

# Beowulf in Hell

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They strung him up,	stowed on the balcony,
and beat him with sticks,	and beat him with rocks,
and bent his muscles,	and bared his insides,
They said, "We shall	teach you what it means
to be a man."	Beyond the rafters,
muted by numbers,	many cackled.
They drank blood	drained from small children,
they drank the rainwater	of distant countries,
they spat bits of their	own children,
they sang fragments	of songs everyone else
had already forgotten.	All across the hall,
small animals scurried,	clasping breadcrumbs
between their teeth.	Winds blasted the clouds,
thunder sheered the clouds.	Thousands of miles
away, mountains were	waking up. Mountains
began to walk,	bringing with them
the mountain paths,	the many outlying
trees. Beowulf looked	at his innards, and
he said, "They are a soup,	to be a man
is to be soup,	to be a goat,
to be a sheep,	to be an ox,
to be a piece of string,	to be cattle,
to be the handle of axe,	to be the baying of wolves,
to be the reek	of dung drying
in the stables	late in the evening
when the children have	already gone inside,
as wind settles in	across the fields,
and dew hovers	above the leaves
and thoughts shiver	quietly in the coming
moonlight, the hours	shuffle, the earth
turns, the calf	bleeds, the woman

bleeds, the man  
the boy dies, the boy  
curls, the lakes cool,  
the bread hardens,  
fitly above the remains  
Yes," Beowulf says,  
means, to be a man—" "  
"that is it means  
to sprout like a limb,  
to gnaw like a wolf,  
I am dying like a dog  
the moss settling  
against the water.  
there was never a God,  
there was never  
never a monster."  
like a tree, being  
of a forest. He imagines  
A small child spits  
a girl. Her face is small,  
she crushes him  
from high

shits, the boy dies,  
dies, the flower  
the stove cools,  
and flies settle  
of the battlefield.  
"that is what it  
and coughs—  
to be a life,  
to live like a beast,  
to die like a dog.  
right now. I am  
on a log, chaffing  
There is no God  
there was never a battle,  
a throne, there was  
He seethes, and feels  
felled in the center  
the animals in their dens.  
in his face. It was  
her body is small;  
like a boulder, dropped  
upon the rocks.

