

Fishing for MONSTERS



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Illustrated by Darcy Bell-Myers

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4335 Matthew Court

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www.KEVINLOVEGREEN.COM



Chapter 1

I'm looking out a tiny window of a tiny airplane. The view below me is anything but tiny, though.

We're flying deep into northern Canada. As far as my eyes can see, there are shimmering blue lakes, endless rows of dark-green pine trees, and miles of grassy meadows. It looks like a puzzle, with different-colored pieces randomly scattered and locked together.

As the view stretches below me, I think about the monsters lurking down there in every lake. I don't mean mythical water-beasts like the Loch Ness monster. I mean monster fish. These lakes are home to some of the biggest northern pike you can catch anywhere in the world.

In fact, that's why we're here. Dad and Uncle Vern are on a quest to catch northerns of a lifetime to celebrate Uncle Vern turning forty this year. He and Dad are hoping to land something twenty pounds or even bigger. That's *huge*!

And who knows . . . maybe northerns aren't the only monsters swimming under all that shiny blue water. These lakes are huge, wild, and practically untouched. They could be full of surprises and mysteries. I have a great feeling about this. Maybe, just

maybe, we'll be lucky enough to catch an unexpected monster.

After all, they don't call me Lucky Luke for nothing!

Dad taps me on the shoulder. "There it is!" he almost shouts so I can hear him over the roar of the plane. He points out the window.

Below, I see three brown log cabins with red roofs. The cabins are tucked into the edge of a slate-blue lake. I jam my face up to the window to get a better look at the lake itself, but it's hard to see.

Then the pilot—who's a lot younger than I think a pilot should be—turns the plane. Now I have a full view of this magical lake. I see its fingers, islands, and big round bays.

Of the endless lakes I've seen during this hour-long flight, this is one of the largest.

I give Dad a thumbs-up. I know he's as excited as I am. Maybe even more excited.

I then look over at my cousin Dillon, who's sitting across the aisle from me and looking out his own window. I tap him on the knee.

Dill pulls his face away from the window and looks over at me. His giant smile and wild eyes say it all. He nods slowly up and down and gives me a look. I've seen that look many times.

It means, *This is gonna be fun.*

Dillon and I are the same age. He's a little shorter than me, though we couldn't look any different. He has brown hair, and

I have red. He gets tan in the summer, and my mom makes sure I pile on the sunscreen.

But we do have one thing in common: we love to hunt, fish, and do anything outside. We are so lucky that we get to go along on this amazing fishing trip with our dads.

Uncle Vern and Dad do all kinds of hunting and fishing together. Uncle Vern is a little older than Dad. And even though they're brothers, they look as different as Dillon and I do. Dad has red hair, like me. Uncle Vern has brown hair. For the trip, he grew a scruffy bit of a beard. He said he wanted to look "rugged" for the deep woods of Canada.

That isn't the only part of his rugged look. With his brown hat, green sunglasses, and dark-green fishing jacket, he looks

like he could be on the cover of a fishing magazine.

Dad also looks the part. He's wearing his Indiana Jones hat, sunglasses, and a brown jacket that's ready for rain, wind, or whatever Mother Nature throws at him.

Both Uncle Vern and Dad love their hunting and fishing gear. Dill and I joke that there's a little brotherly competition between them. They each want to have the best stuff!

Suddenly, the plane drops quickly and banks hard to the left. My stomach jumps. I have to use my left arm to keep my face from smashing against the window.

Then we straighten out and slice through the sky. The green pines below are now in perfect view. It seems like we're dropping right on top of them.

I look out the front window and see a small red clay runway in a landing area about the size of two football fields. The runway doesn't seem much bigger than a driveway. Is it even big enough to land this puddle jumper? I grip my seat and prepare to hit the ground.

The tires touch down. After two quick hops, the tires seem to grab the ground. But we're still moving fast. The trees at the end of the field get bigger and bigger. We're heading right for them!



Then the pilot slams on the brakes. We all launch forward. Thank goodness for my seat belt, or my nose might have hit the pilot in the back of his head.

The pilot looks into the mirror to check on us. He gives us a crazy smile. “Is everyone alive back there?” he shouts over the buzzing propellers.

“Yep!” Dad shouts back. He gives a thumbs-up in case the pilot didn’t hear him.

“Well, then, I have done my job,” the pilot yells out. “Sorry for the quick stop, though. Runways are a little short out here in the bush. And the trees aren’t very friendly if we hit them.”

The pilot says this part without a smile. I think he’s trying to be funny, but I can’t tell for sure.

I look over at Dillon. That crazy-fun look is now replaced with a white face and worried eyes.

Dad, too, sees the look on Dillon's face. "You OK, Dill?"

"Ya, I'm good," Dillon says.

I don't think we believe him.

The plane spins around, and we bounce back down the runway. Eventually, we stop, and the pilot cuts the engine. After an hour of deafening roars, silence finally fills the cab.

"Whew! That is a good sound," Uncle Vern says.

The pilot opens the door, and we all pile out. The crisp Canadian air is filled with the

smell of pine. It hits me square in the nose. I smile.

This fishing adventure is just getting revved up!