

The Hunting Party: Excerpt

Amalie Kae and Dea Johanna Grundt Herbøl.

About this document:

The Hunting Party is the name of a singular chapter in a longer narrative collaboration project. This document contains a short excerpt from said chapter.

Despite the over branching narrative being an equal collaboration between Amalie Kae, and Dea J. G. Herbøl, the following pages are written solely by Amalie Kae.

The setting is European medieval, with minor fantasy traits.

Context / Plot:

A yearly getaway for a group of high-class noblemen turns sour when one man sneaks off from a hunting party, in order to carry out a sinister plot.

As soon as he was a good, secure distance away from the fellowship, Garrent Henzel gave a yell, and the horse took off in the most neck-breaking gallop it could manage.

Instantly, the adrenaline of the hunt kicked in, and as the trees flew by as blurred shadows, Garrent even found himself smiling wide. This was in his blood. There was no denying it. And what made it so much more thrilling, was that someone very special had given him a purpose for this particular hunt.

Not long had passed, before Garrent had snuck past two separate hunting parties who were irrelevant to him.

The men making their way through the forest were clueless..! Stomping through the bed of the forest, crackling leaves and snapping twigs like the oblivious lazy excuses for huntsmen they were. And despite the greedy nobles being on the jumpy, trigger-happy side, it had been easy to guide the horse around the poor fools.

Finally, Garrent slowed the horse down to a relaxed amble, as he made the final, crucial preparations.

From a saddlebag fastened to the horse's side, he produced a soft bundle of dark fabric. As he laced down the front of his vest and took it off, the cool air almost made him shiver.

Scouting around him once again, making absolutely sure no other person was around to witness him as he transformed, he dressed himself in a dark brown tunic without any detailing at all. Next, he picked up a soft piece of black cotton fabric, that he tied around his neck so that the lower half of his face was concealed. Running his hands through the red hair a few times, making sure that it stayed out of his face, he finally dressed himself in a dark, large cowl.

Dressed in plain and common clothes, the humble silhouette looked nothing like the flamboyant, colourful Garrent Henzel. The only thing that spoke of any kind of identity at all, were the bright, green eyes peaking out from between the mask and the dark hood.

As the expensive garments disappeared back into the saddlebag, the rider was truly anonymous. And with that, the huntsman steered his horse closer to where he knew his target was waiting for him.

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The huntsman soon found himself comfortably resting with his back against a sturdy tree that conveniently expanded its branches in a strong Y shape. Despite the tree being one of the tallest one of the slight clearing, it had only taken the strong soldier a few kipping pull-ups to rise to the top.

With one leg extended underneath him, and the other leg flexibly bent in front of him, Garrent simply rested the crossbow on his shin and waited. The dark hood fell over his face, combatting the relentless sun which still hung high in the blue sky.

Below him, a group of noblemen had decided to stop for a short rest. Blaise Du Nor, a couple of Liondales, Kastor Ravendale's uncle... and Erasmus Finakyrn.

Repositioning his leg, making sure the crossbow lay completely secure over his knee, it did not take him long to load the impressive weapon with one of the deadly looking black bolts.

Beneath the black fabric, Garrent pulled a smile.

"Left or right?" he mumbled thoughtfully to himself, as he arched his neck, and aligned the crossbow exactly right. "Sorry in advance for the scare, Blaise..."

A bird chirped in a tree nearby. One of the men in the clearing laughed. Garrent steadied his breathing, as he took aim. Killing the man would have been child's play. But his mission was much more specific than that. Much meaner.

With another deep, controlled inhale, Garrent moved a steady finger to the ornate steel trigger. The man had no clue what was going to hit him. A final exhale. It was almost too easy..!

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Blaise Du Nor had planted himself on a patch of grass next to Erasmus who was casually leaning against a wide oak, with one arm stretched above his head, hand resting on a low hanging branch.

The two friends happily passed the time: Blaise boasting at how he knew his two younger brothers would most likely come back from the hunt completely empty-handed, Erasmus spilling secrets of how his lady of choice surely could not resist him for much longer.

The leader of the group had left to scout ahead slightly, while the two younger Liondales were taking care of a young deer they had managed to take down shortly before.

They all felt good. The break felt more than well deserved. Everything seemed so calm on the bright, warm day.

A throat ripping roar thundered through the clearing, as Erasmus attempted to pull his extended arm closer to his body, but failed.

Blaise shot up from the ground with a surprised, panicked grunt and widening eyes as he witnessed the grim incident that had taken place before him.

Gasping unevenly, entering a hyperactive state, Erasmus turned his head with hoarse, desperate breathing, and saw exactly what had happened to him: Lodged heavily into the tree he was leaning against, a black bolt had pinned his forearm completely in place, the steel still vibrating from the incredible impact. His hand hung oddly down at an unnatural angle, with a slight uncontrolled cramp in the twitching fingers.

In pure shock, both men stopped breathing. Stopped moving. Frozen in place by confusion and roaring adrenaline.

Blaise Du Nor was awoken from his shock in an instant, as another bolt flew directly over his head, and this time, he ducked for cover.

From across the clearing, the Liondales were yelling in complete confusion, demanding to know what was happening. Blaise, confused by his own uneven breathing, fumbled with getting his own crossbow loaded, only to drop the bolt repeatedly. Erasmus' head ominously fell down to his chest, as the tree behind him quickly turned a deep red and the air of the clearing began smelling sweet and metallic.

Another bolt fastened itself with a loud snap in a tree near the two Liondales, making the youngsters throw themselves to the ground and the steeds rear in fright. Another bolt lodged itself in one of the horse's rear legs, forcing it to fall to the ground with a painful, animalistic neigh.

As Blaise finally had his crossbow loaded, he waited for another arrow to leave the unknown enemy's weapon, before he bravely stood up. Scouting around the treeline, he soon realised, that there was no sight of an attacker.

All that was left, was black bolts, and a wounded comrade, losing blood alarmingly fast.