

This Night
a month-old journal of estuary life

Day 1:

Tonight the night is lovely.

I am at camp, volunteering with the Estuary Life program, where schools and other groups come to learn about the local nature with lots of hands-on experience.

I am walking down the path to the pier.

A few odd birds are tweeting in their trees above my head, though the night be dawned and the sky hued midnight blue. The stars twinkle like so many tiny mirrors reflecting light—though they produce light of their own by burning gases.

I am walking down the pier towards the boats.

It is amazing how much I hear—the keys lightly jingling in my pocket, the rippling of the water, my shoes on the wooden planks, the creaking of the pier itself—it has never seemed so loud. Rusty, our leader, says that when one of our senses (*sight, for instance*) is impaired, the others will heighten. I think he is right. So many sounds.

I've reached the end of the pier, now. I stop and look around.

The moon rests like a shining stone, high in the sky and far off. Too great for me.

Below it hangs my star—the large one that sends my love to all my beloved.

My star is actually a planet—either Jupiter or Venus.

I'm not sure which.

The reflection of the orange streetlamp makes a flickering flame in the water.

As if some hidden mermaid were holding up a torch,
that at last some man would see it and behold her beauty.

The light casts an eerie amber glow on the water.

In front of me the stars burn far-off and bright, millions (if not billions) of miles away.

I can see the pole and lines of the sailboat silhouetted against this backdrop—this sky of midnight blue sprinkled with stardust. The pole and lines form a triangle that points upward.

I recall how we went sailing today, and it was beautiful. The boat is beautiful.

Not on the outside, but because of what it is, what it does.

Because of the idea, and the memories.

A dog across the bay is howling incessantly. *Howl. Pause. Howl. Pause. Howl.* And so forth.

The sound echoes far across the water. And as I begin my journey back towards land,

I hear another sound. Some bird is making a loud, grunting call.

This, too, echoes across the gentle waves.

And did I mention that I saw my first monarch (of the year) today? I wonder what they think about the current political plight? Perhaps they discuss it on their long migration.

(Sorry, I just couldn't resist the pun on "monarch.")

But I'm migrating, too, now. Migrating to bed. It's been a good day.

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Tonight the sky is a black net, catching many fireflies that shine like diamonds in the sky.

Day 2:

The world is new this morning. The light on the grass is bright and fresh; the light on the water is light and clear. The bay shines, touched by the ethereal breath of morning, and the light of her eyes.

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I'm on the path now, the overgrown one I discovered this summer.
Hurry, or I will be late for lunch.

My foot caught on a forked stick and turned it over. It was stained red like blood.
And what misfortune bewails you, and covers with crimson tide? I thought of asking it.

The water flows smoothly, in one direction, like a river, blown by the wind.

Under the fallen tree now. Looks the same as when I did this last. Same dead twigs broken as I first broke. As far as I can tell, no one else has ventured this path since.

Taking large steps, big bounds. My writing is slowing me down. Yet still I write.

hurry. I will be late.

The huge, soft grass flattens beneath my feet. Through my boots I can feel sticks, the roots, and the pinecones—still soggy from the rain.

The grass is up to my chin. I see it at eye level. A few pieces are above my head.

Planks, rotting with age. I recall the bridge I crossed to get here.

ducking. I should have stayed on the trail.

Ah, here is the trail! not the overgrown one.

(the overgrown trail connects to the other one)

. . . .

(after dinner)

The sun is gradually sinking towards the water, now. Its light fashions the waves into a sea of golden ridges, each topped with a glowing orange highlight. Blinding. Liquid gold.
I am seeing golden specks everywhere, now.

. . . .

Campfire.

The children, smiling faces lit by an orange glow.
Comments from the adults, amiable and amusing.
Flamelight glows, reflected in each one's eyes.

True tales, grown and lived and spun by Rusty. Lovely tales.
Billy, holding his son. Standing against the stars—a backdrop.
They are brighter tonight, more numerous. A black canopy above us.

. . . .

The moon was low tonight, hiding behind the cafeteria roof. My star was to the right of it.

Day 3:

The water was its bluest today, reflecting the clear sky.
Voices murmured as we gathered in the bayfront gazebo one last time,
each one telling his favorite part.

Today we say goodbye. This the end.
A sack lunch at the picnic tables, and then we wave goodbye.

Addendum: (11/10/11)

Tonight the moon is full, and casts a glow through the clouds around.
The clouds frame her, but they dare not touch her. They surround her, but she is not blocked.
She is radiant, full and bright, lighting the sky beautifully behind the spreading limbs of the great oak. And my star shines above her, to make her so glad, poised to the starboard side
and at half of a right angle from her glowing orb.