

USBORNE YOUNG READING



Beowulf

Retold by Rob Lloyd Jones
Illustrated by Victor Tavares



Characters in the story

Beowulf (say
Bay-o-wolf)



Grendel



King
Hrothgar



Leofric
(Lee-of-fritch)



Wiglaf



The Danes



Grendel's mother



The Geats (Jee-ats)



The dragon



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Chapter 7

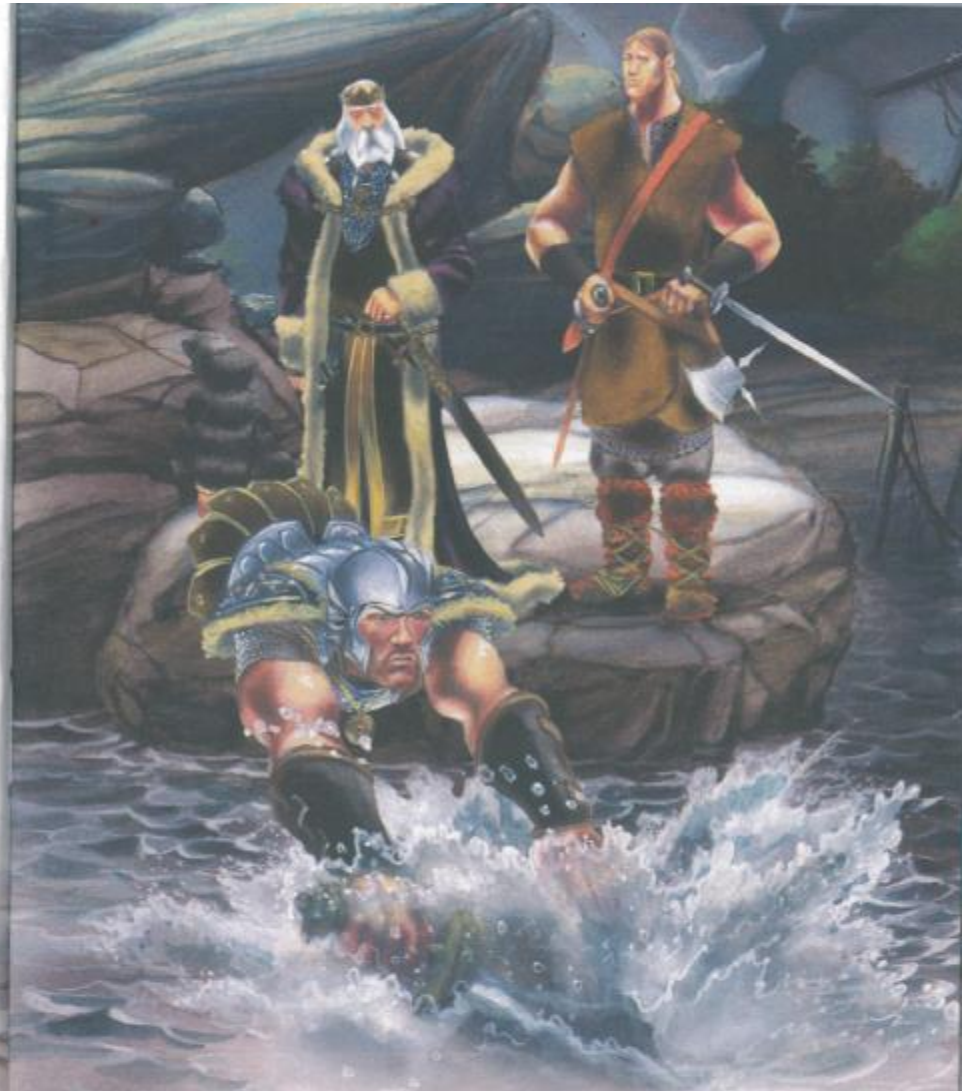
The Lake of Demons

The Geats sharpened their swords.
The Danes gathered their spears.
They marched together behind Beowulf,
following the monster's tracks to the
Lake of Demons.

