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Stillness full of life

As the end of April neared, this winter's season came to an end: the last ski tracks reflected the orange glow of the setting sun in the sky, patches of snow were absent from the piste, the single chairlift swayed in the gentle breeze. A bird watched as pine tree needles flowed down in a steady stream of snowmelt, while new green blades of grass emerged from the rocky ground. A family waded through the wet snow, the parents dragging along a wooden sledge — they were the only ones here. It was quiet and warm here at the ski village, yet high above, in the ever-white mountain peaks, the wintry wind was still sweeping the powdery snow along the iced empty slopes as dark clouds arrived.

As dusk drew near, the moonlit shadows appeared on the melting snow. Dense evergreen forest encircled the town, the towering pine trees looming over it. Today, the closed village was as gloomy as the surrounding woods. Now that the ski season had ended, the piste bashers did not come around — this was the calmest night in a long time. Through the silence, every so often, one could hear the swish of snow tumbling through the fir trees' branches.

The next morning, the lack of people became evident. When the chairlift should have whirred, it remained silent. This long forgotten silence was occasionally interrupted by the singing of the birds. The pistes, the streets, the shops - deserted in the morning sun. The noisy crowds were gone, though nature still went about its usual ways: the water from the melted snow still dripped like an open tap, the clouds continued to steadily drift past, spilling over from one valley to the next. With the morning light, the circles of melted snow around the trunks of trees came to sight, revealing the piles of decaying brown pine needles. In spite of the apparent serenity and stillness, lifting any fallen piece of bark uncovered the soil full of life, teeming with ants and bugs, rolling around like dark and shiny beads. The smiling snowman built just days ago fell apart like a dilapidated building, its body softening and shrinking and turning into a grayish shapeless mass. It was hard to believe that just a week ago, this snow-covered playground was bursting with the excitement of children, yet now it was blissfully calm.

As the sun rose further in the sky, the snow continued to age and wither, and suddenly, in this newly discovered silence, one could hear the sounds of nature that had been dominated by the holiday making invaders for so many months - the purl of the brook, the chirping of birds, the whisper of wind. In this apparent stillness, relentless life was quietly celebrating its long-awaited liberation.