

## THE PERFECT SHOT

The great stag awoke early in the morning. The dawn was just rising and he was anxious to start the day early. He sniffed the air smelling its freshness and seeking out any danger, then he started down to his favourite watering hole. The ducks and geese were splashing about and shaking themselves clean for the start of the new day. As he started to drink he felt the hair on the back of his neck rise up. He was not alone. His first urge was to run but he held himself in check. What was it? Where was it? What was creating this feeling that he should run and keep on running. Suddenly from up ahead a branch bent shaking the leaves and he was off. He could not afford to wait and see what it was; too many would like to have his head as a trophy. He ran for many miles with an urgency that only the hunted know. For in life there are the hunters and hunted and he was born to be hunted. When he thought it was safe to stop he slowed, knowing that he was well away from the danger, if danger it was and started to graze. As he fed he thought back on the situation, was it necessary to run, or was he feeling a little spooky. Still, it is better to be safe than dead.

About an hour later as he lazily wandered through the woods, the alarm bells in his head rang again 'Where was the danger this time'. He looked all around but could see nothing; he smelt the air but could only get the smell of the woodland creatures. Was he imagining the danger he listened closely so that he might hear anything out of the ordinary. Squirrels played in the trees, bees and insects buzzed about on their business, nothing out of the ordinary. Suddenly like a crack of thunder a branch broke under foot of someone or something and the voice in his head shouted run, run and keep on running. As he ran he thought to himself "Why me, there are plenty of others around why am I being pursued so vigorously? Why don't they, whoever they are, go elsewhere for their fun? Why am I the only target of their hunt?"

This time he was not going to stop he ran until it felt as though his great heart would burst. At last he stopped, panting fiercely and shaking all over from the exhaustion. He could run no further; he surely must have outdistanced his pursuers. This time he would be safe. He was on a high hill, looking down he could see other deer in the distance and wondered if the same thing were happening to them. But they seemed to be peaceful and quite.

Then he thought of the rutting season and his quest to gather a large band of does for himself. Ah yes it was good to be alive. For a moment his mind wandered back to his childhood and his playing with the other young bucks. 'Ah yes those were the days' he thought 'No responsibilities'. Just then from somewhere just behind him he heard a click (they say you never hear the bullet that kills you) and he darted away. This time he felt that whoever or whatever was chasing him had given up the hunt and he was safe.

From a small hollow in the ground covered with grass, furze and leaves the hunter rose. "Thank goodness" he said, rising stiffly and sorely when getting to his feet. "I thought that stag would be the death of me. What a chase, over dale and hill, I am exhausted. Still, it was worth it all to get that photo for next month's NATURE IN THE WILD." It was indeed the perfect shot.