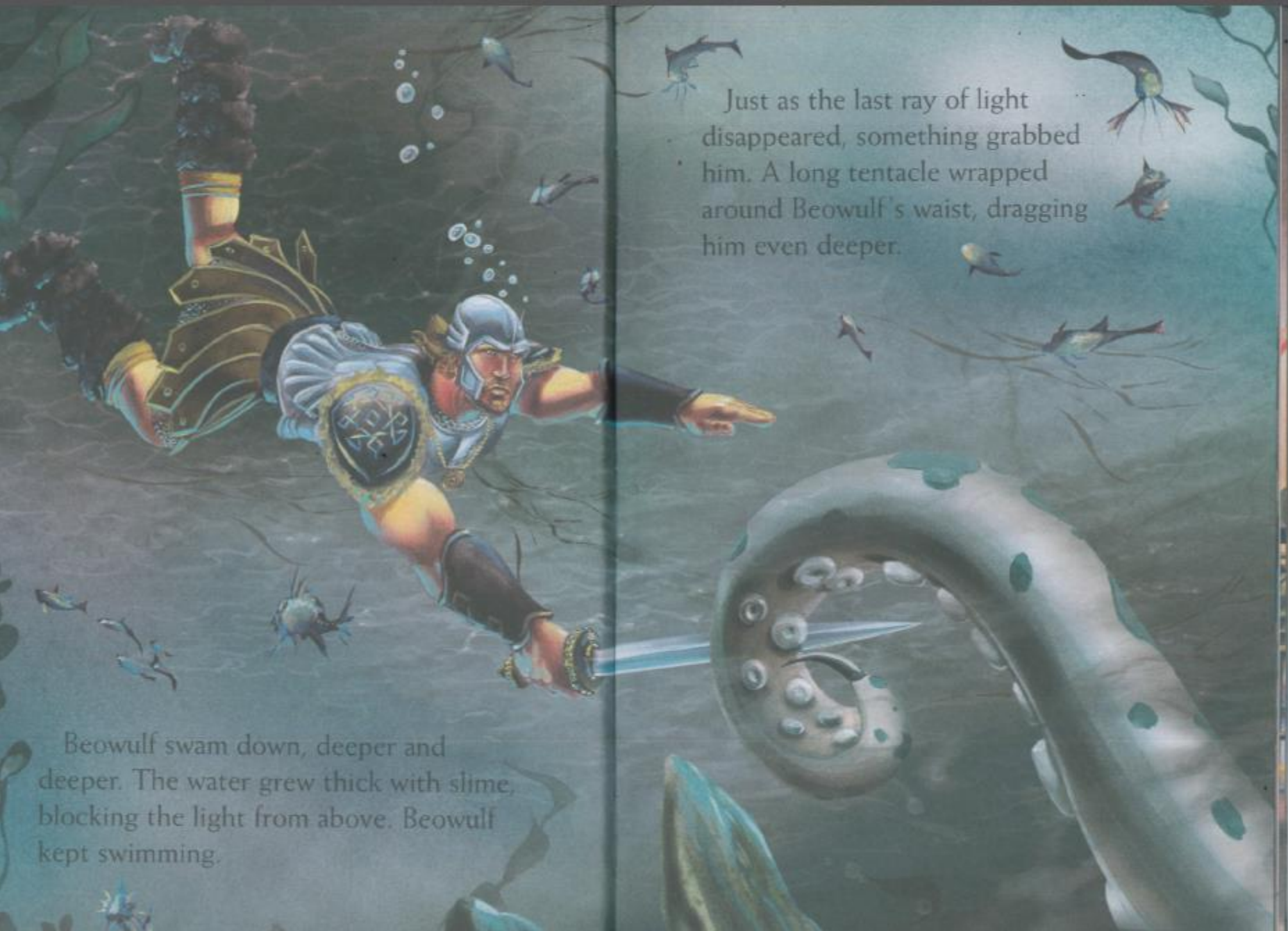
The Geats had never seen such
a ghastly place. The surface swirled
with ghostly fog. The water was
thick with slime. It was a vile lake.

Beowulf grasped his sword and glared into the dreadful depths.

King Hrothgar followed his gaze into the murky water. "It's so dark down there Beowulf," he whispered. "You do not have to go."

