

Jarvis the Duck

Kurt Venables

A Trip

Jarvis is a young duck that lives on a small pond in The Great Poplar Forest. These are the chronicles of his adventures.

Jarvis was rushing at a breakneck pace through The Great Poplar Forest towards Jay's nest near the blackberry bush. Jarvis had been visited in *his* nest by The Pond earlier that morning by two of the elder ducks. These two had some small black splotches on their faces and bodies. The splotches were a discoloration of the feathers that went right down to, and included, the skin, which was inflamed and puffy. But they were much better off than most of the other ducks. They had told him about the council at The Great Lake and had asked him if he would please attend.

Jarvis wanted to tell Jay and Sage about the trip to The Great Lake and some other goings on that they had related. Jarvis found Jay pecking the ground for seeds near the blackberry bush.

"Hey," said Jarvis excitedly.

"What's up," said Jay, sensing that something had happened.

"Let's find Sage; I've got something to tell you guys."

It was a short trip to the tall poplar in which Sage's nest perched between two gnarly old branches sprouting off the main trunk near the top. Sage was out on a branch sitting serenely, enjoying the morning sun.

"Sage, I've got something to tell you and Jay," said Jarvis.

Sage flew down to a branch near the ground where Jarvis and Jay were. "S'up guys," he said with a broad smile.

"Sage, ... Jay," said Jarvis, so excited he couldn't decide where to begin.

"Yeah," said Sage, raising his eyebrows.

"Tell us," pleaded Jay.

"I, ... I was visited this morning by two of the elder ducks at The Pond. They, ... they asked me to attend a council at The Great Lake. They told me that the owls and ducks are looking for a party to make a journey to see the great Snowy Owl, Gnosis, the spiritual leader of the Snowy Owls in The Black Forest."

"The Black Forest is far to the north, Jarvis, and Gnosis is one of the oldest and wisest creatures on earth," said Sage.

"They said that the ducks and owls are looking for a few strong individuals that are both healthy and clever. They said the members of the party need to be very clever because the purpose of the journey is ... the purpose is to find the answer to the Riddle of Osiris," Jarvis nearly burst. He added excitedly, "They said that Gnosis stood the best chance of being able to help and that all possible candidates for the party were to attend the council."

"Wow!" said Jay, then after a short pause, "Individuals that are healthy and clever. Well, you are *healthy*."

"Very funny."

“You sure they didn’t say ‘lovely and talented,’ ‘cause you *are* that.”

“Thank you for the compliment, Jay, and might I say that you’re looking particularly radiant this morning as well,” said Jarvis smiling.

“Man, it *is* an honor that you were asked Jarvis,” said Sage seriously. “Whoever is selected will bear a great responsibility.”

“They told me that of the ducks at The Pond, me and one other are being asked to go, ... the other being Angeldown.” Angeldown was also one of the fortunate few at The Pond that showed no signs of the plague. “I don’t know exactly where The Great Lake *is*,” said Jarvis, “To be honest, I’ve never been that far away from The Pond.”

“No worries, man. I’ll take you there, and Angeldown. You’re a cool cat, Jarvis. Any time you need help, I’m there,” said Sage.

“If you guys are going, I’m going too,” said Jay. “You slowpokes ‘ll need someone to run advance scout. There’s all kinds of dangers in the forest.”

“Like black feathered doppelgangers?” replied Jarvis smiling.

“Hey, those are real,” said Jay, crinkling up his eyebrows and drawing them together.

“Then we’ll be happy to have a scout,” replied Jarvis seriously. “I’ll go and see if Angeldown wants to go with us.”