sent my father before.

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 you,
and that oath I have obeyed. 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.

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?

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

But I am his son. The crown now passes to me.

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, holding it high.

HÆRETH

Behold the throne of Geat-Land!

(turning to Beowulf)

Beowulf, son of Edgtheow, 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. His men smile and nod. He turns back to Hæreth, her gaze filled with longing, knowing what this means for them both.

BEOWULF

No. I cannot accept that which is not mine to take. 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 and
take what I want? 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

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.
Beowulf glances at Hæreth, but she turns and walks away.

EXT. UPSALA - DAY

ONELA watches from atop the wall as the returning Swedish army
passes through the gates below, bearing their own fallen king.
Beside him, UNFERTH stands motionless, wearing full-face helmet.

OTHERE glances up at them darkly as he passes by below.

ONELA

Kill him.

UNFERTH

Yes, Lord.

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 cleaved his skull clean in two!

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 despair.

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

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

This is all that now remains of
the fiend which slew my father and
good Hondscio whom you all knew.

Beowulf tosses the heavy necklace onto the High Table, where it
lands with a LOUD THUD in front of Heardred and Hæreth.

BEOWULF

So for glory.

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 empathetic 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, upon the great whale's
way; until at last at end of day,
heaven's golden jewel settled into
slumber, and the world in darkness
fell.

BEOWULF'S MEN beam with pride, reveling in their moment of fame.

EXT. GÖTABORG COURTYARD - NIGHT

BEOWULF exits the hall alone, heading up the valley road.

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.

He glances up the road to where a faint light flickers, takes a deep breath, then starts toward it.

HÆRETH (OS)

Would you like me to go with you?

Beowulf turns to find HÆRETH standing there.

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 door BEOWULF hesitates, steeling himself to the task. 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. His gaze comes to rest at last on Hannah's swollen belly, and he crumples to his knees.

BEOWULF

I'm sorry, Hannah. 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.

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. All he thought about was you.

HANNAH

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.

(stands and looks her in the eye)

I'll take care of you now. I'll take care of you both. I promise.

Hæreth shifts uncomfortably.

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. SMITHY - BEOWULF'S FARM - 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, feeding the pigs, working the smithy.

INT. HANNAH'S LONGHOUSE - NIGHT - DINNER MONTAGE

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 it all.

EXT. SORROW HILL - WINTER - DAY

The barrow 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 gather around a map of Swede-Land.

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 can 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.

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, as have
you all. He must fight.

BEOWULF (OS)

I will not attack the Swedes.

BEOWULF stands in the doorway with WIGLAF, ERIK and HÆRETH.

HEARDRED

You will fight. I command it.

BEOWULF

I agree, my Lord, that we must
show 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. Your king!

BEOWULF

And we have killed theirs. Where does it end, Heardred? 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

Hold your fire! Do not shoot!

The bowmen hesitate. Heardred turns on them in a rage.

HEARDRED

Shoot! I command you to shoot!

BEOWULF

Lower your weapons.

The archers lower their bows. Heardred glares at Beowulf.

HEARDRED

You will pay for this.

BEOWULF

Why have you come into this land?

EADGILS

We seek refuge.

BEOWULF

From what?

EANMUND

From our Uncle Onela. He has slain our father and taken the throne.

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

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 sits near the fire, ravaging a bowl of hot stew. HEARDRED takes his seat on the throne with a flourish.

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 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 CONTINUED

PUFFS OF BREATH emanate from a source hidden in shadow.

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 back into darkness.

INT. GÖTABORG HALL - BACK TO SCENE

BEOWULF grimaces, glancing at his men.

BEOWULF

Unferth.

EXT. UPSALA - DAWN - FLASHBACK CONTINUED

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.

Atop a snow-covered barrow mound, 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.

OTHERE

Go...to Geats. Seek help. Beowulf.

Othere dies as HORNS BLARE OUT. The boys flee into the forest.

INT. GÖTABORG HALL - 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.

