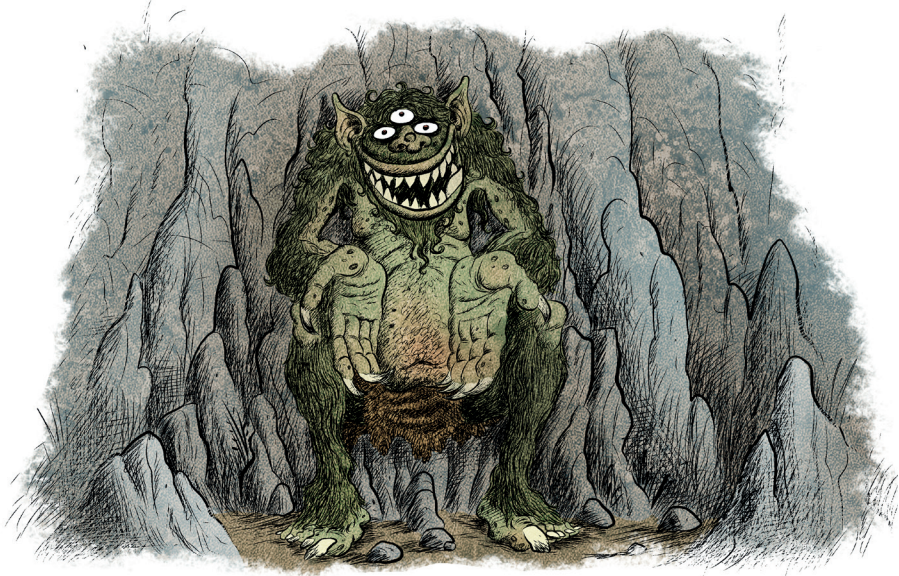


# Chapter One

## The Noisy Neighbours



I am Grendel, the grimmest, grungiest, the most garishly ghastly monster of them all, and I have a bone to pick with you humans! You stole my home and I am hopping mad!

Oh, I suppose you have probably heard the tale of the hero, Beowulf, and how he saved the **Danes** and their drinking hall from a monster, blah, blah, blah. The monster in that old story is a demon, burning with anger and a thirst for blood, rampaging through the village in a murderous mood.

All right, I'll put my hand up. I admit I might have caused a little damage by mistake when I got annoyed.

BUT did you ever wonder what caused my anger, or stop to ask if the tale of Beowulf is true? It is not. It is a pack of lies, a story spun by a **bard** to cover up the bad behaviour of the Danes.

This is what really happened ...

One day, many years ago, I was enjoying grumbling around my marshy home, scaring the birds off their nests, pottering about the reed beds, and munching on thick, black eels, when I heard the sound of hammering.



Now, you have to understand that this was remarkable because I've always had this rotten part of Denmark mostly to myself. No one else would want to live here, apart from my mum – and that, to be frank, is another reason why humans have avoided our patch. No one – and I mean no one – wants to live with my mother. Not even me.

But I stray from my tale. The hammering. I followed the sound, creeping like a shadow through the undergrowth, poked my head out of the bushes and saw ...



... men.

Hundreds of Danes. They had already put up a frame for a huge building. I could see carpenters hanging off the roof, dangling from the walls and digging like badgers to make postholes. They were constructing their new home right on top of my FAVOURITE BREAKFAST SPOT!



Grrrr! Arwaaagh! Had they not heard of the Monstrous Laws of Planning? This place had been named (by me) a place of Special Scary Significance. How dare these people march in and steal my land without even checking who owned it first!

Blistering beetles! I could do nothing that morning but curse and fret: there were too many of them and the sun was up. I am always at my weakest in daylight, my demon strength sucked out of me like water through a straw. I would have to wait for my revenge, go into hiding until these Danes – foolish mortals – went to bed.



# Chapter Two

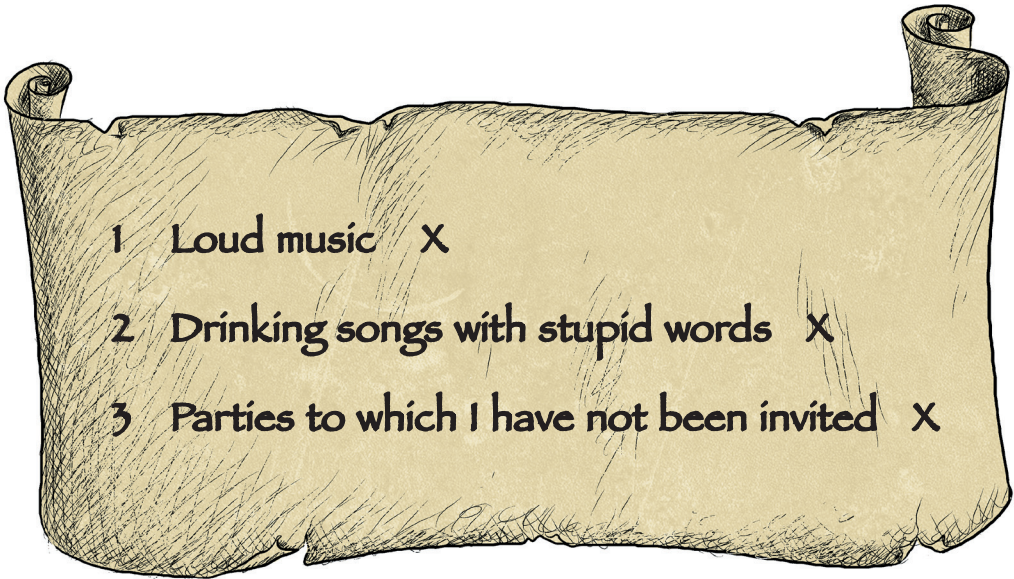
## Revenge



I had calmed down by the evening and was ready to consider living in peace with my new neighbours. As long as they kept me happy with the odd sacrifice or two, I would graciously let their invasion pass. A couple of tasty warriors now and again sounded a fair swap to me for my land. Besides, I reasoned, I was ready for a change after hundreds of years of eel pie, eel stew and eel ice cream.

I approached the Danes' hall in a positive mood – that was, until I heard the din.

There are three things I hate more than anything:



A celebration was in full swing, everybody enjoying themselves without me. The worst bardic band in **Scandinavia**, the Shieldings, was playing a song that went:

*“Drink **mead** until we fall over  
Drink mead until we fall over  
Drink mead until we fall over  
And then drink mead some more!”*



You can see why I was upset.

But I'm not stupid. I may be a great big, green, bug-eyed fellow with teeth like daggers, but don't let that fool you into thinking I haven't got the brains to plan a battle. I had to wait until every last one of those annoying Danes had staggered to their beds and then ...

"Revenge is mine!" I shouted as I burst through the doors into the hall. I grabbed the first three sleepy warriors in one hand and stamped on the fire in the hearth to plunge the room into darkness. Only the angry red light of my eyes was left to pick out my next target. I clutched all five members of the Shieldings in my talons and stormed off, back to my lair.





I will spare you the details, but I will tell you this much: I did the world a favour when I found a use other than music-making for that bardic band.

In my innocence, I thought that would be it. I imagined that the Danes would get the message and move away to build their drinking hall in a place that didn't already belong to someone. But no. That was just the beginning.

They declared war.

