

Ike Says . . .

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made by a buck. The giveaway was when the tracks walked up to a small jack fir tree that was shredded from hooking. The smile again appeared on the hunter's lips.

He worked his way up onto a ridge where the cat road ended and where he knew there was an overlook back toward the small basin he had just walked through. Slipping over to a high stump near the edge the hunter stepped up onto it to gain a higher advantage point. Slowly the he scoured the landscape before him, looking in every opening for tell-tale sign of a buck. The hunter had learned from experience that it took time to look over an area, and that deer have a way of mysteriously appearing out of nowhere.

Tired of standing, he got down, leaned up against the stump and slid off his fanny pack. It was time for some lunch. The hunter continued to watch small openings amongst the green conifers. There were a few big leaf maples scattered about in the young forest, their leaves blazing yellow in stark contrast to the green monoculture. A few vinemaples added some red to the landscape, along with the reddish brown of bracken ferns. Soon the hunter was discovered by a Camp robber, which eagerly accepted the bread crust from his sandwich. The hunter wondered which departed logger's spirit was in this small bird's body; surely feeding him should bring good luck.

The woods were alive with small birds flitting here and

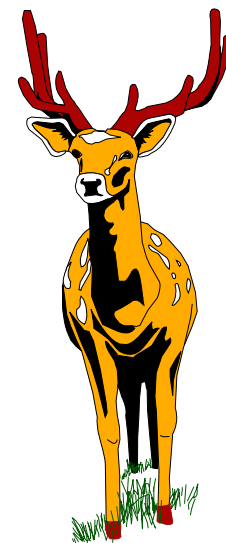
there. Squirrels raced about looking for truffles buried underground. The forest held a lot of life and somewhere out there was a buck. The sky suddenly broke open, revealing a patch of blue sky and warm rays from the sun as the hunter quietly replaced his fanny pack around his waist.

The hunter decided to work his way around the edge of the small basin and, as he turned to step away from the stump, he caught movement in the corner of his eye. Off to his side, through the scattered limbs of a nearby tree, he could see the faint outline of the body of a deer moving quickly away. As he shouldered his rifle and looked hard through the scope at the fleeing animal, he could suddenly see the nice set of horns of probably a 4-point

buck. Moving the crosshairs downward, he tried to find a lethal spot for his bullet, but the buck disappeared into the surrounding forest without giving that opportunity.

The hunter stood there excited, a familiar grin across his face. He had been outsmarted again. Making his way over to where the buck had been bedded, the hunter chuckled to himself as he realized he had been watched by the old buck during the whole time he was at the stump. Just as the hunter had enjoyed watching the birds and the squirrels, the old buck may have enjoyed watching the hunter. Again the smile appeared on the hunter's face, for he knew this was part of hunting and he still had a lot of season ahead of him. Slowly he moved into the young forest

and soon disappeared into its embrace.



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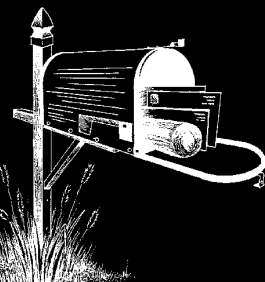
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