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, sticks a hand between her legs, causing her to jerk upright, smashing the ale cup into Unferth face.

UNFERTH
Bitch!

Unferth buries a dagger into her stomach. As the wide-eyed girl crumples to the ground, Onela bursts out in hysterical laughter.

A SCOUT enters, out of breath.

SCOUT
My Lord, the Geats are crossing
through the lake country!

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 and 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.

UNFERTH

They can't possibly have that many men left.

WEOHSTAN

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. Through the trees they can see the Geat camp. DISTANT HOOF-BEATS are heard, growing to a THUNDEROUS GALLOP. They see BEOWULF draw his sword.

HROLF

Here they come.

EXT. FOREST EAVES - SOUTH SHORE - DUSK

EOFOR and his contingent wait across the lake from Hrolf's men. Eofor shuts his eyes, 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

Ten men for each of us, no
problem.

HEARDRED, watching them come, stands frozen with fear. BEOWULF walks steadily forward, sword in hand, the born leader.

HROLF and EOFOR watch from their respective points as the SWEDISH CONTINGENTS draw closer, racing 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, which cracks, spreading out in either direction.

THE RAVEN flits in, landing on the pommel of the 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, cutting down the flanking Swedish divisions with a barrage of spears and arrows.

ONELA bears down on BEOWULF, who stands firm.

Just as Onela reaches him, Beowulf rips the sword free and swings, catching Onela mid-air as his horse sinks beneath him. Onela skids across the ice, leaving a streak of red behind.

BEOWULF'S MEN rush in to battle Onela's dispersed cavalry, many of whom are now flailing in frozen water.

HROLF and EOFOR force the remnants of the flanking Swedes out onto the ice, where their steeds collide and lose footing.

Hrolf does a surprised double-take as he sees Eofor grimly wading through them, mercilessly slaying all in his path.

ONELA struggles to his feet, clutching his bloody side, as Beowulf circles him warily. With his sword, Beowulf draws a line in the ice between them.

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 line. Beowulf blocks his blow.

BEOWULF

So be it. Now I will finish what you have started.

Beowulf swings, pummeling Onela again and again, forcing him back. With each step, Beowulf draws a new line in the ice, until Onela is backed up to the water's edge.

BEOWULF

Nowhere to go from here but down.

Onela raises his sword to attack, but Beowulf runs him through. The blade pulls free as Onela falls backward into the lake.

OSLAF (OS)

Fire!

The TWANG OF BOWSTRINGS jars Beowulf back to reality. The Swedes have regrouped and are firing outward on the surrounding Geats.

In the same instant Beowulf sees that--

--UNFERTH is aiming an arrow straight at him, and--

--WEOHSTAN has a taut bow trained on HEARDRED, who stands gaping in wide-eyed wonder at the ghastly spectacle before him.

BEOWULF

Heardred!

The ARROW SAILS SLOW-MOTION --

--hitting HEARDRED dead in the chest, while BEOWULF takes a hit in the shoulder. Beowulf scrambles to Heardred's side.

HEARDRED

So this is war. Not quite as glamorous as I'd imagined.

Beowulf laughs through the pain.

HEARDRED

I just wanted to be like you.

Heardred's hand falls to the cold ground with a THUD.

Beowulf rises, searching for Unferth, who is attempting to flee.

BEOWULF

Unferth!

Weohstan nocks an arrow and follows Beowulf's path of motion. Seeing this, Wiglaf races towards Weohstan, spear in hand.

WIGLAF

NO!!!

Weohstan turns his bow on the charging figure, but 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 your oath. There is... honor in that. Do not forget.

Weohstan crumples to the ice in a spreading pool of red blood.

EOFOR takes hit after hit as he defends HROLF from an onslaught, falling only after the last man has been defeated. Hrolf cradles his dying brother in his arms.

EOFOR
I didn't run.

HROLF
No, you didn't.

EOFOR
I should have.

HROLF
Yes, you should.

