

ENCOUNTER – Young Buck

In the autumn of 2022, I found a young buck dead on the side of the road and brought him back to Goblinwoode. I placed the body near to where we had found the stag that summer, set up a field camera, and was blessed with excellent footage of foxes consuming the meat at night and robins sniping gathering flies there in the morning. After a few days of this, we had one of the heaviest storms of the year. I went out the next day to find the deer mostly reduced to a skeleton and dragged many meters across the forest floor. More remarkably still, the configuration of the skeleton and the position of a branch lying across its neck produced an arresting and affecting pattern.

A journal entry from 23/11/2022 reads:

“Then to Stag’s crossing where the young buck was also conspicuously absent. This harder to find, perhaps 30 meters off downstream, but unbelievably placed (see images and video). Half the face and skull cleared away as well, and a ribcage almost entirely stripped while remaining in-tact. The spine worked around backward from the neck, as if the buck’s head had twisted about like an owl. However, the head was still aligned as normal with a coat of flesh and hair, along with one leg, that lay in counterpoint to the ribs. One could hardly have laid it out more creatively if one tried. A fallen branch crossed its throat.”

Because the deer had been dragged so far away, there was no good accompanying footage of exactly how it had undergone this transformation. However, the videos “Fox drags hide” and “Fox moves hide” from a couple days after the storm shows a fox pulling on the hide, stretching it behind the log and tugging it into a shape resembling the second skeleton position and revealing something of how the unusual configuration was formed. These configurations are rendered in the images provided on the RC Exhibit (Encounter->The Young Buck), both of which produce configurations that might easily be mistaken for artistic interference.

But what appears here as a work of art is only a collaboration between one human’s photographic framing, the feasting dance of foxes and corvids, and a very intense rain storm. In addition to the artistic interpretation, I, in my intensive grieving state, latched onto thoughts of messages from beyond the grave. My wife, who made the drawing on the last frame of the image slideshow, saw it as a magical sigil. The foxes? Well, I’m pretty sure they were just hungry. I won’t even begin to guess what the storm was up to.

Nevertheless, this entry demonstrates a visually compelling example of the generative potential of (re)wilding collaborations with forests.