



Acts of Kindness

Lindsay and the Magpies

Lindsay is a person who features in my walks on a Saturday. He is 86 years old and sets up his wares on the nature strip in front of the block of units in which he lives. His wares are predominately the plants he has propagated from cuttings. Is it a Pelargonium or a Geranium is a conversation we've had, and for this my benchmarks are childhood memories of plants my father grew.

In my garden are purchases from him, my Just Joey rose which flourishes, as well as what I hoped would be a Mr Lincoln red rose, but when flowering turned out to be a Great Pretender – another Just Joey.

Lindsay and the brief exchanges we have upon my passing have become an integral part of my Saturday mornings; he often has a fresh observation or a little story to tell. Recently it concerned the two magpies that watched us from their vantage point on the power lines across the street from his 'retail outlet'.

According to Lindsay, these male and female magpies were constants of his Saturday mornings, perhaps in the role of guardians of his wellbeing. They lived somewhere within the grounds of his units, and when he set up very early on a Saturday morning, so as to be in place in time for the first foot traffic, they'd greet him as they looked for their early worms.

The male magpie would – according to Lindsay – take the lead in this search and the female (identified by Lindsay as such by her splash of white amongst the black sheen of her feathers) would travel closely behind him, gobbling up his leavings. Apparently, it was an arrangement which suited – or was at least tolerated – by both. When satiated, the two would fly up to the power lines and get a bird's eye view of Lindsay and his sundry dealings from their lofty perch.

The joy Lindsay felt in the telling of his 'news' was evident. Their gaze and their protection offered kinship and accord between the man and the avian pair. Who takes time to notice – and celebrate – nature's creatures in this way and constructs stories that bring such simple pleasure? Perhaps only the old and perhaps the very young who may feel it but not have the capacity to articulate or share it.

As a recipient of Lindsay's pantheistic world view, I am beholden to him. He reminds me to take the time to be still, and to notice the many forms of beauty around me.