

# Jarvis the Duck

Kurt Venables

## The Enchanted Lake

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

The party flew due north. Three weeks had passed since they first saw the Harpies. The air had taken on a biting chill, and snow now covered the ground. The forest had changed, from the poplars of the southern forest to a dense blanket of pines and firs. It had become distinctly darker. They had seen Harpy Eagles many more times. They usually caught sight of them at a safe distance, but twice more, they had close calls with rapidly moving small groups of male Harpies, which they had dubbed “patrols”.

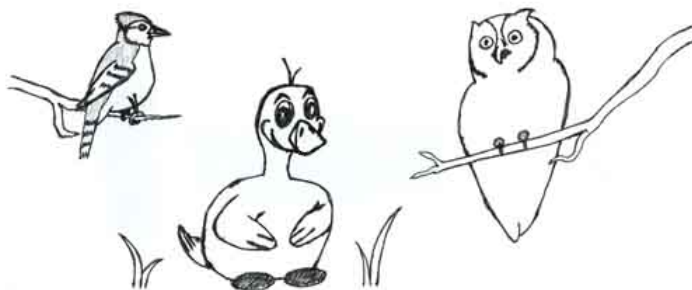
“It’s so quiet and peaceful, and the snow is so beautiful,” said Jarvis one morning as they awoke to the first rays of dawn striking the snow around them.

“Would you like me to recite some poetry or compose a few lines, perhaps ‘Ode to the Snow’,” replied Jay with his good natured sarcasm.

“Come on, Jay,” Jarvis responded, “it is beautiful.”

“I know, dude, I’m just giving you a hard time.”

“That’s what I like about you, Jarvis, you’re not afraid to say what’s in your heart,” said Angeldown, catching Jarvis’s eyes with hers. Jarvis gave her a little smile.



“Beautiful, indeed,” agreed Talon, “we are nearing the northern lands where I grew up.”

After bowing to Ra at sunrise, the party flew for several hours. Just after midday, they spotted a beautiful lake and flew down to try to find some lunch. The lake was partially frozen, with thin ice near the shore and open water towards the middle. Dense reeds and bulrushes surrounded the lake. The party split up a little as they foraged for tidbits. Angeldown was working her way through the reeds when she was startled by a beautiful white swan nestled in the growth, a young female.

“Hello!” said the swan kindly.

“Oh, ... hello,” replied Angeldown. “Do you live on this beautiful lake?”

“No, but I visit it often. It is so beautiful,” replied the swan. “It is a favorite of Coventina, the Lady of the Lake.”

“Coventina?” asked Angeldown, somewhat perplexed.

“Yes, Coventina, a goddess; at least that is what she is called in these parts, although I think she is known by other names. She loves the water- lakes, ponds, springs. She particularly seems to like to visit this lake. It’s easy to see why.”

“Have you seen her? Have you seen a real goddess?” said Angeldown, still somewhat confused.

“Yes, many times. She comes and talks to the trees and the brush, but I hear her sometimes.”

“What does she talk about?” said Angeldown, not knowing if the swan was being truthful or just a few cards short of a full deck, though she seemed very peaceful and kind.

“She talks of many things, of light and fog, of joy and confusion, of deceptions of the mind.”

“I’m not sure if I’m following you,” replied Angeldown.

“She says that the mind is biased towards this world, that it is fundamentally materialistic. She says that without great wisdom and diligence, the mind has difficulty properly accounting for affairs of the heart, for spiritual things. She tells a story of long ago. A bird lived near a beautiful strawberry patch. The strawberries were gorgeous, large, sweet, and juicy, but they were also poisonous to the heart. They would make a bird who ate them depressed and unhappy. So Coventina told the bird to eat the many nuts, seeds, and insects around the patch but not to eat the strawberries because they would make him unhappy. In spite of her warnings, when the bird grew hungry, he always ate the strawberries. In fact, most birds in that part of the woods did. And they suffered greatly because of it.”

“So the birds’ minds were so captivated by the strawberries that they couldn’t see how bad they were for them,” summarized Angeldown.

“Exactly, Coventina says that we must learn to temper our material impulses and listen to our hearts, for love is the key to life- the love and joy within the heart is what makes life worth living.”

“You should talk to my friend Jarvis; he says things like that,” said Angeldown.

“Is Jarvis your boyfriend?” replied the swan with a smile.

“No, not my boyfriend,” said Angeldown as she blushed a little and looked away.

“Coventina tells another story of how her love saved the life of her husband. Long ago, her husband had been killed by an evil god. In her grief, she bent down to kiss him one last time. As she did so, her breath returned life to the body of her husband. However, this was only because she loved him more than her own life. Her pure love for him rekindled his life. Love is life, Angeldown.”

As the swan uttered these last four words, a vague something drew Angeldown’s attention away from the swan, a something that was not there when she looked. As she heard the last word, Angeldown’s gaze returned to where the swan was. “How did you know my ...” started Angeldown, but the swan was gone.