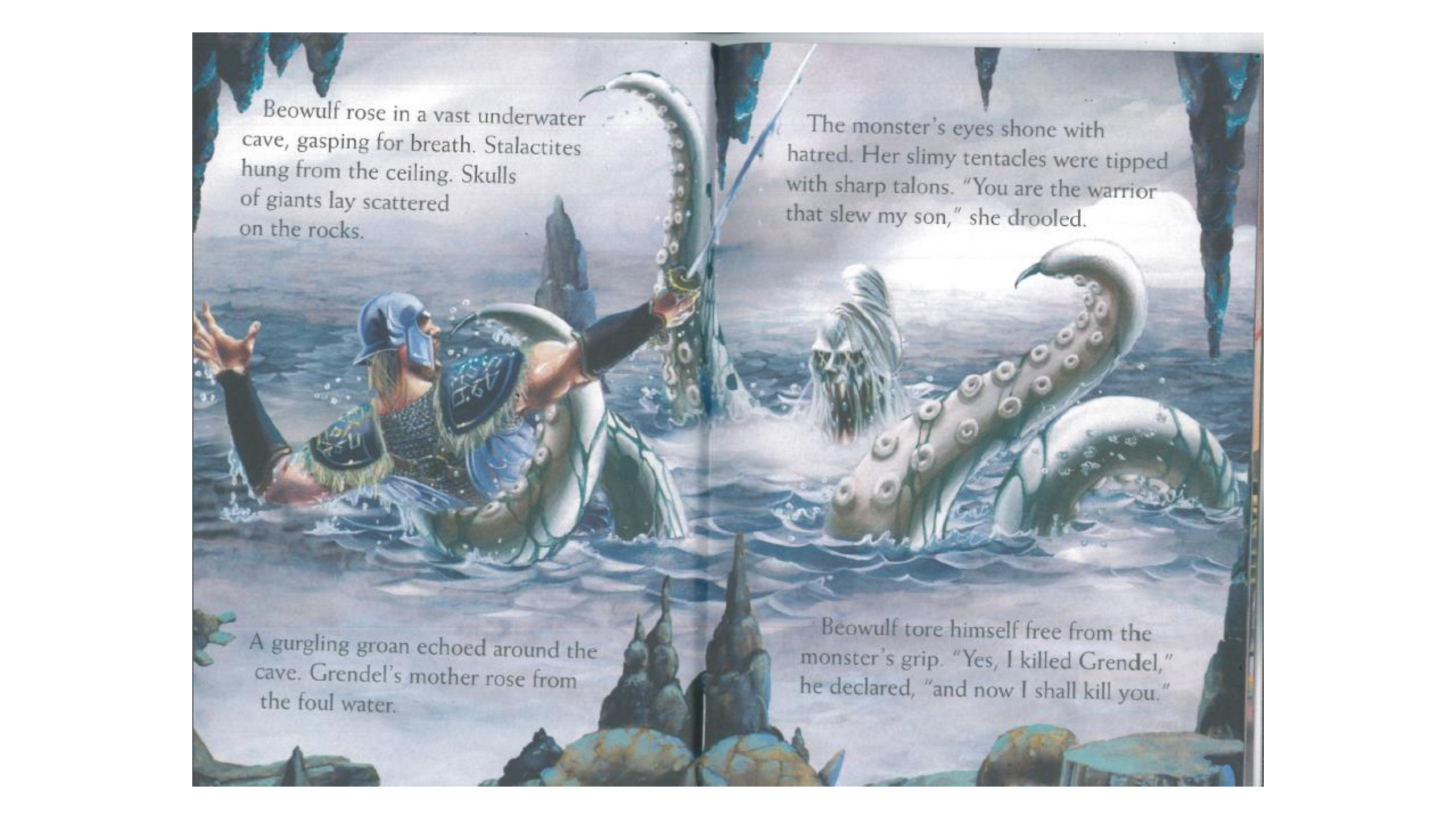


Beowulf just smiled. "That darkness you see is the monster," he said. "I am the light." And he dived into the lake.



Beowulf swam down, deeper and deeper. The water grew thick with slime, blocking the light from above. Beowulf kept swimming.

Just as the last ray of light disappeared, something grabbed him. A long tentacle wrapped around Beowulf's waist, dragging him even deeper.



Beowulf rose in a vast underwater cave, gasping for breath. Stalactites hung from the ceiling. Skulls of giants lay scattered on the rocks.

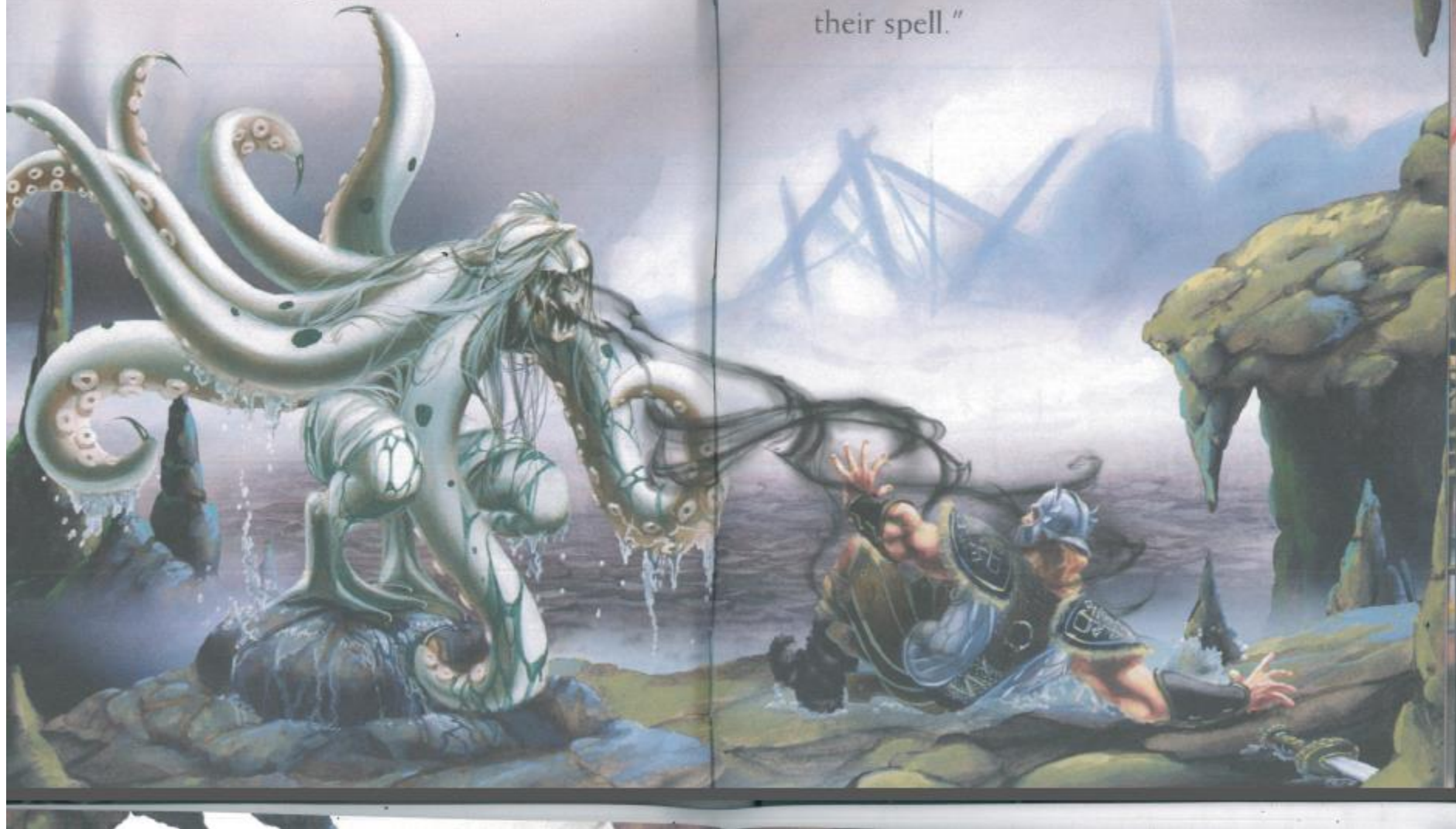
The monster's eyes shone with hatred. Her slimy tentacles were tipped with sharp talons. "You are the warrior that slew my son," she drooled.

