

## The Betrayal

My rise to becoming king was not noble, I'll be the first to admit. So long as *you're* willing to admit that it was clever. It all began when I was young, when Beowulf was known as the hero. Beowulf, you've heard of him. Everyone has. Anyway, Beowulf is my uncle. Or was. He would be your great uncle. Except there is nothing *that* great about him.

Anyway, this story is all about my rise to the top. However, I unfortunately can't leave him out of it. I must give credit to where credit is due. His heroism was the end of him. His downfall was my salvation. His lowest low was my highest high.

Now, I know what you're thinking: enough with the villainous backstory. There's no way you're going to ever think it's justified, what I did. Stop trying to lure us to your side and just get on with the story. You take after your great uncle after all.

There's a reason, my son, I'm leaving you this letter. There is also a reason I must tell you everything in the way that I am. History deserves to be told and recognized by its people. You, of all people, deserve to know the truth. I need to get it out quickly, before my impending doom takes over.

Now, let's take it from where every great story starts, the beginning. . .

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As I had stated earlier, Beowulf was at his prime, not quite yet king, that would happen later. He had just vanquished Grendel and he was being adored by the citizens that he had just saved from certain death. We all knew Mother would be coming next, it was just a matter of time. His Mother was very overprotective over him, as every mother should be with their kin. Mine was not, but that's a story for a different time, we're on a time crunch, you see.

“Beowulf,” I called out to him, bringing him away from the dozens of citizens proclaiming their thanks.

He was laughing and smiling along with them. When he turned to face me, his expression turned grim, almost annoyed. “What is it Wiglaf? Why did you interrupt me out there?”

I scoffed. “Sorry to tear you away from your adoring fans. We have more pressing matters to tend to.”

“Such as?”

“You killed Grendel, and that’s great. But now we have to worry about the Mother. Do you have any idea what that means?”

His forehead creased with concentration and his eyebrows furrowed. “I will be well prepared. After all, I used no weapons with Grendel. His mother should be a piece of cake.”

“Don’t underestimate a mother who cares for their child, Beowulf. A mother who now grieves her child, by your hands and your hands alone.”

Beowulf’s mouth tilted in a coy smile and set a hand on my shoulder. “Except for I wasn’t alone out there. You were there to help me. You and the others. I should never forget that. Thank you, Wiglaf. For everything you’ve done for me.”

I faked a smile on my face and before I could say anything, a woman walked up with her friend following closely behind her. They were both squealing and looking at Beowulf with stars in their eyes.

“Ah yes, meet my nephew,” Beowulf said, gesturing toward me.

“Ladies,” I acknowledged, giving a quick nod, and walking off.

I didn’t want to be involved in that. No thank you.

Beowulf wanted to bask in the fame and glory, that was fine. The warriors and I had work to do. Warriors who were currently drunk off mead, clearly also celebrating the occasion.

“Wiglaf, have some, join us,” one of them called out drunkenly.

“No thank you,” I politely declined. “I’m a little tired tonight.”

I took my leave of the common room and headed toward my sleep chamber to turn in for the night.

However, when I got there, I was distracted by a beautiful sight. By the glow of my candle, I saw the glitter of all of the jewels that Beowulf has earned lately. All of this is something a dragon would love and would risk their lives for.

A dragon.

A dragon could and *would* solve all my problems.

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“Dragon!” a citizen exclaimed. “Where’s King Beowulf? We need him!”

Despite his older and weaker age now, he needed to defend his people. He couldn’t let it go that he was and always has been a hero. I had planned with the dragon: kill Beowulf and he shall be able to keep his jewels and any other treasure I could find.

That is, if the dragon also survived. Which I wasn’t counting on; Beowulf was, of course, strong and heroic. Just not as strong as he was before.

The battle was close. Eventually, the dragon was vanquished. However, Beowulf lay on the ground, as weak as I had ever seen him.

I drew my sword as I crouched down next to him. His eyes were barely open. I would be putting him out of his misery if I just stabbed him.

“Beowulf, I’m sorry,” I told him. “I’m sorry that you won’t be around to see everything unfold the way it should. We both know that I was really the one who helped you out when it came to all those fights. Of course, I was always in the shadows, and you were always the one with the fame and glory. No longer, I’ll always be known as the one who tried to save you but couldn’t. I was too late.”

I took my sword out and plunged it into his chest. He didn’t even put up a fight; the hero had no heroic last words. He was already too frail and lost a lot of blood from the fight with the dragon.

“Long live the king,” I murmured, watching Beowulf’s eyes close.