They share a final laugh as Eofor dies.

UNFERTH draws his sword just in time to block BEOWULF'S blow, the force of which shears Unferth's sword completely in two.

BEOWULF
Now will you pay for your sins,
Unferth. Too long have you plotted
your treachery. Too many crimes
have you committed against good
men. But no more.

UNFERTH
I am just a servant! I was only
doing as I was commanded!

Unferth scrambles frantically backwards across the ice.

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.

Beowulf raises his sword for the final blow. Unferth gazes up with a look of utter resignation as 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. 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. As they reach the encampment, the oil-soaked tents are set alight--

FLAMES RACE OUTWARD in either direction, following the path of spilled oil around the lake, encircling the remaining Swedes, trapping them between fire and ice.

BEOWULF falls to his knees as he reaches the shore, aghast at the spectacle of carnage before him.

Then all around him the Geats begin to CHEER as they realize their incredible victory.

GEATS

Beowulf! Beowulf! Beowulf!

INT. GÖTABORG HALL - DAY

The cry carries over to a crowd packed into the Great Hall.

GEATS

Beowulf! Beowulf! Beowulf!

BEOWULF stands before the throne. HÆRETH steps forward and holds the crown up for all to see.

HÆRETH

Behold, the crown of Geat-Land!
Forged for Swerting in days long
sped. One man now remains among
his heirs, last in lineage, yet
not least in worth.

(to Beowulf)

Son of Hælena, Hrethel's heir, I
name you now King Beowulf, Lord of
all Geat-Land!

Hæreth places the crown on Beowulf's head. The crowds cheers.

HÆRETH

Bow before your King!

The people kneel as one, Hæreth included.

BEOWULF

Good my people, rise and stand united! 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!

(to Eanmund and Eadgils)

From this day forth will we be as one with our kindred cousins. May there be lasting peace between our peoples.

EANMUND

On my honor I swear, so shall it be, so long as I live and rule.

EADGILS

For your aid 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.

Beowulf turns to Hæreth. He holds out his hand and she takes it.

PRIESTESS (VO)

With the blessing of Odin I bind
you now --

EXT. FOREST TEMPLE - NIGHT

BEOULF and HÆRETH stand before a PRIESTESS at a snow-covered altar in a starlit circle of rune-carved standing stones.

PRIESTESS

-- together as one for all time,
never more to part in this world.
In Freya's name, blessed be.

The lovers kiss.

PRIESTESS

In these bonds be joyous, in your
union strong, and may your bodies
bear the fruit of many sons.

WIGLAF

Hear, hear!

The small gathering of friends and relatives laugh and applaud.

EXT. GÖTABORG - BARROW FIELDS - NIGHT

A DARK FIGURE weaves unsteadily among the barrow mounds. The figure stops, listening to the SOUNDS OF CELEBRATION from the nearby hall and village, then slowly continues on towards --

EXT. EAGLE'S CLIFF - NIGHT

Beyond the barrow field a wide shelf of rock breaks up a sheer cliff face that drops to the sea below. HOT SPRINGS BUBBLE out of a STONE ARCHWAY that is all but hidden by overgrowth.

THE FIGURE stumbles to the steaming pool, hovering over it for warmth. His clothes are tattered and burnt, his hair matted.

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 out at the NORTHERN LIGHTS. A SHOOTING STAR flashes across the sky.

BEOWULF

Dragon fire.

HÆRETH

Perhaps it is an omen.

They gaze down at the drunken revels in the streets below.

HÆRETH

These are your children now. 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, Beowulf. 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, 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 so that others might not.

BEOWULF

Is that why you married my uncle?

HÆRETH

I had a duty to my people Beowulf. For me there was no choice.

BEOWULF

There is always a choice, Hæreth. You promised to love me alone for all time.

HÆRETH

I have not broken that vow.

He lifts her chin, gently wiping a tear from her cheek.

BEOWULF

Then perhaps it was I who made the
wrong choice. 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.

