

Jarvis the Duck

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Cloud Delight

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

Early one beautiful summer morning, Jarvis was walking in the woods near The Pond. Jarvis is a good sized duck, a little bottom heavy like most ducks. He has soft white feathers, but a few unruly ones sprout from his head like stubborn weeds growing in a well groomed garden. He had just graduated high school that spring and was out on his own now, having moved out of his parents nest. Jarvis was a little preoccupied that morning, thinking about an incident that had happened the previous afternoon among some of the other ducks who also lived at The Pond. He was thinking about how two of the ducks were making fun of a smaller duck, calling him “pip-squeak” and saying he was “only marginally brighter than a common water lily”. He remembered how other ducks nearby were laughing. These two, Malcolm and Trixie, and a few of their friends, liked to talk down to the other ducks. Jarvis felt sorry for the little duck and did not laugh with the others.

Most ducks didn’t venture very far into the forest, but Jarvis was quite distracted and had traveled a fair distance into the woods when he heard a merry bird song coming from a blackberry bush. He peered behind some ferns to see a little blue bird. The bird was a beautiful shade of sky blue and was quite fit looking.

“Good morning,” said Jarvis.



“Hello, how’s it going?” said the little blue bird. “Just having some breakfast.”

“It is a beautiful morning for blackberries,” said Jarvis.

“Please help yourself,” said the bird. “Do you live at The Pond?”

“Yes, do *you* live nearby?” said Jarvis.

“Yes, but there are not many other blue jays in this neck of the woods I’m afraid.”

“I’m Jarvis by the way.”

“I’m Jay.”

Jarvis got along fine with the other ducks at The Pond. He was actually well liked. He was very clever and had a quick sense of humor. He did very well when he was in school, being especially good at Astronomy and Flora. Even the “uppity” ducks on the pond didn’t tease or bother him much. Yet he always felt that he didn’t quite fit in. So he was happy to find a little friend that seemed to be a bit alone as well. Jarvis paused and looking up at the sky said, “The clouds are beautiful today.”

“Yes, the sky is gorgeous. Good flying weather,” said Jay.

They marveled for some time as several clouds passed by. “I’ve always wondered how they stay up,” said Jarvis, now both of them lying on their backs looking up at the sky.

“Do you mean the clouds?”

“Yes, well, everything else on earth falls down, except us birds and some insects, and even we and the bugs do after a while, if we don’t flap.”

“But the sun and the moon don’t fall,” said Jay.

“Yes, and the stars; that *is* a mystery as well. But they at least seem somehow to be part of the sky. Clouds seem to be part of the earth. You can touch them. Yet they do not fall.”

“I’ve never thought about it, but it does seem odd now that you mention it,” said Jay.

They marveled at the clouds for some time more. “They do come in an almost impudent variety,” said Jarvis.

“You mean ‘an infinite variety’?” asked Jay.

Jarvis just looked at Jay with a wide smile. He wasn’t sure if Jay quite followed his unique sense of humor.

“Sanctuary much for that one,” said Jay.

“I see that you fully expectorate my levity,” said Jarvis.

“Profusely,” said Jay. They both laughed.

They marveled as the clouds passed. After a while, Jarvis said, “I guess I don’t like mysteries. I like to understand things.”

“I often find it easier to understand someone if I put myself in the other’s place,” said Jay. “Perhaps we should try to imagine that we’re clouds to try to understand them.”

“Yes, that’s worth a try,” said Jarvis, and they both closed their eyes and tried to imagine they were clouds. Jarvis was concentrating very hard on what it would be like. They imagined for some time. After a while, Jarvis heard a soft, rhythmic whistle coming from Jay. He was breathing in and out deeply and slowly, with a whistle when he exhaled. Jarvis just continued to stare at the clouds; then he began to think about the incident that happened the prior afternoon.

“Wha ...? Sorry, I guess I find being a cloud very ... relaxing,” said Jay as he jerked awake.

“Yes, it is, though I was actually putting myself in the place of a small duck I know,” said Jarvis.

“A small duck?”

“Yes, some of the other ducks were making fun of him, calling him ‘pip-squeak’. I was putting myself in his place, and it didn’t feel very good. I just don’t think that’s right,” said Jarvis.

“Me neither,” said Jay. “First, talking down to others is so childish. Secondly, those who are a little different are no less worthy of respect and love. Besides, smaller birds are usually excellent flyers.”

“You know, Jay,” said Jarvis, “even though you and I are different, we’re actually more the same than the other ducks and I.”

“Really.”

“Yes, I think so,” said Jarvis, and after some brief discussion of aerial acrobatics, Jarvis said that he had to go back to The Pond for some lunch and that he would come back to see Jay again some time. As he was leaving, Jarvis spied a little patch of

yellow-green flowers growing under a tree.
“Cucumber root.”

“Excuse me,” said Jay.

“The root of this flower tastes like a cucumber.” Jarvis and Jay both pulled up a flower and tasted its root.

“Yes, *exactly* like a cucumber,” said Jay, “but I don’t like cucumbers.”