

Beowulf: A Commedia in Three Acts

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For the actors:

This should be thought as if an Italian troupe got the basic gist of the story of Beowulf "Hrothgar, king of the Danes and Froda, King of the Heathobards have decided to make an alliance by marrying their two children. Unferth, steward to Hrothgar, is against the marriage and secretly plots to break the engagement so he (Unferth) can marry Freawaru, Hrothgar's daughter.

Argument:

The courageous Hero Beowulf is called in by King Hrothgar to dispatch a monster which has invaded his land, killed his men and menaces his sheep. He brings his servant, Wiglaf, to help dispatch the monster. The monster, Grendel, and his mother have other plans for the king and his men.'

Cast:

Hrothgar (Pantalone): King of the Danes

Unferth (Brighella): his Steward

Freawaru (inamorata): Hrothgar's daughter

Astrid (Columbina): her servant

Froda (Doctorre): King of the Heathobards

Ingeld (inamorata): his son

Beowulf (Capitano): a wandering hero

Wiglaf (Arlecchino): his servant (If possible, adopt or impersonate Sir Wiglaf Wilfriding, a former knight of the West. Goofy mannerisms, a love of silly fighting styles, such as the Troika melee.)

Grendel: a monster (wearing Shame Mask - Anger)

Grendel's Dam: (wearing Shame Mask - Gossip)

Zanni for retainers, warriors, etc. - all wearing felt horns on the caps, all in wrong positions (one in front, turned down, Moose horns)

ACT I

Hrothgar and Froda meet with their two families for the betrothal. The children (Freawaru and Ingeld) fall in love on the spot. The fathers have an argument (fueled by Unferth over the dowry “A contract is a contract.”) (lazzo of planting ideas) and break the engagement.

The assembly receive word that monsters are sacking and pillaging the countryside, Froda and company must stay in Hrothgar’s hall until it is safe to leave. (Lazzo of defense: Pilling stuff at stage RIGHT door for blockade, position for fight...)

Grendel and his Dam enter (stage LEFT door, Zanni chorus of 'EEEEK!'). Completely clueless that they are causing fright (and decidedly unwelcome) Grendel and his mother decide to take up residence for a while, before they continue heading South to Rome.

Dame Grendel wants her boy to marry himself off, freeing her from taking care of him, and because she wants him to give her grandchildren (I want to hear little boots stomping around!) Grendel (mama's boy) sees Freawaru, falls in lust ("Hello, Schveethot!") and immediately demands her hand in marriage (“I'm either going to marry her, or eat her”).

Zanni attack Grendel, who shrugs them off (literally!) and laughs about it. He and his mother leave to retrieve their belongings from their camp.

Hrothgar panics. Unferth is not happy about this new suitor, suggests they hire someone to kill Grendel. (discussion on who to get, needs strong enough to beat him, stupid enough to take the job without pay, make jokes about various known companies in the West). Unferth receives word a famous captain is close by and by his reputation should be strong enough to kill Grendel. A zanni is sent off running to fetch Beowulf, and bring him back.

Freawaru and her maid Astrid manage to arrange a meeting with Ingeld to see if their marriage can happen after all, talk about what they will do when they are married, Unferth (who has been spying) breaks up the happy party, threatening to report Ingeld to Hrothgar, which will result in the death of both father and son at the hands of the monster. He then drags Freawaru back to her father while Ingeld expresses his frustration and despair. Astrid encourages him to buck up and wait until Beowulf arrives to solve the problem.

(end of Act 1)

ACT II

Beowulf arrives with Wiglaf. Hrothgar begs Beowulf to fight Grendel, Beowulf agrees. Unferth makes an excuse to leave (“gotta see a dog about a man”) and leaves, Hrothgar takes Beowulf into the hall to discuss strategy.

Unferth goes straight to Grendel and explains his plan to fight Beowulf, then soliloquizes about his own plan to get them both out of the way.

Grendel boasts to Unferth of his great 'wealth' (turnips), Unferth wants to steal it (thinking it's gold) modifies plan to not only have Beowulf and Grendel to kill each other, but to leave him (Unferth) with the money to buy Freawaru in marriage. Ingeld overhears this, and sets off to find his father.

Ingeld tries to convince Froda to bring back the marriage with Freawaru. Starts off with the romantic ideals "but we're in love, and the grandchildren will be beautiful", then appeals to his father's financial gain in the match, which turns him towards agreement.

Grendel and Beowulf enter from either side of the stage, fight with swords, Beowulf chases Grendel off, only just.

Hrothgar proposes marriage between Beowulf and Freawaru; Unferth, Freawaru and Ingeld cry out “What! (hwaet!)” and Beowulf looks uneasy.

(end of Act 2)

ACT III

Unferth prompts Ingeld to follow Grendel in hopes to convince him to return to fight Beowulf again. Ingeld gets lost, sits down just on the stage and bemoans his lost love, Grendel on the other side (behind zanni wearing Moose antlers) doing the same thing, the one notices the other, startling the zanni, who bites Ingeld, at which point Grendel points out "Moose bites can be pretty Nasti."

Ingeld convinces Grendel to go back to the hall to fight Beowulf, otherwise Freawaru will marry him (Beowulf). Grendel storms off back to the hall swearing there's only one real man for the likes of her. Grendel confronts Beowulf, who admits while he is a 'bad-ass' with a sword, he prefers to fight bare handed (being more honorable.)

Fight part two ("We'll meet each other as Gods intended - Sportsman like.") Beowulf tears off Grendel's codpiece ("I tore off his arm! That's not his arm!") Grendel continues to fight on, until they are both exhausted. Beowulf suggests a break, Grendel refuses because 'You're trying to marry my schveethort!' Beowulf says he has no intention of marrying her, or anyone.

Dame Grendel comes to Grendel's aid - late (How dare you do that to my baby boy, pick on someone your own size.) Dame Grendel knees Beowulf in the crotch, then sucker punches him. Takes Grendel off to the side and mothers him (spits on a rag, wipes it over his face, etc.).

Unferth complains that now Grendel is free to marry the girl, keep his loot, take her loot, and the lot. "No loot for me!" Dame Grendel turns around, says the bags of 'loot' belong to her. Unferth presents himself as a suitor, Dame Grendel accepts, then reveals the bags to be full of turnips. Unferth tries to get away but is dragged off 'A contract is a contract'.

Grendel reaches for Freawaru "Schveethot!" Freawaru "IEEEEE!" Froda breaks in "allow me to point out..." that Grendel has no money. Beowulf points out that HE has no money, no land, and no interest. Froda points out that the kids are in love and will have beautiful grandchildren (better looking than that schmuck) "They'll make beautiful portfolios together." Hrothgar gives his consent for them to marry, the lovers are sickly sweet at each other.

Beowulf starts to describe the next adventure, Wiglaf complains about life on the road (sleeping on hard ground, the rain, no food for weeks except rocks) "All I want is a room somewhere..." Astrid "... far away from the cold night air?" She offers Wiglaf a life in town, Wiglaf drops all Beowulf's gear with a 'You're on your own, boss!'

Beowulf goes off with Grendel to the wars. 'Beginning of a beautiful friendship.'

– *finis* –