

Jarvis the Duck

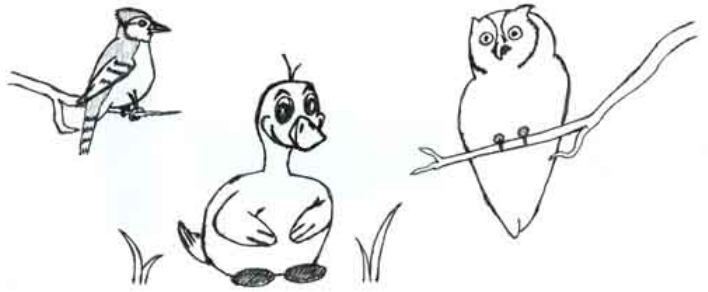
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A Midsummer Night's Dawn

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

Jarvis and Jay were sitting in a clearing in the woods before dawn, just as eerie light was beginning to play across the sky. After their meeting that morning some weeks ago at the blackberry bush, Jarvis had gone back into the woods to find Jay. He had not been hard to find. As Jarvis approached that part of the woods, he had heard Jay's merry bird song. They had become good friends over the last month. Jay had been trying to teach Jarvis some tricky aerial maneuvers (without much luck), and Jarvis had been teaching Jay about astronomy and medicinal plants. Jarvis liked Jay because he was so down-to-earth. The other ducks at The Pond were so materialistic, arrogant, and self-centered. All they cared about was what they could get for themselves. The latest rage was lining one's nest with the softest moss and finest thistle down. "One must keep up appearances for the neighbors" was the general mindset.

Jarvis, however, loved to watch the sun rise. He had always thought that sunrise was so peaceful and beautiful. He was especially excited about this sunrise, for he knew this was the longest day of the year—the summer solstice. Jay was, perhaps, less excited. He had agreed to watch this sunrise with Jarvis the previous afternoon while snacking on blackberries. Jay, however, was a late sleeper and was definitely not singing a merry little bird song *this* morning.



Jarvis had pulled him out of his nice, warm nest despite his protests, and Jay was a little grumpy.

"I hope we don't get attacked by a black feathered doppelganger," announced Jay nervously after a few minutes of silence.

"A *what?*" asked Jarvis.

"A black feathered doppelganger," repeated Jay. "They hunt at night and can assume many different forms. They particularly like succulent young birds like myself."

"Are you succulent?" said Jarvis, "I didn't know." After a brief pause, Jarvis said, "Jay, I did pretty well in Fauna in school, and I'm sure there's no such thing."

They sat in silence for some minutes, then "Whooooo" rang out from a branch high on a tree.

Jay was petrified, unable to move or speak. Jarvis was a little anxious as well now. "Whooooo," came the sound again.

"Ummmm, I'm Jarvis. Hello! Whooo are you?" replied Jarvis, thinking they were being addressed and not wanting to appear rude.

“Oh, hey man,” came a voice, sounding rather surprised itself. What seemed like a huge form in the dim light flapped its wings several times and settled on a low branch near Jarvis and Jay. “What’s up?” said the shapeless form from the shadows, though it was a friendly sounding voice.

“Please don’t eat us ... Are you a black feathered doppelganger?” blurted out Jay in horror.

“A black feathered doggle ... banger? No, man, I’m an owl. You guys enjoying the sunrise?” said what was now clearly beginning to look like an owl. In fact, he was an old owl, brown and rather rumped, but good natured.

“Yes,” said Jarvis eagerly, “this is the solstice.”

“Indeed it is, though most don’t remember it anymore,” said the owl serenely. “I’m Sage.”

“I’m Jarvis, and this is Jay.”

“Glad to meet you guys,” replied Sage. The sun was coming up now, poking just above the tree line. Sage pulled a pair of dark sunglasses out from underneath his feathers and put them on. “Gotta have my shades,” explained Sage, “I *am* nocturnal.”

“Yes, don’t owls go to sleep at sunrise?” asked Jarvis.

“I wouldn’t miss dawn on the summer solstice,” replied Sage. “Besides, in my old age, I stay up late, usually ‘til noon.”

“When I was a duckling, my grandmother would tell me how animals used to revere the sun god, Ra, recognizing him as the *Lifegiver*,” said Jarvis. “Most ducks don’t care about the old gods now.”

“Yes, my grandmother taught me that without Ra, we wouldn’t have life,” agreed Jay, feeling more comfortable now that he could see that Sage was just a kind- if perhaps a little odd- old owl.

“When I was young, animals would bow for a moment of silence at sunrise,” said Sage. “At the solstice, the sun is at its most powerful, life at its fullest. Dawn on the solstice was a very special time to honor Ra, the Lifegiver.”

“I believe that Ra’s light shines on the inside of us as well as the outside,” said Jarvis, “the sun gives us spiritual life.” “We allow Ra to shine within by allowing love to fill our hearts; then, we experience the joy of the light. The sunlight within is what makes life worth living.”

“Very cool, man,” said Sage after a pause to reflect on Jarvis’s words. “Ya know, every once in a great while, an animal is born that just naturally possesses deep wisdom. That animal is a Seer. You may be a Seer, Jarvis,” said Sage.

The three bowed their heads in silence as the sun rose, then sat and wondered at the dawn for quite a while.