INT. CAVERN ENTRANCE - NIGHT

UNFERTH moves through a dark tunnel toward a flickering light --

INT. DRAGON'S LAIR

UNFERTH stops dead as he enters a large cavern lit by a pool of
BURNING WATER. He gapes wide-eyed at the sparkling jewels and
golden coins of an enormous TREASURE HOARD.

Atop the hoard a RED DRAGON lies sleeping, its tail curled
around the pile, tendrils of smoke rising from its nostrils.

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. As he does, the DRAGON STIRS --

Unferth freezes, sweat trickling down his scarred face.

The Dragon shifts, snuggling deeper into the hoard. Its tail
whips past Unferth's head and he ducks just in time --

-- but slips on the loose coins, sending them TINKLING. He
crouches quickly behind a chest as the Dragon stirs and sniffs,
then slowly settles back into slumber.

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 ROARS and SLAMS A CLAWED
FOOT into the golden hoard, sending treasure flying.

Unferth scrambles to escape, slipping and sliding in panic on
the loose surface as 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're together at last, after all. I thought never to--

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.

Candlelight dances over their bodies as they make love, growing in intensity until they are entirely consumed in light.

EXT. EAGLE'S CLIFF - NIGHT

THE DRAGON bursts from the cavern 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 the DRAGON'S ROAR shatters the silence. They rush to the window as--

EXT. GÖTABORG VILLAGE - NIGHT

THE DRAGON SWOOPS DOWN, engulfing the village in FLAMES. Men are wrenched skyward in the Dragon's claws, then dropped into the fiery blaze below. ARCHERS fire in rapid succession as the Dragon soars by, but the arrows only bounce off its scaly hide.

INT. HÆRETH'S BEDCHAMBER - NIGHT

BEOWULF pushes HÆRETH aside as the DRAGON soars straight at the window, BLASTING FIRE.

EXT. GÖTABORG HALL - NIGHT

BEOWULF and HÆRETH rush out of the burning hall as the DRAGON soars away in the night.

EXT. GÖTABORG HALL RUINS - DAWN

Shafts of sunlight break through the black skeleton of the hall. BEOWULF stands amidst the pile of debris that yesterday was his home, gazing out at the CHARRED RUINS of the devastated village. He turns to face an assembly of burned and bandaged VILLAGERS.

BEOWULF

Summon the blacksmith.

EXT. SVEIN'S BLACKSMITH SHOP - DAY

SVEIN and WIGLAF work at forge and anvil, crafting an enormous iron-covered shield. Sweat sizzles and steams as it drips onto the molten metal that is beaten into shape.

BEOWULF and HÆRETH watch from nearby, 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.

Hannah 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 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, Beowulf. But what are you
worried about? It would take ten
dragons to kill you!

BEOWULF

I've never fought a dragon before.

WIGLAF

Me, either.

HÆRETH steps into the room, and Wiglaf quickly 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. It's just 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 King to protect my people. I
must lead my men into battle.

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. Before he went away.

BEOWULF

This is what the gods have made
me, Hæreth, and in this matter, if
no other, I have no choice. You of
all people must understand that.

HÆRETH

I do, Beowulf. But it makes it no
easier to bear. I'm afraid.

BEOWULF

So am I. But if I am destined to
die, then die I must. All I can do
is bravely face what fate brings,
and live or die with honor.

HÆRETH

And how will your honor protect me
when you are no longer here? Will
the memory of your great deeds
warm me in the cold of night, or
hold off the enemy invader? 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 forefathers'
blood.

HÆRETH

Wiglaf? He's just a boy! What hope
has he of leading our people?

BEOWULF

He is stronger than you know.

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.

She picks up his father's sword and hands it to him.

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. SVEIN looks
back at HANNAH, standing with the VILLAGERS. She waves sadly,
cradling her child. OTTAR glances at SVEIN with unusual concern.

