

Common and Minor

Dazed I was, pondering from my horizontal vantage a lone puff of cloud high in an otherwise clear blue sky. I'd wandered this corner of the city searching high and low for a secluded nook where I could lay down and look into space, perhaps through a thin veil of leaves, and meditate over my escape from this meaningless existence and the daily grind. Sighing inside I lay there fifteen minutes, the portion of my lunch break I could dedicate. What a sanctuary, a hidden gem that bench was. I won't tell you where it is, it's my own secret place.

Replenished but sadly again deflating as my time drew near I caught an un-natural flutter in the corner of my eye. I turned my head and looked and thought 'what a curious bird'. Then I sat with a start, squinted hard to be sure. In the winter's leaflessness of a foreign tree it beat its little wings madly, suspended upside down, somehow caught by its legs between the appendages of this twiggy tree. I rose swiftly, circled round a garden bed to the tree planted in a hole in the pavement and peered up at the poor distressed creature. Passers-by paid me no attention as I paced around looking upward. Nobody else seemed to see it, nor even look.

A knower of birds I'm not but I felt almost sure it was an Indian Myna, which caused a dilemma. Could I save it? Should I save it? Could I still climb such a tree? Probably, though at a struggle. But the public liability implications if I fell, and on work time! Surely a security guard from the Convention Centre, or a City Ranger would see me through CCTV and come down and move me along. Call WIRES? Do they even come into the CBD?

Maybe I should go to the authorities for help? Who *was* the authority here? There was the Tourist Information office at Darling Harbour – perhaps they'd find somebody who could help. But what would they do ...for an Indian Myna? And was it the right thing to do, to save an Indian Myna? Would anyone think it worth the effort? Would it be worth the effort? Would they say it's a pest, let it die? Was that the correct thing to do?

Then I remembered Matthew. He'd know what to do. Matthew knows birds. Matthew studies birds, one day he'll be an expert, if not already. I scurried back to the office but he wasn't there. Call WIRES? How could I begin to explain where to find the bird?

Matthew's never far away, he'd be back soon. Perhaps he could come down and at least confirm it's an Indian Myna.

"I think it's an Indian Myna," I explained when he came back. Matthew was unmoved.

"*Common Myna* they're called now," he corrected. "You could call WIRES, but I'm not sure they'd bother. I wouldn't."

I thought about it. Was it really worth the effort for a *Common Myna*? There was Asis who used to work in Databases - he loves them, very publicly, and he wants us to catch them and send them back to India where he says there are very few surviving. Tomoko has one as a pet. They taught it to speak, it says "英さん 好き".

I was at my desk and there was work in front of me - phone calls to answer and a glossary to write. What would happen? Perhaps it had already freed itself.

A few hours later it was the weekend.

Lunchtime Monday I was out on an hour's parole from the office and by chance I'd walked in that direction. I suddenly remembered the bird. I wandered over to the tree and looked up. The wind played a moment of trickery with me as the puffed-out ball of feathers swayed and one wing flapped in the breeze. Then another Indian Myna flew down and sat on a nearby twig and twittered at it, followed by a small band of others. He reached out and pecked, as if to say "You alright mate?" Good, I thought. Someone else had noticed after all.