Of magpies, shags and burning

Sara Crane

There is a large magpie in the corner of a stubbled paddock. Watching.

The magpie caws. Smoke rises from the barn, and I have to decide whether to bark or not.

I don't.

The boy is young. He is the child who never listens and is never listened to. The magpie talks to him and he understands every word she says. He knows she is a she. When she nests he knows where she lays her eggs. He is on protection alert and he needs to be.

The magpie winks. I wink at the boy.

Together we trot through the mangroves to the estuary. There is an old eel resting under the jetty. We can smell the smoke and I imagine I can hear the sound of flames. The old eel winks and I wink back.

There is a little dinghy tucked up the bank. The boy and I look at each other, it surely wasn't there yesterday. We jump in and he starts to row us downstream. The shags holler greetings as we pass under the overhanging branches.

We can see black smoke. Really smell it now. I try not to growl. The boy pauses the oars. He lets the boat slide up against the bank and strokes my head. I let him know we can never go back.

The magpie flies close. She calls danger. The boy takes up the oars again and rows swiftly towards the beckoning sea. I stand in the bow.

Watching.

About writing Flash Fiction

The magic of very short stories, for me, is in the intensity that a brief piece of writing can capture. As a psychodramatist I love to play with my narrators and the characters in each story. Finding places and a congruent atmosphere is like setting the scene in a drama. The challenge of an imposed short word limit also makes completion manageable. I find it a very creative art form.

The writers group I belong to meets monthly at the library to share and refine our stories together. We organise workshops, produce anthologies and encourage young writers to participate. Some of us recently performed at the Whangarei Fringe Festival.

Simon Gurnsey and I also host regular soirees at our home where locals come to try out their stories, poems, songs and music and enjoy the stimulus of an intimate performance space. Sometimes the llamas come and listen too, and the cats and dogs are always keen.



Sara Crane is a Psychodramatist and Trainer Educator Practitioner. She lives and works from Parua Bay in Te Tai Tokerau. She also writes poetry, professional articles and loves reading just about anything.