EXT. EAGLE'S CLIFF - EVENING

The men halt as the cavern entrance comes into view. The hot springs is now a pool of liquid gold, licked by tongues of fire. Near the archway the charred form of UNFERTH lies sprawled, his hands still clutching the golden chalice.

WIGLAF

I thought he died at the lake.

BEOWULF

I let him go.

WIGLAF

The Fates were less kind it seems.

As they gaze down at the charred figure, a weak MOAN is heard and a single eye opens, bright white against the blackened skin.

UNFERTH

Don't go in. Dragon. Run.

A LOW RUMBLE emanates from the cavern.

BEOWULF

Too late.

UNFERTH

Please... kill me.

But Unferth is already forgotten as Beowulf backs away, a look of apprehension on his face hitherto unseen.

The men glance nervously at one another as Wiglaf helps Beowulf unsling the iron shield from his back.

WIGLAF

Remember who you are, my Lord.
Show courage, fight well, and let
Fate fare how she will.

Beowulf turns to Wiglaf, regaining his composure.

BEOWULF

My thanks for these brave words,
Wiglaf. Wait for me close by, my
friend, for soon enough shall we
see who the Fates will favor.

Beowulf dons his crowned helm and turns toward the archway, clashing sword and shield together.

BEOWULF

Wake up Dragon, for your doom is
upon you! Come forth and bow
before your master!

Beowulf ducks behind his shield as FLAMES billow from the cave.

THE DRAGON emerges, spreading its leathery wings to their full thirty foot span and pounding its clawed feet into the ground. IT BELLOWS LOUDLY, baring rows of foot-long fangs.

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 shakes his head as Beowulf turns back to the Dragon.

BEOWULF

Where's your mother whelp? Come
out 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 BEOWULF 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 ever further back.

WIGLAF

Now is the time to keep 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 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.
For better it is to die with
honor, than live without it.

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.

WIGLAF

So be it.

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, shaking it from side to side in an attempt to dislodge its assailant. ROCKS FALL all around as the EARTH CRACKS beneath its pounding 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 golden eyes.

AS THE DRAGON FLAILS WILDLY, 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 and smoking. 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 DRAGON'S HEAD bears down on him --

WIGLAF

Oh, not again...

-- and CRASHES to the ground at his feet.

BEOWULF stumbles back against the rock wall and slowly sinks to the ground, leaving a bright red streak of blood behind.

WIGLAF rushes to Beowulf's side, fighting back tears as he removes Beowulf's helmet.

BEOWULF

I was wondering when you'd show up.

WIGLAF

Victory is yours, my King. You have slain the Worm.

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, Wiglaf. I have fought my last battle.

WIGLAF

It was a goodly 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.

THE COWARDLY WARRIORS peer tentatively from their retreat around the corner of the bluff, their eyes filled with guilt and grief.

Beowulf grimaces with pain, grasping for Wiglaf's shoulder.

WIGLAF

I'm right here, my Lord.

BEOWULF

Ah, good Wiglaf. A better friend no man could want. You alone have stood by 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 a golden moon is just cresting the horizon.

BEOWULF

The hero now must sleep...
The harp falls silent...
All hope is lost....

BEOWULF'S P.O.V.

THREE RAVENS swoop slowly down, TRANSFORMING INTO THE THREE NORNS, the Sisters of Fate: beautiful maidens hovering in air, beckoning to him.

THE NORNS

Not all hope. Such shall remain so long as there are men left to tell your tale. The harps yet may sing.

BEOWULF

Fate leads me on... and I must follow.

BACK TO SCENE

WIGLAF bows his head and weeps as BEOWULF stares blindly.

THE COWARDLY WARRIORS emerge slowly, gathering around tentatively. Wiglaf glares at them over his shoulder, his eyes cold. 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.

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 now shall sing us to our rest.

EXT. EAGLE'S CLIFF - SUNSET

On the edge of the cliff overlooking the sea BEOWULF'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 at 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. 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 upward into darkness.

FADE OUT