

BEOWULF

Translated

By

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Chapter 17

THEN HASTENED THOSE HEROES THEIR HOME TO SEE,
FRIENDLESS, TO FIND THE FRISIAN LAND,
HOUSES AND HIGH BURG. HENGEST STILL
THROUGH THE DEATH-DYED WINTER DWELT WITH FINN,
HOLDING PACT, YET OF HOME HE MINDED,
THOUGH POWERLESS HIS RING-DECKED PROW TO DRIVE
OVER THE WATERS, NOW WAVES ROLLED FIERCE
LASHED BY THE WINDS, OR WINTER LOCKED THEM
IN ICY FETTERS. THEN FARED ANOTHER
YEAR TO MEN'S DWELLINGS, AS YET THEY DO,
THE SUNBRIGHT SKIES, THAT THEIR SEASON EVER
DULY AWAIT. FAR OFF WINTER WAS DRIVEN;
FAIR LAY EARTH'S BREAST; AND FAIN WAS THE ROVER,
THE GUEST, TO DEPART, THOUGH MORE GLADLY HE PONDERED
ON WREAKING HIS VENGEANCE THAN ROAMING THE DEEP,
AND HOW TO HASTEN THE HOT ENCOUNTER
WHERE SONS OF THE FRISIANS WERE SURE TO BE.
SO HE ESCAPED NOT THE COMMON DOOM,
WHEN HUN WITH "LAFING," THE LIGHT-OF-BATTLE,
BEST OF BLADES, HIS BOSOM PIERCED:
ITS EDGE WAS FAMED WITH THE FRISIAN EARLS.
ON FIERCE-HEART FINN THERE FELL LIKEWISE,

ON HIMSELF AT HOME, THE HORRID SWORD-DEATH;
FOR GUTHLAF AND OSLAF OF GRIM ATTACK
HAD SORROWING TOLD, FROM SEA-WAYS LANDED,
MOURNING THEIR WOES. [FOOTNOTE 1] FINN'S WAVERING SPIRIT
BODE NOT IN BREAST. THE BURG WAS REDDENED
WITH BLOOD OF FOEMEN, AND FINN WAS SLAIN,
KING AMID CLANSMEN; THE QUEEN WAS TAKEN.
TO THEIR SHIP THE SCYLDING WARRIORS BORE
ALL THE CHATTELS THE CHIEFTAIN OWNED,
WHATEVER THEY FOUND IN FINN'S DOMAIN
OF GEMS AND JEWELS. THE GENTLE WIFE
O'ER PATHS OF THE DEEP TO THE DANES THEY BORE,
LED TO HER LAND. THE LAY WAS FINISHED,
THE GLEEMAN'S SONG. THEN GLAD ROSE THE REVEL;
BENCH-JOY BRIGHTENED. BEARERS DRAW
FROM THEIR "WONDER-VATS" WINE. COMES WEALHTHEOW FORTH,
UNDER GOLD-CROWN GOES WHERE THE GOOD PAIR SIT,
UNCLE AND NEPHEW, TRUE EACH TO THE OTHER ONE,
KINDRED IN AMITY. UNFERTH THE SPOKESMAN
AT THE SCYLDING LORD'S FEET SAT: MEN HAD FAITH IN HIS SPIRIT,
HIS KEENNESS OF COURAGE, THOUGH KINSMEN HAD FOUND HIM
UNSURE AT THE SWORD-PLAY. THE SCYLDING QUEEN SPOKE:
"QUAFF OF THIS CUP, MY KING AND LORD,
BREAKER OF RINGS, AND BLITHE BE THOU,
GOLD-FRIEND OF MEN; TO THE GEATS HERE SPEAK
SUCH WORDS OF MILDNESS AS MAN SHOULD USE.
BE GLAD WITH THY GEATS; OF THOSE GIFTS BE MINDFUL,
OR NEAR OR FAR, WHICH NOW THOU HAST.
MEN SAY TO ME, AS SON THOU WISHEST
YON HERO TO HOLD. THY HEOROT PURGED,
JEWEL-HALL BRIGHTEST, ENJOY WHILE THOU CANST,
WITH MANY A LARGESS; AND LEAVE TO THY KIN
FOLK AND REALM WHEN FORTH THOU GOEST
TO GREET THY DOOM. FOR GRACIOUS I DEEM
MY HROTHULF, [FOOTNOTE 2] WILLING TO HOLD AND RULE
NOBLY OUR YOUTHS, IF THOU YIELD UP FIRST,
PRINCE OF SCYLDINGS, THY PART IN THE WORLD.
I WEEEN WITH GOOD HE WILL WELL REQUITE
OFFSPRING OF OURS, WHEN ALL HE MINDS

THAT FOR HIM WE DID IN HIS HELPLESS DAYS
OF GIFT AND GRACE TO GAIN HIM HONOR!”
THEN SHE TURNED TO THE SEAT WHERE HER SONS WERE PLACED,
HRETHRIC AND HROTHMUND, WITH HEROES’ BAIRNS,
YOUNG MEN TOGETHER: THE GEAT, TOO, SAT THERE,
BEOWULF BRAVE, THE BROTHERS BETWEEN.

Footnotes

1. That is, these two Danes, escaping home, had told the story of the attack on Hnaef, the slaying of Hengest, and all the Danish woes. Collecting a force, they return to Frisia and kill Finn in his home.
2. Nephew to Hrothgar, with whom he subsequently quarrels, and elder cousin to the two young sons of Hrothgar and Wealhtheow, -- their natural guardian in the event of the king’s death. There is something finely feminine in this speech of Wealhtheow’s, apart from its somewhat irregular and irrelevant sequence of topics. Both she and her lord probably distrust Hrothulf; but she bids the king to be of good cheer, and, turning to the suspect, heaps affectionate assurances on his probity. “My own Hrothulf” will surely not forget these favors and benefits of the past, but will repay them to the orphaned boy.