

As the night shadows fell over Heorot, Hrothgar and his queen escorted Beowulf and all the Geatish heroes to their beds, leaving the great mead-hall in the care of the thanes of Denmark. They cleared away the benches and spread the floor with beds and bolsters and, as so often they had done before, made a dormitory of the great hall. Out of habit these warriors kept their weapons near to hand, always ready for war, their shields and hand-swords at their sides, and, on the benches nearby, their mail-coats, their mighty helmets and spears. But not one of them expected any attack that night. Safe in their hall, so they thought, they fell asleep at once and slept soundly. It was a sleep they would pay for dearly and soon.

For Grendel had a mother, a murderous hag, as hideous a monster as her fiend of a son. Now she was a bereaved mother out

for revenge, maddened by her loss, and she would be savage in her grief. With vengeance brimming in her soul she came to Heorot in the dead of that night, all the Danish lords fast asleep inside, each lost in his dreams. How quickly were these dreams turned into a sudden nightmare! She may not have had the monster strength of her son, but she was thirsting for blood as she came in amongst them and powerful in her fury. The thanes quickly roused themselves from their slumbers, sprang at once to arms to fight her off, but they were not quick enough. She tore down Grendel's arm, that hideous trophy, but so precious to her. She snatched up the sleeping Ashhere, Hrothgar's most favourite lord, and then, seeing so many swords raised against her, made her escape. She had to be satisfied with this one kill. It was revenge enough for her.