But there was another listener. Outside the walls of Heorot in the dim and the dark there stalked an enemy from hell itself, the monster Grendel, sworn enemy of God and men alike, a beast born of the evil and shame. He heard that wondrous story of God’s creation, and because it was good it was hateful to his ears. He heard the sweet music of the harp, and afterwards the joyous laughter echoing through the hall and the mead-horn was passed around. Nothing had ever so enraged this beast as night after night he had to listen to all this happiness and harmony. It was more than his evil heart could bear.

The night Grendel struck was the darkest night of all. He waited until Hrothgar had gone to his bed, until only the lords who lightly guarded Heorot were left. They were fast asleep when he pounced. He was upon them so suddenly and with such violence and fury that none could escape the terrible slaughter. Thirty lords he murdered in his blood lust as savage and swift in his death dealing as a maddened fox in a chicken hut. He left not one of them alive, but carried them off home to his lair to feast on their bloodless corpses at his leisure. Only when day broke did Hrothgar and his warriors discover the dreadful evidence of the holocaust at Heorot. Gone now were the laughter and the music. Hrothgar sat silent in his grief and despair. His warriors too mourned and lamented the loss of their friends and brothers in arms. All were stunned at the merciless cruelty of this fatal fiend of the darkness. But the horrors were not yet over, for the next night Grendal came again, stalking over the foggy moors and down through the forests towards Heorot. The warriors had barricaded themselves in this time, and believed they must be safe. They could not have known that against this hellish monster all such defences would be useless. In a frenzy of hate, Grendel burst in and slaughtered everyone he found there, gorging himself at will. He spared no one.