

# The Lay of Beoric

By Joshua Gillingham

## I. Beoric Leaves The Grim Isles

It has been told of old  
Our fathers on Grim Isles  
Sailed stern ships with firm grip  
Salted water fearing

But one son named Beoric  
Bore little love for fish  
He scorned the barren sea  
And sought to twist his fate

So, sun-starved winter done,  
To his kinsfolk spoke he,  
“Why dredge this dreary sea  
While realms do empty lay?”

Laughter rocking rafters  
Rang long through drafty hall  
“Tell! Where lay these fair lands?”  
His father loud did mock

“There west where wicked kings  
Will glad make you their thrall?  
The sun-scored southland sands  
Or east o’er endless seas?”

Forth Beoric burst, “Nay, North!  
Bear witness to this oath:  
North shall I set my sail  
So come doom or glory!”

Some thought his words well wrought  
With Beoric oath did take  
Then each their ship equipped  
Eager for voyage North

Six were Beoric's brothers  
Three did sail beside him  
Three did grieve them leaving  
Their father cursed him thus:

“So go then! Greet thy doom!  
‘Neath waves great fiends await.  
Or meet on Northern shore  
Some other loathsome fate.”

Many men then trembled  
His mother wailed and cried  
But father bore for him  
Not pity, fear, or pride

## **II. Beoric Slays Kolkrabba**

Through great gales North they sailed  
Oar and rudder thrashing  
Rolling waves wide riding  
Til, for rest, took shelter

But none there knew what lurked  
Neath those writhing waters  
Foul ancient foe below  
Cruel Kolkrabba found them

Beast o’erturned brother’s stern  
Her slick arms Beoric saw  
With white rage he did fight  
Empty waves long slashing

Grey waves then went silent  
Loud wailing Beoric cursed  
Bent on violent vengeance  
Against the vile sea-beast

So quick they took thick rope  
Prows then lashed together  
Tightening formed round ring

To keep ships from rolling  
Then longest hook he took  
Ram's head on it skewered  
Down ship-ring's center dipped  
All waited, weapons drawn

Long laid strong Kolkrabba  
Far below them lingering  
But hook sunk deep did keep  
That devil in their grip

"Haul heavy!" Beoric called  
Well hard his whole crew pulled  
Til tentacles slick spilled  
Upon their tethered decks

Hewing, black blood spewing  
Each boat's crew hacked slick arms  
Til Beoric killed the beast  
Upon his blood-soaked deck

Harbour guard hard vanquished  
Safe haven there they won  
On that beast they did feast  
And mourned their fallen kin

### **III. The Woman in the Wood**

So landed Beoric's band  
Fair timber halls they built  
Those dark woods held good game  
Thin backs and arms grew thick

But night would bring wild things  
Which walked the woods and bogs  
Worse than the cursed wolves  
Trolls most foul and wicked

Yet heart did bid him dare  
Ever deeper wandering

Strange words he heard and songs  
Full of grief and sorrow  
“My sister were you mad  
To make so cruel a trade?  
To tear me from fair woods?  
Beast-bride of me you've made!”

On her silver streaming  
Moonlight saw her suffer  
So also Beoric saw  
Sitting, hiding, listening

“Hail pale stranger,” said she,  
“Long I saw you coming.  
Now tell well - what are you:  
Wicked foe or hero?”

Beoric grunted bluntly,  
“Bear your own keen judgement:  
My crew slew Kolkrabba  
And many crafty trolls.”

“Fortune fair this moon bears  
For sister mine conspires  
To dread troll king wed me  
So she might take these woods.”

Grave word he gave and blade  
There onward her to guard  
So, like a spell, love fell  
Binding burning spirits

With Beoric she went quick  
Through dark and guarded woods  
Out of her sister's grip  
And on to Beoric's hall

#### **IV. Beoric and Fyra**

Wide-eyed many met her

Fyra, foreign maiden  
Red hair like flaring fire  
Eyes green as frigid seas

Beoric's brother wondered  
“Who is this you have brought?  
Dark things I fear cling close  
To her tattered cloak-edge.”

His words Beoric heard not  
For by her beauty snared  
His heart and mind were blind  
To his kin strong grumbling

Addressing all she called  
“Tell! Why this harsh abuse?  
Have I to one done harm  
Or spoke ill in this hall?”

“Betrayed by my sister,  
Lysa, bitter schemer,  
Heartless she would wed me  
To tyrant of these woods.”

Those there rose up at once  
Their anger like red iron  
“What king could claim this wood  
Won with our crimson blood?”

“No word here heard,” she asked,  
“Of horde-lord Gezbrukter?  
Waits he high in Gatewatch  
His promised bride to wed.”

Then their thoughts were darkened  
Fear made their anger thick  
Beoric bore thoughts of war  
With boldness there he spoke

“This long have we held strong  
Against the restless horde.

Let fear not steer us now,  
Nay, let's slay this troll lord!"

Stern words stirred great courage  
So gathered kin for war  
Most of that mighty host  
Would soon be seen no more

## **V. The Battle of Gatewatch**

Over rivers raging  
Through rugged forest trod  
Mighty host most valiant  
All, for war, made ready

To Gatewatch through the pass  
There in between pale peaks  
Arrived to drive at last  
All threat of trolls from home

Sunset done, dusk settled  
Dark shapes stirred, rocks shifted  
In gloom loomed figures great  
Long grey silence breaking

Horrid Troll-King howling  
All his dread host calling  
Trolls like thunder rolling  
Grim-faced rushed to maul them

Beoric he stood bravely  
Gathering scattered brothers  
Shield sisters yielding  
Soon all round him rallied

Slashing, Bashing, Breaking  
Battered white bone shattered  
Screaming, red blood streaming  
All night sharp steel edge sang

Dawn drew near to breaking  
Troll-King desperate fighting  
Saw first light bright shining  
All trolls turned to hard stone  
Eyes by red rays blinded  
Troll-King reeling stumbled  
Quick leapt Beoric boldly  
Bearing wrathful death strokes

This he then swore sternly  
No troll shall thereafter  
Between pale peaks be seen  
If kin of his prove brave

Funeral pyres blazed with fire  
Burning fierce 'til nightfall  
Long did songs of sorrow  
Echo under starlight

## **VI. The Death of Beoric**

All back at Beoric's hall  
Awed by his daring deed  
There hailing him as king  
Thick bear cloak on him laid

So there Beoric the Bear  
Took Fyra as his bride  
Then watches three he set  
To honor those who died

Gatewatch in mountains grey  
Stagwatch the wood did guard  
Seawatch to brave salt waves  
All the realm strong keeping

And so that land secured  
For some time was held tame  
In such rich soil toiling  
Sons and daughters prospered

But one bitter winter  
In Beoric's well-lit hall  
A stranger came to stay  
Black hair neath silver cloak  
"So this is he," she said,  
"Sly Kolkrabba's slayer,  
Great Gezbrukter's killer.  
With this glass I praise thee!"

Holding golden goblet  
Ruby liquid glimmered  
Up to lips cup lifted  
Red stains lingered after

But Beoric was not quick  
To sip her bitter wine  
So said she, "Drink with me  
Or say you are coward."

That draught brought Beoric's death  
Loud bellowing he fell  
Fast fleeing, cloak she shed  
Lysa, Fyra's sister

Long sang they mourning songs  
With grief and wrath so wild  
Yet all had this small hope  
Fyra held Beoric's child