A gurgling groan echoed around the cave. Grendel's mother rose from the foul water.

Beowulf tore himself free from the monster's grip. "Yes, I killed Grendel," he declared, "and now I shall kill you."

Beowulf went to attack, but his legs felt suddenly heavy. His sword clattered to the rocks and his head began to spin. The monster had him gripped in a dark spell.

Grendel's mother slithered closer. Beams of blackness shot from her eyes. "I am pure evil," she hissed. "My eyes are pure fear. No man can break free from their spell."



Summoning the last of his strength,
Beowulf hurled himself across the rocks
and snatched up his sword. "I am not
like all men," he roared. "I am Beowulf!
And I do not fear you!"



The monster swung her claws.
Beowulf whirled his sword...

Far above, the Geats and Danes waited in worried silence. Beowulf had been gone for too long. King Hrothgar feared that he was dead.



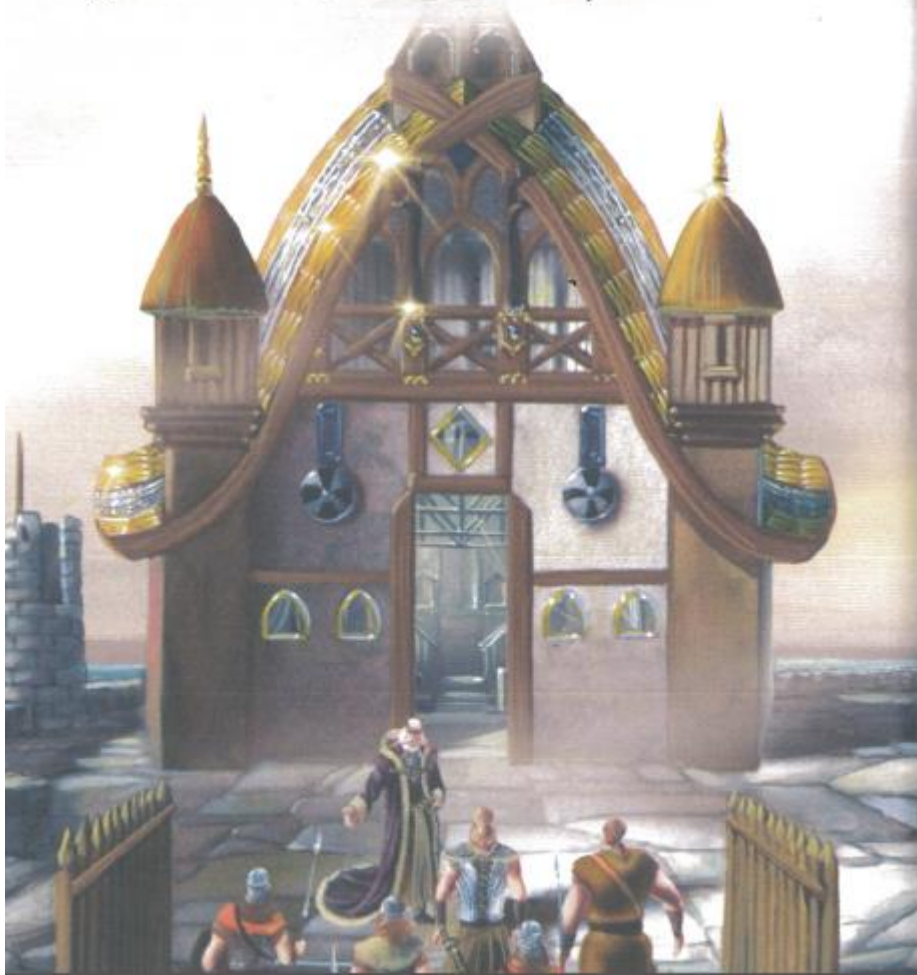
Just then, the water bubbled and frothed. The warriors staggered back in fright as the head of Grendel's mother rose from the lake...

A second later, Beowulf appeared, gripping the head in his hand.



He held up the trophy, smiling at the king. "You do not need to be scared anymore," he cried. "The monster is dead."

Beowulf marched with the warriors back to Heorot. The men cheered and joked as dawn blazed across the sky. The great hall looked more beautiful than ever. Its golden roof sparkled in the sun.



Chapter 8

King Beowulf



Beowulf returned to the land of the Geats, where he ruled for fifty years. He led warriors in battles against fierce beasts and savage monsters. All of his enemies feared him – Beowulf, the killer of Grendel.

Beowulf grew old and tired of fighting.
He dreamed of peace. But there was
one last monster left to fight...

Across Beowulf's kingdom, villagers
lived in fear of a terrible dragon. At night,
the beast swooped over their roofs. Fire
roared from its mouth. Houses burned.
People ran screaming in the streets.



Beowulf rode to a village near the dragon's lair, where he gathered his warriors in a huge stone hall.

"What can we do?" asked one.

"Fight back!" replied another.

