

Leonard the loon lay still in his nest

The greenish-brown shells a broken mess
For just yesterday he'd opened his eyes
And seen the big world much to his surprise

Bert the red-winged blackbird said, "Conkleree-Hi!"
As he flitted, flapped, flashed and flew right on by
This was nothing like inside the egg at all
Surrounded by reeds and bull rushes so tall

When Leonard looked up he saw nothing but blue
With the occasional white puff or two
And when he peered out through the reeds
All he could see were dark green trees

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Glass-like blue water all around him lay
Protected from wind in a little bay
The lake was so clear Leonard saw right down
To the mud where Tommy Turtle was found

Tommy came up and poked out his head
"Welcome to Jimsmith Lake!" Tommy said.
Then he smiled and went on his way
Looking for a log to sunbathe

The air was full of sounds so sweet
Roxie Robin went, "Tweet, tweet, tweet"
And Charlie sang, "Chick-a-dee-dee-dee"
While Phil Flicker cried, "Look at me!"

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Just then a trembling cackling came
Echoing over, familiar but strange
A lonely, haunting, reassuring sound
And off Fisher Peak it seemed to rebound

Mother was saying, "Come out for a dip"
He wasn't sure--he'd never made that trip
Leonard looked at his sister still asleep
And the shallow bay seemed suddenly deep

Then Mom encouraged, "You will be fine"
The water's warm and it's a short climb"
Down from the nest so cozy and dry"
It'll be fun, just give it a try"

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So he took a big breath and waddled along
And closed his red eyes and tried to be strong
Then he felt a strange, cool, watery caress
And instinctively gave his flippers a test

This WAS really fun and came quite naturally
And his brown, fuzzy down kept him warm as can be
Mother smiled and clapped her wide white wings
"If you try you can do anything"

Leonard looked over his shoulder just then
Lana was wide awake and watching them
"Come on in it's really, really great!"
And his sister didn't hesitate

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They laughed as she splashed and got her head wet
And in the middle of the bay they met
Then Father came up from a deep dive
And joined his family side by side

They practiced for a while very near the nest
And climbed on Dad's back when they needed a rest
A golden canoe slowly floated on by
And little Lily couldn't believe her eyes

For she'd never seen a real loon before
Not only one but a family of four!
Lana winked as she drifted away
She was sure that they'd made Lily's day

Then Father said that it's time for some lunch
Another adventure was Leonard's hunch
He heard his stomach growling then
He could eat not one fish but ten!

Suddenly, swiftly his Daddy dove
And Leonard saw a FLASH in the cove
Of shimmering silver in amongst the reeds
As a black and white streak skimmed above the weeds

Just as quick Father returned
A fine crayfish he had earned
He opened his bill and so did his son
Just like that the family lunch was done!

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That meal was so yummy Leonard wanted more
And started underwater to explore
This was another whole new world down here
And each time he dove he conquered his fear

But he still hadn't caught his first fish
When he did it would be so "deelish"
He chased little tadpoles and snails too
Any old kind of crustacean would do

Oh, it was tasty just as he thought
That precious prey that he finally caught
Leonard swam to Lana and told her his tale
And by the end it turned into a HUGE whale!

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That afternoon the wind whipped and stirred
And their delightful day was disturbed
The waves tossed and tumbled the band
So the kids retreated to land

The big black storm clouds covered the sun
And they huddled together as one
Then there was a yellow FLASH so bright
It surely could have lit up the night

Then thunder BOOMED! and shook the nest
This was nature's bravery test!
Leonard looked up when he felt a drop
And all around he heard PLOP, PLOP, PLOP!

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He wondered how long the nasty storm would last
Then as fast as it started it blew right past
Mom and Dad called, "Don't worry it's over"
And the air smelt just as sweet as clover

Slowly, carefully he set out once more
For Leonard had been shaken to the core
But soon he was swimming and diving like mad
And his heart was light and so very glad

Off in the reeds he saw a strange fellow
Long-beaked and long-necked and rather mellow
"How goes it mate?" said Blue Heron Henry
Wading slowly along and quite friendly

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"I'm fine, sir. Made it through the storm"

It was my first but now I'm warm"

"Good for you laddie! You're very brave"

And spread his wide wings and flew away

I wish I could fly like Henry someday

Thought Leonard as he watched him cross the bay

He stretched out his wings and gave them a flap

"I am going to start practicing that!"

Suddenly he heard a SCREECH! on high

And Oliver Osprey went soaring by

Then he dove down like a swift fighter jet

And came up with a trout wriggling and wet

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After that Mother gently glided down
Landing beside him with a skimming sound
"Wow!" said Leonard, very impressed
"I can't wait for my first flight test"

"You will be ready soon my son"
"Racing around the lake for fun"
Then she smiled and he climbed aboard
Tired and not quite ready to soar

Later at dusk a symphony began
Mom and Dad singing as loud as they can
Rippling like laughter across the still lake
Keeping the drowsy young duo awake

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The full moon rose and the music died down
And there was not even a single sound
Except for four happy hearts beating as one
Dreaming about today and tomorrow's sun