

# Grendel

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Mario Stone

In cold womb, black barking husk  
I curl gold to tourniquets.  
    I wrap my neck, my wrists  
pretty gifts  
    to coax a pulse, a throb, an ache,  
anything to quell the shouting  
    walls. Shadows, thick  
the mere thought of light  
cast bricks on me. Every shout snaps at me  
    wolf on bone  
    all fang no tongue  
no warm relief  
    before the bite. I knew a supple life,  
    I held him in my palms, softer than snow,  
    he was a feather's whisper cradling  
    every cloud in his small hands,  
    plucking their strands and smiling  
    as he unraveled all his presence within.  
    Pure in every way.  
Yet when they saw, they tore with bone and claw,  
gnashed their teeth and mauled  
the black skin I sheltered him with.  
The brunt of every club, the blade of every knife,  
I beckoned all curses in his stead.

No darkness damns. The wicked burn  
beneath the breath of doves.