



Solitary Sandpiper

A crescent moon and sparkling Venus set in the western horizon over Indian Pond in Big Moose Township; the untamed honking of Canada geese, and yodeling loons overwhelm the wild stillness. Nearby Burnham Brook is bounded by standing and fallen dead tree trunks. Numerous meadows delineate areas where shallow water once pooled behind beaver dams that have long since been abandoned. The brook is dynamic like the rest of the northern forest. The flora lining this meandering, clear waterway is beginning to bloom. The fresh grasses and leaves signify the start of warm, summer days; soon this new growth will burst with verdure.

An ominous, slow-moving shadow appears on the brook from an adult bald eagle as it flies overhead, just above the treetops. It is deliberate and focused, hunting for its breakfast, perhaps hoping to catch a duck unaware of its presence. A female red-breasted merganser paddles downstream, vigilantly arching its head skyward.

The lean, dead tree trunks provide hunting perches for the fish-eating belted kingfishers, and places for pileated woodpeckers to prod for insects. A female hooded merganser, black ducks, a ruffed grouse, and a solitary sandpiper visit the brook as the rapidly intensifying morning sun glows brightly in a cloudless, spring sky.

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