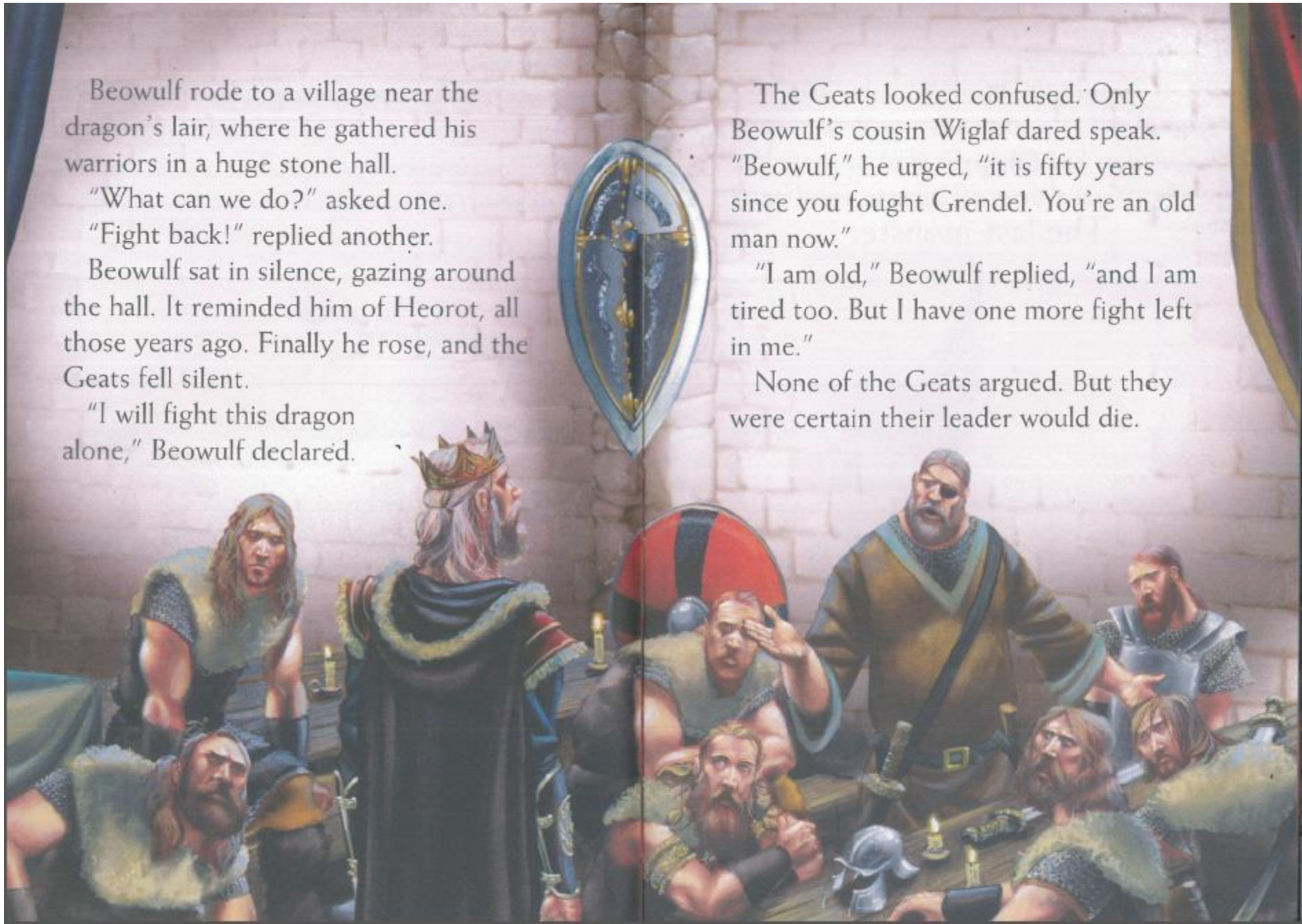
Beowulf sat in silence, gazing around the hall. It reminded him of Heorot, all those years ago. Finally he rose, and the Geats fell silent.

"I will fight this dragon alone," Beowulf declared.

The Geats looked confused. Only Beowulf's cousin Wiglaf dared speak. "Beowulf," he urged, "it is fifty years since you fought Grendel. You're an old man now."

"I am old," Beowulf replied, "and I am tired too. But I have one more fight left in me."

None of the Geats argued. But they were certain their leader would die.



Chapter 9

The last monster



The sun was setting as the warriors approached the dragon's mountain. A huge roar rumbled down the dark slope. The beast had woken.

