

BEOWULF

BEASTSLAYER

A TALE OF HEROES... A TALE OF MONSTERS... A LEGEND REBORN!

1

Urged by the wind, *Sea-Wolf*, the well-braced wave-cutter, skims over the swan's riding. Wind-whetted and white-throated, the curved prow ploughs the sea hard, while the harnessed warriors of the Geats – the storm-folk, resplendent in their bright mail-coats, their war-gear well-wrought – pull hard on the oars at your command.

A day out from home, the sky grows night-black and with storm-wrought waves rising like dark mountains about the ship, your men begin to tire and falter in their stroke.

“Good men of Geatland, proud subjects of King Hygelac,” you exhort your warrior-band, “you fourteen are the fiercest warriors of the fiercest warrior-folk in this middle-earth! Row hard for today is not your decreed death-day!”

“Stroke! Stroke!” you shout, the shout becoming a chant as you seek to help your men row in time with one another. But do you have the skill to keep the men in time together?

If you want to ensure that your rhythmic chanting keeps your men in time, deduct 1 *Hero Point* and turn to 7.

If not, *Take an Agility Test*; if you pass the test, turn to 7, but if you fail the test, turn to 4.

2

The *Sea-Wolf* leaps over the waves before the sea-beast, as it continues to plough through the storm-tossed spume, on its way to King Hrothgar's kingdom. But to tell your men to run

from the monster is not in the brave and noble manner of the hero you purport to be. (Lose 1 *Hero Point*.)

Besides, even a ship as swift as yours cannot outrun the hunting whale. The Orca dives below the waves again only to ram the ship from below, setting your men swearing “By Odin’s beard!” and “Thor’s hammer!”

Through the lashing rain, beyond the unsettled sea, you can see a shadow on the skyline.

Do you want to command your men to keep rowing, and hope you reach land before the whale can capsize the boat (turn to **10**), or will you now prepare to meet the Orca’s attack with your sword (make a note that you the Orca has the initiative and turn to **9**)?

3

The monster sinks back into the chill embrace of the deep ocean. And then, through the rain and tumultuous waves, a smudge of land on the skyline becomes the shimmer of sea-cliffs and wave-washed rocks, sheer fells rising into mist beyond.

The crossing is at an end – turn to **11**.

4

You struggle to make yourself heard – over the wind and the rain and the roar of the mountainous sea – and keep the rowers in time and the wave-cutter’s course straight and true.

Roll one die (or pick a card). If the number rolled is odd (or the card is red), turn to **8**. If the number rolled is even (or the card is black), turn to **6**.

5

Before it can reach the safety of the shingled shore, the *Sea-Wolf* hits the rocks, the jagged black mourn-makers tearing a great hole in the bow of the boat. You are thrown from the

deck and onto the rocks yourself, where you slice your arms and legs open on razor-sharp barnacles and knife-like spurs. (Lose 3 *Endurance* points.)

As you stagger, bleeding, onto the shore, to escape the horrors of the sea, you are joined by the rest of your men.

Turn to **11**.

6

Your warriors fight the waves with oars, not swords, their enemy the ocean-sound, as the *Sea-Wolf* rides out the storm, beneath black-cliff walls of water. And as the Geats beat back the sea-surges with their blades of wood, something finds you, out in the cold ocean.

Sea hunter. Wave rider. Killer whale.

Its tall black fin rises from amidst the waves like the sail of a death-ship. And then the hump of its back breaks the surface and you feel the blood-quickenning thrill of the chase.

Will you arm yourself and make your way to the stern, ready to fight off this monster of the black brine (make a note that you have the initiative and turn to **9**), or will you compel your men to propel the *Sea-Wolf* away from the black-finned hunter (turn to **2**)?

7

You keep the rowers' rhythm strong and the *Sea-Wolf's* course straight and true, until wind and waves relent and, on only the second day out from Geatland, you catch sight of land looming on the skyline.

You see the shimmer of cliffs, and sheer fells behind, while your men cheer for "Brave Beowulf!" and "Noble Beowulf!" and "Sea-wise Beowulf!"

Your voyage is at an end.

Turn to **11**.

8

Thor's hammer pummels the heavens, the storm's wrath worsens, and the *Sea-Wolf* is thrown over the storm-tossed sea, while lightning, like storm-flash fire, fractures the sky.

Until the rumour of land on the horizon becomes the shimmer of sea-beaten cliffs and wave-washed rocks that reach for the *Sea-Wolf* with terrible stone claws.

Turn to 5.

9

Sword in hand, you wait for the Orca to break the surface again, ready to deliver to powerful blow and drive it back into the night-dark depths. And then the monster bursts from the sea, foam-flecked, its black and white whale-skin striking to the eye, and you prepare to strike. (Which of you has the initiative in this mighty sea-battle will depend on how you came to this point.)

ORCA

COMBAT 8

ENDURANCE 10

If you want, you may spend 2 *Hero Points* to automatically win the battle with the whale (turn to 3). If not, you will have to fight it and only if you win, turn to 3.

10

Despite your men rowing with all their might, the *Sea-Wolf* cannot outrun the whale. As you come within sight of the shore, the Orca rams the boat again, driving it towards the jagged rocks that wait to bite down upon its unguarded planks with terrible teeth of the stone.

Turn to 5.

11

Your Geatish storm-warriors bound up the beach, a rope going with them, ring-mail clashing as they drag the *Sea-Wolf* ashore.

Beyond the grey beach rise the black sea-carved cliffs and as you survey the coast a spear-shaft of sunlight breaks through the clouds and you see the flash of armour.

A watchman! Sea guard. Coast warden.

From where he stands on sentry duty, posted there at the regal-command of Scyld Scefing's heir, the hawk-sharp watchman witnesses your arrival at the limit of King Hrothgar's domain.

He sees the polished shields of your men as they make their way ashore, and, curious as a cat, he guides his steed down to the shingle. Galloping through the surf, he greets you, holding out his spear at arm's length, and issues his challenge.

"Strangers, you have steered this proud craft through the sea-ways, and come clad as warriors. In all my years as look-out at land's end, I have never known shield-bearers come ashore more brazenly.

"King Hrothgar has had no word of your coming, so tell me your names and your purpose, or you'll go no further!"

How will you react to the Coast Warden's challenge?

To find out what happens next, back **BEOWULF BEASTSLAYER** on Kickstarter.



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BEASTSLAYER**

A BRAND NEW ADVENTURE GAMEBOOK
BASED ON THE ANGLO-SAXON EPIC POEM

WRITTEN BY JONATHAN GREEN
AND ILLUSTRATED BY RUSS NICHOLSON

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