

The Secret.

Late March; Exmoor bathes in blue light from a full-Moon. The wind calm, yet movement, flowing from various directions and merging at 'the chains'; weaving onwards in one line, resembling a chain itself, silver in the Moonlight.

It travelled between ancient burial mounds to barrows across the moors ---following Ley-Lines, old pathways used since prehistoric times --- heading toward the coast.

A noise caused Jed to look upwards; something moved on the South West Coast Path. He stared at the skyline and there they were?

Large Red-Deer Stags, silhouetted against the orb of the Moon; they leaped a stone boundary wall passing into the steep combe, gliding past focused, not noticing Jed, who was filming Badgers using a night-vision camera. Jed watched through his camera lens as hundreds of Stags zig-zagged downwards through heather, their antlers emitting a sound similar to drumsticks clicking together as they brushed past Hawthorn-tree branches.

The stags came to a precarious trail along a cliff-edge and formed in single file; Jed wondered if they were about to jump into the Bristol channel, like wildebeest migrating? As the last one passed him, it's greyish winter coat glowing silver in the Moonlight, curiosity forced Jed to follow.

Making his way stealthily across the combe, he arrived above them and scanned the cliff below through his camera. he gasped in awe! As steam rose from the herd, its pungent smell tainting the air, Jed filmed; recording unique footage only seen in a cave painting at Northern France.

The cliff, amphitheatre shaped, fell one hundred feet to a beach of boulders; at its top jutted a rock ledge --- on its edge stood an ancient Oak tree, clinging to the rock hand-like with its roots --- decades dead and petrified: its shape mirroring the antlers of the Stags beside it.

It was to this Oak the Deer approached; head held high, antlers touching their backs as if 'at bay'. Then a jerk forward of the head, almost bowing, before thrashing antlers against the tree trunk until they came off, with a loud crack resounding around the rocks. The echo startled the Deer; the leader, antlerless, ran to and fro on the trail as if in grief, then bound off silently into the night: each Stag repeated the ritual and was gone, before the morning sky lit up in a kaliedascope of colour, mimicking Turner's 'sunrise'.

The trail was inaccessible without climbing ropes, so Jed zoomed in on the Oak using his camera. Just then, a pile of antlers toppled --- gravity pulling them over the ledge; the interlocked tines of many more were pulled along snake-like, until out of sight, they fell: many hit the beach and shattered, but plenty snagged the Oak roots, hanging intertwined --- locked in strings, as though the tree probed below for a source of life. Jed knew, this was a special place, an 'antler graveyard' and a reason not many are found; as for the location, well, that's 'the secret'.