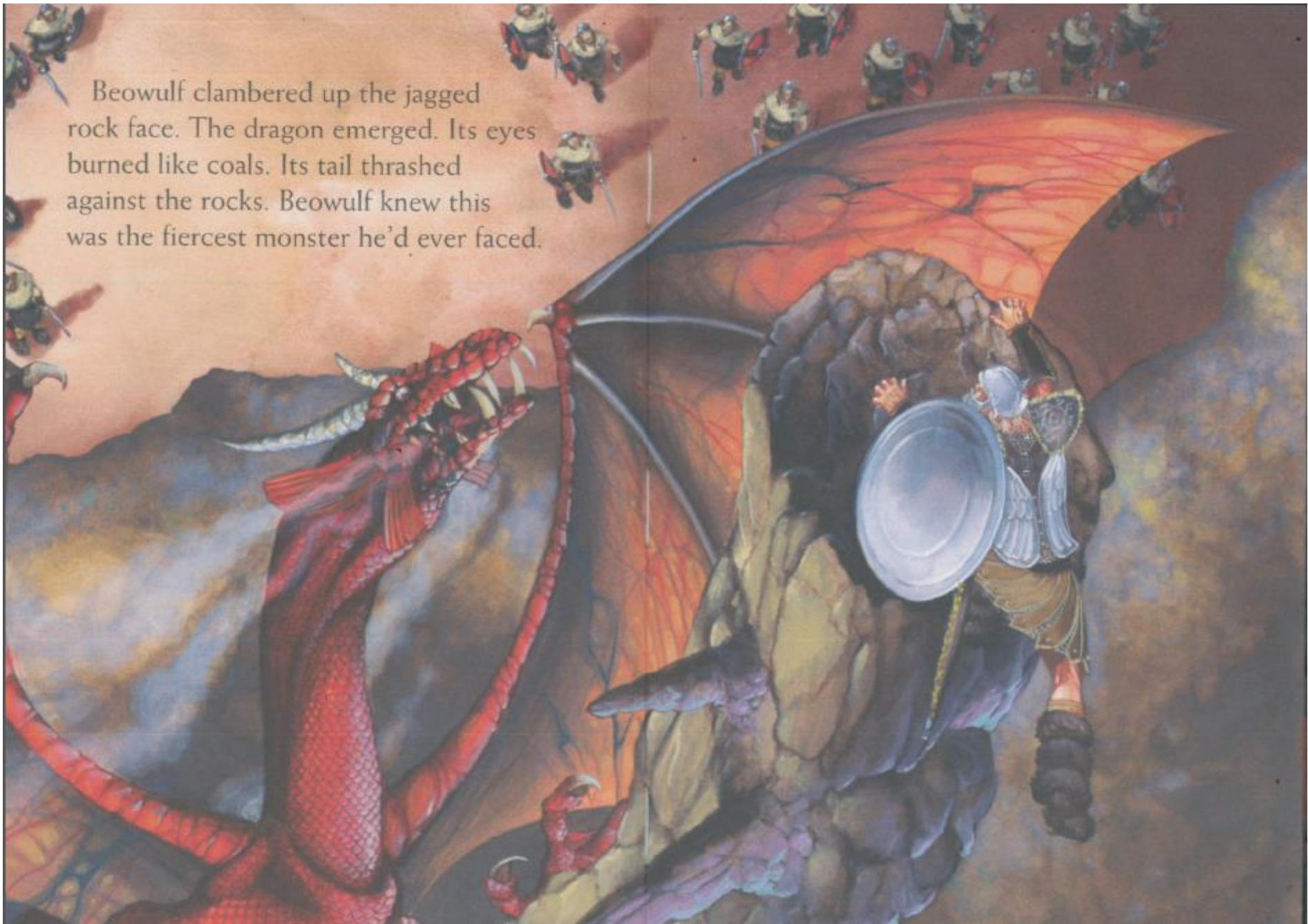
Wiglaf helped Beowulf into his chainmail. It was the same suit the king had worn to fight Grendel, but now it hung loose around Beowulf's chest.



"Cousin," Wiglaf pleaded to Beowulf, "let me go with you."

Beowulf just stared up the hillside. "I must go alone," he said.

Beowulf clambered up the jagged rock face. The dragon emerged. Its eyes burned like coals. Its tail thrashed against the rocks. Beowulf knew this was the fiercest monster he'd ever faced.



The dragon attacked, spitting fire.
Flames swirled around Beowulf's shield.

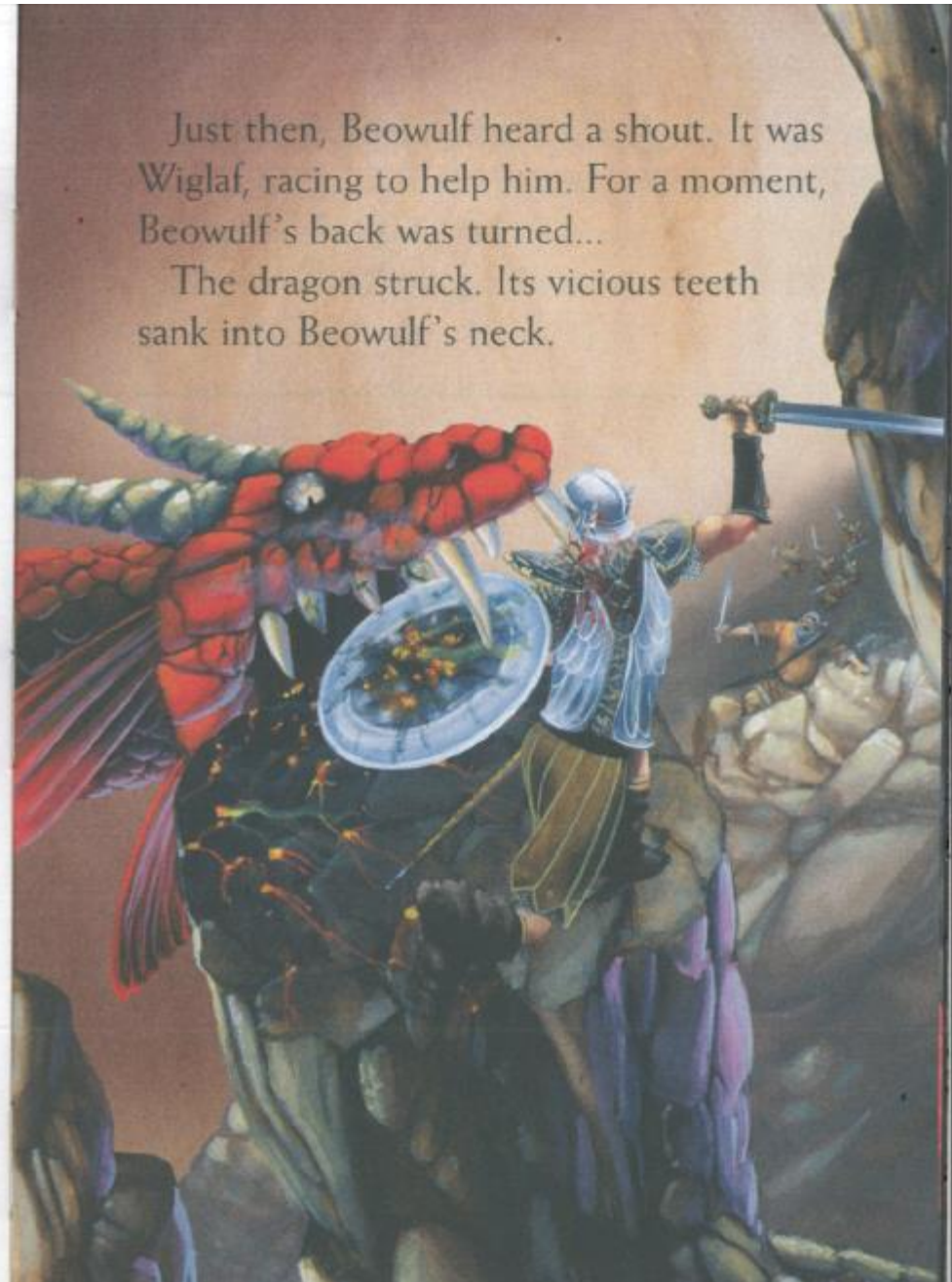
"I wasn't scared when I fought
Grendel," Beowulf cried. "I wasn't scared
when I killed his mother. And I am not
scared of you."



