

long and hard, on the lookout for those friends.

With the anchor cables, he moored their craft right where it had beached, in case a backwash might catch the hull and carry it away.

Then he ordered the prince's treasure-trove to be carried ashore. It was a short step from there to where Hrethel's son and heir, Hygelac the gold-giver, makes his home on a secure cliff, in the company of retainers.

The building was magnificent, the king majestic, ensconced in his hall; and although Hygd, his queen, was young, a few short years at court, her mind was thoughtful and her manners sure. Haereth's daughter behaved generously and stinted nothing when she distributed bounty to the Geats.

Great Queen Modthryth

perpetrated terrible wrongs.
If any retainer ever made bold to look her in the face, if an eye not her lord's stared at her directly during daylight, the outcome was sealed: he was kept bound in hand-tightened shackles, racked, tortured until doom was pronounced – death by the sword, slash of blade, blood-gush and death-qualms in an evil display. Even a queen outstaring in beauty must not overstep like that. A queen should weave peace, not punish the innocent with loss of life for imagined insults. But Hemming's kinsman put a halt to her ways and drinkers round the table had another tale: she was less of a bane to people's lives, less cruel-minded, after she was married to the brave Offa, a bride arrayed in her gold finery, given away

Queen Hygd introduced. The story of Queen Modthryth, Hygd's opposite, is told by the poet.

by a caring father, ferried to her young prince over dim seas. In days to come she would grace the throne and grow famous for her good deeds and conduct of life, her high devotion to the hero king who was the best king, it has been said, between the two seas or anywhere else on the face of the earth. Offa was honoured far and wide for his generous ways, his fighting spirit and his far-seeing defence of his homeland; from him there sprang Eomer, Garmund's grandson, kinsman of Hemming, his warriors' mainstay and master of the field.

Heroic Beowulf and his band of men crossed the wide strand, striding along the sandy foreshore; the sun shone, the world's candle warmed them from the south as they hastened to where, as they had heard, the young king, Ongentheow's killer and his people's protector, was dispensing rings inside his bawn. Beowulf's return was reported to Hygelac as soon as possible, news that the captain was now in the enclosure, his battle-brother back from the fray alive and well, walking to the hall. Room was quickly made, on the king's orders, and the troops filed across the cleared floor.

After Hygelac had offered greetings to his loyal thane in lofty speech, he and his kinsman, that hale survivor, sat face to face. Haereth's daughter moved about with the mead-jug in her hand, taking care of the company, filling the cups that warriors held out. Then Hygelac began

Beowulf and his troop are welcomed in Hygelac's hall.