

## TRUE NORTH

Nathan King

This island dreamed its dream of the north. True magnetic north. Is this true north, as true as north is? Well, I couldn't say. With its island temperament defined by the surrounding sea, it embarked on its own adventure in rock, plant and animal in lush green surrounds bordered by bouldered shores. This island, fulfilling its own dream, stretched itself out under a basking sun and puffed into shape out of the foaming sea. In floating folds of misty-green hills it rides the horizon, framed under a wide expanse of azure blue. Birthing a landform with such a diverse congregation of creatures: crawling, walking, swooping, pecking, hopping, screeching, squeaking, and loping in and out of furrows and burrows, reaching up to the very nape and neck, folds and hollows of its verdant trees.

Icy breezes down south carry whispers to visit up north. A call to all wanderers, wayfarers and adventurers, anchor-less drifters running from lands of forgotten dreams. Shadowed souls, urged to escape their shadow lives and set aside time, reset their compass and venture true North where the magic of Magnetic Island draws dreamers to explore their dreams. No-one is an island, and every islander must discover the way to be an island amidst a crowd. No island is solitary as an island, it attracts those who need to explore, spawn a family, create a species and found a new land.

Whose vision drove this island to create such a rich life tapestry? A new existence created from a dropped seed or a serendipitous landfall for a winged creature, taken off course through the vagaries of wind or elusive, invisible currents. Birds of all feathers flocking together here and now in their own new land. Drawn to take flight, impulsively called by magnetite. Kites and curlews, osprey, peregrine, kingfisher and egret, heron, currawong, ibis and boobook and so many more, embedded in the primordial fabric of this magic island-scape. Each play their part in establishing an island web of being with an invisible, fragile thread binding each to all. This island's sheer forest of animals may be wild by name but not by nature. Supported sustained, complimented and connected in a homeland of uncommon wilderness. 'Wild' life? No, only seen as an oddity from a 'tamed' perspective on life. An unfortunate term and coined from a civil-ised view full of assumptions. For all species that play in this and every other wilderness, are living out the very nature of life. Mammals, shaped into echidna, possum and koala and timid rock wallaby are reveling in

their very own creature-hood, unique. Only a feather's divide between one bird and the next distinguishes one bird from another: one as black as spades, the other, starched stark white.

What the sea knows the sea shares amongst all creatures, both terrestrial and marine. From beneath the waves, silvered angels in their shoals revel in their synchronised maneuvers. Meanwhile, a green-eyed bird walks and stalks a little to the right then a little to the left, lifting its bent-back knee as it rests on the spindle of one leg to pause dramatically in its frozen dance. A wind from out of the sea draws up dolphins diving in and out of the wake under a boat's bow. High above a rocky escarpment, sea eagle and kite hover and fall in a synchronised spiral, egging each other on to fly ever-higher, unwavering in their faith in the support of nothing but thin air in their sky shaped haven. In a single, simultaneous sequence here is one moment out of an island's daily grace. All and everything entwined becomes a rhyme under Maggie's milky blue sky.

Most beautiful island nestled in its seabed of dreams wedded to the surrounding sea. A great cosmic breath of history brought forth such a land of natural wizardry. With numberless waves counting out the days in coves and wide sand flat bays. Moonlight rising over granite peaks speaks for the years in passing, and grandiose boulders locked shoulder to shoulder are the keepers of secret ancient history. These are the stone-faced guardians of sacred stories. What ancients left their imprint fossilised into rock? What past lives are locked inside the shadowed folds of dovetailed earth stones, randomly sculptured in granite masonry?

A white, innocent moon sits high above a fiery red sun bleeding out its last rays into an indigo sea, the final gaze from a life-giving sun offering up its day. A tranquil prayer for a solitary congregation seeking communion between everything, all beings, on this island home.

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**Judge's Comments:** Commended, as well, is 'True North' by Nathan King, a non-fiction piece marked by a richness of language that echoes the richness of the Island's ecologies. Nathan evokes the profound connectivities between animals, plants, and elements through well-crafted images: 'From beneath the waves, silvered angels in their shoals revel in their synchronised maneuvers'. The essay offers a meditation on the deep geological time of the Island.