

# A Night with Hunting Party

A dramatization of the last two rounds of a Hunting Party game.

Like most great events, it started off so commonplace. There I was, drinking at the Tavern, halfway through a bar tab that I couldn't pay, when the Paladin came in. No one would have noticed, except for the fact that he backhanded the dancing Gypsy out of the way and announced, "Is there a blade for hire in this midden heap?" Then he looked at me and said, "Barbarian, I would offer you three shares of the bounty to join my party." A generous offering to be sure, but before I could accept, the Marauder called over his mug to raise the bid to four shares. Half the bounty! An unheard of offer, but the Marauder had been drinking. Nothing new about that. In fact, he always seemed better off after a good drink.



We drank until dawn while he explained to me that he was on a quest for the King. Apparently, the Shadow was trying to take over the land and the King was paying well for the prophecy to go his way. He went on to tell me, "I offered you so much because I've already worked out that defeating the Shadow will require some Melee fighting." Then, with a sneer, he wondered aloud if the Paladin knew it also. Apparently, the King wasn't satisfied with sending only one Hero on this quest. On our way out, the Marauder made a peace offering of some wine to the Paladin. As he lay passed out, the Marauder deftly stole the Paladin's boots right off his feet. He then gave me the Paladin's Boots of Speed, the Dwarven Pack and returned to me my axe, which I had lost the night before. For returning my axe, I gratefully lowered my price to, a still worthy, three shares.



The next day, against my urging, we traveled to the Tower and hired the Elder Advisor into our party for three shares. The weakling researched the prophecy and found, "The Shadow's pace cannot be traced, for upon the ground no marks are found." At this obvious disdain for my tracking skill, I demanded another share from the Marauder for having to put up with this sniveling Tower member. Instead of paying me, he showed true leadership with a wise command.

**"Just kill him. We've learned what we wanted."**

After happily obliging, we went hunting the Shadow. Since the Marauder knew that the Shadow would either be found in the Palace or in the Darkwoods, and seeing as how we weren't equipped for fighting in either place, we chose the less hostile Palace. While tracking the Shadow, we were ambushed by the Court Wizard. Now, most magic throwers are odd and deserve to die, but this fellow was especially odd. He acted like a puppet on strings and his heart didn't seem to be in the fight. While his heart may not have been in it, his magic surely was. Spell by spell, he was slowly positioning us for the kill. Just when all was apparently lost, the Paladin, flanked by the Royal Bodyguard, who was wielding the Sorceress' Magic Wand, countered the Court Wizard's magic and subdued the wayward wizard. It was granted that the Paladin's party would receive the bounty for defeating the Court Wizard and the Marauder would pay two gold to loot the body for items.



The Marauder immediately used the first of the two items to rewind time and start the day again. He then placed the second item on me. Now, I like to be equipped for any occasion, but a Virgin Maiden's Veil made me look completely ridiculous. The Marauder insisted that it was necessary to lure the Shadow out of his hiding in the Darkwoods. So, the Marauder guided us into the Darkwoods and there I was, standing for all to see, in a veil. But it did the trick! Before too long, I was face to face with the Shadow.



Now, I can't tell you what he looked like, for he was barely substantive. Even with his hood, he seemed to bend from the light and form with the shadows. He recoiled as I pulled off the veil and brandished my axe. Although he may be impervious to chains, arrows, and magic, we both knew that blades were another matter. He fought on, matching my strength with the axe, but with a speed no axe could ever achieve. I gave ground instead of blood, and I knew that no single blade would ever beat this fiend. Fortunately, that was never our plan. I gave ground and, step by step, he came closer to springing our trap. I reared back, leaving myself open, and swung with all my might. Unconcerned about the blow, the Shadow went for the quick kill and slashed for my head. The Marauder leapt out from behind a tree and blocked the blow. In the split second that the blades were locked, my axe smashed through, destroying him like the dawn does the night.



by Ben Christenson