He lunged at the beast. The dragon
twisted and turned in the air. Beowulf
dived across the rocks, slashing the
monster with his sword.

Just then, Beowulf heard a shout. It was
Wiglaf, racing to help him. For a moment,
Beowulf's back was turned...

The dragon struck. Its vicious teeth
sank into Beowulf's neck.



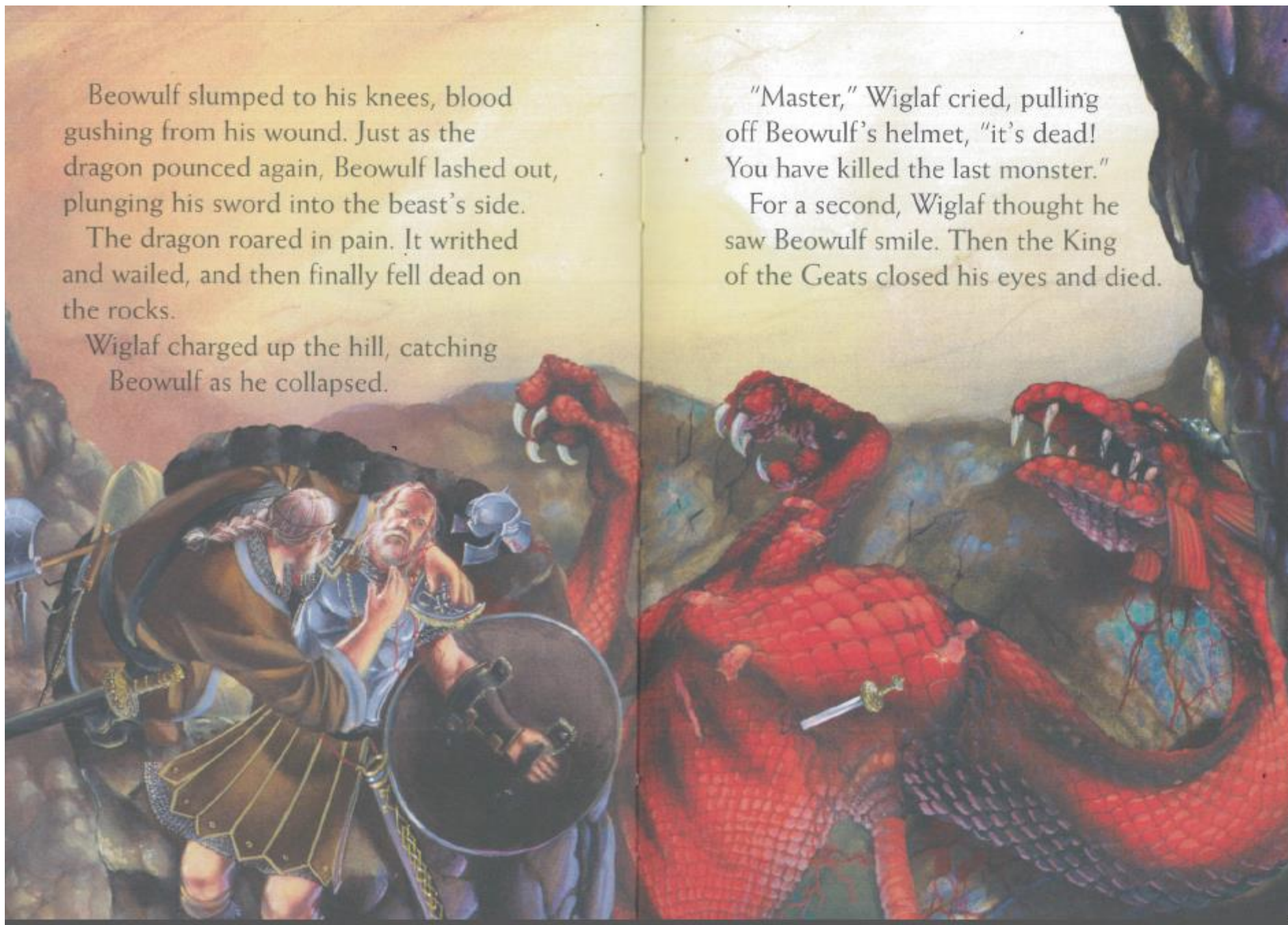
Beowulf slumped to his knees, blood gushing from his wound. Just as the dragon pounced again, Beowulf lashed out, plunging his sword into the beast's side.

