

Krysta Kavenaugh

Even Magic Depends on a Bridge

686 words

I walk across the 20-foot arched bridge, my soft soles tapping on the steel slats. Then I step into fairyland—or at least a magical place for me.

The Island—that’s what we call it. It’s part of our community’s 4-acre lake here in Tucson and there’s a clear break from shore. This piece of land holds maybe 50 people, as well as multiple ducks and an abundance of plants.

When I walk on the island’s ground, it’s almost like taking off a cloak weighted with concerns and problems, and just allowing myself to be present.

It has large trees, and their branches create an overhead canopy. It feels private—yet still open to the lake and the sky at sunset.

I come here almost daily at dusk, when the day settles into night, and I settle in right with it.

A gentle wind caresses my skin. The gnats mostly leave me alone—though I don’t dare open my mouth when there’s a swarm of them.

Often there are clouds dancing with their pinks, oranges, and yellows... then fading into bruised-grey. It’s like a private show just for me. And its art intoxicates me.

Over time, the trees go from brown and green to black and grey against the sky, until they fade away.

As a group of ducks fly overhead, I can hear the soft sound as they flap together in perfect unison. Others are swimming. Or perfecting their vertical quest for food—heads underwater, tails straight up.

They are quacking as they settle into their nightly nests. I inadvertently hear the duck equivalent of “uff” when I throw an apple core into the tall grass—food for whatever will find it—and accidentally hit the duck.

A blue heron widens its wings and soars across the lake from end to end. It glides, and my breath glides with it.

I’m fascinated when it lands to feed. Moving deliberately, impossibly slowly so as not to disturb the water—then instantaneously nabbing its dinner.

I notice bugs skimming the surface. A fish jumping to catch them, creating bubbles and an ever-expanding circle of ripples.

Two fountains on each end of the lake keep the water from stagnating. Sometimes the hissing fountains seem too noisy, but I realize the sound drowns out traffic until it's just white noise.

At dusk, there's a lot of activity where the fountain's streams arc into the water.

That's when a catfish surprisingly surfaces from the lake's depths to feast on little fish, its signature bent-over fin showing. It's not shark-sized, of course—but in a 4-acre lake, it feels like it. My late husband, John, and I nicknamed it Duh Duh, reviving the Jaws theme—"Duh, duh. Duh, duh, duh, duh, duh, duh, duh, duh."—the signal to rush over to watch. A lovely ritual.

I whisper softly to John, "Duh Duh is still here."

As it darkens, the show goes from sunset flowing across the sky to stars twinkling. First one, then another, then more. That always seems wondrous to me—those stars bringing life to the night sky.

As dark emerges, the owls begin who-whoing.

As I look at the wildlife and lake, and hear the nature sounds, I, too, join the continuum of life as one who is just with it. No trying. No striving. Being. Serene. Almost luxurious.

While I'm here, time stops. My mind stills. No gerbil-wheeling here. No to-do list. Just no thought—my mind as calm as the lake's surface.

My body quiets. Breath deepens. Spaciousness opens. I inhale the lake's essence and it feeds me. Peace takes over, and with it ease and relaxation.

My long-lived hyper-vigilance dissipates when I'm here. There's nothing to fear, nowhere to go, nothing to do; just feeling peace envelop the island, and me with it.

I leave different: rejuvenated with more grace, serenity, and equanimity.

Later, I learned this: even magic depends on a bridge. A windstorm crushed ours under an uprooted tree. Management hasn't replaced it.

I still sit by the lake, but I've lost the island's presence.

The spell that took hold when I crossed.