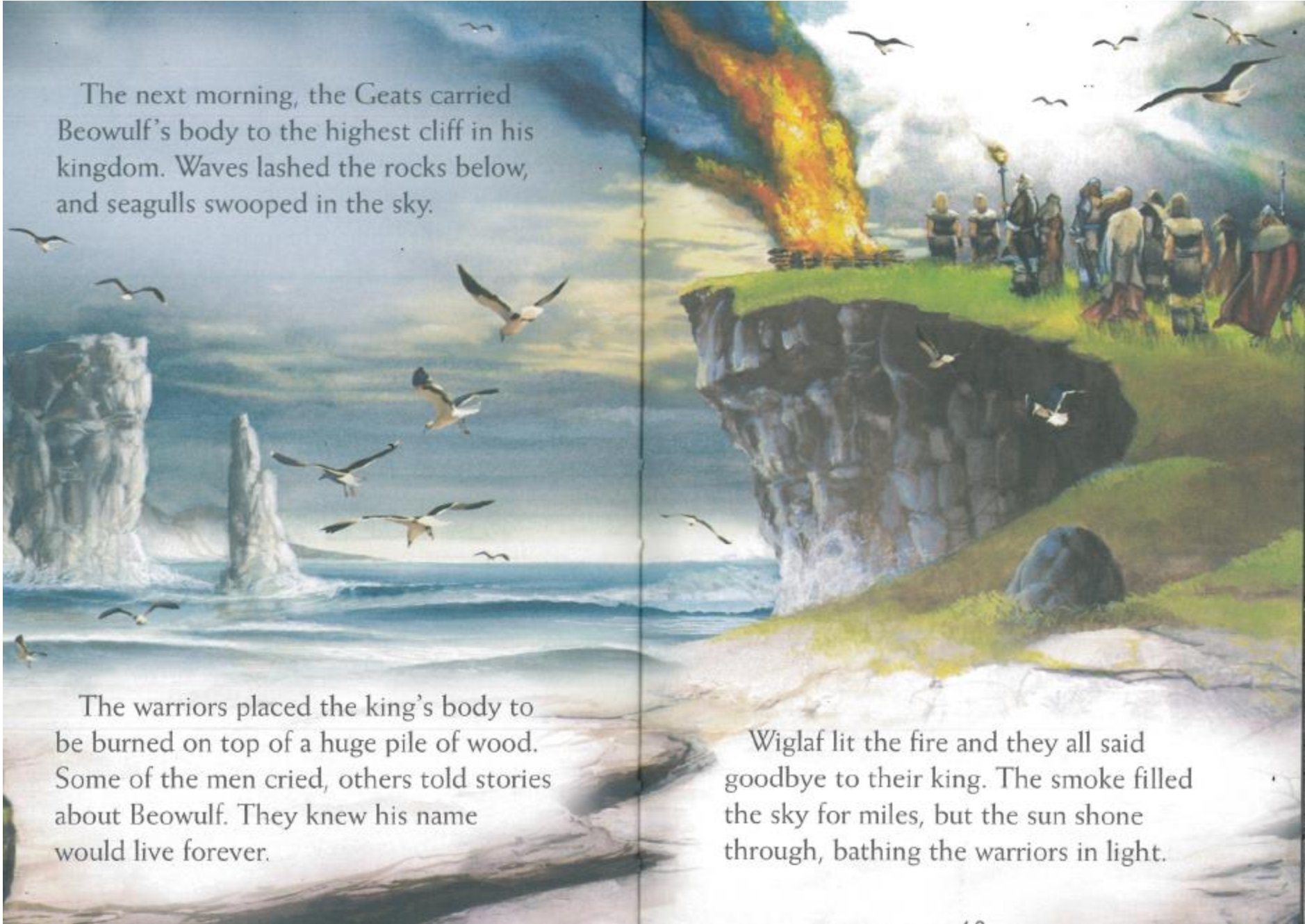
The dragon roared in pain. It writhed and wailed, and then finally fell dead on the rocks.

Wiglaf charged up the hill, catching Beowulf as he collapsed.

"Master," Wiglaf cried, pulling off Beowulf's helmet, "it's dead! You have killed the last monster."

For a second, Wiglaf thought he saw Beowulf smile. Then the King of the Geats closed his eyes and died.





The next morning, the Geats carried Beowulf's body to the highest cliff in his kingdom. Waves lashed the rocks below, and seagulls swooped in the sky.

The warriors placed the king's body to be burned on top of a huge pile of wood. Some of the men cried, others told stories about Beowulf. They knew his name would live forever.

Wiglaf lit the fire and they all said goodbye to their king. The smoke filled the sky for miles, but the sun shone through, bathing the warriors in light.